

# WORLD BRIEFS

## SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA UPSET OVER SNUB AT MANDELA WEDDING

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — After being misled and excluded from Nelson Mandela's wedding to Graca Machel, South African media on Monday vented their anger on the president's spokesman. The marriage took place on Saturday during Mandela's 80th birthday celebrations. Mandela's spokesman, Parks Mankahlana, denied rumors all week that the wedding was planned. And Deputy President Thabo Mbeki on Saturday kept reporters waiting for an announcement in Pretoria while he attended the wedding in Johannesburg. On Monday, Cape Town's Afrikaans-language daily, *Die Burger*, called for Mankahlana's dismissal. The South African National Editors Forum said the wedding was badly handled by Mandela's office. "We acknowledge that this is a private affair," said Mike Siluma, chairman of the editors forum. "But from the presidential spokesman's point of view, I believe there were better ways of handling it." Mandela's office on Monday said that the maneuvers were justified.

## U.S. TREASURY SECRETARY PUSHES FOR AFRICAN LIBERALIZATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. (IPS) — U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin recently visited Africa to further push for financial market liberalization, viewed as the key to boosting investment and economic recovery on the continent. Rubin visited Cote d'Ivoire, South Africa, Mozambique and Kenya. Accompanying him were executives from the U.S. financial companies of Alliance Capital Manager, Good Works, JP Morgan, and Salomon Smith Barney. The collapse of the South African rand in recent weeks dominated talks with Washington's biggest trading partner in the region. South Africa accounts for nearly half of all U.S. exports to Africa. Rubin's trip was billed as a follow-up to President Bill Clinton's visit to Africa in March. Since then, the U.S. administration has approved two new Africa funds by its Overseas Private Investment Corporation to help finance American investments in infrastructure projects. But the centerpiece of its initiatives, the "African Growth and Opportunity Act," has been stalled in the U.S. Senate after passing in the House of Representatives. The bill, designed to boost U.S. commercial interests in a region long dominated by former colonial powers Britain and France, would increase the number of African-made goods permitted to enter the United States duty-free and initiate long-term plans for U.S.-Africa free trade zones. — Abid Aslam

## GATHERING NEWS, BUT NOT MAKING MONEY

GRAHAMSTOWN, South Africa (IPS) — It takes more than just a good sense of what makes news to keep a newspaper alive. Media managers must also have a good sense of business if their newspapers are to be profitable and survive. This is the main message being drummed into a group of 14 media managers from countries in the Southern African region at a month-long June seminar on media management at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa. According to Guy Berger, head of the journalism department at the university, the need to equip African media managers with proper management skills is fundamental to having a vibrant African press that will adequately and competitively cover African issues for an African audience, while at the same time remaining profitable. — Anthony Mukwita

## UN REPORTS MIXED FINDINGS ON PROGRESS FOR WOMEN

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) — The United Nations has issued a mixed report on progress by member states in eliminating discrimination and prejudices against women throughout the world. The U.N. Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), while conceding that conditions for women have improved in some countries, says that overall, global discrimination is worsening. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is the world's most comprehensive, legally binding treaty on women's human rights. In a study of eight nations — Slovakia, Panama, South Africa, Tanzania, Nigeria, Peru, South Korea and New Zealand — the committee found improvements in each country to break down barriers against women. The positive trends included, in the case of South Africa, the repealing of all discriminatory laws against women and, in the case of Panama and Peru, the removal of gender stereotyping in education, the committee said. — Murtaza Mandli-Yadav

# INTERNATIONAL

## Nigerian leader promises civilian rule by 1999

Special to Sentinel-Voice

ABUJA, Nigeria — Nigeria's president must turn encouraging promises of a transition to democracy into action, government critics and international leaders said Tuesday.

In a televised address, Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar pledged Monday to end military rule in Africa's most populous nation and announced presidential elections for early next year. He promised a return to civilian government in May 1999.

Abubakar said his administration had released all political "detainees" — a term that in Nigeria means prisoners arrested without charge — and said charges against all political prisoners would be dismissed.

The speech was received warmly by world leaders.

In Washington, State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said the United States is committed to working with Nigeria to "ensure that a rapid, transparent and inclusive

transition to civilian democratic rule takes place." Germany and Britain also praised Abubakar's remarks.

But some Nigerian dissidents were skeptical.

"This new transition program will fail, it will not lead anywhere," said Gani Fawehinmi, a Lagos lawyer and a leader of the Joint Action Committee on Nigeria. He noted that Abubakar did not repeal a law that gives the government power to arrest people without charge.

Others said they were cautiously encouraged.

Said human rights lawyer Clement Nwankwo: "We need to match these words with action."

Abubakar, who came to power six weeks ago following the death of Gen. Sani Abacha, said he would lay the foundation of a truly representative government.

"Nigerians want nothing less than true democracy in a

united and peaceful country," he said in his nationally broadcast speech.

The military leader disbanded the national electoral commission, canceled the results of elections conducted during the Abacha years, said he would give independence to the judiciary and dissolved all five government-sanctioned political parties.

On Tuesday, a former presidential candidate took advantage of Abubakar's announcement and said he was forming a new political party. Tunji Braithwaite said the Democratic Advanced Movement would focus on ensuring that the rule of law is upheld and push for better housing and improved schools.

Braithwaite withdrew as a possible presidential contender earlier this year, saying the process was rigged in Abacha's favor. All five parties, including his, eventually nominated Abacha.

In his speech, Abubakar complimented Moshood Abiola, the apparent winner of 1993's annulled presidential elections who died this month of an apparent heart attack while in custody. His death sparked days of rioting.

Abubakar said elections would be held in the first three months of next year, and the new president would be sworn in on May 29.

Emeka Anyaoku, the secretary-general of the Commonwealth of former British colonies, said the speech was "further evidence of his commitment to national reconciliation" and democracy.

Many people, fed up with electricity and oil shortages, were more concerned with other aspects of Abubakar's address.

The military leader promised to repair the country's roads and education system and to reform its petroleum industry, the bedrock of the economy.

## Former Botha aids finger boss in church bombing

Special to Sentinel-Voice

PRETORIA, South Africa — After years of conjecture about apartheid's chain of command, a former Cabinet minister provided details Tuesday on how former President P.W. Botha allegedly ordered the destruction of a church headquarters.

Adriaan Vlok, who is seeking amnesty for violent acts he ordered as Botha's law and order minister, said Botha dictated the Aug. 31, 1988, attack in Johannesburg.

Khotso House, home of the anti-apartheid South African Council of Churches, was heavily damaged in the bombing. The blast injured a few people but caused no deaths.

The bombing was a key element earlier this year in a court trial over Botha's refusal to appear before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the panel investigating human rights abuses during white minority rule.

Vlok told the commission's amnesty committee on Tuesday how he met Botha twice in private to discuss

suspicious that African National Congress activists used Khotso House as a base of operations.

"Mr. Botha said it was not a house of peace anymore but a house of danger," Vlok said. "Mr. Botha said, 'You must make that building unusable. And whatever you do, you must make sure no people are killed.'"

Others, including a former national police chief, have alleged that Botha ordered the bombing. But no accusation was as direct — and from such a senior official — as the one made by Vlok.

Botha has denied authorizing the bombing. Apartheid-era government leaders claim such attacks were the work of rogue operatives.

Vlok said he passed Botha's order on to Gen. Johan van der Merwe, the former security branch chief and police chief.

"Van der Merwe was more of an expert in this area, and we decided to use explosives to damage the building," Vlok said.

Among those at Tuesday's hearing was Welcome Ntumba,

53, a security guard who was wounded in the bombing and has not been able to work since then.

Asked later if he forgave Vlok, Ntumba said: "No. I'm still angry. Where can I get money? It's 10 years ago."

Vlok, the only apartheid-era Cabinet minister to apply for amnesty to the Truth Commission, apologized for the attack.

Vlok is also seeking amnesty for the bombing of the Congress of South African

Trade Unions headquarters in 1988, and a series of bomb blasts at theaters showing the film "Cry Freedom," starring Denzel Washington as anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko.

The commission can grant amnesty to those who confess fully to politically motivated abuses committed during apartheid.

President Nelson Mandela's government, elected in 1994's first all-race elections, created the commission in 1996.

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