

Seven Days, Vol. 19 No. 12, May 21, 2012(\*)

The International Experts' Panel set up by Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt to carry out assessment on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project officially launched its activities. The Panel is expected to conduct detailed study on the project and submit a report in nine months. Sudan's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Gen. Abdulrahman Sirelkhatim, said the Panel is expected to make official the study on the dam's due schedule. The Panel comprises competent experts, the ambassador said, and urged the peoples of the three countries to trust the experts. The Panel comprises ten members four of whom are drawn from Britain, France, South Africa and Germany and the rest are from Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan (State media, May 15).

Ethiopia and France on Thursday signed an 11m birr aid agreement to help fund the Addis Ababa light railway project. The project covers a total of 37.381 km of railway running across the capital, from north to south and from east to west. The Chinese company China Railway Eryuan Engineering Group Co. (CREEC) has been awarded the contract, and work started last December. The project will involve a total of seven transit corridors, and the French aid will be allocated to the construction of roads connecting to the railway. The Addis Ababa Light Train Project, which was started two months ago by the Ethiopian Railway Corporation, is expected to be completed after 30 months. The two phase project will cover the rail line between the Armed Forces Hospital and Ayat, and between Piazza and Kaliti Gelan in the first phase. The second phase will be from Piazza to Shiro Meda and from the Armed Forces Hospital to Fouri (Ethio-Channel, May 12).

A second Indian company, Esimo Flower & Agro Industries Plc, is investing 100m USD in Ethiopia to produce flowers, fruits, and vegetables for the European, Russian and Middle Eastern markets. The company has acquired a 71-hectare farm in Debre Berhan, northeast of Addis Ababa. It will start planting flowers in July and has constructed a pack house, where harvested flowers will be processed for export in 2012, according to Sanjaye Bangali, owner and general manager of Esimo. Esimo is set to become the second flower farm in Debre Berhan after ASK Flowers and Greens Plc, run by another Indian, Shahab Khan. Producing flowers is a high-risk but high-profit business and Bangali thinks his company has a good opportunity to succeed within a few years.. Bangali foresees growing roses that are bred locally and are similar to Ecuadorian and Colombian breeds after setting up its drip irrigation system (WIC, May 17).

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has revealed that in the past nine months, 130,140 Ethiopians have traveled legally to Arab countries individually or through agencies with the ministry's approval. The director of the ministry's public relations and communications directorate, Ato Girma Shelema, told that out of the total number who traveled to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Dubai, 132,176 are women and 6,904 men. Last year (2003 E.C.), the total number was 42,233. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs endorses work contracts submitted to it by individuals and private employment agencies, and provides pre-departure orientation on the culture and religion of the destination countries (Ethio-Channel, May 12).