

INTERNATIONAL

Case of former South African president postponed

By Newton Kanhema
Special to Sentinel-Voice

JOHANNESBURG (PANA) - Razor wire three-meters high separated the African National Congress and right-wing demonstrators who turned out on Jan. 23 for the court appearance of former apartheid-era President Pieter Botha.

Botha and his fiancée, Reinette Te Water Naude, arrived at the George Magistrate Court accompanied by a cavalcade of security personnel.

Before entering the building, the 82-year-old former South African President, gave a thumbs-up sign to a man with an old South African flag and waved to the crowd in the street.

He left the building with a two-month reprieve. The case was postponed until April.

But the postponement couldn't mask the climate.

Security was tight as the

town prepared for Botha to answer a charge of ignoring a subpoena by the nation's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The demonstrators stood on either side of the barbed wire barrier set up along the middle of Courtney Street, one of the town's main roads.

ANC supporters had permission to occupy a traffic island in York Street opposite the court building.

The right-wing group, calling itself the Moral Supporters of PW Botha, had been told to congregate outside the George Museum on Courtney Street.

Police occupied the neutral zone between the groups. Elsewhere in the town, traffic police were stationed in strategic positions and there were roadblocks at the approaches to the court.

Some 350 ANC supporters danced and sang while a handful of right-wingers,

mostly older men, waited in their area.

At a news conference earlier, ANC regional organizer Lanval Reid said Botha had become "an embarrassment to the Southern Cape" which wanted to create a non-racial society. The focus of the ANC's protest was, "No reconciliation without the truth."

Freedom Front town councilor Shorty Van Vuuren, who applied for permission for the gathering, said he had done so on behalf of Botha's supporters.

He said he believed Botha was being treated unfairly because the commission had chosen to subpoena him before reading his written submission. He described the latest development as "the open intimidation of the Afrikaner."

However, African residents of George think differently, many saying they want Botha to answer publicly for his role

in the apartheid regime.

The charge against Botha arises from his failure to appear before the commission on Dec. 19, 1997, when he was subpoenaed to answer questions about his role in the apartheid-era State Security Council, which he chaired.

There was anticipation that this hearing would be over quickly as Magistrate Victor Lugaju had to read three volumes of annexure attached to the charge sheet and Botha's own 1,700-page submission to the commission before the trial.

Botha's materials consisted mainly of his answers to the commission's questions as well as minutes of the Security Council.

There were also transcripts of evidence presented to the commission by other former National Party ministers, among them were Police Minister Adriaan Vlok and Foreign Affairs Minister Roelof Botha.

Former president blames colonialists for Africa's ills

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Lusaka, Zambia — Kenneth Kaunda, a former President of Zambia, has attributed Africa's current social conflicts and poverty to the colonial era and slave trade.

Speaking in an interview on Zambian national radio, Kaunda said that while the continent's colonization had divided its peoples, the slave trade robbed it of some of some of its best citizens now scattered in the Diaspora.

"Colonialism and the slave trade before this had contributed a lot to Africa's current problems in that slave trade took away the cream of our people while colonialism divided us through the colonialists policy of divide and rule," Kaunda said.

He cited the conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi as typical examples of the adverse effects of imperialists' divisive tactics.

"Look at Rwanda and Burundi where you have Hutus and Tutsis, who are basically the same people with the same

culture, being divided because the colonialists had told one group that it was superior to the other."

However, Kaunda also blamed some African leaders of causing their own problems by choosing to enrich themselves instead of working for the people.

This was in an apparent reference to former Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko who was recently removed from power for, among other reasons, allegedly squandering his country's wealth.

Government willing to negotiate with IMF

NAIROBI, Kenya (PANA) — The Kenyan government says it is willing to resume negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the suspension of a major loan to the country over stalled reforms and alleged impropriety in the management

of the economy.

The governor of the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), Micah Chesherem, said the treasury was considering re-opening talks with the Washington, D.C.-based IMF about the remaining two years of the three-year loan totaling \$215

million.

"We are determined to maintain underlying inflation at a single digit despite the current difficulties, and in this connection we are happy to report that the government continues to manage its borrowings from the CBK

within statutory ceiling," Chesherem said.

The governor pointed out that the government had implemented far reaching economic reforms in the last four years and is appealing to foreign investors not to abandon Kenya in view of the current problems.

The IMF suspended its key loan package to Kenya on August 1, 1997.

Booksellers association formed in Africa

HARARE, Zimbabwe — The recently concluded Zimbabwe International Book Fair created the Pan African Booksellers' Associations (PABA), a group booksellers say will boost Africa's reading culture.

The association is made up of booksellers and associations from 16 countries.

Their main objective will be to promote and develop book selling, provide training for marketing the materials, as

well as assist in the provision of infrastructure throughout the continent.

The association's chairperson, Gert Naude, says it will focus on encouraging a culture of reading in Africa.

"PABA sees itself as a facilitator in promoting viable book industries while establishing training schemes.

It will look at standardizing book ordering procedures and supplier relationships and discounts given to trade.

It will also look into unfair competition from publishers, wholesalers and their agencies, rationalize trade discounts to customers and check government taxes, duties and levies," he said.

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WORLD NEWS

STAT OFFICIAL: ZAMBIA'S POVERTY RATE ON THE DECLINE

LUSAKA, Zambia (PANA) - Poverty has been decreasing steadily in Zambia since 1993, going down as much as 4.6 percent in 1996, said David Diangamo, the director of the country's Central Statistical Office. Extreme poverty declined steadily from 60.6 percent in 1993 to 53.2 percent in 1996. A reason for this trend, Diangamo said, was because of the improved performance of the informal sector, where there has been significant increases in incomes. He also said the shift by rural households from traditional low income crops to cash crops has helped earn farmers more money. However, there was an increase in poverty between 1992 and 1993 due to the initial implementation of the country economic structural adjustment program. This economic initiative, a result of pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, resulted in large numbers of people being affected by the increased privatization of businesses and forced retirements. Diangamo also said the country experienced severe drought during the 1992-1993 period which left many households impoverished.

UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM LAUNCHES PROJECT FOR SOMALIA

NEW YORK (PANA) - The United Nations Development Programme has launched a 3-year project in Somalia in support of demining, re-integration of ex-militia and strengthening law enforcement. The project, budgeted at \$1.2 million, is already being implemented in northeast Somalia. It is aimed at establishing a secure and stable environment for the country's social and economic recovery, officials say. Somalia has been in a state of anarchy since 1991 when the government of the late President Siad Barre was overthrown. A UN peace keeping mission was forced to leave in 1993 because of resistance from clan warlords. UNDP said its demining program will equip Somalis to manage the activity themselves. In the improvement of law enforcement, the program said it would provide training in modern police methods with emphasis on human rights and judicial procedure. Late last year at a meeting in Cairo, Egypt, Somali faction leaders agreed to set up a government of national unity. The agreement has received the support of the international community, including the UN.

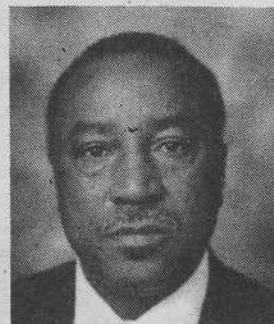
CLINTON'S SEX SCANDAL FRONT PAGE NEWS IN NIGERIA

LAGOS, NIGERIA (PANA) - It is not unusual for Nigeria's press to devote space to a piece of foreign news, but now that it involves the president of the world's most powerful nation, the competition for readership has become as fierce and diverse as the menu the tabloids offer. From the traditional foreign news pages tucked inside newspapers, the story of President Bill Clinton's sex scandal has since shifted to Nigeria's front pages competing for space with top national topics like an alleged coup plot and the violent communal clashes in southwestern Nigeria. The irresistible story of what a commentator dubbed "loose presidential zippers," has elicited in the Nigerian newspapers such headlines as "Presidential Freedom and Extra-Marital Sex," "The Trial of President Clinton," "A Whiff of Sex," and "Clinton and the MonicaGate Scandal," a cynical reference to the Watergate scandal that brought down late President Richard Nixon.

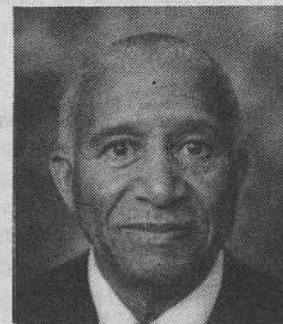
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