



The Ethiopian Herald

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Photo: Berihun Tadele

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Ray Fisher

Church pleads faithful to support needy during Meskel

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA-The Ethiopian Catholic Church has called on the faithful to uphold the support and empathy they have shown for the needy while observing Meskel (the Founding of the True Cross).

A *Demera* (lighting of a large bonfire) event was held on Wednesday accompanied by church songs with young Sunday School youth at Tsion Mariam Church.

Gebru Habte Yohanes, an expert at the Ethiopian Catholic Church Media said on the occasion that Meskel is historically related to

See Church pleads ... page 3

Foreign tourists impressed by vibrant *Demera*

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Foreign visitors who participated in Wednesday’s *Demera* (the burning of a large bonfire) event expressed impression in the colorful celebration and vowed to promote Ethiopia’s unique feature to family and friends.

Approached by the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), visitors from France, Hungary, and the U.S. also expressed excitement to witness the public’s overwhelming participation in the festivity.

Raphael Lorenzo, from France said the celebration of Meskel (*Demera*) with a large

crowd is something unique for his experience and the colorful way of dressing of the clergy and the laity make the event fascinating and memorable. “I took a large number of pictures during *Demera* and will share this experience for friends and families in a bid to encourage

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Frehiwot Gebremedihnn

Ethiopia to celebrate World Tourism Day next month

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Premier attends Addis’ 20th feeding center launching

- Food centers benefit over 35,000 residents

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA- Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), along with Mayor Adanech Abibie attended yesterday the launching of Addis Ababa’s 20th feeding center, dubbed TesfaBerhan, in Ketechene neighborhood of the metropolis.

According to the Office of the Prime Minister, Abiy also shared a holiday meal with beneficiaries of the center.

Mayor Adanech said at the inauguration ceremony that the Food Center is an additional New Year’s gift to residents of the metropolis and provides one nutritious meal a day to more than 500 low-income local residents. Currently, over 35,000 citizens are receiving services at the food centers in the capital.

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News

Ministry sets to enhance horticulture productivity, destinations

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – The Ministry of Agriculture has planned to step up horticulture products through improved production mechanisms to the global market in the current fiscal year.

Speaking to *The Ethiopian Herald*, Horticulture Export Coordinator Mekonnen Solomon said that pronouncing the gaps and lessons learnt previously, the ministry is aggressively engaging on various interventions to promote the potential of the country for horticulture investment and export volumes.

He further remarked that the ministry has been taking bold steps to boost the value of flower production by coordinating land for export consolidators with districts and urban settlements.

So far, in coordination with the regions and stakeholders, it has been identifying and preparing new land for new investors who are engaged in horticulture export development to create a favorable environment for exporting.

“We are establishing and implementing a cold framework management system from farm to market to maintain and send quality horticulture products to the international market,” he pinpointed.

Moreover, despite the limitations in land which is used for flower cultivation in the past seven years, the company has managed to utilize the existing land economically with new varieties that are desirable and productive in the market.

As to him, Netherlands, UK, Saudi Arabia, USA and Japan are among the destination countries importing a large volume of flowers, while Somalia, Djibouti, Netherlands, Russia and UK importing a large segment of vegetables.

He further indicated that a remarkable amount of foreign currency income was registered by improving and exporting qualified flowers and adding value to packaging to market destinations which meet the requirements of the destination markets in the past seven years.

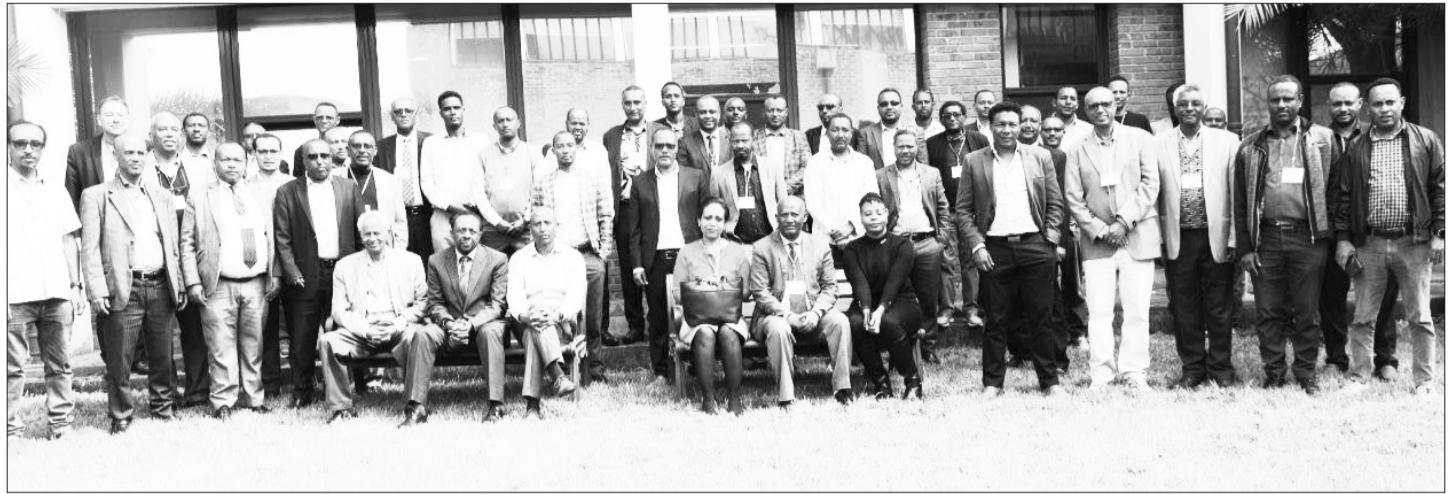
“Lack of quality product, logistics and adequate transportation system, land access, sectoral coordination and others are the bottlenecks witnessed in the sector that result in the lower amount of fruits and vegetables has not been able to penetrate the global market destination,” he emphasized.

Agriculture, manufacturing industry, mining and service sector are among the main export economic sectors that the Government of Ethiopia has given priority, he stated.

In the previous Ethiopian Fiscal Year, the total national export performance of the above mentioned sectors reached 3.635 billion USD. Out of this, the share of the agricultural sector accounts 79.5%, it was learnt.

Besides, coffee accounts for 46%, while horticulture investment hit 23% share and this makes the coffee and horticulture investment sub-sectors to play significant contributions to the performance of exports in the previous fiscal year, he remarked.

Photo by Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)



Ethiopia endeavors to combat climate crisis

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA—Ethiopia is pioneering the inclusion of a course in its higher education system with a view to empowering the generation to come and build resilience, so said senior officials.

Speaking at the workshop held on Monday, Addis Ababa University Acting President, Samuel Kifle (PhD) said that the Government of Ethiopia is highly valuing the role of climate education for climate resilience, as demonstrated by supporting climate change and adaptation in its research centers and universities, recognizing climate in thematic research, and streamlining academic programs and curricula.

Smallholder farmers and pastoralists, who drive the economy, have been most affected by extreme weather events, water shortages, heat stress, droughts, floods, and pests have hit agriculture and food systems hard, so the country is taking bold steps to address the climate crisis through education.

Despite the pressing need for climate

education, Ethiopia’s higher education institutions have historically lacked courage of attaching emphasis on climate change in their curricula.

UNESCO- IICBA Director, Quentin Wodon (PhD) on his part emphasized the need for more research and understanding to be carried out on human capacity in teaching climate change and related topics.

He recommended collaboration between universities, research institutes, and partners to assess the human wealth around climate change thereby benefiting not only Ethiopia but also other countries in the continent.

Furthermore, former senior university official and researcher at AICCRA Ethiopia Berhanu Belay (Prof.) on his part stated that the rigorous process involved in introducing new knowledge and facts in academia, and how it is later disseminated to society.

“Universities are well-positioned to facilitate the generation of knowledge and its dissemination through community services and outreach programs,” he said.

He said, “Ethiopia is poised to become a regional and continental leader in building a climate-resilient future by equipping its future generations with the knowledge and tools to address climate-related challenges.”

Participants agreed to integrate climate education into Ethiopia’s undergraduate curriculum through the national curriculum review process.

As the nation embarks on this transformative journey, the world will be watching closely, hoping that Ethiopia is taking pioneering steps to inspire other nations in the region and the continent to take similar actions in the fight against climate change.

The workshop themed, “Streamlining climate basics in higher education curricula in Ethiopia,” was jointly organized by the Ministry of Education, in association with UNESCO’s International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority and AICCRA project based at ILRI Ethiopia.

SOS mothers share experiences in bringing up children

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

The non-profit organization provides children lacking parental care with a safe home and many children lost their families.

For children growing up alone across the world they need great mothers, SOS mothers fill that role, raising children in safe and nurturing homes. Organization creates bonds that last a lifetime and give children the trust and confidence to make them the strongest selves and self-assurance in their life.

SOS Children’s Villages helps children to find lost relatives so they can grow up with their families in the case where a child has no relatives.

Regarding this *The Ethiopian Herald* had a stay with mothers who give parental care in SOS Children’s Villages in Ethiopia and regarding how to raise and develop socialization of children to reach them at a good level of status.

Her name is Enat Woineshet and she left her village Harar to watch the younger children in the village in Addis Ababa village center. Enat joined the organization after months of training ten years back and she lives in a village center.

She is raising eight children at this moment



and raised about 19 children during her stay in SOS Children’s Villages in Ethiopia and some of her children have graduated and married to her. “We always live in the village and give care to children and even sometimes it is allowed to help our relatives or kids. I don’t detach from my children even when I retire.”

“I give them real love and commit my promise as a biological mother; three of my children have married and are survived by three kids and now they help me as biological mother. Being motherhood needs commitment, born from the heart, needs decision, and true love,”

she added.

Aregash Dagnu, another woman, stated that she served twenty years in SOS Children’s Villages in Ethiopia Addis village in parental care, raising children after consecutive four months training in Hawassa. Among the 30 children she brought up; most of them are getting married and sometimes visit her.

Now she raises eight children in the previously mentioned village center. “I provide care for my children to have a successful life. It takes real commitment to raise a child and devotion.”

News

IGAD Adopts policy to strengthen youth participation

ADDIS ABABA (ENA) - The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has adopted a Youth Policy with a view to promoting the rights of the youth and strengthening their engagement in all matters of the region.

IGAD held a landmark ministerial meeting towards the adoption of the IGAD Youth Policy in Kenya, Nairobi, on Wednesday.

It was indicated during the occasion that the IGAD Youth Policy is a crucial framework for promoting youth rights in the IGAD Region as it is designed to guide and mainstream youth priorities in policies, laws, and programs aimed at empowering youth and ensuring their meaningful participation in political processes.

The policy is also believed to play a crucial role for the development of a comprehensive



roadmap and action plan to empower the youth in the region.

The policy has been developed through extensive consultations with Technical Experts responsible for Youth Affairs from member

states, National Youth Councils, Youth-Led Organizations, and the IGAD Secretariat.

The ministers up on the conclusion of their meeting have issued a statement on the declaration of the adoption and implementation of IGAD Youth Policy Framework.

The ministers agreed to establish IGAD technical experts and ministerial committees on Youth Affairs as a platform to oversee, follow up, and periodically take stock of the progress of the implementation of the IGAD Youth Policy Framework.

They also called upon development partners, including the International Financial Institutions, to provide support to the IGAD Secretariat and its member states for operationalization of the IGAD Youth Policy Framework.

Foreign tourists ...

them to visit Ethiopia in the next year.”

Mentioning France’s active involvement in the renovation of Ethiopia’s historical heritages including the Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela and the National Palace, Lorenzo indicated the activity would play a big role to keep sites safe. “Extensive promotion of Ethiopia’s unique culture and the public’s age-old culture of hospitality is crucial to build the country’s positive image among the global community.”

Another visitor, Tamas Kelemen, from Hungary, said that the festivity is unique due to various spectacles such as religious songs and dances displayed by young Sunday school students. “I really happy to be here for the first time not only in Ethiopia but also on African soil. I was really impressed with Ethiopia’s unique culture and the hospitable environment here.

Hungary has aid projects in Oromia and Afar states and is involved in water management, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs in different parts of Ethiopia. These activities are helpful to rural women to generate income and restore the drought-affected areas.”

Tamas added: “As soon as I return to my country, I will directly introduce this vibrant culture to my family and the country.”

Ray Fisher from the U.S. said, “It is the first time I have come to Ethiopia and I am pleased with what I saw. I think the *Demera* should be promoted to the whole world, attract tourists, and generate income to the country.”

Ray further expressed his convocation with Ethiopians much-cherished culture of hospitality and peaceful co-existence, which he claimed to witness while visiting the different parts of the country. “I recently travelled to Omo Valley and witnessed the local youth jumping bulls to get married and various cultural activities here. I am also delighted to witness the costumes of different nationalities in the *Demera* festivity in Addis Ababa.

“Ethiopia is a country full of amazing cultures and festivities and will come back here next year to participate in the holidays,” he remarked.

Ethiopia to celebrate World Tourism Day next month

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA –Ethiopia has made arrangements for the celebration of World Tourism Day that will be held between October 19 and 25 in the presence of more than two million observers, Addis Ababa Culture, Arts and Tourism Bureau announced.

Bureau Tourism Development and Promotion Director, Frehiwot Gebremedih, told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that World Tourism Day 2023 that takes place on 27 September globally will be held from 19-25 October nationwide due to the overlapping festivals in the month of September.

The program is aimed at developing public understanding about tourism observed by over two million people, she said.

As to Frehiwot, this year’s World Tourism Day will be marked for 36th and 44th at national and global levels respectively aimed at revitalizing and restoring the tourism sector by increasing the income and other benefits that the city deserves.

According to Frehiwot, this year’s World Tourism Day will be celebrated under the theme of “Tourism for Green Development, Green Development for Tourism.”

The World Tourism Day involves various sections of the society in the capital to create a wide awareness about the tourism sector, and various activities will be done to help strengthen social and economic ties.

The program, Ferehiwot said, is aimed at developing the public understanding towards tourism. The celebration involves tourist service providers, to offer their products and services and connect with the

customer and create business ties, connect those who are unemployed in the field with institutions and facilitate job opportunities.

A research paper based on the theme will be presented and a discussion forum will be held incorporating all sections of the society.

Charity works, cleaning and promotion of destinations will also be performed in connection with the day as it helps to expand and grow the tourism sector in the city and make the city a preferred tourism destination, she stated.

In addition, Frehiwot said that the Miss Tourism Addis 2023 beauty pageant would be held in order to promote Addis Ababa and create an environment where the residents of the city can know about the tourist attractions in the city and show them to others.

Premier attends Addis’ 20th ...

“We have inaugurated several mega projects, but our TesfaBerhan feeding centers are the one we give prime attention and priority. In 2021, the city administration began the first TesfaBerhan feeding center and today we inaugurated and opened the 20th one at Ketecheme Medhaniale.”

“When we planned to put the food center into operation, the hope was that food would come from the hotels. However, it was possible to prepare food at the food center with the cooperation of different actors. The elderly and the needy should be helped so that our earth is blessed.”

The 20th TesfaBerhan Feeding Center was built by the Tokuma Business Group and is operated by the Buzayehu Foundation. The center feeds 500 hundred elderly and infirm people once a day and has created jobs for sixteen mothers, it was learned.



Photo: Gebabo Gebre

Church pleads faithful to ...

Jesus Christ and for the Christian followers to commemorate his crucifixion on the cross. “We celebrate Meskel to commemorate the sacrifice Jesus paid for the emancipation of his followers and he expects Christians to show genuine love, real unity and shun hate and materialism.”

Cross is a source of love, value, peace and would have a role in strengthening the much-cherished Ethiopian culture of sharing with the disfavored and sharing bread with the poor, he added.

According to Geberu, Ethiopia’s Meskel celebration is unique and a mystery, which has been celebrated since ancient times to teach the values of the cross for Christian faithful.

Meskel festivity commemorates the discovery of the True Cross by the Roman Empress Helena in the fourth century.

Abebe Tekile, a spiritual singer at Catholic Tsion Mariam Church on his part said that Jesus sacrificed his life for all human beings to show compassion and the faithful should mark the day in a peaceful and

harmonious manner.

“We celebrate every year in our church compound to commemorate Jesus’s crucifixion on the cross and think about his suffering.”

During Meskel, Christians are expected to solace and support people that are in various difficult situations, including in grief, in jail, orphans, the sick and those who do not have access to food, clothes and other amenities and sharing what they have with the needy to enable them celebrate the day in same manner, Abebe pleaded.

Opinion

Peace is born to 'Unity in diversity'

BY MENGESHA AMARE

So long as human beings are social animals, it is natural to lead life consulting one another, sharing idea, halving the repercussions of good or bad days as well as joining forces to overcome common catastrophes.

Such an appealing amalgamation can be made fruitful whenever all human races, with a particular reference to people of the same nation, show keen interest to develop peaceful coexistence and can be attracted when people start reading one another's mind. So the saying goes, 'Unity in diversity,' people can garner benefits of all sorts as they could gain power through the spirit of unity.

This unity can be well empowered when it incorporates and magnetizes diversity. The concept of 'Unity in Diversity' is also a golden phrase and mythical power to build a new nation. Yes, building a nation highly requires unity and it has to be enlightened in diversity. 'Unity in diversity' is a firm glue in which a rage of cultures, languages, norms as well as living, dressing and aesthetic styles have to be entertained, as all these values are pure manifestations of the people of a given nation.

It is well recognized that in countries that are multicultural, multinational and multilingual like ours, 'unity in diversity' has to be well consolidated and translated into practical actions, thereby building a prosperous, safe, stable and well-to-do nation. True, all aspects of development, growth and change need to pass through the channel of unity in diversity, as such an audacious approach helps citizens develop trust, fraternity, respect, as well as amicable way of living among/between citizens with diverse language, culture, religion, socio-political, as well as socio-economic spheres and a range of backgrounds.

It is important to well recognize the positive impact of unity in diversity since it has been instrumental in bringing about peace and tranquility, change and progress, amicable and viable relationship among citizens as well as stable and affluent country. Unity is unequivocally contributing to the stability, peace, progress and just nation. The essence of unity needs to be inculcated in the minds of the generation across the nation.

Diversity is not being different, but a sense of accommodating differences and developing a gut to tolerate and get variations narrowed down and nurtured in the minds of citizens. This approach is instrumental in developing a culture of coexistence among citizens and has been a pivotal element to well cement togetherness among family members, communities and a national population at a larger scale. Yes, individuals, families, communities and social cohesions are the foundation of diversity, equity and inclusion.

If citizens recognize diversity in all aspects, they can absolutely celebrate the unity,

Diversity plays a significant role in maintaining peaceful co-existence among/between citizens with miscellaneous cultures and circumstances

fraternity and togetherness. Unequivocally, unity in diversity is a phrase that signifies the harmony among people with diverse cultural, religious beliefs, social statuses and other demographic, social and cultural differences. This concept is used by various political and social groups to demonstrate unity among individuals or a range of community members.

Needless to state, unity in diversity is very important for a multicultural, multilingual and multinational country like ours and it should be firmly reinvigorated as it would also be easy to disintegrate people with different views and ideologies. Here, all sorts of loopholes have to be leveled and well bridged if citizens are to bring a peaceful, prosperous and safe nation suitable for all.

If there is unity among the people despite their differences, it will always be impossible for any kind of force to disintegrate, fall apart or crumble the nation in general and unity and fraternity of citizens in particular. Frankly speaking, the unity of citizens has been playing, and will always play an invaluable role in maintaining peace, stability and prosperity in Ethiopia.

Since a country that is integrated and houses accommodating citizenry will always move on the path of development and real progress, unity in diversity has prevailed here. No doubt, an integrated nation will face fewer internal issues than a country that is socially unstable and divided on different spheres.

If doors are open to conflict entrepreneurs and anti-peace elements, diversity can be twisted to be a cause for internal conflicts, but unity in diversity plays a significant role in maintaining peaceful co-existence among/between citizens with miscellaneous cultures and circumstances. It helps people stay united despite their differences in various aspects as peace is born to 'Unity

in diversity.'

The good thing is there is a feeling of togetherness, affiliation and integration in unity so long as it is the spirit that holds people together and a bond that signifies a sense of fairness and just. Unity can also be made clear as the absence of differences between people belonging to diverse classes based on religious, linguistic or racial characteristics.

Owning different cultures, languages and religions, people in Ethiopia respect each other and live with a feeling of love and brotherhood. In understanding the concept of Unity in Diversity, Ethiopians have thus realized that they are all from different cultures, races, religions, genders, social-economic statuses, etc. Besides, unity in diversity teaches all citizens that these differences cannot keep them apart, and they are always better when they remain united.

As an important element of a durable order of peace among nations and nationalities, cultural relations have rightly become a preoccupation of a sense of creating a modern nation. In our era of universal interconnectedness, the assertion of cultural identity can only be envisioned on the basis of mutual respect and the acceptance of diversity.

All citizens of Ethiopia have to well know the value of respecting one another, accommodating ideological differences, language and religious respect, among others, to have a peaceful nation whom the generation to come can take over with its future.

Hence, everyone has to work for the stability and tranquility of the nation via a collaborative feature and integrative sense. So unity here means unity of purpose, the coming together not necessarily to agree, but to achieve outcomes that all can support even when they do not even agree about what constitutes some variations.

Yes, diversity incorporates unique characteristics, beliefs and values including culture, ethnic groups, languages, physical features, socioeconomic background, opinions, religion, gender, and it can usually be sweetened with an instrument of unity. That is why people often say peace is born to unity in diversity.

The very point that has to be well comprehended along this line is that some say diversity can be a cause of disagreement and skirmishes singling out even minor circumstances. However, the point is, as it stated earlier, handling situations and managing conditions matters the most.

Ethiopia will always be peaceful as it has long been accommodating societal differences, religious diversities, ideological variations unless some elements who would like to garner benefits at the expense of others sufferings have fueled minor alterations and get citizens clashed forever.

This destructive move must be avoided and sense of togetherness and harmonious way of living has to be well nurtured and transcended from the generation to generation. Yes, the solution to all sorts of problems in Ethiopia lies in focusing on making every citizen optimist and get them ready to show keen interest to nurture peace and security not what is odd targeting at spoiling the exemplary culture of peaceful coexistence among Ethiopians, indeed!

Unambiguously, unity can lead to a more inclusive and equitable society and peace is a vital component of progress and development. Without peace, people are unable to focus on building a better future as they are constantly preoccupied with dealing with conflicts and hunky punchy disagreements. Spreading love, peace, and unity in the country is the best way to ensure peace and tranquility. If citizens can all come together and do their respective part each day in making the country a positive place for all citizens to enjoy living without any fear or sadness, building a stable nation will be quite easy.

Undoubtedly, Ethiopia has grown to become the most populous country and the largest economy in Africa with the largest youth population. Here, national unity refers to a particular condition in which all citizens, regardless of their ethnic, racial and religious belongings are considered equal and equally enjoy from national material and immaterial advantages in a socio-political entity. As national unity is the act of joining together and living together under a nondiscriminatory political system in order to achieve national goals and collectively stand against national threats, unity in diversity in Ethiopia should be highly pronounced.

Surely, unity promotes cooperation and opens opportunity to excellence as no nation has reached to peace and prosperity without deep national oneness and national integrity.

In sum, unity is astonishingly crucial as it provides strength, power, courage and devotedness. When people come together, they can achieve more than they could individually attain, undeniably!

It is often seen in the workplace and in local communities and even at national, level at a larger scale, where people come together to help each other and cement harmony, nothing could be beyond their reach. Therefore, to maintain unity, citizens, all Ethiopians in short, must be open-minded and kind to each other or one another to build a stable and prosperous country. Besides, unity fosters a culture of respect and understanding among individuals, community and entire society across the nation.

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

Editorial

Diverse festivities for glorious harmony

It has been splendidly fascinating to see Ethiopians celebrating grand religious festivals in the last two days. Ethiopian Muslims were celebrating the Mawlid, the 1498th birthday of the Prophet Muhammad while the Christians were celebrating *Demera* (the burning of a large bonfire) and *Meskel*, the Discovery of the True Cross upon which Christ was crucified. The Muslims celebrated Mawlid by sharing meals, attending discussions on the Prophet's life and virtues, offering prayer services, reciting the Qur'an, providing for the needy and the like. Interestingly, history remembers the Prophet's trust in the then Ethiopian king; when his followers were persecuted, Prophet Muhammad encouraged them to flee to Ethiopia considering it as a friendly country where they were treated kindly with respect.

Demera and *Meskel* are the milestone events in Ethiopian culture and spiritual life. The Christians celebrate the eve of *Meskel* festival by setting a big bonfire, the *Demera*. People across the country set the bonfire near their homes. And at a huge gathering, in Addis Ababa, *Demera* is held every year at *Meskel* Square. It is one of the most popular events visitors both from home and abroad enjoy attending. Interestingly, the adherents from Islam and Christianity have been sharing the joys of the festivities to the extent the religious differences cannot be evident.

Indeed, the celebrations created the tremendously exquisite opportunity for the followers of the religions to share banquets, rejoice in their togetherness and cultivate harmonious relations. These values that encourage pleasant coexistence and unity are deep-rooted in Ethiopian cultures and norms. Since ancient times, Ethiopia has been known as one of the nations endowed with various cultures and religions. As these religions and cultures have freely been practiced, they accelerate the peaceful coexistence and harmonious relations of Ethiopians regardless of their differences. Pleasantly, Ethiopians live together in harmony to the degree the ethnic, cultural and religious differences can never be a barrier.

Every year, the *Demera* attracts a huge gathering of Orthodox believers, Sunday school students, several tourists and members of the clergy dressed in robes and traditional clothes. It is one of UNESCO's intangible heritages that has become a world treasure with many cultural and spiritual values. As usual, foreign visitors who attended the *Demera* event expressed their impression on the colorful celebration and vowed to promote Ethiopia's distinctive features to family and friends. They have been excited with the unique nature of the celebrations, particularly the public's overwhelming participation in the festivity. As the large crowd dressed in a supremely eye-catching manner marched to *Meskel* Square, the event created a fascinating and memorable scene for the visitors and tourists.

Fortunately, different religions and cultures, in Ethiopia, are rich in values that cultivate unity and harmony. Hence, Ethiopians, regardless of their religious background, rejoice in the celebrations. Besides, the religious and cultural events are endowed with spiritual values and benefits that have universal significance. As a result, the number of tourists and visitors to participate in these events is progressively increasing.

In sum, Ethiopia considers these cultural and religious events as utmost blessings since they serve powerful platforms to promote togetherness, love, reconciliation, forgiveness and peaceful relations besides attracting tourists.

Opinion

Ethiopian festivals' roles to bring community together

BY FIKADU BELAY

The month of September holds special significance in Ethiopia as it is a time when a variety of religious and cultural celebrations take place, making it a true gift from the Ethiopian people. Ethiopia, with its rich history and diverse population, is known for its vibrant traditions and festivities, and September is a month that truly showcases the country's cultural and religious heritage.

One of the most prominent celebrations in September is the Ethiopian New Year, known as *Enkutatash*. Falling on September 1st, *Enkutatash* is a joyous occasion marking the end of the rainy season and the beginning of spring. It holds great cultural importance and is celebrated with music, dancing, traditional foods, and the exchange of gifts and good wishes. The streets come alive with colorful processions, and people dress in traditional attire, adding to the festive atmosphere.

Another significant religious celebration in September is *Meskel*, which commemorates the finding of the True Cross by Empress Helena in the 4th century. *Meskel* celebration is a festival that resonates with happiness and spiritual significance and is a crucial component of Ethiopian Christianity. The ceremony, which is observed on September 16 and 17 according to the Ethiopian calendar, is highlighted by the lighting of a huge bonfire known as the *Demera*, which represents the directive given by Empress Helena to light torches in order to reveal the location of the True Cross.

The largest festival in Ethiopia, *Meskel*, features a well-planned event that takes place in *Meskel* Square in Addis Abeba, Gondar, Guraghe, Wolayta Gifata, hadia yahode *Meskela*, Gamo gofa YoYo *meskela*, as well as various locations throughout the regional town, including individual homes. A symbol of hope and renewal, this bright celebration also represents the victory of light over darkness and acts as a lighthouse of hope and rejuvenation. There is a sense of fervor and dedication as thousands of people congregate around the *Demera*, singing hymns, religious anthems, and saying prayers. *Meskel* exemplifies the enduring faith and cultural heritage that is interwoven into the fabric of Ethiopian society.

Additionally, this religious event, also associated with the discovery of the True Cross, is celebrated with religious processions, prayers, and fasting. It is a time for devout Christians to reflect on the significance of the Cross in their faith and seek spiritual renewal.

Furthermore, in the September month the other religion festival to celebration of the Prophet's Birthday Held on September 16th Ethiopian calendar, observed by the Ethiopian Muslim community, is a momentous occasion that brings together individuals from all walks of life. This auspicious event, marked by prayer,

recitation of the Holy Quran, and acts of charity, serves as a time for spiritual reflection and unity. Through common values of empathy, understanding, and generosity, it gives Ethiopians an opportunity to establish ties within their communities and promotes interfaith harmony. Ethiopia's dedication to religious tolerance and peace is demonstrated through the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday and other religious celebration like *Meskel*.

Beyond religious celebrations, September is a month that also highlights Ethiopia's cultural diversity. The country is home to numerous ethnic groups, each with its own distinct traditions and customs. After one week to the celebration of *Meskel Demera* ceremony, *Irrecha*, predominantly celebrated by the Oromo people, is a festival steeped in gratitude and unity.

Communities come together during this celebration, which takes place in the final week of September, in revered locations like Hora Harsadii in Bishoftu. With vibrant ceremonies, ethnic dances, and the sharing of food, the Oromo people show respect for their ancestral lands and the bountiful harvest. *Irrecha* promotes a feeling of sustainability and care by serving as a reminder of the interconnected relationship between culture, spirituality, and the environment.

In Ethiopia's cultural and religious celebrations serve as vibrant platforms for embracing the country's diverse heritage. These festivals bring together people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, fostering unity and intercultural exchange. The Prophet's Birthday, *Meskel*, and *Irrecha* festivities highlight Ethiopians' extraordinary capacity for peaceful coexistence that transcends differences and fosters respect for one another. By commemorating these events, we can strengthen social ties between families, neighborhoods, and faith-related groups and foster a sense of belonging.

They provide opportunities for Ethiopians to come together, share meals, exchange gifts, and engage in communal activities. These collective experiences foster a sense of unity and solidarity among participants and other visitors. Moreover it provide a space for cultural expression, preserving and transmitting traditions from one generation to the next.

Furthermore, the festivals have a positive impact on local economies. Increased tourism during these celebrations generates revenue through accommodation, transportation, food, and handicraft sales. This influx of visitors' benefits local communities, stimulates small businesses, and contributes to economic growth.

Thousands of foreigners worldwide put a lot of effort into traveling and attending this colorful and beautiful event. Watching diversity with the same traditional values is very attractive and heartwarming to be part of this culture.

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



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The Ethiopian Herald

Business & Economy

The Ethio-Djibouti railway an engine for economic progress, regional integration

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

The Ethio-Djibouti railway has emerged as a vital tool for economic progress and regional integration in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia, with its large population and booming economy, relies heavily on the port of Djibouti for its import and export trade. The rapid growth of the Ethiopian economy necessitates the exploration of additional ports and the Ethio-Djibouti railway has played a crucial role in facilitating trade and connectivity.

The railway has been instrumental in transporting Ethiopia's import and export goods to and from the port of Djibouti. It has also experienced a steady increase in the number of Ethiopia's export goods containers over the years. The availability of refrigerated facilities for transporting export items such as beef, meat, vegetables, and coffee has further contributed to the growth of cargo transportation on the Ethio-Djibouti railway. Additionally, the railway has had a significant impact on increasing economic growth and fostering people-to-people relations between Ethiopia and Djibouti.

The launching of electric powered rail way transport connected Addis Ababa to Djibouti constructed by Chinese Company six years ago further facilitated the import export business.

The Ethio-Djibouti railway, which is part of the Belt and Road Initiative flagship infrastructure project for African continent, has been providing economic and social benefits to the people of Ethiopia and Djibouti, Chinese companies recently stated.

The Belt and Road Initiative is a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 to connect Asia with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks with the aim of improving regional integration, increasing trade thereby stimulating economic growth.

Ethio-Djibouti railway is one of the several development projects of the initiative which was put into operation on January 2018.

With a total length of 756 kilometers, the railway that starts from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia in the west, and ends in the port of Djibouti in the east, is the first electrified railway project in Africa.

The project is being operated and maintained by the joint venture of China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) under China Railway Construction Corporation (CRCC) and China Railway Group Limited (CREC).

Deputy General Manager of CCECC-CREC JV project office Yang Anwei, said that the Addis Ababa Djibouti railway has



Addis Ababa - Djibouti rail way

been successfully operated nearly six years, which is also the end of the operation service contract of the Chinese management.

According to him, over the past six years of operation, the transportation revenue has increased by more than 35% every year. The revenue in the first half of 2023 alone has increased by 76% compared with same period of last year.

This shows that the Addis Ababa - Djibouti railway is playing significant role in serving the socio-economic development of Ethiopia and Djibouti. The railway has been providing crucial benefits to Ethiopia as it is transporting Ethiopia's import and export goods from and to Djibouti port in addition to passengers, he added.

He pointed out that the number of Ethiopia's export goods containers has been increasing every year over the past six years.

According to the Deputy General Manager, refrigerated facilities essential to transport export items such as beef, meat, vegetables and coffee will be instrumental for the future growth of cargo transportation in Ethio-Djibouti railway.

Addis Ababa - Djibouti Railway is benchmark project of China-Africa cooperation under the "Belt and Road Initiative," he said.

The dry port of Mojo and Dire Dawa, built alongside Addis Ababa Djibouti Railway, have been put into use one after another and the expansion project of the Mojo logistic center, which is under construction, has its own impact on railway transport. The railway is also vital to stimulating the activities and further development of the Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone, as indicated.

All of these activities are expected to increase the railway contribution to the economic development of Ethiopia, the deputy general manager said, expressing his hope that the future development perspective of this railway line is very good.

China Railway No.2 Engineering Group (CREGC), a subsidiary of China Railway Group Limited (CREC), international corporation General Manager Hu Tianran on his part said the management contract of the Chinese companies will be completed this year.

"By working together and transferring the infrastructure operation and maintenance responsibility to Ethiopians," he noted; "In the near future, our Ethiopian friends can manage this whole system as what we have done in the past five years".

He mentioned that even if the maintenance and operation contracts are closed, the technical support from the company will continue.

The Belt and Road Initiative 10th year anniversary summit will be held in China on second half of October, 2023, to discuss about the achievements of the initiative and will be agreed up on future cooperation areas.

As mentioned above, Ethiopia has huge potential in advancing its economic growth. So far, the agricultural and manufacturing sectors are playing a pivotal role. To create linkage between the two sectors, the government allocated a huge budget and constructed industrial parks and most of them are located adjacent to the Ethio-Djibouti rail way.

The industries utilize raw materials obtained from both local and oversea markets. The supply of farm products to industries created market opportunity to the citizenry. On the other hand, some of the raw materials are imported from abroad come through the Ethio-Djibouti rail transport. The export products of the industries are also transported through the rail way and this implies how business and trade are integrated.

The volume of exported vegetable, fruit and flower is increasing and the products

are produced not far from the rail way transport line which reduces the transaction cost of the products.

The railway mutually benefits the two sisterly countries in promoting regional economic and social integration, facilitating trade and industrial development, and bringing employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for citizens of both countries.

While interviewed by the local media, the Chief Executive officer of the Ethiopia-Djibouti rail way company, Abdi Zenebe said that the Ethiopia-Djibouti Railway, Africa's longest electrified railway, has been hailed as a game-changer for trade and development in the region.

The railway, which connects Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa with the port of Djibouti, reduces travel time from three days to 12 hours and boosts the capacity and efficiency of cargo transport.

He further said that the railway, which was inaugurated in 2018, is a joint project between Ethiopia and Djibouti, with funding and technical support from China. The railway covers a distance of 752 kilometers (467 miles) and has 18 stations along the route. It can carry up to 3,500 tons of cargo per train and transport up to six million passengers per year.

The railway is expected to have significant economic and social benefits for both countries, as well as for the wider region. Ethiopia, which is landlocked and has a population of over 120 million people, relies on Djibouti for about 95% of its imports and exports. The railway will lower the cost of transportation and increase the volume and diversity of trade between the two countries. It will also create new opportunities for industrialization, urbanization, tourism, and cultural exchange.

Djibouti, which is strategically located at the entrance of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, is a major hub for international trade and maritime security in Africa. The railway will enhance Djibouti's role as a regional gateway and logistics center, attracting more investment and business from neighboring countries and beyond. It will also improve Djibouti's infrastructure, energy supply, and environmental protection.

The Ethiopia-Djibouti Railway is part of the broader vision of the African Union to connect the continent through integrated transport networks. It is also aligned with China's Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to promote global connectivity and cooperation through infrastructure development. The railway is seen as a model of successful cooperation between African countries and China, as well as a symbol of friendship and mutual benefit.

Art & Culture

The African fashion industry and Ethiopian women designers



BY MULUGETA GUDETA

Simply put, the international fashion industry is a multibillion-dollar global enterprise devoted to the business of making and selling clothes. However, the clothing industry and the fashion industry are not one and the same. It is important to make a distinction between the two. “Fashion design deals more with the generation of ideas, whereas the clothing industry produces the garments that are generated from the design ideas.” Designing in the fashion industry consists of creating, fashioning, executing or producing according to plan. What they call “the seven elements of design are form, shape, line, color, texture, typography and space.”

No doubt that designing is the backbone of the modern fashion industry. In fact most industries operate on the basis of specific designs before they enter into the production process. Any modern industry is inconceivable without the designing stage. Designing is like the outline or plot of stories in literature. It is the earliest of the creative process. It is the design of the novel or any creative output. Designing in art form “is the method of human expression that follows a system of highly developed procedures in order to imbue objects, performances, and experiences with significance. Like all art forms, designing has the potential to solve problems...”

Mr. Shubham Anil Jain, a blogger who is also an insider of the Indian fashion and closing industry, recently wrote that “Fashion is one of the most creative and fascinating fields of art and expression. It is a form of art and skill where one can use their own unique imagination and skills to create new styles, trends and outfits. Fashion is best described as the style or styles of pairing clothes in a classy and unique way.”

Africa has recently become the hub or mainstay of the fashion and textile industry due to the ongoing modernization of the traditional clothes making industry that has a long history across the continent. “The fashion and textile industry is Africa’s second largest post-agricultural sector, with its market value worth 31 billion dollars by 2020 and increasingly annually.

The fashion industry is a marketing and production model in which clothing is moved from the runaway to major retails in second.” Fashion is therefore big business in Africa which is growing at an unprecedented pace because of globalization of the fashion

industry in general and the introduction of high-tech designing and production techniques in the industry.

According to related information, the number one country in fashion in Africa is Nigeria. “In just the past few years, Nigeria has become Africa’s fashion capital. Recognized by some of the world’s most renowned fashion editors and industry insiders, Lagos Fashion Week and Arise Fashion Week in particular have earned supermodel Naomi Campbell’s seal of approval.”

Writing about the future trend in the fashion industry in Africa, another blogger says that, “A growing middle class (i.e. in Africa) has money to spend on clothes and are taking an increasing interest in what they were. Africa’s wealthy elite is also growing, and the continent is one of the fastest growing market for luxury goods. That’s particularly the case in Nigeria, where a fashion-conscious population is enjoying a high economic growth rate, but many other countries in Africa are experiencing a rise in both wealth and interest in fashion.”

Similarly, the Ethiopian fashion industry is growing fast parallel to apparel or textile industry. “Ethiopia has a rich history of traditional hand-woven textiles which are unique and beautifully delicate. The country is one of the fastest growing countries on the African continent and the textile end fashion industry is expanding and spreading all over the country...The beauty of the textile industry in Ethiopia is that within the country we find cotton farmers, spinners, weavers-the “shamane’s” and we find designers who work with the traditional woven textiles-the whole chain.”

In Ethiopia, a new generation of fashion-savvy youngsters are feeding the fashion industry and parallel to this a new brand of Ethiopia designers have emerged at the height of the economic boom that allowed consumers enjoy their own traditional clothing presented in a new and fashionable form that reflect the ever changing global fashion world. The art of combining traditional weaving with modern design and marrying both to the emerging design and development in textile fabrics is apparently behind Ethiopia’s presently explosive fashion industry despite the ups and downs in market demands and export opportunities. It is estimated that there are more than 60 textile factories in Ethiopia that are supplying for domestic as well as foreign markets.

The emergence of new industrial zones has been conducive to the boom in the textile and garment sector elsewhere in the country, which has promising growth in the future as the country develops and the demand increases among the budding generation of youngsters who are fond of wearing ‘modern’ traditional clothes without totally abandoning global brand names.

Behind the design and fashion revolution are a new crop of mainly female designers whose name and achievements are well-known both at home and abroad. The Ethiopian Airlines in-flight magazine *Selemata* once wrote that “As one of Africa’s fastest-growing economies, Ethiopia is also becoming a new hub for global fashion manufacturing. But it’s the homegrown contemporary labels who are putting the country on the fashion map with the sustainable, locally inspired designs. Supermodel Liya Kebede is behind Lem Lem, which harnesses artisanal weaving to offer premium resort wear.”

Another Ethiopian design guru the magazine mentioned was Genet Kebede, who celebrated 30 years in the industry in 2022. According to *Selamta* magazine, “Born in Addis Ababa, Genet originally studied fashion in Italy and Argentina before returning home to establish her label, Paradise Fashion, in 1992.” There are also other famous female fashion designers like Mahlet Afewerk, Abai Schultze, Fikirte Addis and others who have led the fashion revolution in Ethiopia and are still going strong despite the global economic difficulties that have also impacted the fashion and garment industries.

These trailblazing Ethiopian women fashion designers are well-established in the African and global fashion industries. Unfortunately, they are not well-known here in Ethiopia, where the culture of fashion shows and designing innovations is not yet well-developed. Fashion houses can be counted on the fingers of a single hand and new designers do not seem to be attracted to the profession maybe because it is not sufficiently advertised and the opportunities are not readily visible. The design industry in particular is almost shrouded in anonymity as it is rarely enjoying media coverage or sufficient investment. The other surprising fact is that the fashion industry in Ethiopia is almost exclusively the domain of women while elsewhere young and established male fashion designers are easily available, proving to the world that fashion is not

gender exclusive. The outlook for the future is sure to be better than it is now because male fashion designers will surely be attracted to the sector as women continue to make progress and reap the benefits.

The outlook is not however entirely gloomy because the current economic difficulties are going to give way to better times when local and expatriate designers might set shop in the budding Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa and fashion shows will become more frequent and young Ethiopians emerge from anonymity to fame as Liya Kebede and her colleagues have done in the recent past. Ethiopians, like almost all Africans, love to wear fashionable apparels both as a show of class or as a personal preference.

After all who does not like to be seen and admired in the latest designs and enjoy the feel good mood that this can bring to them? Ethiopian youths are increasingly attracted to home-designed and home-made fashionable apparels. This is a new and more visible scenario and anyone can get the spirit of freedom these people are enjoying wearing the finely designed products of the national couture which are not only colorful but also newly designed and cheaper than foreign products that are imported for special occasions.

Ethiopian fashion designers have already proved their mettle by offering the public with new choices that are of high quality and even better than those produced by centuries-old fashion houses in Europe or the United States. Ethiopian couture is accepted by the local public. This can be seen in the number of people who wear beautiful traditional clothes during festivals and holidays, adding bright colors to the celebrations. It has now become the rule to see children, young as well as senior citizens, in Ethiopia at weddings and music shows wearing amazingly beautiful male and female garments made in Ethiopia by Ethiopians.

The outlook for the future for African fashion industry cannot be but brighter than its present status. According to recent analysis of the fashion industry, “The future of African fashion looks bright, with more and more designers brands and design houses making their mark on the global fashion scene. From sustainable materials to traditional techniques, the African fashion industry is embracing new trends and predictions that are shaping the future of fashion in Africa.”

Science & Technology

Your microbes live on after you die

Each human body contains a complex community of trillions of microorganisms that are important for your health while you're alive. These microbial symbionts help you digest food, produce essential vitamins, protect you from infection and serve many other critical functions. In turn, the microbes, which are mostly concentrated in your gut, get to live in a relatively stable, warm environment with a steady supply of food.

But what happens to these symbiotic allies after you die?

As an environmental microbiologist who studies the necrobiome – the microbes that live in, on and around a decomposing body – I've been curious about our postmortem microbial legacy. You might assume that your microbes die with you – once your body breaks down and your microbes are flushed into the environment, they won't survive out in the real world.

In our recently published study, my research team and I share evidence that not only do your microbes continue to live on after you die, they actually play an important role in recycling your body so that new life can flourish.

When you die, your heart stops circulating the blood that has carried oxygen throughout your body. Cells deprived of oxygen start digesting themselves in a process called autolysis. Enzymes in those cells – which normally digest carbohydrates, proteins and fats for energy or growth in a controlled way – start to work on the membranes, proteins, DNA and other components that make up the cells.

The products of this cellular breakdown make excellent food for your symbiotic bacteria, and without your immune system to keep them in check and a steady supply of food from your digestive system, they turn to this new source of nutrition.

Gut bacteria, especially a class of microbes called Clostridia, spread through your organs and digest you from the inside out in a process called putrefaction. Without oxygen inside the body, your anaerobic bacteria rely on energy-producing processes that don't require oxygen, such as fermentation. These create the distinctly odorous-gases signature to decomposition.

From an evolutionary standpoint, it makes sense that your microbes would have evolved ways to adapt to a dying body. Like rats on a sinking ship, your bacteria will soon have to abandon their host and survive out in the world long enough to find a new host to colonize. Taking advantage of the carbon and nutrients of your body allows them to increase their numbers. A bigger population means a higher probability that at least a few will survive out in the harsher environment



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The DNA signatures of host-associated microbes can be detected in the soil below a decomposing body, on the soil surface and in graves for months or years after the soft tissues of the body have decomposed

and successfully find a new body.

If you're buried in the ground, your microbes are flushed into the soil along with a soup of decomposition fluids as your body breaks down. They're entering an entirely new environment and encountering a whole new microbial community in the soil.

The mixing or coalescence of two distinct microbial communities happens frequently in nature. Coalescence happens when the roots of two plants grow together, when wastewater is emptied into a river or even when two people kiss.

The outcome of mixing – which community dominates and which microbes are active – depends on several factors, such as how much environmental

change the microbes experience and who was there first. Your microbes are adapted to the stable, warm environment inside your body where they receive a steady supply of food. In contrast, soil is a particularly harsh place to live – it's a highly variable environment with steep chemical and physical gradients and big swings in temperature, moisture and nutrients. Furthermore, soil already hosts an exceptionally diverse microbial community full of decomposers that are well adapted to that environment and would presumably out compete any newcomers.

It's easy to assume that your microbes will die off once they are outside your body. However, my research team's previous studies have shown that the DNA signatures of host-associated

microbes can be detected in the soil below a decomposing body, on the soil surface and in graves for months or years after the soft tissues of the body have decomposed. This raised the question of whether these microbes are still alive and active or if they are merely in a dormant state waiting for the next host.

Our newest study suggests that your microbes are not only living in the soil but also cooperating with native soil microbes to help decompose your body. In the lab, we showed that mixing soil and decomposition fluids filled with host-associated microbes increased decomposition rates beyond that of the soil communities alone.

We also found that host-associated microbes enhanced nitrogen cycling. Nitrogen is an essential nutrient for life, but most of the nitrogen on Earth is tied up as atmospheric gas that organisms can't use. Decomposers play a critical role recycling organic forms of nitrogen such as proteins into inorganic forms such as ammonium and nitrate that microbes and plants can use.

Our new findings suggest that our microbes are likely playing a part in this recycling process by converting large nitrogen-containing molecules like proteins and nucleic acids into ammonium. Nitrifying microbes in the soil can then convert the ammonium into nitrate.

The recycling of nutrients from detritus, or nonliving organic matter, is a core process in all ecosystems. In terrestrial ecosystems, decomposition of dead animals, or carrion, fuels biodiversity and is an important link in food webs.

Living animals are a bottleneck for the carbon and nutrient cycles of an ecosystem. They slowly accumulate nutrients and carbon from large areas of the landscape throughout their lives then deposit it all at once in a small, localized spot when they die. One dead animal can support a whole pop-up food web of microbes, soil fauna and arthropods that make their living off carcasses.

Insect and animal scavengers help further redistribute nutrients in the ecosystem. Decomposer microbes convert the concentrated pools of nutrient-rich organic molecules from our bodies into smaller, more bioavailable forms that other organisms can use to support new life. It's not uncommon to see plant life flourishing near a decomposing animal, visible evidence that nutrients in bodies are being recycled back into the ecosystem.

That our own microbes play an important role in this cycle is one microscopic way we live on after death.

(Source: *The Conversation*)

Society



The festival of Meskel

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

It has been almost three weeks since Ethiopians welcomed their New Year, 2016, and celebrated their *Enkutatash* which is the first day of their New Year colorfully.

Unlike most of the global countries, Ethiopians mark their New Year in September. This is due to the fact that Ethiopia has its own calendar system, which is seven to eight years behind the Gregorian calendar.

The month of Meskerem holds a number of cultural and religious festivals that hold significant cultural and religious importance for Ethiopians.

Yesterday, Ethiopian Christians celebrated another important event, the Meskel festival, the Finding of the True Cross that Jesus was crucified on.

As historical and religious chronicles stated, Meskel is celebrated among the faithful of Orthodox Christians Church on September 27th each year to commemorate the discovery of the True Cross by Empress Helena in the fourth century.

Using this special day as a ground, *The Ethiopian Herald* had an opportunity to contact individuals to reflect their views regarding the Feast of Meskel. Getahun Alemu is the President of the Ethiopia Tourism and Hotel Association. According to him, Meskel, which is also known as the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, is among the major religious and cultural festivals celebrated in Ethiopia. It commemorates the discovery of the True Cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified, as well as the return of the True Cross to Jerusalem by Empress Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine the Great.

Meskel festival is a vibrant and significant celebration in Ethiopia, blending religious devotion with cultural traditions. For this reason, it is a time for the people to come together, express gratitude, and celebrate the discovery of the True Cross.

The colorful processions, lighting of the Demera (bonfire) that is marked on the eve of the actual day, and the joyful gatherings, spiritual songs and rites among others make the day an unforgettable event not only for local people but also foreign visitors. The festival also attests the religious heritage of Ethiopia.

Beside its religious and cultural values, Meskel festival has also significant

socioeconomic value in attracting several tourists from different parts of the world and generating revenue.

Getahun also said that Ethiopia has various religious and cultural festivals that have multi-dimensional values to promote the tourism sector of the country and promote its identity. Meskel is among these festivals that brings several tourists to Ethiopia.

According to him, Meskel is not only a religious festival; it is also a time where Ethiopians show their unity, togetherness, forgiveness, and synchronization.

Several tourists frequent Ethiopia to witness its unique, historic, cultural, religious practices and tourist attractive sites. However, there is still a gap in terms of promoting tourist destinations. Identifying the demands of visitors and simplifying paying mechanisms for those who want to buy local products also need consideration, he opined.

Dejene Kassa is the other individual approached by this reporter to have his reflection about Meskel Festival. According to him, the Meskel festival marks the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the spring season in Ethiopia. It is an occasion that people give gratitude for the Creator; and pray to get a good harvest in the coming year and for abundance of opulence.

Meskel is also a time where people recall the deeds of Jesus Christ on the cross-love, forgives and mercy. For this reason whenever Meskel arrives it is common to see individuals practicing forgiveness and reconciliation.

Meskel festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm and joy throughout Ethiopia and lighting a *Demera* (bonfire) is one of the central parts of the event whereby not only followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, but also others enjoy it most. A tall pyramid-shaped structure, decorated with flowers and green branches, is built in

a Meskel-Square or any other place. In the evening, people gather around the Demera, and sing religious songs. The Demera is made to symbolize the smoke that led Empress Helena to the True Cross. The bonfire represents the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil.

As part of the celebration, people gather around the Demera and pray for forgiveness, both seeking forgiveness and extending forgiveness to others.

As some documents indicated, the tradition of “Chibo” during Meskel, it is common for people to ask for forgiveness from friends, family, and acquaintances. This practice involves individuals seeking forgiveness for any wrongdoings, mistakes, or offenses they may have committed. It is a way of starting the New Year with a clean slate and fostering reconciliation and unity within communities.

Prior to the lighting of the Demera, colorful church processions will take place at the areas where the ceremony is carried out. People adorned with their traditional white clothes gather around the bonfires and delightfully watch the breathtaking songs and chanting performed by religious icons.

The clergy dressed in colorful robes, lead prayers and perform religious rituals. After the procession, special religious services will be carried out by Sunday school students and priests.

Following the religious ceremonies, people celebrate with feasts, traditional music and dancing. Families and friends gather together to enjoy traditional Ethiopian food, including injera (a sourdough flatbread) and Doro-Wot (spicy chicken stew).

Meskel, the commemoration feast of the Finding of the True Holy Cross of Christ, is one of the Intangible Cultural Heritages of Humanity registered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The heritage was inscribed in 2013.

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It is a time for the people to come together, express gratitude, and celebrate the discovery of the True Cross

INTERNATIONAL

Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania named joint hosts of 2027 AFCON

The 2027 Africa Cup of Nations will be jointly hosted by Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, while Morocco will stage the 2025 edition, the Confederation of African Football (CAF) announced on Wednesday.

Morocco last hosted the AFCON in 1988 and was chosen in 2015 but asked for the tournament to be postponed because of the Ebola virus, although CAF later decided to strip the north African nation of the hosting rights.

While Morocco were hot favourites to host the 2025 edition of the premier African sport event, the shock last-minute withdrawal of Algeria from the 2027 race on Tuesday threw it wide open.

“This withdrawal can be explained by a new approach from the FAF (Algerian football federation) related to its strategy for developing football in Algeria,” it said.

The Kenya-Uganda-Tanzania bid then got the nod from the CAF executive committee, taking the biennial tournament back to east Africa for the first time since Ethiopia staged the 1976 finals.

“I am very proud of Morocco,” said CAF president Patrice Motsepe after naming the successful hosts in Cairo.

“Morocco’s competing countries (for 2025 tournament) -- Algeria, Zambia and Nigeria-Benin -- announced their withdrawal, even if these countries still made their presentation,” he said.

“The main reason is to support Morocco in its candidacy for the 2030 World Cup,” jointly with Spain and Portugal, explained Motsepe.

Morocco boast many world-class stadiums and have successfully hosted numerous African and world football tournaments.

But Kenya and Tanzania have only one international-standard venue each and



Uganda none, which forced their national team to play 2023 Cup of Nations qualifiers at neutral venues.

“One of the key objectives is that the decision that was taken today (promotes) the development of infrastructure and stadiums (and) be a source of enthusiasm among young people,” said Motsepe.

Taking the tournament to east Africa follows a statement this year by Motsepe that he did not want successive tournaments in the same region.

“We cannot assign the organisation of the CAN successively to the same region,” he said at a press conference before the African Nations Championship (CHAN) in Algeria last January.

However, several months later, CAF secretary general Veron Mosengo-Omba said regional rotation may not always be possible.

“Today, only five or six countries out of the 54 CAF members are able to apply to host the African Cup. Consequently, it will not be possible to make this alternation,” he said.

Ivory Coast will host the 2023 Cup of

Nations, which has been put back to January and February 2024 due to the rainy season in west Africa.

“The timing is not ideal,” Motsepe has said, referring to the tournament falling in the middle of the European club season.

“But we could not risk the tournament being disrupted by inclement weather,” added the South African billionaire, who was appointed CAF president in 2021.

Stars who will have to leave their clubs for the African tournament include Mohamed Salah of Liverpool, Andre Onana of Manchester United and Victor Osimhen of Napoli.

The Cup of Nations has grown from a three-team tournament in Sudan in 1957 to a 24-team event since 2019, and attracts a worldwide TV audience.

Egypt have been the most successful country with seven titles, including three in a row from 2006. Cameroon triumphed five times and Ghana are four-time champions.

The line-up for the next edition in five Ivorian cities includes the top 16 African countries in the latest FIFA rankings, led by 2022 World Cup semi-finalists Morocco.

Japanese scientists find microplastics are present in clouds

Researchers in Japan have confirmed that microplastics are present in clouds, where they are likely affecting the climate in ways that are not yet fully understood.

In a study published in the journal *Environmental Chemistry Letters*, Japanese scientists climbed Mount Fuji and Mount Oyama in order to collect water from the mists that shroud the peaks, then applied advanced imaging techniques to the samples to determine their physical and chemical properties.

The team identified nine different types of polymers and one type of rubber in the airborne microplastics, which ranged in size from 7.1 to 94.6 micrometres.

Each litre (0.26 gallon) of cloud water tested contained between 6.7 to 13.9 pieces of the plastics.

“If the issue of ‘plastic air pollution’ is not addressed proactively, climate change and ecological risks may become a reality, causing irreversible and serious environmental damage in the future,” lead author of the research, Hiroshi Okochi of Waseda University, warned in a statement on Wednesday.

When microplastics reach the upper atmosphere and are exposed to ultraviolet radiation from sunlight, they degrade, contributing to greenhouse gasses, Okochi said.

Microplastics – which are defined as plastic particles under 5 millimetres that come from industrial effluent, textiles, synthetic car tires, personal care products and other sources – have already been discovered inside fish, peppering Arctic sea ice, and in the snows on the Pyrenees mountains between France and Spain.

However, the mechanisms of their transport to such varied locations had remained unclear, with research on airborne microplastic transport in particular being limited.

“To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report on airborne microplastics in cloud water,” the authors wrote in their paper.

Waseda University said in a statement on Wednesday that research shows that “microplastics are ingested or inhaled by humans and animals alike and have been detected in multiple organs such as lung, heart, blood, placenta, and faeces”.

“Ten million tons of these plastic bits end up in the ocean, released with the ocean spray, and find their way into the atmosphere. This implies that microplastics may have become an essential component of clouds, contaminating nearly everything we eat and drink via ‘plastic rainfall’”, the university said in announcing the new research findings.

Emerging evidence has linked microplastics to a range of effects on heart and lung health, as well as cancers, in addition to widespread environmental harm.

(Source: ALJAZEERA)

Putin’s talks with the head of South Sudan

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday said relations between Russia and South Sudan were developing “intensively”.

Speaking at a meeting with the South Sudan President Salva Kiir in Moscow, Putin noted Russia was one of the first countries to recognise the sovereignty and independence of South Sudan.

“I must say we believe that we have a lot to do, primarily in the area of economic development,” Putin added.

Kiir said he was happy for the warm welcome and stressed that he was in Moscow “as an opening for our long work in the future.”

South Sudan was one of the African countries present at the Russia-Africa summit in St. Petersburg.

The meeting took place as Kremlin seeks more allies amid the military campaign in Ukraine.

(Source: africanews)





This is Ethiopia

Giffaata Wolaita`s New Year, dynamic expression of identity

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

When it is said that Ethiopia is a unique country, it is not just to say it; but with reason. Leave alone its magnificent natural endowments, but the varied breathtaking social, religious and cultural festivals that are cherished by its diverse people speak for their own selves and have a lot to offer to visitors.

The festivals that are celebrated when the rainy season nearing to leave its place to the sunny season, Ethiopia's nations, nationalities and peoples celebrate a number of festivals. Just to mention, Enqutatsh, the first day of Ethiopian New Year, Demera and Meskel the Finding of the True Cross, Irrecha- Oromo people Thanksgiving day- *Yahode* and Giffaata - New Year festivals of Hadia and Wolaita peoples- are some.

The most inspiring thing about all the festivals is that though the ceremonies are celebrated by different ethnic groups in different areas and times, the core ideas of all the festivals are peace, unity, solidarity, togetherness, forgiveness, and considerateness. All the festivals abhor conflicts, hatred, and theft. Elders preach about peace, solidarity and unity, give their blessings the new year to be a year of happiness, love, peace prosperity.

Recently both *Yahode* and Giffaata, New Year celebration of Hadia and Giffaata people were celebrated colorfully on September respectively.

Giffaata, which is one of the cultural values of Ethiopians in general and to that of Wolaita people in particular was marked colorfully last Sunday, September 24 warmly and colorfully.

The Giffaata New Year festival marks the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the harvest season. It is a time when people express their gratitude for the bountiful harvest and pray for continued abundance in the coming year. The festival serves as a celebration of agricultural prosperity and a way to honor the land and its fertility.

Giffaata festival is marked with various traditional rituals and ceremonies. These include getting together, praying for blessings and prosperity, as well as traditional dances, music, and cultural performances. These rituals are deeply meaningful to the Wolaita people and are an integral part of their identity.

According to Wolyita Zone Tourism Bureau Head, Teshome Habte, Giffaata is a special day marked not only in Wolayta Zone but also in other parts of the country. To make this year's Giffaata more colorful all preparation were made and several platforms were arranged.

"Giffaata is a special event for the people of Wolaita . It is a new year festival and an event that the cultural values



Photo: Wolaita Zone Administration



Celebration of Giffaata festival in Wolaita

and the identity of Wolaita people are demonstrated. It is a festival that has been passed from generation to generation."

On his part, Wolaita Zone, Chief Government Officer Asaminew Ayeza said that Giffaata is one of the intangible heritages of Wolaita people. Giffaata literally means great or first; it also means a channel. In other words, Giffaata is the first month of the year and transitional season for the people of Wolaita . It is a special day where every person experience transition from old to new season; from darkness to light. For this reason, Wolaita people prepare themselves to Giffaata with several traditional and cultural practices.

As he explained it in detail to EPA, Culture, History and Heritage Researcher Adane Ayz, Wolaita is a region with its own unique calendar; and Giffaata is the first month of the year.

Adane said that whenever the issue of New Year is raised among the people of Wolaita , their unique calendar is always there. This

is because every New Year is the result the calendar system that particular society follows. In one way or another, every society in the whole world follow either a lunar, solar or lunisolar calendar. In this regard, as confirmed by studies conducted in this particular area, the Wolaita people follow Lunisolar calendar, which is the combination of both lunar and solar calendar.

Wolaita people call the day time *Gallassa* and he night time *Qammaa*; day and night times (24 hours) together are called *Issi wontta*.

According to Adane, Wolaita people have also a unique way of calculating the week days. Based on this system grand market day is the first day of the week. The day in which the moon first appeared is considered as a week one and is called *Aginiyaa xeeraasu*. All the consecutive days, starting from the first grand market day to the coming market day are calculated as one week or locally called *Naa'u Giyaa*).

Accordingly, five market days (*Ichchashu Giyaa*) including the first grand market day, are calculated one full moon cycle and represent one month (*Issi Aginaa*).

According to Adane, the two days that come before the moon appeared are also special to the people of Wolaita , for it is on these days (*Xeero Cheggena*) they work while waiting the moon to rise.

On Giffaata day, the father followed by his son will go to neighboring site where villagers fattened an ox that is going to be slaughtered and divided equally among the community for that particular day. As they get together at the house, where the ox was fattened and slaughtered, the community will share a meal (raw meat) together. This is part of the cultural tradition of the Wolaitya people and a sign of their love, solidarity and togetherness.

According to Adane, an ox which is fattened for Giffaata day has special value among the society. For that reason, a separate stall will be prepared so that no one will see it except the one who feed and take care of it. It is within this stall the ox will be feed and fattened by those groups of individuals who have share on the on.

Cleaning the environment, the house, restoration and renovation activities that are accomplished by fathers and sons are part of Giffaata festival. Cleaning houses or restoration of houses are signs of the arrival of new season.

The Giffaata New Year festival holds immense cultural, social, and spiritual significance for the Wolaita people. It serves as a dynamic expression of their identity, a celebration of their agricultural traditions, and a time for communal unity and joy. Above all, it is also a living witness that Ethiopia is a mosaic of various fascinating and unique cultures.