

## WORLD BRIEFS

### NAMIBIA PEACE HANGS ON FAIR LAND DISTRIBUTION

WINDHOEK, Namibia (PANA) - A member of parliament from the ruling SWAPO party warned that unless white minority Namibians, currently occupying large portions of land, are willing to share it with the landless, the Zimbabwean land crisis may spill over to Namibia. Alfred Dax, during a debate in parliament on the Townships and Division of the Land Amendment Bill, appealed to those who own excessive land to start selling some of it to the government if peace and stability is to continue in Namibia. The bill has been approved by the house and will be sent to President Sam Nujoma for his assent before it becomes effective. "The situation in Zimbabwe may spill over into Namibia if the current hard attitude on preserving all land at all costs is maintained by those who have been historically advantaged and privileged by apartheid," Dax said.

### AFRICANS, CARIBBEAN DEMAND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS IN FRANCE

PARIS, France (PANA) - Hundreds of African and Caribbean immigrants held demonstrations in Paris to demand representation in the French political, economic, cultural and social spheres. The immigrants said that since they contribute to the development of France through their taxes like other French citizens, the least the French government could do was to ensure their community was well represented in the various sectors. The marches on the streets of Paris, accompanied by African and Creole music, were sponsored various Associations and well-wishers. Among these are the Pan African Alliance, Black Consciousness, Tropical Media, Creole Heritage, UD, CSF, Guadeloupe, Friends of Justice and South Culture. The President of the African Women Initiative in France and Europe, Damarys Maa, told PANA that the groups hope to draw the attention of French authorities to the need to set aside a National Day for African Immigrants in France that would focus on the community's integration in the French society. "What we want to say is that we have had enough," the groups said in a statement. Enough of "the so-called Republican France but which, on the contrary, pursues a policy calculated on a model of colonialism and slavery of the past," they stated. France, a former colonial power in Africa, has a large African migrant population mainly from West Africa. A large majority of Africans whose parents settled in France during and after independence acquired French nationality and feel they are entitled to "honor and respect" through representation. The Caribbean community, mainly from the Antilles of Martinique, Guadeloupe and other islands that form part of the French Overseas territorial possessions, are French citizens by virtue of that historical link.

### MOGAE CALLS FOR ORDERLY SALE OF DIAMONDS

GABORONE, Botswana (PANA) - Botswana President Festus Mogae opened the country's biggest mining venture, the Orapa 2000 project, with a call for sanitation of the market for diamonds. Mogae also spoke against the use of diamonds in financing conflicts in parts of Africa, saying Botswana has always supported an orderly sale of diamonds because earnings from the mineral accounts for nearly half of its revenue. He said the diamond has propelled the Botswana economy to new levels of income and productivity and that the country's position in the world diamond industry has been due to a successful partnership between the government and the private sector. The country has three highly productive mines managed by Debswana Diamond Co., a 50-50 joint venture between the Botswana government and De Beers Centenary. In 1996, the company embarked on the Orapa 2000 expansion project, which will double annual diamond production at the Orapa mine in central Botswana from 6 million carats to 12 million. This would in turn raise the country's total annual production of diamonds to approximately 26 million carats from 20 million. According to the managing director of De Beers, Louis Nchindo, diamond accounts for about 50 percent of government revenue, 70 percent of foreign exchange earnings and 33 percent of the Gross Domestic Product. With an annual output in excess of 24 million carats, Botswana is the largest producer of diamond in the world by value.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Groups mobilize in honor of Haitian AIDS victims

PORT-AU-PRINCE (IPS) — Several Haitian religious and social organizations joined individuals and groups around the world May 21 to pledge their solidarity with past and present victims of AIDS by participating in the 17th International AIDS Candlelight Memorial.

Candles will be lit in hospitals and churches, pastors will deliver sermons to their congregations, and moments of silence will be observed in memory of those who have died from the devastating disease.

The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial honors the memory of those who have died of the disease and offers support and solidarity to those living with HIV/AIDS and to their families.

The day's commemorative activities were coordinated here by the non-governmental organization Zero-AIDS Foundation (POZ), in collaboration with various religious and social groups. Agencies involved in anti-AIDS work also participated.

Dr. Eddy Genece, POZ's coordinator, said before the event that he hoped the commemorative activities will give people hope of better days to come in a world free from AIDS.

POZ hosted an open house on that day to promote their public education campaign on the toll the pandemic has taken.

Sorel Beaujour, executive secretary of the Association for National Solidarity (ASON), has called on officials and members of civil society to observe the memorial, whose theme this year was "Break the Silence: Honor Every Death, Value Every Life."

"In this way, we'll honor those who have died of AIDS,

and proclaim our solidarity with those living with the virus, and demonstrate our determination to fight the spread of this disease, which respects not race, nor color, nor social class," said Beaujour, who is HIV-positive.

In a special message, the leaders of POZ said that "Haiti's participation is an opportunity to show the rest of the world that the lives of those 34 million people living with HIV are irreplaceable."

The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial was observed in more than 350 cities, towns and villages worldwide. The annual event is organized by the Global Health Council (GHC).

"The Candlelight Memorial was entirely grassroots based, and is an opportunity for members of the community to honor those who have died and renew their own commitment to fighting AIDS," said Ron McInnis, the director of the Global AIDS Program.

"It was one of inclusion and not exclusion, of compassion and of joint actions," said Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS, the U.N. department dealing with HIV/AIDS.

When the first candlelight memorial was held in 1983, AIDS was still on the margins of global health concerns. At that time, the memorial served as a way for "communities to take action by publicly mourning loved ones lost to AIDS."

According to a GHC report, this focus has prevailed over the years spurred by the number of families affected by the rapid spread of the disease.

During this period, more than 14 million people have died due to the disease and close to 34 million are currently living with HIV and AIDS.

### Jamaica's post-independence generation remains aloof

KINGSTON (IPS) — This August 6 will mark 38 years since the British Union Jack was slowly lowered and the black, green and gold flag of the newly independent nation of Jamaica was hoisted. But if recent polls are to be believed, almost four decades after that historic event, none of the country's political parties has been able to capture the support of the "post-independence generation."

The poll, conducted by the Donald Anderson-led Market Research Services, found that more than 50 percent of Jamaicans have absolutely no interest in the ruling People's National Party (PNP), the main Opposition Jamaica Labor Party (JLP), or the National Democratic Movement (NDM).

The poll results also revealed that voter apathy is highest in the 18 to 34 age group. Among this group, 22 percent of those interviewed said if an election were to be called now they would not vote, while 26 percent said they were not sure if they would vote at all.

Political analysts say this is an indication that those born after independence in 1962 are disillusioned with successive governments which have promised much, but have delivered little.

"It's hard to say who is better. Neither of them (the PNP or JLP) have really done

anything to make things work," said Nicola Gordon, a 28-year-old administrator.

"I don't think I could vote for any of them. None of them made a difference," said 25-year-old minister Craig Young.

The political malaise is part of a general feeling of hopelessness now sweeping the island's population.

A recent study conducted by Dr. Ian Boxill, a lecturer in social sciences at the regional University of the West Indies, revealed Jamaicans between the ages of 15 and 19 are, on the whole, more pessimistic and disillusioned than their counterparts in the Eastern Caribbean.

"While half of the Eastern Caribbean youth interviewed felt that the average citizen in their country could get ahead, the overwhelming majority of the Jamaican youth did not feel that the average Jamaican citizen could do so," said Boxill.

"If these results actually reflect a national pattern, then they raise some very serious questions about governance, civil society and the general development of our society," said Boxill.

The economic situation in Jamaica is also being blamed for the general feeling of disillusionment among the population. Unemployment now stands at just over 16 percent. One-third of the population is living below the

poverty line, which means they earn less than the minimum wage of \$25 per week.

Over the last three years, the garment sector — 95 percent of whose employees are women — has declined significantly, with many factories falling victim to the stagnant business climate.

In addition, over the last three years, more than 50 financial institutions have been forced to close their doors as the country's financial sector contracted sharply.

The crime rate has also escalated. An average of 900 murders per year over the last three years has led many to argue that the government has no control over the country.

Consequently, the ruling PNP, which had a commanding lead in the Anderson poll, cannot rest on its laurels. With some 25.7 percent of the voter support, the PNP may be way ahead of its main rival the JLP, with only 12.5 percent, but its extensive support base, which allowed it to win 50 of the island's 60 seats in the 1997 election, is still dwindling. But disenchantment with the PNP has not translated into support for the JLP or the NDM, which was formed in 1995. The poll results suggest that instead of changing allegiance, voters are opting out of the political process altogether.

"Here we are in the middle of a deep economic crisis, crime is at an all-time high

and there's a feeling of listlessness in the society and neither of the opposition parties seem to be able to galvanize a disenchanted electorate into a body for change," says talk show host Anthony Abrahams.

For the past 10 years, the JLP has been plagued by well-publicized power struggles as various factions have tried to unseat the current party leader, Edward Seaga. Although Seaga has survived all the challenges to his leadership, overall, the party has suffered.

JLP Member of Parliament Karl Samuda, who was party to a move to oust Seaga, admits the repeated episodes of internal fighting have taken their toll on the JLP's image.

The party's low standing in the poll is more of a reflection of "what has taken place within the Jamaica Labor Party than it is a reflection of what has been done by the PNP," said Samuda.

The NDM is also failing to make an impression. With an eight percent showing in the polls, the leadership of the NDM has failed to have an impact on an electorate grown accustomed to a two-party political system.

When the NDM was first launched, many Jamaicans embraced the idea of a third political party. But the initial interest quickly faded, and the party's platform of con-

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