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Ethiopian security forces have arrested four members of the Al-Qaeda allied Somali Islamist extremist group, al-Shabaab. According to the National Security and Intelligence Agency, the militants were arrested on Friday in Moyale town near the border with Somalia. The suspects are accused of plotting terrorist attacks in Ethiopia's Somali region under the assignment of al-Shabaab. An Ethiopian police source told that the suspects were planning to attack and kidnap foreign aid workers from a camp for Somali refugees (Sudan Tribune, March 16).

A mass rally in protest against the erection of a monument in honor of Italy's Marshal Graziani near Rome is scheduled to be held on March 17 in Addis Ababa. The rally was jointly organized by the Semayawi Party and Raey Youth Association. In a statement issued following a meeting of the organizing committee it was noted that the atrocities committed by Fascist Italy against the Ethiopian people is far worse than what is historically recorded. Over one million Ethiopians died through torture by the Italian fascists. Over 2,000 churches were destroyed and over 14 million heads of cattle stolen (Le'elina, March 15).

Germany's President Joachim Gauck arrived in Addis Ababa on March 17 for a four day official visit to Ethiopia. Mekonnen Manyazewal, Minister of Industry and other Ethiopian officials have welcomed the President at Bole International Airport. President Joachim Gauck was to meet Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in the National Palace and have a working dinner with the President. On Monday, Mr. Joachim Gauck is scheduled to meet President Girma Woldegiorgis to hold discussions. Mr Joachim Gauck will visit the African Union Commission and meet Dr. Dlamini Zuma, chief of AAC. On Tuesday he is expected to visit Lalibela Church and the Addis Ababa Tegbare ed TVET institute on Wednesday before he leaves Addis Ababa the same day. The President is accompanied by a delegation comprising around 60 officials (Indepth Africa, March 17).

After a vicious media campaign for more than two months in the intolerant Islamic kingdom of Saudi Arabia against Ethiopian immigrants, a massive crackdown is currently underway targeting Ethiopians only with Saudi citizens asked to call 992 hotline to help police raid hideouts, flats or homes used or frequented by Ethiopians. A group of MBC journalists who raised the outcry in the capital Riyadh kick started the onslaught on 12 March 2012 by publicly parading two Ethiopians they captured in their neighborhood before handing them over to the notorious Saudi religious police. Some Ethiopians blame the growing anti-Ethiopia sentiment in the repressive oil sheikdom on the recent inflammatory statement made by Saudi Arabia's deputy defense Minister Khalid Bin Sultan, accusing Ethiopia for the unending violence in Egypt and for the bone crushing economic hardship in the Sudan (Indepth Africa, March 13).

Ethiopia's year-on-year inflation rate fell to 10.3% in February from 12.5% the previous month, thanks to a sharp drop in the rate of food price rises, official data showed. The Central Statistics Agency said food inflation slowed to 7.9% last month, down from 11.3% in January. The nonfood inflation rate also dipped to 14.3% in February from 14.4% the previous month (Reuters, March 13).

The United Nations Development Program has released its 2013 Human Development Index. Despite recent economic growth, Ethiopia is still near the bottom of the index. Ethiopia ranks 173 out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index 2013, unveiled by the UNDP. Since 2000, Ethiopia has registered greater gains than all but two other countries in the world - Afghanistan and Sierra Leone. But it still ranks close to the bottom of the Index (VOA, March 15)

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) said that Ethiopia plans to efficiently use its bamboo resource as an alternative energy source to satisfy the growing demand (WIC, March 14).

A new Tigrigna book depicting the history of Atse Yohannes IV was inaugurated here on March 10, 2013. The 534 pages book entitled "Embata Antsar Wererti" was written by Gebrekidan Desta, a teacher. According to Gebrekidan, the book would help the young generation to know more about Atse Yohannes IV. Leul Ras Mengesha Seyoum, a guest of honor, on the occasion said the book would play a key role in passing down the history and culture of the Ethiopian people to the next generation (WIC, March 12).