

Ethiopia's Meles says Eritrea behind mystery blasts (Ethiopia)

ADDIS ABABA -- Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said on Thursday that the material in explosive devices responsible for a string of mystery blasts in the country came from archrival Eritrea.

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Meles stopped short of directly blaming Eritrea for more than a dozen explosions that have hit Addis Ababa and provincial towns killing at least seven people since January but said that those responsible would be arrested soon.

"There is no question in my mind that the material for the bombs is coming from Eritrea," he told reporters at a news conference. "There are many factors that substantiate it but that is as far as I'm prepared to go."

Ethiopia and Eritrea waged a 1998-2000 war over a common border and regularly make allegations of fomenting unrest on the other's soil.

No one has claimed responsibility for the blasts.

Ethiopian officials have in the past hinted at Eritrea's involvement in the explosions but have also suggested that indigenous separatist groups might be responsible for them.

"I assure you it's only a matter of time until the terrorists are caught and brought to the justice," Meles said.

He declined to comment further as investigations are ongoing but stressed that he did not believe that the blasts or the fact that no one has yet been arrested in connection with them posed a major threat to Ethiopia's national security.

"The fact that we haven't apprehended the perpetrators is a matter of concern, but I don't think it will challenge the whole security in the country," Meles said.

Earlier this month at least six people were killed and dozens wounded when grenades exploded in bars and a market in towns in eastern and western Ethiopia.

Addis Ababa has been hit by at least 11 explosions, some attributed to grenades and others to landmines, since January, including a series of five on one day in March that killed one person and wounded 15.

Tension has been high in Addis Ababa since last year when at least 84 people died - many at the hands of police - during opposition-led protests against alleged fraud in the disputed May 2005 election.

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