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Govt confirms first corona case

By Henry Mwangonde

TANZANIA yesterday confirmed the first corona virus case making it the third East African country to have such cases after Rwanda and Kenya.

The Minister for Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children Ummu Mwalimu told journalists in Dar es Salaam yesterday that the patient, a 46-year-old lady who arrived in Tanzania on Sunday from Belgium aboard a Rwandair plane and landed at the Kilimanjaro International Airport (KIA). The thermo scanner did not detect any high temperature.

The minister said the patient left the country on March 3, visiting Sweden and Germany going to Belgium and returned to Tanzania on Sunday.

The patient went into self-isolation and samples taken from her tested positive of the coronavirus. She is now at Mount Meru Hospital and her situation has been contained, the minister noted.

"The government was working hard to ensure that the disease does not spread and we call upon the public to take precautions including those with less important journeys to cancel them," she said.

She appealed for calm and directed institutions such as schools, hotels, churches, national parks to put chlorine water at entry points for people to wash their hands as a measure to prevent easy



People heading for Muhimbili National Hospital in Dar es Salaam observe the newly introduced mandatory routine of washing of hands with a sanitiser yesterday as a precaution, given the global spread of the coronavirus. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala.

Mbowe: Chadema starting its rallies on April 4

By Guardian Reporter

MAIN opposition party Chadema yesterday announced that it will embark on holding public rallies from April 4th in a move to kick off preparations for this year's general elections.

The party's national chairman Freeman Mbowe told journalists in Dar es Salaam yesterday said the demand for an independent national electoral commission shall be the focus of rallies so that poll preparations are conducted in a better political atmosphere.

Mbowe directed MPs from the party as well as regional and district officials to mobilize supporters to start conducting rallies on the said date, saying they will follow the lawful requirement of notification but shall not wait for permission from those in power.

"On April 4 we will start holding rallies with or

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“There is no need for panic because the case is an imported one. We are doing all that is possible to contain the situation

spread of the disease.

Public and private hospitals should not to allow more than two people to visit a patient at any particular time, she directed.

"There is no need for panic because the case is an imported one. We are doing all that is possible to contain the situation," she said.

Upon her arrival at KIA, her body temperature was normal. The thermal scanner screening could thus not establish the need for further testing.

Despite showing no sign of fever, the traveller was herself skeptical of her health.

"From what she told me on phone, while in Belgium she lived in a house where the owner had suffered from coronavirus," the minister explained.

"She later went to Mount Meru Hospital. Her samples were received at around 01:00am and the National Health Laboratory confirmed that she had Covid 19," she said.

World Health Organization (WHO) country director Dr Tigest Ketsela

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JPM suspends 12 Tanroads engineers over negligence

By Guardian Correspondent, Morogoro

PRESIDENT John Magufuli has suspended all 12 Tanzania National Roads Agency (Tanroads) engineers in Morogoro region including the interim manager directed to be relocated at headquarters by order of Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa.

The president also made a finger wagging at top officials of the Ministry of Works, Transport and Communications as well as Tanroads on account of negligence that caused the collapse of the Kiegeya bridge and around 14 days passing without the rebuilding being completed.

Dr Magufuli reached that decision upon inspecting the site where the Mkanga Kiegeya bridge is being rebuilt after it was swept by floods on March 2. The finger wagging was personally directed at the minister, Isaac Kamwelwe (pictured) and the permanent secretary, Tanroads chief executive Patrick Mfugale, and the director for repair work, Mohamed Ntunda.



Earlier the president directed that Ntuda be suspended for failing to inspect the use of more than three billion shillings which he authorized to be allocated to the region for repair of roads and bridges. The president later changed his mind and directed that the engineer be delivered a stern warning and continue with work.

The president castigated the laxity over the rebuilding work given the fact that the bridge is crucial for road links between Tanzania and

landlocked countries on its western borders.

He said he did not inform anyone that he was going to visit the area, to see at close range the trouble that people are facing in that regard.

He similarly observed that there were 25,000 engineers registered in the country and are ready to work despite that at the moment they have no work, in which case the departure of the Tanroads engineers wasn't going to have any effect on its performance.

The president also directed

minister Kamwelwe to write letters of dismissal to any Tanroads regional managers if a bridge will be swept by floods and the road is closed, as the government has been issuing billions of shillings for inspection and short term plus long term maintenance work but some of them fail to use the funds.

Morogoro Regional Commissioner Loata ole Sanare explained measures taken by the regional authorities since the Kiegeya bridge was swept by floods, whereupon President Magufuli directed the regional defence and security committee not to trouble itself visiting the site again and instead leave the rebuilding experts to finish the task appropriately in the next seven days.

Earlier the president walked a certain distance on the banks of river Kiegeya and noticed a spot which he said was friendly to laying a bridge rapidly and at a lower cost on account of environmental factors.

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COVID-19 claims Uhuru torch race

By Guardian Reporter

PRESIDENT John Magufuli yesterday suspended this year's Uhuru torch race scheduled to start on April 2nd in Zanzibar, directing that funds allocated for this year's run be reallocated to the Health ministry to aid its preparations against the Corona virus pandemic (Covid-19) as the first case is reported.

The president announced the decision when greeting Ubungo residents in the city during an inspection tour of construction work for the Ubungo Interchange joining Mandela, Morogoro and

Sam Nujoma roads.

He emphasized that people should be taking precautions against corona virus infection by avoiding congestion or making unnecessary body touches. Washing hands with soap and water and abiding by other directives from health experts must also be observed, he stated.

Uhuru Torch, races throughout the country with the message of hope, love, respect and peace, the races starts from one chosen region and end on 14th October the day we commemorate the death of the father of the nation Mwal-

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COVID-19 claims Uhuru torch race

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imu Julius Kambarage Nyerere.

Uhuru Torch races have different slogans each year depending on national development priorities, launching development projects where the torch passes. This torch goes with the message of hope, love, peace and respect.

The president however said the disease has not yet entered the country, a few hours before the ministry confirmed the first such case, joining Kenya, Ethiopia and Rwanda in reporting Covid-19 cases.

On Sunday, government spokesman Dr Hassan Abbas said isolation centres have been selected in health sector zones around the country as the outbreak of the disease is feared.

This is part of preparedness to tackle any cases of the disease virus, being conducted by the government through the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elders and Children. Isolation centres were being readied in every zone, he said, declining to name the hospitals.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the outbreak a pandemic last week as Italy tightened its strict quarantine and the United States imposed a ban on flights to Europe.

More than 4,900 people have died and over 132,000 infected globally, on the basis of recent WHO data. About 68,000 victims

recovered, on the basis of affirmations of the Johns Hopkins University, which is tracking the virus.

The president, accompanied by the first lady, inspected ongoing work on the widening of the 4.1 kilometers section of Ali Hassan Mwinyi Road from Mwenge to Morocco which upon completion will have four lanes on each side. The project is implemented at a cost of 77.5bn/-.

The work on the Ubungo Interchange is expected to be completed before December, costing 230bn/- and will greatly reduce vehicle congestion in the city of Dar es Salaam.

The president also inspected the 140bn/- project to widen the 19.2 km Kimara-Kibaha road section whose work is 70 percent complete and is scheduled to be finalized at the start of next year.

At Mlandizi township in Coast Region, President Magufuli listened to complaints from small traders who were removed from the roadsides and directed their being returned. He cautioned about anyone trading close to the main road, or blocking entrance to shops.

At Chalinze, the president assured residents who turned up in large numbers that the government will finalize water supply in the town upon completion of a large water project on river Ruvu not far from there, which is still going on.



Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children minister Umy Mwalimu briefs journalists in Dar es Salaam yesterday on the diagnosis of the first case of coronavirus reported in Tanzania. She is with her deputy, Dr Faustine Ndugulile. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Mbowe: Chadema starting its rallies on April 4

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without a permit from any authority. Through this announcement I am informing all our party leaders in the regions and districts to start holding the rallies in demand of two things— independent electoral commission and he right preparations for the coming polls,” he stated.

Mbowe who is also Hai MP said when he was given a brief moment to speak on Independence Day celebrations in Mwanza late last year, he urged

national reconciliation between parties and other stakeholders.

To pursue the same point but in writing, the party wrote to the president but their letter went unanswered, he elaborated.

“We were surprised to obtain no reply to our letter sent to the Chamwino State House and the Dar es Salaam State House,” he specified, insisting that seeking reconciliation was not a sign of cowardice.

Mbowe condemned the beating of the party’s two MPs Halima Mdee (Kawe)

and Ester Bulaya (Bunda Urban) by prison wardens.

He appealed to the responsible authorities to act against all the people involved in the killing of a young woman then studying at the National Institute of Transportation (NIT)—Akwilina Akwilini, shot by police in February 2018 by a stray bullet.

There was a confrontation between the police and Chadema supporters while the student was sitting in a commuter bus on her way home from college.

He also tasked the office

of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to conduct its duties fairly and for the interest of the general public. The DPP’s office hasn’t been fair particularly for the opposition, he emphasized.

“I have heard DPP issuing harsh statements over the (Arusha Urban MP) Godbless Lema incident. This is a public office so it should stand on one side,” he said.

Last week, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Biswalo Mganga warned politicians inciting hate and discontent in

society. He said that his office will act against Lema for providing false information that 14 people were beheaded in Singida Region.

“Stern measures will be taken against anybody, regardless of party affiliation, race, tribe or position. Individuals shouldn’t hide in politics in order to commit acts that abuse the rights of others,” he said.

In 2016, President Magufuli banned public meetings and demonstrations on the argument that peo-

ple ought to concentrate on work and not endlessly restart campaigns once the general elections are over.

Members of Parliament were allowed to hold rallies in their respective constituencies as well as ward councillors.

Currently the ban stands despite elections being held late October, with the government having declared July as the time when public meetings will be allowed again, other than those of the ruling party.



Tanzania National Roads Agency (Tanroads) CEO Patrick Mfugale (with microphone) updates President John Magufuli in Dar es Salaam yesterday on the ongoing implementation of the Ubungo interchange project. The president was on an inspection tour the expansion of the Dar es Salaam-Chalinze road. Photo: State House

JPM suspends 12 Tanroads engineers over negligence

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He cited the factors as narrow width and plentiful availability of large stones which he said the regional experts could use to install the bridge or answer for their failure.

He also said he objected to a decision by the prime minister to bring building

units from the military to add strength on the site, saying that the work was entirely capable of being executed by employees of the ministry.

“If you want the military I will also remove the minister and place an army officer. I will remove the permanent secretary and place a military man, and

remove the Tanroads chief executive and place an army officer, even the sweepers. I wouldn’t fail to do that,” he declared.

He used the occasion to apologise to members of the public who have been affected by the collapse of the bridge and the time it has taken to restore

the situation to normal, given the negligence of ministry officials.

He said that what happened was water filling up partly on account of accumulated dirt and filling up the underside of the bridge on account of the salt tarmac used to build the underside.. It started being eroded and

eventually the whole bridge was swept away since there was no inspection and discovering that situation earlier on.

Local residents who came to the sport used the occasion to ask for remedies to various challenges, including a long standing problem of a bridge connecting the area with Berega

hospital that they rely upon.

The president issued a seven day notice to the Tanzania Rural and Urban Roads (Tarura) district manager for Kiloa to ensure that the bridge is built, adding that he would send people to inspect the work.

Government confirms first corona case

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Mengestu said in her remarks at the press conference that so far 144 countries have confirmed cases, with 53,517 people affected.

In the previous 24 hour period, there were 10,982 new cases and the death toll increased to 5,735 globally.

For Africa, Tanzania was the 25th country to confirm at least one case of the disease, while the positive trend was that there was no local infection as yet.

“We need to work together. As of now the entire United Nations (UN) system was behind WHO and there is need for all of us to work hand in hand. We can conquer this virus,” the director added.



Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa addresses students of Lucas Malia Secondary School in Ruangwa District, Lindi Region, yesterday. Photo: PMO

Magufuli set to inaugurate 10bn/- water project in Kisarawe District

By Correspondent Amri Lugungulo, Kisarawe

PRESIDENT John Magufuli is expected to inaugurate a newly constructed 10bn/-water project in Kisarawe district, Coast region during the commemorations of the Water Week that are scheduled to commence today and run until March 22, this year.

The district's administrative secretary (DAS), Mtela Mwampamba said this here during the weekend at the Council's general meeting.

He said that the head of state would visit the district any day during the celebrations.

According to him, the project which has been constructed by the Dar es Salaam Water and Sewerage Authority (DAWASA) will speed up development in the district.

"The water project's completion is a huge step as it gives relief to the residents who have been suffering from lack of water for many years...the residents had to wake up early in the morning to search for water

from wells and dams," he noted.

For his part, district council chairman, Hamisi Dikupatile urged the residents to come out in big numbers to attend the inaugural ceremony as a sign of thanking the government for bringing the essential service in the district.

He said that the completion of the project sounds a huge relief to the residents especially women who had to walk miles away to search for the precious liquid.

"Previously, residents had to spend a lot of money to buy water from private shops or business people something which was affecting the district's economic growth as well as people's wellbeing. But the project has come to address all the hurdles, majority of the people will now access to smooth clean water supply," he said.

The mega project from Upper Ruvu river is expected to supply ten million litres daily. The project has involved laying of water pipes covering 17 kilometres.

CTI for faster implementation of 'blueprint' on regulatory, licensing reforms

By Getrude Mbagu

THE Confederation of Tanzania Industries (CTI) has called upon the government fast-track implementation of the 'Blue Print' on regulatory and licensing reforms to facilitate businesses and stimulate industrialization drive.

According to CTI fully implementation of the blue print will enable Tanzania to become a middle-income-sized nation by 2025.

The blueprint, prepared after thorough consultations with various private sector associations and World Bank officials-

suggest amendments of various laws including those governing Value Added Tax (VAT), regulatory bodies, immigration and labour, social security and environmental management among others.

Addressing journalists in the city yesterday, CTI Executive Director, Leodegar Tenga said having conducive laws and policies will attract more investments thus stimulate the pace of economic growth and job creation.

Tenga said that in efforts to ensure that business environment are improved; CTI has organized a consultative meeting with the government to discuss

best ways to enhance industrial development in the country.

"The meeting which will be conducted on March 20, this year will bring together manufacturers from various parts in the country will be graced by the Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office (Investment) Angellah Kairuki. These consultative meetings are important avenues for our members to exchange ideas and views for the wellbeing of the industrial sector and economy at large," he said.

Tenga commended the government for its continued efforts to improve business envi-

ronment through dialogue and engagement with industrialists.

"Since it came into power, the fifth phase government has been willing to meet and discuss with local and international investors particularly, the manufacturers with the objective of addressing challenges that hamper the development of the industrial sector," said Tenga.

According to him, the confederation has also witnessed a number of improvements especially in power and transport infrastructures something which has simplified activities.

Adjourning the Parliamen-

tary budget session last year, Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa said that the official implementation of a business environment improvement blueprint would kick off effectively from July 1, 2019.

"The implementation of the blueprint will go in line with the government's intention to improve the country's business environment, which has been clearly elaborated in the Finance Act, 2019, which has abolished 54 different taxes," said Majaliwa.

This raises hopes that Tanzania's investment climate will be improved further to meet

the country's industrialisation objectives.

The Prime Minister said that to ensure the blueprint was fully implemented, the government had directed the Ministry of Trade and Industries in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office to distribute the blueprint and strategic plan for implementation to all ministries so that they could supervise the implementation at their respective levels.

The ministerial cabinet approved the blueprint early 2018, setting a stage for amendments to laws and regulations governing the way of

conducting businesses in the country.

Tabling budget for the 2019/20 fiscal year, Minister for Finance and Planning, Dr Philip Mpango, said in improving the business and investment climate in the country, the government had decided to review 54 nuisance fees and levies following a recent meeting between President John Magufuli and traders at the State House in Dar es Salaam.

"This is the first phase of implementation of the blueprint for regulatory reforms to improve the business environment," said the minister.

NIDA conducting the verification of fresh applications for national IDs

By Guardian Reporter

THE National Identification Authority (NIDA) has said it is conducting fresh verification for applicants of national ID cards especially those with challenges over citizenship.

A press statement issued yesterday by NIDA communications officer Geoffrey Tengeza said the authority is implementing the government's directive to verify in depth all applications that have various challenges and other shortcomings.

"These shortcomings are of various kinds including applicants' citizenship so as to remove loopholes of cheating for people who are not Tanzania citizens," the statement said in part.

It also said the verification will be conducted by NIDA in collaboration with the immigration department, regional and district defense and security committees, local governments, refugees department and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

"The verification exercise will go in tandem with the registration of citizens, foreign residents and refugees, and ID cards for residents in Lake Zone Regions including Kigoma, Kagera, Tabora, Geita, Mwanza, Simiyu, Shinyanga and Mara," Tengeza said in the statement.

He said NIDA is adequately prepared for the exercise and warned that any applicants who will give false information over his/her citizenship status will be dealt with according to the laws.

He said the exercise has started in lake zone regions since there are in the border areas with many foreigners from neighbouring countries.

"More than 21,721,416 have been registered including 17,674,812 who have been issued with NIDA identification numbers.

Tengeza said details of other applicants who have been registered are still being processed so that their ID numbers are issued as quickly as possible.

He said since the ID cards has a microchip that can also be used as e-wallet, the owner thereof can use it to keep money and make payments.

He also said the ID card can also be used as an ATM card via e-entrance, e-attendance registers that will reduce the number of ID cards carried by one person.

While in Kigoma in February this year, Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa directed NIDA officials to strictly verify applications of IDs in border regions due to reality, that some foreigners may seize national IDs to land Tanzanian citizenship irregularly.

He said there was no need to worry for genuine applicants since all Tanzanian citizens will get the IDs after proving to relevant authorities that they are indeed Tanzanian as required.

He appealed to those who have applied for national identity cards but are yet to get the documents to be patient and let the relevant authorities do their work of thoroughly vetting the applicants before issuing IDs.



Shinyanga Urban Water Supply and Sanitation technicians fight to remove water to pave the way for the fixing of a leaking water pipe at Masekelo near River Kidalu yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Marco Maduhu

Nigeria gas explosion leaves 17 people dead, rescue teams at work

LAGOS

RESCUE efforts are ongoing in Nigeria's commercial capital, Lagos, after a gas pipeline exploded on Sunday, resulting in the death of at least 17 people.

A spokesman for the National Emergency Management Agency, Ibrahim Farinloye, said more than 100 houses had caught fire and many people were wounded. Lorries, cars and motorbikes were also destroyed by the blast.

Farinloye said the explosion was triggered when a truck hit gas bottles stacked up in a gas processing plant near a pipeline in Abule-Ado area of Lagos.

"We are recovering dead bodies as we speak and putting them in bags," said local Red Cross official Adebola Kolawale. "We have a school here, and it's a residential area. And we have a trade fair here as well.

As a crowd looked on, rescue workers sought to remove rubble from a girls boarding school attended by more than 250 pupils.

The school headmaster was killed in the explosion, as were a couple and their two sons who lived nearby.

The explosion's impact was so strong it led to "the collapse of nearby houses and damage to a pipeline", according to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation.

President Muhammadu Buhari, in a statement on Sunday, described the incident as a national tragedy. He sent condolences to the families of the victims and Lagos state.

Petrol tanker and pipeline blasts are common in Nigeria where, despite the country's multibillion-dollar oil and gas industry, most people live in poverty.

Fires and explosions often occur as people try to siphon fuel from pipelines and as a result of accidents involving fuel tankers on poorly maintained roads.

In July, at least 45 people were killed and more than 100 others injured in central Nigeria when a crashed petrol tanker exploded as people gathered around to siphon fuel from it.

The truck overturned close to shops as it was travelling through the village of Ahumbe in Benue state.

Dr Shein hails India-Zanzibar historical ties

By Guardian Reporter

ZANZIBAR President Dr Ali Mohamed Shein has said India's continual support to the Isles cements the existing historical, brotherly ties between the two nations.

President Shein expressed this yesterday when he received credentials from the new Indian Consul General for Zanzibar Bhagwant Singh at Zanzibar State House.

Dr Shein said Tanzania, including Zanzibar had historical ties with India that were started by the two countries' forefathers - the late Tanzania's President Mwalimu Julius Nyerere and India's founding Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and later the late Indira Gandhi.

In the education sector, President Shein hailed India for its continual support to Zanzibar including giving scholarships in various fields.

He said there is the need for India in assisting the State University of Zanzibar (SUZA) with instructors in dental care and treatment.

He said the step will also reduce the number of patients travelling to India for treatment in its various major hospitals. DR Shein also hailed India's decision in extending USD 92 million loan through its Exim Bank towards a big water project in Zanzibar Urban West region, adding that this is part of

the agreement by the two countries reached during his visit to India in 2014. India's new Consul General for Zanzibar Bhagwant Singh hailed the existing relations between India and Zanzibar and promised to continue the ties for the benefit of both sides.

Singh hailed President Shein over on the high pace of Zanzibar's development and promised his country will continue to support his efforts.

He also assured that India will com-

plete all the projects started through cooperation of the two countries as well as offering scholarships including short term studies for government officials through Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) and International Forensic Science (IFS).

Consul General Singh also explained the aim of his country to continue cooperating with African countries in their development efforts.

Zanzibar can generate 40MW electricity - Zeco

By Guardian reporter

ZANZIBAR Electricity Corporation (ZECO) has said research conducted on renewable energy has shown that solar power can generate about 40MW of power for Zanzibar.

Speaking to reporters, ZECO general manager Hassan Mbarouk said research by the World Bank (WB) shows that solar power is part of alternative power that can be put to various uses to reduce dependency of electricity from Tanzania Electric Supply Company (TANESCO).

Mbarouk said various researches have been conducted to find alternative energy for Zanzibar including solar and wind energy.

However he said due to the revamp-

ing of the transmission infrastructure Zanzibar now gets 140MW that is sufficient for the Isles power needs.

He stressed that the work now being undertaken is to replace rotten poles some of which have been falling down, including installation of new, modern prepaid electricity meters.

He said work on replacing meters is expected to be completed by the end of this month (March), and will ensure the utility of collecting more revenues.

ZECO is currently undergoing huge revamping including capacity building to its workers under the project sponsored by Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA).



He stressed that the work now being undertaken is to replace rotten poles some of which have been falling down, including installation of new, modern prepaid electricity meters



Members of staff of Tanzania Breweries Ltd's Mbeya plant in joyful mood at an International Women's Day event held at the weekend. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Ministry inaugurates programme to scale up family planning services

By Correspondent George Sembony, Tanga

MINISTER for Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, Umy Mwalimu has launched a new programme aimed to scale up family planning services describing it as among the best initiatives towards reduction of maternal and child mortality rate in the country.

In the project, over 2.3 million people across the country are

expected to benefit from the essential services including sexual and reproductive health information.

The programme is implemented by EngenderHealth in partnership with Pathfinder, CCBRT and DKT International in cooperation with the government with support from the UK-Aid (DFID).

Launching the five-year project here recently, Mwalimu noted that family planning is essential to the country's broad

-based development as it saves lives by helping reduce maternal morbidity and mortality, and increases newborn and child survival rates.

"The government has all the time, continue to strengthen health services in the country, these include reproductive health to meet national goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," she said.

Mwalimu said that the use of family planning services was very important in reducing ma-

ternal deaths and deaths of children under the age of five.

She said ministry of health statistics show that 1,744 women lost their lives from pregnancy problems while 18,118 children under five years lost their lives in the same period.

"For example in Tanga region, 53 women lost their lives through maternal related problems while 461 under five-year children died."

Mwalimu noted that the launch of the project would in-

crease efforts and effectiveness in dealing with deaths maternal and child mortality rates in the eight regions of Tanzania mainland.

She said that at least 62 local government councils would be involved in the project.

The minister emphasized that the fifth phase government will continue to cooperate with various development partners in improving the health of its citizens.

EngenderHealth Country

Representative, Prudence Masako said that the project would among other things, provide family planning integrated services, Comprehensive Post-Abortion Care (CPAC), Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and improved HIV testing and cervical cancer screening.

Others are procurement of family planning commodities, Health system strengthening including capacity building of the Health Facilities Workers and supply chain strengthening and

the programme will also focus on innovative ways of reaching young people and people living with disabilities.

Masako said that UK-AID is supporting a similar project being implemented by Maria Stopes Tanzania in eight other regions.

UK-AID Representative, Gertrude Mapunda said that the organization was proud to work with the government and would continue to cooperate with it to improve people's health.



Kuja na Kushoka Company director Leonard Kushoka (R) pictured in Dodoma yesterday showing journalists machines for the production of alternative charcoal. This was at an Innovation Week exhibition in progress in the city. Photo: Correspondent Peter Mkwavila

By Henry Mwangonde

COVID 19: First SADC video conference kicks off in Dar

DESPITE the destruction it has caused, the deadly Corona virus has also unleashed some positive aspects providing technological advancement opportunities to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as the first video conferencing for high level senior officials kicked off yesterday.

This also gives chance to member states to learn the best ways

to interact without meeting face to face in the future. Officials said that decisions to conduct meetings through video conferencing portray the technological potential the bloc owns.

"Through this we learn how to do things in the coming days in case it happens again," Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs and International Cooperation Colonel Wilbert Ibuge said in Dar es Salaam when opening the first high level SADC senior officials' video conference.

The Permanent Secretary noted that outbreak of the disease continues to offer chances of coming up with other advanced ways of interacting without face to face meeting.

The two days video conference meeting will among other things discuss a report on the preparation of the regional bloc's vision 2050, development plan 2020/2030 and contributions by member countries among others. The agendas will be presented to the council of ministers which is expected to start tomorrow via the same video plat-

form.

A week ago, SADC suspended all face-to-face meetings, adopting video conference instead, as deadly corona virus some of its member states—South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This the first meeting to be held via video conference as strategies are being drawn up to contain the

Over 1,000 youth benefit from agriculture project

By Correspondent Crispin Gerald

OVER 1,000 youth from across the country have benefited from a project designed to encourage them to identify potentials available in the agricultural sector in order to stimulate self-reliance and employment.

The five year project dubbed; national strategy for youth involvement in agriculture (NSYA) was launched in 2016 to respond to the huge demand of employment for youths who make 54 per cent of the country's total population according to statistics from National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

Revelian Ngaiza, national youth agricultural investments development coordinator in the ministry of agriculture told The Guardian in an interview that the major focus of the project is see majority of young people utilizing fully all the potentials available in the agriculture.

"The project also aimed at transforming negative mindset among youth that agriculture sector is for those who 'failed in schools', this notion should be removed. We also wanted to train, capacitate and support young people to chip in the agri-business sector for their development," he explained.

Ngaiza said youths are po-

tential group in the country which needs to be empowered in order to contribute effectively to the growth of national economy.

"As part of the initiative, today we are hosting the youth symposium in Dar es Salaam to welcome youth who are willing to engage in the programme in order to contribute to the development of individual economy."

He said the one-day symposium will bring on board more than 200 from Dar es Salaam, Lindi, Mtwara, Coast region, and Morogoro the event will provide opportunity for youth to get new opportunities of investment.

The event is important because it will give chance for youth to present their recommendations and goals which were gathered from across the country.

He added that it is disappointing to see that 70 of elders at the age of 50-65 are the one who implement agriculture with majority of powerful young people crying of life hardship.

"The government has decided to come up with a strategy to make sure that youth are given enough opportunity in the agriculture sector in order to make sure they add value to national economy," he added.

nize and coordinate the preparedness and response to Covid-19 in the SADC region.

The meeting also noted the status on the level of preparedness of the member states in addressing COVID-19, and urged member states to put in place national preparedness and response plans as well as contingency and emergency funds to address gaps in prevention, impact mitigation and other interventions.

disease that has now spread all over the over the world.

SADC ministers of health met in an extraordinary meeting in Dar es Salaam last week to share existing knowledge and information on the Covid-19 outbreak, which has had devastating global impacts since its outbreak in December 2019, and agree on how to harmo-

COSTECH sets aside 4.5bn/- to foster inventions, innovations in Tanzania

By Correspondent Valentine Oforo, Dodoma

TANZANIA Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) through Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) has set aside 4.5bn/- to support implementation of 5-year programme over identification and promotion of inventions and innovations in the country.

The timely initiative (2016-2020), has already saw establishment of a total of 15 innovation and production clusters in different categories and region within Tanzania mainland and Isles.

Giving an exclusive interview to The Guardian on the sidelines of the ongoing National Week for Science and Technology Innovation Competition in capital city, COSTECH's Information Specialist, Deusedith Leonard said the vision of the programme was to inspire more Tanzanians to become innovative, being in efforts to spur development of industries from across the country.

"Through the programme, we have so far managed to establish 15 inventions -production clusters in different categories, ranging from tailoring, livestock keeping, agriculture and fishing and many others," he briefed.

Moreover, he named Singida, Moro-

goro, Manyara, Arusha and Kilimanjaro among mainland regions where the said clusters have been initiated, apart from Isles.

"In Dodoma we have established a major grapes cluster, in Morogoro a tailoring cluster, whereby in Singida there's a giant sunflower production cluster," he expressed.

COSTECH Director General, Dr Amos Nungu expressed that the mission behind the clusters was to identify and promote key innovations in the country, with an eye to assist small-scale entrepreneurs.

And he detailed, throughout the programme, the beneficiaries are receiving relevant trainings, injected with capitals to assist them start key production clusters as per their areas of productions.

"We, COSTECH, as a prime driver of science, technology and innovation for sustainable development in Tanzania, we have decided to embark on the innovation and cluster programme in a bid to foster knowledge based economy through promotion, technology development for economic growth, as well as to attain social wellbeing and competitiveness in Tanzania," he observed.

Sharing her testimony to The Guard-

ian, Saida Msuya, one of beneficiaries from Morogoro-based tailoring cluster under the auspicious of COSTECH, said the programme has assisted her to cheat poverty as she is currently earning lucrative profit from her tailoring career, under the cluster.

"Formerly, I used to run my activities just like a small single tailor, but after COSTECH identified and put me (and others) in a special clothes production cluster, I am currently receiving many big tenders from within and outside the country," she said.

The National Week for Science and Technology Innovation Competition, which started from grassroots levels from across the country, is held as per the directives from National Guideline to Identify and Promote Inventions, Innovations and Traditional Knowledge Practices.

COSTECH is a public institution established by an Act of Parliament No.7 of 1986 as successor of UTAFITI. The Commission is under the ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Vocational Training and is the principle advisory organ to the government on all matters relating to scientific research, innovation, technology development and transfer (STI).



Vodacom Tanzania corporate affairs director Rosalynn Mworia makes remarks at an Innovation Week ceremony in Dar es Salaam at the weekend. The firm pledged innovators in the country continued sponsorship and other support. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Cases of cybercrime dropping as awareness spreads among citizens

By Correspondent Marc Nkwame, Arusha

IT seems ordinary people are now coming into terms with what is expected of them as far as responsible usage of online content is concerned because cyber-crime cases have dropped by nearly 50 percent in the past two years.

The Head of Cyber-crime Department and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Joshua Mwangaza explained here that criminal matters related to breaching of the Cyber-crime act and other online content misuse have dropped down to 3000 cases as of now, compared to more than 7000 problems reported in 2018.

"Cyber-crime cases in Tanzania are rapidly dropping due to the fact that people are becoming more aware on proper usage of the internet and related online content, including mobile phone message spamming, the social media platforms' participation and peer-to-peer communications," stated the Anti-Cybercrime Czar.

SSP Mwangaza was presenting his report on cyber-crime situation in Tanzania during the meeting between the Tanzania

Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) and heads of religious organizations from the seven districts of Arusha, held at the Regional Headquarters' Hall here.

The Head of TCRA in Northern Zone, Engineer Emelda Salum, explained that the authority has opted to involve the clerics in Cyber-crime Act awareness training so that they may act as animators to relay the message to members of their churches, mosques and other public congregations that they usually attend or address.

Commenting on the issue, the Head of Arusha District Muslim Council, Sheikh Hussein Iyuni said the responsibility of religious leaders is usually to guide people as per their faith directives and books, but emerging issues such as cyber-crime will be treated as extra messages to supplement their sermons.

For his part, the deputy chairperson of the Union of Christendom Denominations (Umoja wa Madhehebu) of Arusha, Bishop Oral Sossy, admitted that cyber-crime was a growing problem, and pointed out that it is high time they start dealing with the problem before it gets out of hand.

State-run institutions directed to connect to e-procurement system

By Guardian Reporter, Dodoma

STATE institutions that have not yet been connected to Tanzanian National e-Procurement System (TANePS) have been directed to do so before end of the current 2019/2020 financial year.

Up to now 511 out of 540 public institutions have submitted their plans for procurement via TANePS, this financial year.

The directive was given here yesterday by chairman of Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Ambassador Matern Lumbanga when opening the authority's workers council conference.

He called on workers to fully supervise the use of the system and ensure all public institutions yet to be connected to the system do so.

"It is my belief that TANePS will be a cure to the complaints that have been coming up from time to time in regard to public procurement such as long times taken in tender processing," he said.

He said other complaints included the high costs of tender processing, lack of competition, transparency in bidding and high prices for goods and services as compared to actual prices in the market.

Chairman of the council, Eng Leonard Kapongo said the authority has attained various achievements in public procurement supervision.

"Up to now 511 out of 540 state institutions have submitted through the system their procurement plans for 2010/2020 financial year for a total of 31,940 tenders costing 22.63trn/-," he said.

He added that up to now 2,191 public servants from various procuring institutions that were joined to the system had received training in using the system.

However he said the authority is faced with various challenges including failure to pay workers' benefits in time as well as lack of office space.

He said various steps have been taken to address these challenges including the issue of office space adding in the 2010/2021 financial year, PPRA plans to build permanent offices in Dodoma region.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Team leader – Digital Hospitals

As a federal enterprise, GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has commissioned GIZ to implement a technical cooperation titled "Improving Health Care Provision" to achieve the objective: the quality and quantity of health services are improved, including access through health insurance. It has five outputs: (1) Digital hospital management information system; (2) Improved neonatal care; (3) improved sexual and reproductive health, in particular Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care and family planning services, especially for young people post-partum; (4) Improved community health fund foundations; (5) Data-based facility and council budget planning.

In the area of "Digital hospitals", the project supports the implementation of a part of the National Digital Health Strategy 2019, specifically its intention of modernising processes in public hospitals and improving quality of care provided using digital technology. The Ministry of Health, Community Development and Gender, Elderly and Children (MOHCDGEC) and the Office of the President of the Regional Administration and Local Government (PORALG) are both working on a management information system (MIS) for health facilities which is to be rolled out to all MOHCDGEC and PORALG operated health facilities. The MIS is intended to digitalise work processes and data, helping to improve overall management, and in the long run also efficiency and effectiveness of these health facilities.

The GIZ project intends to support the roll-out of the software to eight target regional and district hospitals in Tanga and Mbeya. Envisioned inputs from the project include advice on maternal and child health related functions for the new management information system, information technology hardware and network upgrades at each of the target hospitals, advisors to train and roll-out the software including helping hospitals to manage the change, establishment of IT support functions and policy advice on sustaining the improvement such as developing a user support and feedback system and system for peer to peer knowledge exchange.

The ultimate aim of this endeavour is for maternal and child health services delivered by these hospitals to improve with the help of the hospital MIS.

The Improving Health Care Provision in Tanzania project is looking for a full-time team leader in the field of "Digital Hospitals".

Duty station: Dar es Salaam

Terms of the Contract: Fixed term contract

Responsibilities

Under the program manager

- Overall responsibility for the design, planning and implementation of the area "digital hospitals" under the program "Improving Healthcare Provision in Tanzania"

Tasks

Management responsibility

- Overall management of the areas of work - digitalization | "digital hospitals" including operational planning, implementation and steering, coordination with other areas of work and team leaders, counterpart liaison and progress monitoring
- Manages all staff working in this work package (international, national, long- and short-term experts) including performance review and accountability
- Leads the strategic planning of the component (and re-planning, if needed)
- Ensures coherence of the contribution in this area with the overall aim of the program and consideration of digitalization across the other areas of work (active management of interfaces)
- Implementation: among others
 - Compliments team members' work by contributing to the hospital implementation efforts (e.g. conducting training, perform supervision and coaching visits, development of IT based support tools and support hospital MIS system users, drafting hospital IT policies, provide policy advice to counterparts such as hospital management or local health authorities, etc).
 - Ensures that hospital MIS roll out work is progressing on schedule and will meet the goals within the stipulated time.
 - Develops necessary tools and standard operation procedures for rollout and implementation that are aligned with the applicable specifications of the respective government ministries
 - Provides technical support to the team members especially in handling obstacles.
- Results-based monitoring of the implementation
- Regularly reports progress to the project manager and contributes to all report writing

Professional advisory services

- Continuously monitors the Tanzanian Digital Health landscape and provides policy advice to counterparts in MOHCDGEC and PORALG, especially in the area of hospital MIS

Networking and cooperation

- Coordinates with focal points at RHMT | CHMT and in the partner facilities as much as with the technical team from MOHCDGEC and PO-RALG responsible for the software development.
- Engages with key stakeholders (MOHCDGEC and PORALG) for coordination and alignment of GIZ supported activities at different levels with the agreed approach
- Contributes to task forces and technical working groups as part of the Sector Wide Approach and Development Partner Group meetings, if required
- Coordination with GIZ sector initiatives in the area of digitalization in the health sector-wide Approach in Tanzania
- Actively promotes digitalization as a cross-cutting approach and facilitates close cooperation at the interface between different areas of work

Knowledge management

- Contributes to GIZ knowledge management and participates actively in sector network activities and IDA communities (internal exchange platform)
- Contributes to written reports, factsheets and various other formats

Other duties/additional tasks

- Supports mobilizing co-funding, developing concepts for project amendments and alike
- Supports GIZ country planning and implementation of the plan
- Performs other duties and tasks at the request of management

Required qualifications, competences and experience

- Minimum Bachelor's degree in Public Health and Master's degree in Health Informatics or equivalent (or vice versa); international degree as an asset
- Minimum of eight years of relevant professional experience in developing and implementing Hospital Information Systems
- Qualifications and experience in project management is an added advantage
- Three years of experience in policy advisory roles to governments/institutions
- Proven track record (5 years) in implementing hospital information system reform initiatives in low resourced country settings.
- Fluency in both written and spoken English.
- Excellent communication and report writing skills

Applications:

Interested candidates should send their letter of application together with the CV and copies of academic certificates by email to hr.giz-tanzania@giz.de.

Please use the subject line "Digital Hospitals".

Applications in hard copy will not be accepted. Closing date for submission: **27.03.2020**
Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

GIZ Tanzania is an equal opportunities employer and encourages applications from all qualified and eligible candidates regardless of their gender, origin, religion/belief, disability or any other minority group.



A member of the Dar es Salaam Water and Sanitation Authority (Dawasa) staff pastes a poster with a message underlining the need to observe personal and workplace hygiene, as found at the agency's offices in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Mineral dealers decry high operational costs

By Correspondent James Kandoyo

MINERAL dealers from Dar es Salaam and Coast region have expressed their concerns to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on minerals over high operational cost.

The dealers cited the 24,000/- rent fee they pay per every square metre as rent as among the issues that costs them dearly.

One of the dealers Osman Tharia told the committee that visited the dealers to know their challenges and matters affecting them.

"We are paying almost 24,000/- per square metres to pay for the office rent. Indeed it is too high. We call on the government through the National Housing Corporation (NHC) to reduce it," he said.

In response, the Deputy Minister for minerals Stanislaus Nyongo said the government will negotiate with the owner of the building the National Housing Corporation (NHC) to reduce the costs.

The deputy minister said the government will further seek another alternative including shifting to one of the vacant buildings that are not in use because of the shift to Dodoma.

"It is the government goal to create a conducive environment for investors and in this case it is responsible to ensure the cost are affordable and favourable," he said.

He also said that his ministry was review-

ing the minerals, mining and gemstone regulation to eliminate unnecessary fees charged to brokers trading within the market.

Furthermore, Nyongo said his ministry was finalising a discussion with the Ministry for Industry, Trade and Investment in a move aimed at ensuring that the gemstones value chain was free to operate.

He said once it was over, his ministry will be responsible for issuing working permits instead of the currently where responsibility is in the hands of another ministry a move that is causing unnecessary disturbances.

The chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on minerals Danstan Kitangula challenged the government to establish new minerals markets everywhere across the country.

The mineral officer at the Dar es Salaam and Coast region market said since it was established last year, it has registered a high remarkably success.

According to him, for this year target, he said up to February this year, the market had collected fund worth over 788bn/- which was 60 percent of the target set where on average the market collects over 985m/- monthly.

According to him, the target was to collect over 13.15bn/- adding that it has also helped to control illegal business of minerals and loss of revenues.

2020 climate change expo to discuss impact on development sectors

By Correspondent Gerald Kitabu

TANZANIA is expected to hold the annual 2020 climate change symposium and expo early next week that will bring together different stakeholders and partners in Dar es Salaam to discuss climate change and how it affects different development sectors and communities in the country.

Speaking at a press conference in Dar es Salaam yesterday, Director of programmes at ForumCC Angela Damas said that the symposium will be presided over by the Minister of State, Vice-President's Office (Union and Environment), Mussa Azzan Zungu.

The 6th Climate Change

Symposium and Expo with the support of European Union (EU) is expected to bring over 200 diverse actors from civil society organisations, representatives from the government, parliamentarians, development partners, academic institutions, innovators, private sector, youths, community, women and media. The Symposium will be instrumental in promoting climate accountability and building partnerships for increased climate action, helping to put Tanzania on a path to low-carbon and resilience to the inevitable impacts of climate change.

She said the objective of the 2020 climate change symposium and expo is to find ways and solutions to have resilience and other forms of development that is low in carbon.

Damas said this year's symposium will be carrying the theme: Science, Policy and Practice: Working together for Climate Resilience, Low Carbon pathway and Sustainable Development. The theme aims to encourage interactions between science, policy, practice and research communities, including local authorities, government departments, business and community groups as well as researchers and consultants.

It will showcase initiatives that demonstrate how these groups can work together to co-produce knowledge, foster innovation and solutions around climate change adaptation. It also covers synergies and trade-offs between adaptation and mitigation.

She said Tanzania like any other country around the world is facing the problem of climate change. "We need solutions, we need to be resilience, in order for us to develop and to adopt to these changes. We see them in our infrastructures, in our development projects, in our health, in agriculture which is the mainstay of the economy.

It is high time that we don't let other people talk about our situation, but we take action, we talk among ourselves about our situation. We help each other about finding ways we can adopt, we can be resilience to this big monster facing us, she added.

Programme manager for sustainable energy and climate change from TaTEDO, Mary Swai explained that the symposium will also discuss how climate change affect energy and challenges related to research, science and policy. How they affect implementers from attaining their goals and sustainable energy in particular.

"Because we work directly with communities, we shall also get opportunities to give our views on the challenges

we face as we work with the community about climate change issues," she said.

Campaigns coordinator from Oxfam Mkamiti Mgawe said that the symposium will also discuss climate change and gender issues especially women and climate smart agriculture.

"We want to discuss how policy can be inclusive that's why we shall have break up sessions that will involve policy and decision makers, women, youth, agriculture and productive groups like the farmers among other groups to discuss on the effects of climate change, environment and how to address them.

Tanzania is under Climate

Emergency, like the rest of African countries. The climate emergency is becoming real as we experience instances of flooding, unpredictable rains, droughts, widespread crop failures, livestock deaths, sea level rise, salt water intrusion and intensification of climate sensitive diseases among others. The impacts of Climate Change are overwhelming the people; affect all sectors of development, undermining efforts to achieve development and prosperity.

The 2020 climate change symposium and expo is organised by ForumCC, TaTEDO, Oxfam, Action Aid among many others and funded by European Union.

Ubungo Interchange should be protected 24 hrs - Bunge

By Guardian Reporter

THE Infrastructure Parliamentary Committee has called upon the government to make sure it puts the Ubungo Interchange under 24 hour guard for the infrastructure to last longer.

The project that is still ongoing is set to reduce vehicles congestion along Morogoro and Sam Nujoma roads at a cost of 229bn/- with the government contributing in compensation to those whose houses were demolished to pave way to the project.

The Committee Chairman Seleman Kakoso made the remarks during the panel's visit at the project site and expressed satisfaction on the work done so far. He called on the contractor to complete the work in accordance with the signed contract agreement.

"We hail the government, the Works Ministry and TANROADS for the good work and supervision, and the level reached is satisfactory and we believe the infrastructure will benefit Tanzanians," Kakoso said.

The Deputy Minister for Works Elias Kwandikwa assured the committee that they will supervise the implementation of infrastructure projects as every fund passed by the parliament is for the national interest.

"The government's aim is to ensure we have better roads infrastructures in urban areas, the City of Dar es Salaam in particular," he added.

He said Tanzanians who use the roads lose a lot of their valuable time in congestion and the government loses revenue as production is reduced, hence the infrastructure is a savior of the nation.

Tanzania National Roads Agency (TANROADS) Chief Executive Officer Eng Patrick Mfugale told the committee that the Ubungo Interchange in Dar es Salaam has a life span of 120 years and will reduce vehicles congestion for at least next 50 years and added that the project is 70 percent complete and will be fully completed in July this year.

Munde Abdallah, a committee Member said they are pleased to see such a historical project being implemented in the country.

"The government has invested a lot of money in the project, and that is what money can do under the leadership of President Magufuli in ensuring Tanzania makes development strides," he added.



Revelian Ngaiza (R), coordinator of the Agriculture ministry's national strategy for youth involvement in agriculture, presents to Tanzania Women Chamber of Commerce board member Rose Romanus in Dar es Salaam at the weekend a printer donated by the World University Service of Canada. The chamber is among the beneficiaries of a project focused on empowering NGOs, public and private institutions in the country with various skills. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

MRI awards certificates to twenty miners after rock blasting training

By Guardian Reporter

THE Dodoma-based Mineral Resources Institute (MRI), in collaboration with Shinyanga Region mineral office, has conducted training on rock blasting to miners in an effort to equip them with new skills and enhance their mining activities.

The three-day training from

March 9 - 13 was conducted in Kahama district and involved more than 20 small scale miners who later received certificates.

Closing the training, Shinyanga region resident mineral officer Eng Joseph Kumburu thanked participants who attended the training saying by doing so they were responding to the imperatives of the laws as well as gaining

knowledge for employment.

He explained that for the first time the training was conducted in the country's Shinyanga region since the 2017 amendments to the Mining Act which gave the task to MRI in conjunction with the Commission of Mines to conduct such training to miners.

He also called on all miners in Shinyanga region to come out to par-

ticipate in the training every month since it aims to ensure they abide by the amended Mining Act and its Regulations that required all rock blasters to receive training and awarded certificates which will enable them get licenses or renew their existing ones. He also used the opportunity to thank the Chairman of the Commission for Mines, its Executive Secretary and all Commissioners, Minerals

Minister Doto Biteko, the permanent secretary in the ministry for minerals and all ministry's and commission's officials in ensuring the success of the training.

MRI head of mining and smelting Eng Salum Mkango said the training given to miners and rock blasters is a short term strategy, adding that 20 miners graduated and awarded with certificates.



The government's aim is to ensure we have better roads infrastructures in urban areas, the City of Dar es Salaam in particular

Dodoma set to get major cassava processing plant

By Correspondent Valentine Oforo,

Dodoma

PLANS are afoot for the Diocese of Central Tanganyika (DCT) to enter into a crucial pact with KAK High TECH Agricultural (T) Limited in readiness to open a major cassava processing plant in Hombolo ward, Dodoma region.

The envisaged state-of-the-art factory, projected to occupy a total of 100 acres of land in the ward will also see establishment of a major cassava plantation, at a tune of 1000 acres, at least 15 kilometers from the factory, with an eye to provide enough raw materials (cassava tubers).

With the major target to produce cassava starch and animal feeds, the factory will be purchasing fresh cassava from farmers at friendly prices of between 250/- and 300/- per kilogramme on cash basis, depending on the quality of the tuber.

Briefing The Guardian on the development, regional director of Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industrial and Agricultural (TCCIA), Idd Senge said processes for the establishment of the major investment was at advanced stage.

"If all goes well, the two sides will soon sign the pact in order to allow construction processes to begin. The investment is expected to play a major role in stimulating cultivation of cassava in central zone corridor because farmers will have an assured market for their produced," he expressed. According to him, the factory will enter into contract farming with a number of cassava growers in the region.

An Indian investor, Dr Ramani Veerappan who is behind the KAK High TECH Agricultural (T) Limited Company is expected to jet in the country anytime soon in order to finalise pending processes of opening ultra-modern industries.

The high profile investor, in his visit last year, told Dodoma Regional Commissioner (RC) Dr Binilith Mahenge that apart from the cassava plant, he wishes also to invest into a modern hospital in the capital city, if given a land.

In his responses, apart from hailing Dr Veerappan for his timely interest to invest in the fast-growing city, Dr Mahenge assured the investor there is enough land for diverse investment in different parts of the region.

Despite being endowed with key po-

tentials of growing cassava, the cash crop (cassava) has been grown in poor tide in Dodoma and Singida.

But the recent revelation that some Indians and Chinese traders are eyeing to invest in processing cassava in Tanzania has triggered major revolutions among farmers of the said tuber in central zone regions.

However, in similar development, TCCIA in partnership with 'Chama Cha Wajasiliamali Wazalishaji wa Mbegu za Mhogo' (Wa-MBM) have acquired more than 2000 acres of land in Chemba district in readiness to cultivate large cassava plantation.

In assuring professional cultivation of the key cash crop, the Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI) in Hombolo has invented four fresh types of high quality cassava seeds.

Speaking in an exclusive interview to The Guardian, the institute's Head of Root and Tuber department, Dr Elizabeth Mpayo named the new seeds as Dodoma, Makutupora, Mumba and Hombolo.

"Our target is to ensure improvement of cassava value- additional chain through biotechnological increase of nutrition contents," she unveiled.



Finance and Planning minister Dr Philip Mpango and the ministry's Deputy Permanent Secretary, Mary Maganga, exchange greetings in style in Dodoma city yesterday as a precaution against coronavirus infections. Photo: Finance ministry

Govt simplifies issuance of work permits to attract more investments

By Correspondent Crispin Gerald

THE government has assured investors and development stakeholders of improved business environment insistent end of bureaucracy and simplified procedures in acquiring work permits.

"We are aware of the contribution of development partners and investors in fostering economic development in Tanzania. You only need to make official communication with the particular ministries through

which your areas of investment fall upon," said Revelian Ngaiza, coordinator, national strategy for youth involvement in agriculture under the Ministry of Agriculture.

Ngaiza made the statement over the weekend in Dar es Salaam when speaking at a function to close the UNITERA project which was implemented in the country by World University Service of Canada (WUSC).

The organization handed over office furniture and other tools to beneficiaries of the project as

per the condition of the project contract.

He noted that applicants can now process their application online through e-Government services.

"We are so sad that one of our development partner-WUSC that worked to empower local NGOs in the country for the past five years is today closing down their activities. We kindly ask you to reinstate the services to continue supporting Tanzanians in an effort to stimulate sectoral development," he said.

WUSC was implementing the UNITERA project with focus on supporting and empowering private and public institution through capacity building to enhance delivery to the public.

WUSC Country Director, Manu Mwaipopo said the project was focused on providing skills to institutions in the aspects of financial, strategic and human resources management. She said beneficiaries also were provided with skills in the area of tourism and agriculture.

She said the initiative was

working together with over 20 institutions across the country including government based, NGOs and private sector by empowering them to reach youth and women.

Some of the institutions include the Tanzania Women Chamber of Commerce (TWCC), National Network of Small-Scale Farmers Groups in Tanzania (MVIWATA) and Sokoine University Graduate Entrepreneurs Cooperative (SUGECO).

She added for the past five years, the project has recorded

significant achievement where by the number of women involved in various economic activities rose by 34 percent.

According to Mwaipopo some of the reasons that contributed into closure of the project were difficulties in obtaining work permits.

Executive Director for SUGECO, Revocatus Kimario commended the exemplary support from UNITERA project especially in areas of developing media and training of staffs.

"We highly appreciate the sup-

port we received, apart from training to our staffs, we received experts who worked to mobilise funds to improve houses for accommodating young mothers," explained Kimario noting they also received funds to donate desks to different schools.

He however called on the government to further simplify work permit application procedures to allow more investors and development partners to contribute into country's economic development.



Senior journalists display certificates conferred to them in Dar es Salaam earlier this week on completion of three-day specialised training on management organised by the Media Council of Tanzania. Seated (C) is the council's executive secretary, Kajubi Mukajanga. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Council takes senior female journalists through three-day course on management skills

By Guardian Correspondent

TWENTY senior female journalists from several media outlets have been conferred certificates on completion of a three-day specially designed management training organized by the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT).

Speaking during the closure of the training on March 13, 2020, the participants were enthusiastic, expressed appreciation and appealed for more training sessions.

They pointed out topics which were very informative during the training included the Media Services Act of 2016 and other laws related to media - Cyber crime Act, Statistic ACT, Access to Information Act and Electronic and Postal Communications Act.

They were also enlightened on the decisions by national and regional courts on media related cases and what was being challenged by stakeholders.

Other issues that featured during the training were Managing multi-platform newsroom - responding to technological advancement in media and communication, human resources management - managing people and policies leadership and ethics, media ownership and Editorial Independence, Challenges facing women managers in media, Women Managers in newsroom Need for Effectiveness and resilience, Financial Management and Controls.

Closing the training, the Executive Secretary of the Council, Kajubi Mukajanga, expressed hope that it was quite useful and will help them in discharging their duties efficiently and effectively.

Touching on the laws which the participants showed great interest, Mukajanga said that it is good that they discerned that the concern raised by the Council and media stakeholders on the laws was not empty talk.

He said it is quite strange that people in authority enact laws without taking into consideration their outcome and impact to professionals and society in general.

He welcomed them to the Council to seek or share opinion on various issues.

Facilitators of the training were Rashid Kejo - Editor at Mwananchi, Ziada Kilobo - Human Resources and Administrative Manager at MCT, Absalom Kibanda - Media Consultant, Pili Mtambalike - Media Consultant, Mustapha Peter - Finance Manager of MCT, and Advocate Jeremiah Mtobesya.

The participants were drawn from several media outlets including Clouds Media, Tumaini Media, Mlimani Media, TSN, TBC, Mwananchi Communications Limited, Channel Ten, Sibuka, Upendo FM, Majira and Tanzania Daima.

Similar training was conducted by the Council for women journalists was held in Morogoro November, 2019.

The training was sponsored by a Finnish Foundation for Development - VIKES.

UNDP appeals for increase in innovation budget allocation

By Correspondent James Kandoya

THE United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) has appealed to the government to increase budget allocation for innovation to give youth opportunities to develop skills in innovation and entrepreneurship.

Programme Specialist and Head of Inclusive Growth Pillar at UNDP-Tanzania, Ernest Salla said this at a panel discussion on the dos and don'ts of donor funding at the just ended innovation week 2020 held

in Dar es Salaam.

He said currently budget allocated for innovation is small insistent the need for the government to increase it. He said government support on innovation activities was crucial because some local innovators fail to develop their work over lack of funding.

"We call on the government to invest on its people especially emerging innovators by supporting their innovation works to make them more promising," he said.

Salla noted that for Tanzania to

realise its development vision, it is important for the young generation to be given opportunity to develop skills in areas of innovation and entrepreneurship.

He reiterated that partnership between the government and private sector is crucial towards assisting young people to realise their life dreams of becoming new emerging innovators.

"Innovation ecosystem needs involvement of all stakeholders to fast-track country development.

However, government funding

remains crucial to avoid dos and don'ts of donor funding," he advised.

Findings of a study conducted by HDIF-Catalysing and Scaling Innovation in Tanzania' Dos and Don'ts of Innovation Programming' revealed that innovation was thriving, yet its fledgling nature is heavily shaped by those who have opportunity to support it, rather than those who are driving it from the ground up.

The study recommended adopting a pipeline approach to address

funding and resource gaps to take innovations from the viable business model to scale.

According to the study, support investment readiness by helping innovators to get their organisational systems and processes in shape and assume a broad variance in skills and cater for a broad range of support needs.

This year's innovation week theme was "Innovate for the Impact" and has brought together more than 6000 participants. The week was marked in six regions.

The Guardian

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TUESDAY 17 MARCH 2020

Taking A New Look
At The News
ESTABLISHED IN 1995

Sustainable population growth still a huge challenge as a goal

IN sociology, population refers to a collection of humans and their entire race. Demography is a social science which entails the statistical study of populations. Population, in a more simple term, is the number of people in a city or town, region, country or world; population is usually determined by a process called census (a process of collecting, analysing, compiling and publishing data).

The current population of Tanzania is 59,209,625 as of Sunday, March 15, 2020, based on Worldometer elaboration of the latest United Nations data.

Worldometer is run by an international team of developers, researchers, and volunteers with the goal of making world statistics available in a thought-provoking and time relevant format to a wide audience around the world. Worldometer is owned by Dadax, an independent company.

With a new report projecting a rise in population, specifically in Asia and Africa, the United Nations has warned that continued rapid population growth presents enormous challenges for sustainable development in the world's 134 developing nations.

Among them, the heaviest impact will be on the 47 least developed countries (LDCs), described as the poorest of the world's poor, and the 57 small island developing states (SIDS), including 20 "territories" which are non-UN members, largely vulnerable to continued economic hardships and environmental hazards.

According to the report LDCs are among the world's fastest growing - and many are projected to double in population between 2019 and 2050 - putting pressure on already strained resources and challenging policies that aim to achieve the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) and ensure that no one is left behind.

According to a recent UN population report by the year 2050 there will be some 9.7 billion people living on earth.

However, the overall growth rate will continue to fall, and more countries will have to adapt to the consequences of an ageing population.

The nine countries expected to show the biggest increase are India, Nigeria and Pakistan, followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Indonesia, Egypt and the United States. In all, the population of sub-Saharan Africa is expected to practically double by 2050. We are told that many of the fastest growing populations are in the poorest countries, where population growth brings additional challenges.

These challenges include the fight to eradicate poverty, combat hunger and malnutrition, greater equality along with improved healthcare and education. The report offers a 'roadmap' indicating where to target action and interventions.

At the same time, growth is providing opportunities in many developing economies: recent reductions in fertility mean that the working-age population (25 to 64) is growing faster than other age ranges, which could improve the possibilities for faster economic growth. The report recommends that governments make use of this "demographic dividend" to invest in education and health. Today, the average lifespan of a baby born in one of the least developed countries will be some seven years shorter than one born in a developed country. The main reasons are high child and maternal mortality rates, violence and the continuing impact of the HIV epidemic.

Our poetry needs to capture human mind's creative spirit

WORLD Poetry Day is celebrated on 21 March, and was declared by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) in 1999, with the aim of supporting linguistic diversity through poetic expression and increasing the opportunity for endangered languages to be heard. Its purpose is to promote the reading, writing, publishing and teaching of poetry throughout the world and, as the original UNESCO declaration says, to "give fresh recognition and impetus to national, regional and international poetry movements".

Poetry reaffirms our common humanity by revealing to us that individuals, everywhere in the world, share the same questions and feelings. Poetry is the mainstay of oral tradition and, over centuries, can communicate the innermost values of diverse cultures.

In celebrating World Poetry Day, March 21, UNESCO recognizes the unique ability of poetry to capture the creative spirit of the human mind. One of the main objectives of the Day is to support linguistic diversity through poetic expression and to offer endangered languages the opportunity to be heard within their communities.

The observance of World Poetry Day is also meant to encourage a return to the oral tradition of poetry recitals, to promote the teaching of poetry, to restore a dialogue between poetry and the other arts such as theatre, dance, music and painting, and to support small publishers and create an attractive image of poetry in the media, so that the art of poetry will no longer be considered an outdated form of art, but one which enables society as a whole to regain and assert its identity.

In Tanzania, traditional Kiswahili

poetry has seen a bright future in Tanzania and East Africa as the wave of Bongo Flava music, which adheres to its discipline, continues to appeal audience worldwide.

The emergence of mega stars such as Diamond Platnumz, Ali Kiba, Rich Mavoko, Vanesa Mdee and many others whose music appeals multinational audience, helped to promote the traditional poetry through music.

Mriho Mpoti, who goes by the stage name Mjoba, recently released a wedding song titled Nimwaga Radhi in collaboration with Bongo Flava artiste Harmonize.

Mpoti is one of, if not the most prolific poet in Tanzania, who uses his mastery of the Kiswahili language to compose and recite strong political and social messages.

His poetry has been the hallmark of Tanzania's theatre arts for the past two decades. He has used poetry to condemn the haphazard 1990s privatisation of national agencies in his song Waite (call them) and to generally condemn the plunder of Africa's natural resources through neo-colonialism in exchange for fake democracy.

"I am not just a poet. I am a theatre artiste and song and dance are part of my work. My poetry addresses pertinent issues affecting the average Tanzanian. We are often told that Tanzania is arguably one of the richest countries in Africa, yet, most Tanzanians are poor. This is unacceptable. I am the voice of the voiceless," he said.

Mpoti has collaborated with a number of Bongo Flava singers including Diamond Platnumz and Banana Zoro.

Based in Dar es Salaam, Mposho is a poet, actor, director and a storyteller who also works with corporate clients in media campaigns by the government and advertising agencies.

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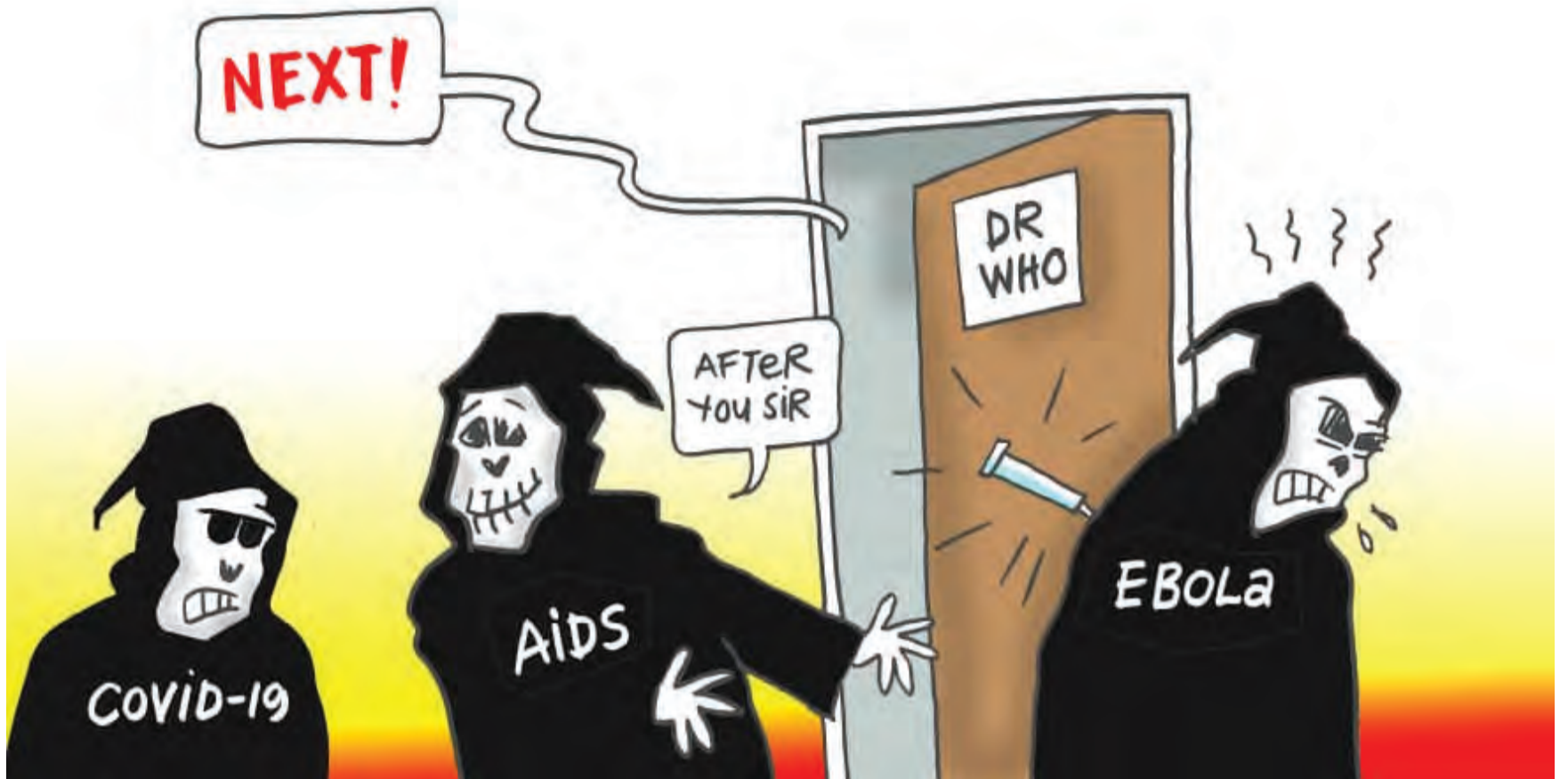
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COVID-19: We will come through this together

By António Guterres

THE upheaval caused by the coronavirus - COVID-19 - is all around us. And I know many are anxious, worried and confused. That's absolutely natural. We are facing a health threat unlike any other in our lifetimes.

Meanwhile, the virus is spreading, the danger is growing, and our health systems, economies and day-to-day lives are being severely tested.

The most vulnerable are the most affected - particularly our elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions, those without access to reliable health care, and those in poverty or living on the edge.

The social and economic fallout from the combination of the pandemic and slowing economies will affect most of us for some months. But the spread of the virus will peak. Our economies will recover.

Until then, we must act together to slow the spread of the virus and look after each other. This is a time for prudence, not panic. Science, not stigma. Facts, not fear.

Even though the situation has been classified as a pan-



dem, it is one we can control. We can slow down transmissions, prevent infections and save lives. But that will take unprecedented personal, national and international action. COVID-19 is our common enemy. We must declare war on this virus. That means countries have a responsibility to

gear up, step up and scale up.

How? By implementing effective containment strategies; by activating and enhancing emergency response systems; by dramatically increasing testing capacity and care for patients; by readying hospitals, ensuring they have the space, supplies and needed personnel; and by developing life-saving medical interventions.

All of us have a responsibility, too - to follow medical advice and take simple, practical steps recommended by health authorities.

In addition to being a public health crisis, the virus is infecting the global economy. Financial markets have been hard hit by the uncertainty. Global supply chains have been disrupted. Investment and consumer demand have plunged - with a real and rising risk of a global recession.

United Nations economists estimate that the virus could cost the global economy at least \$1 trillion this year - and perhaps far more.

No country can do it alone. More than ever, governments must cooperate to revitalise economies, expand public investment, boost trade, and ensure targeted support for the people and communities most affected by the disease or more vulnerable to the negative economic impacts - including women who often shoulder a disproportionate burden of care work.

A pandemic drives home the essential interconnectedness of our human family. Preventing the further spread of COVID-19 is a shared responsibility for us all.

The United Nations - including the World Health Organisation - is fully mobilised. As part of our human family, we are working 24/7 with governments, providing international guidance, helping the world take on this threat.

We are in this together - and we will get through this, together.

António Guterres is Secretary General of the United Nations.

The roots of student protest run deep

By Kaymarlin Govender

THE problem of access to education for South Africans is a systemic and historical one, with failures seen from the early childhood development phase through to secondary and tertiary education.

The recent spate of student protests at institutions of higher education that pit managers against students on issues of access is not likely to be resolved soon - and the ugly displays of violence and criminality are anything but new.

Efforts to end the violence through temporary solutions reflect the difficult predicament that the constituencies face in trying to resolve the problem.

Issues of institutional financial sustainability and lack of student access (payment of registration fees, financial debt, academic exclusions, lack of accommodation) are writ large in this conflict. Acknowledgement of the complexity of issues students and tertiary institutions face is, however, negated by a sector of the student body who choose to damage property, intimidate other students and staff and participate in acts of vandalism.

Populist framing of violence on campuses in terms of dual-role conflict (managers versus students), the interplay between student issues and political party politics, the self-serving nature of these political agendas and the tactical use of social media to score personal and political points also play into the hands of detractors while the real challenges of students and higher education institutions are rel-

egated to the margins.

Student protest is not new to a democratic South Africa; it has a long history, with the form and character of protests marked by the histories of our higher education institutions (historically black and historically white institutions), and the geopolitics of communities where institutions are located.

For many poor students with aspirations of entering tertiary education, the stakes are raised with the expectation that success at tertiary level will overcome the traps of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

Education is an important catalyst for economic and human development and is recognised as a fundamental human right.

For South Africans, however, tertiary education is also a flashpoint of the structural inequalities still inherent in our education system. Most children growing up in townships will face circumstances of material and structural disadvantage.

The problem of access to education for South Africans is a systemic and historical one, with failures (in terms of access and quality of education) seen from the early childhood development phase through to secondary and tertiary education.

Fifteen percent of children aged five years old in 2018 were not in school, yet we know that investments in ECD are linked to higher success rates in later phases of schooling. At the secondary school level, the data suggests that working-class and poor black children are "long-term learners", with a nota-

ble percentage of learners remaining in primary and secondary schools long after they should have left those institutions.

Almost a quarter (24.7%) of 20-year-olds were, for instance, still attending secondary school in 2018 (Education).

To compound matters, the public schooling system is still grappling with large classes, lack of books, bad facilities and lack of teachers.

The DBE matric class of 2019 achieved a pass rate of 81.3%, up from 78.2% in 2018. However, in 2017, 1,052,080 learners were enrolled in Grade 10, yet only 409,906 learners passed matric last year. Only 44.55% of those matrics that passed in 2019 achieved a grade high enough for admission to bachelor's degrees.

Despite widespread public knowledge of the low standards even of these levels, more than 180,000 learners were given the impression that they could be successful at the tertiary level of education; hence the vast numbers of applications to TVETs, and universities. Many of these students have financial difficulty and the numbers are well in excess of what these institutions can accommodate.

The consequences of poor public school education and lack of funds are evident in the fact that 45.7% of youths aged 19 were recently classified as NEET students (not in employment, education or training). This represents approximately three million mostly black youths aged 18-24 years. (Education Statistics).

Breast cancer survivors highlight need for early diagnosis to save women from premature deaths

By Correspondent James Kandoya

It is now fifteen years since Angela Kuzilwa (70), a resident of Oysterbay in Kinondoni District Council, Dar es Salaam city was found with breast cancer leading to the removal of one of her breasts.

Despite all challenges she encountered, Kuzilwa is always happy and socialise with different people in workplaces and those in the streets surrounding her.

She says, "as cancer is always associated with imminent death I never thought I would go back to living my life or if I was going to survive it."

However, with the support of my husband, family and friends I had very successful treatment.

Having known that many women lacks awareness and have many questions she decided to reach out to other breast cancer patients/survivors in the country to support them and eliminate all the myths and stigma surrounding women living with breast cancer.

In regard to this, in 2006, she established the Tanzania Breast Cancer Foundation soon after her recovery to increase awareness about cancer especially breast cancer to women.

Narrating her story, Kuzilwa says that it was in October 2004 at the age of 53 years, when her life changed.

"For almost six months prior to my diagnosis of breast cancer I noticed changes in my breast which was mostly numbness and nipple discharge. Having a very limited knowledge of cancer, breast cancer was the last thing on my mind. When I was finally diagnosed with the disease, I wasn't very sure how to react as I was gripped with fear," she says.

"Indeed, it was a very difficult day for me," she adds.

The oncologist advised her to undergo surgery where one of her breast was removed to prevent the spread of the disease. It was in 2004.

Kuzilwa describes that after a surgery, she undergone six round of chemotherapy followed by 25 round of radiotherapy as recommended by her doctor.

After completing the dose, her life goes on as any other woman noting regular screening is very important to maintain and prevent any infection.

"Once cancer is diagnosed early, it can be treated. I'm representing breast cancer victims. The life goes on after getting treatment," she said.

Kuzilwa is against people's wrong beliefs and rumours that once someone is diagnosed with cancer, her or his life has come to an end.

She says cancer is curable if the patients are diagnosed early and get treatment as recommended by the doctors sharing her personal experience as a victim of breast cancer for fourteen years now.

"Secrecy and wrong beliefs is still a big challenge facing most of the women suffering from cancer especially breast cancer. We need to break the silence," she says.

"Increased awareness on how to conduct self-screening to women is very important to enable them to detect early symptoms of the disease," she adds.

Besides that, Kuzilwa was so open to her family, children and neighbours immediately after being informed by the doctor adding that it gave her relief and untied from deep feeling which according to the health experts, it was a psychological therapy.

The long experience has shown that due to low knowledge and poor beliefs most women tend to hide fearing stigma and instead go to witch-doctors.

As a result, they attend to the health facilities when the disease is at third or fourth stage and therefore ended up in palliative services.

"There are tendencies of



women to hide diseases once diagnosed sometimes even to their husbands and children," she notes.

Kuzilwa is not alone, there are many others who face similar challenges and Fatma Maheza a resident of Mbagala suburbs in Temeke Municipal Council in Dar es Salaam city is one of them.

She was also diagnosed with breast cancer and undergone breast surgery in April 2016.

Maheza, 50 years, calls on other women to adhere to medical check-up to detect early symptoms in case they have a problem.

A breast cancer survivor Angela Kuzilwa (R) briefing journalists on the need to break silence next is Director of Prevention Services at Ocean Road Cancer Institute (ORCI) others are medical doctors at ORCI. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

"After diagnosed with the disease, one of my breasts was removed, thanks to God, I have recovered after fully completed the dose," she says while smiling.

As recommended by doctors, Maheza underwent 20 rounds of chemotherapy and 20 round of radiotherapy. She is well. "I'm improving day to day after completing the dose. I would like to remind my fellow women to downplay rumours and not rely on wrong beliefs. They must attend to health facilities on time. I did, I'm now surviving," she said.

She elaborates that even after completing the dose, she attends clinic for regular check-up every after three months to detect in case another type

of cancer emerges.

Country situation

It is estimated that 40,000 new cancer cases are reported of which 80 percent of those victims die every year and the number is reported to be increasing both in Tanzania and worldwide.

Tanzania, like many other countries, has an increasing number of people who are developing cancer due to diverse reasons.

Cancer is now a major cause of morbidity and mortality in Tanzania, being the 5th cause of death among adult men and 2nd among female adults.

At present, only 12,000 patients out of 42,000 new cases diagnosed reach-

es to the health facilities, according to the Director Cancer Prevention Services at Ocean Road Cancer Institute (ORCI), Dr Crispin Kahesa.

He says the problem is highly contributed by low awareness and wrong beliefs among the community especially in rural areas.

Moreover, knowledge on cancer prevention, cure and care is still a mystery to many people including the victims of the disease despite the fact that one third of cancer can be prevented and early detection and effective treatment of a further third is also possible.

"Missing cases is one of big challenges hindering the institute efforts to screen more people and treat them. Our goal is to ensure that we reach all missed cases and treat them," he says.

According to the director, wrong beliefs is one of the factor confuses the society hence choose wrong decision.

In view of the fact, cancer is treated once diagnosed early, downplaying beliefs that once diagnosed with cancer he or she dies.

The director detailed that statistics shows that the sources of cancer had changed from virus to life style such as smoking and drinking of alcohol.

Therefore regular medical check up to diagnose the problem early is very important so that they can get treatment on time instead of palliative care.

He says since the facility improved services number of deaths has dropped by 40 per cent where all diagnosed undergone chemo and radiotherapy as treatment.

According to the Acting Director for Prevention Services at ORCI, Dr Mark Mseti said the leading cancers are cervix cancer, breast cancer and oesophagus just to mention the few.

"We want the society to change their mindset and break the silence about the disease. This will inspire more patients and other people to come to adhere to regular body screening," he said. He adds that the institute has already trained more than 600 health experts in lower hospitals how to conduct early diagnosis of the disease.

Dr Mseti assures the community that radiotherapy is the right and effective treatment of cancer therefore there is nothing to fear.

Global situation

Cancer has been noted as one of major life threatening Non Communicable Diseases worldwide.

Over 7.6 million people die from cancer which is equivalent to over 21 percent of all NCD deaths globally. Nearly two thirds of all cancer diagnoses occurring in low- and middle-income countries.

A woman peacebuilder's reflections on Beijing+25 and the Generation Equality Forum

NEW YORK

WHERE are the women and youth peacebuilders in the Beijing+25 and the Generation Equality Forum processes?

Their absence raises serious questions about the effectivity and coherence of the work of the UN on gender equality since armed conflict is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality.

Over the last five months, I have spent most of my waking and sleeping hours strategizing with our team at the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) about how to keep peace and security on the agenda of the Generation Equality Forum (GEF), the incarnation of the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Many of our friends and allies within the Women and Peace and Security community ask me: Is it worth putting our limited time and resources into trying to participate in these bureaucratic and non-binding processes? Is it worth engaging with government and UN bureaucracies to advance our feminist agendas?

My answer to these questions is a resounding yes! But only if women and youth peacebuilders are part of the process. Here is why.

An inspiration for the Women and Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security agendas

Nearly 25 years ago, in August and September 1995, more than 30,000 women from around the world convened in Beijing, China to participate in the Fourth World Conference and NGO Forum on Women.

It was a watershed moment for the

global women's movement not only because of its magnitude, but mainly because it brought forth the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action (BPFA), by far the most comprehensive global agenda for women's empowerment and gender equality.

The BPFA set strategic objectives and actions for the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality in 12 critical areas of concerns, ranging from women and poverty to women and armed conflict, and women's human rights.

The BPFA resulted in the establishment of more than 100 national institutions for women's advancement, including Ministries of Gender in many countries. It led to advocacy for—and the adoption of—the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) in October 2000.

The adoption of the UNSCR 1325 was a major achievement and a result of the unyielding work of women peacebuilders around the world. It established a normative framework for women's meaningful participation in decision-making, conflict resolution, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as well as protection of women and girls' rights, and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict-affected situations.

For those of us who are working towards the effective implementation of the Women and Peace and Security (WPS) and the Youth and Peace and Security (YPS) agendas, the BPFA is a foundation document and a model for robust civil society ownership and participation.

It stands alongside the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Dis-



crimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Security Council Resolutions on WPS and YPS as one of the most important international instruments on women's rights, youth rights, and gender equality.

More than two decades later, the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) is underway. Much like the Beijing Conference and Platform for Action, the GEF and its outcomes will not be legally binding.

This raises concerns among some civil society groups as to the resources and energy spent on these processes. Indeed, forums and conferences use up considerable resources; and the

laws and policies that come out of them are, after all, just words on paper.

Nonetheless, with strong civil society ownership and participation, the GEF can lead to outcomes that shape not only laws and policies, but concrete actions on women's rights and gender equality. In the same way that the Beijing Conference and the Platform for Action did.

A test of legitimacy and accountability of the Generation Equality Forum

The success of the GEF and its outcomes are dependent on the extent and quality of the participation of civil society groups representing diverse issues and initiatives.

In line with the accountability frame-

work for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the GEF process aims to map progress and reactivate commitments to implementation. It proposes to do so by launching Action Coalitions, which will catalyze collective action, spark global, inter-generational conversations, and deliver results to further advance equality for women and girls.

This is where a major problem arises. Women peacebuilders and youth peacebuilders are not represented in the decision-making structure of the GEF. As a result, WPS and YPS have been left out from the Action Coalitions identified by the Forum organizers.

This is particularly astounding, since the WPS and YPS agendas are integral to all three pillars of the United Nations—peace and security, human rights and development. Equally important, the exclusion of WPS and YPS raises serious questions about the scope of civil society consultations, and how decisions are made in the GEF.

Many years of experience in the women's movement tells us that the legitimacy of—and accountability to—decisions on women's rights and gender equality largely depend on the participation and ownership of civil society organizations representing women's interests that may be impacted by such decisions.

Call for an Action Coalition on Women and Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security

WPS and YPS agendas are critical to realizing the promise of the BPFA. They cannot be effectively mainstreamed in any of the six Action Coalitions. Recognizing this, more than 150 feminist, grassroots women's rights organizations and networks from around the world sent an Open Letter to the Gov-

ernments of France and Mexico and UN Women, expressing concern about the serious risk of leaving out key priorities and needs of women and youth peacebuilders in the GEF.

Their call was backed by the Civil Society Advisory Group to the GEF, the UN High-Level Advisory Group for the 2015 Global Study on UNSCR 1325, and the Government of South Africa who supported the establishment of a stand-alone Action Coalition on WPS and YPS.

As the GEF process unfolds, its organizers must acknowledge the diversity of women's issues. They also need to recognize civil society as a partner on equal footing with the Governments of France and Mexico, and UN Women. This means responding to the reverberating calls of the more than 150 feminist and women's rights organizations, and the Civil Society Advisory Group to form a stand-alone Action Coalition on WPS and YPS.

Marking the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Generation Equality Forum presents a global momentum to advance gender equality. Yet, to date, it fails to address the biggest and most persistent challenge that the international community confronts: armed conflicts that are becoming more and more vicious and fragmented.

As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said in his January 22, 2020 speech to the General Assembly, the lack of peace and security remains as one of greatest threats to 21st century progress.

Is Beijing +25 worth civil society's limited time and resources? Yes, but only if it fully integrates peace and security at its core and meaningfully includes women and youth peacebuilders to achieve it.

China's battle against the COVID-19 outbreak: A backgrounder

THE recent outbreak of novel coronavirus pneumonia (COVID-19) has been identified as a major public health emergency with the fastest transmission, the widest geographical spread and the highest level of difficulty of containment the People's Republic of China has ever been confronted with since its founding. Since the outbreak began, the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese government have acted out of the paramount concern for the life, safety and health of the people.

The entire nation, united as one has launched a fight with the most comprehensive, rigorous and thorough measures to contain the spread of the epidemic, protect the health and security of both the Chinese people and expatriates from various countries and ultimately to safeguard global public health.

First, the battle against the outbreak has been fought under the personal guidance and direction of General Secretary Xi Jinping.

Giving the most urgent priority to epidemic response in the work of both the Party and the country, General Secretary Xi Jinping has taken prompt and firm decisions, calling for the all-out efforts of the whole Party, the entire Army and all Chinese people to fight the battle against the epidemic and resolutely defeat the outbreak in this people's war, total war and blocking action.

General Secretary Xi has since followed closely the latest development of the epidemic, and arrived at a series of major decisive instructions in a timely manner, pointing the way for and injecting fresh impetus to the response efforts. The courage and confidence of the Chinese people were greatly inspired.

Second, a high-performing inter-agency task force has been put in place without delay. The Central Leading Group on Responding to the Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia Outbreak, which was set up immediately following the outbreak sent a central oversight group to Wuhan, Hubei Province, the epicenter to offer on-site guidance.

An inter-agency task force mechanism consisting of over 30 government departments was established to coordinate nation-wide response. The operation of this mechanism has enabled nationwide mobilisation, deployment and implementation, providing the organisational and institutional guarantee for the success of response efforts.

Third, utmost efforts have been made to contain the source of infection and cut off the transmission route. Prompt instructions were issued to relevant localities on exercising strict control over all outflow of people.

Provinces across China have activated first-level public health emergency response one after another, calling for minimised outdoor activities and utmost synergy for epidemic control while carrying out grid-based management at community level.

Preemptive measures such as holiday extension, deferring the new school semester, flexible restoration of economic activities and staggered working hours have greatly reduced the chance of cross-infection.

Fourth, nation-wide support has been funneled to the epicenter. Nineteen provinces have been instructed to participate in a pairing-up arrangement, with each assisting one city in Hubei Province.

Accordingly, over 41,600 health workers of 330-plus medical teams from across the nation have raced against the clock to assist Hubei Province and indeed Wuhan. Temporary field hospitals including Huoshenshan and Leishenshan and other mobile cabin hospitals have been constructed and commissioned at lightning speed, greatly enhancing the ability of the city to admit and treat patients with better facilities.

Furthermore, ensuring the supply of medical resources and daily necessities to Wuhan and Hubei at large has been implemented as a national priority.



Five experts from the Red Cross Society of China arrived in Teheran, Iran with China-aided medical supplies on Feb. 29 to help the Islamic Republic fight against the novel coronavirus epidemic.

Fifth, a science-based approach has been taken to contain the outbreak. Effective diagnostics and therapeutics have been disseminated without delay to all hospitals. A total of seven editions of "Guidelines on the Novel Coronavirus-infected Pneumonia Diagnosis and Treatment" have been rolled out on an up-dated basis.

All-out efforts have been made in the R&D of vaccine and specific medicine. Traditional Chinese Medicine therapy is also encouraged. Efforts have been made to fully mobilise health workers, scientists and technologists.

As summarised from the practice in China, early detection, reporting, quarantine and treatment of cases are the standard procedures for more efficient containment.

On the treatment side, patients in severe conditions should be admitted to the facilities where the best resources and professionals are pooled. Increasing admission rate and recovery rate while lowering

infection rate and mortality rate are set as the priority and major targets, which has won full recognition of the WHO.

Sixth, a holistic approach has been taken to coordinate economic and social development with epidemic control. Region-specific and multi-levelled plan have been formulated in time to restore economic and social order nationwide. Regions with low infection risks should ensure full restoration.

Those with medium-risks should effect restoration in an orderly manner in light of the epidemic situation. Those with high risks should continue to be fully dedicated to epidemic containment and mitigation.

Macro-policy regulation and control have been strengthened and a series of measures to stabilise the labour market have been put in place.

Efforts have also been made to retain foreign investment and shore up foreign trade, ensure smooth operation of enterprises and provide greater support to companies and

ed. At the time being, Chinese medical experts are working in a number of countries in assistance with the epidemic control efforts thereof.

Thanks to the concerted nationwide efforts, significant progress has been achieved in the battle against the epidemic. The work of prevention and control in China is gaining positive momentum, and the restoration of economic and social order is picking up pace.

The daily number of confirmed cases across China has plummeted from over 10,000 during the peak to below 100. In provinces other than Hubei, the newly added confirmed cases per day has dropped to single-digit and over 80% of the confirmed patients have been cured and discharged from hospital.

The counter-epidemic measures China has taken and the positive results we have since achieved have been endorsed and applauded by the overwhelming majority of countries around the world.

Political parties and their leaders from many countries, in their solidarity messages, expressed admiration for the brilliant decision and strong leadership of General Secretary Xi Jinping and hailed the speed and scale of China's unprecedented response. It has once again demonstrated the strength of the Chinese socialist system.

The WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted that China's forceful actions are protecting not only its own people, but also the rest of the world. China has bought time for the international community to enhance preparedness.

One of the important lessons the outbreak of this epidemic has taught us is that in this age of globalisation, countries are more closely linked than ever before and mankind is increasingly becoming a community with a shared future.

As General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, in today's world, countries are faced with many challenges that no one can tackle alone and no country can retreat to the lone island of self-seclusion.

Virus respects no borders. We call on all countries, political parties and peoples to work hand in hand to overcome the current difficulties and forge a community with a shared future for the fight against the epidemic so that we can defeat the epidemic at the earliest possible date and jointly build a beautiful world of peace and development.

This article is authored by International Department, Central Committee of the Communist Party of China

Coronavirus can spell disaster, but fortune favours the prepared mind

By Cyril Ramaphosa

DEAR fellow South Africans, The world is in the throes of a public health emergency on a scale not witnessed in over a century.

The spread of the coronavirus, which causes the disease known as Covid-19, has been alarmingly swift and wide scale, and is now defined as a global pandemic.

It knows no geographical or territorial boundaries, has infected both young and old, and is on the rise in developed and developing countries alike.

As screening and testing is scaled up, the number of infections in South Africa is expected to rise.

Yesterday [Sunday 15 March 2020], I declared a national state of disaster, a measure proportionate to the severity of the threat to our people, to our society and to our economy.

This will enable us to have an integrated and coordinated disaster management mechanism and to set up emergency, rapid and effective response systems.

This virus will be extremely disruptive, and our priority is to safeguard the health and well-being of all South Africans.

We also have to address the inevitable economic fallout. We must expect a decline in exports, a drop in tourist arrivals and a severe impact on production, business viability and job creation and retention.

Cabinet is in the process of finalising

a comprehensive package of interventions to mitigate the expected impact of Covid-19 on our economy. This is being done in consultation with business, labour and other relevant institutions.

It was Louis Pasteur who said that fortune favours the prepared mind.

South Africa is prepared, and has been so for some time.

Since the outbreak was first reported we have acted to put screening and containment measures in place.

Our national response has been driven by an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) chaired and ably led by the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize.

The manner in which the IMC and the support teams have responded to this emergency has been both exemplary and reassuring, particularly in helping to quell public panic.

I will be chairing a National Command Council to coordinate all aspects of our national response.

South Africa has a positive track record in managing public health emergencies.

We have the knowledge, the means and the expertise. Our scientists and epidemiologists are world-class.

As was announced yesterday, we have put a raft of emergency measures in place, and will make funding available to support their implementation.

They include travel bans on visitors from high-risk countries; mandatory testing, self-isolation or quarantine for South African nationals returning from these countries, and strengthening surveillance, screening and testing at ports



of entry into the Republic.

Social distancing is critical if we are to contain the spread of Covid-19.

Gatherings of more than 100 people are prohibited and mass celebrations of national days are cancelled. Visits to all correctional centres are being suspended for 30 days with immediate effect. Non-essential international travel for government officials has been proscribed and non-essential domestic travel discouraged.

A total of 35 land ports and two sea ports will be closed, as will schools from 18 March until after the Easter weekend. We

will soon be announcing measures with regards to universities and colleges.

Next month [April 2020] will be Easter, a sacred period for a number of faiths and a time in which mass services and gatherings will take place. The faith community should take decisions in this regard in the best interests of the health of their

congregants and the country as a whole.

Hygiene control should be intensified in all sectors.

Every citizen should take charge of their own safety by observing measures such as frequent hand-washing with soap or hand sanitisers and covering their nose or mouth with a tissue or flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing.

As part of our national effort the Department of Health will continue with an intensive and ongoing campaign to raise awareness about prevention, transmission and infection symptoms. I encourage all South Africans to acquaint themselves with the relevant preventative material.

These measures are similar to those in other countries, and it is important we all understand that they are not punitive but a matter of public safety.

One of the greatest dangers at this time is ignorance and misinformation.

We should stop spreading fake and unverified news, especially on social media. This can exacerbate an already tense national mood and damage the national effort.

Just also [do] not give in to the expressions of bigotry that we have seen in other countries directed at nationals of countries

from where the outbreak began or the current epicenter in Europe. This is clearly a virus that affects people of all nationalities.

Let us lower the wing of compassion to those who are infected, and to those who have returned home from high-risk countries.

Let us assist those in need and those more vulnerable, instead of shunning them. We will remain faithful to the values of tolerance and respect that define us as a people.

On behalf of all the people of South Africa I thank the team who repatriated our compatriots from Wuhan, China, as well as the leadership and people of Limpopo who are assisting with the quarantine process.

This is a difficult time. And yet it is in times of adversity that our strength is revealed.

We will act decisively, with determination and with purpose. We will act as a collective, for it is upon the actions of every South African that the success of our efforts depend.

The Thuma Mina moment is upon us, perhaps as never before.

This too shall pass. We shall overcome. We are South Africans. With best wishes, Cyril Ramaphosa.

Agencies

Fearful nurses stage go-slow at coronavirus isolation camp

NAIROBI

NURSES at Mbagathi hospital, which is holding one of the three largest isolation camps for coronavirus (Covid-19) cases, are on a go-slow.

The healthcare professionals are citing lack of adequate coronavirus training and little support to protect their families who they go home to every evening after working near patients that are potentially suffering from the virus.

A spot check at the hospital revealed that, to the outside eye, work was going on but conversations with the caregivers shed light on the complaints by the nurses.

On Friday last week, a nurse broke down in tears about her fears of going back home to her children amid concerns that she could infect them.

It has been learnt that an emergency meeting between Nairobi County and the nurses' union and association has since been called to address the

situation.

The health workers are also complaining that the hospitals are not in "crisis mode" yet in some wards since the other departments differ from the isolation wards, and do not have masks or any other protective gear.

Meanwhile, the counties' struggling healthcare system is bracing itself for the Covid-19 outbreak.

Governors are sprucing up unused buildings, dilapidated wards and maternity wings as they scramble to establish isolation units.

From refurbishing hospital rooms to equipping maternity and high dependency units with beds, the 47 devolved units are struggling to put together 'isolation wards'.

In Coast, save for Mombasa – which has the region's only referral hospital with an intensive care unit – the other county hospitals only have rooms marked as 'isolation wards' with no capacity to handle Covid-19 cases.

"We agreed that every county must



set aside funds and put in place a committee to handle Covid-19. The national government has agreed to support us in handling the situation," said the Council of Governors chairman Wycliffe Oparanya.

Mombasa has converted the Ramtullah private wing at the Coast General Teaching and Referral Hospital as its main isolation unit with 19 beds.

Infected people without symptoms

might be driving the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus, a new study has shown.

While emphasis has been put on the fact that the virus is spread mainly by people who are already showing symptoms, such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing, a team of infectious disease researchers at the University of Texas found that the germ that causes Covid-19 is most contagious

before and during the first week of symptoms.

Since the outbreak of the disease – which has been declared a pandemic – in Wuhan, China in December, a number of studies conducted to understand how the virus behaves have shown that people without symptoms are causing substantial amounts of infection.

The scientists also found that about

10 per cent of patients are infected by someone who has the virus but does not show symptoms yet.

"The data suggest that this coronavirus may spread like the flu. That means we need to move quickly and aggressively to curb the emerging threat," said Lauren Ancel Meyers, a professor of integrative biology at UT Austin.

The arc of justice: The world's religions launch strategic priorities for peace

By Prof. Dr. Azza Karam and Rev. Kyoichi Sugino

AS a growing public health crisis becomes increasingly urgent, prominent global actors and institutions, including the United Nations, are confronted by the realisation that all hands

on deck are required to address the cross-cutting challenges faced by our world today.

Another public health epidemic is but one of the major global challenges demanding coordinated and effective responses from diverse institutions, and civil society networks.

Income inequality continues to grow, with the world's richest 1% in 2020 having twice as much wealth as 6.9 billion people.

The political and economic will critical to combatting climate change is more needed than ever, with virtually all states behind in their commitments to

the Paris Agreement.

With communities ravaged by ongoing conflict, a record 70 million people have fled their homes.

As calls for change echo across the globe, the percentage of people living in countries where civic space is considered

"repressed" more than doubled in 2019.

Fundamental elements essential to securing human dignity – the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to society, the power to demand change, freedom from any and all forms of discrimination, and the ability

to live within and nurture a sustainable environment – are rapidly eroding.

These challenges are striking at a time when multilateralism is threatened, space for civil society is shrinking, and the call for walls of separation are on the rise.

The opportunity to forge ahead as humanity through this turmoil may well exist within the deepest and widest infrastructures ever created and sustained by humankind: the world's religious communities, to which over 80% of humanity claims some affiliation.

India's poor risk loss of privacy, land in drive to digitise records

By Rina Chandran

A PUSH to digitise land records in India to establish ownership and minimise conflicts has raised concerns over privacy for poorer communities and could make them more vulnerable to evictions, legal and technology experts said recently.

India's national land record modernisation programme seeks to re-survey lands, verify and upgrade records, and put the information online by 2021.

Authorities have said this will enable them to monitor land sales more easily, increase tax revenue and reduce corruption.

But with some states not having surveyed their lands in more than a century, digitising of existing records could be "counterproductive", said Namita Wahi, a fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, a think tank in New Delhi.

In addition, there are data privacy issues with making land records easily accessible, she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation at the sidelines of a land conference.

"Technology has the potential to be empowering, but it is possible that it will empower those who are already empowered more than those who are currently disempowered," she said.

Hundreds of laws and the lack of clear titles means that matters related to land and property make up about two-thirds of all civil cases in Indian courts, ac-

ording to a study by Daksh, a legal advocacy group in Bengaluru.

Population growth, industrial expansion and the need for more airports and roads, is putting greater pressure on land, with more than 700 disputes over land across India, according to Land Conflict Watch, a research organisation.

Digitisation of land records is an important step toward greater transparency and efficiency, said Amy Coughenor, chief executive of Cadasta Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit that develops tools to document land.

"But having digital records doesn't take away the need to accurately and fairly document land in the first place, ensuring equitable access to those who have been left out of land systems," she said.

"Issues of consent, fair access and gender equality must be part of a broader digitisation strategy. Otherwise these systems can further marginalise and disenfranchise people without digital access," she said.

About 70% of land in the developing world is undocumented, leaving more than a quarter of the world's population vulnerable to conflict, evictions and encroachment, Cadasta estimates.

With digitisation comes an increased burden on such people to prove their ownership and safeguard their land, said Usha Ramanathan, an independent legal researcher who has studied India's digital identification system.



Time to put the Commonwealth to work on the climate emergency

By Michael Sippitt

A COLLABORATIVE common approach to addressing global warming may be the single biggest contribution the Commonwealth can make to our planet this century.

In 2016, the Commonwealth established a Climate Finance Access Hub, based in Mauritius, and providing regional services as well. The hub helps small and vulnerable countries access international sources of climate finance, has already assisted the financing of several projects in smaller countries, and is there to provide capacity development, knowledge management, and technical expertise.

The idea of the hub is excellent, but the ambition clearly needs to be much greater to tackle climate change on a much wider basis with increased support.

The world is a tough place to be a smaller and poorer country. Everyone needs friends. The Commonwealth is a global friendship that works in many ways usually unseen. Pomp and ceremony has its place, for a few, but most importantly the Commonwealth enables knowledge sharing, technical co-operation and ease of doing business that should help make everyone more prosperous.

As the Commonwealth marks its annual day today, this fam-

ily of nations, which represent a third of the world population, is an extraordinary global collaboration of very diverse countries whose relationship, largely built on shared history, language and laws, still encourages trade and investment to mutual advantage.

A collaborative common approach to addressing climate change may be the single biggest contribution the Commonwealth can make to our planet this century.

The climate emergency is predicted to have a major effect on many Commonwealth nations, plus likely huge job losses as traditional work is increasingly displaced by automation, a much greater danger

to countries who lack diversified economies and strong enough education systems for retraining.

Yet challenges remain, and the rule of law, the foundation of successful trade and investment, is not always as strong as it could be.

These issues are coming together in many vulnerable countries and are bound to lead to people moving in large numbers for economic reasons as well as escaping extreme weather events, sea level rise and resource scarcity.

There has never been a more important time for global friendship, and the challenge is whether the Commonwealth can demonstrate its values

through proactive collaboration to mitigate the worst of the trouble looming for so many of its citizens in the years soon to come. It is definitely time for the more resilient Commonwealth nations to reach out in friendship to help those facing the greatest risks.

The future of humanity depends mostly on what happens in the developing world in the coming years. That is where carbon emissions will be continuing strongly even while developed countries find alternative ways to support their economies more sustainably.

It is estimated \$90 trillion will be spent globally on infrastructure by about 2030. Our futures and those of our chil-

dren depend on wise spending choices that will safeguard the environment and limit climate change impacts.

The Commonwealth includes countries at all stages of economic development. It is accordingly an ideal framework to increase global collaboration on climate change.

Practical possibilities include increased technical co-operation and knowledge sharing. Promoting global collaboration between growing companies in the sustainability sector will also help create employment as traditional work vanishes.

Encouraging and supporting public sector procurement across the Commonwealth

that supports sustainability through increased expertise in evaluating proposals. Public money should support sustainable development and investment everywhere, but this needs good governance and shared technical procurement know how. Reinventing the wheel is not required.

As many Commonwealth citizens face catastrophic impacts of climate change through sea level rise, extreme weather, droughts, and scarcity of water and other resources, there can be nothing so important to the young of the Commonwealth and indeed the world that these challenges are faced with extraordinary common purpose.

We cannot win the war on gender-based violence while avoiding accountability, threatening media

By Special Correspondent

WHEN senior-level officials such as Dr Olive Shisana and her handpicked representatives threaten journalists who ask questions, or when people in the structure are too afraid to speak out, there is room for concern. Massive concern.

As the world battles a viral epidemic and South Africa holds its breath, hoping that the country will manage to take effective steps to avoid the full might of Covid-19, the country battles another deadly epidemic of gender-based violence (GBV). And the struggle to change that epidemic's trajectory has too many victims, from Uyinene Mrwetyana to little Tazne van Wyk. The list is long, too long. In fact, it is so long that posters with names of the dead covered most of Parliament's fence at a rally in September last year.

Our country has extremely high levels of gender-based violence, levels that have been persistently high for all of our history. This violence has its foundations in a violent country, in patriarchy, in gender and socio-economic inequality, and remains cyclical due to high levels of child abuse.

For decades, the government's response to this has been fragmented, one department doing one thing while another does something different. There has been more lip service than we can quantify. They have come up with plan after plan, and each time they have hit the same stumbling block - a lack of resources, a lack of co-ordination and collaboration within government, and a lack of meaningful engagement with civil society. Inevitably it fizzles out.



Nonetheless, civil society and academia have continued to work hard on the ground to provide support to survivors, to attempt prevention programmes, and to document how the criminal justice system is and isn't working. That is not to say that civil society itself is anymore united or co-ordinated than the state. Donor agendas have shaped the work that has been done, transformation challenges have plagued the sector, and we've seen fluctuating resources for support services - both in terms of funding for civil society and for those specialised services the government delivers.

The result of this was that despite

many, many people working incredibly hard, the crisis seemed to be getting worse. It seemed that things were never going to change.

So, when hundreds of thousands of women marched together in September 2019 it appeared to be a moment of hope and opportunity. For the first time, the President took ownership for leading the response on this issue. The Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Summit that followed in November 2018 was a historical moment that showed that government was finally willing to take the input

of civil society on board. The declaration that was produced contained many of the demands submitted by the #TotalShutdown marches, and many that were sourced from the room on the day.

It felt like finally there was a commitment to work together, and the understanding that unless that happens, the violence will continue.

The Summit Declaration included a commitment to develop a permanent multisectoral co-ordinating structure that would include the voices of civil society and of government, that

would be properly resourced, and that would have at its heart transparency, inclusivity, fairness, and accountability.

The opportunity that a structure like this presents is significant - if the state works together the criminal justice system could improve; if the state works with civil society openly then we could begin to hear diverse voices and get new ways of working into the room; if these structures are transparent then people could share information and bring their constituencies on board.

There is the opportunity for open and transparent communication. This would be a different way of working. This would be business unusual.

But the risks are great too. There is the risk that powerful structures saying "things are changing" makes it very difficult for those who see "things staying the same" to speak out.

There is the risk that in the desire to be involved, the organisations represented their take on the role of gatekeepers, providing a civil society rubber stamp to government actions that continue as they have always done. There is the risk that resources that were going to programmes that were working well could be diverted.

There is a risk that in the rush to be seen to be doing something, the state will make the same mistakes - push things through, not choose evidence-based programmes, avoid meaningful representation and engagement, exclude.

Another similar example, the South African National Aids Council, has shown us how some civil society organisations will divide and rule in an effort to access funding and position themselves close to seats of political

influence. SANAC, a body what was supposed to be for HIV what is envisaged for GBV, has mostly become a toothless structure - a big talk shop. There is always a danger that these forums are prey to opportunists and people mainly after status and money. For these reasons insisting on transparency and accountability back to a constituency is a litmus test for an effective institution.

But the first signs of the possibility of working together should not make us complacent. There is no room for taking things at face value, for believing the promises without the evidence that things are happening differently.

When those in power choose not to account, to see accountability as optional - whether it is to Parliament, Chapter 9s, their own constituents, or the public - we should be worried. The Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities on 4 March expressed its concern over the lack of accountability from the Interim Steering Committee on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide

As the article we publish today shows, there is room for concern, especially when senior-level officials such as Dr Olive Shisana and her handpicked representatives threaten journalists who ask questions, or when people in the structure are too afraid to speak out.

This work is hard work for everyone who does it, regardless of whether it is the state or civil society.

The work that this structure will have to do to succeed involves not only designing the right programmes and allocating the right resources, but building the relationships and enabling environment that will facilitate a new way of working.

Securing sustainable food systems hinges on gender equality

By Special Correspondent

THE three United Nations' Rome-based agencies dedicated to food and agriculture called today for bolder action to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls in the agricultural sector and beyond.

Securing sustainable global food systems is only possible if women everywhere are empowered and their rights recognized and respected, stressed FAO, IFAD and WFP at an event today marking International Women's Day (IWD) at FAO headquarters.

This year's IWD - with the theme "I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights" - is an opportunity to review global progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in the 25 years since the Fourth World Conference on Women identify remaining gender gaps, and outline the way forward.

"FAO will continue to play its part, in partnership with others, in strengthening gender equality, realizing women's rights and accelerating their socio-economic empowerment. Only then will we reach our common goal: to eradicate hunger, ensure food security, eliminate all forms of malnutrition, and make this world a better place for us," said FAO Director-General QU Dongyu.

"Each year, International Women's Day is both a cause for celebration and a call for action," said Gilbert F. Houngbo, IFAD President. "Collectively, we can work together to create a gender-equal world. Not simply because it's the right thing to do, but also because it makes sense. Increasing gender equality is critical to deliver strong economic growth. It can help cut down on extreme poverty and reduce chronic hunger. It can lead to longer-lasting peace. And it can benefit entire families and empower all those who face discrimination."

"We know Zero Hunger will not be achieved just by giving people food. This is why our programmes work to empower women so they can be financially self-sufficient and make their own decisions. By giving women and men an equal voice and an equal say on issues affecting their families and communities we can eradicate hunger and malnutrition," said WFP Assistant Executive Director, Manoj Juneja.

Women, especially in rural areas, are instrumental in the fight against hunger and malnutrition and in making food systems more productive and sustainable.

They grow food, reduce food losses, make diets more diverse and agricultural produce more marketable along the agri-food value chains. Yet, in many parts of the world women continue to face significant social and economic discrimination.



They often lack access to productive resources, agricultural inputs, information, finance, services, markets, social protection as well as technological and entrepreneurial know-how. In addition, many rural women are the primary caretakers in their households, which means they face heavy workloads that undermine their productive capacity and overall well-being.

When rural women are empowered, the results are palpable

FAO, IFAD and WFP know from experience that when rural women have better access to resources, services, economic opportunities and decision making, the results are palpable: communities have more food, their nutrition status improves, rural incomes increase and food systems become more efficient and sustainable.

For example, nearly 50,000 people (two thirds of them women) and, by extension, over 300,000 family members across seven countries (Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda) increased their agricultural production and their families' nutrition status as well as their incomes thanks to a joint FAO, IFAD, WFP and UN Women programme that entailed capacity development, technical support and the promotion of gender-responsive approaches in rural institutions and gender-sensitive agricultural policies.

Despite some progress, change has been slow for most of the world's women and girls

The three Rome-based UN agencies also note that there are still gaps in our knowledge about the differences between men and women in terms of their roles and opportunities in agriculture, and how gender disparities play out in different ecological, cultural and political contexts.

What is well known, however, is that rural women are disproportionately vulnerable to food insecurity as well as economic and environmental shocks. Furthermore, harmful social norms and stereotypes on what women can or should do persist in many parts of the world, but these are difficult to address through conventional interventions. Food taboos that are detrimental to women's health and nutrition are still prevalent in many countries. In some areas of Africa or Asia, for example, pregnant and nursing women are not allowed to eat certain nutritious foods, such as fish.

Overall, despite some progress, change has been slow for most of the world's women and girls. Not one single country can claim to have achieved gender equality.

Events marking this year's IWD present opportunities to mobilize global action to achieve gender equality and all women's and girls' human rights.

The event hosted by FAO today brings together representatives of the UN agencies' member states, gender experts, representatives of civil society and others to discuss how we can close the existing gender gaps in agriculture and rural livelihoods. The event also showcases good practices in establishing national policies and programmes for promoting gender equality and rural women's empowerment.

Agencies

THE GUARDIAN SIMPLE WORD FIT // THE GUARDIAN CROSSWORD =069=

WORD FIT puzzle grid with the word NOVICE filled in.

- 9 letters: PRECEDENT
7 letters: EXAMPLE
6 letters: SERENE, NOVICE, GOURDE, ADVENT
5 letters: EMEND, ROAST, ERRED, TRADE, LEMON
4 letters: LORE
3 letters: AGO, EAR, EGO, STD, ICE, DUE, LEO, OMA, ALL ABO, OMA

CROSSWORD puzzle grid with numbers 1-30.

- CLUES: ACROSS
1 Direct (8)
4 Pale-skinned blind salamander (3)
8 The holding of an office (6)
10 Treeless grassy plain (5)
11 Continuing (7)
15 Animals held as stock on a farm (7)
17 Apply (3)
18 Multi-author book (6)
19 An image of a god (4)
20 Habitual drunkard (3)
21 Thick oily substance (6)
23 Kilogram (4)
24 Arise (7)
27 Acute (4)
28 Spoke to God in a burning bush (5)
29 Largest country in the World (6)
30 Person who carries a golfer's clubs and provides other assistance during a match (6)
CLUES: DOWN
1 Moon (9)
2 Large farm in Western Europe (5)
3 Hostile attack (6)
4 Her chief city is Muscat (4)
5 Scientific study of language (11)
6 Hmong (3)
7 Person's look or manner (4)
9 An edible Mediterranean plant (6)
10 Emblematic design of a product (4)
11 Short rib connecting the bosses and intersections of the principal ribs (6)
13 Pistol (3)
14 Flat on the top floor offering fine views (9)
16 Marine plant with a long ribbon (8)
22 Stake put up by a player in poker (4)
24 Flightless Australian bird (3)
25 Attach (4) 26 Master in the Ottoman Empire (3) 28 Insane (3)

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European Bank president commits to sustainable investments in Africa

By Smart Money Reporter

EUROPEAN Investment Bank has committed to continue investing in Africa and also share knowledge on the continent's investment trend to foster proper governance.

EIB President, Werner Hoyer said in its new Banking in Africa series titled, 'Financing transformation amid uncertainty,' that the EIB is committed to investment in Africa in partnership with countries and industry across the continent.

"The EU Bank has been active in Africa since 1963 and provided a total of 45 billion Euros in financing since then. Our new report aims to share understanding and knowledge of African investment trends, and contribute to debate about best practice in investment and financing," Hoyer said.

He stressed that investments are essential for sustainable growth, prosperity, and social progress in Africa adding that, "As the European Union's bank, we will continue to work together with our partners to support sustainable investments, foster inclusive and resilient growth, and reduce poverty."

It is the fifth edition of the report that analyses recent developments in the African banking sectors, the EIB said



European Investment Bank president, Werner Hoyer.

based on both macroeconomic and survey data, it addresses structural issues and investment opportunities in Africa and frames policy options for all stakeholders.

"This year's report includes detailed analysis on three issues crucial for Africa in the 21st

century," the EIB report noted while stating, firstly, the report explores policy options to finance urban development in the context of fast expanding African cities and highlights that adopting a territorial and inclusive approach is key to unleashing the potential of

urbanisation in Africa.

Secondly, the report discusses the financing of Africa's agricultural value chains and their potential to boost agricultural productivity, thereby supporting sustainable economic development and finally, the report examines how

remittances can be harnessed to boost financial sector development.

"It outlines how development of payment systems and increased competition in remittance markets is essential to bring down the cost of sending remittances and encourage remitters to use formal channels to send funds," the report said.

The new study expected that economic growth in Africa is projected to accelerate moderately in 2020, due to strengthening demand but however noted that the current population growth rate means that gross domestic product per capita will increase less than needed to ensure fast convergence with middle- and high-income economies, to make a significant dent in poverty and create enough jobs for the growing labour force.

"The average debt situation of African countries shows signs of stabilisation, but there is a high risk of debt distress in several countries due to the high level of government debt, particularly non-concessional debt, and rising debt-servicing costs," the EIB report warned.

There is a significant degree of heterogeneity across countries regarding the pace of recovery, medium-term prospects and debt sustainability, the report added.

Implementation of reforms can help Sudan boost growth, IMF says

KHARTOUM

The International Monetary Fund said the introduction of reforms, including a gradual exchange rate liberalisation as well as phasing out fuel subsidies for fiscal consolidation, will help Sudan boost economic growth.

"The monetary policy framework needs to be enhanced, and the banking system's ability to sustain shocks needs to be reviewed and strengthened prior to the unification of the exchange rate. Moreover, there is a need to upgrade the central bank law to boost its independence and effectiveness, and curb fiscal dominance," IMF said late Tuesday, after its staff concluded consultations with Khartoum last month.

The central bank should continue to upgrade its capacity to supervise and mitigate financial stability risks, the Washington-lender said. It called for the strengthening of banking regulations and supervision and continuing to address AML/CFT (anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism) deficiencies.

The recommendations come following the exit of long-time president Omar Al Bashir last year. The IMF said the "regime change" in Sudan opens up opportunities for major reforms but many daunting challenges remain including the economy's contraction, large macro-economic imbalances as well as concerns pertaining to governance, corruption and the humanitarian situation.

Sudan's listing as a state sponsor of terrorism by the US also blocks progress toward HIPC (Heavy Indebted Poor Countries) debt relief and the clearance of large arrears to the IMF, it said. Sudan's economy is estimated to have contracted 2.5 per cent in 2019 and the fiscal deficit increased by almost 3 percentage points to 10.8 per cent of GDP due to ballooning energy subsidies and weak revenue. Inflation rose to 60 per cent in November 2019 and is set to reach 66 per cent this year, while a parallel market exchange rate continues to depreciate strongly.

The external position is also weak, with the current account deficit standing at 7.8 per cent of GDP in 2019 and low international reserves of \$1.4 billion in October. Limited forex for fuel imports has led to rationing, persistent shortages, and disruptions to electricity and food supplies, according to IMF.

"With large imbalances and loose policies, the outlook is alarming without policy reforms. Absent reforms, the weaknesses in competitiveness and in the business environment will persist." "GDP growth would then likely remain negative in the near term, with minimal investment and subdued consumption, while bank fragility will rise. High inflation, continued exchange rate depreciation, and pervasive shortages will continue to aggravate social tensions."

The IMF encouraged the Sudanese authorities to continue to engage with international partners to secure comprehensive support for debt relief and avoid selective debt service payments and non-concessional borrowing.

“The monetary policy framework needs to be enhanced, and the banking system's ability to sustain shocks needs to be reviewed and strengthened prior to the unification of the exchange rate

EAC could earn \$1.8 billion from AfCFTA

KIGALI

The successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) could help Eastern African countries reap \$1.8 billion and revive the region's intra trade, a new report from the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) indicates.

Andrew Mold, officer in charge of ECA's sub-regional office based in Kigali, told Business Times that the \$1.8 billion are consumer welfare gains, but the benefits could be much more. "The amount is principally the lower prices paid for imported goods, but with the expectations that real gains could be much larger. It all stems from this fact that consumers in our regions pay more than they should pay for goods," he said.

The economies of East Africa are still highly fragmented, but the latest report asserts that the full implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which was signed by 44 countries in Kigali in 2018, offers hope of a revival of both regional and intra-African trade.

The levels of intra-regional trade and investment are low and have recently been declining in the sub-region. The two largest economies in the region -

Kenya and Ethiopia - barely trade with each other. Their annual bilateral trade is worth less than \$100 million.

According to ECA, intra-regional trade within the East African Community (EAC) declined between 2013 and 2017. Trade was at \$3.5 billion in 2013 and fell to \$2.4 billion in 2017. "The lack of integration represents a serious impediment to the future development of the region," the report which was conducted jointly with TradeMark East Africa reads in part.

Mold said there is no better time to push for the AfCFTA agenda than today. "At a time of great uncertainty in global trade, the regional route is the way to go and the AfCFTA paves the way for that," he said. Mold, who's also one of the report's authors, added that there is a lot to gain for East Africa and it goes "beyond increasing intra-regional trade."

According to ECA, the AfCFTA could generally boost intra-African exports by more than \$1.1 billion and create more than 2 million new jobs.

The status quo A breakdown of trade imbalances by sector shows that deficits are driven almost exclusively by manufactured goods imports. The region's heavy reliance on intermediate goods and manufactured products imported from the

rest of the world hampers the full utilization of local productive capacities.

Currently, manufacturing firms in East Africa are typically operating at around 20 per cent to 40 per cent below their potential. The report argues that the heavy reliance on manufactured imports also results in many missed opportunities to develop deeper regional value chains, both within East Africa and with the rest of the continent.

The Commission says in its report that the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers and harmonization of standards called for under the AfCFTA represent a unique opportunity to boost intra-regional trade and investment. This could go along to allow companies and farmers to tap into rapidly growing markets, both within the region and in other parts of Africa.

Expectations The AfCFTA will potentially cover all 55 member states of the African Union (AU), making it the world's largest free trade area since the formation of the World Trade Organization in 1994 in terms of the number of participating countries.

So far, 54 African Union member states have signed the agreement highlighting a remarkable degree of consensus in a large. Experts have overly



EAC Secretary General Liberat Mfumukeko.

insisted that implementing the agreement through regional economic communities can fast-track the process and ensure that countries benefit from the free trade area in a not-so-distant future.

The East African sub-region is one of the most economically active regional economic blocs in the continent. It has become the fastest growing sub-region on the continent, with economic growth averaging 6.6 per cent since 2014.

Three of the world's fastest-growing economies - Ethiopia, Tanzania and Rwanda - are cur-

rently located in East Africa. In 2018, the joint gross domestic product of the Eastern African economy, measured at market exchange rates and current prices, amounted to around \$342 billion.

Measured however in purchasing power parities, which arguably better reflects the size of regional economies, the regional economy is 2.6 times larger, standing at \$879 billion in 2018. If the current growth momentum is maintained, this implies that East Africa's economy will surpass \$1 trillion by 2021, making it a very sizeable market.

Rio Tinto to pay ex-CEO A\$6.8m in bonuses amid ongoing investigations

LONDON

Rio Tinto Group will pay former Chief Executive Officer Sam Walsh about A\$6.8 million in bonuses withheld amid probes related to an African iron ore project, despite the miner's concerns that the investigations remain in progress.

London-based Rio will release Walsh's

full entitlements of short-and-long term bonuses following an independent dispute resolution process, the former executive said Thursday in a statement. The process was triggered after the two sides couldn't reach agreement to extend deferral of the incentive plan awards, the company said in its own statement.

Walsh retired from his post in July

2016, months before Rio announced that it had alerted authorities, including the US Department of Justice and the UK's Serious Fraud Office, about payments related to the Simandou iron ore project in Guinea.

Investigations are centered on a \$10.5 million payment to an external consultant in 2011 for assisting on negotiations with Guinea's President

Alpha Conde. Rio believed an extension to a 2017 agreement to delay the bonus payments "was appropriate given that the regulatory investigations in relation to the Simandou matter are ongoing," though agreed to comply with the outcome of the dispute process, the company said Thursday in its statement.

Walsh, who was head of iron ore at the time the payment was made, has

previously said that he always acted lawfully. The resolution of the dispute process in his favor showed "there is no basis for those awards to be further deferred," he said on Thursday. Rio in 2016 terminated the contracts of two executives in relation to the Guinea inquiry.

Rio is continuing to cooperate with international authorities in their

investigations into the consultant payments, the company said last month in an annual report. Meanwhile, Simandou is moving closer to potential development. China is poised to give the go-ahead for some of its biggest state-owned companies to back the project, people familiar with the matter said this month.

Absa salary account holders may get double remuneration



Absa Bank Tanzania's managing director, Abdul Mohamed, speaks at a past event.

By Smart Money Reporter

LUCKY clients who have salary accounts with Absa Bank Tanzania Limited stand a chance to get double their salaries if they win monthly raffle draws.

Six luck winners were this week awarded between 100 percent and 50 percent of their salaries after a maiden raffle draw with their cash prizes directly deposited into their accounts.

Announcing the maiden winners in Dar es Salaam this week, Absa Bank Tanzania's Head of Retail Products and Strategy, Heristraton Genesis said the

bank's on-going campaign dubbed, 'Double your salary with Absa Bank,' qualifies anyone who opens the salary account and channel the first salary to the account.

"The campaign is a way for us to promote and increase awareness of the available best salary proposition to workers. Throughout this six months campaign we will reward our new salary account holders who could be existing bank customers or new customers," Genesis said.

"Through a raffle draw which will be conducted every month and a new Salary Account holder stands a chance to win up

to 100 percent of their salary - hence the name 'Double your salary,'" he added.

He said winners will be divided into two groups with the first batch of three winners is for new account opening customers who have joined the bank for the very first time while the second group features existing customers who are holders of other accounts but have opened the salary account.

The winners of the first group are: Anastazia Malambi of Moshi who got double his salary, second winner is Hidayat Makame from Zanzibar who got 75 percent of her salary and third was Asha Haji also from Zanzibar who got 50

percent of her salary.

In the second category, the winners are: Haji Fuko from Iringa who got double his salary, followed by Nelson Mshimbula from Arusha who got 75 percent of his salary and the third winner was Dominic Rwehumbiza from Dar es Salaam who got 50 percent of his salary.

Genesis said Absa Bank Tanzania's salary account campaign makes banking very easy for its customers with peerless digital capabilities and paperless banking which means customers no longer need to queue for long to get services at physical branches.

"Charges to Absa Salary Account are reasonable

and reflect the realistic income of an average Tanzanian, and at the same time a customer can undertake various transactions and send cash in and out of the country without any worries," Genesis added.

On his part, Absa Marketing and Communications Manager, Beda Biwalo said apart from mobilizing employers and employees to sign up to Absa's banking services, the main aim of the campaign is to help bring possibilities to life and make customers realize their ambitions though Africanacity. The draw was conducted under supervision of an official from Tanzania Gaming Board Rasuli Masudi.



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Billions wiped off S. Africa market in minutes amid global bloodbath

JOHANNESBURG

Last week, the JSE lost 15% of its value - and suffered two of its biggest crashes in the past forty years. On Monday, the JSE's all share index dropped by more than 6%, while on Thursday the market lost 9.7%.

Sasol was down 15% again on Monday, to R42.99 - after last week briefly dipping below R30. Mining shares were also hit badly - including Gold Fields (-16%), Exxaro (-15%),

Northam (-13%), Sibanye (-13%) and Harmony (-8%). Financial stocks were also down, with FirstRand and Standard Bank down more than 7%.

On Sunday, the US central bank announced an emergency interest rate cut of a full percentage point, which brought rates to between 0 percent to 0.25 percent. In reaction, the rand strengthened to R16.06/\$, as it is offering attractive interest by comparison. The South African repo rate is still at around

6.25%.

But by Monday morning, the rand has weakened to R16.58/\$. The Fed rate cut has not done anything to calm panic in the market - and with rates now close to 0%, investors are worried about where future help will come from.

"Not only has the Federal Reserve thrown all of its tools out of the toolbox to help combat the economic pressures that the coronavirus will bring to the world economy, it has done so by firing all of its guns, gre-

nades as well as bazookas at the problem and it can't be helped to hold concern following this move regarding what ammunition does the Fed truly have left," Jameel Ahmad, Global Head of Currency Strategy and Market Research at FXTM, said.

US futures slumped on Monday, and trading had to stop after maximum losses were reached. The Australian stock market suffered a record slump (-9.7%) on Monday, while Asian markets were also down. On

Sunday evening, President Cyril Ramaphosa invoked sweeping emergency powers to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

This included a ban on travel from various countries, as well as the closing of 35 land ports of entry, and two of the country's eight seaports. He warned about the economic impact, but said a fiscal relief package will be introduced to minimise damage to the economy. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.



A man walks past the closed Cafe de Flore in Paris' Saint-Germain-des-Près district.

France's cafes ordered to close as part of fight on coronavirus

PARIS

The Cafe de Flore, once the drinking hole of Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, and the Brasserie Lipp continued serving customers during World War Two. But on Sunday they locked their doors until further notice, as France upped its fight against the coronavirus.

"At least during World War Two we knew what we were up against. Now we have no idea," said the Brasserie Lipp's head waiter, who used to listen to tales of German occupation recounted by colleagues at the 140-year-old Left Bank institution.

Across the strangely quiet boutique-lined Boulevard Saint-Germain, Sophie Chardonnet watched an employee at the Cafe de Flore swing off his motorbike to collect his belongings before beginning a two-week period of temporary unemployment.

Similar scenes of shuttered cafes, quiet streets and empty stores played out across the French capital after Prime Minister Edouard Philippe announced restrictions on French public life unprecedented in living memory.

Restaurants, cafes, bars and cinemas would be closed indefinitely from Sunday, Mr Philippe said. So too would libraries, shopping malls, and sports halls - any venue deemed non-essential. Food stores and petrol stations would remain open.

"It's sad to see these cafes closed, let's hope it won't be for too long," Ms Chardonnet said. "I won't complain, however, it is for our own good." The coronavirus has infected 4,500 people and killed 91 in France, which followed neighbouring Italy and Spain and other European nations in enforcing the severe measures.

In the central Marais area of the French capital, home to the Jewish

quarter, brands from US-based Michael Kors to France's Sessun mounted signs telling customers to shop online. Catherine Perochon, whose falafel restaurant Chez Marianne serves 1,000 dishes on a typical Sunday, was clearing up with staff, getting rid of perishables and switching off the gas, anticipating she would be shut for at least a month.

"It was so last minute," she said of the prime minister's notice. Others took a more defiant stand, at least while they could. In the upscale 16th arrondissement, some food and flower stall owners at a market in the Passy neighbourhood made a spirited last stand.

"It's just hard to throw all the merchandise away," said florist Laurent Binder, 41. "Some people are angry at us but others are coming in and making last-minute purchases." Nearby, police pressed another stall owner to close within the hour.

Queues formed outside butchers and bakers, with scant heed paid to the government's plea to people to stand one metre apart to minimise the risk of contagion. But in the most visited city in the world, tourists were in small numbers. The coronavirus outbreak has forced the closure of the Louvre museum, Eiffel Tower and Moulin Rouge cabaret bar.

On the Champs Elysees, which is usually thronged with tourists, there were fewer pedestrians than usual, though a steady stream of visitors took selfies in front of the Arc de Triomphe at the top of the boulevard.

On the Trocadero esplanade facing the Eiffel Tower, unlicensed souvenir vendors tried to flog their wares to the small number of foreigners present. "What can you do? These are special times," said 26-year-old US tourist Laura. "I came from Belgium a week ago and was planning to go to Italy next. Goodbye to that."

Malawi leaning on USF in rural rollout of mobile comms

LILONGWE

The Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) plans to roll out a mobile network, leveraging the Universal Services Fund (USF), to ensure at least 2G connectivity in under-served rural areas.

According to MACRA head of universal services Emily Khamula Lungu 16% of Malawians live in areas that are under-served by mobile phone coverage of any kind. "Service providers are more interested in making quick returns of their investment and so they invest more in urban areas and in the process this has resulted in the sidelining of the rural masses," said Lungu.

MACRA intends to roll out communications towers in these

regions, to be used by all operators - including Airtel Malawi and Malawi Telecommunications Limited (MTL), at a fee. The fees will be paid to the regulator and directed towards the USF, in addition to revenue from government grants. MACRA is carrying out an assessment and has not yet confirmed how many towers would be constructed or how much the project will cost.

MTL chief commercial officer Gladson Kuyeri is quoted as having said the USF is important to operators because it is expensive to roll out networks in areas where there are few users. Kuyeri added that with the USF in place, the telecommunications industry will be able to offer services in areas where a single operator rolling out infrastructure is unlikely to secure a return on investment.



Oil and gas employees at an oil rig in Mtwara Region.

Collaboration between universities, IOCs needed to build a world-class personnel for EA oil and gas sector

By Hussein Boffu

A major shortfall in East African oil and gas industry is that of qualified personnel with skills and expertise to deliver productivity and high performance.

Even as oil prices began to recover in 2017 and 2018, the oil and gas industry remained focused and now places a huge premium on productivity, innovation and high performance of the workforce. And that is expected to continue in 2020 and beyond.

From the first day, I entered the oil and gas industry, I have been told that the industry needs competitiveness because it depends on operational safety, productivity and high performance as being paramount. What happens if you are unable to hire skilled personnel quick enough or have insufficient numbers to deliver the innovation, productivity and high performance required by the industry? The answer is pretty simple. You are going to delay production. You are going to increase overall operational costs. And the whole East African oil and gas industry will become less profitable in the long run.

Research indicates that the oil and gas industry is adopting new technologies. But software competence and ability to use up-to-date technologies are not readily available among graduates and young professionals hence need to be urgently trained and developed for the industry and consumers. This article is set out to answer a number of key questions about a new revolutionary approach to address a skills shortage primarily in Tanzania and regionally in East Africa.

How international oil companies in

the oil and gas industry and education providers can work together more collaboratively to raise performance standards and work competence of the country's oil and gas industry and propel it to become world-class competitive?

How to prepare graduates who are facing rapidly changing job market needs characterized by advanced technologies to become competitive? What are the best collaborative strategies between regional universities with oil and gas curriculum and their foreign counterparts to create world class graduates versus local needs?

Answers to these questions are essential for employers, universities with oil and gas curricula, private training facilities, policymakers and other stakeholders to make a revolution in training and development of local capacity and move them to world class levels.

Dr Mohamed Mahgoub, the Geophysics Expert in the Gulf Countries from his point of view and his wide experience in the industry since 1990 said, "Challenges and opportunities in Tanzania shall be addressed through developing local resources, capacities and finding collaborative solutions to prepare Tanzanian and East African students to be world-class graduates. This requires upgrading universities' syllabus through partnership with international high ranking universities and training institutions to develop the African young professionals and move them to specialists and experts."

A road map for performance improvement in the oil and gas industry

Here there are two collaboration strategies to strengthen work competence of the East African oil and

gas sector;

Creating formal partnership between colleges and employers in the oil and gas industry: To address the skills shortage, East African universities and colleges should collaborate and work jointly with employers in the oil and gas industry to develop curriculum or provide equipment for students to have hands-on practical experience. A partnership between colleges and oil and gas companies in the development and upgrading of curriculum will ensure that programs offered at colleges are aligned with the oil and gas industry's needs and will result in performance improvement at the workplace.

For example, oil and gas service providers donate free software for seismic data processing as the CGG Seismic service provider has established seismic processing unit with Geovision processing software for Sultan Qaboos University in Oman and other universities in Africa and different areas of the world.

Collaboration with internationally acclaimed high ranking universities in the industry: A consortium between universities and companies but also world specialist organization in the industry to standardize the oil and gas students' curriculum to 4/5 year program. Universities should have close collaboration with internationally re-known higher ranking universities in the world in as far as the oil and gas industry is concerned.

Partnership with such world class universities is fundamentally needed to help with significant improvement in the education system to produce world class graduates who are globally competitive.

China's economy suffers historic slump in wake of virus shutdown

BEIJING

China suffered an even deeper slump than analysts feared at the start of the year as the coronavirus shuttered factories, shops and restaurants across the nation, underscoring the fallout now facing the global economy as the virus spreads around the world.

Industrial output plunged 13.5% in January and February from a year earlier, retail sales fell 20.5%, and fixed-asset investment dropped 24.5%. The unemployment rate jumped to a record 6.2% in February, when the outbreak worsened and much of the economy was shutdown.

The outbreak of deadly viral pneumonia in Wuhan dramatically worsened in January, prompting China to lockdown Hubei province, extend holidays and restrict travel and business across the country. That brought much of the nation's economic activity to a halt in February, undercutting a stabilisation seen in December. Gross domestic product is now all but certain to contract in the first quarter compared to the same period last year – the first time that has happened since comparable data begins in 1989.

"Covid-19 made the economy stop, from factories to spending," said Iris Pang, ING Bank NV in Hong Kong. "As the coronavirus spread to almost everywhere, global demand and global supply chains will take a hit and will feedback to China's manufacturers and exporters in March and April."

Even as governments in China and some other Asian nations look to be getting their outbreaks under control, the coronavirus is now spreading rapidly in Europe, the US, and other parts of the world. That will likely hit demand for Chinese exports, lengthening the damage to firms and the economy.

"China's containment of the epidemic is bearing fruit, but there is a challenge ahead in controlling the spread in other

countries," National Bureau of Statistics Spokesman Mao Shengyong said in Beijing after the data was released. "Growth of the global economy and trade may slow to some extent, which will exert some impact on China's economic growth." Mao was optimistic for the economy in the first quarter, arguing that 40% of first quarter GDP happens in March, which he expected to be "significantly better" than the past two months.

"The second quarter is going to see a significant rebound from the first quarter," Mao added. "As the policy effects become more visible, with more potent measures in the next step to counter the shock, we expect that the economy will be more sound in the second half of the year."

Although there are increasing signs that companies and people are getting back to work in March, the economy is still not back to normal. "China is bottoming out. But it's not going to be a V-shaped rebound," said Raymond Yeung, chief China economist at Australia & New Zealand Banking Group in Hong Kong.

The People's Bank of China bank acted on Friday to support the economy, providing banks more money to lend by cutting the amount of cash they must place in reserve at the central bank. It refrained from cutting the interest rate of its medium-term loans on Monday in step with the Federal Reserve. The move signals it'll maintain a targeted, measured easing approach for now, in spite of the bad economic data.

Policy makers may soon have to choose between easing more aggressively to hit a growth target that's expected to be set at around 6% for this year, or continue with its current measured and targeted strategy. This contraction in the first two months will make that growth rate much harder to achieve, and will also affect the possibility of reaching other targets.

President Xi Jinping's administration previously pledged to

double the size of the economy from 2010 by the end of this year, and re-scheduling that goal could risk the leadership's credibility. The government could consider delaying the target by three months to the end of the first quarter in 2021, which will make it more feasible, according to Ding Shuang at Standard Chartered Bank (HK) Ltd.

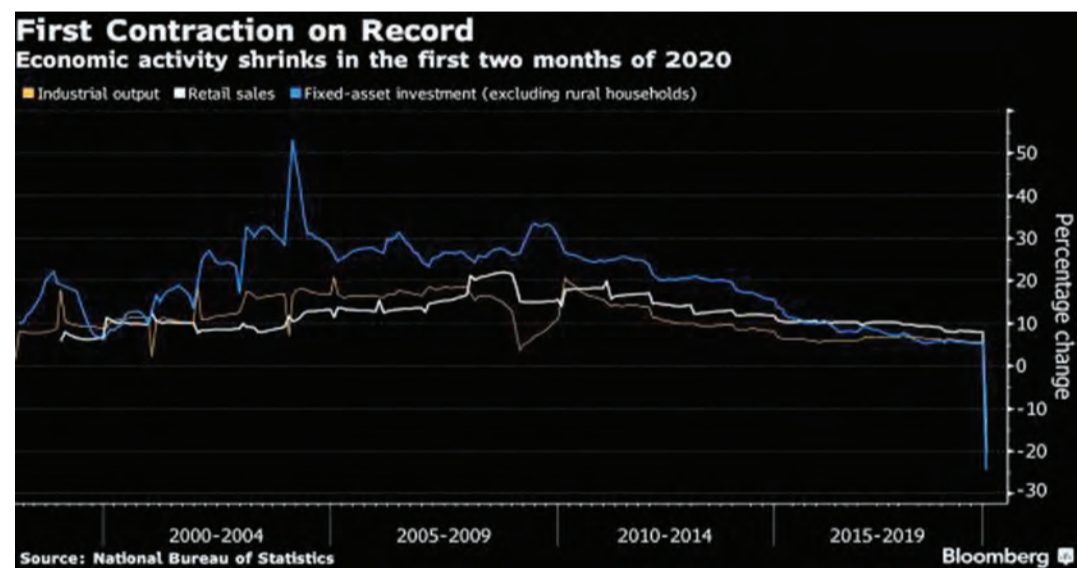
China is also aiming to eliminate extreme poverty, reduce pollution and cut risk in the financial system. The nation will win these "three critical battles," according to Mao, but for this year, the two key targets will be returning the economy to the normal path and the anti-poverty campaign, he added later.

Infrastructure investment, which was hit hard by restrictions on construction and large shortages of migrant workers, was down 30.3% from a year earlier in the first two months. That was despite local governments selling almost a trillion yuan (\$143 billion) in bonds since the start of the year to pay for infrastructure projects.

"We expect infrastructure stimulus to be much stepped up to support aggregate demand and tax and fee cuts to cushion the COVID-19 shock, especially now external demand will be much dampened by the global pandemic," said Michelle Lam, greater China economist at Societe Generale SA in Hong Kong.

The spike in the jobless rate to a record 6.2% all happened in February, as January's unemployment rate was only 5.2%, the same as in December. That rise was due to the coronavirus, with demand for factory workers declining, the NBS Mao said. "The data are awful," said Macquarie Group Ltd Chief China Economist Larry Hu. "It's clear that coronavirus is both a supply shock and a demand shock. It hurts both internal and external demand. It brings both inflation and deflation pressure. As such, we don't expect massive stimulus coming out anytime soon, but China will stay in the current rate-cutting cycle."

VIEW FROM THE TOP



What the energy industry will look like after the coronavirus

By Robin M. Mills

This pandemic crisis is not at the beginning of the end; at best, it's at the end of the beginning. As airlines are grounded and oil prices have their worst week for 30 years, the energy world that may emerge after the dust settles will have seven features.

They include: a likely slow and extended recovery; a thinner, consolidated oil industry; an earlier peak in oil demand; a global gas market; the historic peak in carbon dioxide emissions; political upheaval; and globalisation not halted but reshaped.

Fiscal stimulus for now is arguably like pushing wet spaghetti. Reduced interest rates, extra spending money and lower oil prices are not as effective when people are confined at home and businesses are not functioning. At best they keep people and companies solvent for a faster recovery afterwards. That means the oil slump will be lengthy. When the crisis begins to ebb, the aftershock will ripple through the economy, while the accumulated raw materials dissipate.

How will the recovery be? Will it be



like after a war, when post-bellum reconstruction drives rapid growth? Or, as the virus does not bring material destruction, will it resemble the painfully slow crawl out of the global financial crisis or great depression, with the overhang of debt and bankruptcy? Government stimuli in Europe, Japan and - depending on elections - the US will take the form of Green New Deals favouring low-carbon energy.

The oil industry will be reshaped.

Despite some government efforts, such as refilling the strategic petroleum reserve, US shale firms will go bankrupt en masse. The emaciated industry that emerges will be consolidated around a few companies, mostly the super-majors with legacy non-shale and downstream assets that generate cashflow. They can afford to sit on shale resources indefinitely until prices revive.

But even super-majors will struggle through a lengthy downturn, and some

will merge as in the late 1990s. The Europeans, such as Shell, BP, Total and Equinor, may wish they had built up their fledgling green energy businesses more. Without surplus oil cashflow, they face the question of how to fund their ongoing transformation. We may not have passed the all-time peak of oil consumption, but these events will bring it forward.

The world will be far more cautious of future pandemics. Travel bans and flight cancellations, even if ineffective, will be employed quickly at the first sign of any new disease. These restrictions will prove hard to remove, as the virus threatens to resurface periodically.

Companies have grown used to teleworking and ordinary people to home deliveries. While in its 2019 energy outlook, BP saw essentially flat oil use by road vehicles to 2040, it forecast significant growth in shipping and aviation fuel. The cruise liner industry alone, now virtually shut down, burns through some 300,000 barrels daily; planes use about 7.2 million bpd. Shorter supply chains and virtualised business may halt one of the few growing sectors of oil consumption, while being environ-

mentally more responsible.

The crisis will hit all vehicle sales, but environmental policies and high European fuel taxes ensure lower oil prices won't boost petrol and diesel cars much over electrics. The world's biggest car-maker, Volkswagen, still plans to stop developing new combustion-engine cars in 2026, and to be a purely battery-car maker by 2050.

The future for gas is more promising though: growing markets but at low prices. The fall in crude prices has finally brought long-term, oil-linked contracts more into line with record low spot prices. The Asian Japan-Korea marker for liquefied natural gas is becoming a transparent, trusted and tradable price. That in turn will enable gas exporters to find willing buyers rather than being handcuffed to unattainable oil-based prices.

2019 will probably turn out to be the all-time peak of our carbon dioxide emissions. The silver lining here is that a sharp economic downturn this year will cut greenhouse gas pollution; after that, even as the economy rebounds, improved efficiency and the growing scale of low-carbon technology will

take over. Emissions are not falling nearly fast enough to avoid dangerous climate change, and there is nothing to celebrate about the pandemic, but turning the carbon corner at least gives hope.

This crisis should remind western countries, particularly the US and UK, of the virtues of impartial, competent expertise in democracies. Professionalism has to trump public relations and optics. That applies too to the blustering and vapid promotion of American "energy dominance", which will evaporate as low oil prices boil away shale oil production.

In contrast, China blundered in the early stages of the crisis, amid popular anger, but is now winning plaudits for its draconian response while the Western world appears incapable as a result of its delayed response. This could raise the worldwide reputation of Beijing's political system, and its belt-and-road initiative. But its economy will have a lot to prove.

NB: Robin M. Mills is CEO of Qamar Energy, and author of The Myth of the Oil Crisis. A gas flare at an oil facility in Anelo, Argentina.

WORLD

China readies stronger policies to revive economy as virus disrupts activities

BEIJING

CHINA is preparing to take stronger macro policies to shore up its economy and keep employment stable as the latest data on industrial output, retail sales and investment showed across-the-board contraction in the first two months due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

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

Early epidemic control efforts by the government had kept most people across China indoors and factories, shops and restaurants shut, which had proved key to the anti-virus battle but also resulted in disruptions to economic activities and supply chains.

While the epidemic has caused rela-

tively big shocks to the economy, the impacts are largely "short-term, external and controllable," NBS spokesperson Mao Shengyong said at a press conference.

As the spread of the virus has been basically contained, China's improving economic fundamentals and the trend of upward momentum in the long term have not changed, Mao noted, citing the country's economic scale, strong resilience, internet-powered new drivers and flexible macro policies as among the major factors underpinning growth.

"The economy has withstood the shocks of the epidemic," he said.

Given that businesses have quickened pace to resume normal operations, the NBS projects economic activities will see a visible recovery in March and the second quarter as the impacts gradually weaken.

On the outlook for the second half of the year, forthcoming stronger macro policies will put the economy on stead-



The production lines run at a plant of Beijing Hyundai in Cangzhou City, north China's Hebei Province, on Friday. The Beijing Hyundai plant in Cangzhou resumed full operation under measures taken to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. (Xinhua)

ier footing, according to Mao.

Facing potential economic shocks from the epidemic, China's financial authorities pledged to pay more attention to policy flexibility to keep reasonably sufficient liquidity and release the potential of the loan prime rate reform.

Starting Monday, China's central bank implemented targeted reserve requirement ratio (RRR) cuts for eligible banks, the second such cuts this year, that would release another 550 billion yuan (about 78.6 billion U.S. dollars) of liquidity into the market.

Other policy moves including the issuance of special relos to provide preferential interest rate credit support to enterprises and the issuance of special bonds to provide sufficient funds to commercial lenders for supporting smaller enterprises.

On the fiscal side, the Ministry of Finance has allocated quotas for new local government bonds ahead of schedule and rolled out tax and fee cuts to hard-hit sectors.

"Overall, China's government debt levels remain relatively low...and there is room for properly raising the budget deficit," Mao said.

Asian financial services group Nomura expects more financial relief and policy easing measures in the coming months, including further liquidity injections through channels including the medium-term lending facility (MLF) and RRR cuts.

Monday's data also showed China's job market remained generally stable in February, with the surveyed unemployment rate in urban areas at 6.2 percent, up 1 percentage point from the previous month, though it is set to improve as enterprises restore production order. **Xinhua**

EU restricts export of protective equipment amid spike in coronavirus cases

BRUSSELS/BERLIN

AS Italy reported on Sunday its highest single-day deaths of 368 and France its biggest jump of over 900 new cases of coronavirus in one day, the European Union (EU) adopted a scheme to restrict the export of medical protective equipment and secure the supply within the bloc.

Medical goods including masks, gloves, protective garments can only be sold to non-EU countries with the explicit authorization of the EU governments, said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, noting "We need to keep in the EU the protective equipment we need."

As of Sunday, Italy's confirmed cases amounted to 20,603, with a death toll of 1,809, making it the most affected country in the world other than China.

The number of confirmed coronavirus cases rose to 7,753 in Spain by 14:00 on Sunday, an increase of more than 1,500 cases in 24 hours.

Death toll also jumped to 291, while 517 have recovered. France has confirmed a total of 5,423 cases of coronavirus infection and

127 deaths. On Sunday alone, 36 new deaths were registered.

The country is now at the highest emergency level of its epidemic response plan.

In Britain, confirmed cases reached 1,372 as of Sunday morning, an increase of 232 over the previous day.

Fourteen more people have died, bringing its total deaths to 35. Scientists urged the government to take "more restrictive measures" to tackle the outbreak.

The Netherlands reported 176 news cases and eight new deaths on Sunday, bringing total cases to 1,135 and death toll to 20.

Belgium recorded 197 new COVID-19 infections, total now at 886. Greece added 103 new cases, updating its total to 331; Finland saw 30 new ones, total now at 241. Slovenia currently has 219 confirmed cases; Cyprus, 33; Malta, 21; and Hungary reported its first death on Sunday, as its total stood at 32.

Ireland saw 40 new cases on Sunday, the highest recorded in a single day since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in the country on Feb. 29.

The government called for



the closure of all pubs and bars across Ireland as confirmed cases amounted to 169.

The novel coronavirus has crossed borders and infected thousands more in EU countries, forcing many countries to resort to border controls.

Germany announced on Sunday that it will close its borders with France, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark and Luxembourg from Monday morning due to the coronavirus crisis.

Temporary border controls will come into effect on 8 a.m. on Monday, with exceptions for

goods traffic and commuters for work.

Travelers without a valid reason are not allowed to travel in and out. The new measures are meant to break the chain of transmission.

Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa announced on Sunday that Portugal and Spain will restrict movement of both goods and people between their borders.

Portugal has reported 245 confirmed coronavirus cases by Sunday, while the numbers of new cases in Spain recorded 1,407,

bringing the total to 7,798.

The Moldovan government said on Sunday that all air and ground connection with foreign countries will be closed from Tuesday. The country has reported 12 cases. Greece suspended all road, sea, air links with Albania and North Macedonia except for the transport of goods and the entry of Greek nationals or those residing in Greece.

Serbia said foreigners won't be allowed to enter Serbia, while all returnees will be quarantined no matter where they are from.

"The only ones allowed will be Chinese doctors" who were asked to come to help treat patients in upcoming days," said its President Aleksandar Vucic.

In Sunday's message, von der Leyen also urged EU member states to keep their borders open so that medical supply and life necessities can flow within the Single Market.

The EU will launch joint public procurement with member states for testing kits and respiratory ventilator on Monday, and will present guidelines to national governments on border measures. **Xinhua**

France 'struggling' to curb rate of coronavirus pandemic

PARIS

FRANCE is struggling to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic in the country, its top health official Jerome Salomon said on Monday, as authorities consider whether to implement a partial lockdown.

Salomon expressed his regret that many Parisians had ventured out in large numbers on Sunday despite official advice to stay at home and a government shutdown on bars and restaurants around the country.

It would be "catastrophic" if France were to reach a stage on deciding whether to save the lives of certain patients over that of others, Salomon told France Inter radio.

"This morning, I appeal to all French people to mobilize in the fight," he said.

France has confirmed a total of 5,423 cases of coronavirus infection and 127 deaths. On Sunday alone, 36 new deaths were registered. The country is now at the highest emergency level of its

epidemic response plan.

Mexico's health ministry reported more coronavirus cases on Sunday, urging people to maintain a "healthy distance" to avoid infection, even as the president held rallies in the country, shaking hands with and hugging dozens of people.

"It's social distancing, it's about distance to keep us healthy," Ricardo Cortes, a health ministry official said at a Sunday evening news conference that announced Mexico's tally of coronavirus in-

fections had risen to 53 from 41 a day earlier.

Meanwhile, leftist President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador kept up his busy schedule of rallies around Mexico at the weekend, touring towns in the southwestern state of Guerrero.

Some critics and health experts expressed alarm at the sight of the president hugging supporters and kissing their children on Saturday, arguing he was setting a bad example.

On Sunday, Lopez Obrador shook hands with dozens of people at a rally in the town of Marquelia, embracing many others as they reached out to take selfies.

In Brazil, where the number of confirmed cases has reached 200, President Jair Bolsonaro took selfies with supporters and celebrated their demonstrations in major cities on Sunday, drawing criticism from congressional leaders for encouraging large gatherings that could worsen the spreading coronavirus.

International community speaks positively of China's contributions in fight against COVID-19

LEADERS of foreign political parties and organizations have sent messages to China, speaking positively of the country's achievements in the fight against the COVID-19 epidemic.

The messages sent to the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee also said China's measures had won time for the world to combat the disease and led to valuable prevention and control experience from which countries around the world could learn.

They said they look forward to working together with China to stem the disease's global spread.

In a joint message, Pakistan's National Party President Abdul Malik

Baloch and General Secretary Jan Muhammad Buledi paid tribute to the CPC cadres and the Chinese people for the valor and unity demonstrated during the fight against the epidemic.

They also condemned some Western media for making false claims about the outbreak.

Under the leadership of General Secretary Xi Jinping and the CPC, China will no doubt defeat its current difficulties and become ever stronger and more united, they added.

Secretary-General of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) Roque Silva Samuel said that China has made achievements in epidemic prevention and control, a reflection of the effectiveness of China's measures.

Noting that the FRELIMO -- supported by the CPC -- has taken corresponding preventive measures, Samuel said that under Xi's leadership, the Chinese government and people will quickly beat the epidemic and set an example for the world.

Secretary General of the Rwanda Patriotic Front Francois Ngarabe said that under the leadership of the CPC, the Chinese people have overcome many challenges, and the outbreak will prove no exception.

Ngarabe said he believes that the epidemic will not seriously impact the Chinese economy, and China's long-term sound economic growth remains unchanged.

General Secretary of Cape Verde's

Movement for Democracy Miguel Monteiro said that as the epidemic continues to spread, some countries are facing increasing risks.

The Chinese government has taken strong measures and effectively contained the outbreak, Monteiro said, adding that China's valuable experience is helping other countries across the world.

China's response has played an important part in safeguarding global public health security, he added.

Slumber Tsogwane, chairman of the Botswana Democratic Party and vice president of Botswana, noted that the epidemic is not just a challenge for China but rather a common challenge for the whole world.

Had the outbreak originated in another country, the consequences would have been unimaginable, he said.

Tsogwane said that China has been actively sharing information and its experiences with the World Health Organization and other countries, demonstrating its sense of responsibility as a major country.

Polish Democratic Left Alliance Vice Chairman Andrzej Szejna said he believes the outbreak will not impede China's path to modernization and the rapid growth of its economy, neither will it hinder cooperation between Poland and China, especially pertaining to the Belt and Road.

China's experience in handling the

epidemic will prove invaluable to global fights against possible future outbreaks, said the official.

Branislav Djordjevic, director of the Institute of International Politics and Economics of Serbia, said the Chinese leadership is dedicated to finding the best solution to safeguarding people's livelihoods and reducing threats brought by the epidemic.

China's efforts have earned international acclaim, Djordjevic said, expressing his belief that China will win the battle against the crisis and return to its devotion of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects

China's model best precautionary approach in combating virus

NEW YORK

AS the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread across the world, more attention is being devoted to experiences of countries like China in the fight against the virus.

An article published by Forbes on Thursday recognized that "China and South Korea models seem like only way to contain COVID-19."

"South Korea provided its approach of massive free testing and treatment, "which also corralled the disease and kept new infection rates low.

"The China model has worked, which includes lockdowns and quarantining, as well as monetary and fiscal stimulus, Philipp Carlsson-Szlezak, chief economist for Boston Consulting Group in New York, said as quoted by the American business magazine.

"The high frequency data in China, the proxies for movement for goods and people, all of those see a nice pick-up," said the economist.

The article also quoted Lebanese-American academic Nassim Nicholas Taleb, "black swan" forecaster and author of the book *Skin in the Game*, who said that self-protective quarantine, lockdowns of outbreak clusters and testing are the best precautionary approach to pandemic outbreaks.

The editorial board of USA Today wrote on March 10 about lessons learnt from China and suggested 4 steps that could help mitigate the pandemic namely aggressive public sensitization, rapid shoe-leather epidemiology, taking advantage of online health care and supply cost-free care.

The article raised examples of China restlessly raising public awareness of the coronavirus and prevention of its spread; rapid identification and tracking; ample use of online platforms and mobile phones to speed up the delivery of medical services.

"They have largely stemmed the epidemic," Scott Gottlieb, former commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), was quoted as saying. Eunice Yoon, a senior correspondent with CNBC based in Beijing, shared her personal experiences of self-protection as she has been covering the coronavirus epidemic in China since the beginning of the outbreak.

In her article written on March 9, Yoon offered her advice as more and more people in the world are getting affected by the virus. "Try not to panic," Yoon suggested in the first place, adding that following personal hygiene advice is one's best protection.

She went on answering the most common questions from her personal angel, like should people wear masks or is it safe to travel.

"I have heard the argument that masks can be flawed as protection since they usually aren't a perfect seal. However, I don't see the harm in wearing one in cases where crowds cannot be avoided," Yoon said.

"There are different treatment protocols out there but so far, if you get COVID-19, your best defense will be your own immune system," she said. "I also realized while reporting on the epidemic how connected we truly are... It is in our interest to share with each other, so we all stay healthier, and overcome the coronavirus faster," said Yoon. **Xinhua**

Kremlin sees no grounds to introduce state of emergency over coronavirus in Russia

MOSCOW

THERE are no grounds for introducing a state of emergency in Russia over the spread of the novel coronavirus, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Monday.

"There been neither ideas nor grounds for this [introducing a state of emergency - TASS] nor decisions," Peskov said.

The outbreak of a disease caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was registered in central China in late December 2019.

The World Health Organization recognized the situation with the novel coronavirus as a pandemic on March 11. Outside China, the worst affected countries are Italy, South Korea and Iran.

Overall, more than 130 countries, including Russia, have reported confirmed coronavirus cases.

The WHO says that the novel coronavirus cases globally have exceeded 160,000, with more than 6,000 deaths (over 3,200 in China).

According to the emergency operations center, 63 coronavirus cases have been registered in Russia.

Agencies





An engineer is surveying at the construction site of the makeshift hospital Leishenshan in Wuhan with a BDS-based device.

China's BeiDou navigation system assists epidemic prevention

INNOVATIVE technologies have played their roles in China's fight against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS) is among them.

After the outbreak of the epidemic, the system was immediately applied in epidemic prevention and control, serving as a pioneer in the battle.

When the country was racing against time to build Huoshenshan and Leishenshan makeshift hospitals, BDS equipment provided high-precision and efficient positioning and mapping services at the construction sites and therein helped speed up the construction.

After BDS technicians arrived at the construction site of Huoshenshan Hospital with BDS positioning equipment on the eve of the Chinese New Year, the survey of the site was smoothly completed.

The terminal also enabled workers to finish setting out and linear works at one time, even in complicated environments, such as in the woods and among building complexes, which significantly reduced the construction period for the two hospitals.

The BDS-based unmanned devices contributed a major part to the reduction of human contacts amid epidemic. For example, delivery drones with load capacity ranging from 10 kilograms to 1.5 tons controlled under the BDS are able to drop emergency supplies in designated areas in a rapid and accurate manner.

The first BDS-based drone for operating in epidemic areas were sent to Wuhan's Jinyintan Hospital, Hubei province midmorning of Feb. 12. It successfully delivered medical and protective supplies to the medical staff.

Shanghai-based Qianxun SI is a satellite location service provider that operates high-precision data for BDS. The company has established an on-line platform offering BDS-produced routes for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) across the country to join the fight against the epidemic. The platform enables drones to achieve centimeter-level accuracy on aerial disinfection and patrolling missions.

In Beijing and Hubei, agricultural drones have been widely used to disinfect virus-hit areas. A BDS-based drone can spray 5,000 square meters on a single flight and cover places beyond the reach of other disinfection vehicles.

In Ruichang, east China's Jiangxi province, police officers are using BDS-based drones to patrol in densely pop-

ulated areas to reduce congregation and remind people to protect themselves against the virus.

To ensure stable and accurate material supply, the transport routes must be smooth.

Under the guidance of the BDS, vehicles could quickly deliver emergency medical and living materials from across the country to destinations through the most optimal routes.

Via the BDS terminals installed on vehicles under a national monitoring and service platform for cargo vehicles, over 6 million automobiles are receiving notifications on epidemic control, transportation of medical materials and road services sent by China's Ministry of Transport.

Besides, the ministry is also recommending routes for the drivers and providing route history of the vehicles in the past 14 days. It sends information of vehicles passing the most-hit areas to industry authorities and provides data to guarantee the coordination of major commercial vehicles and the transportation of emergency materials.

Unmanned delivery vehicles operated under the BDS are also busy sending medical materials to hospitals, serving as a vital connection between hospitals in Wuhan and distribution stations.

At communities adopting closed-off management to curb the spread of the virus, the BDS terminals are contributing to the continuous supply of living materials. Delivering the commodities purchased by residents from online platforms, the terminals are powerfully securing the everyday needs of the people.

At present, hundreds of thousands of BDS terminals have been employed by the logistics industry to provide high-precision positioning services, guaranteeing the timely delivery of daily necessities to those in quarantine.

China plans to launch the last two batch of BDS-3 satellites in March and May and finish the construction of the system to provide global service.

In addition, with the launch of the operation control system and TT&C (telemetry, tracking, and control) system of the BeiDou satellites, ground work has been successfully completed.

The ground-based augmentation system of the BDS, based on 2,600 stations across the country, will provide positioning services with a high stability, and achieve service availability up to 99.99%. It effectively guarantees the high-precision performance of the BDS in epidemic prevention and control.

People's Daily



After BDS technicians arrived at the construction site of Huoshenshan Hospital with BDS positioning equipment on the eve of the Chinese New Year

Russia managed to offset all losses from sanctions – Putin

MOSCOW

RUSSIA has lost about \$50 billion as a result of foreign sanctions, but it has managed to offset the losses by various means, including import substitution, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

"To hell with those sanctions," Putin told TASS in an interview for the project entitled "20 Questions with Vladimir Putin". "According to various estimates, we have lost 50 billion but we have earned the same amount."

He agreed that the losses were significant, but the introduction of sanctions

"made us use our brains." Russia focused on import substitution, and started manufacturing "such items and technologies that we did not have before or we simply forgot about them and lost them."

"We recreated all of this," the head of state said. "And we are undoubtedly benefiting from it. It diversifies our economy. In fact, it helps tackle the prevailing priority."

Putin dismissed assumptions that Russia was "deliberately hurting [itself]" as pure nonsense. "Counter-sanctions helped boost the agroindustry. They unshackled our domestic market," he

pointed out.

He recalled that agroindustrial production had skyrocketed and that Russia was now the world's number one producer of wheat.

"Nobody would have ever thought that we would become such a major exporter. And we will raise this volume," Putin emphasized.

"We started to produce enough to meet our basic food needs: dairy, poultry, pork, and basic products. We need to work more on vegetables and start working on beef," he acknowledged.

Agencies



Opposition leader Benny Gantz

Israel's president to ask Netanyahu rival to form govt

JERUSALEM

OPPOSITION leader Benny Gantz will be asked to form a new government, Israel's president said on Sunday, boosting his chances of ousting veteran Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

It was a blow to Netanyahu, who is fighting for his political life amid unprecedented political deadlock and a criminal indictment for corruption, which he denies.

But it remains unclear whether Gantz's centrist Blue and White Party can break a stalemate that has been marked by three inconclusive elections in less than a year.

Netanyahu, 70, is Israel's longest-serving leader and has been heading the country's efforts to combat the coronavirus.

But last year he twice tried unsuccessfully to put together a ruling coalition.

And on Sunday Gantz won support from two key parties, leading President Reuven Rivlin to say that he would get the first chance at forming a government after the latest election on March 2.

"Tomorrow, around midday, the president will assign the task of forming the government to head of (Blue and White party) Benny Gantz," Rivlin's office said in a statement.

The announcement came at the end of a day in which Rivlin held consultations with all parties in the 120-seat Israeli parliament, the Knesset.

"At the end of the consultations, 61 Members of Knesset had recommended... Benny Gantz, as opposed to 58 Members of Knesset who had recommended the current prime minister and head of Likud, MK Benjamin Netanyahu," the statement said. One member of parliament gave no recommendation.

Unlikely partners

As things stand, a Gantz coalition would likely have to be underpinned by two bitter enemies, who have both endorsed him.

One is the Joint List, a coalition of lawmakers from Israel's 21 percent Arab minority, and the other is hawkish former defense minister Avigdor Lieberman's far-right Yisrael Beiteinu.

Netanyahu, 70, was due to go on trial this Tuesday, but the coronavirus emergency has promoted restrictions of gatherings that delayed the start of proceedings for alleged bribery, fraud and breach of trust charges. He has denied any wrongdoing, accusing his enemies of a witch-hunt.

Netanyahu proposed a six-month "national emergency" government, led by him, to confront the coronavirus crisis.

Rivlin has voiced support for a unity government to break the deadlock. But Gantz, who made an issue of Netanyahu's character during the election campaigns, has been cool on teaming up with his rival.

Lieberman said on Sunday: "We recommend Benny Gantz for a very, very simple reason. In the previous election, we said the most important thing was to prevent a fourth election."

Agencies

US Democratic contender says he would pick a woman as VP

WASHINGTON

US Democratic presidential contender Joe Biden, who had hinted he might choose a woman as his vice presidential running mate if he is picked as the party's nominee, committed to doing so during his debate with rival Bernie Sanders on Sunday.

"If I'm elected president, my Cabinet, my administration, will look like the country, and I commit that I will in fact appoint and pick a woman as vice president. There are a number of women who are qualified to be president tomorrow. I would pick a woman as my vice president," Biden said.

There were originally a record-breaking six women vying for the Democratic nomination to take on Republican President Donald Trump in November - US Senators Elizabeth Warren, Amy Klobuchar, Kamala Harris and Kirsten Gillibrand, along with US Representative Tulsi Gabbard and Marianne Williamson.

Only Gabbard remains in the race, although she is polling below 5 percent nationally and was not eligible to participate in the debate.

Sanders said that "in all likelihood," he would choose a woman as his running mate, but did not make as firm a commitment.

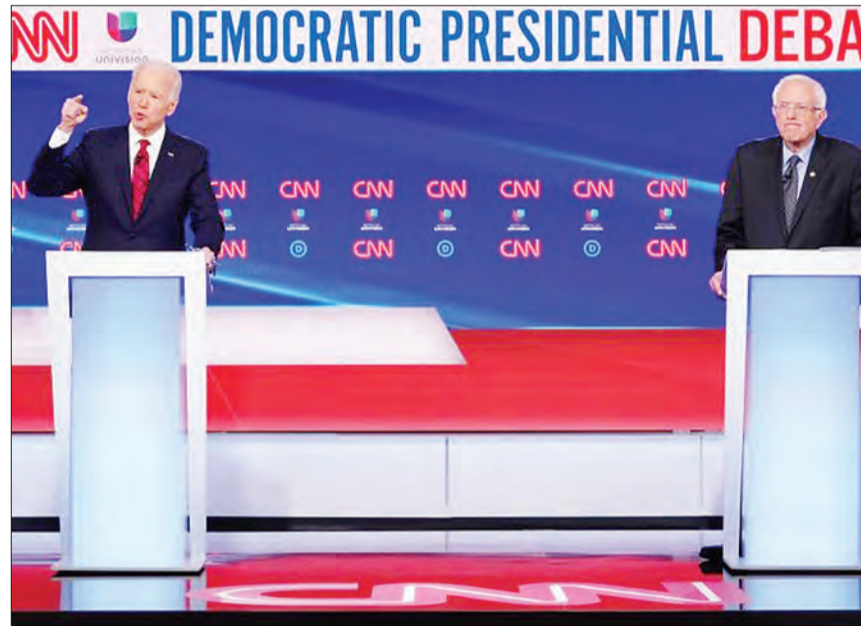
"In all likelihood, I will. To me, it's not just nominating a woman, it is making sure that we have a progressive woman, and there are progressive women out there. So my very strong tendency is to move in that direction," Sanders said.

The debate came two days before Tuesday's nominating contests in the big states of Ohio, Illinois, Florida and Arizona, where another string of Biden victories would give him a nearly unassailable lead in delegates over Sanders.

At the debate, both candidates also blasted Trump's handling of the coronavirus outbreak and offered competing visions of leadership during a widening crisis that has upended the daily lives of Americans.

In their first one-on-one debate, the two Democratic contenders clashed on the proper approach to the pandemic and other pressing issues, with Biden arguing his approach to leadership would get quick results and Sanders pushing for bigger, more fundamental changes.

They assailed Trump for his handling of the coronavirus outbreak, saying he had contributed to growing worries by spending weeks minimizing the threat before declaring a national emergency on Friday.



Democratic presidential hopefuls former US vice president Joe Biden (left) and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders (right) take part in the 11th Democratic Party 2020 presidential debate in a CNN Washington Bureau studio in Washington, DC on Sunday. (AFP)

The debate, originally scheduled for Phoenix, took place in a Washington studio with no audience, a move made to limit possible exposure to the virus - a sign of how deeply the campaign routine has been reshaped by the global pandemic.

When the two candidates took the stage, they smiled and shared an elbow bump - abiding by the advice of public health officials to avoid handshakes.

'Like a war'

Biden recounted his experience as vice president in President Barack Obama's administration in dealing with the Ebola outbreak in 2014. He laid out a coronavirus plan to make testing free and widely available, establish mobile sites and drive-through facilities in each state and provide more help for small businesses hurt by the resulting economic slowdown.

He said he was willing to call out the military to help local officials build hospitals and take other necessary relief steps.

"This is like a war, and in a war you do whatever needs to be done to take care of your people," Biden said.

Sanders suggested the first step in responding to the outbreak would be "to shut this president up right now" because he was undermining the response of public health officials.

"We have got to learn that you cannot lie to the American people. You cannot be less than frank about the nature of the crisis," Sanders said, adding the crisis showed the need for his signature Medicare for All healthcare proposal, which

would replace private health insurance with a government-run system.

"Let's be honest and understand that this coronavirus pandemic exposes the incredible weakness and dysfunctionality of our current healthcare system," he said.

Biden has opposed the Medicare for All plan, saying it is too costly and he prefers to build on the Affordable Care Act, known as Obamacare, by adding a public option for those who want it.

"That has nothing to do with the legitimate concern about income inequality in America. That's real. But that does not affect the need for us to act swiftly and very thoroughly and in concert with all the forces we need to bring to bear," he said.

Biden, 77, and Sanders, 78, have been forced to cancel public events and step off the campaign trail during the crisis. They said they were taking personal steps to stay healthy - avoiding crowds, washing hands and having their campaign staffs work from home.

Both candidates promised to support the eventual nominee, and in a bitter exchange repeated criticism that has come up on the campaign trail before, with Sanders saying Biden was beholden to special interests and Biden accusing Sanders of being too supportive of the gun industry.

Earlier in the day, Biden's campaign courted the progressive supporters of Sanders and Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, who dropped her White House bid earlier this month but has not endorsed anyone, by promising to back a Sanders plan to make public colleges tuition-free to families with incomes of less than US\$125,000 a year. Agencies

Conspiracy theories won't hold water when evaluated with science, rationality

GROUNDLESS conspiracy theories on the origin of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) were cooked up by certain Westerners and Western media, as the international community are making concerted efforts to defeat the virus.

Such sensational claims are neither science-based nor evidence-supported, and only reveal the dark side of its creators, which further indicates that the battle against the COVID-19 is not only a trial of strength between human beings and the virus, but also one between justice and evil.

In response to these conspiracy theories, the Lancet published a joint statement

signed by 27 top public health scientists on Feb. 18, saying "Scientists from multiple countries have published and analyzed genomes of the causative agent, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), and they overwhelmingly conclude that this coronavirus originated in wildlife, as have so many other emerging pathogens."

"We stand together to strongly condemn conspiracy theories suggesting that COVID-19 does not have a natural origin," said the statement, which showed strong support for the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals fighting the epidemic

across China, and expressed intense denunciation of the conspiracy theories circulating on the internet.

Such rational judgment based on scientific research agrees with the mainstream international public opinion resisting conspiracy theories.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has reiterated that there is no evidence that the virus was produced in a lab or as a biological weapon.

Russian officials also clarified recently that they never admitted the new coronavirus is man-made after the cropping up of a rumor saying that Russian scientists found the new coronavirus was produced by humans.

Speaking of rationality and justice, these scaremongers seem even more ridiculous.

Previous experiences tell that the origin of a virus is often hard to trace. Although the first COVID-19 infection took place in China, it doesn't suggest that the virus originated there.

As scientists rigorously try to find out the truth and save lives, these Western politicians and media are making arbitrary assertions and even conjectured a "biological warfare" to smear China.

The despicable political motives hidden under the hype are clear, for which the international community shall stay vigilant.

"While the virus spreads, misinformation makes the job of our heroic health workers even harder," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, adding that false information was "spreading faster than the virus."

Obviously, conspiracy theories not only are a departure from science and rationality, but also churn out rumors, prejudices and panic, impeding the joint efforts from the international community in fighting against the epidemic.

At this critical moment when the whole world is racing against the clock to fight the disease, the world must be on high alert for and resist conspiracy theories,

so as to curb the spread of negative sentiment, such as skepticism, anxieties and panic.

Dr. Ali Mohamed Zaki, an Egyptian virologist who firstly reported the first case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus maintains that human beings' knowledge of virus is far from enough, and scientific thinking and verification are the best weapons to crush rumors.

Science is the sharpest weapon to terminate epidemics. While breaking down conspiracy theories depends on the scientific research on the COVID-19 and the way it spreads, it also calls for rationality and conscience.

To our relief, the mainstream

of the international society holds the bottom line - a fair and unbiased position, and has fended off the attack of "political virus" at the front line of the battle against the "infodemic", which once again proves the simple truth that rumors find no market among the fair-minded.

Virus respects no borders. In the face of the epidemic, all countries are a community with a shared future, as well as shared responsibilities.

Therefore, it requires all of us to conquer ignorance with science, smash rumors with truth, resist prejudices through cooperation and allow no "political virus" to stir up troubles.

People's Daily



Brooks Koepka hits from the ninth hole, during the first round of The Players Championship golf tournament Thursday, March 12, 2020 in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. (AP Photo)

Brooks Koepka says he won't be joining Premier Golf League

By DOUG FERGUSON

BROOKS Koepka said Sunday he has no interest in the Premier Golf League, another setback to a league promising guaranteed money and a team concept that now is missing some of golf's biggest young stars.

"I am out of the PGL. I'm going with the PGA Tour," Koepka told The Associated Press. "I have a hard time believing golf should be about just 48 players."

Later Sunday, Golfweek reported that world No. 2 Jon Rahm said he will not join, meaning the world's top three players are sticking with the PGA Tour.

Rory McIlroy, who replaced Koepka at No. 1 in the world a month ago, said last month in Mexico City that he was not interested in the new league. He said he valued his freedom to decide when and where to play instead of the proposed schedule of 18 tournaments, not including the majors.

Koepka said he made up his mind after meeting with organizers in Los Angeles a month ago during the Genesis Invitational, wanting to wait for a time when any announcement would not become a distraction. He had said at the start of the Florida swing only that "I want to play against the best."

With golf shutting down over concerns about the new coronavirus, he wanted it made clear he wasn't going anywhere.

Koepka, now No. 3 in the world, and McIlroy cited the freedom he enjoys on the PGA Tour. Koepka also spoke about the majority of the PGA Tour who he fears would be left out if all the attention was heaped on top stars competing in a team format.

"I get that the stars are what people come to see," Koepka said. "But these guys who we see win, who have been grinding for 10 or 15 years, that's what makes the cool stories. I'd have a hard time looking at guys and putting them out of a job."

Koepka speaks from experience. Having failed to advance past the second stage of PGA Tour qualifying in 2012, he played remote spots on the Challenge Tour, earned a European Tour card and eventually made it to the PGA Tour, where he won his first tournament in early 2015. He and McIlroy each have four majors.

"I don't forget where I've come from," Koepka said. "There are guys from that top 125 who could be the next star."

PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan made it clear in a memo to players in late January, as six years of chatter about the league began to gain momentum, that PGA Tour members could not play both.

Monahan and the tour staff have been making the rounds over the last month, meeting with top players to get a feel for

their position and to tout what the tour has going. The PGA Tour announced last month a media rights deal said to be worth a little more than \$7 billion over the next nine years.

Monahan said last week he could see The Players Championship prize money going to \$25 million, and the postseason bonus pool topping \$100 million.

"Jay is incredible, the direction he has the tour going," Koepka said.

Golfweek said it spoke to Rahm on Thursday and quoted him saying, "I think what I'm going to do is focus on just the PGA Tour. At the end of the day I'm a competitor. I'm a PGA Tour member and I'm going to stay that way."

The concept of the league was to invigorate golf by putting together 12 four-man teams that would be required to play 18 events – 10 of them in the U.S. – that feature 54 holes, no cut and a shotgun start to fit a five-hour broadcast window. Total prize money would be \$240 million, and the top player could earn as much as \$50 million.

Koepka said that as much as he loves the Ryder Cup and Presidents Cup, "To have it every week, I'm struggling with that."

"Golf is just not a team sport," he said. Koepka also said his financial advisers had doubts about how the money – most of from Saudi interests – would work.

"You ask some of these younger guys if they want to play for someone else," he said, referring to how the rosters would be set under the 12 players who get equity in their teams. "The direction Jay has the tour going, they care about 125 guys. Yes, the top guys do a lot for the tour. But it should be more than 48 players that people are tuning in to watch."

Ultimately, though, he said he was happy with the career he already has.

"Money isn't going to change my life," he said. "There's something to be said about freedom of playing. I get to choose. To me, it's not worth it. I'm happy with how things are. When life is good – and it's real good – you don't want to change it. I think the PGA Tour is run beautifully."

McIlroy had said last month in Mexico that he "wants to be on the right side of history on this one." He said all that could change his mind would be if all the top players decided to join, though he didn't see that happening.

Koepka said he thought it was a "real possibility" the Premier Golf League could still happen. Organizers had targeted a start date of 2022 at the earliest.

But it won't include him. "I plan on playing the PGA Tour for the rest of my life," Koepka said.

Domestic sports and COVID-19

By Correspondent Lloyd Ellipokea

TODAY, we shall ponder much grimmer stuff than what is usually the case in this modest corner of the Guardian's sports pages.

Obviously, it wouldn't be surprising if the coronavirus pandemic ranked most highly on the List of pressing and disturbing concerns of millions of people around the globe, Tanzanians included.

Indeed, things have so dramatically changed from merely a few months ago when the area of greatest concern happened to be China, which, let's not forget, is where the virus originated from in the first place.

Naturally, as I am certain that you are well-aware, Dear Reader, the virus has since spread from China to countries such as South Korea, England, America, Italy, and even the Maghrebian state of Algeria among others.

Critically, as the threat which the virus poses has only increased in harmful potency, affected countries have almost scrambled desperately to take precautionary measures so as to mitigate the dangerous effects which the coronavirus can have on people's health.

In this regard, a spooked world of sports has been no different. For example, in Italy, the famous Serie A has been suspended until further notice, which is NOT



Dar es Salaam junior tennis player, Isando John, participates in the previous season's BQ Open competition, which took place at the Gymkhana courts in November. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

surprising considering that Italy presently has one of the highest numbers of infected people globally.

It is vital to note that the organizers of Serie A are NOT the only actors in the exceedingly profitable global sports industry to have taken such unprecedented precautionary measures against the coronavirus, otherwise known as COVID-19.

Indeed, on the American sports landscape, the country's foremost sporting leagues such as the NBA (Basketball), the NHL (Ice Hockey), the MLB (Baseball), and the NFL (American Football, which is a totally different kettle of fish from traditional football) have all been suspended indefinitely due

to the coronavirus threat.

Similarly, in international golf, the very first Major of the year, the Masters, has also been suspended indefinitely again due to fears related to the wider spread of the coronavirus.

At this juncture, it is crucial to mention that the Majors are the most treasured championships in the sport of golf. Thus, the postponement or suspension of any Major, and there are just four of them annually, is a Big Deal.

After having painted an alarming picture of how COVID-19 has affected various sports around the world, a most pertinent question then crops up which is: how are domestic sports associations and federations supposed to respond

to the obvious health dangers that COVID-19 poses?

Well, in this writer's humble estimation, pushing the panic button will do infinitely more harm than good.

Instead, this writer would like to advise domestic sports administrators to educate themselves about the ways in which people can get infected by the coronavirus and also to develop contingency plans in the event that a basketball star in the RBA League or a prominent player in the Mainland Premier League somehow gets infected by COVID-19.

Thankfully though, domestic sports has gone unscathed since the outset of this gigantic health crisis to date.

Long may that continue.



A giant watch for Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games is pictured in Tokyo, Japan March 16, 2020. REUTERS

IOC to hold talks with sport chiefs amid coronavirus crisis

TOKYO

THE International Olympic Committee (IOC) will hold talks with heads of international sports organisations on Tuesday in response to the coronavirus outbreak, a source close to an international federation briefed on the issue said.

With less than five months to go until the scheduled start of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics on July 24, questions have been raised as to whether the Games can go ahead.

The virus, which originated in China late last year, has killed more than 6,000 people around the world and infected more than 160,000.

It has wreaked havoc on the global sporting calendar, leading to some Olympic qualification events being cancelled or postponed and concern has been rising about whether the entire Games should be scrapped or postponed.

However, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Tokyo 2020 organisers have reiterated that

preparations are going on for the Games to be held as planned.

The IOC, asked about a report by Japanese public broadcaster NHK that talks on the impact of the coronavirus were scheduled for Tuesday, said they were a regular part of dialogue with stakeholders.

"Since this situation started to develop some weeks ago, the IOC is constantly updating its stakeholders on the latest developments," the IOC said in a statement to Reuters.

"The calls are part of this regular information sharing process." IOC Sports Director Kit McConnell discussed changes to qualification processes with various international sporting federations last week.

The IOC had established an Implementation Group to "act quickly, where necessary, on behalf of the IOC EB (Executive Board) to approve the necessary changes to the qualification systems", McConnell said in a letter to federations.

The letter, dated March 9, was

seen by Reuters.

Changes could include the extension of qualification periods, but not beyond June 30, the re-assignment of quota allocations and the removal of certain eligibility criteria.

It is not known whether further changes to the qualification process would be discussed on Tuesday.

Several qualifying events, including those for climbing, boxing, fencing and judo have been cancelled or postponed, leaving athletes in the lurch about how and when they will be able to qualify for the Olympics.

The number of coronavirus infections in Japan rose to 1,484 on Sunday, including 697 from a cruise ship, the Diamond Princess, and 14 returnees on charter flights from China. Deaths in Japan related to the virus stand at 29.

Meanwhile, in Melbourne, John Coates, the International Olympic Committee's point man for the Tokyo Games, faces mandatory self-isolation when he returns to

Australia from Europe this week as part of border controls to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced all international arrivals to the country after midnight on Sunday would need to self-isolate for 14 days to help the country "stay ahead of (the) curve" in containment efforts.

The chairman of the IOC's Coordination Commission for Tokyo, Coates is expected to arrive in Australia on Wednesday from Lausanne, Switzerland, where the IOC are headquartered.

The influential Coates, who is also long-serving president of the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC), has no special dispensation to avoid the government's mandatory quarantine period, an AOC spokesman confirmed to Reuters on Monday.

The IOC's Coordination Commission conducts regular inspections of Olympic host cities and works with international sports federations and national Olympic committees to resolve issues in the leadup to Games. REUTERS

Players treated like 'guinea pigs' over coronavirus: Rooney

LONDON

FORMER Manchester United star Wayne Rooney claims the British government and football authorities have treated players like "guinea pigs" during the coronavirus crisis.

While the rest of European football was shutting down due to the growing threat of the global pandemic, Rooney is angry it took several days for the Premier League and Football League to postpone their matches until April 3.

It was only when Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta and Chelsea winger Callum Hudson-Odoi tested positive for the virus on Friday that football's UK governing bodies called a temporary halt to the season.

Rooney, currently playing for second tier Derby, felt they should have acted quicker and the former England captain said he would "never forgive" the authorities if his family fell ill as a result.

"Why did we wait until Friday? Why did it take Mikel Arteta to get ill for the game in England to do the right thing?" Rooney wrote in the Sunday Times.

"For players, staff and their families it has been a worrying week - one in which you felt a lack of leadership from the government and from the FA and Premier League.

"After the emergency meeting, at last the right decision was made - until then it almost felt like footballers in England were being treated like guinea pigs.

"I know how I feel. If any of my family get infected through me

because I've had to play when it's not safe, and they get seriously ill, I'd have to think hard about ever playing again. I would never forgive the authorities."

Many matches at non-league level were going ahead as scheduled in Britain this weekend and Rooney believes Prime Minister Boris Johnson "dodged" the issue by letting football make its own decision about playing on.

The 34-year-old claimed money was key to the authorities' reluctance to cancel games.

"The rest of sport - tennis, Formula One, rugby, golf, football in other countries - was closing down and we were being told to carry on," Rooney said.

"I think a lot of footballers were wondering, 'Is it something to do with money being involved in this?'"

Once the virus is under control, Rooney wants a radical schedule shake-up which could see the current season being concluded as late as September, and the next two kicking off in winter-time as a result.

"We're happy to play until September if the season extends to then, if that's how it has to be. That's our job. As long as we know we're safe to play and it's a safe environment for spectators, we'll play," Rooney said.

"The next World Cup is in November and December 2022, so you could actually use this situation as an opportunity and say we're going to finish the 2019-20 season later this year, then prepare for 2022 by having the next two seasons starting in winter."

AFP

Lyon defend president Aulas from coronavirus criticism

LYON

IN the face of furious criticism, French Ligue 1 outfit Lyon defended their president Jean-Michel Aulas on Sunday, who had suggested wiping out the French season.

Aulas, his club said in a statement, had only envisaged "a hypothesis" when he talked about "a blank season", if Ligue 1 could not complete its fixture because of the coronavirus pandemic.

On Friday, Aulas told Le Monde newspaper: "The most logical thing would be to say: we'll cancel everything and go back to the situation at the start of the season."

That would mean Lyon's great rivals, Paris Saint-Germain, would be deprived of a likely league title, while Lyon, seventh in the table, would become one of the four French qualifiers in next season's Champions League. Marseille, in second, would miss out.

On Saturday, Aulas told French television he "obviously" wanted to end the current campaign.

"I haven't in any way dismissed the chance to finish the championship," he said.

"The question was what would happen if the championship wasn't finished."

Marseille president Jacques-Henri Eyraud joined the hostile reaction in a column for the Journal du Dimanche. He condemned "the obscenity (of an) opportunistic proposal" and "the selfishness of someone whose only compass is his participation in the Champions League".

On Sunday, French Football Federation (FFF) president Noel Le

Graet told French television the idea was "quite ridiculous, stupid, clumsy and inappropriate to what's happening."

He asked the two club presidents "to calm down and be dignified in their statements, which make no sense and don't make them any bigger."

Lyon responded by defending their president, who is known as JMA.

Their statement condemned "a flood of media coverage around a question taken out of context."

The club said that, "as is often the case, Jean-Michel Aulas has taken the time to dissect the extent of the situation in advance."

Aulas, is a member of the FFF executive committee and the representative of Ligue 1 clubs on the French league (LFP) committee.

The club said on Thursday, he met with the presidents of both organisations "to propose, in the general interest, that the health of the players and all those involved in the competition should be the primary concern."

"It is up to the whole French football family to get together to decide on the best decision to take," said the statement before moving on to the governing bodies of European and world football.

"UEFA's proposals on Tuesday on what will happen to European competitions will be decisive," Lyon said, adding there were issues "concerning international events organised under the aegis of FIFA, with the Tokyo Olympics this summer in the spotlight, while respecting the players' basic right to rest".

AFP

'Football can wait': Italy coach Mancini ready to play Euros in 2021

MILAN

ITALY coach Roberto Mancini said Sunday he was ready for the European Championship to be postponed until 2021 amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"We would have won the European Championship this summer, we can also win it in 2021," Mancini told Italian television station Rai Sport.

"Let's wait to see what UEFA decides, but I adapt to everything, right now the priority is to save lives."

European football's governing body meet on Tuesday to discuss all domestic and European competitions, as well as Euro 2020, which is due to take place from June 12 to July 12.

AFP

Deprived of football, players try to fill the 'big void'

PARIS

MOWING the lawn, playing football with your dog, turning on the TV... footballers around Europe are struggling to fill the "big void" created by the coronavirus shutdown.

Many are writing about the unfamiliar experience on social media. Some have already come to the conclusion that "there is nothing to do".

Real Madrid players, forced into quarantine by a case of coronavirus in the club's basketball squad, have been training at home, where most of them already had facilities and equipment.

Captain Sergio Ramos posted a video on Instagram showing him sprinting on a treadmill.

Marco Asensio, who suffered a knee injury last summer, posted a video showing that he was continuing his recovery programme in his garden.

But even for sportsmen used to working out, there is a limit.

"I'm here, in my garden, there's nothing to do," French striker Karim Benzema said in a video on social media where he appeared alongside his dog, earning him a comparison with Will Smith in the post-apocalyptic film "I am legend".

Fabien Causeur, a Real Madrid basketball guard, has launched a live video channel to show his quarantine challenge.

He has been taking on athletes and celebrities in three-minute simultaneous exercise including Thibaut Courtois, the Real Madrid goalkeeper, and NBA star and former Real Madrid teammate Luka Doncic.

At Barcelona, players are following a "specific and personalised"



Sergio Ramos (left) took to a treadmill while it was the garden with his dog for his Real Madrid teammate Benzema (AFP Photo)

programme set by the club which is monitoring their efforts remotely using biometric tags.

Luis Suarez had been a step ahead of Ramos, posting a video of himself trudging on a treadmill last week.

In Italy, Juventus midfielder Douglas Costa filmed himself practising his dribbling in his back garden with his dog struggling to fill the role of defender.

- Chopped wood -

Alexis Sanchez, on loan to Inter Milan, has two golden retrievers and a much bigger garden but

he comfortably outplayed them in a video he put up online. He also posted photos of himself topless, gathering chopped wood.

Jessica Melena, the wife of Ciro Immobile, posted a cookery video on Instagram, showing the Lazio striker waving a spatula and mixing a cake while she coached him.

Immobile posted his own video in which he juggled furry toys with his feet.

Napoli's Belgian forward Dries Mertens posted pictures of a work out with a huge bottle of red wine.

In France, Strasbourg

midfielder Adrien Thomasson, was looking ahead to another empty week.

"We'll have nothing to do, in the middle of the season, it's never happened before. Our habits have been turned upside down," he said.

Thomasson is a ski fan but as other sports are also at a standstill that leaves a "big void" for this ski lover.

"I'm going to watch series, movies, it's going to be really limited."

Television is also the refuge for James Lea Siliki, a Rennes midfielder, who tweeted the times of a

couple of French quiz shows. Later he admitted a passion for a French TV karaoke show adding "I'll spare you my voice".

Romain Thomas, a defender at Angers, said his daily routine involved jogging, gardening and watching French reality TV.

He said he has talked to team-mates.

"We said to each other: 'Look, it's a beautiful day, it's time to mow'. So I mowed the lawn in the garden, it gives me time to think about something else."

AFP

Qatar breaks record in preparations for FIFA World Cup Finals

BY SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The world is in for the biggest surprise following the State of Qatar's record-breaking speed and accuracy in preparations for the hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup finals.

So far, there is no other host country that has ever done so before in the history of this mega event, Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) President Gianni Infantino declared at the start of the official 1,000 days countdown to the November 21, 2022 opening match.

Qatar will dazzle the world in the way it has taken the best path along which it has come a long way in the preparations within a short period of time, set to make legacy making the 2022 World Cup Finals an achievement of its own kind in the global cultural perspective.

For ten years running, the State of Qatar has been keenly working hard to make way for the success of hosting the championship to go on record as a milestone in the series and paint a worthy and memorable portrait of the first World Cup Finals hosted by the Middle East and the Arab world.

Characteristic to infrastructure projects going on will be the innovative priority vision to deliver a new form of product experience tailored to measure for the 2022 Finals fans.

There is also attention to detail in respect of the requirements of individual families with every member feeling at home and perfectly attended to, for example, rooms are available for children with sensory disabilities. In a completely new world experience, Al Bayt Stadium will have 95 hotel rooms.

On December 2, 2010, Qatar won the contest to host the 2022 World Cup hosting 32 national teams, and pledged to organize the best edition in the history of the World Cup tournaments. In mid-July 2018, His Highness the Emir of the State of Qatar officially received the tournament's banner.

According to figures issued by the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy of the State of Qatar, the country has intensified its efforts to provide the best hotels, airports, stadiums, ports, hospitals, highway networks, transportation, and railways and metro through Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail) to cater for the needs of more than a million and a half million fans.

Two stadiums, Khalifa International and the South, were opened in 2017



Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor. The 60,000-capacity giant tent structure will host matches through to the semi-finals of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. The arena will reach more people around the globe and, like a true nomad's tent, the stadium will be portable. The upper tier of modular design seating will be removed following the World Cup and donated to developing nations that need sporting infrastructure. File photo

and 2019 respectively, and three others are in the pipeline this year. The remaining three will be completed next year, com-

pleting the country's full readiness and preparations, including taking care of other components like designated road and other

transport networks. The committee stated that it had developed 21 training camps as part of the grand total planned in-

vestment of 6.5 billion dollars while the registration of volunteers has topped the 650,000 mark.

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

Deprived of football, players try to fill the 'big void'

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19

Muumin vows to stamp his authority in dance music

By Correspondent Sabato Kasika

VETERAN dance musician, Mwinjuma Muumin, has said although he is encountering many challenges in the field, he will not lose hope.

He disclosed in an interview recently he will continue working hard and ultimately meet the targets he has set.

The renowned artiste pointed out he has gone through plenty of challenges, which include failure by his band to attract more fans.

He disclosed he has nevertheless kept on working and he believes he will at some point in future make it.

Muumin, who recently formed new band known as Shadai, disclosed will be a platform for his attempt to successfully make his way back to domestic dance music.

He disclosed he composed a song titled 'Nimefulia' aiming at narrating the challenges he has gone through.

"People who know me well understand the kind of life I was living and the life I'm lately living. These are challenges I have to face and I will not lose hope," he disclosed.

Muumin, the Director of Shadai Band, said he is set to launch the band in Dodoma on March 28, insisting the occasion will be an opportunity for making his comeback.

"This time around, I have 18 musicians in my band. We have composed such songs like 'Nimefulia', 'Maajabu ya Mgongo', 'Minnie', 'Ushauri wa Mama', 'Mwanadamu Haridhiki', and 'Alkasusum'," he noted.

He mentioned a section of artistes in Shadai Band as soloist Rashid Sumuni, rapper Saulo Ferguson, Dekanto (bass guitarist), and singers Salma Mjukuu and Ramadhan Pentagon.

He noted one should always seek to start afresh, whenever he or she faces challenges in his or her life.

He disclosed he opted to dissolve his previous band, known as Double M Sound, with the aim of forming a new band in cooperation with his fellow director, who is also the band's financier.

"My fellow director is currently outside the country. I believe we will achieve tremendous success in the field should the local media gives the much needed backing in our efforts to see to it the dance music returns to its glory days in the country," he disclosed.



Dance musician Mwinjuma Muumin.

Boniface Mkwasa laments offside call in Yanga's draw with Namungo FC



Yanga

By Correspondent Michael Mwebe

YOUNG Africans SC (Yanga) assistant coach, Boniface Mkwasa, felt his side were hard done by a controversial call in their 1-1 draw with Namungo FC as his side lost further ground on leaders Simba in the Vodacom Premier

League title race and their quest to at least finish second.

Tariq Seif gave Yanga a half-time lead, but a goal netted by Namungo FC's Bigirimana Blaise after the interval meant Yanga, the 2016/17 season's champions, had to drop points for a second consecutive match after the derby win against Simba.

Forced to play without their head coach, Luc Eymael, who was serving a one-match suspension, Yanga dominated the early exchanges and while Nurdin Balora between the posts for Namungo FC was called into action to keep the former out, they took a deserved lead on the sixth minute.

Right full-back Juma Abdul picked out teammate Seif with a pin-point cross at the far post and the forward's attempt was initially blocked but he made no mistake from the rebound nodding the Jangwani Street side's boys in front.

A minute later Seif thought he had doubled the visitors' lead

before his effort was ruled out as an infraction on the goalkeeper.

Namungo pushed forward in numbers after the restart, and they were rewarded 11 minutes after the hour mark when Blaise netted with a header from a well delivered free-kick by Lucas Kikoti to make it 1-1.

Speaking to the press after the match, Mkwasa was left to lament an offside call going against Ditram Nchimbi on the 71st minute.

Nchimbi received a long pass from Papy Tshishimbi but was ruled offside just as he was about to go through on goal with two defenders ahead of him.

"I was shocked to see the goalkeeper go down without being touched and the referee call it an offside while we were counter-attacking. I don't know what he meant. These are black marks in our football, we really need to get rid of them," he noted.

Yanga remain in third place following the draw, but keep their hope of finishing as first runners-up with one game in hand which will close the gap with second-placed Azam FC.



Yanga confident of lifting VPL trophy

By Correspondent Joseph Mchekadona

YANGA have said they are still confident of winning this season's Vodacom Premier League top honour.

Yanga on Sunday were held to 1-1 draw with Namungo FC at Majaliwa Stadium in Lindi.

The results has left Yanga register 51 points from 27 games, they separated with league leaders Simba, who have played 28 games, by 20 points.

After the Sunday results and the 1-0 loss to KMC FC, many football pundits in the country are of the view that the title race is slowly turning into one-side show.

But in an interview, which took place yesterday, Yanga's information officer, Hassan Bumbuli, said although their chances of winning this season's trophy are looking slim they are confident of winning the league.

He said, up to now, Yanga's chances of emerging as champions are there, maintaining what they need is winning the remaining 11 league games.

Bumbuli said Yanga's title hopes will be clearly known after three Premier League games.

He described the three games as crucial as they will determine their championship destiny.

"For now we are still in contention for the Premier League trophy, we have 11 games to play while the leaders have 10 games," the official noted.

"In football anything can happen, the coming three Premier League games will be crucial to us as they will decide our future," he said.

He, however, said Yanga will play to win their games without depending on Simba results.

"In football anything can happen, on Sunday we drew with Namungo FC, the same team will play Simba, who knows, maybe Namungo can either beat or record draw with Simba, and there are also some other teams which can either win or draw with Simba," he pointed out.

"We will play to win our games," he said. Yanga have yet to face Azam FC, Namungo FC, Ndanda FC, JKT Tanzania, Biashara United, Kagera Sugar, Singida United, Mwadui FC, Mtibwa Sugar, Lipuli FC and Coastal Union.

Simba SC seeks to step up title chase in VPL

By Correspondent Joseph Mchekadona

VODACOM Premier League defending champions, Simba SC, have said they will use this international break to sharpen the team ahead of local and continental games.

Simba have seven players who are with the senior national team, which is preparing for the African Nations Championship (CHAN) finals which will be held in Cameroon next month.

Simba head coach, Sven Vandebroek, said he will not give the squad's remaining players time to rest and

instead they will continue with their normal training.

He said his aim is to see to it that, by the time the league resumes, his charges will be in perfect shape, physically and tactically.

The Belgian tactician (pictured) also said this is the opportunity for players, who do not enjoy regular time with the first team, to impress him and technical panel.

Simba players who are with the senior national team are John Bocco, Jonas Mkude, Erasto Nyoni, Shomari Kapombe, Hassan

Dilunga, Mohamed Hussein and keeper Aishi Manula.

"There is no time to rest, we have games to finish the Vodacom Premier League and we are also in the Azam Sports Federation Cup (ASFC) and hopefully we will play in CAF games, so this is the time for drilling the players and trying some new combinations," he said.

Simba have played 28 league games, they have 10 matches to play. The side is currently leading the 20-team league table with 71 points.

The Msimbazi Street based side is also in the quarter-finals of this season's ASFC.

After the international break, Simba will play host to Ruvo Shooting and Mwadui FC.

Simba will thereafter play away to Mbeya City FC, Prisons, Ndanda FC, Namungo FC and Singida united.

The league leaders will then host Mbao FC, Alliance FC, Coastal Union and wrap the 2019/20 games with a match against Polisi Tanzania.

Flexibles by David Chikoko

