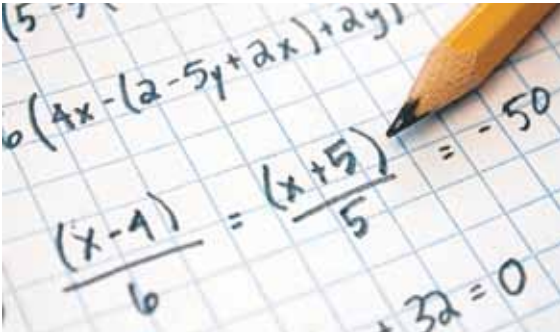


REGIONAL NEWS

Poor mathematics results performance



Mathematics has remained a constant problem. PHOTO | FILE

Results show a slight decline in pass rate when compared with the 2014 results. The 2014 results used the controversial system of GPA while the 2016 used the Division System. Some people have associated the decline with the change of system but further analysis is required to establish that. When announcing the results, the NECTA Executive Secretary Dr Charles Msonde said that the pass rate has dropped slightly from about 68 per cent to around 67 per cent. He also elaborated that the grading system of the two systems (GPA and Division) were different. It is therefore not quite appropriate to compare the results without a reliable statistic. He reported further that Mathematics led in failing. Many people have reacted to the results through the media.

> TANZANIA

Teacher, 16 children held in police custody over terrorism training

Coast Regional Police Commander Boniventure Mushongi said that police were holding a woman, who is a madrasa teacher at the centre. "We're also holding 16 children who attempted to run away after a swoop by our officers at the madrasa," he said. He named the suspect as 48-year-old Ashura Said, a resident of Kimarang'ombe area in Nianjema Ward. "Police had discovered a bomb with registration number G2020c.SSTC at the teacher's Kimarang'ombe home, he said. The madrasa called Arahma has been housing orphans from Dar es Salaam, Handeni, Tanga, Mlandizi and Bagamoyo. Police launched the crackdown following a tip-off from Good Samaritans. In another incident, Mushongi said unknown people on Tuesday killed a resident of Kimanzichana and injured another person at Ukwama area Mkuranga District. He said a 45-year-old man, identified as Bakari Said, met his death while he was filling up loan application forms from Akiba Commercial Bank at Kimanzichana village local government offices. "Two unknown people gunned down Said and injured another person at the local government offices," Mushongi said.

> KENYA

Teachers Service Commission orders teachers to stay on duty during exams

Teachers have been ordered to remain in schools during this year's national examination period. Teachers Service Commission chief executive Nancy Macharia told school principals to ensure all teachers reported to school as usual until the examinations were over. In a circular to secondary and primary school head teachers, Mrs Macharia told teachers to work on the curriculum during the examination period. It was, however, not clear which specific duties the teachers will carry out given that non-candidates will have sat their end of term tests and gone on holiday. Meanwhile, the Kenya National Examination council has asked parents to help police and teachers guard containers in which examination papers will be stored. Council chairman George Magoha said the containers would be in each sub-county across the country, adding: "We should not leave the task to police and teachers alone." The more than 10 million copies of examination papers for 1.5 million candidates will be highly guarded as the government is determined to reclaim the credibility of national examinations that has been severely dented by massive cheating in the past.

Scorned in South but still standing tall in Dar

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he wants to grow and thrive, travel around, and build up a vibrant tourism-company. All started with a decision. "In 2009, I decided to start my own life," he explains. Five years after school, he was doing menial jobs, earning little money. In addition, he had to cope with his father, who served in the army. "His consumption of alcohol was worrying me. And it made him mad. Finally, I had to leave, because my father thought, I would not be worth the money needed for my education", Kizito says. Being the oldest among three boys and one girl, he had to find something to do. In 2009, at the age of 21, he finally left home and moved to Kijoga, where he started to sell second hand things. "The business was not going well at that time. I realised as well, how bad life could be." Additionally, the young man wanted to "try life", as he puts it now. After the first step, he was not yet on the success path, but on the road to failure. And eventually, it got even worse. In October 2011, he and his friend Abdallah planned to leave the country to South Africa. "We applied for the Passports, organised the journey and wanted to learn how things are done in South Africa." Travelling through Mozambique first, he and Abdullah arrived in Nelspruit and went further to Pretoria within three weeks. Finally, they managed to go to Johannesburg, where they met some fellow Tanzanians, who were working in small businesses. "For some

two months, I worked with them, sold water, sweets, cigarettes and other things", Kizito explains. In the meantime, he and Abdallah moved from one Tanzanian couch to the next, having no apartment of their own. Again, Kizito was doing small business. The little money, Kizito earned, he bet on horses. "And one day, I was lucky enough to win some 7000 Rand, which enabled Abdallah and I to get our own place." Kizito laughs when he tells this part of the story. But Kizito did not like his new life in Johannesburg. It was too busy for him. So, he decided again to move. "Sometimes, it is better to try something new", he says. If he would have known, what this "new" thing would be, Kizito would have not made the trip to Port Elizabeth. But he took the decision and moved from Johannesburg to Port Elizabeth in March 2012. In Port Elizabeth, he bumped into some Nigerians doing some business. And Kizito who was eager to try life got involved selling drugs for about three months. Until that day, the police picked him up and put him in jail. Two months later, he had to leave the country. With nothing more than the clothes he wore and his passport, he was transported to the airport in Porth Elizabeth in July 2012. The authorities sent him back to Tanzania, where he had to hand over his passport to the authorities. He, who wanted to travel and expore new things, had to stay in Tanzania. There was no way out anymore. "I came back and had nothing left. I had to leave all my belongings in



Kizito Alphonse lifunga is determined to make everything work out again. PHOTO | HANSJURG JAGER

South Africa", he says. But Kizito learned, how things are done differently. And he further practiced his English. In August 2012 he went back to sell second hand products. But something was different in his mind. "I knew, that this would be only a temporary assignment", he explains. "I understood, that I would have to change my life. I understand, that I wanted something different. Something, where I can talk to people, where I do have conversations, and where I can learn new things every day." Not surprisingly Kizito enjoys to host me as his guest and help me get to know Dar es Salaam. Sitting in the National Museums garden, he explains, why he managed to get out of the vicious circle, in which so many young men are trapped into: "I realized, that I can do almost anything, if I keep on dreaming, trying, learning." He realised, that life has good and bad periods. -He experienced very bad situations, but he never lost trust in himself. "My father always said, that I will never fulfil anything. He never believed in me", he adds. With each time passing, Kizito learned that he cannot blame his father for his own destiny. His relationship with his mother and siblings remained strong though ties between him and his father thawed. "We became almost one", he says. He always wanted to help them to pay their school fees. "They should be able to do, what I was denied to do", he explains. This helped him, to keep on going. To try again. But the disbelief of his father left some traces on Kizito's soul. Now, the only thing he wants is to be loved and appreciated by other people. "I do not have much, but I have a lot of good friends", he says with a big smile. Thanks to his enthusiasm about American movies and songs, and his time in South Africa, he has become a self-taught-English-

speaker. The young man, who loves to chat, to laugh and to discuss, seemed to be the ideal cast be a tour-guide in the tourism-industry. As he started to sell second hand products in August 2012, he finally got in touch with the director of "Afriroots". The company that organises city-tours around Dar Es Salaam to show the real city and its people and not only the touristic hot-spots. He got his chance to show, that he is capable to host groups of tourists. For a bit more than two years, he was guiding tourists through Dar Es Salaam and other areas. "I have never dreamed of getting so much. All I wanted is being loved by others", Kizito says. Therefore, one of his best moments was in 2014, where he was with a class of British pupils on a 3-week-safari in Tanga. "It was a very great moment", he says. "They appreciated me and my work. Everyone enjoyed the trip." Working with people has helped the young man to cope with the missing father in his life. Interestingly, Kizito does not seems to be angry with his dad. Although they barely see each other, he has accepted that he and his dad are different. "But he is still my daddy", he says. And smiles again. Since November last year, Kizito is now building up his own small company. "I want to give back something to the people", he says. He offers tourists city-tours around Dar Es Salaam, as well as camping- and trekking tours in the Morogoro- and Tanga-area. He does not yet run a website, nor does he have an email-account. "But I will build up soon some structures", he says. As he did in his previous jobs, he is going small, but steady steps towards his goals. He concludes that this is the fourth moment in his life, where he starts from scratch again.

Young girls hooked on family planning

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a line fastened on two palm trees. Her maternal care is natural, and these chores mean the world to her. But that beautiful scene is ended by a call for help from one of the mud houses in the homestead. "She cannot latch properly, mama!" a tiny voice wails, in Kiswahili. "And my breasts are sore!" Ms Saumu Baushi, 34, sighs, abandons her washing, and walks into the house. Inside, a small girl sits on a bed, holding a two-week-old baby, one of her breasts exposed. She looks eleven. Or twelve. "This is my 14-year-old first-born daughter," Ms Baushi explains. "She gave birth two weeks ago but she does not even know how to position the baby on her breast. So I have to hold the baby and help it suckle." Ms Baushi is one among many mothers in this little village in Kwale County whose daughters have become mothers at a very young age. And, as Kenya marks the World Contraception Day, the policies and guidelines under debate will strike a sensitive cord in her heart. "I am taking her to the dispensary today to put her on family planning," she announces to us, matter-of-factly,

referring to the daughter who is struggling to breastfeed her progeny. "If she has brought me a grandchild at this age, how sure am I she won't get another child? She will get the Depo-Provera shot and will be on it until she finishes her studies." Contraceptive use Depo-Provera is a contraceptive injection for women that contains the hormone progestin, and while in Kenya it has traditionally been associated with married women who want to space their children or prevent conception altogether, here in sleepy Waa a girl who is barely in her teens is about to get the shot. "I know it is a decision some people would frown over," explains the girl's mother, "but look at me; I am a grandmother at 34 years!" The 2014 Kenya Demographic Health Survey shows that half of women in Kenya aged between 20 and 49 had their first sexual intercourse by the time they turned 18, and that one in 10 women of the same group had their sexual debut by 15. One in four Kenyan women aged between 25 and 49 have given birth by age 18, while one in two have given birth by 20. Health workers say teenagers,

some as young as 13, are now on various family planning options, and this surge may be driven by the high number of teenage pregnancies as a bigger portion opts to use contraceptives after getting their first child. "In every facility in Lunga Lunga Sub-County, there are mothers who are under the age of 19 years seeking antenatal care services," says Ms Lele Hassan Matano, the local public health nurse. The use of contraceptives by adolescents is a sensitive issue in a country with strong religious inclinations, and although government policy is to ensure availability of such services for men and women who are ready

for, and need, them, the society is yet to wrap its collective head around the reality of teens on pills. "We have informed our health care workers that, for family planning to be successful, the entry point is the sexual activity of an individual. So when a teenager comes for the services, the health worker should not deny them contraceptives," Ms Matano says. Her views are supported by Mr David Baya, the Kwale County health promotion officer, who says parents need to realise that the sexual activities of their children, while predisposing them to infections, also expose them to unwanted pregnancies. Ms Ali, a resident of Kwale, put her twin daughters on contraceptives when they were in Standard Seven. "I had to have a plan so that they do not get pregnant again easily. How do I take care of them and their children at the same time?" she asks. "It is better to prevent at least one thing—in this case pregnancy—than them come here with both infections and pregnancies." My initiative Ms Mwanajuma Magadi, a nurse at Waa Dispensary, says while they offer contraceptive services to teenagers, they also advise them on the impor-



tance of protecting themselves from STDs and ask them to use condoms. "The current generation of children is not one that waits to be told," she says. "They pick a lot of stuff from social media. We parents think they do not know things like sex, but some know and do things that even we parents are not aware of." And the evidence is all over the place: at Waa Primary School, the bell goes for lunch break. As others rush to the dining hall, 15-year-old Mwanaisha, who is in Standard Six, heads home to breast-feed her one-year-old son. The Nation is not revealing the identities of the girls we talked to for this story to protect their privacies and rights. "The only thing I have to do now is take care of the baby and read until I complete my primary school education," she says when we catch up with her. "I am on contraceptives, so at least I am sure I will not get pregnant again. I have been receiving the three-month injection since I gave birth one-and-a-half years ago while in Standard Four."

Family planning is usually influenced by external factors. PHOTO | FILE

POETRY CORNER — With Oral African Poetry

The Cattle Killing

Letshitshiba
Le-tshi-tshi-ba
There occurred a problem and a confusion.
It puzzled the land of Phalo.
Woe!
It is perpetual lamentation to generations.
It is death to the observer.
It is a problem that befall the land of Phalo.
That in itself was a sham,
A curse to the land of Xhosa,
For a female to emerge
And proclaim she was addressed by the ancestors,
That she spoke to them in person.
Where were the people of this land?
Where were the great men?
Where were the dignitaries?

Where were the men of experience,
Those who danced while others kept time,
Dancing with their eyes fixed on their oxen.
It happened when this woman spoke
That the Xhosa were the original settlers of this land,
A people with traditions and customs.
They started to prepare themselves to receive.
They proceeded to kill their blameless cattle.
The land of Phalo was covered in greenness.
For the grass was plentiful.
The blameless cattle died.

Their corpses were scattered in the valleys with no one to eat them,
For they were exceedingly fat.
The grain-pits were scraped clean.
The food was taken out and it attracted the hornbills.
The birds stuffed themselves.
The rivers became full when the rains came,
Loaded with the seeds of the lands of Phalo.
The rivers swept away and headed for the sea.
Then the trouble began to appear.
People started to roam about.
The day mentioned by the daughter of Mhlamaza arrived.

The sun rose in the east as usual.
It danced on and on up the arch of the heavens.
When it reached the top of the open sky
The sun appeared in the eyes of the old experienced people as if it would turn back.
But the eyes of these old people played a trick on them,
Because the land was now facing a crisis:
The babies were not crying, they were sobbing.
The sun continued to hobble along.
It was drowsy like the chameleon
Staring at the sycamore tree.

The sun travelled on and sunk down.
Then the people said that the date was wrong:
"Let us see what tomorrow has in store."
But again the following day
Was just as normal.
The sun arose and disappeared.
Then man began to face a problem.
The chiefs grew perplexed.
The men were stunned.

The women strained their necks,
Complaining that they had difficulty with their babies,
Even though they gave them the breast,
they did not grip
Because the breasts would not even ooze blood.
Man died, woman died,
Baby died, old man died,
Chiefs died, councillors died,
The land of Phalon was in trouble.
That is the plight that ruined us.

