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Ethiopia takes lead in coffee expertise

BY FIKADU BELAY

ADDIS ABABA- The launching of a coffee training program is instrumental to fill the knowledge gap and nurture specialized skills thereby positioning Ethiopia as a leader in the commodity's expertise, the Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority (ECTA) said.

Speaking to *The Ethiopian Herald*, ECTA Public Relations and Communication Director Sahlemariam Gebremedhn stated that the program not only benefits local experts but also equips aspiring coffee specialists from other African countries. The program is believed to contribute to enhancing coffee quality, reduce waste, and elevate the overall capacity of the sector.

The authority has been building additional coffee quality and certification centers in Jimma and Hawassa since last Ethiopian fiscal year and has been hugely engaged in expanding the service beyond Addis Ababa and Dre Dawa. This

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Addis gears up for Energy Efficiency Code

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA –The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group said it is finalizing the draft of 'Building Energy Efficiency Code' for Addis Ababa City energy utilization.

Approached by *The Ethiopian Herald*, C40

Cities Climate Leadership Group Regional Air Quality Technical Advisor Tibebu Assefa said that the group in collaboration with Addis Ababa Environment Authority is finalizing the draft of Building Energy Efficiency Code for Addis Ababa city with active participation of several senior local consultants.

The code is believed to specify or mandate certain energy efficiency standards for the residential and commercial buildings, he said.

"We already finalized the understanding of the landscape of energy efficiency in the context

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Leather sector keeps auspicious performance amid challenges

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Ethiopia, India agree to consolidate economic cooperation

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA - Ethiopia and India have agreed to consolidate bilateral economic cooperation as the Sixth Joint Trade Committee of the two held meeting in Addis Ababa between November 6 and 7, 2023.

A statement sent to *The Ethiopian Herald* indicated that both sides acknowledged the huge potential for expansion and diversification of the trade following a comprehensive review of bilateral trade relations.

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News



UAE pledges support to Nat'l Elderly Center

BY BILAL DERSO

ADDIS ABABA - The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has pledged support for the construction of the National Center for the Elderly, which is planned to be built here in Addis Ababa.

The above was disclosed when the UAE Ambassador to Ethiopia Mohamed Salem Al-Rashid discussed with senior leaders of the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs including the Minister Ergoge Tesfaye (PhD).

The Minister briefed Ambassador Mohamed that consolidated efforts are underway to build a center to provide medical, income generation and multipurpose services to the elderly.

Mentioning the execution of the design work to build a standard senior citizens center, Ergoge requested the UAE government to support the construction.

Ambassador Mohamed affirmed his government's support for the construction of the elderly center to be built by the Ethiopian government at the national level.

The ambassador also appreciated the activities being done by the ministry to change and improve the lives of low-income communities, including the elderly.

The Ethiopian government has designed and implemented a national social protection policy and implementation strategy to protect the rights of the elderly. The government has also taken bold steps to protect the elderly's social security and to make them participants and beneficiaries of development.

Ministry accentuates health insurance expansion significance

• *Service reaches out to over 54 mln citizens through health insurance*

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDISABABA - Ministry of Health stated that it is working in close collaboration with the Ethiopian Health Insurance Service for providing all citizens with quality health service and expanding accessibility.

The Service organized an event yesterday to evaluate 2015 fiscal year work performance and 2016 fiscal year Plan under the theme: 'Health Insurance Membership for Common Prosperity.'

Opening the gathering, Service Director General Tesfaye Worku said that the service has so far provided over 54 million citizens with health accesses in some 1,006 woredas across the country. Of this total figure, some 10 million citizens are incapable of paying for the service and their fee is covered the government. The Service was commenced in 2011 in four selected states, 13 districts accommodating 125,142 household members. Currently, the service has 12,000,000 household members in 1006 woredas, according to the report.

Ethiopian Health Insurance Service disclosed that it has so far provided over 54 million citizens with health service in some 1,006 districts across the nation through health insurance, he added.

As to him, the service has been providing inclusive health service, attempting to produce healthy and productive citizens,



ensuring the benefit of women and children as well as reaching out to the unreached are the priority areas leading to the sustainable development goals (SDGs) as far as health concerns are concerned. He added that the service endeavors to provide health insurance service in the remaining districts that have not benefited out of the scheme for various reasons.

As to him, Ethiopia collects 4.8 billion Birr from health insurance a year.

Health State Minister Dereje Duguma (MD) on his part said that the Ministry has been working in close collaboration with the Ethiopian Health Insurance Service aiming at providing all citizens with quality health accessibility. In this regard, the government attaches due emphasis to quality health and it is a commendable step to add value to the effort geared towards

ensuring the holistic health sector change.

Dereje further stated that Ethiopia is striving to realize the 2030 SDGs in the health sector. However, health service accessibility, quality, and sustainable finance should take a lion's share so as to succeed 2030 SDGs. Particularly, improving the local financial system using own resource would play a vital role in reducing the challenge of financial risk, which is a major step for providing quality health for all.

He further underlined that conducting national campaign, informing the political leaders about the issue, involving all stakeholders, addressing all districts especially those which are seriously exposed to conflict and drought would help come up with outcomes for realizing the SDGs in the health sector.

Ethiopia, UK launch Deris Wanaag peace, security borderland Program

• *UK commits 10 million GBP for three years*

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopia and the UK have launched the Deris Wanaag peace and security borderlands program in Jijiga, Somali State as the later committed 10 million GBP to realize the project in the coming three years.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, Somali State President Mustafe Omar highlighted the importance of cross-border cooperation in addressing the drivers of instability in the Horn of Africa, where many of the socioeconomic dynamics are shared across the borders, according to the statement sent to *The Ethiopian Herald*.

A representative from the British Embassy reportedly said that stability in Ethiopia is a core priority for the UK that's how the country committed the 10 million finance for the program.

The Deris Wanaag team also outlined the planned focus on integrating national responses to insecurity, supporting conflict resolution structures, and aligning development and peace building activity across the three countries – a reflection of the program titled Deris Wanaag, a Somali idiom meaning 'good neighborliness'.

According to the statement, the program supports effective policy and programming, strengthens formal and informal resilience-building mechanisms and addresses community needs to mitigate against drivers of instability and violent extremism.

The UK government said in the statement that the Deris Wanaag program aims to support Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya in bolstering resilience against violent extremism in the borderland regions of the countries.

The UK-funded the program mainly to support effective policy and programming, informed by a comprehensive understanding of the conflict and violent actor dynamics, structures and actors, strengthen formal and informal resilience-building mechanisms, and address community needs to mitigate against drivers of instability and violent extremism, it added.

The program will leverage the UK's strategic partnerships in the region and build on the successes of previous activity in the region to ensure that security, development, and peace building efforts bring real benefit to the communities in the border areas, according to the statement.

The launching of the program in Jijiga aimed at bringing together government officials from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, and discuss priority areas for implementation, it was learnt.

News

Ministry says quality assurance paving industrial dev't avenue

• Nation marks 33rd World Quality Day

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA - Quality assessment is a vehicle to accelerate the industrial and private sectors development, so said Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration (MoTRI).

The 2023 World Quality Day was celebrated at the premises of Ethiopian Conformity Assessment Enterprise (ECAE) under the theme: 'Quality: Realizing Your Competitive Potential' in the presence of senior government officials, manufacturers.

Speaking at the workshop, MoTRI Minister Gebremeskel Chala said that following the national reform, the government has given due attention to productivity and service quality thereby developing the country's import, export capacity and helping it become competent at the international market.

As standard is becoming the matter of survival and a path to penetrate the global market, the minister remarked that the enterprise along with the government is providing and installing various high technology gadgets and facilities in a bid to provide high quality products globally.

"Quality is the outcome of input, skilled manpower, technology and other leading inputs that have an immense role in the production process," he noted.

He called on manufacturers, company owners and development partners to leverage these world class facilities and the immense potential of the sector thereby providing customers with convenient and timely services and products.

The private sector is expected to develop a vibrant economy, the service sectors and promote the nation's economy as they are engines for industry. Here, the ministry is highly committed to shore up the private sector more than ever.

ECAE Director-General Meaza Abera on her part stated that the corporate is aggressively working towards producing international standard goods and services produced locally that meet the international market via organized laboratories, inspection, certification and provision of on job training on utilization of equipment's services in the country.

The day is also marked with exhibitions which aim at creating awareness and market linkages with qualified manufacturers, developers and service providers so as to promote their products and services and identify the services delivered to end users.

As to her, the institution is discharging its responsibilities by providing reliable, independent, effective, accessible and efficient conformity assessment services by implementing internationally recognized and accepted laboratory testing, inspection and certification systems.

Leather sector keeps auspicious performance amid challenges

BY MENGESHA AMARE

ADDIS ABABA- Some 7.6 million USD was obtained from export trade in the first quarter of the current Ethiopian year, the Leather and Leather Products Industry Research and Development Center said.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Center Manager Mohammed Hussein said that the sum was secured from finished and semi-finished leather shoes, baggage, leather gloves and other products exported to the global market. China, India, U.S. and Italy are the primary destinations for Ethiopian exports.

"Tough it is promising; the performance in the reported period was below the plan due to various challenges that have been impacting the leather industry."

According to the manager, low level of technological penetration, price fluctuation in the world leather market, limited raw leather collecting capacity and the factories' production reduction are among the major challenges in the leather industry. Limited transport access and inept market linkage and shortage of input supply are also highly contributed to the low production and productivity of the leather sector.

To overcome such challenges, 10-year short, medium and long-term leather development strategies are formulated covering 2023/24 to 2033/34.

Mohammed further highlighted that the plan set to expand local market utilization; substitute imported chemicals and increase leather products in destination countries to

address the problems under the auspices of the strategies.

In addition, the center is working in collaboration with various stakeholders to ease the post-slaughtering problems, raising the supply of salt used for tanning leather as well as building the public's awareness.

"We are working to attract sustainable investment, improve technology utilization as well as draw important lessons from countries which have registered remarkable outcomes in the leather sector."

Tapping the huge potential of the leather industry requires the combined effort of all relevant actors and is highly interlinked with agriculture, industry, environmental protection, and import and export trade policies, he emphasized.

Ethiopia, India agree to consolidate...

The Joint Trade Committee agreed to cooperate in standardization and quality assurance, financial, pharmaceutical, automobile, renewable energy, agriculture and food processing sectors, it added.

The statement showed that both sides have agreed to expeditiously address all issues impeding bilateral trade and facilitate trade promotion between the two countries.

During the meeting, the Indian side invited Ethiopian counterparts to collaborate on the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) of India with Ethswitch of Ethiopia, it was learnt.

It also suggested that Ethiopia can explore the possibility of settlement of trade transactions in local currency which will help boost bilateral trade and conserve foreign exchange.

The deliberations of the 6th Sessions of India-Ethiopia JTC were cordial and forward-looking, reflecting the traditionally friendly and special relations between the two countries,

according to the statement.

Both sides undertook a detailed review of recent developments in bilateral trade and investment ties and noted that the relationship has a huge potential to be scaled up even further, it indicated.

To this effect, both sides identified several areas of focus for enhancing both bilateral trade as well as mutually beneficial investments, the statement mentioned.

India is the second largest trading partner for Ethiopia in which trade exchange between the two stood at 2.8 billion USD in 2022, out of which Ethiopia's exports were about 80 million USD. Exports from India mainly include primary and semi-finished iron and steel products, drugs and pharmaceuticals, machinery and instruments, manufactures of metal, etc, it was mentioned.

On the other hand, the statement elaborated that the major imports by India from Ethiopia

are pulses, precious and semi-precious stones, vegetables and seeds, leather and spices.

India is the second largest foreign investor in Ethiopia where about 650 Indian companies are licensed for five billion USD worth investments of which about USD three to four billion is estimated to be on the ground, it noted.

The Ethiopian Herald has learnt from the statement that Indian investors are the second-largest foreign employers in Ethiopia, providing employment to over 75,000 persons.

Indian companies have invested in various sectors like agriculture and floriculture, engineering, plastics, manufacturing, cotton and textiles, water management, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, it mentioned.

Moreover, the Indian delegation has visited Indian textile factories at Bole Lemmi Industrial and Cadila Pharmaceuticals located in Gelan, it has indicated.

Addis gears up for..

of the city. We are trying to understand energy use study as well as availability of technologies to improve energy efficiency to reduce air pollution and health impact and required policy recommendations," the Advisor expressed.

Currently, the study that has been conducted to investigate energy usage is being finalized, he said adding the draft of outline code would be also completed in the coming four months.

"We hope that the draft code would be approved by pertinent bodies passing legal process and procedures, the requirement for directive. Then it would be implemented step by step through awareness or enforcement," Tibebu noted.

Over 11 Ethiopians cities under C40 cities have been benefited to moderate air pollution and reduce health impact by monitoring air quality, he mentioned.

He also stated that Addis Ababa is one of

the five beneficiaries that have been getting energy with technical assistance from African Cities Clean Air Initiative under C40 cities. The support is focused on energy usage specifically Charcoal, biomass and fire wood.

Ethiopia signed air quality commitment agreement to bring energy usage to national standard in 2050. The finding revealed that the volume of Addis Ababa city air pollution surpassed the national and global standard, he indicated.

Ethiopia...

expansion will continue to more regional states in a bid to ensure access to essential services.

The director indicated technological advancements have also revolutionized the industry, particularly in combating illegal coffee trade practices. Accordingly, the government has implemented enhanced software and network systems to track coffee from source to its destination, ensure strict control, and prevent illegal practices.

"This comprehensive approach has significantly curbed illicit smuggling of

coffee. Also, government institutions, universities, states, and non-governmental organizations have been partnered to support farmers in adopting modern coffee production practices and fostering sustainable growth."

Sahlemariam further noted that establishing closer collaboration with research centers and academic institutions is crucial to guarantee the highest quality coffee production. Joint efforts are also underway to enhance coffee quality, to provide improved coffee varieties to farmers and address marketing challenges.

As the manifestation of the above, Dilla University has prepared an online education program to equip industry participants with essential knowledge on foreign marketing, coffee quality, and related topics.

The coffee industry's remarkable progress is a testament to Ethiopia's dedication to excellence, innovation, and environmental stewardship. Through training, technology, and conservation initiatives, the country is poised to become a global leader in the coffee market, setting a shining example for the rest of the world, he remarked.

Opinion

Strengthening Ethio-Djibouti relation to augment mutual benefit

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIROGIS

Djibouti port is one of the sea outlets of Ethiopia located in the suburb of Bab-el-Mandeb in the south shore of Red Sea. It is bordered by Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. Historically, it was part of the Ethiopian territory but after the agreement emperor Menelik made with France in 1884, the port had been given to France by concession to be administered for 99 years lease. However, it obtained its independence from France in 1977 before the end of the lease period.

The coastline is deeply indented by the Gulf of Tadjoura. Djibouti is one of the hottest places on Earth, with an average annual temperature of nearly 32° C (90° F). The average annual rainfall is less than 125 mm (5 inch), and vegetation is sparse.

The population is roughly divided between two groups: the Afars of the north and the Somali-speaking Issas of the south. Both are Muslims, and both were traditionally pastoral nomads. The Afars, who lean politically toward Ethiopia, and the Issas, with traditional affinity to Somalia, have often fought fiercely. Djibouti has suffered economically from an influx of refugees from neighboring countries. The country also has an Arab trading community and a substantial French-speaking community.

Both Ethiopia and Djibouti have historical, religious, ethnic and cultural attachments. Both Somali and Afar speaking populations have their cousins here in Ethiopia. Ethiopian communities reside in Djibouti and the Djiboutian community also resides in Ethiopia.

As Djibouti is arid, the country's basic agricultural commodities are imported from Ethiopia. Construction of the first rail way transport which connected Addis Ababa with the port city of Djibouti conducted by a French company had begun operation in 1917.

The functionality of the rail way and development of port of Djibouti gave way for the establishment of towns and the flourishing of urbanization which are along the rail way such as Bishoftu, Modjo, Adama, wolenchiti, Metehara, Awash, Yerer, Dire Dawa and Galafi. Side by side with these, the expansion of industries attracted foreign investment for boosting commercial farms which supply their products to agro-industries of sugar factories planted in the middle and upper Awash Valley.

The flourishing of urbanization also helped for the emerging of towns which accommodate the heterogeneous communities. None farming service sectors such as hotels, garages, recreational places, educational institutions, and health centers

had flourished. Rural to urban migration has become a common phenomenon in these towns.

Port of Djibouti also served as a marine transport way out for Ethiopia after Eritrea was occupied by Italy in 1891. The first Ethiopian delegation during emperor Menelik, led by Ras Mekonen left Ethiopia to Europe through the port of Djibouti and returned in the same route.

When Emperor Hailaslassie was visiting countries such as Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Belgium in 1924, he used the sea route from Djibouti to Europe via Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea. Until air transportation was introduced, several Ethiopian delegates used to travel to Europe and Asia through port of Djibouti.

While Djibouti was under the French colonial rule, Ethiopia had established good political and economic relation with France. In the 1920s while modern Education was expanding before the aggression of Italian fascists against Ethiopia, French language was thought in the Ethiopian schools as a compulsory subject. The curriculum also was adopted from the French curriculum. The French community had resided here. Many buildings designed and constructed by French architects still exist in Addis Ababa. When the fascists occupied Ethiopia in 1936, Emperor Hailaslassie went exile in Europe and traveled through the port of Djibouti. During the fascists invasion Ethiopia had been denied access to sea through Djibouti and this made the struggle for liberation harder.

Italian Fascists, during the occupation years, used the rail transport for importing ammunition and weapons and dispatching soldier to the war front to crush the patriots. Since then, Ethiopia drew lesson how being landlocked affects a sovereign State in terms of protecting its own security and maintaining trade relations with the foreign world.

Right after the defeat of fascists and the restoration of the imperial rule, Ethiopia energetically exerted its effort to obtain access to sea outlet. The indefatigable diplomat, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Aklilu Habtewold enabled to win and realized the nation's aspiration to access to the sea through federating Eritrea with Ethiopia after fierce battle in the United Nations platform.

In the late 1940s, officials who assumed the ministerial position in the Government of Ethiopia such as Yilma Deressa and Aklilu Habtewold had been educated and graduated from Sorbonne University of Paris. The trade relation between the two countries was booming and while Ethiopia exported agricultural products to France, it also used to import capital goods from there.

Currently, the electrified standard gauge railway and road transportations are stretched between the two countries, Ethiopia and Djibouti, serving in conducting import and export trade of the former in an increasing rate.

After the independence of Eritrea in 1991, Ethiopia became a land locked country again and since then, it has been heavily dependent on the port of Djibouti for its import and export trade. Therefore, strengthening the two sisterly countries' relation in terms of economic, political, social and security issues has become essential.

Recently, Ethiopian Ambassador to Djibouti, Berhanu Tsagaye affirmed that the long-standing diplomatic relations between the two countries has strongly continued in all spheres.

Ambassador Berhanu characterized the Ethio-Djibouti ties as an inseparable, mutual friendship that has endured for years. He said that the two countries have been working in partnership and based on mutual benefits in the areas of water, roads, railways, electric power, ports and other vital development sectors. The countries are enjoying encouraging cooperation in the areas of political, economic, trade and infrastructure based on mutual trust, the ambassador indicated.

He further said that the people of Ethiopia and Djibouti are strongly interlinked with culture, language and other social bondages.

Regarding infrastructure development, the Ambassador noted that collaborative efforts are underway to improve road conditions from Djibouti to Ethiopia. Both countries are also working to address complaints about Djibouti's customs services and expedite imports at Djibouti's port. It is proved that Ethiopia has become the largest economy in the Horn of Africa and it is registering rapid growth sustainably.

The country is also the second most populous country in Africa next to Nigeria with more than 120 million. The number of population is one of the indicators of economic potential of the given country. If it is well educated and trained it could be more productive and at the same time, will be high consumer and such a situation attracts foreign investors.

The location of Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa where flanked by Red Sea, Bab-el-Mandeb and Indian Ocean brought additional opportunity to the country. The presence of Super power countries in Djibouti is increasing and are eyeing on Ethiopia because they know that the country has great potential for the economic growth due to the availability of natural resource such as surface and underground water, mines, arable land with the combining of

technology, capital and labor can triple the nation's economic growth.

The construction of the Abbay Dam which is eyeing its completion soon further attracts foreign investors to invest their money on various economic sectors. It also enhances our country's bargaining capacity in the global affairs. Currently, the manufacturing and the service sectors are flourishing in various parts of the country. They employ thousands of people, utilize local raw materials and enhance creativity. The construction sector is also booming and creates job opportunity to thousands.

It is also understood that the manufacturing and the construction sectors utilize inputs from abroad and when they are expanded, it is apparent that import and export volume is increased which in turn necessitates the utilization of ports.

Economic growth induces boosting trade which needs the utilization of various ports elsewhere in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia, in addition to using the port of Djibouti for its import export trade, it also supplies basic commodities such as food items and potable water to that country. It is also supplying electric power to Djibouti which implies that how the two countries are intertwined.

Ambassador Berhanu highlighted the joint initiatives like transporting fertilizer at a rate of 5-6 tons per day. Djibouti has implemented Green Legacy Initiative by importing seedlings from Ethiopia. The ambassador reaffirmed the commitment of the countries to supporting each other and overcoming challenges together.

As agriculture is the main stay of the nation's economy which holds more than 80% of the labor force, it supplies food to the market and is the major earner of foreign currency. Hence, raising its productivity is not questionable. Among the mechanisms enable to raise productivity is utilizing inputs such as fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides which are imported from abroad.

According to sources from the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, when the port of Djibouti is busy, unloading imported goods faces challenges and it might be forced to wait for days long until the port is free from congestion and such a situation poses a delay in the transportation of fertilizer to the central part of Ethiopia and creates inconvenience to agricultural activities. Hence, in addition to utilizing the neighboring countries' ports, owning its own sea corridor through diplomatic means is very essential for Ethiopia to accommodate the growing trade volume of imports and exports.

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

Editorial

Unbreakable bond, unshakable resolve!

Situated in the strategic yet volatile region of the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia and Djibouti have enjoyed strong Comradery and friendship tied by unbreakable people-to-people bonds. The amicable relationship lasted decades and could be serving as the hallmark of win-win cooperation accompanied by mutual respect.

Against all the odds in the region, the two countries have continued enjoying a warm and rosier period of economic cooperation. The partnership is one of the best examples of regional cooperation and can set a worth-sharing model for Africa and beyond.

The long-standing diplomatic relations that harken back to 1984 continue to gain momentum over the years and in all spheres. With Ethiopia largely dependent on Djibouti port for its import and export of goods, the latter imports fresh fruits and water from the former.

Also connected by power grids, both nations have been going through a rosier period of cooperation even during regional complications. It is also no exaggeration that the relationship is seen as one of the most stable and smooth ties contributing immensely to the peace and security of the conflict-stricken area. Both nations have chosen to swim together expanding their bilateral cooperation in various areas. The inseparable bond has endured through the ages and remained the same under all leaderships.

Attached by geography, glued by similar culture, ethnicity, and languages, Ethiopian and Djibouti peoples have various things in common and share the same destiny. Over the years, the partnership in infrastructural connectivity gained a boost. The cooperation bolsters socio-economic development in both countries. As much as the opportunities, both nations face common threats. The increased militarization, piracy, terrorism, and unlawful human and arms trafficking are among the few to mention. In this regard, the two nations have inked various agreements and have been collaborating to overcome the challenges. Their resolve was very much demonstrated in the fight against the terrorist Al-Shibab group. The unshakable stand of the leaders of both countries has also been instrumental in sustaining the amicable tie.

Ethiopian Ambassador to Djibouti Birhanu Tsagaye affirmed that the long-standing diplomatic relations between the two countries continue to strengthen in all spheres.

The two countries have been working in partnership and based on mutual benefits in the areas of water, roads, railways, electric power, ports, and other vital development sectors. The countries are enjoying encouraging cooperation in the areas of political, economic, trade, and infrastructure based on mutual trust, the ambassador stated, adding that the nations' dedication to helping one another and conquering obstacles in tandem.

Unfortunately and ashamedly, some naysayers and merchants of conflicts have tried to take the Prime Minister's speech regarding the Red Sea out of context. These elements have been spewing false information claiming that Ethiopia poses a threat to neighboring countries in relation to its interests in the Red Sea. This baseless claim and smear campaign cannot spoil the longstanding tie.

It is to be recalled that Ethiopia has made clear that it has no intention of deploying force to ensure its interest in the Red Sea. And, the country's proposal only plays into a give-and-take approach. It is Ethiopia's conviction that using the Red Sea in a win-win approach will benefit the wider region and pave the way for collective growth. In this regard, it must be noted that neither silly propaganda nor evil actions will damage the ever-expanding relations. However, the neighboring nations need to continue staying on the same page to counter real and perceived threats that would go against their interests.

Opinion

Inclusive, principled national dialogue for lasting peace

BY MENGESHA AMARE

If one is asked about what can bring both pro-change forces and anti-change actors in a given nation together, so long as they are working for the good of the same nation and get them to agree, they can say it is a national dialogue—a viable negotiation format.

Yes, national dialogue is of paramount importance in redefining the future of the state, and the process has had a higher likelihood of success if it incorporates inclusion, transparency, and public participation, a far-reaching agenda, appropriate and clear rules of procedure, and an implementation plan, although there is no one-size-fits-all idyllic.

Needless to say, and as the experiences of other countries would have it, national dialogue is an increasingly popular tool for conflict resolution and radical transformation. It can broaden debate regarding Ethiopia's trajectory beyond the usual elite decision-makers.

Yes, widely publicized national dialogue experiences in Tunisia and Yemen, for instance, have been tools for breaking political stalemates and transforming complex conflicts into pacific setups. These processes, initiated through political pacts, civil society activism, internationally-brokered peace agreements, or other mechanisms, target addressing a wide array of issues. As the concept of an inclusive and holistic national conversation has gained popularity, the concept of national dialogue has been used to describe an increasingly heterogeneous set of processes. What is happening these days in Ethiopia is a case in point in this regard.

A national dialogue should incorporate vital principles in order to meaningfully contribute to political transformation and peace. In the first place, inclusion needs to be cited. An effective national dialogue convenes a broad set of stakeholders for a deliberative process.

In simple terms, all key interest groups should be invited to participate, including women, youth, and other traditionally excluded groups. Before the process begins, an inclusive, transparent, and consultative preparatory phase sets the foundation for a genuine national dialogue.

Undoubtedly, a more representative conversation may have contributed to opening the political space for future participation by women, civil society, and youth. Next, transparency and public participation are also of paramount importance in bringing about lasting peace.

This means that a national dialogue should also have mechanisms to include the broader population. This broad participation can be achieved by linking local dialogue processes to the national dialogue, as well as through public consultations, regular outreach, and coverage in the media.

A credible convener is also badly required. To secure the participation of a wide variety of

stakeholder groups and to avoid perceptions of bias, a credible convener is of the utmost importance.

A national dialogue seeks to reach agreement on key issues facing a country. This could be done with a clear mandate and appropriately tailored structure, rules, and procedures, and the national dialogue commission is working hard to ensure peace and stability in the country.

Unequivocally, national dialogue takes place within a broader transition; it often has formal or informal relationships to transitional justice, constitution-making, and lasting peace.

National dialogue deserves all citizens' attention as a tool with the potential to facilitate peaceful political transformation, not a magic bullet. Even in the most successful instances, national dialogue is one of the viable steps along the long and arduous path of building a peaceful society across the nation.

The country has to have determined and courageous runners, as without a strong, respected national facilitator and a sufficient coalition of the concerned, a national dialogue is unlikely to produce any meaningful change.

Even senior government officials should bear the primary responsibility for envisioning, organizing, facilitating, and financing the national dialogue.

On the diplomatic side too, countries that would love Ethiopia's stability can help negotiate the initial agreement that establishes a national dialogue and make public statements encouraging an inclusive and participatory process.

As recurrently heralded, national dialogue is an instrument to resolve political crises and pave the way for political transitions and sustainable peace. In short, a national dialogue has reduced violence by transferring grievances voiced from the street into formalized processes and lawful appeals. It provides an inclusive, broad, and participatory official negotiation format, which can resolve political crunches and lead the country into political transitions.

Absolutely, a national dialogue is typically expected to involve principal national elites, including the government, armed or unarmed opposition parties, and occasionally the military. Other groups that participate, including those representing wider constituencies such as civil society, women, youth, business, and religious or traditional actors, can be incorporated accordingly.

A principled national dialogue could restore a measure of stability, allowing for longer-term efforts to address ethnic polarization and intercommon intolerance to commence. The national dialogue must encompass a broad range of stakeholders in the preparation, process, and implementation phases. Ending the war and building peace need to be on the priority agenda of the government and the political elites, indisputable!

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



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Business & Economy

A new effort to expand investors' participation beyond agriculture

BY BACHA ZEWDIE

Following Ethiopia's attention to the investment sector, the government has been constantly creating favorable conditions for the private sector to engage in the investment sector. It has worked by showing the potential of the country to those who want to engage in the investment sector, enacting laws that will increase the sector's performance and so on.

It has gone through resolving the obstacles in the investment sector, which have hampered the sector's progress as desired. Among the efforts it has made to solve the bottlenecks is solving the problem related to land supply and infrastructure in the sector. For this, it has built huge industrial parks in selected areas across the country. The construction of the parks has made a significant contribution, especially by attracting foreign direct investment. Until now, 13 industrial parks have been built and put into operation.

This has created a situation where the investors can bring their products and plant sheds in the industrial parks without facing the problems of land, infrastructure and service sectors and move directly to production and export. This favorable situation has made it possible to attract investors from internationally known industries.

The investors were able to create job opportunities for many citizens. The country is also earning foreign exchange while offering products to the foreign market. Local investors have also started working in the industrial parks.

The investment activity is underway widely in the regions as well. Extensive works are being done in the field of investment in various cities of the regions. Investors are engaged in agriculture, manufacturing and other sectors, and they are producing for the foreign market on a large scale. This participation has been strengthened from time to time.

One of the regions where this investment activity is prominent is the Southwest Ethiopian People's Region. Although the region has recently been established, extensive works are being done in the sector.

Data indicates that the region has many resources that can be used for the investment sector. According to the studies conducted to identify the region's resources, it has vast and fertile land for annual crops, coffee and spices and horticulture. It can be an investment destination and option in service and industry sectors as well.

According to the data of the Minerals and Energy Development Agency of the region, it is rich in various minerals including



Ethiopia's coal production to hold cost saving on foreign currency – photo google

gold. In addition to gold ore, coal used for industrial input is widely available in Dauro and Konta areas, and there is a situation where the mine is developing.

In the region, 15 small-scale producers and three high-level producers, a total of 18 producers have taken license and started 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. In terms of income, it was planned to earn 30 million Birr and 29.3 million Birr was achieved.

Iron ore for industries is another resource available in the region. At present, it has become one of the areas of the country that supply a large amount of minerals to the central market. There are many unexplored resources in the region. Opal and other minerals are also believed to be found in the region.

Many investors have shown interest in engaging in various investment sectors in the Southwest Ethiopian People's Region. Although the region has a short life, there has been extensive research and discussion that shows the current situation of the investment. In order to encourage investors to enter the region and engage in investment activities, a campaign and promotion work involving the head of government and cabinet members of the region have been carried out on a large scale.

Since the establishment of the region, the investment promotion activities have contributed to increase the flow of investment in the region. There are 380 investment projects in the region that are at different levels of work and have created employment opportunities for 112,983 citizens (7,983 permanent and 105,000 temporary).

According to data from the Trade and Investment Bureau of the Region, it recorded encouraging investment performance in the 2022/23 fiscal year and is working to

increase this performance in the 2023/24 fiscal year. In the past fiscal year, investment licenses were granted to 141 investors who registered a capital of more than 2.2 billion Birr. Among the projects that received investment licenses, 48 in agriculture, 50 in manufacturing and six in the service sector have been put into operation.

Kebede Tesfaye, Deputy Head of the Regional Trade and Investment Bureau and Head of the Investment Sector, said that the South West Ethiopian People's Region has made plans and preparations to sustain the successes achieved in the past fiscal year.

According to him, in the fiscal year, 84 projects in agriculture, 64 in services and 58 in industry, total of 206, are planned to be put into operation. It is expected that these projects will generate capital of more than 11.1 billion Birr and create job opportunities for more than 109,000 citizens.

He mentioned that many investors in the region are engaged in the agricultural sector, and added that it is one of the plans for the current fiscal year to engage many investors in the manufacturing and service sectors in addition to the agricultural sector.

According to Kebede, since the beginning of the current fiscal year, following the reduction of the heavy rainfall in the region, land auditing is being done with great attention along with the preparation for investment activities. In the last fiscal year, 6,628 hectares of land was transferred to the land bank through the land auditing work.

"If such measures are not taken, investment projects may not be completed within the target time frame. The Investment Decree (1180/2010) clearly sets out the conditions under which lands given to investors can be expropriated. Investors' work activities will be evaluated according to these requirements and if the conditions are not met, the land will be confiscated," he said. Apart from this, investment licenses are being issued for new investment projects. License has

been granted for five industrial sector projects, and 28 agricultural sector projects have undergone necessary verification and evaluation.

He mentioned that it is planned to study 12,650 hectares of land in the current fiscal year in terms of studying potential land for investment, and stated that the Ministry of Agriculture will provide the necessary support for the study based on the request for support and project plan from the region.

In terms of infrastructure development, Kebede stated that there are no favorable conditions for building new roads, but for maintaining the existing ones and finishing the ones that have been started. According to him, the main problem that can hinder investment activity in the region is lack of budget. The budget allocated to the zones of the region is that they used to have when they were under the jurisdiction of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region. The current situation of the country does not allow more budget.

"In terms of investment activities, the question of 'what is the service provided to the community when an investor comes to an area?'" Kebede said this is part of the region's investment sector issues.

"Investors should create job opportunities when they are engaged in the field of investment. They are expected to make technology transfer a reality," he said. If they don't contribute to technology transfer, society's life cannot change and improve and this makes investment activities less profitable.

Therefore, efforts will be made to get investors to pay attention to technology transfer, and according to this, 7,949 farmers are planned to benefit from technology transfer in the fiscal year. On the other hand, although it is not denied that investors who are engaged in investment activities dream of working and using them (to make a profit), they provide various kinds of support to the society as much as they can, Kebede said.

As to him, more than 88 kilometers of access roads were built with the cooperation of investors and the community last year. It is expected that 96 kilometers of road will be built in this fiscal year.

"We have learned from past events that if the investor is not on the side of the society and vice versa, things cannot go smoothly. When investors support the society, the society protects and takes care of the investors' property. Investors who do not get the support of the society will suffer a lot of damages and losses. With this in mind, the region is working closely with investors and explained the great significance of cooperation between society and investors," he underlined.

Art & Culture

The three divine forces on the path of destination: A beautiful journey



Part Two: The second divine power - Hard work

BY BITANIYA TADELE

In our quest for success, we encounter the second divine power on our path: hard work. It is the embodiment of great effort, perseverance, and diligence. Hard work implies a narrow and winding road, but one that leads us to greatness. In fact, if hard work had a vein, patience and perseverance would flow like blood. Along this arduous journey, diligence becomes our guiding light, accompanied by patience and unwavering determination.

As the famous quote by Pele suggests, "Success is not accidental; it is hard work, persistence, learning, studying, sacrifice, and, most of all, loving what you are doing or learning." These profound words perfectly express a common sincere belief in the value of hard work. Talent

alone is not enough; it needs the support of diligent and dedicated effort. As basketball coach Tim Notke wisely said, "Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard."

The world reveres Margaret Hilda Thatcher as the Iron Lady, the exemplary leader who served as the Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1979 to 1990. Thatcher's deep economic and political knowledge left an indelible mark on the global stage. She famously stated, "I don't know anyone who's ever climbed to the top without working hard. That's the recipe. It doesn't always get you to the top, but it gets you pretty damn close." These words are not merely motivational rhetoric; they are a verified truth. The great and accomplished individuals of the past and present testify that hard work is the key to reaching the pinnacle of success.

Moreover, religion itself extols the virtues of hard work. The scriptures speak of the satisfaction derived from diligent efforts: "You'll really enjoy what you've worked hard for—you'll be happy" (Psalm 128:2). Colossians 3:23-24

(NIV) emphasizes working with all one's heart, considering it as service to the Lord. And as Surat al-Najm 53:39 proclaims, "If man does not work, he will gain nothing."

However, laziness, impatience, and despondency are subtle afflictions that undermine the essence of hard work. Yet, with the power of perseverance that exceeds even the force of gravity, healing can be found. Otherwise, mere recommendations would not suffice to achieve success in climbing life's tower. Thus, I conclude my thoughts on hard work by affirming that "Nothing is as satisfying to the soul as success achieved through hard work and dedication."

Third divine power, Faith: The golden anchor for success

Faith is not merely described by the strong word "divine power"; it represents an almighty force. It is like a sharp pair of scissors, cutting through the ties that bind us at the entrance to our destination. The great individuals who have em-

barked on extraordinary adventures emphasize that they tattooed the almighty power of faith to their starting line, preceding hope and effort.

Within the Christian religion, believers in Jesus Christ are rewarded with the forgiveness of sins and eternal righteousness solely because they have faith in the redemptive power found in His death. I affirm that hope without faith is like a boring and meaningless stage play. Similarly, hard work without faith is a battle fought without a strategy, doomed to never achieve true victory. A powerful faith becomes our golden anchor, providing solace on the shores of success. With the oars of hope and hard work, which are stronger than iron, we navigate the tumultuous ocean of life, facing its great waves and storms. Together, with an unwavering belief, we can achieve greatness.

To all those engaged in the fight for success, gazing at the radiant light of hope, believe that you are winners and destined for success. I stand united with all those who share this belief.

The winner of International Emmy Award

BY MEKLIT WONDEWOSSEN

(Continued from Nov 9)

He has participated in seven short films and music videos as a director and an actor. Habtamu recently participated in an international competition. The competition (International Emmy Award) is a short film competition that involves young filmmakers from around the world by choosing one title every year. In this year's competition titled "Let's Stand for Peace", Habtamu took part in the competition with the idea of "Let's stop war and stand for peace". The children were the focus of the film Habtamu, and when a teacher entered the classroom to do a roll call, there was not a single student in the class. And the film shows the horrors of war by saying that children are the first victims of war.

After two rounds of internal review by judges, the competition was announced for public voting. Habtamu wrote, "Vote me using various social networks to win the film in which he participated in directing and editing." He received a message from the company that he was chosen among 25 films in the public election, that he was the winner in the next judging process, and the first from Ethiopia and East Africa.

One of the requirements of the competition was that the film should be one minute long. But conveying an idea in one minute was not easy. Therefore, Habtamu says that his favorite movie is because the idea is close to people's



feelings, and he was able to win by capturing people's attention. In the competition, more than five thousand participants submitted films that were said to be better in terms of budget and technical ability. The company also organizes other competitions in two other fields.

His film making inspiration comes from childhood. Now he is 27 years old, and his biggest dream is to study at a film school to become a professor. In the future, when talking about movies in Ethiopia and Africa, the name of Habtamu Mekonen will be remembered. He wants to make films that are popular among the public, show them at international festivals, and make them win. He wants to tell the story of Karamara's victory in the form of a film based on the stories that happened in our country. Filming the biographies of great people, which is rare in our country, and turning books into movies are included in the plans. In this, however, he did not forget to return to his teaching profession.

Habtamu's dream is to bring Ethiopia's film industry to a higher level. The movement started when he was a student, and it is to make Ethiopia have its own art council (Ethiopian Art Council). The council will help Ethiopians to have collaborations and relationships with international film organizations and to transfer film knowledge. The independent establishment of the Film Classification Board is included in the plan. The group evaluates any films made in Ethiopia to follow the culture and ethics of our country and controls the films made in other countries so that they do not go against the culture. It controls the age range of movies before they are made and released.

Habtamu credits his mother, sister, and brothers, who have played a major role in his plans and achievements, for the stage he has reached in his life. He thanked the actors who helped him with their sincerity and friendship in his winning film work, cinematographer Enoch Teshom, and his Ugandan, Kenyan, and Tanzanian friends who helped him, as well as the Ethiopians who chose him as the winner.

I owe you gratitude

BY ALEM HAILU G/KRISTOS

An ox's appetite whetted
By a lush grass green
On a cliff top,
—oblivious the game is not
worth the candle—
Thumbing down from
A precipice it couldn't
Itself stop.
God, my fortitude
I owe you
A huge gratitude
For sparing me
From ailment
Or trauma or trouble
By the hustle
And bustle of life
My eyes veiled
About which
I've no inkling
Nor concern to discern
As to what lurks
Around the corner.

Science & Technology

Technology for Ethiopia: The political leadership's role in technology empowerment

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

“Whether you like it or not, technology, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI) is affecting every sector you are leading. If the political leadership remains behind in technology, Ethiopia will remain behind. Without technologically conscious leadership, realizing the policies and strategies of government are impossible this time,” Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) said. PM underlined that technological products are becoming more sophisticated and they are affecting every sector across the world.

Hence, for him, development and security of countries is becoming dependent on technology. Understanding the new technological developments, he recommends leaders to consider the impact of technology in the sector they are leading.

The rapidly growing technological advancement needs transformative leadership, both in political and organizational leadership. The industry is growing unpredictable and to exploit its benefits and manage its impacts, conscious leadership is mandatory. Technology, especially AI, is changing everything as such there is a call for leaders to act beyond the traditional way of leadership.

Scholars in the leadership discipline indicated that leadership plays irreplaceable role in transforming organizations, socio-political economy and over all development of a country. Beukman, T. (2005) stated that leadership plays a vital role for any success in life of individuals as well as teams in organizations. Transformational leadership plays indispensable role in transforming the performance of organizations and in transforming overall development of a country.

Leadership can create a difference and bring a change or transformation in many ways. To achieve transformation, the leadership in the current world has to know and understand at least the trends of technology. Technology touches every sector and every business activities. Directly and indirectly, every sector and organization has linkages with technology and the latest technological developments are strongly connected with the day-to-day activities of the people and organizations.

Considering the current trends of technology, leaders of organizations and political leaders from the kebele to the federal level are expected to develop the knowledge and impacts of technology in today's world. The leadership has to remain conscious in promoting technology, developing technological infrastructure, administering technology properly and



sensitizing the society about the importance and impacts of technology.

This time, government policies and strategies are dependent on the effective use of technology. The traditional role of technology is being phasing-out following the invention of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Understanding the technology, its benefits and threats should be part of the leadership's job at this time. Exploiting the technological blessings, managing its impacts, securing the infrastructure and providing services using the latest technologies are part of the leadership's role.

During a recent training for senior government leadership entitled “a transition from Debt to reward,” aiming at transforming the previous and current challenges in to a reward, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) told the political leadership to give due attention to technology. “Without technological know-how, you will never effectively lead the institutions and offices you are administering,” he stated.

“As we are striving to transform our economy to build prosperous country, it is impossible without applying the technologies of the time and implementing the technologies needs aware leadership,” Prime Minister Abiy stated calling the leadership to play the leading role in understanding, using and developing technological products. According to the Premier, technology is both a blessing and a threat for the existence and survival of human beings and countries. Especially the invention of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is totally transforming the impact of technology on human beings and activities of countries.

“Human beings were the dominant actors and their innovations were under their control, but now things are changing. AI has the power to compute and even control human beings,” PM Abiy stated adding “now, human beings are being impacted by their innovations.”

“The most important and dangerous innovations of humankind is artificial

intelligence,” Prime Minister Abiy underlined adding the actual power that AI has is beyond imagination. AI has the ability and capability of analyzing, understanding and solving problem like machine, which makes the machine to compute with human beings' mental caliber without fatigue.

In 2022, AI created over 3.1 trillion USD business value and by 2025 it is expected to create over five trillion business values, Abiy stated. “By 2030, AI is projected to create over 15 trillion USD business value. If the political leaders of countries do not give due attention for this technology, they remain out of this huge business that have a tremendous impact on countries' GDP. Political leaders should remain aware about the development and impacts of technology especially AI. From this perspective, everyone in the leadership has to remain active. As a leader, even with limited capacity and share, one has to participate in areas where indispensable resource is available.”

According to Prime Minister Abiy as the government is striving to accelerate the development of Ethiopia and to build a prosperous country, using the new technology in every sector plays a significant role in accelerating the efforts. “Using AI, sector transformation is becoming easy,” he pointed out. AI is crucial technology to transform the finance, health, education, agriculture, industry and in service delivery and “if we are committed to transform our sectors, we have to be conscious to apply the new technology,” he underlines. Technology makes easy enhancing service delivery for both private and public institutions and for proper allocation and management of resources.

“The leadership has to be mindful. You have to be ready to be a leader of the society in technology. You have to lead, educate and influence the society on the use and expansion of technology,” Prime Minister Abiy told his leadership. “By using technology and expanding it, we can transform the debt to reward (the loss to a



boon)”.

As to him, leaders have to understand the technological tools that can facilitate activities, increases knowledge, provide necessary information with accurate data and display decision making process. “If leaders understand the impact, they will act.”

“By the way AI is not a luxury for Ethiopia and other developing countries. Currently, as we remain behind in technology and our focus seems to be on fulfilling the daily food of our people, people are saying it is luxury. But in reality, AI is becoming a must to apply even to fulfill the basic needs of our people,” PM Abiy noted. For him, though it seems odd for the people, if the leadership remains conscious and apply the technology, users will follow the trend. “If we introduce technology, don't worry, there are users and the general mass will follow.”

“When we launched Mobile Banking, many people labeled it as luxury as they expected there was no user at that time. Imagine, today there are 36 million mobile banking subscribers and over 1.4 trillion birr is transacting through mobile banking,” PM Abiy stated. As to him, this shows that, if technology is introduced, the society will adapt it easily. The only necessary thing, as to him, is the leadership should remain active to introduce new methods and technologies.

According to Prime Minister Abiy, the next trends of AI are more complicated and sophisticated. Unless we remain friendly with the current AI developments, we totally remain behind in the future innovations of the technology which are already on the table to be applied. Humanoid robot, generative AI, quantum computing and deep fake are the next trends of AI technology which remains serious challenges for each sector.

“AI touches all sectors. Leaders lead people, AI influences people. Leader set plans, AI influenced the plan. Leaders collect and manage resources, AI influence resources. This implies that it is a must for leaders to become friendly with AI,” he stated. For the Premier, if the current leadership remains passive in introducing and properly applying the current technological advancements, it will have tremendous impact on the coming generation.

PM Abiy recommends building a National Public Virtual Digital Infrastructure to go parallel with technological advancements. To exploit the benefits and manage the impacts, PM Abiy advises the leadership to play a leading role in the technology sector.

Society

Volunteerism for nation building

BY STAFF REPORTER

Volunteerism has significant benefits in terms of improving social relationships, creating a sense of belongingness within communities, contributing to the development of society, and creating a real difference in the lives of people, further reinforcing national harmony and social cohesion, aside from its.

For the reason that volunteerism has vital roles in fostering societal and economic development, togetherness and encourages people to participate in their respective communities to bring considerable changes, it is instrumental for peaceful co-existence, advance sustainable peace and in nation building as well. Thus, countries promote and coordinate volunteer programs and services to address the social and economic challenges of the people, especially those in need of support, realize national priorities and achieve substantial outcomes.

In fact, volunteerism has long been an integral part of Ethiopian society; and the activities that they have been executing in their day to day activities. However, with the target to inculcate and promote the culture of volunteerism within the young generation, various activities have been carried out by the government.

As part of this effort, the government, to tap the growing youth population to foster a sense of national unity, integration, and build a cohesive society at peace with each other, has launched the National Volunteer Community Service Program under the leadership of the Ministry of Peace and partnership with other stakeholders.

The Program, as documents indicate, aims to promote a culture of public service, foster national integrity, enhance respect for diversity, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, contributing to sustainable peace and stability in the country.

Within this framework, thus, the Ministry of Peace in collaboration with higher education institutions has been providing short training courses to volunteer youths to develop their skills and enable them to provide services for the communities in various areas. Accordingly, in eight rounds, it was possible to graduate close to 50,000 volunteers and engage them in the social, economic and political areas.

Recently, the Ministry in collaboration with Jimma University graduated 1,690 volunteers who took training in the 8th round peace volunteers, the Ministry of Peace reported.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony held at Jimma University, Peace Minister Benalf Andualem, said that volunteering is an act of love that can increase the social and economic benefits of the people. Participating in the activity of nation building is a great opportunity. "Our country is our identity and a string that binds us together. When the country is at peace, we can do whatever we want to do. However, without a country, there is nothing. Thus, to prosper our country, we need to have integrity and honesty," he added.



The 8th round peace volunteers graduation at Jimma University



Peace volunteers graduation ceremony at Wachemo University

According to him, the case that builds or destroys a country is rhetoric. In this regard this generation should work on investigating the distorted divisive narratives, correct flawed stories and focus on accounts that can reinforce our togetherness and unity. The Minister also urged the graduates to act committedly make an effort in this respect.

"This generation needs to practice a new political culture. Our political culture of dialogue should be developed. Hence, I would like to call on volunteer graduates of this round in all areas where you may go to spend your time and knowledge on the common issues that bind us together," he concluded.

Academic Affairs Vice President of Jimma University Tadesse Habtamu (PhD) on his part said a generation that does not believe in unity and righteousness will not bring change to the country. The University, by welcoming volunteers of all rounds and offering training organized by the Ministry of Peace under the theme "Goodness for Togetherness", has practically demonstrated its motto of "We are within the Community" and has testified its being an ambassador of peace.

Young volunteers, who have been in training in the 8th round of the National Voluntary Community Service Program,

have contributed more than half a million Birr and carried out various voluntary works concurrent to their training.

At the graduation ceremony held at Jimma University, officials from the Ministry of Peace, leadership of Jimma University, religious leaders, aba gadaas and other invited guests took part.

In the same development the 8th round National Voluntary Community Service trainees, who have been taking training that was organized by the Ministry of Peace in collaboration with Wachemo University for a month, have successfully completed their training.

In his message at the program, Peace Building and National Consensus Sector State Minister at the Ministry of Peace Taye Denda said that peace excels from all things and it is the foundation for the success of all things. Owing to this, the core mission of the Ministry of Peace is building peace.

When citizens reach consensus on basic national issues, they strengthen national unity and enhance the concept of solidarity and a patriotic sense, peace will be created. To this end, it is necessary to correct the distorted narratives of differences and conspiracies; and instill the concept of solidarity and togetherness.

Highlighting the importance of creating an opportunity for the young people to get to know their own people and culture by letting them visit other regions, the State Minister said that so far 45,000 youths have been deployed outside of their region so that they can understand the culture, identity and living conditions of their people.

"I urge graduates of this round to show your love for your country practically by spreading the messages of peace, becoming ambassadors of peace and leave your legacy in the effort exerted to ensure sustainable peace and national reconciliation by developing your creativity," he remarked.

Wachemo University President Office Head Democracy Petros also said that the University, for the 8th time; received and trained over 1,500 volunteers drawn from all over the country for a month.

As to him, voluntary service aside from its social values will lift up Ethiopianness and helps to further strengthen togetherness and unity among Ethiopians.

"Ethiopia will be a strong country only when its people stand in unison with a sense of togetherness. Thus, I request graduates to fulfill their responsibilities and citizenship duties that are given to you by your country committedly and with the spirit of patriotism," he urged.

South Africa turns to army in nationwide clampdown on illegal mining

As many as 3,300 army personnel will take part in an 'intensified' operation to curb illegal mining across South Africa.

South Africa's president has ordered thousands of military personnel to assist in a nationwide operation against illegal mining, an activity that is estimated to cost the country billions of dollars each year.

The president's spokesman Vincent Magwenya announced on Thursday that 3,300 army personnel would partner with police in "an intensified anti-criminality operation against illegal mining across all provinces".

The mission will run until April 2024 as part of President Cyril Ramaphosa's "Operation Prosper" to instil law and order, he added.

Ramaphosa previously deployed the army to the Western Cape province in 2019 to fight gang violence as part of the same operation.

South Africa mine: 'Still too dangerous' Illegal gold mining has been a continuing threat in South Africa for decades, with poverty, unemployment and crime driving the underground industry. The activity has hurt the country's investment pull and cut into mining companies' profits, mining industry representatives say.

Informal miners have been dubbed "zamazamas" – the Zulu term for people who try their luck – as they risk their lives in disused mines and rudimentary tunnels, scraped into the earth without safety measures.

A gas explosion in May killed approximately



31 miners working illegally in the city of Welkom, trapping their bodies underground. Recovery efforts were stymied by high levels of methane in the mine – and the threat of further explosions.

In July, 17 people including three children were killed in Angelo Tivani, a settlement of about 200 people just outside Johannesburg.

Estimates place the number of abandoned gold mines in the country at about 6,000, and environmentalists have warned that industrial mining has left a legacy of poverty and health

problems in nearby areas.

The informal mining that has cropped up in its place has also been blamed for a rise in gang violence and turf wars, as would-be miners jockey for the best dig sites. The Institute for Security Studies estimates that at least "30,000 illegal miners work in and around thousands of disused and active mines across South Africa".

The black market mining also poses a challenge to legally operating mines, costing them as much as 7 billion rand (\$376m)

annually, mining industry body Minerals Council South Africa says.

The activity also causes South Africa's economy to lose out on tens of billions of rand in export earnings, taxes and royalties, the council estimates.

South African police guard the entrance to an abandoned mine in Stormhill, west of Johannesburg, on August 10 [Shiraz Mohamed/AFP]

Source: Aljazeera



This is Ethiopia

More efforts to harness conference tourism potentials

BY TEWODROS KASSA

Ethiopia, being headquarter to numerous international and regional organizations has a potential to generate more income from conference tourism. Following this, the country has become more competitive in the sector through attracting numerous international tourists and hosting regional and international conferences.

So far, efforts are underway to stimulate and develop the country's conference tourism. In this respect, private actors in the hospitality industry are working closely with the government to render quality conference services in the country. Active Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) also said fundamental to lead the sector effectively.

Recently, the Ethiopian Tourism and Hotel Market Association stated that it is striving to encourage conference tourism to gain adequate benefit through exploiting potentials. The association highlighted the importance of outstanding touristic services towards gaining sustainable reputation through hosting conferences.

Association President Getahun Alemu told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that more activities are being undertaken to encourage conference tourism to gain adequate benefit from the field.

The Association together with the Ministry of Tourism has planned to generate over 500,000,000 USD by attracting 1,000,000 tourists this Ethiopian fiscal year. The association is working closely with other stakeholders such as the Ethiopian Airlines and hotels to maximize tourist inflow, Getahun said.

Ethiopia hosts a number of conference tourism such as International Governance Forum in the past year despite the dissemination of misinformation by some foreign media about the country's peace, he stated.

Conversely, he noted that the tourist inflow in the past year is appreciable and it has promoted the positive image of the nation.

"Currently, the Association is taking the transit passengers to the destinations in the city such as Unity, Friendship, and Entoto Parks to relish. These tourism projects are significantly helpful to motivate the tourism sector in the country. Besides, a common understanding has been reached with the Taxi Association to promote the tourism slogan of 'Land of Origins' and to transport those coming from abroad to attend African Union meetings whilst this service fee is covered by the association," he noted.

Getahun believed that tourists come to Ethiopia for three reasons such as to attend conferences, to visit historical places, and



safari destinations.

He further stated that the Ethiopian Tourism and Hotel Award (Nejash Award) will be held in Skylight Hotel on December 30 aiming at supporting the area that had been exposed to damage due to the conflict in the northern part of the country.

Some 200 potential tourists will observe the area to support renovation activities of the Al Nejashi Mosque, he added.

"Promoting tourism potentials at the international level even using the English Premier League -the way Rwanda did is significant for tourism development," he stated, mentioning how Rwanda attracted tourists by promoting the slogan "Visit Rwanda" on the sleeves of the players of Arsenal Football club.

Recently, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) confirmed that Ethiopia is one of the leading countries in the development of international tourism in 2023. The organization has published its quarterly report on the flow of international visitors and related information on the Tourism Barometer.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Tourism has been undertaking various measures to fulfill the luxurious touristic demands of the international tourists. These include improving the accommodation, transportation, tour operators, among others services. In doing so the ministry continuously is undertaking hotel ratings across the country so as to promote standardized services for tourists.

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 in the near future.

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.

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

The remaining hotels and institutions failed to get star ratings 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 years through applying 12 parameters. The new proclamation approved by the House of Peoples' Representatives stipulates the upgrading and downgrading the hotels' star rating based on specific criteria of their level of service delivery," he said.

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.

In sum, the availability of substantial conference facilities for the meetings industry, high quality accommodation services nearby the convention centers, building latest conference centers, availability of affordable cost of flights, sufficient information, internal peace, among others are the fundamental preconditions to make the country more preferable conference tourism destination and enable to host conference delegates successfully.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) report, Eastern Africa countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya are among the top preferable countries in becoming the leading choice of international and regional conference organizers in Africa.