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Andargachew Tsige, an exiled Ethiopian opposition leader with British nationality, while transiting in Yemen during a journey from Dubai to Eritrea, Andargachew mysteriously ended up on a plane to Ethiopia. It is believed that he was detained by Yemeni officials and handed over to members of Ethiopia's security apparatus. Andargachew was charged by the Ethiopian authorities with terrorism and sentenced, in absentia, to death, at two separate trials between 2009 and 2012. Following postelection protests in 2005 he had fled the country and been granted asylum in Britain, where he created Ginbot 7 - a leading opposition movement (*The Economist*, July 9).

The Ethiopian authorities must halt their continuing onslaught on dissent, Amnesty International said on July 10, after the arrest of four more opposition party members this week, who are believed to be at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. All four were arrested on 8 July in Addis Ababa and in Mekele on "terror" accusations: a charge commonly used as a pretext to put dissenters behind bars in Ethiopia. "These latest detentions add to Ethiopia's ever-increasing number of journalists, opposition members, activists and other dissenting voices locked up for alleged 'terrorism' offences," said Claire Beston, Amnesty International's Ethiopia Researcher. "In the run-up to next year's general election, the fear is that this number will continue to grow as the government continues its onslaught on dissent. Everyone who has been arrested because of their peaceful expression of dissenting opinions, their blogging activities, membership of a legally registered political opposition party or participation in peaceful protests must be immediately and unconditionally released."

The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) said it is undertaking preparations for the 5th general elections scheduled to take place next year. Presenting NEBE's 11 month performance report to the House of People's Representatives (HPR), Prof. Merga Bekana, Chairperson of NEBE, said the board is preparing to make the upcoming election free, fair and credible. The preparation of ballot boxes and training of political parties are among the activities being carried out by the board, he said (*ENA*, July 4).

Opposition political groups have complained that a number of their members have been arrested in the last few days. In statements they issued recently, the parties said the EPRDF has resorted to mass arrests of political activists to facilitate conditions for its victory in the upcoming national elections. The parties called on the government to make public the whereabouts of the arrested people. Andinet Party has disclosed that it has established a formal lawsuit against the Federal Police (*Addis Adams*, July 12).

Ethiopian informed diplomatic sources said 5 that Addis Ababa has agreed on holding a tripartite meeting between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia to tackle the Renaissance Dam project. Talks are still ongoing over the possibility of holding the meeting between Cairo or Khartoum, reported. Ethiopia and Sudan agreed in principle on holding the preparatory tripartite meeting this month, the sources said (*Anadolu Agency*, July 8).

Ethiopia's parliament approved a 178.6 billion birr budget for 2014-2015, a 15% rise from the previous year that will boost spending on education, health and road building. Strong state intervention has boosted the economy over the past decade and economic growth is set to rise to 8.5% in 2014/15 from 8% in 2013/14, the International Monetary Fund forecasts.

The IMF has warned that Ethiopia's huge spending on roads, railways and power is suffocating private lending. It says a reduced public expenditure would make room for the private sector to access credit. The 2014/2015 budget, unanimously endorsed by lawmakers, allocates more than 64% of the total amount for development spending. Of that, Addis Ababa will spend 24.55 billion birr on education, up from 22.48 billion the previous year. Health spending will rise 12% percent to 5.15 billion birr and 29 billion birr will be spent on road building. Infrastructure projects over the last decade include hydro-electric dams and other power projects to offer cheap electricity, and a growing network of roads and railways. Ethiopia, Africa's second-most populous nation after Nigeria, aims to expand its road network to 136,000 km by 2015 from less than 50,000 km in 2010. It plans to build 5,000 km of railway lines by 2020. The capital will soon have its own metro, a rarity in Africa. Defense spending will increase to 8 billion birr, from 7.5 billion, in a country with the largest army in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia is a key U.S ally in the region and is fighting al Qaeda-linked insurgents in Somalia as part of an African Union mission. It has also deployed peacekeepers in South Sudan. The 2014/2015 budget runs from July 8 to July 7 next year (*Reuters*, July 7).

Ethiopia's inflation rate fell to 8.5% in the year to June from 8.7% the previous month, due to a slowing rise in food prices, official data showed. The Central Statistics Agency said food price inflation slowed to 6.2% in the year to June from 6.3% in May, owing to a drop in cereal prices. Inflation of non-food items also slowed to 11% in June from a revised 11.5% the previous month (*Reuters*, July 10).

The Washington-based World Bank Group has approved and disbursed this fiscal year a historic record high funding to Ethiopia. The bank approved 1.6 billion USD and disbursed some 1.3 billion USD for eight projects in the country. As of January 2014, the portfolio has 25 active projects with a net commitment value of more than 6 billion USD (*The Reporter*, July 5).

Canadian investors with a total capital of 367 million CAD have obtained licences to invest in Ethiopia, according to Canada's Ambassador to Ethiopia. The trade exchange between Ethiopia and Canada has reached 141.3 million CAD. Ambassador David Usher said the investors are engaged in importing machinery, leasing construction equipment, education, health, consultancy, tourism and information technology. In addition, 12 Canadian companies have secured mineral exploration licenses in the country, of which two have substantial assets, he said (*ENA*, July 7).

Canadian-based oil firm Africa Oil will collect seismic data from a new oil exploration block in Arba Minch, southern Ethiopia. Africa Oil acquired the new oil exploration block in southern Ethiopia rift valley system back in February from the Ethiopian Ministry of Mines, the company said. The block is covering 42,000 sq km of land in the great East Africa Rift Valley, according to Africa Oil. The oil exploration company has been searching for oil in the Ogaden and in South Omo basins, it said (*Oil Review Africa*, July 9).

Brown Shoe Company, a US-based footwear producer, plans to establish an office in Ethiopia to buy domestic footwear

products which it will export. According to the Director General of the Leather Industry Development Institute (LIDI), Wondu Legesse, Brown will open its office in the 2014/2015 fiscal year. The Director-General said the shoe producer exports its products to China. Nonetheless, he added, it is encouraging Chinese firms produce footwear in Ethiopia. Brown's opening office in Ethiopia will not only increase production but will also bring international knowledge and standards, Wondu commented. He added the company will also provide capacity building and laboratory service (*Capital, July 6*).