

No.46, January 13, 2014(*) Seven Days, Vol. 20

Ethiopia rejected a proposal that would guarantee Egypt the rights to most of the Nile River's water, as disagreements cast doubt over future talks about Africa's biggest hydro power project. The 6,000 MW Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on Ethiopia's Blue Nile River, set to be completed in 2017, has raised concern in Cairo that it will reduce the flow of the Nile, which provides almost all of Egypt's water. The Blue Nile is the main tributary of the Nile. The \$4.2bio dam 30 km from Sudan's border will benefit agricultural and power interests in the region and not cause water losses downstream, Ethiopia says. Sudan supports the hydropower project designed to produce electricity for much of East Africa (Bloomberg News, Jan. 7). The Union of Ethiopian National Journalists has protested against the arrest of journalist Berhanu Assefa who allegedly committed error in a news report on the Southern Region. The union demanded in immediate and unconditional release of the journalist. It accused the regional police of securing an illegal court warrant to come to Addis Ababa to detain the journalist. The union threatened to do everything possible to deploy other journalists to the Southern Region and report on the growing corruption in the region. It said the regional administration is afraid that journalists will unmask the state of corruption in the region. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) had also earlier condemned the arrest of the journalist as unacceptable (Sendek, Jan. 8).

Forty-five out of 69 supporters of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) who had been on trial for the past few years have been sentenced to 2 to 3 years in prison. The defendants have been accused of trying to explode bombs at various places, of robbing the Fincha sugar factory and churches, recruiting OLF members as well as attempting to dismember Oromia from Ethiopia by force. The court also found them guilty of conniving with the Somalia and Eritrean governments which gave them the required military training. They were also found guilty of making money transfers at home and abroad to the OLF, which the government has labeled as a terrorist organization (Sendek, Jan. 8).

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will commit some 10bio yen to Ethiopia for the construction of a geothermal power plan. At the Tokyo International Conference on International Development in June, Abe said, "Africa will be a growth center over the next couple of decades," and added that Japan must make a commitment in a way that would benefit both sides (WIC, Jan. 6). Ethiopia has established the WTO-TBT (Technical Barriers to Trade) National Enquiry Point under the Ethiopian Standards Authority. The establishment of central authorities, such the National Enquiry Point, facilitating free trade is one of the prerequisites of joining the global trading body. According to Geremew Ayalew, Trade Relations and Negotiations Director at the Ministry of Trade, WTO's principle of transparency requires the establishment of Enquiry Points and Notification Authorities (NA). In addition to the Enquiry Point, Ethiopia will also establish Notification Authority under the Ministry of Trade in the future, Geremew said (The Ethiopian Herald, Jan. 11).

Ethiopia will not be ready to open up financial and other essential sectors to gain World Trade Organization (WTO) accession until 2015, according to the Ministry of Trade. This is in contrast with the 2011 Growth and the Transformation Plan (GTP), which promised the finalization of accession within its four-year term. Geremew Ayalew, director general of trade relation and negotiations directorate at the Ministry of Trade (MoT), confirmed that the government targeted WTO accession in the GTP. However, that is not going to happen, he said, as the government prioritized sectors such as telecom, finance and energy, meaning that opening up is not likely to happen until the end of 2015. Currently, Ethiopia is in phase four of responding to the questions of the negotiating countries (The Reporter, Jan. 11).

Premier African Minerals Ltd said the Phase I exploration programme on the Danakil potash license in Ethiopia has been completed. The natural resource company with mineral projects in Africa said the 24 hole programme, operated by Danakil Potash Corp, drilled a total of 7,893 m and 1,569

samples have been submitted for assay work. Premier African Minerals holds a 42% interest in AgriMinco Corp, which has a 30% stake in the Danakil potash project through a joint venture with Danakil Potash Corp. Premier said the results from sampling will be compiled into a mineral resource estimate, expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2014, which will be followed by a full scoping study of the project. Premier African Minerals shares were up 5.9% to 1.35 pence Friday (Alliance News, Jan. 10).