

Seven Days, Vol. 19 No. 38, November 19, 2012(\*)

Ahead of the UN Human Rights Council elections, a group of non governmental organizations (NGOs) from around the world have jointly urged Ethiopia, a standing candidate, to demonstrate its commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights. Ethiopia's candidature has received some criticism from international rights group. Human Rights Watch published letter addressed to Ethiopian prime minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, is signed by Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP), Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), and Human Rights Watch (HRW) (Sudan Tribune, Nov. 13). Ethiopia's year-on-year inflation rate dropped to 15.8% in October from 19% a month earlier, aided by a slowdown in the rate of food price rises, official data showed. The Central Statistics Agency said that consumer prices in the inflation rate shrank to -0.7% from 1.5% in the month of September. Food price inflation dropped for the eighth consecutive month to 13.2% in October, down from a revised 17.6% in September. The non-food inflation rate also slowed to 20.1% this month from revised 21% in September, the statistics body said (Reuters, Nov. 12).

Ethiopia's Mesfin Industrial Engineering Plc, a company linked to the ruling party, expects to build cars for China's Geely Automobile Holdings Ltd. (175) within five years, General Manager Habte Hadish said. Mesfin Engineering, which is based in Mekele, 504 km north of the capital, Addis Ababa, is now assembling six cars a day for Geely and wants to move into full production, he said. - Mesfin Engineering is part of the Endowment Fund for Rehabilitation of Tigray led by Azeb Mesfin, the widow of former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Effort, as the conglomerate is known, has interests in construction, cement, trucking and textiles. The Tigray People's Liberation Front, led by Meles until his death in August, established the company in 1995 by amalgamating assets it acquired during a 17-year insurgency. Mesfin Engineering's revenue grew about 19% to 620m birr in the year to July 7, Habte said. The company has forecast 1 billion birr in sales this fiscal year, he said (Bloomberg, Nov. 13).

Preparations are underway to villagize over 98,000 scattered households this Ethiopian budget year, the Ministry of Federal Affairs said. The ministry's head of public relations, Abebe Worku, told the villagization program will be carried out in Somali, Benishangul Gumuz, Afar and Gambella States. The program is intended to provide infrastructure and improve access to services for the scattered pastoral community, Abebe indicated. The construction of health, education, potable water, road and other service centers is underway in the resettlement sites prior to the start of the program, he said. The pastoral training institutions constructed at the sites have been furnished with training equipment and professionals, the head pointed out. Abebe stated the villagization programs carried out previously have had encouraging results. He urged all stakeholders to do their part for the success of the program that, he said, could improve the livelihood of the pastoral community (WIC, Nov. 15). The Central Statistics Agency of Ethiopia released the Household Consumption and Expenditure Survey Report for the 2010-11 year. All rural and urban areas were covered by the survey excluding three zones in Afar and six zones in Somali states. The survey showed that urban areas have an average of 3.5 people in each household while the average number of people in a household in rural areas is 5.1 people in 2010/11, according to the Household Consumption and Expenditure Survey. The average number of people living in a household nationally is 4.8 with females heading 25% of all households on a national level. The survey was also able to show that male make up 61% of the workforce in rural areas and 52% in urban areas. The survey showed that in the previous year 48.3% of children aged 10 and older are literate in comparison to the national rate of 37.6% in 2004-05. The household consumption and expenditure survey is performed every five years. The last surveys were undertaken in 1995-96, 1999-00 and 2004-5 (WIC, Nov. 14).

A study by UNFPA has indicated that Ethiopia has registered commendable success in family planning during the last ten years through the use of contraceptives. The study said that the use of contraceptives in the country has grown from 35.8% to 52.5% during the period. According to a research paper, the success

resulted from the country's health extension program. Dr. Yared said Ethiopia has assigned some 40,000 health extension professionals to 15,000 health posts to increase accessibility of contraceptives. Ethiopia also registered success in incorporating family planning in the 16 packages of the health extension program and create awareness among the public on family planning (State media, Nov. 16). The Addis Ababa HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (AHAPCO) said the HIV prevalence rate in Addis Ababa has dropped to 5.2% from 9.2%.The office's head of communication, Tesfaye Mekbeb, said the government is striving to reach zero infection of the virus through awareness raising activities and helping vulnerable groups to engage in income generating activities. To achieve this, preparations have been finalized to provide counseling and testing service to more than 30,000 vulnerable groups, he said (ENA, Nov. 15).