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The second round of tripartite negotiations on the Grand Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia began on Dec.8, 2013 in Khartoum. Representatives from Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia met in the Sudanese capital to continue discussing the potential impacts of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on downstream countries. Sunday's negotiations come after a meeting on Dec. 5 between Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir and Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, in which the Sudanese President announced his support for the dam's construction. The two sides signed 14 new agreements dealing with security, a free trade zone, investment and electricity (WIC, Dec. 10).

Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan agreed to form a committee within a month to oversee a regional hydrological study of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, Ethiopia's Water and Energy Ministry said. The panel will comprise four representatives from each country who will select consultants, review their findings and submit a final report to each country's government, Fekahmed Negash, head of the ministry's Boundary and Transboundary River Affairs Directorate (Bloomberg News (December 10).

The the court has set free the wife of former Civil Service Minister Juneidi Sado and ten others who had been accused of involvement in terrorism. The same court is still holding the case of 18 people who have been told to defend themselves against terrorist charges. Members of two organizations known as the Alber Development and Cooperation Association and Nemmi Welfare Association have also been freed of the charges. The people and organizations had been charged with helping terrorist elements who had undergone special training in Arab countries to carry out destructive anti-Ethiopian activities (Addis Admas, Dec.14).

The total number of Ethiopians deported from Saudi Arabia over the past few weeks reached 115,465, according to the International Migration Organization Ethiopia office (IOM) update. "As of 8 Dec. 2013, 72,780 men, 37,092 women and 5,593 children have arrived. Out of these, IOM has provided direct assistance to 104,087 migrants." (New Business Ethiopia, Dec. 10).

Residents in Gode town of Somali Regional State have raised their objections over the fundraising drive for the Meles Zenawi Foundation. People complained that they were being forced to pay 250 Birr per household or 70 birr for lower income groups (Ethio-Mihidar, Dec.10).

The government of Ethiopia and the World Bank signed loan and grant agreements amounting to 102.96m USD to support the Sustainable Land Management Project (SLMP II). Some 50m USD of the total assistance was secured from the World Bank while the balance was obtained from the government of Norway through the Multi Donor Trust Fund, Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Least Developed Countries Trust Fund. The assistance will be used to finance the implementation of the second phase of the Project aimed at reducing land degradation and improve land productivity in selected watersheds in six regional states. The project will be implemented in 937 kebeles in Amhara, Tigray, Oromia, Gambella, Benishangul Gumuz and South Ethiopia People's States. Close to 1.85 million people are expected to benefit directly or indirectly from the project (State media, Dec. 10).

A Saudi agricultural investor has warned about the failure of Saudi agricultural investments in Ethiopia and the liquidation of businesses due to the conditions set by the [Saudi] Agricultural Development Fund (ADF) to support and lend investors in Ethiopia. Following a recent crisis between Riyadh and Addis Ababa regarding the former's crackdown on undocumented Ethiopian workers, many Saudi investors are pulling out of Ethiopia. He revealed that some Saudi investors in Ethiopia have begun to sell their investments due to the impossible conditions set by the ADF for loans, in addition to the lack of facilities to export their produce to Saudi Arabia. The head of the Saudi Agriculture Investors Association in Ethiopia, Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman Al Shahri, said that there are more than 400 Saudi businessmen in Ethiopia investing in the cultivation of a variety of crops, namely wheat, rice and barley. The size of Saudi investments in the agricultural sector in Ethiopia is currently estimated at \$3.47bio. Moreover, he stated that the investment environment inside Ethiopia differs from one place to another, as some areas are very weak in terms of infrastructure. In certain places, investors contributed to building roads, transportation means and

bridges for farmers, since the country is riddled with rivers (AL Monitor, Dec. 10).

Tullow Oil has said that it will stop drilling for oil reserves at the Tultule-1 wildcat well in the South Omo onshore block in Ethiopia after failing to strike oil despite reaching a 2,101 m depth. The oil drilling firm said that recorded gas in the course of drilling point to the presence of a hydrocarbon source in the region (The Star, Dec. 9).

The Ethiopian Privatization and Public Enterprises Supervising Agency (PPESA) has floated a tender for the acquisition of 11 public enterprises. The Deputy Head of PPESA's Deputy Public Relations, Asebe Kebede, told the enterprises up for bid are the Ethiopian Mineral Development S.C., Ethiopian Pharmaceuticals Manufacturing S.C, Bahir Dar Textile SC, Kombolcha Textile SC, Hamaressa Edible Oil SC and Bekelcha Transport S.C. Moreover, Weyra Transport S.C., Caustic Soda S.C. and Artistic Printing Enterprise, Agricultural Mechanization Service Enterprise and Transport Construction Design S.C. are the enterprises offered for sale by the agency, he said. The Ethiopian Pharmaceuticals Manufacturing, Bahir Dar Textile and Kombolcha Textile Share companies were offered for sale for the first time, according to Asebe (WIC, Dec. 12).

According to a Dec. 12 news release from Case Western Reserve University, two teams of researchers have discovered a new species of fossil horse from 4.4 million-year-old fossil-rich deposits in Ethiopia. The horse, dubbed *Eurygnathohippus woldegabrieli*, is approximately the same size as a small zebra, had three-toed hooves, and lived on the grasslands and shrubby forests in Ethiopia's Afar region. The newly-discovered species is named for geologist Giday WoldeGabriel, who earned his PhD at Case Western Reserve in 1987. The researchers detailed their findings in the November issue of the Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology (Science Recorder, Dec. 12).