

INTERNATIONAL

## Negotiators begin Darfur peace talks

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Negotiators from groups battling in Sudan's Darfur region opened their latest round of peace talks on Saturday, with African mediators imploring the government and rebels to resolve their differences through talks.

Peace negotiations have failed to stop nearly two years of fighting in Sudan's western region that has killed tens of thousands and left nearly 2 million homeless.

African Union officials have said that attacks continued this week.

"War will not resolve the problems of Darfur," Sam Ibok, a top mediator of African Union, told delegates. "It's not just a military problem, it's a problem that can be resolved by political means."

Representatives from Darfur's two main rebel groups and Sudan's government are attending the talks, which were promptly adjourned Saturday and expected to continue Sunday.

Early work will focus on reviewing past interim agreements, with power and wealth sharing and disarmament among the final goals for peace, said Ibok.

An earlier round of talks in November produced accords on humanitarian access to the estimated 1.8 million war-displaced in Darfur and in neighboring Chad, bringing new pledges of an end to hostilities.

Fighting restarted almost immediately after the Nov. 9 accords signed in Abuja and aid groups accused the Sudanese air force of bombing towns. The government denied this and the United Nations said it could not confirm the airstrikes.

Rebel delegates said Saturday government air strikes would hinder the talks.

"According to the agreements we've signed, the government should refrain from military overflights in Darfur, but in the past two weeks we've been under constant bombardment and this will affect the talks," said Mohammed Tugod Lissan, of the Justice and Equality Movement.

Disease and famine have killed 70,000 in Darfur since March, the World Health Organization says. There is no official reckoning of the overall toll of the war, which sparked in February 2003 when two non-Arab African rebel groups took up arms to fight for more power and resources. The Sudanese government responded by backing a militia known as the Janjaweed, which is now accused of targeting civilians in a campaign of murder, rape and arson. Nigeria is the current head of the 52-nation African Union.

A promised 3,000-member African Union peace deployment for Darfur has managed to put only about 800 soldiers and 100 observers in the field. The United Nations calls the situation in Darfur the world's gravest humanitarian crisis.

## HIV

(Continued from Page 3)

been spared if the drug had been stopped when the first liver problems showed up in her blood work two weeks before death.

"This case was particularly unfortunate b/c (because) the PI (principle investigative doctor) didn't stop drug when grade 3 liver enzymes were reported," Dr. Jonathan Fishbein, NIH's chief of good research practices, told Tramont in an August 2003 e-mail.

NIH's official review determined the Memphis hospital failed to react to lab results that showed her liver failure was starting well before she died. "The site had identified that there was a delay in reviewing laboratory evaluations from the clinic visit the week before she presented with clinical hepatitis," an Aug. 15, 2003, report concluded.

The official investigative files cited "drug-induced hepatitis" of the liver as the cause of death.

As is routine after a research-related death, NIH ordered changes to the rules its researchers followed in the nevirapine studies to ensure the early detection of liver problems, the memos show.

## Jazz stars help HIV/AIDS push in India

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*  
WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Colin Powell enlisted U.S. jazz stars on Tuesday to help India fight AIDS and HIV, an epidemic he called "the worst weapon of mass destruction on the face of the earth."

Next month's concert tour of India by jazz musicians including Al Jarreau, Earl Klugh and Ravi Coltrane highlighted a \$35 million U.S. effort this year to help the world's most populous democracy fight HIV/AIDS, Powell said, flanked by Klugh

and Coltrane.

India has over 5.1 million HIV-infected people, second only to South Africa. Over the years, HIV/AIDS has moved beyond traditionally high-risk groups such as homosexuals, commercial sex workers and drug users to the general population.

"India is doing a lot and is in a position to do a lot more," said U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Randall Tobias.

"But India, based on the data that we have, is on the verge of a much bigger pandemic," he told reporters.

President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief has contributed over \$20 million to India this year to fight AIDS/HIV, and Washington has provided another \$15 million to support Indian medical researchers study the disease, Powell and Tobias said.

Powell said a goal of the jazz concerts in Mumbai on Jan. 16 and New Delhi on Jan. 19 was to help conquer prejudice against HIV-infected people.

"Jazz was born from the American people's struggle

to conquer prejudice and stigma in our society," he said. "No one should be stigmatized or looked down upon."

Coltrane, son of the jazz legend John Coltrane, said "AIDS awareness is a message that we should be constantly thinking of spreading."

Coltrane was named after the influential Indian musician Ravi Shankar. He said his mother, jazz pianist Alice Coltrane, is a follower of Indian spiritual figure Sai Baba and visits India annually.

## Libya Withdraws \$1 Billion Assets Frozen in U.S.

TRIPOLI — The Libyan Central Bank has withdrawn \$1 billion of assets which had been frozen for almost two decades in the United States on Washington's orders, a Libyan central bank official said Wednesday.

The move follows the ending of a broad U.S. trade embargo in September by President Bush to reward Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi for giving up weapons of mass destruction.

The previously frozen as-

sets, which have been invested in various countries, are believed to include equity holdings in banks. The original size of the funds was about \$400 million, said Central Bank Vice-President Farhat Omar Ben Gdara.

"This (transfer) process was completed within the last two weeks," he said.

The U.S. embargo, which began in 1986, was lifted after Tripoli renounced weapons of mass destruction a year ago and paid a total of about

\$2.7 billion, or \$10 million per victim, in compensation for the 1988 Pan Am airline bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Bankers from the two countries have this year been discussing ways to unfreeze these assets. "This process does not mean we severed our relations with the banks in the United States," Ben

Gdara said. "We are in the process of opening accounts in banks in the United States."

The U.S. administration of President Ronald Reagan ordered the 1986 halt to economic and commercial relations with Tripoli, freezing Libyan assets in the U.S., after a series of what Washington viewed as Libyan-sponsored terrorist acts.

## European Union urges Liberia to improve election laws

AMSTERDAM — The European Union urged Liberia, struggling to emerge from more than 10 years of civil war, to bring its election laws up to international standards ahead of an October vote.

"The European Union is deeply concerned about the slow progress in carrying out electoral reform in Liberia," the EU presidency, held by the Netherlands until the end of the month, said in a statement on Wednesday.

Rebel and militia groups in Liberia, which was founded by freed American slaves, formally disbanded last month in line with a peace deal signed last year. Presidential elections are due by October 2005.

"The European Union considers that the provisions adopted by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly lead to the creation of an electoral system which does not conform to universally accepted standards," the EU said.

The Dutch presidency called on the assembly to review the draft legislation "bearing in mind the need to apply universally accepted principles for the organization of democratic elections."

The civil war, which ended more than a year ago, left the impoverished West African nation of 3.2 million people economically ruined, awash with weapons and home to hundreds of thousands of jobless youths.

The biggest U.N. peacekeeping force in the world, made up of 15,000 soldiers, has helped disarm more than 95,000 fighters but has not reached all parts of the country.



### PLAY BALL

Angolan soccer player Victor Yolame (L) tackles a fellow amputee, in this November 5, 2004 picture. Soccer is an obsession in many parts of the world, but in one of Angola's poorest regions, the passion runs a great deal deeper. In the eastern province of Moxico, one of the worst-hit during Angola's 27 years of brutal civil war, football literally provides a group of amputees, mainly former combatants, with a reason for living. Fifteen years ago, Yolame was on a mission with government forces when, collecting water from a river, he stepped on a landmine which blasted off most of his right leg.

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