

More aid for Darfur

The Star - 19/4/2007

PM to appeal to OIC and Islamic Bank for help

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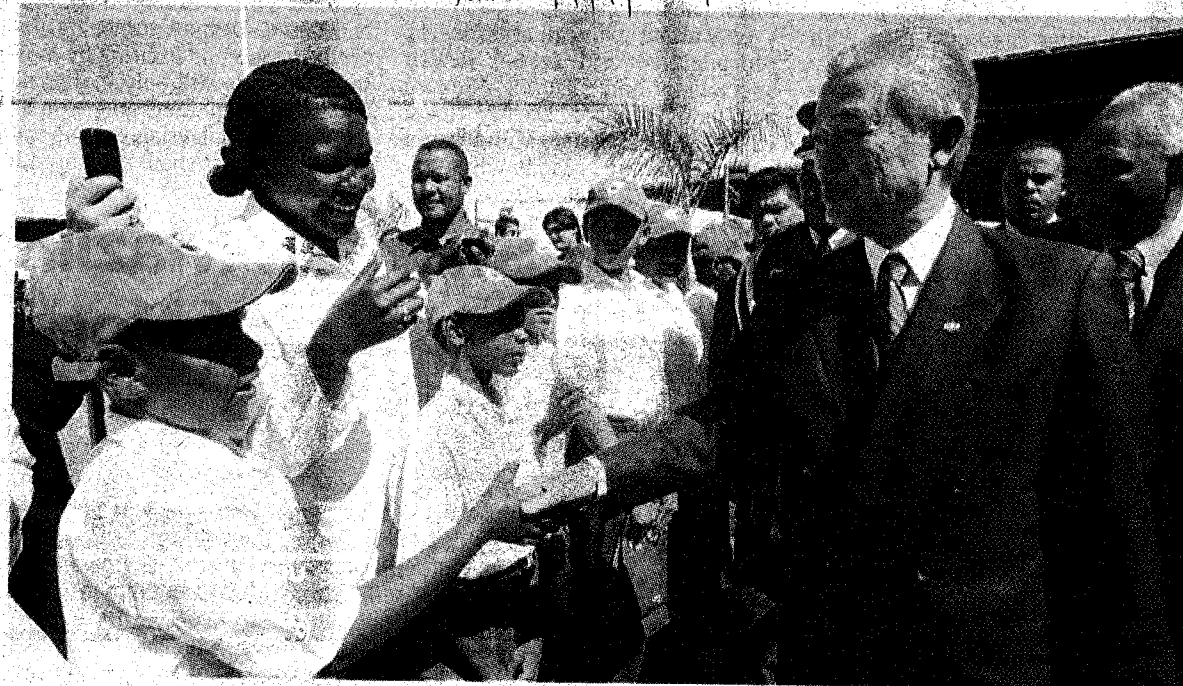
KHARTOUM: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi made a surprise visit to the conflict-ravaged Darfur in western Sudan and immediately pledged to get more aid for the area from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and Islamic Development Bank.

The Prime Minister's unscheduled two-and-a-half-hour visit to El-Fashir, the capital of North Darfur state, saw him being briefed by local authority head Muhammad Osman Yusof and state governor Mohamad Yusof Kibir.

He also visited the Al Salam refugee camp, more than 800km west of here. Only an RTM crew was allowed to cover Abdullah's visit to the region.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and Sudanese Energy and Mining Minister Ahmad Awad Al-jaz went with the Prime Minister.

Abdullah said he was happy to have had a first-hand view of the Darfur region, which had seen years of armed conflict between the



Warm greeting: Abdullah shaking hands with Sudanese school children upon arrival at a gathering with the Malaysian community at the Oil House in Khartoum, Sudan, yesterday in conjunction with his visit to the North African country. He is accompanied by Ahmad Awad (second right). — Bernama

Janjaweed militia group and land-tilling tribes since July 2003.

"The people (of Darfur) want me to forward this message to the OIC and I will appeal to the leaders of OIC and Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah to extend whatever help they can give to the Sudanese government," he told RTM in an interview.

Abdullah, who is the OIC chair-

man, said the main concern was for those who had to seek refuge at camps outside the cities in Darfur.

"Efforts must be made to improve conditions in the villages which have been left behind by people who are now living in camps," he said.

He said the Darfur people must be reassured that there would be development efforts.

Earlier, before leaving for Darfur,

Abdullah spent about an hour catching up with employees of Petronas, students and other Malaysians living in Sudan.

The Prime Minister later left for Nairobi on a three-day official visit to Kenya.

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