

INTERNATIONAL

New monarch crowned in Ghana

KUMASI, Ghana (AP)—Thousands of Ashanti people crowded the Manhyia palace grounds in pouring rain today as tribal drums proclaimed the new ruler of the Ashanti kingdom.

Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, a London-trained accountant, sat three times on a golden stool shortly before 3 a.m., marking the final rite in more than 16 hours of intricate ceremonies to pass the royal seat of the Ashanti kingdom.

Dressed in bright-colored kente cloth, the king set out Monday morning from his palace in Kumasi, the royal seat of the Ashanti kingdom, with 20 men in black waistcloths holding aloft his sedan chair.

They carried him to the small, royal neighborhood of Pampaso, for a series of secret rites that ended with his "enstoolment."

According to tradition, the king, who changed into black mourning cloth and a leather

cap early today, sat three times on the Golden Stool, a small, solid-gold seat believed to embody the soul of the Ashanti nation, which makes up about 40 percent of Ghana's population.

More than 60 Ashanti chiefs then paid allegiance one by one to the newly crowned king.

Earlier, at least 40,000 jammed the Kumasi stadium to watch on a sweltering day as the 49-year-old king, covered in a heavy smock adorned with leather charms and amulets, fired three shots with a musket — proving his ability to command and lead the Ashanti nation.

Crowds followed the royal entourage of incense-bearers and drummers through pouring rain until they officially had a new king after the Feb. 25 death of 79-year-old Opoku Ware II, who had ruled the kingdom for 29 years.

While the Ashanti king has

no power under the constitution, he still wields great influence in this West African nation's political and business worlds, and his approval is needed for several political appointments in the Kumasi region.

The coronation comes a day after the new king was given his royal name, leaving his former name, Barima Nana Kwaku Dua, behind.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime happening. It's a landmark in Ashanti history. I know this new king will do a lot to change the destiny of the Ashanti people," said Nana Osei Banahene I, an Ashanti chief watching the ceremonies.

The new king's coronation comes at a sensitive time in Ashanti history, as one of the wealthiest and best-known African royal families struggles to find its place in the modern world.

While recent Ashanti kings have been modern men

—businessmen who manage the royal families' myriad companies — the families' position and role is also changing.

The struggle for tradition came to a head in February when the former king's death was announced on state radio just a few days after he died — a serious breach of protocol. In times past, the king's death has remained an official secret for weeks, or even months, until the new king was chosen.

The modern Ashanti state was born in the 1600s but by 1800 had grown well beyond the borders of present-day Ghana. Today, the Ashanti king still holds great power over traditional chiefs in parts of neighboring Ivory Coast.

The visual culture of the Ashanti — kente and adinkra cloth, gold weights and graceful wooden stools — have become synonymous in the West with traditional Africa.

WORLD BRIEFS

BISHOP DETAINED FOR
1994 RWANDAN GENOCIDE

KIGALI (IPS)—The arrest of Catholic Bishop Augustin Misago earlier this month for alleged complicity in the murder of 20,000 people in Rwanda in 1994 came as no surprise to many Rwandans. The news of the bishop's arrest was made public April 14 by the country's top prosecutor, Emmanuel Rukangira, who said the clergyman had been remanded to Muhima police station in the capital of Kigali pending trial. He said the bishop will be tried either in Kigali or Gikongoro, the diocese where the murders took place, on charges of "genocide and crimes against humanity." More than 500,000 people, mostly Tutsis and moderate Hutus, were slaughtered by Hutu militias, known as the Interahamwe ("those who fight together" in the Kinyaranda language), in Rwanda in 1994.

BARBADOS HOTEL OPERATORS
SCARED CRIME WILL HURT TOURISM

BRIDGETOWN (IPS)—Nervous at what they say is a growing problem of harassment of tourists, hotel operators want additional police officers to patrol their streets. They fear that escalating incidents of sexual harassment, drug peddling and verbal abuse could threaten the economy. Recent surveys have shown that the number of visitors who reported that they were sexually harassed stood at 10.6 percent, up from 2.6 percent in the mid-1990s. Those who said they were offered illegal drugs went up to 17.6 percent from 6.8 percent. And, the number of those verbally abused rose from 2.7 percent to 7.6. "We need to cordon off the [St. Lawrence] Gap and adopt the zero tolerance method. We need to do it and we need to do it quickly before the Gap is destroyed all together," said Noel Lynch, government member of Parliament and executive vice-president of the Barbados Hotel and Tourist Association. The Gap is the most popular tourist spot on the island. In 1998 there were just over one million visitors to this eastern Caribbean island and 245 crimes were reported against tourists.

AIDS activists decry rape-worsened AIDS crisis

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP)—Women's groups criticized the South African government last week for failing to provide medical treatment they say could help prevent victims of rape from contracting the AIDS virus from their attackers.

The activists are demanding the government provide rape victims with a three-drug cocktail of AZT, 3TC and a protease inhibitor Crixivan.

The three-drug cocktail is available for \$820 on the private market, which represents five months of wages for an average South African.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta recommends the three-drug therapy for health care workers who have been exposed to HIV through contaminated needles because some studies have found AZT alone has prevented them from contracting the virus.

"The state has removed the death sentence" for crime, said Johannesburg journalist Charlene Smith.

"Now we are asking them to remove the death sentence for rape survivors."

Smith, who wrote recently about being raped and her attempts afterward to obtain AIDS-related medical treatment, spoke at a news

One in eight South African adults is infected with HIV. The rate is twice that for pregnant women, the government has said.

conference sponsored by women's groups who represent rape victims.

Doctors and others have also complained about a decision by South Africa's Health Ministry last year to shut down pilot projects to treat HIV-positive expectant mothers in the last month of pregnancy with AZT, which reportedly can reduce by half the transmission rate of HIV to newborns.

A woman in South Africa is three times more likely to be raped than in the United States, and South African men are much more likely to be infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, said Nthabiseng Mogale, head of People Opposed to Women Abuse.

South African women are entitled to treatment as a human right, Mogale said.

One in eight South African adults is infected with HIV. The rate is twice that for pregnant women, the government has said.

Police say about 65,000 women and girls are assaulted every year, but activists insist the number is much higher.

Botswana, South Africa's wealthier neighbor to the north, has introduced free

AZT treatment for infants born to HIV-positive mothers, said Vicki Ehrich, spokeswoman for Glaxo Wellcome, which produces AZT.

Glaxo Wellcome wants to supply the South African government with the drug for \$65 per birth, or one-third of its market price. But the government says that's too expensive.

"We cannot afford this type of intervention," said Khangelani Hlongwane, spokesman for the South African Health Ministry.

Physicians at state-run hospitals have clashed with the government on the issue.

"We're trying to convince the government that it's actually cost effective," said Dr. Avy Violari, a pediatrician at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto.

The United Nations AIDS program estimates that about 600,000 HIV infections are spread during childbirth worldwide, but no figures for South Africa were available.

Transmission of HIV through sexual assault has been less studied, partly because rape and AIDS are not as widespread in Europe

and the United States, where most research is carried out, Smith said.

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