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Highlights

FVP met opposition leaders

Local dailies report FVP Salva Kiir yesterday held a series of separate meetings with the leaders of the political parties in a bid to ease tension between the opposition and the government. He met with NCP official Nafie Ali Nafie, Umma Party leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi, Umma Party Reform and Renewal leader Mubarak Al-Fadil Al Mahdi, PCP leader Hassan Al-Turabi, DUP leader Mohamed Osman Al-Mirghani and the Communist Party leader Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud.

According to **Sudan Tribune website** 14/7/09, He met with the main opposition parties to explain the position of his party on their demand for a broad-based national government.

Sudanese opposition parties had expressed their fears that the dominant party, the NCP, could commit voter fraud in 2010 elections and requested the formation of a national government to conduct the first free election expected in February next year.

They also said the current government formed after the signing of the CPA had lost its legitimacy and it is unconstitutional since July 9th.

Speaking to the media following his meeting with the Umma party leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi, Kiir reiterated the SPLM's commitment to Sudan's unity. He stressed that there would be no return to war and his party was working with the NCP and the other political parties to make unity an attractive option for southerners.

Al Mahdi said Kiir had explained why he considers the government to be legitimate. He noted that they understood and appreciated SPLM's position toward the opposition.

The DUP leader Mohamed Osman Al-Mirghani told reporters after his meeting with Kiir that they dealt with the importance of maintaining the unity of Sudan. He also recalled the Mirghani – Garang pact signed in November 1988, which endorsed the unity of the people and territory of Sudan. He stressed that this agreement was binding on the DUP and the SPLM, calling to strive for its implementation.

Kiir also met late yesterday with Hassan Al-Turabi, the leader of the Popular Congress Party. Turabi said in press statements following the meeting that they discussed the situation in the disputed Abyei area and the verdict on the region, adding that Abyei is a vital channel between the North and the South.

He added that their talks touched on the upcoming elections and the need for more freedoms to allow the different political parties to disseminate their platforms.

Meanwhile, Mubarak Al-Fadil Al-Mahdi, the chairman of the Umma Reform and Renewal Party, said he had agreed with the views of the First Vice-President on the need for a deep dialogue with all political forces including the NCP.

Mubarak, who is the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee of Juba Conference of Sudanese political parties, added that Sudanese political forces are working to push southerners to vote

for unity.

Kiir is also expected to meet with the Secretary General of the Sudanese Communist party.

In the absence of President Al-Bashir, who is in Egypt leading Sudan's delegation to the meeting of the non-aligned movement, Salva Kiir assumes the presidency until Al-Bashir's return.

PCA ends controversy over ruling date

Al-Sahafa reports the PCA has ended the controversy over Abyei arbitration ruling date by announcing that the decision would be made public on Wednesday 22 July at an official ceremony to be attended by official and popular representatives from the two sides. The Court yesterday informed the NCP and the SPLM about the date for the announcement of the ruling, saying representatives of the region's population, media and officials may attend the ceremony. The court also said it would invite all the institutions that had witnessed the CPA signing as well as the AEC chairman. GoSS Presidency Minister Luka Biong said they had been officially informed about the date. Government representative on Abyei Al-Dirdiri Mohamed Ahmed said the court agreed to the Sudan government's proposal to hold a ceremony in The Hague to mark the event. He said although the government's request for delay of announcement was not entertained but the fixed date is welcome.

According to **Al-Ahdath**, Biong said the ruling would be announced on July 22nd at 10 am.

US envoy Gration arrived in Khartoum

Sudan Radio reports US envoy Scott Gration arrived in Khartoum yesterday on ten-day official visit. According to **Al-Sahafa**, the government is expecting a breakthrough on pending issues between Khartoum and Washington. FM Deng Alor told reporters yesterday that the two partners disagreed on many issues but a breakthrough is possible. Meanwhile, Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie asked whether President Obama's remarks about genocide in Darfur would impact dialogue between the two countries, he said dialogue with the US Administration would not be discontinued.

SPLM SG lashes out against NCP leaders

SPLM SG Pagan Amum has criticized some NCP MPs for calling to make self-determination for Southern Sudan a difficult option, **Akhbar Al-Youm** reports. At a press conference yesterday in Juba, Amum accused the NCP of dragging its feet on the referendum bill as was the case with the census results. He also accused the NCP of attempt to create insecurity in the South by funding and providing arms to southerners to fight each other and to distort GoSS image.

Uganda apologizes to Sudan's Bashir over ICC remarks - SUNA

Sudan Tribune website 14/7/09 — The Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni phoned his Sudanese counterpart Omer Al-Bashir over remarks made by one of his cabinet ministers on cooperation with the ICC for his arrest.

The Ugandan official added that his country is committed to the African Union (AU) decision in Libya this month instructing its members who have ratified the Rome Statute not to cooperate in apprehending the Sudanese president Omer Al-Bashir despite their legal obligations to do so.

Sudan criticizes Obama for calling Darfur genocide

AP 14/7/09 - Sudan government has criticized President Barack Obama for calling the conflict in Darfur a "genocide."

There has been a long-running debate over whether to characterize the conflict between Sudan's Arab-led government and ethnic African rebels in Darfur as genocide. Obama and his predecessor both called it that, but the **U.N. never has**.

Presidential Advisor Ghazi Salah Eddin Atabani, said Monday that Obama's comment was "regrettable."

Government builds up troops to attack rebels in Jebel Marra - IDPs

Sudan Tribune website 14/7/09 — Darfur IDPs said yesterday that Sudanese army is building up troops near Jebel Marra in western Darfur in order to dislodge fighters of a rebel group that refuse to take part in the Doha peace process from the area.

Hussein Abu Sharati, the IDPs spokesperson said they have fears that the displaced populations which reside in different camps surrounding the 10,000-foot-high volcanic rock could be affected by the attack.

Many of the IDPs that had already been displaced several times since the conflict began in 2003, are living in camps around the Jebel Marra in areas as Dom Jong, Fujo, Fatma Karal, Kutrum, Kwila, Boldong, Kati and Kurifal.

Abu Sharati told Sudan Tribune from Darfur that International community should dissuade and press Khartoum from carrying attack on the mountainous areas.

He said army closed main routes in the region: Geneina –Nyala, Nyala El-Fasher and Melit El-Fasher to transport troops.

Al-Nur troops based in the mountains say they observe ceasefire they signed in 2004 with Khartoum and do not take parts in the attacks against the government troops.

However the rebel group refuses to join the Doha peace process asking the government to disarm the militias and to organize the return of IDPs to their homes.

Kidnappers of aid workers demand \$ 2 million ransom

Miraya FM 14/7/09 - The kidnappers of two foreign female aid workers in Darfur demanded a two million US dollar ransom for their release. The government refused to pay the ransom saying that it contradicts with its policy. The State Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, Abdel Baqi Al Jilani, said that accepting the kidnappers' demand would encourage others to do the same.

He further said the government prefers to negotiate through local leaders in Darfur to resolve this issue.

SUDAN: Improvements in education - but mainly for the boys

IRIN 13/7/09 - School enrolment across Southern Sudan has trebled since a 2005 peace agreement ended almost 20 years of war with the north, but the number of girls in class has remained significantly lower than for boys, a new report said.

Commissioned by the Southern Sudanese Education, Science and Technology ministry, the report on Socio-Economic and Cultural Barriers to Schooling in Southern Sudan attributed the low female enrolment to socio-cultural values, norms and practices, with economic realities superimposed on them.

"These factors exert their influence from birth, through the child-rearing practices followed by different communities, initiation and marriage, to old age," it noted. "In some communities... the girl-child is prized for the labour she provides to the family, and for the dowry she brings. This pushes up the opportunity cost of educating a girl, and exposes her to early marriage."

The report was released on 7 July by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to mark Girl's Education Day in Southern Sudan. Only one in five children was in school during the war, it noted, but only one girl in 100 completed a full course of primary schooling. The region has the lowest school enrolment in the world.

"Southern Sudan is considered one of the regions that are seriously off-track in as far as attainment of the Millennium Development Goals is concerned as well as that of attaining universal primary completion," it said.

After the peace agreement, gross enrolment rose by about 23 percent in 2003 and by 35 percent in 2008, and is projected to rise by 55 percent in 2011.

"Following the launch of the Go-To-School initiative on 1 April 2006, enrolment has risen from the wartime estimate of 343,000 to 850,000 by December 2006, and to over 1.3 million by December 2007," the report of a study conducted between August and October 2008, stated.

The schools, however, still lack adequate facilities, including appropriate sanitary provisions for girls. In 2005, more than 80 percent of school-children had no bench to sit on and only 33 percent of schools had latrines. There is also a shortage of trained teachers.

In some communities, boys were missing school because they had to look after cattle or go fishing, noted the study, while the girls in some schools experienced sexual harassment, early pregnancy and child-to-child violence.

A school head in Malakal, Upper Nile State, said many girls could not study to higher levels because they were expected to get married.

"Many guardians are still reluctant to let their girls go to school," Williams Gatmon, the head of Both Diu basic school, told IRIN in Malakal. "Among the Southern Sudanese, it is very important for a girl to marry and bring home the dowry."

"The girls particularly find it hard to go to higher schools," Gatmon said on 7 July.

Set up by the Southern Sudanese government in 2002, mainly to cater for returnee children, the school had 75 female students out of 500 pupils. The girls, aged eight to 20, were enrolled in all classes from four to eight.

The school teaches in English, except for a year-eight Arabic class.

The numbers were higher at Akobo town primary school in Jonglei State. The school, which has classes one to eight, had enrolled 960 girls out of 1,695 children from ages six to 20, according to the headmaster Bhan Tut.

There were two female teachers on the staff of 23. "The school has received a lot of support

since the [2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement] – books and other supplies," Tut told IRIN. "The challenge is to pay the teachers on time. As we speak, we last received salaries in April."

EU blacklists Kazakh, Zambian airlines, praises Indonesian checks

Dpa 14/7/09 - EU on Tuesday blacklisted flights by almost all carriers from Kazakhstan and Zambia on safety grounds, but hailed the work of Indonesia's safety authorities as it cleared four Indonesian airlines to enter Europe.

"Safety deficiencies identified in the system of oversight by the aviation authorities of Zambia and Kazakhstan led to an operating ban on all carriers from these two countries, with the exception of the Kazakh air carrier Air Astana," the EU's executive, the European Commission, said in a statement.

At the same time, "the significant improvements and accomplishments of the Indonesian civil aviation authority are recognized in the area of safety," the statement said.

As a result, four Indonesian airlines - Garuda Indonesia, Airfast Indonesia, Mandala Airlines and Premiair - have been taken off the blacklist and allowed to fly in the EU.

At the other end of the scale, the bloc took Thai airline One Two Go off the list because the Thai authorities have cancelled its flying license.

The changes leave nine airlines on the EU's blacklist: Air Koryo (North Korea), **Air West (Sudan)**, Aria Afghan, Siem Reap airways (Cambodia), Silverback Cargo (Rwanda) and Motor Sich, Ukraine Cargo Airways, Ukrainian Mediterranean Airlines and Volare (all Ukraine).

In addition, all the airlines from 11 countries - a total of 246 carriers - are also banned. The countries are Angola, Benin, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Swaziland and Zambia.

Despite the lifting of the ban on four Indonesian airlines, 47 more are still on the list.

Inquiry urged after Sudan women flogged for trousers

Reuters 14/7/09 - A senior Sudanese politician called on Tuesday for an inquiry into reports young women from Sudan's Christian south had been flogged for defying Islamic law by wearing trousers in Khartoum.

Police arrested 13 young women earlier this month, accusing them of wearing indecent clothes in a Khartoum cafe, and later flogged 10 of them, one of the arrested women told journalists.

Lubna Hussein, who works as an information officer for the U.N. mission in Khartoum, said some of the women detained with her were from southern Sudan, where most of the population is Christian.

Khartoum, along with all of Sudan's Muslim north, operates under Islamic sharia law, but the punishment of residents of the capital originating from the south remains a sensitive issue.

Yasir Arman, a senior SPLM member told **Reuters** he was calling for an investigation into the case to see why the southern women were not given greater protection.

"We condemn this in the strongest terms. It is an infringement of the rights of women and youths. I believe Commission for the Rights of Non-Muslims in the National Capital should look

into it," he said, referring to a body set up under the 2005 accord.

Arman said hundreds of southern women were also regularly punished for brewing alcohol in Khartoum.

"They are being punished for something that is acceptable in the south. This is one of the paradoxes that is undermining the chances of unity of Sudan".

In New York, U.N. spokeswoman Marie Okabe said U.N. officials in Khartoum had contacted authorities about Hussein to ensure a UN-Sudan agreement on the status of the mission was respected "and that basic human rights are upheld in the context of national laws governing such issues."

U.N. officials said the United Nations interpreted the agreement to mean that members of the mission were immune from judicial proceedings but that Sudan did not accept that applied to Sudanese nationals.