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TANZANIA

SATURDAY 18 APRIL, 2020

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## 'EAC airlines' idle passenger planes need to transport cargo'

By Marc Nkwame - Arusha

EXECUTIVES at the East African Business Council have advised the six East African Community partner states to convert passenger aircraft to be used for cargo-only operations and re-position air cargo flight crews due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Dr Peter Mathuki (pictured), Executive Director of the EABC, said in a dispatch that the EAC need to adopt and direct the implementation of International Air Transport Association (IATA) operational guidelines for ground handling during the



The six EAC partner states also need to provide subsidies for the aviation industry in terms of direct financial support, loan guarantees, corporate bonds and tax relief, he stated

ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

"The current COVID-19 crisis on air cargo operations requires extraordinary measures to address the challenges in the region. Like the European Union this demands greater cooperation between East African airlines and the international aviation community, including air cargo and express service providers to ensure the supply and fair distribution of scarce and essential goods," the council executive remarked.

He also advised that the EAC bloc should promote the consolidation of air freight and cooperation between EAC airlines and allow for flexibility in scheduling, as well as coordination and equitable share for EAC airlines for both south and northbound freight.

The EABC also recommended the reduction of airlines' operating costs, in that the EAC partner states should waive

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COVID-19 COMBAT-READY: A Muhimbili National Hospital nursing officer (R) pictured yesterday dressed in a sample of newly approved coveralls tailored at the Dar es Salaam-based referral hospital using locally available materials. It is all part of an initiative meant to ease the shortage of personal protective equipment for medical experts at the Covid-19 frontline more affordably. Official sources said the one-piece garments are worth 30,000/- each, while the corresponding price for those of the World Health Organisation official variety (L) is 350,000/-. Photo: Courtesy of MNH

# Coronavirus cases rise to 148, total of deaths now 5

By Guardian Reporter

CASES of Covid-19 reached 148 in the country yesterday with 53 new ones confirmed in the Mainland and 11 in Zanzibar.

Ummu Mwalimu, the minister for Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children said in Dar es Salaam yesterday that one more patient died, bringing to five those who have died after Covid-19 infection.

"Of the new cases, 38 have been confirmed in Dar es Salaam while Mwanza, Kilimanjaro, Coast, Lindi

and Kagera regions registered one case each," she said.

This means Lindi and Coast regions have registered their first cases while Kagera and Mwanza registered second Covid-19 cases.

She said 11 of the patients had recovered and were discharged from treatment centres.

On the other hand, Zanzibar Health Minister Hamad Rashid Muhammad said 11 new cases had been confirmed in the Isles, bringing the toll there to 35 and one fatality.

Mwalimu yesterday launched guidelines for community health workers meant to expand access to preventive health services.

The guidelines allow the use of community health workers to spread key health information at the grassroots level with a view to enhancing preventive health rather than wait for curative measures.

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Mwalimu yesterday launched guidelines for community health workers meant to expand access to preventive health services.

## I am fully aware of beating of patrons in Dar bars - DC

By Henry Mwangonde

KINONDONI district commissioner Daniel Chongolo yesterday acknowledged that he was aware of an operation in which police officers stormed several bars and beat patrons on Thursday night.

Speaking to this paper, Chongolo said those who were beaten were found drinking in large groups 'senselessly,' contrary to the social distancing guidelines issued by the



They were beaten because they were risking their own lives and those of others

government to counter the Covid-19 pandemic.

"They were beaten because

they were risking their own lives and those of others," the DC explained.

The explanation came after social media platforms were yesterday morning abuzz with video clips showing police storming bars and beating patrons in Kinondoni and Sinza suburbs which are hotpots of night life in Dar es Salaam City. Chongolo said authorities in Kinondoni District will

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## Church now icing choir, group religious lessons

By Guardian Reporter

MEASURES are being taken by the Catholic Church, including suspending choir during services and religious education programmes for children and adult groups, to help curb the spread of Covid-19.

The Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) said in a



Rev Dr Charles Kitima

statement yesterday that practicing sessions of choir groups during weekdays to prepare for Sunday services have been called off.

Choirs enliven congregation songs and serve as a small-group within the church for faith formation, to sing beautiful and

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### SHARE FACTS ABOUT COVID-19

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

**FACT 1** Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity. Fear and anxiety about COVID-19 can cause people to avoid or reject others even though they are not at risk for spreading the virus.

**FACT 2** For most people, the immediate risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low. Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19.

**FACT 3** Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people. For up-to-date information, visit CDC's coronavirus disease 2019 web page.



**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



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## Coronavirus cases reach 148, as five deaths confirmed

FROM PAGE 1

"The government understands that communities with the right information about what can improve or weaken their health make the right decisions on issues pertaining to health," she said.

Community health workers will sensitize people on what the government is doing to realize Universal Health Coverage, nutrition, sexual reproductive health, child and adolescent health, non-communicable diseases as well as infectious diseases including Covid-19 now ravaging the world, she said.

As of yesterday, globally confirmed coronavirus cases surpassed 2.2m with over 147,000 deaths and more than 558,000 recoveries.

The total number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Spain rose to 188,068 as the daily death toll shot up from 551 on Thursday to 585.

Only the US and Italy had had more confirmed fatalities than Spain, which has recorded 19,478 deaths in total. Spain has the second highest number of confirmed cases in the world, behind the US.

US President Donald Trump gave state govern-

nors guidance on reopening state economies in the coming months. The guidelines for "Opening Up America Again" outline three phases for states to gradually ease current lockdowns.

Trump promised governors they would be handling the process themselves, with help from the federal government. There was a mixed reception to the plans, with a leading Democrat calling them vague and inconsistent.

The US had 654,301 confirmed cases and 32,186 deaths due to the virus, and Trump had suggested some states could reopen this month.

Spanish health authorities had identified 5,252 new cases of the virus - which represents an increase of 2.9 per cent.

The update comes a day after figures from regional officials suggested the true national death toll could be much higher than routinely reported.

On Thursday, Spain's Catalonia region almost doubled its regional tally as it changed its methodology to also include deaths in nursing homes and private homes for the first time.

## I am fully aware of beating of patrons in Dar bars - DC

FROM PAGE 1

continue patrolling and taking measures against those ignoring directives issued by the government as preventive measures against the pandemic.

He said that the patrol and beating of those flaunting guidelines is continuous, as efforts to fight the coronavirus are for the benefit of all "and that is why he personally presided over the Thursday night exercise."

Officially, the government has not banned businesses such as bars or gatherings in places of worship but has advised that leaders of such establishments discourage large gatherings.

Chongolo said the officers he led in the operation did not intervene with joints where patrons sat apart from each other but targeted those that were packed with drinkers recklessly sitting in large

groups while guzzling booze.

President John Magufuli has declared three days of prayer beginning yesterday amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Dr Magufuli wrote on his twitter handle on Thursday evening as the country recorded six new Covid-19 cases, taking the total number to 94 with 11 recoveries and four deaths.

In his Twitter post, he urged Tanzanians to turn to their respective religions in a bid to stop the spread of the disease.

"Fellow Tanzanians, following the coronavirus pandemic, I urge you to use three days from April 17-19 (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) to pray to the Almighty Lord who has power over all things to save us from this disease. Let us all pray, each in his or her faith, the Lord will listen."



Kilolo district commissioner Asia Abdallah (with mask) joins other Muslim faithful in prayers for divine intervention in the war on the Covid-19 pandemic. The solemn event was held at Ilula grounds yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Francis Godwin.

## 'EAC airlines' idle passenger planes need to shift to cargo'

FROM PAGE 1

landing fees, excise duty on aviation fuel, navigation, landing, parking, import duties and value added taxes during the COVID crisis, so as

encourage imports by air.

The six EAC Partner States also need to provide subsidies for the aviation industry in terms of direct financial support, loan guarantees, corporate bonds

and tax relief, he stated.

Once those measures have been exercised there will be an increase in intra-regional air transport and traffic frequencies projected at 41

percent, the reduction of flight time, speedier delivery of goods and a decrease in air transport costs especially for cargo, he said.

Such moves would create an

additional 46,320 local jobs and ensure a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) gain of more than US\$ 202.1m yearly in the EAC member states, he added.



Residents of Dar es Salaam's Kivule kwa John Fedha suburb wade through floodwaters, as rain pounded the city most of yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

## Africa CDC to roll out one million kits for coronavirus disease testing

ADDIS ABABA

THE Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) yesterday announced that it will roll out one million coronavirus testing kits to meet the continent's "big gap".

The organisation's director John Nkengasong says testing rates on the continent are low.

He said the Africa Union (AU) will distribute the testing kits from next

week to support countries' ability to test.

Dr Nkengasong singled out the continent's most populous nations for low testing levels - Nigeria with more than 200 million people has done 6,000 tests, while Ethiopia with more than 100 million people has tested 5,000.

"Over the next three months or six months, we probably need like 15 million tests, however, a journey of 1,000 miles

starts with the first mile," he said.

So far more than 17,700 cases of infection have been confirmed in 52 countries. Some 915 people have died and more than 3,500 people have recovered from the disease. Amnesty International has warned that millions of people living under lockdown in African countries are facing hunger.

The organisation's director for East and

Southern Africa, Deprose Muchena, has said the majority have no financial means to stockpile food because they live hand-to-mouth, and warned that without support the lockdown could become a matter of life and death.

Dozens of countries on the continent have imposed various levels of restrictions on movement in a bid to slow the spread of Covid-19. As the daily number of new

infections appears to be falling in parts of the world, some fear the epicentre of the virus could move to the continent.

Despite efforts to lock down cities and countries, despite donations of protective equipment, testing kits and ventilators from China, one thing is clear: Africa has not yet flattened the curve and the room for manoeuvre is getting smaller.

## Church now icing choir, group religious lessons

FROM PAGE 1

challenging hymns to edify mass and the congregation, the statement noted.

Rev Dr. Charles Kitima as the Secretary General of TEC, said in the statement that essential religious education sessions will continue through distant and online programmes that will be arranged by respective dioceses.

Apart from choir and religious education for children, other affected programs include Christian initiation for adults. It prepares non-baptized adults or older children to receive the sacraments

of initiation and become full-fledged members of the community and also applied in marriage preparation sessions.

The measures similarly require members of the clergy leading prayer services to shorten them as much as possible.

"We call upon the clergy to ensure that the sitting arrangement during services adheres to social distancing and microphones be used carefully," Rev. Dr Kitima intoned.

The church also directed that its lay members offering services such as prayer to the

sick and funeral mass must wear protective gear as recommended by health experts.

Catechists who come close to the faithful for spiritual services must also be fully educated about Covid-19 and provided with appropriate personal protective equipment, the church head offices directed.

"Items used at mass must be disinfected and the faithful must wash their hands before entering church hall," the statement underlined.

The move comes as number of coronavirus cases hit 94 on Thursday

## Needy, health workers to benefit from coronavirus budget as cases reach 246

NAIROBI

THE Kenyan National Treasury has set aside KSh2.66 billion for the Ministry of Health coronavirus response for the next two months – as tough budget cuts sliced expenses in virtually all sectors.

In a bid to address the coronavirus pandemic, Treasury also increased the recurrent expenditure – salaries and operations – for Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital by Sh635 million, while Kemri gets an extra Sh142 million.

The government has also released an additional KSh8.5 billion to the elderly and poor under the cash transfer programmes run by the Labour ministry.

The additional KSh500mil-

lion, which was in arrears, has also been released to people with disabilities. “These monies will be devoted specifically to cushion the most vulnerable and to protect our healthcare workers,” President Uhuru Kenyatta said Thursday.

This comes as the government is struggling to balance the budget, in an economy disrupted by the Covid-19 crisis.

The president revealed that the government had identified needy households in Nairobi who will receive the weekly Covid-19 stipend.

This came as the number of confirmed coronavirus rose by 12 yesterday, bringing the number of positive cases in the country to 246 by this morning.



Judge (retired) Stella Longway (R), a commissioner with the National Electoral Commission, gets a feel of progress in the ongoing updating of the permanent voters' register at Longuo B in Moshi municipality yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Allan Isack

## 'State realised 15.63bn/- from economic sabotage offences'

By Getrude Mbago, Dodoma

THE government has collected a total of 15.63bn/- in fines from suspects of economic sabotage related cases through a newly introduced plea-bargaining system, the House heard yesterday.

Minister for Constitution and Legal Affairs ambassador Augustine Mahiga said in the National Assembly while tabling the ministry's budget estimates for the

2020/21 fiscal year.

According to him, the funds were collected from 381 suspects who pleaded guilty and requested to be pardoned.

The minister informed that the government confiscated and nationalized a total of 389kg of gold and other minerals worth 42.27bn/- where by 32.29bn/- was for gold alone. These were nationalized through various cases brought in courts.

Other minerals included Tanzanite, Amethyst, Rhodolite, diamonds, Blue Sapphire, Grossularite, Tsavorite, Green Garnet, Spessartite, Citrine, Grossular, Supphire, Spinel, Ruby, Tourmaline and Acumarine.

Mahiga also said for the 2019/20 fiscal year, the government confiscated and nationalized properties worth 5.55bn/- which include wood, cars and fuel from the suspects who were

found guilty by the court.

The minister also said that during the year, the ministry received a total of two requests to deport back to the country criminal suspects from various countries.

He said that the suspects are those involved in illicit drug business, robbery and cyber-crimes among other things.

He further said that the government through the Registra-

tion Insolvency and Trusteeship Agency (RITA) had from July 2019 to March 2020 registered a total of 1,247,640 births, 16,056 deaths, 31,084 marriages as well as 181 divorces.

He noted that births and deaths registration was vital as it helps the government know the exact number of births and plan well its development plans and service provision.

The minister later asked for the

parliament to pass the ministry's budget estimates of 250.1bn/- of which, 176.44bn/- is for the Judiciary Fund and 73.68bn/- for the ministry's expenditure.

Reading the Constitution and Legal Affairs Committee report, Vice Chairperson Najma Giga said that judges should continue conduct regular visits to various prisons to witness actual situation so as to take further measures. “Apart from various achievement which

the ministry has recovered, the committee advises the office of the Attorney General to strengthen system, increase human resource so as to address various legal challenges facing the public,” she said.

The committee also urged the government to continue improving the county's judiciary department by constructing more court buildings so as to enable it bring legal services closer to people.

## Ministry: Vehicle tracking systems reducing accidents

By Getrude Mbago

THE installation of Vehicle Tracking System (VTS) into upcountry buses has led to reduction of road accidents caused by human errors, especially speeding by more than three quarters, the House heard yesterday.

The Home Affairs ministry said this when responding to a question posed by a Special Seats legislator Rehema Migilla who wanted to know how the VTS system project has helped to reduce accidents in the country.

In a written response, the ministry said that statistics show that road accidents caused by speeding upcountry passenger buses went down to 231 in 2019 from 730 accidents recorded in 2016 before the vehicles were fitted with the control devices.

This is a decrease of more than three quarters, with the ministry saying that drivers appear to be more careful on the road when their vehicles aren't fitted with VTS than otherwise.

It further noted that statistics indicated that in 2017, accidents caused by speeding vehicles were 509 and in 2018 the accidents went down to 364 when most vehicles were already installed with VTS.

According to the ministry, by installing the Vehicle Tracking System (VTS) traffic police and owners of the vehicles are able to identify the location of the vehicles and their speed across the country.

The ministry stated that all upcountry buses have already been fitted with electronic car tracking system in an initiative expected not only the avoidable accidents but also the operational costs including the number of traffic police officers needed to man highways to enforce speed limit rules.

The VTS provides alerts on violation of various road laws imposed include speed, violations, off or wrong route as well as harsh turning and dangerous breaking that can cause accident.. It is also able to identify the driver, record and report accidents.

“If the vehicle is moving at a high speed, you will be informed and you can warn the authorities to control it to avoid accidents,” reads part of the ministry's response.

The system is also able to monitor and give alerts if there is any technical defect in the vehicle which alerts authorities and owners to intervene with repair to avoid possible accident.

Vehicle tracking systems are sets of hardware and software bundles that track vehicles, record the driving habits of those behind the steering wheels and issue status reports and alerts when incidents or other events occur.



Bashuru Hussein, chairman of the Dodoma Urban District branch of the Muslim Council of Tanzania (Bakwata), addresses sheikhs, imams and 'madrassa' teachers yesterday on ways to steer clear of Covid-19 infections. Photo: Correspondent Peter Mkwavila

## We need to address environmental degradation, says minister Zungu

DESPITE strides taken by the government and stakeholders to protect the country's environment, massive destruction had continued to be recorded in various parts something which needs more serious and comprehensive measures to address.

The minister of State in Vice President's Office (Union Affairs and Environment), Mussa Hassan Zungu said in the National Assembly on Thursday when he presented his office's budget estimates for the 2020/21 fiscal year.

According to him, the State of Environment in Tanzania report of 2019 had raised some concerns there are still a number of challenges facing the country's atmosphere, which include increased human activities which lead to degradation of land and water resources, massive deforestation, and biodiversity loss.

He cited poor environment knowledge among the public as one of the major chal-

lenges something which sustains various in activities which in-turn have great impact to the environment.

To address the challenges, Zungu said that the government will continue to strengthening institutions for improved environmental management.

“We continue embarking on inter-sectoral and institutions initiatives to ensure that we educate the public that most of the adverse effects that we are experiencing today are a result of our own activities, this is very crucial area,” he said.

In the area of pollution, the minister acknowledged that there are some standard electric wires, gas pipes and motor vehicles which contributes highly to the destruction of air and environment.

He said that the wave of massive pollution is also apparent on water sources and catchment areas with most parts started to experience the impacts.

“We are working to come up with various strategies to fight any kind of environment degradation. We have a number of agreements and projects with our stakeholders going on across the country especially in the area of pollution, sea, river and management

He also said that the government is currently advocating for alternative energy such as gas instead of charcoal both in rural and urban areas to reduce deforestation.

“We have also continued to mobilise the public on tree planting whereby in a total of 209 million trees have been planted countrywide since the campaign was inaugurated few years ago,” he said.

On issues related to union affairs, he said the ministry has continued to strengthen union and various initiatives to cater interest of all parties of Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar.

Zungu added that the ministry has con-

tinued to facilitate residents from all parts of the union to take part in economic, social and development projects within and outside the country.

The minister further requested the Parliament to review and approve the ministry's budget proposal standing at 27.99bn/- aimed to implement various initiatives in the 2020/21 financial year for the country's development.

Reading the Constitution and Legal Affairs Committee report, vice chairperson Najma Giga commended the government for timely disbursement of funds in the Vice President's office.

The committee also commended the government its efforts in resolving various union matters such as in the area of tax and levies something which would stimulate economic development.



**If the vehicle is moving at a high speed, you will be informed and you can warn the authorities to control it to avoid accidents**



Arusha regional commissioner Mrisho Gambo (L) pictured in Arusha city on Thursday receiving from Tanelec Ltd acting manager Michael Mangowi various items to help in the war on Covid-19. Various stakeholders contributed buckets, sanitisers and cash to the cause. Photo: Correspondent Asraji Mvungi

## Morogoro clerics support call to arrest coronavirus

By Guardian Correspondent, Morogoro

RELIGIOUS leaders in Morogoro region have supported President John Magufuli's call for Tanzanians to conduct three days national prayers to salvage the nation from the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The clerics were concerned that prayers are likely to save Tanzanians from the outbreak which might have been caused by increased immoralities.

On Thursday, through his Twitter handle, President Magufuli wrote: "Fellow Tanzanians let us engage in a three-day national prayer (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) so that our Almighty Lord saves us from the spreading pandemic".

Speaking to the Guardian, Bishop Jacob Mameo of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT) Morogoro diocese, said: "It is important to turn to prayers whenever facing a calamity, let us pray for the Almighty God to save us from the disease which has so far killed many people worldwide."

Bishop Mameo added: "God might be annoyed by our sins, this is the lesson that we should all learn and change our behaviours. President Magufuli was right that through prayers we are going to win this war".

He said Tanzanians have the best President since there are some leaders who cannot even remind people to pray. He said by

directing citizens to engage in a three-day national prayer, President Magufuli has demonstrated to be more considerate to the problems that citizens across the country face.

He also called upon Tanzanians to adhere to COVID-19 preventive measures which include avoiding unnecessary gatherings as well as washing hands with soap and running water. He noted that the country can succeed to control spreading of the disease if Tanzanians follow preventive guidelines issued by health experts.

Bishop Godfrey Seheba of the Anglican Church in Morogoro region has directed all the priests to lead people in fasting and prayers as a powerful tool against COVID-19.

"Anglican Church Priests in Morogoro should lead people in prayers for three days, fasting and prayers are powerful enough to save us from the pandemic", said Bishop Seheba noting what President Magufuli has done was also done by prophets in the Holy Bible.

"If you read the holy Bible, you will discover that most people were saved from their sins through fasting and prayers", he added.

A resident, Charles Pangapanga commended President Magufuli saying through prayers Tanzanians will unite and join efforts to contain the pandemic.

## Mo Ibrahim Foundation welcomes Covid-19 call for action

By Guardian Reporter

THE Mo Ibrahim Foundation has endorsed the 'call for action' from African and European leaders for strong collective leadership to tackle the multiple, interconnected and cumulative pandemic.

In their call, published in the Financial Times, the leaders were of the views that

only a global victory that fully includes Africa can bring the pandemic to an end.

In a statement, the foundation stated: "We must indeed address, together and at the same time, and the sooner the better, the need to strengthen Africa's emergency health response capacity; share scientific knowledge and expertise to ensure the relevant humanitar-

ian supply for the most affected communities - namely food security - lest people die from hunger before COVID-19; and the need to deploy a 'massive economic stimulus package' - beginning with immediate debt relief".

"The COVID-19 pandemic is a global crisis, the first of its kind in our contemporary world at this level, depth and width. It

makes no distinction of race or country, and knows of no borders. It will only be solved with collective and coordinated efforts. This is a matter of shared interest", the statement reads.

Africa is facing a severe challenge. In most countries, it will prove difficult at best to implement the measures adopted by more developed countries, such as social distancing, pub-

lic health campaigns, and generous financial support offered to people and business.

Many economies, whether mostly driven by commodity exports or sustained by high debt levels, will be highly disrupted.

For most of the continent and its people, the economic crisis will hit hard and long. This will destroy recent progress, and

worsen already existing fragilities, with all its consequences.

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation also welcomed the recent appointment by the African Union of the four COVID-19 Special Envoys, Donald Kaberuka, Trevor Manuel, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and Tidjane Thiam. These great African brothers and sisters are close friends of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, with Donald

Kaberuka one of MIF's Board members, and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala a member of MIF's inaugural Prize Committee.

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation was established in 2006 with a focus on the critical importance of political leadership and public governance in Africa.

The foundation aims to promote meaningful change on the continent.

## COVID-19 offers the chance for a reset in how African will move into the future

By Bobi Wine and Greg Mills

AMONG other things in Africa, it could lead to significant setbacks in the fight against poverty as developed countries turn inwards. The nature of aid as we know it may change. This is a concern, but more so an opportunity. This reset does not have to be a bad thing if African countries learn to own their problems and be their solutions.

The harsh treatment of African nationals in China, where the pandemic began, illustrates the extent to which the continent's wellbeing lies in its own hands. Africa should not be dependent on the generosity of others, making it vulnerable to changes of circumstance or whim.

As African leaders scour world capitals looking for funding to arrest the effects of the coronavirus, we should be reminded of the limits of aid.

Africa receives more than \$60 billion every year in aid. Much of this is not spent on Africans themselves, of course, but on services from donors, such as Western management consultants. Around one-fifth of total bilateral aid in 2012, for example, went back to donor countries or took the form of debt relief.

Much aid, too, is wasted by going to regimes that lack the governance or policies to further development. Rather than using it for the benefit of their populations, this much-needed funding is used instead to shore up political power.

Aid today is also increasingly being spent on "soft power" initiatives. These focus on culture and values rather than military strength or financial transfers, and allow donors to co-opt rather than coerce their partners. The UK uses the British Council to promote its values; Germany, the Goethe Institute; France, the Alliance Française; China, Confucius Institutes; and Russia, the Russkiy Mir Foundation.

Soft power is also why Africa has been the site of so many leadership visits and summits in recent years. China regularly stages its Forum for China-Africa Co-operation; Russia launched its version in Sochi last year; while the UK, France and US have their own similar summits.

There are now various indices assessing the relative soft-power rankings of states. These are fraught with contradiction, however, since those professing to spread their values regularly fund oppressors, variously claiming (as China does) non-interference in sovereign matters or (as the US does with its support for Uganda's military) overarching strategic interests.

Coronavirus has laid bare the cost of this aid strategy for Africa. Large-scale funding has historically worked in promoting development, but only when employed in an environment defined by good governance and local ownership. And yet governance is not a donor priority.

Only 6.5% of Western aid to Africa is spent on the promotion of democracy, even though studies show clearly that the more democratic a country is, the better it can further development.

Instead, donor funding helps to keep many African leaders in power with little, if any, accountability. Incompetent and self-interested leaders are essentially let off the hook as outside powers scramble for influence with Africa's big men.

In much of Asia, countries took ownership of their own development, setting priorities and leading donors. In Africa, we are led by our donors. As a result, many externally-funded roads, railways and ports - especially in the case of China - are motivated by vanity or opportunities for individual profit rather than their benefits for citizens.



Preparations for the construction of Seka Secondary School under way in Nyamrandirira ward in Musoma Rural constituency earlier this week, with both the government and residents of the area contributing to the implementation of the project. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

By Mohamed Ugasa, Rufiji

LIFE has never been the same in western Rufiji as a result of impassable road network for over two months now.

The overwhelming flood that has never been recorded in the past 60 years has left the entire southern bank of Rufiji River submerged.

Besides hardest-hit villagers located in low lands of the river delta in Eastern Rufiji, those in the west side suffer effects of geographical isolation.

Bridges and parts of the roads have been completely submerged by water resulting in road transport hardships.

Prices of commodities particularly food, services and other commodities continue to escalate at an exponential increasing function. A kilogram of sugar is sold at 3,500/-

## 'Rufiji road network in disarray'

while a litre of gasoline stands at 3,000/-.

Most of the villagers who used to cultivate rice, maize and other vegetables on the fertile-rich soil basin of the southern bank of River Rufiji have been left in deep agony with hope dashed.

The villagers rely on good Samaritan and family members living outside Rufiji for daily food assistance.

However, majorities are in trouble and have no stage to voice their sufferings. Member of Parliament for Rufiji Mohamed Mchengelwa visited this part of his constituency last month but never took trouble to meet ordinary villagers to hear what they say. However his appeal in the Parliament has been hailed by many.

Absence of tourists and ordinary

visitors as a result of poor road infrastructure and outbreak of Corona pandemic has placed members of small business enterprises (food vendors and others) economically pathetic.

Juma Mkumba who has been spending most of his life in the fertile basin of Rufiji River's southern bank says his future is bleak. "Nitaifanya nini hapa kijijini (what can I do here). The northern bank of Rufiji River of the Western part of Rufiji District is safe from floods and cultivation of short-term plantations such as peas, cassava are threatened by invasion of notorious animals that include monkeys and baboons during the day as elephants and wild pigs keep on prawl during the night.

Western Rufiji villagers that have

been highly affected by poor road network and floods include Kipugila, Nyaminywili, Mtanza, Msona, Mibuyu Saba, Mwaseni and Mloka which is the worst hit.

There is no straight road network connecting Mloka to Dar es Salaam via Kibiti as it used to be before floods took charge.

Trucks supplying materials for the Stiegler's Gorge Hydropower Electric dam project crosses the Kipugila water-covered stretch the hard way and its traffic has slowed down.

Fuel prices of white petroleum products such as Gasoline and Kerosene have shot up to TShs 3,000 and Tshs 4,000, respectively. The situation is expected to worsen if torrential rains persist and river tide will

not recede in the next one month or so.

Normal life is expected to come into being after three to four-month stint. Tide of the River Rufiji has increased by several meters higher above its ordinary level that fluctuates between two and two and half meters according to the gauge at Mloka.

However, the tide of the river has been receding in recent weeks though there is no guarantee to deepen.

The magnitude of this year's floods is believed to be reminiscent of that happened in 1962 when former President of the United States John F. Kennedy released helicopters to ferry people into safety and donated humanitarian assistance including food, clothes and tents. Other floods that followed thereafter were in 1964, 1968 and 1974.



Shinyanga regional commissioner Zainab Telack (L) receives an assortment of equipment and supplies in Kahama yesterday from Dr Antoinette George, Barrick Buzwagi Goldmine's head of health and safety, in support of efforts to keep Covid-19 infections in check. Photo: Correspondent Marco Maduhu

## Police in Kigoma report having gunned down suspected bandits

By Guardian Correspondent, Kigoma

SEVEN people suspected to be bandits have been killed at Kumwambu village, Kibondo District in Kigoma Region, police have said.

Four of them were killed during a fire exchange with suspects that lasted for 25 minutes.

The suspected robbers according to Kigoma Regional Police Commander, Martin Ortieno, had had plans to invade offices of a construction firm, Sino hydro engineering construction.

Addressing journalists yesterday, the RPC said police were tipped off by Good Samaritans on the presence of a gang planning to invade the firm's offices located at Kimwambu village. He said incident occurred on April 16, 2020 at around 11pm.

"Four of them were killed during a gun-fire exchange with suspects that lasted for 25 minutes. Following the tip off from citizens, police camped near Sino hydro engineering construction offices before they fulfilled their mission", he stated adding that three other robbers died as were rushed to Kibondo district hospital.

He said police are searching for other five suspected robbers who disappeared to unknown destinations.

During the operation, police seized a gun, 89 bullets and hats, he said.

RPC Ortieno warned Kigoma residents from engaging on crimes insisting stringent legal measures will be taken against them. He said the force is determined to ensure security of the residents and their properties.

"We are determined to ensure peace and security in our region, we will not hesitate to take measures against anyone threatening the lives of our people as well as investors", said the RPC.

According to him, Kigoma region has recorded a number of crimes whereas most suspected bandits are said to come from neighbouring countries.



**Four of them were killed during a gun-fire exchange with suspects that lasted for 25 minutes. Following the tip off from citizens, police camped near Sino hydro engineering construction offices before they fulfilled their mission**

# Racism, misinformation, inclusion: How to ethically cover Covid-19

**THREE editors on the front-line of covering the COVID-19 pandemic join Fergus Bell, CEO of fathom, in a WAN-IFRA webinar to share insights into how to improve the quality of coverage and distance journalism from the sea of misinformation:**

By Neha Gupta and Simone Flueckiger

OPERATING a remote newsroom, with all journalists focused on a single story, is an unprecedented occurrence. In a wide-ranging discussion, editors from Spain, South Africa and the UK recently shared how they are going about their jobs.

They gave top takeaways on how to produce useful, accurate journalism and more considered responses around the audience, racist and nationalistic framing, debunking misinformation and the integrity of COVID-19 data.

**María Ramírez, Director of Strategy at El Diario, Spain:** Listen to your audience and tell them what they need to know. It is rewarding for journalists to be present for their consumers; our jobs have never made sense like they do now.

**Mia Malan, Founding Editor and Director of The Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism, South Africa:** Do fewer stories and do meaningful stories with context. There is so much information and it is just not all useful. Do something that makes data meaningful or gives the data a human face.

**Anna Johnson, The Associated Press' News Director for Europe and Africa:** The COVID-19 pandemic affects human fate, and we must ensure that the news is accurate and transparent.

El Diario's coronavirus coverage is focused on documenting the difficulties Spain's health system is experiencing due to the huge number of incoming COVID-19 cases. The company has started a daily newsletter on coronavirus, and is answering readers' questions about the outbreak.

In South Africa, Malan noted how the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has made it easier for public service journalists to operate compared to other health crises.

"With our HIV epidemic, the government's response was at first essentially based on quack science, and journalists who opposed the president's views were considered the enemy of the people," Malan said.

However, the government's response to COVID-19 is grounded in science, and the media are seen as an ally, she said.

For the Associated Press' Anna Johnson, covering what's happening behind closed doors - inside hospitals, nursing homes, and people's own homes - is one of the biggest challenges.

**Fergus Bell: How are you ensuring that coverage reflects all of the people that are affected by this, and not just the people that are shouting loudest?**

**Mia Malan:** In South Africa, COVID-19 happened almost the wrong way around. Normally, it would be the poorer people who fall ill because they're more vulnerable to disease. But with COVID-19, it was brought in by wealthier people who could travel, and it was seen as a middle class disease, initially. There is a huge discussion going on about making poorer people real-

ise that they are really vulnerable to the pandemic.

The kind of reporting that we have done to have their voices heard is to highlight, for example, communities' townships that can't prevent themselves from being infected because they don't have access to running water, or can't maintain social distancing because many people live in a very small space.

As the outbreak progresses, we will increasingly hear the voices of vulnerable people as it transforms from a middle class epidemic into a poorer epidemic.

South Africa also has very high HIV and TB infection rates. The fate of the vulnerable people is unknown, largely owing to lack of data from first world countries.

**María Ramírez:** Historically, covering vulnerable people has been the focus of El Diario. Currently, our reporters who are out in the field are also focusing their reportage on how the pandemic is affecting the homeless, people drawing low incomes, those from rural Spanish communities, and people who don't have access to the internet and hence aren't well informed.

**Anna Johnson:** We have made focusing on inequality a priority at the Associated Press. We're looking at the pandemic through that lens - not merely covering the virus itself but also the global economic impact, which will be far more damaging on people who are already vulnerable.

We are ensuring our COVID-19 coverage is being told from as many parts of the world as possible, proactively seeking stories, and making them textually and visually compelling. One of the main things that have come out recently is a

racist, nationalistic framing for the virus.

**FB: How do you report on this issue when it is coming from official sources, whose statements must also be included?**

**Ramírez:** Racism has not affected Spain as much as it has affected other parts of the world, which is thanks to the positive attitude of the government and the Opposition. At the beginning of the outbreak, when Chinese businesses were going through a slowdown, local politicians jumped in to tide them over.

A problem that journalists do face here, however, is that of access. During press conferences, the prime minister will only take questions through the spokesperson - and this has eliminated our chances of interaction with the ministers, which is essential for getting the tough questions answered. We have now formally signed a manifesto asking for this to stop.

**Johnson:** Racism is an important aspect of the pandemic and gets challenging especially when dealing with people in leadership roles. Our efforts are, hence, focused on fact-checking every bit of information constantly, in real time - about how the virus has evolved, who it is affecting, the terminology - regardless of the source of that information. We also ensure that our reportage includes a variety of voices.

**FB: What are the trends you are seeing around misinformation in your respective regions? How are you striking that balance between addressing misinformation and giving it additional airtime?**

**Malan:** We have produced a video on myths. We specifically didn't write the story because we wanted it to be accessible to more than just literate people. Our normal audience is decision-makers, but in the case of coronavirus, we are trying to reach a broader audience. For decision-makers, we do more sophisticated stories about debunking the science of treatments that are not proven.

**FB: How are you covering communities that are not digitally connected? Are you sending people out, and how are you keeping safe?**

**Malan:** I'm not sending my staff out - this because of safety precautions. But we have done entire

narrative features over the phone. That's something new; normally, we would go out to the community. But we have taken someone into the community just by having very long phone calls.

**Ramírez:** We are sending our journalists out. However, we have made field reporting voluntary and with the right safety precautions and equipment in place. About 20 per cent of our newsroom has been hit by coronavirus; the silver lining to that, perhaps, is that those employees will have immunity once they recover and add to our coverage.

**Johnson:** We, too, are sending our journalists out to the field, but are also looking at alternative ways. So, either our reporters are on field, with the right protective gear, or are covering the pandemic through virtual interactions. A major concern is to not let go of a story simply because we can't cover it from the field.

**FB: Do we need to take ethical considerations into balancing access to information and a captive audience desperate for information?**

**Ramírez:** Spain has registered several cases of people suffering from anxiety and panic attacks because of the sheer intensity and quantity of information. A constant debate that journalists must tussle with is covering the most disturbing and darkest aspects of the pandemic, while trying to make sure

that the tone of the reportage is calm and positive, and not sensational.

People tend to believe information given out by figures of authority. It is imperative that journalists are careful and thorough with their reportage, regardless of how grave it is, even if it comes from public officials.

**FB: News organisations are showing and comparing data from different countries - collected using different standards. Is that a danger and, if so, how do we mitigate it?**

**Malan:** I think where it gets confusing is when you compare testing, as countries don't test at the same rate. And the number of infections a country picks up really depends on the number of people they tested, so it is hard to compare. We try to do it in as meaningful a way as possible, and if there are data we think can't be compared, we just don't do it.

**FB: How do you balance the risk of sending people out versus being beaten on a story?**

**Johnson:** It is not worth putting reporters at risk, simply to cover a story. Discussions about safety and having the right personal protective equipment (PPE) are a precursor to every time a reporter goes to the field. While it is a fast developing story, we must also slow down. This situation is a marathon, not a sprint. We need to think hard about how we approach stories - cover them immediately, or wait and see how they pan out.

**A World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers report.**



Tanga Port acting manager Juma Mohammed (2nd-L) updates Works, Transport and Communications deputy minister Atashasta Ndiyeti (2nd-R) in Tanga on Tuesday on the port's ongoing expansion. Photo: Correspondent Boniface Gideon

## Govt to combat invasive plant species

By Getrude Mbago, Dodoma

Invasive species have been identified as one of the four significant threats to nation's forest and rangeland ecosystems, the government is therefore working to come up with a national strategy which would allow people to harvest invasive plant species like weeds in various lakes as part of initiatives aimed to fight the increase of the plants in the country.

Invasive plants are type species that are not native to a specific location (an introduced species), and that has a tendency to spread to a degree believed to cause damage to the environment, human economy or human health.

Responding to question by Special Seats MP Esther Alexander, the ministry in the Vice President's

Office (Union Affairs and Environment) acknowledged that invasive species cause massive damage to the livestock, fisheries and agricultural sectors by destroying animals and crops.

The ministry however noted that, apart from causing destruction in lakes, water weeds have a lot of advantages as they can be used to produce paper, alternative energy and bags. This is being practiced in the neighboring country Kenya.

In her basic question, the legislator claimed that the increase of invasive plants and species in Lake Manyara and others like Lake Victoria had huge impacts to the ecological system of the lakes querying on the government's strategies to fight the vice.

The ministry responded that the

increase of the invasive species were highly caused by increased human activities along the lakes which include agriculture and livestock keeping.

"Agriculture activities now days uses much artificial fertilizers and pesticides which in turn lead to increase of invasive plants. To address this, the government has already communicated with the ministry of agriculture so as to review regulations and allow harvest of invasive plants for other use," read part of the ministry's response.

It further stated that the government has also prepared a national work plan (2019-2029) to address invasive species including water weeds. ON September 2018, the Vice President's Office for Union Affairs and Environment launched

a National Task Force to combat invasive plant species in the country.

The task force consisted environmental experts mainly ecologists and conservationists from relevant ministries of agriculture, natural resources and state-owned institutions.

During the inauguration ceremony held in Dar es Salaam, Vice-President Samia Suluhu asserted that the task force would closely work with other experts from ministries of agriculture and natural resources to undertake the assignment. She said the task force was entitled to identify all types of invasive species that are available in the country and prepare a national strategic plan to be incorporated into the national programmes to combat the alien species, among other objectives.



Zanzibar Urban West regional commissioner Hassan Khatib (L, foreground) makes a follow-up on precautions against the spread of Covid-19 infections at Sateni business area in Zanzibar yesterday. Photo: Rahma Suleiman

## Water project built at 6.7 billion/- to benefit Tandahimba villagers

By Getrude Mbagu, Dodoma

OVER 20,000 residents in sixteen villages of Tandahimba district council in Mtwara region to benefit from a mega 6.7bn/- water project which is on final stages.

Responding to questions from Annastazia Wambura (Special Seats) yesterday here, the Ministry of Water stated in a written response that implementation of the project will be a major relief to the residents in the district as it will be one of mega projects to be implemented in the area.

In his basic question, the lawmaker queried on when the government would bring water to villages located in Tandahimba and Newala districts.

According to her, thousands of residents in the villages are currently facing acute shortage of the precious liquid something which affect their daily activities and income.

Ensure that residents in Tandahimba and Newala are supplied with sufficient safe and clean water, the government has

been implementing several projects which had in turn addressing shortage of water in the district.

"Tandahimba district has a total of 21 villages. Five of them have access of clean and safe water but the remaining 16 villages have no access to the precious liquid. This is why the government has embarked on the mega project to be benefit the residents. In this a total 21,384 villagers will benefit," read part of the ministry's response.

The villages are Mkwiti Juu, Mkwiti Chini, Mmeda, Libode, Litehu, Mabeti, Naanala, Mkuti, Nanjanga, Mangombya, Ngunja, Namindondi Juu, Namindondi Chini, Chidede, Mahoha and Mkola Juu.

The project is implemented in three phases whereby in the first part's budget is 2.77bn/- and its implementation had reached 60 per cent expected to be completed in June, 2020.

The second part involve construction of a main water pipe way from Idomole to Mangombya village at a budget of 1.8bn/-. It is implementation has reached 93 per cent.

## Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation expands commitment to global COVID-19 crisis

By Guardian Reporter

THE Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has extended funding for the global response to Covid-19 by providing an additional grant of US \$ 150 million which could be deployed to catalyze the rapid procurement of essential medical supplies and help life sciences companies secure financing to produce Covid-19 products.

In announcing the funding, the foundation called on world leaders to unite in a global response to Covid-19 to ensure equitable access to diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines.

Gates Foundation Co-chair, Melinda Gates said: "It is increasingly clear that the world's response to this pandemic will not

be effective unless it is also equitable. We have a responsibility to meet this global crisis with global solidarity. In addition to contributing to the development of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines, these funds will support efforts against Covid-19 in low-and-middle-income countries, where local leaders and healthcare workers are doing heroic work to protect vulnerable communities and slow the spread of the disease".

The foundation's new US \$150 million commitment will fund the development of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines, as well as new efforts to provide partners in Africa and South Asia with resources to scale their COVID-19 detection, treatment, and isolation efforts.

"Covid-19 doesn't obey border laws. Even if most countries succeed in slowing the disease over the next few months, the virus could return if the pandemic remains severe enough elsewhere. The world community must understand that so long as Covid-19 is somewhere, we need to act as if it were everywhere. Beating this pandemic will require an unprecedented level of international funding and cooperation", said the foundation's Co-chair Bill Gates.

The foundation's CEO Mark Suzman said the pandemic has unleashed an extraordinary philanthropic response.

He added: "While significant, it is still only one small part of what must be a coordinated effort to beat this global crisis. Phi-

lanthropy cannot—and should not—supplant the public and private sectors. What philanthropy is good at is testing out ideas that might not otherwise get tried, so governments and businesses can then take on the successful ones. With all sectors working together, we can avoid the worst-case scenarios of human, economic, and social costs".

The foundation will also leverage a portion of its US \$ 2.5 billion Strategic Investment Fund, which uses a suite of financial tools to address market failures and incentivize private enterprise to develop affordable and accessible health products.

These funds, which can include equity investments, loans, and volume guarantees, will be used to help health systems in

low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) facilitate the rapid procurement of personal protective equipment for health care workers, Covid-19 diagnostics, oxygen therapeutics, and other essential medical supplies.

The funding builds on the US \$ 100 million the foundation has committed to date to support the global response, as well as US \$ 5 million in resources to support public health agencies and frontline response organizations in the greater Seattle region.

The foundation has also directed its programmatic technical expertise to support multilateral, national, and sub-national responses to the pandemic.

While there is not yet global consensus on the total resources required to turn back Covid-19,

the figure is more than any one contributor will bear. A coordinated, international effort bringing together all sectors will be required to mobilize the billions in funding needed in the months ahead.

Institutions such as the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance are in place to coordinate the development and delivery of Covid-19 vaccines, but they require an influx of new resources to do so.

The foundation is also considering gender equality issues in its response, and it will support research into the differential health, economic, and social impacts of the pandemic on women and girls in low income countries.

The foundation will provide non-medical funding to help low income countries to strengthen social and economic support for people who are living in extreme poverty or who are at risk of falling back into extreme poverty due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia together account for 85 percent of the 629 million people around the world who live on less than US \$ 1.90 per day, and past pandemics have had a disproportionate impact on people who cannot afford adequate nutrition, safe sanitation, and quality housing.

People living in extreme poverty are also less likely to be able to practice physical distancing because they cannot afford to stop working.

## 'PCCB in Kigoma Region has recovered 67,468, 800/-

By Guardian Correspondent, Kigoma

THE Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) in Kigoma Region has recovered 67,468, 800/- in the first quarter of this year.

Acting head of the anti-corruption bureau in Kigoma region, Nestory Gatahwa told journalists yesterday that the funds have been recovered during a number of operations conducted between January and March this year at different institutions including the Kigoma district and Maweni Medical College.

Gatahwa said of the monies, 48,578,400/- were recovered at Rumako Agricultural Marketing Co-operative Society whereas leaders of the cooperative are alleged to have swindled the funds through provision of loans and hiking prices agricultural inputs.

Owners of pharmacies paid a total of 3,140,000 to Maweni Medical College in 2015, but they were never called for the intended training. He said PCCB conducted investigations at different development projects whereas it discovered that some 14,525,400/- were wrongly paid to suppliers and contractors. He said another 1,525,000/- was recovered from the immigration, wildlife and conservation departments.

He however said a total of 115 cases filed at the anti-corruption body, noting investigations are still going on for the culprits to be arraigned.

According to him, citizens in the region are complaining of rampant corruption at local government level (village and ward executive officers), savings and credit cooperative societies (Saccos), land departments and agricultural marketing cooperative societies (AMCOS).

He said that PCCB is going with investigations at Manyovu AMCOS in Buhingwe district where leaders are said to have swindled 19, 522, 494, and 60/- from coffee sales during the 2015/2016 season. He said suspected leaders will be arraigned as soon as investigation is completed.

Meanwhile, a total of 133 cases of suspected corruption incidents had been filed at the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) in Tanga region between January and March this year.

Tanga PCCB regional commander, Dr Sharifa Bungala said yesterday that local government authorities (LGA) is leading with 25 reported incidents followed by the regional land department (12), police force (11) and the judiciary department with 10 reported incidents. She was presenting performance report of the anti-corruption agency for the first quarter of 2020.



Adinani Nuhu (66), a newspaper based in Iringa municipality, verifies the number of copies he has in hand before embarking on the sales business in earnest yesterday. He said he has been in the business since 1996, "but the spread of the coronavirus disease is giving me the hardest time I have ever experienced in my working life, with sales having suddenly plummeted". Photo: Correspondent Friday Simbaya

## WHO: Africa coronavirus cases could hit 10 million in six months

By Special Correspondent

CORONAVIRUS cases in Africa could surge from just thousands now to 10 million within three to six months, according to provisional modelling, a regional World Health Organization (WHO) official said.

But Michel Yao, head of emergency operations for WHO Africa, said on Thursday it was a tentative projection that could change. He

noted worst-case predictions for the Ebola outbreak had not come true because people changed their behaviour in time.

"This is still to be fine-tuned," he told a media teleconference. "It's difficult to make a long-term estimation because the context changes too much and also public health measures, when they are fully implemented, they can actually have an impact."

The world's poorest continent has seen

more than 17,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and about 900 deaths so far - relatively few compared with other regions.

But there are fears that the numbers could balloon and overwhelm shaky health services.

"We are concerned that the virus continues to spread geographically, within countries," said Matshidiso Moeti, director of WHO's Africa region, which comprises 46 sub-Saharan nations and Algeria.

"The numbers continue to increase every day."

Infections in South Africa, which has the highest number of cases, have slowed after it began a strict lockdown, but other nations - such as Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Algeria - have seen higher than average fatalities.

The WHO is working with authorities there to improve patient care and reduce fatalities,

Moeti said.

She warned that President Donald Trump's withdrawal of US funding for the WHO could harm not only the fight against the coronavirus but also that against other killers such as polio, HIV and malaria.

"The impact, potentially, of this decision will be quite significant on areas such as polio eradication" just as Africa was close to being declared polio-free, said Moeti.

## Informal traders rally against coronavirus lockdown in Malawi

LILONGWE

INFORMAL traders have taken to the streets in Malawi, protesting against a coronavirus lockdown which comes into effect at the weekend, vowing to disregard it.

Thousands of vendors in the northern town of Mzuzu on Thursday marched to the city council's offices protesting against the shutdown.

They brandished banners with slogans such as: "Lockdown more poisonous than corona" and "We'd rather die of corona than of hunger". Council spokesman MacDonald Gondwe said: "They came to our offices, but they did not present any documents, so we are not in a position to comment."

In Ndirande township in the commercial capital, Blantyre, vendors at the country's largest market said the lockdown order would be devastating.

"In the case of us vendors who live from hand-to-mouth, it would cripple us," Chancy Widoni, chairman of a 5,000-strong vendor group, told the AFP news agency.

"If we close the market for even one day, then we will not be able to feed our families," he said.

President Peter Mutharika has announced a 21-day lockdown starting on Sunday to contain the spread of the new coronavirus which has killed two people in the southeast African country.



Karatu district commissioner Theresia Mahongo (C) receives 1.5m/- from Seventh Day Adventist Church leaders on Thursday in support of the war on Covid-19. Photo: Correspondent Woinde Shizza

## Coronavirus: FAO, AU commit to safeguarding food security

By Guardian Reporter

THE United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), African Union (AU) and international partners have described the food and agriculture system as an essential service that must continue to operate during periods of lockdown, emergency, curfew and other containment measures.

They reached the agreement at a gathering co-organised by the AU and FAO. All 55 AU mem-

ber states were represented, 45 at minister level. The debate was moderated by the AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, Josefa Sacko.

FAO Director-General QU Dongyu said quick, said that strategic action was needed to lessen the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security in Africa.

"Border closures restrict trade and limit food availability in many countries, particularly those dependent on food imports," he said. He expressed

support for measures that do not lead to disruptions in food supply chains: these must be kept alive", he stressed.

Angela Thoko Didiza, Minister for Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development of South Africa, the Minister, whose country currently chairs the AU, cautioned against any moves to weaken inter-regional trade.

Didiza highlighted the toll taken by lockdowns in a continent where informal markets, rather than supermarkets, provide a

lifeline for most consumers.

FAO's Chief Economist, Maximo Torero, pointed to growing evidence of logistical strains in food markets - strains which Qu suggested should be mitigated by shortening the chain, producing more, better, and locally if possible.

Minister after minister intervened to outline the challenges posed by the pandemic, in a region of the world where a fifth of the population is undernourished.

The CEO of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Ibrahim Mayaki, warned of risks to social stability if food and cash were to run low among Africa's urban residents. Many government representatives described strenuous efforts to bolster welfare benefits, often at great cost to national budgets.

European Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, outlined an EU support package for Africa that should eventually exceed US \$

20 billion.

The World Bank's Simeon Ehui also detailed support initiatives, including the possibility of re-purposing US \$ 3.2 billion in uncommitted funding.

Speaking for the African Development Bank, Martin Fregene concluded with details of a COVID-19 response programme that includes targeted technical and financial support.

Border closures restrict trade and limit food availability in many countries, particularly

those dependent on food imports.

In a joint declaration, they committed to supporting access to food and nutrition for Africa's most vulnerable; providing Africans with social safety nets; minimizing disruptions to the safe movement and transport of essential people and to the transport and marketing of goods and services; and keeping borders open on the continent for the food and agriculture trade.

## Zanzibar introduces electronic receipt system to boost revenue collections

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

ZANZIBAR is finalising the processes introducing electronic receipt systems for revenue collections.

Isle's Minister for Finance and Planning ambassador Mohamed Ramia Abdiwawa made the remarks when presenting a report on the implementation of various proposals by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) for the 2019/2020 financial year.

The minister asserted that preparations for issuance of electronic receipts had taken long because authorities wanted to come up with the best and efficient system. He said the electronic receipts will boost revenues as every tax payer will be subjected to its use.

"We are finalising the processes for issuance of electronic receipts in revenue collections. This will be a solution to some dishonest traders who evade taxes through issuance of hand written receipts", he said.

Ambassador Ramia informed committee members that the government has recorded a number of successes after it strengthened its revenue collection systems as well as broadening of the tax base.

She said Zanzibar has managed to control tax evasion and enhance revenue collections through introduction of electronic revenue collections whereas most people now pay levies through banks and mobile money transfers.

The minister said that almost 90 per cent of all payments to the government are done through banks and mobile money transfers. She said the move was aimed to curb theft of public funds by some dishonest public servants.

The committee vice chairperson, Shaibu Khamis Ali called on the Zanzibar Anticorruption and Economic Crimes Authority (ZAECA) to investigate some public institutions which have been reported to misuse funds.

He was concerned that some of the state-owned institutions have been spending funds contrary to the country laws.

According to Ali the office of the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) should thoroughly conduct audit of some institutions whose financial statements have not been audited for years.

"We realized that some public institutions have not been audited for years, this contributes into misuse of funds as well as poor expenditure of collected revenues", said the committee vice chairperson.



**We are finalising the processes for issuance of electronic receipts in revenue collections. This will be a solution to some dishonest traders who evade taxes through issuance of hand written receipts**



A health officer checks the body temperature of Babati District Council staff as part of routine screening for Covid-19, just before they settled down for work on Thursday. Photo: Correspondent Gift Thadey

## Ongoing insecurity in eastern DRC could derail coronavirus containment

KINSHASA

THE United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has warned that latest rounds of violence in eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) that displaces thousands of people could unleash terrible consequences for the country as it grapples to initiate a new fight against the deadly coronavirus.

As confirmed cases of COVID-19 continue to rise in DRC with 287 confirmed cases and 23 deaths, mainly in the capital Kinshasa, UNHCR is working closely with other UN and humanitarian partners to prevent the spread of the disease among refugees and the internally displaced.

The agency said in a statement that more than five million people have been uprooted by conflict within the DRC's borders, the single-largest internally displaced population in Africa. The country also hosts over

half a million refugees, fleeing unrest and persecution in the neighbouring countries.

Recent attacks in North Kivu and Ituri provinces are reported to have displaced more than 35,000 people in recent weeks including some 25,000 in villages south of Lubero territory.

Security has also deteriorated in the Djuju Territory in Ituri province, where a growing number of attacks by unknown assailants have displaced over 12,000 persons so far this month.

The attacks hamper humanitarian access, hinder assistance to desperate displaced people, and disrupt vital coordination on COVID-19 prevention and sensitization.

According to UNHCR, the ongoing violence and insecurity in other parts of the country could also make it harder for the displaced to access public health facilities.

As to date, no cases of COVID-19 infection have been reported among refugees

and asylum seekers in the DRC. UNHCR is redoubling its efforts to implement prevention and response measures in refugee camps and sites.

"We are extremely concerned that insecurity and diminishing humanitarian access will generate major challenges for the country, already overwhelmed and under-resourced with its health services", the agency said in a statement.

It said insecurity in the East had forced UNHCR partners to withdraw staff from displacement sites in Drodoro and Bule in the Ituri province at the end of March, leaving displaced people without effective support.

UNHCR and its partners have facilitated the establishment of 14 humanitarian committees to temporarily provide remote management, until the security situation improves.

UNHCR is strengthening its regular health and sanitization activities in camps, sites

and transit centres where possible. The present prevention COVID-19 measures include temperature screening at entry points of camps, sites and transit centres, and have installed some 365 hand-washing stations, and carried out an initial distribution of more than 23,000 soap bars.

The agency said it is conducting mass awareness-raising activities on health measures being implemented by the government and on guidance on preventive measures to lower the risk of infection.

Meanwhile, nearly some 2,000 Burundian asylum-seekers, who have recently arrived and remain in a transit centre in South Kivu province, will be transferred to a permanent settlement.

Temporary shelters are currently under construction and these new arrivals will remain in quarantine for 14 days and will receive cash for shelter to build their own shelters through mobile money transfers.

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Taking A New Look  
At The News  
ESTABLISHED IN 1995

## Language days seeking to promote multilingualism, cultural diversity

UN Chinese Language Day is observed annually on April 20. The event was established by the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 2010, seeking to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity as well as to promote equal use of all six of its official working languages throughout the organisation. April 20 was chosen as the date to pay tribute to Cangjie, a mythical figure who is presumed to have invented Chinese characters about 5,000 years ago.

The first Chinese Language Day was celebrated in 2010 on the 12th of November, but since 2011 the date has been the 20th of April, roughly corresponding to Guyu in the Chinese calendar.

Chinese people celebrate Guyu (which usually begins around April 20) in honour of Cangjie, because of a legend that when Cangjie invented Chinese characters, the deities and ghosts cried and it rained millet; the word "Guyu" literally means "rain of millet".

Chinese traditional Chinese literally: 'Han language' or especially though not exclusively for written Chinese. 'Chinese writing' forms the Sinitic branch of the Sino-Tibetan languages. Chinese languages are spoken by the ethnic Han Chinese majority and many minority ethnic groups in China. About 1.2 billion people around 16 per cent of the world's population speak some form of Chinese as their first language.

The varieties of Chinese are usually considered by native speakers to be regional variants of ethnic Chinese speech, without consideration of whether they are mutually intelligible. Due to their lack of mutual intelligibility, linguists generally describe them as distinct languages, perhaps hundreds, sometimes noting that they are more varied than the Romance languages. Investigation of the historical relationships among the Sinitic languages is just getting started. Currently, most classifications posit 7 to 13 main regional groups, based on often superficial phonetic developments, of

which the most populous by far is Mandarin (about 800 million speakers, e.g. Southwestern Mandarin), followed by Min (75 million, e.g. Southern Min), Wu (74 million, e.g. Shanghaiese), and Yue (68 million, e.g. Cantonese).

These groups are unintelligible to each other, and generally many of their sub-groups are mutually unintelligible as well (e.g., not only is Min Chinese a family of mutually unintelligible languages, but Southern Min itself is not a single language).

There are, however, several transitional areas, where languages and dialects from different branches share enough features for some limited intelligibility between neighboring areas. Examples are New Xiang and Southwest Mandarin, Xuanzhou Wu and Lower Yangtze Mandarin, Jin and Central Plains Mandarin, and certain divergent dialects of Hakka with Gan (though these are unintelligible with mainstream Hakka). All varieties of Chinese are tonal to at least some degree and largely analytic.

Standard Chinese is a standardised form of spoken Chinese based on the Beijing dialect of Mandarin. It is an official language of China, similar to one of the national languages of Taiwan (Taiwanese Mandarin) and one of the four official languages of Singapore. It is one of the six official languages of the United Nations.

The written form of the standard language; based on the logograms known as Chinese characters is shared by literate speakers of otherwise unintelligible dialects.

The earliest Chinese written records are Shang dynasty-era oracle inscriptions, which can be traced back to 1250 BCE. The phonetic categories of Archaic Chinese can be reconstructed from the rhymes of ancient poetry. During the Northern and Southern dynasties period, Middle Chinese went through several sound changes and split into several varieties following prolonged geographic and political separation. Qieyun, a rhyme dictionary, recorded a compromise between the pronunciations of different regions.

## Why creativity and innovation make it possible for humankind to exist

INNOVATION is important since it helps to build and implement new solutions to all kinds of problems which may not be solved with traditional means, and when existing solutions do not help to achieve results desired. All progress of human civilisation is based on innovative solutions which eliminate really tough problems, resolve conflicts, create new opportunities in every area of human activities: technology, business, health, education, social institutions.

Creativity is important because it is a key ingredient of innovative process, and without it innovation is nearly impossible. Creativity is needed to go out of the box and find new ideas that later can be turned to innovative solutions. Creativity makes it possible by expanding a scope of solution search space, by fighting psychological inertia, by recognising new opportunities, by establishing connections between things that no one before thought could be connected.

World Creativity and Innovation Day is a global UN day celebrated on April 21 to raise awareness around the importance of creativity and innovation in problem solving with respect to advancing the United Nations sustainable development goals, also known as the "global goals". The day was created with UN resolution with the support of 80 countries. The first World Creativity and Innovation Day was celebrated on April 21, 2018.

The purpose of the day is to encourage creative multidisciplinary thinking at the individual and group levels which, according to a special report on the creative economy by UNESCO, UNDP, and UNOSSC, has become the true wealth of nations in the 21st century.

Innovation in its modern meaning is a new idea, creative thoughts, new imaginations in form of device or method". Innovation is often also viewed as the application of better solutions that meet new requirements, unarticulated needs, or existing market needs. Such innovation takes place through the provision of more-effective products, processes, services, technologies, or business models that are made available to markets, governments and society. An innovation is something original and more effective and, as a consequence, new, that breaks into the market or society. Innovation is related to, but not the same as, invention, as innovation is more apt to involve the practical implementation of an invention such as improved ability to make a meaningful impact in the market or society, and not all innovations require an invention. Innovation often manifests itself via the engineering process, when the problem being solved is of a technical or scientific nature. The opposite of innovation is exnovation.

While a novel device is often described as an innovation, in economics, management science, and other fields of practice and analysis, innovation is generally considered to be the result of a process that brings together various novel ideas in such a way that they affect society. In industrial economics, innovations are created and found empirically from services to meet growing consumer demand.

Creativity is a phenomenon whereby something new and somehow valuable is formed. The created item may be intangible such as an idea, a scientific theory, a musical composition, or a joke or a physical object such as an invention, a printed literary work, or a painting.

### The Guardian Limited Key Contacts

MANAGING EDITOR: WALLACE MAUGGO  
CIRCULATION MANAGER: EMMANUEL LYMO

### Newsdesk

General Line: 0745 700710  
News Editor: LUSEKELO PHILEMON  
0757 154767  
E-mail: guardian@guardian.co.tz

### Advertising

Cel: + 255 686 101335 E-mails: Advertise@guardian.co.tz  
Website: Ippmedia.com, epaper.ippmedia.com



## It could now be opportune for US oil and gas producers to consider Africa

By NJ Ayuk

IT isn't breaking news that the world is currently on "lock-down mode". Around the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic has made conditions dire and triggered global economic shutdowns.

For the oil and gas market, it has been an especially trying time. As our global society battles the coronavirus, demand for oil and gas has plummeted. In fact, April 2020 could see a drop in oil demand by more than 30 million barrels a day. To put that into perspective, that represents a whole one-third of the world's daily use.

Now, add an oil price war that has had Saudi Arabia and Russia increasing oil production and battling for market share since March 8, and you have a perfect storm. In March, the benchmark WTI and Brent each fell by more than 50 per cent. In the first quarter overall, WTI fell by 66 per cent and Brent by 65 per cent.

The once-prolific shale operations across the US are now seeing abandoned projects that have little to do with social distancing. Generally speaking, hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") that has become the industry standard in shale production is expensive - meaning that the process cost-prohibitive at the moment.

Whiting Petroleum in North Dakota's Bakken is today's poster child for the current state of that segment: after topping \$150 a share just a few years ago, the producer's stocks took a nosedive to close at 67 cents this March 31. The following day, the former shale giant filed for bankruptcy.

I won't deny that this situation is grim, but it is not a reason to panic. The oil and gas industry is cyclical by nature, and downturns come with the territory. While the situation we find ourselves in now is unusual, there certainly is precedent for recovery.

Already, we are seeing reasons to be hopeful: the oil price war appears to be drawing to a close. Russia and Saudi Arabia reached a tentative deal on production cuts during an April 9 OPEC meeting, and other producers may soon follow suit with cuts of their own. The situation is still fluid, but it looks promising. As



for the lack of demand caused by COVID-19 lockdowns, no one can say how long it will last. But it won't last forever.

For now, I have some advice for the US drillers striving to get through this challenging period: this could be a good time to take a fresh look at Africa.

When I wrote my book, 'Billions at Play: The Future of African Energy and Doing Deals', I explained how the American shale boom affected the presence of American oil and gas companies in Africa. By that time, last year, many US companies had exited or reduced their footprint in Africa to focus on US shale production. It could be that the factors that made shale a more profitable option than production in Africa no longer exist.

I realise that overseas operations may sound counter-intuitive to companies that are slashing their budgets, but there are sound business reasons behind my recommendation.

In particular, the low cost of production should be considered: deepwater wells have been drilled for less than \$50 million in Angola. Plus, Africa's rich reserves still represent opportunity, including a wealth of natural gas waiting to be discovered.

Oil produced in the US needs to sell for at least \$30 to \$50 to be profitable. In contrast, I believe that it's possible to make a profit selling African oil for \$25 to \$30.

Quite simply, it's cheaper to obtain assets like oil and gas mineral rights and oil field licences in Africa. What's more, the revenue that can be obtained from

the assets is higher. The cost of production is typically much cheaper. As I noted in my book, the past few years have seen significant drops in E&P (exploration and production) costs in Africa: rig rates have come down, and the efficiency of drilling has improved. Plus, drilling is being conducted in more favourable conditions: drillers are avoiding high pressure, high temperature, and ultra-deepwater plays.

US independent producers doing exploration and production activities have fewer regulations in Africa, which potentially could make operations less costly.

Plus, one positive "side effect" of our current economic challenges is a renewed dedication on the part of several African petroleum and energy ministers to strengthen cooperation, promoting synergies, intra-African trading, and knowledge exchange. This could spell significant ease for multinational efforts in Africa.

### Africa is still underexplored

Possibly the best case for encouraging activity among African fields is all this untapped potential. The continent is truly one of the last promising regions for both offshore and onshore oil production. Four years ago, the US Geological Survey estimated that there were 41 bbo and 319 tcf (trillion cubic feet) of gas waiting to be discovered in sub-Saharan Africa. It's still waiting!

Even during times of economic difficulty, including the Great Recession, natural gas consumption has increased. Natural gas

**The decline in the global oil price has led to a reduced level of activity across the African continent and had an impact on countries that traditionally depend on oil and gas revenue. Despite the bleak landscape, the African continent still offers significant opportunities in the oil and gas sector.**

prices are down at the moment, but that could change.

Social distancing and shutdowns won't necessarily impact demand for natural gas in the long term, since it is widely used to generate electricity; for heating, cooling and cooking; waste treatment and incineration; and as feedstock for a wide range of chemicals and products from butane and propane to fertilisers and pharmaceutical products.

What's more, the current low prices might actually foster its demand in a post-coronavirus market where we see power generation switching increasingly from coal to natural gas or where natural gas is used as feedstock for hydrogen generation.

These near-term fuel-switching opportunities are expected to be followed by robust LNG market growth in the medium-to-long term.

My book has in-depth, and very honest information, about the risks of operating in Africa and the opportunities for significant returns. Before my suggestions are dismissed, I encourage drillers to utilise this resource.

In short, it would be a mistake for international oil companies to ignore Africa. Many of Africa's oil and gas fields were discovered and/or established by US companies - from Kosmos Energy's discoveries in Ghana and offshore Senegal to VAALCO Energy's success offshore Gabon. They took a chance in these frontier markets - and their investments have really paid off.

**An African Energy Chamber dispatch, where the author is Executive Chairman, first published in USA Today. NJ Ayuk is also CEO of pan-African corporate law conglomerate Centurion Law Group, and the author of several books about the oil and gas industry in Africa.**



# Mental and physical health of reporters during COVID-19

By **Katya Podkovyroff Lewis**

**T**HE novel coronavirus has defied geographical and political boundaries, infecting over 1.5 million people as of April 10. Unlike disasters, a pandemic's impact is not confined to a single location, or a group of victims, and the potential for exposure is always present, yet unpredictable.

The age of COVID-19 has brought a number of new norms – social distancing, working from home, school closures and virtual happy hours, to name a few.

Journalists are not exempt from these changes. While many things are slowing down, the ever-changing news cycle keeps them on the clock. All these changes make reporting more complicated, and take a toll on journalists' emotional and physical health.

Experienced health reporter Heather Mongilio, who works for The Frederick News-Post in Maryland, US, said she never thought she would be covering something quite like COVID-19. In just two weeks of covering the virus, Mongilio worked nearly 95 hours, averaging ten-hour shifts each day.

"There's just no end in sight, we haven't been able to take a break," Mongilio said, adding: "I don't know if I'm going to be covering this for the next month, for the next two months or until December. I don't know if it's going to slow down or if it's just going to be constantly working these ten-hour shifts, hoping that I keep up with all of it."

Evan Hill, a journalist on the New York Times' Visual Investigations team, was meanwhile on a reporting trip when businesses in the US began shutting down.

After reporting in northwestern Syria, he returned home to an entirely different work schedule.

Although there are challenges, Hill's experience abroad offers some perspective on the environment he returned to. He said working from home is a great luxury for reporters in stable environments.

This is compared to people who are living in conflict zones like Syria and Yemen where people don't have the luxury of working from home, or ordering goods from Amazon and grocery delivery services.

Hill elaborated: "Even though it's mentally stressing on all of us to be socially distancing ourselves from friends and family, and staying home most of the day, it really is quite a luxury to be able to set up a nice workstation in your bedroom, your living room or your kitchen, and drink your coffee and order things online."

On top of her reporting beats, Mongilio hosts The Frederick News-Post's podcast, Frederick Uncut. Hosting a podcast in quarantine has created challenges like figuring out how to use phone calls instead of in-person guests while maintaining audio quality, and how to create a make-shift studio at home.

"I also do a lot more email reporting that I usually wouldn't have," Mongilio said, adding: "Under normal circumstances, you always get the in-person interview. If you can't do that, then a phone interview. Now it's email."

Hill expressed his own concern on how the visual investigations team would handle a new workflow, saying: "It changes the way that we communicate, it changes the way that we edit videos, it changes the flow of our teamwork and it changes our

ability to collaborate."

"We can no longer sit and edit things together, look at footage at the same time and make editorial judgment calls in real time when we're editing videos, so that's tough," he pointed out.

But it's not just changing schedules that are creating challenges for reporters. The ever-present threat of illness also affects their work, especially as they try to cover updates related to the disease in their communities.

Mongilio reported on a drive-through testing centre at Frederick Health Hospital in mid-March. To do so, she and her team parked across the street.

She said: "We were taking pictures and we were watching it but when my editors were like 'go down to that', there was a moment where I was like 'well do you want me to talk to someone who is getting tested?', adding: "I have asthma and I don't want to put myself at risk, which is something I never really had to consider with reporting."

Mongilio decided to keep her distance, and remained across the street. The photographer accompanying her, however, did approach people and found someone who was willing to speak with her over the phone.

Hill said work-related stress isn't new for journalists like him who had been reporting in conflict zones, but noted that the stress is different.

He narrated: "Going from a fairly stressful environment, but stressful because you're in a conflict zone, and returning to an environment where you have nothing to do but sit and stew with those concerns – it actually becomes a totally different kind of mental stress, a more drawn out and driftless kind of mental stress."



Without being able to go outside, journalists have to get creative with how they're staying up-to-date on what's happening. Their reliance on social networks means that they are constantly bombarded by information, which can take a toll.

"As a journalist, you have to be consuming news all day long, which means being plugged into the Twitter firehose," Hill said, adding: "It is kind of like sticking your face over the Chernobyl reactor and just staring into the radiation for like ten to 12 hours a day because you're sitting at home."

During a webinar from Investigative Reporters and Editors, Poynter's Al Tompkins said his biggest concern was that journalists don't spend enough time decompressing outside of their work. He said most people check their phones right before they fall asleep, sometimes in the middle of the night and usually as soon as they wake up, which induces stress and burnout.

On top of professional stress, Mongilio

said that she worries about her 80-year-old grandmother, her mother who continues to work as a nurse and her sister.

"At the beginning, it was so much easier to stay on and just keep reporting through it," Mongilio said, adding: "When you first reached out and I was feeling great because I was so focused on reporting that I wasn't really thinking about anything else. Now that we're having this conversation, I've definitely noticed that I'm more concerned."

"You are nicer to your coffemaker than you are to yourself," said Tompkins during the webinar, adding: "At least you turn the coffemaker off when you are not using it. You have to consciously unplug from news coverage for a scheduled part of the day."

Both Mongilio and Hill said they were trying to create a healthy balance between their work and life by implementing new coping mechanisms, but they hadn't found the perfect balance yet.

Hill had tried to spend at least an hour a day exercising, reading and running to

the grocery store or doing some other recreational activity. Likewise, Mongilio said that she tries to do something to relax when she gets home.

It's also important to bring in your colleagues when trying to create a healthy relationship to your work. Mongilio said she has editors who have taken the time to stop and ask her how she's doing.

"They've always been pretty careful about how much we overwork and making sure that the workload is spread out, so I think that they're doing the best that they can," she said.

But Tompkins warned against waiting for the boss, noting at the webinar: "Don't wait for your boss to ask you if you need time off. Especially while we are working remotely, the boss may have no clue how you are doing."

**A dispatch by the ICF/IJNet Global Health Crisis Reporting Forum, which connects journalists covering the novel coronavirus pandemic with leading health experts, resources and each other.**

# What you need to know about a potential coronavirus drug...

By **Dana G Smith**

**T**HERE are promising first data on the effectiveness of the experimental drug remdesivir to treat Covid-19, going by a report published on Friday last week (April 10) in the New England Journal of Medicine.

According to the report 36 out of 53 patients (68 per cent) who received the drug showed signs of improvement, with 25 eventually sent home. Seven people (13 per cent) died, while 57 per cent of the 30 people who were on ventilators in the study were able to come off oxygen support.

For comparison, studies from China and the UK report that 86 per cent and 66 per cent, respectively, of Covid-19 patients who didn't receive remdesivir died after being put on a ventilator.

Physicians involved in the remdesivir research say that they are encouraged by the results, but they caution that the findings are preliminary.

Most glaring is that the data were not part of a clinical trial but come from compassionate use of the drug, which means that there was no placebo arm to compare people who received it with those who did not.

As a result, it is impossible to know whether the patients would have recovered at a similar rate without the medication. Several clinical trials are currently ongoing to provide these data.

"What we showed is that there was some benefit, but we can't really quantify it," says Gary Green, MD, an infectious disease specialist at Sutter Santa Rosa Medical Hospital – who treated two patients included in the analysis.

"It was effective in vitro, and now we know it's effective in vivo – but we can't say how effective it really is because we need to study it in a more tightly controlled manner," Green adds.

Other physicians who weren't involved in the research aren't as impressed with the findings and say the publication is premature.

"These results are uninterpretable in the absence of a comparative control arm. We have no way of know-

ing whether the outcomes reported in this study, good or bad, have anything to do with the drug," says Ilan Schwartz, MD, PhD, an assistant professor of medicine at the University of Alberta in the division of infectious diseases.

Infectious disease physician Krutika Kuppalli, MD, tweeted that the article was "exciting" and that remdesivir was a drug she had her eye on from the start.

However, she says in an interview with Elemental that more information is needed – including details about the safety of the drug and long-term follow-up of the patients who received it.

"I think these data are important in the sense that they give us some information on patients who received the drug, but other than that you can't really deduce anything," says Kuppalli.

A fellow at the Johns Hopkins University Centre for Health Security, Kuppalli notes: "I think it's very hard in this setting to make any definitive claims about what this information means. What we showed is that there was some benefit, but we can't really quantify it."

Remdesivir is an experimental antiviral drug originally developed by the pharmaceutical company Gilead to treat Ebola. Although the medication proved to be relatively ineffective against Ebola, subsequent research in human cells and in animal models showed that it blocked replication of SARS and MERS, sister coronaviruses to SARS-CoV-2 – the coronavirus causing the current outbreak.

Based on these data, scientists and physicians thought that the drug had a good chance of being effective against the novel coronavirus. Remdesivir is not currently approved in any country to treat any condition.

Merdad Parsey, MD, PhD, Gilead's chief medical officer, has acknowledged in a press release the shortcomings of the study, stating: "While the outcomes observed in this compassionate use analysis are encouraging, the data are limited. Gilead has multiple clinical trials under way for remdesivir with initial data expected in the coming weeks."

The biggest critique of the com-



passionate use research is that Gilead cherry-picked the patients who would receive the drug.

To be eligible, people must have a positive test for SARS-CoV-2 and either an oxygen saturation level below 95 per cent or be on oxygen support – such as a ventilator. They also must not be in kidney or liver failure or have problems with blood pressure.

According to the press release, 1,800 patients have been treated with remdesivir under compassionate use. However, there is no information about how many requests Gilead received and how many were granted.

Green says the kidney, liver and blood pressure exclusion criteria are in place to protect patients because the side-effects of the medication are still unknown. However, Schwartz is more critical, saying the requirements exclude the sickest patients who are least likely to recover, which potentially biases the data.

"It's really walking quite a tightrope to only include patients that are on a ventilator, so they have respiratory

failure but don't yet have the involvement of other organs," Schwartz explains.

Schwartz says that most people progress from respiratory failure to multi-organ failure in 24 to 48 hours, noting that if they don't progress, they are more likely to get better – and "these are the ones that have been cherry-picked".

Gilead has since stopped the compassionate remdesivir use programme except for pregnant women and children under the age of 18. In its place, they have launched an expanded access programme to deliver the drug to people who can't be enrolled in the clinical trials owing to geography or the exclusion criteria.

The programme is supposed to administer the drug to more patients more efficiently. However, clinicaltrials.gov reports that at the time of publication, there are only 19 expanded access sites in eight states.

In that several of these are hospitals that are also part of the clinical trial, the new programme leaves many pa-

tients in the lurch – especially those being treated in rural areas.

Peter Jardine, a 58-year-old mechanical engineer from South Berwick, Maine, is one of those patients. Jardine first started showing symptoms of Covid-19 on March 19.

A week after he fell ill, he was admitted to York Hospital in Maine with shortness of breath and a fever of over 104 degrees. The next day, his coronavirus test results came back positive, and he was intubated as his oxygen levels plummeted.

Doctors diagnosed him with acute respiratory distress syndrome, a serious side effect of Covid-19, and transferred him to the Maine Medical Centre intensive care unit.

Jardine's doctors at Maine Medical Centre recommended that he receive remdesivir to try to stem the infection, but the closest hospital with either a clinical trial or expanded access was in Boston – over 80 kilometres away.

His family petitioned the governor of Maine to intervene on his behalf,

but their pleas for compassionate use were unsuccessful. In the days since, Jardine has been put on dialysis to support the functioning of his failing kidney, which disqualifies him for the drug.

"I find it crazy that it has to be such a process to gain these types of resources that could potentially save people's lives," his daughter, Ashley Jardine, told Elemental, adding: "I understand that sometimes these things can be a process, but 4,000 doses were just delivered to New York City hospitals, so why not us? Why not everywhere?"

Schwartz, whose hospital in Canada has also been denied requests for remdesivir, says that Gilead's exclusion criteria and their roll out of the drug are "frustrating and hamstringing access." He says that even though they have no idea whether the drug is "helpful or harmful, there is a tendency for doctors to want to do something and to treat, even though you don't have any evidence of the actual benefit".

# Volunteering...not a walk in the park but worth it

**F**IRST let me start by saying that, I had never thought of working without pay but when I learnt how the history of the company's performance and its overall professional image would elevate my career and boost my CV I forgot all the security a monthly wage comes with and actually gave it a try.

Now am not advocating for a college graduate to initially study a company's history and background before volunteering because it's all about what volunteering will get you at the end rather than a company's background footage.

I graduated from college with the very first thought of landing myself a job in an institution with a very attractive wage just like any other normal and like-minded college graduate would look forward to after completing their studies.

I scrolled through several job sites countless times in a day and would tirelessly apply for any job opportunity that popped up. I had by then got shortlisted in like two job applications amongst the several I applied for and neither did I secure any.

I then came across a young man's job search journey on social media which was not only a story about his struggle and eventual success but also on how he was able to launch two companies after several years of employment after graduating from college and I saw so much sense into it, practical results, career growth and even self-development from his very rare experience and unique initiative he applied throughout his journey and had the dire need of heading down the same road.

Sometimes the road less travelled has indeed the plentiest of treasure.

As crucial as it is to remain positive about job seeking especially for a graduate who is fresh from college with no experience, it's also important for students to be in a position to learn from working in various institutions regardless of low pay or no pay at all.

However this requires discipline and commitment that not a majority of college students can pull up.

A young man's story on social media encouraged me to volunteer to work in a banking institution as a volunteering assistant accountant some years back and I was in the position to gain various career insights

It enabled me to add a valuable referees' list in my CV

Volunteering exposed me professionals in my field of study who I relied upon in doing my daily duties in the field who supervised me and who I built a professional relationship with that I use in my referees' list in my resume to date.

This professionals have an opinion about my skill set, ethical behaviors amongst others.

I have then learnt that if you ever need people to vouch for your skills in your field of study, volunteering will provide you with experienced people who have seen you in action and can recommend you for a job even later when you are called for one. Don't be a plain paper graduate with no skills but instead volunteer to get recommendations and references that could separate you from the rest in the job market

**It outlined work experience in my CV**

This was the most important strategy in my job search by then, especially when a job advert would make me quit looking at it twice due to the number of years of experience working

in a relevant field one was required to have to apply.

I have come to the realization that its way better to volunteer so as to have a current employer list in your CV which will add higher chances of success of securing the position than having a resume with no experience at all which always leaves recruiters doubting your ability to perform well enough for the advertised role.

**I built priceless networks**

We have heard it before and I will say it once more, it's not what you know, it's who you know. Volunteering enabled me to grow my network where I was in a position to find out about new positions and be at the forefront of people's minds if they learn of an opportunity.

I have come to learn that, if you don't know many people in your field, then you are at a distinct disadvantage.

Go out there volunteer and meet people and don't just know them by their names but also associate with them professionally.

People are investments, don't forget that.

**It kept me busy**

Volunteering allowed me to be quite busy and to lift my spirits. Volunteering prevents you from staying idle at home with nothing to do instead allows you go to work while you develop your skills and practice basics of your field of study.

It listed me on the top if a job was available in the institution

A job would even be created that wouldn't have existed in case there wasn't someone working tirelessly three months straight without pay as a Thank you note to you.

Imagine you are volunteering at a company and suddenly an



opportunity pops up, they sure won't go for someone else over you literally!

You have already proven your skills, your dedication and your passion hence will best fit the requirements for the role.

I have since come to learn that, you ought to work hard, show case your skills and always have in mind why you are there in the first place and watch yourself land an opportunity right there. All in all volunteering opened up opportunities for me that I wouldn't know existed if I hadn't made that decision.

**College Comfort Zone**  
*With*  
**Salima Hamisi**

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**saly30@gmail.com**  
**0762 174 124**

## Independent evaluation of adaptation fund is sound financial management

By Correspondent Gerald Kitabu

**I**N recent years, some organizations and institutions in the country wishing to carry out climate change projects have been saying that they are finding it difficult to access the Adaptation Fund to implement climate change projects, citing lack of information and presence of long processes and procedures.

But to answer their concern, the National Environment Management Council (NEMC) has clarified this saying it is simple, advising any organization or Institution in the country wishing to apply for the Adaptation Fund for the purpose of carrying out projects in the area of climate change to improve their working standards.

In an interview with the Guardian regarding the Adaptation Fund, Senior Environmental Management Officer Fredrick Mulinda said that many institutions do not qualify for the Adaptation Fund because they do not meet criteria for the award.

He said that for NEMC to be able to give such money to an institution, uses that criteria, and wants to be sure that applicants at least have some historical testimony of implementing projects, even if not very big project, but at least small ones ranging from 300,000 USD and on.

Mulinda who is also Climate Change Focal Person-NEMC explained further that the organization or institution wishing to apply for the funds, should be able to show a sound and good financial management system and expertise in the project management.

"It is advisable two or more organizations to team up and come out with memorandum of understanding (MoU). That's why they should partner with district councils in the project area because it is easier for us to track the money," he said.

Commenting further, he said the Adaptation Fund is a global financing mechanism under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and it came into being in 2010 as a way of building capacity for developing countries to directly access international funding without going through multilateral agencies like UNDP, UNEP and the alike.

The Adaptation Fund set up a mechanism of each developing country coming up with a national institution which goes through accreditation process and once it qualify, it is called a national implementing entity, now that entity is entitled to receive funds from Adaptation Fund and leads the formulation, the designs and implementation of climate change adaptation projects in the countries. So, for Tanzania, NEMC became the national implementing entity in 2017. This adaptation funds set aside 10 million USD for each developing country to implement climate change adaptation projects.

In 2010, is when NEMC became accredited by that fund and that's when it began the process of accessing the fund. The funds can only be accessed through submission of project proposals and those proposals have to go through two circles of approval. It begins by submitting concept note and when the concept note is accepted then they can be allowed to develop project proposals. Upon submission it will be reviewed by a technical committee and if it is recommendable for approval, it is recommended to the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB) for approval and after that, the fund can be transferred to NEMC and thereafter can be transferred to that particular organization or institution that has won the competition process. Three projects in Tanzania Mainland have been passed and their proposals have been submitted to the Adaptation Fund Board, currently waiting for the AFB to approve the funds so that they can start implementation of their projects in different parts of the country but in partnership with respective district councils. They are

going to be implemented in Kongwa district, Singida and Zanzibar. They are worth five million USD in total. They should have been approved by the board but the approval was delayed because of COVID-19.

Earlier on, Director of programs at Tanzania Civil Society Forum on Climate Change (ForumCC) Angela Damas explained that the Adaptation Fund was established to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes that reduce the adverse effects of climate change facing communities, countries, and sectors.

It was established to finance concrete activities in developing countries. Since 2010 it had funded USD331 million in 54 countries to address climate adaptation and resilience activities.



Fredrick Mulinda, a senior environmental management officer and climate change focal person at NEMC. Photo: Correspondent Gerald Kitabu

to supervise and manage the Adaptation Fund.

The former Miss Tanzania beauty pageant said the AFB has many and important functions. Among the functions are to develop strategic priorities, policies and guidelines including administrative and financial management guidelines.

The AFB also decide on projects, including the allocation of funds, in line with the Adaptation Fund principles, criteria, modalities, policies and programmes.

The Board also monitor and review implementation of the operations of the Adaptation Fund, including its administrative arrangements and the expenditure incurred under the Adaptation Fund and least but not last is to fund and assist developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change to meet the costs of

adaptation.

She said the composition of Adaptation Fund Board takes into consideration of representatives from countries, regional blocks and the United Nations among others.

It is usually composed of 16 members and 16 alternates representing Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, taking into account fair and balanced representation. Some of them are from each of the five United Nations regional groups, least developed countries, and small island developing countries.

FORUMCC as one of the Non Governmental Organizations in the country dealing with climate change issues has been calling on special fund set aside to support the victims of Climate change.

In recent years, FORUMCC joined other eleven NGO's across the World to form Adaption Fund NGO's Network under German watch which was the founder.

The Adaptation Fund NGO Network has more than 200 stakeholders and is a coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs) engaging in discussions and debates on the Adaptation Fund's policies and closely following the planning and implementation of the Fund's projects.

Damas further explained that the Network's aim is to support those most vulnerable to climate change and ensure they benefit from the Adaptation Fund.

This is why we work to ensure the effective engagement of civil society not only at Fund level, but also at the local level, throughout project planning and implementation.

At local level we work with NGO's for the most vulnerable communities for the benefit of the entire community and the general public at large, she explained.

Climate change has taken a new form in recent decades due to increase of global temperature, unpredictable rains, callous wind, raising sea level.

The situation has caused drought and floods conditions which in turn

have led to high costs of life in terms of socio-economic development, affecting the GDP. In some communities, the situation is increasingly becoming unbearable on daily basis.

Outbreak of diseases, Malaria, and purging are some of the problems that call for deliberate and concerted efforts to address the impacts of climate change.

She commended the government and other key stakeholders for taking steps to ensure capacity building and communities are given education on climate change.

The government in collaboration with other stakeholders like FORUMCC have been creating awareness and reminding the local communities on how climate change happen, its impact on the communities and the government at large.

ForumCC is an association of civil society organisations committed to work on climate change in their own programmes as well as through advocacy. It brings together development and environment organizations, those with technical skills and those with a more delivery and advocacy focus.

This combination of organisations is important to ensure effective engagement of civil society that draws on the range of skills and perspectives of different organisations, such as linking the research groups with those that can use research findings for advocacy.

Purpose of the Forum is to ensure effective and informed engagement of Civil Society Organizations in Tanzania on Climate Change issues for the benefit of the environment and people in poverty who are affected.

The main areas of engagement and related activities include to help ForumCC members in influencing and advocating for an effective response to CC from the national to global level, to support effective co-ordination and information sharing among CSOs in Tanzania on CC issues and to strengthen capacity of CS in Tanzania to respond to CC in their programme and advocacy work

# Mitigating impact of Covid-19 on African nations' food systems

By Atsuko Toda and Martin Fregene

We are facing great uncertainty in Africa. The global spread of Covid-19 and the rising number of coronavirus disease cases on the continent are fuelling anxiety about negative economic growth, failing healthcare and collapsing food systems.

We are already grappling with a locust outbreak in the Horn of Africa, drought and flood extremes due to climate change, and increasing food importation costs to the tune of more than US\$47 billion in 2019.

The convergence of all these sets the stage for an imminent food crisis - unless measures are

taken to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

Consider also that the US dollar has surged against emerging market currencies, reducing the purchasing power of countries reliant on commodity imports and sparking off higher consumer prices. Inflationary pressure on food staples can breed social tension and even unrest.

Anti-pandemic measures like nationwide lockdowns and border closures compound food shortages - especially of nutritious but perishable foods like fruit and vegetables.

Restrictions on movement and quarantine measures impede farmers' access to markets. In Nigeria, rice prices are 30 per

cent higher now than in January, thanks to panic buying, transport restrictions and rising global prices. Foreign direct investment and aid into Africa is also expected to fall, or be delayed, as international investors and development partners redirect capital to their local economies and into stimulus packages to combat Covid-19.

But Africa is coming up with its own solutions for these challenges, with the African Development Bank (AfDB) being prominently involved.

To address the threat of food security, several short-term measures are being taken, including creation of a "green channel" for the free flow of food and agricultural inputs; and creation of

strong demand for agricultural inputs - fertiliser, seeds and agrochemicals through smart input farmer subsidies.

Among the others is the taking of measures to prevent food price hikes by releasing food from government grain reserves and implementing anti-hoarding policy.

There are also the rapid scaling up of food production technologies, including high-yielding, early-maturing, drought-tolerant, disease- and pest-resistant staple crops, livestock and fish through programmes like the Bank's Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation initiative; as well as feeding programmes for the worst affected and most vulnerable zones.

Medium to longer-term food security interventions include provision of recovery strategy support to key supply chain players like logistics companies and anchor farmers; strengthening of food supply chain resilience through efficient production, processing and value addition; enforcing food safety, improved food quality and traceability policies in the post-coronavirus period; and promoting digitalisation and e-commerce in markets hit by Covid-19.

Guided by lessons learned from previous health crises, including the Ebola epidemic, AfDB has responded to the pandemic by putting together a package of support for both the public and private sectors. The COVID-19 Response

Facility is expected to mobilise up to US\$10 billion to provide financial assistance to African countries in fighting the pandemic.

The bank has also raised a US\$3 billion Covid-19 bond, proceeds of which will go to addressing fiscal challenges, emergency procurement of drugs, vaccinations, ventilators and other health-related expenditures, as well as feeding programmes, agro-input subsidies and other socio-economic interventions.

If it is to rebound from the pandemic, Africa must maintain adequate food reserves, avoid protectionist policies and promote value chains that link domestic and international markets.

As AfDB takes a key role in sup-

porting African countries to design and implement coordinated policy responses, it will work with regional partners including the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), as well as international ones such as the World Trade Organisation, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Bank and other international partners.

*• An op-ed filed from Abidjan courtesy of AfDB, where Dr Martin Fregene is Director of Agriculture and Agro-industry and Atsuko Toda is Director of Agricultural Finance and Rural Development.*

## Opportune time for African oil and gas industry to consider changing

By Special Correspondent

THE decline in the global oil price has led to a reduced level of activity across the African continent and had an impact on countries that traditionally depend on oil & gas revenue. Despite the bleak landscape, the African continent still offers significant opportunities in the oil & gas sector.

"It is an opportune time for local governments that want to attract oil & gas investors to reform their regulatory, fiscal and licensing systems," says Chris Bredenhann, PwC Africa Oil & Gas Advisory Leader.

Bredenhann says it is also important for the industry to look beyond the challenges caused by depressed prices and consider other forces that are shaping the industry. PwC's 'Africa oil & Gas Review, 2016' suggests that with the ongoing focus on cost reduction in the industry, the demand for innovation in technology will grow.

Furthermore, this can be the ideal time for the industry to consider introducing training programmes to upskill levels and company standards in order to give local players a chance to enter the sector when activity picks up again.

PwC's 'Africa oil & gas review, 2016' analyses what has happened in the last 12 months in the oil & gas industry within the major and emerging African markets.

As at the end of 2015, Africa has a proven natural gas base of 496.7 trillion cubic feet (Tcf), down marginally from 2014, with 90% of the continent's natural gas production still coming from Nigeria, Libya, Algeria and Egypt.

Dealing with the decline

The top challenges identified by organisations in the oil & gas industry have remained unchanged to those in previous years - uncertainty in regulatory frameworks, corruption/ethics, poor physical infrastructure and a lack of skill resources. This year, there was also a significant rise in the challenge of meeting taxation requirements, as well as government relations. Regulatory uncertainty has remained the top challenge facing oil & gas businesses in Africa for the third year in a row, with 70% of organisations citing it as one of the five biggest issues they experience.

For the first time since PwC's series of annual reviews began in 2010, 'government relations' has hit the top 6 challenges. Around the continent, many organisations have experienced difficulty obtaining government sanc-



Fishermen at a lake shores

tion for new projects. This is proving to be extremely difficult in new hydrocarbon provinces, such as Mozambique, because governments do not fully comprehend the intricacies and scale of oil & gas projects.

As a result, organisations are beginning to ally themselves with government in order to ensure that they are a strategic and supportive partner.

Organisations identified the price of oil and natural gas as the most significant factor that would affect their companies' businesses over the next three

years, with respondents expecting the price to reach US\$52 by the end of 2016, US\$60 by the end of 2017, and US\$69 by the end of 2018. With little control over the price, businesses have focused on improving efficiency and driving down costs.

Regulatory compliance, at number two, remains a significant challenge for organisations this year. Foreign currency volatility is also rated a likely factor (number three) to impact business over the next three years. This year there have been large currency

fluctuations - with the fallout from the Brexit vote precipitating some of the largest so far.

Asset management and optimisation remains a key strategic focus area for companies. "Fortunately, the industry remains optimistic, and many upstream players are focusing on exploration and finding new resources over the next three years, most likely in anticipation for an upturn in the oil price," adds Bredenhann.

Financing & Investing  
Although there has been some recovery in the pricing environment, investor confidence remains low as a significant recovery does not seem to be on the horizon, and oil market fundamentals are still down.

The low oil price has led operators to defer FIDs (final investment decisions) on over US\$300bn of projects. Globally, mergers & acquisitions (M&A) activity has also dipped and it is expected that this trend will trend continue.

Sustainability  
Under the current economic climate, oil & gas companies are looking to invest in a number of key areas in order to boost growth over the next three to five years. Improved efficiencies ranked highest, followed by local content and skills development, and infrastructure improvements. "The oil and gas industry is faced with a higher entry barrier because technology and jobs tend to be more complex, highly specialised and costly," explains Bredenhann.

The sustainability of the industry will also be affected by a number of drivers. These include the price of oil, impact of renewable and alternative energy sources, emergence of new competitors, environmental consequences of the industry, legislative frameworks and government takes.

# SA's Covid-19 crisis exposes massive cracks in society

By Xolisa Phillip

THE current lockdown exposes the cracks in South Africa's economic edifice. The disparities between the formal and the informal economy. Scores of citizens are food insecure and in desperate need of relief. Should the relief come, the government's lockdown efforts will be sustained. Should it not, the lockdown will be rendered futile because people have to eat.

Sub-Saharan Africa, the economic growth superstar of the past decade, will plunge into recession for the first time in a quarter of a century, the World Bank forecasts.

The current Covid-19 pandemic is the culprit, of course. The fallout from the coronavirus will not only test the limits of societies and economies across the globe, but African countries are likely to be hit hardest, says Hafez Ghanem, the World Bank's vice-president for Africa.

South Africa, Nigeria and Angola, the continent's three biggest economies, must brace themselves for sharp declines in their national growth rates. The recession prediction could not have come at a worse time for South Africa.

Here at home, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a good economic story to tell. Fresh from a sovereign credit ratings downgrade by Moody's Investors Service, the country could do without the gloom. But this is the new normal and more pain is coming.

Business confidence has dropped to lows last recorded 21 years ago, according to the RMB/BER Business Confidence Index. Weak government finances and

the Covid-19 crisis have shaken confidence. Exporters and those in hospitality are in for a special kind of pain because of all the restrictions placed on the movement of goods and people.

For tourism, in particular, the 21-day lockdown was preceded by a wave of booking cancellations. This was especially the case for smaller-scale establishments such as B&Bs. March and April 2020 are a bumper period for guest houses because of the school holidays and school rugby festivals.

Cape Road, the palm tree-lined main road in Port Elizabeth, has been dead quiet. The road is dotted with B&Bs on either side. A week before the lockdown, calls started coming into guesthouses notifying owners that bookers would not be able to honour their bookings.

In addition, Port Elizabeth is the de facto home of the Iron Man South Africa triathlon competition and the Splash Festival. Both events have been cancelled. The probability of either taking place during 2020 is slim. That means more lost bookings.

There is no remote work in this industry. As a result, workers in the hospitality industry are sitting at home and do not know what the end of the lockdown will bring. What is a certainty, though, is that a post-lockdown recovery is unlikely to unfold anytime soon.

The saving grace for workers in this industry is the fact that they are part of what is considered the formal economy. In most cases, they are likely registered for the Unemployment Insurance Fund and will be beneficiaries of formal relief efforts that flow from the fund,



and other means. Furthermore, owners can tap into the various relief mechanisms designed to aid small businesses.

But spare a thought for those in the informal economy.

A gung-ho police force and administrative bungling have placed people working in the informal economy on the backfoot. Most individuals who derive their income from the informal economy do so on a hand-to-mouth basis. No income means no food. They also do not enjoy much of the protections

which are in place for workers in the formal economy.

Although lockdown regulations have been amended to lift restrictions on informal traders, local council offices remain closed. This is where most informal traders have been directed to go to obtain permits that will allow them to resume operating.

What makes matters worse is that the police have made it their business to brutalise people as a default and ask questions later. This bears the danger of undermining the strides made during

the lockdown because citizens will lose patience. A softer touch is required.

Elements of organised business, civil society and other institutions have taken notice of the inherent disparities about how the lockdown will affect the formal and the informal economy. In collaboration with some key government departments, the organisations are working on a suite of relief packages to mitigate disaster.

The main concern is the level of food insecurity that will be

visited upon scores of disadvantaged South Africans, which might spark rebellion. The World Bank's economic downturn prediction, the Moody's downgrade, the low business confidence and the lockdown confirm what has long been the reality for millions of South Africans: An economic reality coloured by uncertainty.

The World Bank has urged policymakers on the continent to focus on protecting livelihoods and minimising disruptions in food supply chains. In

addition, the World Bank has recommended social protection programmes, such as cash transfers and food distribution, to support citizens, especially those in the informal sector.

It is heartening to know the government, business and civil society are working on similar measures. The success of the lockdown, as well as South Africa being able to stabilise its Covid-19 curve, hinges on the human touch and a humane handling of the disadvantaged - who make up the majority.

# South Africa's world-class fight against Covid-19: The data tell the story

By Marcus Hollington and Monique Bennett

**A**n analysis of the data shows that in contrast to the rest of the world, South Africa's efforts to flatten the Covid-19 curve are nothing short of world-class, attesting to the advantage of a timely implementation of physical distancing and a lockdown to curb the spread of the virus.

The two-week lockdown extension in South Africa comes at a time when the country has become the epicentre of Covid-19 in Africa with 2,173 cases, the highest number of cases reported on the continent. This figure should not be regarded as a cause of concern, but rather be viewed in the context of transparency facilitated by the country's advanced healthcare system, which may not be the best in the world, but is a pioneer in the African landscape.

The fight against the virus in the initial phase of the lockdown has been positive overall with South Africa's measures to reduce peak caseload (flatten the curve), successfully curbing the spread of the virus attesting to the excellence of the country's team of experts coordinating the fight against Covid-19.

In contrast to the rest of the world, South Africa's efforts to flatten the curve have been nothing short of world-class coming in second to Algeria, attesting to the advantage of implementing physical distancing and lockdown measures in a timely manner to curb the spread of Covid-19. This is illustrated by Figure 1. According to the graph, Australia ranked third, Japan ranked fourth and Russia ranked fifth. The public health measures implemented by these countries have been tremendously successful thus far in flattening the curve, though Russia has not yet achieved the aforementioned as it continues to experience an upward though controllable trend in its trajectory.

In the context of case fatality rates, countries

with the highest number of Covid-19 cases are high for some countries and low for others. Algeria is currently the most affected country on the continent with a case fatality of 15.31% followed by Egypt, Morocco and Cameroon with case fatality rates of 7.49%, 7.15% and 1.46% respectively. South Africa ranks fifth in the sample of countries with a case fatality rate of 1.19%, which translates to how many of those infected with Covid-19 will die as a result thereof. Given that no vaccine has been developed yet for the virus, South Africa's case fatality alludes to a responsive health sector with the capacity to attempt treatment thereof and save as many lives possible as illustrated by the country's Covid-19 recoveries, which currently stand at 410. In statistical terms, this translates to a case recovery rate of 18.05% as per current data.

The aforementioned deaths and high Covid-19 cases in Figure 2 for the majority of countries in the sample can be explained by Figure 3 below, which illustrates a correlation between old age and susceptibility to Covid-19 alluding to possible fatality as a result thereof. According to Figure 3, Algeria, Egypt and Morocco have the largest population of old people in Africa, which would explain why they have the highest mortality rates in the sample. The same has been seen with Italy, a country with 23.1% of its total population estimated to be 65 years of age and older, and also one of the worst-hit countries in the world.

Arguably, the most important indicator in assessing South Africa's approach to the pandemic is "active cases" which many governmental bodies, both domestic and pan-African, have failed to publicly release alongside their confirmed case statistics which are abundantly available. This is problematic as it undermines the tremendous efforts that healthcare workers are tirelessly putting in to curb the spread of the virus as well as to treat those who have been infected.

It also undermines the measures that the South African government has put in place to achieve the aforementioned and facilitates panic as the populace continues to see a rise in cases, though gradual. Figure 4 below provides a contrast of the country's confirmed Covid-19 cases and active cases.

The graph shows that while the number of "con-



A resident wearing a protective face mask has her temperature scanned during a health screening in Rustenburg.

firmed cases" has been increasing in South Africa (currently 2,272 cases), so has the fight by health workers to reduce these numbers by treating those infected as depicted by the active cases (currently 1,835 cases), in the graph.

The latter provides a more accurate depiction of the country's Covid-19 situation and the efficiency of its measures in response to confirmed cases. It does this by removing the total number of recoveries and deaths from the cumulative number of confirmed Covid-19 cases, which are currently 410 and 27 respectively as

they no longer constitute as positive Covid-19 cases.

Figure 5 indicates the change in daily testing in South Africa. There has been a clear increase in the daily number of tests conducted. However, the method of testing remains slow and improvements in the speed of receiving results as well as conducting the tests will need to be improved over time. Active testing and screening is another crucial indicator in evaluating the progress made by South Africa in preventing widespread community transmission. While the daily number of Covid-19 cases has decreased, the daily number of tests being conducted has increased.

Although we are still below the target of 10,000 tests per day, overall testing in communities has gradually increased and we are currently on an average of 5,678 tests per day. Profes-

sor Salim Abdool Karim, Chairperson of the Covid-19 Ministerial Advisory Committee, advised South Africans on why the lockdown will assist the healthcare system to prepare for what will be an inevitable rise in cases. Since the lockdown, 28,000 community healthcare workers have been deployed in vulnerable communities to screen and test individuals. "Active" case findings are vital if we are to identify where the community transmission is taking place. This allows the government to intervene before community transmission takes place.

## Will winter increase coronavirus risk?

By Leroy Dzenga

**Z**IMBABWE'S winter is fast approaching, it is a time when temperatures are known to be at their lowest, but not alarming levels.

There are growing concerns that conditions brought by winter may increase the spread of Covid-19.

Common colds have been known to be more aggressive during winter and fears are this may be the case with some Covid-19 symptoms.

Being a new virus, there are no concrete scientific answers on the impact of cold weather on the spread, but authorities are not taking chances.

Government says it is in the process of formulating measures to ensure nothing is left to chance.

Director of Epidemiology and Disease Control in the Ministry of Health and Child Care, Dr Portia Manangazira, said they were crafting a precautionary strategy to minimise a possible surge.

"Coronavirus, being a member of the influenza viruses, thrives in low temperature conditions," she said. "We are intensifying the influenza surveillance and will have the specific programme soon."

A more specific plan is said to be in the pipeline as meetings are ongoing.

Dr Manangazira said the plan, which was being fine-tuned, will be communicated "soon" as consultations were ongoing.

Is there enough reason to be worried about cold weather at this point in light of Covid-19?

Epidemiologist Chido Dziva Chikwari said the question at the moment did not have a conclusive answer, but the country had to remain cautious.

"The possibility is there, but data on seasonality of Covid-19 is scarce due to the fact that we have only been trying to understand the virus for four months," Chikwari said.

Although some countries with the same weather patterns as Zimbabwe are already making contingent plans to respond to cold weather, the global authority on Covid-19 is yet to issue an advisory to that effect.

"WHO says there is no reason to believe cold weather can kill the coronavirus and also highlights that even in the event of changing external temperatures normal human body temperature (where the virus thrives) remain the same," said Chikwari.

"In hotter climates, the virus is being transmitted still. If we assume that the coronavirus behaves like the influenza family of viruses (where we have more cases when it is colder), the mechanisms of impact could be the same."

"When it is colder, people spend more time indoors and there is increased likelihood of close contact with each other. Therefore, there will be higher likelihood of passing the virus to each other and weakened immune systems due to lack of Vitamin D."

Chikwari warned that the prediction may not be an indication of how the virus itself behaves.

Like Chikwari, global experts have been averse to extrapolating how Covid-19 could behave based on previous pandemics or recurring epidemics.

The Journal of Molecular and Genetic Medicine says the Spanish Flu peaked in summer despite other influenzas becoming aggressive during winter.

Former biochemist and senior science writer at BBC Richard Gray says it may not be enough to study other strains of the coronavirus which may not paint a complete picture.

"Extrapolating data about Covid-19's seasonality based on endemic coronaviruses – meaning viruses which have been circulating in human populations for some time – is challenging," Gray said in his writings.

Coronavirus is said to be part of what are described as enveloped viruses and they have a peculiar response to temperature changes.

"Coronaviruses are a family of so-called enveloped viruses," said Gray. "This means they are coated into an oily coat, known as lipid bilayer, studded with proteins that stick out like spikes of a crown, helping to give them their name – Corona is Latin for crown."

The presence of the protein

layer is what some scientists are banking their seasonality prediction on.

A 2019 research by Rory Henry MacGregor, Catriona Graham and Sandeep Ramalingam on the association between viral seasonality and meteorological factors showed that this oily protein coat makes viruses weak in high temperatures.

It also found that when the weather turns cold, they develop a rubber like coat which protects the virus when it is outside the body.

If the findings are correct, this means Covid-19 will be expected to stay longer on surfaces and there will be need for increased disinfection.

There may also be need to increase handwashing points in public places when winter comes, as the virus is likely to become stubborn with cold weather.

Zimbabwe, whose Covid-19 numbers stand at 14 confirmed cases and three deaths, awaits to hear what plans Government has on the winter season which has essentially arrived.

In the meantime, the country continues to observe a 21-day lockdown which runs until Sunday 19 April, and is subject to review.

Meanwhile, last week local authorities across the country heeded President Mnangagwa's directive to allow farmers to bring fresh produce for sale after the markets had been shutdown when Zimbabwe started the ongoing lockdown meant to disrupt the Covid-19 cycle.

President Mnangagwa's act of clemency came against a backdrop of growing calls for Government to allow farmers to sell their perishable produce that was inevitably going to waste if it was not sold in time.

Although the market response was not encouraging on the first day, with most people complying with Government's directive to stay at home, the majority of farmers who made it to the market felt it was better to get very little than lose everything, as the produce was eventually going to rot if they had not taken it to the market.

But with the Covid-19 lurking



At Mbare Musika there was not even the slightest effort to observe regulations laid out in Government's Covid-19 eradication programme

out there, it was also crucial for authorities running the markets to put in place measures that would give the farmers and their other stakeholders that managed to visit the markets some protection against the virus.

At the Lusaka Fresh Produce market in Highfield, health officials from Harare City Council were doing a sterling job allowing moderate numbers of people in and outside the market in tandem with stipulations given under the lockdown.

They made sure all the people entering the market would wash their hands or get sanitised first and would also not congregate inside, but do their business and go home.

This would allow a new set of buyers to get in and make their purchases and leave too.

Social distancing was also religiously observed, with people doing their business in an environment in which all efforts were being made to reduce chances of them contracting the virus in the event that someone among them had it.

The same could not be said of the Mbare Fresh Produce Market, where it was a "no holds barred affair" in which people would mix freely and do business without the slightest indication that there was some deadly virus out there that could harm them.

There was not even the slightest effort to observe the regulations laid out in Government's Covid-19 eradication programme.

The situation at the country's biggest fresh produce market exposed the fail-

ure by Harare City Council to play its role in the fight to break the Covid-19 cycle through creating the much-needed clean environment that everybody, Government included, would have expected as part of the fight to contain the disease.

Before the outbreak of the disease, Harare City Council would close the market every day at 11am, purportedly to allow their staff to clean it in preparation for the next day.

This time around they had bountiful time to do the cleaning, but did not and the markets were in a sorry state, prompting some farmers and their clients to go and do their business outside.

The place was reeking of rotting vegetable waste from the last days of business in the run-up to the shutdown, which made it difficult for people to move freely, as they would have to contend with navigating through seas of heavy sludge covering the floors.

Of course, Harare City Council may want to argue that its workers too were unable to come to work, thanks to the lockdown, but the Government has made it clear that special service providers could always go to work armed with letters from their employers specifying the nature of their services so that they would not run into problems with law enforcement agents enforcing the lockdown.

It was also necessary for the City Fathers to provide water and soap if they could not afford sanitisers to enable people doing their business to do so in an environment that left them safe.

After all, the farmers bring in money every day and part of that money could have been used to buy soap or sanitisers to protect them.

Huge sums of money exchange hands at the fresh produce market on a normal day, which makes the market an important part of the city's economy whose smooth operations should be everybody's business.

It is interesting to note that Harare City Council does not allow any farmer to trade in the market if they do not meet its requirements, so farmers always act in compliance, yet council has never come close to fulfilling its obligations to the farmers on any given day.

Middlemen that have given farmers a torrid time from the distant past were there again last week, yet council did not even seem to notice their presence, which tends to bolster claims by the public that council works in cahoots with the connen to milk the poor farmers dry.

The order that was maintained at the Lusaka Market made it difficult for middlemen to come and harass farmers, as anybody who had completed their business was told to leave and not loiter.

Those used to hoarding produce and later selling it just outside the market were not able to do so.

If the "strictly business" attitude exhibited at Lusaka Market could be replicated in all markets across the country, then there would not be need to close the markets, but allow farmers to do their business as usual.

# BUSINESS

## NATURE

# The boardwalk for birds: Protecting Lake Victoria's Dunga Beach wetland

**NAIROBI**

At around 11am on a Saturday, Luke Okomo arrives at Dunga Beach, on the outskirts of Kenya's Kisumu City, and heads straight to what is known as the 'Dunga Papyrus Boardwalk.'

He pays Sh200 (\$2), the daily fee for local tourists and students, and then joins a group of five visitors already taking a tour of the boardwalk, which is elevated above a wetland swamp and surrounded by papyrus reeds. He then takes a seat in an open café and orders a drink as he enjoys the view of Africa's biggest fresh water body.

It's a good spot for some bird watching. It's hard to imagine that just a few years ago, Dunga Beach, which is one of the most popular fish landing sites in Kisumu, used to be filthy and a source of pollution that spilled into Lake Victoria.

But two years ago the Dunga Eco Tourism and Environmental Youth Group, with financial support from the French Embassy in Kenya, came up with the idea to turn the marshland here, which extends into the Winam Gulf of Lake Victoria, into a tourist site.

"Our main aim was to generate extra income for the youth, apart from what we get from the fishing business, while at the same time conserving the aquatic environment," Samuel Owino, the coordinator of the Dunga Eco Tourism and Environmental Youth Group, tells IPS. Edgar Ochieng, a 28-year-old boardwalk tour guide, tells IPS that along the small museum onsite, the boardwalk has become a perfect tourism site for local and foreign visitors.

"Local visitors, most of them students from different parts of the country, come over the weekends during the day to learn from our small museum, which displays the traditional wares and crafts such as musical instruments, various functional artefacts, ornaments, costumes, all made by the local residents, most of them women groups," Ochieng says.

Owino points out though that many foreign visitors prefer visiting very early in the morning in the hope of catching site of the rare and threatened bird species that make their home here. According to Birdlife International, the Winam Gulf is one of the most reliable sites in Kenya for viewing the scarce and threatened bird species – the Papyrus yellow warbler (*Chloropeta gracilirostris*) – which is often seen along the lakeward side of the swamp.

One can also see the white-winged swamp warbler (*Bradypterus carpalis*) and papyrus canary (*Serinus koliensis*) – all papyrus endemics. Ochieng notes that the Dunga Eco Tourism and Environmental Youth Group has identified 46 different bird species, which they have documented in a handbook called 'Dunga Wetland Birds.' There are also many snakes here too.



The boardwalk extends 50 metres into the Winam Gulf of Lake Victoria.

"During the early hours, there is an opportunity to see different types of snakes, but most importantly, many visitors are interested in seeing a huge python that lives in this swamp and the situnga antelopes," says Owino.

Though the guides are quick to point out that the boardwalk, which extends about 50 metres, has been coated with waterproof material that also prevents reptiles from climbing it. "This kind of innovation is a good thing for the lake ecosystem," says Ken Jumba, a county environment officer at the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) in Kisumu. "We encourage entrepreneurs from all other communities around the entire lake to learn from what is happening here in Dunga," Jumba tells IPS.

The construction of the boardwalk in 2016 also resulted in establishing a protected area around the wetland. "When our proposal was approved for funding, we involved the county government who helped relocating the traders from the wetland, some of whom had erected pit latrines above the water so that the sludge drops directly in the lake," recalls Owino.

Now small businesses, including food places run by local entrepreneurs, have moved away to the upper side of the beach, which has led to improvement of the lake's biodiversity. About 100 metres away, there is a huge biogas plant that has been welcomed. The plant, which produces some 50,000 litres of ethanol gas daily, makes use of the invasive water hyacinth that grows wildly on the lake as a key ingredient.

Agricultural activities in the lake basin has meant that fertiliser and agricultural chemicals have found their way into Lake Victoria through the rivers that feed it. This has resulted in the flourishing of the water hyacinth and algae, both of which put the aquatic ecosystem around the lake at risk.

Water hyacinth or *Eichhornia crassipes* has been responsible for decreasing numbers of fish species found on Lake Victoria. It grows so rapidly that in some areas the water beneath cannot even be seen and boats are unable to pass through it.

"We usually shred the water hyacinth, which is considered to be pollution on the lake, and then mix it with all the inedible waste material from the fish to generate the gas," Daniel Owino, the technical operator of the biogas plant, tells IPS.

Meanwhile, industrial activities around Kisumu and other towns in neighbouring Uganda and Tanzania-Lake Victoria also extends to these countries have turned the lake into a health hazard.

It will take much more commitment and cooperation to ensure that the lake is saved. Though the creation of the Dunga Papyrus Boardwalk and the cleaning up of Dunga Beach can be considered a good start.

## E-HEALTH

# Health minister launches guidelines on community health and use of indicators

By Guardian Reporter

**T**HE government has said it will continue to give priority in improving immunity services including health education and sensitization, nutrition, prevention from communicable diseases, HIV Aids as well as maternal and child health care.

Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children minister Ummu Mwalimu said in Dar es Salaam yesterday while launching guidelines of community health services plan and use of dashboard indicators of public health education.

"The launching of this initiative will supplement efforts of reducing the burden of high medical costs to the people that has been increasing government spending on preventable diseases," Mwalimu said.

She said the importance of the immunity services is underlined in the National Health Policy 2007 and the Health Sector Strategic Plan of 2015-2020, that will also be included in the preparation of the new 2020 National Health Sector Policy.

"This initiative of delivering health services at the community health workers level will enhance provision of immunity services at all community levels as well as providing health education as a means to prevent the community from diseases," she said.

Mwalimu stated that the government recognizes the fact that community health workers having correct education on health related issues which in one way or the other affect their health, can make appropriate decisions on health issues. "This will ultimately result into creating a nation of healthy people who can contribute to own development, their family, community they live and the whole country," she added.



Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children minister Ummu Mwalimu draws curtain to launch guidelines on the community health services plan and use of dashboard indicators of public health education, in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo by Guardian Correspondent

The Health Minister insisted that the government will continue improving health services in order to reach universal health coverage involving all initiatives related to providing health education on nutrition, reproductive healthcare, youth and children as well as the COVID-19 outbreak.

"Such efforts also focus at sensitizing use of health insurance that will enable people access more services. For example in the past three years the number of people who got treatment on non-communicable diseases rose from 3.4 million in 2016 to 4.2 million in 2018, which is equivalent to 24 per cent increase," the Minister for Health noted.

She further unveiled that the number of deaths caused by non-communicable

diseases was 33 percent of all deaths in the country in 2017 where 134,600 deaths were linked to such diseases. "The number of deaths caused by heart disease made some 13 percent of all deaths, which is higher than those caused by HIV/Aids, TB and malaria," she pointed out.

The Minister noted that all these disease can be reduced in the community by enhancing health education as well as providing correct education to the people on preventive measures and follow best health practices. The government intends that all these be done by healthcare providers at the community level.

Speaking at the same event, USAID Tulunge Afya Project Lead, Waziri Nyo-

ni commended the government for formalizing the system of providing health services in the community where formerly each stakeholder followed own system that faced many challenges.

Nyoni said the Tulunge Afya Project uses community health workers in implementing most of its activities in the country saying to date there are 2,200 healthcare providers in 12 regions and 29 districts working on the project.

The Research, Evaluation and Traceability Director of FHI360, Dr Joseph Msofe said USAID Tulunge Afya has collaborated with Ministry of Health to prepare the system of receiving and delivering information which is linked with the DHIS2 at the ministry.

## SA LOCKDOWN

# Cheers! South Africans turn to beer made at home to beat lockdown ban

**JOHANNESBURG**

All that waitress Thabile Vilakazi requires is some maize meal, sorghum malt and three litres of water to concoct five litres of creamy, thick traditional South African brew, known as umqombothi.

Since President Cyril Ramaphosa banned alcohol sales as part of a coronavirus lockdown, booze-deprived South Africans have turned to homebrew fermenting to get around the prohibition. "The idea came because there is no alcohol, there is no supply of alcohol anywhere," said 32-year-old Vilakazi, stuck at home in the leafy Johannesburg suburb of Randburg.

Fermented over at least three days, making umqombothi is inexpensive but time-consuming. Although traditionally served at special ceremonies, where ancestral spirits are evoked such as funerals and weddings, the brew with a creamy texture and a pungent smell is gaining popularity.

"It's a very sacred beverage," said Vilakazi, admitting it's the first time she has tried to make the beverage, usually the preserve of her eldest sister for family ceremonies. The pre-mixture of maize and sorghum can also be cooked and served as a breakfast porridge and it is also believed to soothe stomach ulcers.

But the sudden dearth of liquor sales has inspired creativity on how to get tipsy. A plethora of recipes, tips and hints are being shared on social media by professional chefs and novices alike. According to data on the Google trends website, there has been a rise in the search on "how to make your own alcohol" - starting especially as the country entered its second week of lockdown.

"Back to our roots"  
"This lockdown is taking us back



Umqombothi, a traditional South African brew.

to our roots, especially for the African youth who aren't aware of traditional life," traditional healer Luthando Finca told AFP. He said the regular use and widening popularity of the brew was reminiscent of pre-colonial African society.

"Umqombothi was enjoyed widely in African communities before Western beverages were brought onto the market," Finca said. In a 1999 study, author Anne Mager noted that the notion of "European liquor" in colonial discourse suggested that the liquor of colonial masters was something to aspire to among Africans.

"European liquor" was repeatedly contrasted to

indigenous brews of lower alcoholic content, which were pronounced to be uncivilised and primitive. "It implied that drinkers of sorghum beer, palm wine and other beverages fermented from African grains and fruits would progress to the 'superior' beverages of their colonial masters," wrote Mager.

The coronavirus lockdown regulations have pushed locals to return to ancient methods of making alcohol, "reminding us of our history and heritage," the traditional healer said.

Battle to unban booze

According to a World Health Organisation 2016 report, South Africa rubs

shoulders with the top 10 heaviest consuming nations as the average drinker had 30 litres of pure alcohol. A regional South African association of tavern and shebeen owners, representing about 20 000 micro and small businesses, has threatened legal action if regulations on alcohol sales and distribution were not relaxed. They said the lockdown was likely to "ruin" their businesses. But the government appears far from caving in.

The Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma has ruled out relaxing the ban. "We are stressing the prohibition of

the transport of liquor. The only alcohol that is allowed to be transported is the one that is used for commercial purposes, for our sanitisers," Dlamini-Zuma said on Thursday. "But liquor that you drink is not allowed to be transported in the same way, it is not allowed to be sold."

Parliament's health portfolio committee chief Sibongiseni Dhlomo has pleaded with Ramaphosa to not yield to those who want to sell alcohol. "A person who is under the influence of alcohol has a poor sense of judgement," Dhlomo said. "This lockdown period does not need people who have a poor sense of judgement."

## OUTSTANDING

# Tanzanian Elizabeth Maruma Mrema is UN CBDiversity chief

By Guardian Reporter

VERY few Tanzanians know Elizabeth Maruma Mrema who is the current Executive Secretary of the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity based in Montreal, Canada.

Mrema was the Director of the Law Division and has worked with UNEP for over two decades. Prior to joining the Law Division in her current role in June 2014, she was the Deputy Director of the Ecosystems Division, in charge of coordination, operations and programme delivery from 2012 and for one year, also served as Acting Director to the same Division.

In 2018, in addition to her role as the Law Division Director, she was also the Acting Director of the Corporate Services Division where she led the management of the human resources, financial operations and management and other administrative functions for the entire Organization.

In 2009 she had been appointed as the Executive

Secretary of the UNEP/Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), Acting Executive Secretary of the UNEP/ASCOBANS and Interim Executive Secretary of the UNEP/Gorilla Agreement, all based in Bonn, Germany and held that position until 2012 and thereafter she joined the Ecosystems Division in Nairobi, Kenya.

In these portfolios, she over saw and ensure effective conservation of migratory animals globally as well as implementation of a number of specific species agreements covering geographical areas where animals or birds or marine species migrate during their lifetime.

Elizabeth's work at UNEP has focused on the development, implementation and enforcement environmental laws both at national, regional and international level. She has played different roles in UNEP over the years that have included being a coordinator of capacity building and compliance and enforcement projects related to environmental law and the multilateral environmental



Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, UN Convention on Biological Diversity chief.

conventions.

She was a Senior Legal Officer and Chief of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) Support

and Cooperation Branch in the then Division of Environmental Conventions (DEC), and later a Principal Legal Officer and Chief of the Biodiversity/Land Law

and Governance Branch in the then Division of Environmental Law and Conventions.

Before joining UNEP, Elizabeth worked with the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania and left as a Counsellor/Senior Legal Counsel. During her time with the ministry, she was also a lecturer in Public International Law and Conference Diplomacy at Tanzania's Centre for Foreign Relations and Diplomacy. She had also served as a pro bono visiting lecturer at the University of Nairobi Law School and in the past at the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), Rome, Italy.

A lawyer and career diplomat with LLB (Hons) from the University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, LLM from Dalhousie University, Canada and Postgraduate Diploma in International Relations and Diplomacy (Summa Cum Laude) from the Centre of Foreign Relations and Diplomacy in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. She has published several articles related to international environmental law, compliance and enforcement of conventions and developed, among others, a number of multilateral environmental agreements negotiation tools, handbooks and guidelines currently used by UNEP in its capacity-building programmes.

## PENALTY

## City trader intercepted relocating liquor business to evade tax

KIGALI

A man, whose liquor store had been closed over tax arrears, was arrested on Tuesday morning while relocating his business after he broke the padlock and entered his shop.

Emmanuel Ndahimana, the owner of EMA Wonderful Shop located in Nyabugogo, Nyarugenge District was arrested by the Revenue Protection Unit (RPU) at Giti Kinyoni at about 9am as he was transporting 25 boxes of assorted alcoholic drinks to Nzove, a trading centre on the outskirts of Kigali.

Ndahimana was arrested alongside one Jean Bosco Karegeya, the driver, whom he had hired to transport the goods. The vehicle registration number RAA 087T, Toyota Hilux type, which they were using was also impounded.

In January this year, Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA) Enforcement Division placed a padlock at EMA Wonderful Shop—a liquor store—owned by Ndahimana over accrued taxes amounting to Rwf54 million. He had been required to clear the taxes before reopening his business.

Rwanda National Police (RNP) spokesperson, Commissioner of Police (CP) John Bosco Kabera, said that Ndahimana was trying to evade taxes and together with Karegeya, they violated government directives on fighting and preventing the spread of coronavirus.

"The threat of coronavirus we are facing at the moment is bigger than this unlawful act. We expect everyone to comply with the directives, avoid unnecessary movements, transporting non-essential things, and abusing the granted privilege to operate in this period," said Kabera.

The vehicle which was being used to transport the goods had a "pass" to transport foodstuffs in this period of the lockdown. It is said that Ndahimana was attempting to relocate some of his goods from the shop just in case RRA decided to impound all his goods to recover tax arrears. Ndahimana told the media that he intended hide the drinks in Nzove before selling them.

"I violated the government directives of staying home, broke into my shop closed by Rwanda Revenue Authority and took out the goods unlawfully. I can only beg for forgiveness," said Ndahimana.

His driver, Karegeya, said that he had been paid Rwf50000 to transport the goods to Nzove. He equally asked to be forgiven for violating the directives and using his vehicle in non-essential, unauthorized and unlawful activities.

Kabera warned against violating the orders, engaging in unnecessary activities and lying to Police so as to engage in acts which put people's lives at risk of getting infected with and spreading the pandemic.

Under article 199 of the East African Community Management Act, which is also used in Rwanda, it specifies a penalty of US\$5000 to a driver found driving a vehicle with goods while the vehicle and goods are auctioned.

## RELIEF

# Weddings resume in Wuhan as lockdown is lifted

BEIJING

Big gatherings have been cancelled around the world but in the Chinese city of Wuhan, they are finally resuming as authorities relax a strict lockdown rules.

The white dress is being put on and the bow tie fastened, weddings are back on in China's Wuhan and photo shoots along the water's edge are in full swing. Matrimony, birthdays and celebrations have been cancelled around the world but in Wuhan, the first city to go on lockdown in January has recently seen that lockdown being lifted.

Weddings, birthdays and celebrations have been canceled around the world but in the Chinese city of Wuhan, they are finally resuming as authorities relax a strict lockdown that separated families, friends and lovers for over

two months. Libby Hogan h

"We stayed home every day and I missed her. When I missed her the only thing I could do is chat with her on WeChat and have video calls," says Peng. "We had video calls, played online games and

played computer games – that is all we could do," adds Yao.

Yao and Peng had originally planned to register their marriage on 20 February 2020. The date has a lot of two's in it, considered auspicious, symbolising couple-

hood was meant to be one of China's most popular wedding dates.

But as the Luna New Year ended, Wuhan was shut down. And with that their plans went out the window. But just last Saturday they tied the knot and had the elaborate

photo shoot of their dreams. They are planning their Chinese wedding banquet in May but it will be a simple celebration in Yao's family home. Hotels are still not taking bookings and big gatherings are still frowned upon.



A Wuhan couple finally gets wedded after Covid-19 debacle.

## E-COMMERCE

## Online book sales surge on virus fears

NAIROBI

Online book stores have reported a spike in purchases as more parents shun over-the-counter services in line with the government's social distancing directive to minimise the spread of Covid-19.

At the Text Book Centre, managing director Armand Houahu said the store's online unit has seen a surge in sales by up to 300 percent in a couple of weeks. "As a result, some of the customer orders have not been processed and delivered within the stipulated SLA timelines," he said, adding the dusk to dawn curfew has affected their capacity to deliver orders instantaneously.

"All customers deliveries within Nairobi now take up to 72 hours while those from outside about five days," he added. Naria Bookshop in Nairobi has also seen a rise in online orders compared to the pre-coronavirus days. The store, which primarily sales online books such as Africa literature as well as inspirational books, is struggling to sustain the huge demand.

"Over this period, we have seen a rise in online orders in contrast to the early months of this year," one of the workers told the Business Daily. He added that this has been boosted by parents buying books as they are in the when schools will resume.

## SA LOCKDOWN

# Alcohol ban strengthened to prohibit its transport, as cigarette ban remains

CAPE TOWN

SA's ban on the buying and selling of alcohol, save its use in hand sanitisers and industrial products, as well as the prohibition of the sale of cigarettes will remain in place until at least the end of the lockdown at the end of April.

The prohibition against the buying and selling of wine, beer and spirits, as well as cigarettes and tobacco products, was instituted at the start of the lockdown in late March. The lockdown has been extended for a second phase to the end of April in order to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, briefed the media on Thursday morning on amendments to the regulations governing the lockdown. "In the amendments, we are stressing the issue of the prohibition of transportation of liquor. The only alcohol that is al-

lowed to be transported is that used for commercial purposes for our sanitisers and related issues," she said. "But liquor that we drink is not allowed to be transported, in the same way that it is not allowed to be sold. So that is what we are adding." Minister in the Presidency, Jackson Mthembu, confirmed the ban on the buying and

selling of cigarettes would remain.

Dlamini-Zuma added that SA's economy would "incrementally" be opened up, and South Africans could expect the publication of new amendments almost every week. Some prohibitions would remain in place for a "very long time," she said, but did not provide any detail.

DIVERSIFICATION

# Arab Fashion Council urges Dubai designers to produce protective clothing against Covid-19

DUBAI

Runways may be quieter than ever, but the Arab Fashion Council is on a mission to get designers' ateliers buzzing once again - and all for a good cause. The council, which promotes regional talent on a global stage, has called upon local designers to make protective clothing to be used in the fight against Covid-19.

Under the banner #Thread4Cause, this new move brings together the AFC and Dubai Health Authority, helping designers make protective face masks, gowns and hoodies that comply with the authority's safety standards. In addition, regional perfume makers will be able to start producing hand sanitiser under the initiative.

"We are in this together, and we will be out of it together," says Jacob Abrian,

founder and chief executive of the Arab Fashion Council. "#Thread4Cause is a very inspiring and heartwarming initiative that demonstrates how the fashion industry goes beyond showcasing a beautiful collection, and extends its talent in supporting the community in times of need.

"We are very proud and grateful of our Arab fashion industry members who are committed to giving back to their community and joining hands in such a creative force." Although this is the first campaign of its kind in this region, the fashion industry worldwide has been quick to mobilise its vast resources to help combat the virus. All across Europe and America, workshops and factories have stopped production of the latest trends and instead are mass-producing masks and protective clothing to help healthcare workers.

Louis Vuitton, Prada,



A woman making face masks.

Burberry and Chanel are some of the big names that have thrown their weight and expertise into the battle, putting the skill of their seamstresses into making protective garments, while industry giant LVMH was quick to use its perfume-making factories to make hand sanitiser.

All goods are being distributed to healthcare workers free of charge. One of the first Dubai designers to get involved with the AFC initiative is Marmar Halim, who has put her signature glam dresses on hold to instead produce protective wear.

"Our fashion house and factory will be putting its resources at full capacity to produce medical gowns and surgical masks, proudly made in the UAE for the medical community front-liners fighting Covid-19," she said in a statement. "Special thanks to the Arab Fashion Council, which has given its support to make this project viable."

Using what it calls an "emer-

gency network" of Arab designers, the AFC is helping designers and their facilities make the switch to producing disposable wear, while adhering to stringent regulations. With the goods to be distributed to the region's healthcare workers, it is imperative that safety standards remain high. With the number of worldwide cases having surpassed 1.9 million, clearly the need for protective clothing looks set to continue for the foreseeable future.

"The Dubai Health Authority is proud to endorse the Arab Fashion Council's initiative, which highlights the strength of 'made in the UAE' and proves how Dubai is taking a leading role and all measures to provide safety to its citizens and residents," Dubai Health Authority said in a statement. "#Thread4Cause is a call-to-action initiative open to every Arab company in the fashion industry enabling them to show their love to their community."

DIGITIZATION

# Dubai start-up rolling out first Covid-19 app with EU medical device certification

DUBAI

A Dubai-born start-up has rolled out the first Covid-19 health monitoring app with EU Class 1 medical device certification that will help 'flatten the curve' for overburdened healthcare providers battling the most serious pandemic in a century.

Developed by Medicus AI, in partnership with Luxembourg's Bionext Lab, CoVive provides self-assessment, test interpretation and self-monitoring through chatbot and automation technology.

To reach the greatest number of people, the app is white labelled for national ministries of health and public health care providers, with the potential to assist millions of patients. Dr Baher Al Hakim, chief executive and co-founder of Medicus AI, told The National. So far, CoVive has partnerships in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Austria, France, Portugal and Greece.

Chatbots have been a natural choice for disseminating health information during the coronavirus crisis, according to the World Economic Forum, with thousands of options - including offerings from the US Centre for Disease Control and the World Health Organisation - available worldwide.

The WEF predicts the global pandemic, which has infected over 2 million people and killed more than 137,000 to date, will accelerate the widespread use of chatbots. After the crisis subsides, chatbots will become mainstream means for matching patients to doctors, scheduling appointments, checking symptoms and preparing for procedures and following post-discharge instructions.

Medicus AI's managing director in China, Francisco Vega, first pitched the concept of

CoVive in late January, with a small team from Medicus devoted to building the product for a Chinese audience. But as the pandemic swept the globe in March, Dr Al Hakim diverted half the team, around 50 people, to start working on CoVive full-time to reach as many individuals as possible.

"We made a mistake early on by not taking him seriously," Dr Al Hakim said, "Our response was a bit slow," he acknowledged. Diagnostic labs and large hospitals, which make up the bulk of Medicus AI's clients, reported being overwhelmed by Covid-19 testing in recent months, and when health care providers began telling patients with mild symptoms to stay home and self-monitor, the Medicus AI team decided to fast-track a product to help people record and communicate their symptoms to clinicians.

CoVive's medical recommendations are automated, based on what patients report: they are told to go to an urgent care facility, call their doctor or to continue to self-monitor, based on symptoms. CoVive is the first Covid-19 app to receive a CE medical device class 1 certification, an EU marker that means it poses the lowest risk to patients.

"Completing the CE certification in such a short time was nothing short of miraculous," Dr Al Hakim said. "Even though the timing was critical, we couldn't take any shortcuts here." The biggest technical challenge is that a new disease like Covid-19 means medical guidelines on treatment change constantly and more is known each day, according to Dr Nadine Nehme, the chief science officer and co-founder at Medicus AI. To reflect those changes, the product is updated daily to comply with new guidelines.



**ISIDINGO** MONDAY - FRIDAY STARTING 7:30 PM **ITV**

<p><b>ITV</b></p> <p><b>MONDAY 13 March</b></p> <p>5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi 6:00 Habari 6:40 Kumekucha 7:30 HABARI 8:00 Kumekucha Michezo 9:00 Kumekucha Kishindo 9:30 Soap: Isidingo the need 10:00 Watoto wetu 11:00 Jiji Letu 12:00 Al Jazeera 12:30 Igizo Mtego rpt 13:00 Mjue Zaidi 13:45 Art and Lifestyle rpt 14:10 Telenovela rpt: Elena's Ghost 15:00 Movie: Identity card 16:30 Watoto Wetu 17:00 The Base 18:00 Jiji Letu 18:10 Albu yakol rpt 18:15 Mapishi 18:45 Kesho leo 19:00 Afya ya Jamii 19:30 Isidingo 20:00 Habari 21:05 Dakika 45 22:00 Telenovela: Elena's Ghost 23:00 Habari 00:30 Al Jazeera 02:00 DWTW</p> <p><b>TUESDAY 14 March</b></p> <p>5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi 6:00 Habari 6:40 Kumekucha 7:30 HABARI 8:00 Kumekucha Michezo 9:00 Kumekucha Kishindo 9:30 Isidingo 10:00 Watoto wetu 10:30 Jungu Kuu rpt 11:00 The Base rpt 12:00 Al Jazeera 12:30 Afya ya jamii rpt 13:00 Kipindi maalum: KTMDA 13:30 Kipindi Maalum rpt: Wizaru ya vivanda na biashara 13:55 Habari za saa 14:00 Telenovela rpt: Elena's Ghost 14:55 Habari za saa 15:00 Meza Huru 16:30 Watoto wetu 17:00 The Base 18:00 Jiji Letu 18:10 Yu wapi 18:15 Mapishi rpt 18:30 Uchumi na biashara 19:00 Jarida la wanawake 19:30 Isidingo 20:00 Habari 21:05 Tanzania yetu 21:35 Chetu ni chetu 22:15 Telenovela: Elena's Ghost 23:00 Habari 23:30 The Base 00:30 DWTW</p> <p><b>WEDNESDAY 15 April</b></p> <p>5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi 6:00 HABARI 6:40 Kumekucha 7:30 HABARI 8:00 Kumekucha Michezo 9:30 Isidingo 9:55 Habari za saa 10:00 Watoto wetu 10:30 Usafiri wako rpt 10:55 Habari za saa 11:00 The Base</p>	<p>09:55 Habari za saa 10:00 Watoto wetu 10:30 Uchumi na biashara 10:55 Habari za saa 11:00 The Base rpt 11:55 Habari za saa 12:00 Al Jazeera 12:30 Jarida la wanawake rpt 12:55 Habari za saa 13:00 Dakika 45 13:55 Habari za saa 14:00 Telenovela rpt: Elena's Ghost 14:55 Habari za saa 15:00 Meza Huru 16:30 Watoto Wetu 17:00 The Base 18:00 Jiji Letu 18:15 Korean drama: The great queen Seonduk 19:00 Ijue Sheria 19:30 Isidingo 20:00 Habari 21:00 Albu Yakol Hata wewe? 21:10 Kipindi Maalum: Tanesco 21:40 Ripoti Maalum: 22:15 Telenovela rpt: Elena's Ghost 23:00 Habari 23:30 The Base 00:30 Al Jazeera 2:00 DWTW</p> <p><b>THURSDAY 16 April</b></p> <p>5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi 6:00 HABARI 6:40 Kumekucha 7:30 HABARI 8:00 Kumekucha Michezo 8:55 Habari za saa 9:00 Kumekucha Kishindo 9:30 Isidingo 9:55 Habari za saa 10:00 Watoto 10:30 Shamba lulu rpt 10:55 Habari za saa 11:00 The Base rpt 11:55 Habari za saa 12:00 Al Jazeera 12:30 Ijue Sheria 12:55 Habari za saa 13:00 Ripoti Maalum rpt 13:30 Tanzania yetu 13:55 Habari za saa 14:00 Telenovela rpt: Elena's Ghost 15:00 Meza Huru 16:30 Watoto Wetu 17:00 The Base 18:00 Jiji Letu 18:15 Mapishi 19:00 Usafiri wako 19:30 Isidingo 20:00 Habari 21:00 Malumbano ya hoja 23:00 Habari 23:30 The Base 00:30 DWTW</p> <p><b>FRIDAY 17 April</b></p> <p>5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi 6:00 HABARI 6:40 Kumekucha 7:30 HABARI 8:00 Kumekucha Michezo 8:55 Habari za saa 09:00 Kumekucha Kishindo 9:30 Isidingo 9:55 Habari za saa 10:00 Watoto wetu 10:30 Usafiri wako rpt 10:55 Habari za saa 11:00 The Base</p>	<p>11:55 Habari za saa 12:00 Al Jazeera 12:30 Kipindi Maalum rpt: Tanesco 12:55 Habari za saa 13:00 Jagina rpt 13:30 Chetu ni chetu rpt 13:55 Habari za saa 14:00 Chetu ni chetu rpt 14:10 Telenovela rpt: Elena's Ghost 14:55 Habari za saa 15:00 Meza Huru 16:30 Watoto Wetu 17:00 The Base 17:30 Ibadia ya kislamu 18:00 Jiji Letu 18:15 Mizengwe rpt 18:30 Shamba lulu 19:00 Kipindi Maalum: TMDA 19:30 Isidingo 20:00 Habari 21:05 Kipima Joto 23:00 Habari 23:30 The Base 00:30 DWTW</p> <p><b>SATURDAY 18 April</b></p> <p>5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi 6:00 HABARI 6:40 Kumekucha 7:00 Habari 8:00 Al Jazeera 9:00 Watoto wetu 10:00 Shika Bamba 5 10:30 Mjue Zaidi rpt 11:15 The Base rpt 11:45 The Great Queen Seonduk 12:30 Chetu ni chetu rpt 13:15 Telenovela rpt: Elena's Ghost 13:30 Igizo rpt: Mapito 16:00 Igizo rpt: Mizengwe 16:20 Igizo: Mtego 17:00 Shamsam za Pwani 18:00 Jiji Letu 18:15 Mapishi 18:30 Igizo: Mapito 19:00 Art and lifestyle 19:25 Jungu Kuu 20:00 Habari 21:00 Hawavumi lakini wamo 22:00 Kipindi maalum: Insta Moja 22:10 Kesho leo rpt 22:40 Isidingo rpt 01:30 DWTW</p> <p><b>SUNDAY 19 April</b></p> <p>5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi 6:00 HABARI 6:40 Kumekucha 7:00 Habari 8:00 Al Jazeera 09:00 Watoto Wetu 10:00 Isidingo 11:40 Igizo: Mizengwe rpt 12:00 Bongo Movie rpt: 14:00 Tamasha la Michezo 15:00 Mwangaza 16:00 The Great queen Seonduk 16:45 ITV Top 10 17:30 Kipindi cha kikristo 18:00 Jiji Letu 18:15 Mapishi 19:30 Igizo: Mtego 20:00 Habari 21:05 Kipindi Maalum: Biko 21:10 Mizengwe 21:30 Mjue Zaidi 22:15 Bongo Movie: 23:45 ITV Top 10 00:30 Telenovela rpt: Elena's Ghost</p>	<p><b>CAPITAL</b></p> <p><b>Mon 13 April</b></p> <p>06:00 Al Jazeera 07:00 Morning Jam (Via Capital Radio) 09:00 Lete Raha (Via Capital Radio) 13:00 Telenovela rpt: (Dónde está Elisa?) 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Where is Elisa? 17:15 Tanzania Yetu rpt 17:45 Bundesliga kick off 18:15 Capchat rpt 19:15 Mizengwe 19:30 The Décor 20:00 Korean Drama: Kimchi Family 21:00 Out'n'about 21:30 Movie: The four horsemen 23:00 Series rpt: Itohan 01:00 Al Jazeera</p> <p><b>Sun 19 April</b></p> <p>08:00 CNN International 09:00 In good shape 10:00 Capchat rpt 11:00 Sports Gazette rpt 11:30 Korean Drama rpt: Kimchi Family 12:00 Jagina rpt 12:30 Bundesliga Kick Off rpt 13:00 In good shape rpt 13:30 Series rpt: Itohan 15:15 Albu yako 15:30 Drive it rpt 16:00 Dakika 45 rpt 16:45 Mizengwe rpt 17:00 The Décor rpt 17:30 Meza Huru 19:00 Turning the Spotlight rpt 19:30 Cookery pgm: Culinary Delights 20:00 Korean Drama: Kimchi Family 21:00 Shift 21:15 Capchat live 22:15 Telenovela rpt: (Dónde está Elisa?) Where is Elisa? 00:00 Al Jazeera</p>
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Medicus AI co-founder Dr Baher Al Hakim.

WORLD

Trump unveils three-stage process for states to end coronavirus shutdown

WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Donald Trump laid out new guidelines on Thursday for U.S. states to emerge from a coronavirus shutdown in a staggered, three-stage approach...

The recommendations call on states to show a "downward trajectory" of COVID-19 cases or positive tests for the disease over 14 days before proceeding with the plan...

"We are not opening all at once, but one careful step at a time," Trump told reporters at the White House. The president had said earlier this month he wanted to reopen the economy with a "big bang."

The plan is a set of recommenda-

tions for state governors, not orders. In that sense, it represents a backdown by Trump, who on Monday insisted he had total authority to direct states to re-open or remain closed.

With the onus on governors, the plan also gives Trump political cover if not everything goes well. The president, a Republican who is running for re-election in November, has faced criticism for downplaying the seriousness of the virus in the early weeks of the outbreak.

The recommendations drew criticism from Ron Klain, who spearheaded the Obama administration's response to Ebola and has advised former Vice President Joe Biden, the presumptive 2020 Democratic presidential nominee.

"This isn't a plan. It's barely a power-point," he said on Twitter, noting it did not include provisions to ramp up testing or set a specific standard for levels of



President Donald Trump

the disease before economic opening.

Democrats such as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Biden said testing was key to opening the country and criticized Trump's presentation for lacking specifics.

"I wouldn't call it a plan. I think what he's done, he's kind of punted," Biden said in an interview on CNN.

The new guidelines effectively end, at least for some states, the 30-day federal virus mitigation rules that were meant to stay in place through the end of April. States that have met the criteria can move into the first phase of re-opening on Friday, Trump said. Some 29 states would be in a position to re-open soon, he said.

'NEW NORMAL'

Before they do that, however, the guidelines suggest hospitals have a "robust testing program" that includes antibody testing in place for healthcare workers, the guidelines say.

States should have the ability to set up screening and testing sites for people with symptoms and as well as contact tracing capabilities, and healthcare facilities should be able to supply personal protective gear independently and handle surges if COVID-19 cases increase again.

In the first phase of re-opening, the guidelines say groups of more than 10 people should be avoided if appropriate distancing measures are not practical. Non-essential travel should be minimized, telework should be encouraged, and common areas in offices closed.

Schools remain closed in phase 1, but large venues such as movies theaters, restaurants, sports stadiums, and places of worship can open with "strict physical distancing protocols."

Hospitals, which have been hit hard by the health crisis, may resume out-patient elective surgeries and gyms can re-open with new protocols. Bars should remain closed, it said.

In the second phase, applicable to states and regions with "no evidence of a rebound" in cases, the guidelines recommend groups of more than 50 be avoided where social distancing is not practical. Non-essential travel can resume, while schools and youth camps can reconvene and bars with "diminished standing-room occupancy" may re-open. Hospitals may also resume in-patient elective surgeries. Such procedures are critical to hospitals' income.

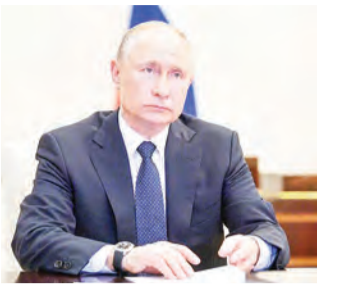
Phase three includes unrestricted staffing of workplaces, but Dr. Deborah Birx, the coordinator of the White House coronavirus task force who took a lead role in designing the guidelines, said that a "new normal" would remain in place: a need for higher hygiene standards and more space between people to prevent asymptomatic spread of the virus.

White House officials made a point of highlighting the support of Birx, infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci and Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for the plan. Trump thanked them repeatedly from the White House podium.

Agencies

Putin postpones preparations for May 9 parade, Immortal Regiment march

NOVO-OGARYOVO



ON Thursday, at a meeting with the permanent members of the Russian Security Council, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced postponement of the preparations for the Victory Day Parade on May 9 marking the 75th anniversary of the USSR's Victory in the Great Patriotic War.

"There is already less than a month left before the Victory Day and now we face an uneasy and, let us say straight, a hard choice: both May 9 is a sacred date for us and the life of every person is priceless," the Russian leader said.

According to the Russian president, "to be able to hold the May 9 parade, the preparations for it should be started already now, right now."

"But the risks associated with the epidemic whose peak won't be over [by May 9] are extremely high and this does not give me the right to start the preparations for the parade and other mass events," Putin stressed.

The Immortal Regiment march is also put on hold, the president informed, adding that both events are due later this year, when the threat of the novel coronavirus recedes.

"We will make the threat that we have faced today recede, and then we will certainly hold all events scheduled for May 9, doing this emotionally and in a festive manner.

Of course we will do it this year, 2020, given that the entire year has been declared the Year of Memory and Glory," the president said.

The Red Square parade in Moscow and the Immortal Regiment march will certainly take place, the president pledged.

Most US firms have no plans to leave China due to virus - survey

SHANGHAI

MOST US firms in China currently have no plans to relocate production to other parts of the country or abroad due to the coronavirus, but there is less certainty about the long term due to growing worries over US-China decoupling, a survey showed.

Concerns over logistics challenges now outweigh those of factory closures, said respondents to the joint survey by the American chambers of commerce in Beijing and Shanghai with consultancy PricewaterhouseCoopers. A total of 68% reported that demand for products and services was below normal.

"Our survey results show that companies are considering adjustments to their business strategy, but there is no mass exodus as a result of COVID-19," Ker Gibbs, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, said yesterday.

"Still, there is no escaping the fact that the current crisis adds a new and unwelcome dimension to the conversation about decoupling."

The novel coronavirus, which causes the respiratory illness COVID-19, has led to over 130,000 deaths and caused massive disruption to economic activity around the world.

China has taken steps since February to restart its economy by recalling workers to factories and easing travel restrictions imposed earlier to help stop the virus spreading. On April 8, it eased a 76-day lockdown in Wuhan that cut the major industrial hub off from the rest of the country, after the number of new local infections plunged.

TOO SOON

The survey was conducted from March 6-13 and received responses from 25 companies. It targeted senior executives from firms that had global revenue of over US\$500 million and were involved in sectors from healthcare to consumer goods.

Respondents were a subset of 70 companies polled in October for a prior survey by the three organisations, they said, providing a basis for comparison.

Noting how the top concerns for companies had shifted over the course of those two surveys, from the US-China trade war to the coronavirus, the chambers said over half of their March respondents said it was too soon to tell whether their China supply chain strategy for the next three to five years would change.

The proportion of respondents who said they thought it would be impossible for the two economies to decouple fell to 44% in the latest survey, from 66% in October.

"There is a perceived greater potential for greater economic decoupling," said Jan Nicholas, consulting partner at PwC China.

Almost 70% of respondents to the March survey said they expected their China supply chain operations to return to normal in less than three months, and 96% forecast a return to normal within three to six months. Xinhua

Xinhua

Chinese mainland infections top 82,000 as Wuhan revises figures

BEIJING/WUHAN/HARBIN

THE overall confirmed COVID-19 cases on the Chinese mainland by Thursday was updated to 82,692, as the city of Wuhan in central China's Hubei province revised its figures yesterday-morning, said an official yesterday.

The death toll on the mainland by Thursday was also renewed to 4,632, said Mi Feng (pictured), an official with the National Health Commission at a press conference in Beijing.

The total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Wuhan as of the end of April 16 was revised up by 325 to 50,333, and the number of fatalities up by 1,290 to 3,869, according to a notification from the Wuhan municipal headquarters for the COVID-19 epidemic

prevention and control.

The revisions were made in accordance with related laws and regulations, as well as the principle of being responsible for history, the people and the deceased, according to the notification.

This ensures that the information on the city's COVID-19 epidemic is open and transparent, and the data are accurate, according to the notification.

"What lie behind epidemic data are the lives and health of the general public, as well as the credibility of the government," said an official for the municipal headquarters, adding that the timely revision of the figures, among other things, shows respect for every single life.

The notification was published as the commission said Friday that it received reports of 26 new



confirmed COVID-19 cases on the mainland Thursday, of which 15 were imported.

The other 11 new cases were domestically transmitted, the National Health Commission said in a daily report, noting that five cases were reported in Guangdong province, three in Heilongjiang province, two in Shandong province and one in

Liaoning province.

No deaths were reported Thursday on the mainland. Three new suspected cases, all domestic ones, were also reported, with two in Heilongjiang province and one in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

According to the commission, 52 people were discharged from hospitals after recovery Thursday, while the number of severe cases decreased by 6 to 89.

As of Thursday, the mainland had reported a total of 1,549 imported cases. Of the cases, 670 had been discharged from hospitals after recovery, 879 were being treated with 45 in severe condition, said the commission.

No death from the imported cases had been reported, it added.

The commission said 1,081 pa-

Xinhua

US may be prepping site in Nevada to test nukes, Russian diplomat warns

MOSCOW

THE United States may be on the way to bringing its nuclear test site in Nevada on high alert, as many signs attest, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told TASS on Thursday.

"The United States, as many signs attest, including publications citing organizations engaged in the United States in maintaining their nuclear arsenal in combat readiness, may well be bringing their test site in Nevada on high alert," he said.

Ryabkov (pictured) added that Russia never did anything whatsoever that allegedly violated its obligations on banning nuclear tests.

Russia is ready to unilaterally observe moratorium on deploying missiles - diplomat

"As for the barrage of criticism coming from Washington for more than half a year now that we allegedly do not fully comply with our moratorium on nuclear tests, we repeat once again that we did not take any steps that would include elements of deviation from our obligations stemming from our unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing and from our ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)," he said commenting on a report by the US Department of State on the "Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments" issued on Wednesday.

Ryabkov stressed that the United States, as a country that formally expressed its unwillingness to ratify



the accord, had no right to hurl any accusations on this score.

He pointed out that Washington's actions looked like a disinformation campaign that the United States

had launched when it was preparing to unilaterally withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

"At that time, they [the Ameri-

Agencies

China launches active international cooperation to combat Covid-19

THE State Council Information Office of China held a press conference recently, where officials from the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) and National Health Commission (NHC) shared the development on international cooperation in fighting COVID-19 and answered questions from journalists.

According to the press conference, China has offered multilingual prevention and therapeutic plans and held a video conference to share COVID-19 control experiences with the international community.

Besides, it also timely shared

scientific data, technical results and prevention strategies, shared Chinese experiences and technologies, and rendered assistance and technical support for other affected countries and regions.

So far, the country has offered assistance in 4 batches to 89 countries and 4 international organizations to combat the novel coronavirus, and a fifth batch is currently under planning.

The virus knows no borders or ethnicity, and it can only be defeated by the concerted efforts of all mankind. And that's why the G20 Extraordinary Virtual Leaders' Summit on COVID-19 attracted global attention.

Vice Foreign Minister Luo Zhaohui introduced at the conference that the summit was the first major multilateral diplomatic activity joined by Chinese President Xi Jinping since the COVID-19 outbreak.

China has achieved prominent results in epidemic prevention and control, and is actively helping other countries in this regard, receiving high reputation from the international society, he said.

After the outbreak of COVID-19, China shared the completed genome sequence of the novel coronavirus with the WHO at the first opportunity, laying an important foundation for global scientists to conduct medicine, vac-

ine and therapeutic researches. Vice Minister of Science and Technology Xu Nanping said global scientists coped with the pandemic together, conducted joint researches, and shared the results.

According to him, Chinese scientists, having done substantial researches on medicine development and clinical treatment, have preliminarily formulated a relatively complete technical plan. China will further share the results, conduct international cooperation, and actively launch and join international clinical researches, he added.

Many countries gave China valuable support when the coun-

try was at a critical moment of combating the virus. Now, when COVID-19 is basically controlled at home, China is willing to re-

inforce the pandemic control for these countries by dispatching medical experts and other forms, upholding the vision of building a community with a shared future, and conveying the confidence to defeat the virus, said Zeng Yixin, deputy director of the NHC.

Zeng said China will take the initiative to share its experiences in treating the disease, and actively share with the international society the latest therapeutic and prevention plans in accordance with the demands in dif-

ferent countries.

In-depth technical exchanges have been conducted by the NHC. It held a video conference to share China's experience with representatives from 77 countries and 7 international organizations who attended, which was viewed by over 100,000 people online, Zeng said.

Besides, the NHC also established an online knowledge center of epidemic prevention and clinical treatment, as well as an international expert database, conducting nearly 30 technical exchange conferences with over 100 countries and regions.

It timely responded to the demand of foreign countries and realized precise docking between Chinese and foreign prevention and treatment plans, Zeng added.

So far, China has offered assistance to 89 countries and 4 international organizations. Deng Boqing, deputy head of the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) noted that to actively offer foreign assistance within its capability is an inevitable requirement for China to uphold the right approach to justice and interests and practice the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind. People's Daily







Captain Tom Moore

## Captain Tom, 99, in the running for British Sports Personality of 2020

LONDON

BOBBY Moore was named Britain's sports personality of the year in 1966 after leading England to triumph in the soccer World Cup, and now another Captain Moore has become a surprise contender to follow in his footsteps – at the age of 99.

World War Two veteran Tom Moore has raised an astonishing 15 million pounds (\$19 million) for the National Health Service (NHS) as it fights the coronavirus epidemic by walking 100 laps of his garden.

Wearing a blazer bedecked with his medals, he covered the 25-metre circuit with the help of a wheeled walking frame, completing the challenge just two weeks shy of his 100th birthday on April 30.

Boxer Tyson Fury and Liverpool soccer captain Jordan Henderson are the hot favourites to pick up the award at an annual gala hosted by the public broadcaster, the BBC, in December.

REUTERS

## IPL suspended 'until further notice', Sri Lanka offers to host

NEW DELHI

THIS year's Indian Premier League (IPL) was officially postponed until further notice because of the COVID-19 pandemic on Thursday but the Indian cricket board believes it can find a "safe" window later for the lucrative Twenty20 tournament.

The eight-team league, originally scheduled from March 29, was initially suspended until Wednesday even as India entered a three-week lockdown last month.

With the lockdown being extended until May 3 and travel and other restrictions in place, a second postponement was inevitable.

With health concerns and lockdown measures in mind, the IPL Governing Council decided to suspend the 2020 season until further notice, Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary Jay Shah said in a statement.

"The health and safety of the nation and everyone involved in our great sport remains our top priority..." Shah said.

"...the BCCI along with the franchise owners, broadcaster, sponsors and all the stakeholders acknowledge that the IPL 2020 season will only commence when it is safe and appropriate to do so."

The confirmation came a day after key franchise officials told Reuters that the

eight-team league had been indefinitely postponed.

"BCCI will continue to monitor and review the situation regarding a potential start date in close partnership with all of its stakeholders..." Shah added.

The number of confirmed coronavirus infections in India has jumped to 12,380, including 414 deaths, as of Thursday.

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has offered to host the tournament.

"It looks like Sri Lanka will be clear of the coronavirus before India," SLC president Shammi Silva told Reuters in Colombo.

"If so, we can host the tournament here. We will be writing to the Indian cricket board soon," he added.

Indian media speculated on a possible window for the IPL in September-October, before this year's Twenty20 World Cup in Australia.

Advertisement

The uncertainty is a big setback, particularly for the 62 cricketers bought for a collective \$18.34 million at the players' auction in December.

Australian Pat Cummins became the IPL's most expensive overseas buy ever when the Kolkata Knight Riders paid a staggering \$2.18 million for the fast bowler in the auction in Kolkata.

REUTERS

## Tokyo Olympics won't provide much economic growth for Japan

TOKYO

IOC member John Coates, who oversees planning for next year's Tokyo Olympics, has claimed the postponed games could help "kick start" Japan's economy.

Japan has been devastated like many countries by the coronavirus pandemic and could be in a recession when the Olympics are to open on July 23, 2021.

"These games are a very positive opportunity for an economic stimulus," Coates said in a teleconference on Thursday with the Tokyo organizing committee. "These games can help kick start the economy again. These games could be the rebirth of the tourism industry."

Coates also praised Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, calling him a "very, very smart man." He said Abe also viewed the games next year as providing an economic stimulus.

But economists and Olympic researchers contacted by The Associated Press on Friday said any economic boost will be negligible given the size of Japan's \$5 trillion economy and the limited tourism and economic benefits from the 17-day games.

In some previous Olympics, soaring prices and crowding have discouraged tourists instead of attracting them.

"His predictions fly in the face of all the research on the financial impacts of hosting the games 'on a good day' – and the current global crisis does not qualify as 'a good day,'" Helen Lenskyj, a professor emerita at the University of Toronto, said in an email.

Lenskyj has written eight books on the Olympics, including the most recent –



Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee President Yoshiro Mori, left, and CEO Toshio Muto, right, attend teleconference with International Olympic Committee member John Coates, who heads the inspection team for Tokyo Olympics, in Tokyo Thursday, April 16, 2020. Tokyo Olympic organizers and the IOC said Thursday they will cut some of the extras out of next year's postponed games, an attempt to limit what is expected to be billions of dollars in added expenses. (AP)

"The Olympic Games: A Critical Approach." She suggested Japan would be better off if it did not have to finance next year's games.

"At this moment in history, 'a very smart man' would be wishing his country did not have the added burden of hosting the Olympics," Lenskyj said.

Japan is officially spending \$12.6 billion to organize the Olympics, although a government audit report in December said it was twice that much. All but \$5.6 billion is taxpayer money.

IOC and Japanese officials say they don't know the cost of the one-year delay, but estimates have put it at \$2 billion to \$6 billion. Nearly all of the added costs fall to Japan under an agreement signed in 2013 when Tokyo was awarded the games.

Coates confirmed the IOC would be spending "several hundred million dollars" because of the postponement. The funds will go to distressed international federations and national Olympic committees, and not to Tokyo

Tokyo organizing committee CEO Toshio Muto has described the added costs as "massive" and Coates acknowledged "there will be some negative impacts."

"If Tokyo is hoping that a surge of tourism is going to cover the costs of moving the games by a year, they are likely to be very disappointed," Victor Matheson, a sports economist at the College of the Holy Cross, said in an email.

Matheson and colleague Robert Baumann calculated the impact of foreign tourism on the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics. They discounted local spending since it was simply moving expenditures from one place in the country to another.

They said Rio had 60,000 added arrivals and estimated \$5,000 spending by each arrival – an impact of \$300 million.

Rio spent about \$13 billion to organize the Olympics, and some put the figure at \$20 billion.

Matheson and Robert Baade of Lake Forest College published a study in 2016 titled "Going

for Gold: The Economics of the Olympics." They looked at the impact of short-term and long-term tourism, sports and other infrastructure, employment, trade, and the intangible "feel-good factor" of holding the Olympics.

They concluded "in most cases the Olympics are a money-losing proposition for host cities; they result in positive net benefits only under very specific and unusual circumstances."

The IOC and Japanese organizers on Thursday promised to cut out frills to rein in spending. They are still trying to nail down if all of the 43 Olympic and Paralympic venues will be available next year, and at what cost.

"On the Japanese side they are assessing the impact of the postponement including costs," Coates said. "These are not matters that are going to happen quickly. I couldn't put a finger on when the additional costs will be assessed and done." AP



R. Kelly

## Singer R. Kelly's New York sexual abuse trial postponed to September

NEW YORK

SINGER R. Kelly's sexual abuse trial in New York has been postponed to Sept. 27 as a judge ruled on Thursday that the previously scheduled July 7 date was not realistic in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

U.S. District Judge Ann Donnelly of the federal court in Brooklyn said at a hearing conducted by telephone that potential jurors would be summoned to fill out written questionnaires on Sept. 14.

Kelly filed a motion asking to be released on bail, citing multiple confirmed cases of coronavirus in

the Chicago jail where he is being held. Donnelly did not rule on the motion at the hearing, and noted that a judge overseeing a separate federal case against Kelly in Chicago would also have to sign off on any release.

Known for such hits as "I Believe I Can Fly" and "Bump N' Grind," Kelly, 53, has faced sexual abuse allegations dating back more than two decades, including accounts from some accusers in the January 2019 Lifetime documentary "Surviving R. Kelly."

He has pleaded not guilty to all criminal charges in several cases filed in New York, Illinois, and

Minnesota last year.

The Brooklyn prosecutors have accused Kelly of running a criminal scheme in which women and underage girls were recruited to have sexual activity with him.

They also charged Kelly with bribing an Illinois official in August 1994 to obtain a fake identification for the singer Aaliyah so they could get married.

Kelly was then 27 and Aaliyah was 15, but according to published reports their marriage license listed Aaliyah's age as 18.

The marriage was annulled in 1995. Aaliyah died at age 22 in a 2001 plane crash in the Bahamas.

Federal prosecutors in the Chicago case charged Kelly last July with engaging in sex acts with five minors, recording some of his alleged abuse on video, and using threats to keep victims quiet. A trial in that case is scheduled for October.

Kelly was also charged last February by Illinois state prosecutors with aggravated sexual abuse, and last August by Minnesota state prosecutors with soliciting sex from a minor.

In 2008, Kelly was acquitted at trial on state child pornography charges in Illinois.

REUTERS

## Chaos as PL clubs fear Sept. start - sources

LONDON

PREMIER League clubs fear that the start of the 2020-21 season will be put back until mid-September at the earliest, with sources telling ESPN that a five or six week delay to the original Aug 8. kick-off is the best-case scenario.

Senior figures from all 20 Premier League clubs are due to meet via video conference on Friday and it is understood that England's top-flight will follow the lead set by the EFL and mark June 6 as a provisional date for a return to competitive action.

All professional football in England has been suspended since March 14 due to the coronavirus crisis and the Premier League and EFL have since been in regular discussions with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in order to remain abreast of the UK government's plans for a relaxation of social distancing and lockdown measures.

The Premier League and all 20 clubs remain determined to play the 2019-20 season to a conclusion and sources have told ESPN that there are no plans to impose a cut-off point for fixtures to be played, despite potential legal issues in

the event of the campaign being extended beyond June 30 -- the date when out of contract players become free agents.

But while there is an intention, and some optimism, that football will resume in June, albeit behind closed doors, club sources have told ESPN that it will be impossible to complete this season in time for the next one to begin as planned on the second weekend of August.

Sources have revealed that there is a tentative outline of a schedule in place which would see domestic league fixtures completed first before cup competitions, such as the FA Cup, which is suspended at the quarterfinal stage, then being played.

The final piece of the jigsaw would see the completion of European competitions, but that remains the most challenging from a logistical perspective due to the need for teams to cross borders into different countries.

If everything goes to plan, the hope is that the 2019-20 season will come to an end in late-August or early-September, before a 7-14 day interlude ahead of the 2020-21 season.

(Agencies)

## Barca coach not convinced by plans to restart La Liga

BARCELONA

BARCELONA coach Quique Setien is pessimistic that the Spanish top flight season will be able to be completed and has called La Liga's conditions for the campaign recommending "a non-starter" due to the continued threat of the novel coronavirus.

La Liga has been on hold since March 10 due to the pandemic although president Javier Tebas has said matches could start up again on either May 29, June 7 or June 28, most likely without spectators.

Tebas has estimated Spanish clubs would lose around one billion euros (\$1.09 billion) if the season is not completed.

A draft of the league's protocol, seen by Reuters, for returning to training and matches once given the green light by health authorities recommends that clubs hold training camps at their training grounds or hotels for a two-week period before matches can start again.

Only first team players, coaching staff and a small number of other staff would be allowed to access the facility, with everyone at the training camp being subjected to two COVID-19 tests before accessing the site.

Testing would continue to take place during the camps, added the protocol.

But Setien, whose Barca side held a two-point lead over Real Madrid at the top of the standings when the campaign was indefinitely postponed, does not think it is so simple.

"Everyone wants to be ready for when the season starts again but

that cannot happen until the health authorities can guarantee that there will be no problems," Setien told Catalan radio station RAC1 on Thursday.

"I have read the protocol and the reality is I don't know if it can be carried out as it is written, I think it's unworkable, I think it's very difficult logistically."

Barca midfielder Sergio Busquets also expressed doubts about the feasibility of clubs holding training camps.

"We can start training again little by little but it will be difficult once everyone comes together and the competition starts again and teams start travelling," he told Spanish radio stations Onda Cero and CadenaCOPE.

"I have heard that La Liga wants teams to concentrate for a few months, I think that's too much and it cannot be done. There will be too many problems."

La Liga declined to comment on Setien and Busquets' comments although a source close to the matter said stakeholders are continuing to discuss a plan to return to matches along with the association of European leagues.

"The objective of La Liga is to create a protocol of the highest possible standard that can allow return to training and get us in a good, healthy, way to the light at the end of this dark tunnel," added the source.

More than 19,000 people have died from the coronavirus in Spain although this week the government loosened the terms of a strict lockdown to allow some businesses back to work.

REUTERS

## Top four will qualify for Champions League even if season is abandoned, says Spanish FA

MADRID

IF the La Liga season is cut short or abandoned due to the coronavirus pandemic, the four teams on top of the most recent completed round of standings will qualify for next season's Champions League, the Spanish Football Association (RFEF) said.

With all teams having played 27 matches before the RFEF suspended play on March 12 due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, Barcelona, Real Madrid, Sevilla and Real Sociedad are the four teams that will go through to Europe's premier club competition if no more action is possible this season.

"The RFEF wants to have done its homework in case, in the event of a suspension of competitions,

it receives the request from UEFA regarding the Spanish clubs that would have access to European competitions next season," RFEF general secretary Andreu Camps said in a statement on Thursday.

"Thus... it has been agreed in the RFEF Delegate Commission to make a plan in order to give certainty in an extreme scenario, such as not being able to finish the competitions, so that all the clubs know the new scenario they are facing."

After the last round of games were completed on March 10, Barcelona topped La Liga with 58 points, two ahead of Real Madrid. Sevilla are third on 47, with Real Sociedad a point further back in fourth.

REUTERS

## Bundesliga aim to restart in May without fans hit by order

BERLIN

EXTENDING the ban on large gatherings in Germany to the end of August threatens soccer officials' aim of restarting the Bundesliga in May without spectators.

Chancellor Angela Merkel's announcement on Wednesday, maintaining gatherings of no more than two people in public to try and contain the coronavirus, also ensures that the next Bundesliga season cannot begin as planned in August.

After talks between Merkel and the 16 state governors about easing restrictions, Bavaria's Markus Söder said the "Bundesliga wasn't an issue," meaning they have bigger priorities than soccer.

The Bundesliga, last played on March 11, was hoping to resume in May without spectators, but the number of people needed at venues -- two teams, substitutes, coaches, medical staff, security to ensure fans stay away -- means even games in almost empty stadiums look like a tall order.

Complicating the issue for the German soccer league (DFL), is that each of the country's 16 states can set their own conditions. It's very likely they will differ, meaning some games could be allowed and others not.

German soccer federation president Fritz Keller is expecting momentous fallout.

"I don't think the landscape in soccer will be the same after the corona crisis," Keller said last week. "We're going to miss a few (clubs), and I think that the longer it continues, the more bankruptcies we're going to have in professional soccer."

Schalke and Paderborn in the Bundesliga are reportedly facing insolvency, while Kicker magazine says 13 clubs in the second division are also under existential threat if



Empty seats are pictured at the stadium of German Bundesliga soccer club Borussia Mönchengladbach in Mönchengladbach, Germany, Thursday, April 16, 2020. All major events in Germany are suspended due to the coronavirus outbreak until the end of August, the German Bundesliga suspended all matches until April 30, 2020. (AP Photo)

a delayed installment payment for television rights is not made to the DFL.

The magazine reports that Sky, DAZN and ARD missed a payment of 304 million euros (\$331 million) -- the last of four installments for TV rights for the two divisions -- to the league on April 10, but the broadcasters have agreed to pay on May 2.

"We can manage another one or two months, but then we're out of air," Paderborn managing director Martin Przdondzono told broadcaster Sport1. "If the TV money doesn't come, it will be tight for us."

Schalke has made no secret of its financial problems caused by the pandemic despite a sponsorship arrangement with Russian energy giant Gazprom reportedly worth 30 million euros per season.

Schalke communications director Alexander Jobst last month asked holders of boxes in the stadium to waive partial repayment for the club's last home games.

"It's about existence!" Jobst wrote in an email on March 17.

Schalke finance director Peter Peters warned club fans this week that its situation was precarious.

"We're trying to reduce costs, have reduced employees' working hours and agreed wage cuts with the players," Peters said on Facebook. "But of course everything depends on when we can take in income and play football again."

The clubs are to meet again on April 23 to discuss how they can end the season as planned by June 30.

As of Thursday, Germany had nearly 135,000 registered cases of COVID-19, with 3,804 deaths attributed to the disease, according to Johns Hopkins University.

AP

## Union calls for maintaining support for women's soccer

BY ANNE M. PETERSON

THE international players' union FIFPro is calling for continued financial support of women's soccer worldwide in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

FIFPro issued a report Thursday warning of COVID-19's impact, saying it is "likely to present an almost existential threat to the women's game if no specific considerations are given to protect the women's football industry."

The report notes that the global absence of industry standards and worker protections means women are especially vulnerable and that an economic downturn could affect otherwise stable clubs.

There are signs the pandemic is already taking a toll in addition to the cancellation and postponement of league play and tournaments worldwide. In Colombia, Independiente Santa Fe suspended all player contracts for its women's soccer team recently but said its men's team would only see pay cuts.

The pandemic came at a time when women's soccer was on the upswing, boosted by the success of last year's World Cup in France.

"We do have concerns about investments in the women's game being dropped or reduced or pre-crisis investments being withdrawn, ultimately, from the women's game. We're concerned that decision-makers might ignore the needs of women or exclude women's football from recovering support programs," said Amanda Vandervort, FIFPro chief women's football officer.

"But we're here with solutions and to present ideas and innovations, and a new way to approach women's football for the best interests of the players and the long-term success of our women's football industry."

A 2017 FIFPro survey showed most women's players don't earn a living wage: 60% of paid players take home less than \$600 a month and 37% say they are paid late.

FIFPro laid out five recommendations for the industry: Prioritize player physical and mental care, apply special financial measures for players and clubs, ensure pre-pandemic investments aren't withdrawn, make sure women are included in any financial relief



Amanda Vandervort

measures and develop solidarity systems across the women's game to insure its recovery.

"We just thought it was an absolute necessity to highlight, in the course of this crisis management problem, the importance of paying conscious attention to the women's game because the damage that a crisis like this can have on an industry which has been growing so well but is still very fragile in many places, can be very drastic," FIFPro general secretary Jonas Baer-Hoffmann said.

The Netherlands-based organization plans to release a larger report later this month on the growth and development of women's soccer.

"I think what is very clear, and we just have to come to terms with it, is that football, as many other parts of our society, will look very different very soon. And I think there is a fundamental question here whether we want to rebuild based on the initial short-term commercial views of the game only, or whether we want to start building it around a set of values that can actually sustain and bring out the best parts of what we are involved in, in the long term," Baer-Hoffmann said.

Gwiji by David Chikoko



# SPORT

Bundesliga aim to restart in May without fans hit by order

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## CPL eyeing on-schedule start, but wary of potential IPL clash

### CASTRIES

CARRIBBEAN Premier League (CPL) organizers hope that the tournament can still take place as scheduled in September, but plans are being developed to stage it behind closed doors, without overseas players, or in a "social-distancing stadium" in Barbados if required.

With the Caribbean in lockdown and attempts to stop the spread of covid-19 proving successful so far - the death toll is yet to reach double figures in any of the six countries that host CPL games - it is possible that the CPL fixtures could be among the first staged globally, though chief operations officer Pete Russell confirmed the league would try to avoid a clash with a postponed IPL season.

Speaking to ESPNcricinfo, Russell said he hoped that staging the tournament as planned could be "a sign that the Caribbean is open for business again" once the worst effects of the pandemic have passed.

"It's good that the Caribbean has locked down early, and it hasn't been hit in the same way as the UK, for example," Russell said. "We're looking at different permutations in terms of what could or couldn't happen, but the lucky thing is that we've got a bit of time - we don't have to force a decision."

"I don't think there's any question that we'll be able to play it. We're only going to play if it's safe to do so, but we've been approached by a lot of the countries who want it to happen. The reason [for that] is that it's a big sporting event, and it could act as a sign or a marker that the Caribbean is open for business again."

With the IPL season currently postponed indefinitely, it has been suggested that the tournament could be staged at some stage in September or October, not least with the T20 World Cup in October in doubt. Russell said that while the CPL would not try to compete for eyeballs with the most lucrative T20 league in the world, he hoped that the IPL could "figure out their own window".

"We wouldn't go up against it," he said. "While I know the BCCI is all-powerful in these things, there has to be some sensible consideration around what players and other leagues are doing."

"I think IPL would want all the West Indian players to be playing in their tournament - it wouldn't make sense for them to play at the same time as CPL when a lot of their stars are playing with us. That would defeat the objective. I don't think they need to do that, either. They can figure out their own window, for sure."

If the tournament does go ahead as planned, it is possible that no overseas players will be involved due to health concerns and restrictions on international travel. The CPL's organisers are also drawing up plans to hold games while maintaining social distancing within a stadium, a situation which would involve all players staying in the same hotels and the tournament being held at one or two venues instead of the planned six.

"That's what people are going to have to look at: how would a stadium look if you were to follow all the guidelines on social distancing? Of course, it's doable. For instance, in Barbados, we would probably be able to do a social-distancing stadium, and it could be at 25% capacity - there's a lot of organisation that goes into that, but it's viable."

"The player side is the important bit. It could be that CPL is played without international players this year, and there's enough Caribbean talent to play without if we have to - that's not our preferred option, but it's doable."

"And then obviously you have to go through the whole medical process. Would you quarantine players, or put them all in the same hotel? How would that all work? Even if we don't necessary use [these plans] this year, it's vitally important that we've done them. That's my biggest focus at the minute."

The picture may become clearer next week, following an ICC meeting via videoconference in which board CEOs will discuss contingency plans, and Russell has been in regular contact with WICB chief executive Johnny Grave to work out how West Indies' fixtures might affect the competition's staging.

AGENCIES

## TFF should increase substitutes' number in VPL, says Cioaba



Azam FC forward, Richard Djodi (R), gets the better of Polisi Tanzania defenders when the squads clashed in a Mainland Premier League match which took place in Dar es Salaam recently. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

By Correspondent Adam Fungamwango

**A**ZAM FC head coach, Aristica Cioaba, has asked Tanzania Football Federation (TFF) to consider increasing the number of substitutes in this season's Vodacom Premier League to five.

The league's participating teams, as per the regulations, have an opportunity to use three substitutes in matches.

Speaking to his side's website from his home country Romania, Cioaba revealed he has tabled the request in a bid to help players stay clear of injuries, should the league resume soon.

The domestic top flight, as it is the case for the remaining sporting events

and gatherings in Tanzania, have faced suspension for a month as per directives by the government with the aim of fighting the Coronavirus pandemic.

It is yet to be known if the league, which was suspended on March 17, will get back to action.

"I think what I'm saying is the truth, this is my own recommendation, should TFF opt to bring the competition back action either next month or after the next two months," he noted.

"I feel it will be good (for the players) should TFF increase the

substitutes' number to five."

"The other way is simplifying coaches and players' duties. In this situation, bench players should be nine."

The coach noted: "Not all players will have the needed physical fitness, therefore we will help them

stay clear of injuries if we will opt for the change."

He moreover noted he prays to God to help Tanzanians get past the pandemic.

In response to the Azam FC coach's request, Tanzania Premier League Board (TLB) Chief Executive Officer, Almasi Kasongo, noted it will be difficult for the board to opt for change of the regulation in the closing stages of this year's league.

"I have yet to know if he has tabled the request as a result of the Coronavirus disease or what but we should possibly put this request into consideration during the amendment of the regulations," he disclosed.

Kasongo disclosed he hardly thinks the recommendation will be put to practice in this season's competition.

The official disclosed the recommendation should be presented prior to the amendment of the next year league's regulations in an effort to ensure TPLB works the matter.

The domestic top flight's new regulations are presented shortly before the start of a new season.

The approach is put into effect once soccer stakeholders have presented recommendations to TFF that are later approved by the federation.

## Smith confirms de Kock won't be Test captain

### DURBAN

QUINTON de Kock will not be named South Africa's Test captain even though there is no clear candidate for the position yet. That was confirmed by Graeme Smith, South Africa's director of cricket, on Friday, who said the risk of overburdening de Kock has resulted in ruling him out of leadership role in all three formats.

De Kock was appointed as the country's white-ball captain in January and succeeded Faf du Plessis, who had been in charge since 2017. Du Plessis also stood down from the Test captaincy but remains available as a player. With South Africa not scheduled to play any Tests before a tour to West Indies in July-August, they have some time before deciding who will lead them in whites but are certain it will not be de Kock.

"The one thing I can confirm is that Quinton will be our white-ball captain and he won't be the Test captain going forward," Smith said. "We want to keep Quinton fresh and playing well. I've



Quinton de Kock

always believed, having been in the job myself, that captaining all three formats is challenging. We've seen a number of nations trying to figure out what's best and I think across three formats, it probably doesn't work."

Among teams competing in the World Test Championship, only India and New Zealand have the same captain across all three formats and although South Africa had the same until this summer, they have also

tried multiple captains. When Smith gave up the white-ball captaincy after the 2011 World Cup, AB de Villiers was appointed and during de Villiers' tenure, he handed first the T20, then the Test and then the ODI reigns to du Plessis. In between, Johan Botha and Hashim Amla had stints as T20 and Test captain, respectively. When du Plessis took over across all formats, consistency was cited as the main reason - not to mention his obvious leadership qualities - but

now both the calendar and their own circumstances have forced a change.

While the Future Tours Programme has become fluid as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, South Africa were set for a fairly busy schedule over the next few months with a white-ball tour of Sri Lanka in June, a tour to West Indies as mentioned, possible white-ball games in Pakistan and a home-series against them, the T20 World Cup and a summer featuring Sri Lanka and

Australia in 2020-21. Given that de Kock is also their premier wicket-keeper and has stated his desire to keep the gloves, and that he opens the batting in white-ball cricket, adding the Test captaincy to his load was decided as being too much.

"From a workload and mental capacity, we felt that to burden him with all three formats wouldn't be beneficial for us. And with the style of personality and player that he is, we want to keep him as expressive as possible," Smith said.

But if not de Kock, then who?

That's the question Smith can't answer just yet with South Africa's current transition phase meaning that there is no obvious choice. "I can't tell you who it is going to be. We are in a debate over it," Smith said. "There's no one person that you could pinpoint right now and say that's the guy. There's still a lot of players that are vying for selection and I think it is the challenge we sit with at the moment. There's a lot of players on a similar level."

With the retirements of Vernon Philander, Hashim Amla, de Villiers, Dale Steyn (from red-ball cricket), Imran Tahir (from ODIs but not T20s) and JP Duminy in the last year, South Africa have lost a significant part of their senior core. The 2019-20 summer saw them field a total of 33 players across formats and hand out nine new Test caps. Of those, stand-out performers included Rassie van der Dussen and Anrich Nortje, with the former being mentioned as a potential Test captain given his ability to deal with pressure and a relatively consistent run. He was South Africa's second-highest run-scorer at the 2019 World Cup, behind du Plessis, and fourth-highest in the Test summer after de Kock, Dean Elgar and du Plessis, and has stood out, which is what Smith is looking for. "The challenge for when we do play some cricket is to see who escalates themselves into really consistent performances and who steps up," he said.

AGENCIES

## Flexibles by David Chikoko

