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The Ethiopian government said gunmen armed by the Eritrean regime killed five European tourists and kidnapped others on January 16 while they were visiting the Erta Ale volcano in Afar region of Ethiopia. Two Germans, two Hungarians, and an Austrian were among those killed. Two other German nationals and two Ethiopians were kidnapped after the attack which left an Italian and a Belgian national wounded. The wounded victims were taken to hospital by Ethiopian military forces, and the bodies of the tourists killed in the attack were expected to arrive in the capital Addis Ababa Wednesday. The tourists were visiting the famed Erta Ale volcanic site in the Afar region near the Ethiopia-Eritrea border. The government said the attack had been carried out by terrorist groups trained and armed by the Eritrean government who crossed the border and attacked the tourists (*WIC, Jan. 18*).

The Ministry of Federal Affairs said that the ideological campaign by Human Rights Watch (HRW) will never jeopardize Ethiopia's endeavors towards sustainable development. HRW accused the government of Ethiopia of forcefully moving tens of thousands of people in Gambella through the „villagization program“. The statement of the ministry denounced HRW's report stating that the program has enabled many people in Gambella region to lead a better way of life through the resettlement program. According to the ministry, out of the 3.4 million ha of arable land, 425,000 ha has been leased to private investors in Gambella, Benishangul and SNNP regions. In its villagization program the government has so far resettled 125,000 households in Gambella, Benishangul and Somali regions. Out of these 20,000 are in Gambella region. These are regions where most inhabitants follow pastoralist and semi-pastoralist ways of life living in scattered settlements. According to the villagization action plan, the program aims to prevent vulnerability due to riverside settlements and to provide access to socio-economic infrastructures including schools, health posts, water schemes and roads for the society (*WIC, Jan. 18*).

Karuturi Global Ltd., the world's largest exporter of cut roses with 250,000 acres under rose cultivation in Ethiopia, is under the scanner of New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW), which in a new report highlights the forced eviction of thousands of indigenous people in the African country's Gambella region, where Karuturi is a key operator. Bangalore-based Karuturi, in a letter to Human Rights Watch and in a conversation with *Mint*, denied any wrongdoing. Companies from all over the world are making a beeline to grow agricultural commodities and sell seeds, fertilizers and agriculture equipment in the Horn of Africa nation thanks to the availability of cheap labor and a dole-out of vast fertile land chunks by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi through the last decade (*Mint.com, Jan.20*).

About 3.2 million people will need humanitarian assistance from Jan. to June 2012, the Ministry of Agriculture announced. Agriculture State Minister Mitiku Kassa said Ethiopia needs 168.7m USD worth food and non-food items. According to HRD, Ethiopia needs 365.6 MT of emergency food aid amounting to 122.3m USD of which a total of 46m is estimated to be required for the non food sectors that include water, sanitation, agriculture and education sectors. The minister said that some 4.5 million people were in need of humanitarian aid but the number declined to 3.2 million due to the coordinated effort by the stakeholders (*state media, Jan. 19*).

Coffee production in Ethiopia for the last two seasons has exceeded all expectation according to the International Coffee Organization. Coffee output, internationally, exceeded expectations by 1 million bags for 2010-11 to reach 134.2 million bags said the coffee organization. The ICO has increased its estimated global output for 2011-12 by 3.8 million bags due to a significant increase in production in Ethiopia expected to be around 6 million bags. Ethiopia is currently producing an estimated 9.8 million bags that would rank the country as the third largest coffee producer in the world after Brazil and Vietnam, beating out Columbia noted the ICO (*WIC, Jan. 19*).

Sudan has agreed to buy 100 mW electric power from Ethiopia. The agreement was made following the installation by Ethiopia of a 230 mW power transmission network along the Bahir Dar-Gondar, Gondar-Shekdi, and Shekdi-Metemma line. The Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation (EEPCo) said 16.4m Birr has been allocated for compensation for people displaced as a result of the installation of the transmission line. Meanwhile, the corporation is finalizing the construction of another power transmission line along the Ethio-Kenya border. The 500 kV project is located in Wolayta Sodo and is expected to be completed shortly. Power export to Kenya will fetch more foreign currency for Ethiopia. The Ethio-Djibouti Power Interconnection project was completed in April 2011 and is now in the power generation experimentation stage (*Sendek, Jan. 18*).

China's President Hu Jintao will arrive in Addis Ababa to attend the inauguration of the newly-built headquarters of the African Union (AU). The new AU headquarters was built by Chinese engineers and contractors with loan made available to the AU by the Chinese government. The new office will be named „China's Gift to Africa.“ The annual African summit will be opened on Jan. 27 at the new AU headquarters instead of at the UNECA conference hall as in the past. The new AU complex, built on 110,000 sq. m of land, includes images of the Egyptian pyramids and the Lalibela rock-hewn churches of Ethiopia (*Sendek, Jan.19*).