

No.26, August 25, 2014(*) Seven Days, Vol. 21

The second year memorial service for the late Meles Zenawi is being marked with various events taking place across the country. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, along with several other high ranking government officials took part in a tree planting ceremony held at the Meles Zenawi Foundation Park at Entoto (ERTA, Aug. 20). Speakers emphasized that the late Prime Minister was the champion of the country's green growth economic strategy and that he struggled hard for the dignity and equality of nations, nationalities and peoples as well as for socio-economic progress and political equality in Ethiopia and more widely (Geeska Afrika Online, Aug. 21).

Journalist Gizaw Taye, managing director of Dadimos Entertainment Plc., has been released on bail of 50,000 Birr. He was arrested and brought to court charged with printing misleading news in Lomi magazine. Gizaw was detained along with six other journalists who are accused of similar offenses. Gizaw said his office still remains closed. Gizaw added he does not have any doubt that he will emerge victorious in the trial (Yegna Press, Aug. 19).

Seven journalists, including the owner and managing director of Lomi magazine, have been forced to flee the country. The owner of Lomi magazine, Gizaw Taye, was released on bail of 50,000 earlier in the week after being detained for a few days. Among those who left with him are Daniel Dirsha, the editor of Lomi magazine, Senay Abate, Thomas Ayalew, manager of Afro-Times newspaper and Asnake Libawi of Jano magazine. This brings to 12 the number of journalists who left the country within one month. The Ministry of Justice sued the journalists accusing them of carrying false reports in their publications (Addis Adams, Aug. 23). Ethiopia's Arabica coffee export earnings are forecast to climb 25% to about \$900m in 2014-15 because of higher prices after a drought damaged plants in the biggest grower of the bean, Brazil, an industry group said. Arabica prices on the Ethiopia Commodity Exchange could average \$2 a pound if supplies of the crop in the world market are tight, Ethiopian Coffee Exporters' Association General Manager Alemseged Assefa said in the capital. Ethiopia is Africa's biggest producer of the crop and the origin of the arabica plant (Bloomberg, Aug. 21).

The Minister of Government Communications Affairs Office, Ato Redwan Hussein, said there is no reason why the government should make new adjustments in the market exchange of the Birr against the USD. The Minister made the statement to newsmen where he was asked what the government's response is to the IMF's proposal to devalue the Birr. World Bank and other sources have claimed that the purchasing capacity of the Birr has been drastically reduced and that a new devaluation is in order. The World Bank's recommendation states that it is possible to stabilize the exchange rate by making a devaluation and strengthening the manufacturing sector (Reporter, Aug. 20).

The Assela Barley Factory has been forced to import barely from Denmark due to shortage. The factory is now spending 6m USD every year to import barley from Denmark. It buys about 17,500 t of barley every year, and produces 360,000 t of barely products to supply over 30,000 t every year to beer factories. The Arsi Barely Factory is a major barely supplier for beer factories including Harar, Bedele, Meta and BGI breweries (Yegna Press, Aug. 20).

The Chinese real estate company, Tsehay Real Estate Plc, is going to start selling units next October from one of its buildings which is 70% complete. On August 14, the company invited what it called potential buyers to visit its site around CMC area after announcing it has so far spent 600m Birr on its 12 storey project. According to the Deputy General of Tsehay, Yijung Wang, these buildings which are at different stages of completion will be available for sale when they reach 70% completion (Diplomat, Aug. 18).

According to studies, over 80,000 graduates of different universities in Ethiopia are roaming around because of unemployment. The graduates completed their studies last year and this year. According to a website of Economic Indicators, 85% of the Ethiopian people still make their livelihood from agriculture. The industrial sector is still not well developed as it should have and hence the shortage of jobs for graduates. Ethiopia ranks 15th by the size of its labor force but this huge manpower is not made use of. The website observed that most graduates who earn their livelihood are those who graduated in law, accounting, economics, marketing and business management (Yegna Press, Aug. 20).

In a bid to curb the recurrent power cuts, the Ethiopian Electric Services has installed 248 transformers in Addis Ababa and the regional states. The new transformers are expected to augment the existing old transformers which can hardly cope with the ever-increasing power load. In an interview, Alemayehu Tegenu, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy, said that there was no shortage of electric power in the country. The cause for the power cuts, he said, is related to the old power distribution lines (The Reporter, Aug. 16).

The UN refugee agency announced that Ethiopia has overtaken Kenya to become the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, sheltering 629,718 refugees as of the end of July. Kenya, in comparison, is host to 575,334 registered refugees and asylumseekers. The main factor in the increased numbers is the conflict in South Sudan, which erupted in mid-December last year and has sent 188,000 refugees into Ethiopia since the beginning of 2014. There are at present 247,000 South Sudanese refugees in the country, making them the largest refugee population. They are followed by Somalis (245,000) and Eritreans (99,000). Over the last seven months, nearly 15,000 Eritreans and more than 3,000 Somalis also arrived in Ethiopia, says a UNHCR press release (RTT, Aug. 19).

Climate change has impacted people's livelihoods in Ethiopia, a new United Nations report has found. "Both the frequency and intensity of droughts have increased, impacting the livelihoods of people," reads the report by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), unveiled in Addis Ababa. "At the same time, increases in flooding have also intensified the vulnerability of households in Ethiopia," it added. The report, entitled "What does it mean for Ethiopia's development," predicted that temperatures would rise by between 0.9° and 1.1°C by 2030, by between 1.7° and 2.1° by 2050, and by between 2.7° and 3.4° by 2080. It went on to assert that Ethiopia's low level of economic development, coupled with a heavy dependence on rain-fed agriculture and high population growth, made and the country particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. "The country has experienced both warm and cool years over the last 55 years. However, the recent years are the warmest compared to the early years," the report read (World Bulletin, Aug. 19).