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Highlights

Elections Special:

Al-Bashir on the campaign trail in southern Sudan

SUNA 2/3/10 - President Al-Bashir said that the state would work to enhance the capabilities and armament of the JIUs in a manner that will enable them to confront the attacks of the LRA in Western Equatoria State.

Addressing a mass rally in Maridi, Western Equatoria State, Al-Bashir said that the GoNU would do its best to boost basic services in the area in the fields of water, electricity, education, agriculture, agro-industry and health.

He instructed the Civil Aviation Corporation to carry out rehabilitation work on Maridi airport to reactivate trade in the area.

In Yei, Central Equatoria State, Al-Bashir pledged to recognize the result of the 2011 referendum on self-determination for southern Sudanese. He said he would remain committed to the implementation of the CPA and that there would be no return to war.

Elections officers' conference kicks off today

Al-Sahafa reports that the NEC in collaboration with UNMIS, UNDP and the "International Institution for Organization of Elections" have embarked on implementing a training plan for 100,000 elections officers on polling and vote counting.

Meanwhile, NEC Chairman Abel Alier will address today in Khartoum the second conference of the chairpersons and members of the elections committees in states. The two-day conference, **Al-Ayyam** reports, will cover all the levels of the elections.

We want professional players and fair play in the elections – VP Taha

Campaigning for his party's candidates at the Soba Aradi area south of Khartoum yesterday, VP Ali Osman Taha said that the NCP was working to bring about social peace to the country, reports **Al-Rai Al-Aam**.

He said his party welcomes competition but called upon candidates to abide by the principles of fair play. "We want professional players who make no fouls at the polls," he said. "Whatever conspiracies hatched by enemies and whatever meetings convened by embassies, Al-Bashir will win," he said.

Opposition parties (Juba Alliance) to stage anti-NEC march tomorrow

The political parties (Juba Alliance) have announced their withdrawal from the NEC's Joint Mechanism tasked to organise use of the media by elections campaigners and have decided to stage a demonstration tomorrow Thursday to hand over a petition of protest to the NEC, **local dailies** report. According to **Rai Al-Shaab**, the opposition parties have threatened to boycott the elections.

Alliance Chairman Farouk Abu Eissa described the NEC as a "tool of repression". The opposition forces are demanding fair and democratic functioning of the mechanism. Reportedly, presidential candidates will participate in the demonstration.

Meanwhile, **Akhir Lahza** reports NCP Political Liaison Officer Ibrahim Gandour has called on the NEC to reform the mechanism that governs the use of state media for elections campaigning. He said that the membership of the mechanism formed earlier was not balanced

despite the fact the members were nominated through consultations with the political parties, pointing out that seven of eight political parties representing the mechanism are members of the Juba Alliance.

In another development, the opposition parties are expected to meet today at the Umma Party HQs for a press conference to declare their position on the postponement of the state-level polls in Southern Kordofan state, reports *Al-Watan*.

Opposition parties to unify list of candidates for 13 governor positions

SPLM presidential candidate Yasir Arman announced yesterday that the Juba Alliance agreed to support a single candidate for governor post in 13 states in order to defeat the NCP, *Rai Al-Shaab* reports. However, he pointed out that the Alliance decided to support the independent candidate, Abu-Fatma, for the Red Sea governor position.

SPLM not serious with elections – SPLM/SK

Members of the SPLM in Southern Kordofan (SPLM/SK) have called on the SPLM supporters not to vote for the SPLM presidential candidate Yasir Arman, *Al-Intibaha* reports. The SPLM/SK claimed that Yasir Arman's candidacy is a proof that the SPLM is not serious about elections; it is only interesting in referendum and secession issues.

Rival south Sudan parties agree on election code

AFP 02/03/10 – All South Sudanese political parties signed an election code of conduct late on Tuesday, committing themselves to ensure upcoming polls in April are free and fair.

A total of 17 rival parties came together to hammer out the agreement in a two-day meeting convened by the African Union ahead of the polls due next month.

"The parties undertake to ensure that the forthcoming elections are free, fair and inclusive," the document read. "The democratic political process must be protected from any form of violence or intimidation."

A separate commitment was also signed to support the 2005 peace agreement that ended Sudan's 22-year long civil war between north and south, and which sets up a independence referendum for the south due in 2011.

"It is a very important document because we are addressing issues of free and fair elections," GoSS Vice-President said, adding that "It commits all parties to play a fair game in the election process," added Machar.

Southern presidential candidate Lam Akol, who is from the splinter SPLM Democratic Change (SPLM-DC) party, also signed.

The northern-ruling National Congress Party (NCP) was not present at the meeting, but senior AU officials said the party had committed itself to signing the deal later.

Independent candidates are being encouraged to sign the agreement too. "We call on those who have not signed it to sign it now," Machar added.

AU officials said the deal would help to ensure peaceful polls.

"My strong message is that to achieve free and fair elections is primarily the responsibility of the political parties, independent candidates and the government," said Pierre Buyoya, a former Burundian President, who chaired the meeting for the AU.

"This agreement is helping to create a conducive environment for that," he added.

The AU hopes to implement a similar agreement in the north, although North-based parties including the National Umma and PCP signed the code in Juba.

Elections in the South on schedule even if delayed in the North – SPLM

Southern Sudanese political parties which participated yesterday in a signing ceremony of a code of conduct for elections in Juba complained that the SPLM was dragging its feet on the border demarcation process that they see as key to the referenda, *Al-Akhbar* reports.

GoSS VP Riek Machar said that a lot of progress has been made in the border demarcation process and the contentious points have been referred to the Presidency for decision.

“Southern Sudan would go to the polls on schedule even if the elections are postponed in the North. This is because we want an elected Government in Southern Sudan for the conduct of the referendum,” Machar said.

SPLM-DC leader in Juba to launch elections campaign

Lam Akol arrived in Juba Monday to put the final touches to preparations for launching his campaign for GoSS President, *the Citizen* reports. He said that his nascent party is facing many obstructions in southern Sudan including “eminent arrest and torture” of party members.

While elections are closing in, Akol said, the role to protect the right to free expression by the political parties squarely rests on the shoulders of the GoSS.

“I was the first to sign an agreement with the Government of Sudan on the right of self-determination for southern Sudan but we are now being accused of sealing out southern Sudanese,” he lamented.

Supporters receive DUP leader in Kassala

Mohamed Osman Al-Mirghani, Chairman of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the spiritual leader of the Khatmiya Sect, was received yesterday by a huge crowd of supporters upon arrival in Kassala to launch his party’s elections campaign, *local media* reports. Reportedly, the large number of supporters was described as an “elections earthquake”. Addressing thousands of supporters, Al-Mirghani said his party campaigns on a platform for Sudanese unity.

Other highlights

Gunmen loot relief in Jonglei’s Pibor County

Sudan Tribune website 02/03/10 – Armed robbers looted a UN relief convoy in Pibor County on Monday, according to informed sources. The aid vehicles were heading to neighboring Pochala County. No human casualties have been reported but a Land Cruiser is missing

Joseph Okello, Jonglei SPLM Secretariat Officer said the ambush occurred between Labarab and Pochala. He blamed Murle tribesmen inhabiting Pibor County, predicting that this month’s election campaigns will be disrupted there. *Sudan Tribune* could not independently confirm the attack.

Mr. Okello said the convoy fell into the possession of the raiders’ squad a few hours’ drive out of Labarab. The driver of the lead car escaped unhurt but left the car behind. He said all relief items, including food, were looted. Police uniforms on board one of the cars were among the loot. A police unit providing escort from Labarab to Pochala did not help stop the robbers. All the cars but one returned to Labarab.

Machar’s team begins planning referendum for the South and Abyei

Sudan Tribune website 2/3/10 – A body recently decreed into establishment to prepare Southern Sudan and Abyei for referenda has begun to brainstorm on the task that would see the people of both regions successfully exercising their right to self-determination for possible independence.

The newly formed Southern Sudan Referendum Taskforce is chaired by GoSS VP Riek Machar Teny with membership of a number of ministers and secretariat. It is also extended to technical support teams from different levels of government and international bodies.

It serves as guidance to the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) in the process leading to the exercise of referendum, post-referendum issues (such as oil – its production and transport - assets, liabilities, waters, currency, international agreements, nationality and citizenship, status of southern Sudanese soldiers currently in the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and vice versa, etc) and management of post-referendum scenarios.

Officials have assured that the Taskforce is neither a duplicating nor a competing institution to the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission or Bureau, but a body formed by the regional government in exercise of its constitutional responsibility to make the environment conducive for the exercise ...

SPLA spokesman criticizes SPLM-DC chairman over remarks

Sudan Tribune website 2/3/10 — The South Sudan army official spokesman told SPLM-DC Chairman Lam Akol "to shut his mouth on SPLA issues".

The angry response follows a series of accusations back and forth between the Southern opposition party and the army over the detention of few SPLM-DC operatives in Juba.

The Chairman of SPLM-DC Lam Akol, was quoted in **The Citizen** daily as saying at a rally in Malakal that he has a vision for reforming SPLA, making it a disciplined army, reorganizing it and having it trained as a national army.

The SPLA spokesperson Kuol today responded saying, "First of all, the SPLA is appealing to all politicians to keep away in the campaign in regard to talking about SPLA issues. Let them not talk about the SPLA at all – let them not campaign with the name of SPLA's future in their agenda."

Darfur new rebel group announces formation of its structure

Sudan Tribune website 02/03/10 – The Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM), formed by ten rebel groups on 23 February, announced in Doha the names of its executive bureau and other bodies, ahead of talks with the Sudanese Government on a framework agreement.

According to a release the former leader of the United Resistance Front (URF) Bahr Idriss Abu Garda is appointed Secretary General of the LJM, while Ali Abdallah Karbino is Commander in Chief of the military organization and Ali Mukhtar Ali, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff. LJM Chairman Tigani El-Sissi will be joined by deputies who form the Supreme Council for the presidency.

Abdel Aziz Abu Namousha and Haider Qalokuma Atim are named Vice-Presidents without portfolios while Mahgoub Hussein is appointed Vice-President for Political Affairs, Abdel Majid Abdel Rahman Dossa Vice-President for Economic Affairs and Yacob Adam Saad Al-Nur is Vice-President for Administration and Management.

The LJM secretary is composed of 27 officials including Hashim Hamad Abdel-Rahman, as Deputy Secretary General, Sharif Jarelnabi Secretary (Foreign Relations) Mokhtar Abdel Karim Adam, Secretary of Political Affairs, Taj al-Din Bashir Nyam Secretary for Negotiations Affairs, Ibrahim Issa Muhajir, Secretary for Organization and Management, Bakhit Mohammed Khamis Secretary for Finance and Abdallah Moussa Morsal, Secretary of Information.

The new rebel group also named Ahmad Badawi Ismail as speaker of the Central Liberation Council, the Parliament of the LJM, and Mohamed Ibrahim Braima as the Vice-Chief of Justice.

The LJM held consultations with the mediation on a draft framework agreement they should sign with Khartoum during the upcoming days while JEM has pledged to finalize a peace deal before March 15.

UNAMID verifying reports of clashes in West Darfur

UN News 02/03/10 – UNAMID is trying to verify reports of fighting in Jebel Marra, with the head of the mission calling on all parties to refrain from any action that could thwart ongoing peace efforts.

“UNAMID is particularly concerned that, if confirmed, the reported acts of violence would be coming at a time that good progress is being made in the quest for peace and stability in the region,” the mission said.

Ibrahim Gambari, the AU-UN Joint Special Representative and head of UNAMID, called again today on all parties “to exercise utmost restraint and refrain from any action that could further add to the suffering of the population” and negatively affect ongoing initiatives for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Darfur.