

INTERNATIONAL

WORLD BRIEFS

ZIMBABWE'S FOREIGN MINISTER
HEADS FOR ZAMBIA

HARARE, Zimbabwe (PANA) - Zimbabwe's foreign affairs minister Stan Mudenge has left Harare for a three-day visit to Zambia amid mounting international condemnation of Lusaka's detention of founding President Kenneth Kaunda on suspicions of involvement in a failed coup. Mudenge, however, said he was going to attend a joint Zimbabwe-Zambia ministerial commission discussing the two countries bilateral agreements and the current political climate in the region. Mudenge, accompanied by mines, environment and tourism minister Simon Moyo, said he was also taking to Zambia a special message to President Fredrick Chiluba from his counterpart, Robert Mugabe. Asked whether the joint commission will look into the arrest and detention of Kaunda, Mudenge said, "The meeting will look at all issues affecting the two countries and all our bilateral agreements." He refused to comment further on the Kaunda case saying he will issue a statement upon his return from Zambia. But sources interviewed later revealed the Kaunda issue was top priority on Mudenge's agenda. Kaunda was arrested upon his return from a long trip overseas, which took him to India, South Africa, the United States and Zimbabwe. About 90 opposition figures have so far been arrested and held for allegedly taking part in plotting the coup.

CONGO TO HOLD NATIONAL
RECONSTRUCTION CONFERENCE

KINSHASA, Congo (PANA) - The government of President Laurent Kabila is set to hold a national reconstruction conference starting Jan. 24 in Kinshasa. The Democratic Republic of Congo's minister of national reconstruction and emergency planning Etienne-Richard Mbaya announced that Congolese nationals employed by the United Nations agencies abroad had been asked to attend the meeting. He told a preparatory meeting for the conference that experts from the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP) had also been invited. Mbaya said that during the conference all cabinet ministers will take turns speaking at panel discussions on their respective sectors. The national reconstruction will be held more than a month after international donors meet in Brussels and pledge to give substantial amounts of funds to help in the reconstruction process.

WORLD BANK APPROVES 200 MILLION
DOLLARS FOR ETHIOPIA

NEW YORK, (PANA) - The World Bank has approved a \$200-million U.S. loan for the development of the energy sector in Ethiopia, including the construction of a hydroelectric power plant along the Gilgel Gibe River. This project will help Ethiopia produce urgently needed energy and open up electricity service for many more users, according to a news release from the World Bank. At present only about five percent of the population of Ethiopia has access to electrical power and what is available is being rationed, which slows Ethiopia's economic recovery, the bank said. The project aims to connect an additional 250,000 new customers by 2002 and reduce system failures, among other measures. The total cost of the project is \$295.89 million. It is co-financed by the government of Ethiopia who will contribute \$48.93 million, the European Investment Bank along with its \$42.11 million and the Nordic Development Fund and its \$4.85 million.

Senegal's new farms: A multi-pronged war against poverty

By Felix 'Machi Njoku.

Special to Sentinel-Voice

DAKAR, Senegal (PANA) - Sebikotane, one of the nearest rural townships to the Senegalese capital of Dakar, looks like many others in the Sahel region of Africa, at least at first glance.

The landscape around it is the usual cacophony of tall grass interspersed with the ubiquitous baobab tree and a variety of less noble shrub.

The traveler would have seen much of this kind of flora across the sleepy landscape during the 30 minutes drive from Dakar. The Sebikotane township is a landmark in the history of Senegal and much of French-speaking Africa. In fact, the name Sebikotane was famous because it once hosted the William Ponty Teachers College, where the first generation Senegalese and many educated Francophone elites went to study until the school was relocated.

Since then, the place has gone into oblivion, taking along most of the jobs and a host of social activities that sustained its population for years.

Apparently none of the few agricultural projects located in the place has been able to lift the town beyond a shade of its pristine glory.

However, a hand-full of educated young people have rekindled hope in the town where they have set up new modern farms. The goal of the modern farmers is to prove that with a good dose of knowledge, a miracle tree, some technology and a little bit of luck, Sebikotane could become the

bread basket of the Sahel.

"Sahelians were once told to abandon agriculture and concentrate on cattle rearing. We now think we have proved them wrong," says Moussa Seck, head of the Enda-Syopro department which is supervising a series of Third Generation Farming Systems, the focal point of the Senegalese government's spirited effort to revive agriculture and provide jobs for everyone.

According to Seck, the idea dates back to the 1980s, after a study found that the average Senegalese farmer earned something in the neighborhood of \$150 U.S. per annum.

No matter how hard he worked, there was no way he was going to escape poverty due largely to outdated agricultural production systems which hindered the production of enough food and surplus for the market.

Given this scenario, the Third Generation Farming Systems "were designed to give Senegal a modern agricultural system, viable enough to provide jobs for both rural and urban youth who flock to the labor market daily," he added.

Seck was sharing this renewed hope with a team of reporters from across the globe who undertook a field trip to the location, under the auspices of the New York-based United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which is assisting the pilot project.

The model farms cover a 40-hectare piece of land cut in geometrical parcels hedged by an all-purpose shrub, a miracle

plant called *Leucaena Leucocephala* in Latin.

One of the farmers, Khassim Ndour, said the project was started in 1990 as an experiment on large scale intensive agriculture which integrates environmental protection with horticulture, forestry and cattle breeding.

It involves all-year cropping of fruits and vegetables, with room for grains and cattle. Soil fertility is maintained with manure produced from animal dung, fodder and plant residue all produced in the farm. Water is a crucial but expensive input. To get around this problem, the farmers buy water at a cost of 100 to 145 CFA francs (20 to 25 U.S. cents) per cubic meter to water the crops using the drip system with imported second-hand PVC pipes which also funnel liquid fertilizer.

Another farmer, Abdoulaye Traore, said that with this system, his group harvests up to eight tonnes of green peas per hectare. The group as a whole exports some 250 tonnes of the beans to Germany and Holland. The profit margin, he said, ranges between 15 and 25 percent of turnover depending on the season.

Thanks to the innovation, farmers here have found their income soaring beyond their imagination.

Any wonder then that the venture is attracting a lot of attention. Some 120 Economic Interest Groups have signed on and the cultivated area is projected to reach 100 hectares in a year or so.

Seck says that socially, the farms are expected to uplift young educated males and

females who are said to constitute about 80 percent of the country's 8.6 million people, who also happen to be among the poorest segment of the society.

Economically, the farms could raise per capita income for farmers from 150 dollars to some \$10,000 annually.

Technically, it is encouraging all-year production and increasing productive land through crop rotation which also reduces production time.

"Up to 70 tonnes of fruits and vegetables have been recorded in some plots in a year. In other words, these farms produce, in one year, what farmers who use traditional methods would produce in seven years," the agronomist said.

Environmentally, the system is intended to produce a healthy environment using trees and shrubs like the *Leucaena Leucocephala* to check wind and water erosion. With their excess biomass, they also reduce the water and fertilizer requirements of the soil.

"In the Sahel, you first have to create the environment on a piece of land before you farm on it and that is exactly what we are doing here," he added.

For ages, Senegalese farmers have always depended on rain which is available for three months in a year for agriculture. The traditional farmers produce subsistence crops such as millet, corn, sorghum, rain-fed rice, groundnut and cotton. Yields were estimated at between 0.5

(See Senegal, Page 15)



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