

Politicians agree on choice of premier

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BUJUMBURA, Feb 22 (AFP) - Burundi's political parties have all agreed on the choice of premier proposed by the opposition, staving off potential ethnic carnage between the minority Tutsis and majority Hutus, national radio said Wednesday.

The Tutsi-dominated opposition Monday called off a strike that paralysed Burundi and threatened to plunge the country following agreement on a candidate to succeed the prime minister.

Under the agreement, Antoine Nduwayo will succeed Prime Minister Anatole Kanyenkiko, a moderate Hutu who heads a coalition government formed late last year to stave off mass violence.

Nduwayo, 52, an economist and former executive secretary of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries which groups Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire, like Kanyenkiko is a member of the former sole ruling party Union for National Progress (UPRONA).

His nomination was imposed on the Tutsi-dominated UPRONA by the seven other small opposition parties.

UPRONA had proposed Aster Girukwigomba, former commerce minister and economic advisor to ex-president Pierre Buyoya.

In another development, the driver of a van carrying weapons was killed when the vehicle hit a post after he refused to stop at a police checkpoint as he drove out of the Hutu Kamenge district of the north of the capital.

Two other people in the vehicle fled back towards Kamenge and a shootout occurred, but it was not clear whether anybody was hurt, a reliable source told AFP.

Police found a grenade, two South African-made assault rifles and six magazines of ammunition in the van.

Nduwayo's nomination was greeted with a sigh of relief by Burundians who feared the strike would lead to a bloodbath between the

country's Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups, must still be approved by Hutu President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya.

Kanyenkiko asked the Hutu president to start looking for someone to replace him last Thursday after the strike spread to most parts of the central African country.

Kanyenkiko, himself from Burundi's Hutu majority, took office as a member of the Tutsi-led UPRONA, but is now considered by the party as being a pawn of the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU), the party of the Hutu majority.

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