

Mandela: Halting new HIV infections paramount

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) - The world must not grow complacent about AIDS because the number of new HIV infections still outpaces the number of those being treated for the disease, former South African President Nelson Mandela said at a recent benefit concert.

Since stepping down as South Africa's first Black president in 1999, Mandela, whose son died from the disease, has championed the cause of people with AIDS.

He drew a crowd of about 15,000 to his fifth international awareness concert, held this year to coincide with Dec. 1 World AIDS Day.

Recent U.N. figures estimate that the number of AIDS cases fell from almost 40 million last year to 33.2 million in 2007.

"This lower figure sug-

gests that prevention programs have been successful in bringing down infection rates," Mandela said. "That trend is encouraging, but it is still alarming that for every person receiving treatment, four others are newly infected."

"If we are to stop the AIDS epidemic from expanding, we need to break the cycle of new HIV infections. All of us working together with government, communities and civil society can make the difference that is needed. Together we have the power to change the course of destiny," he said to rapturous applause.

Wearing a sweat shirt emblazoned with 46664 — the number apartheid prison authorities gave him — the 89-year-old statesman beamed and waved at the crowd who chanted his name.

Of South Africa's 48 mil-



Ludacris performs during the Nelson Mandela AIDS concert in Johannesburg, South Africa on Saturday.

lion people, about 5.5 million are infected with the AIDS virus — the highest number in the world — and about 900 people in the country die every day from the disease.

Sub-Saharan Africa remains the center of the epidemic. AIDS is still the leading cause of death there; it particularly affects women and children.

At the event, the singer Annie Lennox expressed her

anger at the number of children who die from AIDS-related diseases.

"Why is this happening?" Lennox asked. "It is an outrage and it needs to be dealt with. It is unacceptable that children die from a preventable disease. Treatment works. Get your government to do something about it."

The reference was to South Africa's often confusing message about

antiretroviral drugs, and the slow rollout of the lifesaving medicines.

Mandela launched the AIDS awareness campaign in 2003.

Funds raised through the concerts are used to increase awareness of the AIDS pandemic, particularly among young people. More than \$3 million has been raised through the concerts so far.

Star after star appealed to the crowd to heed the slogan of the campaign — "It is in your hands" — calling on them to get tested and practice safe sex.

Other performers Saturday included Angelique Kidjo, Ludacris, Corinne Bailey Rae and the Goo Goo Dolls.

All performed for free.

The musician Peter Gabriel likened the fight against AIDS to the fight against apartheid.

Introducing his song "Biko," about the South African activist who died in

detention in 1977, Gabriel paid tribute to the bravery of those who fought the racist regime.

"We must not forget them. We need to focus the same power and intensity in the struggle against AIDS that was in the struggle against apartheid," he said.

Speaking at a World Aids Day event elsewhere in the country, President Thabo Mbeki, who has been criticized for his handling of the AIDS crisis, said that the government's plea to South Africans to be faithful and use condoms was not being heeded.

"What is really of importance is that we must, all of us, take these messages very seriously, particularly our young people," Mbeki said on SABC radio.

"We don't want our people to be suffering from ill health when they could have handled their own lives in a way that makes for healthy lives."



Crystal Aikin captured BET's gospel music competition.

Crystal Aikin named 'Sunday Best' winner

NEW YORK - The viewers have spoken. Crystal Aikin has been named winner of BET's "Sunday Best."

The 33-year-old Tacoma, Wash., native beat out Shari Addison, 46, in the gospel reality competition during last night's live season finale. Over a 10-week season, Aikin's bubbly personality and big voice captured the hearts of viewers — bringing in the larger percentage of the more than 1.5 million total votes.

Along with the title, Aikin brings home a national recording contract with Zomba Gospel, a 2008 Toyota Camry and a \$300,000 Tide "Loads of Hope" prize package for her community.

The one-hour finale included special performances by platinum-selling gospel singer Yolanda Adams and series' host Kirk Franklin.

As an emergency room nurse, Crystal Aikin placed her career aside, entered the competition and followed her call to minister to the masses in song with her powerhouse voice.

Crystal used her mother's frequent flyer miles and traveled to the Los Angeles auditions for a mere \$2.50.

"This journey has been busy, exhausting, fun and anticipatory," said Aikin. "It's a blessed and privileged opportunity to be the 'Sunday Best' winner, and to God be all the glory."

Your Horoscope Says... December 6-12

ARIES

Reconsider a business offer, it might be a good one. You've got time, so sit down and weigh the pros and cons. Doing it alone is not best. Make a phone call. Talk to someone who knows you well. Get an objective opinion.

Soul Affirmation: I graciously anticipate joy, and this gives me the ability to give.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 31, 40

TAURUS

Your intuition is very high this week. You see where things are going even before they start. This will keep you from making false moves. Be careful not to let your suspicions keep you from making the moves that are definitely called for.

Soul Affirmation: My mood is created by the company I keep.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 44, 51

GEMINI

Beware of financial pitfalls. Your thinking on money matters is not as clear as it could be this week. Someone will try to catch you off guard. This week, your luck turns for the better, so spend it with the one you love or want to love!

Soul Affirmation: A slowing of pace is just what I need this week.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 41, 49

CANCER

Your mate has a sweet surprise. He or she might be a little timid about revealing it unless you present a very receptive mood. Choose your words carefully. You will receive good news about a loan or financial investment.

Soul Affirmation: I look to distant horizons to find truth this week.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 2, 16

LEO

You and your mate should start saving for a joint project. It will make you feel closer to each other. It'll give you something with which to bind the relationship. Otherwise, you might feel that you are drifting apart.

Soul Affirmation: Self confidence is the key to my success this week.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 37, 45

VIRGO

Challenges will be ever present for you this week. Work at it calmly knowing that you are getting some things out of the way. Tackle tasks using your famous self-control rather than your passion. Use your passion on the weekends. Let loose! Be free!

Soul Affirmation: The sunlight of my spirit shines in the land beyond the horizon.

Lucky Numbers: 23, 34, 36

LIBRA

Harmonious communications are part of your charm, and you'll get far this week by speaking your word in an easy-going way. You'll find that your domestic arrangements are very comfortable to you.

Soul Affirmation: I let my words reveal the not-so-hidden truth about my being.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 7, 12

SCORPIO

Your mate has a sweet surprise. Open up to receive it. Choose your words carefully around a sensitive pal. Listen for good news about a loan or financial matter.

Soul Affirmation: I let others toot my horn this week.

Lucky Numbers: 27, 28, 35

SAGITTARIUS

Enjoy the great insights you have in

the area of career objectives. Take a look at what's out there. An unanticipated financial matter may arise, find the good in it.

Soul Affirmation: A cheerful soul should be wrapped in a cheerful package.

Lucky Numbers: 15, 23, 29

CAPRICORN

This week is a good week to get in touch with your emotional self. You will respond well to what people close to you will ask from you. Your loved ones will appreciate your kindness when they find out how highly sensitive you are to their needs.

Soul Affirmation: My life itself is my greatest creation.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 19, 54

AQUARIUS

You know what you want and you have the ability to make it happen. Step into action at work this week and you will get a lot done. You can get what you want without being too demanding. Enjoy the time you have with your family. True rewards come from those who are related to you by blood.

Soul Affirmation: Truth is revealed in the smallest grain of sand.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 11, 30

PISCES

Live this week with an adventurer's spirit. Trade in the comfortable for the exciting; the reliable for intriguing; the familiar for the new. Perhaps a change of scenery will get you started. You will rediscover feelings that you have denied yourself for a while.

Soul Affirmation: Communication is a skeleton key that fits many doors.

Lucky Numbers: 10, 22, 55