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PSC in partial lockdown to tame spread of CoronaVirus

By Pauline Muriuki

The Public Service Commission has put into effect a partial lockdown for the next thirty days, during which a limited number of staff will be allowed at the work place.

This follows the directive issued by President Uhuru Kenyatta on 15th March 2020 on measures that must be put in place to minimize the spread of the deadly Corona Virus disease (COVID-19).

The Commission's partial lockdown took effect from 17th March 2020.

The Presidential directive read in part: "...Where possible, government offices, businesses and companies are encouraged to allow employees to work from home, with the exception of employees working in critical or essential services; and to avoid congregating."

PSC's Chief Executive Officer Mr. Simon Rotich, in a memo addressed to staff, outlined a raft of measures to be implemented, both for the Commission staff and visitors to Commission House.

The arrangement will guarantee that services minimum to the essential operations of the Commission continue uninterrupted.

Directorates, Divisions, Sections and Units will adhere



Artisans fix hand sanitizer at the Ground Floor entrance of Commission House on 17th March 2020

to a weekly schedule that will facilitate a skeleton staff to work on rotational basis in the office, as the rest work from their homes.

Office appearance will apply for critical services in Board Management, Finance, Accounts, Internal Human Resource, Registry and Mail, Security Services, ICT, Procurement, Contracted Cleaning Services, Building Caretaker Services, Transport Services, Main Reception Services, and Telephone Services.

The ICT Unit has been tasked to facilitate staff working online from their homes, and to enhance and ensure security of accessibility and confidentiality of information.

Staff are required to

observe high standards of hygiene, adhere to preventive measures at all times, and report any incidents of infection cases.

The Commission has also shared with staff the toll-free telephone and mobile contacts for emergency rescue teams under the Ministry of Health.

The numbers are 0800721316, 0723355535 and 0729471414.

As a result of the lockdown, some of the Commission's on-going and scheduled activities that would necessitate gatherings and foreign travel have been suspended until further notice.

Selection interviews suspended



Applicants queue outside Commission House as they wait to submit their applications in April 2019

By Pauline Muriuki

Selection Interviews that commenced at Commission House on 2nd March 2020 and were expected to run up to 31st March 2020 have been suspended.

The suspension by the Commission board on Monday 16th March 2020 followed a Presidential directive on Sunday 15th March 2020, that government offices and institutions take necessary measures to manage the spread of the deadly COVID-19 virus.

The long-awaited interviews for various posts in the civil service were advertised in February 2019 .

The cadres who have been undergoing interview include State Counsel II, Lecturer II, Veterinary Officers, Immigration Officer II, Human Resource Management &

Development Assistant III, Trans-boundary Water Resource Officers, Regional Economic Integration Officers, Land Registrar II, Assistant Engineer II and Foreign Service Cadets

The Commission established eight interview panels; each headed by a Commissioner and composed of senior secretariat staff; and senior representatives from technical departments in MDAs.

The turnout has been overwhelming, with some candidates who travel overnight from far-flung areas arriving as early as 5.00am.

According to a Security Officer manning the Commission House Reception area, some young mothers carrying their babies arrived as early as 6.00 am. The interviews began at 8.30 am and ended at 9.30 pm daily.

One of the Board

Secretaries said interview panels give priority to young mothers, expectant mothers and People Living With Disabilities.

“We make sure they’re comfortable,” she said.

“There were cases where candidates had forgotten some of their documents, but the Board gave them time to get the documents, after which they were interviewed,” she added.

The intense interview programme followed a resolution by the Commission Board in January this year to clear the backlog of pending advertisements by April 2020.

The process of shortlisting candidates has also been automated as per the January resolutions, and this has made it possible to conduct the interviews massively within a short time.

Editors declare support for PSC's transformation agenda

By Habel Shiloli

Editors from media organizations in Kenya have expressed support for the citizen-centric service delivery transformation that the PSC is pursuing.

The Kenya Editors' Guild President, Mr. Churchill Otieno, speaking on behalf of editors, lauded the Commission for prioritizing service delivery improvement, adding that the media will play its watchdog role by availing platforms to articulate the transformation agenda.

"PSC is a key institution in the country for its role in service delivery to the public," noted Churchill, adding that "the civil service is critical in society and nation building."

He made the remarks during a luncheon for the Press Club of the Kenya Editors' Guild (KEG), and Public Service Commission on 3rd March 2020 at The New Stanley Hotel.

Ms. Rose Lukalo and Ms. Wambui Wamunyu, members of the KEG highlighted the importance of informing citizens about government activities in a timely manner, to enable good understanding, and entrench good governance as well as democratic ideals to which Kenyans aspire.

They underscored the importance of KEG and PSC working together to achieve this.

PSC Chairman Mr. Stephen Kirogo said that the



KEG President, Mr. Churchill Otieno making his remarks during KEG meeting with PSC

Commission recognized media as a critical stakeholder in driving its agenda, which is articulated in the Strategic Plan 2019-2024.

He revealed that in the reform agenda, PSC is deliberately bringing the youth on board because they are not only a majority of Kenya's population, but also, all policies that are developed affect them.

"Involving the youths in policy development and decision making is critical, in the spirit of stakeholder engagement," he said.

Mr. Kirogo stated that ongoing interviews at Commission House would bring 3,200 youth into the public service at entry level.

"Already 6,000 youth have been brought in the public service as interns. The aim is to grow their skills and sharpen their competencies to make them better entrepreneurs and develop their capacities, even if they don't join the public

service," said Kirogo.

Responding to queries on poor services from a section of public servants, Mr. Kirogo said the Commission will weed out public servants who just sit to wait for a salary, and retain those who work for it.

He said the Commission takes seriously feedback from the citizens on service delivery, adding that in recognition of this, the Commission has established a Call Centre, to enable real-time feedback from *mwananchi*.

"We will take their issues and ensure they are quickly taken to the service ministry for action," said Kirogo.

"Our joy will be when we have citizens who are happy, and citizens who appreciate the public service because they are the employers," he asserted.

Threat of COVID-19 slows preparations for AAPSComs Conference



Director Performance and Service Delivery Improvement, Dr. Silvestre Obong'o Presenting a concept paper on AAPSCOMs to planning sub-committees at Serena Hotel, Nairobi, on 5th March 2020

By Badi Khamis

Reported cases of corona virus infections in various African countries, including Kenya have slowed down preparatory activities for the upcoming AAPSComs 6th Annual Conference, scheduled for August this year in Kenya.

Planning sub-committees for the conference were formally constituted and commenced their work on 5th March 2020, during a breakfast meeting convened by Public Service Commission.

The seven sub-committees whose membership is drawn from the various Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices (CCIOs) include Finance and Budgeting; Hospitality,

Protocol and Logistics; Conference Papers and Publications; Publicity and Public Relations; Innovation and Exhibitions; Security, Health and Safety; and Conference Programming and Management.

The sub-committees reconvened on 12th March to present their draft work plans and budgets to the Steering Committee Chaired by PSC Vice Chairperson Ms. Charity Kisotu.

Ms. Kisotu appreciated the progress so far made by the sub-committees, and urged members to continue giving full commitment to their assigned responsibilities, for prompt finalization of tasks.

She urged CCIOs that are

not yet members of AAPSComs to register with the association so as not to lose out on its benefits.

PSC's Director for Performance and Service Delivery Improvement, Dr. Silvestre Obong'o explained the concept of AAPSComs, stressing that it brings on board all Commissions and Independent Offices that oversee public service delivery in their respective countries.

"That is why it is called the *Association of African Public Services Commissions*, and not *Public Service Commissions*," he clarified.

Dr. Obong'o said the Association is a platform through which members share and find solutions to challenges that are common in public services among member countries.

He highlighted the fostering of good relations among African Public Services Commissions as one of the fundamental objectives of the association.

"In order to promote good governance and improve service delivery in the public service, professionalism and good conduct is important," he said.

Hosting of AAPSComs Executive Committee meeting scheduled for 2nd and 3rd April 2020 in Nairobi has been rescheduled to a later date owing to the Corona Virus threat.

MOH Internships - 900 applicants make it to the interview shortlist



Commissioner Dr. Mary Mwiandi addressing shortlisted candidates before the start of internship interviews at Kasarani gymnasium

By Badi Khamis

The Public Service Commission on Thursday, 27th February 2020, interviewed over 900 shortlisted candidates under the Ministry of Health Internship program at the Kasarani Sports Gymnasium.

205 successful candidates will join the Ministry of Health to serve as interns in various medical facilities managed by the National Government.

Speaking to the candidates before the commencement of the interviews, Commissioner Dr. Mary Mwiandi called on those who will emerge successful to serve the people of Kenya diligently.

“For those who will be unsuccessful after the interviews, remember that there will

always be another chance,” she said.

Speaking to PSC News, one of the candidates Mr. Kenfri Muchui applauded the PSC for using convenient communication channels to inform them on status of their applications.

“I received a text message notifying me of my scheduled interview and also saw my name on PSC website,” he said.

Mr. Muchui urged the Commission to consider taking future interviews to counties so as to cushion them from the travelling and accommodation expenses they incur while traveling to Nairobi.

“I request PSC to review their shortlisting criteria in future. In our case the posts

are just 200 but PSC have shortlisted more than 900 candidates,” he noted.

The Internship program is aimed at providing practical experience to the college and university graduates and prepare them for the job market in future.

Present during the interviews were Vice Chairperson Ms. Charity Kisotu; Commissioners Dr. Joyce Nyabuti, Dr. Mary Mwiandi, Dr. Reuben Chirchir and Ms. Joan Otieno; and CEO Mr. Simon Rotich.

Others were, Deputy Commission secretaries Mr. Remmy Mulati and Ms. Jane Chege, Director Corporate Services Mr. Gerald Kuhaka and other secretariat staff.

Selection Panel for KLRC holds its first meeting at Commission House



Dr. Vincent Nyagilo (Right) making his acceptance remarks following his selection as chair of the selection panel during the meeting at Commission House

**By Habel Shiloli
and Badi Khamis**

The selection panel for nominees of Chairperson and Members of the Kenya Law Reform Commission (KLRC) held its first meeting on 4th March 2020 at Commission House.

The meeting was convened by the Public Service Commission as provided for in Section 11 (2) of The Kenya Law Reform Commission Act No. 19 of 2013, which states that “*The Public Service Commission shall (a) convene the first meeting of the selection panel, at which the members of the selection panel shall elect a chairperson from among their number; and 2013 Kenya Law Reform Commission 493No. 19 (b) provide the selection panel with such facilities and other support as it may require for the discharge of its functions.*”

PSC’s Vice Chairperson Ms. Charity Kisotu who chaired the meeting asked members of the panel to be focused and follow the set guidelines.

Members of the panel include Mr. Jasper Mbiuki, Office of the President; Ms. Emily Chweya, Office of the Attorney General; Mr. Abdalla Cheruiyot, National Commission for Science and Technology and Innovation; and Dr. Vincent Nyagilo, National Economic Social Council

Others are Ms. Mary Mutugi, Law Society of Kenya; Ms. Irene Echakara, Association of Professional Societies of East Africa Professional Centre; Ms. Faith Odhiambo, Kenya Federation of Women Lawyers; and Hon. Mohamed Gabbow National Council for Persons with Disabilities.

The law requires the

selection panel to invite applications from persons who qualify for nomination and appointment for the position of the chairperson and members of the Commission within seven days of its convening, by advertisement in at least two daily newspapers of national circulation.

Within 21 days, the selection panel is required to consider the applications received; short list the applicants; conduct interviews of the shortlisted persons; shortlist three qualified applicants for the position of chairperson; shortlist eight qualified applicants for the position of the members; and forward the names of the qualified persons to the President or the Cabinet Secretary.

The KLRC is the primary Law Reform agency in Kenya and part of its mandate is to offer technical legal advice to government agencies on the review of laws for which they take responsibility.

It draws its current legal mandate from three primary instruments of governance which also inform its establishment, structure and operations.

These instruments are the Law Reform Commission Act (Cap 3), the State Corporations Act (Cap 446) and the CoK2010.

There is need to achieve inclusivity in Public Service

By Juma Gabriel

Public institutions have a responsibility of ensuring inclusivity in the public service so as to address ethnic, gender and PWD imbalances.

Policy makers and top management of public institutions are expected to keenly implement the planned programmes to address the imbalances.

Article 27 4(d) of the Constitution out-laws discrimination on any ground while 27(6) obligates the state to take measures including affirmative action programmes and policies designed to redress any difficulties suffered by individuals or groups because of past discrimination.

In addition, Article 56(c) obligates the state to take affirmative action measures to ensure that the minorities and marginalized groups are provided with special opportunities for employment.

Article 27(8) of the Constitution provides for affirmative action where the state is required to take legislative and other measures to ensure that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies are of the same gender.

The underlying motive for affirmative action is the principle of equal opportunity that holds that all persons have the right to equal access to self-development.

Garry Dessler in his book titled *“Human Resource Management”* defines affirmative action as the process of taking deliberate measures to eliminate the present effects of past discrimination or historical injustices.

Affirmative action policy



Gabriel Juma

focuses on demographics that have historically had low representation in positions of leadership, professional roles, and academics.

It is often considered a means of countering historical discrimination against particular groups or communities.

The Constitution of Kenya lays the foundation for ensuring that the public service is diverse. Article 232 expressly provides that the public service should be representative of the diverse Kenyan communities while Article 10 obligates public institutions to promote inclusiveness, non-discrimination and protection of the vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The *“Framework for The Implementation of Values and Principles in Articles 10 and 232 of The Constitution in the Public Service”* defines Kenya’s diverse communities to include members of different gender, members of different ethnic communities, members of different religious communities, vulnerable groups including the youth, persons with disabilities, orphans and those living in extreme poverty.

To ensure that the public service is representative, the Constitution calls for adoption of special measures including

affirmative action in order to provide groups that were previously marginalized with special opportunities for employment.

This is one way of building one united country where all communities, minorities, the marginalized, PWDs and other special groups feel they belong. The face of Kenya should be seen across the public service.

The 2018/19 values compliance evaluation report findings revealed that: all the ethnic communities are represented in the public service; the two-thirds gender rule had been met in the public service at a ratio of 63:37 male to female; progress had also been made in the attainment of the 5% requirement for Persons with Disabilities in the public service from 1% in 2017/18 to 1.18% in 2018/19 financial year;

Findings further revealed that in most of the institutions evaluated inclusivity had not been realized with the female gender still being under-represented at the managerial and policy levels; representation of diverse ethnic communities had not been realized while the minorities, marginalized and PWDs were still under-represented in majority of the institutions evaluated. The face of Kenya in public institutions as envisaged by the Constitution had not been achieved.

Consequently, to redress these imbalances the Commission required public institutions to establish the gaps in terms of ethnic, gender and PWDs representation and develop a three-year plan to address the gaps.

Get the right information on Corona Virus disease

By Habel Shiloli

The World Health Organization (WHO) has provided all necessary information on its website about the Corona Virus disease (COVID-19).

The website information can be accessed through the link: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

WHO describes COVID-19 as a new strain from among a large family of viruses - Corona Viruses (CoV), which was discovered in 2019 and has not been previously identified in humans.

While a lot of information about Corona Virus disease has been shared among friends through both conventional and social media, such information can only be verified through counterchecking with authentic sources like the WHO Website.

The WHO website provides information on the common signs of infection and gives recommendations on how to prevent infection spread.

Elaborate protective measures have been provided such as washing hands frequently with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub to kill viruses that may be on the hands, and maintaining social distancing to avoid liquid droplets from nose or mouth when infected people sneeze, because they may contain virus.

The general public has also been advised to avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth because hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to the eyes, nose or mouth.

The importance of practicing

respiratory hygiene has also been explained. This includes covering the mouth and nose with the bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing, then disposing of the used tissue immediately because droplets spread the virus.

Most important is the **COVID-19 myth buster**, which gives the correct information against what is trending on social media.

- Contrary to allegations that COVID-19 virus cannot be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates – The truth is COVID-19 virus can be transmitted in ALL AREAS, including areas with hot and humid weather.
- There is also no reason to believe that cold weather can kill the new Corona Virus or other diseases as some allege.
- Taking a hot bath does not prevent the new Corona Virus disease. Normal body temperature remains around 36.5°C to 37°C, regardless of the temperature of the bath or shower.
- The new Corona Virus CANNOT be transmitted through mosquito bites. To date there has been neither information nor evidence to suggest that the new Corona Virus could be transmitted by mosquitoes.
- An allegation that hand dryers are effective in killing the new Corona Virus is misleading. People are advised to frequently clean their hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Once the hands are cleaned, dry them thoroughly by using paper towels or a warm air dryer.
- Ultraviolet disinfection lamps should not be used to sterilize hands or other areas of skin as UV radiation can cause skin irritation.
- While thermal scanners are effective in detecting people who have developed a fever (i.e. have a higher than normal body temperature) because of infection with the new Corona Virus, they cannot detect people who though infected are not yet sick with fever.
- Spraying alcohol or chlorine all over the body cannot kill the new Corona Virus that have already entered the body.
- Vaccines against pneumonia cannot protect one against the new Corona Virus. The virus is so new and different that it needs its own vaccine.
- There is no evidence that regularly rinsing the nose with saline has protected people from infection with the new Corona Virus.
- Garlic is a healthy food that may have some antimicrobial properties. However, there is no evidence from the current outbreak that eating garlic has protected people from the new Corona Virus.
- People of all ages can be infected by the new Corona Virus (2019-nCoV). Older people, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus.
- Antibiotics do not work against viruses, only bacteria.
- To date, there is no specific medicine recommended to prevent or treat the new Corona Virus (2019-nCoV).

Understanding what lockdown means

By Pauline Muriuki

The Public Service Commission has put into effect a partial lockdown, but what does the term *lockdown* mean?

The Cambridge English Dictionary defines a *lockdown* as a situation in which people are not allowed to enter or leave a building or area freely because of an emergency.

The term *lockdown* is used to describe securing of a building or site by controlling human traffic into and/or out of a building.

A lockdown can be applied for significant threats or hazards that impact on the health, safety, or security of people and assets in the workplace.

It identifies how to keep any persons from moving from an area of lower risk to an area of higher risk.

There are three broad types of lockdown: *full lockdown*; *partial lockdown*; and *staged lockdown*.

In a *full lockdown*, all movements are halted in and or out of a building to contain people to keep them safe from harm.

A *partial lockdown*, such as the one effected by Public Service Commission, is whereby movement in and/or out of a workplace is restricted to one part or to a number of places, instead of the whole facility or building.

For the case of PSC, partial lockdown is permitting only few staff to get to the office while the rest work from their homes.

The ICT department is supposed to ensure that all



Pauline Muriuki

systems, including e-mail and the records management systems are working.

The records management system will alert officers on assignments given to them wherever they are.

Necessary approvals to allow officers access and work on official documents outside the office premises will be provided by the ICT team.

A *staged lockdown* is pre-planned and is triggered in response to an evolving hazard or threat.

The current situation facing the nation of Kenya, and the world at large - the outbreak of the new Corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic - has changed the way we live and work.

According to the World Health Organization, the novel coronavirus that has swept the world, infecting more than 130,000 people and killing nearly 5,000 in more than 100 countries within a span of three months, is a pandemic. While some countries have issued travel advisories in order to minimize its spread, a country such as Italy has locked down its entire population and warned the world that they are running out of ICU capacity.

According to the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza: Implementation Plan released by the *Homeland Security Council* (HSC) in *May 2006*, in the event of a

pandemic, the transmissibility of influenza viruses, the universal susceptibility of the world's population to viruses that have not previously circulated, and the mobility of human populations mean that every corner of the globe and every element of society are likely to be affected.

This has consequences not only for the health and well-being of populations, but for the national and economic security of nations, and the functioning of society.

Once this fundamental principle is acknowledged, the scope and scale of the measures necessary to prepare for a pandemic become apparent.

The Homeland Security Council in its report advised that it is critical for organizations to anticipate the potential impact of an influenza pandemic on personnel and, consequently, the organization's ability to continue essential functions.

As part of that planning, organizations will need to ensure that reasonable measures are in place to protect the health of personnel during a pandemic.

Taking precautionary measures can make all the difference.

Although it is impossible to plan for every potential eventuality, there are arrangements that can be made to immensely reduce the possibility for harm to office personnel.

In order to have a good plan, Homeland Security Council advises that the organization has to decide what kind of incidence warrants a response.

One such response could be a lockdown.

PSC IN PICTURES



LEFT: Churchill Otieno, the President of Kenya Editors Guild (KEG) introducing the PSC Chairman Mr. Stephen Kirogo to Mr. Maina Muiruri, Chairman MCK, and a KEG member Mr. William Janak, who is also Chairman of Kenya Correspondents Association, during the KEG and PSC meeting at the New Stanley Hotel, Nairobi

RIGHT: Member of KEG Ms Rose Lukalo making her remarks during KEG and PSC meeting at the New Stanley Hotel, Nairobi



LEFT: Ms Beatrice Kung'u of EACC and also a member of AAPSComs planning sub-committee making her contribution during the preparatory meeting at the Serena Hotel, Nairobi

RIGHT: PSC's Deputy Director P&SDI (Right) and members of Innovations and Exhibitions sub-committee during their first meeting at the Serena Hotel, Nairobi



PICTORIAL: Interviews for interns under the Ministry of Health (Kasarani Gymnasium) on 27th February 2020



L-R: Commissioners Dr. Mary Mwiandi, Andrew Muriuki and Joan Otieno



A section of interns at Kasarani Gymnasium



Senior Deputy Secretary Ministry of health Mr. Ibrahim Abdi addressing candidates



Deputy Director BMS Ms Rose Aduda (right) with a candidate during an interview session



Assistant Director Board Management Services (BMS), Duncan Mungalla (right) with a candidate during an interview session



A Ministry of Health official verifying a candidate's documents before the interview

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Vision

A Citizen-centric public service

Mission

To reform and transform the public service for efficient service delivery

Core Values

- Citizen Focus
- Professionalism
- Innovation
- Team-work

Public Service Commission Directorate

- Recruitment and Selection
- Human Resource Management & Development
- Establishment and Management Consultancy Services
- Performance and Service Delivery Improvement
- Board Management Services
- Compliance and Quality Assurance
- Finance and Planning
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