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Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was laid to rest on Sunday at the Holy Trinity Cathedral Church in Addis Ababa. The funeral service of the late premier was attended by various African leaders, heads of state, delegations and prominent international figures. Prime Minister Meles died at the age of 57. Thousands of mourners gathered at Meskel Square to pay their final respects to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. The flag-draped coffin arrived at Meskel Square and later proceeded to the Holy Trinity Cathedral Church where he was buried (WIC, Sep. 2).

Dozens of foreign leaders and dignitaries, including at least 20 African presidents, were present at the funeral ceremony. Mr. Meles came to power in 1991 and was credited for bringing development and growth to Ethiopia. But critics say this was achieved at the cost of respect for human rights. The state funeral - Ethiopia's first for a leader in more than 80 years - began in Meskel Square after a journey of about an hour-and-a-half from Mr. Meles' official residence, the Grand National Palace. The coffin was accompanied by hundreds of mourners, including Mr. Meles' widow Azeb Mesfin, who was seen being comforted by officials (BBC, Sep. 2).

Over the past week, in near silence, two endless columns of Ethiopians draped in black have shuffled through the grounds of the national palace before pausing beneath a coffin covered by the flag and breaking into wails and sobs. The masses in Africa's second-most populous nation are coming to mourn and pay respect to former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the nation's formidable leader of 21 years who died of illness on August 20. Admiration for the man and his achievements is overwhelming. A former rebel who stepped up to govern after helping defeat a military junta, Meles had an influence on contemporary Ethiopia that is hard to overstate. But of more importance to Kemal Hussein than his leader's fearsome intellect, political cunning, antipoverty mission, or diplomatic charm, was his personal integrity (The Christian Science Monitor, Sep. 1).

Ethiopia's acting Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, will be sworn in after Meles Zenawi's funeral on Sep. 2. Desalegn was initially scheduled to be sworn in last week, but the Ethiopian parliament decided to postpone the ceremony due to make way for Meles' funeral. The Council of Ministers announced that Desalegn will also continue to lead the council. The Prime Minister designate, hailed his predecessor's leadership, saying he had "lived his life burning like a candle for the good of his people". "The loss of his exceptional leadership is great, a leader like him is a once in a lifetime phenomenon", said Desalegn (The Africa Report, August 28).

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's council will probably "legally endorse" Hailemariam as party chairman next month and then recommend him to parliament as prime minister, Sekutire Getachew, the foreign relations head of the party's secretariat. The meeting date hasn't been scheduled yet, he said. Parliament, which has only one opposition representative out of 547 lawmakers, is on "stand-by" to swear in Meles's successor after the nation finishes mourning, Communication Minister Bereket Simon said last week.

Ethiopia's constitution does not cater for succession in the event of the death, incapacitation or instability of the prime minister, said Yohannes Woldegebriel, a lawyer who has written on the subject. The deputy prime minister is empowered to act on behalf of the prime minister in his absence and is accountable to the prime minister, according to the country's 1994 constitution. "Now that the prime minister is dead, the deputy prime minister can't be accountable to the prime minister," Yohannes said. The constitution makes no reference to an acting prime minister. While the constitutional question is "debatable," in practice "there is no gap as the deputy prime minister is working in the position of the prime minister," the EPRDF's Sekutire said (Bloomberg, August 28).

The Government of Ethiopia and the African Development Bank signed a US\$ 251m loan agreement Friday for the "Promoting Basic Services" (PBS) Phase III Program. The African Development Fund (ADF) loan will provide Ethiopia with earmarked budget support over three fiscal years mainly for block grants to the regions to support expanding access and improvements to the quality of decentralized basic service delivery in the education, health and agriculture sectors, as well as upgrades to rural roads, water supply and sanitation. These

services are crucial for raising the living standards of the population and for sustaining the gains made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Ethiopia (AllAfrica.com, August 27).

Africa-focused agriculture firm Agriterra's (LON:AGTA) legacy oil interests in Ethiopia may hold up to 2.7 bln barrels, according to the latest assessment. Partner Africa Oil said the figure was a best case, gross unrisked estimate derived from an independent review of the South Omo block in Ethiopia. Agriterra has a 20% stake in South Omo with Africa Oil owning 30% and Tullow Oil (LON:TLW) 50%. Sabisa-1, the first well planned for the South Omo Block, is now targeted to be drilled by the end of 2012, following Tullow's rig contract negotiations in Ethiopia, which are nearing conclusion, Agriterra added (Proactive Investors, August 27).