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Gov't vows to shore up war-ridden areas' economy

BY DESTA GEBEREHIWOT

DEBRE BIRHAN—Ethiopia pledged more efforts to spur investment activities and pave the way for post war rehabilitation works as Debre Birhan town stages a nine-day International Trade, Investment and Finance Expo.

The international expo which brings together over 200 local and foreign businesses came into being after three years of preparation was kicked off yesterday.

Marred by the COVID outbreak and the two years of northern Ethiopia conflict, the town is set to see more investments following the Pretoria peace.

Opening the expo, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Demeke Mekonnen vowed his government's commitment to

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News



Gondar marks Emperor Tewodros' 204th birth date

- Aims to inspire youth for peace, unity

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA-The 204th birthday of Emperor Tewodros II (1855-1868), was marked yesterday by various events in the historical city of Gondar, the city's Culture and Tourism Bureau said.

The Bureau Head Chalachew Dagne told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the commemoration aims to teach the young generation about Emperor Tewodros' vision for a united and modern country. The tribute has also the purpose to inspire the youth to replicate their predecessors' heroism in withstanding current challenges.

Chalachew further noted that Emperor Tewodros' heroism to unify the country, which was weakened during the Era of the Princes, is an inspiration for the young generation and taught a lesson for the need to engage in activities that will contribute towards nation-building. "Commemorating the sacrifice made by the Emperor encourages today's generation to repeat similar victory over poverty and defend the dignity and unity of their homeland."

Emperor Tewodros, who had the opportunity to know the problems of his country well, is considered by many to be ahead of his time due to the steps he took to save the nation from the danger of disintegration and collapse and strengthen the unity of Ethiopia.

During his reign, the Emperor showed his efforts and desires to modernize his country with technology like other countries in Gafat Industrial Village.

Noting Gondar is also prepared to colorfully mark the annual Epiphany festivity and welcome local and foreign visitors, he indicated that Emperor Tewodros's birthday commemoration has given more impetus to the already-dominant holiday atmosphere in the city.

Historians widely regarded Emperor Tewodros II, whose name was Kassa Hailu before becoming a king, reign as the beginning of modern Ethiopia and brought an end to the decentralized Era of the Princes, known in Amharic as *Zemene Mesafint*.

The birth date of the emperor was marked in the Gondar statue roundabout which was named after him for various events.

Ethiopia, South Africa working together to strengthen cooperation on all fronts

ADDIS ABABA (ENA) - Ethiopia and South Africa are working to further bolster cooperation on continental and global issues beyond their bilateral relations, Ethiopian Ambassador to South Africa Muktar Kedir said.

Ethiopia and South Africa have long-standing political, economic and social relations.

Ethiopian Ambassador to South Africa Muktar Kedir told ENA that Ethiopia and South Africa are working together on continental and international issues beyond bolstering their bilateral relations.

He elaborated that the two countries are working together in trade, investment, public to public relations and other sectors.

Apart from hosting the forum for the peace



agreement reached between the government of Ethiopia and TPLF, the ambassador recalled that South Africa has played an important role in making the process conducive.

Ambassador Muktar stated that the peace agreement is a platform where success has been made in realizing "African solutions to African problems."

Moreover, he elaborated that activities are underway to establish a strong economic diplomacy that will benefit both countries.

In addition to enhancing their bilateral relations, the two countries are working together to ensure mutual benefit by taking common position on continental and global issues, according to the ambassador.

South Africans were able to build a better country by solving the problems caused by the apartheid through dialogue, Ambassador Muktar noted, adding that Ethiopia will learn many experiences from South Africa especially for the success of the national dialogue.

Oromia grades 21 hotels

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA- Giving the hotel sector significant potential, the Oromia State Culture and Tourism Bureau, in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, has carried out the rating of 21 star-designated hotels across the state, an official said.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), the Bureau Deputy Head Hunde Kebede noted that the state government has been incentivizing efforts to build star-rated hotels and lodges in major tourist destinations. Accordingly, it has awarded 21 hotels with different star levels.

The hotels were rated under different categories including fulfillment of all legal requirements for health, safety, and security,



as well as fire and the environment, among other criteria.

Noting the existence of 66 star-designated hotels in Oromia, Hunde indicated that the current inclusion makes the number 87. Many

hotels have been under construction in Oromia and upon completion, they are expected to play a great role to boost the service sector and flow of tourists in the state and the country at large.

The bureau has been working to make tourist attraction sites in the state preferred destinations by equipping them with the facilities and amenities. Accordingly, the bureau has trained over 2,520 hotel professionals from major tourist destinations including Adama, Bishoftu, Batu, and Shashemene,

In collaboration with Tourism Ministry, the bureau is involved in encouraging investors to be engaged in the hotel business and building star-designated hotels, lodges, and restaurants thereby enhancing the flow of tourists, he remarked.

ENAO accredits 11 outstanding companies

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- The Ethiopian National Accreditation Office (ENAO) on Friday gave accreditation certificates to 11 best-performing institutions from various sectors.

While giving the certificates, the ENAO Director-General, Meseret Tessema stated that the institutions have registered outstanding performance in inspection, certification, examination, and calibration.

Besides keeping Ethiopia's competitiveness in the global market, accreditation of products enables stakeholders to provide quality products and services to the domestic demand.

Kombolcha Textile Share Company, SGS and ICT Service Plc., CRC Soft Line Laboratory, Winner Engineering and Calibration Laboratory, are among the 11 accredited companies. ENAO's ability to accredit institutions by its capacity enables the country to save time and foreign currency that were allotted to foreign companies.



Photo Eyob Teferi

The Director-General further highlighted that accreditation is essential to boost product and productivity, ease challenges related to the quality of products and enhance their market competitiveness.

"We are jointly working with Nigeria and Somaliland and there is a growing desire among foreign companies to get the accreditation service from the office. Among the international businesses, those

coming from India have a significant share."

Deneke Negash from Kombolcha Textile Share Company said on his part that the accreditation of products has given quality assurance to buyers and enables the factory to sell products in the global market at a competitive price. "The accreditation that we received from the ENAO opens the door of the international market for us."

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The Ethiopian Herald

Editorial

Beginning of disarmament deserves laudation

It is to be recalled that in a bid to stem the confrontation that flared up in the northern part of Ethiopia a peace deal was reached between the Federal Government and TPLF in Pretoria, South Africa.

Following the agreement reached, the ball has got rolling palpably. Cascaded, the enshrinements entailed in the deal are being translated into action. Specially to render people of Tigray that suffered the brunt of the war to the full beneficiaries; the incumbent has gone extra miles so as to restore services as fast as possible. It did exhibit notable conviction for the implementation of the deal.

As the deal mainly focused on humanitarian aid delivery to strife-torn Tigray, the government has seen to that attaching immediacy to the task. The voluminous aid included nutritious foods to children.

Moreover, concerning ferrying and doling out tasks, it as well has facilitated things for the delivery of such services to ally humanitarian organizations. An enormous mass of medicine, fuel as well as money is dispatched to the state.

Parallel to the humanitarian services, the task of getting all infrastructural facilities demolished by the war back in shape is observably and promisingly underway. This is evidenced by the resumption of electric, telephone, bank and air transport services. Victims are experiencing a new lease of life, which the deal swung around. Their bashed hope reviving, victims are seeing a rosy one at the corner. Estranged family members were pinning each other suffering a lacerating psychological pain of separation. Thanks to the peace deal that is atoned for.

Still the government is exerting an unstinting effort towards the implementation of the accord. Going half way ahead and beyond the peace deal, sending delegates to Mekele the incumbent has tangibly demonstrated it is a votary of peace. It as well has demonstrated that we Ethiopians could iron out differences as per our traditional knowledge of resolving conflicts. The delegate comprising Ethiopian athletes is a manifestation of this. This is laudable as it shows the government's affectionate-bond with the people and the country.

Clapping with one hand is impossible. By the same token, TPLF is exhibiting a commendable bent to the proper implementation of the deal. Its first-round handing over of heavy arsenal to the federal government bears a testimony to this fact. AU's observers and military observers from various countries had attended the event when TPLF handed over its first round heavy weapons. The handing over took place in Agula camp 36 km away from Mekelle. Heavy armored Tanks, rockets, arsenals of different lengths, zoos, and mortars are among the military weapons handed over.

The handing over event is a move towards actualizing the deal. As such, it deserves a tap on the back. Laying a firm foundation for a constitutional order it creates a fertile ground for sustainable peace and territorial integrity. TPLF should be encouraged towards the furtherance of this current disposition. Expectedly similar handing over activities will be carried out in other areas where TPLF stockpiled weapons. Such a move is one that seals the peace agreement by the two peace seekers.

Government and partners have continued delivering humanitarian aids-both food and non-food items in affected regions. For instance, data jointly compiled by the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission, the Logistics Cluster, UNOCHA that cover the period between 15 November, 2022 and 12 January 2023 show that 105,366MT of food and 13,892 MT non-food items were supplied to Tigray. The delivery was carried out using all the corridors and airlifts. Per the set direction, all public institutions have also resumed services such as telecommunication, banks and electricity.

As the benefit of the peace deal is multifarious. All stakeholders should do their level best towards its fructification. The peace deal is one that ensured the sovereignty of Ethiopia, narrowed down gaps, discarded hatred, buried hatchets and took citizens back to previous life of clicking with considerateness, ones and affection.

Furthermore, mobilizing people it could allow them to rebuild better places reduced down to rubles so as to lead improved lives. The sooner things get back in shape the better.

Opinion

Ethiopia bracing to welcome more tourists

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

Considering the large number of visitors who want to visit the country's natural, historical, cultural and manmade attractions, the re-construction of various service providing institutions is quite imperative to further enhance the tourism sector as it has a significant share to the economy.

Accordingly, Ethiopia is now on its way towards recovering its economy from the severe damage it sustained from the war in the northern part. At the moment, various efforts are underway to rehabilitate the war ravaged facilities and turn everything back to the normal situation. The developments of infrastructure and public utilities such as telecom, electric power and others are being reconstructed rapidly so as to make the doors open for tourists.

During the war, all doors were opened for tourists except the route that took us to the northern part of the country. However, the war in the northern part of the country was a push factor for tourists to cancel or postpone the plan to visit Ethiopia. As a result, the nation has been losing the expected amount of money for the sector especially in the past three years.

Even if the Pretoria peace deal that was made between the Government and TPLF forces is quite imperative to scale up the tourism sector, the resumption of services in the northern part of the country is a big opportunity to increase the flow of tourists in the regions.

In Ethiopia, the month of January is busy with various religious festivals. For instance in one of those celebrations, Timket, people wear their colorful clothes and feel spiritually uplifted. Timket is the celebration of the Baptism of Jesus Christ or usually known as Ethiopian Epiphany. This kind of cultural and eye catching celebration of Timket, is held nowhere else in the world except Ethiopia. It is a month when not only citizens but also foreigners are inspired and become ecstatic observing the situation.

That is why the tourist inflow is increasing as the month is an ideal time for vacation and entertainment for tourists who do not have an enjoyable environment in their countries. Ethiopia's tourism sector was weakened due to COVID-19, desert locusts, drought and the war in the northern parts, and is now recovering and going back to its former glory.

The time is now conducive for the tourists

who are interested to visit Ethiopia. Accordingly, the tourist inflow is currently growing rapidly as the government has been working hard by formulating policy and strategy that develop the sector. The first quarterly report indicated that more than a quarter million foreign tourists have visited Ethiopia in the reported period. There are indications that the tourist flow would likely increase two folds after October.

The tourist flow in this season would be at a peak for particularly northern Ethiopia for tourist destinations in Amhara, Afar and Tigray where world heritages are found. Efforts are being made to make the stay of tourists in the country longer, in addition to promoting natural, cultural and historical tourist destinations and developing new destinations.

It was recalled that the highest number of flights were recorded in the tourism history of Gondar and the surrounding areas last Ethiopian year. Accordingly, more tourist flow and foreign exchange earnings are expected this year.

Since the end of this Ethiopian month, in addition to public celebrations and events that are attractive to tourists, it has been arranged to extend tourist stay

by preparing a package for Christmas in Lalibela and Ethiopian Epiphany in Gondar. This allows the visitors not only to participate in public celebrations but also to visit natural and historical attractions in the area and to buy traditional products.

Apart from developing the heritages in the country, the Ethiopian government has now provided special consideration for the tourism sector adding values on the natural resources found in Koysa, Gorgora and Wenchi areas. These areas are assumed to elongate the stay of tourists which will have a direct impact on the income that the nation earns from the sector.

Parallel to the development of attractions of various kinds, stakeholders who are working in the sector have to work aggressively so as to increase the foreign currency income that the nation will earn from the smokeless industry. For this to happen, the peace deal between the two parties should further be strengthened. The other point that should be underlined here is every activity of the tourism sector should benefit the people.

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

News

Ethiopia to grow its trade volume with Pakistan by over twofold

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA –Having expressed keen interest to deepen bilateral cooperation with Pakistan, Ethiopia is working to increase its trade volume with former by over twofold in 2023, Ambassador Jemal Beker said.

Ethiopia’s Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Pakistan, Jemal Beker told international media that: “The bilateral trade between the two countries is minimal and amounted to 78 million USD; however, Ethiopia’s target is to meet 200 million USD by the end of 2023.”

He also disclosed that an inclusive Pakistani business delegation with representation from all the economic sectors would soon be brought to Ethiopia to help them connect with the business fraternity.

It was learnt that Pakistan has many

products that are in huge demand in Ethiopia and similarly, Ethiopia can send different edibles which are consumed in Pakistan in huge quantity.

It was also identified that areas of mutual interests keeping in view the foreign policies of both countries and then moved on to establish connections with the key stakeholders in the business community and the government of Pakistan.

Appreciating the Green Legacy Initiative of the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), the ambassador said that both countries could enhance collaboration on green revolution which helps to tackle inflicted colossal damage in terms of life and property.

He also said that Ethiopia has been exerting unreserved efforts to increase collaboration with Pakistan for technology transfer and knowledge sharing. Agreements would be signed with the government of Pakistan in

this regard soon.

He stressed that Ethiopia as one of the civilizations and had a great attachment to the land of origin due to Hazrat Bilal Habshi and King Nijashi, tourism in Ethiopia would also be promoted, adding said Pakistanis viewed Ethiopians as heroic people because Ethiopia had never been colonized by any imperial power.

“Our geographical location is very critical as most of the trade routes run through the Horn of Africa. We are very close to the Red Sea, Middle East, and Bab-el Mandeb and on the other side we have the Indian Ocean,” he said while highlighting Ethiopia’s role in the current global dynamism.

The Ethiopian government has deployed vibrant personalities as ambassadors to further enhance bilateral, regional, and multilateral relations.

Gov’t vows...

ensure conducive investment climate to shore up economic undertakings and help war-stricken areas in all ways possible.

The two years of war have impacted heavily the Amhara state and it requires the contribution of all to rebuild the state and revitalize economic activities as the government throw its full weight behind restoring peace and stability. “Our priority is to rehabilitate war-hit areas through encouraging more investment and business.”

The international expo is timely and valuable to revive economic engagement and foreign direct investment.

For his part, Amhara State President Yelekal Kefale(PhD) said the state has been hard-hit by the conflict and as the country strives to make peace and reconstruct the region, the focus now is to pull more investment and reactivate economic activities.

“Poverty is rife; unemployment is high with cost of living surging. And, it is time to double down endeavours to redress the setbacks.”

The incumbent is keen to see more investors come in droves and engage in business activities. To make this happen, the former will take decisive measures to ensure peace and ease barriers for business entry through addressing issues related with finance and land provision. Over the years, encouraging results have been registered in terms of productivity but, much is needed to unleash the untapped potential of the country.

The government is making extensive activities for industrial expansion. The expo in this regard will have essential role in linking local and foreign business and make the town an investment hub.

Various local and foreign companies engaged in investment, trade and finance sectors exhibit their products and services in the expo. Symposiums and business to business meeting are also underway on the side-line of the expo.

There are over 600 investors currently engaged in multitude of business in the town, it was learnt.

Council speaks on HR6600, S.3199 revocation significance

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA-The H.R. 6600 and S.3199 draft laws, which were planned to impose on Ethiopia, are canceled due to the time being outdated, the Ethiopian American Civic Council (EACC) announced.

Speaking to local media, EACC Chairperson Deacon Yosef Teferi said that the menacing draft documents of the H.R.6600 and S.3199, which were prepared to impose on Ethiopia were revoked due to being out of date. The council’s endeavor, the progress of the peace agreement, and the owner of the draft power replaced by the republicans are said to be the contributing factors to the annulment.

The chairperson further stated that the termination of the draft laws will bring significant advantages to Ethiopia in regarding obtaining the permission of international financial institutions, backing to AGOA normalcy, and gaining the willingness of other aid organizations. For example, Ethiopia was restricted from loan restructuring opportunities, when many countries obtained this benefit due to being unable to pay their debt on schedule. However, at present Ethiopia will benefit from such an advantage following the draft laws invalidation.

Particularly, as the U.S. controls over 21 financial institutions, it is a good opportunity that Ethiopia will benefit from financial support, obtain loan provisions, and the like due to the country’s progress, he added.



“Though the cancellation of the draft laws will play a paramount role, the violation of human rights especially in Wollega are critical issues that might back up the country’s difficult situation. Therefore, the government of Ethiopia should protect the lives of innocent citizens, ensure rule of law, and the like if the country keeps its

overall development.”

Furthermore, the council has been striving to ensure Ethiopia’s national interest through various mechanisms while it called on the government to protect the rights of innocent citizens as it is the international community that gives serious attention in that regard, Yosef emphasized.

Opinion



DR. MAULANA KARENGA
Guest Columnist

The ethics and essentiality of struggle: Ancestral insights from our ancient sacred texts

One of the most critical tasks of our times is to reaffirm, deepen and expand our culture of struggle as a people, with its rich talking's and sacred teachings and its lived and uplifting experiences of "storm riding", "blooming in the whirlwind", and daring to "specialize in the wholly impossible" in the midst of the most savage and brutal situations of oppression history had to offer.

Indeed, it is as ethically imperative as it is compellingly essential, for it is an anchoring, defining and ongoing project and practice of constantly struggling for African and human good and the well-being of the world. And this is especially important in these times of circus and court jester politics in the crushing context of continuing oppression by fractured and deformed expressions of human beings, held together in hatred and hostility to those different and vulnerable and working to outlaw freedom, grossly limit life and restrain laughter. And our culture of struggle is committed to expanding and defending freedom, enhancing life and establishing the conditions for happiness for everyone.

Thus, it is about, as always, knowing our history and honoring it, engaging our present and improving it and imagining a whole new future and forging it in the most ethical, effective and expansive ways. Likewise, it is about being ourselves and freeing ourselves in ways that recognize and respect both the particularity and universality of our mission, that is to say, our distinctively African and essentially human way of understanding and asserting ourselves in the world.

For it is written in the sacred teachings of our honored ancestors in the Odu Ifa that "humans are divinely chosen to bring good into the world", and this is the fundamental mission and meaning in human life. It is vital, then, that we recognize and appreciate in practice our similar human but distinctly African way of fulfilling this sacred and sustaining mission. And this means, also and again, that it's about how we actually live our lives, do our work, and wage our struggles, drawing from the best of our culture in order to be and become the best of what it means to be African and human in the world.

This critical self-understanding and self-assertion in the world as an African people is especially important given the increasing vulnerability to losing our larger and essential selves through a diminishing and deforming dependence

on consumerist technology.

Indeed, it is a technology that is reshaping, flattening and narrowing the social and moral imagination, providing limitless diversionary devices and endless opportunities to embrace illusions of power, agency and relevance as substitutes for the reality of the need to achieve each of these goals in a practice beyond the quick, the obvious and the easy.

Here the emphasis is on self-conscious immersion in our culture of struggle and contributing meaningfully to it is pivotal. It is an essential Kawaida contention that struggle is a life-giving and life-enhancing practice. It is the way we come into the world, the way we develop and flourish in the world, and the way we leave our legacy so we achieve immortality in this world and the next.

Thus, we say struggle is one of the defining features of human life. We struggle to come into being and that's called birth; we struggle to make the most out of our being and that's called life. And we struggle not to go out of being and that's called the quest for immortality.

Struggle, then, is one of the most important anchors of our identity and way of being in the world and we must study, engage and practice it in a serious, substantive and sustained way, embracing it as a vital and indispensable part of the practice of everyday life.

There are many and varied lessons to learn from the libraries of knowledge found in the written, oral and living practice texts of our honored ancestors. And we must always ground ourselves in these ancient and enduring teachings of immeasurable value. The sacred teachings of our honored ancestors in the Husia tell us that if we are to be successful in the struggle of life, the struggle to bring and sustain Maat, truth, justice and righteousness in the world, we must not forget to learn and respond rightfully to the lessons of history.

Indeed, it says, "Those who fight on the battle field oblivious of the past will not have a good outcome for they lack knowledge of what they should know". And what they should know is that which is valuable in engaging and improving our present and framing and forging our future in dignity-affirming, life-enhancing and world preserving ways.

The Husia also teaches us that at the heart and center of the Maatian struggle for

good in the world, we are to measure the quality of our moral practice by how we treat the poor and vulnerable among us and in the world. Indeed, it is not only a question of struggling for them, but of struggling with them, aiding and enabling them to become and be self-conscious agents of their own lives and liberation.

Thus, the Husia teaches we must "bear witness to truth and set the scales of justice in their proper place, especially among the voiceless, the devalued and the vulnerable." And the sacred teachings of our honored ancestors in the Husia, also teach that it is morally imperative to resist and repel attacks on our person and people and on our right to be ourselves and live free, flourishing and meaningful lives. They say, "You are commanded to struggle against those who struggle against you".

Indeed, we are to rightfully resist when we are attacked and oppressed, but pause and pursue peace when a just peace is offered, possible and really practiced. For the sacred teaching say, "exceedingly good is the presence of peace and there is no blame in peace for those who practice it."

The sacred teachings of our honored ancestors in the Odu Ifa, also offer us several essential lessons in the importance and transformative value of struggle. In addition to posing struggle for good in the world as the fundamental mission and meaning of human life, the Odu Ifa reminds us that we are not perfect, but rather always in the process of becoming. Therefore, it says, "we are all constantly struggling. We are continuously struggling, all of us".

Moreover, it teaches we are to constantly struggle to strengthen, renew and remake ourselves, making ourselves worthy and representative of the good and beautiful world we strive to bring into being. Thus, the sacred teachings say, "Reconstruct yourself. If we are given birth, we must bring ourselves into being again", constantly striving for excellence in all we do.

Furthermore, Odu Ifa teaches that if we dare to be victorious in our struggles against evil, injustice and oppression and to develop and flourish, we must struggle to build a principled, purposeful and productive unity at home. Here, home should be understood as a "with inness", within ourselves, our family and our community. It says of those who do not achieve unity before going to the battlefield, "They did not know that the

battle was already lost at home before they even reached the battlefield."

The sacred teachings of our ancestors in the Odu Ifa also teach us that in our deep commitment to life and living freely and fully, we must give our all to sustain ourselves and pursue the good. "And even if we are injured or disabled or even if we are going to die, we must wage a life-and-death struggle. We must still struggle hard". Indeed, the Odu Ifa says, we must "be able to suffer without surrendering", sacrifice for the good without complaining, and dare to be like fire that everywhere it goes, "it makes a way for itself."

Finally, Odu Ifa teaches us that we should struggle rightfully, courageously and constantly so that "the struggles we wage always add to our honor", engender respect for us and praise for the good we strive mightily to bring and sustain in the world. In the final analysis, our honored ancestors tell and teach us, there are several essential things needed to achieve our mission to bring good in the world, a sacred mission handed to us by both heaven and history. And struggle is at the beginning, center and end of it all and on every level.

They say, "the things needed to bring conditions of good in the world are: sacrifice; character; the love of doing good, especially for those who need it and those who seek assistance from us; and the eagerness and struggle to bring good into the world and not let any good be lost". Let us then dare to embrace these goals, dare to embody them in our daily lives and dare to achieve them. Hotep. Ashe. Heri.

Dr. Maulana Karenga, Professor and Chair of Africana Studies, California State University-Long Beach; Executive Director, African American Cultural Center (Us); Creator of Kwanzaa; and author of Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture, The Message and Meaning of Kwanzaa: Bringing Good Into the World and Essays on Struggle: Position and Analysis, www.AfricanAmericanCulturalCenter-LA.org;

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

Business & Economy

Project eyeing decent jobs for unemployed citizens

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

Ethiopia is taking a series of measures which are aimed towards reducing unemployment and improving productivity. To this end, the agricultural sector has been given an emphasis, especially focusing on agro business, believing that it would highly support to absorb the existing labor force.

Two years elapsed after the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement a project entitled “ProAgro Ethiopia – Promotion of Decent Work in Agribusiness” signed between the Ethiopian government and the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Designed under the framework of the Germany Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (BMZ) Special Initiative on Training and Job Creation, ProAgro project has been implementing in Amhara and Sidama states in Ethiopia over a period of 42 months with an operating budget of five million euro.

The sectors of food and vegetables, edible oils and poultry have been identified as having huge potential to undertake deeper and focused work around job creation, working standards and social dialogue.

ILO works in partnership with the government of Ethiopia through the Ministry of Labor And Skills, Ministry of Industry and Federation of Ethiopian trade unions to make this project happen.

The project primarily creates decent jobs as per the ILO’s definition. The project bothers not only quantity but also quality. Realizing that Ethiopia has huge amount of unemployed youth population, ILO is bringing so much of investment to the country. It is setting up industrial parks and investment strategy attracting foreign direct investment focused on creating jobs in the country. While the jobs are getting created, there are some gaps related to lack of employability skills which the young people don’t have. Investors, employers and enterprises are constantly challenged as they do not have skilled labor forces contribute to their work.

Second there is also a challenge in relation to working conditions particularly ensuring the right to workers. To date, there is no minimum wage law in Ethiopia. Thus, ILO has been working with the Ministry of Labor and Skills for the last few years addressing the stated challenge.

The third is all about the fact that until now the trust or the focus has to be enterprise development. It has been the way of thinking within the government which jobs needs to be created push the young people to set up the enterprises which is a great strategy. However it misses certain other elements to make this happen. Access to finance, market linkages, technology transfer, use of digitization and IT are some of the areas that required a lot of investment.

The project has four clear outcomes. One is, creating conducive ecosystem for decent jobs and sustainable investment. Enhance the capacity of Investment Promotion Agencies (Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC),



Ruchika Bahl, International labor organization (ILO) Chief Technical Advisor to Ethiopia

the Regional Investment Bureaus (RIBs), Ministry of Labor and Skills, and Ministry of Industry (MOI) to influence and monitor the jobs intensity and sustainability of investments. It Supports the “local ecosystem” for employment and training services to better cater for the different needs of the employers and job seekers in the agribusiness sector.

Under this outcome, the project will work at increasing the number of people employed in the target regions and sectors, enhancing the satisfaction rates of job seekers with available local employment services and also working at improving the satisfaction rates of foreign and local investors with the support services offered by investment promotion agencies and the wider local employment ecosystem in the target regions in the country.

Second, social dialogue and inclusive collective bargaining are promoted as key means of achieving decent work and stable industrial relations in the sector. In this case, decent work standards and workers’ rights advocated and promoted.

Under this outcome, the project will work towards improving the working conditions, wages, and productivity between companies and workers by increasing the number of enterprise-level local or sectorial agreements. This will result in an increase in the number of workers (women, men, and youth) who will benefit from the improved working conditions (working time, operational safety and health, wages, harassment, and other key aspects).

Third is quality and more demand oriented TVETs and trainings that increase employability and job prospects developed. This enhances collaboration, advocacy and capacity building on Skills Governance through the establishment of Sector Skills Councils (SSC) at the federal and regional levels. It also designs and develops demand driven short term trainings to enhance employability in the agribusiness sector.

Under this outcome, the project will work to increase the number of trainees employed as a result of the traineeships/apprenticeships/short-term training courses, the number of people who have completed technical short-term and core-skills/TVET programs, and the number of graduates of work-based learning programs.

Conducting enterprise development and entrepreneurship trainings is the fourth

outcome expected from the project. Systemic bottlenecks hindering the performance of selected agribusiness sub sectors identified, innovative interventions introduced through collaborations with local partners. Business development and financial service provider’s better match their services to the needs of local enterprises in selected sectors.

Stakeholders have developed their capacity to advocate for an improved enabling environment. Young, women, and men have access to entrepreneurship opportunities in the agribusiness sector. Under this outcome the project will work to raise the number of enterprises supported and the people who benefit from improved jobs (higher income) in the target value chains.

“Our project has turned two years and we are at the half-way mark, having started in September 2020 in Ethiopia. This thereby merits some reflection and retrospection of time gone by,” Ruchika Bahl, *International labor organization (ILO) Chief Technical Advisor to Ethiopia* said.

Adding she said; “We excitedly designed this first ILO project to create decent jobs in the agribusiness sector in Ethiopia jointly with the Government of Ethiopia in two regions i.e. Amhara and Sidama but soon after it was launched, we were hit by the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic and then faced with the humanitarian crisis in the northern part of the country. This double whammy impacted the work and the progress given the lack of staff mobility, team members working remotely and changed priorities of our tripartite partners both at the federal and regional levels.”

Nevertheless, as to her, they continued to strive by using virtual and online interactions to engage with partners and relying on local consultants to keep the movement on. The entire inception phase of the project was executed online.

She further elaborated that they put together a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for the project and established a partner M&E working group. An independent project evaluability assessment was also undertaken during the period.

The real momentum was gained earlier last year in February 2022 once the humanitarian crisis in the country had calmed down. The team went on an overdrive and the high energy and enthusiasm were appreciated by their partners across the board. This year has been crucial to bringing the project’s speed back on track, she said.

ILO undertook a joint tripartite mission to the Sidama region to prioritize the issues around collective bargaining and social dialogue both for workers and agro enterprises. A productivity assessment to develop a business case for investment in better working conditions in agro-processors to enhance productivity was carried out.

Following the positive recommendations, the project then entered into a partnership with the Ethiopian Kaizen Institute to further contribute to the development of

sustainable, responsible, and competitive agro small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by equipping enterprises with need-based capacity building to enhance productivity using the ILO SCORE approach. Approximately, 20 agro enterprises will benefit directly together with 3000 workers during the project’s life time.

The project has also partnered with the federal Ethiopian Cooperative Agency and conducted training of trainers to build the capacities of federal and regional cooperative agencies and cooperative service providers on cooperative development, using the ILO tools. These capacity building efforts will primarily contribute to addressing market access gaps identified by ILO cooperative assessment and help selected cooperatives establish partnerships with private sector/value chain actors.

Capacity building trainings for the Ethiopian Investment Commission and Regional Investment Bureau’s functionaries on topics of investment attraction and aftercare targeting with reference to international standards was carried out.

ILO also organized a high-level study tour for senior officials of the Government of Ethiopia and social partners led by the State Minister of Labor and Skills to draw lesson from the experience of the functioning of the Indian National Skills Development Council (NSDC) in setting up agro-processing Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to support and ensure enhanced quality and more demand oriented TVET trainings that increases employability and job prospects as part of skills development intervention.

As part of enterprise development work, the project is supporting potential MSMEs through the provision of technical support and capacity building trainings to enhance their business management skills and productivity to increase their income and create jobs. To achieve this, the ILO business management tool, SIYB (Start and Improve your Business) is being used in both Amhara and Sidama regions.

Accordingly, the project also launched the first employment services centre in the Yergalem agro-processing industrial park and developed the first ‘on the job training’ module aimed to be used for industry training in the poultry sector. As the project steps into its next two final years of operation, the focus will be on sustainability and scale ups. The enterprises need seed funding and access to finance along with market linkages. These enterprises will have to be supported as well the agripreneurs. Moving forward, the project will thereby design and execute strategies to address this gap together with the regional partners.

Working together with sectoral associations to enhance private sector engagement in skills development shall also be pursued. Together with the Ethiopian Poultry Producers and Processors Association, the project will pilot the ‘on-the job training module’ which will facilitate the development and supply of skilled labor force in the poultry sector.

Planet Earth

Localizing organic fertilizer preparation to address soil fertilizers challenges

BY EPHREM ANDARGACHEW

Ensuring food security requires various inputs and improved technologies. Agricultural inputs are crucial to benefiting the community, changing livelihoods, and increasing household income by increasing production and productivity. Hence, scholars and higher education institutes have to play a significant role in developing and transferring improved technologies to users.

Currently, Ethiopia, taking the growing demand for agricultural products into account, is making several efforts such as summer wheat development, Ye Lemat Terufat, urban agriculture, and so on to ensure food security across the country. Despite these efforts, the agriculture sector has been suffering from shortages of inputs every year. Particularly, fertilizer, which is one of the most significant agricultural inputs, has faced challenges in terms of price, quantity, security, and time.

The country imports chemical and soil fertilizers to increase the fertility of the land since fertilizers provide elements that are suitable for the growth of plants. Nevertheless, the rising prices of fertilizer in the world market become a challenge in Ethiopia. It is also becoming a worrisome concern for farmers in some parts of the country.

Despite some ups and downs, Ethiopia has managed to import over 1.2 million metric tons of fertilizers last year, as transporting the fertilizers were challenging tasks. Though efforts were underway to import and distribute chemical and soil fertilizers, the farmers could not receive the fertilizers as they wished due to several reasons. Among others, national, and international security challenges, fertilizer supply problems and rising prices were more challenging issues than ever to bring soil fertilizers to the country in a timely manner.

Taking lessons from previous years, Ethiopia has started importing and transporting soil fertilizer for the 2023 farming season. Accordingly, more than 57 thousand metric tons of soil fertilizer has reached the port of Djibouti while over 60,000 metric tons of soil fertilizer is expected to arrive in Djibouti.

Haramaya University Research and Extension and Publication Director Dr. Chanyalew Seyoum told The Ethiopian Herald that challenges in importing fertilizer have forced countries to look for alternative means to alleviate fertilizer problems. Since the price of soil fertilizers globally increases and affects developing countries like Ethiopia, devising alternatives is an essential solution.

Particularly, preparing and utilizing organic fertilizer is the best alternative that the government and other stakeholders should work on it to expand and increase the preparation and use of organic fertilizers. Several studies certainly encourage the utilization of organic fertilizer since it is



suitable and environmentally friendly. Besides, some chemical fertilizers may run off into waterbodies that harm marine life and water quality. Whereas, organic fertilizers do not run off as easily. Hence, it is important to expand the preparation of organic fertilizers across the country, he explained.

As stated by the Organic Trade Association, organic fertilizer enhances biodiversity species by 30 percent compared with chemical and other fertilizers. Besides, the preparations of organic fertilizers also do not harm the environment since farmers use animal wastes from meat processing, peat, and slurry. Organic fertilizers which are prepared from animal manure, human waste, food wastes, backyard wastes, sewage sludge, and composts have long been recognized in agriculture as a beneficial source of plant nutrients and thereby improving the yield of crops. It also acknowledges an environmentally sound process for the treatment of many organic wastes.

Indeed, Organic fertilizer is carbon-based compounds that increase the production, productivity, and growth quality of plants. It has positive effects on the environment and

the quality of food as well as greatly helps a farmer to become self-sufficient and reduce costs.

More importantly, preparing organic fertilizers increases production and productivity while reducing other related challenges. Because the preparation of organic fertilizer has not been affected by universally increasing prices, there are no brokers and illegal traders who illegally increase the price of fertilizers. It also avoids the issue of security that cause the delay of fertilizers in some parts of the country.

Therefore, higher institutions should play a key role in implementing sustainable soil management activities which include replacing chemical fertilizers with an organic one. For instance, Haramaya University provides improved technologies, crops, vegetables, and fruit seeds to farmers. These improved seeds require inputs like fertilizers. Hence, to withstand the rising cost and other challenges, the university has been preparing environmentally friendly organic fertilizers in its center called Burney Compost Center.

In the process of preparing organic fertilizers, the University also creates various platforms for stakeholders who

have knowledge and skills. This in turn increases the agricultural production and productivity in the surrounding area. Apart from preparing organic fertilizers in the compounds, the university has been providing training to farmers in its centers on how to prepare organic fertilizers, he elaborated.

Because ensuring food security requires not only improved seeds that are disease-resistant and higher-yield productive but also an in-depth knowledge and sufficient inputs like fertilizers. The University is also closely supporting the farmers by organizing, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills, and acquiring the agricultural technology to increase production using organic fertilizer preparation, he added.

Government encouragement and direction for organic fertilizer preparation support Haramaya University to prepare the fertilizer extensively, quickly, widely, and in large quantities. Substituting chemicals and soil fertilizer with organic fertilizer is a good advantage not only for the farmers but also for the youth. Hence, the government, the regions, and the stakeholders should give due attention to letting youths take part in the preparation and distribution of natural fertilizers since it saves foreign currency and creates job opportunities.

Actually, fertilizers are one of the most significant inputs in getting better yields in the nation's agricultural sector but the supply of fertilizer faces challenges. Therefore, it is imperative to prepare organic fertilizers from available resources to supplement and replace imported chemicals and soil fertilizers. So far, farmers throughout the country prepare organic fertilizers that can fill up to 20 percent of the country's fertilizer shortage. This trend must be expanded in a well-organized manner since organic fertilizers are required in high quality and quantity to prevent the shortage of fertilizers supply.

Art & Culture

This may be an ideal time for the revival of cinema, the theatres

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

It is indeed a long time since Ethiopian theatre has been hit by an equally long period of drought although there is currently some sign that drama is not completely dead. The current staging of a new work by popular playwright Wudeneh Kifle at the Hager Fikir Theatre may be taken as a sign that theatre may be getting a new lease on life as the prolific Ethiopian script writer has proved in the past when his works were staged for many seasons and attracted massive audiences. It is not yet time to judge whether the drought period in Ethiopian dramatic works will end soon or will continue for some time until favorable conditions will be created for its revival.

For the last two and a half years, movie making and live dramatic productions or presentations have sharply declined not only here in Ethiopia but also around the world mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic that had made it difficult for people to gather at the same place to watch movies or enjoy evening at theatre houses where new dramas could be stage. The golden age of theater in Ethiopia, when dramatic productions here in Addis Ababa forced theatre houses to fill to capacity and audiences counted in their thousands judging by the long and meandering queues, seem to have gone for good.

This was evident back in the 1980s and 1990s well before movie making shifted audience attention away from the stage drama and a new industry seemed on its way to blossoming as the first Amharic-language films caught the imagination of audiences who were apparently fed up with Hollywood productions. A genuine film industry seemed to have been launched in Ethiopia judging by the enthusiasm it was welcomed and the money that was invested in the industry that had become so lucrative that it attracted actors, producers and directors from the theatres and brought them to the silver screen.

The then available trained and experienced manpower transfer from theatre houses to movie settings had led to the decline of theatre at the cost of the silver screen, an event that was mourned by some and welcomed by many. Soon however, the film industry in Ethiopia exposed its softer belly as investments first shoot up and then suddenly dried up and the number of film produced every year dropped and reached a standstill due to the unfortunate arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic that undermined the industry that was already tottering on the brink.

This did not happen only here in Ethiopia. Hollywood, Bollywood and the Chinese film industries in general saw a period of sharp decline as movie houses were closed down and ticket sales dropped from a trickle to complete drying and massive incomes from Western blockbusters stopped altogether. But the big global film industries were strong enough to waver the dry period

and survive until better times came recently while the industries in developing countries went out of business unable even to pay actors for works they had done in better times.

According to sources, the first play by Ethiopian author Teklehawariat Teklemariam was entitled “Fabula: Yearewoch Commedia (Fable: The Comedy of Animals) and staged it at the Terrace Hotel in the capital Addis Ababa in 1921. Aboneh Ashagre in a study entitled, “The Role of Women on the Ethiopian Stage” said that the play was not a good success.

A certain Jane Plastow, professor at the University of Leeds “The First African play: Fabula: Yawreoch Commedia and its Influence on the development of theatre in Ethiopia” says that Fabula is probably the first original African drama ever written and produced...”

In the 1930s and afterwards, many playwrights continued the journey to write Ethiopian stories in in European form of play righting. He mentioned Yoftahe Negussie and Melaku Begossew who wrote plays in the 1930’s along the same lines and were popular among students at schools in Addis Ababa where, at the end of each academic year, students staged plays whose messages focused on student life and gave lessons both to youngsters and their parents.

On the other hand, the history of the Ethiopian film industry dates back to the 1960s but its growth is in no way commensurate with its long existence. The first film was staged in Ethiopia during the reign of Emperor Menelik who was fond of introducing modern European inventions like the telephone, the first train and vehicle to his country. This happened not long after the French Lumiere Brothers invented the first motion picture in 1896. The staging of the first movie that had religious content was opposed by the clergy who regarded it as “the work of the devil”. The stone house where the movie was screened was subsequently called “seitan bet” (house of the devil) and is still standing at the crossroad between Churchill Road and Piazza in Addis Ababa.

The rapport between cinema and stage drama in Ethiopia has largely been a process of mutual exclusion or inverse relationship in the sense that when dramatic works blossomed cinematic productions tended to go into temporary or chronic decline and vice versa. To begin with, the development of theatre in Ethiopia has more than one hundred year history while the first feature film dates back to the 1960s. For many decades, theatres had dominated the cultural landscape in Ethiopian cities and towns where ambulatory drama groups were staging their dramas to rural audiences.

The Ethiopian theatres in its long existence has produced many talented actors, script writers and producers who have contributed to the unprecedented growth of the entertainment while shaping the

consciousness of the theatre audience particularly during the post-revolution period starting in the 1970s. Poet Laureate Tsegaye G/Medhin wrote and stage some of his classic theatre works such as Hahu Besidist Wer (ABC in six Months), Hahu weyim Pepu (ABC or XYZ) in that period together with a stage adaptation of Bertolt Brecht’s “mother Courage” rendered in Amharic as Enat Alem Tenu.

There were also actors like Wegayehu Negatu, who could reach the apex in the development of their artistic talents by playing major roles in the classic dramas of the time and leaving unforgettable legacies of revival and maturity of Ethiopian theatre. There were also other lesser talents on their way to maturity although their profession was cut short to the post-revolution events in the country that prohibited or outlawed the staging of critical dramas. Since independent drama groups were non-existent at that time, the actors and script writers were automatically deprived of the means of earning their bread and many of them ended up in the gutter.

The post-Derg period had created enormous hope of revival for theatre in Ethiopia and there were a few attempts to revive a once vibrant profession that was a major entertainment for so many people in the capital Addis Ababa. Despite the tough times, dramatic works made their appearance over the radio and produced mainly comic dramas that caught the ears of the eager audience. This could not grow at it should due to the fact that actors in radio dramas as well as script writers were paid meagerly for their efforts and this was enough to repel many talents from radio studios. What was a promising enterprise at the beginning of the 1990s soon hit rock bottom and many professionals were sacked from their work places due to this or that political allegation.

It was around this time that the cinema was reborn in Ethiopia, or more truly in Addis Ababa, by making use of the talent, knowledge and demand for entertainment and by combining with individuals who were willing to invest in the movies. Although the Ethiopian Film Corporation (EFC) was established during the Derg era under the then Ministry of Culture, it had not done a great deal given the talent and money at its disposal. Filmmakers; like Haile GERima and Solomon Bekele who later on proved their mettle by producing classic movies here in the country and abroad were at one time employees of the EFC that was liquidated when the EPRDF came to power.

From the above brief exposition, one can see that the theater and cinema in Ethiopia had an intricate and intertwined relationship and their fates were equally tangled as it was evident from their survival in the following decades. What is interesting about Ethiopian theatre is the fact that it has proved itself to be resilient despite the odds as there was always a light at the end of the tunnel. This

was partly because Ethiopian theatre has played a revolutionary role as far as society and politics were concerned.

Theatre was established by an old dignitary by the name Mekonnen Endalkachew to motivate patriots and the general public during the Italian fascist invasion and the war of 1933-36. Ethiopian theatre at that time played a highly progressive and patriotic role in agitating the public and building a strong anti-fascist sentiment during the resistance. As the author of the above-quoted study tells us, “Mekonnen Endalkachew promoted the use of music and sketch plays to attract the audience for his motivational speeches every Sunday. The plays were improvised based on the main issue every Sundays’ gatherings.”

Ethiopian theatre has always been speaking truth to power as it was evident during the imperial era when Tsegaye’s Shakespearean works were perceived as critical remarks about the monarchy and the emperor in person. During the revolution, Tsegaye’s stage production contributed to raising the consciousness of the people while sending warning signs to the military administration that was taking power at that time. In the same period there was also Abe Gubegna’s provocative and critical drama called “politikana poletikegnoch” (Politics and Politicians) that was removed from the Hager Fikir Theater shortly after it was staged.

When Ethiopian theatre emerged from its turbulent period in the 1970s to 1990s, it was completely changed as far as actors, scripts and productions were concerned. The vary talent actors that animated the stage in those radical years had given way to a new generation of young actors who graduated from the Addis Ababa theater department. Although some of them had talent they lacked the experience and maturity of their predecessors.

As far as theme was concerned, Ethiopian theater had abandoned tougher issues that directly addressed the relationships between the people and the government and had sunk into themes related to romantic or tragic personal issues. The scripts were presented by relatively inexperienced writers who tried to reflect the lives of ordinary people in opposition to the heroic or tragic figures in the hands of the pioneering script writers like Tsegaye or Abe Gubegna or Tesfaye Gessesse.

Fast forward to the present. Nowadays, both the movies and dram productions are on the same level of decline even though the major constraint seems to have been overcome and that audiences are now free to go to the movies or theatres. There are occasional productions in both departments that are undermined by the current economic crisis that has apparently made it difficult for people to spend money on entertainment outlets although many people continue to frequent less healthy places that can hardly be called entertaining.

Society

Addressing humanitarian assistance, rebuilding conflict-affected areas

BY TEWODROS KASSA

The two years conflict in the northern part of Ethiopia has led hundreds of thousands of citizens in the area to various challenges including displacement, need for humanitarian assistance and other psycho-social traumas.

In addition, different infrastructural facilities have been demolished due to the conflict. Following this, the government and pertinent stakeholders have been working actively to address the challenges of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and reconstruct the damaged infrastructures.

Subsequent to the efforts, a number of health and educational institutions have been restored; and started providing services; and humanitarian assistance is delivered accordingly to those people who have been affected by the conflict.

According to recent reports, the Government of Ethiopia and partner organizations have succeeded in providing 95 percent of the total demand for food in the three conflict-affected regions during the past 30 days, according to the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC).

Of late, the Disaster Risk Management Commissioner Shiferaw Teklemariam told local media that over 134,948 metric tons of food supplies have been distributed to the war affected areas.

As the government of Ethiopia has been consistent with its policy in ensuring sustainable peace and resolving issues in civilized ways, it has provided and enhanced humanitarian aid in line with the Pretoria's, South Africa, peace agreement.

The Commissioner revealed that the number of people who need emergency food assistance in the areas affected by the war in Tigray, Amhara, and Afar is about 8.4 million. Of these, some 7.9 million people have received emergency food assistance.

Accordingly, the Government of Ethiopia is very concerned about citizens that require humanitarian aid and other basic services. As a result, it is responding vigorously and ensuring unfettered access in all areas.

"Following the peace agreement, full comprehensive support has been initiated by the Federal Government of Ethiopia as a first entry and subsequently by humanitarian partners."

In addition to emergency food assistance, the Commissioner stated that 3,239 metric tons of nutritious food was provided by the government and humanitarian partners to 71,978 vulnerable members of the community in the past month.

Communication and Public Relations Director of the NDRMC, Debebe Zewede told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the provision of unrestricted supply to citizens affected by conflict in northern Ethiopia has been accelerating. Since the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA),



Photo- Disaster Risk Management Commission



over 40,063 metric tons of food and non-food items have been transported within 1,017 vehicles. Some 839.76 metric tons of medical supplies within 25 trucks have been transported and 10 convoys loaded with 413,552 liters of fuel dispatched to the areas, he said.

Stressing that some 16 partners have been involved in the operation of humanitarian supplies, the Director said that over 4,254 metric tons of non-food items have been distributed within 115 vehicles to the conflict-affected citizens.

From October 30 to November 29, 2022, 1,169 heavy trucks were deployed to the areas by partners to accelerate humanitarian distribution via three corridors (Afar-Abala, Gondar-Shire and Kombolcha-Kobo-Alamata routes).

The support has been given for partners to transport over 148.7 million Birr in cash via Mekelle and Shire airport to facilitate humanitarian supply activities in Tigray State. Some, 168 heavy conveyers deployed by various 16 partners to facilitate humanitarian supply operation, he indicated.

Not only the Tigray people, the Afar and Amhara residents are also hugely affected by the conflict. Thus, the government, local and international development partners are

working together to rehabilitate the areas.

With regard to infrastructure development, recently, the Ethiopian Roads Authority announced that more than six bridges that are found in Amhara, Afar, and Tigray states, have been rebuilt. The bridges were out of service due to the conflict in the northern part of the country had caused socio-economic challenges to the surrounding community. Lack of transportation from one place to the other was the significant problems among the society during the past two years of conflict. But nowadays, the government's commitment to rebuild the areas is registering a tangible fruits in the speedy recovery of the socio-economic activities of the people in war affected areas.

Authority's Bridges and Structural Works Directorate Director Getnet Zeleke told the Ethiopian Press Agency that more than 175 million Birr has been allocated to accomplish the bridges reconstruction process and they are now open for traffic. As to him, the bridges reconstruction process is accomplished within a short period of time considering the dire need of the society.

Furthermore, the Authority will conduct other bridges and roads reconstruction as soon as a report is delivered.

Meanwhile, The FDRE Government Communication Service Minister, Legesse

Tulu, stated the activities carried out by the Ethiopian Government following the peace agreement. As to him, the government is working with full commitment for the successful implementation of the peace agreement; and to address the challenges of people in war affected areas.

The Minister told local media that as per the Pretoria and Nairobi Peace Agreement, the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) have started taking over heavy weapons from the TPLF militants.

He stated that the beginning of TPLF's handing over of heavy weapons to ENDF indicates the promising progress on implementation process of the peace agreement.

As to the Minister, the federal government is now working with full determination to the successful conclusion of the peace accord. Various activities also witnessed that everyone is pleased with the two sides initiatives and commitment towards sustainably rehabilitate the areas.

Thus, the effective implementation of the peace accord is bringing a tangible impact on the ground to realize sustainable peace and stability and ensure citizens safety through disarming militants and enable them to focus on the reconstruction process.

Law & Politics

Stiff measure against corruption

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

Regardless of the fact that the federal government has made a wide range of efforts to combat corruption, the problem has continued to pose imminent threat to the country. Notwithstanding the fact that a lot of efforts have been made by numerous pertinent bodies, making happen the anticipated goal is turned out to be easier said than done.

Because of the concealed and multifaceted nature of the delinquencies, among other factors, theft has sustained to be one of the foremost problems that have been throwing cold water on the positive developments of the entire nation.

Dejectedly, as things stand at present, the malpractice has grown into becoming a national threat that would cripple the economy of the whole nation.

In point of fact, fraud of public property and systematized bribes has been one of the leading foundations of weighty public hatreds that resulted in widespread complaints from every corner. Before the reform took place, the country was known for its egregious defilements of corruption and self-enrichment at a grand scale.

Given the current circumstances, corruption has been taking place in every nook and cranny of the country in various shapes and forms. Though corruption plays a paramount role in slowing down the development of the entire nations, most entities directly and indirectly have been involved in the predicaments.

In good truth, corruption is one of the manifestations of the breaking of the rule of law. It is the advancement of one's own benefits at the expense of other. In other words it is an unlawful way of maximizing one's interests. As a matter of fact, corruption is demonstrated on a number of instances. Some of these are embezzlement, bribe, nepotism, and other things of a similar kind.

According to a book written by Dr. Alamirew G/Mariam, who extensively wrote books on corruption and other related issues, nepotism refers to actions in which individuals who hold some power favor their relatives. This is often done at the expense of other citizens and manifested in many ways. For example, allowing relatives to get promotions they do not deserve is a reelection of nepotism.

Other than that letting one's relatives get job that they cannot qualify for is another manifestation of nepotism. Creating favorable situations for some financial benefit is also nepotism. These and other types of nepotism are done to benefit one's relatives or to benefit people who have some martial times with them. It is also a dangerous crime that harms other citizens while favoring few authorities and their relatives.

It affects the economy of a country by letting people exploit its financial wealth in addition to weakening the quality of work as there will be many people who hold position they do not qualify for. Embezzlement is



also wrongly and illegally using money which is at one's responsibility for personal enrichment. This illegal act is manifested in many ways. It could be done either individually or collectively. Abuse of power is also a form of corruption.

It is using one's position to benefit oneself. This excessive use of power is reflected in activities like arranging the situation to get scholarship, promotion, etc. for oneself. It could also include the use of one's power to amass wealth. All these use of power are beyond what is prescribed for them.

Before the reform a wide spectrum of mega projects had been delayed as a consequence of the widespread corruption that occurred on a national scale by various entities. In consideration of the foregoing, most projects in the country were lagging behind the times exposing the country to various predicaments.

Corruption is said to be rife in all sectors with justice, finance and judiciary organs of the government appear to be hotbeds of the evil act. The failure to ensure strong punitive action together with the complacency of the public created a fertile ground for corrupt individuals. As the scale of the thievery remains an issue of hot debate, it is definitely putting the national interest of the country in danger.

Albeit Ethiopia has been battling on numerous occasions to wipe out corruption from the face of the earth, achieving the sought-after goal turned out to be a wild goose chase. While on the subject, the crackdown against anti-corruption institutions in the aftermath of the reform helped the country smooth the path of quite a lot of development projects.

Theft has been the source of pain for the public but gain for few individuals. These days, the problem is also rampant in all sectors despite the variation in magnitude. The incumbent has declared that the malpractice is becoming a stumbling block in the country's path to development and prosperity.

Lately, PM Abiy announced the establishment of a high-level anti-corruption

committee which includes the Attorney General and the Ethiopian National Intelligence and Security Service is a clear indication of a determined effort to directly attack the problem of corruption.

"It should prove to be a first strong step against corruption "if not to eliminate it altogether, at least to put a chokehold on it" as PM Abiy declared.

The National Anti-Corruption Coordinating Committee (NACC) presented the work done so far to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (Ph.D.), the Office of the Prime Minister announced.

Presenting the activities of the committee, a member of the NACC and Justice Minister Gedion Timotheos (Ph.D.) stated that conditions are facilitated to ensure active public participation in revealing misconduct of officials.

Accordingly, a large number of suggestions related to corruption have been received from the society and starting last week, about 598 corruption-related suggestions have been collected via telephone, e-mail and other data collection means. Rigorous investigations have also been carried out in the 161 cases that were collected from various institutions.

By the same token, some 110 cases have also been transferred to further scrutiny.

Noting corruption has created a major threat to the safety and security of society, Gedion indicated the government's commitment has been high in preventing the problem from creating further damage.

"Our future investigation will be on the fertile grounds of grand corruption including service delivery, land administration, financial sector, sales and procurement processes, as well as in the justice system."

The committee has been bringing individuals suspected of involvement in corruption before a court of law while the work of holding crime participants will continue, the minister remarked.

It is to be recalled that the Committee announced that it has started arresting

individuals for alleged corrupt practices.

It has started investigating individuals suspected of corrupt practices and arresting those including officials who were found involved in various corruption crimes, especially in Addis Ababa, according to information obtained from the Ethiopian News Agency.

Tewodros Bekele, Director General of Financial Intelligence Service and other suspects engaged in financial plundering and land grabbing have been detained, the committee disclosed.

Recall the government of Ethiopia has established a national committee to coordinate its anti-corruption campaign on the 17th of November 2022 as the government believes that corruption has become a threat to the security of the country.

The study revealed that widespread corruption is rampant in the provision of loan, consumer goods, procurement, land administration, financial sector, among others, it was indicated.

Director General of the National Intelligence and Security Service, Temesgen Tiruneh, who is also Chairperson of the National Anti-Corruption Committee, on his part said that the government of Ethiopia is intensifying efforts against corruption as it has become a threat to the nation.

The director also said that corruption has now become a national threat and it has been exacerbating the cost of living and unemployment in Ethiopia.

"Corruption or malpractice, in addition to being the cause for the high cost of living and unemployment in the country, has been confirmed by research that it is a third level threat to national security. The fact that it is a serious problem has been a major discussion point of the public."

According to him: "Especially, in service delivery institutions, financial, justice and security sectors, as well as procurement, the land issues and other sectors face wide-range of corrupt practices."



Ephrem Endale
Contributor

Between you & me

“What the heck is he talking about!”

“I don’t like him.”

“Why? I don’t think there’s anything wrong with that guy. You must have some good reason to not like him.”

“He’s a complete dude. He doesn’t have any sense of humor.”

“Sorry, did you say sense of humor! What was that about?”

“The guy has no sense of humor! Have you ever seen him smiling let alone laughing?” I mean come on, you just can’t smile or laugh over anything and everything just to act as one of the nicer guys. Why do I feel there is too much of synthetic laughter these days? I’m not talking about the diplomatic smile and laughter which must be the rule of the game. But let alone smiles and laughter taking part in group discussions is not a plus for some of us out here; the downside of this is that many can’t feel comfortable with the likes of you (and probably me, too!) around!

The entire group is suspicious of you. Why? Well because almost everyone will have something to say and you’re always the silent one. “Why is he always silent? Is he spying on us?” No comment in an age where it seems what makes you a human being is ‘commenting’ on one or a hundred and one issues. How do you think they should feel with such a behavior in an age where everyone acts as if it will be doomsday unless we and only we are heard! Socializing is one thing; but saying something for the sake of saying something might not be a very wise idea.

You see too many people making fools of themselves just trying to be part of the crowd, I mean a good listener can be part of the crowd as fully as a good talker, (what!) is supposed to be.

I more than once have found myself in situations which while they don’t surprise me, made me uncomfortable. Now your writer

here is the last person you want to make part of a boisterous team where everyone wants to push all others offstage and talk, talk and talk. Not very particular talkers, the likes of me could never be the lives of the party, if you know what I mean.

But then let’s call a spade a spade, shall we? There are many out there who shouldn’t be talking much not because their voices aren’t musical or anything like that; but because they don’t know what the heck they’re saying! Of course they think they know everything! There’s no more slippery ground than thinking you know everything when you actually know nothing! I mean when someone who doesn’t know what actually is going in their neighborhoods try to give you some Ukraine 101 course it isn’t a very nice scenario, is it? I’m sure you recall the media blitz a few weeks back when they sent the ‘alarm’ that the Euphrates is drying out. Someone should write some book about what transpired during those days. There was this supposedly learned guy who always wants to be in the spotlight; and he’s almost always in the spotlight! Those around him must be a bunch of something that they’ve already crowned him some sort of ‘the brightest man on earth’ sort of a champion! The fun is that people who have some idea of things are always uncomfortable in his presence because at any moment something like, “No, you’re lying!” sort of outburst might slip all the way down their tongues; and that is the easiest way of losing friends!

Well about this Euphrates thing this guy was telling a group that it will completely dry out in the first quarter of 2023. Maybe it would. Maybe he got some ‘info’ from yonder. Maybe he might have been hitting the betel too much in those days. I mean with the end of the world around the corner there is nothing to lose by drinking yourself unconscious, except of

course, your consciousness! Someone was telling me the guy doesn’t even have any idea as to the real location of the river. But let’s give him the benefit of the doubt and the guy thinks the drying out won’t be a natural process. He supposedly said there were some ‘Secret Society’ activities to ensure that it dries out soon so they can build the sort of society they’ve been devising for ages!

I’ve got a problem here. How in the world can ‘they’ build even any small raw-meet-fans group let alone an entire society when all of us are expected to ‘dry out’ along with the Euphrates! Come on, no Houdini can convince us there would be a way through which that happens! And the funny thing is that he used the term “I think...” He thinks! He even told the group that there are only a few months before Judgment Day comes knocking; and the fellow doesn’t know where the river is located! Something is very wrong here?

I mean when someone acts as if they are immune to the whole thing you can’t help wondering if they have got some piece of paper with strange language scribbled on it in one of their pockets. Aha! You might be saying “What the hell is this dude talking about?” Well thanks for the ‘dude’ comment and I’ll tell you what I’m talking about. A couple of months back I was this old time buddy of mine who for decades resided somewhere across the Atlantic and a year or so back he returned home for good. We were talking about no particular issue over coffee (and nothing more!) when he told me that he goes around with some protection in his pockets. What! He’s not telling me he’s carrying some gun or something in broad daylight. No it was not a gun or anything like that. It was a piece of paper on which some “Wise Man” has scribbled something in a language my buddy couldn’t understand; in fact he isn’t sure if it

indeed was a real language! He offered to show me the strange characters on the piece of paper and I refused. Why! I don’t like such things. You might say “Don’t tell me you believe in such things?” Well it isn’t about believing or not believing. It is such in the culture we grew up in such things send the shivers down the spine. No need to play the hero!

What however really jolted me was that my buddy being well-educated and having lived for decades in a society which prides itself of being modern in every sense of the term believes some piece of paper in his pocket will serve him as some personal Patriot missiles. Maybe it does protect him.

Look, I’m not enthusiastic about watching most interviews these days for more reasons than one. In the first place many interviewers don’t seem to have done their homework thoroughly. It must be because I want to be placed on the side of the nice ones that I used the term ‘thoroughly!’ I mean ‘thoroughly’ means there is at least some work done. But most of them just scribble the same old, tired and worn-out questions which sound so bland and useless and pose them as real questions! I always say how can you ask your guest his name and where he works when the interviewer has already introduced him and told viewers where he works! You can sit through an hour of interview and finally ask, “Does anyone understand what this guy has been saying?” because the fact is that most interviewees show no substance at all except the nice tie and suit with the big tag still on one of the arms. The story is also with the ‘guests’ quite a number of whom have absolutely no idea what they are talking about except that they are in front of the cameras!

When the time comes where we hear less of the “What the heck is he talking about!” question things might start making sense!

Give the best you have...

The guy was out of the country for almost a decade and half. He was in an European country and all these years he never got a valid residence permit. Still, he marries a ferengi though in real terms it wasn’t much of a marriage. He being a hopeless guy who expected roads paved with gold and finally ended up learning to live with his always starving self. As he was inclined towards criminal activities the ferengi woman in whose he resided throws him out. Now, the story while still in Ethiopia he had this girlfriend and they were planning to marry when he suddenly disappeared just like that! No one had any idea whatever happened to him. Or as a common Amharic pun has it ‘which hyena devoured him!’ A few months later he phones and tells in which country he was promising to take her out once he put things in order.

A couple of years tuned into many years and the girlfriend who decided it was time to forget about him and get on with her life did exactly that. A hard worker she makes it through life achieving one success after another. She had a very well-paying job and she manages to build her own wonderful G+1 house. For some reason having dumped a one new boyfriend she was going it alone in life.

Suddenly one Sunday while she was home after prayers in her neighborhood church fixing breakfast for herself and a couple of friends who promised to drop by there was a knock on the door. Her friends have arrived; so she thought. When she opens the door indeed

her friends have arrived but there was a third person with them, the very person who left her out in the cold a decade and half ago and who just forgot about her. Here, knocking on her door on a bright Sunday with all the promise of being a wonderful day was the guy who was supposed to be somewhere in Europe married to a ferengi and leading a comfortable life! Well that was what she heard about him the last time she inquired many years back. And now here he was on her doorsteps disheveled, thin and looking like the last time he ate anything was when Saddam was still wielding rifles at rallies. She was so shaken she said not much and their greetings were the strange and queer. The two friends left once they hastily did away with the breakfast.

His story was that after repeated warnings from the authorities in the foreign country he was once again caught in illegal activities and deported. In fact the unconfirmed talk is that a police officer from that country accompanied him all the way to Addis. No one is sure if he ever saw the inside of any prison cell once back home and what his crime really was back in Europe. I mean it must have been quite serious if all the gossip about his being accompanied by a police officer holds any water. Somehow no one is sure how he managed to soften her heart and they got into a not-so-passionate and very short-lived romantic relationships; she was the one who called it quits telling him in as many words.

However the nice God-fearing lady she was she still kept him in the house until he gets somewhere else to go. Still being the one who brings home all the money she covered his every expense. Let alone earning a single cent he never went out looking for any job! The cracks appeared when he, to her total surprise, asks her for them to have a joint account! This is the very guy who was served the red card of any personal relationship with her! And he asks for a joint account! (No wonder the football team of the country he was in was sent home from the Qatar World Cup quite early!) I mean some people are real weird creations! He earns not a single cent and he has the guts to demand for a joint account! A joint account! Really!

She says there was no way this would happen and it is at this time he started acting like some Napoleon trying to boss his way around her house and she had had enough! She asks him to leave and the guy had practically nowhere to go. Her friends tried to cool her down and give him some more time. But the way he was acting she was also afraid he might try to do something bad and it became a life-threatening situation. With her verbal warnings for him to leave having fallen on his deaf ears one day she threatened to report him to the authorities and that did the job. He left promptly leading her to believe the guy must be involved in some real bad stuff for him to be so sacred at the threat of being reported to the authorities. He approached her friends begging them to do something and that’s when we heard of this story.

I mean given that his betrayal the guy didn’t deserve anything. But the philanthropic-hearted lady went out of her way and did only a few, if any, would have done and took him in; and see how she’s paid back! The fact is that if things had gone well back in that European country he would have forgotten even she existed.

By the way, about this joint account thing we hear many stories of hubbies with hidden accounts of their own where they put in much of whatever extra money they get throwing the crumbs into the joint accounts. Here is a humorous piece I read somewhere;

“My wife and I have a joint checking account.”

“Isn’t that hard to keep straight?”

“No. I put the money in and she takes it out.”

There you have on chauvinist macho!

Now, about this really good lady it’s absolutely maddening to hear some of her closest friends are trying to paint her as a heartless person who threw a defenseless guy out to the wolves! What is wrong with people, especially so-called best friends, these days! These people who in their live times haven’t never been involved in any humanitarian work or even came anywhere close to it and they try to take apart this humble lady’s name!

Here is a wonderful line I read somewhere; “Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough. Give the world the best you have anyway.” Isn’t that a beauty! We need more people like this lady who give the best they have despite the ungrateful times we’re in!

The journey to sustainable peace in Northern Ethiopia continues

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

Following the 02 November 2022 agreement on Cessation of Hostilities between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF) in Pretoria and two consecutive meetings in Nairobi, Kenya between the two parties, different actions are being taken to fully implement the agreement on the ground.

Immediately, following the agreement, active violence has stopped and humanitarian flow opened through all corridors. In addition, a delegation of Federal government officials led by House of Peoples' Representatives Speaker, Tadesse Chafo visited Tigray's capital, Mekelle on 26 December 2022 for the first time after the active war.

The visit of the federal government officials' delegation accelerates resumption of services like air transport, electric power, telecom and banking service, though there are activities that would be done to resume full services in all the war ravaged states. Still efforts are continued to fully resume all critical services in the region. And, this week based on the Pretoria agreement, the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of TPLF combatants started as TPLF started handing over of heavy weapons in the presence of African Union Monitoring team.



DDR implementation on the ground

Article six of the Pretoria agreement discussed the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of the TPLF armed combatants within a set period of time. The article defines that Ethiopia has only one defense force and orders a comprehensive DDR program for TPLF combatants consistent with the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia as part of the agreement for cessation of hostilities.

Based on the agreement, a monitoring team was formed by the African Union to follow and verify the DDR implementation on the ground that consists of senior military men assigned by AU. This week, on Tuesday, within the presence of the monitoring team, the TPLF started handing over of heavy weapons to the Ethiopian National defense Force (ENDF).

The TPLF forces already handed over the first round of weapons that included tanks, rockets, and mortars in Agula camp, which founds 36 kilometers from Mekelle, Tigray capital.

The above shot was taken during the handing over event in Agula camp. In the picture African Union Monitoring team delegations are seen. The DDR monitoring team of AU includes those military men wearing a military uniform with green bonnet in their heads and civil experts.

The heavy weapons that prepared for the transfer from TPLF to ENDF are shown in the picture in the Agula camp. The first heavy weapons handover ceremony was successfully and peacefully applied and is the latest development with regard to the November's Pretoria agreement between the two parties.



ENDF, TPLF combatants, DDR monitoring team in one picture

The above shot was taken during the first-round heavy weapons transfer event by TPLF to ENDF. The group picture includes African Union DDR monitoring and verification team, which includes civil and military experts, ENDF commanders and members of TPLF combatant group.

The group picture indicates the peaceful process of the handing over of the weapons from TPLF forces to ENDF. This picture is the sign and symbol of peaceful journey of the peace building process. This image gives a hope for people that the agreement is on full implementation and that would never go back.

"Tigray has handed over its heavy weapons as part of its commitment to implementing the Pretoria agreement, and the Monitoring & Verification Team has confirmed it. We hope and expect this will go a long way in expediting the full implementation of the agreement," Getachew Reda tweeted following the event.



Ethiopian Athletics Federation team visited Tigray capital, Mekelle

The Ethiopian Athletics Federation team, which includes senior officials of the federation and Tigrayan born athletes travelled to Mekelle. The team includes the star athletes that outshined in Oregon World Athletics Championship, including the record owner in Marathon.

The federation's visit was in an honor for the Tigray born athletes to meet their family after the war. The team led by Federation's president Athlete Deputy Commissioner Derartu Tulu and the federation donated two million birr to support the Tigray Athletics Federation.

The above shot was taken during the team's arrival at Mekelle's Alula Abanega airport. The delegation team wore the Ethiopian Athletics team's uniform (kit) used mainly for trainings. This Red, yellow and green emblazoned flag is a symbol of Ethiopianism.

They commuted by the Ethiopian which is shown just immediately behind them. The Ethiopian airlines is the best airline in Africa and it started flight to Mekelle immediately following the Federal Government's officials visit to Mekelle in late December after the war.