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Ethiopia will deploy 600 additional peacekeeping troops to Somalia, South Sudan and the disputed Abyei region on the border between Sudan and South Sudan next month, according to the Ethiopian International Peace-keeping Training Center. The additional peacekeepers will be deployed around Kismayo in Somalia while three helicopter gunships will be sent to South Sudan. Preparations have also been finalized to deploy half of the 1,069 troops to be assigned to Abyei under the United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA) (*ENA, Feb. 4.*)

Ethiopia's inflation rose to 7.7% year-on-year in Jan. from 7.1% in the previous month, the statistics office said. The Central Statistics Agency attributed the jump to higher prices of food and non-food items. Prices for such items as meat, dairy products, vegetables and fruit increased 7.1% last month, up from 6.5% in Dec. Nonfood inflation also rose to 8.2% in Jan. from 7.8% the previous month, mainly due to an increase in prices for clothes and khat (*Reuters, Feb. 6.*)

The Ministry of Industry (MoI) said it is withdrawing incentive packages and privileges of locally operating foreign companies that were found selling their products in the local market instead of exporting them. The government is keen to attract foreign companies which are export oriented and provides attractive investment incentive packages to them. However, the minister said, some foreign companies already operating in the country are focusing on the local market (*WIC, Feb. 2.*)

In the first half of the budget year, the export from the manufacturing sector earned the nation USD 191.5m. The ministry targeted an ambitious USD 505m in the first six months of the budget year and USD 1.2bln by the end of the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) period. The minister attributed the poor performance to low productivity, poor management capacity, and shortage of raw materials, power outages and focus on local market. Export from the manufacturing sector has averaged a growth of 36% during the first four years of the GTP to reach USD 397m birr last budget year, the report reveals. Still, a far cry from the USD 2.2bln set under the GTP.

Ethiopia earned 157.4m USD in revenue from the export of mineral products in the first half of this budget year, the Ministry of Mines (MoM) said. MoM Public Relations Head, Bacha Faji, told recently that the revenue was secured from the export of 32,425 kg of gold and gemstones, 270 m³ of marble and 113 t of tantalum. According to Bacha, the sector generated less revenue in this half budget year compared to the same period last year due to the decline in gold prices. Ethiopia envisaged earning 714m USD from mineral sectors this budget year (*WIC.*)

Pittards PLC, a British company investing in Ethiopia, has disclosed it intends to increase its production capacity by threefold in the coming two years. According to Pittards' Project Manufacturing General Manager, Tsedenia Mekbib, the company made investment in Ethiopia's manufacturing sector for the first time in 2011 after it bought the government owned Ethiopian Leather Company. In the past fiscal year, Pittards earned USD 4m from the export of 100,000 pairs of gloves, Tsedenia explained. She said the company is working on boosting Ethiopia's foreign currency earnings by 60%. Currently, Pittards manufactures industrial and fashionable gloves, leather garments and jackets. Its factory, upon establishment, had 80 employees. Yet this figure grew to 700 workers and it is still trying to increase the number of employees to 1500 (*state media, Feb. 3.*)

Ethiopia's population is projected to hit 90 million this year, the country's state Central Statistical Agency (CSA) said. The announcement was made in a press conference by CSA Acting Deputy Director General of Population and Vital Statistics, Asalifew Abera, in Addis Ababa. In July 2014, the population of Ethiopia stood at around 88 million, making the country the second most populous in Africa after Nigeria which has a population of over 164 million (*NewsTime Africa, Feb. 6.*)

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA), together with four cooperative unions located in Oromia, Amhara, and Tigray Region and in SNNPR and are constructing four fertilizer blending factories that are expected to start supplying their products after one month. The construction of the blending factories was initiated by the first ever soil fertility study and digital soil fertility mapping project done in the 2013/14 fiscal year in 162 Weredas that revealed the soil in the country needed additional nutrients other than nitrogen and phosphorus. The Ministry and the ATA found out that sulfur, potassium, boron and zinc nutrients are deficient in many areas which indicated that one compound fertilizer NPS and five blended fertilizers namely NPSB, NPKSB, NPSZnB, NPKSZnB, and NPSZn are needed to address the key nutrient deficiencies in the tested soils according to ATA's 2013/14 report (*Fortune, Feb. 1.*)

The government of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development announced a nearly six-year, \$18m project in Ethiopia. Titled "Agricultural Transformation through Stronger Vocational Education" (ATTSVE), the project will be led by Dalhousie with the support of partners the Mennonite Economic Development Associates of Canada (MEDA), Jimma University College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine (JUCAVM) in Ethiopia and McGill University.

Shady coffee plantations in Ethiopia, where coffee has been grown for at least a thousand years, hold more bird species than any other farms in the world, new research shows. According to National Geographic, the research suggests that traditional cultivation practices there support better bird biodiversity than any other coffee farms in the world. In Ethiopia, coffee is traditionally grown on plantations shaded by native trees. These farms boasted more than 2.5 times as many bird species as adjacent mountain forest, according to a study slated for publication Feb. 11 in the journal *Biological Conservation* (*WIC, Feb. 4.*)