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Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn appointed two new deputy premiers to share the leadership of the government between the four ethnic-based parties of the Horn of Africa nation's ruling coalition. The second and third deputies are Muktar Kedir, a former adviser to the prime minister and leading member of the Oromo People's Democratic Organization, and Information Technology Minister Debretsion Gebremichael, who is also deputy chairman of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, Hailemariam told lawmakers today in the capital, Addis Ababa. Demeke Mekonnen, the education minister and leader of the Amhara National Democratic Movement, was appointed as a deputy prime minister in September (Bloomberg, Nov. 29).

Ethiopian troops will remain in Somalia until African Union forces fighting Islamists can take over, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn said, as he met with his Somali counterpart. Hailemariam, speaking alongside newly elected Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, on his first official visit to the Ethiopian capital, gave no timeline for a pull out of troops. Mohamud said that the Shabaab is "literally defeated" - although many experts say it remains a potent threat - and also warned foreign fighters with the extremists to leave Somalia. Ethiopian troops and tanks invaded Somalia in November 2011 to attack Al-Qaeda linked Shabaab insurgents, capturing key towns including Baidoa. At the same time, anti-Shabaab Somali forces and a 17,000-strong AU force have been also battling the Islamists, and are seeking to link up with areas held by Ethiopia (AFP, Nov. 28).

Following decision of the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) to sell one USD at 16.35 birr two years ago, the foreign exchange rate has continued to drop even further. In November of last year, one USD sold at 17.211 birr but this November it has risen to 18.181 birr. In the last two years, the purchasing power of the birr dropped by 30%. According to economists, the drop in the rate may have some economic advantages but it has hindered the reduction in the inflation rate. The drop in the exchange rate has caused the price of basic commodities to rise. Ethiopia has signed a grant agreement amounting to 35m € with the European Union (EU) The grant agreement, known as the Transformation Triggering Facility (TTF), is designed to support selected activities that are thought to contribute in paving the way for the speedy attainment of the Growth and Transformation Plan. Finance and Economic Development Minister, Sufian Ahmed said through the TTF, export and investment in selected value chains, leather and leather products, textile, agri-processing and pharmaceuticals will be enhanced through technology transfer and market development. The Minister said TTF aims at creating more jobs, promoting innovation and entrepreneurial skills, supporting Ethiopia in the attainment of its vision of becoming a medical and aviation hub of the continent in the short to medium term (State media, Nov. 27).

Following a rapid growth in traffic at Addis Ababa Bole International Airport in recent years, plans are now under way to build a major new airport that would supersede Bole as the main national hub for Ethiopia. However, Shiferaw Alemu, CEO of Ethiopian Airports Enterprise (EAE), told that "prior to the construction of the new airport, Bole will be expanded in order to accommodate the traffic volume estimated for the medium-term plan, which is from 10 to 15 years". Bole already operates at its full capacity of 6 million to 7 million passengers per year according to EAE, which is responsible for the development of the country's airports (IHS Jane's, Nov. 28).