



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - The UN Food and Agriculture Organization has expressed confidence rinderpest, a viral infection that targets livestock, has been eradicated removing a serious threat to herds in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. The disease, with a 70% mortality rate, posed a constant threat to impoverished populations who rely on livestock for earnings.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMAN, 15 October - Rural women play a critical role in the rural economies of both developed and developing countries. In most parts of the developing world they participate in crop production and livestock care, provide food, water and fuel for their families, and engage in off-farm activities to diversify their families' livelihoods. In addition, they carry out vital functions in caring for children, older persons and the sick.

HEALTH - Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) kill more than half a million people every year in poor countries around the world despite being treatable with cheap drugs, a World Health Organisation report claims. The United Nations agency released its first ever report on the topic on Thursday, focusing on 17 diverse infections including dengue fever, leprosy, river blindness and bilharzia, which are often ignored by researchers and drug makers. A total of one billion people are affected by NTDs worldwide. The diseases can cause blindness, heart damage and death, according to the WHO.

■AFRICA

Africa Region - The emergence of an effective new meningitis vaccine, rather than a large-scale outbreak of the disease, has prompted the current vaccination drive across West Africa. Health officials say the vaccine marks a "revolution" in preventing the highly contagious and fatal disease.

MALAWI - Human rights activists have urged the Malawian government to release 86 people sentenced to up to six years in jail for practising witchcraft.

SUDAN - The impending closure of a major camp near the South Darfur town of Nyala has led to discussions between humanitarian agencies and the Sudanese government about the future of the tens of thousands of internally displaced people living there.

ZIMBABWE - The economic upswing in Zimbabwe is luring workers under 18-years-old to the now bustling mining town of Shurugwi, about 350km south of the capital Harare in Midlands Province.

■ASIA

INDIA - Campaigners against the death penalty in India are hopeful that a series of commutations of hanging sentences to life imprisonment this month will add up to a trend against the award of capital punishment.

■MIDDLE EAST

SYRIA - Several years of drought are turning once-bountiful farmland in Syria into a barren strip of desert. The changes in the heartland of the Fertile Crescent, which have impoverished some 2 million to 3 million people, also pose a security threat to regional governments that have grown more dependent on imports of food and water.

WFWO's Communications Team