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Photo: Samuel Tesfaye



Preserving authentic values solidifies unity, fraternity

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA – Intangible heritages like *Timket* are factors of cohesion among the society, faith fathers and officials remarked, urging all to keep sustaining and preserving the values to posterity.

Speaking at the *Timket* procession in *Jan-Meda*, both sides underpinned the fact that values enshrined in the heritages would further promote peaceful coexistences among the diverse faiths in addition to fostering tolerance.

Timket festivity, which commemorates the Baptism of Jesus Christ in the River Jordan by John the Baptist, was colorfully marked yesterday at *Jan-Meda* by adherents of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). High-level government officials and foreign dignitaries, domestic and expat tourists were also in attendance at the grand event.

Addressing the congregation, the EOTC Patriarch Abune Mathias I emphasized the need for replicating the unity shown in the festival in day-to-day life. “Ethiopians all

over the world should work together with far-reaching concern and with brotherly love to strengthen our peace and unity.” Abune Mathias further stated that cooperation and good intentions benefit everyone.

It is necessary to act with a pure mind that embraces good deeds. “We need to ask ourselves if we have done something good. Selfishness, wickedness, and evil ways lead to destruction. It is necessary to make peace and live in repentance.” “It is necessary to put into action without hesitation the words

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Tourists vow to promote Ethiopia's tourism

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

GONDAR – Tourists said that they are to promote Ethiopia’s marvelous tourism, stating that they have been astonished by the peculiar celebration of the Ethiopian epiphany (*Timket*), the commemoration of the Baptism of Jesus Christ.

Many tourists from around the globe who attended *Timket’s* celebration with songs, prayers by church choirs and priests and followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church promised to promote the unique features of *Timket*.

Canadian Tourist Mishele who has come to Ethiopia for the first time told The Ethiopian Herald that *Timket* festivity is an amazing occasion that she has never seen in her life. “The festival and the culture of the people are very unique. In Canada, we don’t have anything like this. I am happy to visit Addis Ababa and Gondar. People here are very hospitable and everyone is very welcoming. Having a new experience, I would take a homework and special memory,” she said.

Mihuw who came from Poland for the first time to visit Ethiopia said, “I am making



Photo: Ashenafi Gudeta

some videos to encourage people from Poland to visit Ethiopia. *Timket* festival is really a soul touching. I can feel; this is very important holiday for all people. I enjoyed people’s hospitably.” He also stated that he had visited places like Addis Ababa, Harar, Jinka and Arba Minch.

Francica who came from Germany said, “I am happy to see this colorful ceremony. It is with amazement that we are enjoying the remarkable celebration of *Timket*; it is great to attend such occasion and we also will encourage other tourists to visit such incredible celebration.”

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Gezahegn Abate

Institute lays goal to push trained personnel to 60pc in 10 year

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Hotel and Tourism Training Institute announced a plan to increase trained hospitality professionals in the hotel industry to 60 percent in the next 10 years.

Institute’s Deputy Director-General Gezahegn Abate told *The Ethiopian Press*

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Adwa Zero Km Museum Project to see finalizations next year

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA-The construction of Adwa Zero Kilometer Museum Project, which was started three years ago, is progressing well, so stated Project Representative, expressing hopes to see its finalizations by the next year.

Project Representative Feleke Woldeyohannes (Eng.) told local media that the construction of the Adwa Zero Kilometer Project, which has covered 3.3 hectares of land and incorporated too many facilities, is progressively undertaken.

According to Feleke, the project has some 11 blocks, Adwa museum; city hall that can accommodate some 2,000 participants, offices, cinema halls, taxis and buses’ terminals, parking space that accommodates

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Making Addis Ababa the Biggest Hub of African Arts and Culture

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Promoting impactful technologies in the informal sector

News



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Addis to hold "Ethio-Health Expo, Conference"

• Expo to attract 100 exhibiting companies, over 4,000 attendants

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA-The 7thEthio-Health Exhibition and Conference will be held to grow network or develop relationships with existing clients and make new business connections.

Sales and Marketing Monitor at Prana Event, Christian Ezira, told The Ethiopian Herald that Ethio-Health Exhibition and Conference is scheduled to be held for 7th times from February 23-25 2023. Over the three days of Ethio Health would create direct contact with medical professionals, dealers, distributors, concerned government officials, association and NGO leaders, etc.

The event will be organized by Prana event and Prana Events is a full-service event management, marketing and consulting firm based in Ethiopia.

"The 2023 edition of the event is expected to welcome nearly 100 exhibiting companies and over 4,000 attendees. The conference will cover various topics such as healthcare, Medical and Pharmaceutical Field and others," she added.

The exhibition is the biggest International health care trade show in the east African region and the largest gathering of healthcare, trade professionals and it helps provide potential customers from across the country with relevant business information.

As to her, Ethio Health Exhibition is a healthcare business platform and a perfect avenue to showcase the latest products and services to an engaged audience that are looking for new business opportunities.

The event has proved to be a major platform that fuels the sector development through trade facilitation, market linkages, and introduction of new technology and transfer of knowledge for concerned stakeholders across the whole value chain.

The 6th Ethio-Health Exhibition and Conference was held successfully last year, and Ethio-Health is the premier, largest and comprehensive healthcare, medical, pharmaceutical and wellness technology, inputs and solutions international trade fair in Ethiopia.

MoI conducts preliminary study on damaged industries in Tigray

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA - Ministry of Industry (MoI) stated that it has been undertaking first round study to help manufacturing industries in Tigray State go operational soon.

Speaking to local media, MoI Public Relations Director Abeba Tamene said that the Ministry is working in cooperation with concerned bodies to start manufacturing industries soon in Tigray State.

Quoting the PR Director, local media reported that a delegation led by Ministry officials has headed to Tigray and has undertaken the first round research on war damaged industries, and it has observed the intensity of the damage at Mekelle Industrial Park, Sheba Leather Industry and Semayata Marble Factory.



The report added that following the peace deal, the ministry has been undertaking studies on manufacturing industries in conflict-affected places.

Based on the research, damaged institution, the amount of damage, the required material to get them functional and their current

status have been identified so as to reopen manufacturing industries.

Apart from observing all rounded situation to resume industrial operation, Ministry delegation discussed a range of issues with investors, manufacturing industry heads and stakeholders, as to her.

Free trade area creates opportunity for Africa's Youth: Youths say

ADDIS ABABA (ENA) - The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is an opportunity for young people to accelerate Africa's industrialization and economic transformation through entrepreneurship, youths say, calling for an enabling policy framework.

Through its Youth Protocol, the AfCFTA recognizes that young people can play a critical role in the achievement of the free trade zone by initiating youth-led initiatives in agriculture, financial technology, IT and in the creative industry.

However, they note that across the youth-dominant trade areas critical to the AfCFTA, the challenges of infrastructure gap, lack of access to modern technologies, funding, electricity and broadband internet keep the youth on the sidelines of the free trade area.

At an online presentation meeting organized by the Regional Integration and Trade Division (RITD) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), nine young mentees who have completed RITD's "Youth for AfCFTA Mentorship Programme", presented their final assignment to senior staff in ECA.

The youth participants highlighted that the AfCFTA presented huge entrepreneurship opportunities for them but that governments need to implement supportive policies and investment to ensure their participation.

Associate Expert in Economic Affairs, Market Institutions Section of the Regional Integration and Trade Division (RITD) at the ECA, Mie Vedel-Joergensen said mentees of the "Youth for AfCFTA Mentorship Programme" are winners of a competition launched in March 2022 which led to the mentorship programme in ECA.

The competition with the topic; "The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): What is in it for young Africans?" was developed by the Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa (YALDA) in collaboration with the AfCFTA Secretariat, Afrexim bank, the International Trade Centre (ITC), the UN Development Programme



(UNDP) and ECA.

The competition encouraged participants to develop essays, info-graphics or animation to communicate the potential impact of the AfCFTA on youth in Africa.

According to YALDA, the competition aimed to break information asymmetry among youth on the AfCFTA and promote a bottom-up approach to the policy formulation and implementation by harnessing innovative youth-driven solutions that will contribute to active youth engagement in the popularization of the AfCFTA.

Noting that young people can influence policy decisions in favor of the AfCFTA in addition to providing labor, Jessica Debby Ndjadila, mentee of the Essay group, said Africa's youth understood the technology enablers of the free trade area such as Information Technology, supply chain management, and financial technology.

"African governments should prioritize intellectual property rights protection," Ndjadila said, calling for fiscal policies to drive entrepreneurs into content distribution and the democratization of access to broadband connectivity.

Africa also needs to operationalize the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS), a centralized payment and settlement system for intra-African trade in goods and services developed in 2022.

The platform would increase the competitiveness of and investment in youth-dominated start-ups in Africa.

Another group of youth developed an infographic to highlight the benefits of gender inclusion in the AfCFTA.

Noting that Sub Saharan Africa was losing an average of 95 billion USD annually as a result of gender inequality, the youth felt that investment in mobile and digital solutions can bridge the gender gap in Africa where the proportion of women using the internet was 25 percent lower than men.

"Implementation of the AfCFTA would increase employment opportunities and wages for unskilled workers and help close the gender wage gap," said Richard Muraya, a youth whose group developed an info graphic highlighting the opportunity cost of gender inclusion in the AfCFTA.

The Director of Regional Integration and Trade Division at ECA, Stephen Karingi, said young people fully understand what the AfCFTA is all about and their information products should be promoted in giving policymakers the right narrative about the free trade area.

Besides, the youth have well demonstrated the potential of the AfCFTA and the issues that must be addressed by the protocols developed for the realization of the free trade area, the director added.

News

Sidama's financial transparency attracts businesses

BY BACHA ZEWDIE

ADDIS ABABA – The reform measures that are put in place for financial transparency is enhancing the interest and confidence of businesses and benefiting the public at large, Sidama State Finance Bureau said.

In an exclusive interview with the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), the Bureau Head Ararso Geremew (PhD) stated Sidama's becoming a new state is instrumental in taking outlandish measures in the financial sphere whilst poverty eradication is an utmost priority. As a manifestation of the commitment to ensure financial transparency, Sidama is employing Electronic Government Procurement next only to the federal government.

The provision of training and other capacity-building programs has played a vital role in equipping the personnel's



personality and helping them to shun

corruption and other malpractices and discharge responsibilities ethically. "This situation makes the state's finance sector attractive for potential stakeholders," he added.

Aiming to benefit the people of Sidama from the area's untapped potential and to attract potential investors, the state cabinet has been heavily engaged in the expansion of infrastructural connectivity and the provision of utilities including water and electricity. Accordingly, the majority of the state budget is allocated to road construction which is the blood vein of economic activities and helps the community to bring different products including coffee and fruits to the market.

The bureau head further highlighted that Sidama's immense investment opportunities coupled with the meticulous promotional activities are the reason for the growing desire of local and foreign investors to do business in the area. Yirgalem Agroindustry is a good example

in this regard for its world-class facilities including the uninterrupted provision of electricity, water, healthcare, banking, and other essential services.

"For instance, a factory engaged in avocado production earned 5.7 million USD exporting only 2/3 times last year. This indicates the state's potential for investment and we are inviting more investors to come and reap the fruit of their effort thereby contributing a share to Ethiopia's economic progress. Investors, local or foreign, who respond positively to the invitation will also create thousands of jobs to local youth."

Due to the rigorous efforts exerted by the state's administration, Sidama's internal income increased from 2.3 billion Birr in 2019/20 to over 10 billion Birr in the first six months of the current fiscal year. The five-fold income increment showcased the unwavering determination of the state administration at every level, Ararso emphasized.

Adwa Zero Km...

around , sport festivals' space, a fountain and children's playground. Particularly, the painting, mechanical working, and other finishing work at the parking station at present are carried out.

The surveillance system, mechanical works, and the regulation of the air system have also been seriously undertaken though a lot remains to be done regarding guideline systems.

He further stated the museum is designed in a way that allows to host Adwa's annual celebration Besides, the materials that are important to the construction works have been imported and the granite fold work will continue soon. It would also have standard

walkway.

As the projects are linked to one another such Meskel Square with the municipality, the municipality with Adwa zero project, it would greatly improve the city' look.

Furthermore, the Adwa museum has three levels with a view to showcasing the overall Adwa traits.

It was to be recalled that the Adwa project was started three years ago by allocating 4.6 billion Birr and is expected to be completed in a year. The construction has been carried out with China's Jangezu Contractor with Ethiopian Design Constructing Inspection Consultancy, it was learnt.



Adwa zero kilometer Museum project construction

Preserving authentic...

of our fathers that 'reconciliation should dry up the blood' by walking with a sense of unity. When this happens, we have the opportunity to straighten the crooked and reward the injured. In addition to this, it should be time to build our peace and unity," the patriarch remarked.

For Addis Ababa Mayor Adanech Abebe, the brotherhood and solidarity shown during the festivity should continue to be strengthened. Religious tolerance, absolute humility, and servitude are needed for peace to prevail in Ethiopia.

Timket, which is registered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has become a festivity for the whole of Ethiopia in addition to the followers of the Orthodox Tewahedo faith. "The sense of unity and humility seen on the occasion should be enhanced."

Adanech reiterated the city administration's consolidated efforts to ensure that public holidays including *Timket* are celebrated peacefully and will continue this effort in the future.

In his remark at the event, Culture and Sport Minister Kejela Merdassa noted that besides its religious significance, *Timket* is also a source of tourism. "We should jointly develop our culture and our country by using the important values and virtues found in all religions."

The celebration of *Timket* was widely marked while the procession in Gonder, among others, lures many tourists from across the globe. Unique markings had also gone in Shenkora, Batu, Lalibela, Sekota, Gambela among others. As peace prevailed in the northern part, faithful in Tigray also celebrated *Timket*.

Institute lays...

Agency (EPA) that efforts are being made to produce trained manpower by expanding training institutions nationwide and providing continuous and short training at technical and vocational colleges.

Noting hoteliers can act as ambassadors for Ethiopia's tourism to grow, Gezahegn indicated that consolidated activities have been underway to train them in the field and have an understanding of the profession. Hotels have a significant role to benefit and promote Ethiopia in the economic sector and the institute has supported them to produce trained professionals in the field in addition to providing hospitality services.

The institute has also carried out various activities to produce professionals who are trained in the field and have skills, knowledge, interest, and ethics. The flow of tourists to Ethiopia will be greatly enhanced when the service is handled by trained professionals and the situation will benefit

both the hotel owners and the country.

"We have been providing needs-based training in areas ranging from short training to degree programs in the hotel and tourism sector, respecting Ethiopian culture. The institute has also been nurturing experts in hospitality, food preparation, food and beverage regulation, housekeeping, laundry services, and other areas of the hotel."

Efforts will be made to produce 10 qualified polytechnics in the current fiscal year by using hotel and tourism training centers in the states as centers of excellence. In particular, plans are being made to empower polytechnics working in the sector with resources, manpower, and capacity.

The institute has been hugely engaged to maintain and strengthen the culture of hospitality for which the country is known in the past, and will consolidate its engagement in nurturing qualified professionals in the field, the deputy director general remarked.

Opinion

Ethiopia cannot afford to miss the dividends from the peace accord

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

The signing of the Agreement on the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the TPLF ushered several strategic local and regional opportunities that will have a far reaching positive results for sustained peace, socio-economic development and image building for the country and for East Africa at large.

The country has now entered a new phase in which the gains of all the peace efforts here and at the international level should bear the desired fruit through concerted efforts of all. When it comes to the necessity of peace in Ethiopia, nobody with sober mind is expected to sit on the fence or chose to be neutral.

Ethiopia still faces a number of challenges that are still lingering around for the last 50 years. Peace is so special for Ethiopia because the survival, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country depend upon the prevalence of permanent peace in the country. Peace involves more than silencing the guns.

The Agreement is historical from two perspectives. It showed that Ethiopians have all the capacity required to solve their multi-faceted problems through constructive talks based on the needs, interests, values and attitudes of citizens. At the national level it vividly demonstrated that the desires of the sovereign people of Ethiopia prevails over class, ethnic, politics and the interests of political parties and institutions. Apart from the geographic boundaries and the natural resources of the country, all Ethiopians here and overseas constitute the overarching entity of Ethiopia.

Those with ethnocentric views today think the way they do simply because Ethiopia has brought them up, taught them at schools and provided them with the provisions that the country can afford. Unfortunately, they deny that Ethiopia is a united entity with the necessary diversity and that they are indebted to this historic country. It is not only shameful but also idiosyncratic to belittle Ethiopia and its united people. Ethiopia is not a fairyland. It is African and part of the human community. Liberating oneself from whom? For what purpose? And why? The agreement had set a historical blow to extremism and bookish political demagoguery that preaches exclusiveness under the guise for self-determination and democracy. The author thinks that this Agreement has far deeper meaning than anticipated.

The western powers thought that Africans lack the ability to solve their own problems and suggested that they are the saviors for all the iniquities of the continent. They played one against the other and used local stooges to ignite civil war across the continent. They used puppet regimes to challenge Pan Africanism.

Today, AU, the continental organization has proved itself to have the full capacity to resolve African problems in the African

way. The Agreement is therefore a big success for African Union as well in its practical effort for rolling back interference into the internal Affairs of African countries. The AU has proved to be an important global partner for ascertaining regional and international peace

Indeed, there is still more to be desired for restoring total peace in northern Ethiopia. Despite the efforts made and the successes gained, there are still elements in the country and overseas who believe that might is right. There is a greater need to shift from relief spoon feeding to rehabilitation and fully fledged development programs in the north and the entire country. Drought, various diseases, acute shortage of potable water is still hanging over the country.

Liquidator politicians who strive to find their own niche in the political system of the country are busy sowing discord, hate politics and suspicion among citizens here and abroad through social media outlets. This is part of the containment policy that some neighboring countries and the west are trying to implement on Ethiopia.

The peace issue in northern Ethiopia is not an affair only between the AU, FDRE and TPLF. It is important that the population who suffered from the war must be part of the process of defending and nourishing the peace accord. They must be supported to own it, nourish it so that it would not be hijacked by gun tottering hooligans.

The crux of the matter is to ask and ponder on how the peace process should be turned into a national agenda of converting the gains of the accord into a meaningful development agenda. People in other parts of Ethiopia are still suffering and getting killed by blood thirsty so called "liberators" and these needs to be stopped if the peaceful situation in northern Ethiopia should prevail in a more permanent manner. Ethiopians can fully enjoy the relative peace in the north when peace is effectively restored in the rest of the country. Those who speak of peace and demand it on a clean plate should contribute their part in ensuring sustainable peace for Ethiopia.

The author of this article is amazed of the public and even official perception of peace in this country. It must be noted that peace could be at stake if we take it to mean in its ordinary meaning of silencing the guns. People, who are hungry, dislocated or those who have lost contact with their kith and kin or those who lost their entire property may not be expected to be peaceful. It is important to conduct the relief and rehabilitation programs in a more developmental manner to avoid any level of dependency syndrome. It is useful to link up the rehabilitation of the infrastructure and service delivery facilities with a kind of employment generating schemes in which beneficiaries can gain from the entire national program. In one word, this projects need to be participatory.

Civil Society organizations and religious institutions can play an important role not only in conducting relief programs across

Peace is so special for Ethiopia because the survival, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country depend upon the prevalence of permanent peace in the country. Peace involves more than silencing the guns.



the country but also take concrete steps in organizing peace and reconciliation projects and programs not only in the northern part of the country but also among the needy population in eastern, southern and western part of the country.

The author is aware of the fact that the Ministry of Health has prepared a 3 years national program in which massive rehabilitation of health facilities will be rehabilitated and become fully operational not only in northern Ethiopia but also in regions that are affected by conflicts and natural and manmade calamities across the country. The health plan could be effective if it is linked up with agricultural package programs which could be planned by the Ministry of Agriculture as well as the Ministry of Education and the Climate Change and Environmental Protection Commission.

Millions of children are out of school due to the war and devastating conflicts and instability in various parts of the country. Children in very difficult conditions who have lost both or one of their parents remain traumatized and depressed if the necessary socio-psychological therapy is not provided to them. Both the Ministry of Health and Education need to act in a more coordinated manner by also involving the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs as well as the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. International and local NGOs working

on children and women's affairs also need to coordinate their activities among themselves and the ministries to maximize the all rounded benefits that children and their mothers, widowed women and victims of rape can receive.

The apparent rapprochement between the Ethiopian Government, western countries, UN systems and international financial magnets like the IMF, WB could create an ample opportunity for funding the various national relief and rehabilitation programs that could also link up with energizing and accelerating the regular planned development programs of the country. Here experiences gained during the two years' war could serve as a springboard for more vigorous and well targeted diplomatic activities.

The political parties in the country are now confined only to issuing press releases that are of no value when it comes to resolving the immediate needs of the country may be useful for media consumption but what practical activities could they undertake in helping to resolve the immediate needs of citizens? This must be seriously considered.

The AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission is already busy on monitoring the implementation of the AU sponsored peace accord. The AU also needs to help Ethiopia in the country's efforts to promote reconciliation among the entire population in the three regions of northern Ethiopia by sharing its expertise and practical experience it has accumulated.

It must be noted that the AU played a decisive role in bringing peace on track after a year of continued effort to bring peace to northern Ethiopia. In this context, Ethiopia is indebted to the AU while the country is also doing its best to ensure lasting peace and security in the African region. Ethiopia can use the current favorable diplomatic situation to reaccelerate her efforts to help AU achieve its objectives in a more dependable manner.

The stakeholders in the entire peace process in northern Ethiopia have done a great deal of contributions in bringing the Agreement on Permanent Cessation of Hostilities to its current level. The Ethiopians and Citizens of Ethiopian Origin in the overseas, various Ethiopian councils in the US and Europe, thousands of citizens across the world, the UN systems have rendered immense contributions to make the Agreement see the light of day and all Ethiopians here and abroad are expected to strengthen, safeguard and promote the prevalence of lasting peace in the entire country. Peace in Ethiopia means peace in East Africa and the entire continent.

It is therefore important that every Ethiopian strive for peace not only in the northern part but also in the entire country.

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

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Editorial

Peaceful *Timket* celebration has heralded country's return to normalcy

The Ethiopian government over the past months has been taking grand yet swift measures to end conflict and restore tranquility in the country. The Pretoria peace deal penned between the government and Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) has made a mammoth difference in bringing the devastating conflict that raved the country for two years. Unlike this year, the country was marred by conflicts that ignited human carnage and incalculable property damages.

Outdoor festivals were being held under strict and huge police presence with uncertainty hanging over the country; people were feeling insecurity while foreign missions issued travel warnings affecting the flow of tourists to the country. External pressure was high and media propaganda was intense, ultimately besmirching the good image of the country. It was also balefully painted as a country chaos due to the hoax stories of some unethical media outlets. These trends have cast a shadow on the country's socioeconomic and religious undertakings.

But, following the Pretoria peace deal and other steps, the incumbent put in place, strained diplomatic relations have eased and the country is back to normalcy. Communities in the northern part of the country have begun breathing a sigh of relief. And, this week, the country colorfully and peacefully celebrated epiphany (Ethiopian *Timket*).

This outdoor festival inscribed by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization as one of the world's intangible heritage attracts tourists from all corners of the world. *Timket*, Ethiopia's Feast of the Epiphany, is one of the highest and holiest holidays in the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian calendar and

is celebrated on 19th January every year. This year, as usual, it has been celebrated in enthusiastic style with three days of the festival, beginning on the eve of *Timket* with awe-inspiring processions.

The religious festivity brought together diverse communities with peculiar cultures and dressing styles with foreigners attending the processions in wonders. But given the situation of the country in the last two years, this year's colorful *Timket* celebration sends a clear message that Ethiopia is able to make peace within itself and that peace is indeed returning. The presence of huge foreign tourists means improved security and enhanced diplomatic relations. It also heralds the country's path to healing and recovery. The country however is not without challenges. Restoring sustainable peace, addressing conflicts in various pockets of the country and other setbacks requires scaling up the positive developments. Ethiopia surely will be best suited to harness its tourism potential and promote its eye-catching religious and cultural values once full peace is archived. For the time being the peaceful celebration of *Timket* over sequences of days attests to the people and the government of Ethiopia's resolve to solve their internal problems and back the country to normalcy. In this regard, the development and aid partners should contribute their roles in supporting government's efforts in rebuilding and rehabilitating the conflict-affected areas.

In sum, the colorful celebration of the holiday in every corner of the country is the clearest indication that the peace and stability in country are progressively improving due to the relentless of the government in taking swift measures to restore circumstances following the Pretoria peace agreement.

Opinion

Why we should fend off procrastination

BY MENGESHA AMARE

It is recurrently heralded that time is a precious asset to entail, no doubt, that every activity needs to be well performed right now not to jam the air allotted to carry out the next task using the upcoming minute. Unequivocally, no one can pessimistically argue perhaps, piling up tasks over tasks opens loop holes to make a vicious circle of indolently running activities.

The questions how many times people put off the same task that should have been dealt with today for any other time and in how many areas of their life do they procrastinate?, should be well replied to with a view to vividly revealing the negative repercussions of procrastination and digging out the real causes of task postponing nostalgia.

I would like to cite something practical in this regard from which I have been drawing important lessons and try to work out in life. I do have two opposing relatives concerning valuing time. My uncle, a brother of my mother, once had a habit of putting off tasks until later, and he could hardly correct this style as it has been entrenched in his mind, a habit if I say. On the contrary, a nephew of

mine at his age is very strict and nothing would grab his attention unless he has effectively dealt with whatever he started, even he always says it is necessary to put food items (not susceptible to state of being perish) not tasks or undertakings for tomorrow at all as postponing works has fundamentally affected effectiveness and productivity. As I learn from two sides, especially from the latter, not the former, procrastination is quite bad habit that opens doors to be inefficient, poor and labeled inefficient and lousy.

I have understood the negative repercussion of procrastinating tasks since I was a grade nine student and sporadically went to my aunt's son home and saw what he had been doing at his shop and garden. He has remained effective contrary to the former. Cognizant of the fact that procrastination would potentially affect productivity in various ways, many are trying to avoid this habit, but how?

As far as my experience is concerned, procrastination can seriously affect effectiveness in the world of work, proper academic performance and productivity, be it individual or company level, as rushing to complete or deal with undertakings at the last minute may lead to mistakes apart from bearing stress, anxiety as well as depression against

one's normalcy.

I think, taking what my nephew has been accustoming himself all the time to effectively deal with what is expected of him overcoming the sense of procrastination of course, concentrating on a task before moving on to the next one, prioritizing a to-do list, rewarding oneself when they accomplish difficult task on time or early and setting up a workplace free of distractions are the pivotal steps which everyone should comply with to avoid the spirit of procrastination.

As learnt from experiences and practical observations, one can easily deduce that the common symptoms of procrastination, among others, finding it delightful to extend timelines, underestimating one's job, behaving lame during work hours, over perfectionist and being sluggish to deal with difficulties all the time.

When the life satisfaction level drops, it leads to being lethargic, unmotivated and full of unenthusiastic gesture.

Whenever I procrastinate, for example, I tend to focus on short term gains rather than long term benefits. This makes me lethargic overtime and this move is really tantamount to eating fast food instead of finding nutritious meals.

Those who are fond of procrastination all the time lose interest in work and they find themselves constantly distracted and easily bored with work. Even procrastination is linked to physical illness. If someone is committed to walk the talk and take appropriate actions, procrastination will fade away.

Personally, I find something attractive in the idea of doing things rather than just talking about them. If people delay a task, they are delaying the whole undertaking as a piled up tasks always take the time of carrying out others as per their right order.

Needless to state, procrastination is a common problem that affects everyone at some point in their lives and in history. The good and lucrative means that needs to be well entertained is that it can be overcome through self-awareness, self-discipline, willpower, and other doable solutions like carrying out activities on time.

Generally, it is quite useful to well comprehend that the most common effect of procrastination is that it leads to poor performance and low standard thereby exacerbating life time regret.

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

Business & Economy

Biodiversity treaty: The root causes of nature's destruction

A major biodiversity conference, recently concluded in Montreal, Canada, was billed as the event that will decide the “fate of the entire living world”. All well then that the meeting closed with what has been hailed as a “historic” breakthrough: a deal to protect 30% of all land and water on Earth by 2030.

How historic is this deal, really? Judging from the effect of protected areas and major environment meetings over the last few decades, we should not get our hopes up. In fact, this deal may force us to reconsider the usefulness of such meetings altogether.

If there is anything that defines the history of mainstream conservation it is the steady rise of protected areas, covering about 2% of the globe in the 1960s to around 17% now. This progress was incredibly difficult, and still created many ineffective “paper parks” where species are protected from hunting and other threats in name only. Worse, it bred human rights abuses and violence as people were excluded from land that was declared off-limits.

If it took 60 years to get to 17%, how realistic is a near-doubling of Earth's protected areas over the next eight years? And how will it, despite the pact's rhetoric of placing indigenous peoples at the centre of conservation, ensure that the violence of the past is not repeated?

All this is left to the more than 190 countries under the treaty to implement. Given the pressures of the extinction crisis and the

increasing militarisation of conservation, we have little faith that history will now suddenly work out differently.

The real problem is non-negotiable

Even if 30% of Earth was protected, how effectively would it halt biodiversity loss? The proliferation of protected areas has happened at the same time as the extinction crisis has intensified. Perhaps, without these efforts, things could have been even worse for nature.

But an equally valid argument would be that area-based conservation has blinded many to the causes of Earth's diminishing biodiversity: an expanding economic system that squeezes ecosystems by turning ever more habitat into urban sprawl or farmland, polluting the air and water with ever more toxins and heating the atmosphere with ever more greenhouse gas. These structural problems are mentioned but not actually addressed at global environmental meetings.

Such meetings have become elaborate affairs eagerly organised by host states to reap tourist income and diplomatic goodwill. The idea is that conferences allow countries to negotiate global frameworks for tackling multiple, overlapping crises. Clearly, the planetary scale of environmental change requires cooperation at all levels.

After the Second World War, multilateralism based on cooperation between states developed out of a sense of hopefulness and led to global conventions for addressing common challenges in many areas,

including the environment. The 1987 Montreal protocol helped close the hole in the ozone layer. The CITES ivory ban has helped alleviate pressure on African elephants since 1989.

But that era is now over. UN summits have become little more than travelling circuses filled with desperate hopes but no real-world influence. Their meetings, announcements and deals are comprised of increasingly trivial language games, empty promises and non-decisions – many about the functioning of the convention itself. After every summit, small and sometimes major wins are celebrated as the breakthrough the world has been waiting for. But what have they actually done for the problems they are supposed to address?

Recent climate change summits have done very little to halt the growth in CO₂ emissions. And the Convention on Biological Diversity, which led this latest meeting in Montreal, was hobbled at its origin in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. Here it was decided to split climate change and biodiversity across two conventions, fundamentally placing them on two different tracks when scientists argue that they need to be addressed together.

It was also decided to render biodiversity, especially genes which might be valuable for industries such as pharmaceuticals, into “natural capital” that could be traded internationally. This enshrined capitalist ways of comprehending the environment at the outset of this process and entrenched

a logic of turning nature into commodities. In short, the logic of the problem – the promotion of an ever-expanding economy – became the logic of the solution.

And so, there is a case to be made that international treaties actually deepen environmental destruction by making the problem seem soluble without changing a deeply unsustainable global economic system. They promote carbon offsets, biodiversity credits, no net loss (the idea that negative and positive consequences for biodiversity can be balanced as if on an accounting sheet) and other non-solutions. Fundamentally missing is a plan for an economy that accepts ecological limits to growth.

While more protected areas may alleviate the damage to some ecosystems and species in the coming years, their historical failure to prevent accelerating extinctions is not encouraging. We may still celebrate the international community coming to an agreement. But high expectations, big promises and negligible results have become the hallmark of UN environmental meetings.

We must therefore ask: have they become empty institutional hangovers of a lingering status quo that must be abandoned? Or is holding on to the fraying shreds of multilateralism worth the effort, even if they are becoming little more than extravagant witnesses to unfolding disaster?

COVID hit companies hard. Why some kept their sustainability commitments and others didn't

Covid-19 has had profound implications for the “role of business in society”. One of them is the pandemic's effect on companies' sustainability strategies. These are efforts to avoid companies' harmful impacts on the environment and communities, and to enhance the positive impacts.

The pandemic may cause companies to cut costs and restrict their sustainability strategies. Alternatively, the crisis may focus managers' attention on the dependence of their business on broader social systems. And it may bring about a willingness to collaborate to address shared problems.

We explored this issue by studying how 25 companies responded to the pandemic in four African countries: Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, and South Africa. We discovered that crises could either restrict or strengthen companies' sustainability efforts. Their reactions depended on how different contingent factors interacted with each other.

Our findings have practical relevance for managers, investors, policy-makers, and initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact. The Global Compact enrolls companies to support the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is useful to recognize when and why some companies restrict their sustainability efforts in response to a crisis. This can help design support measures to avoid such restriction going too far. It is also useful to know why other companies actually strengthen their sustainability efforts in a crisis.

Innovation or rigidity

There is long-standing interest in whether crises

and threats constrain or enable organizational change and innovation. Some have argued that crises lead to innovation. That's because they motivate managers to address problems, take risks, and learn.

In contrast, others have argued that a crisis will lead to a rigid organisational response. Managers restrict information processing, emphasise control, and conserve resources. Such constricting responses have been highlighted by studies of companies' sustainability responses to crises such as the 2008 financial crisis.

A great deal of research has tried to identify the factors that influence whether organizations innovate or become more rigid in a crisis. For example, an innovation response is probably more likely when the crisis is not too severe, or if the organization has some resource slack.

However, the literature is inconclusive, especially for a crisis as multifaceted as Covid-19. We argue that this is partly because the contingent factors interact with each other. These interactions need to be better understood.

A configurationally approach

To study the interaction effects between different factors that shape organizational crisis responses, we used Qualitative Comparative Analysis. This allows us to systematically compare our case study companies using both qualitative and quantitative data.

Our analysis helped us identify five configurations. Two of them contribute to companies strengthening their sustainability efforts in response to the crisis. Three of them give rise to restricting responses.

Strengthening responses

We identified two explanations for strengthening responses. “Building on strengths” characterized those companies that had a strong sustainability commitment before the crisis. They also had some resource slack. These companies were able to use their strengths to expand their sustainability efforts. These strengths included well-supported sustainability managers with skills and diverse relationships that could be used during the crisis.

But we also found some companies adopted a strengthening approach even though they did not have a mature sustainability strategy. They were motivated by a lack of governance stability and effectiveness in their national context. This was worsened by the crisis. We called this “governance gap-filling”.

In some cases, companies tried to fill governance gaps because of humanitarian concerns. In others, companies' own operations were constrained by such gaps. For example, the benefits of solar power were shown during the crisis for one of our case study companies, because the Nigerian state struggled to ensure reliable power or security for diesel refueling teams.

Restricting responses

We identified three explanations for “restricting” responses. The “hard hit” explanation applied to companies that were directly and severely affected by the crisis, and did not have resource slack to cushion the blow. This included companies especially in the travel and tourism sectors.

“Low-road business-as-usual” dynamics

applied to companies that had low sustainability maturity and also limited resource slack. They had little motivation or ability to expand or even maintain their sustainability commitments.

Finally, “bunkering down” explains how some companies restricted their sustainability efforts because they saw in the crisis an increase in unpredictability in their operating context. This occurred in those countries where the governance context had been deteriorating. So, declining governance quality combined with the crisis to motivate managers to restrict their sustainability efforts.

Contributions and implications

Our analysis extends understanding of organizational responses to crises in three ways. First, we show the benefits of considering contingent factors together - not independently of each other.

Second, we highlight the role of governance context in organizational crisis responses. This includes the stability and effectiveness of governance at one point in time. It also considers changes in governance quality over time.

And third, our findings show how prior sustainability investments allow companies to “build on strengths” when responding to a crisis. This creates benefits for the companies as well as stakeholders – at a time when they need them most. This should provide further incentive for managers, investors and others to motivate for sustainability investments when times are good.

(Source: *The Conversation*)

Art & Culture

Making Addis Ababa the biggest hub of African arts and culture

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

In April 1966, artists from across Africa and also black performers from the Diaspora had gathered in the Senegalese capital Dakar and took part in what is known in history as The First World Festival of Negro Arts. Since then African arts have made big strides in terms of recognition and impact in the global world of cultures although no other African capital city has come forward to organize a festival of arts comparable to the one that took place more than half a century ago. That was the biggest artistic and cultural event that took place in the era of decolonization.

Africa obviously needs a comparable event to take place in any African capital in this time of globalization when the cultural values and legacies of the great African artists are being challenged by the more aggressive cultural forces of a post-colonial world. This is a time for Africa to rise once again and show the world that it has gone a long way in defending its identity and vision for a world where the cultural legacies of Africans should be respected and celebrated.

Dakar was chosen to organize the first black cultural festival for its vibrant contributions to the growth of African arts through its president, the late Leopold Sedar Senghor who was also one of the best black poets and philosophers in a world dominated by Europeans. Commenting on the purpose of the first African artistic festival, Senghor was quoted as saying that, the Dakar festival was an elaboration of the new humanism which this time will include all of humanity on the whole of our planet earth."

It may be now time to hold the second festival of black arts as a reaffirmation of the vision articulated above by the late Senegalese president. Such a festival can be organized in many African capitals that are potential candidates, including Addis Ababa that, in the last fifty years since Dakar has grown into an African and global metropolis best suited to locate not only the focus of black arts but also to host the second international festival of black art.

Addis Ababa is generally considered the diplomatic capital of Africa. That is true because the former Organization of African Unity (OAU), the then African Union (AU), major international and UN regional agencies and numerous non-governmental groups were established here in the Ethiopian capital and continue to serve the continent and its people. Ethiopian leaders and intellectuals have greatly contributed to the functioning of these organizations. The very idea of African unity although raised and promoted by African leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and others, the struggle for its practical realization was fought under the leadership of the late Emperor Haile Sellassie and his highly educated and talented diplomatic entourage.

All this is an achievement that is worth celebrating for generations. In order to assume this honorable place, Addis Ababa has labored for more than 120 years of construction, renewal, and systemic changes as well as major economic and political metamorphoses. The history of African capital suggests that some of them have long histories of existence as urban centers while others were established by the former colonialists. Addis Ababa is a city imagined, built and developed by its own people. Not only entire people of Ethiopia are entitled to ownership of the city but all Africans and black people living anywhere in the world have a stake in Addis Ababa as a symbol of black identity, consciousness and spirit. As indicated above, the spirit of African unity and identity was born here in Addis Ababa and is still going strong because the spirit is alive and will remain so.

However, Addis Ababa does not only represent the African spirit. It also reflects African and black arts and culture and black consciousness that was born in the post-Adwa anti-colonial struggle and continued under colonialism and neocolonialism. This is a spirit that is also serving as a bond linking Africans and guiding them to a common destiny. However arts and culture in the modern global context should grow and develop in a conscious, articulated and planned manner and not as a spontaneous manifestations of human relationships and people's interaction with nature and their surroundings. In this sense, Addis Ababa needs to develop in a way that it will reflect African common aspirations, cultural practices, spiritual bonds and intellectual creativity.

Ethiopia is entitled to play this role due to the particular contribution it has already made in the development of black arts and culture. According to available information, "The multi-ethnic culture and traditions in Addis Ababa date back more than 3000 years. Today there are more than 80 different languages spoken between all the different groups of people who fall into four major groups-Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic and Nilo-Saharan."

In addition to being the cultural representative of all the people of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa is also a microcosm of African cultures, arts and spirits because of the similarities among all the cultural practices of Africans on the continent. Addis Ababa is also a kind of Africa in microcosm because the cultural practices of Ethiopians and Nigerians or those of Sudan and Egypt or Senegal and Somalia have common factors they shared and borrowed from one another their centuries of coexistence, interdependence and coexistence.

The 3rd pan African Cultural Congress that took place in Addis Ababa back in 2012 stressed on the role of culture in Africa's development and integration by saying that, "Culture is seen as a sector which can greatly contribute to the sustainable development

of African nations and the continent as a whole. For at least 40 years, the notion of 'the cultural dimension of development'- that culture is integral to development, and that cultural development and planning must be incorporated into and cut across other sectors such as economic, social and human development has been recognized internationally and within Africa."

Despite repeated calls for the promotion of African culture as an integral part of its development aspiration, little has so far been done for the practical realization of this important concept. No particular country or city in Africa has so far to take the initiative in launching and building a strong cultural integration process in Africa. Things cannot continue as they were in the past, given the dynamics of development in the world whereby all major global metropolises have established themselves as centre of economic, financial, diplomatic and cultural centers. New York is the financial hub of the world because all major transactions and decisions are taken in an area known as Wall Street in New York. Paris has already established its popularity as a cultural and intellectual hub of Europe.

Brussels in Belgium is the diplomatic centre of Europe. In Asia Hong Kong is a financial and economic artery of many Asian economies. By the same token, there is no reason why Addis Ababa cannot become the artistic and cultural centre of Africa not only because all the major continental and international political and economic agencies are found here but also because of Ethiopia's legitimate claim as the genesis and spearhead of Africa's artistic and cultural development since the time of the Axum's hegemony as a culturally and economically dynamic Empire in the first six centuries AD.

According to Stuart Munro-Hay, author of the celebrated book entitled, "Aksum-An African Civilization of Late Antiquity", "We have a certain amount of evidence of the remarkable development of elaborate variations of the cross motif for which Ethiopia is even now very notable, was in full swing in Aksumite times. On the coins, the cross is gradually expanded to a design gold inlay accompanied by additional features like crosslets on the arms and various shaped frames..."

Speaking of music during the Aksumite period, Stuart says that, "The language of the Aksumite kingdom was Ge'ez (Ethiopic) a Semitic tongue assumed (but not proven) to have an ancestry in old Arabian..." adding, "A fair number of inscriptions have been found dating from pre-Aksumite times and written in the epigraphic South Arabian script at such places as Yeha Haskaseh and Hawelti-Melazo..."

Writing of music, Munro-Hay maintains that, "The liturgical music used even today, and preserved both by memory and as a musical notation is attributed to the deacon Yared who lived in the reign of Kaleb, son of Gabra Maskal, in the sixth century. He is

said to have so improved the dull chants of his time that in a performance before Gabra maskal both chanter and king so absorbed that the king's spear, on which he was leaning, pierced Yared's foot without either noticing."

Regarding literature and literacy during the Aksumite era, Munro-Hay writes that, "Of Aksumite literature...we know that between the fifth and seventh centuries the Bible and other works began to be translated into Ge'ez (in some cases by Syrian /Aramic speakers thus absorbing certain additions to the vocabulary the Ge'ez language) Traces of early Biblical translations survive in the form of quotations in some of the manuscripts....The Ge'ez royal inscriptions themselves show an accomplished use of the language and well exploit the propaganda medium provided by them."

The above are a few quotations from a book of 227 pages that dwell at length on the centuries-old history of Ethiopian arts and culture that, we think provide a convincing evidence that the country can use this long history in order to build an authentically African arts culture and literature by absorbing the other experiences in other parts of Africa. Ethiopia, and by extension Addis Ababa may be able to play the role of cultural hegemony that the Aksumite Empire played back in the 6th and 7th centuries.

This is however easier said than done and cannot be achieved by political means or through resolutions of cultural conferences. This can only be achieved by Ethiopians and their African brothers and sisters who are engaged in the cultural and artistic fields who have the motive or the driving force for such a huge and unprecedented endeavor. African politicians on the other hand can contribute by promoting this continental ideal in their respective countries through intense and sustainable awareness creating activities and by raising the consciousness of the average African still caught in the xenophobic, claustrophobic and narrow space of tribalism and ethnic consciousness.

African intellectuals engaged in history, archeology, philosophy and the social sciences in general should conduct researches with a view to promoting this all-African project of continental revival and renaissance whose centre may be Addis Ababa or any other suitable capital for that matter but spreading throughout the continent in all direction as a common project. For this to be true, an African university of the arts and culture needs to be established preferably here in Addis Ababa as the seat of the UN. In addition to this, the biggest cultural centre on the continent might be built here in the Ethiopian capital where all the arts and cultures of African nations would be collected exposed and identified as well as used for the one common goal of African cultural renewal serving as a possible engine of its genuine economic renaissance.

Science & Technology

Promoting impactful technologies in the informal sector

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

During the early months of the outbreak of COVID-19 period, due to restrictions, closing of business activities and fear of movements from place to place, workers in the informal sector were in troubles to earn income for their daily needs. Though everyone was in a difficult condition during the tough period of the COVID-19 era, the informal sector was seriously affected and workers and professionals that depend on daily incomes within the informal sector were in serious troubles. Especially, technicians, movable workers, mechanics, contract workers and professionals working in private households and private businesses passed a very tough time.

Furthermore, the early periods of the COVID-19 era were seriously bad for experts, professionals and individuals who were in search of jobs. It was difficult to go out to search vacancies and to find vacancy posts. Businesses were closed, activities were restricted and finding new job opportunities was a tough task. Though the time was tough to hire new employees, since life was continued, the demand of experts and professionals in different sectors was there, especially for temporary tasks. The problem was the mechanism to connect those professionals searching for job and the companies or individuals who demand professionals especially in the informal sector.

GoodyOn, an online local platform with the target of connecting professionals in the informal sector, gig workers, with employee companies and individuals was launched in September 2020. The platform launched using both online mobile application technology and hotline platforms to connect job seekers and professional seekers online for temporary and permanent tasks. The situation during that time motivated the founders to launch the technology.

According to GoodyOn, the digital platform is a gig marketplace launched to disrupt the informal sector in Ethiopia. The service is available as a mobile application and is also accessible via a call center hotline, 9675. The service provides digital platform for gig workers where they get digital presence to advertise their services and preferred working conditions. "When employers go on GoodyOn mobile app and search, they are directly matched with gig workers based on location, qualification, and experience of gig workers without any third-party involvement."

Since then, GoodyOn has continued its service of connecting gig workers with hiring companies and individuals. After two years' service, GoodyOn becomes among 40 world companies with impactful outcomes for the society by World Summit Award (WSA). GoodyOn won the WSA award in Smart Settlement and Urbanization category for the year 2022 recognizing its gig digital solution's contribution for the achievement of the UN sustainable development goals



(SDGs).

WSA on its website disclosed that "GoodyOn gig platform is selected as World Summit Award Winner 2022 in the Smart Settlements & Urbanization category. The WSA Winners 2022 provide a meaningful selection of worldwide digital solutions contributing to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The gig platform company will receive its Award in smart settlements & urbanization category at the WSA Global Congress, March 08-11, 2023 in Puebla, Mexico."

Approached by The Ethiopian Herald, GoodyOn Co-founder and General Manager, Tigist Afework said that the platform was launched to create an opportunity for the professionals engaging in the informal sector through modern technology to get jobs during the COVID-19 period. During the initial period, it aims to connect professionals with work in their surrounding since traveling to remote areas was not easy during that time due to COVID-19. The platform was providing services without payments and it helped tens of thousands of professionals to get job opportunities during the past two years and five months period.

As to her, during the lockdown due to COVID-19, those professionals earning their income with irregular daily works were struggling to get their daily consumption. The platform helped movable housemaid professionals, contract workers, technicians and mechanics and electricians to get temporary jobs in their surroundings without traveling to remote areas during the tough time.

"GoodyOn platform is a platform to connect gig professionals through modern technology. It aims to support the unprivileged sector, not an agency to take commissions from the job seekers and the hiring companies," Tigist said.

Now, GoodyOn platform gets WSA recognition for its impactful service for the society using modern technological developments. Tigist stated that "WSA recognized the impact of the platform in

providing services that supports tens of thousands of gig professionals to get job opportunity." For Tigist, there are online platforms that focus on posting vacancies and there are also agencies targeting commissions from job seekers and hiring companies, what GoodyOn makes different is in the first place it is not an agency to collect commissions and secondly the introduction of technology on the informal sector to help those uncertified professionals to connect with hires. This effort awarded the platform recognition by WSA in Smart Settlement and Urbanization category, she added.

According to Tigist over the last 28 months, since its launch, GoodyOn has recorded over 250,000 gig worker searches and successfully matched over 77,000 connections between employers and gig workers in and around Addis Ababa. She added that the user base of GoodyOn is steadily expanding and GoodyOn mobile app has recorded over 100,000 downloads from the Google play store of which over 35 thousand of them are experts and similarly its call center traffic is growing.

Recently, GoodyOn organized an event to announce its WSA award winning and to thank its stakeholders. During the event, State Minister of Innovation and Technology, Huria Ali stated that the government of Ethiopia is ready to support companies that create digital platforms that would benefit underprivileged sections of the society.

As to the state minister, the private sector has the potential to play leading role in building digital economy. Huria added that Ethiopia has established a Digital Ethiopia 2025 strategy and inclusiveness is among the focus areas of the strategy. "The technology is vital in developing countries like Ethiopia to transform the informal sector to formal especially in the job creation opportunity" Huria stated adding that "the platform will contribute great role on creating new job opportunities and new procedures in the sector that have not exploited yet."

For the state minister, Ethiopia is striving to build prosperous country and to achieve its

goal; the government of Ethiopia is taking all necessary reform measures to accelerate the transformation to prosperity. Without technological advancement, it is unthinkable to achieve prosperity and the technological transformation is among the priority sectors in the journey to development. Hence, digital platforms initiating by the private sector would have a vital role in facilitating the digitalization efforts of the government and Ministry of Innovation and Technology will continue to supports similar initiatives, Huria stated.

According to GoodyOn's General Manager, Tigist, the platform creates an opportunity for gig professionals like housemaid, technicians, tutor service providers, domestic workers, accountants, electricians, electronic repairs. As to her, during the past two years, the platform was providing services for around 64 fields. But now, after assessments from their two year experience, the platform gives due focus for four categories, domestic housemaid professionals, electronic maintenance professionals, repairing work professionals and professionals for small businesses.

According to Tigist, GoodyOn on its platform creates a feedback profile for the professionals they hired. This experience of feedback profile for the experts and professionals promotes the professionals more than a written work experience by companies. It helps the professionals to promote themselves for their career.

As to Tigist, this platform is promoting part time works in Ethiopia even for students and workers who want to earn additional income with their talents. "Even those certified professional graduated from colleges and universities are getting temporary opportunity with their natural talents to work part time works parallel to searching vacancies with their profession."

Tigist stated that the platform is planning to expand its service out of Addis Ababa to different cities of Ethiopia. To further expand its services, it calls strong support from stakeholders especially governmental institutions.

Society

Timket: Beyond religious festival

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

The harmonious existence of Ethiopians manifests itself in various forms. Several cultural practices and religious holidays are best manifestations of this harmonious coexistence. Escorting Tabot on the eve of *Timket* (Ketera) to its temporary place and bringing it back to the church the next day with ecclesiastical songs is always accompanied by love, tolerance, humbleness and generosity.

The Ethiopian Epiphany which was celebrated yesterday colorfully all over the country is a showcase to prove this claim. Beside its religious values the Ethiopian Epiphany has cultural meaning where the multitude adorned with colorful, breathtaking traditional costumes.

Whenever the feast of *Timket* arrives, the faithful Christians (from the little children to senior citizens) are seen decorating themselves with traditional attires that reflect Ethiopian culture. Since Tabot, which represents the replica of the Ark of the Covenant, is venerated by all Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, decency is one peculiar feature of the event. For this reason, the dressing code, which is well respected and implemented by all the faithful Christian Orthodox followers, is given special attention and everyone, especially women, are seen on the day wearing well-designed, attractive and eye-catching traditional costumes.



Ethiopian Epiphany is not simply a religious or cultural program which is marked by multitude. It is a manifestation of Ethiopian uniqueness, unity in harmony and a living witness that Ethiopia is a land of antiquity that preserves its value systems and practices, humbleness and humility; which was one of the deeds of Jesus Christ while he was baptized at the River Jordan. Indeed baptism is all about humbleness and showing humility.

On his *Timket* best wish to Ethiopians, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said that, baptism is a celebration with many meanings. On the one hand, the day signifies humility, to proclaim faith in God, and to find repentance and salvation. On the other hand, the celebration of the Ethiopian Epiphany has a great meaning for every one of us to mark the day in unity.

Abiy said, baptism and humility are two sides of a single coin. Baptism is the day when the

Creator is baptized by his creatures; the Lord by his servant. Epiphany is the occasion when he came down from his high place and became human, showed humility from his position of lordship, and taught humility to mankind. The humbleness, John the Baptist showed in the baptism ceremony, is another good example of humility. The obedience and humbleness he reflected while baptizing Jesus is a good lesson to all humankind.

The Prime Minister also said: "Epiphany is more than a religious program to Ethiopians. It is also a time where we practice our cultural values. It is a special event where the multitude- from Gondar to Harar; from Mekele to Bale, from Jimma to Mettema- enjoy age-old Ethiopian cultural values. Not only that, but it is also a time where people are seen visiting relatives and social life is magnified. The various traditional costumes

together with cultural songs give the day additional taste.

Equally, *Timket* is an answer to those people who do not know about Ethiopia. Every religious practice and cultural activities that are performed during *Timket* tells the world who Ethiopians are.

Moreover, he indicated that every year, tourists come to Ethiopia from all over the world, including Israel, where the Jordan River is located today. "As it is a great day that attracts local and foreign visitors, we gain economic benefits from Epiphany. Along with this, one truth we should know is that Ethiopian holidays are the holidays of all Ethiopians," he said, adding that whether we believe in the faith or not, the festival belongs to all of us as citizens.

Indeed, as it was also indicated by Culture and Sport Minister, Kejela Merdassa, Ethiopian Epiphany is a special event that unites Ethiopians and brings them together to a single spot so as to share their common values. According to him, the *Timket* festival is an important celebration that strengthens the unity of the Ethiopian people.

The Minister also pointed out that Ethiopia is endowed with immense cultural, religious and historical heritages, of which *Timket* (the Ethiopian Epiphany) is one.

The Ethiopian Epiphany is inscribed among Intangible Cultural Heritages of Humanity by UNESCO in 2019 attracts many tourists to the country.



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The Ministry of Health

Summary of Health Sector Transformation Plan II:

Vision:

To see a healthy, productive and prosperous society.

Mission:

To promote the health and well-being of the society through providing and regulating a comprehensive package of health services of the highest possible quality in an equitable manner.

Objectives:

HSTP-II's objectives are operationally defined as high-level result statements, equivalent to goals that lead to achievement of the vision for the sector. The overarching objective of HSTP-II is to improve the health status of the population by realizing these four objectives:

1. Accelerate progress towards universal health coverage
2. Protect people from health emergencies
3. Woreda transformation
4. Improve health system responsiveness

Strategic Directions:

The strategic plan for HSTP-II has 14 strategic directions that are listed below.

1. Enhance provision of equitable and quality comprehensive health services
2. Improve health emergency and disaster risk management
3. Ensure community engagement and ownership
4. Improve access to pharmaceuticals and medical devices and their rational and

proper use

5. Improve regulatory systems
6. Improve human resource development and management
7. Enhance informed decision making and innovations
8. Improve health financing
9. Strengthen governance and leadership
10. Improve health infrastructure
11. Enhance digital health technology
12. Improve traditional medicine
13. Ensure integration of health in all policies and strategies
14. Enhance private engagement in the health sector

Priorities area /Transformation Agendas/ of HSTP II:

From the 14 strategic directions, the health sector has identified the top key priorities or health sector transformation agendas based on the major challenges identified in the situational analysis. These are investment areas that form the foundation of health system, and if successfully implemented, they will transform the health sector and the following are the priorities/ focus areas of HSTP-II.

1. Quality and equity
2. Information revolution
3. Motivated, Competent and Compassionate (MCC) health workforce
4. Health financing
5. Leadership

HSTP-II Cost Estimates: Base and High Case scenarios

The total cost estimation for the base and high case scenarios is \$21.88 billion and \$27.54 billion, respectively, for the five years period. To see each of them:

Cost Estimation: Base case Scenario:

The total cost estimation for the base case scenarios is \$21.88 billion for the next five years. Out of the total cost of the base scenario, 50% (\$10.87 billion) is cost for procurement of medicine & medical equipment, 19% (\$4.26 Billion) for human resource development and management, 13% (\$2.77 billion) for health infrastructure (construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of health facilities, equipment and furniture, ICT materials, vehicle), and 8% (\$1.67 billion) for health service program management cost which includes short-term trainings, supervision, advocacy, and other program-specific costs, in the base case scenario.

Cost Estimation: High case Scenario:

The total cost estimation for the high case scenarios is \$27.55 billion for the next five years. In the high case scenario, 45% of the total cost (\$12.32 billion) is for procurement of medicines/commodities and supplies, 22% (\$6.10 billion) for health infrastructure, 16% (\$4.33 billion) for human resources development and 9% (\$2.47 billion) for health services program management.

Implementation arrangements:

The implementation arrangement of HSTP-

II aims at facilitating the implementation of the health sector transformation plan at all system level and by relevant stakeholders. The main implementation arrangements are:

1. Focusing on integrated activities
2. Practicing on good governance to build ownership of all initiatives and help all implementers deliver on their missions towards common vision.
3. Cascading the strategic plan into operationalization plan to align existing resources or inputs (financial, human, time and other relevant resources) with anticipated services to be delivered to clients.
4. Health service delivery arrangement through organizational structures at national, regional, and sub-regional health sector in measures supporting implementation of sector-specific and multi-sectorial strategies.
5. Optimizing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to inform decisions on adjusting plans over the course of strategic periods.
6. Focusing and fostering partnership and collaboration by promoting multi-sectorial collaboration
7. Public-private partnership
8. Expediting the implementation of the plans and fostering innovation by introducing health technology assessment and adaptation mechanism including development aspects of local researches.
9. Health diplomacy, communication and visible leadership

International News

Uganda: Coffee farmers call for more funding

Coffee farmers have urged government to set aside more than Shs 182.8 billion for the procurement of coffee processing and value-addition machines to ably compete with other coffee producers in the world.

During the National Coffee Dialogue, which was held at Serena hotel Kigo recently, farmers complained of challenges such as limited access to affordable finance especially for the private sector, limited investment in value addition to the infrastructure for finished products, inconsistent government policies and others which hinder their growth.

Uganda is currently ranked seventh among the largest coffee producers and third in terms of best coffee quality globally. Uganda's coffee exports grew from two million 60-kilo bags in the financial year 2005/2006 to eight million bags in the financial year 2021/2022. In value terms, coffee contributed 22 per cent of all export earnings, estimated at Shs 3.2 trillion in financial 2021/2022.

"We need funding to establish more coffee washing stations, soluble plants and institutional framework to support the production and value addition. We have Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) but government wants to merge it with the ministry of Agriculture. The authority registered successes in the coffee sector. It needs more funding, not merging," Robert Kabushenga, a coffee farmer, said.



"Let us have a broader view of value addition from production or productivity. We have 57 coffee-washing stations. Have we invested enough in value addition? We need to sit down and mark out the value chain, and determine the investments that we need to make at every stage. That is how we shall compete with other producers," he said.

He said the country should target to move its earnings from \$800 million to \$3 billion per year for five years, increasing the price levels payable to the farmer and the percentage he earns. He said with those two, producing 20 million bags in itself is not going to earn them more money.

"We can produce 20 million bags and put

them in a store. But if we focus on the final outcome, everything we do will lead us to value addition. That is the financial definition of value addition".

Prime Minister Robinah Nabban said, the coffee sector requires close regulation. "We are concerned that the industry continues to be externally focused when it comes to value addition. We donate wealth and jobs to consumer countries when we export unprocessed coffee beans to consumer nations.

"Uganda must evolve to the next level by attracting investment to establish processing capabilities and value addition. We need to produce finished products, including soluble coffee, roasted and

ground coffee for the domestic market, regional and other export markets," she said.

She said the government wants to enhance private sector investments in the processing of coffee for the domestic, regional and international markets.

"Our coffee is good. It can talk for itself. What we need is to process and export what can bring in more money to us. Let's also learn to take advantage whenever your competitors get challenges. We are competing in the US market and our biggest competitor is Brazil. They were hit by drought and frost but we have not utilized much of that market," Justine Kasule Lumumba, the minister for Special Duties in the Office of the Prime Minister, said.

"Coffee is a crop which can work in most of the districts in this country except in Teso and Karamoja. But in the rest of the country coffee can rescue many Ugandans, even those with one acre, from poverty," she said.

She urged farmers to take advantage of irrigation to mitigate the shocks of drought. The managing director of UCDA, Emmanuel Lyamulemye said that in a bid to widen the coffee market, the authority will cooperate with universities to promote coffee consumption in the country.

"We will set up a café, provide brewing equipment, train the youth and promote coffee health benefits," he said.

Kenya: Shilling hits historic low of Sh124 against the dollar on high demand

The Kenya shilling sank to a historic low of Sh124 against the US Dollar on Monday, coming at a time when Kenyans in the diaspora are sending record amounts of money back home buffing the country's forex reserves.

Forex traders attributed the shilling weakening to increased dollar demand from oil retailing companies and general goods importers.

The depreciation comes at a time when statistics from the Central Bank of Kenya show that the country's usable foreign exchange reserves remained adequate at USD 7.415 billion (Sh919 billion) as at January 12.

These were boosted by remittances to the country which hit a record high of ShSh497.1 billion in 2022, and 8.3 percent increase compared to the Sh458.9 billion sent in 2021, defying global economic headwinds such as the Russia-Ukraine war.

The depreciating shilling despite the growth in reserves means that dollar supply in the market is lower than dollar supply.

A recent report from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stated that Kenya



is experiencing a tight period of forex demand coupled with reduced liquidity in the interbank foreign exchange market as well as a depreciation of the local currency following the war in Ukraine.

"Liquidity in the interbank forex market has dried up and shifted to the bank-client market where forex transactions are executed at a more depreciated rate," said IMF.

The shilling had opened the year at 123.42

shedding about 10 percent of its value to the dollar year-to-date.

The continued depreciation of the local currency is expected to push up the cost of living in the country as Kenya's economy is import dependent.

Main imports into the country include petroleum products, machinery, medicine, vegetable oil, pharmaceuticals, cars, wheat, and clothing.

This means that traders who import the

goods will spend more to acquire them and thus pass on the cost to the consumers.

Researchers at AIB-AXYS Africa expect the local currency to continue under pressure due to the increased dollar demand from energy importers on the back of the prevailing high global oil prices, and reduced dollar inflows from key export-earning sectors.

"Additionally, the depreciation is driven by the continued strengthening of the dollar against other currencies," they noted.

The dollar strengthened dramatically over the course of 2022 as the Federal Reserve hiked interest rates in an effort to quash sky-high inflation.

The U.S. Dollar Index, which measures the greenback against a basket of other currencies, was up more than 17 percent in 2022 according to Forbes investment.

With the weakening shilling and soaring inflation, Kenyans need to brace themselves for tough economic times ahead.

Kenya's inflation soared to 9.1 percent in December as the effects of the Russia-Ukraine war continue to batter the economy.



This is Ethiopia



Timket festival: Special opportunity to showcase, preserve cultural assets

BY TEWODROS KASSA

Ethiopia embraces diversified tangible and intangible tourist attractions. Being home to ancient civilizations, it has unique cultural assets that have not been erased for centuries. *Timket* is one of the leading street festivals that are celebrated throughout the country with a huge gathering of the Christianity followers.

Ethiopian *Timket* (the Baptism of the Jesus Christ) has gained more attention among the local and international tourists to attend. Numerous international tourists cross thousands of kilo metres to attend the *Timket* festival annually.

Currently, it is widely known that the festival is among the leading opportunity to showcase cultural assets and attract more tourists to the country. Following this, the Ethiopian Government is working aggressively to tap the untapped tourism potentials of street festivals. It is undertaking various measures to promote the tourism sector through giving due attention towards promoting the sector.

Addis Ababa City Administration Culture and Tourism Bureau Intangible

Heritages Senior Expert Memhir Mekibib Gebremariam told *The Ethiopian herald* that Ethiopia is the land of origins that is rich with diversified cultural assets. Thus, this generation should be aware of his/her own cultural assets and values.

Street festivals like *Timket* plays significant roles towards stimulating the country's tourism sector and showcase various cultural assets during the festival celebration process. More importantly, the new generation will effectively understand the value of cultural assets while observing the *Timket* ceremonial process and its significance. The festival celebration brings peace and togetherness among every nations, nationalities, and peoples of Ethiopia to come together and celebrate the day in unity.

Timket's festival celebration is more colourful in Gonder, Lalibela, and Addis Ababa's *Janmeda* where the celebration took place with a huge get together of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church followers and visitors. Beyond the spiritual ceremony held by priests and deacons, participants of the festival present various cultural songs, dancing, and dressing. Thus, everything taking place in *Timket* festival

has its own values that are inherited from the forefathers/foremothers to the present generation. The new generation should also preserve the ceremonial process and inherit to the future generations through properly preserving the ceremonial process, according to him.

Recently, the Ministry of Culture and Sport announced that *Timket* festival have significant contributions in promoting peoples unity and togetherness. In connection with his best wish for *Timket* festival, Minister Kejela Merdassa said that the festival is an ideal opportunity to promote Ethiopians unity and togetherness.

"The ceremonial process of the festival reflects various cultural assets of the country. It interconnects people and promotes harmonious relations among each other. Thus, it is important to preserve these cultural assets and inherit to the future generations", he said.

As to him, the festival enables the country to generate more from the tourism sector through attracting numerous international tourists during this season. Beyond Ethiopia, *Timket* festival has also become a world heritage that is registered under the United Nations Educational Scientific

and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Conserving and protecting this festival will have significant roles to the country.

Moreover, the Ministry will work strenuously to promote, protect, and develop such religious and cultural assets through keeping its values. It is also everyone's responsibility to contribute in the efforts of conserving such values of the country, he underscored.

According to local media reports, participants of the *Timket* street festival adorned with various cultural dressing gives colour to the holiday. Various cultural songs and dances of every nation, nationalities, and peoples will also get the chance to be displayed with one stage while the spiritual ceremony takes place. Thus, it is a special opportunity to observe the whole Ethiopia on the streets of the ceremonial occasion.

In sum, the hand-in-hand collaboration of various stakeholders is important to conserve the long aged Ethiopian unique street festivals and utilize for socio-economic development of the country. It is sought to attract more foreign tourists if properly promoted and given more attention supported with tourism sector scientific researches.