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A plan by the Ethiopian government to expand the capital's administrative control into neighboring states has sparked months of student protests. Security forces have been accused of cracking down on demonstrators in the region of Oromia. The government says 17 people died in the violence, but human rights groups say that number is much higher (*BBC, July 28*).

Journalist Zerihun Mulugeta of the Ethiopian Journalists Forum has fled the country. Zerihun has worked for several years as a reporter and senior editor of *Sendek* newspaper until he became the head of public relations of the Ethiopian Journalists Forum. He said before his departure that he could not put up any longer with the growing pressure on him from security agents (*Addis Admas, July 16*).

Members of the ONLF who have been accused of inflicting serious damages on the life of 83 members of the China-Ethiopia oil exploration team in the Ogaden have been brought to court. The defendants were accused of killing and torturing the Chinese and Ethiopian mining group. The 19th Criminal Bench of the Federal High Court, which is considering the case, has appointed an interpreter as the defendants are Somali speakers (*Sendek, July 30*).

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) announced 33% to 46% salary increment for civil servants following approval by the Council of Ministers. The increment will become effective as of the first month of the Ethiopian budget year. Civil servants in the lower salary range will get the highest rate of salary increase of 46%. Those in the highest salary bracket will get an increment of 33%. The adjustment also increases the lowest pension fund from 294 birr to 534 birr. The increment will benefit an estimated 1.3 million public servants with the new salary adjustment costing the government an additional 10.3 billion birr each year, Sufian Ahmed, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) said (*State media, Aug. 2*).

Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan are scheduled to resume the tripartite Nile talks on 26 August in Sudan, Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdel-Atti said. The meeting is considered to be a sign of progress after a series of talks last year ended in a stalemate. Ethiopia maintains that Egypt's water share will not be negatively affected by the successful completion of the project. Egypt, on the other hand, has doubts on the matter. On 29 July, Egypt's State Information Service published a statement revealing that Egypt approved Ethiopia's request to postpone the tripartite talks by one week. The talks were initially scheduled for mid-August and to take place in Cairo. However, they were moved to Khartoum (*ahramonline, July 31*).

An Egyptian intensive care unit for cardiac surgery was inaugurated at the Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa, Egypt's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement. Renowned Egyptian-born British heart surgeon Magdi Yacoub, Egypt's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Mohamed Idris, and members of the Ethiopian Parliament attended the opening. "My visit with the Egyptian medical crew to Ethiopia represents the true bonds of the two peoples," the statement quoted Yacoub as saying. Yacoub, who received the Order of Merit from Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in June, added, "This cooperation will continue and evolve to provide high-level medical service to Ethiopian citizens and save the lives of Ethiopian children and brothers who suffer from heart diseases" (*The Cairo Post*).

Allanasons Ltd., an Indian food company, plans to invest \$20m in a meat-processing plant in Ethiopia as it seeks to take advantage of a large population of naturally fed cattle and sheep, Bloomberg.com reported. The Mumbai-based producer has been allotted land in Adami Tulu in Oromia region, about 170 km south of Addis Ababa, where it will build a facility to produce 70 MT of meat products a day, said Aman Khan, head of Ethiopian operations. Allanasons is India's largest exporter of processed food and commodities, according to its website (*WIC, August 2*).

The United Kingdom extended to Ethiopia a grant amounting to £17m to address constraints related to tax, audit and transparency, both at the federal and regional levels. Finance and Economic Development State Minister Ahmed Shide said the UK has provided 300m pounds on average every year to support various development activities in Ethiopia (*state media, Aug. 1*).

The close to 30% youth of the total population of Ethiopia plays a substantial role in the development of the country, the National Planning Commission of Ethiopia (NPC) said. The Acting Director of Population and Development of the National Planning Commission of Ethiopia, Fikre Gesso, said 29.5% of the total population, which is 24.7 million, are young people between 15 and 29 years old and play a significant role in the country's socioeconomic and political development. According to Fikre, the increasing number of youth does not affect the country as they are an additional resource. Ethiopia is following a policy of engaging the youth in the work place, which is enabling the growth of local investment and strengthening a saving culture, Fikre noted.

The Chinese Huajian Group will build a 2.2 billion USD industrial zone in Dukem town of Oromia special zone near Addis Ababa. A statement from the Ministry of Industry said Huajian Group will begin construction at the beginning of this fiscal year. The industrial zone to be built by the Chinese company is designed to conform to the objectives of the Growth and Transformation Plan (*Reporter, July 27*).

Ethiopia is expanding its *Jatropha* plantation to produce 500 million l of biodiesel from the plant, which can yield 600 l of biodiesel from a single tonne of seed. "The country has designed a five-year *Jatropha* development project aimed at planting 700 million *Jatropha* seedlings and produce 500 million l biodiesel," says Bizuneh Tolcha, spokesperson for the Ministry of Water, Energy and Irrigation. The Ethiopian and Norwegian governments are working together on the project at a cost of over \$2.8m (*Industry News, July 29*).

The US government is providing up to 800m USD annually for Ethiopia to advance the country's development in the fields of health, education, agriculture and food security, and energy, the US Ambassador to Ethiopia said (*State media*,