

INTERNATIONAL

WORLD NEWS

RAWLINGS URGES CHINA TO HELP RESOLVE INDIA-PAKISTAN FEUD

ACCRA, Ghana (PANA) — President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana has expressed outrage at the renewed tension between India and Pakistan and has appealed to China to assist in normalizing relations between the two countries which exploded their nuclear bombs in May. "Alongside the efforts of the international community, China, which shares borders with the two countries, should play a more prominent role in bringing India and Pakistan together," he told visiting Chinese foreign minister Tang Jiaxuan. The minister was on a three-day visit as part of a five-nation West African tour, which has already taken him to Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. He will also visit Togo and Benin. India and Pakistan have had tense relations since independence from Britain in 1947 and have fought three wars since then, thus setting the stage for an intense arms race. In May, India exploded an underground nuclear device; Pakistan responded almost immediately with its own explosion. Both have drawn sharp criticisms from the international community.

LIBERIAN REFUGEE WOMEN WORRIED ABOUT RETURNING HOME

ACCRA, Ghana (IPS) — The end of the seven-year-long civil war in Liberia has allowed people who had fled the West African country to return home, but some refugee women are hesitating to return, either because of abuse they suffered or because they fear reprisals. They say they would prefer to be settled in a third country. "My husband was killed in the civil war as a senior ... official then working with the Doe government," 42-year-old Victoria Nimely-Nah told officials of the U.N. High Commission for Refugees. "I am not willing to go back to Liberia because my life and those of my children are at risk." Nimely-Nah and her six children fled to Ghana in 1990, the year Samuel Doe, then de facto president of Liberia, was killed by insurgents. Since then, she — like the bulk of the Liberian refugees in Ghana — has been living at the Buduburam Refugee Camp 35 km west of Accra. Through the UNHCR, she applied to the Canadian High Commission for resettlement in Canada under Women At Risk, a program for women who have suffered torture or other forms of violence during civil conflicts. She was turned down in 1996 on the grounds that she had been granted sanctuary by Ghana, but she now plans to appeal that decision since the Ghanaian government has announced that it will stop supporting the Liberians and close the Buduburam Camp by December 1998. Only two women have successfully used the program. About 700,000 Liberians — roughly a quarter of the population — sought refuge in other West African countries during the 1989-1996 civil war.

REGIONAL INVESTMENT SCHEME TO LINK SOUTH AFRICAN NEIGHBORS

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AIA/GIN) — Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa have started a regional tourism investment scheme to attract visitors to the Lubombo enclave, a scenic area on the borders of the three countries. The project, part of the \$110 million Lubombo development project, will see the exploitation of the recently declared world heritage site at St. Lucia in KwaZulu Natal, the Kosi Bay lake system and the Mozambican tourist resort of Ponto do Ouro. "The project will see the development of two parks running across borders," says Jan Coetzee of the department of tourism. "A new road has to be put up linking the two conservation areas along the coastal area from Hluhluwe in KwaZulu Natal to the Maputo Elephant Reserve inside Mozambique." "Our selling points, other than the stunning geography, are our newly found political stability, undeniable political commitment to this venture and an extraordinary willingness to cut red tape and cooperate," says Mozambique's Tourism Minister Oldemiro Baloyi. Meanwhile, an agreement is expected to be signed in September between South Africa and Botswana on the proposed development of the Kalahari Transfrontier Park. Tourists will be able to travel around the wildlife areas, crossing international borders, without any formalities.

Scientists allege government planned to poison Mandela

Special to Sentinel-Voice

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — South Africa's apartheid-era government plotted to poison Nelson Mandela in an attempt to inflict brain damage, a scientist testified last week.

Appearing before a panel probing apartheid crimes, Schalk van Rensburg described how his superior, Andre Immelman, told him of plans to give Mandela a drug called thallium, which attacks the nervous system.

"The intention, I understood, was to reduce his level of intellectuality and effectiveness by inducing brain damage," van Rensburg said last Wednesday.

The testimony was part of a Truth and Reconciliation

Commission investigation of the former apartheid army's chemical and biological weapons projects, led by Wouter Basson, who ran the scheme through an elaborate network of front companies.

Van Rensburg said the aim was not to kill Mandela, but to disable him.

Though there was no suggestion the plot was ever carried out, it was considered in the final years of Mandela's imprisonment and at least for a short time after he was released, following 27 years of incarceration, in 1990, he said.

Mandela led his African National Congress to victory in the nation's first all-race elections in 1994 and is now president.

The white-run government

began talks with Mandela shortly after he was freed but the apartheid government apparently did not want him to be a viable political opponent.

A 1986 report from the State Security Council, which coordinated the crackdown on anti-apartheid activists, suggested Mandela could be released only when he was in such a poor state of health that he could not continue to lead the ANC.

Van Rensburg said he had never seen the document.

Jaap Celliers, a lawyer representing Basson and other top scientists in the program, denied the document indicated a plot to poison Mandela.

In earlier testimony before the Truth Commission, scientists described working in

a poison factory that churned out chocolates, drinks and cigarettes spiked with lethal chemicals that were passed to government hit squads.

"What is clear is that leading scientists (were) engaged in these inhuman experiments in the same way as those who served the Nazi regime in Germany," the ANC said in a statement last Wednesday.

Basson, who has been called to testify, was forced to resign from the army in 1993 after a government report fingered him in making poisons and chemical bombs.

Mandela and the ANC set up the Truth Commission to examine apartheid-era crimes as a way to help the country move beyond the violent period.

Wealth, disease, war determine life expectancy
Women, men in rich nations generally live longer

By Thalif Deen

Special to Sentinel-Voice

UNITED NATIONS, (IPS) — Women in rich industrial nations live longer, averaging more than 80 years, according to new U.N. statistics released here.

"Life expectancy of more than 80 years for women is increasingly common in developed countries," says the latest Demographic Yearbook published by the United Nations.

The yearbook lists 14 countries, and the territory of Hong Kong, where women have a life expectancy at birth of at least 80 years. Japanese women survive the longest, with a life expectancy of 82.9 years followed by women in Switzerland (81.7), Hong Kong (81.5), France (81.4), Sweden (81.4), Australia (80.9) and Canada (80.9). The list also includes Iceland (80.6), Italy (80.5), Spain (80.5), the Netherlands (80.4), Norway (80.3), Finland (80.2), Greece (80.2) and Austria (80.0).

In 1985, only women in two countries, namely Japan and Iceland, had a life expectancy

of more than 80 years. Currently, women in 60 countries live up to 75 years or more, up from 40 countries in 1985 and 22 in 1980.

Men, on the other hand, are expected to live more than 75 years in nine countries. Iceland recorded the longest life expectancy for males (76.5) followed by Japan (76.4), Sweden (76.1), the territory of Hong Kong (76.0), Cyprus (75.3), Israel (75.3), Switzerland (75.3), Australia (75.0) and Greece (75.0).

Among the 25 largest countries, the gap in life expectancy between women and men is largest in the Russian Federation (13.4 years), Ukraine (10.4 years) and France (8.1 years). That gap is the smallest in Iran (0.9 years) and India (0.4). In Bangladesh, life expectancy for men is longer than for women by almost one year.

The United Nations says that poverty and lack of sanitation, water and health services all collectively contribute to the high mortality rates in poorer nations. The yearbook says that life

expectancy in Africa is still lower than in most other parts of the world. Only women in Cape Verde, Mauritius, Seychelles and Tunisia have an expectation of life at birth in excess of 70 years.

A U.N. study released last year said that the world's lowest life expectancies were in Africa while the highest were in Europe, North America, Australia, Japan and New Zealand. In general, those born in Europe or Japan may live up to 75 years of age or more while those who were born in Rwanda would survive only until 23.

Titled "The World Social Situation," the study pointed out that the world's lowest life

expectancies were in Rwanda (22.6 years), Sierra Leone (34.4 years), Liberia (39.4 years) and Uganda (41 years).

The life expectancy in Rwanda — a country embroiled in an ongoing civil war and victim of a mass genocide in 1994 — declined from 46.3 years in 1980-85 and 46.7 in 1985-90 to 22.6 in 1990-95.

The highest African life expectancies were in Botswana (54.3), Kenya (54.1), Cote d'Ivoire (52.1), Congo (51.5) and Togo (51.0). The overall figure for Africa was 51.8 years, for Asia 64.5 years, for Latin America 68.5 years, North America 76.2 years,

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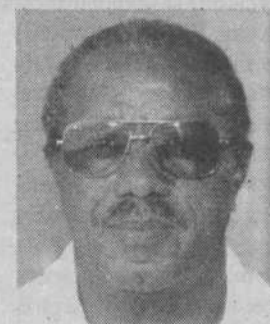
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