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Highlights

Elections Special:

NCP, SPLM agree to hold elections, referendum on schedule

Al-Akhbar reports that the NCP headed by Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie and the SPLM headed by Secretary General Pagan Amum have agreed in Cairo to hold elections and referendum on schedule. Sources said that Egypt, which hosted the meeting, emphasized the need to keep Sudan united.

Egypt seeking Sudan's elections and referendum delay - report

Sudan Tribune website 22/2/10 – The Egyptian Government is seeking to convince the two major partners in Sudan's Government of national unity to delay both the national elections and the referendum in the South of the country, a newspaper reported today.

The London-based **Al-Sharq Al-Awsat** newspaper quoted informed sources in Khartoum as saying that the proposal was put forward during the summit hosted by Cairo between the NCP and the SPLM over the last three days.

Sudan Tribune has been able to confirm that Cairo has proposed a postponement to elections.

According to the Egyptian media, one of the major points of disagreements between the two sides is the application of the Islamic Shari'a law in the country.

The Sudanese Undersecretary of Foreign affairs Mutrif Sideeg and member of the NCP delegation said that this position is not negotiable.

Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper said that Cairo proposed postponing the national elections scheduled for April and the 2011 referendum pending resolution of the North-South disputed items and a peaceful settlement to the Darfur crisis.

However, an official at the National Elections Committee (NEC) told the newspaper that such a move would create confusion in the whole process which was already rescheduled two times.

Political parties (Juba Alliance) to hold decisive meeting this week

At a meeting convened at the residence of FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit in Khartoum yesterday, leaders of the Juba Coalition including Kiir, Umma Party leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi, Communist Party leader Nugud, PCP leader Hassan Al-Turabi and URRP leader Mubarak Al-Fadil Al-Mahdi agreed to hold a decisive meeting during this week to take a common position on the upcoming elections, **Al-Sahafa** reports. Umma Party leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi has supported the postponement of elections if the Darfur crisis is resolved but demanded the formation of a national government to supervise elections and referendum. The meeting was called by Kiir to brief the leaders on the recent agreement between the SPLM and the NCP at the Presidency level. According to **the Citizen**, the Democratic Unionist Party has threatened to boycott the elections if they are proved unfair. The SPLM expressed readiness to discuss all issues including postponement of the elections.

Voting cards color codes confirmed by NEC

Miraya FM reported that the NEC has determined the color codes for voting cards in April's general elections.

Voting cards for the President of the Republic will be green, Governorship cards will be yellow, National Assembly cards, brown and State's Legislative Assemblies will be color coded grey. South Sudan's Legislative Assembly voting cards will be blue.

<http://www.mirayafm.org/index.php/sudan/2043-voting-cards-color-codes-confirmed-by-nec>

SPLM vows to win upcoming country wide elections

Sudan Tribune website 22/2/10 — SPLM leading member James Wani Igga said in Juba that chances of his party to win upcoming national elections were high.

"We are optimistic that results of the upcoming national elections will come out in our favor; because most of our contesting candidates for top positions are those with history of commitment to changing Sudan to a better country," Igga said.

He said SPLM is the only credible political party that can rehabilitate Sudan from the damages it has suffered for so long. "SPLM is the only medicine for all political illness affecting Sudanese people in the South, in the far north, far East and in the war ravaged region of Darfur," he stressed.

Western Equatoria State reports election intimidation

Sudan tribune website 22/2/10 – An independent candidate vying for the Andari constituency, Ezo County in Western Equatoria State, has confirmed intimidation from the local security forces.

The independent candidate who identified himself as Ettore Mbembe told **Sudan Tribune** that, "My fellow competitor former commissioner of Ezo, Peter Jamus contesting on SPLM ticket has reported [me] to SPLA to disrupt my campaign."

Local opinion leaders say, Mbembe is the favorite and people's choice over SPLM's Jamus.

A number of intimidation reports are coming out of a tense Yambio with residents already protesting the "come back" of a "controversial" Police Commissioner who reportedly ordered live bullets to be fired on school goers following the CPA anniversary celebrations.

The Governor's move to reinstate the Police Commissioner has been seen by locals as a defiant move against the ad hoc committee which accused the Governor and Police Commissioner of being responsible for violence that targeted 83 students in the wake of the anniversary celebrations hosted by the state.

Independents candidates in Western Equatoria State are seeking the intervention of the international community (UNMIS) and the NEC to help address the issue of poll-related intimidation.

Safe and peaceful elections campaigning in Malakal

Miraya FM 22/2/10 reported that in Malakal, capital of Upper Nile State, the electoral process is continuing in a steady and peaceful manner. When Miraya FM asked political campaigners on measures taken to ensure safe and peaceful elections, many stressed the importance of maintaining peace for the sake of the state and the people of Upper Nile.

Parties have been cooperating with protocol officers to ensure that campaigning does not turn

violent. Women agents involved in the State's electoral process are firm about not resorting to violence. Many have said it is not in a woman's nature to turn aggressive. The electoral process, women electoral participants said, is a good learning experience.

Government, JEM to sign agreement in Doha today

The Sudanese Government and the JEM will sign today in Doha a framework agreement that was initialed in Chad to end war in Darfur, *local dailies* report. President Al-Bashir, Chad's Idriss Deby and Issias Afwerki of Eritrea are already in Doha to convene a summit meeting in the presence of Emir of Qatar before the signing ceremony. *Al-Rai Al-Aam* reports President Al-Bashir has said in Qatar that today's agreement would be the beginning of end of the war in Darfur, adding that relations between Sudan and Chad would be stronger than ever. JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim visited Libya to brief Kaddafi on the text of the agreement before proceeding to Doha to sign. Khalil invited Kaddafi to attend the signing ceremony.

Sudan to offer government posts to Darfur rebels - documents

Reuters 23/2/10 - Sudan will offer Darfur's JEM government positions as part of a peace deal, according to documents setting out the terms of negotiations seen by Reuters today.

The documents are the first concrete sign that Khartoum is prepared to share power with its bitter foe - a development that could alienate the government's existing allies in the western region and complicate preparations for April elections.

Sudanese president Omar Al-Bashir was due to sign a ceasefire and "framework" deal, listing agreements to be fleshed out in further negotiation, with JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim in Qatari capital Doha today.

According to a French language copy of the framework agreement, JEM and Khartoum agreed to "The participation of the JEM at all levels of government (executive, legislative) in a manner to be agreed subsequently between the two parties."

Peace will prevail in Darfur before the coming elections," Bashir was quoted as saying by SUNA late on Monday. Other rebels have rejected the deal.

JEM is widely thought to control the biggest military insurgent force in Darfur and carried out an unprecedented attack on Khartoum in 2008.

Ibrahim and Sudanese officials signed an initial version framework agreement in Chad on Saturday which also includes a ceasefire, plans to integrate JEM into Sudan's army and a promise to reach a final peace deal by March 15.

Tuesday's event has been billed as the "official signing".

The signing comes almost exactly a year after Khartoum and JEM met in Doha to agree to a set of "confidence building measures" designed to pave the way to the framework agreement and then full peace talks.

The process stalled after JEM accused Khartoum of attacking its positions days after the ceasefire and of failing to follow through on the agreed measures, including freeing JEM captives.

Bashir on Saturday canceled death sentences handed out to more than 100 men accused of

taking part in JEM's attack on Khartoum and promised to free 30 percent of them "immediately".

Authorities at Khartoum's Kober prison on Monday told Reuters they were still waiting for orders to free inmates.

JEM negotiator Ahmed Tugud confirmed the wording of the framework agreement. "This is not about getting government positions for JEM commanders and fighters. We represent the people of Darfur ... This is a new phase for the participation of the people of Darfur."

Tugud said JEM would push for the postponement of elections as part of the "power-sharing" negotiations. JEM and other rebels say elections would be a farce during the conflict.

Tugud said the new deal would also have an impact on the position of former Darfur rebel leader Minni Arcua Minnawi, appointed as senior presidential assistant, after his SLA faction signed a deal with Khartoum in 2006. "He will take part but there is no room for Minni to have the upper hand," he said.

Kiir visits Defence Ministry premises

FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit yesterday visited the Defence Ministry premises where he was briefed on the security situation in the country and the support the JIUs needed to secure elections, *Al-Rai Al-Aam* reports.

Kiir praised the development the Defence Minister has witnessed and directed the improvement of relations between the SAF and the SPLA.

South Sudan clashes kill 28

AFP 23/2/10 reports at least 28 people have been killed in the latest outbreak of clashes in the South Sudan's Lakes state, a military spokesman said today.

More than 35 civilians and soldiers were wounded in the clashes between tribes which also pitted tribes against the military since Thursday in the state's Cueibet area, Major General Kuol Diem Kuol told AFP.

"On the side of the civilians, there were more than 21 killed in the clashes and more than 30 are wounded," said Kuol of the southern Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA).

"There are seven SPLA killed, including two officers, and seven wounded in action," he added.

Fighting began after the Gok Dinka people were attacked by rival Rek Dinka, with the Gok Dinka then trying to break into a weapons store in Cueibet to retrieve guns collected in a disarmament campaign, he said.

"It is a worrying matter that civilians should try to break into a military store," said Kuol. "The people want the guns, but this is an action of anarchy."

The situation in the Lakes state is mostly calm today, Kuol added. "The area is under control, and a high-level delegation from the military and the state authorities have gone to resolve matters there."

Tensions in the south have been on the rise ahead of elections, amid fears that the political contest could spark fresh violence between rival groups.

According to ***Sudan Tribune website*** 22/2/10, an official said that 30 people were confirmed dead and over 30 people were wounded in clashes between the SPLA soldiers and armed civilians in Cueibet County in Lakes State. Six or seven SPLA soldiers were also confirmed dead and seven were injured.

But Lakes state deputy governor Lt-Col David Nok Marial said that a reliable source had told him that only 18 civilians were dead and about 30 people were reportedly sustained serious injuries. Many civilians have fled since the confrontation started, with elderly people and women plus children suffering under the trees, he said. He called upon UN agencies to rush with humanitarian assistance to the victims.

SPLA official spokesperson Maj. Gen. Kuol Deim Kuol said one of the army's captains was captured and killed in the wake of the fighting by angry armed civilians. The captain was traveling to home on leave with the dead body of his brother who had died in Juba. Also, a first lieutenant was killed in the attack.

South Sudan asks financial institutions to reduce "excessive" charges

Sudan Tribune website 22/2/10 —The GoSS has asked financial institutions in the region to reduce what it described as "excessive" charges saying banks should make significant adjustments to these fees.

David Deng Athorbei, GoSS Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, said there is need to make some meaningful efforts in addressing the high cost of banking services in the region.

"It is astonishing that financial institutions increase fees without consulting with concerned authorities like ministry of finance and bank of South Sudan," he said.

The Minister, who spoke to reporters following a visit to commercial banks in Juba this afternoon, said "the economy has shown some resilience in the midst of the global economic crisis, banks should further reduce interest rates".

He further stated that global economy has posted some marked improvements in macroeconomic indicators and that this improvement should be reflected in financial transaction charges.

Athorbei also urged Banks to extend their services to rural areas to improve financial inclusion. He said extending to rural areas will provide the bank with new customers and hence have a higher deposit base.

He cited Ezo, Tambura in western Equatoria State, and Kapoeta in Eastern Equatoria State, Akot, and Yirol in Lakes State as some of the areas that have potential for new customers.

The Minister however said that the real challenge is for all financial sector players to play a role in enhancing savings mobilization and to effectively channel the public's savings to support financing of economic activities in the region.

"Our people have stopped saving in banks but instead keep money in pockets and their houses susceptible to robberies by gangs," he said.

He said despite the recent challenges facing the global economies, some national banks such

as ivory had remained committed to growth through its efforts to expand its branch.

Beja Congress, NCP militias clash in the East

Al-Sahafa reports that bloody clashes erupted yesterday between a group loyal to Presidential Assistant Musa Mohamed Ahmed and militias loyal to the NCP leader Suleiman Ali Beetai of Hamishureib Religious Schools. Seven of the Beja Congress' supporters were wounded, one seriously.

Beja Congress Party spokesperson Salah Barkuein said a delegation from the party visited "Talkuk" area for elections campaigning but they were ambushed by the Beetai's militias commanded by his son Mahmoud Beetai, SAF captain.

Release of JEM elements postponed

Al-Ayyam reports that the release of 30% of JEM elements sentenced to death for participation in an attack on Omdurman has been postponed because the presidential pardon has not reached the prison authorities yet, **Al-Ayyam** reports.

JEM-Kordofan consults with DDR Commission

The JEM (Kordofan Sector) which signed a recent agreement with the Government is engaged in consultations with the North Sudan DDR Commission to implement the security arrangements, **Ajras Al-Hurriya** reports.

The faction said it intends to avoid the mistakes of earlier DDR exercises, hoping a DDR office would be opened in Northern Kordofan.

Darfur rebels say Sudan attacked after ceasefire

Reuters 23/2/10 - Darfur's JEM today said they have been attacked by Government forces two days after signing a ceasefire deal.

Sudan's army denied being involved in any clashes with JEM and the rebel report was not confirmed by independent sources.

Khartoum has accused rebels of fabricating attacks in the past, but the timing of the JEM report will cast a shadow over ceremonies to ratify the ceasefire in Doha, expected later on today.

"Our comrades and garrison east of Jabel Moun (near West Darfur's border with Chad) were attacked by Government troops and militias, backed up by Antonovs (aircraft) and helicopters ... We defeated them," JEM spokesman Ahmed Hussein Adam said.

Adam said JEM would press on with signing the ceasefire agreement despite the fighting which he said took place on Monday afternoon.

"This is not correct," a Sudanese army spokesman told Reuters. "The Sudanese army is not involved in any clashes with JEM. The Sudanese army is committed to the agreement with JEM."