

WORLD BRIEFS

GADHAFI RECOVERING FROM SUCCESSFUL HIP SURGERY

CAIRO, Egypt — Libyan leader Col. Moammar Gadhafi underwent surgery to repair a hip he broke while exercising, according to Libyan news reports on Tuesday which showed graphic video of the procedure. State television carried footage of the surgery showing Gadhafi under local anesthesia talking to aides, while a team of surgeons operated. The operation was "successfully conducted" Monday night by Libyan surgeons, the official news agency JANA said. Gadhafi, 56, on Tuesday greeted from a wheelchair many of the African dignitaries he had invited to Libya to take part in prayers marking the birthday of Prophet Mohammed. Gadhafi announced Monday at a televised news conference that he would undergo the surgery. The Libyan leader addressed the packed news conference while reclining on a hospital bed, draped in a white sheet. Farrakhan and some African leaders also were present in the room.

ILLICIT LIQUOR KILLS THOUSANDS IN KENYAN VILLAGES

GIKAMBURA, Kenya (IPS) — Kenyan police have declared war on illicit liquor which kills and maims thousands in the East African country each year. Latest police figures show that over 6,000 people died as a result of consuming the lethal brews last year. The most serious incident occurred when 12 people died moments after drinking the alcohol known as "chan'gaa" in a village in Murang'a, the central province of Kenya. Dozens more lost their eyesight. Sample contents of the brew, analyzed by a government chemist, revealed that excess car battery acid and methanol mixed with formalin — a poisonous chemical used to preserve dead bodies — had been the lethal weapon in the drink. The liquor sells very cheaply with prices ranging from five to 25 shillings for a glass, depending on the potency (60 shillings is equal to US\$1). To combat the health problems, the government banned the manufacturing and the sale of the alcohol in May, imposing a fine of 300 shillings (\$5 U.S.) or one month in jail on those caught drinking it and a fine of 2,000 shillings (about \$40 U.S.) or a prison term of six months for the brewers. — Philip Ngunjiri

PUERTO RICO'S ENVIRONMENT SUFFERS AS GOVERNMENT AGENCIES FLOUT RULES

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (IPS) — The United States federal agencies have not been good custodians of Puerto Rico's natural resources and in some cases have even broken their own rules, say environmentalists in this U.S. territory. "The agencies that are supposed to protect the environment, both local and federal, have been equally negligent with Puerto Rico's environment. They do not even follow their own rules and the courts are not any better," says Ismael Guadalupe, who lives in the island town of Vieques, which lies between the U.S. Virgin Islands and the main island of Puerto Rico. More than two-thirds of Vieques has been occupied by the U.S. Navy since the 1940s. The Navy uses most of those areas for target practice. According to Puerto Rican environmentalists, the constant bombardment from both sea and air has polluted the ground water and air in Vieques, and has done serious damage to marine life. The U.S. Department of Defense says "however, that these activities are essential to "national security" measures. Last month, the Puerto Rican government publicly admitted that the cancer rate in Vieques is 26 percent above the national average. The Puerto Rican Health Department has refused to link this finding to the U.S. military's activities on the island.

ANGOLAN BEAUTY PAGEANT SPARKS CONTROVERSY

LUANDA, Angola (AIA/GIN) — Both the current and former Miss Angolas have come under fire. The present title holder, Emilia Guardado, 22, from the coastal city of Benguela, is accused of not being Angolan, because she is not very dark. "I do not know why people even raise this issue. I am an Angolan, I was born in Angola and my relatives are all Angolans. I can assure you that if I was not Angolan I would not have entered myself for Miss Benguela, let alone for Miss Angola," she said. Likewise, the former title holder, Manuela Lemos, is criticized for working at a shady night club in Luanda where she is best remembered for dancing on top of the speakers. "It was my job and I had to do it. I was paid to do it. And people still remember me in this image which is not the real me. It is something that they have not yet forgiven me for," she said. Neither woman, critics say, should represent the nation, especially in international competitions. One journalist asked to comment about Guardado said, "While it is true that she might even deserve to win the contest, we are an African country and she is, in a way, representing our country and her color is not that of an authentic African."

INTERNATIONAL

S. African students to hit Cuba for training

Special to Sentinel-Voice
JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AIA/GIN) — The South African government has decided to send Black students to train as doctors in Cuba to ease the current shortage, especially in the rural areas. Under an agreement with the Cuban government, 52 students will train in Cuba for six years. Upon completion, the young doctors will be deployed to outlying areas where the patient doctor ratio is as high as 20,000 to one. Currently, Cuban doctors are serving in most South African rural health centers.

The move has been opposed by deans of South African universities. Professor van Dellen, dean of Natal University, argues that the education systems in the two countries differ substantially. He said Cuba teaches doctors to work as a team while South

Africa trains doctors "holistically" to enable them to individually cope with a variety of medical situations.

Van Dellen and others also feel that the money spent on the Cuban program could have been used locally to train 156 potential doctors. Of the 22,000 medical doctors in South Africa today, only 3,000 are Black and most of the White graduates left the country soon after completing their studies.

The government is unhappy with the number of Black medical graduates produced by the country's eight medical schools. "The pace of admission is not fast enough. When you look at the admissions, instead of improving they are getting worse," said Dr. Ayanda Ntsaluba, deputy director general in the health department.

Professor van Dellen says

208 students could have been afforded full scholarships to study at his institution with the money used to send students to Cuba. But he said his university was finding it difficult to enroll Black students because of falling subsidies and scholarships from the provincial government.

However, Blacks have been excluded from medical schools for a variety of reasons. Historically, Afrikaans universities used the language as a barrier, while those with English as the language of instruction insisted on high pass marks as a criterion despite the fact that Blacks were often exposed to an inferior education system in high school.

Parliamentary health committee chairman Dr. Abe Nkomo said most universities had a hostile academic environment which barred

Black students from them. "Our university caters to the academic needs of the Afrikaans-speaking lecturers and students," said professor Jan Lochner of Stellenbosch University. "We work to preserve and extend Afrikaans medical terminology and phraseology. This does not imply an unwillingness to accommodate the needs of non-Afrikaans speakers," Lochner said.

"Although transformation has not yet taken place, we are working at it. We have to move forward," said professor David Beatty, acting dean at the University of Cape Town. To accelerate the enrollment process, Dr. Ntsaluba said the health department will be implementing plans to increase subsidies to the department of education to ensure that South Africa's medical schools enroll more Black students.

Nigeria's top political prisoner dies of heart attack

Special to Sentinel-Voice
ABUJA, Nigeria — Nigeria's most prominent political prisoner, Moshood Abiola, died of a heart attack Tuesday after falling ill while meeting with a U.S. delegation, the government said. He was 60. "The federal government regrets to announce the sudden death of Chief M.K.O. (Moshood) Abiola," a government statement said. "Chief Abiola was taken ill during a meeting which was being held by Nigerian and United States officials with him."

The statement from the president's office said an autopsy would be performed.

In Washington, a senior State Department official confirmed that Abiola fell ill while meeting with a delegation led by Thomas Pickering. The State Department official, asking not to be identified, said Abiola began coughing and wheezing and apparently died of a heart attack.

Abiola was reportedly due to be freed soon. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan visited Nigeria last week and pushed for his release.

Abiola was the apparent winner of the 1993 presidential

elections that were canceled by the military. He was jailed the following year and accused of treason by dictator Gen. Sani Abacha, who died last month of a heart attack.

Abacha was succeeded as head of state by Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, who freed dozens of political prisoners and vowed to return power to civilian rule.

Abubakar reportedly met with Abiola hours after coming to power.

Abiola's family had repeatedly warned that his health had been failing after years in detention under harsh conditions. His fortune and personal life also suffered during his imprisonment. Two of his many wives died — one in an assassination-style slaying — and his business empire largely collapsed.

Annan said after his visit that he met with Abiola and that the opposition leader had decided to relinquish his claim to the presidency and cooperate with Nigeria's junta in making a peaceful transition to democracy. Many of Abiola's supporters, however, still wanted to see him take office.

Abiola grew up in a poor family, graduating on a scholarship from the

University of Glasgow in Scotland with a degree in economics. His empire once stretched from publishing to shipping to oil, but he said his first serious income came during his years with the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp.

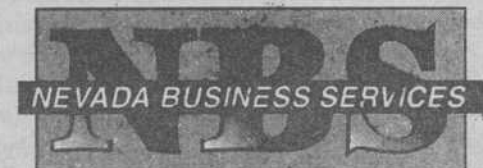
Some Nigerians blamed him for the country's appalling telephone system, saying he made millions between 1971 and 1988 by using inferior materials and pocketing the extramoney. Abiola denied the accusations.

In 1992, Abiola won international attention when he began a campaign to get the

United States and former European colonizers of Africa to pay reparations to the continent for slavery and for fortunes made from its raw materials. Nigeria became an international pariah under the rule of Abacha, who took power in the West African nation following a coup in 1993.

Political jailings were rampant; between 250 and 280 people are believed still held across Nigeria. All are kept in regular prisons except for Abiola, who was detained in the relative comfort of a government guest house in Abuja, the capital.

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