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Egypt has offered to co-fund the Renaissance Dam on the condition that it co-administers or designs the dam, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Badr Abdel Atty told. Egypt also offered to "encourage Arab countries and funding organizations" to co-fund the dam, provided that Egypt participates in its management to prevent adverse "influence over any party," Atty said. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Nabil Fahmy met with his Ethiopian counterpart Tedros Adhanom on the sidelines of the E.U.-African in Brussels. Fahmy openly explained that the matter impacts Egyptian national security and that Egypt would not "stand idly by" if the situation remains as is, according to Abdel Atty. There is a package of political, technical and legal measures that Egypt would use to pressure towards serious negotiations to transcend existing disputes, Fahmy told his Ethiopian counterpart (Al-Nahar TV, April 2).

Egypt's Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy's suggestion to finance the GERD is a positive development, which indicates that Egypt has recognized the importance of the dam to its people, Ambassador Dina Mufti, Spokesperson of Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. He told that the government of Ethiopia appreciates the interest Egypt has shown to finance the dam. However, he added, the Grand Renaissance Dam will be fully financed only by the people and government of Ethiopia. Following the release by Egypt's State Information Service that Egypt has offered to finance Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam and run it jointly; the ambassador appreciated Egypt's recognition of the importance of the dam to the entire region but said that neither of these is possible (WIC, April 4). Egyptian authorities have drawn up a committee to issue recommendations with the aim of allowing international arbitration over Ethiopia's multibilliondollar hydroelectric dam project currently being built on the Nile's upper reaches, Egypt's official gazette stated. It is the first time for Cairo to allude to its intention to resort to international law to resolve the ongoing political stalemate with Addis Ababa over the latter's gigantic Renaissance Dam project, which, Egyptian officials say, threatens Egypt's traditional share of Nile water. The members of the new committee have been tasked with studying the dam project's legal aspects. The committee comprises six members and also includes three international law experts (Anadolu Agency, March 31).

The Federal First Instance Court Ninth Civil Bench at Lideta found the state-owned Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA) guilty of defamation. The charge that was brought by the Unity Democracy and Justice (UDJ) party accused ERTA of producing and broadcasting a documentary film entitled "Akeldama", which, it said, had the intention of defaming the party. The documentary that was aired on ETV showed individuals who lost their membership from the party because of disciplinary measures or those who had terminated their membership because of their own free will as if they were still members of the party, the charge read. UDJ pointed out that the documentary was extremely defamatory and portrayed the party wrongly as if it had a relationship with bodies that are deemed terrorist by the country's law. The three-day program, "Akeldama", showed that UDJ was in close contact with an exiled opposition group, Ginbot 7, a group that was labeled as a terrorist organization by the Ethiopian government and that it is covering or protecting the members of Ginbot 7 (The Reporter, April 5). The former president of Gambella State who had earlier defected to Norway has been kidnapped by EPRDF security men in a hotel in South Sudan. It is not yet known why Ato Akelo Akuay left Norway and went to South Sudan. Ato Akelo is one of the officials wanted by the EPRDF. Ato Akelo seriously objected to the massacre of the Agnuak tribe some years ago during the time of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, informed sources said. He was abducted by EPRDF men in his hotel (Afro-Times (April 1)).

Adherents of the Muslim faith on March 28 staged a peaceful demonstration at the various mosques in Addis Ababa demanding that their voices be heard by the government. Meanwhile, defense witnesses appeared at the Fourth Bench of the Federal High Court to present their defense in support of the detained Muslims, A large number of Muslims were arrested after they staged protest rallies against the government's handling of religious freedom (Ethio-Mihidar (April 2) .

Over 20 people were killed and over 40 injured following tribal armed conflict between the Borena and Guji tribes of Oromia. Informed sources said the conflict occurred in Arge, Ansor and Melke Gula River areas. The two tribes have also been locked in fighting in Mugaya, Adadi and Bako localities A large number of houses were set on fire and destroyed while severe destruction was caused to property. A large number of livestock were also killed. The problem was compounded when Kenyan Borenas attempted to support their kith and kin - the Ethiopian Borenas. No official comment was available on the issue (Ethio-Mihidar, April 2). Ethiopian troops of the African Union Forces in Bakool region, attacked, with Somalia government forces, bases of the militant combatants of Al Shabaab following a clean-up operation. A spokesman for the regional administration said the joint forces destroyed the bases of the militants and took their area to secure. The operation came days after Al Shabaab banned the local transportation to operate in the towns seized by the government forces which forced civilians to flee from the towns due to shortage of food and water (RBC Radio, April 4).

The newly-introduced Islamic banking is booming in Christian-majority Ethiopia, the head of a private bank said. "The Oromia International Bank managed to mobilize 300m Birr within two months since it introduced the new banking service last December," Nuri Hussein, the acting director of the bank's interest-free banking department, told . "Currently, the Islamic banking service is being offered at 46 branches of the bank," he said, adding that the number of branches offering the service will increase to 73 by July. Islamic banking was introduced in Ethiopia in 2013 in an effort to meet the demand of Muslim clients for usury-free banking services. Muslims are forbidden by their religion from usury, receiving or paying interest on loans (Anadolu Agency, April 3).

KEFI Minerals PLC said Tuesday that its two-month drilling programme at the Tulu Kapi gold project in western Ethiopia is underway, and that it anticipates a 1.2 million MT per annum production rate, at higher grades than previously planned. The company manages two joint ventures: 75%-owned KEFI Minerals Ethiopia Ltd, purchased from Nyota Minerals Ltd in Dec. 2013, and 40%-owned Gold & Minerals LLC Ltd (Alliance News, April 1).

Ayka Addis Textile & Investment Group is undertaking an almost one billion birr expansion on six ha of land. This could see its exports tripling to 150m \$ and its employees increasing by around 13,000. The company moved from Turkey to Ethiopia with an investment of 140m \$. Its latest expansion - to take place in two phases beginning as early as April 2014 - will consume 962.5m birr, according to Amare Teklemariam, CEO of Ayka. Ayka has already received 3.6 ha of land from the Kolfe Keranio District for its first phase, and is in the final stages of leasing an extra 2.6 ha, he added. The company currently has five plants in Alem Gena town of the East Shoa Zone, Oromia Regional State (19km from Addis Ababa). These plants, now operating at 80% to 90% capacity, have the capacity to spin 40 t of cotton, knit 38 t of thread, dye 50 t of cloth and produce 80,000 pieces of garment - all in a day's work, with 7,500 permanent and 100 temporary workers. The company exports its products mainly to Germany. Now with a capital of 2.5bio birr, the expansion projects are expected to boost the company's export earnings to 150m \$, from 56m \$ in 2012/13 (WIC, April 2).

The leading Indian meat processing company Allana Group plans to build a meat processing plant in Ethiopia, an Industry Ministry spokesman said. The plant will be built in Zway town Melaku Taye, the ministry's corporate communications director, told "The company has already received 72 ha of land [on which] to construct the plant, which will contribute to Ethiopia's ongoing efforts to maximize benefit from its livestock, which is the largest in Africa," Taye said. The \$20m plant, which will have the capacity to produce 75 t of meat every day, is scheduled to start functioning by September of this year, he added. According to Taye, Allana Group is also looking into the possibility of building two additional plants in eastern and southeastern Ethiopia. Established in 1865, Allana Group - known in India as Allana Sons - is a major exporter of frozen halal buffalo meat, coffee, fruit and other foodstuffs (Anadolu Agency).

Castel Winery Plc, the sister company of BGI Ethiopia, owner of St. George Brewery, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn on March 29. Castel Winery Plc spent some 500m birr on the expansion of a stateowned vineyard located in Battu, some 160 km south-west of the capital Addis Ababa. The company, owned by Pierre Castel, is France's largest producer and is present in West Africa. The company obtained 300 ha of land in a lease agreement. The winery has a production capacity of 1.4 million bottles. Half of the product will be exported to major markets in China, the US and Europe. Castel Winery has two product lines namely Rift Valley and Acacia (Reporter, March 30).

Ethiopia's annual cement output has reached 12.12 million t, more than double the current local demand, the Ministry of Industry (MoI) said. The ministry's head of Public Relations, Melaku Taye, told that cement-output increased significantly after several new factories began production during the past couple of years. According to Melaku, there are 18 cement factories across the country. Ethiopia's cement demand increases by 20 to 25% annually. Activities are underway to export surplus cement. The National Cement Factory has begun exports to neighboring countries, namely Somaliland and Djibouti, Melaku said. Ethiopia plans to increase cement production to 27 million t and the per capita cement consumption from the current 35 kg per person to 300 kg per person by the end of the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) period (WIC, March 30).