

No.19, July 07, 2014(*) **Seven Days**, Vol. 21

Ethiopia has received an official letter from Egypt suggesting the resumption of negotiations between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over the Renaissance Dam, a senior Ethiopian official has said. The director of the Ethiopian department of trans-border rivers, Fakahmed Negash, is saying that the Egyptian irrigation ministry had suggested trilateral negotiations between Cairo, Khartoum and Addis-Ababa to discuss the construction of Ethiopia's multibillion-dollar hydroelectric dam on the upper reaches of the Nile (*Anadolu, July 2*).

Hundreds of Muslims protesters demonstrated in Ethiopia Friday, demanding the release of 17 of their leaders jailed. The leaders were arrested last August, following months of protests by Muslims accusing the government of interfering in religious affairs. They are currently on trial for intending to "carry out acts of terrorism." Protesters accuse the government of forcibly imposing the foreign Al-Ahbash branch of Islam, and appointing leaders, or majlis, of the Supreme Council on Islamic Affairs who are traditionally elected by members of the Muslim community. The government did not return calls for comment Friday (*AFP, July 4*).

The government of Germany on June 30, 2014 donated vehicles which would consolidate the all-round efforts of the Federal Police Commission to prevent and control crime. The Liaison Officer of the German Police to East Africa, Diedrich Ebers, handed over the keys of five land cruisers estimated to be worth 150,000 € to the Federal Police Commissioner, General Assefa Abiyu (*State media, July 1*).

The export of oilseeds has become the biggest foreign exchange earner for Ethiopia overtaking coffee, the country's number one export item for decades. A ten-month performance report obtained from the Ministry of Trade (MoT) reveals that Ethiopia obtained just under 585m USD from the export of oilseeds, knocking coffee off its perch for the first time. In contrast, coffee generated 489.28m USD during the same period. The country exported over 404,000 t of oilseeds during the first ten months of the budget year, a rise of over 10% compared to the same period last year. The revenue obtained also showed a growth of 52% compared to the same period last year. The achievement is over 95% of the revenue the ministry projected to obtain during the period. However, the picture is rather gloomy for coffee. The ministry projected to obtain 822.08m USD during the first ten months but achieved about 60% of the target. When compared to the previous budget year, export performance of coffee in the first ten months of this budget year showed a decline of 8.7% and 15% in amount exported and revenue generated, respectively. The overall export performance saw the country earn 2.6bio USD during the ten months of the budget year, registering a growth of 4.8% from last year (*WIC, June 30*).

Ethiopia will start setting up a new industrial park in September and will expand another at a total cost of \$250m, an official said, part of efforts to shift away from farming and become a hub for textiles and other industries. The Horn of Africa nation aims to attract investors who are moving some manufacturing from China and other Asian markets, where costs are rising. Ethiopia offers cheap labor and fast improving power supply, transport and other infrastructure. Luring new industry is seen as vital to maintaining high growth rates in Ethiopia's still largely agrarian economy. Yaregal Meskir, deputy director general of the Ethiopian Industrial Development Zones Corporation, said plans were being finalized to expand the existing Bole Lemi Industrial Zone, on the southern outskirts of the capital, while a new industrial hub was planned at Kilinto, 30 km further south (*Reuters, July 4*).

Ethiopia has already met the MDG target of halving the population without access to improved clean drinking water, a year before the deadline. The Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Mines said that the clean drinking water coverage of the country has reached 71%, way above the target 62% by 2015. The national clean water coverage was 30% when the MDG was launched (*ENA, July 1*).