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Expert pins hope on Ethiopia's quest to better sea access

BYYESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- Ethiopia's growing quest to sea access came with ample cooperation opportunities since the former has many

resources to be shared with port owners in the Horn of Africa (HoA) region, a senior policy researcher said.

Senior policy researcher and Asia-Pacific Affairs Director General at Institute of

Foreign Affairs (IFA) Dareskedar Taye (PhD) told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that Ethiopia's neighbors are expected to capitalize on its long pursuit to port access.

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Photo: Gebabo Gebre



Gosaye T/Wold

EEU to commence 100 mln. USD worth network rehabilitation

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – The Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU) announced that it is finalizing preliminary actions to commence the network distribution rehabilitation project in Addis Ababa and other ten towns at a cost of 100 million USD backed by the World Bank.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), EEU Distribution Rehabilitation

Program Head Gosaye T/Wold said that the initial works are being done to embark on the construction of the network rehabilitation and upgrading project in the coming four months to meet the ever increasing energy demand through quality and efficient services in the aforesaid areas.

He further remarked that the distribution networks that have not been changed along are causing frequent power interruption and out ages that

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Hailu Adugna

Oromia finalizes preparation for colorful Irreechaa

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA- Sufficient preparation has been made to mark the Oromo people's thanksgiving festival- Irreechaa in the coming Saturday and Sunday in Addis Ababa and Bishoftu cities respectively, the Oromia Communication Bureau said.

Briefing the media yesterday, Bureau

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Expert group pursues victim-centered approach to successful TJ

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Management System

AUTOMATING
YOUR SCHOOL
OPERATIONS

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Awash Bank
Nurturing Like The River

News



Balcha Reba

Digital Transformation Strategy on right track: Authority

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA - The halfway implementation of Ethiopia's Digital Transformation Strategy, which aims to bring holistic change in internet penetration, e-commerce, digitization and others, is on the right track, the Ethiopian Communications Authority (ECA) said.

Speaking at the ITU 2023 Regional Development Forum, ECA Director-General Balcha Reba stated that the five-year strategy has also brought commendable results in enhancing the public's access to the internet and expanding the broadband infrastructure.

"Owing to the strategy, Ethiopia has managed to double the number of internet users from 18 million some two-year-and-half-year to 36 million currently. Moreover, large-scale infrastructure development activities have been carried out, of which, the commencement of 5G service is the major one."

The director general further noted that the government has opened up the telecom sector to the private sector's involvement with a view to provide alternative services for the growing customers. Activities that are underway to provide national digital IDs is also worth mentioning.

"More efforts would also be exerted to fill the gaps that are observed to make the rest of two-and-half-years successful."

Similarly, the strategy has given impetus for Ethiopia's engagement to prevent cyber breaches and ensure its cyber security and expediting the digital literacy activities. Consolidated efforts are underway to enhance the capacity of professionals to create a secured environment.

Apart from economic significance, the implementation of digital strategy would play a pivotal role in improving the country's international relations. "Ethiopia has carried out various activities taking the UN's SDG into consideration.

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development has 17 goals that aim to provide ample jobs, and improve education, health, agriculture and other sectors through technology.

Balcha said; however, the global challenges including COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and climate change have hindered the execution of the plan. Hence, a plan set to the successful implementation of the strategy and Ethiopia would make more of a push to attain the 2030 sustainable development goals.

Dawro Zone calls on potential mining companies

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

Dawro -The Dawro Zone of South West Ethiopia Administration called on domestic and international mining companies to tap abundant mineral resources.

Dawro Zone Administrator Desta Demise told *The Ethiopian Herald* that the zone has a huge accumulation of minerals such as gold, coal, iron ore and others.

However, the people residing in the area had not been benefited from these resources because of poor number of investors engaged in the sector due to lack of infrastructure, he stated.

According to Desta, the infrastructural facilities are being facilitated since the area has been visited by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD). "After he visited the area, our inquiries of becoming a State and infrastructural development have got the right response," he said.

Now the infrastructure development activities and other facilities attract more investors who aspired to unleash mining sector potentials of the zone, he added.

So far, eight companies have been licensed to invest in coal mining of which ET Coal Developing Share Company is one of them.

Currently 85% of the ground work of



the 5.2 billion Birr worth company has been completed, company Representative Wondimu Mitiku disclosed.

He also expressed that his company envisaged to supply coal to cement factories thereby saves country's foreign currency to import the product.

Moreover, the company will create some 410 jobs up on completion, Wondimu added.

Apart from minerals, the Dawro Zone also suitable for fishery thanks to the

artificial lake created as a result of Gibe III hydropower project, the Zone Administrator said, while calling up on investors to utilize the potential and make business in the area.

A media crew has been visiting the South West Ethiopia State including Dawro Zone in a field visit organized by the Government Communication Service aimed at promoting the untapped natural resources of the State there by ensure the prosperity of the society.



Center strives to make manufacturing industry effective, competent

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA-Kaizen Excellence Center which built at a cost of 1.9 billion Birr will help to make the manufacturing industry competent and grow.

This was disclosed yesterday while Manufacturing Industry Development Institute, Kaizen Excellence Center and JICA briefed Media on the issues of inauguration of Kaizen Excellence Center, African Kaizen Annual conference and Award program.

During the briefing, Manufacturing Industry Development Institute the Kaizen Excellence Center General Director Milkesa Jagema said that the program will help manufacturing industries to be successful and grow through providing international training, research that serves as input for the manufacturing sector.

As to him, in order to make the country a symbol of African prosperity by 2029, a national ten-year master plan and half-term

plans have been drawn up and various works are being done.

By increasing the growth and competitiveness of the sector through training and consulting at a higher level, the manufacturing industry sector is doing its part to increase the contribution of the sector and is recording encouraging results, he indicated .

It was learnt that the Institute will assist in building the capacity of Kaizen practitioners and researchers to become internationally competitive and qualified to enhance African connectivity.

Kaizen Excellence CEO Mindaye Yirgahaile on his part, the total cost of the construction of the center building is 1.9 billion Birr, of which 1.4 billion Birr is covered by the Japanese government and the remaining 500 million Birr is covered by the Ethiopian government.

The Center would be carry out training, research, consultation work and will work

with stakeholders to support the development of manufacturing industries.

The center can accommodate 120,000 trainees a year. The services provided are industrial manpower development, African countries training, consulting and research, training and consulting manual ready support center, competency verification support center and workshop accommodation service. The center will be inaugurated the next Sunday.

Mindaye stated that the African Kaizen Annual Conference will be held starting from Saturday in the country for the first time.

JICA Head Katsuki Morihara (PhD) said we spend 27.5 million USD for the construction of the TICAD Africa Human Resource Development Centre. This indicates the Japanese government commitment to supporting the development of Ethiopia in various projects.

News

Expert group pursues victim-centered approach to successful TJ

BY EYUEL KIFLU

ADDIS ABABA- Involving war victims would play a critical role in the transitional justice (TJ) policy formulation that would effectively rectify past injustices, an expert group working on the issue said.

Speaking to *The Ethiopian Herald*, a member of the TJ expert group Kalkidan Derje said the group mainstreams the issue of victims and incorporates people from the war-affected Amhara, Tigray, and Afar states. Accordingly, the group sets a plan to make individuals affected by the north Ethiopia's conflict to constitute at least 60% of individuals who would contribute perspective in the transitional justice formulation.

The group, in collaboration with the UN Women and other international organizations, held consultations in Bahir Dar and Mekelle with women war survivors. "The majority of our

consultations are centred on conflict-victims."

Kalkidan further noted that government officials have made a commendable contribution to create a conducive environment for both participants and the expert group. "The government has refrained from direct involvement in the groups' work, which has been regarded as a supportive gesture."

The primary objective of the expert group is to gather input that will significantly contribute to the formulation of the TJ policy. During the consultation forums, the group actively presented and discussed policy options while welcoming diverse perspectives from the community. This inclusive approach has allowed for the consideration of additional ideas and approaches, the expert elaborated.

According to her, collecting input from the community has been an empowering process that extends beyond mere information gathering and it has

fostered a sense of ownership and active participation within society from the outset. "The consultations have paved the way for future implementation efforts by promoting political and social commitment."

"The expert group has been surprised by the strength of ideas and perspectives shared, which will play a crucial role in shaping the policy. The next step involves documenting the received inputs and preparing a comprehensive report that will further contribute to the policy formulation process."

The group plans to conduct three additional consultations, with the current round nearing completion. Goal is also being set to finalize the report at the end of the current month, a milestone that will streamline the policy drafting process.

There is a remarkable shift from the public attitude towards TJ and the initial suspicion is being transformed into a strong sense of ownership, she emphasized.

Harari unveils new tourism brand

ADDIS ABABA (FBC) – Harari State's newly introduced tourism brand entitled "Harar: the Eternal Museum" will contribute to further promote the region and its ample tourism sector, Harari State chief administrator Ordin Bedri said.

In a message posted on his social media page, the chief administrator said that "Harar: Eternal Museum" will be the brand and logo of Harari state tourism.

He said that this new Harari State Tourism Brand will have a significant contribution towards promoting the state itself and the tourism sector in the area.

Owing to tourism development activities in and around the UNESCO-inscribed Hara Jugol World Heritage, the state has become a source of pride for its residents by attracting the attention of visitors from across the world, he noted.

Ordin assured that the activities embarked in developing the state's tourism sector and to make Harar city a tourism hub will continue to be intensified.

Recall that Harar city has become the first sub-Saharan Africa city to be registered as a member of the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) in July 2023.

On July 10, 2023, the chief administrator of Harari state, Ordin Bedri, signed the registration of Harar city as the member of OWHC in the city of Quebec, Canada.

It was stated that the registration of Harar city as one of the heritage cities will greatly contribute to the development of cultural and historical heritage in the city and the development of the tourism sector.

It is vital for heritage cities to consult on their common issues and set direction to overcome challenges and expand opportunities, it was indicated.

Harar city is known to be the home of international heritage sites registered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), including the Jugol World Heritage Site. Located in eastern Ethiopia, the City is surrounded by a centuries-old defensive wall that has several

large gates, including Duke's Gate. The city is known for its mazelike alleys and traditional houses decorated inside with flat hanging baskets. A replica house features at the Harar Community Centre Museum.

In addition, it is to be remembered that the city has been recognized by UNESCO as a city where citizens live in peace and harmony.

The OWHC said that it is happy and proud to count HARAR JUGOL among its members in good standing. "Harar Jugol has duly fulfilled its obligations and has been registered as a member in good standing of the Organization of World Heritage Cities for 2023," the official membership certificate reads.

The Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization of 250 cities in which sites of the UNESCO World Heritage list are located. It was founded in 1993 in Fez, Morocco, during the second International Symposium of World Heritage Cities.

Expert pins...

Ethiopia has been in constant attempts to expand sea access and surprisingly, the long coastline owned by neighboring countries is still unused. Hence, cooperation with Ethiopia is the great option that needs to be utilized. As the population and economy of Ethiopia is growing fast, the demand to diversify port alternatives is natural and needful, the expert elaborated.

"So far, most import-export goods are passing through the Djibouti ports. Using this port as the only major route could not assure Ethiopia's security and may cause overdependence. If something bad happens in Djibouti, Ethiopia will be the major victim."

"Raising the port issue should not be politicized," Dareskedar noted, adding that neighboring countries that have access to the sea should offer bids to benefit from Ethiopia.

"Somalia, for example, has long coastlines and ports close to Ethiopia. Eritrea and Kenya also have the same thing that could pull the interest of Ethiopia easily. In turn, Ethiopia has a great potential to benefit these countries. Therefore, they need to improve cooperation."

He added, "In Europe, Switzerland has no access to the sea. Nevertheless, it has been using the ports of neighboring countries with easy agreements and with fair expense. I

hope the Horn of Africa countries will take the same approach to allow Ethiopia to use ports straightforwardly."

The expert further noted that the port issue determines the security of any country and called on Ethiopia's neighbors to exercise genuine political and diplomatic approach to satisfy its aspiration to a reliable sea access. "Countries without access to the sea are almost dependent on others and it may threaten their national security... [] access to sea is not only a matter of service or commercial port. Sometimes, the benefit from the access could be unmatched with economic benefit," the expert remarked.

Oromia...

Head Hailu Adugna noted that Irreechaa would be marked in line with the direction of Abba Geddas (tribal leaders) and in the adherence of the community's social values. "In Irreechaa, the Oromo people have strengthened unity and brotherhood and enshrines reconciliation, forgiveness and pass down all values to generations to come."

Hailu further stated that various discussion forums held with different stakeholders at various place to mark the festival in tune with its values. Since millions would participate in *Irreechaa*, residents of Addis Ababa, Bishoftu and Sheger cities as well as security forces are expected to contribute for the peaceful and successful conduct of the festival.

Moreover, the federal and Addis Ababa security forces have made the necessary preparations to make the festival peaceful. "Youths in Addis Ababa have made different arrangements to receive guests and they are also working in collaboration with security bodies to repel violent activities."

The Oromo people regardless of age, religion, political outlook, gender and other differences will overwhelmingly involve in *Irreechaa*, which also promotes their longstanding fraternity with the rest of Ethiopians, the bureau head emphasized.

Irreechaa is thanksgiving holiday celebrating the end of the winter. The Oromo people celebrate the festival to thank *Waaqa* (God) for the blessings and mercies they have received throughout the previous year, it was learned.

EEU to commence...

induced limitations on the provision of electricity at the required level.

"Witnessing the existing networks that have been serving for the last 40 years, the corporate has conducted feasibility studies to fully rehabilitate the outdated distribution networks by concrete poles which are projected to serve for over fifteen years," Gosaye said.

The project is equipped with state-of-the-art electric facilities and technologies, and covered conductors with higher voltage carrying capacity, he stated.

As to him, the project is divided into two sections namely East and West part, and North and South of Addis Ababa in which both are in a bidding process.

Moreover, the scope of the project covers the rehabilitation of 674 km of medium voltage distribution lines in Addis Ababa, in which the engineering, procurement and the construction processes are to be implemented by international contractors, he elaborated.

The project will be undertaken with a 100 million USD financial loan from the World Bank, it was learnt.

Opinion

Commitment to peace, catalyst for growth and unity

BY HIZKEL HAILU

Ethiopia, a peace-loving country, has demonstrated peace and stability activity not only within its internal boundaries but also as a beacon of peace for the volatile region of the Horn of Africa and the world. With a long-standing commitment and dedication to fostering peace, the country has actively engaged in peacekeeping missions, extending its support to more than 10 countries. Through its unwavering dedication to conflict resolution and fostering stability, Ethiopia has emerged as a key contributor to regional and international peace efforts.

Peace is a fundamental pillar for the progress and development of any nation. In the case of Ethiopia, a country with a rich history and a diverse population, the significance of peace cannot be overstated. Over the years, Ethiopia has faced numerous challenges that could pose a hindrance to growth and development. However, recent efforts towards peace talks and reconciliation have opened up new possibilities and brightened hope for national growth.

Peace is a catalyst for economic stability and growth. In the absence of conflict and violence, businesses can flourish, foreign investments can thrive, and trade can prosper. Ethiopia, with its abundant natural resources, has immense potential for economic development. However, prolonged periods of instability have deterred foreign investors and hampered economic progress. The promotion of peace is cardinal and focal point to attract investment, stimulate job creation, and foster sustainable economic growth.

For instance, peace creates a conducive environment for domestic and foreign investment. When conflicts are resolved and stability is established, investors gain confidence in the country's economic prospects. They are more likely to invest in industries such as manufacturing, infrastructure development, telecommunications, and energy. Increased investment leads to job creation, technological advancements, and the growth of local businesses, all of which contribute to economic stability and prosperity.

So everybody should stand together and be in the forefront to sustain peace and stability and share the fruit ushered by such beautiful value and sensuous beauty. Additionally, peace allows for the efficient planning and implementation of infrastructure projects. Roads, bridges, railways, airports, and power plants are essential for economic growth and regional integration. In a peaceful environment, the government can allocate resources towards infrastructure development, improving connectivity within the country and facilitating trade with neighboring nations. Well-developed infrastructure attracts businesses, reduces

transportation costs, and enhances the overall competitiveness of the economy worldwide.

Ethiopia has vast agricultural potential, with fertile lands and favorable climatic conditions. However, conflicts and insecurity disrupt agricultural activities, leading to decreased productivity and limited access to markets. Peaceful conditions enable farmers to focus on their livelihoods, adopt modern farming techniques, and improve agricultural productivity. Additionally, peace allows for the establishment of stable supply chains, enabling the export of agricultural products and boosting foreign exchange earnings.

The fact showcasing lush green fields, modern farming techniques, and abundant harvests can represent the agricultural advancements made possible by peace and stability. It can depict farmers tending to their crops, utilizing innovative technologies, and accessing markets to sell their produce. This visual demonstrates how peace has enabled farmers to increase productivity, ensure food security, and contribute to the country's economic growth.

Moreover, peace is a major catalyst for the growth of the tourism and hospitality sector. Ethiopia's rich cultural heritage, historical attractions, and natural wonders have immense tourism potential. However, conflicts and security concerns have deterred potential visitors. With peace in place, tourist inflows can increase, leading to the growth of hotels, restaurants, transportation services, and other tourism-related businesses. This sector not only generates revenue but also creates employment opportunities, particularly for the local population.

Ethiopia's iconic landmarks, historical sites, and natural wonders can highlight the growth of the tourism industry due to peace and stability. It can depict tourists exploring ancient ruins, vibrant markets, and breathtaking landscapes. This visual representation underscores how peace has attracted visitors, boosted local businesses in the hospitality sector, and helped preserve Ethiopia's cultural heritage.

Coupled with the aforementioned significances, peace has an immense importance for Social Cohesion and Unity. Ethiopia is a land of diverse nation, home to various ethnic groups with distinct cultures, languages, and traditions. Peace provides the foundation for social cohesion and unity among these diverse communities. When conflicts are resolved and grievances are addressed through peaceful means, it creates an atmosphere of inclusivity and understanding. This, in turn, strengthens national identity and promotes a sense of belonging among all Ethiopians, regardless of their background. A united nation can harness its collective potential and work towards common goals, propelling national growth.

Peaceful conditions also promote regional stability and cooperation, facilitating trade agreements and regional integration efforts. Ethiopia's strategic location in the Horn of Africa positions it as a gateway to neighboring countries and international markets. By fostering peaceful relations with its neighbors, Ethiopia can tap into regional trade opportunities, expand its export base, and attract cross-border investments. Increased trade and integration contribute to economic diversification, resilience, and stability.

Meanwhile, it is also undeniable fact that Ethiopia is playing significant effort to keep regional, continental and international peace. Ethiopia is also the only non-colonized country from Africa and has a long history of participation in United Nations (UN) peace operations dating back to the 1950s.

Documents from UN, revealed that since the inception of the UN, Ethiopia has deployed over 80,000 military and police personnel to more than 10 peacekeeping missions worldwide. According to the document, Ethiopia has sent its peacekeeping contingents to Korea, Congo, Burundi, Somalia, South Sudan, Liberia, Sudan and some other countries in order to keep peace of the world.

Yes, Ethiopia has played a significant role in efforts to combat al-Shabaab and maintain regional peace in the East African region. Al-Shabaab is an extremist militant group based in Somalia that has carried out numerous attacks within Somalia as well as in neighboring countries, including Kenya and Ethiopia. The group has been responsible for acts of terrorism, insurgency, and destabilization in the region.

Ethiopia has been actively involved in efforts to counter Al-Shabaab and promote stability in Somalia. In 2006, Ethiopia deployed its military forces to Somalia in support of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia.

Since then, Ethiopia has continued its commitment to stabilizing Somalia and combating al-Shabaab. Ethiopian troops have been part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), a multinational peacekeeping force deployed to support the Somali government and fight al-Shabaab. AMISOM has been instrumental in providing security and creating a conducive environment for political progress in Somalia.

The Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) also recently announced that it has killed around 462 al-Shabaab fighters after a failed attack by the militant group. The ENDF disclosed the militant group had tried to use 12 suicide bombers and three explosives-laden vehicles in the failed attack.

The Ethiopian army has previously foiled multiple al-Shabaab attempts to infiltrate

eastern Ethiopia to carry out cross-border attacks, read the statement. Ethiopia has several thousand troops in Somalia as part of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) tasked with countering the al-Shabaab threat.

Additionally, Ethiopia has participated in regional security initiatives, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Standby Force, to coordinate efforts against terrorism and promote peace in the region.

It's important to note that the fight against al-Shabaab is a collective effort involving various countries and international organizations. Ethiopia's role has been significant in contributing to regional peace and stability by actively engaging in efforts to counter al-Shabaab and support the Somali government's efforts to establish a secure and functioning state.

Peace is not solely the absence of violence; rather, it serves as a powerful catalyst for progress, development, and prosperity. In Ethiopia, the advantages of peace are numerous. Economic stability, social cohesion, human development, agricultural advancement, and tourism growth are just some of the benefits that peace can bring. By prioritizing peace talks, reconciliation, and conflict resolution, Ethiopia can unlock its true potential and embark on a path of sustainable national growth. Embracing peace is not only a strategic choice but a moral imperative for the well-being and future of the Ethiopian people.

All in all, the pursuit of peace and stability in Ethiopia fosters economic prosperity by attracting investments, stimulating business opportunities, and encouraging entrepreneurship. Peace also provides a conducive environment for economic stability, infrastructure development, and the growth of key sectors such as agriculture and tourism. It also promotes social cohesion and unity among diverse communities, strengthening the nation's fabric and fostering a sense of inclusivity and national identity.

Ethiopia's commitment to peace and stability has positioned the country as a beacon of hope and progress, not only within its borders but also for the region of Africa and the world. By actively engaging in peacekeeping missions and promoting conflict resolution, Ethiopia has emerged as a key contributor to regional and international peace efforts. By prioritizing peace as a strategic choice and moral imperative, Ethiopia can unlock its true potential and pave the way for sustainable national growth, while also inspiring peaceful coexistence and progress globally.

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

Editorial

National Dialogue key to restore harmony!

Recently, Chairperson of Ethiopian Social Democratic Party Prof. Beyene Petros, who is also Policy Research Institute General Director, said Ethiopia will use the intended National Dialogue as a platform to eliminate the recurrent conflicts and related problems; and ultimately establish lasting solutions. Realizing its role in restoring the nation's harmony, Prof. Beyene also urges all Ethiopians to play their roles to ensure stability through supporting the process of the National Dialogue that was designed to overcome political and economic disharmonies. Luckily, all Ethiopians are in favor of the dialogue as it is considered to be very significant to increase stability in the Horn as well through eradicating the roots of skirmishes here and there. Thus, the success of this National Dialogue is inevitable.

Logically, national dialogues are generally owned political processes arranged when problems happen that cannot be solved by the current leadership. And as Ethiopia has been struggling with various problems created in the previous systems, conducting the National Dialogue has become a crucial decision. Indeed, its significance for the current circumstances of Ethiopia is indisputable.

Since the Ethiopian Parliament adopted a law establishing the National Dialogue Commission, the Commission has been carrying out commendable activities that ensure its intended purpose. Cognizant of its lasting solutions for the nation struggling with several problems, the international and regional diplomats expressed appreciation for the wise decision of the government. Indeed, the decision is a good step towards resolving the nation's political problems and ending the recurrent conflicts in the country.

Furthermore, the Commission has recently stated that it has reached a stage at which it can undertake a successful dialogue as it has been undertaking extensive activities that pave the way to bring lasting solutions to the accumulated problems. Among these, it has carried out consultation forums with numerous stakeholders, carried out successive discussions with pertinent stakeholders, political figures, and members of the diaspora community. As it has made the proper endeavor to make the entire process more valuable, transparent, reliable, credible and inclusive, the Commission has won the trust of the entire society. These days, the country and its development partners have developed big hope in the result the National Dialogue would bring.

More importantly, in order to minimize any possible disagreement, the Commission has been working independently; it has been carrying out its duties free from any interferences. Essentially, this would reduce the influence of the political leaders and interested groups. Hence, the Commission's trustworthiness to accommodate wide-ranging ideas and issues increases. This makes the Dialogue inclusive and representative which enhance its effectiveness to realize the wished-for goal.

Remarkably, since the Commission has been accomplishing its duties adhering to the set principles and laws, it has been hoped that it can implement the National Dialogue that is inclusive and representative. Here, careful sequencing of activities, proper identification of the agendas, vigilant strategic planning and wise use of available efforts are essential. Currently, encouraging circumstances like ending northern conflicts through implementing the Pretoria Peace Agreement are creating a conducive environment for the National Dialogue. Hopefully, the Dialogue will surely serve as a strong platform to mitigate accumulated political, economic, and social disputes; and ultimately, result in the desired harmony for the nation.



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The Ethiopian Herald

Opinion

Africa needs to harness youth skills to speed up its development

BY STAFF REPORTER

The massive number of young and trainable population is one of the untapped resources that Africa should harness for its development. In order to enable the human resource drive the economic development of the continent, the countries need to give due attention to promote skills development so that the youth can become so competent in the labor market.

The Acting Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Antonio Pedro, has challenged African countries to invest in industrial skills critical for driving Africa's industrial growth and economic development.

In an address at the sixth High Level event on the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA III) held on the sidelines of the 78th United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Pedro lamented the continent's "serious short of industrial skills and professional capacity needed to achieve sustainable development."

"Tackling the skills shortage challenge in Africa requires investing in education and technical and vocational training programs tailored to the needs of the industrial sector to harness the continent's abundant natural resources and labor force more effectively; skills development does not happen in a vacuum," he stressed.

The SDG-9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure is key for achieving the twin 2030 Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Held on the theme, Positioning Africa's industrial skills development, deployment and Retention: Accelerating Manufacturing, the High Level event was organized by the African Union Commission, UNIDO and the ECA. The event was aimed at taking stock of the progress made on the IDDA III and the Accelerated Industrialization Development for Africa (AIDA). Key collaborators involved in the event including the International Labor Organization, Afreximbank, the Africa Capacity Building Foundation, the African Business Council, and The Tony Elumelu Foundation.

The High-Level event was an opportunity for stakeholders on Africa's industrialization to exchange ideas on how best to position industrial skills development for the acceleration of Africa's manufacturing, in critical, value-adding sectors. Besides, the participants discussed ideas to effectively upscale, deploy and retain Africa's labor force using best international labor practices.

Knowing and addressing the skills gap in Africa

"While the skills shortage and the importance

of prioritizing skills development in Africa is widely acknowledged, hard data on the topic is limited", said Mr. Pedro, adding that, "This needs to be addressed starting with the undertaking of skills gap assessments at the macro and sectoral level."

He added that limited funding of Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) and Higher Education by African governments and Development Partners remains a challenge and called for better consultations between governments, businesses and educational institutions to improve the outcomes of resource allocation to skills development.

According to Mr. Pedro, Africa can build on existing initiatives and scale them up to trigger transformational change. As an example, the ECA recently signed a five-year collaboration agreement with the University of Johannesburg to develop an 18-month Master of Philosophy in Industrial Policy programme.

The program aims to build human resource capacity in specialized industrial policy on the continent and to equip its students with the ability to support African governments in prioritizing and developing industrial policy in national development plans and long-term national visions.

"For the continent to create a comprehensive and adaptive skills pool, certain prerequisites, such as improved budget allocation for education and targeted technical training, as well as ensuring an enabling policy environment, need to be prioritized," said Mr. Pedro.

Capacity substitution through technical assistance and use of external contractors, service providers, and other forms of capacity acquisition allows industrial skills to be mobilized quickly for project start-ups.

"It is vital that African countries take steps to transfer essential skills that are critical for strategic sectors," he said, urging for the implementation of strategies and practical measures to safeguard and retain essential indigenous skills.

"The prosperity of a country depends on a productive labor force, which in turn rests on the skills they have and the effectiveness with which they deploy them," he said.

The ECA Acting Executive Secretary recommended that African countries should integrate the rich talent, creativity, and entrepreneurship into the formal economy. At the same time countries must provide mentorship, training, and technical assistance to enable those in the informal sector to contribute to the formal skills pool.

Source: uneca.org

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

Business & Economy

Efforts to align coal development with demand, quality and market

BY BACHA ZEWDIE

One of the areas known for coal production is the new region of Southwest Ethiopia. Data indicate that the region is home to coal products capable of generating large amounts of energy. Especially Dauro, Konta and Kefa zones of the region are known for their coal production.

Mengesha Medalcho, Deputy Director General and Head of the Mining Sector of the South West Ethiopian People's Region Mining and Energy Development Agency, told the Ethiopian Press Agency about the coal reserves in the region, and said that research is needed to find out its potential.

As to him, in the present case, the coal-bearing indicator areas of the region are geographically separated. The work being done is to mine the ore that is on the surface and partially on the surface.

As the studies show, it is three to four meters deep to find coal; in some areas, there are three levels of coal deposits up to 22 meters deep. He then mentioned that there are indications that it may exist at a deeper level. A study was conducted on the identified locations based on the indicators and the study will continue in a wider range.

Based on this study, 15 small-scale producers and three high-level producers, a total of 18 producers, have obtained licenses and started working to produce coal. It was planned to produce 748,024 tons of coal from the region in the 2022/23 fiscal year. It was possible to produce 209,398 tons.

Though many problems can be cited as a reason, the performance is miner in terms of the plan. In terms of income, it was planned to earn 30 million Birr and was able to earn 29.3 million Birr, he said.

In view of the employment opportunities, the plan was to create job for 600 citizens only through coal production, and it has been possible to create permanent and temporary employment opportunities for 525 citizens.

He said that according to the procedure laid down in the guidelines of the region's mining sector regarding job creation, every manufacturer has to allocate 10% of their product sales income to create job opportunities for unemployed citizens. In the future, if these producers come to work with their full capacity, the sector will generate good capital and better work will be done.

The official said that it is impossible to say that coal production is effective in the process underway so far. The demand and the market conditions are not compatible. He also mentioned that there are investors who want to engage in the sector but the existing market is not reliable. It is very difficult for the investors to break into the market and be successful in the sector.

If there is a situation where the market and the producer will be connected, it would be possible to avoid coal importation with high foreign exchange. The current market bottleneck is dangerous if not resolved, he said.

As to him, it is difficult for producers to supply their products directly to factories.



Though the work of substituting coal production in the country has started recently, it has created a revival now

The problem is the presence of brokers between the manufacturer and the factory. The producers also say that there is a situation where the quality of the product will be low even after supplying the ore to the factory. There is also a situation where the product is said to have not been accepted by the factory and they take the ore back. Besides, abnormal relationship is created to gain improper benefit and the sector is victim of unhealthy process.

The problems are raised widely in regular consultation forums so that new licenses have been suspended until these problems are resolved and a secure market is established. However, there is a situation where the existing producers renew their licenses and continue to produce.

While talking about the problems that arise in connection with this, he mentioned that the production is widespread in the Dauro and Konta zones, and the coal production inspection work is being done in Kefam zone.

He also mentioned that infrastructure problems such as lack of road are widespread in these areas. The asphalt road from Tercha center to Sodo has been cut and the road is closed and it is difficult for cargo transport. At the same time, the company that is working on the road from Tercha to Jimma has left because of the new road work and the distance of the road. Road breakdowns are said to be difficult for companies transporting coal.

As to him, among the problems raised so far that delayed the work is related to the local community's benefit. Environmental impacts are not clearly identified and the absence of a legal justification for legal benefits has been hindering operations for some time. In September 2022, after the regulation of the region was issued, it was put into operation in accordance with the procedures and guidelines in order to ensure the benefit of the local community.

In the 2023/24 fiscal year, it is planned to work to strengthen the coal production. A plan has been prepared to gain 500,000 tons of produce in the fiscal year. The producers' demand for production is higher than the set number, compared to last year's performance. The work to achieve this year's plan will continue.

The production process will take place in a manner that suits the needs of the next product seekers and manufacturers. It is essential to establish a procedure that the manufacturer will accept the products unconditionally so that the supplier can produce without any risk. Doing this requires the cooperation of concerned bodies who lead the industry and the stakeholders; otherwise it will not be possible to achieve what is planned.

He mentioned that the area where coal is produced is in the fields of farmers and people's residences. In this regard, holes made here and there create various environmental damages and causing problems of good governance. Such problems should be solved and is being worked on in coordination with the relevant parties. Likewise, the works to solve the problems raised on the road will be done with the relevant parties.

The deputy general director further said that if the problems raised in the sector are solved, it is possible to produce better products. Mainly the problems related to the market should be solved and there should be a reliable market. As a result, out of the 15 existing manufacturers, four are able to cope with the current market conditions and are working effectively because they have a direct market connection.

At present, the production of top producers who are licensed to produce more than 20 thousand tons per year is not more than one thousand tons. If these producers are monitored by the Federal Ministry of Mines and the region to produce at full capacity, better results can be achieved than the current level.

There are also problems regarding coal from a consumers' perspective. Coal with a power generation capacity of 3,000 calories to 6,000 calories is required in different factories. Coal products with lower amounts of up to 3,000 calories are used to generate energy in textile, paint, and other industries; Coals with higher value of 6,000 calories and above are desirable for cement plant.

The official pointed out that coal production may be reduced in terms of production process to meet the standard. Mixing things like ash, stone and other mixed materials together can put adverse impact on the quality. In the process of finding a solution for this, the process of installing a processing machine to separate such things in Dauro Zone is being completed by Ethio Mining Corporation.

He also said that there are encouraging works related to quality. The efficiency of the previously installed machine will be seen in order to facilitate the production of coal that meets the market demand and quality standards for the foreign and domestic markets. At the same time, there are works to be done with the Ministry of Mines to solve the market and quality problems.

The official pointed out that though the work of substituting coal production in the country has started recently, it has created a revival now. He thinks that as far as the work is underway via using the favorable conditions, there will be better results in the future.

Art & Culture

African writer who may win this year's Noble Literature Prize

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

The season of Nobel Prizes has already set in. This year's Nobel Award for literature is set to be announced in less than a week. As usual, many established writers are claiming the mantle and are nominated as the best candidates to win the most prestigious award and the best recognition any worthy writer can dream of. The time preceding the announcement is usually a time of speculation and suggestions about candidates who have the potential to shine at the Nobel Prize awarding ceremony. It is also a time of fierce endorsements by fans and critics of the best-known authors.

The Nobel Prize nomination and awarding process operate pretty much like the Ballon d'Or in soccer. The fans are divided in their preferences and/or predictions of who is going to win the award this year. In the case of the Ballon d'Or, there is usually too much passion governing the nominations from the fan base of the soccer stars. This is also true with the Nobel Prize for Literature, which is open to speculation by book readers and fans of the authors who pen the books and the critics and media that shape public opinions.

This phenomenon is unique to literature because it is exposed to public speculation and public passion, as is the Ballon d'Or in soccer. Both books and soccer are shared by the wider public, which is not the case with other disciplines like physics, chemistry, or economics, to name but a few of them. One does not expect the public to know much about advanced physics, chemistry, or about the scientists while people are expected to know a lot when it comes to books and soccer.

More than a dozen of writers of world renown are expected to be nominated for the Nobel Prize although the final decision rests with the Nobel committee that announces one candidate as the winner although there are often double candidates in other fields like Economics or Physics for instance. You cannot obviously write books for two as writing is by its very nature probably the most personal and private profession in the world.

So, from among the two dozen or so nominations for the Nobel literary prize, there is only one candidate who is finally selected as the winner. As a result of this, all the rest are cancelled to ran either for the nominations or the actual selection. Because of this, there are several authors who are often shortlisted but fail to pass the last hurdle. There are also those who fail to convince the Nobel committee that refuses to select the best among the candidates. A typical example may be the nomination of the late British author Graham Green who was a candidate nominated every year but failed to win it because one of the members of the Award committee was alleged to have said that, "Green would only win the Nobel on his grave".



African writers are relative latecomers to the Nobel Prize, as the first winner was selected only in 1986, while the history of the prize stretches to more than a century. In the past, there were many African writers who were nominated for the prize for many consecutive years but continued to miss the award. One of them is obviously Kenyan author Ngugi wa Tiongo, who, in the eyes of many critics and readers, should have won the Nobel Prize a long time ago. Why Ngugi has so far failed to win the prize is something one can only speculate on. However, it is not definitely because he is black or African. Many black and African writers have won the prize many times in the past.

It would be relevant here to go through a list of African and black authors who have already won the Nobel Prize for literature at different times.

Africa has many writers who have won the Nobel Prize in literature although they were not any match to the European and American authors who have been honored with the coveted prize since its inception more than a century ago. The first African to grab the prize was Nigerian dramatist, essayist, novelist and poet Wole Soyinka in 1986. According to information pertaining to the prize, "The 1986 Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka (born 1934) who, in a wide cultural perspective and with poetic overtones fashions the drama of existence."

Soyinka's literary career is as diverse as his life experience stretching from his native Nigeria to the United Kingdom where he lived and studied drama, wrote some of his best drams and acted in many of them. In his long career as a writer he had written only one novel called, *The Interpreters* in 1965 until his second novel appeared in 2021 with the long title of, "Chronicles of the Happiest People on Earth" which is a parody of life in contemporary Nigeria with its corrupt politicians, drug gangs and kidnappers and the spread of the crime syndicate that is virtually running the

country.

Besides being a consummate writer, Soyinka is also a political activist always standing on the side of freedom and democracy. This was most evident in his Nobel acceptance speech, entitled "The Past Must Address its Present" which he devoted, to the South African freedom fighter Nelson Mandela. His speech was an outstanding criticism of the apartheid system imposed on the black people of South Africa. Soyinka opposed military rule in his country and was exiled several times and more particularly during the late General Sani Abacha's rule from 1993 to 1996.

The second African winner of the Nobel Prize for literature was South African female author Nadine Gordimer. She received the 1991 Noble Literature Prize because of her outstanding criticism of Apartheid and the lives of black majority African under the racist system. She used her novels and short stories to paint a stark portrait of the oppression and exploitation the majority black population suffered and endured under the system.

Although Gordimer was a white South African, her advocacy for racial equality had made an outstanding voice of the voiceless in her country. She was born in 1923 and she described by Seamus Heaney, the outstanding Irish poet who also won the prize after her, as one of "the guerrillas of the imagination".

In 1998, the Nobel Prize went to Egypt where Naguib Mahfouz had long established himself as one of the leading writers of not only Egypt but also that of the Arab world. He was the first laureate who wrote in Arabic and his translated works conquered the world and gave him a prestigious place in the annals of world literature.

Mahfouz also rendered a great service to Arab literature that was ignored and sidelined for many years before his award and later on started to be respected as one of the most developed literatures of the world. His body of works encompasses the modern

version of Egyptian myths and folklore that he derived from a large body of traditional Egyptian storytelling. Mahfouz also used ancient tales of kings and ordinary people, their power and wealth relationships and diverging dreams and illusions. He also used these tales to write similar tales in a modern context, as his major works testify. He has also written many short stories by using the Nile River as a backdrop for the lives of his characters, their aspirations and their dramas.

Then comes South African author John Maxwell Coetzee, who is largely known by his last name that has a South African black flavor although he was a white man of Australian descent. Coetzee won the 2003 Nobel Prize for literature as a recognition of developing a style that, "in innumerable guises portrays the surprising involvement of the outsider." Coetzee was born in 1940 in Cape Town and he was recognized by the Swedish Academy that hailed him as a "scrupulous doubter, ruthless in his criticism of the cruel nationalism and cosmetic morality of western civilization."

As we ca see from the above, not only black writers from Africa won the Nobel Prize for literature. There are two female writers who were honored by the Swedish Academy namely Nadine Gordimer who was black and African. The second woman laureate from Africa is also a white woman by the name Doris Lessing from Zimbabwe who is of British descent. According to Wikipedia, "Doris Lessing was a British-Zimbabwean author who was born to British parents and lived in Iran for some 25 years. She then moved to the then Southern Rhodesia were she remained until moving to London in 1941.

Lessing was recognized as, "One of the most important writers of the 20th century. She wrote over 70 works, covering a huge range of themes and styles, including three novels that were nominated for a Booker prize. Among her distinguished works are the novel entitled, "the Good Terrorist" and numerous African stories that reflected her experience while living in Southern Rhodesia. There is also the much-acclaimed novel by the title, "the Grass is Singing" that won her international acclaim and prestige.

Abdulrazak Gurnah is a Tanzanian-born British writer who won the Nobel Prize in 2021 and whom Wole Soyinka congratulated for bringing the prize back home after a long hiatus. As we said above, there were also near misses, the most famous case probably being the that of exiled Kenyan author Ngugi wa Tiongo who was nominated every year for the prize and expected to win while unexpected ones were lucky enough to claim the prize to the dismay of the literary world particularly in Africa. Who knows, this year may be Ngugi's year as he nears retirement after a long and flamboyant career that has already made him one of the best writers in Africa if not in the world.

Science & Technology

Digital Diplomacy: Ethiopia, Microsoft discuss deepening partnership

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

Using all its capacities Ethiopia is striving to accelerate digital transformation. The Ethiopian Government has launched the Digital Ethiopia 2025 Strategy to leverage digital opportunities and to boost its economy. Ethiopia is working to harness the digital ecosystem as a driving factor to make its economic development endeavors innovative and knowledge-based. Considering the growing role of the digital sector in the economic development, the Ethiopian Government is laying foundations to build sustainable digital economy.

The Digital Ethiopia 2025 Strategy is an ambitious strategy to accelerate the economic digitalization. The focus of the strategy is creating conducive environment for business activities, expanding infrastructural development and promoting technological innovations. The strategy and digital reforms being implemented are bringing promising results in transforming the digital sector in Ethiopia. The sector is attracting new market players, thanks to the reforms being taken by the government.

Accelerating the digital transformation and realizing it within the planned period needs financial and technical resources and active participation of the private sector. In addition to the efforts of mobilizing the local resources, digitalization needs strong coordination with development partners, international organizations and technology companies with well-coordinated digital diplomacy. Well-coordinated diplomacy in the digital sector can attract investments in the sector, technical supports and technological transfers that can help in accelerating the digitalization journey.

Transforming the digital sector in Ethiopia aims at building the comparative economic advantages of the country so as to accelerate its economic development towards prosperity. The digital transformation of Ethiopia targets developing the digital infrastructure so as to provide digital services to key sectors like industry, agriculture, tourism, manufacturing and supporting the economic activities of the private sector. Through achieving the digital strategy, Ethiopia is working to create inclusive prosperity by leveraging technology that catalyzes the realization of broad development.

As Ethiopia aims transforming its digital sector and the technology in general, creating cooperation with technological companies would facilitate and support the initiatives. It helps to accelerate the transition to digitalization. With this vision, Ethiopia has discussed with Microsoft company leadership to extend partnership so as to accelerate Digital Transformation in Ethiopia.

Parallel to the 78th United Nations



(MInT Minister, Belete Molla (PhD) with Microsoft senior leadership in New York)

General Assembly (UNGA), Minister of Innovation and Technology (MInT) of Ethiopia, Belete Molla (PhD) discussed with Microsoft Company's senior leadership in New York, last week. The focus of the two sides' discussion was on technology collaboration and philanthropy intersects for the mutual benefit between Ethiopia and Microsoft.

During the sidelines of the 78th UNGA in New York, Minister Belete met Kate Behncken, Corporate Vice President of Microsoft Philanthropies; Justin Spelhaug, Global Head, Tech for Social Impact, MS Philanthropies, and Alexandre Pinho, Global UN International Development at the Microsoft UN office.

During the discussion, the Minister briefed the Microsoft leadership on Ethiopia's current state in terms of technological advancement, digital transformation and areas of growth, especially the importance of digital literacy and training for Ethiopian youth. Belete highlighted Ethiopia's potential as a Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) destination given its large, young, affordable and trainable workforce, along with the country's strategic location, time zone advantages and the government's reforms being undertaken in the digital sector in particular and the technology sector in general, according to the information from MInT and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia.

The Minister also discussed the initiatives and steps taken by Ethiopia to create a conducive environment for BPO, such as infrastructure development, training programs, and policy frameworks. The discussion aims to explore opportunities for Microsoft to consider Ethiopia as a potential BPO hub for its operations. He also explained Ethiopia's vision for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its potential to drive growth, innovation, and efficiency across various sectors.

Belete further elaborated Ethiopia's desire

for expanding its digital infrastructure and explore potential partnerships where Microsoft could play a role, such as in providing cloud services, data centers, or other technologies. Ethiopia's emerging startup ecosystem and the potential for innovations were also among the points highlighted by the Minister the Microsoft leadership during the discussion.

The two sides also discussed ways Microsoft could support Ethiopian startups through funding, mentoring and providing tools and resources, according to the information from MInT. Ethiopia gives due attention to Digital Governance and Cyber-security in its digital transformation strategy, Belete noted. He explained the need for securing digital platforms for government and public services.

During the discussion, Microsoft pinpointed how digital solutions could revolutionize sectors like healthcare and agriculture in Ethiopia. The two parties also discuss potential partnerships, pilot projects, or initiatives where Microsoft's technology can make a meaningful difference. Both sides reiterated the importance of the partnership during the discussion and Belete expressed his gratitude for Microsoft's interest to strengthen partnership with Ethiopia.

Then, the two sides mutually agreed to take tangible steps and assigned a working team on both sides that will work on an action plan towards steps ahead. Minister Belete Molla also appreciates Microsoft's decision for including Ethiopia as one of the top three African countries for Microsoft's new Digital Development Program.

According to the information from MInT, a follow-up meeting will be conducted in Addis Ababa within a month to further push the partnership and Belete invited Microsoft leadership to visit Ethiopia. Accordingly, the Microsoft leadership is expected to visit Ethiopia in late October 2023.

According to MInT, the meeting between Ethiopia and Microsoft is a significant step forward in the partnership between the two parties. Both parties are committed to working together to leverage the power of technology to drive growth, innovation, and development in Ethiopia. The Microsoft leadership, according to MInT, reiterated how these can serve as foundations for deeper collaborations with Microsoft; explore opportunities for Microsoft to assist in building AI capacities in Ethiopia, whether through educational programs, research partnerships, or investments in AI startups.

Appreciated Ethiopia's keen interest to partner with Microsoft, the Microsoft leadership reiterated its commitment to strengthen the partnership to work closely with Ethiopia. The multinational computer technology corporation, Microsoft, has included Ethiopia to be one of the top three African countries for its new Digital Development Program.

Finally, MInT Minister Belete has thanked Microsoft for including Ethiopia in the company's new Digital Development Program. He also appreciated the team's plan to visit Addis Ababa on the last week of October for the furtherance of the partnership.

Considering the initiatives Ethiopia is taking to transform the digital technology and the investments by the Ethiopian government to realize digital economy, Microsoft leadership visit to Addis Ababa is expected to take the partnership one step forward. Ethiopia's current reforms and the development endeavors would attract the attention of Microsoft to deepen ties with Ethiopia after observing the promising developments in the sector.

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Society

Photo- Mayor Office of Addis Ababa



Making Addis a model, suitable city for children

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

Mekdes Getachew is a resident of Woreda 14 in Lemi Kura Sub-City, Addis Ababa. She is the sole breadwinner of her two children. According to Mekdes, because her daily income is not more than twenty birr, she has been struggling to cover her daily expenses and satisfy her own and children's immediate needs. Thus, she has been leading a hand to mouth existence.

"My life is full of misery and in a situation where food is in short supply. I have no one by my side as my life mate abandoned us, and I have no idea where he is now. I make a living by collecting littered plastic bottles, selling them to buyers, and escorting the schoolchildren of my neighboring families from home to school and back.

I could not even feed and send my children to school as my neighbors do. When things get worse, I had to beg alms to feed my children; and because everyone knows how I am dealing with my daily life, they support me in kind and providing food," she said.

Fortunately, representatives from the Children and Women's Affairs Bureau visited and asked her to tell them about her—her source of income, how she feeds herself and her children and other challenges.

"Last week the representatives came to visit me and notified me as I will be given a sponsorship opportunity and my children will receive support from volunteers."

Mekdes expressed this at the sponsorship program organized by Addis Ababa Mayor Office under the theme "One family for One Child." The program was designed to educate and give sustained support for 100 children until they graduate university.

Speaking at the program, Mayor Adanech Abiebie said that in accordance with the program formulated by the government to build a generation, a number of activities are ongoing in the capital. Mainly, because investing in the generation has its own multitudinous returns in creating the hope of the country for a better tomorrow, extensive works are undertaken with special attention in the city to make Addis Ababa the best African city for raising children. The program, where children can grow and learn happily, mentally and physically, has already started.

Today the City Administration, in partnership

It is obvious investing in early childhood development and education plays a significant role in establishing sustainable economic development

with NWS Trading P.L.C owner, Manaye Sendeku has found a sponsor for one hundred children with a range of one month to six years and to financially take care of the children, (three thousand birr per month) until they graduated from universities.

According to her, public engagements could not undo the social and economic challenges of the community. Rather, the private sector should come at forefront and invest in the posterity. It is obvious investing in early childhood development and education plays a significant role in establishing sustainable economic development and has a huge social payoff.

Mayor Office holds the importance of supporting families is an essential mechanism to unlock a women's ability and enhance their participation in the workforce, and improve access to childcare that affects family and balance work • of both women and men.

"There is nothing that makes a mother happier than seeing her child grow and develop physically and mentally. Thus, parents who got sponsorship opportunities for your children, congratulations. The City Administration will keep on executing human center projects," the Mayor expressed her feeling.

On behalf of the parents and the children, she also extended her heartfelt gratitude to Manaye Sendeku, who shared the City Administration's vision and took the responsibility to back and educate one hundred children up to university.

And Mekdes Getachew was one of the beneficiaries of this program.

The other beneficiary is the mother of Eyob Kefyalew. "I was excited when I learned that my son was given the opportunity and became one of the one hundred beneficiaries of the sponsorship program. I also learnt three thousands birr per month till my son Eyob graduated from higher education. It means a lot to me. I am grateful for the support given to us."

According to her, the support enables her to spend more time to increasing her income and it reduces the challenges she was facing as a single mom, especially in feeding her two children Kalkidan Kefyalew and Eyob Kefyalew and fulfilling their clothing requirements.

"Following the increment of cost of living in Addis Ababa, I was on the verge of

living on the streets. However, thanks to the commencement of this program, I am safe now. Not only sending my children to school, I am supported financially on a monthly basis," she said.

Bethlehem Hurrissa, 35, also stated how she got the opportunity and became one of the beneficiaries of the program. "I am from Lideta Sub-City and a mother of twins named Christina Leul and Yemral Leul, two years and six months old.

"Their father does not support us," she said, fighting to hold back her tears. "It is very difficult for me. I faced a lot of challenges while raising my children without a family. I am happy because I am one of the beneficiaries of the program because it could impact my life positively, and help me to care for my children now better than ever before.

As she stated, because she is the only breadwinner and the cost of living is keeping on hiking, she was facing a burden. "I make my living and bring up my toddlers by engaging in various activities such as washing clothes in my neighborhood and selling some goods to the surrounding people."

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Addis Ababa City Administration Woman and Children Social Affairs Bureau Head Woyneshet Zerihun said that this is one of the efforts to make Addis Ababa suitable for raising children.

"Early childhood is a critical stage where the foundation for their future success is laid. It is believed that providing support to needy families could enhance quality early childhood development opportunities."

According to her, since early childhood captures the period of development from conception to six years, investing at this critical time has a number of returns in ensuring nation building.

Health professionals say that early childhood, especially the first three years, is a time for rapid physical, intellectual, psychological, social, and emotional development; and it is the time when the foundation for children's future success is laid.

Merely in the past three years. It was arranged for 750 children to be provided with food, clothing, and educational materials from infancy to higher education. To this happen, various institutions and individuals have extended helping hands, it was stated.



This is Ethiopia

Irreechaa festival for peace, forgiveness

BY ELIZABETH MENGISTU

Irreechaa festival is one of the intangible heritages of Ethiopia. The festival is warmly celebrated among the people of Oromo when the rainy season ends with the aim to thank *Waaqa* (God) for the blessings they have received in the preceding year.

Irreechaa is an annual festival celebrated on the first weekend following the *Meskel* holiday across the country mainly in all areas of Oromia State. The festival brings millions of people from all walks of life, without religious background, cultural differences or political affiliations from all over Oromia and non-Oromo states, as well as visitors from other parts of Ethiopia and from abroad.

In fact, the festival apart from being a thanksgiving day of the Oromo people and an emblem of their cultural identity, it is also a time of togetherness, forgiveness, peace, and unity is reflected.

The festival will be celebrated this upcoming weekend Saturday and Sunday at *Hora Finfinee* in the capital Addis Ababa and in the shores of *Hora Arsadi* in Bishoftu Town respectively warmly and colorfully.

This year's *Irreechaa* festival will be celebrated under the theme "*Irreechaa* is a symbol of peace and brotherhood," it was learned.

Irreechaa is a symbol of peace and solidarity. It is a sign of forgiveness and togetherness, said Abdulhakim Mulu, Social Affairs Cluster Coordinator at the rank of Vice President of the Oromia National Regional State. Thus, everyone should celebrate the festival in a manner respecting the culture of others and in a way that emphasizes Ethiopianism. The Vice President said this at an opening ceremony of the *Irreechaa* Festival Exhibition and bazaar at the Oromia Cultural Center.

Mentioning that various activities have been ongoing to celebrate the festival he said that in the earlier times in relation to the Oromia Tourism Week, extensive works that help to develop the tourism sector were being done.

The *Irreechaa* exhibition and the bazaar, which is designed to help the next generation to preserve its own culture and promote its values, will help the next generation to know the culture by displaying Oromo clothing and materials.

What is more, the exhibition and bazaar has created an opportunity to see the attractive and wonderful utensils, cultural materials and various tools that were used by our forefathers and foremothers during the heroic times, Abdulhakim remarked.



According to him, the bazaar and exhibition focused on informing the current generation about the history of the past generation who uphold Ethiopianism through promoting the culture.

Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau Head Hussien Berisso on his part said that the *Irreechaa* festival will be celebrated at home and abroad.

"All of us who are attending the festival should carry only the flag of peace and *Aba Gadaa*'s. On the occasion, carrying flags that will reflect the ideology of any political party is not acceptable," he underlined.

Meanwhile, *Aba Gadaas* are urged to play role in preparing the participants of the *Irreechaa* festival for the success of the peace agenda.

Culture and History Director with Oromo Culture at the Oromo Culture and Tourism, Alemayehu Haile, told EPA that *Irreechaa* is the core and the largest of the many institutions in the *Geda* system. *Irreechaa* is a thanksgiving day and it is a festival where the Oromo people go out en masse to the public space to thank God. Thus, in order to achieve the great agenda of peace held at the national level, *Aba Gadaas* are

required to prepare the audiences of the festival for peace.

At the *Irreechaa* festival, *Aba Gadaas* deliver speeches and give blessings. And the people, more than what a political leader says, give due attention to the speeches and blessings given by *Aba gedas*. Most importantly, going beyond giving due attention, do what is said accordingly. The people, without a shadow of doubt, will apply the notions made by cultural leaders, especially in connection to peace. In this regard it is expected that *Aba gedas* will play their part for the success of the peace, he remarked.

In essence, it would be feasible for political leaders to use influential traditional leaders to make the peace effort a success. By using *Aba gedas*, tribal leaders, and others it is possible decisive works in order to bring peace, Alemayehu added.

According to Alemayehu, through using communities' good values like *Irreechaa*, it is possible to compensate the injured, punish the evil doer, and to reconcile the wronged.

It is also possible to improve the situation by creating a sense of belongingness,

correcting the wrong acts and enhancing considerateness and making each other think of one another.

This type of *Irreechaa*'s great value is also available in other areas' cultures too, embracing the values and realizing this big plan [peace] a success is everyone's responsibility. Preparing oneself for peace in the face of the Creator is also a timeless duty, he added.

In order for the peace agenda to be successful, it is wise to raise awareness of *Aba gedas* to stick to the truth and work based on it. However, he said that, after the people gave due attention to what the *Aba gedas* have said and agreed to act in accordance to, conspiring something else behind the scene will be considered as treason.

Restraining from any evil act and embracing the extended hand for peace is important. Stopping killing one another and allowing children to go to school without any fear is necessary, he added.

Alemayehu said that creating peace is not only the responsibility of a single party. Rather it is a promise reached between the offender and the victim, so the agreement of both the offender and the victim is important. Realizing national reconciliation and peace is possible only in this way.

"In this regard, the festival of *Irreechaa* is a day for forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. Thus, reconciliation and forgiveness should not be done only with the Creator, but also with each other. We have come to a peace agreement. The core principle of *Irreechaa* is also peace, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace", the researcher underscored.