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Ethiopia said it had completed raising \$1bio with its debut Eurobond with a term of 10 years and coupon of 6.625%, adding that the offer had been oversubscribed. Investors have been eying Africa's sturdy growth rates and Ethiopia's economy is now expanding by about 9% a year. "Ethiopia attracted high quality investor interest despite a challenging market environment," the Finance Ministry said in a statement, adding the 10-year maturity aimed to create a benchmark and proceeds would be invested in infrastructure (*Reuters, Dec. 5*).

Prime Minister Hailemariam has left for Germany at the beginning of the week at the head a high profile delegation. The PM was to meet the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and members of the Bundestag and discuss ways of improving German financial and technical assistance to Ethiopia. The Premier was to also hold talks with German businesses and present Ethiopia's investment opportunities. Germany is playing a crucial role, particularly in aiding university reforms through technical and financial assistance (*FBC, Dec. 2*).

9 Ethiopian and Eritrean nationals have been brought to court charged with passing Ethiopia's military secrets to Eritrea. The nine were providing information about Ethiopia's defense status along the common border of the two countries. The accused are being held in custody and have been denied release on bail by the court (*Reporter, Nov. 30*).

The Ministry of Federal Affairs said is making every effort to peacefully resolve the conflicts erupting in different parts of the country. The ministry said efforts are also being made to bring armed groups to peaceful public life. In a report to the House of People's Representatives, the ministry said some progress has already been made to bring peace to the conflicting groups in Afar and Somali regions. Afars and Somalis have always fought over territorial claims. The localities of Adayitu, Indifo and Gedamayitu have been given to Afar region as part of the settlement effort, it said. Actions are being taken against those who try to obstruct the implementation of this decision, the report added (*Addis Admas, Dec. 6*).

The Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Party (Medrek) has organized a peaceful public rally to take place on Dec. 7 in protest against the government's handling of state affairs. Medrek accused the government of inaction to ensure that the upcoming national elections will be free, democratic and fair. It said the government has, at all times, dismissed as unacceptable all the demands forwarded by opposition parties to put things right. Medrek also accused the Addis Ababa Administration of refusing to give permits to parties to hold public rallies (*Addis Admas, Dec. 6*).

The Ethiopian Parliament ratified a cooperation agreement with Sudan in crime prevention and prosecution. The House of Peoples' Representatives unanimously ratified the bill, which the Legal and Administrative Affairs Standing Committee described as a deal that would pave the way for enhanced relations between the two neighboring countries diplomatically and legally. Under the deal, the two countries will be cooperating in the prevention of trans-boundary criminal activities such as contraband and human trafficking. The bill also aims to help prevent terrorist activities in both countries through intelligence exchange (*Turkish Weekly, Dec. 2*).

Saturday when a migrant boat, bound for Yemen, capsized in rough weather, adding to what was already a record year for maritime smuggling deaths. Heavy winds and waves battered the vessel before it sank off the port of al-Makha in Taiz province, Yemeni security officials announced Sunday. Saturday's sinking marks the deadliest crossing of the year and brings the death toll at sea to at least 285. Tens of thousands of African migrants risk the overcrowded and unsafe voyage annually (*VOA, Dec. 7*).

Ethiopia expects coffee exports for its 2014/15 crop to hit a record high because of drought and disease stifling crops in Latin America, the head of its exporters association said. An unprecedented drought early this year reduced the 2014/15 crop in the world's biggest coffee producer Brazil. The International Coffee Organization forecast in September that global coffee production will fall short of demand. Hussein Agraw, chairperson of the Ethiopian Coffee Exporters' Association, said he expected the amount of coffee exported to rise to 235,000 t by the end of 2014/2015, generating \$862m in revenue. Ethiopia exported around 190,000 t in 2013/14, earning \$841m, he said (*Reuters, Dec. 3*).

Ethiopia plans to build 960,000 houses in the next 10 years, besides thousands of kilometers of roads and railways. Everywhere you turn in Ethiopia, construction is ongoing - roads, railways, and thousands of houses - all led by the government with local or external funding (*The East African, Dec. 2*).

A \$1.7bio soft loan has been secured from Swiss Bank by Turkish company Yapi Merkez for the construction of the 389km Awash-Woldiya railway, according to Dereje Tefera, head of communications at the Ethiopian Railway Corporation. "The electric railway will save Ethiopia hard currency that would have been spent on fuel imports," Mr. Dereje said, adding that 254 professionals including the rail master have been trained in China (*The East African, Dec. 2*).

Saudi Star Agricultural Development Plc, an Ethiopian company owned by billionaire Mohamed al-Amoudi, said it plans to invest \$100m in a rice farm in western Ethiopia next year to kick-start its stalled project. The company leased 10,000 ha in the Abobo district in the Gambella region, where it's based, in 2008 and bought the 4,000-ha Abobo Agricultural Development Enterprise from the government 18 months ago for 80m. After delays caused by unsuitable irrigation design and contractor performance issues, Saudi Star wants to accelerate work in 2015 after a change of management, a re-design of the farm and a successful trial of rain-fed rice on 2,000 ha at the formerly government-owned, Chief Executive Officer Jemal Ahmed said. Saudi Star's \$100minvestment will focus primarily on building irrigation infrastructure, including finishing the main canal from the more than 25-year-old Alwero Dam built by Soviet engineers, as well as a rice de-husking plant, storage silos and land clearing, according to Jemal. An initial plan to have the farm divided into 3.75-hectare plots to produce rice from submerged paddy fields has been shelved as unworkable, he said. Only 350 hectares has been developed since 2008 on the land leased for 300,000 Ethiopian birr a year (*Bloomberg News, Dec. 2*).

AORA Solar, the Israeli firm focused on hybrid solar-gas CSP systems has announced a deal has been signed to build a plant in Ethiopia. AORA's system, known as the Solar Tulip, is a small-scale, modular plant comprising a tower and a bunch of heliostats which can be run on solar, gas, diesel, biogas, biodiesel or LPG. The key point is its ability to use either solar, fuel or a mix of both, allowing it to run 24 h. The solar receiver uses compressed air as heat transfer fluid to run a turbine. "Our hybrid system uses both solar power and biogas to operate a turbine, with the hot air moving the turbine to generate electricity", says Zev Rosenzweig, CEO of AORA Solar, a feature that makes the system ideal for off-

grid and rural locations. The Solar Tulip has a minimum water consumption, "unlike other solar thermal systems that use steam to drive large turbines, Tulip uses hot air to power microturbines, requiring just 8% of the amount of water that CSP steam technologies consume (*CSP World, Dec. 3*).

In Ethiopia, which already has one of the most extensive systems in the world for educating the 85% of the population who work the land for a living, there is a drive to develop a multilingual mobile phone-based resource centre. The hotline, operated by the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research, and Ethio Telecom, and created by the Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA), has proved a huge hit. Since its July launch and still in its pilot phase, more than three million farmers in the regions of Amhara, Oromia, Tigray and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) have punched 8028 on their mobiles to access the system, which uses both interactive voice response (IVR) and SMS technology. "On average we get approximately 226 new calls and 1,375 return calls per hour into the system," Elias Nure, the information communication technology project leader at ATA, told. When the number of lines doubles from the current 90, he said, "these numbers should significantly increase." More than 70% of users are smallholder farmers, he said.