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TANZANIA

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State organs quarantine 51 Ethiopians for illegal entry

By Guardian Correspondent, Bagamoyo

AUTHORITIES in Bagamoyo District, Coast Region, have quarantined 51 Ethiopians who entered the country illegally through the seashore.

The group arrived on dhows and docked at an unmarked port in the district before being busted by law enforcers while organizing transport to the southern regions.

Coast Regional Police Commander Wankyo Nyigesa (pictured) told reporters here yesterday that the foreigners were nabbed in the wee hours of Thursday and upon interrogation, said they had used dhows to enter the country and were keen to travel southwards and enter South Africa.



We took them to Matimbwa health centre which is designated for coronavirus management in our district for isolation as tests are being carried out

Bagamoyo District Commissioner Zainabu Kawawa who is chairperson of the defence and security committee of the district said the Ethiopians were arrested at a bush as they were secretly organizing transport means to the southern highlands.

"We took them to Matimbwa health centre which is designated for coronavirus management in our district for isolation as tests are being carried out," she said.

The DC noted that after the Covid-19 screening, if cleared, the foreigners were to be remanded at Kigongoni prison in

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DEDs told to transport home stranded pupils



For these fishermen and other people found at the Magogoni International Fish Market section of the Indian Ocean shores in Dar es Salaam yesterday, it was business as usual. This was despite the standing ban on most gatherings in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak. Most were at a loss to know what to do to prevent the spread of coronavirus infections. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

By Guardian Reporter, Dodoma

TRANSPORTING home thousands of pupils who are stranded all over the country after closure of boarding schools will be conducted by District Executive Directors (DEDs), by supervision of District Commissioners (DCs).

The Minister of State in the President's Office (Regional Administration and Local Governments), Selemani Jafo, told reporters here yesterday that there are learners who are stuck in various parts of the country, with their parents or guardians not being able to pick them.

Some spend cold nights at bus stands and other public spaces, the minister said, directing DCs and DEDs to work with respective school heads to ensure that the pupils travel home safely.

This follows a decision announced by Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa on Tuesday to close all kindergarten, primary and secondary schools for 30 days after the first case of coronavirus was confirmed on Monday.

The decision to close schools did not include a detailed explanation of handling the logistics of transporting the boarders back home as a matter of urgency.

Now it has emerged that a number of parents—who it appears expected to pick or send transport money to their children at the end of term in June—could not immediately afford to do so after state announcement.

The minister said that headmasters, DCs and DEDs did not need to be told that it is their responsibility to ensure that the pupils travel back home. "It is naturally their duty under the circumstances that led to closure of schools," he said.

"It is disheartening to see pupils wandering around without any help; this means leaders did not act promptly to assist them," he stated.

The minister emphasised that all head teachers and headmasters who face logistical challenges should liaise with DCs for help, as

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BMH unveils unique laser machine for kidney stones

By Guardian Reporter, Dodoma

STATE of the art medical equipment that breaks and removes kidney stones without the scalpel - the first of its kind in Tanzania was unveiled at the Benjamin Mkapa Hospital (BMH) here yesterday.

The new equipment with the scientific name of extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy (ESWL) uses shock waves to break a kidney stone



The equipment has been purchased by the government at a cost of 2.5bn/-

into small pieces that can more easily travel through the urinary tract and pass from the body.

BMH Executive Director Dr Alphonse Chandika told reporters that the machine has already been installed ready for use for patients from all over the country.

The equipment has been purchased by the government at a cost of 2.5bn/-, he said.

Its installation at the key health facility at centre of the country means it can easily serve patients from all corners of the land.

"Before procuring this machine, removal of kidney stones was done

through operation. That will not be the case anymore because this equipment uses waves," he said.

Dr Chandika noted that with ESWL, a patient lies on a water-filled cushion, and the surgeon uses X-rays or ultrasound tests to precisely locate the stone and crushes it.

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The decision to close schools did not include a detailed explanation of handling the logistics of transporting the boarders back home as a matter of urgency

Covid-19 eats up heart of Ireland's social scene

By Edna Lyatuu Hogan & Richard Gibney

● **Is this what to expect for Tanzania, Africa?**

The hotel bar wasn't busy; on a Saturday night, there ought to have been at least one hundred people there. This night, however, there were fewer than ten customers scattered around, all in pairs.

It was the week that the Republic of Ireland had closed its schools owing to the novel corona virus pandemic. The pub, in a suburb of Dublin on the country's east coast, was a popular haunt for both middle-aged and younger clientele - locals and tourists alike. Tonight, it was eerily quiet.



Edna Lyatuu Hogan



Richard Gibney

In the city, however, things were different: Footage was tweeted from the capital's cultural quarter, Templebar, displaying a very busy pub where few people could practise the "social distancing" advised by the government based on recommendations from the experts, even if they wanted to.

The moral outrage on Twitter was evident as even the Health minister weighed in, claiming that the close-quarters party atmosphere was an insult to the healthcare workers giving

their time and effort to combating the virus.

Pubs and restaurants are now being strongly advised to cease trading for the next two weeks. Although pub owners and managers are agreeing to these closures, they are pessimistic about the timeline and envisage their pubs being closed for far longer than a fortnight. Already, thousands of part-time workers have been laid off as pubs struggle to retain core staff.

Anecdotes and rumours abound; bus drivers are suggesting that there is talk

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Covid-19 eats up heart of Ireland's social scene

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of a public transport ban coming into effect in the coming days. Buses and trains are often half as busy as they used to be.

The public St Patrick's Day festivities have been cancelled; traffic is down compared to normal. [St Patrick's Day is a global celebration of Irish culture on or around March 17. It particularly remembers St Patrick, one of Ireland's patron saints, who ministered Christianity in Ireland during the fifth century.]

Here in the city, there are fewer pedestrians on the streets. The larger shops remain open, as do supermarkets, but many restaurants have also chosen to close alongside the pubs.

Schools have already closed across the Republic. People are encouraged to work from home if they can; Ireland's "paper of record", the Irish Times, has also closed its doors for two precautionary days as one of its employees has contracted the virus.

Yet there are only two deaths and fewer than 200 known cases of the virus in Ireland out of a population of nearly five million. So what are the reasons for the extreme measures being undertaken by the government?

In part, it is due to the fact that the government has seen what happened in Italy because these or similar measures were not introduced there earlier.

Monia Gsaiba, a student from Venice in Italy, came to Ireland ten days ago and was on one of the last flights to be allowed out of Northern Italy. She says of her friends still there: "They are very sad in quarantine; they can't do anything at home."

Monia is glad that she escaped the lockdown in Italy, but is worried that she will not evade it in Ireland, where there is also a very strong chance that there are people in the population who have contracted the virus and are as yet undiagnosed.

Ireland's Health Service Executive expects a dramatic surge in the number of people tested this week, as from this week GPs (general practitioners) can order Covid-19 tests electronically.

Tanzania, with only one confirmed case until only days ago (when the number rose to five), is in a more favourable place in terms of preparation. This is because it can copy or tailor the best precautionary measures that other countries have taken, both in Asia and in Europe, as well as introduce its own approach.

The Tanzanian Diaspora across the world is very concerned too.

"I am very worried about the situation here but more so back home in Tanzania. I can't help but wonder how Tanzania will cope if this deadly virus enters the country," says Anna, a Tanzanian living in Republic of Ireland.

Dr Wilbrod Slaa, Tanzania's Ambassador to Sweden doubling as the Patron of Tanzanian Diaspora worldwide, noted a few days ago: "We have one confirmed case of Covid-19 in Tanzania, as announced by Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children minister Ummu Mwalimu."

The ambassador echoed what minister Mwalimu said by urging people to follow the precautionary measures health experts have put in place.

Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar aptly remarked recently: "The corona virus does not recognise borders," adding: "There will be differences of approaches over the next few weeks and months. What there isn't any difference about is our common objective, which is to slow down this virus and push it back as much as possible and limit the harm to human health."

• **Edna Lyatuu Hogan & Richard Gibney filed this dispatch exclusively to The Guardian from Dublin, the Republic of Ireland.**

TEC wants coordinated prayers to seek God's help in fight against spread of coronavirus

By Guardian Correspondent, Moshi

THE Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) has issued special guidelines calling on faith leaders and followers all over the country to set two days of coordinated prayers to seek for God's help in the fight against spread of the COVID-19.

Speaking yesterday during the special mass to install the newly appointed bishop for Moshi Ludovick Minde, TEC President Archbishop Gervas Nyaisonga urged the followers to adhere to government's directives and plans to contain the spread of the Covid-19 corona virus.

Archbishop Nyaisonga said that the guidelines also aim to educate the followers and the public on key preventive measures of the disease.

"During this catastrophic period, we have suspended holy water services, when attending holy mass; followers will not be able to get the holy water which is usually put on entries. They will also use their hands to receive Holy Communion by hand and avoid physical touch," he said.

The guideline also directs followers not to 'kiss' the cross during commemoration of the Good Friday.

For his part, Archbishop of Arusha Isaac Amani called on followers to be serious on the disease as some of people were doing jokes in social media.

Archbishop Amani who served Moshi diocese for more than ten years commended the new bishop wishing him the best in his new responsibilities.

In her remarks, Anna Mghwira, the Kilimanjaro Regional Commissioner commended TEC for the support to fight the tragic disease.



Howard Fuka (L), a consultant coordinating the construction of Bunge Girls High School at Kikombo in Chamwino District, briefs a delegation including National Assembly Speaker Job Ndugai (2nd-R) and Dodoma regional commissioner Dr Binilith Mahenge (C, in suit) on an inspection visit at the construction site yesterday. Photo: National Assembly

BMH unveils unique laser machine for kidney stones

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Kidney stones constitutes a massive health challenge in the central regions served by BMH, thus the machine has come where it was needed most, he said. "Statistics show

that in urinary tract complications, kidney stones come second after prostate enlargement," the director noted.

Before purchasing the laser machine, at least five operations were being performed at the facility each week to remove

kidney stones, he said.

He said no thorough research has been conducted to establish why kidney stone complications are more prevalent in the central zone than other parts of the country but it is widely believed that it is due to

dry climate and people in the area not drinking enough water.

BMH urologist Dr Okoa Sukunala said the machine is set to relieve both patients and the government of costs that have thus been cut massively.

"With the previous pro-

cedures to remove kidney stones, the patient had to be admitted for at least one week which will not be the case with this equipment," the expert noted.

Kidney stones form when urine exhibits more crystal-forming substanc-

es such as calcium, oxalate and uric acid than the fluid in urine can dilute. At the same time, urine may lack substances that prevent crystals from sticking together, creating an ideal environment for kidney stones to form, he added.



Hai district commissioner Lengai ole Sabaya makes remarks shortly before prayers for a quick end to Covid-19 in Tanzania held at the Hai District Council's premises yesterday. Photo: Godfrey Mushi

DEDs told to transport home stranded pupils

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this matter falls under the docket of the district defence and security committees which they chair.

However, not all school heads sat back and minded their own business. Jafo commended the headmistress of Kilakala Girls' secondary school and headmaster of Dodoma secondary school for arranging smooth transportation of pupils back home after the closure order was given.

The closure was extended on Wednesday to include colleges and universities after more cases of Covid-19 were confirmed. Non essential travels and gatherings have also been restricted as containment measures.

As of yesterday, Tanzania had six confirmed cases of the lethal viral disease with no fatality.

State organs quarantine 51 Ethiopians for illegal entry

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the district as illegal entry charges against them are prepared.

This is just one of seemingly never-ending story of undocumented immigrants from the Horn of Africa attempting to make it to South Africa via Tanzania and other countries.

Last month, police in Morogoro region arrested 61 Ethiopian illegal im-

migrants who they were abandoned in a bush by suspected locals transporting them to the southern regions.

Morogoro Regional Police Commander Mugabo Wekwe said the illegal immigrants were arrested at Kwampangile area in Doma Ward, Mvomero district.

Wekwe said the police who were on patrol received a tip-off about a

group of people believed to be aliens in their vicinity.

Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation Minister Prof Palamagamba Kabudi last month asked Ethiopia to investigate why its nationals leave the country illegally and work on the same.

He gave the advice to Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, during their meeting

on the sidelines of the ordinary session of the 33rd AU Summit in Addis Ababa.

Prof Kabudi said that prisons in Tanzania were full of inmates, most of them being illegal immigrants from various countries including Ethiopia. He urged the country to take measures to control its citizens who have been reported to migrate to other African countries

including Tanzania.

The minister said by that time there were more than 1,300 illegal migrants in various prisons across the country.

Yesterday, this paper reported that the immigration department in Songwe region had nabbed 73 illegal immigrants from nine foreign countries last month.

Regional Immigration Officer Wilfred Marwa

said those nabbed had come from Somalia, Kenya, USA, India, Congo, Burundi, Ethiopia, Malawi and Zambia.

Many of the aliens crossed the border into Tanzania through unauthorized routes, in which case local residents must not to shelter them especially at this time of the coronavirus pandemic, he added.



The laying of a Lake Victoria water project pipe is in progress, as witnessed in Masengwa ward, Shinyanga district, on Thursday. Photo: Correspondent Marco Maduhu

Ruwasa takes steps to stop water theft

By Guardian Correspondent, Kigoma

Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWASA) has cited the establishment of water users' boards as one of the best measures which would contribute immensely in the fight against water loss and thefts in the country.

Speaking during the inauguration of the board for water users association, Kigoma district water manager Eng Respesius Mwombeki expressed his sadness on the behaviour of some people engaging in thefts of infrastructures thus affecting water supply in the district.

"We have started to take stern measures to control the challenge, so far at least 10 boards of water users' associations (WUAs) had been established as per the Water Resources Management Act. The boards will be governing and supervising water infrastructures and sources as well as controlling thefts and destruction of the precious resource," he said.

According to him, the boards involve of-

officials such as local government leaders, teachers and other key elders in the villages.

Eng Mwombeki said that huge amount of water is being lost because of infrastructure leakages. The culprits are doing illegal water connections. He also said that recently the agency purchased new pipes worth 6m/- for the stolen infrastructures.

Mahamudu Issa, one of the members of the board called on the public to protect water sources and avoid practicing human being activities along the vital areas.

According to him, some people have been conducting palm oil processing near water sources leading to production of a lot of wastes thus threatening the safety and life span of the water sources.

"This should be taken seriously, these people are destroying our water sources, measures should be taken to net them.

Another board member Jummanne Rashid said that they are going to ensure that they promote team work spirit within the board so as to achieve all the anticipated goals.

Mbeya farmers will likely harvest more rice this season - official

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

MBEYA Region is expected to increase rice production per acre due to the effective use of improved seeds, farm inputs, and upgraded irrigation technology.

Regional agriculture and irrigation officer, Wilfred Kayombo said this yesterday when he met with irrigation experts from the National Irrigation Commission (NIRC), who are inspecting the progress of irrigation projects in the southern highlands region.

Kayombo said that for the past four years, rice production per acre in the region has been increasing on a yearly basis.

For instance, he said that in the 2016/2017 season, rice production was at 2.8 tonnes per acre, while the following year (2017/2018) rice production was at 3.1 tonnes per acre and in the 2018/2019 farming season, farmers harvested an average of 4.63 tonnes per acre.

"In the 2019/2020 farming season, Mbeya Region is expecting to increase rice production

to an average of 5 tonnes per acre. And this is contributed by a number of interventions including the effective use of improved seeds, farm inputs, and irrigation technology," Kayombo said.

NIRC regional irrigation Engineer, Elibariki Mwendo said that the achievement is a result of the increasing use of improved seeds and modern technologies in rice farming in Mbarali, Kyela, Busokelo, and Mbeya Rural districts.

Eng. Mwendo said that many farmers have moved from tra-

ditional farming practices to a technology-led production. The official said that farmers are currently adopting improved rice varieties like SARO 5 (TXD 306) and being trained on good agricultural practices for rice production.

According to him, the SARO 5 (TXD 306) rice variety has a yield potential of 40 bags per acre.

He further said that rice production in Mbarali District has increased from three tonnes to 5.4 tonnes per acre, while maize

has increased to 3.5 from 2.3 tonnes per acre, onions (10 to 11 tonnes per acre), tomatoes (21 to 40 tonnes per acre).

Eng. Mwendo cited environmental degradation in water sources as one of the challenges facing irrigation projects in Mbeya region.

"Excessive tree felling for timber and cooking energy, some of the areas are cleared and lead to soil erosion and siltation in the rivers, hence pose negative impacts on irrigation infrastructure," Mwendo said.

He also described the increasing number of people, who are relying on the Ruaha river basin for irrigation as another challenge thwarting irrigation infrastructure development in the southern highlands region.

Unwise use of water for small-scale farmers who use traditional irrigation schemes is another challenge facing irrigation schemes in the region, he said.

In addressing all the challenges, Eng Mwendo said that the government through NIRC has come up with the 15-year

National Irrigation Master Plan (2020 - 2035) to improve all irrigation schemes across the country including building dams for irrigation and other water uses.

Through the master plan, NIRC will venture into a campaign to encourage people to get involved in environmental conservation and sustainable water use.

NIRC has been working closely with district councils to look for financial resources to build irrigation schemes to increase food crop production.

CTI challenged to set up industrial sugar factories

By Aisia Rweyemamu

THE government has challenged the members of Confederation of Tanzania Industries (CTI) to establish cooking oil and industrial sugar factories in order to address the existing deficit of the products in the country.

The call was made yesterday in Dar es Salaam by Minister of State in Prime Minister's Office responsible for Investments Angelah Kairuki shortly after meeting with CTI leaders.

Briefing the media, Kairuki said Tanzania is currently a deficit of 360,000 tonnes of cooking oil as production stands at 180,000 tonnes per year.

"There is a huge investment potential in these areas which have not been properly tapped. CTI should advise its members to venture in cooking oil manufacturing since the market is available", said the Minister.

On industrial sugar, the minister noted that all industrial sugar used by local manufacturers is imported because there is no a single factory producing the product.

She said industrial owners are likely to reap more benefits by producing the sweetener locally.

The minister also urged CTI members to increase production and improve the quality of products to compete in markets within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and East Africa Community (EAC).

Kairuki commended the valuable contribution made by CTI in promoting the country's economy through increased exportation of locally manufactured products as well as creation of jobs.

The minister said, they have received all the suggestions they have been given by CTI, including requiring the government to have few measurable priorities.

She added: "we have also received a number of challenges facing CTI including the delay of VAT refund; the government is working on it in order to get a permanent solution".

CTI chairman, Subhash Patel said currently the country needs value addition and supply chain industries. He said value addition would bring economic impact and create a good number of employments to young Tanzanians.

The chairman supported minister Kairuki insisting members to venture into establishment of industries. He said Tanzania is well positioned geographically whereas manufacturers can take the advantage to export goods to the market of almost seven landlocked neighbouring countries.

According to Patel they have invested in industrial sugar factories because its investment needs billions of money but also the market does not guarantee to refund the money.

He added that establishment of industrial sugar depend on the world matrix and not the country therefore the economics of scale is not available to establish such industry in Tanzania.



There is a huge investment potential in these areas which have not been properly tapped. CTI should advise its members to venture in cooking oil



Inspector General of Police Simon Sirro washes his hands before entering his office in Dodoma yesterday, as a precaution in view of the global spread of Covid-19 infections. Photo: Police Hqs

'Close borders to contain spread of coronavirus'

By Guardian Correspondent Dodoma

LEADERS from official opposition camp have challenged the government to close borders to contain the spread new cases of Coronavirus.

Moreover, they urged President John Magufuli to be the main speaker on informing the country over spreading of the killer diseases. They said having too many officials giving statements on the state of the disease will result into the public being misled.

Giving a press briefing to jour-

nalists yesterday, shadow health minister, Secilia Pareso (Chadema) said there is also a need for the government to set and announce indicative prices for sanitizers and masks—the crucial items in fight against Coronavirus.

"Many business persons have hiked prices of sanitizers to the tune of 20,000/- instead of 7000/- which is not patriotic and acceptable at this peculiar time," she expressed.

Apart from hailing the fifth government for so far efforts made

to fight prevalence of the disease, they observed that it was prudent for more public awareness to negate the disease's new cases, from grass roots levels.

At least 30 countries across Africa have now reported cases of coronavirus, including four that reported their first new cases on Monday in Benin, Liberia, Somalia and Tanzania.

Health minister Umyy Mwalimu earlier announced some steps to halt the spread of the virus in the country, including using media outlets to educate the

public over how best to treat infection of the virus.

President John Magufuli postponed the Uhuru torch ceremony scheduled to start on April 2nd in Zanzibar directing funds allocated for its cost be sent to the Health Ministry for preparation against Corona virus disease (Covid-19) should it enter the country.

The government spokesperson, Dr Hassan Abbas said last week that isolation centres had been established in every zone in case of any reported coronavirus

case. He said in preparedness to tackle any cases of the virus, the government through the ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elders and Children has set up isolation centres in every zone, but he declined to name the hospitals.

However, the government advised all citizens to postpone non-essential travel to countries with reported COVID-19 cases. And officials advised public places such as schools, hotels, churches and mosques to install hand sanitizers.

'Work on installation of X-ray machine at Sirari's health centre seeing good progress'

By Guardian Correspondent, Tarime

THE government has issued 110m/- for the installation of x-ray machine at Sirari health centre in Tarime district, Mara Region.

The move aims to improve provision of health services to the residents who had been walking long distances in search of medical treatment.

Tarime District Council chairman, Moses Misiwa made the remarks during a tour at the health centre insisting the hospital management to make sure the monies was spent accordingly.

Misiwa added that implementation of the project should consider guidelines provided by the government through health ministry.

He however explained that the delays in implementation of the project were due to a land disputes between villagers and the health centre.

"All the monies should be kept in the Buriba village account which is

under the health centre," he said.

According to the ward councillor for Sirari, Paul Nyangoko residents in the area had been walking long distances including going to Kenya for x-ray services adding that completion of the project will give relief to the residents.

He said already the procurement procedures had been finalised and that the project was set to start soon.

Sirari village executive officer, Mirumbe Waryoba promised to ensure transparency throughout project implementation. He added all the tendering procedures will be done openly to allow a good number of bidders to compete.

The government has so far spent about 59bn/- to build new referral hospitals countrywide and over 300 health centres in different regions.

In 2019, President John Magufuli revealed that government has spent 184bn/- on the construction and maintenance of 352 health centres across the country.



Efforts to remove a huge mango tree blocking Zanzibar's Fuoni Road after it gave in to strong winds well under way on Thursday. Photo: Rahma Suleiman

Solar power plant in Korogwe saves youth from unemployment, poverty

By Rahma Suleiman, Korogwe

VILLAGERS in Mpale village, Korogwe district were in the dark before a solar power firm—Ensol installed a solar-powered plant in the village in 2017.

The arrival of the decentralised energy source has led to a gradual start-up of new businesses, such as welding, car-washing, and cafes selling cooled soda drinks.

Villagers are now happy as the energy project managed to turn the situation right-side-up and everyone is busy exploring one of the opportunities embedded in the solar-powered project.

"The solar energy project saved the village from poverty and unemployment", says Amina Abdallah, a resident of Mpale village.

Apart from improving socio-economic activities, Amina said that the new source of energy has changed even the outlook of the village as lights are everywhere during night something which wasn't the case in the past.

"The money I was spending to buy kerosene I spend it for other items. All this is due to solar power," Amina told reporters who visited the village recently.

"Our village is shining nowadays and shops are open up to 10

pm. To us, this is a new development because in the past we're in the dark," says Mahunge Mkande, a businessman, who owns a shop in the village.

According to Mkande, the installation of a solar energy plant in the village had boosted their incomes as they have longer time to do businesses as compared to the past when they were relying on kerosene lamps.

"This new source of energy has unveiled new business ventures in this village. We're now selling cold soft drinks and water. It is one of the key businesses here. So, through solar-powered energy we've opened new business

ventures," he stressed.

Through solar power, a village-based businessman has also opened up a TV showcasing enterprise, where he showcases live sports events such as local and international football matches—Vodacom Premier League (VPL), English Premier League (EPL) and other sports events.

Mkande also revealed that his sales had gone up to between 70,000/- and 80,000/- from between 30,000/- and 50,000/- per day.

He, however, complained of high charges of the installed solar power as it goes up to 11,000/- per month, advising the

solar power firm to work on the challenges.

One of the entrepreneurs who is benefiting from the arrival of energy sources in Mpale village, Mohamed Hashim, confirmed that the energy had created a number of job opportunities for youths in the village such as motorcycle taxi (boda-boda).

"So, I decided to open up a workshop where I inflate motorcycle and car tires, soon after the introduction of a solar power plant in the village," he said, adding that in the past the service was only found in the district headquarters.

"But, now it is only found in

the village. It is a paying business," said Hashim, who collects between 15,000/- and 20,000/- per day, the amount he said is enough and has transformed his life. Through the workshop, Hashim has employed two young men in the village.

Philips Yohana has been employed in a hair cutting salon, a business that he introduced soon after the installation of a solar energy plant.

Ensol's project officer at Mpale village, Erica Jackson said that the three-year project started with 61 households which were connected with solar power and the target was to link 250 house-

holds, the target which has been met. The project has also benefited women who are engaging in different small-scale businesses including food vending.

Mpale ward executive officer (WEO), Mwanahija Nurdin, commended the solar power firm for introducing the project, which stimulated development activities in the village.

Abdallah Mdoe, Mpale village chairman described the introduction of the alternative energy source as a redeemer as it has moved people from the dark when they were waiting for power from the Rural Energy Agency (REA).



Shinyanga Urban residents negotiate their way yesterday through a road rendered almost impassable by floodwaters resulting from heavy rain. Photo: Correspondent Marco Maduhu

Federal government of Somalia, AMISOM, AFRICOM conduct operations against al-Shabaab

MOGADISHU

As part of an African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Somali National Army operation, and in coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia, U.S. Africa Command conducted five airstrikes against al-Shabaab terrorists near Janaale, Somalia, March 16-17.

These precision airstrikes targeted members of the al-Qaida-aligned terrorist network as they massed and maneuvered in the vicinity of an ongoing Somali-led ground operation.

"We protect and remain committed to our partners - plain and simple," said Maj. Gen. William Gayler, director of operations, U.S. Africa Command. "We eliminated terrorists posing a direct and immediate threat, allowing our African partners to maintain the momentum on the ground."

Somali security forces continue to lead operations alongside AMISOM forces to increase security and seize ground from al-Shabaab.

Currently, we assess no civilians were injured or killed as a result of these airstrikes.

U.S. forces were in the area

when these airstrikes occurred in order to advise and assist Somali and partner forces.

U.S. Africa Command continues to support the Government of Somalia by strengthening its security forces and promoting regional security, stability and prosperity. Al-Shabaab continues to conduct attacks in East Africa and will continue to threaten American and western interests in the region.

Concurrently, the command is building enduring relationships and strategic alliances in East Africa necessary to address future challenges and malign activity by near-peer competitors.

The U.S., by virtue of our capabilities, influence, and credibility, is uniquely postured to support Somali efforts and counter violent extremist threats.

Meanwhile, the Somalia government has suspended all cargo and passenger flights into the country, dealing a big blow to local miraa farmers.

In a notice issued on Monday by the Federal Government of Somalia, miraa imports from Kenya and Ethiopia were banned for 15 days starting from 1am yesterday after it confirmed its first case of Covid-19.

Egypt foreign minister holds talks with Prof Kabudi over Nile dam dispute

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

EGYPTIAN Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry has held talks with Tanzania's Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation Prof Palamagamba Kabudi to press Cairo's case in the dispute with Ethiopia over the Nile dam during his third tour in Africa.

Shoukry met on Thursday with his Tanzanian counterpart and delivered a message from President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to Tanzanian President John Magufuli to explain Cairo's position on the dam that Ethiopia is building on the Blue Nile, and the latest developments in the negotiations with Addis Ababa.

Egyptian foreign ministry state-

ment said Shoukry was unable to meet with the Tanzanian president, who was visiting flood-stricken areas in his country.

Ministry spokesman Ahmed Hafez said Prof Kabudi voiced appreciation of Egypt's efforts and the flexibility it has shown in the US-sponsored talks to reach an agreement that would safeguard

the interests of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan. Shoukry praised Egyptian-Tanzanian relations, reaffirming Cairo's keenness on supporting Tanzania's development efforts, Hafez said. Egypt's foreign minister also explained the developments in the five-year talks on the dam until the latest Washington-sponsored draft agreement.

He said the agreement is "fair and balanced" and it meets the interests of the three Nile basin countries.

Cairo and Addis Ababa have sent diplomatic envoys to various countries, following the stalled negotiations in Washington.

The Egyptian foreign minister embarked on an African tour on Tuesday. Shoukry also visited Bu-

rundi, South Africa and he expects to also visit the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Niger, and Rwanda where the minister is expected to deliver messages from Sisi to the leaders of the African continent. Shoukry has already been on an Arab and European tour to press its case in the dispute with Ethiopia on the Grand Ethio-

pian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

Last week, he visited France and Belgium after visiting Jordan, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman.

Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan had expected to sign the agreement in Washington last month, but Ethiopia skipped the meeting and only Egypt has initiated the deal thus far.

Kanyasu hails Arusha Press Club for promoting tourism

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

DEPUTY Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism Constantine Kanyasu has hailed leadership of the Arusha Press Club (APC) and its members for their huge contribution in the promotion of local tourism, environmental protection and anti-poaching initiatives.

He made the remarks here when he visited the APC offices and held talks with the leaders of the association's executive committee. Among other things, the tour aimed to witness the progress of the association, listen to its challenges and look for ways to address them.

Kanyasu said that Arusha region is the heart of tourism something which needs concerted efforts to ensure that the available attractions are well promoted worldwide.

"We recognise the contribution done by media people in promoting

the country's attractions, APC has been a good partner when it comes to tourism promotion, I commend the leadership for the tireless efforts," he said.

According to him, the country has witnessed drastic fall of poaching with the media being in forefront in the fight.

He said that the government will continue working closely with the media to fulfill its broad goal to improve tourism industry.

For his part, APC chairman Claud Gwandu said that association is and will be working hand in hand with the government to protect wildlife, fight against poaching and promote local tourism.

"Wildlife protection is not a government's duty only and illegal wildlife trade cannot be tackled in isolation but rather by collective efforts from all the stakeholders, so every Tanzanian has a role to play in conserving

our wildlife," he said.

He further said that "As we are preparing to commemorate the Media Freedom Day in May, we expect to use the platform to educate the public about wildlife protection and encourage local tourism."

Gwandu also said that the association is also expected to establish an online TV and blog which will be among other things, used to educate the public on tourism to reach as many members of the public as possible, including the residents of remote rural areas.

Tourism is the largest foreign exchange earner since 2012, contributing an average of \$2 billion annually, which is equivalent to 25 per cent of all exchange earnings, according to the government data. It also contributes to more than 17 per cent of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and creating more than 1.5 million jobs, 500,000 of which are direct.



Athman Omar, a manager with Tawakal Air Bus company, sensitises would-be passengers in Tanga city on Thursday on ways to keep coronavirus infections at bay. The firm's fleet serves destinations in Tanzania and Kenya. Omar said reports of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic have disrupted their business, with the number of passengers relentlessly falling as days go by. Photo: Correspondent Boniface Gideon

Govt orders REA to list villages reached with electric power and those in pipeline

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

THE government has directed all engineers under the Rural Electrification Agency (REA) programme to list the number of villages reached with electricity and those in pipeline for proper documentation and flow of information to the public.

On the same note, the government has announced the beginning of the implementation of the programme in areas surrounding Dar es Salaam city including Chanika, Kisarawe, Kigamboni, Mkuranga, Bagamoyo and Kibaha insisting the set-up price is 27,000/-.

Minister for Energy Dr Medard Kalembe said every engineer is required to take account of the villages that have not been reached with the project before the end of this month.

"This will help the leaders to provide concrete answers to the public when they inquire especially as to when the project will reach their villages," he said.

The minister said up to now 91,000 villages have been reached with electricity in the last four years saying this was a good gesture towards building an industrialised economy.

He said, however that

there are 1822 villages which have not been reached adding that the process to take electricity to the remaining villages will start this June whereby it is expected that by 2021 they will be finished.

Currently REA provides the procedures for integrating environmental and social considerations into the planning process and implementation of rural energy projects and programmes.

The manual replaces all Environmental and Social Safeguards Operational Guidelines previously used by the Agency.

In 2016 REA announced the beginning of implementation of the Rural Electrification Programme Phase III, a project that aims to electrify more than 7,873 villages in rural Tanzania for 5 years. 7,697 villages will be connected to the national grid, while the remaining 176 will be connected to other energy sources.

The project is implemented by private contractors and supervised by REA, the Tanzania Electric Supply Company (TANESCO) and a Trust Agent

As of June 2016, 4,395 villages in Tanzania were connected to electricity during Phase I and II of the project

IOM assists return, relocation of displaced families in DR Congo

KINSHASA

THE International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has started assisting the voluntary return and relocation of displaced populations in Tanganyika province.

Provincial Minister of Humanitarian Action of Tanganyika, Natacha Mulange Mpundu officially launched the operation last Thursday. Those assisted included one group of 974 families residing in the Kankomba office displacement site.

Mpundu said: "We praise the actions of humanitarian organizations in Tanganyika. We thank IOM, which has been instrumental in the success of this operation. We are confident that this operation will take place in peace and that each displaced person will be able to return to their home in peace".

Over the next three months, IOM expects to assist a total of 1,133 displaced families in Tanganyika province to either return to their communities of origin or relocate.

According to the Population Movement Commission (CMP), Tanganyika Province currently has around 350,000 displaced individuals dispersed in displacement sites and host families across the province.

IOM continues to assist displaced population who are not yet ready to return or relocate with Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), displacement tracking, shelter and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) activities.

A comprehensive survey carried out by IOM's Displacement Tracking (DTM) during 2019 revealed that a majority of some 5,362 families in three displacement sites in Tanganyika expressed their intention to return to their area of origin or relocate in another location or community of their choice.

In Tanganyika Province, there are still many individuals who continue to be displaced and have not found durable solutions due to persisting insecurity in their area of origin. The province has recorded waves of population movements since 2016 following conflict, occurring in the territories of Kalemie, Kabalo, Moba, Manono and Nyunzu, towards the outskirts of the city of Kalemie.

Around 80 per cent of the IDPs registered in the three sites come from the Kalemie and Nyunzu territories.

FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2019

Chairman's Statement



Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Tanzania Cigarette Public Limited Company, I am pleased to present to you our financial results for the year ended December 31, 2019. These reflect another successful year for the company, in which we continued to deliver strong financial performance.

Strong Top And Bottom-line Growth

Our audited results indicate that revenue increased by 5.2% on prior year to TZS 309.8 billion, primarily driven by pricing in the domestic market and robust volume growth in our key export market - the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Profit before tax grew by 9.4% to TZS 78.2 billion as a result of operational cost efficiencies. And profit after tax was TZS 51.2 billion, up by 6.9% compared to prior year.

Stable And Consistent Dividend Per Share

This strong performance has allowed us to increase gross dividend per share by 22% to TZS 550 for the full year. In October 2019, we paid an interim gross dividend of TZS 300 per share. The balance of TZS 250 per share will be paid on or about May 7, 2020. Shares will trade cum-dividend till April 04, 2020.

Improving Our Environmental And Social Impact

Improving our environmental impact is critically important, as we seek to manage our business while simultaneously protecting the environment. Our goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, water withdrawal and waste by 13% by 2023 vs. 2015. We made significant progress in 2019 and are on track to meet our goal by 2023. In addition, we remain committed to making communities where we operate more inclusive and resilient. In 2019, over 1,300 people benefited from our community investment programs. Through our five project partners, we invested over TZS 326 million and volunteered 1,457 man-hours in various community initiatives.

Optimistic About The Future

We enter 2020 with positive momentum, optimistic about the year ahead, subject to a conducive operating environment.

Tanzania will hold general elections in October this year. We are optimistic that peace and tranquility will prevail. The country's recent macro-economic achievements - robust economic growth of about 7% per annum, a low inflation rate of under 5% and a stable Shilling - are commendable. We believe these gains will be sustained. The on-going reforms to improve the business environment are encouraging. We hope the recommendations of the Blueprint for Regulatory Reforms will be implemented fully and accelerated.

Appreciation

The trust you have bestowed upon the Board of Directors, the Management team and employees of Tanzania Cigarette Public Limited Company has strengthened all of us in our daily work. We thank you. We would also like to sincerely thank our employees, consumers, society at large, our business partners and parent company - JTI - for your continued support to the business. We remain focused on creating sustainable value for all our stakeholders in the coming years and look forward to reporting our continued progress.

Tanzania Cigarette Public Limited Company Summary Statement of cash flows for the year ended December 31, 2019		
	2019 TZS M	2018 TZS M
Cash flows from operating activities		
Cash generated by operating activities	97,589	69,156
Defined benefit paid	(98)	(479)
Interest received	2,081	774
Interest paid	(143)	(144)
Income tax paid	(25,154)	(19,569)
Net cash generated by operating activities	74,275	49,738
Cash flows from investing activities:		
Purchase of property, plant and equipments	(14,098)	(14,458)
Proceeds from disposal of property, plant and equipments	2,290	541
Net cash used in investing activities	(11,808)	(13,917)
Cash flows from financing activities:		
Dividends paid	(55,000)	(40,000)
Lease rentals paid	(47)	-
Net cash used in financing activities	(55,047)	(40,000)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	7,420	(4,179)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	20,351	24,530
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	27,771	20,351
Represented by:		
Cash & bank balances	27,771	20,351

Tanzania Cigarette Public Limited Company Summary Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended December 31, 2019			
	2019 TZS M	2018 TZS M	Change %
Revenue	309,771	294,386	5.2%
Cost of sales	(133,875)	(128,278)	4.4%
Gross profit	175,896	166,108	5.9%
Operating expenses	(97,712)	(94,628)	3.3%
Profit before tax	78,184	71,480	9.4%
Income tax expense	(26,936)	(23,544)	14.4%
Profit for the year	51,248	47,936	6.9%
Other comprehensive income:			
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss			
- Defined benefit actuarial gain/(loss)	999	(910)	
- Tax expense/(credit) relating to components of other comprehensive income	(300)	273	
Total comprehensive income, net of income tax	51,947	47,299	9.8%
Earnings per share:			
Basic and diluted (TZS per share)	512	479	

Tanzania Cigarette Public Limited Company Summary Statement of financial position as at December 31, 2019		
	2019 TZS M	2018 TZS M
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	97,754	98,117
Right-of-use assets	70	-
Intangible assets	-	-
Total non-current assets	97,824	98,117
Current assets:		
Inventories	103,610	108,221
Trade and other receivables	39,131	39,925
Cash and bank balances	27,771	20,351
Total current assets	170,512	168,497
Non-Current asset held -for-sale	291	-
Total assets	268,627	266,614
Equity and liabilities:		
Capital and reserves:		
Share capital	2,000	2,000
Defined benefit reserves	5,872	5,173
Retained earnings	179,269	183,021
Shareholders equity	187,141	190,194
Non-current liabilities:		
Deferred tax liabilities	6,577	7,357
Defined benefit obligation	8,076	7,577
Lease liability	31	-
Total non-current liabilities	14,684	14,934
Current liabilities:		
Trade and other payables	57,147	54,922
Provisions	4,922	4,697
Lease liability	4	-
Income tax payable	4,729	1,867
Total current liabilities	66,802	61,486
Total liabilities	81,486	76,420
Total equity and liabilities	268,627	266,614

Paul Makanza
Chairman of the Board of Directors
March 16, 2020



There is a standing ban in Tanzania on the use of plastic 'shopping' bags of this and other types, but old habits die hard. File photo

Shinyanga DC bans building materials importation to boost local industries

By Guardian Correspondent, Shinyanga

SHINYANGA District Commissioner Jasinta Mboneko has banned contractors implementing various development projects in the district from importing construction materials as part of efforts to boost local industries.

She was concerned that since the government gears at making Tanzania an industrialised nation, it is crucial to reduce imports especially on such items which are locally manufactured.

Mboneko made the statement during her inspection tour to different water projects currently under implementation. She urged contractors that government directives require them to purchase construction material within the country.

She said the government is making close follow-up to all contractors, insisting anyone who will be discovered to have imported construction materials will be punished in accordance with the laws.

"We want to move our country into an industrialised nation; we should support our industries by purchasing all needed construction equipment from local manufacturers. The government will not hesitate taking measures against those importing them from

outside Tanzania," said the District Commissioner.

She commended one of the contractors—Emirates Builders Construction Company of Dar es Salaam who is implementing part of the mega water project from Lake Victoria, saying he has purchased all the construction materials locally.

The contractor is implementing the project which includes taking Lake Victoria water from Shinyanga town to Masengwa ward in Shinyanga district.

The government is implementing a total of 875 water projects are being implemented countrywide whereas 802 projects are in rural areas and 73 in urban places.

Last week, Lake Victoria water reached Tabora region whose residents have started to benefit from the 600bn/- project.

In Tabora, the project will benefit 1.8 million residents in more than 90 villages that cover the project area from the lake Zone to Tabora municipality including Igunga and Nzega.

The DC called upon the contractor to speed up implementation of the project as the government is determined to ensure reliable water services to Tanzanians in both, urban and rural areas.

Concerns as plastic bags still get into market through back door

By Guardian Correspondent

WHEN millions of Tanzanians have forgotten the painful sight of plastic carriers that used to fly and litter streets, float on flooding waters and kill cattle of roaming pastoralists, the National Environment Management Council (NEMC) says shrewd manufacturers are preying on unsuspecting small traders by producing, distributing and selling to them tube plastic bags they have all along used to sell nuts and condensed water.

Of late, the environment council has realised that the dishonest manufacturers are producing big carriers and pushing them in the market, sometimes giving them free of charge.

"What these illicit producers of tube plastic bags are doing amounts to putting banned carriers in the market through the back door," NEMC Director General Samuel Gwamaka said that the dishonest manufacturers and users of plastic wrappings were risking heavy penalties.

Dr Gwamaka was elaborating to a group of environment journalists who wanted to know the council's position on tube plastic bags found on the market despite the ban on plastic carriers.

On March 5, this year, Dr Gwamaka said in a statement: "No success is devoid of challenges."

"The big challenge we are facing is the increase in the illegal producers of tube plas-

tic bags. Initially, it was a question of tiny plastic bags used by petty traders to sell groundnuts, baobab nuts, and condensed water. Then slowly these manufacturers have enlarged the sizes, producing tube bags of different sizes against the ban and have pushed their products into the market. Innocent shoppers are using tube plastic carriers to carry products. What does this mean? It means in effect the banned plastic bags are flooding the market through the back door," he said, warning that the law will have to take its course.

Dr Gwamaka highlighted the government's concern, saying: "When one reads the law that bans plastic carriers, one realises that the law prohibits

banned plastic carriers in all forms to be found in the market.

"Therefore, these plastic wrappings are found in the market, it is because of the government's leniency to help petty traders cope with economic hardships by getting containers at considerate prices in order to serve their clients. But these wrappings are in the market against Regulation 4 sub-section (b) (c) which states clearly that the law was enacted to protect human health, animal and environment against potential harmful effects of banned plastic materials."

Dr Gwamaka explained that post-ban survey by NEMC has revealed that many carriers on the market have not been

authorised by the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS).

"They have no seals, have no labels and this is against the terms of Regulation 3."

Abuse of government's leniency and its considerate position will neither help producers of the banned bags nor the small entrepreneurs because finally, the plastic wrappings will have to go.

The DG said stubborn manufacturers, distributors and users will have themselves to blame when the law takes its course.

Explaining the good intention of the law, Dr Gwamaka said Regulation 6 allows the use of plastic wrappings "only when it is ascertained that the use of the plastic wrapping is unavoidable, as amplified by

Regulation 3 which states that the necessity to use plastic must seek to protect and sustain the quality of the product or prevent the product from damage."

The DG said that even under that situation, the products enjoying that privilege "must carry the seal and label before they are sold, distributed or put in the market."

Dr Gwamaka explained that the survey revealed that some children chew tube plastic wrappings after taking baobab nuts or sweetened condensed water. That habit results in children swallowing tiny bits of plastic.

He, however, said that the damage to the consumers' health, damage to the environment caused by the use of the

plastic invalidate the reasons behind the government's leniency and compassion.

He further said that Tanzania now has alternative materials for making plastic wrappings which petty traders use to serve their clients. Petty traders must switch to alternative materials, instead of using plastic wrappings for convenience. Plastic wrappings no longer merit being in use in Tanzania, the official said.

Dr Gwamaka said early this month, NEMC gave users of plastic wrapping a one-month grace period to switch to non-plastic wrappings.

"After this grace period, no plastic wrappings should be seen in the market because they are unlawful," he emphasised.

Improving water quantity, quality in Rufiji basin is a basic necessity

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

WATER, essential to all life, plays a particularly important role in the lives of Tanzanians living near Mbarali River, part of the larger Rufiji River basin in southern Tanzania.

Here, farmers use water from the river to irrigate their crops. Cattle herders guide their animals to its banks to drink and graze. Fishers make a living catching fish from its waters. Still others use it as a place to wash laundry or quench their thirst.

"I have a long memory when it comes to this river," reminisced Alley Mkweta, a longtime resident and local Water Use Association representative. "This used not to be the only river; we used to have several small tributaries, which now only flow during the wet season."

"I won't believe anyone who says that this river will never run dry," he declared, looking around at a gathering of his fellow Water Use Association representatives. "I've seen the river drying up too many times before."

Indeed, water scarcity has become a pressing problem in the Rufiji basin, raising tensions among the many different people clamouring for access to both its waters and surrounding land. Activities upstream—such as livestock grazing, farming in wetlands or too close to river banks, small-scale irrigation, disposing of waste in the river, and more—have changed the quantity, quality and timing of the river's flow patterns.

This uncertainty has caused problems for both upstream and downstream residents.

Water Users Association representatives report an increasing number of people falling ill after drinking from the Mbarali River, which they attribute to pollution from human activities in the river catchment.

They note that fish are no longer as easily found and worry that plants, animals and their habitats will soon no longer receive the water necessary to sustain them.

"If this continues," warned Winfred Mbugu of Sokoine University of Agriculture, "the amount of water available for each person will continue to drop, and we could arrive at a 'zero-flow' situation—meaning the river could dry up entirely."

In response, Tanzania's National Environment Management Council and Sokoine University of Agriculture will be undertaking a project, set to begin in mid-2020, on assessing the current status and implementing measures to ensure environmental flows remain at recommended levels in the Mbarali River catchment.

Studies and implementation of environmental flows—or e-flows—are primarily concerned with the fair sharing and sustainable use of water resources. The project proponents will first assess water resource conditions in the Mbarali catchment. Next, they will devise and apply solutions to improve both the quantity and the quality of water supplied by the river.

The initiative is being funded by the Global Environment Facility through the Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Protection of the Western Indian Ocean from Land-Based Sources and Activities, executed by the Nairobi Convention.



Saidi Swallah (R), Mtwara regional chairman of the Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (TCCIA), in jovial mood during the launch of the region's NBC Business Club in Mtwara municipality on Thursday. He is with the bank's Lindi branch manager, Ndlovini Mapunda (L), and Mtwara branch manager Emmanuel Mseti. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

Modern Coast stops services to Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda

By Hilary Kimuyu

MODERN Coast Express has suspended all services from Kenya to Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda until further notice to avoid the spread of the deadly coronavirus epidemic.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the company said it has also halted services from the three destinations back to Kenya effective March 19, 2020. "The closure of the routes mentioned above shall be in place until further communication is provided,

depending on the health and safety measures as guided by Kenyan government and Ministry of Health on the coronavirus (COVID-19).

All the affected passengers have been asked to contact the call centre on +254709897000 or visit any of

the company branches for a refund or to rebook their travel," said the company. On March 15, the government announced the suspension of all travellers from countries that have reported Covid-19 cases.

Only Kenyan citizens will be al-

lowed into the country "with self-quarantine or government-designated facility," the government said.

The measure is in place for 30 days. "All who arrived within the last 14 days must self-quarantine," officials added.

Over 600 cases of COVID-19 confirmed in Africa

By Guardian Reporter

MORE than 600 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in 34 countries in Africa as of 19th March, compared with 147 cases one week ago, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Although the region has seen a significant increase in confirmed cases recently, there are still fewer cases than in other parts of the world.

WHO Regional Director for Africa, Dr Matshidiso Moeti said: "The rapid evolution of COVID-19 in Africa is deeply worrisome and a clear sign for action. But we can still change the course of this pandemic. Governments must draw on all of their resources and capabilities and strengthen their response".

"Africa can learn from the experiences of other countries which have seen a sharp decline in COVID-19 cases through rapidly scaling up testing, isolating cases and meticulously tracking contacts," said Dr Moeti.

He said COVID-19 is one of the biggest health challenges Africa has faced in a generation. He said coun-

tries can only stop this virus through solidarity.

"And the world is coming together. Donors are stepping up to the plate and providing funding while private sector in many countries is offering their support as well," said Dr Moeti.

Twelve countries in the African region are now experiencing local transmission.

It is crucial that governments prevent local transmission from evolving into a worst case scenario of widespread sustained community transmission. Such a scenario will present a major challenge to countries with weak health systems.

Understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic will evolve in Africa is still a work in progress. The response will need to be adapted to the African context - the demographics on the continent are very different from China, Europe and the USA.

Africa has the world's youngest population and it appears that older people are more vulnerable to COVID-19. However, preliminary analysis finds that people with underlying conditions are at higher risk.

Across the region, nearly 26 million people are living with HIV. Over 58 million children have stunted growth due to malnutrition. So it is possible that younger people will be more at risk in Africa than in other parts of the world.

WHO has been supporting governments with early detection by providing COVID-19 testing kits to countries in Africa, training lab technicians, and strengthening surveillance in communities.

Forty-five countries in Africa can now test for COVID-19: at the start of the outbreak only two could do so. WHO is also providing remote support to affected countries on the use of electronic data tools, so national health authorities can better understand the outbreak in their countries.

Personal protective equipment has been shipped to 24 countries, and a second shipment is being prepared for countries with confirmed cases. Basic preventative measures by individuals and communities remain the most powerful tool to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



Special Seats (CCM) legislator Halima Bulembo makes remarks at the celebrations. The others include Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) senior programme officer Deogratius Temba (R) and executive director Lilian Liundi (2nd-R). Photo: Correspondent Sabato Kasika

Bulembo urges girls to join politics, vie for posts in coming General Elections

By Correspondent Sabato Kasika

AMONG the most emphasised issues which women are always motivated on is to indulge themselves into politics and secure different leadership positions because that's also an opportunity for the country's economic growth.

Due to that kind of motivation, as the years go by, the gender equality democracy also widens hence leading to a number of women and youth to go for leadership positions.

In Tanzanian politics, the political call has begun to show amongst the youth and women, and those that have acquired leadership positions have shown a great cooperation in helping and defending their fellow's rights.

Halima Bulembo is a woman who is among the young special seat members of Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania

who acquired that position in 2015, through CCM.

Last week, Halima got an opportunity to talk to girl's students from different universities in Dar es Salaam and gave them different methods and strategies on how to go for leadership opportunities and eventually become leaders.

The member of Parliament was the guest of honour on International Women's Day commemoration which was prepared by youth activists called Young Feminist Forum (YFF) which involved more than 300 girl's students who met at National Institute of Transport's hall located at Mabibo.

During the commemorations, the girl's students discussed their participation in leadership by keeping into consideration positive uses of technology, whereby different stakeholders who are always in the front line to defend and protect women

rights were among the attendants in those commemorations.

In her speech during the commemorations, Halima explained different methods and ways which girls could use and eventually be able to acquire leadership posts in the elections.

The Member of Parliament explained that the best way to reach up to their goal is not giving up regardless of the challenges that could arise even if those challenges came from their own political parties.

She said there is a lot of challenges along the way including certain words or things that would totally discourage them but giving up shouldn't be the motive but keeping up with those challenges regardless should be their actual motive.

"There is a huge need for women leaders because when there are many of us as leaders then there is an easy access for our agendas to be accom-

plished, and therefore I continue to encourage those who need to become leaders not to fear or give up," said Halima.

She emphasised that the secret behind success is tolerance and believing in yourself, and that there is leadership position in the constituencies, the citizens are tired of the leaders in power and they want new leaders but they don't know where to get them.

"If a lady goes for either councilor or member of Parliament position and he or she fails, she shouldn't give up but she should wait for another year of elections and try again, keep up the spirit no giving up."

She said that there is importance in preparing the youth earlier in politics so that later they can become future great leaders in this country and therefore in this the youth should not be left behind.

"And therefore I have to em-

phasize that daring without fear and without giving up are things that will help ladies acquiring leadership," she said.

The commemorations were also attended by different stakeholders who protect and defend women's rights including the Tanzania Gender Network Programme (TGNP) who were represented by the Executive director, Lilian Liundi who was also given an opportunity to speak to the girls.

Liundi affirmed the ladies youth to indulge into politics by joining political parties because it's not easy to be a leader when you don't belong to any political party.

"It's really important to have a political party card, unless otherwise it's not easy to become a leader without the political party cards and therefore join political parties of your choices and get the cards," said Liundi.

She said TGNP will not al-

locate for them the political parties to join in, that is their responsibility to choose political parties of their choices and eventually become active members.

"Ladies, do your best and go for leadership positions even in the school governments, many leaders are always men, begin from there and then eventually you will get to the parliament," she said.

She said gender equality issues and other women agendas should be monitored by the girls youth especially students themselves, and therefore they should be behind in this.

"My call to political parties is to extend equal democratic scope inside those political parties so that many women and youth can vie for leadership positions in the elections," she said.

The executive director said that women have been facing

many different challenges during the elections which has led them into giving up and has become a major setback.

One of the leaders of that forum, Fatuma Ngamba, wants the girls youth especially University students, to indulge into advocating gender equality rights without fear.

"We shouldn't think that activists should only be adults even the youth should be the activists and therefore we should unite," said Fatuma.

She added that if they unite and become one thing it's easier to help each other access leadership and become a quiet number of leaders and eventually be able to accomplish different gender equality agendas.

"And therefore ladies, you should not accept to be left behind in different agendas that are meant to let girls youth to cooperate in different leadership positions," she said.

Zimbabwe removes barriers to education

HARARE

ZIMBABWE'S amended Education Act is a significant step forward for children across the country. Among other things, the amendment prohibits corporal punishment and the exclusion of pregnant girls from school in accordance with the Zimbabwe Constitution, which guarantees the right to education.

In May 2019, Human Rights Watch wrote an open letter to Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga, the chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education, to ensure that it guaranteed equal realization of the right to education for all in Zimbabwe and complied with international human rights standards.

The new law provides that children are not subject to any form of physical or psychological torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment at school, and prohibits teachers from beating students. An overwhelming number of students are affected by corporal punishment in Zimbabwe's schools.

The amended law further provides that every school provide suitable infrastructure for students with disabilities and requires government authorities to ensure disability rights are protected and accounted for in every school in the country.

The law reasserts the constitutional protection that students should not pay fees, or levies, from preschool up to Form 4, the end of lower secondary education, and says no pupil shall be excluded from school for non-payment of school fees.

Prior to this new amendment, Zimbabwe's Ministry of Education, Sport, Art and Culture introduced a conditional reentry policy in 2010, which ended expulsion of pregnant girls from school but only allowed them to return after a three-month leave. More than 6,000 pregnant girls dropped out of school in Zimbabwe in 2018 alone, according to a UNESCO report.

Zimbabwe authorities now need to act on these laudable legislative changes, ensuring necessary infrastructural changes are made to accommodate children with disabilities and others.

The government should also put in place a monitoring system to ensure schools accommodate pregnant students and adolescent mothers, and that they don't turn away students who cannot pay indirect school costs. The full implementation of the new law will go a long way to ensuring more young people realize their right to education and complete compulsory basic and secondary education in Zimbabwe.



A porter goes about his business along Mkunguni Street in downtown Dar es Salaam's sprawling Kariakoo market zone, as captured yesterday. Photo: John Badi

Over 50 students stranded at Msamvu bus stand following closure of schools

By Correspondent Michael Sikapundwa, Morogoro

OVER fifty students from higher learning institutions and secondary schools in Morogoro region were on Thursday stranded for more than eight hours at the Msamvu bus stand due to transport challenges caused by increased demand after government's announcement to close all the schools and colleges.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa announced the shutting down of all nursery, primary and secondary schools following an outbreak of COVID-19 in the country.

In a statement televised live by state-run Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation, Majaliwa said the schools have been closed down for 30 days.

The stranded students included those from Mzumbe University, Mzumbe secondary, Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), and Alfa Germs secondary school.

However, agents of passenger buses were accused of providing students tickets while knowing all the seats have been booked.

The Guardian witnessed a number of passengers struggling to get transport services as most of the busses were hired by schools to carry students back home after the government announcement.

Senior Official from Land Transport Regulatory Authority (LTRA) Amani Mwakalebela said transport challenges were due to increased demand after schools closure.

However LTRA ordered bus owners to provide stranded passengers with meals as per the authority regulations which requires bus owners to give meals to passengers kept on waiting for more than six hours.

"As you look for alternative transport for the students, you should provide them with meals, and this is according to the laws," said Mwakalebela.

The official noted that LTRA has issued temporary permits to mini buses to carry passengers. He said the permits will only last for three days.

Msamvu bus terminal inspector, Yusuph Masoli insisted that mini buses interested to carry passengers to up-country regions should make sure their vehicles are in good condition. He said they will conduct inspection to all the buses prior to journeys.

"No vehicle will be allowed to transport passengers without being inspected" he said.

A statement released yesterday by the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Elderly and Children said three more cases turned up positive in Dar es Salaam on Thursday, bringing the total number to six, while 26

The Guardian

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SATURDAY 21 MARCH 2020

Taking A New Look
At The News
ESTABLISHED IN 1995

We welcome EAC plans for good governance protocol

ALL could not well within the present day East African Community (EAC), or rather, of late the EA regional bloc has not been as it used to be. Its continual existence seems to be cemented from the historical brotherly bond of its people and not from concerted drive from member governments.

The 21st East African Community (EAC) Heads of State Summit, which was scheduled for February 29, 2020, was postponed allegedly due to lack of quorum, the same reason that had postponed it on November 30 last year.

EAC Secretary Liberat Mfumukeko had also postponed the 41st Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the EAC Council of Ministers scheduled to take place from February 25, 2020 at the EAC Headquarters in Arusha.

These developments came even before the Coronavirus disease had set foot in the EAC member states. And when it did there seems to be no coordinating efforts in confronting the epidemic and its spread through the countries land borders, such as pooling their resources in placing the epidemic under control.

Is the unruffled state of affairs due to the great sin committed by the leaders of the old East African Community (old-EAC) to let the bloc die in 1977 after just 10 years of its existence?

The old-EAC inherited the functions of the East African Common Services Organization (EACSO) that was set up soon after the three African countries - Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda gained their independence from the British.

The EACSO inherited the East African High Commission (EAHC) - an international colonial institution which existed between January 1948 and December 1961 with the intention of providing common services to the British administered Uganda, Kenya and Tang-

anyika.

The EAHC comprised the Governors of the three territories and met two or three times a year under the chairmanship of the Governor of Kenya - and not once or none at all as is the case now in regard to EA Summit meetings.

We therefore cannot avoid being accused of having destroyed a good thing that was handed to us on a silver platter by the British.

One might say it was among rare tributes from the colonial power - 'unite and quit' instead of the customary 'divide and quit' - a la the Indian subcontinent 20 years earlier. We say this because the old-EAC was, and is still unique among the world's economic-political regional blocs - in fact more than the present day European Union (EU).

Not only the people of the three countries had a common currency and import tariff, but also ran joint services in railways, airports, ports and posts and telecommunications.

There were also joint research institutes such as that for malaria and fisheries, to name but a few. There was also a single court of appeal, the East African Court of Appeal.

So anyone in the right mind would not even consider wrecking such a union. But that is what sadly happened, and we believe it was due to weak political harmonization found in the old-EAC structure and lack of push from above.

However one issue - the establishment, nine years ago, of a regional sectoral council for political affairs to handle good governance issues was commendable as it allows for speedy decisions on political affairs as these are deemed important and sensitive issues in the region's political integration agenda.

The conduct of elections in particular - a very sensitive issue in virtually all governments of the partner states was to find a permanent solution through the Good Governance Protocol.

Sustainable management of freshwater sources will do humankind much good

ONLY 57 per cent of Tanzania's population of 57 million have access to an improved source of safe water, and only 30 per cent of Tanzania's population has access to improved sanitation. Under these circumstances people, particularly women and girls, spend a significant amount of time traveling some distance to collect water. In Tanzania, demand for both water and sanitation are high.

In Tanzania, demand for both water and sanitation are high. The market for water products (storage tanks, pipes, rain harvesting facilities, etc) and suppliers appears to be dynamic. And by taking advantage of the growing digital finance sector, there is a strong opportunity for solutions in Tanzania.

One of the major barriers to safe water and sanitation is affordable financing. We need initiatives to help bring small loans to those who need access to affordable financing and expert resources to make household water and toilet solutions a reality.

With millions affected across the world, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to the global water crisis. We must have approaches in place to market-driven and people-driven. We can empower even more people with safe water and sanitation solutions that last.

World Water Day is an annual UN observance day (22 March) that highlights the importance of freshwater. The day is used to advocate for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. World Water Day is celebrated around the world with a variety of events. These can be theatrical, musical or lobbying in nature. The day can also include campaigns to raise money for water projects. The first World Water Day, designated by

the United Nations, was in 1993. Each year many countries celebrate World Water Day.

UN-Water is the convener for World Water Day and selects a theme for each year in consultation with UN organizations that share an interest in that year's focus. The theme for 2020 is "Water and Climate Change" and explores how the two issues are inextricably linked. The 2019 theme was "Leaving no one behind".

The focus on universal access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is in line with the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 6. The UN World Water Development Report (WWDR) is released each year around World Water Day.

The intention is to inspire people around the world to learn more about water-related issues and to take action to make a difference.

Relevant issues include water scarcity, water pollution, inadequate water supply, lack of sanitation, and the impacts of climate change (which is set to be the theme of World Water Day 2020). The day brings to light the inequality of access to WASH services and the need to assure the human right to water and sanitation.

The World Water Day website announces events, activities and volunteer opportunities. In 2020, featured stories are about adapting to the water effects of climate change and using water more efficiently.

This day was first formally proposed in Agenda 21 of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. In December 1992, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution by which 22 March of each year was declared World Day for Water. In 1993, the first World Water Day was observed.

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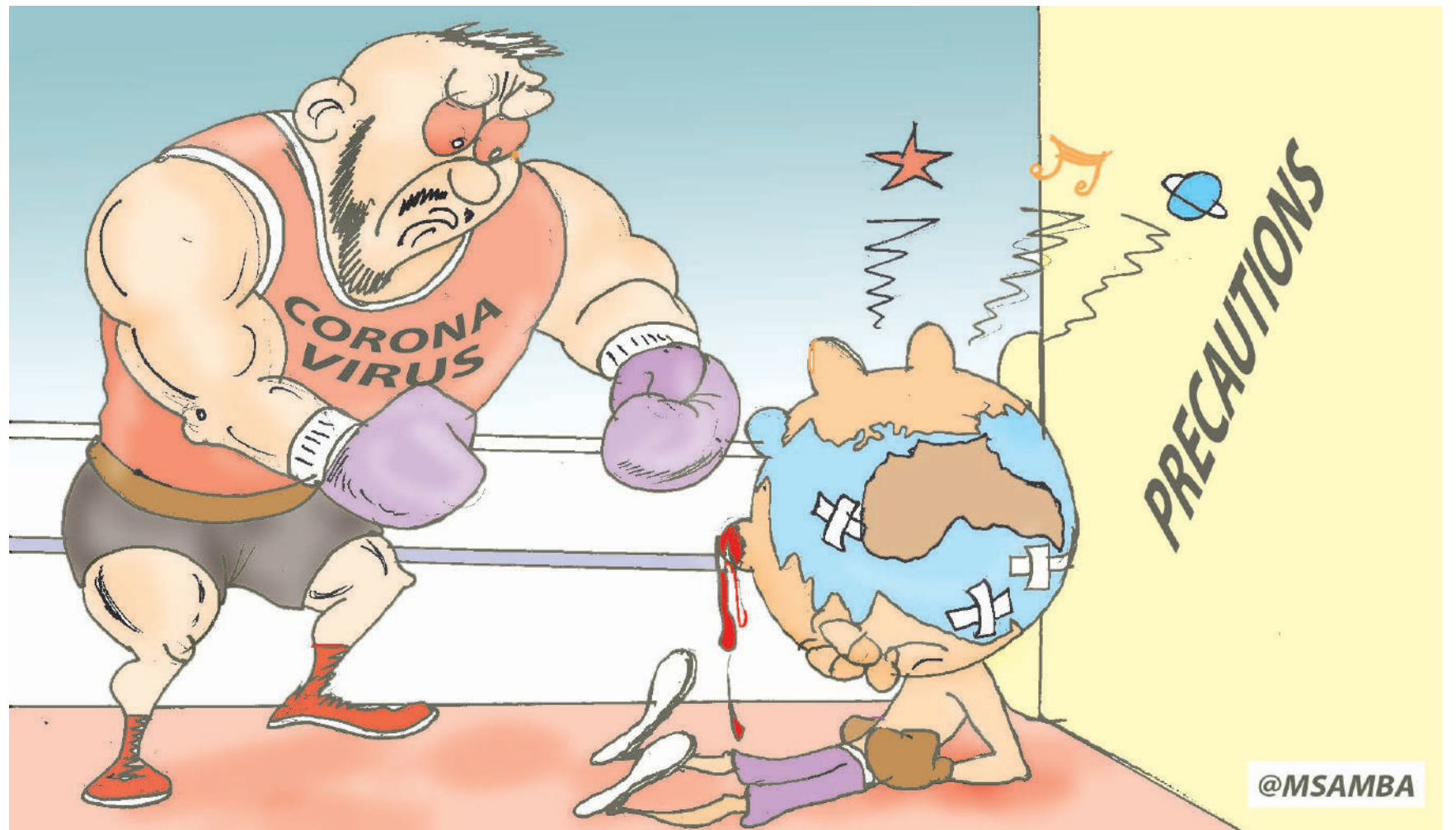
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Preventive and curative measures are requirements in combating COVID-19

By: **Kebba Touray**

S IDIA Jatta, the National Assembly Member for Wuli West, has told his fellow lawmakers that preventive and curative measures are fundamental requirements in combating COVID-19.

Jatta who was intervening on the report of the Health Committee at the legislature, maintained that these two measures are imperative fundamental requirements that have to be fulfilled in fighting against Coronavirus.

He explicated "We have capacity for preventive measure, but we don't have capacity for curative measure. I am speaking because we are at the mercy of the world. Africa is at the mercy of the world".

Ebola came here and we were at mercy of the world".

Jatta inquires "don't we have scientists?"

He added "I am not hearing any effort being made continually to invent a cure for the disease. Ebola came here it was outsiders who did it for us and this one is also here and we are sitting down folding our hands".

He stressed that the problem cannot be solved unless there is cure and getting rid of the coronavirus.

He stressed: "That is the fundamental issue here. Why are we not capacitating our medical establishments to have that capacity? We have been here for 50 years, but we cannot have specialists and people who are capable of creating

vaccines and medicine for this".

He continued: "These are the issues we must raise and they should break into our conscience. We say we are independent but we cannot continue to rely on the world for our survival. There have to be means to do just that. For me, we must from now capacitate our medical establishments to have a core of scientists, to serve our purpose if we don't have that we are nowhere".

Jatta said the country has people who can solve our problems and there is need to capacitate them, adding "the best thing to now, is to pack and go to our people and sensitize them to understand the situation, as well as organize them on how to prevent them-

selves from the disease".

He added that the whole world is against people gathering in one place because the belief is that one can have it in 14 days without signs and nobody knows who has it, because it does not show until 14 days.

Jatta challenged: "We must do what is in the interest of our people. God forbids if the disease comes here, culturally, it will spread like bush fire and all the country will get it once. Why...?"

He said this is because people pray and eat together, and "we are here together. Wherever we meet, we are mingling everywhere, so it will be easier to spread here than elsewhere". Jatta said Gambians must take into consideration all factors that can easily spread the disease.

Jatta said: "We must take control of our borders and our airport. If you don't do that, we are not saved."

According to him, the State should mobilize the paramilitary who should be accompanied by medical personnel to control Gambia's borders, adding "that is what we must do, otherwise we are not saved."

He added: "We have a responsibility to our people. For me am going back to Wuli to help and organize my people on how to prevent themselves from the disease. That is what we must do"

Bringing climate justice thinking to the COVID-19 pandemic

By **Teresa Anderson and Niclas Hällström**

L IKE the climate crisis, coronavirus and its spiralling impacts will hit women, the poor and marginalised the hardest - that is not an acceptable trade-off for reducing emissions

With the coronavirus pandemic gripping the planet, industries are shutting down, planes are being grounded and shoppers are staying home. COVID-19 has already reduced China's greenhouse gas emissions by 25 per cent. Other countries may experience similar trends, leading to lower emissions in 2020 than in previous years.

But this doesn't mean that we should be cheering the climate benefits of the outbreak.

Instead, advocates for climate justice recognise that like the climate crisis, the pandemic and its spiralling impacts, will hit women, the poor and most marginalised the hardest.

We believe that responses to climate change - and all global emergencies - must have social justice at their core. This means rejecting the idea that the suffering of vulnerable people and increasing inequality are acceptable trade-offs for reducing emissions.

The global response needed for the pandemic provides lessons for the action needed to tackle climate change. Governments, movements and society must internalise these principles to address these emergencies with solutions that ensure justice for all:

Equality: Governments must protect women, the poor and vulnerable from both crises and their impacts, valuing every human life equally regardless of nationality, wealth, gender, race or age. Similarly, it is not acceptable for one generation to continue business-as-usual in the knowledge that they are relatively safe, while increasing the risk and impact for another generation.

Social protections: Free, universal healthcare, paid sick leave and unemployment benefits for workers in the formal and informal economies, are urgently needed so that people don't have to choose between protecting their livelihoods and protecting society during the pandemic. Similarly, social protection measures, such as job guarantees, income support



or guarantees of the same wage and benefits, will be key to helping workers in carbon-intensive industries make a just transition away from jobs that harm the climate. Governments must also address the fact that women are disproportionately affected by both crises, as they tend to carry a greater burden of unpaid care and frontline work.

Solidarity: No country can 'go it alone'. Governments must work together and avoid retreating into nationalistic and competitive approaches. As with climate change, wealthy countries must do their 'fair share' and scale up financial and technology support for lower-income countries. True solidarity also means embracing and sharing solutions, many of which are being pioneered in the Global South.

The 'invisible hand of the market' won't fix this. Both crises show the need for deep systemic change. These emergencies expose the injustices of neo-liberal economic systems, in which powerful corporations prioritise profits over the common good and do all they can to avoid regulations. Governments' responses to the pandemic require them to make public policy decisions, including strong regulatory measures, in the interests of their citizens rather than their corporate political donors. Calls for a massive scaling up of public financing, and nationalisation of health and other services to deal with the pandemic, must be expanded to energy, water

provision and public transport.

Build back better: When crises hit, responses must strengthen people's ability to cope with future emergencies. Just as responses to the pandemic must protect society now and in future, humanitarian responses to climate disasters must also strengthen communities' longer-term resilience through social protections and climate-resilient interventions.

It's never too late to act: Every day that passes counts. Every action that limits harm is worth it. Even if we're slower out of the starting blocks than we should have been, we must start now. Giving up is not an option, however bad the situation may appear.

Do what it takes - but don't abuse power: As many governments have been slow to take stringent measures to halt the pandemic, citizens have called for stronger measures to contain the crisis. Society has shown its willingness to accept inconvenience, strong government intervention, social protections and yes, less shopping and flying, if it means protecting millions of vulnerable lives. Governments must take heed of this. Our resolve to do what it takes to solve the climate crisis, in ways that advance social justice, is just as strong. But they must not abuse their power, nor cement measures taken in times of emergency into authoritarian limits on freedom after the crisis has passed.

Covid19 - Teaching and online sessions

As the whole world is in panic mode as the covid 19 goes viral not being able to be controlled with numerous deaths reported in most countries in the world, every normal activity has come to a drastic halt. From schooling, to working and even social gatherings are all been monitored.

Quarantine is the new wave and how normal life was before all this is what we all crave for.

As we open our minds to new experiences, so should we search for solutions to the new life style this tragedy has brought along-isolation and loneliness.

Due to colleges having tight curriculums, some have pivoted quickly toward online learning, here's the secret most educators and students don't yet know: done right, online education can be surprisingly intimate.

As the nation prepares to meet the threat of COVID-19, we are surrounded by the language of loneliness. We move from "social distancing" to "self-isolation" to even the prospect of avoiding the people we love. At colleges and universities across the country, we are pivoting quickly toward online learning, or as it is often called, distance learning.

That student who's sitting far enough away in the lecture hall that you can't quite read her expression amid the proverbial sea of faces? When you call on her in a live session, she pops up right in front of you, one on one, looking you straight in the eye. There is no back seat in online education -- every student is in the front row.

That other student in back who never raises his hand? You might be surprised at how willing he is to open up and share his ideas in the live chat room that's running alongside your teaching content.

When you create small breakout groups online, you eliminate not only the chair shuffling and wasted time of moving people around, but also much of the awkward social dance that human beings do as they try to find their place in a new group. Over and over, we find that group work online creates strong team bonds in amazingly short periods of time. After all, majority of the students grew up cultivating and navigating their social lives on screens



and keyboards.

Students say that they find great value in the online educational experience although social media notifications play a great role in shifting their focus from time to time during sessions. There are many reasons for that. But when faculty and staff members gather to talk about what is working, one theme that arises over and over is the level of engagement. And not just intellectual engagement with the course content, but human engagement -- between faculty and students, and even more strikingly, among students from around the world whose main commonality is this shared digital adventure literary!

That is not to say that this emotional component in online education comes automatically or easily. Effective online teaching often requires more planning and more overall effort than traditional classroom teaching of the same material. Running useful office hours online, for a group of several dozen students at once, requires strict discipline and a lot of energy. And for those of who did

not grow up digital natives, it can still take some mental gymnastics to look into a camera as they would into a human eye -- not to mention performing the multitasking required to manage a good platform in real time.

But after immersing ourselves in this modality for a few years, we do have several practical ideas that might help you get the best out of this medium and create a compelling, engaging, enjoyable learning environment for students who might need that more than ever.

Students should just embark in exploring, editing and creative skills. As their tutors plan assignments, they ought to think about what students do so well in the digital environment and build their work around those skills and behaviors. Online, students quickly shift from consumers to producers of content, and sharing is easy. Build activities that encourage them to co-create and peer review. Have students create or improve wiki pages on key topics.

College Comfort Zone
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No new coronavirus cases in Wuhan sends encouragement to the world

WUHAN

NO new infections of the novel coronavirus were reported on Wednesday in Wuhan, the epicenter of the epidemic, marking a notable first in the city's months-long battle with the virus and sending a message of hope to a world grappling with the pandemic.

The Health Commission of Hubei Province, where Wuhan is the capital, said the virus' death toll climbed by eight in the province, but the total confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Wuhan and Hubei remained at 50,005 and 67,800 on Wednesday.

No increase was observed in the province's number of suspected cases, which fell to zero on Tuesday, in another indication that large-scale transmissions have been suppressed at the epidemic epicenter after a slew of strict measures.

Previously, the central Chinese province had reported single-digit increases of new infections, all of which were from Wuhan, for a week in a row since last Wednesday. A month ago, the figure was several thousand a day.

The province also saw 795 patients discharged from hospital after recovery on Wednesday, reducing its caseload of hospitalized patients to 6,636, including 1,809 in severe condition and 465 in critical condition.

With no new cases in Wuhan, the Chinese mainland on Wednesday reduced the increase in domestic transmissions to zero, according to the National Health Commission. The mainland now faces a greater threat of infections imported from overseas, which jumped by 34 on Wednesday.

"The clearing of new infections in Wuhan came earlier than predicted, but it is still too early to let down our guard," said Zhang Boli, one of the leading experts advising on the epidemic fight in Hubei.

Arduous work still lies ahead as China strengthens its defence against imported cases from abroad, treats thousands of patients still in serious or critical condition and rehabilitates those discharged from hospitals, said Zhang, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

With the strict measures in place, a drastic rebound in new infections is unlikely, said Chen Erzhen, who leads a Shanghai medical team assisting Hubei.

However, Chen noted an alarming fact that there are still patients recently diagnosed at fever clinics, calling for continued epidemiologic investigation.

"Today is a big day for Wuhan, but we can't afford a minute of relaxation," he said. "We are still fighting toward a final victory in Wuhan to be marked by more days of zero increase."

In a leadership meeting on Wednesday, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, said the positive trend in preventing and controlling the epidemic has been constantly consolidated and expanded.

He stressed efforts to protect the hard-won positive trend as new situations and problems, especially the overseas spread of the virus and its negative impacts on the world economy, brought new challenges.

The novel coronavirus was first identified in Wuhan in December as a new pathogen facing mankind. Before its traits were fully understood, the virus had cut a swath of infections among Wuhan's

unsuspecting public, before jumping from the transportation hub to other parts of China via the largest seasonal human migration ahead of the Spring Festival.

Xi has described the COVID-19 outbreak as the most difficult to contain since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and "a big test" for the country.

Medical experts said the virus is more contagious, though less deadly, than the SARS virus that belongs to the same coronavirus family. Globally, the SARS virus infected 8,422 people and killed 919 between 2002 and 2003.

"We still have insufficient knowledge of the novel coronavirus. What we already know is it's a very cunning virus with a long incubation period," said Wang Daowen, a cardiologist at Tongji Hospital in Wuhan.

"We still found the virus from the anus, if not from the lungs, of one patient after he was hospitalized for 50 days," said Wang, who was among the first medical experts joining the treatment of COVID-19. "Usually, a virus should vanish from one's body in two weeks."

TURNING TIDE

The Chinese mainland began to see a drop in the number of COVID-19 patients on Feb. 18, after the number of recovered patients surged and new cases declined. By late February, the virus had withdrawn from most regions on the Chinese mainland, with only single-digit daily increases of infections in areas outside Wuhan.

On March 6, the epidemic epicenter Wuhan slashed the daily increase of confirmed cases to below 100, down from a peak of more than 14,000 in early February. Bruce Aylward, who led the China-WHO joint mission on COVID-19, said the outbreak in China had come down "faster than would have been expected."

On March 11, the daily increase of locally transmitted infections dropped to single digits for the first time on the Chinese mainland, where the virus has so far caused a total of 80,928 infections and 3,245 fatalities, defying earlier predictions by foreign researchers of a more extensive national outbreak.

Behind the downward trends were a raft of strong measures taken by the Chinese government, including canceling mass events, closing scenic attractions, suspending long-distance buses and asking hundreds of millions of Chinese to stay indoors to break transmission chain. On Jan. 23, Wuhan declared unprecedented traffic restrictions, including suspending the city's public transport and all outbound flights and trains, in an attempt to contain the epidemic within its territory.

The situation in Wuhan and its nearby cities was grim. Officials said more than 3,000 medics in Hubei contracted the virus at the early stage of the outbreak due to limited knowledge of the virus. Many families lost multiple loved ones. Following reports of overloaded local hospitals, more than 42,000 medical staff, including those from the military, were dispatched to Hubei from across the country. At the peak of the fight, one in 10 intensive care medics in China were working in Wuhan.

Fleets of trucks carrying aid goods and displaying banners of "Wuhan be strong!" rushed to the city from all corners of the country. Under a "pairing-up support" system, each city in Hubei is taken care of by at least one provincial-level region. **Xinhua**

How long will coronavirus last? See what experts have to say...

By Special Correspondents

In a matter of days, millions of Americans have seen their lives tipped over by measures to curb the spread of the new coronavirus.

Normally bustling streets are deserted as families hunker down in their homes. Many of those who do venture out try to stay a safe distance from anyone they encounter, even as they line up to buy non-precious commodities like hand sanitizers.

Parents juggle childcare as schools close, perhaps for the rest of the school year. And restaurants and bars sit empty as more and more convert to delivery-only options.

How long will this last? Scientists say there isn't a simple answer -- but we'll know soon.

"In many ways, this situation is unprecedented -- we're trying to take some actions to curb the spread and timing of this pandemic," said Stephen Morse, a disease researcher at Columbia University in New York.

Yes, there have been past disease outbreaks that scientists can draw some lessons from but, in those cases, the disease was largely allowed to run its course. "So those models don't precisely apply," Morse said.

On Monday, President Donald Trump said the US may be managing the outbreak through July or August. New York governor Andrew Cuomo said the state's number of coronavirus cases may peak -- not end -- in 45 days.

The overall message is that the United States will be fighting the virus outbreak for a matter of months, at least, not days or weeks.

Rebecca Katz, a public health expert at Georgetown University, says each model of how the disease could spread relies on data and assumptions about population dynamics, demographics, health care capacity and other factors.

The challenge for designing models of what will happen next in the US is that

limited testing for COVID-19 means that researchers don't know what the starting point is -- how many people are already infected.

In simplest terms, scientists say that the epidemic will slow when people with infections don't pass the virus on to others.

"Basically, if I infect one other person or more ... then the epidemic can take off. If I infect less than one person and everybody infects less than one person, then the epidemic will decline," said Elizabeth Halloran, a disease researcher at the University of Washington.

Based on data from China and from cruise ships, scientists estimate that unless measures are taken to limit the spread, each infected person will infect about two or three others, leading to an exponential growth of the virus.

If the virus makes a jump to one new person every two to five days, as scientists calculate, then a single infected person could lead to 4,142 total infections within a month -- assuming that nothing is done to break chains of transmission.

Scientists estimate that unless such measures are put in place, between 40 and 80 per cent of the global population could become infected.

Jeffrey Shaman, a public health expert at Columbia University, said that based on an analysis of data from China, scientists found that the majority of new infections are transmitted by people with mild symptoms who may not even know they are ill.

Even if most people recover and only a fraction of total infections are severe enough to require hospitalisation -- about 14 per cent, scientists estimate -- the sheer scale of the epidemic will put enormous strain on hospitals, healthcare workers and other patients who may see unrelated procedures delayed.

Scientists now agree that measures to break or slow the chains of transmission are crucial to ensure that emergency rooms are not quickly overwhelmed by surges in critically ill patients.

If measures like closing schools are suc-



cessful in slowing disease spread, "we are going to see a hump instead of a peak" in new cases, US government disease expert Dr Anthony Fauci said in a White House briefing.

In other words, the number of infections will rise more gradually and manageably. But that also means that the duration of the outbreak will be prolonged.

"The point of the restrictions we have is actually to stretch this out even longer. We don't want a big peak to come very quickly," said Mark Jit, a disease researcher at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

"It's not like a Hollywood movie with a clear ending where everyone is saved, or everyone dies, quickly," he noted.

So how does this end? Most scientists believe that the fight against COVID-19 will not be over until there is an effective vaccine. But Fauci and other experts say that it will be more than a year before a vaccine can be ready for widespread use.

"The best-case scenario is that we have vaccine in 12 or 18 months and then our lives go back to normal," Jit said, adding: "The worst-case scenario is that it takes a

long time for a vaccine to be developed, and the world is really changed and our lives are not the same again."

While we wait, are we all shut-ins for more than a year? Almost no one thinks that is realistic, with Michael Levy, a University of Pennsylvania disease researcher, saying: "I don't think we can maintain social distancing as it is right now for the duration of the epidemic."

What may be more feasible is a plan for intermittent restrictions and enhanced monitoring to control the disease, an idea explored in a new study from researchers at Imperial College London. Once the number of new cases falls below a certain threshold, schools, offices and restaurants could reopen. But if the number of infections spikes again, restrictions would be reinstated.

"The analogy of pumping car brakes on an icy road is what we should be thinking about," Levy said, adding: "You push on the brakes to slow things down, then ease up -- but if you slow, you have to pump the brakes again."

Agencies

Reading is pivotal in promoting generational equality for youth

By Lucy Rweyemamu

It is 25 years since the Beijing World Conference on Women's Rights, where a platform for action on how to remove the systemic barriers that hold women back from equal participation in all spheres of life was set out.

Have we made any progress with respect to those commitments? Despite some progress, real change has been agonisingly slow for the majority of women and girls in the world.

To this day, not a single country can claim to have achieved gender equality. In Tanzania, only 36 per cent of government leadership positions are held by women.

The theme for this year's International Women's Day (March 8) was "I am Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights". Unfortunately, this raises more questions than answers on why women's rights are still yet to be universally achieved and how generations are passing on the knowledge.

Several factors contribute to the limited participation by women in the mainstream political, social, economic and other sectors in Tanzania. Lack of formal education, teenage pregnancies, violence against women and girls, female genital mutilation and HIV & Aids are among the reasons young girls and women get the shorter end of the stick. Efforts to get answers to these questions have shown that the only overarching response is that women's equality is possible in Tanzania and young girls and boys need to learn about this while they are still young.

Reading - in the form of art, drama, books or visuals - could be a powerful tool in promoting

generational equality. By instilling a reading culture in our children, both girls and boys, we can build the world we want and expand access to education to millions of girls who are not in school.

We need to create, document and publish all great stories on successes, challenges, movements, struggles and efforts towards promoting women's rights.

For us, it is important to nurture our children in reading because that will help them in internalising social norms and values that respect gender equality from early on. They will then grow with positive attitudes and perceptions about gender equality and become champions leading the fight against gender inequality.

Reading will also help our girls and boys to witness and assess how far we have come and how far we still need to go. It is primarily through reading that we will empower young women and girls systematically left on the sidelines of today.

Stories worth reading would include those of inspiring feminist heroines such as Prof Ruth Meena, Usu Mallya and Mary Rusimbi. Among the subjects, themes or topics would be violence against women and crusades for gender equality and knowledge which would be acquired by these girls through reading.

That would help them discover better ways of improving on the ways to ensure gender equality and step it up while leveraging their potential to drive social progress towards the world we want and deserve.

Lucy Rweyemamu is a Senior Manager at the Institute for Educational Development, Aga Khan University, in Dar es Salaam.

Forests and biodiversity: Too precious to lose!

By Fred Kafeero

FORESTS play a critical role as home to biological diversity. Life on earth depends on forests considering the provision of oxygen we breathe. They are a source of livelihood for humanity; they are important habitats for animals, they contain species of trees that are important for environmental, scientific or societal value. They play an important role in mitigating the negative impacts of climate change.

Forests are a source of food, medicine and fuel for more than a billion people. They hold more than three-quarters of the world's terrestrial biodiversity, providing many products and services that contribute to socio-economic development in many countries of the world.

Today, as we celebrate the International Day of Forests, the theme for 2020 'Forests and Biodiversity', reminds us of the important role that forests play in maintaining life on the earth.

It is sad to see that despite all this significance, forests are disappearing at an unprecedented scale world over! According to the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015 report, in 1990 the world had 4.128 million hectares of forest but by 2015, this area decreased to 3,999 million hectares. There are many reasons advanced including an increasing population; expansion of agriculture land; reliance on wood fuel for energy and other unsustainable land use practices.

Deforestation, chiefly caused by the conversion of forestland to agriculture and livestock production areas, threatens not only the livelihoods of forest dependent communities and indigenous peoples, but also the variety of life on our planet. Land-use changes result in a loss of valuable habitats, land degradation, soil erosion, a decrease in clean water and the release of carbon into the atmosphere.

Losing forest biodiversity means losing important sources of medicine, food, raw materials and employment opportunities.

Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is a commitment made by countries to tackle the complex challenges we face, from ending poverty and hunger and responding to climate change to building resilient communities, achieving inclusive growth and sustainably managing the Earth's natural resources. While the importance of forests and trees to a healthy, prosperous planet is universally recognized, the depth of those roots may be greater than imagined.

Several indicators under SDG15 focus on forests, specifically monitoring forest land and the share of forests under sustainable management.

Bearing in mind the important role that forests play in conserving biodiversity, FAO is working with governments of the Member States across the globe to ensure that these resources are utilized in a sustainable manner.

For instance, through the Global Forest

Resources Assessment (FRA), FAO is supporting countries across the globe including Tanzania by strengthening capacities for collection and analysis of official national statistics on forest resources to enable them ensure sustainable use of their natural resources. This way, FRA plays a central role in monitoring progress towards the SDG 15 - Life on Land.

For some years here in Tanzania, FAO has continued to provide technical support for the development of the first ever-comprehensive National Forest Inventory - the National Forestry Resources Monitoring and Assessment (NAFORMA).

FAO has also been supporting the Government of Tanzania by providing both technical and financial support for conducting assessments and studies on forests and biodiversity; community based forestry management; forest tenure in the framework of the Voluntary Guidelines on

the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT); forestry for sustainable food security and nutrition; cost-benefit analysis of forestry interventions for supplying woodfuel, among others.

With regard to forestry governance instruments- policy, legal and guidelines, FAO has supported the review of the National Forest Policy; development of the National Forestry Policy Implementation Strategy; and currently, review of the National Forestry Management Act. Managing forests sustainably, and restoring degraded ones, is crucial for people, biodiversity and climate. Forests and Biodiversity are indeed too precious to lose!

Fred Kafeero (pictured) is the Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) in Tanzania.

An effective women's network needs good leadership to fight for their rights

By Daniel Eliwaha

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day celebrations held on March 8 each year have come and gone, with social and political analysts admitting that this year the annual event was more enthralling than other years in many countries worldwide. It was a day of considerable confetti in Tanzania and elsewhere as many women came out in processions, workshops and other activities organized to live up to its ethos.

There are people who to this day don't know what the day is all about, when it was started. It was in 1912 where around 15,000 workers in textile factories in the city of New York (mostly women) held a demonstration. They were demanding the right to work in an enabling environment and appropriate remuneration. The factory owner, a cruel individual, organized with criminal elements to attack the demonstrators, where 146 of the workers were killed, of whom 129 were young immigrant women.

This incident angered many people and raised the momentum of defending women's rights in the United States and around the world. It was over 60 years later in 1975 that the United Nations General Assembly declared March 8 (the day of the massacre of young women employees) as International Women's Day. The motto of this year's celebrations was 'We are a Generation of Equality.'

Similarly, this year's celebrations were particularly remarkable as it was also the Silver Jubilee of the United Nations Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995 (where former Tanzanian veteran cabinet minister and diplomat Gertrude Mongella presided over the conference). It came up with the Beijing Platform of Action which provided the main goals to be realized by member countries from then on.

In the months and year following the Beijing Conference, the government led by President Benjamin Mkapa agreed to implement the Beijing Platform plan of action. One of its major axis is enabling the realization of women's rights and rights of the girl child, reduction of the poverty facing women in rural and urban areas, to ensure that women have access to decision making platforms for development in the coun-

try, removal of gender violence and instituting special organs to oversee the furtherance of gender equality.

Opening a workshop to mark International Women's Day and 25 years of the Beijing Conference, Union Vice President Samia Suluhu Hassan expressed gratitude to the leadership of Women Fund Tanzania -Trust for inviting her as guest of honor, and for organizing the workshop which was attended by leaders of various women's network organizations numbering around 150.

"The government recognizes that unless we take purposeful measures to build a society led by gender equality, efforts to build an industrial economy and freeing our country from the depths of poverty and reach a middle income status, cannot be achieved," she said, noting that the fifth phase government has a solid intention of removing gender discrimination and build a society led by gender equality.

"In realizing this objective, our Government has ratified all international and regional conventions compelling us to take measures to remove discrimination by gender and enabling women and girls to obtain their rights without any discrimination at all," she emphasized.

Still, the chairperson of the WTF board, Prof. Ruth Meena, said that even with the well meaning efforts of the Government to implement various international and regional agreements concerning the removal of gender discrimination, more intense measures are needed to remove all vestiges or stumbling blocks immobilizing women in seeking to be part of the leadership of our country.

Prof. Meena said that despite that the number of women in the Tanzanian Parliament had increased from 101 in 2005 to 145 in 2015, this increase has come about because of a rise in special seats, and not those elected by the people from constituencies. Similarly, the number of women ministers isn't that big, or the number of women regional and district commissioners.

"These statistics provide a lesson to us activists that we should add strength to the agenda of gender equality, as we have not reached even half of the goals of Beijing," she added.

She said the network of women's organizations numbering about 60 in the country must continue with efforts to



Kishapu District Council Head of Community Development, Joseph Swalala receiving award from Vice President Samia Suluhu, during the 13th Gender Festival at TGNP Mtandao September 2017 (File photo)

place a capable leadership, who are not covered, so that they fight to women's emancipation and bring about positive changes. It is necessary to continue contemplating so as to see what political systems and laws are needed so as to increase the participation of women and girls in leadership representation.

In her speech, the Vice President said that the major challenge she can see is the paucity of women with ability who come out to contest for positions of leadership in politics, business or even in civic organizations. It is our role as defenders of women's rights to mobilise women with ability to come out in big numbers to contest for various positions of ward councilor, parliament and even higher levels in the general elections for councilors, parliamentarians and president, to held later this year in October, she said.

The Executive Director of WTF, Mary Rusimbi on behalf of women activists handed a special AWARD to the Vice President for her great contribution in bringing about women's development in the country, and for being the first women since independence was reached to hold that virtually uppermost position in our nation.

Ireland Ambassador in the country, Paul Sherlock said 'the dream of equality' is possible but demanded that the participation of men given due importance, since for women to fight for their rights without educating and involving men will not be right.

Canadian High Commissioner Pamela O'Donnell praised non-governmental institutions and entities that are on the forefront of campaigning for women rights, mention ing them as TGNP, TAMWA, WILDAF, Msichana Initiative, TAWLA and WFT.

She said even developed countries as in Europe and Asia have not yet reached 50-50 gender equality so women should continue in their solidarity, convinced that one day their efforts will be seen to have borne fruit.

And the Representative of UN Women in the country, Hodan Addou, reminded the delegates that the day was also meant to mark 75 years since the United Nations was inaugurated, and since UN Women came up.

She said 131 countries in the world have been able to strike out various laws that were discriminating women and girls, underlining that this is not a minor issue, but is a good step of success of gender equality.

She urged the Government of Tanzania to place on its priorities what

tactics it will use to remove various impediments arising such that girls fail to finish school and even colleges when they still young age-wise.

A panel of four activists examined in depth various questions concerning challenges that confront women in the implementation of their objectives.

Msichana Initiative Director Rebecca Gyumi emphasized that well educated women and activists must conduct an intensive analysis as to how far sine the 1995 Beijing Conference what successes our country has attained in gender equality. She added that she personally sees that there is still no adequate mindset changes as customs and traditions are very much used as a thicket to hinder attaining gender equality, and emphasized: "We must reach a point where we say 'enough'; these traditions must be changed fast."

Rebecca added, while showing signs of being pained, that it will take 108 years, where many women will not be around, for gender equality to be attained "if we shall continue with the slow speed we have' infighting for such equality.

And Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) Director Lilian Liundi said that along with being told that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was rising at 7 per cent (which is a good percentage in the economy) still the condition of women economically is pathetic, as many live in abject poverty.

She urged activist women to struggle with budgets of each Ministry, to take a gender budgeting inclination and having a specific interval of reporting on gender developments. She cited the example of the Ministry of Education, or District Councils, which can set aside money for the purpose of procuring pads for school girls if it is taken into account that many of them do not go to school for five or six days each month when they are in their periods.

Professor Bertha Koda of the Institute of Gender Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam urged women MPs when in Parliament should anchor themselves in analysing policies, laws, plans and budgets that hinder development and gender equality; without this the benefit of their being in Parliament is not seen.

She similarly demanded conducting of analysis of various legislations as a number of them conflict in matters of

gender equality, one law saying this and another saying something else different from the first law, citing the Marriage Law and the Land Act.

She emphasized that gender proportionality should start at family level, for parents to make male children know that they are equal to girl children; what is different is merely the physiology.

Prof. Ruth Meena said official statistics show that men employed in the formal sector are more numerous than women. For example, statistics for 2016 show that a total of 1,658,046 people were employed, of whom men were 64 per cent and women 36 per cent.

Around 70 per cent of households in the city of Dar es Salaam use charcoal, as this cone uses 20 per cent of this energy source countrywide. Women are the ones with the burden of seeking firewood and using charcoal, and carry diseases arising from firewood and charcoal smoke.

Around 70 percent of agriculture still relies on the hoe, and only 20 per cent use animal pulled ploughs and only 10 per cent use tractors. It is all the same surprising that agriculture depends on manual labour, especially of women, and carries the face of a poverty stricken woman in a village.

Discussion continued after the panel issued its opinions which were often harsh.

Activists congratulated one another for conducting a sustainable campaign against sextortion in the country, working with other activists and organizations like PCCB which cover laws relating to sexual corruption.

A number of participants demanded that there be a process of reviewing the law relating to political parties so that there are enabling laws in politics and of competition in those parties, which shall allow women to participate in leadership equally with men.

The participants emphasized fair competition, gender equality in reaching decisions on party leadership, openness in using party resources, intense presence of the rule of law and stopping the habit of favoring women who cheapen themselves by using sex.

They also asked political parties to arrange and announce clear procedures as to how women can be elected MPs via special seats, as at present the procedure is unknown and feelings of favoritism appear from time to time.

Liberians, stop politicising in everything and follow the rules to save ourselves and our country!

By Special Correspondent

THE world today is facing a major health and medical crisis owing to the terrible disease known as Coronavirus (COVID-19), which broke out first in Wuhan, Hubei Province, People's Republic of China.

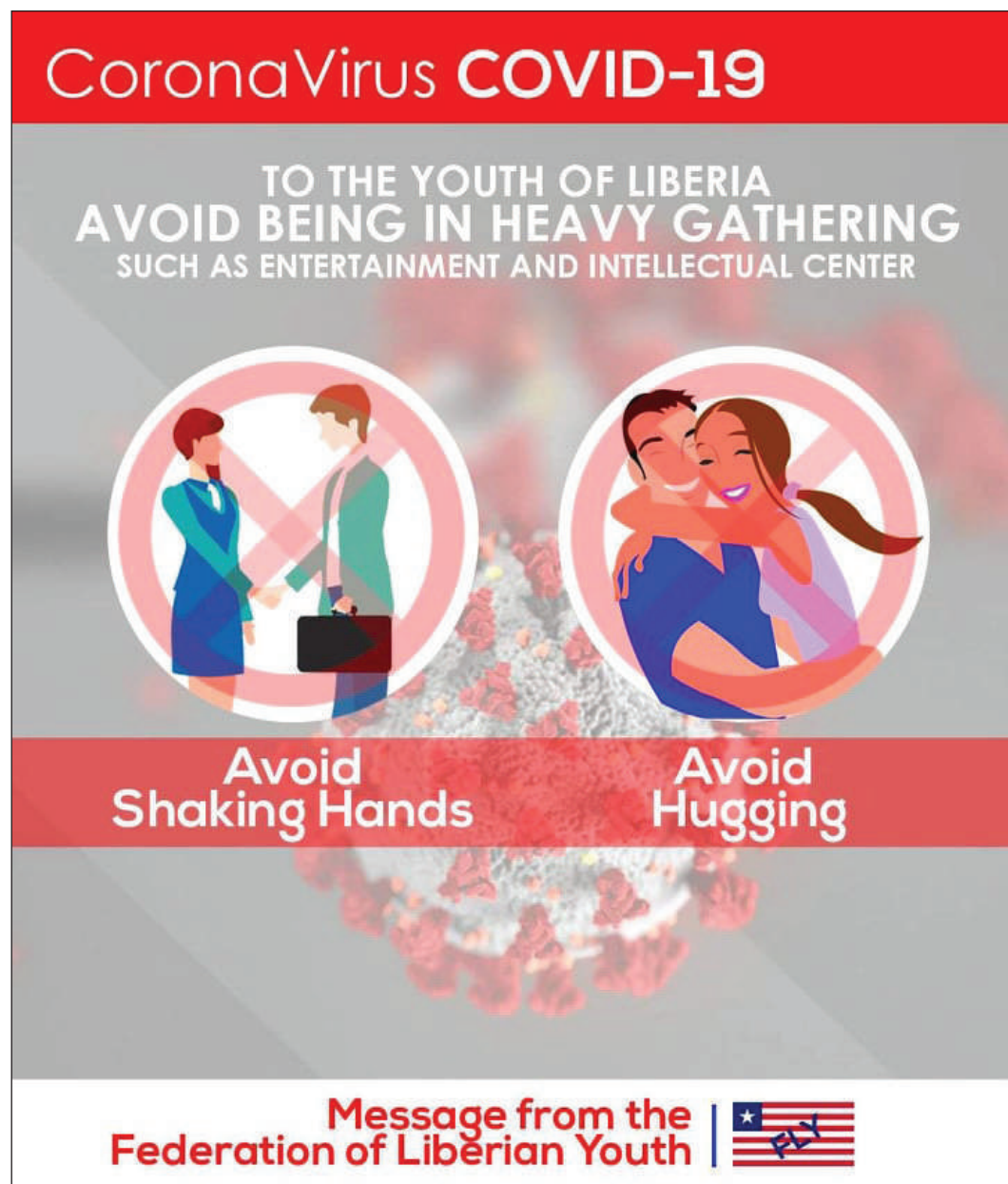
Yesterday, Monday, March 17, 2020 the government of Liberia announced that this deadly disease had reached Liberia, too, with the arrival back in the country of the Executive Director of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Nathaniel Blama, who has been diagnosed with the Coronavirus disease.

In this Editorial we are appealing to Liberians to STOP politicizing everything because in this country, when sensitive national issues get political, it usually means someone messed up somewhere.

And who was it that messed up? Was it the health authorities, or Mr. Blama, who returned to Liberia along with other government officials on Friday, March 13, 2020 on a Brussels Airlines flight from Switzerland through Brussels, Belgium? Belgium is a country in Europe, the continent that is most seriously afflicted with the deadly Coronavirus disease apart from China.

This led President George Weah to deliver yesterday morning a nationwide broadcast, confirming Mr. Blama's affliction with this disease, which a leading Liberian medical practitioner yesterday told the Daily Observer was "more deadly than Ebola." So President Weah said in his nationwide Address yesterday morning that when Mr. Blama's temperature was taken at the airport, whatever the case was, he was allowed to go home.

No sooner had Mr. Blama arrived



home than he realized he was seriously ill; so he called the health authorities and asked for further tests, which confirmed that he is a carrier of the Coronavirus disease. He has since been quarantined.

A quick and URGENT question: what about all

the others who were on the Brussels Airlines flight with Mr. Blama? Have they now turned themselves in for quarantining? If not, why not? After all, they all, like Mr. Blama, flew in from the same Europe to the same Liberia on the same aircraft. It is understood that one person who was with Mr. Blama on that inbound flight was Mr. Jeremiah Sokan, another EPA top official, who also attended the Green Climate Fund Board Meeting in Switzerland.

Have Mr. Sokan and others on that flight not also been quarantined? We submit that this is another distinct indication that we are not a serious country. For how do we Liberians engage in the stupidity of flirting with so dangerous and deadly a disease like the Coronavirus -- a disease that is killing people in some of the world's most advanced places, including Italy and elsewhere in Europe?

To prove further that we are not a serious country, it is alleged that Tolbert Nyesuah, the former Director General of the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL), fled the country few months ago with a lot of the Institute's money and remains at large. Why? Why has the Liberian government not contacted INTERPOL to have Nyesuah arrested and brought back to Liberia to face justice?

The primary purpose of this Editorial is to sound a serious warning to all of us Liberians, all our Town and Paramount Chiefs, all our City Mayors and County Superintendents and the entire government, beginning with the Ministry of Health.

The WARNING is for all of them to get busy paying serious attention to HEALTH and SANITATION. All of these officials, beginning with our Town, Clan and Paramount Chiefs and, most especially our City Mayors, should leave their desks and go out into the fields and CLEAN UP YOUR TOWNS AND CITIES, and most especially, your marketplaces where Liberians buy their food.

When last did the Monrovia City Mayor visit the Douala Marketplace?

When last did the Paynesville City Mayor visit the Paynesville Red Light Market?

Everyone knows that these two marketplaces are the filthiest in the country; yet it is in these places that Monrovi-ans and people in nearby areas buy their food.

We make this URGENT appeal to all Liberian city leaders, most especially to those of our two most populous Montserrado cities -- Monrovia, our capital, and Paynesville -- to clean up their marketplaces at Douala, the Water Side and Paynesville Red Light.

In strong union, success is sure! We can beat the coronavirus

By Lisa R. White

THANK GOD the President of the Republic of Liberia, Dr. George Manneh Weah, has constituted a Special Presidential Advisory Committee for the Prevention of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in Liberia.

CLEARLY, HE understands that the coronavirus outbreak requires all national and international hands on deck to handle eradicating the virus. With donor support, I hope the President takes his initiative a step further and establish a standing Incident Management System (IMS) and an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to help manage all the details of this crisis and any future crisis.

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION reports that worldwide the virus has infected more than 184, 000 people and has killed at least 7,500. This global pandemic has arrived in East, West, Central and Northern and Southern Africa. Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Togo, Cameroon, the DRC, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal, South

Africa, Morocco. These countries have reported confirmed cases.

EVEN LIBERIA'S NEIGHBORS, Guinea and Cote D'Ivoire have confirmed cases. Al Jazeera is reporting that most of Africa's cases came from those who travelled abroad and returned. Only five people have succumbed to coronavirus so far -- all in North Africa, reported Al Jazeera, with the Sub-Saharan region recording no deaths and very low numbers of confirmed cases.

UNLIKE MANY of these countries, Liberia has the hard won experience of successfully combating Ebola. Through the active implementation of lessons learned, data collection and communication along with International and national engagement, and community activism, key measures were put in place -- aggressive communication campaigns, contact tracing programs and reliable reporting mechanisms to eradicate the virus.

THERE WERE also vigilant hand washing schemes, meaningful calls to action like calling community or traditional leaders when sick or when seeing

someone who is sick, seeking early treatment and no touching. These measures helped to combat the deadly but survivable disease. There is a collective memory of what to do. Business and homes alike have installed hand washing stations. The Ministry of Health and the National Public Health Institute of Liberia are working to ensure the relevant parties are quarantined and effective contact tracing is activated.

HOWEVER, THE coronavirus is not Ebola. New measures, campaigns and messages are needed because COVID-19 is infectious in a pernicious way Ebola wasn't. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has said the coronavirus is not just spread between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) but it is also spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets, said the CDC, can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly inhaled into the lungs.

IMAGINE, THOUGH, the pros-

pect of an infected person displaying symptoms and sneezing in a taxi. Those people are potentially affected. When they get out of the taxi, they in turn infect the people they come into contact with.

THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT is encouraging drivers to wear masks and has reduced the number of authorized passengers in a taxi to one in the front. What about passenger safety? Should passengers wear masks and gloves, too?

GOOD CRISIS management critically examines the worst-case scenario. For example, what will parents do if one child or another family member in the household has the virus and the rest of the family doesn't? How will the family manage that? How will sanitation be handled? Are hospitals and clinics equipped with enough gloves and masks to manage the crisis? Will the borders be closed?

HOW WILL INFECTION prevention be handled at congested markets across the country or with the people who travel to Guinea or Sierra Leone to buy

and sell or visit family? What measures are put in place for this scenario? How will they be informed about accurate and reliable ways to prevent infection?

EBOLA WAS MORE than a health emergency. The epidemic severely impacted the provision of health care services and caused setbacks in the treatment and control of other diseases including: HIV, TB and Malaria according to the CDC, but Ebola also affected the population on the social, cultural, economic and political level.

EBOLA CHANGED the way greetings were conducted and it caused the need for safe burials which was a departure from traditional burial ceremonies. Other social norms were either transformed or were temporarily dropped from the cultural fabric of society.

WE ARE SEEING A similar impact of COVID-19 in Italy. Worshippers stand outside of churches, six feet part from each other and listen to a prelate's sermon. During Ebola, pastors distributed holy communion through individual packets that were thrown

away after use as opposed to using one Chalice for all parishioners.

THE OVERALL ECONOMIC impact of the Ebola epidemic on Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone was an estimated \$2.8 billion with incomes declining and poverty increasing reported the World Bank.

GHANA HAS REPORTED two confirmed cases of COVID-19. As of 17 March there are 143 suspected cases. Consequently, Ghanaians have taken to social media and created the hashtag, "#closebordersnow," indicating their drive to stop any more cases from entering the country and preferring prevention to cure. Their trending message is a clarion call to the Ghanaian government to do more than enhance border disease surveillance and temporarily ban government officials from traveling; a prescient example for Liberia's Presidential Advisory Committee.

EVEN THE WORLD Health Organization is urging governments to do more.

THE GOOD NEWS is that the Liberian government is taking con-

crete steps to contain the virus, we must still critically examine how the coronavirus will impact our daily lives.

TRANSPORTATION PLAYED a major role in spreading Ebola throughout the country. What will be the plan, for instance, for citizens who commute from one county to another or from one regional country to Liberia using taxis, pemphehs or kekehhs and are infected? What is the plan for transportation in Monrovia and its environs? Will there be for example, hand-washing stations at regional transportation hubs? Will taxi drivers be required to make hand sanitizer available to passengers?

AND, WHAT IS the best way to communicate with Liberians about efforts to contain/prevent the virus. What if a good portion of the population doesn't have a radio, access to the internet or phone? How will they get critical information on COVID-19 prevention or obtain accurate and reliable information about preventive measures from people they trust?

Alcohol-based sanitisers

By Special Correspondent

WHAT is all this fuss about alcohol based sanitizers and people complaining about hike in prices. I am alright with the price of my local gin (Ye bu didi) from the "Blue Kiosk". I can use it as my hand sanitizer in light of the scare about the corona virus.

In responding to this enquirer I used a lot of material from the World Health Organization (WHO) guideline on hand hygiene for health care (2009) and Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health Care Settings of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). No it is not the same.

The local gin is about 40% strength of alcohol (ethanol). Alcohol based sanitizer are required to be 60-80% concentration to be effective. The paradox here is that higher concentrations are less potent because proteins are not easily denatured in the absence of water.

Most alcohol-based hand antiseptics contain either ethanol or isopropyl alcohol or a combination of these two products. The antimicrobial activity of alcohols results from their ability to denature proteins.

The alcohol content of solutions may be expressed as a percentage by weight (w/w), which is not affected by temperature or other variables or as a percentage by volume (v/v), which may be affected by temperature, specific gravity and reaction concentration. e.g. 70% alcohol by weight is equivalent to 76.8% by volume if prepared at 15°C, or 80.5% if prepared at 25°C

Alcohols have excellent in vitro germicidal activity against Gram-positive and Gram-negative vegetative bacteria (including multi drug-resistant

pathogens such as methicillin resistant Staph. aureus (MRSA) and vancomycin resistant enterococci (VRE), M.tuberculosis, and a variety of fungi. However, they have virtually no activity against bacterial spores or protozoanocysts, and very poor activity against some non-enveloped(non-lipophilic) viruses.

In the World Health Organization specifications for hand sanitizers' hydrogen peroxide is incorporated to deal with the spores. In tropical settings, the lack of activity

against parasites is a matter of concern about the opportunity to promote the extensive use of alcohol-based hand rubs, instead of hand washing, which may at least guarantee amechnical removal effect.

Some enveloped (lipophilic) viruses such as herpes simplex virus (HSV), HIV, influenza virus, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and vaccinia virus are susceptible to alcohols.

Coronaviruses are enveloped viruses. Other enveloped viruses that are somewhat less susceptible, but are killed by 60-70% alcohol, include hepatitis B virus(HBV), hepatitis C virus.

In a porcine tissue carrier model used to study antiseptic activity, 70% ethanol and 70% isopropanol were found to reduce titres of an enveloped bacteriophage more effectively than an antimicrobial soap containing 4% Chlorhexidine gluconate.

In 1994, the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) classified ethanol 60-95% as a generally safe and effective active agent for use in antiseptic hand hygiene or health care workers (HCW) handwash products. Alcohols are rapidly germicidal when applied to the skin.



BUSINESS

CRISIS

Beach resort in Cyprus now 'ghost town' with virus crisis

NICOSIA

On a Cyprus hotel reception desk, health questionnaires on the coronavirus sit mostly untouched near a bottle of hand sanitizer. There is hardly a guest left as tourism has all but collapsed on the Mediterranean island.

From this week the sector will shut down completely as hotels have been ordered closed for a month, along with restaurants, cafes and other businesses on the divided island that has reported 39 cases of the COVID-19 illness.

"This year, I think everything is lost," said Diana Kontou, manager of the Hotel Opera, located near the church of St Lazarus, a historical landmark in the southern seaside resort of Larnaca. Kontou said she had been in the tourism industry for around 20 years and never seen anything like it.

Occupancy this time of year is usually at 80% or more, she said, but the cancellations slowly "started from February" and peaked a week ago. Reservations had all but evaporated for March, April and May, and two staff members had been sent home for lack of work, she told AFP on Sunday.

Later the same day, the government said hotels would be closed until 30 April, though existing guests would be allowed to stay for another six days. President Nicos Anastasiades also said Cyprus would extend entry restrictions, requiring arrivals to carry a medical certificate showing they have tested negative for the virus, and then placing them into 14-day compulsory quarantine.

The EU member is divided between the Republic of Cyprus and a northern third controlled by the breakaway

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is recognised only by Ankara. Cyprus had reported 39 novel coronavirus cases by Monday - including six in the north and two British service personnel stationed on a military base that is part of the UK's sovereign territory.

All of the island is heavily dependent on tourism, and in the Republic of Cyprus arrivals hit a record of nearly four million last year. Cyprus has benefited from its reputation as a regional safe haven as political unrest has hit the tourism sectors of its traditional competitors Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey.

The tourism boom helped it to return to robust GDP growth after it was forced to agree a painful bailout from international lenders in 2013 to rescue its crumbling economy and insolvent banks. But now, as elsewhere, the coronavirus crisis is taking a heavy toll on the tourism and hospitality sector.

Last week, the head of the Cyprus Hotel Association told local media that the developments had hit March reservations hard and that the month was effectively a write-off. Now hoteliers and other businesses fear worse to come.

'Everything unravelled'

Along Larnaca's main Finikoudes beach, small groups of tourists were cautiously venturing out to enjoy the sun, while restaurants and cafes were still open for business. Joshua Mizrahi from north London was sitting at a seaside kiosk having a drink.

He said he had arrived on Thursday - a day before Cyprus announced a 15-day ban on entry to non-residents, with limited exceptions, and before northern Cyprus announced similar restrictions on Saturday.



A mask-clad woman walking along the Finikoudes promenade.

CAUTION

Fukushima hotspots make headlines before Olympics - but what's the risk?

TOKYO

Warnings of radiation hotspots in parts of Fukushima that will host the Olympic torch relay and several sporting events have made headlines, but what is the risk for athletes and spectators?

Since the 2011 tsunami that triggered the Fukushima nuclear accident, Japan has carried out extensive decontamination in affected areas and lifted evacuation orders. It hopes the Games will showcase recovery in areas devastated by the tsunami that left over 18 500 people dead and missing, and unleashed the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl.

But activists, including local NGOs and Greenpeace, have been vocally critical of government efforts and

made a splash with the discovery last year of multiple radioactive hotspots near the start of the Olympic torch relay route.

Greenpeace nuclear campaigner Kazue Suzuki argues the Japanese government is "deceiving people" by underplaying what the NGO calls ongoing health risks. "You don't have to be scared all the time, but you have to be aware of the risk," Suzuki told AFP.

At issue are patches of ground where Greenpeace said they detected radiation levels of 1.7 microsieverts per hour at one metre above the surface. That compares with the nationally allowed safety standard of 0.23 microsieverts per hour and a normal reading in Tokyo of around 0.04 microsieverts per hour.

TECH SAVVY

SA Fashion Week to present digital-only shows in light of coronavirus

JOHANNESBURG

First, fashion weeks went fur-free and now they're going people-free. It's all for the greater good, we suppose.

Remember when we conjectured in a previous article around how the coronavirus pandemic has threatened fashion weeks around the world, that perhaps Covid-19 is the unlikely, yet unfortunate 4R nudge fashion needs to start reconsidering its ailing fashion week model, using Armani and AFT's closing day as early 'case studies'?

And let's face it - technology (our smartphones, tablets, and other gadgets supplementing photography) has always been the primary lens through which we appreciate and analyse collections shown at fashion week anyway, even when we're there in real time, sitting pretty in front row.

Well, SA Fashion Week (SAFW), which takes pride in being in the "business of ethical fashion", has instead of postponing their events usually held at Sandton City, announced a first-of-its-kind digital-only showcase for their upcoming Spring/Summer 2020 Fashion Week.

London Fashion Week goes fur-free for the first time

London Fashion Week opens for the Spring/Summer 2019 seasons with shows from Richard Malone and JJS Lee. For the first time, London Fashion Week also goes fur-free. Of course, this comes in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak; hence SAFW declares they are committed to supporting and adhering to the directives given by the prohibiting of mass events/gatherings of more than 100 people.

The organisation is all about being "climate-friendly, green-friendly, and COVID-19 respectful," as it turns 23 this year. "We had been wanting to push change and the agenda. This was the push we needed," their media alert received this morning reads.

COVID-19 has paved the way for something rather beautiful and unique



Gert-Johan Coetzee fashion show during Day 2 of the SA Fashion Week (SAFW) Autumn/Winter 2020 Collection Showcase at Sandton City rooftop on October 24, 2019 in Sandton, South Africa.

to happen. Our designers' stories will be told in a refreshing and relevant way. And our sponsors and other stakeholders will be part of a bigger, global audience. This is our 23rd SA Fashion Week. We believe it will be our most important.

SA Fashion Week

However, a "Fake News" Instagram post made earlier today by SAFW, captioned "SA Fashion Week Spring/Summer 2020 is NOT POSTPONED!", has been misunderstood by a few concerned members of our local fashion fraternity... understandably so. This gainsaying of fake news around the fashion week's postponement only provides a link to sign up to their newsletter without providing clarity on a way forward with regards to the Spring/Summer 2020 shows.

Perhaps it's just a marketing ploy to

create enough buzz around the upcoming showcase to prompt people to sign up to the newsletter to gain access to their new digital explorations. Fashion retailers are also slowly but surely beginning to punt their e-commerce divisions in light of Covid-19, encouraging consumers to visit their online - over their brick-and-mortar stores. Two such stores that we've received word from so far are Cotton On and Sissy Boy, who have made the below statements respectively:

A letter from Sissy Boy founder, Ronald Sassoon

The health, safety & well-being of our customers, employees and partners will continue to be our number one priority which is why we've implemented the following measures: Hand sanitisers have been positioned at all till points in our stores which we encourage

customers to use on entry and exit from our stores.

Strict cleaning measures have been implemented in stores and the frequency thereof has increased significantly. Internal awareness about the Virus has been amplified to empower our staff with the knowledge they need to combat the spreading thereof. Our cleaning team at our Head Office and Factory has increased and so has the frequency of daily cleaning times.

Hand sanitisers have been placed at all high touch points throughout the building and every individual who enters must sanitise their hands before proceeding further. If you feel more comfortable shopping from afar feel free to explore our online store at www.sissyboyjeans.com or connect with us via social media for daily fashion inspiration & trends.

BRAINWASHED

There's a complex history of skin lighteners in Africa and beyond

NEW YORK

Somali-American activists recently scored a victory against Amazon and against colourism, which is prejudice based on preference for people with lighter skin tones. Members of the non-profit The Beautywell Project teamed up with the Sierra Club to convince the online retail giant to stop selling skin lightening products that contain mercury.

After more than a year of protests, this coalition of antiracist, health, and environmental activists persuaded Amazon to remove some 15 products containing toxic levels of mercury. This puts a small but noteworthy dent in the global trade in skin lighteners, estimated to reach US\$31.2 billion by 2024.

Rwandan government bans skin lightening cosmetics

Rwanda's government has banned cosmetics used to lighten the skin saying that chemicals in the controversial creams and ointments are harmful to the health of their users. What are the roots of this sizeable trade? And how might its most toxic elements be curtailed?

The online sale of skin lighteners is relatively new, but the in-person traffic is very old. My new book explores this layered history from the vantage point of South Africa. As in other parts of the world colonised by European powers, the politics of skin colour in South Africa have been importantly shaped by the history of white supremacy and institutions of racial slavery, colonialism, and segregation. My book examines that history.

Yet, racism alone cannot explain skin lightening practices. My book also attends to intersecting dynamics of class and gender,



Somali-American activist petitioning against Amazon and colourism.

changing beauty ideals and the expansion of consumer capitalism.

A deep history of skin whitening and lightening For centuries and even millennia, elites used paints and powders to create smoother, paler appearances, unblemished by illness and the sun's darkening and roughening effects.

Cosmetic users in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome created dramatic appearances by pairing skin whiteners containing lead or chalk with black eye makeup and red lip colourants. In China and Japan too, elite

women and some men used white lead preparations and rice powder to achieve complexions resembling white jade or fresh lychee.

Skin lighteners generate a less painted look than skin whiteners by removing rather than concealing blemished or melanin-rich skin. Melanin is the biochemical compound that makes skin colourful.

Active ingredients in skin lighteners have ranged from acidic compounds like lemon juice and milk to harsher chemicals like sulfur, arsenic, and mercury. In parts of precolonial Southern Africa, some people used mineral

and botanical preparations to brighten - rather than whiten or lighten - their skin and hair.

During the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, skin colour and associated physical difference were used to distinguish enslaved people from free, and to justify the former's oppression. Colonisers cast melanin-rich hues as the embodiment of ugliness and inferiority. Within this racist political order, some sought to whiten and lighten their complexions. By the twentieth century, mass-produced skin lightening creams ranked among the world's most popular

cosmetics. Consumers included white, black, and brown women.

In the 1920s and 1930s, many white consumers swapped skin lighteners for tanning lotions as time spent sunbathing and playing outdoors became a sign of a healthy and leisured lifestyle. Seasonal tanning embodied new forms of white privilege.

Skin lighteners became primarily associated with people of colour. For black and brown consumers, living in places like the United States and South Africa where racism and colourism have flourished, even slight differences in skin colour could carry political and social consequences.

The mercury effect Skin lighteners can be physically harmful. Mercury, one of their most common active ingredients, lightens skin in two ways. It inhibits the formation of melanin by rendering the enzyme tyrosinase inactive; and it exfoliates the tanned, outer layers of the skin through the production of hydrochloric acid.

By the early twentieth century, pharmaceutical and medical textbooks recommended mercury - usually in the form of ammoniated mercury - for treating skin infections and dark spots while often warning of its harmful effects. Cosmetic manufacturers marketed creams containing ammoniated mercury as "freckle removers" or "skin bleaches."

EXERCISING

The fit keep off gyms, others up their game

NAIROBI

Like all public spaces where people gather, fitness centres and gyms may fuel the spread of viral illnesses—including coronavirus.

Some Kenyans are staying clear, others are exercising under new guidelines from fitness instructors and a few gyms have temporarily closed down. Dr Florence Njenga says that coronavirus spreading at the gym is not very likely if one simply washes their hands.

"However, putting a hold on the gym exercises is a no-brainer and in the grand scheme of things, not being able to go to the gym is not so dire," she says. As the globe slows to a precautionary halt, the World Health Organisation has not urged people to avoid fitness centres but there is hysteria surrounding being in enclosed spaces where the virus, heavy breathing, and warm, moist air are commonplace.

Dr Njenga says that gyms are always too full of people and there are many surfaces that could be contaminated. While gyms such as the Nairobi Serena and Radisson Blu, have temporarily shut down, others have upped their hygiene levels.

Gym-goers have been asked to come with their own towels and yoga mats, water bottles and use hand sanitisers at points of entry. Some are taking their fitness classes to the Internet as other trainers hustle to arrange travel times and new schedules to accommodate home visits or small

outdoor classes.

Arnold Oyuru, a physical exercise for beginner's specialist at Mofit Kenya in Nairobi says he has not seen a sharp decrease in the number of gym-goers since the coronavirus outbreak began. However, he says, trainers are sending out exercise routines to their clients, informing them of how they can carry on while at home.

Patrick Namwamba, the owner of Saints Health Club in Nairobi says that they have put in place measures such as stopping use of the steam rooms. "We now have more disinfectants in the changing rooms, aerobics studio, and treatment room. There is also no more shaving of beard in the washing area," he said.

Mr Namwamba adds that they have also developed a high-intensity interval training (HIIT) and cardio workouts with demonstrations and privately broadcasting them to their clients while looking at possibilities of live streaming of group workouts through social media.

In Mombasa, Times Health and Fitness Centre has closed, employing a wait-and-see approach. Another fitness centre, Inshape Fitness Kenya has stepped up hygiene messaging and measures. Wahida Bayusuf, the director, says they have increased the level of cleaning and hygiene but "if things are not good, closing temporarily will be the right thing to do."

In most gyms, fitness equipment and barbells are wiped down every two hours. Gym goers are avoiding contacts such



Mildred Otieno, a fitness instructor at Inshape Fitness Kenya in Mombasa, shows some home workouts.

as hands-on assists and high-fives with instructors, which have been replaced with elbow bumps or Namaste bows. During yoga, participants are encouraged to maintain a distance from each other.

At Nyali Executive Gym, Mathew Mathe, an instructor at the gym, says there has been a low turnout. In a yoga class of 20, on Monday, where participants had been asked to come with their mats, only five people showed up.

However, Jane Njoki still braves the treadmill and stationary bike at her gym. She avoids the dumbbells and other machines. She says she is less anxious about going to the gym because the management is taking the coronavirus threat seriously. She also uses hand sanitiser every time she touches a piece of equipment.

"It is hard for me to stop coming to the gym but if more coronavirus cases are

reported, especially in Mombasa, I will stop. Now I bring my own disinfectant wipes, mats, and towels. One thing we should practice even after the pandemic is washing our hands, and wiping down our weights or yoga mats after we use them. Such vigilance should continue," she says.

Home workouts

Home workouts are the safest bet for those anxious about gyms. There are a lot of workout videos online uploaded by fitness enthusiasts from all over the world. Gyms such as Inshape Fitness Kenya have introduced custom exercises and nutrition advice through a mobile application available to its members. Users can customise their schedules.

Instructors will also start hosting workouts on Facebook and Instagram Live. They are also putting together videos for people to use at home. "On the

application, we already have recorded videos and members can refer to them while working out even away from the gym. We want to be able to there for the people in case of anything," said Ms Bayusuf.

Using things like resistance bands, jump rope, exercise ball, light dumbbells, kettlebells and push-up bars one can follow a routine that works for the whole body. Furniture and other items commonly found around the house can be used to complement the routines. A sturdy chair, for instance, can be used as supports for triceps dips, Bulgarian split squat, Russian twist, arms circles and planks, and a low couch can be used for lunges.

According to Mildred Otieno, a fitness instructor, home workout requires body weight and sometimes simple items like water bottles which can be used instead of weights. In place of a kettlebell, get a

heavy water container, with a handle, and get started on push presses.

"Be creative and think outside the box if you don't have home equipment because with bodyweight you easily get to a plateau stage. You can take the 1.5 litres bottles and fill them with water then you use them to do the biceps curls and shoulder press," said Ms Otieno.

Other exercises include rope skipping, mountain climbers, star jumps, planks, and squat jumps. Ensure you perform 10 to 12 reps of each exercise. Also, choose stair climbing over elevators. Climb stairs up and down for 15 minutes, do basic stretches and one round of push-ups.

"You can use music as a motivator. Exercise boosts moods and the immune system especially now," she added. Mr Oyuru, however, adds that fitness enthusiasts avoiding the gyms should talk to trainers before they start home workouts. "Not all exercises work for everyone," he said.

Moses Okoit, a personal trainer gives examples of stools, couches, beds, and walls that can be used as alternatives to gym equipment, especially for first-timers working from home. Working from home has its disadvantages as one tends to eat more and spend many hours on the couch.

"First-timers can use walls or small stools to do 10 reps of push-ups; do straight leg raises and side bends for their cores and traditional squats, and hip thrusts for their lower body. Add jumping jacks to this and you'll be breaking a sweat," he says. Pro exercisers can begin with 15 reps push-ups and shoulder taps, followed by the same number of plank push-ups or Russian twists, then jumping squats and jumping lunges," he says.

Repeating this several times will result in a full-body workout. And like the gym workouts, do not forget the basics, Mr Okoit advises. "Begin with a warm-up, finish with a cool down, and be careful with your posture and form to avoid injuries," the personal trainer says.

COVID-19: Kigali public library goes digital



Patrons gather inside Kigali Public Library.

KIGALI

Kigali Public Library has announced that anyone in need of library services can now access its digital library for free as a way of avoiding physical contact in order to limit the risk of coronavirus infections.

The free service is granted following the closure of the physical library for a period of two weeks due to the virus outbreak. "Kigali Public Library as a large gathering institution will be affected by the new measures (to contain the virus) and so the library will be closed for a period of two weeks... all events are also postponed, patrons with borrowed books are requested to remain with them and call to extend their returning dates," reads a statement from the Kacyiru-based library.

"COVID-19 is a global pandemic and following measures in preventing its spread, we encourage our

patrons to use our digital library for free through www.kplonline.org. To login use card number: KPLand first name," the announcements reads.

Odon Nsengimana, the IT officer at the library told The New Times they already have over 6,000 active library users who pay monthly or annual fees to read books and added that they, among others, can now access the e-books for free.

"Ordinary persons used to pay Rwf1,200 per month to read books per month, students pay Rwf800 per month, and children pay Rwf500 per month. Now they can access the digital books for free since we have closed the library to avoid large gatherings of readers to contain coronavirus infections," he said.

He added that any other person who had not even subscribed to monthly reading before can now use the mentioned credentials to access and read the digital books.

The library has a collection of about 31,000 books. "Readers can access the digital books by using any device such as computer as well as mobile phone that have enabling applications," he said.

One of the applications for library e-books and audiobooks is Libby by OverDrive available on Android and iOS devices, the IT officer explained. The free access to digital services follows the closing of schools for a period of two weeks which might be extended if the outbreak persists.

To contain the virus spread, people are urged to wash hands frequently, avoid touching one's eyes, nose and mouth, cover one's cough, avoid handshakes and keep social distance, avoid crowded places and close contact with anyone that has fever or cough, stay at home if a person feels unwell as well as seeking medical care early if they have a fever, cough and difficulty in breathing.

PREVENTIVE

Virgin Active closes second gym in Jo'burg after positive test for Covid-19

JOHANNESBURG

South African gym chain Virgin Active has closed its Cresta club in Johannesburg after a member who had visited it tested positive for the novel coronavirus, or SARS-CoV-2. This comes a day after the group closed its Melrose Arch club under similar circumstances.

By Thursday afternoon, South Africa had 150 confirmed cases of the virus of the virus. Virgin Active said all Cresta club members should have received an SMS, and will also receive an email, explaining when the man visited the club and how the club is being disinfected.

"Closing the club was a proactive measure on our part to disinfect the entire facility (the team comes in in hazmat suits!)," Virgin Active told Business Insider South Africa via email. "We have not seen any retailers, restaurants or shopping centres do the same."

The gym group said it proactively opted to close the Melrose Arch club on Wednesday after a member who visited it on 13 March was in touch to say she had tested positive for the virus. That gym is set to reopen tomorrow after being disinfected.

"We were one of many places she visited over the course of time, and she believes she contracted the virus from a colleague who had travelled," the company said. After a public outcry, Virgin Active changed its policy of charging a 50% fee to pause membership payments, and will now allow all members to freeze their accounts free of charge.

"We are working hard to maintain a balance between good corporate citizenry with our growing list of interventions in response to the virus threat, and saving jobs that can ill-afford to be lost," it said.



Patrons exercise at Virgin Active's Cresta club in Johannesburg before it closed down.

WORLD

California issues 'stay home' order, US death toll hits 200

LOS ANGELES/WASHINGTON

CALIFORNIA issued an unprecedented statewide "stay at home" order on Thursday for its 40 million residents and Washington warned Americans to return home or stay abroad indefinitely, as the number of coronavirus deaths in the country hit 200.

Governor Gavin Newsom's directive, effective immediately, marks the largest and most sweeping government clampdown yet in the worsening public health crisis brought on by the COVID-19 outbreak, which he predicted could infect more than half the state within eight weeks.

As authorities ramped up measures to keep the virus from spreading, Washington could announce restrictions on travel across the U.S.-Mexico border as soon as Friday, limiting crossings to essential travel, two officials briefed on the matter said. That would follow a similar measure on

Wednesday closing the border with Canada. The fast-spreading respiratory illness has shattered most patterns of American life: shuttering schools and businesses, prompting millions to work from home, forcing many out of jobs and sharply curtailing travel.

The U.S. State Department told citizens that if they travel internationally, "your travel plans may be severely disrupted, and you may be forced to remain outside of the United States for an indefinite timeframe."

STIMULUS PACKAGE

With the economy swooning, Senate Republicans unveiled a \$1 trillion economic stimulus plan to provide funds directly to businesses and the American public. President Donald Trump has been eagerly calling for that package.

It would be Congress' third emergency coronavirus bill following a \$105 billion-plus plan covering free coro-



California Governor Gavin Newsom

navirus testing, paid sick leave and expanded safety-net spending, and an \$8.3 billion measure to combat the spread of the highly contagious pathogen and develop vaccines.

The plunging stock market and surging U.S. death toll has caused Trump to sharply change his tone on the disease this week, demanding urgent action after spending weeks downplaying the risks.

Over 13,000 people across the United States have been diagnosed with the illness called COVID-19 and 200 have died, with the largest numbers so far in Washington state, New York and California. tmsnrts/3dkIMIL

Newsom said his 'stay at home' order was essential as modelling showed 56% of California's 40 million people would contract the virus in the next eight weeks, and require nearly 20,000 more hospital beds than the state could provide.

"We are confident the people of California will abide by it, they will meet this moment," News-

om, a first-term Democrat told a news briefing from the state capital in Sacramento.

Los Angeles, as the nation's second-largest city, would likely be "disproportionately impacted" in the coming weeks, he said.

Two Los Angeles Lakers players have the coronavirus, the NBA franchise said on Thursday, after four players from the Brooklyn Nets tested positive for the disease a day earlier.

The virus has taken the greatest toll in Washington state, which reported eight more deaths on Thursday, bringing the toll there to 74.

Hospitals across the country say they face shortages of medical gear, with doctors in Seattle reduced to making their own face masks out of sheets of plastic.

"We're days away from running out of the equipment we need," said Melissa Tizon, Associate Vice President of Providence St. Joseph Health, which runs 51 hospitals across five western states. "We're expecting more shipments later on but until then we've got to improvise."

TEST DELAYS

With the United States slow to roll out mass testing for the virus that has infected more than 244,000 people worldwide, officials fear the number of known cases of the respiratory illness that can lead to pneumonia lags far behind reality. There are no approved treatments or vaccines for COVID-19, but several options are being tested. New York City, where many young people last weekend packed local bars and restaurants, has been eerily deserted after nightfall.

"It's a skater's dream," said Dyanne Hernandez, 20, who had joined a dozen friends in Manhattan's Union Square to enjoy the freedom of what she called a "ghost city" after three days stuck at home. "I can't really be quarantined."

The epidemic, which has killed over 10,000 globally so far, has drawn comparisons with traumatic periods such as World War Two, the 2008 financial crisis and the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic.

Agencies

Xi, Putin discuss strengthening cooperation on fighting COVID-19 by phone

BEIJING

CHINESE President Xi Jinping said Thursday that China stands ready to work with all other countries to step up international cooperation against the COVID-19 epidemic and safeguard global public health security.

In a phone conversation in the night with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, Xi pointed out that the novel coronavirus disease broke out ferociously, and China had to rise up to the challenge and respond to it bravely.

That is because it concerns not only the lives and health of the Chinese people, but also the public health security of the whole world, added the Chinese president.

Thanks to arduous efforts, the situation of epidemic prevention and control in China continues to improve, with the order of production and life being restored at an increasing pace, Xi said.

China, said the president, has the confidence, capacity and cer-

tainity to achieve the ultimate victory over the epidemic.

He added that China is willing to make concerted efforts with Russia and all other countries to tackle common threats and challenges and safeguard global public health security.

He called for closer international cooperation in epidemic prevention and control, experience sharing on containment and treatment, and facilitation of joint research.

Xi stressed that at the special moment when both countries are fighting against the epidemic, China and Russia have been supporting each other and cooperating closely, which has demonstrated the high level of China-Russia relations in the new era.

Bilateral cooperation enjoys a solid foundation and a strong endogenous driving force, Xi said, suggesting that the two sides take the Year of Scientific and Technological Innovation between China and Russia as an opportunity to push for more cooperation fruits



File photo shows Chinese President Xi Jinping (R) holding talks with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Beijing, capital of China, April 26, 2019. (Xinhua)

in various fields.

China, he said, firmly supports the important moves taken by Russia to achieve lasting peace and stability in the country, and is confi-

dent that under Putin's leadership, the Russian people will continue to forge ahead in unity and make new achievements along the development path that suits their country's

national conditions.

For his part, Putin said that the remarkably effective measures taken by the Chinese government has not only contained the epidemic's spread inside China but also made important contributions to safeguarding the health of people in other countries.

Russia highly appreciates and is pleased with China's efforts, he said, adding that China has set a good example for the international community by lending a helping hand to other epidemic-hit countries in a timely manner.

What China has done represents a resounding answer to the provocation and stigmatization by a certain country over the COVID-19 epidemic, said the Russian president.

Russia, he added, hopes to work with China to carry on mutual support and close cooperation in combating the epidemic, and continuously deepen the Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination.

Xinhua

Trump cancels G7 meet at Camp David, to hold teleconference

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump will cancel an in-person meeting of G7 leaders at Camp David in June because of the coronavirus and will hold a video-conference instead, the White House said on Thursday.

The decision comes as nations around the world seal their borders and ban travel to stop the virus' spread.

Trump held a video-conference with the leaders of the world's major industrialized countries earlier this week and plans to repeat that in

April, May and June, when the physical meeting at the presidential retreat in Maryland was scheduled to take place.

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow, who also serves as Trump's G7 "sherpa," has informed his counterparts about the move.

"In order for each country to focus all of its resources on responding to the health and economic challenges of COVID-19 and at President Trump's direction, National Economic Council Director and US Sherpa for the 2020 G7 Larry Kudlow has informed his Sherpa colleagues that the G7



Leaders' Summit the US was set to host in June at Camp David will now be done by video-teleconference,"

White House spokesman Judd Deere said in a statement to Reuters.

"The White House also informed the other G7 members that in order to continue close coordination, the President will convene the Leaders' via video teleconference in April and May just as he did this week," he said.

The White House views the change as part of mitigation efforts to fight the virus. Countries normally send large delegations with their leaders to G7 summits and journalists from around the world convene to cover their meeting as well.

Trump had intended to focus the

G7 meeting on the economy, eschewing traditional topics that often top the agenda such as climate change. He initially planned to host the leaders' group at one of his properties in Florida but canceled those plans after criticism that he would profit financially from the meeting.

The G7 is made up of the United States, Italy, Japan, Canada, France, Germany, Britain as well as the European Union. Trump irritated Europe by instituting a travel ban on its citizens without first alerting European leaders. Europe has become the epicenter of the coronavirus. **Agencies**

Zimbabwe's Mnangagwa thanks China for support in fight against COVID-19

HARARE



ZIMBABWEAN President Emmerson Mnangagwa on Thursday thanked China and other countries for the support they have rendered to Zimbabwe as it steps up its preparedness to combat coronavirus (COVID-19).

The president was speaking at an occasion to launch the country's preparedness and response plan against COVID-19.

"I wish to acknowledge assistance so far extended to Zimbabwe by the People's Republic of China and the United Kingdom government," Mnangagwa (pictured) said.

China has funded the refurbishment and upgrading, currently underway, of Zimbabwe's main coronavirus isolation and treatment center, the Wilkins Hospital, in Harare.

China also has a medical team in Zimbabwe which is assisting the country's health personnel with training on COVID-19.

Zimbabwe has not recorded any confirmed case of the virus and Mnangagwa on Tuesday this week declared the COVID-19 a national disaster to enable the government to mobilize resources towards the fight against the epidemic.

He also banned public gatherings, including national independence celebrations that were slated for next month in Bulawayo, as part of precautionary measures against the spread of the virus.

Mnangagwa said the national preparedness and response plan, with a budget of 26.4 million U.S. dollars, will enable the country to have an integrated and coordinated management strategy focusing on prevention of COVID-19 in Zimbabwe and mitigating the severity of its impact.

The Ministry of Health adds that the plan's overall goal is to minimize morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 and associated adverse socio-economic impact in Zimbabwe.

Mnangagwa said Zimbabwe should fully prepare and try to minimize the impact of the pandemic on citizens and the economy.

"With our high HIV prevalence of 14 percent in Zimbabwe, malnutrition and other non-communicable diseases especially among children, we are deeply concerned about the impact COVID-19 could have in Zimbabwe," he said. He said it was incumbent for Zimbabwe to step up its preparedness against COVID-19 considering the volume of traffic between Zimbabwe and other countries in the region and internationally.

"As Zimbabwe we cannot continue with business as usual as it is no longer a matter of if but when our country will have these cases.

"We need to step up and enhance our preparedness and response to the scourge. This calls for extraordinary measures and responses," he said.

Xinhua

US imposes Iran-related sanctions amid Iran's suffering from coronavirus

WASHINGTON

THE United States on Thursday imposed fresh Iran-related sanctions to further pressure Tehran while the country is suffering from the COVID-19 outbreak.

The U.S. Department of Treasury designated five United Arab Emirates (UAE)-based companies that facilitate Iran's petroleum and petrochemical sales, according to a statement issued by the department.

"In 2019, these UAE-based companies collectively purchased hundreds of thousands of metric tons of petroleum products from NIOC for delivery to the UAE," the statement said.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin accused Tehran of using "revenues from petroleum and petrochemical sales to fund its terrorist proxies, like the IRGC-QF, instead of the health and well-being of the Iranian people."

According to the designation, all property and interests in property of these entities have been blocked, and U.S. persons are prohibited from engaging in transactions with them.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Wednesday said that the United States would be responsible for the "destructive ramifications" of its unilateral sanctions against Iran as the country is fighting the COVID-19 outbreak.

Zarif said that the economic siege imposed by the United States on Iran impedes all the legitimate trade and deprives the Iranians of their own resources, the ones necessary to address the needs of Iranians, including their health and livelihoods.

Xinhua

Wenzhou people donate for Italy amid COVID-19 outbreak, boost understanding

VOLUNTEERS and enterprises from Wenzhou of East China's Zhejiang Province, a leading manufacturing hub, initiated donations for Italy, hit hard by the novel coronavirus pneumonia (COVID-19), which has contributed to changing some locals' stigma and misunderstanding against the Chinese community.

Some Chinese living in Italy have met with discrimination and misunderstandings due to the virus outbreak, although the mainstream society has been supportive, said Wenzhou-based volunteer group Blazing Youth (BY) that organized the donations.

BY helped transport 2,600

pairs of protective goggles from Wenzhou on Sunday, which are expected to arrive in Italy on Tuesday, March 3, Ni Kaomeng, a BY director, told the Global Times.

The goggles were donated by eyewear manufacturers and organizations in Wenzhou, and they meet EU criteria, said Xu Haizhou, a director with the local eyeglass industry association.

"We Wenzhou people received much overseas help during our hardest time in the fight against the virus," Xu told the Global Times Monday. "As Wenzhou's situation becomes steady, it is our turn to offer help."



Wenzhou volunteers help transport donations related to COVID-19 for Italy. Photo: courtesy of Blazing Youth

Italy is home to the largest Wenzhou community in Europe. Some 70 percent of the

nearly 400,000 Chinese living in Italy are of Wenzhou origin, said Chen Ming in Turin, co-

founder and head of the China-Italy Youth Association (ANGI).

Chen said that discrimination against Chinese does exist in Italy amid the COVID-19 epidemic. "But that is just from a small number of people including a few illegal immigrants," he said, adding that the mainstream of Italian society is friendly to Chinese on the whole.

"We hope to clear up their (local people's) misconceptions through showing our support," Ni said.

By is also busy preparing donations for Greece, South Korea, Japan and the US, apart from Italy, Ni said.

A video of a Chinese man with

an eye shield and a mask getting hugs from strangers in the street of Florence went viral online last month. "I'm not a virus. I'm a human," read a paper board in front of the man.

Chen's ANGI is working with Wenzhou donors in communicating with Italian officials during the donation process.

The healthcare authority of Italy's Piedmont region has received 6,000 disposable gloves, 1,900 masks, 660 pairs of protective goggles and 30 protective outfits from Wenzhou individuals and groups, Piedmont government stated on its website Saturday, February 29.

The head of the Piedmont

healthcare department "appreciated and applauded" it, said the statement.

"We have received positive feedback from Italians, with some even asking to participate in our donations as volunteers," Chen told the Global Times.

Italy had 1,694 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 34 deaths as of Monday. No Chinese infections have been reported, according to Chen.

"On the premise of sufficient supplies at home, we will make joint efforts with overseas Chinese in helping other infected countries," Ni said.

Global Times

Sub-Saharan African countries take measures to fight COVID-19 amid increasing cases

NAIROBI

SUB-SAHARAN African countries have taken concrete measures to fight COVID-19 as Africa CDC reported that more than 640 COVID-19 cases have been reported in at least 34 African countries on Thursday.

The Government of Sierra Leone on Thursday has suspended all international flights in its latest bid to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic.

The statement from the Sierra Leone Transport and Aviation Ministry reveals that flights scheduled to and from the Freetown International Airport have been suspended until further notice from March 21. The only exceptional cases are emergency flights.

Sierra Leone remains one of a handful of African countries yet to record a COVID-19 case.

Kenya on Thursday announced comprehensive safety measures in the public transport sector to curb the spread of COVID-19 in the country.

Charles M. Hinga, principal secretary of the State Department for Housing and Urban Development said that the measures will help decongest public service vehicles and minimize the risk of transmitting the virulent disease.

Hinga said that transport operators will sensitize their crew and customers on the immediate culture change required in social interactions under this emergency.

Motorbike operators, who are com-

monly referred to as Boda Boda service providers, are also encouraged to conduct frequent cleaning, disinfection and sanitization of helmets.

Kenya Airways said Wednesday that it has suspended two weekly flights between Nairobi and London effective Thursday but frequencies on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday will continue uninterrupted.

It also suspended two weekly flights between Nairobi and Paris. Flights to Bangkok in Thailand and Djibouti, Mogadishu and Khartoum in Africa have also been suspended.

Kenya Airways noted that the changes are necessary to ensure optimal and efficient operations in the wake of the outbreak of COVID-19.

Also in Kenya, Ministry of Education on Wednesday announced plans to start teaching students through digital platforms after the government shut down all learning institutions due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

George Magoha, Cabinet Secretary for Education, said that the approach will help reach some 15 million secondary and primary school students who are at home following a presidential announcement as part of a measure to contain COVID-19.

Air Namibia on Thursday said it will continue to service its inbound and outbound flights to South Africa and other countries in the region until further notice.

Emirates Airline has suspended flights



An Egyptian Quarantine Authority employee holds out a health form to be filled in by incoming travellers at Cairo International Airport on February 1, 2020. (File photo)

to Zambia after the southern African nation recorded its first cases of COVID-19 on Wednesday. Zambia Minister of Transport and Communication Mutotwe Kafwaya said the airline has decided to suspend its flights into Zambia but did not provide more details.

Meanwhile, the Zambian government has urged citizens not to panic and buy food in bulk in the wake of the country. Minister of Health Chitalu Chilufya said the government has heightened measures against the pandemic because the health of people was paramount.

Emirates Airline also announced Wednesday that it has suspended flights from Lusaka - Harare to Dubai with effect from March 20 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The suspension will be for 90 days. Emirates flies daily from Doha to Harare via Lusaka in Zambia.

As the number of people testing positive for Covid-19 increased, South African government has published a number of regulations set to tackle the spread of the outbreak.

Health authorities of Mozambique said on Wednesday that it will need 23

million U.S. dollars to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak if the country starts to register confirmed cases.

"For an extreme situation, in which the country has to ask for support at different levels, our plan is budgeted at 23 million dollars under a serious scenario," said Benigna Matsinhe, the Deputy National Director of Public Health. She said that the health sector is on high alert.

Zimbabwe's Parliament has been suspended for two months starting Wednesday due to COVID-19 epidemic.

National Assembly Speaker Jacob Mudenda announced the suspension of parliament sittings, public hearings and committee sittings as a precautionary measure against COVID-19, which has lately spread to southern Africa.

Nigeria has placed a ban on travel by public servants to countries highly affected by COVID-19. Boss Mustapha, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, announced this on Tuesday after a closed-door meeting with the Presidential Task Force Committee on COVID-19 in Abuja.

Burundi has announced the suspension of visa applications until further notice, the Foreign Affairs Minister said on Thursday. Ezechiel Nibigira said the decision has been taken to prevent the outbreak of COVID-19 in Burundi.

"This doesn't mean that Burundi closes its borders", said Nibigira, in a meeting with diplomatic corps and consular representatives. **Xinhua**

Bavaria head more popular than Merkel in midst of coronavirus crisis

BERLIN

THE premier of the southern state of Bavaria, Markus Soeder, is Germany's most popular politician, a poll showed yesterday, boosting his chances of standing as the conservative chancellor candidate in the next election and succeeding Angela Merkel.

During the coronavirus crisis, which has hit Bavaria particularly hard, Soeder has impressed commentators by introducing tough steps to restrict social contact before the rest of Germany while displaying a calm and reassuring air.

The INSA poll for Focus magazine put Soeder, head of Bavaria's conservative CSU, on 129 points, up 11 from a week ago and overtaking Merkel who came second on 126 points, making him Germany's most popular politician for the first time.

After almost 15 years leading Europe's biggest economy, Merkel has said she will not seek a fifth term and her conservative CDU party is in the midst of a leadership race after her protegee said last month she would stand down.

The winner is in a strong position to run as German chancellor in a federal election due by October 2021. Bavaria's CSU must agree, however, as the two parties form a parliamentary bloc, and despite protestations that he is happy as state premier, Soeder may decide to stand himself.

Germany has recorded 10,999 cases of the coronavirus and 20 deaths. Bavaria, which had Germany's first cases, now has 1,692 cases and eight people there have died.

Soeder has led the way with school closures and other social distancing steps and has called a state of emergency in Bavaria.

Agencies

NEW YORK/ISLAMABAD

US politicians' use of 'Chinese virus' widely condemned

THE recent re-labeling of the novel coronavirus with xenophobic undertones by some U.S. politicians to stigmatize China has drawn widespread criticism.

As the international community works together to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, a few American politicians are shifting blame to China for the virus' spread by recasting it as

a "Chinese virus" or "foreign virus."

Michael Ryan, executive director of the World Health Organization's health emergencies program, warned on Wednesday against using the phrase "Chinese virus," saying that "Viruses know no borders, and they don't care about your ethnicity, the color of your skin or how much money you

have in the bank."

"So it's really important we be careful in the language we use," Ryan said at a news conference in Geneva, giving an example of the H1N1 influenza outbreak in 2009.

The pandemic "originated in North America and we didn't call it the North American flu," he said, calling for solidarity and joint efforts of all coun-

tries.

Ryan was echoed by co-founder of Microsoft Corporation Bill Gates, who wrote on Wednesday in an Ask Me Anything session on the American social news platform Reddit that "we should not call this the Chinese virus."

The tally of confirmed cases of the COVID-19 pandemic has

reached over 220,000 and spans at least 160 countries and regions, according to the latest statistics from the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University.

With the world facing an escalating challenge from the disease, "it's also an unprecedented opportunity to come together as one against

a common enemy," the WHO wrote on its Twitter feed on Wednesday. U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren on Wednesday refuted the White House's racist remarks on Twitter, saying that "coronavirus does not discriminate."

"Bigotry against people of Asian descent is unacceptable, un-American, & harmful to our COVID-19 response efforts," the Massachusetts lawmaker wrote. **Xinhua**

Guterres appoints new head of UN agency for Palestine refugees

UNITED NATIONS

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday appointed Swiss humanitarian expert Philippe Lazzarini to head the beleaguered UN agency for Palestinian refugees, which has faced a financial crisis following a cutoff in US funding and a crisis of confidence after its previous leader was accused of abusing his authority.

Guterres made the announcement following consultations with the Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

He said Lazzarini has more than 30 years' experience in delivering humanitarian assistance and coordinating international efforts in conflict and post-conflict situations for the United Nations, the international committee for the Red Cross, and the private sector. He is currently the UN humanitarian chief for Lebanon.

Lazzarini will replace former UNRWA commissioner-general Pierre Krahenbuhl, who resigned in November following an internal UN investigation that raised "management issues", reflecting concerns over allegations of possible sexual miscon-



Philippe Lazzarini

duct, nepotism and other abuses of authority at the agency.

Those allegations, in a confidential UN ethics office report, came amid an unprecedented financial crisis for the agency, sparked by the loss of all funding from the United States, its largest donor.

US President Donald Trump said in January 2018 that the Palestinians must return to peace talks with Israel to receive US aid money - an announcement that led leaders of 21 international humanitarian groups to strongly criticize the Trump administration for linking aid and

political objectives, calling it "dangerous".

The US gave US\$360 million to the UNRWA in 2017, but only US\$60 million in 2018, and nothing last year or so far this year.

The agency was established to aid the 700,000 Palestinians who fled or were forced from their homes during the war surrounding Israel's establishment in 1948.

It now provides education, healthcare, food and other services to 5.5 million refugees, their children and grandchildren in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as well as in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Lazzarini joined the United Nations in 2003 and has served in various posts in the UN humanitarian office. He earlier was head of marketing for the Union Bancaire Privee in Geneva and served for 10 years with the International Committee of the Red Cross as deputy head of communication, head of its delegations in Rwanda, Angola and Sarajevo, and as an ICRC delegate in southern Sudan, Jordan, Gaza and Beirut.

Dujarric said the secretary-general expressed gratitude to acting UNRWA chief Christian Saunders of Britain, who will continue to serve until Lazzarini starts his new job. No date was given. **Agencies**

Chinese expats, entrepreneurs donate for Iran against epidemic worsened by US sanctions

CHINESE enterprises and individuals in Iran donated medical supplies to help the country fight the worsening COVID-19 outbreak, in addition to China's official expert team and batches of medical aid, as both the Iranians and Chinese living in Iran struggle to deal with the epidemic, which has been worsened by a shortage of medical supplies partly due to US sanctions on Iran.

Some Chinese in Iran have raised donations on their social media for medical supplies from China, including goggles, masks, protective outfits and testing reagents, to help Iranians fight against the deadly virus.

The aids departing from Shanghai have arrived in Iran by air, to be delivered to the Iranian Health

Ministry and three hospitals in Tehran.

Iran has 1,501 confirmed cases as of Tuesday, with 66 deaths - the highest outside China.

On the boxes of the medical aids donated to the hospital, Persian-language poetry verses were written to deliver messages of support from 85 Chinese donors.

"We learned from Iranian friends working in local hospitals what is most needed is protective outfits, so the first shipment of our medical aid included 900 sets of protective clothes, sent from Shanghai, where a Chinese manufacturer sold some at a very low price and also gave the rest for free as part of the package," Li Hong, manager of an Iran-based



30 boxes of donated medical supplies sent to Tehran's hospitals delivered on the way from Shanghai.

local tour agency "Iran Good," told the Global Times.

She raised the donation with Chinese editor Shen Juan, from Shanghai-based media portal newrank.com. Li said she felt heartbroken

after hearing of a 25-year-old Iranian nurse who died from the coronavirus. She then learned that medical workers in many hospitals in Iran were treating suspected COVID-19 patients without any professional decon-

tamination clothes but only thin ordinary medical cloths. The situation evoked what happened to medical workers in Wuhan - her hometown - in the early days of the epidemic, she said.

"We have assembled nearly a hundred donors and volunteers in both Iran and China in the hope of repaying Iran for its assistance to China in the early stages of our outbreak," Li told the Global Times. "And the response was very positive and very quick. Many of them are tourists who had traveled to Iran, and they were privately collecting medical supplies."

Helping the Iranians is also helping ourselves, said some local Chinese married to Iranians. "Face masks are almost unavail-

able in pharmacies in Iran," a Chinese manager of an Iran-based local service company, who distributed more than 30,000 masks for free to some language schools and Chinese in Iran, told the Global Times on Monday.

Concerns about the coronavirus outbreak in Iran have become one of the top topics across China's Sina Weibo over recent days.

Many Chinese netizens criticized the US sanctions on Iran's cross-border logistics trade and financial settlement system, which have prevented Iran from officially importing medical supplies from other countries.

People living in Iran told the Global Times that the situation has not improved, and the pressure has not abated even though



MOSCOW

RUSSIAN presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Russia and Saudi Arabia are not waging any wars over oil prices. He is certain that other states should not interfere in the partnership between the two countries.

"There are no price wars between Russia and Saudi Arabia. There is a very unfavorable pricing environment for many countries," he told reporters.

According to him, Russia and Saudi Arabia have "good relations, a partnership." "We do not think that anyone should intervene in these relations," Peskov (pictured) added.

On Thursday, US President Donald Trump said that he was about to join in a discussion of the situation around the differences between Russia and Saudi Arabia over oil.

Peskov noted that the Kremlin paid attention to this statement. "We understand that indeed many companies are now suffering due to low oil prices, we know that the huge US oil sector is now in distress because of these prices," he said, adding that he meant those who produce shale oil.

"There is a serious crisis, we

also understand this," Peskov said.

Not a catastrophe

The Brent oil price of \$25 per barrel is adverse but it not catastrophic, according to Peskov.

"Certainly, this price situation is fairly unpleasant. It is possible to agree in this respect," Peskov said.

However, Russia has a sufficient safety margin, the press secretary said.

"When saying that this is a catastrophe for Russia, there is probably no way of agreeing with this in midterm, since as our president and our government reiterated that we have a solid safety margin for several years, which will support fulfilling all social commitments,

development plans, and so on," Peskov added.

"There were times when the price was even lower," the press secretary said. Hardly anyone will venture to forecast international oil prices situation for a year ahead and more, Peskov said. "Even if somebody undertakes forecasting, such forecasts will hardly be accurate to any extent," he noted.

OPEC+ agreement participants failed to decide on further oil production cuts in view of the falling demand due to the coronavirus spread during consultations on March 6. Oil prices have fallen since then. All the limitations of oil production will be lifted from April 1.

Agencies

the US announced a sanctions waiver on Thursday to allow humanitarian aid to Iran.

A number of other Chinese companies have also been making donations to Iran, the Global Times has learned.

In contrast, the Chinese Embassy in Iran and some Chinese companies operating there have donated 250,000 face masks and 5,000 nucleic acid testing kits to Iran's public health, medical, and education authorities.

The move was followed by the Chinese government sending batches of medical aid. The medical aid sent from China last week contained novel coronavirus test kits, oxygen machines, disinfection powder, and electronic thermometers. **Global Times**

The Guardian

SPORT

IOC reviewing Games scenarios, cancellation not among them - Bach



Thomas Bach

NEW YORK

THE International Olympic Committee is considering various scenarios for the Tokyo Games amid the coronavirus pandemic but cancellation is not one of them, IOC President Thomas Bach has told the New York Times.

Organisers of the world's biggest multi-sports event have repeatedly said the Games would start on July 24 as scheduled, even as the rapid spread of the flu-like virus has brought sporting events around the globe to a standstill.

The coronavirus, which emerged in China late last year, has killed more than 10,000 people worldwide, sparking fears that the Olympics might be postponed or cancelled.

Bach, however, said the IOC was not even considering scrapping the Games.

"The cancellation is not on the agenda. We are committed to the success of these Games," he said.

An IOC task force, which included the World Health Organization, had determined it was too early to make a decision on how to manage the impact from the pandemic on the Olympics.

"We don't know what the situation will be," he said.

"Of course we are considering different scenarios, but we are contrary to many other sports organizations or professional leagues in that we are four and a half months away from the Games.

"What makes this crisis so unique and so difficult to overcome is the uncertainty. Nobody today can tell you what the developments are tomorrow, what they are in one month, not to mention in more than four months."

Japan is expected to welcome 600,000 overseas spectators and athletes to the event,

which has seen sponsors pump in billions of dollars and at least \$12 billion spent on preparations.

Bach said the final decision on the Games would not be determined by financial interests. Protecting the health of everyone involved and containing the virus were the main objectives, he added.

"Thanks to our risk management policies that have been in place for four years and our insurance, the IOC in any case will be able to continue operations and continue to accomplish our mission," he said.

"The 206 national Olympic committees and the international sports federations expressed that the world in this extremely difficult and concerning situation needs a symbol of hope.

"So for us, while not knowing how long this tunnel will be, we would like the Olympic flame to be a light at the end of the tunnel..."

In recent days several athletes, including reigning Olympic pole vault champion Katerina Stefanidi, accused the IOC of putting athletes' health at risk by urging them to continue to train while many countries are in lockdown mode.

Bach, a former Olympic gold medalist in fencing, said he sympathised with the athletes.

"For an athlete, the worst thing for preparation is the uncertainty that distracts from training and preparations," he said. "I told the 220 athletes in the phone call Wednesday that we cannot pretend we have answers to all your questions.

"We are in the same situation as you and the rest of the world. It is a unique exceptional situation, which requires exceptional solutions."

REUTERS

Olympic flame lands in Japan as doubts grow over Tokyo Games

MATSUSHIMA AIR BASE, JAPAN

THE Olympic flame on Friday completed its difficult journey from Greece to Japan.

That signified a small, symbolic victory for the IOC and local organizers, who maintain the Tokyo Olympics will open on July 24 amid a chorus of doubters who believe they should be postponed or canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"For the first time in 56 years, the Olympic torch is heading to Tokyo and I hope that the Olympic torch will illuminate the path of hope for many people," organizing committee President Yoshiro Mori said at a scaled-down arrival ceremony at an air base in northern Japan.

Mori of course was referring to Tokyo's famous 1964 Olympics. Tokyo was also to have been the venue for the 1940 Olympics, which were cancelled by World War II.

"We will work closely with the International Olympic Committee, the Japanese government, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government," he said, and based on the World Health Organization's advice, "we will ensure a safe and secure games."

The flame, carried in a tiny canister from Greece, reached Japan aboard a white aircraft painted with the inscription "Tokyo 2020 Olympic Torch Relay" along its side. The tail section was adorned with the refrain "Hope Lights our Way."

The aircraft was welcomed on the tarmac by a small contingent of organizing committee officials. Two of Japan's most famous Olympians – three-time wrestling gold medalist Saori Yoshida and three-time judo gold medalist Tadahiro Nomura – received the flame for the lighting ceremony.



TOKYO 2020 OLYMPIC TORCH

A plane carrying the Olympic flame arrives before Olympic Flame Arrival Ceremony at Japan Air Self-Defense Force Matsushima Base in Higashimatsushima in Miyagi Prefecture, north of Tokyo, Friday, March 20, 2020. (AP Photo)

The two climbed portable stairs and entered the aircraft before emerging holding the cradle-like canister with a flame burning inside. They handed it over at the base of the stairs to Mori, who delivered a brief acceptance speech in a gusting wind.

Yoshida and Nomura then took the torch and ignited a large cauldron on the tarmac of the air base.

Mori referred to the "difficult situation" with the virus, and then thanked the IOC and Greek officials that the "hand-over ceremony was able to be held" with the Olympics set to open in just over four months.

The flame arrived in the northeastern part of Japan, roughly 250 kilometers (150 miles) from Tokyo, that was devastated by the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and meltdown of three nuclear reactors that has left many still

living in temporary quarters.

The flame will stay in northern Japan for almost a week until the torch relay begins officially on March 26 from Fukushima prefecture. It will be put on public display in the three prefectures most affected by the disaster – Miyagi, Iwate and Fukushima, Even if the Olympics and Paralympics don't start as scheduled, the burning flame could be used as a symbol and a rallying point for the Japanese public.

In a conference call on Wednesday, IOC President Thomas Bach got support for holding course, but is also getting push back from athletes who can't train, are confused about the qualification process, and worry about their health. Critics are also complaining about the unfairness of qualifying, which might give some athletes advantages over

others. Worldwide the death toll surpassed 10,000 and infections topped 240,000, including 86,000 people who have recovered. Japan has reported about 900 confirmed cases.

The Japanese news agency Kyodo released a survey on Monday showing 69.9% of those questioned did not believe the Olympics will open as scheduled because of the virus.

The four-month torch relay could be fraught with problems, particularly for sponsors which have invested millions for the publicity.

The torch relay in Greece, following the symbolic lighting on March 12, was stopped during the second day and did not resume because of large crowds. Japanese organizers have asked crowds to be "restrained" and could stop or delay the relay if they are not.

AP



Boston Celtics' Marcus Smart is knocked off balance while going for a shot against Utah Jazz's Rudy Gobert (27) during the fourth quarter of an NBA basketball game Friday, March 6, 2020, in Boston. (AP Photo)

NBA shuttering facilities, as more teams face positive tests

BY TIM REYNOLDS

THE number of known coronavirus cases within the NBA doubled to 14 on Thursday, when Marcus Smart of the Boston Celtics pleaded with people to take social distancing more seriously and the league ordered all teams to shutter their training facilities indefinitely.

Smart revealed that he tested positive and the Los Angeles Lakers said two of their players tested positive as well, bringing the number of players who have acquired the virus to 10. The Philadelphia 76ers said three members of their organization tested positive and the Denver Nuggets said someone within their franchise was positive as well.

The 76ers and Nuggets did not say if the affected people

were players, coaches or other staff.

"I've had no symptoms and I feel great," Smart said on Twitter. "But the younger generation in our country MUST self distance. This is not a joke. Not doing so is selfish. Together we can beat this, but we must beat it together by being apart for a short while."

The league wants its teams to keep distance as well. Earlier Thursday, the NBA sent a memo to teams telling them to close their training and practice facilities to all players and staff – plus recommending that players "take aggressive measures to avoid contact with others and remain home as much as possible, leaving only for essential activities."

Smart said he waited five days for his test results. "I've been self-quarantined

since the test, thank goodness," Smart tweeted. "COVID-19 must be taken with the highest level of seriousness. I know it's a #1 priority for our nations health experts, & we must get more testing ASAP."

Smart's comments and the other positive-test revelations came hours after the NBA's memo, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press, was sent Thursday afternoon. The league told teams that it was going to more-stringent policies "in light of the rapidly-developing coronavirus situation, and consistent with evolving advice from health experts regarding how to promote individual and public health while minimizing the spread of the virus."

As recently as Monday, the NBA was telling teams that individual workouts could take

place at team facilities using what the league called the "one player, one coach, one basket" rule. Now, that's not even permitted. If players are going to work out during the league's shutdown, they'll have to do it at home or some other private facility. Public facilities, like gyms or college courts – many of which are closed anyway – aren't permitted to be used by NBA players under the league's coronavirus policy.

Essential activities, by NBA definition, include buying food, medicine, or other necessary supplies; obtaining critical medical services; providing necessary care for a family member in another household; or attending to some other emergency.

Brooklyn, Utah and Detroit join the Celtics and Lakers as teams known to have players

who have tested positive. In all, seven NBA teams – when adding the 76ers and Nuggets – have revealed positive tests.

Across the U.S., the death toll has reached at least 178 and known infections climbed past 11,000 Thursday.

"We will navigate these uncharted waters together," Jazz coach Quin Snyder wrote in an open letter to Utah fans on Thursday, thanking them for their support. "Right now, we are all sacrificing in our own unique ways – for our health and for the greater good – and that is critical."

With the belief that there are going to be no NBA games for several more weeks, at minimum, the league clearly felt Thursday was the right time to take the additional step of urging players to limit exposure.

The NBA said its infectious disease specialists agree with other public health experts and that, "to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus ... until further notice, team practice or training facilities" needed to be closed to players and staff. The league said the ban applies to G League facilities as well.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

The vast majority of people recover from the new virus. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to

six weeks to recover.

The NBA had already banned teams, as part of the coronavirus response, from using public health clubs, fitness centers, gyms and college facilities. Teams can, however, set players up with training, conditioning, or other instructional materials for use at their homes.

"I'm incredibly blessed to just have some free weights here. I have a versa climber. I have enough stuff that I won't take a step back," Kevin Love of the Cleveland Cavaliers said Thursday. "I'll make sure that I'm maintaining and hopefully keep my wind up and stay strong and just keep that constant tension on my body because it's tough right now. I haven't really left the house much."

AP

How Ronaldinho is spending his time in prison: Futsal, BBQ and carpentry, but no music

ASUNCION

FOR Ronaldinho, what was supposed to be a quick jaunt to Paraguay for a charity event has turned into an extended stay at a maximum-security prison.

The Brazilian legend and his brother, Roberto Assis (who is also his business manager), entered the country on March 4 with falsified passports, even though residents of Brazil do not need passports to enter their landlocked neighbour. Although not initially arrested, they were told to remain in their hotel suite in Asuncion while authorities investigated the matter. Two days later they were in jail, with a judge denying them bail and refusing to release them into house arrest, saying the brothers posed a flight risk.

Ronaldinho's presence in prison, with wild reports of playing soccer tournaments for the prize of a suckling pig, has made for one of the sport's more curious stories in 2020.

The 39-year-old, who played for Paris Saint-Germain, Barcelona and AC Milan in Europe, is not your average prisoner. Winner of two league titles for Barcelona and a UEFA Champions League, in addition to the 1999 Copa America and 2002 World Cup with Brazil, Ronaldinho is regarded as one of the all-time great players, something confirmed by his 2005 Ballon d'Or trophy.

Sources have told ESPN that he's "loved" by his fellow inmates. Though he spends most of his time in a cell at the penitentiary centre, his daily activities are divided between playing football with the inmates and the employees, as well as attending a carpentry course. Sources added that Ronaldinho, who will turn 40 on Saturday, is "relaxed" in prison, although he's missing one of the main pillars of his life: music. A lot of his time in retirement has been spent playing the bongo drums.

"He can't play any instruments inside but I am sure that in his head he will keep on coming up with melodies for compositions when he's out," a source close to the player told ESPN. "He plays football every day and teaches the guys he plays with a few tricks. From the very first moment he wanted to make sure he integrated with the other inmates and he quickly managed to do that. He's an idol for many of them and they have asked for him to sign hats, shirts and trainers."

Photographs and videos have been shared on social media of the two-time FIFA World Player of the Year, dressed in shorts and a white muscle shirt, playing football inside the prison. He even took part in a futsal game last week, making a contribution for every goal as his side won 11-2.

A few days ago, the prison's director, Blas Vera, revealed that Ronaldinho and his brother "have certain privileges." They share a bathroom with some of the other prisoners but each has his own cell with a television and air conditioning. (It's unclear how many individual cells have these amenities, but all other inmates share cells with other inmates.) In addition, Ronaldinho has

been able to dine on barbecue food and is even able to speak with his friends via WhatsApp. However, he reserves most of his phone time for family.

"He speaks with his mother every day in the evening," another source told ESPN. "She's one of Ronaldinho's big concerns."

People in Ronaldinho's inner circle want to believe he's close to ending the saga and that it's all a "political issue." A lawyer for Ronaldinho and his brother, Sergio Queiroz, has said their detention is "arbitrary, abusive and illegal."

The investigation into the falsified passports has now uncovered an alleged wider money laundering scheme. According to the prosecution, at the centre of the operation is Dalia Lopez, the businesswoman who arranged their visit and who met them on arrival at the airport in Asuncion before they were detained. Paraguayan authorities have yet to locate her, however. A source familiar with the case told Reuters on Monday that the "hypothesis is that the false documents used by the brothers were eventually going to be used for some commercial means or investments that were not legal."

Since the Paraguayan police began to investigate how Ronaldinho and his brother came to be in the country with fake identities, they have made 14 arrests, according to news agency EFE. Among those arrested are a number of officials from the country's migration department who helped facilitate the falsified documents. Those figures also include two men who spent \$18,000 to obtain the false passports and turned themselves in to police last week. Wilmondes Sousa Lira, the Brazilian who delivered the passports to the brothers, is also in custody.

Investigators say they are now reviewing files and messages on the phones of Ronaldinho, his brother, and the other people caught up in the case.

Ronaldinho had planned to return to Barcelona in the coming days, in order to finish up interviews he began in February for a documentary about his career in football.

While in Catalonia last month, he was able to meet up with ex-Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard and two of the club's former presidents, Joan Laporta and Sandro Rosell. He did not meet Lionel Messi, whom he played alongside at Barca and has also agreed to be interviewed for the documentary. The Barca captain, at the time, had become embroiled in a war of words with sporting director Eric Abidal over the reasons for former manager Ernesto Valverde's dismissal.

Ronaldinho has been spending a lot of time looking up flights between Asuncion and Rio de Janeiro. Sources say he now knows them by memory. If he receives permission to leave prison, he will head straight to the airport. However, new hearings have been delayed, his lawyer Queiroz explained this week, because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

(Agencies)

Jovic apologises for breaking self-isolation rules in Serbia

MADRID

REAL Madrid striker Luka Jovic apologised on Thursday after travelling to Serbia and breaking self-isolation rules put in place to limit the spread of coronavirus.

Jovic claims he was given permission to fly to his home country of Serbia by Real Madrid, who went into quarantine last week after one of the club's basketball players tested positive for the virus.

But after arriving in Belgrade, according to Spanish newspaper AS, the 22-year-old was "seen on the streets of the capital, celebrating the birthday of his girlfriend".

The local press in Belgrade have reported that Jovic was visited

by police, although it is not clear whether charges will be brought against him.

"First of all, I am very sorry that I am the main topic (of debate) these days, and I am sorry that people are constantly writing about me and not about the main protagonists in the fight against this crisis, who are the doctors and all those who work in healthcare," Jovic wrote on social media.

"In Madrid, my Covid-19 test was negative. So I decided to travel to Serbia, to help and support our people, in addition to being close to my family, with the permission of my club.

AFP

The biggest unsolved questions as shutdown goes on - 1

BY BILL CONNELLY, ESPN STAFF WRITER

IT's blatantly obvious that sports are not the most important thing in the world, especially now. If or when they can still be staged safely, however, sports can still provide an immense and welcome distraction. If nothing else, so can the piece you're reading right now.

With the coronavirus spreading throughout Europe and North America, we've seen more or less every professional sports league across the globe suspend operations to help with social distancing efforts. UEFA met on Tuesday to postpone Euro 2020, but there are still a lot of unanswered questions about concluding the 2019-20 seasons across Europe.

There's nothing guaranteeing that the rest of the European soccer season will ever be played to its completion, or without some modifications. To distract ourselves, however, let's assume for the moment that it does play out eventually, crowds or no crowds. Let's look at some of the more interesting questions the last 10 or so weeks of this season might answer about Europe's big four leagues, if or when the games actually take place.

English Premier League

1. What now for Liverpool?

Jürgen Klopp's Liverpool are currently on pace for 107 points in Premier League play. That would easily top the 100-point record set by Manchester City in 2017-18. Last season, they won the Champions League.

They're in the middle of a run almost unmatched -- unmatched -- by an English club. Yet they're also reeling. As late as Feb. 28, they had a shot at becoming only the second Premier League team to finish unbeaten -- though when Arsenal's Invincibles did it in 2003-04, they managed only 90 points because of 12 draws -- while also winning the FA Cup and Champions League. An almost unbeatable treble, an accomplishment without peers.

The trouble began slowly, as it often does. After the league's new "midseason break" in early February, Liverpool squeaked by relegation-bound Norwich 1-0, then went to Spain and lost 1-0 to Atletico Madrid in the first leg of the round of 16. They returned home and needed to rally from 2-1 down to win 3-2 against 16th-place West Ham United, then saw their "Invincible" quest destroyed by a 3-0 loss to 17th-place Watford.

Three days later, they lost 2-0 at Chelsea in the FA Cup, the potential treble became a double only now, it's a single. The Reds fell behind to AFC Bournemouth on Saturday before rallying to win 2-1. Needing to beat Atletico by at least two goals on Wednesday at Anfield in the return leg of the Champions League, they indeed went up 2-0 early in extra time ... and then gave up three goals to lose going away.

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Two weeks ago, a set of goals you couldn't even accomplish on Football Manager without a lot of cheats and restarts (yeah, guilty as charged) seemed not only possible, but plausible. Now Liverpool have to rebound and focus on simply taking care of business in the league. Their magic number is six points -- if they earn six, second-place Manchester City loses six, or some combination, they clinch -- and that will almost certainly happen pretty soon. And hey, when you haven't won a league title



Liverpool may only have the Premier League to focus on, but if the season gets to finish, they still have records within their sights. (Agencies)

in 30 years, that's cause for extreme celebration.

But if or when the league completes 38 matches, Liverpool will need 19 points from their remaining nine matches to hit 101 points. Can they recover in time? Does it even matter as long as they lift that elusive league trophy? More to the point, how will we remember this team now that we know what was possible and where they ended up?

2. Who scores the final Champions League spot in England?

Manchester United added Sporting CP midfielder Bruno Fernandes for nearly £68 million near the end of the January transfer window, and in the eight matches since his Feb. 1 debut, they have yet to lose: they've advanced in the FA Cup, they walloped Club Brugge in the Europa League round of 32, put five past LASK Linz in the Europa League round of 16 first leg and they've picked up 11 points in only five Premier League matches, second most in the league. (Oh, and they have the best goal difference too.)

This isn't due only to Fernandes, obviously, but the 25-year-old has been brilliant, creating 18 chances, logging three goals, three assists and pressing beautifully throughout (31 ball recoveries already at his new club). And while eight matches aren't enough to declare United back once and for all, it has provided a likely answer to what was for a moment the most intriguing question in the Premier League: Who's going to benefit the most from Manchester City's potential ban from UEFA competitions? With City virtually guaranteed to finish second in the Premier League but banned (pending appeal) from taking part in next year's Champions League, that means that the EPL's fifth-place team would qualify instead. And not too long ago, the battle for that spot looked like a spectacular logjam. Tottenham Hotspur! Manchester United! Wolves! Sheffield United! Arsenal! Burnley! Maybe even Everton or Crystal Palace! They were all within shouting distance.

Technically, most of them still are. But until recent form shifts, we have a clear favorite in this race.

Everton and an injury-depleted Spurs have each picked up only one point in their past three league matches, and Everton looked particularly exhausted in an embarrassing 4-0 loss to Chelsea over the weekend. (Spurs looked the same on Tuesday, getting run out of the Champions League comfortably by RB Leipzig.) But even with United's great recent form they're still only two points up on Wolves and Sheffield United, four up on Tottenham, five up on Arsenal,

and six up on Burnley and Palace. FiveThirtyEight gives United a 70% chance of sealing the deal and qualifying again for the UCL, but Wolves (24%), Sheffield United (12%), Spurs (11%) and Arsenal (5%) are still on the board. Spurs could make things particularly interesting with a theoretical home upset of the Reds on Sunday.

By the way, if Spurs do collapse and Arsenal lose form, we could end up with three of England's Big Six clubs missing European competitions -- Champions League or Europa League -- altogether next season. In an era in which money appears to matter more than ever, some of the most monied clubs in England have been struggling to find their footing. It's an odd time, made even odder by the thought of a Champions League quarterfinal featuring teams from Leipzig and Atalanta but not featuring Liverpool and, possibly, Barcelona or Real Madrid. (We'll get to them in a bit.)

3. Is this the year Leeds returns?

The city of Leeds is the fourth largest in England and easily the largest with only one major soccer club. Leeds United has one of the broadest and most intense fan bases in any sport in the world, which has made its extended Premier League absence awfully noticeable. Two decades ago, Leeds basically spent future Champions League earnings in an effort to keep achieving at a high level; when they failed to actually make the Champions League a couple of times, they found themselves in a financial disaster. They were relegated to the English Championship in 2004, then fell to the third level of English football three years later. It took a while to return to even the second tier, then spending the past decade cycling through different owners and continuously failing to get back to the Premier League.

In 2018, new owner Andrea Radrizani brought in legendary manager Marcelo Bielsa and Leeds fielded its most impressive team in years. But a late collapse dropped the team into the promotion playoffs, where they lost to Derby County.

Despite Leeds' constant ability to step on rakes, and despite Bielsa-coached tending to stumble late in any given season, maybe this is the year they finish the job? After a brutal (and familiar-looking) stumble in January and February (earning five points in an eight-match span) they eked out three 1-0 wins in a row, then knocked around Hull City and Huddersfield by a combined 6-0. Their five straight wins have put them back in first place in the Championship, and more importantly, they're

seven points up on third-place Fulham. (The third- through sixth-place teams end up in the playoff, while the top two qualify automatically.)

FiveThirtyEight projects their promotion odds at 98%: Leeds fans have been through too much to believe in anything less than 100%, but it would take an even larger collapse than normal to keep them from returning to the Premier League in 2020-21.

Bundesliga

4. Is this going to remain an incredible Bundesliga race, or is Bayern going to pull away?

We've seen a version of this episode before. Last year, Bayern Munich spent a good portion of the Bundesliga season looking extremely vulnerable, gifting Borussia Dortmund a pretty big lead in the process, but then roared back and won their seventh straight league title. And after benevolently letting other teams take the DFB Pokal (German Cup) for a couple of years, they went ahead and won that, too.

This season's edition seemed different, at least when it came to the number of teams involved. While Bayern was once again starting slowly -- enough so that manager Niko Kovacs was fired in early November -- Borussia Mönchengladbach was enjoying its best start in ages, Red Bull Leipzig looked spectacular, and any number of other teams, from Dortmund to Schalke 04, were within shouting distance of the top of the standings. Even at the midway point, you could talk yourself into it being a three- to four-team race.

It might be a one-team race now. Leipzig have dropped 11 points (via one loss and four draws) over the past seven league matches, while Bayern haven't lost since Dec. 7. The champs lost striker Robert Lewandowski to injury and, with a point to prove, scored six goals in their first match without him. FiveThirtyEight now gives Bayern an 87% chance of winning its eighth straight title.

They're still only four points up on Dortmund, though, and Dortmund have lost only once since adding attacker Erling Haaland in the January transfer window. If Leipzig find their collective legs, they are still only five points back. The odds are good that Lewandowski will miss an April 4 trip to Dortmund (if it takes place as scheduled) and if Borussia wins there, this could remain a race well into April.

We probably know how this episode ends, but if the door's almost closed, that means it's still open, right?

To be Continued

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

The biggest unsolved questions as shutdown goes on - 1

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Dar es Salaam's JMK Youth Park squad's player, Said Azishi (R), gets the better of Kap Ten squad's players in a friendly soccer clash, which took place at the JMK Youth Park venue recently. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

Mlawa wins National Chess Championships

By Correspondent Joseph Mchekadona

TANZANIA's chess player, FIDE Master Hemed Mlawa, emerged as the overall champion of the just ended National Chess Championships which took place at the Russian Cultural Center in Dar es Salaam last weekend.

Nurdin Hassuji, Tanzania Chess Association (TCA) secretary general, said the 8-round championships attracted many players from Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Dodoma, Morogoro and other regions.

He said Mlawa who was also the 2017 National Championships' winner and the locally highest FIDE rated player, emerged the winner of this year's tournament after securing 6.5 points.

Hassuji, who also featured in the showpiece, said Geoffrey Mwanyika, who is also TCA chairman, tied with Albert Njau for the second spot, with both having six points.

The official, a Candidate Master, noted however due to better tie-break, Mwanyika was declared as runner-up and Njau settled for the third spot.

He said there was also a tie in fourth, fifth and sixth positions as Candidate Masters Yusuf Mdoe, himself, and Rashid Mansoor secured 5.5 points each.

After the tie-break Mdoe was declared fourth, the fifth spot went to Mansoor and Hassuji took the sixth position.

Hassuji said TCA also hosted the Women Chess Championships which had Prisha Chheda laying hands on silverware with six points without losing a single game.

The competition's second position went to Gomathi Srisankar and Asha Kondo settled for the third spot while Ashmi Patil and Mahi Shah took the fourth and fifth positions respectively.

There was also a Youth Chess Championship which attracted 30 participants and was categorized into Under-8 section, Under-10 section, Under-12 section and Under-14 section.

He said Hashwit Sai won Under-8 section followed by Yash Panjwani in the second position and Sai Vedansh took the third spot.

The Under-10 category was won by Gokulraam Sankar with clear six points followed by Zac Okumu and Kahil Walli in second and third positions respectively.

The Under-12 category was won by Rahul Raj, Christian Fernandes took the second spot and Isaac Mukani took the third spot.

Savely Yakovlev emerged as Under-14 category champion, Delbert Panya and Kartike took the second and third spots respectively.

"The National Chess Championships took place at Russia Cultural Center in Dar es Salaam from March 7-15, this was one of the toughest chess championships," he noted.

"We really thank all the players, organizers and anyone who contributed to its success."

Chess tournaments records posted by TCA show Hassuji won the National Championships title in 2016, Mlawa emerged as champion in 2017, Mdoe was the 2018 edition's winner and Mlawa has lifted this season's championships' trophy.



Chess player, FIDE Master Hemed Mlawa, celebrates with a trophy after presentation ceremony of this year's National Chess Championships which took place at the Russian Cultural Center in Dar es Salaam last weekend. He lifted the top honour in the tournament, which brought together chess players from various parts of Tanzania. PHOTO: COURTESY OF TCA

Senior national cricketers wind up international friendly series with victory

By Guardian Reporter

SENIOR national cricket team have notched their second win in international friendly series against Zimbabwe club, Rhinos, cruising to a three-wicket victory over the latter in a match, which took place at Kwekwe Sports Club oval in Harare yesterday.

The visitors have, as per details issued by Tanzania Cricket Association (TCA) information officer Atif Salim, ultimately completed the six-match series succumbing to 4-2 loss to their hosts.

After having been presented with a chance to bat first in the yesterday match, Rhinos were skittled for 104 runs in 16 overs.

Mkhululi Tshuma, the squad's opening batsman, and top order batsman, Takudzwanashe Kaitano, were so far the batsmen that had managed to make their presence felt at the crease during Rhinos' innings.

Tshuma had the most impressive innings, posting 50 runs which included seven fours and two sixes.

His efforts to help the squad set up challenging target for the visitors were halted by senior national cricket team's experienced bowler, Kassim Nassor.

Senior national team's Riziki Kise-tuma went for a catch to dismiss Tshuma from skilful bowling by Nassor.

Kaitano as well posted double digit figure, notching 28 runs which included two fours.

The team's hopes of amassing an imposing total ultimately ended up in smokes, given their remaining batsmen were dismissed in quick succession.

Jatinkumar Darji had a field day with the ball for the senior national team, ending his spell with three wickets and leaking 11 runs in four overs.

He was ably assisted by Nassor and Mohamed Ally that posted two wickets apiece.

Nassor leaked 16 runs in his four-over spell and Ally leaked 16 runs in two overs.

In response, senior national cricket team mounted a successful chase, reaching the target for the loss of



Senior national cricket team.

seven wickets in 17.3 overs.

Jitin Singh showcased scintillating performance at the crease, scoring 51 runs not out for the side.

The senior national side was pegged back during the early stages of the chase, given opening batsman Muhammad Zafar Khan was dismissed by Rhinos' Hussain Bhola for duck.

Darji, who opened the innings with Khan, managed to crack a few knocks at the crease, ending with 13 runs which included a four and a six.

Singh restored the team's hopes of a successful chase, surpassing half century mark and notching four fours and three sixes in what turned out to be the best innings.

Jumanne Mohamed chipped in with 11 runs, which consisted of a four, Nassor thereafter made certain of the visitors' chase, scoring 17 runs which included three fours.

The senior national team pitched the one-week camp in Harare from March 16 to prepare for the ICC Africa T20 Qualifiers' Group A, which will be played in South Africa from April 25-May 4.

Salim said the international friendly series geared towards offering the senior national team's players exposure.

The players, he noted, are playing under new coach Steve Tikolo and a new set up.

He disclosed TCA is pleased with the way the players have performed in the international friendly series.

The players, according to him, have given a good account of themselves and have represented Tanzania in a dignified way.

Tikolo disclosed he is happy his players have secured opportunity to play the international friendly series, noting it has turned out to be a good series for them.

The Kenyan coach noted much as his team lost 4-2 in the series, he had set out to use the games as an opportunity for assessing his players' ability to adapt to match situations.

Tikolo noted he has already assessed the national team's weaknesses, which will be addressed in training sessions which will take place later.

The coach was of the opinion the senior national team is made up of gifted players, insisting the players nevertheless need to work hard in the drills.

Rhinos posted victory in the first game of the series, senior national cricket side regrouped to notch victory in the second match.

The third and fourth matches of the series ended with Rhinos emerging victorious.

Tanzania will face Saint Helena, Sierra Leone, Cameroon and Mozambique in the Group A of the continental showdown, the event's Group B consists of Ghana, Lesotho, Eswatini, Rwanda, Malawi, Uganda and Seychelles, with Rwanda hosting the event in June/July.

The leading squads in either group will book a place in the Regional Final, set to be played in a country and dates which will be announced later by ICC Africa.

The Regional Final will as well have Kenya and Nigeria battling it out in it given they are positioned higher in continental ranking.

TFF set to release uniform curriculum for soccer centers

By Correspondent Joseph Mchekadona

TANZANIA Football Federation (TFF) has said it will, by the end of this month, release a uniform structured curriculum which will be used by all football academies and centers in the country.

The federation's Technical Director, Oscar Mirambo, disclosed in an interview with a local radio station on Thursday that the move will ensure that players in academies and centers around the country are coached within a similar style.

The official said the coming curriculum will provide kids with consistent preparations, terminology, tactics and philosophy which suits the country.

He said currently there is no uniform curriculum, forcing local academies and centers to use different styles.

Mirambo said due to the absence of the curriculum it is difficult for the federation to measure the contribution of the academies and centers in the development of football in the country.

He said the uniform structured curriculum will help the country come up with its football philosophy.

Mirambo said the uniform curriculum will help kids developing a true passion for football, possess a strong desire to learn and get high-level professional coaching and instructions.

"If all goes well, by the end of this month we will come up with a uniform structured curriculum which will be used by our academies," he disclosed.

"Currently our academies and centers use the curricula which suit the football styles and wishes of the particular center's coach, this is not good as the country needs to have its own philosophy of football and for that to come it must start from academy kids," he said.

Mirambo said it is the wish of TFF that kids at academies and centers are trained to play football with passion, skill and intelligence.

He also said they want to see to it all academies and centers have qualified coaches who are capable of interpreting the curriculum and imparting the knowledge to the kids.

Tanzania has many several soccer academies and centers which groom kids in age groups of Developmental Academy (5-8 years), Junior Academy (8-10 years), Youth Academy (11-14 years) and youth team (15-19 years).

Despite the academies and centers having not met the required standards, they have produced some of the players who are playing in the Mainland Premier League and others are plying their trade abroad.

They include Mbwana Samatta, who is now a member of English Premier League side Aston Villa, Thomas Ulimwengu of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)'s TP Mazembe, Simon Msuva and Nicholas Kibabage who play for Morocco's Difaa al Jadida, Shiza Kichuya who is now with Simba SC, and others.

Flexibles by David Chikoko

