

No.8, April 22, 2014(*) Seven Days, Vol. 21

Gunmen ambushed a bus carrying dozens of people in western Ethiopia near the Sudanese border, killing nine and wounding six others. There was no claim of responsibility and no group was blamed for the attack, but Ethiopia says it has thwarted several plots in recent years by Ethiopian insurgents as well as Somali al Qaeda-linked al Shabaab Islamist militants. A handful of rebel groups are waging low-level separatist insurgencies in Ethiopia, while Ethiopian troops are part of an offensive against al Shabaab in neighboring Somalia. The bus ambush - near the \$4.5-billion Grand Renaissance Dam - was the second attack on public transportation in the Benishangul Gumuz region in five months. Four people were killed by a bomb on a minibus in November (Reuters, April 16). - The attack took place at dawn on Tuesday at a place called Teiba in Sherkole Woreda, some 100 km south of Assosa, seat of the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state (WIC, April 16).

Ethiopian government authorities have said they have apprehended two individuals suspected of involvement in the Tuesday ambush on a bus in Benishangul-Gumuz. The two suspects are allegedly principal offenders in the attack, Assefa Biratu, head of the region's Security Affairs Coordinating Bureau, said. The head said the suspects poured petrol on the car and set it on fire after the attack. Eight others, who are suspected of playing a role in the attack, are being investigated (Fana Broadcasting Corporation, April 17).

The Muslim justice seeking committee has submitted a law suit to the Gambia-based Human Rights Commission, which has accepted the case for consideration. The committee is seeking the release of 28 Muslims who were detained last year following disturbances in Addis Ababa. The committee accuses the Ethiopian government of interfering in the religious affairs of Muslims and of dictating terms of worship. It also accused the government of blackmailing the detained Muslims as terrorists. It further accused the government of giving training to all concerned intended to impose the Muslim religious doctrine called Ahbash, a Lebanese doctrine (Addis Admas, April 20).

Forty-six Ethiopians suspected of being in the country illegally were arraigned in court on April 14. Twenty-eight of them were taken before Principal Magistrate Eunice Nyutu at the Makadara Law Courts after being held at the Safaricom Kasarani Stadium. They were taken into custody in the ongoing security sweep dubbed Usalama Watch operation after being found not to be Kenyan citizens. But the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) told the court that some of them were legally in the country as refugees. Eighteen other Ethiopians were arraigned at the Milimani Law Courts on April 14 again on suspicion of being in the country illegally. They were arrested in Loitokitok on Friday together with the driver and conductor of a Public Service Vehicle that is believed to have been ferrying them across the border to Tanzania (Addis Admas, April 20).

Last month, the saga took a fresh twist after the leak of a highly anticipated and hitherto suppressed report into the long-term effects of what would be Africa's largest hydroelectric dam. Written by two water experts from each of the three main countries concerned - Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan - as well as international advisers, the report was seen as a much needed means of arbitration between the parties concerned. But for nearly a year the report's contents were a mystery. After its submission last April, publication was suppressed at the request of one of the countries involved, enabling all concerned to make whatever claims they liked about its contents. That should have changed at the end of March, when a leaked version (pdf) was finally published by the International Rivers Network (IRN), an independent group that campaigns against dams across the world. But rather than clarifying the dam's impact once and for all, the report has become the latest pawn in a war of words between

Egypt and Ethiopia. IRN said it showed that "big questions remain" and called for a halt to the dam's construction. But Ethiopian government spokesman Getachew Reda said the group was absolutely biased. In the meantime, the dam's construction continues apace. The report is nuanced and complex, and does not try to quantify exactly the likely downstream effect of the dam on Egypt's water supply. But its 48 pages nonetheless contain alarming findings. If the dam's reservoirs are filled during years of average or above-average rainfall, says the report, the hydroelectric capacity of Egypt's downstream Aswan High dam (Had) - which provides about 15% of Egypt's power - could face a temporary 6% decrease. But if filled during years of below-average rainfall, the Gerd may "significantly impact on water supply to Egypt and cause the loss of power generation at had for extended periods. Among other criticisms, the report warns that the dam's foundations may need further structural support to protect against sliding.

Ethiopia is currently building five fertilizer plants at a total cost of over \$2.8bn, the Ministry of Industry said. Each of the plants will have the capacity to manufacture 300,000 t of fertilizer annually, the ministry's corporate communication

director, Melaku Taye, told, noting that all five facilities are located in Yayu, some 330km west of Addis Ababa. "The country spends more than \$103.3m on fertilizer imports on average a year," he noted. "The factories, expected to begin production in 2017, will also enable some import substitution, thereby alleviating congestion of import items at ports." According to Taye, the Yayu area was selected to host the plants due to the presence of the coal resources and raw materials needed to manufacture the fertilizers (Anadolu Agency, April 16).

A Guts Agro Industry initiative means that Ethiopia's staple Shiro dish will soon be pre-packaged and available in supermarkets and shops after the company secured 66,000 \$ in funding from USAID. Shiro, made from roasted ground chickpeas, has long been produced by Ethiopian businesses relying predominantly on traditional methods. Guts, a 20m Br factory, currently produces maize-based Lembo snacks, iodized salt and, in collaboration with PEPSICO, Ready to Use Supplementary Food (RUSF). The company has taken a step forward in the production process for Shiro, establishing a separate line at its factory that is dedicated to two types of the meal. Guts Agro Industry was established in 2005. Four years later it won a contract with the World Food Program, through which, between 2009 and 2013, it was able to deliver a total of 280,000q of RUSF (state media, April 15).

The EU announced a €40.2m grant to the Ministry of Health and UNICEF through the "Enhancing Skilled Delivery in Ethiopia (ESDE)" project. This new funding from the EU will be used to scale-up maternal health and newborn care for a three year period (2014-2016). Of this grant, €20m is allocated to the MDG Pool Fund of the Federal Ministry of Health (FmoH) and the remaining half to UNICEF (state media, April 16).