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Currently, the Red Sea hosts eleven countries military bases

Why Red Sea no longer redline for once coastal nation?

BY EYUEL KIFLU

Ethiopia's growing quest to secure a fair share in the increasingly militarized and fiercely contested Red Sea offers regional cooperation does not ignite confrontation, experts in the issue said.

Their remarks came as the country continues to lay out its clear interests in the strategic

yet volatile region.

In the last few months, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) has been setting the tone for the national cause as he continues to press lawmakers and scholars to see the Red Sea as legitimate Ethiopia's cause.

In a stark departure from the last three decades where there was a de facto silence,

the issue of the Red Sea is now making headlines in the country, gaining traction among the Ethiopian public.

Also, the once-Red Sea coastal nation has seen sharp population growth, miraculous economic turnaround, and staggering import and export volumes that are all pushing the nation to zoom in

See Why Red Sea no...page 4



Solomon Kasa

Expert pins hope in Ethiopia's AI advancement

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA—The government has given due attention on the significance and utilization of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies for national development and the awareness of the leadership in this regard is

See Expert pins hope ... page 4

Commission takes bold steps to Diaspora's Nat'l Dialogue stake

• *Diasporas expresses commitment for nat'l cause*

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDISABABA-The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) said consolidated efforts are underway to enhance the involvement of the Diaspora community living home and abroad in the much-anticipated process.

The ENDC held a discussion forum with members of the Ethiopian Diaspora Association yesterday at the Millennium Hall. The discussion aims to seeks ways to foster the Diaspora community's active participation in the National Dialogue.

Speaking at the occasion, ENDC Chief Commissioner Prof. Mesfin Araya noted that the commission is making bold steps to involve Ethiopian nationals as well as members of the Diaspora communities in

See Commission takes ... page 4



Prof. Mesfin Araya

Tigray tourist attractions to resume operation

BY MENGESHA AMARE

ADDIS ABABA- The tourism destinations in Tigray state, which stopped functioning as a result of security problem for the past few

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Role of Industrial Parks for the economic structural transformation

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Leveraging church forest management experience to preserve indigenous trees in Ethiopia

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More awareness to curb illicit cultural properties trafficking!

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News



Organizations call for combined effort against deforestation

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- Organizations working on environmental conservation appealed to national and international institutions to take coordinated global intervention on the growing deforestation and to support the Ethiopian greening campaigns.

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, German national NGO, Brot Fur die Welt East African representative, Christoph Schneider said that the worsening climate change should be responded with international interventions, and his organization has engaged in actively supporting Ethiopian greening campaigns.

"We have seen four or five consecutive drought seasons only in the East Africa region. Floods, droughts and other climatic crises are killing thousands of people while the rest of people are seemingly running out of coping ability because they are losing resources," he said.

Some of the disasters happening this time are not natural phenomena. For example, deforestation is a result of the population growth and overutilization of resources as these factors are affecting sustainability of resources.

"We need to replant what we are deforesting. We were just discussing it at the table. Ethiopia could become a timber exporting country and could have a very vibrant timber industry if afforestation campaign continues boosting," he suggested.

He also mentioned that Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church forest conservation has been regarded as the best example. "The church forests are unique in this regard. Because of its religious nature, forests are preserved, people believe in conserving the trees and this effort in turn preserves the natural habitat of all those places. This should be replicated because it is something that together with dye a cake," he noted.

Speaking about his organization's contribution, he said that they do not implement projects by themselves. They are supporting forest conservation through partnership. So, one of such partners is EOTC, they are the ones who are intervening in forest conservation, he noted.

Another commentator, Ethiopian Forestry Development-EFD Policy and Socio-Economic Research Director, Alemayehu Negassa (PhD) also said that greenery campaigns should prioritize conserving indigenous plants.

In fact, greenery campaigns are gaining focus, but it needs more engagement and participation of the global and local partners. The government should also work on both planting and conservation, he commented.

Ethiopia, Norway inaugurate II phase of the REDD+

BY FIKADU BELAY

ADDIS ABABA - Ethiopia's dedication to sustainable forest management, biodiversity protection, and climate change mitigation has advanced significantly with the start of Phase II of the REDD+ Investment Program, Ethiopian Forestry Development (EFD) announced.

Ethiopia and Norway have joined forces in a major initiative to protect the environment and combat climate change. The launch of Phase II of the REDD+ Investment Program marks a significant milestone in their collaborative efforts on November 17. The program aims to address the country's climate vulnerability, Director General of EFD Kebede Yimam said.

Inspired by Ethiopia's Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy, the two countries have been collaborating on climate change and green growth initiatives since 2011. Beginning with the program's preparedness phase, Norway's unwavering financial support has been essential to the REDD+ Investment Program's successful execution, he said.

Kebede said that the Norwegian government had funded the first Red Plus program with over 55.2 million USD; he added the harm brought on by climate change has been minimized and even prevented due to these support funds. Among these, it has protected natural forests, afforestation, cut carbon emissions, and preserved water and



land resources, all of which have greatly increased agricultural output.

This makes it possible to develop, restore, and turn over one million hectares of land into forests. Various rural development projects that enhance community well-being have also been researched, he mentioned.

Kebede further stated that, in addition to giving residents job possibilities, the tourism sector is growing. The project of preserving the current forests and reforesting the cleared areas will be completed, he said, adding that the Norwegian government has contributed 25 million USD for support in the second phase of the REDD+ program.

According to Stian Christensen, the Royal Norwegian Embassy Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ethiopia's efforts to develop a green economy that is climate change-



resilient are supported.

He expressed Norway's support for Ethiopia's resilient green economy development. Over the years, Norway has contributed 130 million USD to Ethiopia's forestry development as part of their climate cooperation agreement established a decade ago.

Agriculture Minister Girma Amente (PhD) stated that Ethiopia has lots of potential to boost the forest sector's contribution to sustainable economic growth, with approximately 19 million hectares of forested area and plenty of land available for forest development. He also stated that the government has been working with both bilateral and international partners to improve the sustainable use of forest resources.

Scholars underscore chemical science importance for national dev't

• *Society commemorates 40th anniversary*

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA- Promoting and leveraging science-based chemical findings is central for promoting the economic sector and fostering national development, so remarked scholars.

Speaking at the occasion, the Ethiopian Academy of Science Executive Director, Teketel Yohannes (Prof.) said that as one of the leading professional and scientific societies in Ethiopia, CSE, has been working for the development and promotion of chemistry in education, industry, agriculture, manufacturing, environment among other sectors since its inception.

The society has thus risen to a position of eminence as a distinguished professional society achieving widespread recognition not only in the country but also across the African continent and globally, he noted.

He said, "The organization has conducted a number of activities benefiting its members and the public at large thereby bringing about national and international recognitions."

As to him, his organization has prepared a number of annual congresses, workshops and symposia with a view to promoting chemistry in education, industry,



Teketel Yohannes (prof.)

agriculture and research for the last four decades.

CSE Secretary Executive, Getachew Adam (Assoc. Prof.) on his part said that Chemistry would be of paramount importance in backing the development of various sectors such as health, agriculture, industrial among others.

"If the association is managed and promoted well, it surely substitutes importation of inputs apart from assessing import and export products," he added.

Emphasizing its multifaceted importance to the society and for national development, the secretary executive recommended stakeholders to utilize the knowledge transferred from Chemistry



Tegachew Adam (Ass. prof.)

and attach due emphasis too strengthening the society.

So far, the society has also been working for the development of chemical science and education in the country via enjoying relationships with universities and international sister societies.

The Addis Ababa Science and Technology University commemorated the 36th annual congress and 40th anniversary of Chemical Society of Ethiopia yesterday, which was organized under the theme "Chemistry for Sustainable Development."

CSE was established in 1983 with a view to developing chemical sciences in all sectors of the economy and fostering sustainable development, it was learnt.

Editorial

Giving credit where credit is due

Ethiopia has a rich array of standouts that makes it peculiar in more ways than one and allows it to command the attention of many to zero in on it.

Ethiopia, whose name bubbles up in Holy Books time and again, is famous known for being a cradle of mankind as archeology adduces the fact showcasing Lucy.

Moreover, it is a standard-bearer of ancient civilization as one never fails to be informed in the tidbits of history.

This ancient country is inhabited by citizens that boast about black heroism on grounds of their ability to chase out white predators—colonizers, fascist and others—as witnessed in the showdown of Adwa and gorilla fights in Italy's five-year period of occupation. As such, Ethiopia is taken a beckon of independence to freedom fighters. It as well is referred to a fortress society.

Ethiopia's resoluteness in its tooth and nail fight for freedom, God bestowed on mankind, is worth of a high-five. This lofty example the nation set for victims of injustice had rippled far and wide to awaken colored people in Caribbean islands to resort to arms to unshackle themselves from atavistic subjugation of those with a disposition of predators and vampires.

This trailblazer country had also played quite a role in actualizing the independence of other African countries by way of bolstering their fight to such ends. Here, it suffices to reflect on "who lent a military training to Mandela?" and "who helped out Zimbabwe in its heroic fight for freedom and independence."

Not only that but Ethiopia had also played an invaluable midwifery role to the establishment of Organization of African Unity (OAU) and later African Union (AU) taking in mind the organization's incalculable task of consolidating the political deliverance and socioeconomic take off of the continent. AU augurs well for a robust Africa capable to rub shoulders with affluent nations on the global arena.

Still, Ethiopia is a frontline actor in the maintenance of continental peace.

When it comes to collective global peace and development Ethiopia's name is itched with golden inks atop the list of countries that took the lead in the establishment of international organizations like League of Nations and United Nations (UN).

The country's role towards spearheading the sentiment of Pan Africanism is also palpable. It is to be recalled that a university that zooms in on research on Pan Africanism was established around Adwa.

It is the aforementioned virtues put together that win acknowledgements and appreciations to Ethiopia and makes it a sought-after country in many regards.

Furthermore, Ethiopia, a living billboard of unity in diversity, abounds in awe-inspiring tangible and intangible heritages that render the country tourist's hub.

Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ambassadors and the diaspora community have been handling the awareness deepening task pertaining to the aforementioned facts. A heartening diplomatic achievement is consummating the coordinated effort.

It is in cognizance of the cherished corner Ethiopia cuts in the hearts of black people, the Global Black Heritage History and Education Center (GBHHC) ventured to establish its headquarters in Addis Ababa as disclosed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Aside the diplomatic achievement GBHHC is believed to usher in perks to the country arising from socioeconomic activities. Specially the digital museum, in the pipeline and due to see completion in the not distant future, would play a key role in underpinning conference tourism as well as bolstering tourism flow to Ethiopia is a seat of numerous international organizations. Ethiopian another pride of black people is expanding its wings and fleets and taking its services to new heights warranting a safe shuttling to and out of Ethiopia.



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Opinion

COP28: Climate summit in closed civic space

The need to act on the climate crisis has never been clearer. In 2023, heat records have been shattered around the world. Seemingly every day brings news of extreme weather, imperiling lives. In July, UN Secretary-General António Guterres grimly announced that 'the era of global boiling has arrived'.

In short, there's a lot at stake as the world heads into its next climate summit.

But there's a big problem: COP28, the latest in the annual series of conferences of parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, will be held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This is a country with closed civic space, where dissent is criminalized and activists are routinely detained. It's also a fossil fuel power bent on continuing extraction.

At multilateral summits where climate change decisions are made, it's vital that civil society is able to mobilize to demand greater ambition, hold states and fossil fuel companies and financiers to account and ensure the views of people most affected by climate change are heard. But that can't happen in conditions of closed civic space.

Concerning signs

In September, the UAE was added to the CIVICUS Monitor Watchlist, which highlights countries experiencing significant declines in respect for civic freedoms. Civic space in the UAE has long been closed: no dissent against the government or advocacy for human rights is allowed, and those who try to speak out risk criminalization. In 2022, a Cybercrime Law introduced even stronger restrictions on online expression.

There's widespread torture in jails and detention centers and at least 58 prisoners of conscience have been held in prison despite having completed their sentences. Many of them were part of a group known as the UAE 94, jailed for the crime of calling for democracy. Among the ranks of those incarcerated is Ahmed Mansoor, sentenced to 10 years in jail in 2018 for his work documenting the human rights situation, and held in solitary confinement for over five years and counting.

Ahead of COP28, civil society has worked to highlight the absurdity of holding such a vital summit in closed civic space conditions. Domestic civil society is unable to influence COP28 and its preparatory process, and it's hard to see how civil society, both domestic and international, will be able to express itself freely during the summit.

Civil society is demanding that the UAE government demonstrate that it's prepared to respect human rights, including by releasing political prisoners – something it's so far failed to budge on.

An ominous sign came when the UAE hosted a climate and health summit in April. Participants were reportedly instructed not to criticize the government, corporations, individuals or Islam, and not to protest while in the UAE.

Civic space restrictions aren't the only indication the UAE isn't taking COP28 seriously. The president of the summit, Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, also happens to be head of the state's fossil fuel corporation ADNOC, the world's 11th-biggest oil and gas producer. It's like putting an arms manufacturer in charge of peace talks. Multiple other ADNOC staff members have roles in the summit. ADNOC is currently talking up its investments in renewable energies, all while planning one of the biggest expansions of oil and gas extraction of any fossil fuel corporation.

Instead of real action, all the signs are that the regime is instrumentalising its hosting of COP28 to try to launder its reputation, as indicated by its hiring of expensive international lobbying firms. An array of fake social media accounts were created to praise the UAE as host and defend it from criticism. A leaked list of key COP28 talking points prepared by the host made no mention of fossil fuels.

A summit that should be about tackling the climate crisis – and quickly – is instead being used to greenwash the image of the host government – something easiest achieved if civil society is kept at arm's length.

Fossil fuel lobby to the fore

With civil society excluded, the voices of those actively standing in the way of climate action will continue to dominate negotiations. That's what happened at COP27, also held in the closed civic space of Egypt, where 636 fossil fuel lobbyists took part – and left happy. Like every summit before it, its final statement made no commitment to reduce oil and gas use.

The only way to change this is to open the doors to civil society. Civil society has consistently sounded the alarm and raised public awareness of the need for climate action. It's the source of practical solutions to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts. It urges more ambitious commitments and more funding, including for the loss and damage caused by climate change. It defends communities against environmentally destructive impacts, resists extraction and promotes sustainability. It pressures states and the private sector to stop approving and financing further extraction and to transition more urgently to more renewable energies and more sustainable practices. These are the voices that must be heard if the cycle of runaway climate change is to be stopped.

COPs should be held in countries that offer an enabling civic space that allows strong domestic mobilisation, and summit hosts should be expected to abide by high standards when it comes to domestic and international access and participation. That should be part of the deal hosts make in return for the global prestige that comes with hosting high-level events. Civil society's exclusion mustn't be allowed to happen again.

(Source: Inter Press Service)

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

News

Tigray tourist...

years, are going to start operating and being open to tourists as of next week as part of national tourism development, so stated Tourism Minister.

Having a stay with local media, Tourism State minister, Sileshi Girma said that the tourist destinations in Tigray state were not open to visitors due to security concerns and hotels and service rendering institutions were at stake, too, but the destinations will go operational as of next week.

Mentioning that the maintenance of Axum

Obelisk has almost been undertaken and hotels as well as service providing institutions are getting ready, the service they will deliver should be with reasonable fare targeting at introducing the areas well.

He said, "Since a range of remarkable activities have been carried out for the last six months, tourist can visit the state and the community at the vicinity of the destinations has to be alert enough to contribute a lot to the effort geared towards having problem free area in collaboration with security bodies."

As to him, tourists can easily visit Axum using Shire Airport as of next week, and there is also ample opportunity to pay a trek from Mekele to Axum using vehicles.

According to Sileshi, as Tigray state is highly interconnected with Afar and Amhara states, a well-coordinated task will be done thereby safeguarding the safety of tourists, be they are local or international ones.

Since the livelihoods of the majority of the community residing in and around tourist destinations like in Debark, Axum

and Lalibela are highly dependent on tourism, citizens in these and other areas are expected to work hard with a view to ensuring lasting peace, of course together with other segments of the society.

He said, "Tourism and peace are two sides of a coin, and the country is seriously embarking on the sector to make a difference. Hence, everyone has to be well aware of the significance of the sector for national development and work hard to introduce Ethiopia to the rest of the world well."

Expert pins hope...

commendable, Technology Strategist stated.

Approached by *The Ethiopian Herald* Technology Strategist and 'Techtalk with Solomon' TV show Producer and Host Solomon Kassa said that the country is undertaking commendable activities to nurture the youth to utilize technologies and AI which is valuable input to the country's overall growth.

He believed that the country has given due attention to technological advancement as awareness has been created among the leadership about the significance of AI for national development.

"The understanding of the leadership about the importance of the AI is promising," he said, adding utilizing AI technology in a way that benefits the country is not an option, but it is mandatory.

For him, the training given to High School students in AI Summer Camp showcases the focus given by top leadership for the sector.

There is an exposure, interest and information overload from the young generation to grab the knowledge and join the sector, he stated.

To double or triple the number of trainees, it requires resource mobilization and it should be supported by all parties as AI amplifies human and institutions effectiveness, according to Solomon.

"I am optimistic about the young generations for their ability to transform countries' technology level and the overall development."

Applying AI technology in an appropriate

manner is a tool to bring fundamental changes in basic sectors such as health, agriculture, education, industry and others, he noted.

Solomon indicated that the level of human civilization would rely on AI in the near future so that it requires investing in youths to enable them to find solutions since all technologies have benefits and drawbacks.

According to the expert, investing in the next generations must be commenced by local institutions and individuals residing in the country.

Since there are financial and other resources locally, investing in youths and children in telecom, banking, public and private sectors would contribute for the realization of civilization and economic development, he remarked.

Commission ...

the dialogue.

The role and participation of the Ethiopian diaspora is crucial for national dialogue and national consensus. In this regard, the commission is working for Ethiopians living abroad and foreigners of Ethiopian origin to participate in the process, the Chief Commissioner added.

As to him, the commission has carried out tremendous activities in order to make the dialogue inclusive and credible, of which, it has held successive talks with the Diaspora community.

"Ever since the commission came into force about a year and half ago, it has been striving to hold virtual discussions with Ethiopian Diasporas to allow them to exert their responsibility and make them an active participant of the dialogue."

Moreover, it has currently organized a discussion forum for the Diaspora community with an aim of elaborating its mission, objectives and way forwards of the commission.

Mentioning the commission's efforts to make the Diaspora community active participants of the National Dialogue, Mesfin urged the Diaspora community living in the country and abroad to participate in the process and play their part for the lasting peace of Ethiopia.

For Addis Ababa Diaspora Association member Captain Salomon Gezau, it is a national duty to be on the side of the ENDC. The association is doing various activities to strengthen the participation of the diaspora in the national consultation. Among these, it will organize discussion forums with the commission.

According to Captain Solomon, the U.S., China and other developed countries have gone through many internal problems before reaching their current status. The biggest part of this is that they can talk around the table. "The Ethiopian Diaspora will do its part to ensure the peace and development of the country."

He also lauded the commission's role to create a national consensus by holding consultations on basic national issues between various sections of the society, political and opinion leaders in an inclusive manner.

Why Red Sea no...

on alternative port access.

Experts whom *The Ethiopian Herald* approached for an exclusive interview expressed conviction in the Premier's rationale.

Accordingly, Professor of Practice and International Consultant in Water Resource Engineering, Admasu Gebeyehu (PhD) stated that any issues rising in the Red Sea have significant implications for Ethiopia. The country's concerns in the Red Sea extend beyond mere port access, encompassing broader security issues. "Given Ethiopia's close geographical proximity to the Red Sea, its development and stability are closely linked to the area."

Given the region's busy maritime trade and security challenges like piracy and terrorism, countries establish military bases to safeguard trade routes and combat these threats. "The expansion of military bases allows regional countries to train their own military forces, fostering peace and also attracting financial support," the scholar added.

It is to be recalled that Ethiopia has reorganized a naval force that was disbanded decades ago. The military wing came into being on the heels of the 2018 reform with troops trained in Russia and other countries.

Mulualem Hailemariam is a political science and international relations lecturer at Wachamo University. He believed that optimism about future sea access might be the driving force behind the re-establishment

of the Ethiopian naval force.

"A naval force would enhance Ethiopia's defensive capabilities and enable better control over goods entering and leaving the country. Thus, the re-establishment of the Ethiopian naval force could potentially be a preparatory measure for future sea access."

As Ethiopia pushes for a call for regional cooperation to utilize the Red Sea, there have been fears of a possible war outbreak or regional rift, a claim dismissed by Mulualem. He refuted some individuals' attempt to relate Ethiopia's recent military parade on the 116th National Army Day as a warming-up exercise. "Such assertions are entirely false and that military parades are customary events in every country and serving different purposes and Ethiopia is not trying to flex its muscles."

In his parliamentary remark, Premier Abiy expressed Ethiopia's desire to utilize the Red Sea through cooperation and a give-and-take mechanism with concerned bodies. By doing this, he also addresses some groups' concerns on how Ethiopia can meet its port needs- it is through a rule-based approach and respecting the sovereignty of coastal neighbors.

"By promoting a national agenda and highlighting key aspects, the PM aims to steer the conversation towards Ethiopia's priorities". Working collaboratively on Red Sea matters does not invade anyone's rights; rather, it presents a promising opportunity for all parties involved," Mulualem added.

Ethiopian diplomats stationed worldwide must actively engage in this issue beyond the federal government's efforts, he commented, adding that this is a matter of national interest that would unite all Ethiopians, regardless of political affiliations.

Besides cooperation, the academician sees legal means as a tool to secure access to the Red Sea pointing to international law as the first option. The 1983's United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea permits landlocked nations to work with neighboring nations for the purposes of navigation, research, and transit.

In this regard, he highlighted the soundness of PM Abiy's a give-and-take proposal in which the country could offer shares in strategic companies including ethio-telecom and Ethiopian Airlines, in exchange for port access. Such an exchange aligns with international law and diplomatic mechanisms.

"The second option involves diplomatic negotiations, which are closely related to the first option. Addis Ababa reached an agreement with Somaliland in 2018 to have a 19% share in the Berbera Port, although the process is still ongoing". This agreement demonstrates that the Red Sea issue is not a recent development but rather an ongoing endeavor.

To achieve Ethiopia's interests in accessing the sea, the role of international law experts, who will contribute proactively and collectively towards the goal, is critical, the expert emphasized.

Opinion

Coming up with a dependable national vanguard

BY MENGESHA AMARE

It is well recognized that defense force is a viable guaranty a given country has to possess to safeguard the comprehensive social, economic, cultural, psychological and even political movements.

Needless to state, the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) aims at ensuring the state of democratic normality to which the whole population, society, communities and the state at large, aspire, based on efforts that aim at the establishing legality, economic growth, social balance, political stability and peaceful coexistence. This is achieved through the full exercise of citizens' rights and freedoms, through the conscious assumption of responsibilities, and by affirming a state as an active member of the community and the defense force at a larger scale.

The national defense is a concept that has evolved over time, currently covering diverse domains. In the wider sense, the national defense, the defense force briefly, is designated to protect the nation and its inhabitants from infiltrators, insurgents and other elements working to create havoc against the peace and stability of citizens across every corner of the nation—Ethiopia in this regard.

Yes, since its inception, the defense force has been engaging in all sorts of activities as per the interest of the state, which has as its object the assurance, at any time, in any circumstance and against any form of aggression, of the security and the integrity of the territory, and also the life of the population, to get the country much more secure and embark on all development options and avenues.

Unequivocally, a strong and formidable defense force has made up of regulars and national servicemen for supporting the entire nation. Besides, it is an undeniable fact that by carrying out the national defense, protecting national interests and discharging thematic responsibilities in the field with a view to building a great and sovereign nation, it is possible to come up with a definitely stable country. True, being committed to ensure the sovereignty, the independence, the unity, the territorial integrity and the constitutional democracy, under the conditions of combating any type of aggression and terrorism, is the principal objective of the defense force.

Such a gallant duty could be achieved through the full exercise of citizens' rights and freedoms, through conscious assumption of responsibilities, and by the affirming a state as an active member of the community and international organizations. The national defense is very well grounded, being regulated at national level by rules approved by the government.

The national defense thus must carry out legal circumstances and has the primary role of protecting citizens of the country and its interests. This is achieved through the active involvement of concerned institutions with

Defense force should bear the responsibility for ensuring the environment of life and activity of all citizens of the country, both at peace, and in times of crisis or war particularly forwarded from outsiders

responsibilities in the field in order to ensure independence, territorial integrity and democracy fueling the conditions of combating any kind of aggression and external invasion.

Peace and security is assured, as has been previously mentioned, citizens' rights and freedoms, and the status of active member of the defense force is also affirmed since it has been discharging responsibilities as responsibly as possible.

The defense force is an important form of structure that several measures taken in order to realize its role of protection that citizens are at the shelter from any danger, a sense of trust and tranquility that somebody has when they are at risk of danger. In addition, the national defense is the state, the general conception of a country under which national interests are defined, designed and promoted through the institutions empowered by the constitutionally applicable sectors such as the Ministry of Defense.

All members of the defense force have to be committed to ensuring the preservation of sovereignty, independence, unity, territorial integrity, constitutional democracy, and national interests under the conditions of facing any kind of aggression, danger, threat, risk or challenge.

This is to say the actions and the measures that each individual member of the defense adopts in order to protect the lives of its citizens, their own property and national territory thereby guaranteeing independence, privacy and common rights. Without a shadow of doubt, the national defense involves, is duty bound to, and aims at combating the possibility that exposes the country, population, territory, heritage, property, values, attributes, and the likes, to danger and related forms of risks.

However, in circumstances when there is no risk or any real threat to anything or anyone within the country, the duty of the defense force could hardly be talk of the day, it won't be invited to interfere in local matters.

The situation what is widely observed across some parts of the nation has to be corrected as the defense force is not dealing with matters for what it has not been set up, soothing issues that should have been the mandates of state policy, even federal police, if goes beyond.

It would be easy to rebuild the reputation of the defense force via letting it get back to its principal duty and responsibility—protecting the territory of Ethiopia and the complete wellbeing of its citizens.

It is also important to specify that the defense force reflects a dynamic reality that has in its structure incorporating the components such as political, military, economic, civil, cultural, and psychological aspects.

Yes, it must be well understood that the defense force is the spinal cord of the country, and it has to be given due respect and privilege; thence, it must also act its status and live up to the mission it has been set up so long as it was not established to rescue some groups, a ruling party, senior government officials and any other sects deviating from the Ethiopian people and country's interest and firm sovereignty.

Unequivocally, the defense force should bear the responsibility for ensuring the environment of life and activity of all citizens of the country, both at peace, and in times of crisis or war particularly forwarded from outsiders. The political component of the national defense includes all measures and actions that state leadership adopts and puts into practice, in all areas of activity both internally and externally in order to defend national interests, the life and the goods of the citizens, too. The economic component of national defense aims at improving and enhancing national competitiveness in a globalized peace and tranquility trend.

As it is well recognized, the human resource has always been, and still it is the most important element of the proper functioning of any system, be it a private concern, a national agenda, a communal subject, has all the time been safeguarded by the defense force, but in a comprehensive and well inclusive manner.

True, the Army, as part of a system, namely the defense system, public order, national security and judicial authority, can make an aggregate national peace. Thus, there can be optimum and progressive functioning of the military system, if it has fulfilled all the required values such as morality, verticality and dignity. It is obvious that a superior preparation and training of the members of the military/defense force will have as a result the implementing of a high level of national defense, a level that could provide the state security in front of various threats.

Given the complexity of the area related to the national defense, it is necessary to promote the human resource within the military institution that would deepen the

knowledge in all areas ranging from history to elements related to strategic planning and endowment, passing through the knowledge related to economy, sociology and others, as all these will constitute important input in due course of forming an unwavering military muscle.

National security is fundamentally about Ethiopia's interests; consolidating defense and security has been playing a vital role in building the capability and readiness of the members of the defense force which targets at ensuring the national security. The Ethiopian government's national security trend has been focusing on societal safety, national integrity, and unity in diversity, among others, thereby creating a peaceful and stable nation.

Therefore, to strengthen society, continued knowledge-building, technology development among the defense force has to be well entertained.

Of course, national security is an absolute absence of fear among citizens and even beyond. Hence, all the threats thrown from other countries should be curbed by the defense force, but it has now been compromised by local and minor irregularities as the defense force is deployed to soothe tensions occur at small villages and concerns that need to be resolved by other security forces outside of the national military sect.

In principle, national security issues must be treated accordingly by the intensive engagement of the defense force. Such a bold move would help reduce threats and return instabilities to a condition of normalcy once a threatening development such as a natural disaster, terrorist attack, military action or some form of economic or diplomatic pressures. This is the real responsibility of the defense force not being engaged in local matters that has to be controlled by federal police and district militias.

In a nut shell, so long as the defense force is principally entitled to safeguard the nation from external aggressors and outside foes, it should not be made busy in dealing with local issues and skirmishes happen in the country due to local disagreements or because of some circumstantial arguments created in the nation across its corners.

The country along with its citizens, therefore, has to be well protected via its courageous defense force only through deploying it to peculiarly national matters out of the box. Hence, the defense force of the country has to be well respected and given the acceptance as it deserves instead of blackmailing its names citing minor and non-representative incidents run by irresponsible factions because the defense force is the backbone of the nation despite some irregularities.

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

Business & Economy

Role of Industrial Parks for the economic structural transformation

BY BACHA ZEWDIE

The development of Industrial Parks is one of the activities that have been given attention to realize Ethiopia's structural economic transformation. The industrial parks also have the main fundamental missions of attracting foreign direct investment, expanding job creation and realizing technology transfer. The parks will make a great contribution to the national economic development by creating jobs for the community living in the areas they will be built and creating a suitable working environment.

Among the things that make industrial parks preferable are the fact that they provide many services in one place, build appropriate infrastructure and connect with other manufacturers. In this regard, efforts have been made to encourage large international companies to open their factories in Ethiopia by establishing many industrial parks across the country and providing relatively low-cost electricity service, tax-free importation of machinery, loan provision, one-center service and infrastructure construction.

In fact, the industrial parks are expected to play pivotal role in facilitating the efforts to make Ethiopia the manufacturing hub of Africa and to alleviate the unemployment problem. Currently, there are 13 industrial parks across the country, and they are making a significant contribution to the growth of the national economy through job creation, foreign direct investment attraction and technology transfer.

In particular, Integrated Agro-Industry Parks, which are believed to have the ability to increase the value of agricultural products and make them competitive in quantity and quality, are among the sectors that are said to achieve structural economic transformation by modernizing the agricultural sector.

These agro-industrial parks will make the marketing chain easier for the farmers and create market linkages that benefit the farmers. By enabling investors to receive agricultural inputs from farmers, they contribute positively to the farmers benefiting from their efforts. Data from the Ministry of Industry shows that the government has spent more than 30 billion Birr to build agro-industrial parks and this expenditure is to create favorable conditions for investors to enter the parks and engage in production activities.

The "Bulbula Integrated Agro Industrial Park" located in Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha District, Oromia Region, East Shewa Zone, 16 kilometers from Batu City, is one of the integrated agricultural products processing industrial parks built in the country. The park was inaugurated in April 2021 by FDRE Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), and it is an industrial park where producers who process fruits and vegetables, milk, honey, meat, and eggs are engaged.

The first round construction of the park is on 271 hectares of land, and the feasibility study shows that the next round of construction can be carried out to cover up to one thousand hectares of land. In the first phase, the construction can accommodate 148 investors; it is expected to create job opportunities for 70,000 to 100,000 citizens



Bulbula Integrated Agro Industry Park - Bulbula, Oromia

when it is fully operational. It is recalled that a program to promote the features and capabilities of the park to investors was held in August 2014 in Addis Ababa and at that time more than 40 investors promised to work in the park.

According to Getahun Adugna, a public relations expert at the Oromia Region Industrial Parks Development Corporation, preparatory work is underway to welcome and host investors of 29 companies that received permits to enter Bulbula Integrated Agro-Industrial Park and engage in the processing of agricultural products. The agro-processing sectors in which the investors are engaged are the production and processing of honey and wax, edible oil, vegetables and fruits (tomatoes, potatoes, juice...), coffee, avocado oil, meat, milk, animal feed, pasta and macaroni, and baby food.

According to Getahun, in the first quarter of the fiscal year, it is planned to introduce four investors to the park and it has been possible to give licenses to seven investors. The investors are engaged in edible oil production as well as meat and fruit and vegetable processing sectors. Among the licensed companies, a company called "TK Group" has built a shed and is carrying out machine installation work. The company is engaged in the production and processing of edible oil and animal fodder, and has acquired 2.8 hectares of land for its work. Production is expected to begin in a little more than two months.

The other organizations have acquired land and are moving to get bank loans. Some have been approved for bank loans and have started installing machines. For example, two of the manufacturers who have entered the six sheds that the government has built as samples have completed the credit approval process and are installing machines. Getahun said that most of the investors who have taken permission to enter the park and start work are local investors.

Regarding the provision of infrastructure, he said, "The Park has complete infrastructure services. It has road, electricity, telecom,

and one center services. It is the federal government that builds the electricity substations for all the parks. Since we have delayed the construction of the substation, we have drawn more than 35 megawatts of power from the area and allowed the investors who have taken permission to continue their preparations.

As for water supply, the local water is brackish. It costs a lot of money to filter the water. Therefore, it is planned to dig five water wells in Tio District (Arsi), traveling more than 50 kilometers from the park, and three of them have been dug. Line laying work had also started. It is planned to bring water from Batu city to the park for some time so that the work will not be interrupted due to some problems," he said.

According to Getahun, there are six rural transition centers that are connected to the park and whose construction has been completed; the main task of the centers is to collect the farmers' produce in quality and quantity and supply to the park. The local community, including the farmers, will benefit from the ties that the investors create with the centers. Among the centers located in Shashemene, Meki, Dodola, Bale Robe, Iteya and Wolenchiti, the infrastructure constructions of Shashemene and Meki centers have been completed. The four centers have completed their building construction and the infrastructure (water, electricity, road...) is being completed. By the end of the second quarter of the fiscal year, it is planned to complete the construction and infrastructure provision of all the centers.

Getahun mentioned that the construction of the park required a lot of manpower and resources. Many local communities benefited during the construction of the park and local farmers will benefit by providing agricultural inputs to the park when the producers start working.

"When the park is built based on research, the main benefit that is expected to be achieved is to increase the quality and quantity of the farmers' production and benefit them by creating market opportunities," Getahun

said. He mentioned that the "TK Group" which is expected to be put into operation soon produces oil from soybeans, and that it is gathering the necessary input (soybeans) for the product and thus the farmers who produce soybeans are being benefited.

In addition, "Bulbula Integrated Agro Industry Park was built with the aim of augment the agriculture sector via using local agricultural inputs from the surrounding community." By modernizing agriculture and increasing its productivity, the farmers are working to produce surplus produce for industrial input in addition to the produce used for food and market.

Farmers will benefit even more when producers working in honey, meat, chicken, milk, pulses, oil and other sectors start operation. In addition, the park benefits the local community by substituting imported products and providing in local market," he said.

There are many good opportunities that will help to shift the country's economic structure from agricultural led to industrial. However, taking advantage of these good opportunities, the activities carried out to achieve the structural transformation of the economy are not commensurate with the country's capacity and needs. In order to achieve the structural economic transformation that Ethiopia is making towards an industrial economy by using its potential in industry and increasing the income from this sector, it is necessary to increase and improve the manufacturing sector many times over the current performance.

Growth of the manufacturing sector can be improved along with the expansion of investment. Industrial parks create favorable conditions for the expansion of investment by implementing the services of a single center. Therefore, to achieve the structural economic transformation, the performance of industrial parks should be improved. It should be noted that this includes the provision of infrastructure resources, skilled manpower and financing to enable investors to enter the parks and produce.

Planet Earth

Leveraging church forest management experience to preserve indigenous trees in Ethiopia

BY EPHREM ANDARGACHEW

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, through its efforts in tree planting and environmental conservation, has played a vital part in mitigating climate change across the country. The church has contributed to carbon sequestration and the preservation of native tree species by building church woods and advocating the preservation of native tree species, both of which are key methods in mitigating climate change.

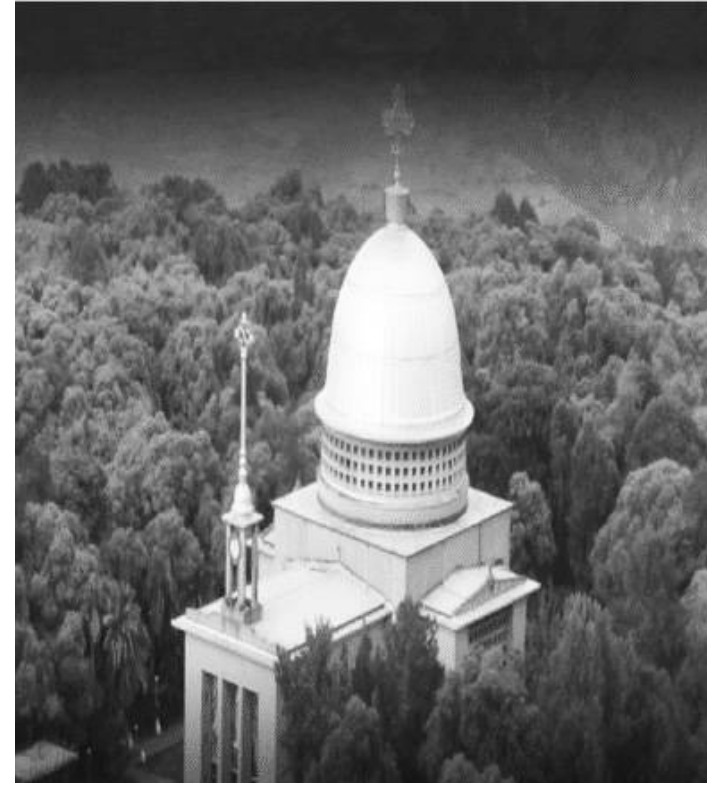
According to a recent research titled “THE ROLE OF CHURCH FORESTS IN AVIAN CONSERVATION: THE CASE IN TAKUSSA DISTRICT, NORTHWESTERN ETHIOPIA” by Mehariw Eristu et al (2019), Ethiopian Orthodox church forests have a significant role in biodiversity conservation. Cutting any tree within the church’s enclosure is strictly prohibited by the Ethiopian Orthodox church’s regulations and norms. As a consequence, old indigenous trees that have been completely gone in many parts of the country are still surviving within the church compounds.

Furthermore, the church’s engagement in tree planting projects and emphasis on environmental stewardship have contributed to enhancing the country’s forest cover, which is critical for minimizing the negative effects of climate change. The church’s incorporation of environmental conservation into its theological teachings develops a culture of environmental stewardship among its followers and the larger society, resulting in sustainable actions that contribute to climate change mitigation.

The development of the church forest is one of the ways the church has contributed to tree planting and preservation. These are areas of indigenous tree plants that are protected by the church and are frequently found around monasteries and churches. The church forests provide essential habitat for indigenous trees and other plant species, as well as wild animals.

Additionally, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has participated in several tree-planting efforts, urging its followers and local communities to plant and care for indigenous trees. The church has also helped to raise awareness about the necessity of protecting native tree species and their function in the ecosystem. The church has also included environmental conservation in its theological teachings and practices, emphasizing the significance of caring for the natural world and living in peace with nature.

More significantly, the church prioritizes planting, protecting, and maintaining indigenous tree species. These indigenous Ethiopian trees have several uses, such as food, medicine, building materials, and preservation of the environment. They are



Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) is a model in forest management that has been at the forefront of the fight against deforestation and the multiple environmental threats to biological resources that have resulted in a significant decline in biodiversity in the country

essential to both the ecology and the local populations’ means of subsistence.

According to Ethiopian Forest Development, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) is a model in forest management that has been at the forefront of the fight against deforestation and the multiple environmental threats to biological resources that have resulted in a significant decline in biodiversity in the country.

“One of the distinguishing characteristics of EOC, a forest management model, is the approach of collaboratively working with the local community and followers to achieve appropriate forest development. This is what has been lacking in the country’s reforestation effort. As a result, the orthodox church forests are designated as national treasures. The Orthodox Church is a critical site for preserving what is left of Ethiopia’s vanishing forest habitat. Indigenous trees and endemic plants may be found in approximately 35,000 churches and monasteries.”

Recognizing this, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church convened the Church Forest Development Conference. Christian Development Commission organized the consultative conference.

During the conference, Ethiopian Orthodox

Tewahedo Church Patriarch His Holiness Abune Mathias stated that “to better our earthly existence, we must plant and care for new trees seedlings instead of old plants. As a result, the church’s effort of planting and caring for indigenous trees should be strengthened”.

According to him, “Everyone should take care of and protect plants by understanding their importance in avoiding air pollution, providing food and shelter, and preventing soil erosion”. If we do not properly care for our plants, our soil will be carried away by floods, land fertility will deteriorate, and climate change will raise temperatures, causing drought and hunger. As a result, planting and caring for indigenous trees should always be our first priority so that all living beings are not exposed to the worst situation.”

His Holiness Abune Mathias pointed out that for generations, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has been planting and caring for indigenous plants surrounding its church to provide shelter for the tired person and food for the needy. These plants also offer sustenance for the less fortunate. As a consequence, indigenous trees surround the church, which are critical for environmental conservation and combating climate change. Forests not only preserve the environment but also provide habitat for a variety of animals and plants.

Although the Church has made great contributions to reducing desertification via forest conservation from ancient times, forest decrease is being noticed owing to population growth and other factors. As a result, the practice of planting and caring for indigenous plants should be expanded and enhanced, he underlined.

Bishop Abune Samuel of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Development and Christian Development Commission said that several projects are being

undertaken in monasteries and churches to prevent the negative effects of climate change.

Furthermore, the commission has carried out several environmental protection projects in 51 higher monasteries and churches around the country. Currently, he noted, 10 additional monasteries in various places are working hard to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change in their area.

In reality, the church has been planting seedlings to avoid the extinction of indigenous trees and is attempting to pass them on to future generations. Extensive study is being conducted, in particular, on the question of how to conserve existing indigenous forests. How might we ensure forest development in deforestation areas? How can we plant indigenous plants in desert areas? These are imperative issues to continue the work on planting and preserving indigenous trees in areas where there is little forest coverage, he stated.

Indeed, the priests of the orthodox church have been ensuring that forests stay healthy in close to 35,000 churches and monasteries which cover 75 percent of the forests in Ethiopia. The church has been effectively managing surrounding environments for a long time by using its own religious justifications.

In general, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been a prominent stakeholder in efforts to plant and conserve indigenous trees in Ethiopia, contributing to the conservation of native trees to address climate change and protect the country’s natural environment. Its devotion to tree planting and the preservation of indigenous trees has aided the country’s efforts. As a result, it is critical to leverage the church’s extensive experience in forest protection management, environmental protection, and indigenous plant species conservation and preservation.

Art & Culture

Commemoration of Artist Ali Birra's death anniversary

BY NAOL GIRMA

The late artist Ali Birra, who passed away on 5 November, 2023 was commemorated with various programs in Dire Dawa City. Honorary Doctor of Arts Ali Birra has been known not only for his musical works for over 60 years, but also for his advocacy for human rights, anti-dictatorship, sports, education, coexistence, patriotism, history and appreciation of nature.

The artist's works remembered with various programs for five days. Initially, a Candle lighting ceremony was held at Ali Birra's Park, followed by the inauguration of a commemorative billboard at the International Airport, panel discussions, sports competitions, musical performances and a major concert by famous local and foreign artists. Family, relatives, friends and admirers as well as various guests from home and abroad had attended the event as Ali is a famous musician loved by all ethnic groups.

A brief biography of Artist Ali Birra

His first name was Ali Mahammad, his nickname as the king of art is Ali Birra and he was called *Adeeroo* by those who were close to him. Honorary Doctor of Arts Ali Birra was born in May 1948. Ali Birra began his education by studying Arabic and the Koran and completed his primary education at Madarasa Jadida and Leul Mokonnen School there, in Dire Dawa. He then studied music at Santa Monica College in California, USA.

Although Ali Birra's father wanted his son to study and become a mechanic, he was interested in sports and music since childhood and loved to watch cinema and movies. In 1962, the Urji Bakalcha Band, which opened a new chapter in the history of modern Oromo art, was established as part of the Afran Qalloo struggle movement. It also paved the way for him to achieve his dreams and aspirations. Ali Birra became a member of the "Hiriya Jalala" Band and began his lifelong career.

The same year he started his career, he sang his first song "Biradhaa Barie" with *Urjii Bakalcha* Band at an Eid festival. His singing and voice became even more popular. The song, which Ali sang as a child, *Biradhaa Barie*, signified the dawn of spring, the coming of the bright age for Oromo culture and art and clearly confirmed the birth of the King of Art in the history of modern Oromo art.

Thus, Artist Ali switched from *Hiriya Jalala* Band to *Urjii Bakalcha* Band and was welcomed with love and respect and continued to sing with great artists like Ali Shanboo.

With this new journey, he set a foundation and reached the peak of modern Oromo art and contributed greatly to turning the darkness into light and as a result the city



of Dire Dawa played a major role in becoming the centre of the Oromo struggle.

After Ali and his friends toured various places in Hararge to perform for the public, he and his friends were forced to travel without government permission as their request to the government for permission to go and perform abroad for the first time was rejected.

Ali was arrested at Djibouti border and imprisoned for a month. After his release from prison, he moved to Finland. The king of art was a guest when he came to Addis Ababa and despite the difficulties he faced, he took it as a great opportunity to enter his home country.

He soon became famous in Addis Ababa by singing with the guitar. He immediately worked with the *Kibur Zabagna* Orchestra for three years with famous artists such as Tilahun Gessese, Bizunesh Bekele and Mahamud Ahmed.

After three years of service, he left the orchestra because of unpleasant circumstances. He decided to quit music altogether, and began to pursue another career. He immediately started working as a mechanic at the station (railway) in Awash with the help of the managers of the Ethiopian Railway Company who knew him before.

Yet he was a man created for art and found it even more difficult to stay away from it. He returned to Finland and continued to serve the people with his natural artistic mission. Ali founded and launched the *Aduu Birraa* Band, the most modern band in the history of Oromo art.

The band was even more popular. Ali's role was even greater for this. But gradually he left the band to his friends and worked with 'IBEX BAND, ETHIO STAR BAND' and other Night Clubs at

D.Afrik, Ras, Harambe, Hilton Hotels.

During the time when the Oromo people were in great suffering, he recorded beautiful Oromo songs in Finland and worked hard to make the Oromo popular in the music industry of our country.

He became an unparalleled artist in the country by bringing out the suppressed voices of the people through his songs. He also set an example for the next generation of artists.

Artist Ali was a veteran fighter, a superhero, a human rights activist and an advocate for justice who took the lead in fighting for the development of Oromo nationalism, for the people to learn about each other and for the injustices he was suffering to be heard around the world. Using his musical instrument and voice as a weapon of struggle, he fought for justice struggling peacefully. He stood up and fought against the oppression of the Oromo.

He has inspired the people to fight for their rights and freedoms. He has served as the voice of justice and freedom for his people. He has also contributed to the development of Oromo and Ethiopian art.

Ali Birra speaks seven languages and has sung in six languages: Afaan Oromo, Amharic, Hararii, Somali, Arabic and Swedish. All the songs he sings in other languages are even more popular with those who speak those languages. Ali is well known in Sudan as the country's artists.

Ali is a master of many professions. He is an expert in art, language and culture. He can play five types of musical instruments. He is a composer of music. He produces fascinating poems that quickly penetrate the heart and are always loved. Above all, he has a unique voice. This

makes him one of the top artists in our country.

When he sang on stage, he was even more beautiful. It is eye-catching. Even the foreigners said he had a "magnetic attraction". His songs are always appealing because of his professional quality, strong messages, and excited vocals. The saying of "Music is the Language of the World" was tangible and expresses his work.

In general, Ali has sung 267 songs. All his timeless songs are lovely and interesting. His music breaks the boundaries of time to be passed down from generation to generation.

His songs are so popular and widely used by non-Oromo listeners. His music, which is in a great demand, is played in all night clubs. It is also preferred for decorating weddings, etc. While artist Ali deserves respect and awards for fighting and being a voice for the people he was born and raised in his native country. He has been subjected to torture and imprisonment many times. He left the country in 1984 with his wife, Bergita Astrom, a Swedish diplomat in Ethiopia, and lived in Sweden, the United States and Saudi Arabia.

He went to Canada and lived there for many years until he returned to Ethiopia. There he married Lili Markos (Lillie Birra) and lived a good life. While abroad, he continued his career by touring the United States, Europe, Australia, the Middle East and performing in various countries. Ali Birra was a visionary. When the Oromos were subject to covert discrimination and Oromo symbols were underplayed, *Karaan Galma Abbaa Gadaa eessa?* (where is the road to the Abba Gadaa Hall?) was a song that raised serious questions of the time. Many years after singing this song, he returned to the country and saw his wishes answered.

Many scholars and musicologists worldwide have studied his work. He has also received over a hundred internationally recognized and prestigious awards from various countries, governments, institutions, associations and universities, not to mention the countless awards he received during his exhibitions.

He passed away last year after undergoing treatment at home and abroad due to serious health problems. The iconic singer of the Oromo, Ethiopian and African art had ceased to be. Our country, Ethiopia, has lost its eldest son. Although this great artist has no children he has produced thousands of artists.

Ali Birra will live forever in the hearts of the people with his 60 years of artistic works. He is a man who left a great message in our homes and gave us a great reward. His legacy will live with respect among today's and tomorrow's generations. He will be remembered and praised forever for his great work.

(TRANSLATED FROM BARIISAA)

Society

More awareness to curb illicit cultural properties trafficking!

BY TEWODRO KASSA

November 14 is the International Day against Illicit Trafficking in Cultural Property. During its 40th General Conference in 2019, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated the day to be annually celebrated as a Day against illicit trafficking in cultural property.

In her message in connection with the 14 November 2023 International Day against Illicit Trafficking in Cultural Property, UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay said that for over 50 years, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property has been an essential tool for protecting cultural property worldwide against theft, clandestine excavations and illegal exports, while assisting in its return and restitution.

According to her, UNESCO has engaged in a worldwide campaign of targeted actions to pre-empt the risks of trafficking in cultural property and, wherever necessary, to repair the damage and support reconstruction through the UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund.

The main objective of the celebration of the day is to create awareness on heritage conservation, enable the issue to gain international attention and bolster the necessity of international cooperation regarding the issue. This year, the day is marked for the 4th time at international level and for the second time at national level.

Illicit cultural property trafficking, deals with illegal trading with heritages, robbery and illegal movement of different heritages. Illicit cultural property trafficking is among the sophisticated crimes conducted internationally and performed with huge amounts of currency exchange.

Various actors are participatory in this activity and involved with heritage owners, dealers, and final destination. Illicit cultural property trafficking causes enormous damages not only on the heritages but also on the destination, excavations areas as well as the owners of the heritages through eroding their own history.

Ethiopia is home to numerous natural, historical and cultural heritages and at the same time affected with illicit cultural property trafficking. The presence of the country's heritages in various countries' museums, libraries, and in individuals' hands confirmed this scenario. In addition, the country's ancient heritages are also available in the internet online market. Especially, the country's movable heritages are highly exposed to illegal cultural property trafficking.

The country's heritages are being exposed to illicit cultural property trafficking from different religious institutions, museums, archeological centers through illegal



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The four Gospels (Bible, New Testament) (14th Century)

Ethiopian Parchment

cultural property traffickers. Therefore, every citizen should fulfill its responsibility of protecting the country's age-old heritages from unlawful cultural property trafficking as it erodes its own manifestations and history. Creating wide public awareness on the values of our age-old heritages that were inherited from our forefathers, undertaking heritage registration, successive heritage inspection activities as well as improving coordinated works with stakeholders is vital to curb illicit cultural property trafficking.

Recently, the Ethiopian Heritages Authority marked the International Day against Illicit Trafficking in Cultural Property on November 14 at Adama Town in the presence of pertinent stakeholders who have considerable participation in fighting the illicit trafficking of cultural property with various discussions and awareness creation.

While opening the event, Ethiopian Heritages Authority Heritages Division General Director Hiwot Hailu said that the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated the day during its 40th general conference in 2019 to be annually celebrated as a Day against Illicit Trafficking in Cultural Property so as to curb Illicit cultural property trafficking.

As to her, the major objective of marking the day is to create international awareness regarding Illicit Trafficking in Cultural Property and draw international attention that the issue concerns every country as it causes damages to countries cultural and

natural heritages.

According to the General Director, these days, Illicit Trafficking in Cultural Property is worsening and becoming more complex from time to time and the market demand for Illicit Cultural Properties is also growing every now and then., she said.

"Different information shows that our heritages are being vandalized by individuals and found in other countries' museums, at the hands of individuals as well as observed on different tenders and online markets. And the major cause to this problem is the lack of enough awareness for the issue," she elaborated.

Some people tend to participate in illicit trafficking in cultural property and engage in selling the country's heritages which passed down for the past generations to illegal dealers and traffickers for the reason they are less aware about the values of the heritages. Thus, coordinated works with stakeholders are required to halt such activities, she added.

At the event, various stakeholders and institutions that have closer engagement regarding illicit trafficking in cultural property have participated and held a thorough discussion. Papers that explained the nature of heritages, the causes of illicit trafficking in cultural property, on ways how to tackle the activities, and the 1970 convention that Ethiopia ratified, heritages that are proscribed to be taken out of the country and the role of stakeholders' in mitigating illicit trafficking in cultural property and maintaining the safety of

heritages were presented.

Controlling illicit trafficking in cultural properties is among the mandated role of the Ethiopian Heritages Authority.

Experts in the heritage sector highlighted that competent human power is needed to create more awareness on heritages and conduct rehabilitation activities on the country's heritages effectively. Moreover, the presence of more skilled expertise on heritage conservation would boost the country's heritages' life span.

Moreover, respective regional state culture and tourism bureaus are the key actors to register, conserve and investigate the national and regional heritages throughout the country.

Accordingly, the country is known for various movable cultural properties. Such movable tangible heritages including; parchments, ancient books, mysterious documents, ornaments, currencies, among others require more attention to be inherited to the future generations. Thus, having effective public mobilization regarding heritages is important to maintain the safety of the country's precious cultural properties.

In sum, the nation's higher education institutions and other heritage related sectors have a social responsibility of doing more to arouse and strengthen the heritage preservation and protection system. Registration of the heritages is more important to secure them. While one has sufficient information about own heritage, can better protect and keep it.

Law & Politics

Crucial points in the premier's responses to MPs' queries

BY FITSUM GETACHEW

On the occasion of the endorsement of the president's inaugural address to the joint session of parliament several questions were presented by MPs to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The questions the MPs posed were all encompassing the major national issues of the country. Many of the questions even had the spirit of challenging the government on the way things were moving in the country. In fact the parliament was exercising its constitutional mandate of oversight on how the executive was carrying out its responsibilities to citizens. These are activities that we see in every democratic nation where power is always eventually controlled by the people. That was also why the premier was in parliament to respond to the questions of the MPs.

The MPs' questions encompassed almost every social issue from the very crucial and alarming peace and security issues to the economic challenges including inflation the country faces; from the project execution shortcomings to the issue of corruption that appears to stifle the major efforts of the country to perform as it should; from questions of infrastructure to diplomatic overtures with foreign countries; from the Horn of Africa geopolitical complexities to Ethiopia's quest for access to a sea port as well as issues of youth education and employment.

Most of the questions were a demand for the explanation by the premier of what his government was intending to do in order to be up to the task of addressing all those urgent issues and the sort of progress he was making.

The premier has been very frank and open in many of his answers admitting that there were several challenges that were very difficult to cope with under the current global circumstances and some of them would need years to address adequately. In many of the issues that concern the peace and security of the country the premier was apt to warn that all those who believe to depose a legitimately elected government using force was unthinkable except that they become obstacles to the growth and stability of the country and keep us busy in security issues rather than engage in development endeavors that would change the lives of millions. The premier then invited all those who have issues with his government had better present their ideas peacefully and now that there is the National Dialogue Commission it is an opportunity not to be missed. He said while we have lost similar opportunities to address these perennial issues that came rolling over the decades past, it would be a grave mistake to miss this one as well.

He mentioned the various past attempts to overthrow the monarchy during the December 1960 attempted coup, the 1974 takeover of the Derg on the monarchy, and then the 1991 introduction of the EPRDF

The premier stated that after years now we have a new opportunity to come together around a table and express our grievances, sentiments and issues so that they are all discussed frankly and openly without excluding any one, including those who have taken up arms and are trying to fight this government by force. He urged them all to put down their arms and come to the negotiating table so that within the framework of the constitution everything is admissible. The premier said his focus has always been on the peace of the country and gave priority to peaceful negotiations to resolve any issue

government as missed opportunities of once and for all discussing the major fundamental issues the country was facing. They were opportunities he said to seek the appropriate solutions and then embark on a process of closing all those diverse narratives that came to be built up along the decades and envisage a new nation with a common narrative and common sense of purpose and objective.

The premier stated that after years now we have a new opportunity to come together around a table and express our grievances, sentiments and issues so that they are all discussed frankly and openly without excluding any one, including those who have taken up arms and are trying to fight this government by force. He urged them all to put down their arms and come to the negotiating table so that within the framework of the constitution everything is admissible. The premier said his focus has always been on the peace of the country and gave priority to peaceful negotiations to resolve any issue. He said he would never choose to resort to using force and that is why he has once again invited all those who have issues with the government to freely present their case at a negotiating table. In this regard the establishment of the National Dialogue Commission is fundamental and vital to present any issue to the fore and have it discussed with the participation of representatives of communities and groups of people.

The premier was heard insisting that only united we can address all the outstanding issues of the country and the participation of each and every citizen is key. Just as we have resolved the issue of the construction of the GERD together, he noted, we can solve the problems of peace and security only if we are all united and pull in to one direction rather than giving chances to all those who do not want Ethiopia to grow and prosper and be an African standard bearer.

Talking about economic issues the premier presented some of the positive numbers that highlight the progress in the economic growth that has been witnessed even by the IMF. However, he did not deny that the issue of inflation is still up front among the major vital issues on which his administration was working day and night. Mentioning that unfortunately the issue is international and that even the developed countries are plagued by unprecedented rates of inflation, however, their economic policies to face this issue have brought about extra burden on countries such as Ethiopia which owe a lot to these advanced economies because their increase in interest rates affects negatively Ethiopia. Developing countries such as Ethiopia are struggling to cope with this world wide inflationary tide and without addressing the issue of better incomes for house-holds people in the lower income bracket are destined to suffer most.

The premier said that of course his government is working day and night

to come to terms with this issue with continuous economic reforms such as encouraging increase in production and lessening dependence on imported goods. Substitution of imported products by homemade ones helps us save our foreign currency reserve and one outstanding example is the recent harvesting of millions of quintals of wheat using irrigation. This has not only stopped import of wheat but we have now begun to export it and earn foreign currency, the premier noted. These are positive moves but a lot needs to be done to tackle all the economic issues of the country adequately and he stressed if we follow current tendencies the problem will begin to be less and less burdensome in the coming years.

Diplomacy wise there were several questions by the MPs that concerned Ethiopia's quest to access a sea port, and if there were risks of another round of conflicts with neighbouring countries. The premier ruled out any such possibility because Ethiopia's request for a sea port is based on a win-win principle, on a give and take move. People should not be amazed if they see Ethiopia showing strong interest in a Red Sea port and take a strategic view of the area while a score of countries from afar and beyond have shown significant interest in the area. The premier said Ethiopia's quest for access to sea is a matter of survival especially in perspective because as the population increases, the economy expands and interaction with foreign markets skyrocket the need for a sea port is inevitable. It is he said in the interest of neighboring countries as well that Ethiopia get access to the sea so that the internal fever gets reduced with better economic achievements and there would be no urge to move outside or emigrate using all means, both legal and illegal, and prevention is better than cure.

Ethiopia is simply anticipating a scenario whereby in the near future the situation in Ethiopia could be out of control economically because of lack of access to sea and the fact that Ethiopia has to rely mainly on one port only has its own issues.

Any unpredicted political or security crisis would have direct impact on the economy of Ethiopia because Djibouti is the lifeline of Ethiopia. That is why the premier said Ethiopia extends its hands to neighboring countries to give her access to sea in a commercial transaction based on the principle of give and take and not by using any form of intimidation or threat as some people have tried to go out of their way and envisage a doom's day scenario. Ethiopia will not pull the trigger against any of its neighbors and has never done that in the past. Its relations with neighbors and others are based merely on mutual respect, mutual sovereignty and only safeguarding the national interest of the country without encroaching on the sovereignty of others. The history of Ethiopia is a clear witness to this diplomatic principle of the country, the premier concluded.



Ephrem Endale
Contributor

Between you & me

Telling It as It Is!

“Where is your son? It has been some time since I last saw him.

“Are you telling me you haven’t heard?”

“Haven’t heard what?”

“He has gone to Ferenj Hager!”

“Really! You are the luckiest people. In a couple of years he’d build you a G-4 residence!”

The sending off was dreamlike. It was an opportunity which came after years of ‘praying’ and also going to most of the ‘wise’ guys who could make anything happen at the clap of their hands. It wasn’t clear to which side the parents and relatives of the young fellow gave the credit. But one way or another it happened and he flies to that place which was supposed to be sort of ‘Heaven on Earth.’ the following weeks and months saw the young man’s family sort of enjoying mini-VIP status. Why not! After all, their son is in the dreamland and soon the dollar would start flooding in! Well, it didn’t actually flood in. But a few months later he starts sending sent some money and everyone was happy.

Barely a year passed when all of a sudden the money coming in dried up. The phone calls too stopped. What in the world was happening? His family managed to contact his friends and asked if he was alright to which the ‘friends’ answered he was doing well. It was because he was so busy he didn’t have the time to phone. His friends

stuck to the narrative of his being too busy to call. That was on hell of an excuse, but still did the trick of making his family believe their son was really making it big over there. Years went by and then bits of information began sipping all the way into the family’s living room that he might not be as well as the so-called friends claimed he was. Finally one day the family had to go to the airport to welcome tier son, a welcome better forgotten than remembered. Their son haggard and practically not the son they saw off years back, gets off the plane! What happened was that the repeated offender drug addict he was and having failed to polish his acts he was deported. Deported! Yes deported; isn’t that a familiar story we hear over and again these days?

Now all those years his family and friends back here believed he was indeed having it nice and dandy in that Brad Pitt country and they had no reason to suspect otherwise. Don’t many of us believe that family or friends in the countries of the ferenjis are doing well despite the fact that they don’t call us as regularly as they used to? On the other hand many keep on phoning and gracing their social media accounts with dreamlike pictures and we just can’t stop wondering how they manage to escape the rough waters which even citizens find hard to navigate. I mean the fact these days is beyond our darkest imaginations as life in the so-called civilized world isn’t as easy and as comfortable as we would have liked

to believe. But few, if any, are willing to tell us these facts for reasons that they would be giving away how their real lives look. In fact being truthful is not a good thing to do because the false narratives of many would come out into the open. Not a very nice scenario, wouldn’t you say? But then there are those who despite being treated as outcasts choose to tell it as it is. “Things aren’t as you think they are. Please gather as much information as you can before deciding to go abroad.”

A couple of days back I watched an interview on a young Ethiopian lady’s YouTube site where she talked with an Ethiopian man who has been living in an European country for the past two or so decades. The interview was about the lives of Ethiopians in that part of the world. Now the young lady chose to talk to him because of his courageous social media posts where he told the story of his own life as it was and as it is. Now his genuine narrative was indeed the likes of which you seldom come across.

Once upon a time this man was a gifted international caliber athlete. And he had a completely different kind of live in his past life was that of the TV cameras flashing and the VIP treatment of the high class hotels as he was one of those who stand out from among the crowd the athletics world. But that life was a story gone but not forgotten as the multitude of prizes gracing his house attest.

Married and supporting a family of seven, six children and his wife with whom he had been married for about a decade, life was nothing but easy. One would think given his illustrious athletic background he might be earning his living in some professions that had to do with sports. No. He worked in a construction company as a laborer where day in and day out he had to carry various building materials in the most uncomfortable of situations. His face and hands covered with dust nothing and he carrying loads of real heavy building materials nothing about him showed a more or less stable family life. But despite working in situations many would have shuddered even to think of, a stable family was what he was leading. I could tell you that many in his situation would have moved a mountain and more to hide what they really did for a living. He used his Face book and You Tube cannels to tell his story posting pictures and videos of himself carrying, pushing, pulling loads of building and construction material. And especially on the part of those in the Diaspora such actions didn’t get him standing ovations. No t many didn’t like one bit of what he does. Here is a man who, engaged in one of the most challenging, tiring and energy sapping works, he supports a family of seven. This is the sort of man who deserves all the accolade accorded to such souls who refuse to hide behind fake narratives and challenge life toe-to-toe.

To be Trusted is More than to be Loved!

There was this story we must have raised some time back which happened ages back. The guy was a civil servant and it so happened a few cents (not even a birr!) go missing in the accounting books he manages. There weren’t concrete accusations or even suspicions yet. But the very fact those few cents couldn’t be traced was more than enough for the man. He takes his own life. It was a story repeated over and again when it came to trust and how people who keep their reputations couldn’t live under suspicion of being suspected of anything. Not that we condone suicide; in fact it is the worst decision anyone make and should be avoided at all costs. (That’s why recent couple of news flashes of very young person’s taking their own lives saddened many.)

I must have read somewhere that to be trusted is more than to be loved. When people who try to lead all their lives based on the foundations of strong principles suddenly find themselves as subjects of the simplest of suspicions they’d probably take it as some sort of capital punishment. Most of us would have said, “So what! How can anybody be offended by such a small and insignificant matter?” Well it isn’t that easy.

Indeed, to be trusted is more than to be loved!

Recently, we heard heartbreaking news from a small town. The young lady worked in a shop where they sell mobilize apparatus. According to the news three customers choose four mobile apparatus and offer to pay through mobile banking. She must have been familiar with the workings of

mobile banking and she agrees. So one of them types certain things on his cell phone and finally shows her confirmation that sixty-thousand plus birr was transferred to the shop’s account. Business done, they leave. However for some reason the young lady goes to the bank to make certain that the transfer was indeed complete, and the payment for the four mobile apparatus safely in the bank’s account. That’s where the ugly reality of life hit, and hit her. The bank people tell her no such transfer has been made. That does it.

The four were nothing but heartless crooks who for all practical purposes stole the mobile phones. Now under normal circumstances one would think all she has to do was tell the owners what happened and if they are aware of such stories which are too common these days they’d understand. That didn’t happen. She chose what she thought was the perfect response. She took her own life. While there are lose ends as to the overall mental condition of the young girl at that moment the story was that she thought the owners wouldn’t believe her story. Sad; very sad. If that indeed was what she really thought she must have some legitimate reason. Being accused of something that she didn’t do deliberately was too much for this young soul to take. Maybe she has been brought up under the strictest of traditions where trust couldn’t be compromised and being suspected of being untrustworthy is the cruelest of punishments; punishments for wrongs or minor failures that haven’t been committed on purpose. May her soul rest in peace!

Indeed, to be trusted is more than to be loved!

Talking about this incident one person asked “What do the crooks feel when they hear that a young girl’s life has prematurely ended because for their greed?” Probably little or nothing! Why do we say that? We hear numerous stories of crooks, even white collar crooks, who having destroyed the lives of whole families feel no remorse or anything that comes close. Some of the stories you hear in this respect are so shocking and blood-curdling your last dose of hope that a better world would be coming down the road is shattered to splinters. Irreparable, irreplaceable!

Looking back there’d be Things you grow up hearing about the untrustworthiness of so and so or how the trust of the innocent was betrayed by the closet of friends or family. The wife who trusted her husband so thoroughly that any shadow of negative comments about him turned her into a lioness suddenly learning that all through their years of marriage he has been the most unfaithful husband jumping from one bed to another and of secretly fathering a couple of illegitimate children.

The person who thought that his friend was so trustworthy lending him forty or fifty thousand birr carried no risk at all suddenly waking up to the fact the trustworthy friend was indeed the worst of backstabbers and the good man was not going to see a single cent of his forty, fifty thousand birr anytime soon. All of a sudden reality sets in and that’s only the beginning of the story. The

stories he hears about his ‘dear friend’ could be so weird and out-of-the-world sort of narrative it’d be very difficult to trust anyone after that.

Indeed, to be trusted is more than to be loved!

Loss of trust has assumed such scary dimensions that it’s no more mere personal issue. Much of the world has lost trust in the so-called global mainstream media flushing out which side was telling the truth and which side was battering the very tenets of journalism to the level of rendering the unrecognizable. The dishonesty of the global mainstream media has slid down the well of unprofessional behavior so deep it is indeed difficult to work out ways to prevent it from finally hitting the bottom for good. Presently mankind is subjected to such colossal amount of disinformation and misinformation the line between truth and false hood is thinning at very worrying and frightening pace.

Will mankind ever come to its senses close enough to say “Maybe all our hatred for each other, animosity, conflicts armed or otherwise result because of the high level of loss of trust amongst us and until we fix that nothing will ever work. Maybe we have given the global mainstream media the master key of the global narrative without holding it accountable for its actions and until we take back the master key and put it in safe, efficient and dependable hands nothing will work out!”

Indeed, to be trusted is more than to be loved!

In Pictures

Ethiopia, Sudan leaders exchange views

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

The President of the Transitional Sovereign Council of the Republic of Sudan, General Abdelfattah Alburhan arrived in Addis Ababa on Wednesday. Up on the arrival of Alburhan with his delegation at Addis Ababa Bole International Airport, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed (PhD) accorded the delegation a warm state welcome. The two leaders exchanged views on key current bilaterla and regional issues.



Ethiopian HPR speaker, Chinese National Congress Vice Chairman discusses

The Speaker of the House of People's Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Tagesse Chafo welcomed the delegation of Chinese National Congress led by Vice Chairman Losang Giltson.

The two sides discussed on mutual interests of the two countries. Speaker Tagesse during the discussion stated that Ethiopia and China are enjoying all-weather strategic relations and China plays significant contribution to the rapid economic growth of Ethiopia.

PM Abiy attends AI trainees graduation ceremony

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) attended the second batch graduation ceremony of youths trained in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology. The youth trained by Artificial Intelligence Institute for two months and graduated last Sunday.

"It gives hope to see our children obtain key knowledge essential to address Ethiopia's problems with the help of Artificial Intelligence. I am impressed by the potential of these youths and fully confident that they can ensure the development of our nation," PM Abiy said during the graduation ceremony.



DPM/FM Demeke discusses with EU Managing Director for Africa

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Demeke Mekonnen held a discussion with Ambassador Rita Laranjinha, European Union Managing Director for Africa. The two sides discussion focused on strengthening relations between Ethiopia and EU.

Demeke expressed Ethiopia's readiness to strengthen cooperation with EU and further explained the importance of sectoral dialogue between the two sides. Ambassador Rita Laranjinha on her part lauded the revamped relations of EU and Ethiopia and the readiness of EU to strengthen cooperation with Ethiopia.