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Ethiopia's AGOA status revocation misguided decision:

Amb. Seleshi

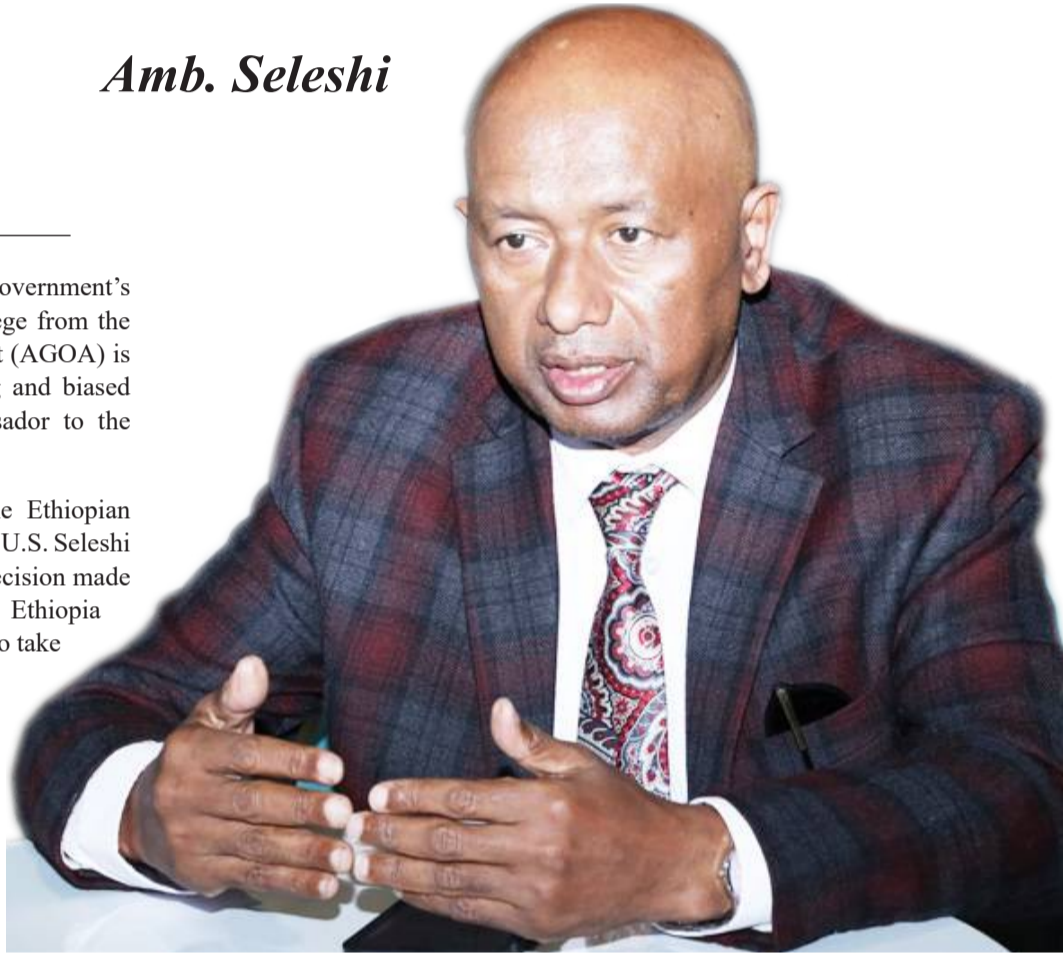
BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA –The U.S. government's decision to revoke Ethiopia's privilege from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is misguided and motivated by wrong and biased assessments, the Ethiopian Ambassador to the U.S. said.

In an exclusive interview with The Ethiopian Herald, Ethiopia's Ambassador to the U.S. Seleshi Bekele (PhD. Eng.) stated that the decision made by the U.S. government to remove Ethiopia from AGOA is erroneous and failed to take into account facts on the ground.

Also, the U.S. lawmakers disregarded the effort and commitment of the Ethiopian government in ensuring human rights and the impact that their decision would create in the

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Photo: Tsehay Niguse

Ethio telecom facilities bank branches connectivity in war-affected states

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA - Ethio telecom said it has facilitated telecom infrastructure access for around 54 bank branches located in the Amhara, Afar, and Tigray states in its Northern Region to allow them to resume services.

See Ethio telecom ... Page 3



Federal Police take charge of safeguarding federal institutions in Mekelle

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA - The Federal Police of Ethiopia, which is authorized to protect institutions of the federal government, stated that it reentered Mekelle, the capital of Tigray State yesterday for protection purposes.

In a statement issued yesterday, the

Ethiopian Federal Police Commission announced that it started working to protect federal institutions.

Following the peace agreement reached by the government and the TPLF in Pretoria, South Africa, the Ethiopian Federal Police will carry out the protection of airports, electricity, telecom services, banks, and

See Federal police ... Page 3

Shire residents hail gov't 'strong, steadfast' support for peace

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA - Having appreciated the government's strong and steadfast support for peace, Shire Indaselassie town residents said that they are witnessing effective jobs in rescuing the public from disaster and restoring infrastructure in Tigray.

During a public forum held in Shire Indaselassie town yesterday, the participant of the discussion Haregwa Goitom noted that since entering the area in the last two months, the federal government has carried out many activities effectively. In addition to restoring essential services, the government has paid an immense price

for peace and stability.

"The people of Tigray are peace seekers. Since there is no life to return from now on, we should leave the past behind and think only about lasting peace. Henceforth, there

See Shire residents ... Page 3

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In 2022, Growing Influence of Digital Culture, the Fate of Africa

ETRSS-1 celebrates its third year in space, continues providing service

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News

City officially launches Smart City Project implementation

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – Addis Ababa City Administration has officially launched Smart City (Digital Transformation) implementation project, which is expected to address complex problems of residents.

Addis Ababa Technical and Vocational Training and Technology Development Bureau held Smart City project implementation symposium yesterday in the presence of Adanech Abiebie, Mayor of Addis Ababa City Administration, other government officials and invited guests.

Opening the symposium, Addis Ababa Technical and Vocational Training and Technology Development Bureau Head Habiba Siraj said the installation of infrastructure in the city has been underway to modernize service delivery of residents allocating huge investment. Over the last years, the administration has allocated over 2.2 billion Birr for ICT sector development to boost efficiency, quality and effectiveness of service delivery.

Over the last years, it has developed 19 software and 20 integrated network infrastructure projects. This budget year, it has also been working on designing 42 projects.

The launching of Smart City project



Photo: Eyob Teferi

aimed to address the complex problems of the residents who are facing during service provision and to transform image of metropolis. The project is really community-centered and will have a paramount importance in easing their quality of life for people living in the capital, Administration Mayor Adanech Abiebie said.

The Smart City project would help to realize swift and appropriate services, ensure safety and security of the residents and enable better understanding and collaboration for the government and dwellers.

The project is digital transformation with a

view to make the city more internationally recognized, livable and attractive. The project is promising in bringing more innovative opportunities, resilient technology-driven city for its inhabitants in all respects, she added.

Recently, Addis Ababa was awarded Bloomberg Award to be one of the smartest cities.

She noted that it would improve the overall images of Addis harnessing advanced technologies and infrastructure. Furthermore, it is vital to meet the growing needs of the residents at large.

Private sector crucial to bridge gender equality gaps

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA - Ethiopian Civil Society Organization Council (ECSOC) stated that the private sector is expected to play their role in ensuring gender equality as the issue needs the combined effort of all concerned.

Speaking at a discussion forum ECSOC organized in collaboration with Action Aid Ethiopia under the theme: “The role of private sectors in enforcing gender equality in Ethiopia,” Program and Development Advisor at the Council, Kalewongel Minale (PhD) said that the private sector has a vital role to play in ensuring gender equality and women empowerment.

Presenting a research paper on gender equality, Psychology Lecturer at Addis Ababa University Abraham Tarekegn (PhD) stated that key elements are capacity building such as training, financial support, empowerment partnership such as creating collaboration, supporting associations, outreach programs such as funding women empowerment projects and others are expected to further promoted to women.

“The majority of women in Ethiopia experience gender inequalities and economic marginalization. Women are underrepresented in managerial or higher positions in almost in all sectors. The major reason given by women for their low level of engagement in the managerial level is household responsibilities. Hence, in order to bridge such a wider disparity, the private sector has to attach due emphasis to the issues and address gender equality and related circumstances,” he added.

The participants of the forum expressed their motivation to strengthen the work that is being done on gender equality and pledged to do more when it comes to capacity building in the private sector. They also pledged to look into the integration of gender equality aspects in organizational structure and agreed that the collaboration of civil societies and the private sector is quite vital in bridging the gap in this regard.

CoHA attests Ethiopia’s ability to solve problems itself

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA- Attempting to put the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) into practice within the shortest time possible has portrayed that Ethiopia has enabled to solve any internal problems without inviting foreign elements, so stated Former SNNPR’s Chief- Administrator.

The ex-chief administrator Abat Kisho told The Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that Ethiopia needs to encourage strong integration and forgiveness among the citizens in realizing the expected prosperity and ensuring sustainable peace.

“If the peace agreement had not been successful, the rest of the chapter would have been the worst and citizens would have been exposed to numerous suffering like what was during the war period,” he added.

“Ethiopia has its own cultural mediation and conflict resolution mechanisms by using religion and Geda fathers, and country’s elderly groups, who have been playing an indispensable role in ensuring peace, equality, tolerance and create ethical citizens in the country,” he added.

Abat also noted that Ethiopia has been regis-



tering remarkable outcomes in various fields though a lot remain to be done to ensure national prosperity. However, the country has recorded appreciable activities in terms of ensuring political leverage, encouraging green legacy initiative, expanding Bega’s

irrigation of wheat production, increasing tourists’ inflow, avoiding external interference on national interest, and encouraging the Diaspora community participation on the reconstruction and rehabilitation process despite a lot of challenges.

News



Institute underscores enhancing scientific researches for health system transformation

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA - Armauer Hansen Research Institute stated that it has been conducting scientific researches on various health issues to improve the health system in Ethiopia apart from publishing 70 problem-solving health researches this year alone.

Speaking at opening of a discussion forum conducted yesterday with stakeholders in Addis Ababa, Armauer Hansen Research Institute General Research and Innovation Sector Deputy Director Alemseged Abdisa (MD) said the forum would showcase the contribution made by the institute so far, reveal its future plan thereby incorporating stakeholders' feedback amount its journey in 52 years.

Alemseged also stated that the institute has organized 70 health-related research projects this year. It has been conducting various researches, particularly in fields of DNA testing and tuberculosis, as well as infectious diseases.

He said that in its history of over half a century, the institute has made over 1,135 nationally and internationally important research results to be published in famous journals.

In terms of capacity building and knowledge transfer, Alemseged said the institute has trained 325 third degree and second degree students and currently 62 third degree and 18 second degree students are being trained with Armauer Hansen Research Institute.

In addition to this, it has been providing

researchers with short trainings to enhance their capacity. He pointed out that this is of great importance in terms of addressing the shortage of manpower in health research.

It is an institute that has left its own mark for the improvement of health policy by conducting research on various health research fields in terms of changing policies, he stated.

At the discussion forum, the ten year plan of the institute was presented and discussed.

Last Year, one of the Armauer Hansen Research Institute's researchers, Abraham Assefa (MD) won the African Union's Kwame Nkuruma Continental Award. He has gained this award for his achievements and valuable discoveries and findings in science, technology and innovation annually.

Shire residents hail gov't...

is no price to be paid for war but for peace."

Haregwa further stated that the people of Tigray are determined more than ever to ensure that the peace that has begun does not go back. They also asked the government to monitor and take action against those who are trying to thwart the peace and the mass media should also produce reports that can strengthen the unity of the people.

Young Semere Teke said that the rescue work done by the federal government is worthy of praise and the coordinators who entered the state due to the problems created by the war have fulfilled their role in solving the problems of the people within two months. "We are all Ethiopians; others have done much to tear us down. But the peace agreement has assured us that Ethiopia

cannot be disintegrated."

The residents, who expressed commitment to support the agreement process and work with the government until the end; stressed during the discussion that Due attention should be given to entering basic service providers into full activity.

For his part, the federal government coordinator in the area Muhammad Sule said that in the last two months, when the political leadership took deployment and put it into action, one of the issues set as the key goal was to ensure peace and stability in the area. By identifying the issues that could disrupt the daily activities of society, immediate action would be taken and the federal government has successfully done so. The government understood the

problems of the society and carried out the work of providing relief food.

"Many members of the society displaced from their villages due to war have been brought back to their homes and among the government service institutions, health organizations have been made to start working quickly."

Efforts have been made to solve the problems by considering the public demand and based on this it has been possible to restore the infrastructure that has been out of service in the town for the past two years. Accordingly, telephone service, electricity, water and sewage services, and banking services have been reinstated, the coordinator remarked.

Ethiopia's...

livelihood of low-income Ethiopians, who have no connection with conflict.

"The decision is the result of some interest groups which have hidden agenda and have been hugely engaged in misrepresentation of the facts and in a disinformation campaign. The revocation is considered a punitive measure and has nothing to do with the conflict. The measure is also counterproductive for both countries which have one of the oldest diplomatic ties dating back to 120 years."

He further highlighted that Ethiopia's foreign policy was designed to lure businesses from four corners of the globe whilst the country aims to capitalize on the U.S. companies' rich knowledge and technology package. "We want more U.S. companies to come and do business here and believe that the recently-held U.S. Africa Leaders Summit facilitated the two countries' strong relations in the multifaceted frontier."

Currently, the diplomatic and political relation between Ethiopia and the U.S., which started in 1903, is expanding in the spheres of trade and investment.

Ethio telecom...

Speaking to local media, ethio telecom CEO Frehiwot Tamiru stated that telecom infrastructure access was provided for about 31 branches in Shire, 21 branches in Waja, Alamata, and Korem as well as one each in Aba Guna and Adwa towns. The operator has given priority to the banks to help them to resume the crucial service as soon as possible.

Through the rehabilitation and restoration activities that ethio telecom has carried out, it has managed to reinstate the service in over 27 war-affected towns including Shire, Alamata, Kobo, Debark, and Adwa among others.

Noting the operator has been heavily engaged to reinstate the damaged connectivity, the CEO indicated that priority has been given to governmental and non-governmental organizations that are engaged in humanitarian response. Though much of the services that are restored currently are categorized under emergency services, once the fiber work is done, all services including data service would be operational.

"Due to the severity of the damage that has occurred in the telecom infrastructure, we have made the attempt to at least partially resume emergency services and other services will also be resumed once the restoration of essential infrastructure has completed."

Federal Police...

other federal institutions that provide services to the public in Tigray.

It is known that the Federal Police has been doing security and safety enforcement work by entering the areas of Tigray and supporting the public to return to their villages.

Opinion

PM Abiy Ahmed in Washington DC: He Came, He Saw, He Conquered With...

PART TWO

BY ALMARIAM

Ethiopia and the US now seem to be on track to rekindle their century and quarter long relations in earnest.

Blinken “welcomed progress made on the implementation of the November 2 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement” and “commended steps taken by the Ethiopian government to improve humanitarian access and begin restoration of essential services.”

Blinken reiterated, “The United States remains committed to supporting the African Union-led peace process, including the AU monitoring and verification mechanism.”

The national security advisor plays a critical role in advising the president on national security issues and is expected to be an honest broker sifting through the mass of interagency information related to national security and accurately providing it to the president.

Although Sullivan towed the party line at the beginning of the conflict in Ethiopia in November 2020, he was not as vocally condemnatory of Ethiopia as the others.

It is likely that he had a comparatively accurate (not blind support for TPLF) and balanced understanding of US interests in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa.

PM Abiy tweeted: We held a constructive discussion with US National Security Advisor over a host of issues including implementation of cessation of hostilities, political & economic reform initiatives of the GOE and on revitalizing the bilateral relationship.

I like the emphasis on “revitalizing the bilateral relationship” as I would like to see a strong Ethiopian-American alliance against terrorism and for increased investments in Ethiopia. “Hope springs eternal in the human breast.”

Sullivan announced: The U.S. will commit USD 55 billion to Africa over the course of the next three years, across a wide range of sectors, to tackle the core challenges of our time. These commitments build on the United States’ long-standing leadership and partnership in development, economic growth, health and security in Africa. We will shower you with details about those deliverables. We’re not putting a gun to anyone’s head. We will make the case with passion and persistence to every country in the world that they should speak out against these flagrant violations of the U.N. Charter. We’re not imposing conditionality from the point of view of this summit on decisions.

PM Abiy managed to secure USD 745 million to meet “basic needs and provide basic services to the vulnerable” from the World Bank.

World Bank Group President David Malpass announced the World Bank Board of Executive Directors approval, which would bring total WBG commitments to Ethiopia to USD 2.9 billion over FY22-FY23.

The money will be spent in two projects.

The Ethiopia Program for Results for Strengthening Primary Health Care Services Project “aims to improve essential and equitable health care services such as key reproductive, maternal and child health as well as nutrition services nationwide for the people of Ethiopia, including in conflict affected areas, and especially for women and children, who are the most vulnerable.”

The Flood Management Project “is geared towards urgently enhancing Ethiopia’s resilience to climate-related shocks, as well as improves its ability to better respond to and manage disasters and flood risks.”

PM Abiy tweeted: he “had a good meeting with US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and discussed ways of expanding US-Ethiopia trade relations.”

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative “is responsible for developing and coordinating U.S. international trade, commodity, and direct investment policy, and overseeing negotiations with other countries. The head of USTR is the U.S. Trade Representative, a Cabinet member who serves as the president’s principal trade advisor, negotiator, and spokesperson on trade issues.”

Ethiopia was the United States’ 77th largest goods export market in 2019. U.S. goods exports to Ethiopia in 2019 were USD 1.0 billion, down 22.5 PERCENT (USD 295 million)

The U.S. goods trade surplus with Ethiopia was USD 442 million in 2019, a 48.8 percent decrease (USD 422 million) over 2018.

On January 1, 2022, the United States terminated Ethiopia from the AGOA trade preference program allegedly because of human rights violations. I have described the termination as “Joe Biden’s dirty bomb/weapon of mass destruction in Ethiopia.”

I have written Joe Biden an open letter on behalf of the “wailing women factory workers of Ethiopia” thrown out of work as a result of Ethiopia’s AGOA termination.

PM Abiy’s tweet gives me hope for optimism AGOA privileges could be restored. But I won’t lose sleep over it. I will believe it when I see it.

PM Abiy met with Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund and tweeted: A productive discussion on Ethiopia’s transformative economic reform agenda with the Managing Director of IMF including the need for debt resolutions. I express our resolve to preserve past gains and deepen our reforms further.

The June 2022 IMF Staff Report noted Ethiopia’s COVID pandemic and conflict challenges and made some encouraging observations: Delivery of a debt treatment for Ethiopia under the G20 Common Framework, as part of a package supported by an IMF program, is essential to reduce debt vulnerabilities.

Continued progress on reforms to shift from public to private sector-led growth as laid out in the Homegrown Economic Reform Plan

will contribute to high and sustainable growth over the long term.

Exports and Foreign Direct Investment have held up well despite the difficult economic environment.

PM Abiy met Republican Senator Mitch McConnell, US Senate Minority Leader. McConnell is reviled by liberals. McConnell has never said an unkind word about Ethiopia. He has been lobbied to do so, but he chose not to join the Ethiopia-bashing lunatic fringe in the US Senate.

I remember McConnell from 2017 when he stepped in to help a Kentucky family adopt an Ethiopian child. At the time, they had been working through the Ethiopian adoption process for seven years. McConnell made it happen.

PM Abiy tweeted: Terrific conversations with members of the US investment community about the untapped investment opportunities in Ethiopia. With Ethiopia’s historic reform and openings, I encouraged them to step up efforts to invest in our people and economy for shared prosperity.

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo announced: All U.S. businesses should take note of new opportunities for trade, investment, and commerce in Africa, spurred by improvements in the business environment, a continent-wide free trade area, and a new generation of entrepreneurs on the move.

PM Abiy was the recipient of the American Academy of Achievement and Global Hope Coalition’s “Outstanding African Leadership Award” for his Green Legacy initiative to reforest the country Ethiopia.

In his acceptance speech, he said: Indeed, our continent is filled with many success stories – past, present and future. The perspective that African countries are net producers of problems that always require external assistance is an outdated one. Therefore, great appreciation to the organizers for lighting a torch on the continent’s net production of solutions.

As the global community continues to be confronted with the adverse effects of climate change, in Ethiopia we chose to undertake bold and practical solutions to address the issue. When in 2019 we launched the Green Legacy initiative as a proudly African nation and as a government navigating turbulent times, Ethiopians from corner to corner rose up armed with seedlings to cover the nation green.

Previous Academy awardees, in a variety of fields, include Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush I, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

Other recipients include John Lewis, Rosa Parks, Elie Wiesel, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Sidney Poitier, Shimon Perez, Mikhail Gorbachev.

“God bless Africa, Guard her people, Guide her leaders, And give her peace.”

Those were the words of Trevor Huddleston, of whom Nelson Mandela said, “No white

person has done more for South Africa than Trevor Huddleston.”

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” –Henry Ford.

“The time is always right to do what is right.” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Afterthought...

On the last day of the Summit, Secretary Blinken provided a list of US financial commitment and investment in Africa over the past couple of years.

There are many who suggest the US-Africa Summit 2022 is a repeat of US-Africa Summit 2014. They point to several factors to demonstrate similarities between the two Summits: No real agenda. No roadmap to get things done. No change in the interventionary orientation of US policy in Africa.

No real commitments, at best grandiose verbal commitment to spend USD 55 billion in three years. They point out the fact that Ukraine got almost the same amount in a year or so with a population of 40 million.

No real plan to increase private US investments in Africa. No real plan to ensure African representation on the G-20. No mention of an African seat on the UN Security Council. They say it is all a public relations stunt/offensive against China.

These critical observations reflect the objective conditions on the ground. With deep skepticism and cynicism, I had expressed similar criticisms in my December 12, 2022 open letter to Secretary Blinken.

I noted: But as Ben Franklin quipped, “I’d rather be a pessimist because then I can only be pleasantly surprised.” Sir, I eagerly await to be pleasantly surprised!

I wrote those words with a tinge of sarcasm and mockery. I grudgingly admit now, I am pleasantly surprised, at least with the outcome for Ethiopia.

George Santayana observation on the march of history is true: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

But so is Arnold Toynbee. “We are not doomed to make history repeat itself; it is open to us, through our own efforts, to give history, in our case, some new and unprecedented turn.”

US-Africa relations is a complicated affair. Borrowing the words of Donald Rumsfeld, former US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld:

As we know [about Africa and the US], there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns.

In other words, “Que sera sera! Whatever will be, will be.”

Editor's Note: The views entertained in this article do not necessarily reflect the stance of The Ethiopian Herald

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General Manager

Tel. 011-126-42-22

Fax. 251-011-156-98-62

Advertisement and Dist. Department

email: etpresspromotion@gmail.com
Tel. 011-156-98-73/011-811-13-15

Editor-in-Chief: **Worku Belachew**
email- workubelachew@press.et
Address- Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-city
Woreda - 05, House No----
Tel- +251 111 26 41 98

Managing Editor: **Wakuman Kudama**
Email: wakuma220@gmail.com

Deputy Editors-in-Chief:

Alem Hailu

Elizabeth Mengistu
Zekarias Woldemariam

Desta Geberehiwot

Daniel Beyene

Website: www.press.et

email: ethiopianherald@press.et

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The Ethiopian Herald

Editorial

Concrete steps towards full implementation of Pretoria peace deal

As Ethiopia ushers in a new path ending the two-year devastating war following the momentous Pretoria peace deal, the desperately needed humanitarian aid is entering the Tigray state unrestrictedly. With the agreement holding effectively, the Ethiopian government is speeding up the restoration of basic services defeating skepticism and foiling desperate propaganda. Particularly, the last two weeks have seen a dramatic turn paving the way for the full implementation of the breakthrough deal.

From the second meeting of the senior commanders of Ethiopian Defense Forces and Tigray combatants to the first visit of the federal government's delegation to Mekelle, Tigray State capital in two years, the last few days have turbocharged the effectuation of the agreement. The strings of concrete measures being taken by both signatories are putting the deal on a string foundation overriding expectations.

Furthermore, upon their Nairobi meeting, the two parties have prepared the Term of Reference (ToR) of the Joint Monitoring, Verification, and Compliance Mechanism (JMVC). They also discussed the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) process. The review of the implementation further cultivates mutual trust and helps redress any shortfall facing outstanding issues.

The African Union Commission has commended "the Parties for the positive confidence-building measures since the signing of the CoHA and encourages them to continue with their efforts to restore peace, security, and stability in Ethiopia.

Meanwhile, there have been fast developments in terms of basic service restoration in Tigray on the heels of the federal government's delegation visit to oversee the implementation of the peace accord on December 26.

One of the good news that unfolded this week was the resumption of

flights to Mekelle. Ethiopian Airlines on Wednesday resumed flights to the regional capital while increasing its regular flight to twice a day, effective from today.

The official social media post from the airline indicates that it will increase the number of flights per day, taking into account the increasing number of passengers. The resumption of flights has been met with cheers as separated family members began reconnecting with their loved ones.

Similarly, owing to the strong resolve of the incumbent, the restoration of other services is well underway with telecom service resumed in Mekelle on the same day after a successful test.

According to Ethio telecom, over 27 towns of Tigray state have been reconnected to the services. The maintenance of some 1,800 km fiber optics line is underway, while the works of 931 km of the line have so far been completed.

On another development, the Ethiopian Energy Authority (EEA) granted 14 petroleum conveyance companies to transport and distribute fuel in conflict-ridden areas of northern Ethiopia directly from the Djibouti port. According to local media, these 14 fuel distributors that had been granted the license to carry out the conveyance of fuel directly from the Djibouti port used to operate in northern Ethiopia before the conflict broke out.

With regard to electricity, the restoration works have covered almost all of the Tigray, Amhara and Afar states that were cut off due to the damage to electric infrastructure. The recent restoration works have been reconnected the states to the national grid.

In sum, expediting the restoration of basic services is defining chapter in the full implementation of the peace accord. And, pursuing to the current momentum will definitely bring the intended goal and ensure lasting stability in the country.

Opinion

Developing nations need stronger cooperation to control risks

BY WANG YOUMING

Looking back to the passing year of 2022, a majority of emerging market economies have suffered a complex crisis of food shortages, energy crunches, elevated inflation and higher unemployment. The combination of these economic problems has even triggered political upheavals in some of the economies.

Their predicament is a result of a series of factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and the US Federal Reserve's aggressive interest rate hikes. However, there is a common root cause behind all these factors - the US. The US' role in the Russia-Ukraine conflict is clear for all to see. The Fed's rate hikes have caused capital flight and currency depreciation in many underdeveloped economies.

The US dollar index has dropped recently, and the Fed issues a signal that it may slow down the pace of rate hikes. This indicates that the momentum of the US dollar's appreciation will weaken. But in the face of global economic gloom and the restructuring of the global industrial and value chains, most developing countries will continue to face pressure in 2023.

Firstly, many emerging market economies will have to continue to contend with inflation. If the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine cannot be resolved in the short term, the world's food crisis and energy crisis may continue, which will further push up international commodity prices. While some Latin American countries are less affected as commodity exporters, developing countries in general remain at risk of higher inflation, plus serious food and energy shortages in 2023.

Secondly, many emerging market economies and developing countries are expected to face rising debt risks next year.

It is estimated that in the current economic environment, among the developing countries, many African and South Asian countries still face high debt risks and debt repayment pressures. In the face of ongoing global economic gloom, the incremental and total debts of some developing countries deserve attention.

Thirdly, currency depreciation and capital outflows in many developing countries still need to be closely followed in 2023. There is a common problem facing many developing countries. The financial systems in many countries are vulnerable, and their foreign exchange reserve size is

small. Therefore, in face of the impact of the US interest rate hikes, it is impossible and unfeasible for them to keep their currencies not to depreciate.

Facing the complex international geopolitical and economic situation, strengthening financial cooperation among the developing countries is an effective way to deal with the risks in 2023. Although the dominant status of the US dollar will persist over the short term, this does not mean that other countries should sit idly by in face of the risks coming from US' monetary policy tightening. The reason why the US dollar maintains its status as a powerful currency is mainly because it is backed by the US' economic strength. However, the irresponsible actions of the US government are undermining the currency's credibility.

At present, the world is facing a critical time of strategic opportunities for de-dollarization. The emerging market economies should strengthen financial cooperation and promote the process of de-dollarization. If some countries continue to rely too much on the US dollar, their economies will be exposed to uncertainties and risks for a long time.

The developing countries can strengthen

local currencies swap in conducting trade. For instance, it is possible to increase yuan settlement in international trade. In this way, the loss caused by the exchange rate fluctuations against the US dollar can be averted.

Drawing lessons from Russia's painful experience of being banned from the SWIFT system, other emerging market economies should build their own financial and currency interaction information mechanism under cooperation frameworks including the BRICS.

And, relevant countries should continue to provide debt relief and debt relief arrangements for the poorer economies facing severe debt distress. As China's economy has weathered the impact of COVID-19 in recent years, the country has fully implemented the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative. The total debt service payments suspended by China are the largest among G20 members. The Western countries and leading international institutions need to provide practical assistance to the troubled economies to ease their debt problems, and at the same time avoid imposing harsh political conditions on them.

Editor's Note: The views entertained in this article do not necessarily reflect the stance of The Ethiopian Herald

Business & Economy



Coffee export: A cornerstone for nation's foreign currency earnings

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

As the need of ensuring food security become mandatory for most nations of the world, the agriculture sector has turned out to be the focal point for most countries. Lately, the world has hit by waves of challenges caused by multiple factors. Due to the current war between Russia and Ukraine and the global pandemic, COVID-19, most nations, including Africa, have been experiencing economical hurdles. In this regard, the world has faced one of the highest inflation rates lately. And most nations are acting up on the queries of their citizens regarding lowering the inflation.

Particularly in Ethiopian context, the nation is blessed with inundated manmade and natural resources with superb weather. In different occasions, tangible results have been drawn when the government and the people of Ethiopia tried to use nation's resources effectively. At this moment, the government of Ethiopia has introduced a number of ways to build the awareness and potentials of the people to exert the utmost effort towards fostering the economy and put their fingerprints on the overall progress of the nation.

In the past few years, Ethiopia is doing better regarding the agricultural sector. The government has been functioning tirelessly on advancing the quality and quantity of agricultural production and productivity across the country. Similarly, the nation has been registering better accomplishments on agricultural products including the production of wheat, avocado, coffee, and spices. In fact, the government has been implementing numerous policies and strategies to register such accomplishments.

Needless to say, coffee is one of the export commodities of Ethiopia from which the nation earns better income. It was reported that like the figure registered in wheat production in recent years, coffee has

recorded the highest achievements in the past few seasons. It is the fact that coffee shares 30 percent of the nation's total foreign exchange earnings. In recent times, the government has worked with stakeholders to increase the production of coffee and other agricultural products in terms of quality and quantity.

To this end, according to Ministry of Agriculture, the nation has secured a record 1.4 billion USD from coffee export in the 2021/22 fiscal year which is the highest of all time so far. Besides, in the year before, the nation had registered 906 million USD after exporting more than 240 thousand tons of coffee to the international markets. Regarding the scored figures, coffee export has helped the nation to increase its foreign earnings and the overall economic development.

It is important to remember that the government has been implementing numerous techniques to upgrade the lives of coffee farmers by organizing different events including 'Cup of Excellence' contest which focuses on bringing the best coffee quality to the market. This particular competition has brought better results regarding increasing the production and productivity of coffee along with uplifting the lives and income of farmers.

In 2021's contest, for instance, it was reported that the best coffee that stood first on the competition was sold by 407 Dollar per kilogram. This means the price of a kilo of coffee became around 15 thousand Birr. Hence, the farmer earned over 5 million Birr for 9 bags of coffee locally known as Kessa. On this year's competition, the best coffee was sold by 330 Dollar per kilogram which means 19 keshas of coffee was sold by 364,643 Dollar. Besides, five Ethiopian coffee samples got the Presidential award which is the highest prize.

Also, steps have been taken to add values to the export items so that the income will be increased. To this end, Ethiopia previously

exported raw coffee to the world market; however, in recent times, some companies have been emerged to the coffee production bringing new ways of doing business. These companies are working to add values on the exported coffee by roasting, grounding, and packing products.

In this regard, Gezahegn Mamo, CEO of Wild Coffee Ethiopia previously disclosed, "The former government didn't support investors and coffee companies to export value added coffee to the international market. Thus, it was one of hindrances that prohibited most investors to be involved in the coffee production." In addition, in the present climate, the government is working on expanding its market destinations across the world which will create more opportunities for Ethiopian government and farmers to produce agricultural products with more quantity and better quality.

Due to those factors, the quality and quantity of coffee production and export are progressing better and better. According to multiple sources, Ethiopia is exporting better quality coffee to the world market by adding values. The Ethiopian Commodity Exchange (ECX) has recently announced that the institution is under reforms to create favorable conditions for those who export agricultural products by making the system modern and electronic to make it easily accessible. In actual fact, every stakeholder is playing its part effectively so that the nation can score better results in exportation.

Lately, The Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority announced that the nation has secured better income in exporting coffee. The authority stated that the country has earned over 615 million USD from coffee export to foreign markets over the last five months.

According to the Authority's Deputy Director General and Head of Marketing Department, Shafi Umer, the nation has secured millions of Dollar, (615 million USD to be specific),

from exporting coffee. To generate the aforementioned income, the country has exported more than 109 thousand tons of coffee to the world markets within the last five months. Comparing the figure with the similar period last year, this year's earning has shown a 100 million Dollar difference.

The Deputy Director General further explained that the nation is working on expanding its market destination. To this end, the country has started to export its coffee products to the eastern world, mainly to China and Indonesia, this year. The expansion of destinations has been significantly contributing to nation's income and generating foreign exchange. More to the point of exporting coffee to China and Indonesia, Ethiopia has been exporting its coffee products to other countries including Germany, Saudi Arabia, Belgium, Australia and Japan.

Be that it may, the authority has been working tirelessly to upscale its export quantity in recent times. It is stated that in the current fiscal year, the authority has set a goal to generate around 2 billion USD by exporting more than 360 thousand tons of coffee products to the global markets. Figures show that the country is keeping on increasing its export quantity in the past few years. Specially, in the last four years, the country has registered better achievements. For instance, just last year, the nation exported 302 thousand tons of coffee to the world market and earned over 1.4 billion USD.

To wrap up the above ideas, the Government of Ethiopia has been implementing various mechanisms to upgrade the nation's export potentials. Similarly, the incumbent is working with responsible stakeholders to take part in the progress. Regarding agriculture, the nation has been doing much better on the production of various crops and advanced its capacity to export. Nation's coffee production will continue supporting the nation's economy.

Art & Culture

In 2022, Growing Influence of Digital Culture, the Fate of Africa

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

What differentiates Africa from other parts of the world is that social media here is used for destructive as well as constructive purposes. Social media in Africa are triggers of conflicts and bloodsheds while they are mostly catalysts of business and technology in more developed regions. Catalysts what is perhaps paradoxical is the fact that Western countries invent new communication technology and we African are using them to foster conflicts that claim many innocent lives. This is bound to lead us to the important consideration that communication technology can be destructive depending on the context and social and political environments prevailing in many African countries.

This does not however to say that social media is not used for promoting political turmoil in developed countries. A few years ago, former US president Donald Trump was allegedly using Twitter platform to mobilize his constituency to dispute the legality of the last presidential election that he lost. This had led to serious dispute culminating in the invasion of the White House by Trump followers. The case was brought to court and the former president is found guilty of fomenting dissent and even an insurrection.

The big news in 2022 in the area of social media communication culture and technology is the transfer of Twitter to the ownership of American billionaire Elon Musk who made business history by spending 44 billion US dollars on an apparently simple tool that has become a major political game changer in the world of human communication. Its cultural implications are also obvious. This buyout has brought social media technology and business to a new level thereby defining the way how we will communicate and interact for generations to come.

For the uninitiated like you and I, American multibillionaire Elon Musk's buying of Twitter for a nerve racking 44 billion dollars could sound like a page from a sci-fi novel where the leading character might be a human out of this world. Judging by how fortunes are spent on new gadgets or communication tools we can be assured that the race to dominate the world

through mind control and 'newspeak' is getting hotter year after year. Social media platforms are highly profitable enterprises. Suffice it to look at the brief history of Facebook that was born in a Harvard university dormitory and took a few years to conquer the world and become one of the most profitable social media outlets.

In the world of social media end users come after advertisers who, according to many analysts, are the real customers while individual users are simply collateral beneficiaries if I may be allowed to use the term. In other words, Twitter or any other communication tool does not exist for the sake or the benefit of individual users but those of advertisers who pay more than 99 percent of the company's incomes. Although "the collateral users" are not the more important consumers, they are paying the price for the negative cultural fallouts of social media platforms as they suffer the consequences of fake news circulating thanks to the platforms that do not care how many people are suffering because of it simply because they are not the real customers and are not therefore kings. The real customers or kings are the advertising companies who pay the bulk of the incomes of the social media outlets.

We have left behind "1984", the title of the novel by Aldous Huxley but the actions described in it by Big Brother are reenacting themselves through personalities like Musk and others. Musk's spending to buy Twitter can only be described as defying the imagination. However, the billionaire's objective may not be making profits by reselling it which is the principle ruling such transactions.

No, Musk does not look to be a greedy investor from Wall Street but a man driven by the idea of controlling the world by setting his own laws as to how people should communicate with one another. This looks in a way part and parcel of his drive to conquer and control the space through his Space X project and now he is out to control the human mind, which is itself as complex as the space above us, and satisfy his cravings for control. Money is not here the prime motive. A man with even a billion dollars in his account would do whatever they like in this world for the rest of their lives.

Why a renowned rocket scientist and the maker of electric cars spent so much

money to buy an apparently simple tool for sending and receiving messages in matters of second is indeed baffling. Elon Musk's Space X is doing fine in space exploration area while his electric cars are in great demand while Twitter is buckling under its own worth and weight particularly after its new boss decided to take control of the social media giant and later on changed his mind and brought in a little known woman to head his new acquisition. This rather demonstrated the tight hold social media tools have on our imagination while their growth seems to know no restraint or any sign of slowing down.

Why Musk wanted to take control of Twitter might be another story in its own right since the transaction took place at a not so ideal moment in world business when inflation is increasingly becoming a global economic menace. Musk's decision may however be explained by his recent obsession with communication technology as a mover and shaker of global culture and society as a tool of influence in politics and society. Musk may also have a hidden ambition to one day use his money and technological powers to seek the highest executive post in US politics.

However, Musk has another more philanthropist or altruistic objective at the back of his mind. In a statement he made following the transfer of Twitter to his growing business empire, Musk said that, "He is buying Twitter to help humanity." The same sources, quoted the billionaire as saying that Mr. Musk did not buy the firm to "make more money. I did to try to help humanity whom I love." Musk's claim may be disputable as some online publications have denounced through their articles. As they often put it, the driving force for Musk to spend so much to acquire Twitter is pure and simple capitalist profit motive.

Social media tools like Twitter and Facebook have radically changed the way we communicate and the way we entertain ourselves now and in the future. Their advance is irresistible simply because humans are fond of getting in touch with one another and enjoying other forms of entertainments. We are living a kind of futuristic world where culture is undergoing unstoppable metamorphosis while dictating us how we should communicate, dance and sing and watch movies. In this post-modern world of social media ascendancy,

humans are proving that they are before anything else not only Homo sapiens but Homos sapiens with an unstoppable obsession with technology and digital culture.

According to another view, digital culture is so fluid and ever changing that it may not help cultural tendencies to crystallize for the long run. A recent article on the Internet entitled "Digital Culture and Social Media" says that, "The only constant in digital culture is change which may sound clichéd, but the underlying ICT structure s shift so often that it can be difficult for cultural trends to take hold." The same article goes on to highlight the fact that "evolving information and communication technologies (ICTs) can influence the mass media and contribute to social and cultural change in the process."

If the acquisition of Twitter by Elon Musk may not represent a "revolution" the social media environment in many African countries that are already adopting it on a grand scale. Many articles are circulating on the internet describing the beneficial consequences of digital media on African politics, economics and societies. According to one of those articles, entitled, Mainstreaming African Digital Cultures, Practices and Emerging Forms of Citizen Engagement, "On the political front, the direct interactions between citizens and politicians visa social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are unprecedented. The interactions have broken deep-seated political barriers and the traditional culture of fear associated with publicly challenging and confronting the political elite has been deflated, albeit in dispersed digital spaces. Equally, civil society institutions and special interest groups are galvanizing and increasingly devoting more time and resources to virtual deliberative forums."

Another article entitled Digital Media and Globalization maintains that, "Globalization on the hand is the continuation and expansion of Western imperialism. It is a fresh phase of re-colonization African societies which attempts to continue Western linguistic heritage and literacy canons at the expense of African indigenous language and literature. Globalization tends to diminish the value of cultural practices of Africa. The culture of the developed economy has obviously taken over the local culture..."

Science & Technology

ETRSS-1 celebrates its third year in space, continues providing service

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

Ethiopia celebrates the launching of the third year of its first ever satellite, ETRSS-1, to the space. On 20 December 2019, Ethiopia launched its first remote sensing satellite to the space named ETRSS-1 and marked December 20 as Ethiopia's Space Science Day. The day is commemorated annually in Ethiopia and used to create awareness about the space science sector for the people especially the younger generation.

ETRSS-1 makes Ethiopia the 70th country in the world and the tenth country in Africa to launch a satellite to the space and own a satellite. The 70 kilogram ETRSS-1 is a civil earth observation satellite aimed to provide data for government and research institutions to monitor the environment. In addition, it was aimed to help weather pattern predictions for agricultural production, to develop drought early warning mechanism, to conduct forestry management and to manage mining activities by using the information gained from the satellite.

The satellite was launched after it was developed by 21 Ethiopian scientists in collaboration with China Academy of Space Technology based on the agreement between the governments of Ethiopia and China. After the satellite was launched, the control, operation and maintenance activities were fully operated by Ethiopian experts in the sector based in Entoto Observatory and Space Science Research Center, found near in Addis Ababa.

Space Science and Geospatial Institute of Ethiopia this week commemorated space day and the third year anniversary of the launching of ETRSS-1 with the motto of "Thank You ETRSS-1". Similarly, the institute also celebrated the annual Geographic Information System (GIS) day parallel to the space science event.

Speaking at the opening session of the twin events, Space Science and Geospatial Institute (SSGI) Director General, Abdisa Yilma stated that ETRSS-1 was launched three years ago with the plan of providing the planned service for two and half years. Abdisa added that though the satellite was sent to the space to provide service for 30 months, beyond the planed period, the satellite is continuing its usual operation and providing services even after six months of the target plan.

The Director General stated that ETRSS-1 laydown a milestone and became an eye-opener in Ethiopia's space science sector. It contributes and continues contributing a lot in technology transfer and in creating capable and skilled human resource in the sector. In addition, the service it provides also helps the country's economy in many ways. "ETRSS-1 has special contribution in the Ethiopian space science sector,

as Explorer-1 to U.S.A, Sputnik-1 to Russia and Dang Fang Hong-1 to China, ETRSS-1 is the first historic satellite to Ethiopia. The satellite is an eye-opener in the space science sector and plays a great role in image building in addition to its economic benefits," Abdisa stated.

ETRSS-1 stimulates the space science sector development in Ethiopia. Beyond the services it provides, the parallel benefits of the satellite especially in creating capable manpower in the space sector is very crucial. The experience Ethiopian scientists' gain from ETRSS-1 is helpful to develop the country's space science sector. It helps to develop satellite design, operation and maintenance for Ethiopian experts and to prepare for ETRSS-2, he noted.

"Originally, the major duty of ETRSS-1 was gathering information and delivering the gathered data to the center; it achieved a lot in this regard," Abdisa stated, adding that "based on the information received from ETRSS-1, different applications were developed to find solutions to modernize things." For him, the information delivered by ETRSS-1 was helpful for agriculture, for water resource management application development, for tourism sector and other activities. In addition, the raw data played significant role for higher institution researchers in different fields.

"So far, based on the information gained from ETRSS-1, different applications were launched and started functioning especially in tourism and water resource management. Recently, we launched 'Visit Ethiopia' application jointly with Ministry of Tourism to promote the tourist sites easily through application. Similarly, a mobile application was developed and launched to promote the South Omo and Gamo tourism sites and memorandum of understanding was signed between SSGI and Gamo Zone tourism office," the director general reiterated.

Similarly, the information from ETRSS-1 was used in the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) during the water reservation and in cleaning the forest to prepare the land for the reservoir. It helped to identify and predict the level of the land the water would cover after the filling.

Hence, for Abdisa, the data received from ETRSS-1 was used to agriculture, urban development, road works, land resource management, water resource management, forest protection and tourism sector. The satellite also contributes in supporting the geospatial industry in exploring, discovering and accessing geographic information system (GIS).

During the last three years, Ethiopian space science experts have kept the the satellite's health and they are operating

As to the state minister, as Ethiopia is striving to modernize its services using the information communication technology (ICT), the space science is crucial in supporting and accelerating the country's development journey. In this regard, ETRSS-1 becomes an eye-opener in the sector, she added.

"Ethiopia launches National Digital Transformation Strategy to transform the digital sector which is also critical to transform the overall economy and service provision," Huria noted. She added that investing in science and technology would accelerate Ethiopia's journey to prosperity. Ethiopia has a vision of joining the ranks of the economically prosperous African countries, Huria stated adding that to realize this vision, it is critical to exploit the comparative advantage Ethiopia has in all sectors.

As to her, the space science sector is not a luxury investment; the sector plays a crucial role in accelerating the fight against poverty and helps the journey towards development and prosperity. "Though Ethiopia joined the space sector lately, we have to use the latecomers advantage to develop our presence in the space and to exploit the benefits from the space science sector," the state minister stressed.

Majority of the Ethiopian population comprises youths who can easily understand new technologies and the developments of science. Hence, it is important to promote and support the efforts and innovations in science and technology sectors. Ethiopia is home to high youth population and as latecomers to join the space science sector which gives an opportunity to learn from others, it is important to accelerate the development of the space science sector. To develop the space science sector, in addition to its economic contribution, the experience from ETRSS-1 would help to accelerate the sector's development journey.

Entoto Observatory and Space Science Research Center is playing a great role in developing Ethiopia's space science sector. Especially, following the launch of ETRSS-1, the sector attracts the younger generation and innovational activities are stimulated across schools and research centers.

Ethiopia is home to high youth population and as latecomers to join the space science sector which gives an opportunity to learn from others, it is important to accelerate the development of the space science sector

it successfully. "This experience helped us to develop satellite designs and to start preparations for ETRSS-2," Abdisa noted adding that "for all these multidimensional services, we thank ETRSS-1 during its third year launching commemoration."

On her part, Innovation and Technology State Minister, Huria Ali stated that science, technology and innovation are becoming priority sectors of the government to realize the country's comprehensive prosperity. As to her, space science would play irreplaceable role in supporting the journey to prosperity by supporting every sector in developing new applications to modernize services.

Following the 2018 reform, Ethiopia accords due attention to science, technology and new innovations so as to modernize all sectors. The historic remote sensing satellite, ETRSS-1 launched a year after the reform and the space science sector are stimulated following this development.

Society

A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

Reading is the foundation to create a rational generation that is capable of alleviating conflicts through reason. There is no area where man's life is not touched by reading. Be it in political affairs, social arenas or economic activities man and books have strong attachments. Several scholars have explained the power of reading in different ways. For instance, Margaret Fuller, a 19th century American journalist, has been quoted as saying, "Today a reader, tomorrow a leader."

Indeed, reading is all about leading oneself and the others as well. A person that reads leads himself/herself and others too. Reading is the most powerful weapon man has got to unlock the gates of wisdom. By taking this into consideration on its 6th round Reading Week, Addis Ababa City Administration Culture, Arts and Tourism Bureau said that it has finalized all the preparations to hold a three day reading event. The Reading Week, which is going to happen at Abrehot Grand Library, starting from December 30-January 1st, is expected to bring several readers, writers, book retailers and other stakeholders.

Culture Division Deputy Head of Bureau Asfaw Legesse said, during the Reading Week all stakeholders: scholars, book retailers, readers, researchers and authors will participate to create awareness and share knowledge on the values of reading to the nation as well as to individual readers. According to him, using the theme "Reading for Reason" the bureau uses all options to create awareness on the significance of reading to create a reasonable generation that cares for itself as well as for the country as a whole.

Asfaw also said, the Reading Week will also serve as a podium to create healthy competition among students, writers and children. "Using the event, students will measure their reading culture, writing talents, aptitudes and others. Whenever we talk about healthy completion we are talking about measuring an individual based on the books S/he reads. Whenever a person prepares himself/herself for an examination or to show the writing skill S/he has got, reading is the best parameter to evaluate one's capabilities. In this regard, 'Reading for Reason' week plays a significant role in measuring potential."

Reading books or listening to the wise words of elders is the secret behind most of earthly wisdom. In this regard, listening to elders or reading books builds a generation that can reason out for every problem. According to Asfaw, the Reading Week will also have a significant role in the area of quality education. The more students give their time to reading the more they will develop readiness to face challenges and become reasonable generations.

He also said, organizing such kinds of events have also a key role in bringing the society and books into one podium. Whenever there is a book fair or reading



week, there is a trend to visit libraries and exchange ideas. In this regard, the Reading Week is expected to bring different members of the society into one place.

"Reading which is accompanied by reason always ends up with excellence. For instance, we always hear children wishing to become a doctor, an engineer or a pilot. However, this wish will not come into reality if it is not supported by reading. Whenever there is a reason, there is a goal. Whenever there is a goal, there should also be an input to support that goal. In this regard, reading is an input to achieve our vision. Reading is a visa that takes readers to almost everywhere. Depending on the reason behind reading a particular book, the person can go wherever he/she wishes to go. In other words, reading is a ticket that takes us to our destination."

In his message to the society, Asfaw said that reading culture should not be a onetime agenda or confined to an event that should be marked in times of book fair or other program. It should be a day to day activity. For this very reason, families, educational institutions, NGOs and government institutions have a responsibility in nurturing the culture of reading among the society.

A society that reads could develop a culture of discussion, research and reason out. In this regard, reading should not be taken as an option but as a must action. Whenever we give priority to reading we can consider ourselves civilized. "As the body longs for food when it gets hungry, our mind also longs for knowledge. For this reason, we should develop the culture of reading as part of our life. Reading should not only be

our culture in exam seasons but also every season."

Indeed, reading is not a one-time agenda that should be conducted for the sake of a book fair or to promote newly published books. It should be part and parcel of our daily life. As proven by research, people who read books are better informed than people who do not and are consequently better able to hold their own in society. They are more aware of their surroundings and can envisage themselves more easily in other people's places. They are more capable of reflecting on their own conduct and on that of others. Reading books lets them acquire a wide range of skills that also make them stand out on the work floor.

In fact, reading books even helps make them more healthy: firstly because people who read books are better informed about topics such as health risks and access to care, and secondly because reading books has a positive effect on the brain. Finally, and not unimportantly: reading books is an exceptionally pleasant pastime that adds to individuals' happiness and sense of well-being. But where do these effects come from? How is it possible that you can develop these skills by reading books? And why is it important for society?

Over the years, numerous studies have been carried out into the impact of reading books from various scientific disciplines such as literature, psychology, neuropsychology and economics. Combining a large number of such studies together creates a clear overview of the effect that reading books has. The analysis of the available data keeps revealing four themes: being a good member of society and a good employee, health, and a sense of meaningfulness. In this regard, Reading Week, which is organized Addis Ababa City Administration Culture, Arts and Tourism Bureau, is expected to create awareness among readers and other concerned bodies.

Reading books or listening to the wise words of elders is the secret behind most of earthly wisdom



This is Ethiopia

Celebrate Genna at Lalibela!

BY TEWODROS KASSA

Lalibela is one of the leading international tourists' destinations in Ethiopia. The Rock Hewn Churches of Lalibela makes it a significant tourist attraction in the country. This tourist destination is known for its numerous religious pilgrims throughout the year. However, a larger number of Christian worshipers get together is seen annually during the Genna (Ethiopian Christmas) celebration that takes place with various wonderful religious festivities of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church Priests and Deacons.

Visiting Lalibela during the Genna holiday gives an erasable memory that captivates the spiritual life of everyone. Recently, the Lalibela town administration announced that preparations have been finalized to welcome over 1.8 million tourists for the celebration of Genna (Christmas) in the area.

Lalibela Town Deputy Mayor Head of Town's Tourism Office, Deacon Addise Demiss told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the town has concluded its preparation to serve the expected tourists thereby boost the tourism movement which was devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic and conflict in the area for over three years.

In doing so, he mentioned that around eight major committees were formed to better facilitate the celebration. While ensuring peace and security, beautifying and cleaning up the town being their major role, he said the committees have been on stand since December to safeguarding peace in the surrounding.

Similarly, over 45 hotels have been ready for the accommodation service that the tourists may need. He added that for the language constraint that the tourists might encounter while attending the actual celebration; the town has collaborated with tour operators to fill the gap.

Moreover, a work force that is in charge of inspecting illegal trading or traders who tries to gain unnecessary profit out of the tourists is organized adding that discussion were held with traders with hope of sensitizing them of the situation.

Besides its religious and societal benefits, the celebration had a huge contribution in enhancing the economic gains as well as stimulating the tourism. According to him, some 141 million Birr is expected to be generated from this year's celebration.

According to him, the town's economic movement is nothing without its tourism. With the outburst of the corona virus pandemic and the conflict, the livelihoods in the area were hit hard by the shattered economy that followed the aforementioned



problems. Prior to those years, the number of tourist that used to arrive at the stonerock-hewn churches was over 39 thousand and an amount of 260 million Birr used to be secured.

Reminding that huge amount of destruction has occurred and there is decline in the number of tourists, he noted that now that the infrastructure is rebuilt and facilitation has been done, the town expects to welcome 1.8 million tourists and secure 141 million Birr.

Debre Roha Saint Lalibela stone-hewn churches Administrator, Komos Aba Tsege Selassie Mezegebu noted beside the preparation on religious aspect, works are underway with concerned bodies with regard to accommodation, beautification and cleaning.

Furthermore, spaces are also being prepared to serve participants who do not have reservation in hotels to stay in the resident's location as well as in the compounding of the churches. A group of volunteers would also help out desperate people during the celebration, he mentioned.

He finally urged Ethiopians to visit the place given its age-long and historic value that adds to its religious architecture.

On his part, Heritage Protection and Tourism Development Department Coordinator with Lalibela Town Administration Culture and Tourism Bureau, Mandefro Tadesse, said that the town is preparing itself to celebrate the festival impressively. Lalibela has finalized preparations to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ (Genna) holiday, on January 7th, 2023.



Photo: Hitelema Tafesse

In doing so, various committees are set up and the youth are given the training to receive guests and facilitate transport, water, and food as well as to make tourists aware of the town and its environs. As the faithful and tourists did not attend and celebrate the day as required over the last 3 years, it is necessary to celebrate the upcoming Christmas in a very glamorous way with guests. Some 45 hotels are ready to welcome and host the guests who come to the town to celebrate the holiday.

Ethiopian Christmas is marked after forty-three days of fasting. January 7th is regarded as a special epoch as it is also the birthday of King Lalibela, who built the historic and mesmerizing Lalibela churches. Training has also been offered for priests, youths, and other holiday coordinators to celebrate the festival in a good manner.

The coordinator also pointed out that efforts are being made to celebrate the Christmas holiday widely and restore the tourism activities that have been dwarfed due to conflict and COVID-19. "There is no security problem and we have discussed it with the security bodies so that the festival can be celebrated peacefully and guests can return safely to where they came from. Over 1.5 million guests are expected to celebrate Christmas on the spot".

In sum, millions of local and international tourists flow to Lalibela to celebrate the colorful Genna festival that takes place annually with the huge gatherings of the Christianity religion followers. Celebrating Genna at Lalibela gives special feeling. Come and visit Ethiopia and celebrate the wonderful Genna (Ethiopian Christmas) festival at the Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela.