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Headlines

- Taha: Differences will not stop peace (**Al-Ray Al-Aam**)
- Expected Presidential decree to appoint new administration in Abyei (**Al-Sahafa**)
- CPA partners discuss in South Africa post-referendum scenarios (**Al-Ray Al-Aam**)
- Objections on electoral register conclude today (**Al-Ayaam**)
- President Al-Bashir visits Mauritania tomorrow (**Dailies**)
- CPA partners fail to reach agreement on Security Act (**Dailies**)
- NCP denies agreement to extend parliamentary session (**Dailies**)
- UNDP allocates \$91 million to support elections (**Dailies**)
- Conference on coexistence begins in Warap State (**Al-Sahafa**)
- Pagan leads SPLM high level delegation to Cairo (**Al-Akhbar**)
- Pagan denies Machar's resignation (**Al-Ray Al-Aam**)
- Eastern Equatoria State calls for urgent food assistance (**Al-Raed**)
- Gutbi Al-Mahdi: Foreign organizations need to shift priorities in Darfur (**Dailies**)
- SPLA foils LRA fresh attacks in Bahr El-Gazal (**Sudan Tribune**)
- Sudan court upholds death penalty against US diplomat assassins (**Sudan Tribune**)
- Election observers concerned over Sudan crackdown (**Reuters**)
- South Sudan postpones CPA anniversary celebrations to later day (**Sudan Tribune**)
- One H1N1 flu death case reported in Sudan (**Xinhua**)
- Uneasy truce in South Sudan town (**BBC**)
- Sudan climate negotiator 'Holocaust' remarks prompt angry response (**Sudan Tribune**)
- Sudan says human rights situation in Darfur 'better' (**AFP**)

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Address: UNMIS Headquarters, P.O. Box 69, Ibeid Khatim St, Khartoum 11111, SUDAN
Phone: (+249-1) 8708 6000 - Fax: (+249-1) 8708 6200

Highlights

Taha: Differences will not stop peace

Al-Ray Al-Aam reports Vice President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha confirmed the State's keenness to resort to the will of people in the upcoming elections, adding that elections would be a point for unification and not fragmentation. Addressing a celebration held at the Khartoum State Legislative Assembly Saturday on the occasion of the 54th anniversary for the declaration of Independence, Taha called on the new generations to build the nation through unity and tolerance.

Expected Presidential decree to appoint new administration in Abyei

Al-Sahafa reports the Presidency is expected to issue a decree in the next three days appointing a new area Administrator in replacement of Arop Moyak who had earlier submitted his resignation. Sources informed the paper that SPLM submitted a request to appoint Deng Aropthe, the current Chairman of the Legal Committee as Abyei area Administrator. The source disclosed contacts with NCP to change the members of the Administration following its failure to achieve any progress in the area. The source attributed Arop's resignation to the pressure imposed on him by different parties in Khartoum, Juba and Abyei. During his recent visit to the area, the Foreign Minister Deng Alor had received complaints from all actors and Sultans (community leaders), the source added.

CPA partners discuss post-referendum scenarios in South Africa

Al-Ray Al-Aam reports a workshop on post-referendum scenarios kicked off yesterday in Liberia Lotus resort in South Africa in top confidentiality. An informed source revealed that yesterday's sessions dealt with experiences of other countries in similar situations including East Timor and Colombia. The NCP is represented by Presidential Advisor Mustapha Osman Ismael whereas the SPLM by the Secretary General Pagan Amum who is expected to arrive tomorrow. The workshop, which wraps up Wednesday, gathers a number of international experts, think tanks and GoNU officials.

Objections on electoral register concluded yesterday

Al-Ayaam reports NEC concluded yesterday the period for objections on voters' registration in all the States after the three-day additional period. The Head of the Register Committee Gen. Al-Hadi Mohamed Ahmed stated that NEC had formed administrative tribunals each chaired by a judge and two members to look into objections on the voters' register. He added that the commission tasked the High committees at the States to receive and transfer objections to the tribunals. Political parties and individuals are allowed to submit objections to the tribunals in case they reject the high committees' resolutions, he added.

President Al-Bashir visits Mauritania tomorrow

Al-Raed reported President Al-Bashir heads tomorrow (Monday) to Mauritania in a three-day visit during which he will discuss bilateral relations between the two countries with the President Mohamed Weld Abdel Aziz. **Ajras Al-Hurriya** reports the visit comes after a high level official at ICC has ended his visit to Nwakshot.

CPA partners fail to reach agreement on Security Act

Ajras Al-Hurriya reports that the First Vice President Salva Kiir has issued instructions to the

SPLM MPs to vote against the bill on National Security. Meanwhile, a number of Parliamentary blocks announced that they carried extensive contacts to stand against the bill.

Al-Sahafa (18 Dec) reported that the Parliamentary blocks of the SPLM and the NCP stood by their positions with regard to the National Security Act and agreed to settle the difference by voting in the Parliament on Monday's session. NCP's Ibrahim Ghandour told reporters last Thursday that the two parties failed to agree on the Act and confirmed that his party would not make concessions on the powers of the security to arrest, detain and inspect.

Yassir Arman, the leader of SPLM block at the Sudanese parliament and SPLM deputy Secretary General for northern Sudan, told **Sudan Tribune** Thursday they reiterated their opposition to the national security bill during the meeting because they "are opposed to the powers to arrest, detention, search and seizure, and immunities for national security personnel," he said. "This is our initial and last position and we will not endorse this bill on Sunday," he added. Arman also said the NCP is determined to pass this bill with the mechanical majority stressing this position violates the spirit and the text of the CPA and the interim constitution.

Sudan Tribune (17 Dec) reports Sulaiman Hamid Al-Haj, spokesperson of the opposition National Democratic Alliance block at the National Assembly announced they would boycott the assembly session on Sunday, he stressed they took this decision after a meeting of the parliamentary blocs of the NDA, SPLM and the bloc of Darfur Peace MPs.

Ajras Al-Hurriya (20 Dec) reports that an informed source at the Darfur Peace Parliamentary block announced they agreed with NDA block and would boycott the session. "If there is no essential amendment in the bill, we would boycott the session and we will announce our position when the session begins", the source added.

However, **Al-Ahdath** daily (20 Dec) reports the Parliament will vote tomorrow (Monday) on the National Security Bill at the final presentation stage amid sharp differences and divergence between the Parliamentary blocks which all, with exception of the NCP block, oppose to articles related to freedoms and the powers to arrest and detain.

NCP denies agreement to extend parliamentary session

Sudan Tribune reports that the NCP denied reports that it has agreed to delay the adjournment of the national assembly in order to give more time for passing laws that are still pending. The SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum said that this step is needed in order to continue discussions on laws needed to ensure implementation of the CPA, such as the security act. However, the speaker of the parliament Mohamed Ibrahim Al-Tahir brushed off the SPLM demand saying that the current legislative session will end as planned on December 23rd with no extensions. Al-Tahir added that there are only few disputed items in the security law that will be resolved through vote suggesting that despite the NCP majority, every member will be allowed to make his opinion without having to adhere to the party view on this.

UNDP allocates \$91 million to support elections

Dailies (18 Dec) report that the NEC signed an agreement Thursday 17 December with the UNDP and Ministry of International Cooperation according to which the UN will provide \$91 million to support the Sudan's upcoming elections. An amount of \$18 million was received and the rest will consecutively be granted until the end of the electoral process. A source at NEC said the fund will cover areas related to elections administration including ballot cards and boxes, civic education and awareness campaigns. The fund will also help in the training of election officers and local police to provide security during elections, the paper adds.

According to **Xinhua** news agency the NEC said that UNDP will run the programme, which is funded by the governments of Italy, United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Japan, Netherlands, France and the European Commission. NEC Chairman Abil Alier said that the programme indicated commitment of the international partners to support the electoral process in the country. "With the financial support, provided by the donors, the NEC can affirm its ability to organize free, fair and credible elections", he said. The Sudanese government signed an

agreement earlier with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which will grant 25 million dollars, as the first installment, in support of the electoral process.

Conference on coexistence begins in Warrap State

Al-Sahafa reports a conference on peace and coexistence between Warrap State's tribes convened yesterday in Western Tonj under the theme "together for peace" with participation of executive, legal, religious and political leaders besides representatives of the international organizations.

Pagan leads SPLM high level delegation to Cairo

Al-Akhbar (18 Dec) reports an SPLM high level delegation headed by Secretary General Pagan Amum left Khartoum on Saturday heading to Cairo in a three-day visit. Pagan told the paper that the visit comes after the Egyptian Government extended an invitation to the movement to discuss various issues of common interest between the two countries. He added that discussions will include recent political developments in Sudan. Pagan will be accompanied by Nhial Deng, Deng Alor and Yassir Arman, all of whom are members of the movement's Political Committee tasked to discuss outstanding and future issues with the NCP, the paper adds.

Pagan denies Machar's resignation

Al-Ray Al-Aam (19 Dec) reports the SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum, in a statement to *Al-Shoroq TV*, denied the information circulated on the resignation of GoSS Vice President Riek Machar, adding that "is merely a misleading rumor". Before his travel to Egypt, Pagan said his movement would unify its positions to face the recent CPA challenges.

Eastern Equatoria State calls for urgent food assistance

Al-Raed reports the Minister of Information and Communications at the Eastern Equatoria State Ben Luki confirmed the urgent need of the state to food assistance. Luki told *Miraya FM* that residents in some parts of the State had left their areas as precautionary step ahead of the looming famine. Luki called for urgent intervention from the part of humanitarian organizations to respond to the deteriorating humanitarian situation.

Gutbi Al-Mahdi: Foreign organizations need to shift priorities in Darfur

Dailies report the Secretary for Organizations at the NCP Gutbi Al-Mahdi stressed that the current stage requires a different approach from UN agencies and the organisations operating in Darfur with regard to the humanitarian action priorities. He said this approach should focus on the return of IDPs to their areas, security and the provision of the basic services. He said the mandate of international organizations is renewed every year by the relevant authorities and warned that any organisation that does not abide by the agreement will have its mandate canceled and will be asked to leave the territories. Meanwhile, Al-Mahdi hailed the role played by the national organizations especially in the provision of the services usually provided by the international organizations.

SPLA foils LRA fresh attacks in Bahr El-Gazal

Sudan Tribune reported that the SPLA said Ugandan LRA rebels attempted to attack Kor-Al-Madina in Western Bahr-EI-Gazal at Raja County. One chief is reportedly killed and one small girl abducted by LRA armed men. "On the December 17, 2009 at 8am, LRA attacked Darfur IDP camp in Kor-Al-Madina, one of the villages of Raja County. Eleven SPLA soldier managed to fight LRA in that camp and IDPs were protected by our forces," said official spokesman Major General Kuol Deim Kuol. "Our SPLA forces had so much of intelligence to discover the

attempted attack and successful situation was brought under control," Kuol disclosed. Kuol said that on December 15, LRA had attempted to attack Kor-Al-Madina. "Our battalion 308 which was developed in that village did wonderful work. The LRA before they could come to the villages, they killed area chief and abducted one small girl." "For the last two days, our forces were perusing LRA," he added. Deim also noted that the numbers of abducted people are not yet clear. "We did not get actual numbers of abducted people".

The Ugandan Army spokesperson Lt Col Felix Kulayigye Saturday told *Sudan Tribune* that, "Kony is believed to be hiding in Western Bahr El Ghazal, where the Ugandan Army continue to hunt him down, however *Sudan Tribune* could not verify this claim independently.

The Ugandan Army Spokesperson dismissed reports citing LRA to be regrouping in northern Congo, calling it "rubbish, the UPDF is on the ground, there is no way LRA can strike."

Election observers concerned over Sudan crackdown

Reuters reported that election observers in Sudan said on Friday 18 December they were gravely concerned about government crackdowns on opposition rallies that undermined "political rights and fundamental freedoms" ahead of polls in April. International observers from the Carter Centre called on the government to investigate reports of police brutality during the rallies, end arbitrary arrests and release "persons detained while conducting peaceful political activities". "The Centre is gravely concerned by the recent action of the security forces in Khartoum to restrict legitimate activity related to the exercise of freedom of assembly, association and speech," a report by the observers said. It also condemned attacks on the offices of north Sudan's dominant National Congress Party in two towns in south Sudan, and reports of harassment of minority parties in the south.

The report congratulated Sudan on holding a broadly peaceful voter registration exercise which, authorities said, reached more than three quarters of eligible voters in Africa's largest state. But it said authorities needed to step up checks of voter lists compiled during the six-week registration, particularly in four states which reported they had signed up more than 100 percent of the estimated electorate.

The report said there were also concerns about continued public ignorance about the election process, low registration in Khartoum and some other states, and the intimidating presence of security officers at registration centres in strife-torn Darfur region. "While the registration of a relatively high level of eligible voters is a positive development in Sudan's electoral process, additional steps are needed to ensure the accuracy of the voter lists and to build confidence in the broader process," the report said. The Carter Centre called on Sudan to launch more voter education programmes in Darfur and other areas with low registration numbers, and to compile and publish voter lists, to allow checks by parties and members of the public.

Sudan court upholds death penalty against US diplomat assassins

Sudan Tribune reported that a Sudanese court rejected appeal by four men who were sentenced to death for assassinating a USAID employee and his driver last year prompting angry reaction from their families according to *Al-Raed* newspaper. The paper reported that in addition the convicts were also required to pay money and damages to the vehicle that the victims were riding when they were shot at. Following the decision, the families of the assassins accused the court of ruling based on political considerations rather than judicial ones.

South Sudan postpones CPA anniversary celebrations to later day

Sudan Tribune reports that the fifth annual CPA celebration has been postponed from its traditional day of 9th January to 19th January 2010. The postponement was requested by the chairperson of the celebrations preparatory committee, Dr. Luka Tombekana Monoja, who is also the GoSS minister of Cabinet Affairs. This decision, according to the government's spokesperson, Paul Mayom Akech, was to give time for the necessary preparations to make the

celebrations a success.

One H1N1 flu death case reported in Sudan

Xinhua cites *Akhir Lahza* newspaper reports that one H1N1 flu death case was reported in the capital of Sudan on Sunday. Sources told the paper that there were another three H1N1 flu cases in quarantine centers, two in Khartoum hospitals and the other at a hospital in Omdurman. The *Sudanese Media Center* (SMC) reported at its website that the Sudanese federal Ministry of Health had requested the WHO to provide it with its share of swine flu vaccines so that the ministry could implement its new strategy to combat the disease. The director of the Epidemiology Directorate at the ministry, Babikir al-Magboul, told the SMC that the vaccine was requested to be used according to specific strategy at a recommendation by the WHO. "The WHO recommended immunization of the health cadres and other categories exposed to danger of the diseases including children aged less than one year, pregnant women and elderly people besides persons suffering from chronic diseases such as heart, chest, kidney and liver diseases". As for safety of the vaccine, al-Magboul affirmed to the SMC that the WHO authenticated safety of the vaccine and that the organization is known for its keenness on safety of the nationals of its member states. He further noted that the manufacturers of the vaccine were subject to international monitoring by the WHO to verify quality of their products.

Uneasy truce in South Sudan town

(BBC) 19 Jan - *More than 2,000 people have died in tribal clashes in Sudan in the past year, prompting fears the country is heading towards another civil war five years after its last conflict ended. Will Ross travelled to southern Sudan to assess tensions in a town caught between two armies.*

Luckily it is the dry season. Yes it is baking hot, but at least the town of Malakal is not a quagmire and the mosquitoes are thankfully off duty.

"I'd be very happy to give you an interview, but not until I've had my two cups of tea," the head of Malakal hospital told me. Like many southern Sudanese, Dr Gabriel Gatwech is extremely tall and has in the past had to run for his life because of war. Post-tea, the doctor told me that since the outbreak of peace five years ago, the hospital was now better staffed. "I worked here as a doctor during the 1990s but I had to leave when the security forces falsely accused us of treating the rebels." "Many doctors could not work," he told me, as a nurse used an ear trumpet to check on the health of an expectant mother's unborn child. Malakal is in the south of Sudan but during the civil war it was a garrison town under the control of the Islamic north. The mix of mosques and churches points to a place which straddles the two sides. Even today it remains extremely tense. "To be frank," Dr Gatwech tells me, "Northern and Southern Sudanese cannot live peacefully together. There is a total lack of trust."

According to the peace agreement, the southerners will, in a year's time, choose whether to cut ties with the Islamic north and become fully independent.

But I met plenty of people who suspect the north will not allow the south to secede.

"The north does not want to lose the oil fields or the agricultural land," said Joshua Leek, the High Deacon of Malakal's Episcopal Church, whose white hair matches the colour of his cassock. Sitting on wooden benches in the mud-walled church, he said he feared the north would block the referendum on independence and push the two sides back to war.

Under the peace deal, the soldiers from the north and the south were supposed to have merged to form an integrated force for Malakal. So has this worked?

Joshua Leek made it clear that the answer was no, and Malakal's scenario was representative of what was going on in the entire country. "You have northern troops on one side of the town and the soldiers from the south on the other. And we, the people, are stuck between them," he said.

Earlier this year, the hospital staff were once again treating the wounded. The two armies had, not for the first time since the peace deal, sent tanks out onto the muddy streets of Malakal and

they had fought each other.

We had managed to arrange a meeting with the head of the northern forces in Malakal.

I sat next to the brigadier on a comfortable sofa, along with an Arabic translator, and was about to ask him about the allegation that the northern army was using southern militia to fuel the tribal divisions and destabilise the south. Then he insisted we do the interview together with the head of the SPLA, or southern army. "You see we are now an integrated force so we should talk as one," he said. His words seemed rather at odds with the 10 or so tanks belonging to the northern army that were outside his office. We headed across town together.

After more hearty handshakes, soon we had a colonel from the southern army and the brigadier from the north in adjacent armchairs.

Luck was on our side and the ceiling fans were switched off in preparation for our radio interview. We were set for a scoop. "Hang on," said the colonel as he snapped open his mobile phone, "I need to get permission from my superiors." So close but yet so far.

There was no interview and I left the room with one photograph of the two men, now squeezed on to the same sofa.

On the outskirts of Malakal, returning refugees were building new homes of reed walls and grass thatch. A huge mechanical digger was creating clouds of dust as it ploughed furrows between the huts, churning up the ground searching for anti-personnel mines - laid by the northern forces to keep the southern rebels out during the war. Since November, 200 unexploded mines have been found, so not surprisingly at the primary schools, mine awareness lessons are still a vital part of the curriculum. We then walked straight into trouble. While interviewing two students at a tea shop, we were hauled over by swaggering men with exceptionally short fuses. "Get in the car," one of them yelled. We were detained for hours even though we had all the correct paperwork. Our permits were from Juba, the capital of the south. The men with short fuses were from the National Security Office, headquartered in the north. We were stuck in the middle. They shouted and we grovelled. Banned from working, we were later set free.

The same cannot be said for the people of Malakal who sit nervously between two armies, which have clearly not yet buried the hatchet.

Sudan climate negotiator 'Holocaust' remarks prompt angry response

According to the *Sudan Tribune* report the Sudanese negotiator representing the Group of 77 and China bloc of 130 poor nations was criticized following his statements likening the climate-change deal reached in Copenhagen to the Holocaust. "It is asking Africa to sign a suicide pact, an incineration pact in order to maintain the economic dependence of a few countries," said Lumumba Stanislas Di-Aping of Sudan. "It is a solution based on values that funneled six million people in Europe into furnaces" he added.

Sudan is amongst 15 countries listed as the most vulnerable countries to the impact of climate change in Africa in a report released in Copenhagen at the UN climate summit by the International Institute for Environment and Development. It says that Sudan is vulnerable to drought, floods, extreme heat and shifts in the rainy season and that these climate hazards will have a negative effect on health.

Ed Miliband, Britain's climate minister, condemned the "disgusting comparison" adding that it "should offend people across this conference whatever background they come from". The Sudanese official had accused Danish Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen of bias against developing nations.

UN climate talks ended with a bare-minimum agreement on Saturday when delegates "noted" an accord struck by the United States, China and other emerging powers that falls far short of the conference's original goals. Di-Aping was reportedly angered by the positions of China and India for agreeing to the accord.

Sudan says human rights situation in Darfur 'better'

AFP reports that during a government-backed conference in El Fasher on Saturday government officials said that the security and human rights in Sudan's western war-ridden Darfur region are getting better. "Everything points to a progression, to an improvement in the human rights situation in Darfur," Hassabo Mohammed Abdel Rahman, the country's humanitarian aid chief, told **AFP**. The governor of north Darfur, Osman Mohammed Yussef Kebir, said: "Recovery in Darfur has much progressed," and spoke of "normalisation of civilian life."

Both officials were speaking on the sidelines of a conference on human rights in Darfur, organised with government support by a Sudanese rights group and the Al-Jazeera satellite television channel.

"The most important indicator (of an improvement) is the voluntary return home of people who were displaced," Abdel Rahman said. He said around 450,000 people -- refugees who had been in neighbouring Chad, people living in camps in Darfur and others affected by the conflict -- returned to their villages in 2009.

On Thursday the Brussels-based International Crisis Group warned that Sudan is heading towards "violent breakup" because of the lack of implementation of peace deals between Khartoum and the west, south and east of the country.

"Sudan is sliding towards violent breakup," the think tank said in a report entitled "Sudan: Preventing Implosion." "Unless the international community, notably the US, the UN, the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Horn of Africa Inter-Government Authority on Development (IGAD), cooperate to support (peace deals), return to north-south war and escalation of conflict in Darfur are likely," the ICG said.

It recommended adding an additional protocol on Darfur to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement or CPA, signed in 2005 to end two decades of war between north and south, in order to "unite the several peace processes."