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Photo: Berihun Tadel

Ethiopia remains resolute to regional peace, stability: Premier

• Nation marks 116th ENDF Day

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) said Ethiopia is committed to working closely with its neighbors to ensure lasting peace and stability in the region and resolve problems through negotiation and in a peaceful manner.

Speaking at the 116th Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) Day at the Meskel Square yesterday, Premier Abiy stated that some interest groups have been engaged in distorting Ethiopia's call for discussion on some regional affairs as an attempt to invade its neighbors. "The Ethiopian government has no intention to invade or to execute its desire

militarily."

"I would like to announce to the people of Ethiopia and ENDF members that Ethiopia has no purpose to attain its own interest through military force and we are always committed to peaceful negotiation. The hundred plus years

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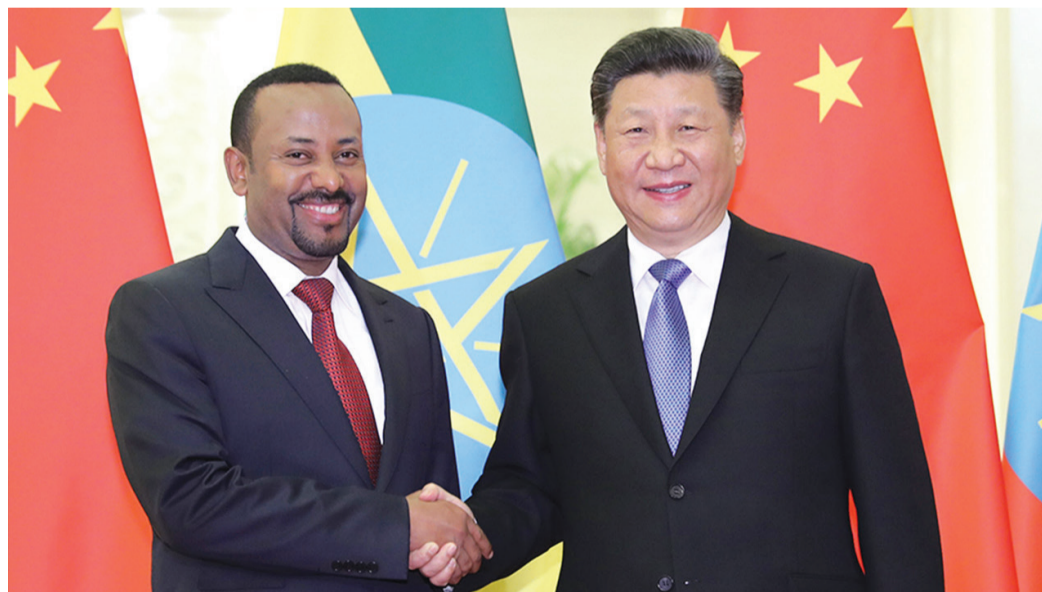
Ambassador outlines BRF's outcomes in expanding Ethio-China holistic partnership

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA- The agreement that Ethiopia and China recently signed at the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) will help to grow the two countries' multifaceted ties in economy, culture, politics, and people-to-people, according to a senior diplomat.

Ethiopian Ambassador to Sweden and other Nordic countries Mehreteab Mulugeta told FBC said that the agreement signed at the sidelines of the Belt and Road Forum last week could be considered a huge diplomatic victory. The agreement will help to grow the two countries' ties to a higher level economically, culturally, politically and in

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Ministry to announce star ratings of 20 hotels soon

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA – The Ministry of Tourism said it has finalized preparations to announce star ratings of 20 hotels soon.

Ministry Tourist Service Delivery Institutions Competency Assessment and Ranking Leader Tariku Demssie told *The Ethiopian Herald* that some 20 hotels are selected to get star rating by fulfilling the evaluation criteria.

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Ethiopia endorses six pledges to improve refugees' condition

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

BISHOFTU- The Ethiopian government endorsed yesterday six pledges to improve the lives of refugees and host communities that will be presented in the upcoming Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in Geneva, Switzerland.

The pledges were approved in the IGAD supported high-level ministerial level meeting attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Demeke Mekonnen, ministers and senior officials. The pledges encompass

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News

Zimbabwe, Gabon defense attaché desirous of enhancing ties with Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA (ENA)- The military attachés of Zimbabwe and Gabon have expressed interest to further enhance their relations with Ethiopia in the field of military as the country has a long time experience in building army.

The defense attachés of Zimbabwe and Gabon have stated that they would work to further develop their relations with Ethiopia as the country has a very long history of building an army.

On the occasion of the 116th Army Day, a photo exhibition showcasing the history of the army, its struggle and its current state of capabilities were presented to the public at the National Theater of Ethiopia.

Speaking at the occasion, Military Historical Heritage, Research and Management Directorate representative with the Ministry of Defense, Lieutenant Colonel Agzew Altaye, said that the exhibition is an indication of the heroic deeds, history and integrity of the army up to the present time.

He explained that the exhibition aims at commemorating the sacrifice the army paid for Ethiopia's sovereignty and the



Lieutenant Colonel Agzew Altaye

historical heroism it has demonstrated.

The defense attachés of African countries who attended the exhibition said that the exhibition enabled them to have in-depth understanding of the history of the Ethiopian Defense Forces.

Defense Attaché of the Embassy of

Zimbabwe in Ethiopia, Brigadier General Ines Ashamu explained that he found the exhibition to have enhanced his understanding of the history of the Ethiopian Defense Forces.

He pointed out that Ethiopia and Zimbabwe have a historical relationship

in the sphere of military, he stated, adding that work is being done in this regard to strengthen the relationship between the two countries.

“We are doing a lot and I think there are probably a pending meeting... to continue to build the military cooperation between Ethiopia and Zimbabwe in particular. I think most of these defense attachés are doing equally the same,” he said.

Defense Attaché of Gabon Embassy in Ethiopia, Colonel Aristide Anguilet said that the exhibition has depicted that the Ethiopian Defense Force has made enormous history and achievements in multifaceted undertakings.

The potential of the Ethiopian Defense Force capability is an example for African countries and explained that activities will be carried out to increase the ties between Gabon and Ethiopia in the military sector, he pointed out.

“I am work for the cooperation with Ethiopian army, how we can work together, because for us Ethiopian army is the good and great example. We want to follow how we can progress like Ethiopian army,” he added.



Prosopis Juliflora invading river-banks

Researcher calls for consolidated efforts to curtail Prosopis impact

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA- a noted researcher called on stakeholders to move in unison to curb *Prosopis* plant expansion by conducting a pilot project and feasibility study.

In an exclusive interview with the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Researcher and Teacher at Wollo University, Amogne Asfaw (PhD) stated that the expansion of *Prosopis* plant is escalating in various dry lands of Ethiopia posing immense socio-economic and environmental harms mainly in the Horn of Africa including Ethiopia, and threatening the livelihood and food security of agro-pastoral communities via severely affecting soil fertility in agro-pastoral areas.

He further remarked that OXFAM International has been implementing an integrated *Prosopis* management pilot project in Somali State, Shinile Woreda with the view to preventing the expansion of this plant for the last two years.

He said, “Despite its negative effect, the plant is also found relevant and promotes commercial use by creating entrepreneurial and economic opportunities for women and youth.”

By the same token, among the unintended outcomes, the project includes charcoal and briquette production from its shrub, animal feed

production from pod and production of fruits and vegetables using the cleared land among others, he underscored.

As to him, it is currently swiftly expanding to East Amhara, Tigray, SNNPS and Oromia regional states and cross border countries. So, it is high time not only for local actors but also for neighboring countries to engage in the intervention to minimize the expansion rate of this hazardous plant.

“Well-planned and organized collaboration among concerned stakeholders including governmental organizations at all levels, NGOs, higher institutions, research centers, local institutions as well as the local community with their indigenous knowledge is significantly useful in doing so,” he urged.

Considering its multifaceted benefit, he recommended the use of strengthening the value addition, innovation technology adoption, public awareness, enhancing the utilization of the plant for economic benefit and exploring other countries best experience through enhanced projects and researches.

It is to be recalled that *Prosopis Juliflora* was introduced by the Derg regime to the Ethiopian dry lowlands with the view to rehabilitating the environment in Afar and Somali states.

Institute toils to secure national product standards

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA- Institute of Ethiopian Standards (IES) said that it has been making positive strides in harmonization of regional and international standardization systems by setting up relevant national standards on products.

As to the institute, there are 11,000 mandatory and voluntary standards products of which 350 are mandatory but the question is how many of them are being implemented effectively to reach to consumer on proper manner. Producers are responsible to provide, deliver better service and products to the communities in this regard.

Approached by the journalists last week IES Director General Meseret Bekele (PhD) noted that manufacturers need to move in unity to contribute a lot to the development of the nation.

IES made many changes last year in the nation benefiting the national economy in a number of ways such as supporting industry professionals, policy makers, researchers and regulators as well as the producers and suppliers to deliver quality products to the community, she noted.

She said: “A range of stakeholders need to be involved in standards work to create safety life since they play great role in the implementing through creating awareness to supply quality products.”

A lot of things need to be done as standards



Meseret Bekele (PhD)

promote innovation of products and services by building confidence among industrial users and consumers, she said adding that such a bold move creates a large scale market and speeds up technology transfer. Hence, producers should run activities responsibly.

“Yes, standards play a great role in ensuring and improving the quality of products as well as ensuring safety aspects. Standards also facilitate trade by supporting exports in the course of combatting technical barriers to trade in the market and globally by aligning with international standards and further create new markets and industry to place goods on the market,” she added.

As to her, standards also increase safety, environmental protection as well as help companies ensure safety, consumer protection and other related aspects.

News

South West working to earn 40 mln Birr from mines

- Plans to create over 6,800 jobs

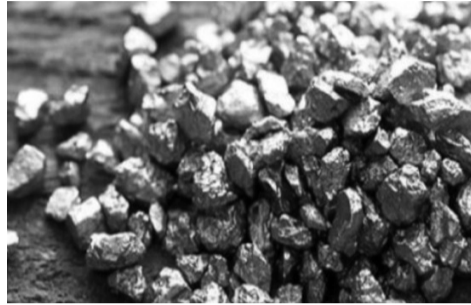
BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – South West Ethiopia People's State Mines and Energy Development Agency announced that it is working to earn 40 million Birr in this fiscal year and has planned to create over 6,800 job opportunities.

Agency Director General, Gebrmariam Setegn told The Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that various activities are being exerted to benefit the people and the country by using the mineral wealth. Due to this reason, the agency has planned to gain more than 40 million Birr in this fiscal year. Compared with the past period, this year's income is expected to be more than 1,000,000 Birr.

The agency is working on mineral resource research, management, and alternative energy technology expansion. There is a situation in which employment opportunities have been created in the sector by granting licenses to construction minerals and special small gold producer associations.

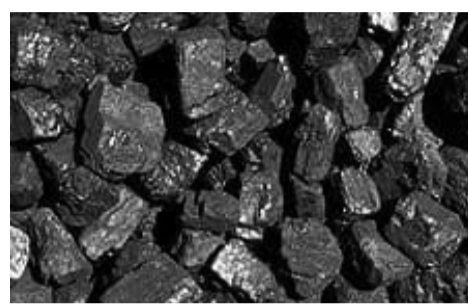
"So far, some 333 citizens have been put into operation from the total sum of over 6,800 jobs



only in this fiscal year. It created more than 4,500 jobs in the same period last year," he added.

Gebrmariam further stated that in the state, there were 34 gold mining associations and 18 associations organized as special small enterprises. However, only 21 associations are operating in the gold sector at present. Similarly, solely seven associations are producing coal though some 74 associations requested a license of coal exploration and 13 of them have gained to produce in the state. Activity is being carried out in Keffa, Maji, and West Omo and it will continue to Sheka, Bench Sheko in the near future.

"The expansion of coal exploration, testing and production licenses in Konta and Dauro zones by



the administration have been a challenge against creating jobs as planned. The illegal action undertaken on the gold sector are thus also serious factors hindering the economy growth. If the challenge is solved well, the plan will be achieved on the schedule in the state," he cited.

"Some sort of strategy is being prepared to respond to the license quest of about 120 associations. It is also intended to ease the problem by making them engage in the minerals available in the state."

As the coal is used for cement fabrics and helps reduce foreign exchange challenges, the Agency is working hard to get potential investors involved in the sector and ensure adequate benefit out of it, he elaborated.

Ambassador outlines BRF's...

other domains.

Other hand, the agreement will help Ethiopia to benefit more from the Belt and Road initiatives and accelerate its development activities. This Belt and Road initiative is to expand trade through sea, railway and road connections. Direct participation in this type of initiative and free from other dependencies will mean a lot to Ethiopia's economy, the Ambassador emphasized.

"Chinese companies have been largely participating in various investment projects and its government promotes similar ideas with the Ethiopian counterpart in the international arenas."

Mehreteab further noted that the agreement could be considered as a demonstration of the strong diplomatic relations between the two countries. This year's forum and agreement confirm that Ethiopia has received great attention from the Chinese government in the region.

"Contrary to some Western media reports, the Belt and Road project is not linked to China's global expansion of raw materials and military expansion and it is a project of mutual growth. The agreement shows that the relationship between Ethiopia and China is based on mutual economic benefit and political cooperation and it will continue to strengthen."

The Ethio-China bilateral relationship that has crossed five decades is standing on a firm foundation based on comprehensive mutual benefits and co-development. The two countries have moved their long term relationship to a new chapter and the diplomatic commitment is also valid. According to him, in a dynamic and different world, unwavering friendship and diplomatic relations would help in all fields and reflect a common position in the international forums.

Ethiopia remains resolute...

old history of the army has taught us that Ethiopia has always been defending itself, and the army never provokes others. It will never be provocative, too."

Ethiopia's attempts to build a modern and capable army aim to defend its national interest and not to provoke others and ENDF will continue its engagement in continent and international peacekeeping missions, he added.

"There will be no mission except peace-keeping. The army has three major tasks and all are just to defend peace. It will continue ensuring, restoring and consolidating peace in and outside Ethiopia."

Congratulating all Ethiopians and members of the

army, Abiy, who is also the Commander-in-Chief of the ENDF said, "I am not sure that how many countries have 116 year-old- national defense institution, but the ENDF is one of the few African old-aged modern armies, and all people shall support the national army in law enforcement missions."

ENDF Chief of Staff Field Marshal Birhanu Jula on his part said the sufficient training the army gets and the preparations before deployment as well as its being committed and disciplined have made it successful.

Field Marshal Birhanu further stated that the ongoing reform has made the army constitutional more than ever. Now, The ENDF is fighting informal

militia groups to ensure peace and constitutional order. Similar law enforcement operations will continue until lasting peace is ensured.

"We need to learn from the current situation in Sudan. The people of Sudan are now suffering from the war. We have information about what is going on in our neighborhood. Therefore, we need to ensure that ENDF is the only body entitled to carry weapons."

The chief and deputy chief of staffs of several African countries militaries, high-ranking military officers of the ENDF, government officials and military attaches based in Addis Ababa were in attendance of the 116th ENDF anniversary, which was decorated with military parade.



Ministry to announce...

Over the last two years, the Ministry performed supervision, support and evaluation of over 100 hotels to give star ratings in which 64 of them were identified for evaluation and review, he said.

However, only 20 hotels are currently competent to get star rating fulfilling compulsory hotel fire safety requirements across the country, he expressed.

The remaining hotels and institutions failed to get star rating due to lack of compulsory hotel fire safety requirements, plus, poor awareness and absence of interest by owners for hotel star rating has challenged the effort, he stated.

The star rating of hotels is functional for three

consecutive yearsthrough applying 12 parameters, he noted.

The new proclamation approved by House of Peoples' Representatives stipulates the upgrading and downgrading the hotels' star rating based on specific criteria of their level of service delivery, Tarkiu underscored.

The Ministry used various criterions to determine star ratings of hotels including room and suite amenities, guest services, and overall hotel condition. The standardization would help hotels to improve their amenities and services over time which pay back them to upgrade their level in star rating, he underlined.

Ethiopia endorses six ...

climate action, human settlement, inclusion of refugees into existing national systems, private sector engagement, access to land and digital connectivity.

Speaking at the meeting, Demeke stated that Ethiopia has been able to receive and accommodate millions of refugees and dependents despite its own challenges. Great work has been done in making refugees see Ethiopia as their country.

Ethiopia will present the six commitments it approved at the next GRF conference scheduled from December 13-15, 2023, by fulfilling its promise in 2019 and strengthening the work the country is doing in creating a favorable environment for refugees. The 2019 pledge encompassed jobs (livelihoods, education, protection) capacity, and energy and environment areas.

Meanwhile, the new pledge is formulated based on the priorities of the 10 years development plan and RRS priority areas.

The Deputy Premier emphasized the need to use the success of the previous pledge as a benchmark to do better in the new one. "Hosting refugees is not just a humanitarian deed but it is also a core diplomatic feature that nation gives due emphasis."

Teyiba Hassan, Director-General of the Refugees and Returnees Service said that Ethiopia is the leading country that has been implementing progressive refugee proclamation. There are over 110 million refugees and asylum seekers globally and drought, climate change and unrest in different countries are

the main reasons for displacement.

Teyiba further noted that Ethiopia has been engaged in implementing the 2019 pledge in four major areas. Despite the promising outcomes, global and local challenges such as the COVID pandemic and the unrest in some parts of the country have affected the performance.

Ethiopia hosts some one million refugees and asylum seekers from 26 countries notably from Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen, Syria and among others. As migration is a global challenge, the situation needs collaborative effort from several institutions, she stressed.

Andrew Mbogori, UNHCR Ethiopia Representative on his part mentioned that the new pledge is essential for the sustainability of the previous one. "Ethiopia is way ahead from other countries in this regard and the nation has made progressive changes on core development strategies."

For IGAD Director of Health and Social Division Fathia Alwan, Ethiopia has long been a key player in hosting refugees and humanitarian efforts in the East African region. Ethiopia's engagement at the first GRF as the only African country co-convening the forum together with other countries deserves recognition.

This year's GRF pledge and the previous one highlights the Ethiopian government's longstanding commitment to find long-term solutions for refugees, the director emphasized.

Opinion

Can Ethiopia reclaim the Red Sea?

BY AHMED MOHAMMED

The Red Sea, the most highly trafficked waterway, is a talking point of East Africa today, perhaps the entire globe of ours as well. Narratives on it are on the remaking and the way nations think about it is and should be expected to be redefined. Almost everyone, at least here in Ethiopia, irrespective of age, sex educational background, religion, started off chatting about it, immediately after a trailer on the Red Sea was aired.

The documentary, published recently, made it clear that Ethiopia has at least the soft power to regain its natural, political and legitimate rights of having direct access to the Red Sea. But sadly yet intentionally, some singled out only phrases from the lecture, used it out of context, and misinterpreted it for their own personal gains and possibly for their hidden motives.

Ethiopia has been landlocked since Eritrea, once its county gained its independence in 1993. For thirty years, this ancient nation has been forced to be dependent on neighboring countries, especially Djibouti for its access to ports and international shipping lanes. This has been severely costly and unsustainable both to Ethiopia and the region at large, as experts say. Ethiopia's aspiration to regional economic integration, I think, and of course its plan to be a mid income country has necessitated the need to eye a direct access to sea waters-gate to the world.

Ethiopia, in its latest quest, has demanded not a free lunch, rather has pledged to offer lucrative business shares of Billion Dollars, namely its flagship project in return of what it might gain from its direct access to the busiest water routes—a win-win approach.

It short threatened no one, targeted no particular group or country, and just tabled a proposal to promote regional-multilateral economic integration. Ethiopia has not a hidden motive of waging war as some local and international media houses are trying to mislead.

Simple! Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed boldly and genuinely spoke of his government's strong desire that Ethiopia, a country of over 120 millions+, badly needs to have direct access to the Red Sea. This was the first time when PM Abiy Ahmed addressed lawmakers on matters of having direct access, the Red Sea in particular.

His words got immediate responses from both home and neighboring countries, when few stood against his request; millions favored it, citing natural and legal justifications.

Then, how on earth a country of over 120+ million condemned to be locked under siege, when distant powers from the ocean away are allowed to establish their military bases in and off the shores of the Red Sea? Can the Red Sea Form, the recently established club of states go any longer without Ethiopia's inclusion? I doubt it. How Ethiopia's plea could be taboo when it is right for other nearby and distant nations, namely the US, China, France and Germany.



Ethiopia would have a lot to contribute for the common agenda and destiny of both the Horn and the Gulf states and beyond

Many are insisting that any Red Sea related architectures and projects have little or no chance of succeeding unless Ethiopia, one of the architects of AU, is welcomed, its regional and international roles are credited. Failure to accept Ethiopia's plea, as PM Abiy Ahmed warned, would lead the region

into mistrust and conflicts.

Both old and recently sketched Red Sea related strategies and forums, including the Red Sea club of some East African and Gulf states, which has sadly turned down Ethiopia's request to join it, needs to be redefined, I think. Ethiopia's direct access to the sea outlet, whose imports and exports are entirely dependent on ports of neighboring countries, can further stabilize the entire region, help the fight against piracy and human trafficking, and enhance regional economic integration.

A matter of life and death, I think, is to have direct access to the waterways for Ethiopia. If not, the years to come, strategies and common destinies both IGAD and AU are aspiring to claim by 2063 will be turned into a nightmare. As perspectives and understandings toward the waterways are fundamentally changing with geopolitics, failure to timely act will risk not only Ethiopia, but the region and the globe entirely. Mistrust of nations over how to fairly and responsibly use the waterways should be tackled either by soft powers, or any international laws. Because, failure to wisely approach claims of stallholders may result to mistrust.

But what is the motive behind the Red Sea Forum- a club of states which has refused Ethiopian's pleas to join? And don't you wonder why Ethiopia is denied to join it? And why are some daring to deny the quest of Ethiopia and Ethiopians to have direct access to sea outlets when dozens of distant super powers are enjoying their military presence along the coastal regions of East Africa? Is there any nearby and distant group or government conspiring against Ethiopia, East Africa entirely?

I think Ethiopia has been excluded from the forum intentionally. But given its irreplaceable roles to regional and global issues of security and counter terrorism efforts, such as its peace keeping mission and regional and global influences, its

exclusion from the Red Sea Forum will endanger the heavily trafficked waterways, a safe haven will be created for any human and drug trafficking. Being a regional power, both militarily and economically, Ethiopia's inability to easily respond to any security threat may result in grave consequences.

As conflicts, such as the warring parties in Sudan, indicate existing mechanisms seem yet unable and still ineffective to tackle tensions and misunderstandings. The necessity to form all inclusive and capable clubs of regional and international significance is then can't be compromised, including guaranteeing Ethiopia's request to have a direct and sustained access to sea outlets.

Its formal appeal has been turned down by the newly established geopolitical architecture which was formed in 2019 by the Gulf and the Horn of African countries, which Ethiopia questions its sustainability, is warned the forum is against the aspiration of Africa to create a far united and strong Africa by 2063. The forum is made of eight countries, picking Sudan, Djibouti, Eritrea, Egypt, Somali from the Horn regions, that of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen from the Gulf States.

Ethiopia would have a lot to contribute for the common agenda and destiny of both the Horn and the Gulf states and beyond, and its exclusion will definitely impact the region negatively, at least in the distant years.

Because of its strategic importance competitions with no doubt will go intense as it has been over the last five years. The need to employ soft power, the use of diplomatic exchanges, and all inclusive regional bilateral and multilateral agreements are of irreplaceable significance for Africa to prosper.

The Red Sea Forum, as my reading has proven to me, from its onset aimed at excluding Ethiopia. At some point, the draft boldly noted its hidden motive not to include Ethiopia without naming it. It dictates that no landlocked country can be accepted, international sea laws are not against, though. In fact, the draft writer himself, and then many others warned that excluding Ethiopia—the regional power—would be not only costly, but gravely dangerous.

Fortunately, some neighboring countries have positively responded to Ethiopia's request of having direct access to the Sea port, many people in the Horn and beyond are in support of economic integration- a win-win approach. Thousands cheered regional and continental togetherness, yet few others are acting negatively as if militarily threatened.

Right now, Ethiopia is demanding a direct access for economic reasons, and it definitely needs access which is sustainable, and economic integration is what the region needs the most for the Horn and beyond to be stable and prosperous.

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

Editorial

ENDF: Incessant valor!

Ethiopians commemorated the 116th National Army Day colorfully yesterday in the capital Addis Ababa with members of the Ethiopian Defense Forces paraded and staged a grand rally displaying their firepower and manpower capability. The commemoration is in recognition of the decades of sacrifice and valor the Ethiopian army has been demonstrating to defend the sovereignty of the country and the dignity of its people.

The Ethiopian National Army has been revered for its heroic deeds that transcended the country. Ethiopia is still considered to be the major pacifying force in the Horn and beyond owing to the valor of its army shown in different peacekeeping missions. The peacekeeping forces of the country deployed in the Korean Peninsula, Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Somalia, and other countries were able to discharge their mandates ethically and effectively. Feared by its arch-enemies and respected by the peoples of Ethiopians and the communities where it was posted, the Ethiopian army restored peace and stability in neighboring countries. This hard fact is acclaimed by the international community.

Internally, the Ethiopian army is known for its unwavering commitment and increasing capability to foil planned terrorist attacks posed by internal or external foes. The army at different times drove back invading powers who tried to infringe on the sovereignty of the country. In addition, the army also crushed violent acts that threatened the national interest and territorial integrity of the country.

And, this year's commemoration came on the heels of the strings of reforms the government has been making in the past few years to modernize the security organs of the country including the National Defense Forces. It is fair to say that one of the areas that have seen successful reform works is the security bodies of the nation. Following the 2018 reform, the government has been throwing its full weight behind reforming the army in terms of various aspects. Having taken the significance of a powerful army in achieving the socioeconomic development of the nation, the incumbent has been very much focused on boosting the defensive and offensive capability of the country. The army was reorganized to be a neutral force that would only serve the nation's interest and its people.

The security apparatus of the country has been going through various reforms with a naval force wing added to the country's defense forces. The capability of the national defense forces has been cemented. The army has been equipped with new technologies and well-trained manpower. The capacity of the army to neutralize threats on air and the ground has also been boosted. That is what has been witnessed at least in the last couple of years. The army has been steadfast in reversing national threats posed by internal and external entities.

The Ethiopian army will continue to be a staunch force in the efforts to maintain national, regional, and world peace, so said Commander in Chief of the Army of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (Ph.D.) speaking at the National Army Day held yesterday in Addis Ababa.

The Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) has always deterred several foreign aggressions and maintained the unity and sovereignty of the nation, the Prime Minister noted, reiterating the army's readiness to ensure peace and stability and defend the nation's interests towards development and prosperity.

The reform activities the ENDF has so far implemented have helped to realize a well-structured non-partisan military equipped with modern arms and technologies. The army is well equipped in the infantry, air force, and cyber spheres which the premier said is crucial to effectively deter any threat.

"Maintaining peace remains the top priority for the Ethiopian Defense Forces," the Premier said. The Premier stressed, "Ethiopia has no any intention to seek incursion into any country; rather it will continue as a major peace force nationally, regionally and globally."

"History proves that Ethiopia has never been defeated by any external force and has never invaded any country, and the army has never taken part in any unprovoked combat. Because safeguarding peace remains our top priority," he said. Saying that the time is full of uncertainty, Abiy called on members of the army to pursue knowledge, become innovative, and keep on standby for any mission in line with the changing circumstances.

True to the Prime Minister's word, Ethiopia and the entire Horn Africa face imminent threats from internal and external elements. As witnessed in the last couple of years, Al-Shababa and its likes have been trying to conduct terrorist attacks in Ethiopia. And, the country's national army effectively neutralized the threats and crushed the enemies. And, the years of heroism and valor should continue to receive recognition from the peace-loving people.

Opinion

Red sea's regional, global geostrategic significance

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

There are 10 major ports on the Red Sea which transact 10% of the world economy and Ethiopia needs a port primarily for promoting her own trade network and acquisition of maritime trade route and for the economic development of the country. Ethiopia's average GDP amounts to 110 billion USD and the nation imports goods worth 14-16 billion USD about 90% of which is through ports. Ethiopia imports 4 billion USD worth fuel and 12.5 million quintals of fertilizers and pays 1.6 billion USD for port services every year because the country has no port of her own.

As a member of BRICS, Ethiopia can effectively utilize her membership for boosting trade, investment, development of new technologies in every economic sector. Ownership and access to ports will certainly help to swiftly accelerate the socio-economic development of the country.

In terms of geopolitical and geostrategic priorities, as Tim Marshall has noted, being a prisoner of geography is embracing poverty. It is important to turn the geopolitical and geostatic location of Ethiopia from a threat a comparative advantage for the economic development of the country. With its proximity to the Red Sea, Ethiopia connects Arica with Europe, Middle East, Indian Ocean, Strait of Bab el Mandeb, Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf. If Ethiopia acquires ports and naval base, the country can contribute to the safety and security of its own commercial vessels and ships of other countries across the world.

Ethiopia's strategic and geostrategic location and its proximity to the Red Sea which hosts 10% of world trade with the length of 2,500kms linking the Mediterranean Sea with the Indian Ocean, Middle East, Persian Gulf and Far East Countries. Ethiopia is at close proximity with major important ports on both sides of the Red Sea including the ports of Jeddah, Port Sudan, Massawa, Assab, Djibouti, Berbera, and Another 10 ports belonging to Saudi Arabia, 15 sea ports of Somalia, Berbera Port of Somaliland, and Mombasa port of Kenya.

Ethiopia has far greater cultural, linguistic and social relations not only with the neighboring countries but also with all the Red Sea littoral states and beyond. Acquiring ports will help to strengthen cultural relations with these countries and strengthen people to people relations. This is important to promote peaceful relation among the countries around the Red Sea and beyond.

Ethiopia will further enhance her political assertiveness among the countries of the world and could advocate for economic pan Africanism in which African countries can use their own resources for developing their collective and national economies instead of serving only as raw material resources for the more advanced countries in the west.

Ethiopia's strategic and geostrategic location and its proximity to the Red Sea which hosts 10% of world trade with the length of 2,500kms linking the Mediterranean Sea with the Indian Ocean, Middle East, Persian Gulf and Far East Countries

Ethiopia's leading role as a promoter of pan Africanism and major source of renewable energy for African economic integration would be enhanced for the benefit of African countries in which case these countries are expected to share their ports with the country for mutual economic benefit.

It must be clear to every citizen that when it comes to Ethiopia, her legal request for ports does not have anything to do with politics. Some misinformers who are busy on the social media contest the timing of the request and suggest the prevalence of absolute peace in the country before the issue of ports is raised. A question comes into the mind as when is the appropriate time for ensuring total peace in the country? The same people who cause havoc on the social media outlets and declare war in the country try to link the issue of obtaining port and port services with the prevalence of absolute peace. The truth is, they are adding fuel to the crisis in the country because they are sure to secure financial benefits from spreading false, sensational and fabricated news.

Ethiopia used to be a major owner of ports and a strong naval force in the Horn of Africa for thousands of years but lost access to the sea because of internal and external conspiracies conducted on the country. It is now high time to reverse this with full cooperation from the people and government of Ethiopia.

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



The Ethiopian Herald

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The Ethiopian Herald

Business & Economy

Vitality of cooperating with partners to mitigate macro-economic challenges

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

With about 123 million people (2022), Ethiopia is the second-most populous nation in Africa after Nigeria and one of the fastest-growing economies in the region, with an estimated 6.4% growth in FY2021/22. Though considered as one of the poorest countries with a per capita gross national income of \$1,020, Ethiopia aims to reach lower-middle-income status by 2025.

Ethiopia's strong growth rate builds on a longer-term record of growth over the past 15 years, where the country's economy grew at an average of nearly 10% per year, one of the highest rates in the world. Among other factors, growth was led by capital accumulation, in particular through public infrastructure investments.

Ethiopia's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth slowed down from FY 2019/20 to FY 2021/22 due to multiple shocks, including COVID-19, with growth in industry and services easing to single digits. However, agriculture, where over 70% of the population is employed, was not significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and its contribution to growth slightly improved compared to previous years.

The consistently high economic growth over the last decade has resulted in positive trends in poverty reduction in both urban and rural areas. The share of the population living below the national poverty line decreased from 30% in 2011 to 24% in 2016 and human development indicators improved as well. However, gains are modest when compared to other countries that saw fast growth, and inequality has increased in recent years. Furthermore, conflicts in various parts of Ethiopia risk undermining the economic and social development progress the country has achieved.

The government has launched a 10-Year Development Plan based on its 2019 Home-Grown Economic Reform Agenda, which runs from 2020/21 to 2029/30. The plan aims to sustain the high growth achieved under the Growth and Transformation Plans of the previous decade while facilitating the shift towards a more private-sector-driven economy. It also aims to foster efficiency and introduce competition in key growth-enabling sectors (energy, logistics, and telecom), improve the business climate, and address macroeconomic imbalances.

Ethiopia seeks to chart a development path that is sustainable and inclusive in order to accelerate poverty reduction and boost shared prosperity. Significant progress in job creation, as well as improved governance, will be needed to ensure that growth is equitable across society. Achieving these objectives will require addressing key challenges including macroeconomic distortions that constrain private sector development, structural



Ethiopia seeks to chart a development path that is sustainable and inclusive in order to accelerate poverty reduction and boost shared prosperity

transformation and generation of jobs, reducing the incidence of conflict that has been having a substantial impact on lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure.

The cessation of hostilities in the Northern part of the country between the government and TPLF forces in November 2022 is an important step in this direction.

Like the rest of the world, Ethiopia has been experiencing the unprecedented social and economic impact of the pandemic. While exports and foreign direct investment rebounded in 2020/21 and jobs have been recovering, some lasting scars are likely to remain. Urban employment levels have not recovered fully, some households and firms continue to report income losses and poverty is estimated to be increased.

Frequent severe weather events alongside long-term impacts of climate change undermine agriculture and pastoral livelihoods as well as food security. The 2022 drought is the worst in forty years, severely affecting millions in the southern and eastern parts of the country. Overall, more than 20 million persons are facing severe food insecurity in 2023.

Ethiopia's Human Capital Index is at a lower level 0.38 (2020) which means that a child born in Ethiopia today will be 38% as productive when s/he grows up as s/he could be if s/he enjoyed complete education and full health. This is lower than the average for the Sub-Saharan Africa region but slightly higher than the average for low-income countries. Learning poverty stands at 90% and 37% of children fewer than five years of age are stunted.

The country's growing workforce (with roughly two million persons reaching working age per year) puts pressure on the absorption capacity of the labor market, necessitates improving current jobs, while creating sufficient new jobs.

The nation's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture which is the major foreign currency earner, supplies inputs to agro industries and food to the market. But it utilizes unskilled labor, low agricultural

inputs with low yields. The vulnerability of the sector to extreme climate condition also critically affects the efforts exerted on poverty reduction in the rural part of the country. Hence, to attain economic progress and development, modernizing the sector is essential.

To that end, expanding education in rural part through increasing budget and enhancing the utilization of inputs and providing extension services is necessary.

For the mentioned registered economic growth side by side the government efforts, the financial support and advice obtained for partners played pivotal role. However, it is undeniable fact that Ethiopia still faces macro-economic challenges which needs due attention and among others, inflation, high debt service approximately two billion annually, unemployment, foreign currency crunch, illegal trade, money laundering, deep routed corruption and capital out flow through illicit trade.

To mitigate the problems, the government has taken various measures but bringing solution is not an easy task and needs time, dedication and commitment on the parts of the pertinent institutions.

Recently, a high-level Ethiopian delegation led by the Minister of Finance, Ahmed Shide and Governor of the National Bank, Mamo Mihretu, made fruitful discussions with the World Bank Group (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) officials during the Annual Meetings held in Marrakech, Morocco, from October 9-13, 2023.

According to a press release of Ministry of Finance, the delegation met with WB President Ajay Banga, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, WB Managing Director, for Operations Anna Bjerde, WB Eastern and Southern Africa Vice President, Victoria Kwakwa, and African Department Director, Abebe Aemroselassie.

During the occasions, the minister highlighted the country's development priorities, including economic recovery,

macro-fiscal stability, private sector development, human development, and reconstruction of the demolished infrastructure in the past two years long among others.

The press release disclosed that both institutions commended Ethiopia for the critical steps taken to stabilize the economy and tame inflation as well as the broad-based reform program planned under Ethiopia's second phase of the Home-Grown Economic Reform.

The meetings also discussed and agreed on a way forward on how the IMF and the WB can jointly support the country's ambitious economic program that is set to unlock Ethiopia's full economic potential.

Meanwhile, the Ethiopian delegation held bilateral discussions with the British State Minister Andrew Mitchell, and US Treasury Undersecretary as well as US and France Executive Directors on Ethiopia's current political and economic affairs and the ambitious plan for the next phase of transformative reforms needed to address present challenges on the sidelines of the annual meetings.

IMF team notes that important steps taken by Ethiopia enables to bring down inflation and stabilizes the economy.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) team on its part noted that the important steps that have been taken by the government of Ethiopia to bring down inflation and stabilize the economy, including significant fiscal and monetary tightening in Ethiopia.

The IMF mission led by Alvaro Piris visited Addis Ababa from September 25 to October 3, 2023, to hold discussions on IMF's support for the reform program, a press release issued by IMF said.

This has put in place a critical foundation for success of the Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda, which aims to fulfill Ethiopia's considerable economic potential.

The mission made good progress in discussing how the IMF could support the government economic program.

Art & Culture

After forty days...

(A short story)

BY DESALEGN DAGNEW

Five minutes in the real world amount to two days in Meron's world in that gap of two days, events come and go frequently, especially their car's somersault from the highway to the pit of the earth. Her husband and her son's last-minute ordeal, expressed by their knee-jerk screams, echoed in her head again and again.

"People take time to entertain, but the tyrant time snatches away my whole and lonesome delight," Meron said inaudibly for herself. "It is correct" her wristwatch responded strangely. She unexpectedly jumped to her feet, jolted by the watch's response. She looked suspiciously.

"What did you say?" She wanted to get the watch off from her hand. The watch continued, "Your family members are no more following their reckless driving. They were carelessly driving, I love such kind of moments" Meron is still subject to some sort of illusion that cannot be clearly defined.

"Are you the murderer of my family?" she frowned. The strange sound mockingly laughed, "People compel me to cut brief their ephemeral existence by the misuse of their precious gifts," uttered the watch in a computer-generated voice. "What is that gift?" Meron asked. "Time is the invaluable gift of this world. Everything is born and perishes by the clockwise movement of time and that is me." The strange voice responded.

Meron sat suspiciously on a table. No one was insight on the roads for the last few days. This didn't disturb her living mechanics. "Nice to meet you! I have a lot of things to ask you?" she said, "Continue," a coarse voice responded. "What did you do on my life? Why are you taking two souls in one minute?" Meron strengthened her left hand, angrily looking the strange wristwatch.

The voice continued, "People are full of mistakes, and nature is full of pitfalls, and I am the one, who can marshall everything in the universe. You know, I am the only thing that causes the wear and



tear of things, Nothing can escape from me, even you" Meron began entertaining fear, "So what are you doing here?" she began to cautiously watch things.

"To tell you the truth" the sound said. "Actually most people are not well-trained on how to effectively use their own time. The real world doesn't know the real one—that is me." The sound added, "So where are you going now?" Meron became fascinated. The strange sound takes a few second to respond.

"Oh gosh you didn't know me yet, there was nothing before me; there could be nothing after me, look big woman, I am the owner of everything and I am everywhere. I am the heartbeat of everything. Don't ask foolish things."

"Oh my God, so what things do you fear?" she said nervously. "Fears nothing, feels nothing" the strange sound said. "Eventually you are mine, I am mine and at the end everything is mine, "

Meron is on the mood of fearsome amazement. She was listening the sound carefully. She never let the sound out of her ears. She pondered about time for a few seconds and decided to live as she were before. Just feel nothing and fear nothing, she decided to take off her watch from her hand and to throw it away, but

the voice prohibited her from taking the watch off.

"By the way I want to tell you what I love from people," the sound added, "Tell me what it is?" Meron became over eager.

"Like you, some people sleep their half age from their life,"

"What?" Meron shouted.

"If you may live 80 years, you could be asleep 30 years from your life, then from the remaining 50 years you may be engaged in work for 20 years. The rest 30 years could be gone by talking, the valuable time from your age is not more than 20 years. But you big woman has slept 20 years from your 50 years. From your idle 30 years you had spent only the five years at work," he laughed strangely for a while.

A knock on the door nudges her out of her nightmares. Abel approached her with a mouthwatering breakfast that greeted her nose with a sweet aroma. He has been a friendly neighbor showing sympathy for her for the last days. He demonstrated a rare sympathy to her in her bereavement. He was the only one who was by her in her forty foggy days. Her sister and parents were had dispersed after seven days. Without Abel there is no body that

could stand by her side. Preparing food and washing her clothes he was serving her like a man servant.

Awakening from her sleep, she looked at him from his back. He was very gentle with her for the last 41 grief casted days. He was single, handsome, muscular and tall. Her heart pulsed when he opened the bedroom's door, sporting the delicious dish. Her heart desired to seek solace in his chest, wrapped with his strong arms. Her hands sought to snake around his waist. When she got off the bed, stretching up a bit, she missed her balance a little. Abel forthwith gripped her waist from the back. She rotated to seek comfort on his chest. She gripped his waist too. He was a good man to her during the last forty gloomy days. While her husband was alive as a faithful wife, she had never focused on this good-treating man.

She looked him up. Their eyes got glued for a while. He is a handsomely, charming and caring man as her heart told her.

"I had a terrific dream before you came here. I was subject to a nightmare. I suffered alone. No one is around me. All have shunned me. I feel the village and the city to be hallow. Pity to lonely me her tears trickled down her red cheeks. Abel embraced her tightly. He wiped her tears dry with his palm when she sensed his soothing palms again, she developed a new joy, a new hope, and a strange feelings.

Unintentionally their mouths drew closer. She shut her eyes for lip locking. Both wanted to prolong the kiss. When it is the first time, the fear and stamina always fights each other. At long-lost the stamina takes the upper hand.

It was the best kiss she experienced after a long time. It served her a panacea. A 15 years gap was evident between them. She tried every method to sustain the kiss. A call from his phone interrupted them. He took out the phone from his pocket licking his upper lip. Both looked the phone simultaneously. The caller's name was saved by the word "lovely".

Song

BY NAOMI ALEM

Believe in me.

Like I believe in you.

Are you scared to be alone?

We're not the same. We're different.

You know everything about me.

But It's still not enough for me

Even when I pour my heart out I feel so
out of reach

I have your continuous love and support

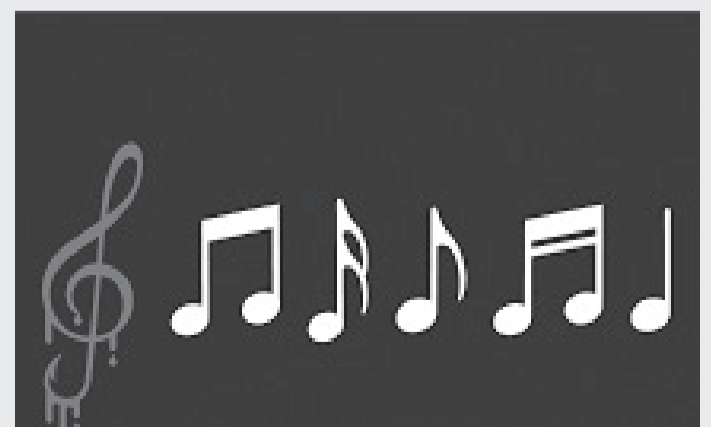
You're such a dream to me

So I got to go now

I'll hide the love letters I never sent

and you keep the vulnerable thoughts

you never gave me.



Science & Technology

Ethiopian-born Gebisa Ejeta awarded USA National Medal of Science

President Joe Biden on Tuesday (Oct. 24) awarded the National Medal of Science to Gebisa Ejeta, Distinguished Professor of Plant Breeding and Genetics and International Agriculture, executive director of the Purdue Center for Global Food Security and Purdue University Presidential Fellow for Food Security and Sustainable Global Development. The award is the highest recognition the nation bestows upon scientists.

Ejeta studies sorghum, an ancient grain used widely as a food source for humans and livestock. He received the 2009 World Food Prize for his research in creating sorghum hybrids that are resistant to both severe drought and the destructive parasitic Striga weed. The resulting dramatic increase in sorghum production has helped feed hundreds of millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa.

"Gebisa Ejeta is one of the most impactful geneticists in the world, a remarkable leader at Purdue in food security research, and a role model of perseverance for all Boilermakers. Our university celebrates another prestigious and richly deserved honor, bestowed by the president of the United States, to Gebisa, and I am delighted to join him on behalf of our university at the White House ceremony today," said Purdue University President Mung Chiang. "With this latest exciting news, Purdue faculty and alumni have received 19 National Medals of Science, of Technology and Innovation, of Humanities or the Presidential Medal of Freedom, including three current faculty members."

According to the White House, Ejeta was honored for outstanding contributions to the science of plant genetics. By



(President of the U.S.A, Joe Biden providing the National Medal of Science Award for Professor Gebisa Ejeta at the White House)

developing sorghum strains that withstand droughts and parasites, he has improved food security for millions. His advocacy for science, policy and institutions as key to economic development "has lifted the fortunes of farmers and strengthens the souls of nations."

Ejeta has served at the highest advisory levels of science and national policy, including as special advisor to the administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development, as science envoy of the U.S. State Department, and as a member of the National Academy of Sciences Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources. He also has been a member of the U.S. Board for International Food and Agricultural Development and the U.N. Secretary's Scientific Advisory Board.

Ejeta is an advocate for purpose-driven research. His own work is focused on elucidating the genetic and physiological mechanisms of important sorghum traits. Grain sorghum is the world's fifth-most important cereal crop. With its superior drought tolerance and broad adaptation, sorghum is grown worldwide, serving as a staff of life for over 500 million people in developing countries, and is the second-most important feed crop in the United States. Ejeta's research addresses some of the most crucial traits of sorghum production and utilization, including nutritional quality; drought and cold tolerance; and resistance to pests, diseases and Striga. He also investigates concerns of global biodiversity, gene flow and the use of sorghum as a biofuel crop.

The goal of Ejeta's sorghum research program is the development, release and deployment of improved sorghum cultivars for both food and feed use. His sorghum research is generally characterized by its sustained commitment to translational approaches that generates products and technologies from research findings to impact farm productivity and the eventual utilization and profitability of the crop postharvest. He utilizes a variety of research tools and works in interdisciplinary collaboration with a number of other scientists and programs. Ejeta has released many inbred lines and improved sorghum varieties and hybrids for use both in the United States and in Africa. His cultivars have been successfully deployed in several African countries.

Graduate education, mentoring of professionals and developing partnerships are integral components of his sorghum research program. Ejeta has trained and mentored a large cadre of domestic and international students and professionals at Purdue and in collaboration with other institutions. He has led many collaborative agricultural research and development projects, catalyzed the creation of public and private seed enterprises, and facilitated the formation of public-private partnerships in collaborating countries.

Ejeta was born and raised in a small rural community in west-central Ethiopia and was awarded the nation's National Hero Award, Ethiopia's highest honor, in 2009. He earned his master's and PhD in plant breeding and genetics from Purdue, where he has been a College of Agriculture faculty member and researcher since 1984.

Source: Purdue University

Ethiopian-born teenager wins the 2023 America's Top Young Scientist award

A 14-year-old teenager who invented soap to treat skin cancer named America's Top Young Scientist.

Heman Bekele, a ninth grader from Virginia, was named "America's Top Young Scientist" after he invented a \$.50 bar of soap to treat skin cancer "America's Top Young Scientist" is a 14-year-old who invented a soap that treats skin cancer.

Heman Bekele, a ninth grader from Annandale, Virginia, won the prestigious award from 3M and Discovery Education, considered one of the country's top middle school science competitions.

"I believe that young minds can make a positive impact on the world," Heman said in his submission for the award. "I have always been interested in biology and technology, and this challenge gave me the perfect platform to showcase my ideas," he said.

What is the 'America's Top Young Scientist' competition?

Heman spent the past four months competing against nine other finalists to be

named "America's Top Young Scientist." The competition was created to help students between the fifth and eighth grades create an innovative idea that helps to change their world.

In addition to the prestigious title, young scientists who win the award get a \$25,000 cash prize. Heman won this year's grand prize at 3M's headquarters in St. Paul, Minnesota, on Oct. 9 and 10, according to a news release announcing the award.

Shripriya Kalbhavi, a ninth-grader from San Jose, California, won second place for developing a cost-effective patch that allows for self-automated medication delivery without pills or needles. Sarah Wang, a seventh-grader from Andover, Massachusetts, came in third place for developing a glove that can detect certain epileptic seizures with common hand movements.

Shripriya and Sarah each won \$2,000, while the students who placed fourth through 10th won a \$1,000 prize and a \$500 gift card. The other students recognized hail



from Portland, Oregon, Baltimore, New Rochelle, New York, Austin, Texas, and Oviedo, Florida, among others.

More about Heman Bekele's invention to treat skin cancer

Heman developed a compound-based bar of soap designed to treat melanoma. The bar of soap costs about \$.50 to make. Heman hopes to refine his innovation and create a non-profit organization to distribute the soap to communities in need over the next five years, according to 3M and Discovery Education.

Competition organizers didn't immediately respond to USA TODAY's request to interview Heman on Monday. Should you get screened for skin cancer? What you need to know about getting checked.

Skin cancer cases rising in the US

Skin cancer cases have increased in the U.S. over the past few decades, the National Cancer Institute found. The rate of new cases rose to 24.1 per 100,000 people in 2019, compared to 14.6 in 1992. The National Institute of Health reports that skin cancer one of the most commonly diagnosed groups of cancers worldwide, with 1.5 million new cases estimated in 2020.

Source: USA Today

Society

Averting NTDs via coordinated efforts

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

Studies indicate that Micronutrient Deficiency is one of the serious problems that affect developing countries. In a workshop organized by the Ministry of Health to media professionals, it is also stated that nutrition deficiency is one of the problems affecting newborn children in Ethiopia. According to the research presented by experts, pregnant women's failure to have proper prenatal and postpartum care checkups and absence of nutrient rich foods affects the future of newly born children.

On her presentation, Nutrition Officer with the Ministry of Health Gobane Dea said that the impact of Neural Tube Defects (NTD) in Ethiopia is significant and the prevalence rate of NTDs in the country is relatively high. According to her, NTDs are a group of birth defects that affect the development of the brain, spine and spinal cord of a fetus. Because of this, children are seen becoming victims of several health complications.

It is important to note that consuming a varied and balanced diet can provide a significant amount of folate, and pregnant individuals or those planning to conceive, are often advised to take a folic acid supplement. This is because the recommended intake of folate increases during pregnancy to support the development of baby's neural tube formation and overall growth; and prevent birth defects known as neural tube defects, such as spina bifida, one of the most common birth defects.

Nutrition deficiency is a multidimensional problem that affects children and adults alike. Because of the health problems caused due to nutrition deficiency, it is not only a single child that will be a victim of the problem; rather it is also a family and the whole nation as well.

According to the expert, the most common types of NTDs found in Ethiopia are anencephaly and spina bifida. Anencephaly is a condition where the baby is born without parts of the brain and skull, while spina bifida is a condition where the spinal cord does not develop properly.

In her presentation Gobane also stressed the fact that identification of age, sex, profession or other considerations have key roles for adolescents and adults while taking Macro or micro nutrients. While macronutrients provide energy and contribute to the body's structure, micronutrients are involved in regulating various physiological processes, supporting immune function, and promoting overall health. Both types of nutrients are necessary for maintaining a balanced, nutritious diet.

Due to nutritional deficiency and related problems families are seen suffering from both economic and social challenges. To address the problem, creating awareness among the society is an unquestionable issue. Coordinated effort of the government, the society and the media play a significant role in this regard.

To reduce the risk of neural tube defects,



healthcare professionals often recommend that women take folic acid supplements before and during pregnancy. Folic acid supplementation has been shown to significantly reduce the occurrence of neural tube defects. Therefore, in addition to prenatal and postpartum medical examinations, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including proper nutrition is crucial for reducing the risk of birth related defects.

It is essential for pregnant individuals to consult healthcare professionals, attend regular prenatal check-ups, and strictly follow their healthcare providers' recommendations to ensure the best possible outcomes for both mothers and babies.

"It is also important to note that the specific nutrient requirements vary based on factors such as age, sex, activity level, and overall health. Consulting with healthcare professionals or registered dietitians can provide personalized guidance on meeting ones' individual nutrient needs."

For instance, proper intake of vegetables and fruits has substantial benefits for pregnant or lactating women. "Consuming a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, and other food items play a key role in obtaining an adequate intake of vitamin B9, also known as folic acid or folate. Vitamin B9 is essential for various bodily functions, including the production of red blood cells and the synthesis of DNA."

The expert recommended that as a means to overcome the challenge, pregnant mothers are advised to take leafy greens (spinach, kale, collard greens, and other leafy greens) because they are excellent sources of folate. She also said, proper consumption of lentils, chickpeas, black beans, and other legumes are also rich in folate. Citrus fruits (oranges,

grapefruits, and lemons) are not only high in vitamin C but also contain folate. Avocado, fortified grains and cereals, asparagus and broccoli are recommendable to mothers or lactating women.

Gobane said that micro and macro nutrients are essential components of a balanced diet that are required for optimal health and proper functioning of the body. Absence of the proper amount of micro will expose children to NTDs. Micro Nutrients are vitamins and minerals that are essential to

the proper functioning of our body.

Regarding the solutions and recommendations to curb the problem, the expert said, the Ministry of Health together with other stakeholders is working hand and glove. "Efforts are being made to prevent NTDs and other related problems through various intervention and mechanisms. This includes creating awareness among the society and promotes the intake of folic acid, also known as vitamin B9, by pregnant women," she reiterated.

The Ministry of Health in Ethiopia is working aggressively to avert Neural Tube Defects (NTDs) through various means. This includes promoting the intake of folic acid supplements by women of reproductive age, especially during the preconception period and early pregnancy.

Antenatal care services are the other area where the Ministry is focusing on to improve access to antenatal care services across the country. This includes regular check-ups, counseling, and educating pregnant women on various aspects of maternal and child health, including the prevention of NTDs.

The Ministry also conducts extensive health education and awareness raising campaigns to inform the public, particularly women and families, about the importance of proper nutrition, folic acid supplementation, and prenatal and postpartum care to prevent NTDs. These campaigns aim to increase knowledge and bring about behavioral change regarding NTD prevention. What is more, the Ministry is working committedly to develop healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved areas, to ensure access to quality prenatal and maternal healthcare services. This includes training healthcare providers, equipping health facilities, and improving referral systems for specialized care.

To reduce the risk of neural tube defects, healthcare professionals often recommend that women take folic acid supplements before and during pregnancy



Numerous visitors visit the tourism and hospitality exhibition.

Activating tourism investments via exhibition

BY TEWODROS KASSA

In recent years, numerous tourism projects have been inaugurated across the country. The tourism projects are solely undertaken by the government. Parks including Unity, Sheger, and Entoto are the leading tourism projects in Addis Ababa.

In addition, the Gorgora, Wonchi, Halala tourism projects that are under construction in various parts of the country are also part of the government's wide tourism projects that sought to motivate the country's tourism sector through attracting tourists from the four corners of the globe.

Moreover, various local investors are also engaged in the vast tourism and hospitality sector investments. Haile hotels and resorts group is among the leading private investors that contributed its part in the efforts of availing luxurious touristic services in every corner of the country.

Lack of infrastructure, quality hotel and hospitality services, competent tour guides, among others are the leading sector bottlenecks. In doing so, there are more assignments to be done to attract more international tourists and fulfill their luxurious demand, according to experts.

Visitors of the ongoing the National Tourism and Hospitality Exhibition opened at the Science Museum said that the exhibition plays a significant role towards promoting the untapped tourism potentials of the country to investors, discovering its endowments and boosting tourism development.

Different countries' investors are visiting the exhibition at the Science Museum; and it is expected to give

new insights to the investors to join investment in the tourism sector. The exhibition is crucial to motivate international and local investors to identify new investment opportunities in all states, to take part and expand their investments in the tourism sector.

Experts in the sector also lauded the importance of having such exhibitions annually, quarterly or monthly. The exhibitions will attract pertinent stakeholders to come together, discuss sector's challenges, and identify possible solutions to the country's tourism sector bottlenecks.

Ethiopian Tour Operators Association President Endegenaw Assefa said that the exhibition is unique in letting more stakeholders participate and embracing various items.

"As the government sets tourism among the five pillars of the economy, it is important to specialize in undertaking enormous and successive exhibitions and promotional activities. Convening all sector actors in such an event is a big milestone to restore international tourists' inflow to the country. The event also paves ways to establish coalition, cooperation, and integrity among sector actors to work together in the future," he said.

More importantly, the one month long exhibition is crucial to solve the sector's challenges through forums and panel discussions held beside the exhibition, he added.

He expressed that the country should give more attention to the sector and; generate more income through attracting a number of local and international tourists. Tourism sector development could not be realized with a single institution; rather it seeks the joint efforts of the finance ministry,

customs commission, immigration and other stakeholders.

Participant of the exhibition from Somali State Kemal Zekaria said that the exhibition helps to share the experience of other states in developing the tourism sector.

As to him, the exhibition is ideal to know own tourism sector assets and at the same time discover what should be visited in other parts of the country. The exhibition avails more tourist destinations that are given less attention due to the lack of information.

Another participant of the Tourism and Hospitality Exhibition from Sidama State Almaz Anberbir said that the exhibition is fundamental to show the immense tourism potentials of all states to the world.

In addition, every state will have the opportunity to share other states' experience in the efforts of developing tourism projects and harnessing its tourism blessings.

Tourism Minister Amb. Nasise Chali believed that the exhibition which is being held at the Science Museum in the capital is promising to attract more investment in tourism development since over 85 institutions are displaying their products and services to an expected number of 200,000 visitors.

Minister Amb. Nasise told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that technology and tourism service providers are participating in the exhibition which is important to attract more investors in the sphere.

The exhibition helps to promote the nation's tourism resources starting with the concept behind the tourism slogan that popularizes Ethiopia as

'Land of Origins', she said.

She also called on private owners to visit the exhibition to find viable investment options in Ethiopia's tourism sector which is full of abundant potential that needs to be exploited.

Tourism State Minister Sileshi Girma on his part said that the tourism and hospitality exhibition is a vital platform which introduces investors with Ethiopia's positive images and its potentials for lucrative investment in the sector.

An investment forum mainly organized to promote tourism investment was also held with investors, private sectors and other stakeholders on the opening day of the exhibition, he said, adding an ambassadors' forum will also take place soon to support tourism development.

Ethiopia would promote its immense tourism potential through participating in various international tourism and hospitality exhibitions that take place this year, Sileshi disclosed.

Absence of experiences in organizing local and international exhibitions is one of the limitations that restrict the tourism development in Ethiopia, the State Minister noted.

Therefore, this exhibition is crucial to draw lessons about how to organize international tourism exhibition, in addition to its significance to create linkage among service providers and visitors, he added.

The Tourism and Hospitality Exhibition which is being held in Addis Ababa at Science Museum will stay open until November 8, 2023 and it is expected to be visited by more than 200,000 local and foreign tourists.