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Highlights

Local Arabic and English Language Press

Peace will soon be realised in Darfur – Al-Bashir

Addressing the Sudanese community in Doha, President Al-Bashir said that Darfur will soon see a series of development projects that will bring the region out of its dependence on relief assistance, reports **Al-Ayaam**. He said that the ICC should bring former US President George Bush to court for backing the rebel movements of Darfur.

On Darfur, Al-Bashir maintained that the conflict in Darfur was a “colonialist concoction”. He warned that the Sudan government would expel any defaulter of the law – be it an NGO or diplomatic mission.

“The expelled NGOs have been shown the red card and will not be allowed to return whatever the pressures exerted on Sudan,” he said. According to **Al-Khartoum** newspaper, Al-Bashir also said that the government will encourage IDP returns and provide all their humanitarian and security needs. “Sudan shall become a regional power despite the west,” he added.

Al-Bashir also addressed the Arab summit of Arab and South American states in which he expressed appreciation for those countries that stood by Sudan. He also asked “friendly and peace-loving states” to urge those who back the rebel movements in Darfur to desist from such backing in the interest of peace.

Chavez slams ICC on Al-Bashir arrest warrant

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has described the ICC warrant for President Al-Bashir as “judicial terrorism and lack of respect for third world nations,” report **Al-Ayaam**.

“They are definitely doing this (the ICC warrant on a sitting head of state) because Sudan is a third world state,” Chavez told the press in Doha where he is participating at a summit of Arab and South American countries. He voiced support for the Arab League position on the ICC and wondered why there is no ICC warrant for former US President G. Bush and Israel’s Shimon Perez.

NEC to unveil tomorrow the preparations for elections

The National Elections Commission will feature at the **SUNA** Forum at noon tomorrow, reports **Al-Wifaq**. Head of Commission Abel Alier and the Commission’s Deputy Chairman and its Secretary General will give a briefing on preparations for the forthcoming elections and on the what the NEC has done since inception.

In a related story, the paper reports that the technical committee for the 5th National Population Census has endorsed the results of the census, reports **Al-Wifaq**. Head of the Census Monitoring Committee Abdelbagi Al-Jailani told a press conference yesterday that the results they have endorsed would be tabled before the Higher Council for the National Population and Housing Census. He said that local and foreign observers would also testify that the census was transparent.

In a statement by the GoSS Ministry of Regional Cooperation revealed yesterday that EU and GoSS officials will start discussions in Juba today on progress in the implementation of the CPA, reports **The Citizen**.

Obstacles to elections in southern Sudan – technical team

The technical committee for elections in southern Sudan says the elections would face a number of obstacles in southern Sudan, reports ***Al-Rai Al-Aam***. Caesar Archangelo who heads the technical committee cited the delay in the census results, the north-south border demarcation, the delay in voter registration, registration of political parties and insecurity in some parts of southern Sudan as some of the hurdles that have to be overcome.

AEC calls for implementation of Abyei Road Map

Derek Plumbly, the Chairman of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC), has called on the parties to the CPA to fully implement the Abyei Road Map and encourage returns to Abyei ahead of the forthcoming elections, reports ***Al-Rai Al-Aam***. He told the press following a meeting with GoSS President Salva Kiir in Juba yesterday that Abyei is in much need of development.

Meanwhile in another development, VP Ali Osman Mohamed Taha has called on the Ministry of Finance to resolve the issue of budget for the Abyei Area Administration as soon as possible, reports ***Al-Sahafa***. Representatives of the AAA discussed at a meeting with the VP yesterday the issues of the budget and other issues concerning the region.

EU, GoSS discuss CPA

In a statement by the GoSS Ministry of Regional Cooperation revealed yesterday that EU and GoSS officials will start discussions in Juba today on progress in the implementation of the CPA, reports ***The Citizen***.

CPC discusses CJMC reports

The Ceasefire Political Commission discussed at a meeting in Khartoum yesterday the reports of the Ceasefire Joint Military Commission, ***Al-Ayaam*** reports. The meeting also discussed issues pertaining to the work of the CPC and to the CPA process.

Tensions on Sudan-DRC border

Deputy Governor of Western Equatoria, Joseph Jara, said that the security situation in Western Equatoria State has deteriorated in the wake of the withdrawal of Ugandan troops who were participating at a joint operation with Sudanese and Congolese forces to flush out the LRA, ***Al-Raed*** reports. The Deputy Governor added that increased LRA attacks have caused the displacement of a large number of people.

Jonglei governor calls for SPLA protection from the Nuer

Al-Wifaq reports that the Governor of Jonglei State has requested reinforcements from the SPLA to help protect Bor from armed attacks by the Nuer. The SPLA has blocked all roads leading into the town.

Reports say that clashes flared between Dinka and Nuer tribesmen in those areas following attacks by the Dinka on Murle tribesmen. The Nuer argue that Dinka tribesmen had violated an earlier accord between them through that attack.

Southern Sudanese politicians meet in Kenana to discuss current affairs

Kenana in central Sudan plays host today to a conference in which a group of southern Sudanese political figures will assess the political situation in southern Sudan following the signing of the CPA, the political future of the region, the forthcoming elections and referendum and the ICC arrest warrant for President Al-Bashir, reports **Al-Rai Al-Aam**. The 3-day conference will bring together about 60 leading political figures representing Greater Upper Nile, Bahr-el-Ghazal and Greater Equatoria, revealed Presidential Al-Bashir Advisor Bona Malwal.

Courts to issue ruling on Omdurman raiders

Al-Sudani reports that the courts issue tomorrow its ruling on 25 suspects charged with involvement in the JEM attack on Omdurman last May.

Government to coordinate on relief efforts

State Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, Charles Manyang, confirmed cooperation between the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and the UN on humanitarian operations in Darfur in the fields of health, education, the environment and food, reports **Al-Intibaha**. He said that the doors are open for any NGO wishing to carry out humanitarian operations in Darfur provided it abides by the laws governing voluntary work in Sudan.

UNAMID military strength at 67% - UN official

Sudan, the UN and the AU held talks yesterday to discuss progress in the deployment of hybrid forces in Darfur and means to facilitate the work of UNAMID, reports **Al-Ayaam**. USG for Field Support, Susana Malcorra, said following the meeting yesterday that the increase of the UNAMID military deployment to 67% during the past year reflect the success of the tripartite mechanism.

UNAMID said in a statement yesterday that Sudan has agreed that UNAMID take custody of the assets of the expelled NGOs pending a final decision on the issue.

ICC warrant cause of insecurity in Sudan - AU

Al-Raed reports that the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Ramadhan Al-Amamra said that the AU is prepared to help Sudan out of the ICC problem that is a US plan to destabilise Sudan. He pointed out that efforts by the Arab League, the AU and the Non-Aligned states have extensive backing from the international community. Khartoum is also carrying out parallel political activities, he said. He pointed out that former RSA President Thabo Mbeki heads a delegation of African Wise Men expected in Khartoum today.

Police uncover expired drugs in MSF's West Darfur warehouse

Police in West Darfur have uncovered large quantities of expired drugs and other supplies at the MSF warehouse, reports **Al-Raed**. Investigations continue over the issue, according to the police.

Websites/International News Coverage

Sudan's Al-Bashir heads to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage

(Al-Arabia) *Riyadh, KSA, 01/04/09* - President Al-Bashir arrived in Saudi Arabia today to perform Omra, a minor Muslim pilgrimage, which will take him to Islam's holy city of Mecca, state media reported.

Bashir arrived in the kingdom from Qatar, where he attended the Arab League summit this week. It was not immediately known if he would meet any Saudi officials seeing as Saudi King Abdullah Abdul Aziz and his foreign minister were in London for the G20 summit.

JEM rebels slam Arab support to Sudan's Bashir, pledge more action

(Sudan Tribune website) *London, 31/03/09* – The JEM has denounced the support the Arab League has expressed for President Al-Bashir. "Qatar has tarnished its credibility by receiving Al-Bashir," said JEM Spokesperson Ahmed Hussein Adam.

Adam further said the Qatari officials "we are assessing the whole process and will take decisions allowing us to better defend the interests of Darfur people." He further described the warm welcome for Bashir in Doha and his designation as the concluding speaker of the summit as "an insult for the people of Darfur and peace lovers."

"And now they should not be surprised of any position that we adopt towards the peace process," he added.

Adam regretted that the Arab leaders didn't change their bad perception for the cause of Darfuri people. "They left the main issue and their major concern became how to save the oppressor (Al-Bashir)," he underscored. He also accused the Arab leaders of having a double standard and misleading words in their final communiqué.

The JEM Spokesperson also said he was frustrated by the statement made by the joint mediator, Djibril Bassolé before the UN Security Council on March 26. He said Bassolé's focus on the ICC decision as main hindrance for the peace process is not correct because the issue of justice should not be linked to the political process.

However, Presidential Advisor, Mustafa Osman Ismail, told the Qatari news agency that JEM would change its position and resume the suspended peace process when it realizes the impact of the Arab support and the ineffectiveness of the ICC arrest warrant.

UNICEF celebrates education in Southern Sudan

(Sudan Tribune website) *Juba, 31/03/09* – The beginning of April marks a new school year and the fourth anniversary of Southern Sudan's 'Go To School' initiative, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) reminded in a statement today.

The initiative, launched on April 1, 2006, is led by the GoSS Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and aims to raise primary school enrolment levels to over two million.

So far, total enrolment is currently at approximately 1.6 million, up sharply from an estimated 343,000 at the end of the war, said UNICEF.

Minister of Education Job Dhoruai said: "The commitment of the Government of Southern Sudan and our partners offers us the strength to build a comprehensive education system that offers learning to all children who are the future of Southern Sudan."

Millions of school bags, books, pencils and other essential teaching and learning materials have been distributed by truck, boat and even on foot for communities that are often remote, with

limited access.

Speaking ahead of the fourth anniversary commemoration, the Director of Operations for UNICEF's Southern Sudan Area Programme, Peter Crowley, said "Today, there is no more important priority than to enable the current generation of children to fully develop their talents and skills, so they can help put an end to the poverty and suffering that have afflicted Southern Sudan for so long, and build a better future for all."

In Southern Sudan, 36 per cent of children in schools are girls. During the war period, very few girls completed any primary education.

According to survey data from 2006, Southern Sudan had 2,922 schools, but only 16 percent had permanent buildings. Often, school is held under large trees. So UNICEF has helped build permanent classrooms and rehabilitate existing ones.

UNICEF has also supported the training of teachers in Southern Sudan, providing assistance to the development and implementation of an English-language based curriculum as well as ongoing intensive English language courses for teachers.

Denmark, Ireland, Japan and the Netherlands donate to promote the 'Go To School' initiative, as well as UNICEF National Committees in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.