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(By Public Information Office)

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HIGHLIGHTS:

UN

WHO reports 14,000 cases of infection by meningitis and cholera in southern Sudan

(*AlRai AlAam* – 3rd May, **Khartoum**) Reported cases of cholera since 1st January to 7th April this year have reached 11m,446, 301 of them fatal, says Malik Ma'moun, an official at the WHO's department of epidemics.

The WHO official further said that 2,828 cases of meningitis were reported between December 2005 to 16th April, 255 of them fatal.

The WHO official told a press briefing yesterday that the health situation in southern Sudan is deteriorating and called for a clear health strategy.

He noted that cholera was reported in Yei in February last year and spread to Juba as a result of the movement of citizens. He said that UN health assistance helped curb the spread of the disease.

He also pointed out that the rates of infection are not all that high and campaigns must be launched to inform the people of how to prevent the infection. He pointed out that meningitis is concentrated in Bahr-el-Ghazal and northern Warab and that vaccination campaigns have helped reduce infection.

CPA

First batch of Sudanese refugees back home from Uganda

(*ST* – 2nd May, **Geneva**) The first convoy of 160 Sudanese refugees in Uganda repatriating to South Sudan left Tuesday from the northern district of Moyo to Kadjo Keji, some 30 kilometres north of the Ugandan border.

From now until the rainy season starts in June - when the roads become impassable - UNHCR plans to help 160 refugees a day return home to their areas of origin.

So far, 27,000 of the some 174,000 Sudanese refugees in Uganda have registered to repatriate, said UNHCR spokesperson Jennifer Pagonis.

In preparation for the return, representatives from Sudanese communities and local authorities in the return areas came to Uganda in mid-April on a "come-and-inform visit" to tell refugee leaders what they could expect back home.

Last week, UNHCR sent 13 refugee leaders on a two-day "go-and-see visit" to South Sudan, where they saw for themselves the health, education and water conditions in the area. After also talking with the local population in Kajo Keji area, refugee leaders returned to the refugee settlements in Moyo to tell refugees about their findings so they could make their own decision about returning.

There are still 350,000 Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries and some 4 million internally displaced in Sudan itself. Since UNHCR started voluntary repatriations in

December 2005, some 3,000 refugees have returned from neighbouring countries to South Sudan.

GoNU

Deng Alor calls on northern Sudan to stand against secessionist plans of the NCP

(*AlAyaam* – 3rd May. **Khartoum**) Minister for Cabinet Affairs, Deng Alor, said the National Congress Party bears the major responsibility for working towards making unity an attractive option and to prepare a conducive political platform and eliminate racist tendencies and religious bias.

He confirmed SPLM commitment to its principles advocating democracy, political pluralism, justice and equality.

Speaking exclusively to *AlAyaam* yesterday, the minister said that the SPLM feels there has been no change in the perceptions of the people concerning classification of citizens in Sudan into southerner, northerner, Christian and Muslim.

He said some political parties still adhere to these concepts and regard the SPLM as representative of “Africans”. He said these northern political parties have not managed to break the trend set by the National Congress Party and the political climate in the north and are facing difficulties that have slackened the pace of the SPLM in the north.

He made mention of the simple majority the NCP wields in the legislature and the executive and of its intentional marginalisation of the SPLM by operating as though the SPLM is not its partner in the GoNU.

“We at the SPLM have the feeling that our partnership with the NCP will not progress ahead especially since the NCP is suspicious of the intentions of the SPLM and tries to monopolize power and looks forward to winning the forthcoming elections even if that would be at the expense of the unity of the country”, said Alor. He also said that the NCP plans to throw its weight behind the secession option because it feels that southern Sudan is a threat to its Islamic program.

Minister Alor called on the people of northern Sudan to stand against the NCP’s plans and to safeguard the country’s unity.

Uganda defence minister arrives in Khartoum

(*Khartoum Monitor* – 3rd May. **Khartoum**) Uganda’s defence minister Amama Mbabazi arrived in Khartoum last night at the head of a high level military delegation.

During the visit, he will hold discussions with Sudanese government officials on how to continue the fight against the Lord's Resistance Army to the renewal of the joint military protocol that allows the Uganda army to pursue the Lord's Resistance Army into Sudanese territory.

Darfur/ Abuja talks/ Chad

Authorities report sighting three foreign fighter aircrafts hovering over South Darfur

(*AIRai AlAam/SMC* – 3rd May, **Khartoum**) For the second time in less than a week, foreign fighter planes have been sighted over Raheed el-Burdi in South Darfur.

Sources told the SMC that two aircraft - a Mirage and a Phantom – were sighted flying over the area last Sunday. The issue, the sources say, was reported to the concerned authorities.

It is worth noting that similar sightings were reported last week of two Mirage fighter aircrafts.

AU Commission terminates Chad's mediation on Darfur

(*Khartoum Monitor/SUNA* – 3rd May, **Khartoum**) The AU Commission has terminated the Chadian mediation over Darfur.

SUNA has learnt that the government of Sudan has received a formal notification from the AU to that extent based on a request presented to the AU earlier.

The AU Commission has also withdrawn Chadian military observers from Darfur.

Sudan's Bashir assures US's Bush he wants Darfur peace deal

(*ST* – 2nd May, **Khartoum**) Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir assured his US counterpart George W. Bush that he was determined to reach an agreement to end the three-year-old conflict in Darfur, the official SUNA news agency reported Tuesday.

Bashir received a telephone call from Bush, who expressed his concern over the situation in the western Sudanese region amid a push by Washington to broker a deal with rebels at peace talks in Nigeria.

"President Bashir reiterated the national unity government's commitment and determination to reach a peace agreement and achieve stability in Darfur," the news agency said.

Negotiators from the Sudanese government and the two Darfur rebel groups face a Tuesday night deadline to reach a deal after African Union mediators gave the rebels a two-day extension.

Washington, which has accused Khartoum and its allied Janjaweed militia of genocide against non-Arab minority groups in Darfur, announced Monday it was sending Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick to the talks in Abuja.

Khartoum has said it is ready to sign the draft peace agreement submitted to the warring parties but rebel leaders have expressed misgivings about the proposals for sharing wealth and power between the central and regional governments.

UN must back any Darfur peace deal - Chad's FM

(*Reuters/ST* – 2nd May, **N'Djamena**) A peace deal in Sudan's Darfur region would help stem the flow of rebels and refugees over the border into Chad but must be enforced by a strong U.N. peacekeeping mission, Chad's foreign minister said on Tuesday.

Chad is holding an election on Wednesday expected to re-elect President Idriss Deby for a third five-year term. But its security forces are keeping a wary eye on the eastern border with Sudan from where rebels who raided the Chadian capital N'Djamena last month are threatening attacks to disrupt the polls.

Deby accuses neighbour Sudan of backing his rebel opponents from Darfur, where ethnic and political conflict has raged since 2003 but the U.S. government put pressure on Tuesday on the warring Darfur parties to strike a peace deal.

Chadian Foreign Minister Ahmat Allam-Mi said an accord would improve security for his country, which houses more than 200,000 Darfur refugees.

"We want peace in Darfur, first of all for ourselves, for the interests of Chad and our people," he told Reuters in an interview in N'Djamena.

"Once peace has been restored in Darfur, you can be sure that the immediate consequence will be peace on Chad's frontiers," he added.

Although Khartoum denies helping the anti-Deby rebels, Deby accuses Sudan's Arab government of trying to "export" the conflict in Darfur to extend Islamic fundamentalism to Sub-Saharan Africa.

"Sudan will not stop attacking us as long as the crisis in Darfur is not resolved," Allam-Mi said.

He repeated a call by Deby this year for the U.N. to impose peace and strengthen and take over an African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur, where tens of thousands have been killed and more than 2 million forced from their homes since 2003.

"The execution of a peace deal cannot be carried out without the support of U.N. forces," the Chadian minister said.

Darfur Mediators extend deadline for more 24 h, AU Nguesso to Abuja

(*ST* – 2nd May, **Abuja**) The African Union's mediation at the Abuja negotiations on Darfur has given the parties 24 hours more, while the Chairman of African Union and the head of AU executive are heading to Abuja.

According to the official SUNA, the AU mediation extended the deadline of Darfur peace talks for more 24 hours to give regional and international efforts more time to consult the Sudanese parties in the negotiations.

While, US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick arrived in Abuja Tuesday, SUNA reported that President of Congo and Chairman of the African Union Denis Sassou-Nguesso and Chairperson of the African Union Commission Alpha Omer Konare are due in Abuja Tuesday as part of the African concern with the negotiations.

Zoellick immediately entered in intensive meetings with the African mediation and the parties to the negotiations. The US official is expected to meet the chairman of the government side in the negotiations, Dr. Magzoub Al-Khalifa, Tuesday.

Official source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the American concern and the arrival of the US Deputy Secretary of State in Abuja affirms the concern of the international community to find a speedy solution to Darfur problem and convince the armed movements to accept the African agreement document.

Government offensive raises fears of attack on Darfur's Gereida

(*IRIN* – 2nd May, **Nairobi**) Observers fear the town of Gereida, which provides refuge to an estimated 90,000 displaced persons, might come under siege following a series of attacks on rebel-controlled villages in South Darfur.

"We have received unconfirmed, unilateral reports that there might be an attack on Gereida town - meaning that the town could be under fire - if we do not take immediate steps," said Gemmo Lodesani, the United Nations deputy humanitarian coordinator in Sudan, by telephone on Tuesday.

"Gereida was under siege before, and it is under siege even more today, he added." "If an attack occurs, the price to be paid by civilians protected at the moment in Gereida would be very, very high."

Leaders in displaced communities said more than 300 villages around Gereida have been abandoned because of the threat of attack since November 2005. Today, according to the international nongovernmental organisation Oxfam, Gereida and the surrounding camps are home to around 90,000 displaced people, and the figure is growing every day.

According to United Nations sources, on 24 April, the Sudanese government used an Antonov plane and two helicopter gunships to attack the rebel-controlled village of Joghana, southeast of Gereida, which displaced an additional 25,000 people. Earlier, on 16 April, government forces attacked and retook the rebel-controlled town of Donkey Dreisa, 50km north of Gereida. On 21 April, Janjaweed militia and government forces jointly attacked Dito town, 25km northeast of Gereida.

"If the Sudanese government continues this offensive, then Gereida is likely to be the next target," said Peter Takirambudde, Africa director of Human Rights Watch on 25 April. "Civilians there - particularly those who share the ethnicity of the rebel groups - could be in grave danger."

The current offensive exacerbates the already dire situation for many civilians across Darfur. "We put the figure of newly displaced over the past three months or so at 250,000 people," Lodesani told reporters on Monday. As a result of the violence in the region, he said, the number of "households that can take care of themselves" dropped from 40 percent to 20 percent. Lodesani said all parties in Darfur were violating international human rights laws and international humanitarian law.

Interfactional skirmishes were also complicating the situation. Fighting between two factions of the rebel Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) intensified near Shangil Tobayi and Tawilla in North Darfur during the second half of April, displacing thousands. One observer said both factions used "Janjaweed-style violence", referring to notorious Arab militias used by the Sudanese government during counter-insurgency operations in Darfur. Unconfirmed reports described scenes of mass rape, beatings and summary executions.

Meanwhile, Jan Pronk, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's special representative for Sudan, called on the SLA to stop attacks on humanitarian workers in Darfur. Over the past few weeks, aid workers have come under continuous attacks and harassment by armed groups in the Shangil Tobayi, Tawilla and Kutum areas of North Darfur, with several reports indicating that SLA factions were behind the attacks.

"Armed robbery and hijacking have endangered humanitarian workers assisting over 450,000 vulnerable people living in the area," Pronk said in a statement. "Moreover, credible information points to the use of hijacked vehicles for military purposes by these armed groups. This is unacceptable and contrary to international humanitarian law."

"Unless these attacks and harassment stop immediately, the UN and its partners will be obliged to suspend all relief assistance to this particular area till effective safety for humanitarian personnel and assets is guaranteed," the statement said.

Lodesani said he hoped a peace deal between the rebels and the Sudanese government would reduce the tensions and bring down the level of violence. The African Union (AU), which is mediating the peace talks in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, extended the April 30 deadline of the negotiations by 48 hours after rebels expressed "reservations" about the draft comprehensive agreement and refused to sign it.

Residents flee N'djamena as election day looms

(*IRIN* – 2nd May, N'Djamena) As election officials report that everything is in place for Wednesday's presidential poll, fears of more rebel attacks are sending residents of the Chad capital N'djamena over the river into neighbouring Cameroon.

"We are going to put ourselves into a safe haven for now. The war could restart at any moment," said a French citizen and N'djamena resident waiting in the line at the Ngueli Bridge that links N'djamena's suburbs to Cameroon.

Residents fear a rerun of a rebel dawn attack on the capital last month that left 300 dead and injured. Those with enough money to pay for transport and lodging in Cameroon, or with family connections over the border, have been flooding into northern Cameroon since the weekend, Chadian customs officials told IRIN.

Chadians left behind in the world's fifth poorest country, according to the UN, are fearful about what election day will bring. "Only God knows what will happen tomorrow. Those of us who have nowhere else to go are crossing our fingers and waiting," said Paul Nguirayo, who has no job and no money.

The incumbent President Idriss Deby has ignored pleas from Chad's civil opposition, the influential regional organisation the African Union, US government, and the Catholic Church to postpone Wednesday's election until stability can be guaranteed.

"All the preparations are in place for the election to proceed without problems. We have distributed all the materials, including in those areas that were held by rebels. The government has told us that security will be assured," said Ahmat Mahamat Bahir, president of the government's National Electoral Commission on Tuesday.

According to the electoral commission 11,800 polling stations have been set up throughout Chad's vast territory about three times the size of France to accommodate 5.8 million

registered voters. In the last national election in June 2005 just 30 percent of Chadians turned out to vote.

Chad's civil opposition has boycotted the election to protest Deby's changing of the constitutional term limit, saying he is trying to install himself for life.

Opposition parties have kept out of the spotlight during the last week of campaigning, although their protest slogan "dialogue first, elections after" has been promoted on t-shirts and stickers seen around the capital.

"The government regrets that these parties have taken this partisan position and invites it to not interfere now in the political debate," said government spokesman Hourmadki Moussa Doumgor.

Running against Deby are two serving government officials aligned with pro-Deby parties, Pahimi Padacke Albert, the agriculture minister and Mahamat Abdoulaye, the minister for decentralisation. Kassire Coumakoye, a former prime minister under Deby between 1993 and 1995, has also thrown his hat into the ring.

The only opposition candidate fielded, Brahim Koulamallah, is from the little-known African Socialist Movement.

The election will take place against the backdrop of growing instability in Chad's eastern provinces as militia groups fill a power vacuum, displacing Chadians from their villages and threatening the more than quarter of a million Sudanese and Central Africa Republic refugees sheltering there.

Southern Sudan/GoSS/SPLM/A

SPLM accuses DRC of sympathising with the Lord's Resistance Army

(*AlSahafa* – 3rd May. **Khartoum**) The SPLA has accused the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo of sympathizing with the Lord's Resistance Army rebels who have taken refuge inside the DRC.

Bior Ajiang, SPLA official spokesman, said the SPLA intends to contact the government in Kinshasa and ask them not to allow Lord's Resistance Army elements a place of refuge in the DRC.

He said that the SPLA will declare war against the Lord's Resistance Army should current efforts by the Vice-President of the GoSS to bring the Lord's Resistance Army to talk with Kampala fail.

"But they will be subject to SPLA fire whenever we find them because they attack innocent civilians," said the SPLA spokesman.

The spokesman said that it seems that the government in Kinshasa is sympathising with the Lord's Resistance Army despite the fact that the DRC enjoys good relations with the Sudan. He pointed out that it may seem that the DRC sympathy is based on some grudge it has against the Uganda government.

He pointed out that the SPLA alongside the SAF could wipe out the Lord's Resistance Army should they have no other option.

He also revealed that the Ugandan forces pursuing the Lord's Resistance Army are now based in Lasu near Juba and carrying out combing operations along the western bank of the Nile in search for Lord's Resistance Army elements.

On the other hand, the SPLA spokesman said that the SAF is giving a free hand to the SSDF faction that split from mainstream SSDF led by Paulino Matib. This, he said, makes the SPLA classify these forces as enemy forces.

Sudan's SPLA soldiers beat two Western Equatoria ministers

(*ST* – 2nd May, **Juba**) Two regional ministers from southern Sudan Western Equatoria have been harassed and beaten by soldiers of Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The incident happened when the travelling ministers were arrested at a checkpoint by SPLA soldiers.

The incident involved Western Equatoria State (WES) ministers of Finance and Agriculture at Rasulu in the border areas between Western Equatoria and Central Equatoria states as they travelled to Yei from Maridi.

The Western Equatoria minister of Finance, John Dominic Dabi and the minister of Agriculture Dr. Jackson Zowai, were travelling to Juba via road from Maridi to Yei when they arrived at Rasulu junction at 4:00 p.m., 30 April 2006, and their car was stopped at a checkpoint said to be manned by some SPLA soldiers from the Dinka ethnic group.

The soldiers refused to open the gate to allow the ministers and their support staff to pass through and proceed.

After more than 20 minutes one of the ministers who came out of the car first, Dr. Jackson Zowai then asked if their own driver could not open the gate so that they can continue with their journey. But the SPLA soldiers cocked their guns and said anybody who opens the gate will be shot dead.

As Dabi, then got off the car, unknown number of the SPLA soldiers are then said to have landed on him with countless blows.

After this tense incident the ministers and their support staff were allowed to continue with their journey. They arrived in Yei and reported the incident to the military authorities there but they were advised to go and report the incident to the SPLA soldiers' Division commander, CDR Richard Babiro who was said to be in Lanya on the way to Juba, but when they arrived Lanya CDR Richard Babiro was said to have gone back to Yei, a story the ministers' company hardly believed.

The ministers have now arrived Juba and have been to the SPLA Army Headquarters to report the incident and they are seeking disciplinary action against the soldiers who can beat one of their own SPLM minister and obstruct ministers from free movement and threaten civilian lives.

The case has already been reported to Major Gen Obute Marmur and Major Gen Malauul Majok and the response of these commanders is being awaited. Also, the ministers on

Tuesday 2 May have written an official complain to Major Gen. Oyai Deng Ajak Chief of Staff for the SPLA.

During the war, some SPLA soldiers were well known for brutality and mistreatment of civilians. "To continue with the same culture into a peaceful Southern Sudan under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement cannot be tolerated", observers said.

Under normal conditions, checking vehicles at check points are the responsibility of Police Officers. "As the soldiers at Rasulu check point continue to harass and humiliate people including senior staff of Western Equatoria State", the ministers strongly recommend that SPLA leadership take appropriate action to bring the soldiers to justice to avoid future events of similar kind, said an informed source.

Eastern Sudan

Bashir supports Eritrean mediation with Eastern Sudan rebels

(*ST* – 2nd May **Khartoum**) President Omar al-Bashir, has announced Sudan's support for Eritrea's initiatives to begin negotiations with the rebel Eastern Front to achieve a peaceful resolution to the eastern Sudanese problem.

During his meeting with the personal envoy of the Eritrean president, Abdallah Jabir, who is also in charge of organizational affairs of the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) in Eritrea, Al-Bashir announced the Sudanese government's support and solidarity with the Eritrean government's efforts to begin eastern talks between the Sudanese government and Eastern Front.

Regarding the beginning of the eastern talks, the Eritrean official stressed that the talks will begin within this month, adding that the coming days will witness holding of meeting in Asmara between the Sudanese government and Eastern Sudan rebels to discuss the process and specific dates for the beginning of talks between the two sides.

Jabir told the press "We requested that the president oversee and support the talks in order to realize the peace agreement soon. The president welcomed and supported this and affirmed his readiness to support the process".

He also said that the negotiations will begin this month but the procedures of the negotiations will begin this week. He further said no date was fixed yet, but Eastern Front was consulted on the issue and it gave its view in writing on the procedures.

The Eritrean envoy affirmed that his government has informed the Eastern Front on arrangements for the beginning of the talks.

SAF regains control of 6 vehicles looted by the JEM on the Port Sudan highway

(*AlAyaam* – 3rd May. **Khartoum**) The JEM has looted vehicles on the Khartoum-Port Sudan highway between Hadaliya and Hamdam and is said to have taken off with a number of vehicles.

Reports also say that they have abducted some officials of Kassala State.

A SAF detach later recaptured these cars.