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His Holiness Abune Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), has passed away, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church Patriarch Private Secretariat said. The Patriarch, who is also President of the World Council of Churches, died on Wednesday after medical treatment in the country. His Holiness Abune Paulos, who is also World Peace Ambassador, was 76 years old. The fifth Patriarch of EOC was born Gebremedhin Woldeyohannes on 3 November 1935 in Adwa, Tigray. He has been Patriarch of EOC since 1992 (State media, August 16).

In a statement on August 15, Human Rights Watch said the Ethiopian government should immediately release 17 prominent Muslim leaders arrested as part of a brutal crackdown on peaceful Muslim protesters in Addis Ababa. A court is expected to rule during the week of August 13, 2012, on whether to bring charges against the detainees who have been held for almost three weeks in a notorious prison without access to lawyers.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's health is in good condition, improving fast and he will resume his official duties very soon, a top government official said on August 8. Communication minister, Bereket Simon, told that the Ethiopian premier will be back in office sooner than the Ethiopian New Year 2005, which will turn in few weeks. Zenawi has been suffering from an unspecified illness and is believed to be back in Addis Ababa after receiving successful medical treatment in undisclosed hospital in Europe. It has been over one month since Zenawi disappeared from the public life and the issue remains a topic of fierce debate in Ethiopia and the region (Sudan Tribune, August 12).

The Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM), which had turned to armed struggle a decade ago, said it has signed an agreement with the government to end its armed struggle. An agreement to that effect was signed at the Ghion Hotel this week. The movement's leaders also called on its members to put down their arms and work with the government to bring peace. The government has offered to pardon all those willing to put down arms and to release detained prisoners of the movement (Addis Admas, August 18).

A total of 3.7 million people are estimated to require humanitarian assistance from Aug.-Dec. 2012, the Ministry of Agriculture said. State Minister Mitiku Kassa said 41% of the recipients are in Somali, 27% in Oromia, 10% in Tigray, 7.7% in Amhara and 8.1% in South Ethiopia People's State. Mitiku said in order to fill the food gap of this population, there is need to provide a total of around 314,000 MT of food. Considering a carryover food amounting to around 120,000 MT, the net requirement of relief food is 194,000MT valued at approximately 149m USD. - The number of aid recipients was 3.2 million in the past six months. The number increased to 3.7 million due to the delay of "belg" rains (mid-February to May) in belg-growing areas of the country and also the recurrent drought in pastoral areas (State media, August 13).

Ethiopia anticipates that revenue generated from the mining sector will add up to 849m USD in the newly started financial year, according to the Ministry of Mines. Artisan miners are expected to raise 70.7% of the revenue projected for the financial year, revenue estimated at 600m USD from the supply of 13,200 kg of Gold to the National Bank of Ethiopia and selling 18,000 kg of artisan mined minerals. The ministry also plans to increase the investment levels in the sector by 2.55bio birr by issuing 10 mining production licenses to investors (Capital, August 14).

Over 78,000 MT of cotton was produced in the country in 2004 E.C. budget year, the Ministry of Agriculture said. Agriculture Investment Support and Monitoring Director in the Ministry, Issayas Kebede, told that the amount of cotton produced in 2003 E.C. budget year was only 18,000 MT. 71,000 ha was provided to investors during the budget year, Issayas said. 90%\$ of the land was given to investors engaged in cotton, the foundation for growth of textile development in the country (ENA, August 12).

Ethiopia is preparing for a flood of medical doctors within "three to four years", an influx meant to save a public health system that has been losing doctors and specialists to internal and external migration. "We are now implementing strategies that intend to increase the current below-World Health Organization [WHO] standard number of medical doctors and retaining them in public hospitals," Tedros Adhanom, Ethiopia's minister of health, told. "We have now reached an enrolment rate of more than 3,100," he said. The rate of

enrolment in the country's medical schools has increased tenfold from 2005, when it was below 300." In the next two, three years, it could go to 6,000 and 8,000," said the minister, adding that once these students start to graduate, the problem regarding shortage of physicians in the country "will [have] considerably stabilized" (IRIN, August 14).

The Ministry of Health said 16 blood banks being constructed in different parts of the country will become operational soon. Health Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom said the blood banks will give service mainly to mothers. He said the banks being built with the support of the U.S. government will greatly increase the accessibility to safe blood supply (ENA, August 17).

The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) announced a 5m USD investment through its Global Sanitation Fund (GSF) to help the government of Ethiopia achieve its Universal Access Plan in Sanitation and Hygiene. The programme announced by WSSCC is part of the country's wider national development vision. From 2005 to 2008, access to potable water in rural areas increased from 35% to 52%. However, millions of Ethiopians continue to experience difficulties in accessing clean and safe water and sanitation facilities. The GSF-funded programme will help 1.7 million people to gain use of improved toilets over the next five years, and 3.2 million people will be living in open defecation free environments. The three-year programme aims to strengthen institutional capacity in forty woredas to increase access to and use of sanitation facilities, with an initial focus on four regions namely Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's region (SNNPR). The GSF is supported by the Governments of Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (New Business Ethiopia, August 16).

Ethiopia's FIFA/Olympic-standard stadium is to be built by a Qatar and Australia consortium, the Doha-based Australian company Designsport said in a statement. The company, in partnership with local Ethiopian architects, JDAW, won the bid based on its design for a sunken arena for a new national stadium and sports village in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. According to TradeArabia news, the stadium evokes "Ethiopia's world-famous excavated architecture and the 'Mother womb', the skeleton of one of the first humans, Lucy, who is about 3.2 million years old." (Bakyamisr, August 11)