



National Pg 4
ZEC gives time for voter registration

National Pg 6
148 children get free NHIF cards

National Pg 7
Kilombero Sugar resumes production



Magreth Massawa (L), Singida regional coordinator of the Anglican Church of Tanzania's Mothers Union, takes elders Rhoda Mwaja (C) and Julita Mapogo of Sukamahela village in Manyoni District yesterday through the basics of on prevention against Covid-19 infections. Photo: Correspondent Paul Mabeja

'Monduli-Mdori road stretch top in the slaying of shifting wildlife'

By Correspondent Marc Nkwame, Babati

HUNDREDS of wild animals are killed on a 50 km road stretch from the Makuyuni Junction of the Arusha-Dodoma road in Monduli district to the Mdori section of Babati in Manyara Region.

Zoological researchers who conducted a year-long investigation along the road stretch in the Tarangire-Manyara ecosystem say that trucks hit and kill an average of 400 wild animals of different species every year in the zone.

"We dispatched a team which studied the scenario from the Makuyuni Bridge all the way to 'Kibao Cha Tembo,' in Babati Rural district for the entire 12 months and recorded that most accidents occurred at dusk," stated Dr Bernard Kissui, a researcher with the Tarangire Lion Project.

Apparently, the time when most animals get hit is from 6.00pm and well into the night, an interval when cargo trucks especially drive through the area.

Natural Resources and Tourism deputy minister Constantine Kanyasu said he was taking the matter to the Tanzania Roads Agency (TANROADS) so that the agency can erect warning signs.

"We should also impose penalties as in

Mikumi National Park," he said, asserting that this will push drivers to take precautions.

The researcher was speaking at a meeting of stakeholders at the Babati District Commissioner's office to discuss ways of protecting the 'Kwa-Kuchinja' wildlife corridor. It has been invaded by trespassing residents, he pointed out.

"We need to demarcate all wildlife corridors with official beacons so that local people may know their limits in terms of extending farms, erecting houses or grazing livestock within the precincts," he stated.

Dr Julius Keyyu, Director of Research at the Arusha-based Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI), said there were 31 wildlife corridors mapped all over the country.

"But that is according to the studies leading up to 2009. That is more than ten years ago and we moved to conduct the research again last year but couldn't accomplish it as we were caught in the midst of coronavirus pandemic," he said.

The 'Kwa-Kuchinja' corridor used to measure 81 square kilometres, but now the wildlife passage has shrunk into a measly 5.2 kilometre width, the researcher noted.

The wildlife corridor connects Tarangire

TURN TO PAGE 2

\$1m anti-Covid 19 fund bid raised by AU on Africa Day

ADDIS ABABA

AS the African Union marked Africa Day yesterday, the African Union (AU) was set to raise US\$1million for its Covid-19 response fund.

Established by the chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat in March, the AU-Covid-19 Response Fund aims at strengthening the continental response to Covid-19, mitigating its socio-economic and humanitarian impact on African populations.

"This Africa Day, May 25, all Africans, people of African descent and friends of Africa are encouraged to give a little to the fund," the AU said, underlining that a target of one million dollars has been set for the day.

Contributions can be made in any currency and this will be automatically converted into U.S. dollars, which is the original currency of the Fund account. The AU has also created a website where donation can be made, it said.

The number of confirmed Covid-19 positive cases across Africa rose to 107,412 as of Sunday morning, the Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) said on Sunday.

African countries are mobilizing resources and taking measures to fight the spread of COVID-19.

Some countries on the continent have imposed night curfew and suspended international flights. Wearing face masks

TURN TO PAGE 2

Minister astonished by bag levying for mineral quarry

By Guardian Correspondent, Tabora

OFFICIALS collecting levies from artisanal miners contrary to regulations stipulated in mining sector laws will be arrested and prosecuted, the government has warned.

Energy minister Doto Biteko made this declaration yesterday when addressing small scale miners at Isanga village in Nzega District, Tabora Region.

Punitive measures will serve as a lesson to other dishonest officials, as it was to flout the country's laws to charge artisanal miners 1,000/- per bag of mineral quarry, he stated.

Mineral quarry extracted from an open-pit mine can't be charged per bag, he said, vowing that the government will not tolerate such acts as the miners are struggling to make ends," he

vowed.

To reduce complains, licensed miners need to ensure that all levies and taxes paid to the government are stamped by mining offers in respective areas, he directed.

The government will support artisanal miners as it has been creating a favourable environment to ensure they benefit from their efforts, he said.

Earlier, artisanal miners complained that officials at the area have been charging them 1,000/- per bag of the mineral quarry. They expressed fears that the monies end up in individuals' pockets as the charge is not applied to licensed miners.

In 2017, the government enacted new mining laws and regulations which ushered in sweeping

TURN TO PAGE 2

'Bandits' die in police trap, in targeting GS warehouse

■ One pistol recovered

By Guardian Reporter

POLICE in Dar es Salaam have killed seven suspected armed bandits and seized a pistol (Beretta) with three bullets, Special Zone Commander Lazaro Mambosasa confirmed yesterday.

The RPC told journalists that the incident occurred early Monday when suspected criminals attempted to force their way into a GS Group Ltd warehouse located near Coca Cola in Mwenge, Kinondoni District.

"Our special police task force was earlier tipped off on the planned invasion at the warehouse," he said.

The suspected bandits arrived in a Toyota Noah with registration number T 956 BYA and started firing at the police who were on patrol

after they suspected that they were being monitored, he said.

The suspected gangsters attempted to escape from the police in their vehicle but they stopped at a place and started firing at the police. Police fired back and injured all the seven suspected bandits who died while undergoing treatment at the Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH), the zonal commander narrated.

Police also found them with various traditional weapons and a mobile phone, he said.

The nurse who attended to them said the suspected criminals died from serious bleeding caused by gunshot wounds, he cited.

He warned those planning to conduct different crimes in the city to be aware that police are well prepared to tackle all sorts of crimes through a

TURN TO PAGE 2

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.



0315464 03/26/2020

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

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

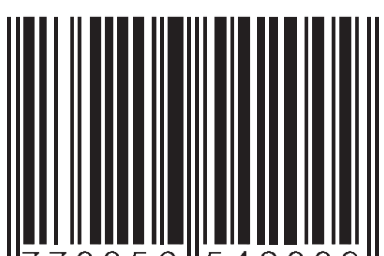
FACT 5 You can help stop COVID-19 by knowing the signs and symptoms:

- Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
- Seek medical advice if you
- Develop symptoms

AND

- Have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

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



9 770856 542009 >

Heed ceasefire call, UN chief Guterres, marking Africa Day

NEW YORK

AFRICAN countries have "demonstrated commendable leadership" battling the COVID-19 pandemic, but more nations across the continent where conflict prevails, should heed the UN call for a global ceasefire to push back the deadly virus, said the Secretary-General on Monday.

Marking Africa Day, António Guterres said in his message that the pandemic "threatens to derail progress" which would enable countries to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and development targets set out in the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063.

The AU has established a task force to develop a continent-wide strategy and appointed special envoys to mobilize international support, said the UN chief. Its Peace and Security Council has also taken steps to counter the negative impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of critical peace agreements and reconciliation efforts.

He noted that the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention established a response fund, while African Member States have undertaken "robust measures to contain the spread of the virus and mitigate the socio-economic impacts."

Guterres welcomed the AU's support for his global ceasefire call, an imperative that also reflects the AU's 2020 theme: "Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development."

"Armed groups in Cameroon, Sudan and South Sudan have responded to the call and declared unilateral ceasefires. I implore other armed movements and governments in Africa to do likewise. I also welcome the support of African countries for my call for peace in the home, and an end to all forms of violence, including against women and girls", he continued.

Some 20 African countries are scheduled to hold elections this year, some of which are likely to be postponed due to the pandemic, with potential consequences for stability and peace, noted the Secretary-General.

"I urge African political actors to engage in inclusive and sustained political dialogue to ease tensions around elections and uphold democratic practices."

Last week, the UN issued a policy brief outlining the impacts of the pandemic on the continent: "We are calling for debt relief and action to maintain food supplies, protect jobs and cushion the continent against lost income and export earnings. African countries, like everyone, everywhere, should also have quick, equal and affordable access to any eventual vaccine and treatment."

An opportunity now exists, for African governments to "use this moment" to shape new policies that bolster health systems, improve social protection and pursue climate-friendly pathways.

Targeting measures to those employed in the informal sector, the vast majority of whom are women, will be an important step to recovery, said Mr. Guterres, as will empowering women to ensure their full participation and leadership.

"The inclusion and leadership of young people will also be crucial every step of the way."



The inclusion and leadership of young people will also be crucial every step of the way



Chief Sheikh Abubakar Zubeiry Ally (2nd-L) symbolically receives five tonnes of foodstuffs from An-Nahl Trust director Musa Nyamsingwa on behalf of Nama Foundation, An-Nahl and Nama Integrated Centre for Excellence (NICE) in Dar es Salaam yesterday. The items were meant as support to the government and disadvantaged communities. Left is An-Nahl Trust chairman Ali Kilima. Photo: Correspondent Mary Geoffrey

'Monduli-Mdori stretch top in road slaying of wildlife'

FROM PAGE 1

National Park, Manyara Ranch, Mswakini Chini, Burunge Wildlife

Management Area (WMA) and Lake Manyara National Park.

A week ago, Deputy Minister Kanyasu visited the precinct and warned against

this encroachment.

He said it not only threatened the eco-system in the area but also posed a danger to invaders as they

are "pitting themselves against ferocious beasts that may not take it kindly to have their paths blocked."



Residents of Dar es Salaam's Kitunda-Kivule suburb prepare meat yesterday for consumption during Eid el-Fitr celebrations yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

FROM PAGE 1

special task force.

"Let the people celebrate Eid el-Fitr in peace. We are thankful that the city is calm as residents continue with their income generating activities," he stated.

State and regional authorities have relaxed controls on various gatherings after rapid decreased number of Covid-19 cases.

"We allowed people to go the beaches during Eid el-Fitr with conditions that they take care of themselves by

'Bandits' die in police trap, in targeting GS warehouse

observing guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health," the RPC noted.

He commended city residents for collaborating with the police, tipping them on likely crime incidents.

In January, police in the Dar es

Salaam Special Zone killed three suspected armed robbers and seized a gun that had one of its numbers erased.

The incident occurred at Magomeni when police were conducting routine patrols, with the suspected bandits

killed during an exchange of fire with the police.

Police said early investigations showed that the suspected robbers were engaged in a number of crimes in Dar es Salaam and its neighbourhood.

Minister astonished by bag levying for mineral quarry

FROM PAGE 1

changes in the country's mining sector.

The legislature endorsed two key bills, the Natural Wealth and Resources (Permanent Sovereignty) and the Natural Wealth and Resources Contracts (Review and Re-negotiation of Unconscionable Terms).

In a meeting with artisanal miners in January last year, President John Magufuli directed ministers responsible for mining and finance, the Commissioner for Mining, the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) and geologists to sit and restructure the relevant taxes in order to provide relief on miners.

Multiple taxes were the main reason for small and medium miners in the country to engage in illegal business and tax evasion, plus selling the minerals across borders illegally.

He said miners are subjected to six taxes, listing them as six per cent royalty, municipal levy of 0.3 per cent, withholding tax of five per cent, inspection and clearance fee one per cent and 18 per cent VAT.

The president said there was no need of having so many taxes in one sector. Top officials must examine possible ways of amending the tax schedule to relieve the miners, he affirmed.

\$1m anti-Covid 19 fund bid raised by AU on Africa Day

FROM PAGE 1

is mandatory at public places in many countries.

AU chairperson Cyril Ramaphosa said on the occasion that despite severe shortcomings like shortage of personal protective equipment, testing kits and ventilators, African government have been swift and proactive in introducing measures to flatten the curve of the virus.

In his message to mark the 57th anniversary of the formation of the Organisation of African Union, the precursor of the AU in 1963, Ramaphosa noted that countries in Global South were more vulnerable to impacts of the coronavirus due to low levels of development, insufficient resources and weak health systems.

"Countries ranking low on human development indices, many of which are in Africa, are less capable of managing the fallout of a global health

emergency of this kind on their own.

"Yet at the same time, some of the health challenges African countries have wrestled with for decades have given us a clear understanding of what needs to be done, and how to do it," said the South African leader.

African countries drew on their experience in dealing with diseases such as HIV and TB in deploying community health workers for screening, testing, contact tracing and case management in fighting the coronavirus.

African nations have also joined the race to produce test kits, with Senegal in an advanced stage of developing a low-cost testing kit, he stated.

"At least 25 African countries have registered clinical trials for possible COVID-19 treatments, like the BCG vaccine, hydroxychloroquine, antiretrovirals and remdesivir, and as part of global solidarity clinical trials," he added.



Tanzanian human development specialist, anti-corruption crusader and politician Dr Mayrose Kavura Majinge addresses journalists in Mwanza city yesterday on her intention to contest as a presidential candidate through the opposition Chadema in the upcoming (October) General Election. Photo: Correspondent Rose Jacob

Minister advises farmers to cultivate crops with guarantee high demand

By Guardian Correspondent, Kongwa

THE Minister for Agriculture, Japhet Hasunga, has appealed to farmers in the country to cultivate crops with high demand in both local and foreign markets including vegetables, fruits and flowers to free themselves economically.

Hasunga issued the appeal yesterday when presenting eight tractors to farmers who received loans from the Agricultural Inputs Trust Fund (AGITF) and added that the country needs crops of this kind, hence it is an opportunity for them to ensure they cultivate such crops for more income generation.

He said as of now agriculture has contributed a lot to the country's GDP as recent statistics show that it has earned the country more than 25bn/-.

He said the government has been making various efforts to get agriculture going including increasing funds for farm inputs.

"For this year AGITF has provided 2bn/- and in the five year period beginning 2015 the number of tractors in the country rose from 14,100 to 19,604, an increase of 38 percent," said Hasunga.

He further explained that research show that the volume of land cultivated using tractors is only 20 percent and the aim is to reach 50 percent.

AGITF Director General Festo Mhimba said the tractors presented are valued at 284m/-, and added: "Up to now Dodoma Region has received 203 via loans to farmers including these eight today."

Speaking about AGITF achievements, he said since its establishment it has received 35bn/- and issued loans to 3,607 farmers and more than 84bn/- has been spent.

"As you see, we had received 35bn/- but we have issued 84bn/- in loans, this is because we collect debts and issue more loans," Mhimba explained.

He said loans issued by the Fund are for individual farmers including those in groups.

"A farmer can apply for a loan in respect of farming equipment or inputs and our loans are of two years to five years period and the farmer has to channel his application via his local council for verification," he added.

Earlier, the Speaker of Parliament Job Ndogai called on the Fund to advertise itself more so that many farmers can grab its loan opportunities.

Hadija Ngoro, one of the farmers who benefited from AGITF loans from Kondoa District in Dodoma Region said the loans will help to enhance her income as agriculture is the saviour for her and her family.

Beware COVID-19 eat healthy food to enhance immunity, truck drivers urged

By Guardian Reporter

THE government has appealed to truck drivers in the country to take precautionary measures against Covid-19 infections including eating healthy and balanced diets to enhance body immunity.

Speaking at the weekend in Dar es Salaam to some drivers from various transport firms, the Minister for Health, Community Development, Gender, Elders and Children Ummu Mwalimu said the pandemic still exists even though it is going down and the most important thing is for the people to abide by the directives from health experts including avoiding gatherings, to wash hands with soap and running water, wear masks and maintain one metre social distancing.

The drivers had gone to the National Laboratory for Community Health at Mabibo in Dar es Salaam for testing against Covid-19 infection.

"I am pleased to see you here for testing and if you will be tested negative you must try to eat food like fruits including oranges, pineapples, lemons, green vegetables that will enhance your body immunity. And if you are travelling and have time, do not forget to undergo steam inhaling," Ummu said.

The acting director of the National Laboratory for Community Health Ambele Mwalufango said in addition to conduct testing for other diseases, they test 200 drivers per day and for those in other regions there is a special procedure of sending samples to Dar es Salaam for testing.

He said test results come out within 48 hours and if the drivers test negative they will be given certificates that will be valid for 14 days which will assist

them to cross the borders without the need for testing in the countries of their destinations.

Mwalufango said before testing, the drivers have to undergo body temperature tests and for those found with higher body temperatures will be first tested.

"The drivers who will test negative of Covid-19 infection will be educated on how to protect themselves while in their journeys," he said.

"In this laboratory we have five new machines which test 1,800 samples in 24 hours... and this has enabled us to test many more samples compared to the National Community Health Laboratory where two machines were testing 300 to 400 samples per day that were causing delays in our performance," Mwalufango added.

The government has set up special Covid-19 testing procedures for truck drivers transporting cargo to neighbouring countries that sees they undergo testing before they travel.



The drivers who will test negative of Covid-19 infection will be educated on how to protect themselves while in their journeys

Use CIP gold processing technology, Zungu tells Barrick North Mara mine

By Guardian Correspondent, Musoma

MINISTER of State in the Vice-President's Office (Union and Environment) Mussa Azzan Zungu yesterday here called on Barrick North Mara gold mine to use CIP gold processing technology to protect Tanzania's environment and reduce its own costs on protecting the mine's environment.

The minister told his audience that it was pertinent for all gold mines in Tanzania to adopt the technology for its proven usefulness, worth and convenience in treating toxic sludge. "It is important to use this technology in treating the toxic sludge because of its intrinsic horrifying hazards once seepage from the sludge enters water sources, especially rivers. Contaminated water bodies would pose terrible health consequences to

people using that water," the minister explained adding: "We have satisfied ourselves that waste water here is safe and we shall maintain our regular inspections."

Zungu said the government welcomes investors but he added, investment must conform to the law.

Zungu was accompanied by Minister for Minerals, Dotto Biteko, Deputy Minister for Land, Housing and Human Settlement Development Angeline Mabula, NEMC board chairman, Prof Esnati Chaggu and other NEMC officials.

Zungu said ministers would listen to people complaints or grievances if any.

Minister Biteko presented a cheque for 34 billion/- and said the money would be used to compensate Nyamongo residents.

"This money will be used to

compensate eligible Nyamongo residents to end friction between the residents and Barrick company. After compensation the government will not tolerate individuals who will instigate Nyamongo resident to have sour relations between them and the company," he warned.

Mabula called on people to respect the law, urban development and avoid building houses without approval from district councils. Proven violators of the law would be losers, she cautioned.

NEMC General Director, Dr Samuel Gwamaka said the council was making follow ups on mining operations countrywide.

"Barrick North Mara is one of the mines that we have keenly followed up to ensure operations do not harm the environment and people living around this area," he said.



Minerals minister Doto Biteko addresses small-scale miners at Mwabomba small mine in Ushetu District, Shinyanga Region, yesterday. He was there to seek a peaceful end to a longstanding land ownership and use dispute between the miners and Catton Myabi Tanzania Company Ltd. Photo: Correspondent Saban Njia



Bonite Bottlers Limited is delighted to introduce **Kilimanjaro Drinking Water in 6 Litres, 12 Litres and 18.9 Litres.** We have invested in a state of the art water bottling line to enable our customers, consumers and stake holders to get the desired packs for their consumption in homes, offices and in various Institutions.

AVAILABILITY:-

- Kilimanjaro Drinking Water in bulk is available at our depots, shops and wholesalers throughout the country.
- For our customers and consumers in Dar es Salaam, you can buy Kilimanjaro Drinking Water while at home through our online partners for home delivery which are **Shoponline Tanzania www.shoponline.co.tz** and **Piki Deliveries www.piki.co.tz**.

We hope you will continue to support us and enjoy the refreshing taste from the home of Africa's highest peak.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Moshi: +255 755851170 au +255 27 2754422/7, **Arusha:** +255 756339532 au +255 27 2544876, **Dar:** +255 754635988 au +255 22 700450/655, **Morogoro:** +255 782546090, **Dodoma:** +255 787495439, **Karatu:** +255 757673123, **Babati:** +255 765459199, **Singida:** +255 755271963, **Tanga:** +255 763407979, **Mbeya:** +255 757266235, **Mwanza:** +255 742099191, **Nzega:** +255 746031412

KILIMANJARO DRINKING WATER IS THE WATER YOU CAN TRUST EVERYDAY!



Kungu district executive director Justice Kijazi responds to questions raised at a councillors' meeting held late last week. Photo: Correspondent Elisante John

9-year-old dies, kin hospitalised after consuming poisoned food

By Guardian Correspondent, Tarime

A nine-year-old child has died while his companion is still receiving treatment at Sirari Health Centre after allegedly eating food believed to contain poison.

The incident happened yesterday at Ng'eregere village in Tarime District. It is claimed that a person yet to be

identified arrived at their house at around 10.00 in the morning when the children's parents had gone to the market in Sirari town.

Witnesses said neighbours and other good citizens rushed to the house after hearing screams for help.

Ng'eregere village chairman Chacha Ghati said neighbours and other people rushed the children at

the health centre but one of them later died.

He said according to initial medical examination conducted, the children consumed a large quantity of poison the kind of which experts are yet to identify. He said he will convene an emergency village meeting to conduct a secret poll with the collaboration of the police to identify the people who

were behind the incident.

The father of the child who lost his life Nyankogoti Masaite said his son was in Std 2 at Ng'eregere Primary School while his kin who survived was in elementary school.

According to the parent he has been living well with his neighbours for many years and never expected such a thing to happen.

World Vision empowers 32 villages in Longido with Covid-19 education

By Guardian Correspondent, Longido

A Non-Governmental Organisation, World Vision Tanzania (WVT) in Arusha Region has conducted Covid-19 educational programmes to residents in 32 villages in Longido District.

The residents were also educated on the importance of protecting girls during the pandemic outbreak.

Coordinator of Kitumbeine DP, Peruth Daudi said yesterday that WVT's efforts are meant to support the government in sensitizing people on the importance of protecting themselves against the novel coronavirus which has now spread globally.

She said they are promoting girl child protection because in most Maasai communities the girls are subjected to gender based violence especially early marriages.

Longido District social welfare officer who is the chairman of the district Covid-19 committee, Atuganile Chisunga said apart from educating citizens on how to avoid contracting coronavirus, they also stress on them to protect both girls and boys.

She said they have so far reached over 70 percent of the residents.

Chisunga noted that the residents face serious water problems thus it becomes difficult for them to ensure frequent hand washing.

"We have educated them on how to make tippy tap which uses small amount of water".

The tippy tap is a hands-free device for hand washing that is especially designed for rural areas where there is no running water.

She noted that villagers are still honoring old traditional customs which allow girls to be married before the age of 18. She expressed worries that some girls might be married off during the pandemic following closure of schools.

According to Chisunga, some of the villagers are yet to understand the importance of wearing face masks when going to public places.

Arusha Region community development officer, Blandina Nkini said they have been working with various stakeholders in ensuring the residents are educated on Covid-19 preventive measures. She said they have been providing the education from grassroots level.

A health worker from Enguashi village, Thimotheo Lekoja said: "I have reached 82 households in Endonyonajuu ward. The villagers were keen to learn on the Covid-19 preventive measures and they have started to observe them."

He said most of them are washing hands with soap and running water as well as make sure they wear face masks whenever going to public places such as markets.

He called upon other organisations to embark on similar educational programmes to save Arusha residents from deadly coronavirus.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) the symptoms for Covid-19 can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia or breathing difficulties. More rarely, the disease can be fatal.

Those mostly at risks of developing severe symptoms include older citizens and people with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes and heart diseases.

The short to long term solution to the proliferation of the virus include social distancing, frequent hand washing with soap and running water or alcohol-based hand rubs and wearing the face masks.



We have educated them on how to make tippy tap which uses small amount of water

RC orders evaluation of all projects for viability

By Guardian Correspondent, Tunduru

RUVUMA Regional Commissioner Christina Mndeme has called upon the local councils in the region to make sure all development projects are inspected and receive evaluation to ascertain there is 'value for money' in them.

Mndeme issued the directives at the weekend when opening a special sitting of the Councillors' Meeting at Tunduru that discussed the report of the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) on issues raised therein and recommendations on the accounts of the Office of the Regional Administration and Local Government (RALG) for the Financial Year 2018/20.

RC Mndeme instructed the Ruvuma Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS) Steven Ndaki to make sure all development projects in the region's eight local councils are inspected and assessment made thereon.

"In case of negligence due to poor implementation I need to be informed on the appropriate steps taken to negligent officials before September 30 this year," she stressed.

She also said she should be informed on the reason for the issues that have been raised persistently in the CAG report and be given a list of relevant officials and their ranks and steps taken against them before June 30 this year.

In the sitting, RC Mndeme hailed councillors, members of parliament

and councils' experts in Tunduru District for having received a clean certificate according to the CAG Report ending 30 2019.

This is the fifth time consecutively for Tunduru District Council to receive a clean certificate beginning FY 2014/15 and Mndeme stressed this has to be a motivation for doing much better.



In case of negligence due to poor implementation I need to be informed on the appropriate steps taken to negligent officials before September 30 this year



Mkuranga district commissioner Filbato Sanga (5th-R) pictured yesterday receiving foodstuffs from Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) official Asca Sagwa for use by the needy. Photo: Correspondent Julieth Mkireri

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

THE Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC) has appealed to all those who have not registered themselves in the Permanent Voters Register (PVR) to come out and register to use their democratic right to elect leaders in the coming General Elections.

ZEC Chairman Retired Judge Hamid

ZEC gives more time for voter registration

Mahmoud issued the call when speaking to leaders of political parties at Sheikh Idris Abdul Wakil hall in Zanzibar.

He said ZEC has decided to again open its register after discovering that there are many citizens who

have not been registered for various reasons.

He mentioned the reasons as including lack of Zanzibar residence identity cards which according to the electoral law are a must for anyone to enroll in the PVR.

"ZEC plans to restart the exercise for new voters who had not registered themselves during the first phase and the new exercise begins on May 30 this year," he said.

He said ZEC has mobilised itself and will ensure the elections

will be free and fair and remove all deficiencies that might raise complaints.

He also said those who will be registered must be 18 years of age or more according to the law and must be in possession of a Zanzibar resident

identity card.

Some political party leaders hailed ZEC for putting in place a transparent environment that gives hope that the elections this year will be free of deficiencies.

AdaTadea Publicity Secretary, Rashid Mshenga called on the commission to conduct free and fair elections that will produce a legitimate winner to run the country.



Kyela district commissioner Claudia Kitta (2nd-L) checks a fast-boat engine donated by Kyela legislator Dr Harrison Mwakyembe, who is also Information, Culture, Arts and Sports minister, in support of the war on illegal fishing in Lake Nyasa. This was shortly after a representative of the MP, Amani Mwakipesile (2nd-R), handed over the engine in Kyela at the weekend. Photo: Correspondent Grace Mwakalinga

Mbeya registers 16 cases of GBV during Covid-19 crisis

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

A TOTAL of 16 incidents of Gender Based Violence in Mbeya Region have been reported during the Covid-19 crisis from January to March this year. This was revealed by the Coordinator of Mbeya Paralegal Aid Centre (Mbepace) Laiki Ndagile when speaking to this paper saying the figure is from research conducted that showed an increase in acts of human rights violations during the period and which have not been reported anywhere for

fear of the 'reporters' being infected with the Corona virus. He said the fright over the pandemic infections has made many people fear going out to report on these violations to appropriate authorities including police stations and the courts. He said the victims of these acts were women and according to statistics they include 15 females and one male. He explained that Mbeya District led the region with many GBV cases,

totaling seven, followed by Kyela district (four), Chunya (two), Mbarali (two) and Rungwe (one). "Women and children were the main GBV victims especially from the pastoralist community found in Mbeya, Mbarali and Chunya Districts. In addition there is a bigger fear of pregnancy to girls due to schools' closure. Ndagile said apart from the results from the research conducted, the high cost of masks and sanitisers made many people failing to go out of their

homes to report these acts to relevant authorities. He said legal apparatuses including courts have been stressing that many cases must be submitted in writing, the requirement which precludes many GBV victims due to lack of money to engage lawyers. He said Mbepace continues to use social media to educate on the dangers of GBV acts and they are cooperating with religious institutions and anti-Covid-19 committees that have been established.

'Bunda likely to record poor cotton harvest this season'

By Guardian Correspondent, Bunda

WARD councillors in Bunda Town Council have expressed fear of poor production of cotton in this year's harvesting seasons due lack of farm inputs. They were speaking at the Ward Council meeting held here over the weekend. Councillors said that many cotton growers have lost hope of harvesting enough cotton in this season due to unavailability of pesticides and "when they are available they are too expensive, whereby one bottle is at 37,000/-." "To an ordinary farmer, this is too expensive," one of the councillors said, noting that cotton growers are demoralised with the price of agro-inputs. Bunda Town Council chairman, Abraham Mayaya, also confirmed that cotton pesticides are too expensive and "if someone buys, they are not effective (they don't kill insects and this lead to poor harvest of the crop)." "Most of the pesticides are not effective. This gives farmers hard time as cotton is one of income earning crops in the district," said Mayaya. The council chair said: "The danger I see is that many farmers would fail to re-pay their loans for the farm inputs from traders as this farming season the Tanzania Cotton Board (TCB) didn't guarantee farmers as it was in the past." So, the council asked TCB to work

on the matter and assess the loss caused by the challenge and advise the government on best ways to assist farmers who incurred loss. Mayaya also suggested the need for TCB to talk to the traders who gave loans to farmers to suspend loan repayment until the next farming season. Cotton is the country's second largest export crop after coffee and Africa's fourth-largest producer of cotton after Mali, Burkina Faso and Egypt. About 14 million people or 40% of the total population derives their livelihood directly or indirectly from cotton that is grown by an estimated 500,000 small holder farmers with approximate cultivated area of 400,000 hand crop of 360,000 tonnes and having a very high potential for growth through sustainable farm management, contract farming, credit facility, and adequate and timely provision of farm inputs. Currently, 70 - 80 percent of Tanzania's annual cotton production is exported.

“...if someone buys, they are not effective (they don't kill insects and this lead to poor harvest of the crop”

Extension officers urged to closely monitor farmers in their localities

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

AGRICULTURAL extension officers are required to closely monitor farmers in their areas to educate them on various methods and new farming technology for better harvests and dump poverty. Director of Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute - Uyole Centre (TARI-Uyole) Dr Tulole Bucheyeki made the call at the weekend when speaking about various farming technologies created at the institute. He said it is appropriate time for the extension officers to assist farmers on better farming methods to enable them reap more and better harvests instead of continuing with traditional farming methods. "Many farmers do not develop, so are their incomes, the situation that make

them continue languishing in poverty," he said. He said farmers are supposed to produce crops according to procedures directed to them by farming experts in rural areas including those selling farm inputs. Bucheyeki also called on farmers to abide by the use of better farming technologies and abandon traditional farming methods to enable them develop to big farmers, instead of continuing calling themselves 'small farmers.' He said TARI-Uyole does not like seeing the so called 'small farmers' while there are various technologies in existence and as of now there is technology for assessing the soil, hence he advises farmers to grow crops that best fit the type of the soils in their areas.

He said as of now they continue to educate farmers in various areas to cultivate strategic crops using modern seeds produced by TARI. Dr Bucheyeki said at the moment TARI-Uyole has produced modern seeds of various types and farmers are advised to use them including beans, maize, sunflower avocado and wheat. TARI-Uyole researcher for Irish potatoes Dr Dolla Mende said in the research conducted they discovered that if farmers use certain seeds they produce, they will produce more crops as they withstand various plant diseases as well as climate change. He disclosed that they have produced 10 types of potato seeds and others are in the various stages of research, and when ready they will be distributed to farmers for cultivation.



A vegetable vendor (in red T-shirt) attends to his customer at Dar es Salaam's Ilala mixed-goods market yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

Afyra Plus

Vacancy Announcement

Afyra Plus is a local Non-Governmental Organization registered under NGOs Act no.24 of 2002 in Tanzania. Afyra Plus is an affiliate of IntraHealth International Inc, a not-for-profit organization headquartered in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA, with more than 40 years of experience in over 100 countries in health systems strengthening and service delivery. As a local affiliate, Afyra Plus brings a deep understanding of the country context and offers a route towards local self-reliance, working to be a key partner of the Government of Tanzania (GoT). Afyra Plus envisions a community with quality health care services for everyone, achieved by strengthening the quality and accessibility of Tanzania's health care system, working in partnership with the GoT, civil society organizations, for-profit firms and other key stakeholders to support improved service delivery outcomes in the country. Afyra Plus is in the Tohara Plus project consortium led by IntraHealth International that supports the GoT to strengthen and accelerate the scale-up of Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) for HIV prevention for maximum public health impact with funding support from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Afyra Plus is soliciting applications from excellent candidates to fill the **Human Resources and Administrative Officer** position based in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania.

Summary of Role: The Human Resources and Administrative Officer shall be responsible on providing Human Resources, Administrative and operations support to Afyra Plus. He/she will be responsible to provide guidance on interpreting and implementing Human Resources policies, rules and regulations as well as ensure constance adherence to the Human Resources related legal framework. He/she will be responsible to oversee administrative and operations portfolio within Afyra Plus. The incumbent of this position will work under the overall supervision of the Director of Finance and Administration.

Key Responsibilities

Human Resources:

- Interpret and review Human Resources policies, rules and regulations as well as standard procedures;
- Review candidate applications for advertised vacancies, schedule and administer interviews;
- Determine entitlements, issue contracts and ensure the correct payment of salaries according to existing Staff Rules and Regulations; process all types of personnel transactions;
- Provide guidance, training and daily supervision to other support staff in the area of responsibility;
- Arrange for and/or attend meetings on day-to-day personnel matters; participate in discussions of new or revised procedures and practices, interpret and assess the impact of changes, and make recommendations for follow-up action;
- Review the contractual status of all staff in order to ensure contracts are prepared on timely basis and reviewed before the deadline;
- Oversee the data input into personnel-related databases and provide guidance on data input and validation;
- Prepare correspondence to respond to enquiries in respect to relevant personnel matters; review correspondence prior to clearance by the Executive Director as appropriate;
- Create, check and maintain personnel files for all staff at location, ensuring all documentation is complete; maintain and file confidential personnel information and documents, ensure relevant documents are kept in their respective files;
- Ensures that all newly hired employees in the office have gone through formal orientation about the organization and the job;
- Provide advice to managers on organisation planning, job design;
- Administer staff entitlements, allowances, benefits and

Administration and Operations:

- Briefing/debriefing staff members on issues relating to a variety of administrative areas, e.g., personnel actions, visas, licenses, documentation procedures and practices, administrative procedures, etc.;
- Assist in the preparation of office budgets applicable to staff and servicing costs and maintain necessary budgetary control records;
- Provide administrative support in procurement of equipment and supplies as per laid down procedures making recommendations and following up to ensure that procedures are strict adhered to the organizations and donors/USG policies.
- Ensures regular and timely payments for utilities, staff mobile airtime, staff medical insurances etc.
- Ensure the efficient running of the office including IT systems and other equipment.
- Maintain updated inventory registry, filing and recording systems of the organization;
- Provide support in the preparation and implementation of systems and procedures for the procurement of all supplies, goods, works and services;
- Manages office supplies and keeps update records of office stationery and other supplies.
- Manage the office petty cash in accordance with approved financial procedures and regulations.
- Assist to secure relevant and adequate insurance in order to minimize risk and liabilities to the organization (staff medical, vehicle insurance, etc).
- Set up internal controls and security;
- Supervise support staff as required

Minimum Qualifications

- Advanced University Degree (Masters or equivalent) or post graduate degree with experience and advanced training/ courses in one or more of the following disciplines: Business administration, human resources management or other related areas;
- At least 3-5 years post graduate, progressively responsible job-related experience in business administration, human resources or public sector management.
- Demonstrated excellent personal integrity and confidentiality
- Previous experience working with CDC funded project or NGOs is advantageous
- Excellent interpersonal communication skills,
- Demonstrated ability to work effectively in team-based environment
- Demonstrated ability in using Microsoft Office applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, Outlook, etc.)
- Oral and written proficiency in English and Kiswahili required

Application letter with detailed CV, indicating daytime contact telephone numbers and email address, as well as names and contact information of three referees should be submitted to the following email address: employment.afyraplus@gmail.com indicating the job you are applying for in the Subject line.

The closing date for receiving applications is May 31st, 2020. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted. Afyra Plus seeks to fill this position with the right person as soon as possible. Successful candidate will be required to report one month after receiving an employment offer.

Ikungi spends 120m/- to buy green gram from farmers

By Guardian Correspondent, Ikungi

AUTHORITIES in Ikungi District, Singida Region have spent over 120m/- to purchase green grams from small-scale farmers.

Ikungi District Executive Director, Justice Kijazi told ward councillors here that auctions were conducted through farmers' cooperative unions.

He said farmers will be directly paid by their specific unions under the cooperative department.

Kijazi said they have so far bought more than 40 tonnes of the crop. He said a decision to buy the green grams was meant to assist farmers who were previously struggling to access the market.

"We purchased the crop at 1,075/- per kilogramme, the amount is almost double compared to prices that were offered by middlemen. We are determined to support green gram farmers by ensuring reliable markets as well as better prices," he noted.

Ikungi District Commissioner, Edward Mpogolo said the crop can fetch up to 1,200/- per kilogramme while middlemen were buying it at between 400 and 600 per kg.

"Farmers were previously not benefiting from their hard work, they were selling the crop at cheapest prices," DC said.

One of the councillors, Halima Ng'imba applauded the government for offering better prices to farmers insisting payments should be done on time. She was concerned that despite assurance of a reliable market, farmers were waiting for longer periods to get

the monies from cooperative unions.

According to Ng'imba, most of the farmers live in remote rural areas where houses have been damaged by floods caused by the just ended rains, hence the need for money to repair them.

She said that following payment delays, some farmers resolved to sell the crops to middlemen to get quick money.

"These people need money to repair their houses and purchase various commodities, some have sold their green grams at a loss, only to get monies to meet their family demand," he noted.

Ikungi District chairman, Ali Mwangi said the new purchasing system conducted through auctioning will enable government to collect enough taxes, urging authorities to apply similar methods to other crops such as sesame grams and cow peas.

"We now want all the crops to be sold through auctioning under farmers' cooperative unions. This will ensure better prices and markets for the cash crops," he said.



Farmers were previously not benefiting from their hard work, they were selling the crop at cheapest prices



Rajab Ali Rajab (R, foreground), Zanzibar's North B Unguja district commissioner and chairman of the district's safety and security committee, leads a crackdown targeting illegal liquor distillers and traders around the district at the weekend. Photo: Rahma Suleiman

By Guardian Correspondent, Muheza

POLICE in Muheza District in Tanga Region have reined in criminal activities in the district during Eid el-Fitr celebrations, a move that saw residents celebrate in peace.

This was made possible by round the clock patrol in all areas of the town on Sunday and yesterday led by the District Police Commanding Officer (OCD) Cosmas Maziwa and District crime officer Jonas Sirra.

On the other hand the district's Police traffic division led by its commanding officer Richard Muwe

Muheza police say Eid el-Fitr holiday went without incident

were seen along main roads checking on unruly drivers, the move that saw the holiday passes without any serious road accident.

Muheza residents hailed the police for controlling criminal activities during holidays enabling them to celebrate in peace.

Seleman Jonga, a Muheza resident

said the police in Muheza District were well mobilised to ensure the residents live in peace without bothers from criminal incidents.

Days before Eid holidays Tanga Regional Police Commander Blasius Chatanda issued a stern warning to all those with intentions to breach the peace during Eid holidays saying

they would be dealt with accordingly, and assured residents in the region to celebrate the holiday in peace as there would be ample security for them and their property.

Following the RPC assurance, Eid holidays in Tanga was celebrated peacefully without any serious criminal incidents.



Garbage lies abandoned just inches from Dar es Salaam's Mbezi Mwisho commuter bus and Bajaj stand yesterday, reportedly uncollected for several weeks now and hugely inconveniencing motorists, passengers and the public. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

148 children from poor households in Dodoma, Dar get free NHIF cards

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

A TOTAL of 148 children from poor households in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma regions have benefited from free National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) cards, something which enabled them to access quality medical services without further payments.

Funded by a non-profit organisation—Sachia Society, the support benefits 103 children from Dodoma and 45 from Dar es Salaam.

Organisation's director of administration, Nsia Paul said this during the event to hand over 70 NHIF cards to children in Mkutupora ward in Dodoma. "We are doing this to complement the government's efforts to move towards Universal Healthcare Coverage (UHC). There is a good number of children from disadvantaged families that are unable to access quality health services. This is why we sat down and thought to extend our help in this area," she said.

She also said that apart from the contribution, the organization is also supporting children living in difficult and risky environment in Coast Region.

"We are providing basic life support to children aged between 7 to 17 whom are orphans, children living in risky environment and those with disabilities, we also support girls who

failed to continue with studies due to financial problems," she added.

According to her, under the organisation, women from poor households are taught various ways to generate their income including engaging in entrepreneurship and agriculture and other vocational skills.

For her part, Sachia Society representative in central zone Elizabeth Kimwage said that they are palling to construct its permanent centre at Makutupora area so as to extend its services to more people.

"In Dodoma, we have provided the NHIF cards to children from the areas of Azimio, Vyeyula, Makutupora, Mchemwa, Mmbande, Namihanga, Kambarage, Mji Mpya and Sekondari," she said.



In Dodoma, we have provided the NHIF cards to children from the areas of Azimio, Vyeyula, Makutupora, Mchemwa, Mmbande, Namihanga, Kambarage, Mji Mpya and Sekondari

By Guardian Correspondent, Singida

OFFICIALS issuing Identification Cards (IDs) to small traders in Singida Region have been challenged to uphold high moral standards so as to achieve the intended goals.

Singida Regional Commissioner Dr Rehema Nchimbi made the call over the weekend when handing over small traders' IDs to district commissioners from across the region.

RC Nchimbi wanted officials to register and issue IDs faithfully and

Uphold ethics in issuing IDs to small traders, RC tells officials

with due diligence by learning from the challenges recorded in the past.

"We've received more IDs this year. So petty traders should come up in big numbers to get the IDs for their development and country's at large," she said, commending President John Magufuli for measures he had taken to fight against the spread of Covid-19.

Dr Nchimbi said that as the country mulls to become middle-income nation

by 2025, petty traders are key to drive the agenda.

"The IDs have brought positive impacts to the traders and the government, they have enabled small-scale traders to be recognised and respected and being able to grab various business opportunities," she noted.

"The IDs which we are distributing now will contain special serial numbers

to make it more exceptional and a small trader will be required to pay 20,000/- to access it, however this year, they will be paying online compared to previous year where cash was accepted," she said.

According to her, in the first phase, 9,000 out of 55,000 IDs were distributed to small-scale traders in the region.

For his part, Ikungu District

Commissioner Edward Mpogolo said that in the first-phase traders contributed 100m/- by purchasing the IDs.

"We will strengthen efforts this year to ensure that the IDs reach all corners of the region including auction areas, we are well prepared to make sure that we collect revenues to even surpass our target," he added.

Late 2018, President John Magufuli

launched the programme to provide vendors and small-scale entrepreneurs with special taxpayer ID cards which he printed in efforts to expand the tax base in the country.

When handing over the cards to regional commissioners, he charged the leaders to ensure proper distribution of the cards.

The ID cards will be renewable annually and are available at a price of 20,000/-. Anyone running a business with a maximum profit turnaround of 4m/- is eligible to have one.

Kilombero Sugar Company resumes normal production

By Guardian Reporter

The sugar industry ought to see some relief amid the price hike and scarcity of the commodity, as Kilombero Sugar Company has resumed production marking the commencement of season 2020/2021 whereas the sugar company projects to produce 127,000 tonnes of sugar for the season.

Like other sugar factories in the country, Kilombero Sugar Company had suspended production temporarily for a few months to pave way for annual maintenance of its factories.

For 2020/2021 season, which officially commenced on May 19th, the sugar company is expecting to crash 1,328,445 tonnes of cane of which 600,000 tonnes will come from Kilombero Valley cane growers and the rest grown by the company.

Morogoro Regional Commissioner, Loata Ole Sanare attended the inaugural event held recently at Kilombero Sugar Company as the guest of honor. The RC was also accompanied by Kilombero District Commissioner, James Ihunyo and Kilosa District Commissioner, Adam Mgoi.

The Regional Commissioner commended Kilombero Sugar Company for responding to government's call by resuming production two weeks earlier than planned previously.

"I commend Kilombero Sugar Company for going back to production earlier, this will help increase sugar supply in Morogoro region and the country at large. I am also impressed with the good distribution of sugar done by Kilombero Sugar and for good prices when selling imported sugar," said Ole Sanare.

Speaking of 2020/2021 season, Board Chairman for Kilombero Sugar Company, Ambassador Ami Mpungwe said although last season (2019/2020)

was challenging, the company is optimistic about the upcoming season and hopeful that this time the company will achieve its production targets.

"Season 2019/2020 was marred by a few challenges but the major one being heavy rains, which made it difficult to harvest cane and obviously destroyed infrastructures hence making it even more difficult to transport cane, because of this we couldn't reach our target," said Ambassador Mpungwe.

The board chairman further noted that, for season 2019/2020 the goal was to produce 129,000 tonnes of sugar but managed to produce 103,000 tonnes instead, attributing the flop to heavy rains.

"For Kilombero Sugar Company, this 2020/2021 season has commenced two weeks earlier in response to government's call for sugar factories to get back to business as soon as possible to lessen the sugar deficit impact in the market," said Ambassador Mpungwe, noting that by the end of May, the factory will have managed to produce 2,000 tonnes of sugar for distribution.

Regarding the imported gap sugar, head of corporate affairs for Kilombero Sugar Company, Joseph Rugaimukamu said by June, a total of 10,000 tonnes of sugar that were meant for Kilombero Sugar will have arrived. He noted that by May 20th, the company had already received 6,416 tonnes of sugar which is being distributed to the market.

"Season 2019/2020 was marred by a few challenges but the major one being heavy rains, which made it difficult to harvest cane and obviously destroyed infrastructures hence making it even more difficult to transport cane, because of this we couldn't reach our target"



A resident of Bahi in Dodoma Region lays the groundwork for the construction of a pit latrine, as captured at the weekend. Photo: Correspondent Peter Mkwavila

'Corona self-screening app will ease congestion at hospitals'

By Guardian Reporter

THE Aga Khan Health Services (AKHS) in collaboration with the Aga Khan University (AKU) has launched a mobile programme dubbed 'Coronacheck' to facilitate home self-screening of Coronavirus and thus reduce congestion of people seeking for the service in hospitals.

Developed by AKU's Technology Innovation Support Centre (TISC), the self-screening programme will enable people to easily identify early symptoms of the infections while at home and be able to seek further service.

In a statement availed to media, director of Aga Khan hospital Sisawo

Konteh said those who own android smart phones and iPhones will be able to access the service for free.

"The tool has been approved by the Alberta Health Services and been improved to cater for the country's demand. Through this app, we hope to share useful tips that can prevent new cases and provide reassurance to worried citizens during a time of widespread concern. All these efforts are meant to support government efforts to reduce the spread of the disease," he said.

Konteh said the app uses an interactive chatbot, driven by artificial intelligence, which allows users to understand their symptoms, recognise whether they may have contracted

Covid-19 infections and thus seek for further help.

"The programme also aims to identify potential coronavirus carriers so as to limit their risk of transmission. It also lists the national helplines available," he added.

For his part, Saleem Sayani, director of AKU's TISC said self-screening for the coronavirus continues to be a public health priority in every country around the world.

He said that by reducing the need for patients to visit hospitals for screening, the app will also contribute to reducing the burden on the healthcare system and ensure care for those most in need.

"Initial findings show that 19 percent of the users needed immediate

screening and treatment. This helped to reduce the number of people visiting health centres to seek for Covid-19 testing," he explained.

Sayani further said that CoronaCheck also seeks to tackle myths and misconceptions by featuring educational videos to combat the increasing amount of unverified information circulating on social media platforms.

"It also includes authentic information on best practices to protect oneself from infection, advice on self-assessment, and precautions and guidance on physical distancing as recommended by World Health Organisation and the ministry of Health," Sayani added.



Retail trade, chiefly in clothes and household goods, well under way in Dar es Salaam's sprawling Kariakoo market zone yesterday - the second Eid el-Fitr day, a public holiday in Tanzania. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

Big fall in SA mango harvest due to drought

By Pieter Dempsey

ONGOING drought conditions in the main production regions resulted in a more than 20percent decline in South Africa's 2019/2020 mango harvest.

This was according to South African Mango Growers' Association's technical coordinator at the South African Subtropical Growers' Association (Subtrop), André Botha.

He said the season had just come to an end, and it was estimated that a crop of about 70 000t would be realised due to the effects of the drought. The average crop size during the past five

years had been around 84 000t per season.

Botha said the main production areas near Hoedspruit in Limpopo, as well as in Mpumalanga, had been hard hit by the drought.

He explained that in South Africa, the greatest demand for mangoes was from the local consumers, along with the processing industry where mangoes were used to produce achar, a spicy mango pickle. Less than 10% of the fruit was exported.

In the 2018/2019 mango season, just over 93 000t of mangoes were harvested, with just under 30 000t going to local fresh produce

markets, while around 26 800t was used in the production of achar. A further 15 000t was used for juice production, and 9 000t was used for the production of dried fruit, he said.

Although final figures were not available yet, Botha said, to date about 3 500t of mangoes had been packed and processed for exports by sea and air.

"The export numbers will be down, due to the smaller crop this season, but these are not the final figures, some exporters' data [still needs] to be collected."

By comparison, about 6 000t, or

1.5 million 4kg boxes, were exported in 2018/2019. The main export destinations were the EU, Canada, Ghana, Indonesia, Kuwait, Russia, Singapore, Hong Kong and China, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, he said.

Botha added that the industry had not experienced any delays in packing and processing due to the national lockdown to contain the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

"Most of the crop was already harvested by March, and farmers received all the necessary protocols prescribed by government through Agri SA and Subtrop."

\$5 million supporting research into neglected tropical diseases

By Julia Evangelou Strait

RESEARCHERS at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis have received two grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) totaling more than \$5 million to study two types of parasitic worm infection that cause devastating illness in millions of people worldwide.

The two infections are on the World Health Organization's (WHO) list of neglected tropical diseases, a group of about 20 illnesses that together affect more than 1 billion people. One project will focus on onchocerciasis, commonly known as river blindness, caused by a parasitic roundworm spread by black flies that live and reproduce near rivers. The second project will target fascioliasis, caused by a foodborne parasitic flatworm commonly found in cattle-farming operations.

Led by Makedonka Mitreva, professor of medicine and of genetics, both projects involve large-scale genome sequencing of the parasites to develop genetic tools to help monitor the infections' spread and track resistance these parasites already have developed against drugs intended to eradicate them. The genomic information also could lead to new therapies to combat the drug-resistant strains.

"These parasites are becoming very good at evading the drugs that target them, and we have no idea how they are doing that," said Mitreva, also a research member of the McDonnell Genome Institute at Washington University School of Medicine. "We need a better understanding of these parasites' genomes so we can discover how they resist standard drugs. That knowledge then could result in identification of genetic markers that predict whether a drug will fail to effectively treat infected individuals, thus guiding the design of new treatments."

In collaboration with Miguel Cabada, MD, of the University of Texas in Galveston, Mitreva is studying fascioliasis in the highlands of Peru, where farmers and their families are often in close contact with infected livestock. Cabada, who also runs a

clinic in Cusco, Peru, treats adults and children with fascioliasis infection, caused by the flatworm Fasciola hepatica. A drug called triclabendazole is the first-line treatment for fascioliasis, but resistance to the treatment is widespread in livestock and a growing problem among people who become infected. "This parasite burrows through the intestinal wall and makes its way to the liver and bile ducts," Mitreva said. "It causes substantial liver damage. This sets up a long-term, chronic infection that can really have an impact on nutritional status, leading to anaemia and weight loss."

Children are especially vulnerable to fascioliasis infections, which can contribute to malnutrition and lifelong consequences, including stunted growth, dysfunctional brain development and impaired immune systems. In the Andes Mountains of Peru and Bolivia, an estimated 70% of children are infected.

The researchers will sequence the genomes of fascioliasis parasites that are sensitive and resistant to triclabendazole in an effort to identify genetic reasons for the resistance and to develop a quick test to distinguish between drug-susceptible and drug-resistant worms.

In collaboration with Warwick Grant, of La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia, Mitreva is studying river blindness in parts of sub-Saharan Africa. River blindness is caused by the parasitic roundworm Onchocerca volvulus, which is spread by black flies. "This roundworm can make its way to the eye and cause permanent blindness in some people," Mitreva said. "The parasites migrate through the skin, causing nodules and extreme itching. Not all strains of the worm cause blindness - that can depend on the geographic area that the worm comes from."

The drug ivermectin has been used to treat and prevent river blindness for decades. It is often given to entire communities as part of mass drug-administration programs to prevent the disease in areas where the parasite has a long history of being endemic.

The Guardian

www.ippmedia.com

TUESDAY 26 MAY 2020

Taking A New Look
At The News
ESTABLISHED IN 1995

The Guardian Limited Key Contacts

Managing Editor: WALLACE MAUGGO
Circulation Manager: EMMANUEL LYIMO

Newsdesk

News Editor: LUSEKELO PHILEMON
0757154767
General line: 0745700710
E-mail: guardian@guardian.co.tz

Advertising

Mobile: 0782253676
E-mails: advertise@guardian.co.tz
Website: www.ippmedia.com
epaper.ippmedia.com

School closures due to COVID-19 raise new issues for our education

PROSPECTS of opening primary and secondary schools still hang in the balance owing to the difficulties of figuring out how precautions about hygiene - and temperature tests - can be applied on large concentrations of young people.

Students in colleges and universities can be expected to lead the way in taking care of themselves, as well as ensuring that appropriate conditions are in place.

When the younger students are less easily directed, and unlikely to observe such requirements as adults, they surely get dangerously exposed to infections.

That is why the government has hesitated on the measure, despite allowing adult learners in higher learning institutions to continue with studies, and Form VI students to prepare for exams rapidly and actually sit them.

It means a gap is being opened in learning for this year, unless the number of Covid-19 cases in the country continues to plummet, which is everyone's wish but which no one can guarantee.

Hence, the necessity to sit and wait, indefinitely, as it is entirely possible for number of cases of the pandemic to 'tilt' either way.

Some experts have been saying that, owing to this situation, the government ought to formalise distance learning, but there were two problems.

First, some pundits appeared to be making that suggestion in relation to preparing for this academic year's exams, which would create an unequal situation favouring those best connected to the internet, those capable of acquiring smart phones, etc.

The second problem is that they were rushing to conclusions, including that the virus will be here for a long time, even the whole year and beyond.

The stage is set for the opening of

institutions of higher learning so long as they conform to hygiene measures more by each person's actions than when large groups of teens and pre-teens are put together.

But it isn't just a matter of formalising and leaving everything as it is; it calls for policy discussion as to how primary and secondary schooling can be organised amid the coronavirus.

This will not be an easy matter to address as what it implies is breaking down learners into small groups amenable to rules and equipment to ensure all this.

While it is still too early to make out specific or definitive ideas about the matter, chances are that a new round of investments in the education sector will be needed, like ensuring social distancing among learners even if to a minimal extent.

There will be need for plenty of new space, whether it is by expanding space in current schools or even in building more schools to accommodate pupils in the vicinity - which would leave existing schools with fewer pupils.

It also opens up the scope for informal education based on the tuition model, where more well-to-do families will obtain an advantage with the model cheaper than having to pay school fees.

This may also provide room for the recycling, so to speak, many unemployed graduates of our higher learning institutions, where they obtain a few coins helping the younger people understand the lessons.

In 1974 our country went through such a programme, called Universal Primary Education (UPE), to which was later added universal secondary education. With support from stakeholders here and outside, reorganisation can be done in the sector in a viable manner. That would be beneficial in more ways than one, we believe.

UN Days awfully off focus with mental conditions dominated by the pandemic

AS public gatherings remain off the table for the third month running, plenty is being lost in terms of cultural communication and public reminders on issues that have helped to shape local and global culture.

Looking at the UN calendar of international days, it is possible to arrive at the view that they are a bit numerous. However, they are virtually indispensable for activist portions of society labouring to improve the conditions of suffering people everywhere.

Just within this month, we have World Press Freedom Day (May 3) and hardly any journalists, media executives or activist organisations met to take stock of the situation - owing to understandably stringent measures to keep Covid-19 infections in check.

On May15 there was the International Day of Families, and perhaps there is no better time to mark the day like in the current (Covid-19) situation, where the disease hangs like a sword above all families.

We have been spared the worst of that situation, as a top official of the World Health Organisation has had occasion to quip recently, but Covid-19 is still very much here.

Somewhat similar to the World Press Freedom Day is May 17, which meant for marking World Information Society Day. It is possible that information technology even led the way, while it unites all avenues of information into one large information society.

On May 21 there was the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, which in the past has been marked by way of a rich variety of activities in Tanzania and elsewhere.

Diversity usually involves the wish to protect minorities, their ways of life and even their ancestral territories from

the vagaries of the market economy.

The International Day for Biological Diversity (May 22) promises yet another avenue where local and other professionals did not have an opportunity to sit in a meeting hall and examine experiences or lessons for the past year.

Tanzania is an important country not just because it is rich in diversity but also because thanks to its organisation of that diversity - with the like of the annual giant wildlife migration.

Just next to the Ngorongoro Crater lie the irreplaceable footprints of early man, and Tanzania has been a sort of Mecca in that regard since 1959 with Dr Louis and Mary Leakey having permanently put both early man and Tanzania on the world map.

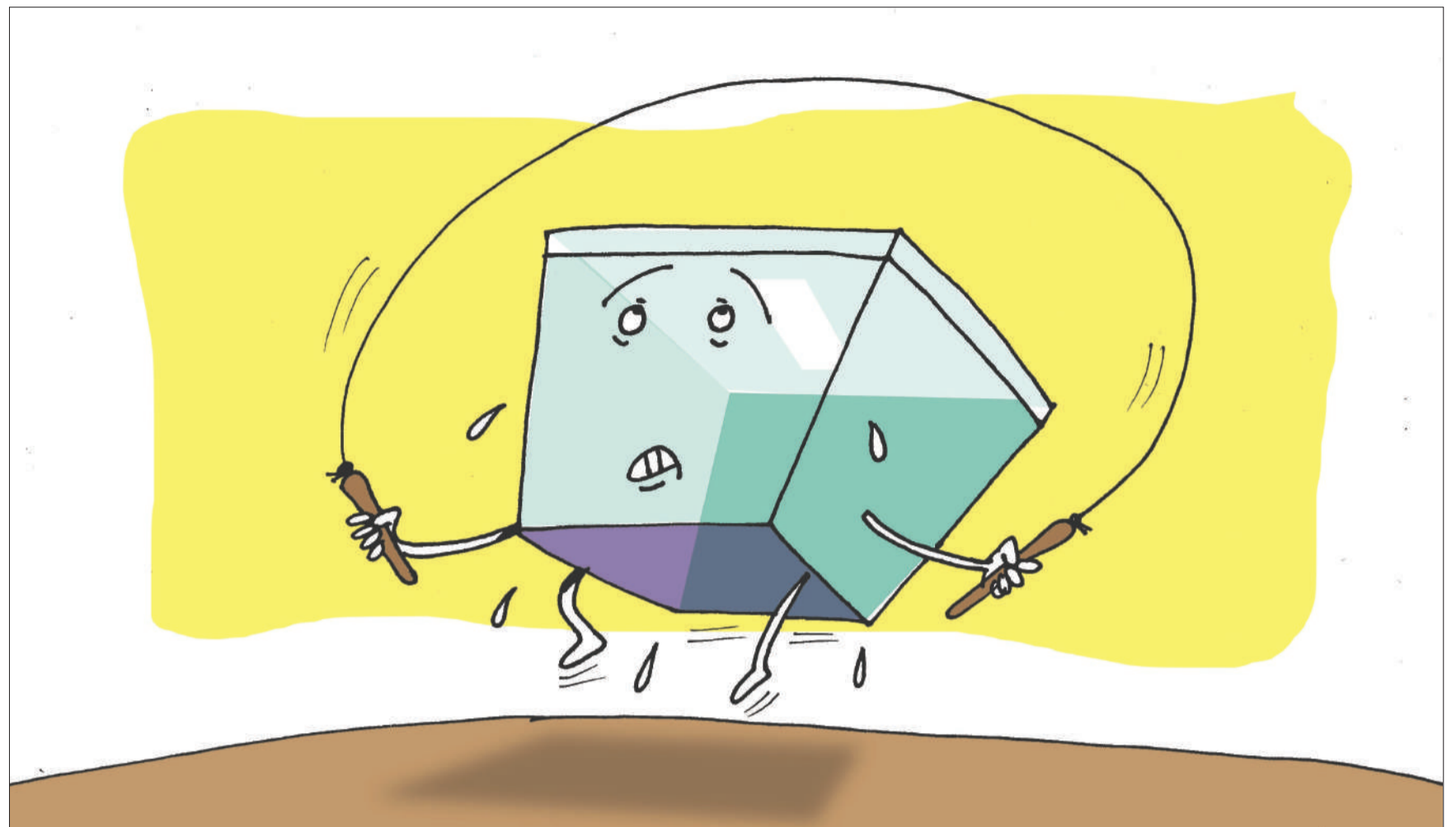
We are close to ending the month with three vital international days - with May 23 more noticeable as Africa Day. May 29 is similar to it in part as International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, the theme this year revolving around intra-regional efforts to avoid the worst amid civil war.

Not to be slighted is the international day relating to the war on obstetric fistula, a painful condition afflicting many young women.

It is unsettled conditions in life that often lead to such complications, hence the need for society to appreciate the urgency of educating young women on these risks.

Much the same can be said for the World No Tobacco Day (May 31), where emphasis is laid on kicking out the habit, though for many smokers it hasn't been easy.

Activists were to have met to compare notes, hopefully making some progress on the matter. Fears over Covid-19 have seen all these occasions axed, but the respective wars and battles must continue.



From infection to recovery, here is how long it takes to shake the virus

By Robert Roy Britt

IN the early weeks of the Covid-19 crisis, little was known about the wide range of possible symptoms and the typical progression of the disease. Now, more than three months into the coronavirus outbreaks, doctors and researchers are finally getting a handle on the typical duration of the illness and how it plays out.

It all starts when a person is infected by SARS-CoV-2. The virus, entering most often through the mouth, nose or eyes, gets into the respiratory system and incubates before announcing itself through symptoms. This incubation is a bit like a chicken egg developing before it hatches.

Covid-19 is known to take anywhere from two to 14 days before it triggers symptoms, with a median of four to five days, according to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). There are known exceptions, up to 19 days.

During incubation, a person can be infectious. It's not yet known how early the period of infectiousness starts, but this period of "viral shedding" is thought to typically begin two to three days before symptoms start, and reach a maximum around day five for mild cases and around day ten for severe cases, according to one small study on early data, published in the journal Nature.

When the virus does take hold, the onset of symptoms is typically gradual, so a person may not realise that he or she has Covid-19 for up to three weeks after contracting it.

"For those three weeks, those individuals can spread the virus, because they may not be sick, or they may not feel too sick. So you've got a perfect storm scenario for the spread of this virus," says Mark Cameron, PhD, an immunologist and medical researcher in the School of Medicine at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio.

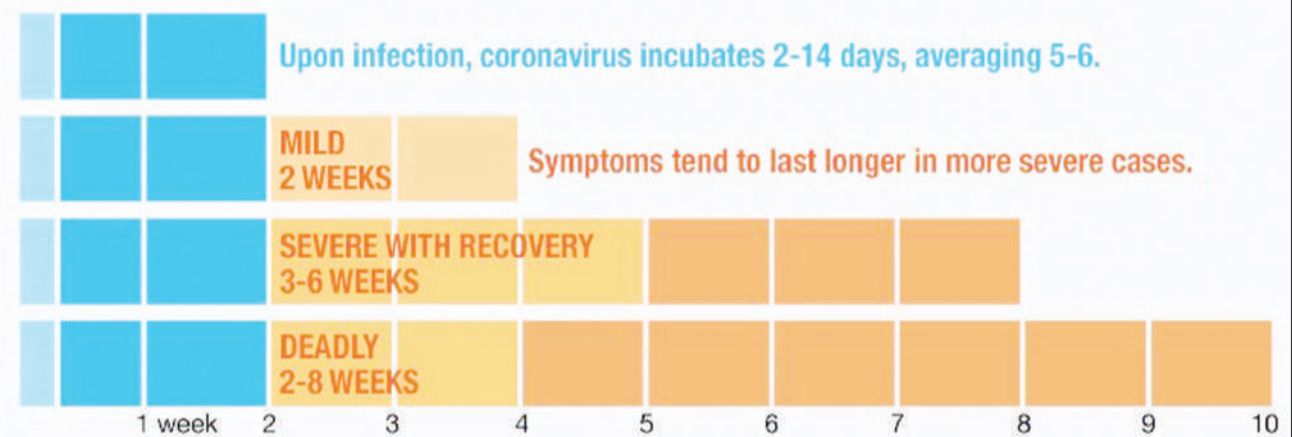
While there is no typical case, there are a range of scenarios. At its most brief, the virus might incubate for just two days, and a person might have a mild case of Covid-19 lasting just two weeks, for a total duration of 14 days from infection.

In more severe cases, a person might suffer anywhere from three weeks to six weeks. Among those who die, the final outcome can come as quickly as two weeks after symptoms start, or up to eight weeks later.

Add a possible 14-day incubation period, and the longest likely scenario,

COVID-19 Timeline: Infection to Recovery or Death

The course of the disease can run from around 16 days after a short incubation period and mild case to 10 weeks given a long incubation period and worst-case outcome. The following scenarios are estimates based on research to date and input from multiple epidemiologists and medical professionals.



A person can be infectious before symptoms start until symptoms are gone, with a peak about 5 days after symptoms onset. But this timeframe is not well understood, and some people with COVID-19 have no symptoms yet can infect others.

SOURCES: Mark Cameron & Robert Salata, Case Western Reserve University; Bruce Aylward et al., WHO; Additional interviews and research GRAPHIC BY ROBERT ROY BRITT

then, is ten total weeks from the time of infection to a person's death.

How symptoms progress

For Covid-19 patients who have symptoms, the effects can vary widely. The most common symptom among those who have been diagnosed is fever, followed by cough, then fatigue, and in more severe cases, shortness of breath and other symptoms.

But some people never experience more than mild cold- or flu-like symptoms. Some people lose their sense of smell with Covid-19 while experiencing no other symptoms, doctors are reporting. Some 80 per cent of diagnosed cases involve only mild to moderate symptoms.

The progression can come in phases. A person might start out with mild or moderate symptoms, explains Robert Salata, MD, a professor of medicine in epidemiology and international health at Ohio's Case Western Reserve University. "Then on days five to nine it can really explode in those people who are destined to develop severe disease," he says.

Negative tests are no guarantee the effects of the illness are over, either. "For severe cases, and cases that end up in the hospital, we're seeing quite a significant time lag between symptoms first arriving and the patient weakening

and requiring hospital care," says Caroline Buckee, associate professor of epidemiology at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Scientists don't know all factors involved in severe cases, but they do know that underlying health conditions, including heart disease, diabetes and respiratory issues, raise the risk of a severe case.

It's also possible that the "viral dose" matters in determining whether a case becomes severe or not. That means someone who is exposed to a lot of the virus for an extended period of time, such as a health care worker, is at greater risk than someone inhaling a small amount.

How do we know when someone is virus-free?

Much remains to be studied about when symptoms are gone and people "feel better" versus when they are no longer infectious, especially among people who have mild or no symptoms.

Salata says that in most diagnosed cases, a swab test looking for the virus performed seven days after the onset of symptoms will be positive. A test ten days after symptom onset will typically come back negative, suggesting that the person is virus-free. But he says that there have been outlier cases of people testing positive up to 37 days

after symptom onset.

Half of people treated for mild Covid-19 infections harboured the coronavirus for up to eight days after symptoms disappeared, according to a March 27 study in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine.

Negative tests are no guarantee that the effects of the illness are over, either. "We have seen individuals with some lingering respiratory symptoms, including cough, even though they tested negative," Salata says.

He explains that the presumption when these conflicting signs appear is that the person is symptomatic but no longer infectious, but that's not known for certain.

A vaccine for Covid-19 is thought to be many months away. Meanwhile, a ray of hope: multiple clinical trials under way now, at Case Western and several other institutions, should soon reveal treatments that can decrease the severity of Covid-19 symptoms in some people and, as importantly, shorten the duration of both symptoms and infectiousness.

A report published in Elemental a new Medium publication about health and wellness. Robert Roy Britt, a former editor-in-chief of Live Science and Space.com, is author of the science thriller "5 Days to Landfall."

Brazil's Covid-19 crisis shows what may happen if US relaxes on social distancing

By Andy Slavitt

SOMETHING is happening in the world that we all should pay attention to. Sadly, we are ignoring it and the many warnings it represents.

There is a country that may do a worse job and have a worse outcome addressing Covid-19 than the US - and it is none other than Brazil. It's not getting better; rather, it is likely to get worse and worse.

There are many parallels in Brazil to the problems in the US. In Rio de Janeiro, the favelas (low-income neighbourhoods and slums) share the ingredients that nursing homes, prisons and public housing have. There are 800,000 in indigenous communities, and Sao Paulo looks a lot like the New York City epicentre.

Another sad similarity is the government's indifference to those populations. Brazil has the highest inequality in the world. The wealthy fly in helicopters and have guards. They are not at risk. At the end of last month some cities had run out of coffins.

And the government shrugs off the coronavirus. President Jair Bolsonaro calls worrying over it a "neurosis", saying "there's nothing to be done about it".

He congregates with large crowds at the beach. He's holding large, crowded political rallies and has waged a "war" on local governors who have tried to lock down their states.

He fired his Health minister for disagreeing about social distancing. He is rooting for unproven drugs. It's almost as if there's a playbook.

Bolsonaro is cementing the impression that certain leaders are more callous or indifferent (Trump, Boris Johnson pre-Covid) than other types like Germany's Angela Merkel or New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern.

Now hospitals are two weeks from collapsing in Sao Paulo - the same precipice as NYC and Detroit were on. Today there are 1,200 deaths per day in Brazil, not quite US levels but gaining as Brazil won't peak until at least this coming month.

We are so used to seeing daily death tolls in the US that we have lost all perspective on human life. One difference in Brazil from the US is that half the country is not complying with social distancing standards. Not complying may



not be right - can't is more likely the case.

Brazil is a live example of what would happen if the US relaxed social distancing standards again - a new explosion.

Brazil is also a lesson in what the US would look like if Trump had been allowed to continue to ignore the outbreak as he was through mid-March - or what a second wave could look like if he convinces half the country to drop their guard.

The US reaction to Brazil, like everything else, has been

slow. Not only aren't we helping them, we're putting ourselves in danger - we haven't halted air travel from Brazil, which has greater Covid-19 spread than China did when the US did ban travel from China.

We think we're insulated from the world. We think we can protect ourselves - isolate ourselves. That's not

as easy as it sounds. Unlike with respect to prior pandemic responses, we've turned our backs on the globe. This protects neither us nor our leadership.

The coronavirus is harder to contain in poorer countries with thinner health care systems. Haiti and Africa must be concerns. They can't

get there without help from the US or whoever chooses to lead.

Those risks exist in parts of the US as well. Alabama and Arkansas are starting to see spikes now. Their ICU capacity is lower and in Alabama is at a warning level.

We're not having the summer lull in the US. We're not exploding, but the death rate isn't materially dropping. This is not what it is supposed to be like between waves.

But even if we do, what happens in Brazil means that we are at risk here too. Trade, travel and seasonal changes as we get to flu season don't bode well if we haven't gotten our act together.

Having Trump declare that the coronavirus is over now is virtually the same as declaring that it was non-existent in February.

I have done several closed Congressional briefings. At one, I was told to stop asking for investments in public health and start focusing about the economy. I said that's exactly what I thought I was doing.

Whether domestically or whether it comes ashore from abroad, we need testing, contact tracing, and isolation capabilities - and vigilance.

It's tiring but we must keep doing it. The best way out of this will be to start caring about the world and our own vulnerable populations again.

• Andy Slavitt, a former Medicare and Medicaid head for President Barack Obama, writes for Medium Coronavirus Blog, a real-time resource for Covid-19 news, advice and commentary.

The race is on to find the holy grail of Covid-19 antibodies

BY EMILY MULLIN

CARL Hansen was in the middle of running a pandemic simulation at AbCellera, the Vancouver (Canada) biotech company where he is CEO, when the first reports of a mysterious respiratory disease trickled out of China.

It was mid-January, and the Canadian company was testing how quickly it could find promising antibodies against the coronaviruses that cause MERS and SARS.

Its goal was to identify and reproduce these antibodies - proteins produced by the immune system in response to an infection - within 60 days. But when the first US case of Covid-19 was detected on January 21 in Washington state, Hansen cut that simulation short to focus on the new threat.

"Then the missing piece was to find a blood sample," he told OneZero. After AbCellera got its hands on a small vial of blood from an early US Covid-19 patient on February 28, Hansen and his team immediately started looking for antibodies in it.

Now, he and other scientists are racing to find potent antibodies in the blood of human Covid-19 survivors, in lab mice and in other animals. The hope is that the most effective ones - known as neutralising antibodies - could be used to both treat people who are sick with the disease and also act as a kind of temporary vaccine for those at high risk of contracting it.

One drug for Covid-19 - remdesivir - was granted emergency use authorisation from the US Food and Drug Administration, but experts say that it's not a knock-out punch against the virus. With a vaccine at least a year away, more treatments will be needed.

In the absence of a vaccine, some think that lab-produced antibodies that mimic the real thing are the best hope for beating back the coronavirus as well as any new infectious pathogens that could emerge in the future. When the body detects a foreign invader, like SARS-CoV-2, it mounts an immune response and starts making a host of antibodies that are specific to the invader. Neutralising antibodies are particularly good at helping the body fight off infection. Scientists want to use one or a few of these neutralising antibodies as a drug to help those hospitalised with Covid-19 recover more quickly, or prevent people who are exposed to the virus from getting sick in the first place.

The trick, though, is finding the right antibodies. Singling them out and analysing them used to take years of research. But new technology is speeding up the process so much that it now takes days or weeks. Now, a handful of companies are already manufacturing SARS-CoV-2 antibodies and plan to start testing them in people by this summer.



A nurse handles Covid-19 blood sample vials in a lab. Photo: Emanuele Cremaschi/Getty Images

The notion of using antibodies to treat infections dates back more than a hundred years. In the 1890s, scientists started treating people with serum, or plasma - the clear part of the blood that contains antibodies - taken from horses that had been immunised against diseases like diphtheria and tetanus.

It proved to be a life-saving approach, and it earned the scientist who spearheaded its use, Emil von Behring, the first Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1901.

During the 2014-2015 Ebola outbreak, doctors used plasma from survivors to treat patients with the disease. Now, this approach is being tried for coronavirus patients in the US and elsewhere.

But, the process has its downsides. Collecting plasma from Covid-19 survivors and getting it to all the people who are sick or have been exposed to the disease is difficult to scale. Plasma also contains molecules other than antibodies that might not be helpful in treating disease.

Those pursuing antibody therapies think that they can make a more potent treatment by singling out the powerful antibodies and producing them en masse.

Identifying neutralising antibodies is like searching for a needle in a haystack. "If somebody is infected with a virus, they make hundreds of thousands of different antibodies. Some of them are extremely good at blocking the virus. Some of them are horrible," says Christos Kyratsous, vice president for infectious disease research at Regeneron, a New York-based biotech company developing antibody drugs for Covid-19. The huge range of antibod-

ies produced by the immune response explains why there are still a lot of unknowns about how immunity to the coronavirus works.

The mere presence of antibodies in the blood doesn't necessarily mean that a person is immune. Rather, immunity likely comes down to what kind of antibodies and how many of those antibodies a person has - and even then, it isn't clear how long immunity lasts.

Scientists are now looking for antibodies that can neutralise the virus by binding to the so-called "spike" protein on the virus's surface. This spike has been a major focus of Covid-19 research because it's instrumental in helping the virus attach to human cells, allowing it to get inside.

But it's still unproven whether a drug that binds to the spike protein will prevent infection in people or help them recover faster. "It's not enough to say that you found an antibody against the virus," Hansen says, adding, "You have to find one that binds to it - and strongly - so that it can neutralise that virus at a very low concentration."

After the blood sample arrived at AbCellera's headquarters on February 28, the company immediately began screening the five million immune cells it contained. Less than two weeks later, its lab had identified 500 different neutralising SARS-CoV-2 antibodies. The list of promising candidates has since been narrowed down to 24.

Hansen and his team used a "lab-on-a-chip" device that can isolate 200,000 single human immune cells into tiny reaction

chambers. Those immune cells pump out antibodies, which are then analysed with machine learning algorithms to determine whether they have properties that would make for a good drug.

In mid-March, AbCellera partnered with pharma giant Eli Lilly to further develop and manufacture the antibodies. They hope to begin testing an antibody drug in human clinical trials by July or possibly sooner.

At Regeneron, Kyratsous and his team meanwhile turned to a strain of genetically engineered mice to discover antibodies. The mice are bred to have certain human genes that provide instructions to make antibodies; that way, when the mice are deliberately infected with a virus or other pathogen, they produce human antibodies. The company then looked for the most potent antibodies in these mice. To be sure that they had found the right antibodies, they compared the mouse-derived antibodies to those from blood samples of real Covid-19 patients.

"As expected, we saw that the antibodies from humanised mice and the antibodies from the previously infected humans are very similar in terms of properties," says Kyratsous, adding, "So we chose the best antibodies out of those."

Regeneron has selected two antibodies for a drug cocktail and expects to begin clinical trials in June to test it in people infected with Covid-19. Other biotech and pharma companies like Amgen and Vir Biotechnology are also racing to produce antibody drugs that could be tested on Covid-19 patients as soon as this summer.

Academic scientists are aiding in the search for antibodies, too. Researchers at Vanderbilt University led by immunologist James Crowe used technology developed by California-based Berkeley Lights to identify 500 unique SARS-CoV-2 antibodies in a single day.

The \$2 million system uses small, fluid-filled microchips and fluorescent light to guide and separate thousands of immune cells at a time so that they can be analysed. Vanderbilt has since teamed up with AstraZeneca to advance the most promising of those antibodies. "Nobody should be super confident at this point that they've found the right antibody," says Eric Hobbs, CEO of Berkeley Lights, adding, "The more patient samples we can get, the more unique antibodies we can find and the better chance that the world has at having a therapy."

The company has formed a consortium with Vanderbilt, Emory University and the La Jolla Institute for Immunology to discover and develop antibodies for the coronavirus as well as new pathogens that could emerge in the future. Scientists hope to use antibodies in two ways: as a treatment for hospitalised patients and as a short-term vaccine for frontline health care workers.

Using it as a temporary vaccine would prime the immune system so that, when it encounters the virus, the antibodies needed to fight it are already there. This approach could potentially prevent infection entirely, or at least lessen symptoms if a person does get sick. But experts aren't yet sure which people will benefit most from antibody drugs. "At the later stages of disease, it's yet unknown if a really potent antibody would be able to change the course of disease," says Hansen. "It's highly likely that early in disease, or even before disease, an antibody could either prevent someone from getting sick or from getting very sick," he notes.

Researchers also don't know what dose of the drug to give to patients. Hansen explains that the amount of antibody needed to treat someone who's already sick will probably be much higher than the dose required to prevent someone from getting sick, "because the virus has not yet taken a toehold and so it's not as hard to fight it off". Phyllis Kanki, a professor of immunology and infectious diseases at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, says the work on antibodies looks promising but thinks a combination of therapies that includes antibodies and another drug might be the best approach to treating patients with severe Covid-19 symptoms.

"Antibodies in general have been very effective at bringing virus levels down if you've had a high burden of infection," she says, noting however that the effects appear to be temporary - that "there are

limitations to how much you can give and for how long".

Kanki points to an antibody drug for Ebola patients, which was effective at reducing the risk of death but seemed to require long intravenous infusions to keep the virus at bay. The drug, a cocktail of three antibodies, was developed by Regeneron.

But even if these antibody drugs work in upcoming trials, it's possible that SARS-CoV-2 could mutate in a way that renders them ineffective. Each time the virus replicates, its sequence changes a little bit.

An antibody would be virtually useless if it targets a particular place on the virus that ends up mutating - and that's where an antibody cocktail, like the one Regeneron is developing, could come in handy. If the virus changes slightly and evades one antibody, the second one is "basically an insurance policy," says Kyratsous.

Another way to mitigate the potential for mutation is to look for broadly neutralising antibodies which can block multiple strains of a virus but are much harder to find. These antibodies have been of considerable interest in HIV research because that virus mutates rapidly, but they come with a downside. Hansen says they tend to be less potent, meaning that you'd likely need a lot more of them to make an effective treatment. Antibody drugs are also difficult to manufacture. It takes months to grow the cells needed to produce a large volume of antibodies. This complex manufacturing process means that antibody drugs are also expensive.

A 2018 study that compared prices of antibody therapies from 1997 to 2016 found that the average annual price was \$96,731. These included antibody therapies that are already on the market for cancer and autoimmune disorders.

If antibody drugs work, they could stem the tide of coronavirus infections and provide short-term immunity to people who need it until an effective vaccine is available. But that means that manufacturers will need to figure out a way to produce the millions of doses that could be needed to treat patients and protect at-risk health-care workers in the coming months and years. Hansen says the process of finding and testing antibodies will get even quicker in the future. With technology that could rapidly identify effective antibody drugs and manufacturing capabilities to produce them on demand, the world could be ready for the next coronavirus or other infectious disease outbreak.

"We will see more pandemics. And there will certainly be a day where we can go much faster than we can today," he says.

• A report published in OneZero, a Medium publication on tech and science where Emily Mullin is a staff writer covering biotech and Covid-19.

US small businesses go all out to survive COVID-19 pandemic

LOS ANGELES

SMALL business owners across the United States, finding themselves wedged between a rock and a hard place, are struggling not to become the latest casualty in COVID-19's march from sea to shining sea.

Some are shuttering their businesses, some are scrambling to repurpose them to try and tough it out, while other small business owners and employees are finding themselves having to choose between keeping their businesses healthy or themselves.

While most people are safely sheltering in place during the pandemic, many workers, like at cleaning services, must still work outside the home to earn their daily bread.

"For us, the fear of having no money coming in can outweigh the fear of getting COVID-19," said Gladys Hamil, manager of MurrMaids Residential Cleaning Service, a small, Hispanic-owned and staffed housecleaning service operating in Orange County, California.

Working in a pandemic that is already disproportionately infecting Hispanics according to Los Angeles County statistics can be a challenge. Cleaners have to keep working when their income takes a nosedive and government programs are slow to pick up the slack to help put food on the table for their families.

"Those of us who can stay home, do," Hamil told Xinhua. "But that's not possible for everyone."

MurrMaids staff and their clients prioritize safety, despite the difficulties and added expense of COVID-19 protocols.

"We and our clients are su-

per safety conscious now, so our staff wears masks and gloves and maintains correct social distancing. Some clients are still nervous -- especially those with small kids and elderly parents in the house," Hamil said. "You need to be compassionate about people's fears."

MurrMaids has already had cancellations that have brutalized its business and raised the worry of how to make ends meet for its hardworking staff.

"We used to clean four or more per day five days a week. Now we are down to less than half of that," Hamil said. "That's a real worry for everyone."

Restaurants, from "white tablecloth" gourmet venues to mom-and-pop eateries, have been particularly hard hit. Rise N Shine Cafe in Shadow Hills, Los Angeles, a small business owned by the Ratz family and run by a mother-daughter team, Sharon and Melinda Ratz, is trying to come up with innovative ways to survive the lockdown and stay in business.

"Our business dropped 50 percent and we went from dine-in to take-out pretty much overnight," daughter Melinda told Xinhua. "We are using the down time to renovate, prep for reopening, repainting and hanging partitions inside."

They have been in business for 18 years and served a lot of first responders from local police and fire departments who can't get enough of their hearty plates of American and TexMex fare.

"They are not just customers," Melinda said. "We have a lot of friends in our community and hate to see everyone struggling. We are trying to bring a little light into their

lives, especially the first responders who are used to eating here all the time."

They are considering doing "car-hop" service so people can eat off 1950's style window trays in their cars in the parking lot or putting up big tents outside so people can sit six feet (1.8 meters) apart while they chow down.

Another industry feeling the bite is pet services. Right Fluff operates outside of Washington, D.C. It is owned and run by the founder, Marcela Santos, who went from owning a thriving dog-walking, cat-sitting, and pet-care business to having to make a COVID-19-inspired hard pivot into the grocery delivery service.

"Our pet care business went hand-in-hand with the travel industry, so we were hit really hard by the pandemic," Santos told Xinhua. "There's not much need for pet-sitting when no one is traveling and everyone is working from home."

A level-headed and resourceful young woman, Santos took just a weekend to grieve the loss of her pet business, and then got down to figuring out how to move forward and survive.

Now she is making ends meet with grocery delivery, prescription pickup and pet supply delivery services, with the occasional drop off of sick pets to the veterinarian. Her company now also features staff members on its website with other skills to offer, such as one employee who offers tutoring in French and another who is also a talented graphic designer.

Like many of the really small businesses, Right Fluff has had little success getting government grants or loans. "We've applied for every kind of assistance there is, but



Chairs and tables are seen outside a closed restaurant in Washington D.C., the United States, on April 24, 2020. (Xinhua)

other than a little Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) money, none of the other programs even answered us," Santos said. "My number one goal is to make sure everyone has a job to come back to," Santos said.

"It is frustrating to see the delay on critical and necessary changes to the flawed Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) that will make the program more functional for small business owners who have received PPP loans," said Amanda Ballantyne, executive director of the Main Street Alliance, a business advocacy group that represents over 30,000 small businesses, in a recent press release.

Before the pandemic, small businesses typically accounted for 44 percent of U.S. economic activity and created two-thirds of net new jobs, according to the Office of Advocacy of the U.S. Small Business Administration, noting that small businesses are the lifeblood of the U.S. economy.

But now, mid-stream in the COVID-19 outbreak, multiple reports and polls are painting a far grimmer reality.

A total of 54 percent of all small businesses report that they have closed or expect to close temporarily in the next 14 days, according to a poll released in April from the U.S.

Chamber of Commerce and Fortune 500 insurer, MetLife.

The CNBC/SurveyMonkey Small Business Survey conducted from April 21 to 27 among 2,200 small business owners across the country reported that 72 percent of all small business owners say their businesses will be permanently affected by the outbreak, due to decreasing consumer demand for their products and services.

With U.S. consumers accounting for 70 percent of U.S. economic activity, if they won't -- or can't -- keep spending, it will trigger a domino effect leading to more closures.

There are government pro-

grams trying to help, but with no central leadership coordinating the effort in Washington, D.C. and many confusing qualifications, exclusions and contradictory rules for each program, only 45 percent of U.S. small businesses have even tried to apply for them, revealed the CNBC's recent survey.

Ballantyne warned that the loss of small businesses will have a multiplier effect on employment and the economy, predicting additional waves of bankruptcies coming down the pike, a matching rise in unemployment, and supply chain breakdowns.

Xinhua

As people shun clinics, doctors fear a non-Covid-19 death spike

By Kerry Cullinan

THOUSANDS of South Africans are avoiding health facilities, shunning life-saving treatment out of fear of being infected by Covid-19 and being harassed by police.

Even mobile clinics that provide HIV, TB and contraceptive services have reported a huge drop in clients - possibly because all health services are being associated with Covid-19.

"Head counts at some Johannesburg clinics are down by between 30% and 70%," says Professor Francois Venter, an infectious diseases doctor at Wits University's Faculty of Health Sciences.

"These clinics are delivering absolutely essential services. We are going to spend the next six months cleaning up this catastrophe - the lack of contraception leading to unintended pregnancies and increased demand for terminations, diseases from lack of immunisations, untreated diabetes. We are likely to see a wave of mortality linked to HIV and TB. The HIV and TB programmes have been doing well and we could lose all that progress," adds Venter, who is also a member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Covid-19.

Periodic clinic closures when health workers test positive for Covid-19 has fuelled community fear of being infected if they venture into clinics.

The health department "has observed this legitimate fear" people have of health facilities, says Popo Maja, the department's director of communications.

"We are developing messaging to encourage people to observe the Covid-19 preventative measures when accessing health services - wearing masks, sanitis-

ing hands and physical distancing. The managers at our facilities have also been requested to ensure that stringent infection control measures are adhered to throughout the facilities."

Anele Yawa, the Treatment Action Campaign's (TAC) general secretary, says that while he "appreciates our government's efforts on Covid-19, we are really dropping the ball when it comes to HIV and TB".

"What is coming out from our consultations with provinces is that clinics have stopped offering viral load or CD4 testing for people with HIV," says Yawa. This means that health workers won't be able to tell whether ARVs are working to suppress the HIV.

During the Level 5 lockdown (from 27 March 2020 to 1 May 2020), new TB tests plummeted by almost half, according to a report by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD).

The NICD report blames this "dramatic decline" in tests on the lockdown's restrictions on movement and a lack of public transport.

But Lebohlang Mokgate, chairperson of TAC's Vukuzakhe branch in Gert Sibande district in Mpumalanga, says many people avoided clinics because of security crackdowns.

"People are scared because the police are everywhere and they do beat people," said Mokgate, who is based in Volksrust. "They arrested a man who went to fetch his ARVs because he wasn't wearing his mask. He showed them his ARVs, but he still spent the night in prison and had to pay a R1,000 fine."

Yawa agrees: "The militarisation of the Covid-19 response has caused fear and resistance. Many people have been shot at and harassed. Some people in rural



Patients with HIV and tuberculosis (TB) wear masks while awaiting consultation at a clinic in Cape Town's Khayelitsha township, February 23.

areas, who have to walk a long way to fetch medicine, were afraid to do it because they did not have a permit to travel. The police and army could have approached this in a different way by showing that they were there to help communities."

Thousands of people living with HIV have defaulted on their antiretroviral drugs and TB medication. In Gauteng alone, almost 11,000 HIV and over 1,000 TB patients failed to collect their medicine since the lockdown started on 27 March, according to the provincial health department.

TB is South Africa's biggest killer and an estimated 63,000 people die of the bacterial disease every year, followed by diabetes. We have the biggest

HIV epidemic in the world, with almost eight million South Africans living with HIV - one in five of those aged between 15 and 49.

Impact on TB

Countrywide, entire TB hospitals and wards have been converted to address Covid-19 while staff have been redeployed. Many community health workers who used to trace TB defaulters have been redirected to do Covid-19 screening.

Recently, nurses protested the conversion of Empilweni TB Hospital in Port Elizabeth to a Covid-19 facility. Meanwhile, TB wards in various hospitals, particularly in the country's pandemic epicentre, Cape

Town, are now Covid-19 wards.

Dr Anja Reuter, Medecins sans Frontieres' medical manager of drug-resistant TB (DR-TB) in Khayelitsha, is worried about how few new TB and DR-TB patients have been detected since the start of the pandemic.

"There is a significant overlap of Covid-19 and TB symptoms as both may present with fever, feeling unwell with a cough or tight chest," says Reuter, but because of the focus on Covid-19, TB cases might be overlooked. "Healthcare workers need to be trained to detect both."

She is also concerned about whether current TB patients are able to take their medication, particularly if they are going hungry: "DR-TB patients have to take up to 20 tablets, many of which cause nausea. This is very challenging on an empty stomach."

Treatment for DR-TB is long and the medication can have debilitating side

effects, so most patients qualify for a temporary disability grant, but the government has suspended new applications for temporary disability grants because of Covid-19.

"If people can't get access to this grant, this might affect whether they adhere to treatment," says Reuter.

Integrated approach

"I have been grappling with how we can integrate Covid-19 into our services, as it is an infectious disease and another health priority alongside HIV and TB," says Professor Linda-Gail Bekker, Chief Operating Officer of the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation.

"Infection control is key to protect staff. We are looking into installing perspex screens between staff and patients and having consultations outdoors."

The foundation operates five mobile clinics, providing HIV, TB and contraceptive services to almost 100,000 people in under-served Cape Town communities. But demand for their services was "almost zero" during Level 5 of the lockdown, adds Bekker.

"We usually do 40 to 50 HIV tests in a day. [Last week] we were doing 10. People are worried. Health facilities are being seen as places of contagion. There is also confusion about what people are allowed to do under lockdown. Our staff also express anxiety about going into people's homes and communities to do tests."

Meanwhile, TAC's Yawa is concerned about the large numbers of South Africans who might simply stop taking their ARVs.

"Covid-19 efforts should be integrated with HIV and TB services. When community health workers are doing screening for Covid-19 cases, they should screen for HIV and TB also. Contact tracers looking for Covid-19 contacts should also look for people who have defaulted on HIV and TB treatment. South Africa initiates a lot of people on ARVs and a lot of people default - even before Covid-19."

Alison Best, communications manager for the NGO, TB HIV Care, says her organisation has worked with the Department of Health in eThekweni to screen street-based people for both TB and Covid-19, and hopes HIV and TB screening and testing can be integrated into "mass community screening for Covid-19".

The department's Maja says the government is trying to ensure integration: "We have had discussions with the SA National AIDS Council and Covid-19 testing has now been integrated into the Cheka Impilo wellness campaign, which tests people for HIV, TB and non-communicable diseases."

"We are very worried that if we don't integrate TB and HIV services with Covid-19, the gains we have made against our country's high burden of diseases will be erased."

AngloGold Ashanti marks Africa Day amid efforts to fight Covid-19

By Guardian Reporter

ANGLOGOLD Ashanti joins over 1.2 billion Africans across the continent and in the diaspora in marking Africa Day at a time when the African Union (AU) is spearheading several initiatives aimed to combat the spread of Covid-19 and ensure Africa's economic resilience.

This year's Africa Day is themed: "Silencing the Guns; creating a conducive environment for Africa's development" provides the relevant framework to all stakeholders including governments, the private sector, civil society and acad-

emia to join forces in the fight against the pandemic, ensuring that livelihoods are protected and keeping economic activity alive.

Chief Operating Officer for Africa, Sicelo Ntuli said the theme is in pursuance of the aspirations of Agenda 2063, which provides a developmental framework towards a continent that is integrated, prosperous and peaceful.

"Other flagship projects include the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which has come into force and which aims to boost intra-African trade.

"Africa's leaders met and developed a comprehensive, continent-wide response strategy to Covid-19 in March. The strategy aims to enhance collaboration and communication on Covid-19 by member states and partners, including Africa CDC, which specializes in efforts to strengthen health systems and improve surveillance, emergency response, prevention and control of diseases in AU member states," he said.

He said the AngloGold Ashanti is committed to supporting the AU in its response strategy and is working in cooperation with the respective government

programmes and stakeholders to roll out a series of hygiene and educational interventions at its sites and across communities.

"As a pan-African investor, AngloGold Ashanti operates in five countries across the continent and is a joint venture partner in a mine in a sixth. It employs more than 20 000 people including contractors. The Company continues to build its African operations, investing millions of dollars annually in sustaining and growing its portfolio on the African Continent.

"AngloGold Ashanti aims to support the countries in which

we operate to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. The company continues to work closely with governments and communities and has rolled out a number of interventions to keep people safe," he said

"AngloGold Ashanti congratulates all Africans on the occasion of Africa Day and will continue to work in partnership and support governments and communities where it operates," he said.

He added that the company has introduced measures to slow the spread of the infection, stepping up screening and surveillance of employees, banning

non-essential travel, instituting clear self-quarantine measures where applicable and increasing hygiene awareness and facilities across its operations.

"AngloGold Ashanti also has a range of humanitarian initiatives in place. It is committed to working with governments at all levels and a range of other stakeholders to slow the spread of Covid-19.

He said in South Africa, the company collaboration with expert, multidisciplinary teams from the provincial governments to make available two hospitals and ICU beds for their exclusive use as part of the

frontline Covid-19 effort, donation of masks to provinces, municipalities and hospitals and pledged R20 million to the Solidarity Response Fund, which is supported by business, civil society and the South African government.

"Tanzania, Geita Gold Mining Limited (GGML) has committed 1.6bn/- to support the government of Tanzania in its efforts to curtail the spread of the virus.

The Money will be directed to purchasing critical medical equipment and supplies for Covid 19 patients and personal protective gears for medical practitioners.

Cocoa, forest agency reports having planted a total of four million trees in two countries

By Anthony Myers

A public-private initiative has reported progress in West Africa seeks aims to expand efforts to end cocoa-related deforestation and forest degradation.

The influential Cocoa & Forests Initiative (CFI) said it has seen unprecedented collaboration across the supply chain in the past 12 months, notably between the public and private sector, and its 35 signatory companies.

In its latest Progress Report, it announced that more than 1 million farms have been mapped by signatory companies in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana to improve traceability and that 1 million farmers have been trained in Good Agricultural Practices in the two countries.

Signatories, which also include the governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative and the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF), reported progress towards their goal of ending deforestation and said progress needs to accelerate this year to save and restore the forests in the two West African countries.

WCF president Richard Scobey said: "We are proud of CFI's first steps and are determined to keep our eyes on the prize: end deforestation and restore forest areas. In 2020, we will notably accelerate private sector collaboration across cocoa landscapes and, in partnership with governments,

put in place effective tools to monitor and eliminate any new deforestation."

In 2018-2019, CFI signatory companies and the governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana began implementing activities that will help meet their 2017 joint commitment to end cocoa-related deforestation and forest degradation.

Companies' actions included putting in place systems to eliminate deforestation from their cocoa supply chain, including mapping more than one million farms in their direct supply chain.

They have also distributed more than 4 million trees to farmers to establish agroforestry systems and reforest degraded forests in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

We will notably accelerate private sector collaboration across cocoa landscapes and, in partnership with governments, put in place effective tools to monitor and eliminate any new deforestation -- WCF president Richard Scobey

Governments' efforts have focused on creating policy, legal and institutional frameworks that can support implementation of CFI signatories' programs.

This included the release of a new Forest Code in Côte d'Ivoire, strengthened collaboration on a landscape level in CFI priority areas in Ghana, and taking measures to actively promote agroforestry in both countries, the CFI



said in a statement.

The governments have also released forest boundary maps and updated land cover maps to help signatory companies identify areas that are at risk of deforestation.

Kwaku Asomah-Cheremeh, minister of lands and natural resources in Ghana, said: "We are proud to present the CFI achievements so far, and in particular, progress achieved in terms of promotion of climate-smart cocoa, clarification of tree tenure, and facilitation of landscape-level partnerships.

Moving forward, we need to continue working together to mobilize sustainable funding to make further progress with our commitments, especially in key areas of satellite-based monitoring and forest categorization."

His counterpart in Côte d'Ivoire, Alain-Richard Donwahi, minister of water and forests, said: "Since the signature of the CFI commitment, we've made significant progress on the protection of forests, including through the release of the new Forest Code in 2019. This new code defines the legal and regulatory framework for the implementation

of the CFI, including the creation of a differentiated approach to classified forests, which also takes into account the needs of communities whose livelihoods depend on forests.

The next challenge will be for us to mobilize further funds to support implementation of this ambitious policy, in close collaboration with the private sector, and with support from civil society organizations."

AfDB's programme targets 40 million farmers in Africa in next five years

By Special Correspondent, Abidjan

THE African Development Bank (AfDB)-funded Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation program (TAAT) is set to reach 40 million farmers across Africa in the next five years.

Moreover, the institution has further added 120m in metric tons of additional foodstuffs in the African food basket, valued between US\$1.5bn-\$2.8bn.

Launched back in 2018, the TAAT program has started implementation in 28 countries, with 4 more in the process of joining the program.

The overall goal of the program remains to transform African agriculture into a competitive sector by deploying high-impact, proven agricultural technologies to raise agricultural productivity in Africa; mitigate risks and promote diversification and processing across 18 agricultural value chains within eight priority intervention areas.

The program increases agricultural productivity through the deployment of proven and high-performance agricultural technologies at scale along selected nine commodity value chains which include Maize, Rice, Wheat, High Iron Bean, Cassava, Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato, Sorghum/Millet, Livestock and Aquaculture.

These work with six enabler compacts addressing transversal issues such as soil fertility management,

water management, capacity development, policy support, attracting African youth in agribusiness and fall armyworm response.

Despite huge agricultural potential, African countries are yet to reap multiple benefits from it, experiencing one of the highest prevalence of undernourishment in the world. Out of about 795m people suffering from chronic undernourishment globally, 220m live in Africa.

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in 2015 indicated that 23.2%, the current numbers at the time, is by far the highest prevalence of undernourishment worldwide. Even in abundant regions, food shortages can happen, mostly due to poor conservation techniques or post-harvest losses.

As a result, African countries import increasingly more agricultural products than they export, putting additional strain on scarce foreign exchange reserves. Other challenges facing the agricultural sector in the continent include gender disparities, dependence on rain-fed agriculture, low use of irrigation and technologies, limited public investment and institutional support.

All these factors prevent countries from increasing productivity, adapting to climate change shocks and promoting agricultural value chains and trade. As such and to address these challenges holistically, AfDB in 2018 launched TAAT program as part of the institution's Feed Africa Strategy of



The coronavirus vaccine might just not work in the elderly – and this is why...

By **Brendan Borrell**

LAST Friday, US President Donald Trump stood in the White House Rose Garden and announced 'Operation Warp Speed', a plan to deliver a vaccine for the coronavirus by the end of this year.

At the president's side was Moncef Slaoui, who had recently stepped down from the board of Moderna, the first US company to test its vaccine on humans, in order to lead the effort.

"Mr President, I have very recently seen early data from a clinical trial with a coronavirus vaccine," said Slaoui, adding: "These data make me feel even more confident that we will be able to deliver a few hundred million doses of vaccine by the end of 2020." Then, early last week, Moderna unveiled early positive results from its safety trials.

Operation Warp Speed's promise feeds into our hopes of finding immunity. But whether a vaccine arrives in six months or 12 months, it will come with an enormous caveat that scientists have been warning of for months, and our leaders have all but ignored: The first successful vaccine against the coronavirus may well fail the people who need it most – 50 million people over 65.

Vaccines, including Moderna's, are generally designed to get out of the gate with the young and healthy in mind and only later are dialled-in for more vulnerable groups. The ambitious vaccine rollout timetable touted by the president likely represents the starting line – not the finish line – when it comes to the immunity of older adults.

"I don't think life is ever going to be going back to the way it was," says Janet McElhaney, a medical doctor and vaccine expert at Health Sciences North in Ontario, Canada, who is now herself in her mid-sixties.

As we age, our bodies lose the ability to respond to new threats and to recognize ones we've previously been exposed to, which means that older adults don't develop a vigorous defence following vaccinations.

We need a reality check on coronavirus vaccine

Take, for instance, the influenza vaccine: For those in their forties and fifties, flu vaccines are between 30 per cent and 60 per cent effective. For people over 65, however, effectiveness frequently drops into the teens.

An essay published last month in the New England Journal of Medicine argued that "the (Covid-19) pandemic response remains hamstrung by our limited understanding of how to gener-

ate effective immunity, particularly in the elderly".

Advances in modern genomics and molecular biology have allowed us to create safer, more targeted vaccines than we had in the past, but they have also created a wider gulf in the immunity achieved by the young and the old.

Our earliest vaccines against polio and tuberculosis were made with a live, weakened virus. A whole virus presents a plethora of targets, or antigens, to the immune system – which is why it generates the strongest, most durable response. Some efforts for the coronavirus vaccine in China and India are indeed testing this method.

But a violent immune response can itself damage the body, as occurred with the mass rollout of the 1976 swine flu vaccine, which has been linked to 450 cases of the paralyzing autoimmune disorder known as Guillain-Barre syndrome.

"You want the immunogen without all the inflammation," says Margaret Liu, chairperson of the board of the International Society of Vaccines.

Modern vaccines no longer rely on live, weakened virus particles. Researchers can now identify one or more pieces of virus protein that they believe will make a good target for the immune system and then deliver them to the body using a variety of clever methods.

The technique Moderna and other companies are testing involves injecting just the genetic instructions – messenger RNA in Moderna's case – for the coronavirus's distinctive spike protein.

The downside of the more advanced methods is that they don't offer as wide a variety of antigens to rile up our immune system, which becomes a problem for people whose immune systems are less vigorous. Moderna's method, in particular, has never been approved in humans, let alone in older adults.

"There is zero published data about the mRNA vaccine's ability to work in older people. That's a gigantic question mark," says Norbert Pardi, an mRNA vaccine expert at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

Tailoring a vaccine to those over 65 depends on recognizing why they are so susceptible to the disease – which, in the US, has killed more than half its victims in nursing homes.

Just as the skin starts to wrinkle and sag with age, so also does the body start to lose its physical mechanisms for clearing foreign particles from lungs and airways.

This puts a higher burden on the immune system, especially its ability to



A nurse holds up a syringe with an elderly woman sitting in a hospital bed in the background. Photo: Prakesit Khuansuwan/EyeEm/Getty Images

produce antibodies that glom onto – or seize – viruses and neutralise them before they penetrate cells and turn them into virus factories.

The partial results Moderna released last week highlighted the fact that eight of the 45 subjects – all under the age of 55 – produced neutralising antibodies against the coronavirus. Older people, however, generally don't produce as many neutralising antibodies in response to vaccination.

One strategy to compensate for this is to give the elderly more antigens. A flu vaccine for older adults, for instance, contains four times the dose as a typical shot.

There's a second hurdle that a vaccine for those over 65 will have to clear. The ability to induce neutralising antibodies is one of the main metrics that scientists and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) look at in judging a vaccine candidate's prospects.

However, eliminating an infection from the lungs will require recruiting a second branch of the immune system that involves killer T-cells, a special type of white blood cell that can destroy infected cells and halt virus replication.

Unfortunately, modern vaccines aren't as good at stimulating this arm of our immune system, which is why vaccine additives known as adjuvants

become especially important.

The Shingrix vaccine against shingles, approved in 2017, was a rare win that proved to be nearly 90 per cent effective among people aged 70 or older, thanks to a novel adjuvant isolated from the Chilean soapbark tree that ramps up T-cell immunity.

"For older people, you need both arms of the immune system working to prevent serious complications," Canada's Dr Janet McElhaney says.

Adjuvants are the black magic of vaccine development. Their immune-boosting effects help a vaccine work but they can also, in rare cases, cause dangerous reactions – and this is why manufacturers tend to be conservative with them. According to the Milken Institute, more than 140 potential vaccines for the coronavirus are in development around the world and many will likely resort to aluminum-based adjuvants, old standbys that have been around since the 1920s.

These adjuvants increase the amount of time an antigen is present in the body, buying more time to produce an immune response. Moderna's adjuvant is a lipid nanoparticle that encapsulates the short-lived mRNA, keeping it from degrading too quickly.

Ofer Levy, director of the Precision Vaccines Programme at Boston Children's Hospital, believes that harder

work is needed to identify the optimal adjuvants for a Covid-19 vaccine before a raft of clinical trials are launched this summer and autumn.

Doing so is traditionally complicated: historically, most adjuvants are tested in rodent cells, which don't necessarily reflect what happens in a typical human cell. And when a vaccine fails to be effective in clinical trials, it's often hard to surmise whether the antigen or the adjuvant led to the downfall.

Levy's group, however, has the ability to test hundreds of thousands of vaccine-adjuvant combinations using fresh blood cells from people of all ages, including newborns and older adults. "We do things completely different from everybody else," he says.

The idea is to identify adjuvants that will produce the strongest, broadest, and most long-lasting response with the smallest amount of antigen – in all age groups.

Levy's group is working in partnership with several biotechnology companies, including Excure in Skokie, Illinois, and Avidia Technologies in Baltimore, to help develop vaccine formulations that will be safe and effective in all age categories.

Levy is also in talks with Moderna, which has abandoned the highest dose it tested in people after it produced systemic immune reactions, including

fevers.

The company may need to explore adjuvant strategies to produce the most robust response in older adults with lower dosages.

Moderna did not respond to media requests for comment, but it has plans to test its vaccine in people up to age 70. Prior to the recent results, Moderna's chief medical officer brushed off concerns that it will be less effective for those over 65.

The harried timeline of Operation Warp Speed means that there will be limited information about how long immunity from a vaccine lasts and whether it is safe for seniors in the long term. Vaccinating 300 million Americans with Moderna's vaccine could cost tens of billions of dollars – a huge gamble for the country and a sizable payday for the company.

"If it turns out the vaccine protects you for two months, that's not ideal," says University of Pennsylvania's Norbert Pardi.

In the absence of a highly effective vaccine, the quality of life for older adults will largely depend on the successful development of Covid-19 drugs that directly attack the coronavirus.

Earlier this month, the FDA issued an emergency authorisation for Gilead's experimental drug remdesivir, which has only demonstrated a modest effect in helping hospitalised patients recover faster. But scientists are also testing a wide range of pre-existing drugs and new compounds.

A second line of defence could come from commercial monoclonal antibodies – though these are likely to cost hundreds of dollars a dose and would have to be re-upped every couple of months.

One vaccine-like defence on the horizon involves circumventing the frail immune systems of older adults by injecting the genetic instructions for making antibodies directly in their muscles and stimulating them to produce the antibodies.

The technique was successfully tested in monkeys against the Zika virus, and two Massachusetts-based companies – Generation Bio and SmartPharm Therapeutics – are hoping to deploy it for the novel coronavirus.

"We call it pop-up immunity. We hold the line until the reinforcements arrive," says Timothy Brauns, chief operating officer of SmartPharm.

A dispatch in OneZero, a Medium publication about technology and science. A journalist based in Los Angeles. Brendan Borrell writes for The Atlantic, National Geographic, Outside, Science, Wired, etc.

WHO testing four possible treatments for Covid-19

By **Nancy R. Gough**

It is also important to remember that the majority (80 per cent) of people who con-

tract Covid-19 will recover without any treatment at all. For those requiring hospitalisation and respiratory support, treatment options are desperately needed.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has launched the SOLIDARITY Trial and the Discovery Trial to test the four most promising therapies for the pandemic.

The gold standard for clinical trials is a double-blind randomised study. The patient doesn't know if he or she is receiving the drug or not and the physician does not know if the patient is receiving the drug or not.

Then the data are analysed. In some cases, the treatment group benefits so substantially that the trial is changed to include all of the patients, or the treatment group shows a serious adverse effect and all treatment is stopped.

In the current rapidly escalating pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2, this gold standard trial design will take too long and will be too difficult to implement on the global scale needed. So, the WHO has launched the SOLIDARITY Trial and the Discovery Trial, which are not double-blind randomised trials. They are randomized all right, but not blinded.

In these trials, doctors will test: Remdesivir, a drug that inhibits the enzyme necessary for the virus to replicate its genome; Chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine (anti-malarial drugs that showed early promise in a small trial); Ritonavir and Lopinavir (brand name Kaletra), drugs that inhibit HIV; and Ritonavir, Lopinavir, and interferon beta (IFN-β, an antiviral peptide).

Doctors will be able to enrol consenting patients with

confirmed Covid-19 by entering information into a WHO database through an online interface. In addition to Covid-19 positivity, any other relevant conditions will also be recorded – such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart disease, diabetes or HIV infection.

Doctors will indicate which medications are available for testing at their facility. The WHO system will then randomly assign patients to receive one of the available medications plus standard of care or to only the local standard care for Covid-19.

To simplify and speed up data collection, the only follow-up data required will be the day the patient died or left the hospital (recovered), the length of time in the hospital, and if the patient needed oxygen or artificial ventilation.

It is most likely that different treatments will be appropriate and needed at different stages of the disease. The early stages may be best treated by drugs that reduce viral load and boost the immune response. Meanwhile, later stages associated with systemic hyperinflammation may require both drugs to reduce viral load and prevent a hyper-immune response that causes tissue damage and organ failure.

Additionally, each of the tested medications has limitations for use. Chloroquine and

hydroxychloroquine cannot be used in patients with some types of heart disease or patients with G6PD deficiency (also known as Favism).

Remdesivir is not an approved drug and so its safety within large populations is unknown. Kaletra is an approved drug for treating HIV infection; however, this drug interacts with many other medications, so drug interactions could be a factor.

IFN-β boosts antiviral immune response. This is a naturally produced cytokine that regulates many aspects of immune function. However, this drug could have complicated effects and may only be suitable in a subset of Covid-19 patients or at certain points in the disease process.

Thus, it is likely that no single treatment will work for all patients, and most people who contract Covid-19 will recover without any treatment at all. Hopefully, these trials will provide options for healthcare providers so that hospitals can stay ahead of the epidemic and minimise deaths.

A report in The Startup, Medium's largest active publication. Nancy R. Gough, PhD, is a scientist with a passion for scientific communication boasting over 20 years' editorial experience.

THE GUARDIAN SIMPLE WORD FIT // THE GUARDIAN CROSSWORD --00 90 00--

WORD-FIT

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: ART, HUT, RIB
 4 LETTERS: COST, TING, LEAD, TASS, STAR, ROME, UNIT, (7 WORDS)
 5 LETTERS: ASIDE, DOORS, TSARS, SKULL GRATE (5 WORDS)
 6 LETTERS: ENDURE, ARREST, BEAGLE, SERENE ASSIGN (5 WORDS)
 7 LETTERS: MEXICAN
 8 LETTERS: HARANGUE
 10 LETTERS: CALAMITIES

CROSSWORD

1 able to operate independently
 5 a list of meals
 7 a tripod frame used to support an artist's canvas
 8 Chief city of Jordan
 10 the whole quantity
 11 an inlet
 13 group of musicians playing together
 15 an enzyme which breaks down RNA into smaller molecules
 17 afflicted
 19 the chief male character in a book
 20 the chemical element of atomic number 68

Down:
 1 an unspecified amount
 2 former monetary unit of India
 3 a thing that is borrowed
 4 an instrument for sewing
 6 community of Muslims
 7 festival of the Christian church celebrating the resurrection of Christ
 9 unusual
 12 ended, stopped
 14 person who donates something
 16 beard in Kiswahili
 17 exclamation expressing triumph
 18 a kind of rock in which metal is found



CURRENT NEWS

OMCs' chief says Ewura's order on GBP fuel purchases wrong

Page 14



TOP VIEW

In fresh assault on top African CEOs, Trump turns gaze on Adesina

Page 14



VIEW FROM THE TOP

Vodacom's digital platforms enabling students to continue learning for free

Page 15

PBPA chief defends punishment to ASA Energy after BPS default

By Finnigan wa Simbeye

ASA Energy FZCO will lose US\$250,000 (over 578.5m/-) bid bond after failing to deliver a bulk procurement system tender to supply the country with petrol in June.

Petroleum Bulk Procurement Agency's Executive Director, Erasto Simon said in Dar es Salaam last week that ASA was awarded the BPS tender in April but recently notified the agency that it will not be able to deliver the consignment.

"As per BPS regulations, ASA Energy's bid bond will be forfeited and the tender has been awarded to the second best bidder, Vitol Bahrain EC," said Simon who defended the decision not to suspend ASA from taking part in BPS tenders for failing to deliver without proper reason.

Critics say the Dubai based company pulled out of the deal because as countries ease stay at home orders to curb the coronavirus outbreak, global fuel prices have started appreciating hence the June quoted premium is likely to be higher.

"ASA has simply defaulted against the ten-



PBPA CEO Erasto Simon

der because of the rising world market prices for fuel which is on the increase," said an industrial source

who preferred not to be identified adding that such deliberate violations of BPS regulations carry a ban

of up to six months.

ASA won the June 2020 BPS tender to supply 70,168 metric tons of petrol at a price of US\$60 per ton while Vitol emerged as second best bidder with a price of US\$ 70.64 per ton. Global petroleum prices have started appreciating since China ended its lockdown in Wuhan and eased movement restrictions for goods and people. India also followed suit earlier this month by ending its nationwide lockdown. World market prices for crude oil increased by 3 percent earlier this month and have continued to rise as more countries lift lockdown restrictions to tame the novel coronavirus.

Brent crude LCOcI settled at \$27.20 a barrel, up 76 cents, or 2.9 percent, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude CLcI gained 61 cents, or 3.1 percent, to \$20.39 a barrel. Worldwide fuel demand fell by an estimated 30 percent in April largely due to stay-at-home orders,

and weak consumption.

Responding to the allegations that ASA has been given 'mild' sanctions, the PBPA chief dismissed them complaint saying they did take measures according to BPS regulations. "Forfeiting the bid bond is the most appropriate punishment although more sanctions may apply if necessary, we have taken the immediate and direct one," Simon noted while conceding that ASA Energy may have ditched the tender because of the pricing factor.



As per BPS regulations, ASA Energy's bid bond will be forfeited and the tender has been awarded to the second best bidder, Vitol Bahrain EC

Medical aid costs shrink but Covid-19 costs still unknown

JOHANNESBURG

MEDICAL aids are saving a lot of money because elective surgeries and visits to doctors and specialists have dramatically declined as a result of the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic.

On the other hand, the hospitalisation of one Covid-19 patient costs R85 000 (excluding hospital costs). This is about three times the cost of typical hospital admissions. Ryan Noach, the CEO of Discovery Health, said that the virus would be with us for some time, so its impact on medical aids this year and next year should be taken into account.

Depending on the extent of the pandemic, Covid-19 screening, testing and hospital treatment during this time could lead to an additional cost of between R816 and R3 561 per beneficiary across all medical aids. That could cost the country's medical aids between R7.3 billion and R31.8 billion, Noach said on Wednesday.

It is, therefore, too soon to say whether the decline in medical aid claims during the national lockdown will lead to a saving for the funds this year, and to lower increases in member contributions for next year. Discovery Health administers 19 medical aids covering about 3.5 million beneficiaries. The biggest fund under its administration is Discovery Health Medical Scheme.

Noach statistics
According to Noach, their statistics

show that 23% of confirmed Covid-19 cases are admitted to hospital and 4.5% to ICU. The cost associated with putting someone on a ventilator is R169 525 for a Covid-19 patient in ICU, and about R92 000 in a high-care unit. Noach said they have had one case where the hospitalisation of a patient who required a ventilator cost more than R800 000.

By Wednesday, Discovery Health had 529 cases of Covid-19-related hospital admissions. At R85 000 per case, that amounts to just less than R45 million in payouts. Other major medical aids told City Press' sister publication, Rapport, that far fewer claims had been paid out during the lockdown, because only emergency or urgent operations were carried out under level 5 of the lockdown. Hospitals were also emptier.

However, the medical costs associated with Covid-19 are still unknown. Damian McHugh, the CEO of Momentum Health Solutions, said that Covid-19-related hospital admissions were expected to rise as the lockdown was relaxed. The peak of the virus is expected in South Africa in August or September.

Emile Stipp, head actuary of Discovery Health, said it had sufficient reserves to cover worst-case scenarios. Medical aids are required by law to keep 25% of their contributions in reserve for eventualities like Covid-19. Discovery has about R20 billion in reserve.

According to Craig Comrie, the CEO of Profmed, savings by medical aids so far

this year must be seen in light of the expected rise in the cost of personal protective equipment being used by hospitals, doctors and dentists.

This will have an impact on the costing models and projection models for the next couple of years. Funds will battle to limit costs and keep premiums affordable as a result of all the long-term uncertainty around the virus, which is why everyone is still hoping for a vaccine, he said.

Comrie added that annual increases in medical aid contributions were also supplemented by the returns funds make on their investments, which have been adversely affected by the poor performance of the markets and by declining interest

rates.

Profmed, for example, lost more than R100 million for the year to April. "We expect that any decrease in claims for elective operations will not nearly make up for this loss, unless the markets recover very quickly."

But if medical aids are paying out fewer claims, it means that hospitals and specialists will also feel the effect of Covid-19. Johann Serfontein of the consultancy Healthman, which advises the SA Private Practitioners' Forum, said that medical claims data for about 80% of the 3 500 specialists it advises show that ophthalmologists, in particular, had been affected by the lockdown.



Claims by ophthalmologists were 80% lower last month than in March - from R153 million in March to R30 million last month. He said there was evidence that claims by certain specialist groups last month were as little as 4% of what was claimed in February and March. Some surgical specialist groups' claims were about 27% of the normal level.

Serfontein said surgical disciplines such as orthopaedic and general surgery, those that do facial procedures, as well as ear, nose and throat specialists, have been hit hard by the ban on elective surgery.

The Council for Medical Schemes does not release payment numbers for elective and emergency procedures, but it does for hospital costs. According to the 2018/19 annual report, expenditure on hospital services made up 37.1% (R64.3 billion) of the total benefits of R173.3 billion paid out by medical aids in 2018.

Adam Pyle, CEO of Life Healthcare in South Africa, said nationwide occupancy in its hospitals during March and last month was at 69% and 40%, respectively, compared with 72% and 70% in March and April last year. About 50% of cases in Life Healthcare hospitals may be regarded as elective. McHugh said elective procedures that had been postponed could increase rapidly over the next few months, so eventual costs could be similar to last year.

But Serfontein said that it was unlikely that operation volumes for the remainder of the year would return to normal, because measures intended to prevent Covid-19 require theatres to be disinfected between operations and ventilated for between 20 and 30 minutes. It will, therefore, be impossible to use these theatres at full capacity.

E-shops becoming the norm as Covid-19 bites

NAIROBI

THE shift to e-commerce has gained momentum as businesses seek to stay afloat during the coronavirus pandemic.

Enterprises, big and small, are looking for ways to make their online presence felt and reach out to customers who are unable to move around due to curfew and lockdown imposed as part of measures to contain the disease.

Online and tech firms such as Jumia and CompuLynx, in partnerships with various organisations, have rolled out plans to help businesses shift to digital platforms. Jumia, has entered partnership with The Kenya Private Sector Alliance (Kepsa) to help local businesses establish e-shops.

Kepsa chief executive Carole Karuga said the partnership was informed by the current situation where Kenyans now spend more time online as they remain indoors to help curb spread of the dreaded Covid-19.

The partnership with Jumia through the Digital Commerce Program will see local businesses trained on using online platforms to maximise sales of their goods and services. "We believe Jumia with its current scale and countrywide operations is well positioned to facilitate visibility for local businesses and is prepared to invest upfront in this initiative," said Ms Karuga.

Jumia Kenya chief executive Sam Chappatte pledged support for local businesses seeking to establish an online presence. Jumia, he said, will allow local companies

use its distribution network to service orders as received from across Kenya.

"We will commit resources to support Kepsa's digital commerce initiative, to train vendors and give them tools to sell online effectively. We hope this will save jobs in the short term and help digitise the economy over the longer term," said Mr Chappatte.

The Kepsa-Jumia deal will see local companies open their e-shops on the Jumia platform at no start-up costs with Jumia cutting its commissions on vendors by 50 percent for locally manufactured goods to one percent.

The pact will involve free online training, ranging from the basics of e-commerce to operations, marketing, finance and sales

where Jumia will allow participating companies to access its online self-study modules available on Jumia's Vendor Hub page.

Kepsa said the partnership will initially be rolled out in Nairobi ahead of a planned nationwide expansion. Kenya-based retail software developer CompuLynx and digital payments company, DPO Group have also launched e-commerce platforms for local businesses.

CompuLynx with a presence across East Africa and the United Arab Emirates serving 400 companies in 36 countries, said its cloud-based NEXX e-commerce platform will be available to retailers at no cost for a three-month trial period with no obligation to subscribe after the trial period.

"CompuLynx recognises the pressure

on retailers during this challenging times of Covid-19 and has opened its patented retail software allowing Kenyan retailers to serve loyal customers on a portal that allows home deliveries," said chief executive Sailesh Savani.

Last month, the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) also launched an online directory giving its members a platform to market locally manufactured goods.

Also, DPO Group has partnered with MasterCard to launch a free-of-charge e-commerce platform where supermarkets, food stores, pharmacies and other essential service providers will "own" branded webpages on DPO store platform where buyers log onto shops and pay via mobile phone money or pay-cards.

OMCs chief says Ewura's order on GBP fuel purchases defying free market rules

By Smart Money Reporter

AN order issued by Energy and Water Utilities Regulatory Authority to oil marketing companies supplying northern regions of Arusha, Kili-manjaro and Manyara to get fuel from GBP Tanzania's Tanga depot, violates free market rules.

Tanzania Association of Oil Marketing Companies (Taomc) CEO, Raphael Mgaya said in Dar es Salaam last weekend that the Ewura order also lacks legal backing because no regulation is in place to force OMCs to buy fuel from another supplier.

Mgaya said GBP is an oil marketing company doing the same businesses as other OMCs hence entitled to competition which Ewura is trying to trample on without any legal basis.

"The issue here is that, first OMCs are not by law required to buy products from another OMC except via BPS," Mgaya argued noting that as a free market economy, fair competition with demand and supply as main factors should be allowed to apply.

He explained that in addition to GBP Tanzania's monopoly, not all OMCs have stocks at GBP depots in Tanga hence unable to meet Ewura's directive because, "So they cannot go and take stocks in Tanga which they don't have in the first place."

He however dismissed allegations by some OMCs that the quality of BPS petroleum products supplied through Tanga port is poor because of substandard handling facilities compared to Dar es Salaam Port.

In a recent public notice, Ewura warned OMCs which get petroleum products from Dar es Salaam instead of Tanga against penalties as per regulations.

"In 2015, the Government of Tanzania approved commencement of operations at the Tanga Port, as the second fuel receiving facility after Dar es Salaam Port, with a view to minimize costs of doing business and decongest the Dar es Salaam-Chalinze section of the highway, among other factors," the regulator said in its statement.

The statement added that following the



Tanzania Association of Oil Marketing Companies (Taomc) CEO, Raphael Mgaya.

decision, Petroleum Bulk Procurement Agency (PBPA) and industrial stakeholders facilitated petroleum product imports through the Tanga Port, so that the northern regions close to Tanga can utilize fuel from the port.

Ewura's statement stated that in recent days, it has noted with concern unhealthy business practices where fuel suppliers from northern regions have started buying products from Dar es Salaam instead of Tanga.

"Ewura hereby issues a firm order and di-

rective to all fuel suppliers to ensure that petroleum products that are intended for northern regions shall only be sourced from Tanga Port; and not elsewhere.

Any person who refuses or fails to comply with this directive shall commit an offence pursuant to section 238 of the Petroleum Act, Cap. 392," the regulator warned saying on conviction, defaulters shall be liable to a fine of not less than 100m/- or to imprisonment for a term not less than ten years or both.

Meet Quintin, the robot who is doing ward rounds in a Cape Town hospital

CAPE TOWN

A robot called Quintin is one of the latest interventions helping specialist doctors make ward rounds safer during South Africa's Covid-19 pandemic.

Intensive-care specialists at Tygerberg hospital, Cape Town, have called on the uniquely skilled Quintin, who can't catch the coronavirus, to broadcast ward rounds on Covid-19 patients as well as reduce the risk of his peer specialists catching the disease or spreading it themselves.

The robot has been "employed" to help the specialists do virtual ward rounds - which can be done even from home. So if a doctor is in isolation, but well enough to work, they can still provide medical advice.

Watch Quintin in action: "If any of the specialists gets the virus and is unable to physically go to work, we will be able to function remotely using the robot, from a phone or a laptop," said Coenie Koegelenberg, Professor of Pulmonology at Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Medicine, which spearheaded the project.

Quintin looks like a computer tablet attached to a Segway.

Made by robotics company Double Robotics, it stays upright using gyroscope and accelerometer sensors in its base. The robot is controlled remotely by desktop, tablet or smartphone. It communicates between patient and doctor through a microphone and a zoom function and can relay vital signs of highly infectious patients.

Robots have been used in China to perform all sorts of roles in lockdown from making food to spraying sanitiser. Other Quintins have been used in Italy, for much the same purpose, says the university. Koegelenberg, started experimenting with virtual ward rounds in the intensive care unit (ICU) of Tygerberg Hospital shortly before South Africa's lockdown.

"On Wednesday 18 March, on my way home after many meetings, I wondered whether 'virtual' ward rounds in many ICUs could be feasible. I phoned my wife and shared my thoughts. I had thought of using a fancy 'nanny cam' she bought a few years ago." Koegelenberg's wife Dr Suretha Kannenberg, a dermatologist, suggested using one from the Sunskill laboratory, a state-of-the-art clinical training facility at FMHS, instead.



Quintin is made by Double Robotic.

The robot has been "employed" to help the specialists do virtual ward rounds - which can be done even from home. So if a doctor is in isolation, but well enough to work, they can still provide medical advice.

In fresh assault on top African CEOs, Trump turns gaze on Adesina

LAGOS

AFRICAN finance ministers who form the bulk of the board of governors of the African development bank, AfDB have been thrown an unusual challenge by the US government which is seeking a rejection of the report of the ethics committee that investigated and cleared the institution's Nigerian head, Akinwumi Adesina.

Treasury secretary Steve Mnuchin in a two-page letter dated May 22 and made available to BusinessDay, asked the continent's biggest multilateral lender to set aside its ethics committee report totally exonerating Adesina from accusations by an anonymous group within the AfDB claiming favouritism in Nigerian appointments and waste of the bank's resources.

An American executive director of the bank and a close friend of the American head of the World Bank, has since been fingered as being the one pushing the claims of favouritism against Adesina. This latest call from the US, AfDB's biggest non-African shareholder, comes ahead of Adesina's re-election bid in August. Will the finance ministers allow the US to denigrate the bank's ethics committee and its governance process or risk a tiff with the Trump led US administration which recently threatened to withdraw funding from the WHO at the time of an unprecedented global health crisis.

"We have deep reservations about the integrity of the committee's process," Mnuchin said in the letter to Niale Kaba, chairwoman of the bank's board of governors. "Instead, we urge you to initiate an in-depth investigation of the allegations using the services of an independent outside investigator of high professional standing."

"Considering the scope, seriousness, and detail of these allegations against the sole candidate for bank leadership over the next five years, we believe that further inquiry is necessary to ensure that the AfDB's president has broad support, confidence, and a clear mandate from shareholders," Mnuchin added.

Some critics link the turn of events with US President Donald Trump's legendary disdain for Africa and demonstrated in his slamming of Tedros Adhanom, the African director general of the World Health Organisation just weeks ago. "Clearly there are interests in these matters that the stated concerns about transparency and governance, which Adesina has upheld," said one international relations Professor in Lagos.

In February, World Bank President David Malpass, who had previously served as Under Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs for the United States, criticized Adesina's AfDB for approving loans too quickly thereby worsening Africa's debt situation.

Moussa Faki, the African Union Commission chairperson, described Trump's hammer on WHO as "a campaign by the US government against the WHO's global leadership." African leaders including Nigeria has stood behind the Ethiopian DG of WHO.

Comments from African Presidents suggest an awareness of a subtle attack on Africa- imagined or not. "Under the stewardship of Dr Tedros, the WHO has shown itself to be a true flag-bearer of multilateralism when global solidarity has become critical," said President Hage Geingob of Namibia.

His Rwandan counterpart President Paul Kagame of Rwanda questioned Trump's tirad, saying, "Is it Dr Tedros, WHO, China...under attack or all of them together?... Save us too much politics Africa does not need it. Who does?"

Adesina is the only candidate for the August election and the letter by the US Treasury secretary may have been timed to spoil the atmosphere ahead of the leadership contest. The U.S. has a 6.5% stake in AfDB, the biggest shareholding after Nigeria which has largely refrained from pushing its influence at the organization.



AfDB president, Akinwumi Adesina.

Twitter and WhatsApp could face EU data privacy sanctions

BRUSSELS

TWITTER and Facebook's WhatsApp are in the firing line as Europe's leading privacy watchdog for US tech giants edges closer to delivering its first major sanctions under the region's tough data-protection rules.

The Irish Data Protection Commission said on May 22 that it finalised a draft decision linked to a data breach at Twitter and has asked its peers across the European Union for their sign-off. The regulator said it has also completed a draft decision in a probe of WhatsApp's transparency around data sharing. The Facebook service will be asked to give its comments on any proposed sanctions before EU counterparts can weigh in.

The Irish authority's probes have been piling up since the bloc's tough General Data Protection Regulation took effect in May 2018 - but with no final decisions to date. The regulator is the lead data protection authority for some of the biggest US tech companies, including Twitter, Facebook, Google and Apple.

GDPR empowered regulators to levy penalties of as much as 4 per cent of a company's annual revenue for the most serious violations. The biggest fine to date was a €50 million penalty for Google by France's watchdog CNIL.

The Irish regulator said it has also made progress in a number of its other pending cases, including an investigation into obligations of Facebook's local unit "to establish a lawful basis for personal data processing", adding that this "inquiry is now in the decision-making phase." Twitter and WhatsApp representatives declined to comment on the Irish probes.

Vodacom's digital platforms enabling students to continue learning for free

By Smart Money Reporter

AS students remain at home due to closure of schools by the government to contain the spreading of the novel coronavirus, Vodacom Tanzania Plc has continued working with schools and relevant educational institutions to zero online learning platforms.

Currently, the telecommunications and technology giant is collaborating with University of Dar es Salaam, Mkolani Foundation Health Sciences Training Institute, St. Joseph University in Tanzania, College of Health and Allied Sciences and Shule Direct, among others to support students access free digital education material.

"We are seeing online schooling, virtual gatherings, home entertainment, and remote working - becoming the new norm worldwide. In all of this, data is the key enabler in supporting business continuity, education and enabling all segments of community to keep in touch with their loved ones," said Vodacom's Corporate Affairs Director, Rosalyn Mworira.

Mworira said the telco's initiative is directly benefiting primary and secondary school students as well as they interact with teachers, lecturers and parents across the country. "We are connecting for good with Vodacom's Supa Network that is available across the country because we want to help Tanzanians stay connected while being productive wherever they are during this difficult period," Mworira added.

She explained that through Supa Network, Vodacom is also ensuring that the learning process is not completely disrupted by the virus which has put many countries at stand still through lockdowns.

"We continue to see interest from innovators all across Tanzania reaching out to us for purposes of collaboration. This is encouraging because it means as a community, Tanzanians want to work together to ensure that our children continue to learn despite the temporary school closure," she added.

She further pointed out that as a company which has been an advocate of quality education through digital



Vodacom's Corporate Affairs Director, Rosalyn Mworira.

platforms for many years, Vodacom invests heavily in technology to provide a level playing field by bringing connectivity and an opportunity for everyone to benefit from.

Among other notable names which the telco has partnered with for many years include Universal Communication Services Access Fund, Dlab and Samsung Technologies. Through such partnerships, both Vodacom customers and non-subscribers have enjoyed free access to educational material available on its Instant Schools, a free e-learning platform which provides digital learning materials to students and teachers through mobile device and desktop computers.

"This free content is available to students in primary and secondary schools for free, all you need is a Vodacom line. Our company remains committed to support customers and Tanzanians in every aspect that we can as we battle the pandemic," Mworira assured.

With over 14.1 subscribers, Vodacom Tanzania Plc remains the largest telco in the market with

its mobile money platform M-Pesa also leading other brands as per Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority's latest report.

In its quarterly report for the year ending March 2020, TCRA said that, overall, mobile money accounts increased to 27.13 million from 22.8 million with M-Pesa registering an increase of 0.10 million to 9.08 million, making Vodacom Tanzania Plc continue leading the market with a subscription share of 37 percent.

The report further unveiled that mobile money value of transactions increased in the quarter to 9.02trn/- from the 7.82trn/- registered during the corresponding period last year with M-Pesa continuing to dominate the market as the CIVOD-19 outbreak forces customers to resort to digital transactions.

Vodacom Tanzania Plc and its subsidiary companies are part of the Vodacom Group registered in South Africa which is in turn owned by Vodacom Group Plc of the United Kingdom. The telco is listed at Dar es Salaam Stock Exchange.

Entering Rwanda? Be ready for seven days' self-isolation

KIGALI

ANYONE entering Rwanda will now spend at least seven days in designated hotels and isolation centres at their own cost as the country begins opening up following the coronavirus lockdown.

Prior to this, the country was footing quarantine costs for new arrivals. The government has negotiated special rates with some hotels and apartments to host those arriving into the country. In communication by the Ministry of Health on Friday, May 22, officials disclosed six facilities that will be used as quarantine centres.

Every traveller arriving in Rwanda on a flight that departs from another country must proceed to the isolation center for a minimum of seven days, where they will be required to foot the costs of accommodation, meals and other services.

"People will pay for themselves to ease on the government's COVID-19 expenses. However, it should be noted that it is only incoming travelers that will pay for the quarantine. These payments do not apply to patients in treatment facilities and suspected cases in isolation centres all over the country," a source in MoH told the New Times. The government will, however, pay for those who cannot afford it.

Upon arrival into the country, all persons will be tested for COVID-19. And if found positive, they will be taken to a treatment facility with specialized medical care; and if found negative, they will be obliged to remain in mandatory quarantine for 7seven days.

On the fifth day of the quarantine, they will be tested again, and if found negative, they will be discharged on day seven. However, those discharged will be required to continue with self-quarantine at home for a further seven days with Rwanda Biomedical Centre professionals following upon them on

a daily basis.

In Kigali, institutional quarantine sites include the Nyarutarama Apartment Hotel at Rwf 55,000 [\$57] per a day, Kicukiro Apartments at Rwf 55,000, Dove Hotel Rwf at 45,000 [\$47], Hilltop Hotel at Rwf 40,000, Greenwich Hotel at Rwf 25,000 [\$27], and IPRC Kicukiro at Rwf 12,000.

The facilities will provide full board services, guest amenities, and house-keeping. However, tenants that will be hosted at IPRC Kicukiro will be required to buy their own amenities (soap, toothpaste, brush, lotion, among others).

By Friday, May 22, Rwanda had a total of 321 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Of these, 222 have recovered, while 99 are active cases. Rwanda was the first country in Africa to impose a country-wide lockdown on March 21. For about a month and a half that followed, people were discouraged from leaving their homes, public transport was closed, and only essential businesses operated (food, fuel and pharmacies).

On May 4, there was a partial lifting of the lockdown, allowing public transport to operate under tight social distancing measures, businesses to open again, and companies to work with essential staff, among others.



People will pay for themselves to ease on the government's COVID-19 expenses. However, it should be noted that it is only incoming travelers that will pay for the quarantine. These payments do not apply to patients in treatment facilities and suspected cases in isolation centres

VIEW FROM THE TOP

Disease is ravaging \$25bn banana industry

GUAYAQUIL

IN the banana plantations of the tropical lowlands of Ecuador, workers are being issued with protective clothing and disinfectant is provided for their tools.

The safety precautions implemented in the farms that stretch between the Andes and the Pacific coast are not simply to guard against the coronavirus. They're a foretaste of what will be required to shield the valuable crop against another disease, one that poses an existential threat to a \$25 billion industry.

Bananas have a claim to be the modern world's first globalised product and are still the most exported fruit on the planet. Yet the trade that began some 130 years ago is now a potent symbol of the underlying fragility of globalisation. How it adapts and responds may suggest a path toward rebuilding international consensus in the post-pandemic era.

The fibre and vitamin-rich fruit is such an everyday item that it's easy to overlook the environmental, social and political issues inherent in where they come from, and the economic reality of what it takes to get them to supermarket shelves. Grown in the south and shipped to markets in the north, much of the supply chain put in place in the 19th century is still in use today.

Just as coronavirus ravages the world in the absence of a vaccine, so the banana disease fusarium wilt is marching inexorably around the globe, leaving a trail of scorched plantations in its wake. A strain known as Tropical Race 4 (TR4) first identified in Taiwan some two decades ago has spread throughout Asia to the Middle East and Africa before its arrival in the banana heartlands of Latin America late last year, when it was detected in Colombia.

It is considered among the most destructive of all plant diseases, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, or FAO. "Biosecurity measures" including "on-farm quarantine" are recommended to mitigate its spread, but as with Covid-19, there is no treatment. Once the soil is contaminated, there's no hope of elimination; the only recourse is to abandon the land and move elsewhere.

The industry was beginning to adapt to the fusarium threat, and the same biosecurity measures intended to protect against it are being used in the coronavirus response, said Juan José Pons, coordinator of the Banana Cluster of Ecuador that includes the industry's guilds and associations.

Ecuador's 8 000 banana producers will all need to "become more productive, more efficient, with better biosecurity controls that can guarantee future sustainability," he said. In reality, the banana trade was at a crossroads before TR4 arrived in Latin America, which together with the Caribbean accounts for more than three-quarters of world banana exports.

Add in Covid-19, and "the industry is really at a turning point," said Pascal Liu, a senior economist at the FAO in Rome and coordinator of the World Banana Forum, a stakeholder group for everyone from growers to retailers, NGOs and research institutes.

Climate change, environmental degradation, the power of supermarkets to dictate prices and growing pressure to improve the lot of workers, the banana industry has been under siege on multiple fronts for some time now.

As the world's biggest exporter, Ecuador is at its epicentre. The country on Latin America's Pacific coast accounted for around one third of the 20 million tons of bananas shipped globally last year. The fruit is worth more to Ecuador than the oil industry after the collapse in crude prices - some \$3.2 billion last year, the equivalent of 3% of the economy.

It's also been home to one of the worst outbreaks of coronavirus in Latin America, at one point with bodies lying in the streets of the port of Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city. The epidemic caused logistical difficulties at the port, with staff shortages and a lack of temperature controlled containers resulting in temporary interruptions in shipments. There was little or no disruption to work on the plantations, however.

Indeed, the banana looks like one of the winners of the crisis, with its reputation as a healthy snack helping to boost global demand during lockdowns. Anecdotally, sales are up in the European Union, the world's largest importer.

But that hasn't translated into a boon for the banana growers or importers, whose costs have risen due to the logistical disruptions and the implementation of safety measures. Seasonal factors have also weighed in, driving down spot prices for a 40-pound (18 kilogram) box to as little as \$2 or \$3.

"There is definitely pressure on those perhaps 30% of producers who are selling very cheaply because they have to sell," said Kléber Sigüenza, president of banana producer Orodelti, which has close to 3 000 workers in two dozen Ecuadorian plantations, mostly in Guayas province, whose



Harvested bananas sit in large baths to wash off the latex that comes from the freshly cut clusters.

capital is Guayaquil.

Sigüenzasellsbananastoexportersincluding multinationals under fixed contracts. But the ranks of smaller producers that employ some 40 000 workers have no such guarantees. While the immediate impact may be limited, he doesn't see a significant rebound any time soon. That has consequences for the industry's capacity to handle its deeper issues.

Lower prices limit the ability of producers to respond to environmental concerns over the use of toxic pesticides, which pollute groundwater. They also reduce the possibility of adapting to climate change, whose effects are already being felt in the Caribbean. The Windward Islands have suffered repeat hurricane damage that hit production, while Jamaica has ceased exporting bananas altogether.

"You cannot ask a producer to increase sustainable production systems or to use more sustainable production techniques if at the same time you reduce their margin," said Liu at the FAO. "And their margin is almost nothing."

The banana trade was traditionally lucrative.

The relation between the fruit and money is clear from the position of the former Banana Docks in Manhattan, just below Wall Street. In London, bananas from Jamaica were landed at the Royal Docks, now the site of City Airport.

It also has a dark history. In the early years of the 20th century, "banana wars" were fought to secure U.S. interests over plantation land in Central and South America.

The trade became synonymous with U.S. corporate might flexed at the expense of workers and governments in the producer countries, the original "banana republics." The so-called banana massacre of striking United Fruit Company workers by army troops in 1928 was adapted by Gabriel Garcia Marquez for his novel "One Hundred Years of Solitude."

The world's favourite fruit has also earned itself a place in popular culture. The Velvet Underground's 1967 debut album featured a banana cover by Andy Warhol. In communist Eastern Europe they were a sign of affluence, with the privileged families of party officials in Poland nicknamed the banana youth. Even now, the most popular Halloween costume for American babies in 2019 was the banana, a

Google Trends report found.

The influence wielded by the old traders has long since faded as the world became more globalised. The United Fruit Company was incorporated into Chiquita Brands International Inc., which is now held by a Brazilian agribusiness, Grupo Cutrale. Fyffes, the oldest fruit brand in the world, was sold to Sumitomo of Japan in 2016.

As with so much produce, the real power now lies with the supermarket chains, which deploy bananas as a weapon in price wars, selling them at a loss to lure customers. The retailers hold the leverage of trade between consumers and producers, enabling them to set prices and often driving down margins.

David McCann, chairman of Fyffes, Europe's largest banana supplier, says the arrival of "big retail" is one of the most significant developments for the trade of recent decades. He is in favour of a higher price for bananas so that "everybody gets a little more share."

"It's not easy being a retailer, so they naturally push for good quality product at the best possible price they can achieve it," he said. But he would "certainly love to see a somewhat higher retail ticket with everybody along the chain getting a little bit more out of it."

At the Belgian city of Antwerp, the world's largest banana port, a typical ship will unload more than 2 million bananas packed in 50 containers in a morning. From there, they are taken around Europe by rail, road or barge to be ripened according to taste. (Belgians and Germans eat theirs greener than the British; Scandinavians prefer them bigger.)

New safety measures introduced because of coronavirus mean the terminals and cold stores remain fully operational, and banana volumes "are quite stable," a port spokeswoman said. That's a reflection of the banana's importance to the food chain. In a world where food security has catapulted up the agenda, the banana and its cousin the plantain rank ahead of maize as a staple in some 80 countries. Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar chose a Fyffes ripening facility in Dublin to reassure the public that fresh food would get through.

For Alistair Smith, international coordinator of Banana Link, a campaign group that advocates on behalf of smaller producers and workers, the pandemic is focusing minds within the trade to reappraise how it operates.

WORLD

Africa's COVID-19 cases pass 100,000 mark

ADDIS ABABA

THE number of confirmed COVID-19 positive cases across Africa surpassed 100,000 as of Friday afternoon, the Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) said.

The Africa CDC in its latest situation update issued on Friday revealed that the number of confirmed COVID-19 positive cases across the continent rose from 95,201 on Thursday to 100,330 as of Friday afternoon.

The death toll due to the COVID-19 pandemic across the African continent had surged to 3,101, according to the Africa CDC.

It disclosed that some 39,416 people who had been infected with the COVID-19 had recovered across the continent as of Friday afternoon. The continental disease control and prevention agency also noted that the virus had spread into all of the 54 African countries.

It said that the Northern African region is the most affected area across the continent both in terms of positive COVID-19 cases, as well as the number of deaths.

CONCERTED EFFORTS

The African countries are mobilizing

resources and taking measures to fight against COVID-19. Many countries on the continent have imposed night curfew and suspended international flights so as to curb the spread of the virus. Wearing face masks is mandatory at public places in many countries.

They also have the support from international organizations, and countries including China.

In addition to taking actions including sending medical teams to relevant African countries and providing anti-epidemic materials in short supply within its capacity, China said it will establish a cooperation mechanism for its hospitals to pair up with 30 African hospitals.

The Asian country added it will also accelerate the building of the Africa CDC headquarters to help the continent ramp up its disease preparedness and control capacity.

The World Bank announced on Wednesday that it had approved 107 billion shillings (about 1 billion U.S. dollars) for Kenya to address the COVID-19 fiscal financing gap.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said in a statement on Thursday that it is working with governments in Africa to train health work-



ers, improve surveillance, testing, contact tracing and treatment. More than 7,000 health workers, including over 400 in Tanzania, have been trained in WHO African Region since the beginning of the pandemic, according to the statement.

UN CALLS FOR MORE SUPPORT

The WHO said in the statement that most countries on the continent, however, do not have the capacity to manage many critically ill COVID-19 patients.

There are on average nine intensive care unit beds per one million people, according to a March 2020 survey based on self-reports by 47 countries in the WHO African Region. Improvements are being made to increase the number of ventilators in intensive care units and more critical care clinicians are being trained, it added.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday called for international action to help Africa deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

"These are still early days for the pandemic in Africa, and disruption could escalate quickly. Global solidarity with Africa is an imperative -- now and for recovering better," said Guterres in a video message for the launch of a policy brief

on the impact of COVID-19 on Africa.

Ending the pandemic in Africa is essential for ending it across the world, he said. "We are calling for international action to strengthen Africa's health systems, maintain food supplies, avoid a financial crisis, support education, protect jobs, keep households and businesses afloat, and cushion the continent against lost income and export earnings," said Guterres.

He warned that the pandemic threatens African progress. "It will aggravate long-standing inequalities and heighten hunger, malnutrition and vulnerability to disease. Already, demand for Africa's commodities, tourism and remittances are declining. The opening of the trade zone has been pushed back, and millions could be pushed into extreme poverty."

Xinhua

US coronavirus crisis 'failure of democracy' - Obama's former speechwriter

WASHINGTON

DAVID Litt, a former speechwriter for then U.S. President Barack Obama, has said the spread of COVID-19 which has so far claimed nearly 100,000 lives in the United States is a failure of democracy at the root.

"It's become commonplace to refer to COVID-19 as 'the worst public health crisis of our lifetimes.' But what has cost the United States so many lives and jobs during the pandemic is not, at root, a failure of public health.

It's a failure of democracy," Litt wrote in an article published by Time magazine this week. "Poll after poll has shown that a clear majority of Americans trust, want our leaders to heed the experts' advice.

Yet that hasn't happened. We were far too slow to implement social-distancing guidelines -- a delay epidemiologists found is responsible for 90 percent of U.S. coronavirus deaths," he said. "Now we're acting far too quickly to reopen the economy," he added.

Dozens of U.S. states have rolled out reopening plans in late April, with Georgia, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas among the first to allow certain nonessential businesses to resume operations.

The writer pointed out that lower-income and non-white Americans are those most likely to suffer from the U.S. government's failing response to the coronavirus.

Citing a report analyzing the changes in the U.S. political map in recent years from the Univer-



David Litt, a former speechwriter for then U.S. President Barack Obama, has said the spread of COVID-19 which has so far claimed nearly 100,000 lives in the United States is a failure of democracy at the root.

"As we battle the coronavirus,

American lives depend on a successful government response. But with rare exceptions, House Members' jobs do not," he said. "In early March, for example, as the virus was spreading, the first 15 U.S. states to report cases of the coronavirus accounted for 56 percent of America's population but only 30 percent of America's senators. No wonder the Senate was initially slow to act," he said.

So as of Friday night, the United States has reported over 1.6 million cases of COVID-19, according to Johns Hopkins University. Furthermore, Litt said "the corporations' increasing clout with policymakers" has pushed the U.S. government into acting more slowly and reopening more quickly than the American people believe is safe. That capitalistic influence has

more influence on policymaking than the people's welfare, in Litt's view, is "no surprise."

"From the way we manage elections to the way we fund campaigns, from the congressional districts we draw to the lobbyists we include in the policymaking process, the story is the same," he said.

"The American republic is a government of fewer people, by fewer people, for fewer people than at any time in the past half-century. And we, the People, are suffering because of it," Litt concluded.

Litt is the author of "Democracy in One Book or Less: How It Works, Why It Doesn't, and Why Fixing It Is Easier Than You Think" as well as "Thanks, Obama: My Hopey, Changey White House Years."

Xinhua

Pandemic exposes chronic gaps within EU, says Russian expert

MOSCOW

THE novel coronavirus pandemic has exposed chronic discrepancies within the European Union on matters of European unity, Alexander Dynkin, director of the Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), said yesterday.

"The pandemic has revealed a chronic gap in the European Union between the Europeanization of values and the nationalization of interests," he said at the online Potsdam Meetings conference organized by the German-Russian Forum and the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund.

"I think that the institutionalization of individual preferences into a regulation of the Maastricht or Schengen Agreement type has demonstrated its fragility," he noted.

"At least, we heard unprecedented apologies from President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen to the Italians for the European Union's failing to offer timely help to that country amid the coronavirus pandemic."

: An attempt to forge a new historic affinity has failed so far, he noted. "National identities, personal systems of values still differ. For instance, Warsaw is currently seeking to impose a narrative that Vatican City and the United States brought



Alexander Dynkin, director of the Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), said yesterday.

"Apart from that, such symmetry has emerged in the European Union around the argument on support to vulnerable countries and sectors," he stressed.

"Evidently, southern nations stand for financial solidarity and shared responsibility whereas northern nations, such as Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden, are against sharing debts. Germany has unexpectedly left the northern camp. [German Chancellor Angela] Merkel has opted to leave the stage as an advocate of European unity."

According to Dynkin, Russia has questions to a number of European nations. "For instance, why does no one in Germany, but for a few Social

Democrats, pay any attention to the 75-year-long presents of the US military in their country? Why do five EU countries still have nuclear munitions? These are the questions we need to discuss," he emphasized.

He noted that there are two ways for further development. "It is either moving ahead to a common budget, which is hardly ever possible in the current political situation, or reversing to looser ties, without such conditions as the Maastricht Treaty, a common market and a focus on intellectual property and technologies, and the unification of the foreign defense policy under slogan of strategic autonomy," he added.

Agencies

Xi orders fortifying public health protection network

BEIJING

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping stressed fortifying the public health protection network when participating in a deliberation at the annual national legislative session.



Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks Sunday afternoon when joining in discussions with lawmakers from central China's Hubei Province.

Xi stressed reforming disease prevention and control system; boosting the epidemic monitoring, early warning and emergency response capacity; perfecting the treatment system for major epidemics; and improving public health emergency laws and regulations.

He commended the vital contributions and enormous sacrifices made by the people in Hubei and its capital city of Wuhan in fighting COVID-19, and expressed his sincere appreciation.

Noting the continued spread of the virus overseas, clusters of cases in some domestic areas, sporadic cases in Hubei and daily increases of new asymptomatic infections, Xi urged continued efforts to forestall both imported cases and domestic resurgence to ensure that the hard-won progress in epidemic containment is not lost.

Xi said the most imperative task for Hubei is to spare no efforts to coordinate COVID-19 prevention and control and economic and social development, stressing paying close attention to addressing possible "post-epidemic syndromes."

Xinhua

Solutions to Africa's problems reside within Africa itself, says Ramaphosa

CAPE TOWN

SOUTH African President Cyril Ramaphosa, in his capacity as African Union (AU) chairperson, yesterday stressed the role of African countries in resolving African problems, including the COVID-19 pandemic.



In a statement marking the Africa Day, Ramaphosa said this event reminds Africans once again that "the solutions to Africa's problems, be they overcoming disease or eradicating poverty and underdevelopment, reside within Africa itself."

"Although the coronavirus pandemic is not an African problem alone, we have shown ourselves capable of agility and ingenuity," Ramaphosa said.

This year's Africa Day, the annual commemoration of the foundation of the Organization of African Unity, now known as the AU, was overshadowed by the wide spread of COVID-19 across the African continent. It has been a little over three months since the first case of coronavirus on the continent was confirmed.

"This pandemic has been a stark reminder that regardless of whether we are born into wealth or indigence, we are all mortal, and can succumb to disease," Ramaphosa said.

As countries around the world battle to turn the tide against the pandemic, Africa has taken firm control of its destiny, by developing a clear strategy and raising financial resources from its member states, he said.

The African response to the coronavirus pandemic has received widespread praise. Despite the multitude of resource challenges they face, African countries have come together in remarkable ways, united by a common purpose, Ramaphosa said.

The countries of the Global South are more vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19 because of low levels of development, insufficient resources and weak health systems, he said.

Although many African countries are ranking low on human development indices thus less capable to manage the fallout of a global health emergency of this kind on their own, "yet at the same time, some of the very health challenges African countries have wrestled with for decades have given us a clear understanding of what needs to be done, and how to do it," said Ramaphosa.

African countries have been able to use their experience in managing outbreaks of malaria, cholera, HIV, tuberculosis and hemorrhagic viruses like Ebola and Lassa. "Our understanding of communicable diseases and how to manage them has put us in good stead when it comes to coronavirus," Ramaphosa said.

African governments have been swift and proactive in implementing measures to flatten the coronavirus curve, he said.

Xinhua

Political goals hid under US speculations on China's COVID-19 statistics

CHINA has always taken people's lives as the top priority in the sudden outbreak of the novel coronavirus pneumonia, trying its best to improve the cure rate and lower mortality to save the life of every patient. Many Chinese lost their lives due to the major pandemic, which placed the nation into deep lament.

The numbers of infections and deaths are always transparent and open in China, and every case can be traced. However, some U.S. politicians, in an attempt to hide their own inability to control the pandemic, have repeatedly pointed fingers at China with political delusion, saying the country covered up infection and death numbers, and "the most in the world has to be China." What it shows is not unwis-

dom, but vicious calculations to frame up China.

Saving lives is of paramount importance, and that's a conviction always held by the Chinese government and people in pandemic response. Giving play to its institutional advantages, China pulled concerted strength from across the country, with many places hitting the "brake pedal" for social and economic development.

To save lives, the populous Hubei province with nearly 60 million people locked its transportation channels, and its capital Wuhan, where over 10 million people live, reacted with a city-wide lockdown.

To save lives, over 42,000 medical staff went to Hubei for assistance in hundreds of teams, while the best med-

ical resources and top respiratory and infectious disease experts gathered in Wuhan. Besides, millions of Chinese also stood out to protect Wuhan and Hubei in various ways.

To save lives, Wuhan launched a "blanket search" for more than 4.2 million households, vowing to leave no one behind and admit and treat all confirmed and suspected patients.

To save lives, China adopted individualized treatment plans for all COVID-19 patients in severe and critical conditions, and the treatment expenses, which averaged 150,000 yuan (\$21,239) per patient and even reached over a million yuan for some critical patients, are all shouldered by insurance companies and the government.

"I have never seen in my life this kind

of mobilization," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Even Western media refuted the U.S. politicians who accused China of hiding infection and death numbers. The whole process of China's pandemic response is open. Since January, the country has published the numbers of confirmed cases, deaths, suspected cases, close contacts and people under medical observation on a daily basis. A total of over 3,000 press conferences have been held at national and provincial levels where government officials, medical staff, experts and recovered patients directly answered questions.

After strenuous efforts of the nation, decisive results have been achieved in protecting the province of Hubei and

the city of Wuhan, and the whole nation has also made huge progress in preventing and controlling the disease.

Senior advisor to WHO Director-General Bruce Aylward said China didn't hide its data, which can be proved by multiple investigations conducted by WHO missions to China.

During the initial phase of the COVID-19 epidemic, some statistics released by China were delayed, missed, misinformed, or overlapped because of the insufficient hospital capacity and the belated docking between a few medical institutions and the disease control and prevention information system, as well as the overload of hospitals and medical workers. However, the statistical work has always been advanced, and Wuhan had timely revised

its data and published the results. Such practices are responsible for the history, the people and the deceased.

However, after China revised Wuhan's statistics on April 17, some U.S. politicians became hysterical, ridiculously saying China's statistics are not believable and more revise would be made to other Chinese cities. It seems like they just hope more Chinese people to die, which revealed their ill and crude political mentality.

Even U.S. internet users can't tolerate their practices. They questioned whether the pandemic was a race between death numbers, saying only crazy and anti-humanity people would do this.

People's Daily

Trainee teacher in Wuhan serves as courier during COVID-19 epidemic



Wu You is on his way to send medicines.

THE Chinese New Year, which fell on Jan. 25 this year, marked the first day for Wu You, a trainee teacher in a Wuhan middle school, to offer free delivery service for citizens in the city amidst the COVID-19 epidemic.

From this day on, he started bustling through Wuhan, sending medicines and materials to those in dire need.

Wu's first "client" was a father of a three-year-old boy. The man isolated himself in the kitchen and the bathroom because he was suspected of contracting the novel coronavirus. When asking for help from Wu, he almost ran out of food and medicines.

From Jan. 25 to the end of Wuhan's lockdown, Wu, an enthusiast of videoblogging and rap music, cycled over 1,000 kilometers and helped more than 700 people get through the darkest time.

His volunteering service started from a favor he did for one of his students' parents who asked him to send some masks and drugs, which later inspired him to post a message on micro-blogging platform Weibo and instant messenger WeChat in which he said he would offer free delivery of masks and medicines for the left-behind elderly.

At first, Wu was just trying to offer some help passively, as most of his approximately 300 followers on Weibo were friends and relatives. However, he unexpectedly received more than 1,000 pieces of help information, most of which were sent by strangers.

Trying to fulfill his promise, Wu asked his student Huang Xinyuan to join him. The two bought medicines and then distributed them.

They selected some help seekers who lived nearby and were in urgent need, and started delivering at around 2:00 pm on the first day of the Chinese New Year. It was already 10:00 pm when they arrived home.

They didn't feel scared until they finally hit the road, realizing they were at a very high risk because the recipients might be COVID-19 patients.

"But we left it all behind and carried on," Wu said. "We are not that great, but we just can't turn them down."

As there were more and more help seekers, Wu decided to carry on his service till the epidemic is relieved. He reassigned tasks with Huang, with him sending supplies to the east part of the city and Huang to the west. Wu would always spot the patients for the medicines, and firstly send the medicines to children and the elderly.

He received an emergency call at around 10:00 pm on the third day of his service, when he was about to sleep.

The caller said he was quarantined at her aunt's in Wuhan, and his uncle had a breathing problem, adding that he was worried very much since the drugs had run out.

Wu went out immediately and took

with him a box of oranges, because the vitamin C needed by the caller was out of stock.

The residential complex of the caller, which was newly built and located 10 kilometers away, was not shown in the navigation application, so Wu could only search for it according to description.

However, when he finally arrived at the residential complex, he was not able to locate the specific building. Therefore, the only way to find the receiver was to shout his name, even though it was raining. He was finally answered by the help-seeker's uncle who thanked him in a trembling voice.

Three days later, Wu was informed that the senior man had been hospitalized and his conditions turned great. The caller extended a million thanks to Wu, saying his timely delivery service had won valuable time for the treatment.

"From that moment on, I started to feel that I was probably saving lives," Wu recalled.

He was joined by more people since mid-February and gradually formulated a team. Some verify information while some deliver medicines. Besides, his delivery coverage has also been extended to the whole city.

Wu established a chat group on WeChat containing 250 people, including psychological consultants, doctors and patients, to share experiences of fighting the pandemic. There was even a software engineer for map apps planning routes for Wu and his team every day.

In the meantime, the number of followers of Wu on Weibo exceeded 1 million, and he started receiving donations from across the country.

A volunteer team from Sichuan sent critical drugs and 4 tons of vegetables, while writers from Beijing mailed protective suits and alcohol. He also received masks from Chinese students overseas.

Wuhan started to resume production and work at the end of March, gradually reopening its public transport and subway system, which led to a decline in the number of help seekers. During the past two months, Wu was thanked numerous times and received "like" from millions of internet users.

Wu believes the tiredness and doubts he received are worthy, and the only regret is that he still missed many help seekers. "To help more and care for more is needed not only during the epidemic, but also in the post-crisis period," he wrote on Weibo.

People's Daily

Russia to allocate \$9 million to WHO to fight maternal, infant mortality

MOSCOW

RUSSIAN Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin has signed an order to allocate \$9 million to the World Health Organization (WHO) to implement measures aimed at providing help for countries to prevent maternal, infant and child mortalities, Russia's official legal information website published the order yesterday.

"To allocate \$9 million of funds from the federal budget as a voluntary payment for the World Health Organization to implement measures to provide assistance to countries to increase the quality of healthcare provided in medical facilities to reduce maternal, infant and child mortality and boost achievement of healthcare tasks as part of the sustainable development goals for 2020-2022," the

statement reads.

In 2020, up to \$3.5 million will be allocated, in 2021 - up to \$3.4 million and in 2022 - up to \$2.1 million.

The health, foreign and finance ministries are ordered to inform WHO about the decision made.

Moreover, the finance ministry is also instructed to ensure the funds are covered.

Agencies



Putin and Iraqi PM discuss Syria, oil market stabilisation

MOSCOW

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin had a phone conversation with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to discuss interaction to stabilize global hydrocarbon market, the Kremlin press service reported yesterday.

"They discussed cooperation aimed at stabilizing the global hydrocarbon market," the press service said.

According to the Kremlin press service, the parties praised the agreements reached with the participation of Russia and Iraq in the OPEC+ format with the goal "to overcome the acute phase of the oil crisis." They also noted "the importance of continuing effective joint efforts in this area," the Kremlin added.

The two leaders also exchanged views on regional issues, focusing on the Syrian settlement. "The sides agreed on further coordination of steps on ensuring a long-term normalization of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, restoring its sovereignty and territorial integrity," the statement runs.

Putin also congratulated the Iraqi prime minister and the Iraqi people on Eid al-Fitr, a religious holiday celebrated by Muslims to mark the end of the month of fasting of Ramadan. During the conversation, held at the Iraqi side's initiative, an agreement was reached to continue contacts at various levels.

The Russian leader also congratulated Mustafa al-Kadhimi on assuming the office of the Iraqi head of government on May 7. Putin earlier sent him a congratulatory message.

"The sides expressed mutual intention to continue developing traditionally friendly relations between the two countries," according to the statement. During the conversation, they hashed over a range of topical issues of bilateral cooperation in trade and economic and energy fields.

Agencies



The two leaders also exchanged views on regional issues, focusing on the Syrian settlement. "The sides agreed on further coordination of steps on ensuring a long-term normalization of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, restoring its sovereignty and

Agencies

Post-pandemic world needs better globalisation, not less

BEIJING

EVEN at a time when the coronavirus pandemic is sweeping the world, beef from New Zealand, red wine from Chile, and detergent from Germany remain just a click away to Chinese customers.

This offers a glimpse of how globalization has led to the creation of a highly integrated world web of interdependence and altered the way of living in many parts of this closely connected global community.

The ravaging pandemic, however, has jolted global supply chains and halted much of cross-border travels. It has also exposed once again some of globalization's deep-seated deficiencies, and prompted many in academia, politics and the press to debate whether this marks the beginning of an end to this historic process.

It is not the first time that globalization has been questioned or assaulted in times of turbulence. Between the 2008 global financial crisis and this pandemic, sharp criticism against globalization was heard fueled by rising waves of trade protectionism and economic nationalism.

Nevertheless, being a natural process driven by the combined forces of technological breakthroughs, as well as the free flow of people and profit-thirsty capital, globalization has brought down trade and commerce barriers, shrunk production costs, stimulated technological cooperation, integrated global markets and financial systems, created inestimable jobs and wealth, and raised living standards throughout the world over the centuries since the Age of Discovery.

These upsides of globalization are unmistakable, and will not be wiped out by a single global crisis. Arjun Appadurai, a U.S. globalization studies expert, argued in an opinion piece published by the Time magazine earlier this month that "globalization is here to stay," and de-globalization efforts are no more than "wishful thinking."

Thus the international community, instead of trying to turn inward and break away from each other, should come even closer and make globalization work better for everyone. The first task should be for countries worldwide to make global production and supply chains more resilient. This pandemic will not be the last one. Other unknown risks and new challenges are likely to emerge in the future.

While some Washington politicians are talking about reshoring the production of critical medical and technological supplies back to the United States, others like Shannon K. O'Neil, a senior fellow with the Council on Foreign Relations, argued that governments and boardrooms should add redundancies to the global manufacturing processes.

Information technologies have also been considered key to rendering future global supply chains more resilient. The World Economic Forum (WEF) suggested



Tourists admire the skyline view of Lujiazui area at the Bund in Shanghai, east China, Jan. 6, 2020. (Xinhua)

in an article published on its website last month that companies should stop recording data like ships' cargo on paper, and start digitizing their supply chain processes so as to make sure critical information can always be available.

Whatever the proposals - reshoring, multi-sourcing or digitizing, China, with its comprehensive industrial advantages, will remain a critical part of any future global supply chains.

"I don't think China's role as a major source of manufacturing is going to be eliminated. They will continue to be so," said Morris Cohen, a professor at The Wharton School, told Deutsche Welle last month.

Secondly, the international community should jointly enhance global economic governance and further boost global free trade. In mid-April, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected that the global economy is on track to contract sharply by 3 percent in 2020 due to COVID-19, probably the worst recession since the Great Depression in the 1930s.

To forestall that nightmare scenario, governments should at the moment better coordinate their macro-economic policies so as to maintain market stability, prop up employment, conduct stimuli proportional to the ongoing pandemic, and restore global growth through such multilateral economic platforms as the Group of 20.

Also, they should give even stronger support to the rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at the core. Right now, because of Washington's intentional obstruction, the WTO's Appellate Body, which has arbitrated international trade disputes over the past 25 years to ensure fairness, has been left inoperative.

The Financial Times, a British newspaper, argued in a recent editorial that the WTO is needed more than ever so that it can "underpin the open global economy we will all need on the other side of the pandemic."

The U.S. administration should curb its protectionist impulses, and actively and fully back the existing global economic

governance system.

The third front should be strengthening international cooperation so that countries worldwide can better respond to their shared non-conventional security challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Globalization is now far more than just economic integration. As the global village is highly interconnected, the human race needs to ramp up, not to dial down, trans-border cooperation in a bid to jointly tackle common challenges like deadly contagions, climate change, terrorism and cyber attacks, problems no country can solve single-handedly.

The most immediate mission should be stepping up global cooperation against the COVID-19 pandemic and bolster the backbone-role the World Health Organization has been playing in coordinating global endeavor to beat humanity's common enemy.

The fourth task is to make globalization more inclusive for all. The pandemic has further revealed that globalization has not turned out to be a rising tide lifting all boats, and that it could further widen the global gap between the rich and the poor.

In a WEF research report earlier this month, which focuses on epidemics like H1N1 in 2009, MERS in 2012, and Zika in 2016, and traces out their distributional effects in the five years following each event, the Gini coefficient, a commonly-used index of inequality, has gone up by nearly 1.5 percent on average.

In the United States, the world's largest economy, the outbreak recession has kicked millions of the most economically vulnerable Americans out of their jobs, while many are facing a dire choice between protecting their health or their jobs. Also, several racial minority groups account for a disproportionate number of the COVID-19 infections and deaths in the country largely due to lower living and working conditions as well as a lack of access to health care. In Wisconsin alone, a U.S. state with a 6-percent Black population, African Americans account for about half of its outbreak fatalities, according to a recent report by the Washington Post.

Xinhua

US COVID-19 death toll nears 100,000, New York Times calls it 'incalculable loss'

NEW YORK

THE front page of Sunday's New York Times features the names of 1,000 people who have died of COVID-19 in the United States. Calling it "an incalculable loss," the newspaper clarified that "the 1,000 people here

reflect just 1 percent of toll."

"They were not simply names on a list. They were us," the paper said. "Numbers alone cannot possibly measure the impact of the coronavirus in America, whether it is the number of patients treated, jobs interrupted or lives cut short."

"Toward the end of May in the year 2020, the number of people in the United States who have died from the coronavirus neared 100,000 - almost all of them within a three-month span. An average of more than 1,100 deaths a day," said the cover story sub-titled "The Human Toll," which was printed

on four full pages including the cover.

"Why has this happened in the United States of 2020? Why has the virus claimed disproportionately large number of black and Latino victims? Why were nursing homes so devastated? These questions of why and how and whom will be asked for decades

to come," said the report.

"For now, all we can do is hold our collective breath, inch toward some approximation of how things were - and try to process a loss of life greater than what the country incurred in several decades of war, from Vietnam to Iraq," it added.

Over 96,000 people have died of the coronavirus in the United States, the largest toll among all the countries in the world, according to the Center of Systems Science and Engineering of Johns Hopkins University as of Sunday morning.

Xinhua

To defeat COVID-19 pandemic calls for joint efforts from global media

THE COVID-19 pandemic is a war between human beings and the virus. At this special moment when countries must fight together for a shared future, the media is not only a disseminator of information, but also a major participant.

It's difficult to distinguish between fiction and facts in an information-overloaded world. Based on lessons learned from history, the World Health Organization (WHO) has emphasized the importance of offering accurate information to the people around the world since the onset of the outbreak, pointing out that it's crucial to fight epidemic-related ru-

mors and false information.

The WHO suggested stopping the spread of false information about COVID-19 by tracking misinformation in multiple languages. The organization's infodemic management team is working hand in glove with its communications department to deliver information to a broader public audience. The UN health body is also engaging with search engines and social media companies, asking them to filter out false information and promote truth.

As a matter of fact, the pandemic is a big test for global media, as it reflects media outlets' practices and

sense of justice.

The media should faithfully record history and respect facts in news reporting. Truth is basic for news. At this crucial moment, media practitioners must work in a down-to-earth way, learn the real situations, and report the truth in the most accurate, objective and comprehensive manner.

Unfortunately, some irresponsible Western media outlets spread and even fabricated rumors, which undermined international cooperation to fight the virus.

China's incredible sacrifice in fighting COVID-19 has made huge

contribution to the world, winning high recognition from the international community. It's of great significance to provide objective and accurate coverage of Chinese anti-epidemic achievements when rumors abound. The media should be aware that when they share China's successful anti-epidemic experiences with the world, they are injecting positive energy into protecting the lives and health of the people across the world. The media should uphold the common values of mankind and see to it that the limits of civilization shall never be tested in news reporting. "In this situation

sometimes, it's easy to move into perspectives in which there tends to be discrimination; there tends to be violation of human rights; there tends to be stigma on innocent people just because of their ethnicity or whatever. I think it's very important to avoid this," said UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, some Western politicians and media have deliberately spread racially discriminatory messages, which is one of the main reasons for the language and physical violence against Asians.

COVID-19-related stigmatization is a racist act against a country and all its people, and it is a hate crime, said Mushahid Hussain Syed, the chairman of the Pakistani Senate's standing committee on foreign affairs, adding that such behaviors are also uncivilized, and go against diplomatic norms and international law. All responsible media in the world should conscientiously resist stigmatization and stand by justice. Under the current circumstances, the media plays a vital role in reassuring the people, Beito Rubido Ramonde, director of Spanish newspaper ABC, emphasized in his letter to the People's Daily.

Besides, the media should also fully reflect the general trend of the world's future becoming increasingly interconnected, and inject positive energy into the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

As COVID-19 continues to sweep the world, the international community should work together to overcome the difficulties and defeat the virus. Similarly, the media should also enhance cooperation to assist in the world's COVID-19 fight and contribute to safeguarding the health and wellbeing of mankind.

People's Daily

The
Guardian

SPORT



In this June 9, 2019 file photo, spectators watch Austria's Dominic Thiem playing Spain's Rafael Nadal, right, on center court during the men's final match of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris. (AP Photo)

Tennis, anyone? Not on this sunny Sunday at the French Open

PARIS

TENNIS, anyone? Not Sunday at the French Open. Nobody was there. Maybe they will be in September.

It should have been the first day of the clay-court Grand Slam tournament held annually at Roland Garros - with thousands flocking to catch a glimpse of Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic or Serena Williams.

Instead, the grounds in leafy western Paris were deserted on a sunny, blue-sky day because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Every year it's Roland Garros time, it's a bit like tennis fever. I was looking forward to seeing quality tennis and having a day out again. There's a certain mood, an atmosphere," said 34-year-old Hector Snowman, who attended the tournament in 2019. "You see stars walking around there, it feels like a privilege to be there. Everyone's expecting a French player to do well and they have their favorites like (Roger) Federer."

Court Philippe Chatrier, where 15,000 fans cheered Nadal's record-extending 12th title last June, wouldn't have needed the new roof that was supposed to debut in case of rain this year.

Viewed from outside, peering through one of the site's imposing iron gates, the towering roof looked grandiose with its 11 large sections, each 110 meters (360 feet) long and weighing 330 tons (660,000 pounds).

Also visible: construction equipment left behind when France went into lockdown on March 17 littering the inside of Roland Garros.

In early February, the French Tennis Federation proudly released a video to announce the roof was ready. A few weeks later, people were sheltering in place as the nation went into confinement. Soccer, rugby and tennis events all got called off.

If the French Open does start as hoped on Sept. 20, it might have to be played with no spectators present on the 17 courts for health and safety reasons. The maze-like grounds of Roland Garros are narrow, crammed, stuffy and sinewy, making social distancing impossible.

That would mean 10,000 fans missing out on watching Djokovic or Nadal on Court Suzanne Lenglen in the early rounds, and it would dash the FFT's hopes of beating the record 520,000 fans who came to watch last year.

Normally thousands of people would be pressed

together on the surrounding streets, preparing to go through security as they walked toward the entrances down Avenue de la Porte d'Auteuil or Avenue Gordon Bennett. As folks waited in line to get checked, the chatter might have been something along these lines:

- Can Nadal win a 13th championship in Paris to raise his total of major trophies to 20 and equal Federer's record for men?

- Will Williams win a 24th Grand Slam title to equal Margaret Court?

- Will Djokovic claim an 18th major title to close in on Nadal and Federer?

- Can Ash Barty repeat her 2019 French Open triumph, which earned her her first major championship?

- Could Dominic Thiem, a runner-up to Nadal the past two years, finally win his first major?

But on this day, the long lanes leading to the stadium looked like any other tree-lined street in Paris. There were no stewards barking out instructions or beefy security guards checking bags. No panama-hat wearing volunteers guiding fans around or checking tickets.

Normally it would take 15 to 20 frustrating minutes to walk from the Porte d'Auteuil subway station to the main entrance. On Sunday, it took just six minutes.

There was plenty of time and space to admire the Jardin des Serres d'Auteuil, whose gardens stand opposite Roland Garros and have been there since 1898; the four white statues in front of the main gate look imperious under a cloudless sky.

Only handfuls of people walked down the avenue or rode bikes, some wearing protective masks.

One woman in a blue face covering stopped twice to take photos.

The first time, she photographed the roof. The second time, she walked around the corner and snapped a shot of the stadium entrance.

Tangled green foliage has draped itself over the main sign that says, "Federation Francaise de Tennis" - French tennis federation - with "Stade Roland Garros" written underneath in black letters.

Normally, that would not be visible with the amount of people around on Day 1 of the French Open.

AP

“

Every year it's Roland Garros time, it's a bit like tennis fever. I was looking forward to seeing quality tennis and having a day out again. There's a certain mood, an atmosphere," said 34-year-old Hector Snowman, who attended the tournament in 2019. "You see stars walking around there, it feels like a privilege to be there. Everyone's expecting a French player to do well and they have their favorites like (Roger) Federer."

Musings on sports

By Correspondent Lloyd Elipoke

THE mood of numberless sports aficionados globally has been understandably downcast - what with all of the grim and discouraging coronavirus-related news reports which we have been bombarded with quite literally day-in, day-out.

Indeed, the potentially devastating tentacles of this scourge have even extended to our neck of the woods where the COVID-19 pandemic has sadly claimed the lives of a few of my countrymen and countrywomen.

However, a few weeks ago, domestic football fans were beaming at the news that the top flight Mainland Premier League was scheduled to pick up from where it left off starting from June 1st, this year.

Naturally, the report concerning the Premier League's resumption has indisputably been an invaluable source of rare good cheer for all football devotees in the country, this writer included.

Having said all this, though, there is one weighty concern which has occurred to this writer about the resumption of the country's premier football league championship.

That concern is viz: why has there been little mention made about local women's football?

In fact, if one were to cast an eye over the wider African football landscape one would encounter the same worrying reticence on



African Lyon players participate in training in Dar es Salaam recently to shape up for the 2019/20 First Division League (FDL). PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

matters women's football from the Confederation of African Football (CAF), which is the governing body of continental football.

This is vexatious because some key steps have yet to be taken regarding the development of the women's game on the continent.

True, the fact that many countries on the continent have already established national women's football leagues is a monumental stride forward.

Despite that, though, some major deficiencies in continental women's football still unfortunately remain.

For instance, to date, CAF has grossly dilly-dallied in setting up a CAF Champions League for African women's club football and the governing body has also gigantically dragged its feet in setting up a CAF Confederations Cup for the women's game on the continent as well.

Thus, as the mood of football fans in this country and others on the

continent distinctly perks up over the planned resumption of various national men's football leagues, it is our hope that the state of African women's football will also be factored into the equation sooner rather than later.

Let us now pivot to the sport of Tanzanian chess, which is slowly but steadily burgeoning in popularity and prominence on our shores.

Recently, a Tanzanian chess player Albert Njau took part in the African Individual Free Online Chess Competition and he performed creditably well.

Indeed, bearing in mind that this was Njau's debut at the august event, he was nonetheless still able to win a whopping ten games!

Sadly though, Njau also lost five games, which was most likely a direct consequence of him being a greenhorn at the esteemed tournament and also because the bald truth of the matter is that Tanzania does not have a long tradition of playing chess.

In the big picture, however, it is this writer's assertion that Njau's debut at the grand chess contest should be viewed in only a positive light.

What's of the essence now is for domestic chess to receive more funding and greater levels of support so that in the future, our flag-bearers at such noteworthy chess tournaments will be able to put their best foot forward.

Woods-Manning prevail in star-studded match, raised \$20m for charity



Phil Mickelson, Tom Brady, Peyton Manning and Tiger Woods after their charity match. (Agencies)

MIAMI

TIGER Woods says while his surgically repaired back may never be 10-out-of-10 again, it won't stop him from being healthy and ready to go when the PGA Tour starts up again.

The 44-year-old Woods says he's been able to use the down time during the coronavirus pandemic to get himself in shape for an expected condensed fall golf season.

"It is going to be interesting," said Woods during a four-man charity golf tournament in Florida on Sunday. "I am used to trying to peak for majors in April, May, June and July, forever. Now this (COVID-19) has changed everything. It is fluid. It is on the fly."

Asked to rate how his back feels on a scale of one to 10, Woods said, "Well, let's just say 10 is not what it used to be."

PGA stars Woods and Phil Mickelson and two NFL quarterback legends Peyton Manning and Tom Brady squared off in an entertaining made-for-television charity golf event on

Sunday that raised \$20 million for coronavirus relief efforts.

The 18-hole match included nine holes of four-ball and nine holes of modified alternate shot, with on-course challenges for charitable funds.

Woods, who paired with Manning, showed no rust as they held off a back-nine rally from Mickelson and Brady for a one-up victory in the 18-hole match play format.

Sunday's event, called "The Match: Champions for Charity," was a rematch of sorts for Mickelson and Woods, who faced off in a similar charity event last year in Las Vegas. It also marked a return to the golf course for the both PGA stars due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PGA Tour is on hiatus until June 11, when the Charles Schwab Challenge at Colonial is scheduled to begin in Texas.

The charity match was the first competitive golf for Woods since the Genesis Invitational on February 16, where he shot weekend rounds of 76-77 to finish in 68th place at the Riviera Country Club course.

He said the forced break has been refreshing and described his health as surprisingly good considering he

has been taken out of his regular training regime.

"It is to nice be at home training each and every day," Woods said. "I get some treatment on it and get onto a routine basically."

"With this pandemic and everything that has happened, we (have) all been very careful and try to stay at home," he said.

Woods says he has enjoyed spending more time with his family and has added tennis to his workouts.

"It has been good in that regard because I have been able to spend a lot of time with my kids. We had a lot of fun. This is the most amount of tennis I have played ever."

The start of Sunday's match was delayed by rain that fell steadily throughout the majority of the round.

Woods helped offset the difficult playing conditions Sunday by taking advantage of competing on his home course, the Medalist Golf Club in Hobe Sound.

"I am just trying to hit it in the right spots. I kind of know this place," he told a television interviewer early in his round. The entertaining match featured plenty of friendly banter and trash talking going back and forth between four of North America's

biggest sport stars.

Brady, who recently signed with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers after winning six Super Bowl titles with the New England Patriots, made the shot of the day on the par-five seventh.

- Wardrobe malfunction - Brady had been struggling for much of the first round, but his approach on No. 7 landed just past the hole before spinning wildly to the right and rolling into the centre of the cup. "When the going gets tough, the tough get going," an obviously relieved Brady said of his first good shot of the day.

The shot was notable for another reason: it included a wardrobe malfunction. Brady also split his pants on the shot, resulting in a hasty costume change.

"There was so much torque on that swing," he joked.

The birdie also lightened the wallet of PGA golfer Brooks Koepka. When he saw Brady struggling early in the round, Koepka tweeted out a promise to donate \$100,000 to charity if Brady could make a par on the front nine.

"Brooks owes me a little money," Brady said following his surprise birdie.

AFP

Football clubs forced to rethink recruitment strategy as virus impacts transfer market

PARIS

AROUND Europe, football is waking up from the coronavirus shutdown, but it is different to before for players and supporters and it is changing behind the scenes too.

While the German Bundesliga returns in stadiums devoid of fans, the sport is preparing for an economic crisis which will impact all levels of the game.

That will be particularly visible in the transfer market, where it has become the norm to see leading clubs splash out 100 million-euro fees.

Damien Comolli has observed events from afar having left his role at Turkish club Fenerbahce in January.

The ex-Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur sporting director told AFP he foresees fees dropping by "between 30 and 50 percent compared to the usual prices, and a reduction of 70-75 percent in terms of activity."

In particular, the loss to clubs from matchday revenue as a result of games being played behind closed doors will impact budgets.

When it comes to signing players, those in charge of recruitment at clubs have also simply not been able to do their jobs.

Time to take stock - "The biggest part of my job is following up on targets for the next transfer windows," says Martyn Glover, head of scouting and recruitment at English Premier League side Southampton.

Scouts usually spend much of their time clocking up road and air miles to watch prospective signings in action.

"I would expect to be abroad every week at some point," says Glover, who previously worked at Everton.

"I might fly to Paris to watch PSG and then the next day to Germany to watch somebody else. My week would probably be three or four live games of football."

Robert McKenzie has a similar role at Belgian second-tier outfit Leuven, who in 2017 were taken over by King Power, the Thai owners of Leicester City.

Usually he would be on the road watching up to 20 games a month, eyeing up targets.

"The current situation obviously has significant implications for what has historically been the most important part of the process: the assessment of players in

live games," he tells AFP.

"I do often think to myself when will be the next time I'm actually sat in a football stadium watching a game? Who knows?"

However, he acknowledges that the shutdown has afforded him the luxury of time to take stock and assess options.

In contrast, Newcastle United made headlines when their head of recruitment, Steve Nickson, was placed on furlough along with the whole scouting department, stopping a crucial section of the club from functioning.

In any case, how can a Premier League club plan for the summer window without knowing if they will still be a top-flight club next season, or if this season will restart, with all the financial consequences?

"There are too many imponderables," says Glover.

"We are not a club who might spend 80 million on a player any way.

"I am sure there will be some opportunities that present themselves by the nature of what has happened, both at home and abroad, but the hardest part is the finances."

A different approach -

Glover admits the way his job is done could change forever. Comolli helped introduce data use and analytics into English football and believes that approach will become more widespread.

"Maybe more and more clubs will use data and statistics instead of live scouting and maybe clubs will also investigate more the player himself, their families, the way they live.

"If I had one chance to go and watch a player live or one chance to meet him and his family, I would take the opportunity to go and meet him."

He believes those clubs who already placed the emphasis on video scouting and data can emerge from the crisis with their teams unscathed.

Even clubs lower down may emerge stronger. That includes Leuven, although they must await the outcome of a play-off in August to see which division they will be in next season.

"I think there may be opportunities that arise for us as a club as a result of the current situation which were previously thought not possible," insists McKenzie.

AFP

Liverpool-Atletico match linked to '41 additional' virus deaths - report

LONDON

THE decision to let Liverpool's Champions League match against Atletico Madrid go ahead may have "led to 41 additional deaths" due to the coronavirus, the Sunday Times reported.

Jurgen Klopp's side faced the Spanish club in a second-leg last 16 tie at Anfield on March 11 in front of a crowd of some 52,000, with 3,000 visiting supporters in attendance.

The match was the last major football fixture played in England before the coronavirus lockdown.

According to the Sunday Times, Edge Health, which analyses data for Britain's National Health Service, estimated the match was "linked to 41 additional deaths" at nearby hospitals between 25 and 35 days later, compared with similar hospital trusts that were used as a control.

Imperial College London and Oxford University have estimated Spain had around 640,000 positive coronavirus cases at the time that the match went ahead compared to 100,000 in Britain at that stage.

March also saw jump horse racing's four-day Cheltenham Festival in southwest England go ahead as scheduled, with officials citing British government guidance that it was safe to proceed with major sporting events.

According to the Edge Health research estimates cited by the Sunday Times, that decision may have been linked to 37 additional deaths.

AFP

No home rule: Bayern out to show Dortmund who's boss

BERLIN

BAYERN Munich aim to continue the Bundesliga's current trend of teams winning on the road behind closed doors when they face Borussia Dortmund in a potential title decider today.

Leaders Bayern arrive at second-placed Dortmund four points clear and on course for an eighth straight title.

"For us this is a very decisive week," insisted Bayern forward Thomas Mueller.

"We've clearly set ourselves the goal of three victories this week and taking a giant step forward" towards the league title.

Bayern warmed-up by beating Eintracht Frankfurt 5-2 at the weekend and also host relegation-threatened Fortuna Duesseldorf this Saturday.

Since the Bundesliga resumed ten days ago, behind locked doors due to the coronavirus, home advantage has counted for little with 10 of the 18 games played won by the away team.

Bayern and Dortmund are among only three clubs - the other being Hertha Berlin who thrashed neighbours FC Union 4-0 on Friday - to have won at home since the restart.

Hansi Flick's Bayern are eager to continue the trend and again assert their dominance over Dortmund, who they routed 4-0 in Munich last November.

"We're looking forward to Tuesday - I hope that we can show what makes us strong and leave Dortmund's stadium with a smile," added Mueller.

Signal Iduna Park would normally be packed with 82,000 fans for a visit of Bayern, but the terraces will remain empty on Tuesday.

"It will still be a hard day's work," Mueller added. "We're marching, Dortmund is marching."

Dortmund winger Raphael Guerreiro is in form with three goals in his last two games and was on the scoresheet in Saturday's 2-0 win at Wolfsburg.

The Portugal star also netted twice in the 4-0 rout of arch rivals Schalke the previous weekend in the Ruhr derby.

Dortmund are waiting on the fitness of key defender Mats Hummels, who injured his Achilles' tendon at Wolfsburg.

In the Bayern camp, midfielder Thiago Alcantara



Bayern Munich midfielder Leon Goretzka (R) opened the scoring in Saturday's 5-2 win at home to Eintracht Frankfurt. (AFP Photo)

has a groin strain while centre-back Jerome Boateng picked up a leg knock on Saturday.

Having beaten Bayern 2-0 at home in the pre-season Super Cup match last August and 3-2 in the league in November 2018, Dortmund are eager to again send the Bavarians home disappointed.

"I hope we can get the next victory," said Dortmund's Swiss centre-back Manuel Akanji.

"Since I've been here, we've always lost to Bayern away, but won at home. I want to keep this series going."

Tuesday's showdown will also pit the league's top-scorer Robert Lewandowski, 31, who has scored 27 goals in 25 games for Bayern, against his former club.

For the hosts, Norwegian sensation Erling Braut Haaland, 19, has scored ten goals in as many league games since joining Dortmund in January from Salzburg.

Haaland and Lewandowski have exactly the same record - 41 goals from 35 games in all competitions this season.

England winger Jadon Sancho came off the bench to set up Achraf Hakimi for the second goal in Wolfsburg.

Dortmund coach Lucien Favre has hinted the 20-year-old could start against Bayern.

On Wednesday, third-placed RB Leipzig host Hertha Berlin in the day's key game.

Germany striker Timo Werner warmed up with a hat-trick in Sunday's 5-0 thumping of Mainz.

He had also scored a hat-trick in an 8-0 mauling of Mainz last November.

Fixtures Today

Borussia Dortmund v Bayern München (1630 GMT), Bayer Leverkusen v VfL Wolfsburg, Eintracht Frankfurt v Freiburg, Werder Bremen v Bor. Moenchengladbach (1830 GMT)

Tomorrow

RB Leipzig v Hertha Berlin (1630 GMT), Hoffenheim v Cologne, Fortuna Duesseldorf v Schalke 04, Augsburg v Paderborn, Union Berlin v Mainz 05 (1830 GMT)

AFP

Liverpool's scoring from corners underlines value of set pieces

LONDON

CORNER kicks can seem pointless, can't they? Over the past decade in Europe's top five leagues, about 3% of all corners have led to goals. If goals are so unlikely, why even try? If it's a choice between lumping the ball into the penalty area, with the faint hope that this is one of the three times out of 100 that your team miraculously converts, or playing it short and re-establishing your standard patterns of possession, then, well, it doesn't seem like much of a choice at all.

Jose Mourinho famously echoed the corner-kick skepticism after he arrived in England to manage Chelsea. As he said to Gianluca Vialli in "The Italian Job: A Journey to the Heart of Two Great Footballing Cultures" (co-written by ESPN's Gabriele Marcotti): "How many countries can you think of where a corner kick is treated with the same applause as a goal? One. It only ever happens in England."

But perhaps the British fans were on to something.

"People just assume that set pieces are a waste of time," said Stats Perform AI scientist Paul Power. "But we know from the research we've looked at that if you have a very good set-piece regime, that's basically the equivalent, in terms of goals, of spending £80 million on a striker." That echoes with what Ted Knutson, founder of the analytics consultancy Statsbomb, told ESPN last year: "Right now, the average team scores between 0.30 to 0.35 goals a game from set pieces. The best teams can bump this up to 0.75 to 0.80."

In 2018, Power co-wrote a paper featured at the Sloan Sport Sports Analytics Conference called "Mythbusting Set-Pieces in Soccer." One of the busted myths: teams are actually more likely to score from set pieces (1.8%) than from a normal open-play possession (1.1%).

"You're basically doubling your odds of scoring if you have taken a shot from a set piece," Power said. Plus, those aggregate numbers don't take into account that most teams still aren't putting much effort into scoring from corners.

"It can be improved upon," said Euan Dewar, an analyst with Statsbomb. "This is the problem that arises when people do studies on the effectiveness of set pieces. A lot of teams could be doing better, so using them as the basis for how useful set pieces could possibly be is going to lead you astray."

But that stat: 3% of corners lead to goals? The reality is that's on the low end of what top clubs are actually capable.

During the 2013-14 Premier League season, Power was consulting for Everton. Under Roberto Martinez, the club put together its best-ever top-flight season, finishing fifth on 72 points. Pretty good, but it could've been even better.

"There's this whole perception that scoring from set pieces is almost cheating," Power said. "You know, like it's not part of the beautiful game. [Former Everton manager] Roberto Martinez just didn't practice set pieces. He wanted to know everything about open play: synchronization between players, how to create



Liverpool led the top-five leagues in Europe in converting goals from corners and set pieces in 2018-19. (Agencies)

space through intricate movements. But if you looked at a set piece, there was no interest. This still kind of plagues soccer, from top to bottom."

That year, Everton finished seven points back of fourth-place Arsenal. They also took the second-most corners in the league, behind only league-winners Manchester City. However, Manuel Pellegrini's side also led the league in goals from corners (15), while the Toffees ended up in the middle of the pack with seven. The difference between elite execution and league-average neglect might have also been the difference between the Champions and the Europa League.

But what if a coach wanted to be, say, the anti-Roberto Martinez, searching for beauty among the pre-programmed routine? How would he go about it? Last year for Statsbomb, Dewar put together a brilliant modern taxonomy of the different types of effective set plays. Blind spots? Flick-ons?

Picks? Misdirections? Picks into a blind spot created by misdirection that lead to a goal from a flick-on? It's all in there.

"Inswingers would generally be preferred over outswingers due to their trajectory," Dewar said. "They're curving in toward goal and provide multiple points along said trajectory at which runners can get to the ball."

Power agrees. He found that teams have a 2.7% chance of scoring from in-swinging corners, compared to a 2.2% chance from out-swinging corners. While out-swingers actually lead to shots more often (20.9% compared to 18.6%), shots taken from inswingers are significantly more likely to lead to goals (10.8%, compared to 6.5) because they almost always occur closer to the goal frame, thanks to the direction of the ball in flight.

"Aiming for the near post is generally going to be better for the simple fact that far-post corners are in the air for longer

and thus give the defence more time to read and react," Dewar said. And that logic works even better if someone at the near post heads it across the goal.

"Teams who use flick-ons are more likely to score rather than just from a direct cross," Power said. "It causes that kind of perturbation, disrupting the structure." His research found that flick-ons lead to goals 4.8% of the time, compared to just 2% of the time for a shot directly from the corner. The modern master of these moments is everyone's favorite: Tony Pulis, with Power saying: "He was actually a magician at creating goals from set pieces."

While his Stoke City teams dominated from throw-ins, Pulis' West Brom sides made their hay whenever the ball crossed the touchline. Among every individual club season in Europe's top five leagues since 2008-09, the 2016-17 iteration of the Baggies are the only side to score on 10% of their corners. No one else has even broken 9%. Who knows if he'd do it - or if anyone would hire him - but the currently unemployed Pulis would make one hell of a set-piece coach for any club, whether it be Barcelona, Borussia Monchengladbach or Burnley.

Among current practitioners of the flick-on from corners, both Power and Dewar pointed to Liverpool, which is no surprise given that they led the top-five leagues in set-piece goals last season.

"In terms of the flick-on situations, Sadio Mane is the best at creating them," Power said, while also singling out a slightly less prominent side. "Leganes are actually one of the smallest teams in Spain, but they have some of the most elaborate set-piece routines that create the space for their players to get into."

(Agencies)

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

No home rule: Bayern out to show Dortmund who's boss

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19



Ruvu Shooting's information officer, Masau Bwire

Ruvu Shooting irked by new format for rest of VPL games

By Correspondent Adam Fungamwango

VODACOM Premier League's RuVU Shooting have expressed dissatisfaction over the new format for the rest of this season's top flight games, noting the approach will force the participating clubs to spend a lot of cash compared to the previous format.

In the new format for the rest of the top flight's games, which was presented by Minister for Information, Culture, Arts and Sports Harrison Mwakymbe, the sides will play all of their remaining games in Dar es Salaam.

The government reached the decision after President John Magufuli had officially granted the resumption of sporting activities, starting with soccer competitions.

The Premier League, First Division League (FDL), Second Division League (SDL) and Azam Sports Federation Cup are now free to restart on June 1.

The top flight duels will be held at the National Stadium, Uhuru Stadium and Azam Complex.

The Premier League's previous format had the squads playing home and away games.

Ruvu Shooting's information officer, Masau Bwire, disclosed they feel reinstating the previous format would hardly affect the domestic top flight sides, as far as participation expenses are concerned.

"It should be known I'm merely issuing advice, considering the government has already said the remaining games will be played in one center. The government nevertheless accepts advice," he stated.

"There is no one that can go against government directive."

"My advice is playing the rest of the fixture in one center will force sides to spend plenty of cash, as opposed to the previous format which had outfits taking part in home and away games."

"In Dar es Salaam, the cheapest hotel costs 40,000/- for a room. Each of the sides, made up of 30 players and officials, should meet the costs."

"The clubs should as well meet costs for food three times a day, I as well know there is no training ground that a side can use for free here."

"A side will have to spend 100,000/- to access a cheap training venue, it is indeed expensive."

Bwire noted his squad would have spent little cash if the top flight would have used the previous format for the rest of the games.

The government nevertheless has set aside funds to be used by the Premier League, First Division League (FDL), and Second Division League (SDL) clubs which will play the rest of their respective competitions' games.

Ruvu Shooting are holding the 11th spot in the top flight with 39 points, with 11 matches left.

Elgar eyes South Africa test captaincy

CAPE TOWN

DEAN Elgar would be willing to become South Africa's next test captain as speculation about who will replace Faf du Plessis gathers momentum.

Elgar (pictured), who turns 33 next month, put his hand up in an interview with Cricket South Africa (CSA), released on Monday, and joins Aiden Markram on the list of players who have expressed interest in the job.

Quinton de Kock was expected to take over from Du Plessis, having succeeded him as captain of South Africa's limited-overs teams, but CSA said it did not want to overburden the wicketkeeper-batsman and ruled him out of the test captaincy.

With CSA still trying to find a solution to playing their scheduled three-test series against the West Indies in July, the appointment of a captain has become more pressing.

"It's definitely not an easy journey being a test captain but I think leadership is something that comes extremely naturally to me," Elgar said.

"I've captained teams in the past, right up from school level to provincial level and at franchise level. I enjoyed it extremely and if I was asked to take on the captaincy it's definitely something I would think long and hard about because it would mean a lot to me." Du Plessis quit as captain after South Africa lost their home series to England at the start of the year.

Elgar twice deputised for Du Plessis as captain, losing the 2017 Lords test to England by 211 runs and overseeing a 107-run victory over Pakistan in early 2019.

REUTERS



Artists put their skills to show at a recent concert, which took place in Arusha.

New pop band out to transform Dar dance music

By Correspondent Marc Nkwame, Monduli

A new music ensemble, known as Wisdom Musica, has been formed in Arusha ready to revolutionize Tanzania's pop scene which, according to entertainment observers, has been lagging behind.

Based in Monduli District, Arusha, the Wisdom Musica members have chosen to steer away from the city lights and the ensemble is scheduled to be officially launched next June, depending with the decrease in the Covid-19 infections.

Speaking during a soft launch ceremony, the band's General Manager Cletus Wilbert, representing the band's Director Humphrey Nyuchi, described the band as being a 12-piece ensemble, made up of six vocalists and six instrumentalists.

The band's line-up includes guitarists Francis Kandidus Komba, Khalid Shaibu Muhumba, Awadh Marijan Selemani and John Charles 'Ngosha', drummers Elias Shaaban Shaster and Said Shaaban Lamba, singers Awadh Seif Mbulu and Simphorian Novatusy Mwambaluka.

Others in the band are singers,

Rama Peter Balala, Jarafi Idrisa Mbaruku, Maria Fidelis Msafiri, and the band's Manager, Selemani Shaibu Muhumba.

During the occasion to introduce the new band at Dhahabu Resort, veteran singer, Ali Choki, popularly known as 'the Horseman', was invited to offer advice and take part in some of the band's songs, including his own cover versions.

"The band is good and the members are promising, but it needs to be more disciplined and future focused, as they seem to be young," Choki.

He cautioned the band mem-

bers against indulging in consuming either alcohol or narcotic drugs.

During the inaugural show, Wisdom Musica was playing as support act to Les Mwenge Jazz from the Tanzania Military Academy of Monduli in the latter's regular performance.

Arusha has for years been lagging behind in musical performances.

The region's only portfolio in music scene is the defunct Kurugenzi Band, which staged shows in 1970s and 1980s, as well as the army band of Mwenge Jazz.

Flexibles by David Chikoko



“The clubs should as well meet costs for food three times a day, I as well know there is no training ground that a side can use for free here”

EATV TUESDAY
11:00 DADAZ LIVE
12:00 MPYA
12:30 Msosi Kitaani (r)
13:00 Wanawake Live (r)
13:30 Kali Za Wana
14:00 DK 10 za Maangamizi
14:30 Bball Kings Highlights (r)
15:00 Funuka
15:30 SPORTS (r)
16:30 #HASHTAG
17:00 S5ELEKT
17:55 Kurasa
18:00 eNewz
18:30 Music/Soap
19:00 EATV SAA 1
19:45 MJADALA
20:00 DADAZ (r)

TONIGHT @ 9:00

NIRVANA

Nirvana explores the hottest trends in fashion, beauty, art and lifestyle as well as interviews with notable people from the entertainment, art and fashion industries.

eastafrika 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