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Ethiopia becomes wheat exporter

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA – Having commenced officially wheat exports on Sunday, the government of Ethiopia announced that the country is ready to export over 32 million quintals of wheat in this year.

The exports are expected to boost the

country's foreign currency earnings and foster regional integration, according to high-ranking government officials.

During the launching event, a high-ranking government delegation led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (Ph.D.) presided over the wheat plantation in the Bale Zone of the Oromia State, which is part of the

nationwide summer irrigation program.

Speaking at the occasion, Trade and Regional Integration Minister Gebremeskel Challa said that preparation has been finalized to export the stated amount of wheat to the global market through cooperative unions,

See Ethiopia becomes ... page 3

Second-phase 'Dine for Nation' to raise 10 bln Birr

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA - A committee led by Addis Ababa Mayor planned to collect 10 billion Birr from the second phase of 'Dine for Nation' project from the private sector, the Mayor Office said, adding 1.2 billion Birr has so far been pledged.

Headed by Addis Ababa Mayor

Adanech Abebe, the phase two fundraising program planned to collect 10 billion Birr from local investors to build large national projects in various areas, Office's Communication Department Head Adonias Woldearegay told The Ethiopia Herald.

The head further stated the project, which aims to develop the potential natural resource in areas that have not been well

accessed and the media does not know about, plans to collect the stated sum from 70 private investors.

Noting the private sector's indispensable role in Ethiopia's development, Adonias highlighted that their participation in the second phase of the 'Dine for Nation'

See Second-phase,... page 3

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Ethiopia's cereal, oilseeds exports see promising progress: Association

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA - The export performance of cereal and oilseeds has shown tremendous progress recently following the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), so said Ethiopian Cereals and Oilseeds Processing and Exporters Association.

See Ethiopia's cereals,... page 3

Addis hotels welcoming AU guests

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA - The Addis Ababa Hotel Owners Association said hotels in the metropolis have started receiving participants of the 36th African Union Summit and are ready to build the image of the country through professional service.

See Addis Hotels ... page 3



News



State distributing modern beehives to boost honey production

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA - Oromia Agriculture and Natural Resource Bureau stated that it has distributed 300,000 modern beehives to the farmers in the state to boost apiculture productivity in Ethiopia.

A beekeeping development initiative is already launched in the state with help of non-governmental organization that would help to develop productivity of honey in the nation.

The bureau Silkworm and Honey production Development Expert Tekalign Mitiku told The Ethiopian Herald that they are doing their best by providing training and creating awareness for those who want to work in such areas to alter it.

“In the state, the activity of silkworm and honey production is improving and creating great jobs for many youths,” he said.

Some 80,000 tons of honey has been produced a year, and the office is replacing the traditional beehives by modern beehives to make the sector more productive, he added.

The office is working in cooperation with non-governmental organization named International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe) with specifically MOYESH program and 33,000 youths are engaging in honey and silkworm production through MOYESH program in five zones and it is changing the previous scenario, he added.

“Youths are doing other jobs at the same time (sideline work of farm) thereby improving their livelihood and even becoming food secure. Farmers sell their honey product in annual organized festival of the farm products and share experiences, he said.

Standby force member countries to further consolidate contribution

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA - Member countries of the East African Standby Force (EASF) have been urged to further enhance contributions in terms of financial, logistics, human capital and time thereby successfully realizing its mission, stated Field Marshal.

Speaking at an EASF’s member states’ General Chiefs and policy makers meeting organized to discuss a range of East African issues yesterday in Addis Ababa, Chief of the General Staff of the Ethiopian National Army, Field Marshal Birhanu Jula said : “As terrorism, unconstitutional government changes, cross-border crimes and others have been occurring now and then in our continent, we are expected to build our capacity well.

He said: “The meeting would help conceptualize research- based and policy reforms in enhancing and improving the capacity and capabilities of the institution.”

As to the field Marshal, the meeting is also aiming at delivering messages on EASF’s action-based proposal, budget and other significant documents.



EASF Director Brigadier General Getachew Shiferaw elucidated that during the meeting, various important documents of the organization’s overall structure and operational strategies have been dealt with.

Meeting guest of honor, Speaker of the House of Federation Agegnehu Teshager

said that : “ Since there are lots of problems stirring in our continent, we have to work cooperatively to eliminate the all-rounded problems across the continent.”

The meeting would enable countries well hit EASF’s mission, the Ministry of Defense disclosed.

U.S. donates lab equipment worth 300,000 USD

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA – The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) donated laboratory equipment worth of 300,000USD (over 16 million Birr) to 28 medical and health science colleges in Ethiopia.

According to the Press Release issued for The Ethiopian Herald, the donation which was provided through USAID’s Health Workforce Improvement Program activity was made as per to the request of the afore-said medical and health sciences colleges in higher education institutions from across Ethiopia.

The donated clinical items(over 650), including autoclaves, microscopes, intubation kits, resuscitation machines, and other specialized laboratory equipment, are said to ensure nation’s doctors, nurses, midwives, and other health professionals have the tools and skills they need to learn their lifesaving trade.

The handover ceremony included demonstrations of how existing students and staff have used lab equipment previously donated by USAID’s Human Resources for Health Project (2012-2019), it was stated.



This long-term investment in Ethiopian health professionals is part of the American people’s continuing support for the people of Ethiopia. An estimated 40,000 students currently enrolled in Ethiopia’s nationwide Health Sciences Education Program will also be benefitted from these valuable medical learning tools, as to the PR.

The donation of this laboratory equipment was celebrated at an event held at Menelik II Health Science College in Addis Ababa and was attended by Minister of

Health, LiaTadesse(MD), Director-General for Higher Education Academic Affairs EbaMijena(MD), and USAID/Ethiopia’s Health Office Director, Jonathan Ross.

Deans and management professionals from medical colleges and other higher education institutions in Ethiopia also took part at the handing over ceremony.

In 2022 alone, USAID provided more than 1.8 billion USD in development and humanitarian aid to Ethiopia, it was learnt.

News

Bank calls on citizens to boost blood donation

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA- The Ethiopian Blood and Tissue Bank Service (EBTBS) has urged the society to widely donate blood as it has faced blood scarcity as a result of people's busy state following a series of festivals.

EBTBS Deputy Director HabtamuTaye told *The Ethiopia Herald* that the number of voluntary blood donors is getting minimal due to the overlapping of public festivals, schools semester break and fasting season.

He called on volunteers to donate blood so as to meet blood shortages across the country. The culture of donating blood among the society has improved over time, but we still have a lot of work to do.

"The standard set by the World Health Organization(WHO) requires that 1 percent of the country's population should be blood donor. In this sense, we have a lot of work to do to meet the country's blood demand," he noted.

As to him, 10 percent of the total blood



donors should be regular blood donors in order to have a reliable blood reserve. This means that a blood donor should donate blood regularly every 3 months. Currently, the permanent donor the bank has is 2, 3 percent.

As to Habtamu, EBTBS has called on voluntary blood donors to continue donating this lifesaving fluid in all blood banks across the country. Besides, lack of blood supply can be addressed through volunteers 'continuous donation and their commitment to do so.

"In Addis Ababa we are always collecting blood in an organized way. Currently, there are 11 temporary blood collection sites. Awareness raising is being done using various media to overcome the existing shortages; and we are working with 147 high schools, 147 religious institutions in a bid to increase number of volunteer blood donors."

In the first half of the budget year, 167, 850 units of blood were collected and distributed to medical institutions nationwide, it was learnt.

Addis hotels...

Association President Aster Solomon told local media that the hotels have made the necessary preparations to provide seamless services to guests who are coming to Addis Ababa for the continental summit.

She noted that a committee led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued guidelines on how the hotels should treat the guests coming for the summit. Accordingly, the hotels have completed the necessary arrangements to accommodate guests and render the uninterrupted provision of water, electricity, telecommunication, and other amenities.

"We are working in coordination with the relevant stakeholders including police and other law enforcement agencies so that the guests staying here are secured and comfortable. The security apparatus assured us that our guests are protected at all times."

Addis hotels have made the necessary preparations concerning the Covid-19 precautionary guidelines. Also, short phone numbers have been prepared to quickly inform the concerned parties in case of any problems related to security and emergencies, Aster remarked.

It is to be recalled that Addis Ababa hotels expressed readiness to provide world-class services to the AU guests and vowed to make the latter's stay memorable.

Accordingly, Ethiopian Skylight Hotel Sells Manager Ayehu Gesese told *The Ethiopian Herald* that the hotel, which boasts over 1,000 rooms, is capable of providing world-class services that best fit the needs of high-ranking AU dignitaries.

By the same token, Assistant Director of Sells at Hilton Addis Ababa Hotel Daniel Gelaw expressed readiness to showcase their longstanding experience in the hospitality industry to the AU delegates.

While the 42nd Ordinary Session of the Executive Council (Ministerial Session) will be held from February 15-16, the 36th Ordinary Session of the African Union Summit (Heads of States and Government session) will take place from 18 to 19 February in Addis Ababa.

Ethiopia's cereal,...

In an interview with the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Association's Deputy President Adawo Abdi noted that though the unrest in the country used to have its own negative impact, the cereal and oilseeds export performance has shown progress since the peace deal.

Noting that chickpeas, sesame and French beans, among others are the main export items, the Deputy President mentioned that the association has been facing challenges with regard to production, harvesting and transportation.

He added that the export has been highly affected to the extent that customers had canceled their requests. However, following the CoHA, the export performance is getting back on the track.

Moreover, as the issue with the production as well as harvesting has also been resolved, exports of cereal and oilseeds have shown promising result. To exemplify, over 24,000 metric tons of cereal and oilseeds were exported to the international market last December, he said.

The association is closely working with the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, different associations and exporters to better facilitate the export performance, as to him.

"In addition to the major export destinations of cereal and oilseeds such as China, Turkey, Dubai, the association is exerting utmost effort to expand its destination across the world. To this effect, participating in international expos and provision of several capacity building trainings are among others," he underlined.

The transport and logistics cost, which is said to be expensive, has affected association's competitiveness in the global market as it has pressurized the products to become costly despite huge efforts made to address the aforementioned difficulties, he added.

Underscoring the need to work in collaborating with the government, stakeholders as well as exporters, he pointed out the challenging aspects product exportation has been facing.

He said :“Priority must be given to address all the hurdles related to the sector with a view to promoting it, revising incentive packages, and providing investors with clear map to help them reshuffle the inappropriate intention they have developed.”



Second-phase...

will have paramount importance to attract investment and stimulate the overall economy. Cognizant of the project's wide-reaching importance, the private sector is expected to make active engagement for its success."

International experiences showcase that the private sector has a significant contribution to the development of any state. In Ethiopia, the participation of the private sector in

national development has not reached the desired level and this project is one of the instruments to enhance their contribution to the overall economy, he emphasized.

The phase two fundraising program of 'Dine for Nation' is part of the national project initiated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (Ph.D.) in a bid to develop eco-friendly tourist destinations across the country.

Ethiopia becomes...

Ethiopian Trading Business Corporation, and the private sector. The exported wheat is a surplus from domestic consumption.

Boosting wheat export will have a significant impact on enhancing regional integration and also curbing illegal smuggling of the commodity. Apart from regional integration, export is instrumental in improving the smallholder farmer's income and helping to change their livelihoods, Gebremesekel added.

For Finance Minister Ahmed Shide, the production of wheat in Oromia, Amhara, Somali, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' State, and other areas are going well and will have great significance in bolstering the export revenue.

In his remark at the launching ceremony, Prime Minister Abiy said: "We have fulfilled what we promised to our people, and today we have made Ethiopia's wheat export dream a reality. It is testimony that we dream big; say what we dream; do what we say, work day and night, and show what we have done after

completion."

According to the Ethiopian Agricultural Research Institute (EARI), the summer wheat irrigation program covered over 1.3 million hectares of land in the current year. The country is expecting 52 million quintals of yield from the harvest.

Institute's Wheat Irrigation Project Coordinator Daniel Muleta (Ph.D.) told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the government has heavily invested in the program to ease Ethiopia's dependence on rain-fed agriculture and ensure food sufficiency. Accordingly, starting in October 2022, the country has covered 1.3 million hectares of land with wheat with a view of obtaining 52 million quintals.

It is to be recalled that Djibouti's Agriculture, Water, Fisheries, Livestock, and Marine Resources Minister Mohammed Ahmed Awaleh expressed his country's desire to become the first destination of Ethiopia's wheat export.

Opinion

concerted efforts to strengthen cooperation

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

The Horn of Africa is located in the very strategic area where flanked by red sea, the street of Bab el Mendeb which is a root to connect Mediterranean Sea with Asia and Indian Ocean. As it is also the place where Nile River and its tributaries originate raise the strategic importance of the area. According to recent data, the region is the inhabitant of more than 160 million people.

Agriculture both sedentary farm and livestock breeding is the main stay of the economy. It is also characterized by endemic drought and natural calamities. The region also is known by rampant poverty and unemployment which pose conflict and tribal war. As the region is located in the nearest point of the Middle East where extremists used to reside, it might be vulnerable to be the breeding ground of terrorist groups. Al-shabaab backed by foreign forces can be mentioned as the case in point here. Therefore, to change the course for the better, regional cooperation among the governments is vital.

To that end, countries of the region established a regional organization known by its name Inter Governmental Authority on Development /IGAD/ in 1986.

As part of strengthening regional cooperation, weeks ago, an Ethiopian government delegate led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) paid a visit to the Sudan and made discussion with the country's president, Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan President of the Transitional Sovereign Council of the Republic of the Sudan. According to the information obtained from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, the two leaders talked on various issues and among others how to strengthen the two sisterly countries' centuries old relation; how to strength economic cooperation attaining political stability in Sudan and defusing tensions between the two countries resulted from border dispute. After the meeting, Sudan reassured that it has no antagonistic stance towards the construction of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam /GERD/. Ethiopia's exporting of electric power to the Sudan and the utilization of Port Sudan by Ethiopia for import and export of goods also manifests consolidated regional cooperation of the two countries.

Similarly, a week ago, the Ethiopian delegate led by the Prime Minister attended the East African countries' summit hosted by the Somalia President Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan. The Kenyan President William Ruto, and Djibouti's Ismail Omar Guelleh also were presented.

The Ethiopian delegates made discussion with the countries' heads both unilaterally and multilaterally on various issues. According to sources, the main agenda of the summit was how to coordinate their military forces to launch offence against Al-shabaab, the terrorist group which is still active in central and southern parts of Somalia.

The four leaders have agreed to coordinate their effort to root out the terrorists and bring peace and stability in the country. Ethiopia is committed to bring peace and stability and stationed its troops there since 2011. As a front line country, Ethiopia is vulnerable to terrorism ignited by Al-shabaab and for long exerted its energy to eliminate the terrorists. It has also played a vanguard role to commit the objectives of African union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Ethiopia also took various Preemptive measures to deter terrorism which posed threat from its eastern boarders.

As it is known, after the down fall of the Mohamed Siad Barre's regime in Somalia in 1990, the country is found itself in anarchy and many agreed to name the country as a failed state.

As a result, many external forces and internal faction groups made war against each other for the last three decades to advance their interests. Some external forces also waged a proxy war but no one became a winner.

After almost two decades of tribal war, the al-shabaab terrorist group indoctrinated by Islamic extremism emerged as a major fighting group in Somalia. It targeted civilians, the central government and foreign troops who are deployed there to support the central government. The ruthless attack committed by the terrorist group incurred heavy lose in terms of human life and infrastructure.

In the past, the terrorist group made military offence not only in Somalia but also in the neighboring countries such as Kenya and Uganda frequently. Therefore, coordinating the effort against their common enemy is not a matter that has to be left for tomorrow.

According to sources, the leaders also made discussion on how to contain cross border terrorism act; human and drug trafficking; and how to mitigate drought and global warming. As it is known, the region is entourage by drought and natural calamities that occur every two years. Such disaster brings mostly animals' death and loss of human life sometimes.

All countries have numerous populations residing in the low land areas of the region which earn their living from livestock breeding.

When environmental adversity comes, the

whole community's livelihood is affected and their animals meet their death in the wilderness. Even in the last two years the drought coupled with COVID 19 left thousands to death. Therefore, to mitigate environmental disasters, countries should exert their concerted efforts.

During the interval of the Mogadishu summit, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed met with the Kenyan President and as to the reports, the two leaders discussed on the bilateral relations of the two countries and among others, for fully utilization of the Lamu port of Kenya located in the suburb of Indian Ocean to import and export Ethiopian commodities and capital goods through it. They also discussed how to expand the dry port of Ethiopia located in the nearest place of the port; how to finalize the electric power sell of Ethiopia to Kenya and strengthening trade relation.

Ethiopia is the most populous country in the Horn of Africa. It is also the largest economy but unfortunately, it is a land locked country which left her to be port dependent on the neighboring countries. Conducting import and export trade through air transportation is very expensive to Ethiopia. In addition, the volume of freight through air transport is very small. Hence, utilizing and expanding of ports located in foreign lands is a best alternate mechanism. So far, Ethiopia is utilizing the ports of Djibouti with the highest volume of freight. Port Sudan, Hargeisa and Lamu are already utilized by our country.

Even though our country faces some upside downs due to the war broke out and lasted for two years in northern part of the country and COVID 19, the country's export and import volume is increasing from time to time so that demand for port also enhanced. Hence, sticking on it is vital. On the other hand, exporting electric energy to Kenya not only enables Ethiopia to boost hard currency earning capacity, as the electric is environmentally friendly energy, it helps Kenya to promote its green economy which the aspiration cascaded from the African Union sustainable development goal which is building non pollutant economy.

Building climate resilient economy for the countries in the Horn of Africa is a must. Because as mentioned above, they are highly vulnerable to global warming and climate change induced by pollution released by the economically advanced countries. Agriculture is their dominant feature of the economy in which frequently hit by drought. Therefore, unless they substitute their energy source from carbon based such as petroleum and petroleum products by renewable energy, such as hydro-power, solar

and geothermal, attaining sustainable development will be a night mare. The exportation of electric power to Sudan and Djibouti also has immense value in supporting attaining green growth and helps them not only attaining economic cooperation but also political integration.

The Ethiopian delegate also made discussion with the Djibouti officials with regard to economic cooperation and port utilization. Ethiopia also exports vegetable, fruits and clean water to Djibouti. The new electrified rail way which connects the two countries also reduced transaction cost of goods and commodities and again strengthened their ties. Since 1986, member countries of the region that includes Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Djibouti and Eritrea have been exerting their efforts in areas of peace, security, agriculture, environment, economic cooperation, and social development.

Currently, IGAD becomes a Public International Organization; A Regional Development Objective Grant Agreement (RDOAG) was signed in June 2016. The five-year agreement focuses on shared development priorities to promote sustainable economic integration across the region; improve systems to respond to development risks, such as those related to climate change, drought, and violent extremism; and strengthen IGAD's organizational leadership.

As it is understood, historically, the Horn of African countries had been under the yoke of colonialism for more than 80 years in the 19th and 20th centuries and when the colonial masters left the region and the countries gained independence in 1950s and 60s, the border demarcated by the colonialists was artificial which disregarded the socio-economic, ethnic and geographical situations. Hence, right after their independence, boarder disputes among various countries had been the common phenomenon. Due to border conflict and war, many lost their life and the wars incurred economic costs and for decades the relation among the Horn countries had been intense.

Currently, though the relation of the countries seems to be better, it is not consistent and the absence of modern border demarcation based on consensus still poses sporadic border clashes.

As mentioned above, rampant poverty and unemployment is a burning issue of the countries. Therefore, they should exert their efforts to mitigate these problems and to that end attaining peace and stability in the region is essential. Inter- regional trade and cooperation also should continue.

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

Editorial

From being recipient to export

“We are visionary ones, confidently speak about what we have aspired and virtually translate the promise made into practical actions, and this is the manifestation of being people of our words,” is what Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) elucidated Sunday when he officially commenced wheat export at Bale Zone of Oromia state.

He also once said that not only is Ethiopia determined to stop importing wheat by declaring self-sufficiency in wheat production but it has also developed strong commitment to export the product with a view to securing great a deal of foreign currency. What he pledged earlier has now been made real, and the agriculture sector has helped the nation reap remarkable achievements.

Not only does wheat export beginning help Ethiopia meet food security but it is also a means to well foster trade integration of the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia has pioneered the export, and the best practices learnt from such a promising step would be lengthened to other countries of the continent in the years to come thereby pushing Africa to the level of standing on its own two feet. Thanks to the firm commitment of the incumbent, Ethiopia continues making history. The agriculture sector has started bearing scrumptious fruits. Yes, history in being made, and notable changes have been recorded in the country.

The noteworthy export move has portrayed country's confidence to attach due emphasis to the agriculture sector. No matter how trying circumstances have so far been, and no matter what propaganda has been wheezed against the country, Ethiopia has been trekking on the right track to declare food self-sufficiency thereby successfully defeating poverty.

The country has embarked on the agriculture sector targeting at principally hitting three goals. First, it has planned to secure food self-sufficiency within the shortest time possible via effectively exploiting what it possesses. Second, the country always works to boost import substitution and underpin export promotion. Third, it is working from dawn to dusk to quench its foreign currency thirst.

Despite the misinformation and disinformation disseminated to blackmail Ethiopia's image so far, the real picture of the country has now been vividly revealed. The beginning of wheat export is a clear manifestation of its due attention to the agriculture sector and factual determination to come out of the coil of poverty its finds itself in.

The bold move Ethiopia has now employing has to be triplicated on other sectors and products too. This initiation would be of paramount importance in reinvigorating Horn trade integration, consolidating firm ties between/among neighboring countries to help assist one another, among others.

The concept of 'the greater the emphasis given to the sector the higher benefits it gives in return' into account, the government has been stimulating economic growth through applying a range of agricultural practices such as irrigation. Facilitating market access to products, potential productivity gains through increased import substitution and export promotion is also being well underway.

In sum, all efforts to tarnish Ethiopia's image have been disproved as the nation has seized unwavering avenue for growth and prosperity. As Ethiopia has always been a pioneer and east African icon for a number of issues, other countries of the continent had better follow its footsteps and further solidify their relations with the former to grow together.



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The Ethiopian Herald

opinion

What AU should do to meet continental challenges

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

The AU peace keeping mission under AMISOM and now under AU Transition Mission in Somalia is engaged in building the capacity of the Somali Armed Forces while effectively battling the terrorist actions of Al-Shabab.

The AU has also initiated a number of continental flagship projects including integrated high speed train project, African Commodity Strategy, AfCFTA, African Passport and Free Movement, Silencing the Guns, Grand INGA Dam Project, Single African Air Transport and Market, African Financial Institutions, Pan African Network, African Outer Space Strategy, African Virtual and e-university, African Cyber Security and Great African Museum.

Despite all the above mentioned achievements mentioned by the author only in brief, the AU and Africa at large face various challenges that need to be resolved if the continental organization is to meet its objectives.

Over the last several years, the AU has encountered a number of challenges related to changes of government through coups that flared up in the continent in Sao Tome and Principe, Togo, Mauritania, Mali, Egypt, and central Africa. This has to a greater degree affected AU's efforts to help develop democracy and good governance as well as the continental stability and peace that the organization has strived to achieve.

Although the AU has been advocating for self-finance, the continental organization heavily depends upon the assistance it receives from global partner agencies for about 75 per cent of its budget for running the organization and financing its projects. This will seriously affect AU efforts to effectively follow and implement its cardinal principles on deciding on the major issues that concern the member nations and creation of conflict of interest between the AU and global partner agencies who wish to drive the organization towards their official and hidden interests.

Moreover, incessant conflicts across the continent, human and arms trafficking, political instability triggered by ethnic conflicts, corruption, marked lack of good governance, inadequate infrastructure, climate change induced food insecurity, poor health facilities etc. have remained the major obstacles to the socio-economic development of Africa.

Nonetheless, recurrent El-Nino- La-Nina induced climate change which in most cases resulted in widespread drought and drought across the continent has seriously affected the pace of development programs of AU member states.

Cross border contraband trade has remained as one of the major challenges of the national economies of AU member states. For instance illicit trading in oil in Africa amounts to nearly US\$100 billion a year

due to under-invoicing, theft, bunkering and corruption.

A number of sub-regional integration programs including the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development were formed to facilitate economic integration between their members. Although some have existed for many years, they have failed to develop to the desired level of integration because the member nations are at different level of development and there is a marked lack of commitment to make all the necessary legal and economic measures to put them into action.

The proliferation of terrorist organizations like Al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and Boko Haram are already busy disrupting the normal economic activities in the countries in which they operate totally isolating some of the areas they occupied from the rest of Africa.

Besides, in countries like DRC, armed conflicts aimed at controlling the mineral rich areas of the country has prevented the nation from enjoying its resources to pull the population out of abject poverty.

Spread of diseases like Ebola, COVID-19, TB and a number of vector borne diseases have continued to affect the health of millions in the continent. On the other hand, although AU is seriously committed to peace and security in the region lack of political commitment among leaders and wanton interference of western powers into the internal affairs of African countries have in many parts of Africa, including the volatile Horn of Africa has continued to pose a threat to continental peace and security.

Resolving the above mentioned challenges over time is of critical importance if the AU is to fulfill its objectives as one of the biggest continental block in the world. Africa has recently been seriously affected by the increase on global food prices like wheat and edible oil.

Therefore, under the coordination of the AU, African countries need to devise and implement plans to increase agricultural productivity, promotion of manufacturing industries and engage in import substitution programs to narrow down trade deficits, hyperinflation and heavy dependence on foreign aid through time.

It is quite obvious that it would take time to ascertain Africa's sustainable economic development. Despite the challenges, the future is bright for Africa to become a major economic hub and global financial magnet but more is to be done to achieve this.

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

Business & Economy

Viability means for augmenting crop production

BY MENGESHA AMARE

Agriculture in Ethiopia has long been exercised as the majority of the population in the country has deepened on this traditional and pertinent sector. The country has nowadays embarked on a range of systems to make the sector mechanized and helps farmers produce more using various means. Using fertilizers, whether they are natural, like cow dung or manmade ones, does have many benefits in helping the farming community produce more in terms of quantity and quality.

True, if a country would like its farmers to have better production, it has to employ crop improvement mechanisms like using fertilizer, entirely organic if possible. Fertilizers are of significantly useful in providing crops with specific nutrient due to its nutrient-specific nature, increasing crop yield and providing crops and plants with additional nutrients, bringing about a rapid effect on crops, and they are easy to transport, store and apply.

Alemayehu Asres is a person whom The Ethiopian Herald talked to about the use of fertilizer and its contribution towards economic change and real growth. He is an economist working for a consultancy firm. As to him, it is quite challenging to meet the demands of the expanding population with limited resources and subsistence life leading farming community as agriculture output has declined due to pests, shortage of fertilizers as well as soil fertility.

According to Alemayehu, fertilizers can be essential to plants in the following ways including they make plants more resistant to pests. As a result, they are using fewer insecticides, which result in healthier crops. Using fertilizer thus improves the water holding capacity of plants, and increase root depth, the potassium content present in fertilizer strengthens the straw and stalks of the plants, the phosphorus present in the fertilizers helps in faster development of roots and formation of seeds as well as nitrogen in the fertilizers promotes plant growth, which is seen in the green color of the plants.

He said, "Bio fertilizers are substances that contain living or latent cells, and even micro-organisms. They provide the soil with the necessary nutrients and microbes for the growth of the plants. They help the soil to retain its fertility. They are environment-friendly and also destroy pathogenic components responsible for causing disease in plants."

Alemayehu further elucidated that fertilizers, artificial or natural, are the components that increase plant productivity and development. They help the soil increase its fertility thereby promoting growth. The use of manures as compost is presumably as old as agriculture itself. With the help of fertilizers, plants become resilient against harmful plant pathogens, pests, and weeds. Elimination of diseases in plants increases the value in the harvest, too.

He said the soil requires the regular maintenance of its fertility. Naturally, soil



Appropriate utilization of fertilizers has to be well mastered by the farming community

comprises of very fine rocks, different types of minerals, and organic matter due to the decomposition of the biological species.

According to Alemayehu, at the time of plant growth, essential nutrients are required by the plant for its unimpeded growth. Incorporating fertilizers into the soil guarantees that the plant is getting proper nutrition during its development.

He further stated that knowing the exact amounts of nutrients in the mineral fertilizer also makes it easier to plan the farming process.

Throughout the years, farmers have utilized chemical fertilizers to increase the production of crops to meet the increasing demand. But over the years, continuous usage of these chemical fertilizers have proven to be harmful to all forms of life by causing pollution of air and water, and depletion of minerals from the soil. Therefore, there is a need to now change to organic farming that involves the utilization of the Bio-fertilizers.

Bio-fertilizers are living organisms that enhance soil quality. It refers to the utilization of microorganisms like different types of bacteria or fungi that will enhance fertility. Bio-fertilizers are also much more beneficial to the environment compared to their synthetic/chemical counterpart. Due to this very reason, utilizing bio-fertilizers is so beneficial and important.

The Ethiopian Herald had also a stay with Solomon Begna, a Chemist and an agro economist working for a private company as a soil expert. He said, "Fertilizers are used for various purposes. The uses of fertilizers are mentioned below: Used to provide additional nutrients to the plants, they are added to improve the yield of the crops, Nitrogen-rich fertilizers are used for the greening of lawns, Organic fertilizers improve the texture and fertility of the soil, Gardeners use fertilizers to address certain needs of the plants such as nutritional needs as well as fertilizers are

added to potted plants to replace the lost nutrients."

Adding he said, "The application of microbial inoculants (Bio-fertilizers) is a promising technology for future sustainable farming system in view of rapidly decreasing phosphorus stocks and the need to more efficiently use of available nitrogen. Various microbial taxa are currently used as bio-fertilizers, based on their capacity to access nutrients from fertilizer and soil stocks, to fix atmospheric nitrogen, to improve water uptake or to act as bio control agents."

As to him, using organic fertilizers is an incomparable means for crop productivity except their limited access. "Needless to state, organic fertilizers are natural fertilizers obtained from plants and animals. They enrich the soil with carbon compounded needed for crop activities. Organic fertilizers increase the soil's organic matter content, promote the reproduction and activities of microorganisms as well as alter the physical and chemical properties of the soil.

Remarkable achievements have been achieved in agricultural production in various states in Ethiopia, but many demanding challenges for ensuring food security and environmental sustainability have remained untouched. This calls for a coordinated effort of all to make real difference.

As to Solomon, field experiments have been conducted to determine the effects of fertilization on enhancing crop, and it has been found that a balanced nutrient application using fertilization is a key management strategy for enhancing crop productivity and environmental safety.

He also said that fertilizers provide the most important nutrients that plants and crops need for proper growth and development. When nutrients are not replaced in the adequate quantity and form, soil productivity will decrease with each harvest. Hence, agricultural experts who are duty bound to

guide farmers are expected to seriously focus on the proper utilization of fertilizer.

As to him, agriculture farming, previously dominated by production, currently has diverse objectives. The environmental impacts of crops, the reduced costs of production and the balanced use of fertilization are among the main objectives of modern agriculture, indeed!

The very thing that has to be well known is over-fertilization by farmers, driven by the desire for higher yields, does not always contribute to high yield but it has recently become a common practice for farmers in Ethiopia nonetheless. Unfortunately, over-fertilization decreases the efficiency of nutrient use and causes a series of economic and environmental problems. However, balanced mineral fertilizer inputs have played an important role in increasing the production of cereals, cash crops and other staple foods.

He said, "Undoubtedly, managing agricultural nutrients to provide a safe food supply and secure the environment remains one of the immense challenges of the 21st century. Crop nutrient uptake and crop yields are the principal factors that determine optimal fertilization practices. Therefore, it is very important to apply fertilizers in an efficient and scientific way to minimize loss and to improve the nutrient use efficiency."

As to Solomon, Sustained crop productivity relies on constant renewal when the supply of nutrients becomes a constraint to plant growth and development. Application of fertilizers is necessary for enhancing crop yields and sustaining soil fertility. However, inappropriate or excessive fertilizer application does not guarantee constantly increasing yields, might result in low nutrient use efficiency, and can cause environmental problems in agro-ecosystems. In general, as the proper utilization of fertilizers a viable means to augment crop production and productivity, it has to receive special attention, he underlined.

In the Sphere of Diplomacy

The dividends of hosting the AU

BY EYUEL KIFLU

Preparation has been finalized to host the upcoming AU summit in Addis Ababa. The Summit which is expected to deliberate on pressing continental issues will kick off later this week with Ethiopia rolling out the carpet to warmly welcome African nations' heads of state. The AU Ministerial sessions and the Assembly are scheduled to take place from February 15-19 in Addis Ababa.

The 36th Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government themed 'Acceleration of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Implementation' serves as a great opportunity for Ethiopia to prove to the world that it is capable of hosting great events peacefully.

With the hospitality industry expressing its readiness to give guests decent services, the country is well-positioned to make the Summit a success. Arrangements have been done in terms of health, security, telecom, firefighting, and emergency services.

The Summit came following Ethiopia's groundbreaking Pretoria peace deal which ended the country's two years of conflict. The Summit is expected to see high turnout due to peace agreement reached between the government of Ethiopia and TPLF in South Africa.

The deal was brokered by the continental bloc and saw an effective implementation on the ground. This sets an exemplary lesson for a continent that is beset by civil war, violence, and other man-made menaces. The agreement also proved that African institutions are capable of resolving their internal matters. The peace deal also successfully silenced the gun in the northern part of the country sending a clear message to the rest of the world that Africans can settle their conflict through peaceful means.

The Summit will have great diplomatic, political, and economic benefits to Ethiopia as it is held at a time when the country is emerging from a challenging situation, she added. Every service is prepared, such; as hotel, security, telecom, and financial services, which are ready to provide excellent service. The preparation also shows that the country's security is stable and there are no problems for the delegation members, said Ambassador Birtukan Ayano, State Minister of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and member of the preparation committee in her discussion with stakeholders.

In fact, Ethiopia was a victim of a misinformation campaign and there were minor security issues that might have



cast the African Union Summit. Different countries have had travel alerts issued on Ethiopia, but now that's history and the country is now very safe. The recent visits of Chinese, German, and French foreign ministers show that the country is back to normalcy and stable condition.

Pretoria peace accord is expected to be presented as an experience at the summit. It also shows how the country solved its problem by African means.

Amb. Bankole Adeoye, commissioner for political affairs, peace, and Security of the AU Commission, in his meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Ethiopia Demeke Mekonnen lately, said the peace deal sets a good example for the other AU member countries the commissioner said. It will be presented as an example in the upcoming summit, he remarked

Meanwhile, in his press briefing, Ethiopia's Permanent Representative to the African Union, Ayele Lire said the summit is majorly focused on the current status of Agenda 2063. Also, it will focus on trade and economic issues. Indeed, the Ethiopia peace accord is an achievement of agendas because silencing guns is one of the agenda issues. So, this makes Ethiopians and Africans proud of themselves. It shows that the AU is working well, and the deal has built every African's trust in their continental union.

In another good move, recently, African Union Commission officially launched the Network of African Think Tanks for Peace. African Union Political Affairs Peace and Security (AU PAPS), in its social media posts, disclosed that the initiative is intended to drive the partnership between the African research community and the African Union Political Affairs Peace and Security on governance, peace, and security.

AU PAPS added that the official launch of the African Union Network of Think Tanks for Peace Network (NeTT4Peace) follows the two-day technical session of its strategy group that was convened with GIZ sponsorship.

In his welcoming remarks on the launching event Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, explained the rationale behind the initiative to create a structured and focused interface between AU PAPS and African think tanks, local media reported

The Commissioner also mentioned that collaborative effort is needed to achieve African solutions to African problems

It is stated on the occasion that Ambassador Ahmed Abdel-latif, Director General of Cairo Peace Keep and Co-chair of the strategy group, presented the initial structure and operational guidelines of the Network of African Think Tanks for Peace (NeTT4Peace) Network.

African countries should institute wide-ranging fiscal reforms to expedite sustainable recovery from multiple crises which have hindered industrialization and economic diversification, the Economic Commission for Africa's (ECA) Acting Executive Secretary, Antonio Pedro, has urged.

"Ensuring a sustainable recovery, which protects populations and economies from the shocks of future pandemics and other crises, will require a range of reforms and initiatives at both the national and international levels," said Mr. Pedro in his remarks at the 2023 Coordination Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 2 February in New York City.

"For African countries, appropriate policy choices through fiscal reforms as well as building coherent and effective frameworks for mobilizing domestic

revenue are needed," Pedro said, calling for a reprioritization of public expenditure to invest in more growth-enhancing projects.

"At the current pace, we are starting to see a reversal of much of the progress made towards achieving Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063," Pedro noted.

Currently, nine African countries are in debt distress and an additional 13 are at high risk of falling into debt distress, necessitating the urgency to reform the G20 Common Framework to make it a more effective process for multilateral debt restructurings, he urged.

Calling for a simplified process of rechanneling Special Drawing Rights to developing countries and the honoring of pledges, Mr. Pedro urged African Multilateral Development Banks to help in de-risking investments on the continent to reduce its dependence on the rest of the world.

Optimistic that a recovery, which leverages the human and economic potential on the African continent, was possible, Mr. Pedro cited that such recovery starts with jobs and skills. In addition, inclusive and resilient recovery needs must be underpinned by green and equitable growth while ensuring a just energy transition to achieve the fundamental goal of access to electricity for all on the continent.

"We have 500 million Africans that have no access to electricity, and this must change," Mr. Pedro emphasized, urging Africa to tap its natural endowments to localize strategic value chains such as the development of batteries and electric vehicles, and renewable energy, including solar and wind.

Besides, Africa needs to operationalize local content policies and national suppliers' development programmes to accelerate the emergence of globally competitive SMEs and expand the job market.

Society

“A small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world”

BY STAFF REPORTER

Reconstructing and restoring conflict-wrecked essential infrastructures and rehabilitating communities residing in the affected areas have continued unwaveringly.

The government has been striving to address the challenges on the double – reconstruct damage infrastructures, restore basic services, rehabilitate communities and return the areas to their former states.

As a result, a number of encouraging outcomes are seen though a lot remains to be done owing to the scope and severity of the problem.

In fact, even if the government has taken the lion's share, partners, Ethiopians living at home and abroad as well as Ethiopia's friends have also contributed significantly in terms of supporting the rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

Recently, members of the Global Ethiopian Diaspora Action Group (GEDAG) - Virginia-USA, based humanitarian organization-donated medical equipment worth 442 million Birr to the Ministry of Health.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, Health Minister Dr. Lia Tadesse said that Ethiopia has succeeded in overcoming the challenges it faced over the past two years through the support of the Diaspora, according to a report from local media.

The Minister, thanking the Diaspora community for the unreserved commitment



they exerted, called them to further strengthen their support.

Group's President Endalkachew Zewde said on his part said that the Organization is fulfilling its responsibility.

Mentioning that members of the Group made a tour to various areas and visited displaced citizens, the President expressed organization's readiness to permanently extend the needed assistance until the problem is resolved.

According to him, the Diaspora group is always ready to support the country by providing financial and other support.

“We should not always count what we have done once, because we should do it until the Ethiopian problem is beaten,” the President underlined.

He also urged the Diaspora community to strengthen their support and actively participate in the rehabilitation, and reconstruction efforts.

GEDAG Director Alemayehu Abebe on his

part said that the Group has been providing support for communities residing in war-torn areas.

“What we want to convey to our brothers and sisters is that our organization is nonpolitical, non-partisan and non-religious institution. Our goal is to help people who are in dire need of help. We are here to support the country. Governments come and go, but we have to help our people. We have seen with our own eyes that hospitals and schools were destroyed owing to the war. In the next five years, our project will continue helping other destroyed schools and hospitals in the best possible way,” he remarked

Zeni Jabessa, a member of the Group, stated that the purposes of the group are many; however they have prioritized the unmet basic needs.

According to her, after winning the challenges facing the country these days owing to the conflict and addressed the need of the people in war affected areas, members of the group

aspire to facilitate and ensure access to schools, healthcare services, clean water and sanitation to those people who do not have these and other related basic services.

Members of the Group further mentioned that the Ethiopian Diasporas from all over the world would like to contact the Group and work with them. As to them, if they work together, they can change Ethiopia with many other things.

Korso Koji, another member of the Group, said that the Diasporas are doing great work. However, if all the Diaspora community unite and work together, they can do more than this.

In the last four years, many infrastructures have been destroyed, people have died, Korso said, adding that there are many problems that the Diaspora community collaborate and to solve together.

He also pointed out that the Ethiopians in the Diaspora must do a great job in rebuilding the country.

“The Diasporas have greater role to play in country's overall growth. There are various projects for them to engage in, especially in investment. There are industries that they can take part and bring about substantial change. Thus, we have to promote the areas through different media so that they can come and participate,” he stated.

GEDAG is a global non-profit organization that supports good causes and positive change all over the world.



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MoE urged students to prepare for the exit exam

BY EPHREM ANDARGACHEW

The Ministry of Education urged students of higher education to prepare themselves for the university exit exam.

This exit examination is a test that students must pass to receive a diploma and graduate from higher education institutions. It is also an assessment that many higher education institutions apply to inspect the level of education obtained by their students.

Besides, the exit exam helps higher education institutions to make relevant decisions for the improvement of the quality of either the institution or the education system by assessing the standard of education in specific courses or departments. It is also an important aspect of improving the education curriculum and so on.

Taking the significance of improving quality education into account, in many instances, higher education students are required to pass the exit exams in order to fulfill the requirements necessary to graduate this year.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Education will prepare an exit exam that will be given in all



academic fields and programs both private and public universities next July.

Ethiopian Ministry of Education State Minister Dr. Samuel Kifle discussed the issue of the exit exam with students' union representatives last week. In the discussion, he stated that the exit exam will be given on an online platform to all public and private university students in July. Hence, students have to prepare themselves for the exit exam.

The Ministry decided to roll out the exit exam for all undergraduate students of private and public higher institutions at



the end of the current Ethiopian academic year. The exam is a part of the education sector reform effort that aims to elevate the education quality at universities and colleges.

Moreover, the exam is a requirement for degree completion and a mandatory exam, which is administered on campus and normally scheduled at least three weeks before the graduation deadline. Accordingly, more than 200,000 this year's first-degree candidates are expected to sit for this exam.

According to State Minister Dr. Samuel Kifle in order to be eligible for the exit exam, the students should take the last semester exam and complete the courses given by the universities. For this, all universities are informed about the eligibility criteria of the selected courses in all fields of study for the examination. Accordingly, the exam preparation work is being carried out.

Therefore, he stressed that students should make appropriate preparations in the remaining five months to qualify themselves for the exam. Student union representatives should inform the students to prepare adequately for the exam when they return to their universities, he stated.

International News

Uganda keeps oil dream alive amid rising criticism

The Nation- Uganda says its oil dream is alive despite intensified criticism from several groups, which this week lodged a complaint in the US against insurer Marsh that is brokering underwriting services for the \$5 billion East African Crude Oil Pipeline (Eacop).

On February 7, at least 10 human rights and environmental groups in Uganda and Tanzania accused Marsh of violating guidelines for responsible business conduct for the company's role in Eacop. The complaint was lodged with the US National Contact Point at the Department of State.

Last year, financial services provider Britam Uganda dropped out of the insurance consortium for Eacop after a complaint was filed at the World Bank office, alleging the insurer breached International Finance Corporation performance standards.

The complaint against Marsh came barely a week after Eacop completed acquisition of 47.22 acres of land in Kakumiro District for the main camp and pipe yard site.

In the meantime, construction of the coating plant is also ongoing at Nzenga, Tanzania, officials said.

Eacop managing director Martin Tiffen signalled readiness by the project's sponsors to conclude land acquisition processes by mid-2023 to pave way for construction of the 1,443km pipeline that starts from Hoima in western Uganda to Tanzania's Indian ocean Tanga Port.

The project's critics allege that Eacop has displaced about 100,000 people without compensation, but Tiffen said 81 percent of the project-affected persons in Uganda have signed compensation agreements, while 69 percent have received payment.

"An insurance broker's role is often invisible to the public, which allows them to avoid accountability, but Marsh deserves to be scrutinised," said Coleen Scott, legal and policy associate at the Inclusive Development International (IDI).

The US-based IDI is one of the forces backing non-governmental organisations in Uganda and Tanzania that have put pressure on sponsors of Eacop to abandon the project on climate and human rights basis.

Guidelines

A summary of the complaint says that Marsh should be scrutinised based on OECD guidelines, which set out principles and standards for responsible business conduct across a range of issues, including human rights and the environment. While the guidelines are non-binding, they are an important and widely accepted international standard for ethical business conduct.

On January 24, as Uganda launched its first drilling rig for the Chinese-operated Kingfisher oilfield, police blocked a public debate on the impacts of Eacop and arrested its organiser Bob Barigye, which IDI claims is a sign of increasing repression against critics of the project.

The complaint also argues that Marsh is going ahead to broker insurance for the project on the back of inadequate consultations with the affected communities and threats to natural resources.

Kenyan company turning newspapers into pencils, cutting deforestation in the process

African News- MOMO Pencils, based in Athi River, Machakos County, came up with an effective way to reduce the number of trees cut down every year to make simple writing pencils.

The company, headed by brothers Mahamud Omari and Rashid Omari, sources its raw materials, in this case glue and old newspapers, locally. They currently import the graphite.

According to CEO Mahamud Omari, the old newspapers cost them just KSH 70 (\$0.70) to KSH 100 (\$1) per-kilogram.

He says the price of the finished product depends on the quality and quantity, but it ranges from KSH 15 to up to KSH 50 per-pencil.

Pencils are an important part of life, they're used for sketching, drawing and in schools.

The United Nations says some eight million trees are cut down every year to make pencils, contributing to deforestation.

came up with an effective way to reduce the number of trees cut down every year to make simple writing pencils.

"If you look at the present day, we are suffering from climate action and the best way is to reduce the number of trees that

are cut for any purpose," he says.

"So, for that matter, 82,000 trees that are cut every year to make pencils, we provide an alternative. We take the newspaper and turn it into a viable product which is a pencil, providing an option for those people to use instead of wooden pencils."

The process of making pencils starts with newspaper collection.

The newspapers are cut into the right size, then graphite is glued to the pieces.

The pieces of newspapers and graphite are then put into a roller, which rolls and compresses them into pencils.

They're then left in the sun for three days to dry off.

They're lastly put into a final compressor, sharpened and packaged.

Mahamud says in the next five years, the company aims to ensure every child in Kenya will use their pencils.

"We want each and every child in Kenya who goes to school to use our pencils and at the same time, be able to plant a tree through our pencil. That way we will reduce the number of trees cut," he says.

"We will also provide an option and reduce the number of wooden pencils in the market."

Sustainability consultant and climate change expert Nickson Otieno believes such efforts will reduce the number of trees cut down, while at the same time reducing the amount of wastepaper that's dumped or burnt.

"Eight million trees are cut down every year to make pencils, and that contributes to deforestation and climate change. Also, about 85 billion tonnes of wastepaper are generated every year and 32 billion tonnes of this wastepaper is dumped and burnt down. Now, this contributes also to climate change, but on the other side, we can address climate change by making pencils from recycled paper," he says.

According to the UN, over 13 million hectares of forests are lost annually to deforestation, out of which 36 percent is for paper manufacturing and 42 percent is for manufacturing timber-based products that constitutes about 18-20 billion pencils.

Yesterday's news, tomorrow's pencils.

Tanzania set for 100 percent telephone penetration: TCRA

The Citizens- Tanzania is set to attain full voice telephone network coverage in the near future, a new report shows.

The Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority's statistical report for the fourth quarter of 2022 shows that the overall telecom voice penetration stands at 98 percent as of December, 2022.

Furthermore, the TCRA report shows that Dar es Salaam has the highest penetration equivalent to 16.9 percent of total country's coverage. It is followed by Mwanza with 6.2 percent and Arusha with 5.9 percent.

The regions with the lowest penetration in Tanzania Mainland and their percentage in brackets are; Katavi (1.1pc); Rukwa (1.6pc); Lindi and Njombe (1.8pc) each.

Communication experts say that the new statistics are a very positive development that shows that almost all Tanzanians have been reached.

"I attribute this good performance to the huge investment made by telecommunication firms and by the government especially through the Universal Communications Service Access Fund (UCSAF)," Dr Moses Ismail, a senior lecturer at the College of Information and Communication Technology (CoICT) of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), said.

He added that the fund has been providing subsidies to telecommunication firms to enable them increase coverage in rural areas in the country. However, he said, there is still a challenge of low broadband penetration despite increasing demand of the internet in Tanzania.

Dr Ismail urged the government to work hard to realize its target of reaching 80 of the population by 2025.

Tanzania is connected to several undersea fibre optic cables that provide broadband internet services. The government is on the mission to connect all wards in the country by the broadband network.

In another development, statistics indicate that mobile money services accounts involved in mobile money transfer increased from 39.6 million to 40.9 million.

The increase is equivalent to 1.4 percent, while the number of transactions grew by 2.8 percent and value of transactions went up by three percent.

Furthermore, the report shows that over 410.742 million transactions worth Sh13.9 trillion have been carried out between January and December, 2022.

According to a report, more transactions were carried out in the month of December than any other, probably due to increased festive activities.

South Sudan aims to turn ailing economy around

African News- Nearly 12 years after its independence, South Sudan, which holds the third largest oil reserves in sub-Saharan Africa, is unable to feed more than 7 million of its people who live on humanitarian aid.

Because of corruption and years of instability, the country only benefits from forty-five

thousand barrels out of an annual production of about 150 000 to 170 000 barrels.

To get more on that, I am joined by Dr. Peter Biar Ajak from the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University.

Benin ramps up volumes of locally processed

cotton

In 2022, three cotton processing plants opened in the textile park of Glodjigbé near Benin's capital. Since then, 40,000 tons of seeds have been processed, representing 12% of the national production.

Leaf vegetable culture gains momentum in

Kenya

The East African country has been hit by the worst drought in 40 years and by four consecutive failed rainy seasons. Farmers most affected by these climatic conditions have decided to turn to ancient vegetables, which are more profitable.

Planet Earth

Curbing challenges of access to potable water nationwide

BY FIKADU BELAY

Ethiopia is frequently referred to as the “water tower of Africa.” In order to prove this it has numerous rivers that flow across a single border and into other nations. On top of that, it is a country with a large number of lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water that irrigate the land and its environs.

It is public knowledge that the country has a lot of natural resources, but this is more a result of the country’s growing population, urbanization, and industrialization of the nation as well as an improper use of modern equipment.

Due to the lack of clean water supply in the country, people are seen complaining and being abused at different times and places.

The Ministry of Water and Energy is working to build 18,000 water facilities until June 2015 to address clean drinking water to six million citizens.

Tamiru Gedefa, the Drinking Water Supply Lead Executive Officer with the Ministry of Water and Energy, told The Ethiopian Press Agency. As a country, we are working to increase clean water access from 62.47 per cent to 69 per cent in 2015.

Despite the fact that Ethiopia is working to meet the demand for clean drinking water that is accessible to the country’s population, challenges remain in the sector due to a lack of educated experts, outdated technology, limited institutions that regulate the use of water resources, a lack of funding, the security situation, the drought, and the inability to produce the majority of the nation’s water resources. Other issues include drainage issues and environmental protection.

Tamiru said that the ministry has discussed to solve these problems with contractors at various times and

is talking with the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration to solve the shortage of cement and resources. It is also talking with the Ministry of Finance to solve the problem of fund allocation.

Tamiru explained that various projects have been prepared and are working to implement the plan of the ministry. For example, the One Wash Water Supply and Sanitation Program serve 307 woredas and 64 towns across the country.

Through the climate resistant wash project, construction of about 84 projects is being facilitated since the last two years in areas affected by drought. Out of these 35 water facilities are under construction to provide clean water access in the areas affected by drought.

The remaining projects 9 are completed, 7 are in the process of obtaining water, while 32 are under study and design totally in the country.

According to researchers, when Ethiopia’s water resources were divided by its population in the 1960s and earlier, each individual received about 2000 cubic meters of water annually, which is considered high. However, the water supply is dwindling as the population grows occasionally.

In this sense, there is a shortage of drinking water in different parts of the country. Following the rapid expansion of cities, 23 cities, including Addis Ababa, have been made to use alternate water in some places.

The ministry’s main goal with the urban drinking water project is to reduce water wastage and provide access to clean water for the public.

He pointed out that while 38 water facilities are under construction, eight of them have already been completed and are already providing services.

For this purpose, 70 million dollars are being

allocated to provide access to clean water supply to the regional, zonal cities for six years, he said.

He explained that Asosa, Gondar, Kombolcha, Mizan, Dire Dawa and Debre Markos are among the main beneficiaries of the water projects that are being built with indirect funds, so they are in the process of renovation, construction, and expansion.

He said that the Second Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Project in low-income urban areas has been prepared to solve the problem of supply. The focus is on having information control and managing the water service in a system, and many different things are being done.

In terms of using technology to be able to control the water supply from a single place, energy is needed to draw water from a distance, so by reducing the use of fuel, clean water is being made available through the use of solar systems.

Tamiru stated that there are activities to lead new large projects in the SCADA system in order to solve the problems related to energy in the rural areas due to the increasing price of fuel. It is being done at the federal and state levels by switching oil-powered water facilities to solar energy.

Tamiru mentioned that with the help of other partner organizations such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the British Government, UNICEF, the Korean Government, and the Netherland Government, efforts are underway to improve the water supply with technological equipment.

Tamiru said that there are four projects supported by the African Development Bank in Mekele, Gode, Bichena and Adama. While the project in Gode has gone operational those in Adama and Bichena are recently launched. The project in Mekelle still has to

be launched in the future.

In addition, the Horn of Africa Ground Water Residents Project, which was implemented this year in all regions of Ethiopia and focused on the border areas, said Tamiru that work has started to implement it in 55 districts in this year and also the project will continue for the next six years.

Tamiru said that there are more than 207 thousand water facilities in the country, ranging from small to large.

So far, the ministry has been working in conflict-affected areas, including Shire, in various small towns, and in some areas along Raya, but plans have been prepared and sent to the Ministry of Finance to be able to work in an organized manner, he explained.

In order to identify areas affected by the conflict, including Mekele, and continue the interrupted sanitation service, a plan has been prepared in consultation with the Ministry of Finance, and activities are being carried out to start work.

Research shows that various water bodies in the world are decreasing in size and drying up. Therefore, they are facing the same challenges as our country. However, in order to reduce and eliminate this issue before it causes a worse problem, the Ministry of Water and Energy is carrying out various works together with the Ministry of Agriculture and various institutions to develop the water resources in a sustainable manner.

For example, the green legacy program that the country has been conducting for the past four years is mentioned. In the eastern part of the country, especially in the Borena region of Somalia, trees should be planted and dams should be protected to prevent drought and protect the water bodies in the country.



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Bole Lemi Industrial Park attracting foreign direct investment

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

For the last few years, Ethiopia has taken multiple actions in order to transform its economy from agriculture to industry-led. Achieving its goal, the government has built 13 industrial parks and start operating to meet the desired goal. Within short period, those industrial parks start attracting foreign direct investments to prove themselves as the magnets of investment and foreign currency. From those government sponsored industrial parks; Bole Lemi Industrial Park is on the top of the list. It is located in the capital on the road from Goro Roundabout to Summit Condominium and it covers 353 hectares of land.

During his stay with the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), the park’s CEO Tinsae Yimam has explained how the park is playing its part in nation’s economy regarding attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and foreign currency remittance. The first part of the interview is presented as follows.

According to Tinsae, the park’s construction was started in 2004 E.C and built in two phases. The first phase was done on 172 hectares of land by constructing 22 factory shades. Those shades were directly transferred to developers with the intention of making



Bole Lemi Industrial Park

them operational as soon as possible with the equipment they have. The second phase of the construction was completely different from the first one. The second phase incorporates all the necessary infrastructures including water supply, electricity, telecom, and sanitary pipe installations on 181 hectares of developed land. On this developed land, it has been designed to give the chance to the investors to build their own building or working shades by their own design. The construction was fully covered by the Ethiopian government and local contractors built it.

At this time, there are 24 working shades in the park, and all of them are transferred to

developers. Besides, there is 109 hectares of land which is fully developed. Of which, 21.25 hectares of land is owned by developers. The land is transferred to three developers; one of them is under construction, and two of them have finished constructing and become operational. To this end, 87.75 hectares of land is still waiting to be transferred to developers.

Accordingly, the park also incorporates one-stop service center building, a water treatment technology called Zero liquid Discharge & Advanced Treatment Plant, police and health centers, fire brigade center, kindergarten and school, supermarket, employees’ and investors’ homes, cafeteria, sport fields, parking, and 30 hectares of land for greenery.

Currently, there are 14 developers who are working in the park, and 13 of them are foreign investors. The park is built to work on textile, apparel, and leather production. In this regard, most of the developers are working on the aforementioned productions. In addition, two developers are working on agro-processing and renewable power sectors. Of which, the agro-processing factory named Suflet Malt Ethiopia is working aggressively on substituting the imported malt with local production to meet the nation’s demand.

In its first phase of the construction, the park incorporates developers that have invested around 50 million USD. Suflet Malt, for instance, has invested over 50 million Euros. Also, there are factories that are fully operational and started exporting their products. On the other hand, there are factories that are not fully operational.

From the onset of exporting its products like children apparels, sport armors, coupled with other textile and leather products in 2008 E.C, the Park has been generating 297 USD. Similarly, in the past six months of the current fiscal year, the park has exported products worth 43.2 million USD.

The continuation of this interview will appear next week.

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