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Happy Meskel!



Photo: Berihun Tadele

Abune Mathias underscores maintaining peace, unity through forgiveness

• *Ethiopians mark Demera, Eve of Meskel festival*

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA - The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) Patriarch Abune Mathias urged Ethiopians to maintain peace and unity across the country through forgiveness.

The Demera, the eve of Meskel festival

colorfully celebrated yesterday at Meskel square in the presence of Representative of Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Abune Mathias, President Sahle-Work Zewde and others.

In his message on behalf of EOTC Patriarch Abune Mathias, Abune Abraham urged Ethiopians to maintain peace and strengthen unity through reconciliation and forgiveness.

“We preach the cross for the sake of ensuring peace and unity. EOTC demands to ensure justice, peace and love across the country via refraining from destructive activities.”

Addis Ababa Mayor Representative and Addis Ababa Culture and Tourism Bureau Head Hirut Kasew (PhD) for her part said that Meskel or

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Demera symbolizes Ethiopian unity to reach new heights: Premier

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Ethiopia's top priority port diversification: Veteran diplomat

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA – Putting various port diversification efforts, Ethiopia would gain uninterrupted, secured and direct access to

see Ethiopia's top... Page 3

Council pleads to citizens to preserve peace, security

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council urged all faithful and Ethiopians to exert relentless efforts towards preserving peace and security across the country.

This was noted yesterday during the 1498th Mawulid-al Nabi celebration at the Great Anwar Mosque here.

It was also learnt that several religious ceremonies commemorating good deeds of Prophet Muhammad had been carried out by celebrants of the holiday at the mosque.

see Council pleads to ... Page 3



Experts suggest outdoor festival promotion to better tourism revenue

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- The hospitality sector could benefit a lot from rigorous promotion of outdoor cultural and religious festivities, experts in the area suggested.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Hotel and Tourism Expert Ashenafi Desta said that Ethiopia has many outdoor festivals which are being celebrated every year.

“A month of September, for example, has several cultural and religious festivals. So, promoting these festivals can easily improve the tourism revenue that we seek to generate,” he indicated.

All Ethiopian festivals have their own unique cultural and religious features that can catch tourists’ eye easily. So, promotions should be carried out by Ethiopians and the tourism sector actors in particular, he noted.

Traditional cloth suppliers and sellers, hotels, tour guides, and governmental institutions should work together so as to make festivals easy for tourists, he urged.

During the past few years, the number of foreign tourists has diminished because of COVID-19 and conflicts in Ethiopia.



Photo Eyob Teferi

This year, the number of tourists is expected to be higher as the effect of COVID-19 and conflicts have already been resolved.

Another tourism expert, Kalab Belachew also said that these festivals can be used as a source to generate foreign currency which Ethiopia is in dire need of.

Promotional works including live streaming through international broadcasters should be enabled.

Senior Tourism Expert, Maru Emagnu, also added that Ethiopian festivals are becoming globally known though it needs more tasks to make them economically important events.

Meskel, Demera, Irrecha, Timket, and Fiche Chambalala are UNESCO inscribed Ethiopian socio-cultural heritages which should be introduced to non-Ethiopian through all available channels of

information, he mentioned.

Tourists always need something new and worthy to them. Accordingly, tourist guides should work to promote festivals while doing their businesses, he noted.

Ethiopians celebrate several festivals in the month of September: *Enkutataash, Meskel Demera, Irrecha, Yahode, and Mashiro* are some of the warm festivals that occur only in September.

Zone strives to UNESCO’s inscription of Gurage heritages

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Gurage Zone Culture and Tourism Department stated that it is working hard to register the Gurage identity and features under the United Nations Education Science Culture and Organization (UNESCO) during the Meskel festivity.

Department’s Head Meseret Amerega told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that it has been carrying out various activities to register the Gurage identity and characteristics as a world heritage when the zone celebrates Meskel. Meskel is the identity and characteristics of Gurage people.

“It means that the Gurage zone is one of the areas of the country where the festival of Cross is celebrated. A preliminary activity has been done to celebrate the cross annual festivals with protecting the image of the religion and culture this year.”

According to her, the festival of the cross is celebrated in the selected places annually in the zone. This year, at the government level, the festival is celebrated for the 6th time in Mihur Aklil district with the presence of various stakeholders and tourists since September 19.

Meseret further stated that an exhibition will be held to show the whole process of making Gurage *kitfo* (food prepared from raw meat-butter with a key ingredient of kocho), the decoration of Gurage villages, and the making of traditional huts and similar works of art during the celebration. “It is significantly useful to promote Gurage’s tourism potential and to showcase



Meseret Amerega

for tourists that the people of Gurage and the cross festival are the two sides of a coin.”

“The cross festival will be held until October 12 whilst various activities such as cabbage kitfo, *Demera* (the burning of a large bonfire), livestock slaughter ceremony, and related issues will be carried out.”

She stressed that the department has been working a lot in promoting the wide landscape of the area, cultural values, and the like to the rest of the world and ensuring the people benefit from the sector in the near future.

The number of tourist inflow is increasing from time to time whilst it is a golden opportunity to promote and develop the tourism sites in the zone. Besides, the department is striving more to transfer the original religion and cultural values for the new generation with effective protection.

ILO reaffirms commitment to shoring up refugee livelihoods

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – The International Labour Organization (ILO) has reaffirmed commitment to supporting refugees and communities to improve livelihoods.

Approached by *The Ethiopian Herald*, ILO Country Director in Ethiopia Alexio Musindo said that Ethiopia is one of the countries hosting thousands of refugees in the continent.

He stated that his organization along with governments and partners is working to improve the lives of the communities and refugees in terms of access to finance, skills development, among others.

“In addition to safeguarding the migrant workers, it has been working on providing financial loans and capacity building, business developments services that enable them to engage in any business fields,” he added.

ILO is struggling to lift out the hosting communities and refugees from their situations through various initiatives such as job opportunities, businesses and economic empowerments and others which are the focus areas of the organization, he remarked.

He said, “So far we have been facilitating and domesticating the requirements that help make financial contributions. Moreover, as migration is becoming complex and multi-faceted in the East and Horn of Africa, international partners and donors need to strengthen advocacy and financial assistance.”

As most of the migration accounting for 80% is intra-regional, cross border agreements between unions and countries would



Alexio Musindo

contribute a lot in addressing the problem, he said.

As of April 2023, Ethiopia has been hosting 253,616 Somali refugees and in parallel the latter has hosted 23,701 Ethiopian refugees and asylum seekers, it was learnt.

It is noted that the flow of people from every corner is characterized by mixed migration flows encompassing refugees, asylum-seekers and migrant workers. Hence, it has posed a strain on governments in regions as they struggle to cope with the large number of migrants crossing their border and moving through their countries.

“Countries in the East Africa and Horn of Africa region have increased efforts to boost migration governance at the national and regional levels based on continental and global initiatives and frameworks established to advance improved migration management.”

Therefore, ILO in partnership with other partners is currently implementing a three year program to strengthen the capacities of countries in these regions thereby alleviating the threats occur in due course of migration, it was learnt.

Demera symbolizes Ethiopian unity to reach new heights: Premier

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA -“The celebration of Demera is the symbol of Ethiopians coming together for realizing the new heights of our country,” Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) said.

The premier extended his best wishes and message yesterday to Ethiopians for the commemoration of Meskel.

Demera is the lighting of a bonfire where the people come together to ignite fire to the bundle of branches, sticks and torches on the Eve of the feast of Meskel.

It is an annual religious holiday celebrated among the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians to commemorate the discovery of the True Cross upon which Jesus was crucified.

He said that: “Demera is our symbol of coming together to realize the height of our

country.”

The different sticks, branches and torches are added together to build Demera, Abiy said, making parallels with various cultures, faiths, resources, value systems, diverse views and history which constitute Ethiopia.

The prime minister noted that: “All of us are not required of adhering to identical views, or identifying ourselves with same

identities and languages.”

“The pole which unifies and supports the branches and torches of the Demera is symbolic to the federal system which we establish one economic and political community,” he said.

“This is our multinational unity, our Ethiopianism, by so doing, we can build prosperous and strong nation common to us,” the premier underlined.



Rice cultivation, production increasing in Amhara state

ADDIS ABABA /ENA/- Rice cultivation and production have been increasing in Amhara State as a result of the efforts being carried out by the government to expand the development of the crop in the country, according to Agriculture Bureau of the State.

The government of Ethiopia has been undertaking various agricultural development activities with a view to ensuring food self-sufficiency expand export trade and realize import substitution.

Rice development program is one of these activities which are being implemented over the past few years as part of the efforts.

There is a fast tendency of rice farmland and production increment in Amhara state

which demonstrates the fact that the country has the potential to substitute rice import by strengthening domestic productions and even start export.

Bureau’s Rice Crop Development Coordinator Eniye Assefa told ENA that some 5.4 million quintals of rice crop is expected to be harvested this season from Amhara state alone.

The production is expected from the 83, 650 hectares of cultivated land in 17 rice growing districts, she added.

Compared to the same period last year, land covered by rice showed an increment of 22,000 hectares and more than two million quintals in terms of production, the coordinator stated. This indicates that the

land cultivated and the yield obtained is showing a tendency of increment.

Moreover, she elaborated that Fogera National Rice Research and Training Center and other organizations have helped the farmers to ensure their food security and increase economic benefits with the improved varieties.

About 61,497 hectares of land was cultivated with rice and collected more than 3.2 million quintals last year in the state.

According to the National Rice Development Strategy there is a high tendency of rice farmland increment in Ethiopia particularly in Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia States.

Council pleas to...

During the occasion, Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council Deputy President Sheikh Abdulkerim Sheikh Bedredin conveyed his best wish message to all Muslims.

“Mawlid-al-Nabi commemorates all good deeds of the great prophet of Islam. We need to recount outcomes which human beings endowed because of the revival by the prophet. The prophet was a man of humanity. He teaches us to respect all good things and to reject inhuman things,” he said.

At the event, Addis Ababa Islamic Affairs Supreme Council Deputy President, Sheikh Fethudin Haji Zeynu indicated that Islam and Ethiopia have common history.

Taking the opportunity, he urged all faithful to respect national socio-cultural diversity.

Culture and Sport Minister Kejela Merdasa also congratulated the faithful and wished a happy holiday.

In his remark, the minister stated that Islam and Ethiopia cannot be separated.

Ethiopia is the first country to receive Muslims following the Saudi Arabia. The first Muslims have laid their legacies in Ethiopia and it will be extended for long, he said.

Religious commands and values preached by the prophet are fundamental for all human beings. The prophet teaches harmony and refuses tyrannical administrations. All those things are absolutely irrefutable, he said.

He also called public to strengthen interreligious and intercultural integration.

Abune Mathias...

finding of True Cross is a good lesson for this generation.

Culture and Sport Minister Kejela Merdasa said that this generation should avoid divisive activities to live together in a passion. It should maintain unity and peace by refraining from divisive acts. The festival has become world’s asset. As a result, the Ministry is ready to support the preservation of these kinds of festivals.

Meskel (True Cross) holiday marks the finding of the cross that Jesus was crucified on. It is a magnificent carnival celebrated for two subsequent days.

The eve of the festival is known as Demera, a bonfire which is lit before the end of the day to symbolize the smoke that led Empress Helena to the true cross.

the Red Sea, a veteran diplomat said.

Approached by *The Ethiopian Herald*, the seasoned diplomat Ambassador Girum Abay stated that the uninterrupted access to the Red Sea is the matter of existence to Ethiopia and it is a lifeline for Africa’s second populous nation. Ethiopia’s import-export almost totally goes in the Red Sea and the country stands only 48.8 kilometers away from the nearest shores.

“The question today is how Ethiopia would ensure a guaranteed and uninterrupted access to the Red Sea. The mechanisms for landlocked

Ethiopia’s top...

nations to access the sea are more or less those which Ethiopia has been using for centuries.”

According to Ambassador Girum, the best alternative for Ethiopia is using neighboring ports in an uninterrupted and secured manner for import-export activities while port diversification should remain its priority. Currently, Ethiopia is now in a good position to utilize different ports on the Red Sea.”

The United Nations convention stipulates that landlocked countries have the right to access to the sea through neighboring countries. This right should be discussed, negotiated

and accepted. All neighboring countries are expected to understand Ethiopia’s successive economic growth and settle problems if the latter’s hindrance to access to sea impacts the wellbeing of its people and affects business.

“The big powers believe Ethiopia has the right to secure an uninterrupted and secured access to the sea. The question is how we will convince our neighbors using the understanding of big powers. Holding a cordial negotiation with our neighbors is the tool that Ethiopia ensures reliable access to the Red Sea,” the veteran diplomat emphasized.

Opinion

Indigenous values in fostering coexistence in Ethiopia

BY LAKACHEW ATINAFU

Ethiopia, a land rich in cultural diversity and historical significance, has long been a cradle of indigenous values that interconnect and maintain the essence of humanity. These values are deeply rooted in the country's intangible cultural heritage, which has recently received international recognition through UNESCO's registration.

As celebrations of many religious festivals take place, this is the right time to explore the significance of indigenous values in Ethiopia and how they contribute to the preservation of humanity's shared heritage.

Ethiopia reveals itself a remarkable hub of cultural diversity, with over 80 different ethnic groups and numerous unique traditions. This diversity is reflected in the intangible cultural heritage, encompassing practices, rituals, knowledge systems, and expressions that have been passed down through generations.

Elements of this intangible heritage, such as oral traditions, music, dance, craftsmanship, and religious rituals embody the indigenous values that connect Ethiopians to their past and present.

In recent years, Ethiopia has received international recognition for its rich intangible cultural heritage. Several elements have been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Notable examples include the Gadaa System, a democratic social and political system practiced by the Oromo community, and Fichee-Chambalaalla, a New Year festival celebrated by the Sidama people. These registrations highlight the importance of safeguarding Ethiopia's indigenous values and promote cultural diversity on a global scale.

To ensure the preservation and vitality of Ethiopia's indigenous values, concerted efforts are needed. This includes enhancing educational programs that promote cultural awareness, fostering intergenerational transmission of knowledge, and supporting community-led initiatives for the revitalization of endangered traditions. Collaborative projects involving the government, civil society, and local communities can play a crucial role in safeguarding and promoting Ethiopia's intangible cultural heritage.

Ethiopia's indigenous values, deeply embedded in its intangible cultural heritage,

provide a foundation for interconnecting and maintaining the values of humanity. The recognition of Ethiopia's intangible heritages by UNESCO serves as a testament to their significance and calls for collective action in safeguarding and revitalizing these invaluable treasures.

By celebrating and nurturing indigenous values, Ethiopia can continue to contribute to the preservation of our shared heritage and promote cultural diversity for generations to come.

These intangible heritage elements, such as oral traditions, music, dance, craftsmanship, and religious rituals, embody the indigenous values that connect Ethiopians to their past and present.

At the core of Ethiopia's indigenous values lies the concept of Ubuntu, an ideology that emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity. Ubuntu recognizes that one's humanity is tied to the collective well-being of the community. It promotes compassion, empathy, and a sense of responsibility towards others, fostering harmonious relationships and social cohesion.

Ethiopia's indigenous values are closely intertwined with traditional knowledge systems that have been nurtured for

centuries. These systems encompass a wide range of expertise, including herbal medicine, agricultural practices, and ecological management. The transmission of this knowledge occurs through oral traditions, apprenticeships, and community-based learning, ensuring the preservation of ancestral wisdom and sustainable practices.

By celebrating and nurturing indigenous values, Ethiopia can continue to contribute to the preservation of our shared heritage and promote cultural diversity for generations to come.

Nationally marked days are important dates that hold significance at the national level and are officially recognized by the country. These days often commemorate historical events, celebrate cultural or religious festivals, honor national heroes, or raise awareness about specific causes. In Ethiopia, there are several nationally marked days that hold great importance for its people.

One such nationally marked day in Ethiopia

See Indigenous values... Page 12

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

Editorial

Green investment for sustainable tourism

For more than four decades, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has celebrated World Tourism Day as an international observance on September 27. Identifying this day as tourism day helps the global leaders to raise awareness on the role of tourism within the international community and to demonstrate how it affects social, cultural, political and economic values worldwide. Along with choosing the day, the laws was also adopted which is considered to be a milestone in global tourism.

A glance at history indicates that a Nigerian national the late Ignatius Amaduwa Atigbi was the one who proposed the idea of marking September 27 of every year as World Tourism Day. Justly, he was finally recognized for his contribution in 2009. On its General Assembly in October 1997, UNWTO decided to designate a host country each year to act as the organization's partner in the celebration of World Tourism Day.

This year's theme for World Tourism Day is "Tourism and Green Investments" which highlights the significance of making tourism more sustainable and environmentally friendly. The day is being marked on September 27 and 28 in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with panel discussion. Some topics of the discussion include: The power of tourism: building bridges, Investing in our people: is tourism getting the right talent? Investing in our destinations: the potential of the undiscovered, Investing in our prosperity: bridging the innovation gap, Investing in our prosperity: powering entrepreneurship and the like.

Essentially, the panel discussion has aimed at calling the international community, governments, multilateral financial institutions, development partners and private sector investors to unite around a new tourism investment strategy and act accordingly. Moreover, the UNWTO states, "The organization highlights the need for more and better-targeted investments for people, for the planet and for prosperity. Now is the time for new and innovative solutions, not just traditional investments that promote and underpin economic growth and productivity."

Unquestionably, tourism plays irreplaceable roles for mutual understanding and development; hence, it has to be cultivated to offer its full potential. Unfortunately, these days, both natural and man-made consequences are threatening many travel destinations and the survival of communities and economies. As a result, many developing countries and economies that depend on tourism are facing a growing investment deficit and a cost-of-living crisis.

Indeed, among these consequences, climate change takes the lion's share. A research by University of Cambridge (2014) states, "The industry [tourism] faces profound impacts from climate change – impacts that are already being felt. As temperatures rise, the attractiveness of many destinations will fade. Winter sports will become less viable in some locations. Coastal tourism is highly vulnerable to rising sea levels. The natural phenomena that millions of tourists travel to see – coral reefs, forests, fauna-rich Savannah – will be degraded or destroyed. The sector also faces impacts of a more general nature: more expensive insurance (from more extreme weather), reduced water availability, reduced food security and greater conflict affecting some communities in which it operates."

Cognizant of these impacts, the global community has decided to recognize the necessity of investing in green development on this World Tourism Day. Every government and businesses are earnestly demanded to invest in sustainable and resilient tourism practices.

Profitably, Ethiopia has been contributing a commendable share in this regard, investing green development. For more than a decade, it has initiated a green campaign every year when millions of seedlings were planted. As a result of this campaign, the biodiversity and ecological balance of many destinations could be protected. This certainly cultivates the full potential of sustainable tourism. More interestingly, Ethiopia remains to be one of the leading nations that are immensely investing in climate resilient green economy.



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Opinion

Meskel: Ethiopia's UNESCO inscribed Intangible world Heritage

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

The Ethiopian New Year comes up with various religious and cultural celebrations which are marked indoors among families and outdoors with the entire public in mammoth paraphernalia. *Meskel*, the holiday celebrated in commemoration of the discovery of the True Cross happens to be one of those holidays marked at outdoor venues, mostly open fields.

This year *Meskel* is celebrated in Ethiopia under the backdrop of two sets of political events that heralded the end of the two years' war in the northern part of the country and relative restoration of peace through AU brokered Agreement on Permanent Cessation of Hostilities inked between the Federal Government and the TPLF while the ongoing implementation of the State of Emergency Declaration in Amhara Region is gradually helping to restore normalcy in the region.

Meskel, meaning the Cross in Amharic is an annual religious Ethiopian holiday among Orthodox Christian believers and the first outdoor feast in the Church calendar. *Meskel* takes place on the 27th of September, or 28th during a leap year in Gregorian calendar.

In addition to its religious values, *Meskel* coincides with the end of the main rainy season (June to September) and the onset of Ethiopian spring in which fields and meadows in the country are carpeted with mesmerizing endemic daisies, locally known as *adey abeba*, with their captivating yellow colors which majestically envelop the Ethiopian fields. The daisies prevail for only two months and disappear over the next ten months to reappear at the same period the next year.

Meskel is also a time when many urbanites return home to villages. Neighborhoods and villages celebrate *Demera* in thousands of local celebrations.

The feast of *Meskel* started on the 26th of September with the celebration of the *Demera*, a ceremonial burning of a large bonfire. It is a special event that is conducted on the eve of *Meskel* to recall the smoke that supposedly led Empress Helena to the site of the True Cross.

The True Cross, on which Jesus Christ had been crucified upon it, was thrown in a ditch or well, and then covered with stones and earth, until Empress Helena, mother of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor of Rome, discovered the place where three crosses that were believed to be used at the crucifixion of Jesus and of two thieves, executed with him were found.

Empress Helena known by her Ethiopian name Nigist Eleni had a revelation in a dream to make a bonfire and that the smoke would show her where the true cross was buried. So she ordered the people of Jerusalem to bring wood and make a huge pile. After

adding frankincense to it the bonfire was lit and the smoke raised high up to the sky and returned to the ground, exactly to the spot where the True Cross had been buried.

The national feast of *Demera* is held at Meskel Square, a huge square in Addis Ababa, on September 26, the eve of *Meskel*, the official day of the Feast of the Finding of the True Cross.

That morning, the *demera*, a tall pyramid of branches, decorated with *adey abeba*, daisy-like flowers, prepared at the Meskel Square and in public squares or at intersections.

At the Meskel Square, in the afternoon, dozens of Sunday school students and members of the clergy move through the square singing spiritual songs that last hours. As darkness begins to set in, the *demera* is set ablaze.

The following day, the official day of the feast of the finding of the True Cross, Ethiopians attend liturgy and a feast and celebrate with family and friends. Many use the ashes from the *demera* to mark their foreheads with a shape of a cross.

According to official chronicles, the *demera* festival of the *Meskel* holiday celebration dates back to 1600 years has been registered as world intangible heritage by UNESCO in December 2013, as the first intangible Ethiopian heritage.

During *Meskel* festival, a special species of birds known as 'YeMeskel Wof -Meskel's Bird' also appears. Generally, the word 'YeMeskel Wof' is used to call the four bird species, namely the northern red bishops, indigo-birds, whydah and widow birds, and yet it has more than ten species under it. These birds are also enjoyed by bird watchers during *Meskel*.

These birds are endemic to Ethiopia, and do not migrate from one place to another as other birds do. As September, Ethiopia's first month, is their reproduction season, the colors of their feathers gets changed in order to attract opposite sexes. Due to this change, it looks that they are new birds that appear only at this time of the year.

Meskel also marks a tourist season in Ethiopia. Thousands of tourists from many countries converge on Ethiopia to enjoy the ceremonies during the *Meskel* celebrations. They particularly enjoy celebrating *Meskel* in Addis Ababa at Meskel Square and in tourist attraction areas in the northern part of the country known as *the historical route* among tourists and travel agencies catering to tourism in the country. Ethiopia has now developed three world class eco-tourism projects in Gorgora, Koisha and Wonchi in Amhara, South Ethiopia and Oromiia.

Meskel is celebrated as a grand religious occasion among the Ethiopian Orthodox believers because it is believed that a part of the True Cross has been brought to Ethiopia. It is said to be kept at Amba Gishen, which

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

Business & Economy

Lucrative sector from “The land of Origin”

BY LAKACHEW ATINAFU

Certainly! Ethiopia is a country with immense tourism potential and a rich cultural heritage. Its diverse festivities play a significant role in attracting tourists and contributing to economic development. There are so many key points to be mentioned about the Ethiopian tourism potential and the contribution of diverse festivities. Most of all, historical and cultural attractions are grabbing the interest of tourists.

Ethiopia is known for its ancient historical sites and cultural treasures. The country is home to numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Lalibela, Axum, Gondar, and the rock-hewn churches of Tigray. These attractions draw tourists interested in exploring the country's unique history and architecture.

By the same token, natural beauty is the other manifestation for the country. Ethiopia boasts breathtaking landscapes and natural wonders. The Simien Mountains, Danakil Depression, Blue Nile Falls, and the Rift Valley Lakes are just a few examples of Ethiopia's natural beauty. Tourists can engage in activities like trekking, bird watching, and wildlife spotting, attracting nature enthusiasts from around the world.

On the other hand, unique festivals are serving as magnetic tourism factor and appeared to be lucrative income and peaceful coexistence for the country. Ethiopia has a diverse range of cultural and religious festivals throughout the year. Enkutatash, Ethiopia's New Year is celebrated on 11th September or 12th during leap years; Meskel, the colorful outdoor festival observed by Christians that attracts tourists from all over the world; and the Oromo thanksgiving festival, Irreecha are among the intangible heritages of Ethiopia.

One of the most famous is Timkat, the Ethiopian Orthodox celebration of Epiphany. The festival involves colorful processions, music, dancing, and the reenactment of baptismal ceremonies. These and other celebrations provide a glimpse into Ethiopia's vibrant cultural heritage and traditions.

Apart from promoting the counties' ancient civilization, the economic impact of tourism has enormous merits for the country. The tourism sector in Ethiopia has significant economic potential. By promoting tourism and attracting visitors, the country can generate revenue, create job opportunities, and stimulate local businesses. Tourists spend money on accommodations, transportation, food, souvenirs, and various services, all of which contribute to the local economy.

Furthermore, employment and entrepreneurship is the other area reinforced by tourism development. The growth of tourism in Ethiopia can lead to increased employment opportunities. The sector requires a wide range of skills, including hospitality, tour guiding, transportation,

and craft making. Additionally, tourism can encourage entrepreneurial activities, such as the establishment of hotels, restaurants, tour agencies, and handicraft businesses.

Community developments ushered by tourism can have a positive impact on local communities. As tourism grows, it creates demand for goods and services, encouraging the development of infrastructure, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions. Moreover, community-based tourism initiatives can empower local communities, preserve cultural heritages, and provide sustainable livelihoods.

Beyond these, international image building and investment attraction can be achieved through efficient tourism. A thriving tourism industry enhances the country's international image and attracts foreign investment. Positive experiences shared by tourists can lead to increased interest from potential investors, encouraging economic growth in other sectors beyond tourism.

According to the Addis Ababa City Administration Culture, Arts and Tourism Bureau, a plan is in place to channel approximately 86.99 billion Birr into the capital's economy from domestic and foreign tourists in the current fiscal year. This includes 42.59 billion Birr from foreign tourists and 44.4 billion Birr from domestic tourists. These funds will contribute to the economic growth of the capital and provide opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship in the tourism, arts, and culture sectors.

By implementing a strategic approach to tourism development and leveraging the unique cultural heritage and festivities, Ethiopia can position itself as a top tourist destination in Africa and the world, leading to economic prosperity, cultural preservation, and enhanced international recognition.

Again, the government has to put in place the factors to up line the country's tourism and be able to one of the hub of tourism in the world since the country is The Land of Origin and heterogeneity, according to tourism documents.

Investing on improving transportation infrastructure; including airports, roads, and railways is among the key factors to enhance accessibility within the country. This will make it easier for tourists to travel between different destinations and regions in Ethiopia. Additionally, ensuring the availability of quality accommodations and tourist facilities in key locations is equally essential.

Launching effective marketing campaigns to raise awareness about Ethiopia as a tourist destination serves as a bloodline to the nation's economy. Using various channels, including social media, travel websites, and international tourism fairs, to showcase the country's unique attractions, cultural heritage, and diverse festivities is a noble activity in the sector. Collaborating with international travel agencies and tour operators to promote Ethiopia as a must-visit destination is a duty must not be put



Demera celebration in Ethiopia

aside.

Establishing and expanding direct flight connections between major international cities and Ethiopia's are among core facilities of tourism sector. This includes forging partnerships with international airlines and encouraging them to increase the frequency of flights to Ethiopian airports. This will facilitate easy access for international tourists and boost visitor numbers.

Emphasizing on sustainable tourism practices to preserve Ethiopia's natural and cultural resources should be a habit to anyone engaged in the sector. Implementing guidelines for responsible tourism, including waste management, conservation of natural areas, and respect for local communities is as equally essential as promoting the sector. In line with this, encouraging eco-friendly accommodations and promoting community-based tourism initiatives enable to ensure the benefits of tourism reach local communities.

Since peace and security are preconditions for tourism, focusing on maintaining a safe and secure environment for tourists is a matter of preserving the sector secured. To this end, investing in training and equipping security personnel, especially in tourist areas ensure the safety of visitors. Collaboration with law enforcement agencies, local communities, and tourism stakeholders is a must to create a secure and welcoming environment for tourists.

Protecting and preserving Ethiopia's cultural heritage sites, historical monuments, and artifacts is keeping the sector alive. There should also be implementing conservation measures to safeguard these treasures for future generations.

Exerting all the above mentioned efforts without investing in training programs to enhance the skills and professionalism of individuals working in the tourism industry will be in vain. Thus, providing training in hospitality, customer service, tour guiding and language proficiency is essential. This will improve the overall visitor experience and contribute to the growth of the tourism

sector.

In order to create fertile ground to flourish the tourism sector, fostering collaboration among government agencies, local communities, private sector enterprises, and international organizations must be underlined. Establishing partnerships with international tourism bodies and seeking their support, enables promoting Ethiopia as a preferred tourist destination. This includes engagement with local communities to ensure their active participation and benefit-sharing in the tourism sector.

Offering attractive incentives and creating conducive investment climate to attract local and foreign investors in the tourism sector should be planned and applied. This may include Provision of tax breaks, streamlined administrative processes, and support for infrastructure development to encourage investment in hotels, resorts, tour agencies, and other tourism-related businesses.

Capitalizing on enhancing the overall visitor experience by providing quality services, cultural immersion opportunities, and unique tourism products add value to the sector. Developing specialized tour packages that showcase Ethiopia's diverse attractions, festivals, and cultural experiences will make the tourists extend their stay here.

By implementing these strategies, Ethiopia can position itself as a leading tourist destination and a hub of internal peaceful mobility in Africa and the world. This will lead to economic growth, job creation, cultural preservation, and an enhanced international image for Ethiopia.

To fully realize Ethiopia's tourism potential and leverage the diverse festivities, it is important to focus on infrastructure development, marketing campaigns, preservation of cultural heritages, and training programs to enhance the skills of those working in the tourism industry. By doing so, Ethiopia can harness the economic benefits of tourism while preserving its cultural identity.

Art & Culture

Students' Marching Band Back in Shape

BY NAOL GIRMA

A marching band is a group of instrumental musicians who generally perform outdoors and who incorporate some type of marching or other movements with musical performance. Instrumentation includes brass, woodwinds, and percussion instruments. The music usually incorporates a strong rhythmic component suitable for marching. A marching band not only performs musical compositions, but also entertains with flamboyant steps and movements to create a moving musical ensemble, sometimes forming designs such as letters, logos, or even animated pictures. In addition to traditional parade performances, many marching bands also perform field shows at special events such as football games or at marching band competitions.

For the past 35 years now, Lieutenant Colonel Sisay has been a music and education professional. The Marching Band, which formerly flashed in schools and that helped to produce a diversity of musicians, was to be revived. This in mind he began knocking on doors of schools. Lieutenant Colonel, who had served as a general music teacher and lieutenant for many years, began his volunteer work at Menelik II School to revive the marching band scene in schools. The scenes were mostly used for protocol works and in the form of parade performances, where brass, woodwind, saxophone, clarinet, flute, trumpet, euphonium, sousaphone and other musical instruments were used. He was a young boy when he first fell in love with this profession. In his early age, while he was attending his formal education with his classmates, his heart was drawn to the song of the marching band trainees at the Emperor Gelawdewos of Nazareth's school while playing a variety of musical instruments.

"During my stay in the school I was eagerly expectant of the days when I will start to seek a niche in a marching band profession," According to him, a love for music welled up in his heart since he was a kid. Often, he was very much inspired by the music the March band used to organize in the school. But unfortunately as it may sound the marching band in his school did not endure. Even if the marching band's training screeched to a halt in the school, his childhood dream lingered likely to come true in the course of time.

History shows that marching bands began in the 17th century. It evolved out of military bands. Military values are enhanced and parade shows are highlighted in this art. In the UK, the United States and other Western countries, marching bands have reached their peak in defence institutions. Gradually, it spread to schools. If the United States were to rise as an example, it had several marching bands with up to 800 people participating at a time in colleges and universities alone.

When we come to the case in Ethiopia, the Marching Band was introduced by the Armenians during the reign of Haile Selassie I. Then the emperor selected people from Benishangul Gumuz area to take training and celebrate his coronation in 1931, but it



was disrupted due to the Italian invasion.

From 1945 onwards, however, it expanded into a military unit formerly known as the imperial body Guard, followed by the Ground Army, Police Army and later the Navy and Air Force. All military units also had marching bands.

Orchestras and marching bands were prevalent in all the so-called Northern Command, Western Command, Eastern Command. In particular, Northern Command had a marching band that was no smaller than the Central Command and the ground army.

It later began to spread to schools. Strong marching bands were in high schools, especially from the mid-1968s to the mid-1966s.

Lieutenant Colonel Sisay flipped through information and asked those who knew the history and told us that the Marching Band was first formed at the school level in different parts of Ethiopia at Dessie Woyzero Sehen School. Later, it spread to the schools of Harar Medhanealem, Addis Ababa KokebeTsebah, Menelik II, Emperor Gelawdewos of Nazareth and Arsi Ras Darge.

Many well-known musicians from the Navy also came out of the Menelik II School Marching Band. Solomon Lulu, Yared Music School teacher Bekele Debre and director Tekleyohanes Zeke, Mesfin Abebe, Alemayehu Woldeyohanes and many other professionals came out of the marching band and orchestra. This was also the result of the establishment of the Marching Band of Emperor Gelawdewos of Nazareth.

This marching band, which was born in the military during the reign of Haile Selassie and later expanded in schools, was disrupted from school in the mid-1978s. "The presence of the marching band in schools will boost the music industry, it will be the basis for interested students to join the field. And it is a source of employment and income," said Lieutenant Colonel Sisay.

In order to revive the marching band and orchestra, which has been discontinued in schools for the past 40 years, he recruited and trained students for free. In 1983, when

he was a student at Emperor Gelawdewos school, he joined the school's marching band. He was disappointed that his training was interrupted without much study.

The opportunity to go abroad for peacekeeping work was attended by many introductions with foreigners. A three-day visit to Entebe, Uganda, not only won him trophies, but also provided a good opportunity for him to achieve his goals. But he didn't want to buy a house or buy anything else. Instead, he bought a variety of musical instruments in order to achieve his goals.

He planned to share the knowledge and experience he accumulated during his three decades as a music teacher in the defence and with many friends with students. He took his personal musical instruments and devised a one-year work plan and recruited 30 students from Menelik II School in 2022 for three months training in the summer season. He also trained students in the marching band outside of school hours during the remaining period of the year.

Interested students are undergoing various musical instruments training alongside with their formal classes. They also plan to undergo vocal training in the future.

Lieutenant Colonel Sisay pointed out that live band-accompanied music is disappearing and is being replaced by electronics. This tragic episode prevents many professionals from coming out efficiently and in large numbers. While he doesn't have the money to pay for his noble practice in the field, he believes that in the future, the Addis Ababa Education Bureau and other institutions will support him and institutionalize him.

He added that if such students don't get paid for their pursuit of the education, it doesn't make sense. Trained students can generate income by performing in the street marching band in parks, holidays and annual festivals.

Lieutenant Colonel Sisay, who was trained in the Navy for a year as a sailor in 1984, told us that he enjoyed the enriching opportunity at the Yared School of Music due to the opportunities he had in competition, he served one year in the Navy as a music teacher and quitted his job in 1991 due to a



change of regime.

However, two years later, the vacancy of the Ministry of Defence for a music teacher created a good opportunity for him. Since 1985, he has been employed by the ministry as a music teacher and has served for more than 25 years.

According to the evidence of his service in the Ministry of Defence, from 1985 to 2019, he served as a clarinet player in the Navy and as a teacher and head of the Department of Defence Music.

Lieutenant Colonel Sisay, who brought his experience as a music teacher in the National Defence Forces to Menelik II High School, began training students in marching band at his own expense. Still he cannot evade challenges.

While the school principals and others are encouraging him offering him a hall where he can provide training, he is concerned that the work is not generating income, and that it is an unrealistic prospect for the students whom he trains.

The lack of experience in volunteer training in the music sector, the lack of qualified teachers, the lack of talented music equipment, the high budget the music industry presupposes, the overall sector and the challenges that he has undertaken, have challenged him personally.

Lieutenant Colonel Sisay, who recalled that the former Menelik II School Students Association did offered full uniforms for the students he trains, also called the Ministry of Education, Education Bureau and other institutions to turn the voluntary work they started personally into an institution.

Indepth

GERD'S instrumentality in enhancing regional peace, stability and integration

BY STAFF REPORTER

The successful filling of the fourth round of the dam represents a significant achievement for Ethiopia demonstrating its diplomatic skill and commitment to mutual benefit and regional integration. It is a collective victory for the Ethiopian people who have contributed significantly to the realization of the project. The successful filling can promote shared benefits, support sustainable development goals and enhance national and regional security.

With this great accomplishment, Ethiopia must continue to take the lead in implementing shared goals across the region. By doing so, it will efficiently promote and strengthen mutual cooperation and beneficial relationships among its neighboring countries. These efforts will be a significant step towards creating a peaceful and prosperous region for all.

The completion of the fourth filling is a clear indication of the unity that exists among Ethiopians, particularly when striving to achieve a common purpose. The commitment and collective effort of Ethiopians coupled with a positive mindset and unwavering determination have helped the country remain firm in the pursuit of the GERD project to enhance its overall development agenda.

The dam demonstrates Ethiopia's unwavering commitment to economic development and the country's ability to withstand external pressures to achieve its goals. With the GERD's construction being instrumental in promoting cooperation among the three riparian countries, it will contribute significantly to enhancing regional peace, stability, and integration.

Ethiopia has been keen to ensure that the dam's operation respects the downstream countries' interests while ensuring the rights of the upstream countries to utilize natural resources for their development. Despite immense pressure, Ethiopia has remained steadfast in its mission to complete the GERD.

The success is a result of the contribution of the Ethiopian people and government who have demonstrated resilience and determination in the face of pressures. Ethiopia's approach to water development and management focusing on mutual benefit and dialogue sets an example for other countries in the region to follow.

The successful fourth filling without causing any significant harm to Egypt and Sudan is a significant diplomatic victory for Ethiopia. It represents a positive step towards resolving the diplomatic tensions and disagreements among the three countries. Ethiopia has demonstrated its commitment to international law and cooperation and it has repeatedly called for dialogue and negotiations to resolve any outstanding issues related to the GERD.

The country has demonstrated its commitment to mutual benefit and cooperation emphasizing that the GERD project is not a threat but an opportunity for regional



integration and sustainable development. The successful filling represents a positive move towards resolving diplomatic disputes and promoting shared benefits for the mutual advantage of all.

The GERD negotiation process underscores the commitment of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt to dialogue rather than confrontational measures. Such an approach can promote a culture of peaceful resolution emphasizing diplomacy as the primary tool for resolving regional conflicts and setting a precedent for resolving disputes in a peaceful manner.

When countries collaborate towards a mutual objective, it allows them to establish systems and practices that can help them tackle future challenges and resolve conflicts in a peaceful and sustainable way. An excellent example of this is the GERD project, where Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan have come together to achieve a common goal. This cooperation can go beyond the GERD project and can contribute to regional integration, sustainable development, and a shared prosperity.

The GERD negotiation process also provides an opportunity for the involved nations to develop and deepen their cultural exchange. Through exchanges of information and experiences, the nations involved can learn from each other and develop a deeper appreciation for each other's cultural, social, and political norms. This cultural exchange fosters greater understanding, trust, and respect thereby building stronger relationships among the involved parties.

The achievement of the fourth round of the Ethiopian dam filling is considered a remarkable feat for the country. This is because beyond meeting the country's power demands it also highlights the country's diplomatic skill and commitment to regional integration. Ethiopia has exhibited the potential of being a significant contributor to the African continent's development becoming an enviable model for other countries to emulate. The achievement represents a collective victory for the Ethiopian people who have tirelessly contributed to the realization of the project.

From the moment construction of the dam started, the public had a significant role in providing material, human, and financial resources and supporting the project's overall objective. The success of the dam filling has positive implications for the country's regional integration efforts. It opens opportunities for mutually beneficial ties with neighboring countries that are in need of power supply.

By having the potential to export energy to other African nations, Ethiopia can take advantage of the opportunities for more affordable and sustainable energy generation in the region, and consequently improve the quality of life of its citizens and attain sustainable development goals.

Regional integration will bring about significant transformational changes in the economic, environment and social sectors of Ethiopia. In addition, the successful filling of the dam has enormous potential to boost the economic prosperity of Ethiopia. There is the possibility of increased availability of energy which can spur industrial development attracting more investments and creating job opportunities which would reduce the country's poverty levels.

According to Yacob Arsano, Associate Professor, GERD Negotiating Team Member, and Hydro Politics Researcher, the fourth filling of the GERD is a huge success Ethiopia has registered withstanding diplomatic pressures. The pressure was so immense on Ethiopia since the beginning; the successful completion of the fourth filling has fully reversed the pressure against Ethiopia.

It is a big diplomatic victory for Ethiopia to complete the water filling according to plan. The success is the outcome of the contribution of the Ethiopian people.

Ethiopia has always taken into consideration the mutual benefit of neighboring downstream countries in its water development and the fourth round filling of the dam without any harm on the downstream countries proved Ethiopia's stance.

According to Engineer Sileshi Bekele (PhD), the GERD negotiating team leader,

Ethiopia's ambassador to the United States, and former Minister of Water and Energy, the successful completion of the 4th round filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) shows that no challenge will stop Ethiopians when they stand together for one common goal. Besides being a source of cooperation between the three riparian countries, the Great Renaissance Dam has practically demonstrated the fact that there will be no damage to the lower riparian countries. The completion of the 4th round filling opens a new chapter in the process of the construction of the dam.

According to Mohammed Al-Arousi, a Member of Parliament and Advisor to the Minister of Water and Energy, the successful completion of the fourth filling of the GERD is a confirmation of Ethiopia's position not to cause harm to Egypt and Sudan.

Ethiopia has once again declared beyond any doubt that the country is only seeking development after many speculated about the danger of filling in its various stages.

The fourth filling of the dam is a critical stage in which Ethiopia confirmed the fact that the country is moving in the right direction. Egypt and Sudan should share the joy with Ethiopia over the success of the fourth filling of the GERD since it has not brought any significant harm so far.

Engineer Kifle Horo, General Manager of GERD while briefing higher government officials, stated that the overall construction of the GERD reaches over 93 % completion. The dam comprises left, right and middle sections and to reach the final stage, the left and right sections requires only 9 to 10 meters while the middle part needs up to 20 meters. Until next year, this part will be fully accomplished.

Currently, two turbines are producing energy. After the successful completion of the fourth round filling, in this budget year, five additional turbines would be added to generate energy. This fiscal year, the number of turbines producing energy from the GERD would increase into seven. These units will be operational soon.

Law & Politics

Widespread calls for UNSC reform to redress imbalances against Africa

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

Over the years, African leaders have been advocating for an increase in representation within the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). They argue that the current composition of the council does not reflect the current geopolitical reality of the world particularly in relation to Africa. They claim that the current distribution of power is skewed against Africa and this inequality needs to be addressed.

They demand that the UNSC undergoes structural reform to redress the existing imbalances and ensure that Africa's active participation in global governance is secured. Despite repeated calls from various African leaders and scholars, the council has failed to give a swift response on the matter.

The lack of a permanent representation for Africa in the UNSC has been a matter of concern for many stakeholders. The absence of a voice for the continent in one of the most significant international bodies is seen as a significant disadvantage to Africa. This lack of representation also leaves Africa vulnerable to security threats which ultimately have an impact on the continent's development.

For several years now, African nations have been working tirelessly to bring about positive change and ensure that their voices are heard and their viewpoints represented on a global level. This desire for change is fueled by the recognition that Africa has for far too long been marginalized and overlooked by the rest of the world and that decisive action is urgently needed if the continent is to achieve its full potential.

Many scholars have questioned the legitimacy of the council citing its failure to reform in response to the changing global landscape. They argue that the council's composition does not reflect the current geopolitical realities of the world, and its decision-making process lacks transparency and accountability.

African leaders believe that the failure of the UNSC to provide the continent with a permanent representation undermines the principle of equity and fairness in international relations.

The possibility of an increased African presence in the UNSC is anticipated to have a positive impact on the continent's development trajectory. More African leaders on the council will create an avenue to advocate for policies that address critical developmental areas such as infrastructure, industrialization, human capital, trade and foreign investment, and value addition to the continent's resources. This type of engagement provides the necessary platform to push agendas that are critical to Africa's continued growth and development.

Increased representation will further



provide new avenues for African countries to participate in global decision-making which will enable them to have more significant influence on issues that affect their progress. If Africa can remain steadfast in the face of continuing challenges there is firm belief that it will eventually achieve its full potential. This determination towards progress and development will ensure that African citizens have the chance to live meaningful, productive lives in a world free of violence, oppression, and injustice.

The African leaders believe that more prominent African representation in the UNSC would allow challenges specific to Africa to receive greater attention and address concerns that directly affect the continent. These issues relate to conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and development. Africa has faced numerous internal conflicts, including civil wars and regional conflicts, which have often degenerated into humanitarian crises.

African leaders have long fought for permanent seats in the UNSC recognizing the urgent need to have their voices heard in this important global body. While there have been sporadic efforts to achieve this goal, it has largely remained an elusive dream. Despite this, the African Union, as one of the highest authorities in the continent should redouble its efforts to make this dream a reality. By doing so, the African continent can finally have a rightful say in the important decisions that affect its future.

The granting of permanent seats on the UNSC will provide African nations with a much-needed opportunity to play a meaningful role in the decision-making processes that affect their continent. This newfound representation will empower

them to shape discussions around matters that deeply affect them, making them more effective and inclusive to the needs of African society.

By including Africa in the decision-making process, the continent can become a major contributor to global peace and stability. The move towards greater inclusivity in international relations offers Africa an opportunity to significantly influence global decisions, improve governance structures and processes, and promote human development and prosperity.

The leaders of African nations firmly believe that the inclusion of more prominent African representation in UNSC is vital to address the specific challenges facing the continent. Such challenges pertain mainly to the issues surrounding conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and development. African nations are keen to participate fully in shaping the global peace and security agenda. They are putting in a lot of effort to see to it that their voices are heard whenever significant decisions are made in the international arena.

The reasons that Africans feel this way about having more representation in the global stage are numerous. One of the significant reasons is the fact that the continent has been subjected to a long history of exploitation and marginalization. Facing this historical injustice has resulted in African nations' need to push for representation in the global community and ensure that their interests are taken into account.

The continent has been plagued with socio-economic hardships, political turmoil, armed conflicts, famine, and other natural disasters that have left African people struggling to make ends meet. Despite this, however, the people of Africa are

not deterred by these adversities. They continue to work tirelessly to effect positive change, and with continued persistence, it is hoped that Africa can and will reach its full potential.

Withstanding attempts to maintain the unbalanced world order, Africans should stand together to secure permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and have a say on their peace and security matters, a veteran diplomat said.

The UNSC reform, including the expansion of the current five veto-wielding members has remained the major talking point among actors of international politics.

Speaking to The Ethiopian Herald, the ex-diplomat Ambassador Tiruneh Zena stated that Africa's robust economic growth, establishment of strong institutions and productive population make its exclusion from the council inconceivable. "Some permanent members of the UNSC want to keep the current international order, but this cannot be true due to various reasons. For instance, there is a loud voice and strong push from African countries to join the council on a permanent basis."

The ex-ambassador pleaded African leaders who will partake in the UNGA 78 to make a united voice to ensure the continent's permanent representation in the world's premier body for international peace and security.

"There is a projection that some African countries would join the club of big economies around 2030/40. As a result, countries including Ethiopia would become economically robust in the near future. The next century could be Africa's century as the continent is registering astonishing developments and achievements."

About Ethiopia, he expressed optimism that the country could play a prominent role in mobilizing African partners to come up with a united stance that would enhance the continent's share in international relations.

According to him, rotating Africa's permanent seat in the UNSC would make the continent advantageous and help the countries to have more capacity to take their peace and security matters in hand. The seat would be granted for the African Union (AU) and it would rotate among constituent members, Ambassador Tiruneh remarked.

Some permanent members of the UNSC including the U.S. and Russia supported the motion to ensure permanent seats not only for different countries including Japan, Germany, and India but also for countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The UNSC is one of the six principal organs of the UN and charged with international peace and security. China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States are UNSC permanent members with veto-wielding status.

Women in Focus

Women and *Giffaata*- New Year festival of Wolaita

BY STAFF REPORTER

In every society, be it in developing or developed countries, the contribution of women during holidays is multifarious. Even though their involvement and the part they play differ from country to country and from culture to culture, it is possible to say that young girls and women are always the main actresses that give life to festivals.

Ranging from purchasing holiday materials to redecorating the houses, from preparing delicious foods and drinks with whatever is available at home, without a shred of doubt; women are always at the front in adding more colors to the festivals and making everything fascinating.

The role of Ethiopian women, in this regard, is manifold. In addition to their regular arduous household chores, such as food preparation, child rearing, cleaning, purchasing goods for holiday parties, women exert utmost energy and shoulder extra responsibilities to make the festivals more impressive and unforgettable to the entire family members.

They go all out to prepare foods and drinks that are served on the table be more aromatic and delicious, to keep everything well organized and make all the things magic.

Obviously, *Meskerem* is a month of numerous holidays. The month, as it is a time that Ethiopians send off the old year and welcome their New Year, a number of festivals that have cultural and religious relevance will be celebrated. Among these festivals, *Giffaata*, the New Year festival of the Wolayta people, is the one.

Giffaata is a cultural festival celebrated by the people of Wolayta in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' State (SNNPS) in the month of September. When flowers blossom, green grasses and yellow flowers cover the mountains, plateaus and the gorges, the people of Wolaita will



Photo- Wolaita Zone Administration

'Gulia' (Demera) ceremony, which is one of the activities performed on the day of *Giffaata*

welcome their New Year warmly and colorfully.

As Wolaita Zone Chief Government Officer Asaminew Ayeza told EPA, *Giffaata* means 'the older or the beginning.' It is also considered as the bridge from old to new, dark to light. *Giffaata* is also the name given to the first month of the year in Wolaita's calendar,

And in this festival, the role of young girls and women in making the festival a real festival is incomparable.

As stated by Culture, History and Heritage Researcher Adane Aya, the role of women in *Giffaata* festival is central. Women start their preparations on the same day the preceding *Giffaata* festival is celebrated by storing butter in the form of *Equb*, a rotating saving that enable them to deposit money that will be used for the holiday - to buy festival items such as cultural clothes, *Enset* products and the like materials. This technique of saving money among the people of Wolayta for *Giffaata* event is known as *qoraphuwaa*.

Thus, when the actual day rolls around, primarily on the second market week of *Giffaata* season, known as *Bobbooda*, women get together at the house of the *Equb's* leader to collect their respective money that they deposited for a year to cover the expenses spend on this special holiday.

Mothers since mid-June, start preparing *Enset* (false banana) that will be used for the making various traditional foods such as "*Kocho*", "*Muchuwa*" and "*Bachira*" joining hands with their friends and daughters. In addition, they prepare *dat'a*, red pepper, and homemade cultural drinks such as *Borde*, *Tella*, *Tej*, *Qaribo*, and store milk in big clay pots.

They also purchase food grains, numerous beautifying cosmetics as well as lemons that will be used for a traditional game known as '*Gaziya*' and keep them in a cool place.

As the researcher stated to EPA, preparation of *Dat'a* pepper in the *Giffaata* celebration is a must and will be carried out by every individual woman when the festival is

nearing.

Young girls give a helping hands to their mothers in all activities, concurrent to their personal activities such as dye and decorate their hands and feet with '*Ensosela*' (similar to henna) and playing traditional game, '*Gaziya*.'

Preparing food and serving family members, neighbors and invited guests are also tasks that women are expected to do so accordingly and effectively.

The researcher pointed out that *Giffaata* festival has additional important values among the people- they have to pay off loans before the actual day of the event. For the reason they believe that not settling lends of the preceding year brings bad luck to the coming year and it takes away the blessings of the New Year. Wolaitas, no matter what, will not welcome their New Year acquiring loans. Thus, they pay back loans before the *Giffaata* festival. One, if he fails to do so, will receive strong condemnation from the community. Owing to this unwritten law, thus, it is a must for someone who borrowed money or grain to clear his debt before *Giffaata* day, Adane elucidated.

According to the researcher, saving among the people of Wolaita will not come to an end once the *Giffaata* celebration is concluded. Rather, it continues in the same manner for the next year's New Year festival. They start depositing their first day's saving on the fresh skin of the ox that was slaughtered for the festival; and continue doing it on weekly basis.

This unique practice of Wolaita community, apart from its economic importance by allowing mothers to cover their holiday costs, it has substantial social consequences. It further strengthens their social bonds and cooperation and plays a vital role in promoting a culture of saving among the young generations.

Meskel: Ethiopia's...

itself has a shape a cross.

The cross has a special meaning for Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. Christians of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church dangle the symbol of the cross on their neck.

Priests carry various types of cross with their ceremonial staff in conducting mass and other forms of prayers including a ceremonial blessings and sanctification of holy waters meant for healing the sick and casting out evil spirits from persons suspected of being possessed by demons.

Mario De Salvo says that "There is no country in the world that matches Ethiopia in the number of forms and types of its crosses. Ever since Ethiopia's conversion to Christianity, the cross has appeared almost universally, not only as a liturgical instrument in churches and monasteries, but also in common

devotion and in daily life."

From the cross stamped on the Aksumite coins, depicted in architecture and illustrated in the ancient illuminated codices to the astylar, manual or pectoral crosses made and forged respectively for liturgical functions, the author notes that "there is no country in the world that matches Ethiopia in the number of forms and types of its crosses." (Mario Da Silva, *Crosses of Ethiopia*, 2006)

Ethiopia boasts various types of crosses that are used on various religious and cultural occasions. The most popular ones are the crosses of Lalibela, Axum and Gondar. Tourists from various countries visiting Ethiopia make sure that they purchase various types of Ethiopian crosses that are made from silver and bronze, as well as carved from wood and marble.

This year's Meskel celebration also coincides with World Tourism Day is marked Thousands of tourists from all over the world are expected to arrive in Addis Ababa and regional towns to mark the event. *Meskel* is a season of reunion of families who were separated during the rainy season due to torrential rains and over flooded rivers. At this point in time, all Ethiopians who celebrate *Meskel* must remember the plight of our citizens who are currently displaced due to the war inflicted on the country by terrorist TPLF and its supporters here and abroad.

Despite the ordeals the nation had faced over the last two years, Ethiopia is marking *Meskel* and World Tourism Day with full optimism for promising economic self-reliance expected through import substitution of commodities like wheat through a bumper harvest in agriculture. Ethiopia has become a pace

setter in National Green Legacy Initiative by planting more than 20 billion trees across the country.

Ethiopia seems to endure a lot of challenges in and out of the country but the nation is discharging her responsibilities both in the global and regional levels in terms of promoting pan Africanism and African economic integration.

Meskel is a season of peace and unity as the cross also symbolizes love. Ethiopians can in no way afford to hate each other and live in conflict as this does not tally with the culture of the people and their history of coexistence. The conflicts that have flared up in the country over the last several decades have destroyed human and material resources of the country. All this could have been avoided over time so that the country can embark on peaceful socio-economic development.

Society

Marking Mawlid with acts of kindness, forgiveness

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

As a land where people with different cultural and religious backgrounds live in harmony, Ethiopian Muslims have a unique way of marking Mawlid with their Christian or non-Christian neighbors by sharing meals and enjoying traditional Ethiopian coffee.

The celebration of Mawlid- the birth of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad- has a special place among Ethiopians. On the day of Mawlid, it is common to see Ethiopians getting together for special prayers, sermons, and religious gatherings. Processions may also take place in some areas, where people march through the streets while chanting Islamic hymns and praising the Prophet Muhammad.

Mawlid is a joyous occasion that fosters unity and togetherness among Ethiopians with diverse background. In addition to its religious significance, the holiday is a special event for most Ethiopian families and communities to come together and share special meal which is prepared for that particular event.

The celebration of Mawlid across Ethiopia may vary from different regions and communities but the core purpose of the event is honoring the birth of Prophet Muhammad.

In his message extended to the Muslim community, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) stressed the importance of togetherness. Prophet Muhammad is revered for his teachings and being an example for promoting virtuousness, opposing injustice, and guiding people towards righteousness. His teachings emphasize the importance of humility, compassion, justice, and forgiveness.

“No matter what our religious background, we, Ethiopians stand together with our Muslim brothers and sisters during this great holiday by observing humility, kindness and forgiveness and elevating our spiritual lives. There is no a problem that cannot be resolved through humility, kindness and forgiveness.”

The Premier also urged Muslims to observe the blessings of Prophet Muhammad and contemplate the ways of humility while celebrating the Mawlid holiday.

In relation to the 2023 Mawlid holiday, The Ethiopian Herald had approached some individuals to reflect their view on the value of Mawlid in further bringing love, togetherness and peace to the people of Ethiopia.

Muhedin Hassan is an Ethiopian born Diaspora living in Seattle, in the United States, who came to Ethiopia recently for a short visit. According to him, like other holidays, most Muslim community mark Mawlid colorfully with their families, friends and neighbors. Islam is all about Salam (peace). The birth of Prophet Mohammad, the prophet and messenger of Allah, has witnessed the value of peace and love among human kinds. “In this regard, whenever we mark the day, peace, love,



Mawlid is a joyous occasion that fosters unity and togetherness among Ethiopians with diverse background

togetherness, gratitude and tolerance are the core values of our holiday.”

In view of this, when the Muslim community marks the day, it is common to show kindness and thoughtfulness to the needy people. Muslims distribute food, clothes, and other essential support to the needy, emphasizing the importance of helping others and fulfilling charitable obligations.

Asked how he relates his experience here in Ethiopia with that of Seattle, Muhedin said: “So far, I did not mark Mawlid in the US. Rather, here in Addis Ababa, I had several experiences of marking the days with families and friends. Whenever I came home to visit my families and friends, I have witnessed the power of holidays in bringing people of different culture and identities into one circle and to share common values.”

This togetherness, according to him, is not only among the Muslim community; but also with other members. “I have witnessed this several times. Whenever there is Christians’ holiday, it is common to gather with non-Christian neighbors and mark the day colorfully. Sharing traditional meals, drinking coffee and experiencing the holiday vibe with neighbors have a special

place in my heart. This is what I always miss when I am away from my homeland.”

Regarding the role of holidays in nurturing peace and tolerance, Muhedin said that, maintaining peace and tolerance is in the hands of every individual. The more every individual capitalize on peace and tolerance, the more rewarding results he/she would get. In this regard, holidays have a significant role in bringing people of different cultural backgrounds together and experience the power of forgiveness and act of kindness.

“I had a chance to visit several places in Ethiopia and was able to witness tolerance and love among Ethiopian people. I am able to disprove the misinformation that is being circulated on social media. Overcoming divisions and conflict, promoting peace and tolerance should be the only mission of every Ethiopian to overcome all forms of conflicts. When individuals and communities embrace tolerance and respect the cultural values and religious beliefs of others, conflicts based on religious differences or other grounds can be reversed, Muhedin opined.

Promoting dialogue and nurturing understanding on differences further promote peaceful religious coexistence. This dialogue further enhances understanding, fosters empathy, and helps dispel misconceptions or stereotypes that can lead to tensions or conflicts. In this regard, religious leaders and followers should be role models to their children and family members as well.

Abdurezak Mohammed is a journalist by profession. He is among those Ethiopians who knew the art of living in love and tolerance. Responding how he defines Ethiopianism with that of tolerance in times of holidays, Abdurezak said, tolerance is an important thing to live with peoples that have different ethnic, cultural, or religious background and opinions. Islam is the religion of peace, tolerance, forgiveness

and kindness.

According to him, Ethiopians have a long-standing tradition of celebrating holidays together. Muslims show their love for their Christian brothers and sisters by cleaning streets/places during holidays like Meskel Demera, Timket; and sharing food and other things. Christians do similar things during Muslims’ holidays like Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Mawlid.

Amare Adamu, is a project consultant for a private firm here in Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian Herald had a short stay with him while he was preparing to mark the feast of Meskel which is one of the grand holidays for followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian.

Asked what his impression is to mark the Muslims and Christians holidays in consecutive days, Amare said that seeing churches and mosques decorated with lights, banners, and colorful fabrics to mark the Mawlid and Meskel and watching followers of the two religion helping each other to mark the days colorfully and living in harmony is a living testimony of love and solidarity.

He also commented that religious tolerance and togetherness are indeed crucial to ensure sustainable peace for the Ethiopian society. “Respect for diversity is one of the qualities of modern society. Embracing religious difference and tolerance means recognizing and respecting this diversity as it promotes an environment where people from different religious backgrounds live together peacefully. This is what is needed for Ethiopia and to the coming generation.”

Religious peace, tolerance, and togetherness facilitate sustainable peace to Ethiopia by promoting respect, understanding, dialogue, and cooperation among diverse religious communities. Embracing these values can contribute to a more harmonious and inclusive society where people can live together in peace and mutual respect.

Indigenous values...

is Meskel, also known as Demera, the eve. Meskel is an annual religious festival celebrated on September 27th (September 28th during leap years) to commemorate the discovery of the True Cross upon which Jesus Christ was crucified, according to Ethiopian Orthodox Christian tradition. The festival involves the lighting of a large bonfire called the “Demera,” which is lit in the evening and represents the guidance of the Holy Cross.

Meskel is celebrated with religious processions, prayers, and vibrant festivities, including traditional music and dance.

Another significant nationally marked day in Ethiopia is Irrecha. Irrecha is an indigenous Oromo cultural and religious festival celebrated by the Oromo people, who constitute the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia. The festival is observed to give thanks to Waaqa (God) for the blessings of the past year and to pray for a prosperous future.

Irrecha is held annually at the end of September or beginning of October, depending on the lunar calendar. Lake Hora Arsadi in Bishoftu (Debre Zeit), located about 40 kilometers southeast of Addis Ababa, serves as the focal point for the celebration. Thousands of people gather to engage in cultural and spiritual activities, offering prayers and pouring water on the ground as a symbolic gesture of gratitude.

The peaceful coexistence of Meskel and Irrecha in Ethiopia demonstrates the country’s rich diversity and cultural tolerance. Although Meskel has its roots in Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and Irrecha is rooted in Oromo traditional beliefs, both festivals are celebrated with enthusiasm and mutual respect.

The Ethiopian government recognizes and

supports the celebration of both Meskel and Irrecha, fostering an environment of inclusivity and religious freedom.

Meskel (Ge’ez: Romanized: Mesk’el) is a Christian holiday in the Ethiopian Orthodox and Eritrean Orthodox churches that commemorates the discovery of the True Cross by the Roman Empress Helena (Saint Helena) in the fourth century. Meskel occurs on the 17 Meskerem in the Ethiopian calendar (27 September, Gregorian calendar, or on 28 September in leap years). “Meskel” (or “Meskal” or “Mesqel”, there are various ways to transliterate from Ge’ez to Latin script) is Ge’ez for “cross”.

The festival is known as Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in other Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant churches. The churches that follow the Gregorian calendar celebrate the feast yearly on 14 September.

The feast is held in Meskel Square, named after the festival, in the capital city of Addis Ababa. Religious and civil leaders preside over the celebration, and public figures give speeches and reference biblical themes and stories. Many Ethiopians who live in cities return to their villages to celebrate the national event. When it gets darker, the Demera is burned. UNESCO inscribed Meskel in 2013 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The Meskel celebration includes the burning of a large bonfire, or Demera, based on the belief that Queen Eleni, as she is known, had a revelation in a dream. She was told that she should make a bonfire and that the smoke would show her where the True Cross was buried. So she ordered the people of Jerusalem to bring wood and make a huge pile. After adding frankincense to it the bonfire was lit and the smoke rose high up

to the sky and returned to the ground, exactly to the spot where the Cross had been buried.

According to local traditions, this Demera-procession takes place in the early evening the day before Meskel or on the day itself. The firewood is decorated with daisies prior to the celebration. Charcoal from the remains of the fire is afterwards collected and used by the faithful to mark their foreheads with the shape of a cross (compare Ash Wednesday). Edward Ullendorff records a number of beliefs of the meaning of Demera, with some believing that it “marks the ultimate act in the cancellation of sins, while others hold that the direction of the smoke and the final collapse of the heap indicate the course of future events – just as the cloud of smoke the Lord raised over the Tabernacle offered guidance to the children of Israel.

One explanation for the high rank this festival has in the church calendar is that it is believed that a part of the true Cross has been brought to Ethiopia from Egypt. It is said to be kept at Amba Geshen, which itself has a cross-shaped plan.

Certainly! Ethiopia has a rich cultural heritage that is deeply intertwined with its traditional values and religious beliefs. Let’s explore some of the cultural values and traditional holy days in Ethiopia:

Respect for Community: In Ethiopian culture, community plays a vital role. Strong bonds and a sense of collective responsibility are valued. Ethiopians often prioritize communal needs over individual desires, emphasizing cooperation, support, and social harmony.

Ethiopians are known for their warm hospitality. Guests are treated with great respect and are often offered food and drink. Sharing meals is an integral part of Ethiopian

culture, and visitors are welcomed into homes with open arms.

Family and Kinship: Family holds a central position in Ethiopian society. Extended families often live together or in close proximity, fostering a strong sense of kinship and support. Elders are highly regarded and their wisdom and guidance are sought after.

Ethiopia is known for its religious diversity. The predominant religions are Orthodox Christianity and Islam, but there are also significant populations adhering to various indigenous beliefs. Religious tolerance and coexistence are valued, and religious festivals are celebrated with great enthusiasm.

Timkat (Epiphany): Timkat is one of the most significant religious festivals in Ethiopia, commemorating the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River. Celebrated on January 19th (or 20th in leap years), it involves colorful processions, hymn singing, and the reenactment of baptismal ceremonies. Timkat is celebrated throughout the country, but the most renowned celebration takes place in the historic city of Lalibela.

New Year (Enkutatash): Enkutatash, meaning “gift of jewels,” is the Ethiopian New Year celebrated on September 11th (or September 12th during leap years). It is a time of joy, renewal, and gratitude. Families gather to share meals, exchange gifts, and engage in traditional dances and music. It also marks the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the harvest.

These are just a few examples of the cultural values and traditional holy days in Ethiopia. The country’s rich and diverse heritage, combined with its strong religious traditions, contributes to a vibrant and unique cultural tapestry.