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The Ethiopian government reiterated its readiness to hold peace talks with Eritrea to resolve their decades-long border dispute. During his meeting with the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York, the Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs Tedros Adhanom accused the Eritrean government of refusing to engage in peace talks. Adhanom said his country is ready to sit down for direct negotiations with Eritrea without any preconditions regarding to level, time or venue (Sudan Tribune, April 30).

Nine of the 14 people involved in the killing of 23 innocent persons in Gambella State have been sentenced to death. The offenders were found guilty of killing 17 students and six staff members of the Saudi Star Plc in cold blood as part of their terrorist activities (Reporter, April 28).

Presenting its 2011-12 fiscal year audit report to parliament, the Federal Auditor General reported that billions of birr of government money has gone amiss and unaccounted for. It also reported that the government lost huge amounts of money from its treasury during the period. The Federal Auditor General, Ato Gemechu Dubiso, told the House of People's Representatives that his report is based on thorough discussions with all the offices that required special auditing. According to his report, it was discovered that 1.4bio birr was missing in 57 public offices. This includes 404m birr of the Ministry of Education, 173m birr of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and 155m birr of the Agricultural and Technical Vocational Schools Training Coordinating Office (Reporter, May 1).

Following the decision of the government of China to finance the Ethio-Djibouti railway project, high-ranking officials of Exim Bank of China will arrive in Addis Ababa in the coming days to finalize an agreement between the finance ministers of Ethiopia and China. This will pave the way for the disbursement of the \$3.3bio loan. The loan will be used to finance the 752.7km railway project which is intended to connect Sebeta town of Oromia Regional State with Djibouti's Negad Port. The project will be accomplished in three phases, two of which would be implemented on the Ethiopian side, and the third, in Djibouti (WIC, April 30).

Russia's government may fund a 587-km southern line that will eventually connect with a proposed port at Lamu on Kenya's northeastern coast, Ethiopian Railways Corp. General Manager Getachew Betru said. Brazilian companies could build a 439-km section of a route to oil rich

South Sudan and India is considering export financing for a line to a port in Djibouti, he said (Bloomberg, May 1).

The cultural tradition of chewing khat, a leaf that is a mild narcotic, is on the rise in Ethiopia. The East African nation is one of the world's chief exporters of the crop, earning hundreds of millions of dollars a year. Khat's popularity is growing as more members of the middle and upper classes are chewing the leaf. The government has banned khat houses. That means men now gather in private homes to chew and discuss daily life, politics and sports (VOA, April 30).

Shelter is among the many things Ethiopia's street children long for. But a study by the international aid group Save the Children indicates that local nongovernmental organizations and community organizations rarely offer what the street children want. Azeb Adefrsew, a researcher with Save the Children, said the limited services provided by local NGOs do not match what the kids see as their greatest needs. Save the Children interviewed kids living on the streets in five major cities, three regional towns and eight rural villages across Ethiopia. The children discussed a wide range of topics, including their needs, health and risks. There are about 30,000 street children in Ethiopia, with 17,000 in Addis Ababa alone. More than half of these kids do not have access to shelter or adequate food. They mostly survive on what they receive from shining shoes, selling small items to passersby and begging (VOA, May 1).