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(By Public Information Office)

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Highlights

UN/ Agencies

[UN Information Director visits Sudan Tribune Newspaper](#)

(ST) As part of his visit to the media institutions and agencies, UN Information Director, Mr. Khaled Mansour, paid a visit to Sudan Tribune Newspaper on Thursday where he was acquainted with the problems facing the paper, besides acknowledging requirements needed from the UN in order to open up channels of dealing in all media fields.

Mr. Mansour commended the Sudan Tribune Newspaper, saying it is “one of the highly distinguished English newspapers in covering local and international news in clear-cut and distinguished way. He also lauded the paper’s clear and objective line, besides the efforts being exerted to develop it.

During his meeting with the Sudan Tribune Editorial Advisor, Raja Elnuwairi, Mr. Mansour pledged to cooperate with all media institutions and UNMIS in order to present an integrated media message.

[Marking International Day, top UN officials urge greater investments in women](#)

8 March 2008 – Top United Nations officials commemorated this year's International Women's Day by calling on countries to invest more in women and girls, warning that failing to do so will undermine efforts to achieve global development targets.

In his message for the Day, Secretary-General drew attention to the “serious” gap between policy and practice in many countries when it comes to gender equality, as reflected in a lack of resources and insufficient budgetary allocations.

“This failure of funding undermines not only our endeavours for gender equality and women's empowerment as such; it also holds back our efforts to reach all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),” he said, referring to the global pledges to slash poverty and other social ills, all by 2015.

“As we know from long and indisputable experience, investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect on productivity and sustained economic growth,” he added, noting that no measure is more important in advancing education and health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS, or as likely to improve nutrition, or reduce infant and maternal mortality.

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), agreed that “if we want to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, we need more investments in women and girls.

“Whether we are looking at it from a human rights, political or economic point of view, the conclusion is the same: It makes sense to invest in women. The returns are high for women themselves and for the world at large,” she said.

However, not only were investments still not being made to the extent they should be, they were actually declining in some areas, such as maternal health and family planning.

“Improving women's well-being cannot be accomplished without improving their health, particularly their reproductive health,” she stressed, noting that by ensuring universal access to reproductive health, it will be possible to reduce poverty, reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, and meet the need for family planning.

“By investing in women's reproductive health and well-being, we will stand a better chance of achieving the MDGs and making gender equality a reality.”

Part of the struggle for women's rights and gender equality is the urgent need to end violence against women in all of its forms, a point highlighted by the acting Executive Director of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), who drew attention to the UN campaign launched by the Secretary-General on 25 February, UNiTE to End Violence against Women.

“The campaign will add value and visibility to the efforts that Governments, women's and other civil society organizations, UN and donor partners are making to combat gender-based violence and send the message that ending violence against women stands on par with other critical development goals,” said Joanne Sandler.

She added that it also comes at a time when the world's leaders are renewing their commitment to financing for all national development goals, including the MDGs.

“Ending violence against women was a missing indicator in the MDGs, owing to the lack of comparable data,” she stated. “It is encouraging, therefore, that the United Nations has also committed to assist countries in efforts to generate the data needed to measure the extent of violence against women and girls.

“Together with proven evidence of what works and the financial and technical resources needed to support countries to meet the implementation challenge, there may indeed be an end in sight to the pandemic of violence against women and girls ? and genuine progress on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment,” Ms. Sandler said.

From Afghanistan to Sudan, women around the world are celebrating the Day through events at the local and national levels. In the strife-torn Sudanese region of Darfur, staff of the new African Union-UN mission there (UNAMID) handed out T-shirts and posters to women in the central market in El Fasher, and held a procession along with Sudanese female police officers and local residents.

Hundreds of women in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar marched for peace, while their sisters in the capital gathered in Kabul's women's garden to mark the Day with a

UN agency fair, which included films and a performance by child artists. Female counsellors from UN agencies were also on hand to provide advice on health, education and social issues facing the country's women.

[UN Chief hails creation of group backing Darfur Hybrid Force \(Sudan Vision\)](#)

(UNITED NATIONS) — UN chief Ban Ki-moon on Thursday hailed the creation of an international group to back the deployment of the joint UN-African Union peace force in Sudan's Darfur region and urged member states to contribute needed assets. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is shouted by pro-Sudanese government women upon his arrival in the north Darfur capital of El Fasher, Sudan Wednesday Sept. 5, 2007. (AP)He welcomed the establishment of "Friends of Unamid," a reference to the joint UN-AU peacekeeping force. The group's first meeting was convened Thursday in New York by the United States and Canada.

In a statement released by his press office, the secretary-general "urges all Unamid troop and police contributors to expedite the deployment of the units and assets that they have pledged to the operation."

He lauded Washington's decision to help accelerate the deployment by providing 100 million dollars to African troop contributing countries for training and equipping military units which have been pledged for Unamid.

Ban also urged member states "to provide the outstanding enabling units, including air assets, in order to permit Unamid to achieve full operating capability."

Unamid still lacks crucial components, including a ground transport unit, 18 transport helicopters and six light tactical helicopters meant to provide air mobility and firepower to protect civilians and peacekeepers.

The force is to total 26,000 members protecting the civilian population of a region the size of France and which has been beset by civil war between ethnic minority rebels and the Arab-dominated government.

Meanwhile, Ban Ki-moon is to travel to Senegal next week to attend a mediation meeting between the leaders of Chad and Sudan as well as a summit of the Organization of the Islamic conference (OIC), his press office said Friday.

Ban will make the visit to Dakar at the invitation of Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, who is to chair the reconciliation meeting between Chadian President Idriss Deby and his Sudanese counterpart Omar al-Bashir.

That meeting, which aims to mend strained relations between Ndjamen and Khartoum, is to take place on the eve of the OIC summit.

On Friday Wade announced in Paris that neighbors Chad and Sudan would sign an agreement to end their long-running conflict in Dakar next week.

Previous Chadian-Sudanese accords, sponsored in particular by Libya, have failed to be implemented.

Chad and Sudan routinely accuse each other of aggression and of supporting each other's rebel movements.

GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

[NCP leader Abdullah Safi Al-Nur: Minni Minnawi should exercise his powers on the ground in Darfur and keep away from opposition](#)

(Al-Khartoum) NCP leader and member of GoS team for negotiations with Darfur Movements, Lt. Gen. Abdullah Safi Al-Nour, has strongly defended the policies pursued by his party to resolve Darfur issue.

Reacting to the Senior Presidential Assistant Minni Minnawi's statements in America to the effect that NCP was not respecting Abuja Agreement, he said Minnawi, being party to the GoNU, should not take the side of the opposition, he should exercise the powers granted to him by the agreement so that Darfur people feel that there was a peace agreement.

[Sudanese Al-Bashir to visit United Arab Emirates on Sunday](#)

(ST) March 8, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — President Omer Hassan al-Bashir will leave Sunday for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on a three-day visit on the invitation of President, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed.

The relations between Sudan and the United Arab Emirates are witnessing a major progress in the political and economic fields, a matter which is being reflected in the big increase in the UAE investments in Sudan and the trade exchange between the two countries.

The UAE investments in Sudan witnessed a remarkable leap in the past six years through establishment of several projects in the agricultural, building industry, communication, financial, banking and other fields.

Al-Bashir will be accompanied by a high-level delegation.

The Secretary General of the Supreme Investment Council, Ambassador Ahmed Mahjoub, said that the President of the Republic has given a directive to the council to give much concern and facilitation to the UAE investments in Sudan.

Relations between UAE and Sudan improved significantly in late 90's after a period of tension between the two countries.

The United Arab Emirates expelled the Sudanese ambassador in Abu Dhabi and six other Sudanese diplomats in 1992, the first move of its kind in the history of the oil rich country.

The UAE has refused subsequent request to restore full diplomatic relationship. In 1999 Sudan and the UAE agreed to restore their diplomatic ties to ambassador level.

[Sudan demands compensation for incursion by French troops](#)

(ST) March 8, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — The Sudanese government told a visiting delegation from the European Union (EU) that Khartoum expects reparations for the losses incurred after French troops strayed across the Sudanese border from Chad.

The EU delegation arrived in Khartoum on board two military planes to receive the body of the French soldier who was killed by Sudanese troops after an exchange of fire between the two sides.

The head of the protocol division in the Sudanese Foreign ministry Al-Sadek Al-Makli said that the delegation promised to review a report prepared by Khartoum containing an assessment of the damages caused by the French troops to determine the appropriate compensation.

The body of the French peacekeeper was repatriated Friday after a ceremony with full military honors at Khartoum airport.

The soldier, identified by France as a member of its special forces, was reported missing when at least one vehicle from the European Union peacekeeping mission in Chad, known as EUFOR, crossed into Sudan on Monday.

An exchange of fire followed in which a Sudanese soldier and civilian were killed and another French soldier was wounded, but details of the incident are sketchy.

The commander of the EU's mission to Chad, Lieutenant General Patrick Nash, has expressed regret for the troops "accidentally" crossing the remote unmarked border.

But the French president Nicolas Sarkozy on Friday accused Sudanese troops of using "disproportionate force".

The defense ministry in Paris said the soldiers who strayed across the border encountered a Sudanese checkpoint and quickly declared their identity, but were fired on without warning.

Al-Makli said that the EU delegation expressed their gratitude for the cooperation received from the Sudanese government.

The Sudanese official said that his government has "waived its right under international law to perform an autopsy on the soldier for humanitarian reasons". But he said that an external examination of the soldier's remains was made for identification purposes.

The 14-nation EUFOR mission of 3,700 troops began deploying to Chad and the Central African Republic last month after a delay caused by a rebel assault on the Chadian capital.

Of that total, 2,000 will be French troops. So far some 700 have been deployed as the force builds up its strength.

[Sarkozy Condemns Sudan in soldier Death](#)

(Sudanese online) PARIS (AP) — French President Nicolas Sarkozy condemned Sudan on Friday, saying it used "disproportionate force" against a French peacekeeper who was fatally shot by Sudanese troops this week.

The peacekeeper, Sgt. Gilles Polin, went missing Monday after he and another member of France's special forces were shot at when they strayed across the Sudanese border from Chad. The second soldier escaped with light injuries.

In a statement, Sarkozy spokesman David Martinon said the French leader "condemned with the utmost firmness the use of deliberate and disproportionate force against soldiers ... who were fulfilling their mission of humanitarian protection."

The two peacekeepers were part of a European peacekeeping force deployed in Chad and the neighboring Central African Republic to protect uprooted people and aid workers on the borders of Sudan's war-torn Darfur province.

The statement said Sarkozy "has requested Sudanese authorities take all necessary measures so that this does not happen again."

Polin's remains were formally identified Friday and flown to Paris from the Sudanese capital, Khartoum.

In a statement, French Defense Minister Herve Morin said the two soldiers had stopped at a Sudanese checkpoint after inadvertently crossing the border when they were fired on.

"At no point did the two French soldiers show hostility or aggressiveness," Morin said.

Sudan has been hostile to the peacekeeping mission being deployed near Darfur. The mission now includes about 700 soldiers, mostly French, Irish and Swedes, and is planned to increase to 3,800 from at least 14 countries.

The mission has been delayed by logistical problems and recent fighting in Chad.

[Sudan re-imposes censorship on newspapers](#)

(Sudanese online) KHARTOUM (Reuters) - Sudanese authorities have re-imposed daily censorship of newspapers after they published reports accusing the government of backing Chadian rebels, journalists and a security official said on Thursday.

Journalists and local human rights activists criticized the move, which they said had begun nearly three weeks ago after rebels stormed the Chadian capital N'Djamena in a failed attempt to topple President Idriss Deby.

Journalists said security agents visit the newspapers every evening and take out what they deem as sensitive material. The censorship has further strained already-tense relations between the government and privately owned newspapers.

The security official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters the censorship was "temporary."

Sudan eased press censorship after a new constitution put in place at the end of a two-decade civil war between the north and south in 2005 guaranteed freedom of the press.

But authorities confiscate papers sporadically and there have been reports of journalists coming under pressure over sensitive issues.

"Censorship has been re-imposed since the crisis of Chad," Mohamed Latif, a prominent writer in the privately owned daily Al-Sudani, told Reuters. "Whenever the government is in a political predicament, it imposes censorship."

Chad accused Khartoum of backing the rebels. The Sudanese government denies this and accuses Deby of supporting rebels in the war-torn region of Darfur in western Sudan.

Authorities prevented opposition newspaper al-Rai al-Shaab from being published on February 14 for trying to print columns accusing the government of backing Chadian rebels.

Shortly afterwards, security agents summoned editors of five newspapers for questioning over articles about changes in the upper-level positions of the police force. The summons prompted street protests by dozens of journalists.

Ahmed Khalifa, editor of Al-Watan newspaper and among those summoned, said papers now risked confiscation if they go to print without government approval.

The security official said newspapers have violated a deal with the government whereby censorship stopped as long as journalists avoided publishing "false information."

"But some newspapers again started to repeat what is being said by foreign sides, like the Chad issue," he said.

Censorship would stop once the justice ministry concludes efforts to reach a deal that will prevent similar incidents in future, he added. The justice ministry was not available for comment.

Faisal ElBagir, co-founder of the group Journalists for Human Rights, said imposing censorship was unconstitutional.

"This censorship should be lifted immediately," he said. "If newspapers commit mistakes, they should take us to the courts."

[Arab League envoy to visit Sudan for talks on Darfur](#)

March 8, 2008 (CAIRO) — Arab League envoy to Sudan is expected to arrive in Khartoum on Sunday for talks with Sudanese officials over peace process in the country and Darfur humanitarian situation

Salah Halima will discuss mainly during his visit the outcome of Arab League Conference on humanitarian situation in Darfur held last October in the Sudanese capital.

He further will determine the schedules for meetings of committees on the follow-up implementation of the conference's resolutions

Further the Arab League envoy would visit the three Darfur States to find out the latest developments there; also he will visit other regions in the Sudan during the current visit.

Halima said he would meet during the visit with senior Sudanese officials and contacts with all concerned Sudanese peace file, whether in Darfur or the south or the east.

He pointed out that he would meet envoys of the United Nations and the African Union to Sudan to coordinate on the course of the peace process in the country

[Vice - President to Address Forum on Sudanese - European Relations](#)

Khartoum, Mar. 8 (SUNA)- Vice - President of the Republic, Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, will address Monday at the Friendship Hall the Forum on the Sudanese - European Relations. The three-day forum would discuss a number of working papers on the historic, economic, political and diplomatic relations between Sudan and Europe, Sudanese and Darfur issues and the American impact on progress of the relations between Sudan and Europe. Meanwhile, the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Ali Al-Saddiq, affirmed the importance of the Sudanese - European relations, especially that the European Union is the biggest donor to Sudan in the field of humanitarian aid and its considerable support to realization of comprehensive peace in south Sudan and ongoing role for achievement of peace in Darfur. He referred to the efforts for normalization of the relations between Sudan and the European Union. Ambassador Al-Saddiq said that the European Union has extended humanitarian support to Darfur as well as assistance to the African Union forces in the region. He pointed out that the relations between Sudan and the African Union are witnessing continuous improvement since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), He said that the year 2006 witnessed effective resumption of the Sudanese - European dialogue through convocation of monthly dialogue meetings, adding that preparation is being made to continue the dialogue with the European Union. Ambassador Al-Saddiq said that Britain is giving much concern to Darfur issue, adding that Britain has repeatedly appreciated the efforts of Sudan government in implementing the Security Council resolutions in Darfur

[Defence Minister: all rebel areas will be SAF target \(Al-Sahafa\)](#)

(Al-Sahafa) Sudanese Minister of Defence, Lt. Gen. Abdul Rahim Mohamed Hussein, said all the areas where there were rebels would be SAF target until fully recaptured.

On the other hand, he said JIUs training was progressing but he said crisis over Abyei was caused by SPLM failure to implement part of agreement dealing with security arrangements. He expected that SPLA's assembly and withdrawal of its forces from the areas would contribute towards peace and peaceful co-existence.

He has described Abdul Wahid's opening of an office in Israel as 'suicidal step'. "Nur is now without goal or cause," he added.

GoSS

[\(ST\) LRA not responsible for Sudan's Equatoria attacks – report](#)

March 8, 2008 (JUBA) — In a report presented to the Chief Mediator of the Ugandan peace talks, Dr. Riek Machar Teny, the leader of the Cessation of Hostilities Monitoring Team (CHMT) that monitors the cessation of hostilities agreement signed since August 26, 2006, between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) said

that LRA forces were not responsible for this year's attacks carried out in various parts of Greater Equatoria region in Southern Sudan

SPLA Major General Wilson Deng Wek issued the statement after he, accompanied by his team, carried out investigations into last month's attacks on the civil population in Kajo-Keji County in Central Equatoria state by unknown gun men that left dozens of people dead and wounded.

General Deng's monitoring team is currently composed of representatives from the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the Ugandan Popular Defense Forces (UPDF), the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and one representative each from the African Union observer countries.

The team also spent one week on a fact-finding mission in Eastern Equatoria state where he discussed the general security situation with Chiefs and representatives of returnees in the state, particularly in Magwi County, following allegations in the media that hundreds of LRA forces moved back into the County from Rikwangba Assembly Area in Western Equatoria state.

Among the Bumas and Payams the team visited included Nimule, Opari, Jebeleen, Palataka, Panyikuar and Owinykibul. The local populations in these areas refuted the allegations and told the Monitoring Team that there were no any LRA forces in the areas.

The team also met with the Magwi County administration at the County headquarters in Magwi town who also confirmed that there were no LRA forces present in the County, adding that their County citizens previously displaced by the LRA activities in their respective areas before the Juba peace process were now returning to settle peacefully in their Bumas and Payams.

The local populations in the areas visited by the team, however, complained to the team against who they described as cattle-keepers who were not part of the indigenous populations and caused some problems in the course of their attempt to resettle in the areas.

The local populations also complained about lack of basic services such as clean drinking water in their areas.

The investigation report by the Monitoring Team could not disclose to the media who was responsible for the Kaji-Keji County attacks on the civil population, which strangely coincided with the resumption of the Ugandan peace talks in Juba after several months of adjournment.

In July 2006 when the Ugandan peace talks were launched in Juba, intensive attacks were carried out by unknown group on the civil population in the outskirts of Juba town, particularly around Gumbo areas on the eastern bank of the river Nile almost on daily basis.

The general feeling of the population in Juba was that the LRA forces carried out those deadly attacks, despite the LRA's denial to the accusations, until the SPLA forces encountered the attackers, killing two of them and capturing fifteen others.

Instead, the culprits were identified to be members of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), eight of them identified to be from the SAF Engineering Corps Unit and seven from various units at the former SAF General Headquarters in Juba.

The Kajo-Keji County attacks also triggered accusations and counter-accusations between the LRA and UPDF.

The leader of the LRA peace delegation, Dr. David Matsanga, told the press that the UPDF had made recruitments from communities that speak Acholi, Madi and Teso and organized them under what he called 'Brigade 105' under the command of former LRA officers who defected to the Ugandan government in order to destabilize the area while acting like LRA bush soldiers so that the attacks are blamed on the LRA.

The UPDF denied the LRA accusations, saying it was the LRA forces that carried out the attacks.

The Minister of Internal Affairs in the Ugandan government and head of the government peace delegation, Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda, said the LRA accusations were not acceptable. "We should wait until we hear a final report from the CHMT," he said.

Others speculate that some Southern Sudanese citizens might have organized themselves into bandits to carry out such attacks to loot properties while others suspect some disgruntled SPLA soldiers in those areas of attacks who did not receive salaries for several months.

Earlier during the signing ceremony of the Permanent Ceasefire agreement between the two parties, former President of Mozambique and Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General for the LRA affected areas, Joaquim Chissano, warned the parties to remain vigilant of peace spoilers.

The UN Special Envoy said there are those who may not be happy with the achieved peace in northern Ugandan and may want to spoil it. He said this hard-won peace is for the people of Uganda and they should not allow any body to spoil it.

A Final Peace Agreement is expected to be signed in Juba by both President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Joseph Kony of LRA/M at the end of this month, which will then trigger its implementation process.

[South Sudan census body says facing financial crisis](#)

JUBA, Sudan (Reuters) - The body in charge of a vital census in southern Sudan said on Friday it will face a serious financial crisis unless the central government delivers delayed cash and approves a larger budget.

Isaiah Chol Aruai, chairman of the Southern Sudan Commission for Census, Statistics and Evaluation, told Reuters the national government in Khartoum owed his committee \$7.2 million.

"Even if we were to get the (delayed) \$7.2 million we would still have a deficit gap ... of \$4.5 million," he said.

The census, set to start on April 15 for two weeks, is considered crucial for Sudan's first democratic elections in 2009 after the end of the two-decade civil war between the north and south.

"We need the money now ... If it is delayed beyond March 20 it's already a crisis," Aruai said. The commission will use the funds in part to pay for more field officers more than initially thought, he said.

Operational costs across the vast south with its poor infrastructure and security for the materials and enumerators have also driven the cost of the project up, he said.

KEY PART OF DEAL

The census is a key part of a 2005 peace deal between the north and south, which allowed for a semi-autonomous south ruled by former rebel group Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

The group pulled out of the central government complaining about what they described as the northern partners' lack of transparency over oil revenues as well as the slow funding of the census.

The southern census body said it has enough money to train enumerators on how to count people in scattered villages in the bushes, barracks and nomadic cattle camps.

But Aruai said money to pay for the enumeration itself, and then for data processing, is still missing. "I have raised (the issue) but there's not any commitment," he added.

Around 14,000 enumerators, supervisors and field officers will be needed to carry out the census, the committee's director for census, Adwok Chol, told Reuters. In rural areas each enumerator will count around 150 households and up to 200 in towns, he said.

The war between the north and south, separate from continuing conflict in the Darfur region, left some two million people dead. Four million fled their homes as conflict over religion, ethnicity, ideology and oil raged on

[South Sudan gender policy workshop in Rumbek](#)

(ST) March 7, 2008 (RUMBEEK) — Lakes State has kicked off on Thursday a workshop to examine how efforts should be made to increase the role of women in education and the number of girl children being educated across the south.

"Ninety percent of women are not educated in South Sudan," said Director of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs Anastasia Akujo Zacharia who also said that women are still overlooked for government positions.

Delegations from across the south's ten states have begun arriving. Local chiefs have also been invited.

This workshop is organized by Government of Southern Sudan with support from Norwegian People's Aid. Today all invited guests are flowing back to their own original home state.

Darfur

[SLM spokesperson Al-Tayeb Khamis: Darfur Transitional Authority Minni Minawi fails to manage 23 million pounds it received by SLM from GoNU \(Al-Khartoum\)](#)

(Al-Khartoum) SLM spokesperson, Mr. Al-Tayeb Khamis, has accused Darfur Transitional Authority of mismanaging a sum of 23 million pounds received by the Movement from the central government.

He told the newspaper that the Chairman of the Darfur Transitional Authority should account for this huge amount of money. He said according to the Transitional Authority the money is spent on launching the Authority and supporting students. "This justification is unconvincing," he said.

He said the Authority was misleading the people of Darfur, IDPs and refugees over spending of the amount and accused it of mismanaging public funds.

[SAF launches new air raid on villages at borders with Chad](#)

(Ray Al-Shaab) BBC correspondent at Sudan-Chad border reported Sudanese warplanes having launched new aerial raids on Darfur.

The correspondent said she saw helicopters flying close to borders followed by explosions and plumes of smokes rising from spots believed to be locations of villages.

[Sudan puts Darfur death toll at 10,000 \(Sudanese online\)](#)

A Sudanese senior official claims that the death toll in Darfur conflict is estimated at 10,000, far fewer than the widely reported 200,000.

Sudanese presidential adviser Nafie Ali Nafie, who is currently in Tokyo holding talks with Japanese officials, lashed out at the West for distorting the reality.

"Our estimate is not more than 10,000, quite a different number from 200,000," Nafie said at a press conference in Tokyo on Friday.

The death toll in Darfur is estimated at 200,000, with up to 2.5 million people displaced over five years of violence in the crisis-stricken region.

The conflict began in the arid and impoverished region early in 2003 after ethnic African rebels took up arms against the government.

The rebels say that the region has been neglected by the central government in Khartoum.

[Chinese Official: Chinese Troops are contributing to peace, stability and development in Darfur](#)

Beijing, Mar. 8 (SUNA)-Deputy Director of the Peace Keeping Affairs Office at the Chinese Ministry of National Defence said that the Chinese peace keeping troops in Darfur are contributing to realization of peace and stability in the region. He said that the

major tasks of the Chinese unit in Darfur is to build and rehabilitate roads and bridges, dig water wells and to establish landing ports for UNAMID helicopter planes, explaining that the Chinese unit is currently operating for establishment of a new camp for the hybrid operation in south Darfur that will include UNAMID command and UN troops in Nyala. He said that a Chinese military engineering unit of 140 men was deployed in Nyala city, South Darfur State, adding that another Chinese unit of 175 troops would be sent to Darfur.

[Northern Darfur Government allocates plot of land for UNAMID in El Fasher](#)

(SMC) Northern Darfur state government and UNAMID signed an agreement upon which the first has allocated a piece of land to the latter in Fashir town for accommodation of UNAMID peacekeepers. Minister of physical planning in the state Abdel Shafi Issa told (smc) that the deal was made in the context of cooperation with UNAMID and the government of the state to facilitate hybrid troop's mission.

Miscellaneous

[Chadian Opposition Factions negotiate to form coalition](#)

(SMC) Chadian opposition forces are negotiating to form a political coalition. Meanwhile some unit commanders in Chadian army have joined opposition. Deputy Chairman of regional office for Development and Democracy Union Forces (DDUF), Mahmoud Ali Hagar told (smc) that the opposition forces controlled south east and central areas in the country. He pointed out that 250 troops from Chadian army joined the opposition at Fabaljaro north of Chad last week. More than 500 persons from Kamanim tribe were also having joined due to mistreatment applied on them by Chadian government. Hagar highlighted that the opposition forces are holding intense negotiation between themselves including prominent members in Daby's government such as former minister of interior Ahmed Mohammed Sibyan and Daby's former office manger Timan Ardamy to form strong political coalition and recruit head and deputy head of the government Hagar noted that soldiers have strong moral to restart an attack against Deby's regime and capture Power in N'djamena.

[Western Media Spend \\$400 m. on Darfur-related Propaganda, Hoile](#)

(Sudan Vision) Director of the European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council (ESPAC), David Hoile indicated the presence of several avenues for eliminating the obstacles that hinder Sudan's relations with Europe.

He reiterated that the western media reports on the death of 400 persons a day in Darfur are false, pointing out that \$400 million are currently spent on circulation of incorrect information on Darfur and that the British media is currently seeking to straighten out the false reports on Darfur circulated by the US media.

At the press conference held yesterday at the quarters of the Sudanese Media Center (SMC) on the occasion of the Sudanese-European Forum to be held tomorrow, Hoile

said the present campaign on Sudan can be countered by stepping up Sudan's relations with Europe, remarking that the British Prime Minister had misconceptions on both Sudan and Darfur case. He accused Darfur factions of dragging their feet over joining the peace process and stated that some European countries are earnest in their efforts to establish peace in Darfur while others are hosting leaders of the rebel factions.

Hoile disclosed that around \$70 million is allocated as budget for the lobby media to deal with incorrect issues on Darfur and stressed that the European-Sudanese Forum will embark on setting right these misconceptions on Sudan. Unlike the US, he said, European policy on Sudan centers on economic relations and growth as well as on the humanitarian field, particularly in respect of extending aid to the war-affected citizens in Darfur. He further revealed that some pressure groups in Europe are attempting to twist their government arms over Darfur.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of ESPAC High Committee Engineer Abdulrahman Ibrahim, said preparations have been finalized for hosting the Forum as delegations are by the hour arriving in Khartoum from Britain, Germany, France and Italy to participate in the Forum. He said that the inaugural session will be addressed by Vice President of the Republic, Ali Osman Mohammed Taha, while the concluding session will witness a speech by Senior Presidential Advisor, Minni Arkoi Minawi. The Forum will be organized on the basis of a memo of understanding signed between SMC and ESPAC, he explained.