

INTERNATIONAL

Officials discuss Congo cease-fire

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Military officials from the countries involved in Congo's civil war met recently for the first time to oversee the implementation of a cease-fire and prepare the ground for peacekeeping operations in Africa's third-largest nation.

"Peace is something that cannot wait," Amama Mbabazi, Uganda's minister for regional affairs, told the opening session of the joint military commission. "Peace is something Africa urgently needs." The session was held behind closed doors, but a copy of Mbabazi's speech was made public.

Under terms of a cease-fire signed July 10 by Congo

and its allies — Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia — and by the rebels' allies — Rwanda and Uganda — the commission is responsible for executing peacekeeping operations until the deployment of a U.N. force. The two rebel factions signed the deal Sept. 9.

The joint commission is made up of senior military officers from Uganda, Rwanda, Angola, Congo and Namibia. It is chaired by Gen. Rashid Lalani of Algeria, which holds the current chairmanship of the Organization of African Unity.

Mbabazi said among the commission's immediate tasks was the setting up of

camps to receive armed groups "who may wish to surrender and to appropriately address those who do not answer the call to lay down arms."

It is not clear when the first U.N. peacekeepers will arrive in Congo, although 18 U.N. military observers under the command of British army Col. James Ellery arrived in the Congolese capital, Kinshasa, in late September.

Under the cease-fire deal, the commission must track and disarm groups, screening mass killers and perpetrators of crimes against humanity, as well as monitoring the many armed forces involved in the Congolese civil war.

Mbabazi said the

commission also needed to come up with "methods of cooperation with humanitarian agencies so that those lives which have been interrupted by the war can receive assistance."

Despite Congolese government claims of rebel cease-fire violations, Mbabazi said adherence to the agreement had been encouraging.

"The self-restraint which has so far been exercised by most of the signatories to the agreement is the greatest source of encouragement and can be interpreted as clear evidence that all parties remain committed to the agreement which they signed," he said.

South Africa, EU sign trade pact

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — After more than four years of negotiations, South Africa and the European Union signed a free trade pact Monday, warding off a last-minute bid by France to get further concessions.

The agreement proposes abolishing tariffs on about 90 percent of two-way trade between South Africa and the EU — which tops more than \$17 billion annually.

Over 12 years, South Africa will eliminate tariffs on 86 percent of goods it imports from EU countries, while tariffs on 90 percent of its exports to the EU will be lifted within 10 years.

Fears the accord would unravel emerged Monday after Pretoria rejected fresh demands that it give wider recognition to product names emanating from Europe.

The signing ceremony in Pretoria, the capital, was

delayed by nearly an hour as the French deliberated whether to block the deal, which needed the approval of all 15 EU member states.

Diplomats said French President Jacques Chirac had to be called to resolve the impasse and have the agreement cleared by a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg.

The deal, to be implemented Jan. 1 next year, is the most important to be

struck by South Africa's post-apartheid government. Pretoria took a hard line in the negotiations with its largest trading partner and was rewarded with significant access for its agricultural products in European Union markets.

Sulfur blamed for dead fish

BLANTYRE, Malawi (AP) — Thousands of dead fish are being washed upon the shores of Lake Malawi, probably caused by sulfur rising from the depths, researchers said.

At least 1,100 pounds of dead fish were collected in a single day on one short stretch of beach, said Alexander Bulilani, a fishing project manager for the Southern African Development Community. Fish in the 375

mile-long freshwater lake already have been depleted by uncontrolled overfishing.

Bulilani said prolonged strong winds appeared to have caused sulphur to rise up from the bottom and stifle oxygen in the water. The fish kill has spread from the central lake districts to the northern lake district of Karonga bordering Tanzania and to the southern resort district of Mangochi.

Beauty

(Continued from Page 4)

Jamaicans' fascination with beauty contests goes back to the 1950s and 1960s, when the pillars of British rule were not yet toppled. It was accepted Miss Jamaica should be White or near-White.

When the 1963 Miss Jamaica, Carol Joan Crawford (of mixed descent), went on to win Miss World, her predecessors were almost all carbon copies.

Not until 1978 — under Haughton-James' ownership — did Joan McDonald, a Black contestant, win. She brought hope to the working class that one of their own could be Miss Jamaica.

But, that has not been so. Since McDonald's victory

21 years ago, only three holders of the Miss Jamaica crown have been of direct African descent. With the trend of the "brown" Miss Jamaica gathering

momentum, beauty contestant buffs believe that women of color will shy away from the Miss Jamaica pageant, feeling they have little chance of winning.

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WORLD BRIEFS

REBEL LEADERS RETURN HOME TO SIERRA LEONE

FREETOWN (IPS) — Three months after the signing of the peace agreement, which ended eight years of civil war in Sierra Leone, the two main rebel leaders, Corporal Foday Sankoh of the Revolutionary United Front and Major Johnny Paul Koroma of the defunct Armed Forces Revolutionary Council have returned home to help advance the peace process. The return home of the two warlords did not ignite the sort of heroes' welcome they probably anticipated. Security, both at the airport and around the rest of the country's capital, Freetown, was tight with tanks, helicopter gunships, alpha jets and thousands of rifle-carrying Nigerian-led West African peace-keeping troops, known as ECOMOG. The mood among the citizens was more somber and reflective than celebratory. Even supporters of the rebel movement acted reserved about their leaders' return.

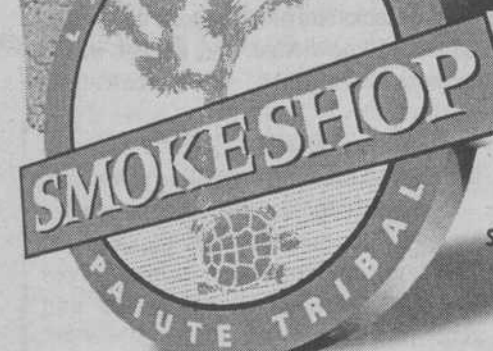
DEBATE OVER ABORTION HEATS UP IN KENYA

NAIROBI (IPS) — The abortion debate between the church and rights groups in Kenya has taken a nasty turn, with the government of President Daniel Arap Moi continuing to maintain its distance. Enraged by the call to legalize abortion, the Catholic Church, arguing that abortion violates the sanctity of human life, said it will not compromise on the issue even if it means launching a door-to-door campaign. "Abortion is the first-degree murder of an innocent, defenseless person by a professional who is otherwise trained to defend life," said Archbishop Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki who heads the Catholic Church in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital. The right to choose whether or not to have an abortion is a right and need for every woman. The Church must let women decide for themselves," said Njoki Ngung'u of the International Federation of Women Lawyers, Kenya chapter. Abortion is outlawed in Kenya and is permitted only in cases where the mother's life is in danger or the fetus is severely deformed.

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