

## WORLD BRIEFS

### SOMALI BANTU REFUGEES ARRIVE IN DENVER, PHOENIX

NEW YORK (IRIN)—The first group of Somali Bantus who were living in Kenyan refugee camps for the past decade have arrived in the American cities of Denver and Phoenix. The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) said this was the beginning of one of the biggest resettlement operations to take place from Africa, in which some 11,800 Somali Bantus will be resettled in the United States. After weeks of cultural orientation classes, the first batch of 74 Somalis left Kenya late last month. Another 150 are expected to travel before mid-June, the statement said. The Church World Service, along with eight other voluntary agencies, will oversee the resettlement program in the United States. The refugees originally were scheduled to start arriving last year, but tightened security measures after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks pushed back the date. The Somali Bantus—a minority group whose physical, cultural and linguistic characteristics distinguish them from the Cushitic majority in Somalia—were considered for resettlement in the United States, because they faced difficult circumstances in their country where they were treated as second-class citizens, partly because they are descended from slaves.

### MILITANTS SUSPECTED IN LATEST NIGERIA PIPELINE BLAST

LAGOS, Nigeria (IRIN)—The main pipeline supplying natural gas to Nigeria's biggest power station has been ruptured by explosives planted by suspected ethnic Ijaw militants, the navy said. The pipeline, which exploded last Saturday at the village of Ajama, near the oil town of Warri in the oil-rich Niger Delta, supplies gas from transnational ChevronTexaco's Escravos gas plant to the Egbin thermal power station, near Nigeria's biggest city, Lagos. No one has claimed responsibility for the blast, the second in two months in the volatile oil region targeting a key pipeline. "We suspect the Ijaw youths did it," Shinebi Hungiapuko, navy spokesman, told IRIN. Bello Oboko, a leader of the militant Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities, denied responsibility for the blast. He accused the military of carrying out some military raids in the area where the pipeline was damaged during the weekend, suggesting troops may have ruptured it unwittingly. In April, a major pipeline supplying crude oil from Escravos to refineries in Warri and the northern city of Kaduna were similarly blasted with explosives. The previous month, armed Ijaw militants aggrieved over the distribution of electoral wards they said favored their Itsekiri rivals, engaged government troops in gun battles. More than 100 people were killed in two weeks of violence. The government has responded with a massive deployment of troops in the region that produces most of Nigeria's oil.

### DEATH OF SENEGALESE SEPARATIST LEADER REPORTED

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (IRIN)—Separatist rebels in Senegal's southern province of Casamance have announced the death of Sidi Badji, a hard-line leader who had held out against any compromise with the government on Dakar. The Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) confirmed the death of Badji at the age of about 83. Despite his advancing years, Badji had remained, at least nominally, the head of the MFDC's military wing and commander-in-chief of a guerrilla army that has waged a low-intensity war against the Senegalese government for more than 30 years. Badji and his supporters opposed the softer line taken by MFDC's veteran President, Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, a Roman Catholic priest who had recently shown a willingness to settle for a modest degree of autonomy for Casamance, providing this is accompanied by government investment. The swampy and heavily wooded province constitutes the narrow tongue of southern Senegal that separates Gambia from Guinea-Bissau. Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade signed a provisional peace agreement with the MFDC in March 2001, but made it clear that a real rapprochement between the government and separatists would require evidence of unity within the MFDC's ranks. A new MFDC peace conference was scheduled to open in Bissau on June 1, but the meeting may be delayed while the MFDC organizes Badji's funeral.

## INTERNATIONAL

# Togo's president seeks another term

LOME, Togo (AP) - In power for the past 36 years, President Gen. Gnassingbe Eyadema told the people of Togo his work was not yet done as he sought another term Sunday. Even before voting began, international monitors said the election in the West African nation was discredited.

Eyadema was running against five opposition challengers, but opposition charges of vote-buying, ballot-box stuffing and other vote fraud surfaced quickly after polls opened.

The Togolese ex-French

Foreign Legion officer - in power longer than any world leader except Fidel Castro - is one of Africa's last so-called "Big Men," absolute rulers who have withstood the wave of multiparty democracy that swept across some African countries in the 1990s.

"We haven't completed our mission. That's what we want to do today," Eyadema, 67, in blue suit with bright pinstripes, told reporters after casting his own vote in the dirt-road and cement-shack capital, Lome.

The European Union and

many of the leading international election monitoring groups did not send official election observers, saying government handling of the run-up to the election already made a fair outcome unlikely.

Still, the fact Eyadema had allowed candidates to campaign somewhat openly stirred hopes among the opposition.

"If he loses and doesn't go, we will take to the streets. We don't have guns, we don't have rocks, we don't have machetes, but we will take to the streets," vowed Attivi Ekoue, waiting in line to vote

in an opposition neighborhood in Lome.

"Thirty-six years is too long," he said.

"Even a worker who labors for 30 years retires - he's tired. Eyadema should retire," said Maurice Mousou, a government customs worker in the village of Danliko, outside Lome.

"Democracy has come to the rest of the world, and it's passed Togo by."

Eyadema came to power four years after leading what was post-colonial Africa's first coup in 1963.

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## Kenyan president vows to end corruption

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) - Kenya's president said Sunday the era of corruption and political handouts is over in the East African nation, and it's time to get back to work and reward honest labor.

Mwai Kibaki's National Rainbow Coalition won a landslide victory in December's parliamentary elections when voters repudiated the regime of former President Daniel arap Moi. He said the objective was to re-establish "a working nation."

Kibaki spoke at a ceremony celebrating the day 40 years ago when Kenyans were granted self-rule by Brit-

ain. Six months later, the East African nation achieved full independence.

No precise figures have been released, but it is estimated that Kenya lost billions of dollars through theft of public funds, rigged contracts for public works and other scams under which Moi dispensed political patronage, particularly in the second half of his 24-year presidency.

"The last 15 years were our wasted years of nationhood. We saw the emergence of institutionalized corruption.

Our people were taken back to a culture of dependence," Kibaki said

"The virtues of hard work were displaced as national coffers were opened wide for looters," Kibaki said, adding that "the era of free things" was over.

Kibaki paid particular attention to the perilous state of the nation's agriculture, the primary source of its exports and hard currency earnings.

"Personal greed of a few individuals has in the past impoverished the Kenyan farmer," he said.

"My government will never pay lip service to your demands to get a reasonable return on your investment."

Kibaki's government has discussed instituting some

kind of guaranteed minimum price for agricultural products, particularly sugar cane. Kibaki said a minimum-guarantee plan for farmers would be a key feature in months to come.

He also said he would introduce a new national health insurance plan for Kenya's 30 million people.

An estimated 700 people die each day of AIDS-related diseases.

The national health agency has been drained of funds, and millions of dollars in drugs donated by international donors have been sold on the black market.

## U.N. Tribunal gives first Rwanda war crimes conviction

ARUSHA, Tanzania (IRIN)—The appeals court of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has upheld a sentence of life imprisonment against George Rutaganda, a key player in the 1994 genocide of Tutsis and moderate Hutus. At the same time, the court handed down its first conviction for war crimes, the ICTR said.

Rutaganda, 45, at the time of the massacres was a vice-president of the Hutu militia group, the "Interahamwe," which largely carried out the killings of about 800,000

Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus. He was sentenced by the ICTR on Dec. 6, 1999, after he was found guilty on charges of genocide, extermination as a crime against humanity and murder as a crime against humanity.

According to an ICTR statement, the appeals court upheld the first two convictions but acquitted Rutaganda of murder as a crime against humanity after finding "inconsistencies" in witnesses' evidence.

However, it entered two new convictions for murder as a violation of Article 3 of

the Geneva Conventions after ruling that the trial chamber had wrongly acquitted Rutaganda of war crimes relating to the killing of Tutsi refugees at a school. The ICTR said the two convictions represented the first time the tribunal had convicted a defendant of a war crime.

Rutaganda's lawyer had filed the appeal, accusing the trial chamber of being partial in delivering its judgment and

of committing 10 general errors of law which undermined the fairness of the trial. The appeals court said it found no evidence of factual or legal errors to back the accusation.

Rutaganda, a former businessman, was born in Masango commune of Gitarama province.

He was arrested in October 1995 in Zambia and was transferred to the ICTR in May 1996.

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