

# Gaddafi revives offer of vote to end Libya conflict

*African leaders discuss truce efforts*

REUTERS, Tripoli

The Libyan government yesterday renewed its offer to hold a vote on whether Muammar Gaddafi should stay in power, a proposal unlikely to interest Gaddafi's opponents but which could widen differences inside Nato.

Pressure is growing from some quarters within the alliance to find a political solution as the military option has so far failed to topple Gaddafi.

Moussa Ibrahim, a spokesman for Gaddafi's administration, told reporters in Tripoli the government was proposing a period of national dialogue and an election overseen by the United Nations and the African Union.

"If the Libyan people decide Gaddafi should leave he will leave. If the people decide he should stay he will stay," Ibrahim said.

But he said Gaddafi -- who has run



the oil-producing country since taking over in a military coup in 1969 -- would not go into exile whatever happened. "Gaddafi is not leaving anywhere, he is staying in this country," Ibrahim said.

Meanwhile African leaders met yeesterday to discuss efforts to broker an end to the four-month-old conflict in Libya.

South African President Jacob Zuma accused Nato of exceeding its UN mandate, insisting that the resolution approved by the Security did not allow "regime change or political assassination" of Gaddafi.

"The continuing bombing by Nato and its allies is a concern that has been raised by our committee and by the AU Assembly, because the intention of Resolution 1973 was to protect the Libyan people and facilitate the humanitarian effort," he said.

"The intention was not to authorise a campaign for regime change or political assassination."

The idea of holding an election was first raised earlier this month by one of Gaddafi's sons, Saifal-Islam.

The election proposal could find a more receptive audience this time around, especially after a Nato bomb landed on a house in Tripoli on June 19, killing several civilians.

## Israel adopts tougher Iran sanctions

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli cabinet yesterday approved broad economic sanctions against Iran, bringing the Jewish state into line with measures taken by other governments.

"The government of Israel authorised economic sanctions against Iran and companies that trade with it," a statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said.

The measures, which do not need further parliamentary approval, were taken after a committee found in March that, despite years of calling for tough international action against arch-foe Iran, Israel's existing legislation did not live up to public policy.

Animosity between the two countries has grown under the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has repeatedly spoken of the Jewish state's demise.

## SOUTH CHINA SEA ROW

# China, Vietnam vow to cool tensions

AFP, Beijing

China and Vietnam pledged to resolve a row over the strategic South China Sea, state media said yesterday, in a bid to ease tensions that prompted accusations of Chinese bullying in the region.

The apparent olive branch between the testy neighbours came as the United States and Philippines readied for joint naval exercises in the face of Chinese actions and after the US called for Beijing to help lower the temperature.

Several recent incidents have put the security spotlight on the South China Sea, a strategic and potentially oil-rich area where China has sometimes overlapping disputes with Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan.

Recently, Vietnam carried out live-fire drills and the Philippines ordered the deployment of its naval flagship after accusing China of aggressive actions.

Representatives of China and Vietnam met in Beijing for weekend talks and agreed to resolve their maritime territorial disputes

"peacefully", China's Xinhua news agency said yesterday.

They pledged to reach a "peaceful resolution of the maritime dispute between the two countries through negotiations and friendly consultations," it said.

The joint vow was made in a meeting Saturday between Chinese State Councillor Dai Bingguo, China's senior foreign-policy official, and Vietnamese Vice Foreign Minister Ho Xuan Son.

They agreed to take measures to "safeguard peace and stability in the South China Sea", work toward an agreement on addressing maritime disputes and seek speedy implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.

However, the report gave no details on specific steps to be taken or a timetable.

The United States on Saturday called for China to lower tensions through dialogue as they held talks on frictions in Southeast Asia.

China has in the past rejected calls for multi-lateral talks on the South China Sea disputes, insisting on one-on-one contacts with other claimants.

## NEWS IN brief

### China releases human rights activist Hu Jia

AFP, Beijing

One of China's most prominent prisoners of conscience, Hu Jia, returned home yesterday after completing a jail term for subversion but looked likely to be muzzled along with other top dissidents.

The human rights activist's release after more than three years in prison comes after outspoken artist Ai Weiwei emerged in Beijing last week from nearly three months in police custody amid a government crack-down on dissent.

### Malaysian police hold dozens ahead of rally

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian police have arrested dozens of people planning to build up support ahead of a mass rally for electoral reforms, activists said yesterday.

Police have stopped at least one talk to whip up backing for a planned July 9 rally since Friday and held some 70 people, mainly members of the opposition Socialist Party of Malaysia.

The campaign calls for an end to the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition's five-decade rule and for support for the electoral reform rally to be held by activists and opposition parties in the capital Kuala Lumpur, Kohila said.

### 6 mountaineers die in French Alps

AFP, Grenoble

A hiker yesterday found the bodies of six mountaineers in the French Alps who appeared to have died in an avalanche of snow and stones, officials said.

"It looks like there was a slide of snow and stones mixed together," a official said, adding that it appeared that they had died on Saturday.

There was no immediate confirmation of the nationality of the dead climbers.

### Blast hits UN building in Gaza

AFP, Gaza City

A mine exploded near the offices of the UN coordinator for the Middle East peace process in Gaza City, Hamas police and the UN said yesterday.

The blast, late on Saturday, slightly wounded a Palestinian passer-by, medics said.

The explosion damaged the wall surrounding the United Nations Special Coordinator Office for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), which abuts the headquarters of the Hamas security services in Gaza.

## Suicide blast kills 2 in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

A suicide bomber in a wheelchair attacked a police station north of Baghdad yesterday, killing two people and wounding 17, nine of them policemen, officials said.

"A suicide bomber detonated his explosives vest at the entrance to a police station, killing two civilians and wounding 17 people, including nine policemen in Tarmiyah," a town north of Baghdad, an interior ministry official said. A defence ministry official confirmed the report.

Meanwhile, two people were wounded by an improvised bomb that exploded next to a convoy transporting the mayor of the town of Al-Riyadh in the restive northern province of Kirkuk.

## Khmer Rouge leaders face trial today

Cambodia's UN-backed tribunal to try four former leaders of the Marxist regime for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity

Indicted			
			
<b>Nuon Chea</b>	<b>Ieng Sary</b>	<b>Ieng Thirith</b>	<b>Khieu Samphan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 84, "Brother Number Two" to Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot</li> <li>▶ Defected to government in 1998 and pardoned by Prime Minister Hun Sen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 85, "Brother Number Three", served as Khmer Rouge's minister of foreign affairs</li> <li>▶ First senior leader to defect in 1996, granted royal pardon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 79, described sometimes as "First Lady" of Khmer Rouge</li> <li>▶ Most powerful woman, served as social affairs minister</li> <li>▶ Ieng Sary's wife</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 79, regime's former head of state, public face of Khmer Rouge to outside world</li> <li>▶ Defected in 1998</li> </ul>

## Gaza-bound flotilla set to leave Greece

*22 countries to take part*

AFP, Athens

Hundreds of activists are preparing to board aid ships bound for Gaza this week in defiance of an Israeli blockade and UN warnings and in spite of the violent end to an operation last year which left nine dead.

About 350 pro-Palestinian supporters hailing from 22 countries are set to join the "Freedom Flotilla" leaving from Greek ports.

Bestselling Swedish crime writer Henning Mankell and many journalists are among those taking part in the action seeking to break a five-year long Israeli naval blockade.

Nine Turks died when Israeli forces seized the Mavi Marmara, a ship taking part in the international aid flotilla in May last year. The raid sparked worldwide condemnation.

Israel said on Thursday it was determined to stop the flotilla, calling the protest a "provocation" and saying the country had a right to self defence.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and a number of governments have warned the flotilla not to start.

Israel imposed a blockade on Gaza in 2006 after militants snatched Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

Boats from Greece, France, Italy and Spain are among those taking part in the flotilla.

Two cargo boats will carry medicines, a fully-equipped ambulance car and cement. The departure date has not been specified yet.

## Key hacker group disbands

AFP, San Francisco

Lulz Security hacker group said Saturday that it has ended an Internet rampage that included cyberattacks on videogame companies, police, and even a US spy agency website.

"For the past 50 days we've been disrupting and exposing corporations, governments, often the general population itself, and quite possibly everything in between, just because we could," the group said in a message.

"It is time to say bon voyage," the message concluded. "We must now sail into the distance."

Lulz Security has claimed responsibility for hacking websites of the CIA, US Senate, Sony and others.

## Chavez in 'critical' condition: Report



AFP, Miami

Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, who is in Cuba following emergency surgery, is in "critical" but stable condition, Miami's El Nuevo Herald reported, citing US intelligence sources.

Chavez's government has said he was operated on for a pelvic abscess on June 10 and is recovering well; the president's brother has told Venezuelan state media that Chavez could return to Caracas in about two weeks.

But the Venezuelan government has not addressed details of Chavez's condition, and angry opposition lawmakers in Caracas say it is unconstitutional for the president to be governing from abroad.

The Spanish-language El Nuevo Herald on Saturday cited unnamed US intelligence sources as refusing to comment on rumors in Venezuela that Chavez could be receiving treatment for prostate cancer.

"They took Marisabel and her daughter out urgently," another source told the paper.

Late Saturday several top Venezuelan government officials dismissed the report.

"Chavez will be around for a long time," Vice President Elias Jaua told reporters.

## Palestine to go for UN statehood bid

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said yesterday that with no renewal of peace talks on the horizon, the Palestinians would pursue their unilateral bid for recognition in September.

"I say that if negotiations have failed we will go to the United Nations for membership," Abbas told a meeting of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and his Fatah party.

"Until now there have been no new incentives to return to negotiations," he said.

Abbas had indicated that the Palestinians would be willing to give up the September bid for recognition of a Palestinian state if long dormant peace talks with Israel could be resurrected.

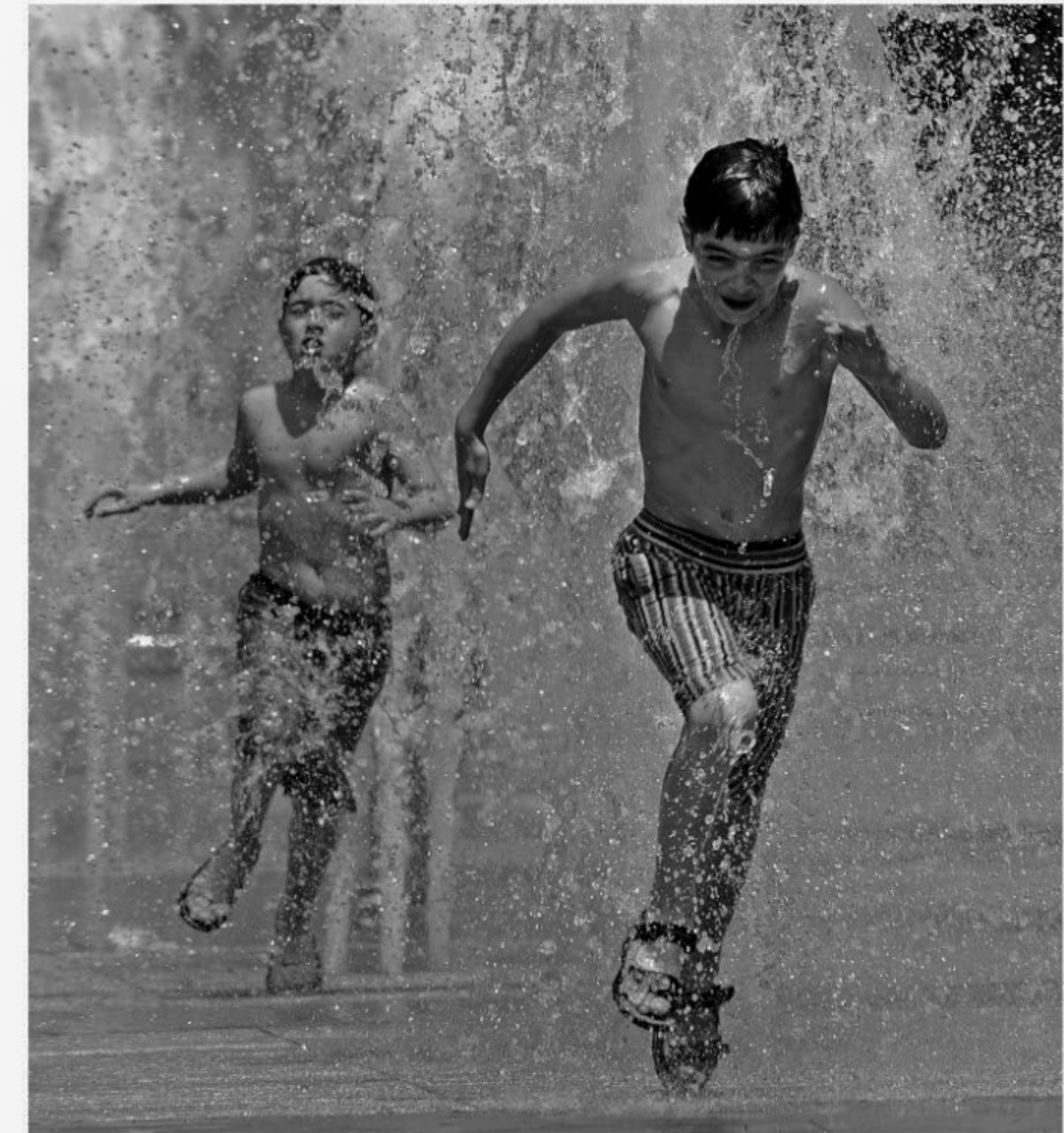


PHOTO: AFP  
Georgian boys enjoy the cold water of a fountain during a midday heat in Tbilisi yesterday.

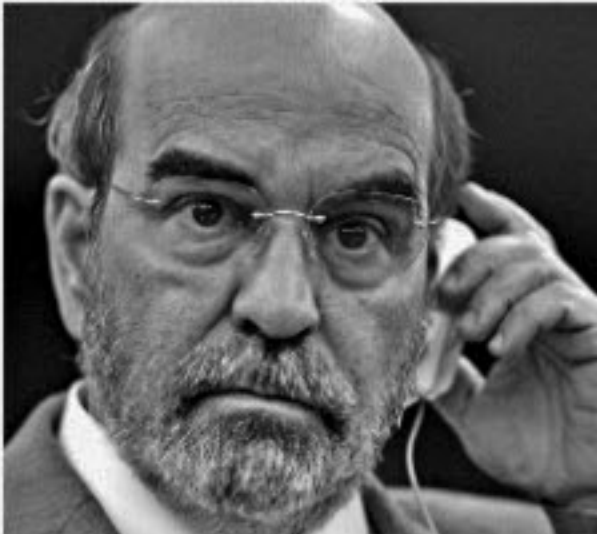
## Brazil's candidate elected FAO's head

AFP, Rome

Brazil's former food security minister Jose Graziano da Silva was elected yesterday as the next head of UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation, the first South American ever to get the post.

Graziano beat off his main competitor, former Spanish foreign minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, winning by 92 votes to 88.

He takes the helm of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation when growing concerns over global hunger, spiralling food prices and the effects of climate change causing havoc all over the



Graziano da Silva

The programme saw the region become the first in the world to commit itself to eradicating hunger by 2025.

But it was the former Brazilian food security minister's role in designing and implementing the Brazilian "Zero Hunger" programme before joining the FAO that brought him international acclaim and recognition.

## Bangladesh mission in KL

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Commissioner AKM Atiqur Rahman told The Daily Star over phone yesterday evening.

Koko was sentenced to six years' rigorous imprisonment on June 23 for laundering over Tk 20 crore to Singapore. The same sentenced was handed down on the other accused in the case Ismail Hossain Saimon, son of former shipping minister late Akbar Hossain.

Both were tried in absentia and were fined Tk 38.83 crore each as well. The sentences will take effect from the day of their arrest or surrender.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case against Koko on March 17, 2009.

According to the charges, Koko and Saimon had received Tk 19.71 crore in

bribe from German telecom giant Siemens and Chinese engineering firm China Harbour Ltd to win them telecom and terminal-building contracts. They later siphoned the money off to Singapore.

In connection with the money laundering, a Singapore court on January 2 this year fined Lim Siew Cheng, a local businessman, for keeping Koko's money in his account.

Koko stayed only five weeks in a hospital in Bangkok in the last three years and left for Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur in October, according to a letter from the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) to the attorney general of Bangladesh.

According to the Thai Immigration Bureau database, "Arafat Rahman

departed Thailand for Kuala Lumpur by flight no MH 783 on October 15, 2010," reads the letter.

The Office of the Attorney General in Bangladesh wanted to know the whereabouts of Koko from the Thai government in August last year. In response, the AMLO on behalf of the Thai government sent the letter in February this year.

Koko was arrested on September 2, 2007 on charges of corruption and was released on parole for treatment in Bangkok on July 17, 2008.

His parole was cancelled on August 19 last year for violating the parole terms. He was asked to return home, but he did not.

Saimon has been absconding since filing of the case.