

Niger refuses to send back Gaddafi's son

AFP, Niamey

The Nigerien government said Friday it will not send fallen Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi's son Saadi back home from Niger, where he fled after the collapse of the regime in Tripoli.

Asked by journalists if Niger would turn Gaddafi's son over to Libya's new authorities, government spokesman Marou Amadou said, "No."

"With regard to (our) international obligations, we cannot send someone back there where he has no chance of receiving a fair trial and where he could face the death penalty," he said.

"On the other hand, if this gentleman or any other person is wanted by an independent court ... which has universal competence over the crimes for which he is pursued, Niger will do its duty," he added.

On a visit to Libya on Thursday with British Prime Minister David Cameron, French President Nicolas Sarkozy said he was confident that Niger would cooperate in this regard.

"We have no reason to doubt the Nigerien leaders' commitment to international justice," Sarkozy said.

"We are a sovereign government and we shall consider requests or demands when they are received," said Amadou.

Saadi Gaddafi is on a list of people close to the Gaddafi regime targeted by UN Security Council travel sanctions.



Saadi Gaddafi

NTC forces regroup after setback

UN votes to ease Libya sanctions, grants membership

AFP, Near Sirte

Forces of Libya's new leadership battled diehard remnants of the fallen regime of Muammar Gaddafi yesterday, after the UN eased sanctions and assigned its seat at the world body to the former rebels.

Anti-Gaddafi forces in Libya are regrouping for fresh attacks on loyalist strongholds after suffering a setback in the town of Bani Walid.

Moussa Ibrahim, Gaddafi's spokesman, contacted Reuters by satellite telephone to say Gaddafi was still in Libya, leading the "resistance" against his foes.

He said Nato air strikes on Sirte, Gaddafi's birthplace, had hit a residential building and a hotel, killing 354 people.

"We are aware of these allegations," Colonel Roland Lavoie, spokesman for the Western military alliance, said in Brussels. "It is not the first time such allegations have been made. Most often, they are revealed to be unfounded or incon-

clusive."

The death toll could not be verified as communications with the coastal city have been scant since Tripoli fell on August 23.

More than 700 people were wounded in air strikes in Sirte on Friday, Ibrahim said, and 89 were missing.

"In the last 17 days more than 2,000 residents of the city of Sirte were killed in NATO air strikes," he added.

He said the resistance would continue for "months and months".

National Transitional Council forces swept further into Gaddafi's hometown of Sirte as at least 6,000 fighters battled in and around one of the ousted despot's final strongholds.

Commander Salem Jeha, a member of Misrata Military Council, told AFP yesterday at the Gate 30 checkpoint west of Sirte: "We are now concentrated in a handful of buildings in the city and on the outskirts including Wadi Abu Hadi where Gaddafi's forces are concentrated."

He said NTC combatants seized

Sirte airport late on Friday, and added that there was "no possibility for them (Gaddafi's forces) to continue their resistance."

Western nations that were at the forefront of the push for sanctions against Gaddafi regime and offered help for the rebels hailed the "historic" double breakthrough at the UN for the NTC.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said in a statement it showed the international community's determination to support a "free future" for Libya.

The 15-member Security Council unanimously passed a resolution on Friday to ease an assets freeze and arms embargo against Libyan companies and the new government.

It maintained sanctions against Gaddafi and a no-fly zone which has been used to justify Nato air strikes against forces loyal to the fallen strongman.

Security Council resolution 2009 also established the UN Support Mission in Libya -- UNSMIL -- a UN

mission to go to Libya to help the interim government arrange elections and write a new constitution.

The resolution eases sanctions against major enterprises such as the Libyan National Oil Corporation, the central bank and the Libyan Investment Authority sovereign wealth fund in a bid to kick-start the economy.

The Security Council also expressed concern at the "proliferation of arms in Libya and its potential impact on regional peace and security."

While agreeing to keep the no-fly zone in place, Russia's UN envoy Vitaly Churkin demanded that it be quickly reviewed, renewing accusations that Nato has acted outside the UN resolutions.

Earlier, the UN General Assembly voted by 114 countries to 17, with 15 abstentions, to let the interim government take up Libya's UN seat.

Some 90 countries now recognise the NTC, whose leaders moved to Tripoli this week.



WikiLeaks memorabilia auction to raise funds

BBC ONLINE

The WikiLeaks website has put up for sale a collection of memorabilia associated with its founder, Julian Assange, in a bid to raise funds.

Among the items on the eBay auction site are a sachet of prison coffee and a laptop computer.

Starting bids for the items range from \$315 for the coffee to \$6,000 for the computer.

WikiLeaks has come under increasing financial pressure as sources of funding have been shut down.

It has been criticised by several governments for releasing sensitive US diplomatic cables which, critics say, could put at risk some of those named as sources.

Many of the items put up for sale make much of their association with Assange.

An "exclusive" photograph of him with a starting price of \$947 is described as being signed "Julian A. Ellingham Hall, 10 July 2011 while under house-arrest two days before high court appeal at his 40th Birthday party".

The coffee sachet is said to have been smuggled out of the prison where Mr Assange was held on remand, until his release on bail in December 2010.

The computer, which has a buy it now price of \$552,615, was used to "prepare the cables for media partners and releases".

"In this exclusive auction item you will get the full set of WikiLeaks Cables, the WikiLeaks computer and its passwords," WikiLeaks said in a statement released on Twitter.

US embassy in Algiers on Qaeda alert

AFP, Washington

The US embassy in Algiers is warning potential targets about an al-Qaeda threat to launch missile attacks against planes chartered by foreign oil firms in North Africa, officials said Friday.

The warning comes after US officials expressed concern about the fate of thousands of shoulder-launched missiles in neighbouring Libya, where Colonel Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown last month by a rebel movement.

"The US embassy in Algiers received threat information," the State Department said when asked about a newspaper report that al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) planned missile attacks against planes with oil workers.

Series of quakes hit Japan disaster zone

AFP, Tokyo

A strong 6.6-magnitude undersea quake and a series of aftershocks hit off the coast of Japan's Honshu island yesterday, not far from the area ravaged by a huge March quake and tsunami, geologists said.

There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties and no widespread tsunami warning, although the initial earthquake was followed by five more quakes of magnitude five or above, one of them measuring 6.2.

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) said the first, 36.2-kilometre deep quake hit 108 kilometres east-southeast of the coastal town of Hachinohe, 574 kilometres from Tokyo, at 4:26am.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said that "no destructive widespread tsunami risk exists based on historical earthquake and tsunami data".

But it said that quakes of this size sometimes generate local tsunamis. "Authorities in the region of the epicentre should be aware of this," the centre said in a statement.

Japan, located on the tectonic crossroads known as the "Pacific Ring of Fire" and dotted with volcanoes, is one of the world's most quake-prone countries, registering a fifth of the world's most powerful quakes every year.

Since March's enormous quake and the devastating tsunami it spawned, the country has been rocked by hundreds of powerful aftershocks.



Palestinian women demonstrate at the Qalandia Israeli checkpoint in the West Bank, near Ramallah yesterday in support of the Palestinian bid for UN membership, one day after President Mahmud Abbas promised Palestinians he will demand admission of their state to the UN before the Security Council next week, amid mounting opposition from Israel and the United States.

PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN brief

McGuinness to run for Irish presidency

AFP, Belfast

Northern Ireland's Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness is to run for president of the Republic of Ireland next month as part of what he called a bid to bring about Irish reunification by peaceful means.

The candidature of 61-year-old McGuinness for the October 27 election is expected to be rubber-stamped by the executive council of his Sinn Fein party today.

McGuinness, who admits being a commander of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) paramilitary group during the three decades of violence in Northern Ireland, would be the first candidate from the hardline Catholic socialist party to run for the Irish presidency.

US won't sell new fighter jets to Taiwan

AFP, Washington

The United States has decided not to sell Taiwan new F-16 fighter jets and will instead provide upgrades to its existing planes, a US congressional source said Friday.

The US State Department was to brief key lawmakers Friday on the decision, which was sure to anger China critics in the US Congress and upset Taiwan, but "no official announcement will be made for weeks," the official said.

"We are hearing from State that it will be an upgrade and no sale," the source, who requested anonymity, told AFP.

Taiwan applied in 2007 to buy 66 F-16 C/D fighters, which have better radars and more powerful weapon systems than the 146 F-16 A/Bs it currently has, in response to China's growing military muscle.

Dutch government drafts burqa ban

AFP, The Hague

The Dutch government agreed Friday to a ban on the burqa, the Interior Ministry said, under a deal with the far-right party of anti-immigration MP Geert Wilders.

"A general ban on wearing face-restrictive clothing in public is on the way," the Interior Ministry said in a statement after a cabinet meeting.

"The proposed legislation will ban the wearing of face-covering clothing in the Netherlands in public places including public buildings, educational institutions, hospitals and public transport," it said in The Hague.

PHONE HACKING UK police seek Guardian's sources

AFP, London

Police probing Britain's phone hacking scandal said Friday they were seeking a court order that would force The Guardian newspaper to disclose the sources for its reports on the affair.

London's Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) said it was "seeking to identify evidence of potential offences resulting from unauthorised leaking of information".

The Guardian's editor Alan Rusbridger condemned the move as "vindictive", adding: "We shall resist this extraordinary demand to the utmost".

The daily has been at the forefront in exposing the voicemail hacking scandal at media baron Rupert Murdoch's now-defunct News of the World tabloid.

Modi seeks moderate image with fast

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The Chief Minister of BJP-ruled western Indian state of Gujarat Narendra Modi, whose government had come under fire for communal riots nine years ago, yesterday began a three-day fast for "peace, unity and communal harmony".

In a political counter move, Gujarat Congress leaders Shankarsinh Vaghela, a former party colleague of Modi, and Arjun Modhvadia also started their fast on a footpath in front of Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad city of the state.

Modi's hunger strike under 'Sadbhavana (goodwill) Mission' at the Gujarat University Convention Centre here, where an array of leaders from the BJP and its key ally Shiromani Akali Dal ruling northern state of Punjab have arrived, coincides with his 62nd birthday.

On the eve of his fast, Modi had issued an "open letter" that was seen by political observers as his first sign of regret over the 2002 communal violence that had

broken out after a train compartment carrying 57 pilgrims was set on fire in February, 2002.

The communal violence had at that time left over 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, dead.

Attempting to reach out to the minority community and wash the taint of 2002 riots, Modi in his letter said Gujarat has realised that communal frenzy and casteism never helped anybody grow in the country and expressed "gratitude" to those who pointed out his mistakes in the last 10 years.

There is intense speculation in political circles in India and the media if Modi, the poster boy of BJP's Hindutva ideology, will be the party's prime ministerial candidate in the next parliamentary elections due in 2014, especially after a US Congressional report that said Modi could be the saffron party's prime ministerial candidate.

The US Congressional report sparked speculation if Modi is preparing himself for a much bigger role in national politics after being the chief minister of Gujarat since 1997.

BDB for simultaneous

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support in principle for the BNP rally scheduled for September 27 at the Paltan Maidan.

BDB Secretary General Maj (ret) MA Mannan said this at a joint press conference after a meeting with BNP leaders at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office in the capital.

Bikalpa Dhara will stand beside BNP in all democratic movements including agitation for restoring the caretaker government system, he mentioned.

But the BDB leader refused to join hands in programmes like hartal and blockade, which cause public sufferings.

Claiming that the government has failed completely to run the country, he demanded formation of a new government through a fresh election.

He also accused the gov-

ernment of dividing the countrymen and destroying the country's democratic electoral system by repealing the caretaker government system.

"We will never participate in any election under a partisan government instead of a neutral caretaker government," insisted Mannan.

BNP acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said it was a fruitful meeting and both the parties have reached a consensus on launching a tougher movement on the caretaker government issue.

BNP standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan, Bikalpa Dhara Joint Secretary General Mahi B Chowdhury, among others, attended the meeting.

Earlier on August 29, leaders of both the parties held a meeting to discuss a joint movement.

BNP plays down 'split rumour' Exams first

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Another standing committee member Khandaker Mosharruf Hossain said the probable split in the party is absolutely impossible. The idea of breaking with BNP is spreading only to divert public attention from its movement, he noted.

Referring to a previous incident, the veteran BNP leader mentioned a few aggrieved ruling party leaders could even join with the opposition at the eleventh hour of the government's tenure.

A group of BNP lawmakers led by Col (ret) Oli Ahmed left the party in October 2006 just a day before completion of the BNP-Jamaat alliance government's tenure.

"There are some opportunists in the party to help the government implement

its plan to bar Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman from contesting the next general election," observed former deputy minister Ruhul Qudus Talukder Dulu.

The party high command is well aware of the move and steps will be taken regarding this in time, added Dulu, once close aide of Khaleda's son Tarique.

Some recent comments and activities of several leaders have been embarrassing to the party, a vice-president of BNP told The Daily Star. He, however, denied disclosing any name in this regard.

"One or two leaders can leave the party to become a minister, but it will have no significance in politics," maintained the BNP leader.

During the tenure of last Awami League government, BNP lawmaker Hasibur

Rahman Swapan joined AL and was appointed deputy minister. But it did not have any lasting impact in politics.

BNP is observing the activities of some of its leaders who reportedly have close ties with several AL leaders.

Chairperson Khaleda Zia talked to several leaders including Nazmul Huda during the last few days.

Huda met Khaleda on Thursday and gave a clarification on his recent speech about calling Bangabandhu as father of the nation.

"My speech was published partially. I explained it to the chairperson to clear up the confusion created over my comment," he mentioned. "I told her we are with the party from the first day of its formation and so we cannot split it."

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for long five hours, reported our correspondent from Chittagong.

They expressed anger over the matter and held responsible the medical college and hospital authorities for their suffering.

"There are many rooms, examination halls and seminar rooms in the college. I don't understand what this inconvenience is for," said Tahmina Akther, 55, a patient of the cardiology ward.

CMCH Director Brig Gen Mustafizur Rahman told The Daily Star, "Cardiology examinations at post-graduation level are held every year at the ward, and the examinations are very much related to patients. So, temporary inconvenience may occur at that time."

Prof Selim Mohammad Jahangir, principal of

CMCH, said the clinical part of medical exams involves patients so it is not possible to hold the examinations of post-graduate students without patients.

"However, such situation arose mainly due to lack of accommodation," he added.

Our Barisal correspondent reported that some of the patients at SBMCH complained they had to stay outside the gynaecology ward for the whole night on Friday.

Senior staff nurse of the hospital Delwara Begum said there were 96 patients against 52 seats in the ward and that was why some of them were shifted temporarily to the corridor to make room for the practical exam.

Abdur Rashid, director of the hospital, said he was unaware of the incident and that he would investigate the matter.

Two terror suspect held in Finland

AFP, Helsinki

Police in Finland announced Friday they have arrested two people suspected of financing terrorist activities and recruitment.

"Police have begun an inquiry into a suspected case of financing and recruiting for a terrorist activity," a statement on the arrests carried out last week said.

"On September 7 two people were arrested at the start of the preliminary investigation," it said.

Police added that the two were in custody and that searches had been carried out at several homes and locations in the capital Helsinki.