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Highlights

Choice for unity requires reviewing the constitution

Al-Ray Al-Aam reports the Southern Sudan Referendum bill included post-referendum arrangements.

The bill stipulates arrangements including a comprehensive constitutional review if the Southerners opted for unity. In this case, the constitution will be subject to amendment and will be in force until a permanent constitution is adopted.

If the Southern Sudanese opted for secession, the two partners shall engage in discussions in order to agree on all post-referendum issues along with witnesses from the organizations and the countries signatory to the agreement.

These issues include nationality, currency, the status of the joint forces, the national security and intelligence, oil fields and production, water resources and property.

The act allows for any court to cancel the ballot at any center if a court proved any fraud. The ballot shall be repeated in a period that does not exceed seven days of the issuance of the court decision. The act allows for postponement of the referendum exercise with agreement of the Federal Southern Sudan Governments.

Parliamentary committee formed to review Referendum bill

Dailies report the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Joseph Ukel submitted yesterday to the National Assembly the draft bills of Southern Sudan Referendum, Abyei Referendum and Popular Consultations.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly in its session yesterday formed a committee to review these bills. The committee is chaired by Badria Suleiman and Ismail Al-Haj Mussa as Deputy Chairperson. The decision raised a dispute within the Parliament, particularly from the Darfur Peace group which was not involved in the committee.

The head of SPLM Parliamentary group protested against the formation of the committee and noted that the Deputy Chairperson should have been selected from the Southern Sudan Parliamentary group.

Parliament approves Trade Unions Act

Dailies report the National Assembly, chaired by the Deputy Speaker, Mohamed Al-Hassan Al-Amin, Tuesday referred the tabled bill on the People's Consultation Act for South Kordofan and the Blue Nile for the year 2009 to the assembly's Legislation and Justice and Peace and Reconciliation Committees to formulate a report about it.

Popular uprising unattainable - Gosh

Al-Ray Al-Raam quotes Presidential advisor on Security Grl. Salah Gosh as saying the enemies of Sudan support old days' affiliations as if Sudan had never changed.

He said in a conference organized by the National Unity Government in Abu Si'id area, Omdurman yesterday the Sudanese people would go to the dustbin of history through ballot boxes and the Sudanese people would teach them an unforgettable lesson.

Gosh mocked opposition call for a popular uprising adding that it would be unattainable.

NEC extends period of appeals

Al-Sudani reports the National Election Commission has issued a decision extending the period of receiving appeals on the voters' registers for more three days that will end on December 19.

SRSG Qazi calls for investigation on alleged irregularities in voter registration

Al-Sudani reports the SRSG Ashraf Qazi called upon the National Elections Commission to quickly and completely investigate any complaints raised by political parties about alleged irregularities in the voter registration exercise and to take steps to file charges against those responsible. While applauding the conclusion of voter registration, Qazi urged the Sudanese people to help ensure the integrity of the voters' list.

Abyei Administrator resigns

Ajras Al-Hurriya & The Citizen reported the Interim Abyei Administrator Arup Mouyag confirmed that he submitted his resignation to the First Vice President Salva Kiir. Mouyag preferred not to disclose the reasons of resignation, confirming that he is awaiting a response to it.

The Citizen adds sources explained that the reasons for the resignation were due to lack of resources and non-fulfillment of allocation to the administrative area.

NCP-SPLM political committee reshuffled

Akhir Lahza reports that the two partners reshuffled the Joint Political Committee. According to this reshuffle the committee is formed of the following: Ibrahim Ghandour, Salah Gosh and Ahmed Haroun from the NCP and Nhial Deng, Pagan Amom and Yassir Arman from the SPLM.

GoSS tables SDG 5 bn budget

The Citizen the Finance Minister David Deng Athorbei has tabled a 4.5 billion budget proposal for the next fiscal year. Athorbei said GoSS determined to make Southern Sudan safe place for its people and create a friendly atmosphere for economic growth.

The Minister said for this reason, out of the SDG 4.5 billion for the 2010 budget, 101 million will go to SPLA. This money will allow for the transformation of the SPLA into a modern and professional army to fully support the implementation of the CPA.

Beside that focus, the Minister said there is additional allocation to GoSS Ministry of Internal Affairs with amount of 299 million SDG for the maintenance of security throughout Southern Sudan especially police and prisons in States.

President Al-Bashir briefed on situation in Khartoum State

SUNA reports the President of the Republic, Field Marshal, Omer Al-Bashir, was briefed on the general security situations in Khartoum State as well as the implementation of the State's security plan.

The Plan includes inauguration of some 17 new Police Stations, launching of 100 new vehicles besides increasing the number of horses of Police by 200% and supporting the Civil Defense Administration with 20 new Vehicles, as well as the completing the implementation of the project of the electronic monitoring of vehicles in streets by the end of January 2010. This came when President Al-Bashir received Tuesday at his office at the Republican Palace the Wali (governor) of Khartoum State, Dr. Abdul- Rahman Al-Khidir.

President Al-Bashir was also briefed on the projects which will be inaugurated during the celebrations of Sudan's Independence Day anniversary, in January 2010, which will include water projects, a hospital in the Eastern of the Nile locality, inauguration of Al-Halfaya- Al-Hitana Bridge, besides some vocational training centers and social projects to support low-income sectors and poor people as well as the inauguration of the alternative taxi project.

Meanwhile, Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Khidir said in a statement to SUNA that he reviewed with the President of the Republic the state's efforts in addressing the traffic congestion by inaugurating number of roads, including the Nile Avenues in Khartoum and Omdurman and the introduction of new buses with large capacities, explaining that the first batch of these buses will arrive by

end of next February.

He added the meeting with the President touched on Khartoum State's projects in combating unemployment and recruitment of fresh graduates, besides implementing housing projects and granting the families of martyrs 500 houses and opening a number of stadiums for youths.

Trial of 48 demonstrators postponed

Ajras Al-Hurriya daily reports the attorney at Central Khartoum postponed questioning 48 people who faced charges of causing riot and public disturbance. Meanwhile, the paper adds that the political leaders who had been arrested among others were not notified to appear in front of the attorney.

Sudan presses US special envoy to lift sanctions

Sudan Tribune reports the US special envoy to Sudan General Scott Gration met with a number of officials here who urged his government to ease the decade long unilateral sanctions imposed stressing that they are no longer justified.

The Sudanese finance and national economy minister Awad Al-Jaz told Gration that debt relief is one of the peace deliverables and part of the Oslo donors' conference obligations adding that Sudan has made substantial efforts in improving economic growth as shown in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports.

Al-Jaz stressed that Sudan is working on sustainable and balanced development as well putting efforts to bring peace to the war ravaged region of Darfur.

The Sudanese official said that the current stability in Darfur is an opportunity for resolving the country's problem and inaugurating more development projects. His deputy Lual Deng said that debt relief allows for the allocation of more resources to be spent elsewhere.

The most recent IMF report estimates Sudan's debt to have grown to about \$34 billion due to a "further buildup of arrears to Paris Club and non-Paris Club creditors....and new drawings from Arab multilateral and bilateral creditors, as well as from China and India".

Sudan informed the IMF that in light of Sudan's difficult foreign exchange position their debt repayments to the fund will be at \$10 million for 2009 compared to a total of \$50 million in 2007 & 2008.

The general manager of Sudan's national airways company (Sudan Air), Al-Obeid Fadl Al-Moula, has disclosed that there are ongoing talks with some US companies, whom he declined to name, in order to hold a meeting next January to discuss lifting US economic sanctions on the aviation sector in Sudan.

Al-Moula further said that recent talks with Gration had touched on the issue of lifting US sanctions on the aviation sector, pointing out that a committee had been formed to discuss the issue with US companies operating in the field of spare parts for aircrafts.

Khartoum has frequently complained that its poor record in air safety is largely due to lack of spare parts for its aircrafts.

However, the US state department refuted this allegation, pointing out that the sanctions include an exemption on spare parts for civilian airliners.

Separately Gration today has welcomed a deal between former civil war enemies in north and south Sudan over national elections and a southern referendum on independence, but warned that more work still needs to be done.

"We are very impressed with the political will, demonstrating the leadership that we wanted to see", he told Agence France Presse (AFP) in an interview in the capital of the semi-autonomous south.

"Implementation is of course key, and we will be working with both parties to ensure that" he added.

The relations between the two partners in the government of national unity reached a low point following protests held this month that included a coalition of Northern opposition parties along with the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM).

The Sudanese authorities banned the protest the day before and deployed police to the streets to curb the demonstrations arresting a handful of SPLM senior figures.

The US condemned the crackdown and called on Sudan to allow peaceful freedom of expression without intimidation to allow for a conducive environment to hold the elections.

The tension appeared to have been defused over the weekend after both parties reached a partial agreement on a package of democratic reforms bills ahead of next April's elections and on a procedural law for the south's referendum scheduled for January 2011.

Graton said preparations must be made ahead of the independence referendum for the south, slated for January 2011.

"There is a lot more work that needs to be done; post referendum issues also have to be decided," he said.

"There are issues in terms of sharing of resources, of oil revenues, grazing and of water rights: these are issues we will be involved with in the next couple of months to ensure that the CPA is implemented fully".

Graton also commended the "excellent" results of the registration period for elections in November, noting that more than 15 million people signed up to vote in the April 2010 ballot, the first in 24 years.

Some political powers also pointed fingers at the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) alleging widespread fraud in the registration process.

"There are things that have to be corrected, there are lessons that we learned, but this experience of registration for elections exceeded our expectations", said Graton.

Government accepts 18 INGOs in Darfur

Al-Khartoum reports the State Minister of Humanitarian affairs Dr. Abdelbagi Al-Jaylani announced that three new NGOs from Switzerland, France and Scotland were accepted. He added that 15 other INGOs would operate in Darfur.

Government to expel national illusory and inactive NGOs

Sudan Vision reports the State Minister of Humanitarian affairs Dr. Abdelbagi Al-Jaylani affirmed that a new law would be adopted and assured to avoid any defects while practicing it. He added they would activate the law in collaboration with SCOVA to expel any inactive NGO.

Sudanese President to visit Mauritania next week

Sudan Tribune reports the Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir will make a trip next Monday to Nouakchott, "informed sources" have told the Mauritanian news agency (AMI) today. The agency said that Bashir's visit is the "first of its kind by a head of state to Mauritania" since General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz won the presidential elections last July. Abdel Aziz had ousted Mauritania's first democratically elected leader in a coup last year.

There was no parallel confirmation of the visit by Sudanese state media. The Mauritanian foreign minister Naha bint Mukanass met with Bashir in Khartoum last month in a visit aimed at reenergizing bilateral relations.

Both sides at the time agreed to hold the joint ministerial meeting in mid-December headed by the foreign ministers in Sudan and Mauritania.

Sudan telecom company (Sudatel) has bought a license two years ago to become Mauritania's third mobile phone service provider.

Mauritania is the newest spot for Bashir trips since the arrest warrant issued for him last March by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on charges that he masterminded a campaign to exterminate African tribes in Sudan's Western region of Darfur.

The former French colony is not an ICC state party and this has legal obligation to arrest Bashir if he sets foot on its territory. The Sudanese head of state has limited his travels to regional countries that are not signatories of the Rome Statute.

Bashir has turned down several invitations in the last few months to attend events in Uganda,

Nigeria, Venezuela, Denmark, Turkey, South Africa and US for fear of arrest.

This week it was announced that the France-Africa summit due to be held in Egypt next year has been cancelled over French concerns at the invitation of Bashir. The decision was made after Presidents Nicolas Sarkozy of France and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt met in Paris on Monday.

France-Africa summit moved to Paris to avoid Bashir's presence

Sudan Tribune reports the Egyptian foreign minister Ahmed Aboul-Gheit told the London based Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper in an interview that president Mohamed Hosni Mubarak and his French counterpart Nicolas Sarkozy discussed the matter in Paris during a working lunch at the Elysee.

Aboul-Gheit said that both sides agreed to move the summit venue to France which would effectively mean that Bashir will stay away for fear of being arrested on the territory of an ICC state party.

But other sources told the newspaper that Aboul-Gheit and his French counterpart Bernard Kouchner will meet later to agree on the "place and date" of the summit.

The participation of the Sudanese president in the summit has been subject of intense diplomatic wrangling between Cairo and Paris over the last few months. France dispatched its interior minister Brice Hortefeux last October to seek exclusion of Bashir from the summit.

European Union (EU) rules prohibit its members from engaging into contacts with an individual indicted by the ICC.

Last week, France's Le Monde newspaper quoting officials at the Elysee palace said that Sarkozy is adamant about not inviting Bashir to the conference.

The officials speaking to the Le Monde said that "if Omar Al-Bashir is invited then Nicolas Sarkozy can not be present. Without his presence, there is no Africa-France summit".

However, the newspaper said that Paris proposed a compromise in which the summit would be split in two parts, first at the ministerial level, focused on discussing economic issues with the absence of French officials, followed by a meeting of heads of state to which the Sudanese president would not be invited.

But Egypt has apparently rejected the proposal pushing the disagreement to the meeting between Sarkozy and Mubarak which took place in Paris today.

The list of events Bashir has skipped since the ICC warrant keeps growing. He has turned down several invitations in the last few months to attend events in Uganda, Nigeria, Venezuela, Denmark, Turkey, South Africa and US for fear of arrest.

This month the ICC prosecutor told the UN Security Council (UNSC) that Bashir cancelled appearances showed that he was facing increasing isolation and "sends a clear message [that] President al-Bashir will face justice".

Richard Dicker, an international justice expert at the New York-based Human Rights Watch, agreed with the ICC prosecutor's assessment, telling Reuters that "Bashir's world is getting smaller and smaller".

The decision by Cairo to forfeit the hosting of the summit is an extremely rare event in Egyptian diplomacy which is historically well known for its aggressiveness in seeking to assert its role as a respected regional power and the favorite spot for international conferences.

Egypt was one of the first countries to roll out the red carpet for Bashir following the issuance of the ICC arrest warrant in an act of solidarity with its southern neighbor.

However, the Egyptian move is likely not a carte blanche but rather driven by growing political and economic interests in Sudan.

Sudan has witnessed a huge influx of Egyptian labor in recent years needed to keep up with the booming economy thanks to a steady flow of oil revenues. The most populous Arab country is hugely dependent on remittances from Egyptians expatriates abroad as one of its hard currency sources.