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Ethio-India longstanding ties invigorated in various frontiers: Ambassador

BY ZEKARIAS WOLDEMARIAM

ADDIS ABABA – The 75- year strong diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and India have been invigorated in the fields of education, investment and defense, according to the country’s ambassador.

Addressing the media in an event held recently to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Ethio-India Diplomatic Relations, the Ambassador Robert Shetkintong said the two countries have enjoyed strong partnership in the education sector that Ethiopia is among the top recipients of India’s scholarship. “Ethiopians are among the largest groups of students from Africa studying in India and out of the 55 scholarships provided by our ministry of foreign affairs, the 48 were in PhD programs.”

Noting his visit to 25 public universities in Ethiopia, the ambassador highlighted that additional scholarship, in particular in the post-graduate level, will be provided to Ethiopian students.

India has substantial business presence in Ethiopia and 650 Indian companies have been registered by the Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC) of which 300 are



operational. “I myself have visited 160 plus Indian factories, most of them are in and around Addis, about 100 in Oromia. We also have about 12 to 15 factories in Debre Berhan. And the biggest banana farm as well as the biggest and probably the only sugar factory owned by a private investor

also belong to India.”

According to EIC, India has a five billion USD investment portfolio in Ethiopia of which companies with the aggregate capital of three billion are on the ground. The companies have generated 75,000 jobs here.

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Foreign relations enhancement paves strong ties with lending institutions: Expert

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA- The improvement of Ethiopia’s international relations will strengthen and facilitate communication and cooperation with other countries and lending institutions, a noted economist said.

Dawit Hayeso (Ph.D.), an economics Professor at Dilla University, told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the improvement of Ethiopia's international relations will strengthen its communication and cooperation with other countries and lending institutions.

Noting Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s discussion with leaders of financial institutions is of great importance, the academician indicated that recent aid



released to Ethiopia will have paramount importance from an economic, social, and political point of view.

The World Bank and the IMF are a reference to other financial institutions and since lending organizations operate watching the



actions of the two giants, the loan released to Ethiopia will create a partnership and message for other international lending entities.

Since large international financial

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Mohammed Ali

U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit precludes strong Ethiopia-U.S. ties

BY TAMERU REGASA

ADDIS ABABA- Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s (Ph.D.) participation in the recently-held U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit would have a paramount significance to

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Ethio telecom eyes South Sudanese market

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – A delegation led by ethio telecom CEO Frehiwot Tamru discussed with South Sudan’s various stakeholders on a wide range of issues particularly on ways for the operator to explore the latter’s telecom market.

The ethio telecom delegation also discussed with officials from South Sudan Ministry

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Boosting access to FP to improve socioeconomic well-being of families, communities

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Forty political parties agree to support Dialogue Commission

BY TAMERU REGASA

ADDIS ABABA- The National Dialogue Commission announced that 40 political parties have agreed to work in collaboration with the commission in its efforts to address Ethiopia's atrocious problems.

The commission announced that 40 political parties and different social classes have been playing a constructive role to achieve a fruitful National Dialogue in the country.

The commission discussed with social media actors yesterday concerning ways of participating in National Dialogue.

Speaking at the discussion event Chief of the Commission Professor Mesfin Araya said that, the media have been playing a constructive role starting from the establishment of the commission to now. The commission will facilitate environments so as to enhance the participation of media in the dialogue process.

He underscored that the commission



will organize a strong communication department in the nearest future to enhance the participation of media in the dialogue process.

Commissioner Tegegnework Getu, member of the commission on his part said that, the commission has been operating hopefully to solve disputes from their sources in

the country through conducting inclusive National Dialogue.

Explaining the independence of the commission the commissioner said that, the commission is independent from government and political influences adding that up to now nothing can distort the independence of the commission.

The commissioner said that, the commission has been working in collaboration with different stakeholders adding that even the commission is willing to work in collaborate with independent international consultants to get different inputs.

He stressed that, the commission wants to involve every agent including extremist groups that want to join the dialogue.

Sharing the above idea Commissioner Melaku Woldemariam also said that, the public is the decisive agent to achieve successful dialogue.

Explaining the benefit of the dialogue he said that, the dialogue will pave the way for all social classes found in the country adding that in the country some social classes are organized while others are marginalized. As the right to hear is human right all these classes will get equal opportunity to participate in the dialogue.

The commission called on all citizens of the country to play a constructive role to achieve successful National Dialogue.

Company concedes what Ethiopians did for Korea

BY YESUF ENDRIS

Taking what Ethiopians paid for the sovereignty of Korea shouldering the peacekeeping mission into account, a Korean company has contributed to the step to help assist the family of Korean War veterans as well as other vulnerable segments of the society.

It is well remembered that the Kagnev Battalion of Ethiopian soldiers' unit fought and heroically served the people of Korea under United Nations Command during the Korean War in the 1950s. Many members of the battalion wounded and sacrificed their lives that time, whereas many others left their family members with no endowment.

After several decades, Korean technology company, LG Electronics has financed Habitat for Humanity Ethiopia (HFHE), and recently handed over new houses constructed for vulnerable residents of Addis Ababa, and some of them are Korean War veteran family members.

Tekalign Tadesse, a son of the Korean War veteran Ethiopian soldier, who is also PWDs said he was living in a dusty house made of plastic sheets and tattered cartons for many years.



Remembering that, his father was one of the Ethiopian Soldiers Unit during the Korean War, he said, "I believe and have now understood that my father was dead for a reason. The Korean company, LG Electronics in partnership with Habitat for Humanity Ethiopia lifted me up from that dusty house," he said.

Tekalign is a father of two. He along with his family members was distressed due to their house condition.

Elfinesh Herpa, an old woman, whose husband was a member of the Korean War Veteran, has also recounted that her life was so miserable since her husband died.

She and her six family members were

living in a substandard house that caused them to experience an enigmatic life. She said, "Indeed, we were in trouble because of the absence of a safe house. . Habitat for Humanity Ethiopia along with LG Electronics of Korea provided decent houses for vulnerable groups and I would wholeheartedly thank these organizations."

During the key handover ceremony, LG Electronics Ethiopia Office Country Director, Seung Hwan Yang said that, Ethiopia and Republic of Korea have long standing diplomatic relations and such a mesmerizing tie and cooperation would further blossom."

Handing over the houses symbolizes

the restoration of dignity to families and manifests the notion of a caring Koreans to Ethiopians, he added.

Approached by the Ethiopian Press Agency, Habitat for Humanity Ethiopia-HFHE Interim National Director, Alem Shumiye on his part said that, HFHE has been working in providing housing to vulnerable groups in Ethiopia for the last 30 years.

Habitat for Humanity Ethiopia is implementing several projects which are fundamentally focusing on alleviating housing and sanitation problems. Nowadays, we are on the second phase of the three year project, he noted.

Including eight houses, HFHE has constructed six communal and individual kitchens, and a 345 meter drainage ditch has been constructed in the second phase of 'Improving the life of families in Addis Ababa through Housing and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Interventions, it was stated.

As a national office of Habitat for Humanity International, HFHE started work in 1993 through mortgage housing which later diversified to integrate vulnerable group housing, WASH and recently to Disaster Risk Reduction Response (DR3) and resilience building interventions.

Ethiopia secures over 41 mln USD from meat export

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA- Over 41 million dollars has been earned from meat products that have been exported to foreign markets over the last five months, so said Ethiopian Agricultural Authority.

Export Slaughter house Inspection and Certification Director with the Authority Ayalew Shumetie (PhD) said that, over the

last five months, 41 million 800 thousand dollars was secured from exporting meat products. The income was obtained by supplying 5 thousand 900 tons of meat products to foreign market.

As to him, the Authority is working to supply 28 thousand tons of meat products to the foreign market this fiscal year, and it is working to earn over 150 million USD. Besides, work is being done to massively

supply meat products to the market keeping the required quality.

Dubai, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait are among the countries where meat products are widely exported, he stated.

"Efforts are being done to export meat products to China, Indonesia, and European countries, too. With the current capacity, 200 thousand tons of meat products can be supplied to the foreign market every year,

and the governments working hard along this line."

Furthermore, a lot is done to meet the high demand for meat in the country. From this point of view, the *Lemat Turufat*, which has recently started, will be of great importance in filling the gap.

It was learned that there are 70.2 million livestock, 42.9 million sheep, eight million camels, and 52 million goats in Ethiopia.

Firms keen to see digital Ethiopia soon

• Sign MoU to develop technologies

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA- Africom Technologies and Ashewa Technology Solutions stated that promoting the technology sector would be significantly useful in achieving the goal of creating digital Ethiopia in 2025.

Speaking at the event to sign a memorandum of understanding between the two entities yesterday, Ethio ICT Park General Manager, Surafel Shimels said the country is applying information technology pillars nationwide to achieve the plan of making digital Ethiopia in 2025.

As to Surafel, these two giant technology companies are jointly working to help the country achieve the vision of information

technology plan thereby ensuring digital Ethiopia within the shortest time possible.

He said, "Jointly undertaking activities would also enable the country to create huge job opportunities, foster market connection, transfer knowledge in the nation and back parks in their effort."

Ashewa Technology Solutions, Chief Executive Officer, Daniel Bekele said, "We are endeavoring to ease challenges and make society's life better. We are working on 13 types of latest technology areas and in a bid to transform the manual working culture to a sophisticated one towards reinvigorating the national economy."

"As working together swells the capacity of discharging responsibilities, we have to

amalgamate efforts to bring about real impact on societal life. To this end, we will apply rural inclusive technology interventions across the nation. Besides, the partnership will bring tangible change in technology solutions and make the rural localities accessible to technology."

The companies signed to work together in the areas of doing research together, jointly provide training, share experience and finance resource mobilization," he added.

Africom Technologies Chief Executive Officer, Bahru Zeinu on his part said that, companies, the private sector and government are expected to work hard towards digitizing and connecting each other as this move plays a great role in making them fruitful.

"We have developed various software technologies and sent them to U.S. Africa, Europe and Asia apart from focusing on business consultancy service locally. We have to some extent soothed the impact of shortage of foreign currency in the nation since we have developed the new software in Ethiopia."

As to him, they are working together to ensure digital Ethiopia is cognizant of the fact that solitary move leads nowhere and doesn't help someone hit the set target.

"We have planned to expand the best practices to foreign countries in the years to come," he added. It was also learnt that Africom Technologies was established 18 years back by five persons.

U.S.-Africa Leaders...'

Ethiopia in the social, economic and political frontiers.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Assistant Professor of Diplomacy at the Ethiopian Civil Service University Mohammed Ali said that western powers in particular the U.S. took the side of the TPLF during the two-year conflict. As a result of some global powers unconstructive approach, Ethiopia's diplomatic relations with the west was largely problematic.

Prime Minister Abiy's appearance in the summit; however, attested the change in the course and manifests the improvement of the diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and the U.S.

Explaining the benefit of the visit, Mohammed highlighted that the Premier's discussion with President Joe Biden and leaders of international financial organizations would facilitate immense flow of loan and grant to Ethiopia. Accordingly, the World Bank has approved a 745 million USD grant to vulnerable Ethiopians.

"As Ethiopia is a great country in terms of population size and geopolitical

significance, western powers are expected to work collaboratively for the common good."

Ethiopia sets favorable business climate and opening up the banking sector for foreign investors and has been taking other important steps that that could potentially attract western and other countries companies to come and invest here.

Apart from the ongoing economic reform, the Ethiopian government is expected to strengthen the deployment of qualified diplomats that would ultimately improve the country's multifaceted relations with the Developed World, the academician recommended.

Rooted in this recognition that Africa is a key geopolitical player, President Biden invited leaders from across the African continent to Washington, DC on December 13-15, 2022 for the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit. President Biden believes U.S. collaboration with African leaders, as well as civil society, business, Diaspora, women, and youth leaders, is essential to unlocking the potential of this decisive decade.



Ethio telecom delegation received warm welcome in South Sudan

Ethio telecom...

of Information, Communication, and Postal Services, the National Communication Authority as well as other pertinent agencies on ways in doing business. "On the bilateral discussion, the South Sudanese authorities have appreciated the initiative of ethio telecom for exploring the telecom market in South Sudan and affirmed their readiness to provide all necessary support to the operator in this endeavor."

Speaking on the occasion, Frehiwot affirmed the company's readiness to share its rich experience in telecom infrastructure expansion and management and its success in ensuring services price affordability to the government

of South Sudan.

By the same token, the ethio telecom delegation also held a discussion with the head of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia and Ethiopian Airlines on their business activities and experiences in South Sudan during the visiting time.

Furthermore, a strategic partnership agreement was signed with Tele Mobile South Sudan Limited Company in the areas of international internet gateways (communication line), telecom infrastructure expansion and telecom services provision as well as other related services, according to the information obtained from ethio telecom official page.

Ethio-India...

In its endeavor to make Ethiopia a manufacturing hub, the government has formulated viable policies and strategies that have proved successful in attracting immense investment across the globe including India.

"While an Indian company named Glocare has been operational in Kilinto Pharmaceutical Industrial Park, the second firm called Africure is expected to commence production in the coming months."

Emperor Haile Selassie I who visited India in the 1960s was impressed by the Indian Military Academy and requested the establishment of a similar institution in Ethiopia. The Harar Military Academy was a replica of the Indian Military Academy whose first three commanders were from India.

"I think the last Indian instructors in the

academy were in 2011 and hopefully the day will come again and we will see Indian instructors here soon."

Ambassador Shetkintong continued: "India has assumed the G20 Presidency under the theme of One Earth, One family, One future, and this is a call made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, because today, when we look at issues that concern and affect all of us including environment and terrorism should be addressed globally.

People from Africa, Asia, the developing world, and the global south should be part of that consultation. So, if the world looks at issues from its own perspective, in the sense that from the perspective of Ethiopia from the perspective of India, then only it could be really a comprehensive answer to those pressing problems, he emphasized.

Foreign relations...

institutions are used as insurance for small financial institutions, there will be more organizations participating in the reconstruction.

According to him, the biggest starting point for economic, social, and political ties is international relations. Where there is peaceful international cooperation and relations, there will be peaceful political relations; this will effectively strengthen economic cooperation.

"As political and economic cooperation is strengthened, social interactions are getting stronger, and the bilateral discussions held by the Ethiopian government at the sideline of the U.S. - African Leaders Summit are important. The relations that have been observed recently will strengthen the economic ties of Ethiopia-U.S. and open the door for lending financial institutions."

As the U.S. is the world's largest economy, its influence on international financial institutions is high and the current bilateral relationship will improve the credit and aid system. The incoming loans are of great significance in terms of easing the forex crunch.

Since the rebuilding of the damaged infrastructure in Ethiopia requires high costs, lenders and aid organizations should provide a great deal of assistance. It cannot be built in a short period without the help of international financial institutions.

As a result of the war, Ethiopia has not been able to get the foreign currency it deserves, so the support will help a stable forex market and will also go a long way in reducing the cost of living. The economy can be made to return to its normal activity and register its growth, the expert remarked.

Opinion

Intensified costs of living: Driving forces, relieves

BY GETACHEW MINAS

The repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian/Ukraine war have intensified the global cost-of-living crisis. This has led to extreme hardship for the poor people of the least developing countries, including Ethiopia. The crisis is even deeper than expected in Ethiopia due to the civil war that destabilized the people living near, around and in the battle zones. These people have suffered from high costs of food, housing, health, education, fuel and transport services. These costs have accelerated the vulnerability and reduced the welfare of the poor. It is crucial and obligatory to explore the different risks that people face and how they will be confronted and compounded by the cost-of-living crisis. Observers may focus on the impacts of the crisis on various parts of the country. Years of conflicts have brought the worst outcomes for those with the lowest incomes and for the unemployed. The recurrence of COVID-19, civil wars and the high cost of living has rendered Ethiopians war fatigued.

The cost of living is still steadily rising as a result of internal and external factors. Imports, including raw materials, inputs, finished goods and services, carry imported inflation. This is reflected in the cost build up of goods and services produced domestically using “imported” inputs. Imported goods and services are also major carriers of global inflation into Ethiopia. Rising domestic prices “excluded” the low income earners from markets where they used to purchase basic goods and services. The most affected parts of the society are those poor families with large number of unemployed relatives residing with them. There is no social security system that provides unemployment benefits in Ethiopia. Thus, the burden of rising cost of living is heavier on these families. However, they devise strategies in which they feed in rotation, each family member missing one meal a day. The meal is not fully nutritious and causes all kinds of vulnerability to diseases. Thanks to the school feeding system in Ethiopia, families are now partly relieved from the burden of the cost of living.

The costs of essential foods are on the rise. At the same time, wages are “not” rising proportionally. Real wages without bonuses fell due to inflation. Pay deals between employers and workers will not necessarily match the rising costs of living. This increases the burden for disadvantaged groups in the developing countries. This disparity becomes clear years after the initial emergence of COVID-19 and social conflicts. This has inevitably caused a shift in labor relations. In the labor market, where skilled workers receive more significant pay increases, unskilled workers suffered from rising cost of living. Some workers, particularly those engaged in the private sector, faced less flexibility, insecure pay, and heightened difficulty. This indicates that many will struggle to escape low-skilled, underpaid work unless employers invest in skills training. If total costs are already higher than revenues of enterprises, there is indeed a cause for grave concern at country level.

The burden on households facing high food and energy costs increases steeply. Low-

income families with incomes below poverty line may not survive without sufficient food. These families are also unable to pay water and electricity bills. Those who are lucky enough to reside in government houses have to struggle to pay rents that are very low compared to those rents charged by private owners of urban houses. These citizens are the most at risk in urban communities. Other vulnerable individuals are those engaged in the transport sector, mainly truck and taxi owners, who take full responsibility of the costs of vehicles, fuel, maintenance, and insurance, and thus absorb the brunt of rising cost of living. Included in this sector are those who depend on transport vehicles for their living. All transport operators, of course, transfer their expenses on users of their services. These users come from all parts of the society, including the rural ones.

The rising cost of living, which occurred on a foundation of precarious economic conditions, suggests that policies related to tax and debt should be designed and applied in a manner that controls the cost of living. Tax revenues should be used to address the rising cost of living in the country. These revenues may be used to issues of demand and supply in the economy operating under normal circumstances. Peace is crucial for the enhanced productivity that meets the economic demands of all Ethiopians. Without it, there is no market to meet the demands of the people. A share in the “Peace Dividend” is the ultimate goal of a society immersed in civil wars, civil strife and infantile ethnic skirmishes. All of these have depressed production and productivity, which resulted in closure of enterprises, dispersal of workers, unemployment, poverty and ultimately a call for “food aid.” Hunger in the land of plenty is the long-standing intrigue of the Western Whiteman to render Ethiopians submissive to his policy camouflaged in aid.

The rise in the cost of living is an opportunity to the so-called donors to permeate and leak into the peaceful society of Ethiopia and create havoc. These intrusions take different forms and masks. One facade of pretense is to “look” sympathetic to the hunger stricken Ethiopians. They supply grain that is dead on arrival, not fit for seedling. Impoverished people, however, do usually thank these donors with evil missions. They want to keep the poor poorer and unable to feed themselves. They become psychologically dependent on aid and do not have the courage to farm and produce for household consumption and for the market. This provides an opportunity for “external” investors who come with a mission of under-developing Ethiopia. As aid dependents, the poor peasants fail to work on their farms as they used to do in the past. This leads to low production and low supply to the market, causing high prices of grain and high cost of living.

The poor urban consumers find it hard to pay for the high market prices of grain. The urban people are also exposed to the “hidden hunger” covered with high cost of living. All these are manifestations of failure to challenge the economic intrigues of foreigners who provide Ethiopia with food aid to discourage domestic production of grain. The country has to suffer from food-deficit, which is a strong sign of failure. This opens the door for foreign donors who generate the age old politics of ethnic conflict. This is used as an excuse for entry

into the country to deliver food-aid to those parts of the country seriously affected by ethnic skirmishes over petty issues. The local clashes are magnified by the media of the donor countries to aggravate rather than solve the problems. Aid is provided to regions where it is not required most. In the process Western investors are encouraged to operate freely in parts of the country where peace has reigned. These investors may not produce to supply the local market that would have minimized the cost of living in the country.

Investors are provided with loans from local banks to expand their businesses at the cost of excluding local investors. Foreign investors are more interested in producing for the external markets. This practice allows for keeping foreign exchange earnings abroad. Ethiopian investors, on the other hand, would produce for local markets to meet the need of the people thereby reducing imported final goods and services. This process, however, is partly dependent on imported inputs that required foreign exchange, which is availed by the local banks and NBE. These financial institutions acquire foreign exchange only when agricultural, industrial, mineral products and electric services are exported to international and regional markets. These sectors are, therefore, producers supplying both the local, regional and global markets and they need closer attention by the leaders of the country. They also provide employment and generate income that may help minimize the cost of living.

Increased production and productivity help in raising the income of the workers. Increased income enhances their economic and social welfare. It also supports those who depend on pension and other social benefits. Of course, these provisions are revised whenever it is necessary to meet the rising cost of living. Those who are separated from their work for various reasons suffer from lack of income to meet the rising cost of living. Temporary employees, for example, may be subjected to instant separation from their jobs. Such dismissal, however, depends on employment contract based on the labor law of a country. In Ethiopia, temporary employees are exposed to the whimsical decision of capricious and impulsive managers or owners of enterprises. Jobseekers that have been unemployed for too long may be forced to accept temporary employment to earn income for covering the rising cost of living.

Workers may continue to suffer from rising cost of living if the size of their families is increasing. Newly born babies are both a blessing and misery to the poor parents who work hard to earn a limited income. Providing nutritious food to babies is as costly as feeding and caring for a grown up person in the family. Workers that are heads of families may suffer from innumerable financial crises. They may be forced to borrow money from individual lenders or access advance payment before pay day is due. Money borrowed from individuals carries interest, which is higher than charged by the banks. It is decided and agreed upon by both the individual lender and borrower, with a short period of repayment. Normally, the individual lenders do not have long process of fund delivery, which is much preferred by borrowers who urgently need money. The sooner the money is availed the better it is, even if it costs more to borrow from private

individual lenders.

In the face of rising cost of living, working to earn income becomes more stressful. The income is wiped out by rising prices of basic necessities, including health services. “Delays” in payments of wages, salaries or other incomes create mental stress on workers. Quality of life is negatively affected with additional costs of goods and services. In particular, patients who need effective and efficient health service delivery may face exorbitant costs of treatment and travel to health centers or hospitals. Inability to work creates delays or lack of periodic income. This leads to cost-cutting solutions that may ultimately be harmful for dependent families. They will be forced to expend less on basic services, consume lesser, and even cancel some essentials. These dire situations reveal that those with health issues are most affected by rising costs.

There is a strong connection between the cost-of-living crisis and the strain on family members. There may be conflicts due to shortage of consumption goods at home. These shortages may lead to abusive tendencies. Rising costs further decrease resources and reduce mobility in search of cheap or freely donated food. Unemployed dependents tend to migrate to an unknown destination. As victims of destitution they may want to escape the reality, which is self-defeating. These persons may join those who suffer from the same calamitous life. They may end up to be beggars in and around churches and mosques. They may even end up as thieves and robbers. They evade or avoid friends and relatives. They also fail to attend holidays, parties and feasts where they fear to meet their acquaintances. They shun or reject successful persons whom they know in childhood or in schools. They tend to hate those who spend money in the face of high cost of living.

Low salaried Ethiopian civil servants are known to accept or take or even force clients to pay them bribes. These “bribes” may be small but help low paid civil servants to shoulder the rising cost of living. Annual increments of wages and salary do not cover the fast rising cost of living. Prices of basic goods increase every quarter if not every month. The vicious circle of rising prices and diminishing quality of life are circulating fast to the dismay of policy makers and impoverished persons. By the time Ethiopian policy makers design new techniques to fight inflation, there is another on the rise. It is really very intriguing for economists who deal with domestic factors that perpetuate high prices of goods and services. As price control mechanism is being designed for domestic products, there appears imported inflation, the sources of which are out of control. The economic struggle is, therefore, two-pronged, internal and external. In this process, some “Merchants of Death,” may be hidden in the Ethiopian public and private sectors, devising high cost of living from which they benefit immensely.

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

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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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Editorial

Peace lovers must reject anti-peace rumors

Now that the federal government and TPLF have reached an agreement to uphold peace all other parties must focus on giving their two cents to foster the ongoing process of ensuring peace. Any effort that deviates from propping up the support to realize the pace agreement will only end up spoiling the gains thus far.

As per the permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) signed in Pretoria, Republic of South Africa, the government is discharging its responsibilities for the normalization of situation in Tigray. Accordingly, the process of resuming services like electricity, telecom and banking has been witnessed by the international community and the media.

Without any need to refer to the witnesses, it is enough to see the statements by TPLF. While most of the statements by TPLF comply with the positive progresses in the region it is common to hear some complaints about shortages, delays and drawbacks.

If at all problems happen in the process of implementation of the terms of the peace agreement there is no need to rush to the conclusion that the problem is created intentionally and blame it on one of the parties. It is much better to look into the matter to discern what is really happening and examine the issues out of good faith and with intent to rectify problems and help resume the peace process.

Indeed any massive undertaking like the one in delivering large amounts of food and medicine to the Tigray region is likely to

pass through ups and downs, like technical procedural ... etc.

It is better to understand the fact that as much as the peace deal has pleased millions of Ethiopian people, there are also scores who are displeased as they have lost their expectations of evil outcomes out of the war.

Hence no matter how the implementation of the peace agreement progresses smoothly, they are not likely to reflect any positive remarks about it. They will do whatever they can to pick a little failure or draw back and apply it for their propaganda. It would not be amazing if they exploit every opportunity like this to serve their malicious interest. As long as their objective is always to find means to spoil the peace and run their interest, they are likely to watch for such incidents or kernels of information. After all, their entire objective is to spoil the peace at any cost.

However, those who expect to build peace at any cost should not go along with them. How do entities with opposite objectives share the same route? How can those who want to build peace extract information from those who feed the ones who want to destroy peace? Obviously, peace lovers and partners should focus on their own objectives and choose reliable sources of information. They have to keep in mind that those with vested interest are likely to twist information towards their own benefits.

Therefore, those partners in peace should stop collaborating with the anti-peace forces, and make their decisions and stances free from unreliable information.

Opinion

How long should human beings be bargained?

BY MENGESHA AMARE

One Thursday morning after getting off a taxi, I was heading to Shiromeda, Addis Ababa, on the way to Entoto to drop a document holding a personal affair, a job application I suspect, of a friend of mine, at a small shop adjacent to his home.

Taking a walk towards Holy trinity church there, I went along with my neighbor, Ango Kensa, when I was living a neighborhood commonly called *Dorzie Sefer*.

How are you Ango? How is life treating you these days? I asked him.

I'm good! He subtly replied.

What makes you like this, I have known you since long back, and you are not a person like this? What happens to you, man? I requested.

I am being seriously looked for and even I don't right now feel comfort. He replied.

What makes you offended like this, why don't you tell me, or is it quite confidential to be told to others?

"As everyone knows, it has these days become common garnering benefits out of human beings taking advantage of their weak side of the economic aspect. It has also been a habitual action to trade on human beings as people who are vulnerable to trafficking including those who are experiencing lack of social safety and exposed to a range of manmade and natural disasters or political instability," he said.

You are telling me the obvious! So what!?

The police have been tipped as I have brought a number of children from rural areas and engage them in looming and even as I have sent girls abroad. What can I do? I don't have any job to win daily bread other than indulging myself in such an act. Put yourself under my shoes and tell me what you are going to do.

With no way of supporting myself, my family, parents and as I have fallen prey to schemes to exploit hope, training or better opportunities to generate income, I have unintentionally been a forerunner of this modern-day slavery.

I see, there might be problems especially these days when everything is skyrocketing and citizens are given hard time in due course of leading even a subsistence life.

Yes, of course, but I shouldn't have been engaged in such a regretting task in life though lucrative, he said.

I again painstakingly sought the way how they have brought small children from rural localities to urban areas particularly to Addis Ababa. As we were very close I resided around his resident, he didn't reserve himself from telling me the fact and exhibiting in what way children are taken to cities.

"First, we systematically establish rapport with families of the trapped child and introduced them later to the very actors, living nearby, running this activity in the

most sophisticated and delicate manner. Then the targeted family is provided with some sort of benefits for the purpose of captivating or lullabying them. The process is even highly networked up to the senior officials of government authority who can potentially level leeway not to hunt and expose perpetrators," says Ango Kansa.

He suddenly, seemed regretted very much, uttered that it is difficult to well comprehend now where are we heading as human beings are being bargained and presented for sale and sold for profit. He has also confessed over what he has been doing against fellow citizens for years though I could hardly take measures instead of telling him the negative repercussions of child trafficking under the guise of providing them with hope for a better life.

To your surprise, he said, as they are frequently required to work for excessive periods of time, under extremely hazardous working conditions as well as for little or no wage at all, like what is really happening in Mercator, I don't want to tell where it exactly is, we are really killing the generation thereby making the nation devoid of successors at the end of the day.

If this is so, and if you are regretting to this extent, why don't you expose individuals trading over their fellow citizens?

Since most of them have been turned into high profile investors and can do anything they would love at the expense of innocent

poor, I am afraid of exposing how they perform actions and where they really are right now, but it is the duty of the government to put them under control taking time.

On the contrary, individuals who would like to amass undeserved profits at the expense of innocent citizens have all the time robbed children of their innocence, and prey upon the weak, ignorant and desperate ones.

Right you are! Had I known this much about my action I would have preferred leading a subsistence life to having huge wealth and vehicles of my choice. Yes, human trafficking, be it local and Trans-boundary is becoming the most profitable illegal industry. Inadequate law enforcement provides human trafficking with an opportunity to flourish. Without strong law enforcement agencies, anti-trafficking task forces or effective criminal justice systems to prosecute offenders and uphold human rights, perpetrators have not been held accountable.

The government has to well identify causes of human trafficking and address the needs of families who are vulnerable to such illicit acts to get the roots dried forever.

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

Business & Economy

Intensifying honey production for job creation, nutrition

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

The honey production and business does not require large areas of land and huge labor. However, if attention is paid for honey production, realizing job creation and balancing diet is possible. According to experts, honey production can bring more than three benefits. Practitioners who changed their life through the business testified this reality.

Simply explaining the matter, in the beginning, flower plant producers which serve bees for honey production generate income. Bee's colony sellers also obtain income. People engaged in bee reproduction also gain a lot. Others also engaged in refining crude honey and supply by-products and sell wax for candle production and other purposes generate income. To continue the whole process modern beehive is essential. Therefore, youth engaged in wood work can produce modern hives and generate their income.

The sector also creates job opportunities to people engaged in textile sewing which used for honey producers wear during honey harvesting.

In Ethiopia, places that are located 1000-2400 meters above sea level are proved that they are conducive for honey production. In these areas floras that are grown after the end of the rainy season said conducive for the availability of pollen which helps for bee reproduction and honey production.

Though there are many types of bee species and millions of honey producers in Ethiopia, according to experts, the nation does not benefit from the sector as it is expected due to various reasons. Therefore, to maximize the benefit obtained from the sector, establishing bee reproduction and honey production industry is essential.

It also needs introducing new technology helpful to the sector, increasing tree planting, creating value chain and modernizing honey production system.

According to the Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Institute, Ethiopia has the capacity to produce 555,000 tons of honey and supply to the market annually. Nevertheless, till now, it has produced only 9 % of the total capacity which is 50,000 tons annually.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, in the 2020/21 budget year Ethiopia produced 129 thousand tons, the amount of wax production was 6,300 tons. Though more than 1.8 million farmers, semi pastoralists, investors, urban residents and extension service workers are engaged in honey production in Ethiopia, the outcome is not satisfying.

Honey production and its value chain can create job opportunity to thousands in this country. This is proved by International Center of Insect Physiology and Ecology-ICIPE which works in cooperation with the Canadian based organization by its name 'Mastercard Foundation'.

The institution is engaged in environmental



Converting honey to money – Ethiopian Business Review

protection works and insect researches. It supports rural population engaged in honey production to raise productivity by providing technical support and extension services so that enables to uplift their living standard through raising their income. Particularly, it extended its work in Amhara region.

The institute crafted project focusing on youth to create job opportunity through providing training regarding modern honey production and fertilizing silk worm for textile production. In addition to Amhara, it is implementing its projects in the regions endowed with rich resources such as Southern Nation and Nationalities region, Oromia and Tigray regions. It could create jobs for 70 thousands youths in these regions. In general, the center is working to train and create job opportunity to 100 thousand youths on honey production in the coming five years.

The research center project coordinator, Workineh Ayalew (PhD) said that till now the center spent 25 million Dollars for training and creating job opportunity to youth and totally it obtained 55 million Dollar from mastercard foundation to support the project.

He further said that currently 65 thousand youth are engaged in honey production and training will be given to them with regard to trading skills, life skill, planning, saving, profitability and other related skills.

Following provision of the training in cooperation with the officials of regional land management offices, efforts will be exerted to provide plot of lands for starting the work. Additional materials helpful to start the work will be fulfilled by the institute and partially by the job beginners themselves.

In the traditional way of honey production, it is proved that only 6 kilograms of honey could be produced per harvest time from each hive. However, with providing modern honey producing techniques, it is possible to produce 9 kilograms from each hive. In fact during the transition period from traditional to modern method of honey production some could produce from 20 to 30 kilograms.

In Ethiopia, there are various types of honey and the geographical landscape and types of bio diversity have their own impact on the produced honey test and content. Honey produced in the Sekota and Waghimra zones of Amhara region has white color similar to milk, whereas in the central high land parts

of Ethiopia it has yellow and golden color and in the low land parts of the country, it has mild white color.

Getinet Yalew is residing in Waghimra zone gazgibila woreda kebele 02. He is one of the members of youth association comprised 10 people engaged in honey production. Before they began honey production they were part of the unemployed youths.

In their residential areas, honey production was regarded as taboo. However, after getting training regarding honey production, their attitude has been changed and recognized that the sector can help them to boost their income. By now, they could produce 20 kilograms of honey per hive in a modern method and 6 kilograms and above through traditional honey production per hive. As to him, if they secure credit, they can expand their production and increase their income.

In a similar manner, Belay and his friends are the residents of Guagusasigda woreda of Awi zone. They organized themselves by youth association in 2019/20 and engaged in honey production. They have ten members of which six of them are females and the rest are males. They obtained various supports from International Center of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) via More Young Entrepreneurs in Silk and Honey (MOYESH) Program. In 2020/21, they produced and sold 180 kilograms of honey and raised their capital amount. In 2021/22 they took additional trainings and could promote their association to the better level.

In the past, most of the members of the association were moving from region to region in search of job. Now, after they obtained three hectares of land from their woreda, they started producing crops such as maize and wheat side by side with honey production. Encouraged by the witnessed result, the members of the association planned to engage in cattle rearing.

Moa Mengistu is the marketing manager of Oda Share Company and his company is engaged in honey production for the last one year. Now his company works with the ICIPE MOYESH project. The company purchases raw honey from honey producing associations and supplies to foreign markets after refining and packing.

As to Workineh, export business needs sustainability and to that end providing training to raw honey producers and

suppliers is essential. The company has planned to purchase 60 tons or 60 thousand kilograms of honey in 2023 from Amhara region honey producers and based on the international price, it will export the products.

He also said that to meet the objectives of poverty reduction through job creation, his company, in cooperation with the areas where the MOYESH project is implemented, will continue to work with the honey producing associations in the rural part of the country. He also said that until recently, less attention was paid to the sector. Banks also did not give priority to the sector because they assumed that honey production is a risky business. But currently, the money circulated in honey business is increasing and attracted by such a situation, banks have begun to change their attitude. Exporting honey enabled the nation to raise its foreign currency earning capacity. In addition, the growing of the number of business men engaged in honey export pushed the banks to pay high attention to the sector.

The International Center of Insect Physiology obtains foreign currency from donor countries for its research works so that banks showed interest to work with the center. As a result, they could get the hard currency through exchanging by Birr with the center.

The project intends to benefit about 100 thousand youth engaged in honey production. It also intends to support others who showed interest to engage in silk worm production and to date, the number of beneficiaries reached to 90 thousands.

"If there is willingness in the part of the youth, the project tries to increase the number of the beneficiaries to 150 thousand," Workineh (PhD) said. He further said that poverty is a chronic problem in this country and unemployment is rampant particularly in the rural areas. Hence, engaging the youth in honey production in this regard can be taken as a mechanism to alleviate poverty.

Recently, on 25 October, 2015 E.C Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) officially opened the "Yelimat tirufat" program in Arbaminch town. It has an objective to ensure food security through engagement in fattening cattle, poultry and honey production in the compound of each residential house and replicating the achievement witnessed in green legacy manifested by the cultivation of wheat and fruits and vegetable.

The "Yelimat tirufat" program will be implemented in the coming four years. The program targets to increase the current annual milk production from 6.9 billion litter to 11.7 billion litter. In addition, it is targeted to increase the annual chicken production from the current 90,000 tons to 240,000 tons and honey production from the current 147,000 to 296,000. In the meantime it is intended to create job for hundreds of thousands of unemployed youth.

Art & Culture

Wretched lives

BY HENOK TIBEBU

I was walking down the cobblestone street in our neighbourhood “Amrachoch” when I saw Fantu sitting on her porch making coffee for herself. I heard her saying “some people are born to waste their money and some to waste their time. What a wretched life.” The saying which I seconded unzipped my lips. Fantu is one of the peaceful psychos of our neighbourhood. She loses her mind when she runs out of money like most of the psychos in town.

I grew up in Debremarkos a small town found in east Gojjam Zone of Amhara state. It is a very old town whose growth observably stuck at some time before I was born. Currently, there are few signs that the town is waking up from its slumber. Buildings are growing up here and there. Trade is picking up. Ironically, the same is true with corruption. As it is true of elsewhere, it is hard to get served without greasing palms with oil these days. Is insomnia affecting the much-lauded improvers, we saluted to the power pedestal following the breath of fresh air.

Anyways Amrachoch has one special place that its youths choose to release their stresses from unemployment and economic inflation. It is well-known for the best local beer tella its residents make and sell at their houses. They make tella everyday the whole year and support their livelihood from the profit.

In this small town, many young men have no jobs. Since they have nothing important to do, they have a very long stubborn day. Most of them have lost purpose in life. Thus they loaf around looking for a place to spend their abundant time of idleness. They don't feel like they are wasting their time or money. They rather feel like they are spending it on a worthwhile venture. We go to one of the tella houses and spend our long stubborn days drinking.

Actually I am lecturer at the Technical, Vocational, Education and Training College. I give courses from Tuesday to Friday. I also have a part time job on weekends. So the only long and stubborn day that I have is Monday.

Drinking tella starts early in the morning and ends at midnight on Monday. I like the chatters and laughter, conversations and arguments even the quarrel between the youngsters who drink thick strong tella in one of the houses at Amrachoch.

My friends and I are regular customers at Alemitu's tella house with different rooms. But that doesn't mean we spend the whole day there. We also visit some three or four similar houses for the chatter and laughter. But we prefer Alemitu's corner for her best tella. Alemitu is also beautiful - on top of amazingly humbleness. It seems like I and two of my friends are in love with Alemitu even though none of us made it official.

We just watch her beautiful light skinned face and admire her elegance whenever she walks around with her big iron kettle to pour tella. The girl is quite all the time. She only responds when she is asked for how much to

pay or when there is a trouble maker-tipsy barfly disturbing the house. When upset or provoked she turns a protective or wary mother tiger. She has fear for nobody when pushed to such a mood.

I like her attitude. I like her humble personality. I like her elegance. I like everything about her. All these in one, I could call true love. I want to make an open breast of my feelings for her hoping she could reciprocate in a similar fashion.

I have read the special respect she has for me more than any other customer referred a frequenter. She is intimate with the knowledge of my being a lecturer at the TVET College. Who would fail to respect a college lecturer in a small town like mine? I can propose to her any day any time and I am sure she would willingly make me the lucky guy.

But there is one problem in my family. How can I explain that to them? They are one of the most literate and intelligent families in town. Except the little children, everyone has graduated from different colleges with BA, BSC degrees and diplomas. My grandfather is the cornerstone. He is one of the most respected and educated senior citizen in the town.

I know he is not to be a trouble creator about my falling in love with a low class tella seller bewitching girl. My problems are my educated aunties. They are educated but always think, act and talk like illiterates.

Take my aunt Lube for instance. She has been a teacher in elementary school for fifty years. She is supposed to be wise and matured. But when it comes to racism, she turns out one of the stubborn racist.

One day we were sitting on the couch watching TV when we heard news that a house servant killed two children of her boss. My Lube didn't hesitate when she made her racist conclusion. The servant must be from the Jubara ethnicity.

“How do you know?” I asked her.

“I know there is no one who commits such cruelty except those that hail from Jubras' ethnicity.”

Few hours later news came up that the killer is from Lube's own ethnicity. Do you know what Lube said; she said “the Jubras must have forced the offender to commit the crime!”

My educated family's logic is so twisted with reckless conservative reasoning on every issue. Despite their destitution they boast they fit the bill as a high class and look others down. So if I propose to Alemitu, the poor but so beautiful tella seller, they would go crazy saying how could you disgrace our family with a relationship with a simple tella seller?”

Even if willy-nilly they bless off our marriage I am certain they wouldn't give us peace in the future. So I have to cherish my love just watching her from far and drown the pain by drinking her strong tick tella.

So, I was walking down the street to meet my friends at Alemitu's corner while I heard Fantu uttering “some are born to waste their

“some people are born to waste their money and some to waste their time. What a wretched life”



money and some to waste their time.”

“Which one of them do I represent?” I asked myself. The only spare day I have is Monday and I spend it gulping tella. I don't call it wasting. Monday is my only long and stubborn day.

I love my neighbourhood Amrachoch. One can drink the best tella there in every house, every day with a cheap price. The women who sell tella also offer a good meal with good a portion and price. Chatter and laughter are for free and boundless. Sometimes you may be broke but there is no worry as you will find someone to buy you three or more glasses of tella. If a tipsy boozier wants to buy tella for you, he won't pay for only one glass.

There is a saying that goes like “even a slap has to be repeated” so if one wants to invite you to tella, it is going to be glasses of two or above.

Here we are me and my friends Baba and Seifu drinking tella at Alemitu's tavern. Baba is an engineer without a job. He doesn't care less about finding a job because he lives with his wealthy family and is always financially secure. Seifu is a carpenter and from a poor family. He started out as an assistant in his friend's family workshop. Now, he is a chief owning his own workshop.

We spend every Monday together drinking tella. The other days of the weeks are meant for business. “Why is Monday so boring?”

I asked Baba, Baba is sometimes weird. He replied “Monday is not boring, it is stubborn.”

“What's the difference?”

“I don't know but the words are different”

Now Seifu who was staring at Alemitu for a long, as she silently sat on her small round chair on the right corner of the house and taken away by deep thoughts, God knows what she's thinking. Seifu said “Look at her. Isn't she beautiful? Isn't she amazing? Isn't she the loveliest creature in this planet? Isn't she stressed?

“Stop it man!” This word came out of my mouth harshly. It was a sound of jealousy. I don't want anyone to describe her beauty like that except me. But I was sober. I felt ashamed for my outburst. Apologetically and trying to be humours I said to Seifu “you sound as if you are in love with that girl?”

He doesn't like the word love. Declaring your love in our community is considered to be cowardice. You have to keep your love a secret if you are man enough. So Seifu said “no I am not in love with Alemitu. She is just a tella seller, what I was trying to emphasize on was our being stressed?”

“Hu? I was confused because there is no link between what we were talking about and the final question he posed.

“I mean why are we always stressed? We never miss a Monday to be drunk. Isn't it the result of stress? Nowadays, I am even stressed every day, what happened?” he seemed worried but I didn't trust his diversion of idea of conversation because I never saw a stress on his face ever since we were toddlers.

So I didn't answer his question. I was rather looking at him curiously. But Baba who always has weird answer for every question say “you didn't feel it before or you felt it today but the truth is that we are born to be stressed. Stress is in our blood.”

“Why is that?” asked Seifu

“It's is because of the economic inflation” I said trying to be logical. But unaccepted logic would come from Baba immediately. He said no economic inflation. That has got nothing to do with our stress. Economic inflation doesn't stress our people including us. We are used to ruined economic system. We are just born to be stressed?”

Why is that?” asked Seifu again

“It's because we were born during the civil war!”

“What does the civil war that stopped some thirty years ago has to do with our current stress?”

“It's because we are the results of a stress-time physical intimacy!” said Baba.

We all laughed. Even Alemitu brusted out with a laughter, I have never seen before. Baba killed the stress in the house. Is there such a thing as a stress-time sex and a born stress? I don't know but the life in Amrachoch will continue being blissful when you are stressed, stressful when you are happy. Life is ironic! Isn't it?

Indepth

U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit: Strengthening Partnerships to Meet Shared Priorities

The U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, from December 13-15 in Washington DC, highlighted the U.S. commitment to expanding and deepening our partnership with African countries, institutions, and people. Our world is quickly changing, and U.S. engagement in Africa must evolve accordingly. African leadership and contributions are essential to addressing today's pressing challenges and achieving shared priorities.

The Biden-Harris Administration is deepening longstanding areas of cooperation while revitalizing and expanding our partnership to better meet the shared challenges and opportunities of our era. On December 15, the U.S. and African Union delegations released a Vision Statement outlining the contours of this strengthened partnership.

At the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, President Biden and Vice President Harris announced new initiatives that will empower African institutions and citizens. We reaffirmed our resolve to work collaboratively with African governments, businesses, and publics to strengthen people-to-people ties, ensure more inclusive and responsive global institutions, build a strong and sustainable global economy, foster new technology and innovation, strengthen health systems and prepare for the next pandemic, tackle the food security and climate crises, support democracy and human rights, and advance peace and security.

The Biden-Harris Administration plans to invest at least \$55 billion in Africa over the next three years, working closely with Congress. We are dedicated to following through on these commitments and are establishing a new Special Presidential Representative for U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit Implementation to coordinate these efforts. President Biden announced his intent to name for this role Ambassador Johnnie Carson, former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and Ambassador to Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. New investments and policy initiatives highlighted at the Summit include:

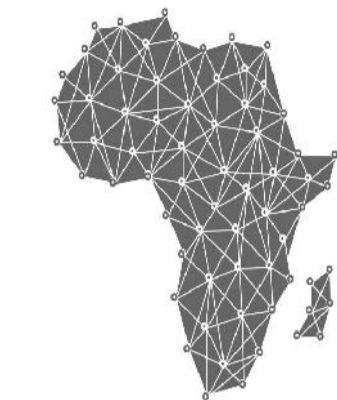
People-to-People Ties

Establishment of a New Diaspora Council: The President issued an executive order (EO) directing the Secretary of State to establish the President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement in the United States (PAC-ADE). The PAC-ADE will deepen the dialogue between U.S. officials and the African Diaspora in the United States, as described in the U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa.

The EO encourages efforts to advance equity and opportunity for the African Diaspora in the United States and strengthen cultural, social, political, and economic ties between African communities, the global African Diaspora, and the United States.

Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) Expansion: Vice President Harris announced that the Administration plans to work with Congress to provide over \$100 million toward YALI over multiple years to support innovative, diverse young African women and men to excel in a 21st century economy and catalyze transformational change in their communities, countries, and continent.

The YALI expansion seeks to harness the support of the private sector, the Diaspora,



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and bilateral partners to facilitate networking, expand digital literacy, accelerate gender equality and women's leadership, advance transparent governance, foster a vibrant civil society, and increase economic opportunities.

Global Governance and Diplomatic Engagement

Support for G20 Membership: The United States will support and work to realize greater and long overdue African representation in international institutions, including supporting the African Union to join the G20 as a permanent member. Home to over a billion people, Africa must have a more prominent voice in global conversations. This builds upon President Biden's September announcement of support for permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council for countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Travel to Africa: President Biden announced that he, Vice President Harris, the First Lady, the Second Gentleman, and several members of the Cabinet intend to travel to Africa in 2023, demonstrating our commitment to African countries and citizens.

Trade, Investment, and Inclusive Economic Growth

Supporting African Resilience and Recovery: President Biden highlighted that his Administration is committed to working closely with Congress to lend up to \$21 billion through the International Monetary Fund for low and middle-income countries, which will support African resilience and recovery efforts. The Biden-Harris Administration is also calling for all bilateral and relevant private creditors to provide meaningful debt relief so countries can regain their footing after years of extreme stress.

Memorandum of Understanding between the United States Government and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat: The United States Government and the AfCFTA Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding to expand engagement to promote equitable, sustainable, and inclusive trade; boost competitiveness; and attract investment to the continent. Once fully implemented, the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area will create a combined continent-wide market of 1.3 billion people and \$3.4 trillion, which would be the fifth-largest economy in the world.

The First Regional Multi-Sectoral Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compacts: MCC announced its first regional compacts, totaling \$504 million, with the Governments of Benin and Niger, with additional contributions of \$15 million from Benin and Niger. The compacts support

regional economic integration, trade, and cross-border collaboration. Since the start of the Biden-Harris Administration, MCC has also signed agreements with the Governments of The Gambia, Lesotho, and Malawi totaling \$675 million.

The agency is currently working in 14 African countries with more than \$3.0 billion in active compact and threshold programs and approximately \$2.5 billion in the pipeline. On Tuesday, MCC announced that The Gambia and Togo are eligible to develop their first compacts, Senegal is eligible to develop a concurrent regional compact, and Mauritania is eligible for a threshold program.

U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC): DFC announced \$369 million in new investments across Africa in food security, renewable energy infrastructure, and health projects, including a \$100 million transaction with Mirova SunFunder for the Mirova Gigaton Fund to support clean energy across Africa. DFC has more than \$11 billion in commitments across Africa.

Technology and Innovation

The Initiative on Digital Transformation with Africa (DTA): At the U.S.-Africa Business Forum, President Biden launched the DTA, a new initiative to expand digital access and literacy across the continent. Working with Congress, this new initiative intends to invest over \$350 million and facilitate over \$450 million in financing for Africa, in line with the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy.

First African Countries to Sign the Artemis Accords: On December 13, Nigeria and Rwanda became the first African countries to sign the Artemis Accords, which facilitate collaboration and establish principles grounded in the 1967 Outer Space Treaty for safe, sustainable, and responsible exploration and use of outer space.

Health

Investing in the Health Workforce to Build More Resilient Health Systems: As part of the Global Health Worker Initiative, the Administration plans to work with Congress to invest \$1.33 billion annually from 2022 to 2024 in health workforce in the Africa region, for a total of at least \$4 billion by Fiscal Year 2025, to help our African partners close the gap in health workers, including clinicians, community health and care workers, and public health professionals.

Partnering to Build Stronger Health Systems and Strengthen Global Health Security: Since the start of the Biden-Harris Administration, the United States has invested and committed to provide \$782 million in global health security programs to work with

partner countries in Africa to close major gaps outlined in their national action plans for health security and to build resilient health systems in critical technical areas. The United States announced \$215 million in new funding to address the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa.

Partnership to Accelerate Regional Manufacturing: The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the President's Malaria Initiative, and DFC also announced plans to accelerate regional manufacturing capacity for vaccines, tests, and therapeutics, including PEPFAR's plans to procure 15 million HIV tests produced by African manufacturers by 2025 and to shift at least 2 million patients on HIV treatments to use African-made products by 2030.

Food Security

Strengthening Food Security Partnerships and Responding to the Need for Emergency Food Security Assistance: The U.S. Government and the African Union announced a strategic partnership and joint statement focused on transformational investments for resilient food systems and diversified supply chain markets. In addition, President Biden announced \$2 billion of new emergency humanitarian assistance for Africa, building on over \$11 billion in recent announcements of food security assistance.

Climate Change

Support for Climate Adaptation and Resilience: At COP27 in Egypt, President Biden announced U.S. plans to work with Congress to provide over \$150 million in new funding to address climate adaptation in Africa under the President's Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience (PREPARE), supporting early warning systems, adaptation finance, climate risk insurance, and climate-resilient food systems. This investment will also galvanize global public and private investment in African clean energy infrastructure. This year, MCC's compacts in Benin and Niger, Lesotho, and Malawi included over \$150 million in new climate adaptation funding.

Democracy and Governance

African Democratic and Political Transitions (ADAPT): President Biden announced the new ADAPT initiative, which reaffirms the U.S. commitment to engage with complex political transitions in Africa and demonstrate U.S. Government support to governments and civil society at critical moments. Working with Congress, over three years, the Administration will invest \$75 million for this initiative to counter democratic backsliding in partnership with regional bodies, governments, and civil society in support of durable political transitions.

Peace and Security

21st Century Partnership for African Security (21PAS): President Biden announced that his Administration is working with Congress to provide \$100 million for a new partnership to incentivize and bolster African efforts to implement and sustain security sector capacity and reforms. This three-year pilot program is designed to allow the United States and African partners, including civil society, to sync, share, and support solutions to security challenges.

Source: The White House

Law & Politics

Bolstering implementation of peace agreement: A viable path to foster sustainable peace

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

In light of the current situation, some anti-peace elements in the Tigray state have embarked on ransacking the hard-earned possessions of innocent civilians and turning their lives upside down in areas where the Ethiopian National Defense Forces have not reached yet.

As opposed to joining hands to get back on track with the whole thing in the Tigray State, some groups have been making a supreme effort to turn the lives of the people into a bottomless pit and abode of the damned. Given the current circumstances, organized crimes are being perpetrated in some parts of the Tigray State escorted by armed patrols.

To everyone's dismay, some of them have been jumping through hoops to place Northern Ethiopia between a rock and a hard place as well as the hammer and the anvil orchestrating a comprehensive range of treacheries aimed at moving the country into uncharted waters. Instead of engaging in this kind of criminal deeds that can up the ante and raise the stakes in Tigray state, they should go to the ends of the earth to smooth the path of the peace implementation at the earliest possible moment.

It is common knowledge that Ethiopia has passed through a broad range of challenges in the wake of the war that lasted for two years. For the sake of truth, in the course of the conflict, the incumbent managed to move heaven and earth to resolve predicaments in an atmosphere of calm despite challenges that emanate in several instances from various entities aimed at dismantling and moving the country into uncharted waters.

There is no denying the fact that in the aftermath of the war Ethiopia has passed through a broad spectrum of challenges to reach where it is in the present day. The whole thing was not an easy journey.

To the surprise of everyone, working in close association with Ethiopia's bitter enemies, some entities bend over backward to bring into disrepute positive developments surfacing left, right, and center of the northern part of the country. Notwithstanding the fact that a maximum amount of effort has been made by some groups in several instances to thwart the peace effort, Ethiopia ended up making peace happen under the auspicious of the African Union.

Even after the peace deal, the disgraced international media outlets have made an effort to bewilder the global community with make-believe stories that do not reflect the existing circumstances and facts on the ground. Dejectedly, as they feel like a chicken with its head cut off in the absence of conflict, some of them have sustained besmirching the positive moves unfolding across the country with their usual cock and bull stories distancing themselves from journalism ethics and standards.

In point of fact, following the signing of the cessation of hostilities agreement between the federal government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) in Pretoria, South Africa, every single thing in the Tigray State has been moving forward in the right direction. However, there are some



actors working around the clock to distract the positive moves of the implementation of the peace agreement.

In a similar fashion, it is important to make it clear that the signing of the peace deal in black and white demonstrates the firm stance of the government to beat swords into plowshares. Albeit some groups gave a lower profile to the role of the African Union under the guise of quite a lot of lame reasons, the efforts of the federal government in the fullness of time metamorphosed into bearing fruits and winning the hearts and minds of the wider international community.

In the aftermath of the fruitful completion of the cessation of the hostilities agreement, people from all walks of life have been enjoying the fruit of the peace agreement and expressing their happiness in a number of ways. In the current state of affairs, as the whole thing in the Tigray state is moving in the right direction, every Tom, Dick, and Harry should combine efforts sooner rather than later for the implementation of the cessation of hostilities agreement.

Though some entities spared no efforts working in tandem with internal and external actors to besmirch the positive achievements of the cessation of hostilities agreement, all their efforts went the way of the dinosaurs.

On the heels of the unflinching stance of the government, the smooth flow of humanitarian assistance has been satisfactorily entering the Tigray state. In consideration of the foregoing, all and sundry have been patting the government on the back. Although Ethiopia's rivals know the positive developments of the incumbent like the palm of their hand, they have continued dragging the positive progress being manifested through the mud.

Following the smooth flow of humanitarian assistance in the northern part of the country, the wider international community in several instances has been commending the federal government. It should be borne in mind that since the start of the war, some disgraced international media outlets have been engaged in besmirching the fruitful delivery of humanitarian assistance in the Tigray state turning a blind eye to the existing reality on the ground.

It is crystal clear that even before the cessation-of-hostilities agreement, the incumbent left no stone unturned to make peace happen by

coming up with a wide spectrum of effective strategies.

The Government of Ethiopia has been diligently implementing the details of the Peace Agreement for the sake of peace dividends for all, according to Government Communication service.

However, evidence is coming out that organized crimes are being committed in areas that the National Defense Forces have not yet reached.

These criminals have exploited the transitional situation for their transgression. Especially in Mekelle, there are persistent reports that organized robbery is being committed with the accompaniment of armed patrols.

The people of Mekelle Town have been reporting their anger through phone calls and other means. Forces that used to benefit from the conflict are behind such crimes. The Federal Government wants to underline that these criminals will be held accountable. We urge all those concerned and responsible entities in the area to stand for the well-being of the people.

The Federal Government will take all necessary measures to safeguard the security of the people in those areas and discharge its responsibilities.

The government has been fulfilling its responsibilities enacting in the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), so disclosed Government Communication Service (GCS).

GCS also announced that the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure in Tigray is already in a full swing.

The GCS State Minister Selamawit Kassa briefed journalists on the current affairs of the country yesterday and she indicated that 85% of war-damaged power transmission towers have been maintained and trial activities are being done.

Eight main power stations including the Mekelle power station have been connected with the national power grid so it allows 57 towns and districts to regain power. The rest 15% of war-damaged transmitters will be maintained and gone operational within the next two months, she noted.

Telecom service in several towns has also been restored. The restoration process of telecom service is being implemented in parallel with

power restoration. Accordingly, 65 telecom stations have been fixed and have become functional, she said.

As to the State Minister, bank service in some towns has been resumed and about 24 bank branches of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia are going to finalize preparations to restart service.

“Basic and large bridges have been reconstructed. And, four hospitals as well as eight health stations are now serving people having carried out swift reconstruction by the government, moreover, 2,200 health professionals who were out of the job because of the war have also registered to return to work.”

According to information obtained from Ethiopian News Agency, Tigrayan scholars and youths have expressed readiness to discharge their responsibilities in order to sustain the peace agreement and realize the development undertakings being underway in Ethiopia.

Scholars and youths from the Tigray region discussed the process of national reform, the implementation of the peace agreement, the reconstruction efforts in Tigray region and their role in ensuring the country's development endeavors.

Chief Government Whip at the House of People's Representatives, Tesfaye Beljige and Coordinator for Democracy System Building Coordination Center with the rank of Minister, Zadig Abreha have briefed the participants about the government's activities in the national reform and its commitment in the effective implementation of the peace agreement.

During the briefings the officials mentioned that the government is carrying out reform activities with a view to addressing Ethiopia's political, economic and social problems from their roots.

However, they said that internal and external problems were encountered in the course of the reform activities citing the war in northern Ethiopia as one of such incidents.

Recalled that the government has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to peace before the war; even after the war, it had exerted efforts by giving priority to peace.

The officials have also said that the government is currently implementing the peace agreement without any disruption.

Women in Focus

Boosting access to FP to improve socioeconomic well-being of families, communities

COMPILED BY BETELHEM BEDLU

Though it is a sad fact, pregnancy and childbirth complications remain the leading cause of death among 15 to 19-year-old girls globally, with low and middle-income countries accounting for 99 % of global maternal deaths of women aged 15 to 49 years. Evidence suggests that Family Planning interventions contributed to more than a 25 % reduction in the maternal mortality ratio. In another context, an estimated 23 million adolescent girls have an unmet need for modern contraception and are at risk of unintended pregnancy. Addressing all of these challenges will be possible only through creating access to informed and voluntary family planning services, as stated in the National Guideline for Family Planning Services in Ethiopia, 2019.

Besides its commitment to meet the sustainable development goals, the government of Ethiopia considers Family Planning as one of the key strategies to improving maternal health and bringing about development. Since the revision of the first guideline in 2011, there have been various local and international updates on the provision of family planning services.

It is no wonder that access to family planning service is one of the reproductive rights of a woman and it is one of the tools used to prevent unintended pregnancy and to reduce maternal mortality in Ethiopia.

FP not only helps women preserve their health and contributes to the improvement of the overall quality of their lives, but it could also help to space and delay pregnancies for a woman who is at risk of pregnancy related problems.

Moreover, using a family planning method will benefit mothers who have chronic cardiac, renal and respiratory problems, multiparous women who are at risk of post-partum bleeding, and adolescents and youth who want to delay pregnancy.

Recently, the Ministry of Health held discussion with spokespersons of Speakers of State Council, youth, leaders from women league and representatives from various partners and concerned institutions on family planning and reproductive health.

During the discussion, Maternal and Child Health Director with the Ministry of Health (MoH) Meseret Zelalem (MD) stressed that the major interventions carried out with regard to fairly distributing family planning and reproductive health services has played a significant role in reducing maternal and child mortality rate.

Mentioning the holistic importance of improving the provision of family planning services for a nation, the Director indicated that a plan is set to lift up family planning service to 50 % in the



second Health Sector Transformation Plan (HSTP-II). Likewise, she added that the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) has also recognized the fact and plans to make the service 54 % within 10 years' time.

She elaborated that facilitating the necessary equipment, appropriate budget allocation as well as commitment is important to deliver fair family planning and reproductive health services. Furthermore, she stressed the need to prioritize budget allocation similar to the concerted efforts of pertinent stakeholders.

While presenting a paper on the discussion, Maternal and Child Health Family Planning Directorate Advisor, Jemal Adem (MD) illustrated that financial constraint and lack of awareness remain challenges not to deliver fair family planning services.

Thus, joint efforts are needed to curb the underlying challenges as well as acquire the desired result, he recommended.

Meanwhile, during the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) day celebration held under the theme 'Build the world we want and a future for all', Ethiopian Health Minister Lia Tadesse (MD) highlighted the need to work together with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), development partners as well as other stakeholders to bring about change.

Speaking on the UHC day organized by the Ministry along with Consortium

of Christian Relief and Development Associations (CCRDA), Save the Children, Consortium of Reproductive Health Associations (CORHA), International Institute For Primary Health Care - Ethiopia (IPHCE), Consortium of Ethiopian Non-Communicable Diseases Association (CENCDA) and MWCA, the Minister emphasized that through the expansion of primary health care facilities, in terms of infrastructure, workforce, increase in number and diversification of health professionals and also in the availability of input, the nation was able to reduce child and maternal mortality, reduces death of infectious diseases and improved availability of better sanitation through collective leadership, professionals, community, stakeholders at all levels,

It is important to note that FP service is a very cost-effective investment compared with investments in most other health and social interventions to bring quality of health to a woman and her child.

It saves the lives of women and children, improves the quality of life for all and reduces morbidity and mortality from pregnancy and has social and economic importance.

According to the WHO, children with fewer siblings tend to stay in school longer than those with more siblings. When girls leave school early for marriage and childbearing, it perpetuates the cycle of high fertility, low women's status and high rates of poverty.

By the same token, the National Guideline for Family Planning Services in Ethiopia further elaborated that investing in expanding access to voluntary family planning contributes to better economic outcomes for households, communities, and nations. FP will ensure that women have the freedom to decide when to have children, to be more engaged in various household activities, personal development activities and community participation, it stated.

On the other hand, it said investment in family planning service saves various expenses that result from social, economic and cultural impacts of unplanned pregnancy and childbirth.

For the aforementioned social as well as economic benefits of FP, more importantly, for the promising result registered in maternal and infant mortality rate reduction and to make the success sustainable, it is important to build on past gains; and joint intervention is fundamental.

Thus, the participation of all stakeholders, engagement of private sector as well as the commitment of the government is highly needed to realize the desired result- to create a world where a mother as well as an infant is out of risk with regard to birth related problems.

FP service is a very cost-effective investment compared with investments in most other health and social interventions to bring quality of health to a woman and her child



International News

World Bank releases \$100 mln for Zambia amid delays in debt restructuring

A participant stands near a logo of World Bank at the International Monetary Fund - World Bank Annual Meeting 2018 in Nusa Dua

The World Bank is releasing \$100 million for Zambia amid substantial delays in its debt restructuring efforts as its creditors drag their feet, it said on Wednesday.

The World Bank approved in October a \$275 million grant to Zambia to help the southern African nation recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the spillovers from the war in Ukraine and emerge from its debt crisis.

Zambia became the first African country to default in the COVID-19 era in 2020, but the restructuring of its external debts of almost \$15 billion with creditors including China and Eurobond holders has been greatly delayed.

"Zambia urgently needs debt relief to restore medium-term debt sustainability and attract the new investment needed for growth and jobs," World Bank President David Malpass said in a statement.

"I remain deeply concerned by the slow pace of the creditors' committee and the impact of the delays on growth and poverty," he added. Zambia has continued to implement agreed



structural policies to achieve macroeconomic stability even as its official bilateral creditors delay discussing and finalizing debt treatment for the country under the G20's

Common Framework, the statement said.

Zambia has agreed to the principles of debt restructuring with its creditors and is

focused on signing an agreement on its terms with them by the end of March, President Hakainde Hichilema said on Tuesday.

Source: Reuters

Sudan's Bashir admits role in 1989 coup, could face death penalty

The ousted former Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir on Tuesday acknowledged his full responsibility for the 1989 coup that overthrew the government of the late former Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi at the time and installed him as the new leader.

But the long-term ruler of Sudan, who himself was ousted in April 2019, denied any role for civilians and military members of the Revolutionary Command Council in planning and implementing the seizure of power. The former president is currently serving a prison sentence for corruption.

Bashir and 15 officers of the armed forces and eight civilians from among the leaders of the Islamic Movement, appeared before a special court to face charges of masterminding a coup. Under Sudanese law, the crimes carry the death penalty if one is found guilty of undermining the constitutional system and overthrowing the elected authority at that time.

"I stand before this court, and I say with pride and dignity that I am the leader and bomber of the national salvation revolution, and I bear all responsibility for what happened in June 1989," Bashir told the court.

He stated that he was following "with pleasure the indictment's attempts" and its production of video clips to prove his involvement in the coup.

In his testimony, Bashir declared that all the accused members of the Revolutionary



Command Council had no role in planning and implementing the seizure of power.

He also denied that civilians supported the military's action: "It was a purely military action, and we did not need civilians to help us." He said the coup was inspired by the squalid conditions that the army was suffering from before they seized power.

Some cities had also fallen in the hands of the South Sudan rebels then led by the late Dr John Garang who would later lead the rebels to an autonomous administration.

Bashir indicated that the memorandum of the armed forces that was presented to the political leaders shortly before they seized power was the real downfall of the government at the time.

"The memorandum of the armed forces explained the extent of the danger to the country as a result of the weakness that the army was suffering from, and the great shortage of mechanisms, ammunition and medicines, and that the ammunition used at that time, which the government obtained from some countries, was not able to be used by the soldiers because it did not match, and these are all examples of bad conditions," he said.

He said the memorandum had given the government seven days to implement its provisions, but it was not fulfilled, and there was not much time to wait.

He emphasized that the army based its movement on Article 15 of the amended Constitution of 1965, which is the article

that talks about "the protection and gains of the Rajab revolution are a trust with the armed forces."

Bashir boasted about the achievements he made during his rule in Sudan in the areas of infrastructure, roads and bridges, and the efforts made in developing the electricity sector, among others.

He said, "We have been running the country for more than 10 years with a budget of less than a billion dollars. Despite that, we were working on development and achieved many successes. We did not come out of love for power. We served our people and gave them what they deserve."

Observers believe that Bashir's confessions have a dimension and that they are a political act organised by the leaders of the former regime.

Tariq Osman, a Sudanese political analyst, told The East African that "the step is not improvised and it seems that there is a plan and agreement between members of the Brotherhood accused in the case that the statements are consistent with those who deny the charge and who confess to it, and it seems that the confession process was entrusted to Al-Bashir".

"If the influential figures in the Brotherhood regime will be acquitted, this could be a step towards exploiting the fragile political situation to arrange the ranks and return the regime to the political scene again," Tariq added.

Source: The East African