

Steady progress at Rwandan peace talks in Arusha

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DAR ES SALAAM, Dec 29 (AFP) - Rwandan government and Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels are making steady progress in an attempt to find a final solution to pave the way for an interim national assembly to lead the country to democracy.

Rwandan Foreign Minister Boniface Ngulinzira, who is leading a government delegation to the negotiations at Arusha in northern Tanzania, on Tuesday told AFP by telephone that they were now haggling on the legislature issue after reaching agreement last week on the distribution of cabinet posts to six major political parties in the conflict.

Ngulinzira said the two sides were due to hold another plenary session where each would present its stand on succession to the presidency and premiership in case they fell vacant during transition period.

After a month-long deadlock, the

two sides agreed on a 22-member transitional cabinet last week under which President Juvenal Habyarimana's National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development will get four posts, the rebel RPF four, Democratic Republican Movement (MDR) four, Social Democratic Party (PSD) three, the Liberal Party (PL) three and the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) one.

The MRND will continue to hold the presidency, while MDR will also retain the premiership. The remaining two posts would be shared by parties still outside the current coalition government.

Ngulinzira added that the negotiators had yet to decide which parties outside the coalition would get the two positions.

Last week's agreement also provided that the two portfolios could be allocated to two prominent persons with no political affiliation if no party

qualified.

Diplomats attending the talks as observers said last week's consensus was a major breakthrough that could lead to the final settlement of the

Rwandan conflict by the end of January. The Arusha talks started last July.

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