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A delegation of the Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) led by Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs and current Chairman of IGAD, Dr. Tedros Adhanom, traveled to South Sudan. The visit is aimed at seeking ways of ending days of fighting in South Sudan (WIC, Dec. 20). - African mediators say they have had "productive" talks with South Sudan's President Salva Kiir as they try to stop days of clashes spreading. Heading the delegation, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom said the talks would continue. At least 500 people are believed to have died since last weekend, when President Kiir accused his ex-deputy Riek Machar of a failed coup (BBC, Dec. 20).

Ethiopian police have arrested five more people suspected of plotting the suicide bombings during Ethiopia's World Cup qualifying match against Nigeria in October, security officials said .

Former intelligence chief Woldeselassie Woldemichael on Dec. 16 submitted written objections to prosecutions' charges of corruption. Woldeselassie, formerly head of Internal Intelligence and Security Services, is currently facing abuse of power charges. At a hearing, attorney Meressa Fisseha, lawyer of Woldeselassie and two other co-defendants, submitted to court a five-page objection to the charges instituted by prosecutors of the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (FEACC). Prosecutors allege that Woldeselassie used his official position to influence the printing and sale of a book titled 'Terrorism in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa' written by him (WIC, Dec. 16).

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) says Eritrea, Ethiopia and Egypt have the highest number of imprisoned journalists on the African continent. In Ethiopia, seven of the 34 journalists are in jail. But the government here insists these reporters are imprisoned for violations of anti-terrorism laws, not because of their reporting. Global rights groups, including Amnesty International, have been critical of these laws in Ethiopia and elsewhere, noting they are often misused to silence the media. In Eritrea, 22 journalists are in prison; none of them were charged or brought before a court.

A committee made up of experts will be formed to oversee the implementation of the recommendations made by the International Committee of Experts to combat the impact of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). The announcement by Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Mohamed Abdul Muttalib comes days after the conclusion of high-level meetings in the Sudanese capital after which it was agreed to hold another meeting in January to discuss some "sticking points". Muttalib said last week that he and his Ethiopian and Sudanese counterparts had discussed the implementation of a mechanism to oversee the implementation of the recommendations but provided no further details. The minister announced on Dec. 15 that this mechanism will take the form of a committee made up of an expert representative from each country and will be formed "within two weeks of approval by the ministers." The minister said that it had been agreed the committee would have one year to complete its work, starting from the date of its formation. All three countries will bear the cost of the committee (Daily News Egypt, Dec. 15).

Sudan's support to Ethiopia's controversial dam project is not politically driven, Sudan's ambassador to Ethiopia said. "We fully support the project because it benefits Sudan," Ambassador Abdul Rahman Sir-al-Katim told reporters in Addis Ababa, referring to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), which is being built just 30km away from the Sudanese border in Ethiopia's western Benishangul Gumz region. The Sudanese diplomat said his country will continue to extend the necessary support to the multi-billion dollar project as long as Khartoum remains convinced that the project is beneficial to Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt (Sudan Tribune, (Dec. 13).

A gem crystal and hydrophane opal was recently discovered in Ethiopia. Ethiopian opal was found in Gondar which was at first called desert opal but it is from a plateau in the highlands. The main field which is creating a lot of excitement now is from a field called Wello. This was found in a plateau 2500 to 3299 m high. Only the locals are allowed to mine this field

and the government has supplied basic tools. This field produces a variety of crystals, brown base and even black material. Opals from this field are known as Ethiopian Opal from Wello. Ethiopian Wello opal is popular as the crystal opals are very bright and spectacular. The colors are very striking with red being common and blue quite rare which is the opposite of Australian opals. It has some magnificent patterns and brilliant colors and is called Ethiopian fire opal (WIC, Dec. 16).

The government of Ethiopia and France signed two loan agreements amounting to 70m € to support the construction of high-voltage transmission lines and sanitary landfill. Some 50m € of the total assistance will be used to finance the implementation of reinforcing power transmission network. It will finance the erection of 62km of 400kv transmission lines and the construction of corresponding new substations in Debre Zeit, Dukem, Modjo and Ginchi. The 20m € assistance will be used to support the Addis Ababa City Administration's waste management program. The fund will finance the construction of a new sanitary landfill including access road, as well as infrastructure and facilities for both waste selecting and recycling (WIC, Dec. 20).

Revenue of 165m USD was earned from the manufacturing sector over the past five months, the Ministry of Industry said. Corporate Communications Director in the ministry, Melaku Taye, told that the amount obtained during the reported period exceeded the previous year's by 22%. The revenue was obtained from the export of textiles and garment, leather and leather products, processed agricultural products, pharmaceutical and chemical products (ENA, Dec. 16).

The government's decision to break the former Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation (EEPCo) into two independent entities was made to ensure efficient service delivery, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology said. The Minister, Dr Debretsion Gebremichael, said the Corporation has split into two companies, namely, the Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) and the Ethiopian Electric Service (EES). He said the government decided to dissolve the 60-year old corporation after years of study. Power Grid India has been selected to take over the management of the Ethiopian Electric Service (EES), the company which will lead the service delivery. Power Grid India has been given a two and-a-half year contract of 21m USD before tax. The management of the Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP), the company which is responsible for the construction of power generating dams and sub-stations, will remain in the hands of Ethiopians. The two companies need a total of 17,480 employees, the Minister said. Activities are underway to recruit an additional 4,100 employees, while keeping the 13,372 employees of the former EEPCo, according to Debretsion (State media, Dec. 18).

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) will provide a loan of US\$85m to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to finance a third phase of the Pastoral Community Development Project. The Government of Ethiopia and the World Bank will co-finance the \$218.2m project. Pastoralism relates both to an economic livelihood system that is based primarily on extensive livestock production and to the unique characteristics of communities that live in the arid and semi-arid lowlands of Ethiopia (WIC, Dec. 17).

Chinese footwear maker Huajian Group plans to make Ethiopia the hub for the global footwear industry and create more than 100,000 jobs locally in the next 10 years. The company, which first moved to Ethiopia to offset rising labor and raw material costs in China, says it has teamed up with the China-Africa Development Fund and the Ethiopian Ministry of Industry to establish a light-manufacturing base in Ethiopia. Covering an area of 318 ha near the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, the proposed zone will have facilities for shoemaking, other light manufacturing, commercial facilities and residential communities. It will house more than 50,000 families and generate revenue of \$4bio from exports. According to Wei, Huajian has invested more than \$6m on shoemaking facilities since 2011 at the Oriental Industrial Zone in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. A four-line shoemaking plant and a shoe materials plant in the park have helped the Chinese

company make 837, 4000 pairs of shoes in Ethiopia in the first 10 months of this year and generate revenue of \$13.06m (WIC, Dec. 17)..

The Sino-Ethiopia Associate (Africa) PLC, a capsule manufacturer, has built an additional factory in Addis Ababa at a cost of over 100m Birr. The new factory has a capacity to produce 1.2 billion capsules per year, which increases the total production capacity of the company to 2.4 billion. The company's Executive Secretary, Zaf Gebretsadik, said the factory is producing standard capsules and fully meets the local demand. She said the company is exporting its product to South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Sudan and Yemen (state media, Dec.16).

The Ethiopian Roads Authority (ERA) signed a 1.5 bio birr Dessie-Kutaber-Tenta road upgrading project with China First Highway Engineering Co. Ltd (CFHEC). The 67.5 km long ten m wide asphalt road upgrading project will link South Wello Zone to North Wello in the Amhara Regional State. The upgrading project includes a 24 km asphalt road built during the brief Italian invasion, which now is found in poor condition due to long years of service. The remaining 34.5 km is gravel road which will be upgraded to asphalt (WIC, Dec. 19).

Ethiopia has repatriated over 136,000 citizens from Saudi Arabia, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). MoFA Spokesperson, Ambassador Dina Mufti, told local journalists that the arrivals are expected to increase in the future. According to him, efforts are underway to repatriate undocumented Ethiopians living far from major cities of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the government has been doing all it can to rehabilitate the returnees (WIC, Dec. 19).

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) said the Bishoftu Farm Service Center (FSCs), the first of six such centers established to provide training to rural entrepreneurs, to create Ethiopian-owned retail farm supply and service centers was opened. According to a press release issued by USAID, these private, retail supply and farm service businesses will serve as innovative models in Ethiopia and throughout Africa. In addition to Bishoftu, FSCs will be opened in Ambo, Dodola, Fiche, Nekemte and Shashemane towns in Oromia State. In addition to highly trained staff that provide services and training at each location, the FSCs provide a complete range of supplies such as quality seeds, fertilizers, plant protection products, and veterinary products; information; and marketing links for Ethiopian smallholders, allowing them to make the step from subsistence to commercial production (ENA, Dec. 17).

The implementation of the Tendaho Dam and Irrigation Project launched in Afar State is well in progress as 90% of the required construction materials have been provided. Project Manager Eng. Abraham Berhe told that the dam will have a capacity to develop 60,000 ha of land. The land will be developed by using 1.86 billion m³ of water harnessing the Awash River. Some 50,000 ha of the stated area will be covered with sugarcane and the remaining for fodder development. The execution of the irrigation project, which has a capacity to develop 25,000 ha of land, is expected to be completed next June. Upon completion, the project is expected to create jobs for up to 60,000 citizens, Eng. Abraham said (WIC, Dec. 18).

A new outpatient annex constructed at the Dil Chora Hospital in Dire Dawa City Administration at a cost of 3m USD was inaugurated in the presence of high level officials, USAID said. The US President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) provided fund for the construction of this new integrated services facility (State media, Dec. 20).