



# The Ethiopian Herald

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## Abbay Dam: Freeman advises Africans to emulate Ethiopia's vision

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA-Ethiopia is constructing one of the largest dams in the world to become Africa's power provider apart from quenching its local consumption, the noted Political-Economy Analyst Lawrence Freeman stated.

In his article, the analyst further noted that this massive infrastructure project constructed by an emerging sub-Saharan African nation, the Abbay Dam, is a potent demonstration of the power of human creativity, and humankind's harmony with the physical universe. "It is a dam for development. With just 750 MW being produced from two of its turbines, Ethiopia is already exporting electricity to Djibouti, Kenya, and Sudan. Moreover, Ethiopia has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with South Sudan for electricity sale."

"Upon completion, the Abbay Dam will be the largest hydroelectric dam in the African continent and the seventh largest in the world. For this to happen, Ethiopians and their leadership have exerted utmost effort and should be praised for initiating such a grand endeavor over a decade ago; this grand step would make an immense



contribution to the transformation of the African continent."

Energy from the dam will contribute to powering the industrialization of Ethiopia and will also benefit the greater Horn of

Africa. "Hence, the Abbay Dam, a human intrusion into nature, not only produces desperately needed energy but raises Ethiopia's infrastructure platform to a more advanced level that will permeate the entire See *Abbay Dam* ... page 3

## Some 90 health facilities restart operation in Tigray

ADDIS ABABA- About 90 health facilities, including the hospitals in Shiraro, Shire, Axum and Adwa, have started operation, following the peace agreement.

Following the agreement reached between the federal government and TPLF, service providers and other institutions in Tigray state were able to return to work quickly.

The federal government has been fulfilling its promises by restoring basic services, including banks, telecom, health facilities and air transport service.

Following the peace agreement, residents of the city of Shire who spoke to ENA expressed their happiness with the speedy and efficient service of basic services.

Residents of Shire have expressed their



appreciation for the commendable act the government has taken in providing efficient and effective services.

Patients at Schul Hospital in Shire told ENA that they are benefiting from peace more

See *Some 90 health...* page 3

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## Ethiopia's truce stands as living proof of African solution

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA –The AU-brokered Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) between the government and TPLF demonstrates Africa's ability to solve internal problems thereby protecting its interest and bringing inclusive economic progress, experts in the issue said.

Bahir Dar University Political Science and International Relations Assistant Professor Yayew Genet told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the ability to solve internal problems independently would have a significant impact in creating strong unity among the people of Ethiopia. The truce also has the ability to ensure sustainable peace and development in the country.

Likewise, resolving problems in accordance with the political culture of the country should ensure inclusive

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# News

## Expert outlines *Timket's* wide-reaching significance

BY HAILE DEMEKE

**ADDIS ABABA-** The colorful celebration of *Timket*, an Orthodox Christian celebration of Epiphany, is crucial in promoting similar outdoor festivities and boosting Ethiopia's tourism sector thereby boosting the national economy, according to a tourism expert.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Senior Tourism Expert Ayalew Sisay (PhD) said that the celebration of Epiphany in Ethiopia is inscribed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as one of the intangible cultural heritages in 2019.

Also, the inscription promotes Ethiopia's similar outdoor festivities to the rest of the world which in return has a significant impact on the growth of other celebrations. "*Timket* is crucial in attracting tourists from across the world and paves the way for them to visit the country's world-famous attraction sites."



"*Timket* will also have its contribution to Ethiopia's economy. Concerning stakeholders, the government, investors, and hotel- owners need to work together for the promotion of the festivity and benefit the country and its economy."

Following the peace accord, the flow of tourists from around the world is rising and the government needs to work tirelessly

in promoting *Timket* and other religious and secular festivities expected to create a conducive environment for visitors, the expert recommended.

The annual *Timket* festivity remembers the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. During the festival, *tabots*, models of the Ark of the Covenant, are taken from churches and paraded through the streets.

The commemoration starts on the eve of the main festival on 18 January which is known as *Ketera*, which means blocking the flow of water for the blessing of the celebrants. On the *Ketera*, people escort their parish church *tabot* (replicas of the Ark of the Covenant) to Timkete-Bahir (a pool, river, or artificial reservoir), transported by a priest of the parish and accompanied by a great ceremony.

The celebrants then attend night-long prayers and hymn services, before attending the actual festival the following day, when each *tabot* is transported back to its respective church.



### Lionel Messi joins campaign to support visually impaired in Ethiopia

•Says keen to work in collaboration with OrCam Technology

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

**ADDIS ABABA-** Argentinian football legend Lionel Messi announced in his Facebook page that he has joined the campaign to support visually impaired people in Ethiopia in collaboration with OrCam Technology.

Lionel Messi said that he is honored to team up with OrCam for a special donation to the visually impaired segments of the society in Ethiopia. The OrCamMyEye device's revolutionary technology has improved the quality of life of thousands of users, increasing their independence and supporting them to fulfill their biggest dreams.

Recently, The Office of the First Lady has handed over the OrCamMyEye glass, the product of modern technology, which helps close to 2,000 visually impaired people.

The MyEye device reads both Amharic and English and identifies as well as explains currency notes to the user. It identifies color type and provides information by keeping track of what's in front and who's coming, as local media reported.

OrCamMyEye is a breakthrough, wearable artificial intelligence device for people who are visually impaired, enabling them to independently access the world, read text from any surface, recognize faces, identify colors, products, and more, it was learnt.

OrCam Technologies develops pioneering artificial intelligence solutions that empower people, enrich their daily experiences, and realize their dreams. Regain independence and bring out best with wearable and handheld Personal AI product.

## Company, Association sign MoU to foster online market

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

**ADDIS ABABA-** Ashewa Technology Solutions and Addis Ababa City Merchants Association have signed MoU to work together to cut unnecessary long trade chain and help merchants to sell their commodities through digital market.

Speaking at the agreement, Ashewa Technology Solutions Chief Executive Officer Daniel Bekele said the system would enable merchants to sell commodities through digital trade market, and help them scale up their business as well as cut unnecessary long trade chains.

He also said that the company has planned to operate and expand its availability nationwide to facilitate digital trade and change obsolete and bureaucratic channels.

"After this agreement, we support the merchants to help them increase productivity, enable them to be profitable and solve the problems at a sustainable manner, and focus on improving or facilitating the merchant's trade and easing life by applying modern technology of online market in place of traditional trade system.

We would build smart city and economy that can compete with international merchants by using digital trade system



for every product. The system connects merchants with their counterparts and buyers at any places and the platform in a bid to facilitate the trade."

Addis Ababa City Merchants Association President, Zahra Mohammed on her part said that the association has 10,000 merchant members and is serving as the bridge between the merchants and the government and working to create clear, convenient trade atmosphere and minify the illegal traders or commodity trafficking

and encourage the legal ones since its establishment.

She said the agreement would create conducive trade atmosphere and cut the long chain and avoid illegal brokers that have aggravated the cost of living in the city at this moment.

"Digital marketing could reduce high cost, time and create credible relationship between public with merchants and create dedicate groups."



# News

## MoSL inks MoU with China-Africa TVET alliance

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

**ADDIS ABABA-** Ministry of Skills and Labor (MoSL) signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China-Africa Vocational Education Alliance in a bid to jointly work on various areas in TVET sector.

During the signing ceremony, MoSL State Minister Teshale Berecha (PhD) noted that the agreement would allow the nation to share best China's experience in TVET.

Besides, it would help facilitate the ongoing works that are performed to modernize TVET centers in the country, he added.

He also stressed that projects that will allow the implementation of the agreement will be put in place in the coming months.

As to him, the agreement is said to enable TVETs in Ethiopia get technological



support, scholarship opportunities as well as teacher's training from the alliance.

He went on saying: "China has been carrying out various activities on artificial

intelligence in Ethiopia and such support clearly demonstrates its keen interest to develop the sector."

Representing China-Africa Vocational

Education Alliance, Mark Kong (PhD), on his part stated his country's commitment and readiness to cooperate as well as share best experiences with Ethiopia in TVET sector.

## Ethiopia's truce stands...

growth and also avoid external interference and pressure. The situation would also open the space for promoting the political culture and ability of countries to solve their problems by internal mechanisms.

The academician further noted that the CoHA aligns with AU's vision of seeking African solutions to African problems. The government of Ethiopia has, in practical terms, demonstrated its commitment to resolving the conflict peacefully through the auspices of the continental body.

"Ethiopia believes that the principle of 'seeking African solutions to African problems' shall dictate the policies of those involved in the conflict and those advocating for a negotiated peace."

As to him, most of Africa's problems are differ from the rest of the world and addressing those problems require special mechanisms. Accordingly, solving the

issue needs indigenous and continental approach.

For Political Science and International Relations Lecturer DeguAsres (PhD), resolving internal problems by own capacity would have a significant impact on building a strong continent and a self-confident country. Similarly, it strengthens unity and cooperation among citizens thereby contributing to the development of the country.

Sharing the above rationale, the renowned economist Costantinos Berhetesfa (PhD) stated that solving issues independently will have a significant impact on creating a strong economy and open space for new technological innovations. Similarly, such capability eases the burdens extorted on countries by creating strong economies.

Resolving international problems free from intervention and interface on the other hand



creates strong unity among the people, and also protects the national interest of the country. The condition also creates a

competitive economy which is crucial in averting external pressure, the scholar emphasized.

## Abbey Dam: ...

production process of the economy."

Freeman advised other Africans to emulate Ethiopia's bold visionary initiative as its firm move is the viable pathway for poverty and hunger to be finally eliminated on the continent."

"For future generations of the Nile Basin nations to prosper, we should create the equivalent of a second Nile River through nuclear-powered desalination. Many pessimists will complain that this is impractical and will never happen. In response to these naysayers, I say: let us aspire to the same audacious optimism of Ethiopia when they conceived of creating the Abbey Dam where only mountains and the Blue Nile existed."

than anyone else.

They stated that children to adults are getting treatment at the hospital due to the availability of better medical services and medicines in hospitals and health institutions.

They recalled that inhabitants, especially children, women and elders, were the most affected during the conflict. "We are happy to have peace now."

They further stressed that the peace agreement has given great relief to the people of Tigray who were facing many problems.

Sehul Hospital Manager Gebrehiwot

## Some 90 health ...

Legesse (MD) said the hospital has given great relief to more than one million people living in the area.

Even if there are many people seeking treatment, the hospital is doing its best to serve all by working with the limited workforce it has got, he added.

Gebrehiwot pointed out that the current problem will be eased when other health facilities in the area become fully functional.

Shiraro, Shire, Axum and Adwa Area Health Sector Coordinator under Ministry of Health, Samuel Dinkineh said a total of 88 health facilities have been put into operation since November

1, 2022.

The coordinator added that the communities are getting efficient medical services as supply of medicine is being made accessible and health professionals are returning to work.

According to him, activities have been intensified to provide full service at health centers and hospitals in every district.

Following the Pretoria Peace Agreement, the government has not only made humanitarian supplies widely available in Tigray state, but also actively working to reconstruct and restore basic services.



# Opinion

## *GERD*: Utilizing the Blue Nile to create energy for development in Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa

BY LAWRENCE FREEMAN

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam-GERD, built on Ethiopia's Blue Nile River will be completed in 2025 with an installed capacity to generate 5,150 megawatts of electricity. This will not only provide increased access of electricity to the Ethiopian population, but supply much needed energy to the nations of the Horn of Africa as well.

On December 19, 2022, I was given a VIP tour of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, known as the GERD. It was an exciting and joyful experience for me to examine this massive infrastructure project constructed by an emerging sub-Saharan African nation. It is proof that humankind is capable, nay obliged, to intervene upon the physical universe for the betterment of the human race i.e., progress for our civilization.

The GERD, when completed, will generate from its thirteen turbines a total of 5,150 megawatts (MW) of electricity for Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. The GERD is a dam for development. Already, with just 750 MW being produced from two of the GERD's functioning turbines, Ethiopia is already exporting electricity to Djibouti, Kenya, and Sudan. Additionally, Ethiopia has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with South Sudan to sell electricity.

Upon completion, the GERD will be the largest hydro-electric dam on the African continent and the seventh largest in the world. For this accomplishment, the Ethiopian people and their leadership should be praised for initiating such a grand endeavor over a decade ago, that is today contributing to the transformation of the African continent.

### A Source of Pride

The GERD is located at the Guba district in the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state of Ethiopia, 20 kilometers (km) (13 miles) upstream from the Sudan border, a driving distance of 729 km (453 miles) from Addis Ababa. Construction began in 2011 to capture the hydro-energy potential of the Blue Nile, a winding river of 1,450 km (910 miles) flowing down from Lake Tana, nestled in Ethiopia's dense range of mountains. The Blue Nile, which joins the White Nile in Sudan under the bridge connecting Khartoum and Omdurman, provides over 80 percent of the volume of Nile waters that flow north through Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea. Ethiopians, refer to the Blue Nile, which contains 70 percent of the country's river systems, as Abay River. "Abay" is derived from the Ge'ez word for 'great' to imply that it is 'the river of rivers'."

The Ethiopian people self-financed the USD 5 billion cost of the GERD. No international loans were issued by Western financial institutions. Nor did China

provide any financial assistance, contrary to those maligning China's relationship with Ethiopia and with Africa. As a result, the GERD is sovereignly owned by the Ethiopian people. It is a well-deserved source of pride and national identity, much like the victory of Menelik II against the invading Italian army at Adwa, on March 1, 1896. Recognizing this accomplishment, I have suggested that upon completion of the GERD, Ethiopia should establish a new holiday that will be called, "GERD Day."

### Humans Create Wealth

Standing at the top of the dam's wall, the GERD, erected between two mountains, with its vast reservoir, is resplendent in its beauty. However, it is more than simple splendor. The GERD is a potent demonstration of the power of human creativity, and humankind's harmony with the physical universe. All infrastructures are the product of human intervention. We human beings alter the physical universe by creating improvements. This noetic-creative process of the mind is actually transforming our planet, and implicitly the universe, for the advancement of humankind. It is the lack of infrastructure that is killing Africa and harming my United States as well.

The modern form of Lake Tana is estimated to be 5 million years old. Therefore, it is reasonable to estimate, that the Blue Nile, which emanates from Lake Tana's waterfalls, is millions of years old as well. Thus, the Blue Nile has flowed into the White Nile, unexploited for millennium, before creative Ethiopians willfully decided to make this "lazy river" do some work i.e., produce energy for the progress of civilization.

Given the staggering paucity of energy in sub-Saharan Africa, this injection of 5,150 MW is essential to preserve human life, which depends on energy for all its productive activity. The GERD will significantly improve Ethiopians access to electricity, which is currently estimated at 50 percent. Energy from the GERD will contribute to powering the industrialization of Ethiopia and will also benefit the greater Horn of Africa.

It is all but impossible for any visitor to the GERD not to marvel at this engineering achievement, but for me, it has additional significance. As a physical economist, I understand the vital role that infrastructure performs in a successful economy. Unlike simple financial transactions, services, and even tourism, all of which macro economists include in computing the GDP of an economy, hard infrastructure is unique. It inserts value by enhancing the productive process, which results in the creation of additional wealth for society.

Infrastructure, a physical input, increases productivity, enabling the economy to expand (produce more tangible wealth) at a faster rate during the ensuing production

cycle. All economies function on and within a given integrated infrastructure platform. A more technologically advanced platform creates more wealth and profitability for the entire economy/society. An economy without energy, a density of paved roads, and railroads per area, is doomed to create misery and death for its population.

Thus, the GERD, a human intrusion into nature, not only produces desperately needed energy, but raises Ethiopia's infrastructure platform to a more advanced level that will permeate the entire productive process of the economy.

### A Scientific-Engineering Wonder

The height of the dam is 145 meters and is 645 meters above sea level. Its length is 1,780 meters. The reservoir surface area is 1,874 km squared, and will hold 74 billion cubic meters of water. When the water level in the reservoir reaches a height of 640 meters above sea level, it will start flowing into the power generation structure of the dam. There will be 13 independent waterways supplying water to the turbines below through installed pipes, 8.5 meters wide. This directed water flow will rotate the turbines, producing a maximum of 400 MW of electricity per turbine.

The water from the reservoir will descend by gravity 123 meters from the head (where the water enters) to the turbines below, at a flow rate of 330 cubic meters per second. These two parameters determine the potential electrical power that can be generated through rotating the turbines 125 times per minute across a magnetic field.

U.S. based General Electric (GE) is supplying 5 of the 13 turbines. Presently there are two GE made turbines producing 375 MW each, which has added 500 MW of electricity to Ethiopia's national grid. This has enabled Ethiopia to export 275 MW of electricity to its neighbors; 75 MW to Djibouti, 100 MW to Sudan, and 100 MW to Kenya. Both these turbines went into operation in 2022. The additional 11 turbines will produce 400 MW each, yielding a total output of 5,150 MW, with average annual energy production about 16,692 gigawatt hours, generated from the GERD.

### The GERD Is For Africa

The GERD will insert over 5,000 MW of renewable electricity into an African sub-continent starved for power. With its already existing sources of energy, the GERD will make Ethiopia second to South Africa in generation of electricity in sub-Saharan Africa. While this amount of additional electricity is desperately needed, my calculations are that to transform African nations into modern industrialized economies, a minimum of 1,000 gigawatts of power has to be added to national grids. It would be wise for more African nations to emulate Ethiopia's bold visionary initiative. This is the pathway for poverty and hunger to be finally eliminated on the continent.

There is no danger to downstream nations from the GERD. Ethiopia has extended the time it will take to fill the GERD's reservoir beyond the original plan of 3 to 4 years, in order to mitigate any substantial reduction in the flow of the Nile River. Annual fillings will continue until achieving completion. Ethiopia is making every effort to maintain the flow of the Blue Nile while this huge reservoir is being filled yearly during the June and July months of the rainy season. After 3 fillings (2020-2022), the reservoir now holds 22 billion cubic meters of water. Sudanese officials report no noticeable decrease in the water levels of the Nile traveling through their nation.

The GERD will regulate the flow of the Nile, preventing both deadly flooding in Sudan, and the dwindling of the Nile during drier seasons. The GERD will have three spillways with a discharge capacity of 19,000 cubic meters per second to prevent flooding of the Nile. At the higher altitude of the GERD's reservoir, evaporation, which can account for 10 percent of the Nile's total volume of 84 billion cubic meters, will be reduced. Due to the size and depth of the GERD's reservoir, there will also be a reduction in the transfer of sediments from the Blue Nile.

The drainage area of the Nile Basin includes 11 African nations whose total population is over 400 million and growing, with Egypt and Ethiopia accounting for over half of the people. A long term development plan that provides for the well-being of the people residing in the nations of the Nile Basin should be established. However, we must be cognizant that the waters of the Nile River are not sufficient to provide for the expanding population of the region. Other alternatives must be sought.

For future generations of the Nile Basin nations to prosper, we should create the equivalent of a second Nile River through nuclear powered desalination. Nuclear power plants can be built along the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts. This would deliver millions of tons of fresh water and provide thousands of megawatts of electricity to the Nile Basin nations. Application of nuclear energy, would also crucially upgrade the infrastructure platform of a large section of the African continent by introducing advanced nuclear technologies. Many pessimists will complain that this is impractical and will never happen. In response to these naysayers, I say: let us aspire to the same audacious optimism of Ethiopia when they conceived of creating the GERD where only mountains and the Blue Nile existed.

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



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## Editorial

### Greening initiative has made a big difference

Since the past decades, climate change has been affecting our planet severely and the global community is experiencing the actual impacts of the change at the national, regional, and global levels in a manner they have never felt it before.

Subsequent to the direct or indirect activities of human beings, climate related crises including rise in global temperatures, droughts, wildfires, extreme rainfall among others are happening at faster and alarming rate than ever.

Worse than this, as environmental scientists predict, the severe impacts of the change will sustain for an extended period of time, even for several decades which makes the issue more terrifying and overwhelming.

In fact, countries have been taking various measures to mitigate climate change and reduce its undesirable impacts including investing hugely to build climate resilient economy; though it is not at the desired level.

Ethiopia is one of the nations that are affected by climate change. The country, though contributes little to the problem; (even less than 0.1 % of emissions), is frequently experiencing the harsh consequences of climate change.

Just to mention a few, irregularity in rainfall, recurrent droughts and floods, increasing in temperature, land degradation, reduction of agricultural production, desertification and loss of biodiversity and wildlife have been witnessed practically and are challenging the country immensely.

However, the country, realizing the impacts of this global phenomenon on country's overall activities, is undertaking various measures to reduce the risks and realize its development goals.

Particularly, by devising climate change adaptation and resilience strategy -Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) Strategy - it is working committedly to reducing its vulnerability to the change,

promoting low carbon economic growth thereby transforming its economy.

As part of this effort, under its Green Legacy Initiative launched in June 2019 targeting to plant 20 billion saplings, Ethiopia has been able register remarkable success. Merely, in the past four years, the nation has planted 25 billion seedlings; exceeding its target.

The effort has also resulted in making the nation a model country across the globe. It has also led Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (Ph.D) to receive "Outstanding African Leadership Award" for his leadership role in fighting the consequences of climate change.

It is recalled that last December 2022, in a special event organized by the American Academy of Achievement and the Global Hope Coalition in Washington DC and held under the theme "Africa: The Urgency of a Global Mobilization", Prime Minister, Abiy received the 'Outstanding African Leadership Award' in recognition of his Green Legacy Initiative.

Not only that, but Ethiopia is also working aggressively to build a climate resilient economy in all sectors by designing a "Net Zero and Climate Resilient Development Strategy by 2050."

To this effect, Ethiopia is working to build an economy that is resilient to climate change by encouraging manufacturing industries to go green; and facilitating a tax-free and low-tax incentive system for those industries assembling electric and solar powered vehicles at home. It will also go all-out to support global efforts made to mitigate climate change.

Noticeably, climate change is not a phenomenon that will be mitigated by the relentless energy of a single country due to the scope and complexity of the matter. However, Ethiopia understands that each and every effort can make a big difference. Thus, will further strengthen its efforts and apply its potential to contribute share in reducing global carbon emissions to net zero.

## Opinion

### Ethiopia's diplomatic hard work towards rapprochement with the west

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

Over the past two seasons of war, protracted propaganda, a barrage of misinformation and disinformation, economic and diplomatic embargo, Ethiopia was able to cross the Rubicon of containment and internal conspiracy thanks to her consistent diplomatic and foreign policy offensive of peace.

Consistency and pursuit of principled foreign policy and diplomacy of peace has finally enable the country to fulfill the nations desire for peace and development by inking AU coordinated Agreement on Permanent Cessation of Hostilities with the TPLF. Despite the diplomatic zigzags and loopholes, the country had to cruise through and in spite of the fact that the nation had to grapple with well-organized global conspiracy against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and statehood of the country, Ethiopia has started to enforce peace in the northern part in a spirit of responsibility, accountability and lawful responsiveness.

However, the road to such success was not easy and smooth. Despite its role as a regional and global peace keeper and strict adherence to international law and the UN Charter, the nation's legitimate quest for using her own resources to generate hydropower was taken as an international security threat by the UNSC resulting in a marathon of 12 sessions of discussions on issues that fall under the sovereignty of

the country.

Ethiopia was forced to face the devastating effects of COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant economic downturn trigged by the Russo-Ukraine War and hyperinflation in the economy. Besides, economic sabotage in the form of contraband in live animals, electronic and textile products, gold, rare metals and precious stones to disrupt the economic base of the country as a tool for destabilization and civil unrest.

Although there was no meaningful investigation that was conducted on the case, Ethiopia was accused of genocide and her leaders were wrongly incriminated. Some western powers even suggested the deployment of UN forces in the country in an attempt to provoke a regime change. Some of the major powers of the world were busy trying to isolate the country simply because their national and regional interests were at loggerheads with Ethiopia's pursuit of her national interest.

Ethiopia firmly believed in resolving African problems in the African way and staged full diplomatic battle to resolve the crisis in the northern part of the country under the auspices of the AU in full recognition of the competence of the continental organization. Ethiopia was proved to be right because the AU managed to complete the peace process in the exalted diplomatic and professional

way based on ascertaining the unity and territorial integrity of Ethiopia.

Over the last two years, Ethiopia's foreign policy, foreign relations and diplomacy was subjected to the ideological dictate of the west in which some western countries picked up the issue of human rights, violation of human rights, war crimes and crimes against humanity to push through their neo-liberal and liberal foreign policy objectives in the process of criminalizing the country.

Ethiopia's constructive engagement with the EU, USA and other western countries to resolve the conflict in the northern part of the country was conducted through institutional diplomacy by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the personal diplomacy of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed pushing forward viable diplomatic efforts to ensure the national interest of the country at every inch of diplomatic maneuvers.

Apart from fighting off the ill intentions of western diplomatic moves, Ethiopia traveled a longer way to accept their positive recommendation while rejecting their dictates which was not in favor of the national interest of the country.

Heads and ambassadors at the Ethiopian missions in Europe and the USA fought head to head not only against the propaganda ploy of some officials in the EU but also effectively repulsed the misinformation and disinformation by

commercial media outlets in the west and some paid lobbyists who rallied to discredit Ethiopia's diplomatic efforts at the power corridors of the western governments.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office of the Prime Minister and the Premier himself were busy making continuous calls and video conferences some of which were filled with multiple sets of threats, again the Ethiopian Government and the leadership withstood all these attempts to frustrate Ethiopia's diplomatic efforts pushing for their own way or the highway.

The current trend of rapprochement between Ethiopia and the west is primarily a product of an aggressive diplomatic effort made by Ethiopia in acting and accenting in the context of the truth and the nations urgent need for peace to speed up the national reform program geared towards working on giving a better life for the people of Ethiopia. The visits paid to Ethiopia by French and German foreign ministers and the pledge made is a step in the right direction.

During the last two years, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs trained and retrained

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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

## Multifaceted challenges, reciprocal measures of the construction sector

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

In the construction industry misunderstanding has been rampant between the contractors and owners of the projects. Breaking contract between the two entities is common as a result of the construction works are delayed far from their completion time.

In fact, there are factors which induce misunderstanding between contractors and owners who hire them. However, since recently the misunderstanding and conflicts between them have been exacerbating. The absence of mutual trust and miscommunication among each other creates havoc on the construction industry. The sky rocketing of the price of the construction materials and increasing of construction cost further aggravates the situation. The incrementing of construction cost hampers contractors not to continue the job.

In the last five years, the price of the construction materials is irrationally increasing. As a result, many projects failed to eye their completion. Some owners of the projects show tolerance and agreed with contractors that the construction work to continue as per the schedule by whatever price but many of the owners of buildings instead interrupt contract.

According to Girma Habtemariam, President of the Ethiopian Contractors Association, in the last five years the unabated price hike of the construction materials is affecting the construction industry. Particularly in the last two years, the price is increased by 400 percent. Aluminum price which is used as input for construction work, for instance, is increased by 360 percent only within one year. The uninterrupted price hike of the materials indicates how the sector is found itself in misery. Such and other constraints made the construction works not to be completed as per the schedule.

In Ethiopia, the government is the major owner of the construction projects hence, the price hike witnessed in construction materials forced projects to be halted.

The capacity limitation of the design adjustment of contractors, failing to pay payments for contractors on time and other factors contribute a lot for prolonging the construction completion time.

According to Girma and other engineers, failing to take remedial action to contain inflation witnessed in the sector by the government aggravated the situation further. The problems in relation with construction appeared not only on the government projects, but also on private ones. Most contractors interrupt the construction works due to price hike before the termination phase of the project.

Among the companies faced such problem is Nib Insurance Company / NIC/. The Chinese construction company which took contract from the NIC was forced to abruptly stop the construction due to misunderstanding by the rise of



Challenges facing Ethiopia's construction industry sector

construction cost. During the recently held annual meeting NIC announced that initially it made an agreement with the Chinese construction company to pay 810 million Birr for the construction of its building but the Chinese Company gave up the construction before the completion of the construction due to the increment of the cost of the construction.

The construction of the 30 floor building was intended to serve as head office for the NIC but the construction work was interrupted when the work was reached to 10th floor. As to construction professionals, the delay of the construction work further increases the cost. Others big construction works also interrupted and will face similar fate. Badly, some buildings under construction eyeing their completion soon, failed to reach their final phase as a result of the price hike.

As to Girma, interrupting construction work and giving the interrupted construction work to the new contractor incurs additional cost on the owners. However, as to him, to adjust the construction cost the document which contains the agreement between the two parties is a decisive. But it is advisable to resume the contract through consensus rather than dealing the mater through legal means.

The Oromia Insurance Company is the case in point in this regard. It resumed the construction work through making dialogue with the contractor and reached to consensus by adjusting the construction cost. Had the construction work been given to a new contractor, the cost would have been beyond its paying capacity. Therefore, the action taken by the Company can be said exemplary to others.

According to experts, disputes rose between the contractor and the project owner due to the price hike of construction materials is solved based on the rules noticed in the agreement reached between the two parties. But the project owner can resume the work by increasing the construction cost by five or ten percent. Many project owners took

such measure as preferable mechanism. But it might be impossible to resume if the construction cost is increased above ten percent.

Therefore, it is vital to reach consensus between the two parties not to interrupt the construction work. According to the reality on the ground, contractors are demanding the difference of the cost created by the current price hike due to inflation. Hence, if this is understood, both parties can resolve the disputes and resume the construction work.

According to Girma, in some projects owned by the government, construction cost adjustment is undergone. Unless, these projects are completed as per the schedule, it incurs additional cost on the government which again burdened on the tax payers. However, recently, some government owned projects which were interrupted due to the price hike, were given to the new contractors and consequently the government is forced to pay additional money.

The construction works owned by Federal Housing Corporation for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be taken as the case in point. The project was given to the Afro-tision construction company three years ago to be constructed by 1.1 billion Birr. However, after it constructed 15 percent of the construction, the company demanded price adjustment but did not reach to consensus with the owner.

As a result, the construction remained unfinished yet. However, after the contract with Afro-tision Construction Company was broken, the project was given to a new contractor to be finalized by 4.5 billion Birr. Here, one can understand that how costly it is transferring the interrupted project to the new contractor. As to Girma, delaying the project only for three years brings additional cost which is beyond imagination.

Therefore, others should draw lesson from these practices. In addition, radical measure like in the cement product should be taken

in other construction inputs to address the problem because; breaking a construction contract and giving it to the new one may accelerate the cost of production by two or three folds.

He further said that, due to the Ethiopian Contractors pressure in order to resume the government construction projects, price adjustment on selected construction materials has been made. Such a move is perceived as a positive measure and projects which were began before 2021 will benefit from the price adjustment. However, only 60 percent of the additional cost will be covered by the government and the rest 40 percent will be covered by the contractor. Nevertheless, as there are many projects which were stared before 4 and 6 years, implementing the price adjustment plan might face a challenge.

A contractor who asked his name to be hold anonymity said that the measures that have been taken for price adjustment through compensation are fully in trouble. As to him, the major problem lies on part of the government. The government takes away projects as it wishes arbitrarily and gives it again to the new contractor.

Again, it provides compensation to any contractor as it wishes. It also makes price revision as it wishes. Therefore, though the government claims that it took various measures to stabilize the sector, it has no consistency. Such a situation brought its own negative consequence by delaying more construction projects for long and incurred additional cost.

Not getting the compensation money on time further aggravates the problem. Currently, the price compensation scheme does not cover most construction materials; therefore, revising the construction agreements should be undertaken.

For example, wage for workers, payment for sands and others are not included in compensation scheme. Hence, corrective measures should be taken as soon as possible.



# Art & Culture

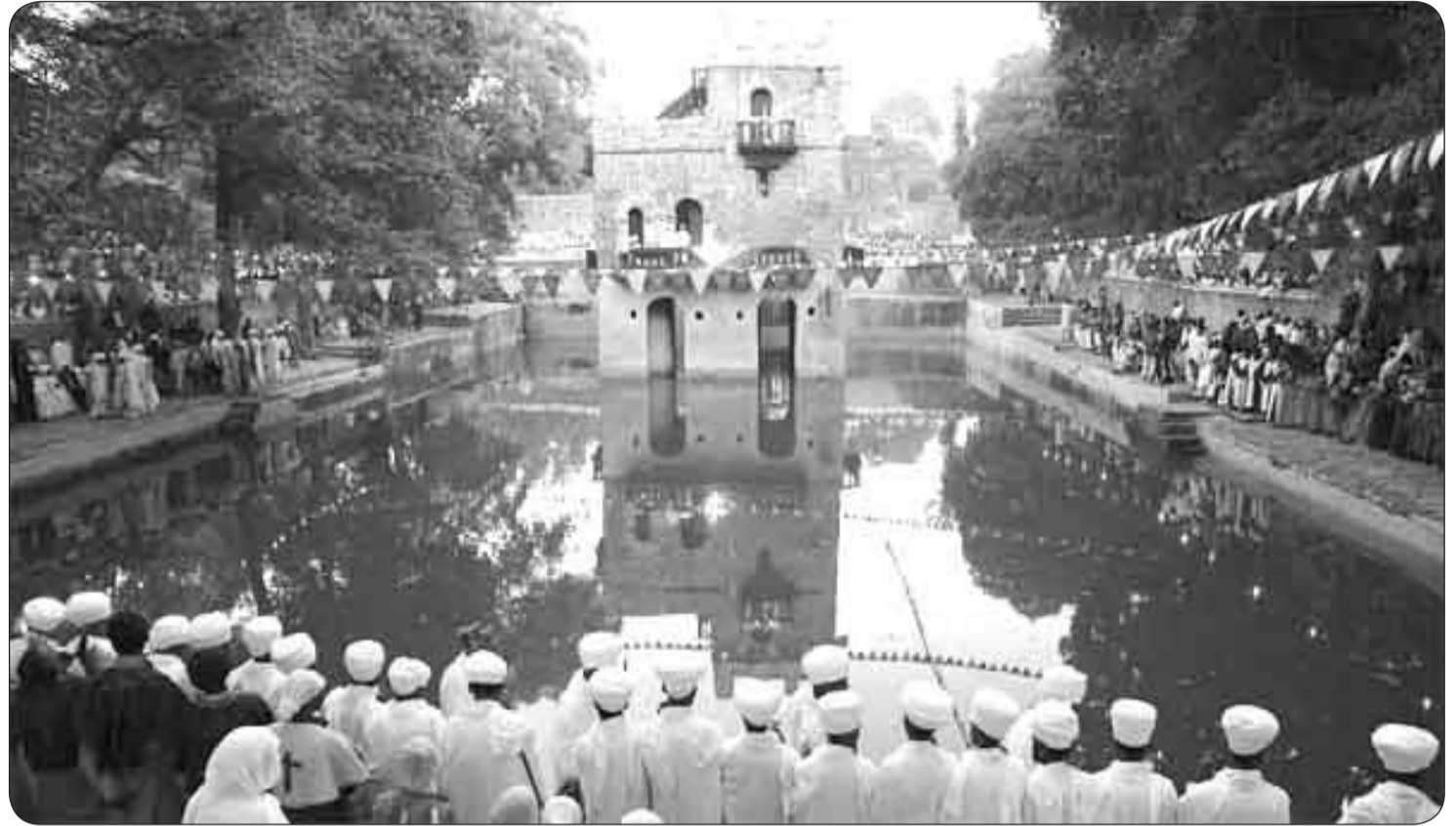
## What makes Gondarian Timket/ Epiphany so special?

BY KFLEEYESUS ABEBE

Timket or Epiphany is an annual commemoration of the baptism of the Son of God, Jesus Christ in the river Jordan. Though it is known in every sect of christianity, the remembrance of this quintessential happening is seen given magnitude in Eastern Orthodox churches. From the eastern Orthodox churches, Ethiopia, having larger number of faithfuls, celebrates the day colorfully as it has already adapted it to its culture. Timket or Epiphany is a vibrant holyday across Ethiopia but there is a typical place many people relate this festivity to; Gondar. As Christmas is linked with Lalibela, Timket/epiphany is associated with Gondar. Gondar sustained to fascinate visitors and the special Timket celebration is among the factors that is attracting local and international tourist influx to the town. But have you ever asked what makes Gondarian Timket/ Epiphany special?

Gondar, serving as capital in the beginning of modern Ethiopia, has been center of many aspects of the country. One of the major features of the country, religion had huge role in the affairs of the state. Religion had been a strong tool of governance and a symbol of unity at that time. Gondarians were known for being ardent followers of the orthodox faith. What they did to King Susneyous when he attempted to change the state religion from Orthodox to Catholic is symbolic even to this day. Therefore, this history has made the people to be vigilant and passionate about their faith ever since. The successor King Fasildes built impressive castles that is currently drawing many tourists to the town. Among these castles, Fasildes' Bath pool is reserved for Timket celebration. This is one of difference you would witness when you celebrate the holyday in Gondar town. In all corners of the country and the capital Addis Ababa, Timket is celebrated in an open field with a makeshift stage and artificial pools. The Gondar celebration however is unique as it is held in Fasiledes Bath, a compound where there is eye-catching room that houses different Tabots or Tsellat / a sacred replica of the Ark of the covenant during the celebration. There is also a swimming bath celebrants actually immerse themselves in a water as Jesus Christ did in the river Jordan.

Second, Timket in Gondar lets everyone to participate at least in one of the activities. There are different groups based on age, gender, lifestyle or status in the church. Members of the clergy who aren't among those who carry the ark gather and perform their unique religious songs and praises. Sunday school students also sing different hymns or spiritual songs befitting the occasion. Women sing religious and cultural songs together and accompany the celebration with their ululation. The youths, adult males, elderly and people who aren't active members of the church



won't be left alone. Either they accompany one of the groups or form other groups to contribute their share for the liveness vibe of the town.

Cultural authenticity is a significant component of Timket celebration in Gondar. Youths who live adjacent to the town appear at the eve of the celebration decorating themselves with unique traditional costumes, carrying long sticks and riding horses. The town starts erupting with their cultural dancing. The songs praise heroism, beauty and good manner. They give praise to the Lord that raises patriots, God-fearing and beautiful people in their land. Everyone, from a child to senior people, is part of the festivity. Mothers say their prayers to Saint Mary. Through their songs they praise God who let them witness this special day. They also pray to God to keep them alive and allow them see next Timket. And, there are sayings that encourage people to participate and to own the celebration for themselves. They say "Le timket yalhone kemis yebetates/ A dress (a Sunday best) that isn't put on for epiphany wear away. Accordingly, most people appear with best outfits during the holyday. It is also a show of respect to the guardian angels and Lord Jesus. Like the David who danced seeing the ark of covenant, the faithful are by no means reserved to sing, to conduct a spiritual dance and bow before the passing replicas of the ark of covenant. The song "ye zarew kurat lemanw"/ What is today's pride for? meaning it is for God you are singing so be humble and praise the Lord. For this reason people in procession clap their hands, sing along the leaders in resp group or contribute lyrics that praise God, St. Mary, angels and martyrs. The participation of everyone makes the holiday vibrant and exciting to watch.

Religious fathers, elders and mothers have

*As Christmas is linked with Lalibela, Timket/epiphany is associated with Gondar. Gondar sustained to fascinate visitors and the special Timket celebration is among the factors that is attracting local and international tourist influx to the town*

commanding power during the celebration. Anything that isn't religious is often criticized and usually doesn't sustain long. The youths' reverence to their elders helped the celebration to maintain its originality and religious flavor.

Gondar is also an important city to the teaching of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church having 44 churches and notable religious scholars. There are religious scholars who created hymns and unique religious performances. Accordingly, for this alone there are clergies who come from other teaching places like Gojjam, Akum and other places to witness this performance. Like Lalibela Christmas celebration, clergies circle the Fasildes bath, in a syncretic manner move their bodies and sticks gracefully in tune with exquisite hymn. This event has also captured the attention of tourists as it is not strange to see would see them participating despite the cold weather early in the morning.

Epiphany these days have become an opportune time as many religious and social themes are conveyed through placards, sculptures and songs. The typical song "Ethiopia Selamshe Yebza," Ethiopia let your peace thrive is loudly sung.

Overall, it is a blessing, a gift from history, culture and public cohesion for Gondarian Timket to appear special. The event isn't something to be seen easily. Because of this colorful event, a season is created to pay homage to Fasiledes Castle, the Semien Mountain and other riches of Gondar. There are times over 20 flights from Addis Ababa to Gondar are conducted. Hotels are booked ahead of the event. As it is changing the town with the influx of local and international tourists, it is also generating income to the nation. The takeaway from this festivity for me is always the power faith, public cohesion and pride on one's own culture. //



# Global Affairs

## Economic slowdown likely to force workers to accept lower quality jobs

Faltering global employment growth and the pressure on decent working conditions risk undermining social justice, according to the ILO's World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2023 report.

The current global economic slowdown is likely to force more workers to accept lower quality, poorly paid jobs which lack job security and social protection, so accentuating inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, according to a new International Labour Organization (ILO) report. The ILO's World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2023 (WESO trends), also projects that global employment growth will be only 1.0 per cent in 2023, less than half the level in 2022.

Global unemployment is slated to rise slightly in 2023, by around 3 million, to 208 million (corresponding to a global unemployment rate of 5.8 per cent). The moderate size of this projected increase is largely due to tight labour supply in high-income countries. This would mark a reversal of the decline in global unemployment seen between 2020-2022. It means that global unemployment will remain 16 million above the pre-crisis benchmark (set in 2019).

In addition to unemployment "job quality remains a key concern", the report says, adding that "Decent Work is fundamental to social justice". A decade of progress in poverty reduction faltered during the COVID-19 crisis.

Despite a nascent recovery during 2021, the continuing shortage of better job opportunities is likely to worsen, the study says. The current slowdown means that many workers will have to accept lower quality jobs, often at very low pay, sometimes with insufficient hours.

Furthermore, as prices rise faster than nominal labour incomes, the cost-of-living crisis risks pushing more people into poverty. This trend comes on top of significant declines in income seen during the COVID-19 crisis, which in many countries affected low-income



groups worst. The report also identifies a new, comprehensive measure of unmet need for employment – the global jobs gap.

As well as those who are unemployed, this measure includes people who want employment but are not actively searching for a job, either because they are discouraged or because they have other obligations such as care responsibilities.

The global jobs gap stood at 473 million in 2022, around 33 million above the level of 2019. Stagflation conditions threaten productivity and labour market recovery.

The labor market deterioration is mainly due to emerging geopolitical tensions and the Ukraine conflict, uneven

pandemic recovery, and continuing bottlenecks in global supply chains, the WESO Trends says. Together, these have created the conditions for stagflation, - simultaneously high inflation and low growth – for the first time since the 1970s. Women and young people are faring significantly worse in labor markets.

Globally, the labor force participation rate of women stood at 47.4 per cent in 2022, compared with 72.3 per cent for men. This 24.9 percentage point gap means that for every economically inactive man there are two such women. Young people (aged 15–24) face severe difficulties in finding and keeping decent employment. Their unemployment rate is three times that of adults. More than one-in-five – 23.5 per cent – of young

people are not in employment, education or training (NEET).

"The need for more decent work and social justice is clear and urgent," said ILO Director General, Gilbert F. Houngbo. "But if we are to meet these multiple challenges we must work together to create a new global social contract. The ILO will be campaigning for a Global Coalition for Social Justice to build support, create the policies needed, and prepare us for the future of work."

"The slowdown in global employment growth means that we don't expect the losses incurred during the COVID-19 crisis to be recovered before 2025," said Richard Samans, Director of the ILO's Research Department and report coordinator.

"The slowdown in productivity growth is also a significant concern, as productivity is essential for addressing the interlinked crises we face in purchasing power, ecological sustainability and human well-being." Significant variations in regional 2023 labour market prospects In 2023 Africa and the Arab States should see employment growth of around 3 per cent or more. However, with their growing working-age populations, both regions are likely to see unemployment rates decline only modestly (from 7.4 to 7.3 per cent in Africa and 8.5 to 8.2 per cent in the Arab States).

In Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, annual employment growth is projected to be around 1 per cent. In Northern America there will be few or no employment gains in 2023 and unemployment will pick up, says the report. Europe and Central Asia are particularly hard hit by the economic fallout from the Ukraine conflict. But while employment is projected to decline in 2023, their unemployment rates should increase only slightly given the backdrop of limited growth in the working-age population

Source: (ILO)

## Ethiopia's diplomatic

new diplomats and provided on job refresher trainings or the country's career diplomats with a view of beefing up the army of diplomats in the great battle to defend the cardinal principles of the country's foreign policy and diplomacy as well as the national interest of the country.

The battle in the areas of foreign policy and diplomacy is expected to continue with the following objectives. First, repositioning and re-rooting Ethiopia's

reputation in all regional and global international forums is a priority. Second, the country's immense needs in supplying relief assistance and massive rehabilitation programs need to be accelerated through speedy diplomatic efforts particularly in the missions in the western countries. Third, further rebuilding the image of the country is required not only to accelerate the peace process in the country but also to accelerate the planned development programs of the country through FDI

and promoting export oriented economy by producing quality export level commodities to effectively compete in the world market.

The efforts made by Ethiopian diplomats is highly commendable and the government has accorded them due recognition for their efforts but still there is a longer way to go before the country comes back on the right track of peaceful and uninterrupted development. Going

forward, diplomatic relations particularly with the western countries need to focus on promoting viable partnership with development stakeholders abroad and local sector ministries. The imperatives of healing the wound created by the two year devastating war should be addressed through the upcoming nationwide dialogue and the diplomatic offensive for promoting peace in the country need to be accelerated without ceasing.



# Law & Politics

## Improved internal situation, enhanced diplomatic relations

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

Last week alone, Ethiopia has rolled out the carpet to host senior foreign ministers of China, Germany and France and EU delegation. Addis Ababa was even the first stop of Chinese newly appointed Foreign Minister in his first visit to Africa. Unlike two years, Ethiopia's diplomatic relations with other country have seen improvement after the signing of the cessation of hostilities agreement. The latest visits are the latest indications that Ethiopia has been strengthening its diplomatic relations with several nations worldwide, for the most part, subsequent to the conflict that lasted for two years in the northern part of the country.

Over the course of the war that lasted for two years in northern Ethiopia, Ethiopia's foreign relations with various nations worldwide had passed through multifarious challenges that needed a quick fix.

Even though a lot of efforts have been made by the federal government time after time to smooth the path of its diplomatic efforts with various nations, undertaking the desired destination was easier said than done on the grounds that disgraced international media outlets have been engaged in carrying bogus stories.

Apart from rupturing Ethiopia's relations with other nations, they left no stone unturned to besmirch the positive moves of the country. Aside from that some entities had been as well sparing no effort to twist Ethiopia's arm in the matter of a considerable amount of issues under the veil of many lame and weak reasons.

In a similar vein, in the face of a broad range of unwarranted pressure on Ethiopia from the country's adversaries working around the clock to twist Ethiopia's arm and breach its sovereignty. In fact, in the course of the conflict, Ethiopian ambassadors residing in various parts of the world have played a paramount role in bringing to light the existing situation to the wider international community and fending off external pressure.

There is no gainsaying the fact that Ethiopia over the past two years passed through a considerable amount of challenges that have been testing its existence. But after the peace deal Ethiopia has been smoothing the path of the delivery of humanitarian assistance and restoration of social infrastructure in the length and breadth of the war-ridden areas of the northern part of the country.

In consideration of the foregoing, residents of the northern part of the country have been expressing their infinite happiness and patting the incumbent on the back over and over again. Given the current circumstances, the federal government has been expediting the restoration of



social services in the length and breadth of the Tigray State with flying colors.

In point of fact, as things stand at present, the federal government has been working at all hours of the day and night with quite a lot of humanitarian organizations to accelerate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. As the existing predicaments in the northern part of the country need the concerted efforts of the wider international community, every Tom, Dick, and Harry should stand by the side of Ethiopia more essential than ever.

By the same token, it is common knowledge that since the onset of the signing of the cessation of hostilities agreement the federal government has been working day and night with several nations worldwide to get the whole thing out of the woods and turn the corner.

As Ethiopia's relations have been improving with various nations worldwide, the whole lot has been moving in the right direction and receiving a pat on the back. Back in the day, regardless of the fact that the federal government went to the ends of the earth to make peace happen, making progress in the right direction was not as easy as falling off a log.

At this very moment, the country has set in motion smoothing the path of diplomatic relations with more than a few nations worldwide on several issues that would take the country to a new chapter of accomplishment and reach the objective.

Showing signs of Ethiopia's diplomatic relations improvement, foreign ministers of various nations have recently paid a visit to Ethiopia. The positive developments of the federal government have been receiving appreciation over and over again from the global community. On top of that some nations have been playing a paramount role in supplying humanitarian assistance for conflict-affected people in Northern Ethiopia.

With Ethiopia's improving situation, countries have shown their desire to forge strong relation with the country while

expressing knees to support Ethiopia's peace deal.

Last week, Chinese foreign minister met with Ethiopian officials.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Demeke Mekonnen, expressed his delight and gratitude to the Chinese new Foreign Minister, Qin Gang who has made Ethiopia his first African destination since taking office, according to information obtained from MoFA.

In a meeting held at the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Office, the two sides signed Memorandum of Understanding to further enhance their cooperation on political and economic issues.

Demeke praised China's consistent and principled stance in global fora in favor of Ethiopia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

At a press conference, Demeke mentioned his discussion about the Pretoria Peace Agreement and its implementation status with the Chinese Foreign Minister, further appreciating China's support for peace and stability in Ethiopia.

Foreign Minister Qin Gang, for his part, reaffirmed the Chinese government's commitment to strengthening and maintaining its all-weather friendship with Ethiopia in the face of changing international circumstances.

According to Qin Gang, the two countries should strengthen their ties in development cooperation, meet global challenges together, and jointly defend international justice.

He stated that the practice of Chinese Foreign Ministers visiting Africa for the past 33 years reflects China's determination to further strengthen ties with Africa.

By the same token, according to information obtained from Ethiopian News Agency Foreign Minister of France, Catherine Colonna and the Foreign Minister of Germany, Annalena Baerbock expressed commitment to support Ethiopia's effort for peace in the country.

The foreign Ministers of the two countries visit is to support the peace agreement signed between the federal government and TPLF in Pretoria, South Africa.

The Ministers have conferred with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and President Sahle-Work Zewde on various issues of mutual concern. And they visited the humanitarian aid warehouses of the World Food Program located in Adama town of Oromia Region.

After their visit they told journalists that the implementation of the peace agreement is encouraging. France and Germany will continue their support to Ethiopia in various forms including to realizing a sustainable climate resilient agriculture.

The first objective of the visit to Ethiopia is to accompany and support the peace process which has also allowed humanitarian aid to reach people affected by the war," Foreign Minister of France, Catherine Colonna said.

She also mentioned that the two countries will finance the rehabilitation of the electricity network in Amhara and Tigray. "We came here supporting the peace agreement signed in Pretoria.

There is a good start as the hostilities have ceased, the public services have started, the handing over of heavy weapons has also commenced." Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has made the first assessment which is positive and we encourage him to continue. We encourage everyone in good faith to seek lasting solutions for the country to regain peace and security and the paths of development.

As a matter of fact, in the aftermath of the peace accord a wide spectrum of nations and organizations have set in motion supporting the federal government of Ethiopia in a number of ways.

It should be remembered that two agreements were signed between the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the French Republic at a ceremony held at the French Embassy, Addis Ababa for the implementation of "Framework Agreement for Food Security and "Amendment to Credit Facility Agreement." according to Ministry of Finance Ethiopia.

The Framework Agreement for Food Security is aimed to contribute to reducing food insecurity in Ethiopia by re-launching resilient agricultural activity in conflict affected regions and improving agricultural productivity through the sustainable strengthening of the seeds sector and of agro-ecological transition practices. The grant amount of for this project is 32 million € (Euro) and the project will be primarily implemented in Amhara, Tigray and Afar régions but also includes Oromia région, the Southern Nations, Nationalités and peoples' Région.



# Planet Earth



## Curbing the effect of alien species requires strong commitment

BY EPHREM ANDARGACHEW

Ethiopia is rich in biodiversity species. Nevertheless, these species have been negatively affected by climate change, environmental degradation, deforestation, recurrent drought, habitat destruction, overexploitation, expansion of agricultural lands, and so on. Even some of the species have been lost or extinct due to a lack of conservation and protection. Especially, the expansion and invasion of alien species cause biodiversity loss in the country.

Although the biodiversity species of the country haven't been studied exhaustively due to the financial and knowledge limitations of the nation, the expansion of alien species is increasing at an alarming rate from time to time. Despite the lack of accurate figures, various reports indicated that the spread of alien species in Ethiopia has enhanced in the last decade in terms of area coverage and plant density.

Currently, alien species are threatening not only the biodiversity of the country but also the economic growth and development as well as human well-being. Because once alien species are expanded and cover significant areas, it is difficult neither to manage nor reverse them.

Bufebo B, Elias E (2018) academic article "Distribution and Socio-economic Impacts of Invasive Alien Plant Species in Ethiopia: A Review" stated that Invasive Alien Species (IAS) refer to plants, animals, or microorganisms that are not indigenous to a specific ecosystem and whose introduction affects biodiversity, food security, health or economic development. Invasive species are of concern because of their capability of increasing fast, their high competitiveness, and their ability to colonize new areas within short periods. The nature and severity of the impacts of these species on society, economic life, health, and national heritage are of global concern. Furthermore, encroachment of rangelands by invasive species, reduction of crop yield, genetic erosion of biodiversity, disruption of water flow, poisoning of livestock, formation of impenetrable thickets, etc. is some of the impacts of invasive species across a wide range of agro-ecologies.

In fact, invasive species are a key threat to indigenous species and ecosystems across the country. They are taken as one of the major challenges of the world's biodiversity resources by changing the ecosystem services, system, and processes as well as reducing indigenous species abundance and richness, and reducing the genetic diversity of the ecosystems. Hence, the invasion of alien species requires state, environmental agencies, activists, and international and local organizations' intervention since the loss of biodiversity creates economic and health problems.

Cognizant of the negative effect of alien species plant into consideration, Ethiopia has prepared a national strategy to reverse the adverse consequence of these species. The strategy will be implemented from 2021 to 2030.

Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority programs sector Head Ngusu Lemma said that the strategy is currently promoted to stakeholders and concerned bodies. Because creating awareness regarding plants or animals' invasive alien species is a key to curbing the problem since they are not indigenous but spread very fast into the country's ecosystem through various ways. Even the spread of some invasive alien species has reached out of control in some areas.

Besides, in Ethiopia, invasive alien plant species are posing negative impacts on indigenous biodiversity, agricultural lands, range lands, national parks, waterways, lakes, rivers, power dams, roadsides, and urban green spaces with great economic and social consequences. Hence, it is time to implement a national strategic plan that aims to control the invasive alien species plant.

According to Ngusu, various researches have indicated that there are over 35 invasive alien plant species in Ethiopia. The species cover and distribute almost all the ecosystems of the country. Especially, Water Hyacinth, Prosopis Juliflora, Parthenium hystephorous, Lanthana camara, Striga Spps, and Senna didymobotrya highly affect the land and water bodies of the country.

Therefore, the negative effect of invasive alien plant species forces the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority,

The national strategy is ready to be implemented at various levels and ecosystems across the country. The Authority is also working with federal and regional governments as well as other stakeholders to coordinate knowledge and necessary resources that facilitate the creation of common understanding and consensus, he explained.

The strategy requires a huge amount of resources while the invasion and expansion of alien plant species are very fast. Therefore, he elucidated that apart from harmonizing resources and protecting activities, it is also imperative to mobilize the government structure and public organization from the policymakers to the lower level.

Ethiopian Forest Development Director General Kebede Yimam stated that along with reversing the adverse effect of alien species, it is significant to focus on the conservation and sustainable biodiversity management including forests in the country, because proper protection of forest ecosystems plays a decisive role in keeping the planet healthy.

Although Ethiopia has shown some accomplishments in fighting Water Hyacinth and other alien species, it still requires the government, civil society organizations, and the private sector to coordinate and combine efforts to meet the intended goals, he elaborated.

Actually, invasive alien plant species can affect the indigenous biodiversity by heavily colonizing specific or whole areas. These species are non-native plants that occur outside their adaptive ranges and cover a significant amount of land, forest, water bodies, and so on.

Hence, apart from implementing the national strategy plan, it is significant to design nature-based solutions to preserve, protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural ecosystems, as well as reverse the invasive and expansion of alien plant species. More importantly, creating awareness and careful control of existing or imported invasive alien species is key to ensuring the conservation of biodiversity. Because managing and protecting the biodiversity of the country is a matter of survival, not a luxury.

*Currently, alien species are threatening not only the biodiversity of the country but also the economic growth and development as well as human well-being*

which is responsible for protecting the environment and ensuring its safety, to prepare a strategy and action plan to curb the challenge and control of invasive alien plant species, he added.

Indeed, the invasive alien species that are widespread in the country at present pose a significant challenge to biodiversity, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, national parks, lakes and rivers, power generation dams, roadsides and urban green parks, and the livelihoods of pastoralists and farmers. These in turn hurt the country's economy, society, and ecosystem.