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Ethiopia's economy to grow by 7.5 percent: MoPD

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA - Ministry of Planning and Development (MoPD) has predicted that Ethiopia's economy would record a 7.5 percent growth rate this Ethiopian fiscal year.

This was noted yesterday at the council of ministers past six months performance evaluation and reviewing meeting.

During the meeting, MoPD minister Fitsum Asefa (PhD) said Ethiopia had managed to record an economic growth of 6.4 percent in the 2021/22 fiscal year. At the end of the current fiscal year, Ethiopia's economic growth is expected to be 7.5 percent according to last six months macroeconomics performance.

Recording 6.7 percent in the past six months, the agricultural sector is continuously spearheading the growth of the country's

See Ethiopia's economy ... page 3

Ethiopia, Russia vow to take relations to new heights

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Speaker of the House of Federation Agegnehu Teshager and Russian Ambassador to Ethiopia Evgeny Terekhin expressed consensus to strengthen inter-parliamentary relations to take the two countries' bilateral ties to the highest level.

In their discussion, the parties emphasized the need to foster cooperation between the House of Federation and the Upper House of Russia to bring all-around progress in the Ethio-Russia long standing partnership.

The information obtained from the House indicated that Ambassador Terekhin congratulated the people and government of Ethiopia for the peaceful resolution of the northern conflict whilst expressing his country's everlasting desire to support the peace process. The ambassador also mentioned the conflict between Russia and Ukraine is becoming more complex and difficult.



Agegnehu Teshager



Evgeny Terekhin

For his part, Agegnehu conveyed Ethiopia's firm belief and desire to solve any dispute on the ground according to law. In particular, the government has been tirelessly working for the peaceful resolution of the conflict

with the TPLF and the recently-concluded Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) with TPLF show cases its commitment.

Also, the government has carried out

See Ethiopia, Russia ... page 3

CBE unveils Ethio Direct remittance service

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA- A new digital money transfer service dubbed as Ethio- Direct (White Label) remittance platform has been commenced in a bid to discourage informal remittance channels and boost the country's foreign earnings, so disclosed Commercial Bank of Ethiopia(CBE).

Briefing journalists on the new launched service, CBE President Abie Sano yesterday said the white label remittance service would play a great role in combating informal



Photo - Eyob Teferi

channels and encouraging the formal ones.

Accordingly, the platform has been made

available for the Ethiopian Diasporas in order to send money swiftly and easily to their beloved ones in homeland.

CBE has introduced the first in its kind platform in Ethiopia the president said adding that, this platform is free of charge at all.

“The bank has been doing its best to encourage the use of formal remittance channels across the country, therefore, members of Diasporas or Ethiopian citizens can send money to homeland via the

See CBE unveils ... page 3

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ethio-telecom, partners ink MoUs to ensure digitalizing Ethiopia

BY TAMERU REGASA

ADDIS ABABA- ethio-telecom has signed Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with three partners to ensure Digitalizing Ethiopia through launching different digital services.

The telecom has made agreements with Zergaw Internet Service Provider, Kulu

See ethio-telecom, ... page 3

News



AfCFTA

AfCFTA members urged to accelerate ratification protocol

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA- Trade experts, business executives and advocates of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) called upon to accelerate the ratification of the Protocol on the movement of people, during the Africa Prosperity Dialogue.

In Africa Prosperity Dialogue held in Ghana from 26 to 28 January on the theme: "AfCFTA: from Ambition to Action delivering prosperity through continental trade," African countries are called upon to "accelerate the ratification of the Protocol."

Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) on its website stated that, the Agreement has, thus far, been signed by fifty-four of the fifty-five African Union (AU) Member States. Forty-four countries have deposited their instrument of ratification, but only four have ratified the Protocol on the movement of people.

The Protocol initially contained in the 1991 Abuja Treaty aims to facilitate and increase the movement of Africans within Africa, while enhancing their rights to entry, residence and establishment in AU member states. With more people able to move freely, countries will easily tap into a wider labor market to bridge skills gaps while trading across borders.

"Continental integration is an existential necessity and therefore a natural destiny for Africa," said Stephen Karingi, Director of Regional Integration and Trade at ECA.

President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of Ghana at the event called upon to champion the Protocol on the free movement of persons. "Readily accept in all humility." He cautioned, however, that "I need the approval of the AU before I can become the champion of anything"

The President urged "all of us here to see ourselves as champions of intra-African trade." "We cannot afford to fail. As African nations, we must join hands with each other and work diligently to pursue this noble cause."

"When our governments sign or ratify an agreement of this nature, they are making a collective promise to all of us...It is thus incumbent on all of us to support them to be true to their words, but also to hold them to account when they fall short," said Melaka Desta, Coordinator of the African Trade Policy Centre at the ECA.

"Let Africans roam freely. Free movement of people is a must if Africa wants to enjoy the full benefits of the AfCFTA," said Joseph Atta-Mensah, Senior Regional Adviser on Trade at ECA.

The Dialogue was organized by the African Prosperity Network in partnership with the AfCFTA Secretariat, the Government of Ghana, UNDP, and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Organizers agreed to "meet annually, under the Africa Prosperity Dialogue," and take stock of the progress of Africa's prosperity agenda.

NDRMC, humanitarian partners reaching war-impacted communities

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- The National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC), along with various donor groups, has continued delivering humanitarian aid to the war-ridden parts of the country.

In its latest Twitter post, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-Ethiopia (UN OCHA-Ethiopia) announced that the government of Ethiopia and humanitarian partners continue to deliver food and non-food assistance to conflict-affected people through the air and all available corridors.

While quoting NDRMC, the UN OCHA Ethiopia indicated that the government of Ethiopia and Humanitarian Partners assisted IDPs and War-affected communities in Amhara, Tigray, Afar states through the air and land corridors.

"Looking at the latest food distribution round, the three food partners namely, EDRMC, WFP and the NGO Consortium-JEOP have assisted more than 415,000 people in Afar under round 5 including more than 138,000 people last week. In Amhara, more than 972,000 people received food aid



under round 5 including 149,000 last week."

More than 532,000 people in Tigray have also received food assistance under the third round including more than 2,300 people last week. The number of beneficiaries in Amhara and Afar states has been collected as of January 27; and Tigray's report as of 18 January.

The UN OCH said, however, that limited areas across the three war-affected states remain hard to reach. "Humanitarian

partners continue to flexibly re-prioritize the most urgent needs with available resources in the face of conflict-induced displacement."

It is to be recalled that NDRMC Commissioner Shiferaw Teklemariam (PhD) recently held talks with the UN Secretary-General Special Advisor Robert Andrew Piper and FAO representative to Ethiopia, Farayi Zimudzi on the subject of aid assistance to IDPs.

Ethiopia introduces framework to address construction sector-problems

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA -The Ministry of Urban Development and Infrastructure disclosed the introduction of the Construction Industry Capacity Building Framework (CICBF) which is believed to play a notable role in addressing problems the sector has been facing.

The framework is being developed by Construction Management Institute (CMI) in cooperation with Construction Solutions PLC (CONSOL).

Speaking on the occasion, Urban Development and Infrastructure State Minister Fenta Dejen said despite the ever increasing importance of the construction industry for the national economy, lack of technology and system inputs of the sector has made the sector not competitive globally.

The framework is of great importance to enhance the capacity of various actors in the construction industry including contractors and consultants and help build a competent construction industry that maintains the rapid economic growth, the state minister added.

CONSOL Manager Mesfin Tadesse



Photo Gebabo Gebre

(Eng.) said for his part that enhancing the capacities of consultants, contractors, and small and medium industries through training is something worth due emphasis. "The main finance sources of the project are government, NGOs, donors, and others."

CMI Director Tamirat Mulu (Eng.) pointed out that analyzing the gaps in consultants, contractors, suppliers, professionals and other stakeholders in the construction sector is the main task of the framework.

Substituting imported construction materials, building the capacity of contractors, and revisiting the construction policy are vital for the implementation of the capacity-building framework.

"This project is of great significance to nurture a skilled labor force in the construction industry, create more jobs, ensure workers' safety, and attract international actors in Ethiopia's construction industry," the director remarked.

News

Associations' plea for more support in fighting Cancer

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

ADDIS ABABA - Mathewos Wondu Ethiopia Cancer Society and Ye Ethiopia Cancer Association said that, Ethiopia has been working hard on preventing and controlling cancer but it should receive more support to ease the burden in this end.

In an exclusive interview with Ye Ethiopia Cancer Association Volunteer General Manager Serkalem Getaneh told *The Ethiopian Herald* that, the association is toiling working to ease

the burden through providing medical treatment and creating awareness among the communities through face to face and media.

“As of now we do have 14 breast cancer patients along with their caregivers in our premises getting medical and psychological services and other expenses. It has a few ratios or it can be said null when compared to the cancer burden of the nation.”

The association is keen to provide services to the cancer patients but it is short of accommodation places, thus, the association is pushing its efforts to access

facilities, she said.

“We are continuing to urge public and private stakeholders to support association efforts.”

Mathewos Wondu Ethiopia Cancer Society operation Director Lemma Ayele for his part said that, the society is planning to further strengthen the awareness creation through various platforms. “We are working with pertinent stakeholders, like private and public education institutions, media houses among others.”

Currently the society is supporting over

360 cancer patients and their caregivers of which 96 childhood, 86 cervical and breast cancer patients. The society covers cost of transport from and to their regions, medicines and diagnostic laboratory services not provided by the Tikur Anbessa Hospital, and food support while the patients are under treatment at the hospital, provide education support to selected childhood cancer patients, provide psychosocial support including transport, food accommodation at our 24 beds Psychosocial Support Center, education to cancer patients and their caregivers in between treatments.

ethio-telecom, ...

Network and Shedii Trading PLC to launch various network and internet based services.

Speaking at the signing event ethio-telecom CEO Frehiwot Tamiru said that, as the telecom believe that it cannot achieve the plan to digitalize Ethiopia without participating partners. So the telecom company has been participating private companies to achieve its goal adding that the telecom has been operating to generate 10 percent of its revenue by participating private companies.

She stressed that, the company has sufficient telecom infrastructures throughout the all parts of the country to enable to do business effectively and efficiently.

She noted that, the telecom should work more on digital skill gap to enhance the skill of stake holders and customers to digitalize Ethiopia.

It was learnt that, the telecom company has signed Memorandum of Understandings(MoUs) to launch Tele Drive, ELFF and Cloud Solutions services in collaboration with the aforementioned companies.

ethio telecom Chief Marketing Officer Said Argaw with on his part explaining the benefit Tele Drive Service said that the service is launched to enable customers to store, access and share phone files anywhere and anytime and it is secured, easy retrieved and easy searching and sharing.

Regarding ELFF plus the officer said that, the service is music streaming service.

The officer said that, the launched services are timeliness services exemplifying Cloud Solutions Service he said that it is the service that is used to expand electronic commerce and trading.



Ethiopia's economy...

economy, she said.

The agricultural sector is boosting the growth of Ethiopia's macro-economy by facilitating export trade. However, the industrial sector faced severe troubles due to internal challenges and external pressures during the last two years, but recorded better performance this fiscal year, Fitsum stated.

As to report, the sector has resisted various challenges during the last six months and registered a growth rate of 8.2 percent. Domestic revenue from tax and non-tax sources is also among the highest performers.

She further stated that, 222 billion Birr of domestic income was obtained from tax and non-tax sources, a growth of 28.9 percent compared to the same period last year.

The export trade generated 1.8 billion

USD in revenue and performed 77 percent compared to the plan. The country was able to attract Foreign Direct Investment worth 1.9 billion USD. During the first six months of the 2022/23 fiscal year, a total of 1.5 million jobs were also created nationwide, she added.

On the occasion, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) said that: “While we continue to be confronted with many challenges, our economy perseveres resiliently and entails we all work collaboratively across all sections of the population to continue strengthening it.”

It is to be recalled that recently the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected Ethiopia's economy to expand by 13.5 percent on USD terms this year.

Ethiopia, Russia...

various activities to resolve conflicts in other parts of the country peacefully and legally. Extensive works are being carried out so that the sound of weapons will not be heard in Ethiopia and permanent peace will be established on a firm foundation. “Significant work is being done to revive the Ethiopian economy and the political situation of the country is showing stability.”

The Speaker has also advised Russia and Ukraine to solve their differences through negotiation and in a peaceful manner.

During the occasion, Ambassador Terekhin handed over the letter of invitation sent from the Russian Federation to the Speaker to participate in the meeting of the Russian-Africa Summit to be held in Moscow in July 2023.

CBE unveils...

platform from the countries such as U.S, Italy, UAE, Sweden, Israel, Canada, UK, South Africa and Saudi Arabia.”

Through this digital money transfer remittance, anyone can send money using Android or IOS mobile by downloading their application from play store, he stated.

The minimum and maximum amounts of remittance that can be sent to the nation is starting from five to 1,000 USD, but this would be improve gradually and other types of money transfer would be also

apply soon, he said.

It was learnt that Ethio Direct remittance service platform is an advanced foreign exchange remittance service as it saves time being fast, convenient and reliable as well encourages the legal sending of money through supporting the circulation of sufficient amount of foreign exchange.

At the event, CBE announced that during the last six months, the bank handled 1.3 trillion Birr through 365 million transactions across all digital options.

Opinion

Despotic tendencies can be controlled only by a democratically elected government

BY GETACHEW MINAS

Leaders with despotic inclination believed in the supremacy of military power. They embraced para-militarism for secret missions against contenders who competed for political power. Despots had a feeling of uneasiness and were determined to eliminate politicians with democratic tendencies. They employed a double-edged approach for both collaboration and confrontation. They achieved effective collaboration with elites that are opportunists. In Ethiopia, elites did not want confrontation with armed gangs of despotic leaders. As opportunists, they avoided armed confrontation, but stood with the winner at the end of the power struggle. Winners were surrounded with power mongers and opportunists who strove to share power in the aftermath of war. Winners took all and left nothing to losers.

Despots armed their soldiers and justified the glory of violence. Aggression, hostility and antagonism were means of maintaining authority by despots. Despots were dictators, autocrats, tyrants, oppressors and tormentors who survived by murdering citizens who questioned their authority. These inhuman tendencies were observed mostly in backward societies that failed to develop politically and economically. Political development implied democratic elections in which parties competed for power. The people decided on who should hold power by casting their votes during elections. But, in countries where despots reigned, citizens had no right to choose their leaders. There was, however, a despotic pretense of holding pseudo elections and show the results to the rest of the world. What was amazing was that leaders of the developed countries congratulated the winners of such an election.

Despotic rulers had a Constitution approved by parliament that was filled by their supporters. These parliamentarians were elected periodically by their constituencies. They conducted campaigns in which they promised to provide everything the electorate needed. The voters seemed to trust those who campaigned for parliamentary seats on their behalf. Results were posted after the election was over. The voters were encouraged by the media to appreciate the process of election and enjoy the results. This gimmick and publicity stunt was repeated at every election season. This process created distress among the educated elite that wanted the reign of true democracy in the country. However, power seeking elites congratulated the parliamentarians who won back their seats. These elites were collaborators with the ruling class that won election by means of fraud. The elite class was well entrenched to control power at all levels.

Once tested, despotic power became enigmatic, the mystery of which became unknown to the electorate. The new despotic class was shrouded with secrecy for the purpose of excluding the contenders from controlling and sharing the resources of the country. The aim of despotic rule was

to steal the “wealth of the nation” by legal means. People paid tax to the state governed by despots. The state revenue was pocketed by the ruling class through the legal process of annual plans and programs for which budget was allocated. The official in charge of the budget process made sure that budget was allocated by economic sectors and by regions. The despotic rulers had access to these channels in which the budget flowed. These despotic rulers and bureaucrats ensured that resources flowed in the direction they connived together. Quarterly and annual budgetary performance reports were reported to the council of ministers and to the parliament which they dominated.

The auditor reported to the parliament the fact that the state budget was abused and misused. It suggested corrective measures as a matter of duty. The list of despotic officials that abused the budget was not released to the public or the taxpayer. It was a state secret that should not be divulged to the public as it would negatively affect the confidence of citizens. The despotic officials that abused public fund would not bother if the public lost trust in them. In the past, some of them had never performed official duties that benefited the Ethiopian people. The evidence for this was the amount of money they had stolen and deposited abroad. This had been difficult for the government to detect and take appropriate measures. Foreign banks had never cooperated with the government to divulge the names of those cliques that had transferred money abroad.

What was very disappointing was the manner in which transfer of money had been conducted. Despotic bureaucrats that had access to huge budget might have used the “black market” for currency conversion. This market operated in secrecy or in the open. When control of the illegal market was lax, they tended to charge lower rates and vice versa. If the control was severe, the illegal operators found it hard to come in contact with those who needed foreign currency. Those importers of goods who found it hard to access legal official foreign exchange sought to contact these operators. It was not only the despotic Ethiopian bureaucrats and importers that dealt with forex, but also those who traveled abroad for medical or official purposes. When some Ethiopians traveled abroad they had the tendency to carry more forex to manage the inflationary situations abroad.

There was an argument about the relationship between inflation and corruption. Low paid civil servants found it hard to pay for basic goods due to inflation. They might, therefore, be tempted to force clients to pay them for their services. They obstructed the flow of work or delayed delivery of services if clients did not cooperate with them. Middle level civil servants might also charge some bribes from the same clients. Depending on the type of services they needed, these clients would be forced to pay every public servant that handled their cases. The network of corrupt bureaucrats seemed to be secretly linked. But, through time

corruption became an open secret in which the “anti-corruption” agents were no longer feared. These agents became redundant in an ocean of corruption where they would also be tempted to become partners. After all, these agents needed some relief from inflation.

Corrupt persons tended to be aggressive with despotic tendencies. They thought everyone knew about their inappropriate practices. They avoided close friends and relatives to hide their illegal operations. This made them a kind of schizophrenic, unable to think, feel and behave clearly. They were extremely evasive, elusive, slippery, ambiguous and vague. Evasion was a cover for illicit acts. They had also a tendency to be nervous and they maltreated their staff for no apparent reasons. Corruptors also tried to manipulate persons whom they had already bribed. They acted as external bosses or supervisors on corrupt bureaucrats. They put them on their list of officials that were to be remunerated periodically. These officials were invited to attend lunch or dinner in ultra modern hotels by “wealthy” corruptors. The dinner party was usually accompanied by expensive drinks and rampant sexism.

There were despotic tendencies reflected in Ethiopia when a corruptor and a corrupted person happened to meet. The corruptor acted despotically and dictatorially while the corrupted individual succumbed to the urge and impulse of the corruptor. One was a tyrant and the other a servant. The former gave order while the latter took it respectfully. Behind such a respect was the power of bribery. The relations between the two must absolutely be secret. If there were a leakage on such relationship, both of them would be exposed to anti-corruption agents. These agents could be merciless to both the corruptor and the corrupted. But, these agents could be susceptible to the influences of corruptors depending on the sensitivity of the case they would handle. These events might be sensitive and difficult to publicize them through the media.

The corruptor might influence the media to hide or undermine the “truth.” The media staff might be open to treatments by corruptors. They might be influenced by corruptors to hide malpractices to both the government and the people of Ethiopia. In recent time, however, the media has tried to divulge corrupt practices in all branches of the government. The audience has been fascinated by “investigative reports” of the media that have focused on corruption of different types and styles. Some were novel and unique to the listeners.

These reports, however, did not provide the audience with the necessary measures to take when faced with corruptors. Could they report the incidence of corruption to the concerned authority with impunity? Did they fear the repercussion of reporting to an authority? Their success depended on the despotic tendencies of the authority.

Corrupt and despotic authorities were obsessed with their own personal security. They wished the reign of “national

insecurity” that overwhelmed their petty individual offenses. When the nation was in turmoil they felt free from the security apparatus. They thought they evaded punishment for crimes of corruption. This might be temporarily true, but not a lasting one. When the nation gained its peace and security it meant the “day of reckoning” was approaching fast. All despotic tendencies might tend to shrink. However, peace and security should not be taken as the “absence” of war or social turmoil as observed in Ethiopia today. The reign of peace and security is manifested only by the absolute freedom of citizens to move, read, write and secure their livelihood. It means that they enjoy their Constitutional rights without limitations. In this case, they totally trust the institutions that enforce law and order. With the reign of peace, they enjoy the fruits of their labor that contributes to the economic development of their country.

Apart from economic performance and success, chronic social issues have to be resolved. In the past, despotic rule, state and religion were intertwined. The ruling party dominated religious affairs for the purpose of gaining the support or submission of followers. Winning their support was not an easy affair for the state. It had to convince religious leaders and adherents of its social policy and program of action. The state talked with the “barrel of the gun” and the religious leaders with their spiritual power. One could kill and the other could hold “burial ceremony.” Before they came at loggerheads with the ruling party, they had to agree to disagree. Fortunately, in Ethiopia there was no evidence of skirmishes between the state and religious organs. They supported peaceful political, economic and social transition of the country. But, inter-faith confrontations are observed in Ethiopia today.

Despotic tendencies are partly controlled only by a democratically elected government. It is not simple to check these tendencies as they have influences at all levels of government. Despotic tendencies may lead to corruption throughout the bureaucracy. It is difficult to wipe out corruption at all levels as it permeates the entire system of government. Where there is corruption, the corruptor and the corrupt persons design a mechanism that conceals or hides their secret operations. These operations may include, among others, the elimination of human lives and properties, if necessary. There may be several situations that lead to corruption that put the Ethiopian state at risk. Corruptors operate in both peace and war situations as long as they provide pecuniary and financial benefits. The varieties of corrupt practices and despotic tendencies render the duties of the Ethiopian government very difficult for the time being.

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

Marvelous opportunities for potential investors!

Ethiopia has since recently opened eyes to well tap natural resources centering utilization of natural resources, including the tangible and intangible heritages it does have though a lot remains to be done.

Recognizing that attracting investment is an invaluable trajectory to tap the optimal benefit out of what the country does own, the government has been exerting utmost effort to attract investors in a variety of spheres as investment knows no boundary.

Being home to abundant as well as untapped natural resources, the country is now in a position to attract potential investors at home and from abroad.

The sector in turn would help the nation create a number of job opportunities for numerous citizens. Not only is investment a viable weapon to attract potential investments thereby initiating them to be committed enough to work with Ethiopia. Not only has investment accelerated the economic development of Ethiopia, but it is also of instrumental in further cementing people-to-people ties among citizens of interested countries.

Clearly, taking the fertile ground and potential areas to invest in Ethiopia into consideration, a number of investors have shown keen interest in investing in Ethiopia. This is not said out of the blue as a handful of concrete incidences can confidently be cited. To mention but few, Ethiopia has now entertaining a peaceful atmosphere since it has solved internal problems especially following the Pretoria and Nairobi accords; the country is highly endowed with pretty virgin natural resources.

Furthermore, the suitable investment climate with which the country is adorned and the intangible cultural heritages it has recently celebrated have assuredly lured investors at home and from abroad. No doubt, tapping what a given nation has owned properly

is unequivocally the right pathway to bring about real change in terms of economy, social and even political compasses.

If the country has shown remarkable economic progress even amid trying scenarios for the last two plus years, it would be easy to image the nourishing outcomes in all aspects when the untouched tourism potential it does have is properly catered.

As the aforementioned evidences and the not yet exhibited ones are viable enabling environments, foreign investors like those of USA, Kazakhstan and others are interested than ever before to invest in Ethiopia.

That is why the country has now aggressively working for promoting investment opportunities and other required conditions for both local and foreign investors.

Ethiopia has also been prioritizing signing bilateral or multilateral investment promotion and protection treaties with interested world countries to further lure many more investors.

Yes, creating an attractive investment climate for investors as well as assisting them in the acquisition of land, utilities, among others, have attracted due attention on the side of the government.

In sum, as the country has well capitalized on cementing partnership with local and foreign investors via properly identifying potential areas to invest and focusing on developing investment strategies targeting at winning new investment lines, Ethiopia would hit the set target of meaningfully exploiting tourism potentials. Since the more emphasis is given to all-rounded investment climate, the greater the inflows of investors and investment, the feedback forwarded from the existing ones could often be the best tool to make a difference. In so doing, Ethiopia can attract a number of investors, indeed!

Opinion

Utilizing fish resources to ascertain food security and economic benefits

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

Both among the academia and an Ethiopian on the street, it has become customary to talk and write about the shortfalls, lacks and inadequacies on food security and the general poverty profile of the country. Thousands of research documents on poverty and food insecurity are on file in the institutes of higher learning and universities across the country.

There were a lot of seminars, campaigns to harness Mother Nature to pull our population from poverty and food insecurity but even today, with all given circumstances including the aftermath of the two years' war in the northern part of the country, we have more than one fifth of the population which are food insecure.

Some reports by international organizations indicate that, as of May 2021, 5.5 million people (61% of the people in the area) are facing high levels of acute food insecurity: 3.1 million people are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and 2.1 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). This dire situation has worsened in 2022 and at the startup of 2023. Moreover, Twenty-seven percent of women in Ethiopia are thin or malnourished and 38 percent of children suffer from stunting in 2022.

Fishing has been practiced across the world from time immemorial right up to the current year. Fish has not only served as major sources of food for millions of the world population but also constitute sources of family and community income. Fish and fishery is an important component of global

food security package. The world enjoys 20% of nutritional protein from fish and fish products. Experts on fishery estimate that Ethiopia has a potential capacity of producing more than 51,000 tons.

Given the growing population of the country with more than 2% of annual growth, the current potential of fishery resources can satisfy some 80% of the national annual demand. Ethiopia has a rich diversity of Ichthyo-fauna in its lakes, rivers and reservoirs. The highest fish species two in Ethiopia has been recorded from Baro basin, followed by Abay, Wabishebele and Omo-Gibe basins.

Ethiopian aquaculture is recognized as an alternative means of achieving food security in particular and poverty reduction in general, and is now considered as an integral part of rural and agricultural development strategies. Ethiopia has an estimated live water body of 7,334 km² of major lakes and reservoirs, and 275 km² of small water bodies, with 7,185 km of rivers within the country. The country has only inland freshwater fisheries.

The inland fishery comprises Rift Valley lakes such as lakes Chamo, Abaya and Ziway), Lake Tana, Lake Hashenge, Baro and Tekeze Rivers. There is fishing in all these water bodies, but commercializing it is mainly concentrated around lakes such as Chamo, Ziway (Southern Ethiopia) and Tana (North-Western Ethiopia). Hence, the existing role of fishery is insignificant in the country's overall economy because the fishery sector in the country is far below its

potential

Approximately 15,000 fishermen are currently employed in this sector signifying that fishing practice in the country is still in its infancy stage with an average production of about 12,300 tons in 2002. Although there is an alarming level of unemployment in the country even in the agriculture sector, the number of farmers engaged in fishery is far less than expected.

There are seasonal variations in the availability of different types of fish, but as there are some differences between the lakes, traders can smooth out supply to some extent. There are 180 different species of fish in Ethiopia and 30 of those are native to the country. For the sake of convenience, the country's water bodies are classified into four systems: lakes, reservoirs, rivers and small water bodies. The lakes and rivers support highly diverse aquatic life, ranging from giant mammals like the African Hippopotamus, to microscopic fauna and flora.

On the first week of November 2022, The FDRE Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, launched a national poultry, dairy, and honey production development program, themed "YeLemat Trufat". This program among other things included vegetable gardening and horticulture development.

The campaign's goals are to increase export earnings, ensure food and nutrition security, and domestically substitute imported products.

Leaders who are to coordinate the campaign in Ethiopia's regions pledged to take over

coordination of the national 'YeLemat Trufat' program at the invitation of Prime Minister Abiy.

This national development program will be implemented for the next 4 years across Ethiopia. The author of this article has wondered why fishery was not accentuated in the program as an alternative source of narrowing down the level of food insecurity in the country. The author thinks that all necessary links need to be established to ensure that the program should be linked up with the mainline agriculture development of the country and the entire food security strategy for the nation. In addition, it is important to involve all concerned stakeholders in the entire program, both at the federal and global level.

Under the backdrop of the issues raised above, the basic question now is why Ethiopia was unable to develop its fishery resources for internal consumption and possible exports. There are several potential challenges that need to be addressed if the nation is serious to use her fish resources.

The government and institutes of higher learning and universities across the country need to conduct wide ranging researches on how to develop food resources in the internal water bodies of the country to enhance food security instead of focusing only on crop and horticulture food sources.

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

Business & Economy

Economic progress and infrastructure firm link

BY MENGESHA AMARE

Thinking of development or growth, whether it is economic, social or even political, without nurtured infrastructure is tantamount to leading a subsistence life devoid of all the unavoidably required basic necessities.

Without any doubt again an effective infrastructure management is of paramount importance in improving national competitiveness. There are of course several factors influencing the economic growth thereby being competitive enough like institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and education, and technological readiness among others.

Having the direct bearing of economic growth and infrastructure development in mind, The Ethiopian Herald had recently a stay with an agro-economist graduated from Haramaya University goes by the name Ashenafi Buta.

He said, “Infrastructure is a socio-economic factor determined principally by the quality of roads, bridges, ports, railroad infrastructure, air transport, electricity supply, and even sewer systems. The presence of institutional traps, which have been witnessed in various sectors, have prevented the development of the national economy.”

As to him, capitalizing on infrastructure development understanding the key factors holding growth and change back would potentially determine economic growth, help come up with a more successful trek in raising income levels and provide policy makers and business leaders with an important tool in the formulation of improved economic policies and institutional reforms.

“As to me,” he said; “Infrastructure spending occurs when a local, state, or federal government spends money to build or repair the physical structures and facilities needed for commerce and society as a whole to thrive. Hence, using infrastructure would undoubtedly enable the nation, I mean Ethiopia in this context, to spur economic growth.”

Apart from boosting the economic performance in a given country, infrastructure outlay creates job opportunities as workers have to be hired to complete myriads of societal-oriented projects. This has in turn would be of instrumental in creating employment and capable of spawning new economic growth. “Conventionally,” Ashenafi said; “Boosting growth has been seen as the best way to create job opportunities and raise living standards. However, governments have looked at this the other way round. By better equipping their citizens to navigate the world of work, countries can most effectively boost their economic growth and development.”

Reinvigorating economic growth and preparing citizens for the future of work are highly intertwined and further consolidated by well-defined and responsibly constructed infrastructural development, the agro economist noted.

In this new era of comprehensive development and change, the government and development partners need to view the



Capitalizing road network helps the nation properly connect producers with consumers



relationship between economic growth and infrastructure progress.

According to Ashenafi, Ethiopia has to improve its infrastructural development, focus on coming up with independent and influential institutions, raise public awareness about good working culture among the society, swell public private partnership in labor-intensive economic sectors that can generate wider benefits for citizens if it is to bring about real change.

The former has to be peculiarly embarked on as it is the fundamental bridge to foster all activities revolving around social, economic, cultural, political and other related facets.

He said, “A thriving economy coupled with a well streamlined infrastructure can provide the country with reputed status and make it a charming spot to live and work.”

He further elucidated that producers and consumers, for instance, the ones who are residing in urban areas and the farming community need suitable infrastructure development. “I can cite credible examples in this regard. I once went to East Hararghe zone and observed plots of land full of appealing teff and maize crops, but the road that connects that specific area to the boulevard was not constructed well and the crops were damaged by heavy rain as they could hardly be harvested and transported

to the area of mowing and deporting in to barn,” he said.

From this simple sample, everyone can easily deduce that infrastructure, be it grand or minor, does have indescribable influence on economic growth and societal livelihood improvement.

He also said that investing in infrastructures would open ways to trek towards real development and meaningful economic growth as all citizenry including the unreached ones.

Expanding infrastructure in every part of the nation shouldn't be left only to the government, development partners and other concerned bodies as it highly requires the combined effort of all they coming up with economic, social and even communicational development and growth.

As to him, Ethiopian economy maintains growth even in times of unprecedented global economic downturn basically penetrating multiple compounded shocks.

Needless to state, he added that reinvigorating infrastructure would be of paramount importance in accelerating sectorial reforms, boosting agriculture, manufacturing, digital economy, mining, tourism, and trade among others.

The country odes have incisive plans that are believed to solve the long heaped and

rolled down economic, social, cultural and even political problems as popper networking would with no doubt bridge the gaps which have been witnessing so far. Networking here doesn't solely refer to oral communication, but to associate localities easily using a range of infrastructure types, Ashenafi underlined.

Road networks in rural parts of the country ranging from gravel sands to those which are built following state of the art technology have to be well expanded in various parts of the nation.

There are dilapidated ones in many rural localities and has attracted due emphasis of the government and other development partners.

Undeniably, the economy of the country has reached a backbreaking point for Ethiopians especially for low income ones, but this needs to be well met putting oneself under the shoes of the destitute.

Frankly speaking, the country is capable of attaining all this if citizens at all corners of the nation work hand in glove with role model administration and leaders, and firmly condemn maladministration and sense of amassing undeserved gain at the expense of fellow citizens.

He further accentuated that the focus of the government on homegrown economy has to be swiftly coupled with infrastructural advancement with a view to making real difference in all aspects.

If the effort geared towards enhancing infrastructure of all sorts is run in full swing and with great sense of belongingness, bringing about change in Ethiopia is within its imminent reach.

Not only has Ethiopia capitalized on expanding and keeping standard a range of infrastructures, but is also expected to forge power and abundant potentials of citizens at home and from abroad.

In so doing, the target the country has long aspired would be hit within the shortest time possible. Here, the role the international community would play is worth appreciating in terms of backing developmental efforts, not dictating the nation where and how to proceed.

In the Sphere of Diplomacy

The power of Diasporas

BY EYUEL KIFLU

Despite its gloomy face, migration is also a blessing in disguise for both migrants and their countries of origin. That is why countries that have large diaspora communities abroad try to integrate the communities into their socioeconomic and political undertaking.

In fact, Diasporas have lofty opportunities to offer to their home countries. From hard currency generation to knowledge and technology transfers, the community can make a big impact in their homeland. With proper policies and strategies, nations can unleash the overall potential of their diaspora population.

Countries like India, China and Nigeria have significantly benefited from their diaspora population. These countries have been leading recipients of remittance for many years. Likewise, Ethiopia is working to make use of its Diaspora community numbering over three million. The country's diaspora community is serving their homeland through trade and investment, remittances, unpaid assistance, and different national interests.

In the last two years, in particular, Ethiopian Diasporas have been at the forefront of countering misinformation and fending off external pressure directed at their homeland.

From staging mass rallies to campaigning on social media, the community has been well-engaged in the political and economic affairs of the country. And, their impact was staggering.

Accordingly, lately, the government recognized over 50 Diasporas for their noble contribution to the national call; they have received recognition from President Sahlewoek Zewde and Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonen.

When Ethiopia was in trouble, the struggle of the diasporas will be written with a golden pen", DPM said in his congratulatory speech.

The aim of recognition is also to show appreciation and motivate others to participate in the overall well-being of their nation. It also serves as a bridge between the country and Diasporas. The recognized individuals were selected based on their active participation in knowledge transfer; image building, public and digital diplomacy, and others.

The Ethiopian Diaspora Service (EDS) Communication Director Wondwosen Girma told *The Ethiopian Herald* that for the past two decades, the country has been closely working with the diaspora community.

The diaspora policy document was drafted to strengthen the relations of the diaspora with the country, he added.

Especially in the past four years of the reform period, attention has been paid to the sector. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed held discussion with the diaspora during his last visit to America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. .

As he said in the discussion, the Diasporas should strengthen their support for the countries, and avoid divisive rhetoric.

The Diasporas are also responding at any time to national calls. The movement of Ethiopian Diasporas during the war season was indispensable. They held different protests to defend the country's interests against internal and external interferences. Also, they played a huge role and opposed the effort to legislate HR 6600 and SS 3199.

According to Wondwosen, the last two years have cemented the ties between the country and its diaspora community. Especially in preventing international intervention during the war, public diplomacy and digital diplomacy played a giant role. They have staged over 70 public rallies over 40 metropolises around the world to stop international intervention.

He added that many messages are addressed in protests, such as that it's mandatory to give Ethiopia the chance to resolve its problems by itself, stop international intervention in interior problems, stop their influence in Ethiopia, and others. They conducted much digital diplomacy on Twitter by arranging different campaigns and letter of opposition. Also, they even have reached out to the American congress to express their opposition.

Moreover, their role in the negotiation process for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam has been inevitable, particularly in bringing back the issue from the UN to AU. As to Wondwosen, the Ethiopian diaspora communities, especially those who have the mandate to elect their leader, making a call, e-sending mail, and appearing in person. They revealed the truth to their chosen representatives and tried to lessen external meddling.

In addition to this, they provided huge amounts of different materials, especially health-related supplies, and finance to the country

According to the director, for the last four years, they have received support estimated to be a total of three point three billion birr in cash and materials.

From this support, the amount of two point two billion birr is for the provision of homes for displeased people to replace, including material support. The remaining support is for GERD and for different humanitarian service companies.

The contribution of the diaspora is not

limited to this. Still, they are striving to protect the country from external interference with the collaboration of those who have same goals. They are opening different offices in different countries and states to strengthen their relationship and to stand together for their countries in any national issues.

Addis Ababa Diaspora Association president Artist Zeleke Gessesse told *The Ethiopian Herald*, the diaspora communities play a significant role in national concerns. Similarly, the association works with the members of the diaspora and others to ensure the interest of the nation at the international level. The #No More movement has been instrumental to defend the country from sanctions.

Currently, the association plans to work many things with different partners such; Government and domestic humanitarian organizations, also financial institutions. Formerly the association is working in partnership with Ethiopian Diaspora Service, he added.

According to Zeleke, It's known that the one method of generating foreign currencies is those sent from the diaspora in different countries. So, the association is now working focused on legal transactions of foreign currencies and also they are trying to encourage the community to deposit their money in local banks. As a result of this, remittance has seen an increment compared to the past years.

Currently, the association has finalized preparation to give full service to the diaspora community around the world. "Anyone can establish contact with us in any national issues even any investment, volunteer service, aid, and other national concerns. Also, they may get information from our website www.aadiaspora.org," he remarked.

Recognizing the Diasporas is important to motivate them as it may increase their support and attract others who don't participate yet. According to EDS, when the Diasporas are willing to invest in their countries, the bureau is eager to serve them as much as possible. Still, now that thousands of Diasporas have received support for investments, many are starting their work. Similarly, they are creating job opportunities for thousands of people.

Likewise, the activities of the diaspora continued after the peace accord. They are participating in the restoration of war-ravaged areas, especially in restoring health centers and primary schools. For this restoration process, they are soliciting money and materials estimated to be over 15 million dollars, according to EDS report. The diaspora community has also served as a bridge to connect with the outside world.

Law & Politics

Strong defense -a deterrent against aggression

BY SOLOMON WASSIHUN

After the hectic transition period of recent years, Ethiopians are striving to establish sustainable peace and stability, which are essential foundations for harnessing their country's potential for prosperity. Ethiopians are working to build pillars for sustainable peace and stability that include robust democratic institutions, a competent judicial system, and wise diplomacy of cooperation and coexistence.

But if the democratization process and the judicial system are to survive and thrive, and Ethiopia is to take its rightful place in the international arena, the country's sovereignty must be secured against the threat of lawless aggressors from inside and outside. The country's defense forces and security apparatus must be capable of effectively thwarting anti-peace activities when they occur. It must even be structured to deter the anti-peace forces from even thinking about the possibility of an attack on Ethiopian soil.

In a geopolitical setting that is becoming increasingly tense and unpredictable, attracting the attention of several players, Ethiopia has to ensure it has excellent defense and security capabilities that continually update to keep up with the latest advancements in military technology.

This argument is not just based on common sense inspired by a paranoid political cliché. It is a hot regional strategic issue that military experts have been mulling over to this day. For example, there was a panel discussion of experts jointly organized by various bodies including the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign affairs. The focal subjects the gathering discussed include among others the East -African geopolitics, the threats, and challenges surrounding the Abbay water politics, Egyptian policies, and strategies towards Ethiopia.

The timeless word of wisdom that dates back to the age of the Roman Empire has a lot of truth in it. "If you want peace, prepare for war," it says. No need to get far back in time to validate the relevance of this word of wisdom in Ethiopia's case. The recent memory of the past four decades of aggression unleashed against Ethiopia testifies to the hard truth behind the saying. All the violations against the nation's sovereignty unleashed by foreign powers during the mentioned period were made on assumption that Ethiopian defense was not in good shape to counterpunch their attacks. During those times, the foreign powers tried to exploit the hectic political situation in Ethiopia as an opportune moment to decimate the country directly or indirectly with the help of mercenaries and traitors.

A very clear instance is the invasion of eastern Ethiopia by the Somalia dictator, Siad Barre in the late 70s, the time when the nation was in a vortex of a bloody political transition from pro-western absolute monarchy to a Marxist regime. Barre sent his troops up to 700 kilometers deep into Ethiopian territory on the assumption that the country's defense capacity was low and disorganized, and its leadership was divided along political parties that were struggling to get the upper hand. Barre's assumption was right. But his blunder was he did not know the resilience of Ethiopians and the fact that no matter how deep differences they may have, Ethiopians unite as one in the event of the attack of a foreign aggressor.

For curious minds, it is easy to notice that similar belligerent acts of aggression have been made very recently by foreign powers and terrorists directly or indirectly to jeopardize Ethiopia's sovereignty, encroach on its borders, and violate its national interests.

In its long history that dates to three millennia, the Ethiopian state has never been involved in an act of unprovoked aggression against its neighboring states or those beyond. Ethiopia has always been sticking with its foreign policy of good neighborliness and cooperation for the common good, Ethiopia's relationship with neighboring countries and those beyond is based on the principle of mutual benefit and bilateral cooperation. All the wars Ethiopia was involved in, which caused a setback in the economic progress the nation made, were instigated by foreign aggressors, and their agents. That was the past and the present. And the future would not be any different.

So based on this assessment, it is quite logical to consider that the Ethiopian government is giving appropriate attention to the continuous improvement and build-up of the Ethiopian defense forces and the modernization of the security apparatus. Since the political reform began four years ago, the nation's defense and security apparatus has successfully conducted major reform and capacity upgrading measures.

Almost three decades after being disbanded, the Ethiopian Navy was reestablished in 2020, and Ethiopia has now a fast-developing naval defense force stationed in neighboring Djibouti and protecting Ethiopia's interest in the Red Sea. The re-emergence of the Ethiopian navy is indicated in the anchor in the new logo of the ENDF that was unveiled in 2021.

The Ethiopian defense forces and the Ethiopian national intelligence agency have recently moved to their newly built headquarters armed with state-of-the-art facilities. Ethiopia is building a defense industry that has already become a head-turner to many African states. The time

when Ethiopia almost solely relied on one exporter nation for its advanced military supplies is long gone. Over the past decade, Ethiopia has diversified its arms imports.

It is to be recalled that last May, the ENDF's military and security elites collage, the Defense War Collage, which is Ethiopia's highest military academic & research institution, graduated its first batch of professionals from various institutions as well as neighboring countries.

Notwithstanding the expected wear and tear it sustains during a devastating two-year war in northern Ethiopia, the Ethiopian defense force has remained well organized and resourced, capable of defending the country's national interests and safeguarding Ethiopia's sovereignty. Ethiopia now has achieved a record level of military might in its history. It has built dependable air power, heavy weapon firepower, and maintenance capabilities in scale and sophistication like never before. ENDF has the largest ever number of active-duty Military Personnel, and field commanders with practically proven combat skills.

Since its rise to power in 2018, the reformist government's top priority agenda next to the democratization process has been the revitalization of Ethiopia's defense power as a deterrent and coercive force against any sources of threat to the country's sovereignty and national security.

A senior army field commander of the ENDF, Lt. General Zewdu Belay recently said, "We have built a defense power, that can competently execute whatever mission it is assigned anywhere under any circumstances."

Similarly Head of the Training Main Department with the Ethiopian National Defense Forces Lt. General Yimer Mekonnen said.: "For the honor and sovereignty of Ethiopia, an army with competent leadership and superior fighting skills and capabilities have been built up."

A few days ago, the Ethiopian Premier, after reviewing the joint military exercise of ENDF's Air Force and the mechanized division of the army, told members of ENDF that: "Your continuous improvement and strength means a lot in guaranteeing Ethiopia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It also lays the foundation for conditions to expedite the implementation of our development plans. The defense power we built will serve as Ethiopia's guarantor and the bridge for economic development. The deterrent power we are building aims at preempting war before it starts, and neutralizing aggression with coordinated utilization of air force and heavy weaponry with minimal involvement of military personnel."

The timeless word of wisdom that dates back to the age of the Roman Empire has a lot of truth in it. "If you want peace, prepare for war," it says. No need to get far back in time to validate the relevance of this word of wisdom in Ethiopia's case. The recent memory of the past four decades of aggression unleashed against Ethiopia testifies to the hard truth behind the saying

Society

Coordination to rehabilitate war affected areas

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

The conflict in the northern part of the country has displaced several people from their village, damaged infrastructures and caused visible and invisible scars on the mind of people; especially, those living in the war-torn areas and witnessed the devastating impacts of the war.

However, following the peace agreement signed between the government and TPLF to end the war, extensive rehabilitating and restoring activities are ongoing.

The Ethiopian Government, joining hands with pertinent stakeholders, is working persistently to restore war-scarred areas and support people who were affected by the war. As a result, since the agreement was signed, massive activities have been carried out and remarkable achievements witnessed.

Hand in hand providing humanitarian assistance, the activities of restoring infrastructures and public facilities; resuming basic services, as well as the construction and rehabilitation works of centers to displaced people are carried out.

As part of these activities, the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs has recently repaired and inaugurated a temporary rehabilitation center in Afar, Semera town, one of the areas affected by the conflicts.

The rehabilitation center, which once had been providing services in Afar- Semera Town- is now repaired by government's budget and inaugurated recently in the



presence of senior government officials, as Women and Social Affairs Ministry stated.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Women and Social Affairs, Women and Children Sector State Minister, Alemitu Umod, said that the challenges which the nation faced should be alleviated by the coordinated efforts of the government and non-government organizations, individual investors and partners.

According to the State Minister, the rehabilitation center was once used as a temporary rehabilitation midpoint for people displaced from various areas due to the conflict. However, because it got damaged, it is repaired by the financial support gained from the government. It will continue providing temporary services to those communities affected by the war, she reiterated.

Mentioning that the center is much helpful to provide the required services for conflict affected women and children in the State, the State Minister urged international partners to exert similar efforts to help victims who have experienced the undesirable effects of the war in northern parts of the country

Afar State's Women and Social Affairs Bureau Head Aisha Yasin on her part said that, while the construction activity of the rehabilitation center was finalized and readied to be inaugurated, the war broke out; and it had been used to provide service to those brothers and sisters who came from Tigray State. For that reason, it could not provide the expected services. However, due to the support from the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, the Center is repaired and is now providing service.

Expressing her heartfelt gratitude to the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs for restoring the Center, Aisha urged stakeholders and concerned bodies to extend their hands and support the Center in the future.

On the consultative forum held on the occasion, a study that focuses on areas that were affected by the war, and activities that carried out so far, especially to support women, as well as challenges and ways to overcome and supports that are needed to help victims were presented.

At the forum, the importance of a strong coalition and joint plan to help the Center play a substantial role and enable it to provide appropriate services through equipping it with the necessary inputs and strengthening it was highlighted.

It was also said that in order for the center to function properly, a technical committee that embraces organizations especially working focusing on the prevention and response to violence against women should be organized and, a coordinated plan should be prepared.

Stakeholders have also reached a mutual agreement on the event stating that they are expected to work in coordination to avoid duplication of works.

In her conclusion remark, Alemitu Umod pointed out that the damages and the works being carried out are not still proportional. In this regard, there is a need for joint efforts by all partners and it is the right time for everyone to discharge responsibilities.



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Grade twelve national exam result indication

BY DIRRIBA TESHOME

The Ministry of Education announced over the weekend that 29,909 students scored more than 50 percent among the 896,520 students who sat for the 12th grade national exam in the 2014 E.C school year. The report and main findings of the results were also released.

Education Minister Professor Birhanu Nega mentioned that the examination was different from the previous ones in that the efforts of all concerned parties made it successful. "The exam was completed without any cheating and the results released now include only those students who did not cheat on the exam excluding the cheaters caught by the invigilators."

He explained that a total of 985,384 students were registered for the exam, of which 896,520 were tested and their results have been recorded. Out of this, 77,098 students did not sit for the exam on their own reasons and 20,170 were students who attended the exam but prevented from the exam due to various rule violations and left the exam.

The national average score of the overall



Professor Birhanu Nega

exam results is 29.5 percent.

In the statement, the highest result recorded at the national level out of 700 was 666 in natural science while 524 was the registered highest result out of 600 in social science.

It was also noted in the statement that there are 263 students who scored 600 and above in natural science. It was also mentioned that

there are 10 students who have scored 500 and above in social science.

"Of the students who sat for the exam, the number of students who scored more than 50 percent is 29 thousand 909, which is 3.3 percent of the total number of candidates," he explained adding that at the regional level, Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa City Administration

and Harari have achieved better results.

Hundred percent of students from seven schools were able to pass uniquely nationwide.

Similarly, he noted that the students who did not get entry results will join universities through the remedial program and the recruitment criteria based on the capacities of the universities. They will be given supports on the subjects they failed and if they get better results, they will join the universities.

By the same token, the minister said that this test result is a manifestation of many problems that the nation has been through for years and indicates the level of the real education system that has been covered up. "Including the government, the entire educational community is responsible for this failure. And in order to change this result, it is planned to prepare a new strategy to change the entire national education system."

At last, he publicized that students who scored less than 50 percent will not join the university, but taking the universities' acceptance capacity into account more students will be accepted based on their results to score the results that will enable them to enter a university for the next year.

International News

ChatGPT: Challenges and opportunities for financial services

It's been decades since algorithmic trading transformed Wall Street with its high-frequency trading, and years since the financial services industry began to integrate artificial intelligence in areas such as fraud detection, lending decisions and robo-advisory services. Yet the recent explosion of generative AI tools like ChatGPT – providing human-like text on seemingly any subject and any style so successfully it easily conquers the vaunted Turing Test – has opened the floodgates of possibilities.

The advent of such a powerful language processor like ChatGPT – open source and available for public use – threatens to upend various parts of the financial services industry, spanning beyond areas such as chat bots and robo-advisors to even the workforce needed in something as skilled as coding.

As artificial intelligence reaches a crucial tipping point – and AI bias lingers – whether the proper private and public controls are put in place ahead of the technology's dizzying progress becomes even more urgent yet challenging.

In a recent Nvidia survey, 78 percent of financial services companies said they use at least one kind of artificial intelligence tool.

The benefits have been clear: over 30 percent of those surveyed said AI increased annual revenues by more than 10 percent while over a quarter saw AI reduce costs by more than 10 percent.

In broad strokes, AI is employed in financial services in four categories:

1. Fraud detection and compliance
2. Credit risk analysis
3. Chatbots and robo-advisers
4. Algorithmic trading

Even before ChatGPT entered the public consciousness, artificial intelligence had already transformed much of what financial services do.

Across the board, investment in AI grew tremendously in financial services this past year; though none of the use cases surveyed by Nvidia in 2021 saw more than 14 percent industry penetration.

In 2022, nine of the 13 use cases tracked saw investment from more than 15 percent of the industry.

Investing in AI is by now essentially a requisite to stay alive in financial services, especially as operational efficiency becomes more crucial.

But while even the laggards have jumped in on the AI revolution, it might be most appropriate to frame this ubiquity as one marked by some leaders surrounded by many who only possess a basic understanding of how their AI really functions.

"In surveys, banks will say, 'Oh, yeah, we do use AI to some degree.' But when they're asked, 'how well do you understand it?'... there's not that same degree of response. It's one thing to apply it, but it's another thing entirely to go ahead and blindly apply a one-size-fits-all algorithm," said Bonnie Buchanan, director of Sustainable and Explainable Fintech Centre at the Surrey Business School.

According to the Nvidia survey, among the

features that saw the biggest jump in investment in 2022 was conversational AI.

Truly advanced conversational AI electrifies the public precisely because it ventures into cognitive fields so unlike the confined and programmed capabilities machines have until now been limited to.

ChatGPT's mastery of language processing in styles ranging from 2nd grader to erudite scholar to even coding languages signal to experts like Buchanan not simply an acceleration of what's come before, but a true alteration of the course we've been on.

In ChatGPT's own words, the immediately apparent benefits to financial services will be in areas such as automating customer service tasks and generating insights and analysis for banks to make better-informed decisions while helping to detect fraud.

Already, ChatGPT can do simple coding and debugging, with some estimating it will only take two to three more years for it to be able to perform actual banking coding.

Answering routing questions or queries will now be serviced by chatbots, further freeing up space for human customer service agents to address more complex queries. This should also carry over to coding duties, which would free up time for coders to engage in higher-level pursuits.

How this impacts the workforce in these sectors is unclear. It could be another false alarm, or a true paradigm shift.

Alberto Rossi, a professor of AI at Georgetown University whose research focuses on robo-advisors, notes how the same fears were evoked when robo-advisors first emerged. These concerns proved unfounded as the democratisation of financial advice dramatically expanded the market so that more financial advisors were needed, though to provide a more human touch to complement AI.

This next, potentially dramatic step in democratisation might auger another expansion along these same lines, says Rossi. Or it could manage to replace at least to some degree the domains of financial customer service previously best requiring the human touch.

At minimum, however, it is likely that older demographics – which possess a disproportionate amount of wealth – will remain most comfortable with the human touch for the next decade or two.

Considering the massive layoffs underway in swaths of fintech, however, ChatGPT's capabilities might turbocharge such trends.

The impact such a powerful language processor like ChatGPT should not be underestimated.

On the business end, startups lacking in resources or data of scale suddenly have at their offering an advanced machine capable of analysis and communication in almost any style, any format, and for a wide variety of purposes.

The advantage for Big Techs would subsequently lie squarely in their vast storage of data – an advantage that might also be at least minimised if the now-emerging synthetic data sector proves able in narrowing information gaps, conjectures Buchanan.

To be fair, Big Techs will also likely be seeing a massive jump in automated communication abilities in areas like customer service.

Although it's too early to know how the titan/startup, legacy/challenger dynamics will be impacted, the consumer will benefit either way.

Rossi believes it can prove vital in alleviating the shortcomings in financial literacy that plague the industry.

"The ones that are going to benefit the most are going to be the end consumers that right now are cut off from services because they don't have the kind of resources to pay for them. Financial advice [regarding] what kind of credit cards to use, how much to spend, how much to put aside every month, can be done fully in an automated way," said Rossi.

The rapid pace of AI's progress naturally comes with uncertainty and more issues to emerge.

AI tools assisting the financial decision-making for the disadvantaged can be a boon for the financially illiterate while also proving a crutch; how much worse are people at navigating in the world of Google Maps than before?

The possibilities for unprecedented personalisation can also nudge robo-advisors and related tools further into paternalistic directions that can lead to strangely rational economic outcomes compared to what we've come to expect from homo sapiens of the 21st century, if at the cost of free will or direct consent.

Trying to prevent the dystopian variations of what comes next in AI invariably comes with implementing the proper design and regulation.

In the US, the second draft of the National Institute of Standards and Technology's AI Risk Management Framework (RMF) provides the most recent conceptual framework for "mapping", "measuring", "managing" and governing AI systems.

The RMF views any trustworthy AI as providing several characteristics, all of which in an accountable and transparent manner:

1. Valid and reliable
2. Safe
3. Bias is managed
4. Secure and resilient
5. Explainable and interpretable
6. Privacy-enhanced

Measuring these factors requires testing, evaluation, verification, and validation in each of the stages.

Yet artificial intelligence provides novel issues for regulators that aren't always easy to solve. Consider the area in financial services that's elicited the most public discussion in these regards – preventing algorithmic bias in use cases such as automated lending decisions.

As Katja Langenbucher, professor of law at Goethe University in Frankfurt, describes in a recent paper, anti-discrimination law traditionally relied on chains of causation that AI-powered origination models challenge.

While in the past the variables that went into a person's credit score were transparent, that isn't the case in today's world of increasingly sophisticated AI credit origination models.

AI models powered by previous data sets mean that, in the words of Langenbucher, "yesterday's world shapes today's predictions", giving rise to algorithmic bias that's difficult to eliminate without throwing out the data sets altogether.

Yet today, AI-driven models have already expanded to incorporate variables far beyond what a normal human would consider relevant to the model – variables that nonetheless can serve as proxies to discriminate against certain groups in ways that are hard to discern.

The "proxy variables" included in AI models are (a) no longer crafted by humans in a directly discriminatory manner, and (b) so numerous that simply taking one "variable" out of the mix won't really make a difference in automated decisions.

This has led some economists to conclude that we are reaching a situation where prohibiting certain variables in automated lending will prove ineffective; AI will have become too sophisticated for regulators to pin down what's happening within the black box algorithm.

Nonetheless, the first laws regulating AI are coming into shape. What is setting up to be the standard bearer in this respect is the EU's proposed AI Act, which seeks to treat AI models as products requiring regulation, providing a risk-based approach.

Models that determine access to financial resources – like underwriting and scoring models – are placed in the high-risk category, which requires compliance in data governance, technical documentation and record-keeping, transparency, human oversight and checks on robustness, accuracy and cybersecurity.

The European Fintech Association came out in October to support the AI Act, though it expressed worries of classifying credit assessment models as high-risk. Requiring such systems to be explainable and interpretable likewise will limit the robustness and accuracy, fintechs fear.

Language has forged the building blocks of society until now: its laws, its culture, its norms, its commerce, and its economy. For the first time in our species' existence, we have a glimpse of what it may look like when not only humans possess such capabilities with the dexterity and recall as we do – or even better.

Whether humans can both cultivate and harness such machine power for the betterment of humanity is a question that of course extends far beyond the financial services domain. But let us remember how finance and economics were once manmade creations at the dawn of society, too, with its imperfections mirroring the characteristics of its creator and steward. Experiencing growth through turbulence, transformation through decay, and improvement following setback are hallmarks of financial history.

As we hand greater reins of that stewardship to AI models of our own creation, these rules and patterns may stay the same – or what emerges may be something entirely unexpected and new. What is certain is that a new age is upon us.

Source: *The EastAfrican*

Planet Earth

Green legacy's role in raising awareness on forest protection

BY FIKADU BELAY

Ethiopia is one of the earliest settled places on the earth. Various kingdoms rise up in the area over time, and every regime that rules a mysterious country has their own doctrine regarded on the glorification and for magnificent of peoples, but on the issue of environmental protection, this has not varied in this sense in Ethiopia, where planting trees and protecting in every site from peripheral up to the center is a habitual action.

As a country with various indigenous rose species Ethiopia flaunts a unique array of flora inhabitants, thousands of species of trees, shrubs, and lianas, of which are endemic to those extraordinary plants. The landscape has its share of equivalent natural support. There are unwritten rules that govern people's environmental treatment as most of the societies treat forest as tenderly as their children.

The current government has a great responsibility to continue and leave a remarkable legacy of planting trees. According to the Ethiopian forestry development data in the Green Legacy Project, it is known that about 25 billion saplings have been planted in the last four years of which 80 percent have sprouted.

Among the saplings planted in the last four years, 52 percent are for agroforestry, 42 percent are for forestry and the remaining 6 percent are ornamental saplings, said Tadesse



Belay, Communication Director of Ethiopian Forestry Development.

Tadesse said that, all the saplings have done their part by reducing problems such as land degradation, deforestation and depletion of water bodies, animal migration and other such problems.

In the past years, the Green Legacy program has increased soil fertility, strengthened economic activity in the agricultural sector and played an important role in ecology by increasing forest development, by protecting the environment and reducing the high level of carbon dioxide that is constantly released.

And also, this activity has highlighted the national and international importance of forestry and as an example of this it has enabled us to remain on the frontlines of the

international media.

In 2016, India achieved an earth-friendly record. The country planted 50 million trees in one day. In 2019, Ethiopia decided to break the record. They gathered lots of trees and the people to plant them. The latter included thousands of Ethiopian volunteers and staff from foreign embassies, the United Nations, and the African Union who participated in these holy projects.

He stated that, this "green legacy" program has done a great job of creating awareness in forestry by planting new saplings and protecting and maintaining the previous forest cover.

He said that, apart from planting flower saplings and other ornamental saplings, people have been doing it as a daily activity by planting and taking care of other big trees of their own voluntarily.

The United Nations Development Program in ten African countries is working to make it an African pioneer by expanding and promoting Ethiopia's experience in the Green Legacy program.

In this case, the government also leads with novel projects that fight modern, global problems such as deforestation and water shortages.

Tadesse pointed out that by correcting the weaknesses that existed in the past years and developing the strengths of good practices, they will plant saplings that can contribute to the agro-forestry and economic sectors in addition to the ecological benefits of trees.

Tadesse underlined that plant product that can generate foreign exchange for industrial inputs should be planted on a large scale. This year, 2.5 billion trees will be planted under the next green legacy project. From this 1 billion, there will be agro-forestry content and another 1.5 billion will be able to create favorable conditions for the cultivation of mixed agricultural crops and protect soil fertility.

He also added that, his institution has plans to encourage the plantation of fruit trees that are used as food for humans and animals, combined with other agribusiness products that can generate high income. For this reason, explanations have been given to the federal government and all states to implement this properly, he said.



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Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone: New foundation of Ethiopia's economy

BY DIRRIBA TESHOME

Industrial Parks Development Corporation (IPDC) has been working to make Ethiopia's industry-led economy a reality for the past eight years based on the responsibilities and duties given to it by law. At this point in time, it is putting into operation the Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone by doing the preparatory work that will allow it to be operational.

Recently, the IPDC has signed a memorandum of understanding with foreign and local investors who have shown interest in producing various products in the Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone. On the signing ceremony, IPDC CEO Aklilu Tadesse, said that one of the organizations that signed a joint agreement is foreign direct investment.

The CEO stated that, the companies are to assemble trucks, generators, two- and three-legged electric vehicles, various engineering and construction materials, as well as motor oil.

He said that, the companies supply the products they produce to the foreign and domestic markets in a wide range and quality and the corporation is working with the relevant parties to provide one stop service centers in sheds and lands with completed infrastructure.

Many activities have been done to increase the

participation of financial institutions in the Free Trade Zone. In particular, a joint agreement was signed with the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, Oromia Cooperative Bank, Dashen Bank and Enat Bank, the CEO listed adding: "The financial institutions will play their part by facilitating the necessary financial services to the sector by entering and working in the Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone."

Several works have been done to put the Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone into operation at its full potential. And IPDC has been carrying out many activities in the free trade zone and especially, besides the manufacturing, it has been working to make the business a center for logistics activities.

He also explained: "As the Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone is a new industry for our country, many policy reforms including tariff guidelines have been made by scaling experiences from knowledgeable countries and considering the actual situation of Ethiopia."

Similarly, Aklilu stated that, one of the ways to be competitive with the free trade zones of other countries is providing the nation with foreign exchange and improving issues related to the use of foreign currency. "For this, the government has been making decisions at every level and it shows the attention given to the sector. Many local and foreign investors



have come to work because the government has created favorable conditions for them to be engaged in the sector."

The first phase of Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone is located on 150 hectares of land. And four thousand hectares of developed and undeveloped land has been prepared for the expansion of the zone, he elucidated.

Like other industrial parks, the Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone was prepared for the manufacturing sector. The government has turned the Dire Dawa Industrial Park into a free trade zone, to demonstrate its desire to improve business activities in the country and develop logistics capacity.

For this reason, Dire Dawa's proximity to the port and the business activities in the area have developed long-term experience and knowledge, as well as the fact that there is a community group with national unity, Dire Dawa has made it the ideal choice for the free trade zone, he said.

At this time when the Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone has come into operation, many local and foreign investors are entering the business due to their desire to enter the business. Companies that have completed their preparation and are entering production stage will spend 110,000,000 USD or six billion Birr. And in the first round, more than 2500 jobs will be created for citizens, he specified.

Apart from the foreign currency to be generated by the free trade zone, it also plays a major role in avoiding the foreign currency spent by the country to import, especially in the production of proxy products, he lasted it.

This first free trade zone was built in the city administration of the Desert Queen Dire Dawa and inaugurated in August 2022 in the presence of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) to increase the flow of foreign investment and to speed up the national economic growth of Ethiopia.

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