

## Aid workers free in Darfur after 'kidnap'

AFP, Khartoum

Two Sudanese staffers of Libya's Kadhafi Foundation who had been reported kidnapped in Darfur are free, Sudan's state minister for humanitarian affairs told AFP yesterday, saying they had never been abducted.

"I have just contacted the security people at El-Fasher (capital of north Darfur). The two Sudanese from the Kadhafi Foundation were freed after half an hour. It was a misunderstanding," Abdel Baqi Gilani said, adding that they had never been kidnapped but declining to elaborate.

Sudanese intelligence services also insisted that the two men had not been abducted, according to a senior official with the UN-African Union peacekeeping force.

The source told AFP that the intelligence services informed the joint force that the two men had been briefly detained by a group of armed men in the suburbs of El-Fasher on Wednesday, questioned and then released.

There were no further details on why they had been seized.

Kadhafi Foundation officials earlier reported that the men, whose names were not given, had been kidnapped. They maintained their insistence on this, even after Gilani's announcement.

The pair were project leaders for the Association of the Brothers of the South, an arm of the foundation run by Kadhafi's son Seif al-Islam, association director Mashaallah Zaoui said.

They were snatched as they supervised projects in Darfur, Zaoui said, without giving other details.

On Thursday the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

announced that one of its employees, Gauthier Lefevre, a Frenchman who also holds British nationality, had been abducted in Darfur.

Gilani told AFP Lefevre is in "good health" and that he expected him to be released soon, but voiced fear of more abductions and urged foreign relief organisations to bolster security.

A relief official echoed his concern and said: "What has been happening in Darfur is very worrisome. I hope that the government will take this seriously."

## Pedestrian

FROM PAGE 16

Noman and pedestrian Kalam sustained bullet injuries in the attack. Kalam was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his wounds. Noman was admitted to a local hospital.

Meanwhile, muggers shot dead an apprentice security guard of a private company at Badda in the morning.

The muggers fired shots at Sachin Chandra Barman, 24, of Securix Private Ltd at Nur Chala, Badda, at about 6:15am while he was returning home. They took away his mobile phone, set, wristwatch and money, said Sachin's family members and police.

Locals took him to a clinic. Later, he was shifted to the DMCH where the on-duty doctor declared him dead at about 9:45am.

In another incident, criminals fired shots at Khairul Islam, a mineral water trader, and took away Tk 12,000 from him early in the morning.

He was admitted to the DMCH.

Besides, a gang of muggers stabbed a Kabab shop employee and snatched away Tk 3,400 from him at Bibir Bagicha early yesterday.

## Rab regrets

FROM PAGE 1

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National Board of Revenue has taken a list of those lawmakers from the EC Secretariat, said EC sources.

Besides, the EC Secretariat has asked the ROs and district election officials concerned to examine the original documents submitted by the 39.

Requesting anonymity, a senior EC official said all the documents are preserved at the offices of ROs, who are also deputy commissioners, and it may take a few days to complete the scrutiny.

"Once we receive the information from the field level, we will place the issue before the commission," he added.

Nevertheless, in Tehran, an Iranian source close to the Vienna talks was quoted as saying on state television's website that the Islamic Republic was awaiting a "positive" response from world powers over its own proposal to procure nuclear fuel for a Tehran reactor.

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The source said Iran "entered the Vienna talks with a positive and constructive approach, and now it is awaiting a constructive response and positive response to Iran's proposal."

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## Russia's liberals criticise arrest of oil tycoon

AFP, Moscow

Russian liberals have called for President Dmitry Medvedev to free jailed oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky and criticised him for a lack of progress in the case during his presidential term.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday in Moscow attended by Khodorkovsky's parents and lawyers, liberal politician and former world chess champion Garry Kasparov harshly criticized Medvedev.

He said any hopes that Medvedev would take a softer line on the Khodorkovsky case after taking over from Vladimir Putin as president last year had evaporated.

"Few people realized that Putin would actually be playing the role of good cop," Kasparov said at a news conference marking six years since Khodorkovsky was arrested on October 25, 2003.

"There hasn't been any progress in the case of Khodorkovsky and (his former business partner) Platon Lebedev at all, in fact everything has got worse."

Khodorkovsky is serving an eight-year sentence for fraud and tax evasion. He is now facing a second trial on fresh charges of embezzling millions of tons of oil and money laundering that could see him jailed for another two decades.

Seven prominent activists including Lyudmila Alexeyeva, the chairwoman of Moscow Helsinki Group, signed a letter addressed to Medvedev calling for him to end the trial and free Khodorkovsky and Lebedev.

The letter also called for Medvedev to attend a court hearing so he could see a "full picture of the Russian justice system with all its flaws."

Svetlana Gannushkina, a member of the presidential council for civil society and human rights, said that the "absurdity of the trial is obvious to everyone," but questioned whether Medvedev will be able to halt the trial.

"I don't believe that Medvedev's support will save us today, I don't believe that this battle in the corridors of power, which we don't know much about, will end in our favour," she said.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin "hates Khodorkovsky personally," she said.

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## 17 MPs

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## Tehran faces

FROM PAGE 16

Tehran needs for a research reactor.

Iran has yet to announce its decision.

But French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, on a trip to Beirut, said the signs coming from Iran so far were "not positive".

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei had set Friday as the deadline for all parties to sign off on the arrangement which was aimed at breaking the seven-year deadlock on the Iran's suspect nuclear programme.

ElBaradei did not specify a definite time when he set the deadline, but theoretically, Iran has until midnight to respond.

Russia was the first of the four countries to formally back the proposal.

It was followed by official statements in Paris and Washington.

"The United States delivered its positive response to IAEA Director General's (Mohamed) ElBaradei's proposal," said National Security Council spokesman Mike Hammer in a statement.

"We look forward to Iran's reply," Hammer added.

In Paris, French foreign ministry spokesman Bernard Valero agreed that the draft agreement "suits" Paris.

"We have made this known in an official manner," Valero said, adding that ElBaradei was awaiting "a clear response from Iran."

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## Hizb ut-Tahrir men

FROM PAGE 1

regard, he added.

Home Minister Sahara Khatun on Thursday said the organisation has been banned because of its activities that go against the state, the government, people and democracy.

Asked about their activities against the country's laws, Bangladesh chief coordinator of the outfit Mohiuddin Ahmed, an associate professor at Dhaka University's Institute of Business Administration, yesterday said, "Democracy or any rules—whatever you mention is imposed by the western world."

Under section 18 of the anti-terrorism act, becoming or claiming to be a member of a banned organisation is an offence punishable with imprisonment for up to six months or fine or both.

Even supporting a banned organisation or asking anyone to support it or organising or conducting or helping organise a rally of such organisation, or addressing it is also a crime.

Telecast or broadcast of such rallies on radio and television or printing information with a view to making any banned organisation active or seeking support for it is also an offence.

Anyone found guilty of such offence will be sentenced to imprisonment for two to seven years and in addition may be fined.

If anyone, except for the parents, spouse and children of such offenders, provide them with shelter knowing their offences, the person will also suffer jail term.

In the last few years, Hizb ut-Tahrir appeared in Bangladesh as one of the most controversial Islamist organisations because of its vigorous provocative campaigns against not only the government's role, but also against the US, Britain and some other countries.

Its campaigns often provoked people into violence against the outfit's "enemies," a source in a law enforcement agency observed.

Despite its campaigns through leaflets and posters, the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh came to the notice of law enforcers after the grenade attack on the then British high commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury at Hazrat Shah Jalal's Shrine in Sylhet on May 21, 2004.

Tahrir men had put up anti-British and anti-US posters around the shrine two days before the attack and this made investigators suspect about the organisation's involvement with the attack. The outfit has since been alleged to have militant links at home and abroad