

WORLD BRIEFS

DONORS PLEDGE \$800 MILLION TO UGANDA

KAMPALA, Uganda (PANA) A five-day consultative group meeting has ended in Kampala with donors pledging \$800 million to Uganda. Uganda's finance minister, Gerald Sendaula, described the talks as fruitful. "The donors have accepted to continue supporting Uganda for the coming financial year with 800 million dollars, in line with our requirements," he said at a press conference. Uganda's total financial requirement for the year 2000 is just over \$2.2 billion from donors, while just under \$1.5 billion is expected to come from local resources. Sendaula said the government has recorded a revenue shortfall of 115 billion Uganda shillings, adding that the targeted 1.1 trillion shillings will not be met. He said Uganda will receive funds under the enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative after the April meeting of the board of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

ZAMBIA BATTLES TO ROLL BACK TB SPREAD

LUSAKA, Zambia (PANA) - Tuberculosis has been identified as a major epidemic in Zambia and in recent years has emerged as one of the leading causes of adult mortality. According to a 1995 study, tuberculosis was responsible for 13 percent of all adult hospital deaths in the country. In Lusaka, the mortality rate is said to be high, and about 17 to 23 percent of the patients die in the course of treatment, said Moses Sichone, a public health and clinical systems manager. He added that the trend had been increasing every year since the advent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in 1995. Over 40,000 patients had been reported to be suffering from the epidemic since then, compared to only 8,500 in 1985. The sharp increase in the number of TB cases has largely been attributed to the core HIV epidemic. "TB and HIV trigger each other's progress quite considerably, so the rapid increase in the number of TB cases is directly attributable to the HIV epidemic," Sichone told PANA. He also noted that TB had now become a major public health problem, particularly in countries south of the Sahara and in east and south-east Asia, where the rate of TB infections were high.

WADE SWORN IN AS SENEGAL'S PRESIDENT

DAKAR, Senegal (PANA) - Abdoulaye Wade, elected as Senegal's next president, was sworn-in after a two-hour meeting with out-going President Abdou Diouf. Wade praised Diouf for his adherence to the ideals of democracy during his 20-year rule. He also announced that Diouf had also agreed to represent him at the OAU-EU summit to be held April 3-4 in Cairo, Egypt. "I was briefed of the great state projects and programs during our discussions," Wade said in a statement, adding that he was aware of the responsibility he was shouldering and the hope millions of Senegalese placed on him. After his meeting with Diouf, Wade was escorted to his home in a suburb of Dakar by thousands of young Senegalese citizens.

PRESIDENT BIZIMUNGU OF RWANDA RESIGNS

KIGALI, Rwanda (PANA) - President Pasteur Bizimungu of Rwanda resigned for "personal reasons," according to an official announcement. The parliament immediately held an extraordinary session on the president's decision, at which some legislators accused Bizimungu of "political crimes." They said he sowed the seeds of hatred and dissension among parliamentarians during a speech he made in March in which he accused the house of "gross violations of the constitution" in their efforts to manipulate the government machinery. He particularly cited "the parliament's irregular procedures" in the rejection of four nominees for ministerial posts submitted by former Prime Minister Pierre-Celestin Rwigema. The speaker of parliament has assumed the functions of interim president.

ZIMBABWE ESCAPES ACP-EU SANCTIONS

ABUJA, Nigeria (PANA) - The African, Caribbean and Pacific states used their numerical strength to save Zimbabwe from sanctions proposed by some European members of the ACP/EU joint parliamentary assembly that wound up its 30th session in Abuja. Four European socialist parliamentarians sponsored the motion calling on the EU to suspend non-humanitarian aid to Zimbabwe because of alleged infractions of human rights, and for its row with Britain over the recent searching of British diplomatic baggage. After a heated debate, which mainly pitted the Europeans against their African counterparts, the motion was put to the vote and rejected. The head of the Zimbabwean delegation, Chris Kuruneri, told PANA, "it would have been tragic to allow the motion," which he (See World briefs, Page 15)

INTERNATIONAL

Up to 470 may have died in suicide fire

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Two days after an apparent mass suicide in a remote part of southwest Uganda, a police spokesman said Sunday that up to 470 cult members may have died in the fire.

"The scene is horror," spokesman Asuman Mugenyi told The Associated Press after visiting the site of the fire. "It is only about two or three bodies which you can say that these are men or women. The rest of the bodies are beyond human shape."

The fire Friday burned through a church in the small town of Kanungu, some 217 miles southwest of the Ugandan capital, Kampala, according to deputy police

spokesman Eric Naigambi. The doors and windows of the church were nailed shut, he said.

Mugenyi said the adults who died would be treated as suicide victims but the deaths of those under 18 years old would be regarded as murder.

He said it was impossible to identify bodies at the scene but the number of dead was likely to be double the 235 reported earlier.

Doctors began autopsies Sunday and forensic experts were expected to arrive from Kampala the same day. Naigambi said it would take at least a week to know the exact number of people who died.

"We don't know who was

inside or outside," he said. "Relatives of people said to have burned keep on telling us that their relatives are nowhere to be seen, and yet we have not proved their identities."

The cult, the Movement for the Restoration of Ten Commandments of God, was regarded as peaceful, Naigambi said.

Local residents told the paper the cult members had a party on Wednesday at which they consumed 70 crates of soda and three bulls. The next day, they gathered personal belongings including clothing, money, suitcases and church materials and set them on fire, the paper reported.

On Thursday, cult members went around nearby villages bidding farewell to neighbors, witnesses told the Sunday Vision.

"They were aware they would die on March 17 because the Virgin Mary had promised to appear at the camp during the morning hours to carry them to heaven," Anastasia Komuhanti told the paper.

It was unclear whether sect leader Joseph Kibweteere died in the fire.

He had predicted the world would end Dec. 31 but changed it to Dec. 31, 2000, after nothing happened, said the independent newspaper The Monitor in its Sunday edition.

UN: Drought possible in Horn of Africa

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations warned last Thursday that Ethiopia and its neighbors in the Horn of Africa may face drought and famine equivalent to the mid-1980s crisis during which nearly 1 million people died of starvation.

Poor and infrequent rains, coupled with fighting in Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, threaten to cause a major humanitarian catastrophe, said Carolyn McAskie, deputy U.N. emergency relief coordinator.

She announced that Secretary-General Kofi Annan has named the head of

the World Food Program, Catherine Bertini, to be his special envoy, directed to draw public attention to the crisis and mobilize the necessary relief operation. "We are facing the real prospect in two months from another catastrophe, which can be averted with the right kind of donor assistance," McAskie told a new conference.

The United Nations estimates it will cost \$205 million to bring the needed 409,000 tons of food and other assistance to the 12.4 million people at risk from famine in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya,

Uganda and Djibouti.

But U.N. officials estimate the crisis may eventually affect 16 million people — including residents of Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi — requiring 1 million tons of food aid.

Ethiopia is, by far, the worst affected, and will account for 80 percent of the aid requirement, McAskie said. During a drought in 1984-85, an estimated 1 million people died of starvation or related illnesses in Ethiopia.

Hundreds of thousands of others were forced to leave their homes to seek food, creating sprawling refugee

camps that became breeding grounds for disease. The images of emaciated Ethiopians in the West prompted an enormous relief effort.

The United Nations has issued a special appeal for \$190 million to help Ethiopia, about half of which has been met. But there has been no response to the U.N. appeal for Eritrea, McAskie said.

"It's pretty obvious that the response that will be needed will be prolonged food aid relief over the next few months," McAskie said, adding that the United Nations wouldn't know until (See Drought, Page 13)

Congo limits military tribunal's authority

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — A military tribunal that has passed hundreds of death sentences will no longer have blanket authority to try civilians, Congo's president said following condemnations of the court by the United Nations and human rights groups.

The government is also setting up a committee to review the court's convictions, according to a statement from President Laurent Kabila, read on state-run television Wednesday.

The tribunal, known as the Military Court of Order, was set up by Kabila to handle discipline problems within the army after he seized power in 1997.

But it has slowly extended its jurisdiction to non-army matters.

Last year, the United Nations said over 250 people — both soldiers and civilians

— had been executed over the previous two years by order of the tribunal for crimes against Kabila's government.

Decisions of the court, which is headquartered in Kinshasa with branches across the country, have, until now, been irreversible. Kabila did not say, however, when the review committee would be set up or how it would function.

The tribunal will continue to handle military matters, the statement said. Civilians will be tried by regular courts except under "exceptional cases called for by the law," Kabila said without elaborating.

There was no immediate reaction from the United Nations or rights groups, which have said the panel should be abolished.

Under Kabila, journalists, opposition members and

rights activists have been repeatedly harassed in this central African nation, which is divided by civil war.

A cease-fire agreement was signed last summer by Kabila and his allies —

Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia — and by the main rebel factions and their allies, Rwanda and Uganda.

But fighting continues, with both sides accusing each other of violations.

Zimbabwe secures fuel agreement with Kuwait

HARARE, Zimbabwe (PANA) Zimbabwe, reeling from a four-month fuel shortage, has struck a short-term oil supply agreement with a Kuwaiti company, an official of the Gulf state said Friday. R. Kesavan, Independent Petroleum Group finance manager, said the company would supply Zimbabwe with its fuel needs to June, and was exploring a long-term contract.

A team of officials from the company were to work out financing for the fuel supplies as the country faces a critical shortage of foreign currency for essential imports.

"We need to have in place a long term contract to enable our bankers to finance deliveries, and we need assurance that we will be paid timely for deliveries made," Kesavan said. President Robert Mugabe has taken direct control of the energy ministry in order to deal with the fuel crisis.

In early March, the president led a government delegation to Kuwait to negotiate for new oil supplies.