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**(By Public Information Office)**

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## **HIGHLIGHTS:**

### **UN**

#### **Russian peacekeepers will leave for Sudan this week**

(AP/TASS/ST – 17<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Moscow**) Russia will send more than 100 servicemen to Sudan this week to participate in a United Nations peacekeeping operation, the Interfax news agency quoted Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov as saying Monday.

Ivanov told President Vladimir Putin that Russia would begin sending an aviation unit in three days, Interfax reported. He said the Russian contingent would comprise 117 servicemen, pilots and technicians, and four Mi-8 cargo helicopters, and that Moscow will send a planeload of blankets, tents and kitchens.

At the same time, under an agreement with G8 countries, Russia "plans to send to Sudan a military transport plane carrying tents, stoves and blankets for the civilian population". The minister noted that the Russian contingent in Sudan "will be periodically rotated".

The U.N. Security Council voted in March 2005 to send 10,700 peacekeepers to southern Sudan to monitor an accord ending a 21-year civil war between the government and rebels, and Russia's parliament last December approved Putin's proposal to send some 200 troops, four helicopters and other equipment.

There are also U.N. plans for a peacekeeping force in western Sudan, where more than 2 million people have been uprooted from their homes by violence in the Darfur region, but the Sudanese government has not approved a U.N. deployment.

On Tuesday 18 April the UN commission will check the readiness of the Russian aviation unit to be sent on the peacekeeping mission to Sudan at the army aviation flight personnel combat training and retraining centre in Torzhok, the Russian air force's press service told ITAR-TASS. The UN representatives will be shown the technical equipment used by the aviation unit.

#### **Russia, China oppose sanctions against Sudanese officials**

(ST – 17<sup>th</sup> Apr. **United Nations**) Russia and China will oppose sanctions against four Sudanese for blocking peace efforts and violating human rights in Darfur, U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said Monday.

Britain sent the list of four names to the chairman of the U.N. sanctions committee on Sudan on Thursday and the 15 Security Council members have until 4 p.m. EDT (2000 GMT) to lodge objections, a move strongly supported by the United States.

Bolton told reporters that the United States has been informed informally that Russia and China will object to the sanctions, and in light of their opposition the United States asked for a council meeting late Monday and may circulate a resolution that would impose the sanctions. Qatar, the only Arab member of the council, is also expected to object, council diplomats said.

"We've been trying to get this process in gear for a year and we think that the list of four names ... is a solid list," Bolton said. "It's a down payment. It's certainly not the end of the sanctions process."

China's U.N. Ambassador Wang Guangya said the timing of this effort was bad because serious negotiations are under way in Abuja, Nigeria, to end the three-year Darfur conflict, hopefully by April 30 as the Security Council has demanded.

"China believes that this is not the right moment since the Abuja negotiations are under way and we expect progress on that. So therefore everything must be done to help the Abuja process," Wang said. "At this sensitive moment, to publish this list will have a negative effect on the negotiations there."

He reiterated Beijing's longstanding opposition to sanctions as unhelpful to resolving conflicts.

Bolton was asked about possibly delaying the sanctions until after April 30.

"Certainly, we hope the talks will produce a result by the 30th," he said. "But our view is that these sanctions proceedings have been pending for a while ... and we don't see any reason to delay it."

The British list was the first to be circulated to council members, and while it drew support from other council members, including Argentina, Denmark, France, Japan, Peru and Slovakia, Russia reacted cautiously.

When asked last Wednesday whether Moscow supports sanctions, Russia's U.N. Ambassador Andrey Denisov said: "Human rights abuses should be judged, it is clear."

"But at the same time, (the) political process should not be interrupted, and it is very fragile in Sudan, and any additional aggravations can play negative role in that process. So let's wait ... and see who's on that list," Denisov said.

Council diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity because the list has not been released, said the four names proposed for sanctions include one member of the Sudanese government, two rebel figures, and one member of the Janjaweed.

## **CPA**

### **Fifteen killed in south Sudan militia clashes**

(Reuters/ST, AlSahafa - 18<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Khartoum**) Fifteen people including 11 civilians have been killed in clashes between militia fighters in southern Sudan since Saturday, straining a deal that ended the country's north-south civil war, officials said on Monday.

The fighting is between rival factions of a southern militia group called the South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF), which fought alongside Sudanese government forces during the 20-year civil war, the local officials said.

SSDF commander Paulino Matip signed a deal in January to incorporate his forces into the SPLM's southern army but another commander, Gordon Kong, has opposed the move.

Local officials have said differences between Matip and Kong over which side to ally with have sparked the clashes. SSDF officials have played down earlier clashes saying they were over local tribal differences.

"The people from Gordon Kong's faction attacked our position in Longchauk on Saturday and they managed to dislodge our forces," said Nhail Thak, a commander with the pro-SPLM faction.

Thak said his forces recaptured Longchauk, about 200 km (125 miles) north of Malakal in Upper Nile state, on Monday. He said four soldiers and 11 civilians, who were caught in the crossfire, were killed in fighting since Saturday.

Thirty-two people, including 17 civilians, were killed in five days of violence between the two factions last week. That fighting was centered around the towns of Nasir and Ulang in the same state, local officials had said.

A senior SPLM official said he had heard reports of fighting and civilian deaths.

"There is some fighting in the area ... (it) shows that some people are not serious about the CPA and (it) damages confidence between the two partners," said the SPLM official, who asked not to be named.

A U.N. official said investigators were looking into reports of violence in the area but could not immediately confirm its extent.

### **Committee charged with delineation of the 1.1.'56 line to meet next Thursday**

(*AlAyaam* – 18<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Khartoum**) The technical committee charged with drawing the 1.1.'56 line holds its third meeting next Thursday.

Mohamed Kheir Ali, the head of the committee, said that the meeting will be held at the Republican Palace. He says the committee is yet to issue final resolutions as the first two meetings had focused on the budget, procedures and bylaws of the committee.

He also pointed out that they could not proceed ahead with their work during that time because the SPLM and the GoSS were yet to field in their representatives.

### **Head of Khartoum State legislature expects parties to soon reach deal on the constitution**

(*AlRai AlAam* – 18<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Khartoum**) The head of the Khartoum State legislative organ says the Parties may reach a compromise on the Constitution of Khartoum State.

He rules out possibilities that the Parties may resort to arbitration by the Presidency of the Republic over the issue and pointed out that much common ground has been uncovered.

## **GoNU**

### **MPs lash out on foreign ministry for shortcomings in handling Cairo refugees' issue**

(*AlSahafa* – 18<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Khartoum**) Parliamentarians have blamed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for shortfalls in its handling of the issue of the Sudanese refugees in Cairo who clashed with Egyptian police in December last year.

30 refugees lost their lives in the clash that occurred as Egyptian law enforcing officers tried to put an end to a sit-in they had staged.

Some MPs called for an investigation into the issue and a cut in diplomatic ties with Cairo.

Foreign minister Akol's briefing before the National Assembly on the Cairo incident was strongly criticised by mainly SPLM MPs who say government did not do enough but the foreign minister defended the steps taken by government and asked the people not to ask of the government what it can not do.

The minister said the demands that the ministry summon the Egyptian ambassador to Khartoum for an explanation and that the Sudan cut ties with Egypt are unrealistic as he has already discussed the issue with Egypt's foreign minister.

### **About 1,000 NCP members in Amri walk out**

(*AlAyaam* – 18<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Khartoum**) Over 1,000 members of the National Congress Party have declared they are walking out of the party because of what they described as its silence over the policies of the Implementation Unit of the Meroe Dam Project.

The head of the committee of the people affected by the dam said that security authorities in Northern State arrested late last Sunday four members of their executive committee.

Suleiman el-Hassan says that 12 cases of kidney failure have been reported amongst the workers employed to build the alternate residential areas the people of Amri are to relocate to as they leave their homes that will be drowned by the reservoir the dam will form and that many cases of urinary tract infections have also been reported amongst these workers [*this is to confirm their fears that the Wadi el-Mugaddam area they are to relocate to and which is currently under construction may have been a dumping site for radioactive waste*].

He also pointed out that two water holes drilled in that area to provide clean drinking water has been sealed following the discovery of a high presence of sulphur and salt.

Meanwhile, the Alliance of National Forces (*an alliance of opposition parties*) says the issue will feature prominently in the impending meeting of its leadership office.

### **Ministry of Health announces shortage in meningitis vaccine**

(*AlAyaam* – 18<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Khartoum**) The Ministry of Health has announced a shortage in the meningitis vaccine for the states of northern and southern Sudan.

The head of the directorate for epidemics points out that currently the Central Medical Stores currently have a quantity of 345,000 vaccines while the quantity needed until June this year is 2 million.

He said that Kassala and South Darfur have reached epidemic levels.

### **Darfur/ Abuja talks/ Chad**

## **Libyan envoy arrives in Khartoum to try to defuse tensions between Sudan and Chad**

(*AlRai AlAam* – 18<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Khartoum**) Talks in Khartoum yesterday between President Bashir and an envoy of the Libyan leader focused on Libya's efforts to help defuse the tension between Sudan and Chad.

Libyan envoy AbdelSalam el-Treiki said he delivered a letter to President Bashir from the Libyan leader and revealed that he was in Chad before coming to Sudan and held talks along the same lines with the Chadian leader.

The envoy said the two leaders have agreed that the Monitoring Committee formed by virtue of the Tripoli Agreement and the border monitors continue their work.

He said he felt the Sudan and Chad were committed to improving relations and expressed hopes that a meeting will soon be held between the two countries at ministerial levels.

The envoy also held talks with Sudan's foreign minister who said that Sudan had tried to send an envoy to Chad recently but Chad was not welcoming.

“We will not try again,” said the minister

Minister Akol further said that the AU Peace and Security Council turned down Chad's accusations on Sudan.

## **Sudan's Taha holds closed-door meeting with SLM's Minnawi**

(*ST* – 17<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Abuja**) Second Vice-President Ali Osman Taha continued his closed-door meetings with leaders of the rebel movements where he met Sunday Meni Arko Minnawi, the chairman of one of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) factions.

The State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Al-Samani Al-Wasila, said in a press statement that this is the fifth meeting between Taha and Minnawi, pointing out that the focus now is on the security arrangements axis on which agreement would have positive reflections on the security situation and displaced persons and it is considered key element for achieving agreement on the rest of the axes.

Al-Wasila added that there are now no outstanding issues in the file of the security arrangements, expecting the file will be completed within this week.

Meanwhile, the mini-team on the security and military arrangements continued its meetings in the presence of the mediators and international partners in a view to reaching cease-fire agreement in Darfur.

The Spokesperson of the African Union in Abuja talks, Nouredine Mezni, said to SUNA that the coming few days will witness preparation of a final document of the security arrangements.

He said that presenting by the African mediation of proposals on the final peace agreement is connected with finalizing the security arrangements file, after the mediation has completed the final proposals on the power and wealth axes. He expressed hope that a peace agreement would be reached by the date set by the African Union Peace and Security Council, the end of current April.

Mezni pointed to the consultations being made by the Vice-President, Ali Osman Taha, with the leaders of the rebel groups, hoping that the consultations will achieve positive outcome backing the peace process.

He said that the African Union Top Mediator, Salim Ahmed Salim, left to New York where he is expect to submit on Tuesday a report to the UN Security Council on the latest developments of Abuja peace talks. He affirmed that Salim will return immediately to follow the work of this decisive and final stage of the negotiations.

### **US says Sudan may have been involved in Chad's unrest**

(*AFP/ST* – 17<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Washington**) The United States suggested that Sudan may have been involved in last week's failed offensive by rebels in neighbouring Chad, and said it warned Khartoum such action was "unacceptable."

Washington stopped short of officially endorsing Chad's allegations that the Sudanese had armed the rebels who stormed N'Djamena on Thursday seeking to overthrow President Idriss Deby Itno.

But a senior State Department official, who asked not to be named, told reporters, "I'm not going to wave you off that there was some involvement" by the regime of President Omar al-Bashir in Khartoum.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack, speaking at his daily press briefing, said there was no "definitive public conclusion" of a Sudanese role in the Chadian rebel assault. But he also pointed to the possibility.

"We have made very clear to the government of Sudan that that kind of future behaviour is just unacceptable," McCormack said.

He added that US, European Union and African Union officials had contacted many African governments to drive home the warning against arming or aiding groups seeking to invade another country.

Khartoum has denied any involvement in the move against Deby's government, which it believes is supporting rebels battling government-backed militia in Sudan's bloodstained western region of Darfur.

The violence in Chad has been seen as a spill over of the three-year-old conflict in Darfur, which the United States brands genocide. It has left up to 300,000 people dead from attacks and disease, and two million homeless.

### **AU envoy in Chad to see Deby**

(*AFP/ST* – 17<sup>th</sup> Apr. **N'Djamena**) An envoy from the African Union Commission arrived Monday in the capital of Chad N'Djamena with a message from its head for Chad's President Idriss Deby Itno, an AU source said.

Special envoy Abdoukader Toure, an aide to AU commission president Alpha Oumar Konare, was due to meet Deby Tuesday to hand over the message, the content of which was not revealed, the source said.

On Sunday Libyan African Union Minister Ali Abdelsalem met Deby, Chad's Foreign Minister Ahmat Allami told AFP.

"We gave him the proof that Sudan was implicated" in the attack by rebels belonging to the United Front for Change (FUC) on N'Djamena on Thursday, repelled by loyalist troops, Allami said.

### **Chad reassures UN, no expulsion of Darfur refugees**

(*Reuters/ST* – 17<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Geneva**) Chad has told the United Nations that some 200,000 refugees from Sudan's Darfur will not be expelled despite an earlier warning that they might have to go in June, the U.N. refugee agency said on Monday.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in a statement that Chad's President Idriss Deby, who accuses Sudan of backing rebels that attacked the capital N'Djamena last week, had promised that nobody would be forced to leave.

"I ... am pleased to report that he (Deby) has reaffirmed that refugees will not be 'refouled' (forcibly returned) and Chad will abide by international principles," said High Commissioner Antonio Guterres.

But Guterres, who spoke to Deby on Sunday night, said that the Chad leader had repeated his concerns about the difficulty of providing security for both the refugees and the humanitarian organisations that are helping them.

"UNHCR strongly appeals to the international community and its various organisations to do everything possible to urgently establish peace and security in Darfur," the former Portuguese prime minister said in the statement.

Thursday's attack on the capital was the boldest yet by rebels who have vowed to end Deby's nearly 16-year rule and block a May 3 presidential poll in which he is standing for re-election.

Deby says the international community has been slow to react to the border crisis with Sudan, a spill over from the Darfur conflict in which pro-Khartoum Arab militias battle other ethnic groups.

He had warned that if the international community did not solve the long-running Darfur crisis by June, and guarantee security on the border, then his country would no longer be able to shelter Sudanese refugees living in UNHCR-run camps.

### **Chad accuses Sudan of preparing new attack**

(*AFP/ST* – 18<sup>th</sup> Apr. **N'Djamena**) The Chad government on Monday accused neighbouring Sudan of forming a new rebel army to attack the country, but withdrew a threat to expel 200,000 Sudanese refugees.

Chadian Foreign Minister Ahmat Allami claimed the Sudanese government was "reforming a new army" to attack Chad, after the failure of an assault by insurgents on the capital N'Djamena last week.



“Preparations are under way on the other side of the border. The Sudanese are reforming a new army... The Sudanese are preparing a new massacre,” Allami told AFP by telephone.

Chad has been a co-mediator in the effort to bring peace to Darfur, where three years of fighting between rebels and Khartoum-backed militias have left up to 300,000 people dead and two million displaced.

But N’Djamena considers the Darfur conflict to be the main destabilising force in Chad, and views the refugee camps in the east of the country as recruitment “reservoirs” for the FUC rebels.

Ana Liria-Franch, the UNHCR representative in N’Djamena, confirmed to AFP that rebels have used the camps to recruit fighters, both forcibly and through financial inducements.

On Sunday Chad withdrew its delegation from the Darfur peace talks between the Khartoum government and the rebels in Abuja (Nigeria), in a further sign of tension between the two countries.

The Chad government’s withdrawal of its threat to expel the Darfur refugees follows its decision Sunday to push back the date for halting its oil production.

It had threatened to shut down its oil production on Tuesday if it did not receive 100 million dollars worth of oil revenues from a United States-led consortium held in an account in Britain’s Citibank.

But government spokesman Hourmadji Moussa Doumgor said Sunday N’Djamena had agreed to delay turning off the taps over the row until the end of April to allow the US time to resolve the situation.

N’Djamena said Friday it had repelled a rebel offensive after three hours of heavy fighting on the outskirts of the capital that left around 150 people dead, and that the fighting was over.

Allami said the rebels had “scattered across the country” and was no longer a threat.

Nonetheless, military sources told AFP on Monday that the Chad army’s only combat helicopter had been brought down by rebel gunfire over the weekend in the Sarh region, 500 kilometres (310 miles) south of N’Djamena.

Fuc has launched offensives in several parts of the country in the past few days, and outbreaks of tension were reported in several areas of the country on Monday.

### **More Chadian officers desert to rebels**

(*AFP/ST* – 17<sup>th</sup> Apr. N’Djamena) Several officers in the Chadian army have deserted to the rebel United Front for Change (FUC) in recent days, sources on both sides said Monday.

"At least 10 high-ranking officers have joined us since Thursday” when FUC forces attacked the capital N’Djamena, FUC spokesman Albissaty Saleh Allazam said.

"These are people with whom we have been in contact for a certain time and joined us at the battle of N’Djamena."

Chadian military sources confirmed the latest wave of desertions. Several senior officers, often formerly close to President Idriss Deby Itno, have quit the national army (ANT) in recent months to join various rebel groups.

Several more officers had deserted after the attack on N'Djamena, a source said.

"We think these soldiers were already in contact with the rebels, that they helped them reach the capital and that after the failure of the attack they joined the rebels for fear of arrest."

## **US struggles to muster support for Sudan's Darfur**

(*AFPST* – 17<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Washington**) Nineteen months after branding the carnage in Sudan's Darfur region as genocide, the United States is struggling to muster support to end one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Facing Sudanese resistance to foreign peacekeepers, delays from the African Union (AU) and United Nations, and wariness from NATO to commit too much more of its own resources, US officials are showing signs of impatience.

Still haunted by the world's failure to stop the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, officials insist plans to boost an African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur and nail down a peace agreement are moving ahead.

"Would we have liked to have seen things move more quickly? Yes," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Friday. "It might not move as quickly as we would like, but it is moving forward."

Some Africa watchers say the United States needs to work harder to mobilize international action against the Sudanese regime to curb the bloodshed in its western region which has spilled over into neighbouring Chad.

But significant obstacles remain, they say. For one, no major power has followed the US declaration of genocide in Darfur made by then-secretary of state Colin Powell in September 2004.

Tough UN measures have run into opposition from China, which has considerable oil interests in Sudan. Khartoum has also been playing the pan-African card to block the deployment of foreign troops in Darfur.

Within the United States, there is concern about rupturing relations with Sudan's government, which is now considered a partner in the war on terror even if it is still listed here as a state sponsor of terrorism.

"With Rwanda 10 years ago, nobody had any interest so nobody did anything," said Leslie Lefkow, a Darfur expert with Human Rights Watch. "With Sudan everybody's got interests and they're all different so nobody does anything."

The US dilemma on Darfur was highlighted last Thursday when Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called for an urgent international response to the Darfur crisis, insisting "we really can't afford to wait."

The same day her deputy Robert Zoellick, appearing at a Brookings Institution forum on Sudan, gave a candid assessment of the delicacy of dealing with the regime of President Omar el-Bashir.

The United States is backing efforts to transfer the 7,000-strong AU contingent in Darfur into a more-robust UN force. But Zoellick suggested there was little way to ram foreign peacekeepers down Khartoum's throat.

"You either get the approval of the government, as the government did for the African Union force and the NATO support, or you invade, and that's a very big, serious challenge," he said.

Zoellick said the United States was counting on Khartoum's cooperation, not only in Darfur but in efforts to implement a January 2005 peace agreement that ended a 21-year war with rebels in the country's south.

"And so that is the challenge of working with regimes that we don't like, how do you get that combination moving forward and how do you try to put pressure on them to take the right steps?"

The United States spent its month-long presidency of the UN Security Council in February in an unsuccessful effort to win approval for a resolution on a new peacekeeping force for Darfur.

The world body was to have sent a team to Darfur to assess the needs of such a force but has been bogged down in a wrangle with the Sudanese over visas.

US officials have taken no pains to hide their frustration. Asked about the delay last week, Zoellick responded dryly, "As you may have noticed, we don't always run the UN."

Even among US allies, there are indications that some are not completely on the same page as the Americans.

When NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer visited Washington last month, President George W. Bush expressed hope the alliance would "take the lead" in Darfur.

But Scheffer made it clear he saw NATO, which currently provides air transport for AU soldiers, as playing more of a logistical and training support role without troops on the ground.

The United States, which has already slapped an economic embargo and other sanctions on Sudan for sponsoring terrorism, last week pushed for UN moves to target individuals responsible for the slaughter in Darfur.

But Lefkow, the Human Rights Watch expert, worried only low-level Sudanese would be affected by assets freeze and travel restrictions. She said the measures would have no bite unless they "start hitting harder and hitting higher."

## **Eastern Sudan**

## **Sudan demands Eritrean mediation with eastern Sudan rebels**

(*ST* – 17<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Asmara**) Eritrean official announced here that Sudan has demanded Eritrea officially to sponsor peace talks with eastern Sudan rebel group.

The Head of Organizational Affairs at the Eritrean ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), Abdella Jabir told the press that Sudanese government requested Eritrea to host negotiations on resolving the East Sudan issue, as well as participate in the Abuja talks on resolving the Darfur issue.

Jabir said that erirea will host the talks between the Sudanese Government of National Unity and the East Sudan Front on resolving the east Sudan issue.

According the official site of the Eritrean ministry of Information Shabait, both parties have agreed to hold a preliminary meeting on reaching agreement on technical issues so that Eritrea as an intermediary could listen to the views of the East Sudan Front and organize a meeting of both parties at the earliest.

Regarding Abuja peace talks on Darfur, the PFDJ official indicated that Eritrea is ready to send a delegation to hear the different points of view of the Sudanese parties over the still unresolved issue, promote a lasting peaceful political solution to the Darfur issue and evaluate Eritrea's possible role thereof.

An Eritrean delegation headed by the chairman of the political commission at the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) Yemani Ghebremeskel visited Sudan from 10 to 15 April. The Head of Organizational Affairs at the PFDJ Abdellah Jabir, and Ambassador Eissa Ahmed Eissa were among the delegation members.

The Eritrean delegation held talks with the First Vice President Salva Kiir. It also met with The Deputy Chairman of the ruling National Congress for political and organizational affairs Nafei Ali Nafei.

Eritrea and Sudan agreed to restore full diplomatic relations between the two countries. Ambassadors from both sides will be accredited soon, according to Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol.

Eritrea and Sudan withdrew their ambassadors and closed their common border in 2002 after Khartoum accused Asmara of supporting an offensive by Sudanese rebels on its territory and both sides traded steady streams of invective.

But following implementation of a January peace deal that ended Sudan's 21-year north-south civil war, Asmara and Khartoum agreed to resolve their differences.

## **Gedharef legislature instigates citizens not to pay traffic levies**

(*AlSahafa* – 18<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Khartoum**) The legislative body in Gedharef State has urged citizens not to pay the taxies levied by the local traffic police on the grounds of illegality.

In a press release yesterday, the head of the Gedharef State Legislative Assembly accused the Ministry of Interior of violating the Interim Constitution that bestows on state governments the rights to draft its own legislature as the local legislature had outlawed these levies while the local police continue to collect.

## **Southern Sudan/ GoSS/ SPLM**

### **Southern Sudan Bahr al-Jabal State changes name**

(*Juba Post/ST* – 15<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Juba**) Members of Bahr al-Jabal State legislative assembly have resolved to change the name of Bahr al-Jabal State to Central Equatoria State, the Juba Post reported.

The resolution was read by Esther Awate during the sitting No 39 of Bahr al-Jabal legislative assembly on April 6. The motion for the change of the name was raised in January by Nehemiah Lasu Sei and seconded by three members of the Assembly, two representing the SPLM and one representing the South Sudan United Democratic Salvation Front (UDSF).

Sei said the name of Bahr al-Jabal, by which the state is currently officially known and addressed, was never approved by the citizens of the state.

Furthermore, he said, the name had negative connotations relating to the slave trade practised in southern Sudan during the 16th century.

"The change will answer many questions raised by the citizens about the legality of our state's name and the new name is very fitting considering our environment and our historic connections with our sister states of Eastern and Western Equatoria", he added.

The Assembly members noted that the state is part and parcel of the equatorial zone, which stretches from the Lowii river in eastern Kapoeta to the Bo river in Tambura, Western Equatoria State, from which the name Equatoria derives.

"The name Bahr al-Jabal did not reflect the historical identity of Greater Equatoria and is not consistent with the name of our two sister states", Ms Awate said.

She said the assembly appreciated the role of the people in pointing out this inconsistency and their interest in "restoring dignity".

## **Other Developments**

### **Chopper probe team to hand over final report to the President of the Republic**

(*AlSahafa* – 18<sup>th</sup> Apr. **Khartoum**) The committee investigating the chopper crash that killed late Dr. Garang will present its final report to President Bashir later today.

The official spokesperson for the committee says the report that will be presented today to the President of the Republic annexes the observations by the Ugandan team.

Siraj-el-deen Hamid, the spokesperson, promised to host a press briefing tomorrow to release the contents of the report to the public.