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WHO makes new 'Covid-19 Organics' key consultations

BRAZZAVILLE

REGIONAL experts of the World Health Organisation (WHO) yesterday held a virtual meeting with 70 African traditional medicine experts concerning the treatment Covid-19.

In a tweet, the WHO's Regional Office for Africa said its meeting with experts across Africa focused on the role of traditional medicine in the COVID-19 response.

The number of coronavirus cases in the African continent reached 66,373 with 3,048 new infections over the past 24 hours, on the basis of figures released by the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Addis Ababa on Tuesday.

"They unanimously agreed that clinical trials must be conducted for all medicines in the region, without exception," the UN agency said, with no further details.

The meeting announcement came a



After originating in China last December, COVID-19 has spread to 187 countries and regions

day after Madagascar President Andry Rajoelina slammed the UN agency for not endorsing Covid Organics (CVO), an organic herbal drink that the Malagasy authorities says it can prevent infections and cure patients suffering from the novel coronavirus.

WHO warned against the use of CVO without medical supervision and also cautioned against self-medication. It further called for clinical trials of Covid Organics.

"We are advising the government of Madagascar to take this product through a clinical trial and we are prepared to collaborate with them," said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO regional director for Africa, last week.

After originating in China last December, COVID-19 has spread to 187 countries and regions, with Europe and the US currently the worst-hit regions.

The pandemic has killed over 286,600 people worldwide, with total infections reaching more than 4.19m at present, while recoveries exceeded 1.46 million, according to figures compiled by the US Johns Hopkins University.

Economy: BoT in rescue measures amid Covid-19



It is by no means a scene from Samuel Beckett's play entitled Waiting for Godot in which two characters wait for the arrival of someone who never arrives. Rather, it is residents of Muheza in Tanga Region waiting for their turns to buy sugar said to have been available in small amounts at one of the shops there yesterday. Many parts of the country have been experiencing an acute shortage of the all-important sweetener for about a week now. Photo: Correspondent Steven William

By Guardian Reporter

BANK of Tanzania (BoT) Governor Prof Florens Luoga yesterday outlined a number of policy measures to rescue the country's economy during the Covid-19 pandemic.

These include lowering of discount rates and easing of collateral terms for bank clients and other conditions that the central bank sets out when commercial banks borrow from it.

Governor Luoga said in a statement that with effect from yesterday May 12, the central bank will reduce its discount rates to five percent from seven percent to provide additional space for banks to borrow at lower costs, enabling them to lower lending rates to bank clients.

The series of moves aim at cushioning the economy from adverse effects of the novel coronavirus outbreak, where BoT raised the daily transaction limit for mobile money users from 3m/- to 5m/- and their daily balances enhanced from 5m/- to 10m/-.

Prof Luoga said the newly approved policy measures are meant to encourage mobile money users to be more facilitated in the use of digital payment platforms for transactions such as online banking and point of sale systems.

However, to provide additional liquidity to banks, BoT will lower the statutory minimum reserves requirement to six per cent of total capital of a commercial bank from seven percent,

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Minister: Ships diverted sugar to smaller vessels

Shortages to end as 4,000 tonnes of sugar already in port, 21,000 tonnes being awaited

By Henry Mwangonde, Dodoma

LOGISTICAL challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic led to the short supply of sugar countrywide.

Agriculture minister Japhet Hasunga told the National Assembly yesterday that government was assured the country will have sugar plentifully after it resolved logistical challenges.

He assured MPs that sugar consignments which had already arrived in the country were enough and there is no need to panic because more consignments are coming.

He said the delay in the arrival of sugar was caused by logistical challenges due to the coronavirus and tendency by some dealers to hide sugar to create an artificial shortage.

Ship captains whose vessels were supposed to bring sugar consignments to Tanzania decided otherwise and started disembarking the product to small vessels. Sugar thus entered the country in small consignments and in paltry quantities, the minister explained.

Hasunga said two months ago the government gave importation permits to

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Covid-19 patients' caring tops Nurses Day agenda

By Guardian Reporter

NURSES are among the crucial frontline fighters in curing and curbing the novel coronavirus, the government has declared, stating that it is considering basic guidelines for Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) when attending to Covid-19 patients.

Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children minister Ummu Mwalimu made this observation yesterday when addressing health workers at the Mwananyamala regional referral hospital in Dar es Salaam as part of activities to mark the International

Nurses Day (IND) commemorated around the world on every May 12th.

"You should take precautions when executing your duties by considering the presence of the deadly Covid-19 in our community. It is important to adhere to infection prevention measures especially when attending to patients infected with the coronavirus," she said.

Mwalimu said the government will continue to recognize and value the contribution of nurses in the provision of health services in the country.

She asserted that the government is working to improve nursing and

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SHARE FACTS ABOUT COVID-19

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

[cdc.gov/COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID-19)



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Zanzibar President Dr Ali Mohamed Shein addresses government officials from East Pemba and South Pemba regions yesterday while on a two-day official visit of Pemba Island. Photo: State House

Economy: BoT in rescue measures amid COVID-19

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starting from June 8th.

As of yesterday, the central bank reduced "haircuts" on government securities from 10 percent to 5 percent for Treasury bills and from 40 percent to 20 percent for Treasury bonds, a decision that is aimed at increasing commercial banks' ability to borrow from BoT.

Experts say that haircut refers to the difference between the market value of the particular securities and the value at which the same has been kept as collateral. "The haircut would be at least 2 per cent for Treasury bills and liquid government securities having maturity period of less than three years," an online explanation indicates.

BoT also directed banks and financial institutions to conduct assessment on financial difficulties experienced by clients due to Covid-19 outbreak. The assessment should be based on loan repayments and possible restricting of loans, the governor noted.

BoT will provide regulatory flexibility to banks and other financial institutions that will carry out loan restructuring in

a transparent and impartial manner, he stated.

On foreign reserves, Prof. Luoga assured the public that there was adequate foreign exchange back-up for importation of goods and services, while insisting that all payment transactions between residents and local businesses among themselves should be done in shillings.

Tanzania announced the first case of Covid-19 mid-March and the number has increased to 480 on the basis of the last update by Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa on April 22nd.



The haircut would be at least 2 per cent for Treasury bills and liquid government securities having maturity period of less than three years

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbarali

Mbarali villagers remove forest invaders to protect environment

RESIDENTS of Malamba village, Ruiwa Ward in Mbarali district, Mbeya region have succeeded in controlling environmental destruction in their village by removing invaders from the nearby Boya Forest Reserve and preventing rampant movement of livestock from other areas.

Speaking to this paper early in the week the villagers claimed that the reserve was facing acute environmental destruction challenges that were endangering the availability water sources and the life of the

people.

The village chairman, Leonard Ulaya, said there were people who had invaded the forest reserve and started settlements and farming activities including livestock keeping.

He said the village government

through its environment committee and the ward's natural resources officers removed the invaders after which the passed by-laws for the protection of the forest that was in danger of disappearing.

He said some of the herders were

keeping livestock in the village areas without following procedures and allowed them to graze in unauthorized areas and added that they did not use any force to remove them, they only educated them and agreed to leave.

THE chairman of herders group in

the village Andongwise Kyando said as of now anybody wanting to bring his livestock from other villages must get permission from village leaders.

Kyando said they are following government procedures on livestock from one ward to another or from

one district to another to avoid land conflicts.

He said some villagers used grazing land which was sold to other people who had initiated settlements the situation which he said brought in some misunderstandings, and added that the issue is in higher official levels for appropriate action.

Mbarali is among districts that had huge populations of livestock from other areas that made the government to conduct special operation in 2007 to remove the livestock from Ihefu valley which were sent to southern regions of Lindi and Mtwara.

Minister: Ships diverted sugar to smaller vessels

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three producers, that is Kagera Sugar Ltd, Tanganyika Planting Co. (TPC) and Kilombero Sugar Co. to import 40,000 tonnes in the country to complement the gaps.

"It is true that sugar is not available in most parts of the country, but let me announce that already there is some 4,000 tonnes already at the port and 21,000 tonnes yet to enter the country which we expect by the end of this month," he specified.

"Let me call upon those responsible for distribution to ensure it is well distributed on time," he urged.

The minister addressed the issue before tabling the ministry's 2020/2021 Budget estimates, where he said the country's monthly sugar needs stood at 35,000 tonnes.

The government was confident that the sugar being imported was enough until the harvesting period starts, he said.

As of last month, sugar production stood at 298,948.61 tonnes, about 86 percent of the targeted 345,296 tonnes.

He said indicative prices which were given by the government will remain intact.

Prices issued for the product require retailers to sell the product at a price range from 2,600/- in Dar es Salaam to 3,200/- in the more inland regions. But the selling price is almost everywhere around 4000/- per kilo, including in Dar es Salaam shops when it is available.

Sugar has remained a hard nut to crack for years in the country, despite the country having four sugar factories, namely Mtibwa, Kilombero, Kagera, and TPC.

Their production capacity is placed at about 300,000 metric tonnes per year against the country's consumption demand of 420,000 metric tonnes, leaving a gap of 120,000 metric tonnes that is filled by imports.

Tanzania has not had any new

investment in the sugar industry for the past 40 years – with existing sugar factories stemming from brown field investments through privatization of the once badly managed, government-owned sugar factories.

The sugar sector has been surrounded by politics for a long time, such that incoming President John Magufuli banned sugar imports in 2016 to protect local sugar factories.

By April 2014, the four sugar producing factories in the country had at least 62,800 tonnes of sugar which they could not sell, saying the market was saturated with illegal imports while their distributors had another 11,000 tonnes piled up in plantation warehouses.

The president's directive came amid business wrangles between local sugar producers and importers of the commodity, mostly from Thailand, Brazil, India and Indonesia.

The president revoked local import permits, issued to traders to import sugar for domestic consumption, saying the country had failed to protect local factories while sugar importers made a killing.



It is true that sugar is not available in most parts of the country, but let me announce that already there is some 4,000 tonnes already at the port and 21,000 tonnes yet to enter the country which we expect by the end of this month



Dar es Salaam Water and Sanitation Authority (Dawasa) technicians move to repair a leaking pipe in the Luguruni suburb yesterday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Covid-19 patients' caring tops agenda during Nurses Day

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midwifery services where it has developed guidelines for professional nurses and midwives to follow when executing their duties. The codes of conducts insist on health workers to promote ethics, human dignity and respect for patients, the minister emphasized.

The government has so far trained 778 nurses from 15 regional referral hospitals on how to provide health services on the basis of the guidelines being prepared and starting to be applied, she said, noting that similar training sessions will be organized for different cadres of health workers countrywide. "We have put in place a system where patients can log-in complaints from specific health centers and hospitals. This will help us know the gaps in our health system and resolve them accordingly," the minister underlined.

She said the country faces a shortage of nurses despite the presence of 30,451 accredited nurses. The government will prioritize employing more nurses, she stated.

She reiterated that in tackling Covid-19, people must continue adhering to preventive measures to control its spread.

Alexander Baluhya, the president of the Tanzania National Nurses Association (TANNA), said that to ensure the provision of quality health services, the country must ensure availability of professional workers at all levels as well as a good working environment.

He said that nurses account for 60 percent of all employed health workers in Tanzania, providing around 80 percent of all health services rendered to patients.

With the shortage of nurses standing at 48 percent at present, the TANNA president congratulated all nurses working tirelessly especially during this period when the world struggles to combat Covid-19.



George Lwakatare (R), Fundraising Director of Dar es Salaam's Rotary Club of Mbezi Beach, sensitises Bajaj and bodaboda (motorbike taxi) riders shortly after the club donated sanitiser, disinfectant sprays and face masks at Mbezi Beach yesterday in supporting efforts to prevent the spread of Covid-19 infections. Others include Rotary Club of Mbezi Beach president Gulu Sykes (2nd-R), followed by Mbezi Beach B local government chairperson Asha Voniatis. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Agency invests over Euro 2m in promoting food production

By Guardian Reporter

FOOD production in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda has to increase significantly to feed the population that is growing at an average of three per cent in Tanzania and Uganda and 2.5 per cent in Kenya, experts believe.

Adoption of climate smart production, harvesting and processing methodologies is key to improving productivity and efficiencies of the existing food crop production and supply systems. Achieving an increase in food production however requires concerted efforts and joint investments by supply chain actors, service providers and public sector partners, working in the different targeted value chains to support effective adaptation and mitigation strategies.

A five-year multi-country project for Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda is investing two million Euros in grants to 14 agri-businesses in the three countries.

The investment from the Climate Resilient Agribusiness for Tomorrow (CRAFT) project is specifically targeting companies and farmers working in the sunflower, soybean, sesame, common beans, potato and sorghum value chains in the three countries.

Menno Keizer, the CRAFT Project Manager for Tanzania, said in an interview that co-investment with the private sector is one of the key strategies identified by the project to achieve sustainable results and increase availability and accessibility of climate-resilient food.

Through its Climate Innovation and Investment Facility (CIIF), the project will support performance-based investments so as to build the resilience of private sector agribusinesses and service providers in the targeted value chains.

So far four Tanzanian companies (Nondo Investors Co.Ltd, Rogimwa Agro Co. Ltd, Jack Ma Enterprises Ltd and Mwenge Sunflower Oil Mills) have signed partnership agreements worth 567,135 euro.

CRAFT invests in companies that

have demonstrated from their own internally generated funds as well as from third party providers (i.e. financiers and beneficiaries) that their businesses are viable.

The project will thus work with and through the private sector to promote climate smart agriculture related innovations at farm and value chain level and support public sector partners in creating the institutional environment for wide-scale adoption of CSA-practices.

The CIIF contribution is not an end in itself but rather a means for attracting commercial funding for follow-on investments and scaling. The agri-businesses invest their own funds and then leverage off the CRAFT grant to attract additional investment from commercial financial institutions. This not only boosts their credit worthiness and relationship with the financial institutions but ensures businesses continuity beyond the life of the project.

The CRAFT investment facility will be able to reduce the financial risks of new business initiatives including those of small-medium scale (women and youth-led) agri businesses and of cooperatives, thereby contributing to an increase in the level of investment and private sector engagement in climate resilient food systems in East Africa.

Medium sized companies in the mentioned value chains (sorghum, potato, common beans and sunflower for Tanzania) can find more information and apply for investment support using this link: <https://snvdata.org/ciif/#/applications/new-application>

The Climate Resilient Agribusiness for Tomorrow (CRAFT) project is a multi-country (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) five-year effort implemented by SNV in partnership with Wageningen University and Research (WUR), the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), Agriterria, and Rabo Partnerships. The project is funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

'NFRA is expected to purchase 65,000 tonnes of farmers' crops'

By Henry Mwangonde, Dodoma

THE government through the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA) is expected to purchase 65,000 tonnes of food crops from farmers to boost the national food reserves as part of preparations against the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

Agriculture minister, Japhet Hasunga, announced in the august House yesterday when he tabled the ministry's 2020/21 budget estimates, saying this will increase the country's food reserve to 103,698,794 tonnes in addition to the current 38,698,794 tonnes already stored.

The minister said the country's monthly grain needs stand at an average 750,000 tonnes considering that only 20 per cent of Tanzanians will need to buy 100-per cent of their food

needs and will require 145,000 tonnes which is a small amount of food.

In containing the challenge NFRA will purchase 435 tonnes of food crops worth 217.5bn/- which will be enough to carter for three months, saying in implementing the move, his ministry will hold talks with the Finance ministry for facilitation.

"From June NFRA will buy 300,000 tonnes for the 2020/21 budget and the agency's internal funds making the total number of food crops to be bought to 735 tonnes," he said.

The minister however named tea and horticulture as crops which have been affected by Covid-19, saying if the pandemic continues it is likely to affect cotton production which its market starts in May as well the availability of agriculture inputs for the 2020/21 season especially fertilizers and

pesticides which are imported.

An analysis by the ministry, Hasunga said has shown that despite coronavirus affecting various economic sectors, the sub-sector had not been affected. However, the food crop subsector not been affected because agriculture imports had already been imported.

In containing the danger, the minister said the ministry will allow importation of fertilizers without following the Bulk Procurement System (BPS) according to section 7(4) of the Fertilizer Bulk Procurement Regulations, 2017.

The ministry of Agriculture requested the House to approve 229,808 bn/- as budget for the 2020/21 financial year.

The minister said the agriculture sector has remains the backbone of the country's economy whereby in the last five years the sector increased by 17 per cent. The sector contributed

29.5trn/- in the 2018/19 financial year from 25.2 trn/- in 2015. The sector also offered employment to 58 per cent of Tanzanians in 2018 and contributed 28.2 per cent to the national economy including the food crops sector which contributed about 16.2 percent.

According to the minister, it was due to the increase in production of agriculture products, saying the sector grew by average 5.2 per cent from 2015 to 2019 and the food crop subsector stood at 5.8 per cent.

REA workers die in motorcycle crash

By Guardian Correspondent,

Songea

TWO Rural Energy Agency (REA) workers in Songea, Ruvuma region have died after the motorcycle they were riding collided with a parked lorry at Utwango village in Namtumbo district.

Speaking to reporters yesterday the Ruvuma Regional Police Commander Simon Maigwa mentioned the names of the deceased as Robert Mlonganile (34) and Victor Mguli(31) all residents of Msamala in Songea municipality.

RPC Maigwa said the accident happened on Monday along Songea - Namtumbo road and involved the motorcycle Reg MC227 AYP driven by Mlonganile who was travelling to Namtumbo.

The two were travelling to Namtumbo to install electricity meters for their customers'.

He said the lorry was stopped by traffic police for inspection and cited the cause of the accident as gross negligence by the motorcyclist as he was riding his machine with one hand while the other person was protecting his eyes from the sun rays. He called on all motorists to be extra careful to ensure they abide by road traffic regulations.



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A Dar es Salaam resident sells fresh fish in clearly filthy conditions at a bus stand in the city yesterday. Photo: Correspondent: Miraji Msala

CCWT recounts violations of human rights and oppression by herders in forest protected areas

By Guardian Reporter

TANZANIA Livestock Keepers Association (CCWT) recounts of grave legal and human rights violations and oppression by forest reserve authorities against herders, saying up to now they have confiscated more than 1,995 herds of cattle and killed more than 5,000 livestock.

In their statement issued on Monday signed by CCWT chairman George Bajuta and secretary general Magembe Makoye said herders have been faced with such challenges.

"There have been rampant confiscation of livestock without abiding by the law in various wildlife reserves that have impoverished the herders," according to the statement.

They said the confiscation had taken

place in various areas despite some of the cases thereof still being in court, and some of which herders had won.

They cited some of the areas from where the number of cattle (in brackets) were confiscated as including Uwanda Forest Reserve (76), Kigosi and Mayowosi (327).

They said 547 herds of cattle belonging to Mliki Mungula were confiscated and sold.

Other areas from where the livestock were confiscated include Swsagaswaga Forest Reserve (104) but when the owner won the court case he was given only 27 cattle, nine goats and five donkeys.

"In Biharamulo Forest Reserve in Chato District 150 herd of cattle were confiscated from Musa Malale and had been sold while the owner's appeal is

yet to be determined upon.

"80 herd of cattle belonging to Regina Yohana in Chemba district were auctioned while the case was still continuing in Kondoa district court.

"In Meatu district 420 cattle belonging to seven herders had not been returned to them despite the fact that they won the case in Shinyanga zone High Court which ordered their return."

They also claimed that in the Maswa Forest Reserve in Itilima district, despite four herders having won court case in the High Court for Shinyanga Zone, but so far they have been given only 47 out of 339 cattle that were confiscated.

The CCWT leaders also alleged that there had been killings of herders by some of game warders, saying so far

eight herders had been killed.

"In Ruaha Game Reserve in Mbarali district five herders were killed and three killed in Rukwati Forest Reserve," the statement claimed.

They also mentioned another challenge faced by herders - their livestock being eaten by wild animals without being paid compensation whereas in Bunda, Serengeti and Tarime districts more than 3,000 cattle were eaten by wild animals between November 2019 and March 2020.

They said in the budget speech of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism presented in the national Assembly on May 7 showed that a total of 984,768,000/- was allocated to 900 victims as consolation payments but did not specify who were paid the money.

Tanzania keen to strengthen marine transport, House told

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

THE government has said it will strengthen marine transport in the country by enforcing safety measures in all the vessels in efforts to reduce marine accidents in the country, the House heard yesterday.

Other measures include having in place laws, policies, regulations and directives governing marine transport in the country as well as the establishment of ships agency.

This was said yesterday by the Ministry of Works, Transport and Communication in a written response to a question from Special Seats MP, Asha Juma (CCM) who had wanted to know what the government was doing to reduce marine accidents in the country.

The lawmaker had told the National Assembly that marine accidents in Tanzania are on the rise and almost every year. What the government was doing to contain the situation.

In response, the ministry explained that the government had taken several measures to help control the accidents that cost the country dearly. "The government has taken several measures to control and stop marine accidents," said the ministry in a statement.

The ministry mentioned some of the losses as reduced workforce due to deaths and injuries, increased costs of treatment, rescue and insurance services, investigations and court cases as well lack of transport services. Others include loss of property and destruction of environment.

According to the ministry, the government has established various laws, policies, regulations and guidelines to help effectively control marine transport. It has also formed the Tanzania Shipping Agencies Corporation (TASAC) in line with the Shipping Act number 14 of 2017.

At the same time the government has improved training and certification on sailors on ships along the coastal areas of Indian Ocean and great lakes regions. The trainings, according to the ministry are as per International Maritime Organisation (IMO) standards.

It has also improved inspections and certification of ships and agencies and having inspectors in all regions including Mara, Mwanza, Kagera, Geita, Kigoma, Sumbawanga, Ruvuma and Mbeya. The government has also ratified several international agreements that help the country get more trainings and experiences in control of marine accidents as well as safety of maritime vessels.

Pyrethrum farmers guaranteed global markets, despite COVID-19 pandemic

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

PYRETHRUM farmers in the country have been assured of reliable markets for their crops in the Covid-19 pandemic period as the trade on pyrethrum raw materials is still very strong.

Mbeya's crops coordinator from a pyrethrum company (PCT) Michael Bishubo said yesterday on the preparations of pyrethrum farming for this season.

Bishubo said despite the world being shaken by the pandemic the pyrethrum market was still intact because of a great demand in the world.

He said pyrethrum farmers must

not harbor fears about the market reliability because the raw materials are extensively used for making farm pesticides and insecticides for use in homes. He appealed to farmers to ensure they finalise planting of the crop before the end of this month so as to provide ample time to work on the crop while growing.

"In the current season beginning January when we started receiving more rains up to April was the period when we had mobilised our pyrethrum farmers to plant the crop," he said.

He said Tanzania has more than 16,000 pyrethrum farmers, many of who are in Songwe and Mbeya regions.

By Joseph Ngwawi

THE southern Africa energy sector has not been spared by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, with both positive and negative impacts on efforts by the region to address power shortages.

On the positive side, most countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have experienced reductions in demand for electricity during peak hours.

According to the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP), the majority of its member countries have not had to impose demand side management measures such as load shedding during the past few weeks as there has generally been a decline in system load.

"There has been a general decrease in demand recorded by SAPP members due to lockdown measures that were taken by most SADC countries," SAPP said during a teleconference meeting of the SADC Energy Thematic Group (ETG) held on 5 May.

SAPP is a regional body that coordinates the planning, generation, transmission and marketing of electricity on behalf of member state utilities in SADC. It is made up of power utilities from Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The majority of these countries have been on lockdowns since the end of March, a development that has seen them shutting down businesses, closing borders and asking people to stay home as part of measures to contain the spread of the corona virus, which had affected more than 8,800 people in the region as of 8 May, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

According to SAPP, South Africa, which is the largest producer and consumer of electricity in the region, has experienced a 40% decline in peak system load since it embarked on a corona virus nationwide lockdown on 27 March.

South Africa accounts for more

SADC energy sector braces for Covid-19 consequences

than 70% of the installed electricity generation capacity for the 12 SAPP member countries, according to the 2018 SADC Energy Monitor. Being the largest economy in southern Africa, South Africa also consumes the bulk of the power generated in the region.

According to SAPP, Zimbabwe has experienced a reduction of 25% of its system load since the country embarked on a lockdown on 30 March.

Other countries with significant demand reductions are Botswana where the Botswana Power Corporation has experienced a 14% decline in system load, while NamPower of Namibia has reported a decrease of 10% for its load.

A similar situation has been reported for other SADC member states such as Lesotho, Malawi and Zambia.

However, the negative impact of the pandemic are more worrisome, given the long-term implications of the lockdown measures on the ability of the SADC region to achieve energy self-sufficiency.

According to members of the SADC ETG, the lockdowns are likely to significantly delay implementation of both planned projects and those where construction has already commenced.

By their very nature, construction of power plants involve the employment of several hundreds of workers and regular meetings among teams from engineering, construction and procurement firms.

However, with the lockdown directives barring gatherings and calling for social distancing, there is likely to be delays in meeting project timelines and amendment of work schedules, SAPP warned.

The same is expected for environmental and social impact assessments, which are one of the requirements before construction of a power plant commences.

As a result of the lockdowns, most environmental site visits and

geotechnical investigations have been shelved until further notice and project teams have resorted to increased use of desk-top studies and information.

SAPP is coordinating a number of power generation and transmission projects across the region and one of these is the Mozambique-Malawi Transmission Project for which tendering is in the process and construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.

This is one of several transmission projects expected to connect Malawi to the regional power grid, a development that would leave Angola and the United Republic of Tanzania as the only SAPP member countries whose power systems are not linked to the rest of the pool.

There are fears that the worst-case scenario is that funding partners could invoke force majeure clauses in contracts already signed should the coronavirus pandemic and the accompanying restrictions continue.

Force majeure is a common clause in contracts that essentially frees both parties from liability or obligation when an extraordinary event or circumstance beyond the control of the parties prevents one or both parties from fulfilling their obligations under the contract.

Such clauses are invoked in the event of a war breaking out, a long-running industrial strike, riot, crime or epidemic.

Other ETG members said they have been affected by the lockdowns, with the Regional Electricity Regulators Association of Southern Africa (RERA) saying it is conducting an assessment of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on its members.

The 14-member RERA comprises the electricity and energy regulators from Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



Tanzania Shipping Agencies Corporation director general Emmanuel Ndomba (R) presents to Tanga regional commissioner Martine Shigella (C) items worth 70m/- donated in collaboration with Marine Parks and Reserves Tanzania to help in an environmental cleanliness operation. Photo: Correspondent Oscar Kasimiri

Mbarali rice millers fault shortage of raw materials

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbarali

RICE mills owners in Mbarali District, Mbeya region have said the quantity of rice produced by farmers in the district does not satisfy the their factories' needs to be able to operate throughout the year.

The chairman of the district's Rice Millers Association, Venance Mgeni, said any kind of factory needs to be certain of the availability of raw materials, but rice mills in Mbarali district depend on the raw materials from small farmers who do not produce much.

Mgeni appealed to the government to conduct a census to identify which farms remain idle in order to give them to mills owners so that they also participate in rice farming for their mills.

He said due to the shortage of raw materials many rice mills operate seasonally, the situation that makes their operation problematic including denying people reliable employment.

Mbarali district commissioner Reuben Mfuno, said last season's rice harvests were not good due to short rains even though total acreage under

rice cultivation exceeded the district's targets.

He said the district had estimated to harvest 555,720 tonnes of rice from 125,388 hectares but this target was not realised due to little rainfall.

He said some of the farms in the district rely on irrigation but due to the inadequate rains affected rivers and therefore we had no enough water for irrigation.

The DC appealed to owners of the rice mills to unite in addressing the challenges facing them and the government will continue to support them.



It's watermelons aplenty on open sale at Dar es Salaam's Temeke Veterinary market yesterday, the going retail price ranging between 800/- and 1,000/- per piece - largely depending on size. Sources said that was considerably low, largely dictated by abundance. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

Lack of education cited among reasons for rampant illegal fishing in Tanzania

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

MINISTRY of Livestock and Fisheries has cited lack of education and proper knowledge as one of the reasons why Tanzanian fishermen still engage in illegal fishing.

Responding to a written question by the Special Seats MP, Aida Khenan (Chadema) who had wanted to know if the government was aware why illegal fishing exists in the country asking: "Does the government know why many fishermen engage in illegal fishing despite the efforts to end the menace?" the ministry explained that most fishermen do not understand effects of illegal fishing and use of illegal fishing gear. At the same time, personal behaviour also leads to this without them knowing health and environmental effects of illegal fishing.

The ministry added that the government will continue providing public education on effects of illegal fishing among fishermen in the country, adding that such education has been provided through different forms like radio, television, seminars and other events like Nanenane and

World Food Day.

According to the ministry, the government conducted 19 radio programmes, 34 television programmes and several other newspaper articles concerning fishing, environment conservation, among others.

During that period, a total of 43,104 were educated on illegal fishing and improved fishing. At the same time the ministry conducted surveillance in efforts to control illegal fishing, various fishing gear used in illegal fishing.

The ministry said the inspection led to confiscation of 808 illegal fishing equipment and other 149,071 metres of nets, among others.



Does the government know why many fishermen engage in illegal fishing despite the efforts to end the menace?

Police kill four 'bandits' in Malagarasi exchange of fire

By Guardian Correspondent, Kigoma

POLICE in Kigoma Region have killed four suspected bandits after an exchange of fire in Kanpe area, Mvugwe village near Malagarasi area in Kasulu District, Kigoma Region.

Speaking to reporters in his office Kigoma Regional Police Commander Martini Otieno said the incident

happened at 6.00 in the morning following a tip from good citizens that said there were 8 bandits who were planning abduction along Kasulu-Kibondo road.

Otieno said: "Fortunately our officers were well prepared and when they reached the area, the bandits discovered their presence and started firing and the police responded in kind.

He said during the fight four bandits were killed on the spot but the rest, about four or five fled.

He said they also managed to recover one firearm, an AK 77 rifle with 13 bullets in the magazine and 40 others in a bag, two machetes and a spear.

RPC Otieno said in another incident on May 8 this year four people were

arrested at Shayo area in Kasulu District in possession of an AK 47 rifle with registration number (S/N TX871019960).

He named the arrested as Yolamu Hamisi, Aberi Ngoma, an elderly woman identifies as Alesi Yolamu (63) and another woman - Asha Hamisi.

He said they were found with the firearm and 49 bullets with two

magazines one of with 30 bullets and another with 19.

He said one Ally Hamisi, the son of the elderly lady is sought after by the police allegedly for being a hardcore bandit whom the police had been looking for for a long time and is the one who had brought the weapon and hid it in his mother's house who despite knowing its existence never reported to

the police."

He appealed to all citizens that whenever they see Ally, popularly known as Pima to report at any police station in the country.

In another incident, Otieno said three people have been arrested over possession of elephant tusks at Nyaryoba village in Kibondo District, but declined to reveal their names.



Ruvuma regional commissioner Christina Mndeme (R) presents a motor vehicle ignition key to division officer Blanca Luambano (L) at a ceremony held in Songea District yesterday. The vehicle was meant for official use. Photo: Gideon Mwakanosya

By Special Correspondent, Nairobi

Over 1 million affected by flooding in eastern Africa

AT least 1.3 million people in eastern Africa have been affected by flooding caused by heavy rains since March, the UN humanitarian agency has said.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the figure includes at least 481,000 displaced in countries including Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya.

"With water levels rising in multiple locations across the region, rivers have burst their banks and lakes have overflowed," OCHA said in its latest update on flooding.

Heavy rainfall has intensified across large swathes of Eastern Africa in recent weeks, causing deaths, displacement, flooding, landslides and damage to homes, infrastructure and livelihoods.

Many weather stations have recorded their highest amount of rainfall in about 40 years, according to regional bloc, the Inter-Governmental

Authority on Development (IGAD).

In Uganda, Lake Victoria's water levels are the highest recorded since 1964, according to authorities, causing displacement of communities close to the shoreline and creating challenges for the country's hydropower infrastructure.

In Burundi, it said, the Rusizi River burst its banks for the second time in two weeks on April 30, affecting tens of thousands of people.

"In Somalia, torrential rains and riverine floods have inundated at least 27 districts, with Belet Weyne in Hiran region worst-hit," OCHA said.

In western Kenya, at least seven rivers had caused displacement, while in Rwanda, intensified storms since May 1 have killed at least 70 people and

severely impacted seven districts.

According to OCHA, a landslide in Tanzania washed away 50 houses in Arusha on April 20.

The recent heavy rains come on the back of an above-average "short rains" season in the region.

"Beyond their immediate impact on families and communities, the heavy rains in the region have provided conditions conducive to the further breeding of desert locusts," said the UN agency.

It noted that although control operations have reduced locust populations, another generation of breeding is underway, with new hopper bands and swarms expected to form in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia during May and June.



WAJIBU - INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

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TENDER NO. WAJIBU/2020/G/03 FOR SUPPLY OF MOTOR VEHICLE

Invitation for Tenders

Date: 13/5/2020

1. WAJIBU - Institute of Public Accountability has set aside funds for the operation of the Institute during the financial year 2020. It is intending that part of the proceeds of the fund will be used to cover eligible payment under the contract for which this invitation for tender is issued.
2. WAJIBU - Institute of Public Accountability now invites sealed tenders from eligible Suppliers of an office motor vehicle.
3. Tendering will be conducted through the National Competitive method procedures specified in the WAJIBU Procurement Procedures and is open to all Tenderers as defined in the Procedures.
4. Interested eligible Tenderers may obtain further information from and inspect the Tendering Documents at the office of WAJIBU - Institute of Public Accountability, Ruhinde Road, Kumbukumbu Street, House No. 20, Block 41 Kinondoni, Dar es Salaam. P.O. Box 13486, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania | Tel: +255 22 266 6916 from 0800hrs - 1600hrs on Mondays to Fridays inclusive except on public holidays.
5. A complete set of Tendering Document(s) in English and additional sets may be purchased by interested Tenderers on the submission of a written application to the address given under paragraph 4 above and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of TZS. 100,000.00 (TZS One hundred thousand only). Payment should be by either Cash, Banker's Draft, or Banker's Cheque, payable to Executive Director, WAJIBU - Institute of Public Accountability.
6. All tenders must be accompanied by a Tender Security Declaration in the format provided in the Tendering Documents.
7. All tenders in one original plus one copy properly filled in, and enclosed in plain envelopes must be delivered to the address as indicated on paragraph 4 above at or before 28th May at 1000hrs. Tenders will be opened promptly thereafter in public and in the presence of Tenderers' representatives who choose to attend in the opening of the tenders at the office of WAJIBU as indicated on paragraph 4.
8. Late Tenders, Portion of Tenders, Electronic Tenders, Tenders not received, Tenders not opened and not read out in public at the tender opening ceremony shall not be accepted for evaluation irrespective of the circumstances.

Executive Director
WAJIBU - INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Experts push for more studies on better silage seed varieties

By Correspondent Valentine Oforo,

Dodoma

TANZANIA'S livestock sector is crippled with a number of challenges including inadequate researched and certified pasture seed varieties.

Experts observed that availability and proper uses of forages is a critical factor to propel for smooth transformation of the key sub-sector, a situation which according to them, is still not the case in the country.

Dr Jonas Kizima, Acting Manager (Technology Transfer Division) at the Tanzania Livestock Research Institute (TALIRI) said in an interview: "It's high time for stakeholders from the private sector to band with the government to jointly invest largely in supporting and financing silage seed varieties researches."

As part of preliminary efforts to improve the situation, he informed that, TALIRI has already researched and innovated some few useful fodder seeds, which are currently available and marketed at the institute's centers within the country.

He named the forage seeds varieties and their relevant prices in brackets as Medicago Sativa (50,000/-), Leucaena Leucocephala (20,000/-) and Canavalia Ensiformis, sold at a cost of 20,000/-.

"The varieties contain potential nutrients for livestock in terms of cattle fattening as well as milk production. They are also rich in protein and biomass," he expressed.

He said the institute was in a crucial exercise of gathering varied fodder samples from at least 20 different regions within the country with an eye to conduct thorough researches for getting best seed varieties.

Dr Kizima said: "After completing the exercise we will forward the seeds to the Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI) for approval before they are released into the market".

He however noted that there was a serious shortage of enough funds for researches calling for more financial

support from both private and public sector.

Dr Kizima underscored the need for public awareness campaign among livestock keepers on the importance of using certified silages to feed their cattle.

Importing fodder seeds is expensive costing up to \$ 40 per kilogramme, he said.

In a general quest to advance performance of the sector, the Tanzania Agriculture Research Institute (TARI) in its Hombolo center has launched Advanced Yield Trials (AYT) and Farmer's Assessment Trials (FAT) projects on different forage sorghum and pile millet varieties.

According to the center's Senior Plant Breeder Dr Lameck Nyaligwa the initiative targets to increase performance of the country's beef and dairy sectors as well as boosting incomes among livestock keepers and farmers.

Some of seed varieties for forage sorghum and pile millet currently under the Advanced Yield Trials (AYT)'s plantations at the state-owned center in Hombolo, Dodoma region are Sugar-Grace, Mega-Sweet, BMR Rocket and Jumbo-Gold.

"These varieties are very potential for livestock silages as they contain much needed nutrients for cattle, especially in increasing livestock health (market weight) and with at least 25 per cent capacity of increasing milk production," he expressed.



The varieties contain potential nutrients for livestock in terms of cattle fattening as well as milk production. They are also rich in protein and biomass



China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation site surveyors and other workers in business on Dar es Salaam's Sam Nujoma Road, as captured yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

Waive taxes, levies charged on retired public servants' businesses, govt urged

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

THE Lupembe Member of Parliament, Joram Hongoli (CCM) has called on the government to waive taxes and levies charged on businesses owned by retired public servants.

In a written question to the ministry

of Finance and Planning, the lawmaker told the parliament that most retired public servants start small business and farming activities as a way of getting income and deserve to be exempted from taxes and others levies.

"It would be prudent if the government will waive taxes on

businesses whose capital does not exceed Sh 4,000,000 per year and owned by the retired public servants," he said.

In response, the ministry said section 4 of the Income Tax Act Cap 332 provides income tax exemption to all business people whose gross income

does not exceed Sh 4,000,000 per year.

"Small business with net worth of not more Sh 4,000,000 per year are exempted from income tax, therefore retired who have established small businesses and agricultural activities are not charged in accordance with the law," said the ministry.



Mary Kilimba (L) and Veronica Peter, officials with a Singida-based NGO known as Sustainable Environment Management Action (SEMA), pictured in the municipality yesterday displaying a poster bearing a message on ways to check the spread of Covid-19. Photo: Correspondent Dotto Mwaibale

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

POLICE in Arusha region in collaboration with Lake Zone anti-poaching unit have arrested two people and seized one firearm—AK47 allegedly being used in poaching.

Arusha Regional Police Commander, Jonathan Shana said that the firearm with 12 ammunitions was seized on Sunday at around 1pm in Enguserosambu village of Ngorongoro District.

During the operation, Shana said the team arrested two Tanzanians, and two Kenyan suspects who managed to escape. RPC Shana said the firearm was

Arusha Region police hold two suspected poachers, AK47 allegedly used in poaching

found after the anti-poaching unit was tipped off by good Samaritans on four people who were getting prepared to get into the game reserve for poaching.

"After a close follow up, we managed to arrest two of them who are all Tanzanians," RPC Shana said.

According to Shana, names of the

suspects are withheld for further investigation. He said: "During this difficult time when the world is grappling with Coronavirus, there are unscrupulous people who use this pandemic to commit crimes including killing wild animals."

He called on the public to continue

working hand in hand with the security agencies such as police force to fight poaching which is a thorn to the country's tourism.

Conservationists have reported an increase in illegal bushmeat hunting fearing organised poaching of rhino horn and ivory could be next.

The Covid-19 epidemic could lead to a surge in wildlife poaching as the tourism industry that has long sustained conservation programmes across Africa collapses, conservationists have warned.

Restrictions on international travel have already fuelled a jump in illegal

hunting for bush meat as a catastrophic fall in revenue forces government wildlife agencies and NGOs to scale back anti-poaching operations.

Fears are growing that organised crime syndicates involved in the ivory and rhino horn smuggling could also take advantage of the chaos.

New platform to connect top talent with employers

By Guardian Reporter

A NEW recruitment platform has been launched to link top engineering talents in Tanzania with employers.

A statement released yesterday by the firm that runs the outsourcing programme—Smart Codes—said it aims at supporting corporates to build topnotch engineering teams and provide support through the collective experience.

Dubbed Smart Lab Talent, it brings together professionals who have been recruited to answer specific objectives of respective employers. They will be working under the Smart Lab umbrella and delivering exclusively for that particular employer.

"It's hard to hire developers; so, we help companies to achieve it by bridging barriers around hiring, identifying top talent that fits specific role, considering the employee lifecycle, and building successful teams," said Edwin Bruno, founder and CEO of Smart Codes.

He added that the candidates will go through thorough scrutiny, screening and training to make sure that they provide employers with top notch engineering and technological solutions that are crucial in today's demanding world.

"Every company has their visions and how to go about fulfilling them, but everyone will agree that the most

investment a business can make is the people they employ. Do they have appropriate qualifications? Are they career-driven and growth oriented? Are they reliable, trustworthy and loyal? Going about getting the right employees especially in this tech-driven world can be quite a challenge and take some time. That is why we created the platform," added the CEO.

As opposed to regular recruitment agencies that receive CVs from employment hopefuls from different industries and hire successful candidates after interviews, Bruno argued that the programme goes further by going for professionals with qualifications, experience and knowledge.

"We have so far had great success with providing our partner, Vodacom Tanzania PLC, with a team of young, driven, energetic and ambitious Developers, UX/UI experts and copywriters who have all proven to be a great addition to our team. We are looking forward to receiving more submissions and eventually map out Tanzania as one of the technological hubs in Africa and the world in general," said Bruno.

The founder added that Smart Lab is an innovation platform that links learning institutions and startups with corporate partners to empower groundbreaking solutions that will impact communities.

Institute out to prioritise agri-financing to bolster the production of crops

By Correspondent James Kandoya

TANZANIA Institute of Bankers (TIOB) has vowed to increase participation of stakeholders in agri-financing to boost agricultural production in the country, taking into account that the sector employs millions of people across the country.

The TIOB Registrar, Saad Banzi made the pledge when presenting a paper on "TIOB Agricultural Finance Capacity Building Initiatives in partnership with USAID -Engine Building Sustainable Financing" in Dodoma recently.

He said that the only way to reach large number of players in the agriculture value chain is through improving access to credit through capacity building of financial service providers (FSPs). "This will also go in line with doing more research initiatives to understand and reduce barriers to access to finance," Banzi said in his presentation at the 6th Annual Agriculture Policy Conference (AAPC).

According to the registrar, currently banks lend a small share of their loan portfolio to the Agriculture sector.

Banzi noted that it was estimated that total agri-lending in Tanzania makes up less than 10 percent of the total loan book of the banking sector, hence making farmers unable to scale up crop production and sometimes fail to expand their fields.

"There are a number of challenges and factors concerning growth of the Agricultural Sector but TIOB has chosen to focus on "capacity" and leverage its core mandate as a professional training institution to contribute meaningfully and effectively to ongoing efforts," he said.

"TIOB will engage its immediate stakeholders and identify other relevant stakeholders in order to develop a specialized Certification for Bankers and Lenders in the Agriculture sector this year," he added

Banzi said crop insurance will be the next focus area for TIOB this year. Capacity building programmes in crop insurance will be developed in collaboration with various partners in the sector.

He described that for many African economies including Tanzania growth has occurred outside of agriculture.

It was estimated that less than 3 percent of total bank lending in Africa goes to a sector that accounts for about 70 percent of all employment and over 40 percent of the GDP.

For his part, the Political Adviser Prof David Nyange said private lending to agriculture seems to decline with decrease in public investment in agriculture

He said Secured Transactions Reform (STR) was critical to unleashing formal financial resources to SMEs adding that it involves establishment of the legal framework to allow use of moveable property as collateral.

According to her, traditionally banks require borrowers to pledge immovable assets such as land or real estate to serve as security or collateral.

Prof Nyange said research has shown inclusive growth in Africa can only be achieved when there is increased public and private investments in agriculture.



TIOB will engage its immediate stakeholders and identify other relevant stakeholders in order to develop a specialized Certification for Bankers and Lenders in the Agriculture sector this year



Blacksmith Saidi Mwandike makes a poultry feeding container at his small factory near Dar es Salaam's Temeke Veterinary market yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

Itigi Town Council spends over 328m/- on fencing of schools and health centres

By Guardian Correspondent, Itigi

ITIGI Town Council in Singida Region received a total of 328,789,14 from the central government for the implementation of citizens' oriented projects for the Financial Year 2019/2020.

The town's executive director John Mgalula said out of the amount 282,770,099.14 was spent for the completion of the fencing work for

primary school buildings and health centres.

Mgalula cited challenges faced during the implementation of the projects as long distances from the council headquarters to the villages hence making projects follow-ups difficult.

Another challenge was the delay or non-receipt of projects funds from the central government which has affected smooth

implementation of the council's development projects since the council collects inadequate revenue due to few sources thereof.

He said another challenge is the inadequacy of transport that has adversely affected service delivery to rural areas.

Speaking on the strategies they have put in place, Mgalula said these include mobilising people in the implementation of development

projects and close supervision thereof.

Others is to ensure all projects funds are spent for the purposes intended while insisting on value for money approach in accordance with 2015 Law on Budget that requires councils to have priorities when planning their budget expenditure.

He said during the financial year the council received a total of 452,154,758.72 equivalent to 100 percent of its needs.



Trucks moving from Tanzania to Zambia, most of them with cargo, stranded at the Tunduma (Tanzania) border post in Songwe Region yesterday after Zambia closed its side of the territorial boundary. Photo: Correspondent Manuel Kaminyonge

By Janene Pieters

Netherlands govt urged to give billion Euros aid to support African nations

THE Netherlands must make 1 billion Euros in aid available to combat the coronavirus and the crisis around it in developing countries in Africa, among others, the Dutch government's advisory council on international affairs AIV said in advice to the government on Monday.

The coronavirus is causing unprecedented problems throughout the world, and especially in poorer, vulnerable countries, the AIV said. The Netherlands and the European Union can and must play a leading role in the fight against this crisis, to ensure

that the virus is eradicated as soon as possible.

If the Netherlands and Europe do not take this responsibility, there will be geopolitical consequences, the AIV warned. "Covid-19 is the first global crisis without American leadership and it intensifies the US-China rivalry," the council said. "If the EU claims a geopolitical role, now is the time to live up to it."

The Netherlands being generous on this front is "well-understood self-interest", according to the AIV. As a trading country, the Netherlands benefits from a well-functioning global economy. The coronavirus could also trigger significant refugee flows to the Netherlands if it hits developing countries hard, the council pointed out.

"The AIV recommends that an amount of 1 billion euros be made available for alleviating the most acute needs," the council said. The money must come from general resources, not from ongoing budgets for development aid. The AIV also strongly advises against budget cuts to development aid, even now that the Dutch economy is facing recession.

Domestic and regional tourism key to post-Covid-19 recovery in Africa

NAIROBI

DEVELOPING domestic and regional tourism is the best strategy that would make African continent a single destination, taking into account of the rich tourist attractions within the continent, according to Africa's travel and tourism industry power players.

Kenyan minister for Tourism and Wildlife, Najib Balala said late last week that domestic and regional tourism was the key and best approach that would bring the African tourism to immediate recovery from COVID-19 pandemic effects.

Speaking during the tourism and hospitality industry stakeholders' webinar in Kenya, Mr. Balala said that development of domestic and regional tourism in Africa will lay out the ground-work for the sector's recovery.

He singled out domestic and regional tourism as key to Africa's future in tourism development.

"The international market will take a while to recover and we should therefore bank on the domestic and regional travelers. However, affordability and accessibility will play a vital role in this", he noted.

Balala's sentiments were supported by Damian Cook, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of E-Tourism Frontiers, and a leading international tourism consultant.

"We need to take stock of Kenyan products, see what is going to work during recovery and capitalize on them", Cook said.

The webinar, under the banner "Leap Forward" had brought together over 500 stakeholders to listen and interact with six local and international tourism experts who made compelling presentations on the way forward for Kenyan tourism.

Key panelists and tourism experts other than Damian Cook were Chad Shiver, Destination Marketing Head for Africa and Trip Advisor and Alexandra Blanchard the Destination Sales Manager for EMEA and Trip Advisor.

Other experts were Ninan Chacko, the Senior Advisor, McKinsey and

Company, Hugo Espirito Santos, Partner, McKinsey and Company, Karim Wissanji, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Elewana Group, Maggie Ireri, CEO, TIFA Research Limited and Joanne Mwangi-Yelbert, Chief Executive Officer, PMS Group.

Data presented by TripAdvisor's Destination Marketing Head for Africa indicated that in terms of recovery, Africa leads in the number of respondents of which 97 percent were ready to take short domestic trips within six months of the end of COVID-19.

The data also indicated that most travelers were seeking road trips and beach experiences, because of concerns about boarding planes and the need to unwind, respectively, post-COVID-19.

This data further supported Mr. Balala's call for a focus on domestic and regional tourism. Ninan Chacko of McKinsey, called for re-imagination and reform of Kenya's tourism to have a more diversified tourism product that offers options and more value to travelers.

He gave the example of Tourism Australia and said that in tandem with the focus on domestic and regional tourism, Kenya could position itself as the hub for East African tourism given its national airline's network and resilience and its developed tourism infrastructure.

Kenya Airways is the leading carrier in East and Central Africa with connections to key cities in the whole of Africa. It connects mostly West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean tourist Islands of Zanzibar and the Seychelles.

Hugo Espirito-Santos, of McKinsey further noted that one of the ways to re-imagine and reform the tourism product would be by focusing on experiential tourism in which tourists could be offered a better experience by reducing density in tourism sites such as the Maasai Mara and laying out strategies that take into consideration geography, consumer segments and culture and food experiences.

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Reforestation, afforestation efforts critical in maintaining forest cover

FOREST cover in general refers to the relative land area that is covered by forests or the forest canopy or open woodland. Forest cover is one category of terrestrial land cover. Land cover is the observed physical features, both natural and manmade, that occupy the earth's immediate surface.

Global forest cover, however crucial for soil health, the water cycle, climate and air quality it is, is severely threatened by deforestation everywhere, as a direct consequence of agriculture, logging, and mining. Forest cover can be increased by reforestation and afforestation efforts, but loss of old-growth forests is irreversible in terms of its ecological services.

Since the onset of agriculture about 12,000 years ago, the number of trees worldwide has dropped by 46 per cent, according to one research published in 2018.

It is against this background that forestry experts from East African region met in Dar es Salaam last year to develop the region's capability to monitor changes in forest cover and land use.

The six-day remote sensing survey workshop for east african countries was organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as part of the ongoing global forest resources assessment 2020 (FRA 2020).

The workshop developed regional capacities in the utilisation of the participatory FRA 2020 remote sensing methodology. Participants were also trained in visual image interpretation, and each of them collected data for at least 250 remote sensing survey samples within their territories.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Valeria Contessa, Geospatial specialist at FAO, said, "The recent rapid development of affordable cloud-based solutions for storing, accessing and analyzing remote sensing data and products have drastically facilitated remote sensing based assessments

even in developing countries with low technical capacity and computing infrastructure".

"It also comes at a time when these solutions can play an important role in improving the national, regional and global data bases on forest and land resources as well as their changes and facilitate monitoring progress towards several SDGs," Valeria added.

The data collection will be carried out using Collect Earth Online tool developed in collaboration with NASA and Google and tailored for FRA 2020 remote sensing survey purposes.

The Global Forest Resources Assessment FRA 2020 Remote Sensing Survey Workshop for East African countries was one of the approximately 30 workshops organised by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in collaboration with its partners, which will train, in total, about 600 country experts in remote sensing and visual interpretation of satellite imagery.

FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment is a country driven process of collection and analysis of official national statistics on forest resources for all the countries and territories of the world.

The FRA data are gathered through a global network of officially nominated national correspondents.

Combining their knowledge of forest resources in their countries with data from remote sensing and other sources, allows FAO to provide a global dataset of information on over sixty variables covering all aspects of sustainable forest management. This information can be used to draw up recommendations for governments, civil society and the private sector.

FAO conducts the global remote sensing survey to enhance countries capacity to use the latest technology in their own assessments as well as to generate independent, robust and consistent regional and global estimates of forest area and its changes over time.



Of pandemic, solidarity and cooperation

By Zhou Pingjian

ECHAR Christopher Sunday, 43, has been living in Guangdong province as a businessman for a decade. In March, he applied to become a volunteer, after local authorities called on residents, including foreigners, to help with the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic. He lives in Zhanjiang, a city 450 kilometers away from Guangzhou, the provincial capital. After his wife was approved as a volunteer, she helped Echar submit his application to the local foreign affairs authority. "My Chinese wife helped me a lot to become a volunteer," he said.

Zhanjiang has more than 1,900 foreign residents. Echar, among the first group of 46 volunteers involved in foreign affairs management in the city during the pandemic, said the volunteers can communicate in English, Japanese, Korean, French and Spanish. "The life here is easy, nice, less traffic and peaceful," he said, adding that volunteering was a way to help contribute to building a cross-cultural society. In Zhanjiang, Echar exports Chinese goods including daily necessities and electrical products to Africa. He and his wife, who married in 2009, have two sons. "Zhanjiang is more like my second home. I am grateful that I had a chance to do something for the city," he said.

After days of online and offline training, Echar was given the job of raising awareness of ways to control COVID-19, including distributing brochures at the Zhanjiang airport and helping to take the temperature of passengers arriving in the city. "Some foreigners did not realize the importance of taking a nucleic acid test for the virus," he said. "In the fight against the disease, we should work together, no matter where we are from."

Echar and his wife visited local communities, helping people from African countries to be more aware of regulations, policies and measures taken by the health authorities during the pandemic. "I am grateful to be trusted by African brothers and sisters. They open up about their life here and challenges. And I hope I'll be of help to them," he said. "More communication would help foreigners know more about Chinese culture. Moreover, it would help us to be more aware of prevention and control of the disease."

On April 27, Echar wrote a letter to the city's foreign affairs authority in appreciation for being given a chance to volunteer in the fight against COVID-19. And, local officials invited Echar, his family and 35 foreign teachers and students on a tour of some scenic spots in Zhanjiang during the May Day holiday to show their appreciation for their contributions, according to China Daily.



Dr Zhou Pingjian

I had the privilege to receive a copy of Echar's letter on April 28. A hand-written one, emanating understanding, solidarity and cooperation. I wish one day I could have the honour and pleasure to meet Echar, his Chinese wife and two sons, in Nigeria or in China. The number of families like Echar's in Guangdong are in hundreds, I know. And I know there are many more excellent Nigerian goodwill ambassadors like Echar in China.

I would be remiss if I here don't acknowledge Ambassador Baba Ahmed Jidda. He finally returned to Beijing on April 8, after having spent 14 days in quarantine in Taiyuan, the capital city of Shanxi province which is 500 kilometers away from Beijing. At that time, the international flight to Beijing he was onboard like many others were required to divert to other cities for landing. All the inconveniences for an ambassador during 14-day quarantine outside Beijing could be imagined. "We have to abide by regulations for everyone's sake," the Nigerian Ambassador to China assured his hosts in plain words. Senior officials saw him off at the railway station to express their sincere appreciation and

gratitude. I reached Ambassador Jidda for that, thanking him from the bottom of my heart.

As one of the countries hit by the first wave in the pandemic, China was the first to bring COVID-19 under control. There must be something worth looking at. China has taken the most comprehensive, stringent and thorough measures to fight the virus. It works, albeit at huge cost. Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province and then the epicenter of the epidemic, ended the lockdown on April 8 after being closed for 76 days from January 23.

On April 26, Wuhan city had no remaining cases in hospital. On May 2, Hubei province lowered its public health emergency response level. On May 6, about 57,800 students in their final year from 121 high and vocational schools returned to campus. Now Wuhan is working hard on prevention and control on a regular basis and is promoting work and school resumption to let the society return to normal as soon as possible. Remarkable achievement, indeed.

During the lockdown however, the city's public transport operations were totally suspended and all contacts

between the epicenter and the rest of the country were blocked off. Everyone in Wuhan, Chinese or foreigner, in response to the government's call, staying indoors and sacrificing normal lives in order to contain the spread of the virus, have borne the biggest burden and paid the biggest price.

Of more than 3,000 African students in Hubei province and the city of Wuhan at the most difficult time, only one was infected and then quickly cured. The rest have all been safe and sound. 79 Nigerians (65 adults and 14 dependants), including 50 students, were then in Wuhan. No one got infected and I heard no complaints from them. Their full cooperation on the implementation of the most stringent measures to fight COVID-19 outbreak is highly appreciated. As one Nigerian student said, "We are foreigners, not strangers." We are deeply touched by their understanding, solidarity and cooperation.

What happened in Guangdong recently is a similar story like Wuhan, in essence. All the measures taken there aim to fight against the COVID-19, not against any Nigerian, any African, or any foreign national. Between April 5 and 23, altogether 138,700 residents in Guangzhou, including 5503 African nationals (3.97%), have been tested. Among them, 185 tested positive with 164 (88.5%) asymptomatic cases. Their understanding, cooperation and sacrifice has made every resident there safer. Since April 12, the Foreign Affairs Office of Guangzhou has been daily briefing Nigeria's Consulate-General by note on the numbers of confirmed cases, test result positive cases, and close contacts, as far as Nigerian nationals are concerned.

As for the issues raised regarding the situation of Nigerians in Guangdong involved in local outbreak response, the Guangdong authorities attach great importance to Nigeria's concerns and work promptly to improve their working method. As far as I know, there is not a single complaint case outstanding from Nigerians in Guangdong at the moment. As of May 7, altogether 26 complaints were registered and resolved immediately. I've reviewed the 26 specific cases one by one. It is my assessment that all of them were caused by a lack of communication or misunderstanding. We thank all Nigerian brothers and sisters in China for bearing with us in such a trying time no one ever expected or wanted.

All foreign nationals are treated equally in China. We reject any differential treatment, and we have zero tolerance for discrimination. Nothing whatsoever is changed in China's policy of friendship towards Africa. China cherishes her strategic partnership with Nigeria.

Dr Pingjian is Ambassador of China to Nigeria

Yes, environmental pollution concerns whole of humankind

ENVIRONMENTAL pollution is one of the most serious problems facing humanity and other life forms on our planet today. Environmental pollution is defined as the contamination of the physical and biological components of the earth/atmosphere system to such an extent that normal environmental processes are adversely affected. Pollutants can be naturally occurring substances or energies, but they are considered contaminants when in excess of natural levels. Any use of natural resources at a rate higher than nature's capacity to restore itself can result in pollution of air, water, and land.

Environmental pollution is one of the most serious global challenges.

Environmental pollution represents an obstacle to the economical exploitation of coal deposits. In industrialized countries, the rules for protection of the environment are stricter than in developing countries.

Thus, to get a license to open mines involves lengthy procedures which in turn cause delay. Indian authorities have also started to put stringent conditions in place regarding environmental pollution. Consequently, ecological

problems can be totally prevented, but such measures are costly.

Some environmental consequences of mining and processing coal deposits are deforestation, land damage, water pollution and hydrological damage, air pollution, noise pollution, ground vibration and rock dispersal, and visual impact.

Such environmental impacts are increasing day by day because the scale of individual mining operations is increasing as mining of lower grade deposits increases. The current trend toward surface mining, and mine mechanization, is also aggravating such problems.

Environmental pollution is the unfavorable alteration of our surroundings, wholly or largely as a byproduct of man's actions, through direct or indirect effects of the changes in the energy pattern, radiation levels, and chemical and physical constitution and abundance of organisms.

Environmental pollution is a global problem and is common to both developed as well as developing countries, which attracts the attention of human beings for its severe long-term consequences.

Tour by Agriculture ministry PS in Kigoma inspires workers, researchers

By Gerald Kitabu

THE newly appointed Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture Gerald Musabila Kusaya has directed Tanzania Agriculture Research Institute (TARI) to double efforts of research and production of improved seeds of oil palm variety- TENERA from the current target of five million to ten million per year.

He has also directed TARI to conduct more research and production within a very shortest period of time to meet the target and needs of the farmers across the country.

The Permanent Secretary issued the directive recently in Kigoma during a working visit in the region to inspect progress on the research and production of improved seeds of oil palm variety- TENERA being carried out at TARI-Kihinga centre located at the outskirts of Kigoma town.

During the visit, the Permanent Secretary paid courtesy visit to Kigoma regional office where he introduced himself to the regional leaders and discussed various issues concerning agricultural development in the region.

Kigoma regional authorities are working with Tanzania Agriculture Research Institute to implement the Prime Minister's directive of ensuring revamping of the oil palm in the region.

So far TARI has produced two million improved seeds of oil palm variety- TENERA at TARI Kihinga Centre which have been disseminated to the district councils for multiplication for the oil palm farmers in Kigoma region where they were first piloted, and other parts of the country.

"This 5th phase government wants things to move faster than before. I urge you to surpass your target of producing five million improved seeds of TENERA to ten million seeds. My Ministry will give you every material support you would need to accomplish this work," he said.

He said the country needed self-sufficient in terms of edible oil adding that oil palm is one of the crop that will contribute significantly to attain this national goal.

Kigoma will remain the region where the task of research and production of the improved seeds of Palm Oil has been very successful. Now it is high time TARI should double the efforts to produce more seeds that will cater farmers' need across the country.

"You must know that the ministry of agriculture through TARI has a hard work ahead of ensuring the nation becomes self-sufficient in terms of edible oil production. We have been given the task of improving Oil Palm crop not only in Kigoma but across the country. Therefore, it is better we work around the clock and double production to ten or fifteen million per year, he said.

He congratulated TARI Kihinga for outstanding performance in research and production of TENERA seeds



Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture Gerald Musabila Kusaya admiring oil palm production at TARI Kihinga in Kigoma during his working visit in the region. Photo by correspondent Gerald Kitabu

but said more efforts are needed to completely abandon Dura oil palm variety which has low yielding potential in old farms.

"I congratulate you for doing a great job. This research work needs hard work and seriousness. I now want you to work hard to surpass your target," he said.

New hope for researchers and research institutions in the country

At TARI-Kihinga centre, the Permanent Secretary raised new hope for researchers. He promised researchers that the ministry of agriculture under his leadership has put in place plans and strategies that would ensure all researchers go for advanced short and long term courses at different colleges and universities in the country.

"I want all of you to go back to school for further education, to acquire knowledge and skills to improve your performance. From today onward, I will take all opportunities for further education to you through the Tanzania Agriculture Research Institute. I don't want you to let me down," he said.

However, he made clear that he would support researchers who build a culture of working hard, with

integrity and who adhere to the Ministry's directives and guiding principles.

"I believe that some of you are aspiring to get advanced education specifically university level. Some want to go for undergraduate degree, Master degree, PhD, etc. when one goes for further education, he or she improves performance and I am ready to support them for better performance in your respective fields," he said.

He promised to increase the budget allocation for research work and renovate research institutions, equipment and other working facilities by increasing allocation of financial resources so that they can be able to perform the research activities and produce desired fruits.

"I have heard that there are only

thirteen workers including researchers at this TARI Kihinga research centre. Although you are few in number make sure that you work hard to meet deadline, everyone on his or her position must work hard and this is one of the qualification for you to go back to school for further studies. All of you will go for further studies regardless of your position and age," he said.

Earlier on, Director General of Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute, Dr Geoffrey Mkamililo told the permanent secretary that the efforts of research and production of improved seeds of Oil Palm is going on in Kigoma and the intention is to conduct further research that will produce TENERA that produces up to nine tones per hectare instead of five tones.

Until now TARI has produced two

million improved seeds. The seeds have been distributed to Kigoma district councils of Uvinza district council, Kigoma district council, Kigoma Municipal, Kasulu district council, Buhigwe district council, Kasulu Town and other parts of the country.

He said the nation import 365,000 metric tonnes of edible oil which cost approximately 443 billion shillings annually adding that this should not be the case because Tanzania has a potential land to produce all types of vegetable edible oil that is needed in this country.

"Kigoma alone has an area of about 114,000 hectares of land which is suitable for oil palm production saying if it can be utilised well, definitely the nation will be able to reduce or eliminate importation of vegetable edible oil in the country," he explained.

He said TARI has launched other units in different regions in Tanzania for production and disseminating the improved oil palm seeds at TARI-Ilonga for the Eastern Zone, TARI Naliendele in Mtwara for the Southern and Kyela Mbeya for the Southern highland regions among others.

According to TARI-Kihinga Centre Director and National Coordinator for oil palm production in Tanzania, Dr Filson Mbezi Kagimbo, the centre will work around the clock to heed the ministries directive.

"The motive of TARI Kihinga is to produce more TENERA seeds as per the directive from the ministry of agriculture and the prime minister. By increasing production, Tanzania will be better placed to produce more raw materials for our industries which is the vision of our President John Pombe Magufuli and the 5th phase government.

Kigoma Regional Administrative Secretary Dr Rashid Mchata commended the efforts being taken by the ministry of agriculture to enhance development of agriculture and oil palm production and development in the region saying the region will continue working with the ministry for the benefit of the region and the country at large.

At a critical time, reporters persist in spite of threats to press freedom

By Jennifer Dorroh

AT a time when citizens need fact-based, trustworthy information to survive the global pandemic, reporters face mounting threats as they report on the crisis, three distinguished journalists said during a panel discussion Monday.

"Journalists have the opportunity to amplify public health information and save lives. We're not going to come up with a vaccine, but we are able to share this information far and wide," said Washington Post opinion writer Jason Rezaian, who spent more than a year in prison in Iran.

Rezaian, along with Swedish Radio director general Cilla Benk and award-winning Newsweek magazine Beijing bureau chief Melinda Liu, highlighted several trends beleaguering press freedom during the pandemic.

ICFJ Senior Vice President Sharon Moshavi moderated the panel. The webinar was a partnership between the International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ) and the Embassy of Sweden in Washington, D.C.

In many parts of the world, "politicians are trying to clamp down on media freedom, trying to use this as an opportunity to go ahead with things that they would have liked to do all the time", Benk said. She noted that, according to an International Press Institute (IPI) study, Europe is responsible for a large percentage of Covid-19-related violations of freedom of the press.

Of the more than 160 violations of media freedom that IPI has documented during the pandemic, Europe leads in the two most common types: physical and verbal attacks and legal charges, including arrests.

Benk, a board member of the European Broadcasting Union, noted that violations are happening in some European Union countries that "used to, at least once, respect freedom of the press and free speech".

Benk also pointed to cutbacks by



media companies, which are facing financial strain exacerbated by the pandemic. "The whole financial model has gone down the drain," she said, leading to layoffs and fewer reporters scrutinising the powerful.

In China, the "government is resorting to high technology to exert a kind of 'Big Brother' environment on the media that is still not only very much in place, but we see it actually increasing, increasing the pressure", Liu said.

She warned that the surveillance hardware and software authorities use to track the virus can also be eas-

ily adapted to keep a close eye on the public.

The situation in Hong Kong is also worsening, as the space for media freedom is "shrinking, and it's shrinking fast", Liu said. Outspoken critics of China, such as Apple Daily, may not be able to survive the pressures. Beijing is also using the pandemic as a "reset" for Hong Kong and "for dealing especially with foreign media", she said.

"Hong Kong has traditionally been a great place to be able to keep an eye on China without being in China", but there is now a de facto expulsion of

international reporters from Hong Kong.

It is even bleaker in Iran, Rezaian said, where "the notion of a free and independent press doesn't exist". Many good journalists "have been silenced and fired from their news organisations because of pressures from the government".

As a result, there is "a lot of bad information" about the coronavirus, leaving the population at risk, he said, adding: "It seems as though they might be facing a major second wave because they reopened their economy."

Other countries, including Brazil, India and Turkey, are making "emergency rules" that inhibit press freedom as well, Rezaian noted. In the US, "nobody is really saying that we can't report on things... But you have a commander in chief who takes a very antagonistic line towards individual journalists", he added.

As tensions rise between Washington and Beijing over the coronavirus, some Beijing officials are taking a page from "out of the Trump playbook with highly aggressive language", Liu said. Nicknamed "Wolf Warriors" after the triumphant hero of a series of

pro-Chinese action films, they deploy social media attacks using "highly nationalistic language, politicised language and blaming other countries to an intense degree".

Added Liu: "The diversity of types of disinformation and types of characters who are spreading disinformation from the Chinese government side has blossomed during this pandemic."

A dispatch by International Journalists' Network (IJNet), a project of the Washington-based International Centre for Journalists.

How people over 60 can protect themselves in COVID-19 setting

By Katie Couric

AS the coronavirus pandemic continues to dominate headlines, we've been hearing that one particular population may be vulnerable: those aged 60 and older. But what puts that group at a higher risk of complications from Covid-19? And for those over 60, or who have a loved one in that age group, what should we be doing to keep ourselves and each other safe?

We turned to physician and longevity expert Dr Peter Attia for his thoughts on the subject. Here's what he had to say on why the 60+ age group is particularly vulnerable to this virus:

Dr Peter Attia: Different populations are susceptible to different viruses. In the case of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (the coronavirus responsible for COVID-19) it's been clearly observed that the risk of death rises sharply for people older than 60, and especially for people over the age of 75. This does not mean that people younger than 50 are safe, but their risk is much lower.

There are probably a few reasons for this observation. First, age is a strong proxy for other conditions that increase risk - most notably high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and lung disease.

Second, as people age, their immune responses change, and there is typically a diminished adaptive response.

Finally, as people age their "physiologic reserve" (how much physiological stress they can tolerate) goes down, so they have less buffer to combat severe illness.

What would you say to people in the 60+ age group who are not practising social distancing?

The best option to help protect oneself and those around them from infection is social isolation. From the most recent March 18 CDC report of US cases by age group, some 32 per cent of positive cases for ages 65-74 were hospitalised, some 11 per cent of those cases required intensive care and there was a 3 per cent death rate reported for the age class. And in other countries, such as Italy, the numbers are worse.

Moreover, delaying the onset of illness - referred to as "flattening the curve" - is particularly important to ensure that the healthcare system can support the number of hospitalisation cases at any given time.

Is there anything people in this age group can be doing to help boost their immune systems right now?

Sleep may be the most important behaviour we can control to maintain a strong immune system. But even sleep or another immune system supporter will not do very much without social distancing, given how infectious this virus is. There is probably little harm in supplementing with zinc and vitamin D, but



these measures should not at all be viewed as "protection" from more extreme measures to avoid infection.

If someone over 60 needs to leave their home - say to walk the dog or go to the grocery store - how should they best protect themselves?

If you need to leave an isolated environment, it is best to do so at a time when there is the least chance of exposure to other people. Going for a walk where there is low foot traffic

or going to the grocery store when it is the least busy will limit person-to-person interaction.

You should also take special precautions not to touch your face and to wash your hands well after any outing. That means scrubbing your hands for 20 to 30 seconds with soap and water.

If someone in this age group appears to be exhibiting symptoms, should they go to the hospital?

It is important to call a healthcare professional as soon as possible, if you think you have been exposed

and begin to develop symptoms. Although a diagnosis cannot be made over the phone, a hospital setting increases risk of viral exposure and should be avoided if possible.

If symptoms progressively worsen you must contact your primary care physician as soon as possible. Your symptoms should be monitored by phone with your physician in order to evaluate if and when you should get tested and seek in-person care. Telemedicine is also emerging as a suggested resource to monitor and confer about symptoms without hav-

ing to leave social isolation.

Should people in this age group do anything to prepare, just in case they fall ill?

Noting that testing protocols vary from state to state, older individuals and persons at risk for serious illness are generally given testing priority. Please, make sure that you have made contact with your primary care physician so that you have a point of contact prior to your symptoms getting worse.

It is also a good idea to have nearby clinic information on hand to consult upon symptom onset to understand the location-specific instructions to get tested. A medical professional can help you by phone to evaluate when you should leave isolation to get tested.

The most concerning symptoms to monitor are fever, cough and shortness of breath. More generally, it is always a good idea to be in touch with a family member or caretaker who can be involved and support monitoring of symptom progression and providing transportation if and when necessary.

Disclaimer: Please note that this is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute the practice of medicine, nursing, or other professional healthcare services, including the giving of medical advice. No doctor/patient relationship is formed.

An edited and condensed version of an interview originally published in Katie Couric's Wake-Up Call newsletter. Katie Couric is founder of Katie Couric Media.

Just what made CEOs become more trusted in pandemic than politicians?

By Steve Levine

FOR a half-century, big company executives have been among the most maligned figures on the American stage - defamed as mere suits, bloodthirsty war profiteers, soulless millionaires and billionaires, and unpatriotic globalists.

But at a time of cratering markets, rock-bottom trust and a dangerous new virus, CEOs in the US and elsewhere have somehow emerged as bastions of credibility, according to a new survey.

As COVID-19 clamps a huge padlock on the US and world economies, vast majorities of the public say CEOs are most likely to tell the truth, stand up for what's right, and safeguard their employees and ordinary people.

This is according to Edelman, a crisis management firm, which released the survey Monday at an event at the Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C.

Americans and people in nine other major countries said they trust their own employer more than they trust the media, the government or any other institution. The contest is not close, says Edelman, which produces a much-followed annual report on global trust. "My employer" is trusted on average by 75 per cent of the public, far higher than business-at-large (56 per cent) and the media (47 per cent).

In prior Edelman reports, it had become clear that the public was looking for companies to take a stand on public issues. But the latest survey is the first to all but demand that employers take charge when something needs doing.

The pool of faith in business puts serious new pressure on prominent companies, which are often ambivalent when it comes to considering the broader impact of their decisions beyond shareholders.

Whether CEOs are prepared to do so or not, the public across the ten countries surveyed expects prominent companies not to wait for distrusted politicians to conspicuously take the offensive.

Some of this change may be generational - millennials may have a different attitude from baby boomers on the role of companies, one that harkens back to the 1960s' anti-corporation militancy. Some of it comes from a newer breed of startups and compa-

nies claiming to be "mission-driven".

The reasons cited in the survey are both competence - people believe by a 54-point margin that companies are more able than anyone else to deliver - and a conviction that they have the greatest freedom to actually do something. Among the expectations are that companies will pay decent wages (83 per cent) and provide retraining when jobs are automated away (79 per cent).

Perhaps not surprisingly given the current times, although public demands of companies are high, expectations that CEOs will come through is low - fewer than one-third think their employers will accomplish these things. Yet, the suggestion is that popular commercial punishment might rain down on companies that fail to take charge.

"The belief is that 'my employer' is better prepared than 'my government'," said Richard Edelman, chairman of Edelman.

The Covid-19 crisis is tailor-made for the new public sentiment. His own credibility under a severe test because of the collapsing stock market and a delayed reaction to the seriousness of Covid-19, US President Donald Trump, held a news conference on March 13 where he declared a national emergency and introduced a parade of CEOs, each of whom promised to do their part in controlling the virus.

The executives included Walmart CEO Doug McMillon, Target CEO Brian Cornell and Walgreens president Richard Ashworth, who spoke for a few minutes and stood alongside Trump on stage.

In that case the executives seemed to be attempting at least in part to placate Trump as much as the public but, in subsequent days, the world's best-known companies have appeared to be trying to stake high ground.

Apple has offered to let distressed users of its branded credit card forgo interest for the month of March. Patagonia and Levi's said they would close their stores because of the coronavirus and that they would pay their employees as usual. LVMH, the Paris-based luxury company, said it would start to manufacture and deliver free hand sanitiser in France.

Jared Spataro, head of the Microsoft unit overseeing its Office 365 software, said that he recently participated in a call about the virus with executives



Justin Sullivan

from a number of large companies, including Amazon and Starbucks. Companies are in a new environment, he said, in which the question is: "What is the role of business in society? To whom is it accountable?"

A split has emerged between companies that suggest that, at least for now, they will pay their employees while their operations are curtailed or stopped and another group that wants their workers to rely on their sick

pay.

In the former group is Taco Bell, and among the latter are Whole Foods, which is owned by Amazon, and Walmart. Tesla CEO Elon Musk is in a category all his own, flouting the new zeitgeist (the spirit of a generation or a period of time), obtaining special permission from authorities to keep his Fremont plant open while downplaying Covid-19, saying he himself intends to keep working but telling

his workers they can stay home if they wish.

The difference may reflect CEOs striking a balance between satisfying their teams and staying in business. "The biggest company challenge is how they do keep themselves an operating concern while doing well by their employees," said Karen Harris, head of Bain & Company's Macro Trends Group.

Steve Levine is Editor at Large at Medium with interests in ferreting out the whys for the turbulence all around us.

Camartec employs more than 10,000 people through biogas technology

By Inès Magoum

BIOGAS technology is definitely taking hold in Tanzania. The acting director of the Centre for Agricultural Mechanisation and Rural Technology (Camartec), Pythias Ntella, said recently that the institution had already employed more than 10,000 people in Tanzania with

biogas technology.

These figures were made public at a workshop on renewable energy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, organised by Hivos East Africa Nukta Africa, an international development organization, and Journalists for Environment (JET), a Tanzanian organisation of media professionals. The workshop aims to train jour-

nalists in the country to enable them to improve the quality and quantity of reporting in the field of renewable energy.

More than 10,000 temporary jobs and over 100 permanent jobs

Camartec, a government organisation responsible for the production and marketing of agricultural implements in Tan-

zania, introduced biogas technology to the country in 1983, in collaboration with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), a German international development cooperation agency. To carry out its activities, the institution needed an abundant workforce.

More than 10,000 temporary and over 100 permanent

jobs have been created over the years. Thanks to this labour force, Camartec has already built 12,000 facilities (biogas digesters and tanks) for households and 125 facilities for various institutions (schools, companies...) in Tanzania. Communities have also received training in the use of biogas.

The biogas plants set up by

Camartec use animal waste such as cow dung to make clean and cheap fuel. These plants are also used to produce electrical energy for household use.

Despite the Camartec's good results, much remains to be done. The centre needs more employees to work in its biogas plants in order to produce more electricity to supply the popula-

tion. The Tanzanian company also needs funds to monitor and evaluate the implemented facilities.

In Tanzania, 90% of the population has no access to the electricity grid. They depend on firewood and charcoal. This situation leads to the felling of about 500,000 hectares of trees each year in the country.

Report calls on African govts and businesses, CSOs to step up efforts to curb malnutrition

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

THE 2020 Global Nutrition Report has called on African governments, businesses and civil society to step up efforts to address malnutrition in all its forms by tackling injustices in food and health systems is now more urgent than ever.

The Report provides updated data and analysis on the state of malnutrition globally, including Africa, and highlights significant challenges faced by countries in the region, as well as progress made towards tackling them.

Some progress has been made both in Africa and globally, but this remains too slow. The region has made considerable effort to reduce the prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years of age.

In Ethiopia, this has fallen significantly from 57.6 percent in 2000 to 38.4 percent in 2016. The same applies for Burundi that has managed to reduce stunting levels from 64.0 percent in 2000 to 55.9 percent in 2016.

However, Africa remains the region by far the hardest hit by overlapping forms of malnutrition. Of 37 countries that struggle with three forms of malnutrition - childhood stunting, anaemia in women of reproductive age and overweight among women - 27 were in Africa.

Obesity and overweight levels are also on the rise across the continent. The prevalence of overweight in adolescents

is greater in girls (17.7 percent) than boys (11.2 percent). This trend continues into adulthood, where the overweight prevalence in adults is greater in women (41.1%) than men (25.8 percent).

Despite these figures, countries are often unprepared to face the global nutrition crisis.

Strong government nutrition coordination is often lacking; lower income countries tend to deprioritise overweight, obesity and other diet-related chronic diseases.

Financial commitments also don't match the scale and nature of the issue: increases in domestic resources for nutrition have been marginal at best and nearly impossible in fragile states, while obesity and overweight have been largely ignored in aid allocations.

Jane Battersby-Lennard, Associate Professor at the University of Cape Town's African Centre for Cities, said: "We have seen significant progress to tackle malnutrition in Africa, but the Covid-19 pandemic could reverse these gains. Covid-19 is expected to increase this disparity, which means that now is the time to scale up our efforts and support communities and people most affected."

New perspective: redirecting resources to communities and people most affected is the right and the smartest thing to do.

Global and national patterns hide significant inequalities within countries and populations, with vulnerable



The 2020 Global Nutrition Report looks beyond global and national patterns, revealing significant inequalities in nutrition outcomes within countries and populations.

groups being the most affected. The Report found clear links between levels of malnutrition and population characteristics like location, age, sex, education and wealth, while conflict and other forms of fragility compound the problem.

In Africa, differences between communities at the sub-national level are striking.

Underweight is a persisting problem of the poorest countries, while overweight and obesity are prevailing in wealthier communities. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the prevalence of overweight is 2.2 percent in poorer households and 9.7 percent in richer ones.

If no action is taken, the effects of the pandemic will only make it harder for vulnerable populations to protect themselves against malnutrition. Malnutrition affects our immune system, leaving us more susceptible to infection, and the socio-economic impact of the pandemic could in turn drive malnutrition globally.

Changes in food systems: Poor diets are not simply a matter of personal food choices. The Report calls for a change in food systems.

According to the Report, existing agriculture systems still focus on staple grains like rice, wheat and maize, rather than

producing a broader range of more diverse and healthier foods, such as fruits, nuts and vegetables.

Fresh or perishable foods are less accessible and affordable in many parts of the world compared to staple grains. In Burkina Faso, egg calories are 15 times more expensive than calories from staples, whereas they are 1.9 times more expensive in the United States.

Processed foods, especially ultra-processed food, are available, cheap and intensively marketed, with sales high and growing fast in many parts of the world. In sub-Saharan Africa, the growth of supermarket chains is diminishing the role of informal traders and has affected people's food choices. These changes demand policy and planning resources to promote desirable nutrition outcomes.

Solutions have started to emerge in Africa and across the world: increased public investment for healthier food products, support for shorter supply chains for fresh-food delivery programs, use of fiscal instruments, limiting advertising of junk food, and food reformulation, or the use of front-of-pack labelling (FOPL) to inform consumers and influence industry behaviour adopted by Chile and the UK. However, much more remains to be done.

Venkatesh Mannar, Co-Chair of the Report and Special Adviser on Nutrition to the Tata Cornell Agriculture & Nutrition Initiative, said: "At a time when COVID-19 has further revealed the gaps in our food systems, we now have a unique opportunity to act in coordination to address them and ensure that healthy and sustainably produced food is the most accessible, affordable and desirable choice for all."

Universal Health Coverage: an opportunity to make nutrition care universally available as a basic, life-saving and cost-effective health service.

Malnutrition in all its forms has become the leading cause of poor health and death, and the rapid rise of diet-related chronic diseases is putting an immense strain on health systems that are already fighting diseases like Covid-19, Ebola or Malaria.

But despite this assessment, nutrition actions only represent a minuscule portion of national health budgets although they can be highly cost-effective or even cost-saving solutions.

In most countries, health checks do not cover diet quality and national surveys rarely comprehensively assess diets and the nutritional status of populations. The distribution of trained nutrition professionals is inequitable, and these experts are not widely accessible. Globally, the median number of nutrition professionals stands at 2.3 per 100,000 people, 0.9 per 100,000 people in Africa, and some countries have none.

Renata Micha, Co-Chair of the Report and Research Associate Professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, said: "Good nutrition is an essential defence strategy to protect populations against epidemics, release the burden on our health systems, deliver Universal Health Coverage and ultimately save lives. The findings of the 2020 Global Nutrition Report make clear that tackling malnutrition should be at the centre of our global health response."

Women empowerment crucial in building resilience against climate change - FAO

By Jeffrey Gogo

FORMER director general of the Food and Agriculture Organisation José Graziano da Silva once remarked that there is no inclusive and sustainable way forward for Africa without women, youth and agriculture.

Indeed, agriculture offers Africa, and Zimbabwe in particular, an opportunity for economic prosperity, food security, poverty eradication, skills transfer and economic empowerment for women and girls.

But all this will come to naught if governments do not

do enough to build women's resilience against climate change.

The science has been shown to have the most devastating effect on agriculture. In large parts of Africa, scientists forecast farm output to decline by between 30 and 50 percent by 2030 due to changing climatic conditions.

Throughout much of the continent, agriculture is threatened by multiple issues, ranging from population increase to urbanisation and industrialisation, to the sub-division of land and degraded resources.

Women disproportionately bear much of the brunt given

their traditional roles as tillers of the land and their recognition as the backbone of the family unit.

In Zimbabwe, the state is looking at improving food security and nutrition, as highlighted in a number of current and past economic blueprints, while it has now started to ramp up fund-

ing for women in agriculture through ring-fenced facilities.

Moreover, as a short-term measure, the classification of agriculture as an essential service during the ongoing Covid - 19 lockdown has insulated women farmers, especially those in horticulture, against financial losses

arising from market shut-downs.

But changes in the agriculture landscape over the decades have already resulted in massive food shortages in successive years, leaving some seven million people in need of food aid in 2020.

Community garden started by refugees in Australia attracting interstate interest

By Claire Campbell

A Community garden started by a group of refugees in Adelaide's north in Australia has become so popular its produce is now being sought interstate, with those behind it hoping to boost production.

Muhamma Yotham fled Burundi as a refugee before making Australia home.

During his years spent in a refugee camp in Tanzania, maize flour was the staple ingredient in his diet.

"You were eating it almost every day, you made it into, like, a stiff porridge," he said.

Maize has now become a source of both optimism and revenue for a community of refugees and migrants in Adelaide's north, along with other, rarer crops not easy to source in Australia.

The group - the Amazing Northern Multicultural Service - established a community garden in Davoren Park four years ago to grow vegetables, herbs and plants that are popular in Africa and Asia, such as African eggplant and roselle.

It was not long before interest in their produce took off.

"We were finding that many people were somewhat isolated and disadvantaged," Mr Yotham, the service's chairperson, said.

"We've had a very good response not only from African communities, but Middle Eastern and Asian [communities] and now we're teaching even Aussies to use the maize and they like it."

"We've brought something which brings a sense of optimism, a sense of determination and this garden has been the centre of that."

Hundreds visit when 'the corns are ready'

During the coronavirus pandemic, the refugee community in Adelaide's north has been hit hard, with many losing their casual jobs.

The garden has not only provided a source of food but a sense of purpose as well.

"While many services have closed and many in the community have lost their jobs, the garden persisted and continued," Mr Yotham said.

Demand for their produce has now outstripped supply, with requests coming from interstate.

Burundi refugee Lidia Inarukundo, who has been involved with the com-

munity garden since it began, said she was "very, very surprised" by the response. "People from everywhere have been coming to buy the corn because when we tell them it's maize they're really interested," she said.

"If we put on WhatsApp 'the corns are ready' you get more than 100 people here wanting to buy."

The Amazing Northern Multicultural Service is hoping to harness this interest and grow.

It has bought some land across the road to expand its garden and is also in discussions with nearby market gardeners about the prospect of growing their corn in the northern Adelaide floodplains.

Mang Bawi Cinzah, who came to Australia as a refugee from Myanmar, has now been employed part-time to help oversee the garden.

He said he has been pleased by the strong community interest - but most important for him was the fond reminder of his homeland.

"For me, a sense of belonging is really important for people in emerging communities."

"This community garden is really important for people like me, who come from another country."



Lidia Inarukundo said she's been surprised at how popular their maize has become.

You tested positive for Covid-19. Now what? Here's how to proceed safely

By Keren Landman, MD

IT'S not easy to get yourself tested for Covid-19 right now. However, if you've done so and received a positive result, know that most people who contract Covid-19 have a pretty mild case, ranging from no symptoms at all to flu-like symptoms including fever, cough, congestion and stomach upset.

This is whether you got tested as part of a surveillance programme, because you were a contact of someone who tested positive, or because you were feeling sick.

Symptoms "run the gamut," says Tina Tan, MD, an infectious disease and paediatrics doctor based in Chicago, adding that most people have an 80 per cent to 90 per cent chance of having relatively minor symptoms. So do your best to remain calm. Doctor-approved advice for what to do next includes that you need to put on a face mask. A surgical mask, if you can find one, is enough to prevent you from spreading infection - you don't need an N95 or a full-on hood with an oxygen tank.

If you don't have a surgical mask, the next best thing is to improvise with a scarf or a bandana over your nose and mouth, says Tan. However, fabrics don't protect other people nearly as well as masks made for that purpose, so don't be overconfident in these improvised solutions.

The goal of face protection is to shield others around you from inhaling droplets you give off when you cough or sneeze. Most of this type of transmission will happen within 10 feet of you, so you'll want to mask up around roommates and family members if you must be around them.

Two: Isolate yourself. If your test results come back positive and your symptoms are mild

enough that it is safe for you to be at home - that is, you are not short of breath or otherwise severely ill - you should isolate yourself at home for 14 days after a positive test, says Tan. If you have or can get a room to yourself, stay there as much as possible, and open a window if the weather allows to help ventilate the space.

In any shared environment, cover your coughs and sneezes and wash or sanitise your hands often (but especially when they're dirty, before and after meal preparation, and after blowing your nose or using the bathroom).

It's almost impossible to seal yourself off completely from people you live with, but do your best, and try not to worry about the things that are out of your control.

Three: Clean shared spaces (and cuddle buddies). Living with other people usually means sharing kitchens and bathrooms. If you can get a bathroom to yourself to use while you're sick, do it.

But if not, and if you also share a kitchen with other people, wipe down surfaces in these spaces at least once a day with a bleach wipe or a household disinfectant on a rag or washcloth. If you use a rag or washcloth, place it into a laundry bin immediately after using so that others don't touch it.

The virus can live on surfaces for several days, so give special and more frequent attention to high-touch surfaces like door-knobs, refrigerator handles, microwave or other push buttons, and faucets.

Select a dedicated dish or hand towel that only you use, and keep it on an out-of-the-way hook or in your room.

Animals are often a source of comfort, but in many households, they can function as adorable, mobile high-touch surfaces.

"Treat it like a fomite," says Tan. Avoid contact with your pet, and if you have contact despite

your efforts, clean off the pet afterward with a pet wipe, a baby wipe labeled safe for pet use, or a washcloth soaked in a little pet shampoo and water before they snuggle anyone else.

[A fomite is an inanimate object such as a dish, doorknob, or article of clothing that may be contaminated with infectious agents such as bacteria or viruses and serve in their transmission.]

Four: Use medications judiciously. The symptoms and severity of Covid-19 infection vary among people depending on age, other medical conditions, smoking history, and other poorly understood factors.

However, most people who get infected experience cold or flu-like symptoms. These include several days of fever and cough (either productive or dry), with or without chest or nasal congestion, upset stomach, sore throat or headache.

Unless you have a medication allergy or are taking a medication that can interact with other medications, it's probably safe to use ibuprofen or acetaminophen to treat fever and discomfort, NyQuil to help with nighttime symptoms, and pseudoephedrine for congestion.

Other cough and cold medications don't do very much for everyday coughs and colds, so they probably won't help much with a Covid-19 infection, either.

If you have allergies or asthma, you might be prescribed medications that you use seasonally or only when you have chest tightness or when you exercise. Follow your usual plan for taking these medications, and don't stop them unless you discuss it first with your healthcare provider.

In the hospital, people are often prescribed incentive spirometry, a practice of taking deep breaths to keep lungs healthy during periods of low mobility.

A home adaptation of the procedure would involve taking 10 to 15 deep breaths an hour while awake, holding each inhale for 3 to 5 seconds, then exhaling slowly. Although there are no data to suggest this will reduce the risk of developing more severe infection, says Tan, it can't hurt.



cedure would involve taking 10 to 15 deep breaths an hour while awake, holding each inhale for 3 to 5 seconds, then exhaling slowly. Although there are no data to suggest this will reduce the risk of developing more severe infection, says Tan, it can't hurt.

As for the swirl of advice recommending salt-water gargles and other strategies, she says: "All of those homeopathic recommendations are just to make somebody more comfortable and have nothing to do with making the virus go away any faster."

Also, if you're a smoker or a vaper, now is a good time to quit - if not forever, then at least until you're better. Smoking is associated with more severe lung infections, and vaping can cause lung injury that may increase the risk of those infections; quitting decreases the risk of developing pneumonia.

Five: Seek help if you get sicker. People with mild illness generally start feeling better after a few days, Tan says. But some people remain ill for more than a week and occasionally worsen after an initial improvement in symptoms. This

"double-peak" symptom pattern can include worsened cough, a newly productive cough, higher fevers, increased chest pain and tightness.

Several things may be happening in this situation: It may simply be taking the body time to fight off the virus; a new bacterial infection may be appearing in parts of the body weakened by the virus (especially the lungs); or the viral infection itself may be causing changes to the heart or lungs that are causing persistent or worsening symptoms.

If you get worse instead of better, you might need more evaluation and treatment. For symptoms like fever and worsened cough, call your doctor - but if you develop danger signs like shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure, confusion, or blue lips, you need to seek emergency room care.

Six: Get to know your neighbours - electronically, probably. If you live alone, or everyone in your house is sick, it's a good idea to have a buddy plan in case you get so sick that you need medical attention.

Get to know a few neighbours or reach

out to some friends nearby, and make a plan with them to check in daily (via text or phone call or from at least six feet away) - or more often, if you like.

Choose the health care facility where you'd go if you were to get sicker, and store its phone number somewhere easy to find. Think about how you'll get there and share your plans with your buddy.

Because the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention recommends avoiding public transit including ride-shares and taxis, taking a private car is best. Social networks can also help you get food and medicine when you're stuck at home, so don't be afraid to reach out to people.

"I would hope all of us are human," says Tan, and "as part of being a human person, that you could ask somebody to help you. And if you were really in trouble, people would do it."

A dispatch in Elemental, a new Medium publication about health and wellness. Keren Landman, MD, is an infectious disease doctor, epidemiologist and journalist.

Covid-19 and human health risks linked to wildlife trade practices

CAMBRIDGE, UK

AT the time of writing, the COVID-19 pandemic is raging worldwide, causing human mortality and socio-economic disruption on a massive scale and it appears highly likely that profound impacts will continue for many years to come.

Although the precise origins of the disease remain unproven, there are strong indications of a wild animal source and a direct link to wildlife trade in China.

Even if evidence points elsewhere in future, the magnitude of the current outbreak places under an intense spotlight concerns raised by zoonotic disease experts over many decades about human health risks linked to wild animal trade in the increasingly inter-connected global economy.

As calls for new health-focused re-

strictions on wildlife trade have increased in volume in response to the current pandemic, some countries have taken immediate action. Building on immediate emergency restrictions placed on wildlife markets in January 2020, China is implementing a long-term prohibition on trade and consumption of wild animals for food as a public health protection measure.

Viet Nam is also considering new health-focused market restrictions and Gabon has introduced new species-specific trade restrictions. Looking ahead, there is a critical need to improve understanding of what sort of interventions might make the biggest difference in reducing risks of zoonotic disease emergence.

However, it is also important to work out how such actions might best complement, rather than conflict with, the range of existing conservation-focused wildlife trade regulation

and management measures that are already struggling to contain over-exploitation of nature by people.

Zoonotic disease risks have not been wholly ignored before now. Many countries have live animal quarantine requirements and other rules governing the cross-border movement of meat, fish and other animal products.

Similarly, production, trade and use of live animals and products are subject to animal and human health regulations within domestic markets of most countries. However, such measures are typically designed primarily to address trade and consumption of domesticated species, the volume and value of which vastly exceed wild animal business.

As a result, the provisions of such regulations are seldom tailored to the specific dynamics and risks of the trade in wild animals.

Design of new interventions should



An animal market in Indonesia. File photo

be based on evidence-based assessment of disease-related vulnerabilities in current wild animal trade chains. Based on study of past cases, experts point to heightened risks of zoonotic disease spillover in places where large numbers of stressed live animals of different species (wild or domesticated) and people are in close proximity, such as transport hubs, holding facilities and markets.

However, there remains considerable uncertainty about differentiation of risk levels between different wild animal species (or species groups) and about the likelihood of transmission from different wild animal parts and products.

There is a wide range of options for future intervention based on assessment of such risks. Prohibitions on trade and consumption of certain species or products could be warranted. This would likely require new or modified national legislation in many countries, as most current restrictions are explicitly justified by conservation threat levels and jurisdiction is often limited to import/export controls only.

Such measures would of course face the same challenges that undermine

existing wildlife trade laws: enforcement is inconsistent, often under-resourced, undermined by criminality and corruption, and given insufficient priority by governments. Risky trade may simply continue through illicit markets.

It is possible that the greatest benefit might come from changes in management practices for holding, trade and processing wild animals in trade. These might include regulatory or voluntary private sector measures aimed to improve animal husbandry, increase separation between species in trade, enhance sanitation at holding facilities and improve personal protection for workers.

These measures may again require modification of existing animal and human health legislation, but there is considerable practical experience from the domesticated animal sector that could be applied to this challenge.

Despite the clear imperative for action provided by the tragic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be critical to ensure that remedial restrictions on wildlife commerce are tailored to achieve specific risk reduction goals and designed to take into

account potential negative impacts on social equity, livelihoods, and indirect conservation impacts.

Such measures also need to be set in the context of other zoonotic disease pathways and risk factors that need careful attention, such as land-use change, domestic livestock management practices and other human/wildlife interactions.

It is also vital that amidst the urgent need to reduce zoonotic disease threats from wildlife trade, the ongoing drive to address over-exploitation threats to wildlife does not lose momentum. It is of course possible that new health-focused restrictions on wild animal trade and increased scrutiny of wildlife commerce more generally owing to its likely connection with the pandemic may reinforce conservation-focused action.

However, trade in what may be identified as higher risk sectors, such as that of live wild mammals and birds, makes up a small proportion of the global wildlife trade. The greatest over-exploitation threats are faced by marine species and the biggest wildlife trade flows are of timber and other wild plant products.

THE GUARDIAN SIMPLE WORD FIT // THE GUARDIAN CROSSWORD --00 83 00--

In this puzzle you have no clues, only a list of words that all fit into the grid. The Guardian have given you a head start

3 LETTERS: ICE, LAY, BOY
 4 LETTERS: FINE, EASE, NEST, ABEL, TACO, AGED
 5 LETTERS: MEANT, EASEL, EMBED, DIENE
 6 LETTERS: ADRIFT, YEMENI, EUNUCH, MEAGRE, MEKONG, MILAN,
 7 LETTERS: PENGUIN
 8 LETTERS: LIBERALS
 10 LETTERS: FREE LOADER

CLUES: Across

- profession of being a journalist
- Chief city of Togo
- present food to someone
- make suitable for a new use
- place in a particular position
- Paris is her Capital city
- be absolutely sure about something
- milk and milk products collectively
- physically dependent on a particular substance
- a chair
- work requiring little skill and lacking prestige

Down:

- named after Julius Caesar the whole community of Muslims
- a yearly court of record held by the lords of certain manors
- appreciate to the full
- Garden of Adam and Eve
- distribute over a wide area
- small bomb thrown by hand
- a traditional Japanese inn
- the color of milk
- a sphere of activity
- say something in order to obtain an answer
- a barrier constructed to hold back water

WORD-FIT

CROSSWORD

SOLUTIONS

1 JOURNALIST 2 TOGO 3 LAY 4 TACO 5 EMBED 6 MEAGRE 7 PENGUIN 8 LIBERALS 9 MILK 10 CHAIR 11 POSITION 12 PARIS 13 ABSOLUTELY 14 MILK 15 CHAIR 16 POSITION 17 POSITION 18 POSITION 19 POSITION 20 POSITION

CAG REPORT

AfDB withholds 77bn/- loan owing to lack of procurement policy

By Guardian Reporter

LACK of a national procurement policy denied the country US\$35 million (over 77bn/-) loan from African Development Bank last year. Controller and Auditor General, Charles Kichere has said in his maiden report since taking over at National Audit Office.

The annual audit report which focused on procurement entities and their regulatory body, Public Procurement Regulatory Authority pointed out that the AfDB loan was for the Power Sector Reform and Governance Support Programme.

"One of the conditions of AfDB, was the government should have a National Procurement Policy. Therefore, lack of the policy motivated AfDB to reconsider their plan to offer it," the CAG report stated while revealing that despite spending over 543.9m/- to develop a draft of the policy nothing much has

happened.

The report further noted that up to the time of audit, Ministry of Finance and Planning had already spent the over 543.9m/- in the process of developing the policy over the past ten years.

"Review of National Procurement Policy file noted that, the Ministry through support of ILO conducted a detailed study to carry out a situational analysis on public procurement by showing the current situation, detailing achievements, failures and challenges in the public procurement field," the report noted.

The CAG however said its team of auditors who talked to Treasury officials were told that currently the revised draft has been presented to the ministry's management for scrutiny.

"Arrangements for submitting the draft to cabinet secretariat for approval is on progress," the report noted



PPRA CEO Leonard Kapongo speaks at a past event.

while censuring PPRA for laxity and inconsistency in dispensing its duties which include monitoring and evaluating the public procurement entities.

"Sixty three percent of PEs did not submit contract awards information to PPRA as required by Section 36(1)(l) of PPA No. 7 of 2011 which wants them to submit records relating to procurement awards," the CAG stated.

The CAG also added that PEs did not submit information relating to procurement plan, monthly and quarterly as required with some of them unaudited by PPRA for five years in a row.

"Review of PPRA's Annual Performance Evaluation Report showed that, 63 percent of PEs did not submit information relating to procurement awards," the report charged pointing

out that even levels of compliance vary ranging from 14 to 84 percent.

"The compliance levels were lower in submission of contract awards in which the trend of compliance declined over the years and about two thirds of the PEs did not submit in 2018/19," the CAG revealed.

The audit noted that, PPRA did not effectively take enforcement

measures to the PEs which did not comply with the requirement. "As a result, there was a continued trend of non-compliance for a long period. As an alternative in 2008 PPRA introduced Procurement Management Information System (PMIS) to address the challenge of non-submission of procurement information," the CAG noted.

CONCERN

Fish production in Lake Victoria dips to a five-year low

NAIROBI

FISH production in Lake Victoria dropped to its lowest in five years to 90,743 tonnes amid water pollution and restrictive laws.

Official data shows fish output from the country's single larg-

est source has declined by 19,159 tonnes over the period from the 109,902 tonnes realised in 2015. The presence of heavy metals such as mercury, lead and copper in the lake has degraded quality of water making it harder for some fish species to breed.

"The fish catch from Lake Victoria has been dwindling over the years as a result of water pollution and restrictions on fishing in neighbouring countries such as Uganda and Tanzania," said the Economic Survey 2020. Even with dwindling harvests,

Lake Victoria accounted for 62.5 per cent of the 120,873 fresh water fish in 2019. In early 2000, 150,000 to 200,000 tonnes of fish catch was achieved annually.

Kibos Sugar and the Kisumu County-owned Kisumu Water and Sewerage Company are

among firms that have been blamed for routinely failing to meet the standards set by the National Environment Management Authority (Nema) for treating waste before releasing it to the sewer line.

It is this waste from the indus-

tries along the lake, untreated sewerage and widespread practice of open defecation that have continued to contaminate the lake. The degraded quality of water of Lake Victoria has compelled fishermen to travel deep inside the water body to cast nets

and get a catch.

This and the pollution on the lake has drastically reduced the number of fish in the lake and denied fishermen revenue. Freshwater fish producers in the country include Lake Turkana, Lake Naivasha, Lake Jipe, Lake Baringo

MARGINALISATION

Covid-19: Many domestic workers not covered by relief measures

JOHANNESBURG

"GOVERNMENT must force our employers to pay us our wages or register us for UIF so we can claim because we didn't create this virus and now we are suffering," says Vaidah Sande, a domestic worker in Johannesburg.

Sande has lived and worked in South Africa intermittently since 2004. She has worked for her current employer in Northgate on a full-time basis for about two years, earning R3 000 a month, GroundUp reported.

When the Covid-19 lockdown was announced in March, Sande's employers told her that she should stay at home until the lockdown is over. Since then, she has not been able to earn a living or send money to her three children in Zimbabwe.

The reality of a 21-day lockdown hit many South Africans hard on Thursday as they rushed to queue for unemployment benefits, ID documents, birth certificates and other essentials. Her husband passed away during the lockdown. "I used every last cent of my savings to send his body back to Zimbabwe... I have nothing left, I am sitting at zero," she told GroundUp.

Sande said she called her employers. They said their income had also been cut and they could

no longer pay her after April. According to Stats SA, there are over one million domestic workers in South Africa. Many will be excluded from the Covid-19 Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme (TERS).

Employers who are not able to pay salaries during the lockdown are compelled to apply for UIF TERS on behalf of their employees. But this excludes workers who do not contribute to the fund (often in the informal sector) and undocumented foreign nationals.

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced last month that unemployed people who do not receive any form of a social grant and do not qualify for UIF would receive R350 per month until October. According to Social Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu, South African citizens, permanent residents and refugees on the Department of Home Affairs' system will qualify for this grant.

Survey finds 79% of domestic workers not registered for UIF

But Sande, and many other domestic workers, are undocumented and cannot be registered for UIF. This means she cannot access the UIF TERS during the lockdown. According to a survey of about 600 domestic workers con-

ducted by Izwi Domestic Workers Alliance in April, 79% were not registered for UIF and 11% did not know whether they were registered or not. (Part of the reason for this low registration is likely to be the labour department's uFiling system. Last year, we tested it and found it extremely difficult to register a domestic worker on it.)

"To date, the state has refused to include unregistered workers in the TERS wage benefit. Most households have not registered their worker for UIF because they did not think it was worthwhile or did not want the hassle. Now domestic workers and their families are paying the price for their employers' non-compliance with labour law," read the statement by Izwi on 28 April. Izwi is calling on the labour department to compel all employers to pay domestic worker wages, regardless of their UIF registration status.

'We are suffering'

Domestic worker Miriam Mutsikira has two employers and also works part-time through a labour broking service. She works at one employer on Mondays and Fridays and another employer on Wednesdays.

Mutsikira is still being paid by one of her employers. Her other



Unemployment Insurance Fund Commissioner Teboho Maruping

employer only paid her for the one day she worked in March.

She is not receiving any relief from the labour broking service, although some other domestic workers were, she said.

"The government must really consider us domestic workers, especially foreign nationals, because we are suffering just like everyone else. No matter how much noise we make, we [immigrants] are not listened to," she

told GroundUp.

Mutsikira is not registered for UIF, despite working for one of her employers for about two years and having a work permit.

The South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (Sad-sawu) and United Domestic Workers of South Africa (Udwosa) have proposed an amnesty for all employers who have not registered their employees and have not contributed to

the fund.

In a submission sent to UIF Commissioner Teboho Maruping, the unions said the purpose of the amnesty would be to promote compliance with the law and to ensure that domestic workers have access to UIF TERS. "While no fine will be imposed, employers should be issued with compliance orders to settle the outstanding contributions on registration, or arrange for payment,"

read the submission, dated 4 May.

The unions said domestic workers who have not been paid during the lockdown must be advised to apply for UIF and their applications should be approved "as a matter of extreme urgency."

All labour centres should be opened to ensure that domestic workers who do not have access to the internet can apply for UIF, said the unions.

COVID-19

African finance ministers launch debt talks with creditors

ADDIS ABABA

COUNTRIES are asking official and private creditors to temporarily suspend payments in order to channel resources to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

African finance ministers started talks with private creditors to find a way to temporarily suspend debt payments without triggering defaults. At least a dozen African finance ministers spoke during the hour-and-half virtual meeting with more than

100 creditors on Monday, according to a representative of private creditors who attended the gathering.

Both sides talked about mechanisms that would allow nations to suspend payments while guaranteeing their access to

debt markets in the future, said the representative, who asked not to be named because the discussions were private. Both sides agreed to hold more meetings.

African countries are asking official and private creditors to

temporarily suspend payments in order to channel resources to contain the coronavirus pandemic. The virus threatens to overwhelm the health system of a continent that is home to two-thirds of the world's poor. While official creditors have

agreed to halt payments this year on about \$20 billion of obligations, getting private investors to join the initiative is proving more difficult due to legal and financial complexities.

Vera Songwe, the head of the United Nations Economic Com-

mission for Africa, participated in the meeting, the person said. The African Union's special envoy Tidjane Thiam, chaired the discussion, according to a statement by UNECA and the Washington-based Institute of International Finance.

GENEROSITY

Dangote Cement donates patrol cars to Ogun Security Trust Fund

LAGOS

DANGOTE Cement plc has donated 25 operational cars, fully equipped with security features, to the Ogun Security Trust Fund (OSTF) as part of its strategic Corporate Social Responsibility towards maintaining security of lives and property.

The donation was a fulfillment

of a pledge made by the immediate past group managing director (GMD) of the company, Joseph Makoju, who had promised the state government that Dangote Cement as a responsible corporate citizen would partner the government in ensuring the much-desired security is maintained in the state and its environs.

Presenting the cars to the OSTF

in Lagos on behalf of the management of Dangote Cement plc, Emmanuel Ikazoboh, independent non-executive director, said the donation was informed by the need to boost the Fund's operation because security is essential to economic development.

"No investor will be willing to put his/her funds in an economy where insecurity is rife with law-

lessness and chaos as the order of the day.

We are major investors in Ogun State and as such we prefer a state of orderliness and sound security which allows businesses to thrive," Ikazoboh said.

Ogun Security Trust Fund was established in 2011 and refined in 2019 by Governor Dapo Abiodun. The objectives of the Fund include

the maintenance of security and welfare of citizens.

"I recall that on October 6, 2019, our then group managing director, Engr. Joe Makoju, made a pledge on behalf of the company to present operational vehicles to the Fund. As a corporate socially responsible organisation, the security and well-being of our host communities remain utmost in our minds," he said.

Ikazoboh said a major step towards encouraging investments and creation of employment is promoting and ensuring adequate security in the environment.

"This is why we at Dangote Cement fully appreciate your state government's several initiatives in the promotion of security and a safe operating environment for business," he said.

He explained that government alone could not continue to bear the full cost of meeting the expectations of the entire populace in the provision of basic necessities like health, education and security for the citizenry, adding that this thought gave rise to Public Private Partnerships, where private sector collaborates with public sector in the provision of essential services.

MOBILIZATION

ALMA chairs tout on integrated response to COVID-19, malaria

By Guardian Reporter

THE current Chairman of Africa Leaders Malaria Alliance, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, and his two predecessors, former Liberian President Hellen Johnson Sirleaf and Tanzanian's Jakaya Kikwete have urged the continent's leaders to have an integrated response against the coronavirus that includes focus on malaria.

In their joint statement, the three leaders who represent the End Malaria Council, called for continued essential health services like malaria prevention and control, while responding to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

"I am committed to working with fellow heads of state and government on a coordinated and harmonized response to COVID-19 that stamps out this pandemic while continuing to provide essential health services to our citizens," said Kenyatta in the statement noting that nothing is more important than protecting our

women, children and men from preventable and treatable diseases like malaria.

"These efforts will help us to sustain the significant gains that we have made driving down malaria cases and deaths over the past twenty years," the Kenyan leader added as Liberia's Sirleaf backed him by saying that prioritizing frontline health worker safety is a critical investment in the COVID-19 response that will provide short- and long-term benefits.

"Ensuring these health workers are equipped with the necessary protective equipment, diagnostics and data tools will protect health workers and empower them to interrupt the virus while maintaining life-saving services against existing diseases like malaria," said Sirleaf who is currently World Health Organization's goodwill ambassador for the Health Workforce.

In seconding his peers' observations, former President Kikwete also said in order to fight COVID-19 effectively and ensure hard-won gains in

malaria are not lost, African nations must work together by, "Strengthening essential regional partnerships to develop coordinated and collaborative approaches to support public health systems." Currently Kikwete is an ambassador and advocate for regional approaches to health and development on the African continent.

The three leaders statement comes in the wake of a WHO warning that severe disruptions to insecticide-treated net campaigns and in access to antimalarial medicines could lead to a doubling in the number of malaria deaths in sub-Saharan Africa this year compared to 2018, according to a new modelling analysis released by WHO and partners ahead of World Malaria Day (25 April).

WHO urges countries to move fast and distribute malaria prevention and treatment tools at this stage of the COVID-19 outbreak in sub-Saharan Africa, and to do their utmost to safely maintain these essential malaria control services.



ALMA chairman, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya.

The analysis considers nine scenarios for potential disruptions in access to core malaria control tools during the pandemic in 41 countries, and the resulting increases that may be seen in cases and deaths.

Under the worst-case scenario, in which all insecticide-treated net (ITN) campaigns are suspended and there is a 75 percent reduction in access to effective antimalarial medicines, the estimated tally of malaria deaths in sub-

Saharan Africa in 2020 would reach 769 000, twice the number of deaths reported in the region in 2018.

This would represent a return to malaria mortality levels last seen 20 years ago.

CRISIS

KQ applies for Sh7 billion emergency State bailout

NAIROBI

KENYA Airways has asked the Treasury for a Sh7 billion emergency bailout after its aircraft were grounded due to the restrictions on international passenger flights sparked by the coronavirus pandemic that has killed over 280,000 people globally.

The Treasury is reviewing the application but has remained non-committal on whether it will offer the national carrier the money it needs for the maintenance of the grounded planes, payment of staff salaries and settlement of utility bills like security, water, electricity and parking fees.

Large aircraft pay \$25 (Sh2,650) daily to park at airports like JKIA and \$585 (Sh62,010) and \$702 (Sh74,412) to land during the day and night respectively. Besides the bailout, the airline is also seeking other incentives like tax breaks and waivers of navigation and landing fees. Without State aid, the airline risks running out of money in the near future against the background of banks' uneasiness in lending to Africa carriers which are facing a plethora of challenges.

The International Air Transport Association has warned that the aviation industry may take years to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and that African airlines could lose up to \$6 billion (Sh636 billion) in passenger revenue this year alone, further compounding their woes.

"We are looking into KQ's Sh7 billion request during this difficult time," Treasury Secretary Ukur Yatani told the Business Daily. "The request will be reviewed against the background that the airline recently received Sh5 billion from the government." The Treasury has indicated that it



Treasury Secretary Ukur Yatani.

has not included a provision for Kenya Airways in the budget estimates for the year starting July, which are before Parliament for approval.

Kenya Airways received a Sh5 billion commercial loan from the Treasury in late February to fund its fleet engines overhaul and maintenance as well as to finance day-

to-day operations for the loss-making airline. This underlines the airline's overreliance on Treasury-backed loans and financing.

In the latest case, Mr Yatani did not disclose whether Kenya Airways is seeking a grant, a loan or a combination of both.

The State suspended all cross-border passenger flights on March 22, stopping KQ's flights to destinations outside Kenya. The order effectively cut off Kenya Airways' flow of new revenues at a time when it had no cash reserves.

On April 6, the government also barred movement into and out of four counties including Nairobi, Mombasa, Kwale and Kilifi, forcing Kenya Airways to ground local flights as well and hinge its survival solely on cargo business, which is also facing stiff competition from Ethiopian Airlines.

Kenya Airways Chief Executive Officer Allan Kilavuka said revenue from the carrier's cargo business are not adequate for the airline to meet its obligations. Cargo and mail contributed only 7.3 percent of the airline's sales in 2018, bringing in Sh8.4 billion out of Sh114 billion that the listed firm recorded as revenue.

"We can survive if we get some revenue from cargo, but only just survive. For us to meet our full obligations, we need government support urgently," said Mr Kilavuka. "Aircraft engines have to be maintained often and it is important that we get funds for this."

Global carriers like British Airways and Ethiopian Airlines have committed more flights to shipping flowers, fresh fruit and vegetables via Jomo Kenyatta International

Airport (JKIA), further squeezing Kenya Airways' share of cargo business.

The Ministry of Transport has acknowledged that lack of cargo flights has hurt the airline's cargo business. "Kenya Airways has only two cargo freighters, one of which is currently undergoing heavy maintenance. These freighters, however, fly short distances and cannot, therefore, fly to Europe," said Transport Secretary James Macharia.

To get around this handicap, Kenya Airways has converted some of the passenger planes grounded by the coronavirus for shipment of light cargo like medicines. In 2017, the government converted Sh6.8 billion worth of loans it had provided to the airline into shares as part of the airline's debt restructuring.

The government, which owns 48.9 percent of KQ shares, also holds another Sh7.7 billion worth of convertible debt.

The carrier's share price at the Nairobi Securities Exchange has dropped to Sh1.27, shaving off nearly half its value in the past month and valuing the airline at Sh7.2 billion. KQ reported a net loss of Sh8.5 billion in the half year ended June 2019, more than double the net loss of Sh4 billion the year before as costs rose faster than revenue.

KQ's problems have been linked to a mix of increased competition, corruption, mismanagement and a previous debt binge that continues to weigh heavily on its balance sheet. In the wake of the global coronavirus pandemic, KQ's top executives as well as some employees took a pay cut of up to 75 percent on their gross salary following the grounding of international flights.

INVESTMENT

Govt to insure more crops as farmers bear negative impacts of floods

KIGALI

FOLLOWING disasters that continue to destroy farmers' crops and kill domestic animals, the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) has said that it is going to subsidize insurance cost for more crops and livestock so as to cushion farmers against losses.

Farmers in Gakenke district are among farmers who are victims of floods as their crops are not insured. At least 32 hectares of rice farms were affected after River Mukungwa broke its barriers and destroyed their farms and considering they did not

have crop insurance, they have totally counted losses.

"Our farms were destroyed by floods and we have not yet insured our crops. Those in charge of insurance had not yet approached us to explain to us how crop insurance works. But the next time we are going to follow up so that we embrace it to avoid further losses," said Claudien Nanzubuhoro, one of the farmers.

The issue of lack of knowledge about agriculture insurance and lack of insurance services close to them was reiterated by farmers in Eastern Province in Nyagatare District. They grow crops in Rwangingo marshland of more

than 900 hectares straddling the Districts of Nyagatare and Gatsibo in Eastern Province that were flooded, ruining rice, maize, beans and soybean plantations while these crops are not even covered with insurance.

"It seems there is limited awareness about crop insurance services because many farmers do not know how it works. We have not seen those in charge of insurance services coming to enlighten us and we do not even know the required cost," said Eugene Kalisa, the chairperson of Rwangingo Rice Growers Cooperative composed of 98 farmers in Nyagatare District.

He added that there is no technology to manage floods in the marshland and therefore floods have been worse. "Besides seeking insurance, we also request agriculture ministry to help us with technology to manage floods in the marshland since it is very expensive," he said.

He also requested the ministry to enhance insurance to other crops since at present only maize and rice are insured for very few farmers across the country. "We grow maize, rice, beans and soya and we want that all of them be insured," he said.

These are part of other famers whose over 3,117 hectares of crops

have been devastated by disasters mainly floods across the country which also killed 3,227 domestic animals including 60 cows in the first four months of this year.

More crops, animals to be covered

Marion Nirere Mulindwa, the SPIU Coordinator at the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources said they are going to work with insurance companies to cover more crops beyond maize and rice. Of domestic animals, only cows are covered. The insurance scheme is subsidized up to 40 per cent by government.

For crop, she said, compre-

hensive risk insurance is provided to cover yield losses due to non-preventable risks, such as drought, flood, landslide, pests and diseases, storm, natural fire and lightning.

For livestock, the insurance policy covers accidents such as lightning, internal and external injuries, flooding and landslides, diseases of terminal nature, emergency slaughter on advice of a qualified veterinary practitioner and epidemics.

"In the next fiscal year, other value chains will be added. For example for crop insurance, Irish potatoes, beans, soybeans and bananas, cassava and horticultural

crops among others are the new value chains to consider, and for livestock poultry and piggyery will be considered. All the farmers in the mentioned value chains will be eligible for the scheme," she said.

Mulindwa said that only 56,868 farmers have been covered for crop insurance while 2781 farmers have livestock insurance coverage so far. Only 6, 120 cows are covered while 10,303 hectares have been covered since the launch of agri-insurance scheme. At least Rwf390 million has been invested in the scheme under 2019/2020 fiscal year.

SLOWDOWN

Canada loses most jobs ever, unemployment hits 13%

OTTAWA

CANADA shed three million jobs in the last two months due to the coronavirus lockdown, causing the unemployment rate to shoot up to 13% in April, the government reported Friday.

That rate more than doubled, following a relatively small increase the previous month when restrictions started to be put in place, its statistical agency said. The new rate is second only to the 13.1% observed during a recession in 1982, but lower than analysts had forecast.

Statistics Canada said the figure would have been much higher had it included a large number of people who wanted to work but could not job-hunt "presumably due to ongoing business closures and very limited opportunities to find new work." Many also worked fewer hours, the agency said.

All of this has led to 6.7 million Canadians applying for unemployment benefits or government aid, and just over one in five Canadian households reporting difficulties meeting financial obligations. "These numbers tell us what we already know: Canadians are hurting because of this pandemic. Everyone has their own story. But it all boils down to a very difficult time for a lot of people," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told a daily briefing.

He also announced an extension beyond June of an emergency wage subsidy "to help kickstart our economic reopen-

ing and boost jobs." Specific details are to follow next week.

'Nothing to cheer about'

Although worst-case projections failed to materialise, "when you're rounding the number of jobs lost to the nearest million, there's nothing to cheer about," commented CIBC analyst Avery Shenfeld. The employment declines over the past two months were observed in all provinces, but Quebec - which has recorded the highest number of Covid-19 infections and fatalities - led all of them with 821 000 jobs lost.

Employment also dropped sharply in Canada's three largest cities - Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Youths aged 15-24, recent immigrants, low-wage workers and those with the least job security - temporary or non-unionised, for example - suffered the most job losses. Statistics Canada noted, however, that most of the newly unemployed were temporarily laid off, meaning they could return to work when restrictions are lifted.



Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau

In March, it said, almost all job losses were observed in the services sector, whereas the following month goods-producing industries saw proportionally larger losses, led by construction and manufacturing.

Within the services sector, employment losses continued, led by wholesale and retail trade, and accommodation and food services. Some sectors managed to avoid the carnage. Utilities, public administration, and finance, insurance and real estate, for example, were "relatively less affected by the Covid-19 economic shutdown," said Statistics Canada.

Large firms and institutions appeared to have been able to keep workers on the job better than small businesses. An additional 3.3 million Canadians also worked from home. After previous downturns, services jobs returned "relatively quickly," or within four months, to pre-downturn levels. Workers in goods-producing industries were not as lucky, with recoveries from recessions in 1981-1982 and 1990-1992, and the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, taking more than six and 10 years, respectively. This time, said Statistic Canada, "as economic activity resumes industry by industry following the Covid-19 economic shutdown, the time required for recovery will be a critical question."

RELIEF

India's energy demand is gradually rebounding as it emerges from lockdown

NEW DELHI

FUEL consumption in India is showing signs of rebounding after witnessing the worst monthly sales in more than 12 years.

Demand in May will be as much as 25 per cent higher than April as planting season begins, requiring tractors and water pumps to burn more diesel. The easing of the world's biggest lockdown will also bring more trucks back to the road, according to officials at two state-owned refineries. The world's third-biggest oil importer saw demand drop sharply after the government ordered its 1.3 billion people to stay home from March 25 to curb the spread of coronavirus. April consumption fell by half from the previous year to the lowest level since 2007, according to official data released on Monday.

"In about a week, we will see more signs of demand revival as factories restart, construction work resumes and there's greater freight movement," said R. Ramachandran, Bharat Petroleum's director of refineries. "Sowing of summer crops in north India will increase use of tractors and water-pumps helping diesel consumption."

Demand for petrol should improve slightly as lockdown restrictions are eased and pas-

senger movement picks up as factories open up, said M. Venkatesh, managing director at Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals. Jet fuel demand remains a problem, and there are limits to how much of it can be blended into diesel, he said.

India's rebound remains far behind that of its neighbour, China, where traffic in top cities is busier than pre-virus levels. Indian demand will remain well below normal levels even with the rebound, Mr Ramachandran said. Indian refiners have had to seek out tankers to hold oil at sea as every bit of the nation's on-shore storage capacity is filled. India has extended its lockdown to May 17, but introduced relaxations earlier this month especially for the areas that have been least affected. Those tend to be in the countryside, while the typical urban demand centres of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai still face harsh restrictions.

"Since a few weeks back we decided to start our economic activities - the transportation activities, the industrial activities in the rural areas of the countryside of India," oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan said in an online conversation with consultancy IHS Markit. "And gradually we are edging out from the lockdown. Our demand is picking up."



Indian motorists are back on the road after COVID-19 lockdown.

PESSIMISM

IMF declares previous warnings of global economic contraction were too optimistic

FLORENCE

THE head of the International Monetary Fund said Friday that previous estimates for the world economy to contract by three percent this year were too optimistic. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, during a video-linked conference in Florence, said that worsening indicators in some countries could weigh even further on this forecast.

"Incoming economic data for many countries is below our already pessimistic assessment for 2020," Georgieva said. "And with no immediate medical solutions, more adverse scenarios might unfortunately materialise for some economies." In April, the IMF warned that the world economy would experience the worst downturn since the Great Depression.

Provided the pandemic were to lessen in intensity in the second half of 2020, however, global growth would rebound by 5.8% in 2021, representing a partial recovery, the IMF said last month. "The unknown behaviour of the virus is clouding the horizon for projections," Georgieva said on Friday.

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WORLD

UK's COVID-19 death toll tops 38,000, worst in Europe

LONDON

THE United Kingdom's COVID-19 death toll topped 38,000 as of early May, including suspected cases, by far the worst official toll yet in Europe, according to official data published yesterday.

Figures published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for England and Wales brought the United Kingdom's official death toll to 38,289 as of May 3 - up nearly 6,000 in the space of a week, according to a Reuters tally of death registrations data.

"For the first time that I can remember, there were more deaths in total in care homes than there were in hospitals that week," ONS statistician Nick Stripe told BBC TV.

The figures showed care homes now account for a third of all COVID-19 deaths in England and Wales.

Such a high UK death toll increases the pressure on Prime Minister Boris Johnson: opposition parties say he was too slow to impose a lockdown, too slow to introduce mass testing and too slow to get enough protective equipment to hospitals.

The British government will on Tuesday set out details on how to make workplaces safer as some busi-

nesses start to return to work, a day after Johnson set out a cautious plan to exit the coronavirus lockdown.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the business ministry would set out details of how employers could make workplaces safer. Hancock also said that British people are unlikely to be able to go on international holidays this summer due to the pandemic.

The government published Monday a 51-page document entitled "Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy", followed by a series of sector-by-sector documents offering guidance to employers and workers.

The leaders of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland made clear they did not share Johnson's approach.

UN

The United Nations (UN) on Monday held a wide-ranging policy discussion stressing a variety of multilateral solutions to ease the COVID-19 pandemic and also to get back on track toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"Our commitment to achieving the SDGs has not changed, but the urgency to act has," said Mona Juul, president of the Economic and Social



Passengers commute on a subway train on the Jubilee Line in London, Britain, on Monday. (XINHUA)

Council, as the discussion over the topic of "Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for Covid-19 Response" got underway online.

Juul said that national responses should be shaped by human rights and that country-specific global action should take special situations into account. Noting that "we are currently tossing and turning through dangerous waters," she pointed to the SDGs as "our chart to see us through the storm." UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed underscored the "immediate priority" of addressing the needs of the most vulnerable countries and communities who are at risk of being left behind.

Describing the coronavirus pandemic as "a human crisis of historic magnitude," Liu Zhenmin, who heads the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), stressed the need to build on lessons learned throughout the crisis to accelerate progress during the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development and to turn the tide against inequality.

Guy Ryder, director of the International Labour Organization, said that an effective response to COVID-19 required global solidarity and multilateral action, with international coordination on health, social and economic policy.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet stressed that human rights should be at the core of the COVID-19 crisis and encouraged vocal support to

step up efforts to leave no one behind.

Qu Dongyu, head of the Food and Agriculture Organization, emphasized the impact of that the pandemic was having on food security and nutrition, pushing for effective policy solutions for the global pandemic response.

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, executive secretary for the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, encouraged a coordinated and coherent global response to the adverse social, economic and financial impact of the pandemic.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO), also weighed into the discussion, saying: "There can be no going back to business as usual."

Global tally

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases reported to the WHO has exceeded 4 million worldwide, according to the UN health agency.

Agencies

Youth play role to help Africa beat pandemic

NAIROBI

YOUNG people are increasingly stepping up to help combat the spread of the coronavirus in Africa with enterprising initiatives.

Their contributions are making a difference as the World Health Organization predicts that Africa could become the continent hit hardest by COVID-19.

As of Monday afternoon, 42,626 cases had been reported across Africa, the WHO said.

South Africa, the worst-affected country in the continent, saw the number of cases top 10,000 by Sunday, according to health au-

thorities.

In Ghana, President Nana Akufo-Addo (pictured) said in a broadcast late on Sunday that a worker at a fish-processing factory in the Atlantic coastal city of Tema had infected 533 colleagues with the novel coronavirus.

Ghana had reported 4,700 confirmed cases as of Sunday night, the most infections in West Africa.

Greenway International Foundation, a youth-driven environmental protection organization from Ghana, has partnered with the Nigeria-based World Youth Summit and the United Nations Youth Association to distribute



healthcare supplies to vulnerable communities.

Michael Olusanya, the organization's founder and director, said it has been distributing sanitizers,

liquid soap and face masks, as well as educating the community on how to reduce the spread of the virus.

Olusanya said the group had so far handed out 3,000 containers of home-made liquid soap in 60-centiliters portions, 2,700 hand sanitizers in 100-milliliter packaging, 1,300 face masks, and 320 buckets in Ghana and Nigeria.

Kenya's Usalama Technology, a mobile platform founded by James Chege, is helping to disseminate information about the risks posed by the coronavirus.

The platform also links users to nearby emergency services and

helps potentially infected people access healthcare services. The application uses GPS to offer locations near users.

Chege said his company has about 14,500 users, with the site logging about 21,000 lifetime downloads. Locations of medical facilities authorized by the government to offer first-line COVID-19 responses are shown on a map, as well as isolation facilities provided by the government.

"We do not have exact numbers of COVID-19 infected users but we estimate that it may be up to 5 percent of our users," he said.

Agencies

COVID-19 cases climb in US prisons, nursing homes

DENVER

AS nearly 20,000 confirmed cases and 1,000 deaths from COVID-19 have been reported in Colorado, the western state's newest emerging battlegrounds are prisons and nursing homes, a trend also seen across the United States.

On Monday, a second inmate, 61, died at Sterling Correctional Facility in northeastern Colorado, and the number of active cases among inmates there has swelled by more than a third to 327, according to the Colorado Department of Corrections (CDCO).

The update was posted online on Monday as part of a new state prisons database reporting the results of coronavirus testing at prisons across the state.

Last week, an 83-year-old inmate

died from COVID-19, CDCO officials said.

Since May, the pandemic has been hitting prisons hard. In Ohio, more than 20 percent of the people infected with coronavirus were prisoners. In Arkansas, almost half of the state's cases were in prisons and nursing homes, according to a CNN report.

More than 1,000 inmates have tested positive for the virus, according to the Arkansas Department of Health, and 876 of them were in one prison facility.

CASES SURGE

Recent weeks have seen a rapid jump of infectious cases in nursing homes across the United States.

CNN last week reported that more than 30 percent of Arkansas' coronavirus deaths were nursing home residents. In New Hampshire,



US President Donald Trump

long-term care facility residents accounted for around 80 percent of the state's fatalities.

Last week, the Louisiana Department of Health reported that 688 nursing home residents had died and an additional 50 deaths were reported among residents of other adult residential facilities.

Louisiana recorded 30,399 COVID-19 cases and 2,167 related deaths, Johns Hopkins University's data

showed.

In the country's northwest, more than 50 percent of New Jersey's deaths came from long-term care facilities, according to data posted by the New Jersey Department of Health. New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy said he spoke with the National Guard over the possibility of using non-medical members to assist nursing homes.

"Based on our numbers in long-term care to date, we took some very aggressive action early on and I think at this point it's time to take further steps to address some of the long-term care testing issues," New Hampshire Health Commissioner Lori Shibinette was quoted by CNN as saying.

"To date, we have tested over 1,000 nursing home residents across the state, which is a great number,

we want to test more," Shibinette said.

About 111 people have died in New Hampshire, near 80 percent of whom were related to long-term care facility outbreaks, said Shibinette.

CALLING FOR TRANSPARENCY

With the caseload from nursing homes growing, officials have been addressing requests from family members for greater transparency and communication.

"As the coronavirus continues to isolate families from their loved ones, providing swift and accurate information on coronavirus cases should be the bare minimum we expect from nursing home facilities," California Attorney General Xavier Becerra said in a letter to the federal government last week. Xinhua

Russia ready to help Venezuela investigate mercenaries' incursion, says Lavrov

MOSCOW

RUSSIA'S special services are ready to consider providing assistance to Venezuela to investigate the incursion of mercenaries, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told reporters yesterday following a video conference of the CIS Foreign Ministers' Council.

"As for other forms of cooperation, including the investigation into the incursion of mercenaries in Venezuela with the aim of carrying out sabotage operations, terrorist attacks and toppling the legitimate president, our special services have been in touch. If a request on providing assistance in such matters is received based on the relevant agreements, of course, it will be considered," Lavrov (pictured) said.

Russia's top diplomat stressed that all contacts with Venezuela were carried out on a legitimate basis, that is, as part of intergovernmental documents and agreements ratified by the two countries' parliaments.

"This also applies to our military-technical cooperation and the need to provide maintenance of those products that are delivered there as part of our military-technical cooperation. These are our contractual obligations," he said.

"Of course, we help Venezuela, including by delivering humanitarian aid," Lavrov underscored, adding that attempts are made to stifle the country by imposing sanctions. "Together with other countries, we provide humanitarian assistance to Venezuela, including by supplying medicines," he added.

On May 3, the Venezuelan authorities reported that they had foiled an incursion by a group of mercenaries from Colombia who plotted to stage a coup in the country and assassinate President Nicolas Maduro.

Maduro said in an address on state television that two US citizens had been apprehended. In turn, US President Donald Trump said that the two Americans arrested in Venezuela had nothing to do with the US government. Agencies

DRC seeks Zimbabwe President Mnangagwa's intervention in border dispute with Zambia

HARARE

THE Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has approached Zimbabwean President Mnangagwa to mediate in its long-standing border dispute with Zambia, government-controlled media reported yesterday.

DRC special envoy Marie Nzeza on Monday met Mnangagwa (pictured) at State House to brief him on the situation. Mnangagwa is the current chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)'s Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation. DRC and Zambia have had misunderstandings over a part of their common 1,600km border, the latest arising from a late 1980s attempt to demarcate the frontier with beacons.

Mnangagwa said after the meeting that both countries were seeking SADC's intervention on the matter. "A special envoy from my brother Tshisekedi of the DRC briefed me on the situation in DRC, in particular in relation to the current COVID-19 pandemic and how they are tackling it.

"There is also the security situation where DRC and Zambia want the Organ on Defence and Politics to look at a small matter which is existing between the Republic of Zambia and DRC," he said.

Nzeza, who is also the DRC Foreign Affairs Minister, refused to shed more light into the issue saying that she was not at liberty to share what had been discussed in her meeting with Mnangagwa, according to the Herald newspaper.

It is not the first time that SADC has been approached to discuss border disputes between two member states. In the 1990s, the regional bloc intervened in the dispute between Botswana and Namibia over ownership of an island on the Chobe River, which forms part of their border.

The matter was subsequently referred to the International Court of Justice, with the World Court ruling in 1999 that the island belonged to Botswana. Xinhua



Chinese internet companies light a candle for global countries in fight against COVID-19

WHILE curbing COVID-19 and re-summing production at home, Chinese internet companies have moved proactively to apply their technologies to help foreigners and overseas Chinese cope with the globally spreading pandemic, actively contributing Chinese strength to the global fight against the virus.

Recently, 500 respirators and a large quantity of other medical materials from China were distributed from Ethiopia to the frontline of more than 50 African countries.

The supplies marked the second batch of materials donated to Africa by China's Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation. Besides respirators, the donation also consisted of one million sets of virus sampling

machines and nucleic acid extraction reagents, 200,000 sets of protective suits and masks, 2,000 forehead thermometers and 500,000 pairs of gloves.

The two foundations have so far donated preventive materials to more than 100 countries in the world.

"Those having genuine friends will never fail," President of Iceland Gudni Thorlacius Johannesson quoted a famous saying in his country in a thank-you email to Chinese internet giant Tencent.

The Chinese high-tech giant established a global pandemic fund worth more than \$1 billion, and recently purchased 7.7 million pieces of medical materials and delivered them to more than 10 countries in urgent de-

mand.

The technological advantages of Chinese internet companies also played an important role in the global anti-pandemic efforts.

China's Baidu Research opened its RNA structure algorithm LinearFold and the fastest website in the world for RNA structure prediction to epidemic control centers and research institutions around the world, in an attempt to enhance the understanding of the virus and significantly reduce the waiting time.

Days ago, the United Nations (UN) and Tencent announced a global partnership for the organization's 75th anniversary. Tencent will provide technical solutions to support online meetings for the UN. The

global dialogue on the COVID-19 pandemic initiated by the UN will be held under the technical support of the Chinese internet company.

Relying on their technological reserve, the Chinese internet companies steadfastly promoted the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in the global fight against the pandemic.

On March 28, Tencent launched an online global anti-pandemic information platform called "Together We Can", starting to provide one-stop information services on pandemic prevention and control for global users.

The platform introduces medical knowledge, helps users screen themselves for COVID-19, offers medical advising, and provides open pandemic-related courses for doctors from

China and around the world.

The Shenzhen-based enterprise also opened its COVID-19 self-triage assistant, an online tool backed by AI technology, to help people conduct a self-assessment about their health conditions by reporting their ages, symptoms, and 14-day travel history to the system. The tool also gives people medical advice.

Chinese tech giant Huawei has offered AI-enabled auxiliary diagnostic systems to Ecuador. Huawei Cloud, the cloud computing unit of the tech giant, also launched rapid diagnostic solutions to provide experience and technical support for dozens of countries in the world.

Alibaba Cloud of China's internet titan Alibaba developed AI diagnos-

tic technology for COVID-19, and has applied it in about 170 Chinese hospitals. The technology can analyze CT images of suspected COVID-19 patients within 20 seconds at an accuracy rate of 96 percent, effectively relieving the pressure on doctors.

Recently, Alibaba Cloud announced to share its AI-powered novel coronavirus disease diagnostic technology, free of charge, with hospitals worldwide. Medical institutions in multiple countries have expressed interest in using the technology.

The AI-powered technologies from China are making a positive contribution to the global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

People's Daily



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

Those who spread 'political virus' should be held accountable

COVID-19 is currently making some severe situations in the US with skyrocketing confirmed cases and deaths, tugging the heartstrings of all the compassionate. However, when the ghastly virus keeps on claiming lives of numerous Americans, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo exposed his malicious intentions.

He spread dangerous "political virus" just in the way COVID-19 did and fabricated rumors with prejudices and ignorance, which counteracted the joint efforts of mankind to jointly combat the disease and set the whole world into conflicts.

Disregarding the rampant spread of the virus, a common enemy of the mankind, he not only ignored the science-based instructions from international organizations and medical experts, but also sowed discords and launched unceasing attacks against China.

It is reported that he has denigrated China on many occasions, saying the country failed to report the outbreak in a timely manner and "destroyed existing samples". Pompeo, together with his fellow politicians, demanded compensation from China for COVID-19 and accused the WHO of promoting China's "disinformation" about the outbreak. Reports say that the former director of the CIA is transforming US Department of State into an intelligence unit.

Clinging to the Cold War Mentality, he wantonly started conflicts instead of caring for the vast number of Americans on the brink of death. In total disregard of facts, he stigmatized China and made China a scapegoat in an attempt to shirk responsibilities. The undercover intention was to deflect attention at home and shift the blame to the innocent. He must be held accountable for all his evil acts.

Even the US media cannot tolerate such "political virus". Washington Post remarked that "while more responsible leaders have struggled to contain the pandemic, Pompeo has pursued pet causes." "He has dedicated himself to affixing blame to Beijing for the epidemic," and "Pompeo's pandemic performance ensures his place among the worst secretaries of state ever."

Groundless allegations against China cannot hold water. Faced with the horrific spread of COVID-19, China

reported the outbreak to WHO, shared the genome sequence of the virus with other countries, and carried out international cooperation to contain the virus, all at the earliest time possible. These are plain facts for all to see, and have been widely acknowledged by the international community.

The Communist Party of China and the Chinese government have always given top priority to the lives and health of the people, and fully safeguarded people's right to life, health and other basic human rights. The country has admitted all suspected and confirmed cases for treatment, and tried its utmost to offer free testing and treatment for the patients.

China's arduous efforts yielded remarkable phased results within two months, and the lives and health of all 1.4 billion Chinese people have been protected to the highest extent possible. As the Communist Party of China (CPC) has been dedicated to wholeheartedly serving the people, it is highly trusted by the Chinese people.

It is crystal clear who is the first to sound the alarm for the prevention of the virus; who placed people's lives above everything else and saved lives and cured patients at all costs; who took the most strict measures and mobilized the whole country; who shared the results of scientific research on the virus with the international community in a spirit of openness and transparency; and who shouldered its international responsibilities by lending a helping hand to countries with vulnerable public health systems. All these facts cannot be denied.

When the world was in dire need of joint efforts to defeat the common enemy, Pompeo and his fellows stirred up troubles, regarded China as their rival and created the absurd "political virus". Such practice would only undermine the joint efforts from the international community. Their wrong values and logic disclosed the ill intent to frame China and cover up their own incompetence.

They defied the golden rule of defeating the virus with international cooperation, single-mindedly drove a wedge in the world and impeded international cooperation. Like what US scholars said, they are the accomplice of the virus.

People's Daily

Beijing underlines one-China principle on WHO affairs

BEIJING

IT is a smooth process for technical experts from the Taiwan region to participate in the World Health Organization (WHO) technical activities under the one-China principle, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said here yesterday.

Spokesperson Zhao Lijian's remarks came after the foreign affairs department of Taiwan authorities

said Monday that the Chinese mainland signed a confidential Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the WHO in 2005 on affairs related to the Taiwan region's participation in the WHO activities.

It is no secret about the MOU signed by the Chinese government and the WHO in 2005, Zhao told a routine press briefing, adding that relevant information could be reached online.

There is only one China in the world,

and the Taiwan region is an inalienable part of China's territory, Zhao stressed, noting that China does not need to sign an MOU with any international organization to "return Taiwan to China."

According to the MOU signed by China and the WHO, it is a smooth process for technical experts from the Taiwan region to participate in the WHO technical activities under the one-China principle, said the spokesperson.

Xinhua



Congo president's chief of staff denies graft charges as trial begins

KINSHASA

THE chief of staff to Democratic Republic of Congo's president denied all wrongdoing on Monday as his trial on charges of embezzling more than US\$50 million in public funds opened live on national television.

Vital Kamerhe, who appeared at a two-hour hearing wearing prison fatigues and a surgical mask as protection against the coronavirus, is the most senior politician to face trial for graft in Congo, where high-level corruption is endemic.

Kamerhe backed President Felix Tshisekedi in his successful 2018 election campaign in return for Tshisekedi's support the next time around in 2023. The veteran power-broker's arrest on April 8 sent shock waves through the country's ruling coalition.

If convicted, Kamerhe could serve up to 20 years in prison and would be ineligible to contest the next election.

Kamerhe, 61, told the court he never touched money earmarked for social housing under Tshisekedi's flagship 100-day building programme that prosecutors say was stolen. Kamerhe and several other senior government figures oversaw the public works drive.

"I intervened on behalf of the President of the Republic to ensure that this work is carried out and that we can meet the pressing needs of the Congolese people in the sectors of education, health and roads," he said.

Kamerhe is charged alongside two others, Lebanese businessman Jammal Samih and Jeannot Muhima, a senior aide to Tshisekedi. They also pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The trial will resume on May 25. The court has 48 hours to rule on Kamerhe's request to be released on bail.

The arrest of Kamerhe, a former president of the national assembly, exposed deep fractures in his coalition with Tshisekedi. Some of Kamerhe's supporters say he is being targeted to remove a potential rival to Tshisekedi. The presidency has declined to comment on the affair.

Transparency advocates see the trial as a litmus test case for Tshisekedi's commitment to addressing corruption, which they say was rampant under former president Joseph Kabila.

Congo is one of the world's poorest countries despite vast reserves of copper, cobalt and gold, and investigative reports by domestic and international organisations have repeatedly accused senior government officials of graft.

Xinhua

How many US flu patients actually infected with COVID-19?



A healthcare worker walks past a flu tent set up at Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center in the Brooklyn borough of New York, the United States, April 19, 2020. (File photo)

WASHINGTON

"HOW many of those were presumed to be flu or pneumonia when they were actually COVID-19?" a renowned U.S. geneticist and researcher said in a report published by The Washington Post in late April.

Eric Topol, founder and director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute, said the early coronavirus deaths confirmed in California could mean COVID-19 may have been misdiagnosed in many people early this year.

His doubt represented concern of the public.

Several U.S. epidemiologists said since the COVID-19 outbreak in the country, factors such as lack of knowledge of the virus, failure of timely alarm by the monitoring system, and serious problems with testing, have led to "confusion" between COVID-19 and flu patients.

Some death cases presumed to result from influenza may actually be related to COVID-19, according to the experts.

In late April, health officials in California state confirmed at least two people who died in early- and mid-February had contracted the novel coronavirus, suggesting the virus may

have spread in the United States earlier than previously thought.

Tissue samples from victims who died on Feb. 6 and Feb. 17 in Santa Clara County, California, tested positive for the virus.

Previously, the nation's earliest coronavirus fatality was thought to have occurred on Feb. 29 in Kirkland, Washington.

The COVID-19 epidemic "spread silently within communities at a time when health officials still focused entirely on infections from travelers entering the United States from abroad, or off cruise ships," said a report by The Los Angeles Times.

"We were missing cases because we didn't have the tests to be able to confirm," Sara Cody, Santa Clara County's public health officer, was quoted by The Washington Post as saying.

As Cody explained, each severe COVID-19 case or death represents "tips of icebergs of unknown size."

"When you start seeing the first death, actually, the number of cases in the population is probably pretty high already. It's been in the community for a long time," Neeraj Sood, a professor at Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California, was quoted by The Los

Angeles Times as saying.

According to a report by The New York Times, as part of a research project into the flu, Helen Y. Chu, an infectious disease expert in Seattle, and a team of researchers had been collecting nasal swabs from residents experiencing symptoms throughout the Puget Sound region.

To repurpose the tests for monitoring the coronavirus, they turned to the support of state and federal officials, but were repeatedly rejected.

On Feb. 25, Chu and her colleagues began performing coronavirus tests without government approval. They quickly had a positive test from a local teenager with no recent travel history.

The coronavirus had already established itself on American soil without anybody realizing it, according to The New York Times report.

Some COVID-19 deaths have been diagnosed as flu-related in the United States, Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), told a hearing on Capitol Hill on March 11.

According to the CDC, as of Feb. 22, in the current season there were at least 32 million cases of flu in the United States, with 18,000 deaths.

Xinhua

Japanese press' reports on Brezhnev's 'statements' on Kuril Islands are bogus - ministry

MOSCOW

AUTHORS of reports in the Japanese press about unknown statements by Soviet Leader Leonid Brezhnev about ownership of the southern part of the Kuril Islands indulge in wishful thinking to strengthen their position in the negotiations on a peace treaty,

the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"The purpose of these bogus pseudo-sensational materials on the problems of the peace treaty between Russia and Japan is obvious - try to strengthen the Japanese position in the negotiations on the basis of regular speculation," the Russian Foreign

Ministry said.

The Russian Foreign Ministry indicated that the sovereignty of Russia over all the southern Kuril Islands is undeniable, and the peace treaty should be based on Japan's recognition of the results of World War II in full, including the southern Kuril Islands.

"Any insinuations on this subject, especially with links to the 'private archives' of the former Japanese leadership, are inappropriate," the ministry emphasized.

The ministry recalled that the priority at the current stage is to develop the Russian-Japanese cooperation in order to bring bilateral relations to a

new level.

On Wednesday, Japanese newspaper Asahi reported that Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev during the talks with Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka in October 1973, allegedly verbally admitted that the problem of the southern Kuril Islands was one of the "unresolved issues" between the two

countries after the end of the World War II.

The newspaper claimed that this was stated in the official recording of conversations between the two leaders, made by employees of the Japanese Foreign Ministry with the "top secret" stamp.

Agencies

China-Europe freight trains ensures unimpeded transportation channel of medical supplies amid COVID-19

CHINA-Europe freight trains witnessed growth in both the number of trips made and cargo volume in the first quarter this year, serving as an effective logistics channel stabilizing international supply chain, facilitating international cooperation, and expediting the transportation of preventative materials amid COVID-19.

They sent a total of 1,440 tons of epidemic containment materials to Poland, Spain, Lithuania and other European destinations which served as transfer stations and distributed the supplies further afield.

On April 23, a 50-container China-Europe freight train arrived in Poland, carrying 350 tons of masks, protective suits, as well as

commodities such as accessories, garments, shoes and hats. The China-Europe freight trains not only brought preventative and productive materials to Europe amid the COVID-19 pandemic, but also injected confidence in local enterprises, said Philip Grzelak, CEO of Hatrans Logistics, the operator of the freight service in Poland.

The production of many Polish enterprises relied on the spare parts sent by the China-Europe freight trains, said Grzelak, adding that the freight service was the only available logistics channel during the coronavirus outbreak as most of the major transportation routes were forced to suspend service. He believes that Poland and Europe can maintain stable economic and



trade ties with China through the China-Europe freight rail.

The advantages of the service are more conspicuous given the spread of the virus, and it's hoped that more Polish and European products can reach China through the service, the CEO told People's Daily, saying the rail link will play a

unique role in the recovery of Eurasian economy.

According to statistics, 96 trips had been made to Europe by the service between Jan. 1 and April 4 from Yiwu in east China's Zhejiang province, known for its small commodity trade and vibrant market, sending a total of 8,114 standard

containers, up 70.2 percent from a year ago.

The robust growth achieved amid the pandemic in Q1 indicated the rapid recovery of Chinese economy, which is of great significance for stabilizing global logistics chain, promoting cross-border circulation of goods and services, and revitalizing the confidence for international trade development, said Grzelak.

On April 12, Lithuania's capital Vilnius received the first China-Europe freight train carrying postal parcels. The train, departing from China's Chongqing municipality, took 260 tons of mails and medical supplies.

Minister of Transport and Communications of Lithuania Jaro-

slav Narkevicius remarked that the arriving postal train from China brought medical materials that were in dire need in Europe, and opened a new, stable and effective logistics channel. The service is expected to inject new energy into China-Europe relations, he added.

YUXINOU (Chongqing) Logistics Co., LTD, the operator of the freight service in Chongqing, said its service plan of May will be made in advance, and the company is planning to expand the daily volume to Europe by 50 tons.

On April 6, a China-Europe freight train arrived in Madrid, Spain from Yiwu after a 16-day trip stretching 13,052 kilometers. Apart from routine cargos such as auto parts and small commodities,

it also carried medical supplies donated by China to the Spanish government.

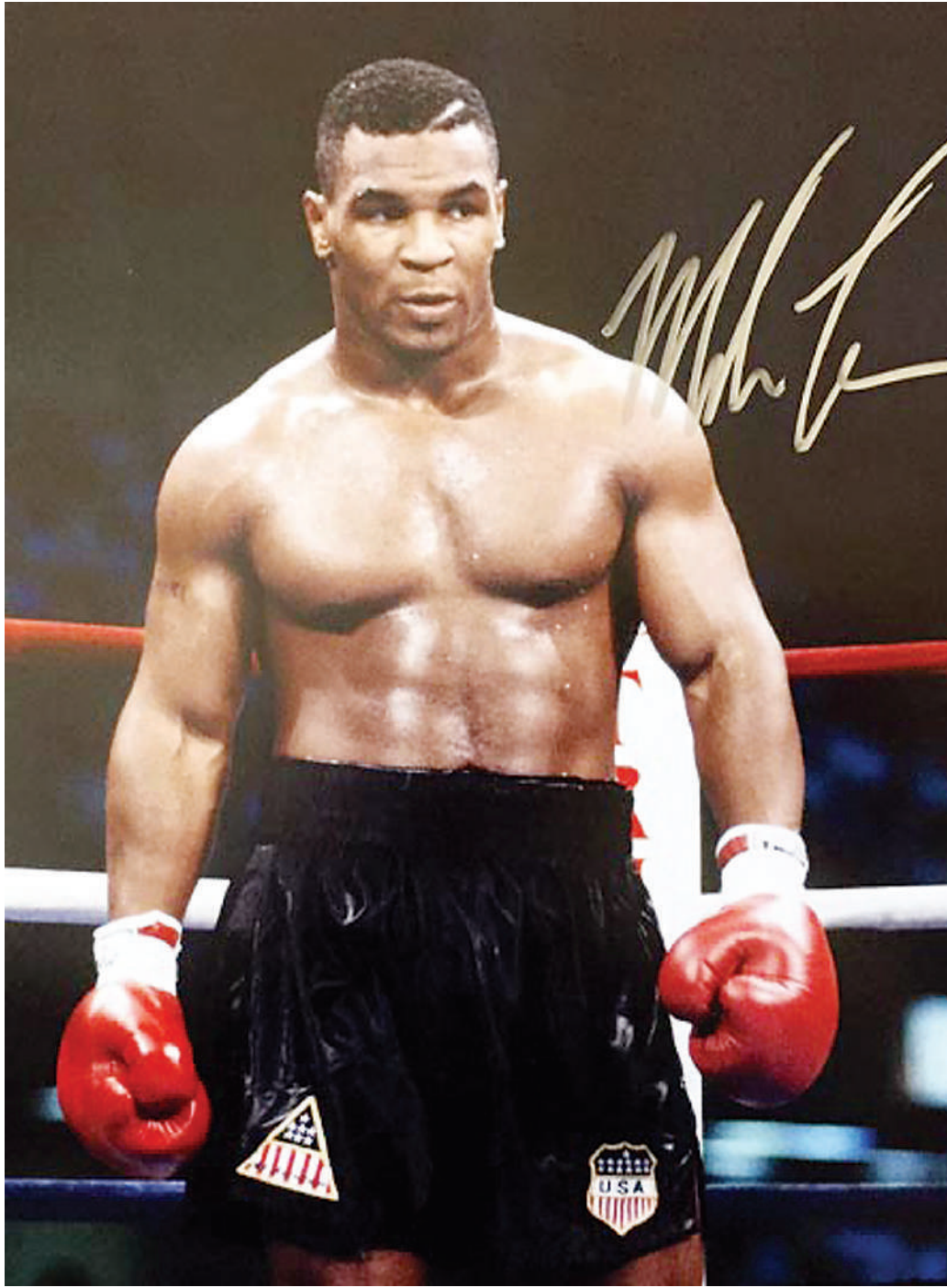
The Spanish branch of the YXE Trading Service Group, the operator of the rail line, will offer free international rail transportation and relevant services for all medical donations to Spain from organizations, overseas Chinese groups and individuals, so as to assist the concerted efforts to defeat the COVID-19 pandemic, said Carlos Santana, general manager of the YXE's Spanish branch.

He believes it bears huge significance to have a reliable international trade and logistics channel when global transportation is under impacts.

People's Daily

The
Guardian

SPORT



Mike Tyson

'I'm back', declares Mike Tyson in training video

NEW YORK

FORMER world heavyweight champion Mike Tyson continued to tease boxing fans about a possible return to the ring by posting another training video on Instagram on Monday that ended with the message, "I'm back".

The 53-year-old caught the attention of the boxing world last week when he posted a short video of a workout that showed he possesses plenty of the punching power and speed that allowed him to become the first heavyweight to hold the WBA, WBC and IBF titles.

Tyson said then that he was considering a return to the ring for some exhibition bouts to raise money for charity.

The newest video showed Tyson growling through a workout hitting the pads in yet another display of the ferocious power that made him one of the sport's most feared punchers.

Since Tyson hinted at a return, challengers have

been lining up for a shot at the boxer known as "Iron Mike".

New Zealand rugby great Sonny Bill Williams, who dabbled in boxing posting a 7-0-0 record, and Australian Paul Gallen, another rugby player with a 9-0-1 record in the ring, have been touted as potential opponents.

A more likely bet, however, would be Evander Holyfield with whom Tyson engaged in several epic bouts during their professional careers.

If Tyson, who retired after a loss to Kevin McBride in 2005, does return to the ring, he will be following in the footsteps of Floyd Mayweather Jr and Manny Pacquiao in coming out of retirement for an exhibition fight.

Tyson, who became the youngest heavyweight champion of all time when he defeated Trevor Berbick in 1986 aged 20, won 50 of his 58 professional fights before retiring.

REUTERS

Tokyo Olympics closing 5 souvenir shops; downsizing another

TOKYO

FIVE official Olympic merchandise shops in Tokyo will close by early June with business hindered by the coronavirus pandemic and the games being postponed until next year, organizers said Tuesday.

It's not clear if they will reopen.

Tokyo spokesman Masa Takaya said in an online news conference that a sixth store in Osaka would also be downsized by early June. Tokyo organizers said 89 stores were operating around Japan at the end of April.

Takaya could not rule out more closures amid the questions surrounding next year's games and how – or if – they can be held.

"We don't know what's going to happen in the next three weeks," Takaya said. "So in that respect I cannot precisely confirm how many shops will remain after the closure of these shops."

Organizers have budgeted for income of about \$100 million from merchandise sales. This is a small part of the privately financed operating budget of \$5.6 billion. The largest amount of income is from local sponsors that are paying \$3.3 billion to be part of the games.

Overall, Japan says it is spending \$12.6 billion to organize the Olympics, although a national

audit says the number is twice that much. This is all public money except for the \$5.6 billion operating budget.

The Tokyo Olympics are to open on July 23, 2021 – a one-year delay because of the pandemic. The Paralympics are scheduled to open on Aug. 24, 2021.

Organizers say about 5,500 products are being sold at the "licensed" shops, which carry caps, t-shirts, and even "official" chopsticks – all carrying the Tokyo and Olympic logo.

Takaya was asked what percentage of products were made in Japan. Many products, including the stuffed animal mascots – Miraitowa for the Olympics and Someity for the Paralympics – carry labels saying made in China or Vietnam. Many other products also carry the "Made in Japan" label.

"Tokyo 2020 does not have an aggregated number in terms of how many products are being made in Japan or outside of Japan," Takaya said. "In that respect, we will not be able to provide such (a) number."

He said the Tokyo organizing committee had contracts with suppliers, which are largely free to source products where they wish.

AP

Fish shoals move into new sports complex, stadium construction shelved due to floods

By Correspondent Marc Nkwame, Arusha

THE new sports complex currently under construction in Mirerani area of Simanjiro may as well be used for sport fishing, as it has been flooded by torrential rains currently precipitating in the mining district.

As rains pound most parts of the Northern Zone, flood water submerging the giant stadium currently under construction has also swept in shoals of fish that are finding the newly planted grass on the football pitch rather tasty.

"The grass is first of all rotting, due to the submerged pitch, but the decaying forage is attracting all types of fish that feed on them," Charles Mnyalu, the man behind the stadium project, disclosed.

Mnyalu, the Director of Tanzanite Community Empowerment Organization (TACEO) of Mirerani, working on the ambitious project, said the works have thus been shelved until, possibly, next August.

He explained that, there is a large river nearby, which due to torrential rains, was swollen and pumped water into the project area, filling the entire playgrounds and soccer pitch.

Due to that the giant sports complex will have to wait until next year before completion.

"It is no longer possible to accomplish the project this year, because we first have this flooding problem, then ongoing Corona pandemic which can shake our finances," he stated.

The proposed Tanzanite Complex, which is large enough to accommodate 22,000 people at one



Dar es Salaam athletes feature in training session outside National Stadium in the city on Tuesday to prepare for Tulla race, which is slated for August this year in Tukuyu, Mbeya. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

sitting, should be larger than even the Sheikh Amri Abeid Stadium of Arusha because the latter takes only 12,000 seated spectators at any event.

It was proposed to have four main sets of stalls, with the largest segment taking 12,000 spectators, followed with the one with 5,000 seating capacity, then another with 3,000 seats and finally the stall with 2,000 seats.

Mnyalu is also the organizer of

Mirerani-Tanzanite Marathon and he also serves as patron for Usalama Football Club of Manyara region, which is currently playing in the Second Division League (SDL).

He is also the founder of Tanzanite Football Club which topped the Simanjiro District's Fourth Division League. The patron now wants to consolidate all sporting activities in the precinct under the new complex.

He said once done the grand sports complex will have a soccer

pitch, basketball and tennis courts, netball grounds, athletics tracks' arena, swimming area and training academy, a garden as well as hostel and hotel.

The related Tanzanite Academy training center for soccer development was meant to run alongside the project for the purpose of recruiting and grooming new talents from the Northern Zone regions of Arusha, Manyara and Kilimanjaro.

In some Olympic sports, training from home is almost routine

By NOAH TRISTER

LESS than a month after Nikhil Kumar qualified for the Olympics in table tennis, the Tokyo Games were postponed until 2021. Like so many other athletes, he is now trying to stay sharp and in shape.

What's different for Kumar are the logistics. All things considered, his situation is pretty manageable.

"For my sport, a little lucky that we're able to have everything indoors, and it's not taking up too much space and everything," Kumar said. "Not many sports are as lucky as ours is right now, to be able to have the opportunity to continue playing on a daily basis."

The coronavirus crisis has forced many athletes to be creative as they try to continue their training, but in some Olympic sports, working from home is fairly routine. Kumar has been able to practice with a robot that shoots balls at him. Weightlifter Kate Nye trains in her garage. Everyone is facing challenges during this pandemic, but some competitors have been fortunate.

"When everything kind of started shutting down, it obviously affected our lives in other ways – but weightlifting wasn't one of them," Nye said. "The kind of just been going as scheduled."

The virus has forced some athletes to come up with unusual solutions. Sandi Morris and her father built a pole vault setup for her near her parents' place. In India, swimmer SP Likhith has reportedly been training in an irrigation tank at a farm. Javelin thrower Kara Winger tries to simulate that event by throwing a metal pipe along an angled cable in her yard.

Compared to all that, Kumar's challenge is pretty mundane. He recently upgraded his device that shoots table tennis balls at him in rapid succession.

"With this new one, I'm able to give different spin, like every single ball, and keep alternating," he said. "It's just more advanced."

He also does some weight training and running on the treadmill. The biggest concern at this point is probably the mental grind.

"It's just a different experience. But now, once I got the hang of it, the practice is going well," said Kumar, who is from California. "But it's also hard to have to mentally want to push myself, every single day, to come and practice, because it's a little different feeling than if you were to practice with a person."

Nye had actually set up her garage gym before the virus really became an issue. Mattie Rogers, another American weightlifter, would normally train at a



In this April 14, 2020, file photo, Olympic pole vaulting silver medalist Sandi Morris runs on the vaulting pit she is building with her father in Greenville, S.C. The coronavirus crisis has forced many athletes to be creative as they try to continue their training. (AP Photo)

gym, but she had to shift to her garage as well.

"I kind of like it, honestly, now, because I don't have to drive," Rogers said. "My gym is about 40 minutes away, so if I'm doing two training sessions a day, driving there and back that many times, I'm saving a ton of time now."

Rogers did have to make adjustments. The floor in her garage isn't level, so she tried to fix that using a living room rug. There have also been neighbor complaints about weights hitting the ground. "We got these mats, so like every time that I drop the bar, I have to walk forward and drop it on the mats," she said.

Rogers spent a dozen years as a gymnast and she knows how much harder it would be to train from home if she were trying to reach the Olympics in, say, the vault.

"It would be almost impossible. You could do some things to stay in shape, but

you can't do normal training from home," she said. "There are a lot of weightlifters that regularly train in their garage. I think we're unique in that aspect."

For air rifle shooter Lucas Kozeniesky, the basement is where he's been able to set up. There is enough room for him to practice at his home in Colorado – at the Olympic length of 10 meters.

"I opened up a couple doors, and like a hallway connected, and I'm like, 'Oh look, this is actually perfect,'" he said.

The logistics of training these days can vary widely within a sport.

American cyclist Chloe Dygert is favored to win two gold medals at the Tokyo Games, one in the time trial on the road and one with her pursuit team on the track. She recently moved to Idaho to be near her coach, and she says not a whole lot has changed for her because she can still do individual training rides or ride indoors on a stationary bike.

A BMX track, on the other hand, has jumps and ramps that aren't easy to simulate at home.

"I do have an elite training site with minimal riders accessing the facilities and hopefully those will open soon," American BMX racer Alise Post said recently.

For Nye, the training has been simple – although that certainly doesn't mean things are normal right now. She's a student at Oakland University who wants to go to medical school. The postponement of the Olympics has created a lot of uncertainty in her life outside of sports.

The weightlifting, though, she can keep up with.

"I've had it pretty easy. My life hasn't changed a whole lot. School went online, and I'm working at my garage as usual," Nye said. "What is my future going to look like, emotionally? That's hard, but everyone's dealing with that on some level."

AP

Cancelling Premier League season discussed for first time

LONDON

PREMIER League chief executive Richard Masters said that the 20 top-flight clubs discussed the cancellation of the 2019-20 season for the first time during talks on Monday aimed at finding a way to resolve the current campaign, which has been suspended since March 13.

With the UK government giving professional sport the green light to resume competitive action from June 1, the Premier League is targeting June 8 as a potential date to restart the campaign, which has nine matchdays still to play.

English football's authorities – the Premier League, EFL and Football Association – will meet with the government to discuss their plans in detail on Tuesday.

However, with no firm plan yet resolved in terms of a return to action due to disagreements over the prospect of games being played at neutral venues for the remainder of the season, clubs have now raised the possibility of the season being halted and decided by non-playing methods – such as current positions or average points-per-game.

"I'm happy to reveal it [curtailment of season] was discussed for the first time, but the contents of that discussion have to remain confidential," Masters told the media

after Monday's four-hour video conference.

"It's still our aim to finish the season obviously, but it's important to discuss all the options with our clubs. What I can say is that all of the talk was about finishing the season. No conclusions were reached on any other models.

"Those are future conversations we may need to have. There was a desire to see all the different implications, the adaptations, if you like, to the Premier League model as we know in order to play out the season and then discuss what the fairest way forward is."

Masters, meanwhile, confirmed that clubs have been given permission to extend the contracts of players whose current deals are due to expire on June 30.

"Obviously this issue has been highlighted and we've discussed it at the last two meetings – but we've been working as far as possible to ensure that clubs complete the season with the same squad they had prior to the suspension," he said.

"What was agreed is that players can extend their contracts beyond June 30 until the end of the season, but it must be agreed by both parties and a later date can be scheduled for that – no later than June 23."

(Agencies)

Danny Rose on Prem restart plans: A 'joke'

LONDON

NEWCASTLE United defender Danny Rose has hit out at plans to restart the Premier League season amid the coronavirus crisis and said it should not return with lives at risk.

Clubs have been in discussions to finish the campaign, which has nine matchdays remaining for the majority of sides, while four have played a game fewer. The possibility of a restart next month was given a boost when the UK government said elite sport could return after June 1.

During an Instagram Live chat with British singer-songwriter Don-E on Monday, Rose said: "The government is saying we are bringing football back because it is going to boost the nation's morale.

"I don't give a f--- about the nation's morale, people's lives are at risk. Football shouldn't even be spoke about coming back until the numbers have dropped massively.

"It's b-----, I listened to the announcement yesterday, no football until June 1 or something, I don't even pay attention to any of that."

The UK has recorded more than 223,000 cases and over 32,000 deaths from the coronavirus – the highest number in Europe.

The Professional Footballers Asso-

ciation's deputy chief Bobby Barnes said black players were concerned about the restart after a government study said black people are nearly twice as likely to die from the coronavirus than whites.

"I think I'm getting tested on Friday, so we'll just have to wait and see," Rose added.

"I'm sad that people are getting sick and being affected. Football should be the last of things that need to be sorted."

Discussions continue between the league and the government about the details of how a resumed season would be carried out, with clubs hoping they can avoid playing at neutral venues.

Last week, clubs were told any return to complete the season would have to be with games played behind closed doors and at neutral venues – to limit the risk of supporters turning up outside grounds.

But that idea had been rejected by some of the clubs facing the threat of relegation, such as Watford and Brighton, who expressed concern about the fairness of playing games at neutral venues.

The league has to give European football's governing body UEFA details of their plans by May 25.

(Agencies)

Hungry' Bayern delighted to be back in training, says Alaba

BERLIN

DAVID Alaba says Bayern Munich are "hungry" and enjoying their return to full-team training ahead of the restart of the Bundesliga this weekend behind closed doors.

The German top flight resumes on Saturday after the season was suspended in mid-March to help slow the spread of the coronavirus.

It will be the first major European league to resume after the outbreak of the pandemic, which has so far claimed around 7,500 lives in Germany.

Bayern coach Hansi Flick has been putting his players through their paces in training sessions at the Allianz Arena.

Bayern, who were four points clear of second-placed Borussia Dortmund in their bid for an eighth straight Bundesliga title when football was halted, restart their season at Union Berlin on Sunday.

"It was really very, very nice to be back on the pitch, training as a whole team," said Alaba. "You could tell how much we have all looked forward to this moment."

"You could feel that in training, everyone was hungry – and looking forward to the first game."

- 'Extreme challenge' -

Chancellor Angela Merkel approved the league's plan to restart with regu-

lar testing of players and strict hygiene measures in place.

Bundesliga CEO Christian Seifert has warned clubs they are "on probation" because of fears an outbreak of the virus in the competition could again see the season suspended.

The clubs are now holding practice sessions featuring the whole squad after weeks of training in small groups.

Dortmund host arch rivals Schalke on Saturday in the first derby without spectators in the rivalry's 95-year history.

Dortmund played the first of two training matches at Signal Iduna Park without injured midfielders Axel Witsel and Emre Can.

"We are used to playing at home in front of 82,000," Dortmund coach Lucien Favre told German daily Bild.

"To prepare mentally now to play without being cheered and without being pushed by the atmosphere is an extreme challenge."

- 'Stick to the rules' -

RB Leipzig coach Julian Nagelsmann is hoping his side can treat the remainder of the campaign as a mini-tournament to help them rekindle their title challenge.

The third-placed outfit, five points behind Bayern, host mid-table Freiburg on Saturday.

AFP

Premier League seeks to allay players' training health fears

MANCHESTER, England

THE Premier League will seek to allay players' concerns about health risks as the government prepares to release protocols allowing a phased resumption of contact training in the easing of coronavirus restrictions.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday set out how elite sports could resume in June if there is not a new spike in COVID-19 infections. The government is planning to release a strategy later this week on the road map to players being allowed to resume group training even as social distancing is being encouraged in wider society.

"It's about the building blocks – how long before we can go back into full contact training?" Premier League chief executive Richard Masters told reporters. "It does depend on what sort of contact because obviously you're trying to ensure the players keep themselves safe even during that contact training situation and that will have to be dealt with on a case by case basis."

It is two months since the last games were played before the league was suspended during the pandemic.

"One thing is for sure," Masters said. "All clubs will have to be safe and secure in the knowledge that their players are going to be fit before a decision on going back on the pitch is taken, given that they have had such a long lay-off."

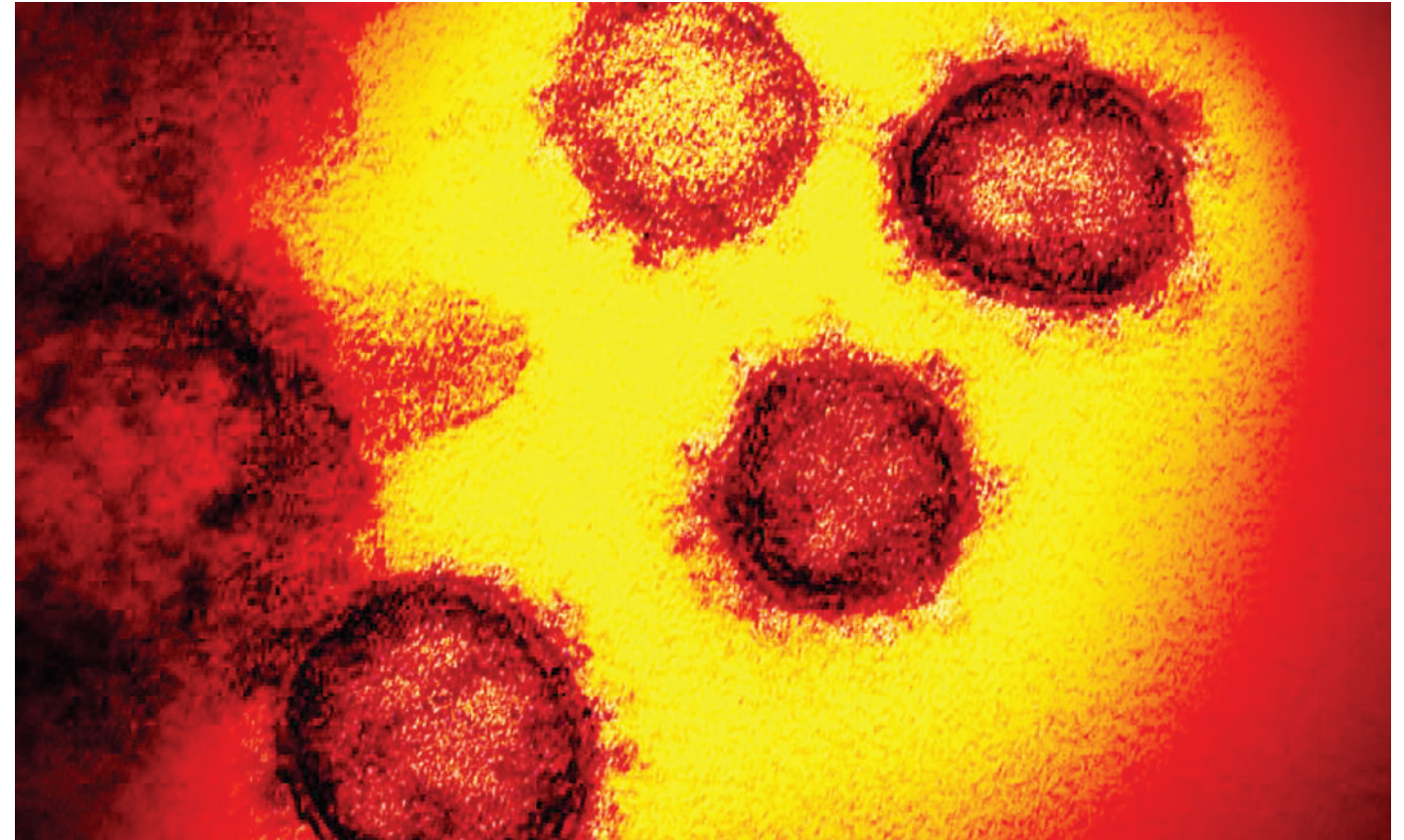
"We have talked about four weeks of training but haven't agreed yet as we haven't agreed to go back to training."

Masters said players will be consulted about how a safe environment can be created at training and then games.

"It is right that they will have concerns and questions and we need to hear those first," Masters said.

Manchester City and England forward Raheem Sterling has broader concerns.

"The moment we do go back we need to make



FILE - This undated electron microscope image made available by the U.S. National Institutes of Health in February 2020 shows the Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, the virus causes COVID-19.

sure it's at a moment where it's not just for footballing reasons, it's safe for not just us footballers but the whole medical staff, referees," Sterling said on his YouTube channel. "I don't know how that's going to work. I feel like once that side of the people's safety and the player's safety is secured and their well-being is being looked after, then that's the right time to go back in.

"Until then, I'm ... kind of reserved and thinking what the worst outcome could be, but at the same time looking forward to it."

Players and coaches will be regularly tested at training venues for COVID-19. Masters does not envisage full squads having to self-isolate if there is a situation like at Dynamo Dresden last week. Two players at the German second division side

tested positive for the coronavirus, forcing the entire squad, coaching and supervisory staff to enter 14 days of quarantine at home.

"If a player tests positive," Masters said, "providing he has been socially distanced in the protocols, he would be isolated for a period but there would be no need for the rest of the group to be."

AP

Players need to be disciplined in virus plan, says Bundesliga chief

MANCHESTER, England

EACH individual player's behaviour will be "crucial until the end of the season", the medical head of the Bundesliga and UEFA's efforts to restart the game across the continent warned on Sunday.

Tim Meyer, the head of the Bundesliga's new coronavirus task force and chairman of the UEFA medical committee, said that while the German league had produced the safest possible system for resuming competition, it was vital that players showed discipline and kept to the new rules.

The Bundesliga will become the first major league in Europe to resume action, on May 16, with games held without spectators and with strict restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Football has to give something back to the people now," he told Reuters in an interview.

"That also means to be disciplined as a player. Keeping themselves away from the virus and the virus from them is the target. They need to be responsible.

"They are very public and need to show how to behave – on the pitch, play football as always but as soon as you leave the pitch, you are a citizen again and need to behave as a citizen in times of Corona," he added.

Meyer said his task was to create the highest possible level of safety, based on what was "medically justifiable".

"We do not think that any job, any profession in the country is 100% safe at this moment, as long as you deal with other human beings.

"Sometimes there are people who say, 'there is still a little risk'. Yes there is. We will not be able to eliminate any small risk – we did a lot, we put a lot of measures in place, to make sure that infections from football are highly unlikely," he said.

STRICT GUIDELINES

The Bundesliga has produced a detailed set of strict guidelines for the restart which include three separate zones at stadiums to limit human contact and reduce the chances of viral transmission along with a large scale testing procedure.

There will also be an impact for those living with players.

The co-habitants, wives or partners of all Bundesliga players will be required to choose from three options – either to undergo two tests, agree to document each contact outside the house or they have to live separately.

However, the decision on how to respond to any positive tests amongst players – and who in a squad might need to be quarantined as a result – will remain with the local health authorities in Germany.

That came into the spotlight on Saturday when Bundesliga 2 team Dynamo Dresden were told by their local health body to put the entire squad into 14 days quarantine after two of their players tested positive for the virus.

The decision means Dynamo will not be able to play their scheduled first game after the restart on May 17.

"We cannot change German law and German law says that in the case of, whoever is tested positive from the population, it is the local health authorities who take responsibility for the management of that case," said Meyer who was speaking before the Dynamo news



Tim Meyer

was announced.

"Usually, and this will be exactly the same with football, the affected person is put into quarantine and then the local health authority starts to check contact persons... fortunately in professional football we have footage of training sessions and each match," he added, noting that tracking systems would be able to provide quick and detailed information.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Meyer has been in regular contact with medical staff at the Premier League and the English Football Association. He said the situations in the two countries were very different given the lower impact of the pandemic in Germany and in particular the higher capacity for testing for the virus.

Many of the Premier League's evolving 'Project Restart' plans are similar to the Bundesliga's approach and Meyer said it would be difficult to produce a more stringent system.

"You cannot easily be stricter than we are. You can put everyone into a complete quarantine, that is a scenario that has been debated in several countries," he said.

"You can do that, but you need to be aware what you are doing then isolating a number of young men, completely, from the outside world for several weeks is not easy.

"We do not know how that would work, if it works at all, or what the consequences of it are not just on a medical but also a psychological level, we don't know if it is feasible at all. Being stricter is difficult."

REUTERS

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

Premier League seeks to allay players' training health fears

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19



Mafumu Bilal 'Bombenga'

Govt evaluates proposals for hosting VPL matches

By Correspondents Faustine Feliciane and Adam Fungamwango

THE government has disclosed it has been presented with views on the way this season's Vodacom Premier League should be played once the top flight resumes.

The top flight, as it is the case for the rest of sporting activities, have been indefinitely suspended, as per the government directives, in a bid to fight the COVID-19 spread.

The government's spokesman, Hassan Abbas, said yesterday they have been presented with the recommendations on the approach for hosting the top flight, should the government give green light to the competition's restart.

President John Magufuli had recently disclosed he is thinking of granting the domestic top flight's restart and the hosting of the remaining sporting events after the suspension.

The government has held a recent joint meeting with the Tanzania Football Federation (TFF), Tanzania Premier League Board (TPLB) and National Sports Council to evaluate the approach the domestic top flight should deploy when the government issues permission for the restart.

Abbas said in an interview with a Dar es Salaam radio station yesterday the government has yet to come up with final decision on the restart.

He disclosed what the government does is evaluating the approach for hosting the domestic top flight because the coronavirus crisis is still present.

"There was an evaluation on the recommendations, some of them propose the event ought to take place in one center, whilst others are of view the current approach should be sustained," he stated.

"There are some that propose soccer followers should be free to attend the competition but precautions ought to be in place, we are working on all of the views," Abbas noted.

Abbas noted the views will be presented to government officials including health experts and advisers.

He disclosed he understands soccer followers are anxiously looking forward to the domestic top flight and the rest of the sporting activities' restart but there should be precautions in place given the coronavirus crisis still persists.

"People are still submitting the views to us but we are also waiting for the final say from the government on the sporting events' resumption," he disclosed.

Defending champions, Simba, were, until the day the Vodacom Premier League was suspended, at the top of the domestic top flight log after notching 71 points.

Azam FC were holding second spot with 54 points, Yanga were positioned third with 52.

Most of the top flight teams have taken part in either 29 matches or 28 outings and have 10 to 11 games left.



Mbeya City FC defender, Hassan Mwasapili (R), blocks Yanga forward, Tariq Seif, in this season's Vodacom Premier League clash, which was played in Dar es Salaam. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

Mbeya City FC, Ruvu Shooting opposed to playing in neutral venues in VPL

By Correspondent Michael Mwebe

RUVU Shooting and Mbeya City FC have declared that they are against any mooted plan to play the remaining Vodacom Premier League games at neutral stadium sites.

No Vodacom Premier League matches have been played since March 14 due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

However football officials do see light at the end of the tunnel and are optimistic that the 2019/20 season can be completed following President John Magufuli last speech hinted at the possibility of allowing the top flight to restart.

On Monday, the Tanzania Premier League Board (TPLB) met officials from the Ministry of Information, Culture, Arts and Sports to explore the conditions necessary for closed-doors football and discuss the possibilities for a resumption of play in June.

Speaking in a radio interview, Ruvu Shooting information officer, Masau Bwire, said the league should resume behind closed doors with home and away matches otherwise the season should be declared null and void.

If we really want to restart the league and ensure every club gets what it deserves then we should stick to the home

and away format. Otherwise it is better to cancel the season, Bwire said. He added they want to preserve home advantage even when games return behind closed doors.

"Even if we play without fans, home advantage still counts. There is that confidence of playing in your own backyard whether behind closed doors or not. Justice must be done to all," he disclosed.

Mbeya City FC Secretary General, Emmanuel Kimbe, echoed similar concerns, insisting the Vodacom Premier League should either stick to the home and away format or wait until it is completely safe to resume.

The league is played on a home and away basis, that is the definition and not otherwise. There should be a meeting between clubs and the Premier League organizers to decide how best to proceed, Kimbe said.

Instead of playing in neutral venues we are better off waiting until when things improve and it is safe to again play home and away.

Mbeya City FC sit in 17th place in the tournament's log, four points from safety but have five home games, one more than most of their relegation rivals.

Four teams will be directly relegated while two will have to battle it out in the playoffs.

Legendary saxophonist Mafumu Bilal passes on

By Correspondent Marc Nkwame

ONE of Tanzania's legendary musicians, Mafumu Bilal 'Bombenga', passed away at his Vingunguti home in Dar es Salaam on Monday at about 8.30 pm after suffering long period of illness.

The Tanzania Dance Music Association (CHAMUDATA) Secretary General, Hassan Msumari, has confirmed the reports, previously released by the deceased's family.

Bilal, the saxophone expert, played with more than 10 music bands since he debuted into the entertainment industry in Tanzania in 1972.

He has left behind a wide and seven children, two of whom have followed their father's footsteps in showbiz.

Ferouz Bilal, a keyboardist, and Aziza Bilal (singer), aged 22 and 19 years respectively, are the two Mafumu's children who have taken a path in music industry.

Ferouz and Aziza, though, are still a far cry from Mafumu's 40 years of churning out popular hits and forming bands.

Bilal learned to play the wind instrument, which became his trademark, during his time in the National Service (JKT) and since then he had served a number of local music bands.

The bands include the extremely popular troupes like Maquis Du Zaire, Vijana Jazz, MK Group, Bima Lee Orchestra, Bico Stars, Morogoro Jazz and The Kilimanjaro Connection.

Among his recent hits was the cover version of TP OK Jazz's hit, 'Mayai', with his African Stars band, which he later left to form his own African Beats.

He is credited with innumerable compositions as he crisscrossed his way between more than 10 bands during his four-decade music career.

Mafumu's death is yet another serious blow to horns department of local music as he played saxophone, a tough instrument which emerging musician seem to be afraid to try playing.

Other top saxophone and trumpet players in Tanzania, who have passed away, include Twahir Mohammed and Cousmon Mkomwa.

Another little known fact about Bilal is that, his father, the late Mzee Bilal Mafumu Kalindula of Kigoma, was among the young apprentices hired by the German colonialists to assemble the legendary MV Liemba ship in 1913.

The vessel, still serving on Lake Tanganyika, is the oldest having clocked 107 years.

TONIGHT @ 7:00

EATV SAA 1

WEDNESDAY

11:00 DADAZ LIVE
12:00 Weekend Movie (r)
13:30 Kali Za Wana
14:00 Planet Bongo (r)
14:30 Bongo Hits
15:00 Funguka
15:30 Nirvana (r)
16:00 Skonga (r)
16:30 #HASHTAG
17:00 SSELEKT
17:55 Kurasa
18:00 eNewz
18:30 Music/Soap
19:00 EATV SAA 1
19:45 MJADALA
20:00 DADAZ (r)
21:00 Kibishara Zaidi

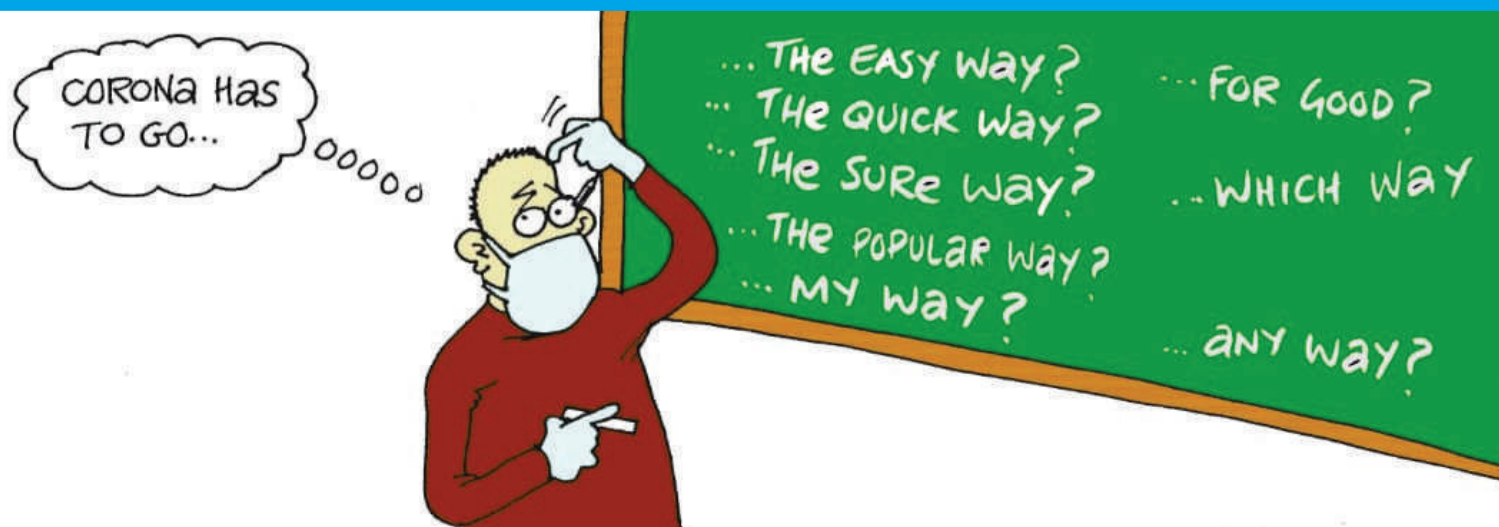
EATV SAA 1
Coverage of the days current events accompanied by interviews with prominent people on diverse topics ranging from national to social interests.

eastafrica RADIO

06:00 Supa Breakfast
10:00 MAMAMIA
12:00 Kipenga Xtra
13:00 Planet Bongo
16:00 EA Drive
20:00 Kipenga
21:00 The Cruise

88.1FM DAR ES SALAAM

Flexibles by David Chikoko



Mafumu's death is yet another serious blow to horns department of local music as he played saxophone, a tough instrument which emerging musician seem to be afraid to try playing