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Some 100 members of Ethiopia's opposition Semayawi (Blue) party were arrested and some badly beaten over the weekend, the party says. Party chairman Yilikal Getnet said equipment such as sound systems were confiscated ahead of the rally on Sunday Sep. 1 which was banned. Communication Minister Shimeles Kemal denied there had been a crackdown. The government said the venue had already been booked by a pro-government group condemning religious extremism. The governing EPRDF maintains strict control over public life in Ethiopia (Awramba Times, September 3).

The All Ethiopian Unity Organization (AEUO) has complained that 54 of its members in different part of the country have been imprisoned and tortured. It said 45 of them are in the Southern Region, two in Benishangul-Gumuz and Afar regions. AEUO added an increasing number of farmers who are members of the party have been dispossessed of their land for being AEUO members. Informed sources said that the farmers who went to see government officials to demand a return of their land were imprisoned and fined (Addis Admas, Sep. 7).

The Office of the National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation for the Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam (GRD) said that the dam construction work is 25% complete. Currently, over 5,600 workers equipped with about 1,250 huge machines are enthusiastically discharging their responsibilities day and night working in three shifts. The National Council's Media and Communication Director, Fekadu Ketema, said: said that out of the 10.2bio birr public pledge, about 5.2bio birr has so far been collected. Yet, 23% of the construction cost has been covered by public contribution. People in rural areas are backing the project through labor contribution. They have been engaged in watershed management and natural resource conservation activities. About 16 million farmers participated in watershed management duties planting over five billion seedlings of various species on 13 million ha in 2005 EC, he added (WIC, Sep. 3).

Ethiopia earned over 3bio USD in revenue from foreign trade during the last budget year, the Ministry of Trade said. The director of public relations in the ministry, Amakele Yimam, told the revenue was earned from the export of over 9.6 t of items. He said coffee, khat, live animals, vegetables and fruits, flowers, food and beverage, tea, cereals, oil seeds, spices, honey and footwear were among the exported products. The director said the income exceeds by 59.8m USD that of the previous year. The products were exported to 133 countries, including Somalia, China, Germany, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland and the USA (ENA, Sep. 3).

Ethiopia's Ministry of Industry and China's Association of Industry Zones have signed an agreement for the construction of an industrial park in Dire Dawa city, east of Addis Ababa, as part of the East African nation's effort to build an industrial economy. According to the agreement, the Chinese association will draft a master plan for the economic and industry zone and provide support during and after its construction. Ethiopia's State Minister of Industry, Sisay Gemechu, noted that the industrial zones being constructed across the country also take local agricultural development into consideration (PANA, Sep. 5).

Turkey is preparing to create a Turkish industrial zone Addis Ababa as part of its African policy which started in 2005 and has been showing marked development of its business assets. Turkey's Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, said that the Ethiopian prime minister had proposed the assignment of some land to establish a Turkish industrial zone in Addis Ababa, and that Turkey hopes to implement this plan. Davutoglu stated that Turkey has come a long way in the last ten years. He explained that a Turkish firm invested \$50m in Ethiopia in 2005 while there are now 341 Turkish companies with a total investment of \$3bio in the country (WIC, Sep. 4).

Habesha Breweries S.C launched the construction of factory at a cost of over 550m Birr in Debre Berhan town in Amhara State. Factory Director General, Eskindir Desta, said the factory will build on 7.5 ha secured from the regional state. Upon becoming fully operational within a year, the factory will produce over 500,000 hl of beer. Lehui Food Machineries, a Chinese company, will build the factory. Bavaria N.V. - the 300-year-old Dutch brewer, is a major shareholder with 43% shares at Habesha Breweries (ENA, Sep. 5).

The Ethiopian Railways Corporation (ERC) said that the Addis Ababa Light Rail Transit (AA-LRT) project is being carried out according to schedule despite the heavy rainy season. Behailu Sintayehu, Project Manager, said the project would be completed after two years. The 34-km double track electrified light rail transit project, 43% of whose construction has already been done, is expected to cross all 10 sub-cities of Addis Ababa. Upon completion, AA-LRT is expected to operate 18 hours a day using 41 light trains thereby transporting 60,000 commuters per hour. Every locomotive will travel 70km/h pulling a three room car with more than 300 seats. Trains will be expected every three to six minutes at every station (WIC, Sep. 7).

Some 6,863 new cooperatives with 245m birr capital were established across the country in the concluded fiscal year, according to the Federal Cooperative Agency (FCA). In addition to the cooperatives, some 28 unions with over 49m birr capital were also established in the last budget year, FCA's Public Relations Director, Yigzaw Dagneu, indicated. The five-year Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) envisages the establishment of 59,000 cooperatives and 511 unions. And so far, 48,124 cooperatives with 6.6 million members and over 3.7bio birr capital as well as 293 unions which have over 1.5bio birr capital have been established, he said (WIC (Sep. 6).

Ethiopian Airlines announced that it expects to receive A350 Airbus planes by 2016 on the basis of its agreement with the European aircraft manufacturer, Airbus Ethiopian CEO Tewolde Gebremariam, said that the airline has ordered 14 A350s which was originally conceived in 2004, and had recently its first test flight at the Paris Air Show held last June. Tewolde also said these orders for the A350s, on top of the 13 aircraft it ordered the US aircraft manufacture Boeing made 787s, will help it further excel in its air services endeavors. Currently, Ethiopian has five 787s, which are said to be fast, fuel efficient and more spacious compared to its predecessors (WIC, Sep. 1).