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Economist Zemedeneh Negatu

Expert assesses Ethiopia's BRI, BRICS membership benefits

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopia should capitalize its privileged membership of the China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the BRICS economic bloc to foster its trade and investment portfolio, a noted economist suggested.

Speaking to the national broadcaster-ETV, the economist Zemedeneh Negatu stated that Ethiopia's inclusion into the bloc avails a great opportunity to secure substantial finance from the New Development Bank.

Zemedeneh further stated that the BRI is a very crucial Chinese

See Expert assesses ... page 3

Premier pays visit to Yangshan Port, Huawei Center

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA – Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) yesterday visited the Yangshan Port in Shanghai, the Office of the Prime Minister (PMO) disclosed.

Prior to his visit to the Yangshan Port, the Prime Minister, together with his high-level delegation, also visited the Shanghai Stock Exchange and Huawei Center in Shanghai city.

Recall that Prime Minister Abiy and his ministerial delegation arrived in China a few

days ago for official working visit and to partake in the 3rd Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing.

Since then, the Premier held several bilateral discussions with the Chinese President

See Premier pays ... page 3

Experts underscore legal, amicable approach to Ethiopia's port pursuit

BY MENGESHA AMARE

ADDIS ABABA-Ethiopia's access to the sea is playing a crucial role in propelling its holistic progress and speeding up the ongoing socioeconomic and political reforms, experts said, emphasizing the need to enact an amicable approach.

Speaking to local media, international peace expert Garedeew Assefa noted that Ethiopia

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Ministry launches revised childcare, support directive

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA-The Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA), along with partners, launched yesterday the revised comprehensive alternative childcare and support directives that is expected to improve the quality of childcare and service.

In her opening remarks at the event, MoWSA

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News

UNWTO names Ethiopia's Lepis 2023 best tourism village

ADDIS ABABA (FBC) – The Lepis community-based eco-tourism site near Arsi Negele town in Oromia State has been named among the World's Best Tourism Villages 2023 by the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Lepis has been named the Best Tourism Village during the UNWTO General Assembly, taking place this week in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

The Lepis ecotourism site has won the accolade for leading the way in nurturing rural areas and preserving landscapes, cultural diversity, local values, and culinary

traditions.

Located some 242Kms from Addis Ababa to the South, Lepis ecotourism site incorporates several attraction sites including a horse trekking, a mountain range covered a dense forest, a mesmeric river, an enthralling water fall and a vantage point for bird-watching.

“Tourism can be a powerful force for inclusivity, empowering local communities and distributing benefits across regions,” said UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili during the recognition ceremony.



Call for consolidated efforts to ensure media literacy, peace building

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA - The Ethiopian Media Sector Alliance has called on the government and international actors to develop and implement a coordinated response mechanism to create an enabling media landscape.

At the workshop yesterday, the Ethiopian Media Council Chairperson Amare Aregawi said that to bring about a vibrant media, the government along with the media sectors and the alliance has to undertake engagements to tackle hate speech and fake news.

Citing that Ethiopia is one of the country signing accesses to information, the Chairperson further remarked that the government has to safeguard the rights of journalists while reporting as per the guidelines of the constitutional press freedom accordingly.

“Due to COVID-19 and other security issues the alliance has not been operating in its full swing,” he added.

The council has recently signed an agreement with the Ethiopian Mass media Authority which help entertain peer reviews and claims of journalistic malpractices and brought to the Council to get resolved, he added.

UNESCO Communication Officer Aderaw Genetu for his part said that the alliance along with international partners is set to support and facilitate cooperation in the media sector in issues related to capacity building and other technical support.

Therefore, he said it is critical to develop a coordinated response mechanism that will ensure various media actors which would contribute to the priorities aligned to the ongoing media reforms and enhance media literacy and support the

youth to develop digital literacy.

So far, the alliance has been undertaking regular follow-ups and support to the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation training center to create a convenient media landscape through its training hub. Besides, media representatives and institutions have taken overseas training and shared experiences.

Following the reform, he noted that the government has taken measures by revising media rules and regulations and this needs to be further strengthened.

UNESCO Liaison Office to the AU and ECA Representative in Ethiopia Rita Bissoonauth (PhD) said that as per the UNESCO World trends in freedom of expression and media development report, independent journalism is in danger, faced with the erosion of business models, increasing crackdowns on press freedom against the safety of journalists.

She said: “As mis-and disinformation has contributed to years of declining trust in media worldwide, UNESCO is taking various actions to counter disinformation.”



Photo : Eyob Teferi

As to her, Ethiopia's media landscape as part of the global community faces various challenges; therefore, it requires concerted efforts by all actors both nationally and internationally.

“We trust the EMSA's platform provides the space for a strategic discussion and collaboration regarding the opportunities and challenges of the media landscape in Ethiopia,” she said.

“The fact that EMSA is an open platform for all local and international media partners in Ethiopia, it provides us the opportunity to discuss priorities of the sector, identify the gaps and create synergy and avoid duplication of efforts,” she noted.

She reaffirmed that UNESCO is committed to supporting the coordination of the EMSA by providing the required technical and other functions within its mandate and expertise.

It is to be recalled that the Alliance was established on 19 November 2019 aiming at ensuring Ethiopia a vibrant media sector capable of supporting the development and peace building agendas of the country.

DBE launches DBE-TA, AWUN interest free banking

• Deposits 80 to 160 bln. Birr

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA - Development Bank of Ethiopia (DBE) launched DBE-TA, AWUN—first ever Interest Free Banking service in the nation based on Sharia principles.

This interest free banking will provide customers with service in DBE head office and in all branches, according to the bank.

DBE President Yohannes Ayalew (PhD) said over the last four years, the bank increased branches from 77 to 100 across the nation, the bank capital has risen from 2 billion to 38 billion Birr, and the total deposit of the bank grows from 80 billion to 160 billion Birr.

“The interest free banking service has been unusual for a long period of time in the nation, and the will provide services interest free banking financial loan for those who engage in agriculture, agro processing, manufacturing, mining, tour operator areas,” Yohannes added.

Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council Vice President Sheikh Abdulkarim Sheikh Bedredinstressed that all Muslim community needs to use this opportunity and enter into the development.

“If we do together in an organized manner, everything is at our hand and growth and development is round us. Thus, everybody can bring so many tangible changes at home and abroad,” Sheikh said.

State Minister of Finance, Eyob Tekalign (PhD) on his part said: “We need to implement financial inclusion among all community members to ensure our development in financial service throughout the nation as it is vital for the development of the country. One of these steps is interest free banking.”

Ethiopia is undertaking vast financial sector reforms as well as making great efforts in reforming its finance sector towards inclusivity. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed received the 2022 Laureate of the Global Islamic Finance Award (GIFA) in 2022. This is a clear indicator of the successfulness of the scheme,” he said

News

Expert assesses Ethiopia's BRI...

investment worth over one trillion USD intended to connect strategic partners on land, sea and other mediums through funding and developing infrastructure. "It is vital to Ethiopia's economic development as it increases trade and investment as well as tourist inflow."

China has been the strategic partner of Ethiopia in the past twenty years and it has been hugely involved in the construction of major infrastructural facilities including roads, railways and airports, among others.

According to him, Ethiopia has the opportunity to boost productivity through unleashing the potential of foreign direct investment and trade since several investors and traders are coming from China and other countries thanks to the membership of BRI and BRICS bloc.

Zemedeneh, who is also the Global Chairperson at Fairfax Africa Fund, stated however, that Ethiopia has to do a lot to adjust its trade balance with China. While Ethiopia imports over four billion

USD from China annually, its exports have not exceeded 200 million USD.

"To attain this, we have to bring structural change in our economy. We have to boost export products both in volume and quality. Ethiopia may also need to utilize the African Free Trade Area Agreement (AcFTA) through trading products that could be manufactured by local and foreign companies."

"These days the significance of membership of development blocs and initiatives like BRICS and BRI has become clear," he noted, mentioning that even some Western countries that have been criticizing China's initiatives are proposing new infrastructure projects that may take about 20 years.

Zemedeneh also refuted some corporate media's allegation of Ethiopia's accession to BRICS as the signal of breaking relationship with the West and called the narrative as "groundless." Ethiopia will continue working with all global powers transcending ideological

barriers.

According to him, Ethiopia's recent inclusion to the BRICS family showcases the cooperation with China is reaching new heights as the latter is the proponent of the bloc's expansion. "The elevation of the two countries partnership from Comprehensive and Enduring Strategic Cooperative Partnership level to an All Weather Strategic Cooperation Partnership level further manifested the above."

The financial cooperation between China and Ethiopia has been growing through time to time and Ethiopia is among the top three African countries that have been receiving substantial financial aid from the East Asian country. Accordingly, China has financed Ethiopia over 13 billion USD in the past two decades which shows the strong cooperation between the two. China is also the biggest trading partner and the major foreign investor in Ethiopia, Zemedeneh remarked.

Experts underscore ...

faces significant challenges due to its direct access to the sea, and this geographic disadvantage created constraints in the country's ability to carry its larger population. The situation also affected the country's economic growth and development.

As to Garedew, being landlocked limited Ethiopia's geostrategic options in the Horn of Africa and beyond and made it difficult for the country to expand its economy, and develop its military, specifically its navy force. "It is difficult to independently see Ethiopia's history from the history of the Red Sea."

Ethiopia's ongoing socioeconomic and political reforms that are being undertaken by the current government require the sea outlet to accelerate economic progress. As one of the fastest-growing economies on the continent, Ethiopia needs to meet the demands of its large population.

Ethiopia does have ample opportunity for cooperation and its coastal neighbors are expected to accept its offer it is crucial to employ the win-win approach to utilize ports so the saying goes, "you don't get what you deserve but what you negotiate." Hence, we have to benefit from the sea port through close talks and amicable dialogue."

The expert added, "The negative repercussions of being landlocked are quite immense and untold, as every activity is run following the consent of others and incurring too much cost for importing and exporting goods, commodities and services as well as causing economic inflation. Even a power shift would come if the nation does have a generous opportunity to use the Red Sea port, and be influential, too. This would really be a threat on behalf of other countries."

Dagmawi Tesfaye (PhD), a historian, on his part stated that the problem emanated from the narrow attitude of the then transitional government about Ethiopia. For example, Ethiopia via Axum was pertinent using the Adulis port. Scholars like Prof. Mesfin Woldemariam, and Prof. Astrar Woldeyes, among others had been arguing over the issue, and they were even labeled as opposition to the change.

Owing to the previous government's senseless decision, what the current generation is forced to pass to posterity is a landlocked country with immense economic challenges. If citizens would like Ethiopia to become a great nation, the issue of the port has to be discussed. Common understanding over local matters would make Ethiopia benefit from direct access to the seaports and materialize its economic aspirations, the historian remarked.

Ministry launches revised childcare,...

Minister Ergogie Tesfaye (PhD) stated that the new directive came into place through identifying the major gaps of the seven-year-old ruling. Apart from taking the experience of many countries as a benchmark, the government believes that it would provide holistic and sustainable solutions to child problems.

The minister further stated that consolidated efforts have been exerted to harmonize the new directive with Ethiopia's long standing culture and values. Apart from adopting international child care and protection laws, Ethiopia is striving to put in place legal, institutional and administrative regulations to facilitate the implementation of the laws.

The government has also been putting effort to protect orphaned and vulnerable children from natural and manmade disasters as well as to provide them with a healthy environment. Similarly, MoWSA has been implementing the childcare and support directive since 2009 E.C which has been revised and launched today.

Ergogie, who mentioned the plan to reunite some 14,000 street children drawn

from 22 cities with their families, urged the active participation of relevant actors.

Tawnya Brown(PhD), Senior VP of Global, Refugee and Immigrant Services, said on her part that Bethany, global non-profit organization, has been a strong partner of the Ethiopian government since 2007 in family focused programs including family preservation and empowerment, foster care, reunification, domestic adoption and humanitarian programs.

In addition, the organization has been working with the government to help orphanages at both federal and regional level and equipped local partners with skills and tools needed to support children and families, she added,

Having a comprehensive alternative childcare and support directives plays a crucial role in promoting family based care, standardizing the service across the country, and ensuring that the best interest of the child is protected.

"This directive will not only benefit the children of Ethiopia now but it will also protect children through families long

into the future. The directive comes in alignment with the rights of the child made by the UN General Assembly."

As to her, Ethiopian families have taken over 1000 children from orphanages through Bethany Christian services.

Hassan Mohammed, Head of Child Support Services, Expansion and Strengthening Desk within MoWSA, highlighted that the new alternative directive, which is recognized by the Ministry of Justice, plays a significant role in delivering quality service to vulnerable and orphaned children in a comprehensive and accountable manner. "Unlike the previous directive, the revised one is legally binding. It would also guide relevant actors how to deliver standardized service."

During the launching ceremony, a taskforce was established to regulate the implementation of the new directives.

It was learned that the MoWSA in collaboration with Bethany Christian Service, USAID, and other stakeholders prepared the alternative childcare and support directive.

Premier pays visit to Yangshan...

Xi Jinping, Prime Minister Li Qiang, the President of New Development Bank Dilma Rousseff, and other officials.

In a meeting with President Xi Jinping, the two leaders announced the elevation of partnership between the two countries from Comprehensive and Enduring Strategic Cooperative Partnership level to an All Weather Strategic Cooperation

Partnership level.

Testament to the latest announcement by the two leaders, Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Chinese pharmaceutical and agro-processing enterprises. Three of the firms that inked the MoU are all set to invest in Ethiopia, according to the Chief Commissioner.

Meanwhile, Premier Abiy's discussion with the Chinese Premier focused on ways of enhancing economic cooperation between Ethiopia and China. Premier Li Qiang highlighted that both countries are developing and emerging economies that can seek ways of growing together. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, on his part, shared the multifaceted growth objectives

of the government and development achievements gained thus far. He further emphasized the need to expand trade partnership with China. Following the bilateral meeting, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Premier Li Qiang presided over the signing of 12 cooperation agreements and 2 letters of intent in various fields.

Opinion

Sea access for Ethiopia: Harnessing the power of diplomatic ties

BY LAKACHEW ATINAFU

The equitable utilization of the Red Sea and the promotion of regional integration among Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti and the Arab states in the region hold significant importance for various reasons.

The Red Sea serves as a crucial maritime route connecting Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Ensuring fair utilization of the Red Sea and its ports facilitates trade and economic connectivity between the Horn of Africa and the Arab states. It enables the movement of goods, encourages investment and promotes economic growth in the region.

The Red Sea region is home to important energy resources and trade routes. Access to these resources and ensuring the safe passage of oil and gas shipments through the Red Sea is vital for the energy security of both the Horn countries and the Arab states. Regional integration can enhance cooperation in the energy sector, leading to increased energy trade, infrastructure development, and energy diversification.

Cooperation and integration among the Red Sea countries and the Arab states contribute to regional security and stability. Collaborative efforts in maritime security, counterterrorism, and border management can help address common threats and challenges. Enhanced cooperation also reduces the potential for conflicts and tensions, fostering peaceful relations and stability in the region.

The Red Sea and its coastal ecosystems are home to diverse marine life and delicate ecosystems. By promoting regional integration, countries can work together to address environmental challenges such as pollution, overfishing, and climate change impacts. Collaborative efforts in conservation, sustainable fishing practices, and marine resource management can help protect the Red Sea's unique biodiversity and ensure its long-term sustainability.

Regional integration fosters cultural exchanges, people-to-people contacts, and mutual understanding among nations. It provides opportunities for educational, scientific, and cultural collaborations, promoting social cohesion and cross-cultural dialogue. Such connections can strengthen the bonds between the Horn countries and the Arab states, leading to greater cultural appreciation and cooperation.

Effective port utilization among the Horn countries, namely Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, and Eritrea, plays a crucial role in promoting regional integration and development in the region. These countries are strategically located along the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, making their ports vital gateways for trade and economic activities.

Eritrea's ports, particularly the Port of Massawa and the Port of Assab, have the potential to become important regional trade hubs. However, due to political and diplomatic challenges in the past, their utilization has been limited. With the recent improvement in relations between Eritrea and its neighbors, there is an opportunity for increased regional cooperation and utilization of Eritrean ports, which would contribute to regional integration and development.



Landlocked Ethiopia wants better sea access: a port deal with neighbors could benefit the region – photo google

Overall, effective port utilization among the Horn countries is crucial for regional integration and development. Investments in port infrastructure, streamlined customs procedures, improved logistics, and cooperation among these nations are vital to unlocking the region's economic potential, boosting trade, and fostering greater integration for the benefit of all countries involved.

Ethiopia, a landlocked country located in the Horn of Africa, has long recognized the importance of gaining access to the sea. With no direct coastline, Ethiopia's aspirations to establish robust diplomatic ties with the Arabian Peninsula and increase its influence in global politics hold immense strategic significance. As a result, it is a right and critical time to explore the importance of sea access for Ethiopia and the potential benefits it can derive from strengthening its diplomatic relationships, drawing upon relevant world experiences.

Access to the sea would open up Ethiopia's landlocked economy to international trade routes, facilitating the import and export of goods. It would enhance the country's economic growth and diversification by reducing transportation costs and expanding market access. This connectivity promotes economic interdependence, encourages peace and stability, and enhances diplomatic relations.

The presence of a coastline allows for the development of ports, logistics' hubs, and industrial zones, attracting foreign investment and catalyzing infrastructure development both within Ethiopia and across the region.

Establishing robust diplomatic ties with the Arabian Peninsula and other maritime nations provides Ethiopia with increased political clout in global forums. It allows Ethiopia to actively participate in regional and international decision-making processes, thereby shaping policies that align with its national interests.

Closer diplomatic relations with maritime nations create opportunities for security cooperation, including joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and counter-terrorism efforts. Such collaborations enhance Ethiopia's security architecture and contribute to regional

stability.

Several countries have successfully leveraged sea access and diplomatic ties to bolster their geopolitical influence:

Ethiopia, a landlocked nation in the Horn of Africa, has long played a crucial role in the geo-political dynamics of the Red Sea region. Blessed with a rich history, diverse culture, and significant economic potential, Ethiopia finds itself at a critical juncture as it navigates the complexities of world politics in the context of the Red Sea.

Situated at the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, Ethiopia's strategic location grants it immense geopolitical importance. The country's proximity to the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb strait, and major shipping lanes makes it a key player in regional trade and connectivity. However, being a landlocked country, Ethiopia faces challenges in accessing the sea and fully harnessing the benefits of its strategic location.

To address this, Ethiopia has been pursuing diplomatic efforts to strengthen its ties with neighboring countries and establish access to ports and maritime routes. One significant development in this regard is the recent peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which ended decades of hostility and opened up new possibilities for regional integration.

Through the peace agreement, Ethiopia gained the opportunity to access to Eritrea's ports, particularly the Port of Assab and the Port of Massawa. This access provides Ethiopia with a direct gateway to the Red Sea and international trade routes. It reduces the country's dependence on other neighboring countries' ports, such as Djibouti, and diversifies its options for import and export activities.

Furthermore, Ethiopia has been actively engaging with other maritime nations in the region, such as Djibouti and Somalia, to strengthen economic and diplomatic ties. Djibouti, in particular, has emerged as a vital partner for Ethiopia, providing crucial port infrastructure and logistics services. The two countries have been collaborating on various projects, including the development of the Djibouti-Ethiopia railway and the establishment

of industrial parks.

Ethiopia's efforts to establish sea access and strengthen diplomatic ties have the potential to bring about significant economic and strategic benefits. Improved connectivity to the sea enables Ethiopia to attract foreign investment, expand its export markets, and enhance its competitiveness in global trade. It also facilitates the development of industrial zones, special economic zones, and transportation infrastructure, which contribute to job creation and economic growth.

Moreover, sea access enhances Ethiopia's regional integration efforts and strengthens its position in regional and international forums. By actively participating in discussions and initiatives related to maritime security, trade facilitation, and regional cooperation, Ethiopia can shape policies that align with its interests and contribute to peace and stability in the Red Sea region.

In conclusion, sea access holds great importance for Ethiopia's economic development, geopolitical influence, and regional integration efforts. By harnessing the power of diplomatic ties with neighboring countries and leveraging strategic partnerships, Ethiopia can unlock the benefits of its location, enhance its trade connectivity, and play a more significant role in the dynamics of the Red Sea region.

Moreover, the deliberately demarcated line presumably to deny access to sea Ethiopia is the neo colonial agenda and building wall of vengeance among the Horn fraternity and paying legacy for the colonizers that had been defeated at the battle of Adwa and still considered to be the most precarious war and the beacon for Africans that had been on the darkness.

Amid all these, the African countries and fellow neighbors should enter venture and truth to emancipate them from unjust as nations are not prohibited from accessing to the sea once it had been part of it.

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

Editorial

Legitimate pursuit for win-win cooperation

Prime Minister Abiy (PhD) has recently emphasized the urgent need for Ethiopia to get access to ports on the Red Sea through negotiations. And several experts are also asserting the appropriateness of Ethiopia's quest for alternative ports. They say Ethiopia should engage with other nations in the area to ensure its access to the ports and be able to overcome geostrategic impediments in this respect. The Premier said that his government is considering all possible options, offering resources to be shared with port owners in the Horn of Africa. Indeed, the population and economy are growing fast, the demand to diversify port alternatives is natural and needful for the country.

Appropriately, Ethiopia has been in constant endeavors to own sea access; the nation's pursuit to the ports is the proper measure as the long coastline owned by neighboring countries has still been unexploited. Consequently, for the port owners' across the Horn, cooperation with Ethiopia is indisputably the great option that maximizes their benefits. Provided that Ethiopia remains without access to the sea, it will continue to be dependent on others; this may even threaten its national security. Access to the sea is not only a matter of service or commercial port, the issue of securing sovereignty.

These days, Ethiopia is using the Djibouti ports for most import-export goods. Using this port as the only major route may not assure the future as Ethiopia's population and economy are rising. For instance, it is expected that the population will hit 150 million in 2030 (now 120 million population) which affirms the urgent need for the alternative port. Owning access to ports is becoming a matter of survival for an alarmingly increasing population. Hence, discussing the port issue should not be politicized; even the neighboring countries that have access to the sea should show cooperation in this regard to benefit from Ethiopia that has a great potential to benefit them. Indeed, it is hoped that these countries will complement this offer that accelerates win-win approach and allow Ethiopia to use their ports.

Most importantly, Ethiopia's quest for sea access is a reasonable measure that has not violated any of the agreements that the country has so far signed with its coastal neighbors. Justly, international laws accommodate issues of access to the sea and national security, as well as port ownership of populous countries. Hence, the neighboring nations should consider Ethiopia's pursuit of sea access as a legitimate request. It is certain that the Ethiopian government is claiming the right thing and its intention is to grow together with the neighboring countries.

In short, in light of its ever-growing population, Ethiopia's quest for a sea port is undeniably justifiable given its landlocked geographical position and the potential benefits that would be gained from these ports. If the nation could not secure its quest for the ports soon, it undeniably faces significant challenges in terms of importing and exporting goods that can meet the rising demand of the growing population. Hence, seeking access to a sea port is a logical step for the country to enhance its economic growth and regional integration besides securing the survival of its people. Likewise, the neighboring nations ought to realize that access to the sea is not a mere luxury but a matter of utmost significance for Ethiopia's existence.



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Opinion

Effective financial markets, key to sustainable development in Africa

BY STAFF REPORTER

Africa needs strong financial markets to unlock much needed capital to drive sustainable development on the continent. Addressing the launch of the Absa Africa Financial Markets Index 2023, acting Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Antonio Pedro, highlighted that effective financial markets are key to Africa's development prospects, according to a press release from UNECA.

Pedro further said Africa risked realizing the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063 owing to heightened financial and social challenges triggered by a combination of the COVID19 pandemic, growing inflation and geopolitical turbulence.

"Strengthening financial markets and diversifying the investor base would not only enable governments to mobilize more funding for economic recovery, sustainable development but also enhance financial resilience to future shocks," said Mr. Pedro, adding that, "To foster the development of their financial markets, countries require a comprehensive approach, encompassing capacity building, robust infrastructure, essential reference tools, benchmarks and opportunities for peer learning.

Mr. Pedro said Africa had huge investment needs to achieve sustainable development. For instance, Africa alone is estimated to require up to \$86 billion annually implementing adequate adaptation measures by 2030 while the cost of transport and service infrastructure required to enable the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area Were at about \$500 billion.

"To close the financing gap African countries need to make better use of their domestic capital and gain greater access to global capital, for example, African pension funds should be incentivized to invest locally, special purpose vehicles (SPVs) should be created accordingly," said Mr. Pedro. He noted that SPVs could equally harness Diaspora remittances that could be channeled to more productive investments but these required "deeper, healthier, more efficient and more inclusive financial markets".

Financial markets which include bond markets, commodities markets and foreign exchange markets trade in capital and credit which is vital for economic development of countries.

He commended the Absa Africa Financial Markets Index for offering highly valuable insights to countries which aid policy and guides the prioritization of financial market development initiatives. The 2023 edition of the index covers 28 countries, a significant milestone including more than half of the countries on the continent.

The ECA supported the inaugural participation of Cabo Verde and Tunisia in the Index which assesses markets across six pillars. The pillars include market depth, access to foreign exchange, transparency, tax and regulatory environment, capacity of local investors, market economic environment and transparency and legal standards and enforceability.

With the rapid emergence of new opportunities and challenges, the Index has evolved to reflect emerging trends, including financial technology, environmental, social and government policies, said Mr. Pedro, underscoring that the Index was an important tool for informing policy decisions and facilitating peer learning as part of the ECA's commitment to assisting member states in the development of their capital markets.

In developing the Index, the Official Monetary and Financial Institutions Forum, an independent think tank organization concerned with central banking, economic policy, and public investment conducted extensive quantitative research and data analysis with surveys of over 50 organizations across Africa.

The Absa Africa Financial Markets Index 2023 reveals that there has been continued progress in developing financial markets across Africa in the past year despite global shocks.

According to the report, scores have risen for the majority of AFMI countries, increasing in 15 countries largely due to an improvement in market transparency, particularly a rise in the number of credit ratings. Most countries also scored higher as macroeconomic conditions have generally stabilized following shocks from the COVID 19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The majority of AFMI countries now implement some form of environmental, social and governance initiatives, up from 57% in 2021, the report found, highlighting that this has helped mobilize new investment as sustainability becomes increasingly important to global investors.

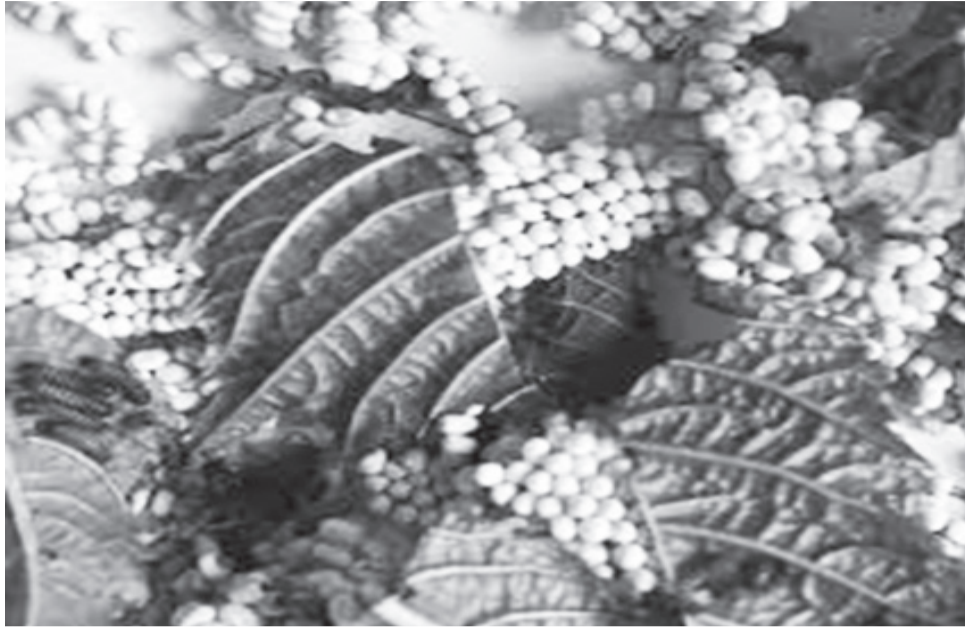
However, progress in the index has not been uniform, the report noted, explaining that each country experienced a lower score in at least one of the six pillars that make up the report.

Commenting on the report's findings, Charles Russon, chief executive officer, Absa Corporate and Investment Bank said global markets have faced challenges in recent years which pushed many countries into 'crisis mode', focusing their efforts on dealing with the next problem and putting long-term structural reform on the back burner.

"Progress in ESG investments, boosting market transparency and improving central security depositories are cementing Africa as a destination for capital investment," said Mr. Russon.

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

Business & Economy



Ethiopians are tapping into Silkworm farming



Eying on the other face of agriculture: *Sericulture*

BY MENGESHA AMARE

Of the multifarious production types exercised in Ethiopia, sericulture has been cited as a promising one. Cognizant of the fact that the agricultural sector has incorporated a range of sectors, *The Ethiopian Herald* had a stay with Semir Abamecha, an agro-economist who graduated from Jimma University, to have a piece of information about the cultivation of silk work, sericulture.

He said, "As silk has played an important role in the social and religious life of Ethiopia from the earliest days of the kingdom of Axum, sericulture has been, as an agro-based industry, practiced in the country despite its minimal intensity. It is the process of obtaining the natural silk fiber through silkworm rearing, which can be experienced in varying agro-climatic conditions and is suited to different production systems."

According to Semir, sericulture industry has enormous advantages for sustainable development of any country. The industrial and commercial uses of silk contributed to the silkworm promotion all over the world especially in developing nations like ours.

In simple terms, he elucidated, sericulture is the rearing of silkworm, which is practiced in many countries around the globe, and silkworm is the primary productive insect species for the sericulture industry. Silk has a strong attraction to the people of Ethiopia, dating from the ancient period of the country's civilization. It has various advantages, among others: socio-economic, religious and ecological values creating job opportunity, alternative source of income, environmental conservation, and technology adoption.

Semir further stated that Ethiopia has a high potential for silk production due to the existence of suitable conditions such as bimodal rainfall patterns, ambient temperatures, different vegetation and other agro-ecological factors. However, silk production in the country is still limited by several factors, such as institutional aspects, farmer-related problems, infrastructure influences, and natural factors. Therefore, the government and other stakeholders should work on solving these problems and attach due emphasis to sericulture to help the nation gain what it deserves out of the subsector.

"True, sericulture is an agro-based industry. It is the process of obtaining the natural silk fiber through silkworm

rearing, which can be practiced in varying agro-climatic conditions, and the industry has enormous advantages for sustainable development. Today, the top five silk producing countries in the world are China, India, Japan, Brazil and Thailand.

In Africa, silk has been used for textiles for about thousands of years and sericulture has a history of more than 30 years in East Africa. The potential of the African indigenous silk moth species for wild silk production has been well documented in Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya and other central and southern African countries," Semir added.

As to him, silkworm is the common name for the silk-producing larva of any of several species of moths which is used by the cottage and small scale industry as well as big silk industry. Silk is said the queen of fibers because it is a smooth, shining, very soft, lustrous, fabulous, strong and durable and unique natural protein fiber produced by silkworms.

He said sericulture, silk worm farming, is an agro-based industry that involves all the processes starting from mulberry cultivation to silk dyeing and weaving of sericulture activities. In short, sericulture is an art of rearing silkworms for silk production, and its main product is the natural silk fiber.

As studied well so far, silk is a natural protein fiber and is very soft, lustrous, smooth, strong, and durable than any natural or artificial fiber. Developing countries like ours have relied on silk production as an important tool for economic development, for employment generation especially in rural sector and also as a means to earn foreign exchange though its grade is highly minimal in Ethiopia.

He said, "In Ethiopia, agriculture is the cornerstone of the development policy. Since the country is the second highly populated country of African continent, it has faced problems born to unemployment, underemployment and poverty, especially in rural areas due to lack of farmland and high rate population growth. Henceforth, for these serious problems another part of agricultural sector such as sericulture industry becomes an important pre-requisite as an alternative source of income, efficient and effective income and employment generating activity and poverty reduction."

He said in view of its potentiality for job oriented or self-employment positions at various levels can be suitable to college or university students after successful

completion of university training by providing them sericulture courses with knowledge in theoretical background and skills in practical field work.

According to Semir, among East African countries, Ethiopia is the only country to export wild silk products to markets abroad because silk products in Ethiopia are organic by nature as the plantation for rearing uses natural fertilizers.

The country has also granted with diversified climate, vegetation and topography, and this is also true for diversified options of sericulture industry which are adopted on different vegetation for rearing of silk-worms, and different species of silkworms. Besides, he discoursed that the country has bimodal rainfall pattern, ambient temperature, and other agro-ecological factors provide a fertile ground for mulberry and castor seed cultivation and silkworm production.

Some of the areas of investment in sericulture which have incredible employment potential in the country include collection and processing of cocoon, silk based textile production, silkworm seed production as well as production of cocoon processing equipment, he added.

Therefore, Semir said it is quite important to introduce sericulture technology to the local community by providing them with expertise, new plant cultivator, new silkworm seeds and the overall production scheme through training.

He further stated that silk production can be integrated with other farming activities like fish farming, aquaculture, beekeeping or apiculture, vegetable production and poultry farming.

"In addition to feeding silkworms, mulberry leaves can serve as animal feed and provide fruit. Farmers also integrate silkworm production with poultry production as the chickens feed dead and over produced worms. Sericulture is an agro-based enterprise highly suited for both large and small land holdings, with low capital investment," he added.

As learnt from Semir, silk products are purchased by the urban rich consumers and the final value of silk fabrics flows back to the primary producers in rural areas. It plays a significant role in transferring prosperity from the rich to the poor sections of the society.

As to him, creating rural industries such as sericulture can effectively reduce poverty as it is labor intensive industry and

brings about rural development. Sericulture is advantageous for women, to control their own earnings, helps them develop their own business and have lucrative income. Silk production in particular, provides women with economic opportunities.

Mulberry leaf is also considered as commercial crop because its stems, leaves, roots will be used for industrial and pharmaceutical purposes he said adding in Ethiopia, silks are produced in different agro-ecological zones by some companies through commercial as well as smallholder farmers both as a source of income and employment opportunity. Besides, silks are highly profitable activities.

In general, he wrapped up his idea saying natural factors like the presence of shortage of water supply, drought, inadequate rainfall, flood, frost, diseases and pests, location and season specific production are often beyond the control of farmers and institutions that is the main reasons for low sericulture productivity as well. Besides, rural roads inaccessibility, high transportation cost and lack of means of information communication for efficient flow of goods unsuitable transportation facilities and market information are attributable to the diminutive level of sericulture production.

Besides, he added shortage of capital, lack of necessary facilities and inputs, absence of skill and knowledge, attitude problem, dearth of necessary support from government and others have made sericulture cultivation a sluggish one. Therefore, the sector requires due attention via proper management practices, continuous follow-up and holistic support as needed in order to enhance the quality and production scales thereby reinvigorating sericulture production for better future on citizens' livelihood effectively using the subsector.

It is also quite lucrative to strengthen sericulture industry linkage with experienced professionals from various research institutes, and universities, private companies, different project groups and others have to join forces to boost the good experiences of sericulture practices, encourage and promote farmers and out growers to push the sector forward, he opined.

Most importantly, researchers must conduct scientific studies with a view to promoting sericulture, enhancing income generation via addressing problems related to silk production, marketing channel and linkage for the sake of scaling up its production and productivity.

Art & Culture

A thin and poisoned exhale

BY MELKAMSERA AFEWORK

A day of two friends is not shady. They won't spend a day or night without meeting or looking at each other. The husband will be confused and unable to do anything if he doesn't get his beloved wife. Their year-long closeness makes them to be together from day to evening desirously. Some people who observed their excessive relationship are advice especially for husband, "to refrain and to leave her".

However, such kind of advice is strongly annoying to him. He never ever wants to see anyone disparage and affront his old friend. His eyes are always in contact with her eyes. She has already turned his years-long mouthful of air. He understands that such a romantic relationship requires physical touch and mental attachment. Hence, he wraps around her body and hides her in his chest. When he touches her body with his fingers, passionate love feels like instant attraction with a bit of nervousness and feels intense internal feeling of joy. He never forgets her, even when he is alone. She is not out of his mind when he goes anywhere.

When he gets her anywhere, he deeply kisses her leaps heading to a hidden place and she frequently experiences feebleness in the knees. At such moment, he leaves her alone and escapes from the area. He never tries to make her calm down. These kinds of emotions give him satisfaction. He feels at home with her. But he knows that a problem arises with his wife when he returns back to his real home. His wife always suspects and nags him. His wife frequently asks him where he has been and why. She always angrily sniffs his shirt, jacket and body as a whole to detect where he has been and with whom he was.

Sometimes she cries tears trickling down from her eyes, as his odor confirms to her that he was with his mistress. She shouts at him showering him with insults. Reversely, controlling his emotions, he calms down trying to make her cool. He also promises her not to repeat his mistake again. The intention of his promise is not for the sake of his wife but for the sake of his children too. He is always afraid of his children and won't hear about his disloyalty by engaging in infidelity, breaking promises and neglecting his family. In this sense, he always tries to take care of his children. Because of this, he always begs her not to tell anything to their children and promises "to do away with this misbehavior of his again". He also knelt down under her legs and beseeched her to excuse him.

One evening he has been with his mistress beside his home fence. As usual, he fondles her body with his fingers warming her up. Eying her he kisses her deeply. She also experienced a feeling of feebleness. He immediately desert her as he did before and escaping from that hidden area. After distancing some meters, when he looked behind, he understood that one of his sons was trying to support and pick up her from the ground. Not only observing it but also trying to wrap her body with his fingers and struggling to kiss her as his father did. The son has been around there when his father



massaging and kissing her. The father could not believe his eyes. It seemed a dream. He felt sad and deeply regretted. He got disappointed over what he saw. The husband also observed a piece of cigarette in his son's fingers. The father became mad and began cursing himself. He realized that his children are imitating his misconduct. There was a trace of nervousness in his voice. He emotionally seized the cigarette and threw away. He felt guilty and believed that he is responsible for the misbehaviors of his children and families in general. He got convinced that he is setting bad example of his family. He realized cigarette as his worst enemy. It subjected him to addiction, detached him from his family, his wife, friends, relatives and the community. He decided to say good bye to it not to bequeath it to generations.

The thin shaft poison breath Good work

The friendship between the two will not be separated by darkness. It will not be possible for them to spend the night without meeting or seeing each other. When an adult family loses her, what they do is lost. Their closeness that lasted for years will last them until the night. Some who saw their inappropriate relationship continued to tell the man, "Leave her, let her approach you".

But he resents this kind of advice. No one wants to look down on his fellow-year-old, criticize her. His eyes are always on her eyes. She has been his inspiration for years. He forgets the world, he avoids revenge. Her breath always warms him, he misses her company.

Every day he rubs his friend with love and hides her from his chest. When he was with her, touching and feeling his fingers, he was happy inside. He will not let you out of his thoughts all the way. Every time he meets her, he hides in a corner and comes to her with his lips. When he stares at her and kisses her, she becomes helpless. In a moment, her warm breath was gone. She flinches and jumps from his hand. Watching you fall, weaken. It doesn't pick up. He leaves her out of heat.

Whenever this happens, the satisfaction is special. Surrender to him alone with joy. When he comes home in the evening, his wife stares at him suspiciously. The situation does not go away when he is always away from his friend.

This friend has become the problem of their home and the test of their marriage. She sees the wife burning her shirt, jacket. She flips over and sniffs him. This is when the smell of a woman she has known for years reaches her nose. As her voice fills the house, the family kneels at her feet with the usual "never again" apology. Mercifully, she passed.

He is not just doing this for his marriage. He does not want this bad to be known beyond his wife and children. He always thinks about them, cares for their feelings. But one day it happened.

The family was to return to the door that day in the evening. Chances are that the friend's stay is near and they are staying at the corner of the fence. The little boy, who observes the action from a distance, is awestruck and asks the end. He did not know that his father had done this before.

Before the father entered the house, he said goodbye to his friend. As soon as he finished wiping his mouth, his lover fell from his hand. He didn't turn to look at her as usual. He walked past her like a fool. The little boy who saw this did not keep quiet about his father's friend.

He quickly picked her up from where she fell and put her in his arms. He didn't delay, as he had seen his father do, he pulled her close to his mouth and searched for her breath with his breath. Some force prevented him from throwing it.

Before he fell, the father reached behind him and took his son's hands in his. Now he couldn't believe his eyes. He started crying in shock. When the boy saw that he had followed the evil path he had followed, he could not forgive himself.

He crushed the cigarette stub that landed on the little boy's small hands and threw it away. Cigarettes took his life away from his family, a bad addiction. A bad habit that he has changed from his spouse. Beyond him, his son's married, evil friend. The father broke up with his friend of years after that moment. A cigarette from his life, a cigarette from his family, a friend's enemy.

This shocking incident by the son became the reason for the future identity of the family. He rushed to a great decision without spending a night, he immediately became violent with himself, threw away his long-time smoking

companion from his mind. A habit called smoking, called smoking, was removed from him immediately.

This fact is a story that happened to someone years ago. The father who shares his memories with me is today's elderly, mature neighbor of mine. The decision to quit smoking that many have tried and failed, or that took years, has become a reality for this person. The occasion when he decided to quit smoking thirty eight years ago has become an excuse for him to take a break today. Now they are the epitome of a good father, the epitome of a good household. Their consciences are saved from remorse. Their generation has crossed over in health.

The dangers of smoking are multifaceted. Every year, more than five million people in the world die from diseases caused by smoking. Of these, 600,000 are non-smokers who are exposed to illness and death due to smoking. Smoking causes many health problems. Its contribution to social and economic pressures is also high. Cigarettes contain nicotine. Nicotine is a dangerous substance that controls the brain's neurotransmitters. This substance has addictive power by creating a temporary euphoria. Smokers addicted to this substance are unable to quit smoking suddenly. Even if they try to give up the habit, it still leaves them with unpleasant physical and psychological symptoms. Therefore, they smoke again and again to increase the level of happiness of the night.

Cigarette smoke seriously damages the respiratory system. Especially the damage to the lungs is worse. Out of more than 7000 chemicals found in cigarette smoke, 250 are considered very harmful. These chemicals damage the respiratory system and cause diseases like asthma.

According to the American Lung Association, there are approximately 600 harmful substances in cigarettes. Even when the smoke disperses in the air, it has the power to produce about 7000 chemicals.

According to history, the production of tobacco in modern form in Ethiopia started during the reign of Emperor Menilk. The first tobacco factory was opened in 1931 in Dredawa city, owned by Armenians. After the factory moved to Addis Ababa, it produced about 300 cigarettes a day until the Italian invasion in 1933. During the Italian occupation, the demand for cigarettes increased and the consumption increased. After Italy left the country, in 1934, the tobacco monopoly began to employ 300 workers.

According to the research conducted by Development Studies Associate /DSA/, the consumption of cigarettes in Ethiopia shows an increase of 8 percent every year. In our country, there are extensive tobacco farms in Blate, Shewarobit Wolaytana and Hawasam. According to a study conducted by the World Health Organization in 135 countries, Ethiopia ranks among the fewest smokers in the world.

Ethiopia has been one of the 6 countries in the world with less than five percent of adults over the age of 15 who smoke. This is compared to 23% of the United States, 26% of Kenya, and 29% of China.

Science & Technology



Cyber warfare:

Build strong cyber army to defend the invisible war

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

October is named as cyber security awareness month since 2004. Every year since then, the world is observing cyber security month with different activities mainly focusing on awareness creation to the general public. This year marks the 20th years of Cyber Security Awareness Month, celebrated across the world. The month is dedicated to cyber related awareness creation campaigns for the private and public sectors to work hand-in-hand to raise awareness about the importance of giving care for cyber security.

Securing critical resources in the cyberspace and ensuring secure online communications is the target of the awareness-creation campaign. The 2023 theme of the cyber security awareness month is “Secure our world,” and the cyber security month is celebrated worldwide by different activities. As cyber-attacks are growing to a warfare level and cybercrimes are growing from year to year with huge destructions, each country gives due focus to securing their cyber infrastructure and the whole cyber system. And raising awareness to the general public is the first step in combating cyber-attacks, as human error is among the main reasons for cyber-attacks.

Technology ownership, trained and skilled human resource in the sector and aware society are among the critical steps in securing the cyber infrastructure in addition to building a 24/7 alert cyber army. Countries are creating and strengthening cyber security institutions to safeguard their cyber infrastructure of a sovereign country and to defend cyber-attack attempts.

Ethiopia is celebrating cyber security awareness month and this year’s theme for the campaign in Ethiopia is “Resilient cyber capability for national sovereignty.” Organized by Ethiopia’s cyber institution, the Information Network Security Administration (INSA), different awareness creation campaigns, seminars and discussions are being conducting to continue the whole month.

As part of the cyber awareness campaigns, INSA inaugurated a movie conducted on

Ethiopia’s cyber army. The movie entitled “Invisible War” focuses on the cyber related attacks on Ethiopia and the Ethiopia’s cyber army capability and abilities in defending these attacks and securing Ethiopia’s cyber sovereignty. INSA builds a cyber-army safeguarding Ethiopia from internal and external, from group and country initiated attacks on various infrastructures and key sectors both public and private sector.

“The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) becomes among the key projects targeted by cyber-attack of those who stands on the opposite side of the national interest of Ethiopia. To minimize the risks in this sensitive sector and to safeguard the national security, national development and key development projects from cyber-attacks, it is critical to build a strong and resilient cyber security army. At this century, cyber security is becoming a serious national survival issue,” Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Foreign Minister (FM) Demeke Mekonnen said.

On his opening remarks during the fourth year nationwide and 20th worldwide Cyber Security Month, DPM and FM Demeke said that cyber security is becoming the new warfare and protecting national security is unthinkable without building resilient cyber security at this century. “Those with latest cyber technologies and capable cyber professionals keep their national security and national interest in the highly complex and competitive sector which touches all social, political, economic and diplomatic activities of countries,” he stated.

Demeke noted that countries are widely using cyber security for their development endeavors and investing on it using all the capacities they have to protect their national interests in the competitive international arena. As to him if wisely managed, the cyber space is becoming very essential for the development endeavors of countries, but at the same time, without proper management, the cyber sector is becoming a serious national threat.

“The cyber technology has its own gains and benefits to develop competitiveness,” Demeke noted adding “similarly, without properly managing it and without having

a resilient cyber army, its consequences is destructive.” Hence, given the fast development of the cyber technology with immense benefits and consequences, it needs strong investments in the sector to develop it and to build resilient cyber army at national and institutional levels.

“In this regard, the Information Network Security Administration is playing a vital role in defending Ethiopia’s cyber space from attacks and in developing cyber literacy in the society,” he stated. The competition in the science and technology sector is innovating new and unimaginable technological products and these technologies are touching positively and negatively the lives of all. “By understanding its impacts, we have to act with the time and the technological developments to be stay in the competition,” Demeke noted.

Unless we keep working on cyber space, FM and DPM Demeke underlined, it is unthinkable to protect the national sovereignty and national interests in this technology dominated era. The countries that create strong capability in the cyber space are using the information from the sector in their relations with other countries, he stated. According to him, the cyber sector is using by countries to keep their geopolitical interests and to protect their national interests in their interactions with other countries including diplomatic activities and negotiations.

“Countries like Ethiopia with undeveloped cyber technology and high geopolitical significance due to their strategic location become among the top vulnerable countries for cyber-attacks. Hence, if we want to survive, it is impossible to remain behind the cyber technology. Building resilient cyber institutions and cyber army is a timely action for Ethiopia,” he underlined. To minimize the vulnerability of cyber-attacks, building resilient capability and strengthening cyber diplomacy are very critical.

“The competition, vulnerability and threats are growing and becoming more complex. We have to be proactive, ready and remain resilient to safeguard our national interest and national sovereignty.” In this regard, Demeke recommends to invest in the young generation and in technology ownership by giving due

attention for local innovations in the sector.

For his part, INSA Director General, Solomon Soka stated that the infrastructural destruction and financial lost due to cyber-attacks is growing at global level. What makes the sector more difficult is that, the source of cyber-attacks is invisible due to the complicated and borderless nature of the sector. “More sophisticated technologies and innovations are adding in to the sector which makes the sector more complicated and using these technologies hackers are easily attacking the sovereignty of countries,” he stated.

“By 2025, the world is predicted to lose over 10.5 trillion USD and compared with the three trillion lose in 205, the consequence and destruction of cyber-attack is highly growing,” Solomon stated. He added that cybercrimes and attacks are also growing in type and in number on Ethiopia. Only in 2022/23 budget year, INSA saved over 23.2 billion birr from cyber-attacks thanks to the professionals alerted 24/7 “and we are working day and night to secure our country’s cyber space and its sovereignty in the sector.”

Cyber warfare is becoming a new competition sector and even a battlefield among countries and building capable and resilient cyber institutions with well-equipped cyber army is a top priority of countries. To defend the sovereignty and national interests, to keep the national development safe and secure from the invisible war, technology and skills ownership, building skilled cyber army and investing in cyber literacy is becoming a serious agenda of countries.

Cyber warfare is invisible war and is becoming a serious threat for all countries. But, the countries which own the technology and the skilled human resource are protecting their national interests while the developing countries continue to be vulnerable for the cybercrimes and its destructions.

As part of the cyber month campaign, INSA inaugurated last Sunday a movie that focuses on Ethiopia’s struggle in combating cyber-related crimes. The movie entitled “Invisible War”, which is based on a true story shows Ethiopia’s cyber army efforts, capability and readiness in safeguarding Ethiopia’s institutions and its sovereignty in the sector.

Society

Ethiopia's sustained effort to eliminate trachoma

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

According to the Ministry of Health, trachoma is the leading cause of infectious blindness in Ethiopia, with the country having the highest burden of trachoma in both urban and rural areas.

To combat the burden of trachoma, the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with international partners and local organizations, has been implementing comprehensive interventions aimed at controlling and eliminating the disease. These interventions include strategies such as Mass Drug Administration (MDA) of antibiotics, promoting facial cleanliness, improving environmental conditions, and providing trichiasis (TT) surgery for individuals with advanced stages of the disease.

The Ministry of Health acknowledges the crucial role played by TT surgery campaigns in addressing trichiasis in both rural and urban parts of Ethiopia. These campaigns have significantly reduced the prevalence of trachoma and prevented blindness. The campaigns involve mobilizing and training ophthalmic surgeons and healthcare workers to perform the surgeries. Collaborations with local communities, health facilities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to eye health are also established.

TT surgeries are primarily conducted in rural areas where trachoma is endemic, ensuring that the most affected populations receive the necessary treatment. Mobile eye clinics equipped with surgical instruments and supplies are set up in remote locations to provide surgeries. Patients diagnosed with trichiasis are referred for surgery, and trained surgeons perform the procedures.

The implementation of TT surgery campaigns, alongside other interventions, has led to a significant reduction in the prevalence of trachoma and trichiasis in the country. As part of the ongoing efforts to eliminate trachoma, the Ministry of Health continues to work with relevant stakeholders this year.

During a conference to review the nation's trachoma elimination program, Health Minister Lia Tadesse (MD) highlighted the achievements of the Ethiopia Trachoma Program. She stated that TT surgery had been conducted on 1.6 million individuals, effectively preventing blindness caused by trachoma. Ethiopia is implementing the World Health Organization's strategy for trachoma elimination in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The Ministry of Health remains committed to this goal. She also attributed the progress achieved to factors such as the availability of qualified and skilled integrated eye care workers at primary healthcare units and the large number of TT surgeries performed.

Through the Government of UK support more than five million people have received improved access to WASH since 2018, which is really prominent not only to sustainably eliminate trachoma but also to prevent other water borne diseases, it was



TT surgeries are primarily conducted in rural areas where trachoma is endemic

pointed out.

As reported by ENA, during a visit to Ethiopia, the Duchess of Edinburgh, who is also the Global Ambassador for the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), Sophie Helen Rhys-Jones, emphasized the need for collaborative efforts to eliminate trachoma and create a generation free from the disease. She commended the progress made by the Ethiopia Trachoma Program, highlighting that over 1.6 million individuals, mostly women, have received surgical correction known as TT, effectively averting blindness.

The Duchess also highlighted the importance of strong strategies to maintain progress and prevent setbacks. She emphasized the collaboration between the Ethiopian government and WASH to increase access to clean water and sanitation, which is crucial for achieving a trachoma-free future.

“So much has been achieved both here in Ethiopia and around the world. But now is the time that we must all redouble our efforts if we are to achieve our aim of eliminating trachoma by the year 2030, which is a mere six years away. We must not let ourselves become defocused or complacent. We are on the cusp of achieving something almost unimaginable in previous years. Every person involved in this vital work has reason to be so very proud of each and every accomplishment.”

Medical Director of Bahata Health Center, Yeshiwas Mitku, on his part emphasized the need for concerted efforts to improve child care, household hygiene, and food security to further strengthen the fight against trachoma.

If individuals notice symptoms such as eyelashes rubbing against the surface of the

eye, eye irritation, redness, or discomfort, it is crucial to seek medical attention from an eye care professional for proper diagnosis and treatment. Early intervention can help prevent further eye damage and potential vision loss.

He emphasized that trachoma is a progressive disease that can lead to serious complications if not treated. In advanced stages, trachoma can cause corneal scarring, which can result in visual impairment or blindness.

He concluded by stating that the national trachoma elimination efforts are making progress and yielding positive outcomes. The provision of medical services and other interventions have been instrumental in alleviating the burden of trachoma, improving the quality of life for individuals and promoting productivity.

The challenge of trachoma in developing countries is significant due to several factors: lack of access to healthcare is one of the factors affecting them. Many developing countries have limited access to healthcare facilities, especially in remote and rural areas. This makes it difficult for individuals affected by trachoma to receive timely diagnosis and treatment. Limited access to trained healthcare professionals and specialized eye care services further exacerbates the problem. Poor sanitation and hygiene practices are the other most serious factor.

In developing countries, inadequate access to clean water, lack of proper sanitation facilities, and limited knowledge about hygiene practices contribute to the spread of trachoma. Without access to clean water for personal and household hygiene, it becomes challenging to prevent and control the transmission of the disease.

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AfDB approves fertilizer project for small scale Uganda farmers

The Board of Directors of the African Development Bank Group has announced that they have approved a project to provide 60,000 metric tons of fertilizer to 400,000 smallholder farmers in Uganda.

In a press statement on Thursday, the directors said that under the Fertilizer Financing for Sustainable Agriculture Management project, the Africa Fertilizer Financing mechanism will provide \$2 million (Ush7.5 billion) in partial trade credit guarantees and a grant of \$877,842 (Ush3.3 billion) to the African fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership.

The African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership is a non-profit social enterprise that collaborates with public and private sector partners to develop and strengthen input value-chains and, in particular, deepen and broaden fertilizer markets across Africa.

The AfDB board of directors explained that for over three years, the project will support two wholesalers to sell fertilizer with a value of up to 15 times the value of the \$2 million partial trade credit guarantee. It will

also link wholesalers to around 25 hub agro-dealers and 125 retail agro-dealers who will on-sell the fertilizer to farmers.

They anticipate that the credit facility will reduce the risks associated with suppliers lending fertilizers to wholesalers on credit.

The project is expected to boost yields and will also provide training to 3.4 per cent targeted farmers—40 per cent of them women— on using improved seeds, balancing crop nutrition and best farming practices.

“In Uganda, the fertilizer consumption is about 2.5 kg/ha. The project will help to make fertilizer more accessible and appropriately used by farmers, which would in turn boost agricultural productivity and help to improve food security in Uganda,” said Ms Marie Claire Kalihangabo, Africa Fertilizer Financing Mechanism Coordinator.

She said the project will advance the Bank’s Feed Africa Strategy by increasing food productivity and security.

Source: The East African

South Sudan, Kenya in solidarity and cooperation for regional stability

South Sudan and Kenya have embarked on the establishment of a joint cooperation commission, marking a crucial milestone in their bilateral relations.

A message from Kenyan President William Ruto to his South Sudan counterpart, Salva Kiir signified the commitment to address mutual concerns and strengthen collaboration.

The meeting of officials from both nations highlighted their focus on peace, stability, and exploring areas of shared interest within the framework of the East African Community.

Kenyan Prime Cabinet Secretary and Foreign and Diaspora Affairs Musalia Mudavadi lauded Kiir for his efforts in unifying the people of South Sudan during challenging times.

“This acknowledgment reflects the recognition of President Kiir’s role in fostering unity and fostering stability within the country, which is crucial for regional equilibrium,” he stated.

Kenya, Mudavadi said, believes Kiir has experience and capabilities in resolving conflicts.

“This recognition highlights President Kiir’s leadership and his potential contribution to finding peaceful solutions to Sudanese conflicts. Kenya’s confidence in President Kiir exemplifies the emerging regional trust and cooperation between the two nations,” he added.

For his part, South Sudan’s Foreign Affairs minister, James Pitia Morgan, reassured



the Kenyan delegation of President Kiir’s resolute commitment to promoting peace and stability not only within South Sudan, but across the entire region.

“This commitment underscores South Sudan’s dedication to regional cooperation and its determination to play a constructive role in the East African Community,” he explained.

In addition to discussing mutual concerns, the meeting also focused on exploring potential areas of shared interest within the framework of the East African Community.

This indicates the intention of both countries to foster deeper cooperation, strengthen economic ties, and promote regional integration for the collective benefit of the region.

Analysts say the establishment of a joint cooperation commission between South Sudan and Kenya marks a significant milestone in their bilateral relations, thus showing their commitment to addressing mutual concerns, fostering peace and promoting regional stability.

(SudanTribune)



This is
Ethiopia



Endeavors to attain tourism sector plan

BY TEWODROS KASSA

According to tourism review data, Egypt, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, and Tunisia are among the top five African tourist destinations in 2023. These countries attracted the largest international tourists and generated a tangible income from the tourism sector. Following this, such countries are generating more from the tourism sector and the sector becomes a sustainable source of job opportunities to the growing number of youths.

Regarding this, the Ethiopian government is also undertaking its level best to motivate the tourism sector. The Ministry of Tourism is closely working with pertinent sector actors to attract numerous international tourists and promote domestic tourism. By doing so, the tourism sector has been given due attention by the government as the five pillars of the economy.

Recently, the Ministry of Tourism announced that preparations are underway to tap the untapped potentials of the tourism sector through undertaking various measures by the new Ethiopian fiscal year. The Ministry plans to boost the sector income through promoting new tourist destinations, cultivating a trained and productive labor force, as well as easing the sector challenges.

Speaking with the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Tourism State Minister Seleshi Girma stated that the utmost effort is being put to attract one billion foreign tourists and collect one billion USD.

The Ministry of Tourism has set a plan to earn the stated amount of revenues from the one million foreign tourists that are expected to pay visit to Ethiopia this year.

Accordingly, the country expects to generate over one billion USD from one million foreign tourists during this fiscal year.

Last budget year, some 30 million local tourists visited several tourist attractions and similar number of tourists are expected to pay visit to various destinations this fiscal year, as to him.

The State Minister further stated that different tourist destination development activities would be performed as well as Ambassador's forum would be held to enhance tourist inflow.

"The lifting of travel restrictions that had been put due to outbreak of COVID 19 and unrests would be significant in building a positive image," he noted.

The soon to be inaugurated community lodge located in Senkele Swayne's Hartebeest Sanctuary, is amongst the tourism development activities, said Seleshi.

In addition to the current tourism information center, around three new information centers would be made ready this year. Moreover, the nation would take part in different international tourism exhibitions and hospitality forums to introduce its untapped tourism potentials, he added.

He indicated that the promotion activity that used to be carried out mainly in North America and Europe countries have now widen to different Middle East countries. Similarly, the Ministry has given due emphasis to promote domestic tourism.

Mentioning that it has been over five years since the standard of several hotels and lodges have been rated, Seleshi mentioned that rating hotels as per to their standard would positively add to the tourism market development.

The hotels standard's report that has been carried out for the past six months would be released soon, according to the State Minister.

Moreover having well trained human power in the tourism sector is another milestone to harness the country's vast tourism potentials. No doubt, the tourism sector embraces more job opportunities across the country. Thus, the youths are expected to be more successful in their future endeavors if they are offered with successive tourism sector trainings.

In Ethiopia, the Tourism Training Institute (TTI) is among the leading institution that has been generating the largest number of tourism sector professional in the past years.

The Tourism Training Institute said it has been working tirelessly to provide a skilled labor force for hotels and contribute share for bringing competitive quality in Ethiopia's hospitality industry.

Institute Deputy Director Habtamu Kibret told *The Ethiopia Herald* that they have been offering training and other capacity building programs to hotel professionals that would help the hotels to avail international service to their customers.

Mentioning the need to exert collaborative efforts to ensure quality in the sector, Habtamu indicated the institute is taking bold steps to meet the needs of the hotel industry. Currently, the institute provides training up to five levels and the programs have been periodically reviewed by hotel experts.

"Previously, we offered 21 programs and the number of programs was downsized into eight in a bid to ensure quality training and to nurture qualified professionals."

He added: "Since it is not feasible to produce adequate hotel professionals by a single

entity, we have been supporting regional tourism and hotel training institutes to adjust the quality of their training per the federal level. We have also offered capacity building training to their teachers and extended professional assistance."

According to the deputy director, the institute's graduates have been playing a vital role in satisfying the demand for skilled professionals among star-designated hotels and in the tourism industry.

The institute is also a leading entity that has been supporting the hotel and tourism sector with researchers and innovative ideas. Equipped with a viable professional structure, the entity envisions becoming a center of excellence in the area, he remarked.

Other private owned institutions are also providing various trainings in the tourism sector to numerous youths in Addis Ababa and throughout the country.

Among these, Capital Hotel and Management College (CHMC) announced that it has been contributing to satisfy the growing demand for skilled labor in the hotel and tourism sectors and in job creation in the country.

CHMC Dean Solomon Taye told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the college has been steadily working to fill the skilled labor gap in the hotel and tourism sectors and enhance the service delivery. "All of our departments are providing international standard training."

He added: "We equip our students with international hospitality principles in a bid to enable them to serve global tourists and to portray Ethiopia's positive image. Nurturing qualified hotel professionals should not be left to a single college and all concerned bodies need to support us."