

## INTERNATIONAL

## Congo leader willing to share power

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — President Laurent Kabila says he is willing to share power with an elected legislative assembly in war-torn Congo, though opposition parties want nothing to do with such a body.

Kabila created a 15-member committee by presidential decree Friday to prepare for assembly elections, which he said could take place in the next few weeks.

He did not, however, appoint any of the

committee's members.

Kabila, whose forces swept across the vast Central African nation in 1997, currently rules without a legislative body.

The 300-member assembly would involve the Congolese people in the running of the country and its defense against aggressors, Kabila said at a ceremony to announce his plans.

He provided no further details of the body's powers and functions.

Opposition politicians, said the assembly was an

attempt to bypass a national dialogue on Congo's political future that would lead to general elections, which form part of an often-violated cease-fire agreement.

The Congolese civil war erupted in August 1998, a year after Kabila overthrew the late dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

The rebels accuse Kabila of mismanagement, corruption and warmongering.

An Italian missionary news service reported Saturday that two Protestant

ministers were missing and believed killed after an armed attack on a village in northeast Congo.

Armed men kidnapped the two pastors from Vuatsinge, a village in Virunga National Park not far from the border with Uganda, the MISNA news service said in Rome.

A third man was killed in the same raid last Wednesday, the missionary news service said.

Neither the names nor the denominations of the two ministers were confirmed, it said.

## Zimbabwe court OKs Suit against president

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Zimbabwe's Supreme Court ruled Monday that lawyers may sue to force President Robert Mugabe to release secret reports about the alleged killing of as many as 20,000 government opponents.

Mugabe sought to invoke a constitutional amendment prohibiting civil or criminal proceedings against him. But the five judges who comprise the country's highest court ruled unanimously that the president can be sued in his official capacity. In its ruling, the court gave Mugabe 20 days to give reasons why the secret reports should not be handed over to "foster a culture of democracy."

"This is a victory for freedom of information," said Kevin Laue of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, which is working with the Zimbabwe Legal Resources Foundation to push for the release of the reports. Mugabe's troops are alleged to have killed up to 20,000 government opponents in the province of Matabeleland between 1980, when the country won independence from Britain, and 1988.

In 1981 and 1983, Mugabe ordered judges to investigate bloody clashes between his security forces and former guerrillas of the late Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union.

Both reports were suppressed, and the violence ended when Mugabe signed a unity pact with Nkomo, who became vice president. Victims of the alleged atrocities in Matabeleland want perpetrators brought before a South African-style truth and reconciliation commission.

A planned new constitution, overwhelmingly rejected last week by voters, would have curbed the powers of the Supreme Court, making it subject to a judicial commission and a constitutional court appointed by Mugabe.

In a broadcast marking his 76th birthday, Mugabe hinted he might invoke special presidential powers to negate the result of the constitutional referendum. The president also said he would only consider retiring in 2002, when his current term ends. He is not barred from seeking re-election.

## Bob Marley's star shining bright in Jamaican homeland

Howard Campbell

KINGSTON (IPS) — Once shunned by Jamaica's ruling class, Bob Marley is now being lauded by the island's luminaries, from talk show hosts and religious leaders to politicians, as a champion against oppression during week-long celebrations commemorating his 55th birthday.

Unlike previous years, when the reggae legend's Feb. 6 birth date was recognized with token homage from civic leaders and one-day of increased airplay of his music, Marley's image took on added significance in his homeland in 2000.

Full-page color ads appeared in newspapers proclaiming Marley as the "Millennium Man." The leading television stations supported events honoring Marley, as well as advertising Marley "specials" in the weeks leading up to his birth date.

This wave of popularity has been triggered by a recent spate of accolades from prominent Western media, which have cited Marley's role as a Third World musical

icon. None has made more of an impression in Jamaica than Time magazine naming in December Marley's "Exodus" as Album of the Century.

The acknowledgement from one of the world's most well-known publications received front-page treatment in Jamaica, with newspaper columnists and government leaders alike lauding the achievement.

Earlier in 1999, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) named his single "One Love" Song of the Century. Both distinctions have sent Marley's stock soaring in Jamaica, which has traditionally shunned followers of his Rastafarian faith.

Time's proclamation made the "Exodus" album a hot item, with retailers reporting strong sales for the 1977 album, which is distributed by Island Records.

"That publication has made a lot of difference. We are selling a lot of Marley CDs, especially 'Exodus,'" said Robert Khouri, the manager of a leading Kingston record store.

Khouri reported that "Exodus" has appealed to an older demographic, but says that a younger generation is also being exposed to Marley through "Chant Down Babylon," an album that fuses Marley's vocals with those of several big-name hip-hop acts.

Clive Kennedy, manager at the Aquarius record store, says his establishment was also benefiting from the new love affair with Bob Marley.

"'Exodus' has been in demand since January and we can't get any more from Tuff Gong (Marley's company),"

said Kennedy.

Ironically, "Exodus" was inspired by a near-fatal incident involving the dreadlocked vocalist in 1976. Marley's Kingston home came under fire from gunmen during the state of emergency that was called to crack down on crime in the country. Marley was shot in the arm.

Shortly after performing at the Smile Jamaica concert — organized to ease political tensions in Jamaica — Marley retreated into a self-imposed exile that ended with his headlining the One Love concert in Kingston in 1978.

## WORLD BRIEFS

## SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT CHARGED WITH BIAS IN DRC CONFLICT

CAPE TOWN (IPS) — In a letter to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, South African opposition politician Bantu Holomisa, leader of the United Democratic Movement, alleged illegal arms sales with the Democratic Republic of Congo and suggested that South African mercenaries are operating in the war-torn central African country. He said that South African Foreign Minister Nkosazana Zuma has dealt almost exclusively with the rebels, ignoring the government of President Laurent Kabila. "The United Nations and its agencies should impose a moratorium on the sale of arms to the continent (Africa) as a whole, to give your peace initiatives a chance to succeed," he reportedly wrote. Holomisa failed to back up any of his claims with material evidence in the form of affidavits or other documents. Still, the response from his government has been harsh and quick. President Thabo Mbeki's spokesperson, Parks Mankahlana, labeled the allegations as "absolute rubbish." And a foreign affairs official said: "I don't think he's [Holomisa] serious. I don't think he expects anyone to take him seriously."

## FIRE STRIKES KENYA REFUGEE CAMP

KAKUMA, Kenya (AP) — Fire at a refugee camp in northwestern Kenya razed 500 huts and left at least 3,000 refugees without shelter, a police official said Saturday. The cause of the fire, which erupted last Thursday at a U.N. refugee camp at Kakuma, 375 miles northwest of the capital Nairobi, has not yet been established, said regional police spokesman Joseph Kiget. A witness, speaking on condition of anonymity, said one refugee had accused another of stealing his money and set the second man's hut ablaze, and the fire spread to other huts. Kakuma camp houses 70,000 refugees from Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Uganda. They live in huts made from branches and mud.

At the time of the television specials assassination attempt, Marley was being hailed as the next big thing in music. He had appeared in Time and People magazines and was the subject of numerous specials throughout Europe. Though he had a grassroots following at home, he was never popular among the middle and upper classes. (See Jamaica, Page 17)

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