

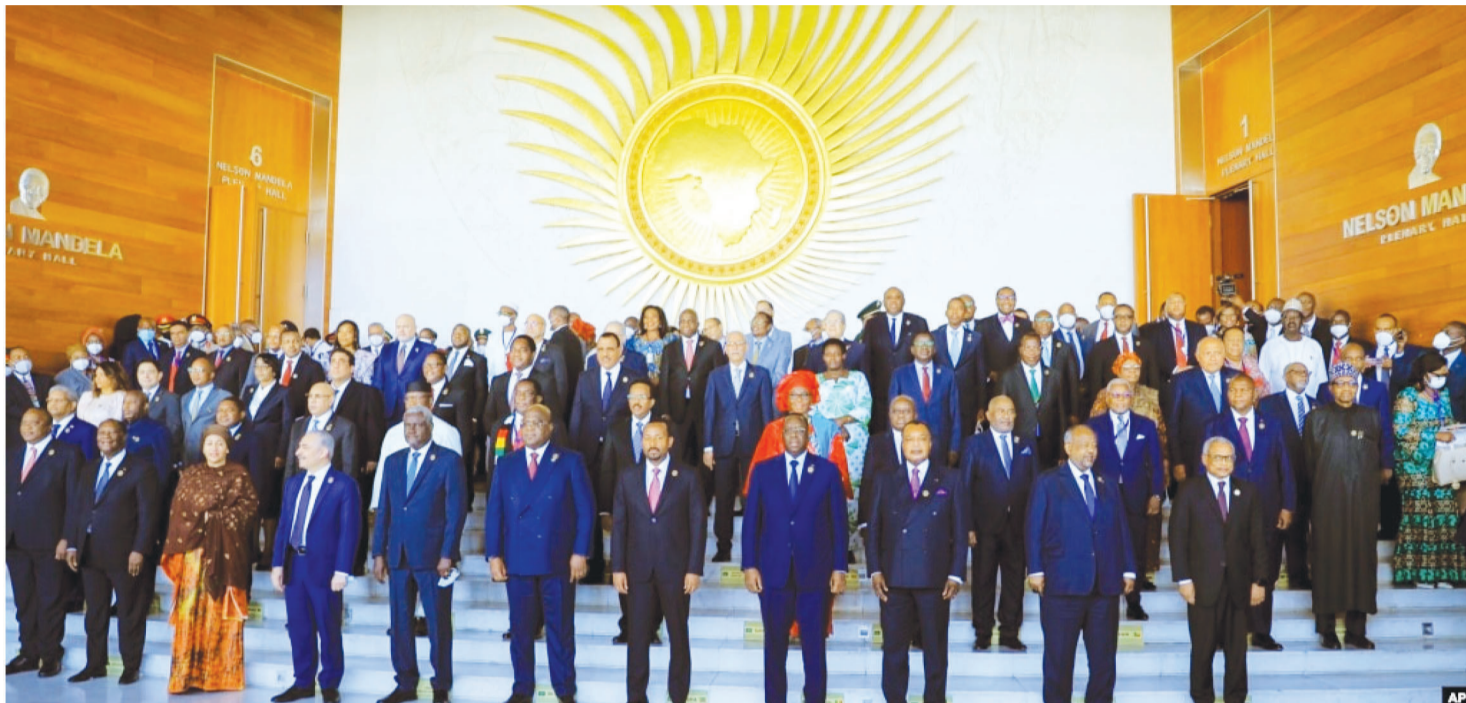


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Ethiopia to capitalize 36th AU summit to image building

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA- The upcoming AU sessions will create an opportunity for Ethiopia to testify its emergence from a challenging situation and to build its positive image, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Demeke Mekonnen said.

The Deputy Premier made the above remark yesterday in a deliberation with a National Committee composed of 30 institutions that

met to assess the status of preparations thus far.

Demeke further noted that Ethiopia should build on the success of hosting the AU Sessions last year and learn from observed challenges in order to properly organize the forthcoming sessions, which will require collaboration across diverse sectors.

The National Committee Chairperson Ambassador Birtukan Ayano stated on the

occasion that preparation work is already underway to ensure that participants of the AU meetings enjoy a successful stay in Addis Ababa.

Yesterday's discussion established guidelines for the remaining tasks that each stakeholder must complete, it was learned.

The 36th Ordinary Session of the African Union Summit and the 42nd Ordinary Session of the Executive Council will be held from February 15-19 in Addis Ababa.

Danish minister pledges more support for Ethiopia

- Witnesses safety-net program implementation

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA – Danish Minister of Development Cooperation Dan Jørgensen reiterated his country's firm commitment to work with the government of Ethiopia in areas of mutual significance while pledging more support to the latter's development endeavors.

The minister visited on Tuesday the safety net program that the Ethiopian government runs at the Gulelle Sub City of Addis Ababa.

See Danish Minister ... Page 3



Ethiopia's power exports hit over 39 mln USD in six-month

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA-The Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) announced that over 39 million USD was obtained from exporting electricity to Djibouti and Sudan during the first six months of the current fiscal year.

While Djibouti is the leading destination for Ethiopia's power exports with 21.4 million USD in revenue, the remaining 18.36 million USD was earned from Sudan; the EEP Communication Director Moges Mekonnen told *The Ethiopian Herald*.

See Ethiopia's power ... Page 3



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IMF says Ethiopia's economy to expand by 13.5 %

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA:–The economy of Ethiopia is to expand by 13.5 percent on USD terms by 2023, so disclosed International Monetary Fund (IMF).

According to IMF, Ethiopia's GDP to hit 126.2 billion USD this year.

See IMF says ... Page 3

MoLS creates 1.4 jobs within first fiscal half year

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

ADDIS ABABA: - About 1.4 million jobs have been created in six-month of this Ethiopian fiscal year, the Ministry of Labor and Skills (MoLS) announced.

In his opening remarks at an event organized to evaluate MoLS's performance report of the aforementioned period, MoLS State Minister Nigussu Tilahun stated yesterday that his ministry has planned to create around 3.7 million jobs in the current fiscal year.

He, therefore, said that during the past six months, MoLS have created 1.4 million jobs, 70 percent of the jobs are created by opening enterprises, and the remaining one is from employment.

"The current performance report and discussion will be used as a spring board for

our next moves," Nigussu underlined on the occasion.

During the last six months, 41 poly technic colleges, 94 one-stop service provider stations, 450 enterprises, and 18 industries, totally 670 institutions have been supervised and evaluated by the a team formed by MoLS, Nigussu noted.

Oromia State Labor and Skills Bureau Head Mathiwos Seboka on his part said that the state has allocated 5 billion Birr for loan and around 60 thousand hectares of land in order to achieve its main goal of creating ample jobs for fellow citizens.

Accordingly, at this time, around 2.6 million unemployed individuals have been registered and identified. Of which over 214,000 of them are university and poly technic graduates. The bureau has also provided long and short term trainings for



Photo- Hadush Abreha

those citizens, the head noted.

It was learnt that regional states' labor and

skills bureaus have also presented their six-month performance report.



Photo - Ashenafi Gudeta

University to set up Horsemen Festival Display Center

• Association finalizes preparations to host 83rd annual Horsemen Festival

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

INJIBARA - Injibara University in collaboration with Awi Zone Administration has been working on establishing the first Horsemen Festival Display Center in Injibara town.

Briefing media about the preparation to mark the 83rd Agew Horsemen Festival celebration, University President Gardachew Worku (PhD) stated that apart from the social and historical benefits provided by the Agew Horsemen Association to its members and the local community, efforts are started to build a Horsemen Festival Show Center to benefit the country economically.

According to the Agew Horsemen's Association, it has finalized preparations to colorfully celebrate its 83rd annual festival in Injibara town.

The Agew people are known for their ancient architecture, indigenous knowledge and hardworking culture, and the Agew Horsemen's Association has become a symbol and manifestation of the Agew people and become an ambassador of the people.

The president said: "Currently, when Ethiopians think of this Association, they

think of the people of Agew and vice versa as both are two sides of the same coin. The festival has been becoming a wonderful Ethiopian festival. Before the festival, various programs and events are held to beef the essence of the festival."

Injibara University has trekked a long journey and almost about to complete the necessary research and procedure to get the festival registered as a World Heritage by UNESCO through the Institute of Agew Studies.

Awi Zone Chief Administrator Engida Dagneu called all Ethiopians to play their part to enable the festival to be registered in UNESCO. Hence, all Ethiopians at home and abroad are expected to exert utmost effort to this end.

Association President Aleqe Tilaye Ayenewon his part said that preparations have been completed to colorfully celebrate this year's 83rd Agew Horsemen Festival and a range of arrangements have been made since September.

Agew Horsemen's Association is established by a few members to commemorate the heroes and the role of horses in the Battle of Adwa some 83 years ago and six types of horse shows are planned to be on board for the festival.

Diasporas laud gov't efforts in ensuring durable peace in homeland

BY TAMERU REGASA

ADDIS ABABA- Ethiopian Diasporas residing in various corners of the globe have appreciated government's so far measures to put Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) into practice in a bid to ensure lasting peace in the homeland.

Having a stay with local media, the members of Diaspora said that the agreement has been benefiting the people of the country in various ways, and Ethiopian Diasporas have been standing on behalf of the country to safeguard its sovereignty before and after the conflict.

An Ethiopian Diaspora who lives in Moscow, Russia, Dereje Getahun said that if the parties had agreed before the loss of human life and destruction of resources, they would have rescued indescribable mess. However, the implementing of the agreement within this short period of time is recommendable, he added.

He urged that the Diasporas need to strength their effort for the rehabilitation of citizens and reconstruction of the damaged social and economic infrastructure.

Abinet Alemayehu, resident of Toronto in Canada, on his part said that as the country has been damaged highly by the conflict, it deserves mass supports from Diasporas and international communities.

He said that the government should work hard to enhance the link between different ethnic groups through conducting people to people events with a view to fostering the fraternity, amicable relationship and lasting peace among either ethnic groups or in the entire nation. Explaining his hope Abinet said, "The government will hopefully implement each and every



Dereje Getahun



Abinet Alemayehu

article of the agreement for the wellbeing and peace of all citizens."

Institute outlines policy interventions to arrest soaring inflation

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- Along with policy intervention, the government should import food items and ease administrative and other bureaucratic glitches to arrest the soaring inflation and stabilize the market, the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) recommended.

An inadequate marketing system, insufficient food supply, maladministration, and global challenges have been identified as major causes of inflation in Ethiopia. Also, the study mentioned low productivity of farmers, fluctuation of production and illegal trade have significantly contributed to the problem.

While presenting the institute's research yesterday, the Director-General Prof. Beyene Petros, said that the soaring increase in the price of agricultural commodities needs meticulous policy interventions before the problem leads the country to a political crisis.

In the short term, the government should import food and support the low-income community while addressing bureaucratic and market setbacks and stimulating local

production should be a priority, the scholar added.

Research leader at PSI, Tadesse Kuma, noted that the price of cereals and horticultural crops is increasing at an alarming rate. Accordingly, Ethiopia's inflation rate is the eighth highest in the world and the second highest in Africa.

Lauding the government's efforts to arrest inflation, including the establishment of cooperatives and issuing agricultural production initiatives, the researcher highlighted that the imbalance between the demand and supply of food items is still high. "The government and other relevant stakeholders should work to enhance agricultural and industrial productivity through employing viable policy intervention."

As for him, the government should supervise institutional transparency and capability of its agencies and the commitment of officials in a bid to realize effective market regulation.

"We can simply produce cereals and horticultural crops with our capacity. It does not require nuclear or other sophisticated



Prof. Beyene Petros

technology. The annual domestic production of food oil is surprisingly low. Now, we are importing more than 97 percent to fulfill food oil demand which is unforeseen to others."

Photo: Eyob Teferi



Ethiopia's power exports hit over...

Noting the utility planned to secure 44.57 million USD from exporting electricity to the two countries, the director indicated that the performance is 89 percent of the target set for the reported period.

During the past six months, the electricity export to Djibouti was eight percent (1.5 million USD) higher than the target. Conversely, due to the decreased demand of Sudanese companies to purchase electricity, export to that country has shown a 25 percent decrease from the plan.

EEP has explored the East African markets and it

began exporting electricity to Kenya last month to boost revenue and help Ethiopia's forex earnings.

Besides satisfying the local demand, the construction of the Abbay Dam and other hydroelectric dams also manifested Ethiopia's desire to connect the East African region through electricity Moges remarked.

Ethiopia's foreign policy was designed in a way to embrace its neighbors and it is the major factor behind the country's huge involvement in regional economic integration.

Danish minister pledges more...

Approached by the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) during the occasion, Jørgensen stated that the Green Legacy project is among the areas the two countries are working together while affirming his country's support for efforts by Ethiopia. "Ethiopia is doing a commendable job in the greenery program, and Denmark is desirous to elevate the longstanding relations into new frontiers."

Finance State Minister Semereta Sewasew commended Denmark's holistic support to Ethiopia, mentioning the former as one of the 'key development allies' of the East African nation. Denmark's participation in the safety net program is among the key and important support for Ethiopia while the two countries have enjoyed a strong partnership in various areas.

Addis Ababa Deputy Mayor Jantir Abay said on the occasion that the safety-net program, in which the government of Denmark and other international partners have played an active role, has benefited over half a million people in the metropolis. In the safety-net program, the city administration has carried out a commendable job in supporting the low-income communities.

For Urban Development Safety-Net Program and Job Creation Project Coordinator Mekonnen Yai, Ethiopia's success in implementing the pro-scheme is exemplary for other African countries. Having witnessed the program's success in changing the livelihoods of low-income communities, the Danish government, World Bank, and other development partners have been extending their support.

The safety-net development program has been implemented in 11 cities and benefited over 604,000 citizens. About 75 percent of beneficiaries of the 450-million-USD program reside in Addis Ababa, Mekonnen remarked.

IMF says Ethiopia's economy to expand...

Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous country, is on the back of easing armed conflict and continuation of the ambitious economic reform drive aimed at opening up one of Africa's fastest-growing country, IMF stated.

Former Director-General of Public Debt Management for the Treasury and

Economist Wahoro Ndoho noted that Ethiopia has been on an upward trajectory owing to its aggressive industrialization where the government cherry-picks various sectors and projects to be prioritized.

He also stated that Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) unwavering stance for launching an ambitious

reform drive aimed at opening up one of Africa's most closed economies is worth appreciating.

Wahoro, moreover, said that the ceasefire reached in November has raised hopes on the nation's economic momentum restoration. Ethiopia is among Africa's top recipients of foreign investment, becoming

a magnet or manufacturers.

The Ethiopian economy driven by investment in agriculture, industry and infrastructure has been growing on average 7.0 percent annually per capita over the 15 years to 2019, according to World Bank data.

Opinion

We all have to go back and visit!

BY DANIEL TESFAYE, MD

PART TWO

Diplomat, American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology

Practicing Neurologist in Atlanta, Georgia USA

After spending the next day with family, we were ready for our city, palace, and park tours. What has been achieved by this prime minister's guidance over the past four years is challenging to comprehend.

The visionary Prime Minister has done a lot to beautify the city and is doing a fantastic job of transforming the city's image. The city has opened up, is cleaner and greener, and is trying to reflect its name Addis Ababa (New Flower). Excellent infrastructure has been done.

Indeed, the Chinese have done a lot for our country. At what cost? I have no clue! China is also the equalizer of our world. There is nothing you want and need help finding in Addis. The malls are getting like the shops in the west. Cheap, affordable, fashionable, obviously defective Chinese products have flooded the country. You can find all kinds of fake designer stuff abundantly on the streets of Addis. I am sure this to be the same in Nairobi or Lagos.

The most important and relatively miraculous phenomenon was the arrival of my sister-in-law from Mekele. She got on the first flight and on the day the airspace was opened for travelers in two years. Her appearance created immense joy for the family. Meeting my side of the family was joyous as well. Despite our short stay, we were also able to visit several family members and friends' homes.

As a returning diaspora, the amount of love you receive and give is difficult to express. Many people find the kid in them when they visit their old houses, neighborhoods, villages, and back on familiar grounds. I have a tight group of friends, some from kindergarten and elementary school years. We have an intimate and unique bond, and we always find the kid in us when we get together. The overwhelming majority of us live in the US. It is also a must culture for us to meet up with old friends when we go to Addis. We have our ambassador and our best friend who organizes these Rendez-Vous in Addis. We visited our school St. Joseph in Addis. It is unbelievable to see the then well-built school still to be in excellent shape. It was a special moment to show my wife and son how we grew up and what we did in school. I was glad to find my childhood picture on the wall. I also found the kid in me while being in the schoolyard.

The highlight of our trip was our trip to Bahr-Dar and visited the *Tis Abay*, the origin of the Blue Nile River. Bahr-Dar has been the most developed city in Ethiopia and Africa over the past 20 years. The town is located

along the beautiful Lake *Tana*. We stayed overnight and had memorable and emotional moments. I could see for the first time and touch the river of my ancestor the Blue Nile. Now, like the rest of my countrymen and women, I can proudly say it is my river! And it is my Dam! Unfortunately, we didn't see the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam this time. It will happen on our next visit.

For the diaspora, visiting home has a unique spiritual and emotional meaning that words can't express. Over the past 30 years, I have traveled to Ethiopia four times. This trip was exceptional and the longest. I felt triumphant in witnessing the defeat of the TPLF in my lifetime, which I consider the sworn enemy of my country and people.

One cannot express and emphasize the level of development over the past ten years. Most of the started infrastructure projects were completed in the past four years. We visited the new museum at Menelik's palace. What a fantastic project! Like him or hate him, the Prime Minister deserves recognition and appreciation. We visited The Unity and Friendship parks, Entoto Mountain Park, the new science museum, and the newly built state-of-the-art library. These projects will be the ground and skeleton for the growing and transforming beautiful Addis Ababa. For the records, Addis Ababa is the only black-built and designed capital city in the world!

I had a unique moment at the Friendship Park. At 7 PM, the colorful water fountain starts to operate. This dancing water fountain is slightly bigger than the Bellagio in Vegas and smaller than Dubai but very lovely, to say the least. The show ends with the famous Tilahun Gessese's song "Ethiopia." This is a beautiful song written by the great Ethiopian poet and artist Alemtshay Wodajo.

In the past years, this popular song was played at the beginning and end of soccer tournaments in North America. I have witnessed people getting emotional and tearing up while listening to this song. It was a beautiful evening in Addis under clear skies. As the music played, I watched the dancing fountains reaching up to our flag.

Suddenly, I had a vision-like sensation. I was vividly reminiscing my beautiful early childhood, and the era of Haile Selassie, and then transitioned to the brutal period of the Derg and my youth years. It was followed by the ethnic divide of my country and people during the TPLF era. I felt again the hope and jubilation we felt when the current Prime Minister took office, followed by the deep anguish we endured as a nation and people in the past two years. I saw tremendous hope, opportunity, and development for my country simultaneously. Yet, I also felt a deep fear and darkness of a looming disaster and catastrophe if the current regimen is not correcting its course. My emotions exploded, and I sobbed with mixed and deep feelings.

Ethiopia has changed for the better. It is a country of young people. Huge potential for development and prosperity is on the horizon and can be felt. It was heartwarming again to hear about the country's self-sufficiency in feeding its over 110 million population. But unfortunately, the ethnic divide and tension are currently palpable. I am not a politician, but I believe that the significant and dangerous hurdle at this juncture is the ethnic divide and tension being exploited by the current so-called political elite and the pseudo-intellectuals.

Over the past two years, we have seen untold misery, suffering, distraction, and loss of close to one million lives and billions of dollars. I want to quote Albert Einstein's definition of insanity "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result." In my opinion, continuing the course of ethnic federalism is nothing short of insanity. True federalism and democracy need to be the pillar of the future of Ethiopia. We can't afford this insanity and experiment of ethnic federalism.

The second most serious enemy is utter poverty and growing corruption. The gap between the rich and poor in Ethiopia is simply mind-boggling.

Finally, something humane must be done about the "kid street beggars" in Addis. These kids are mostly coming from the densely populated southern regions. I have heard that there are adults who dispatch these kids and who use and abuse them. They tarnish the image of the city. Again, something humane and comprehensive must be done and begging as a trend must be discouraged and banned.

In conclusion, the diaspora must visit our countries of origin. Our visit brings inexpressible mutual joy for our family members and us reciprocally. Our tourist money and hard currency are needed there more than in the shops and streets of New York, San Francisco, LA, London, Paris, Barcelona, Lisbon, Istanbul, or Dubai. Our spending money supports local businesses.

The hard-working youth in the service industry is highly appreciative of our generosity. Our tour guide in Bahr-Dar told me he prefers his generous diaspora compatriots over white tourists. The little gifts we carry bring tremendous joy. I will never forget the face of a random little boy when my wife unexpectedly handed him a candy bar.

The transfer of knowledge in various fields that the diaspora presents is also changing our country immensely. Therefore, I would like to call on the Prime Minister to declare the month of December and January annually as a homecoming pilgrimage of the Ethiopian diaspora.

Continuing the course of ethnic federalism is nothing short of insanity. True federalism and democracy need to be the pillar of the future of Ethiopia. We can't afford this insanity and experiment of ethnic federalism

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

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The Ethiopian Herald

Editorial

Honouring the gallant diaspora community

The government has announced plans to award some 40 members of the Ethiopian diaspora community with outstanding contributions to serving their homeland, Ethiopia, during the past two years of historical-level challenges.

Currently, the Ethiopian Diaspora population is believed to have reached more than 5 million, according to information from IOM. Out of this more than 1 million live in the US, an equal number in Europe, and more than 2 million in the Middle East and various African countries.

There could be many reasons people leave their homelands and dwell away from home. Among such reasons, the main driving forces are war, poverty, lack of justice, and freedom at home, and the Like.

It is so baffling to summarize the countless contribution of the diaspora community in various parts of the world. Yet, what the diaspora did at least in the past two years alone demonstrate that they always have their heart pinned to their motherland, land of origin. They always live with expectations to return home either temporarily or permanently.

Their commitment to their country shows that they left their country due to a certain reason; nevertheless this does not mean that the country of origin is a use-and-throw object. Rather it is a place where someone would return in a lifetime or even after they pass away, their children and grandchildren would have a strong feeling about the land of their ancestors.

Living far away from home the diaspora has been doing all the best for the home land. Withstanding the challenges of time shortage,

cost of living ... etc of the country they live in, the diaspora has been working day in and day out to safeguard the country of origin in all fronts. Regardless of the income they make they never refrained from pooling money in response to any call made to help an initiative at home whether an emergency issue like drought or disaster, supporting a development project like GERD.

Despite having all privileges including citizenship in the country of residence they have fought tooth and nail against coercive economic and diplomatic impositions that are tantamount to aggression. They have demonstrated their heroism by travelling home heeding the call of the government when the country was portrayed as unsafe to travel.

Ethiopian diaspora has also demonstrated their strong affiliation to their homeland. Accordingly, they have established many communities to make timely, well-organized and adequate support to their country of origin.

As the diaspora communities have continued discharging their responsibilities to their country, the government has also taken a commendable measure to reward the heroic deeds. The award to be given to the communities is a significant milestone in further bolstering the role of the diaspora in their national affairs as well as for the government to reciprocate their deeds by delivering efficient and quality service to them as a diaspora community.

The government should further reward the diaspora by bolstering the activities it executes through dedicated government agencies like the Ethiopian Diaspora Service, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as through respective diplomatic missions.

Opinion

Intangible heritages indescribable value in the eyes of foreigners

BY MENGESHA AMARE

It is recurrently heralded that Ethiopians are rich in intangible cultural heritages namely oral traditions, performed arts, social practice, natural knowledge, wisdom and art. The heritages which do have a direct bearing to especially intangible heritages are generally associated with historical, religious and cultural life of the society.

I the other day happened to Bole at a certain café located against Millennium Hall to wait for my uncle coming from Canada. Having been informed earlier, that small café is a source of concentrated coffee, I requested a lady to bring me strong coffee (concentrate one I mean).

Receiving the coffee and put it on a table scrupulously, my eyes collided with two guys uniquely dressed ones; their style accentuates something that they are not Ethiopians. They were Africans running their own business, I mean they were talking in their language, I presumably thought that they came from Ghana or Nigeria.

I moaned and tried to establish some sort of rapport with them assuming that they are visitors to experience what Ethiopia looks like ranging from diminutive teashop like this one to grand four or five star hotels.

Unfortunately, I was right they were African guests although I failed to trace the right

nation from where they have come, and safely set of connections with these people.

They told me that they are from Tunisia and said that a range of tourism sources like on the beach, religious festive although it is not very wide and appealing as Ethiopia does have, Tunisia has come up with remarkable achievements in northern Africa regarding tourism.

One of them stated that the tourism industry is one of the most important sectors of the Tunisian economy creating thousands of direct and indirect jobs. When it comes to Ethiopia, he added, the intangible heritage Ethiopia has possessed could undoubtedly be real source of income apart from the viable reflection of religious values, look this (pointing his tip finger towards the girl who provided us with strong coffee, with a traditional dress bedecked with a mosaic of colors)

These two guests unequivocally confirmed that the intangible heritages like the just over epiphany celebration is the most important source of tourism. Intangible Heritages are non-material cultural heritages that include oral traditions; performing arts like music, dances, social practices, rituals and religious festivals as well as knowledge and skills of people.

Observing intangible cultural heritages like the recent *Timket* (Ethiopian Epiphany), the two Tunisians turn by turn said that this

annual festivity has recently become an important source of tourism development in Ethiopia, which is home to such cultural resources apart from its religious values.

One of them further stated that the value of *Timket* (Ethiopian Epiphany) has often been used to guide tourism development and policy making. In addition, community residents' attitude and perception of this religious as well as cultural essence contributes to tourism development.

He said, "Attitudes played a mediating role in the formation of value cognition to travel intention. The *Timket* festival offer insights into intangible heritage related tourism development, particularly regarding tourism product design and conservation of myriads of tourist sites."

"I understand that the intangible cultural heritages can be seen as depositories of the Ethiopians' culture, traditions and history. They are non-material resources by which the Ethiopians expressed their own cultural identity. As far as I know the intangible cultural heritages found in the Ethiopia include religious festivities, oral traditions, social values, among others, have great potential values in terms of academic, economic and cultural spheres, too," the other Tunisian said.

The other guy on his part said that he has investigated Addis Ababa residents' value cognition and emotional attitudes in an

intangible heritage on the spot and analyzed the formation path of tourism intention.

As to him, an intangible culture can be associated with numerous places, including tourist destinations, museums, exhibitions, and heritage sites, cultural and religious manifestations.

Frankly speaking, one of them said, *Timket* celebration is renowned for its aesthetic value, long history, creation of economic value, spiritual sustenance and use as an educational tool for the generation to come.

In these paths, aesthetic value, educational and spiritual value, social and economic value and historical value appeared to directly affect new generation's willingness to travel and indirectly influence the formation of tourism.

In sum, all the intangible religious and cultural heritages such as *Timket* (Ethiopian Epiphany), Fichee-Chambalaalla, Irreechaa, Meskel, among others have made Ethiopia amongst the countries that have registered their tangible and intangible heritage under UNESCO's cultural heritage list. These priceless values have to be well utilized and preserved for the benefit of the generation to come. The two Tunisian guests have also confirmed this fact.

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

Business & Economy

Sidama state financial transparency begetting ease environment for investors

BY BACHA ZEWDIE

Earlier to the formation of Sidama as a State in 2021, its people have passed through outrageous political struggle that included armed struggle in some times for the past fifty plus years to secure freedom and realize self governance. Once assured the freedom with blood and sweat, the struggle continued in different dimension more of peaceful with idea focusing on attitude changing of the people aiming to materialize economic development, Ararso Geremew (PhD), Sidama State Finance Bureau Head said.

In an exclusive interview with the Ethiopian press agency, the bureau head discussed myriads of issues concerning the multifaceted progress the newly emerged region scored since its establishment. The long lasted political struggle diverted the mind of the people to self rule independently that hindered the basic economic issue for a while that became burden to the new cabinet of the State.

Up on its assuming the power as a regional state, as to Ararso, the State's cabinet took as a primary agenda of discussion identifying the basic needs of the people and realized that the people need mostly provision of infrastructure such as roads, power supply, and potable water among others. Since Sidama is well known for its coffee produce and other fruits, the cabinet was amazed and appreciated that how the people is conscious when asking road infrastructure that is the blood vein for economy which helps them provide their products to the market.

Taking in to account the need for road and its significance to economic growth, the cabinet of the region allocated majority of its initial budget around half a billion Birr to road construction. Other infrastructures also were given equal attention, the bureau head said.

As it had gone through structural transformation from zonal administration to Regional State, it had no more income. So, addressing the public questions became challenging because of financial deficit. With the motive of lighting a candle is better instead of staring at the darkness, the cabinet reached on consensus to transform the financial process getting rid of spoiled system via circumventing messy process and avoiding corruption thereby utilizing the limited budget wisely and eyeing the ways to earn more income.

As to the bureau head, Sidama's becoming a new state is instrumental in taking outlandish measure in the financial sphere whilst poverty reduction is an utmost priority. As a manifestation of the commitment to ensure financial transparency, Sidama is employing Electronic Government Procurement next only to the federal government.

The provision of training and other capacity building programs has played a vital role in equipping the personnel's personality and helping them to shun corruption and other



Ararso Geremew (PhD), Sidama State Finance Bureau Head

malpractices and discharge responsibilities ethically.

As a result, the region scored amazing progress in revenue collection of which the increment has become more than triple in the first half of this fiscal year. To make clearer, earlier to the structural change or the state formation in 2020, Sidama Zone's internal income was 2.3 billion Birr. The structural change accompanied with not additional budget. Thus, the cabinet is shouldered the responsibility of filling the gap. With commitment, so that, the internal income of the State could reach 6 billion Birr in 2022 and 10.9 billion Birr this year's first half. This efficiency comes true with the application of legal frameworks to cutting some impeding processes in the course of income collection.

For becoming successful in income collection is not the only target of the State, the bureau head said that they have invested the money on the projects that the people need most like construction of new roads and amendment of the existing ones and potable water provision. The primary focus of the region was poverty reduction sectors.

Besides, social services like education and healthcare could draw attention of the cabinet and they moved towards the sector to address the public needs. As a result, they performed well in expanding number of hospitals and fulfilling with necessary inputs of human resource and materials.

As far as any development is strictly related to financial capacity and following

strengthened financially with internal income, the region geared its attention towards poverty reduction programs of which job creation is among the primary issues. Consequently, remarkable amount of the youth could engage in various developmental activities like realizing green legacy and wheat production schemes.

Ararso further said that all the successes registered to date and on the way have come true not without challenges. For instance, on top of shortage of roads and substandard of the existing ones, the industrial parks built in the region could not be operational as the set target. Companies those could create jobs didn't come to the parks in time due to lack of effort from the government side that coerced the State pay unnecessary sacrifice.

On the other hand, Sidama cannot develop alone without integration with neighboring states of Oromia and South. Working on security issues with these regions has been the key for developing the regions and gaining the benefit desired. In order to ensure peace among the peoples of the regions, integrating them with economic development will help more and promising outcomes have been observed so far, the bureau head noted.

Leading the financial sector with transparency necessitates radical change to mould the personnel in a new personality that have a strong aversion to theft. To this end, series of trainings had been provided and the result is promising. People began to see the financial sector is transformed

liberating itself from traditional process that was exposed to corruption. Those who became rigid in accepting the new process which prioritizes supremacy of the law and remained stuck to the previous messy process were made accountable and received corrective legal measures. This trend is replicated in others sectors as well because transparency in the financial sector alone cannot bring remarkable change in the region's development.

The bureau head further highlighted that Sidama's immense investment opportunities coupled with the meticulous promotional activities are the reasons for the growing desire of local and foreign investors to do business in the area. Yirgalem Agroindustry is a good example in this regard for its world-class facilities including the uninterrupted provision of electricity, water, healthcare, banking and other essential services.

Yirgalem Agroindustry is inaugurated last year by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD). It is built on 294 ha of land; it can accommodate 152 factories or shades and adorned with greenery. Currently, however, only five companies are functional in the park. With the meticulous promotion made by the Status's cabinet, many investors have shown interest to engage in this attractive industrial park. Following the promotion, 97 investors get registered in only one day and 11 of them made agreement so far.

Factories engaged in any field in the industrial park, with no doubt, will be beneficial. "For instance, a factory engaged in avocado production earned 5.7 million USD exporting only 2/3 times last year. This indicates the state's potential for investment and we are inviting more investors to come and reap the fruit of their effort thereby contributing a share to Ethiopia's economic progress. Investors, local or foreign, who respond positively to the invitation will also create thousands of jobs to local youth," he illustrated.

"If the industrial park is fully operational," the bureau head said, "it will provide job for 300,000 to 400,000 youth of the region."

Budget allocation of sidama state, as to the bureau head, is transparent from the regional level to woreda level so that the public can cross check the performances on the ground with the budget allocated. In case they observe any mismatch between the budget allocated for a given project and its performance, they feel free to ask and go up to making accountable the concerned body.

All in all, in order to benefit the public more, Sidama state is working on encouraging the private sector to take the lion's share in investment surpassing the government's part. Thus, there is a green light for investors of any background, from any region in the country and foreigners to come to the region and invest on their respective interest, the bureau head underlined.

Art & Culture

Bon appétit music albums

BY KFLEYESUS ABEBE

Modern music in Ethiopia has gone a century-long process producing beautiful songs and introducing talents across the country. Though its production is commendable, the industry has not been organized as it should be. For a start, its promotion was disorganized and unstudied. In recent years however this seems to be changing as artists are releasing their albums taking seasons into account, doing preparation and using everything at their disposal to let the audiences know about their albums releases.

Album releases in US and Europe are usually done in times there are no holidays as holiydays preoccupy people and holiday musics also takes the stage. The Ethiopian album release seasons in contrary wait for festive seasons. "Enkutatsh"/ Ethiopian New Year, "Genna"/ Ethiopian Christmas, "Timket"/ Ethiopian epiphany and "Fasika"/ Easter are now preferred and accustomed for album releases.

Accordingly, this *Timket* is flooded by music albums of young artists like Melat Kelemework to legendries Aster Aweke and Girma Tefera. Melat Kelemework, Dibekulu Tafesse and Kidus Belete are already famous singers but their debut albums are expected to take their career to another level. The response is already positive as it is a talk of social media. Fans are unreservedly expressing their appreciation to these musicains. They are recommending songs to their loved ones, friends and anyone they know. As a listener myself I found many of them to be spectacular in their lyrics, melody composititions and the messages they conveyed. For instance, Melat's album is a great breakthrough as the album is beautiful and unexpected for me. The Songs "Leyelegn"/ I am crazy and "And Hager" One Country are the songs I liked very much from this album.

"And Hager"/ One Country

My mother is a country
And my country is a mother too
My country is a mother to me too
To be created on earth
To be a human is a luck (2x)
It is double honor and victory
"Leyelegn"/ Got Crazy
Leave alone the gathering of people,
You can live with animals of wild
You can live taming them
With peace, love and harmony
Kind heart, lightened
He is filled with
Your face tells your goodness
Ehe ehe
I got crazy
When I get closer to you
Got crazy
After I know you much
My heart that loved you got crazier

Dibekulu Tafesse is a member of Jano Band and has made some fabulous songs with the band. In his debut album "Yetu Gar Neh", he attempted to showcase his talent



at fullest. The album posed a philosophical question "Where are you at?" and Dibekulu said he has been asking himself his progress and wanted fans to ask the same question themselves and strive to change in their lives.

"Since a slogan "Yetu gar neh/where are you at" posted in the studio, I been asking myself where am I. I am sharing this with my audience. Where does my album stand? What about me? Musically, individually how I am? As nation where are we? We have to ask this question ourselves any time to carry on our progress. We can be at the wrong path but if we ask this question there is a chance to correct ourselves."

The lyrics are written by legendary music writer Yelma Gebreab. They are powerful and timely. For instance, the way he described the power of peace is very visual in mind of the listner.

When the scent of good plants blown
When good and beautiful stories are seen
When birds fly in its sky
before the eyes of the world
they were jewels of our peace
When the clean air attracts tourists
When the scene of wild animals allures
But, why they denied peace to this continent?
They didn't want good be sown
Let peace prevail in Africa
Let's glow with love
How many times growth pass us?!
We shall put a stop on jealousy
When we become a disdain to others
To find a lucky day

Other songs of Dibekulu like "Yebebe Zema"/ Song of my heart also preaches

unity, peace and love. The melody, the style and the potential of the vocalist also made this album popular now.

Girma Teferra is a notable music figure. He began taking the footstep of his father, Teferra Kassa who was a music giant. Girma has so far refurbished his fathers song and with considerable popular acclamation. His other singles were also loved by listeners for him to create a wide fan base. Acording to composers and other people involved in the making of Girma's new album "Gin Yet Hager?" But, to which country? (Where should I go?) say it is done with due preparation. Guitarist and music composer Abegaz Kibrework appreciated Girma's dedication for the album to be an outstanding work.

"I have participated in production and composing of Girma Teferra's album. This works show Girma's deep love to music. He has been very dedicated to this work. I am happy to be part of this great work."

Yared Tefera, one of the greatest Ethiopian saxophone player, exalts Girma's talent and care to make his works superb.

"Girma is naturally gifted vocalist. We see that he has inherited his mellifluous voice from his father. He is an accomplished singer. When the remaking of his father's music, he has done it impressively and without affecting the taste of the original work. Whenever songs are remade we tend to say it is better the previous way. But Girma's reproduction is developed and its original beauty isn't affected.

Several figures including Mahmoud Ahemd, Abegaz Kibrework, Yared Tefera and others have participated in writing songs, playing instruments and handling arrangements. Girma said he was talking

about the progress of his album with the late Madingo Afework. Madingo was encouraging him and giving constructive comments. Therefore, Girma dedicated this album to his colleague Madingo Afework, an emerging start who was cut brief.

"Gin Yet Hager?" But, to which country?

It is not your cute face, not your beauty
My heart melted by your personality
I chose to retreat somewhere
Than having hard time seeing you
I distance my self from you
But, to which country? (2x)

Another album released recently is an *Oromigna* album by Kidus Belete. I can't say more since it is in a language I don't undersatnd much. However, I have heard great medlody from this album too. It is said that "music is a universal language of mankind." Indeed you can witness this by listening to this album.

Aster Aweke's album is very antipated since the artists have already proven her unmatched talent. She has 24 albums before, performed in big continental stages, featured in many new outlets as "queen of Ethiopian solo music." Her 25th album is expected to capture the hearts of the country.

While the release of the albums are coming like a flood, another good development from the industry is the coming of Sewasew which is a music app similar to spotify. In fact, it has made deals with spotify. Accordingly, musicians are likely to get deserving return from their works.

As a result this season is a buffet of music to music lovers. All the music apps and singers saying; "You want it some more.

Well it is open
Bon appétit

Indepth

Ramping up tourism in Ethiopia

BY FITSUM GETACHEW

During the past few years tourism in the world as a whole has undergone a huge set back due to most significantly the COVID pandemic. Conflicts here and there are also another factor. The economic challenges many countries have faced are also another one. Countries which had a substantial reliance on tourism for their economy suffered a lot, particularly in the less developed countries. There is no doubt that Ethiopia is also among those victims.

We have always heard the saying that Ethiopia is a country of immense potential referring to the untouched attractive sites and historical artifacts, and a lot of cultural assets that would just make tourists very happy and rewarded for their visit. Speaking of the potential of tourism in Ethiopia implies in a way that a lot remains to be done in this area, or not enough has been done in the sector, at best. There have been recent awakenings in the tourism sector in Ethiopia also because the government is an active contributor to this phenomenon. In this respect the Ministry of Tourism needs to be commended.

The government of Abiy Ahmed can be very much appreciated for this reawakening because it seems to have well understood and appreciated the vast riches of the country that would fascinate tourists from all walks of life from all corners of the world. The premier himself has been heard many times stating that so and so country has much less history and treasures both natural and artificial than Ethiopia and yet they have done a wonderful job to sell what they have in a wonderful package and managed to attract so many tourists and earn a lot of foreign currency. It has all depended on how to present what we have and prepare the right grounds for tourists to make them feel at home during their stay here. Many say the climate of Ethiopia itself is so beautiful that anyone who comes from extreme climatic conditions would enjoy the moderate and well ventilated conditions of Ethiopia.

There are no doubts that the Ministry of Tourism does have full awareness on this potential and there are many citizens who know how to appreciate the riches of Ethiopia in terms of attracting tourists. But not all citizens know their country very well and not many have visited the various historical and geographical sites of the country while some do not even realize the potential the country is endowed with. That is why we have seen in recent days particularly during the just ended World Cup in Qatar we saw lots of publicity on ETV on the various riches of Ethiopia and Tourism Ethiopia inviting people to visit their country know their country and the peoples of the country with all the various cultures and mores. In the spots we have seen footage of beautiful sites of the country and people of various ethnic backgrounds with their traditional costumes and some may have wondered 'do we have all these wonders?'

Hence we can easily assert that tourism in

When you look at the crowd you would be induced to believe that no one stays at home when the processions go to and from the places where the 'tabots' pass the nights

Ethiopia does have a huge potential and we need to do much more to invite tourists to our land and show them what sort of hospitality are we capable of according them. While Ethiopia was trying hard to advance this potential to new lengths, the Covid pandemic did inflict a huge blow to the burgeoning industry. Hotels and tour agencies, transport agencies, shops of souvenirs and others directly or indirectly related to the tourism industry suffered a huge loss.

When the COVID began to die down then come the conflict in the north and the various

negative propaganda that was disseminated against Ethiopia by various media, both mainstream and social, also contributing to the crisis in the sector. Foreigners never go to countries where there are rumors of conflicts and instability let alone when they are even advised by some media sources not to step their feet in Ethiopia. This did a huge damage both to the image of the country but also to the economy. No tourist wants to risk their life to visit a country and if there is little reliable information that would ascertain to these tourists that most of the talk in the media is unsubstantiated and done only with malice, they would still hesitate from flying to Ethiopia. This of course does not mean that there were not some who had tangible information and did not change their plans of coming to Ethiopia for a visit. This was also further encouraged by thousands of diaspora who came back to their country notwithstanding the negative stories that continued to come out on Ethiopia from outside sources.

In the past few months however after the conflict in the north has been sealed with a cessation of hostilities and activities have been run as usual with people who have been getting rehabilitated and returned to their home towns and efforts for reconstruction are taking place rapidly, there has been a huge return of tourists to Ethiopia. The past few weeks have been particularly very valuable in tourism terms. Many Ethiopian diaspora came back home to celebrate the Christmas holidays with their families and the fact that now there is an atmosphere of peace in the country has encouraged also foreign tourists to flock to Ethiopia. Ethiopians themselves have been moving in the country to celebrate Christmas at Lalibela where traditionally hundreds of thousands used to celebrate it warmly in a fervent religious atmosphere. The past three years this was not possible but this year it has been celebrated with the maximum warmth and beauty. Thousands of people traveled from the adjacent and far off localities to observe the religious rites of Christmas in Lalibela.

Then came Epiphany or *Timket*, the baptism of Jesus Christ. This is among the most famous and best celebrated religious and cultural holidays that is a part of Ethiopian reality, Ethiopian culture. It was in fact inscribed as one of the World natural heritages at UNESCO's registry and is now a relic for all humanity.

Millions of Ethiopians accompany their 'tabots' or replicas of the ark of the covenant from their churches out to a place where they pass the night and in the morning carry out all religious rites before baptizing everyone who attends the *Timket* ceremony. People are in their best possible clothes and accompany the 'tabots' with religious hymns and even traditional songs of every ethnic group present and past two or three days in celebration. When you look at the crowd you would be induced to believe that no one stays at home when the processions go to and from the places where the 'tabots' pass the nights. You see newly born infants on the back of their

mothers, kids of all ages and adults as well as the elderly who all celebrate *Timket* together. Tourists are simply breath taken by the number of people rejoicing together in a festive and religious mood and thank their Lord together. They are attracted by the wonderful religious clothing the clergy and the young chanters dress making moves and chants all together creating an inspiring and harmonious atmosphere. That was why every tourist asked about their impression said they were deeply impressed by what they saw and never did they ever experience such a spectacle before. We heard them invite other tourists to come to Ethiopia and not to miss such a celebration.

The past few days hence saw a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to Ethiopia and the huge special spectacle was held in Gondar at the King Fasilides Swimming Pool where *Timket* was conducted. Many dived into the pool to get baptized while others watched the show in sheer delight and fascination. This season is particularly very important for Gondar and environs because it is an area very famous for the celebration of *Timket* in a very colorful manner. We saw so many foreign tourists in this area and many were vowing that they would return other years as well to take part in such wonderful chants and ceremonious celebrations.

Tourism Ethiopia knows that there are other similar celebrations carried out in the open such as 'Irrecha' (a thanks giving ceremony by the Oromo ethnic group) which is celebrated at the beginning of every Ethiopian year and there is the 'Demera' and 'Meskel' (the finding of the true cross) which is celebrated in the same month both of which are UNESCO registered world heritages. 'Fiche Chambala' is another similar celebration carried out at the beginning of the year for the Sidama ethnic group in the South. All these celebrations that happen in the open in the presence of hundreds of thousands of people create an atmosphere of peace and joy and a deep religious belief that people are devoted to.

These are historical treasures of Ethiopia that one does not find in other localities and that is why many tourists admire them and vow to come and attend whenever they can. Ethiopia's attractions for tourists are immense but what we need to do is make them publicized to the maximum while at the same time prepare adequate infrastructure and transportation and hotel accommodations of the highest standards so that tourists do really feel at home when they come here. This will be the homework of every Ethiopian particularly those with the financial means to contribute to the industry and Ethiopians in diaspora who need to inform others what kind of country we have. We must continue with the momentum of the past weeks so that the number of tourists continues to grow by leaps and bounds. Indeed there is no doubt that Ethiopia has a vast tourism potential to exploit sooner than later.

Law & Politics

Inclusiveness, transparency: Prerequisites to stage a successful national dialogue

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) has been studying and exploring global experiences intending to carry out a successful National Dialogue that will tackle the country's long-standing quandaries that still continue to take a huge toll on the people. Given the current circumstances, the Commission has been fully involved in figuring out major contentious issues shackling the hands and feet of the country. It is largely expected that the Commission's efforts would bear fruits and produce results.

In actual fact, it cannot be denied that the Commission has been discharging its responsibilities with a focus on addressing barriers.

Nowadays, Ethiopia on several occasions has been leaning over backwards to get to the bottom of the stockpiles of glitches that pose national threats. And, the planned national dialogue is part of the country's effort to redress the longtime setbacks.

There is no denial with the fact that national dialogue plays a huge role in resolving a diverse range of social and economic impediments and bringing the various Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples of Ethiopia together.

As a matter of fact, as some of the conundrums facing the country need fix more than ever before, the Commission since its inception has been clearing the way for establishing a common understanding and reaching common ground by conducting national dialogue.

It must not be forgotten that the Commission was able to reach an agreement with a considerable number of political parties to make the dialogue a success.

Needless to say, as national dialogue plays an extremely important role in reinforcing cultural harmony and solidarity, pertinent bodies have been standing by the side of the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission.

In the same way, national dialogue serves as a jumping-off point for creating a democratic system in every region of the country, buttressing a common set of values, enhancing the culture of broad-mindedness, and so forth.

In addition to giving priority to carrying out National Dialogue to bring about everlasting peace, the National Dialogue Commission has been discharging its duties and responsibilities giving emphasis to consolidating peace and tranquility all over the national territory working in close association with religious officials, political opposition parties, and more of the same.

Other than that the country has been working at all hours of the day and night to put the accent on the national dialogue that can bring about sustainable peace, strengthen cultural harmony, and resolve confrontation to quandaries surfacing in the entire territory. In current circumstances, Ethiopia has been bending over backward to stage a national dialogue that would play a big role in resolving the complicated impediments of



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ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL
DIALOGUE COMMISSION

the country. It is believed that conducting national dialogue plays a huge role in smoothing the path of ensuring peace and tranquility in every nook and cranny of the country in addition to averting socio-political catastrophes.

As Ethiopia has been working in close corporation with more than a few bodies to successfully conduct a national dialogue aimed at creating a consensus on major national political issues and bringing about lasting peace throughout the country, the whole thing has been moving in the right direction.

As trustworthy dialogues are a real gadget for calming down a dispute and political conditions, people from all walks of life have been working in close coordination with the National Dialogue Commission for accomplishing the sought-after goal. In a similar vein, taking into consideration the huge role national dialogue plays in making the impossible possible and the unthinkable thinkable, everybody has set in motion working in close collaboration with the National Dialogue Commission.

In the same fashion, as conducting a successful national dialogue necessitates the combined efforts of the population at large, Ethiopians at home and abroad have been giving support to the National Dialogue Commission. In fact, when the national dialogue sees the light of day the country for sure will achieve a consensus at the earliest possible time. In this regard, all and sundry should work in close cooperation with the Commission for its realization.

As national dialogue plays a paramount role in resolving disagreement, settling differences, finding common ground, finding a common understanding, coming to an agreement, smoking the pipe of peace, and other things of a similar kind, each and every one should stand by the side of the federal government.

The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) said it has been hugely engaged in studying and exploring global experience to conduct a successful National Dialogue that will address the country's age-long contentious problems.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) ENDC Commissioner Prof. Mesfin Araya said that the commission has been

established with the objectives of facilitating consultation between the various segments of the society by identifying the root causes of the difference in fundamental national issues and identifying the topics on which the discussion will take place.

Studying the experience of others has become a common experience globally and attempts have been made to understand the reason behind the successes and failures of national dialogues that have been conducted in various countries, the commissioner added.

External interference, government interference, lack of inclusiveness, and others were among the main reasons for the failures of the National Dialogue conducted in different countries. On the other hand, some countries have made successful deliberations citing the experience of Tunisia.

Mesfin further stated that countries including Yemen and Sudan failed to execute successful National Dialogue because of the interference of the government and external actors. Accordingly, conducting an all-inclusive dialogue that consists of the lower part of the society, religious leaders, civil society and others is crucial.

Ethiopia, the commission, has been making an extensive preparation to execute an inclusive and transparent National Dialogue complying with its mandate. Due attention has been given to keeping the deliberation inclusive and participatory in the preparation, process, and implementation phases to bring about holistic peace-making.

"Likewise, we have been discussed with various segments of society including political parties, civil society organizations, and other parts of the society. Understanding of historical narratives on contentious issues is among the most important elements to conduct a successful National Dialogue."

According to the commissioner, the truce agreement reached between the government and TPLF is among the basic things to conduct activity in Tigray and discuss with the public.

Similarly, various efforts have been exerted to actively involve the members of Ethiopian Diaspora communities in the upcoming National Dialogue, so disclosed Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC).

ENDC Commissioner Yonas Adaye (Ph.D.) told *The Ethiopian Herald* that ENDC has been carrying out various activities to enhance Diaspora participation in a bid to conduct inclusive and fruitful National Dialogue.

According to the commissioner, the Diaspora's participation in national activities such as building Abay Dam, widening the political landscape, supporting law enforcement, building democracy, sustaining peace, encouraging social interaction, and reconstructing the war-affected areas have been augmenting over the past few years.

He remembered that ENDC held extensive discussions with some members of Diaspora communities last year concerning issues about the value, and significance of the establishment of the National Dialogue and the use of connecting it with the Ethiopia Diaspora Service (EDS). Besides, the commission has promised to travel to the U.S., Latin America, the Middle East, Europe, Asia, and other countries to discuss a range of affairs with the Diaspora communities.

It has also planned to listen to the heartbeats of the Diasporas, which is in turn significantly helpful in carrying out a fruitful National Dialogue. In this regard, the ENDC has finalized preparations to hold the final discussion with the Diaspora community this week.

"Particularly, the Diaspora representative in Addis Ababa has taken crucial measures in connecting the Diaspora communities with the commission by using various mechanisms like webinar and physical attendance," he added.

He further stated that taking the lessons drawn from success stories of other countries to this end, for example, the Gahanna's Diaspora living in Britain has been benefiting their homeland in a significant manner. Unfortunately, the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have failed due to inappropriate utilization of the Diaspora communities. Therefore, the ENDC is working on holding an effective and successful National Dialogue.

"As the Ethiopian Diaspora communities are large in number across the globe and well experienced in various fields such as politics, economics, entrepreneurship, science, engineering, and the like, they would play a paramount role in making a dialogue a success. Therefore, not only is the commission duty bound to foster conditions but also the media, stakeholders, as well as the public at large, are expected to play their part in the process of carrying out the National Dialogue and making it a lucrative boulevard to lasting peace and unwavering socio-economic national status," he underlined.

He called upon the Diaspora in every part of the world to play their respective role in walking the talk thereby having a peaceful nation.

It is to be recalled that the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission revealed its schedule to start the conduct of the historic national dialogue by March 2023.

Women in Focus

Good habits formed at youth make all the differences

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

Most youths in this generation seem to break the old habit of waiting to be employed in a certain institution. They rather tend to observe their environment, identify gaps and come up with new ideas and business opportunities to be their own boss.

Hawi Debele, the founder and Chief Executive Officer at ELBEE and Gebo Manufacturing Company, is one of these aspiring and hard working women.

Hawi was born in Gimbi, Wollega. She stayed there until she turned five and went straight to Bishoftu Town where she attended her primary and secondary education.

Hawi has earned her first degree in Accounting and Finance. Being one of the top students, she became a lecturer after she graduated. Throughout her lecturing career, she was able to teach in various private colleges- from freshman to graduating class. However, she knew deep down that her calling in life was not teaching. It was soon after she realized this fact Hawi decided to quit her job and went to the Capital-Addis Ababa, so that she could take time to identify her calling. Once she realized that 'living for the service of others' was more meaningful, she focused on considering it thoroughly how she could serve people especially women.

It was undeniable that benefitting and empowering women was the major pillar that took over her mind through the entire process of trying to figure out the ways. While Hawi was fighting hard to discover how a scholarship opportunity that she was not prepared for stood at her door.

Unlike many people would do, Hawi did not seize the scholarship opportunity she was destined to follow, rather she rejected it. In doing so, she let the institution that offered her the scholarship know she was not interested in leaving her home country; and asked if they could substitute the support with something that would ladder her to get to her dreams.

Fortunately, she was able to receive support which helped her to establish her ELBEE manufacturing company. "My dream was to help people, change their living standard and create ample job opportunities," she underscored.

ELBEE Manufacturing was built on a foundation where unity, coexistence and prosperity are prioritized. Though she encountered multiple challenges with regard to getting inputs as she started the company in the garment sector, she came up with an idea of performing the entire job at one place. Thus, she decided to do the weaving, embroidery, and other handmade activities there.

The fact that she had a habit of doing embroidery on toys during her childhood paved a way for her to cope with her job easily.

Besides her job in the garment sector, she is also engaged in providing training. She said that the reason why she decided to involve in weaving was to address the challenge



Hawi Debele, the founder and Chief Executive Officer at ELBEE and Gebo Manufacturing Company

Unlike many people would do, Hawi did not seize the scholarship opportunity she was destined to follow, rather she rejected it. In doing so, she let the institution that offered her the scholarship know she was not interested in leaving her home country

she faced with shortage of materials. Fortunately, her involvement brought about vast job opportunities for many women (mothers) that were engaged in cotton spinning, embroidery and other handicrafts.

During this process, Hawi learned that she was able to produce essential materials simply using her hands. Then, she began making garbage bin that is made from fibers, house and kitchen materials made from bamboo and other materials.

Apart from supplying the handmade materials to the market, Hawi started providing training to others so that the sector could be flourished as well as preserved.

Her company has so far offered training for close to 300 people on various sectors including weaving and handicrafts. Not only did they have the training, but the people, of whom most of them are housewives, have got the opportunity to be employed at the company working from home.

She said, the fact that the materials are handmade which does not require machinery allowed the women to work from their home, adding that ELBEE manufacturing focuses on producing materials without the need to use any machines.

Cognizant of the fact that people's interest has shifted to handmade materials, and the availability of inputs locally, have made a huge contribution for the success of the job.

More importantly, since the work could be performed at home, it would open more doors to solve the unemployment problem by providing training to citizens.

Currently, there is high demand for handmade materials. A simple example in this regard, as to her, is that their company sold out the entire material it supplied for sale at the *Genna* (the Ethiopian Christmas) exhibition prior to the closing date of the bazaar."

Her company which is engaged in producing handmade materials that are made of fiber, weaving, and bamboo, delivers weaving products to various designers in which the designers then add value to the materials and supply to the market in various forms.

One of the activities that are performed at ELBEE is pottery works. Putting various designs on the pottery, the company sells it to various customers while they perform sewing activity that is used to decorate walls and produce baskets used for various purposes.

Scarves, carpets and other closings are also produced in the company. Similarly, they manufacture different mugs that are made from bamboo.

"Owing to the fact that the company uses inputs that are available locally, it did not only help us to provide the products at fair price but it would also allow us to create job opportunities for many."

As women are actively engaged in handmade, similar sectors enable the country to preserve the profession to the next generation, she added.

Her company has also come up with a weaving machine that is made from bamboo. Taking the hardship that the previous weaving machine brought up on the employees into consideration, they not only make use of the weaving machine they introduced; but they are also supplying to the market.

Besides easing the labor work, the machine was made to allow the women to use it at home. Currently, ELBEE Manufacturing offers short term training on various issues. While making scarves and carpets took months of training, she said trainees could accomplish a weaving course in three months. Preparation has been finalized to provide training for 200 people, as to her.

As part of exerting her corporate responsibility, she offers financial and in-kind support to disadvantaged people. Currently, she is raising six children by covering their full expenses for food, clothing as well as education.

The company that Hawi started with a capital of two million Birr has currently hit 20 million Birr. Currently, receiving 30 thousand hectares of investment land; she is constructing a factory in *Sendafa* Town.

When the factory becomes operational, it is expected to create jobs for around 10 thousand citizens. She also set a plan to train over 6 million people and create job opportunities for citizens within the coming five years.

Ethiopia honors Diasporas' togetherness, contribution

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

Several Ethiopians, owing to various reasons, such as economic, political or other related matters, have left their country and are residing in different parts of the world. However, the love, attachments and dedications of all Ethiopian Diasporas to their country is beyond words. This is witnessed several times. Despite their ideological differences and all the challenges in host countries, they are always committed on Ethiopia's matters.

This affection and commitment has been manifesting itself in their active political, economic and social participations. The role of the Diaspora communities who always are alert to protect the interest of the country is a good example in this regard. What is more, those individuals who send money in a legal way to support their family and invest their capital in Ethiopia witness how Ethiopian Diaspora communities are committed to their country.

The last four years are periods where the Diaspora community has shown unreserved effort towards the peace and stability of the country. From standing as one to elevate the reputation of Ethiopia and protect its sovereignty and dignity in international arenas is a good proof for the claim.

What is more, the last four years have also seen an increasing number of the Diaspora communities returning back to Ethiopia, which can be taken as a historic visit to homeland. The commitment of the Ethiopian Diaspora has also revealed itself within the past two years



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ETHIOPIAN DIASPORA SERVICE

where the nation was caught with internal and external challenges by playing an active role representing Ethiopia.

Not only that, but the participation of the Diaspora community in investment and trade, transfer of technology, building up educational and health institutions and other areas are few among the others that should be valued and receive recognition.

Taking the incalculable contributions of the Diaspora community in the overall activities of Ethiopia, the Government has arranged the first Ethiopian Diaspora Organization Recognition Program; and today, the recognition program is being marked here in Addis Ababa.

As indicated by the Ethiopian Diaspora

Service, Ethiopian Diaspora organizations have received recommendations on the event for their contributions to the national calls that have been made on various occasions.

Ethiopian Diaspora Service Director-General, Mohammed Edris, said that the recognition program aims at encouraging and expressing gratitude to the Diaspora community for their contribution in various activities, including public diplomacy, image building and resource mobilization. The Diaspora organizations are contributing significantly towards safeguarding the national interest as well as the economic and social development of the country. The Director General also pointed out that the Diasporas have been contributing tens of millions USD for the construction of the Grand Ethiopian

Renaissance Dam during the past years.

Diaspora Service Communication Director, Wondwossen Girma, on his part told the EPA that like other countries, the Diasporas are one alternative to stimulating economic progress. In this regard, Ethiopian Diasporas are playing significant role in backing the economic progress of the nation. There were no times where they refrained from supporting their country in the form of knowledge, skill, technology transfer and finance.

Mentioning that they are exerting unreserved efforts in areas of tourism and commerce which have key role for our economy he said: "The Diasporas have an active role in Ethiopia's day to day activities. They are active in several charitable activities and remittance. They are always ready for national calls and backing projects."

Wondwossen also said, within the past two decades, the second ten years Diaspora Policy Document that enhances the participation of the diaspora community is prepared. Using this, several activities are being carried out. What is more, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working aggressively in the area giving more focus to the Diaspora; especially in the past four years, the Diaspora Communities have gotten more attention. This is especially true after the political reformation where the Prime Minister discussed the Ethiopian Diasporas living in America, Europe, Middle East and Africa. Due to the discussion conducted with the community, Diasporas' attachment with the motherland has become strong; and their support has improved.



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Fifth International conference of Oromo studies: Oromo in the horn of African discourse

BY DIRRIBA TESHOME

The fifth International Conference of Oromo Studies on the Grand Theme: Oromo in the Horn of African Discourse: Past and Present, organized by Haramaya University Institute of Oromo Studies (IOS) and Jimma University Institute of Gada Studies (IGS) jointly was kicked off yesterday.

The International Oromo Studies Conference, "Oromo Literature in the Horn of Africa, Past, Present and Future" was started yesterday. The Conference is being held for two days from 25-26 January 2023 at Haramaya University Main Campus. And it welcomed abstracts with full length paper from scholars around the world, it was learnt.

It received research papers that examine various discourses of/on Oromo from multidisciplinary areas, focusing on contemporary discourses on indigenous democratic Gada System of government, economy, history, socio-culture, and literature. The research papers, which explore the discourse and practices of Ethiopian Federal system as an opportunity and challenge from the perspectives of Ethiopia and wider East African geopolitical landscape are among the priority areas



of the conference. The Conference aims to bring together prominent academic scientists and researchers to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of discourses mentioned above. It also provides a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners and educators to present and discuss the most recent trends, and concerns as well as practical roots of challenges and suggest feasible solutions to points of divergence in Ethiopia.

Research papers which scrutinize the following sub-themes are welcome; Debate on structure of Gadaa System vis-à-vis western institutions; Gadaa Grades and Gadaa Cycle and Qadadduu (alliances) among parties; Buttaa: parties power transfer and succession ceremony and Gadaa military organization;

Buqqisuu: mid-term deliberations and impeachment of the incumbent Gadaa leaders; Gadaa and Qaalluu Institutions: Overlapping and Divergent roles; and Decentralization of power in Gadaa: Confederacy to local levels;

It also included: Debate on Gender Roles in Gadaa: Ateetee, Siqqee, etc; Aesthetic values in Gadaa and its role as learning (education) center; Gadaa legislations on peace, environment, human & animal rights; Discourse on externally and internally-generated changes to Gadaa and its revitalization; Adopting the best practices of Gadaa to modern institutions; Federalism in Ethiopia and its Implications for the Horn; Oromo in the Economy of Ethiopia and the Horn; Oromo History, Literature and Arts

in Ethiopia as well as the Horn; and Other related issues to grand theme and sub-themes stated above could be entertained.

As the Vice President of Haramaya University, Professor Jeylan Waliyyee, said in his opening remarks, these studies to be presented are expected to be the Oromo Studies, the solutions to the economic, social and political problems of the Oromo. The research presented at the conference will enable to preserve the culture and pass it on to the next generation.

The conference is being attended by the leadership of the Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, researchers and stakeholders in the field.