

# Scientist: 'Mountain of God' is safe ... just yet

From **MARC NKWAME**  
in Arusha

A GEOLOGIST has allayed fears of possible volcanic eruption at the 'Mountain of God,' the country's third highest peak found in Ngorongoro district.

Dr Ben Beeckmans, an authority in Volcanology says if there were any researchers who visited Tanzania and made such claims,

(as some did late last year) then they didn't follow the right procedures of research as volcanoes were not something to simply look at and make conclusions.

A member of International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry, Dr Beeckmans, however, admits that the Mountain of God (Oldonyo L'engai) was 'currently rumbling underneath' but that does not necessarily

mean it could erupt.

"The only thing I can say for certain is concerning the large crack on the western side of Oldonyo L'engai .... just under the northern crater; I saw it myself when I last climbed the mountain about three years ago. It looks like this 'western part,' will collapse and fall into the crater," he stated.

Dr Beeckmans warns; "People who ascend Mount

Oldonyo L'engai should make certain to go around this large crack, meaning deviating to the South under the crater, and coming up from the Southern side (between the northern crater and the, now filled in, southern crater, which is the side of the 'highest point' on the volcano.

Last year, Dr Sarah Stamps, a geophysicist at Virginia Tech, led a team of local and international re-

searchers to predict the next major eruption. They installed five positioning sensors around Mount Oldonyo L'engai and these apparently are sending back signals for impending volcanic activities.

The academics reported that, the mountain may erupt in a few weeks or months' time and therefore necessary steps need to be taken. However, residents at Enka-

resero Village located at the mountain's base, amusingly dismissed the warnings.

And so did, Dr Beeckmans; "I myself have a project to install seismic stations in the area to study seismicity under the volcano, but I have not heard about an eruption to happen soon. I am not aware of the mentioned study. Usually this volcano seems to follow a pattern since last century. But then,

I did not do any seismic research on it."

According to the Scientist, even though there might be activity in the pit crater, he did not have the impression that it will or may be dangerous to an extent that tourists cannot climb it anymore.

"... at least not for the moment ... all active volcanoes present a potential danger. It does not mean you

should not climb it. I personally climbed the volcano when there was a lot of activity; but it is best to avoid the big fissure under the Northern crater," he concluded.

"I don't know the actual situation, but noise in the Northern crater does not mean there will be an important eruption! It is true, Oldonyo L'engai is active and being active means that one always has to be careful!"