

Skulls to return in July

By Magreth Nunuhe

WINDHOEK — The skulls of Nama and Ovaherero people who perished in the German 1904-1908 colonial wars are to finally return to Namibia before end of July, Prime Minister Nahas Angula said this week.

However, he did not give a specific date on when the delegation of 54 Nama and Ovaherero people, including their traditional leaders, would accompany Government officials to Germany to bring back 20 skulls that were taken for 'scientific research' to the Medical History Museum of Charité Hospital in Berlin.

Kazenambo Kazenambo, the Minister of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture, would also not give a date as to when the delegation would leave for Germany, but said preparations were underway.

The repatriation of the skulls has been marred by controversy over the number of delegates that each group is to take to Germany to bring home the skulls.

Initially, the Ovaherero Genocide Committee (OGC) and Nama Technical Committee rejected the

SKULLS

27 places that were allotted to the Ovaherero-Ovambanderu Council for the Dialogue on 1904 Genocide (OCD-1904), while each of them had to settle for 13.

This prompted the Government to put on hold the trip in May until the parties resolved their differences. But in the end, the OGC and Nama Technical Committee conceded to the numbers.

Last week, Damara Chief Justus //Garoëb entered the fray when he lashed out at Government for excluding the Damaras out of the delegation as though they were not victims of the imperial war.

But the Prime Minister said the repatriation of skulls had reached an advanced stage, which would

make it unlikely for Damaras to be included in the trip to Germany.

Angula said they were working within a budget approved by Cabinet and while the skulls repatriation was only the first phase, from time to time, they might include other communities that were also affected by the German war.

"They (Damaras) are not the only community that was affected, and it's not because we want to exclude anybody," the PM said, adding that the Damaras could perhaps negotiate with the other groups to be included on the trip.

Approached for comment, Tjikuua Ueriuka, Secretary of the OCD-1904, said it was impossible at this time to cancel the names of any of their delegates to include the Damaras as they were based in different areas and had started with passport and visa applications.