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A large number of Ethiopians living in the war-torn South Sudanese territory of Unity State are caught in the conflict between the warring parties of South Sudan. Some Ethiopians told newsmen that they are forced to take refuge with their construction machinery. About six of the Ethiopians who are working for a construction project there said two of their fellow workers have been killed while three others sustained serious injuries. It is not yet clear how many Ethiopians have died in the country so far but VOA reported this week that as many as thirty Ethiopians lost their lives since the outbreak of the war (Yegna Press, Dec. 31).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said the nation is exerting concerted efforts to evacuate its citizens, estimated to be over 15,000, from South Sudan. Briefing local journalists on current issues in Addis Ababa on Tuesday, MoFA Spokesperson, Ambassador Dina Mufti, said as fears rise due to war in that country, Ethiopia has begun evacuating its citizens. More than 900 Ethiopians have been transported back home until this morning (Tuesday, December 31, 2013) as fighting continues between the two sides, he said. "Currently, Ethiopia is doing its level best to evacuate its citizen soon from South Sudan by increasing flights," he said (WIC, Dec. 31).

Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan failed to reach an agreement in the tripartite negotiations regarding the construction of the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance dam. Ethiopia has refused to discuss the terms of "confidence-building measures", which Egyptian officials say must be changed in order to avoid reduction of Egypt's Nile river water share. Also, Ethiopia insisted on special conditions to an international conflict-resolution committee that Egypt believes "would deplete it from its original purpose of being an impartial moderator between the three countries," according to a statement released by Egyptian authorities. The Khartoum talks, which lasted for two days, ended by leaving an open door for any suggestions that might arise between the three countries (MENA, Jan. 5).

Ethiopia hopes to finalize the construction of its \$4.7bio hydroelectric dam project on the Nile River within three years, the director of the project said. "The implementation has been going according to schedule," the project manager, Semegnew Bekele, told Anadolu Agency, noting that the dam would be 30 percent complete within a few months. The Grand Renaissance Dam, being built in Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State near the border with Sudan, will allow the country generate 6,000 megawatts of electricity (WIC, Jan. 4).

Reliable news sources we are getting from Baidoa, the capital town of Baay Region confirm to Shabelle radio station in Mogadishu that a large number of Ethiopian troops had arrived in the town on January 2. The troops are said to have set bases in different parts of the town and an eye witness who talked to Shabelle radio told us that the troops have started maneuvering inside the town. Baidoa town which is in the hands of Somali Government troops and AMIOSOM troops face frequent attacks from Alshabaab militants who hide within or outside the town targeting government and AMISOM troops based in the region. However, government officials in Baay region have not released any statement about the arrival of the large number of Ethiopian troops (Shebelle Media Network, Jan. 3).

The sugar projects under construction were due for completion within the five-year Growth and Transformation Plan but failed to secure the required financial resources. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has, therefore, ordered the projects to seek partnership with foreign companies and bring the construction to completion. The initial plan was to build ten new sugar projects and to upgrade three old ones. The upgrading of the three old projects is fully underway with the 640m USD loan obtained from India. The ten new ones have been unable to secure the required 75bio birr and their construction is being hampered (Reporter, Dec. 29).

Nyota Minerals Ltd, the gold exploration and development company in East Africa, said that it has completed the sale of a 75% majority stake in its Ethiopia operations to KEFI Minerals PLC, its new partner in the subsidiary.

An Ethio-American company based in the US, North Holdings Investment Inc., will build a new cement factory with an outlay of USD 800m . North Holdings Investment Inc president, Temesgen M. Bitew, told that his company is planning to build the factory in east Gojjam, Dejen wereda, Menda locality. Temesgen said with two production lines the factory will have the capacity to produce 8.4 million t of cement. According to Temesgen, the feasibility study was completed and the company will hire a Danish contractor called FLS which will build the factory, supply and install the machinery. Temesgen said the company will secure loan for the project from a London based investment bank. The project includes the establishment of a cement bag factory, a transport company and a coal manufacturing plant. In order to be energy self sufficient, North Holdings plans to build a coal manufacturing plant in Gonder, Chilga locality, where there are coal deposits. According to Temesgen, the total cost of the investment will reach 1.1 billion \$. The company has secured a 250 ha plot of land and hopes to start work on the project in the New Year. When the whole project is realized fully, it will create 15,000 jobs, according to Temesgen. The Ministry of Mines has granted a limestone mining license to North Holdings. According to the Ministry of Mines, the license area covers 24,513 sq. km plot of land and the mining license will be valid for 20 years. North Holdings is a business corporation established by 12 business people in Delaware, United States in 2006 (The Reporter, Dec. 29).

A bumper harvest which would stabilize the grain market is expected this year, according to official estimates. This was indicated in a joint report issued by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Ministry of Agriculture Tuesday. The report said there has been a dramatic increase in the production of teff, wheat, maize, sorghum and barley. Earlier, the Ethiopian Central Statistics Agency reported that a harvest of 254.2 million q is expected this year. It said this will undoubtedly stabilize the grain market (Reporter, Jan. 1) .

Huda Real Estate which belongs to Sheikh Al- Amoudi has refused to hand over the land it had kept idle for years without starting any investment. The Addis Ababa Administration had earlier ordered the real estate company to hand over the land as it could not start any work as agreed upon with the government. The land is located in Lideta sub-city near the Wabe Shebelle Hotel. Huda kept the land idle for the past 10 years. The company has approached the administration to reverse its order by pledging to start the projects soon. The Addis Ababa Administrations is expected to reconsider the appeal and make the required decision. Huda had plans to build a 20-storey twin building (Reporter, Jan. 1).

The Ministry of Industry (MoI) said the Bole Lemi Industry Zone development is at its first phase. According to Melaku Taye, corporate communication director at the ministry, this includes the building of five factory buildings. Three factory buildings covering an area of 5,000 sq. m each and two structures each with an area of 1,000 sq. m have been completed at a cost of over 348.9m birr, Melaku told (WIC, Dec. 30).

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) said more needs to be done to attract private investors to engage in commercial agriculture to tap into the country's huge potential. Tefera Deribew, Minister of Agriculture, said large scale commercial farmers in the country are registering 'encouraging' results but insisted more needs to be done to ensure more success. Ethiopia is touted as a nation with huge agriculture potential with diverse ecological zones suitable for various types of crops, abundant ground and surface water resources and cheap labor. According to the ministry, Ethiopia's potential arable land is estimated to be nearly 70 million ha, out of which 12 million ha have, so far, been developed. "We have identified nearly 3 million ha of arable land for potential foreign and local investors," Tefera said (WIC, Dec. 31).

If you like your holidays to come with a big slice of adventure, you might want to take note of a new top ten from no-nonsense travel publisher Rough Guides. The holiday authority has named its best countries to visit in 2014 - a list headed by Ethiopia. According to Rough Guides, a 'boom' in small hotels and restaurants is making travelling around this culturally rich

east African nation much easier, giving adventurous tourists the chance to experience 'untouched national parks, ancient cities, the world's first coffee plantations, the largest cave in Africa and the continent's greatest concentration of UNESCO sites' (Opodo News, Dec. 31).