

31 March 2017



Contracts of 24 firms out soon

The government will soon disclose the identity of mining and natural gas contracts of 24 companies in efforts to enhance transparency in the mining sector.

In implementing the requirements of the law governing TEITI, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals wrote letters to the 24 companies holding Mineral Development Agreements (MDAs) and Production Sharing Agreements (PSAs) informing about its plans to disclose (contents of the) agreements to the public.

Companies should have responded by now, informing the TEITI committee whether there were any sections in the agreements which they wouldn't want made public. Out of the 24 firms, only two have submitted their recommendations.

Government unveils TZS 31.7T Budget

The government unveiled its TZS 31.7T National Development Plan and Budget Ceiling for the 2017/2018 fiscal year, an increase of TZS 2.2T over the current TZS 29.5T financial plan.

Finance and Planning Minister, Dr Philip Mpango tabled the budget projections before Parliament in line with the National Development Plan for 2017/2018. Overall, he proposes a budget totaling TZS 19.7T in recurrent financing which includes a wage bill of TZS 7.2T and another TZS 9.4T for financing the national debt.

The budget projections indicate the national budget goes up from TZS 8,000B to TZS 9,461.4B following the maturing of the previous loans taken for financing development projects.

The National Development Plan spells out seven priority areas, which include the construction of the Central Line at Standard Gauge, the revival of the Air Tanzania Company and implementation of the Liganga iron ore and Mchuchuma Coal projects. Other priority areas include establishment of special economic zones in various regions such as Tanga, Coast Region, Kigoma, Ruvuma, and Mtwara, implementation of the Liquefied Natural Gas project and investments in two sugar factories.

The minister also noted that the government would continue to invest into other prioritised projects such as building the basic infrastructure for the envisaged industrial economy by setting up industrial sites at Kibaha in Coast Region, General Tyre in Arusha, implementing the Soda Ash project in Engaruka Valley and strengthening of the National Empowerment Development Fund. Further, he noted that the government would push the implementation of its plan to relocate to Dodoma.

Around the World

Shares in UK tech firm plunge 70% as Apple ends chip deal

Shares in UK chip designer Imagination Technologies have slumped nearly 70% after it said Apple, its largest customer, would stop using its graphics technology in the iPhone and other new products. This is a major blow to the British company, which relies on Apple for half its revenues. It warned that the US tech firm risked infringing its intellectual property rights.

Employers may sometimes ban staff from wearing headscarves

Employers are entitled to forbid their Muslim staff from wearing headscarves as long as it is part of a consistent practice of banning the display of religious or ideological symbols, and not a one-off action aimed at satisfying the demands of a particular client. That was the main thrust of a decision issued by the European Court of Justice (ECJ), a Luxembourg-based tribunal whose job it is to interpret and uphold the laws of the European Union. "An internal rule...which prohibits the visible wearing of any political, philosophical or religious sign does not constitute direct discrimination," the court said.

Thousands march in support of Soros-Founded University in Budapest

Thousands of people marched in Hungary's capital to protest proposed legal changes that are seen as singling out a Budapest university founded by George Soros, the billionaire Hungarian-American philanthropist. Many Hungarian and international scholars and institutions have expressed support for the school, Central European University, which was founded by Mr. Soros in 1991 and has more than 1,400 students from 108 countries. Prime Minister Viktor Orban considers Mr. Soros an ideological foe whose "open society" ideal contrasts with his efforts to turn Hungary into an "illiberal state" that places majority rule over civil liberties and minority rights.

31 March 2017

Bunge committees breathe fire

Members of the Parliamentary Committee on Energy and Minerals complained over slow implementation of the rural electrification drive despite legislators' approval of budget for the undertaking.

Moreover, Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee has queried over additional costs amounting to TZS 30B incurred during the execution of various water projects in the country, demanding that disciplinary measures be taken against all officials who contributed to the poor implementation of the projects.

Parliament passed the Rural Energy Act, 2005 that established the rural energy fund to finance rural electrification projects but as of March this year only 4,393 villages or 36% of 12,268 villages in the Mainland had been connected.

Nominated MP Anne Kilango Malecela (CCM), said the number of villages which were reached during initial projects were few and it took nearly a decade. "Now, more than 60% of villages have not been covered; how fast would you move to accomplish the plan in just five years," she queried.

She urged the government to analyse and identify all the villages which have not been fully covered, to help implement the third phase of rural electrification that targets connecting all villages.

No birth certificate, no marriage: order reversed

Former Justice and Constitutional Affairs minister Harrison Mwakyembe admitted that he was wrong on his controversial 'no birth certificate, no marriage' order. President John Magufuli swiftly moved to reverse Dr Mwakyembe's controversial directive. President Magufuli said the order was illegal, and suggested it did not make sense in a country where only 20% of the population have birth certificates. He said the order would deny 80% of Tanzanians their right to marriage.

Strengthen Legal Framework to protect online shoppers

As the number of complaints over online purchases grows, the government tasked the Bank of Tanzania (BoT) and Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) to strengthen the existing legal framework to better protect online shoppers.

The Deputy Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister responsible for Policy, Parliamentary Affairs, Labour, Employment, Youth and the Disabled, Mr Anthony Mavunde, said consumers who were now thrilled to make purchases online are increasingly complaining about such services.

Mr. Mavunde made the remark at the climax of the World Consumer Rights Week held here yesterday. The event was jointly organised by Tanzania Consumers Forum (TCF) and Fair Competition Commission (FCC) with the theme; "Building a digital world consumers can trust."

Around the World

Brexit: UK backing away from threat to leave with no deal, say EU diplomats

European diplomats based in the UK say the British government is stepping back from its threat to leave the EU without a trade deal if negotiations break down. UK officials recognise the "havoc" that this would cause, and have come to regret the threat to turn the UK into a deregulated offshore tax haven, implicit in Theresa May's Lancaster House speech in January, when she warned that "no deal for Britain is better than a bad deal". They claim the conciliatory signals from UK government officials are an attempt to lower the temperature as the prime minister prepares to send the UK's article 50 letter, triggering the start of two years of intensive Brexit negotiations.

Woman 'trapped in loveless marriage' after judges refuse divorce

A woman says she has been left trapped in a "loveless and desperately unhappy" marriage after senior judges refused to allow her to divorce her husband of 40 years on the grounds of unreasonable behaviour. The highly unusual ruling by the court of appeal triggered calls from divorce lawyers for parliament to introduce "no fault" divorce and warnings that the decision would force separating couples to make more aggressive allegations to justify marital breakdown.

Elephants get a reprieve as price of ivory falls

The price of ivory in China, the world's biggest market for elephant tusks, has fallen sharply, which may spell a reprieve from the intense poaching of the past decade. Tougher economic times, a sustained advocacy campaign and China's apparent commitment to shutting down its domestic ivory trade this year were the drivers of the change, elephant experts said.

31 March 2017

"The Bank of Tanzania (BoT) and TCRA in collaboration with consumer consultative councils must put in place mechanism, technology and legal framework to protect consumers," he stressed. Tanzania is a signatory to the United Nations (UN) on consumer protection and according to the Deputy Minister, the authorities are required to harmonise legislation, rules and regulations to best protect the consumer.

He said, FCC and TCRA on another part should oversee the service contracts and mobile transactions to make sure they are in line with the standard form consumer contracts regulations of 2014. "I have been informed BoT and TCRA are working with Financial Sector Deepening Trust (FSDT) to develop new rules to protect online consumers."

Surface and Marine Transport Regulatory Authority (SUMATRA), Consumer Consultative Council Executive Director, Dr Oscar Kikoye, presenting consumers' recommendations outlined that complaints from consumers have been increasing day in day out. He named most registered complaints as high airfare, some telecom not displaying clients' name when sending mobile money before confirming the transaction, some decoders not showing free national channels and high prices of electricity and gas.

International decry Tanzania's delayed ratification of IMO Laws

Tanzania's delayed ratification of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) laws has affected shipping business of international vessels flying the country's flag.

Director General of Zanzibar Maritime Authority (ZMA) Abdalla Hussein said that Tanzania has not ratified several international sea transport legislations as per IMO guidelines. ZMA is the only Tanzanian institute that registers and issues operational licences for international ships. It has issued licences to over 400 domestic and international sea vessels flying the Tanzanian flag. Many shipping businesses have been affected due to the delays in ratifying the laws and that some international ships have threatened to deregister should the problem persist.

IMO requires its member states, including Tanzania to ratify conventions and laws, important in the safety of navigation, co-operation in promotion of the adoption and development of international rules and standards on pollution from ships within the framework of IMO; liability and compensation; and technical cooperation and assistance for developing countries.

EALA adjourns debate on Polythene Materials Control Bill

EALA has adjourned the enactment of the EAC Polythene Materials Control Bill 2016 in order to allow more room for consultations. The Motion for adjournment of the Bill was moved by the Chair of Council of Ministers and Deputy Minister of EAC, United Republic of Tanzania, Hon Dr Susan Kolimba under Rule 30 (c) of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly.

The Minister moved the Motion in order to allow for further scrutiny of various amendments, as well as the incorporation of views of the apex body of the Private Sector, the East African Business Council. In addition, the time allows for the views of the United Republic of Tanzania to be incorporated.

Around the World

Serious Fraud Office boss warns big names to play ball – or else

David Green, the director of the Serious Fraud Office, has warned that British businesses should not consider deferred prosecution agreements (DPAs) the "new normal" if they are caught misbehaving. Used in the US for some time now, DPAs were introduced in the UK only three years ago. The Tesco case is the fourth time the SFO has used its new power: it previously reached settlements with Standard Bank, Rolls-Royce and a third company that cannot be named for legal reasons. The Tesco deal still needs high court approval: a hearing is scheduled for 10 April.

UN: Disappointed with Israel settlement decision

Antonio Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General, expressed his discontent with Israel's latest decision to build settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and repeated his previous calls for a two-state solution to resolve the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In particular, a spokesman for Guterres said the UN official "condemns all unilateral actions that, like the present one, threaten peace and undermine the two-state solution." This condemnation follows in line with recent international ire for Israel's actions in building settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

31 March 2017

The Bill is meant to provide a legal framework for the preservation of a clean and healthy environment through the prohibition of manufacturing, sale, importation and use of polythene materials. The Bill was re-introduced afresh during the Sitting held in August 2016 in Arusha, Tanzania.

"Polythene bags take a month to decompose, plywood 1-3 years, cigarette butts 10-12 years and soapwood for example take between one to three years, while plastic containers may take as many as 50-80 years to degrade," he said.

Even as the motion for adjournment sailed through, a preceding report indicated that Partner States are indeed in support of the Bill. However, polythene manufacturers especially in the Republics of Kenya and Uganda, while understanding the concerns of the Committee of Agriculture, Tourism and Natural Resources, are taken aback considering the heavy investments they have put in the sector.

Change of yellow fever cards 'in progress'

The Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children announced procedures and centres to be used for people, who want to secure new yellow fever vaccination cards.

Those, who live in Dar es Salaam and near border posts are able to obtain the new cards at the ports of Dar es Salaam, Tanga, Kigoma and Mwanza and airports in Dar es Salaam, Mwanza and Kilimanjaro, as well as at Tunduma, Kasumulu, Mtasambwala, Tarakea, Holili, Horohoro, Namanga, Mutukula, Rusumo, Sirari and Isaka boarder points. The cards are also available at Mnazi Mmoja Hospital in Dar es Salaam.

The process requires a person to fill in a special form, website (www.moh.go.tz) and submit it to the centre together with their old cards and passports and pay a TZS 5,000 fee for Tanzanians and USD 10 for non-Tanzanians before they are provided with the new cards.

The change of yellow fever vaccination cards was to end on 31 March but is likely to be extended.

Architect call for guiding law proposal

Architects and Quality Surveyors Registration Board (AQRB) has urged the government to enact the Building Code Act to govern the building sector and do away with bylaws which vary from one local authority to the next.

The chairperson of AQRB, Mr. Ambwene Mwakyusa, said there was a need to have a national building code which would help to set standards. "Tanzania is the only country in East Africa that doesn't have such an Act, while other countries have already enacted the law and it is very useful," he said. He added that unless the law is enacted, the challenges facing quantity surveyors, architects and civil engineers will continue to persist since the bylaws used in one town can be completely different from those of another authority.

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