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An Ethiopian court sentenced three British citizens to prison after finding them guilty of trying to establish Islamic rule in the country through acts of "terrorism," according to a Justice Ministry official. Ali Adorus was sentenced to 4 1/2 years in Ethiopian prison, while Somalia-born Mohammed Ahmed and Ahmed Elmi were each given jail terms of four years and eight months, Fekadu Tsega, coordinator of the federal center of prosecution, said by phone (*Bloomberg News, Jan. 15*). The UK Foreign Office has confirmed the detention of two British nationals. The three men, who received terms ranging from four to seven years, were alleged to have had links with local jihadists. Ethiopia has extremely strict anti-terror laws. It has long waged a campaign against Islamist militancy in East Africa - and has been involved in fighting against al-Qaeda linked militants in neighboring Somalia (*BBC, Jan. 16*). The Ethiopian intelligence agencies said it found the group while they were recruiting, taking part in military training and conspiring to carry out terrorist attacks in Ethiopia to establish ISIS style group in Oromia, Somali zone, Afar zone and in Eritrea. The British Foreign Office has confirmed the detention and is providing assistance (*Geeska Afrika Online, Jan. 16*).

A delegation of British MPs will visit Ethiopia next month in a bid to secure the release of Andargachew "Andy" Tsege, a British father of three who is under a death sentence. Mr. Tsege, 59, a leading critic of the Ethiopian government who came to Britain as a political refugee more than 30 years ago, has been held in solitary confinement for the past six months. He vanished during a stopover in Yemen last June. Weeks later it emerged he had been imprisoned in Ethiopia. His precise whereabouts remain unknown (*The Independent, Jan. 15*).

The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) said it has finalized preparations to host foreign and local observers interested in monitoring the upcoming national elections. NEBE Assistant Head of Services and Relations Sector Wondimu Golla, told that the board is ready to receive neutral observers so that the election could be free, fair and credible. The board is mandated to recruit local observers only, he said. The government will recruit foreign observers and submit the candidates to the board which will then verify the neutrality of the observers and assign them. Various associations, including the Coalition of Ethiopian Civic Society Associations, have asked to observe the election, according to Wondimu. NEBE is reportedly compiling the data of local applicants interested in observing the elections. Observers that meet the requirements will be trained and deployed, according to Wondimu. The board will also invite others to widely participate in observing the election (*ENA, Jan. 8*).

Ethiopia and Italy signed a financial agreement amounting to over 16.1m € in the form of loan and grant to support Ethiopia's drought resilience program, health service improvement and women empowerment. Of the total amount, the 12m € will be in the form of loan, while the balance will be a grant. The loan will be used to finance the drought resilience and sustainable livelihoods program that aims at improving drought resilience capacity and improve sustainability of livelihoods in pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in selected woredas in the Afar regional state. Some 3.5m € will go to finance the health system in Oromia and Tigray regional states, while the remaining 600,000 € will be channeled to women empowerment and social integration projects (*ENA, Jan. 15*).

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn has received an invitation from the government of Egypt to participate in Egypt's economic conference. This was disclosed during the discussion held between Prime Minister Hailemariam and Egyptian National Security Advisor to the President of Egypt on ways of enhancing development, peace and growth of the two countries. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn has confirmed his participation in the economic conference that will be held March 13-15, 2015 to support Egypt's economy (*state media, Jan. 17*).

Heineken has been gradually ramping up its new plant in Ethiopia since July. The 110m €) brewery, with a capacity of 1.5 million hectolitres, is the largest in the country and located near the capital Addis Ababa. The new facility adds to the Bedele and Harar breweries, each some 500 km from Addis Ababa, that Heineken bought from the state for a combined \$163m in 2011. Hiemstra said the new brewery would initially focus on local brands Harar and Bedele, but could start producing the premium Heineken brand next year (*state media, Jan. 17*).

ICL (NYSE and TASE: ICL), a global manufacturer of products based on minerals that fulfill essential needs of the world's growing population in the agriculture, processed food and engineered materials markets, announced that it launched a Potash for Growth program in Ethiopia. The program is designed to unlock the potential of agriculture in Ethiopia by promoting balanced fertilization among Ethiopia's small and private farmers in order to increase their agricultural productivity and economic benefits from farming. While Ethiopia has experienced strong agricultural growth over the past several years, the country remains challenged to significantly increase its crop yields and food security. Low fertilizer use, soil erosion, coupled with other traditional practices, result in severe nutrient depletion, widespread decline of soil fertility and low crop yields. The Potash for Growth program launched by ICL, in collaboration with its Ethiopian partners, includes a range of activities to increase awareness by Ethiopian farmers of the benefits of potassium fertilizers (*PRNewswire, Jan. 12*).

Wonji Shoa Sugar Factory started producing in its full capacity taking its daily production of 7221 q. Wonji has been undertaking expansion work at the cost of three billion birr and started it in 2011. The project was carried out by the Indian company, Utlam Group following the extension of USD 640m loan from the Indian government. Recently, there was a critical shortage of sugar supply in Ethiopia. According to managers of the three sugar factories - Wonji/Shoa, Metehara and Fincha - the factories alone cannot meet the domestic demand. Yet it is expected the local demand can be satisfied once Tendaho, whose construction is over, starts production. Wonji was established in 1951 by a lease agreement concluded between a Dutch company, H.V.A. For a decade, it was the nation's only sugar factory until Metehara Sugar joined it (*The Reporter, Jan. 15*).

Italian engineering firm ELC Electroconsult SpA recently won a USD-499,000 contract, through a tender, for surface exploration in the Aluto Langano geothermal field in Ethiopia. The company sealed the deal with the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) on January 7, the latter said in a statement. Aluto Langano is a water-dominated gas-rich geothermal field in the Lakes District region of the Ethiopian Rift Valley (*SeeNews, Jan. 16*).

Ethiopia will attain 100% potable water coverage in the 2nd phase of the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) period, the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy (MoWIE) said. The ministry's Public Relations Director, Bizuneh Tolcha, told

the clean drinking water coverage of the country stood at 76.7% last Ethiopian fiscal year. The coverage will reach 80.8% by the end of this Ethiopian fiscal year, he added (*WIC, Jan. 14*).

Ethiopian Airlines disclosed it has finalized preparations to start flights to Tokyo Narita International Airport on April 20, 2015. The airline is going to render the service in codeshare partnership with All Nippon Airways, which is a Star Alliance member just like Ethiopian. The flight will be the only direct connection between Africa and Japan and it is going to be done via Hong Kong using Boeing Dreamliner aircraft. The flight will be three times a week (*ET press release, Jan. 12*).

The government will consolidate its efforts to fairly distribute institutions of higher learning across the country in the coming five years. This was disclosed by Education Minister Shiferaw Shigute during the laying of the foundation for Arsi University in Assela town. According to Shiferaw, 11 new universities would be opened in different parts of the country during the Second Growth and Transformation Plan period. Due to the existing 34 universities and more than 32,000 primary and secondary schools in the country, the coverage of education is growing fast, the minister noted. The number of students attending government universities, which was less than 10,000, has now exceeded 387,000. There are more than 30,000 graduate students and 116,000 undergraduates at the institutions of higher learning in the country, Shiferaw stated (*ENA, Jan. 13*).