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Abune Matiyas



Abune Berhane Eyesus



Pastor Tsadiku Abdo



Priest Yonas Yegezu

Religious leaders send message of peace, benevolence

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA- Religious leaders called on faithful in their Christmas message to uphold their collaboration with the government in safeguarding the country's peace and supporting the needy, while

observing holiday.

In his message, Patriarch of Ethiopian Orthodox Church His Holiness Abune Mathias I called followers to work and pray for the country's peace and refrained from dissemination of hatred between brothers and sisters. "More than ever, we need

to work together to ensure peace in the country. Religious fathers at every level are expected to preach peace and harmony to overcome the pressing problem Ethiopia has been encountering."

"Elders, religious fathers and scholars' need to

See Religious leaderse ... page 4



Premier wishes Ethiopians merry Christmas

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA -In connection with today's Ethiopian Christmas (Genna) - the Nativity of Jesus Christ, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) has extended his best wishes to fellow citizens.

In his message, the premier stated that during the time of prophets many read and heard about the coming of Jesus Christ. But, they expected the Nativity of Jesus Christ to have occurred in a palace or a home of wealthiest people. No one had expected the Birth of Jesus Christ which transformed the world and human beings to have occurred in a humble manger. Due to this, the world itself fell asleep when its narrative was changing in a spectacular manner.

Things that change the history of the world and a certain country as well might not happen in an expected way, the Prime Minister remarked.

The Prime Minister underscored that it is not possible to address existing problems through

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Medhin Decor

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Ethiopia receives looted artifacts during Mekdela battle from UK

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Ambassador Eshete Tilahun

Ethiopia maintains good ties with all global powers

BY TAMERU REGASA

ADDIS ABABA- Ethiopia's smeticulous diplomacy that has embraced African brothers and sisters has proven successful in withstanding the mounting pressure of some interest groups and improving its relations with all

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Reaping university-industry linkage lucrative bounties

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"Genna marks a festival regarding the brushing aside of Satan's curse on mankind"

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Happy Ethiopian Christmas, Genna!

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News

Bureau underlines festivals significance for Amhara's tourism revival

BY TAMERU REGASA

ADDIS ABABA-Amhara State Culture and Tourism Bureau announced that Christmas and Baptism festivals, which will be colorfully celebrated in the state, will enable the revival of the stagnant tourism sector in the state in particular and across the nation in general.

The Bureau Public Relations Head Abebe Himbale told Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that Amhara state is among the predominant areas where Christmas and baptism festivals are celebrated in the country. Therefore, the festivals will be celebrated with the intention to revive the stagnant tourism sector in the state.

He stressed that preparations are being made with the North Wollo Zone Administration through establishing a city management committee to celebrate Christmas in Lalibela, which will be celebrated on January 07, 2024 and the baptism festival celebrated in Gondar is being organized at a state level.

The head further stated that more than 2 million people attended each of the two festivals last year and steps have been taken to celebrate the festivals in a similar condition this year.

As to the head, the bureau has been working in collaboration with Ethiopian Airlines, Tour Guide Associations, Hotels and other institutions as the Ethiopian Airlines has allowed direct flight from Bahir Dar to Lalibela and Gondar to Lalibela for the visitors coming to attend the festivals in consideration of Christmas and Baptism.

Abebe said that the number of foreign tourists in the state has decreased due to lack of peace and occurrence of COVID-19. Therefore, the bureau has been working to revive the tourism sector through focusing on ways to boost the number of domestic visitors and making the vast cultural and tourism destinations in the state comfortable, and by supporting service providers, we should revive the sector and increase the benefits available.

Conveying his messages to guests who come to celebrate this cultural and religious holiday Abebe said that as there is relative peace in the state, it is possible to move and freely visit the state.

Religious fathers urge faithful to support needy during Christmas

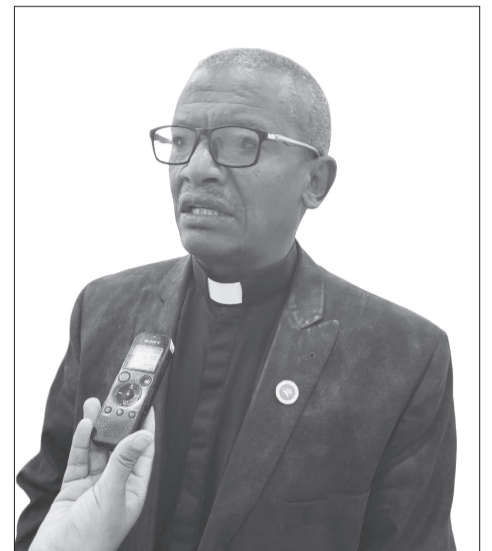
BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA- Religious fathers have called on the Christian faithful to uphold the support and empathy for the needy and foster peace, unity and love while observing Christmas.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Education Department of Lideta, Kirkos and Addis Sub city Head MelakeTsehay Aba Gebremedhin Mitku, told the Ethiopia Press Agency (EPA) that the faithful should mark Christmas in a way that promotes love, harmony, peace, and showing kindness to those in need.

“Christians have a responsibility to perform spiritual work in addition to obeying God’s order. We human beings should celebrate Christ’s birth with kindness and love. We must express love through work, not by words. We should spend what we get from work, by sharing our hard-earned wealth, by expressing love, by supporting people in need.”

Megabi AberaTesfay, Secretary General of the Office of the Union of Evangelical Churches in Akaki Kality sub city, on his part said that Jesus Christ has compassion



for the poor. It is good if the faithful celebrate the day through sharing and praying with the needy.

“Related to the current circumstance in Ethiopia, if we build peace in our relations with each other, we can do many things that can strengthen our unity. We must abandon actions that incite violence.”

As to him, in some regions, it is necessary

to work on what is common for the benefit of the country and the people. “We have to pay attention to peace, and the government also should be generous in answering the questions that allow us to live together. Both sides should work to improve the economy of our country by having peaceful talks. When the followers celebrate Christmas, we should be thinking about this homework,” the Secretary General added.



Photo: GebaboGebrie

Supreme Court launches smart technology system

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA- The Federal Supreme Court of Ethiopia has launched a modern technology-assisted system called ‘Smart Court System’ which is said to enable the delivery of efficient judicial service.

At the launching ceremony Smart Court Technology System yesterday, the House of Peoples’ Representatives (HoPR) Speaker Tadesse Chafo said that the system will help the judicial service to be efficient, accessible to all citizens, transparent, quality evaluated and honest.

So far in the country, the litigations of the disputing parties in the courts and the testimony of the witnesses are recorded manually. The smart court that was inaugurated yesterday would solve this problem of good governance and play a great role in enabling consumers to get services without harassment.

The smart court has components such as

audio transcription, smart chat bot/AI based interactive Chabot, information desk and others, he said.

Currently, various technological innovations, including artificial intelligence, are expected to solve various problems providing appropriate judicial services to the community.

According to the speaker, the system would help the customers to get quality services without being subjected to unnecessary expense.

It was learnt that the system was developed by the court and the Artificial Intelligence Institute to facilitate the judicial service,

The Federal Supreme Court President TewodrosMehret on his part said that efforts are being made to make the judicial service effective expanding the procedures assisted by modern technology.

Justice has a great value for the economic, social and political stability and creating a stable society of a country. On the other

hand, if there is no justice, there will be no peace and development, the President said.

The new smart court, technology-assisted system that has been put into operation is a part of this effort and stated that the modern system will make the judicial service more effective.

According to the Director General of Ethiopian Artificial Intelligence Institute Eng. WarkuGachena Smart Court is a digital system that enables courts to work together. It helps courts to work more efficiently by developing technology-assisted judicial systems, reduces time wastage, where judges make decisions online without being physically present, and allows for witness blackmail. It also includes online testimony and audio-to-text technology and this will speed up the trial process.

According to Eng. Worku, it includes a system where customers can submit complaints to the courts online and follow up on their cases.

Editorial

Love, truce, humbleness, peace are what are encoded in Christmas

It is not a hyperbole to claim that clashes and conflicts at different parts of the globe have stopped to be news, in the true sense of the word, as they have become hackneyed as if dooms day has drawn nigh. Human beings seem to be inured to atrocities committed against the human race, including that of the feeble and toddlers, by the human race with the intention of maximizing a given group's advantages.

Ranging from superpowers to ethnic groups locking horns has become apparent. Burying the hatchet resolving disputes with discussions and win-win approaches has proved not doable as those at loggerheads find it hard to get soft spots in their hearts regarding shaking hands with forgiveness. Peace like the sky has receded. Obsessed by egotism, hardliners are not willing to bend down from their adamancy to lend heeding ears to those at loggerheads with them or their contenders. Love is being relegated to the dictionary. Innumerable people internally or otherwise displaced from their homes are found scattered around the globe seeking timely and unwavering help largely but in vain.

It is against the aforementioned backdrop we must check our emulation effort of the messages— love, truce, humbleness and peace— encoded in Christmas.

For Ethiopians Christmas is a multifaceted holiday. Aside from its religious facet it has a cultural manifestation.

When we come to its religious aspect, we notice that Christ, the incarnated word, was born in a petty size in a barn in a human flesh and gown to portray He is a humble God. Herdsmen in Bethlehem who witnessed this unmatched miracle in which earth and sky closed ranks expressed their awe and praise joining with angels, who broke the good news to the former. Christmas marks a day of euphoria and truce when the wall of sin that put man and God (His angles) asunder fell apart. Hence to declare truce we must give attention.

Christmas as well is a day of gift giving, for three wise men led by a shining and pointing star came to the bar to gift Christ with Frankincense, Myrrh and Gold. Noting this, people around the globe exchange gifts. It is a day they remember the needy. Even animals have supplied their breath to the Child God to spare him with biting cold.

All in all, the tidbits add up to give the bigger picture that drives home peace has reigned supreme on earth. Those separated had rejoined and those nursing a grudge had stopped to do so.

Aside from the religious aspect, Ethiopians celebrate their Christmas or Gena in a peculiar way involving in a hockey-like game called Yegena Chewata. Split into two groups, putting on costumes celebrants carrying sticks contend. Elderly arbiters preside over the game to prevail over contenders not to be emotional and get embroiled in clashes.

On Christmas an array of cultural dishes and beverages are prepared in every household. Heading to neighbors and relatives house felicitating one to another they dine and bout together to their hearts content in a show of unity and enduring oneness. The haves share things with the haves not to accentuate the day and to see things that there is no one left out from the holiday. In the same wavelength, the incumbent spends such holidays with the destitute.

In general, Christmas is a day for peace, love, considerateness and happiness. It is a day for the transaction between the benevolent and the needy. It as well is one for expressing best wishes.

Currently, instead of capitalizing on peculiar cultural manifestations we are copying and pasting the cultures of the conceptual west. Caution is called for not to lose our identity.

In connection with Gena and Timket (Ethiopian Epiphany) a multitude of tourists across the globe rush into Ethiopia. Hence, with comfy and cordial welcome it is wise to prolong their stay here and reap a better profit.

The bottom line is let us translate the message encoded in Christmas into action.

Opinion

The uniqueness of Genna celebration in Ethiopia

BY STAFF REPORTER

In Ethiopia people start celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ on the eve of the day, as many of the laity prefer to stay overnight at the church and participate the ritual. This holds a special and memorable event in the minds of children and adults who adore the holiday more than all other celebrations.

Christmas is one of the most favorite holidays among Christians across the world and is celebrated in more or less different ways in different countries. Ethiopia also cherishes a centuries of indigenous tradition of celebrating Christmas colorfully.

Ethiopia (and especially the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church) celebrates Christmas on January 7th, not December 25th. The Ethiopian Calendar has different months - and Christmas in on the 29th of Tahsas, according to whychristmas.com.

Many other orthodox churches around the world also celebrate Christmas on the 7th January. The calendar the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church uses originally came from calendar used by the Coptic Orthodox Church (which is based in Egypt) but now has its own special days. The Christmas celebration in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is called Genna or Genna. Most people go to Church on Christmas day.

Many people take part in a special Advent fast during the 43 days before Christmas. It starts on 25th November and is known as the 'Fast of the Prophets' (Tsome Nebiyat). During this time, traditionally only one vegan meal is eaten each day. It's a vegan meal because during the fast, foods including meat, dairy, eggs and wine aren't eaten.

For Genna, people get dressed in white. Most people wear a traditional garment called a Netela. It's a thin white cotton piece of cloth with brightly colored stripes across the ends. It's worn like a shawl or toga. If you live in a big town or city you might wear 'western' clothes. People go to church mass on Christmas Eve (called the gahad of Christmas) at 6.00pm and the service finishes about 3.00am on Christmas Day.

The Ethiopian capital city is Addis Ababa. It's a modern city. Most people who live outside big cities live in round house made of mud-plastered walls which have thatched cone-shaped roofs. Sometimes houses in the country are rectangular and made of stone.

The design of Ethiopian Church is similar to the houses. In the country, they are often very old and have been carved out of rock. In cities, modern churches are built

in three circles, each within the others.

The choir sings from the outer circle. Everyone who goes to church for the Genna celebrations is given a candle. The people walk around the church three times in a solemn procession, holding the candles. They then go to the second circle to stand during the service. The men and boys are separated from the women and girls. The center circle is the most important and holy place in the church and is where the priest serves the Holy Communion or Mass.

Just like many other religious and cultural feasts, there are places where locals and tourists prefer to travel and visit during Christmas. One such place is Lalibela. The city which is known for its UNESCO registered rockhewn churches is also famous for its special ceremony of observing Genna rituals.

The religious celebration of Lidet (also known as Gena in parts of Ethiopia) takes place over three days, culminating in Christmas Day, which is celebrated on 7 January in Ethiopia.

Christmas in Lalibela is an extraordinary experience as the town's population more than doubles in size in the weeks preceding Lidet. In advance of the three-day celebration, tens of thousands pilgrims gather, camping in the hills around the town and its famous rock-hewn churches.

Some are from nearby communities, and others have walked for weeks to get here. As you walk through the town, you feel the anticipation and sense something special is imminent. Traders set up market stalls, residents open their homes, welcoming any pilgrims who want to come in and eat with them, and local young people wash the feet of the tired pilgrims.

On Christmas Eve you join the white-clad crowds in the church of Bete Emanuel, where the rhythmic chanting and signing continue in the warm candlelight through the night. Your guide gives you all the information you need to be respectful and understand what's happening around you. He was a deacon in the church himself, and has taken part in these ceremonies since childhood. The ceremonies themselves are solemn and mesmerising. Here, Christmas is celebrated as it has been for hundreds of years and you are struck by the devotion of the faithful.

The time Genna and Timkat are celebrated is the prime time for tourist in flow in Ethiopia. Ethiopian diaspora and those engaged in the hospitality industry should also work strenuously at this time to promote the special and mesmerizing events of Genna which has the potential to add the reputation of the nation in the field.

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



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News



Photo: Dagne Abera

Ethiopia receives looted artifacts during Mekdela battle from UK

• Hopes to reclaim 11 Arks of Covenants (Tabot) soon

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopia has received its looted artifacts including the arch of Covenant that were taken to UK in 1868 during the battle of Mekdela.

Ethiopian Ambassador to the UK Teferi Melesse handed over the restituted artifacts to the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritages (ARCCH) Director General Assistant Professor Abebaw Ayalew.

The artifacts include three horn cups with

silver plating, Holy Tabot tablet, a lock of Prince Alemayehu's hair, an imperial shield and others.

Speaking at the ceremony, ARCCH Director General Assistant Professor Abebaw Ayalew said that still now, there are many Ethiopian heritages found in different museums and hands of individuals. The government and concerned bodies are underway efforts to restore those looted heritages that were found in different corners of the world.

The heritages that were looted during the

battle of Mekdela take a lion share in a number and kind among heritages that were taken by different reasons. Over 2,000 artifacts found in UK museums and hands of individuals. Over the last two years, some 19 heritages returned to Ethiopia from the UK through negotiation and others.

The return of these heritages to origin would enable further research and studies and others, he added.

He appreciated the effort of the Ethiopian embassy in London for giving special focus to restitute these artifacts.

For his part, Ethiopian Ambassador to the UK Teferi Melesse the restitution of Ethiopian artifacts would be continued. England is one of the countries where many of Ethiopia's heritages are found, especially those looted during the battle of Mekdela. The strict heritage law of the country challenged the restoration of Ethiopian heritages found in the Great Britain.

"I hope the 11 Holy Tabot tablets found in various England museums will be restored in a short period of time as the negotiation efforts are ongoing."

Ethiopia maintains...

powers, a high-level diplomat said.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Office Head Ambassador Eshete Tilahun told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that in contrast to the UN laws, some interest groups had tried to undermine its sovereignty under the guise of human rights violation, aid, and conflict issues. Due to such intensified attempts to meddling, the UNSC conveyed for over 14 times about Ethiopia's domestic issue.

According to the diplomat, the rationale for such unwarranted pressure is hindering Ethiopia's building of the Abbay Dam and those groups also attempted to take the dam's negotiation out of the African Union. "The establishment of

the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia that is said to investigate alleged human rights violations during the North conflict is also aimed to achieve those groups' hidden political interests."

Yet, Ethiopia has managed to withstand such pressure in mobilizing other African countries behind and have made commendable diplomatic jobs that forced some of these interest groups to make a positive shift in their approach towards the country and eased the mounting pressure.

Moreover, Ethiopia's diplomacy is gaining momentum amidst all such pressures and BRICS members considered the former's contribution to regional security in East Africa as the reason

to approve its accession to the economic bloc, Eshete emphasized.

He also said that Ethiopia's relations with the West in particular with the European Union (EU) and the United States have been greatly improved. As the manifestation of this, the EU allotted 600 million Euros for reconstruction purposes.

"The reform government has formulated many fundamental elements for Ethiopia's diplomatic transformation," diplomat noted, adding that the incumbent is prioritizing cooperation with neighboring countries, increasing the country's contribution to Africa's peace and stability and advocating African issues. Fostering cordial

diplomatic relations with countries in four corners of the world is also part of the reform agenda.

Following the improvement of diplomatic relations with Ethiopia, international organizations have agreed to support the ongoing development in the country. "We are expecting the organizations to implement the agreements they have signed in a timely manner.

The public should play a part in advocating Ethiopia's interests and resolving internal security problems through dialogue so that the country's diplomacy could attain greater results than it is currently achieving, Ambassador Eshete pleaded.

Religious leaders...

to work hand in hand and the government and political parties should also overcome challenges wisely and narrow differences through discussion and forgiveness. Currently, there are many man-made problems in the country. Therefore, I call upon everyone in the name of God to prevent hunger to support those who are in need," the Patriarch pleaded.

Archbishop of the Ethiopian Catholic Church, Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew advised the faithful to work in unison with

fellow brothers and sisters to end conflict and the suffering of the people.

The cardinal also called on the adherents to extend support to the people affected by the drought and flood.

President of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Rev. Yonas Yigezu also stressed that armed conflict between any entities does not bring sustainable peace and development. "We need to understand war is not a solution to any problems and

the solution is only promoting peace in the world."

President of the Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia, Pastor Tsadiku Abdo, advised all warring parties to desist conflicts and urged followers to distance themselves from violence.

Noting Christmas is the celebration of sharing, Pastor Tsadiku pleaded followers to show their love and compassion for the disfavored while celebrating the day.

Premier wishes...

a vicious circle like accustomed manner.

The Prime Minister further called on the faithful to contemplate the way the world is transformed and weigh the path to their future apart from enjoying the blessings they get through the birth of Jesus Christ while celebrating the holiday.

Opinion

How the MoU with Somaliland can propel Ethiopia's economic progress, regional integration

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

The signing of the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between the governments of Ethiopia and Somaliland for Partnership and Cooperation represents a momentous milestone in the relentless pursuit of securing a seaport for Ethiopia – a long-standing challenge that has persisted for many years.

The successful outcome of this agreement not only holds profound implications for Ethiopia and Somaliland, but it also serves as a globally significant inspiration for nations worldwide. Through careful observation of the remarkable accomplishments accomplished by Ethiopia and Somaliland through their robust collaboration, other nations can glean valuable insights and embrace similar cooperative approaches.

The MoU between Ethiopia and Somaliland has generated a sense of excitement and optimism among the people. They are confident that this partnership will bring about positive changes in their lives and contribute to the overall development. Thus, people are filled with a renewed sense of enthusiasm and positivity about the future. They are confident that it will provide both the general public and the country as a whole with numerous advantages.

One of the key aspirations for Ethiopia in signing this MoU is to address its long-standing challenge of securing access to the sea and diversifying its options for seaports. By formalizing this understanding, Ethiopia aims to overcome the geographical limitations it faces and enhance its connectivity to international trade routes.

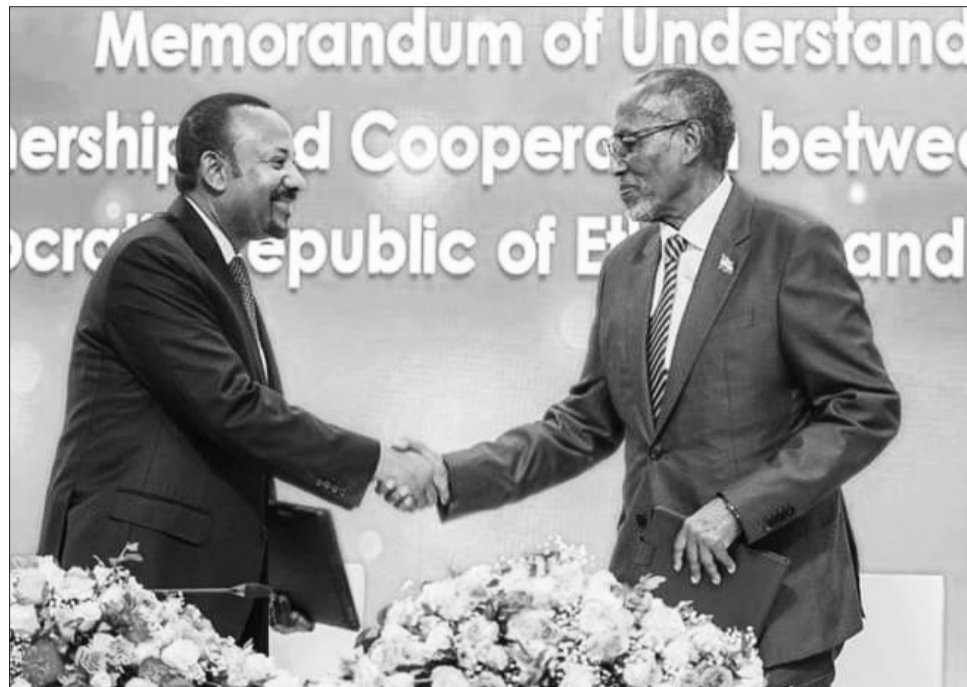
This, in turn, has the potential to unlock new economic opportunities and bolster Ethiopia's economic growth and development.

By effectively diversifying its trade routes through this agreement with Somaliland, Ethiopia can unlock new avenues for its economic growth and development and for the other party as well. This expansion of trade networks allows the country to tap into previously inaccessible markets expanding its economic reach and bolstering its position as a key player within the region.

The agreement presents a plethora of opportunities for development projects and initiatives that will have a profound impact on Ethiopia's economy, trade, and overall standard of living. This breakthrough is particularly significant because it has the potential to accelerate Ethiopia's progress towards achieving its overarching developmental objectives at an unprecedented pace.

The signing of the MOU represents a turning point in Ethiopia's efforts to overcome this hurdle and expands its avenues for maritime connectivity. By forging this partnership with Somaliland, Ethiopia can now explore alternative trade routes and access sea ports that were previously beyond its reach.

Through this agreement, Ethiopia and Somaliland commit to collaborating on social matters signaling their shared commitment to



addressing common challenges and improving the well-being of their respective populations. The spirit of this agreement lies in fostering collaboration, mutual support, and respect between Ethiopia and Somaliland.

By upholding these principles, they can work towards common goals leveraging their respective strengths and resources to create positive outcomes for their citizens and the broader region.

Also, the sea port is expected to significantly improve trade and transportation making it easier and more efficient to move goods in and out of the country. This will lead to increased economic growth as businesses will have better access to international markets.

What sets this agreement apart is its firm commitment to ensuring equitable and sustainable growth with cooperation positioned as the linchpin for unlocking unprecedented success. The increased economic activity resulting from the establishment of a seaport will lead to improvements in infrastructure, healthcare, and education in the surrounding areas. This will have a positive impact on the local community improving their quality of life and standard of living.

Considering Ethiopia's substantial population and untapped economic potential, this partnership is poised to play a pivotal role in driving Ethiopia's economic progress. By embracing this strategic alliance and leveraging alternative trade routes, the country can realize its economic aspirations and materialize sustainable growth setting the stage for a prosperous and thriving future.

The signing of this agreement assumes immense importance as it grants Ethiopia the ability to expand its trade routes and diversify its import-export activities alleviating its longstanding reliance on the ports of Djibouti. By forging strategic partnerships and diversifying trade routes, Ethiopia can solidify its position as a thriving economic powerhouse and chart a path towards sustained growth and prosperity.

This newfound access to maritime resources opens up avenues for economic growth and development enabling Ethiopia to further diversify its economy and solidify its position

as a regional economic powerhouse. However, the implications of this MOU extend far beyond economic considerations.

The collaborative endeavor between Ethiopia and Somaliland holds immense promise in reshaping the dynamics of their relationship in a profound way. By diversifying its trade routes and broadening its economic horizons through this partnership with Somaliland, Ethiopia exhibits great foresight and a comprehensive understanding of the evolving global economic landscape.

This strategic move positions Ethiopia favorably equipping it with the necessary tools to navigate shifting economic dynamics and respond effectively to emerging challenges.

Through this partnership, they have the opportunity to foster positive transformations. As Ethiopia continues to embrace its status as a major economic powerhouse forging strategic partnerships and exploring alternative trade routes becomes not only desirable but vital for sustaining its upward trajectory.

By working together on critical political matters such as regional stability and conflict resolution, Ethiopia and Somaliland can foster stronger ties and contribute to the overall peace and security of the region. By bolstering cooperation, they can enhance their defense readiness and better address security challenges, thus ensuring the safety and stability of their territories.

With diverse trade routes at its disposal, Ethiopia can expand and fortify its economic foundations enhancing its standing not only within the region, but also on a continental scale. This newfound freedom to explore alternative trade channels enables Ethiopia to tap into previously untapped markets reinforcing its economic presence and establishing itself as an essential player within the broader African context and beyond.

The ability to access alternative trade routes not only mitigates the risks associated with a heavy dependence on a single port, but also opens up a plethora of opportunities for Ethiopia to harness its economic prowess and secure sustainable growth. By engaging in various areas of cooperation from social and economic to political and military, Ethiopia

and Somaliland have the chance to forge a multi-faceted and robust alliance.

This broad scope ensures that the partnership goes beyond a superficial connection and delves deep into the core issues and challenges they face.

Under the given circumstances and considerations, it is undeniable that this MoU bears an abundance of advantageous outcomes for Ethiopia. By offering alternative trade routes and alleviating its reliance on the ports of Djibouti, this agreement enables Ethiopia to embark on a transformative path of economic diversification and consolidation of its regional and continental influence.

One of the most significant benefits of this agreement is the getting hold of a seaport which will provide Ethiopia with a direct route for exporting goods to international markets. This will significantly reduce transportation costs, demurrage fees and time making Ethiopian products more competitive in global markets and attracting foreign investment into the country.

This agreement also benefits both Ethiopia and its neighboring countries mutually demonstrating the power of collaboration in driving growth and progress without causing any harm or disadvantage to either party. The availability of employment opportunities in the port and related industries will provide job opportunities for the local population contributing to poverty reduction and economic growth.

By successfully attaining a seaport, Ethiopia gains access to a multitude of opportunities unleashing the potential for a plethora of development projects and initiatives. This breakthrough is of particular importance due to the remarkable speed at which it can propel Ethiopia towards accomplishing its overarching developmental objectives.

The availability of a direct route for exporting goods to international markets will significantly reduce transportation costs and time making Ethiopian products more competitive in global markets. This will attract foreign investment into the country further contributing to economic growth.

This collective approach not only maximizes the potential impact but also fosters a strong sense of unity and common purpose leading to long-lasting sustainable change. This transformative partnership has the potential to create a solid foundation for ongoing collaboration and exchange between Ethiopia and Somaliland. By recognizing the inherent value of cooperation and harnessing the transformative power of partnerships, countries can collectively foster widespread development laying the groundwork for a future that is defined by progress and opportunities for their respective citizens.

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

Business & Economy

Reaping university-industry linkage lucrative bounties

BY MENGESHA AMARE

Advanced nations have garnered the benefit they deserve from higher learning institutions, as universities play a very key role in the socioeconomic transformation and development of the nation through the innovation of new technology, upgrading the existing low-level technology to medium or high technology.

They are also viable instruments for devising better or new and effective management techniques and formulating and suggesting economic and other relevant policies by producing competent, civic-minded, responsible and patriotic citizenry.

Having all these cardinal essences of the universities and their further value when they are bonded with industries, *The Ethiopian Herald* held talks with Hussein Taha, an industrial engineer graduated from Addis Ababa University in Industrial Engineering, to have professional information about the greater significance of University-Industry linkage.

He said, “Whenever universities and industries work together, pushing the boundaries of knowledge, expertise, innovation and advancement would be easy and they have become powerful engines for the socioeconomic development of Ethiopia. Besides, University-Industry engagement requires both sides to engage far beyond the traditional and common exchange of research for funding and staff training.”

The good thing here is that the existing scenario has revealed the fact that government is primarily considered a source of new policies and management techniques not only for the general public but also for higher learning institutions, he added.

As to Hussein, universities and industries strategic partnerships would unequivocally foster the discovery-driven culture of the university with the innovation-driven environment of the country. In order to overcome the traditional partnership culture and communication boundary that tends to weaken industry and university collaboration of all types, contemporary ties have to be well entertained.

Collaboration within the universities or academia itself should be enhanced by fulfilling institutions infrastructure, such as laboratories, testing facilities, qualified and experienced staff, he opined.

True, he said establishing organizations and programs that connect research with business and catalyze collaboration is of paramount importance in solidifying networking among stakeholders like entrepreneurs, trade associations, university researchers and administrators, capital providers, and business support service providers so as to foster innovation and entrepreneurship across and within the private sector as well as facilitate greater university-industry engagement. The establishment of science parks and technology incubators for the purposes of technology transfer would also have to be significantly useful in accelerating creativity and creative thinking.

Ethiopia, more than ever before, needs

technological competence and an inclusive development strategy based on a combination of commodity and labor-intensive, albeit sometimes high-tech, exports by foreign producers, he added.

The linkages have become more important in light of the development challenges facing Ethiopia. The ability to take advantage of these opportunities depends on knowledge-centered capabilities, that in turn can be enhanced through linkages.

Across sectors, linkages between educational institutions and firms either individually or collectively, need to be made robust.

As to Hussein, the closer the cooperation is the more conducive to knowledge spillover would become. The joint establishment of scientific research bases is the most closely coupled and interactive mode of cooperation between different entities, involving a formal research agreement and referring that enterprises, universities, or scientific research institutes invest a certain proportion of resources. Such a viable indenture helps promote knowledge exchange and innovation among all parties with knowledge complementation and subsequently enhances the innovation ability of each party.

University-industry linkages are now widely spread in Ethiopia and industries tend to be satisfied with their interactions with them, though a lot remains to be done.

Our universities have to innovate new ways of improvements for strong entrepreneurial culture and flexible policies for higher education institutions to enter into partnerships.

He said, “Aligning education, industrial, and economic policies to strengthen innovation policies helps increase competitiveness. Research and innovation have helped boost collaboration between higher learning institutions and the industry. True, university-industry collaboration is instrumental in laying the groundwork for innovation.”

The need for universities to increasingly commercialize academic knowledge has increased the relevance of industry-university collaborations. By collaborating with industrial firms, universities gain access to additional funds, particularly for research, test the practical applications of their research on real-world problems, foster links with knowledge users, and facilitate technology transfer, Hussein added.

Because these linkages usually involve sophisticated research and innovation, universities in emerging economies lack the ability to engage more actively with firms. An important motive for universities to link with industrial firms is informed by benefits, such as fostering the commercialization of research outcomes and technology transfer. Knowing how the university-industry linkage operates as promptly and efficiently as possible would make the sectors in particular and the nation in general fruitful at the end of the day, how legitimacy can contribute to entrepreneurial university emergence in Ethiopia has to be top on the agenda, especially in the era of technological advancement.

He further stated that the academic-



University-Industry linkage has been proved effective in transferring technology, fostering innovation and increasing productivity

industry interactions should be rapidly moving towards the forefront of science and technology policymaking, planning and management. The goal of supporting university-industry linkage is to promote the relevance and contribution of universities to the socioeconomic development of the society across the nation. Hence, the universities and industries are expected to work more to be significant sources of information, either in terms of suggesting new projects or helping the nation push growth and development steps forward. Therefore, the trend of university-industry linkage has to be systematically and scrupulously appraised and strengthened to find out best practices, determinants and challenges for sustainable collaboration.

Here, said Hussein individual, organizational and institutional factors need to be identified as determinants and establishing multidisciplinary research centers with industry buy-in, student internships, and job placement programs. Besides, establishing University-Industry Liaison office and leadership commitment are expected to be keyed out as best practices for effective university-industry linkage.

Furthermore, setting up a technology fund, supporting the establishment and management of science parks and technology incubators for the purposes of technology transfer, encouraging private sector active participation in curriculum development, integration of the private sector, the research community and government agencies, establishing organizations and formulating programs that connect research with business and serve as an interface between idea creation and business generation are pivotal in bringing about change, he underscored.

According to him, developing a collaborative culture, improving the innovation system and facilitating greater university-industry collaboration has become the timely avenues for change.

University-industry partnership is a relatively new phenomenon that emerged during the past century and has strongly expanded

in scope and number over recent decades. University-industry linkages cover a large range of diverse realities in both teaching and research, from the more traditional, such as student placement schemes, staff exchanges, and consultancy services, continuing professional development, joint research and development, to recent areas such as small enterprise development—the creation of spin-offs for the joint commercialization of products.

He further elucidated that the industry academia interactions are rapidly moving towards the forefront of science and technology policy making, planning and management. With the ongoing economic reforms there has been a dramatic change in the economic and business environment confronted by industries, academia and public laboratories-protection is getting replaced with competition, controls are giving way to liberalization, and import substitution is replaced with export promotion and globalization.

“A university industry relation has changed dramatically in recent years. Universities, research laboratories and research institutions are keys in driving a nation’s innovation system. The leadership of the university is strongly supportive of technology commercialization and student/researcher entrepreneurship. Leading universities have multiple methods to link their students to work experience and job opportunities in the private sector.”

As to him, the major elements characterizing best university industry relation program include institutional support, the mutual benefits to both university and corporate partners are the focus of corporate engagement strategies, research development is integrated between the industry relations office and the office of research administration in order to increase levels of industry-sponsored research and to facilitate technology transfer, and cross-campus coordination on corporate strategy identification, execution, and information-sharing are common places for change.

Planet Earth

Ethiopians should promote their Christmas

BY EPHREM ANDARGACHEW

Christmas is becoming more of a business transaction than a spiritual one. It is not uncommon to see large Christmas trees gleaming with multicolored lighting in Addis Ababa's city centers, hotels, malls, and exhibition areas these days. The trees are appealing to customers in a variety of ways.

In the past, it is customary for people to cut off several pine tree branches to colorfully celebrate Christmas. Nowadays, both real and artificial trees are being used by urban residents in place of real ones, which is positive as it helps to stop deforestation.

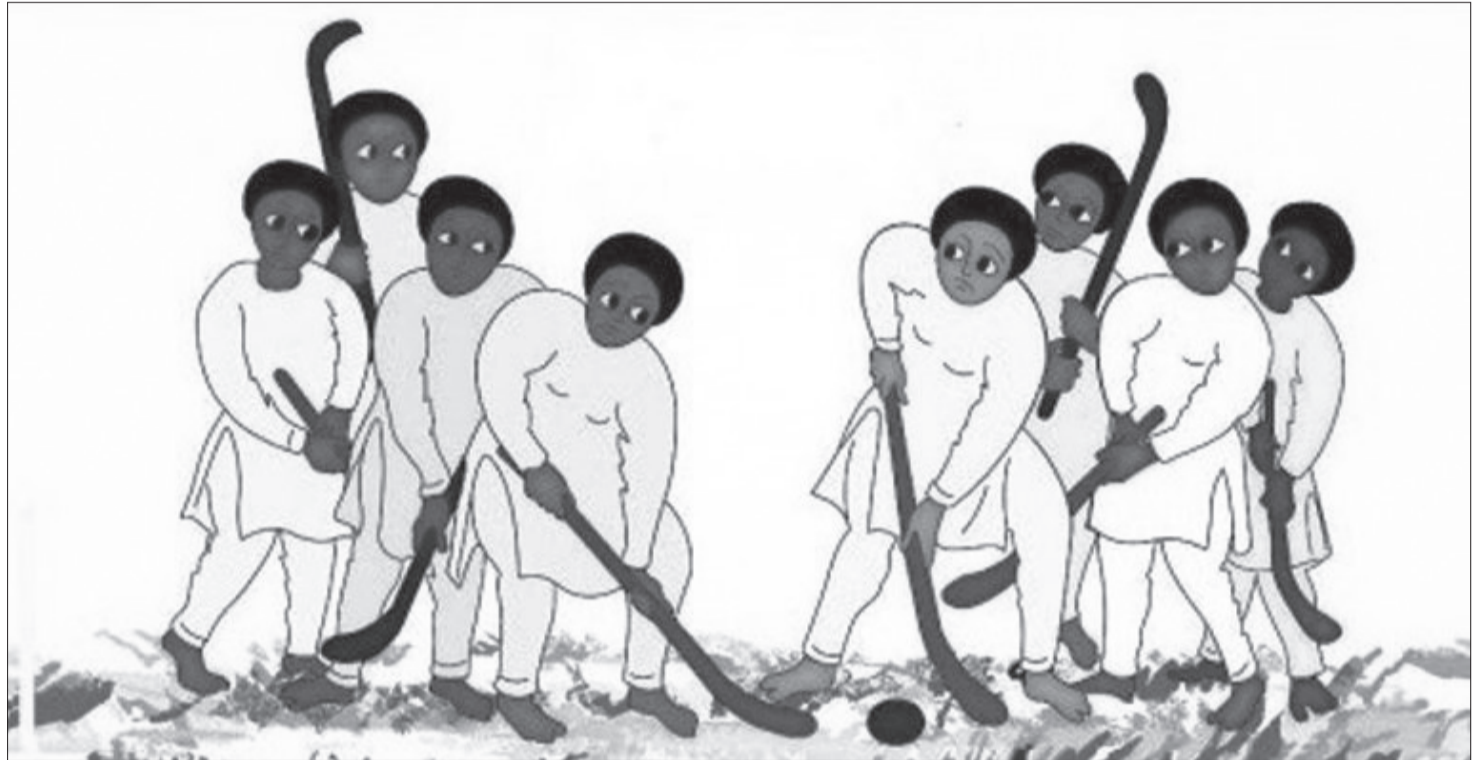
The history of Christmas trees has various origins, ranging from the usage of evergreens in ancient Egypt and Rome to the German customs of illuminated trees that found their way to America in the 1800s. Discover the history of the Christmas tree, from the first winter solstice festivities to Queen Victoria's decorating practices and the yearly lighting of the Rockefeller Center tree in New York City.

Ever since the earliest days of Christianity, people have associated winter with particular meanings for evergreen plants and trees. Many ancient peoples draped evergreen boughs over their doorways and windows, just as people do now with pine, spruce, and fir trees during the holiday season. It was thought that evergreens would ward off disease, ghosts, bad spirits, and witches in many different nations.

Furthermore, a Christmas tree, an evergreen tree, usually a pine, spruce, or fir, adorned with lights and decorations as part of the Christmas season. Christmas trees can be fresh-cut, potted, or artificial, and are used as both interior and outdoor decorations. While the trees have historically been connected with Christian iconography, their current application is primarily secular. Many families wrap gifts around an indoor Christmas tree to be unwrapped on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

The ancient Egyptians, Chinese, and Hebrews all used evergreen trees, wreaths, and garlands to represent perpetual life. The evergreen Christmas tree is one of the most often utilized trees for Christmas decorating across the world. Decorating dwellings with evergreen fir trees throughout the winter originated long ago as a sign of vitality among the dark, cold winter evenings.

Traditionally, it has been utilized to celebrate winter festivals to decorate residences in the middle of winter, which is an indication of the spring invasion. Most people use Christmas trees to symbolize the arrival of the New Year, hope, and a transition from the gloom of the rainy season to the radiance of winter. According to historical transcriptions, no one knows when or where the Christmas tree was originally utilized, although it is thought that it originated around 1000 years ago in Northern Europe.



Aside from celebrating Christmas in their own ways—known as “ye Genna Chewata”—Ethiopians also congregate and share meals during indigenous holiday festivities, ride horses, and play hockey

It is often known that the Christmas holiday and its vibrant celebrations are the ideal occasions to foster hospitality, socializing, and cultural well-being. But why are some people unhappy with Ethiopia's Christmas celebrations? The issue is, “Is the Christmas tree an Ethiopian tradition in the first place?”

In Ethiopia, especially in metropolitan areas, there was a random house design employing real pine trees and covering it with tissue paper or cotton, candy, snow balloons, and photos of Jesus. The natural Christmas pine tree has been replaced with artificial ones, which seem much more genuine and joyful throughout the holiday season. Nonetheless, residents in Ethiopia's metropolitan regions have begun adorning their homes with Christmas trees, despite the fact that there is no historical, customary, or religious reason to decorate homes with evergreens in the country.

According to Ethiopian Orthodox Church External Relation, “the Western Church commemorates Jesus' birth by adorning a Christmas tree to symbolize that Jesus Christ is the tree of life. Nevertheless, “Ethiopian Orthodox Church does not advise people to celebrate Christmas like that, because the church has bible based holiday celebration process.”

Aside from celebrating Christmas in their own ways—known as “ye Genna Chewata”—Ethiopians also congregate and share meals during indigenous holiday festivities, ride horses, and play hockey. They also seek blessings from nearby churches. In addition, traditional foods, attire, sports (such as *Genna Chewata*, a hockey game played on a horse), and religious ceremonies are held to commemorate the occasion. Moreover, religious fathers urged all Ethiopians to exert every effort for peace and the nation's unity as Christians celebrated Christmas (*Genna*) throughout the country.

Religious leaders in their Christmas

messages also encourage Christians around the country to work for peace in addition to supporting one another during the holiday season. On the eve of *Genna*, the faithful gathered at churches in white traditional clothing for mass church services that began after midnight and ended on the morning of Christmas day.

In Ethiopia, particularly among adherents of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, which has its own set of customs and practices around Christmas and other religious observances. To commemorate the festival, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church does not customarily utilize or display Christmas trees. This is due to the church's distinct historical and cultural legacy, which differs from Western Christian traditions.

In general, Ethiopians celebrate with elaborate religious services, processions, and distinctive customs that are strongly established in Ethiopian culture and history. As a result, the usage of Christmas trees, which is more typically linked with Western Christian customs, is not a component of Ethiopian Christmas.

It's important to note that individual Ethiopians may have their own personal views on Christmas trees, and attitudes toward them may vary. However, the absence of Christmas trees in Ethiopian traditions is primarily due to the unique religious and cultural practices of the church rather than a general opposition to the concept of Christmas trees.

Therefore, the Christmas tree is not Ethiopian culture and some people do not honor it. Ethiopians do not celebrate Christmas in the same way that other people do. They have their own traditions. The followers of religious fathers are advised not to imitate this behavior; instead, they should be taught how to celebrate holidays in Ethiopia. Even if they choose to utilize an artificial tree or decorate a real one without cutting it, they are still able to enjoy the occasion.

Art & Culture

“Genna marks a festival regarding the brushing aside of Satan’s curse on mankind”

BY NAOL GIRMA

Christmas is celebrated annually in both religious and cultural forms and it is the day when the curse on human beings was broken and freedom was ensured, said the priest of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Balay Mekonnen.

According to the bishop, the celebration is cheerfully observed annually on the occasion of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, who delivered humanity from the enslavement of the curse of Satan that had held them captive for more than 5,000 years. Genna is a festival of freedom celebrated in both spiritual and cultural contexts, when faith and culture are blended together. In several parts of Ethiopia, people of all ages go outside the churches to play Christmas games in the fields. The shepherds sang together when Jesus Christ was born, proclaiming that the Lord had come to earth, that we had experienced reconciliation, that slavery had ended, and that we had experienced togetherness.

The festival is properly celebrated by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Christians as it is a festival where human freedom was guaranteed and God’s light is given to the world. After Jesus was born, the wise men and apostles visited his birthplace, bearing gifts



of frankincense, myrrh and gold as a way to show their happiness.

If we come to culture, we notice that culture and religion are intertwined if they are not contradictory. Genna is celebrated in a spiritual way in the Christian church and celebrated in the traditional form in different ways.

The yoke of servitude that Satan had yoked on humanity for generations was broken for the world’s freedom with the birth of Jesus Christ. Thus, he remarked, it is a period of light, love, harmony, and forgiveness.

He noted that the festival is highly respected by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the

rest of the world and that it is a time for love, forgiveness, respect, and gift-giving. Thus, all adherents of the Christian faith have an obligation to teach peace, bless the generation, bring the confused to understanding, helping the poor, and ask the imprisoned during this holiday. The joy of this festival is not only for the Christian church, he said, adding that it is a special day for all the creation of the earth as it is the day when their freedom is guaranteed and the yoke of Satan’s slavery is broken.

Just as the wise men followed the star that pointed to the birth place of the Lord and carried gifts, in terms of culture, the festival may have different names, but it is no different



in the tradition of the church.

Christmas is a time when the curse of the generation was broken and reconciliation and love, light and freedom were ensured to the world, he said.

In general, Christmas is celebrated in various ways through the Christian church and through culture, namely reconciliation, unity, love, tolerance, caring for each other, reconciliation for the sick, forgiveness for the imprisoned, prayer for peace for the government and country.

The religious leaders are expected to stand up for reconciliation for their country, their citizens and the world in prayer and work to strengthen the victory of freedom achieved through the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, he said.

Priest, Balay Mekonnen expressed his wish that the festival would be a time of breaking curses, reconciliation, unity and patriotism.

Opera in Cape Town:

critics trace how a colonial art form was reinvented as African

How was opera established in South Africa?

Like most things western European, opera in South Africa is part of a colonial legacy. Sources – from various journal articles and the South African Music Encyclopaedia (1979-1986) – refer to the early 1800s as the time when opera came to South Africa via Cape Town.

Travelling theatre companies from Europe staged mostly lighter operas, such as French opéra comique. As time went by, more of these theatre companies came to Cape Town and travelled to the interior of the country. Eventually some of these artists and producers immigrated to South African, and so local opera production started to take shape.

In 1831, German composer Carl Maria von Weber’s *Der Freischütz* was performed in Cape Town and billed in a newspaper, *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, as the first “serious” locally produced opera.

Since the early 1800s there has been a process of the professionalization of opera, which can be seen, for instance, in the building of theatres and the training of opera singers at tertiary level. And, to put it simply, in this way opera became established and evolved as the art form that is performed in South Africa today.

How did critics track opera’s transformation?

My research on opera in post-apartheid South Africa looked particularly at how two

Cape Town daily newspapers reported on the transformation of opera from the middle 1980s when apartheid was starting to unravel. I studied reviews of productions, news reports and other articles. Initially one sees a survivalist approach in arts reportage that highlighted a political “attack” on western art forms and questioned the place of indigenous art within the new democracy. Soon it became about “how do we ensure the survival of opera while doing the politically correct thing of giving indigenous music the same status”.

Also, critics expressed (albeit subtly) surprise at the emergence of black opera singers because the apartheid narrative had been that opera was the domain of white South Africans. Eventually in classical music and opera, critics’ writing started showing an embrace of a hybrid form of western classical and indigenous music that came about in opera during the 1990s. Looking at the past 30 years, it seemed that opera critics (writing mostly for a white readership) negotiated with their readers for an acceptance of emerging operatic aesthetics and expressions that were distinctly African.

How did opera become “Africanized”?

In the book I chart how opera became South African opera. “Africanization” has been a process in which opera was made relevant to local South African audiences. Some scholars also refer to this as the indigenisation of opera. Already during the apartheid era, operas were

translated into English and Afrikaans as a means of localising them. But the setting and music remained European in nature. Following translation, changing the mise-en-scène from Europe to local settings became a means of “Africanisation”. A good example is a 1997 production of Italian composer Giacomo Puccini’s *La Bohème*. It was renamed *La Bohème Noir* (black) and was set in the township of Soweto instead of Paris. Now the staging was set in a South African context, but the music was still European.

By the early 2000s, “Africanised” productions not only had a local setting, but the original music was merged with indigenous music and indigenous instruments were also included, such as in productions of Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi’s *Macbeth* and English composer Henry Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*. Later, themes were adapted to be locally relevant, such as a version of Hungarian composer Franz Lehár’s *The Merry Widow*, set in an imagined African state with new character names and retitled *The Merry Widow of Malagawi*.

But the most pertinent “Africanisation” of the operatic genre has been the composition of new South African operas with original music and stories – like South African composer Mzilikazi Khumalo’s *Princess Magogo kaDinuzulu*. Since 1995, there have been more than 20 South African operas performed in the country, and I think each of them in their own

way represent a distinct way of reinterpreting opera within a (South) African context.

Concurrently, we saw a transformation in opera with the emergence of black opera singers. The Choral Training Programme at the now defunct Cape Performing Arts Board (known as Capab) was established in 1993 and played a key role in providing vocal training, particularly to black singers, as a means of enabling transformation in opera. And since then, we have seen many black singers embracing opera, with the likes of Pretty Yende and Levy Sekgapane becoming star singers in the big opera houses of the world.

How reliable are just a few critics in telling history?

I believe it is a reliable historical perspective if one qualifies that it is an historical account from that specific perspective. It can never be a 360-degree type of history (and the book does not claim this). There are other ways of looking at and interpreting sources on opera that could also constitute a history. However, what I have found is that our archives are inadequate to write a “full” history and much research still needs to be done from other perspectives and sources. So, this book is rather a means of capturing the historical patterns and trends in opera that have been documented by opera critics in newspapers – journalism being the first rough draft of history, as the phrase goes.

(Source: *The Conversation*)

Society

Happy Ethiopian Christmas, *Genna*!

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

Today, Ethiopians are celebrating *Genna*. The festive atmosphere of the day is palpable, with joy and happiness spread across the nation. They mark *Genna* in commemoration of the Birth of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem.

In preparation for the *Genna* festival, Ethiopians have been engaged in various traditions and rituals, homes are beautifully decorated, special meals, including the traditional dish-Doro Wot, a spicy chicken stew that is often prepared during festive season, and Injera are prepared. Families gather at the church for a night-long vigil, singing hymns and participating in prayer services. Many also choose to engage in acts of charity, giving to the less fortunate and visiting relatives and friends.

Genna, also known as Ethiopian Christmas, is a cultural and religious celebration that takes place across the country among adherents of Christianity. Like other holidays, *Genna* is also a unique religious and cultural day where people with their own distinct culture enjoy the true Ethiopian neighbors.

This holiday holds significant importance to Ethiopians, both living at home and the diaspora community. On the eve of *Genna*, it is common to see Ethiopian Orthodox Christians attending a special church service which lasts throughout the night. On which, the faithful ones will gather at churches, dressed in traditional white clothing and engage in hymn singing, prayer and scripture reading.

What is more, *Genna* is also a special time for family gatherings and exchange of gifts. Relatives and friends visit each other, extend well wishes and share meals together.

Ethiopians, unlike the Western culture, mark the day with their unique and distinctive style integrating their age-old cultural and religious values. This is due to the reason that Ethiopia is an ancient country and among the countries that accepted Christianity in the early period.

Blending the traditional cultural practices together with religious values Ethiopians are best in marking the day colorfully. This is especially true among followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox church who spend about 43 days fasting. During which Ethiopian believers abstain from consuming any animal products, including meat, dairy products and eggs. This period of fasting, which is commonly called, "Fast of Prophets" is an essential part of the spiritual preparation for the festival of the Birth of Jesus Christ.

In addition to its religious and cultural significance *Genna* has also economic significance to promote local business and stimulate the Ethiopian economy. In the weeks leading up to *Genna*, people engage in shopping for traditional clothing, food, and gifts for celebration. This increased economic activity supports the livelihoods of artisans, small traders, and small farmers whose products are in high demand during



this time.

Nuhamin Tekola is a young business woman here in Addis Ababa. This journalist meets her at bazaar opened around Arat Kilo bazaar selling Christmas gifts and hand woven traditional costumes. Nuhamin is a single mom who always gives priority to her daughter. As a young mother, she always has a custom of sending gifts to her parents and marking holidays colorfully. For this reason, she does not want to miss such chances that can generate money to her. According to her, holidays like *Genna* are a Godsend opportunities for the reason that allows exposure for her items and increases the number of customers who love to buy her products.

"Holidays and festivals are harvest seasons to me and my friends. They are the best seasons to sell our products. One or two days before the actual holiday, customers frequently visit bazaars and this will give

us [retailers] the chance to sell more goods than the usual days. This encourages us to be more active in the business and support our families."

Beside its economic significance, the moral and ethical teachings during *Genna* holiday have also significant place among Ethiopians. This is because *Genna* serves as an opportunity to reflect the life and teachings of Jesus Christ: compassion, forgiveness, and helping the less fortunate. It encourages individuals to engage in acts of charity and kindness by distributing food, clothing and gifts to the underprivileged.

This journalist had also a chance to interview Mengestu Alem, a civil servant here in Addis Ababa. For Mengestu, marking holidays goes beyond eating special food and adorned with traditional costumes. It seeks compassion and stretching hands to those who are in need of help. "Whenever holiday arrives, it is not the special food I may consume on the day, or

the kinds of new costume I may wear that bother me. It is what I can share with the underprivileged individuals on the streets of Addis or in my village that concern me most. This is because of the reason that Jesus' birth, death and resurrection remind me of His deeds, moral teachings, compassion and humbleness."

He also said, like other holidays, *Genna* has special value in uniting Ethiopians to share common cultures and sustain togetherness. "All the cultural practices performed during the day have a power to deepen Ethiopianism. To mention one, the communal aspect of food is highly valued in Ethiopian culture. Families and friends gather around a large, shared plate, eating with our hands from communal dishes. This communal dining experience promotes togetherness, as everyone sits together, shares food and engages in lively conversations."

Certainly, Ethiopia as a country accepted Christianity early (in the 4th century AD) *Genna* has a special place among the majority. This is particularly true for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) that serves as an umbrella for preserving religious and cultural values of Ethiopia.

As the country aspires to achieve economic prosperity and ensure political stability, the role of special holidays have key role in sharing common value systems and work for common goods.

Ethiopia as a land where different religious and cultural values are exercised in harmoniously, it serves as mosaic of cultural and religious tolerance. The strong sense of pride among Ethiopians that emanates from valuing their traditional values, defending their country from foreign aggression and marking holidays together are manifestations of true Ethiopian identities.

Law & Politics

A reciprocal deal with regional dividends

BY STAFF REPORTER

Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Addis Ababa and Hargeisa, many stakeholders have responded quickly. For the Horn region, which has been mired in interstate strife and other threats, the historic agreement with benefits to all parties would be a huge breakthrough.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Partnership and Cooperation would give Ethiopia, already besieged by natural and man-made disasters, the chance to establish a port and station a naval force in the Red Sea, as well as give Somaliland a stake in Ethiopia's public sector. Both parties to the agreement have clear and sincere aims, which are to promote common growth.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Partnership and Cooperation that Ethiopia and Somaliland signed will be a unifying force and an example to promote unity in the fractured area, in contrast to some incorrect responses from some entities.

The agreement also suggests that a new era is emerging in the unstable area. Additionally, it is the ongoing manifestation of Ethiopia's persistent determination to foster close friendship and cordial relations with its neighbors. Ethiopia has already signed agreements to construct infrastructure cooperatively with its neighbors. The agreement with Somaliland is also the same.

In contrast to some incorrect responses from certain sources, Ethiopia and Somaliland's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Partnership and Cooperation would serve as a unifying force and a model action to promote unification in the fractured region.

The agreement also suggests that a new era in the unstable area is about to dawn. Furthermore, it represents Ethiopia's ongoing commitment to fostering close friendship and cordial relations with its neighbors. Ethiopia has already signed agreements to cooperate on cooperative infrastructure development with neighboring countries. The Memorandum of Understanding with Somaliland is the same.

Unlike some erroneous reactions from some entities, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Partnership and Cooperation that Ethiopia and Somaliland signed would be a rallying factor and exemplary move to foster unity in the fragmented region.

The accord also signals that a new dawn is in the making in the volatile region. And, it is the continuation of Ethiopia's unwavering resolve to cultivate strong comradeship and amicable relation with neighboring countries. Ethiopia has previously entered agreements with neighboring nations to undertake joint infrastructural development. The MoU with Somaliland, and is no different.



The deal with Somaliland is an indication of the government's conviction that peaceful tactics, the reciprocity principle, and cooperation with neighbors will help Ethiopia achieve its goals. "This opportunity is open to all," the statement of GSC indicated

The accord with Somaliland demonstrates the government's conviction that Ethiopia can achieve its goals using peaceful means, collaboration with its neighbors, and the reciprocity principle. The deal with Somaliland is an indication of the government's conviction that peaceful tactics, the reciprocity principle, and cooperation with neighbors will help Ethiopia achieve its goals.

To create clarity among the international community and to foil the smear campaigns by some archenemies of the country, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has briefed Addis based diplomats on the MoU. In his briefing, the National Security Advisor of the Prime Minister, Ambassador Redwan Hussein stated that the MoU will allow Ethiopia to diversify its options regarding access to the sea and ports. Furthermore, Ethiopia will have an important role in peace and security of the region in tandem with ensuring its survival. The MoU is not only about access to the sea or port but it also includes the vast areas of cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, technology, agriculture, and tourism.

Over the years, Ethiopia has been following the principle of neutrality in the internal affairs of other countries. It has rather been a proponent of internal solutions for internal problems. It also set an example with its Pretoria peace. The MoU the country penned with Somaliland do not breach the sovereignty of other parties, no does it affect other nations. The intentions are clear and genuine. It is an agreement which other nations of the region should follow a suit. And, Ethiopia is ready to enter similar agreement with

has always been taking into account the concerns of neighboring countries and seek regional integration through negotiations that benefit the peoples of the region.

All must therefore deal with this issue with wisdom and impartiality by revealing the facts and the truth.

According to the MP, the concern of neighboring countries was taken into consideration and weighed against the need for sea port, which is an existential issue for Ethiopia with 120 million populations.

Multiple access to the sea is a regional and economic opportunity for Ethiopia, he pointed out, adding that the country can contribute to peace, just as it has been contributing for many years in Africa.

It will inevitably be a force that maintains the security, safety and stability of ports as well as international seas and corridors, Mohammed noted.

However, the MP cautioned that even if the relationship between Ethiopia and Somalia is historical and the decision makers have both appreciation and understanding of the issue, there are spoilers which try to harm Ethiopia.

They are doing this not out of love for Somalia, but out of hatred for Ethiopia that is focused on development, he underscored.

The international community must, therefore, understand Ethiopia's aspiration for development and regional integration, and welcome the agreement.

The move should not be viewed as targeting anyone's economy or the sovereignty of countries, he underscored, urging countries to cooperate in this issue by rejecting the spoilers that are trying to drag the region into war and instability.

Mohammed further recalled that Ethiopia has been one of the few countries that maintained peace in the region and beyond.

Neighboring countries must take this into account and understand Ethiopia's concerns as the country is not targeting anyone, but seeking to achieve regional and diplomatic balance and peace.

While there has never been objection to military bases in the region and not considered as violation of sovereignty, blocking Ethiopia's endeavor for development is irrational and illegal, the MP noted.

He said that there is a misunderstanding of the Ethiopian position in order to impose pressure on the country, and stressed that everyone must direct force against the common enemy that is working to destabilize the continent and bring it into wars and conflicts under many names.

Mohammed finally urged Ethiopia and Somaliland to continue strengthening diplomacy, contain opponents, achieve the ultimate goal of their peoples, and be a force that unites the countries and does not divide them.

The MoU the country penned with Somaliland do not breach the sovereignty of other parties, no does it affect other nations. The intentions are clear and genuine. It is an agreement which other nations of the region should follow a suit. And, Ethiopia is ready to enter similar agreement with other nations of the region as well

other nations of the region as well.

Ethiopia has never attempted to trample on the interests of other countries and develop at their expense, House of People's Representative Mohammed Al-Arousi pointed out today.

Accordingly, the recent agreement concluded between Ethiopia and Somaliland was open and does not violate the law and custom of the countries.

The MP stressed that the country, in its endeavor to attain development,



Ephrem Endale
Contributor

Between you & me

“Nothing Personal, Dear Friend!”

A Merry Ethiopian Christmas to all Ethiopians and their true friends the world over!

Several years back I was this man's house a couple of days after Ethiopian Christmas. That for some is breaking news. “You mean that boring guy actually went to someone's house and a few days after Christmas too!” take it easy guy. You can interrogate me using the latest interrogation science (There must be some ‘science’ there too, isn't there?) and I wouldn't tell you what prompted me to go to that gentleman's house.

Anyways my going by itself isn't the point here. Now the man was that sort of guy you wouldn't expect to ‘touch’ anything foreign. Especially when it came to celebrating holidays he never resorts to traditions other than his country's. With him this is a very big issues and he wouldn't let you mess around with what he believes going as far as refusing to have any discussions on the issue. Try to be a smart guy and he'd be smarter; he dumps just like that. You know like that inconsiderate, arrogant and spineless love interest of you who just shuts you out.

“What's the problem?”

“What do you mean what's the problem?”

“You have practically ignored me and it's not at all like you. People notice and ask me what the problem between us was. I tell them there's none and they give me these side glances. They believe that something serious was in play between us. Can you tell me what have I done?” If you get an answer for that then you're the luckiest guy and you might as better try this

multi-million birr lottery stuff.

So this guy is the real local guy blood and bones. The day I went to his house I can tell you I was a little taken off guard. It was as I have messed up with the address and ended up at the hose of his namesake somewhere else. The size of the Christmas tree in the middle of the living room was so huge it completely shut out large of the wall. And, now this is really interesting, multiple colorfully packaged and decorated boxes were all over the place. And to add to my total confusion on another side of the room was, who else, good, old Santa Klaus!

One thing I didn't do is ask him what was all that about places in his house. No, not me! The start fellow he was said “This week you'll be writing about me.” And that broke the ice between us and I got the courage to comment something like, “I never expected such a scene in your house.”

“No one does expect. Not even me.” What! What's kind of comment is that? I mean the guy and his family have turned the living room into some main section of a big carnival or something like that. And that's what he has to say!

His story was that since his two daughters lived abroad he does it to remember them. Now that is a little odd. His two daughters have been living abroad for the better part of two decades and it's now he thinks of a Christmas tree and Santa Klaus remembrance in their name? I didn't argue with him because trying to do so would be like starting an unprovoked fight. Again, not me!

But the story of his house new look already

made the rounds and I can tell you there were quite a number of stories flying around; stories ranging from the humorous to the ridiculous, to the outrageous.

The Christmas tree issue had been around for some time in the yesteryears. Yes I'm talking in the past tense. These days practically no one seems to be interested in such issues. I don't think there are many who think that I had ever been an issue.

“What the hell is there to talk about the Christmas tree? Don't you guys have better things to talk about?”

Many of us would say that the exchange of wrapped gifts put underneath the Christmas tree has not been part of the traditional Ethiopian Christmas celebration in the older days. No more old days stuff! A couple of years back I heard of a pretty young lady being given a three-million birr car as a Christmas present. It isn't for nothing we say times have changed! Not only with the younger generation. Even the adults and even senior citizen seem to be catching up with the trend of Christmas presents. In fact many seem to have lost traditional and indigenous ways of celebrating Christmas or even as holidays. Some acting pseudo-civilized while they could be anything but civilized would say the likes of those who want to stick to the age old days of celebrations are losers who never would be civilized!

A long lost friend I heard nothing for more than a decade or so phones a few days back. Not until he tells me who he was did I discover it was him, Look, these days my problem is that the voices

of many have changed in a hundred and some ways or there must be too many actors amongst us; you know those of us who think that by changing our voices we can change our status.

“Did you hear that guy talk recently?”

“Which guy?”

“That guy who shares the use of his sun glances with the moon too.” Ha!

“Oh, that guy; what did he do now?”

“You should hear him talk. The guy's voice has changed so much I think they must have made him a CEO or a boss of some kind.”

Believe me I wouldn't have discovered his identity in a thousand years had he not come to my rescue. So the usual “hello!” “long-time-no-see” stuff was thrown to and fro and he says “I want to give you a present and I don't know where to end it to.”

“Present! That's nice of you.” at a time when people are no more sending wedding invitations let alone giving presents this guy is ‘The Man of The Match!’ Ha! “What's the occasion?”

“Don't you know it is Christmas?”

I politely thanked him telling him there was no for giving presents watching my words so that I wouldn't offend him I didn't. We'll meet one of these days for coffee and maybe then he would grill me as to why I declined his present. “Nothing personal, dear friend!”

Believe me when it comes to things that go against not only what you believe in but also is without and convincing premise declining with the good words “Nothing personal, dear friend!” is a wonderful way out.

Again “A Merry Ethiopian Christmas to all Ethiopians and their true friends the world over!”

Falling in Line

Look, there are many who really like to walk the streets of the city to do justice to the limbs and also as a hobby. Yes, there are many for whom walking has become a hobby. Isn't that nice? I like to think of myself as a guy who enjoys to really walking. In the older days I walked such long distances that even those close use to caution me I was overdoing it. Thanking them for being so considerate I politely turned down their advice. Not that I was part of that crowd which thinks taking advice is tantamount to putting oneself on the lower rungs of the social ladder. You know that crowd where the question is not about the context and content of the advice but who actually offered the advice.

“What! Are you telling me to advice from him! Of all people from him! I can't believe you could be so naive.” Once you make walking your regular activity you enjoy it so much that any advice is rejected before it's even made. (What am I talking about here? Sounding like an unlucky physical education teacher who has been downsized because the students and even their parents have no interest! “My kid could get that from Tik Tok!”)

But then we are no more in the older days' people who liked to walk the streets of the city are facing an important challenge; congestion! Yes, there is so much congestion in many parts of the city that we're running out of open and convenient spaces. If you can enjoy walking with so much bumping and jostling, then you must be of a different species!

Recently a few of us were talking about

the importance of doing physical exercise especially as the birthday candles keep on adding. Walking, of course, featured as the best physical exercise convenient for all. (While we're at it recently I was browsing the net and came across this weight lifting expert. This guy says that walking isn't physical exercise. Yes, that's what he said. He went on to explain that walking is only a sort of entertainment and it adds nothing to physical well-being. No comment.)

So as we continued complaining about the congested streets one amongst us brought up an issue which practically brought our complaints to a sudden end. He went on to explain that no change would come by complaining. So what should we do? “Learn to live with the new normal.” That did it. To tell you the truth forget about the Einstein mind. We don't need it to understand that we indeed need to live with the ‘new normal’ since we can't change them. Such things change through processes that could take years and decades.

Frankly speaking it's not only about the congested streets of the city. But there are many instances with which we have to learn to live with the new normal in our daily lives. Take the friends who displayed behavioral changes and you don't know why or how. In fact the friends could be so close to you that you thought you knew them, as they say, like the palms of your hands. I can tell you that the behavioral changes of the very people you thought you knew inside out aren't something

you can take lightly. In fact you could start digging deep into your long relationships trying to find out where you might have jumped the rails and made them act so weird. You might want to sit down and talk with them as that's the most direct way of dealing with the issue.

“Is there anything I did wrong against you?”

“What do you mean?”

“The past couple of months you have been ignoring me. You're treating me like I'm a complete stranger to you. You have even stopped taking my calls.” But sadly they wouldn't want to have such talk. You are concerned because under your very eyes one of your strongest intact friendships.

For one reason or another, the person in question has changed. All your attempts to get to the bottom of things haven't worked. You have also learned that you weren't the only one on the receiving end of the person's changed behavior. So what do you do? Well, I think like the fellow I mentioned above said “Learn to live with the new normal.”

It's indeed frustrating to realize these days people change behaviors overnight these days. We say things not because of any studies or any ‘investigative’ something but from day to day experiences we and others went through. So then if such things are happening with the frequency we're witnessing why anyone should torch their brains with questions we couldn't answer conclusively.

By the way I don't think learning to live with

the ‘new normal’ means to conform to the changed situation. Or to put it in other words one doesn't have to join the circus! Decision to cut or abandon things if they don't work for you is also living with the new normal. Yes, it is! The new normal let's say unfortunately has thrown you to the farthest corners by going against the things you held dear and you're expected to stay in place. “No way!” you say. So what do you do? You decide, “This isn't my turf. So time to relocate to where my principles and my beliefs are honored and respected.” That' dear readers, wood be your new normal prompted by events of the preceding ‘new normal.’

In the information superhighway of our age where the social media features high the new normal is the massive amount of fake news about any and everything. I read somewhere that fake news has been industrialized. Bingo! That's it. Fake news has seeped into our daily life so deeply whether we like it or not, fake news, largely deliberately produced even by the maker and breaker of the global information superhighway, has become the new normal. Now this ‘new normal’ didn't just appear out of the blue and overtake us. It's a well-thought out, planned and executed blueprint drawn by those who aspire to hold the throat of the world more firmly and enslave the inhabitants. This isn't empty hate-the-west rhetoric; but a fact of life we have been forced to live with...

By the way the ‘New Normal’ does conforming with the ‘new normal’ mean falling in line!

In Pictures

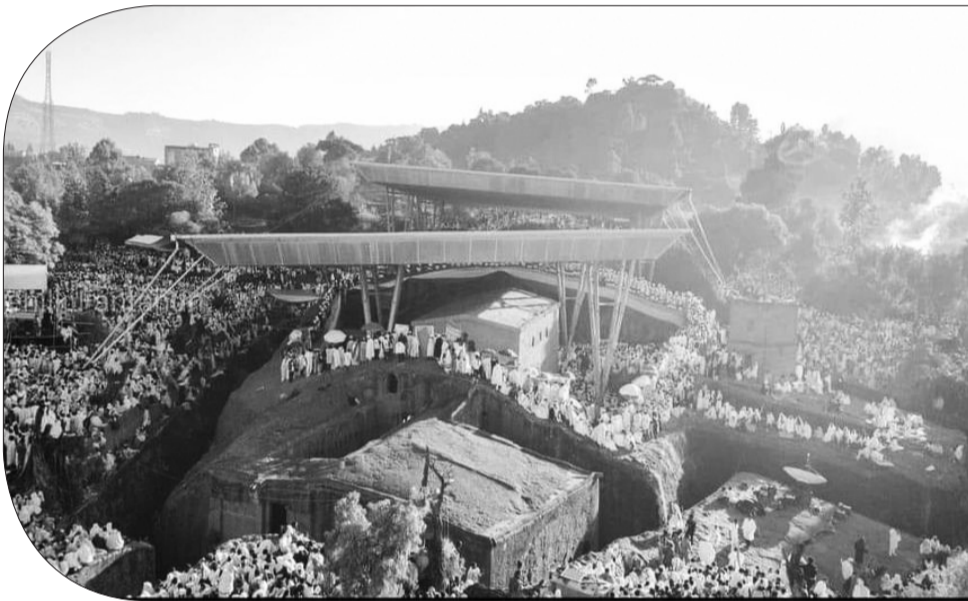
Ethiopian Christmas celebrated across the country

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

The Christian faithful here celebrate Ethiopian Christmas (Gena), the birth of Jesus Christ, across the country colorfully. The Ethiopian Christmas is celebrated on January 07 and this year's Gena festival is being colorfully celebrated across Ethiopia.

Especially, the celebration of Gena, Ethiopian Christmas is unique in Lalibella Rock hewn Churches. Local and foreign tourists visit Lalibella during Gena to enjoy the special and colorful celebration of the festival and to visit its unique 11 rock hewn churches constructed some 800 years ago.

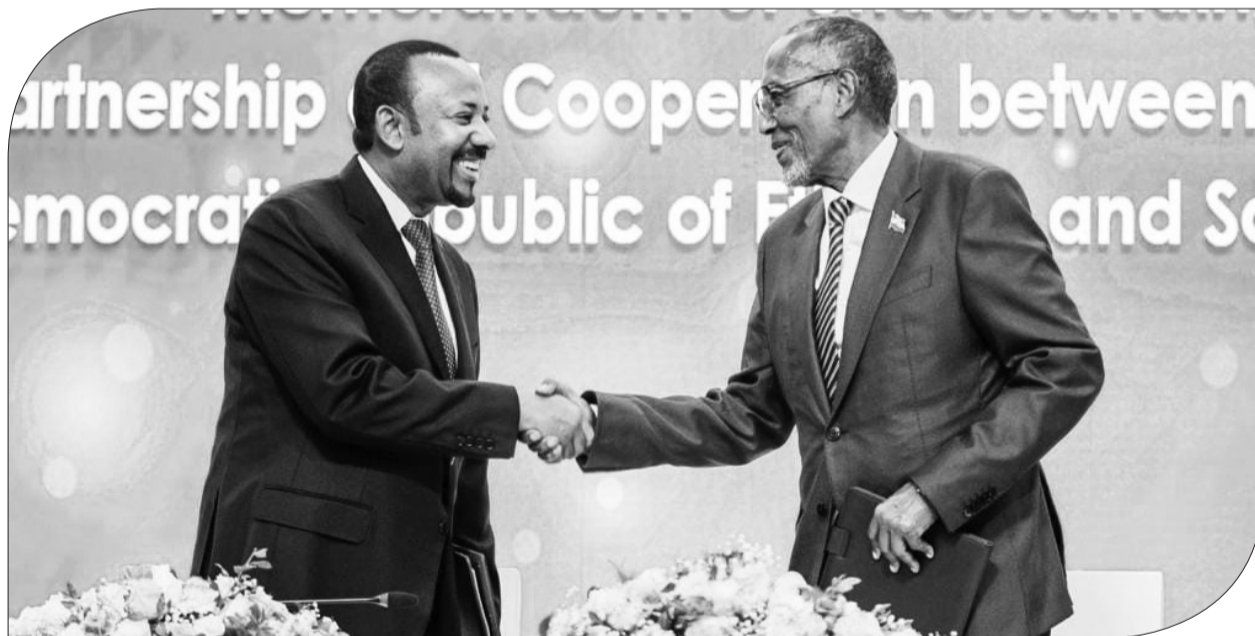
The picture above depicts the colorful celebration of Gena, Ethiopian Christmas in Lalibella.



Home-coming, second-generation diaspora warmly welcomed

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) invited the second-generation Ethiopian Diaspora to visit their country of origin in three rounds. The first round home-coming Diaspora started arriving at home. A warm welcoming ceremony is being accorded to the Diaspora upon their arrival at Bole International Airport.

Accepting the Premier's call, Ethiopian origin second-generation Diasporas from across the globe have started arriving in Addis Ababa. The above shot shows Minister of Tourism Nasise Chali and other senior government officials warmly welcoming the second-generation Diaspora upon their arrival.



Ethiopia, Somaliland signs historic MOU

On January 01, 2024, Ethiopia and Somaliland have signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for partnership and cooperation.

Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed (PhD) and Somaliland President Muse Bihe Abdi signed MOU in Addis Ababa. The picture above shows the two leaders shaking hands. It was taken here in Addis Ababa following the signing of the MOU.

'Walking the talks'

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) repeatedly said that access to sea is not a luxury for a country with over 120 million populations, but a matter of survival issue. Still, he stressed Ethiopia's firm stance to find peaceful ways through cooperation to find access to sea.

Though it seems something a dream for most of us, PM Abiy walks his talks and agreed with Somaliland to own an access to the sea through lease. Ethiopia agreed with Somaliland to get access to the sea through lease for 50 years.

Per the plan, the agreement was achieved peacefully and through mutual cooperation.





Ethiopian Diplomatic Week:

A unique opportunity to review, reflect Ethiopia's diplomatic voyage

BY WORKU BELACHEW

Please meet **H.E. Ambassador Birtukan Ayano**, a career diplomat, who is the State Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Her Excellency previously served as Ambassador Extra-Ordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia to Canada. She served at the headquarters and on missions in different capacities. We sat down with her for an exclusive interview regarding the first Ethiopian Diplomatic Week due to be held from January 11- February 02, 2024. Enjoy!

What is the purpose of the Ethiopian Diplomatic Week and Exhibition?

I'm grateful for the opportunity *The Ethiopian Herald* provided me. The purpose of the Ethiopian Diplomatic Week and Exhibition dubbed as "From an African Hub to the World," is of course manifold. But the major ones would be to highlight the diplomatic feats and challenges of the past, reflect on the current Ethiopia's diplomatic path, and to give a picture of what the future holds for our diplomatic activities.

The foreign relations of Ethiopia during ancient times were much influenced by trade, culture, and religion, as well as security issues. In the modern era, the scale of Ethiopia's foreign relations was expanded to adopt the technology of the day. Today, we ultimately envision creating a prosperous Ethiopia. We're working diligently to safeguard our national interest. Also at the center of our diplomatic undertaking is ensuring the provision of citizen-centered diplomatic services at our missions abroad.

To cut a long story short, the events have chronicled not only the last 116 years of Ethiopia's diplomatic journey carried out since the establishment of the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs but it also exhibits the ancient diplomatic engagements of the country. We have much to learn from the past and current endeavors and can use the lessons emulated as a springboard for the future diplomatic course. To be honest, the last one, future diplomacy, is not that predictable given the ever-evolving technology and diplomatic landscape. Otherwise, we have laid the foundation to embrace the next generation of diplomacy.

How do you explain the theme, 'From an African Hub to the World'?

The theme, "From an African Hub to the World," demonstrates the diplomatic stature of Ethiopia then and now.

Ethiopia, as an ancient state that safeguarded its sovereignty and territorial integrity, has served as a beacon of freedom for Africans, if not for the entire oppressed people.

Ethiopia was the only independent African country that was represented in the League of Nations. It also became a founding member of the UN in 1945. The Economic and Social Council of the UN established the UNECA and Ethiopia has hosted this prestigious organization ever since.

What is more, the unity of Africa could have been farfetched had it not been for the role Ethiopia played in bridging the gulf between the Casablanca and Monrovia groupings. The heads of state and governments of Africa decided to headquarter the OAU in Addis Ababa in 1963. Later generations of African leaders have taken a similar decision, headquartering the AU in the diplomatic hub of Africa, Addis Ababa. Ethiopia hosts a large number of foreign missions and international organizations.

These and other salient issues position Ethiopia to be the hub of Africa. This is not to mention the pan-African airline that connects Africans among themselves and with the rest of the world. Our profound role in establishing and leading the IGAD is quite notable. IGAD has now become an important regional force in Africa and around the world. Ethiopia is also fulfilling its international responsibilities by participating in peacekeeping missions. We spearheaded the climate negotiation representing Africa and are also setting an example for the world by planting over 32.5 billion seedlings in just five years. Therefore, our foreign relations create positive impressions in our region, continent, and the planet.

What are the major contents of the exhibition and the accompanying panel discussion?

The contents are diverse, engaging, and informative, to say the least.

We have made thorough preparations to effectively demonstrate the 116 years of the Ethiopian diplomatic journey. Besides, we have made efforts to highlight what future diplomacy will look like. The storyline of the exhibition starts with Ethiopia's diplomatic activities during the Common Era. The pinnacle of Ethiopia's foreign relations and the challenges encountered during ancient times are both highlighted. The diplomatic feats and challenges that Ethiopia has been through are presented in a variety of ways. There is also a children's quarter furnished in a 'learn and have fun' fashion. Ethiopia's modern foreign relations, which of course ensued with the triumph of Adwa are arranged in three categories: bilateral relations, multilateral relations, and the future diplomacy. Seasoned Ethiopian diplomats and scholars would also take part in the panel discussion on various topics.

What do you like to tell the diplomatic and international community based in Addis Ababa as well as the diaspora



H.E. Amb. Birtukan Ayano



community that would come home as a result of the national call?

The exhibition is open from January 11 to February 1 / 2024. The event creates a unique opportunity for the members of the diplomatic and international community based in Addis Ababa. Hence, I feel honored to invite members of the community to come to the **Ethiopia Science Museum** and learn the country's diplomatic history.

Indeed, we're calling the second-generation diaspora community to get connected to their origins. It is an important opportunity for them to learn about their country. We have quite awe-inspiring displays, captivating and diverse presentations, and rich contents. Hence, the new generation

of the diaspora community would walk through the Ethiopian diplomatic path, which would seal a lasting memory in their minds.

Fortunately, this is a peak tourist season in Ethiopia. We will soon mark the UNESCO-registered *Timkat festival* (The commemoration of the baptism of Jesus Christ in the hands of Johan the Baptist). And tourists from around the world would attend this absorbing event. And the exhibition would add yet another rewarding experience for them. It is incumbent upon all of us to inform tourists to include the exhibition in their itineraries.

Thanks Excellency.