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# Covid-19: Isles, Dar confirm new cases

**Colleges students not reporting back, those in residence to go home**

By Guardian Reporter

TANZANIA is now in partial lockdown as the government announced the closure of higher learning institutions following the confirmation of two new cases of coronavirus in the country.

This comes in addition to the closure of kindergarten, primary and secondary schools announced on Tuesday along with restrictions on gatherings and travels as authorities put in place containment measures.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in statement yesterday that the two positive cases involve foreigners, bringing confirmed cases to three. The first case was confirmed on Monday involving a Tanzanian who had arrived back from Belgium via the Kilimanjaro International Airport and is being isolated in Arusha.

A German national aged 24 years who is



**A German national aged 24 years who is in Zanzibar tested positive, while another is an American aged 61 years who is in Dar es Salaam, with both patients having been quarantined**

in Zanzibar tested positive, while another is an American aged 61 years who is in Dar es Salaam, with both patients having been quarantined.

Many higher learning institutions were at present on holidays in which case students ought not to report back, and for those still in the colleges go home with immediate effect, the statement directed.

"Students at teachers training colleges were supposed to sit their examinations in May. The Minister for Education, Science and Technology will make amendments to the examination timetables following the situation of the coronavirus infection," it stated.

The PMO stressed upon the public to continue with their daily activities. They should not panic as the government continues to assess the situation and will inform the public when and as necessary.

Services provided by shops, markets and transportation should go on as usual but

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Chief Sheikh Abubakar Zuberi addresses journalists in Dar es Salaam yesterday and issued a directive to close down Madrassas and unnecessary gatherings after confirmation of coronavirus cases (COVID 19). Left is Ulamaa secretary Sheikh Hassan Chizenga. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

## Tourist city life altered by fear of coronavirus

By Marc Nkwame, Arusha

SINCE the government announced the first confirmed case of coronavirus in Arusha on Monday, life in the normally bustling city has changed dramatically with the usual clusters of people walking together or chatting having disappeared.

Being the tourist capital of the Mainland, groups of people walking to and fro in all directions were commonplace here with most hotels, open-air eateries full to capacity but that is not the case



**Passengers are also shunning public vehicles such as commuter vans and buses**

any more.

Observations by The Guardian yesterday noticed basically lone individuals wearing masks with hand washing becoming the new norm in public establishments that were open for business.

Hotels in town have placed water dispensers on entrances so that visitors were their hands before getting in for service. "We must take all measures possible," explained Walter Maeda, proprietor of Golden Rose hotels and

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## MSD retails disinfectants, masks to tame COVID-19

By Correspondent James Kandoya

MASKS and hand sanitizers will be sold by the Medical Stores Department (MSD) at its outlet shops from today.

The items will be sold in retail to help people reduce the risk of contracting coronavirus, a shift from its usual procedure of serving only health facilities.

Reacting to reports that there was a scarcity



of the two items countrywide, MSD Public Relations Officer Eti Kusiluka said retail distribution started yesterday.

"We placed an order with the manufacturer as a matter of urgency and initial stocks have already been delivered," she said.

Regions with MSD shops and locations are Dar es Salaam (Muhimbili National Hospital),

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**Kenya confirms three more cases**

NAIROBI

KENYA yesterday announced confirmation of three more coronavirus cases, bringing the country's total number of patients with Covid-19 to seven.

Health Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe said that two of the cases were a couple that travelled from the Spanish capital of Madrid on Wednesday, March 4 through Dubai, arriving in Kenya the following day.

The third case is a Burundian national who travelled from Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Kenya, arriving on Tuesday March 17 and was picked up by a surveillance team, he said.

"We are tracing persons who may have been in contact with the patients," he said, noting that all cases so far are imported.

The tests were done by the National Influenza Centre and the Kenya Medical Research Institute (Kemri).

About 18 patients are currently under observation at Mbagath and of these seven have been screened and found to be negative, while samples of 11 others were still being processed, he said.

He appealed to Kenyans to report anyone who was abroad and is not self-quarantining.

"Any Kenyan returning to the country must sign a legal form to assure the government that he or she will self-quarantine," he specified.

Kagwe also stressed the importance of



**The tests were done by the National Influenza Centre and the Kenya Medical Research Institute (Kemri)**

strict hygiene in curbing the spread of the disease.

"Washing hands and social distancing is the key reason Chinese cases are coming down."

The number of coronavirus cases worldwide passed 200,000 yesterday, on the basis of data released by the Johns Hopkins University which monitors the disease. The total stood at 201,530 confirmed cases, and 8,007 deaths.

China still had the highest number of confirmed cases at 81,102, with Italy having the second highest with 31,506.

Share prices have fallen again in Europe and Asia, with markets unimpressed by government stimulus packages designed to counter the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The main exchanges in London, Frankfurt and Paris fell four per cent in early trading.

Across much of the European Union, border restrictions are in place, suspending the free movement of people.

Wall Street's main indexes rebounded by more than five per cent on Tuesday following Monday's steep fall.

The Trump administration outlined a \$1 trillion (£830bn) package to support the world's biggest economy.



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ACT Wazalendo leader Zitto Kabwe (3rd L) with party supporters at Kisutu Resident Magistrate Court in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

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operators of public transport should take care by not overloading their vehicles with passengers.

On Tuesday the government announced closure all kindergarten, primary and secondary schools for a period of 30 days, with Form Six students who were to sit for their examinations starting May 4 having to wait for other procedures from the ministry on the basis of the developing situation.

In a televised address, Premier Majaliwa said all unnecessary indoor

## Covid-19: Isles, Dar confirm new cases

and open gatherings are suspended including n sports, music festivals, politics, graduation ceremonies, wedding parties, etc.

Ministries and other institutions were directed to suspend workshops, conferences, seminars and all other meetings that involve foreign participants.

"Tanzanians who planned unnecessary trips to countries with big

coronavirus infection rate are advised to cancel such trips," he said.

Regional and district commissioners were instructed to make sure spaces indicated as isolation centres for infected people have all the necessary facilities.

He said that Tanzanians need to abide by instructions given by the government and ignore rumours circulated in social networks.

Religious leaders and the media were asked to collaborate with the government to educate their adherents to observe protective measures against the pandemic.

People must also immediately report any suspected coronavirus case to medical authorities, and those needing more information could use toll free numbers 0800110124, 0800110125 and 0800110037.

## Tourist city life altered by fear of coronavirus

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Kilimanjaro Villa.

A number of restaurants have however closed doors, either out of fear or for scarcity of customers who would rather wait until they got home before peeling off their masks for dinner.

Passengers are also shunning public vehicles such as commuter vans and buses, choosing to walk manageable distances or jump onto motorcycle taxis should the situation call for it.

Arusha is a city of nearly 500,000 residents, while the entire region is home to 1.8 million people, with 26 persons quarantined following the citing of a case of infection as she reported to hospital after arriving from Belgium.

On the other hand it is reported that hundreds of Tanzanian pupils and students, studying in Kenya and released for compulsory leave, were stuck at Namanga border post due to scarcity of public transport to ferry them to Arusha.

A concerned parent, Lawrence John, said they are compelled to join hands with others to hire buses to help transport their family members from Namanga back home after schools closed en-masse.

In another development, the Arusha-based East African Business Council has cancelled the 'Industrialization Business Convention and CEO Round Table Breakfast Meeting' set for 30th to 31st March at the Johari Rotana Hotel in Dar es Salaam.

EABC Executive Director and CEO Dr. Peter Mathuki said in a statement yesterday that the decision was taken due to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

"This is to inform all EABC members, development partners, sponsors and government officials that the East African Business Council in

consultation with the Tanzania Private Sector Foundation (TPSF), the Confederation of Tanzania Industries (CTI) and the Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (TCCIA), has adjourned the Industrialization Business Convention and CEO Round Table Breakfast Meeting until further notice."

Dr Mathuki affirmed that EABC was standing in solidarity with measures taken by East African Community (EAC) Partner States in their efforts to control Covid-19 spread.

Health Minister Umyy Mwalimu called a press conference at the Arusha Regional Commissioner's office, to highlight that the first reported case of COVID-19 infection who alighted from the Kilimanjaro International Airport early this week was doing well.

For the overall dramatic effect, she even placed a 'live phone call' to the victim, Isabella Mwampamba (46) who confirmed that she was doing well, without saying exactly where she is quarantined.

About 26 people believed to have been in contact with the Rwandair passenger been placed under isolation for observation.

**About 26 people believed to have been in contact with the Rwandair passenger been placed under isolation for observation**

## Majaliwa calls upon SADC member states to support Zimbabwe efforts to have economic sanctions lifted

By Guardian Reporter

PRIME Minister Kassim Majaliwa has said that Tanzania as a chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has continued to strengthen efforts to raise voice calling for removal of the economic sanctions imposed by the West on Zimbabwe.

According to him, as Member States expect to commence implementation of the 'SADC post 2020 Agenda, it is better for all of them to continue supporting Zimbabwe to ensure that it becomes free from the economic sanctions.

Majaliwa made the remarks in Dar es Salaam yesterday when opening the SADC council of ministers meeting. The occasion was conducted for the first time through 'video-conference technology'.

"SADC believes in security, safety and democracy in implementing its goals, we are calling for all member states to participate fully towards getting strong strategies that will serves the region's interests," he said.

For his part, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and chair of SADC council of ministers Prof Palamagamba Kabudi said that the meeting has been conducted through video-conference as part of preventive measures to fight the spread of Coronavirus.

Few weeks ago, Prof Kabudi said that various efforts taken by SADC members states on Zimbabwe bid for the lift of economic sanctions have started paying off after revelations that discussions to review them has begun.

Prof Kabudi said that the international community has started discussions with Zimbabwe to review and lift the sanctions.

The minister stated that through various communication modes the Tanzania government has been informed on the discussion between the European Union and Zimbabwe on the matter.

When he took over the SADC chairmanship in August last year,

President John Magufuli called upon members states to throw their support on Zimbabwe bid to have economic sanctions imposed by the West lifted.

President Magufuli said the sanctions have not only being hurting Zimbabweans but people from the entire bloc. He said it was unacceptable that a region endowed with vast natural resources should remain poor.

In 2002 and 2003, the United States imposed targeted measures on the government of Zimbabwe, including financial and visa sanctions against selected individuals, a ban on transfers of defence items and services, and a suspension of non-humanitarian government-to-government assistance.

SADC is an organisation established in 1980 as the Southern African Development Co-ordinating Conference and later in August 1992 transformed into the Southern African Development Community.

The mission of SADC is to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development through efficient, productive systems, deeper cooperation and integration, good governance and durable peace and security so that the region emerges as a competitive and effective player in international relations and the world economy.

**SADC believes in security, safety and democracy in implementing its goals, we are calling for all member states to participate fully towards getting strong strategies that will serves the region's interests**



Leader of the opposition in the Parliament Freeman Mbowe being screened for Coronavirus symptoms moments before he enters into the Parliament offices in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: Parliament

## MSD retails disinfectants, masks to tame COVID-19

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Arusha (Mount Meru Hospital), Mwanza (Sekou Toure Hospital), Mbeya (near the Regional Referral Hospital), Geita (Chato), Lindi (Ruagwa) and Katavi (Mpanda), she stated.

After the first case of coronavirus was confirmed in the country on Monday, face masks and hand sanitizers that are used to contain the propagation of the virus started becoming scarce in city pharmacies and elsewhere as prices were on a

steady upward climb.

A spot check by The Guardian in Dar es Salaam on Tuesday showed that many pharmacies had run out of the two items, with attendants saying people went into panic buying from Monday as a positive case was confirmed in Arusha.

Hand sanitizers that previously sold at 2000/- in the city yesterday shot up to 5,000/- and were hard to come by in shops. Face masks also rose from 500/- to between 1,500/- and 2,000/-. There were long queues in supermarkets and

shopping malls that had stocks of the items.

The MSD official noted that the supply of the items will be increasing depending on the demand, to complement government efforts of containing it.

MSD was gearing to supply more items used in large quantities for institutions such as the army, police, hotels, churches and mosques, the official stated.

The department usually serves 7500 health centres across the country but

individuals and families can now buy sanitizers. They are available in 250ml, 100ml and 60ml as well as face masks at affordable prices, she specified.

"We have taken the decision to save the community from the risk of contaminating the disease that can highly be caused by scarcity of the items," the official intoned.

She however did not give expected supply quantities, explaining that it was not easy to know demand growth. Stocks will increase as demand increases as well, she added.



Project officer with the Registrar of Political Parties Emmanuel Msengi explains a point to Alliance for Africa Farmers Party national leaders (AAFP) during the exercise of political parties verification held at AAFP offices in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

# PM: Coronavirus is now a 'great war'

By Henry Mwangonde

PRIME Minister Kassim Majaliwa has called upon the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) members states to combine their efforts in the fight against the deadly Coronavirus calling it a 'great war' that requires collective powers to conquer.

Speaking during the opening of the SADC council of ministers video conference held in Dar es Salaam yesterday, Majaliwa said member states need to intensify their precautions collectively and share information of the progress.

PM Majaliwa further cautioned that if the disease continued to spread in the region it was going to affect economies hence derail all the progresses made in all three years.

"This is a great war, to win it we must unite, otherwise it will affect our economies and impact the wellbeing of our people, therefore what is needed now is for us to abide to international health guidelines," he said.

So far in the SADC region, three members States namely South Africa, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo has reported cases of COVID 19.

In her remarks, SADC Executive Secretary Dr Stergomena Tax said swift response by member states to this video-conference is commendable, and is demonstration of economic bloc's readiness to manage emergencies and disasters.

She commended SADC member states for the rigorous measures taken in response to the global pandemic.

"We call upon all citizens of the region to abide by the measures pronounced by our respective leaders, and play our part. Our efforts to combat COVID-19 will only succeed if everyone plays their part," she said.

She added by calling upon member states to ratify the economic bloc's Free Trade Area and the African Continental

Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to facilitate the acceleration of regional and continental integration.

She said industrialization remains a key priority for the region adding that the region has recorded some milestones, though progress remains slow.

"In recognition of the slow progress, and as directed by the 39th Summit, the Secretariat is finalizing an assessment on the status of industrialization and SADC intra-regional trade," she said.

Tanzania Telecommunications Corporation Limited (TTCL) facilitated the Video conference.

In his remarks, TTCL Chief Executive Officer waziri Kindamba said after move, the company has received requests for the same service by various local institutions saying this was a positive trend.

"We want to use this opportunity to grab the opportunities and offer the services needed at the same helping in the war against the Corona Virus," he said.



**We call upon all citizens of the region to abide by the measures pronounced by our respective leaders, and play our part. Our efforts to combat COVID-19 will only succeed if everyone plays their part**

## Lissu back to Tanzania hangs in the balance

By Guardian Reporter

DEPUTY Chairman of Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (Chadema), Tundu Lissu, has said his return to the country depends on the government response to the Human Rights Committee of the world Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The committee wrote a letter to the government for permission to accompany the party leader into the country.

Earlier the committee issued

proposals that among others included accompanying Lissu to return to Tanzania due to fear for his safety.

Lissu was speaking to this paper last Sunday, from Belgium since he went for treatment following an incident in which his vehicle was sprayed with more than a dozen bullets in September 2017. He said: "Up to now IPU has not given me any feedback on the government's response, I am waiting for them to tell me then I will know when I will return home."

He also said he is saddened by

removal of his belongings from the Parliament quarter he was living in as the opposition Chief Whip.

However Parliament refuted the claims saying the person commissioned by Lissu to remove his belongings from the house was not to be found.

Lissu lodged a complaint to IPU over what he said was unjust treatment by the Parliament of Tanzania when his Parliament Membership was revoked.

He also called for thorough investigation over the incident that saw his car sprayed with bullets by

unknown people.

Apart from request to accompany Lissu to Tanzania, the IPU committee had also asked for reasons over his removal as Member of Parliament.

Lissu's membership of Parliament was revoked last year by the Speaker Job Ndogai citing rampant non-attendance of its sittings claiming he was not informed of his whereabouts.

Another reason cited was Lissu's failure to fill and submit Public Service Integrity Forms for two years running as required by the Ethics secretariat.

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

## TAEC develops nuclear technology for foods

THE Tanzania Atomic Energy Commission (TAEC) has developed a nuclear technology to be used to preserve food and prevent crops from being damaged.

Speaking at the national science, technology and innovation exhibition going on in Dodoma region, senior researcher from TAEC Simon Mdoe said the technology will assist farmers in preventing their crops from being damaged by insects thus reduce post-harvest losses.

He said most farmers were experiencing post-harvest losses as most of the stored crops were damaged by insects.

The researcher added: "This technology was developed by the patriotic researchers who have come up with the mechanism that have the ability to store food crops, fruits and vegetables for six months".

He said the technology is also being used to improve industrial and medical

products by keeping them in a safe environment.

Mdoe said the commission is now seeking donors who will then assist them to build a factory in the country that would do radiation service to the crops.

Mdoe said presence of the factory will help to prevent crop losses, as traders and farmers will be able to store their agricultural produce for longer periods without damage.

"Most farmers especially those engaging in vegetable and fruits farming incur losses over lack of poor storage facilities. We want them to store their products and look for better market prices without fears of losing the crops", he noted.

TAEC is a government body with the task to promote safe

and peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology for sustainable socio-economic development and regulate the use of radiation technologies in order to protect the public, workers and the environment from harmful effects of both ionizing and non-ionizing radiation"

Among the commission role is to issue permits for the importation, ownership, transportation and use of radioactive sources. To take sample and analyze radiation in all imported and exported foodstuff, fertilizers, animal foods and tobacco.

To test environmental samples to identify radioactive contaminants in the environment and measure the level of radiation on telephone towers and communications radars.



Inspector General of Police, Simoni Siro in a group picture with CRDB bank Plc managing director Abdulmajid Nsekela (L) and bank's corporate affairs director Tully Mwambapa after paying a courtesy call at his office in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent.



### INVITATION FOR BIDS

#### TENDER FOR PROVISION OF STAFF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

**MBEYA CEMENT COMPANY LIMITED (MCCL)** is a subsidiary of the LafargeHolcim Group with its industrial operations based in Songwe, Plot No. 1 Industrial Area, Mbeya. MCCL now invites sealed bids from eligible tenderers to provide Staff Transportation services to its employees. Bidders are required to submit 1 bid document, properly enclosed in one envelope marked **TENDER FOR PROVISION OF STAFF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES 2020**, and physically delivered to:

**SECRETARY,  
TENDER COMMITTEE,  
MBEYA CEMENT COMPANY LIMITED,  
PLOT NO 1, SONGWE INDUSTRIAL AREA  
P.O. BOX 529, MBEYA,  
TANZANIA**

At MBEYA CEMENT CO LTD's RECEPTION located at Administrative Building, Songwe Mbeya.

Kindly request electronic **Tender Documents** via [mcc.tender@lafargeholcim.com](mailto:mcc.tender@lafargeholcim.com), with subject **REQUEST FOR TENDER DOCUMENTS - STAFF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES 2020** after payment of Tender Fee amounting TZS 100,000/= to one of below account.

ACCOUNT NAME: MBEYA CEMENT COMPANY LIMITED

1. Account no. 0140015051101 – Stanbic Bank
2. Account no. 0150065139500 – CRDB Bank
3. Account no. 62510014746 – NMB Bank

Payment Slip has to be sent to: [mcc.tender@lafargeholcim.com](mailto:mcc.tender@lafargeholcim.com)

**DEADLINE FOR TENDER SUBMISSION: 3rd APRIL 2020, 4H00 PM**

# Zungu: No factory will be unfairly closed due to environmental snags

By Guardian Reporter

THE government will not sweepingly close factories because of environmental problems, Minister of State in Vice-President's Office (Union and Environment) Mussa Zungu assured the business community in Dar es Salaam yesterday.

Zungu told a joint meeting of representatives of the Tanzania Private Sector Foundation (TPSF) and the National Environment Management Council (NEMC) that the government would not swiftly order closure any factory that did not meet stipulated environmental conditions. In ordering closure, he explained, wisdom would prevail.

"The objective of President John Magufuli's government is to make Tanzania a middle-income industrial country. We shall achieve this objective if we shall close every factory that violates the Environmental Management Act and its Regulations. Consultations, warning and fines provide better options for getting solutions without affecting production, without loss of jobs or denying government revenue," he told the meeting.

He said their ministry would meet representatives of the private sector to solve constantly emerging challenges, pledging that the ministry and NEMC would continue meeting investors and businessmen not only to solve jointly challenges but also to increase openness and diligence in government service delivery.

The minister also announced that in the near future application for environmental impact assessment certificates and permits would be done on-line to stave off red tape and other inconveniences.

NEMC director general Samuel Gwamaka called on members of the business community to work closely with the council in order to solve their

problems with ease.

"Issuance of a certificate starts with the investor, then up to the consultant and finally to us. The entire process must be exhaustive for we must satisfy ourselves that everything is correct as the law demands," Dr Gwamaka told the meeting.

The TPSF executive director, Godfrey Simbeye, said the private sector appreciated steps being taken by the government to create conducive climate for investment and doing business in Tanzania.

"Online application will sharply improve service delivery. In the past, closure of industries had adverse impacts on investors, workers and the government itself. Therefore, we welcome the initiatives the government is taking. Our appeal is that there must be more and regular consultations between the government and the private sector because they are fruitful and beneficial to both sides," Simbeye said.



**She said in the event the mill has more than three plants and all are started simultaneously, power consumption must shoot up, and advised them to change their habits in starting their machines**



NMB Bank highland zone manager Straton Chilongola hands over 100 iron sheets to Rungwe district commissioner Chalya Julius for Tukuyu prison dispensary. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

# Morogoro district hospital sets up ward for Coronavirus

By Correspondent Michael Sikapundwa,

**Morogoro**

AUTHORITIES in Morogoro region have set a special ward at the district hospital for suspected Coronavirus patients, saying no cases of the disease had been reported so far.

Briefing journalists here yesterday, Morogoro district commissioner Regina Chonjo said since the region is located at the centre and borders with regions in

the western and southern zones, it is important to have the ward as part of preparedness in case COVID-19 enters the region.

Chonjo added that Morogoro receives a number of visitors due to available agricultural, businesses and investment opportunities.

"We are yet to confirm any case of Coronavirus, but we should take measures and prepare ourselves to tackle the disease", DC Chonjo told a press conference.

She said authorities arrived to the

decision following directives from health minister Ummu Mwalimu that each of the regions should prepare isolation centres for suspected Coronavirus patients.

Morogoro district medical officer, Zulu Ikaji said they continue to educating citizens on the symptoms of the disease calling upon them to immediately seek medication when they feel the signs.

Ikaji said citizens in need of medical help should dial toll free lines-0754 386 037, 0714 199 919 and 0622 181

494 to get assistance from medical officers who will go directly to their homes.

Morogoro municipal director, Sheila Lukuba, warned some pharmacies and owners of retail shops to sell hand sanitizers at indicative prices insisting measures will be taken against those hiking the prices.

Lukuba said the government through the Medical Stores Department (MSD) had already provided indicative prices for different sizes of hand sanitizers.



Snakes toxic expert Zugebrton Nezelien (C) talks with Natural Resources and Tourism deputy minister Constantine Kanyasu (L) moments after visiting the snake zoo in Hai district, Kilimanjaro region yesterday. Right is mountain birds and trophies company managing director Paul Madinda. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

# Govt may allow export of snake poison for researches - Kanyasu

By Guardian Reporter

DEPUTY Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism Constantine Kanyasu has assured investors of

Mountain Birds and Trophies dealing with taming of live wildlife of reptilian species that he will work on the issue of their permits for export of snakes' poison for research purposes.

Kanyasu also pledged to work on the company's application to the Ministry and Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA) for establishing a Mobile Zoo, the application that has been pending for two years.

Speaking in Arusha yesterday soon after visiting the zoo that keeps reptilian wildlife including snakes, frogs, scorpions and chameleons, the Deputy Minister promised the investors that he will work on the challenges as soon as possible.

He also promised the investors that the Ministry will look into the possibility of lowering prices of snakes following their complaints that they fail to extract the poison from the snakes due to their high prices.

He explained that the regulations prepared by the Ministry on prices of wildlife, snakes in particular had targeted people establishing

animals zoos and not for poison extraction.

He said the current regulations has set the price for a snake at 800/- while the firm wants 3,600 snakes for research of the poison as needed by foreign researchers.

Earlier the Managing Director of Mountain Birds and Trophies Paul Madinda said since the government's ban export of the reptilian species of wildlife they later started selling snake poison and other insects but they are accorded little cooperation from relevant authorities.

Hence Madinda requested the Deputy Minister to ask TAWA to respond to their application letters so that they know if they are allowed to continue with the business, and if not they will have no option but to close business.

Meanwhile Madinda said in the event the government will allow export of the snake poison samples; it will contribute to the national income as well the availability of medicines to treat people bitten by snake.

Elaborating on the use of the snake poison, Madinda said it is in great demand in the world for use in making cosmetics used by rich people in softening of skin.

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbarali

# Coronavirus cases surge as Mbalali DC bans gatherings

MBARALI district commissioner in Mbeya region Reuben Mfune has directed the district's police commander (OCD) not to issue permits for any type of meetings due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Mfune issued the directive yesterday when speaking to the district's government and religious leaders aimed to call for caution over the disease infections that had already entered the country.

He said from now on there will be no gatherings of any kind and in regard to mosques and churches they will prepare procedures to safeguard the people against the virus.

"In the consequences I direct the district executive director to use the funds earmarked for Uhuru Torch race to be used for purchase of various protective gear against the disease," he

added.

He said the items that will be bought should be allocated to village and ward offices and stressed that the items and other drugs must be bought from the government pharmacy at the district hospital at affordable prices.

He also asked religious leaders to continue praying and educating their

followers on how to protect themselves from Coronavirus.

Mbarali district medical officer Dr Godfrey Mwakalila said already areas had been set aside for isolating people who will be suspected to have the virus while their diagnostic sample are sent to Dar es Salaam for verification

Dr Mwakalila stressed the

importance for the wananchi taking precautionary measures on the disease and to ensure those suspected are to be isolated even if they are their close relatives.

World Health Organization (WHO) country director for Tanzania Dr Tigest Ketsela Mengestu said on Monday that so far 144 countries had confirmed of 53,517 people affected.

He said for Africa, Tanzania was the 25th country to confirm the case, saying the positive trend was that there was no local infections. All the cases were imported.

"We need to work together as of now the whole United Nations (UN) systems was behind the WHO and there is need for all of us to work hand in hand to contain this virus," she said.

By Guardian Reporter, Dodoma

## Govt preparing affordable communication bundles for international calls, Ndiitiye says

THE government is planning to come up with special communication bundles that will enable people in the country to directly make calls to those outside Tanzania at affordable rates. Deputy Ministers for Works, Transport and Communication

Atashasta Ndiitiye made the remarks of the communication sector staffs council yesterday here when closing a meeting

“We will look for a mechanism that people will enable people to use normal airtime packages to call abroad without using internet (Whatsapp). We will implement it without affecting any of the operators because our job is to make sure the sector grows and people benefit from it,” he said. Ndiitiye also called on all units and departments in the telecommunications sector to fulfill their obligations with efficiency and due diligence as per their agreements so as to place the sector on top of the major contributing sectors list on the national income. He expressed his disappointment that in the year 2017/18, the sector failed to be in the top five of the sectors that contributes much in national income as it contributed only 13.4 percent.

“We are now positioning the sector in a good place and working hard to ensure that we emerge number one contributor in the national economy,” he said. He added that the construction of 10 new centres to provide services to the national fibre-optic backbone has been completed, pointing it as a great success recorded in 2019/20 fiscal year. Ndiitiye mentioned the municipal councils where the centers will be providing services as Siha, Nyangwale, Bukombe, Ngorongoro, Nsimbo, Kalambo, Buhigwe, Busekelo, Buchosa and Mbogwe. He added that the government is finalising the exercise of upgrading 72 centres whereby approximately 1.6bn/- has been spent on the project.

Commenting on the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the minister said that a total of 87 institutions have been linked to 16 regions in the country and the work is expected to be completed by June this year.

He referred to the regions as Kilimanjaro, Geita, Arusha, Katavi, Rukwa, Kigoma, Mbeya, Mwanza, Dodoma, Tanga, Lindi, Mtwara, Morogoro, Manyara, Kagera, and Iringa. Ndiitiye said, with the 118bn/- aid from the Universal Telecommunications Fund, 94 per cent of the country’s areas have been reached by telecommunications services which include 704 wards and 2,501 villages. For her part, the chairperson of Tanzania Union of Government and Health Employees (TUGHE) Grace Chalila said they are encouraging women to participate in various activities that contribute to the nation economic growth in order to bring safety and equality at workplaces.



Parliamentary committee for good governance and local government chairman Dr. Jasson Rweikiza looks at an astonishing range of merchandise made by a Tasaf beneficiary Edith Makalah in Singida region yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Elisante John

## Over 1000 youths benefitted from life, entrepreneurial skills, thanks to TEEC

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

AT LEAST 1120 youths aged between 18 and 24 years old from Dodoma, Dar es Salaam, Coast and Mtwara regions have attained life and entrepreneurial skills, thanks to Tanzania Entrepreneur and Competent Centre (TEEC). The training conducted between 2016 and 2020 targeted 1250 young Tanzanians with at least secondary school education and above. The aim was to empower them for self-employment, starting own business as well as financial knowledge. Speaking during eighth phase of the training here, Lydia Mhina, TEEC Monitoring, Education and Learning Officer said out of those trained by the organisation, some 550 are self-employed. “These are those who had no business ideas prior to the training but have since taken serious steps and some had small businesses that have now grown bigger,” she said.

She noted that the programme under sponsorship of MasterCard Foundation and being implemented by TEEC through collaboration with International Youth Foundation (IYF), in its final phase ending August 2020, aims to reach 200 more youths in all the regions of operation. Speaking at the same event in Dodoma City Council, Youth Development Officer, Mfungo Manyama thanked TEEC for the good programme that has changed lives of young Tanzanians. He said more stakeholders should come up with such projects that help alleviate poverty and empower young people who are the national workforce. “It is really pleasing to see youth groups access financial services like loans from the banks and other institutions, use it wisely and reach a very high level of doing business,” he said. He cited a case in Dodoma where the

authority disbursed a total of 853m/- to different youth, women and people with disabilities groups. Out of that amount youth got 357m/-, women 419m/- while people with disabilities got 77m/- between July and December, 2019. He decried low turnout of people with disabilities to access the funds. Iddi Sungita, one of the beneficiaries of the programme commended TEEC for the good programme that has helped shape his life. “Since I started the training, I have gained a lot of knowledge needed for the running of my business,” he said. The programme aims to establish business and create employment to youth with the age range from 18 – 35 years. The programme has three main components which are training, mentorship and financing; SIDO has been commissioned to conduct all trainings in the selected regions which are Lindi, Mtwara and Dar es Salaam.

## TANCDA announces free health education and medical screening

By Guardian Correspondent

THE Tanzania Non-Communicable Diseases Alliances (TANCDA) has announced free health education and medical screening to public to increase general awareness on the diseases due to its rapid rise. Speaking with The Guardian, TANCDA treasurer Dr Tatizo Waane said the organisation is focusing on building capacity on health issues to different groups in the community for them to be aware of the diseases. Waane who is a cardiologist said that TANCDA is providing education and capacity building to the public for different groups of people in various regions across the country including Lake Zone, southern and northern parts of the country. “We have also provided awareness education to students from various colleges in the country and now we have embarked on a special programme to train female students,” Dr Waane explained. He said in implementing their duties they work closely with journalists who helps them to spread information to the public.

Dr Waane attributed the increase in non-communicable diseases rates with poor lifestyles and lack of physical exercises amongst Tanzanians. She said the association plan to focus more on providing awareness education to students alerting them to be aware with their lifestyles so as not to fall into diseases in future. Managing Editor for Nipashe Beatrice Bandawe, thanked the association for recognising the media’s contribution in educating the community. Bandawe has invited the NCDs experts to submit awareness articles that will be published so that many people can benefit with the knowledge. “We invite experts from TANCDA to write educational articles since through our newspaper the information will reach many people across the country,” said Bandawe. Managing editor for The Guardian newspaper Wallace Maugo, said the media has a big role to play in educating the public warranting specialists and experts from various sectors. “You are invited to contribute to the industry through your expertise, the door is open, write educative articles for the public, they will be published,”

he noted. Non-communicable diseases are not transmissible directly from one person to another. NCDs include parkinson’s disease, autoimmune diseases, strokes, most heart diseases, most cancers, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, alzheimer’s disease, cataracts and others. According to the World Health Organisation NCDs kill 41 million people each year, equivalent to 71% of all deaths globally. Each year, 15 million people die from a NCD between the ages of 30 and 69 years; over 85% of these “premature” deaths occur in low and middle-income countries. Cardiovascular diseases account for most NCD deaths, or 17.9 million people annually, followed by cancers (9.0 million), respiratory diseases (3.9million), and diabetes (1.6 million). Tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diets all increase the risk of dying from a NCD. Detection, screening and treatment of NCDs, as well as palliative care, are key components of the response to NCDs.



### VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

**SUMMARY**  
Amref Health Africa Tanzania is a leading public health organization that is committed to improving the health of people by collaborating with and empowering communities, and strengthening health systems at various levels in Tanzania. Amref Health Africa is submitting a project proposal to USAID in response to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Number: 72062120RFA00005 for Local Institutions to activity Title: Tuberculosis and Family Planning Integrated Community Solutions Program (TB&FP LON). Specifically, this NOFO’s main intended outcomes are improved service delivery for TB and FP; strengthened linkages between communities and health facilities; better health outcomes for Tanzanian citizens; improved health worker capacity; and greater self-reliance, as local Tanzanian organizations become directly responsible for addressing local development problems. In this regard, Amref Health Africa in Tanzania invites suitable applicants for the following position to be filled contingent to the organization winning the award.

<b>JOB TITLE</b>	<b>Senior Finance and Administration (F&amp;A) Manager</b>
<b>REPORTING TO</b>	Head of Finance
<b>PROJECT</b>	USAID TB and Family Planning Integrated Community Solutions
<b>PHYSICAL LOCATION</b>	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

The Senior F&A Manager will lead and manage the production of accurate and timely financial information needed to facilitate the efficient operations of the project activities and ensure that there is an effective financial management system in place required to maintain financial integrity and accountability of project funds as per donor expectations and organizations policy.

**PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES:**

**Financial management roles:**

- Ensure timely submission of financial reports to USAID/Tanzania and other stakeholders.
- Supervising financial data posting and validation daily to facilitate monthly and annual closure of accounts
- Provide technical financial and accounting services to all project operations and monitor overall financial performance
- Provide technical support on Project Audit and following to ensure the action plan are implemented as agreed.
- Manage donor call down requests and cash flow planning, ensure availability of adequate cash balances
- Manage existing grants by tracking, developing internal reporting systems working with staff to ensure the project is meeting proposal conditions and expectations
- Responsible for pre award budget development and post award re-budgeting of all project sub grants

**Administration roles:**

- Ensure compliance with administrative systems, policies and procedures.
- Oversee effective maintenance and insurance of all project assets and ensure staff conducive working environment with optimal use of project resources.
- Support management and compliance to the Amref Health Africa developed disposal guidelines, policies and procedures for Amref Health Africa’s obsolete assets.
- Oversee the drafting and servicing of service contracts related to project activities and payment processing.
- Support the deployment and maintenance of appropriate security systems that ensure Network, systems and data security from internal and external threats.
- Foster strong partnerships and collaborations with the MOHCDGEC, LGAs, other local organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

**REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS**

- Certified Public Accountant and a Bachelor’s Degree in accounting or a related field from a recognized university or equivalent
- At least five years of experience in financial management and administration
- Demonstrated experience in managing and supervising a team
- Knowledge of USG cost principles, rules, and regulations and applying these in program decision-making
- Demonstrated experience in supporting and working with program staff to ensure resources are used efficiently and to accurately account for expenditures
- Demonstrated experience in managing sub-grants
- Exceptional computer skills, particularly Microsoft Excel, and experience using commercially available accounting software programs
- Record of accurate and reliable reporting to donor agencies
- English written and oral communication skills; fluency in Swahili also required
- At least seven years of experience working in Tanzania.

**DCOP on the progress of implementation of the M&E activities in respective regions. Will also be responsible to report the agreed USAID indicators on regular basis to USAID Tanzania, MoHCDGECs departments such as NTLPRCHS.**

**PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES.**

- Developing a strong MEL plan consistent with the donor’s results framework, coordinate the collection of data including conducting field visits for data validation, monitor the quality and completeness of data sets, contribute to the development of the program and document project performance against established outputs and indicators that will be submitted to USAID for approval
- Responsible in designing innovative and creative methods to capture, document, and report results required by the donor, while strengthening and using relevant national and district level reporting systems.
- Responsible in supporting data-driven decision-making to solve critical problems with guidance from GOTs and USG’s monitoring and evaluation systems
- Participate in setting high quality performance targets ensuring adherence to technical standards, best practices and donor guidelines;
- Responsible for building the capacity of the regional M&E officers, data officers and other program staff in the collection, utilization, and dissemination of data as well as ensuring that all monitoring and data collection activities are harmonized and information is shared.
- Develop a robust M&E approach that can track the immediate and intermediate effects of program activities, including changes in knowledge, attitudes, responsiveness, data use and technical assistance demand.
- Design and implement an M&E system that is capable of tracking and documenting the targets set for community TB and Family planning interventions and progress of the activities.
- Interact with USAID/Tanzania M&E teams on data reporting and all other project related M&E issues
- Ensure timely submission of major technical reports to USAID/Tanzania and other stakeholders.
- Foster strong partnerships and collaborations with the MOHCDGEC, LGAs, other local organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

**REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS**

- Master’s Degree in public health, demography, sociology, epidemiology, biostatistics, or a related field
- At least five years of experience in monitoring, evaluation, and research related to health development programs
- At least three years of experience with management of M&E systems for health initiatives
- Demonstrated experience in target setting and reporting against health development programs
- Excellent knowledge of data collection protocols for quality data collection and verification
- Exceptional ability to analyze multiple sources of data to identify data trends and provide recommendations on program performance and improvement
- Demonstrated experience and familiarity with behavioral surveillance surveys, research methodologies, qualitative and quantitative research methods, data analysis, sampling methods, and establishment of M&E systems in developing country contexts
- Demonstrated experience in managing and supervising a team
- Exceptional English written and oral communication skills; fluency in Swahili also required
- At least seven years of experience working in Tanzania.

**How to apply:**  
If you meet the criteria given above and interested in the vacancies, please send an application letter and CV combined in as one document indicating your present employer and position, daytime telephone contact, names and addresses of three referees. To be considered, your application must be received by **16.30 HOURS March 23, 2020**. Please mention the job title/vacancy name or use the job title as the subject line when applying for this position failure to do that your application may not be retrieved. All correspondences should be directed to: Email: [jobs.tanzania@amref.org](mailto:jobs.tanzania@amref.org) Direct application through mail will not be accepted.

<b>JOB TITLE</b>	<b>Senior Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Manager</b>
<b>REPORTING TO PROJECT</b>	Chief of Party USAID TB and Family Planning Integrated Community Solutions
<b>PHYSICAL LOCATION</b>	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

The Senior MEL Manager will oversee, implement and monitor all monitoring and evaluation activities for the project including supporting the community TB and FP M&E including data quality, use, and dissemination. He/She will collaborate with other technical staff in the project and advise the COP and

- Amref Health Africa is an equal opportunity employer however women and people with disability are encouraged to apply and has a non-smoking environment policy;
- “Amref Health Africa is committed to the principles of safeguarding in workplace and will not tolerate any form of abuse, wherever it occurs or whoever is responsible”
- Amref health Africa – Tanzania regrets that only short-listed candidates will be contacted.

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## Twaweza announces formation of new independent educational bodies for Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda

By Guardian Reporter

TWaweza has announced the formation of three new independent educational institutions to operate in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda in a new move aimed to improve learning outcomes and citizen engagement in the region.

In a statement availed to the media, executive director of Twaweza East Africa Aidan Eyakuze said the three independent country operations will be unified by an overarching Uwezo 2020-2024 strategy that has been developed at a regional level.

He said that the key elements of the overarching strategy, focused on improving equitable learning outcomes such as generating evidence, identifying and testing innovations that improve learning and advocating for changes in policy and practice to support equitable learning.

"From January 2020, we are pleased to announce the formation of three new independent educational institutions with a focus on learning outcomes and inequalities in education. These organisations are set to take forward more than ten years of experience in working in education as part of Twaweza," he said.

Eyakuze noted that in moving into these pivotal areas of work, Uwezo will be able to build on its myriad of successes over the past ten years in mobilising citizens, influencing policy and advocating for learning outcomes to be the measure of progress in education.

"Uwezo will continue to be synonymous with high standards of accountability and transparency. As part of Twaweza East Africa, Uwezo holds itself to the highest standards of financial transparency and management. We were collectively subjected to 17 audits during our previous five-year strategy, all of them with positive reports. Given Uwezo's vast experience in managing micro-operations at macro-scale, the new organisations will carry with them strong systems of procurement,

payment, and operational management."

He said that as Uwezo transitions in three countries, the new organisations will continue to exemplify the high quality, integrity and creativity in their work that has come to be expected of Twaweza. And Twaweza will continue to be supportive, working to ensure that the new organisations have a bright and sustainable future as they begin their important expanded mission of demonstrating how to improve learning outcomes and keeping communities and leaders focused on learning through assessment, research, innovations, partnerships and advocacy.

According to him, Twaweza will continue to work towards its vision of open society, built on the human impulse to make a difference; where information and ideas flow, citizens engage, and authorities are accountable to the people.

"We will work towards this through: demonstrating how citizens can come together to collectively address their systemic development problems, and make government work better for them; enabling citizens' voices, interests and experiences to be heard and taken seriously in decision-making across multiple governance levels; promoting and protecting open civic space which enables citizens to freely assemble or organise, speak and act.



**From January 2020, we are pleased to announce the formation of three new independent educational institutions with a focus on learning outcomes and inequalities in education**



Zanzibar Minister for Health Hamad Rashid Mohamed and members of the House of Representatives listen to Zanzibar harbour health officer Ali Ahmada Ali (2nd R) on services rendered by the authority. Photo: Rahma Suleiman

By Correspondent Friday Simbaya, Mufindi

IRINGA-based non-governmental organisation—Rural Development Organisation (RDO) is providing free vocational trainings to vulnerable children and orphans as a way of preparing them towards safe adulthood.

The trainings are offered with the support from Mbabulo Vocational Training College in Mufindi district.

Speaking to this paper recently, RDO chief executive officer, Fidelis Filipitali said the organisation is supporting the vulnerable rural children in Mufindi as part of poverty reduction strategies.

"We are targeting children who have failed to continue with further education after completing secondary

## NGO introduces trainings to support vulnerable children overcome poverty

education. We are providing vocational trainings to enable them to overcome life-dependency through acquired skills and knowledge," he said.

According to him, students undergo various courses including plumbing, embroidery, animal keeping, catering, sewing, agriculture, computer education carpentry, metalworking and masonry.

He called upon all the young people to work and stop being socially dependent adding that the organisation also helps 1800 households and over 8,000 orphans.

One of the youth, who has completed his course at the Mbabulo VTC, Lackson Sanga said the knowledge he acquired has helped him to be self-reliant.

Sanga who is now an employee of the Rural Development Organisation said: "I am now transferring the acquired skills to my fellow youths especially those from vulnerable families and orphans".

He said following challenges of water, the organisation is also assisting villagers to have access to clean and safe water. He said villagers connected to the services pay for water through a

prepaid card system.

The government continues to improve the availability of clean and safe water to the wananchi in both urban and rural areas adding a total of 875 water projects are being implemented countrywide whereas 802 projects are in rural areas and 73 in urban places, according to the government's spokesperson, Dr Hassan Abbasi.

He said: "We expect to achieve our target of ensuring availability of clean and safe water by 85 percent in villages and 95 percent in urban areas".



Uhuru primary school pupils in Dodoma city listen to Hadija Salumu from the Institute of Education during the innovation exhibition week being held in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Peter Mkwavila

## Improved irrigation infrastructure boosts crops production in Mbeya

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

IMPROVEMENT of irrigation infrastructure in Mbeya Region has increased the area of irrigated land from 49,117 hectares in 2018 to 71,890 hectares this year, thanks to the initiative made by the government through the National Irrigation Commission (NIRC).

Regional Irrigation Engineer, Elibariki Mwendu said that for the past two years the government upgraded seven irrigation schemes of Mbaka and Katelantaba (Busokelo), Uturo, Gwiri, Igomelo, Mwendamtitu (Mbarali) and Mshewe (Mbeya Rural).

Eng Mwendu said that after improving irrigation infrastructure

the irrigated area has increased, whereby the irrigated land in Mbaka is 500 ha, and Katelantaba (250ha), Uturo (900ha), Gwiri (400ha), Igomelo (312ha), Mwendamtitu (30,001ha) and Mshewe (250ha).

"The irrigation improvement made by the government through NIRC has strengthened irrigation—which is the reliable farming that has increased production of food crops such as rice, maize, and vegetables. This has also increased income at the family level in the area."

Eng Mwendu said that the move will improve food security in the region and the country at large, taking into accounts that farmers are able to do farming throughout the year.

Earlier, a senior agricultural officer from NIRC, Mnadi Taribo said that the commission has been providing training on new methods of rice farming called 'system of rice intensification (SRI)'. According to him, SRI has proved to use limited amount of water, labor-intensive, organic method that uses younger seedlings singly spaced and typically hand weeded with special tools.

"The new system of rice farming doubles rice production per acre," Taribo said, citing Madibira scheme as one example whereby through SRI production has increased to 9.3 tonnes per hectare, from 7.2 tonnes per hectare (traditional farming).

In Uturo scheme, the SRI method increased production to 13 tonnes per hectare from 5.7 tonnes (traditional farming).

Taribo further explained that SRI methods help increase yields by over 30 percent while using 40 percent less water than conventional methods. The method was initially developed in the 1980s in Madagascar and has been validated in 43 countries. SRI practices and concepts have also been successfully adapted to upland rice and to other crops such as wheat, finger millet, and sugarcane.

Between 2014 and 2020, the government spent 3.2bn/- in upgrading irrigation infrastructure in Mbeya Region.

## New cocoa seed varieties provide far better yields to Cameroonian farmers

YAOUNDE

ANTOINE Mani Tonye sinks his thumb into the red soil to gauge how deep to plant the next seedling. The Cameroonian cocoa farmer has seen healthy yields and improvement in his income since he began planting a locally adapted seed variety developed in a laboratory in the capital - Yaounde.

"In its first year, my nursery has been the best. This should get me out of poverty", said Tonye, who farms his own plot in the village of Azanza on the outskirts of Mbal Mayo in central Cameroon.

"For now, I am doing better, I don't beg, I do my best, I manage to get by on my own. Farming is going to become my passion".

There are 600,000 cocoa farmers across Cameroon, and it is a vital sector for rural communities. But cocoa is a fragile crop with yields that tend to decrease over time, putting farmers' livelihoods at risk.

That's why the African Development Bank has committed to provide funding to IRAD, the Institute of Agriculture Research for Development, where research is focused on creating adapted seed varieties.

The second-generation seed varieties developed by IRAD allow for an average yield of 2 tons per hectare, compared to the first generation developed in the 1970s and 1980s that produced around 1 ton per hectare.

"There has been great progress. In less than two decades, we have been able to double the yield potential of the varieties that farmers now use", said Bruno Efombagen, an IRAD researcher in Yaounde.

Demand for the higher-yielding seeds has outstripped supply. To solve this problem, the African Development Bank has supported IRAD in its efforts to make the seeds accessible to a greater number of farmers. Across the country, IRAD is setting up more and more seed production fields.

A new seed variety called "Brazilian cacao" is now widely in use, providing far better yields to Cameroonian

farmers.

"Before, our parents used to grow a variety called 'tout-venant', but today, thanks to advances in research, we have access to improved seeds," said Samba Mviena, Chairman of AKOM-COOP-CA, a cooperative of farmers. "You get the first yields 18 months after planting them, with flowers and a few pods on some stems. After two or two-and-a-half years, or more precisely three years, you can already get a perfect crop."

The higher-quality cocoa seed varieties have helped to stem the migration of young people from rural villages to seek work in the city. Mviena's cooperative has strong youth representation, with 62 young people in the group.

"Their decision to engage in the cacao sector stems from the availability of improved seeds, because these seeds allow for quick and bountiful harvests," he said.

Brazilian cacao not only provides far better yields to Cameroonian farmers, it benefits everyone in the production chain.

Trader Yannick Fosso buys cocoa from across the region and sells it in Cameroon's economic capital, Douala.

"The season runs from August to January. I make all my year's earnings during those six months," he explained.

Fosso added: "When you look at the plants, you can see that Brazilian cacao is a better variety than the ones that our parents used to grow. Its colour is much brighter; the pods never get black, they are entirely red. So when you brew it, it comes out with a very good colour and taste".

Cocoa is Cameroon's second export crop. The majority of the Central African nation's annual output of about 220,000 tons is shipped overseas from Douala's Atlantic port.

For Fosso, part of the pride he takes in his work is in Cameroon's improving reputation as a cocoa exporter. "Cacao is a central part of the lives of the people here," he said. "It's rewarding to buy something that is eaten across the world."

# Zanzibar government affirms commitment in preventing spread of the coronavirus

**By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar**

ZANZIBAR Health Minister Hamad Rashid has assured the public that the government is taking all key measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and that all information and updates concerning new cases will always be shared openly.

The minister called upon citizens in the Indian Ocean Archipelago to remain calm and keep themselves safe.

Rashid made the remarks when members of the House of Representatives Committee for Social Welfare visited some entry points and quarantines set aside to serve those who will be diagnosed affected by the virus.

Rashid said that the government is well prepared to overcome the outbreak.

He further urged residents in the area to continue taking precautionary measures, including stopping travelling to countries that have been affected by the virus.

The Committee chairman, Mwanaasha Khamis Haji expressed the committee's satisfaction on the preparedness measures taken by the government to protect Isles residents from the disease outbreak.

She however wanted airports authority to provide close support to the government through enhanced screening as part of strategies to prevent and overcome the spread of the disease.

Assistant head at a health center located at the Abeid Amani Karume International Airport, Mohamed Khamis Ali said that the authority has made special system to ensure that all guests arriving in the country are screened to identify their health status.

Meanwhile, the ruling party-CCM in Zanzibar has called on the public to continue taking preventive measures as

Tanzania records cases of the disease.

Dr Abdulla Juma Saadalla, CCM deputy secretary general said that the disease is a disaster to people's health across the World.

"Zanzibar receives a number of guests including tourists, so it is better for the country to take extra measures to ensure that all entry points are well protected...CCM should also suspend all events that involve bringing together groups of people," he said.

He also urged security bodies to strengthen operations especially in illegal entries and ports.

According to latest update by the World Health Organisation (WHO), more than 120,000 confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus disease have been reported globally.

**“Zanzibar receives a number of guests including tourists, so it is better for the country to take extra measures to ensure that all entry points are well protected... CCM should also suspend all events that involve bringing together groups of people”**



Masasi District Commissioner Selemani Mzee (4th L) at the launch of NBC business club in the district recently. Others are NBC Masasi branch manager Erick Mbeyale (R), brand and finance services manager Jonathan Wilson (2nd R) and the bank's staff members. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

# Mbeya RC gives 60-day ultimatum to Lulu Saccos debtors to repay over 1bn/- loans

**By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya**

MBEYA Regional Commissioner Albert Chalamila has issued a 60-day ultimatum to all hardcore debtors of the 1.09bn/- debt that were loans from Lulu Saccos members in Mbeya to repay the money.

Chalamila gave the ultimatum early this week during the event to mark

six years of the establishment of Lulu Saccos, and stressed that in the event they will not repay the money within the given time, he will take stern legal measures.

He said Lulu Saccos is among the credit societies that were performing well in enabling its members economically and had a huge capital compared to other lending and credit societies.

In the circumstances he called upon all those who were given loans and failed to repay them to do so to enable the society to perform accordingly.

In her speech Lulu Saccos Manager Emmy Ntale explained that there are various challenges they face that hinder the society's progress including not repaying the loans given in time.

She said the society has been giving loans to its members in phases but some of them forces the society to give them loans without following laid down procedures.

The Saccos board chairman Byalugaba Chengule promised to refer all names of hardcore debtors to the regional commissioner for him to take steps thereof.



Tanzania Social Action Fund official Florence Saria makes a presentation on savings and book keeping for Agape members at Ngyeku village in Arumeru district, Arusha region yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Woinde Shizza

# Communication sector should aim for 1st position as contributor to GDP

**By Guardian Reporter**

THE communication sector is a crosscutting sector that has great contribution in increasing the nation's income hence its officials should work hard and provide quality services to the public so that it attains number one position in its contribution to the national income.

This was expressed by Deputy Minister of Transport and Communication Eng Atashasta Nditwe when opening Workers Council conference of the ministry's communication sector in Dodoma yesterday.

"Communication is the sector which government institutions, public and private sector depends on for communicating, we are the ones administering and formulate policies of which we are required to ensure communication is self-attaining in the present one global village world," said the deputy minister.

He stressed that the communication sector is capable of performing even better in contributing to the nation's GDP if it uses well ICT experts who are professional and creative to help the government in its responsibility to serve Tanzanians.

He said the sector was among leading contributors to the GDP by holding No 3 position for FY 2017/18 with 13.4 percent and has been among top five sources of government revenue.

Ministry's Acting Permanent Secretary (Communication Sector) Kitolina Kippa said the government will receive implementation report for the sector for the 2019/2020 financial year that includes the building of ICT infrastructures and provision of reliable communication service to both the government and the public.

Chairperson of Women Branch in the Ministry's communication sector, Grace Chalila asked Ministry's leaders to plead with the government to increase the Sector's budget so that it can contribute more to the national income.

Meanwhile Deputy Minister Nditwe reminded staff and workers that HIV/AIDS still exists and called on them to take care of themselves as the government depends on them in the performance of their duties to serve the wananchi.

He also appealed to them to abide by directives given by health experts in the country on their personal hygiene, avoid shaking hands as the Coronavirus has already entered the country.

**NAIROBI**

# Kenya raids shop selling 'fake' coronavirus testing kits

Kenyan authorities have raided a shop allegedly selling fake coronavirus testing kits.

The Standard newspaper reported that police detained 10 people and locked the facility in the capital, Nairobi in Monday's raid.

The suspects advertised the testing kits online claiming they sold 600,

according to officials.

"They say that they are left with 400. We want to know who the 600 were sold to," Daniel Yumbwa, Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Council chief executive, told the newspaper.

On Monday, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed there were at least 327 cases of coronavirus in Africa.

Kenya confirmed its first case of COVID-19, the medical term for the disease, on Friday. The East African

country has confirmed a total of three cases as of Tuesday morning.

On Monday, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said his government was suspending travel from any country with reported COVID-19 cases.

"Only Kenyan citizens, and any

foreigners with valid residence permits, will be allowed to come in, provided they proceed on self-quarantine," he told the nation in a televised address.

Schools should close immediately and universities by the end of the week, he added. Citizens would

be encouraged to make cashless transactions to cut the risk of handling contaminated money.

As of Tuesday morning, the disease has killed more than 6,600 people and infected almost 168,000 people worldwide, according to WHO.

### WMO should highlight the safety, well-being of society

THE date of the establishment of the World Meteorological Organisation in 23 March 1950 has been named World Meteorological Day. This organisation announces a slogan for World Meteorology Day every year, and this day is celebrated in all member countries. World Meteorological Day is celebrated every year on 23 March to commemorate the entry into force in 1950 of the convention that created the World Meteorological Organisation. The day also highlights the contribution that national meteorological and hydrological services make to the safety and well-being of society. Many different activities and events are organised for this occasion.

World Meteorological Day often features various events such as conferences, symposia and exhibitions for meteorological professionals, community leaders and the general public. Some events aim to attract media attention to raise meteorology's profile. Many prizes for meteorological research are presented or announced on or close to World Meteorological Day.

Many countries issue postage stamps or special postage stamp cancellation marks to celebrate World Meteorological Day. These stamps often reflect the event's theme or mark a country's meteorology achievements.

We have many global meteorological agencies and Tanzania is no exception. The Meteorological Agency (TMA) is the government organisation that has been given the mandate as the National Meteorological Authority which is entrusted with the task of provision of weather and climate and regulations of weather and climate services in Tanzania. Tanzania Meteorological Agency (TMA) was established in 1999 by the Parliamentary Executive Agencies Act No 30 of 1997, (Cap.245 R.E. 2002). Its predecessor the Directorate of Meteorology (DoM) was established by the Parliamentary Act No. 6 of 1978, as a specialised department for provision of meteorological services in Tanzania. Before then, meteorological services were

provided in Eastern African countries (Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya) by the East African Meteorological Department (EAMD) under the former East African Community. Observations of meteorological data in Tanzania first began along the coast. The first weather observations were made at the Zanzibar stone town in October 1886 and later extended to the mainland with the rainfall observing stations being Bagamoyo, Tanga, Amani and Bukoba. By 1929 meteorological services had become fully operational in Tanzania under the British Meteorological Services. Today observed meteorological parameters are rainfall, maximum, minimum, dry bulb, dew point, wet bulb temperatures, cistern level pressure, relative humidity, vapor pressure, cloud cover, evaporation, radiation, sunshine hours, wind run, wind speed, wind direction, fog, thunder, hail, mean sea level, visibility and evaporation. A network of more than 2000 rainfall stations exists in Tanzania where large percentage of its historical climate data are still in paper form and at greater risk of being lost as the paper is deteriorating very fast. Only about 30 per cent of the historical data has been digitised mostly rainfall and temperature.

Tanzania Meteorological Agency has accumulated a large amount of paper records with a few estimated to be 100 years, while some of them have started wearing out at dramatic rates posing a threat of losing these valuable historical climatic data. Thus, TMA is facing a very big challenge of efficiently manage its data and storage.

The Agency has been managing its data using a CLICOM data management system before migrating to the current CLIDATA data management system as one of the data management system recommended by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). TMA has been making efforts to rescue the perishing data after realizing a remarkable deterioration of its paper-based documents and often stored under poor conditions through government and donor organisations funds.

### Raising awareness and strengthening of sustainable conservation of forests crucial for future generations

TANZANIA has two main types of forest namely natural, and plantation forests. Natural forests found in Tanzania are of three main types namely miombo woodlands, montane forests and mangroves. According to the National Forest Programme - NFP (2001), the country possess about 33.5 million hectares (ha) of natural forests. Almost two thirds of this area consists of woodlands on public lands of which 13 million ha have been gazetted as forest reserves. The forest reserve area includes about 80,000 hectares of plantations, mainly consisting of Pinus patula and Cupressus lusitanica. Out of the forest reserve area, 1.6 million ha are managed as catchment forests and about 6 per cent is within national parks.

The year 2011 was declared the International Year of Forests by the United Nations to raise awareness and strengthen the sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests for the benefit of current and future generations.

Forests are an integral part of global sustainable development. According to World Bank estimates, more than 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihoods with some 300 million living in them. The forest product industry is a source of economic growth and employment, with global forest products traded internationally is estimated at \$327 billion.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that every year 130,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the world's forests are lost due to deforestation.

Conversion to agricultural land, unsustainable harvesting of timber, unsound land management practices, and creation of human settlements are the most common reasons for this loss of forested areas.

According to the World Bank, deforestation accounts for up to 20 percent of the global greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. FAO data estimates that the world's forests and forest soil store more than one trillion tons of carbon - twice the amount found in the atmosphere. The World Bank estimates that forests provide habitats to about two-thirds of all species on earth, and that deforestation of closed tropical rainforests could account for biodiversity loss of as many as 100 species a day.

According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration, "Across the globe lie more than a billion hectares of lost and degraded forest land that could be restored".

The Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests is the focal point for implementation of the International Year in collaboration with governments, the collaborative partnership on forests and other relevant organisations and processes.

Governments, regional and international organisations and civil society organisations are expected to create national committees and designate focal points in their respective countries to facilitate organisation of activities in support of the International Year of Forests.

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## A silent hero of the Coronavirus crisis

By Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg

**A**S the US and countries in Europe move toward near-complete lockdown, with potentially disastrous consequences for the world economy, technology offers a glimmer of hope.

Not to diminish the superhuman efforts of nurses, doctors, and health-care workers worldwide, but sometimes, no matter how hard one tries, and no matter how selflessly one sacrifices, one stands no chance against a more powerful enemy. The new coronavirus, Covid-19, has proved to be such a foe. Were it not for technology, the battle against it would have been lost by now.

Maths and technology, to be more precise. I say maths, because understanding a concept as basic as "exponential growth" proved crucial for attacking the enemy head-on.

The successful containment of the epidemic in China, South Korea, and Japan has been attributed to strong governments and cultures that put society's good ahead of private convenience. I would add that these countries also stand out for their students' high maths literacy. In the 2019 PISA rankings, produced by the OECD, China ranks first in math with a score of 591 out of 600, Japan ranks 6th, and South Korea is 7th. By contrast, Italy is in 31st place, Spain places 34th, and the United States ranks 37th.

PISA scores may have their shortcomings, but they do provide a rough idea of the maths literacy of the average citizen in the countries that take part. And the fact that the countries with the highest rankings seem to have adopted the most effective containment strategies serves as a reminder that, ultimately, the reason we want better training in maths and logic is not to land more lucrative jobs, but to make better decisions regarding our lives.

Technology has been the true champion in the fight against the spread of Covid-19. Here, I don't mean the ICUs and respirators without which severely ill patients would not stand a chance. I mean the new data-driven technologies that enabled responsible governments to track the infected, contact them, and quarantine them early. These technologies have been the target of much criticism in recent years. Now, when they are helping us save lives, they deserve our praise.

South Korea's achievement is truly impressive. As of March 17, the country has had 8,320 cases and 81 deaths, despite an early bad start. Contrast this with Italy, which at the same time reports 27,980 cases and 2,158 deaths.



The wider world should show sympathy and express solidarity with the long-suffering Chinese people. These are ugly times, and the racism implicit (and sometimes explicit) in many responses to Chinese people around the world makes me question just how far we have really come as a human family.

Technology's contribution to pandemic management goes beyond tracking and quarantines. As the US and countries in Europe move toward near-complete lockdown, with potentially disastrous consequences for the world economy, technology offers a glimmer of hope.

Many firms, especially in tech, have closed their offices, mandated that employees telecommute, and provided them with computing and video technology to work remotely. Not only does this keep an important part of the economy going, but it also has had unintended positive consequences. Vehicle congestion, for example, has vanished. The hours harried commuters previously lost in traffic can now be dedicated to work and family. Corporate travel is disappearing, and video conferences are the new norm, with associated reductions in airplane pollution and huge savings in time.

Likewise, educators at nearly every level are scrambling to find online alternatives to in-classroom instruction. Whereas in earlier times, school closings would have implied loss of instruction time, technology is allowing students to continue learning. And the current crisis will advance that process, as a relatively modest group of early adopters in producing online courses is joined by whole universities that have been forced to move to the web.

Obviously, there are challenges to adapting a curriculum intended to be taught in person to the online setting.

But with entire faculties experimenting, we are certain to see innovation and rapid improvement in the effectiveness of distance learning. Once students finally return to the classroom, we should continue to leverage these innovations, not only in the developed world, where necessity has forced our hand, but also in developing countries hungry for cost-effective education.

In the retail sector, digital platforms can fill the gap when supermarket shelves empty or self-quarantine makes in-person shopping impossible. And film and music streaming, video chats, and social media have offered avenues to reduce isolation, stay connected, and preserve mental health while locked down.

In these and other ways, the pandemic is accelerating existing technological trends and revealing important benefits, which we should embrace, both now and after the crisis abates. But when normalcy returns, we are also likely to confront once again some tough questions about technological innovation.

The Covid-19 crisis has revived the tension between privacy and effective targeting. In recent years, we often encountered this debate with respect to major tech platforms using granular information about users to deliver micro-targeted news and advertising. But the same kinds of technology have been used to identify those infected by or most vulnerable to the coronavirus.

Of course, the tension between privacy and health outcomes is not

new: the desire to protect individual histories prevents medical researchers and clinicians from mining the full set of health data to achieve better outcomes. Covid-19 reminds us that we may want to think carefully about the relative benefits of data sharing, as they may sometimes dominate the value of preserving privacy.

Absent intervention, technological trends will inevitably generate winners and losers. Brick-and-mortar stores that were already losing market share to digital platforms are likely to be decimated wherever self-quarantine and mandatory lockdowns are in effect. And though increased telecommuting, reduced business travel, and distance learning will increase productivity for some, they are significantly disrupting the livelihoods of others, and that disruption will accelerate in the next few months.

So, more than ever, it will be imperative to provide support and adjustment assistance to individuals, firms, or entire communities hit by the crisis. But we should resist the urge to resume our relentless, if fashionable, tech bashing. If there is a silver lining in the current crisis, it is the realisation that knowledge - primarily math, science, and technology in this case - is our best weapon.

Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg, a former World Bank Group chief economist and editor-in-chief of the American Economic Review, is Professor of Economics at Yale University.



# Global economic consequences of COVID-19



## COVID-19 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS PREVENTION TIPS

Don't be scared, be prepared! Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

**Wash your hands**  
Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand-sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Thorough cleaning with soap and water will remove most microorganisms.

**Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes with unwashed hands.**

**Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.**

**Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces including: desks, tables, countertops, sinks, door handles, faucets, railings, phones, bathrooms and rooms.**  
Cleaning removes germs from surfaces, while disinfecting kills germs on surfaces. Use alcohol-based products to disinfect surfaces.

**Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care. Call your doctor before going in to get checked so they are aware of your condition.**  
Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If a family member is sick, place them in a separate room and bathroom if possible.

**Remember to stay calm and practice good hygiene. Reach out to your local health department or medical provider with any questions.**

For more information please visit: <http://dph.nv.gov/coronavirus/>



### DENVER, Colorado

The panic resulting from the events starting with the deaths in Wuhan keeps spreading globally faster than the spreading of the virus itself. Quite apart from the immediate health dangers, now a new economic danger looms large globally. We are facing the prospects of a deep and lasting global recession regardless of the health policy and economic policy measures taken by China, the US and other countries unless there is timely global cooperation and coordination. What will be the global economic impact of COVID-19 if swift and effective action is not taken globally? Is there a way to find out through some kind of rigorous model-based economic analysis?

Indeed there may be a sober reality-based way of looking at the possible economic consequences. In work that is still ongoing, I have used the best available data from the World Bank, the IMF and other national and international sources about the Global Economy to do precisely this exercise. My preliminary results pertain to the overall effects for the World economy, China, the US, the Middle East as well as for specific sectors. More importantly, they also give us some rough insights into what the panic might mean for the major regions unless we take effective global action quickly.

In order to assess the impact, I have derived several sets of model-based counterfactual results. My work which is ongoing can be seen as a first step in analyzing the impact of COVID-19 rigorously. Aggregate consequences for the Global, Middle-Eastern (ME), EU and US economies in terms of output and employment losses are estimated from several models for several scenarios. These are both the contain-

ment costs and costs stemming from global panic with higher and lower bounds and an in-between scenario. Finally, a more complex economic systems model with explicit banking and financial sectors is used to analyze the financial systems scenarios.

It is clear that China will suffer the most. But so will Japan, the Middle East, the US and EU economies along with many other smaller economies. Hence there is no reason for the rivals of China to rejoice. With maximal containment costs and panic, Chinese GDP will decline by several percentage points. EU will lose about two percentage points and US about between one and one and a half per cent. But some of the model results already at hand should give thoughtful ME, US and EU citizens pause. With declining oil prices, the oil producing economies are already experiencing economic downturns. The direct and indirect effects of COVID-19 will worsen this trend.

As a first approximation, my current modeling results show that the easing of monetary policy and implementing expansionary fiscal policies—even if they are imposed immediately and coordinated globally—will take about six months to kick in and will lead towards the very low loss scenario, especially for China. But for EU and the US financial firms, the loss will be considerably more than what we have seen so far. The corresponding loss in global employment in these and other sectors should also give all countries pause.

While medical and public health professionals struggle to understand the nature of the virus and devise antidotes, strong economic measures need to be taken globally and within countries to protect vulnerable groups. A coordinated interest rate cut will most probably happen; but monetary policy can not by it-

self help increase global investment and output. Tax cuts will help but will take time even if they are wisely designed to help not just the global rich but the middle class and the low income groups. Fiscal policies through direct government expenditures targeted to specific sectors and groups will be necessary.

Furthermore, trade policies are important too. If trade barriers go up because of this panic reinforcing earlier hostilities then all countries will be losers. The hostilities against China may well be heading in that direction. Likewise, some countries might try to counteract the loss in exports by devaluing their currencies. Such moves can rapidly expand through the international system creating a competitive devaluations scenario where no one will ultimately win.

Consider also the role that trading networks have always played. Clearly, with globalization these networks of firms across the globe are even more important than before. With a large scale disruption the dynamics of network trade may easily break down. Since networks require time to build up again, such large scale disruptions will result in longer term malfunction of the global trading system.

The world leaders must act quickly and resolutely before it is too late. We are facing the possibility of a vicious downward cycle in the global economy. Single countries can act and indeed have acted unilaterally, for example the US by cutting interest rates citing an emergency situation. But global coordination of monetary, fiscal, trade and exchange rates policies is sorely needed. If there was ever a time to devise globally coordinated policies through cooperation among US and China (G-2), the G-7 and more broadly, the G-20, it is now.

Agencies

# Can South Sudan change its approach to politics?

By Andrews Atta-Asamoah

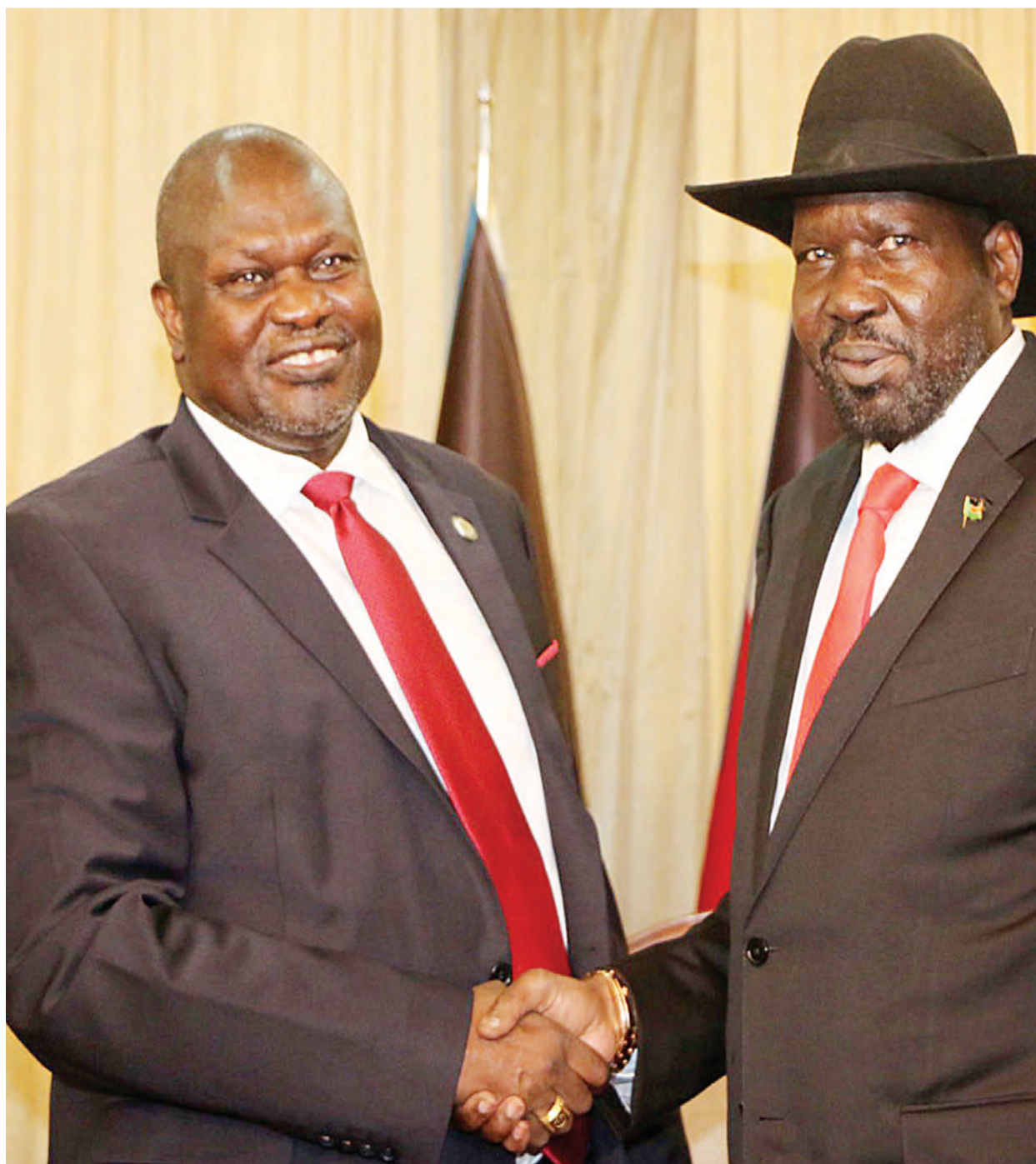
The formation of South Sudan's new unity government on 22 February is a major milestone in recent efforts to restore peace in that country. This is the first successful attempt to form an inclusive government since 2016.

The swearing-in of Sudan's opposition leader Riek Machar and four other vice presidents was a relief not only to the South Sudanese people, but to the many regional and international actors involved in Sudan's peace efforts.

Yet the diplomatic pressure needed to secure the last-minute deal has left many wondering whether the actors will be committed to the outcome of the process. Will the way ahead for the new unity arrangement differ from the failed 2016 attempt, and can it bring about lasting peace?

Despite the fragile nature of the unity government, there are numerous major improvements on the previous agreement that give rise to cautious optimism. Apart from the fact that the June 2018 ceasefire seems to be holding, the compromises the parties made in the run-up to 22 February are key.

Under intense pressure, President Salva Kiir Mayardit reversed his controversial decree to create 32 states in South Sudan and accepted a return to the pre-war 10 states. Machar also backed down on his earlier insistence on having his own private security on his return to Juba, accepting



Former South Sudan President Salva Kiir, right, and new President Riek Machar, left. File photo

government protection. This was significant given previous attempts on Machar's life. In 2016 he had to flee on foot from Juba to the Democratic Republic of

Congo after being pursued by government forces. Many believe the weight of these compromises suggests some level of commitment to the process.

And while Kiir's government has had the upper hand on the battlefield against the various opposition forces, it's failed to maintain a healthy relationship with

key international actors and to sustain the international goodwill the country had at independence. The Kiir government's lack of political will and poor human rights record has had a negative impact and towards the end of the pre-transitional period it increasingly slipped into an antagonistic relationship with major powers.

Regionally the lack of progress contributed to a wait-and-see attitude by some countries, including Kenya, which became notably absent from regional diplomatic efforts regarding South Sudan.

Meanwhile Machar's opposition group has also been on the back foot since the collapse of the 2015 peace agreement, and has lacked the capacity to match the government's military strength. The proliferation of armed groups and the emergence of leaders such as Thomas Cirillo Swaka and Paul Malong Awan to contest Machar's dominance of the opposition space has also diluted the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition's (SPLM-IO) position as the go-to party for those opposing Kiir.

The government and the main opposition (SPLM-IO) were locked in a stalemate that would have been difficult for either to sustain in the long run. The formation of the current unity government is in the interest of both leaders, as it gives them new relevance. Many believe this could motivate Kiir and Machar to work together in the interest of peace, rather than against each other. Despite optimism in some

circles, however, there is still deep mistrust between Kiir and Machar. Machar intends to contest Kiir for the presidency, and it isn't clear how Kiir might respond to this. The antagonism between the two over this issue helped trigger the 2013 crisis.

Bringing the two into the unity government without any significant changes to the underlying contestation between them effectively restores the status quo. The formation of the current unity government can thus at best be described as patching up South Sudan's broken political space. This is necessary for interim peace, but offers no lasting solution to the country's underlying drivers of instability.

It is an arrangement that assumes the two rivals will look beyond their differences to find a working formula for dealing with the crisis. Despite increasing the number of vice presidents, there's no indication that this will generate any new ideas. Facilitators of the peace process must continue to build confidence among members of the rather large presidency.

The current configuration has effectively returned South Sudan to its pre-war political context. It raises questions as to whether the country's politics can be reconstructed to revolve around the state rather than personalities.

One of the risks to the new government is that the opposition could again fracture if the expectations of the various interest groups aren't met. The existence of armed groups

outside the current process and outstanding security arrangements are also crucial matters that will determine the unity government's success. Any defecting faction is likely to join the groups currently outside the unity government.

In a country with a history of political fracturing and transactional politics, managing existing interests, differences over emerging interests, and outstanding issues is a delicate balancing act. Any further splintering of the armed groups will offset gains made in forming the unity government and could derail the process.

A key lesson from current developments in South Sudan is that concerted regional and international efforts that support willing domestic initiatives can make a major difference. The regional consensus that informed the final push to end the pre-transition phase and the pressure that came with it should continue in order to sustain the unity government. Development partners must adopt a common voice in their messages for maximum impact.

The African Union Peace and Security Council should commend the parties for making the necessary last-minute concessions to establish the unity government. The council should also decisively reiterate its rejection of spoilers and its readiness to sanction any policy or action by individuals, entities and groups aimed at sabotaging peace in South Sudan.

Agencies

# Rich countries must protect developing nations from Coronavirus pandemic

BRATISLAVA

Governments in wealthy, first world countries must not ignore the plight of poorer nations battling the coronavirus or the disease will not be brought under control, global development experts have said.

As African nations slowly report growing numbers of cases, and more and more infections are registered in countries with endemic poverty on other continents, there are growing fears that some states could soon see major outbreaks they will not be able to cope with.

A potential paralysation of already vulnerable healthcare systems would not only have a drastic impact on population health, but could also push people further into poverty and deprivation, World Health Organisation (WHO) officials have told IPS.

But if developing countries are overwhelmed by the virus, there is a threat that the disease would rage on in developing countries, even if it is brought under control in developed states, and inevitably spread back into places like North America and Europe.

To avoid such a scenario, rich states must keep a focus on helping other countries with weak healthcare systems, despite the fact they are fighting their own battle with the disease, say



This playground just outside the Slovak capital, Bratislava, has been sealed off to stop people spreading the virus. Similar measures are in place in cities and towns across Europe, which is now the epicentre of the virus's spread. File photo

experts.

"High income countries are completely consumed with what is happening in their own states, but it would be good if they could give at least some focus to poorer countries," Amanda Glassman, executive vice president of the Washington-based Global Centre for Development think-tank, told IPS.

"If things are not brought under control in less developed countries, it could come back to hurt developed countries later on," she added.

There have so far been more than 169,387 COVID-19 infections and 6,513 deaths, according to today's figures.

The past week saw an

unprecedented shutdown of Europe and the United States, with widespread school, restaurant, cinema and museum closures. Several countries across Europe have closed their borders, with Germany being the latest to shutdown all non-essential travel.

While the vast majority of cases have been in China, where the virus was first detected, with Italy being the country with the second-highest most cases, followed by Iran, South Korea and Spain. Europe is now the epicentre of the pandemic.

Significant infections have been recorded in the United States and some other Asian countries, and the Philippines

capital of Manila has been sealed off.

But while there have been far fewer registered cases of the disease in places like Africa and South America, many health experts believe that those numbers could very quickly rise dramatically.

Healthcare systems in many poor countries, especially in Africa, are already severely stretched with limited financing and resources. Access to hospitals, and especially intensive care units, are generally much lower than in developed nations - studies have estimated that less than half of Africa's population has access to modern health facilities.

Some countries also face extra burdens such as battling other endemic diseases, recent natural catastrophes, or coping with large-scale refugee influxes.

"Sub-Saharan Africa is already struggling with the Ebola virus and the locust invasion and associated famines. It now faces a third war against the coronavirus. In many countries, resources are stretched thin," international policy expert and founder of the Difference Group advisory organisation, Dr. Dan Steinbock, told IPS.

Any major COVID-19 outbreak could affect incidence, and treatment of, other diseases in some African states, Dr Ambrose Talisuna, Programme Manager for Emergency Preparedness, at the WHO Regional Office for Africa, told IPS.

"We fear that the healthcare systems in some African countries could be completely paralysed.

"We saw this with Ebola [outbreaks in some African countries]. There was a diversion of resources to the disease and the healthcare system couldn't deal with the shock of the outbreak. People died of malaria, people couldn't get treatment for tuberculosis," he said.

Even countries with relatively developed healthcare systems could face similar problems. South Africa has the world's worst

HIV/AIDS epidemic and it is not known how a major coronavirus outbreak may affect treatment for those with HIV/AIDS or outcomes if they are infected with COVID-19.

"We don't know what might happen with issues relating to COVID-19 infections and other conditions, such as HIV/AIDS," said Glassman.

In Latin America, where more than two thirds of people live in extreme poverty, doctors have already warned of the strain widespread coronavirus infections could put on hospitals and health workers.

Writing in the the Folha de São Paulo newspaper last week, Drauzio Varella said: "... depending on the speed with which the epidemic spreads, the stress on our health system could be brutal."

There would also be serious economic problems. Not only would massive financial resources have to go into healthcare rapidly, but measures implemented to contain the virus's spread, such as travel restrictions, business closures, quarantines, would very soon affect people's incomes.

"As we saw with Ebola, there can be a massive effect on the local economy and people's income. If people cannot travel because of restrictions and cannot do 'petty trade', which is what

some rely on to survive, then they will have nothing," said Talisuna.

One potential advantage some less developed countries may have in dealing with an initial outbreak is their experience with other deadly infectious diseases.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a devastating Ebola outbreak has just been brought under control. Talisuna pointed out that checks for COVID-19 could simply be added to existing screening on entry into the country which was set up because of the Ebola outbreak.

"Prevention measures and training of healthcare staff could just be refreshed, so people that were used in Ebola prevention could be trained up quickly to deal with the coronavirus. The response can be scaled up quickly," he said.

Many countries, including some of the poorest in the world in Asia, Latin America and Africa, have begun introducing strict measures to try and halt the spread of the disease. These have included closing borders and mandatory quarantine.

While the WHO has supported the use of such measures, they have been shown to have had an enormous economic toll with sectors such as travel, transportation, tourism and retail, among others, all seriously affected.

Agencies

NAIROBI

## Why Nigeria knows better how to fight Corona than US

The coronavirus disease, otherwise known as COVID-19, was first reported in Wuhan, China on the last day of December 2019. When it began to spread rapidly, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared it a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020.

As such, the coronavirus puts and continues to put a spotlight on the need for meaningful investment in health care - and public health in particular, understood as 'the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, organizations, public and private communities, and individuals.'

However, in an interesting turn of events brought about by the coronavirus, neoliberal capitalism will be faced with the reality of what its policies actually mean for human life. One just needs to take a look at how the US and African countries like Nigeria are dealing with the outbreak.

Many consider the United States the home of neoliberalism. The healthcare sector in particular has seen reforms in line with neoliberal policies.

Now, in the midst of a global public health crisis, President Trump is proposing a 16% budget cut for the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and an overall 10% reduction to the Department of Health and Human Services. Continuous budget cuts like this see American citizens having increasing cost barriers to getting tested.

The WHO says '[k]nowing and understanding your epidemic is the first step to defeating it'. This requires testing people to know where



Ebola outbreak in Nigeria 2014

the virus could spread in order to contain it. Stories coming out of the US show people being charged over USD 1,000 in some instances to get tested and even more for being quarantined.

Therefore, many are just not going to get tested, further contributing to the spread of the virus. Moreover, many jobs in the US do not cater for paid sick days, which means that for low income earners, staying home when they develop flu like symptoms is not an option.

Similarly, the 80's and 90's saw Africa suffer the effects of a series of neoliberal policies under the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), which essentially cut funding for public services and goods including primary education, primary healthcare and public infrastructure.

There was a push for Africa to privatise and have more of a market and export-led orientation in its development.

African countries like Nigeria however, have had to learn hard lessons from the outbreak of Ebola in 2014.

Governments were obliged to cut their budgets for public provision of healthcare, which has been turned into a commodity placing responsibility on the individual rather than on government policy.

This meant that healthcare provision shifted to the private sector - a model many social justice advocates continue to criticise as untenable given that the basic mandate of private corporations is solely to generate profit, not to work for the interest of the general public.

The WHO Constitution advocates '...the highest attainable standard of health as a fundamental right of every human being' and states are obliged to support this right. The question then remains how this human right is to be 'enjoyed' when its provisioning is privatised and not everyone can afford or access it.

This contributes to a change in health seeking behaviour with citizens not visiting health facilities because they simply can't afford it.

### Ebola Outbreak in Nigeria

The situations in the US and Africa are of course different because of different circumstances, different histories and different degrees of power in global politics. The impact of privatising health

however are obvious and starkly similar.

African countries like Nigeria however, have had to learn hard lessons from the outbreak of Ebola in 2014. By the time Ebola was dealt with, Nigeria had twenty cases and eight deaths.

It had started in Lagos, one of Africa's most populous cities, and the government's ability to contain it under prevailing conditions of a health system on its knees put a shining light on the country. Moreover, Nigeria has also been silently dealing with many different infectious diseases over the last few years.

With all this, the country has learnt some major lessons that it is using to help other African countries

to fight COVID-19. This arguably makes the country better prepared to fight the disease than countries like the US.

For instance, Ebola taught Nigeria a crucial lesson in the fight against a disease outbreak that has already erupted, when it would have been easier to stop it early on. Nigeria is now applying what it learned back then with regards to the threat of the coronavirus.

In particular, Nigeria knows that public health interventions cannot be vertical. Vertical responses are interventions that target specific diseases at a given time and are mostly curative, like cholera or malaria interventions for instance.

A number of development partners like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have focused on vertical interventions such as their work on malaria, which however do little to ensure there is a holistic approach to health care.

Currently, Africa is on the verge of a debt crisis largely because of borrowing from private finance in the form of bank loans and bonds. Horizontal approaches, on the other hand, are broader and focus on prevention and care with a focus on the general wellbeing of a community - making it harder for disease to spread rapidly.

Nigeria therefore understands the importance of strengthening systems that regards public health as connected with any other facet of life. Equally important is surveillance, airport and border screenings. Taking people's temperatures, asking about their travel history and questions related to the symptoms of the disease. A lesson that the US is yet to learn.

But healthcare requires proper investment horizontally in a way only public sector can provide. It means a holistic approach to healthcare that provides for safe water to wash hands to stop the spread of the disease, it requires doctors that are decently paid and work in safe conditions as well as research that is well-resourced.

This complex web of provisions cannot be delivered by a neoliberal agenda fixated on privatisation. Neoliberal policies have been behind Nigeria (and the rest of Africa's) devastatingly underfunded public healthcare sector. Despite this, Nigeria has managed to circumvent all these hurdles and had a hugely successful response to the Ebola crisis of 2014.

However, the World Bank continues to advance its new 'Maximising Finance for Development' agenda, which pushes countries - especially in the Global South - to look to private finance to solve development issues such as health.

On 3 March this year the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund announced that emergency loans would be made available in response to the coronavirus crisis 'with special attention to poor countries where health systems are the weakest and people are most vulnerable'.

Currently, Africa is on the verge of a debt crisis largely because of borrowing from private finance in the form of bank loans and bonds. This then begs the question why the same financing and neoliberal solutions are being floated as a way to solve the very same systemic problems they created.

Agencies

# Ethiopia disinfecting public buses, subsidising sanitizers

ADDIS ABABA

Authorities in Ethiopia are disinfecting public buses as part of efforts to curtail possible spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

Transport Minister Dagmawit Moges posted on Twitter photos of cleaners

undertaking disinfection work on some buses.

"Action has been taken to reduce the risk of transmitters by providing alcohol-based cleaning that allow transporters and their customers to keep observe safe hygiene and to maintain hand-held vehicle surfaces," she said.

The move comes a day after a National Coronavirus body led by PM Abiy Ahmed issued a range of prevention measures. Key component of the measures was ban on public gatherings, closure of schools and controlling of prices of essential materials.

As pertains to transport, the direc-

tives said: Government buses are to be availed free of charge to help control crowding in public transport. Special buses designated to take public servants to work. Private transporters are also asked to follow suit.

Addis Ababa city helping with sanitizers

The Addis Ababa city administration is also helping in spread containment measures after the mayor Takele Uma Banti made available hand sanitizers to a large retail outlet. The products are to be sold below retail price.

"In collaboration with the Addis Ababa Health Bureau head, Dr Yohan Kela-

na and volunteers, we have launched 24 hygiene kits in Kanema Pharmacy," a translation of an Amharic tweet he posted read.

The administration has also put together youth volunteer task-force to help people with hand washing at designated points in the city.

# Malawi president dismisses army chief who 'protected' protesters

LILONGWE

Malawi's President Peter Mutharika has sacked the country's military chief, General Vincent Nundwe. The army has been hailed in the aftermath of a court's annulment of May 2019 general elections.

Mutharika's re-election was overturned by a successful opposition petition. The rerun of the poll has been ordered by the court. Parliament set a new date and passed an electoral reform bill which the president on Tuesday refused to sign citing unconstitutionality of portions.

Protesters who took to the streets protesting the outcome of the polls reported enjoying support and protection of the army. Major opposition voices also spoke in glowing terms of the role the army is playing

in the protests.

The MDF is one institution the people of Malawi have always been able to count on to uphold the constitution in times of political crisis.

In several instances when the police and protesters have clashed, the army have stepped in to restore order and calm and protected demonstrators.

While deploying forces in August 2019, the now dismissed Malawi Defence Forces (MDF) commander Vincent Nundwe declared that his "priority is to ensure that Malawi is sovereign as well as peaceful."

Praise, criticism for the army

Leading opposition politicians including the former vice-president Saulos Chilima have praised the army's role in protecting citizens. "They stood up to their billing and reputation as one of the most

professional armies in Africa and the world," Chilima said early this month.

"The MDF is one institution the people of Malawi have always been able to count on to uphold the constitution in times of political crisis," said main opposition Malawi Congress Party leader Lazarus Chakwera.

But for the president's supporters, the army was soft on protesters. "People can protest and hold demonstrations in a democracy but my only issue was that these weren't peaceful demonstrations," said Joshua Khan, a Democratic Progressive Party activist.

"You don't claim to fight for your rights while infringing on other peoples rights," he said. "The army should have stopped the demos. People even died! And MDF seemed to be okay with it."

Model for Africa In a continent where

armies often prop up governments, crush dissent and interfere in mainstream politics, Malawi in southern Africa has been an exception for decades.

From Sudan to Zimbabwe to Ivory Coast and Guinea-Bissau, the military has had a long track record of being state flunkies, breaching the neutral role it is supposed to maintain.

But Malawi, which was ruled with an iron fist by founding president Kamuzu Banda since independence from Britain in 1964, broke out of that mould in 1993, a year before Banda lost in the country's first multi-party polls.

Although allegiance to Banda was enforced at every level, the army swiftly dismantled the dictator's renegade paramilitary wing, the Malawi Young Pioneers, and Banda lost power in 1994.



Good Samaritans pushes a broken down car near Mwenje traffic lights along Bagamoyo road in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

# New drive to empower women farmers with bank loans pays off

By Guardian Correspondent, Njombe

DESPITE playing an active role in scaling up the agricultural sector in the country, women are denied access to loans from financial institutions and extension services.

The situation has been putting more women to continue living in poverty as most of them have no collateral and access to ownership of land. After realizing that, the Tanzania Agricultural Development Bank (TADB) came up with a new initiative geared towards empowering women, who are in the agriculture value chain. And the initiative has started paying off.

Lucy Yona is one of the women entrepreneurs, who had benefited from the loans offered by the agri-bank, which has helped her to significantly change her life.

In an interview, Lucy says women entrepreneurs and farmers play a vital role in the country's socio-economic development, but the challenge is lacking enough capital as they cannot access loans.

She says the loan she acquired from the agri-bank has helped her to invent the machine in order to simplify her work and increase production capacity of mealie meal to 30 tonnes per day.

Lucy, who is the executive director of Mama Seki Industries Limited said that through the bank's initiative of women's loan projects, experts from the University of Dar es Salaam helped her with the invention of innovation.

"So far our production capacity of maize flour has increased from 10 tonnes to 30 tonnes per day," she said, adding that she is currently eyeing the international markets.

"I usually purchase maize



Executive director of Mama Seki Industries Limited, Lucy Yona (C), briefs TADB managing director, Japhet Justine (L) and Njombe District Commissioner Ruth Msafiri who visited the factory recently. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

from farmers from different parts of the country such as Katavi, Njombe, Ruvuma, Amcos Namtumbo, Mbinga, and Agricultural Marketing Cooperatives Societies (Amcos)."

She said that through her agents she was eyeing to sell maize flour in East African countries, the agents currently distribute maize meal in Dar es Salaam, Mbeya, and Iringa with the aim of having many outlets to enable her to be able to distribute countrywide.

Through her project, she currently employs 12 people directly whereas 30 others are indirectly employed.

TADB managing director, Japhet Justine said that women in small, medium businesses play a vital role in economic development and expansion of business but funding remains very limited.

"We have come up with a women loan project to enable them to increase capital. Since the loan initiative was started last year, we have seen that women can do wonders for the country because of their custodial status," he said.

Justine said that Tanzania has a vision of achieving her industrial revolution and in the process become

a middle-income economy by 2025, "but this could be a pipeline dream if women have access to loans for their development."

TADB enables women, contribute to the country's economy and the bank is committed to empowering women and increasing their awareness and access to finance, which can help them become more productive in the agricultural sector.

The bank started its operations in 2016; it has four Zonal offices, Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Mwanza, Mbeya and has disbursed loans to over 141 agricultural projects. The bank's operation has

benefited, directly and indirectly, over 1.6 million farmers in 18 regions in Tanzania, 32 percent among them are women. As of December 31, 2019, the bank has disbursed a total of 150bn/-.

TADB is a key stakeholder in the development and envisaged revolution of the agricultural sector; it is committed to delivering on undertakings made in the context of the national agriculture-related strategies aligned with the implementation of ASDP II through its operations in transforming the agricultural sector.

# EAC suspends meetings due to increased cases of coronavirus, directs staff to work from their homes

By Guardian Reporter

THE East African Community (EAC) has suspended with immediate effect all meetings due to the novel coronavirus outbreak directing that all staff who flew in or drove from the countries with confirmed cases to work from home.

EAC Secretary General ambassador Liberat Mfumukeko said the community had noted with concern that the virus continues to spread across the entire globe with increasing speed to a number of African countries.

Ambassador Mfumukeko's letter to EAC partner states permanent and principal under secretaries was written in response to a request by Vincent Biruta, chairperson of the EAC council of ministers, who asked the Secretariat to postpone the 21st EAC Summit until further notice, hold all scheduled meetings by Video conference and suspend all other meetings and activities that require large gatherings.

He said: "Given the nature of EAC work which involves travel, and the mode of delivery through meetings, conferences, there is ample evidence that such gatherings can increase the risk of transmission of infectious diseases including COVID-19. The EAC Secretariat would take various measures to prevent any risk of importation the virus".

"All EAC meetings for all Organs, Institutions and Project Implementation Units are suspended until further notice. We are also suspending all rental and use of EAC facilities. Organisers of meetings will use Video Conferencing or other available virtual facilities as much as possible," added the SG.

"All international meetings and conferences with delegates from countries at high risk of COVID-19 are suspended until further notice," he said.

According to him, critical or essential meetings, more particularly those related to health or security engagements, shall be allowed through a written waiver after assessment and approval

by management, and will be organised in accordance with health guidelines issued by the respective EAC partner states.

Also discouraged according to the letter is non-essential personal travel or local travel.

The Ambassador said: "We, however, urge all travellers to carefully consider their intended destinations for personal trips and strictly adhere to quarantine measures required by the EAC national authorities upon return as guided by the WHO."

All EAC Organs and Institutions are urged to observe and adhere to the Africa Centres for Disease Control Guidance on Community Social Distancing during the COVID-19 Outbreak with Partner States being called upon to do likewise.

So far, three EAC partner states have reported cases of the coronavirus with Kenya having confirmed three cases, Rwanda seven and Tanzania three.

Two countries neighbouring the EAC, namely the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia have each confirmed one case.

Meanwhile, following the confirmation of COVID-19 cases in the East African region, the EAC has decided that all staff who flew in or drove from the countries with confirmed cases work from home beginning Monday, 16th March, 2020 until further notice.

In an email to the staff, EAC Secretary General said the move is done to give staff time to detect any symptoms in case of exposure to the virus and also to reduce risk of spread of the disease.

"Any staff member who notices any symptoms related to the disease should call the Human Resource Office and report to the nearest medical facility to get assistance for testing/confirmation and subsequent treatment," said the SG.

He urged all the staff to be vigilant, follow recommended hygiene including washing of hands with soap and water, and sanitizing one's hands among other things.

By Mark Heywood

# Activists talking: Protest in a time of climate crisis

**K**a Hsaw Wa is an activist who will forever carry with him the scarring memories of his fight against the military dictatorship in Burma. In the 1980s, as a student, he was imprisoned and tortured.

"A friend who opposed authority had disappeared and the police wanted information about him. So they detained and tortured me. They beat me for three days until I passed out. Once I was released and had recovered in hospital, I joined the student movement."

The experience turned him into a freedom fighter. He fled to the jungle in 1988, and in the years that followed he worked with village communities, monitoring and trying to report the abuses of the military. He documented pillage, murder and rape. Eventually, in 1995 he fled Burma and, 20 years ago, co-founded EarthRights International with Katie Redford, a volunteer and activist from the USA who had taught him about love and law in the jungles of Burma.

That was 25 years ago. Since then the world has changed. Democracy came to Myanmar, and then left again. The struggle goes on, as they say. Issues morph, merge, emerge and evolve.

Thus it was that on 3 January 2020 Ka Hsaw Wa was on a very different frontline when he was arrested in a symbolic statement to show solidarity with another eradicating struggle. He was one of 50 people, including his 22-year-old daughter



EarthRights International co-director Ka Hsaw Wa is arrested outside the US Congress during a Fire Drill Fridays protest in January 2020. File photo

ter Nyo Kwee Tha (a Karen name that means "sacrifice"), arrested in Washington DC outside the United States Congress as part of Fire Drill Fridays, a weekly protest to demand political action to address the climate crisis. It was catalysed by actress Jane Fonda and has been going on since September 2019. So far over 700 people have been arrested in a campaign of civil disobedience targeting fossil fuel industries and the US government.

When I interviewed Ka Hsaw Wa about his reason for joining the protest, his responses combined deadly seriousness with playfulness and jocularly.

He started out by saying that "to be arrested in the USA feels like a five-star hotel". At another point, he called the gathering "a social event... it looked like a party to me".

But, I sense, seeing light in serious actions is part of his nature, perhaps a defence mechanism

picked up long ago in the jungles of Burma. Because, in almost the same breath, he describes his arrest as "maybe not a life-changing event, but it made me think".

A lot, I think. Ka Hsaw Wa says he had two reasons for being part of the protest.

"Firstly, I want my struggle to continue into the next generation. I have learnt that little people make a big

spark."

Second, and I sense this is his most important reason, "I want to show my people back home that it's important."

"Back home" (and in many other developing countries where people live in permanent poverty, unemployment, homelessness and illness) "people are fighting for tomorrow, they don't have the privilege of thinking about what will happen in 10 years." (Ten years is the time the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates we have to massively reduce carbon emissions globally if we are to keep to the 1.5° warming target set by the Paris Agreement.)

"People in Myanmar don't understand this struggle. When people face life-and-death problems now they can't think about a 10-year problem. So by my involvement, I want to show that the climate crisis is not a Western problem, it's a global problem. This is not a white people's revolution. It must be a worldwide revolution. All of us have got to be on the same page."

In this context, Ka Hsaw Wa refers to struggles in Myanmar and across SouthEast Asia against deforestation, extractive industries that rob indigenous people of productive land, the choking pollution that comes with coal. The struggles are examples of how "we are all working on climate change, yet my people don't yet see themselves as part of the climate justice movement".

Fortunately, on the day of the protest, a journalist from Radio Free Asia was there. "She took pictures and posted them on Face-Book, which generated a big discussion amongst activists back home. Now more students in countries like Myanmar and Thailand are active in groups like Fridays for Future (the global student movement inspired by Greta Thunberg)."

I turn his memory and thoughts to the arrest itself and how he felt. Interestingly, despite his earlier comment that it was "like a five-star hotel", it's evident that a lot of feeling, emotion and learning got compressed into those few hours.

Quite a lot of it was about race.

First, there was an experience of how law enforcement in the USA is infused with racism, even - or perhaps especially - on high-profile protests like this. He talks of a very different experience at the hands of a white cop ("who treated me negatively") and a black cop ("who treated me sweetly, was super nice and treated me with appreciation").

He says during the arrest, while he was doing all he could to cooperate, the white cop subtly "hit me three times in the balls and was quietly yelling at me".

It's a vivid description and I can well imagine it. Brown people get treated differently by the law, hence movements like Black Lives Matter.

But that was almost to be

expected.

However, the arrest led Ka Hsaw Wa to another epiphany about race: "To begin with it looked like a party to me. But then I met very dedicated people, people who really cared. There was an 80-year-old nun, Sister Ardeth Platte who had been to jail many times, and I thought "oh my God the white people also have a heart". Although at the outset I felt "this arrest is nothing" I came to realise others' integrity."

On the day I speak to him, Ka Hsaw Wa is at home in Washington. Since September, people have continued to be arrested every Friday and more and more evidence of the disastrous impact of global heating is emerging. We are getting closer and closer to the tipping points.

At the same time, "new" issues - not disconnected from the way we have brutalised the planet and its poor - have emerged, the most frightening being the Covid-19 pandemic. Once again, the United States government and its President Donald Trump are a centre of attention. But the learnings of the arrest still resonate:

"My personal perspectives that often generalise and stereotype white people changed that day. It's obvious, but important to state, especially for people in other parts of the world, that America is not only the Trump kind of people, but also the Jane type of people."

"I realise that 'my people' is not just the people of Burma, but all the people with no voice in the world."

Agencies

# Spying for profit: Dangers of economic intelligence

By Jane Duncan

**I**n September 2019, High Court judge Roland Sutherland found sections of South Africa's main communication surveillance law, the Regulation of Interception of Communication and Provision of Communication-related Information Act (or Rica), unconstitutional. The Constitutional Court still has to decide whether or not to confirm the lower court's decision.

In terms of Rica, no one is permitted to intercept communications intentionally, except under strict conditions. These conditions in-

clude that a special judge issues an interception direction (or warrant), to the applicants (the law enforcement or intelligence agencies), permitting the interception.

The applicants in the case, the amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism, argued that the threshold allowing the Rica judge to issue directions for lawyers' and journalists' communications was too vague and speculative. Both professions require confidentiality to protect clients and sources.

In terms of Rica, the judge can issue a direction if there are reasonable grounds to

believe that a crime has been, is being or probably will be committed, and this applies too to members of these professions.

In his judgement, Sutherland argued that while sections of Rica were unconstitutional, he was loath to prescribe a higher threshold for lawyers and journalists. Instead, he preferred to focus on tightening the conditions for, and restrictions on, these directions. These conditions included requiring that the applicants disclose to the judge all relevant facts about the people they wanted to spy on, including their professions.

Whatever the Constitutional Court decides about these arguments, it is likely that the existing grounds for issuing of interception directions will survive intact. This is because they've received little attention in the brouhaha about Rica. Yet, some of these grounds are highly problematic.

One of the most problematic is that the judge can issue a direction if there are reasonable grounds to believe that "...the gathering of information concerning an actual threat to the public health or safety, national security or compelling national economic interests of the Republic [of South Africa] is necessary".

So in other words, this section allows the collection of intelligence that relates not only to threats facing South Africa, but its interests, too. Collecting intelligence about threats to South Africa is largely uncontroversial, although we can quibble about what is a threat and what isn't. But mandating them to collect intelligence about South Africa's interests is too broad and open to abuse. Who decides what South Africa's interests are, and on what basis?

Implicitly, Rica endorses an expanded mandate for the spy agencies to include economic intelligence. Spies collect this form of intelligence to provide policy or commercially-relevant economic information to assist policy-makers to make better decisions.

Ostensibly, these decisions may help to defend the country's economic sovereignty. Spies argue that not collecting such intelligence



Unless the foundations of overbroad spying are tackled - including South Africa's overbroad definitions of national security, economic security and economic intelligence - then abusive spying practices that serve dominant interests, rather than the public interest, are likely to continue.

may jeopardise a country's national security by making it vulnerable to losing its competitive edge, resulting in job losses, or having its technological secrets stolen.

The spies argue further that in an increasingly competitive global economy, economic security is an important dimension of national security. Therefore, they need to support policy-makers to raise the national standard of living, defend the country's competitiveness by maintaining competitive advantages and maintain a fair business environment.

Spies use economic intelligence mainly for strategic purposes to forewarn policymakers about long-term trends. Electronic signals, including communication networks, provide the spies with easy sources of economic intelligence, especially outside their countries. Yet, as Edward Snowden's leaks have shown, intelligence is one of the most unregulated forms of spying and consequently is wide open to abuse.

Now, Rica's recognition of economic intelligence is arguably not as broad as is the case in other countries. In the UK and New Zealand, for instance, the spy agencies there can collect economic intelligence that relates to the country's "economic well-being".

This formulation is much broader than what Rica allows for, which is unsurprising as the UK and New Zealand have embraced an expansive definition of national security to include economic security, or the security of its economic interests abroad. Rica, on the other hand, requires the spies to demonstrate that the intelligence they collect

is both necessary and compelling. Nevertheless, the formulation in Rica remains vague.

The South African spy agencies could argue that their mandate to collect economic intelligence also comes from the White Paper on Intelligence. This policy document embraces an expansive human security definition of national security, which includes an economic dimension.

According to the White Paper, the intelligence services should focus not just on the absence of war, but on creating the conditions for peace and stability more broadly, and this extends to focusing on economic security.

South Africans are all too familiar with controversies about the uses and abuses of political intelligence, but we haven't even started to have a public discussion about the dangers of economic intelligence.

Economic intelligence mandates the over-collection of intelligence for very dodgy reasons that risk escalating rather than reducing global tensions.

Economic intelligence has been used by countries to wage economic warfare internationally, where intelligence is used to advantage countries unfairly in trade negotiations. Inevitably, this overbroad mandate leads to spooks turning up in all the wrong places, like commercial companies, parastatals and major international meetings.

At its worst, economic intelligence legitimises espionage, giving spy agencies the mandate to steal the economic secrets of other countries. It positions intelligence work as being inherently partisan. It becomes about the defence of the capitalist system, and anti-capitalist and eco-socialist critics become enemies of national security.

AGENCIES

## THE GUARDIAN SIMPLE WORD FIT // THE GUARDIAN CROSSWORD =071

**WORD FIT**

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

W  
A  
S  
T  
E

7 letters: STIPEND, CURIOUS, TEMPLES  
6 letters: CONNED,  
5 letters: LAPSE, WASTE, PRICE, BASIS  
4 letters: RIPE, IRON, MADE, SILT, MUSE, WISP  
3 letters: IRE, ASA, ROM, END, SOT BED, SOS  
LAW

**CROSSWORD**

1 2 3 4 5 6  
7 8 9 10 11 12  
13 14 15 16 17 18  
19 20 21 22 23 24  
25 26

**CLUES: ACROSS**

1 Egoistic (7)  
7 Children whose parents are dead (7)  
8 Chemical element of atomic No. 45 (7)  
10 Glide by (6)  
11 Shaman in Hawaii (6)  
13 Irish term for stoat (6)  
14 Fatal fever named after a river in DRC (5)  
15 Prezzie (7)  
16 Give an account of (6)  
18 Sanaa is the chief city (6)  
19 Emphasis (6)  
21 Remaining of fire (3)  
22 Pond (4)  
24 Cloak (6)  
26 Former European merchant ship (7)

**CLUES: DOWN**

1 Attacker in a ball (7)  
2 Aperture (8)  
3 House (4)  
4 Obvious (8)  
5 People (6)  
6 Quire (3)  
9 Inborn (6)  
12 Suspension (8)  
13 Ulema (5)  
17 Improve the quality (7)  
19 Desert in Africa (6)  
20 Do again (6)  
23 Trees bears acorns (4)  
25 Consume (3)

**WORD FIT SOLUTIONS**

WASTE  
CONNED  
BASIS  
WISP  
LAW

**CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS**

1 WASTE 2 HOUSE 3 HOUSE 4 OBVIOUS 5 PEOPLE 6 QUIRE 7 CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS ARE DEAD 8 CHEMICAL ELEMENT OF ATOMIC NO. 45 9 INBORN 10 GLIDE BY 11 SHAMAN IN HAWAII 12 SUSPENSION 13 ULEMA 14 FATAL FEVER NAMED AFTER A RIVER IN DRC 15 PREZZIE 16 GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF 17 IMPROVE THE QUALITY 18 SANAA IS THE CHIEF CITY 19 EMPHASIS 20 DO AGAIN 21 REMAINING OF FIRE 22 POND 23 TREES BEARS ACORNS 24 CLOAK 25 CONSUME 26 FORMER EUROPEAN MERCHANT SHIP



Thursday 19 March 2020

## European Bank warns against technologies adoption by banks in East Africa region

By The Banker Reporter

**A**DPTION of new technologies in East African region by banks is an important investment though European Investment Bank says it remains to be a challenge for banks in the region.

In its latest 'Banking in Africa series: Financing transformation amid uncertainty,' report the EIB said that banks will need to continue deploying technology for efficiency and cost management together with product designs that utilise the analytical capability provided by abundant data.

"In line with global practice emerging in the period following the global financial crisis, the regulation of bank compliance will go beyond monitoring personnel to also include complementary algorithms - so-called RegTechs," the report stated while noting that such a development will expand the use of information technology to enhance regulatory processes.

"Investments in technology are therefore expected to remain critical to ensuring that banks remain compliant with regulations - covering issues ranging from capital, corporate governance and all disclosures to anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism," the EIB report noted.

In general, the report added that in terms of products and service focus, African banking groups are still emphasising



Customers withdrawing cash from ATMs in Dar es Salaam. The EIB recommends investments in digitalisation by banks to remain competitive.

investment on e-banking and mobile banking services. The report further noted that some banking groups are also deploying or planning the development of fintechs, with the main focus on facilitating mobile money, electronic transfers and back-office operations.

"Banking groups view telecom companies primarily as partners rather than as competitors for the provision of mobile money services. It is commercial banks that banking groups consider as

their most direct competition," the EIB report added.

A fair proportion of groups are also investing in lending-related fintech, including data analytics and blockchain technology. Banking groups are increasing their focus on information technology and mobile banking technologies while declaring that the highest needs for technical assistance are related to credit risk management and lending technology, the report explained.

"In 2018, only 5 percent of banking groups considered IT as a priority for technical assistance compared to 16 percent in this edition. Lending technology has also risen as a priority in this edition (16 percent) as compared to the 2018 edition of the survey (5 percent)," the report pointed out.

The EIB report further said a large share of groups, however, are either in fintech deployment (42 percent) or planning such deployment (37 percent)

while financial inclusion is said to have improved more significantly in East Africa than in other regions, but access to finance remains the main bottleneck for companies throughout the region, although less so in the bigger economies.

"This is particularly the case for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and micro-enterprises. In some countries, lending to the public sector is crowding out private credit. Mobile accounts and financial inclusion are improving unevenly across the region. Despite generalised access in countries such as Kenya, in some countries less than 5 percent of the population uses digital banking or payment systems," the report stated.

It also said the financial sector in East Africa remains stable because in recent years, the performance of the banking sector in the region has been underpinned by a favourable economic outlook and regulatory developments.

"Macroeconomic policies have been broadly sound and supportive of solid performance of the financial sector. The improvement in economic activity in 2018 and 2019 dispelled some of the fears that followed the deceleration in 2016 and 2017," the report stressed saying, going forward, the performance of the regional banking sector will continue to depend on the extent to which the banks address not only the downside risks to the economic outlook, but also the challenges related to regulation and digitalisation.

## Banks urge customers to go digital amidst coronavirus outbreak

KIGALI

Since Rwanda confirmed its first Coronavirus case, members of the public have been avoiding public spaces as recommended by the Ministry of Health in the country.

Banks, which are often characterized by long queues and gatherings, seemed to have less traffic at the beginning of the business week, on March 16, except for a few. For the few exceptions, queues are noticeable upon entrance but with bank staff calling for distancing between clients and also urging them to use digital services.

The move is to comply with recommendations of the Ministry of Health about measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Talking to The NewTimes, Athanasie Niragira, Head of Marketing and Customer services at Equity Bank Rwanda, revealed that they are urging their customers to go digital.

"Why do you need to come to the bank when you can use your phone or card for transactions; be it loans, payments, loans or airtime top-up," said Niragira. She added that people can also use ATMs for withdrawal of cash if need be. Among other measures taken, she explained had been established by the bank is one meter distance when queuing within the bank halls or as they wait to enter the ATM booths.

Asked why those measures had not yet been implemented as of Monday morning, she said that "the management had just established them from a meeting that has just concluded and we're immediately going to implement them." The New Times observed the same case in most of the banks but noted that there was mandatory use of hand sanitizers before entering any of the institutions.

Alternatives of going to line up in the bank. In their efforts to digitize banking services, most local banks have adopted the use of online services or provide their services through online applications. As opposed to having to visit banks, one may use these applications. Normally, they entail transfer services, purchasing airtime and sending money to mobile money, which may be helpful during this time to facilitate social distancing. Another alternative is the use of mobile money as people do not need to handle money during payments of goods and services.

"Tapping" is also another alternative for payment methods. This is where one taps a card or their phone on NFC enabled gadgets as a payment option. The alternatives should encourage shops, restaurants, and bars as well as other service providers to avail of the cashless payment methods to their customers.

## Banks defy CBK on removal of M-Pesa transfer fees

NAIROBI

A number of banks were on Tuesday yet to comply with a directive by the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) requiring them to remove transaction costs for customers who move money between their mobile wallets and bank accounts.

Investigations by the Business Daily showed banks, including Equity Bank, Standard Chartered, Cooperative Bank of Kenya and Stanbic, charged fees for the transfers contrary to the CBK directive that was to take effect from Monday midnight.

The CBK reached a deal with the banks to waive the charges starting Monday night until June 30 as part of measures meant to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Cashless payments are expected to cut down on the handling of cash and the risk of the virus being transmitted from person to person. Kenya has confirmed four cases of the virus so far.

On Tuesday, the Kenya Bankers Association (KBA) - the industry lobby - blamed the delayed removal of the charges on 'technical hitches.' "We sought advice from central bank who told us that it was starting at midnight. After that we (banks) had to amend our systems to comply with the directive," KBA chief executive Habil Olaka told the Business Daily on the phone.



Central Bank of Kenya governor, Dr Patrick Njoroge.

"It may be the case of delayed implementation that requires adjustment of the systems. The cases are specific and

I prefer you talk to the specific banks." A customer who moved Sh1,000 from an Equity Bank account to M-

Pesa on Tuesday mid-morning was charged Sh84 for the service.

Standard Chartered Bank charged its customers Sh40 for transferring Sh1,000 from the account to their mobile wallet at 11.49am on Tuesday. Stanbic Bank was yet to remove its Sh84 charge for moving Sh2,000 to an M-Pesa account.

Cooperative Bank of Kenya capped free transfers at Sh1,000, with a transfer of Sh1,500 facilitated by the Business Daily attracting a fee of Sh38. Mobile telephony firms - Airtel and Safaricom - effected the pact that saw them waive transaction costs on mobile money transfers under Sh1,000.

Standard Chartered and Stanbic failed to respond to questions by the Business Daily over the charges, but Equity said it needed board approvals to remove them. "Equity Bank has worked out measures to respond to this advisory and have called for an urgent board meeting on Thursday 19th to deliberate and approve the executive management proposals and recommendations," Equity Group managing director James Mwangi said in a statement on Tuesday.

Banks in Kenya generate billions of shillings from transac-

tions, which became a prominent income stream when lending rates were capped by the State. The legal caps on lending rates were imposed in September 2016 and removed in November last year after they restricted flow of credit to risky borrowers such as households and small businesses.

The CBK also approved an increase of the daily transaction limit to Sh300,000 per person from the current Sh140,000. M-Pesa users will be able to hold more money in their wallets under the new changes, the central bank said, adding that the total monthly limit for transactions has also been removed. "The following emergency measures will apply from midnight March 16, 2020 and will remain in place until June, 30, 2020," the CBK said.

The various limits are designed to stem cases of money laundering and the central bank said it will monitor the implementation of the emergency measures to ensure they comply with anti-money laundering guidelines. The new measures are also aimed at boosting the cashless economy that last year saw Sh4.35 trillion moved through mobile phones up from Sh361.39 billion in 2018, according to official data.

## Bankers in Saudi Arabia told to work from home

RIYADH

Saudi Arabia's central bank, the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority, is implementing remote working at its facilities and ordered banks under its supervision to do the same.

The central bank said the decision was in line with a government directive to suspend the attendance of employees at all government agencies, "except for those in health, security and military sectors". Also exempt

from the suspension are those employed in the kingdom's cyber-security sector and educators involved in distance learning programmes.

"Sama has suspended attendance of employees in its head office and branches, and has decided to implement remote working for the financial institutions under its supervision, except for critical positions that require attendance of employees, for 16 days from Monday," the central

bank said.

It added that a business continuity plan was activated to ensure payment systems are not affected and the system continues to operate normally. It said banks must reduce the number of workers in their offices and branches to only include those involved in providing services through digital channels.

The central bank also instructed banks to encourage customers to carry out

transactions digitally, monitor ATMs to ensure enough cash was available and to make money transfers in riyals between Saudi banks through the SARIE system free for both business and personal accounts. DIFC Courts, the regulatory body for Dubai's financial free zone, said it would begin operating remotely "with immediate effect."

"In an effort to protect the health and well-being of our judges, registry team and court users, the DIFC Courts and

its Registry will operate on a [generally] completely remote basis," it said in an email to clients. The court premises will be closed from today until March 26 at the earliest. Case hearings will generally be conducted by teleconference, DIFC Courts said, with "extremely limited" access to the court.

"If you have a hearing, and the judge has granted permission to have it onsite, access will be limited only to counsel and the instructing solicitor. Observers

and solicitors not active on the case will not be allowed entry," he said.

The Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange also said on Tuesday it has instigated remote working through a new platform that has successfully tested deposit, clearing and settlement systems, as well as services to brokerage companies.

"ADX's decision to launch a remote working system is consistent with its strategy to deal with any potential crisis

scenario," said chief executive Khalifa Al Mansouri. ADX, the Dubai Financial Market and Boursa Kuwait have all announced temporary closure of their trading floors within the past three days, as a measure to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

Boursa Kuwait also announced on Tuesday the exchange will close on Sunday, March 22, for one day for the Al Isra'a and Al Mi'raj holiday. Work will recommence on Monday.

# Airtel Money subscribers to share 2.6bn/- 'dividend'



Airtel Tanzania Director of Communications, Beatrice Singano speaks in Dar es Salaam this week while announcing disbursement of 2.6bn/- to Airtel Money subscribers across the country being part profits made by the company last year. Right is Airtel Money director, Isack Nchunda. Photo courtesy of Airtel Tanzania.

By The Banker Reporter

**S**UBSCRIBERS of Airtel Money who transacted on the platform between April and September last year will share a 2.6bn/- in profits as the mobile phone services company lures the public to adopt digital payments.

Announcing the good news in Dar es Salaam mid this week, Airtel Tanzania Limited's Communications Director, Beatrice Singano and Airtel Money Director, Isack Nchunda said the money is a result of interest earned over the period.

"Our aim is to continue promoting mobile money services through Airtel Money platform," said Singano urged the public to join the platform and earn cash the easy way. "We are happy with the growth pace of Airtel Money customers base as we continue to see a double digit increase," she said

adding that its the eighth time that the company is sharing profits with the public since 2015.

"So far a total of 19bn/- has been distributed to customers and agents countrywide since 2015," she added while noting that backed by 60,000 Airtel Money agents county wide, the platform has grown into a market leader.

On his part Airtel Money Director, Isack Nchunda backed Singano saying Airtel Tanzania is committed in improving and bringing mobile money services closer to customers and agents in the market hence promoting financial inclusion.

"Airtel Tanzania recently launched 'Tuko awe kila kona' campaign with the rolling out of Airtel Money branches countrywide becoming the largest mobile money distribution company with over 1,000 Airtel Money Branches," Nchunda said.

He said the mobile phone

services company will continue to widen its agent's footprint to ensure mobile money services are available to the majority of the Tanzanians both based in rural and urban areas.

"To serve our growing customer base with Airtel Money services, we have also integrated our systems with various payment platforms such as e-government where customers can make several government payments at a go," he noted.

Airtel Money is also connected to over 40 banks in the country which makes it possible for customers to do instant money transfers from their bank accounts to their Airtel Money wallets anywhere any time at the comfort of their homes, Nchunda added.

Among other things, Airtel Money customers can settle pay bills such as DAWASCO, LUKU and other fees, taxes and royalties through Government electronic Gateway System.

## Ubungo DC hails NMB as key partner in community services investment

By The Banker Reporter

REGULAR support given by NMB Bank Plc to education and health sectors is an important investment backing government's efforts to improve delivery of such services to the public.

Ubungo District Commissioner, Kisare Makori said in Dar es Salaam earlier this week while receiving an assortment of education and health materials worth 15m/- donated by NMB to three

public schools in the district that the government appreciates the bank's support.

"NMB has been a trusted partner to Ubungo district specifically in supporting education and health sectors, you have responded positively whenever we have requested your assistance," said Makori who pleaded with the bank's management to continue supporting the district as it faces more challenges.

He said Ubungo district is fac-

ing shortages of 100 classrooms and 7,000 desks to accommodate the growing numbers of students who are joining public schools since the government's declared universal primary and secondary education. The three schools which benefitted from the donation includes; Kibamba, Kinzudi Secondary Schools and Makuburi Primary School.

In a vote of thanks, Kibamba Secondary School Head master, Natujwa Mrinde paid tribute to

NMB management for the support saying the beneficiaries will ensure that the donation is put to better use by reflecting progress in examination results.

Mrinde said Kibamba which has 1,365 students has serious shortage of desks and other materials and that NMB's donation will help reduce the crisis. "We still are in need but this donation will make a big difference in improving the situation," Mrinde noted.

Speaking after donating the

desks, NMB's Dar es Salaam Zone Manager, Badru Idd said the donation is part of the bank's commitment to plough back part of its profit into community projects. "It's a tradition that we have sustained for the past decade or so meant to share with the public part of the profit that we make from our commercial business," Idd said adding that the bank supports education and health because the government focuses such areas for rapid growth.



NMB's Dar es Salaam Zone Manager, Badru Idd (L) handing over part of the desks donated to public schools in Ubungo district to the district commissioner, Kisare Makori in Dar es Salaam earlier this week.

## Central Bank steps in to oversee UAE Exchange operations

ABU DHABI

The Central Bank of the UAE is stepping in to oversee the operations of currency exchange firm UAE Exchange after parent company Finabl appointed an accountancy firm to undertake "rapid contingency planning" for an insolvency process.

Finabl, which listed on the London Stock Exchange less than a year ago, said on Monday there was a "material uncertainty about the Group's ability to continue as a going concern". The company has discovered cheques to the value of \$100m "which may have been used as security for financing arrangements for the benefit of third parties." Its chief executive Promoth Manghat stood down immediately and the

company appointed corporate investigations firm Kroll to conduct a review.

"The Central Bank of UAE inspection team has started an examination on the UAE Exchange today, in order to verify its compliance with the applicable laws and regulations," the regulator said late on Tuesday evening. "The Central Bank of UAE will take additional action, if necessary, once the examination is completed."

UAE Exchange has halted transactions through its branches and online platforms, with the exception of the operation of a Wage Protection System which it is being allowed to operate "until further notice," the central bank noted. "In order to protect consumers, the Central Bank of UAE has required the exchange house to swiftly settle outstanding remittances and all other

already initiated transactions," it added.

The CBUAE announcement follows the appointment of an advisor by the company's parent Finabl to help it with potential insolvency proceedings. The UAE-based payments firm has been facing problems for months now after its Travellex business came under a ransomware attack late last year. The company also reported that it is facing business disruption from the global outbreak of the coronavirus.

Finabl's owner, BR Shetty, is also the founder of the UAE's NMC Health, which has asked its debtors for a standstill to help stabilise the entity's financial situation. Mr Shetty recently resigned as joint non-executive chairman of the healthcare company he founded in 1975 after it was accused by short seller Muddy Waters Research in De-

ember of inflating cash balances, overpaying for its assets and understating its debt.

Finabl's business has also been impacted by its exposure to NMC Health, the company had previously said. On March 12, Finabl said "adverse perceptions in the market that the circumstances surrounding NMC Health ... have exacerbated current levels of stress on the company's cash flow position."

"These factors place significant constraints on the company's access to the daily liquidity the company needs to manage its business effectively and its ability to negotiate longer term financing," the company said. Finabl had a market capitalisation of \$1.3 billion when it floated last year but by close of business on Tuesday it was valued at just £77.2m.

MARKETTRENDS

## Mozambique queried \$535 million loan guarantee, VTB says in court filing

MAPUTO

Mozambique has "implicitly suggested" that a government guarantee on a \$535 million loan might not be valid, state-run Russian bank VTB, which lent most of the money, said in a London court filing.

The money lent by VTB was one of three multi-million dollar loans that funded a project encompassing tuna fishing, maritime security and shipyard development in Mozambique and is now at the heart of a \$2 billion debt scandal.

Hundreds of millions of dollars went missing in what U.S. authorities have alleged was an elaborate front for a bribery and kickback scheme. Mozambique remains on the hook for the money, but has contested the validity of a government guarantee on one of the other loans, \$622 million which was lent by Credit Suisse.

The Swiss bank has denied a claim it is liable to pay any damages to Mozambique and has submitted a counterclaim arguing that the African state should have to repay its loan. Mozambique has tried to restructure the loan from VTB, which in December filed a lawsuit against state-run Mozambique Asset Management (MAM) and the state after talks failed.

"In correspondence, [the Republic of Mozambique] (both directly and indirectly through its solicitors) has purported to reserve its rights in relation to the MAM guarantee and has implicitly suggested that the MAM facility and/or the MAM guarantee may not be valid and binding," the filing, submitted to the London High Court and dated Feb. 24, said.

Mozambique's attorney general's office did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment. A representative for VTB did not immediately respond outside office hours. VTB was seeking a declaration that the guarantees are in fact enforceable, the filing shows. VTB is seeking a sum of just over \$670 million, the outstanding balance of the loan plus interest, or damages for breach of contract.

The filing is the first suggestion that Mozambique could try to nullify the guarantee on the loan by VTB, which had previously not been involved in any related court proceedings. VTB filed its lawsuit in a year when Mozambique and Russia were working to strengthen ties, with Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi visiting Russia twice in 2019.

The debt scandal has already sparked court cases spanning London, New York and South Africa, involving global investment bank Credit Suisse, three of

# Revisiting PPP regulations to allow investment in cross border projects by Tanzanian citizens

By Elias Ngunangwa

As Tanzania journeys towards becoming a middle-income economy by 2025, it is vital for the country to take advantage of the various opportunities available in Africa's oil and gas sector.

Currently, the African liquefied natural gas market holds 7.1 percent of proven global gas reserves and will contribute an estimated 10 percent of global production growth by 2024. According to African Economic Outlook

2019, the continent's LNG attracted nearly US\$103 billion, therefore Tanzania has a huge cross-border opportunity to tap into the billion-dollar projects in the near future.

The Mozambique LNG project is estimated to create 323,000 job opportunities and a potential to facilitate real gross domestic product growth of 8 to 10 percent over the next 30 years and most importantly, creating a pipeline of bankable projects for the rest of Africa.

This discovery presents the region with opportunities

to create joint projects to supply alternative energy within member countries resulting in socioeconomic benefits and improvement in bilateral trade relations that enable cross-border market opportunities.

In order for Tanzania to benefit from the oil and gas opportunities across its borders, there is need to revisit and structure Public and Private Partnerships (PPPs) and policy guidelines for PPP participation in cross border opportunities. This will help outline the role of public and private

**Elias Ngunangwa**

Head of Client Coverage at Stanbic Bank Tanzania



investments in cross-border projects as per the host country's local content regulations.

Stanbic Bank Tanzania recently hosted a breakfast meeting to map

the opportunities in Mozambique's oil and gas sector, which has a total of 150-200 trillion cubic feet in natural gas reserves. The dialogue presented opportunities for Tanzanian

companies and experts with direct oil and gas expertise to upstream resource development and nurture partnerships with Mozambican companies as per the country's local content legal guidelines to create win-win investments for the two countries.

The event also fostered discussions aimed at learning progress made on Mozambique LNG Project and apply the same knowledge on the country's LNG project that is estimated to have 54 trillion cubic feet of proven natural gas reserves.

According to the Head of Oil and Gas at Standard Bank Group

South Africa, Paul Eardley-Taylor the 128 capex spent over a decade is an opportunity for businesses to participate in the supply chain and formulate partnerships with Mozambican nationals.

With the dawn of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfFTA), the decision to explore cross-border opportunities in Africa will open doors for Tanzania to take part in Africa's common market for macroeconomic growth. Public-private partnerships should be leveraged for cross border investments so as to boost Tanzania's industrial acumen.

# IMF ready to mobilise \$1tn and calls for coordinated policy action to combat coronavirus

NEW YORK

The International Monetary Fund is ready to mobilise \$1 trillion in lending capacity to help nations combat the deadly coronavirus outbreak, as its managing director said the need for a co-ordinated global fiscal stimulus is becoming urgent "by the hour."

"Many members are now at risk and need support because of weak health systems, limited policy space, and exposure to the large terms of trade shocks and financial spill-overs seen in recent days," the IMF said in a policy statement late on Monday.

"The IMF is also in close contact and coordinating country support with the World Bank and other international financial institutions." The Washington-based lender has made \$50 billion available in financing to countries to help quell the economic fallout of the coronavirus. Low-income members of the fund can avail financing of up to \$10bn at zero interest through the fund's Rapid Credit Facility. Other member countries can access emergency financing of \$40bn through the Rapid Financing Instrument, according to the lender.

Emergency financing under the RCF and RFI can pave the way for new Fund-supported programmes with larger loans, drawing on the IMF's \$1tn lending capacity. The IMF already has 40 ongoing arrangements - both disbursing and precautionary - with combined commitments of about \$200bn, it said.

The Fund's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust has about \$400 million to help the poorest and most affected countries with grants. With the UK's recent pledge of up to \$195m, the IMF hope to increase the size of CCTT to as much as \$1bn, it said.

The IMF and the World Bank have been leading calls for a co-ordinated global monetary policy action to reduce the impact of the outbreak on the global economy. In a shock move, the US Federal Reserve on Sunday slashed its funds rate to 0-0.25 per cent, less than two weeks after a 50 basis point emergency rate cut to 1-1.25 per cent earlier this month. The central bank also signalled it would begin a programme of asset purchases, including \$500bn of treasury bonds and \$200bn of mortgage-backed securities.

Central banks across the globe have stepped up efforts to shield their economies from the impact of the deadly coronavirus outbreak, which has disrupted glob-



Medical staff cheer themselves up before going into an ICU ward for COVID-19 coronavirus patients at the Red Cross Hospital in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province.

al supply chains and is threatening to push the US, European and some Asian economies into recession.

"Beyond these positive individual country actions, as the virus spreads, the case for a co-ordinated and synchronised global fiscal stimulus is becoming stronger by the hour," the IMF's managing director, Kristalina Georgieva, said in a blog post on Monday. "During the global financial crisis, for example, fiscal stimulus by the G20 amounted to about 2 per cent of GDP, or over \$900bn in today's money, in 2009 alone. So, there is a lot more work to do."

The co-ordinated policy response by the central banks, however, has done little to boost investors' sentiment as markets across the globe suffered heavy losses on Monday with the S&P

500 index falling about 12 per cent while the Dow Jones Industrial Index and the Nasdaq Composite Index slumped more than 12 per cent each. Portfolio capital flows to emerging markets have also declined dramatically in February as investors pulled back \$42bn since the beginning of the crisis, the largest outflow ever recorded, said the Institute of International Finance.

Ms Georgieva said there may be a need for "swap lines to emerging market economies." "Central banks' policy action in emerging-market and developing economies will need to balance the especially difficult challenge of addressing capital flow reversals and commodity shocks," she said. "In times of crisis such as at present, foreign exchange interventions and capital flow man-

agement measures can usefully complement interest rate and other monetary policy actions."

Governments in Europe and North America are trying desperately to stem the flow of the coronavirus from the Chinese city of Wuhan. The pandemic has so far infected more than 182,400 people and killed more than 7,150 across the globe. Outside China, Italy is the country hardest hit by the pandemic.

"While quarantining and social distancing is the right prescription to combat Covid-19's public health impact, the exact opposite is needed when it comes to securing the global economy," Ms Georgieva said. "Constant contact and close coordination are the best medicine to ensure that the economic pain inflicted by the virus is relatively short-lived."

# The only question on South African rate cut may be 'how much?'

JOHANNESBURG

The debate around South African interest rates has now moved from whether the central bank will cut, to how much it will cut on Thursday.

Of 21 economists in a Bloomberg survey, 11 predict a 50 basis-point reduction, while the balance expect the rate to be lowered by 25 basis points. Forward-rate agreements show traders have switched from pricing in a less than 50% chance of a 25 basis-point cut three weeks ago to betting on a 100% chance that the central bank will cut by 50 basis points.

With an economy that slumped into a recession even before the coronavirus intensified, South Africa's inflation-targeting central bank is facing calls to ease policy to support economic growth. The Reserve Bank has repeatedly said that monetary policy alone cannot help South Africa's economy and has a track record of being cautious when moving down - the last time it cut at consecutive meetings was in 2010.

In addition to the US Federal Reserve cutting its main interest rate twice this month to near zero, emerging-market peers Pakistan, Turkey and Egypt eased by between 75 and 300 basis points this week.

While Governor Lesetja Kganyago ruled out an emergency meeting in response to the virus after the Fed called such a gathering early in March, it is now urgent enough for a 50 basis-point cut, according to PwC economists Lullu Krugel and Christie Viljoen. Two interest rate cuts of 25 basis points each in March and May would suggest the bank is not in panic mode, according to PwC.

"Significant monetary policy easing - combined with faster implementation of economic reforms, as indicated in the budget review 2020 - is required to boost the South African economy," Krugel and Viljoen said in a note. "This could add 0.3 percentage points to economic growth over the next 12 months. And there is no risk to the inflation outlook from this suggested stimulus."

Since Kganyago was appointed governor in November 2014, the MPC has made a 50 basis-point move only once, and that was an increase. The last 50 basis-point cut was in July 2012, when inflation was at 5%. That compares with 4.5%, the midpoint of the target range, reported for January. The rate has been at or below that point since December 2018.

President Cyril Ramaphosa said the government is planning fiscal measures to support the economy, but with a budget deficit close to a 30-year high the scope to do so is limited. To effectively shore up the economy, a rate cut would have to come hand-in-hand with fiscal and health-care stimulus which could be achieved by re-prioritising current spending plans, according to Reezwana Sumad, an analyst at Nedbank Group.

"The reasons for a cut wouldn't be grounded in fundamentals," she said. "It would probably be the Reserve Bank reacting to very volatile moves in the market to try and calm down the market." The risk of a downgrade to junk by Moody's Investors Service next week, which would trigger outflows and batter the rand even further, could keep the central bank from cutting more than 50 basis points, according to Mpho Molopyane, an economist at FirstRand Group's Rand Merchant Bank.

It's also possible is that the MPC could go back to having monthly meetings, like it did in 2009 during the global financial crisis, she said. That would give the panel scope to cut by 50 basis points this round and by 25 basis points each in April and May.

What Bloomberg's economist says "An escalation of the virus outbreak and a drop in oil prices to record lows now gives the Sarb scope to significantly revise its economic and inflation outlook, creating both the space and rationale for further cuts. However, the effectiveness of monetary policy and rand weakness will remain a valid concern." -Boingotlo Gasealahwe, Africa economists.

**BANKING & FINANCE**



## WORLD

# White House seeks massive fiscal stimulus, braces for potential recession amid coronavirus

## WASHINGTON

AS the COVID-19 pandemic roils U.S. stock markets and ripples through the economy, the Trump administration, fearing a looming recession, is scrambling to roll out a massive fiscal stimulus package.

At a White House news briefing Tuesday, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said he is working with lawmakers on a "significant" economic stimulus plan, which includes support measures for small businesses, airlines and hotels, as well as potential cash payments for working Americans.

The Trump administration had proposed a total aid package of 850 billion dollars, but discussions later included spending as much as 1.2 trillion dollars, Bloomberg reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

As the White House goes to Congress to push an economic relief plan, the U.S. Federal Reserve, meanwhile, has taken aggressive action.

The central bank on Sunday cut its benchmark interest rate by a full percentage point to near zero and pledged to increase its bond holdings by at least 700 billion dollars, amid mounting fears over the pandemic. Earlier on Tuesday,

the Fed announced it would establish a Commercial Paper Funding Facility to support the flow of credit to households and businesses.

"There is nothing else left to do on the monetary side. No one should expect that the monetary stimulus will fix things," said Adam Posen, president of the Washington-based think tank the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE).

"It will help some, and may put a floor under inflation and interest rates. But fiscal stimulus and direct help for affected sectors is necessary to get recovery," he said.

Echoing Posen's remarks, Krista Schwarz, an assistant professor of finance at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, told Xinhua that monetary policy as the primary tool to fight the virus' effects is comparable to "using a sledge hammer to hit a precisely placed pin."

"Beyond this, there is not much more that monetary policy can do, and it is fiscal policy that will have to take it from here," said Schwarz.

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the United States has been climbing over the past few weeks, with more

than 6,300 reported as of Tuesday night, according to a tracking tool developed by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. The death toll has now surpassed 100.

Stock markets have recently shed trillions of dollars amid mounting fears of the spread of the coronavirus, leading to a historic sell-off on Monday and the third circuit breaker in a week being hit, before a rebound on Tuesday.

"The market is fearing what the implications of aggregate demand cratering due to the virus' outbreak in economically significant parts of the U.S. might mean," Sourabh Gupta, senior fellow at the Washington D.C.-based Institute for China-America Studies, told Xinhua.

There are also fears in the market around what the implications of the U.S. public health system's "significant capacity shortfalls" could mean in terms of an unchecked spread of the virus and its knock-on economic effects, Gupta said.

"The market is fearful that the economy is already in a late-business cycle phase, meaning a significant demand shock could tip it into recession," he said.

The outbreak has disrupted major U.S. industries, as the government has advised Americans to reduce social gatherings, more companies are adopting work-from-home policies, many universities and schools are closed, and some state and city officials have banned in-person dining at restaurants and bars.

Noting that discretionary consumption accounts for some 39 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pan-

theon Macroeconomics, said a 20-percent plunge in discretionary consumers' spending in the second quarter will alone subtract some 8 percentage points from GDP growth.

"We now guesstimate that second quarter GDP will drop at a 10-percent annualized rate, after a 2-percent fall in Q1," said Shepherdson.

Alan Blinder, a former Federal Reserve vice chairman and now a professor at Princeton University, said last week that the United States is probably already in recession due to the "fear-induced slowdown" from the coronavirus, according to a CNBC report.

"I wouldn't be one bit surprised if when we look back at the data, it is decided ... that the recession started in March," Blinder said.

Even President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly touted a strong economy, said Monday that the country's economy "may be" heading toward a recession.

PIIE's Posen, meanwhile, believes that the U.S.' growth rate is expected to halve to around 1.0 percent over the next six months, though several factors are likely to determine whether there is going to be a recession.

"We go into real recession if the fiscal response is poor or delayed, the uncertainty about U.S. government ability to manage the virus - to bend the curve - remains high, and/or the irrelevant-to-the-health-crisis lashing out of the Trump Administration worsens international commerce," Posen said.

Xinhua



A medical staff waits to test the body temperature of entrants to the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York, the United States, on Tuesday. (Xinhua)

## Italy says coronavirus lockdown may need to be extended

## ROME

AN unprecedented lockdown imposed on Italians last week to halt the spread of coronavirus might be extended if the incidence of new cases doesn't slow, officials said on Wednesday.

The government has ordered restaurants, bars and most shops to shut down until March 25. In addition, it has shut schools and universities and told everyone to stay at home unless absolutely essential until April 3.

Since the restrictions were ramped up on March 12, the number of new cases has more than doubled in Italy to 31,506. The number of deaths has more than tripled to 2,503.

"I do not know if the measures will be extended beyond April 3. We will make a decision based on the numbers and events. I cannot rule it out. We will see in the coming days," said Infrastructure Minister Paola De Micheli.

The head of welfare in the northern region of Lombardy, the epicentre of the contagion, said even tougher curbs might be needed to halt the trend.

Italy's government ruled on Tuesday that all Italians returning to the country from abroad must self-isolate for 14 days, in a further effort to limit the spread of coronavirus.

The number of new cases jumped dramatically on Tuesday, with more than 3,500 new cases, pushing the cumulative total number to over 30,000, according to new data released by the Civil Protection Department. The number of deaths reached 2,503.

Agencies

## Tourism industry moves to counter COVID-19 influence

AS the current outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) continues to develop, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) made a joint statement recently.

The statement stressed that International cooperation is vital for ensuring the tourism sector to effectively contribute to the containment of COVID-19.

UNWTO and WHO committed to work in close consultation to assist States in ensuring that health measures be implemented in ways that minimize unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade.

UNWTO said that tourism's response to the disease outbreak needed to be measured and consistent, proportionate to the public health threat and based on local risk assessment, in line with the WHO's overall guidance and recommendations. Travel restrictions going beyond these may cause unnecessary interference with international traffic, including negative repercussions on the tourism sector.

The tourism sector, as a booming industry in China, contributed more than 11 percent of the country's total GDP in 2018, according to the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. In context of the disease outbreak, the contribution could drop by 1 to 1.5 percentage points in 2020, according to Song Ding, a research fellow at the Shenzhen-based China Development Institute.

Industry insiders noted that there is likely to be a quick rebound in their business if the coronavirus can be contained soon. Jane Sun, CEO of a leading online travel service provider trip.com, said that although the tourism industry is taking a short-term hit, demand will not decrease in the long run.

According to statistics from trip.com, ticket orders on the platform soared 200 percent the same month SARS ended in 2003, and during the first Labor Day holiday after SARS, flight bookings jumped more than fivefold year-on-year.

China Tourist Attractions Association, together with 51 tourist attractions across China, has issued a convention on strengthening epidemic prevention measures at tourist sites to provide visitors a safe environment, and in reply to the country's call to resume normal work and business.

The first batch of 51 tourist attractions include 33 sites with China's highest 5A rating, such as Pingyao Ancient City.

The document proposes a total of nine suggestions and operating standards covering important issues such as disinfection of equipment, health management of working staff, time-sharing control on visitor flow and online information disclosure concerning epidemic prevention.

In tourist sites with high visitor traffic density, big data techniques will be introduced to help divide reservations into different periods.

The convention will give guidance to tourist sites on epidemic prevention and control after their opening, as well as give impetus to the recovery of cultural and tourism-related industries, said Zeng Bowei, an official with the China Tourism Association.

Global Times

# Zimbabwe's President declares COVID-19 a national disaster

## HARARE

ZIMBABWE has postponed its 40th independence anniversary celebrations scheduled for April 18, as well as other public gatherings and international sporting events as part of efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

In an update to the nation Tuesday, Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa declared COVID-19 a national disaster, saying the country had escalated its national response to the virus after neighbouring countries in the region had reported cases.

Zimbabwe has so far not recorded any confirmed case of COVID-19.

The country's premier trade showcase, the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair, national in-



Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa speaks at a press conference in Harare, Zimbabwe Tuesday. In an update to the nation Mnangagwa declared COVID-19 a national disaster, saying the country had escalated its national response to the virus after neighbouring countries in the region had reported cases. (Xinhua)

dependence celebrations and pending international sporting fixtures had been postponed until the threat of corona virus

recedes, Mnangagwa said. The independence celebrations were due to be held in the second largest city of Bul-

awayo, the first time since independence from Britain 1980 for the event to be held outside the capital Harare.

Government also suspended gatherings of more than 100 people, including those for purposes of worship and weddings for the next 60 days after which the suspension will be reviewed.

"Government has decided to postpone, curtail or cancel public events, gatherings and activities. All these activities will resume as soon as we are satisfied that our nation is no longer at risk," Mnangagwa said.

He said Zimbabwe will in the meantime keep its main points of entry open while screening and testing of visitors into the country will be intensified.

Schools, due to close in two weeks time, will also remain

open unless the situation necessitates early closure.

He said as part of measures to avoid spread of the disease, the country was encouraging travelers from high risk countries to postpone visiting the country for the next 30 days from March 20, 2020.

The country was also discouraging Zimbabweans from traveling to, through and from high risk countries during the same period, he said.

"We must continue to heighten our vigilance, always acting with care, consideration and compassion.

"Should the situation escalate, government will not hesitate to take further and even more drastic measures for our common good," Mnangagwa said.

Xinhua

# Oil war between Russia and Saudi Arabia may benefit both - experts

## MOSCOW

The price confrontation between Russia and Saudi Arabia in the oil market, which began after the collapse of the OPEC+ agreement, may drag on for a long time.

Both countries are able to survive even at prices well below \$30 per barrel, according to experts interviewed by TASS.

If the situation persists for a year or two producers of more expensive oil might be squeezed out of the market, for example, shale companies, and the market will be balanced, analysts said.

## Short-term forecast

Saudi Arabia may reach production level of 12 mln barrels per day (bpd) in 3-6 months, Director of ACRA corporate rating group Vasily Tanurkov said.

In his opinion, increasing production capacities by 1 mln barrels to 13 mln will not happen right away, but "most likely by 2021."

"But even if production reaches 11 mln barrels, this is already a quite negative situation for the market," he noted. In total, OPEC countries can increase supply by 3-5 mln bpd starting from April, the expert added.

Saudi Aramco itself, given the particularities of its fields, can safely produce oil and at \$15 per barrel "not just for a long time, but almost forever," analysts said.

However, the economy of Saudi Arabia is oil-dependent and low commodity prices threaten the kingdom with a serious budget deficit.

It can compensate for lost income

through reserves, borrowings, and even the devaluation of the national currency, experts said.

Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia can live off the price of \$30 per barrel for several years, despite the high fiscal equilibrium point of about \$80 per barrel, Director of corporate affairs at Fitch Dmitry Marinchenko said.

Russia is also ready for a period of low prices even "better than other countries," Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov told reporters recently.

According to him, Russia will not reduce the expenditures adopted in the budget.

The oil industry is able to withstand volatility over a long period, according to the recent comments by Russian companies.

Under the influence of factors such

as coronavirus and recession, the price of oil "would still fall to \$35 per barrel" and "the role of the OPEC+ agreement should not be overestimated," Gazprom Neft CEO Alexander Dyukov said.

## Cutting Expenses

Russia has deposits where production costs are very low due to the proximity of transport infrastructure, Tanurkov said. "But in general, if oil prices are not below \$20 per barrel for a year or more, then our oil industry will survive and even be able to invest," he said.

However, experts believe the scenario in which the price will remain at this level for a long period is almost unreal, because it will lead to the bankruptcy of not only shale companies in the

United States, but also manufacturers in China, Brazil and Europe.

"We cannot rule out that oil will drop below \$30 per barrel, as it did at the beginning of 2016. But this level is not comfortable for anyone and therefore unstable," Marinchenko explained.

"The next years or two we can withstand, including companies. If many of our oil companies lobbied for a way out of the deal with OPEC, then obviously they are ready.

They understand their profitability, they understand that they can get tax benefits. Moreover, profitability of our companies does not depend on oil prices, but on the dollar," Senior Researcher at the Institute of Economic Forecasting of the Russian Academy of Sciences Andrey Kolpakov said.

In the last two years, thanks to the

work of the OPEC+ agreement, the Russian oil sector has been making record profits, which were difficult to use effectively in the face of restrictions.

Thus, due to the accumulation of these funds and high dividends, companies and their shareholders created an airbag that will allow them to survive for quite some time, analysts explained.

## Price War

The price war of the two largest oil producers could hurt other countries where production costs are larger, such as the United States, China, Brazil and Northern Europe, analysts said. In the long run, a price war may turn out to be beneficial for both Russia and Saudi Arabia, as it will help cut out competitors.

Agencies



# US mulls using sweeping powers to ramp up virus gear production

WASHINGTON

JOE Biden coasted to blowout victories in Tuesday's three Democratic presidential primaries, expanding his nearly unbeatable lead in the race to challenge US President Donald Trump in November and increasing pressure on rival Bernie Sanders to end his campaign.

The dominating wins in Florida, Illinois and Arizona were a sign Democrats were ready to rally behind Biden and turn their focus to the looming Nov 3 election battle against Trump, before the campaign enters an extended hiatus with no primary votes scheduled for weeks amidst the coronavirus outbreak.

The victories also raised questions about whether Sanders should continue his pursuit of the White House. Party leaders have worried about a repeat of 2016, when they believe the US senator's long, bitter primary battle with Hillary Clinton played a role in her upset loss to Trump, 73.

Biden, 77, strung together a series of decisive wins, routing Sanders by nearly 40 percentage points in Florida, 20 points in Illinois and more than 10 points in Arizona.

In somber remarks broadcast from his home in Delaware, the former vice president said the coronavirus outbreak demanded leadership from the White House, and made an appeal to the many young supporters drawn to Sanders, a democratic socialist.

"Let me say especially to the young voters who have been inspired by Senator Sanders: I hear you. I know what's at stake. I know what we have to do," he said. "Our goal as a campaign and my goal as a candidate for president was to unify this party and then to unify the nation."

Biden's sweeping victories were powered by a broad coalition of voters of

every ideology and demographic, Edison Research polls showed. Young voters between ages 18 and 44 were the only major demographic that backed Sanders on Tuesday, the polls found.

A majority of voters in all three states trusted Biden more than Sanders, 78, to handle a major crisis, the polls found, in a sign the deepening health crisis has increased Biden's appeal as a steady and experienced hand.

They also found seven of 10 voters in all three states believed Biden had the best chance of beating Trump, a crucial factor in this year's Democratic race where electability has been the top priority for many voters.

Because of the coronavirus, Edison Research, which normally conducts exit polls, spoke by telephone to early voters and others who planned to vote.

Biden's overpowering performance in Florida, a traditional battleground state where he won every county, was an encouraging general election sign for Democrats. Trump narrowly beat Clinton in Florida in 2016.

Biden had taken command of the Democratic race in the past two weeks, scoring victories in 16 of the last 21 state contests. His sweep on Tuesday extended his lead over Sanders to roughly 230 delegates in the chase for the 1,991 delegates needed to clinch the nomination at July's Democratic convention.

Despite escalating concerns about the coronavirus outbreak that has shut down large public gatherings across the country, Edison Research estimated Democratic turnout in Florida at 1.85 million - more than the 1.7 million who voted in 2016 and 1.75 million in 2008.

A REAL DISASTER

The polls also showed about half of voters in Illinois were "very concerned" about the potential effects of the outbreak, which caused Ohio to cancel its



Former Vice-President Joe Biden, participates in a Democratic presidential primary debate at CNN Studios in Washington, on Sunday. AP

planned nominating contest on Tuesday.

"Our goal is that no one will have to choose between their constitutional rights and risking their health," Ohio Governor Mike DeWine told a news conference on Tuesday, adding that going ahead with the vote would have been "a real, real disaster."

Several states have postponed their Democratic presidential primaries, including Georgia, which had been scheduled to vote on March 24; Louisiana, on April 4; Maryland, on April 28; and Kentucky, on May 19.

Tom Perez, chairman of the Demo-

cratic National Committee, urged the remaining primary states not to postpone their voting but to focus on ways to make it safer such as voting by mail and extending early voting hours.

Officials in the three states that voted on Tuesday had assured the public it was safe despite fears about the coronavirus, which has dramatically altered American life, forced the campaigns to abandon public events and prompted other states to postpone future primary elections.

In remarks livestreamed online before the voting ended on Tuesday, Sanders did not mention Tuesday's primaries

but set out a detailed US\$2 trillion plan to deal with the health and economic impacts of the coronavirus.

Tracy Finger, 53, wore a face mask as he cast a vote for Sanders in Miami. He said he expected the pandemic would offer the eventual Democratic nominee a political boost given the Trump administration's response, which has drawn criticism for a lack of urgency.

Armed with hand sanitizer in his jacket pocket, Bill Monnin, a 60-year-old bartender who was recently laid off because of a lack of business due to the coronavirus, went to cast his ballot in Chicago.

# Russian PM orders to restrict flights to UK, US, UAE

MOSCOW

RUSSIAN Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin has instructed the Transport Ministry to introduce temporary restrictions on flights to the UK, USA and the UAE from March 20. The document was published on the website of the Cabinet yesterday.

"I hereby request [Russia's Transport Ministry to ensure that a temporary restriction is introduced on passenger traffic from the territory of the Russian Federation to the territories of the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the United Arab Emirates and vice versa from 00:00 Moscow time on March 20, 2020, with the exception of: regular flights Moscow - London (and back), Moscow - New York (and back), Moscow - Abu Dhabi (and back) operated via the Sheremetyevo International Airport (terminal F)," according to the ruling.

The exception also applies to the charter flights to return citizens of the abovementioned states to their countries and Russian citizens - to Russia.



**I hereby request ] Russia's Transport Ministry to ensure that a temporary restriction is introduced**

# Equality indispensable to defeating coronavirus

TO defeat the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic calls for the principle of equality - a light that illuminates the modern civilization.

People from different countries, races, and nationalities share the same destiny, and they must join hands and make concerted efforts to combat the virus. That's how a new chapter of human civilization with equal treatment, equal assistance and equal cooperation shall be written.

All countries, races and nationalities on the planet share the same right to live. No matter in which country, people's life safety and physical health must be maintained and guaranteed, and the practices of racial discrimination and stigmatization must be firmly opposed.

Sympathy and empathy must shine and break the borders of countries, races and nationalities, especially at this special moment. Every country has the responsibility to protect the lives and health of the people from other countries and make contribution to the global public health security while they are ensuring those for their own people. That is why an open and inclusive community with a shared future for mankind shall be built.

Equal treatment is a way to practice justice. Since the outbreak of the epidemic, China,

always being committed to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, has shared information with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the international society, actively responded to the concerns of each party and enhanced international cooperation in an open, transparent and responsible manner to prevent the global spread of the COVID-19 epidemic. The country is implementing the most thorough, strict and complete measures to win valuable time for the world to defeat the virus.

According to a data model offered by WHO's partner experts, the measures taken by China to contain the flow of the people have slowed the spread of the virus by 2 to 3 days in China, and 2 to 3 weeks in other parts of the world. WHO Assistant Director-General Bruce Aylward remarked that the draconian measures China imposed a month ago may have saved hundreds of thousands of people from infection.

Doing its own business well and adhering to altruism at the same time, China is using its own actions to define justice with a mind of equality.

Equal assistance presents the beauty of humanity. At the critical moment of combating the virus, over 170 heads of state, as well as 40 leaders of international and regional organizations have expressed sympathy and support

for China through phone calls, letters and statements. Besides, the people and enterprises from other countries also supported China with concrete actions.

When China is seeing arduous tasks in fighting the disease, it is still offering assistance to other affected countries and regions. The country donated a batch of nucleic acid testing reagents to Japan to make up for the shortage, and offered a large number of medical masks to Daegu, South Korea which is going through severe conditions. In addition, China has sent nucleic acid test kits and medical equipment and dispatched an expert team to Iran to help the latter contain the epidemic.

The love and assistance from China are going out to the places in need of help, presenting a gorgeous image of the world sharing weal and woe.

To achieve the final victory over the COVID-19 epidemic, equal cooperation is very much needed. General secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee Xi Jinping noted that global public health security is a common challenge facing the mankind and countries should work together to cope with it. What he said has become an international consensus.

The trial of strength between human beings and the epidemic is a battle in which people fight

for their right to live. Countries must treat each other with openness and inclusiveness, unite together and strengthen mutually beneficial and equal cooperation, especially at this arduous moment. China will keep expanding international and regional cooperation, maintain close communication with the WHO, share experiences of epidemic prevention and control with relevant countries, and enhance global cooperation on the development of anti-virus drugs and vaccines.

As world renowned British sociologist Martin Albrow has said, tackling major public health emergencies such as the new coronavirus requires collective wisdom and collaboration, and global crises highlight the importance of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

The appeal from the academician of the UK's Academy of Social Sciences, who is also one of the earliest scholars raising the idea of globalization, is worth attention from the international society, and countries shall show their sense of responsibility in this epidemic.

The light of equality is indispensable to defeating the epidemic.

Only by safeguarding justice and adhering to humanity can the world achieve victory and keep creating a bright future for mankind.

People's Daily

# President Xi offers help to global community

TORONTO

China stands ready to join hands with the international community to fight against the novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak in order to uphold global health security, President Xi Jinping said on Tuesday.

Xi made the remarks in a telephone conversation with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. On behalf of the Chinese government and people, Xi extended his sincere sympathies to the Spanish government and people over the outbreak.

Xi said that China wants to work with the rest of the world to turn the risks posed by the outbreak into an opportunity and act with openness and cooperation to cope with the impact of the epidemic.

Thanks to the arduous efforts by the whole nation, China's measures to control the epidemic have produced positive results, he said, adding the country has gone out of the most difficult and challenging time.

Noting the outbreak has taken place in many countries in the world, Xi said China is willing to develop international cooperation on epidemic control and provide assistance within its reach.

Tuesday marked the third day



President Xi Jinping (left) meets with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez in Madrid, Spain. File Photo

that Spain has been under a state of emergency, which was declared by Sanchez late on Saturday night.

The number of confirmed cases of coronavirus rose to 11,178 on Tuesday, according to Spain's health ministry. In Europe, the number of infections has surpassed 50,000 and more than 2,000 deaths were reported as of Monday.

Italy, the worst-hit nation in Europe, reported 27,980 cases as of Tuesday, with its death toll exceeding 2,000. French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday widened steps already taken to fight "a sanitary war" against the pandemic, ordering border closures, air traffic suspension, and tougher restrictions on move-

ment. The country reported 6,633 infections and 148 deaths as of Monday.

From Tuesday noon and for at least two weeks, people across French cities can move around only for work, health needs or shopping for necessities, Macron said. "France is going through a difficult time. No one can predict precisely the duration (of the epidemic)," he said.

In Russia, foreign nationals and stateless people will be denied entry from Wednesday to May 1. The ban will not apply to diplomatic representatives, among other categories of people, according to a document signed by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.

Xinhua

# Hubei endeavors to ensure supply of daily necessities

HUBEI will always put people's lives and health in the first place and ensure all-out efforts to guarantee the supply of daily necessities during the lockdown of its cities, said Ying Yong, secretary of the Hubei Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) at a recent meeting on the province's epidemic prevention and control.

The meeting, convened by the Hubei Provincial Committee of the CPC and the provincial epidemic control command centre on Feb. 23, made plans to further ensure the basic supplies of the province's cities during the epidemic.

Unimpeded logistics leads to stable supply of materials and stable supply of materials makes

people feel assured, which finally results in general stability, said Ying at the meeting.

With strong assistance from across the country, Hubei has established a mechanism of joint supply with 8 other provinces and municipalities, and built 5 inter-provincial transfer stations for the transportation of materials.

Cargos coming from across the country are distributed by Wuhan's logistics enterprises after arriving in the city, and there is no human contact in the unloading process, so quarantine for the drivers and vehicles from outside the city for is uncalled-for, which ensures the smooth operation of the inter-provincial green channel.



Community workers and volunteers from Tangcai community, Jianghan district, Wuhan loaded a bus with 11-product packages, Feb. 24, 2020. In order to win the battle against the epidemic, all communities in Wuhan are under closed-off management. Photo: People's Daily Online

At present, around 3,500 large- and medium-sized chain markets are in operation in the province, and the large-scale commercial and trading enter-

prises in Wuhan have resorted to a new group-buying model under which commodities are delivered to communities after bulk orders are placed online by residents.

Besides, e-commerce platforms and logistics companies such as Alibaba, JD Logistics, Meituan and SF Holding are also moving into high gear to guarantee the supply of daily necessities for the residents.

"My job today is to help residents buy medicines, and yesterday I was delivering vegetables," said Chen Hao, an official with the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Hubei province who come to Yuexiu residential community in Jang'an district, Wuhan to serve the people from Feb. 24, as residents have been required to stay at home to contain further spread of the virus.

"Foodstuff is all-important to the people. I must guarantee the supply of their everyday items or else closed-off management will

encounter problems.

"I'm a cadre, and I must serve the people well," Chen said.

After communities in Wuhan adopted closed-off management, most residents bought vegetables online, and the Hubei Provincial Committee of the CPC and Wuhan Municipal Committee of the CPC have taken multiple measures to tackle the problems encountered by the citizens, such as stale vegetables and insufficient varieties, Chen introduced.

Wuhan Municipal Commerce Bureau launched a fourth edition of guidance for residents to purchase vegetables online on Feb. 24, adding another 10 platforms on its previous 23-supplier list, including Suning Xiaodian, the convenience store unit of Chinese re-

tailer Suning.com, and the online food material supplier Liang Zhi Long.

The bureau also provided detailed introductions to the purchasing process and delivery time-tables of each of the platforms, as well as brief introductions to the features of them.

For instance, some of the platforms boast fresh, cheap and disinfected products as well as non-contact delivery; some take pride in their cost-efficiency products that are transported directly from the production bases and manufacturers; and some adopt no minimum consumption policy and promise to delivery all orders regardless of the price.

People's Daily



In this Aug. 21, 2016, file photo, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe appears as the Nintendo game character Super Mario during the closing ceremony at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. (AP Photo)

## Abe could be big loser if Tokyo Olympics canceled, postponed

TOKYO

JAPANESE Prime Minister Shinzo Abe might be the biggest loser if the Tokyo Olympics don't go off as planned in just over four months.

Abe has attached himself to the success of the Olympics since pushing hard for Tokyo's selection at an IOC meeting in 2013 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Tokyo was picked over Istanbul by billing itself as a "safe pair of hands."

It was also Abe who charmed the closing ceremony of the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics, parading before a 70,000 sellout as Nintendo game character Super Mario.

Abe hopes to use the Tokyo Olympics as the capstone of his career as Japan's longest-serving prime minister. But the games are in doubt, even though Japanese organizers and the International Olympic Committee have repeatedly said they are going ahead on July 24 – as planned.

But the possibility of the first Olympic cancellation outside of wartime – or a postponement – is real in the face of the fast-spreading virus that the World Health Organization has declared a pandemic. The virus, of course, has clobbered the economy, another bad sign for Abe.

"He (Abe) must certainly be worried that he might not be in charge if the Olympics were delayed for a year," David Leheny, a political scientist at Tokyo's Waseda University, said in an interview with The Associated Press. "He really has invested a lot in the idea of showing Japan to the world in the best possible light, and he's extraordinarily reluctant to give that up."

Leheny speculated that Abe's tenure would be unlikely to survive a cancellation or postponement. He has been embroiled in corruption scandals and blamed for his slow reaction to the virus outbreak. Although, his popularity increased about 8 percentage points to 49.7% in a telephone poll released this week by Japanese news agency Kyodo.

In the same poll, 69.9% of respondents said "no" when asked if Tokyo "can hold the Olympics as planned. Almost one-quarter of respondents thought the games could be staged as planned.

"I think he's still clinging to the hope that the epidemic is going to pass as quickly as it came on," Leheny said.

There are signs it may not, and more questions about the safety of bringing hundreds of thousands of athletes and fans together in Tokyo.

"Who would want to be prime minister during the Olympics that nobody attends because of a global pandemic," Leheny added.

The IOC this week asked its staff at headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, to work from home until further notice. It also closed the Olympic Museum. In addition, the staff for the Olympic Broadcasting Service in Madrid is being asked to work from home. The IOC said staff members have not reported any coronavirus cases.

An Irish bookmaker is offering odds of 1-4 that the games will not open on July 24.

A small reception is planned Friday when

the Olympic flame arrives from Greece at an airbase in northern Japan. The torch relay will start officially in Fukushima prefecture as planned on March 26 with severe limits on crowd size.

"The IOC has repeatedly faced serious challenges in the final road map into the games," Michael Payne, the IOC's marketing director for 20 years, told AP. "Experience has also reinforced in the IOC that you don't jump the gun, no matter the media or political pressure."

Payne said there was no reason to decide now with the Olympics still four months away.

"As serious as it is, the final decision is only going to get taken much, much closer to the games because the situation then may be very different from what it is today," said Payne, who still consults for the IOC.

The IOC holds most of the leverage over any decision to cancel or postpone, which is spelled out in the Host City Contract signed in 2013 with the city of Tokyo and the Japanese Olympic Committee.

At stake are billions in broadcast and sponsorship deals. Tokyo organizers additionally say they're officially spending \$12.6 billion to hold the Olympics, although a national audit board says it's twice that much.

John Coates, the IOC member who heads the inspection team for Tokyo, told The Australian newspaper there was more concern back in 1980 about a boycott of the Moscow Olympics.

"There is less uncertainty than we had in 1980, I can tell you that," Coates told the newspaper.

In an exclusive interview last month with AP, former IOC vice president Dick Pound speculated the Olympic governing body would have to announce a decision by the end of May. Pound suggested cancellation was the most realistic option.

Others have suggested postponement as a likely option if the IOC can reach a financial deal with broadcasters, sponsors, sports federations, athletes, and 200 national Olympic committees. Most have long-term relationships with the IOC and an incentive to go along.

Holding an Olympics in empty venues has also been suggested.

"Postponing the games is, I fear, the only option if the government, under advice from the WHO and others, comes to the conclusion that the risk of hosting with spectators is too great," high-profile sports marketing expert Patrick Nally told AP.

Nally and Payne were key figures in driving IOC sponsorships.

Nally dismissed the no-spectator option because of the event would lack "atmosphere." A no-fans option would also cost local organizers about \$1 billion in ticket sales, and many would have been tickets sold to sponsors who pass them on to customers – a valuable perk.

"Participants will find the event hollow and quality performances will be severely impacted," Nally said. "My view, therefore, is a games without public is an impossible and unrealistic proposal."

## Dissent grows as IOC battles to keep Tokyo Games on track

ATHENS

THE International Olympic Committee is facing its strongest headwinds in decades as it briefed national committees on Wednesday on the state of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics amid the coronavirus pandemic, with voices of dissent growing louder.

The IOC has remained committed to staging the Tokyo Games as planned from July 24-Aug. 9, saying on Tuesday after a meeting with international sports federations that measures against the virus were delivering results.

The coronavirus has so far killed more than 7,500 people and infected about 200,000, with the epicentre now in Europe.

The Olympic body has refused to publicly consider cancellation or postponement as possible options, even as other major events including soccer's Euro 2020 and Copa America and the French Open tennis grand slam announced postponements on Tuesday.

The virus has also wreaked havoc with Olympic qualification tournaments with athletes struggling to train, travel or compete and many pre-Games qualifiers cancelled or postponed.

Tokyo is set to host some 11,000 athletes and 53% have already earned their spot at



The Olympic rings are pictured in front of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Lausanne, Switzerland, March 17, 2020. Picture taken with a fisheye lens. REUTERS

the Games. The remaining 43% will clinch their place through modified qualifiers, or previous performances based on ranking.

Under the current exceptional circumstances, the IOC said, solutions needed to be found that were appropriate, though they might not be ideal for all athletes.

"This is an exceptional situation which requires exceptional solutions," the IOC told Reuters in a statement on Wednesday.

"The IOC is committed to finding a solution with the least negative impact for the athletes, while protecting the integrity of the competition and the athletes' health."

"No solution will be ideal in this situation, and this is why we are counting on the responsibility and solidarity of the athletes."

The IOC got the backing from

Panam Sports, the organisation representing 41 national Olympic Committees in the Americas.

"The Panam Sports family unanimously supports the IOC with all the measures taken... to address the issues facing the NOCs and athletes in the current qualification opportunities," Panam Sports President Neven Ilic said after the briefing via conference call on Wednesday.

Advertisement "The athletes of the Americas are facing issues to complete their usual training schedules and take part in competitions."

IOC member Hayley Wickenheiser called the decision to proceed with the Games "insensitive and irresponsible" in the most vocal attack on the Olympic body since President Thomas Bach took over in 2013.

Wickenheiser, who competed in five Winter Games in ice hockey and at the 2000 Summer Olympics in softball, said continuing with the Games as planned ignored the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic.

"This crisis is bigger than even the Olympics," Wickenheiser said in a statement on Twitter. "Athletes can't train. Attendees can't travel plan. Sponsors and marketers can't market with a degree of sensitivity."

"I think the IOC insisting this will move ahead, with such conviction, is insensitive and irresponsible given the state of humanity."

She is not alone.

Several athletes, including reigning Olympic pole vault champion Katerina Stefanidi, said the IOC decision was putting athletes' health at risk, urging them to train as normal when entire countries have shut down to contain the virus spread.

"There is no postponement, no cancellation. But it (the IOC) is putting us at risk," Stefanidi said in an interview with Reuters.

"We all want Tokyo to happen but what is the Plan B if it does not happen?"

"Knowing about a possible option has a major effect on my training because I may be taking risks now that I would not take if I knew there was also the possibility of a Plan B."

REUTERS



A pedestrian passes an entrance to the Barclays Center in the Brooklyn borough of New York on Thursday, March 12, 2020, after the NCAA's Atlantic 10 Conference Tournament was announced cancelled due to concerns over the COVID-19 coronavirus. (AP Photo)

## Durant among 4 Nets to test positive for new coronavirus

NEW YORK

FOUR Brooklyn Nets players, including Kevin Durant, have tested positive for the new coronavirus, bringing the total to seven known players in the NBA.

The Nets did not name the players Tuesday, but Durant told The Athletic he was one of them, saying: "Everyone be careful, take care of yourself and quarantine. We're going to get through this."

The Nets announced that one player is exhibiting symptoms, while the other three are asymptomatic. All four players have been isolated and are under the care of team physicians.

"The health of our players and staff is of the highest priority to the organization and the team is doing everything within its power to ensure that those affected receive the best care possible," the Nets said in a statement.

Brooklyn's most recent game was March 10 in Los Angeles against the Lakers. After the Nets announced their test results, the Lakers – who have the NBA's second-best record this season and two of the game's biggest stars in

LeBron James and Anthony Davis – indicated that their team will now be tested.

"Given the exposure risks from our game against the Nets on March 10th, we are following the next steps of our COVID-19 procedures and protocol that are established in consultation with various health officials, the NBA and our UCLA Health doctors," the Lakers said. "The health and well-being of our players, staff, fans, and society in general, is of paramount importance to us, and will continue to be our focus."

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority of people recover from the new virus.

The Nets said that all players and members of their travel party are being asked to remain isolated and closely monitor their health, but the team's ability to get testing that has been unavailable to so many others drew criti-

cism from New York Mayor Bill de Blasio.

"We wish them a speedy recovery. But, with all due respect, an entire NBA team should NOT get tested for COVID-19 while there are critically ill patients waiting to be tested," de Blasio wrote on Twitter. "Tests should not be for the wealthy, but for the sick."

NBA spokesman Mike Bass later said that public health officials and team physicians had concerns that players – because of their direct contact with each other and interactions with the general public – "could accelerate the spread of the virus."

The NBA's hope is that the platform its players have will raise awareness among the game's fan basis on the topic of taking precautions seriously. Several NBA players have taped messages in recent days on the topic; Portland's Pau Gasol, for example, released one Tuesday thanking first responders for their work on the front lines of the crisis.

"Hopefully, by these players choosing to make their test results public, they have drawn attention to the critical need for

young people to follow CDC recommendations in order to protect others, particularly those with underlying health conditions and the elderly," Bass said.

It is unknown how many teams have been tested.

Brooklyn beat the Lakers in that March 10 matchup. The Nets were then to face the Golden State Warriors two nights later in San Francisco – a game that was to be played without fans because of a decision made by local officials there – before the NBA season was suspended after Utah's Rudy Gobert tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. Durant was in Los Angeles for the Nets' game against the Lakers, but was not in San Francisco for the game against the Warriors, his former club.

"I saw that news," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said of the Nets' positive tests while speaking on a conference call. "I'm hoping none of our players went and hung out with guys the night before our game. I don't know if that's the case or not."

AP

## History suggests postponed Copa America can come back stronger

BY TIM VICKERY, SOUTH AMERICA CORRESPONDENT

THE world's oldest continental competition, the Copa America was first played in 1916 -- while Europe was at war -- with the original intention of staging the tournament annually.

The first one was held in Argentina, the 1917 version took place in Uruguay, and the 1918 tournament was set for Brazil. But though the Copa carried on during the First World War, there was one global event it could not ignore -- the outbreak of the so-called "Spanish Flu" pandemic.

This disease, which infected over 500 million people globally, proved so serious -- it even killed Brazil's president-elect Rodrigues Alves -- that the Copa had to be put back a year, and eventually played in Rio de Janeiro in May of 1919.

History now repeats itself. The coronavirus outbreak has forced the postponement of the 2020 Copa America, co-hosted between Argentina and Colombia, which has now been put back to June and July of next year.

The news came as no surprise with last week an extremely unusual one in South American football. In the course of a few days, business as usual gave way to behind closed doors matches which have now almost everywhere given way to total shutdown. When the news came through last Thursday that the Copa Libertadores, the continent's Champions League, had been suspended, it was clear that the Copa would not go ahead as planned.

All that was needed was a formal announcement with coordination with UEFA. That came on Tuesday, with the respective governing bodies announcing that both European Championships and Copa America would be postponed a year.

But there is a difference in the decision between the two continents. The postponement of

the Euros may be underpinned by a hope -- perhaps forlorn -- that this will free up June and July for the completion of domestic leagues and the conclusion of the continental competitions.

The situation is different in South America. Firstly, almost all the leagues follow the calendar year, and so are in the early stages. It may prove easier to simply scrap them and start anew next year.

The Libertadores is also in its early stages, just two of the six rounds of group play having been played. The problem here is that June and July is mid-winter in the Southern Cone -- very cold in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, the south of Brazil and briefly in Paraguay.

So the scenario for South American football remains unclear. But at least history gives us a reason to smile. After the suspension for the Spanish Flu in 1918, people were all the more keen to enjoy the collective spectacle of the third Copa America when it did eventually take place.

The 1919 Copa is a hugely significant moment in the development of the game. On home soil, Brazil won their first title. Just as important, though, was the participation of Uruguay, who had won the previous two tournaments and were the runners up this time. They featured a diverse roster, led by the extraordinary Isabelino Gratin, and defeated Argentina and Chile. This was a sharp contrast to Brazil, where the game was still largely restricted to the elite.

The locals took notice, songs were written about the 1919 Copa, and something that could hardly have been predicted two decades earlier, the continent of South America started to establish itself as one of the major players in world football.

The celebrations of 1919 helped drown the tears of the previous year's pandemic. Hopefully 2021 will do the same this time around.

## Euros off, but UEFA has Champions League conundrum

BY MARK OGDEN, SENIOR WRITER, ESPN FC

POSTPONING Euro 2020 for 12 months and rescheduling the tournament for June and July next year was the easy part for UEFA. Finding a way to complete this season's Champions League and Europa League amid the coronavirus crisis will be a far greater challenge, and supporters should brace themselves for the prospect of the pandemic forcing both competitions to be abandoned without completion.

It is a grim possibility, but sources have told ESPN that so many obstacles stand in the way of games being played in the Champions League and Europa League that it will require a Herculean effort by all parties -- clubs, broadcasters, associations and governments -- to navigate a route through the chaos and uncertainty that has affected all levels of society.

A video conference on Tuesday involving all 55 of UEFA's national associations swiftly resolved the issue of postponing Euro 2020. That decision has enabled UEFA to clear space in the calendar for domestic leagues and European club competitions to resume and be played out to a conclusion during June and July, but solving the crisis in football is not as simple as creating dates in the fixture calendar.

Therefore, UEFA have set up a working group, which includes the leagues and European Club Association (ECA), to "examine calendar solutions that would allow for the completion of the current season and any other consequence of the decisions made today."

There are many issues to be overcome here, and they are all complex. The primary obstacle is, of course, the coronavirus. All of UEFA's discussions in the coming days and weeks will be hostage to the spread and effects of the pandemic. If it continues to force countries into lockdown, there will be absolutely no prospect of football being played.

It's mid-March and Italy, France,



UEFA have, for now, addressed the issue with this summer's continental tournament, but finding a resolution for the Champions League and Europa League seems almost impossible. (Agencies)

Norway and Spain are in lockdown. The United Kingdom has also told its citizens to stay at home, with those over 70 and other groups regarded as vulnerable urged to self-isolate for a period of 12 weeks from this weekend. If that advice holds and people are forced to stay home for 12 weeks, it will be mid-June before it is deemed safe to return to something approaching normality.

The issues facing UEFA are clear. UEFA may simply run out of time to get their club competitions up-and-running again, never mind find a way for them to reach a conclusion. But even if the crisis begins to ease, there are numerous other problems that must be resolved for the Champions League and Europa League to resume.

A UEFA source told ESPN that an obvious issue will be travel between countries, if or when football

resumes, as every country in Europe is at a different stage of its own coronavirus crisis. Will one emerge before the other, and if so, will its citizens be able to travel to a nation that is still wrestling with the pandemic?

If, for instance, Atletico Madrid are drawn to play against RB Leipzig, will their players be allowed into Germany without entering a period of self-isolation, and will they be able to return to Spain without once again entering quarantine?

Most countries have now imposed travel bans on their citizens and flights have been grounded. Sources at UEFA have told ESPN this is a major issue that may make it impossible to stage fixtures, because there are no guarantees that restrictions will be lifted quickly when, or if, the pandemic subsides. This is also a factor in why staging knockout ties at

neutral venues may prove impractical. One country, hosting teams from two different countries, would appear to be an impossibility for months, at this stage.

But let us be optimistic for a moment and suggest that, within a month, the pandemic will have eased enough for football to resume, even if only behind closed doors. This is clearly a hopeful scenario considering the situation, but if football restarts in late-April or early-May, there are still many sporting considerations that must be addressed.

Due to the lack of time to get the competitions played -- UEFA have said they'd like both the Champions League and Europa League to be completed by June 30 -- sources have told ESPN that one-legged ties are the most likely solution, but we are still at the round of 16 in both competitions, so that means UEFA

must resolve four rounds, including the finals. If the quarterfinals and semifinals are to be played over 90 minutes, the clubs and broadcasters must accept the loss of revenue from the reduction in the fixture list.

Participating clubs must also accept the jeopardy of being drawn to play away from home -- which places them at a significant disadvantage -- unless a neutral venue can be found for each tie. (It's also worth noting that the 2020-21 Champions League was due to begin on June 23 with the first leg of the preliminary qualifying round.)

The possibility of playing the semifinals and final over two weekends as a mini-tournament has, as reported by ESPN, been floated as a solution, with the Champions League last four being played in Istanbul and Europa League in Gdansk, the two original host cities for the finals of both competitions this season. (It's worth noting that the Turkish Super Lig is still taking place.) But would the Turkish and Polish governments be prepared to welcome the supporters of four teams, potentially from four different European countries, just weeks after those countries had been placed in lockdown?

Quite simply, UEFA faces a logistical nightmare in terms of getting both competitions to the finish line, and the biggest problems have nothing to do with football. The intention is there to find a way, but some of the challenges may prove insurmountable.

## Ceferin says virus is 'biggest crisis that football faced'

LONDON

AFTER being forced to postpone the European Championship, UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin fears football on the continent is facing its biggest crisis ever.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought the European game to a standstill, and there is no way of knowing when the action can resume. The latest step was for UEFA, the governing body of the sport in Europe, to postpone the continent's showcase tournament from this summer to next year.

And Ceferin knows the difficulties are far from over.

"It is the biggest crisis that football faced in history," Ceferin said in a television interview from his native Slovenia. "We all know that this terrible virus that is all across Europe made football and all life in Europe quite impossible. We knew we have to stop the competitions."

The financial hit for UEFA from turning Euro 2020 into Euro 2021 will be significant.

"It will go to hundreds of millions of euros," Ceferin said.

UEFA has reserves of 574.8 million euros (\$632 million) that have been built up by being able to sell the rights to some of the most appealing fixtures in the global game. The European Championship generates around 2 billion euros for UEFA from sponsors and broadcasters -- companies that will also feel the wider repercussions of a virus that is bringing so much of life in Europe to a standstill.

"The economic situation in Europe and in the world will harm us as well," Ceferin said. "It's not only about the losses that we will have directly with postponing of the Euro, but it will affect all the economy. And now today, it's time for unity and for deciding. And tomorrow, it's time to start assessing

the possible damages. But I still think I'm sure that we all together will finish this and come. We will come out stronger than ever."

That could require finding a means to financially support clubs whose key sources of revenue have been wiped out by the leagues across Europe being forced to come to a grinding halt.

"We are all the same in the same situation here and we have to help each other," Ceferin said. "When we see what kind of financial impact are we talking about, then we will see how to help. But yes, some clubs, some leagues will have serious problems."

"But you shouldn't forget about national associations because the sole source of revenue of national associations is mainly UEFA. So it will be a bit hard in a few months or years, but we will step together. And as I said, I'm very optimistic and we will solve the situation."

A working group will assess the financial landscape for football in Europe, while another explores solutions for competitions on hiatus -- domestically and those run by UEFA like the Champions League, which has some last-16 fixtures still to complete.

"We think that postponing the Euro is the only chance to get a chance to the national leagues and to all the club competitions to finish their competitions, but also that is not sure for now," Ceferin said. "For the competition for sure it's the best (to complete), but is it possible, concerning the calendar, which is extremely tight? It's hard to say."

Moving the Euros to June 11-July 11 2021 means moving into a slot reserved by FIFA for its newly-expanded Club World Cup, which had yet to find financing or agree to a format after tensions with UEFA over the concept.

AP

## What next for European football?

LONDON

UEFA's decision to postpone Euro 2020 for 12 months on Tuesday buys European club football some time to decide how to proceed, but extremely difficult decisions lie ahead on how, if and when to finish the season.

How long the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic continues will be the decisive factor.

Europe has become the epicentre of the pandemic, with France joining Italy and Spain in applying strict lockdown measures and European leaders also planning to ban all non-essential travel into the continent.

UEFA's crisis meeting on Tuesday with its 55 national associations as well as clubs and players bodies agreed on a working group to look at solutions with the hope of still completing the season by June 30.

The end of June is when many players' contracts and loan deals expire.

"As the governing body of European football, UEFA led the process and made the biggest sacrifice. Moving Euro 2020 comes at a huge cost," said UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin.

More financial pain for UEFA and Europe's major clubs could be on the horizon if the Champions League cannot be completed.

Last season UEFA paid out 1.9 billion euros (\$2.1 billion) in prize money and TV revenue to clubs competing in the Champions League.

This season's competition was cut off with only four of the last-16 ties completed and no date has been set for a return to action.

"The focus now will be to come up with solutions to conclude the 2019/20 club season in the most practical manner and, beyond that, ensure football, like society as a whole, returns as quickly as possible to its natural form and rhythm," said Andrea Agnelli, Juventus CEO and chairman of the European Club Association (ECA).

The Champions League and Europa League may therefore need to be streamlined to reach a conclusion.

Ties from the quarter-finals on could be reduced to one-off games rather than two legs, while the semi-finals



UEFA Champions League matches have been indefinitely postponed (AFP Photo)

and finals could come together like a "final four" format often used in basketball.

That would see both semi-finals and final played over the course of a few days, with the Champions League final due to be in Istanbul and the Europa League final in Gdansk.

"Without any prejudice, those are also options," said Ceferin. "We have different options, but really it's far too early to be concrete. Whatever we decide, nothing is sure because we

don't know when this COVID-19 will stop and allow us to play."

- Difficult decisions to come -

With that in mind, UEFA's goal of finishing by June 30 is highly optimistic.

Domestic associations then face the difficult call of whether to let this season roll on until it can be completed at a later date, use the current standings to call the season to a halt or even declare the campaign null and void.

"The competitions have

to be completed, if possible before June 30, but that date doesn't have to be an insurmountable wall," said Luis Rubiales, president of the Spanish football federation.

"If there are games to be played after June 30, our opinion is that all teams can play all their games, so that league position is earned on the pitch."

West Ham vice-chairman Karen Brady has been accused of self-interest after declaring: "The only fair and reasonable thing to do is declare the whole season null and void."

The Hammers are perilously placed outside the relegation zone of the Premier League on goal difference.

In England, a void season would deprive Liverpool of almost certainly ending a 30-year wait to win the title.

This option appears unlikely and not only due to sporting integrity.

Not playing the remaining games risks penalty clauses in billions worth

of broadcast contracts being activated, while season ticket holders could ask for their money back.

Ending the season with the current standings is also open to legal challenges from those clubs currently sitting in the relegation zone or that would miss out on lucrative European places.

Hearts owner Ann Budge said on Monday she would go to court if her side were relegated due to their position at the bottom of the Scottish Premiership.

Short-term league reconstruction could also act as a solution.

A proposal has been made for Germany's Bundesliga to expand for one season from 18 to 22 teams with no relegation this year.

Similarly, there is the option of the Premier League expanding to 22 teams with Leeds and West Brom promoted for being top two in the Championship and no relegation.

AFP

Gwiji by David Chikoko



# SPORT

Euros off, but UEFA has Champions League conundrum

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## NSC lauds company for outstanding sponsorship in athletics

By Guardian Reporter

THE National Sports Council (NSC) has expressed its gratitude to the Tanzania Breweries (TBL) Group for the latter's outstanding sponsorship in athletics in the country.

The TBL Group's gesture, according to the council, ought to be emulated by others.

The TBL, through Kilimanjaro Premium Lager brand, is the main sponsor of the prestigious Kilimanjaro Premium Lager International Marathon since the race's inception in the early 2000.

The gratitude compliments have been expressed just a few days after the conclusion of the 2020 version of the famous Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Marathon which was held in Moshi, Kilimanjaro, which drew more than 11,000 participants and a similar number of spectators.

Neema Msitha, Acting Executive Secretary of the NSC, who witnessed the 18th edition of the annual Kili Marathon which was held on March 1, this year, congratulated the sponsors and appealed to other stakeholders to sponsor other competitions so as to promote sports in Tanzania.

Msitha further pointed out that, for the past 18 years there has been a big change in the Kilimanjaro Marathon, which she said had turned into a big international event both inside and outside the country.

She disclosed that such competitions also help in bringing unity in the society.

"We call upon other stakeholders who need to provide sponsorship to sports events like this one to come forward, we are ready to provide them with our cooperation with the intention of bringing unity in the country through sports", she added.

Recently, NSC directed the Athletics Tanzania (AT) to reduce the athletics organizing fees to marathon organizers from 3m/- to 1m/- so as to enable them to organize good events and of the highest quality.

Irene Mutiganzi, the Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Brand Manager, on her part, thanked the participants of this year's event as well as all Tanzanians who took part in it for their outstanding participation.

She noted the 21km and 42 m races, in the end, been sold out and finished before the set deadline for registration.

"This was clear that the Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Marathon event is now very popular not only in the country but also outside the country, hence, the reason for our presence as the main sponsors since the inception of the now popular event worldwide," she said.

Other sponsors during this year's race included Tigo-21km, Grand Malt-5km, TPC Limited, Simba Cement, Unilever, Absa Bank Tanzania Limited.

The event's official service providers are the Kibo Palace Hotel, Keys Hotel, GardaWorld Security, Precision Air and CMC Automobiles.

## Premier League matches set to be played behind closed doors



Azam FC forward, Richard Djodi (C), dribbles past Polisi Tanzania players in a Vodacom Premier League match, which took place in Dar es Salaam recently. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

By Correspondent Joseph Mchekadona

TANZANIA Premier League Board (TPLB) yesterday resolved that, after 30 days of football suspension in the country, all elite games will be played behind closed doors.

The board met in Dar es Salaam yesterday to discuss the future of the Premier League, due to the outbreak of Coronavirus, and came up with four resolutions.

Almas Kasongo, TPLB Chief Executive Officer, said the meeting agreed

that after the 30-day suspension of all football activities in the country, depending on the status of coronavirus in the country, all Premier League games should be played behind closed doors until further advice from the government.

Kasongo also said as precautionary measure, all players will be subject to Covid-19 diagnosis before any Premier League match and also TPLB is to act as agent of educating people on measures to prevent coronavirus.

He also disclosed that TPLB resolved that the 2019/2020 league should come to an end in June so as teams can register

and prepare well for CAF club assignments.

"We have met today (yesterday) and come up with four resolutions, the aim is to see to it that the elite league players, officials and supporters are safe from coronavirus, the league should end in June so as our clubs can prepare for CAF club assignments," he pointed out.

"The CAF games will depend on status of Covid-19 in the country, as TPLB we are now agents of preventing further spread of the outbreak especially among football," he said.

Some of the preventive measures which TPLB is advocating to teams is clubs ought to avoid

sharing drinking water bottles and sanitary materials during matches.

Players must also avoid unnecessary body contact such as in goal celebrations.

On Tuesday, the government suspended all sporting activities in the country for a period of one month as a means of controlling the spread of Coronavirus.

Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa, in his address to the nation, disclosed the aim is to control further spread of the virus.

He said Minister for Information, Culture, Arts and Sports, Harrison Mwakymbe, will write to all national sports associations informing them of the development.

"We are all aware of the Coronavirus case which was reported in the country on Monday, as one way of preventing the spread of the outbreak the government has banned all gatherings for one month, this include all sporting activities where many people come together, Premier League, First Division League (FDL) and Second Division League (SDL) games, Inter-Secondary and Inter-Primary Schools games (UMISSETA and UMITASHUMTA), the responsible ministry will write all national sports associations on the development," he said.

On Monday, Minister for Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, Umy Mwalimu, informed the nation of the Coronavirus case presence in the country.

The minister said a 46-year old

lady who arrived in the country from Belgium abroad Rwanda Air plane and landed at Kilimanjaro International Airport (KIA), was diagnosed with the virus.

She informed the general public to take preciously measures to avoid the outbreak.

Apart from the country, some nations that have postponed football leagues in the wake of the coronavirus are Kenya, South Africa, Morocco, England, Germany, Belgium, Brazil, Namibia, Swaziland, Botswana, Mexico, Italy, Scotland, Australia, Wales, Greece and France.

European football governing body (UEFA) has postponed Europa League and UEFA Champions League while Confederation of African Football has also postponed two rounds of the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifiers.

World Health Organization (WHO) mentioned precautionary measures to be taken at football events and at other places as washing hands frequently and thoroughly with an alcohol-based hand rub or with soap and water as this kills viruses that may be on a person's hands.

Other measures are maintaining social distance between a person and anyone who is either coughing or sneezing, avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth because hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses and if contaminated, they can transfer the viruses into the body through the eyes, nose and mouth.

## Moshi Khalsa clinch National Hockey Club Championship

By Guardian Reporter

KILIMANJARO'S Moshi Khalsa have kept on stamping their authority after clinching the prestigious National Hockey Club Championship, which took place in Dar es Salaam recently.

The tournament, also known as Mapinduzi Cup, took place at Lugalo hockey field in the city, with male and female players taking part.

It was generously sponsored by Reliance Insurance Company and TATA Africa Holdings LTD.

Moshi Khalsa will, for that matter, represent the country in Africa Hockey Club Championship which is scheduled to be held in Malawi in December.

The National Hockey Club Championship which was organized by Tanzania Hockey Association THA saw six teams battle it out in men's category, women's category involved four squads.

Moshi Khalsa proved they are still a force to reckon with in the sport, given they displayed scintillating showing in the last four and saw off Tanzania People's Defense Forces (TPDF) team at the stage.

Khalsa trailed TPDF squad 2-0 but the former managed to showcase their



Moshi Khalsa players pictured with trophy after presentation ceremony of this year's National Hockey Club Championship, which was played in Dar es Salaam recently. Moshi Khalsa cruised to 2-1 victory over Black Mamba in the men's category final. The event's women category was won by Tanzania People's Defense Forces (TPDF) side.

experience and notched 3-2 victory over the army squad to book a spot in the final.

However, TPDF squad had earlier showed determination to win the game as they were leading 2-0, luck though was not on their side in the end.

The event's second semi-final had Black Mamba comfortably sailing through to the final, hammering inexperienced Juhudi 8-1.

In the men's category final, Black Mamba and Moshi Khalsa displayed classic stick work with equal misses on the both sides.

However, Black Mam-

ba had an upper hand and managed to open the scoreboard on the 27th minute, thanks to a goal netted by Ernest Edward.

Moshi Khalsa leveled matters on the 45th minute, as Temmyson Kisona netted for the squad. The Moshi squad, thereafter, dominated the clash and scored the second goal on the 48th minute, courtesy of Kisona.

It was, eventually, Moshi Khalsa's determination, which helped them lay hands on the to honour in a hot sun.

In the ladies' category final game, TPDF team emerged champions,

thrashing Twende 3 - 1.

Halima Bushiri, a representative from National Sports Council, was the guest of honour in the closing day.

Halima presented the trophies and medals to champions Moshi Khalsa and TPDF team, and runners-up, Black Mamba and Twende.

There were also individual prizes for either category's players, Juhudi team's Lawrence Baraka won the competition's best player, Kibasila were presented with the most disciplined team prize in men's category, Juhudi were handed best upcoming team prize.

## Dhani seeks top honour in National Rally Championships

By Correspondent Renatha Msungu, Dodoma

HARI Singh Rally team's driver, Ajiminder Singh Dhani, has promised to take the series of the National Rally Championships (NRC) by storm in order to win this year's title.

Dhani made the comment after laying his hands on the top honour in the first edition of NRC which took place in Arusha last weekend.

Navigated by Manmeet Birdi, Dhani clocked 40.53.7 minutes to beat the other 15 drivers who competed in the championships. Dhani drove Subaru Impreza MY03.

He said despite the fact that there were mud and the rough road, he also faced strong opposition from the other 15 drivers who targeted victory in the event.

"The competition was very tough and all drivers were eyeing the silverware, there were many road obstacles, God is great and He helped me finish at the top," Dhani said.

"This is just a start as there are other six NRC series that have to be competed in order to clinch the title, I thank my sponsors, Exim Bank and Hari Singh and Sons Limited, for the big support."

The race also saw four drivers fail to finish the championships due to mechanical problems in their vehicles.

The drivers are Manveer Birdi with his navigator, Ravi Chana, Isaac Taylor with Bashiru Mnaywi, Gurtaj Bhogal and

Abdul Hakeem, and Rafique Din Mohamed who was navigated by Ahmed Kiame in the Subaru Impreza GC8.

"I am very happy to finish at the top of the first leg of the NRC. This is just a start as my intention is to win the national title in the country. The event was very tough as I have just beat the second winner, Gurpal Singh, with his navigator, Dave Sihoka for 38 seconds," Dhani disclosed.

Dhani said he needs to maintain his status in the game by doing well at the second leg and other series and eventually clinch the national title.

"The level of the competition is tough as each driver wants to crown the title. This is competition and you need to prove your worth as there are many series of NRC to come including African Championships," he said.

The race saw Gurpal Singh of the AESL racing team finish second after clocking 41.31.3 while Mandeep Dhani finished third after clocking 42.23.5.

The fourth place was taken by Gurjit Singh who clocked 42.25.6 while Randeep Singh finished in the fifth spot after clocking 48.23.3, and Jamil Shahbhai ended sixth with 49.27.5.

Other drivers, who took part in the race, are Kelvin Taylor (seventh), Mussa Mswaki (eighth), Rajpal Dhani (ninth), Kelvin Parnis (10th) and Zaneal Somji, who ended 11th.



Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Hamisi Kigwangalla, hands over a cheque to the winner of the Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Marathon 2020's women category, Lydia Wafula (R) during the presentation ceremony of the just ended event. Looking on is the TBL Group Trade Marketing Director, Doreen Tumbeebire. The firm has been sponsoring the marathon, through Kilimanjaro Premium Lager brand, for the last 18 years. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT

## Flexibles by David Chikoko

