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IN THE NEWS TODAY:

• **Government of National Unity**

- Sudanese president returns home after Yemeni summit
- Sudanese president vows to make unity attractive
- Sudanese president signs decree forming Joint Defence Council
- Sudan: Garang crash probe delayed again
- Sudan celebrates the occasion of the golden jubilee of Sudan independence, Vice President of GoS warns against serious conspiracies against Sudan
- GoSS condemns incident of Sudanese refugees killed in Cairo
- US Delegation visits Sudan Friday to discuss lifting economic sanctions
- Sudan urged to stop backing "small, volatile armed groups" in region

• **Darfur**

- Some Darfurian Rebel Activists Propose Peace initiative
- Fear, terror still stalk Sudan's Darfur -Annan

• **LRA**

- Ugandan army kills six rebels in country's north

- **Sudan, Chad relations**

- Chadian foreign minister expected in Ethiopia, opposition expresses disapproval
- Darfur rebels say Sudan plots to overthrow Chadian government
- Chad holds CEMAC meeting, says unable to attend AU mini-summit

- **Other Developments**

- Sudan closes down its embassy in Baghdad, pulls out its staff
- Increase in number of refugee victims in Cairo
- 245 Sudanese refugees decide to come back
- Czech yacht arrives in Sudan for AU summit
- Sudan does not deserve to host AU summit, opposition says
- Egyptian Foreign Ministry says Sudanese refugee sit-in had to be dispersed

HIGHLIGHTS:

Government of National Unity

Sudanese president returns home after Yemeni summit

*(BBC monitoring, Yemeni news agency, 29 Dec, **Sana'a**)* Sudanese President Umar Al-Bashir and the delegation accompanying him left Aden this afternoon after participating in the 4th summit of the Sanaa Forum for Cooperation which lasted two days.

Sudanese president vows to make unity attractive

(BBC Monitoring, Sudan Tribune, Dec 31, 2005, Khartoum) President Omar al-Bashir, has renewed keenness to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and to make the national unity as an attractive choice of both the north and the south.

During a national address on the occasion of the golden jubilee of Sudan's independence, al-Bashir pointed out that the pillars for the national unity, as included in the CPA, are represented in the free will of the people, the democratic rule, equality and justice for all the citizens, the rights of the south citizens for regional government, fair participation in the

federal government and self-determination, besides support of the national unity and making it an attractive choice.

He asserted the seriousness of the parties of the CPA to implement all the clauses of the deal.

He Pledged to establish a broad-based government to assume the rule till election of the Sudanese people to their government.

Al-Bashir expressed his pleasure over the participation of all the political parties at the institutions of the interim period, calling for an effective, responsible and objective opposition.

He said that the government will keep open the channels of constructive national dialogue.

The President announced in his address that the state will set up a committee to review the complaints of the citizens who were relieved from work for political reasons.

He reiterated the government commitment to realize economic and social development at the national and states' levels.

He emphasized the state will work to achieve sustainable development and food security and to establish strong infrastructures, boost the private sector's role and to develop the manpower.

Al-Bashir said that the CPA and the Constitution stipulated the realization of sustainable development, support to the rural development, utilization of the oil and natural resources for the interest of the Sudan people.

He said that Sudan has a role to play in the Arab region and the African continent, stressing that his country is committed to deepening African-Arab cooperation in political and economic fields.

The Sudanese government will work to ensure a complete success of an African summit in January 2006 and an Arab summit two months later, both due in Khartoum, he said.

Sudanese president signs decree forming Joint Defence Council

(BBC Monitoring, SUNA, 29 December, Khartoum): The president of the republic, FM Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, has issued a republican decree on the formation of a Joint Defence Council in accordance with the interim constitution. This took place after the National Assembly passed the joint forces law.

According to the law, the council will have a technical committee that will help it [council] carry out its duties which include coordination between the armed forces and the people's army [ex-rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army, SPLA], training of joint [army-SPLA] units and facilitating an atmosphere of trust between the armed forces and the people's army.

Sudan: Garang crash probe delayed again

(BBC monitoring, Juba Post, 29 Dec, Khartoum) The commission investigating the helicopter crash that caused the death of John Garang has again delayed its report.

President Umar al-Bashir has agreed to extend the deadline for the Sudanese fact-finding commission for the third time, without explaining what the cause of the delay was.

Bashir was briefed on Tuesday [27 December] by Abel Alier, the chairman of the committee, which was established last August. The investigation is now scheduled to end in February 2006.

Sudan celebrates the occasion of the golden jubilee of Sudan independence

Vice President of GoS warns against serious conspiracies against Sudan

(*Akhbar Alyaum* – 2nd Jan 06, **Khartoum**) Mr. Ali Othman Mohamed Taha, First Vice-president of GoS, warned - during his public speech delivered at the Republican Palace yesterday on the occasion of the golden jubilee of Sudan independence – against different conspiracies and challenges.

Further, he confirmed that the Sudanese people will eliminate and overcome such obstacles depending on its unity and its support to the peace process.

GoSS condemns incident of Sudanese refugees killed in Cairo

(*Akhbar Alyaum* – 2nd Jan 06, **Khartoum**) Efforts are still continuing to be exerted in order to identify the victims who lost their lives when the Egyptian police dispersed refugees' protest in front of Almohandsin Mosque in Cairo.

Within the context of increasing voices of protest by the civil society organizations and some Egyptian political parties, Sudanese sources announced in Cairo yesterday that 27 persons died; from amongst whom only the names of 14 bodies were identified. Others' identities are still missing.

At the same time, the GoSS, in an official Communiqué, condemned the killing of the Sudanese refugees in Cairo. Dr Reik Machar, Vice President of GoSS said that his Government came to know about the catastrophic event that had taken place in Cairo, upon which the Egyptian police forces opened fire on innocent Sudanese refugees who organized a peaceful sit-in in front of UNHCR office. He further stated that his Government was highly shocked by such incredible news.

US Delegation visits Sudan Friday to discuss lifting economic sanctions

(*AlRai AlAam* – 2nd Jan 06, **Khartoum**) A high delegation representing the US Congress will arrive in Khartoum on Friday in a two-day visit to Sudan. The delegation will discuss with respective Sudanese officials of GoS and GoSS possibilities of lifting the economic embargo that has been imposed on Sudan since the mid 1990s.

Sudan urged to stop backing "small, volatile armed groups" in region

(*BBC Monitoring, Juba Post, 29 Dec, Khartoum*) The Government of National Unity in Sudan is not only expected to unite the political forces in Sudan, and to give service to the people of Sudan, but also to establish good relationships with the neighbouring countries.

The impoverished people of Sudan cannot afford their resources to be wasted on senseless wars.

Sudan in the past has had bad relationships with most of its neighbours due to belligerent religious policies. With the signing of peace, most of the countries that had a bad relationship with Sudan are mending relations, the latest being Sudan's arch-enemy Eritrea. A number of these countries, including Uganda and Egypt, now have consulates in south Sudan. This has been a good gesture towards peace.

Unfortunately, another problem has been creeping up between Sudan and Chad since the incursion of violence in Darfur in February 2003. The Chadian President Idriss Deby has accused Sudan of backing Chadian rebels (called the 'Rally for Liberty and Democracy') and threatens to pursue them into Sudanese territory.

The Chadian president's threats are not entirely unjustified given the constant reports of Janjawid raids on Chadian villages near the two countries' borders.

Sudan, as usual, refutes the charges.

While Idriss Deby's claims of Sudanese involvement may be baseless, his accusations and consultations with the Central African Republic and Nigeria can tarnish Sudan's international image further, making representation in the AU next year unlikely. It seems improbable that the government that backed Deby's accession to power would oppose him 10 years later.

However, if many people become enemies of one person, it is that person to examine his conduct towards others. Sudan should examine and alter its policies of supporting small, volatile armed groups in neighbouring countries.

The Sudanese are tired of war and need a government that uses the resources of the country to effect internal development, not external strife.

Darfur:

Some Darfurian Rebel Activists Propose Peace initiative

(BBC Monitoring, SMC, Sunday 1 January 2006) Prominent political and military members from Darfur two rebels' movements namely SLM and JEM have demanded dissolving the movements so that they can be integrated into single faction. The movements' activists called for resolving Darfur region dispute through peaceful negotiation. The idea of forming single opened structure was imitated by seventeen members representing JEM and SLM besides other Darfurian dignitaries living inside the country and abroad. JEM activist Bushara Hussain who lives in exile in London told (smc) the idea was proposed in the event of negative impacts of dispute on the ordinary citizen in Darfur region. Hussain said that armed movements in the region have failed, to meet the aspiration of the region. He explained that Darfurian rebels movement have been committing violations against a number of towns in the region and disagreed upon themselves. Hussain said the proposal for unification was known to leaders of the two main movements. But he said SLM leader Mani Arkoy was reluctant to discuss the proposal. He added that a delegation composed of Ahmed Ibrilim Derag and Tigani Cici may visit Abuja/ Nigeria and also a similar delegation might visit Khartoum.

Fear, terror still stalk Sudan's Darfur -Annan

(BBC Monitoring, Reuters, 29 December 2005) After nearly three years of civil war in Darfur, the Sudanese government has yet to make real gains in ending militia attacks that have left tens of thousands dead, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan reported on Thursday.

"Large-scale attacks against civilians continue, women and girls are being raped by armed groups, yet more villages are being burned, and thousands more are being driven from their homes," he said in a report dated December 23 and circulated at the United Nations on Thursday.

The government has not yet been able to even identify militia leaders, and a power struggle among rebel leaders has meant the two sides remain far apart in peace talks, Annan said in his latest monthly report on Darfur to the U.N. Security Council.

Conditions on the ground continue to deteriorate in a "deeply disturbing trend" that began in September amid growing inter-tribal conflict and banditry, Annan said, adding that a recent influx of military deserters from neighbouring Chad has made the situation worse.

His glum assessment comes as the African Union, which has deployed 6,800 peacekeepers in Darfur, reassesses its mission.

The AU Commission sent a delegation to the region earlier this month, accompanied by officials from Canada, Britain, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations, in search of ways to make the peacekeeping force more effective.

Among the options being examined are a major expansion of the force and converting it to a U.N. mission.

Tens of thousands have been killed in Darfur since the conflict broke out in February 2003.

The violence threatens one of the world's largest humanitarian operations. More than 11,000 aid workers are trying to feed, clothe and shelter the more than 2 million Darfuris who fled to miserable camps to escape the fighting.

The United Nations says the Khartoum government armed Arab proxy militias to fight the rebels who say their needs are ignored by the central Arab-dominated government. The militias stand accused of a widespread campaign of rape, killing and looting, which the United States calls genocide.

The Security Council has repeatedly called on Khartoum to disarm the militias, to no avail, and the International Criminal Court is investigating alleged war crimes in Darfur.

"The vast majority of armed militia have not been disarmed, and no major steps have been taken by the government to bring to justice or even identify any of the militia leaders or the perpetrators of attacks," his latest report said.

"I strongly urge the government of the Sudan once again to take decisive steps to address these manifest failures."

A series of mid-November militia raids on more than a dozen villages in southern Darfur, in an area policed by AU peacekeepers, was "a shocking indication of the government's continuing failure to protect its own population," Annan said.

The raids killed more than 60 people and drove another 15,000 people from their homes, he said.

While aid workers were able to carry out emergency relief efforts, Annan said he was alarmed by "numerous reports" of the deliberate destruction and burning of vast areas of cultivated land, threatening future food supplies.

LRA

Ugandan army kills six rebels in country's north

(BBC Monitoring, Radio Uganda, 30 Dec, Kampala) The army has announced it killed six Lord's Resistance Army, LRA fighters on Wednesday night [28 December] in Gulu and Pader districts, along the Uganda-Sudan border.

Four SMG rifles and three rounds of ammunition were recovered. Three rebels surrendered.

UPDF [Uganda People's Defence Forces] Fifth Division Public Relations Officer Lt Deo Akiiki Asiimwe said the army had embarked on what he termed a daily harvest of LRA fighters who refuse to surrender.

Meanwhile, another group of LRA rebels escaped UPDF helicopter attacks along the Uganda-Sudan border where they burnt bushes around them, raising smoke which disabled the visibility of the helicopter crew.

Sudan, Chad relations

Chadian foreign minister expected in Ethiopia, opposition expresses disapproval

(BBC Monitoring, Radio France, 29 Dec, Paris) Chad is still trying to convince the world that it was a victim of aggression by its neighbour, Sudan. Chadian Foreign Affairs Minister Ahmat Allam is expected today evening in Addis Ababa, at the African Union headquarters.

The Chadian opposition does not agree with this strategy which involves directly accusing Khartoum for the Adre attack. The CPDC, the Coalition of Parties for the Defence of the Constitution, denounced what it called a rush decision by President Idriss Deby. The 20 parties in the coalition said they would boycott the process that should lead to presidential elections. They said they would not take part in the CENI, the electoral commission.

Darfur rebels say Sudan plots to overthrow Chadian government

(BBC Monitoring, Alwan, 30 Dec, Khartoum) The spokesman for the [Darfur] rebel Sudan Liberation Movement [SLM] Isam al-Haj yesterday in Abuja said the Sudanese government was striving to overthrow the government in Chad and the government was encouraging Chadian army deserters to wage a war against the regime in N'djamena.

Al-Haj said Sudan's efforts to change the Chadian government were part of its attempt to Arabize and Islamize neighbouring countries. Al-Haj added that part of Khartoum's plan was to weaken the two rebel movements [in Darfur], the SLM and Justice and Equality Movement, in order to weaken the Chadian state and consequently to crush the framework of the rebels' organization.

Chad holds CEMAC meeting, says unable to attend AU mini-summit

(BBC Monitoring, Sudan Tribune, Dec 31, 2005, N'djamena) Leaders of a six-member central African grouping are due to meet here on January 4 to discuss the growing tensions between Chad and Sudan, the Chadian government announced Saturday.

Chadian President Idriss Deby called for the extraordinary summit of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) after meeting his counterpart from the Central African Republic (CAR) Francois Bozize on Monday.

Apart from Chad and the CAR, CEMAC also includes Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea Gabon and the Republic of Congo.

Chadian Deputy Foreign Minister Lucienne Dillah told a news conference Saturday that because of the CEMAC meeting, Chad would be unable to attend a separate African Union mini-summit in Libya on Darfur, a region in western Sudan bordering on Chad that has been in the throes of a devastating civil conflict since early 2003.

On Friday, Chad made fresh claims that Khartoum supported Chadian rebels, alleging the insurgents were given air time on Sudanese television and that Sudanese nationals were among prisoners taken after a recent rebel raid on a Chadian border town.

"It seems clear that Sudan is arming, financing and equipping Chadian rebels on its territory to destabilise Chad," Dillah told parliament in Ndjamena.

Several new rebel groups have sprung up recently in eastern Chad, a region inundated by about 200,000 refugees from the civil war in Darfur, and Khartoum had accused Ndjamena of deploying planes and troops on its territory.

Other Developments

Sudan closes down its embassy in Baghdad, pulls out its staff

(BBC Monitoring, Sudanese TV, 30 Dec, Omdurman) Sudan has resolved to close down its embassy in Iraq, and called on its staff to pull out immediately.

The relatives of the Sudanese hostages held in Iraq had appealed to the kidnappers to release the hostages in the quickest time possible.

These families had appealed to the kidnappers to safeguard the good relationship which exists between the people of the two countries in various fields, and the relationship which exists between Arabs and Muslims. [Passage omitted on the appeal made by the relatives of the hostages].

Increase in number of refugee victims in Cairo

(*Akhbar Alyaum* – 2nd Jan 06, SUNA, Khartoum) The Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its deep sorrow towards the killing of at least not less than 25 Sudanese citizens following the clashes which took place on 30 December 2005, between the Egyptian police and Sudanese citizens camped at a public square in front of the premises of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Cairo.

245 Sudanese refugees decide to come back

(*AlRai AlAam* – 2nd Jan 06, Khartoum) Following the latest Egyptian police actions against Sudanese refugees in Cairo, number of deaths increased to 27 (amongst whom 7 men, 8 women, and 12 children). At the same time, 245 refugees agreed to come back to Sudan.

In above connection, The Sudanese Minister of Interior issued a decision yesterday to establish a committee that will be made responsible for receiving the returnees.

Czech yacht arrives in Sudan for AU summit

(*BBC Monitoring, Al Ayyam, 28 Dec, Khartoum*) The presidential yacht from Czechoslovakia arrived yesterday in Khartoum among tightened security. The yacht is to be used to ferry delegates to the AU summit in Khartoum next January from the presidential villas to Friendship Hall, the summit venue.

The yacht, which has two decks and measures 9.5 m by 36 m, completed an arduous journey from Port Sudan to Khartoum and took about 20 days to arrive in Giad town yesterday.

The yacht, which was bought in accordance with Sudanese naval specifications, has been named Al-Qasr [palace] and will be put on the Nile at the Baburat area in Bahri [Khartoum North]. Al-Qasr is the first large yacht to arrive in Sudan for presidential services.

Sudan does not deserve to host AU summit, opposition says

(BBC Monitoring, Al-Mashahir Newspaper, 30 Dec, Khartoum) Opponents to the Sudanese government and human rights groups have said the hosting of the AU summit by Khartoum next January is an undeserved reward for a regime accused of genocide in Darfur.

So far, the strongest protest against the venue for the AU summit has come from Chad, which recently said it was "in a state of belligerence" with Sudan and accused it of backing Chadian dissidents and carrying out military operations in Chadian territories.

"A country with more than two million displaced persons does not deserve to host an AU summit", Chadian President Idriss Deby was quoted as saying on Tuesday [27 December]. The summit is scheduled to take place on 23 and 24 January in Khartoum

Egyptian Foreign Ministry says Sudanese refugee sit-in had to be dispersed

(*BBC Monitoring, Egyptian news agency, 30 December, Cairo*) Spokesman for the [Egyptian] Foreign Ministry made the following statement today on the crisis of Sudanese protesters at the garden of the Mustafa Mahmud Mosque in (Al-Jizah's affluent suburb of) Al-Muhandisin:

The crisis of the Sudanese protesters at the garden of the Mustafa Mahmud Mosque in Al-Muhandisin started on 29 September 2005 when some Sudanese gathered with the aim of staging a sit-in in the garden, where the regional office of the UN Higher Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) met the people frequenting it. The number of protesters kept rising till it reached an estimated 2,500-3,000.

Those protesters were Sudanese refugees, asylum-seekers and some people who the commission decided did not qualify as refugees but were illegal migrants whose stay permits in Egypt had expired, in addition to other newcomers from Sudan.

The protesters showed some reasons for staging the sit-in as they aspired to travel to the USA, Australia or Canada to settle in these countries, or complained about the UNHCR Cairo office's failure to determine the status of those registered with it as asylum seekers, and to pressure the office to review the cases of the applicants whose request to get a refugee status in Egypt (the Sudanese whose applications have been completed) had been rejected.

Since the beginning of the sit-in, the Egyptian authorities have intensified security measures to protect the UN high commission for refugees' regional office headquarters as well as its staff. They also deployed big numbers of security forces at the sit-in area to secure it. They did not spare any effort to disperse the protesters peacefully. The Egyptian authorities and concerned security bodies coordinated and cooperated with the Sudanese authorities and the commission's Cairo-based office to discuss the necessary means to end the sit-in peacefully and to what extent the commission could meet the protesters' demands in accordance with its capability and powers. They also held several meetings with the protesters' representatives to discuss their demands and to what extent these demands could be met.

The efforts made by the concerned authorities and bodies in Egypt had resulted in an agreement that was signed between the commission and the protesters' representatives. The agreement met many of these demands, such as reviewing the cases of those [Sudanese] whose applications had been completed; registering all the individuals who were not registered with the commission, giving priority to patients and people with special needs; and offering aid to those willing to return voluntarily to Sudan. This agreement, however, was rejected by the protesters.

The protesters continued to break the law of the host country (the Egyptian law in this case), which refugees should respect in accordance with Geneva agreement for 1950. As the sit-in at the garden was continuing, the protesters faced extremely difficult circumstances, especially in the light of the presence of women and children. Some people pressured others to continue the sit-in. In addition, the residents of the area suffered damage from the continuation of the sit-in at the garden. All efforts to convince the protesters to end the sit-in peacefully, including efforts made by some Sudanese figures such as [Sudanese Vice-Presidents] Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi and Faruq Abu-Isa, failed. Moreover, the protesters rejected the agreement that had been reached with the UNHCR and they declared that they would continue the sit-in until they were repatriated to Western countries. The Sudanese government was dissatisfied with the continuation of the sit-in. IN the end, the UNHCR presented a request that there should be peaceful intervention to end the sit-in. Consequently, it was necessary to intervene to end the protest and this is what was done early on Friday.