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Highlights

NEC likely to amend elections schedule

NEC press statement revealed yesterday that the Commission is likely to introduce limited amendments in the elections timetable to address some flaws caused by new developments and to create a conducive atmosphere as well as to ensure that the people exercise their constitutional rights in a free and fair elections, **Al-Sahafa** reports.

Sudan leader denies Darfur crimes

BBC - Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir has denied that his armed forces have targeted civilians in Darfur, in an exclusive interview with the **BBC**. "I challenge anybody to bring me evidence that proves the Sudanese armed forces attacked and killed citizens in Darfur," he told the BBC's HARDtalk.

In his first TV interview since being indicted on war crimes charges, he dismissed talk of crimes as propaganda. He has poured scorn on the International Criminal Court charges, which were the first issued by The Hague-based body against a sitting president. In the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, Bashir told HARDtalk: "What has been reported to have happened in Darfur did not actually happen at all." "What happened in Darfur was an insurgency. The state has the responsibility to fight the rebels." He added: "We have never fought against our citizens, we have not killed our citizens."

The Sudanese leader said government forces had been searching for arms used to shoot down a Unamid plane from inside the camp when rebels opened fire. "Our citizens were used as human shields by the rebels," he said. "Therefore, it was only natural for our forces to carry out their operational duties." "The shooting started from inside the camp, the soldiers returned fire and yes there were casualties. The issue was resolved with the citizens concerned."

The UN estimates 300,000 people have died in Darfur's six-year conflict and millions more have been displaced. But President Bashir said figures for casualties in Darfur were "less than one tenth of what has been reported". "Any talk about crimes committed inside Darfur is hostile and organized media propaganda to tarnish the reputation of the government and is a part of the declared war against our government," he added. Mr Bashir has denounced the ICC warrant as part of a neo-colonial Western plot to take over Sudan. The Darfur conflict began in early 2003, when the government and Arab militias launched a campaign against black-African rebel groups

No corruption, power will go to the people's representative – Bashir

Al-Sahafa reports President Al-Bashir has pledged free, fair and internationally-monitored elections. The President, in his speech at the second forum of the Sudanese media persons working abroad, has declared commitment to elections results, adding that power would be handed over to whosoever is voted by the people. He denied claims of corruption in the state's machinery and accused Turabi-led PCP of continuously sending its cadres to join JEM.

VP Taha, in his address to the forum, said Sudan came under a fierce disinformation campaign, being portrayed by media as a source of problems and crises and a menace to the world. "The campaign is using various means to fabricate information, turning Darfur into a wailing wall," he said. "We are not asking you to defend Bashir against the ICC or to defend his government. We only want you to reflect facts about Sudan to the outside world,"

Meanwhile, the State Minister for Information Kamal Obeid told the forum that pre-publication censorship and heavy fine was imposed upon recommendation from the FVP Kiir himself who had protested that the media had singled him out for criticism.

1291 jobs sanctioned for Abyei

Al-Watan reports the Abyei Area Deputy Chief Administrator Rahma Abdul Rahman Al-Nur as saying that 1292 jobs have been approved for Abyei area as part of the administrative structure process.

NCP is assessing its presence in southern Sudan

NCP has begun wide assessment of its presence in southern Sudan a head of upcoming elections to determine whether it has the capacity to compete with SPLM in Southern Sudan, **Al-Intibaha** reports.

Mbeki Panel due in Khartoum tomorrow

Al-Raed reports the high level AU Panel on Darfur headed by the former South African President Thabo Mbeki is to visit Khartoum tomorrow to resume consultations with local authorities to prepare a report containing proposals for resolving the Darfur problem to be submitted to the AU in July. The panel will this time visit Juba for consultation with the FVP Kiir and will also visit the three Darfur States.

ICC prosecutor says rebel case likely decided before UNSC briefing

Sudan Tribune website - The ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo said that a decision on a case against Darfur rebel commanders could be as early as next month.

In an interview with Reuters Ocampo said he hopes that that the Pre-Trial Chamber I issue an indictment for rebel figures accused of masterminding a deadly attack on African Union (AU) peacekeepers in 2007.

The ICC official is due to submit his semi-annual report on the Darfur case to the UN Security Council (UNSC) in June. T

The ICC prosecutor filed an appeal in March saying that the judges applied a higher threshold of standards when reviewing the evidence for genocide charges, more than required under the Rome Statute. He did not say when a ruling on the appeal is expected.

Parliament Speaker “arrogant and repressive” – Arman

SPLM parliamentary group chairman Yasir Arman has criticized the National Assembly Speaker Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir saying he treats MPs in “an arrogant and repressive manner”. He said the Speaker also disregards the Assembly’s rules and regulations. Arman was reacting yesterday to the Assembly’s disregard of an urgent question raised by SPLM MP about a recent fatwa issued by the Religious Council.

Meanwhile, **Al-Sahafa** reports Arman has criticized the criminal bill describing the manner in which the bill was tabled before the Assembly as “a scandal” According to **Al-Rai Al-Aam**, Arman angrily walked out of the House when the Speaker rejected his point of order.

DDR aims at disarming 17000 soldiers

Miraya FM – North Sudan DDR Commission said that it aims at disarming seventeen thousand (17,000) soldiers from the Sudan Armed Forces, the Popular Defence Forces and the Sudan

People's Liberation Army, in Southern Kordofan State.

The Chairman of the Commission, Abdul Rahman Shanto, told **Miraya FM** that the process began by disarming the first batch of about twenty soldiers. He added that this comes in implementation of the security arrangements protocol of the Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan States, as stipulated in the CPA.

Jonglei assembly opens to tackle increasing crimes

Sudan Tribune website - After over a lengthy holidays Jonglei state Legislative Assembly open Monday with lawmakers and executive pledging to end tribal feuds through peace talks and all-means disarmament.

Jonglei Gov. Kuol Manyang Juuk, in a statement read on his behalf to the assembly by Deputy Gov. Hussein Mar Nyot, told lawmakers to develop efficient and effective policies in order to provide quality services to the State citizens. Governor Manyang traveled to Juba in the early hours of Monday for official visit.

Both Speaker Jodi Jonglei Boyoris and Gov. Kuol Manyang embark to peace conferences as a way forward with hopes to strengthen policies and involvement of leaders at all levels as well as "unconditional disarmament" for the on-going peace talks to hold.

"The commitment of the State Government is to provide quality life services to all citizens.....[which] can only be realized when there is relative peace," Gov. Kuol said adding "to achieve this goal therefore, our collective efforts both the executive and legislative is to develop policies that would produce efficient and effective procedures and mechanisms....as the State Government is committed to unconditional disarmament."

ECMC form Election Strategy Committee

Miraya FM - The Election Campaign Management Committee has yesterday formed the State's Election Strategy Committee in Western Bahr el Ghazal State to carry out the formation of sub-committees in Payams and Bomas in the three Counties of the State.

In an exclusive interview with **Miraya FM** in Wau town, a member of the national election strategy committee, and team leader of the election campaign management sub-Committee, Mr. Gatwech Lam Puoch, said the SPLM aims through these campaigns to educate people about elections and prepare them for the upcoming elections in Sudan.

Woman raped by regular troops in Khartoum

Local dailies report an Ethiopian female tea-seller was raped in Khartoum by three members of regular troops. According to **Al-Watan**, the women, 22, told a Khartoum North Court that she was goaded by the three members of regular troops to the Passports and Nationality building in Khartoum North and took turns in raping her. The rapists were arrested and investigation underway.

Darfur movements to meet in Juba

Ray Al-Shaab reports the SPLM Deputy Secretary General Ann Ito as saying that Darfur movements will meet on 25 May in Juba as part of GoSS efforts to unify their negotiating positions. She said a large number of the Darfur Movements have positively responded to the proposal for meeting in Juba.

UNAMID concerned over surge in factional violence

UN News Centre - The joint African Union-United Nations envoy to Darfur expressed concern yesterday over recent armed clashes between various factions in the northern part of the war-ravaged Sudanese region. AU-UN Special Representative Rodolphe Adada called on the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and Sudanese Liberation Army/Minni Minawi wing (SLA/MM) to end hostilities, which flared up over the weekend in the North Darfur town of Umm Baru.

Mr. Adada noted that the hybrid AU-UN peacekeeping mission, known as UNAMID, had transported 26 people injured in the fighting to the North Darfur capital of El Fasher for medical treatment at the military hospital.

The Special Representative also held discussions yesterday with the Under-Secretary of the Sudanese Foreign Affairs Ministry, Mutrif Siddiq, and the Presidential Adviser, Mustafa Osman Ismail, during separate meetings in Khartoum.

In a briefing to the Security Council in April, Mr. Adada estimated that around 2,000 civilians have been killed in Darfur since UNAMID deployed last year.

Meanwhile, the World Food Programme (WFP) has started distributing emergency food supplies for May in areas most affected by the Government's expulsion of 13 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

For food assistance beyond June, WFP is preparing to launch a special operation in Darfur, designed to compensate for the gaps in humanitarian relief aid left by the ouster of the NGOs.

In North and South Darfur, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has entered into agreements with partner organizations to set up a health clinic and psychosocial activities formerly managed by expelled NGOs in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

However, in West Darfur three of the 13 therapeutic feeding centres formerly managed by expelled NGOs remain out of action, either due to insecurity or lack of alternative resources.

Gunmen kill three Sudanese police in Darfur

Reuters - Gunmen riding camels shot dead three Sudanese police officers in Sudan's Darfur region in an attack aimed at stealing their weapons, a senior police source said on Tuesday.

"An unknown armed group attacked four policemen yesterday ... east of Nyala and killed three of them," the source told **Reuters** by telephone from Darfur. The fourth officer was wounded in the attack.

Doha talks adjourn without breakthrough

Sudan Tribune website - The talks held in the Arab Gulf state of Qatar between JEM and the Sudanese government adjourned with no deal on humanitarian issues or swapping prisoners.

JEM spokesperson Ahmed Hussein speaking to Sudan Tribune by phone from Doha said that the mediation teams set May 27th as the new date for talks to resume after the closing session on Tuesday night.

"Make no mistake. We did not come here to renegotiate things we have already agreed on. If the government is genuine about peace they will execute what they have signed rather than attempt to buy time. Instead they are focused on their dispute with Chad and a ceasefire," he said.

"The humanitarian issue is of paramount importance. We need to ensure that these organizations are allowed back in to prevent further deterioration in the situation," JEM official added.

Hussein lashed out at the Sudanese government saying it is mistreating JEM POW's and targeting other Darfuris.

"Our detained prisoners have no access to their families and are being kept in extremely poor conditions. On our end we treat their prisoners in accordance with the Geneva Convention. Even the list they submitted for our POW's was inaccurate," he said.

"They hanged nine Darfuris after bogus trials in which they were framed for the murder of Mohamed Taha," Hussein added.

With regard to the question of the release of prisoners of war, the two sides exchanged lists of POWs held by each party and agreed to form a joint committee with participation of the mediation in order to finalize it and to speed up the process of release, the statement said.

Uganda army says LRA rebels weakened

AFP - LRA rebels have been severely weakened in a recent offensive by regional armies on their camps in DR Congo, and were no longer a fighting force, the army said Tuesday.

"The LRA is not a fighting force. They are not. They cannot attack you. They have lost that capacity," James Mugira, who heads Uganda's military intelligence, told **AFP**. "They are just in hiding and when they see the UPDF everybody takes off on his own," he said. "It's really like hunting animals."

Mugira said the rebels have also been weakened by the withdrawal of support from the Sudanese government in Khartoum. "We have not received any evidence of external support. So now if they fire two rounds, they are two rounds short for good," he said.

But Washington-based rights group Enough said in a report Tuesday the drive ended prematurely and left civilians in northeastern DR Congo vulnerable to LRA reprisal attacks. "There is a pervasive fear of LRA attacks since Uganda left and a feeling of no security," Julia Spiegel, co-author of the report, told **AFP**.