



HEALTH



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Minister: Coronavirus is spreading internally

By Guardian Reporter

NOVEL coronavirus transmissions have started taking an internal character, spreading among people who never travelled abroad recently, the government affirmed yesterday.

Ummu Mwalimu, the minister for Health, Community development, Gender, Elderly and Children said in Dar es Salaam that Tanzania has entered the local transmission stage of the disease as evidenced in the latest confirmed cases.

"The data we had yesterday, a day before and last week show that we have local transmissions, and it is no longer imported cases," she told a group of religious leaders.

The minister said every Tanzanian should do their part by taking recommended preventive measures as the country could enter the community transmission stage in the near future.

"The community transmission stage is a complex one because it is impossible to do contact tracing as no one knows the source of the virus," she said.

The minister called on religious leaders to



The community transmission stage is a complex one because it is impossible to do contact tracing as no one knows the source of the virus

conduct their services in a controlled manner to avoid overcrowding that could worsen the coronavirus situation in the country.

She advised that religious crusades and conferences that bring together thousands of people should not take place at this stage as the country struggles to contain the deadly disease.

The meeting was hosted by World Vision Tanzania to assess the coronavirus situation in the country and sensitize the public on preventive measures.

Mwalimu said the government will soon issue new guidelines on constant wearing of face masks since some studies indicate that the virus can be airborne in some conditions.

Current World Health Organisation regulations recommend constant wearing of masks by Covid19 patients, health workers and people who come into close contact with patients

In another development, the government is constructing a centre for the study of infectious diseases costing around 7bn/- at Kisota area, a stone's throw from the Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH)

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Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa has a word with Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (Investment), Angella Kairuki (L), in the National Assembly in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: PMO

Start homeschooling, distance learning amid Covid-19 - MPs

By Getrude Mbago, Dodoma

MEMBERS of Parliament yesterday advised the government to come up with a national homeschooling and distance learning strategy to enable pupils and students who are at home as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic to continue learning.

The lawmakers asserted that as the country struggles to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus with schools closed, parents are stranded with no idea of the future of their children's education.

Debating budget estimates of the President's Office (Regional Administration and Local Governments) for the year 2020/21, MPs called for immediate action to keep the children

learning.

Hawa Mchafu (Special Seats, CCM) said that the government can arrange TV or radio programmes and use program teachers to handle such learning for children for a few hours every day.

"The government has to take this matter seriously to support children by coming up with educational technologies to provide remote learning opportunities for primary school children and those in secondary schools," she said.

For his part, Hamidu Bobali (Mchinga, CUF) said that apart from facilitating distance learning, the government should also make sure that the children are protected by

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Taiwan sends WHO chief death threats, racist insults

GENEVA

WORLD World Health Organization director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has said he has been receiving death threats and racist insults while running global efforts to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

"I can tell you personal attacks that have been going on for more than two, three months. Abuses or racist comments giving me names like black or Negro. I'm proud of being black,

proud of being Negro," he told reporters on a conference call from the organization's Geneva headquarters on Wednesday. "I don't care, to be honest ... even death threats. I don't give a damn."

Tedros was responding to a question about whether criticism from world leaders such as President Donald Trump in the midst of a global pandemic makes it more difficult to operate the WHO. Tedros commented

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Police hold five in head teacher murder inquiry

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

POLICE in Dodoma Region are holding five people over the murder of the head-teacher of Chilungulu Primary School, in Bahi District.

The murdered teacher is Eradius Mgya (41), whose body was thrown into the school farm.

Addressing reporters here yesterday, Regional Police Commander Gilles Muroto (pictured) said the incident happened on Tuesday this week at Chilungulu village, with the deceased struck by a sharp instrument, causing his death.

"The assailants ambushed him on the way as he was returning home, but we are still investigating the motive behind the murder. We are detaining the suspects until we finish investigations," he said.

However RPC Muroto declined to give the names of the suspects on reasons that investigations were not yet complete.

In another development, a resident of Image in Dodoma City Godfrey Shirima (22) is being held by the police for being in possession of a pistol of serial number 016975 without a licence and using it in criminal activities.

He said they expect to take the suspect to court soon after they finalise investigations.

Muroto issued a warning against large unnecessary gatherings especially during

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SHARE FACTS ABOUT COVID-19

Know the facts about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and help stop the spread of rumors.

FACT 1 Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Fear and anxiety about COVID-19 can cause people to avoid or reject others even though they are not at risk for spreading the virus.

FACT 2 For most people, the immediate risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low.

Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19.

FACT 3 Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.

For up-to-date information, visit CDC's coronavirus disease 2019 web page.



CS15464 03/16/2020

FACT 4 There are simple things you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

FACT 5 You can help stop COVID-19 by knowing the signs and symptoms:

- Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
- Seek medical advice if you
- Develop symptoms
- AND
- Have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

cdc.gov/COVID-19



Police hold five in head teacher murder inquiry

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this time when people are required to take preventive measures against the spread of Covid-19.

Police in Dodoma are also holding a resident of Mtoni Kwa Aziz Ali in Dar es Salaam, Grace Lauwo (31) for online theft.

The suspect was arrested with a motor vehicle with registration number T 745 DSS Toyota Crown which is suspected to have been stolen and which she allegedly uses in her criminal activities, the RPC said.

"The suspect leads a criminal gang of other people engaged in online theft of money... they have registered

themselves as agents but they hack passwords of other people's mobile numbers and steal money," he elaborated.

Before her arrest the gang had stolen some 27m/- online which they divided among themselves, money that enabled her to buy the vehicle, he stated.

RPC Muroto said police in the region discovered that 'sensor' ignition keys are responsible for the theft of many vehicles in the region.

Vehicles owners need to take precautions especially by leaving their cars in a secure environment, not in areas where with such keys the car can easily be stolen, he added.

Start homeschooling, distance learning amid Covid-19 - MPs

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supplying them with enough sanitizers in classroom units within residential areas.

"The government should use the funds allocated for free education in the meantime to purchase enough sanitizers and other protective tools and supply them to school children. Pupils in rural areas are the ones in high risk as they have little ability to purchase soaps and masks," he said.

The MP also urged the government to capacitate the Tanzania Rural and Urban Roads Agency (TARURA) to enable it fulfill its tasks of improving road infrastructures, saying that the allocated 300bn/- wasn't enough for the agency.

Joseph Haule (Mikumi, Chadema) said that most roads and bridges in

his constituency were dilapidated and that the government had shown no commitment to improve them.

"Most wards in Mikumi constituency are disconnected following poor road infrastructures in those areas, I have been speaking on this for a long time but no measures are taken...the ongoing rains have gone further to cause more destruction," he elaborated.

Hasna Mwilima (Kigoma South, CCM) said that there are several roads in her constituency which need immediate action by the government to improve them so as to promote economic activities.

The government should come up with an alternative strategy to ensure that more funds are dished out to finance rural road rebuilding following heavy rains pounding many parts of the country, she added.



Mussa Hassan Zungu (L, in cap), Minister of State in the Vice President's Office (Union and Environment), leads National Environment Management Council officials during an inspection tour of Axel Chemical Ltd factory yesterday. Residents of the area have been complaining that the facility, which is based at Zinga in Bagamoyo District, is a public health hazard. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Singida to disinfect buses on daily basis in response to coronavirus

By Guardian Correspondent, Singida

AUTHORITIES in Singida Region in collaboration with the Land Transport Regulatory Authority (LATRA) will soon start sanitizing passenger buses every day in response to the coronavirus.

"We're working closely with LATRA to see the possibilities of using cleaning agents to sanitize all surfaces on vehicles," said Rehema Nchimbi, Singida regional commissioner.

RC Nchimbi unveiled the plan here yesterday when speaking with chairpersons and secretaries of the CCM women wing (UWT).

Dr Nchimbi said that there are many ways of protecting against the pandemic including hands washing, spraying disinfectant and "that's why we want to sanitize all surfaces in those buses."

Although there are no confirmed coronavirus cases in Singida, RC

Nchimbi said: "We want to reassure passengers and operators that it's safe to continue using public transport."

According to Nchimbi, Singida region is a hub it receives buses from almost all corners of the country; hence the move will make the public transport safe against covid-19.

UWT member from Mkalama district, Elizabeth Zakayo Sakaya, called on the public to adhere to all the precautionary measures against the

pandemic.

Tanzania has officially registered 25 cases of covid-19, five recoveries and one fatality.

As of Wednesday, confirmed cases globally surpassed 1.4m people while deaths exceeded 83,000 with over 300,000 recoveries. Deaths in Spain rose for a second consecutive day to reach an overall 14,555 while in Germany, infections passed the 100,000 mark.



Home Affairs minister George Simbachwene (R), who is also chairman of the Public Service Commission in respect of Prisons, Police and Immigration, swears in Ali Juma Abdulkadir in Dodoma yesterday as a member of the commission. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Taiwan sends WHO chief death threats, racist insults

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specifically on insults that he said came from Taiwan.

"Three months ago, this attack came from Taiwan. We need to be honest. I will be straight today. From Taiwan," he said.

"And Taiwan, the Foreign Ministry also, they know the campaign. They didn't disassociate themselves. They even started criticizing me in the middle of all that insult and slur, but I didn't care."

Tedros also referenced remarks made by scientists on French TV that Tedros had condemned on Monday as

artifacts of a "colonial mentality." The scientists were discussing the potential of moving a vaccine trial in Europe and Australia to Africa, according to the BBC. Tedros said Wednesday that the remarks insulted "the whole black community."

Tedros pleaded for world leaders and politicians to put aside differences and focus on the fight against the pandemic, which has now infected more than 1,452,378 people around the world and killed at least 83,615, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

"Please quarantine COVID politics. That's what we want. We don't care about personal attacks," he said. "We

care about the life passing every single minute unnecessarily because we couldn't unite to fight this virus."

Meanwhile, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has appealed to members of the United Nations to stand together and start focusing on Global South as the Covid-19 pandemic takes root there.

He urged in a signed statement that crucially, "this robust and cooperative effort should be guided by the World Health Organisation, a member of the United Nations family; countries acting on their own - as they must for their people - will not get the job done for all."

"Second, tackle the devastating social and economic dimensions of the crisis. The virus is spreading like wildfire, and is likely to move swiftly into the Global South, where health systems face constraints, people are more vulnerable, and millions live in densely populated slums or crowded settlements for refugees and internally displaced persons," he cautioned.

"Fuelled by such conditions, the virus could devastate the developing world and then re-emerge where it was previously suppressed. In our interconnected world, we are only as strong as the weakest health systems," the UN chief civil servant added.

Minister: Coronavirus is spreading internally

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Mloganzila branch building.

The project is being carried out by the National Service economic wing-Suma JKT and with a section of the buildings expected to be completed by the end of this month.

Dr Zainab Chaula, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, said that upon completion the centre will be used to host Covid-19 patients and coronavirus suspects.

"The government has decided to construct the centre which upon its completion will be distinctive as it will be installed with modern equipment to ease health care delivery for Covid-19 patients," she said.

On Wednesday, minister Mwalimu said screening of temperature will now be extended to domestic arrival terminals at all airports as well as major bus stands in an enhanced fight against the novel coronavirus.

The announcement followed as a new case was confirmed in Dar es Salaam Region, bringing the national tally to 25 with five recoveries and one

fatality.

The latest confirmed case was of a male Tanzanian aged 51 years who the minister said was being isolated at a facility within the city.

The minister noted that the move to extend screening aims at identifying possible hidden cases. Earlier the screening for fever took place at international arrival sections of airports as well as seaports and land border points.

As of yesterday, confirmed cases globally surpassed 1.5m with over 89,000 deaths and over 340,000 recoveries. The US had the highest number of confirmed cases with more than 432,000 followed by Spain, Italy and Germany.

Italy had the highest death toll with more than 17,000 losing their lives. More than 15,000 had died in Spain and France had reached 10,000 deaths.

The UK had seen more than 7,000 deaths and more than 60,000 confirmed cases.

More than 6.6m people had already filed for unemployment benefits in the United States, while some European countries cautiously started easing lockdown measures.

COVID-19 shaking sub-Saharan Africa

WASHINGTON

GROWTH in Sub-Saharan Africa has been significantly impacted by the ongoing coronavirus outbreak and is forecast to fall sharply from 2.4 percent in 2019 to -2.1 to -5.1 percent in 2020, the first recession in the region over the past 25 years, according to the latest Africa's Pulse, the World Bank's twice-yearly economic update for the region.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is testing the limits of societies and economies across the world, and African countries are likely to be hit particularly hard," said Hafez Ghanem, World Bank Vice President for Africa.

"We are rallying all possible resources to help countries meet people's immediate health and survival needs while also safeguarding livelihoods

and jobs in the longer term - including calling for a standstill on official bilateral debt service payments which would free up funds for strengthening health systems to deal with COVID-19 and save lives, social safety nets to save livelihoods and help workers who lose jobs, support to small and medium enterprises, and food security."

The Pulse authors recommend that African policymakers focus on saving lives and protecting livelihoods by focusing on strengthening health systems and taking quick actions to minimize disruptions in food supply chains. They also recommend implementing social protection programs, including cash transfers, food distribution and fee waivers, to support citizens, especially those working in the informal sector.



Yusuf Seif (C, facing camera), a health officer with the Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children ministry, sensitises Vice President's Office staff in Dodoma yesterday on the coronavirus pandemic. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

By Correspondent Mutayoba Arbogast, Bukoba

Kagera Region suspends outdoor Easter gatherings over Covid-19

Kagera region has cancelled outdoor entertainment activities that take place during Easter festivities to stop further spread of novel coronavirus.

Regional Commissioner Brig. Gen. Marco Gaguti said here yesterday that games and other entertainment activities including beach sports on the shores of Lake Victoria will not take place this time.

He added that even groups of people—families and friends—that normally throng beaches to enjoy the breeze during the Christian holidays will not have that luxury this time around.

Kiyoyera and Custom beaches along

Lake Victoria located within Bukoba municipality are popular with outdoor large gatherings at entertainment joints.

The beaches also attract hundreds of thousands of children for games that start early in the morning until late in the evening.

"I have directed law enforcement and security organs to ensure that no gatherings take place including beach entertainments on Lake Victoria beaches which attract hundreds of thousands of people during holidays," he said.

This does not mean closing of businesses. However we discourage large gatherings at entertainment joints. I appeal to owners of such businesses to manage their patrons."

Willy Rutta, a tourism industry stakeholder told this paper that some people are reluctant to comply with government directives on taking precautions especially social distancing.

With schools closed, Rutta said crowds of people have been visiting the beaches with some accompanied

by their children.

"Most parents regard this as a normal school break which is not the case; instead of staying at home with their children they go about their activities as usual," he said.

The businessman recommended that families that are used to jam-packed entertainment joints during festivities to organise small events at home to celebrate Easter instead of going out.

Tanzania has so far recorded 25 cases of Covid-19, five recoveries and one death.

Govt to prioritise Hepatitis B vaccination

By Getrude Mbago, Dodoma

THE Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children has said the government will prioritise Hepatitis B vaccination. However, not everyone is required to undergo the vaccination but only those who are at high risk of contracting the disease.

Minister Mwalimu said this yesterday when responding to question from Task Mbogo (Special Seats-CCM) who sought to know the government's strategy to scale up the provision of Hepatitis B vaccine to all people.

The lawmaker expressed concern that the current vaccination coverage among Tanzanians is low, despite a high level of awareness and the acceptance of the vaccine by majority of people.

Responding, minister Mwalimu said that the provision of the vaccine is however done in phases starting from regional referral hospitals and later at

district hospitals.

"To access the vaccine, the public will be required to contribute a small amount of money," she said.

Mwalimu named the high risk groups as health workers who serve the public and those working in medical laboratories. Others are those working in mortuaries as well as doctors and nurses attending reproductive and child health (RCH) clinics.

She also cited other people who are in high risk of contaminating the disease as blood donors, drug users, prisoners, HIV/Aids patients, those having multiple partners and those assisting Hepatitis B patients.

She further said that Hepatitis B vaccine was introduced in Tanzania in 2002 and is administered as DPT-hepatitis B at four, eight and twelve weeks of life (infants).

Hepatitis refers to an inflammatory condition of the liver. It's commonly caused by a viral infection, but there

are other possible causes of hepatitis.

In highly endemic areas, hepatitis B is most commonly spread from mother to child at birth (perinatal transmission) or through horizontal transmission (exposure to infected blood), especially from an infected child to an uninfected child during the first five years of life. Hepatitis B is also spread by percutaneous or mucosal exposure to infected blood and various body fluids, as well as through saliva, menstrual, vaginal and seminal fluids.

Sexual transmission of hepatitis B may occur, particularly in unvaccinated men, who have sex with men and heterosexual persons with multiple sex partners or contact with sex workers.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), about 3.2 million Tanzanians have hepatitis B and about 0.5 million have hepatitis C, meaning for every 14 people one is suffering from hepatitis B or C.



Shinyanga Regional Police Commander Debora Magliligimba shows journalists in Shinyanga municipality yesterday items he said have been impounded during police patrols. Photo: Correspondent Shaban Njia

Govt unveils subsidy plan on fishermen's cooperatives

By Getrude Mbago

THE government has unveiled a plan to start providing special subsidies to fisheries cooperative unions to enable them purchase modern equipment and thus increase their productivity.

Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Luhaga Mpina said this when responding to question from Mtambile MP Masoud Abdallah Salim (CUF) who sought to know on the government's strategy to support fishermen whom majority of them are living vulnerable life.

In his basic question, the lawmaker decried that fishermen in the country were living difficult life as most of them lack access to capital to help them conduct commercial fishing.

Responding, Mpina said that in the plan, the government will purchase of modern fishing engines which are normally expensive for them to maintain.

He also said that the government is also implementing special strategies which aim to bring major reforms in the fisheries sector to protect resources and improve lives of fishermen and surrounding communities.

"We also removed Value Added Tax (VAT) in engines and various raw materials used to produce fishing tools so as to provide relief to fisheries," he said.

The minister wanted the MP to encourage fishermen to join fisheries cooperative unions in their areas so as to benefit from the government and

stakeholders initiatives.

He also said that the government will encourage and stimulating private sector to increase investment in the sector particularly production of quality fishing tools.

"There is a lot of areas where private sector can direct their efforts, these are production of "fibre gas" boats. We already have factories like Sogoro Marine Transport of Mwanza and Sam Anzai Boat Builder and Seahorse East African which doing well in producing fishing factories," he noted.

Recently, the government said that Tanzania's fish imports have gone down by 99 per cent in the past four years due to increased efforts done by authorities and stakeholders to curb illegal fishing.

In November, 2018, the government launched a crackdown on illegal fishing with the minister Mpina, saying illegal fishing resulted in depletion of fish stocks in the country's lakes, forcing Tanzania to spend more money to import fish.

Available data now show that, with improved management of fish resources across the ocean and lakes, fish stocks improved significantly.

"We also removed Value Added Tax (VAT) in engines and various raw materials used to produce fishing tools so as to provide relief to fisheries"



ADVERTISEMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

TENDER TITLE: SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF ICT INFRASTRUCTURE IN TANZANIA NATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE, ZANZIBAR NATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE AND TANZANIA WOMEN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (TWCC)

TENDER NUMBER: PRQ20191054 & PRQ20191074

TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) is seeking the services of a firm/consortium to supply and install ICT infrastructure for Tanzania National Chamber of commerce, Industry and Agriculture, Zanzibar National Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture and Tanzania Women Chamber of Commerce.

The Terms of Reference for this services and the Request for Proposal (RFP) document can be obtained at <http://www.trademarkea.com/get-involved/procurement/>. All queries quoting the above Tender Title and Number should be emailed to procurement@trademarkea.com. The closing date for submission is on or before Monday 4th May 2020 at 4:00 p.m. (Kenya time)

Applications are open only to firms/consortiums. Interested bidders MUST submit separate technical and financial proposals via TMEA procurement mailbox at the address procurement@trademarkea.com and all attachments must be 5 MBs or less.

TMEA cannot answer any query relating to this tender seven (7) days or less prior to the submission deadline.

Coast Region residents to pocket 22 billion/- in land compensation

By Getrude Mbago

THE government has set aside a total of 21.57bn/- to compensate residents of Kibaha, Kisarawe and Chalinze in Coast region whose land had been taken to pave way for the construction of 400Kv power transmission line, the House heard yesterday.

Minister for Energy Dr Medard Kalemami made the remarks when responding to question posed by Mary Muro (Special Seats, Chadema) who sought to know the government's plans to settle compensation arrears for Kibaha residents.

The legislator queried on when the government would pay the compensation, as the major power project with 400Kva from Kinyerezi through Coast region involved the citizens and had not been compensated.

In his response, Dr Kalemami said that all residents will receive their arrears soon as the government is currently finalising payment procedures.

According to him, as of March

2020, all the procedures of verifying and preparing compensation list and information are being finalised before distributing the funds to designated areas. "We request the citizens to be patient while the government continues to complete the process related to the payments of compensation," he requested.

He said that the government through Tanzania Electric Supply Company Limited (Tanesco), was implementing the project of transmitting power with 400kv from Kinyerezi in the outskirts of the city and Rufiji in Coast region through Chalinze to Dodoma.

"The project's objectives are to increase access to electricity in the east, central and north zones of the country from Kinyerezi power plant and Rufiji project," he noted.

According to him, the project involves construction of 400kv, double circuit 340km of transmission line from Chalinze to Dodoma and rural electrification along the line. Kinyerezi-Chalinze 100km and Chalinze-Rufiji 160kms.

DC: Don't dare misuse Mkomazi park corridor

By Guardian Correspondent, Same

THE government will not allow Mkomazi National Park wildlife corridor bordering Tsavo National Park in neighbouring Kenya to be misused especially at this time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This is according to the Same district commissioner in Kilimanjaro Region Rosemary Senyamule who said that the government believes the corridor and the border areas are safe and will not be misused.

She was speaking yesterday during her visit at the border area accompanied by members of the district defence and security.

"We have satisfied ourselves that the corridor is safe and we will continue to

make sure it remains so," she said.

The wildlife corridor is the area joins wildlife reserve areas along which the wildlife migrate during certain seasons of the year and later flock back to the reserve. The corridor is also the area for reproduction and where animals get certain minerals they lack in the reserve.

Assistant commissioner of Mkomazi national park that is located between Same and Korogwe districts, Abeli Mtui said their aim is to identify all passages that need protection.

The commissioner said population increase has adverse effects to the environment and protection of wildlife.

He said it was essential for the wildlife corridors to be protected for production.



Dodoma regional sheikh Mustapha Rajabu washes his hands before entering the venue of Muslim Council of Tanzania (Bakwata) electoral meeting for Dodoma District yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Peter Mkwavila

By Guardian Correspondent, Nkasi

IN efforts to control the spread of covid-19 infections Nkasi district council in Katavi region have warned that whoever will enter any auction area without first washing hands will be fined 50,000/-.

The penalty will also be meted to traders who do not put in place running water and soap for their customers at their businesses premises.

Speaking to this paper over the phone recently Nkasi district executive director (DED), Missana Kwangula, said during the last auction ten people were fined 50,000/- each for entering the auction area without washing their hands.

'50,000/- fine for avoiding washing hands at auctions'

He said all auction areas will be fenced so that people should not enter without first washing their hands.

He said there will be two entrances for entry and exit and at each there will be a huge water tank, soap and sanitizers.

"After each person washes his hands, he will put his left hand's small finger in an indelible ink in similar manner as he does after casting his ballot at a voting centre," he said, added:

"Afterwards an inspection will be conducted for each one to show his finger to ensure it has the ink mark...

and in the last auction we nabbed 10 people who did not wash their hands."

He stressed that health officials will inspect every business premise and owners without running water and soap for the customers will also be fined 50,000/- each.

He also appealed to the residents not to ignore the calls for washing hands

using soap and running water before entering into business premises.

Maria Adam, shop owner at Namanyere town in the district said a bucket of water with 20 litres capacity is sold at 10,000/- but as of now the price is 25,000/-.

"These buckets are in very short supply here, they are brought by traders from Mbeya and we have been forced to buy them at such high price, she said.

Police arrest man for allegedly inflicting severe burns on his son

By Guardian Correspondent, Songea

POLICE in Ruvuma region are holding Mohamed Halifa (30), resident of Mzazi Mmoja village in Tunduru district allegedly for inflicting severe burns on the feet of his son, Shalukani Mohamedi Halifa (7), a Std One pupil of Mzazi Mmoja primary school.

Speaking to this paper on Wednesday Ruvuma Regional Police Commander Simon Maigwa said on March 15 this year the Police's Gender Desk received information from good citizens about the incident.

RPC Maigwa said according to the

informant, after Mohamed Halifa hid the child inside the house for more than three weeks before neighbours started to complain over the father's brutality.

Maigwa said after receiving this information police were dispatched to Halifa's house where they found the child being treated by a herbalist.

He added that the police found child's feet were starting to emit a strong offensive smell and took him to Tunduru district hospital for proper treatment and that he was doing well, saying after investigations are complete the suspect will appear in

court. In another incident, one Isaya Komba, a resident Mkuzo area in Songea municipality was found dead in his room after hanging himself using a woman's veil. The incident happened on April 4, this year in the afternoon.

He said the incident was reported by one Scolla Mvula (26) who informed the police that her husband, Komba had hanged himself and had died.

He said the police is continuing with investigations to establish the cause of the death and the body of the deceased was handed to relatives for burial after an autopsy was conducted.

MAXINSURE (TANZANIA) LIMITED



AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS MAXINSURE TANZANIA LIMITED FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2019 PURSUANT TO SECTION 41 (1) OF INSURANCE ACT 2009

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

	2019 TZS	2018 TZS
Gross written premium	7,040,323	10,604,612
Gross earned premium	9,042,620	11,443,754
Less: Outward Reinsurance	3,811,861	4,124,923
Net earned premiums	5,230,759	7,318,831
Investment income	124,934	159,997
Foreign Exchange gain	-	-
Gain realized on Financial assets	-	-
Other Income	7,098	-
Commission earned	880,860	1,254,968
Total income	6,243,651	8,733,796
Commissions payable	1,371,831	1,982,786
Net Claims Incurred	1,350,256	2,746,050
Operating and other expenses	2,866,999	4,690,428
Profit before tax	654,565	(685,468)
Tax	231,919	473,218
Profit for the year	422,646	(1,158,686)
Other comprehensive income	422,646	-
Change in fair value of available for sale financial assets	-	-
Other Comprehensive loss for the year net of tax	-	-
Total Comprehensive Income for the year attributable to the owners of the company	422,646	(1,158,686)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2019

	2019 TZS	2018 TZS
Capital Employed		
Share capital	5,922,880	4,563,260
Share Premium	-	-
Call on shares	-	-
Contingency reserve	1,326,460	1,115,250
Capital reserve	-	-
Retained Earnings	(4,883,907)	(5,095,344)
Proposed Dividend	-	-
SHAREHOLDERS' FUND	2,365,433	583,166
ASSETS		
Property and equipment	102,005	163,247
Intangible assets	111,283	80,008
Receivables arising out of reinsurance arrangement	942,941	-
Receivables arising out of direct insurance arrangements	1,609,317	2,151,123
Reinsurers' share of technical provisions and reserves	8,565,590	9,758,935
Deferred acquisition costs	215,040	521,880
Other receivables	89,605	43,094
Current tax	8,470	190,937
Deferred Tax	184,619	184,619
Government securities	671,514	1,123,753
Deposits with Financial Institutions	779,600	586,831
Cash and Bank Balance	1,580,778	673,656
TOTAL ASSETS	14,860,763	15,478,083
LIABILITIES		
Unearned premium	1,677,768	3,680,065
Outstanding claims provisions	9,129,186	10,128,099
Deferred tax	-	-
Creditors arising from reinsurance arrangement	502,676	315,164
Creditors arising from direct insurance arrangement	264,163	-
Other payables	921,537	771,589
Bank overdraft	-	-
Current tax	-	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES	12,495,330	14,894,917
NET ASSETS	2,365,433	583,166

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

	Share Capital TZS	Contingency Reserve TZS	Accumulated Losses TZS	Total TZS
At 1 January 2018	4,563,260	914,758	(3,736,166)	1,741,852
Revaluation	-	-	-	-
Issue of shares	-	-	-	-
Net Profit after tax	-	-	(1,158,685)	(1,158,685)
Transfer to contingency reserve	-	318,138	(318,138)	-
Transfer- Capital reserve	-	-	-	-
Proposed Dividend	-	-	-	-
At 31 December 2018	4,563,260	1,232,896	(5,212,989)	583,167
At 1 January 2019	4,563,260	1,232,896	(5,212,989)	583,167
Revaluation	-	-	-	-
Issue of share	1,359,620	-	-	1,359,620
Net Profit	-	-	422,646	422,646
Transfer- Contingency reserve	-	211,210	(211,210)	-
Transfer- Capital reserve	-	-	-	-
Proposed Dividend	-	-	-	-
Dividend paid	-	-	-	-
At 31 December 2019	5,922,880	1,444,106	(5,011,553)	2,365,433

CASH FLOW STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

	2019 TZS	2018 TZS
OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Cash generated from operation	(663,412)	(751,393)
Investment Income	124,934	-
Other Income	-	591,526
Tax paid	(49,451)	(48,839)
Net Cash from / (used in) operating activities	(587,930)	(208,706)
INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Purchase of property and equipment	(84,892)	-
Purchase of unlisted share	-	-
Liquidation/purchase of government bond	-	-
Increase in government securities	444,592	(77,052)
Liquidation of Corporate bond	-	-
Increase in fixed deposit	(246,070)	271,731
Investment in related Company	-	-
Proceeds from disposal of property and equipment	21,800	-
Proceed from disposal of shares	-	-
Net cash from / (used in) investing activities	135,430	194,679
FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Proceeds from issue of shares	1,359,620	-
Interest	-	159,997
Net cash from / (used in) financing activities	1,359,620	159,997
(DECREASE)/ INCREASE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENT	907,121	145,970
Movement in cash and cash equivalent		
At the start of the year	673,657	527,687
(Decrease) / Increase	907,121	145,970
At the end of the year	1,580,778	673,657

Mustafa Rashid
Director

Ramesh Patel
Director



Mueha district commissioner Mwanasha Tumbo (with hoe) pictured on Wednesday taking part in clearing a site at Upare village that is earmarked for the construction of a dispensary. Photo: Correspondent Steve William



Brig Gen John Mbungu, Director General of the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau, briefs journalists in Dar es Salaam yesterday on the efforts the agency is making to ensure the General Election scheduled for later this year is conducted fully in accordance with the country's laws. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

Dar firm offers re-usable masks to its workforce in fighting virus

By Correspondent Joseph Mchekadona

IN efforts to ensure that rural electrification project in Katavi region is completed on time, a Chinese firm—China Railway Construction Electrification Bureau Group has put in place all measures to fight against Covid-19. Among the measures include giving its workers reusable face masks. The company is connecting electricity to villages in Katavi region under Rural Energy Agency (REA). In an interview, firm's representative, Han Jianli said about 1800 re-usable masks were given to employees in Katavi and Dar es Salaam regions and also the workers had trained on how they can stay safe during this period of coronavirus pandemic. According to him, the company has also put in place all the facilities needed such as hand washing and sanitizers in the two working sites—Dar es Salaam and Katavi. "Our idea is to ensure that employees and Tanzanians in general are

protected against this silent killer disease." "We value the contribution which our employees are bringing to our company, we put their health and safety first and during this time of the coronavirus it is good to be with them by providing them with protective gear such as masks for use at their work places and homes, on top of that we are giving them Chinese tips on how to stay safe during this period," he said. He explained that the workers were given the reusable masks as they are good and durable, saying it can be used 5-7 times and advised that before reusing it, the mask must be put on direct sunlight for 6 hours. Jianli also said: "In Katavi region, we've finished 600 km lines of electricity and more than 30 villages have been connected to electricity." The country has 25 cases of covid-19 with one death reported and currently there are many ways which being taken to control the spread of the virus. **Photo on Page 6**

By Guardian Reporter

Covid-19: Health ministry and stakeholders mobilise children on preventive measures

THE Community development department of the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Children and Elders in partnership with Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network (TECDEN), the UN Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) have put up a strategy in mobilising children on preventive measures against covid-19 infections.

Speaking mid this week at a meeting that brought together the stakeholders in Dar es Salaam, TECDEN managing director Bruno Ghumpi said there are various guidelines in regard to

covid-19 preventive measures, but what is lacking are guidelines targeting special groups in the society including pregnant women and small children of 0-8 years of old.

Ghumpi said the right education for children against the pandemic's infections will assist parents, guardians and children themselves in protection against the disease in their areas.

"This message to children is essential at this stage because they are at home due to closure of schools and therefore it suffices for parents and guardians to adhere to important

issues in educating their minors to protect themselves against the covid-19 infections," he said. A community development officer from the Health Ministry Mathias Haule said it is important for the stakeholders to convey the instructions at the lowest the levels - starting at family, street or area to enable them access right reports and guidelines on the preventive measures against the pandemic.



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'349 older people countrywide land full govt support'

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

ONLY 349 old people nationwide get full government support, Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children said here yesterday, adding that they are those who do not have relatives to help them earn a living.

The ministry told the House that the government is determined to ensure that the elders in the country who contributed immensely in nation building get due attention and protection.

The government said in response to a question from Special Seats MP, Joyce Sikombi who had sought to know what the government is doing to help elderly people in the country, most of whom are living in pathetic situations.

"It is sad that many old people, most of whom served the nation at different capacities during their youthful days live in deplorable conditions without any support. What is the government doing to help them?" the lawmaker asked.

She argued that the government had not done much despite improving services to the elderly people in the country, noting that some of them do not even have access to medical care among other services.

Responding the government said in efforts to ensure the aged people in the society get their rightful services, the local governments had always conducted identification processes and registration of the elderly, especially those who do not have means of getting the basic human needs.

The government noted that the authorities had been responsible in providing social services to the groups of elders, among others issuing them

with identification cards for free medical services, residential places at designated homes for the elderly as well as psychological support.

"There are 349 old people, 149 being men and 200 women nationwide who get full government support in some 13 homes for the elderly as of March, 2020", said the government, adding that they are those who do not have relatives to take care of them.

The government also noted that it had not conducted national research to identify the elderly who live on the streets, stating that most of those on the streets come from their homes, beg on the streets and return home in the night, but others also simply resort to sleep on the streets.

It called on the local government authorities to continue providing the needful services to the elderly, joining them together with their families and ensure the communities take care of the elders.



It is sad that many old people, most of whom served the nation at different capacities during their youthful days live in deplorable conditions without any support. What is the government doing to help them?



Longido District CCM secretary Ezekiel Mollel sensitises Maasai elders at Engrnaibor village on Wednesday on the coronavirus pandemic. Photo: Correspondent Woinde Shizza

Covid-19: Mwanza Region embarks on disinfecting of buses, Bajaj, taxis

By Guardian Correspondent, Mwanza

MWANZA Region has officially launched the disinfectant spray campaign on passenger carrying vehicles including buses travelling to other regions, commuter buses, tricycles (bajaj) and taxis in an effort to control the spread of Covid-19 infection.

Speaking during the launch of the exercise held at the main stand for buses travelling to other regions, the Nyamagana District Commissioner Dr Phillis Nyimbi, on behalf of Mwanza Regional Commissioner, John Mongella said in the fight against the pandemic, bus owners are supposed to ensure that their buses are sprayed with

disinfectant to protect passengers against the disease.

Dr Nyimbi said this was very important in the fight against the pandemic and added that President John Magufuli had already explained what is to be done including disinfectant spraying.

She also thanked various stakeholders including owners of passenger carrying vehicles in supporting efforts to ensure the city of Mwanza remains safe against Covid-19.

She hailed the Committee tasked to ensure Mwanza remains safe by coming with the idea of disinfectant spraying and called on its members to be good ambassadors in ensuring

bus conductors urge passengers to wash their hands before boarding the vehicles.

She also called on Mwanza residents not to allow children roaming the streets during this time the schools are closed.

A senior official from Land Transport Regulatory Authority (LATRA) in Mwanza Region Ngereza Pateli said their responsibility is to ensure that the spray contents are right in killing the virus and that no bus is to depart without being sprayed with the chemicals.

Mwanza Region Bus Owners Association Yusuph Lupula said no one should come out to mar the exercise as it is not a personal matter

and all bus owners must abide by the preventive measures against the disease.

Mwanza Region Pharmacist Nelson Kamuhanda said the chemicals for spraying are in accordance with the Health ministry's guidelines; hence those given tender for the work should have special equipment as the spray should be used only half an hour after mixing.

However a cross section of wananchi said including business people at the Bus Stand including Chairman of Nyegezi food vendors group Hanifa Nasoro hailed the spraying exercise and added that all people should make sure to wash their hands before boarding the buses.



A worker with China Railway Construction Electrification Bureau Group Company Ltd washes his hands with water and a sanitiser in Dar es Salaam yesterday. The firm recently distributed reusable masks to its entire workforce in effort to forestall the spread of COVID-19 infections. Photo: Guardian correspondent

NGO Hope sees Serengeti District girls escape FGM

By Correspondent Sabato Kasika

FOURTEEN out of 19 young girls from Serengeti district in Mara region have been rescued from undergoing female genital mutilation (FGM) thanks to efforts by a non-profit organization—Hope for Girls and Women in Tanzania.

Hope for Girls and Women in Tanzania works to pioneer and protect women dignity to bring to an end all forms of violence against girls and women.

The organisation's rescue operation however failed to reach five girls who had their genital parts already mutilated.

Organisation's executive director, Rhobi Samwelly, said they conducted the rescue exercise in collaboration with other stakeholders including the police force and other state organs.

"We conducted a seven-day operation from April 1st to 7th this year. We reached various villages including Machochwe, Kebancha, Matare, Kenokwe, Burunga and Nyansurura where we rescued 14 girls as five among them already had their genital parts mutilated", said Samwelly.

According to her all the 19 girls were facing an imminent danger to have their genital parts mutilated, but through the operation fourteen among them were saved.

She added: "The young girls are currently staying at our safe home in Mugumu town, whilst police and other law enforcers are consulting their parents so that legal measures are taken against the proprietors.

Regional Police Commander, Daniel Shillah confirmed the reports. He said the information availed to him indicated that there are ten young girls who were held captive ready for undergoing FGM.

He said the police received information from Good Samaritans about the presence of FGM practices in the region where they managed to trace and locate the whereabouts of the children.

Commander Shillah said such acts are being held in secrecy at night. He called upon parents and those engaging in the malpractices to immediately stop since FGM is prohibited by the law.

Serengeti district medical officer, Dr Tanu Waryoba confirmed to have received several children who after being examined whether they had undergone FGM.

Dr Waryoba said that FGM poses serious health risks to the girls including contacting infectious diseases by sharing unsterilised surgical instruments. He added that victims might also die from excessive bleeding.

"The mutilation causes severe pain because it doesn't follow all the surgical procedures including anaesthesia", said the district medical officer.

"The mutilation causes severe pain because it doesn't follow all the surgical procedures including anaesthesia"

By Guardian Correspondent, Tunduru

THE government has appealed to Tanzanians and foreigners who cross the border from Mozambique to Tanzania via Tunduru in Ruvuma region should agree to be quarantined for 14 days before they are released.

The appeal was given by Ruvuma district commissioner Julius Mtatiro when speaking to residents who participated at the burial of the late Hadija Hassan a member of CCM. Mtatiro said the directives have been

All people arriving in Tanzania via Tunduru to be quarantined

in place since the beginning of the week after the government closed the border in efforts to control the spread of covid-19 infections.

Mtatiro said Tunduru district borders

with Mozambique in Wenje, Makande and Mbuyuni villages.

The Ruangwa district commissioner in Lindi region who also attended the funeral called on residents to abide by

the directives from their leaders and health experts in protecting themselves against covid-19 infections.

He said as of now the government is putting much efforts to fight the

disease, and if the people will not adhere to the directives the pandemic will spread fast and kill many people.

He said attendance of district leaders to the funeral was not unfortunate, but

was because the deceased, had good relations with the people of various cadres in Ruangwa district.

Earlier, in his condolence message from CCM Tunduru district party chairman Kite Mfilinge said the party received with great shock the news of the death of Kungu's mother and may God help you to get through this hard times.

Speaking on behalf of the deceased's family, Sheikh Adam Ausi, among other things hailed government leaders for their attendance at the funeral.

Chemical company admits fraudulent use of trademark

By Guardian Correspondent, Bagamoyo

BAGAMOYO-based chemical factory Axel Chemical Company has admitted packaging and selling products using a forged trade mark, different from the one in government books.

The owner of the company, Prashant Detha, confessed wrong-doing by telling the minister over the phone from India that the business malpractices raised would be rectified immediately.

"All (charges) will be rectified immediately," was heard telling the ministerial delegation over the phone. The party included Bagamoyo District Commissioner Zainabu Kawawa, NEMC Director General Samuel Gwamaka and other officials.

But, Mussa Zungu, Minister of State in the Vice-President's Office (Union and Environment) who made a surprise visit to the factory in Zinga area, ordered the factory closed until exhaustive investigations were made into all allegations. The company, which produces raw materials for making marketable colours and dyes, reportedly uses trade mark that is different from the one registered with the government.

Zungu said deliberate trade malpractices deny the government revenue and hold back the development process.

"The government is unable to collect revenue because of purposeful trade misconduct by some deceitful businessmen in our country. Let thorough investigations be made into all allegations, including that the National Environment Management Council (NEMC) delays investment processes."

But, Zungu said NEMC was doing

its best to ensure investment was done based on laws of the land, more so the Environmental Management Act 2004 and its Regulations, adding that investment must of necessity be friendly to environment.

The minister made the surprise visit following allegations that the factory was illegally established in a residential area -- a charge that was established to be correct. Other charges include loss of public revenues because of deceitful trade practices by the company, running the factory since 2014 without environment impact assessment certificate and without clearance by local authorities.

Kawawa said the district would cooperate with other authorities in making the investigations because, she said, the charges leveled before the company were grave and the district was unable to collect due levies.

Dr Gwamaka called on investors and businessmen to respect laws to avert embarrassment and be able to go about their work peacefully. "I appeal to all business community members to respect laws. Laws do not look at the position a person holds in society or the enormity of the property a person owns," Dr Gwamaka cautioned.



I appeal to all business community members to respect laws. Laws do not look at the position a person holds in society or the enormity of the property a person owns



Simanjoro district executive director Yefred Myenzi (R) joins Langai ward residents on Wednesday in clearing the site set aside for the construction of a hospital. Photo: Correspondent Gift Thadey

Dodoma warns against littering of market areas

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

DODOMA City Council says it will take steps against traders who cause the market area to be littered with packaging material for fruits.

The warning was issued yesterday by the City Markets Officer James Yuna when speaking to reporters on the issue of the packaging materials

for fruits, including banana leaves and other grass brought by traders from outside the city.

He said as of now the City will start fining all vehicle owners and other people who throw away such material into unsanctioned dump sites, adding that all litter should be taken to the official Chidaya Ntyuka dump site.

"The Council has already issued the prohibition order on such packaging material brought to the market that calls for the traders thereof to take away the material after they unload their cargo," he said.

He said some of the City's markets have been found to be dump sites due to traders not adhering to calls for

cleanliness. He mentioned such markets as the Bonanza fish and fruits market and the main Majengo market.

Dodoma City Council's Head of Environment and solid Waste Department Dickson Kimaro said the Council will take stern measures for those contravening the prohibition order.



Kiteto district executive director Tamim Kambona addresses staff from various government departments yesterday on the coronavirus disease. Photo: Correspondent Gift Thadey

Call: Protect children, women against Covid-19 pandemic

By Guardian Reporter

THE Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA) has warned on possibilities of increased gender-based violence against women and children during the pandemic outbreak.

In a statement that was signed by executive director, Rose Reuben the association commended the government's decision to close primary and secondary schools, colleges and higher learning institutions to prevent the spread of covid-19.

"Parents are responsible for protection of their children against covid-19, but should also to ensure their safety when at home. It is important to come up with strategies to protect women because they are the main care

takers at family level", she said.

According to her, children might be exposed to a number of violence including rape and early pregnancy during school breaks.

She added that global data from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) indicates that 70 per cent of all domestic works are done by women.

TAMWA called upon the government and policy makers to consider the health risks that children and women are likely to face during the outbreak of Coronavirus. She urged health and education stakeholders to educate children on the disease as well as how to report gender based violence cases during the pandemic outbreak.

"There should be plans to ensure

children continue learning during school closure and ensure availability of information on Covid-19 to them", she said adding authorities should make sure women health workers have all the essential gears to protect them from being infected with disease.

She said despite closure of schools to prevent the spread of covid-19, parents, caregivers and educators must find new ways to keep children learning.

Reuben insisted on parents control to children and make sure they stay at home throughout the day.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), at times, incidences of violence against children are committed when they are at home or on their way to and from school.

In a recent statement, UNICEF called for protection of the most vulnerable children from the impact of coronavirus whereas it stated the need to keep children healthy, reach vulnerable children with water, sanitation and hygiene, keep children learning, support families to cover their needs and care for their children.

It said the socio-economic impact of covid-19 will be felt hardest by the world's most vulnerable children.

According to the fund, protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse is crucial because communities are disrupted, children already at risk of violence, exploitation and abuse will find themselves even more vulnerable.

Stopping all that denial and embracing the Covid-19 war

By D. Kaiheneh Sengbeh

I looked at her lips moving up and down, as she spoke. Words were plentifully jumping out between them just like popcorn dancing in a hot pot. That's what she's been doing, not giving her friends time to explain the reality. Her mind was made up!

"Mr. Sengbeh, I don't believe this whole thing. This whole coronavirus thing here that kuku-jumuku business. You na inside you na know," Martu (not her real name), asserted. "No corona here. It is in China, its America and other countries, but our own da lie 'kolokolo'. The people just looking for money like the Ebola time, that's all," she insisted.

Matu, a middle age woman, was in a heated debate with three other persons in my community late Monday (April 6) evening while on my way home. They were fetching their evening water from one of the three hand-pumps in our community when I met them arguing.

Knowing that I might have some knowledge on the matter, one of them signaled me over. I provided some education to the level of my knowledge, including showing them statistical and video evidence from the internet including websites of the WHO and the National Public Health Institute of Liberia.

The other three in the argument convincingly understood the points I provided, but Martu contended and held on to her view as I walked away. "Da thing no true; no Coronavirus here, they just want suffer us."

The denial attitude by Martu is widespread in our communities and has the propensity to undermine not only the national but global fight against the coronavirus, and we all must exert the necessary efforts in our weakest way possible to minimize this risk factor. If I meet her again, I will talk to her.

Martu is just an "ordinary" person, but there are big people in society called influencers who are also with this same thought. They have followings and they need to wake up to speak to the matter. Their visible silence could equate to the kind of denial Martu. Such denials, especially by influencers in society can become crippling as they have huge following and fans who believe them so much.

For example, prosecutors in

Uganda recently charged prominent cleric, Augustine Yiga (in this case an influencer), over telling his Revival Christian Church in a televised comment that there is "no coronavirus in Uganda and Africa".

"Pastor Yiga ... was charged and remanded to prison for doing acts likely to cause the spread of COVID-19," Uganda police spokesman Patrick Onyango is quoted to have said. "Claiming that Covid-19 doesn't exist in Africa and Uganda undermines government efforts in fighting the pandemic, and exposes the public to great danger of laxity in observing the guidelines on its control and prevention," he added.

In the fight against this deadly and complicated coronavirus (as we speak scientist are still trying to understand it), denial is very dangerous. In the psychological sense, I've learnt that denial is a defense mechanism in which a person, faced with a painful fact, rejects the reality of that fact. They will insist that the fact is not true despite what may be overwhelming and convincing evidence. For me, I don't need any evidence from anyone to believe Coronavirus exists, based on what I see happening everyday around the world. Besides, as a Christian, I believe we are in the LAST DAYS prophesied in the Holy Bible.

Research tells me that there are three forms of denial.

SIMPLE DENIAL - when the painful fact is denied altogether.

MINIMIZATION DENIAL - is when the painful fact is admitted but its seriousness is downplayed.

TRANSFERENCE DENIAL - is when the painful fact is admitted, the seriousness also admitted, but one's moral responsibility in the situation involving the painful fact is downplayed.

The action by Martu could be described under the second category: **MINIMIZATION DENIAL** - Martu understands that indeed, there exists Coronavirus in the world, but not in her country, despite the number of cases which has now hit 14, plus three deaths.

When a person, like Martu, is in denial, they engage into acts or make comments that please them and their beliefs, thereby undercutting concentrated efforts and downplaying possible consequences of the issue-in this case, the virus.

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FRIDAY 10 APRIL 2020

**Taking A New Look
At The News
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Passion and patience are pivotal to business success

AFRICA has more than 200 million young people between the ages of 15 and 34, according to the Africa Development Bank (AfDB). Agriculture is a key economic driver in many countries on the continent, with the African Union having long ago identified the sector as a force for social and economic growth in its 2003 Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

Youth in Africa constituted 19 per cent of the global youth population in 2015, numbering 226 million. The United Nations defines youth as people aged 15 to 24 years. By 2030, it is predicted that the number of youths in Africa will have increased by 42 per cent.

Africa's population as a whole is very young, with 60 per cent of the entire continent aged below 25, making it the youngest continent in the world, in relation to its population makeup.

All of the world's top 10 youngest countries by median age are in Africa. The youth of Africa experience the globalisation of culture in many different forms, such as through fashion and music.

A further significant issue for Africa's youth population is the prevention, treatment and eradication of disease, with particular reference to HIV/AIDS, which remains a major cause of morbidity and mortality amongst African youths.

Passion and patience are pivotal to business success. We should therefore recognize the need to create opportunities to nurture agribusiness among Africa's growing ranks of unemployed youth.

But agriculture suffers from negative perceptions among the youth of being

labour intensive and offering little gain. Many youth are not patient, youth that go into agriculture have to be patient and they have to persevere serve to succeed. We have to change the perception of Africa's youth about agriculture to see it as an exciting and profitable business.

Agribusiness is lucrative but demands entrepreneurial flair and a never-say-die attitude, something that eludes young people. Most times the youth feel its old people that can go into agriculture and we ought to try to change that mindset. It is possible, the youth are innovative and can create something and change the way agriculture is seen.

Skills in agribusiness are critical for youth employment, especially for those in rural areas.

Research by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that youth are turning away from agriculture and moving into cities to take up low skilled labour, all the while aspiring to high-skilled jobs despite their low level of education.

Skills mismatch is a big issue and youth need to be trained and retrained in jobs along the agri-food value chain, beyond farming. With the increasing domestic and regional demand for diversified and processed food, there is a high opportunity to develop the agri-food business in Africa.

We have to improve policies targeting youth, especially in the agro-food value chain. Entrepreneurship is a false panacea to the youth employment problem. Youth need to be trained in various types of jobs along the agro-food value chain, from farming to processing, services and marketing to help them find salaried positions.

Time to act tough against swindlers

FOR almost the whole of last week big headlines the country's media and social networks were about the characteristic grim side in the establishment - how a handful of influential people are stealing citizen's money left, right and centre, depriving them of quality basic social services - education, health and water, and no one seems to care.

The big story was the Controller and Auditor General Report for 2018/19 Financial Year that was tabled in Parliament. As is customary - since times immemorial - CAG reports have been displays of what is outrageously amiss in the nation's official accounting system and for the government becoming deaf about it.

It would be accurate to say it is the greatest display of the rot that tells much about the country's difficult drive in poverty eradication as well as the rampant corruption in the officialdom.

Hence to merely say the report is a grim side in the establishment's nearly six decade history is perhaps an understatement - but its playing deaf on the shenanigans going on without relent borders the inconceivable.

The report details many cases of public funds pilferage through shoddy contracts, outright embezzlement and

theft by officials and sheer lethargy on the part of management.

There is also this: Incredible though, the government is also blamed for pushing up costs of development projects because of its delays in releasing budgeted funds thereof.

One sordid instance was given in the report in respect of TANROADS construction projects in regard to roads and airports whereby claims from contractors and consultant amounting to 1.03tr/- as at November last year of which 224.03b/- was interest charges - from the principal amount of 794.09b/-

For decades many calls were being made to have the annual reports used to hold accountable those found to have abused their powers and caused the government losses running into billions of shillings, with some calling for outright court action against the culprits.

The latest CAG Report is the fifth to come out during the current Phase V administration, but Tanzanians are yet to see the results of its early promise - that it would never condone graft and or business-as-usual, happy-go-lucky style of public resource management.

We are therefore reminding that something has to be done if merely to show that this administration is in reality different to its predecessors.

UN Secretary General António Guterres: "We must fight the coronavirus for all of humanity, with a focus on people, especially the most affected: women, older persons, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises, the informal sector and vulnerable groups."

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By Sadock Magai

THE world is in an economic lockdown - or is heading there - owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hardly any good news is coming out of any news channel, whether mainstream or social media.

Never before in our lifetime have we witnessed such a magnitude in closures of business and borders anywhere in the world. From developed economies to developing countries, business and borders have been - and are being - locked down owing to the spread of the pandemic. It is a global problem and, therefore, its effects should be measured - and addressed - globally.

The coverage of this pandemic by the global and local media clearly indicates the economic problems ahead not only for individuals but also for businesses at large. This calls for a reflection of the impact of this pandemic on the financial sector in Tanzania, given the global and local reality.

A summary of the financial sector in Tanzania shows a composition of 30 commercial banks, six community banks, five microfinance banks and two development finance banks, collectively referred to as lenders.

The primary function of these lenders is to acquire liabilities through deposits and assets by lending to businesses and individuals. When lending, lenders assume investment risk but expect returns by way of revenues through various charges, interest rates levied and repayment of the principal amounts.

Banking laws in Tanzania require that loans be adequately secured, although we have unsecured loan portfolios as well. Irrespective of the collateral taken by lenders to secure their loans, these repayments are expected to come from revenues generated from running businesses. Collateral realisation is the last resort.

It is because of their special place in the economy that lenders should actively engage their borrowers (customers) at a very early stage to protect their assets and the economy as a whole, this in an effort to mitigate any foreseeable defaults.

The financial sector is highly regulated, including by the Bank of Tanzania Act, the Banking and Financial Institutions Act and the Foreign Exchange Act as well as by regulations, directives and circulars made under the respective or relevant pieces of legislation.

It would be naïve to suggest that lenders are not aware of the risk posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as they are required to have in place management of risk assets policies as part of their modus operandi.

That would be in line with the banking laws, in particular the Bank and Financial Institutions (Management of Risk Assets) Regulations and the Risk Management Guidelines issued by the

COVID-19 pandemic: Time for lenders to be counted?



Sadock Magai

Bank of Tanzania in its capacity as the licensing, regulator and supervisor of these institutions.

For the Bank of Tanzania, in its capacity as the regulator of the financial sector, the primary concern is to make sure that these lenders operate in a financially sound manner.

That would mean that the lenders have adequate credit by way of proper capitalisation; and good investment policies meant, among other things, to identify, measure, monitor and manage the risk arising from their businesses.

The aim here would be to ensure that timely and adequate measures or actions are taken on problematic assets. By extension, that would be geared towards promoting and maintaining public confidence in the financial/banking sector.

In that loans are assets, they must be repaid or secured. As already argued, repayment is normally expected to come from business revenues. When there is disruption in business, the borrower's capacity to pay is impacted negatively.

That would disrupt the performance of the lender's assets, eventually forcing lenders to resort to the unpalatable action of collection by either managing the business to generate enough revenue to repay the loan - if the business is found to have been mismanaged - or by resorting to disposal of the security or collateral.

Loan agreements foresee challenges that may make a borrower fail to repay the loans and provide for default clauses.

Given this unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that commercial lenders be on the alert to manage these possible events of default

by borrowers in order to minimise provisioning for losses.

For example, it is high time lenders closely monitored the economic trends affecting their customers if they are to understand the extent of the financial difficulties their customers are currently facing. Under most loan agreements, borrowers are required to submit monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual reports to lenders.

The primary purpose of these reports is to inform lenders of the financial status of the borrowers, market conditions and other operational issues so that the lenders can make a reasonable assessment of the nature of the business. It is also a signal to the lenders on the need to assess the solvency or otherwise of the business.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a worldwide pause in business. There are unprecedented lockdowns of businesses both local and international. Borders have been closed; production has been suspended; travel has been grounded; and hotels and tourism sector are shut down.

The pandemic does not call for "legalese thinking" such as the possibility of invoking force majeure by borrowers (which has rarely been upheld by courts when it comes to defaults in banking business).

Nor would one find solace or consolation in the concept or doctrine of frustration of contract, which is not the ambit of this brief. Rather, what is needed is a practical and realistic approach to dealing with borrowers, the regulator, creditors and shareholders.

With the loss of business due to the COVID-19 pandemic, borrowers are at risk of defaulting on loan repayments.

Our humble and honest opinion is that lenders should attempt to take a pragmatic approach to the problem at hand by assisting their customers to survive the pandemic - if at all possible.

Considerations such as waivers of certain charges, interest rates (both current and penal) and restructuring options to give relief to borrowers should, as far as practicable, be considered.

Lenders should do the utmost to assess the financial capacity of their borrowers, given the revenues from the businesses and based on the financial capacity of the businesses, and agree on the amount that can be paid.

This calls for lenders to approach the matter in accordance with the Management of Risk Assets Regulations already cited and their own credit risk management policies.

During these trying times, it is important for lenders to engage with the regulator (the Bank of Tanzania), with a view to considering the possibility of suspending the statutory provisioning requirements and consultation with the Tanzania Revenue Authority through the regulator to waive penalties on the anticipated tax revenues from interest charged and other charges if waived.

Lenders also ought to "go slow" on the option of engaging the regulator on the financial stimulus package option. In this respect, it is important for lenders to engage the regulator in their capacity as an industry and not as individual lenders.

They would do so by bringing to the regulator's attention measures taken in other jurisdictions to ensure the survival of, for instance, the banking industry. Silence and non-action would be detrimental to the economy and - in our case - the banking business.

By actively engaging now with their respective customers and the regulator (the Bank of Tanzania), the banking industry in particular and businesses in general can mitigate the risk of heavy provisioning for losses.

In the particular case of the banking industry, time has surely come to act collectively, borrow a leaf from other jurisdictions and actively recommend solutions to the regulator.

That will mitigate the anticipated loss of business and build confidence in the industry, while also reassuring customers in that they will appreciate the fact that the industry or business is there for them.

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Remembering April 6 in the face of Covid-19

By Richlue O. Burphy

FOR months now, the world is being struck by this novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and like Liberians on April 6, 1996, the world didn't see it coming. For some countries that saw it coming, they overlooked the virus impact. Many of them trusted their healthcare system that are being hard hit even the most. Some had significant trust in their health infrastructure whilst others had their hopes in their health care service providers including their doctors and nurses.

And African countries are seeing cases of the Coronavirus too. With high poverty rate where many of the continent's citizens survive on less and a dollar daily, not many countries on the continent can boast of good healthcare system that can beat COVID-19 if there should be an outbreak on the continent.

Whilst developed countries are still ordering some of the equipment like ventilators and protective gears, I'm told here in my country Liberia, we have just three ventilators for a population of over 4 million people.

Globally, over 1.2 million people have been affected with the virus over 300,000 being in the United States alone. This is indeed a war! It's a war against an unseen enemy. Like the Ebola Virus Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea experienced in 2014, none can see the COVID-19 but it is attacking on a daily basis.

On April 6 in 1996, Liberians were listening to dreadful sound of automatic raffles, expulsions from tons of rocket propel grenades, and voices of militia groups, violently screaming at the top of their lungs. We could see the enemies!

It was a fateful Saturday morning and some weekend students were on their way to school, market women had left their homes for the market on a regular business day and commercial drivers had already started their workday and were all out in the traffic. Business owners were opening their businesses, and some had just gotten started with business activities - in anticipation of a normal routine day when hell

broke loose.

And 24 years down the line, it's not just Liberia, but the world is faced with a global enemy - the Coronavirus. Schools have been closed and parents are forced to teach their children at home. In more developed countries, schools are running online and digital learning programs to aid students to that they don't miss out on their education.

Many businesses are closed and Liberians are unable to fend for their daily bread. Street hawkers who sell on a daily basis to cater to the needs of their families are seriously challenged in caring for their homes amidst this new reality the virus is causing.

People are being urged to stay at home. But how do you stay in a home that has got no food, water and other basic things you need for your survival? Is it being insensitive to needs of the poor and those who can't afford? But what good will it do you even if you are out and about but you contract the virus?

So the social distancing order is very important. 6 feet apart! Public transportation system has been asked to carry two passengers in the back other than the regular four. Essential business providing food and health services have been ordered to take between five to ten persons in their facilities at a time.

Churches, mosques and other religious institutions have been asked to stop gathering their members. Entertainment and recreation centers have been ordered closed. Gathering of any kind are to be limited to maximum ten persons. And this includes weddings and funerals.

Frequent washing of hands is being projected as one of the most important measures to stay safe and free from the virus. Stay at home, wash your hands frequently, avoid touching your face and off course, if you feel sick with any of the symptoms of the virus, call the 4455 hotline of visit the hospital or clinic.

I remember always listening to the BBC during the April 6 war in Liberia. As a refugee, I wanted to know what was going on back home in Liberia. For sure, the famous voice from back home

on the radio was that of veteran Liberian journalists Jonathan Paye Layleh. I must admit here that his voice, to me, was not one of a pleasant one to listen to. I always laughed when I was a boy but one line I never forgot from his reportage was his closing signature. Mr. Paye Layleh never forgot to sign out that 'reporting for BBC Network Africa, this is Jonathan Paye Layleh; Monrovia, Liberia'. I always waited for that line and I would just recite it with him.

These are the moments when nearly every Liberian on the refugee camp would be glued to their radio in high earnest anticipation of what Paye Layleh had to say. The news was mostly not good. Many people would cry after listening to him. Many hearts would get broken after hearing him speak of the situation in the motherland. Yet and still, nobody wanted to miss the opportunity of listening to him.

24 years after, it's not the sounds of guns but the Coronavirus. It first started in China. It quickly spread to other countries and in no time, it has become a global challenge spreading all over the world in Africa; with Algeria reporting the index case on the African continent. Today, almost every country on the continent has reported some cases though many of them are at very low rates compared to countries in Europe and Asia. Liberia for example, as at April 5, 2020 had reported just about 13 cases.

But is it that Africa really have these very few cases or the continent is challenged with testing facilities and so do not know the actual extent of the virus presence on the continent? Or is it that there is lack of transparent information coming from health authorities on the continent?

Whatever the case, the presence of the virus is already affecting Africa and its economy and these effects are already being observed at the geopolitical level in many countries. Even with the low number of cases so far, the threat to the continent is serious. It started in Algeria, the Kenya, Egypt, South Africa and Morocco. Then it started affecting other countries including Liberia, and you will notice that



It's another April 6 and this time, it's not just Liberians that are facing difficult times but the world at large.

almost all the index cases in African countries are people connected with the outside world. They are either government officials, bureaucrats, business people, entertainers and sports.

And almost all African countries are unfavorable in many ways. From basic hygiene needs to health infrastructure, African countries are not the best or even among the best.

One other very important and could be an alarming factor is the amount of people living in slums and unfavorable conditions on the continent. If the virus spreads to these areas where these people in the slums and struggling for life, what do you think would happen? What would the government do? How would the international community respond?

April 6, 1996 is a day that has gone deep, deeper down in our history as part of our ugly past. It is a day that Liberians will never forget. We will tell it to our children and their children. We will continue to remind them of those dark days and prevail on their conscience never to attempt going back into those days. We should vehemently resist every temptation to go back where we came from.

And like Liberia, the world will forever remember this COVID-19 outbreak.

Never before has our way of life being affected at this unprecedented level. Never before has the world been shutdown to this extent. Never before has even the powerful look so powerless.

The damage this global pandemic will do to the African economy in the medium term and long term may be far more severe than its health impact in the short term.

Currently, it is negatively affecting the markets; commodity prices, the value of national currencies and interest rates. It is also affecting international trade which are the main factors triggering a global economic crisis.

The developed countries will try to overcome this crisis soon. Some are already pushing out stimulus packages to support their citizens and businesses that are affected by the outbreak. What are our African governments doing? What are we doing here in Liberia to help the economy and those that are being affected?

Looking at what is happening globally and in the developed countries, anyone can predict that it would be devastating and worse if there should be an outbreak here in Liberia. This is why we must all in our own little ways protect this motherland. We must all endeavor

to ensure that we stay safe here in Liberia. Stay home. Wash your hands, keep your distance from people. Stop attending large gatherings. And importantly, we must remain prayerful.

We must be prayerful! That and only that, will we know after we pass this challenge and we will say to ourselves and everyone else that it must have been God. Nobody else could have done this much for us. It must have been God. Nobody else could have brought us thus far.

It must have been God. Nobody else could have lifted our face in the comity of nations. It must have been God. Nobody else could have revive our shattered economy. It must have been God.

Nobody else could have restore our basic social systems. It must have been God. Nobody else could have ignited our dreams and hopes. It must have been God. Nobody else could have shone so much light on our days. It must have been God.

See what other countries are using to fight the outbreak. Do we have some? Do we have the number of beds? Do we have those kind of facilities - the ventilators, advanced hospitals, that number of qualified doctors? Are we anywhere near them? How

Riability of coronavirus-related deaths across nations

By Peter Twumasi

VARIED recordings of the corona virus, COVID-19, infection from continents and countries suggest fundamental differences in prevailing conditions and factors at locations to favour or hinder the infectivity of the virus in humans.

This write-up explores possible linkages existing between the pathology of COVID-19 and identified demographic factors in countries currently experiencing the effect of the deadly virus.

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the corona virus strain, SARS CoV-2, first recorded in Wuhan Province of China in December 2019 and now becoming a pandemic affecting over 170 countries.

The world has record varied effects in terms of infection spread and fatalities across nations. Like all flu viruses, COVID-19 seems to be behaving similar to flu or influenza viruses.

Some of the characteristics identified with COVID-19 virus and similar to influenza viruses include upper and inner respiratory effects, pneumonia inducing effect, high infectivity rates in colder environments, high prevalence among the elderly and people with underlying chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes and hypertension.

Although fatalities have been recorded among all races, age groups, and under different climatic conditions, COVID-19 effect is greatest among people aged 60 years and above, people in colder countries with average temperatures below 20 degree Celsius, and among younger people with one or more of the underlying diseases mentioned above.

Effect of COVID-19 on elderly

Generally, the aging human body tends to have reduced immunity to fight diseases due to lowering efficiency of the cells' metabolic functions required for growth, maintenance of biochemical or life processes, and repair of damaged tissues caused by internal or external factors.

The aging population is thus confronted with many age related diseases such as hypertension, pulmonary or lung diseases, heart or cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, and cancer.

These diseases, although can be found in younger people, their prevalence is lower compared with the elderly. Influenza diseases which tend to damage respiratory system of an individual who is infected is severe in the elderly who are likely to have at least one of the underlying diseases.

Older people especially those with chronic pulmonary or lung disease experience severe flu attacks if not properly managed.

The younger people, due to their efficient immune systems to fight diseases and also rarely suffering from any of the underlying diseases experience mild to moderate symptoms when infected with flu or related infectious microorganisms.

Data available from countries affected by the COVID-19 points to overwhelming effect of the disease among the elderly from 60 years and above.

It is also clear from the limited data available that countries with relatively high percentage of the elderly population such as Italy with almost 30% (about a third) of its population above 60 years, as compared to Ghana's 6.7%,



have highest COVID-19 infections and fatalities.

There are also associated risks in such countries where the frail and delicate older persons are kept in nursing homes or support facilities which present conditions for maximum spread of any contagious diseases like COVID-19.

Many European countries including France, UK, Spain, Netherlands, etc and to a lesser extent America and Canada have high aging population compared to nations in the developing world such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia which rather have high youthful population and relatively small adult population depicted by a narrow ended pyramid.

This increased population of the el-

derly in the advanced nations is attributed to 1950-1960 high fertility rate called baby boom after the Second World War in nations mostly affected by the war.

Another factor promoting this high aging population is the drastic reduction in fertility rate in these nations far below the replacement fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman.

Thirdly, the improved health systems in these advanced nations have succeeded in extending life expectancy of the people. In Europe today, life expectancy is 84 and 89 years for male and female respectively.

Another factor, though minor, is the internal migration of Europeans to warmer countries in southern Europe

closer to the Mediterranean Sea by people of Scandinavian descent as they age.

This is explained by the elderly dislike for the harsh winters in the northern Europe, and thought to claim lives of the elderly especially through winter flu infections prevalent in such nations.

The weak and fragile elderly people aged 80 years and above have been found to be disproportionately affected by the corona viruses and therefore such class within the population may require extensive care. This must aim at insulating them from getting infected and at the same time providing better supporting systems for those affected.

The youth who tend to have mild symptoms and rather becoming carri-

ers of the virus must be more responsible in their lives to safeguard our older population.

COVID-19 and cold weather

Like common flu, COVID-19, currently, is ravaging in colder countries with outside temperatures below 20 C. Countries such as Italy, Iran, China, Spain and affected States in the USA are either experiencing winter or early spring with temperatures lower than 20 C. Influenza viral infection is enhanced by winter where the cold temperature preserves the viral particles from melting and thus staying longer in the environment.

The cold environment is also drier due to lower humidity to facilitate particle dispersion among the population. Winter is also a time when people stay indoors more often and thus enabling the virus to spread from person to person within the more sociable communities.

The UV component of the sun which kills microbes including viruses is less in the winter. Due to reduced sunshine during winter, vitamin D which is synthesized by the body in the sun, and known to suppress viral infection, becomes unavailable unless diet is supplemented with the vitamin.

Hot climates are thus less affected by winter-inducing flu viruses especially if it is not during rainy seasons of June to October or cold periods of December and January due to the hammattan and cold winds from Europe or Sahara desert.

However, this does not mean that the virus cannot spread at all in hot climates. It can spread in hot environment but at a lower rate and also at a reduced fatality all things being equal.

Coronavirus disease pandemic has only just begun

By Robert Roy Britt

WHILE the worst COVID-19 outbreaks in the United States so far have occurred in a relative handful of large cities and other locales, experts say the steep rise in cases - the curve - will come to communities large and small across the country in coming days and weeks.

Already some rural counties are seeing outbreaks. For just about everyone else, it's a matter of time. And this may be just the first wave of a pandemic that could return in multiple seasons, all depending on whether it can be contained by physical distancing, a potential vaccine or other preventive measures.

"This is an extraordinarily transmissible virus, and I think it's more transmissible than we recognize," says Michael Mina, assistant professor of epidemiology at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Mina has "little faith" in the accuracy or extent of COVID-19 testing so far. Between people who are sick but have not been tested and the unknown number of people carrying the disease without any symptoms, and transmitting it, Mina and other epidemiologists says it's completely unknown how many people are actually infected.

"We really don't know if we've been ten times off or a hundred times off in terms of the cases," Mina says, adding: "Personally, I lean more to 50 or a hundred times off."

That means that instead of more than a million cases in the world right now, there could be anywhere from 10 million to perhaps 100 million. That also means the extreme preventive measures like stay-at-home orders could last months, not weeks, Jeremy Konyndyk, a senior policy fellow at the Centre for Global Development, tells the health news site STAT.

Few doubt that the effects will be grave, no matter what the actual number of cases is right now.

Total projected US deaths from COVID-19 are projected to climb steeply in coming weeks and reach 93,531 by August 4, according to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), an independent global health research centre at the University of Washington.

The estimate, which includes a wide range of uncertainty, was cited earlier this week by Dr Deborah Birx, the White House coronavirus response coordinator.

"There will be a lot of death," President Trump has just declared

'It's all coming soon'

"The spread and scope of COVID-19 is just immense, and that's because the disease has been spreading unchecked, and still is," says Mark Cameron, PhD, an immunologist and medical researcher in the School of Medicine at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio.

During the 2003 SARS epidemic, which was also caused by a coronavirus, Cameron worked at Toronto General Hospital, the only major city that experienced an outbreak outside China. That disease and this one yielded similar data on many measures except one: the ratio of severe to mild cases.

"People who got SARS in 2003 got very sick very fast, so it was easy to identify them, and isolate and treat them," Cameron says. Conversely, a far lower percentage of people had mild or no symptoms with SARS, so it did not spread as rapidly as COVID-19.

Cameron says many of the same extreme preventive measures were taken in Toronto as are being taken now in states across the US, and the 2003 epidemic was contained and the virus apparently eliminated from the human population.

"This virus is very smart, and it spreads very easily," he says of COVID-19, adding: "This is unprecedented. This is a 100-year pandemic."

The first US case of COVID-19 was reported on January 21, 2020. New York's unfolding nightmare illustrates how population density fosters more rapid spread of a disease, Cameron and other experts say.

But Cameron says every city and state that has yet to see severe outbreaks of COVID-19 will get its turn, adding that the curves will be similar even if the total numbers of cases and deaths are lower.

"Every state will experience its own curve and its own peak," he warns.

Mina agrees, adding another twist that has yet to play out: It's known that



people with underlying health conditions are at greater risk for severe symptoms and death from the coronavirus.

So areas with a high proportion of people with heart disease and diabetes may experience more severe death ratios than what's been seen so far.

Mina cited Memphis, New Orleans and Atlanta as three examples, noting: "These are places that I think have the potential to be hit very hard. It's all coming soon."

Making matters potentially worse, unlike New York and other major cities that have large, highly capable hospitals, many rural communities have none. St. John the Baptist Parish in Louisiana, near Baton Rouge, has the highest per capita coronavirus mortality rate in the US right now, and exactly zero hospitals, according to Politico.

How the curves ultimately play out depends largely on the extent to which preventive measures are put in place, kept in place, and followed by the public.

"Our estimated trajectory of COVID-19 deaths assumes continued and uninterrupted vigilance by the general public, hospital and health workers, and government agencies," says Dr Christopher Murray, director of the IHME - the organisation publishing the death projections cited by the White House.

"The trajectory of the pandemic will change - and dramatically for the worse - if people ease up on social distancing or relax with other precautions. We encourage everyone to adhere to those precautions to help save lives."

Time to prepare

Meanwhile, cities, counties and states fortunate enough to have watched the havoc unfold elsewhere have had an opportunity to take strong spread-prevention actions while simultaneously making preparations akin to a war footing while case counts are relatively low.

One example of a state in waiting is Ohio, where Governor Mike DeWine issued a strong stay-at-home order for March 23, declaring: "We haven't faced an enemy like we are facing today in 102 years - we are at war. In the time of war."

That strict order and other physical distancing measures help explain why Ohio has about one-fourth as many cases as neighbouring Michigan, says Dr Robert Salata, a professor of medicine in epidemiology and international health at Ohio's Case Western Reserve University.

Salata leads the medical response in an 18-institution united command centre, similar to what's used by the military in a time of war. "And this is a time of war," he says in a phone interview. He says cases are starting to spike, and Ohio is in week 1 of a 4-week ramp-up to an expected peak.

"It's not totally chaotic or a real crisis at this point," Salata says, adding: "But it can become so, and we're preparing for that inevitability."

He and colleagues are taking a variety of measures, among them eliminating elective surgeries and cutting back on even semi-urgent care to reduce occupancy in the system to just 60 per cent, much lower than normal; as well as working with a local biodefence company to figure out how to re-sterilise and re-use protective gear.

The other measures are figuring out when infected hospital workers can return to work, by testing ten days after symptom onset, again 24 hours later, and letting them return if they test negative but still have a cough (but of course wear a mask), as well as using this low-volume "window of opportunity" to study the COVID-19 cases they do have, including through clinical drug trials.

"Ohio has had more time to watch what's been happening in Seattle, and the Bay area and New York, to be proactive instead of reactive," Cameron says, adding: "But at the same time what I'm seeing in the case data, in general every city or county is experiencing the same type of curve."

He elaborates further: "So Ohio might have been a little lucky so far, and population density and measures that were taken proactively will help us. But we can't be complacent in terms of this spread and the case rates of infection seen everywhere else."

72% of all counties probably have an outbreak

Given the underreporting of total cases, disease modellers at the University of Texas at Austin used the data available and projected the likelihood that any given county in the US already has an outbreak, meaning sustained human transmission, whether they realise it or not.

"If a county has detected only one case of COVID-19, there is a 51% chance that there is already a growing outbreak under way," the researchers state, adding: "COVID-19 is likely spreading in 72% of all counties in the US, containing 94% of the national population."

"Proactive social distancing, even before two cases are confirmed, is prudent," conclude the researchers, Emily Javan, Dr Spencer Fox and Dr Lauren Ancel Mey-

ers.

"Although not entirely surprising, these risk estimates provide evidence for policymakers who are still weighing if, when, and how aggressively to enact social distancing measures," they note.

The map - a snapshot of the moment as of April 3 - is probably optimistic, the researchers figure, writing: "It is likely that our entire map will be bright red within a week or two, given that COVID-19 spreads very quickly and often silently."

Second wave... and then more

Meanwhile, worst-case scenarios are not inevitable, says Dr Harvey Fineberg, president of philanthropic organisation Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and former president of the US National Academy of Medicine.

"That choice begins with a forceful, focused campaign to eradicate Covid-19 in the United States. The aim is not to flatten the curve; the goal is to crush the curve," Fineberg writes in an April 1 editorial in the New England Journal of Medicine.

"China did this in Wuhan. We can do it across this country in ten weeks," he says.

He says that would require quickly taking far more aggressive than the current US response, including six big steps. These include establishing a unified command at the federal level and for each state, addressing the shortage of protective gear for healthcare workers, and making available millions of diagnostic tests.

While what is done now is vital, decisions in coming weeks and months could prove similarly weighty.

"We know from the SARS 2003 outbreak in Toronto that there is a well-documented wave of second infections caused by letting some

of the close-contact and personal protective equipment (PPE) precautions be relaxed, because they felt they were on the other side of the curve," Cameron says.

He adds: "It turns out they weren't, and a new curve, a new outbreak, a second wave, occurred in Toronto. We need to avoid that."

The New York Times meanwhile reports that already some Asian countries that had flattened their curves are seeing resurgences in new cases. They include Singapore and Taiwan.

Next season and beyond

Further ahead looms another great unknown: whether COVID-19 will subside with warmer temperatures, as is typical of some coronaviruses and influenza. Don't bank on it.

"Unlike seasonal influenza or common colds where the transmission chains get easier to break in the warm, humid, summer months, especially amongst communities with herd immunity, we cannot count on COVID-19 relenting simply because of a change of season," Cameron says.

He adds: "COVID-19 has already bulldozed through multiple different climates in the northern and southern hemispheres quite easily."

Among South American countries as of this April 4, Brazil has 7,910 diagnosed cases and 299 deaths, Chile has 3,737 cases and 22 deaths, and Ecuador has 3,163 cases and 120 deaths.

Even if the pandemic does lessen or go away this summer in the US, that won't mean that it's gone.

"It is more likely that COVID-19 will spread relatively unchecked by seasons until the surges and curves have run their course...in populations

worldwide, then return seasonally, hopefully put in some check by those amongst us with pre-existing immunity by having had it already," Cameron says.

A vaccine would help too, of course, but that's thought to be months away, notes Cameron.

Breaking the chain of transmission

Cameron cites the 2009 H1N1 "Swine Flu" pandemic as an example of how viruses can flout the seasonality rule, noting: "It took firm hold in the spring and summer months of 2009 in Mexico and the US, spreading virtually worldwide from there until August 2010."

The influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 cycled through multiple seasons across two years, ultimately killing some 675,000 people in the US and more than 50 million around the globe.

In Boston, a second wave hit during the first season when World War I ended, and large crowds gathered to celebrate.

If there is a notable dip in COVID-19 cases this summer, all it takes to re-emerge in the autumn is for infected people, whether from south of the equator or from a fresh pocket in the Northern Hemisphere, to travel.

"There has to be a chain of human transmission to support the seasonality of a particular illness," Cameron explains, adding: "So breaking that transmission is absolutely critical. If it finds enough of a foothold in enough places that we don't detect, it will re-emerge in the autumn."

A Medium Daily Digest dispatch. Robert Roy Britt is an explainer of things, former editor-in-chief of Live Science and Space.com and author of the science thriller "5 Days to Landfall".



AfDB unveils \$10bn response facility to curb COVID-19

By Special Correspondent, Abidjan

THE African Development Bank Group on Wednesday announced the creation of the COVID-19 Response Facility to assist regional member countries in fighting the pandemic.

The facility is the latest measure

taken by the Bank to respond to the pandemic and will be the institution's primary channel for its efforts to address the crisis. It provides up to \$10 billion to governments and the private sector.

Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank Group, said the package took into account the fiscal challenges that

many African countries are facing.

"Africa is facing enormous fiscal challenges to respond to the coronavirus pandemic effectively. The African Development Bank Group is deploying its full weight of emergency response support to assist Africa at this critical time. We must protect lives. This Facility

will help African countries to fast-track their efforts to contain the rapid spread of COVID-19," Adesina said, commending the board of directors for its unwavering support.

The facility entails \$5.5 billion for sovereign operations in African Development Bank countries, and \$3.1 billion for sovereign and

regional operations for countries under the African Development Fund, the bank group's concessional arm that caters to fragile countries. An additional \$1.35 billion will be devoted to private sector operations.

Commenting on the facility, acting senior Vice-President Swazi Tshabalala said: "The setting up

of the facility required a collective effort and courage by all our staff, board of directors and our shareholders."

Two weeks ago, the Bank launched a record-breaking \$3 billion Fight covid-19 social bond, the world's largest US dollar-denominated social bond ever on the international capital market.

Last week, the board of directors also approved a \$2 million grant for the World Health Organisation for its efforts on the continent.

"These are extraordinary times, and we must take bold and decisive actions to save and protect millions of lives in Africa. We are in a race to save lives. No country will be left behind," Adesina said.

Potatoes play decisive role in promoting food security and health for East African countries

NAIROBI

POTATO is a key food and cash crop contributing both to food security and the local economy in Kenya, Malawi and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. However, crops in the region are frequently affected by low yields and plant pests and diseases, with a significant impact on communities' livelihoods.

Scientists of the James Hutton Institute, in collaboration with the University of St Andrews in Scotland are supporting a research project aimed at delivering food security and health for East Africa, which has received a GCRF Global Research Translation Award from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) valued at over £1.1m, over 18 months from October 2019.

The Quikgro initiative, which aims to develop potato varieties suited to the agronomic and environmental conditions of the region, is a key component of the project and will hopefully result in economic and social benefits for smallholder farmers.

Dr. Mark Taylor, a research leader

within the James Hutton Institute's Cell and Molecular Sciences department:

"Within this project, we aim to identify climate-resilient and disease-resistant potato varieties tailored to potato production systems in Kenya and Malawi. The work will translate our research in potato genetics and molecular physiology - already we have demonstrated that some potato types developed by geneticists at the Hutton perform well in the warm and dry environments of East Africa."

"The best performing potato types will be assessed in more detail in field trials in which a range of quality, agronomic and disease traits will be closely monitored. Importantly, socio-economic and cultural preferences will be determined for potato markets in the East African countries.

The most successful potato types will be submitted for National Performance trials in Kenya and Malawi with a view to future release in these markets."

Researchers hope the new varieties



will produce tubers that bulk quickly in warmer environments, mitigating the effect of short rainy seasons and droughts, with enhanced disease resistance and a better rotation fit with other crops such as rice and wheat.

The work builds on collaboration between the University of St Andrews and the James Hutton Institute with partners in Kenya including Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), the Department of Agri-

cultural Research Services (DARS) of the Malawi Government, the International Potato Center (CIP Nairobi and Blantyre) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture.

Climate change could abruptly alter biodiversity

By Kim Cloete

A STUDY by a trio of researchers and published in Nature has revealed that the disruption of biodiversity from climate change on land and in the oceans will be abrupt and could be much sooner than we had expected.

The paper outlines that in many places around the world, a high percentage of species will be exposed to potentially dangerous climate conditions at about the same time, potentially leading to sudden and catastrophic die-offs of biodiversity. Under a scenario of high greenhouse gas emissions, such abrupt exposure events are forecast to begin before 2030 in tropical oceans and spread to tropical forests and some temperate regions by the 2050s.

"The main finding that surprised us was how much biodiversity is at risk in the first half of this century," said Dr Christopher Trisos, senior researcher at the African Climate & Development Initiative at the University of Cape Town (UCT). "The risk doesn't accumulate gradually, but can go from low risk to high risk within a decade. This abruptness of risk was really a shocking finding for us.

"It's not a slippery slope, but a series of cliff edges, hitting different places at different times."

Trisos and his co-authors from the University of Connecticut and University College London (UCL) used annual projections of temperature and precipitation - rain, snow, sleet, etc. - across the ranges of more than 30 000 marine and terrestrial species from 1850 to 2100. They did this to estimate the timing of their exposure to potentially dangerous climate conditions.

The research shows that if we can keep global warming to below 2 °C, we can expect

less than 2% of ecological communities globally to experience abrupt exposure. But the risk accelerates with the magnitude of warming, and it is similar for species in protected and unprotected areas.

"Basically, the message is that the lower the global average temperature, the fewer species are exposed and the lower the risk of an abrupt biodiversity collapse in any given place," said Trisos.

Entire ecosystems under threat

Trisos said the research showed that entire ecosystems - and not just individual species - could be under threat, putting people's livelihoods at risk.

He said many forecasts of risk to biodiversity from climate change have focused on the end of the 21st century. "What's really novel about this study is that it has looked at this increase in exposure to dangerous climate change throughout the 21st century and not just a snapshot at the end."

The team looked at almost all the animal biodiversity at a site: amphibians, mammals, birds and reptiles on land, and corals, seagrass, fish and marine mammals at sea.

Trisos explained that first they assessed information about the geographic ranges of the species. For this, they benefitted from over a century of biodiversity inventory work, in which thousands of researchers and citizen scientists have recorded where species occur over the decades.

They then added information from climate simulations from 1850 to 2005 before looking at projections from 2005 to the end of the century.

"The next step was to say: What is the warmest temperature within a species' geographic range that we have observed



The new research shows that entire ecosystems - and not just individual species - could be at risk of abrupt ecological exposure, threatening people's livelihoods. Recent events like the bleaching of corals on the great barrier reef suggest this is happening already.

in the historical climate? When you go from inside the historically experienced climate range to warmer than has ever been recorded, that's potentially dangerous.

"It's not a slippery slope, but a series of cliff edges, hitting different places at different times."

"When that happens, at best, we have a massive increase in uncertainty about whether species can survive, and at worst, we have local extinction. It could be a threshold for catastrophic local extinction and that's really scary," Trisos said.

"We have evidence from other studies that it's a credible risk,

and we've already seen it in places like the Barrier Reef where coral has been dying off."

Threat to livelihoods in Africa

Within Africa, the research reveals that extreme biodiversity loss could be seen earliest in the Sahel region, the Congolese rainforests and the tropical Indian and Atlantic oceans potentially as early as the 2040s in an extreme warming scenario.

"So many people on the coasts of Africa depend on ecosystems for vital nutrition. They fish on coral reefs. They depend on eco-tourism. We rely on healthy

forests for water filtration," said Trisos.

"If you have a sudden collapse of an ecosystem, in a decade you could lose most or all of your services. Your income is at risk. Your food security is at risk. Your mental and spiritual well-being could be at risk if those places are important for you culturally."

He said reducing emissions could buy valuable time.

"We show that reducing emissions to a low-emissions pathway can avoid this transition to dangerous climates for many thousands of species."

Wake-up call for policymakers

Trisos hopes that the research will be a serious wake-up call for policymakers and other key players. "I'm hoping that showing how terrifyingly widespread and close in time this could be for biodiversity globally will lead us towards some tipping points in our response to divest from fossil fuel and transition to renewable energy."

"Generally, people think it's going to be bad in 2100, but this study showed it could be bad as soon as 2040."

"Keeping global warming below 2 °C effectively 'flattens the

curve' of how this risk to biodiversity will accumulate over the century," said co-author Dr Alex Pigot from UCL, "providing more time for species and ecosystems to adapt to the changing climate."

Trisos said some species may be able to adapt, but for others, it could lead to a catastrophic extinction of local biodiversity.

"If we continue on our high emissions pathway, then absolutely, abrupt collapses might happen much earlier than we thought," Trisos concluded. "Generally, people think it's going to be bad in 2100, but this study showed it could be bad as soon as 2040."

Women shoulder most of the extra work because of Covid-19

By Rachel Thomas

In the spirit of solidarity this pandemic demands of us, we need to find ways to give women a break

We need to talk about the extra work women are shouldering because of COVID-19.

Millions of Americans are adjusting to our new norm. We're turning our homes into schoolhouses. We're stockpiling supplies. We're trying to make sure our kids feel safe and supported.

If human behavior tells us anything, it's that Mom is handling most of this work.

That was the case pre-pandemic. In the 2019 Women in the Workplace report, 40 percent of women said they do all or most of the childcare and housework for their families. Just 12 percent of men said the same. This disparity holds true globally. According to a survey OECD conducted in 20 countries, women do an average of 173 minutes of housework each day, compared to just 71 minutes for men. Meanwhile, one in eight women worldwide are single mothers. Everything's on their shoulders.

That's how the table was set before the COVID-19 pandemic, when it was business as usual. Now the burdens on women are even heavier. According to new research by LeanIn.Org and SurveyMonkey, 77% of mothers have taken on more household work since the pandemic started. And that doesn't count all the emotional labor women tend to do - like checking in on older relatives.

The result is a non-stop, high-stakes juggling act. We're carefully standing apart from other shoppers at the grocery store while fielding calls from our boss, then rushing home to disinfect surfaces and make sure our kids aren't bored out of their minds. As one woman I know put it, "I was already working harder than I thought was possible. Now I'm supposed to be a high-performing employee, a reassuring mom during a global crisis - and my kid's teacher too!"

This is nothing compared to what healthcare workers and other people on the frontlines are going through - many of whom have



kids at home. And it's nothing compared to people who have to work sick because they don't have another option, or the millions of Americans who have lost their jobs or are about to.

Still, it's a lot. If COVID-19 takes months to get under control, women won't be able to keep this up. In the spirit of solidarity this pandemic demands of us, we need to find ways to give women a break.

Employers, please internalize that most women are not just working a double shift, but a double double shift right now. Even in normal times, America's work culture can be over the top. In these abnormal times, we need to switch from "get it done" to "do what you can." Consider dropping hard deadlines - projects can keep moving forward without them. Take the time to learn what the people on your teams are dealing with. Are they taking care of kids or parents full time? Do they have the ability to work uninterrupted at home? Find out - then do what you

can to work with their specific situation.

This is the time for as much compassion and grace as possible. Those aren't words we often use to describe employers, and this is an opportunity to change that.

And men, be clear-eyed about how many hours you and your partner spend on everything that goes into running your home right now. Lots of you are stepping up to do more household labor and childcare. Still, cognitive biases will persist. If you go from doing 20 percent of the housework to doing 30 percent, you may feel like you're doing a ton - when you're still doing less than half.

This emergency is reshaping our

lives in ways we don't fully understand. If we're not careful, we will burden women with more than they can possibly do. That will leave a whole lot of women burnt out when this pandemic is finally controlled. But if we rise to the occasion, we may change our workplaces and households for the better - and for good.

Meanwhile, Mauricio Angelo reports that as the new coronavirus reaches into Brazil's indigenous communities for the first time, one village trying to protect itself in the Amazon rainforest has achieved a rare victory: getting illegal gold miners to agree to leave, indefinitely.

Kayapo leaders from Turedjam village negotiated with more than 30 prospectors, who all agreed to stop operations and remove their equipment over the course of last week, with no solid date on when - or if - they will return.

The move could help slow the country's dizzying deforestation rate if other indigenous groups try to follow suit, environmentalists say.

For the approximately 400 indigenous people living in

Turedjam, in Brazil's northern state of Para, the decision was a matter of life and death.

"We no longer want the prospectors to circulate through the villages. They agreed to leave," Takatkyx Kayapo, one of the community leaders who negotiated with the miners, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Brazil has more than 11,000 reported novel coronavirus cases and more than 400 deaths. The first case among indigenous communities was confirmed on April 1.

Health experts warn that the spreading virus could be lethal for Brazil's estimated 900,000 indigenous people, who have been decimated for centuries by diseases brought by Europeans,

It remains urgent to eliminate racism amid Covid-19 pandemic

A CIVILIZED society must have its bottom line, and that's why there's no time to delay uprooting racism from the earth.

In the global fight against the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), each and every one of us should take on our responsibilities as the exacerbating pandemic has already put human civilization to the test.

With the COVID-19 sweeping across the globe, mankind has come to a critical historical moment when solidarity is the only key to the victory over the virus.

While it's clear to all that concerted efforts are the premise of the victory, some people are still acting in total disregard of the future and common interests of mankind, allowing their deep-rooted racism to repeatedly inject negative energy to the global anti-pandemic efforts.

Emmanuel Lechypre, a journalist of French BFM TV made discriminatory remarks when broadcasting a mourning activity over the COVID-19 victims in Wuhan on April 4. The journalist later received wide condemnation from netizens who said the remarks were racist, not "inappropriate" - a word Lechypre used to excuse himself.

Although Lechypre and BFM TV have both made public apolo-

gies, the damage still exists.

The ridiculous theories raised in Western countries since the outbreak of the COVID-19 revealed the conventional thinking powered by racism.

Attempting to label the virus and the pandemic in a racist manner, they called the coronavirus a thing "only for the yellow race", and claimed that the novel coronavirus only attacks the immune system of Asians.

Such insensitive comments, while fully exposing the pride, prejudice, ignorance, and conceit of them, have instigated racist acts and xenophobia, and become public hazards of the world.

Opposing geographical, national, and racist labels for virus is a consensus among the mainstream international community as well as something that the world should always abide by.

It has been reiterated by the World Health Organization (WHO) that viruses know no borders, and they don't care about people's ethnicity, skin color or bank account.

The greatest enemy is not the virus itself but the stigma "that turns us against each other," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said recently at the 56th Munich Security Conference (MSC).



WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

In addition, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has on many occasions called on efforts to avoid discrimination, violation of human rights and stigma on innocent people just because of their ethnicity.

However, some Western politicians and media turned a deaf ear to these appeals and trampled on the bottom line of civilization by stirring up racial conflicts time after time.

The international community must stay vigilant against, severely condemn, and firmly resist such extremely irresponsible and immoral deeds at all times.

As history lessons have shown, racist sentiments and xenophobia triggered by major infectious diseases cannot solve problems but would create bigger challenges.

Racist prejudices would only cause barriers and harm, and racist remarks would only create tension and conflicts. Previous distress shall never be repeated.

The international community must be aware that as the pandemic spreads around the world, wanton stigmatization and well-planned smear out of ulterior motives have led to a rise in bullying, discrimination, and violence against the Chinese people and even all Asians.

Such backtracking is extremely dangerous and shall never be tolerated.

In the face of the epidemic that threatens all, far-sighted personages from around the world have frequently called for solidarity and opposed discriminatory and separatist deeds, expressing insistence on goodwill and justice.

world needs joint efforts to fight the disease.

It's irresponsible to adopt calculated alternative names for the COVID-19, pointed out E. Tendayi Achiume, UN special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

"Political rhetoric and policy that stokes fear and diminishes the equality of all people is counterproductive," Achiume said in a media statement last month.

Alan Macfarlane, emeritus professor of Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, said that as a history scholar and anthropologist, he firmly believes that one of the best ways to get in-depth knowledge about a society and its civilization is to see its attitude towards difficulties. What he said is thought-provoking.

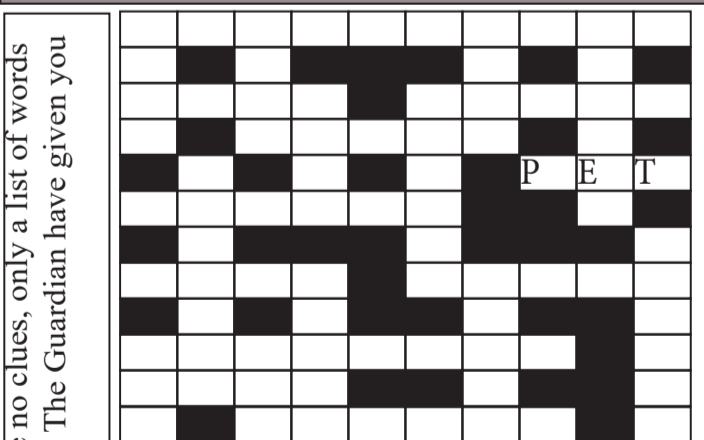
"Major infectious disease is the enemy of all," said Chinese President Xi Jinping on March 26 at the Extraordinary G20 Leaders' Summit via video link in Beijing, noting that "This is a virus that respects no borders. The outbreak we are battling is our common enemy."

"At such a moment, it is imperative for the international community to strengthen confidence, act with unity and work together in a collective response. We must comprehensively step up international cooperation and foster greater synergy so that humanity as one could win the battle against such a major infectious disease," Xi said.

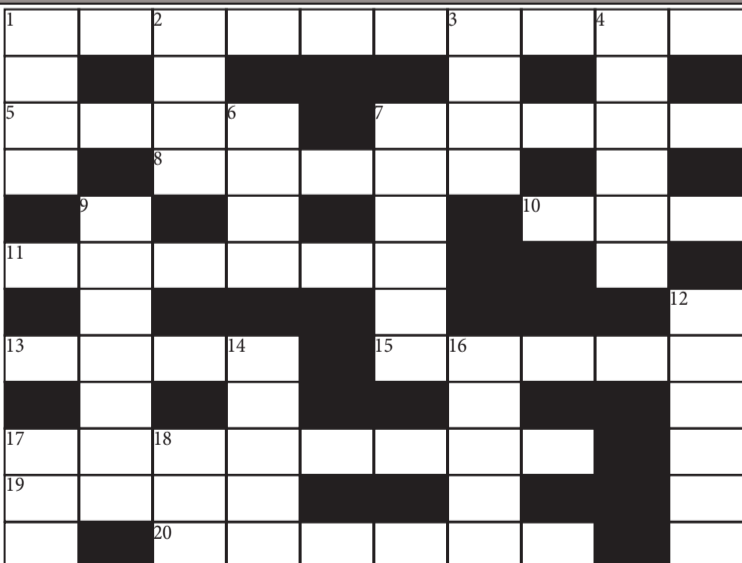
The remarks of Xi at the summit have won wide support and facilitated international consensus on making joint efforts to combat the epidemic.

It must be totally understood that in this global battle against COVID-19, no one can truly stay immune from the crisis and no deed that challenges universally-acknowledged truth shall be allowed.

THE GUARDIAN SIMPLE WORD FIT // THE GUARDIAN CROSSWORD --00 84 00--



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- 4 LETTERS: FLOW, OVER, EVEN, REAL, OVER, ROME, MOOS, POUR
- 5 LETTERS: LARGE, NOVEL, OMBRE, SPORT, METER
- 6 LETTERS: EAGLES, LEAN TO, MTWARA, MODERN, REJECT
- 7 LETTERS: MOROCCO
- 8 LETTERS: ACCOUNTS
- 10 LETTERS: FREE MARKET



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| <p>CLUES: Across</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 fail to impress 5 a memorandum 7 accumulate over time 8 a corner 10 heaven 11 known about by many people 13 the refuse of grapes that have been pressed for winemaking 15 out of the way 17 Kuala Lumpur is her capital city 19 one as a quantity 20 a small stone made smooth and round by the action of water | <p>Down:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Muslims bound together 2 a legislative body in the ruling assembly of Russia 3 a house 4 Zambia's capital 6 on to 7 Largest state in U.S.A 9 vehicle equipped for living in 12 the holding of an office 14 a slatted wooden case used for transporting goods 16 an accomplice of a hawk 17 Mother 18 labium |
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WORD-FIT

CROSSWORD

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KILIMANJARO MARATHON GLOBAL FOLLOWING SUFFOCATES HOTELS, RESTAURANTS IN MOSHI

By Property Watch Reporter

ONE of the events that have proven to attract a lot of tourists in Tanzania is the Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Marathon which brings together people from more than 58 countries for an athletic event that has been in existence for 18 years now with an overwhelming growth every year.

An event that started with barely 500 Fun runners, now boasts of over 11,000 participants from all over the world who take part in the Kilimanjaro Premium Lager 42km Full Marathon, Tigo 21 Km Half Marathon and Grand Malt 5Km Fun Run.

It is for this reason that this is one of the most awaited events not just in Tanzania but within the Sub Sahara African region. The uniqueness of the route which includes running on the slopes of the snow capped Mount Kilimanjaro is breathtaking and something that thousands of tourist would want to be part of.

Recognition as a premier international event The main sponsor, Kilimanjaro Premium Lager, is happy that stakeholders are treating it as Tanzania's major international event and not just an event for the people of Kilimanjaro or Tanzanians.

Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Brand Manager, Irene Mutiganzi said they are pleased with a comment made by Athletics Tanzania's Vice President, William Kallaghe that the marathon should now be treated as the premier international athletics putting Tanzania on the world sporting map.

Mutiganzi said as main sponsors of the annual event, they have upheld the sponsorship due to the massive participation of people who are drawn from all over the world. "This event is richly attended by people from all over the globe and as a brand that is what we are after, getting closer to our customers in a special way," she said.

She further added that plans by the govern-



Kibo Palace Hotel in Arusha played host to some of the 2020 Kilimnjaro Premium Lager Marathon participants.

ment to promote sports tourism using the event is welcomed as it will increase the number of local and international tourists attending hence give the brand more mileage and more reason to sponsor the event.

"This will generate a lot of foreign exchange for our country and we are sure that more Kilis will also be consumed in return as the tourists enjoy and also spend," she added noting that Tanzanians have now also improved much in embracing domestic tourism because during Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Marathon, many of them travel from all over the country to participate in the prestigious event.

The Tanzania Breweries Plc Manager also said its high time that businesspeople take advantage of the huge numbers attending the event do more business while ensuring the quality of local products and services to convince foreign consumers.

Mutiganzi thanked Kilimanjaro Regional Commissioner, Anna Mghwira for realizing the need to convene a stakeholders' meeting especially involving travel and tourism industry to see how they can improve services and products on offer during the annual event. A good example is how to deal with the accommodation challenge which comes with the marathon.

"Some hotels are already booked for next year, that is how serious accommodation is during the marathon. All hotels, guest houses and lodges are always literally full. Some people opt to stay in Arusha or other neighbouring towns," she noted adding that it is a true sign as the people's event hence requires more attention from all stakeholders.

Improved road infrastructure The main sponsors are also happy that the government has shown keen interest in improving the road infrastructure to ensure more participation by both local and foreign sportsmen.

Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism who graced this year's event, Dr Hamisi Kigwangalla and his Information, Culture, art and Sports peer, Dr Harrison Mwakembe, pledged to cooperate with the organisers and sponsors to ensure that roads are modernised in the region.

"This to us as sponsors is indeed good news because as earlier stated, we are more interested in the people hence with improved road infrastructure, the organizers will be able to accommodate more participants hence more revenue for the government and also more mileage for the sponsors," she stated.

A local race Director, John Bayo backed Mutiganzi's observation saying with cooperation from the government, Athletics Tanzania and the sponsors, the event is very well placed to promote tourism and take the country's status to a greater heights.

"We are happy that the government has seen this already and is doing something to ensure that the marathon grows in terms of participation hence boosting tourism and other businesses like accommodation, transport and communication in the country," Bayo said.

He said the marathon is among events that have maintained a sole main sponsor for a long time. "We have had Kilimanjaro Premium Lager for 18 years now. This is a record and it is all because of the people involved in this event and the consistency in organization," he noted.

Executive Solutions Managing Director, Aggrey Marealle whose firm coordinates the event since 2004, expressed satisfaction with the events growth stating "This started as a fun event but has developed into a major professional international event attracting global attention with a major boost to the local economy."

Marealle said the event not only enhances sports but also promotes destination Tanzania for tourists and investors. "We thank Kilimanjaro Premium Lager for its continued support as well as Tigo and Grand Malt who together with the water table sponsorship have ensured that the marathon is held annually," he added.

Other sponsors of this year's marathon included: Kilimanjaro Water, TPC Limited, Unilever, and Simba Cement while the official suppliers were Kibo Palace Hotel, Keys Hotel, Garda World Security, Precision Air, and CMC Automobiles.

G20 Initiative activists petition G20 on COVID-19 response

By Property Watch Reporter

LEADERS of the world's 20 largest economies have been challenged to internationally coordinate action within the next few days to address the deepening global health and economic crises from COVID-19.

In an open letter, G20 Initiative activists said at a recent G20 Extraordinary Leaders' Summit held end March, the leaders said they recognize the gravity and urgency of the entwined public health and economic crises, but now require urgent specific measures that can be agreed on speeding up emergency support for global

health initiatives led by the World Health Organization (WHO).

"Both require world leaders to commit to funding far beyond the current capacity of our existing international institutions," the G20 Initiative activists said in the statement noting that between 2008/10, the immediate economic crisis could be surmounted when the economic fault line-under-capitalization of the global banking system-was tackled.

The statement added that now, however, the economic emergency will not be resolved until the health emergency is effectively addressed warning that the health emergency will not end

simply by conquering the disease in one country alone, but by ensuring recovery from COVID-19 in all countries.

"All health systems-even the most sophisticated and best funded-are buckling under the pressures of the virus.

Yet if we do nothing as the disease spreads in poorer African, Asian, and Latin American cities and in fragile communities which have little testing equipment, ventilators, and medical supplies," the letter noted.

World leaders must immediately agree to commit \$8 billion-as set out by the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board-to fill the most urgent

gaps in the COVID-19 response. This includes: \$1 billion this year urgently needed by WHO: This would enable WHO to carry out its critically important mandate in full," the statement noted.

The statement further added the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) is coordinating the global research effort to develop and scale up effective COVID-19 vaccines adding that in addition Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance will have an important role procuring and equitably distributing vaccines to the poorest countries and requires \$7.4 billion for its replenishment, should be fully funded.

"\$2.25 billion for Therapeutics: The COVID-19

Therapeutics

Accelerator aims to deliver 100 million treatments by the end of 2020 and is seeking these funds to rapidly develop and scale-up access to therapeutics," the statement noted.

Instead of each country, or state or province within it, competing for a share of the existing capacity, with the risk of rapidly increasing prices, the letter stated that the G20 should also be vastly increasing capacity by supporting the WHO in coordinating the global production and procurement of medical supplies, such as testing kits, personal protection equipment, and ITU technology to meet fully the worldwide demand.

Copper belt miners turn to Tanzania as South Africa lockdown hobbles ports

JOHANNESBURG

SOUTH Africa's strict coronavirus lockdown has caused miners to divert copper from the country's ports to others in Africa, with Dar es Salaam the clear winner, sources told Reuters.

Authorities in South Africa initially said ports would only process essential goods during a three-week nationwide lockdown that began on March 27. On Friday, the Department of Transport said ports remain open to all types of cargo.

But miners in the copper belt - an area spanning northern Zambia and southern Democratic Republic of Congo - did not wait for that clarification before acting. Trucks from the copper belt were turned round midway through journeys to Durban and redirected to Tanzania's Dar es Salaam port, officials at two

regional logistics companies said.

"The moment the lockdown happened, all the trucks on their way to South Africa were basically stopped and offloaded at a warehouse in Zambia," said an official in Tanzania's capital, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"Then all the documentation was changed and they started the journey to Dar," the official added. "Everybody is now looking at Dar as the reliable solution, because in South Africa it's not clear." Exports of copper cathodes and copper concentrate through Dar have increased by between 20% and 25%, he estimated.

Mozambique's Beira port, 1 200 km (746 miles) north of the capital, Maputo, and Namibia's Walvis Bay are also seeing more copper and cobalt export volumes than average, said a logistics company official in Zambia, who also asked not to be

identified.

Transnet, which manages South Africa's railways and ports, did not respond to questions about the hit to its revenue from the lockdown. Transnet Port Terminals made R3.7 billion (\$200 million) in revenue in 2019 from dry bulk, which includes copper, coal and grains.

Capacity hurt

Although South Africa's ports are open again to non-essential cargo, capacity has been hurt by the lockdown, logistics firm Grindrod said, predicting revenue at the company's port and terminals businesses would fall in April. Some port personnel who were initially sent home have not yet returned to work.

First Quantum is now exporting all the copper from its two mines in Zambia through Dar es Salaam and Walvis Bay, whereas the majority previously went via Durban, a source close



A bird's eye view of Dar es Salaam port.

to the miner said in London. It is sending around 12 000 tonnes of copper through Dar this month - more than twice the usual average of 5 000 tonnes, according to the Zambia logistics source. The amount exported through Walvis Bay has increased by a third.

A First Quantum spokesman did not respond to a request for comment on Monday. Barrick is exporting copper concentrate from its Lumwana mine in Zambia through Dar es Salaam and Walvis Bay, as local refineries

where it would usually send concentrate are shut, Chief Executive Mark Bristow told Reuters.

China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group Co (CNMC), which runs the Deziwa mine in Congo and Chambishi in Zambia, is also exporting copper through Walvis Bay, the Zambia logistics source said. A CNMC manager familiar with the company's African operations said it might look for a port in Namibia if logistics issues continue at South African ports.

Queue of trucks

Increased checks at the Zambia-Congo border crossing are also creating delays, with a 35km (22 mile) queue of trucks south of the border, according to another logistics company official in Zambia.

This is slowing the supply of key reagents mines need for copper processing, he said. Congo miner Chemaf shut one of its processing plants on Sunday, saying it could not source oxide ore.

COVID-19 HAS BIG IMPACT ON THE MINING SECTOR

JOHANNESBURG

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic. At the time of writing there are over 400 000 confirmed cases across 194 countries. Even the most optimistic analysts expect a global recession.

Mining companies have been affected by COVID-19 outbreaks, and global restrictions to encourage social distancing have meant that mining projects have either slowed or been put on hold until further notice. There is no doubt that mining executives are beginning to feel nervous as the spread of the virus accelerates.

Share-prices of listed mining companies are in a downward spiral. Commodity prices across the industry have been tumbling as the industry considers the devastating aftershocks of this "Black Swan" event. To single out one example: platinum and palladium prices have dropped by more than 40% in just three weeks.

Mining companies are feeling the pressure, despite recent positive results brought by surging commodity prices and various cost-cutting initiatives. South African miner Sibanye-Stillwater's share price has lost over 60% in the past four weeks while Impala Platinum has lost a similar percentage, and Anglo American is down by as much as 40%.

Covid-19 shakes mining sector

The response to the pandemic from governments and markets has shaken the mining industry. Restrictions imposed on mining companies has seen production shut down across multiple markets. Alta Zinc has shut down production at its largest project in northern Italy. In Mongolia, Rio Tinto suspended non-essential operations following the country's first confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis. And Anglo American is in the process of demobilising most of the 10,000-strong construction workforce at its copper project in Peru.

We're also witnessing a halt on capex growth. While capital expenditure for the world's 20 largest mining companies grew by 12% in 2019 to reach \$491-billion, we're now seeing delays in project work and investments being put on hold.

The recent announcement of a 15-day quarantine in Peru, the world's second-largest copper producer, has meant miners such as Anglo American, Pan American Silver and Newmont, have had to put a halt to operations, which includes the slowing of work on Anglo American's major copper project.

South Africa's 21-day period of national lock-down



Karibu Homes in Nairobi, Kenya.

has similarly ground all local mining operations to a halt until at least April 16th. Even where shutdowns are not occurring, restrictions on the movement of people and supplies will inevitably delay development work.

Mining industry 'more exposed' to pandemic
South Africa's mining sector is particularly exposed to the spread of Covid-19. According to the Minerals Council of South Africa, the industry employs a workforce numbering almost

420,000, many of whom are underground on any given day. Some mines have thousands of men and women underground, descending into the depths in crowded "cages". Before and after, dressing rooms are filled with miners preparing for their shifts or cleaning up afterwards. It does not take an epidemiologist to realise that the mining work environment is a catalyst for spreading the COVID-19 pandemic.

In South Africa, this is exacerbated by the

fact that the mining labour force remains migrant, with constant movement between the gold fields and platinum belt and Lesotho, Mozambique and the Eastern Cape. In addition, the average age in the industry's workforce is over 40, increasing their vulnerability to an illness that poses a greater risk the older the infected person is.

On a slightly positive note, the South African mining industry's experience with AIDS and

tuberculosis should stand it in good stead: It has invested in health infrastructure and has experience with contact-tracing because the procedure with a tuberculosis diagnosis is similar to that of coronavirus.

The Minerals Council of South Africa has also published a 10-Point Action Plan for COVID-19 which outlines several measures to deal with COVID-19, however it will take its lead from agencies like the World Health Organization and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases.

Industry to fast-track automation?
The COVID-19 outbreak has made the immediate future of several mining operations around the world uncertain. As a result, there may be an increased appeal and demand for solutions to reduce the human workforce at mine sites.

The uptake of automated mine solutions including self-driving haul trucks and remote operations centers has been slow but steady. One of the earliest moves into automation came with global mining giant Rio Tinto's Mine of the Future initiative in 2008. From a remote operations center in Perth, Western Australia, workers operate autonomous mining vehicles at mines more than 1,200km away in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Today, around a third of the haul truck fleet at Rio Tinto's Pilbara mines are autonomous.

The Syama underground gold mine in Mali, became the world's first fully autonomous mine operation. Designed in partnership with Swedish engineering company Sandvik, the mine operates with fully automated trucks, loaders and drills. The fully autonomous operation means that the mine can operate 24 hours a day, with all operations overseen from a remote operation centre.

Depending on how long this crisis lasts, the mining industry could see big moves into autonomous mining technologies in the not-too-distant future. Whilst it is not possible to predict how COVID-19 will further disrupt the mining industry, what is certain is that the mining industry must reconfigure and prepare itself to operate under a new nor-

Covid-19 ripples into container industry

DURBAN

WHILE South Africa is two weeks into a 21-day lock-down, most of the world has been shaken to its core. An estimated 20% of the global population is in some form of a lockdown and those who are not in government-mandated lockdowns are mostly taking extreme measures to self-isolate to contain the rapid outbreak of the Covid-19 global pandemic.

Considering the coronavirus pandemic, many industries and businesses have had to quickly adapt and change to the "new normal." This rapid outbreak has impacted global markets in unprecedented ways since its arrival. As with many businesses and industries, the container industry has been and will be impacted - and changed in many ways.

Reduced demand for containers

China, the world's manufacturing powerhouse, was first hit by the outbreak of the coronavirus and implemented restrictions and lockdowns earlier this year. These had a huge impact on the manufacturing of goods and containers and South Africa is only starting to feel the impact of this now.

Because production and export from China were halted, the demand for shipping containers has been drastically reduced, both locally and internationally, as fewer goods are being shipped and fewer containers are being produced.

Decreased volume of containers entering South Africa
Along with the delayed production in China, South Africa started a government-mandated lockdown on 27 March 2020. The lockdown only allows for essential goods to be imported and exported into and from South African ports. The combination of these events has led to a decrease in the volume of containers entering South Africa, which has a drastic effect on the South African demand for containers.

International price hikes

We also foresee an increase in the prices of containers.



Stanbic Bank Tanzania Limited's head of private banking, Thereza Majinge (R), presents a dummy cheque for 30m/- to Medical Association of Tanzania's President, Dr Elisha Osati (L), in Dar es Salaam earlier this week to help in fighting the COVID-19. Photo courtesy of Stanbic Tanzania.

Prices will be increased to alleviate lost revenue from ceased production of both containers and exported goods. Fewer containers are also being circulated internationally, which will also contribute to the rise in prices of containers.

However, it's not all doom and gloom for the container industry and businesses as a whole. It is important to look ahead and plan a way forward in these

uncertain times. Although the coronavirus pandemic will have an enormous impact on the global economy, there are also new business opportunities arising in which industries can invest.

South Africa, and the rest of the world, are very dependent on Chinese production. This is the time for Africa to become more self-sufficient.

Africa has abundant natural resources

and vast land with mining and manufacturing opportunities. In the future, we should be able to manufacture our own goods and work towards being export-driven rather than import-driven.

As we settle into our new work-from-home routines one thing is assured, life will continue after Covid-19, industries will change, and new opportunities lies on the horizon.

WorldRemit facilitating digital transactions amidst COVID-19 pandemic

By Property Watch Reporter

AMIDST the global coronavirus pandemic, global online money transfer, WorldRemit has continued to facilitate instant transactions involving 150 countries including Tanzania.

While Tanzania has not been subjected to a mandatory lockdown, WorldRemit Tanzania's Country Director, Cynthia Ponera said receiving money in the country albeit some restricted movement by the state, is simply digital based.

Ponera said the government has classified financial services as essential hence exempt from any possible lockdown measures hence banks and other financial institutions will remain operational but under tight health and safety control measures.

"This means that if you go to banks and our other partners to receive cash, the cash payout option may not be as readily available since some of our partners may operate alternative opening and closing times," she said.

Ponera explained further that cash pick up options currently continue to operate through commercial banks and financial service providers that WorldRemit partners with in Tanzania saying cash pickup services throughout the global remittance industry, are on a general downward trend currently due to social-distancing measures introduced by governments. "People simply aren't going out of their homes and are shifting more of their transactions and work to online. In some countries where we operate, we have seen a 100 percent swing to digital payout methods, bank accounts, mobile money or airtime top up - for example in Thailand and Fiji," the WorldRemit Tanzania Country Director, added.

She however cautioned that despite such developments, it's too early to tell whether or not the world is 100 percent treading towards a cashless community in the future. In Tanzania, WorldRemit is working in partnership with M-PESA, TigoPesa, AirtelMoney and EzyPesa mobile wallets to ensure a secure, fast and convenient service of transactions internationally. "Tanzanians can receive money directly into a mobile wallet or a bank account from their sender. Airtime can also be sent directly to a phone which helps Tanzanians stay connected," she added.

Donholm, Athi River report lowest rental prices in quarter one

NAIROBI

UPPER Kabete and Donholm-Komarock areas in Nairobi as well as Syokimau, Ngong and Athi River satellite towns reported the lowest rents in the first quarter of the year.

According to Cytonn Real Es-

tate latest findings, Athi River had the lowest per square metre rental charge in the last three months at Sh63,485 with an 88 percent occupancy rate, Syokimau Sh68,072 at 84.6 percent occupancy while Donholm and Komarock areas sold for Sh77,085 with an occupancy rate of 86.1 percent.

Upper Kabete went for Sh87,668 and had a 91.2 per cent occupancy rate, thanks to proximity to Nairobi while Ngong town, which now enjoys good access due to newly built roads reported a 72 per cent occupancy that went for an average Sh96,104 per square metre. "Apartments were popular

among the middle class with developers utilising small spaces to build high-rise rental properties," said Wacu Mbugua, a research analyst at Cytonn. Cytonn said Ngong enjoyed a two per cent rise in rental prices due to increased interest among tenants looking for quality properties renting at

friendly rates.

Cytonn said as the coronavirus scourge impact sinks in, the real estate sector would witness a downturn as house-seekers suffering from lost or lower incomes continue pursuing rent bargains across the market.

In its first-quarter market re-

view, Cytonn found that Juja enjoyed the lowest leasing rate per month for detached units at Sh67,651 enjoying 90.1 per cent occupancy. Ngong township sold for Sh75,980 while enjoying an 88.3 per cent occupancy compared to Ruiru's Sh85,686 charge per square metre, which returned

the highest yield at 5.6 percent.

Lang'ata reported the highest return at 6.8 percent with a 94.5 per cent occupancy with rental spaces charged at Sh105,466 per square metre, Kilimani Sh115,985 per square metre with a 94.5 per cent occupancy with a 6.7 percent return.

TECHNOLOGY

LUXURY AUSTRALIAN HOTEL OFFERS REFUGE FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE AMID PANDEMIC



The Pan Pacific Hotel in Perth Western Australia.

PERTH

A FIVE-STAR waterfront Perth hotel has taken in 27 people who usually sleep rough and have nowhere else to go in a bid to keep them healthy and safe during the coronavirus pandemic.

Staff at the Pan Pacific saw an opportunity to help the city's "most vulnerable people" as travel bans meant bookings dropped off and rooms lay empty, General Manager Rob Weeden, said. "We have 700-1000 people sleeping rough just in the Perth central business district every night and we recognised we could do something to help," he said.

Mr Weeden contacted a local government commissioner, who then worked with the state's Department of Communities and RUAH, a homelessness non-government organisation, to initiate a pilot program to help the homeless.

The 27 homeless people moved in last week and will live at the Pan Pacific for at least a month.

"This cohort is Perth's most vulnerable people. We have Indigenous people aged over 40, non-Indigenous people over 50, all of them have an illness, diabetes, heart disease... they represent the most vulnerable of the vulnerable in our city," Mr Weeden said. He told

The National about an Indigenous man in his 50s who has become the unofficial artist in residence at the hotel which, with 500 guest rooms, is the city's largest.

"He arrived and settled in and has just started to do his artwork. He works in the traditional style from the Kimberly region. He was doing a beautiful piece depicting wildflowers meeting, having a fight and fleeing, leaving behind the seeds that grew into a prairie... but he realised he didn't have enough paint," Mr Weeden said. "I contacted Linton Partington of Linton & Kay Galleries, and he asked around the arts community and we received a huge box of paints, which will keep this gentleman busy for months."

Mr Weeden said another guest, a woman who jokes with him about the hotel's food and suggested he bring her lobster thermidor, has taken big steps in just six days to try and overcome alcohol addiction. "She is determined she is going to get better," he said. The general manager said that the "VIP guests" are now almost half-way through their 14-day mandatory self-isolation, following quarantine guidelines.

"There are nursing and security staff on their level, everyone is well looked after.

Some people are transitioning to sleeping in a bed, because they're used to sleeping on the floor, so it is alien to them... It is a different acclimatisation, for some of the guests - they are adapting to sobriety, and suddenly going cold turkey - they are not easy... After the 14 days self-isolation, they will be able to mingle in groups of two, get some fresh air. The long-term plan is to get them into housing," he said.

"After six days we have seen wonderful progress. It is a pilot for a month, to determine if it works for our guests. We have to know it is right for them before it gets rolled out to more people," Mr Weeden said that with winter coming to the southern hemisphere there will be an even more urgent need for crisis accommodation. He told The National that

the next cohort of guests will include individuals and families left homeless by escaping domestic violence.

"There is a long waitlist but there is a triage process run by Anglicare, Uniting Care West, RUAH, and Homeless Housing are the main bodies," he said. Homelessness is a national crisis in Australia, one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The nation's 2016 census found that 116,000 people in the country were homeless, an increase of 14 per cent on the previous census five years earlier.

Recent figures showed that 40 per cent of the people seeking help from homelessness emergency services in Western Australia were fleeing domestic violence. In a recent statement, Karyn Walsh AM, chair of the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness, said "Australia is a prosperous country and we should maintain a vision for no one to live on our streets."

A spokesperson from Western Australia's Department of Communities told The National that the hotel trial period is necessary "because we want to know that it is the best response for this vulnerable cohort, before any decisions are made about scaling it up". "If the trial is successful, the new service model could be scaled up to support and ensure the safety of people experiencing homelessness and family and domestic violence," they said.

Mr Weeden said the hotel and its staff were honoured to help the city's homeless. "The staff want to work on level ten, where the VIP guests are staying. They feel honoured to do it..."

These guests are really nice people, and our staff are seeing that with a bit of kindness we can do a lot of good."



The cruise ship Carnival Spirit docked at Port Kembla in Wollongong, Australia, last week.

Cruise ship operator Carnival set to tap markets for \$6bn in cash

NEW YORK

CRUISE line operator Carnival is turning to all corners of the capital markets to raise at least \$6 billion (of cash, the biggest test yet of investor willingness to finance industries ravaged by the coronavirus outbreak.

The company is tapping bond investors on both sides of the Atlantic with the sale of at least \$3bn of notes in US dollars and euros. The new bonds will be secured by a first-priority claim on the company's assets such as its vessels and intellectual property and mature in three years. The dollar-denominated portion is being marketed with a coupon of about 12.5 per cent and the entire offering could be increased to \$4bn, according to sources.

Carnival said it also plans to raise \$1.25bn by issuing common stock and another \$1.75bn through the sale of convertible notes to improve its liquidity position. Combined with the \$3bn the company drew on its bank credit lines earlier this month, the bond and stock sales could give the company as much as \$10bn of additional liquidity. The company's shares fell in early trading on Tuesday, before rebounding sharply, trading up almost 10 per cent at 11:38am New York time.

The offering is a barometer for pandemic-hit capital markets, which have faced historic upheaval in recent weeks. While investors have been loading up on new debt from America's safest companies, they've largely avoided riskier firms, especially those affected by the virus. Even with ships as collateral, investors can't be sure when Carnival will sail again after a series of Covid-19 outbreaks at sea raised concern about the safety of the industry. When it does, the fallout is likely to weigh on consumer demand.

Carnival is attempting to take advantage of rampant investor demand that has seen more than \$200bn of debt sold in the US and Europe over the past week. Some companies, including Sysco and YUM! Brands, offered higher premiums to lure investors.

"What we're seeing right now are a few phenomenal businesses that are under pressure because of the shutdown. These companies are doing what they can to strengthen their balance sheets, some with new bond sales," said William Smith, a high-yield portfolio manager at AllianceBernstein.

The cruise companies were left out of the recent US federal government bailout package due to their offshore status. Although many are headquartered in Miami, most are incorporated in places where they aren't subject to US federal income taxes and American minimum wage rules. The cruise industry, which has large fixed costs, is now bracing for the possibility of having to go months without customers.

Carnival, the industry's biggest operator, is incorporated in Panama. While it is still rated as investment grade by Moody's Investors Service and S&P Global Ratings, its existing unsecured bonds have been trading at distressed levels in recent weeks. The new secured debt sale is being managed by banks' high-yield syndicate desks, sources said.

JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs and Bank of America are leading the bond sale, which is expected to be completed on Wednesday. Carnival had been in discussions with banks to raise as much as \$7bn through equity and debt to shore up its finances, Bloomberg previously reported.

Earlier this year, Carnival hosted one of the most dramatic coronavirus episodes aboard its Princess Cruises-branded Diamond Princess off Yokohama in Japan. The Diamond Princess had more than 700 Covid-19 cases, which was the biggest outbreak outside mainland China for a while.

Another ship on its Holland America Line, Zaandam, is still at sea searching for a place to dock after the death of four passengers from undisclosed causes. The company transferred passengers it believed to be healthy to another ship, and both ships are now sailing to Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Singapore Changi Airport to close terminal due to drop in travellers

SINGAPORE

OPERATIONS at one of the world's busiest airports are being consolidated due to a drop in demand because of travel restrictions designed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Terminal 2 at Singapore Changi Airport will close from Friday, May 1, and will remain closed for at least 18 months. "In view of the steep decline in passenger traffic and the likelihood that air travel demand will not return to pre-Covid-19 levels in the near term, terminal operations at Changi Airport will be consolidated," Changi Airport Group said.

The airport is one of Asia's busiest passenger transport hubs. Terminal 2 serves flights to destinations across the Middle East, Africa, South-East Asia and the Indian sub-continent. Flights from Abu Dhabi with Etihad, the national airline of the UAE, typically fly into and depart from Terminal 2.

All flight operations will be consolidated across Changi's other terminals. Details of which terminal airlines have been relocated to will be announced closer to Friday, May 1. The decision is a way of cutting running costs and to "optimise resources across the airport's terminals to better match the low travel demand," CAG said.

No entry for transit passengers and visitors

Singapore has put in place precautionary measures to reduce the risk of Covid-19 entering the country. These include strict travel



A Singapore Airlines jet taxiing on the tarmac of Singapore Changi Airport that will reduce services and close Terminal 2 for 18 months due to a drop in demand.

restrictions. Short-term visitors and transit passengers are not allowed to enter Singapore. Entry is only open to returning residents or those with special permission.

All travellers, including citizens and permanent residents, must submit health declarations and people returning from at-risk destinations need to serve a 14-day isolation period in a government-appointed hotel. All other travellers must self-

isolate at home for 14 days.

Airlines also face restrictions on staff, as crew members that are not Singapore citizens or residents can no longer enter or transit through the country.

Reduced services at Terminal 4 Operations at Terminal 4 have also been reduced and could be temporarily suspended if more airlines adjust their schedules. Changi Airport has a long-standing reputa-

tion as being one of the best in the world.

Travellers enjoy its butterfly garden, movie theatre and swimming pool, and the airport is also home to the Jewel. Opened in 2019, this nature-themed entertainment and retail complex is home to the world's tallest indoor waterfall. It remains operational but shops and services in the Jewel are widely restricted.

French hotel group Accor closes two-thirds of hotels

PARIS

FRENCH hospitality group Accor closed two-thirds of its hotels and is furloughing, or temporarily laying off, 75 per cent of its staff.

The company is also cancelling its planned €280 million dividend payout against 2019 earnings because of the coronavirus crisis as it seeks to preserve cash. The company is closing more than 3,000 of the group's 5,000 hotels and is making more than 200,000 staff temporarily redundant, but its chief executive Sebastien Bazin told Bloomberg Television he intended to reopen all of the properties and re-employ the workers as soon as possible.

"I don't know how long the crisis is going to last, but I know you're going to see light at the end of the tunnel," Mr Bazin said. "I intend to reopen every one of them, I intend to re-hire every employee and I just hope that people are going to come back traveling ... by early this summer."

The travel and tourism sector has been one of the hardest hit by the global restrictions put in place to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Last month, the World Travel and Tourism Council said it expected about 75 million jobs would be lost in the sector globally as a result of the outbreak, and the loss in tourism revenue would mean a \$2.1 trillion hit to global GDP in

2020.

The main uncertainty facing the business is how long a return to normality will take, Mr Bazin said, but added that as of Tuesday evening only 10 per cent of the company's bookings for July and August had been cancelled.

"It doesn't mean people will show up it just means, I guess, people are - and have to be - as optimistic as I am." In China, he said that 85 per cent of the 25,000-strong workforce in its hotels were at home two and-a-half weeks ago, but that the same number were now back at work. Hotel occupancy remains low - at 10-20 per cent in many cities - but is much higher (nearer 60 per cent) at budget chains that rely on local Chinese customers.

The company is setting aside 25 per cent of the scrapped dividend payout to help staff facing financial hardship, Mr Bazin said. He also added the company had a strong balance sheet to help it through the crisis, with about €2.5bn worth of cash on its balance sheet and access to a €1.2bn funding line.

"As of this minute, I don't intend to draw on the line, we have no necessity for it," he said. There are more than 1.36 million confirmed cases of the coronavirus and more than 36,000 deaths as of Tuesday, according to Johns Hopkins University, which is tracking its spread. More than 292,000 people have recovered.

WORLD

Africa strives to navigate challenges as COVID-19 cases surpass 10,000

ABUJA

SEVERAL countries have been on lockdown as Africa continues to see an upsurge in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases amid an all-out and unprecedented efforts to contain the spread of the pandemic within the continent.

The world's second-most populous continent has reported 10,692 confirmed cases of the coronavirus with 535 deaths as of Wednesday, across 52 out of 54 African countries, according to the Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC).

"COVID-19 has the potential not only to cause thousands of deaths but to also unleash economic and social devastation," Matshido Moeti, the WHO regional director for Africa, said in a statement. "Its spread beyond major cities means the opening of a new front in our fight against this virus."

Mainly confined to some major cities initially, recent data by the WHO and Africa CDC show the confirmed COVID-19 cases have now spread to the nooks and crannies of Africa.

"With poor medical facilities and insufficient medical personnel, it is very difficult for African countries to reduce the morbidity and mortality rates

of COVID-19," said Wang Xiaochun, senior advisor of disease control with the Africa CDC. "They should do their utmost to prevent the spreading and strictly implement the measures they already had," said Wang.

Looking at the situation broadly, the majority of African countries are on high alert in regard to responding to the pandemic.

Ghana, one of the worst hit countries in sub-Saharan Africa, has taken a raft of drastic measures to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, including a prolonged border closure and lockdown in its major cities.

Once bustling streets in Accra, the Ghanaian capital, are now quiet amid the ongoing lockdown, during which residents are strictly required to stay at home and leaving local sanitation workers walking around with their disinfection tools.

A series of barrier measures have also been put in place by the Cameroonian government since mid-March. These include the closing of borders, isolation of people at high risk, the restriction of mass gatherings and movement.

Recently, the wearing of a protective mask has become mandatory for all Cameroonians wishing to approach

needs, share its experience in epidemic prevention and control, and strengthen cooperation in health care, Xi said.

Xi expressed confidence that under the leadership of Ramaphosa, the South African government will achieve positive outcomes from its anti-epidemic measures. "We encourage Chinese nationals in South Africa to proactively support South Africa's anti-epidemic action and hope that the South African government attaches great importance to and protect their safety, health and legitimate rights and interests," Xi said.

China is willing to enhance political mutual trust with South Africa, understand and support each other on issues concerning the other side's core interests and major concerns, promote bilateral cooperation for more progress, and strengthen cooperation within such frameworks as the BRICS and the G20, Xi said. Xi stressed that



China and South Africa are good brothers who share weal and woe.

The Chinese side has been following the epidemic situation in Africa and provided batches of anti-epidemic assistance for the African Union and all African countries that have diplomatic ties with China, Xi said.

Experts from both sides have held video conferences for several times, and many Chinese enterprises, local and non-governmental organizations have also provided anti-epidemic supplies, Xi added.

Xi says China will continue to support Africa in COVID-19 battle, capacity building

BEIJING

CHINA stands ready to continue support for African countries in their battle against the COVID-19 epidemic and help Africa improve its capacity of disease prevention and control, Chinese President Xi Jinping said Wednesday in a phone call with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Xi (pictured) recalled that after the epidemic broke out in China, the South African government and various sections of the South African society conveyed via multiple means their sympathies with and support for China.

"Comradeship plus brotherhood" marks the special friendship between the two countries and the two ruling parties, Xi said. China firmly supports South Africa's endeavor in COVID-19 fight, Xi said, adding his country will continue to offer help within its capacity to South Africa in line with the latter's

Kremlin expects Israel to adhere to decision to transfer Alexander Metochion to Russia

MOSCOW

THE Kremlin is counting on Israel to remain committed to its decision to transfer the Alexander Metochion in Jerusalem to Russia.

Commenting on the decision by the Jerusalem District Court to suspend Russia's renewal of registration for that property after a lawsuit was launched by an organization, known as the

Orthodox Palestine Society in the Holy Land, that is unlawfully occupying the grounds, Russian Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov recalled that "during his recent visit to Israel, Vladimir Putin thanked Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the decision to transfer that compound."

"Israel's friendly stance was very much appreciated by both Russian believers and the church. As far as we understand, difficul-

ties have now arisen because of the judicial appeal by one of the parties against that.

Of course, we hope that Israel will remain committed to its decision to transfer that metochion. That's very important to us," Peskov emphasized.

On January 23, Israeli Minister of Environmental Protection and Co-Chairman of the Russian-Israeli intergovernmental commission Ze'ev Elkin said that Israel

had begun the legal process of registering the Alexander Metochion in the name of Russia in response to Moscow's request.

On April 7, The Marker Israeli newspaper reported that the Jerusalem District Court had suspended the registration until the lawsuit hearing was completed.

The Alexander Metochion is located in the Old City of Jerusalem in close proximity to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

For his part, Ramaphosa said

China has contained the epidemic through decisive and strong measures, which sets an example for other countries and provides valuable reference.

He said he appreciates China's support for South Africa and Africa over the years, especially the precious assistance provided at current difficult time for their fight against COVID-19, which is very important to them and boosts their confidence in beating the epidemic.

Ramaphosa said he stands ready to work with Xi to implement the consensus of the Extraordinary G20 Leaders' Summit and promote global solidarity and cooperation.

South Africa will continue to support China on issues concerning China's core interests, and steadfastly promote the development of relations between South Africa and China as well as relations between Africa and China, he added.

Xinhua



Health workers wearing personal protective gear inside a testing tent, during the screening and testing for COVID-19, in Lenasia, south of Johannesburg, South Africa, on Wednesday. (AP)

certain hospitals and public services, like the General Hospital of Yaounde, and government bodies in the country's southwest region. Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, had also followed the trend, locking down its main cities, Abuja and Lagos, its industrial hub.

The largest economy in Africa also shut down its airports for foreign and domestic flights, as well as railway services across the country. "We are fully aware that such measures will cause much hardship and inconvenience to many citizens," Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari said while announcing the lockdown on March 29.

"But this is a matter of life and death; if we look at the dreadful daily toll of deaths in Italy, France, and Spain," Buhari said, calling on all Nigerians to see all the measures as a national and patriotic duty to control and contain the spread of this virus.

In many parts of Africa, people are encouraged to work from home to further curb infections. The WHO said it is working with governments across Africa to scale up their capacities in critical response areas such as coordination, surveillance, testing, isolation, case management, contact tracing, infection prevention and control, risk communication and community en-

agement, and laboratory capacity.

Due to the social distancing requirements, residents of informal settlements across Africa that often serve as domestic workers, cannot access their workplaces for fear of spreading the virus by the employers.

This, has, no doubt, hurt the economic wellbeing of the affected families, now seeking government intervention. The impact of the COVID-19 on economic, financial and human levels in Africa is "indisputable", Mamadou Fall, a Senegalese academic and historian, told Xinhua.

Speaking of Senegal as an example, Fall said a loss of 2 to 3 percentage points of the gross domestic product (GDP) is expected, which is a huge loss for a country in Africa.

Closing borders in West and Central Africa amid the COVID-19 crisis "can have a catastrophic impact on families living on frontier trades," Florence Kim, a spokesperson of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in West and Central Africa, told Xinhua.

The region is characterized by cross-border economic activities. People cross the border sometimes several times a day to go to sell and buy. "Closing borders can have a devastating effect on these families who make a living from this activity," Kim said.

Xinhua

Economic toll grows in virus-hit Europe

BRUSSELS

THE coronavirus pandemic, which had claimed over 60,000 lives and infected more than 700,000 people in Europe as of Wednesday, has begun to spread economic gloom in the continent.

Over the past days, noted economic think tanks, central banks and government officials in Europe had issued gloomy economic outlooks for major European economies, such as Germany, France, Italy and Britain.

GLOOMY OUTLOOK

On Wednesday, Germany's leading economic institutes forecast that the economic output of Germany, Europe's main engine of growth, was likely to shrink by 4.2 percent in 2020 due to the impact of the coronavirus.

The joint forecast was prepared by the German Institute for Economic Research, the ifo Institute, the Kiel Institute, the Halle Institute for Economic Research, and RWI Essen.

According to the forecast, Germany's gross domestic product (GDP) was likely to shrink by 1.9 percent in the first quarter and would fall by 9.8 percent in the second quarter. The institutes predicted that as a result of the pandemic, the country's unemployment rate would rise to 5.9 percent "at its peak" in 2020.

Germany would also end up with a "record deficit" of 159 billion euros (172.8 billion U.S. dollars) this year, compared with a positive balance of 45.3 billion euros in 2019. In neighboring France, the central bank BdF said that the country's economy shrank by 6 percent in the first quarter of the year, its worst performance since 1945, due to slack industrial, service activities and turbulent financial market caused by the pandemic. The bank had previously estimated growth of 0.1 percent for the January-March period of this year. The French government had instituted two-week confinement on March 17 to contain the outbreak. The lockdown was prolonged by 15 days until April 15, and would likely be extended. Every two-week confinement would lead to a 1.5 percent loss in GDP, said the central bank.

A report by the bank, based on the interviews of 8,500 business leaders from March 27 to April 3, showed that French economic activity dropped by 32 percent because of the coronavirus lockdown. In Britain, a report published Monday by the Center for Business and Economic Research, a think tank, said the country's economic output would reduce by 31 percent due to the current level of lockdown to fight COVID-19. Morgan Stanley forecast last month that the British economy will contract by 5 percent this year, in sharp contrast to the most recent official growth forecast of 1.1 percent from the Office for Budget Responsibility.

"MARATHON" FIGHT

As some European countries reportedly attempt to relax lockdown measures as early as mid-April, the World Health Organization (WHO) regional office for Europe on Wednesday described the continuing fight against COVID-19 in European regions as a "marathon", stressing that it is not time to lower guard and relax measures.

In a video statement to the press in Copenhagen, WHO Regional Director for Europe Dr. Hans Kluge called on all Europeans to stay united and vigilant.

"Knowledge of COVID-19 and some positive signs from some countries do not yet represent victory ... Now is not the time to relax measures.

It is the time to once again double and triple our collective efforts to drive towards suppression with the whole support of society," Kluge said, warning that "Europe remains very much at the center of the pandemic."

His warning was echoed by Dr. Ranieri Guerra, who sits on the Technical and Scientific Committee advising the Italian government on how to handle the pandemic. "We still have to take a lot of preliminary steps," Guerra said Wednesday at a press conference in Rome.

"The trend of the epidemic curve shows it is not decreasing significantly, but rather we are in the midst of a slowdown in the speed of transmission (of the virus)," said Guerra, who also serves as assistant director-general for strategic initiatives at the World Health Organization (WHO).

"This means there is a reservoir of asymptomatic coronavirus carriers, which continues to guarantee the circulation of the virus," said Guerra.

Relaxing the lockdown "in these conditions, without precise knowledge of how the coronavirus epidemic has evolved and will evolve, is rather difficult to imagine," he said.

Also on Wednesday, Spanish Health Minister Salvador Illa said that Spain, which recorded the most infection cases in Europe, has "reached the peak of contagion," although the country saw a rise in new COVID-19 cases and deaths for a second day after four straight days of decline.

As of Wednesday, Spain reported 146,690 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 14,555 deaths. Italy ranked second with 139,422 cases and 17,669 deaths, followed by France with 112,950 cases and 10,869 deaths.

Xinhua

CHINA'S economy has withstood shocks caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the first two months of the year, Mao Shengyong, spokesperson of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) told a press conference held by the State Council Informational Office.

China's value-added industrial output fell 13.5 percent year on year during the January-February period. Fixed-asset investment went down 24.5 percent, while retail sales of consumer goods dropped 20.5 percent, according to the NBS.

While the epidemic has caused relatively big shocks to the economy, the impacts are largely "short-term, external and controllable," said Mao, who is also director general of the Department of Comprehensive Statistics with the NBS.

Chinese people's livelihood is effectively ensured and social stability maintained, Mao noted, adding that China's improving economic fundamentals and

China's economy withstands epidemic shocks

the trend of upward momentum in the long term have not changed.

The country's economic scale has not shrunk as there is high demand for production. China's GDP approached 100 trillion yuan (\$14.28 trillion) in 2019 and the production of major industrial products topped the world for years, which lays a solid material foundation for the country to respond to emergencies.

While the country was hit hard by COVID-19 in the first two months, major indicators and volume of production remained at a high level.

From January to February, the total output value of China's industrial enterprises above designated size reached 11.5 trillion yuan; the total retail sales of consumer goods exceeded 5.2 trillion yuan;

the fixed asset investment exceeded 3.3 trillion yuan.

China's strong economic resilience has not changed as basic industries are well safeguarded and epidemic prevention materials sufficiently supplied.

The epidemic did not interrupt the production of important industries directly concern the country's stability and the people's wellbeing. In addition, the expansion of the production of epidemic prevention materials has fully satisfied the need for virus control.

From January to February, the number of masks produced by industrial enterprises above designated size increased by 2.9 times year-on-year, and the average daily output of masks reached 116 million pieces, indicating that China's

strong supply capacity has met the demand for medical supplies.

Demand and supply remained balanced as there are affluent supplies of living necessities and goods for public use. During the first two months, the basic livelihood of the Chinese people was effectively guaranteed, and consumer goods maintained a sound growth overall. Retail sales of meat, poultry and eggs increased by 37.8 percent, and that of vegetables by 27.1 percent.

New growth drivers kept increasing prompted by the sound development of the internet economy. The internet has played a very constructive role in allocating and distributing materials and facilitating telemedicine services.

From January to February, the online

retail sales of physical goods increased by 3 percent year-on-year, accounting for 21.5 percent of the total retail sales of consumer goods. The growth rate represents an increase of 5 percentage points over the same period last year. The output of 3D printing equipment, smart watches and other electronic products increased by more than 100 percent.

China's confidence to meet the year's targets for economic growth has not changed as the macro policies have effectively hedged the impact of the epidemic. To bring the economy back to normal, the central government has rolled out a series of policy measures to support epidemic control and promote work resumption, Mao said, adding that these measures are gradually taking ef-

fects. At present, China faces a number of economic challenges. The epidemic has exerted certain impacts on the economy in the first quarter, especially the first two months. Due to the fast-spreading epidemic in foreign countries, the global financial market and commodity prices are relatively volatile and market expectations are unstable, indicating a possible slowdown of global growth.

However, there are favorable conditions for China's economy to maintain stability. The country is consolidating the progress in the battle against COVID-19; enterprises across the country have resumed production in an orderly manner; the endogenous power of the Chinese economy will continue to be released as the epidemic has been brought under control; some previously suppressed economic activities will also go back to normal.

People's Daily



China Eastern Airline carrying medical aid from China to help Spain combat COVID-19 arrives at Zaragoza airport in northern Spain.

Unity can ease medical supply shortages in the world

AS novel coronavirus pneumonia (COVID-19) spreads across the world, transportation barriers have become a major issue impeding the flow of medical supplies to countries that need them most. Nations should together devise an emergency coordination mechanism to solve the shortage of medical supplies internationally.

The World Health Organization (WHO) last week declared COVID-19 a pandemic. So far there have been more than 160,000 cases worldwide. A total of 146 countries, areas and territories have seen confirmed cases.

Under these circumstances, countries may see a gap between the supply and demand of medical supplies. US federal agencies have sounded the alarm that the country may see shortages of basic medical and food supplies amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The WHO at the beginning of this month warned of a global shortage of protective equipment and asked companies and governments to increase production by 40 percent. The situation has only worsened since.

As the first country to slowly recover from the outbreak through strong and effective measures, China has accumulated rich experience and is prepared for the worst possible situation.

China began to boost its production capacity for medical supplies quite

early on. Now, Chinese companies have resumed operations to restore production volumes. Moreover, many companies, even shipbuilding companies and car manufacturers, have begun to produce more medical supplies such as masks. These medical supplies manufactured by China should be provided to the countries that need them most.

However, the transportation of these medical supplies has hit a major barrier: Aviation companies in most countries have cut international routes. Ticket prices for certain trips have soared, and the cost of charter airplanes is far from affordable.

China donated plane loads of medical supplies including masks and respirators to Italy, Belgium and Spain earlier this month. But more medical supplies, donated by or purchased from China, still need a regular and unblocked passage for transportation.

In order to satisfy the world's enormous demand for medical supplies to fight the pandemic, it is time to establish a transportation channel between countries - particularly those which have been hard hit by the coronavirus - to allow the dispatch and receipt of medical supplies and other key supplies. Furthermore, a coordination mechanism on an international level should be set up as soon as possible to

Saudi Arabia expects Russia to cut output by more than 1.6m barrels per day

MOSCOW,

SAUDI Arabia expects Russia to agree on a deeper crude output reduction than by 1.6 mln barrels per day, a source in OPEC told TASS.

It was reported late on Wednesday that Russia is ready to discuss a cut of its crude output by 14% compared with the average production level in the first quarter of 2020, or by 1.6 mln barrels per day, according to a representative of the Energy Ministry speaking with TASS.

"You (Russia) should agree on a deeper reduction," a source familiar with Saudi Arabia's position told TASS without specifying what volume the Saudi side will be satisfied with.

Reuters said earlier with reference to sources that Moscow is ready to discuss output reduction by 2 mln barrels per day as well.

Meanwhile, the issue of reduction volumes is not the only one between the partners. The sides have not yet reached a consensus on the level that is suggested to be a basis for reduction by 10 mln barrels per day, two sources in the organization told TASS.

"Saudi Arabia still wants to reduce only from 12.3 mln barrels per day," one of them said. Another source confirmed that the cutoff point "is a stumbling block so far."

Agencies



Please quarantine politicising COVID - WHO chief

GENEVA

"PLEASE quarantine politicising COVID. If we want to win, we shouldn't waste time pointing fingers," World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged here on Wednesday, saying "Unity is the only option to defeat this virus."

Answering a question from the press about U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to freeze U.S. funding to the WHO, Tedros said his message for the world at this moment is unity and solidarity, instead of politicizing the virus.

"I will suggest two things to the

world," he told a virtual press conference from Geneva. The first is national unity, and the second is global solidarity.

Tedros stressed that at the national level, leaders should work across party lines.

"My message to political parties: do not politicize this virus. If you care for your people, work across party lines and ideologies ... Without unity, we assure you, even any country that may have a better system will be in trouble, and more crises," Tedros noted.

"No need to use COVID to score political points.

You have many other ways to prove yourselves. This is not the one to use

for politics. It's like playing with fire," Tedros added.

"Now, the United States and China, all the rest of G20 and the rest of the world should come together to fight the virus," he said, adding that "When there are cracks at the national level and global level, that's when the virus succeeds."

Earlier in the day, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had called for support for WHO.

"It is my belief that the World Health Organization must be supported, as it is absolutely critical to the world's efforts to win the war against COVID-19," said Guterres in a statement.

Xinhua

Sub-Saharan Africa to fall into recession in 2020 - World Bank

NAIROBI

THE rapidly-spreading coronavirus outbreak is expected to push sub-Saharan Africa into recession in 2020 for the first time in 25 years, the World Bank said in a new forecast yesterday.

The bank's Africa's Pulse report said the region's economy will contract 2.1 percent to 5.1 percent from growth of 2.4 percent last year, and that the coronavirus will cost sub-Saharan Africa US\$37 billion to US\$79 billion in output losses this year due to trade and value chain disruption, among other factors.

Africa has at least 10,956 confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus, 562 deaths and 1,149 recoveries, according to a Reuters tally based on government statements and WHO data.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is testing the limits of societies and economies across the world, and African countries are likely to be hit particularly hard," World Bank Vice President for Africa Hafez Ghanem said. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund are racing to provide emergency funds to African countries and others to combat the virus and mitigate the impact of sweeping shutdowns aiming at curbing its spread.

The coronavirus has led to suspension of international passenger travel in many countries on the continent, and hit sectors such as tourism.

Various African governments have announced lockdowns or curfews in response to the virus, which was slow to reach many African countries but is now growing exponentially, according to the World Health Organization.

Real gross domestic product growth



A man wears a facemask amid concerns over the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus in Craighall Park, Johannesburg, on March 23, 2020. (File photo)

was projected to fall sharply particularly in the region's three largest economies - Nigeria, Angola, and South Africa, the World Bank said.

Oil exporting countries would also be hard-hit, while growth would likely weaken substantially in the West African Economic and Monetary Union, and the East African Community due to weak external demand, disruptions to supply chains and domestic production.

The bank said the spread of the flu-like respiratory disease also had potential to lead to a food security crisis on the continent, with agricultural production forecast to contract 2.6 percent and up to 7 percent in the event of trade blockages.

"Food imports would decline substantially (as much as 25 percent or as little as 13 percent) due to a combination of higher transaction costs and reduced domestic demand," the bank said in a statement accompanying the report.

The institutions have also called on China, the United States and other bilateral creditors to temporarily suspend debt payments by the poorest countries so they can use the money to halt the spread of the disease and mitigate its financial impact.

"There will be need for some sort of debt relief from bilateral creditors to secure the resources urgently needed to fight COVID-19 and to help manage or maintain macroeconomic stability in the region," Cesar Calderon, the bank's lead economist and lead author of the report, said.

The World Bank said African policymakers should focus on saving lives and protecting livelihoods by spending money to strengthen health systems and taking quick actions to minimise disruptions in food supply chains.

Agencies

Pandemic could plunge half a billion people into poverty - Oxfam

LONDON

THE fallout from the coronavirus spread that has killed more than 83,000 people and wreaked havoc on economies around the world could push around half a billion people into poverty, Oxfam said yesterday.

The report released by the Nairobi-based charity ahead of next week's International Monetary Fund (IMF)/World Bank annual meeting calculated the impact of the crisis on global poverty due to shrinking household incomes or consumption.

"The economic crisis that is rapidly unfolding is deeper than the 2008 global financial crisis," the report found.

"The estimates show that, regardless of the scenario, global poverty could increase for the first time since 1990," it said, adding



that this could throw some countries back to poverty levels last seen some three decades ago.

The report authors played through a number of scenarios, taking into account the World Bank's various poverty lines - from extreme poverty, defined as living on US\$1.90 a day or less, to higher poverty lines of living on less than US\$5.50 a day.

Under the most serious scenario - a 20% contraction in income - the number of people living

in extreme poverty would rise by 434 million people to 922 million worldwide. The same scenario would see the number of people living below the US\$5.50 a day threshold rise by 548 million people to nearly 4 billion.

Women are at more risk than men, as they are more likely to work in the informal economy with little or no employment rights.

"Living day to day, the poorest people do not have the ability to take time off work, or to stockpile provisions," the report warned, adding that more than 2 billion informal sector workers worldwide had no access to sick pay.

The World Bank last week said poverty in East Asia and the Pacific region alone could increase by 11 million people if conditions worsened.

To help mitigate the impact, Oxfam proposed a six-point action plan that would deliver cash grants and bailouts to people and businesses in need, and also called for debt cancellation, more IMF support, and increased aid. Taxing wealth, extraordinary profits, and speculative financial products would help raise the funds needed, Oxfam added.

Calls for debt relief have increased in recent weeks as the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic has roiled developing nations around the world.

Agencies

3rd CIIIE to showcase more healthcare products, services

BEIJING

THE third China International Import Expo (CIIIE) plans to double the size of its medicine and medical equipment section from that of last year's event, and nearly 60 Fortune 500 companies and industry giants have signed up for the section, an official said yesterday.

Over 80 percent of the planned area for this section has been booked, Gao Feng, spokesperson of the Ministry of Commerce, told a press briefing.

The section will display items such as drugs, medical equipment, elderly care, health food and medical services. A few companies will present epidemic control products including extracorporeal membrane oxygenation machines, invasive and non-invasive ventilators, thermometers and protective face masks, said Gao.

More than 1,000 exhibitors worldwide have signed up for the third CIIIE scheduled to be held in Shanghai from Nov. 5 to 10, occupying 60 percent of the exhibit space.

Xinhua

Pandemic may sweep away 20m jobs in Africa

NAIROBI

THE African Union warns that up to 20 million people could lose their jobs as the coronavirus makes ever deeper inroads into the continent.

The risks to national economies were set out in a report, "Impact of the Coronavirus on the African Economy", which was released on Monday.

The document also raised the specter of social unrest resulting from the turmoil.

The report focuses on the possible socio-economic repercussions of the outbreak in order to propose policy recommendations for implementation at a time when the pandemic is at an early stage in Africa.

"The coronavirus pandemic has revealed that African countries are extremely exposed to external shocks," the report reads. "A paradigm shift is needed in order to change the trade patterns of African countries within themselves and with the rest of world, particularly with China, Europe, the USA and other emerging countries."

The African Union notes that tumbling oil prices will disrupt the economies of the major oil-producing countries, such as Algeria, Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana and Nigeria.

The report singles out Nigeria and Angola, which draw up their budgets on the basis of oil trading at \$67 a barrel. With prices dropping below US\$30 a barrel, many countries are staring at sharp budget deficits.

"Today, crude oil is facing the biggest demand shock in its history, falling below US\$30 a barrel, due to the cessation of world trade since January," the report says. "For oil-producing countries in Africa like Nigeria and Angola, which are the continent's largest producers, oil revenues represent more than 90 percent of exports and more than 70 percent of their national budgets, and the fall in prices will likely hit them in a similar proportion."

The report identifies tourism as another sector that will put African economies under pressure. It provides more than a million jobs in Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania. The African Union says tourism will be hurt by travel restrictions, the closure of borders and social distancing.

Agencies

World should move faster to prevent coronavirus crisis in Africa

NAIROBI

THE COVID-19 pandemic is ravaging the world and Africa is not being spared. Since the first confirmed case was found in Egypt in mid-February, the coronavirus has spread to 52 out of the 54 African countries with more than 10,000 infections.

The wealthy countries in the West are staggering under the strain caused by the outbreak.

With densely populated markets and housing, poor access to clean water and run-down health infrastructure, Africa, the least developed continent, is even more vulnerable to the raging pandemic.

The international community must move fast to support Africa and keep it from becoming the next "epicenter" of the pandemic, since any failure to do so would deliver a heavy blow

to the global battle against the pathogen.

For decades, Africa has been plagued by malaria, AIDS as well as tuberculosis and has yet to recover from two rounds of Ebola virus outbreak in 2014 and 2018.

Now, it faces serious challenges - shortage of test kits, insufficient protective materials and isolation wards, and poor medical facilities and services.

What is worse, inevitable

prevention measures taken by many African countries, like city lockdowns, curfews and suspensions of international flights, have incurred enormous economic costs and threatened to cause unimaginable humanitarian disasters.

In the words of John Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the COVID-19 pandemic "is an existential threat"

to the continent with a population of 1.3 billion.

During the Extraordinary G20 Leaders' Summit last month, major economies in the world have reached a consensus that consolidating Africa's health defense is a key for the resilience of global health.

The group must now take concrete actions to implement their consensus, and help developing and least developed countries,

notably those in Africa, to cope with the daunting challenge.

China has been doing what it can to help African countries. It has organized several video conferences to share its experience in fighting the outbreak with African countries.

Chinese enterprises and other entities have also assisted Africa by donating millions of masks and test kits to African countries.

What's more, China has helped renovate several designated COVID-19 treatment hospitals in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Senegal for free.

No country or continent should be left ignored in the global fight against the coronavirus. As the clock ticks, the world should move faster to help its least prepared regions to survive the unprecedented health crisis.

Xinhua

The
Guardian

SPORT



Uhuru Primary School's pupils participate in volleyball training session at the JMK Youth Park in Dar es Salaam recently. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

Formula One faces new reality amid coronavirus crisis - Todt

PARIS

FORMULA One is facing a new reality and must make deeper cost cuts to ensure the sport emerges intact from the coronavirus crisis, FIA president Jean Todt said.

Nine Formula One Grand Prix races have been cancelled or postponed since the start of the season in Melbourne last month and the next race on schedule is the French GP on June 28.

"I'm sure that a lot of teams, suppliers, manufacturers, they may have to review their programmes," Todt told Motorsport on Thursday.

"They may be constrained to stop.

"I don't want to be too confident, but I hope a few team owners or team sponsors will keep the motivation. That's why we must make sure we don't discourage them, because they may say OK, after all of that, what is the purpose? Do I still like it?"

Do I still need it?"

Also speaking to French sports daily L'Equipe on Thursday, Todt said the FIA would not rush the resumption of the season.

"We will not put anyone in danger to resume a championship," the Frenchman explained.

"We will only resume when we have guarantees that the contamination risk is zero."

Motorsport's philosophy will have to change, too, Todt added.

"We will have to restart from scratch and do things differently," he said.

Teams have agreed to lower the 2021 budget cap from \$175 million to \$150 million and L'Equipe reported that the FIA would be pushing to further lower it down to \$125 or \$100 million.

"We will have to be determined because some are against the proposals that are essential to the survival of the sport," said Todt.



FIA President Jean Todt

Athletics: Suspension of Olympic qualification gets cool reception

LONDON

THE decision by the governing body of athletics to suspend Olympic qualification until December due to the coronavirus outbreak has received a cool reception from some Tokyo hopefuls.

World Athletics announced on Tuesday that qualification for the Tokyo Olympics, which will now take place in July and August next year, would restart on Dec. 1, subject to the global situation returning to normal. "Pretty disappointed about this decision," former Olympic steeplechase silver medalist Evan Jager posted on Twitter.

"Even if COVID-19 clears up in some countries and it's safe to compete, (it) takes away a major motivation to run fast this year.

"I understand freezing the world rankings but I feel achieving the Olympic Standard should still be on the table."

Measures to control the coronavirus have forced many athletes into self-isolation, while most major meets and marathons in the first half of the year have been postponed.

Athletes need to reach certain qualifying marks to be available for selection for the Olympics by their national federations.

The qualifying period started in 2019 and, after the suspension, will continue until the end of May for the marathon and 50 kilometre race walk, and June next year for all other events.

Jamaican middle-distance runner Aisha Praught-Leer thought the decision was premature and would affect the ability of athletes to earn sponsorship by achieving Olympic qualifying times (QT's). "Running for QT's was the last modicum of hope many could cling to in 2020," she posted on Twitter.

"Most don't make money. Most are doing everything they can to have a shot. Why make a blanket statement when we don't know what the future holds and remove the only lasting power an athlete has in 2020?"

Christian Taylor, twice Olympic triple jump champion, welcomed the fact that the Athletes Commission of World Athletics had been consulted over the decision but thought wider opinion should have been solicited.

REUTERS

Sporting events suspension frustrates hockey club targets

By Guardian Reporter

DAR ES SALAAM hockey side, Black Mamba, has disclosed the suspension of sporting activities in Tanzania following the Coronavirus pandemic has frustrated the side's targets.

The side said it had set several targets with a view to achieving success in major tournaments.

Black Mamba skipper Mark Fernandez disclosed the targets include participating in training on regular basis.

The side, he pointed out, had moreover planned to groom domestic performers in an effort to avoid depending on foreign performers.

"Our club had come up with the targets, we have as well targeted to form junior teams in U-12, U-14, U-16 and U-18 categories," he disclosed.

He disclosed the squad will train the junior players with a view to seeing to it they step into the shoes of the outfit's senior players in the future.

Dossa Joshi, a former senior national hockey team player, praised Black Mamba for targeting to set up junior teams.

"All countries which are enjoying success in hockey at the international level have sound junior development programs," he pointed out.

The club took the second spot in the men's category of this season's Mapinduzi Cup that took place in Dar



Black Mamba hockey side's players pictured after the men's category final of this season's Mapinduzi Cup that took place in Dar es Salaam recently. The club suffered loss to Moshi Khalsa in the final. PHOTO: BLACK MAMBA HOCKEY CLUB

es Salaam recently.

Black Mamba's efforts to clinch the silverware ended in vain considering they lost 2-1 to the tournament favourites, Moshi Khalsa, in a pulsating final.

Black Mamba as well had an impressive outing in the Aside Field competition which took place at JMK Youth Park in Dar es Salaam early this

year. Black Mamba had in one of the event's matches clobbered Arusha Twiga 3-1.

Arusha Twiga's player, Prabvir Singh, won the Aside Field competition's best player honour.

Black Mamba's player Tipu Hassan laid his hands on the competition's top scorer honour.

The club, which was formed last

year, has turned out to be a force to reckon with in the sport in the country because of the success it has garnered in competitions the outfit has participated in.

Black Mamba have, in the process, outshone such established hockey teams like Tanzania People's Defense Forces (TPDF), Prisons, Dar Khalsa and Arusha Twiga.

LeBron: Closure not likely unless Lakers can finish season



LeBron James

LOS ANGELES

INSTEAD of preparing for a playoff run, LeBron James is mostly spending the spring playing hoops with his teenage sons and enjoying tea time with his young daughter.

And when he isn't binge-watching "Tiger King" with his wife, he is scanning the news for information on whether the coronavirus pandemic will allow the Los Angeles Lakers to finish their impressive season chasing an NBA championship.

James is still optimistic about the Lakers' future, but he also knows safety comes first.

"I don't think I'll be able to have any closure if we do not have an opportunity to finish this season," James said from his home Wednesday on a conference call with Lakers beat reporters.

The Lakers were cruising toward their first playoff berth since 2013 when the NBA season was suspended March 11. They have the Western Conference's best record at 49-14, leading the second-place Clippers (44-20) by 5 1/2 games and trailing only Milwaukee (53-12) in the overall league standings.

The Lakers did it following a thorough roster turnover last summer headlined by the arrival of Anthony Davis. They also persevered through a stressful preseason trip to China, followed by the death of franchise icon Kobe Bryant in a helicopter crash in January.

James' 17th NBA season is obviously unique for many reasons, but he is uncommonly proud of what the Lakers have accomplished so far.

"I can have some satisfaction on what our team has been able to do this year (with) a first-year coach, first-year system, a whole new coaching staff, bringing on so many new pieces to our team this year," James said. "I honestly didn't think that we would be able to come together as fast as we did, just having so many new pieces (and) bringing in Anthony. He spent seven years in New Orleans, so he was coming into a new system, playing along with myself, and how we would be able to come together? I thought it would take us a lot longer than it did, but I was wrong. I was very wrong about that."

And then all that good work abruptly stopped four weeks ago.

Two unidentified Lakers players subsequently tested positive for coronavirus, and the Lakers say James and his teammates are all healthy after they completed their 14-day isolation.

James will be deeply disappointed if the Lakers don't get a chance to test themselves during a playoff run, yet he realizes what's most important in the upcoming weeks and months.

James initially expressed reluctance about playing games in empty arenas, or the possibility of NBA teams gathering in the same city to complete the season in a form of sports quarantine. The 16-time All-Star selection now says he is up for anything that's safe and smart.

"If it's in one single, isolated destination, if it's Las Vegas or somewhere else that can hold us and keep us in the best possible chance to be safe, not only on the floor but also off the floor as well, then those conversations will be had," James said. "Once this thing gets a good handle on it and the people in the higher ranks understand it, if they know we are safe, then we can make the next step. But the safety is always the most important, and then we go

from there."

James isn't yet back at work with Mike Mancias, his personal trainer. Instead, he says he is training with his wife, Savannah, and playing plenty of hoops with Bronny James, their 15-year-old son, at a thoroughly sterilized court owned by a friend. He also shoots hoops outside at his own home with the whole family.

James is doing weekly meditation, but says his mental state is outstanding thanks to his family. He has frequently spoken about missing time with loved ones during the grind of the NBA season, so he is enjoying this intensive togetherness with his kids.

"They wake up every day in a positive mind frame," James said with a laugh. "Maybe one reason is they're not actually in school, so I know they get to sleep in a lot more now. But also they're just so appreciative of life. ... Just being able to see my kids wake up with that positive attitude helps. For me, I wake up, I'm able to get a nice breakfast, and then I train. And when I'm training, I'm always in a very positive state of mind."

AP

Infantino talks of different football, but what might it look like?

BERN

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has said that football will be "totally different" when it re-starts after the coronavirus. He has talked of smaller, but more meaningful, competitions, more balance and football being "more attentive to true values."

Infantino has not yet gone into further details and some may question his credentials in this matter: as FIFA president he has increased the World Cup from 32 to 48 teams and, in a previous role as UEFA general secretary, oversaw growing financial inequality in European football.

But, putting that aside, what might such a future look like?

Recent talks and meetings have provided some clues as to what the future could hold. Here are some possibilities:

FEWER, BUT LONGER INTERNATIONAL WINDOWS

International matches are played in several short windows which are seen by some as an unwelcome intrusion into the club season.

An alternative would be to concentrate them into one or two longer windows per season.

This would give national team coaches more time to train their squads, which could in turn improve the quality of matches – often compared unfavourably to club games – and could reduce long-haul travel for the players.

Meanwhile, there is a growing sentiment that the Africa Cup of Nations and the CONCACAF Gold Cup should be held every four years instead of two.

STRENGTHENING CLUB FOOTBALL OUTSIDE THE BIG FIVE LEAGUES

Infantino's most ambitious project is to "bring at least 50 national teams and 50 clubs from all continents to a top competitive level."

FIFA hopes to do this by launching a new global development programme and new global competitions such as the 24-team Club World Cup, which was due to start in 2021 but has been postponed because of the coronavirus.

"We need 50 clubs that can win the Club World Cup, not just five or six European ones. And 20 of these 50 will be European, which seems better than today's five or six," said Infantino.

CROSS BORDER LEAGUES

Cross-border leagues, until now frowned upon by FIFA, could help by giving more growth opportunities for clubs limited by small internal markets.

Earlier this year, Infantino himself proposed a 20-team Pan-African league which he said could give clubs a chance to grow and encourage African players to stay on the continent rather than move to Europe.

New transfer regulations, currently being worked on, could also help if they succeed in limiting the astronomical fees – even average international players are currently unaffordable for most African and South American clubs – and prevent big clubs from hoarding players.

NEW COMPETITION FORMATS

For a glimpse of what new formats could look like, the CONCACAF World Cup qualifiers for 2022, featuring a highly unconventional system, offers a sneak preview.

The 35 teams have been divided into two sections, according to their FIFA rankings. The top six-ranked teams take part in a mini league – the Hexagonal – where the top three qualify for the World Cup.

The remaining 29 teams were sent into the "lower seeded" section where they are split into eight groups, followed by a knock out stage with the eventual winners to meet the fourth-placed team from the Hexagonal in a play off. The winners of that tie go into an intercontinental play off.

"This new format makes every competitive match count," said CONCACAF president Victor Montagliani – although it could be seen as highly unfair on teams who just miss out on the Hexagonal in the first place.

Meanwhile, UEFA's Nations League has proved an unexpected success as it pits teams against opponents of the same standard in small groups – unlike the region's qualifying competitions which consist of notoriously bloated, unbalanced groups and too many one-sided games.

On the domestic front, 22 of Europe's 54 leagues now use a variety on the play off system, rather than conventional format, to avoid teams running away with the title.

SMALLER TOP DIVISIONS, FEWER CUP TOURNAMENTS

At club level, the European Club Association (ECA) has often spoken of reducing the size of first divisions which include up to 20 teams in several larger countries.

Axing domestic cups may be an attractive proposition in countries such as Italy, where the Coppa Italia is actively designed to avoid upsets, but less so in other countries where they are still seen as a chance for giant-killing.

LIMIT MATCHES FOR PLAYERS, BUT NOT CLUBS?

A radical idea which has been discussed by FIFPRO would be to limit the number of matches players can play in a season – but not clubs. This would allow bigger clubs to play year round and go on lucrative tours abroad, though the amount of squad rotation it would require could prove a headache for coaches.

REUTERS

A month into lockdown, Serie A torn over return to action

MILAN

A MONTH after Serie A last saw a ball kicked football-mad Italy is torn over whether to return to action or scrap the season as the coronavirus crisis continues to keep the nation on lockdown.

Endless dates have been proposed from May, through to September and October, all depending "on when health conditions allow".

The Mediterranean country has been under siege since the COVID-19 disease took a grip on February 22, and no Serie A matches have been played March 9.

In the midst of the health crisis which has claimed the lives of nearly 18,000 people, Italy's top clubs have been at loggerheads over when is best to resume this season, if ever.

The Lombardy region – home to Inter Milan and AC Milan – has recorded 9,722 deaths while the neighbouring Piedmont, the home region of champions Juventus has also been hard hit.

Among the most vocal supporters of the season being scrapped are clubs located in the northern

regions, such as Brescia and Torino.

Brescia president Massimo Cellino warned last week his club, who are at the epicentre of Italy's outbreak, were ready to forfeit their matches if the season resumes, saying that "returning to play is pure madness".

Brescia opted for a more conciliatory tone Wednesday, saying a statement: "The resumption of the championship is a possibility that the club would like to avoid while respecting the sad reality of Brescia."

Torino president Urbano Cairo agreed: "In my opinion, the championship is over. The title will not be awarded."

But Lazio president Claudio Lotito, whose club are second, one point behind Juventus as they chase their first title in two decades, has been keen to return. Juve are also leaning towards a return to action as they target a ninth consecutive 'Scudetto'.

Juve president Andrea Agnelli, as head of the European Club Association (ECA), issued a joint letter with UEFA and European Leagues, stating: "Any decision of abandoning domestic competitions is, at this stage, premature and not justified."

AFP

Can FIFA save soccer during coronavirus crisis with an economic bailout?

By Gabriele Marcotti, Senior Writer, ESPN FC

FOOTBALL mirrors life. And football governments sometimes mirror real governments.

As the coronavirus pandemic wreaks havoc – first and foremost with human life, but also the economy and people's livelihoods – so, too, is it throwing football's ecosystem into a tailspin.

Just as governments are taking economic countermeasures – from bailouts to stimulus bills – football's governing body, FIFA, is considering how best to react. The organization, which has cash reserves of more than \$2.7 billion, as well as the ability to borrow against future income and guarantee loans, is exploring ways to stave off economic disaster.

In the short term, many clubs of all sizes are starved of cash flow and risk insolvency since the game ground to a halt last month. In the medium term, it is unclear whether sponsors and broadcasters will be able to meet their financial commitments, or whether the game will be able to keep its end of the bargain and deliver matches to global audiences.

And in the long term, the very financial structure of the game, which sees players listed as assets on balance sheets and upon whom clubs rely on trading to balance books, is in jeopardy.

The challenge to save football is unprecedented. Right now, not only do we not have a sense of what it will take on a global level to mitigate the most serious damage, we do not even know when we will know.

There is also a certain unease at the idea of FIFA doling out money to the rest of the world given the history of patronage and corruption that resulted in scandal and a 2016 indictment that brought down the previous administration. But it is also an opportunity to shape the future of the game and effect lasting change. A chance to make fairer, more transparent and more sustainable a sport that, even as it has grown at the top end, has left many disenfranchised and frustrated by imbalances of power, polarization and corruption.

Here are some key questions as FIFA looks to create its own stimulus package:

Q: How much money does FIFA have to give away and how did they get it?

A: They have \$2.745 billion in cash reserves. Some of that is already committed to different projects – \$500 million is earmarked for women's football over the next four years, for example – but the bulk of it is sitting there. FIFA's main source of income, which supplies more than 90% of revenue, comes from organizing the men's World Cup and selling commercial and broadcasting rights to the tournament.

The idea is not just to give away FIFA's cash reserves, though; it's to create a bailout fund for the game. Some of it might be a portion of those cash reserves, some of it might be borrowing against future income, and some of it might be acting like a guarantor if clubs need to borrow money; a bit like parents who co-sign their kids' mortgages.

Remember, though, this is a concept right now and FIFA has plenty to thrash out, starting with whether to make the funds available directly to clubs, leagues or member associations.

Q: Is the situation really so dire that football needs to be bailed out?

A: Why else do you think players are being asked to take pay cuts? We don't know how long the pandemic will last, but it's obvious that if games aren't being played, there's little to no cash flow. Clubs have costs: cash comes in and goes out the door straight away and not just to player wages. Rent must be paid, debt needs servicing, and non-playing staff need to be paid.

Most clubs, outside a handful in big European leagues, make most of their money from matchday income: tickets, parking and concessions. They might get a little in sponsorship and commercial revenue, but with the economic slowdown, that revenue will dry up, too. And, sure, some clubs also get broadcasting income, but that is also in jeopardy; it's not clear that broadcasters will want to pay up in full for games that aren't taking place or might take place at less desirable times.

Q: Surely that can't be the case at the biggest clubs in the biggest leagues? Especially those owned by multibillionaires?

A: Not every club is in the same boat. Manchester United, for example, shows cash (and cash equivalent) reserves of \$377m (£307.6m) in their most recent accounts. They have been profitable for years and their majority owners, the Glazer family, are extremely rich, so they are unlikely to have a cash flow issue.

Bear in mind, though, that wealth and liquidity are two different things. The stock market is down some 30%, oil and commodity prices are also down. Rich people might have a lot of assets, but they probably don't want to sell them now to raise cash because value has declined. (As the saying goes, the only time you can ever make a loss in the stock market is when you sell.)

Q: So FIFA wants to create a fund to help football. Is it similar to what governments are doing by approving massive stimulus packages?

A: Sort of. And it's not just FIFA acting alone. The issue was one of several discussed with the six regional confederations – UEFA, CONCACAF, CONMEBOL, AFC, CAF and OFC – last Friday. They will obviously need to be involved, though most of them do not have much in the way of cash reserves.



FIFA president Gianni Infantino must decide how best to help clubs and leagues in need. (Agencies)

Even UEFA, who are sitting on nearly \$600m, probably cannot commit much since they'll likely be hit hard by the postponement of Euro 2020 – they say it will cost them in excess of \$300m – and the 2019-20 Champions League and Europa League knockout stages indefinitely postponed. Some of the wealthier national associations could chip in on a local basis, but there are a number of big decisions to make.

Q: Like what?

A: How much money to raise and how to raise it, primarily. FIFA will have to decide how much of their own reserves to devote to this, how much to borrow against future earnings and how much to raise by acting as a guarantor on other entities' loans.

The next step is how to distribute the money – whether through grants or loans – and, crucially, decide who gets it and when.

Q: If it is a cash flow problem, loans makes sense, right?

A: Indeed. Interest-free bridge loans, paid back over time, would seem right and bear in mind that, in most countries, it would take relatively little – think millions, rather than tens of millions or more – to keep things ticking over.

The tricky part is deciding who gets the money. It's straightforward with clubs that are publicly owned or nonprofits. You can look at their accounts, figure out what's needed and what you can contribute.

With private ownership, it's more difficult for the reasons stated above. Some of the owners may be asset rich but cash poor. Or they may simply not want to divert cash from their other businesses, which may also be struggling. Or maybe they're just stingy and don't really care about the club and are all too happy for someone else to fund their losses. You need to evaluate each case.

Q: How do you do that?

A: What I would like to see is independent, non-football figures involved, such as economists and auditors. Maybe borrow some from the World Bank or International Monetary Fund, who do this sort of thing for a living. But it can't be left solely to football administrators.

Q: Why?

A: Have you forgotten FIFA's track record when it comes to doling out money? How the patronage system brought down Gianni Infantino's predecessor, Sepp Blatter? Cash for votes? There was too much pork in that system and it led to decades of corruption and the scandal that brought down a whole generation of football administrators.

Infantino may rub some of the wrong way with a style that can seem autocratic and grandstanding at times, but there is no debate that there is far more oversight and transparency than before. That said, simply writing a check to member association and telling them to go fix their problem is a recipe for corruption and malfeasance.

Plus, there's another problem if they do that ...

Q: What is that?

A: The relationship between FIFA and UEFA has been tense for a while. Infantino's decision to stage a 24-team Club World Cup – the first edition was to be held in the summer of 2021 in China, but that has been postponed due to the coronavirus crisis – was seen by some at UEFA as a form of encroachment on their turf, since the biggest, most lucrative clubs are in Europe and this would have given FIFA a direct business relationship with them.

Moreover, the fact that Infantino was originally going to fund this with a \$25 billion offer from unknown investors assembled by the Japanese conglomerate SoftBank and insisted on getting approval from confederations without offering details did not sit well with them, either.

That's why it is important that FIFA and UEFA put their differences to one side and why they cannot be the ones handing out the money. They cannot be seen to be currying favour with one party or another. Provide the funds, set up the mechanism and step away. You will help football and save jobs.

Q: You talked about using this for a better world, once this is over. What does that mean?

A: This funding has to come with strings attached. That's how federal bailouts work, that's how IMF bailouts work, that's how this has to work. And by this I mean a commitment for football to give itself new rules. I don't know if this industry is more

corrupt than other ones, but there is certainly enough malfeasance to go around, whether its money laundering, tax evasion, conflicts of interest, lack of transparency. You have clubs that are basically just cover for third-party ownership. You have certain agents who effectively run half-a-dozen clubs like their own fiefdoms. You have clubs owned by offshore companies; Bournemouth and Tottenham are just two examples of many. You have a club in a major European league, whose owner also owns a significant chunk of a football agency. You have clubs whose owners borrow against the assets of the club to fund activities elsewhere. You have players who are exploited, who don't get paid, who have to give up their education to pursue an athletic career that might pay them peanuts. Need me to go on?

Q: I get the picture. So the aim is to get clubs to play along?

A: You cannot force change from the top, but you can tell clubs, "if you're going to take our money, you need to follow these rules." That's what the IMF and World Bank do when they provide loans and grants and some at FIFA see a vision along those lines. If enough clubs do, maybe they'll be able to pressure leagues to introduce newer, tougher rules to stop some irresponsible behaviour. It will probably be necessary, because, make no mistake about it, when football returns, it's not going to bounce back straight away.

Q: Why not?

A: Because the economic landscape will change. Economies will contract, there will be less money floating around, fans will have less cash in their pockets and institutions will have more debt. When that happens, if you're not careful, you have a negative chain reaction, which is why governments come up with stimulus packages.

All those clubs that list footballers as assets on their books – putting valuations on them that might have made sense a year ago – will have to rethink things.

It is crucial to be prepared; that there is a better ecosystem for the game to survive and grow in a fairer, more credible way. As much as ensuring cash flow and that clubs and players do not file for bankruptcy, that has to be the goal of any bailout by FIFA and the sport in general.



SPORT

Can FIFA save soccer during coronavirus crisis with an economic bailout?

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Yanga winger Juma Mahadhi (L) gets the better of Democratic Republic of Congo's TP Mazembe player during the 2016/17 CAF Confederation Cup's group stage clash, which took place in Dar es Salaam.

Sporting events suspension prevents clubs from properly monitoring players -Katwila

By Correspondent Joseph Mchekadona

MTIBWA Sugar head coach, Zubeir Katwila, has disclosed it is difficult for squads to monitor their players' training during this period when the 2019/20 football season has been suspended due to the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic.

The season and other sporting events were suspended by the government two weeks in a bid to fight the pandemic.

This has seen Mtibwa Sugar, which participate in the Mainland Premier League, and the league's other sides suspend training sessions in a bid to ensure safety of their players, officials and supporters from the outbreak.

Katwila said he gave his players training program for them to continue training at their respective homes in a bid to maintain their fitness, but said it is difficult to monitor them.

"I gave my players training program, they are doing it at their individual residences, but as you know I can not move from house to house following them regularly, as some players stay upcountry," he disclosed.

"So in general it is difficult for us to monitor them, but as mature people I expect them to follow the program," he said.

He said, Mtibwa Sugar are not taking chances in their preparations.

However, Katwila disclosed that he is doing his best to ascertain if the players are following the program he gave them.

Katwila further said it will not be easy for players to maintain their fitness once the the government announces the lift of the suspension of sporting activities and all gatherings.

He hailed Tanzania Premier League Board (TPLB) for its opinion that teams have to be given days to prepare well in the case the suspension has been lifted.

He pointed out the approach is the only way which can keep players fit.



Mtibwa Sugar head coach, Zubeir Katwila.

TONIGHT @ 9:00

EATV FRIDAY

11:00 DADAZ LIVE
12:00 Mid Week Movie (r)
13:30 Kali Za Wana
14:00 Bongo Hits
15:00 Funguka
15:30 Wakilisha (r)
16:00 Ujenzi (r)
16:30 #HASHTAG
17:00 S5ELEKT
17:55 Kurasa
18:00 eNewz
18:30 Skonga
19:30 EATV SAA I
19:45 MJADALA
20:00 DADAZ (r)
21:00 Friday Night Live
23:00 Kurasa (r)

Friday Night Live The Weekend begins here! Listen to upbeat mixed music by the hottest Djs, Gossip, showbiz updates and exclusive interviews with celebrities from home and abroad. Don't you dare miss this.

eastafrica RADIO

06:00 Supa Breakfast
10:00 MAMAMIA
12:00 Kipenga Xtra
13:00 Planet Bongo
16:00 EA Drive
20:00 Kipenga
21:00 Friday Night Live

88.1FM DAR ES SALAAM



Former senior national soccer team's player, Amri Kiemba.

Lack of plan costs Tanzania in CAF club tourneys - Kiemba

By Correspondent Michael Mwebe

FORMER Tanzania international attacking midfielder, Amri Kiemba, believes the country lacked a proper plan on how to maintain four spots in African club competitions.

Mainland Tanzania had gained two extra spots in the African club competitions at the start of this season following the exploits of Simba last year.

Simba reached the quarterfinals of the CAF Champions League before bowing out to DR Congo's TP Mazembe in April last year.

Simba, nicknamed 'Msimbazi Reds', contributed 15 points and Young Africans SC (Yanga) chipped in with three points to the five-year coefficient.

A country's achievements in the two competitions over the five-year period are awarded points, given a weighting and then averaged out.

With 18 points, Mainland Tanzania Premier League was ranked 12th on the CAF ranking of performance in continental club competitions.

The ranking had the league gaining chance to field two extra representatives for the 2019/20 CAF Champions League and 2019/20 CAF Confederation Cup.

The league's winners and the first runners-up in the 2018/19 Mainland Tanzania Premier League season, Simba and Yanga, took part in the CAF Champions League.

Azam FC, who finished third and also won the Azam Sports Federation Cup, along with KMC FC, who finished fourth in the league, competed in the CAF Confederation Cup.

At the start of this season, the objective was to get at least one team into either the CAF Champions League or CAF Confederation Cup Group Stage but none made it.

Simba were dumped out of the preliminary stage of the CAF Champions League, as it was the case for KMC FC who were taking part for the first time in the CAF Confederation Cup, to the dismay of many.

Azam FC managed to wriggle their way into the first round after edging out their opponents, Fasil Kenema from Ethiopia, in the preliminary round.

Their journey was embarrassingly cut short by less fancied Zimbabwean opponents who beat the Tanzania side home and away.

Yanga went as far as the first round of the

CAF Champions League, where they lost out to Zambia's ZESCO United.

Yanga, thereafter, had an opportunity to play in the play offs to seek qualification for the Group Stage of CAF Confederation Cup.

They succumbed to defeat to Egyptian giants, Pyramids, in the CAF Confederation Cup play offs.

The poor performance of Tanzania teams this season has cost them the two extra spots for the 2020/21 season.

Libya has picked up Tanzania's spot, given the former's club, Al Nasr, sailed through to Group Stage of this season's second tier of continental club tournaments.

Tanzania has, as a result, easily lost the spots after only one season.

Speaking about the loss of the extra spots, Kiemba who played for Simba, Yanga and Azam FC before hanging his boots, said the outcome was not surprising.

"It was a case of easy come, easy go. We neither planned for the extra spots nor prepared on how to maintain them when we got them," he disclosed.

"Things just happened by chance and frankly speaking we have lost them easily after only one season."

Mahadhi upbeat about playing for Yanga

By Correspondent Joseph Mchekadona

YOUNG Africans SC (Yanga) winger, Juma Mahadhi, has expressed hope about his return to action for the squad in this season's Mainland Premier League.

Mahadhi has been out of action since early last season when he sustained a knee injury.

The former Coastal United player said he was hopeful of a return when the league resumes.

He said he has been doing individual training sessions and thanked his club management, players and supporters for being with him during his injury period.

Mahadhi said he is deeply missing football action and disclosed that the suspension of football action due to the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic would give him more time to completely heal and be ready for action.

"It has not been easy watching action from the sidelines. I am now feeling much better and I should be ready when the league resumes," he noted.

"I thank the club management, supporters and my fellow players for their support during the period which was very difficult and tough to me and my family," he said.

The player disclosed that considering that he has been out of action for one season and half, he owes a lot to his club.

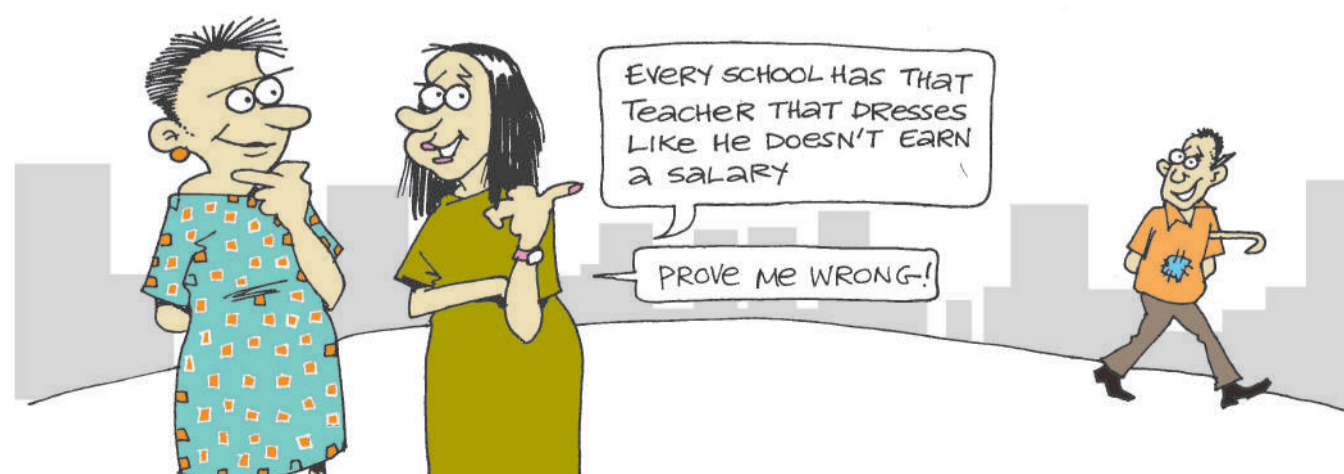
"Yanga signed me on three years' deal, but I have spent one season and half nursing my injury. I'm of the view that I owe the club a lot," he disclosed.

"The supporters haven't seen the best of me, I promise them the best when I return to action," he said.

Yanga information officer, Hassan Bumbuli, said Mahadhi recovery is encouraging as it will boost the camp.

"It is good news that he has recovered from his injury, this will boost the team, Mahadhi is one of the best players, we are missing his services," he said.

Flexibles by David Chikoko



“It has not been easy watching action from the sidelines. I am now feeling much better and I should be ready when the league resume”