Doomsday cult sees end to world in Sept

AFP, *Kinangop*

The escalating Middle East conflict has strengthened the convictions of a doomsday cult in central Kenya that believes the world will come to an end in September.

Members of the "House of Yahweh" sect here have begun selling off their belongings and preparing for Armageddon, attracting the attention of authorities concerned the group's leaders may be taking advantage of believers.

"The goings-on now in Israel are a clear indication of what will happen," says Ruth Wanjiku, a member of the Kenyan branch of the House of Yahweh that is based in the US state of Texas.

"This is the beginning of the end of the world as prophesied by the 'Book of Yahweh'," she says, referring to the group's version of the Bible that holds Armageddon will begin on September 12.

According to the prophesy, the end of the world will begin that day when the United States moves to protect Israel, sparking a war that sucks in nuclear powers China, North Korea, Iran, India and Pakistan, as well as non-nuclear state Sudan.

Recent developments in the Middle East, with Israel attacking militant positions in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, have only bolstered the group's assertions.

"There will be a 'nuclear winter' with temperatures dropping to below zero degrees centigrade (32 Fahrenheit) and killing all non-believers," Wanjiku says, explaining the group's belief that conflict in the Middle East will cause the apocalypse.

"The high nuclear concentration will slowly move to low-concentration areas and this is how lives will be wiped from the face of the earth," adds fellow member Dominic Karichu.

In order to survive, believers are selling off possessions to build massive mud bunkers and store food, moves that have alarmed officials in Kinangop, a small trading post about 80 kilometers (50 miles) northwest of Nairobi.

"Since we cannot risk staying in our houses after September 12, we are selling them to finance the bunkers and food," Wanjiru said.

It was not immediately clear if other branches of the House of Yahweh were taking similar preparations to the group's Kenyan followers but local officials said they will take action against any unscrupulous behavior.

Authorities said they had ordered village chiefs and police to arrest House of Yahweh leaders who instruct members to sell their homes and other possessions.

"Some people could be taking advantage of this to fleece the unsuspecting faithful and we are not going to leave anything to chance," said Nyandarua district commissioner Khamasi Shivogo.

Participants at a gender orientation training for government officials held in the city yesterday. The Department of Women and Gender Studies, University of Dhaka, organised the daylong programme.

Winners of 9th National Television School Debate Competition pose for photograph with Viqarunnisa Noon School Principal Rowena Hossain and Hasan Ahmed Chowdhury, director of the debate programme, recently. Viqarunnisa Noon School became the champion of the debate competition.

Blood test may find early lung cancer

REUTERS, *Washington*

A blood test that looks for the body's own immune response to tumours may provide an easy way to find lung cancer in patients long before an X-ray or CT scan could, US researchers reported on Friday.

The test correctly predicted non-small-cell lung cancer in blood samples taken from patients years before they were actually diagnosed with lung cancer, the researchers reported.

If the test's reliability can be confirmed, it might become the first new blood screen for any cancer since the prostate specific antigen or PSA test. The test is licensed to privately held Rockville, Maryland-based 20/20 GeneSystems Inc.

"These data suggest antibody profiling could be a powerful tool for early detection when incorporated into a comprehensive screening strategy," the researchers wrote in their report, published in the Journal of Thoracic Oncology.

Non-small-cell lung cancer is the most common type of lung cancer, and has an average five-year survival rate of only 40 percent.

Lung cancer is by far the biggest cancer killer globally. Each year 10 million people are diagnosed with it, according to the Global Lung Cancer Coalition, and half of all patients die within a year of diagnosis. It kills more than 160,000 people annually in the United States alone.

Special X-rays known as computed tomography or CT scans can find lung cancer tumours, but they have a high rate of false positives -- meaning many people have to undergo a painful biopsy to get a piece of a suspicious lump out of the lung, only to find out it was not cancerous after all.

By the time people have symptoms of lung cancer, it is usually too late to save them.

Li Zhong and colleagues at the University of Kentucky developed a test that looks for certain proteins the body makes in response to very early lung tumours.

When they tested it in people who were being treated for lung cancer, it correctly identified 90 percent of cases, and with very few false positives in samples taken from people who did not have lung cancer.

They went back and tested blood samples taken from some of the lung cancer patients years before they were diagnosed. The test found cancer in four out of seven samples taken a year before diagnoses, and in all 18 samples taken two, three and four years earlier.

"Based on doubling times, a lung cancer can be present three to five years before reaching the conventional size limits of radiographic detection," Zhong's team wrote.