



Addis Ababa, December 7 (WIC) – The Ethiopian Football Federation (EFF) has called in 26 players in preparation for the upcoming 2013 Africa Cup of Nations tournament which will be held in South Africa.

Ethiopia Premier League defending champions St. George and Dedebit FC have contributed the lion share with 10 and 9 players respectively. They are followed by Ethiopian Coffee (2), while EEPKO, Arba Minch, Sebeta Kenema and Defence Force had 1 each.

The players underwent medical checkup today. Coach Sewinet Bishaw has 43 days to prepare his team for the continent's biggest football stage. Ethiopia, which qualified for Afcon after 31 years of absence, is drawn in Group C with Zambia, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Ethiopia will play its first match against defending champions Zambia on January 21, 2013.

In a related story, CAF has notified the Ethiopian Football Federation that Ethiopia has qualified to the next stage of the African Nations Championship qualifiers following Eritrea's withdrawal.

"We have just been informed by the Eritrean Football Federation that its national team is withdrawing from the ... matches," said a letter from CAF's Competitions Deputy Director Shereen Arafa seen by Reuters.

Eritrea was drawn with Ethiopia for the qualifier in which only domestic players can take part.

The letter did not mention Eritrea's reasons for its withdrawal. But the decision came after 18 members of the Eritrean Football Team sought asylum in Uganda after being knocked out of the Council for East and Central Africa Football Associations (CECAFA) competition.

It has been reported that the host Uganda has granted asylum for the Eritrean team, which includes the team doctor.

Ethiopia is now set to face Rwanda in Addis Ababa on June 21-23 in the next qualification round.

Ethiopia's squad

St. George (10): Degu Abebe, Biadgelegn Elias, Abebaw Butako, Shemelis Bekele, Adane Girma, Oumed Oukri, Fitsum Gebre-Mariam, Alula Girma, Yared Zenabu, Zerihun Tadele, Zerihun Tadele.

Dedebit FC (9): Sisay Bancha, Getaneh Kebede, Berhanu Bogale, Aynalem Hailu, Seyoum Tesfaye, Aklilu Ayenew, Addis Hintsa, Menyahel Teshome, Behailu Assefa,

Ethiopian Coffee (2): Jemal Tassew & Dawit Estifanos

EEPCO (1): Asrat Megersa

Commercial Bank (1): Fikru Tefferi

Sebeta Kenema (1): Dereje Alemu

Defence Force (1): Medhane Tadesse

Arba Minch (1): Mulualem Mesfin