



National Pg 3

Dr Shein: Desist from fear of Covid-19



National Pg 4

NFRA builds modern granaries



National Pg 5

Rains destroy 11,000 acres of rice farms



National Pg 6

'Bridge construction 37.7 pct complete'



'Overseas agents want to start sending tourists to Tanzania'

By Correspondent Marc Nkwame, Arusha



Nurses at Mbeya Referral Hospital come together in celebrations to mark International Nurses Day (May 12) held at the hospital's compound yesterday. They donated a sewing machine to the hospital for use in making face masks. Photo: Correspondent Grace Mwakalinga

REMOVING the 14-day quarantine period for travellers entering the country from overseas is a key demand of foreign tour agents for them to resume the promotion of Tanzanian destinations to clients.

Dr Hamisi Kigwangalla, the Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, made this assertion here yesterday when addressing journalists shortly after chairing a two-day meeting of stakeholders from the tourism, hotels and health sectors.

The session was aimed at working out modalities of reviving the travel and hospitality industries after three months of lockdown.

"Most foreign tour agents are ready to bring visitors into the country as long as a number of precautionary measures are put in place," said the minister, noting that already a ministerial task force has been formed to work on those modalities.

The task-force shall translate agreed terms of services with foreign travel agents into the regulatory mechanism, for them to be executed and adhered to sustainably, the minister noted.

Tanzania has been getting an average of upwards of 1.4m tourists per annum in the last few years, where the country was focusing to attain two million such visitors by the end this year especially with the rising Asian and Far East market but the coronavirus stepped into the fray.

The other matter that the minister raised is to intercept negative reports regarding Tanzania and how the country addresses the current Covid-19 disaster, to assure the

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Govt intends to acquire 305 new buses for DART

By Henry Mwangonde, Dodoma

THE government intends to acquire an additional 305 new buses for the Dar es Salaam Rapid Transit (DART) fleet which links the city suburbs to the central business district, MPs heard yesterday.

The special commuter transit system, operational since 2016, has a total of 140 buses currently plying between city centre destinations of Kivukoni and Gerezani to suburb destinations of Ubungo, Kimara and Morocco.

The entire system is operated by Usafiri Dar es Salaam (UDA) via its Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) unit.

The Regional Administration and Local Government (RALG) 'wing' of the President's Office made this announcement in a written response to a question by Special Seats MP Aysharose Mattembe (CCM).

PO-RALG said additional buses would ease

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Africa's HIV deaths set to rise amid Covid-19

GENEVA

THE World Health Organisation has predicted that over 500,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa could die from AIDS and its related illnesses amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The WHO said unless African governments take steps to address the issue that number of Africans could have perished in one year from now.

A modelling analysis conducted by WHO experts and the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), affirms that the disruption of

anti-retroviral therapy for about six months could cause Africa to record high AIDS-related death rates as it did in 2008 when more than 950,000 deaths were observed across the continent.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the terrible prospect of half a million more people in Africa dying of Aids-related illnesses "is like stepping back into history."

He appealed to governments to ensure

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Gold refinery completion, exports set for September

By Guardian Reporter

TANZANIA will start exporting refined gold within the next four months after the completion of the refinery plant in Mwanza.

Stanslaus Nyongo, the Deputy Minister for Minerals, revealed this yesterday after visiting the refinery project site in Mwanza.

He said that construction of the plant began two months ago and is currently around 40 percent complete. Its completion will settle the long standing legal issue surrounding non-exporting raw minerals, he stated.

Speaking on amendments to the 2017 Mining

Act, Nyongo said the completion of the refinery will go in tandem with the rule that requires traders in minerals not to export raw minerals as all minerals will be refined in the country to increase their value. They are expected to fetch good prices in the world market, he said.

Nyongo said he was pleased with supervision by the State Mining Corporation (STAMICO) of work on the refinery project, elaborating that he would be making regular visits at the site to ensure it is inaugurated on time.

STAMICO Managing Director Dr Venance

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SHARE FACTS ABOUT COVID-19

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



0120484 02/10/2020

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

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

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

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

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



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Mourners pay their last respects to Philemon 'Fili' Karashani at his residence in Dar es Salaam's Ubungu suburb yesterday, before the award-winning Tanzanian journalism veteran was buried at the city's Kinondoni cemetery later in the day. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

Africa's HIV deaths set to rise amid Covid-19

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that person living with HIV adhere to treatment conditions and testing services are not disrupted.

"It will be important for countries to prioritise shoring up supply chains and ensuring that people already on treatment are able to stay on treatment," Dr Tedros asserted.

Without this effort, the knock-on effects would see people continue to die in excess numbers over the following five years, he said in a statement.

In sub-Saharan Africa in 2018, an estimated 25.7 million people were living with HIV, of whom 16.4 million were taking antiretroviral therapy.

Tedros said some countries were already implementing measures such as ensuring people can collect bulk packs of treatment and self-testing kits.

"We must also ensure that global supplies of tests and treatments continue to flow to countries that need them," he emphasized.

Five teams of modellers used different approaches to work out the effects of possible disruptions to testing, prevention and treatment services caused by COVID-19.

With a six-month disruption, estimates of excess AIDS-related deaths in one year ranged from 471,000 to 673,000.

Disrupted services could also reverse gains made in preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, the agencies said.

HIV infections among children in

sub-Saharan Africa have declined by 43 percent from 250,000 in 2010 to 140,000 in 2018.

Curtailed of HIV services for mothers and their children could see new child HIV infections rise by as much as 37 percent in Mozambique, 78 percent in Malawi and Zimbabwe, and 104 percent in Uganda, the modeling results indicated.

UNAids Executive Director Winnie Byanyima meanwhile said the treatment could be interrupted with HIV services closed or unable to supply antiretroviral therapy due to likely breakdown in the supply chain.

"It could even be because services simply become overwhelmed due to competing needs to support the Covid-19 response. There is a risk that the hard-earned gains of the Aids response will be sacrificed to the fight against Covid-19, but the right to health means that no particular disease should be fought at the expense of the other," Dr Byanyima noted.

"We cannot sit by and allow hundreds of thousands of people, many of them young, to die needless deaths.

"I urge governments to ensure that every man, woman and child living with HIV gets regular supplies of antiretroviral therapy -- something that's literally a life-saver."

Since the first cases of HIV were reported more than 35 years ago, 78 million people have become infected with HIV and 35 million have died from AIDS-related illnesses, the UN agency intoned.

Kabudi: Tanzania has opened eight embassies in last five years

By Henry Mwangonde, Dodoma

TANZANIA has opened eight embassies in various countries globally in the last five years, bringing the total number of the country's missions abroad to 43 including three consulates.

Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation Prof Palamagamba Kabudi told the National Assembly that the government opened new embassies in Qatar, Turkey, Sudan, Cuba, Israel,

Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Namibia and the Republic of Korea.

The minister was speaking when presenting 2020/21 budget estimates for the ministry.

During the same period, Prof Kabudi said Ethiopia and Poland opened their embassies in Tanzania increasing the total number of foreign missions hosted in the country to 62 with 30 international organisations.

"In the last five years, the ministry has administered Tanzania's status on the international community but

also managed to host international conferences including the Head of States summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The minister said the Coronavirus pandemic posed a threat to the state economy and security of the global community.

Prof Kabudi said Tanzania being SADC chairman, has managed to coordinate various initiatives to contain Covid-19 including hosting the emergency summit of SADC health

experts via video conference.

On protocol on diplomacy the ministry has administered the signing of various treaties as well as oversee their implementation.

According to Prof Kabudi the ministry has also been working on the involvement of diaspora in development activities.

The ministry requested the parliament to approve 199,750bn/- as the ministry's budget for the coming financial year.

The chairman of the parliamentary

standing committee on foreign affairs defense and security Sebastian Kapufi said an analysis by the committee has seen that the ministry's priority for the formulation of a new foreign policy has been repeating itself since 2016 saying his committee advised that it should be worked on.

Special seats MP Dr Suzan Kolimba in her comments to the ministry hailed the ministry for using economic policy as a tool to ensure Tanzania was accessing opportunities that are available.

She said president Magufuli being the country's number one diplomat, has used all his powers to ensure Kiswahili was taken to the world.

Member of Parliament for Mtambile (CUF) Masoud Abdallah Salim said there was need for the minister to explain to Tanzanians on the capacity of the herb from Madagascar to cure Covid-19.

The legislator also wanted an explanation from the minister on the issue of Zambia closing its border with Tanzania over coronavirus.

'Overseas agents want to start sending tourists to Tanzania'

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world that 'everything was right' in the country despite contrary reports.

The newly refurbished post-corona tourism industry task-force is similarly tasked with ensuring that tour operators, hoteliers, drivers, guides and other industry workers are trained on better ways of handling sensitive visitors, as a new operational environment.

Willy Chambulo, a leading tour operator in the northern circuit and member of the Tanzania Association of Tour Operators (TATO), stated that the industry had suffered from the global lockdown and operators were hopeful that with the new strategies, they could be go back to work.

Just as officials are working to revive

the country's leisure industry, the American Embassy in Tanzania has just released an advisory stating that "The Department of State has issued a Global Level 4 Health Advisory for COVID-19" in the country.

"The embassy has strongly recommended that U.S. government personnel and their families remain at home except for essential activities such as grocery shopping and substantially limit into private homes the entry of anyone but regular residents."

"The US government does not anticipate arranging additional repatriation flights in Tanzania at this time. However, in the event that such opportunity becomes available, we are asking you to let us know if you are interested in being contacted," read part of the advisory.



Morogoro regional commissioner Loata ole Sanare (R) pictured in Morogoro municipality yesterday instructing Bajaj driver Thomas Yusufu (L) to wear a face mask, one of those donated by Morogoro Urban legislator Abdulaziz Abood. Photo: Correspondent Ashton Balaigwa.

Govt intends to acquire 305 new DART buses

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transport woes and congestion of passengers commuting in the rapid transit system.

It said it was finalizing an electronic ticketing system with intent to boost collections as well as reduce congestion at bus stops and terminals.

The electronic system will also enable mass transit system users to receive updates on the various DART routes across the city. Such updates will help passengers in making proper planning before commuting.

In her question, the MP was concerned that despite the rapid transit system being established to improve commuter transportation, DART buses are overly congested with

passengers waiting for long periods at bus stops and terminals.

"Instead of lightening the commuter burden, this transport system has become a menace to Dar es Salaam residents with overcrowded buses, posing health risks to passengers," the MP declared.

Matembe demanded to know what plans the government has to improve DART services as well as measures to decongest the buses.

There is poor supervision at bus terminals where unlimited numbers of passengers are allowed to board the buses at a time. "Other commuter bus operators were adhering to government directives by carrying passengers according to their seat capacities," the legislator added.

Gold refinery completion, exports set for September

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Mwase said completion of the project will go in tandem with enabling small miners in gold refining in their areas.

Assistance to be accorded to small miners will assist the refinery getting enough raw materials as it expects to refine 480 kgs of gold per day that will have a purity of 999.99 which is at par with the highest purity levels worldwide.

Dr Mwase said he and team feel proud to oversee the government's aim in attaining industrial economy level and that STAMICO is contributing towards that goal in deeds.

The project contractor, Libaan Yasir of Aqe Associates Ltd, said the project was slated to be completed by December last year but resource mobilization pushes the work to be ready come September this year.

In 2017, President John Magufuli banned export of raw, citing the fact that the government was losing much deserved revenue due to poor follow-up on amounts and value of minerals recovered from the sands.

President Magufuli underscored the need to invest in smelters in Tanzania instead of exporting gold sands to recover minerals.

He said among all countries blessed with large amounts of minerals, only

Tanzania shipped its valuable sands abroad.

Tanzania is Africa's fourth-biggest gold producer after South Africa, Ghana and Mali.

The government collected 301bn/- in mining revenue in the 2017/2018 fiscal year, a figure that rose to 310bn/- in 2018/2019. Existing plans projected collecting 470bn/- in the 2019/2020 financial year.



Juma Burhan (L), Bank of Africa Tanzania's Zanzibar branch manager, pictured yesterday presenting to Zanzibar's Urban West regional commissioner Hassan Khatib Hassan, Ramadan-time foodstuffs donated by the bank to orphanages. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Four held for allegedly engaging in organised crime in Lake Victoria

By Guardian Correspondent, Mwanza

AUTHORITIES in Mwanza are holding four people for allegedly engaging in crime incidences on Lake Victoria, the Africa's largest fresh water resource.

The suspects were also found in possession of thirteen boat engines, according to Mwanza Regional Police Commander, Muliro Jumanne.

RPC Muliro said the suspects were arrested during police patrols conducted at Juma, Gembale and Zilagula islands in the region.

"The suspects have been engaging on a number of crimes including armed robbery in Lake Victoria. They had stolen 13 boat engines whereas four of them have been identified", said the RPC when briefing journalists on Wednesday.

He said the suspects will be appear in court after investigations were complete. They are Filbert Kipara (56) a resident of Nyamanoro, John Enos (57)

a fisherman conducting his activities at the Gembale Island, Boniface Agustino (42) from Kigoma and Paul Martin (34) residing at Zilagula island.

Meanwhile, Mwanza based factory tyre has donated 100 tyres to police in support of efforts to protect citizens and their properties. The tyres according to the RPC will be fixed on over 25 police vehicles for conducting patrols across the city.

"We recommend the company for providing us with the tyres because police to conduct a number of patrols to enhance security in the city. The police is determined to control crimes and ensure safety of the people and their properties", said Muliro.

"The suspects have been engaging on a number of crimes including armed robbery in Lake Victoria. They had stolen 13 boat engines whereas four of them have been identified"

Mombasa-bound passengers and drivers reject testing for Covid-19 at Lungalunga border post

By Guardian Correspondent, Tanga

MORE than 40 freight trucks and 10 passenger buses that were travelling from Tanga to Mombasa in Kenya have been stuck at the Lungalunga border post on the Kenya side until all passengers and drivers get tested for coronavirus and wait for three days for the results.

The decision had been given by

Kenyan authorities on Monday night this week, the situation that made some of them refuse being tested by Kenya's medical personnel and instead wanted Tanzanian doctors.

Some bus passengers travelling to Mombasa refused to be tested and decided to break their journeys and return to Tanga.

The stranded drivers also said they were surprised seeing people

from Kenya crossing the border into Tanzania at Horohoro without any problems or even being tested.

Tanga Regional Commissioner Martin Shigela made an inspection of the border post and saw for himself the situation of trucks and passengers stranded at the border.

He said Kenya's Lungalunga border post has not been closed only that they have put in place procedures

for crossing hence directed the Horohoro border (Tanzania's side) officials to cooperate with their Kenyan counterparts to solve the issue amicably.

Speaking to this paper some stranded drivers complained saying many trucks were carrying food consignments that are perishable and would incur bid losses.

Shauri Mwariko (34) a minibus

conductor plying between Tanga and Mombasa said many passengers refused to be tested for the virus and decided to return to Tanga.

Faridi Abdalah, a truck owner urged the governments of Kenya and Tanzania to sit together and discuss the matter.

Senior Immigration Officer at Horohoro One stop Border Post (OSBP) Singwa Mokiwa said they for their part

the Tanzania side did not stop the drivers to proceed but the challenge came from the Kenya's Lungalunga border post authorities.

Tanga regional medical officer Jonathan Budeme said the situation calls for a procedure for travelers to be tested for coronavirus at Horohoro (Tanzania) border post and given special certificate before proceeding to Kenya.

By Guardian Reporter

Dr Shein: Don't let fear of COVID-19 become stigma

ZANZIBAR President Dr Ali Mohamed Shein (pictured) has appealed to leaders from Pemba regions to allay fears from among the people on the Covid-19 infections and instead they should continue taking preventive measures according to directives given by health experts.



He also hailed the Union President, John Magufuli for managing the pandemic well by urging the people

to continue with activities without lockdowns or border closures.

For their part, the leaders said they have responded well to the calls on the fight against the pandemic including having hand washing facilities at business places, wearing of masks and

providing food to people who are in isolation camps.

The leaders also mentioned the adverse effects of heavy rains that have destroyed houses and crops in Pemba regions and added that it is fortunate that they did not destroy road infrastructures.

"While leadership is important, we all play a vital role in removing stigma during a pandemic. Indeed, one of our best reduction and resilience tools is simple social support. Although stigma is an evolved reaction to disease, it is not an inevitable one. Stigma divides and turns us against each other, but pandemics remind us of how connected we all are. Our shared vulnerability to this virus is a source of solidarity. We must remember that the virus – not people with Covid-19 or affected by Covid-19 – is the enemy."

Speaking on Tuesday to government and other officials from Pemba regions Dr Shein urged them to continue with their strategies they had put in place in fighting the pandemic.

He said both governments, Zanzibar and Union, have been fighting the pandemic and added that Zanzibar has been issuing the infection updates from time to time.

He also stressed the importance in educating the public, especially those in the rural areas about the disease.

Dr Shein also called on the people to work hard and directed farmers to use well the current seasonal rains to ensure the availability of food in the country.



UNHCR
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

INVITATION TO BID: No. ITB/2020/KIB/SUPP/001

FOR SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF MULTIPURPOSE TENTS

1. Background:
The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Field Office in Kibondo, invites qualified suppliers to make a firm offer for the Supply and delivery of multipurpose tents (referred to hereinafter as goods) at its offices located in Kibondo district, Kigoma Region.

2. Eligibility:
Manufacturers or traders duly registered with relevant government authorities, with sound financial basis, relevant experience, reputed clientele and with knowledge of how to meet UNHCR's needs are invited to participate in the bidding process.

The tender documents can be collected from the following UNHCR Offices:
Kindly download the tender documents in the below link:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/ITbwzpkZOtMQkstyUE94dEdCFUY2D-SI?usp=sharing>

If you fail to access the link, please write to ndassa@unhcr.org copy ishobeza@unhcr.org

CRUCIAL DATES FOR THIS INVITATION TO BIDS.

Deadline for receiving requests for clarification	Friday 22nd May 2020 at 16.00 hours EAT
Deadline for submission of offers	Monday 08th June 2020 at 17.00 hours EAT

UNHCR tenders are free of charge, no fees are charged to collect the tenders.



USAID | TANZANIA
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

U.S. MISSION DAR ES SALAAM

SOLICITATION ANNOUNCEMENT

The U.S. Mission in Dar es Salaam is seeking eligible and qualified applicants for the position identified below at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Position Title: Project Management Specialist - Malaria

Solicitation Number: 72062120R10010

A copy of the complete solicitation, listing all duties, responsibilities and qualifications required, is available at:

<https://tz.usembassy.gov/embassy/jobs/>

HOW TO APPLY:
Effective immediately only online applications will be accepted via usaidtzlesapps@usaid.gov

Applicants **MUST** follow instructions in the solicitation on the website:

Failure to do so will result in an incomplete application.

CLOSING DATE FOR THIS POSITION:
May 28, 2020

NFRA constructing modern granaries to store grains on site worth 14bn/-

By Guardian Correspondent, Mpanda

THE National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA) is building modern storage facilities in Mpanda Municipality with the capacity of storing 28,000 tonnes of crops at once.

The 14bn-project which has reached at 75 percent will be completed on July 14, this year and will be a relief to thousands of farmers in the western Tanzania's region of Katavi.

Project manager, Eng. Mussa Chiyanda said this when briefing the delegation led by Katavi Regional Commissioner, Juma Homera who visited the project site here yesterday.

Eng. Chiyanda informed that the project which kicked off on January 14, 2019 will create reliable market to farmers in Katavi—one of top ten cereal producing regions in Tanzania.

RC Homera for his part called on contractors to speed up construction of the facilities so that farmers should use it during this harvesting season.

"Let's complete this project as soon as possible as farmers are due to start harvesting their crops and NFRA

should get prepared to buy those crops and store in the new warehouses," he said.

RC Homera said that in some parts of the region farmers have started harvesting maize and they have started selling them.

He also urged farmers in the region to ensure that their crops are well prepared before taking them to the storage facilities and be able to compete in local and international markets.

Katavi is an emerging economy with high economic growth potential in the Lake Tanganyika Zone of Western Tanzania. With its growing agricultural, mining and tourism sectors, a promising foreign direct investment than any region, and a current political climate open to investment than any time before.

The region is rich with untapped economic opportunities and its people are a farmer, who produces cereals, legumes, fruits and high value crops including spices. Large part of the land is fertile and needs little fertilizer to grow crops in large quantities.



Judge Gerson Mdemu (2nd-R), Judge-in-charge of the Shinyanga zone of the High Court of Tanzania, pictured yesterday launching the hearing of cases via video conference as part of a strategy to forestall Covid-19 infections. Photo: Correspondent Marco Maduhu

Goat keeping and fattening training benefits ten youths

By Correspondent Valentine, Dodoma

TEN youth from different regions are in final stage to complete a one-year special course on goat keeping and modern techniques of goat fattening for business purpose at the Agribusiness Innovation Center (AIC), initiated by the Private Agricultural Sector Support (PASS-Trust) in Kongwa district, Dodoma region.

In partnership with the Tanzania Livestock Research Institute (TALIRI) which has donated over 200 acres of land for livestock incubation in the district, among others, the program eyes to impart the youth with useful skills to enable them venturing professionally in goat businesses.

Eva Idd, the project's development officer told the Guardian that

throughout the vital project, PASS freely offers mentorship and coaching to the youth on how professional to raise goats to possible maximum market weights.

"The youths who wishes to involve in this project, normally must apply for the relevant chance, and later on pass through serious vetting in order to remain with the devoted one," she detailed.

She said the program was part of concerted efforts to curtail increasing spate of unemployment among elite youths in the country, but also, propelling industrial growth.

Idd said that PASS will continue implementing several projects with direct economical impart to the youth in varied parts of the country.

In 2019, PASS and Tanzania Agricultural Development Bank

(TADB) signed a memorandum of understanding that is to benefit the youths through financing to enable acquire working capital and start their agribusiness.

The institution's 2018-2022 strategic plan puts creation of 700,000 jobs as its key priority.

However, since 2003 to 2019, a total of 1,117,190 agribusiness entrepreneurs have benefited from PASS credit

guarantee as well as business development services.

The beneficiaries are drawn from different agricultural sector that include livestock, crop production, processing, crop trading, mechanization, support to irrigation infrastructures, transportation of agricultural commodities, bee keeping, fish farming, inputs trading among other areas.



Jacqueline Materu (L), Vodacom Tanzania Plc's Head of Public Relations and Communication, presents foodstuffs worth 177m/- to Laurence Malangwa of the Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner's Office for use by healthcare service providers and patients at Mloganzila, Amana and Temeke hospitals' Covid-19 quarantine centres. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

New law requires the Diaspora to recognise Zanzibar Revolution

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

THE new law for the Zanzibari community living the Diaspora passed by the House of Representatives now requires the community to recognise the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution as among the national values and as a demonstration that Zanzibaris are free in their own country.

This was explained by the Zanzibar Deputy Minister for Trade and Industry Hassan Khamis Hafidh when contributing to House debate on budget estimates for the President's Office for FY 2020/21 which also deals with the Diaspora issue.

He said the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution is the demonstration of a free Zanzibari after toppling the feudal Omani

Sultanate rule.

He said this is an important criterion which those in the Diaspora need to know, recognize and respect.

Responding to issues raised by members, the Minister of State in the President's Office Issa Haji Ussi said among the conditions the conditions that should be adhered to by the Diaspora community is that they will

not engaged themselves in politics.

He said they will not be permitted to be members of political parties including participation in elections.

Members of the House of Representatives passed the law on the Diaspora community which now recognizes them and permit them to engage in the country's development activities.

Mo Ibrahim Foundation announces 2020 Ibrahim Leadership Fellowships

By Guardian Reporter

THE Mo Ibrahim Foundation yesterday announced the selection of the 2020 intake of Ibrahim Leadership Fellows, who make up the programme's ninth cohort.

According to a statement issued yesterday, the incoming Fellows include Hainan Taifour (Sudan), who joins the International Trade Centre (ITC), Eliam Kadewele (Malawi), who joins the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and Sylvain Degolmal Ngaryo (Chad), who will join the African Development Bank (AfDB). Due to the impact of COVID-19, Sylvain will be taking up his post in 2021.

The Ibrahim Leadership Fellowships programme is a selective programme designed to identify and prepare the next generation of outstanding African leaders, providing them with mentoring opportunities in key multilateral institutions. The candidates, chosen from a pool of over 2,000 applicants, will benefit from the direct mentorship of the current heads of the institutions.

Commenting on the new Ibrahim Leadership Fellows, Mo Ibrahim, Founder and Chair of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, said: "I'd like to congratulate our three new Ibrahim Leadership Fellows who are joining this unique programme. Today, Africa faces severe challenges that highlight the need for strong leadership and sound governance. There has never been a better time to invest and support a new generation of future leaders. My aspiration for the new Fellows is that they will enhance the expertise required to drive this continent forward, by learning, using their skills and working in close collaboration with colleagues in these important organisations."

Hanan Taifour (Sudan) joins ITC. Hanan is an economist with extensive experience in economic policy research, project management and supporting the growth of small to medium enterprises (SMEs) in Africa. She has worked with organisations including the Economic Policy Research Institute in South Africa.

Eliam Kadewele (Malawi) joins ECA. Eliam is an economist with vast experience in the public sector focusing on economic policy formulation and analysis, project development and management, planning and budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, economic analysis and financial modelling. He has worked for the Malawian parliament and undertaken a range of roles in the Malawian Ministry of Finance.

Sylvain Degolmal Ngaryo (Chad) will join the AfDB. Sylvain is an entrepreneur with extensive experience in the energy sector. His professional experience include the management of various energy programmes including renewables, bioenergy, oil and gas. Sylvain has worked for organisations such as the African Union (AU) and N'Djamena Refinery Company Limited.

The application process for the 2021 Ibrahim Leadership Fellowships programme will open in August 2020.

There has never been a better time to invest and support a new generation of future leaders. My aspiration for the new Fellows is that they will enhance the expertise required to drive this continent forward, by learning, using their skills and working in close collaboration with colleagues in these important organisations

Rains destroy 11,000 acres of rice farms in Bahi District

By Guardian Correspondent, Bahi

MORE than 11,000 hectares of rice farms that were almost to be harvested in Bahi District have been destroyed following heavy rains in neighbouring regions.

The affected farms include those in Bahi Makulu, Bahi Sokoni, Nagulo Bahi and Matajira rice schemes while some farmers are forced to harvest the crop by means of canoes.

In the circumstances, the farmers have urged the government to talk to financial institutions to provide them with loans to reschedule repayments due to losses they had incurred.

Bahi District Commissioner Mwanahamisi Munkunda had to travel more than 20 kms by car, motorcycle and canoe to inspect the effects of the floods.

Speaking to the farmers from the Bahi Makulu scheme, DC Munkunda said the area's economy depends on rice and measures should be taken to address the challenges to avert or mitigate the famine threat.

"During this period in the past we used to see many vehicles coming to transport the rice from Bahi, and Bahi Makulu scheme was producing bumper crop, it will now take three to five years for the cultivation of rice.

She said as of now they are discussing with experts to see how the floodwaters can be used for growing other crops such as onions and vegetables. She promised farmers that she will discuss with banks to reschedule the loans.

"We have to get a list of farmers and the amount of loans each received, there are others who took loans from

private individuals, I urge them not to bother the farmers as they have seen for themselves the situation," she said.

Earlier, the chairman of Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Society (AMCOS) for Bahi Mukulu Hillary Ndugai said Bahi Mukulu scheme with 9,000 acres is the largest but has been affected by floodwaters from Bubu river whose sources are Manyara and Arusha regions.

He said as of now instead of harvesting rice, people are engaged in fishing for income generation.

Presenting his report to the DC, Bahi village executive officer Lightness Swai said in the 2019/20 season farmers cultivated 9,000 acres of rice, but as of January this year floodwater had increased and submerged all the rice farms.

Mpamatwa ward councillor Sosthenes Mpandu said in the last season farmers incurred losses due to inadequate rainfall.



We have to get a list of farmers and the amount of loans each received, there are others who took loans from private individuals, I urge them not to bother the farmers as they have seen for themselves the situation



Dr Fatma Rashid Khalfani (L), a commissioner with the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance, presents an International Nurses Day cake to Dodoma referral hospital nursing director Stanley Mahundo when congratulating nurses on a job well done. She earlier donated a set of items for use in fighting off Covid-19 infections. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

'Govt plans to introduce quota system on crop importation in bid to shield farmers'

By Henry Mwangonde, Dodoma

THE government is planning to introduce quota system on the importation of the crops in the country in efforts to protect barley and wheat farmers in the country, the National Assembly was told here yesterday.

With the new system, local processors of the two crops will be forced to purchase locally the amount of tonnes they import from other countries so as to increase productivity among Tanzanian farmers.

The statement was made in the parliament by the ministry of Agriculture in a written response when answering a question posed by the Special Seats MP, Cecilia Pareso (Chadema) who had wanted to know what the government was doing to help barley and wheat farmers who no longer have market for their produce.

The MP said barley farmers in Karatu District were lacking reliable market of the crop since Tanzania Breweries Limited (TBL) which is the main buyer had seized to purchase their products.

How will the government help these farmers?" she asked.

In response the minister for Agriculture, Japhet Hasunga explained that the government was in talks with TBL, which is also the owner of barley processing company in Kilimanjaro to restore the factory or lease it to another investor who can run it and process the crop.

The ministry added that both TBL and Serengeti Breweries Limited (SBL) annually enter contracts with farmers to produce barley.

During the 2018/19 financial year, TBL entered contract with farmers to produce 230 tonnes of barley for the factory.

Since there was plenty produce by the farmers, the company purchased barley from farmers in phases whereby the last consignment was bought at 800/- per kilogramme.

"Complaints about lack of market for barley in Karatu District is due to the fact that farmers produced the crop in abundance outside the contract system," said the minister.



Livestock and Fisheries minister Luhaga Mpina (2nd-L) presents to Kaliua (Tabora Region) district commissioner Abel Yeji Busalama a speed boat engine the government has donated to a group of fishermen based in the district. This was at a ceremony held in Dodoma city. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

By Guardian Correspondent, Kigoma

Kigoma lags behind in modern family planning methods usage

KIGOMA Region has not yet attained the national target in the utilisation of modern family planning hence many women still bear children without spacing of two to three years as advised by health experts.

Speaking about child bearing situation in the region, the Coordinator of Mother and Child Maternal Health for Kigoma Region Ernest Teyumwete said in 2019 the level in utilising the modern methods was 42 percent while the national target is 60 percent.

Teyumwete said the low level use of the methods has necessitated

high child bearing ratio among women when in 2019 it was 6.7 percent or six to seven children as opposed to the national level of 5.2 percent or five to six children, and added that Uvinza District and Kigoma-Ujiji Municipality have been mentioned to have the lowest ratio in utilisation of the modern family planning methods.

"We as health experts still continue to educate men to know

the importance of working together with their partners in using the modern family planning methods, but we discovered that they are the main obstacle," he said.

A maternity worker at ujiji Health Centre in Kigoma-ujiji Municipality said he witnessed several cases where some of the women were severely beaten after their partners found out that they were using family planning

methods.

"Some of the women coming to us for family planning advice do so secretly and when their partners come to know about it they come to complain to us," he added.

An Ujiji resident, Omary Shaaban said he will allow his partner to use modern family planning methods as he was ready to accept any results on child bearing.

Three sea rescue centres now operational in Z'bar - minister

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

ZANZIBAR Minister of State (Regional Administration and Local Government) Haji Omar Kheir has said three centres for rescue at sea that will assist in rescue work from various disasters at sea have already been completed.

Tabling his budget estimates for his Office for Financial year 2020/21, he mentioned the rescue centres as the one at Kibweni in Zanzibar Urban West Region, Nungwi in Zanzibar North Region and Mkoani in Pemba.

He said these centres have been installed with communication equipment on disasters when they happen.

Kheir said the equipment is able to identify and locate the positions of vessels in distress to enable rescue operations to take place.

He said these efforts were initiated by the Zanzibar President Dr Ali Mohamed Shein following two major accidents at sea that saw two passenger ships sinking.


He mentioned the two

ships that sank as MV Spice Island and MV Skagiet with great loss of human lives due to lack of reliable rescue equipment.

He said training will be conducted for the youth in


rescue operations at sea.

He also called on fishermen and others using sea going vessels to ensure they have communication equipment while out at sea including mobile phones.



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Over 8,000 industries established in 26 regions from 2015 - ministry

By Henry Mwangonde, Dodoma

AN assessment made by the government on the implementation of a directive to have 100 industries in every region countrywide shows that as of February, 2020, about 8,477 industries had been established in 26 regions.

The industries were established since the fifth phase government took over power in 2015, according to the assessment made by the ministry of Trade and Industries in collaboration with the ministry of State, President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government (RALG).

The government issued the new statistics for industries in the country when responding to a question posed by Mbulu Urban Member of Parliament (MP), Zacharia Isay in a written response.

The Mbulu Urban MP asked: "In ensuring that the government attains its ambitious dream of an industrial economy, when will an assessment for a directive to have 100 industries in every region be done?"

Responding, the ministry of Trade and Industries said out of 8,477 industries, big industries were 201, medium were 460, small industries were 3,406 while the smallest were

4,410.

The ministry further insisted that in collaboration with RALG and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the government had prepared a robust assessment plan for 2020/2021 Industrial Mapping.

"The exercise will also involve a plan for assessment of a directive for 100 industries in every region, the number of industries as well as assessment on employment opportunities, revenue and technology being offered," said the ministry adding that the assessment will also ensure that raw materials used in such industries were obtained locally.

The ministry assured the MP that in collaboration with other public institutions and the private sector it will continue implementing various strategies to have more industries in a bid to attain the country's dream to have a middle-income economy by 2025.

"The exercise will also involve a plan for assessment of a directive for 100 industries in every region, the number of industries as well as assessment on employment opportunities, revenue and technology being offered"



Stella Ikupa, Deputy Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (Persons with Disabilities), washes her hands in Dodoma city yesterday after presenting 90 buckets meant to help people with disabilities in Dodoma Region in the war on Covid-19. Photo: Correspondent Peter Mkwavila

Ministry: Wami Bridge construction 37.7 pct complete

By Henry Mwangonde, Dodoma

CONSTRUCTION of Wami Bridge has reached 37.7 percent as of March 2020, the National Assembly was told here yesterday.

According to the ministry of Works, Transport and Communications, the construction of the bridge is being funded by the Tanzanian government

by 100 per cent.

The ministry said in a written response when answering a question posed by Zainab Amir (Special Seats-CCM) that the contract for the construction of Wami Bridge was signed between the government of Tanzania and the Chinese contractor-Power Construction Corporation on June 28, 2018 and that the construction

was expected to be completed after 24 months (2years). "The construction will involve the linking of roads to the bridge that will have 3.82 kilometres in an attempt to connect the new bridge with the Chalinze-Segera highway," noted the ministry.

In her main question, the Special Seats lawmaker wanted to know, when the government would look

for an investor to construct the new Wami Bridge in the Coast Region to modernise it and make it a source of revenue collection from motorists just as it is currently being done at the modern Kigamboni Bridge in Dar es Salaam.

Responding, the ministry said that the feasibility study and detailed design for the new Wami Bridge was

carried out in March 2016, adding that the bridge which is expected to be constructed 670 metres away from the current bridge will have a length of 513.5metres and 11.85 metres in width.

The current bridge has 88.75 metres and it is a very important bridge connecting the Coast Region and its neighbouring regions of the Northern Zone and the neighbouring country of

Kenya and the bridge is 47.47 kilometres away from the Chalinze junction on the Chalinze-Segera highway.

"Currently this bridge is still suitable for vehicles crossing over as it was constructed at higher qualities many years ago, however, the sharp corner within the bridge has been causing several accidents, that is why we need to have a new bridge," he said.



Dodoma District Muslim Council chairman Alhaji Bashiru Hussein has a word with widows from Dodoma Region's Chang'ombe ward yesterday on ways to steer clear of Covid-19 infections. Photo: Correspondent Peter Mkwavila

By Guardian Reporter

MINISTER for Livestock and Fisheries Luhaga Mpina has presented 73 outboard motors (engines) for fishing boats valued at 320m/- to assist cooperative groups from various areas with fishing activities in the country.

Presenting the engines to Members of parliament at the Ministry's headquarters in Mtumba in Dodoma, Mpina said out of the 73 engines the government has donated for free 13 engines valued at 60m/-to assist various fishing cooperative groups.

He said 60 other engines valued at 260m/- have been subsidized by

Govt presents 73 boat engines to promote fishing across the country

the government whereas fishermen have contributed 60 percent and the government 40 percent to enhance growth of the fishing sector.

Speaking soon after receiving the engines Kyela Member of Parliament Dr Harrison Mwakembe who is also the Minister for Information, Arts, Culture and Sports thanked minister Mpina for deciding to assist fishermen with modern fishing

equipment.

Member of Parliament for Mtwara Rural Hawa Ghasia said the government assistance to fishermen was last time given by President John Magufuli when he was the minister for Livestock and Fisheries; hence he thanked Mpina for the decision to remember fishermen through the assistance.

Member of Parliament for Ukerewe Joseph Mkundi said the assistance

has come at an opportune time and shows the government values fisheries development as opposed to popular conception that the government was only bent in confiscating illegal fishing gear from fishermen.

Kaliua District Commissioner Abel Busalama said the assistance will spur revolution in fishing activities in Kaliua and that the district will make sure the engines are well cared for.

Employers, employees called on to ensure flexibility despite COVID-19

By Guardian Reporter

EMPLOYERS and employees have been challenged to be flexible in order to maintain a track of productivity while adapting to new changes in the business amid Covid-19 outbreak.

Experts in Human Resource made the call on Tuesday when speaking during virtual meeting organised by BrighterMonday—a Tanzanian recruitment firm.

The meeting, which involved human resource professionals and employers from within and outside the country, was meant to discuss the role of the sector in ensuring business sustainability amid Covid-19 outbreak. The experts shared their experiences on how employers and business owners can survive this difficult time without causing harm to their businesses.

Moses Raymond, who was the speaker in the session insisted on the need for employers to adapt to changing trends of talent acquisition.

Moses argued that changes are inevitable when traditional ways of physical interaction have been challenged.

As we are forced to adopt new ways of doing business, we should understand talents are core needs of any business. Therefore, businesses should maximise the use of existing online platforms to maintain human capital. We can marginalise using tools like Applicant Tracking System (ATS) and Skills assessment Tool offered by BrighterMonday to recruit quality and keep our businesses going," he said.

Roam Group Head of Talent, Heather O'Shea who was also a lead speaker encouraged employers and human resource managers to come up with innovative ways to keep their teams focused and healthy throughout the pandemic. Heather insisted on the importance of overcoming remotely related challenges for increased teams' productivity.

"This is the first time that HR is being thrust into the limelight...more people are asking for CEOs' opinions more than they ask for CEOs' opinions...businesses need additional help to facilitate staff that are working from home. HRs should think of how to keep teams engaged, how to get teams waking up every day and work in unusual home environments," said Heather.

Presenting on how employers can recruit remotely, the Products Development Expert for BrighterMonday, Ezra introduced the skills assessment tool. This is a digital tool developed by BrighterMonday Tanzania to help recruiters remotely assess technical skills and aptitude required for a specific role. Ezra insisted that the tool helps employers to hire the right talents for the right roles especially in these times when physical verification is not an option.

Reshma Bharmal-Shariff, the CEO of BrighterMonday Tanzania said that the firm will continue to innovatively work with employers and job seekers in Tanzania to keep businesses running even in times of crisis.

Coronavirus pandemic has made stakeholders react and respond differently. Everyone tries to mitigate the adverse impacts of the pandemic. Due to its dependency on human capital for production and marketing, business is arguably to be the most hit sector.

The virus discourages physical interaction which has been a culture and an important vehicle for businesses in developed and developing countries. Businesses like tourism, hospitality services, traveling and even social services are finding it harder to cope with measures such as lockdown and social distancing.

The new unprecedented culture which encourages human isolation has forced businesses to adjust and adapt new norms like working remotely (working from home). This means employers are striving to adapt to new changes, and they are seeking alternative ways to manage changes in human resource management. BrighterMonday in Tanzania tries to fill the void resulting from coronavirus pandemic.

On Tuesday, the firm organised a virtual meeting that brought a total of 135 human resource professionals and employers from Tanzania and abroad. The meeting was intended to discuss the role of human resource in ensuring business sustainability amid Covid-19 outbreak.

During the meeting, HR professionals shared their experience and tips on how employers and business owners can survive this difficult time without causing harm to their businesses.

Tamwa-Zanzibar donates PPE to reinforce fight against Covid-19

By Guardian Reporter

THE Tanzania Media Women's Association (Tamwa)-Zanzibar has donated assorted Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) worth 19m/- that will help health workers working under the ministry of Health in Unguja and Pemba islands in the fight against Covid-19.

Handing over the donation in Tunguu, Unguja North District, Dr Mzuri Issa, Tamwa-Zanzibar Director said the organisation donated face masks, sanitisers and other related facilities.

Dr Mzuri suggested the need for collective responsibilities and assists the Isles' government in containing Covid-19. "And this is what we did, to complement the government's efforts in containing the spread of the Coronavirus," she said, adding that health workers are at a high risk of the disease.

According to Dr Mzuri, the donated items have met all the standards of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Zanzibar's Ministry of Health.

She said the items will also help women who are in need in various parts of Unguja and Pemba so that they continue with their economic activities.

The Tamwa official said: "All the donated PPE were bought directly from local producers and have met the standards required by the Ministry of Health."

For his part, head of health education in the Zanzibar's Ministry of

Health, Halima Ali Khamis said that the donation from Tamwa-Zanzibar came at the right time when the ministry was in dire need of such support from different stakeholders.

She said that health workers were in difficult environment particularly at this time when the government is grappling with Covid-19 pandemic.

Halima lauded Tamwa-Zanzibar for the support, vowing that the items will be given to health practitioners as planned.

"As the government representative, I pledge that these facilities will be used as planned," she assured.

On behalf of journalists, Khatib Suleiman said Tamwa-Zanzibar has been in forefront in assisting media practitioners who are in difficult environment when executing their duties.

Tamwa Zanzibar became fully self-governing and operational in both Isles of Unguja and Pemba since 2004. In January 2007, it attained its own separate registration. The registration number is 493 under Zanzibar Society Act No. 6 of 1995 Tamwa's Mission is to advocate for women and children's rights by conducting awareness raising activities for cultural, policy and legal changes in the society through the use of media. This mission is meant to facilitate the realisation of the association's vision of existence of a peaceful Tanzania society, which respects human rights with a gender perspective.



Zanzibar-based Tanzania Media Women's Association (Tamwa) board member Aziza Juma Ali (L) presents items worth 19m/- to Halima Ali Khamis, an official with Zanzibar's Health ministry, to help in the war on Covid-19. The event was held in Zanzibar yesterday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

By Guardian Correspondent, Masasi

PCCB recovers over 50m/- cashewnut funds in Masasi

THE Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) in Masasi District, Mtwara Region has recovered 50.5m/- that were swindled by leaders of six Agricultural Marketing Co-operative Societies (AMCOS).

The farmers' monies are said to be from cashewnut sells in the 2016/2017 and 2018/2019 season.

Presenting report on money recoveries to Mtwara Regional Commissioner, Gelasius Byakanwa, PCCB Commander in the region,

Enock Ngailo said the monies will be given back to farmers. He said they are determined to control the widespread fraud in cashewnut trade in the region.

Ngailo said the AMCOS leaders are alleged to swindle over 100m/- from cashewnut sells, insisting they have been directed to repay the remaining funds immediately.

The PCCB commander said that until May 12, 2020 the anti-corruption body recovered 50,541,862.98/- out of

151,337,188.80/- which were embezzled by AMCOS leaders in Masasi District.

"These leaders have been stealing monies from farmers in almost every season; there are some farmers who have been paid by their AMCOS since 2016. We will make sure they re-pay the funds for farmers to benefit from their sweat," he noted adding that the leaders have been tasked to repay the remaining 100m/- in few months.

Commander Ngailo mentioned the

AMCOS as Chiungutwa, Mkombozi, Mshikamano, Masunge, Chimana and Mnavila. He said the leaders were arrested and investigated following claims by farmers that their cashew nuts have been stolen from warehouses.

"They all agreed to repay the funds in phases, they will complete reimbursement in coming months," he stated.

He said the case was different at the

Chungutwa AMCOS where the leaders intentionally exchanged their dirty cashews with clean ones from farmers, the thing that resulted into farmers fetching low prices.

He claimed that the leaders sold the first grade cashews and distributed the monies among themselves.

According to Ngailo PCCB has recovered more than 800m/- in all the districts in Mtwara region. He said funds were given back to farmers.

Mtwara Regional Commissioner, Gelasius Byakanwa said they will continue taking stringent legal measures against the leaders to ensure they repay all the stolen funds.

Byakanwa said farmers have been struggling to get their monies from the agricultural association since 2016. He said there are alleged fraud reports whereas some AMCOS leaders have also swindled cashew nut funds during the 2019/2020 season.



Traders selling carrots at Dar es Salaam's Temke Stereo market attend to customers yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

WaterAid calls for proper hygiene to curb Covid-19, communicable diseases

By Correspondent Crispin Gerald

A public health specialist for WaterAid Tanzania, Twaha Mubarak has called on the public to adopt and continue with proper hygiene behaviours not only to protect themselves against Covid-19 but from other communicable diseases also.

"Good hygiene is very important, not only in combating Covid-19, but also in most of the communicable diseases," he said in an email interview.

He advised the government to use this time to continue promoting sustainable behaviour change towards good hygiene practices, noting that sustainable behaviour change relies on three pillars which are knowledge, mindset, and infrastructure which allow communities to practice hygienic behaviours such as hand washing.

Mubarak added that the government and partners should continue to ensure the availability of water and soap in all high-risk areas, including institutions such as hospitals and other public places. "Since the virus hit Tanzania in March 16, the WaterAid have been working very closely with the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, regional secretariat and local governments to respond to the Covid-19 crisis with a major focus on hygiene promotion and infrastructure development," he said.

"We are running a hygiene campaign aiming to improve the following behaviours: hand washing with soap, social distancing, respiratory hygiene, cleanliness (cleaning frequently-touched surfaces regularly) and self-isolation or referral," the specialist explained.

The intervention is integrated in the National behavioural change campaign on sanitation and hygiene dubbed: 'Nyumba ni Choo Campaign'. The campaign uses different mass media channels such as national television and radio, social media, on-

ground activation and hand washing demonstrations in communities.

Through our current projects, we are improving access to hand-washing facilities especially in highly populated places, such as bus stops and markets to enable communities to practice good hygiene behaviours. This intervention is focused in Dar es Salaam, Arusha and Zanzibar. For over thirty years, WaterAid Tanzania has been working to promote hygiene best practices through behaviour change campaigns and water and sanitation infrastructure development as a way to improve people's life in both rural and urban areas.

According to Mubarak, in terms of clean water, communities can treat water by boiling it, as bringing water to a boiling point for a minute can kill viruses and bacteria and other pathogens.

According to water sector equity report 2019, around 60 percent of Tanzanians now have access to improved water, although levels of access vary. Access to proper hand-washing facilities is at 50 percent for rural and 72 percent for urban population. "Communities can also build their own hand washing facilities known as a tippy tap - which is a low-cost solution, and is also hands-free. It requires sticks, an empty bottle, string and stones," he said.

Communities can also build their own hand washing facilities known as a tippy tap - which is a low-cost solution, and is also hands-free. It requires sticks, an empty bottle, string and stones

Nurses donate modern sewing machine to zonal referral hospital

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

NURSES at the Mbeya Zonal Referral Hospital (MZRH) have donated a modern sewing machine worth 1.5m/- to the hospital that will be used to sew uniforms used by health workers and patients in marking the International Nurses Day (IND).

The International Nurses Day is commemorated around the world on every May 12th.

Speaking during the celebrations, chairman of the Tanzania National Nurses Association (TANNA) MZRH branch, Idda Sewangi said the donation is meant to support the hospital's efforts to improve provision of health services. She explained that the sewing

machine will also be used in the making of fabric face masks as well as other personal protective gears (PPE) which are currently in high demand following the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus.

She added that nurses have resolved to join hands with the government in combating Covid-19 by ensuring doctors and nurses are well protected and work in a good environment. She said nurses are among the crucial frontline fighters in curbing and curbing the novel Coronavirus.

Receiving the donated machine, MZRH Executive Director, Dr Godlove Mbwanji commended the nurses for the support insisting the referral hospital is in dire need of fabric protective gears including masks. He

said the machine will also be used to make nurses uniforms.

"May I congratulate you for the job well done in collaboration with other health workers, we are aware of many challenges you face in executing your work but we will make sure that you get all the required PPE to safely attend to patients during the Covid-19 outbreak," said Dr Mbwanji insisting the hospital values nurses contribution in provision of health services.

According to him, nurses spend more time with patients compared to doctors hence the need to keep them safe throughout. In her address to mark the IND on Tuesday, the Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children Minister, Ummu

Mwalimu said the government has developed guidelines for professional nurses and midwives to follow when executing their duties. She said the codes-of-conducts insist on health workers to promote ethics, human dignity and respect.

She however, insisted on nurses to consider the basic guidelines for Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) when attending to Covid-19 patients.

According to the TANNA President, Alexander Baluhya, the country shortage of nurses account for 48 percent. They account for 60 percent of all employed health workers in Tanzania and provide 80 percent of all the health services rendered to Tanzanians.

How COVID-19 is likely to affect sustainable development goals

By Gerald Kitabu

UNITED Nations Association-Tanzania (UNA Tanzania) has said that this is a special year for the implementation of Agenda 2030, it is the year the international community begin the decade of action.

However, the ambitions to achieve the SDGs might be held back by the COVID-19 which is currently affecting socio-economic development.

UNA Tanzania Secretary General Reynald Maeda said with the outbreak of COVID-19, everything has almost come to a standstill. The world's focus has now shifted from socio-economic development issues to combating the malady to rescue human life.

Lockdown is affecting productivity and businesses are being closed down in many parts of the world. Unemployment is also swelling across the globe.

The covid-19 being a health crisis, SDG number 3 (Health and Wellbeing) has been most affected, as it is about the well being. Currently, thousands of deaths have been reported worldwide with millions recovering from the pandemic.

There is high possibility that the goal number 3 will also affect other goals because the SDGs are interrelated.

Goal number 1 and 2 (poverty and Zero hunger) are likely to be affected due to loss of income. This may increase the number of ordinary citizens living below poverty line, while food production and distribution could be disrupted impacting heavily on nutrition among the vulnerable groups.

Goal 4 which is about quality education is also reported to have been affected, especially among marginalized communities who cannot access online learning. There are also reports that female genital mutilation, child labor and early marriage are on the rise in some parts due to school closure. At times, some parents are not careful enough to observe stay home and look after their children.

If you look at goal number 5 on gender equality, reports from UNFPA indicate an increased risk of gender based violence, especially on women with violent partners, as a result of COVID-19 (stay home). This, again, is likely to cause physical and emotional problems on women," he said.

Goal number 8 on decent work speaks for itself as economic activities are being suspended, lower income, unemployment rates are surging globally and cut in pay for some industries. This also affects goal number 10. There



United Nations Association-Tanzania (UNA Tanzania) Secretary General Reynald Maeda

is a risk of widening of inequality gap especially at the aftermath of Covid 19.

Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions has not been spared. Foreexample, countries with conflicts will also be struggling to work on the fight against COVID-19 malady. This will have multiple loss effects. "We are witnessing what is happening in other countries, cases of police brutality and major violations of human rights. The situation could also be a potential breeding ground for corruption, and misappropriation of public funds. When you look at SDG 17 which is about partnership, you will find out that each country is focusing on fighting the pandemic at home first, with the anticipated historic economic downturn as aftermath, there will be a shift of priorities especially donor countries on develop-

ing countries.

What about the youth?

According to UNA Tanzania, as much as reports indicate that young people have mild fatality risk, they are likely to be affected most, economically more than other groups especially aftermath of this pandemic. Several factors work against this demographic. Foreexample, in 2019 ILO estimated that youth unemployment rate was estimated to be 12 percent. This is a big number already,

with the outbreak of Covid 19, it has affected the global economy, some factories have been shut down, businesses collapsed and it is expected unemployment rate to continue rising across the global. Small businesses run by young people will be the most affected as well. Some already have faced hard time to secure capital. Furthermore, in many corporations and organizations youth have been retrenched.

Explaining what should be done for the youth, Communication and

Advocacy officer for UNA Tanzania Godfrida Magubo said there is a need to create special stimulus packages designed to rescue small businesses run by young people.

I understand that there are also new opportunities that comes along with Covid-19 such as a surge in e-commerce, and since life will not go back to what it was hundred percent, it is a great opportunity for the youth to engage in science, technology and innovation (STI).

Science and technology are essential to humanity's collective response to the covid -19 pandemic. At this time, it's clear that no one is safe until when the disease is smoked out. There is a need to strengthen national capacities for science-based decision making across all countries.

There is also a need for individual care and collective efforts and responsibilities. We need to stay safe and keep the whole community safe. In most developing countries, the biggest problem is the flow of information. At times, accurate data is a major problem. We need to have accurate and correct information about Covid-19. The information should be on time and should be accessible to all people for informed decision. We need to be more serious and take precaution.

There is also a need for strategic solutions that work for the people and for the country. Private sector, civil societies, development partners, scientists, the medical community and the government should work collectively to thwart the malady.

The coronavirus pandemic presents an opportunity for the human family to act in solidarity and turn this crisis into an impetus to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. SDGs want countries to make sure that no one is left behind even in the toughest of times.

What to understand about the Swedish Covid-19 experiment

By Matthew Zeitlin

LIFE in the Swedish capital, Stockholm, appears perfectly normal to outsiders: Walk down a cobblestone street and you may see two friends sitting at a cafe enjoying the spring air or a group of children kicking a soccer ball in the park. Cars and bicyclists may zip by; a family may walk past you on their afternoon stroll.

Whereas most of the Western world has been in lockdown for weeks, Sweden has opted to forego any sort of shelter-in-place policy in response to the coronavirus and instead allow businesses and parks to stay open and groups of under 50 people to gather.

That's not to say that the country hasn't been proactive at all. The policy in effect in Sweden is similar to what had been implemented in much of the United States before shelter-in-place orders were issued - and the one that will soon be in place in states that reopen.

The Swedish government has recommended that people wash their hands frequently, maintain social distance, work from home if they can, and those who are elderly or more susceptible to Covid-19 stay home.

The government recommended that universities switch to online teaching; they quickly followed course. Social distance is required by law in restaurants, and bar service is banned.

The government changed its sick leave rules to encourage anyone who is feeling symptoms to stay home. Anders Tegnell, the epidemiologist at Sweden's Public Health Agency in charge of recommending policy to the government, said when interviewed for The Daily Show: "Instead of saying 'close down all of society', we have looked at society and closed down... aspects of society where the disease is most likely to spread. I think that's had a great effect."

Sweden's approach has been hailed by critics of American and European pandemic policies as a less restrictive - and less economically devastating - alternative to state or national shutdowns.

However, it has also been lambasted by others as an unnecessarily risky strategy that has led the country into



having the highest Covid-19 death toll among the Nordic nations. As more and more areas of the US reopen, Sweden may not be so much an alternative as a glimpse of the future.

As of Sunday (May 10) afternoon, Sweden had 25,921 confirmed cases and 3,220 deaths, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre. These are much higher figures than those of the country's neighbours, but lower than those in some other wealthy Western European countries on both an overall and population-adjusted basis.

Sweden also has suffered problems familiar to residents of countries that have had more severe outbreaks and stricter policies. Nursing homes have been hard hit, and Tegnell described Sweden's failure to protect nursing home residents as its greatest shortcoming so far.

Immigrant and ethnic minority communities also have suffered, owing in part to their larger households. Just over half of all households in Sweden in 2016 consisted of only one person, while immigrants were substantially more likely than native-born residents to live in overcrowded conditions or multigenerational households.

Even with the less aggressive con-

tainment measures, the economic effects of the virus have been severe for the country. Sweden's National Institute for Economic Research projected that gross domestic product would contract by 7 per cent this year and the unemployment rate would rise to just over 10 per cent.

The large fall in consumer and business confidence, the institute said in a release, points "to a rapid and severe downturn, not least in large parts of the service sector".

"The economy will shrink both owing to a drop in exports and is already contracting owing to lower consumption," said Lina Maria Ellegård, an economist at Lund University.

"But the underlying causes differ in that the export sector is mostly affected by the international situation, whereas the drop in consumption is directly related to the government's recommendation of social distancing," added Ellegård.

In the first three months of the year, the Swedish economy contracted by less than 1 per cent - less than the United States' fall - but the production of both goods and services declined in March. The car industry, one of Sweden's major export sectors along with real estate, hospitality and

restaurants, led the way.

That's because even without lockdowns or orders, the behaviour of Swedes still changed - to an extent.

According to data collected by Google and Apple, Swedes have cut back on their travel to places like stores and restaurants and decreased their use of transit-like buses substantially, though not as dramatically as their Nordic neighbours in Denmark. Still, travel over the Easter holiday fell by 90 per cent, Tegnell said on The Daily Show.

Multiple experts in Sweden agreed that because a recommendation made by Swedish leadership is culturally viewed as more of a demand, the freedoms allowed have not resulted in free-for-alls.

"There's a basic misconception that there's one big huge after-ski party. That's not true," said Lars Trägårdh, a Swedish historian.

Sweden's voluntary restrictions policy is made possible by the high levels of trust throughout Swedish society. "We have a lot of social trust and a lot of trust in the institutions, and the institutions have confidence in the citizens," said Trägårdh, adding: "That's why we decided to have this voluntary approach as opposed

to one that's more hardcore."

The photos circulating online don't fully represent the broader reality on the ground either. "I've seen pictures in the newspapers and news media of what looks to be crowded restaurants in Stockholm," said Bo Becker, an economist at the Stockholm School of Economics.

"What I've seen is mostly pretty sparse restaurants. Every other table is empty, and there's very little business. Life doesn't go on as usual, but maybe the lockdown is less severe than in other countries," added Becker.

But even if Sweden's policy of allowing businesses to open and people to move out and about is not that different from some policies American states have or will soon implement, there's been one major difference: the schools.

Schools for children up to age 15 have remained open, all the way down to daycares and preschool. "That makes a world of difference. It's a gender issue," noted Trägårdh.

Sweden has one of the highest rates of female participation in the labour force for rich countries. Forcing young children to stay home would put many mothers in a bind or even knock them out of the workforce entirely.

"Closing down schools works well if you are in a well-to-do, middle-class family that has a house and a garden and can afford to have one person staying at home," Trägårdh said, adding: "That may not look like a doable proposition if you are a single parent or do not make a lot of money."

Angner meanwhile explained that shutting down daycare and schools could increase risk as well by leading working parents to turn to their own parents for help.

"If you close daycares, then either one parent has to stop working or grandma or grandpa shows up," he said, adding however that since the elderly are most at risk, it was even more important to keep schools and daycares open.

As other countries work through their peak infections, they will have to figure out how to reach a new status quo where the spread of Covid-19 infections is still slow but restrictions can be lightened.

"Now that everybody else is starting to shift towards opening up, peo-

ple are talking about Sweden," said Trägårdh, adding: "Other Nordics are realising that you can't keep schools closed forever. We're in the long run here. It's not a 60-meter race, it's more like a marathon."

While Sweden has a higher death rate than its Nordic neighbours and other wealthy European nations like Germany, it has been lower than rates in the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom.

According to the Financial Times' figures, Sweden has seen an 18 per cent jump in excess deaths since the start of the Covid-19 outbreak, while Denmark has seen a 5 per cent rise. Excess deaths in England and Wales are up 37 per cent.

"The data out of Finland, Norway, and Denmark look much better. But everything will hinge on what will happen next," said Angner.

There's some evidence that Sweden has managed to take the heaviest blow from the coronavirus already - about a quarter or one-fifth of the population of Stockholm may have been infected, which would put the infection rate at a level similar to that found in New York City - which has had many more deaths and has been under a near-total lockdown for almost two months.

On Tuesday, health officials in Stockholm said the number of new deaths linked to Covid-19 was slowly decreasing from one week to the next.

The Swedish example carries both optimistic and pessimistic tidings for the US as it embraces a partial, scattered reopening cheered on by the White House. It suggests that, even without punitive mandates, people can and will take measures to keep themselves safe from the disease.

But even though people are protecting themselves without formal orders, the economy will be only slightly better off than it was under lockdown.

Meanwhile, the American push to reopen is being driven by distrust of the government combined with the absence of robust safety-net programmes to stem the economic bleeding. In the American context, Sweden's example may be no example at all.

Matthew Zeitlin filed this dispatch for GEN, a Medium publication about politics, power and culture.

Here's who's dying from Covid-19 in the United States

By Robert Roy Britt

PEOPLE over 65 are more likely to die from Covid-19, as are people with underlying health issues like diabetes or heart disease. Those are well-documented facts and have led some to believe that only the old and sick need worry.

But in fact, the disease has killed people in all age groups, including children who have developed a rare toxic shock syndrome, according to reports in recent days from New York and elsewhere in the United States and other countries.

Separately, a new study of children with Covid-19 admitted to paediatric intensive care units in the US and Canada concludes that while the overall severity of symptoms in the children was "far less than that documented in adults... Covid-19 can result in a significant disease burden in children".

According to the research, published in JAMA Paediatrics, 40 of the 48 children - ranging in age from four to 16 - had underlying medical conditions. Two of them died, and three remain on ventilators.

Meanwhile, more data are revealing how other age groups are affected. People ages 20 to 44 account for 20 per cent of Covid-19 hospitalisations and 12 per cent of ICU admissions, according to Paul G. Auwaerter, MD, at Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Robert Salata, MD, a profes-

sor of medicine in epidemiology and international health at Case Western Reserve University, meanwhile sees Covid-19 patients on a daily basis. He's clear to point out that the majority of severe cases are indeed among older people and people with underlying health complications.

However, he says that lately he has seen more people under age 40 developing severe breathing problems and blood clots related to Covid-19.

"We are really shocked to see younger age groups have similar complications" as older people, Salata tells me, adding: "We've seen it in some younger people who had no risk factors."

One does not have to die from Covid-19 to be severely affected. In Italy, where the outbreak hit hard before it did so in the US, some people who recovered from Covid-19 have been "unable to shake sickness and fatigue" weeks later. It's too soon to know whether the disease might leave some people with enduring debilitations.

It may be too soon to draw many firm conclusions from these disparate datasets, but they indicate that around half of all Covid-19 deaths are among people younger than age 80, and more than 20 per cent are among people who've yet to reach retirement age.

Underlying health conditions clearly raise the risk of severe outcomes and death



from the coronavirus. In an analysis of early data, the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention found that 71 per cent of Covid-19 patients requiring hospitalisation had at least one underlying health condition or risk factor, as did 78 per cent of those requiring

intensive care.

If those figures hold up on further analysis, however, that means that 29 per cent of Covid-19 hospitalisations involve otherwise relatively healthy individuals.

Either way, underlying conditions don't pertain to just a few people or only to older people.

"We estimated that 45.4 per cent of US adults are at increased risk for complications from the coronavirus disease because of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory disease, hypertension, or cancer," a new analysis from the CDC shows. Those at elevated risk include 19.8 per cent of people age 18 to 29 and 80.7 per cent

for people over age 80.

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

Mauritius battles a growing synthetic drugs problem

By Richard Chelin

FOR decades Mauritius has been a popular destination for traffickers of traditional drugs such as heroin and cannabis. Despite the hefty prison sentences the offence carries, there are daily media reports on drug seizures and the arrest of traffickers.

Recently though the island has seen a rise in synthetic drugs. Each year since 2015, the number of people arrested for synthetic drug offences has doubled, reaching 1 059 in 2018. Public health institutions have also recorded growing in-patient cases of drug abuse - 44% of drug abuse cases in 2017 were related to new psychoactive substances (NPS).

The ENACT Organised Crime Index for Africa ranks Mauritius number one in the synthetic drug trade in Southern Africa and in the top 10 on the continent.

Synthetic drugs are manufactured in laboratories using chemicals to mimic traditional narcotics or hallucinogens such as marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy, LSD, amphetamine-type stimulants and even morphine. Based on seizure data, the most common types of these drugs in Mauritius are synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones.

Synthetic drugs present a new and worrying era for the drug market in Mauritius.

The history of drugs in the country is key to understanding the problem. Substance abuse in Mauritius dates back to the 1970s when heroin was first introduced on the island. The problem has escalated significantly, with the 2010 World Drug Report revealing that Mauritius had the highest prevalence of opioid use in Africa.

The government has struggled to contain the problem despite adopting a holistic public health stance on drug abuse by moving away from the traditional 'war on drugs' approach. Various initiatives have been introduced, including harm-reduction strategies, needle and syringe exchange programmes, opioid substitution treatment and drug awareness programmes.

The change in approach has shown some success, notably a reduction in cannabis and traditional opioid use such as heroin. But the synthetic drug problem is increasing, and is a burden on both the law enforcement and public health systems.

Former attorney-general and justice minister Rama Valayden told media that 'there is no way to win the fight against synthetic drugs.' He said drug producers were replacing compounds in the drug faster than law enforcement could detect them.

Producers of synthetic drugs are replacing compounds in the drug faster than police can detect them.

The drugs are obtained in various forms. Chemicals used for their production can be imported online in powder or liquid form, and it's estimated that about 95% of those ingredients are imported from China. Unlike heroin or cocaine, synthetics can be produced at home using products such as pesticides, rubber, rat poison and detergents, among others.

This changes the dynamics of the traditional drug trafficking system. There's little reliance on the hierarchical structure of a producer or supplier at the top, transport networks into the country and street-level dealing. Synthetic drug systems have 'democratised' the drug economy - it's now open to anyone.

Despite this, the government has made some strides in addressing the problem. A commission of inquiry was established in 2015 to 'inquire into, and report on, all aspects of drug trafficking in Mauritius.' One of its tasks was to look into the availability of new types of drugs, including synthetic and designer drugs.

The commission report, released in 2018, made over 400 recommendations and government has been acting on some and evaluating others. One includes establishing the National Drug Observatory to monitor illicit drug use, abuse and trafficking in the country.

Synthetic drug systems have 'democratised' the drug economy - it's



open to anyone

In 2019 government launched the National Drug Control Master Plan 2019-2023 focusing on: supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction. A mechanism to coordinate legislation, an implementation framework, monitoring and evaluation, and strategic information was also included. The plan emphasises three aspects to succeed: capacity building, respect and observance of human rights, and gender mainstreaming.

The national plan has practical objectives and clear outputs, but will it curb the synthetic drug problem? To succeed policies must be practical and relevant,

and implemented properly. Key aspects to consider are young people's willingness to experiment with new drugs and the low cost of manufacturing of these narcotics.

In the short term, government could use existing drug laws or adapt them to be more responsive. Coupled with other forms of legislation, more comprehensive approaches could be created.

A new law could also be passed specifically for synthetic drugs focusing on the import, export and sale of any addictive or harmful psychoactive substance. An example is Ireland's Psychoactive Substance Act of 2010.

An early warning system based in the Mauritius National Drug Observatory could monitor synthetic drugs and provide an understanding of its market and characteristics. This information could inform policy and prevention and awareness programmes aimed at reducing the harmful consumption of these substances.

Synthetic drugs present a new era for the drug market in Mauritius. The low price and availability of the ingredients coupled with greater reach to buyers through advanced technology enable traffickers to remain a step ahead of law enforcement. Unless this pattern changes, traffickers will have the upper hand and the synthetic drugs problem will expand on the island.

The fashion industry must learn from coronavirus

By Special Correspondent

THE new coronavirus (COVID-19) is said to have first emerged in China at the end of December 2019. Despite its far-reaching impact, COVID-19 is far from a great leveler. It is increasingly clear that people living in poverty are shouldering the greatest cost for the pandemic.

In the garment industry, the crisis has laid bare systemic inequalities in supply chains that are built on decades of poverty wages.

COVID-19 has highlighted the fragile interconnectedness of supply chains, where, like falling dominoes, a crisis in one country sets off a chain of painful consequences in others.

Lockdowns in China disrupted the supply of raw materials to suppliers in producer countries, like Bangladesh, resulting in temporary factory closures and suspension of workers' wages. Brands reacted to lockdowns in Europe and America by cancelling an estimated £20bn worth of orders, refusing to pay for completed goods and even de-

manding discounts on goods already received. Many suppliers operating on narrow profit-margins, are not able to sustain the impact of mass cancellations and will be forced into insolvency, resulting in job loss for garment workers.

The injustice we are seeing in the garment industry during the pandemic is not a new

phenomenon, rather global supply chains are designed specifically to limit brands obligations to suppliers. Brands typically only pay after delivery of goods, which has made it possible for mass cancellations, including of orders that have been completed or are in production. It has also made it possible for brands to demand brutal discounts on

goods already received. Cancellation of payment or terms may not be contractually allowed, but in a relationship where brands have the upper hand, suppliers often have little choice but to comply.

The crisis faced by garment workers is rapidly evolving. Decisions that brands make in the

coming days, weeks and months will have a long-lasting impact on workers and their families - and indeed on the future of many garment producing countries. After intense pressure, a growing number of brands are now backtracking on decisions to cancel orders and have agreed to honour existing contracts.

FAO makes gains in the fight against Desert locusts in East Africa and Yemen but threat of a food security crisis remains

By Special Correspondent, Rome

THE Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), QU Dongyu, said that significant gains had been made in the fight against the desert locust upsurge in East Africa and Yemen. He stressed, however, that more needs to be done to prevent a food security crisis, as the ongoing rainy season not only provides livelihoods for farmers and pastoralists but also favourable conditions for locusts to breed.

Releasing FAO's progress report on the locust control campaign in East Africa and Yemen, the Director-General noted that the UN agency had continued its surveillance and control operations despite constraints resulting from COVID-19 and other challenges.

Preliminary estimates from the UN agency indicate that 720, 000 tonnes of cereal, enough to feed five million people a year, have been saved in ten countries by preventing the spread of

Desert Locusts and damage to many more hectares. An additional 350 000 pastoral households have been spared from distress.

"Our gains have been significant; but the battle is long and is not yet over," Qu said. "More people are at risk of losing their livelihoods and worsening food security in the coming months."

While swathes of treated land are now relatively free from the voracious pest, the first wave of swarms has reproduced and a second wave of locusts will transition from juveniles to the young adult stage in June, taking flight at a critical time when many farmers in East Africa prepare to harvest their crops.

The Desert Locust is considered the most destructive migratory pest in the world and a single swarm covering one square kilometre can contain up to 80 million locusts. FAO's Desert Locust appeal, launched in January, now covers ten countries - Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Su-



dan, Uganda, Tanzania and Yemen.

The current upsurge is particularly alarming in the broader Eastern Africa region, with recently released forecasts from the Global Report on Food Crises indicating that over 25 million people will face acute food insecurity in the region in the second half of 2020. In Yemen, where locusts have been reproducing in hard-to-access inland areas, an additional 17 million people are acutely food insecure. But those estimates were made before the impact of COVID-19 in a region of acute food insecurity.

"We can and must protect vulnerable people from the impact of multiple crises: conflicts, climate extremes, desert locusts and COVID-19, which threaten to cause a further dramatic deterioration in their food security," Qu said. "To do this, we need to intensify our efforts further and focus not just on controls but on supporting the livelihoods of farmers and pastoralists so they can get through this."

Since FAO launched its desert locust response in January,

its appeal has been \$130 million funded, the report said. However, funding has concentrated on locust control activities and much more backing for livelihoods support activities is needed.

Qu thanked political leaders in the affected countries for their efforts in mobilizing staff and resources and working closely with FAO to design, monitor and implement control operations.

While locust control and surveillance operations are led by national governments, FAO is providing critical support in the form of pesticides, bio-pesticides, equipment, aircraft and training.

So far this year, more 365,000 hectares have been controlled in the ten countries covered by the FAO appeal.

While governments keep expanding their efforts to control the current upsurge with FAO's support, conditions remain very favourable for locust reproduction and will require sustained and geographically expanded efforts. The revised ver-

sion of the appeal to be launched in the coming weeks is expected to also seek resources for the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, which are also dealing with locust infestations and for scaling up preparedness efforts in the Sahel region which might also be affected.

Desert locust monitoring, forecasting and control are at the heart of FAO's mandate. Its Desert Locust Information Service has been in operation for nearly 50 years. FAO's well-established field presence, ability to link up authorities from different countries, and expertise in desert locust management and forecasting, make it a key player in responding to upsurges like that currently affecting East Africa and the Red Sea area.

ABIDJAN

THE African Development Bank (AfDB) says its Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation programme would benefit 40 million farmers in the next five years, adding 120 million tonnes into the continent's food basket. Since the launch of the Technologies for African Agricultural Transfor-

mation programme in 2018, the project has been implemented by 28 countries including Zimbabwe while four more are in the process of joining the programme.

"The Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) programme has set the ambitious target of reaching 40 million farmers in the next five years and adding 120 million

AfDB programme to boost Africa's food basket

tonnes of additional foodstuffs in the African food basket, valued between US\$1.5 billion to \$2.8 billion," said the regional bank.

AfDB said the overall goal of TAAT was to radically transform African agriculture into a competitive sector by deploying

high-impact, proven agricultural technologies to raise agricultural productivity in Africa. The programme is also aimed at mitigating risks and promote diversification and processing in 18 agricultural value chains within eight priority intervention areas that include self-sufficiency

in rice production, cassava intensification food and nutritional security in the Sahel, this, transforming African savannahs into breadbaskets, expanding horticulture, increasing Africa's wheat output and achieving self-sufficiency in inland fish farming.

"Within two years, TAAT has recorded successes in bringing the latest technologies to African farmers at scale - enabling them to increase yields and improve their livelihoods," said the regional financier.

It said success stories of the TAAT project have been record-

ed in countries such as Ethiopia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Sudan. In Zambia, for instance, where the fall armyworm is threatening food supplies and farmers' incomes, the bank is working with the Zambian government, seed companies and community leaders to distribute pesticide-treated and drought-tolerant wheat, maize and sorghum to farmers.

Learning and sharing key to climate adaptation and resilience building

By Zak Derler

LAST year, participants from 12 different nations met in a drought-stricken region of central Chile to share lessons on how to adapt water and resilient agriculture practices to tackle climate change.

The representatives learnt new ways to plough and aerate fields at risk of drought and how to adapt irrigation and water collection to more unpredictable rainfall by viewing resilience efforts first-hand in the South American country.

By bringing together various nations, with unique ways of tackling the issues they face on a daily basis, such exchange visits help to work towards a common goal of climate adaptation.

The participants represented 12 different national implementing entities (NIEs) under the Adaptation Fund's pioneering Direct Access climate finance modality that empowers country ownership in adaptation.

For example, the water collection techniques can be applied in similarly dry areas. "I've seen a lot of ideas that can be taken to Armenia," said then-director Meruzhan Galstyan of Armenia's NIE, EPIU, after participating in

the exchange. "There are also things others can learn from us and how we deal with our problems. We will continue communicating and sharing our ideas and our experiences."

Sharing and learning from tangible actions in the field is a big part of the Adaptation Fund's focus.

With 100 concrete adaptation projects on the ground and activities in over 90 countries, the Adaptation Fund has developed a rich knowledge base that countries and others can learn from to multiply the efforts of the Fund's work. All the projects also include a knowledge management component built into them.

For example just last month the Fund's NIE in Costa Rica, Fundecooperación para el Desarrollo Sostenible, launched the first in a series of webinars to share results and lessons learned from its multi-sector adaptation project.

Fundecooperación director Mariánella Feoli signalled the idea of a virtual series came about as part of adapting to the changed dynamics of the Covid-19 situation.

Over the last few years the Adaptation Fund has further increased its capabilities to support learning, and a

2018 independent evaluation concluded that the Fund was making substantive progress in learning activities and had "the potential to lead knowledge management on adaptation".

Now, Learning and Sharing is one of the three pillars (action and innovation are the others) of the Adaptation Fund's five-year Medium Term Strategy; a plan launched in 2018 which aims to add new tools to further support its concrete actions in climate vulnerable countries, building on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and serving the Paris Climate Agreement.

Within the learning pillar, case studies, new learning grants, thematic studies and country exchanges like the one in Chile are being generated to share experiences, best practices and lessons and ultimately enhance adaptation on the ground. Interactive e-learning courses are also offered to help NIEs and stakeholders improve access to climate finance.

The strategy "recognizes and responds to the fact that accelerated global actions are needed to strengthen adaptation capacity and reduce vulnerability," said Mikko Ollikainen, Manager of the Adaptation Fund.

"To that end, as one of the early



Participants of 2019's Chile country exchange. AF NIE participants from Antigua and Barbuda (l) and South Africa (r) pictured at one of the farms supported by the Chile project

movers in climate adaptation with currently a sizable portfolio of projects, we also see it as our responsibility to make lessons available for other actors that may benefit from them."

For Chile, the nearly US\$ 10 million project funded by the Adaptation Fund utilizes innovative approaches to support small farmers in generat-

ing and saving water, and diversifying crops.

The project, "Enhancing resilience to climate change of the small agriculture in the region of O'Higgins", is also the first adaptation project in the country and is generating replicable models that can be scaled up in other vulnerable areas.

Located just south of Chile's capital Santiago, O'Higgins is one of the areas most affected by precipitation decrease and is currently experiencing a 10-year drought.

Climate change is projected to exacerbate water scarcity and soil degradation - an issue that farmers in the region are already struggling with.

What does 'eliminating' Covid-19 mean, anyway?

By Yasmin Tayag

LAST Friday (May 8), the prestigious medical journal The Lancet published a stunning news headline: "New Zealand eliminates Covid-19." In the piece, health journalist Sophie Cousins reported that the country had ended "community transmission of SARS-CoV-2" and recorded its first day of no new Covid-19 cases the previous week - about a month after it had started its aggressive lockdown.

To the non-technical ear, this description of New Zealand's very specific milestone may have seemed at odds with the way we usually think about "elimination". Using the common definition of the word would suggest that the virus was completely wiped out from the island nation.

But the Lancet headline used "elimination" in the epidemiological sense, which means a very different thing, as I'll explain below. The words "eradication" and "extinction" - which I hope we'll be seeing in the news soon - are also used by epidemiologists to talk about infectious disease in very specific ways.

The following definitions were put forth by former CDC (US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention) Deputy Director Dr Walt Dowdle in a document for the CDC in 1999, though there's plenty of nuanced scientific debate about how these terms are defined.

Elimination: Eliminating Covid-19 means that the incidence of new cases in a defined geographical region has been reduced to zero as a result of deliberate efforts. Notably, Dowdle writes, "continued intervention measures are required". More on this later.

Eradication: Eradicating Covid-19 means that the worldwide incidence of Covid-19 infection has been reduced to zero as a result of deliberate efforts. "Intervention measures are no longer needed," says Dowdle.

Extinction: For Covid-19 to be considered extinct, the SARS-CoV-2 virus would have to cease existing anywhere in nature or in a laboratory.



One reason defining these terms is so contentious has to do with what they mean for public health intervention. David L. Heymann, the WHO's Assistant Director General for Health Security and Environment, argued in 2006 that the way Dowdle defined "eradication" was insufficient because it incorrectly emphasized that interventions were no longer needed. Once a disease is eradicated, Hey-

mann writes, it's imperative to continue public health efforts so that it doesn't re-emerge.

This may seem like a lot of quibbling over small details, but the way public health officials talk about infectious diseases is vitally important in ensuring that the public acts appropriately.

This is primarily because, after all, people will act very differently if

they believe that the virus no longer exists - compared to how they might behave if they understood that there were merely no new Covid-19 cases in their region.

Michael Baker, a professor of public health at the University of Otago in New Zealand and an adviser to the government, told the Lancet that "how the country communicates the concept of elimination will be impor-

tant going forwards".

Siouxie Wiles, an associate professor at the University of Auckland, meanwhile said it was important to clearly explain "elimination" to citizens because we "don't want the public to feel like they are being lied to".

As more nations successfully rein in the spread of Covid-19, New Zealand's careful approach to communicating to the public will become increasingly

important to watch and learn from. Meanwhile, the country will continue work to maintain its "eliminated" status, true to Dowdle's definition of the term.

A Medium Coronavirus Blog dispatch. Yasmin Tayag is senior editor at OneZero at Medium covering "all science that's shaping the future".

Washington's Machiavellian maneuvers undermine world's pandemic endeavors

BEIJING

NICCOLO Machiavelli might have never anticipated that his booklet on politics The Prince would become a handbook for politicians who resonate with the doctrine of deception and ruthlessness in political maneuvering over the centuries following his death.

Today, machiavellianism has some new loyal inheritors in Washington who have been practicing the political theory to the extremes in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

One of Machiavelli's key lessons is, "He who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived." It turns out that some

Washington politicians are truly good students of that teaching.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, policy-makers in the White House have been doing everything they can to manipulate public opinion in their own country and that of the world.

At first, they didn't bother to take the repeated early warnings coming from its own intelligent officers and experts, the World Health Organization (WHO) and Beijing seriously, called the raging pandemic a "hoax," and misinformed the public that the virus was a "flu" that would disappear miraculously.

When the pandemic started to grow rampant in the United States, they began to pretend as if they knew nothing about the pathogen, and blamed China, the WHO, the previous U.S. admin-

istration, the so-called deep state in America, and whoever else they could think of, except themselves.

Machiavelli also taught that "the end justifies the means." Those selfish and egoistic Washington power hunters appear to be true believers of that creed. In a bid to ensure an election victory in November, the current U.S. administration cares more about ballots than body counts.

They are sidelining the role of scientists and common sense in decision-making, ready to silence or sack people like Rick Bright, a leading U.S. vaccine scientist, who dissented against the powerful, and attempting to reopen the country against the advice of professional opinion. They match literally every part of Machiavelli's "successful



ruler" description by being "brutal, calculating and, when necessary, utterly immoral."

The third Machiavellian doctrine this White House seems to have drawn inspiration from is "The promise given was a necessity of the past: the word broken is a necessity of the present."

It is widely known that the United States helped build the post-war world order underpinned by multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund.

Today, Washington has decided those global governance arrangements it once supported now go against its desire to put "America First," or in other words, put itself well

above all others. It has thus begun to practice a withdrawal doctrine.

For more than three years, this administration has cut itself loose from a host of international organizations or treaties. Most recently, it announced a suspension of funding for the WHO while accusing it of "severely mismanaging and covering up the spread of the coronavirus."

The world today is no longer that divisive I-win-you-lose place when the Italian thinker wrote his booklet, but rather a densely connected community where the wellbeing of one country depends on the wellbeing of others.

The fact that the United States is now the world's epicenter in the pan-

democratic should serve as a wake-up call for some Washington politicians that zero-sum, calculative and self-serving Machiavellian teachings are part of the problem, not the solution, in coping with this unprecedented global public health crisis.

As the world's sole superpower, it should stop acting as the disruptor-in-chief in this global pandemic fight. Abusing its power in such a Machiavellian manner will only allow the plague to wreak more havoc and claim more lives.

That is too high a price for both the United States and the rest of the world to pay.

Xinhua

THE GUARDIAN SIMPLE WORD FIT // THE GUARDIAN CROSSWORD --00 84 00--

WORD-FIT

3 LETTERS: PET, APE, CUM
 4 LETTERS: FLOW, OVER, EVEN, REAL, OVER, ROME, MOOS, POUR
 5 LETTERS: LARGE, NOVEL, OMBRE, SPORT, METER
 6 LETTERS: EAGLES, LEAN TO, MTWARA, MODERN, REJECT
 7 LETTERS: MOROCCO
 8 LETTERS: ACCOUNTS
 10 LETTERS: FREE MARKET

CROSSWORD

CLUES: Across
 1 fail to impress
 5 a memorandum
 7 accumulate over time
 8 a corner
 10 heaven
 11 known about by many people
 13 the refuse of grapes that have been pressed for winemaking
 15 out of the way
 17 Kuala Lumpur is her capital city
 19 one as a quantity
 20 a small stone made smooth and round by the action of water

Down:
 1 Muslims bound together
 2 a legislative body in the ruling assembly of Russia
 3 a house
 4 Zambia's capital
 6 on to
 7 Largest state in U.S.A
 9 vehicle equipped for living in transporting goods
 12 the holding of an office
 14 a slatted wooden case used for transporting goods
 16 an accomplice of a hawk
 17 Mother
 18 labium

SOLUTIONS

WORD-FIT
 P E T
 F L O W
 O V E R
 E V E N
 R E A L
 O V E R
 R O M E
 M O O S
 P O U R
 L A R G E
 N O V E L
 O M B R E
 S P O R T
 M E T E R
 E A G L E S
 L E A N T O
 M T W A R A
 M O D E R N
 R E J E C T
 M O R O C C O
 A C C O U N T S
 F R E E M A R K E T

CROSSWORD
 1 F A I L
 2 D U M A
 3 H O U S E
 4 L U S A K A
 5 M E M O R A N D U M
 6 O N
 7 A C C U M U L A T E
 8 C O R N E R
 9 V A N
 10 H E A V E N
 11 W I D E L Y K N O W N
 12 O F F I C E
 13 D R U S H
 14 C O F F I N
 15 O U T L I N E
 16 H A W K
 17 K U A L A L U M P U R
 18 M O T H E R
 19 Q U A N T I T Y
 20 S M O O T H S T O N E



Thursday 14 May 2020

NMB's Zaipuna basks in windfall profits as bank makes 48.7 billion/ in Q1 of 2020

By The Banker Reporter

NMB Bank Plc's windfall profit making spree continued during the first three months of this year with 48.7bn/- made in net profits accounting for a 141 percent increase year on year period.

The bank's acting Managing Director, Ruth Zaipuna said the impressive results were buoyed by a double-digit growth in total operating income at 13 percent while operating expenses decreased by two percent with impairment charge also reduced by 40 percent during the same period.

"The bank has recorded a profit before tax of 69.6bn/- which represents a 141 percent increase year on year on account of strong growth in credit to private sector during the fourth quarter of 2019, which continued into the first quarter of 2020," Zaipuna said.

She pointed out that loans and advances increased by 15 percent while growth in customer use of the bank's digital channels in line with its digital transformation agenda grew significantly. Zaipuna further noted that NMB has also continued to monitor its operating costs appropriately hence reduced it to income ratio by 53 percent by end of the first quarter while also sustaining efforts and focus on ensuring a quality loan book.

"In the light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, management anticipates increased impairment pressure on the loan book, and efforts are currently centred on customer engagements and recalibration of the 2020 strategy with a view to minimize anticipated impact," the acting NMB chief explained.

The country's largest bank in terms of physical branch network, customer numbers and profit making, last year made 52 percent increase in net profit for the year ended 31 December 2019. Net profit increased from 97.7bn/- in 2018 to 148.6bn/- during the period thanks to an increase in the bank's operating income, which increased by five percent, reduced impairment charges which fell by 27 percent and cost control measures that resulted in flat year on year operating costs.

Other highlights during the past year included interest income which grew by four percent to 626.3bn/-, non-funded income increased by 14 percent while impairment charges dropped by 27 percent year on year 100.4bn/- thanks to significant improvement in the quality of the loan book and loan repayments.

"The bank's total assets grew by 15 percent from 5.68trn/- in 2018 to 6.548trn/- in 2019 while loans and advances to customers increased to 3.619trn/-, representing a 12 percent increase from 3.272trn/- recorded in the previous year," Zaipuna revealed.

NMB's asset growth was boosted by a 629bn/- increase in customer deposits as well as its retail bond which raised 83.3bn/- in liquidity. Overall customer deposits rose by 15 percent to 4.871trn/- during the last quarter of 2019.

NMB which is listed at Dar es Salaam Stock Exchange has approximately 22 percent market share in both loans and customer deposits while its balance sheet is largest in the banking industry.



NMB Bank Plc's managing director, Ruth Zaipuna.

IMF demands reversal of Corona tax cuts in Kenya

NAIROBI

INCOME tax, value-added tax and sales levy cuts announced by President Uhuru Kenyatta in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic will be reversed if Kenya agrees with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reinstate the higher taxes.

The fund says the cuts will cost the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) and compromise the State's ability to deal with emergencies and spending on development projects like roads, power plants and water infrastructure.

The IMF has asked the Treasury to reverse its earlier stand of delinking the tax reliefs to the end of the coronavirus pandemic, meaning that Kenyan workers and companies will stop enjoying them after the spread of the virus has been contained.

The Treasury and the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), in a response to the IMF, have committed to review Kenya's tax measures without being specific, adding that the country will restore the lost revenues.

Kenya's revenue collection is expected to drop by Sh43 billion in three months due to the cuts on Income tax, value-added tax and sales levy, the IMF warned after agreeing a Sh78.3 billion (\$739 million) in emergency financing to help Kenya respond to the economic shock caused by Covid-19.

"Going forward, to support the revenue effort over the medium term, staff recommends that the tax rate reductions for the VAT, turnover tax, and personal income tax be reversed once the crisis has passed," says the IMF in an assessment of Kenya's economy published on Tuesday.

The State's ability to deal with unforeseen spending has been weakened given that civil servants' salaries, debt payments and allocation to counties already eat up 94 percent of government revenue.

The IMF did not comment on the reduction in corporate tax from 30 percent to 25 percent, a reduction meant to ease companies' cash flow at a time when they are plagued with lower sales. The relief excluded workers earning less than Sh24,000 from paying taxes and increased the personal relief for all workers to Sh2,400 from the initial Sh1,400.

The Treasury lowered the maximum income tax rate to 25 percent from 30 percent, which initially applies to workers earning more than Sh47,000. This created an additional income of Sh4,241 monthly for those earning Sh50,000; Sh7,229 for those earning Sh100,000 and Sh9,717 for those with a salary of up to Sh150,000. Employees on Sh500,000 pay will get Sh27,229 as relief.

Top earners on a gross monthly salary of Sh1 million will see their take home increase by Sh52,229, translating to an income increment of about seven per cent. Lawmakers agreed to lower the three percent tax levied on small and



Kenya's Treasury Secretary, Ukur Yatani.

mid-sized traders sales to one percent, a move that looks set to ease the pain for enterprises. Local companies are also paying a lower tax of 25 percent on their profits from the current 30 percent.

Treasury Secretary Ukur Yatani in an April 30 letter to IMF director-general Kristalina Georgieva committed to restore some taxes without being specific. "We are closely monitoring the economic impact of Covid-19. Once economic activity recovers sufficiently, we will review our tax measures to fully restore revenues as a share of GDP as part of our efforts to strengthen the public finances," Mr Yatani said in the letter he co-authored with Central Bank of Kenya governor Patrick Njoroge.

"We remain committed to raising the ratio of tax revenue to GDP over the medium term," the two added in the letter made public by the IMF. The tax changes are aimed at lowering the cost of basic items while providing workers with additional income to boost consumption. This is expected to boost traders and retailers flagging sales. Kenya has confirmed 715 cases of Covid-19,

and 36 deaths, and has imposed restrictive measures to halt its spread.

The country has suspended international passenger travel, imposed a daily dusk-to-dawn curfew and banned public gatherings including closure of schools, bars and nightclubs. Those moves have led to a sharp reduction in economic activity.

The Treasury says economic growth could decline to 2.5 percent in 2020, but may go lower to 1.8 percent, compared with 5.4 percent growth a year earlier. The IMF has also raised Kenya's risk of debt distress to high from moderate due to the impact of the coronavirus crisis.

Kenya's debt stood at 61.7 percent of GDP at the end of last year, up from 50.2 percent at the end of 2015, the IMF said, driven up by gaping budget deficits that were caused by large infrastructure projects such as the SGR railway line. "The risk of debt distress has moved to high from moderate due to the impact of the global Covid-19 crisis which exacerbated existing vulnerabilities," the fund said.

Access Bank creates mobile banking App to boost seamless transactions

LAGOS

AS part of its effort to ensure its customers have easy access to their funds and can carry out seamless transactions during these uncertain times, Nigeria's leading retail bank, Access Bank Plc has launched a revolutionary new mobile banking application.

The AccessMore app is an innovative mobile application that offers a 'more than banking' experience, built on cutting-edge technology, offering tailored and personalised services, ease of use and excellent customer experience.

Herbert Wigwe, CEO, Access Bank Plc, said in a period like this, when the bank needs to be more present and relevant in the lives of its customers than ever, it has risen to the challenge to ensure its customers have access to their funds to carry out transactions while keeping safe at home, by providing not just uninterrupted service but superior service.

"To deliver on our promise to continually give our customers 'more', we have worked with first-class tech experts to build the AccessMore mobile app to suit our customers' lifestyle and meet their financial needs.

As we mark our first anniversary post-merger with erstwhile Diamond Bank, this new addition to our array of solutions is also in line with our promise to adopt the best of both institutions. The AccessMore mobile app does not only deliver the best combination of both mobile apps, it accommodates the unique needs of existing users, delivering the best mobile banking experience on a world class platform. Some of the unique features of the "AccessMore" mobile app include: dashboard personalization of theme and favourites, interactive promotional messages, intuitive beneficiary selection and of course a more rewarding banking experience", he said.

In an interview with Victor Etuokwu, executive director, retail banking, Access Bank Plc, said, "This month marks the one-year anniversary of our expanded institution and we are using this opportunity to reward our loyal customers who believed in us and stood by us throughout the integration period.

From April - December 2020, we will be rewarding customers who complete 10 transactions using either our USSD service *901# or any of our mobile apps (old Access Mobile, old Diamond mobile or the new AccessMore app) per month. So, the more a customer transacts in multiples of 10, the higher his/her chances of winning a brand-new car in the quarterly draw. Our customers can download the new AccessMore mobile app from their Android Play store or IOS app store."

Access Bank Plc is recognized as one of the most innovative financial institutions in Africa. With about 40 million customers and more than 600 branches nationwide, it offers a range of products and services tailored to suit needs and lifestyle of its customers across multiple segments.



Herbert Wigwe, CEO, Access Bank Plc.

Letshego Holdings post impressive results in year ending December 2019

By The Banker Reporter

BOTSWANA based Letshego Holdings Limited which owns Letshego Bank Tanzania and Letshego (T) Limited posted a net profit of 692 million pulas (over 131.8bn/-) last year being a 35 percent increase compared to 2018.

In its full year results for 2019, the Botswana Stock Exchange listed company said its profits were mainly driven by gross advances to customers which increased by three percent; net advances to customers increased by four percent with strong capital adequacy ratio of 36 percent compared to 33 percent in 2018.

"The group's financial performance for the year ended December 2019 was within expectations. Overall profit before tax increased by 11 percent, profit after tax by 35 percent and earnings per share by 41 percent," the report said.

Net income growth was however muted as the focus

was placed on improved portfolio quality while return on equity increasing to 16 percent compared to 12 percent during the period under review while total savings customers increased to 402,298 from 173,074 in 2018.

"The focus for the year was on embedding the strategy to deliver positive performance through stability, cost control, improving portfolio collection quality and stabilising the effective tax rate," the report added.

The Letshego Holdings annual report which highlighted achievements made in 2019 which include total acquisition of Letshego Tanzania's 100 percent shares, further noted that a portion of savings LetsGo customers using electronic channels to transact rose from 54 to 81 percent during the period.

"As expected, gross yields continue to come under pressure, mainly due to the competitive markets

in which we operate. Borrowing costs increased by 42 percent on the back of one off adjustments," the report stated.

The report said borrowing costs increased because of a notional International Financial Reporting Standards adjustment for mobile loans of P250 million compared to P84 million in 2018. "If this notional IFRS adjustment was excluded from borrowings, the increase year-on-year would be 19 percent," the report added.

The holding company said this was due to the timing of when new debt was put onto or removed from the balance sheet or rather when most of the new debt was put onto the balance sheet in the second half of 2018 and some of the less expensive debt was repaid in early 2019 due to the facility reaching its contractual maturity.

"The overall blended cost of borrowings was 12 percent against 12.1 percent

in 2018. Focus has been, and will continue to be, on broadening the funding base, extending the tenor of debt funding and getting more local currency funding directly at the operating subsidiaries," the bank noted.

Ratings Agency Moody's maintained Letshego Holdings Limited's credit rating unchanged at Ba3 with stable outlook while the croup remains well capitalised with a capital adequacy ratio (CAR) of 36 percent compared to 33 percent in 2018 which is well above the regulatory minimum in all of its operating countries.

"Despite high reliance on wholesale funding, significant progress has been made in diversification of the group's funding base away from the bank loan market through the issuance of local currency corporate bonds in Botswana, Ghana, Mozambique and South Africa," the report stated.



Letshego Holdings Limited's CEO, Andrew Okai

Mboweni, Reserve Bank kicks off scheme on loan guarantee

JOHANNESBURG

A multi-billion loan guarantee scheme announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa last month is set to begin operating from Tuesday, with the assistance of the country's major banks, including FNB, Investec, Standard Bank and Absa.

According to a joint statement issued by National Treasury, The South African Reserve Bank and the Banking Association of South Africa, the legal details have been finalised, allowing the scheme to be activated. Ramaphosa announced the scheme in April as a measure to soften the blow of the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent national lockdown on banks as well as their individual and business clients.

The loan guarantee scheme is intended to assist businesses with an annual turnover of less than R300 million to meet operational expenses. The South African Reserve

Bank's loans to commercial banks will be guaranteed by National Treasury. Treasury initially provided a guarantee of R100 billion to the scheme, with the option to increase to R200 billion if the scheme is deemed successful.

"The loan guarantee scheme is an initiative to provide loans, guaranteed by government, to businesses with an annual turnover of less than R300 million to meet some of their operational expenses," said Treasury, adding that government was sharing the risk of the loans with commercial banks.

Treasury said the funds borrowed through the scheme could be used to cover the operational expenses of banks, pay salaries, and cover rent and lease agreements. Economist Dr Francois Stofberg said the amount was enough to assist consumers, but the survival of big businesses and SMMEs was hanging in the balance depending on how fast government could finalise



Tito Mboweni

assistance.

He added that there was a "significant" need among businesses. Stofberg credited government, saying they have done a lot to keep the ship afloat for consumers. He said while

about one million two hundred thousand people have applied for a payment break, this was still only 8% of the tax base and there was room for government to focus on helping businesses.



IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva.

More than 300 lawmakers call on IMF, World Bank to cancel poor countries' debt

NEW YORK

CONCERNS that developing countries and emerging economies will be devastated by the pandemic are growing.

Over 300 lawmakers from around the world on Wednesday urged the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to cancel the debt of the poorest countries in response to the coronavirus pandemic, and to boost funding to avert a global economic meltdown.

The initiative, led by former US presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Ilham Omar, a Democrat from Minnesota, comes amid growing concern that developing countries and emerging economies will be devastated by the pandemic.

The virus has infected more than 4.2 million people globally and killed 287,349, a Reuters tally showed. Widespread shutdowns aimed at containing the virus are taking a huge toll on the global economy, and especially poor countries with weak health systems, high debt levels and few resources to manage the dual health and economic crises.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva on Tuesday said the Fund was "very likely" to revise downward its forecast that global output would shrink by 3% in 2020, and said developing countries would need more than \$2.5 trillion in financing to weather the storm.

Sanders said poor countries needed every cent to care for their people, instead of servicing the "unsustainable debts" they owe to the large international financial institutions. Cancelling the debt of the poorest countries was "the very least that the World Bank, IMF and other international financial institutions should do to prevent an unimaginable increase in poverty, hunger, and disease that threatens hundreds of millions of people," he said.

The lawmakers welcomed a move by

the IMF to cover the debt service payments of 25 of the poorest countries for six months, but said further efforts were needed. The World Bank has said it will look at ways to expand its support for the poorest countries, but warned waiving debt payments could harm its credit rating and undercut its ability to provide low-cost funding to members.

In the letter, parliamentarians from two dozen countries on all six continents, said debt service obligations of the poorest countries should be cancelled outright, instead of simply suspended, as agreed by the Group of 20 countries in April.

Failing to do so meant those countries would not be able to prioritise spending needed to fight the virus, which in turn could lead to continued disruption to global supply chains and financial markets, they wrote. The lawmakers also urged the IMF's Georgieva and World Bank President David Malpass to support creation of trillions of dollars of new Special Drawing Rights, the currency of the IMF.

"An issuance of SDRs on the order of trillions of dollars will be required to avert major increases in poverty, hunger and disease," wrote the lawmakers, who span a wide range of political affiliations and include former heads of state.

An SDR allocation is akin to a central bank "printing" new money and does not trigger big costs, but has been opposed by the United States, the IMF's largest shareholder. Omar said the United States should lead the effort to provide relief to the most vulnerable nations.

"All our destinies are linked. If we turn a blind eye to the suffering of people abroad, it will eventually harm us," Omar said. Other signatories include former British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and Argentine lawmaker Carlos Menem, who enacted austerity measures when he served as president in the 1980s and 1990s.

Creditors approve winding up of collapsed Abraaj in Kenya

NAIROBI

A FIRM overseeing local commercial interests of collapsed Dubai private equity firm Abraaj Group in Kenya has been wound up.

This is after creditors held a virtual meeting and unanimously voted to wind up Abraaj Kenya Advisers Ltd where Muniu Thoithi and George Weru were appointed as joint liquidators. The meeting held on May 4 agreed that all unpaid bills be presented for settlement with each creditor expected to provide proof of goods and services rendered by June 15.

"Creditors are required on or before June 15 to send full particulars of all the claims they may have against the company to the joint liquidators and, if so required, by notice in writing from the joint liquidators, personally or by an advocate, they just come and prove their debts or claims," it said.

The notice published in the dailies warned that any creditors failing to present claims risks being excluded from the planned payments. The liquidation of Abraaj Kenya Advisers Limited, said the notice, would not disrupt normal operations of any entity formerly affiliated to Abraaj Kenya Advisers Ltd.

In a gazette notice filed by the virtual meeting, conveners Ashish Patel (Abraaj Kenya managing director) and director Benjamin Ikenye said only creditors with verified claims would be allowed to vote on the consideration to wind up the firm.

Banks and asset-backed lenders also seeking payments must surrender their security or provide its proof, the date it was given and the estimated value at which it was assessed. Secured creditors usually hold a fixed or floating charge over a business asset or assets that grant them priority on repayments when the said businesses go under.

Is BoT's hands-off approach to interest rate reduction charged on loans working?

By Finnigan wa Simbeye

THIS week while responding to lawmakers' calls for interest rates charged on loans given to farmers to be lowered to single digit, Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Food Security Hussein Bashe was quoted as saying he expects Tanzania Agriculture Development Bank to lower the rate from the current 16 percent to a single digit, preferably 9 percent.

Bashe backed lawmakers' arguments that charging smallholder farmers an interest rate of double digit and expect them to invest in farming and graduate to large scale commercial farmers is a utopian thinking.

The Deputy Agriculture Minister was simply seconding calls which have been made by the private sector for many years, "Cut interest rates charged on loans to at least single digit if meaningful investment can be made with loans from banks."

Since November 2015 when

John Pombe Magufuli took over as head of state with the banking industry in chaos, fleeing clients with crooked loan contracts, major achievements have been made to cleanse the banking industry.

President Magufuli himself has personally intervened and done major changes at Bank of Tanzania with appointment of new Governor in Professor Florens Luoga since 2018.

The bankers themselves followed suit through Tanzania Bankers Association when they came up with a code of conduct to end years of deceit done by some thieving bankers.

Most banks have also since overhauled their managements and boards while advancing ethical and professionalism in the industry which was rife with money launders, traffickers and grand corruption culprits who teamed up with thieving politicians.

Prof Luoga's entry as central bank chief has witnessed many changes taking place in the industry,



Bank of Tanzania Governor, Prof Florens Luoga.

among which were the lowering of capital reserve thresholds for banks, lending rates for which the central bank gives money to private banks and the enforcement of the mandatory vetting of borrowings through licensed credit reference bureau firms which have been endorsed by Bank of Tanzania.

As a result, we have witnessed interest rates charged on loans by banks starting to fall from as high as 22 percent in January 2016 to an average of 16 percent earlier this year and now it has lowered to 15.83 percent according to Bank of

Tanzania's monthly economic review report for March 2020.

"Interest rates charged and offered by banks on loans and deposits declined in March 2020 from the corresponding month in 2019. This was in tandem with sustained liquidity easing monetary policy to support credit intermediation to various economic activities.

Overall and one-year lending rates fell to 16.78 percent and 15.83 percent from 16.84 percent and 15.84 percent in the preceding month, and from 17.27 percent and 17.59 percent in the corresponding month of 2019, respectively," the BoT report stated.

The central bank which has declined to intervene and place a cap on rates being charged by banks on grounds that legally, Tanzania's banking industry is managed by market forces, has once again come forward this week to further cut rates charged on loans given to banks.

In a statement this week, Bank

of Tanzania Governor, Prof Luoga said effective May 12 this year, the central bank reduced its discount rate to five percent from seven percent to provide additional space for banks to borrow at lower costs hence enable them lower lending rates to clients.

The central bank chief said the move was aimed at cushioning the economy from adverse effects of the novel coronavirus outbreak which has devastated global economies while interrupting smoothly operations of markets.

BoT which has all along resisted pressure from politicians and the private sector to reign in banks which have not been reducing lending rates at a speed in line with the central bank, seems to be proving its critics wrong because apparently rates are coming down.

That the downward trend will be sustained till such time that Deputy Minister Bashe wants to see TADB lower its lending rates to farmers to single digit, or at least 9 percent, remains to be seen but so far so good.

Investors welcome India's stimulus worth \$266 billion



An Indian man listens to Indian Prime Minister Modi's address on Tuesday.

NEW DELHI

INVESTORS and strategists have broadly welcomed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of a larger-than-expected stimulus package worth an estimated 10 per cent of gross domestic product.

The measures are impressive in their size, should boost investor confidence in India's ability to deal with the economic impact of the

coronavirus outbreak and provide support to the currency, according to early reaction from a number of market participants. Still, further details are required, especially on how the package will be financed, they said.

Equity futures on India's NSE Nifty 50 Index traded in Singapore climbed in early trading Wednesday and dollar-rupee one-month non-deliverable forwards retreated. Here's what strategists and economists are saying about the new measures: Samiran Chakraborty and Baqar Zaidi, India economists at Citigroup said: "The size of the package likely exceeds market

expectations and the details will eagerly be awaited."

"This is likely to necessitate both additional market borrowing as well as an immediate announcement of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) support through large OMO and may be even direct monetisation if the combined power of fiscal and monetary stimulus has to be unleashed."

"By explicitly referring to reforms in land, labour, agriculture, legal and administrative systems and infrastructure the PM has embarked on an ambitious reform agenda to

make India more productive. Bolder structural reforms in the financial sector is also need of the hour." "While all these measures to boost domestic capacity is welcome, there could be a more explicit protectionist bent on the trade front in the near term as India shapes up to be more self-reliant."

Gaurav Saroliya, director of macro strategy at Oxford Economics said "Alongside monetary easing by the RBI, we think this move, the details of which are still awaited, will boost market confidence that India will be able to limit the economic costs of the lockdown, which our macro team earlier estimated at around 6 per cent of annual GDP."

"Indian equities and the rupee have underperformed during the sell-off in March as they tend to be a reflection of India's domestic growth expectations. The fiscal boost has come at an opportune time for India as valuations are cheap both historically and relative to the Asia ex-Japan peer group."

Qi Gao, a currency strategist at Scotiabank said: "US dollar and Indian rupee will likely trade between 74 and 77 in the coming weeks. A fiscal stimulus package itself could provide some support to the Indian rupee."

Vishnu Varathan, head of economics and strategy at Mizuho Bank in Singapore said: "Arguably, Indian PM Modi's announcement of a 10 per cent of GDP (\$266bn) COVID stimulus is a big deal compared to the earlier 0.8 per cent of GDP fiscal boost."

"But with details awaited, it is unclear if this includes the already announced RBI credit/liquidity measures worth some 2.5 per cent of GDP. And so, the precise [quantum and dispersion] impact across sectors/industries remains to be seen, while the question of how it will be financed may prove to be a bugbear."

Kaushik Das, India chief economist at Deutsche Bank said: "The 10 per cent of GDP economic package is inclusive of the various liquidity measures announced by RBI earlier and the previous fiscal package announced on 26 March (1.7tn rupees; 0.8 per cent of GDP); so we need to see what the incremental package size is excluding the support from earlier measures."

Mahesh Nandurkar and Abhinav Sinha, equity analysts at Jefferies Financial Group said: "The headline no of the gross fiscal package of 20tn rupees / 10 per cent of GDP is impressive. This leaves a space of -10tn rupees / 5 per cent of GDP for incremental announcements."

BANKING & FINANCE

What African central banks should do in response to virus

JOHANNESBURG

AFTER emergency meetings and aggressive interest-rate cuts to buffer their economies against the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, some central bankers in sub-Saharan African economies may follow a more measured approach when they sit down for their deliberations in the next two weeks.

While monetary policy committees in South Africa and Kenya will probably take advantage of scope to lower rates even further, those in Nigeria and Zambia may continue to buck the global trend by holding. Zambia may even mull a rate hike.

"The initial concern was the hit to economic activity and growth and cutting rates was an attempt to try and mitigate that," said Yvonne Mhango, an economist at Rencap Securities. "Going forward, the concern now is also going to be currencies."

Ghana, May 15

After the Bank of Ghana cut its key rate to an eight-year low in the middle of March, analysts are split about its next move. Of the five economists in a Bloomberg survey, two predict more easing on Friday to boost an economy that's forecast to grow at the slowest

pace in 37 years and three said the MPC will hold.

The central bank may also announce additional measures to prop up specific sectors of the economy, according to Patrick Asuming, a senior lecturer at the University of Ghana Business School. With excess liquidity in the market and lenders that are cautious about giving credit to the private sectors, banks need guidance on loan-to-deposit requirements and direction on the industries which have been earmarked to spur growth, said Courage Martey, an Africa economist at Databank Group in Accra. "Additional liquidity in the form of rate cut will not solve the problem," he said.

Zambia, May 20

With inflation at a 43-month high and a currency that's lost more than a fifth of its value against the dollar this year, cutting isn't an option for the Bank of Zambia. The MPC will decide between raising the policy rate in attempt to stabilize the economy or providing relief by leaving it unchanged.

"Increasing the rate at this time is comparable to taking out blood from a patient who has just experienced an

anaemic condition," said Chibamba Kanyama, a Lusaka-based economist. "I expect the MPC to hold as a way of stimulating the economy."

South Africa, May 21

South Africa's central bank may reduce its benchmark interest rate for the fourth time this year as it seeks to support an economy that could contract as much as 16.1%.

With inflation likely to test the 3% lower bound of the Reserve Bank's target range and risks to the growth outlook skewed to the downside, there's scope for a reduction of a further 125 basis points this year, according to Mpho Molopyane, an economist at FirstRand Group's Rand Merchant Bank.

"At the moment, the Reserve Bank is not worried about inflation," she said. "We've seen other emerging markets cutting interest rates quite aggressively, taking real rates to zero or negative territory in some cases. The Reserve Bank definitely has scope to take the real rate to zero."

While RMB's baseline view is for a 50 basis-point reduction this month, there is an increasing likelihood the MPC could move by a full percentage point after economic indicators showed a nationwide lockdown brought activity close to a standstill

in April, and with no indication when restrictions could be eased further, she said.

What Bloomberg's Economist says

"We think the Sarb will cut rates by a further 25 basis points due to a weaker growth and inflation outlook. Despite partial easing, the economy remains under lockdown and stimulus deployment remains slow. Oil prices also remain well below the Sarb's forecast of \$42/bbl for the year and Stats SA Essential Products-CPI shows muted price pressures. Unlike the rest of the world, interest rates in South Africa remain well above zero and the repo remains the main monetary policy tool." – Boingoto Gasealahwe, Africa economist

Nigeria

Central bankers in Africa's biggest economy will continue to hold the key rate as it grapples a marked slowdown due to the pandemic and the slump in the price of oil that's the nation's top export. The plunge in crude prices has forced it to devalue the naira, while inflation been above the target band for almost five years.

"The Central Bank of Nigeria has demonstrated its resolve to ride out this crisis and see if any of the current shifts in global economic

behaviour become more permanent," said Ikemesit Effiong, the Lagos-based head of research at SBM Intelligence. It's unlikely that the MPC "will rock the boat" because he fundamentals of the West African economy are the same as before the crises, he said.

Kenya (date to be confirmed)

Kenya's MPC is expected to cut the benchmark interest rate for a fifth straight meeting when they gather during the last week of the month. That's because the East African economy is operating below its potential due to virus-related shocks, said Jibrán Qureishi, Stanbic Holdings Plc's economist for East Africa. While the central bank rate is at a nine-year low of 7%, it could be cut to as little as 5% by the end of the year, according to Razia Khan, chief economist for Africa and the Middle East at Standard Chartered Bank.

Mauritius (date to be confirmed)

Policy makers in Mauritius slashed the repo rate to 1.85% – the lowest since the introduction of this monetary policy mechanism – at an unscheduled meeting last month, after forecasts showed the nation's economy would contract for the first time in four decades.

Given the cut was an attempt to stimulate activity and lending on an island reliant on income from tourism and exports, and with consumer-price growth at an acceptable level, the MPC will vote to keep the rate unchanged, according to economist Takesh Luckho. "A further cut in the repurchase rate could be used a joker card in the near future, depending on the economic recovery," he said by phone.

WORLD

Malawi election campaign may worsen COVID-19

LILONGWE

WHEN the Malawi Election Commission (MEC) Chairperson, Justice Jane Ansah, officially launched the campaign period for the July 2 fresh presidential poll on May 2, her message was clear.

Under normal circumstances, the official campaign period is a time when all contesting candidates and political parties are free to sell themselves to the electorate.

But the circumstances under which Malawi is going to hold this election are by no means normal, given that the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country is growing day by day.

"Being a very critical period of our electoral calendar, I have some words to all candidates, registered voters and all stakeholders considering that campaign will be done at a time we have the COVID-19 pandemic in Malawi and globally.

With respect to the global pandemic on the coronavirus and various public health guidelines and restrictions in place, candidates will have to find other innovative ways of reaching out to the electorate," said the MEC chairperson.

Presidential candidates in the July 2 poll presented their nomination papers to MEC chairperson on May 6-7, stamping their will to contest in the race for the country's hottest seat.

On May 8, MEC and President Peter Mutharika lost the appeal case in which they wanted the Supreme Court to rule against the High Court's annulment of May 2019 presidential election.

The Supreme Court thus upheld the annulment and described the appeal as "embarrassing, hard to make sense from" and that the fresh election should be conducted as ordered by the High Court on Feb. 3.

With the campaign period officially launched and the Supreme Court ruling in favour of the fresh election, both ruling and political party leaders started steamy campaign trails across the country from May 9.

The crowds that the political leaders are pulling in their political campaigns are in thousands, with no adherence to one of the key COVID-19 measures of social distancing.

The development does not only contravene MEC chairperson's call for "innovative ways of reaching out to the electorate," but it also puts lives of Malawi's population of 18 million at



Officials go about their work at the main entrance of Sunbird Mount Soche Hotel during an event for presidential candidates to present their nomination papers in Blantyre, Malawi, May 7, 2020. Malawi is going to host another presidential election on July 2 this year. The development has come amidst a time when almost every country in the world is trying to control public gatherings in fear of COVID-19. (Xinhua)

risk of contracting the global pandemic.

Health authorities in the country have condemned the laxity that the public has taken in as far as social distancing is concerned and they have warned that the country could face an upsurge of COVID-19 cases.

"As health workers, we find the development very disheartening because we would have expected our political leaders to lead in embracing the health guidelines," Director of Health and Social Services for Blantyre District Hospital, Gift Kawalazira, told the local media Monday. Kawalazira also called on individuals to make personal efforts in maintaining social distance and following all health guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Global Health Specialist and Malawi's Director of Quality Management Department in the ministry of health, Andrew Likaka, has also emphasized on social distancing as paramount measure against the spread of COVID-19.

Likaka warned in his presentation to local broadcasters Monday that "if nothing serious is done to stop the spread of the pandemic, at least 1.5 million people will contract coronavirus with 30,000 people needing critical care by the end of the year."

The fears were also earlier raised in strong terms by the Secretary for Health, Dan Namarika, on April 23 when Ma-

lawi registered 10 confirmed cases in 24 hours.

"We are at war and the war continues, it's up to us Malawians to choose. We have the opportunity to control the disease," said Namarika, adding that "we already have volatile health situation in the country which is not found in many countries making us more disadvantaged."

According to Namarika, the model that the country is using to analyze the impact of COVID-19, the pandemic has the potential of causing 50,000 deaths, in Malawi with 5,000 of the deaths occurring in the capital, Lilongwe.

Meanwhile, Minister of Health and Population Services, Jappie Mhango, has condemned public gatherings organized by politicians in the wake of COVID-19, which has killed three and infected 57 people with 24 recoveries as of May 11.

Agencies

Majority of Kenya's COVID-19 cases imported from outside China - analysis

NAIROBI

There has been a long-held misconception that COVID-19 which was first detected in Kenya on March 12 was imported by travellers from China into the east African nation.

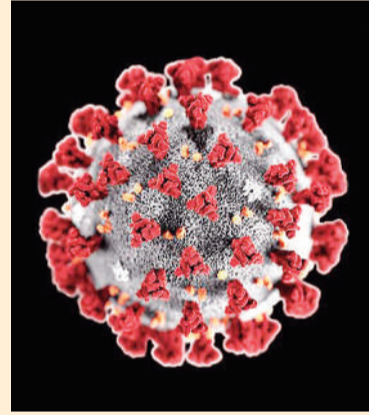
However, a Ministry of Health analysis has shattered this myth, with figures from the government institution responsible for the fight against the new coronavirus disease, indicating that most of the confirmed cases were imported from other countries or regions.

The analysis shows that of the first 621 COVID-19 cases reported in Kenya (700 as of Monday), 163

were imported, with Dubai in the UAE contributing about a third (47) of the imports, a report by the local daily, the Daily Nation said on Tuesday.

From Africa, Kenya recorded 50 infections (about a third) from people who had traveled from different nations in the continent, including Nigeria, Somalia, Tanzania and Congo.

Europe came third with 30 cases, followed by North America (US) with 15 and South America one. On the other hand, China, where COVID-19 was first reported, contributed only two cases - a man and a woman - having traveled from the country.



The Health ministry figures that comprise incoming travelers that were placed under quarantine, indicate that in every five of the imported cases, two of the infections

were from Asia, where the UAE is located. Other countries, besides the UAE and China, in Asia which contributed to virus imports into Kenya include Pakistan (7) and Qatar (5).

Kenya on Feb. 26 castigated the government for allowing a flight from China with 239 passengers jet into the country at a time the virus cases were rising globally.

At the time, COVID-19 cases in Wuhan city, the epicenter of the virus, were on the rise thus citizens were concerned that allowing the flight from China would expose the country. "The numbers from the health ministry vindicate the Kenyan government on its reluctance to cut air links with China," said the Daily Nation report.

"One explanation for China's minimal contribution to the global spread of the virus has been attributed to its swift move to contain the virus.

On Jan. 23, the government locked down Wuhan and other cities in Hubei province when not many cases had been reported in other provinces and the world had recorded only 500 cases," it said.

Kenya and UAE have long trade relations, with hundreds of businesspersons from the east African nation traveling to the country for goods every year.

Xinhua

Govts worldwide roll out phased plans to reopen, experts urge precautions

BEIJING

AS weeks of social isolation prove to be effective in curbing COVID-19, governments worldwide are trying to absorb economic shockwaves caused by the pandemic and mulling over plans to reopen their economy, while experts urge precautions and warn against a resurgence of the virus due to recklessness.

REALITY CHECK

As stringent preventive measures have reduced the spread of COVID-19 in various countries and regions, governments could choose to continue the restrictions or reopen the economy with a serious reality check.

Some of U.S. President Donald Trump's top economic advisers have emphasized the importance for states to get more businesses and

offices back to normal, given that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the loss of 20.5 million jobs in the country in April alone.

"If we do this carefully, working with the governors, I don't think there's a considerable risk," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Fox News Sunday. "Matter of fact, I think there's a considerable risk of not reopening. You're talking about what would be permanent economic damage to the American public."

As the coronavirus pandemic has brought the worst economic shock since the Great Depression, the European Commission predicted on May 6 that the European Union will contract 7.4 percent this year. Following weeks of COVID-19 curbs, European countries, including France, Germany and Spain, are also lifting lockdowns step by step.

Both in France and Spain, restric-



Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

tions are being lifted by regions depending on how seriously affected they are, with schools and shops in some parts allowed to resume work. Germany is also continuing to ease movement restrictions and get more children return to classrooms.

In contrast, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau warned on Saturday that if provinces move quickly to reopen their economies, a second

wave of the coronavirus pandemic would send Canada "back into confinement this summer."

Canada was "not in the recovery phase yet," he pointed out in a daily briefing, adding that "we are still in the emergency phase... The vast majority of Canadians continue to need to be very careful."

CONTROVERSY OVER REOPENING

Whether to reopen economies now has aroused a bitter controversy amid doctors and economists.

Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said Tuesday that the nation has not had the ongoing coronavirus outbreak under "total control" yet, warning that states could face serious consequences if they open up prematurely.

"My concern is that if some areas,

city, states or what have you, jump over those various checkpoints and prematurely open up without having the capability of being able to respond effectively and efficiently ... we will start to see little spikes that might turn into outbreaks," Fauci cautioned during a teleconference hearing on the White House's response to the coronavirus.

Also attending the hearing remotely, Robert Redfield, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said "rapid, extensive and widely available, timely testing is essential to reopening America."

Meanwhile, Scott Atlas, former chief of neuroradiology at Stanford University, has called for an end to lockdowns in favor of a targeted approach to getting the United States back on its feet.

Xinhua

Lesotho becomes last country in Africa to record COVID-19 case

JOHANNESBURG

LESOTHO recorded its first case of COVID-19 yesterday, the health ministry said, becoming the last country in Africa to be afflicted by the virus.

The ministry said it had conducted 81 tests for COVID-19 from travellers from South Africa and Saudi Arabia, of which one was positive. It was awaiting results from 301 other tests.

The remote, high-altitude kingdom, nestled in a South African mountain range, had previously been spared the coronavirus, although its bigger, more industrialised neighbour has recorded more than 10,000 cases.

As at 1245 GMT, Africa had 69,764 confirmed cases of COVID-19, 2,421 deaths and 23,857 recoveries, according to a Reuters tally based on government statements and World Health Organization data.

Germany

Germany will start to ease some of the border controls introduced to slow the spread of the coronavirus from Saturday with the aim of having free travel in Europe from June 15, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer said on Wednesday.

Seehofer said that general border controls agreed with France, Switzerland and Austria due to end on May 15 would be extended until June 16 but as many crossings as possible would be reopened.

"The goal is that from mid-June we want to have free travel in Europe," he said, adding that controls could be re-imposed if there are new outbreaks.

Chancellor Angela Merkel told her parliamentary caucus late Tuesday that border controls should end as soon as possible, but didn't give a specific date, according to a person familiar with the discussions who asked not to be identified because the meeting was private.

Germany on Wednesday recorded a decline in the number of new coronavirus cases and the country's infection rate dropped below a key threshold, as the country continues a gradual easing of restrictions on daily life.

The number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Germany increased by 798 to 171,306, down from 933 on Tuesday, according to data from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) for infectious diseases. The reported death toll rose by 101 to 7,634, according to the data.

France

France will maintain border controls with Germany until June 15, although there will be some relaxation of measures to help the day-to-day lives of those who have to make regular crossings, said French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner yesterday.

France's death toll from the coronavirus rose by 348 to 26,991 on Tuesday, overtaking Spain to become the country with the world's fourth-highest number of fatalities after the United States, Britain and Italy.

Agencies

US knocks on a closed door seeking to extend Iran arms embargo - Russia's UN envoy

THE UNITED NATIONS

THE United States cannot demand the extension of arms embargo against Tehran since it is no more a party to the Iran nuclear deal, Russia's UN envoy Vasily Nebenzya told a press conference with journalists via a video link-up.

"I do not see any reasons why arms embargo should be imposed on Iran," Nebenzya said. "It expires on 18 October. It was temporary. Let's call a spade a spade: it was not in fact even an embargo.

It is the provision where Iran is allowed to export/import armaments on the consent of the Security Council. Of course, you may call it a de-facto embargo, because we know what would happen if Iran asked for such waiver, but technically it was not an embargo. For us it's clear, it expires on 18 October. We proceed from that fact."

The high-ranking diplomat recalled that exactly two years ago, the US "proudly announced" that it withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and closed the door behind.

"Now they knock on that door and say 'just wait a second, we forgot to do one little thing on the JCPOA. Let us back, we will do it and leave again'."

This is ridiculous," he said. "You know, in order to be able to use the instruments provided by JCPOA you first have to be a participant of the JCPOA. The US has not been an effective participant of the JCPOA for two years now."

The New York Times reported on April 26 that Washington sought "to pressure the United Nations Security Council to extend an arms embargo on Tehran or see far more stringent sanctions reimposed on the country."

Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on March 3 that an extension of the arms embargo was not on the table. Under the JCPOA, which was signed between five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany with Iran in 2015, Tehran will be able to purchase armaments and military equipment from foreign suppliers since October.

Agencies

Anti-intellectualism impedes US COVID-19 fight

VIOLATING social distancing requirements, protesters gathered on Saturday afternoon, April 25, in Austin and Dallas of Texas, to rally against local stay-at-home orders and to demand Texas businesses reopen, according to local news portal the Austin American-Statesman.

Video clips circulating online show protesters holding signs calling COVID-19 "a hoax" with a crowd shouting "Arrest Bill Gates!"

During a "You Can't Close America Rally" in Austin on April 18, some 300 protesters decried local government's COVID-19 control measures. Protesters shouted "Fire Fauci!" during the rally and declared the virus "a hoax."

Bill Gates, a philanthropist, and Dr. Anthony Fauci, US top medical expert on the coronavirus pandemic, have been targets of some right-wing

campaigns in the US as both of them have been at odds with US President Donald Trump on the measures to contain coronavirus.

Such rallies reflect the prevailing anti-intellectualism in some parts of the US, where people have little scientific knowledge of COVID-19's severity and of the function of vaccines. Some of them even believe in a conspiracy theory that says Bill Gates's goal is to reduce global human population.

Anti-intellectualism is not new in the US, but the Trump administration's handling of the coronavirus has exposed its existence in an unprecedentedly absurd way. President Trump has been exploiting populism, which drives anti-intellectualism further in the US.

The US is now trapped in a series of problems - governance, policy, anti-intellectualism, populism, white supremacy, and so on all looped together. The sequence to disentangle the loop is yet to be found due to severe political polarization.

Many people in the conservative states believe in Trump without a shadow of doubt. They take anything or anyone at odds with Trump as part of a political conspiracy, regardless if Trump is correct.

Such being the case, calls to poison control hotlines skyrocketed across the US as more Americans have questions about using bleach and other disinfectants to kill the coronavirus, after Trump suggested injecting disinfectant to the lung could be a

treatment, Toronto-based CityNews reported Sunday. Even Canada has issued warnings regarding Trump's suggested COVID-19 treatments.

It is unbelievable to see people in the US, the most powerful and most developed country both economically and technologically, make such nonsense.

Some argue all these phenomena reflect the degradation of the US. But there are still capable politicians who could better lead the US. If the US were hit by COVID-19 during Barack Obama's tenure, it would have been a very different situation today.

The main factor leading to these astonishing phenomena in the US to a large extent lies in Trump being a very unusual president, who has

made existing problems even more protruding.

For any country including the US, the more critical a crisis, the stronger the leadership it needs, leadership that can convey correct information, take effective measures, solidify public opinion, and unite the whole country to fight the pandemic. Trump is incapable of achieving that. Apart from Trump's spreading of information that lacks a scientific basis, scenes such as the scramble for scarce resources between state and federal governments have also been witnessed, igniting the public's anxiety and uncertainties over the outbreak.

These have fueled some Americans' willingness to attend public

gatherings in an attempt to express their mood.

To some extent, the capacity of a government is matched by the people it governs. The kind of government it is and the policies it makes determine how the public - at least some of them - behave or believe. The Trump administration provokes populism and fans anti-intellectualism, which has contributed to its failure in effectively containing the coronavirus.

The US is the world's largest economy, and it is strong and powerful in pharmaceutical and technology sectors. There should not have been so many infections, so many deaths, nor such a massive economic and social impact, but all have become the truth and will continue. This is a tragedy for the US.

Global Times



US President Donald Trump

Why the US has become the country worst hit by COVID-19

A NEGATIVE approach, delayed actions, and incorrect policies resulted in making the U.S. the country that has been worst hit by the COVID-19 outbreak in the world. The U.S. has over 960,000 confirmed cases and 54,000 dead as of April 26, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

These figures are not very precise, as the number of tests that have been conducted is limited.

It is beyond the capacity of even the developed world to test every single individual, let alone the developing world and underdeveloped countries.

The pandemic has already become a terrible threat to humankind. Some countries in Europe have already passed the peak, and the trend of new infections is already on the decline. But the U.S. has not reached this point yet.

In Asia and Africa, the pandemic is still in its initial stages. Some experts are predicting a frightening future.

Although the Trump administration has recently taken good initiatives, the delay has already caused enormous damage.

Timely decisions and the correct policies might have prevented a lot of the suffering. A 2 trillion-dollar package is a very positive step, and other measures have been encouraging.

The U.S. is one of the largest economies, the wealthiest nation, and most developed and advanced in science and technology. The U.S. can overcome the epidemic, but it must bear a high cost to do so.

The Chinese government and Chinese people have been brave as they took on this formidable task. From the very beginning of the fight against the outbreak, they have put people's lives and health first.

They acted according to the overall principle of shoring up confidence, strengthening unity, ensuring science-based control and treatment, and imposed targeted measures. China mobilized the entire nation, set up collective control and treatment mechanisms, and acted with openness and transparency.

China has put up a strenuous struggle and made tremendous sacrifices. Now, the situation in China is under control, and life and economic activity are gradually being resumed.

Over the last few months, China has been struggling to overcome the epidemic and focused on its goal of saving human beings and containing the virus. China has concentrated all its energies into fighting against COVID-19.

The country mobilized all its national resources, and with the support of the public, finally controlled the coronavirus outbreak.

The Trump administration failed to help out its allies in their most challenging moments, when Italy, France, UK, Spain, and Germany were facing a severe threat. If the U.S. had helped its allies from the beginning, it might not have spread so widely or even reached the U.S.

In fact, when China was suffering from the outbreak, the U.S. was overly engaged in scoring political points by bashing China, criticizing its draconian and authoritative laws, accusing it of not respecting human rights and personal freedom, and generally trying to defame the country. But China ignored pressure from the outside world and focused only on eliminating the epidemic.

The U.S. government wasted time, ignored the suffering of the Chinese people and assumed that it would never happen to them. They were relaxed and, to some extent, some U.S. politicians were happy with the loss of human lives and the economic damage China was suffering. Instead, China recovered, and a stable normal situation has almost returned.

The U.S. is now facing enormous challenges, especially as it has now become the worst-hit country. During the recent pandemic, "China-Fever" was very evident in the U.S. Had it spent less time on anti-China sentiments and more on controlling the pandemic, the situation might be different.

People's Daily

Africa's malnutrition burden could be worsened by COVID-19 - report

NAIROBI

SUB-SAHARAN African countries are likely to deal with declining food and nutrition security amid disruptions to their agricultural systems triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, said a report that was launched in Nairobi on Tuesday.

The 2020 Global Nutrition Report (GNR) said that African governments, industry and external financiers should prioritize mitigation measures to avert a

hunger and malnutrition crisis in a continent where the viral respiratory disease is gradually spreading.

"We have seen significant progress to tackle malnutrition in Africa, but the COVID-19 pandemic could reverse these gains," said Jane Battersby-Lennard, associate professor at the University of Cape Town's African Centre for Cities.

COVID-19 is expected to increase this disparity, which means that now is the time to scale up our efforts and support communities and people most affected,"

she added.

The 2020 Global Nutrition Report whose theme is "Action on Equity to end Malnutrition" stated that robust policy, regulatory and funding interventions are key to boost nutrition outcomes in Africa.

According to the report, the COVID 19 pandemic has worsened the fragility of the continent's agricultural systems hence undermining efforts to feed a population already grappling with other infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and Ebola.

Xinhua

Virus drains Vatican coffers as income falls, deficits loom

VATICAN CITY

LATE last month, the Vatican announced the coronavirus pandemic had forced Pope Francis to postpone an annual fund raising campaign among Catholics worldwide to help him carry out his ministry.

The delay of "Peter's Pence" by more than three months to the first weekend in October has come at a particularly bad time, as other revenues, notably from the Vatican Museums, slow to a trickle.

The pandemic has wreaked havoc with the Vatican's finances, forcing it to dip into reserve funds and implement some of the toughest cost control measures ever in the tiny city-state.

Against this bleak backdrop, top Vatican administrators held an emergency meeting in late March. They ordered a freeze on promotions and hirings and a ban on overtime, travel and large events.

An internal memo seen by Reuters said the decisions, effective for the rest of the year, were taken "to mitigate, at least in the short-term, the grave economic impact ... and to avoid any further immediate drastic measures."

A follow-up letter in April told department heads that, in keeping with the pope's policy, they could not fire people.

The Peter's Pence fund, which brings in an estimated US\$50-65 million yearly, aims to help the pope's activities as head of the 1.3 billion-member Church and support charitable projects in the world's neediest areas.

But for more than 30 years the Holy See has been forced to tap into it to keep regular operations going and to plug the Holy See's administrative budget deficit.

The pandemic has also drastically slowed the flow of funds from the Vatican Museums, which received some 7 million visitors last year and are the city's most reliable cash cow.

The museums, which generate an estimated US\$100 million yearly, have been closed since March 8 and are not expected to open until late May at the earliest, resulting in up to three months of lost revenue.

Even after they reopen, officials fear that enhanced security measures, social distancing requirements, new health regulations and the expected dearth of international tourists will erode ticket and sou-



This photo taken and released on May 13, 2020 by the Vatican Media shows Pope Francis (C), flanked by Monsignor Leonardo Sapienza (L) and Monsignor Luis Maria Rodrigo Ewart, holding a weekly live broadcast private audience in the library of the Apostolic palace in The Vatican during the lockdown aimed at curbing the spread of the COVID-19 infection, caused by the novel coronavirus. (HANDOUT / VATICAN MEDIA / AFP)

venir sales for years.

"We definitely have difficult years ahead of us," Father Juan Antonio Guerrero, the new head of the Vatican's Secretariat for the Economy, told the official Vatican News website on Wednesday.

He estimated that Holy See income would fall between 25 and 45 percent because of the coronavirus, depending on how well cost-cutting measures worked.

REDUCED RENTS

Another unknown is that there is no indication when the pope can resume activities which attract tens of thousands of people at a time, such as general audiences and Masses on religious feast days.

Many pilgrims and tourists who come to Rome primarily to see the pope also leave donations in St. Peter's Basilica, where there is no entry fee. But they pay to visit the Vatican Museums, which boast some of the world's greatest masterpieces.

Adding to the income shortfall, the two Vatican departments that manage real estate holdings in Italy offered reduced rents for commercial tenants whose businesses have been affected by the pandemic, such as some 600 stores and offices in Rome.

"I don't think that we are in a different situation than anybody else," Father Augusto Zampini, member of a Vatican commission the pope set up to advise him on the social effects of the crisis, told reporters on a conference call.

"As any company or state, you have some reserves and emergency funds and we are reaching for that

but that is only temporary," said Zampini, 50, an Argentine who was a lawyer before he became a priest.

Bishops conferences in rich countries such as the United States and Germany make large contributions to the running of the Vatican but the pandemic has also hit their finances.

The headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church has two budgets.

One is that of Holy See, the government of the Catholic Church which is recognised as a sovereign entity in international law. It includes the central administration and embassies that keep up diplomatic relations with more than 180 countries.

Its income is from real estate holdings, investments and contributions such as Peter's Pence. It has run a deficit for many years.

The other budget is for Vatican City, a 108-acre city-state surrounded by Rome. It includes the vital income from the Vatican Museums and it traditionally runs a surplus.

The surplus from the Vatican City budget, as well as contributions from the faithful and profits from the Vatican bank, have been used to plug the Holy See's deficits for years.

The last year for which the Vatican has published full budget figures was 2015, when the Holy See had a deficit of US\$13.1 million.

Since then, Guerrero said, the Holy See has had yearly income of about US\$293 million and expenses of about US\$347 million euros, resulting in a yearly deficit of about US\$54 million.

Agencies

Fear grows over virus threat to children

NEW YORK

HEALTH officials worldwide are warning parents about a new syndrome believed to be linked to the novel coronavirus that has infected 93 children in New York, killing three, and infected at least 100 in Europe.

The rare but dangerous illness called pediatric multisystem inflammatory syndrome can cause in children ages 2 to 15 a fever of 38 C for five days, swollen neck glands, abdominal pain and inflammation and could require them to be treated in intensive care.

It also produces redness in the tongue, rashes, a racing heart and a change in skin color. Medical experts are alarmed, as they had believed children were relatively immune to COVID-19, as so few had been infected.

US President Donald Trump downplayed the syndrome at a press briefing on Monday, saying: "It's a very, very, small percentage ... and people recover from that."

Admiral Brett Giroir, assistant secretary for health in the US Department of Health and Human Services, said: "Most do recover, but it is serious and can be a fatal condition, so we do want to make sure that parents understand that high fevers, red rashes in your child, you may want to make sure that you contact your healthcare provider. ... There are treatments."

Howard Zucker, New York state's health commissioner, said at a press briefing on Sunday: "The most important thing parents should do is err on the side of caution."

He said that among the three children who died from the syndrome in New York, two were of elementary school age and one was an adolescent. They lived in three different counties and didn't have pre-existing conditions.

Nationwide, the illness also has been seen in New Jersey, California, Louisiana and Mississippi. Out of 93 cases being investigated by the New York State Health Department, 38 are in New York City.

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said at his Sunday press briefing: "Every parent out there, if you see these symptoms, take them seriously. If you see these symptoms, report them to your doctor immediately."

Oxiris Barbot, New York City's health commissioner, first warned the state's health departments to be on the lookout for the illness on May 1. On Sunday, she urged the federal government to ramp up virus testing citywide to help identify children who are at risk. "This is still evolving," she said.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said at his daily news briefing on Friday: "So this is every parent's nightmare, right? That your child may actually be affected by this virus. But it's something we have to consider seriously now."

Agencies

Russia poised to aid implementation of agreement between US and Taliban – top diplomat

MOSCOW

RUSSIA is ready to aid the implementation of the peace agreement between the US and the Taliban movement (outlawed in Russia), Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said

yesterday following the videoconference of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) foreign ministers.

"We are not happy about the fact that currently, the agreements reached by the US and the Taliban are stalling. We see the reasons why it is

happening and we are ready to help them overcome those issues," he said.

According to the minister, to overcome the crisis it is necessary that Washington return to cooperation with the region's states on Afghan regulation.

Lavrov expressed hope that the SCO can make a constructive contribution to overcoming the existing standoff.

The minister informed that during today's meeting, the SCO foreign ministers agreed to modernize a roadmap for further actions of the SCO-Afghan-

istan contact group taking into account the situation after the signing of the US-Taliban agreement.

On February 29, the United States and the Taliban inked a peace agreement in Doha. Under the deal, intra-Afghan consultations were to begin

on March 10.

It stipulated that up to 5,000 Taliban supporters and up to 1,000 people held by extremists should be released as part of confidence-building measures by the beginning of intra-Afghan negotiations. Agencies

US accusations against China on COVID-19 totally immoral

HYPES are recently being made by certain politicians and organizations in the U.S. to claim compensation from China for the COVID-19 outbreak.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is one of them that has repeatedly accused China of covering up how dangerous the disease is and failing to share all of the information it had.

He also stigmatized China and claimed to hold the country responsible when the time is right. What he did not only is harmful, but also goes against conscience.

Such a theory is groundless and the accountability forced on China by U.S. politicians barely hold wa-

ter.

Some questioned China's epidemic data and information transparency, because they either had not a thorough check or simply ignored the facts.

Some complained that China didn't take timely measures at the beginning of the outbreak, because they either failed to see the huge difficulties posed by the sudden outbreak of the unknown virus or were reluctant to admit the ignorance and incompetence of the U.S. in dealing with the Pandemic after the country acquired certain information.

China has notified the World Health Organization (WHO) about

the epidemic and shared relevant information in a timely manner, fulfilling its obligations according to the provisions of the International Health Regulations. It has also set a good example for other countries in fulfilling international duties, as pointed out by the WHO.

With concerted efforts of the Chinese people, the country has done a great job in "early detection, early reporting, early isolation, and early treatment," acted promptly to track the source of infection and close contacts, and released timely information to the society in all honesty.

The theory about the so-called compensation is also unjustifi-

able. The anti-pandemic practices of China or any other country are the practices of a sovereign state, which, based on the principle of sovereign equality under the international law, shouldn't be bound by the courts of other countries.

Even the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act of the U.S. has specified that the American courts have no jurisdiction over foreign governments and affiliates unless foreign affiliates have been prosecuted by the U.S. for engaging in illegal commercial transactions.

China's offering of supplies for other countries was either humanitarian aid free of charge or normal and reasonable market practice.

The country has also fulfilled its obligations according to the International Health Regulations.

If the U.S. government winks at or even backs the accusations and compensation calls against China, it will have to rewrite the international law first and promise that such principles also apply to itself in the future.

After all, to claim damages from a country for a public health emergency is without precedent in history. The U.S., for example, has never compensated for the 1918 flu pandemic, AIDS or the influenza A (H1N1) virus that first emerged on its homeland, or the subprime mortgage crisis that led to an inter-

national financial crisis.

Besides, the theory is morally unacceptable. It is immoral and shameless for U.S. officials to ask China to take responsibilities for the novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak and apologize and pay for the damages, as such a request breaks the bottom line of human conscience. Despite various backgrounds and motives, Pompeo and his fellow politicians, in essence, are using the virus as a political tool to stir up troubles and suppress China.

When China released timely information about the virus and launched an all-out and people's war against the epidemic, Pompeo

and the like were busy downplaying the risks of the outbreak, stigmatizing China and shifting blames.

When China called for unity in the anti-pandemic fight and assisted other countries out of morality and responsibilities, Pompeo and his colleagues were still discrediting China and sowing discord between China and other countries.

Virus is the enemy of all mankind and countries shall work together to defeat it. The U.S. can't become more immune to the virus or contain the pandemic by defaming and slandering China, just like the injection of disinfectant can't cure COVID-19 patients.

People's Daily



Serena Williams - Venus Williams

Stretch it out: Serena, Venus Williams offer fans yoga tips

NEW YORK

SERENA Williams is looking forward to getting back to competing when the coronavirus pandemic permits it, in part because she's "feeling better than ever."

Her older sister, Venus, is looking forward to hanging out at a rooftop bar.

Two of the most famous and successful siblings in the history of sports – owners of a combined 30 Grand Slam tennis titles in singles and an additional 14 in doubles as a pair – shared those thoughts and more after doing yoga together Tuesday during an online session that offered workout tips and some laughs.

All professional tennis tournaments are on hold at least until mid-July because of the pandemic. The French Open, for example, was postponed from May to September, while Wimbledon was canceled for the first time in 75 years.

Under normal circumstances, the Williams sisters might have been in action this week at the Italian Open, a clay-court tuneup for Roland Garros.

"I really look forward to getting back on the court. It's what I do best. I absolutely love playing," Serena said. "But this break is ... a necessary evil. ... I felt like my body needed it, even though I didn't

want it. And now I'm feeling better than ever. I'm feeling more relaxed, more fit. Now I'm just like: Now I can go out and play real tennis."

Asked by her sister what she's excited about when life returns to normal, Venus replied: "I like to go out and I just want to be on top of a rooftop bar with champagne in my hand and ... just having a good time, dancing."

In the meantime, fans who want to know how to flex and stretch like a champ got the chance to watch along as 23-time major singles title winner Serena led the session, chatting along the way.

Venus, who won Wimbledon five times and the U.S. Open twice, joined her on a nearby yoga mat, following the same routine and occasionally showing modified versions.

The whole thing was on the sisters' individual Instagram Live feeds. After the yoga was done, they asked each other some questions, and then Venus stayed around to take queries from viewers.

The aim, it appeared, was to help folks find ways to stay in shape while stuck at home during the COVID-19 outbreak.

At one point, Serena cautioned, "Do not injure yourself doing this." At another, she said: "If you have bad knees, like me, use a pad."

AP

Cannes is empty, the day the film festival should have begun

CANNES, France

THE stars stayed home, their beach backdrop is closed and the prestigious grounds of the Cannes Film Festival have been repurposed as a homeless shelter.

Cannes should have been buzzing with cinema glitterati on Tuesday, which was scheduled as the first day of this year's film festival. But during the time of the coronavirus, the French Riviera resort is nothing but a ghost town.

The world's biggest film festival was canceled for the first time since World War II.

A couple of mask-wearing residents sit on the edge of the empty promenade to catch the morning sun, dangling their feet above the sand and next to an "Access and Swimming Prohibited" sign. An elderly group play petanque quietly next to the deserted roads.

The iconic billboard reserved for each year's

festival poster instead framed a large "THANK YOU" for the health workers caring for people during the pandemic.

"I overcome with a great sense of melancholy and nostalgia," Cannes Delegate General Thierry Fremaux told Screen Daily about the festival going dark. "Cannes has only ever been canceled once, due to the Second World War, and stopped once, in May '68.

"I could never have imagined something like this. Who could foresee that so many countries around the world would be caught out by the epidemic?" Fremaux said.

While the cancellation represents a blow to the movie stars and directors it promotes and honors, it has also devastated the legions of businesses and unsung subcontractors that rely on the Cannes Film Festival.

AP

NBA players polled about return; stars want to resume

NEW YORK

THE National Basketball Players Association is informally polling players to gauge where they stand on restarting the season, ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski reported Tuesday.

NBPA regional representatives began asking players to respond to a "yes or no" question about their desire to return to the court during the coronavirus pandemic, sources told Wojnarowski.

Some teams were asked the question in group texts, per the report, and names of the players and their individual responses will be kept confidential.

However, in a statement to The Athletic, the NBPA said it "is not engaging in and has not authorized any formal poll of its players."

NBPA executive director Michele Roberts, executive committee members including president Chris Paul and other players held a conference call Friday with league commissioner Adam Silver to discuss various topics related to resuming play, chiefly health and finances.

Yahoo Sports' Chris Haynes reported Paul held a private conference call with superstars across the league on Tuesday, with all wanting to resume the season at some point.

Per the report, LeBron James, Anthony Davis, Kevin Durant, Giannis Antetokounmpo, Kawhi Leonard, Stephen Curry, Damian Lillard and Russell Westbrook were all on the call, and "all parties were in agreement to take the court with proper safety measures" once that proves possible.

The NBA suspended the regular season on March 11. Silver has said that a decision about whether to resume and how to do so does not need to be made until June.

Meanwhile, following a Board of Governors call with commissioner Adam Silver on Tuesday, the NBA is "increasingly positive about the league's momentum" toward resuming the 2019-20 season, ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski reported.

Per the report, owners and



FILE PHOTO: A man walks past an NBA logo at an NBA exhibition in Beijing, China October 8, 2019. REUTERS

executives were encouraged about the league's steps toward returning safely amid the coronavirus pandemic and about positive conversations with the National Basketball Players Association.

The report added that Silver emphasized that in order for a return to occur, all parties would need to accept that a single positive test for COVID-19 would not derail the season. If a positive test would "shut us down, we probably shouldn't go down this path," Silver said, per Wojnarowski.

The report added that it remains unclear at what point numerous positive tests would impact the schedule.

Wojnarowski also reported that the format for the return play remains unknown, in terms of regular-season or playoff structure.

The NBA also reportedly continues to vet the possibility of holding all games in neutral sites, with Orlando and Las Vegas the leading candidates, in what Silver referred to as a "campus environment."

Both Wojnarowski and The Athletic's Shams Charania reported that the NBA aims to decide within two to four weeks whether to restart the season.

A potential roadblock to the proposed resumption is that the league doesn't believe "rapid response testing" will be readily available inside of a month.

Earlier Tuesday, the NBPA informally polled players to gauge where they stand on restarting the season, Wojnarowski reported.

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The NBA suspended the regular season on March 11 after Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert tested positive for COVID-19.

REUTERS

Singer Bryan Adams apologizes for coronavirus conspiracy rant



Bryan Adams

TORONTO

CANADIAN singer Bryan Adams apologized on Tuesday for a social media post in which he blamed "bat eating, wet market animal selling, virus making greedy bastards" for the novel coronavirus.

Adams, who first became a global star in 1984 with hits including "Summer of '69" and "Heaven", made the comments in the caption of an Instagram post on Monday when he addressed the cancellation of his concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London due to COVID-19.

Born in Kingston, Ontario, Adams currently lives in London and is a vegan.

The post was widely condemned on social media, and Amy Go, president of the Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice, told the Canadian Broadcasting Corp that the singer's comments were "just so, so, so, so racist."

In his apology, also posted on Instagram, Adams said he had no excuse, he "just wanted to have a rant about the horrible animal cruelty in these wet-markets being the possible source of the virus, and

promote veganism."

Many researchers believe that the virus originated from a wet market in Wuhan, China, although a theory that the virus emerged from a lab in Wuhan has gained ground in recent weeks.

The Chinese state-backed Wuhan Institute of Virology has dismissed the allegations.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has said evidence suggest the novel coronavirus originated in animals, "most likely" in bats before spreading to humans

through an intermediate animal host, and that there is no evidence to suggest it was created by humans.

Countries around the world have seen an uptick in racist attacks against people of Asian descent as fear and anger around the novel coronavirus increase.

Last month Canadian apparel company Lululemon Athletica Inc apologized after one of its art directors promoted the sale of a T-shirt online under the name "bat fried rice."

REUTERS

With little competition, the Bundesliga now goes global

PARIS

GERMAN football will find itself in an unaccustomed global spotlight this weekend as audiences starved of live football turn to the only major European league back in action.

With the Premier League, Spain's La Liga and Serie A in Italy all still sidelined by the coronavirus pandemic, the Bundesliga will take centre stage on Saturday.

Even in Brazil, media coverage has switched from domestic football stories to what TV viewers can expect to see when Borussia Dortmund meet Schalke in the biggest match of the opening day, albeit it without spectators in the stadium.

Cable channel Fox Sports, which holds exclusive rights to show the Bundesliga in Brazil, will be showing the Ruhr Derby at 9:30 am local time. Its website already features a lengthy article about the games entitled "The wait will soon be over".

Even Brazil's biggest media group, Globo, is getting in on the act with interviews with four Brazilians who play for Bundesliga clubs, including Wolfsburg midfielder William, who admitted players were "a little bit scared" about the implications for their health.

In India, foreign football leagues have found a market in India's urban youth who keenly follow the Premier League and support clubs like Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United. But a few of these fans also watch La Liga and Bundesliga.

"I am desperately waiting for the Bundesliga to start this weekend. I am thirsty for live football action in this lockdown," Amjad Rehan Ibrahim, a student of Delhi University, told AFP.

"A barometer" - Indian international forward Jeje Lalpekhlua said he would also be tuning in to the coverage on Indian broadcasters Star Sports and Hotstar. "It's difficult without football for so long. I am surely going to watch it."

In Japan, rights holder Sky Perfect is going to show two Bundesliga matches this weekend free of charge.

In Europe too, the matches in Germany will provide a much-needed fix of live sport.

Adolfo Barbero, who comments on Bundesliga games for the Spanish channel Movistar+, said: "I can assure you that I haven't seen this level of interest in the Bundesliga in 20 years. Normally people support Bayern Munich, Dortmund or even Bayer Leverkusen and that's it."

"But now they are also looking forward to seeing Fortuna Dueseldorf and Paderborn. It's crazy."

In Mexico, football journalists are grateful for something to cover - and the sorely-missed revenue live sport generates.

"For those of us who make a living from football the fact there hasn't been any activity really affects us. A weekend without football is really difficult," said Emilio Fernando Alonso, a Mexican reporter for ESPN.

In China, where the Super League might not begin until June, German football's meticulously planned return is being closely watched.

Writing in the Oriental Sports Daily, columnist Ji Yuyang said the biggest challenge for the Bundesliga was not restarting during the pandemic, but being able to outlast it because of financial pressures that clubs were facing due to the health crisis.

"Half of the teams in the top two leagues are in danger of going bankrupt, according to estimates in Germany," Ji wrote.

"So for many German clubs, whether it was better to wait for failure or risk restarting, they chose the latter."

The quarantine and social distancing measures that Bundesliga clubs have instituted are also being scrutinised in Italy and Spain, whose leagues are some way from being able to consider resuming.

"It will be a barometer, the reference point for all the others... if it all goes well it will be a great success and if there's a big problem it will have a similarly powerful negative effect," Movistar+ commentator Barbero said.

AFP

Sterling: I've had family members die from virus

LONDON

MANCHESTER City forward Raheem Sterling has said some members from his family have died from the coronavirus and that he is "reserved" about plans to restart the Premier League.

The possibility of a restart next month was given a boost when the UK government said elite sport could return after June 1.

Sources have told ESPN a number of players do not want to play football during the crisis and Sterling said he is also concerned about returning to action.

"I knew it was serious when football got cancelled," Sterling said on his YouTube channel. "I'm not saying football is the most important thing in the world but when a football event or the Premier League gets cancelled then you realise this is massive, this is something I've never seen."

"From the moment we got told we were off I knew this was very serious. I've had friends whose grandmas passed away. I've had family members as well that have passed away. You've got to be wise and take care of yourself and those around you."

"The moment we do go back it just needs to be a moment where it's not just

for footballing reasons, it's safe for not just us footballers but the whole medical staff, referees.

"I don't know how that's going to work, but I feel like once that side of the people's safety and the player's safety is secured and their wellbeing is looked after then that's the right time to go back in."

"Until then, I'm...how can I say...not scared but reserved and thinking what the worst outcome could be. At the same time I'm looking forward to it and I really want to get back but hopefully it will all be well when we do get back."

Sterling's club teammate Sergio Aguerro has also addressed concerns about returning to action amid the global outbreak. Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola also lost a family member from the coronavirus when his mother Dolores Sala Carrio died in Barcelona last month at the age of 82.

Newcastle United defender Danny Rose also labelled the decision to restart the campaign as a "joke" and criticised the UK government.

The UK has recorded more than 223,000 cases and over 32,000 deaths from the coronavirus - the highest number in Europe.

(Agencies)

Prem to prohibit tackling during training - report

LONDON

PREMIER League players will be prohibited from tackling and pitches will have to be disinfected when clubs return to training as part of plans to prevent the further spread of COVID-19, the BBC reported on Tuesday.

Citing an official protocol sent to Premier League players and managers outlining conditions for returning to training, the BBC's report said pitches, corner flags, cones and goalposts would have to be disinfected after each session.

Players will be tested twice per week for the virus and take a daily

temperature check, while they will also be forbidden from congregating together or travelling to or from training with team mates, the report added.

The Premier League did not immediately respond to a request to comment on the BBC's report.

English football has been on-hold since March along with most leagues across Europe due to the pandemic.

Yet while clubs across the continent have begun training again and set dates for re-starting their seasons, England's top-flight is yet to confirm plans for returning to training or matches.

(Agencies)

The Bundesliga is back, so can Dortmund catch Bayern?

BERLIN

BAYERN Munich are in pole position to win an eighth straight title, but Borussia Dortmund lead the chasing pack and are spearheaded by Erling Braut Haaland as the Bundesliga comes out of its coronavirus-enforced hibernation this weekend.

AFP Sport takes a look at what is at stake on the field when the German top flight ends a two-month shutdown to play out its final nine matchdays.

- Some things stay the same... - Teams have undergone testing and been forced into quarantine training camps because of the virus, and all matches will be played behind closed doors in the league with the highest attendances in world football.

So this will not be the Bundesliga as we know it, but something else may be just as before - Bayern, the country's most successful club, are on track to win another title, which would be their eighth in a row.

They had put a patchy start to the season under Niko Kovac behind them before the shutdown, with Hansi Flick coming in as coach and Bayern winning 10 and drawing one of their last 11 league games.

The Bavarians are four points clear of Dortmund at the top and have been busy since their last game, with Flick signing a new contract until 2023.

Key players Thomas Mueller and Alphonso Davies followed suit by penning extensions of their own, while former striker Miroslav Klose has joined as assistant coach.

With Robert Lewandowski scoring 25 goals in 23 games, Bayern are formidable. They still have to visit Dortmund and Bayer Leverkusen, although it remains to be seen how much home advantage will matter without fans.

- Watch out for Haaland - It could still just about be a four-horse title race, with Borussia Muenchengladbach six points off the pace in fourth, but Dortmund are best-placed to stop Bayern.

Lucien Favre's side were last seen going out of the Champions League to Paris Saint-Germain, but before that were in thrilling form led by young stars Haaland and Jadon Sancho.

They won seven out of eight league games after 19-year-old Norwegian powerhouse Haaland arrived from Red Bull Salzburg. He scored nine goals in that run.

Dortmund, though, will not be able to rely on their fans who usually pack the 81,000-capacity Signal Iduna Park and their next two home games - against Ruhr rivals Schalke on Saturday and then



Can Bayern Munich see off the chasing pack to claim an eighth straight title as the Bundesliga returns behind closed doors? (AFP Photo)

Bayern - will lose much of their edge as a result.

"Having to play behind closed doors is an enormous challenge, especially for a club like BVB, which draws a lot of strength from the passion of its supporters," admitted Dortmund chief executive Hans-Joachim Watzke.

Dortmund also must still visit Leipzig, who reached the Champions League quarter-finals before the suspension but whose patchy league form after the winter break saw them fall off the pace.

In Timo Werner, they have their own fearsome striker. And in Julian Nagelsmann, 32, they have one of Europe's most exciting young coaches, so anything is possible.

Gladbach were the last team to beat Bayern in the league but would now settle for holding off fifth-placed Leverkusen to secure Champions League qualification.

There are two points between those sides, who are due to meet next weekend. Beneath them, in the fight for one Europa League spot, Schalke, Wolfsburg, Freiburg and Hoffenheim are all within two points.

- Bremen in danger - At the bottom Paderborn prop up the division but the plight of Werder Bremen is more striking.

The four-time champions are four points adrift of Fortuna Dusseldorf in the relegation play-off place and eight points from outright safety.

They have a game in hand, but are in danger of following the path of Hamburg and Stuttgart, two giants to have been relegated in recent seasons.

"We all know how precarious our league position is. That's motivation enough," said sporting director Frank Baumann when asked about playing home games without fans.

Elsewhere, Hertha Berlin seem far enough clear of relegation trouble but it has been a chaotic campaign in the capital.

Bruno Labbadia has become the club's fourth coach this season since the shutdown began, with Jurgen Klinsmann's short-lived time in charge ending.

AFP

Premier League's 'Project Restart' running out of time

By Mark Ogden Senior Writer, ESPN FC



Sergio Aguerro

THE Premier League is running out of time to complete the 2019-20 season on the pitch. Sixty days after the competition was suspended because of the coronavirus crisis on March 13, the road map for a return is still nowhere close to being drawn.

Monday's summit meeting between the 20 Premier League clubs, at which the English Football Association was also represented, was the latest video conference to come and go without a date being set for the resumption of the top-flight season, although we at least now know it won't happen before the start of June.

Two months after it all ground to a halt we still don't know whether, or how, Liverpool will be able to clinch their first league title since 1990 or how the Premier League relegation battle will be decided. We don't know where the games will be played, due to disagreements over U.K. government requirements to stage them at neutral venues. Perhaps most importantly, we still have no clear idea of how the Premier League will make it safe for all participants to be involved in competitive fixtures while the coronavirus remains a threat to all.

English football cannot be blamed for kicking the can down the road once again. We are in the midst of a global pandemic, with no end in sight, and nothing can happen without being sanctioned by the government, so there is a bigger picture to be considered. But sooner or later, the Premier League has to deliver its blueprint for re-emerging from the shutdown. UEFA has set a May 25 deadline for all European leagues to confirm either their restart plans or intention to cancel the season, and there's also an expectation that all domestic leagues will be concluded by Aug. 2 in order for the Champions League and Europa League to be wrapped up later that month.

All of a sudden, the Premier League is being squeezed by two crucial deadlines. If they miss the first one, it will begin to look impossible for them to meet the second.

While the situation across Europe is complex, with each country dealing with football differently, there is at least some sense of clarity as to what is happening, and when:

- In Germany, the Bundesliga will start again on Saturday after a 61-day hiatus, with all clubs in the top two divisions expected to adhere to an 11-point list of safety guidelines laid out by the league (DFL).

- In Spain, La Liga president Javier Tebas has set June 12 as the target date for football to resume.

- Italy's sports minister Vincenzo Spadafora said on May 6 that it was "impossible" to set a date for Serie A to restart, while the 2019-20 seasons in France and the Netherlands have been cancelled altogether.

In England, however, all we have is a government

is beginning to tick louder and louder on those deadlines. There are still 92 league fixtures to be played. If the Premier League cannot restart on June 8 and has to push that provisional date back by just a week, it will be a difficult challenge to play nine match-days, and complete the FA Cup, before Aug. 2, even without the anticipated bumps in the road that will come with players testing positive for COVID-19 and the problems that will bring.

There is some optimism among clubs that the government, in conjunction with the police, will soften their stance on the neutral venues plan, which had been imposed as a safety measure to prevent fans from massing outside stadiums when games were being played behind closed doors. More than half of Premier League clubs oppose the neutral venues plan, with Brighton and Aston Villa publicly voicing their opposition due to concerns that losing home advantage in games could be damaging in their fight to avoid relegation.

But even if that issue can be resolved this week, the safety concerns of players must also be addressed. While ESPN has been told that many players want to return to action as quickly as possible, some have made it clear that they are reluctant to do so. Sergio Aguerro, Raheem Sterling, Danny Rose and Todd Cantwell have already spoken out to express their concerns, but without the kind of detailed safety plan that has been produced in Germany, it is no surprise that footballers are demanding more assurances that playing again will be as low-risk as possible.

But there are no certainties. Richard Masters, the Premier League chief executive, revealed that, for the first time, clubs raised the prospect of cancelling the season altogether at Monday's meeting. The clubs remain committed to playing the season to a conclusion, but the fact that deciding it by other means, such as average points per game, is now on the table is a clear sign of a growing acceptance that time is running out.

So when the clubs meet again on Monday, they really have to emerge with a plan. If they don't, the Premier League may have to go the way same way as Ligue 1 in France and the Eredivisie in the Netherlands by throwing in the towel on the 2019-20 season.

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

The Bundesliga is back, so can Dortmund catch Bayern?

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19



Deus Kaseke

Kaseke says ready to leave Yanga

By Correspondent Na Faustine Feliciane

YANGA midfielder, Deus Kaseke, is adamant he will be willing to leave the club should he get lucrative offer from another side.

The roving midfielder, though, hinted his move will depend on an agreement between his current outfit and the club that is seeking his services.

Kaseke conceded he is happy at Yanga but he will not be prevented from heading elsewhere, if another squad from either in or outside Tanzania will show interest in roping him in.

"I'm looking forward to plying my trade outside the country, as it is the case for other players, should there be good offer," he noted.

"I will be ready to head outside the country should my club too approve the exit."

"I will as well settle for playing for a club which is within the country, if we will reach an agreement."

Kaseke, who had as well turned out for Mbeya City FC and Singida United, pointed out a player should showcase resilience if he is to turn into his outfit's first choice squad member.

"There is no player who wants to sit on the bench. Every player wants to showcase his potential but the club's coach has a final say on players he needs for a match," he added.

He disclosed a player sometimes experiences challenges in his career but he must display tenacity to stay in good form.

Kaseke insisted he will keep on working hard to maintain his place in his club's line up.

Kaseke had turned out for Morogoro's Police in the First Division League and he later on moved to Mbeya City FC in 2010/11 season.

He conceded he has no qualms about being relegated to the bench but he always presents his coach with a chance to re-assess his decision by giving his all in training sessions.

Govt opens debate on foreign soccer players' number in VPL

By Correspondent Faustine Feliciane

THE government, through the National Sports Council (NSC), has officially opened a debate on the number of foreign football players needed in Tanzanian outfits.

Minister for Information, Culture, Arts and Sports, Harrison Mwakymbe, recently revealed the government is willing to see local football sides recruit not more than five foreign professionals.

Domestic football stakeholders have been given chance to issue recommendations on the issue.

Neema Msita, NSC Acting Secretary General, pointed out the council has already started getting the recommendations from the sport's stakeholders on the issue.

She said the council will later on present the recommendations to government for final decision.

"We on Monday officially opened doors to the stakeholders to present recommendations. We expect the process will end soon," she disclosed.

She pointed out the NSC will start working on the recommendations as per the government's say.

"There will be a technical committee which will review the recommendations before presenting them to Minister for Information, Culture, Arts and Sports, we want to get the recommendations from plenty of stakeholders and settle for the right decision."

Neema disclosed the government's say in the matter will benefit domestic soccer.

The Mainland Premier League's regulations stipulate each of the top flight sides should recruit 10 foreign professionals.

Nchimbi loan move a learning experience for us- Polisi Tanzania

By Correspondent Adam Fungamwango

VODACOM Premier League side, Polisi Tanzania, have disclosed they will not repeat the mistake they committed in a controversial transfer deal, which involved their forward Ditrani Nchimbi.

Kilimanjaro-based Polisi Tanzania had secured Nchimbi's services on loan basis from top flight other squad, Dar es Salaam's Azam FC.

The speedy forward thereafter moved to Yanga in what turned out to be a controversial move in this season's mini transfer window.

Polisi Tanzania have for that matter pointed out the transfer saga was a learning experience for not only them but also the rest of local football clubs.

Robert Munisi, Polisi Tanzania vice chairman, noted they will not repeat the mistake in the 2020/21 season, given they learnt from it.

Polisi Tanzania controversially lost Nchimbi to Yanga in the mini transfer window, when Nchimbi's parent club Azam FC sold him to Yanga.

Munisi noted Polisi Tanzania roped Nchimbi in on a loan basis, but they had no written agreement on the move that could have blocked the player's move to other club in mini transfer window.

"We learnt a lot from the issue. We will not repeat the mistake which can again put us in trouble," he insisted.

"Once we seek to rope a player in on loan basis we will first specify a kind of player we need. We will as well need to have written agreement on the move."

The Polisi Tanzania official maintained the issue should also serve as a lesson to other sides when they want to rope in players on loan basis.

He said the clubs should have written agreement with the players' respective sides.

"Many teams will no longer be willing to rope in players on loan basis. There ought to be a written agreement that, for instance, clearly states a player's season-long deal should be adhered to," he disclosed.

Nchimbi has drilled in six goals in this season's Vodacom Premier League, three of which he scored for Polisi Tanzania and the rest for Yanga.



Justin Shonga

Simba SC denies approach for Orlando Pirates striker

By Correspondent Michael Mwebi

SIMBA SC Chief Executive Officer, Senzo Mbatha, has said that there are no ongoing negotiations between the club and South Africa's Premier Soccer League (PSL) outfit, Orlando Pirates, regarding a possible deal for Zambian forward Justin Shonga.

Shonga joined Orlando Pirates during the 2018/19 season and despite having had a solid start to his life with the South African giants, he has since tailed off.

This season, the 23-year-old has struggled for regular game-time, making only 11 appearances across all competitions and without being directly involved

in a goal. As a result, he has been constantly linked with a move away from the Soweto Giants.

At the start of this campaign, many reports suggested that Shonga would join Simba on a possible loan deal.

With his Pirates situation seemingly getting worse, Shonga is said to be considering exiting the cold benches in search of first team action elsewhere.

Simba are once again being heavily linked with acquiring his services.

However, as reported by South African Football Magazine Soccer Laduma, CEO Mbatha denied they have initiated talks with Shonga and, like many others, he read the transfer ru-

mours in the media.

"I have also read the same reports on social media. It is obvious that speculation is rife during this time of the year as we are nearing the June/July transfer window," Mbatha said.

"Officially, as the club we have not been in contact with the player or his club for his services. We are currently focusing on our players whose contracts are about to expire at the end of the current season. We are trying to tie up those," he added.

"As for new recruits, the registration committee has not met and or finalised on the matter."

"We still have an unfinished league, which is also our immediate focus. We are hopeful that

this can also be concluded judging from the statements from the government this past weekend."

Simba are on the search for a new striker as they look to add even more firepower up front and ease the burden on talisman Meddie Kagere and John Bocco.

Should Simba decide to pursue Shonga, who has 16 goals and similar assists in 77 appearances in all competitions for Pirates.

He could come with a hefty price tag given the financial difference between the lucrative South Africa Premier Soccer League and the Mainland Tanzania Premier League.

Flexibles by David Chikoko

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12:00 MPYA
12:30 Bongo Hits
13:00 Msosi Kitaani (r)
13:30 Kili Za Wana
14:00 Ujenzi (r)
14:30 DK10 Za Maangamizi
15:00 Funguka
15:30 Wagona Ulimbo (r)
16:00 Ubongo Kids (r)
16:30 #HSHTAG
17:00 SSELEKT
17:55 Kurasa
18:00 eNewz
18:30 Music/Soap
19:30 EATV SAA I
19:45 MJADALA
20:00 DADAZ (r)
21:00 Kibishara Zaidi

DADAZ.

DADAZ A show that explores social and political issues from a feminine perspective.

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06:00 Supa Breakfast
10:00 MAMAMIA
12:00 Kipenga Xtra
13:00 Planet Bongo
16:00 EA Drive
20:00 Kipenga
21:00 The Cruise

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