

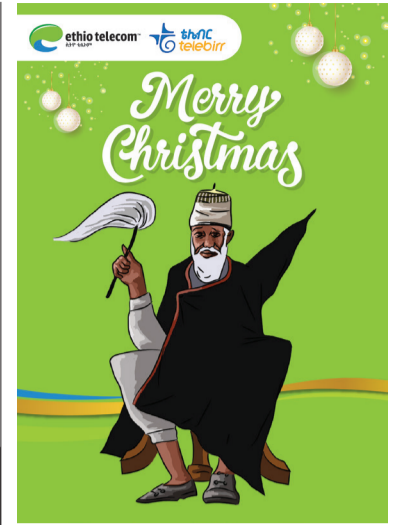


The Ethiopian Herald

Vol. LXXX No 099 4 JANUARY 2024 - TAHISAS 25, 2016

Thursday

Price Birr 10.00



AGI CONSTRUCTING THE FUTURE AFRICA
Abyssinia Group of Industries

Manufacturer of Rebars, Angles, Channels, Flat Bars & Round Bars. Introducing cut & bend service for rebars.

Contact & Address
Tel: +251 116 63 97 55/ 251 116 63 51 22/25
Mob.: +251 962 009 072/ +251 949 440 868
+251 911 45 9790
E-mail: sales@agiethiopia.com
4th Floor, Dabi Building, Bole road Addis Ababa Ethiopia

የመንግሥት ኮሙኒኬሽን አገልግሎት
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Government Communication Service

Ethiopia, Somaliland accord doesn't harm any party: GCS

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA - The agreement signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland would not affect any party, or breach any laws, so said Government Communication Service (GCS).

In a statement published yesterday

See Ethiopia, Somaliland ... Page 3

Historian advises Horn countries to follow Somaliland's suit

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- Ethiopia and Somaliland port pact opens a new era in the Horn of Africa (HoA), a noted historian said, calling Ethiopia's coastal neighbors to follow suit.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), senior historian and researcher Ayele Bekri (PhD) stated that Ethiopia's coastal neighbors are expected to follow Somaliland's footsteps that would foster

mutual benefits. "As long as Ethiopia desires sea ports, neighboring states ought to seek ways to benefit from what the former offers and open their doors for negotiation."

See Historian advises ... Page 3

Ethiopia to extend warm welcome to second-generation Diaspora

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA- Preparations have been finalized to accord warm reception and hospitality to those second generation Ethiopian Diasporas who come here to enjoy the diverse cultures of their country of origin, the Ministry of Tourism said.

Tourism State Minister Lensa Mekonnen told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that consolidated efforts are underway to make foreign born Ethiopians come here in response to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's

See Ethiopia to ... Page 3



Lensa Mekonnen

Topnotch hospitality services await tourists in 'Small Ethiopia'

• Town safe, splendid to visit

BY DESTA GEBREHIWOT

HAWASSA- Sidama capital, Hawassa expects high tourist influx in 2024 G.C as decent services and warm welcomes await visitors from the hospitality industry.

Dubbed also as 'Small Ethiopia' with melting pot population, Hawassa town is bracing for high tourist turnout this New Year with hotels and tour business vowing reliable and quality services to tourists.

With law enforcement services patrolling the town 24/7, CCTV cameras installed in most parts of the town and hotline established, the Sidama's capital according to interviews is safe to visit and will give a peculiar experience to visitors.

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, residents expressed optimism in relation to the number of tourists visiting and transiting the town in the 2024 E.C.

See Topnotch hospitality ... Page 3

The spiritual significance of African artifacts and the case of sold Gabonese Mask

Page 7

More reflections on Ethiopia's quest for access to sea

Page 8

Helina Teklu, a youth who aspires to fight climate change

Page 10

Expert pins hope on port deal's economic, political virtues

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA – The MoU reached with Somaliland would extremely benefit Ethiopia, which is the third largest economy in Sub-Saharan Africa and the second most populous in the continent both economically and politically, a well-known economist said.

Fairfax Africa Fund (U.S.) Global Chairman and Economist Zemedeneh Negatu told a foreign media that the agreement is very positive for Ethiopia which is heavily reliant on Djibouti ports for import-export trade over decades. Ethiopia is today the third largest economy in Sub-Saharan Africa next to Nigeria and South Africa and having over 120 million people.

Per the agreement, Ethiopia would obtain approximately 20 km of coastline for commercial and military purposes for the coming 50 years in the lease base and the agreement is also extendable based on mutual consent. A sovereign access to the sea has been Ethiopia's primary objectives for the last 30 years and it is extremely important for the country both politically and economically, Zemedeneh added.

"Actually, the growth of Ethiopia's economy benefits the whole of East Africa and in the next forty years, the country would be among the fifty largest economies in the world."

According to him, Ethiopia needs more sea outlets and Berbera Port is just one



Zemedeneh Negatu

of the first branches. It would continue to use Djibouti ports, Lamu Port of Kenya and other countries' sea outlets based on strategic partnership as the agreement benefits everybody.

"For instance, Ethiopia has been building the largest hydro-electric dam in Africa not only for itself, but also for the whole region. We Africans should not talk about borders, we should open borders to travel, to work together, to use resources and others. This should be the coming spirit in the future."

The economist added, "I think everybody knows the importance of having its own sea outlet for Ethiopia and the MoU with Somaliland would give a relief at least for

50 years as we will sort other ports in the future."

The agreement is also a very significant step to enable Ethiopia to secure a seaport for fifty years. For instance, the U.S had used the Panama Canal for 100 years. The countries should have a clear understanding about whom, how many people and how many countries would be benefited.

Something worth considering is that Ethiopia's MoU with Somaliland would bring the opportunity for mutual growth for the Horn of Africa countries and pave the way to the integration of people and economies in the region, Zemedeneh emphasized.

Ethiopia's missions start facilitating second-generation Diasporas' call

BY MENGESHA AMARE

ADDIS ABABA- The government of Ethiopia has invited second-generation of foreigners of Ethiopian origin to visit homeland so as to introduce themselves to the history, culture and values of the beloved country-Ethiopia.

Apart from organizing a core committee to organize activities in this regard, a number of activities are being undertaken by many missionaries and consular offices in different parts of the world for the same cause. These bodies are running a range of practical activities along with foreign Affairs Minister and Diaspora Agencies.

Having a stay with FBC, Ethiopian Ambassador to Nordic countries, Ambassador Mihreteab Mulugeta stated that sub committees in various countries where we have been delegated are set and start operation.

He said: "We have planned to make the call successful preparing website to help them get registered in whatever program convenient, and Ethiopians, foreigners of Ethiopian origin and Nordic countries committee members have been provided with a registration form coupled with a number of communicating means like



Ambassador Mihreteab Mulugeta

brochures and pamphlets with a view to making them well aware of the purpose of homeland trip."

As to him, the call would help the second generation have ample opportunity to properly interact with respective counterparts at home, share experiences, draw important lesson and acquire the most important knowledge about their country.

He further expounded that in addition to give the nation some sort of economic value, the

visits would be of paramount importance in helping the guest boost the understanding about their country thereby promoting culture, history and societal values.

It is to be recalled that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) invited Ethiopians and foreigners of Ethiopian origin to visit their country two years ago and promised that he would invite second generation in the second chapter.

Art, media professionals to mobilize citizens for Nat'l Dialogue

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- Artists and media professionals have pledged to mobilize the people for the success of the National Dialogue that requires inclusiveness and participation.

The National Dialogue that the government designed to resolve national discords is under process demanding the active participation of the public in which artists and media practitioners are expressing commitment to contribute to this end.

Ethiopian Musicians Association President Dawit Yefru said that the art sector had played a significant role in mobilizing the public during difficult situations such as drought and famine over the past years.

Therefore, Artist Dawit indicated that the nation needs the active participation of the art sector in mobilizing the public for active participation in the National Dialogue that intended to solve national discrepancies and ensure lasting peace.

"Connecting people to people through art is vital. Art is conveyed through various forms. So, the sector could play a remarkable role in correcting the false narrative and focus on areas that could unify the public despite their differences," he underscored.

Following the call of the National Dialogue Commission, "our association is ready to exert our responsibility and take the lion's share in every possible ways," he stressed.

An Author and Media Professional Tesfaye Mamo on his part emphasized that each individual who involves in art, music, literature and media and promotion sector need to own the National Dialogue.

"Unless we take it as a priority and sit around the table to right the wrongdoings and resolve the challenges, passing the country we want to the nation generation would be difficult," he said.

Tesfaye noted that the only way that the nation could pass its difficult situation is through applying a peaceful dialogue.

Thus, people in every profession must take the issue as a priority and contribute to the successful realization of the dialogue, he stated.

"Nothing good would come out of instability. It is important to note that it is by discussing and correcting our wrongdoings that we are able to pass better country for our children. To this end, we are ready to actively exert our responsibility as professionals," he added.

For his take on the issue, Artist and Promotion Expert Tilahun Gugsu mentioned that holding a National Dialogue that could create national consensus is critical.

He stated that the National Dialogue was supposed to be held way sooner.

"Taking too much time without having a proper National Dialogue would cost the nation more lives and bring about further socio-economic problems," he said.

He emphasized that professionals must show commitment and play role in sensitizing the society and sustaining the nation.

Moreover, artists need to do whatever is necessary as a citizen and professional, he underlined.

PPSO-E launches project to improve Parkinson patients' lives

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA - Parkinson Patients Support Organization-Ethiopia (PPSO-E) expressed that it has launched a project to improve the life of patients through capacity building and raising public awareness.

PPSO-E Project Coordinator Yabisra Zelalem, told the Ethiopia Press Agency (EPA) that the purpose of the project is to ensure the quality of life of Parkinson patients and caregivers as well as raising awareness about the disease.

"Parkinson disease is a brain disorder. And some causes are a family history, environment exposure, life experience, trauma, emotional stress and others," she stated.

The project that would last for three years is going to be implemented in Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, Central Ethiopia, and Addis Ababa, she expressed.

According to her, the project would increase the awareness of Parkinson sufferers and caregivers' through undertaking various activities including campaign, lobbying, advocacy, and experience sharing via the media.

Additionally, a capacity building works would be done emphasizing on income-



generating activities for Parkinson disease patients and caregivers, providing speech and physiotherapy services, and providing disease management training for patients and caregivers," she elaborated.

Care and support will be focused on drug and cash support for economically underprivileged Parkinson disease patients and caregivers, home based care service for bedridden patients with health professionals and neurologists, she added.

As to project coordinator, the project would also help to increase government and organizations attention on the area,

improved health professionals' knowledge, and decreased misdiagnosis and reduced discrimination.

Non-Communicable Diseases Focal Person at the Ministry of Health, Selam Ayele (MD) said, "If stakeholders, professional associations and partners do their part, the project will bring about the desired change (of awareness, skills and attitudes), we will be able to reduce the discrimination and stigmatization of Parkinson's patients, prevention and health. In terms of making the service accessible, we all have to play our part."

Ethiopia to extend warm...

(PhD) call to know about the country's much-cherished cultural values.

In addition to paving the way for second generation Ethiopian Diasporas to visit attraction sites, there will be events and festivals that allow them to see their culture up close.

The Ministry is partnering with relevant stakeholders including service providers and media to help second generation Ethiopian Diasporas to know the culture of their country of origin at best. "Foreign-born Ethiopians' stay here will be what they would learn about their forefathers and foremothers cultural assets and values and understand the reality beyond second-hand information," Lensa stressed.

The State Minister further stated that the completion of tourism mega projects and

those that are under construction have been significantly contributing for the sector's development. "Second generation Ethiopian Diasporas will be happy with what they see during their stay here."

Apart from Ethiopia's commendable efforts to develop the tourism industry, the recently inaugurated tourist-friendly sites including Chebera Churchura Elephant Paw Lodge have played their due role in making the country a preferred tourist destination.

"Extensive promotional activities are underway to attract both domestic and foreign tourists to come to Ethiopia. "When tourists who come here find a comfortable lodging and entertainment place like Chebera Churchura Elephant Paw Lodge, their desire to come back and visit will increase."

According to her, the tourism promotional activity should be supplemented by the provision of adequate and comfortable accommodation that would make the tourists stay memorable. In this regard, efforts are underway to provide seamless service to both local and international tourists who wish to visit Ethiopia's attraction sites.

Currently, the Ministry of Tourism is conducting a market research that evaluates visitor's satisfaction in services they have obtained in attraction sites and areas that require more promotional and advertising activities in a bid to enhance the tourists' inflow.

The Ministry has also been employing digital options to promote the country's world-famous attraction sites to foreign tourists and encourage them to come and visit Ethiopia, the State Minister remarked.

Ethiopia, Somaliland...

about the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Partnership and Cooperation that has been signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland, GCS said that the accord wouldn't harm anybody since it relies on mutual benefits achieved through lawful and peaceful means.

"No party or country will be affected by this MoU. There is no broken trust nor is there any laws that have been transgressed," the statement noted.

While this is the fact, it cannot be said that some will not be offended, shocked and refrain from attempting to destroy the positive progress, it said.

According to GCS, the MOU includes wide scopes of cooperation in social, economic, political and military fields.

The document gives Ethiopia the opportunity to obtain a permanent and reliable naval base and commercial maritime service in the Gulf of Aden through a lease arrangement, and according to the government's announced position, it allows Somaliland to derive an equivalent share of the lease from Ethiopian Airlines, the statement expressed.

Beyond that, it mentioned that the document also includes provisions for the Ethiopian government to make an in-depth assessment

towards taking a position regarding the efforts of Somaliland to gain recognition.

As to GCS, the agreement with Somaliland is a demonstration of the government's belief in achieving Ethiopia's aspirations through cooperation with its neighbors, through the principle of reciprocity, and peaceful means.

"This opportunity is open to all and remains open," the statement added.

The MoU should please all Ethiopians and friends of Ethiopia, as well as all members of the international community who desire for peace to reign in the region, it noted.

Historian...

It is worth remembering that the border among Horn of Africa countries is artificial and made by colonizers and the people living in those nations have robust cultural, historical and economic ties and their fate is intertwined. Accordingly, the role of Horn leaders should be negotiating over the terms of agreements which need mutual understanding, the historian emphasized.

"Ethiopia has still many more undone diplomatic and home works to efficiently benefit from the Red Sea and the MoU reached with Somaliland should be expanded to all neighboring states that would enable the former to ensure port diversification and ease its reliance on a single outlet."

It is critical to analyze the political dynamics that would happen due to the MoU and make vigilant preparation for negative responses that may come from different corners. To this end, the Ethiopian government is expected to make extensive discussions with concerned bodies who claim to have a stake in the issue, Ayele added.

It is also commendable to shun situations that could lead to confrontations and overcome the challenges wisely as the escalation only benefits external forces that have the mission to destabilize the already-volatile region.

"I strongly believe in mutual agreements and want to underscore the importance of non-political actors' recommendations in the issue. Unilateral and forceful gestures are not helpful to either of the Horn countries and the leaders should weigh the experts' suggestions. We need no more war. Cooperation is a matter of saving civilian lives," the historian remarked.

Topnotch...

The peace and stability of the town is by far better than it was years ago. And, the strong cooperation between the public and law enforcement bodies has made the town a safer town to visit, so said Abdurazak Kidir, front service receptionist at Central Hawassa Hotel.

Abdurazak who has been in the post for three year said that Hawassa is fast growing town replete with tourist enticing natural and manmade heritages. It is frequented by domestic and foreign visitors. Fish market, Emperor Hailesele palace, Fikir lakes.

Somehow the violence erupted years ago cast a shadow on the tourism activities of the town. These days, with the town's peace becoming reliable and hospitality industry ready to accord decent services, visitors will find their stay a rewarding experience.

Unlike previous times where the town experienced unrest, the town is tranquil with so much more to offer to tourists, according to Abdurazak.

"We have received substantial amount of reservation requests and we have finalized to offer unforgettable experiences to tourists either visiting or transiting the city," said Getachew Munib a General Manager at Ker-Awud International Hotel Hawassa.

Hawassa is home to diverse population and mosaic cultures, the town harbors splendid natural lakes and an array of fine cultural dish, the General Manager stated adding "It is our expectation that this New Year will see an uptick in the number of tourists. It will surely remain a top choice in the itinerary of tourists."

Both also urged all to help restore national stability for the tourism industry to perform to its fullest potential. Endowed with both natural and cultural heritages, Hawassa which is 220 kilometers from the capital Addis Ababa is among major tourist destination towns in Ethiopia.

Opinion

National Dialogue: A viable journey to realize harmonious, prosperous Ethiopia

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

The success of the national dialogue crucially depends on its capacity to bridge the gaps that currently exist in terms of understanding between different communities and trust in the leadership of the country. To accomplish this, it is subservient for the government to exhibit an unwavering commitment to actively listening, comprehending deeply, and effectively addressing the concerns voiced by its citizens.

By doing so, the government, not only demonstrates its genuine willingness to foster a more inclusive and prosperous Ethiopia, but also strengthens the bonds of trust between the leadership and the people. Active listening is a fundamental aspect of successful national dialogue as it allows the government to gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse perspectives and needs within society.

This level of engagement fosters a sense of trust and cooperation as citizens feel valued and respected knowing that their voices are being heard and their concerns are being addressed.

Beyond listening, the government is also duty bound to demonstrate a commitment to addressing the concerns of its citizens in meaningful and tangible ways. This involves taking concrete actions to address the underlying issues and challenges faced by different communities, and to develop and implement policies that promote inclusivity and prosperity for all. By actively working towards resolving these concerns, the government sends a powerful message of its dedication to creating a society that works for the benefit of all its citizens.

Through open and respectful dialogue, the government can help people from different backgrounds to gain a better understanding of each other's perspectives, fostering empathy and cooperation. This not only promotes social cohesion but also paves the way for collaborative efforts in addressing common challenges and achieving shared goals.

Overcoming deep-seated divisions and addressing long-standing grievances cannot be achieved overnight. It requires dedicated time, persistent effort, and a sincere commitment from all parties involved. However, the fact that the national dialogue commission is actively engaged in this pursuit is a clear indicator of significant progress and an unwavering determination to foster unity and reconciliation among the people of Ethiopia.

By creating avenues for open dialogue and actively involving all segments of society, the government sends a resounding message that it values the input and concerns of its citizens. This deliberate effort to bridge gaps and build trust serves as a critical foundation for meaningful progress and sustainable development.

The National Dialogue Commission's (NDC's) commitment to fostering inclusive conversations and addressing the concerns of citizens is an integral part of the nation's journey towards a stronger and more cohesive Ethiopia. While the process of bridging gaps and addressing deep-rooted divisions may be challenging, the government's active engagement in the national dialogue demonstrates a clear determination to confront these obstacles head-on.

During the preoperational activities of the



National Dialogue Commission, it has become evident that Ethiopia exhibits a strong sense of unity and shared dedication toward the advancement and progress of the nation. The participation and involvement of individuals from diverse segments of the society including youth, women, farmers, civil servants, and professionals, have provided tremendous encouragement to the commission.

The enthusiastic participation of youth in the national dialogue process is noteworthy. As the future leaders and pillars of society, their active engagement demonstrates their commitment to actively shaping the destiny of Ethiopia. Their eagerness to contribute insights and perspectives underscores their belief in the transformative power of dialogue and their determination to create a better future for themselves and future generations.

The broad participation of individuals from various societal spheres demonstrates the collective commitment to Ethiopia's development. The enthusiasm and engagement shown by these diverse groups highlight the shared belief in the importance of the national dialogue process and the potential it holds for building a stronger, more inclusive, and prosperous Ethiopia.

This broad-based involvement ensures that the national dialogue encompasses a comprehensive range of perspectives and interests greatly enhancing its ability to effectively address the diverse concerns of Ethiopians. The remarkable level of public support and active engagement witnessed during the NDC's preoperational activities exemplifies the deep-seated yearning of the people to be heard and their profound desire to actively contribute to the betterment of the country.

The commission recognizes and highly values the immense significance of the input provided by the public as it firmly believes that collective efforts hold the potential to foster positive change and pave the path towards a brighter and more prosperous future for Ethiopia. By actively involving individuals from different societal spheres, the NDC ensures that a plethora of voices and perspectives are represented in the national dialogue.

This deliberate inclusivity not only reflects the diversity of the country but also strengthens the dialogue process by incorporating a wide range of concerns, experiences, and aspirations. The commission acknowledges that meaningful and lasting change can only be achieved by actively engaging all segments of society and harnessing the

collective wisdom and determination present within Ethiopians.

As the NDC moves forward with its mission to facilitate productive conversations and shape policies that will guide Ethiopia's future, it will continue to rely on the profound public desire for active involvement and constructive engagement. The commission understands that the success of the national dialogue process lies in recognizing and amplifying the voices and aspirations of individuals from all walks of life.

In a similar vein, the NDC has diligently established a multitude of platforms carefully designed to foster open dialogue and provide the public with opportunities to freely express their thoughts and concerns. This inclusive and participatory approach has proven to be immensely empowering for citizens, as it grants them agency and enables them to actively contribute to shaping the future of the country.

The sheer magnitude of their participation serves as a powerful testament to their unwavering belief in the transformative power of open and inclusive conversations. It highlights their collective determination to address pressing issues, foster unity, and forge a more harmonious and prosperous future for the nation.

The active participation of the public in the NDC's preoperational activities indicates their strong desire to be heard and actively contribute to the betterment of their nation. It demonstrates their recognition of the potential of open and inclusive conversations in addressing societal challenges and fostering a sense of unity among all Ethiopians. This collective determination to engage in meaningful dialogue reflects a shared vision for a more harmonious and prosperous future where the voices of all citizens are valued and considered.

This remarkable display of eagerness serves as a powerful testament to the collective belief held by Ethiopians that open and inclusive dialogue is not only essential but also pivotal in effectively addressing the pressing challenges that the country faces. This shared belief underscores the recognition that fruitful conversations, involving perspectives from all walks of life hold the key to fostering understanding, cooperation, and finding sustainable solutions for a better Ethiopia.

From the very inception, the NDC has been privileged to witness an overwhelming level of enthusiasm from the public which serves as a reinforcement of their unwavering

commitment to actively engage in the national dialogue process. This enthusiastic response has greatly uplifted the commission highlighting the dedication of individuals from diverse backgrounds and sectors who wholeheartedly embrace the opportunity to foster productive and meaningful conversations.

The commission draws inspiration from the tremendous support and active involvement demonstrated by the people strengthening its resolve to ensure that every voice is heard throughout the national dialogue process. This enthusiastic response not only reinforces the commitment of the commission but also emboldens the nation as a whole demonstrating that there is a shared vision for a better future.

It is the collective dedication observed in individuals from diverse backgrounds and sectors that paves the way for inclusive and fruitful conversations.

By fostering an environment where people can express their views freely and respectfully engage in dialogue, the hope is to find common ground and work towards collective growth. The national dialogue initiative realizes that the full potential of the people can only be realized when they come together and work towards a shared vision.

Through this inclusive dialogue, the country can harness the power of different viewpoints and experiences to find common ground and develop innovative solutions for the country's pressing challenges. This collaborative approach will not only enable us to tackle developmental issues, but it will also promote social cohesion and harmony among diverse ethnic and cultural groups.

By recognizing the value of the national dialogue and aligning their priorities accordingly, political parties in Ethiopia are taking a significant step towards building a more inclusive and prosperous future for the country. This shift in mindset reflects a growing understanding that sustainable development can only be achieved when all voices are heard, political tensions are resolved, and decision-making processes are inclusive and transparent. Thus, political parties are beginning to acknowledge the importance of national dialogue as a catalyst for positive change and progress in Ethiopia.

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

Editorial

BRICS + to revamp the advancement of the global south

As of the beginning of this year, 2024 BRICS + has officially accepted its five new members. It is also believed that it will add more this year. This will reinforce the new bloc that favours the rapid development of the global south.

The world is a vast place with 8 billion people living in about 200 countries and territories. The countries differ in criteria like geography, population, and resource distribution. So is their difference in their economic development.

The difference in the economic development level is believed to be an outcome of an unbalanced or biased global economic system that favours one side or already the world's economic giants. The rules of the game are formulated according to the situation of the developed world who want to maintain its economic and political hegemony as long as it can carry on. Therefore, the developing world has to look for a way out to change the situation that is keeping them in a quagmire of poverty, backwardness, and political and social crisis.

Many years ago the developed world has been operating under the framework of the south-south cooperation. South-South cooperation is a type of technology cooperation. It tries to interact and exchange knowledge, skills, and successful initiatives in a variety of fields. It is a mechanism used by countries and international organizations to foster collaboration among developing countries in the Global South.

What makes the South-South Cooperation a pivotal alliance in transforming the global imbalance is that developing countries and developed countries have different priorities, needs, and challenges. Thus, South-South cooperation allows developing countries to cooperate and address their common issues.

Developing countries have many commonalities due to their shared colonial past. This includes poor infrastructure, illiteracy, poverty, etc. This brings them together to cooperate and find solutions.

South-South cooperation helps developing countries achieve collective self-reliance as it is difficult at the individual level.

In addition to what has been done so far, the South-South Cooperation needs further support to speed up the development of its member states.

BRICS + is likely to become such an alliance of countries of the SSC that can prop up the noble objectives of collaboration among countries of the global south.

Ethiopia is also an important member of both the BRICS + and the global south. It is the second most populous nation in the continent. The country is also diversifying its economic activities in sectors like agriculture, the manufacturing industry, and tourism, among others.

As a rapidly growing economy in the Horn of Africa region, it plays an important role in raising the contribution of the BRICS+ alliance towards the realization of the ambitions of the global south.

"Ethiopia's membership in the BRICS mechanism is based upon the fact that it promotes South-South cooperation. Since Ethiopia is an important country within the South-South cooperation framework, we believe that our membership into the BRICS would be an important impetus both for Ethiopia and other BRICS members," PM Abiy Ahmed told Member of the House of Peoples Representatives on Ethiopia's accession of BRICS +.

There are hopes that the BRICS+ alliance will absorb more members this year making it an additional force that drives the economic, political and social advancement of the global south that represents a vast majority of the world's population.

Opinion

Hold high the banner of a community with a shared future for mankind and create together a brighter future

BY ZHAO ZHIYUAN

President Xi Jinping delivered an important address at the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs held in Beijing from December 27 to 28, 2023. A systemic review of the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, and a further advocate for an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization are one of the most important outcomes of the conference.

It was pointed out at the conference that in building a community with a shared future for mankind, the goal is to build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and shared prosperity, the pathway is promoting global governance that features extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit, the guiding principle is to apply the common values of humanity, the basic underpinning lies in building a new type of international relations, the strategic guidance comes from the implementation of the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, and the platform for action is high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. On this basis, we seek to bring countries together to meet challenges and achieve prosperity for all, and usher in a bright future of peace, security, prosperity and progress for our world.

Given the series of major issues and challenges facing the world today, it was pointed out at the conference that China calls for an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

An equal and orderly multipolar world is one in which all countries, regardless of size, are treated as equals, hegemonism and power politics are rejected, and democracy is truly promoted in international relations. To keep the progress toward greater multipolarity generally stable and constructive, the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter must be observed by all, the universally recognized, basic norms governing international relations must be upheld by all, and true multilateralism must be practiced.

A universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization is one that meets the common needs of all countries, especially the developing countries, and properly addresses the development imbalances between and within countries resulting from the global allocation of resources. It is important to resolutely oppose the attempt to roll back globalization and abuse the concept of security, oppose all

forms of unilateralism and protectionism, firmly promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, overcome the structural problems hindering the healthy development of the world economy, and make economic globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all.

China is the largest developing country in the world. Africa is the continent with the most developing countries. China and Africa have long become a community with a shared future where our people rise and fall together. How to resolve the development deficit, address the security challenges and enhance mutual learning between different civilizations are the questions of our times faced by both China and Africa.

As a major African country with great influence, Ethiopia is one of the most important practitioners of building China-Africa community with a shared future. In the political field, both countries always lend firm support to each other on multilateral occasions for safeguarding the common interests of all developing countries and making the international order more just and reasonable. In the economic field, fruitful outcomes have been yielded from high-quality China-Ethiopia Belt and Road cooperation. The Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway with industrial parks along the line, the Addis Ababa Light Rail, and the Riverside Green Development Project have played an active role in promoting economic and social development, and improving people's livelihood in Ethiopia. All these vividly epitomize the mutually beneficial cooperation between our two countries. In the security field, both sides work together to implement the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa for realizing peace, stability, development and prosperity in the region. As all-weather strategic partners, China and Ethiopia will, as always, join hands to address global challenges and promote common development, setting a fine example in the building a community with a shared future for mankind.

For the present and coming periods, China has been following the principles of self-confidence and self-reliance, openness and inclusiveness, fairness and justice, and win-win cooperation. Focusing on the theme of building a community with a shared future for mankind, China will always be a good friend, a good partner and a good brother that is reliable through thick and thin of Ethiopia and Africa as a whole. Together, we can deliver a brighter future.

The author is Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

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



The Ethiopian Herald

Established in 1943

Published daily except Mondays
By The Ethiopian Press Agency

Office of the CEO
Tel. 011-126-42-22
Fax. 251-011-156-98-62
email- epa@press.et

Advertisement and Dist.
Department

email: etpresspromotion@gmail.com
Tel. 011-156-98-73/011-811-13-15
Telegram :- 0976084707 - press

Editor-in-Chief: Worku Belachew
email- workubelachew@press.et
Address- Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-city
Woreda - 05, House No----
Tel- +251 111 26 41 98

Managing Editor: Wakuman Kudama
Email: wakuma220@gmail.com

Deputy Editors-in-Chief:
Alem Hailu
Elizabeth Mengistu
Zekarias Woldemariam
Desta Geberehiwot
Daniel Beyene

Website: www.press.et
email: ethiopianherald@press.et
Fb/ /Ethiopian Press Agency/
The Ethiopian Herald

Business & Economy

Exploiting hide and skin resources

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

The livestock resource is an important economic subsector which supports both the agricultural income and the nation's Gross Domestic Production (GDP). It contributes about 13% of the annual export earnings. However, as Ethiopia has un-delimited long distance border with the neighboring countries, the large amount of unregistered cross border trade negatively affects the nation's economic gains. Not only these, cross border trade made the nation vulnerable to smuggling of armaments from the neighboring counties which aggravate domestic violence.

Birhanu Gebremedihin is an agricultural economist specialized in livestock and working as a consultant for various local and international none governmental organizations for the last three decades. As to him, despite the nation has huge resources, the predominant traditional way of cattle rearing practice has restricted the sector's growth and made it remain subsistence.

At the household level, livestock plays crucial economic role in the lives of pastoralists, semi-pastorals and supports small holder farmers in the high land parts of the country.

As the community is defined in a low income brackets, the sector serves the people to cope sever situations induced by climate change and global warming. Traditionally, pastoralists in the peripheral regions are not reached by modern finance system. Hence, animals are used as accumulated capital and movable property.

In time of hardships, they are exchanged in to money even with less optimal price to purchase other vital consumption products. The government is convinced that the livestock sub sector plays critical role in the ongoing efforts of poverty alleviation and support the economy. Often its policy in this regard is harmonious through various dimensions, encouragements in terms of budget regulation and institutional arrangement and marketing.

Among the bi-products of livestock, hide and skin production is commonly practiced as an additional source of income and the leather industry sector is one of the growing economic sectors in Ethiopia. However, the sector is constrained by different factors like external parasites, inappropriate management of animals and faults during slaughtering, and improper handling of skin before reaching the tannery, so that the sector is losing a large amount of money due to the decline in quality and the fall in export price.

In the rural parts of the country where there is no modern abattoir, each house hold slaughters animals in the house yards and mainly the skins are used as sleeping item. The absence of market which absorbs animal skin in the rural parts also coerces them to use it for their own or throw it away as irrelevant item. Therefore, resource that can be exported



Leather products are used for various purposes

photo google

Ethiopia has very good potential to produce substantial quantities of hide and skins, the quality of the hide or skin, to a large extent, is related to the attitude of the community with regard to the value of skin and hide

and can bring foreign currency to the nation is simply wasted.

According to the Ministry of Industry, 27 tanneries in Ethiopia produce all of the hides and skins and supply finished leather to the domestic and export markets. These tanneries have an average daily soaking capacity of 107,850 pieces of sheep skin, 51,550 pieces of goatskin, and 9,800 pieces of hide. The annual capacity has reached approximately 48 million (32.4 million sheep and 15.5 million goat) skins and 2.9 million hides. However, the importance and uses of hide and skin production in the context of smallholder farmers were multidirectional. Data from the three districts of Gambella region (the outskirts of Gambella town, Godare and

Lare) had shown that hide and skin are primarily used for income generation and secondly used for bedding purpose in all districts.

Ethiopian small ruminant skins, especially sheep skins, traditionally have a very good reputation for quality in the world leather market due to their fine grain and compact structure. According to the Central Statistics Agency report, the existing 27 tanneries in Ethiopia produce all forms of hides and skins and provide finished leather for the domestic and export markets. However, the capacity to process hides and skins greatly exceeds domestic supply, particularly for raw sheep and goatskins. Although Ethiopia has very good potential to produce substantial quantities of hide and skins, the quality of the hide or skin, to a large extent, is related to the attitude of the community with regard to the value of skin and hide.

In this regard, the leather industry sector is losing large amounts of money due to the decline in quality and the fall in export price. It is estimated that about one quarter to one-third of all the skins processed at tanneries are unsuitable for export due to various defects. Some reports indicated that the major problems affecting the leather and especially the tanning industry are related to skin diseases, scratches, scabs, and branding, poor pattern, flay cuts, putrefactions, and poor substances.

Based on annual offtake rates of 7% for cattle, 33% for sheep, and 35% for goats, the production stood at 3.78 million cattle hides, 8.41 million sheep skins, and 8.42 million goatskins in 2022/2023. The 7% offtake rate for cattle falls significantly below the African average of 12.71% and the world average of 20.31%. However, the offtake for sheep ranks slightly below the average level in Africa and the offtake for goatskin ranks slightly higher than the African average, although both remain well below the world average.

The percentage of skins having defects, which end up downgrading the quality, has increased tremendously in Ethiopia. Skin quality is primarily defined by the absence of damage to the grain layer of the skin.

Tanneries categorize only 10–15% of the collected skins' qualify for top grades,

with the rest being downgraded and sometimes even rejected. The quality of finished leather is related to a number of surface and structural defects that the hide and skin acquire during the life of the animal, during slaughtering, storage, and transportation stages. The causes of defects on raw hide and skin can be broadly classified as pre-slaughter and post-slaughter defect causes.

Recently, the senior researcher at the Ethiopian Institute of Agriculture Research (EAIR), Rehima Musema said that Ensuring well organized marketing system and establishing proper network among stakeholders in hides and skins value chain are instrumental in enhancing their contribution to the country's economy.

Presenting a paper titled Hides and Skins (HSs) Production and Market: Status, Challenges and Prospects in Ethiopia at a workshop organized by the agricultural research institute recently, the EIAR Senior Researcher said that Ethiopia has abundant livestock resources and unique features of hides and skins. However as to her, there are outstanding challenges that need to be solved urgently.

pre-slaughter defects, post-slaughter flaws, shortage of chemicals, limited support for the sector, inadequate network of stakeholders in hides and skins value chain, among others, were raised as challenges to the sector. Also, lack of proper platform to integrate all pertinent stakeholders in hides' and skins' value chain starting from farmers and pastoralists to the market system has been a critical challenge in the sector.

The senior researcher further stated that solving quality problems, ensuring well organized marketing system and institutional support are very important to enhance the inclusive contribution of hides and skins to the country's economy. Moreover, Rehima stressed the need for revising the policies towards hides and skins, leather and leather products.

The senior researcher finally urged all stakeholders to contribute their respective responsibilities to properly exploit the country's abundant resources in the sector and increase its share in the economy. Ethiopia has abundant livestock resources and is ranked first in Africa and fifth globally in terms of livestock population.

According to the Ministry of Industry's recent report, production process of some of the tanneries is interrupted due to lack of salt which is available in the Afar region that can be used as input to change the raw skin and hides in to leather since bringing the material to the center where the tanneries are located become harder as a result of instability in the region.

On the other hand, the chronic shortage of hard currency in banks hampered some tanneries from importing other inputs which are not available locally and this again restricted them not to enhance their production volume. Thus, collective effort to ease these bottlenecks is essential in order to get better of the leather sub sector, it was learned.

Art & Culture

The spiritual significance of African artifacts and the case of sold Gabonese Mask

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

A recent story that appeared in the Guardian newspaper about an extremely rare African mask that was sold to a dealer by a French couple for only 150 Euros only to discover that it was worth millions have had a request to cancel the artifact sale, a case that thrown out in court had claimed the headlines. According to the newspaper, “the couple, in their 80s, sold the wooden mask in September 2021 to a secondhand goods dealer as part of the sale of a number of antiquities including African artifacts that they had kept in their secondary home in southern France.”

The report went on to say that the object had belonged to an ancestor who was a colonial era governor in Africa, and they believed they were of little value. A couple of weeks back, I had written an article on the fate of African ancient artifacts that have great historical, artistic and cultural values and some of which are kept in European museums or in private homes as relics of the colonial era that saw the disappearance of an estimate 600,000 relics dispersed all over Europe and even beyond the old continent. For those of you who do not know what these masks are good for, here are a few explanations that can help us grasp the value of these artifacts. Generally or more commonly speaking, the term ‘mask’ has different definitions. The Merriam Webster dictionary defines a mask as 1-a cover or partial cover for the face used for disguise, 2- a person wearing a mask is called a masker 3-figure of a face worn on the stage in antiquity to identify the character and project the voice or a grotesque of false face worn at carnivals or in rituals.

These are of course definitions of ordinary masks. The origin of masks or the wearing of masks goes back to the 16th century, when the word “mask” appeared in English in 1530 from Middle French mask “covering to hide or guard the face”. The term is known to have been derived in turn from the Italian “maschera” or from medieval “mask, specter, nightmare”.

We are not here dealing with the etymology of the term but its evolution from a simple cover for the face to one that is loaded with symbolism and meaning deriving from its particular use. African traditional mask has for instance a very serious meaning because, “In some African cultures, a spirit inhabits a mask upon its creation. When a man (or on rare occasions, a woman) puts on a mask and costume, they give up their own being. The identity of the spirit takes over.”

In traditional Africa, mask is worn “during celebrations, dances and festivities and rituals ceremonies commemorating social and religious events. They play a very significant spiritual and functional role in the community and often there is no distinction social recreation and ritual celebration.” The value of African masks is derived not from

its use value but from its scarcity, that is to say from the fact that it is not easily found in the market or in private homes in even in museum although relics there are not for sale but for contemplation and appreciation. What makes the African mask in the above story such an important item that attracted international media attention is obviously its rarity. According to the same newspaper, “The auctioneers described it as “an extremely rare 19th century mask, property of a secret society of the Fang people in Gabon, an ethnic Bantu group, with only 10 such objects still in existence. One auction house official was reported as telling a French TV that, “This type of mask is even rarer than a Leonardo da Vinci painting.”

Look at this! A 19th century African mask with higher value than a Leonardo da Vinci painting! That is incredible to say the least. Few are not the so-called art experts who often attribute far less value to ancient African artifacts in general and the masks in particular, in their ill-informed or arrogant attitude towards a culture they often consider inferior to theirs. As we said above, what makes an African artifact more important than the best painting by the best European renaissance painter is not its use value but its market value that results from the rarity of the object together with its rarity deriving from its symbols and meanings.

The African mask in question created such a controversy in court because the couple that sold it realized its market value only after they sold it and saw that it was worth more than their original price of 150 Euros. The mask had been in their possession for almost two centuries but they could not see its significance because they likely considered it as a piece of old and useless item that had no significant and they should thereby get rid of it by throwing it out to a buyer who offered them a price that was better than throwing it into the garbage. They did not even stop and think why their ancestor kept it at home in the first place or they did not respect the memory of their ancestor who took the pains to bring it back from such a distant place that was a French colonial possession at that time.

From the story, one can gather that the old couples are culturally ignorant although they are members of a “civilized” society that has taken away by hook or by crook an item that belong by right, to a “backward” African community they despised and undermined at that time but went to court now only when they realized that they were in possession of a very valuable piece of African history.

The couple may not be accused of selling the item because they did not bring it from the African colony. Neither is the dealer responsible for the sale of the item because his job is to buy and sell such items. However, the court should at least have conducted an investigation as to the origin of the mask and how it found its way in the



houses of the buyers and sellers.

Such an investigation may not lead to the reclamation of the item by concerned third parties because there might definitely be no law prohibiting people from owning or selling old relics from Africa probably stolen or bought at dirt cheap price. There must be others items similar to the African mask in question that are still hidden in private homes or forgotten by their owners like the couple in the story. To begin with, French museums should be the sole collectors of such items because they represent the history of colonialism which is also their history.

The best option would be to buy such items from private collectors and put it in the museum and then ask the pertinent African authorities whether they would like to reclaim it because former officials from a former European colonizing nation then still bear a moral, if not a legal, obligation, to return the looted artifacts to their legitimate and original owners. What is more disturbing is the fact that the concerned or relevant African authorities are looking on with a degree of impartiality as their historical relics that were stolen from Africa are being claimed and reclaimed by illegal possessors disputing not the question of ownership but that of cost in the market.

Meanwhile the protest by the Gabonese community in southern France against the auctioning of the mask was a courageous and responsible action although the court has thrown off their appeal. They demanded the return of the mask to its legitimate owners, i.e. the people of Gabon. By doing so the French court has made the mistake of not identifying the real and original owners of the items knowing full well that neither the

couple nor the art collector are the legitimate owners. The Gabonese government has also protested against the court ruling following the protest by the Gabonese community in south France.

Where is the African Union’s cultural committee in all this? Although it is given the authority to fight for the return of African lost artifact back to the continent, there is no protest or appeal by the AU against the ruling by the French court. With added pressure from the AU, the court ruling might have changed its mind and returned the artifact to Gabon. This has not happened simply because Africans are not yet united in reclaiming their history and their legacy. What one Gabonese official told The Guardian stands out as a remarkable protest statement against the indifference of African institutions that should have come out to defend his position.

The statement by the Gabonese official is worth quoting here. He said that, “Today, this court case is about the grandchildren of the governor versus a second hand dealer. But neither of them is legitimate in terms of this mask. What we want is the restitution of this mask to Gabon.” The man went on to say that, “the mask has a soul. it was used to establish justice in our villages. The discussion in court has been about morality, but how about the morality of the spoliation of works of art and our dignity? Where is the morality in that?”

There are many cases of Africa’s soul being put for legal niceties in dealing with art spoliations. The case of the African mask will not be the first or the last in claiming media headlines although justice may not be served in the case of the mask which was the symbol of justice in its glory days.

Indepth

More reflections on Ethiopia's quest for access to sea

BY FITSUM GETACHEW

Following the recent statement made by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on the issue of Ethiopia raising the issue of getting access to sea and alternative port, various reactions have been coming from multiple corners. Politicians, academics and even ordinary individuals have been expressing their reflections and thoughts on this critical issue for Ethiopia.

The premier has insisted that Ethiopia will continue raising the issue of getting access to sea and alternative port through win-win approach and not in any way presenting a threat to any of its neighbors. Recalling that Ethiopia with a population of about 47 million and low economic growth had two ports 30 years ago, even though its population and economy have grown many times today, he said the country has no alternative port and it needs it. The premier did not downplay the vital role Djibouti has been playing in Ethiopia's growth and development by letting Ethiopia use its port for years now. In fact, he thanked the government and people of Djibouti for that. But he also underlined that Ethiopia will have more needs in the future and; Djibouti alone may not suffice to accommodate all its growth and expansion ambitions. Our neighbors must understand our concerns, he was heard stating.

According to him, it is important to find an alternative port as Ethiopia's economy and population are growing at a high rate.

"Ethiopia didn't ask an inappropriate question that is out of the law. Ethiopia has no desire to fire a shot at neighboring countries. But, what we are saying is let us discuss this in terms of the law and business. The premier underscored that those who link the Red Sea issue with Eritrea's sovereignty are wrong. Ethiopia has no desire to violate the sovereignty of any country. Abiy also said that Ethiopia believes that the issue of port should be resolved immediately and without delay.

Neighboring countries and governments of the world should understand that we have submitted a request to get access to sea by sharing Ethiopian Airlines, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam or other organizations, and that we are committed to common development. As Ethiopia needs peace, prosperity, and development, it is ready to discuss the issue of port with all friends who believe in this agenda.

Ethiopia's diplomatic principles are based on working in cooperation and harmony with other countries, giving priority to neighboring countries and encouraging regional integration, mutual growth, and working toward mutual interest.

He dismissed the erroneous comments raised in connection with Ethiopia joining the BRICS+ group stating that it was not made to support one side and ignore others. Ethiopia joined BRICS+ to strengthen mutual cooperation and not harm any country

Meanwhile, scholars have stressed the need for the government of Ethiopia to pursue its

Ethiopia must pursue peaceful means based on the principle of mutual benefit and expedition of regional integration to secure its access to the Red Sea

diplomatic efforts and dialogues to enable the country to have access to ports in a mutually beneficial manner.

A scholar said sea ports that had originally been used by previous rulers of the country had regrettably and sadly been taken away by a major historical error causing the disclosure of the issue that was toned down for decades.

In spite of the fact that there were various challenges across the Red Sea, such situations did not prevent the country from using the ports. He noted that Ethiopia was effectively utilizing the ports of Berbera, Zeila, Assab and Massawa and other alternatives to link up with the rest of the world through trade and other spheres of relations.

The scholar noted that there are historical and legal justifications that provide access to ports and hence there is a need to rectify the historical error in a peaceful manner and current efforts to raise the issue need to continue in a more vigorous manner.

The entire public, scholars and politicians need to raise the awareness of the youth on the matter and help them to come to a common national consensus on the topic.

Ethiopia needs to further enhance ongoing efforts on her historical and legal rights to have access to the sea ports. The government should continue to pursue its diplomatic efforts and dialogues to enable the country to have access to ports in a mutually beneficial manner.

It was also noted that the government is obliged to ensure justice based benefits for citizens by utilizing the provisions of international law and creation of a spirit of fraternity and cooperation to ensure peaceful development in the region. The need to conduct deeper and wider level of consciousness to ensure common understanding on the issue of access to ports is also clear. It should be stressed that Ethiopia needs to work in cooperation with all international partners to resolve the issue of access to ports on the basis of international law and the principles of give and take.

In another reflection on this matter, the analysis of the American Scholar Lawrence Freeman is remarkable. He says leaders of the Horn of Africa nations have to

consider discussing Ethiopia's quest for having access to sea as it would increase the physical economic growth of the East African region. He considers the matter in a wider perspective because he does not believe the benefit is limited to Ethiopia but to the entire Horn Region. The premier's initiation of the issue according to him is important as he has underlined that the matter will be presented and pursued only through peaceful means.

The American analyst stated that access to sea not only reinforces the steadily growing import-export trade of Ethiopia but also ensures development in the region. Hence Ethiopia's quest for coastal access to sea outlets "is essentially correct" as it would enable to increase physical economic growth of the people in the Horn of Africa.

He said, "If people understand more about physical economic growth, they would understand that this is not only very reasonable, but it is correct. If you want to raise the standard of living for 200 million people living in countries in the Horn, then you would benefit from the trade that could be increased in Ethiopia by having a port on the Red Sea."

Freeman said "The Prime Minister is putting these issues on the table now. (He says) let's discuss how we are going to bring this about. And I think that is the approach of a statesman and I would agree with it."

"If we look at how we increase the physical economic growth of the people in the Horn of Africa, it is going to depend on Ethiopia. Ethiopia is going to be the dominant economic growth center. And this will benefit all the other countries.

Freeman said disseminating media reports that Ethiopia is claiming access to sea using force if necessary is distorted. This is a very divisive policy that has been used in Africa for hundreds of years. Political leaders and statesmen must rise above this. The purpose is to prevent the development and sovereignty of African nations. Freeman said the leaders of the nations in the region can sit down and discuss how the region will grow economically. He noted the leaders should be able to counter those media and other internal and external enemies who are trying to create tensions between the neighboring countries. There is no objective reason for countries in the Horn of Africa not to work together for common aims.

Discussions should, therefore, be considered among leaders, experts in the area, including economic experts, water experts and transportation specialists on access to the Red Sea, the analyst stated.

Similarly, at a joint workshop entitled "Ethiopia's Strategic Pursuit: Unlocking the Red Sea- a Journey through History, Geopolitics and International Law" organized by Samara University in collaboration with Dire Dawa, Addis Ababa, Jigjiga, and Mekelle universities, Addis Ababa University Interim President Samuel Kifle said Ethiopia should ask for reclaiming its right and unlock the Red Sea for achieving prosperity. The history of human civilization and the fight for global

power supremacy, he said, have affected the nations neighboring the Red Sea and also invited others from distance. The Red Sea hence holds a high order in history, geopolitics and international trade. He added, "For us, Ethiopians, the Red Sea was and still has remained to be part of our history, both as a curse and a blessing. Now it seems a new world order is in the making that we should ask for reclaiming our rights and unlocking the Red Sea for our prosperity."

According to him, getting the facts right and informing others about Ethiopia's pursuit for a fair access to the Red Sea is essential that needs due attention.

Similarly, Samara University President, Mohammed Usman said on his part that, as academic institutions, universities must create a platform to discuss and direct the right path of mutual benefit in the Red Sea corridor.

He elaborated, "Ethiopia, as a landlocked country, cannot hold itself aloof from emerging regional issues that could significantly affect its vital interest. Given its close proximity to the Red Sea and other adjacent states, as well as its growing economic demands and regional security concerns, Ethiopia must pursue peaceful means based on the principle of mutual benefit and expedition of regional integration to secure its access to the Red Sea. The task at hand is to clearly define Ethiopia's strategic interest towards the Red Sea.

Likewise, AAU Professor Yakob Arsano said North Eastern African countries need permanent mutual cooperation and security bondage on fair access to sea and unleashing the prevailing potential. Yakob said that sharing the water within the region enhances regional development and security.

Moreover, he elaborated that the North Eastern African countries need to foster shared aspiration, self-reliance, strengthen regional organizations such as IGAD, and COMESA, establish task forces on littoral and riparian issues as well as engage in reactivate negotiations, and boost mechanisms of peace and security.

According to him, transforming regional geopolitical relations, equitable and reasonable utilization of regional resources, protecting and conserving the shared water resources, and enhancing economic cooperation are among the promising opportunities in the region.

The countries of North Eastern Africa are destined to stay together, he stated, adding that cooperation on shared resources can be the engine of prosperity and sustainable peace and security.

Cooperation among riparian and littoral nations should be guided by principles of mutual trust, empathy, equitable and reasonable utilization of littoral and riparian resources.

Yakob underscored "Now is the time that the countries in North Eastern Africa should embark on a new milestone of regional cooperation on shared endowments.

Law & Politics

The deal of the year at the turn of the year

BY SOLOMON WASSIHUN

Securing direct access to the Red Sea cannot be overestimated. It is not just about creating the conditions for a sustainable economic transformation. Acquiring reliable access to the sea is also about ensuring national security and defending the country's national interests.

One scholar, comparing the current landlocked situation of Ethiopia to a prison, wrote: "... Every effort for development faces the possibility hitting the wall of this prison and that will remain as a chilling reality "

A look into the not-too-distant past shows that one of the strategic moves of the Italian fascists made to secure a quick invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s was to completely close the port of Djibouti and thus suffocate the Ethiopian regime of the time.

Until Ethiopia secures reliable access to the Red Sea and builds a reliable navy, its national security is at stake. The mounting tension on the Red Sea which is currently at a fever pitch is another cause that escalated the urgency and seriousness of securing direct access to the sea.

The thrilling breaking news we received on European New Year's Day brought joy, a sigh of relief, and a breath of hope for a bright future and prosperity. It is indeed the deal of the year done on the first day of 2024. What makes the news more dramatic is not only the news per se but also the mix of reactions to be followed and the timing chosen to break it.

The Ethiopian leadership and diplomats are continuing to stun the world, both friend and foe, with unbelievable news broken at a carefully planned timetable. The historical memorandum of understanding, MOA, signed between the governments of Somaliland and Ethiopia would lead to a comprehensive agreement that would possibly closely bond the two nations with socio-economic and security cooperation.

The deal is the fruit of a long and arduous journey of diplomatic bargaining with a quid pro quo approach, with the spirit of mutual benefit, sharing resources and a vision of development and prosperity. By achieving this deal, the current generation of Ethiopian leaders and diplomats has emulated their forebears in the 1940s, who peacefully and diplomatically secured Ethiopia's right to access to the Red Sea.

In its long history of existence that spans several centuries, the Ethiopian state has lost and regained access to the sea several times. The agreement signed a

few days ago, marks the end of 30-plus years of the period of being a landlocked nation and the beginning of a period where Ethiopia gets direct access to the sea with the acquisition of a 20 km strip of coastline for 50 years lease with possible extension.

In a speech he made at the signing ceremony, Premier Abiy said, "Keeping the promise we made to our people repeatedly, today we and our Somaliland brothers have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for bilateral cooperation that will resolve one of the handicaps that impede the progress of our nation, the lack of access to the Red Sea. The agreement is a document that enables us and the brotherly people of Somaliland to jointly grow, develop, and maintain our peace and security."

It is being reported that both the peoples of Somaliland and Ethiopia are welcoming the big news with great enthusiasm and expectations. After the dust settles and the excitement subsides, questions on the details of the agreement are raised. The answers to these questions are the outcomes of the upcoming series of negotiations between the two government officials and experts. It is incumbent on the negotiators to carve out details that are equitable and entitle Ethiopia to use the Berbera corridor in a sustainable and economically sound manner.

After it became landlocked in 1993, Ethiopia used mainly the maritime services of the Assab Port until the Eritrean war broke out in 1998, after which it switched to Djibouti Port until today. Currently, Djibouti Port accounts for over 95% of Ethiopia's import-export trade by volume and Ethiopia pays an estimated 1.6 billion USD per year for maritime services.

With the acquisition of the Berbera corridor, Ethiopia would not only run its own comprehensive commercial maritime service but also build a military base that would be home to the recently re-established Ethiopian Navy. This means Ethiopia will have a well-organized and strong presence on the Red Sea for the first time since the early 90s.

Ethiopia's access to the sea would undoubtedly catapult its economic growth to an unprecedented scale. Under present stressful conditions where the country is undergoing internal conflicts, harsh effects of climate change, and the extortionate port services fees, the IMF has predicted that the Ethiopian economy will grow by 6.1 percent this year.

No one needs expert knowledge to see that the economy would have an upward trajectory. Along with this, follows the possible reduction of inflation and

foreign currency. The acquisition of direct access to the sea could also be a factor in the rise of foreign direct investment since the accessibility of ports is one of the variables they use in the calculation of the destination of their investments.

The decision Somaliland and the Ethiopian government made to share their resources for the common good should be welcomed by all states on the Horn, as well as regional multinational organizations like IGAD, EAC (East African Community) and AU. This is so because the agreement serves the AU's and IGAD's objective of cross-border socio-economic integration of African people and interconnection with power lines, waterlines, gas lines, highways, airways, and railroads etc.

What is more, the agreement should be considered as a model inspiring other transboundary socio-economic corporations on the vast stretch of the Red Sea coastlines of the Horn region which is estimated to stretch about 4800 kms, most of which is lying idle.

If Somalia does not deem it is not a national security risk to lease a strip of its coastline to Türkiye, then it has no logical reason not to support a similar arrangement done for a fellow African country.

The MoU would serve as a wake-up call to such nations like Eritrea to reconfigure their stance on regional cooperation and to put to use and exploit the full potential of its ports like Assab, which is now reportedly lying almost idle and abandoned.

As its dynamic economy and population keep on expanding at a rate that is expected to accelerate in the years ahead, Ethiopia's appetite for the acquisition of more coastlines is likely to grow considerably. Therefore, there would not be any surprise we felt on New Year's Day when we hear in the near future another breaking news announcing Ethiopia has got a second lease for port development based on its policy of sharing resources for joint prosperity.

Above all, the MoU signed in the New Year has laid bare the sensationalism driving the major international media outlets that were echoing the speculation of politically motivated analysts blindly accusing the Ethiopian government of preparing to fulfill its need for access to the Red Sea using military power.

"We have affirmed that we want to share our resources and work for mutual success. We have never wished to impose our will and interest on any one. That is our conviction and today's signing of the agreement is proof for this. Ethiopia will prosper and we will reach the next level" said the Premier.

It is incumbent on the negotiators to carve out details that are equitable and entitle Ethiopia to use the Berbera corridor in a sustainable and economically sound manner

Women in Focus

Helina Teklu, a youth who aspires to fight climate change

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

Helina Teklu, an architect by profession, is an environmental activist, CEO and Co-Founder of Seed Bomb Ethiopia and Climate Change Africa (CCA). She dedicated herself to sustainable interior design and furniture works.

She is amongst the three youths who got 'Global Earth Champion' recognition from IGAD for their contribution to climate change in the East Africa region. Helina is mostly known for her 'Seed ball Ethiopia' innovation, though she won two prizes in the field of climate change for her country.

According to Global Landscapes Forum (GLF), the world's largest knowledge-led platform on integrated land use, dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate Agreement, under Climate Change Africa (CCA), Helina had successfully organized three expos in Ethiopia and one in Kenya (2019) with the help of the US Embassy Addis Ababa.

In 2020, she was one of the panelists for World Economic Forum (It.org – Empowering the #RestorationGeneration) where she shared her experience how she plans to be part of the 1 trillion tree movement with the help of Seed balls.

She earned her first degree in the field of Architecture from Addis Ababa University. During her stay at the university, she had taken courses on sustainable architecture landscape which helped her to develop an interest in working on climate change. Currently, she is following an online Entrepreneurship course from Regent Business School in South Africa.

In 2016, she established her first 'Climate Change Africa' Organization. Through her company, she was able to support many youths to encounter and collaborate with different professionals as well as stakeholders to work on various projects. They were able to organize similar events in neighboring country Kenya.

Dedicating her entire time to such projects, she somehow neglected her own work. While she was talking to an old friend over the phone, in 2018, Helina was introduced with the idea of 'Seed Ball' for the first time. The seed ball that her friend talked about was the one which was covered in a circled paper and could be used after recycled.

Their conversation took her back to the landscape architecture course she took at the university. She then started thinking and researching how she could turn it into Ethiopia's context and make use of the innovation.



Helina Teklu

Through her research, she learnt that children in various areas make snowballs and mud balls to play with. Then, she decided to try making the seed ball with mud.

Since finding enough mud that could be used for samples would be hard in the capital; she went to Gurage Zone, Eza District in Agena Town. She stayed about four years researching and examining different mud until she finally found this one type of mud that could be used for seed balls.

Apart from containing essential inputs and natural fertilizer, the seed balls Helina finally made hold Nitrogen, Potassium, and Calcium. Since the seed is covered with a circle of mud, it would be protected from getting eaten by insects and also minimize the cost that used to be spent for fertilizers. More importantly, the seed balls would reduce the burden that most women go through when they plant seeds in agriculture.

Once the seed ball is planted underneath the land, it would start feeding the land the essential substance it contains. Even in the rainy season, the ball will break down into pieces and start growing by itself. Thus, it has changed the time which used to take four month to grow into two months.

Naturally, seeds will run out of their actual serving time, nonetheless, she is undertaking further research to extend the time at least to one year.

The seeds that are covered in mud are different in types. The ones that are used for vegetables and fruits have around four different seeds within themselves. However, the seeds that are found in flowers have 5 to 6 seeds.

Currently, she has opened a seed ball manufacturing company around *Shiro Meda* and employed three women and a man. The company, which has the capacity to produce 1000 seed balls, produces about 14 vegetable seeds.

It also contains over 50,000 vegetable seed balls. They also produce six types of flower seeds, and 11 types of indigenous trees.

Helina strives to distribute the seed balls easily to farmers. For instance, farmers located in Amhara State have taken the seed balls for trial where they have said the results are very promising.

Similarly, the tree seeds have been accepted by farmers in Oromia State. Remarkably, the seeds are penetrating into the capital as well as in various public institutions. Moreover, it is creating job opportunity for many youths especially for women.

The fact that the seed balls are natural, they have the capacity to treat lands that have been damaged by acid and chemicals. Besides saving the cost that used to be expended on purchasing chemical fertilizer, it could allow the nation to preserve

“ Opportunity that could allow the youth to actively engage in climate change and discuss with professionals must be created, ”

endangered indigenous plant species.

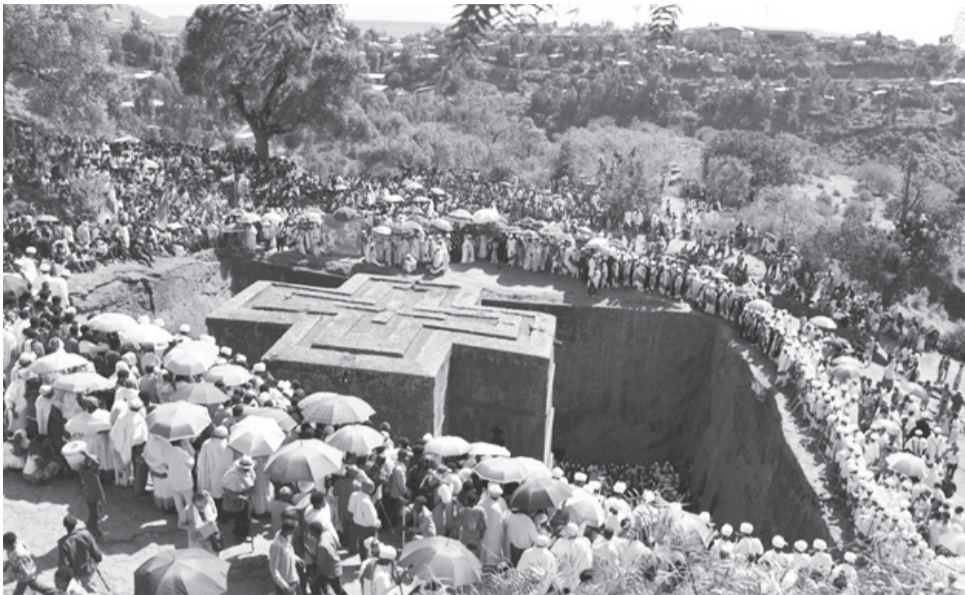
The seed balls have already passed government's evaluation process and have received positive feedback. Currently, they are on the waiting list to receive verification code and; are holding talks with the Ministry of Agriculture.

She said that she wants to expand the business and collaborate with governmental and non-governmental institutions so as to create more jobs for the youth. Furthermore, she plans to supply the seeds for farmers at an affordable price.

As to her, the seed ball could contribute hugely for the agriculture sector, ensure food self-sufficiency as well as enhance productivity. It could also support the green development projects.

Helina said that she wants to continue teaching courses on entrepreneurship, investment and skill development. “Opportunity that could allow the youth to actively engage in climate change and discuss with professionals must be created,” she stressed. She strongly believes that women should be encouraged to do business and become self-employed.

Society



The Holy City of Lalibela



The Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela

Discover Gena festival!

BY TEWODROS KASSA

Gena, the Birth of Jesus Christ, is celebrated warmly and colorfully throughout Ethiopia. However, the celebration of the day is marked in an exceptional manner at Lalibela and takes very special spectacles than the other parts of the country.

When the festival of *Gena* is approaching, hundreds of thousands of local and foreign pilgrims head to Lalibela town; one of the most important pilgrimage places of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and one of the world heritage sites.

Lalibela, located in the north of the country, is a town known for its rock cut monolithic churches. The Rock-hewn churches of Lalibela are among the prominent Ethiopian heritages included on the UNESCO list.

The principal edifices of the rock hewn churches of Lalibela that are included in the World Heritage List are the Churches of Medhane Alem, Maryam, Ammanuel, Giyorgis and Golgota-Mikail. The 11 medieval monolithic cave churches of this 13th-century 'New Jerusalem' are situated in a mountainous region in the heart of Ethiopia near a traditional village with circular-shaped dwellings some 645 km from Addis Ababa. Lalibela is a high place of Ethiopian Christianity, still today a place of pilgrimage and devotion.

The mystery of the rock hewn churches of Lalibela architectural design, durability, sacredness, and historical recordings among others make the church to be one of the leading centers of religious pilgrims in Ethiopia.

Ethiopian *Gena* is the peak season where a large number of international and local tourists' arrival is registered in Lalibela.

The Rock Hewn churches of Lalibela generate the largest tourism revenue to the country through attracting numerous local and international tourists. The tourism sector has been highly affected by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict occurred in the northern part of the country which in turn cast a shadow over the income of the residents of the town and the nation.

However, these days following the peace sustained in the area, preparations are finalized to welcome guests and celebrate

Gena at Lalibela.

Lalibela Town Mayor Wondimnew Wodaje told local media that preparations are finalized to colorfully celebrate this year's *Gena* at the Rock Hewn Churches of Lalibela.

In his message in connection with the celebration of the annual *Gena* festival, the Mayor underscored that the town administration is closely working with pertinent stakeholders to welcome guests cordially.

Despite being the leading international and local tourist destination, the ancient Lalibela Town's tourism sector had been highly affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict broke out in the northern part of the country, he added.

Currently, the administration is undertaking various measures to stimulate Lalibela's tourism environment through actively working with every stakeholder, he said.

According to him, a committee has been established to facilitate the celebration process of the festival. Religious fathers, youths, investors, government bodies, among others are working proactively to celebrate this year's *Gena* colorfully at Lalibela.

The Mayor also calls upon all Ethiopians and foreign visitors to celebrate Ethiopian *Gena* at Lalibela.

On his part, Amhara State Communication Bureau Head Mengesha Fentaw (PhD) said that preparations are finalized to facilitate safe road and air transportation for guests who want to attend *Gena* and Timket festivals at Lalibela and Gondar, respectively.

So far, the State is actively working to resume road transportation in every corner of the State. Security forces are ready to ensure peace and security so as to maintain the safety of travellers. Currently, air transportation services are available in Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, Gondar, and Lalibela, he said.

As to him, road transportation services will be given after the renovation works are completed on the damaged roads. Security forces are also working day in, day out to ensure sustainable peace in the areas. The community is also working in coordination with security forces to ensure lasting peace in some restive areas of the State.

Moreover, some foreign media houses are intentionally disseminating fake news targeting to tarnish the good image of the country and weaken the stimulating Ethiopia's tourism sector, he indicated.

"Such moves affect the lives of the community dependent on rendering touristic services for the tourists. The international and local tourists' inflow to such areas could be highly affected if such media reports are intentionally disseminated."

He also urged such groups to abstain from such activities and underscored the role and engagement of every segment of the society to activate the tourist destinations and return to normalcy. Successive discussions are also being undertaken with the community to support the struggling tourism sector development.

Nowadays, internet services have been restored in some parts of the State to ease tourists' challenges; and facilitate tourist service providers' services including accommodation.

In sum, the *Gena* festival in Lalibela during this season will immensely contribute to stimulate the country's tourism industry. *Gena* is a great milestone to maintain indigenous cultural celebrations and gives a chance to inherit forefathers' cultural festivities to the future generations. More than hundreds of thousands people annually flow to Lalibela to attend the Ethiopian *Gena* festival and closely witness its ceremonial process.

All Ethiopians eagerly await the annual Lalibela *Gena* festival. Every Ethiopian is expected to visit Lalibela at least once in their lifetime because it is considered as the second Jerusalem for Ethiopia's Christians.

In most parts of the country the one who visited the Rock Hewn churches of Lalibela is considered to be sacred and maintain life in heaven after death. That is why people give credits to the visitors; and they request the almighty God to enable them to visit the church and sanctify themselves.

Tourists who wish to see the most impressive Christmas ceremony in Ethiopia should go to the Holy City of Lalibela.

**Ethiopian *Gena*
is the peak season where a
large number of international
and local tourists' arrival is
registered in Lalibela**



Published Weekly in Collaboration with Haramaya University

HU's graduates practical dedication to community services

BY EPHREM ANDARGACHEW

Haramaya University (HU) a class of this year's graduate students inaugurated various projects in Eastern Harareghe that solve the problems of the community. "We have understood the problems of our society and we have been able to solve them to the best of our ability," they said.

Indeed, university graduates contribute to the general welfare and advancement of society in the community in many ways. For example, they contribute specific expertise and abilities to society in areas like education, engineering, law, and medicine. This knowledge may be used to advance innovation and advancement, offer beneficial services, and address issues facing the community.

They frequently become active in community groups, volunteer work, and advocacy. They devote their time, energy, and experience to addressing social concerns, promoting good change, and improving the lives of others. As a result, university graduates play an important role in strengthening the community's social, economic, and cultural fabric through their knowledge, skills, and contributions.

Taking these factors into consideration, graduate students from the HU College of Health and Medical Sciences have undertaken a variety of projects in five communities in the East Harareghe zone during the last two months. This year, 213 students from the graduating class undertook a six-week practical education program in the municipalities of Kombolcha,

Deder, Qarsa, and Qullubbi, as well as the Maya City Administration in East Harareghe.

Among the tasks finished by the graduate students were the constructions of a computer-equipped library, clean drinking water sources, restrooms, and nurseries for the local refugees. In addition to building a community pharmacy, restrooms, and clean drinking water facilities, they offered medical care and education to the locals. The value of these services is estimated at five million birr.

According to Abdi Birhanu, the students who participated in the projects said "We concentrated on community-oriented practical education rather than academic and conceptual work. As a result, we completed major work in a short amount of time with minimal expense and community engagement.

Another graduate student, Kemal Abdi, and Nasreddin Abdi, stated that eight projects worth two million one hundred thousand birr had been built in Kombolcha District, including a community pharmacy, schools, and a first aid center. These projects are critical for resolving communal issues.

Kombolcha Woreda Deputy Administrator Dr. Jamal Jabir congratulated the graduate students for completing eight projects worth two million birr during their brief stay. He emphasized the community pharmacy built in the woreda avoids major renting expenses.

HU College of Health and Medical Sciences Chief Executive Director Dr. Ahmed Mohammed



Inaugurated project in use

said that the students, using their knowledge, identified the problems of the community and have been working to solve them. Accordingly, they completed and inaugurated the projects which are key to ensuring the well-being of the society.

HU Community Development Directorate representative Ayele Shwangizaw noted that the HU has provided 700,000 birr worth of materials to support the students' project work. Hence, the graduate students accomplished the projects. In the future, HU will continue to support the development work not only in health students but also in other departments.

Deder City resident Aisha Ibrahim appreciated the student's efforts and commitment to solving the community's problems. She also added that in the past it was very difficult to get clean drinking water, but now the students should be thanked for making us able to water not only the community but also our animals.

He also stated that graduating students have done successful work to overcome the community's basic development gaps, despite a lack of resources, distance, and challenges, by coordinating the society's efforts. The City administration will also fulfill its responsibilities by guaranteeing the projects' long-term viability.