

WORLD BRIEFS

NIGERIAN COURT SENTENCES MAN TO STONING

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) - An Islamic court in Nigeria has sentenced a man to death by stoning, the first such sentence since Islamic law was introduced last year. Attahiru Umaru, 35, was convicted Wednesday of sodomizing a 7-year-old boy, court officials in the northeastern city of Birnin-Kebbi said Friday. The Islamic court in Kebbi state ordered the man stoned to death in public. He has been given 30 days to appeal the ruling. Since several northern states began imposing Islamic law, or Sharia, last year, Islamic courts have ordered the hands of thieves amputated and several women and girls have been publicly flogged for alleged sexual indiscretions. But this was the first order of execution by stoning. Nigeria, Africa's most populous state with 120 million people, is divided into an overwhelmingly Muslim north and a largely Christian south. Since introduction of Islamic law, Muslim-Christian tensions have repeatedly exploded into violence in several northern cities, killing hundreds at a time.

UNITED NATIONS EXTENDS ETHIOPIA-ERITREA MISSION

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - The U.N. Security Council has unanimously extended the 4,200-strong U.N. peacekeeping mission monitoring the cease-fire between Ethiopia and Eritrea for six months. The council adopted a resolution Friday calling on the former warring nations to urgently resolve outstanding issues, completely demilitarize the buffer zone between them, and redirect their efforts from buying arms to rebuilding their shattered economies. Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia in a 1993 referendum that followed a 30-year guerrilla war, but the 620-mile border was never officially demarcated. The council extended the peacekeeping mission until March 15, 2002, but stressed that it will end when the Boundary Commission delineating the border completes its work. The resolution, adopted without debate, also calls on Ethiopia and Eritrea to establish an air corridor between their capitals and return all prisoners of war. It urges Eritrea to provide U.N. peacekeepers with information on the local militia and police inside the buffer zone and it urges Ethiopia to provide the force with detailed information and maps on minefields.

CONGO UNCOVERS GOVERNMENT PAYROLL SCHEME

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) - Congo has suspended pay to more than 21,000 "ghost" civil servants put on the country's payrolls by corrupt government employees, authorities said Monday. Hordes of civil servants and some former ministers profited from the scheme, Civil Service Minister Benjamin Mukulungu said. Mukulungu told The Associated Press 21,652 phantom employees had been discovered after an investigation, saving the government about \$619,000 in salaries it was about to pay out. Government employees in most parts of Congo make from \$2 to \$20 per month, with many supplementing their incomes with bribes. Some civil servants in Kinshasa say they haven't been paid in the last eight months Mukulungu said the government would use the saved money toward paying civil servants in the rebel-held east who have not been paid in three years.

FORMER MALI PRESIDENT LEAVES ARMED FORCES

BAMAKO, Mali (AP) - A former president of Mali has resigned from the West African country's armed forces, apparently to qualify as a candidate in next year's presidential race. Gen. Amadou Toumani Toure, who held power for a year after a 1991 coup, resigned from the military late last week, sources close to him said over the weekend on condition of anonymity. Toure has not announced he plans to run in the April election, but supporters and political observers say the resignation means he intends to do so. Members of the armed forces cannot run for political office. Toure overthrew the 23-year dictatorship of Gen. Moussa Traore in March 1991 and set the country on the road to multiparty democracy. He declined to run in Mali's first democratic presidential election in 1992. The current head of state, Alpha Oumar Konare, won that race and was re-elected in 1997 by a large majority. Konare has promised to abide by the constitution and step down at the end of his second term next year.

INTERNATIONAL

Liberia undertakes slave route study

By Peter Kahler

PANA Correspondent

MONROVIA, Liberia (PANA)-Liberia's education ministry has commissioned a nation-wide feasibility study to identify and locate sites, places and objects linked to the Trans-Atlantic slave route, an official said in Monrovia.

The study aims to gather information to possibly establish a museum related to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in Liberia, and to recommend sites and places to include on the World Cultural Heritage List of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the official said.

The secretary general of the Liberia National UNESCO Commission, Hawa Goll-Kotchi, said the study would last for a month.

Headed by the director of the national museum, Robert Cassell, the study mission includes historians, anthropologists and sociologists mainly from the University of Liberia and the ministry of information, culture and tourism, Goll-Kotchi said.

She said the study would also look at places and things linked to the return of the settlers who were former slaves or descendants of slaves.

Liberia was founded in 1847, some 25 years after their arrival, by newly freed Blacks from the plantations of North America and shipped to the West African shores by the American Colonization Society.

Goll-Kotchi said ready acceptance of commodities like guns, gun powder, tobacco and rum suggests the indigenous people the settlers

met had prior trading experience in these things that bought slaves.

On the other hand, she also argued that indigenous leaders' opposition to the settlement of the returning slaves in the early 1800s could have been sparked by fears that with another authority (settlers) the slave trade would be stopped.

The study is being undertaken as part of a UNESCO slave trade project.

"The trans-Atlantic slave trade, which fuelled the world economy during the 18th century, saw the greatest deportation in history. This must be said out loud, and we must continue examining the evidence of it," says UNESCO in its publication, "The Slave Route: A Memory Unchained."

It says "the UNESCO (slave route) project wants to

go beyond the legitimate feelings this human commerce arouses and sponsor rigorous scientific research in the root causes, methods and consequences of the slave trade."

"The project is also an opportunity to rethink Africa, whose major problems of under-development and ethnic conflicts cannot be explained without reference to the unprecedented savagery of the (slave) trade," the publication says. It says the project is also "a chance for Africa to display again its incredible cultural vitality."

"African slaves stood up to the violence of the slave trade armed with the living force of their culture, their gods, their legends, values, tradition and rhythms-all these buried in their souls, beyond the reach of the slave owner, who was only interested in their bodies."

HIV/AIDS hinders development in SADC

By Lewis Mwanangombe

PANA Correspondent

LUSAKA, Zambia (PANA)-The world's most stubborn affliction, HIV/AIDS, will kill more than 10 million people in sub-Saharan Africa by 2015 while life expectancy is expected to go down considerably and leave a dent on the development of the continent.

This revelation is contained in the Southern Africa Development Community Regional Human Development Report for 2000 that states further that in the SADC region alone human lives adding up to 6.3 million will have been lost between 1995 and 2005.

Zambia's Gross Domestic Product is already estimated to have fallen by 9 percent in 2000 as a direct result of HIV/AIDS.

The number of AIDS victims in Zambia in 1995 was at 200,000 and by 1997 it had spiraled to 1.02 million - 950,000 of whom were adults and 70,000 were children.

The report says between 1990 and 1998 Zimbabwe's life expectancy went down by 12.66 years, Botswana by 10.55 years, South Africa by 8.73 years and Zambia by 8.65 years.

In 1999 Botswana had the highest adult HIV/AIDS prevalence rate at 36.1 percent. It was followed by Zimbabwe at 24.3 percent, Lesotho at 24.1 percent, Zambia at 20.1 percent while Tanzania had the low prevalence

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In spite of the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the prevalence there stood at 5.1 percent while Angola had 2.8 percent.

The lowest prevalence rate in the SADC region was in Mauritius where it stood at 0.1 percent.

The report attributes the low prevalence in Mauritius to the isolation of the Indian Ocean state and the efficiency of its health system.

The low figures in Angola and DR Congo are said to be due to the inability of the health authorities in the two countries to access the right information because of the civil wars in the two countries.

The report says another useful indicator of the magnitude of the HIV/AIDS scourge is the percentage of women who are attending antenatal clinics who are infected.

Zimbabwe leads in this category followed by Botswana, Zambia and Malawi. Other countries with relatively high rates of antenatal infections are Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Lesotho.

with AIDS.

Estimates, according to the report, indicate that the situation is worsening in the region as evidenced by Zimbabwe where 700 people are dying of AIDS every week and more than 200,000 are estimated to have died of this disease since 1985.

In South Africa 500,000 people have died of the disease since its emergence and it is expected that this number will reach 10 million by the year 2015.

It is now being estimated that life expectancy in these countries for children born now will be 12 years lower than for those born in the 1960s and the 1970s.

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