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Transitional Federal Government forces and Ethiopian troops seized two districts in Bay region in Southwestern Somalia. Al-Shabaab militants ceded Burhakaba and Qansah-dhere towns, about 200 and 180 km southwest of Mogadishu, the TFG reported. The advancing troops came from Baidoa town, 240 km southwest of Mogadishu, which Al-Shabaab lost in February. „We took over Burhakaba and Qansah-dhere without resistance,“ remarked Hon. Afarale (*WIC, April 7*).

Kenya and Ethiopia are opening up their volatile border to more trade as they seek to improve community relations, ease inter-ethnic tensions to reduce demand for small arms and disrupt one of the main routes of illicit small arms coming into East Africa. Kenya officials this week cited the success of newly constructed and refurbished Magado and Sololo livestock markets near Mandera that have enabled border communities to increase their engagement through trade a fact that has helped reduce tensions. Orwa Ojode, Kenya's Assistant Minister for Internal Security, said such joint projects will continue as the two countries explore means of building confidence along the border (*The East African, April 7*).

Ethiopia and South Sudan have agreed to undertake a range of joint activities along their shared border. Representatives from Ethiopia's Gambella and South Ethiopia Nation Nationalities and Peoples state (SNNP) regions and South Sudan's Jonglei, Upper Nile and Easter Equatoria states met in Ethiopia's Gambella town last week to discuss ways of fostering cooperation over a broad range of interests and concerns. - The bordering regions of the two countries will undertake a number of development activities and will make coordinated efforts to further strengthen the ties between its people. The two sides have also agreed to work on border security, to ensure sustainable peace and stability. They will take joint measures to combat armed groups which pose a threat to the security of the border regions. This is the first major joint agreement to be signed between the two countries at the regional level since South Sudan officially gained independence in July 2011 (*Sudan Tribune, April 4*).

An Ethiopian company majority-owned by Saudi billionaire Mohammed al-Amoudi plans to invest \$600m over two years to produce edible oil, its general manager said. Horizon Plantations Ethiopia leased a 20,000-ha (49,400-acre) plot in the northwestern Benishangul-Gumuz region last month to grow groundnuts, as part of a government drive to boost commercial agriculture. Ethiopian-born al-Amoudi owns 80% of the company. The Horn of Africa nation imports up to 250,000 t of palm oil a year from Malaysia, at a cost of more than \$300m, said Jemal. At full capacity, Horizon's farm, which may be ready for planting next year, should produce 150,000 t of oil a year from a processing plant in Bahir Dar, according to Jemal. Horizon's river-irrigated plot, which it says the government will increase to 35,000 ha when 10,000 ha of the initial area is cleared, is „barren land,“ according to Jemal (*Bloomberg, April 5*).

Benishangul Gumuz State supplied more than 755 kg pure gold to the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) over the past eight months, the state's mines and energy resource development bureau said. The head of the bureau's public relations office, Habtamu Asege, told that the gold was supplied by 38 traditional gold miners and 47 gold vendors. Most of the miners are women. Traditional miners said they have been able to increase their benefits after they were organized in associations. A gold vendor, Mohammed Kedir, said supplying gold to the CBE's Assossa branch has helped vendors to save money and time. According to the bureau's recent assessment, up to 1,000 kg of gold is produced every month in 20 gold potential woredas of the state (*ENA, April 5*).

The Tendaho Drinking Water Supply Project, Ethiopia is 90% complete according to Kumilachew Abebe, Communications and Public Relations Process Owner with the Ethiopian Water Works Construction Enterprise. The project is expected to take 97m birr and will be utilized by the nomadic Afar peoples and the employees of the Tendaho Sugar Development project, a total of almost 70,000 people in the area around the project. The Tendaho Dam and Irrigation Project management buildings, being constructed by the EWWCE, are also 90% complete at an estimated cost of 200m birr said Kumilachew (*Capital, April 4*).

The German Cultural Center, Goethe Institut, will celebrate its golden jubilee for three months, April to July, with various programs. The Institute Director, Dr. Elke Kaschl Mohni, said that the celebration will officially kick off on April 11, 2012 in the premises of the institute and in the presence of invited guests. Musical performances, exhibition and a language contest are some of the programs. She said that the institute has contributed much to deepen mutual understanding between the peoples of Ethiopia and Germany by launching various projects and programs on the history and socio-cultural situation of the two countries over the last 50 years. According to Dr. Mohni, the three-month event will wrap up with a historical exhibition and symposium entitled „The personal physician of Emperor Menelik II“ (*ENA, April 1*).