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Highlights

Elections Special

Experts say Sudan is in for electoral surprises, warn of “time bombs”

Experts said three presidential candidates have the highest chances of winning in the upcoming elections, citing Sadiq Al-Mahdi, Omer Al-Bashir and Yassir Arman, **Al-Sahafa** reports. The experts, who addressed a symposium in Khartoum yesterday organized by the Centre for Peace Studies under the theme “presidential elections on scale”, said the Sudanese people are in for major surprises and also warned of “time bombs” that might threaten elections, citing Darfur crisis, dispute over the census results and electoral roll, distribution of geographical constituencies and foreign interferences.

On the Southern Sudan, while some speakers said secession was inevitable, others said lack of accurate information makes the process of measuring public opinion trends difficult, making talk about inevitability of secession a mere speculation.

The participants downplayed talk about possibility of insecurity during elections but warned that elections rigging and sharp polarization on ethnic lines could invite trouble.

Official media coverage of NCP candidate biased – SPLM

SPLM has criticized the official media coverage of NCP presidential candidate Omer Al-Bashir's elections campaign, saying it is “biased and unfair”, **Rai Al-Shaab** reports. SPLM Northern Sector Spokesperson Ms Keji called on the NEC to monitor the performance of the media and to ensure equal access to the official media organs for electoral campaigning.

Presidency to decide on “Southern Kordofan electoral crisis” Saturday

The Southern Kordofan state government has set February 20 as deadline for resolving current electoral crisis in the region, **Al-Sahafa** reports. A statement issued by the state government said local leaders were developing options to assist the Presidency to take a decision to resolve the problem.

Polling would take place in 20,000 stations

The electorate will have 20,000 polling stations across the country to cast their votes, said NEC Deputy Chairman Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, **Al-Ayyam** reports. Abdullah told a symposium organised yesterday by the Sudanese Council of Voluntary Agencies (SCOVA) that there would be 8 voting cards to cast for the different levels of Government.

According to **Al-Sahafa**, the NEC revealed a move to extend voting deadline for over three days in some areas in South Darfur besides the training of 120,000 observers to monitor the elections.

Al-Bashir reveals key features of his electoral campaign

NCP Presidential candidate Omer Al-Bashir told state television that he would strive to increase employment opportunities and to fund small-scale businesses to combat poverty, **local dailies** report. Al-Bashir, who spoke to the TV yesterday as part of Media Mechanism's plan for candidates to present their campaign issues, said protecting the country's economic stability would be a key feature of his electoral platform.

On foreign policy, the NCP candidate said he would employ policies that would help realise the country's development goals and would adhere to the principles of reciprocity and safeguarding common interests. He said he wants to see the country promote political and economic ties with

Asia and Latin America and to move away from the “traditional western and US camps”.

His Government would also lead Sudan’s campaign to help resolve the global food crisis and would strengthen the country’s position regionally and internationally.

The candidate then gave a detailed outline of the development and economic progress the country has achieved since he took power.

First female candidate launches presidential bid

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports that Sudan Socialist Unionist Democratic Party presidential hopeful Fatma Abdelmahmoud launched her campaign yesterday in Khartoum North. She told party supporters that she would advocate for unity, peace, fundamental freedom and improved foreign relations. She also said she would increase employment opportunities for youths, women and the rural population.

SPLM suspends party membership for independents

The SPLM has suspended the membership of its members who have insisted on contesting the elections as independents, reports **Al-Ahdath**. Party Secretary-General Pagan Amum said yesterday that they would request all SPLM supporters across the country not to vote for these independent candidates.

Former Sudan intelligence chief describes SPLM & PCP as “junkies”

Sudan Tribune website 16/2/10 – Former NISS director and current security adviser Gen. Salah Abdullah Gosh described the SPLM and Al-Turabi-led Popular Congress Party (PCP) as “junkies” during an election gathering in North Sudan.

Gosh is the NCP candidate for the parliament in the Merowe constituency, a stronghold for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) led by Mohamed Osman Al-Mirghani. Sudan’s general elections are scheduled for next April.

The town of Amre which was impacted by the Merowe dam construction has been the scene of violent clashes in 2006 between protestors and the police killing three and injuring nine policemen.

Youths’ delegation pledges to avoid poll violence

Akhir Lahza reports NEC Chairman Mohamed Bushara Dousa has tabled before the NEC yesterday a pledge from the Sudanese National Youths’ Association for an effective participation at all levels of the electoral process and that they would avoid violence. The youths denounced all forms of violence and promised to work for the success of the electoral process.

SPLM’s Arman promises women 40% of ministerial portfolios

SPLM presidential candidate Yassir Arman, addressing a women rally yesterday as part of electoral campaign, promised to grant women 40% of ministerial portfolios if he wins forthcoming presidential race, **Al-Sahafa** reports. Arman demanded the freezing of the Public Order law and the abolition of article (152) of the Criminal Law.

Activists call for election postponement, files appeal against Al-Bashir

Head of the Sudanese Centre for Comparative Human Rights Studies, Dr. Mahmoud Sharani along with civil society organizations yesterday filed an appeal at the Constitutional Court contesting the constitutionality of acts of the President of the Republic under the consideration that the constitutional Court is the only body that has criminal jurisdiction over the President, **The Citizen** reports.

The appellars called on the Court to exercise its powers stipulated under articles (15) and (16)

of its law for 2005, together with articles 48-61 for the Interim Constitution of 2005, to initiate legal proceedings against the President for grave violations of the provisions of the Interim Constitution (2005), the Bill of Rights, the decentralized system, the CPA and the constitutional system. They also asked the court to issue a decision to defer the elections since there is a popular consensus due to the inequity of the procedures that preceded the voting process.

Al-Bashir attends air pilots' graduation

SUNA 16/2/10 - President Omer Al-Bashir attended on Tuesday the graduation of a new batch of air pilots at the Military Air College.

Addressing the graduation ceremony, Defence Minister Lt. Gen. Abdul-Rahim Mohamed Hussein, said that the Armed Forces is keen to continue on the path of development and modernization.

He affirmed the importance of the Air Defence Forces in securing the Sudanese air space and protecting the strategic areas.

SAF dismisses claims of Hamas training in Sudan

Al-Ayyam reports Sudanese army spokesperson office has dismissed allegations contained in a security report prepared by a western intelligence agency to the effect that Iran's revolutionary guards are training Hamas elements in Sudan on firing ground-to-ground missiles. The report said tens of the Islamic Resistance (Hamas)'s elements are being trained in Sudan under the supervision of officers from Iran's missile unit of the Revolutionary Guards.

The Spokesperson Office said the report was totally incorrect, saying Sudan is committed to UN agreements and treaties.

According to the report, the "Jerusalem forces" have allocated a budget of \$170,000 to cover the training expenses in Sudan.

Authorities arrest 37 people on charge of breach of law

Khartoum state police authorities have arrested 37 people among them foreigners on charges of wearing indecent dress, **Al-Ayyam** reports.

The authorities also confirmed the arrest of 94 homeless and 17 beggars as part of the campaign launched last week. 51 three-wheeler taxis and 4 motorcycles driven without number-plates were also detained.

Donor fury as millions for Sudan go unspent

Financial Times Juba, 17/2/10 - A fund administered by the World Bank to help south Sudan recover from decades of civil war has spent little more than a third of its money, angering western donors who provided most of the capital.

By the end of last year, only \$181m of the \$524m (EUR381m, £333m) they had committed to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) had been spent. More than four years into the fund's six-year lifespan, \$343m still languishes unused.

"That's just not good enough," said Michael Elmquist, head of the donor team for six countries that contributed to the MDTF. "Some parts of the fund have worked well. Others have worked terribly."

The World Bank's strict rules on disbursing funds explain why so much remains. A stringent

approach may result in large sums lying unused, but a more relaxed policy risks wasting the funds. Either option leaves the bank exposed to -criticism.

Mr Elmquist said there was "no way" the MDTF would spend all its money, including \$75m contributed by the British government, before a deadline next year.

The MDTF was due to fund 100 new schools but that has been cut to 44. So far, 10 have been completed.

Last year, the donors diverted \$181m that would have gone into the MDTF to three other funds under their control. The MDTF's performance has been hampered by World Bank procurement rules. In the bidding process for a teacher-training contract, aid agencies were required to be present in all 10 states of south Sudan. Insecurity and logistics problems make that almost impossible.

Maya Mailer, a policy adviser for Oxfam, said the fund had been "set up with a fundamental lack of understanding about the reality of southern Sudan".

The government of south Sudan put more than \$170m into the fund. But its ministries, created in the five years since civil war with the Khartoum regime ended, often lack the experience to follow World Bank procedures.

Laurence Clarke, the manager of the World Bank's south Sudan programme, acknowledged getting "beaten up" by donors. But he accused them of a "total abdication of responsibility". Mr Clarke added that expenditure figures did not tell the whole story.

"The realities on the ground dictated a slower start-up and a certain maturing process," he said.

But Mr Elmquist responded: "When schools are not being built and health services not provided, you can't pretend everything is OK."

Chad appoints ambassador to Sudan

RFI 16/02/10 - In a new sign of warming ties between Chad and Sudan, Ndjamena has just nominated an ambassador to Khartoum.

The new ambassador is Mahamat Abderrahim Assil [phonetic], the former secretary of state for agriculture and FAO official.

Southern Sudan ready for referendum – GoSS tells diplomatic Mission

Al-Intibaha reports that GoSS informed diplomatic missions in Juba about its preparations for the conduct of referendum. GoSS Presidential affairs Minister Luka Biong said the Government has assigned VP Riek Machar to lead the South Sudan Referendum Task Force and to study the requirements needed. Biong told reporters that GoSS met with diplomatic missions in Juba to request their assistance for the parties to conduct the referendum in a manner that will meet the Southern Sudanese's aspiration.

Ukraine supplying weapons to Darfur rebels through Eritrea - report

Sudan Tribune website 16/2/10 – A Ukrainian weapons company has been shipping arms to rebels fighting in Sudan's Darfur region, according to a Russian newspaper.

Vremya Novostei reported that according to the data that appeared in Kiev, Ukrainian company Ukrspetsexport supplied artillery systems and small arms with assistance of intermediaries through the territory of Eritrea.

The report if true would be a violation to UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1556 and 1591 adopted in 2004 and 2005 respectively which prohibited the sale or supply of arms and military equipment to all warring parties in Darfur.

A UN panel of experts revealed last year that an increasing portion of ammunition and military-adapted vehicles used by all parties to the conflict was produced within the past two to three years — after the arms embargo was imposed.

This demonstrates "an increasing rate of violation" of the embargo, it said.

The newspaper further said Sudanese Government will receive this month 100 T-72M tanks from Ukrspetsexport. The latter is shipping the tanks to Port Sudan in accordance with a contract signed in 2009 worth \$70 million...

Gunmen injure seven peacekeepers in Sudan's Darfur

Reuters 16/2/10 - Unidentified gunmen opened fire on international peacekeepers in Sudan's Darfur region on Tuesday, injuring seven, two of them seriously, the force said.

The ambush on an armed police patrol near Nyala, capital of South Darfur, is the latest of a string of attacks on UNAMID force that have killed 22 peacekeepers since they arrived in Sudan's rebellious West in 2008.

"It was an ambush this afternoon. Two of the seven were critically wounded...This is very serious. We are a peacekeeping mission but we do not have a comprehensive peace to keep," UNAMID spokesman Nouredine Mezni told Reuters. The attackers took two of the force's vehicles, he added.

ICC prosecutor to appeal ruling against Darfur rebel commander

Sudan Tribune website 17/2/10 –The ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo will file a leave to appeal this month's ruling acquitting a Darfur rebel commander from charges that he was one of the masterminds behind the 2007 deadly attack on AU peacekeepers.

Last week, the Pre-Trial Chamber I at the ICC said in their 103-pages decision on the confirmation of charges hearings that took place last October that the prosecution failed to prove that Bahr Idriss Abu Garda, leader of Darfur United Resistance Front (URF), played a role in the deadly assault that left 12 soldiers dead and wounded eight others.

The ICC prosecutor's office said in its weekly newsletter that it will challenge the finding that there was "no substantial grounds to believe that Abu Garda could be linked to the crimes either as a direct or indirect co-perpetrator for the commission of war crimes allegedly committed during the attack".

The prosecution had alleged that the attack on Haskanita was agreed upon by Abu Garda and other senior commanders of armed rebel groups in the course of two meetings on September 29 2007. The first meeting occurred "shortly after the attack on the rebel forces in Dalil Babiker, which had allegedly been carried out by the GoS around midday on 29 September 2007".

Chief negotiator Bassole resigns

Al-Rai Al-Aam, quoting the Qatari Al-Sharq newspaper, reports that UN-AU chief mediator Djibril Bassole has tendered his resignation to UNSG Ban Ki-moon.

According to **Al-Sahafa**, Mr. Bassole has requested the UNSG Ban Ki-moon not to extend his mission due to expire in June. Sources said Bassole wants to resign so that he is free to manage elections campaign for current President of his country.

Ethiopia sends five Helicopters to Darfur peacekeepers

Sudan Tribune website 16/2/10 - The Ethiopian Government today said that a tactical aviation unit comprising of five helicopters has headed to Sudan's Darfur region to join the badly-needing UNAMID peacekeeping operation in Darfur.

Speaking at the departure ceremony, Ethiopian air force chief, Major General Mola Hailemariam said that Ethiopia has continued to proof herself the commitment it has to peace.

He said the move is an indication of the country's military competence and commitment to take part in regional and international peace keeping missions.

An official ceremony to receive the five MI-35 tactical helicopters is expected to be held this week in Nyala-South Darfur where these choppers will be based. A high level delegation from Ethiopia is expected to attend the event.

The helicopters arrived in Nyala, South Darfur, with 15 pilots and crew members onboard. They will join a 185 member advance team, including pilots, technicians and protection force, which arrived last month, the hybrid mission said today.

The UNAMID force still needs 18 transport choppers to move the supplies and equipment necessary to carry out its mandate.

Jerry Fowler criticized by Foreign Ministry while on visit to Darfur

Sudan Tribune website 16/2/10 - Save Darfur Coalition President Jerry Fowler, currently visiting Darfur where there are some 2.7 million displaced civilians, was criticized by the Foreign Ministry in Khartoum today.

The Sudanese Foreign Ministry played down the importance of a visit by the U.S.-based Jerry Fowler, who has voiced harsh criticism of the regime for years and accused them of genocide and war crimes.

Muawya Osman Khalid, spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry, told Sudan News Agency (SUNA) that the president of the Coalition had asked to visit Sudan and the Government allowed him in the context of visits allowed to the organizations.

But he added that the organization has been fabricating lies and allegations over the past five years without seeing the situation on the ground or having any knowledge or familiarity with the situation in Darfur.

According to the Foreign Ministry Spokesman, the organization has used the slogan "Save Darfur", which is far from its activities. He stressed that the Government has nothing to fear in Darfur.

He pointed out that trading with the cause of Darfur has become undesired commodity since the war in the region has ended and people speak now about development and stability, thus the lies of the Coalition are no longer relevant

The spokesman expressed the hope that the visit would be an opportunity for the Coalition to return to the voice of reason and see the situation on the basis of reality without falsification.

Save Darfur is affiliated with about 190 civil society groups in the United States. The headquarters staff, based in the downtown Washington, D.C., engage in lobbying, advocacy, media outreach and education.

SAF denies JEM controls Jebel Moon

The Sudanese army has denied that it is a party to the ongoing fighting among Darfur factions in Jebel Moon and Jebel Marra, *Al-Wifaq* reports. SAF also dismissed allegations that the area is under JEM control. SAF Spokesperson Office said the Sudanese army is monitoring the developments of events in the area, adding that the security protocol signed between Sudan and Chad would have a positive impact on the ground.

UNAMID calls for "maximum restraint" in Darfur

Sudan Tribune website 16/2/10 – Darfur peacekeepers have called on the Sudanese warring parties to exercise maximum restraint to save the lives of thousands of civilians displaced by the recent surge of violence in the region.

Sudanese army attacked this week the positions of the SLA-AW in northern and southern Jebel Marra. The attacks occurred while other rebel groups gathered in Doha for peace talks with the government, but SLM-AW refuses to join the negotiating table.

Also in Jebel Moon, western Darfur, the JEM said it had cleared the region from "criminal bandits" backed by the Sudanese army. Pro-Government press reported last week clashes between JEM and troops loyal to Minni Minnawi, former rebel leader turned Senior Presidential Assistant.

"UNAMID's peacekeeping forces are increasing their security presence in and around the region, to prevent a further escalation in the violence, said a press statement released Tuesday by the hybrid operation.

The new head of the Mission, Ibrahim Gambari, discussed the military escalation in Darfur last week with the Government and rebel delegations and voiced his "grave concerns".

"Such confrontations may negatively affect the ongoing peace process, which has recently seen significant strides towards bringing stability to the region," he said.