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Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarch Mathias I landed in Cairo early Saturday on his first visit to Egypt. Mathias I, whose visit will last six days, came to Egypt upon invitation from Pope Tawadros II of Egypt. The Egyptian and Ethiopian churches have played a role in smoothing negotiations between the two countries regarding the Grand Renaissance Dam Ethiopia is building on the Blue Nile (*Ahram Online*, Jan. 10).

Egypt has rejected the current Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam's (GERD) high storage capacity, as studies showed it will affect its national water security, reported state-owned. The dam's storage capacity reaches 74bn m³. Calling such capacity "unjustified and technically unacceptable", Egypt asked Ethiopia to reduce it to what was agreed before the start of negotiations over the years-offilling and operation of the dam. Alaa Yassin, Advisor to the Egyptian Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation and spokesman for the GERD file, hopes that all parties adhere to the August agreements that took place in Sudan "without procrastination and time-wasting", while the three countries are trying to overcome these difficulties. "Egypt's share in the historic Nile River water red line cannot be crossed," Yassin told (*Middle East News Agency (MENA)*, Jan. 11).

Voter registration for the upcoming 5th general elections started on Friday across the country, the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) said. NEBE Public Relations Coordinator Director, Demisew Benti, told that the registration was started in 45,000 polling stations established throughout the country. He said 33-35 million people are expected to register for the elections to be held in May 2015. The registration will be for 52 days, he said (*WIC*, Jan. 9).

The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) has decided to give legal recognition to the faction of the All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP) led by Ato Abebaw Mehari. In a statement it issued a few months ago, AEUP had announced that it has deposed Ato Abebaw Mehari from presidency and replaced him by Ato Mamushet Amare. NEBE now urges that this was effected with conspiracy hatched by former AEUP President Engineer Hailu Shawul. AEUP said that the removal was illegal and that Ato Abebaw Mehari is still the legal president (*Ethio-Mihidar*, Jan. 6).

A new law has been formulated on the dissemination of news and information by various websites as well as by radio and television stations. The new law is expected to put control over the activities of media including the use of websites. The new draft law was presented at a meeting last week between government authorities and media establishments. The draft law prohibits the establishment of private television stations. It states private companies can only buy television airtime and cannot own TV stations. The law also puts restrictions on websites that disseminate news and information over the internet (*Addis Admas*, Jan. 3).

A new book on the history of the armed struggle of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) against the Derg regime was released. The newly released book, which was written in Tigrigna language by veteran TPLF fighters, Fitsum Salih and Hadush Haile, tells an untold and amazing history of the TPLF from 1967-1983 E.C. "We wrote the book to discharge our responsibility in telling the current generation about the TPLF's bitter political and armed struggle against the Derg regime," the authors said. In addition, the book will also inspire them to contribute their share to the efforts under way to build a prosperous Ethiopia, they added. The 149 page book has 15 chapters and various photos. The authors plan to release the second volume in the future (*state media*, Jan. 9).

Ethiopia's year-on-year inflation rose to 7.1% in Dec. from 5.9% 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 sugar, vegetables and fruit increased 6.5% last month, up from 4.8% in Nov.. Non-food inflation also rose, to 7.8% in Dec. from 7.1% the previous month, mainly due to an increase in prices for clothes and khat. Inflation peaked at 9.1% in 2014 but it has since been moving up and down (*Reuters*, Jan. 9).

Ethiopia has imported over 3,000 tons of cotton over the past five months to ease the raw material shortage in the textile industries, the Textiles Industry Development Institute said. The government has been trying to meet the demands of the factories through importation and expansion of cotton plantations, Bantihun Gessese, PR Director at the Institute, told. The government has introduced a new system that allows factories to cultivate cotton in order to ease the shortage for raw materials. According to Bantihun, industries such as Ayka Addis, Adama and Selin Dewan textile factories are working accordingly. The raw material shortage is affecting the revenue the nation is getting from textile exports. The revenue secured during the past five months is one-third of the target. Ethiopia exports yarn, fabric and garments made of cotton, and had set a target of increasing its textile and apparel exports to US\$ 1bio by 2015. But the country is still very far from achieving the target, mainly because the local cotton supply is unable to meet the demand of the domestic industry (*fiber2fashion.com*, Jan. 7).

Ethiopia earned 1.16bio USD in revenue from the export sector in the first five months of this Ethiopian fiscal year, according to the Ministry of Trade (MoT). The head of the ministry's Public Relations, Amakele Yimam, said that the revenue was secured from the export of agricultural, manufacturing and mining products. The revenue earned during the reported period has shown a 10.7% increase compared to the same period the previous year, he said, attributing the increase to a rise in the price of agricultural products in the global market.

The Metals and Engineering Corporation in Ethiopia has manufactured two trams for trial. The trams are of good quality and up to European standard. MetEC has also started building 530 train carriages for the railway projects that are under way in Ethiopia. Some 20 Ethiopians, trained by Hungarian technicians, took part in manufacturing the trams. Manufacturing the trams locally is said to have a significant positive impact in saving hard currency, in promoting technological transfer of knowledge and in creating employment opportunities (*FBC*, Jan. 5).

Ethiopia will seek to rein in its population growth by bringing its people's fertility rate down to 2.6% in 2020 from 4.1% at present, a government official has said. "With 90 million people, Ethiopia is the most populous state in Sub-Saharan Africa," Berhane Assefa, a family planning service coordinator at the Ministry of Health, said. "The country has been engaged in a strong family planning campaign since 2000 to achieve the same goal [bringing the fertility rate down]," he told. He said in 2000, only 6% of childbearing age mothers benefited from the service, but now this figure had risen to 42%. The Ethiopian Health Ministry says a large percentage of the population in Ethiopia has good knowledge of

contraception and birth control methods. The ministry adds in one of its documents that three in every ten currently married women use a method of contraception. It notes that injectables are by far the most popular modern method, being used by around 21% of currently married women. Assefa said his ministry had a plan to increase the percentage of Ethiopian citizens benefitting from family planning services to 54 percent in 2020 from 42% at present. He said the government was working on ushering in the necessary materials and skilled manpower to achieve this goal (*The Anadolu Agency, Jan. 9*).

A fire department official says a fire has damaged a hotel which is a historical landmark in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, disclosed. Commander Tadesse Gemechu said two people were taken to the hospital after being rescued from the fire at the Taitu Hotel which was built in 1907. Tadesse says the cause of the fire is being investigated. Many of the hotel's rooms, its historic pieces and a bank office were completely burned down before firefighters put out the fire. The city's famous jazz club that used to be frequented by foreigners and locals alike, Jazz Amba, was also completely destroyed by the inferno. Addis Ababa's Deputy Mayor Abate Sitotaw said efforts will be made to restore the Taitu Hotel (*AP, January 11*).