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Photo: Tsehay Nigussie

Abdi Zenebe

## Ethio-Djibouti Railway instrumental for economic integration: CEO

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA – Having served as the bridge between the two countries, the Ethio-Djibouti Railway (EDR) has played an immense role in facilitating the vision of economic integration apart from advancing connectivity, the CEO said.

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, the Ethio-Djibouti Railway Share Company CEO Abdi Zenebe stated that the passenger and cargo transport to and from Djibouti is the realization of the vision of an integrated economy.

The establishment of the Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone, which is believed to improve Ethiopia's economy by boosting the import and export trade will also be highly beneficial for the company. The Free Trade Zone which is aligned with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) coupled with proximity to the ports of Djibouti plays a significant role in realizing regional integration.

The EDR is also proving successful in advancing trade and investment as well as people-to-people

See Ethio-Djibouti ... Page 3



## Ethiopia ready to supply wheat to East African countries

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA - Ethiopia is due to start exporting wheat to East African countries, including Kenya, Djibouti and South Sudan, the Ministry of Agriculture announced.

"According to our five-year plan, we have set a goal that we will achieve the national demand in three years. In the past three years, wheat production has transformed from solely depending on rain-fed farming to irrigated-farming," Isaias Lemma, Director of Crop Development at the Ministry of

See Ethiopia ready ... Page 3

## BPLM agrees to end armed struggle: Commission

• Gov't working to resolve differences in peaceful manner

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA- The Benshangul Gumuz Liberation Movement (BPLM) has agreed with the government to end its armed struggle, Benshangul Gumuz Police Commission said.

Commission Commissioner Harun Oumer told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the coming of armed rebel groups to struggle in a peaceful means is a showcase of the government's repeated peace call bearing fruit.

The regional government was repeatedly

See BPLM ... Page 3



## Office raises over 17.4 bln. Birr for Abay Dam

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA-Some 17,485,692,000 Birr has been mobilized from Ethiopians and foreigners of Ethiopian origin living at home and in the Diaspora since the beginning of the construction of the Abay Dam, the coordinating office disclosed.

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Culture diplomacy –  
What lessons to Africa?



Creative youth who  
innovated aircraft,  
drones

Page 8

# News



## Ethiopia amasses over 615 mln. USD from coffee export

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

**ADDIS ABABA**-The Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority stated that the country has earned over 615 million dollars from coffee beans export supplied to foreign markets over the last five months.

Authority Deputy Director General and Head of Marketing Department, Shafi Umer said that 615.4 million dollars have been generated from coffee export and more than 109 thousand tons have been supplied to the foreign market over the last five months. The export has shown a 100 million dollars difference compared to the same period last year.

As to him, Ethiopia started coffee export to China and Indonesia this year by expanding its market destinations, and the step taken has been significantly contributing to national income. Germany, Saudi Arabia, Belgium, Australia and Japan are among the countries where the coffee product is exported.

The Authority is working to generate approximately 2 billion dollars by exporting and supplying 360 thousand tons of coffee products for foreign markets this fiscal year.

Some 1.4 billion dollars was earned by exporting 302 thousand tons of coffee to the foreign market last year. Ethiopia is increasing its income by exporting high coffee production for the last four years.



Photo: Tsehay Nigussie

## Corporation lauds industrial parks development engagement

• Signs MoU with three indigenous companies

BY MESERET BEHAILU

**ADDIS ABABA**- The Industrial Parks Development Corporation (IPDC) stated that several activities have been carried out in 13 industrial parks focusing on building infrastructure, promoting import substitution, and creating jobs, among others.

Speaking at the event to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the corporation and three indigenous companies registering capital of more than 11.4 billion birr yesterday, the Corporation's CEO, Akililu Tadesse said that a lot of investors have signed with the corporation to involve in various investment sectors obtaining foreign exchange, transforming technology and stimulating the investment sector, which

has been stagnant due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the northern conflict.

He added that three indigenous companies namely, Gumesa Trading PLC, Impact Printing and Graphics, and Suji Liyan Doyo Oxygen and Nitrogen manufacturing PLC, which have an initial capital of over 200 million USD and product packaging material for medicines, over 40 million Birr and produce garment printing, and over 206 million Birr to produce oxygen and nitrogen respectively. They have also engaged in activities targeting reducing foreign exchange crutch and attracting foreign and local manufacturing companies.

In terms of job creation, the companies will secure 140, 200, and over 300 jobs whilst they have obtained 10,000 km<sup>2</sup> in the Kilinto Industrial Park, 1150 km<sup>2</sup> in Addis

Industry Village, and 800 Km<sup>2</sup> arable lands in Jimma Industry Park of their respective orders.

Gumesa Trading PLC Owner, Neway Nigussie on his part said that his company will be fully operational within one year plus and give critical attention to foreign exchange challenges and job creation.

Besides, the company will work with foreign and local companies to share experience and technology in a bid to foster the expected result from the sector.

Suji Liyan Doyo Oxygen and Nitrogen Manufacturing PLC's CEO, Girma Ababi (Ph.D.) on his part said that the company mainly produces oxygen and Nitrogen, which has to play an indispensable role in encouraging social and company relationships.

## Health Ministry strives to avail COVID-19 vaccine to IDPS

• Integrated Measles Immunization underway

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

**ADDIS ABABA**- The Ministry of Health said it has been working heavily to avail COVID-19 vaccine at proximity to Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPS) and communities in war affected areas in various parts of the country.

Speaking to the media, National Program and Immunization Acting Manager with the Ministry Temesegen Lemma said consolidated activities have been carried out to contain the spread of the virus through various approaches.

Accordingly, the ministry immunized 55 percent of the target and using 43 million doses, this round immunization will be helpful in addressing the concerns of IDPS and bring sustainable support to the nation's overburdened health system. At the same time the activity helped in reducing the spread and impact of COVID-19 by scaling up vaccine roll-outs throughout the country.



Temesegen Lemma

The ministry reinstated the effort following Pretoria peace accord inked between the federal government and the TPLF that gave the opportunity to restore normal life of community services in these parts of Ethiopia. Vaccines for COVID-19 are critical tools for helping to bring the pandemic under control when combined with effective testing, treatment and existing prevention measures.

Meanwhile, he indicated that the ministry plans to immunize 15.5 million children in the ongoing Sublimated Immunization Activity (SIA) campaign. The campaign is headed by a national task force and it includes nutrition screening for children and pregnant women who had attended or not got regular immunization.

Vitamin A supplementation is also given to children 6-59 months to support their rapid growth and help them to combat infections and deworming supplementation to children aged 2-5. At the same time screening individuals with club feet and women with fistula health problems will be practiced.

Mentioning the Integrated Measles Immunization campaign has been conducted starting December 22, 2022 for the coming ten days, Temesegen called on stakeholders to contribute for the effective execution of the program.

# News

## Over 235,000 IDPs in Amhara returned home

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

**ADDIS ABABA** - Following the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) between the federal government and the TPLF, more than 235,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) have been returned to their villages, the Amhara Region Disaster Prevention and Food Security Program Coordinating Commission announced.

The Commission Public Relations Officer Eyasu Mesfin told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that there were more than 850,000 displaced people in the state due to the previous conflict. Following the truce, more than 235,000 evacuees have been returned to their homes.

Mentioning 8.7 million citizens in the state



Eyasu Mesfin

are in need of humanitarian assistance, he indicated the aid was distributed to 5.3 million and 5.6 million people in two

rounds. "Alongside the government's support, non-governmental organizations and the people should also do their part in the humanitarian response."

Eyasu continued: "The Ethiopian Red Cross Society is making efforts to support us and we called on other humanitarian organizations to provide the necessary assistance."

Out of the total evacuees in the Amhara State, 68,445 are located in 34,000 shelters, while others are located in different parts of the state, it was learned.

The federal government has constituted the lion's share in availing the support to people impacted by the past conflict in various parts of the country.

## Office raises...

Public Relations and Media Communication Director of the Office, Hailu Abraham told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) the stated sum was collected from bond sale, lottery, SMS and other fund raising schemes. Accordingly, more than 1.3 billion Birr was collected from the sale of Diaspora bonds; a clear indication of the Diaspora's active participation in the construction of the dam.

By the same token, over 658.7 million Birr was collected in three rounds through a short text message on 8100. The Office of National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation on the Construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam has also the plan to collect two billion Birr in the current Ethiopian fiscal year of which it has managed to collect 702 million Birr within five months.

The director pointed out from the stated sum, the share of domestic bond sales and gifts is over 576.5 million Birr meanwhile over 11.6 million Birr was secured from Diaspora bond sale and gift. Also, more than 51.5 million Birr was collected through 8100 short text messages.

"Efforts are being made to support the Diaspora more," he said adding the Diaspora is participating in bond and gift collection activities through embassies and consulates and by sending to relatives. "Therefore, it is necessary to make an effort to overcome the problem of accessibility among the Diaspora by gathering resources with the support of modern technology."

Along with the construction and support of the dam, there is a need for soil and water conservation and successful works have been carried out to prevent silt from entering the dam. The farmers have done soil and water conservation activities in the Abay basin that would be worth more than 120 billion Birr, Hailu remarked.

## Ethio-Djibouti...

relations between the two countries and has remained the largest transporter of primary commodities in the country. Accordingly, 98 percent of Ethiopian coffee has been transported to the international market by the company. Through the EDR, the country enables to save billions of birr that would be spent on other modes of transport.

The company has transported about 500,000 tons of items since the establishment of operation which accounts for about 15 percent of Ethiopia's total import-export trade. In doing so, the firm has secured

over 2.3 billion Birr while the plan is set to increase the figure to four billion in the coming years.

The CEO further highlighted that the EDR is contributing immensely to Ethiopia's economy and the cargo service is very essential to export the bulk of coffee exports. By the same token, the firm has played an immense role in importing fertilizer, oil, and other strategic commodities.

"Despite the aforesaid successes, we have been challenged by power interruption, spare parts shortages as well as sporadic

theft among other issues. To ease the power interruptions, we have been working closely with the Ethiopian Electric Utility."

Having started vehicle shipment from the Port of Djibouti to Addis Ababa, the company has also been working to transport new commodities and increase its operational capacity. The transporting of huge amount of goods imported commodities from Djibouti ports to the central part of Ethiopia and the diversification of the service signifies EDR's commitment to diversify its transportation services, the CEO remarked.

## Ethiopia ready...

Agriculture told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA).

Ethiopia has been able to achieve the national demand for wheat production by increasing wheat productivity and by expanding production areas, he said adding that currently, the country is working extensively to export wheat.

Isaias further stated that Ethiopia has been importing wheat until last year. The country has been focusing on wheat production in the last three years to avoid imported wheat by replacing imported item with local production.

Pointing out that Ethiopia is increasing wheat production every year; he said

that including autumn, 625,000 hectares of wheat have been cultivated, of which 355,000 hectares have been cultivated using irrigation. This year it is working to cover 32 million hectares with wheat production and currently 700,000 hectares of land have been covered with wheat seeds.

The director said that more than three million farmers and investors participated in the wheat production while Oromia, Amhara, Somali and Afar states have significant participation in the process. In order to keep the quality of the product, efforts are being made to protect it from the wheat beetle and other pests.

"The product is exported to East African

nations, especially neighboring countries. Kenya; South Sudan and Djibouti are considered as market destinations. All East African countries are 100 percent wheat importers. In particular, Russia and Ukraine were the main suppliers of wheat to these countries."

The peace agreement made in Pretoria, South Africa, has created a good opportunity for nearly 100 districts in each state, which were out of production due to the war, to fully turn their faces to production. Leadership commitment; farmers' desire to become self-sufficient in wheat and as well as the existence of first and second generation export wheat varieties in the society are cited for Ethiopia's success.

## BPLM agrees to end...

calling the armed rebel groups to end armed struggle and lead peaceful life. As a result, BPLM has come to struggle peacefully. Members of the group have started disarming. The agreement is reached between the regional government and the BPLM rebel group to end the armed struggle, he said.

Giving rehabilitation training has started to enable them to join in various developmental activities. For this, the government is committed to creating job opportunities after completing the training. The peace accord reached by the two parties has paramount importance in ensuring sustainable peace and benefit of people, he underscored.

The Benishangul Gumuz State Prosperity Party Head Ishak Abdulqadir for his part said that the government's repeated peace call efforts for the rebel group registering achievements.

The peace agreement without any pre-conditions with the armed group has a huge role in building peace in the region as well as across the country. It will contribute its role to the success of national inclusive dialogue.

As to him, the regional government has been working hard to solve differences via discussion and peaceful means.

BPLM Leader Abdul Wahab Mehdi Isa said that understanding the value of peace for the region's people, we signed the peace agreement to peacefully end the armed struggle. "We are committed playing our role to benefit all the people in the region in all sectors. Stopping blaming one another, we will work for mutual development."

He noted that members of the armed group are happy for the warm welcoming in the surrounding.



# Opinion

## Sustainability reporting: A means to development goals

BY KIRAM TADESSE

The American artist Jim Morrison famously said: “Whoever controls the media controls the mind.” Morrison’s saying holds water given the fact that media can indeed manipulate, persuade and influence societies. Being a means of mass communication the media is a powerful influence that affects opinions and attitudes as well as lives of the individual and society perceptions.

Mass media such as television, radio, newspapers and the internet are noticeably influencing the human interaction and their perceived aspirations today. Thus, media proved to be powerful in controlling the world at times in both positive and negative ways.

To test this view spend few hours watching television programs or online contents and you will be stunned at just how societies, countries or continents are portrayed in the media and how you find yourself being influenced by it. This holds true especially in societies like Ethiopia where everything conveyed through the media is deemed to be right.

This situation leads us to a prominent role of the media practitioners or journalists. These are individuals who explore and write or broadcast various contents. In more broader but egalitarian views these are professionals whose service is a measure of how well societies function.

Although journalists’ identity and place in society is still arguable issue, they articulate and enact their duties corresponding to conceptually distinct ideas based on four analytical roles namely; normative (what journalists ought to do), cognitive (what they want to do), practiced (what they really do in practice), and narrated (what they think they do).

Having these important roles in mind we carry on what we want to see journalists realize their contribution to the proper development goals and aspirations in line with values, attitudes and beliefs. They embrace success as a result of their occupational socialization. Thus, journalists are expected to demonstrate their values and beliefs in practice.

### SDGs and Media

Seven years into the adoption and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, there is an ongoing stirring debates on the role of the media as a vital instrument to achieve these goals. This is mainly due to the perception that media might have only been used to spread the general information about SDGs across the world in order to simply inform people with its aspirations.

In other words, people are often reminded of these development goals through meetings, workshops, and other international events. Local contexts are missed. With an aim to transform the world, these goals set an urgent call for action by all countries to end poverty



and inequality, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy health, justice and prosperity.

Media on other hand are seen as a precondition for progress and implementation of all development targets stipulated in the SDGs. Particularly, SDG 16 of target 16.10 calls to ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

Therefore, the role of media through access to information is signified as an essential component of the SDGs, where media support “peace, justice and strong institutions.” Moreover, media have to do with other goals as well including SDG 2 of creating a world free of hunger and SDG 5 of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

These goals are strongly associated with press freedom and exposure to mass media. Accordingly, journalism acts as a driver of change and forms the foundation of a healthy information environment that can help societies deal with challenges of the times and achieve a sustainable society.

### Sustainability Reporting for Development Goals

Ideally, sustainability has four pillars of human, social, economic and environmental. It is aimed at the preservation of a particular resource. Meanwhile, during the most recent decades the idea of “sustainable reporting” is something meant to deal with information concerning environmental, social, economic and governance issues of a certain business. In this regard the Harvard Business Review puts “sustainable reporting” as companies’ commitment to measuring and reporting publicly on their sustainability performance.

Sustainable problems need sustainable media reporting, which led me to contemplate the need for a potentially refreshing concept on sustainability that is attached to the role and functions of journalism.

Seeking out the truth being one major duty of journalists in the interests of the public’s right to know, regardless of the consequences

they bear the concept of sustainability calls for a professional duty on journalists to critically and objectively examine, evaluate, report and forecast on development goals. It gives room to assess a plan and its actual implementation, and the difference between its impacts on people as designed by development plans. Through this I also want to take the professional ethics of media and journalistic commitments more seriously.

How is “sustainability reporting” different from a common label used by journalists called “*follow-up*”? Follow-ups in general rely on previous stories for their news value, while sustainability reporting will be more of impact oriented contents in more concise development objectives.

However, like follow-up, sustainability reports treat cases as separate stories. The strength of sustainability reporting is that it tells the audience about an ongoing aspect of a development goal, to save from potential collateral damage that could stay dormant for long time.

In sustainability reporting, for example, the original story may have been that “Ethiopia had conducted Voluntary National Review (VNR) on SDGs for 2017 focusing on the methods and approaches of integrating the SDGs into the national context.”

In the follow-up, a sustainable reporter shall investigate the outcome of the past VNR after implementing the SDGs for six years, and its impact on subsequent VNR in 2022. A sustainability reporter need to inquire the impact of SDGs based on past years of implementation and predict its future trend amid other global challenges that affect the overall implementation of the development goals.

Follow-ups stories can be subset of sustainability reports. Sustainability reporting requires for well equipped journalistic practices with ample research before carrying on a particular development topic. “Sustainability reporters” are proactive towards development goals. They may not necessarily have to be reminded of the development goals through particular events or government invitation but should act

independently.

There would be potential problems with such reporting. Freedom of press takes the lead while journalists attempt to enlighten people who could not demand for their rights, because they may not know about what is planned development scheme on their behalf.

Therefore, the sustainability reporter will have the ultimate intervention to inform and monitor people’s rights carefully. Once media reports are sustainable there should be assurance that attention to SDGs issues can deliver better outcomes. Media will also use its power to identify and uphold responsible parties.

In countries like Ethiopia by understanding the root of all evils such as poverty; sustainability reporters shall stand their ground and act as gatekeepers in the mass communication process. They ought to report the development goals objectively and check their own political convictions and individual affiliations at the realm as they receive the entitlement.

One way to advance this practice is professionalism through support from the academia. Recently, for instance, the Addis Ababa University announced a joint program with University of Oslo to establish a center of excellence that supports the achievement of SDGs. Media oriented SDGs insights can be invigorated which will help enhance knowledge to address matters of development goals.

The center of excellence has already amassed good-will and commitment to come instrumental in conducting researches that are insightful for policy makers to value media in tandem with SDGs. In this regard, the center of excellence sees a promising prospect on the role media can play to achieve SDGs through technical support and searching for grants.

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

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## Editorial

### Disinformation— a hotbed for duplicity of error

The quality of one's thinking and decisions heavily leans on the quality of information one feeds one's mind. Otherwise, one would go astray to land in the soup.

It cannot be gainsaid that if a mathematical equation or a data is flawed the solution one gets is nothing but rubbish. As such the end result will not only be good for nothing but also pollutes consecutive outputs.

The adage in mathematics, statistics and computer science also runs "Garbage in garbage out!" Of course, in hard science erroneous solutions could surface from knowledge gap or not being high on one's guard.

On the flipside, when one comes to politics, the heinous that have inkling about the advantage of disinformation on purpose tamper with information to come up with wrong narratives thereby to dupe the unsuspecting and to tarnish the image of a targeted-innocent victim. Such sadists commit the crime covertly dishing out sugarcoated poisonous cake, which they advertise on sham media outlets that are estranged from their conscience blindfolded by handsome bribes. Phony politicians and Pinocchio journalists connive to emasculate a targeted victim stripping it of its truth.

Moreover, when disinformation is brought into play repetitively and simultaneously to feed the rumor mill it picks steam to the extent of appearing a reality.

Wrong-headed information wields influence on policy makers and donors to act as per wrong narratives. Using this pretext some super powers and their satellites that have a hidden motive of optimizing sole advantage could act as per their whims and caprices in sharp contrast to facts on the ground.

When we assess Ethiopia's case having the disinformation campaign in mind, we notice that though Ethiopia is doing everything in its

power for the return of quiet in the conflict-torn and food shortage affected northern area of the country also even if, bending over backwards, it is catering to the humanitarian aid needs of Tigray naysayers have still indulged in tarnishing the image of the country as an in considerate mother. Doomsayers were doing the image sully task all along the way from the very outset of the conflict their knowledge that started the war notwithstanding.

Several international organizations are working along with Ethiopia in outreaching the needy in the strife-torn Tigray with the necessary food aid. Ethiopia is at its best in translating the Pretoria and Nairobi agreements into action. Key services like electricity and bank are being put in place fast. Restoration of social infrastructures is swiftly taking place as the government has thrown its full weight behind it. Yet doomsayers try to portray a wrong image about Ethiopia churning out wrong information.

Ethiopia's tranquility foreshadows its development. This has a ripple effect in the region and beyond. But those who do not want to see a serene Ethiopia surging ahead on the path of affluence are crying foul as a last ditch effort to derail the fructification of Ethiopia's dream.

Stretching back over the last four years, assessing things could help to discern the disinformation those who feel a fish out of its elements in the glare of light or truth are doing.

Ethiopia, thirsty of all-rounded and all-embracing socioeconomic take off, has sacrificed a lot for the sake of peace. Going half way it shakes hands with peace lovers, even the supposed ones, as witnessed in the agreement. Ethiopia is eager to spur its developmental thrust once peace is ensured. All should be rest assured on this score. In an era of disinformation taking things without a grain of salt is inimical as statisticians call this folly duplicity of error.

## Opinion

### Where does the threat to peace and security in East Africa come from?

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

Several visible and invisible factors and actors are responsible for absence of sustained peace and security in this extremely volatile region of the African continent. Abject poverty, extensive and untracked and unprotected porous borders, shaky governments, ethnic based conflicts, climate change induced natural and manmade calamities, cross border and inland contraband, trafficking in humans, firearms, cultural relics, counterfeit documents, drugs of all types, illicit financial transfers, fake travel documents and currencies, periodic epidemics, drought, landslide and flooding, hyperinflation, systemic corruption and other factors that the author of this opinion page has not mentioned are blocking and chocking the socio-economic, peace, security and development endeavors of these countries. Regrettably, if allowed to prevail, all these challenges are here in East Africa for unforeseen years and decades. Will there be any solution? Let us see.

Human trafficking has escalated violation of human rights including rape, gender and physical violence and looting of properties in this region. Reports indicate that tens of thousands of non-skilled laborers who attempt to cross the Red Sea seeking for employment with no fear of the total crisis in Yemen or the danger that can befall them in route have ended up languishing in the hands of the traffickers.

The entire tragic situation which is a triple jeopardy on the victims will certainly continue unabated unless the states in the region work together to control the situation and ensure the rule of law in their respective countries.

The Union of the Police Commissioners of East Africa was established in Kampala, Uganda in 1998 with its headquarters in Nairobi Kenya resolved to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement bodies

came up with a strategy to facilitate exchange of information on cross border crimes.

Apart from Ethiopia, the member countries of the union included Kenya, Sudan, The Republic of South Sudan, the DRC, Djibouti, Somalia, Seychelles, Rwanda, Eritria, Uganda, Tanzania, Morocco and Burundi

Incidentally, the Union conducted its 24th Annual Meeting from December 4-9 in Addis Ababa under the theme, "Replicating experiences and Good Practices of the Police Forces of the Region in the struggle against terrorism and cross border crimes. Higher officials of the police forces of the member countries, staff members of the headquarters, Interpol representatives of the region, and attaches of embassies here attended the Annual Meeting.

The meeting focused on the importance of practical and meaningful cooperation on regular exchange of information and data on cross border crimes among member nations and partner international agencies like Interpol. Moreover, implementation of common plans on mutual capacity building programs and exchange of information and good practices among member nations was adequately discussed on the meeting.

The visible link between the proliferation of international and local terrorism and cross border crimes in East Africa has now become a major issue of mutual concern among the countries of EAPCCO. It is now loud and clear that these countries cannot fight against terrorism and cross border crimes single handedly and would need to cooperate among themselves and international stakeholders engaged in the fight against terrorism and cross border crimes. Here the author thinks that it is more important to focus on how the proliferation of terrorism and cross border crimes would affect Ethiopia.

Compared with other countries Ethiopia has a

better experience in fighting against terrorism and cross border crimes but the uniqueness of Ethiopia's situation lies in the fact that local terrorist organizations like Shene, Gumuz, Kimant and other terrorist groups operating in Gambela area work in full cooperation with cross border terrorist groups like Al-Shebab, complicating the country's battle against cross border crimes and terrorism.

Apart from the political consequences of cross border crimes and terrorism, Ethiopia is also suffering from the negative economic impacts of cross border crimes and criminals. Gold, gemstone and narcotics smuggling from Ethiopia by land and air has become so rampant over the last two years resulting in the fact that the National Bank of Ethiopia has reported the lowest level of gold purchases as vast amount is smuggled out of the country. This form of cross border crimes has deprived the country that financial gains it should have secured.

Over the last two years, smuggling of firearms and all types of explosives and hand grenades from Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, and South Sudan has continued to pose a threat to the national security of the country. Although most of these firearms have been caught by law enforcement bodies the attempt to smuggle them has continued none stop.

Again, large quantities of foreign currencies are also regularly smuggled outside of the country while some of them have been caught.

Human trafficking through Metema, Bossaso in Somalia, Djibouti and through Hargeisa in Somaliland is still on the move inflicting a potential danger to the security of the country.

Contraband trade with live animals, coffee and electronics has continued as ever. This economic wars conducted on the country coupled with the vast expanse of border area that the law enforcement bodies have to cover has put an

additional burden on the country and has made the border areas of the country permanently insecure.

As mentioned earlier in the text, none of the East African countries are capable of ensuring their peace and security by themselves. International organization and all members of the Union must work together in fighting corruption, maladministration and bad governance in their respective countries.

In addition, strong legal framework and enactments of regulations that are to be implemented among the countries of East African will help to foster meaningful legal cooperation without compromising the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries in the region.

Ethnic based conflicts in Ethiopia have paved the way for the spread of terrorism in the border areas of this country and helped some neighboring countries to interfere into the internal affairs of the country in a bid to destabilize the statehood of the nation.

In general, foiling cross border crime which is out to darken the hope for mutual development and trust building among member countries is a priority assignment that should be addressed by the concerned countries. Technology based In general, foiling cross border crime which is out to darken the hope for mutual development and trust building among member countries is a priority assignment that should be addressed by the concerned countries. Technology based police information analysis must be put in place to enhance wider cooperation in crime prevention in a more sustainable manner.

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

# Business & Economy

## Wheat production:

### A radical change from import to export

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

The museum of Africa depicts the inundated natural resources of the continent has been exploited by colonizers, and this evil deed made Africa unable to cope with the pressure in the modern world. It is the fact that Africa has been suffering from various drought and famine along with different natural and manmade disasters in different times. With all those challenges that the continent has been encountering, African nations are still trying their best to give responses to their challenges.

In good truth, though the continent is blessed with the fountain of both man-made and natural resources, African nations were unable to satisfy the needs to fill up their bellies; however, attempts have been made by most nations to curb the situation. To this reason, most African nations are calling for aid from other countries. In various scenarios, such aid and support have become a national threat as the providers could ask untouchable national demands. In the present climate, the question of independency and living under one's own umbrella has a direct link to food security.

Sad it may sound; Africans have been abused by those providers and African nations open the path for providers to take whatever they want to take. At this point, the African continent must find a quick fix and say 'NO MORE!' to all the unwarranted pressures and operations on sovereign states of Africa. Aid makes a nation weak and unable to stand on its feet. That was what happened to Ethiopia.

The so-called suppliers of aid and superpowers of the world turned their back on Ethiopia when the country was crying for help. Such challenges made the nation ready to face any upcoming pressures and gave the strength to exert its utmost effort to work on the lope holes of the nation instead of bowing down for the needs of aid providers.

That was the reason why Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) initiated summer and irrigation based wheat production programs to alleviate the local demand. Fortunately, nation's attempts have borne fruits and showed the capacity and potential that the people and the country could change anything to positive. The best experience, now-a-days, might be the Ethiopian way of answering its demand of wheat production as the nation has become one of the top-listed wheat producer nations in Africa.

In recent times, the Government of Ethiopia has left no stone unturned to satisfy its demands regarding wheat productions. Coupled with stakeholders, the government has been working on promoting the expansion of wheat and other agricultural products by supporting farmers to be aware of the advantages and providing the necessary equipment.

In addition to wheat production, Ethiopia, at this time, has also scored better in rice, avocado, maize, and other cereals



*Ethiopia in new drive to cut wheat import – Ethiopian news*

productions. The government is working tirelessly on the advancement of mechanized farming to upscale the quality and quantity of agricultural productions.

In a previous report, having stayed with a local media, State Minister of Agriculture, Meles Mekonnen (PhD) explained, wheat production is cost-effective for Ethiopia. Therefore, in 2022/23, regions have selected 2.8 million hectares of land for wheat production, and 2.6 million hectares of land is covered by wheat seeds. In addition, around 1.6 million hectares of land out of 2.6 million is selected for intensive wheat cluster production. "We are also expecting more arable lands in Bale and other places. We will give special attention for cotton production in some parts of the country especially in Afar," the state minister added.

Meles said: "In 2022/23, local consumption is estimated around 97 million quintals. Again, we plan to produce more than 107 million quintals of wheat. This means, we will have extra product around 10 million quintals of wheat. We can export and generate around 390 million USD. In order to achieve our goals, we need to be committed. We must work on the market system. We need to fight the challenges and misdeeds observed in the market."

In an actual fact, the Ethiopian Government has exerted its maximum effort to achieve its goal to answer the local demand of wheat products and lifting its potential to exporting standards. To change the idea to reality, the government has been working to making the trading and exchange system easily accessible to export agricultural products. One of the tools to make the process easy is working on the system implemented in trading and exchange areas.

Having stayed with the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), ECX Corporate Communication Head, Netsanet Tesfaye has explained the activities that are being carried out by the institution. He said that the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange has been active for the past 15 years in Ethiopian

trade system. It started its service by trading 2 agriculture products namely wheat and maize, and at this time, it trades more than 17 agricultural products including coffee, sesame, and other spices. The institution has specific goals including making farmers advantageous, and it is building a systematic and modern or electronic way of doing business assisted by technology. Currently, the institution has 25 different branches across the country, and 6 of them are fully electronic. Such expansion of branches has created plenty job opportunities for young citizens.

Netsanet noted that in the course of the exchange, responsible stakeholders including customs bureaus, National Bank of Ethiopia, and Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration are all informed about the whole process. In this regard, every party; the farmer, the exporter, and the supplier, will pass through the tax system of the country. The institution, as to the head, has been taking numerous ways to uplift the entire system of doing business. The act of amending and fixing its rules and regulation for over 13 times could be a textbook example. Such action shows the institution's eagerness to make the system easy for its customers, he added.

According to Netsanet, the nation is at the better position in exporting agriculture products including wheat. When the institution became operational, Ethiopia was able to export wheat and maize, but the wheat exchange was stopped due to shortage of the product. Now, the nation is ready to bring its wheat product to the center.

The institution has prepared a document called 'Product Contract' to make the wheat and other agriculture products eligible for the export trade system. The document, Netsanet remarked, was returned after scholars and experts added ideas and recommendations for better practice.

This time, ECX is waiting for an answer from Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration to approve the document so that

the institution can start exporting cereals including wheat to global markets. "A trading guide has been prepared to introduce the commodities into the marketing system taking into account their role for foreign currency earnings and increase agricultural production and productivity," Netsanet noted.

The Communication Head further explained that a number of efforts have been made and several are in the pipeline to trade other agricultural commodities and species to the world market as the demand is observed. The actions and decision made by the institution has greatly supported the overall advancement of production and productivity of the nation's agriculture sector.

It is the fact that there is great demand for agricultural products in the global markets like rice and beans, and these products are being produced in a sufficient amount in Ethiopia. To help the nation secure its benefits from exporting those crops to the global markets, Netsanet stressed, the government and other responsible stakeholders are working to satisfy the demand.

In relation to wheat export, the communication head disclosed that the wheat production and the issue of exporting it to the world market have got a special attention. He also mentioned that there are a number of organizations that have extended their support the program for it have brought tangible results and effective.

Similarly, as the stakeholders are focusing on exporting agricultural products to foreign markets, there is huge demand in local markets, too. "For those factories that are working on pasta and macaroni products, we are planning to substitute the wheat demand that they have imported from outside with local wheat products. It will help the factories produce pasta, macaroni, and flour products to domestic consumption. This act of substituting export products with local ones brings tremendous advantages to the nation," Netsanet said.

# Art & Culture

## Culture diplomacy – What lessons to Africa?

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

Culture diplomacy or soccer diplomacy has won the day in Qatar. Although the Qatari team did not travel long during the month-long event, the organizers have definitely won the other competition, by offering, in the words of FIFA boss Gianni Infantino, the best World Cup so far. Western media outlets that tried to tarnish Qatar's image have been proved wrong. It is now up to them to encourage the organizers of the next World Cup i.e. the US, Canada and Mexico to work harder and give the soccer world the next best World Cup.

Last week in Doha, Qatar, as the World Cup game between Croatia and Morocco for third and fourth place was in the offing, there was a TV show depicting the launching of a fashion show nearby the stadium where the game was taking place. The fashion show was about Qatari couture that reflected its traditional attires for women that have been updated and modernized in order to reflect the present status of Qatar as a highly developed modern Arab country.

Qatar has not only shined by organizing an unprecedentedly high-tech and high standard soccer festival. It has also won the culture diplomacy or the soccer diplomacy by proving that it has organized the best World Cup as many commentators have agreed despite the criticisms and negative propaganda that was evident from the beginning to the end of the once in four years event.

The organizers of the fashion show took traditional costumes and simply gave them modern twists that appeal both to older and younger visitors. There were also jewelries on display that beautifully reflected the traditional materials that were worn by Qatari women when they were not as wealthy as they are now and gave them still more beautiful looks. Why has Qatar displayed its traditional costumes nearby the stadium? The answer is obvious. It wanted to sell its culture to the visitors who came to see soccer at the highest level. There are of course tourists among the throng of people who crowded the venues. How did the Qataris sell their culture? Simply by giving its old traditions new faces without abandoning their Arab and Islamic backgrounds. Whether in the Arab world or in Africa, the approach is similar. Modernization is not about inventing new things out of nothing but rather giving traditions modern touches and presenting them on different occasions. Fashion is culture but most of all it has become an industry in many parts of the world in general and in Africa in particular.

From Paris to New York, where some of the fashion houses produce the most unbelievably stylish designs, African designers have already carved out their niches. The latest brands in design and couture, promote the black and beautiful faces of African young women that are adorning the glossy fashion magazines. The fashion world is breaking old stereotypes that marginalized black or African women

who were considered not beautiful enough to work as models in fashion outlets.

These young Africans have broken the stereotypes and have repeatedly featured in beauty contests winning the top spots and, bagging in the meantime fat payments for their courage and efforts. Some of them have even opened their own fashion houses and modeling schools to promote the new fashion wave African women have pioneered only a few decades ago.

Qatar has added a new innovation as far as culture and culture tourism are concerned. The organizers have effectively promoted their country in this sense. Despite the controversies surrounding the Qatar World Cup, the organizing committee has proved its mettle by finishing the preparations on time and by doing an excellent job in all areas of the preparations, including culture, tourism promotion, and by elevating soccer tourism to a new height. More than 1.5 million foreign soccer fans have attended the events in addition of the millions local fans who could attaining a new level of soccer culture.

Soccer diplomacy has proved itself stronger than traditional diplomacy that is often exercised by professional diplomats living in foreign countries where their embassies promote their respective national interests. Soccer diplomacy does not require education, training or being stationed in embassies in different capitals of the world. In soccer diplomacy the actors are the fans and the meeting points are stadiums. You do not send diplomats but diplomats come to you. This was what happened in Qatar. Hundreds of thousands of fans who came to Doha were kind of "mobile diplomats" without knowing they were. They visited Doha, interacted or connected with the people, saw the culture of the country and spoke a few words of Arabic and talked soccer. Brotherhoods, connection, peace and inspiration must be the words most spoken or exchanged among fans from dozens of countries.

These were moments away from the usual gibberish and brutality of world politics. They forgot those brutal moments and turned their eyes and minds towards the most peaceful and most entertaining game on the planet. This was also true to those fans that followed the games on TV screens. They breathed sighs of relief as they turned their attention away from conflict news and were fixated on soccer for a month before returning to the boring and frightening realities of wars and economic hardships. That is why soccer diplomacy and soccer culture gives a positive alternative to bad news and daily boredom for the entire world.

Soccer was not usually the most celebrated sporting event in Arab countries. The fact that Saudi Arabia participated in this tournament and Qatar was the organizing country gave soccer in the Arab world new opportunities for growth and development in the near future. Qatar gave the inspiration not only for a new soccer culture in the Arab world. It also inspired the world an

opportunity for connecting and for mutual understanding without compromising its own culture and traditions.

The opening and closing events and the cultural displays in Doha proved this point. It was a display of modern Qatar without compromising its old traditions, religion and social aspirations. Some critics may argue that Qatar built this wonderful World Cup thanks to its foreign technology and the money spent to buy it. It is important to note at this point that even those who have invented the technologies have never managed to organize a World Cup that inspired the world in every way without forgetting once again that the next event will be organized by the US, Canada and Mexico.

What do we Africans can learn from the Doha World Cup as far as Soccer culture or soccer diplomacy is concerned? There are lots of lessons in store for us. First thing, we have managed to shine at this World Cup despite the early exit of teams like Senegal and Ghana. The Moroccans have made us all proud of our soccer performance or culture and gave us a new and solid basis to build our optimism in African football for the coming years and until the next World Cup.

African countries must now believe that they can do it as Morocco has done it through hard work at players and coaches levels. Most of all African players need to get a lot of experience from players in Europe and in other parts of the world. Second, they need to do a lot of inter-continental games in order to discover new talents who can shine on the international stage. FIFA and CAF have a lot of work to do in this area, besides providing the financial, technical and inspirational backing they are expected to give to African players on the continent. World football is changing and Africa has to change accordingly because it has proved in Doha that it can.

As far as selling our culture to the outside world, we Africans have ancient and rich traditions that we need to modernize and offer them to the world. We can learn for instance from the Brazilians who organize carnivals every year to attract the attention of tourists to their country and earn a lot of hard currency in the process. We in Ethiopia, have religious traditions that have earned international recognitions and that we could work harder to put them on the tourism market. Take the soon to come Ethiopian Christmas and Timket in particular.

Take also the Great Ethiopian Run, an annual festival that has started to attract global attention. We can perhaps upgrade it by combining culture events with it as the Qataris have done at the World Cup. These are rare occasions that attract visitors from every corner of the world. Sadly enough, we have not yet fully exploited them to our economic benefits and this is the time to be inspired by the Qataris or the Brazilians to launch an aggressive campaign to reach the global tourism consumer market which is vast and unexploited.



***Soccer diplomacy does not require education, training or being stationed in embassies in different capitals of the world. In soccer diplomacy the actors are the fans and the meeting points are stadiums. You do not send diplomats but diplomats come to you. This was what happened in Qatar. Hundreds of thousands of fans who came to Doha were kind of "mobile diplomats" without knowing they were. They visited Doha, interacted or connected with the people, saw the culture of the country and spoke a few words of Arabic and talked soccer***

# Science & Technology

## Creative youth who innovated aircraft, drones

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

Biruk Bekele is a youth in his 20s. He was born and raised in Wolaita Sodo town of Sothern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region of Ethiopia. Since his childhood, he has been focusing on innovating different things. “I was trying to make my own toys and playing gadgets when I was a child. Assembling and fixing metals and other materials made me happy when I was a kid,” Biruk said.

“My home, where I grew up, was around the airport in Sodo, I was witnessing the landing and taking-off airplanes. People of the community often gathered there to see planes alighting during their arrivals and similarly I went to the airport to see the planes with my friends. I was wonderstruck by how a plane functions and the physics that allows it to take-off from the ground to the space carrying people and vice versa. I think since then, the seeds of aircraft and aviation was ingrained in me.”

For Biruk, innovating new things has been his hobby and his source of happiness since early in life. In addition to making his own childhood playing materials, he continuously tried to fix and repair different materials from fallen inputs. He continuously developed this culture of innovation. After he joined school, this culture and hobby of repairing and innovating materials became a skill honed by education. He became an active member of science clubs in schools since his elementary education. His innovational ideas snowballed when he was in high school and preparatory school as he growingly became adept in mathematics and physics educations.

He tried his hands on practical innovations since his early high school education. So far, Biruk has come up with over 10 innovations of his own. This time Biruk has innovated his own designed drones on top of an aircraft he is striving to give birth to. Currently, he is attending his Master’s degree in Aerospace and specializing in the field to further his innovations.

Biruk attended his primary and secondary education in his abode Wolaite Sodo. Following his completion of high school and preparatory education, he joined Wolaita Sodo University to specialize in Mechanical Engineering, though his interest was attending Aerospace. As to him, it was impossible for him to get the chance of attending aerospace since the field was not given in Ethiopian higher education institutions until Ethiopian Space Science and Technology Institute started delivering courses in the field recently.

When effort realizes dream

Biruk pursues his education simultaneously with his innovational efforts to live his dream and to realize his vision. He continued to struggle undaunted by many difficulties, including financial limitations and attitudinal challenges, to effectuate his innovations. Biruk continued challenging his limits with all these odds and hurdles to innovate new things and develop his skills and knowledge.



As he joined mechanical engineering department in his higher education in his home town, on one side, he continued to imbibe theoretical knowledge and acquire practical experiences and on the other hand, he continued his innovations. Currently, he is struggling to have his own workshop to scale up his innovational activities. But, financial constraints remain to continue a serious challenge for Biruk.

Parallel to his education and innovational activities; he juggles part-time works for want of cash. To finance his science engagements, he was doing part-time works like electrical installations, assembling satellite dishes and repairing electrical stoves and other maintenances. The income he earns from his part-time works, though modest helped him to buy inputs for his innovations and to organize a workshop. Still, he continued to face financial limitations to consolidate his innovations. But, Biruk never says die discouraged by the challenges, Instead he expands and develops his innovational activities.

During the final years of his campus education, he focused on collecting workshop machines. “When I was in campus, as a student of mechanical engineering, I got the opportunity to attend different workshops and to practice laboratory activities. I was practicing the theoretical and practical experiences I get from my education in my workshop. Side by side, I was collecting materials and inputs for my workshop. Finally, during my graduation year from campus, I owned a small workshop,” Biruk told a local media.

“After graduation, though I got a chance to join Wolaita Sodo University as an instructor, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the global community. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, education was temporarily

closed. I used that opportunity to fully turn my face to my innovational works in my work-shop,” Biruk added. At this time, after he collected necessary inputs and materials, Biruk has started to make an aircraft, which finally become real.

After a long process, Biruk’s aircraft actualized in 2021, which he named EW-13. Regarding how he coined the word, Biruk said, EW-13 represents Ethiopia-Wolaita 2013, the first letters are names of Ethiopia, his mother country and Wolaita Sodo, his birth town, while 2013 represents the innovation year of the aircraft, as he finalized the plane in 2013 Ethiopian calendar, two years back.

According to Biruk, EW-13 has an engine capacity of flying up to four hours. “EW-13 successfully completed its ground-roll. But it needs adjusting some safety equipment. Few parts need modifications to takeoff,” he noted adding after adjusting and modifying remaining parts, the plane has the capacity to fly for four hours.

“I am captaining EW-13 and I love it from the core of my heart. I built it confronting different challenges especially financial ones. I built it deducting from the income I earned from the part-time maintenance and other installation works. Hence, I like the plane. It gives me hope and strength to continue my efforts,” Biruk highlighted.

Biruk’s innovation is not confined to innovating an aircraft; he has continued with his innovative passion. He has designed a technical aerial unmanned vehicle and launched his new innovation successfully. As to Biruk, the drones are multipurpose modern ones. “When I dreamed to innovate a drone, first I started with designing a drone that can fly successfully. I did that and the drones are now designed in a fashion they are multipurpose drones which can

be used for civil and military purposes by modifying the designs. By scaling-up these drones, it is possible to use them to different surveillances, border area surveys, for military and video and photography purposes,” the youth innovator stated.

Currently, parallel to his investment in innovational activities, Biruk is attending his MA program in Aerospace Engineering, a field of study started by Ethiopian Space Science and Technology Institute in collaboration with Addis Ababa University. “There are four students and the program is very helpful to realize my efforts,” Biruk stated.

Biruk got the chance to stage his innovational works at a workshop prepared at the recently opened Science Museum. His innovations were visited by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Kenyan President William Ruto at the Science Museum. The leaders praised his innovations and encouraged him to continue his efforts.

Meanwhile, Biruk “we are in the era of technology and promoting local innovations would accelerate Ethiopia’s efforts of transforming the technology. But, financial limitations remain a serious challenge for local youth innovators. Hence, he argues, supporting and promoting youth innovators should get added attention. Similarly, he urges the youth innovators to press ahead with their efforts to realize their vision instead of being hampered by challenges they faced.

In the future, Biruk has a vision of realizing his innovations fully and to support new innovators. Especially he is dreaming to contribute his own share in filling knowledge gaps in the aerospace sector for his country. He calls government and private sectors to support and finance local innovations.



# Society



## Choke mountains “best tourism village”

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

Ethiopia is a land where several fauna and floras are found and it is also a place where communities live in harmony with nature. However, for known or unknown reasons some of these natural endowments are neither properly utilized nor converted into tourist attraction sites at the desired level.

However, this does not mean that there are no areas that earn due attention from nature lovers and converted to be source of income for the community and places of recreation for tourists. Combining the natural blessings together with the special leadership skill, several places are turned into earthly paradise. The recently built parks Unity, Friendship, Entoto parks and others can be taken as good examples in this regard.

Once abandoned and shanty places are now changed into stunning tourist attraction sites. In addition to such areas, there are also several Eco villages that the nation enfolds within its beautiful landscape. Choke Mountains Eco village is among such tourist sites that earn global attention from nature lovers, become a source of income and lately recognized by The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as “2022 Best Tourism Village.”

The Choke Mountainous Village is situated at 300 KM from Addis Ababa and it is found in the Western Gojjam Zone, Dega Damot Woreda, Amhara State where a unique tourism experience that combines environmental protection, community wide tourism and unique tourism experience is found. It is also one of the Eco villages in Ethiopia that integrate social norms of the community with tourism and proper natural resource protection.

The Choke Village stands in a substantial patch of indigenous forest that supports Colobus Guereza, Menelik’s Bushbuck and the Common Duiker as well as a variety of endemic birds. Since the village is founded closer to a mountain river that forms many waterfalls and a forest, it has a refreshing environment to the mind and recreational value to the body.

An important watershed feeding the Nile Basin, Choke is cultivated up to the 3,300 meter contour, while higher altitudes



support an indigenous cover of grassland and moorland studded with giant lobelias and home to several highland endemics.

As documents indicate, the Mount Choke is the third highest mountain in Ethiopia. Rising to an elevation of 4,070m around 40km northeast of Debre Markos, this ancient volcanic massif (also known as Choke Terara) is incised by steep riverine valleys that held glaciers during the last ice age.

The UNWTO has selected Choke Village among 32 top Eco villages in 2022. Out of a total 32 villages from 18 countries, Choke Mountains Village is selected among the top and awarded the recognition.

“The Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO recognizes villages that are outstanding examples of a rural tourism destination with accredited cultural and natural assets, that preserve and promote rural and community-based values, products, and lifestyle and have a clear commitment to innovation and sustainability in all its aspects – economic, social and environmental,” a WTO statement published on Monday pointed out.

Welcoming the news, WTO Secretary-

General Zurab Pololikashvili said tourism could be a true game changer to the livelihood of rural communities and the Best Tourism Villages by WTO showcases the power of the sector to drive economic diversification and create opportunities for all villages outside big cities.

The Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO recognizes villages that are outstanding examples of a rural tourism destination with accredited cultural and natural assets that preserve and promote rural and community-based values, products and lifestyle and have a clear commitment to innovation and sustainability in all its aspects economic, social and environmental. The village is expected to be one of the stimulants for rural development and be a model village to introduce the untapped tourism and natural resources of the country. Choke village in this regard is a community based environmental protection ecosystem including amazing waterfalls, forests and wildlife and Blue Nile watersheds with unique flora and fauna.

Tourism is a true game changer in providing jobs, supporting local businesses and keeping traditions alive. The Best Tourism

Villages by UNWTO showcase the power of the sector to drive economic diversification and create opportunities for all outside of big cities. Ethiopia is pursuing a sustainable development policy. Using the available resources and the opportunities nature provides the country is pursuing a policy that nurtures sustainable development that benefits all.

The Best Tourism Villages initiative is the flagship project of the UNWTO Tourism for Rural Development Program. The Program aims to ensure tourism contributes to reducing regional inequalities in income and development, fighting depopulation, progressing gender equality and women’s and youth empowerment. Further, it is key in advancing innovation and digitalization, improving connectivity, infrastructure, access to finance and investment, innovating in product development and value chain integration, promoting sustainable practices for more efficient use of resources and a reduction of emissions and waste and enhancing education and skills, it was said.

The Program promotes multi-level governance and partnerships and the active involvement and empowerment of communities.

Following the reform of the nation, several sustainable development projects have been implemented all over the nation and effective results are being registered all over the country. The tourism sector, which is one of the areas that are given due attention by the government, is creating job opportunities for several Ethiopians, aside from building the image of the nation and preserving the traditional values of the country. In this regard, the achievement of Choke Mountains Eco village is worth appreciating and can also be taken as model tourist destinations for other Eco villages that are found in the country.

According to the statement, the award ceremony will take place in AIUla, Saudi Arabia, on 27-28 February, 2023 back-to-back with the first presidential meeting of the WTO Network of Best Tourism Villages.

It is recalled that spectacular Wonchi Crater Lake was recognized as one of the best tourism villages of 2021.



# This is Ethiopia

## Dagu: Afar people information exchanging culture

BY TEWODROS KASSA

Information is a decisive power, especially during this time of globalization. Several countries do have various their own platforms that help the society to exchange information and facilitate its socio-economic development.

In Ethiopia, the people of Afar, who are residing in the north eastern part of Ethiopia, are known for their numerous traditional values and well-established, unique traditional communication network.

The people share information and convey message through this traditional communication network called Dagu system.

Dagu, which is considered to be the fast information sharing system among the Afar people, is one of the values that have been passed down from generation to generation for the past several years until today. It has served as a great means of communication for many years without modern communication tools and is still serving as a traditional means of communication among the society. It is a traditional method of communication that has been conserved well by Afar people for centuries and cannot be separated from the Afar community's identity.

According to various researches done on Dagu, the Afar people are highly pastoral and semi-pastoral community who move from place to place in search of pastures and waterhole grazing for their animals. Thus, they need to have sufficient information about their society; and have developed a culture of asking anyone who is a member of their community about



Photo- Worqamba Tour

what is new around.

The people have a non-written agreement to share information/news to their society without any hesitation. According to the custom of the people, it is common to hold Dagu at any time, in any situation. If two Afar people met accidentally on the road, it is cultural responsibility to hold Dagu and exchange information about what is happening and what is new in their surroundings.

Every member of the community discharges responsibility by conducting Dagu; receiving and giving information. No one says "I am in a hurry."

The two persons will communicate about what is new in their surroundings. The first question Afar people Dagu when they meet begins with the phrases "what have your ears heard? And what have your eyes witnessed?"

The Dagu can be any item of public relevance, such as weddings, funerals, battles, new alliances, missing cattle or the like matters. Failure to pass

on relevant information is not only an offence to the conversation partner, but is harmful to the community.

In Dagu information exchange, the source of information is given special attention as false information is never tolerated. The person transmitting the information, who gave it to him; and chains of the information will be checked and rechecked.

To this end, misuse of Dagu is subject to punishment within customary law of Afar which has a prominent place in the Afar culture. Anyone who passes on unchecked or fake information is punished. Disseminating false or fabricated information is an unforgivable offense among Afars.

Different studies have given different interpretations about Dagu. The following are among the major manifestations of Dagu. It literally means news. Dagu means not only listening to and watching information, but also embraces the traditional

responsibility of passing on what someone have heard and seen to others as it is, without distorting the information.

In addition, if we see it from the perspective of modern technology, Dagu is a wireless fast data exchange method that uses no other technology. It is a traditional method of information sharing in which information reaches many people in a short period of time without using any technology. When the Afar received and inherited it from generation to generation for centuries, they inherited this great value from their ancestors to their grandchildren.

For Afar people, Dagu is part and parcel of their life. It is a mechanism manifested in their day to day activities, seen, done and expressed in every event. It is important because it explains in detail what is happening in the community and what has to been done. For the reason that Afar people move from place to place, holding Dagu has decisive role to have the required information in detail.

In Dagu information exchange, the source of information is given special attention, false information is never tolerated. The person transmitting the information has the responsibility to check who gave the information to him/her.

During Dagu, interrupting the one who is talking is strictly prohibited. Priority is given to the older person to start Dagu.

Dagu is one of the most understudied cultural heritages of the country. Promoting such tradition should be enhanced by enriching the values that are important for the modern world of communication.



## Published Bimonthly in Collaboration with Ethiopian Electric Power

### PPO main functions, achievements

BY DIRRIBA TESHOME

The Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) has been given the responsibility of building, managing and maintaining plants, transmission and substations, wholesale of electricity, compliance research, design and survey works.

In this article, EEP subsector, Power Plant Operations (PPO) Department main functions and achievements are discussed. These are based on an interview with Tiruwork Shiferawu, Planning Manager of the department.

For her, it is a department of the institute that carries out operations, maintenance, supply of spare parts, and water management of dams at the respective power plants. It manages only those stations which are completed and have fully started generating power. Accordingly, while managing 17 power generation stations, 13 of them are water, three wind, and one solid waste power generation stations.

Power Generation Operation provides security and maintenance services for the 17 power generation stations it manages. In relation to this, the manager explained that it is the responsibility of this department

to purchase and provide spare parts for the repair works.

A hydropower station has an average service life of 50 years; she specified adding that the wind power plant has 25 years durability. "All power generating stations are regularly monitored to ensure their safety and maintenance work is carried out as required."

Maintenance activities are divided into three categories: regular maintenance, light maintenance and heavy maintenance. "In the past, when there was employee capacity problem in dams and power generation units, it was foreign experts who did the repair work, but since 2020/2021 the experience of repairing problems faced has been developing by various power generation stations on their own.

The main reason for the ever-increasing self-repair capability of the stations was initiations or motivations created among the employees to fulfill EEP mission. "If the power generation stations are unable to perform the task of producing the required energy properly, the institution will not be able to effectively fulfill its national mission by providing electricity," she reasoned it out.

In consistent to this, the workers had the opportunity to repair the dams and units by using the experiences gained from the foreign professionals and the capacity building through training.

For example, one of the two units of the Tis Abai Hydropower Station was out of service for 10 years and only one unit was generating 36 megawatts. "Now, we maintained it to generate 72 megawatts on our own," she noted.

Consequently, EEP has saved an estimated cost of 850 million USD which was to be spent on foreign professionals for the maintenance works of Tis Abai - II, Gibe - II and Adama - I power stations. "The fact that it was able to fix the fault timely on its own has assisted it to prevent income loss due to the extension of work and disruption of power supply. Therefore, the sector is achieving the plan of saving foreign exchange and generating income," she calculated.

Furthermore, Koka and Awash-II Hydropower Stations are respectively 62 and 58 years old, she noted adding: "Repairing them on time on its own has helped to maintain their operation beyond the expected time avoiding major outages."

Additionally, power stations were not as diverse as they are now before ten years and there were times when power shortages occurred, the manager recalled the summer months when the water level was low.

After wind power and thermal power stations started generating power, it is used as an alternative; she noted mentioning that the diversification helps to overcome the shortage that occurs when there is water shortage and to properly manage water in the dams.

The other activities of the department are following each dam's water counts to generate power and time need to fill in advance. Wind and thermal power generators will be used to make up for the power shortage caused by the reduction of water levels in dams, and the time will be changed to reduce the pressure.

Therefore, by making most of the power generators whose water level increase during winter, and the wind speed from December to May is on average 10 to 17 meters per second, the pressure on the hydropower generators will be reduced and the power production will be done based on the current capacity of the power generation stations using wind energy, she concluded.