

INTERNATIONAL

AIDS vaccine to be tested in Uganda

BALTIMORE (AP) — An oral AIDS vaccine is expected to undergo human tests in Uganda in as little as 18 months, and could provide an inexpensive form of prevention in poor countries hit hard by the disease.

The vaccine, which could cost \$1 per dose or less, is being developed by the institute headed by Dr. Robert Gallo, one of the co-discoverers of AIDS.

Uganda health officials said Friday that the vaccine is the only hope against the AIDS pandemic that affects millions in the country.

"I don't feel this announcement is the answer to AIDS, but it's a very important additional step toward the next line of HIV prevention candidates," said Gallo, who heads the University of Maryland's Institute of Human Virology.

The oral vaccine, which uses the common salmonella bacteria, could be a cheap and easy means of preventing the deadly disease.

"This has the potential to be as cheap as any vaccine," said Seth Berkley, president of the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, a non-profit which is providing at least \$3 million over three years to complete development of the vaccine.

It is one of several vaccines expected to be tested in Uganda, according to Gallo's institute and the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative.

Once in full production, the salmonella bacteria used to make the vaccine could be grown in mass quantities, Berkley said.

"This has the potential to be as cheap as any vaccine," he said.

Nearly 70 percent of the

world's 33.6 million HIV-infected people live in sub-Saharan Africa. Current efforts to slow the spread of the virus by eliminating risky behavior are not enough because many people do not know they are infected, said Francis Omaswa, Uganda's director general of health services.

"Even with an 80 percent cut in the prices of drugs, they will still be too expensive for our people" Omaswa said. "That brings us back again to a vaccine. It is for this reason, that we have associated ourselves with this initiative."

The strain of salmonella bacteria responsible for typhoid is genetically altered to be less infectious and to carry portions of the DNA of the HIV virus, which causes AIDS, into the body.

Once the salmonella bac-

teria invade intestinal cells, the bacteria die, their cells break apart and the HIV DNA they carry is released.

The infected intestinal cells are then hijacked by the HIV and produce a part of the HIV virus, which is not harmful but causes an immune response. Researchers hope that will allow the body to fight off an attack by the real HIV virus. More than two dozen potential AIDS vaccines have been tried worldwide. Only one, however, has advanced to large-scale testing, the researchers said.

Results of trials of that vaccine, produced by Vaxgen, should be available in late 2002 or early 2003, said Dr. Peggy Johnston, assistant director for AIDS vaccines at the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, a part of the National Institutes of Health.

Group: Zimbabwe election climate very poor

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — An international pro-democracy group said Monday that conditions for credible elections in Zimbabwe don't exist because of the widespread political violence and a bias in favor of the ruling party.

At least 23 people — nearly all opposition supporters — have been killed in recent months, leading to worries that many Zimbabweans opposed to the government will be frightened to vote in the parliamentary elections set for June 24 and 25.

"The violence has created an atmosphere of anxiety and fear," said Alex Ekwueme, head of the delegation from the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. "The abilities of political parties and many candidates, predominantly from the opposition, to campaign openly and freely do not meet international standards for fair electoral competition."

Ekwueme, a former vice president of Nigeria, said Zimbabweans are afraid their ballots will not be secret and that there will be postelection retribution against those who

vote against the ruling party.

In its report issued Monday, the institute also criticized the state media's bias toward the ruling party, the stringent requirements for public campaign funding that disqualifies all opposition parties and the opposition's lack of access to important information, including updated voter rolls and new voting districts.

"The conditions for credible, democratic elections do not exist in Zimbabwe at this time," Ekwueme said.

A delegation from the institute, which has monitored

elections in over 50 countries, has been talking to representatives of political parties and civic organizations across Zimbabwe since May 15.

Violence has spread throughout the country since the ruling party lost a constitutional referendum in February that would have strengthened the powers of President Robert Mugabe.

In the elections, the new opposition party the Movement for Democratic Change is expected to pose the greatest electoral challenge to the process.

United States argues over peacekeeper funds

WASHINGTON (AP) — The State Department said Monday that a congressional hold on \$226 million for U.N. peacekeeping activities is damaging U.N. efforts to achieve peace and stability in Sierra Leone, Kosovo, East Timor and the Congo.

Separately, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said a continued hold on the money "is going to hamper our activities."

The funds are being blocked by Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., who oversees State Department spending.

Gregg has said he would keep the money on hold at least until the situation in Sierra Leone had changed.

Gregg is angry about the Clinton administration's role in encouraging a peace agreement in that African country, signed in July, which gave

amnesty and a share of power to rebel leader Foday Sankoh.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said both the United Nations and the United States are being adversely affected by the hold.

"We have \$226 million in unpaid bills, despite having the funds already appropriated," he said.

Annan, speaking with reporters in New York, said, "I hope that the other members of the Senate would work with the senator concerned to remove the holds."

As chairman of a key Senate Appropriations subcommittee, Gregg has the authority to put a hold on foreign assistance outlays singlehandedly.

Gregg has frozen \$368 million, which is the estimated U.S. share of peacekeeping costs for Sierra Leone, Kosovo East Timor and Congo for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30. The \$226 million mentioned by Boucher represents unpaid bills to date for these operations.

(See *Peacekeeper*, Page 15)

Morocco king to visit Washington

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton plans to host the new king of Morocco for a state visit in Washington next month, the White House said Monday.

King Mohammed VI took office last year after the death of his father, King Hassan II. Clinton attended Hassan's funeral, and has called him an important figure in Mideast peace efforts.

The June 20 visit will be the younger king's first official trip to Washington since taking office.

"Their meeting will help strengthen the bilateral relations between the United States and Morocco and provide an opportunity to exchange views on regional and international issues," including Mideast peace, the White House said in a statement.

Dubbed the "king of the poor" by the Moroccan press, the new king has made social policy one of his priorities in a country where more than 20 percent of the population is officially unemployed and about half, mainly women, are illiterate.

WORLD BRIEFS

PRESS UNION CALLS FOR JOURNALISTS' STRIKE

RABAT, Morocco (PANA) - The National Union of the Moroccan Press called on its members to observe an hour-long work stoppage recently in protest against the suppression of expression and press freedom. The union, in a communique, denounced "repeated acts of aggression against journalists, the banning of several national and foreign publications and the condemnation of two journalists." Mustapha Alaoui and Khalid Mechbal have been given suspended jail sentences of three and six months respectively. They are not allowed to exercise their profession within a period of three and one month respectively, according to a verdict, which also condemns them to pay huge sums of money in damages. The two journalists were charged with defamation in two separate trials by the foreign minister, Mohamed Benaissa. In its appeal, the union referred to a "great worry" in the face of "the restrictions affecting press freedom," marked by "repressive" interventions, administrative measures and judgments hostile to the press and to journalists. The union also denounced "negative practices," in particular the continuation of acts of aggression against journalists "in the discharge of their duties."

ROTIBI, VETERAN NIGERIAN JOURNALIST, INTERRED

LAGOS, Nigeria (PANA) - Emmanuel Akin Rotibi, a pioneering Nigerian news agency journalist and former commercial manager of the News Agency of Nigeria, was buried at the Lagos Atan Cemetery, amid wailing by family members, sympathizers and professional colleagues. At the graveside were his three sons, the widow, Adewunmi, and other family members, including his London-based journalist younger brother Bayo. Akin, as he was known in the journalism community in a career that spanned several decades, died April 11 in a Lagos hospital after a brief illness. He was 66. Rotibi joined the London-based Reuters wire service as a Nigerian correspondent after training at the famous Hope Waddle Institute, located in southeastern Nigeria. He rose to become head of the agency's West African Bureau before leaving to join the Paris-based Agence France-Presse in a job that took him around the world on coverage assignments. Rotibi also had a stint as a correspondent for the Daily Telegraphs of London. In his retirement from active journalism, he was contracted to set up the commercial department of the News Agency of Nigeria in 1978.

CARIBBEAN PREPARING FOR CHALLENGES TO TRADE REGIMES

PORT OF SPAIN (IPS) — Caribbean attempts to stave off hard-line approaches to preferential trading arrangements with the United States and Europe have produced mixed results in recent weeks, but leading officials are welcoming the added breathing space even in the face of new challenges. The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed a Trade and Development Act, which, among other things, reduces tariffs on a range of Caribbean imports and enhances provisions currently enshrined in the Caribbean Basin Initiative. Caribbean governments had waged a protracted campaign, since 1993, to have so-called "NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) parity" accorded the region under the CBI. The threat that the campaign could have been undermined by parochial U.S. interests led a frustrated CARICOM Assistant Secretary-General Byron Blake to exclaim last December the U.S. agenda appeared to be designed to keep Caribbean imports out of the market despite a \$2.4 billion trade surplus with the region.

SAHARA MORTGAGE CORPORATION

"Professionals You Can Trust"



MORSE ARBERRY, JR.
C.E.O.

Office: (702) 870-2425
2551 S. Fort Apache Rd., Ste. 101 Voice Mail: (702) 373-2821
Las Vegas, NV 89117 Fax: (702) 869-4951