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Prof. Brook Hailu



Ambassador Dina Mufti

Ethiopian diplomacy injects new impetus into regional economic dev't

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA-Ethiopia's give-and-take diplomacy would help to bring sustainable peace and stability, realize cooperation and ensure all-inclusive development in the Horn of Africa (HoA) region, sources closer to the issue said.

Accordingly, Political Science Expert Prof. Brook Hailu told *The Ethiopian Herald* that Ethiopia remains the proponent of peaceful coexistence and constructive approach and have been engaged in resolving conflict through negotiation

Ethiopia's diplomacy, which has a long history and widening and deepening since

the reign of Emperor Hailselasie, is in a better stage in the present day due to the strengthening of relationships with various actors, he added.

"As Ethiopia is the center of HoA's geopolitical landscape, each and every diplomatic issue immediately touches the nation. It means that any

See Ethiopian diplomacy ... Page 3



Gov't, donors to provide humanitarian aid to 6.6 mln citizens

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- The Ethiopian Disaster and Risk Management Commission (EDRMC) revealed the government's plan to partner with donor agencies to provide lifesaving humanitarian aid for some 6.6 million citizens.

See Gov't donors ... Page 3

Photo: Hadush Abreha



Prof. Berhanu Nega

MoE devises program to improve public school standard

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDISABABA- The government has been running a program that aims to improve facilities and education delivery in over 48,000 public schools across the country that are being identified as substandard, the Education Minister (MoE) said.

In a press conference he held yesterday, MoE Minister Prof. Berhanu Nega stated that among 48,000 public schools that were subjects of the study, only six have met international standards.

The national educational quality assessment that has been conducted over the past few

See MoE devises ... Page 3

BY HIZKEL HAILU

HARAR - Up on the completion of Eco Park Recreational and Hyena Feeding Center Project, a surge in tourist influx is highly expected, Harari State Tourism Bureau announced.

Harari State Culture, Heritage, and Tourism Bureau Director Amir Remedan told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the fiscal work of the project has reached 47% completion which is expected to increase tourist inflow when it goes fully operational.

Amir noted that the construction of the recreational center project is part of "Dine for Generation" initiative aimed at increasing the number of tourist attractions in the state.

Besides, he expressed optimism that the project, with a total budget of 140 million birr, will be completed in the near future and open doors for visitors.

General Consultant of the project, Architect Genanaw Alemnew for his part stated that

See Harari expects ... Page 3

Harari expects new recreational project to increase tourist influx



News

Documenting diplomatic journey key to protect national interest: Diplomats

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopia’s diplomatic successes and challenges need to be well-documented to shape the next generation about protecting national interest, carrier diplomats said.

The above remark was made on Thursday at the launching event of the book dubbed ‘Ethiopia and its neighbors in the midst of cooperation and challenges’.

Speaking at the event, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) Spokesperson Ambassador Meles Alem (PhD) said that the country needs paradigm shift as well as well-organized diplomatic documents and narrations to bring about forward-looking generations who maintain its successful diplomatic journey.

Ambassador Meles pointed out that documenting the country’s diplomatic achievements and challenges would have a paramount importance to promote national and regional diplomatic success.



Photo: Gebabo Gebrie

Moreover, he said the ongoing exhibitions at Science Museum, diplomatic panels and other platforms are significant platforms to create awareness in the diplomatic area and an impetus to extend the nation’s diplomacy to a higher position.

Praising the author’s contribution, he called on scholars, researchers and other actor’s engagements in the area to contribute to the forthcoming generation to maintain the country’s diplomatic principles.

He said: “It is highly important to put

inclusive diplomatic engagements in place to forge our foreign policy partnership with neighboring countries. Indeed, identifying the breaches and executing multifaceted diplomatic activities are viable tools to preserve our deep-rooted partnership.”

A veteran diplomat Ambassador Girum Abay on his part stated that in addition to a well-documented diplomatic channel, a sovereign nation needs to have a strong military base and security to achieve fruitful foreign policy frameworks and reshaping the

country’s future prospects and sustainability as well.

“These days, the political landscape in the region has been seriously impacting the flow of diplomatic activities,” Amb. Girum noted.

He, therefore, recommended that the nation’s diplomacy should be revised and promote cooperation despite the diverse geopolitical features.

Author of the book, Horn of Africa Analyst and Historian, Belete Belachew (PhD) said that Ethiopia needs to build capacity in terms of security, economy and political stability to beef up cooperation with neighbors.

Apart from formulating policies, the author pointed out that policy execution capability and institutional capacities need to be highly facilitated to effectively implement institutional policies and strategies.

As to him, suggesting solutions for country’s internal problems and conflicts is a valuable mechanism to ensure national interest and avoid any foreign pressure.

Gov’t demands NGOs to play part in water, energy supply

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA—Ministry of Water and Energy (MoWE) has called on NGOs engaged in water and energy projects to exert extra efforts to meet the growing demand.

MoWE Minister Eng. Habtamu Itefa (PhD) has recently discussed with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) about their contribution and challenges they have faced while facilitating water and electricity supply, the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) reported.

The Minister said on the occasion that NGOs are expected to put further effort to improve their contribution in supplying clean water and energy to communities.

Apart from the government activities in the supplying of water and energy, non-governmental organizations are participating in various projects though they should exert extra efforts to improve accessibility of drinking water, he remarked.

The supply of drinking water has reached 68 percent at the national level while energy coverage hit more than 51 percent, Habtamu expressed.

He stated that efforts should be put to complete the water and energy development projects so as to increase the access to clean water through utilizing natural resources.

To this end, the Minister noted that the government is ready to work more closely with non-governmental organizations to boost their role in providing water and energy that improves the lives of citizens.

Civil Society Organizations Deputy Director General Fasikaw Mamo on his part said that the demand for access to potable water has been growing through time.

Therefore, he mentioned, an increased



effort is expected from non-governmental organizations which requires a coordinated effort among themselves.

Among the participants, Vita Green Impact Program Representative Sultan Abdurahman said that resolving technological constraints in water and energy supplying process needs more attention.

He pointed out that solving the problems faced by the humanitarian organizations engaged in energy supply is the key and requires an immediate solution from the relevant body to satisfy the growing demands of citizens.

Mobile health service available in conflict affected areas: MoH

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA—Ministry of Health (MoH) stated that citizens, especially pregnant women, in conflict affected areas and natural disasters are being provided with prenatal care services through mobile health facilities, nearby facilities, and multidisciplinary health professionals.

MoH Maternal Health Desk Head, Zemzem Mohamed told the Ethiopia Press Agency (EPA) that prenatal care services are being provided by mobile health facilities using nearby health facilities and multidisciplinary health professionals to pregnant women who have been displaced from their homes due to conflict and natural disasters.

The ministry is making integrations and connections with nearby health facilities to provide access to antenatal care services for mothers who are displaced due to conflict and flood.

In areas where the problem is visible, the service is being provided by a multidisciplinary

health professional called a mobile institution. “Generation can continue when the mother is healthy. Therefore, it is important for the entire community to collaborate to foster peace and improve maternal health, and advance national development.”

She stressed that special care should be taken as the number of deaths related to childbirth at the country level is not easy. The frequency of follow-up of mothers in health institutions should be increased to eight and the deaths related to childbirth should be avoided.

Zemzem explained that attention is being paid by the Ministry of Health to reduce maternal mortality and said that all relevant parties should contribute to the success of this goal.

Attention is given to the health of mothers, every year, a national movement held under the name of January as the month of healthy motherhood. Currently 70 percent of mothers give birth under the supervision of a trained health professional, she noted.

Japan provides 10 mln USD emergency support to HoA

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA – The government of Japan has decided to extend an emergency grant aid worth over 10 million USD to Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya in the Horn of Africa (HoA).

According to the press release issued for *The Ethiopian Herald*, the grant focused on assisting the countries that were hit hard by several challenges particularly by the floods that occurred from October to December in 2023.

Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya have been facing a serious humanitarian situation due to the compounding effects of the drought over the past three years and soaring prices of food and energy globally due to the recent international situation, it stated.

Emphasizing that these circumstances cannot

be overlooked from a humanitarian point of view, the Government of Japan has decided to provide assistance because the floods that occurred at the end of last year caused extensive damage.

As to the press release, this Emergency Grant Aid provides humanitarian assistance in areas such as shelter provision, water and sanitation through international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

It has also underlined that from the perspective of human security, access to water and sanitation should be ensured.

News

Authority says over thousand media personnel to cover 37th AU summit

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA— The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA) disclosed that more than 1,000 local and international Media Personnel are expected to cover the 37th African Union Summit which is set to be held from Feb 14 to Feb 18, 2024.

According to the Authority, it is undertaking essential activities to make the badge available for the journalists. Moreover, it has started providing 24 hour service in order to facilitate arrival visa and custom clearance services at the Bole International Airport Custom Office, African Union Badge Center as well as Authority's Head office.

Highlighting that it is part of the National Committee for the African Union 44th Executive Council and 37th Ordinary Session of Heads of States, the Authority also noted that activities are ongoing to host successful summit and provide adequate media coverage.

Moreover, intensive preparation has also been taken to provide efficient service for the media personnel as well as to showcase nation's long-cherished welcoming approach and good image.

So far, some 550 international and 350 domestic journalists have been registered, though the registration is expected to increase, it stated.

Gov't, donors to provide humanitarian...

EDRMC's Senior Public Relations Expert Atalele Abuhay told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the Commission has finalized the necessary preparation to reach 6.6 million people in need from January-March, 2024 in the fourth round of support.

The 6.6 million citizens are affected by instability, drought and other natural and manmade disasters and the commission identified the victims by household-level survey. Some eight billion Birr is required for the fourth round of support and the government and donor agencies will equally share the expense, Atalele elaborated.

The expert further mentioned the existence of eight food stores with the capacity to store more than 300,000 tones in eight various states across the country including Adama, Kombolcha, Mekelle and Shashmene among others. Several farmers unions have supplied these stores with food and non-food items.

"Since humanitarian response fluctuates given its seasonal behavior, the government

reserves both food and non-food items in its eight stores. Equally, the commission is working closely with humanitarian partners to provide necessary support for people in need."

So far, the government has allotted over 11.2 billion Birr to bridge food and non-food shortages in three phases.

During the first phase, the government provided humanitarian aid to some 7.3 million citizens while it delivered support to 3.6 million people in the second phase. Moreover, the commission managed to reach 6.5 million citizens in the third phase.

According to him, the third phase of support, in which 20% of the share is covered by donor groups through the government's diplomatic effort, mainly targeted the northern part of the country particularly Amhara and Afar areas.

It was learned that the commission has been identifying citizens that are in dire humanitarian situations with the support of state bureaus.

Harari expects new recreational...

the park has various attractions including a dedicated hyena feeding site, cozy cafes, shops, a sprawling park, a museum, and some other green and recreational spaces.

For him, these diverse offerings aim to provide an enriching experience for tourists and locals alike.

"Spanning across 14 hectares of land, the Eco Park holds great promise for Harari state's tourism industry. Its strategic location and wide range of attractions are expected to draw visitors from far and wide. The project's integration with the local community is another advantage, offering tourists a chance to engage with the vibrant culture and heritage of the state."

Notably, the construction of this center is set to create approximately 200 permanent jobs for the locals, he mentioned.

As to Genanaw, more than 300 youths from the community are already involved in various jobs related to the project, underscoring its positive impact on the local economy and livelihoods.

The federal and regional government bodies have been closely monitoring the project's progress, reflecting their commitment

to sustainable tourism development, he said, adding that their active involvement indicates the importance placed on enhancing region's reputation as a prime tourist destination.

As the construction nears completion, Amir explained that the project is poised to elevate Harari state's tourism sector to new heights.

The project's array of attractions, combined with its scenic beauty and job creation opportunities, will contribute to the overall growth and appeal of the State as well as the nation, he noted.

This development is set to solidify the state's position as an enticing and culturally rich destination for domestic and international tourists, he added.

According to the Architect, this project is also paramount importance in generating foreign currency and creating a positive image to the state in particular and the country in general.

It is to be recalled that Harari State Eco Park centre is part of the eight tourism sites launched by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) under the "Dine for Generation" initiative recently.

MoE devises program to improve public...

years helps the government to formulate a viable master plan to improve infrastructures. Schools are below standard and water and sanitary issues have been challenging students and causing large dropouts, he added.

The minister further highlighted that a research that was conducted during the quality assessment period also shows that students were reluctant to receive education because of the low standard of school facilities. Hence, a large number of task forces and significant finance have been deployed to improve the sector.

The MoE has adopted a new design whereby schools will be built while accommodating the necessary facilities in their compounds and involving construction designers and architects in the process.

The design has also been made with the engagement of CSOs and some other institutions and though it might not solve

the students' problems overnight, the new approach would significantly improve the overall quality of future education, Prof. Berhanu elaborated.

"The main challenge we have faced these days is financial shortage whereby almost all schools are substandard and the situation needs immense investment that the government could not afford at once or twice. Therefore, we are facilitating conditions to mobilize the public to provide the needed resources and supplement the ongoing school reconstruction campaign."

He also told journalists that the government prioritizes ensuring education quality rather than a mere expansion of facilities. "However, we have to build thousands of schools in areas with school shortages. Reconstruction of war-damaged schools and restoring school feeding program are also being implemented in parallel with other packages."

Ethiopian diplomacy injects new impetus...

politics in the region without Ethiopia's participation will not be effective."

The former diplomat further highlighted that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that Ethiopia and Somaliland have signed aiming to ensure the former's direct access to seaport and does not intend to harm any country rather than encouraging regional integration.

The port deal is also a peaceful approach and ensures the signatories' mutual benefit. Similarly, Ethiopia has been playing a significant role in Mogadishu's peace and stability through deploying soldiers under the umbrella of Africa Union.

According to Pro. Brook, some interest

groups are attempting to utilize the MoU to incite war and conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia. "It is not known why those groups oppose Ethiopia's aspiration to sea access from Somaliland given the fact that several countries including Japan, France, the U.S., and China have military bases in Djibouti. There is a need to build constructive engagement among Addis Ababa, Haregasa, and Mogadishu as well."

Above all, Somaliland conducted five presidential elections; allow free press and contesting political parties and the likes which are not common in Mogadishu. Currently, Ethiopia, Egypt and Somalia are attracting the global attention whereby

experienced diplomats are required to facilitate deliberation and create mutual understanding among the parties.

Ethiopia had the access to the Red Sea coastline some 30 years ago and owing to its economic and population expansion of the past three decades; its quest for sea outlet is intensified. Emanated from its Foreign Policy, Ethiopia pursues a peaceful approach to the realization of its port aspiration and not to violate other countries' sovereignty, he remarked.

Sharing the above rationale, Ambassador Dina Mufti said that Ethiopia's give- and -take diplomacy would help to strengthen cooperation among HoA countries and

ensure their national interests.

Ethiopia's Foreign Policy prioritizes relations with neighboring countries and it aims to ensure regional peace and stability while preserving the country's national interest.

Ethiopia has a large population, extensive arable land which is not yet utilized and the country is also endowed with precious minerals and immense resources that could avail the opportunity to businesses from neighboring countries to invest in their areas of preference, the veteran diplomat emphasized.

Opinion

Living up to promises: tough but bearable AU assignment

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

It is well recognized that Ethiopia is one of the founding members of Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) in 1963, which was later renamed African Union (AU). It was established with the main aim of liberating the nations of the continent from colonization, promoting the well being of citizens, creating regional economic integration as well as eradicating poverty thereby attaining the socio-economic development of member countries.

Among a number of founding fathers of such a cardinal entity, Emperor Haile Sellasie of Ethiopia, Gamal Abdel Nasir of Egypt and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana have come to the forefront as they had immensely contributed to the establishment of this continental organization.

At the time when this monumental organization was established, most of the countries of the continent were under the yoke of colonialism, and westerners regarded Africa as a dark continent. Before the advent of colonialism since 1500, Africa had lost its productive human resources due to the three centuries long slave trade by European expansionist who were encroaching their extensive commercial farms in the Caribbean and North America plantations. The slave labor had played pivotal role in booming cotton plantations in America which was again utilized as input for textile industries established in Western Europe after industrial revolution.

Obviously, industrialization needs raw material used such as inputs, cheap labor and market. Hence, in 1888 the then super powers such as Great Britain, France, Germany, Spain and Portugal eyed towards Africa and agreed to craft their own map for the creation of vassal states. They imposed colonialism by force and regarded the population as their subject and planned to govern as per their preference and egocentric status. They had then exploited labor, robbed resources and imposed their culture and language.

Great Britain pursued the colonial policy of divide and rule along ethnic lines while French pursued the policy of "asimilado" which means assimilating the colonized people with a nominal French citizenship.

Italy as a late comer and relatively weaker than other European countries tried to expedite to Ethiopia for its colonial ambition but denied by the Adwa victory in 1896. This time except Ethiopia all African countries had already fallen under European colonization.

Nevertheless, though African countries had been colonized, they never gave up their struggle against colonialism for their independence nearly for about 8 decades. They coordinated both their peaceful disobedience and armed struggle. The "Mao Mao" disobedience movement in Kenya in 1920s against Britain colonialism can be

taken as a case in point in this regard. The armed struggle waged by freedom fighters of Angola and Mozambique against the Portuguese colonialism, the struggle against white minority rule in Zimbabwe and the fierce and heavy fighting against French colonialism in Algeria can be mentioned as pretty living testimonies along this line.

Ethiopia as independent country played pivotal role in supporting anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggle by providing training, morale, finance and diplomatic support to freedom fighters.

The role of both the imperial and the Derg regimes in supporting the struggle vividly remembered, indeed!

After decades long anti-colonial struggle in the late 1950s and earlier 1960s the ray of freedom for Africans became apparent. Most countries colonized by France except Algeria won their independence through negotiation. Countries under the British colonial rule also gained their independence through negotiation.

After independence, however, nations could hardly come up with political stability and economic progress for various reasons. Such a tumultuous scenario pushed the continent to instability, military coup, and civil war accompanied by cross boarder violence.

When colonial rule was imposed by Europeans, new institutions were established to serve the colonial rule by dismantling the traditional indigenous institutions. Hence, when the colonialists left the countries, the new African leaders were unable to govern the countries due to the absence of institutions which fit to the independent country.

This again affected the effort to establish rule of law and opened loophole for the emergence of dictatorship. According to historians, in the post-colonial era only within two decades 40 military coup had taken place and claimed the lives of 25 presidents and prime ministers.

The other challenge which put the continent in to crises was boarder conflict between countries. As mentioned above, the map of African countries was crafted arbitrarily by colonialists without considering the reality on the ground. It defined one ethnic group up to three countries. The Somali ethnic group who are living in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya can be mentioned as pretty examples for this.

Such situation took Ethiopia and Somalia to wage war against each other in 1964 and 1977 by claiming the large swath of land called Ogaden. The war ravaged the two poor countries economy and infrastructure. The civil war which broke out in Sudan which lasted for 30 years gave birth to the creation of South Sudan in 2005. The crisis was directly related with the colonial administration. During the colonial era the British rulers governed Sudan in a discriminatory manner.

They paid attention more to the development of the northern part of the country. They also expanded infrastructure such as education, health and other vital necessities while ignoring the southern part of the country and left it backward. When the country gained independence in 1958, the new rulers sustained the discriminatory governance against the south and regarded the people as inferior than the northern part, and such situation posed the outbreak of war between the South and North and ultimately gave way for the birth of new sovereign South Sudan republic.

The colonial administration also to somehow responsible to the rampant poverty and underdevelopment witnessed today. The economic system designed by the European that time had reduced Africa to be raw material supplier to the European industries. Road constructions in that era were intended to connect mining and plantation areas to ports so that the products could easily access European markets. They had not been constructed to connect countries each other to attain trade and economic integration and facilitating movement of goods and people from place to place. The education system introduced by colonialists also brought its own demerits. Basically, the objective of any education system and curriculum is to address the society problems and attaining socio economic development. However, in the era of colonialism the education system created the elite group who aspire to develop European culture and life style which again left them in identity crises.

Instead of engaging in addressing the socio economic problems of the community, some of the elite groups therefore promoted themselves in to the governing class by being part of the status quo.

On the other hand, due to absence of rule of law and the prevalence of dictatorship and political upheaval and because of the above mentioned reasons many educated people left their country and employed in foreign countries which in turn negatively affected their country of origin by posing shortage of academically well trained people and get them in a state of brain drain.

As the result, the continent failed to achieve its goals of advancing in the economic, politics and social affairs.

These days, after 60 years of the establishment of the African union, the continent has found itself in chronic poverty, unemployment, political upheaval, dictatorship, military coup (witnessed in West Africa) and population explosion.

Even one can find the longest serving presidents in the world in Arica. They stayed in power for 46 and 38 years respectively. They regarded their country as their personal property.

Many countries conducted election but only to perpetuate the power of the incumbent presidents. Due to deep rooted political

crises and external intervention, countries such as Libya and Somalia have been converted into failed states and hubs of civil war, which is going on consuming their economic resources and incurring them too much instead of embarking on the right development path.

The only option left to the youth residing in these countries is to sustain their life either to be recruited to be soldier and prop up the killing business or to migrate to the unknown destiny.

Desperate young men and women who lost hope on their country from various parts of the continent attempted to cross Mediterranean sea to enter Europe illegally and as to the IMO report only in a decade thousands submerged in the sea and lost their life.

The contribution of Africa to the world trade is only three percent and still exports raw materials to the world market. As Africa imports more than its export, the trade balance is still calculated negative. Nevertheless, there are undeniable facts that one can explain the positive outcome of the African Union dedication for attaining peace, economic progress and the protection of human rights. AU deployed its peace keeping force in Somalia, Sudan Darfur, Abiye and in other parts of the continent to somehow bring stability.

The free trade agreement between the member countries also brought opportunities to countries to trade each other in lower price than importing commodities outside the continent. Agricultural and manufacturing products are also obtained markets with in Africa and supply their products to the market free of tariffs.

Member states are also signatory to the international and continental conventions for the protection of human rights in their respective countries. When the AU gets report regarding violation of human rights in member countries, it sends investigators, take various measures based on the evidence to bring justice to the culprits. It also cooperates with ICC.

The AU constitution also asserts that assuming power by unconstitutional means is illegal. In this regard, the new military governments assumed power by force in Guinea, Burkina Faso and Mali are banned from membership until they transfer power to the legitimate government elected by free and fair election. In the coming week the 37th African summit will take place in Addis Ababa where its headquarter is found and the leaders are expected to be committed to the objective of the establishment of African Union.

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

Editorial

A decision worth replicating!

Plural ideas set the way for a proper functioning of political and economic apparatus within a state. For a country like Ethiopia that has a host of people who hail from diverse backgrounds, representing the various ideas in a government decision making table could serve as a silver bullet to achieve the set national goals. On top of this, drawing people who have amassed a wealth of experience unlocks the full development potential of the country.

Since assuming power, the reform government has been doing things differently. The latest in a series of such practices is the appointment of apolitical figures to senior ministerial positions held last Thursday. What is more, the decision that has taken merit into consideration in the appointment of the personalities is so exemplary that it should be replicated in other areas. It is also expected of a country that is aspiring to become beacon of prosperity in Africa.

The reform government is breaking the vicious cycle of assigning top political leaders to key positions on the grounds of patronage and membership rather than merit. Such trend, provided that it is sustained and will help do away with the social, economic and political menace that we are facing with. In such fashion, the way we do things would be on the basis of tested knowledge and experience. It encourages the citizenry, particularly the youth to work diligently.

At the onset of the reform days, apolitical personalities took senior ministerial positions. These appointees delivered to their capacity and contributed to the national scheme of institution building. Also, political figures from the opposition camp have also given seats in the cabinet. The government avoided the old-fashioned “winner-take-all” pattern and also showed respect to the significant number of voters of the opposition figures. Over and beyond, the measure helps to leave no one behind.

The Ethiopian constitution endorsed in 1995 has it that Ethiopia pursues a multiparty democracy. Particularly, article 56 stipulates a multiparty system in the country. The current exercise, allowing opposition parties to work with the executive, ushers in the cultivation of the culture of the multiparty system. Today, we are confident that despite pursuing different ideologies, major political parties are capable of sitting and working together towards a common goal.

There is a unique aspect of this democratic experiment as well. Figures from the opposition parties, apolitical people and the winning party, Prosperity Party, are sharing the same table and are working together at a time that the country is encountering a number of emerging polarized national topics. Things have not been bed of roses over the last two and three years. Ethiopia endured a two-year bloody war. Having confidence in one another and working by exhibiting the utmost discipline at such trying times are not things to be taken for granted. It must receive a salvo of commendation!

Even as we speak, Ethiopia is facing a number of internal challenges ranging from economic, political to social ones. As usual, Ethiopians and the political leaders at all levels would exhibit wisdom to narrow differences and resolve disputes in a round table. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (Ph.D) in a recent parliamentary address reiterated that the government’s door is open for peaceful dialogue.

The two-year war that claimed the lives of millions of citizens, not to mention the destruction of property and its economic repercussions, ended as a result of the astuteness of the leaders. And we still have that wisdom with us. In addition, the pressing regional issues are also on the table. Of course, the diplomatic prowess of the Ethiopian leaders, compounded with backing from friends of Ethiopia, would de-escalate the tensions that a few elements are fomenting. Ethiopia has one agenda—i.e., development. And its development never harms anyone. A win-win approach of Ethiopia would eventually triumph!

Opinion

Russian

Diplomats’ Day

By H.E. Mr. Evgeny Terekhin,
Ambassador of Russia to Ethiopia

On February 10, we are celebrating our professional holiday — Diplomats’ Day, established by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of October 31, 2002, which testifies to the high public recognition of the diplomatic profession and the important role of the domestic diplomatic service.

The date of the holiday stems from the earliest documentary mention (February 10, 1549) of the Posolsky Prikaz (Ambassadorial House) — the first government structure in the history of Russia in charge of foreign affairs. However, Russia’s diplomatic service is much older: starting from the 9th century, the Russian state has been acting as an active participant in international relations. Since then, Russian diplomats have written many glorious pages in the history of their country, attaining a lot of significant foreign policy achievements.

Russia’s unique geopolitical position predetermined an extraordinarily wide range of its interests in the international arena. Under no circumstances could it afford to pursue a passive or isolationist foreign policy. On the contrary, its interests constantly forced it to play not just an active, but also a largely system-forming role in international affairs.

Today, Russia continues to play a prominent role in the international arena and, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has a special responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Its foreign policy is peaceful, open, predictable, consistent, pragmatic, based on respect for generally accepted principles and norms of international law and the desire for equal international cooperation with the aim of solving common problems and promoting shared interests.

These principles find full reflection in Russia’s interaction with the countries of the African continent, with which our country has always been linked by strong bonds of friendly and trust-based relations. Over the decades, they have successfully passed a test of strength and proven themselves long-standing and independent of political circumstances. Our country is deeply interested in continuing to enhance its multifaceted partnership with Africa, including in expanding political dialogue and increasing economic and humanitarian cooperation.

Our partnership with the African continent continues to grow upward. Its strategic directions are outlined by the decisions of

the Second Russia-Africa Summit, held successfully in July 2023 in St. Petersburg. Our interaction covers all states and multilateral associations of the continent without exception, extending to the political, socio-economic and humanitarian spheres. Results are expected to be attained in a variety of areas — both traditional since Soviet times, and relatively new to us.

I am convinced that the time-tested Russian-African partnership will continue to deepen and expand for the benefit of our countries and peoples. We have all the necessary prerequisites for this to happen, the main one of which is our mutual determination to consistently and purposefully work in the interests of the dynamic development of our comprehensive cooperation.

I share the same confidence with regard to partnership between Russia and Ethiopia. We highly value and appreciate our bilateral relations, distinguished by their unique and multifaceted nature. Last year, together with our Ethiopian colleagues, we did plenty of good work to **qualitatively improve our interaction. This year, there is much more of it ahead of us. In its turn, the Embassy, as a vital link in the cooperation between the two countries, including their government bodies, relevant agencies and economic structures, is making every effort to properly ensure the expansion of partnership between Russia and Ethiopia across the broadest possible spectrum of areas and facilitate the establishment of numerous working contacts with Ethiopian partners.** One of the effective tools for the enhancement of our interaction is the Intergovernmental Russian-Ethiopian Commission on Economic, Scientific, Technical and Trade Cooperation, the next meeting of which is scheduled for the first half of this year. Given the mutual sincere interest of our states in strengthening our partnership in a wide range of areas, I have no doubt that we will be able to achieve the desired results.

Recently, the **Ethiopian Diplomatic week was held in Addis Ababa. The exhibition organized on this occasion at the Science Museum leaves no one untouched, serving as a valuable source of information about the rich history of Ethiopian diplomacy.**

Outstanding talent and a deep commitment of Ethiopian diplomats to their country and people, as well as their highest professional level deserve admiration and great respect. I am availing myself of this opportunity to express gratitude to my dear Ethiopian colleagues for our joint work and interaction and wish all of us further success in our difficult but extremely interesting diplomatic craft.

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



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Art & Culture



(Female horse riders vying with their male counterparts)

The Enchanting Agew Horse Riders Association Festival: A Celebration of Equestrian Beauty in Ethiopia

BY NAOL GIRMA

Ethiopia is home to a diverse-range of tangible and intangible cultural heritages. It is well-known for its annual colourful festivals, which draw large numbers of both domestic and foreign visitors. These include the well-known Irrecha the Oromo Thanksgiving Day, Timket (the Baptism of Jesus Christ), and Meskel (the Founding of the True Cross).

For centuries, horses have played a vital role in the daily lives of Ethiopians, serving as trusted companions, symbols of prestige, and vehicles for exploration. Horse riding holds immense historical significance in Ethiopia, dating back to ancient times. The country's long tradition of horsemanship can be traced to the era of the Aksumite Empire, where horses were utilized in warfare, transportation, and ceremonial events. Over time, horse riding became an integral part of Ethiopian society, firmly ingrained in various cultural practices and celebrations.

In rural Ethiopian communities, where horses are still an integral part of daily life, horsemanship skills are passed down through generations. Horses are used for herding livestock, transportation, and navigating challenging terrains. The bond between horse and rider is nurtured from a young age, creating a symbiotic relationship based on trust and mutual understanding. This deep connection exemplifies the significance of horses in Ethiopian culture and the vital role they play in the livelihoods of many.

The 84th Annual Agew Horse Riders Association festival was colourfully celebrated this year as always in different parts of Awi Zone and including Addis Ababa. On the festivals numerous Diasporas, tourists, higher officials, cultural researchers, and other participants took part.

According to researches, settled in the breathtaking landscapes of Ethiopia, the Agew Horse Riders Association Festival is a mesmerizing event that showcases the exceptional horsemanship skills and cultural heritage of the Agew people. This annual festival not only captivates the senses with its vibrant displays of color and movement but also offers a glimpse into the profound bond between the

Agew community and their majestic equine companions.

The Agew people, an ethnic group residing in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, have a long-standing tradition of horsemanship that has been passed down through generations. The festival serves as a platform to honour their rich cultural heritage and showcase their equestrian skills to the wider community. Horse riding is deeply intertwined with the Agew way of life, and this festival provides an opportunity for participants to express their pride and preserve their traditional practices.

The festival is a visual feast, featuring awe-inspiring horse riding performances that leave spectators spellbound. Skilled Agew riders, adorned in vibrant traditional attires, showcase their mastery of horsemanship through elaborate choreographies and acrobatic manoeuvres. The synchronized movements between horse and rider create a harmonious spectacle, highlighting the deep bond and mutual trust that exists between them. From graceful dressage routines to high-energy equestrian stunts, the performances at the Agew Horse Riders Association Festival are a testament to the agility and beauty of these remarkable animals.

Beyond the equestrian performances, the festival offers a platform for the Agew community to share their rich cultural traditions with attendees. Traditional music, dance, and attire take centerstage, creating a vibrant atmosphere that immerses visitors in the heart of Agew culture. Colourful parades featuring beautifully decorated horses, accompanied by traditional music and joyful celebrations, add to the festive ambiance. The festival becomes a living tapestry of Agew heritage, inviting everyone to experience the beauty and diversity of Ethiopian culture.

The Agew Horse Riders Association Festival serves as a catalyst for community cohesion and solidarity. The event brings together Agew people from various villages and neighbouring regions, fostering a sense of unity and pride in their shared cultural identity. It is a time when families and friends reunite, forging new connections and strengthening existing bonds. The festival also provides economic opportunities for local artisans,

food vendors, and entrepreneurs, stimulating the local economy and promoting sustainable development within the community.

The Agew Horse Riders Association Festival plays a crucial role in preserving and passing on traditional equestrian practices and skills to future generations. By showcasing the beauty and significance of horse riding, the festival inspires younger members of the community to embrace their cultural heritage and develop a deep appreciation for the bond between humans and horses. It ensures that the age-old traditions of the Agew people are not lost to the passage of time.

The North Cushitic people are fully aware of the Agew people's civilization, according to Minister of Culture and Sports Kejela Mardasa. They were the first people in recorded history to use several crops for agriculture, such as white barely and others. He added that since horses were the first tamed animals, the Agew people adopted them and now horses are everything to the Agew people. The Agew community has a strong attachment with their horses. Horses have a big role for Agew people in almost every walk of their life: during war, marriage, funerals, farming, among other events. The annual Agew Horsemen Festival celebration has a great role in promoting the social interaction of the Agew community. While cavalry, or horse fighting, was well-known in Europe in the 17th century, it was also well-known in Ethiopia, where it was practiced by the people of Agew and Oromos, among others. The Agew people were renowned for more than just their prowess on horses; they also established powerful states and dynasties. The Agew people formed the Zagwe dynasty, which meant that they had a major influence in the establishment of state building. Above all, the Agew people were vital to the Adwa victory and during the Italian invasion.

According to him, the yearly celebration has been observed for the past 84+ years, depicting the distinct socio-cultural expressions of the Agew people, whose culture is still thriving today. Since the event has drawn a large number of both domestic and foreign visitors, it has gained momentum and is now a crucial tool for promoting tourism in the area.

Currently, the Agew Zone has some 6,200

community leaders who are capable of promoting tolerance and peace in the country the festival does not only reinvigorate the Zone Tourism and enhance social interaction, it also stimulates the economy said Awi zone culture and tourism office. The association is discharging various social responsibilities though the fundamental objective was to commemorate the role of the horses during the war. Apart from being a commemoration festival, the event is playing a key role in conflict resolution, promoting cooperation and serving as a traditional court which is more acceptable by the community than formal legal institutions.

The Agew people are known for their ancient architecture, indigenous knowledge and hardworking culture, and the Agew Horsemen's Association has become a symbol and manifestation of the Agew people.

The Agew Horse Riders Association was established in connection with the Golden Victory of Adwa over the Italian aggressors. The horse riders and fighters of the Agew people established the association as soon as returning from the battle of Adwa. The festival perfectly suits to explore the then roles of Ethiopian fighters and commemorate how the brave fighters of the Agew people enthusiastically fought against all odds in the past on the back of their horses.

Sources indicated that in the 1930's the people of Agew Awi (*Sebat Bet Agew*) joined patriots who waged guerrilla warfare against Fascist Italian invaders with other Ethiopians. Agew patriots utilized a rich tradition of horse riding skills to fight and transport logistics for war by then. Agew Awi Zone, is one of the zones in Amhara state found to the South and South West of the State capital, Bahir Dar. The name *Sebat Bet Agew* (seven families of Agew) was coined from the name of seven brothers; Anksha, Banja, Kuakura, Dangila, Metekel, Zigem and Azena.

After the total defeat and departure of Italy from Ethiopia, *Sebat Bet Agew* Equestrian Association (*Yesebat Bet Agew* /Seven Houses of Agew/Horsemen Association) was established to commemorate the role of horses and St. George in clearing the invading army from the land.

Law & Politics

Ethiopia's unreciprocated services to Somalia's causes

BY EYUEL KIFLU

In the Horn region, which is the most contested area, two countries have a long history of cultural and economic ties and share a border that stretches over 1,600 kilometers. It is no exaggeration to say that Ethiopia and Somalia indeed are not only neighbors; they are also same people living in two countries.

The people-to-people ties between Ethiopia and Somalia are remarkable, as some tribe leaders of Somalia are designated and live in Ethiopia, and Ethiopia also has some Somali tribes in the Somali regional state. Additionally, many Somalis consider Ethiopia their second home. These two countries' historical ties have been strengthened in recent decades through mutual benefit.

One of the key areas of collaboration between the two countries in recent decades has been in the field of security. Both countries have faced challenges from extremist groups operating in the region and have worked together to combat these threats.

In 2018, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea signed an agreement to enhance economic, political, social, cultural, and security cooperation during a tripartite summit in Asmara. The relationship between the two countries has deepened through Ethiopia's sacrifices during the civil war in Somalia and its support for the establishment of the central government in Somalia.

Ethiopia has played a significant role in supporting Somalia's efforts towards peace and stability. Ethiopian troops have been part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) since 2007, helping to combat Al-Shabaab militants and supporting the Somali government in its efforts to establish security.

In a recent address to lawmakers, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed shed light on his country's years of genuine gestures towards Mogadishu's causes and recalled Ethiopia's sacrifices for the peace and security of Somalia. The relationship between the two countries extends beyond peacekeeping missions and includes military training and bilateral agreements.

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Muktar Mohamed, the Ambassador of Ethiopia to Somalia, highlighted that Ethiopian troops in Somalia are actively involved in enhancing the security apparatus of Somalia's Special Forces, known as "Darwish," through the provision of military training. Moreover, Somali troops also receive training in Ethiopia through bilateral arrangements. The Ethiopian government has trained numerous Somali police and defense forces since the establishment of Somalia's transitional government, and it

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed shed light on his country's years of genuine gestures towards Mogadishu's causes and recalled Ethiopia's sacrifices for the peace and security of Somalia.

also offers scholarships for training Somali military generals.

Currently, Somali police officers are undergoing training at the Ethiopian Police College. Furthermore, according to the ambassador, college officials promised to train Somalis and provided extra funding for their food needs last year.

Despite President Said Barre's invasion of Ethiopia and the civil war in Somalia, many Somalis from various parts of the country have migrated to Ethiopia. A considerable number of Somalis have lived peacefully in Ethiopia for an extended period of time. Some of them returned to their homeland with the support of the international community after achieving peace in Somalia, while others sought refuge in third countries. The ambassador stated that the majority of Somalis view Ethiopia as a second home.

According to Ambassador Muktar, approximately 1.5 million Somalis have migrated to Ethiopia. Ethiopia has welcomed and hosted all these refugees in accordance with Ethiopian hospitality and international refugee law. Moreover, due to ongoing Al-Shabaab attacks, many continue to seek refuge in Ethiopia.

Since 1991, Ethiopia has conducted over ten negotiations with Somali warlords to facilitate peace and security in Somalia. As the ambassador pointed out, these talks were crucial to the formation of Somalia's central administration. Additionally, Ethiopia has backed Abdullahi Yusuf's internationally recognized transitional government in Mogadishu, Somalia.

The ambassador emphasized Ethiopia's contribution to international peacekeeping missions in Somalia, stating that the sacrifice of Ethiopian troops has enabled the legitimate government of Somalia to operate from Villa Somalia.

The Ethio-Somaliland sea access agreement, however, has recently put the two nations' relationship to the test. Some countries and entities are trying to intervene in the historical relationship between Ethiopia and Somalia to achieve their hidden agendas. However, the Ethiopian government has reaffirmed many times that it has no intention to harm Somalia's sovereignty. The unwarranted statements made by Ethiopia's arch foes are not even useful for the people of Somalia. Countries that weren't present during Somalia's difficult times are now pretending to be Somalia's partners, superficially.

Prime Minister Abiy, in his address to lawmakers, stated, "In the wake of my briefing to you regarding the Red Sea, we have graduated Somali military recruits at the Hurso training center, so it is clear that we do not have any intention to get into trouble with Somalia." This speech by the prime minister is a sign of Ethiopia's

unwavering support for Somalia, rather than harm.

Without considering what Addis was doing and doing for Mogadishu following the sea access pact, countries like Egypt are spreading their propaganda by pretending to be supporters of Somalia. But the truth is, during Somalia's hard times, Cairo did not even contribute a single military person or any support.

Ethiopia's ambassador to Israel, Tesfaye Yetayeh, told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that Egypt is pressuring Somalia to act aggressively against Ethiopia in an effort to diverge from domestic pressure. Some Egyptian officials are also attempting to capitalize on Ethiopia's justified port deal with Somaliland to incite war against the former and to regain public support.

"Those actors are pretending to be patriots and to garner overwhelming public support in their internal politics. Ethiopia has been calling all countries for integration and collaboration, not for war. I see no real interest of Mogadishu in provoking Addis; the Ethio-Somaliland sea access pact has not affected its sovereignty. If they entered into an actual war, the outcome would not be desirable," Ambassador Tesfaye added.

Nebil Mahdi, the Ethiopian ambassador to South Sudan, concurred, stating that Ethiopia must have access to the sea. Ethiopia's population is rapidly growing and is expected to reach 150 million in the near future. It is evident that access to the sea will become unavoidable."

He also said that Ethiopians should have a long history of repelling external pressures. "There must be no difference on national issues. We need to learn from countries that are defending their common interests while they are in political and internal disputes."

There may be polarized political views among people and political parties. However, Ethiopians need to unite themselves to make their national interests come true. If not, the country could not ensure the development it aspires to for long, Ambassador Nebil emphasized.

Despite the sea access pact with Somaliland, Ethiopia is still not getting anything in return from Somalia for what it has done and continues to do. However, ignoring Ethiopia's contribution to Somalia is not logical and may lessen the cooperation between the countries in the region. Therefore, Ethiopia's offer of a win-win approach for mutual development is a blessing for regional development. It is time for Somalia to repay its arrears to Ethiopia, for the benefit of both countries and the region's development.

Also, the two countries relation is remain unwavering and never tested by countries which are trying to meddling in concern of the two nations.

Members must be strong and peacefully developing to have a vibrant IGAD

Ambassador Fisseha Shawl

BY EPA STAFF MEMBERS

Ethiopia, the owner of over 100 years diplomatic history, has not been advocating its immense contribution to the African continent and world as well. With the initiative of Former Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Demeke Mekonnen, the country has now exhibited and shared its main diplomatic achievement in the science museum, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In connection with the exhibition and diplomatic week, The Ethiopian Herald had interviewed Ambassador Fisseha Shawl, African Affairs Director General at the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Ethiopia. Apart from diplomatic exhibition, our guest raised a range of issues concerning IGAD regional role, the advantage Ethiopia will get from BRICS membership and so on. Have a nice reading!

The theme of the Ethiopian diplomacy week and exhibition is “From African hub to the World.” What do you like to say in connection with this?

The very purpose of the exhibition was to affirm that Ethiopia’s diplomacy is not limited in serving the country but it further serves the continent as well as the whole world in terms of peace, stability, and economic focus. So, Ethiopia is a country with a history of collective security and collective prosperity, but we still want to reaffirm to the world that we are on the same principle now, yesterday, and before yesterday. And if you perceive the development projects of Ethiopia, all are linked with our neighbors and from our neighbors, it will go further to the continent and from the continent to the world.

So, Ethiopia is a diplomatic center for Africa. The country is one of the key players on the African continent and takes part in the whole world for the assurance of peace and stability as well as economic development and growth of countries to benefit their citizens.

This is the whole concept. We are not narrow focusing only on internal affairs and issues, but we center on issues of continental development, cooperation and regional coordination of the whole world.

If you perceive, we are members of the IGAD, and we have an immediate drought mitigation plan. Right now, we are a member of the BRICS which helps us to play a global role. We are also a member of the African Free Trade Area and African free-sky aviation. So, we are playing regional, continental, and global, and hence that’s what we want to show. The exhibition is a reassurance of Ethiopia’s diplomatic role from the continent to the world.

How do you describe the importance of the exhibition and diplomatic week in terms of showcasing Ethiopia’s role in



So IGAD is a platform for cooperation on peace and security, for infrastructure, for regional integration, and for the movement of people and capital in the region

past and current African affairs?

When the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established in 1907, almost all African countries, Latin America, and the Global South were under colonialism. In fact, colonialism was about to begin in most of the countries. At that time, Ethiopia was a global player in diplomacy and we used to have the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1907. During the same period, what were the situation countries like Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, Morocco, South Africa, the Gambia, or Zimbabwe? Ethiopia has a rich diplomatic history; however we have never utilized it. We never showcased data as we have said. Now, we are coming up with this initiative under the leadership role of former Deputy Prime Minister Demeke, who really came up with this idea, and thanks to his Excellency, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who approved our initiation, our plan, and our program. So it became a reality. So, the people of Ethiopia have to be involved.

We also came up with a book that demonstrated the deeds of the Ministry from 1907 up to 2023. The diplomatic tasks done so far by our excellent ministers, excellent ambassadors with their excellent engagement, excellent agreements, and excellent negotiations are displayed on it and that make us a big player in the continent and in the world. So, as our own story and it has to be told. Once the Prime Minister came to office and said our foreign ministry has both positive and negative history, we have to take lesson from the positive leaving

the negative or bad history.

We want to take up with us as it is a rich engagement and rich culture of diplomacy of Ethiopia. This helped the country to keep its independence, territorial integrity, and now we attach to the whole continent. If you talk about independence, freedom and sovereignty, the history of diplomacy has greater importance.

What was your expectation from visitors of the exhibition, especially diplomatic community, to learn from it about Ethiopia?

Diplomats are in the field; they are attached to the African Union, engaged with the ECA, or occupied with IGAD, COMESA, or the Africa Free Trade Area. Whatever the case, they’re aware and know it. However, they may not know this detailed history and how we have progressed up to now. Their knowledge could be pieces by pieces and the exhibition had help them now, since the last 2000 years, or 3000 years -- how diplomacy in Ethiopia has evolved.

And we were not a land and mountains or a country of trees, but a country of people, a country of leaders, a country of books the Quran, the Bible, and the Torah of the Jews. We were writing, we were thinking, and we were engaging with the Arabian Peninsula, Jerusalem, India, China, and Europe. So, this must be understood. I think African ambassadors who visited the exhibition

Continued to Page 9



Members must be strong and peacefully...

Continued from Page 8

appreciated it; they will have the advantage of learning about the long diplomatic history of Ethiopia. They don't know Ethiopia which has a diplomatic history that we are talking about now as they may miss some details. The exhibition in this regard will help them to get an understanding of Ethiopia's continuous, strong, uninterrupted positive role as an air for peace in the region and the world as well.

Would you reflect on Ethiopia's national interest and its vibrant diplomatic journey?

If you see one of the booths, the title is to ensure the continuity of Ethiopia as a diplomatic center of the world. And that is reassurance of Ethiopia's continuous engagement, like what we were doing. And diplomacy will be our focus as a government, and you will engage, and the end result is the protection of our national interests and the promotion of our national interests. What is our national interest? Our national interest is to have peace and stability in our country. So we do not want any national security threat coming from any part of this region, in the continent and the world, whether the west or the east, the north, or the south.

The second national interest that we push through our diplomacy is economic diplomacy. We have to invite investors, companies, and individuals from the east, west, China, Turkey, the US, and everybody else. They will come here.

The third national interest that we need to achieve through diplomatic engagement is the process of democratization. We have to be democratic in our regular elections; we have to have people expressing themselves and discussing their issues with themselves. So, we don't want any interference from anybody else. At the same time, we have to have a raffle for Ethiopians to discuss. For this, we need capacity building, assistance, support, and some experience. So that's how we want to learn from others about the democratization process. Our national interest is always to be equal among all equals, no less, no more. So we're playing our role accordingly, based on principles and our national interests. That's how we do it.

Ethiopia's bid for BRICS membership has now received acceptance. How does it help its effort to benefit the whole continent beyond its own interest?

BRICS is not about ideology. The world is in dynamic transformation at this moment. The existing internationalist system is getting paralyzed and fractured. So in this transition, with Ethiopia's core national interests at hand, we look into any opportunity that benefits our national interests. It could be security, peace, integration, economy, trade, science, or anything. So, the BRICS is now providing an alternative to the Bretton Woods Institutions that were established at the end of the Second World War in 1945.

The second national interest that we push through our diplomacy is economic diplomacy. We have to invite investors, companies, and individuals from the east, west, China, Turkey, the US, and everybody else. They will come here

And the medium of exchange is the US dollar. And now the West is defining what is wrong and right in the world, and Ethiopia has passed through a very difficult moment when we had a war with the North, when we had elections during Meles Zenawi's tenure, and when we had war with Eritrea in 1998. During the Mengistu's era, when we choose our ideology, we had suffered a lot from pressures like sanctions. Not only in Ethiopia, but many other countries, especially those that are developing, were once facing the same problem.

Now the BRICS is providing an alternative economic development model. We can use our own currencies, or we may barter things and commodities, and we'll have our own banking system that could be of help. Ethiopia would use the previous international financial and other systems. At the same time, we will continue to use the BRICS. So that Ethiopia has options,

seeking an alternative to achieve its national interest.

So, it is not about having a problem with the West, or having a problem with the West, or running away from other institutions, whether regional, continental, or international. This is for us; an opportunity presented itself to Ethiopia, with its large economy, large population, and strategic position. So why not use this platform (BRICS) to promote trade, investment, and economic benefits? Because of that, we have made a lot of preparations. And at last, thanks to the strong diplomatic struggle of our prime minister, His Excellency Dr. Abiy Ahmed, he really made it possible for Ethiopia to join the group.

Joining BRICS means something big, if we properly utilize it. However, the internal situation that we are witnessing these days is not good for us to exploit the benefits of the BRICS. We have to have a surplus of production, trained manpower, and the capacity to use funds. And we have to have good projects because Ethiopia is in the interest of many BRICS countries. So, we have to resolve things quickly, get on the right track, and have production. If the manpower is properly engaged in all kinds of productivity at the highest level, then we can benefit.

Now that Ethiopia has joined the BRICS, those countries may take us seriously. So from Africa, we have only Ethiopia, Egypt, and South Africa. It means, apart from using opportunities, Ethiopia is among the prominent countries according to the global community, among governments among states, with more than a 100 million people, a vibrant economy, hardworking people, and bordering all the countries in the Horn of Africa, potentially huge opportunities for everybody who want to partner with Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is just doing that. It's not about any ideology or alliance shifting. It's certainly promoting Ethiopia's national interest, be it the economy, trade, or investing in peace.

Concerning peace and security, especially observed in East Africa, what has IGAD been doing for the last few years?

IGAD is trying. And it is successful. It has a long history in terms of peace and security. The Sudan peace process is because of IGAD; and the Somalia peace process, which brought government, federal government, and regional states together, is because of IGAD. In Sudan, we are engaged in the peace process, and we're also trying to do something on the issue of Sudan. IGAD has done its best during the Ethiopia-Eritrea War of 1998–2000. They tried their best, but it did not succeed. So IGAD is a platform for cooperation on peace and security, for infrastructure, for regional integration, and for the movement of people and capital in the region.

But because, as you said, Sudan is burning now and almost destroying itself, the capital city is being destroyed. Khartoum is the

eldest sister of Addis Ababa. And as for South Sudan, they have not moved much. And despite a lot of delays and transitions to implement the peace agreement of Addis Ababa, led by our prime minister in 2018 that agreement was still extended.

And now we're also pushing on how to implement and conduct elections and bring in a government that is elected by its people. But we haven't reached it yet. Somalia, the issue of Al-Shabab, and then the relationship between the center and territory—we need to move fast. We have to cover a lot of ground. And there are issues between the North Somalis, who want independence, and the Mogadishu federal government, which is not agreeing to the independence of Somaliland. There are also operations in Somalia. In Ethiopia, we had a terrible and devastating war in the northern part of the country, and it has left lots of people and property killed and destroyed. And now in the Amhara region, the same is happening. So, the peace and security of Ethiopia shouldn't be like this. So most parts of the IGAD region are in the crisis.

Then, with this, IGAD cannot be effective. People tend to criticize IGAD, and I disagree. IGAD is a mirror of its members; when Ethiopia is healthy, Sudan is okay, South Sudan is advanced, and Somalia has defeated al-Shabaab, we will have a vibrant guide. Otherwise, we are focused on our internal situations. And we are trying to bring peace, security, law, and order. And because of that, our regional organization cannot be effective. The contribution of member states makes IGAD strong. Unless the members are healthy, strong, and peacefully developing, you cannot have a vibrant IGAD. The same is true with the African Union. The same is true with the United Nations.

So we have to work more through IGAD collectively and bilaterally to bring peace and stability to Sudan, which we are trying to do. We have to have dialogue; we have to bring peace to our country. And then we have to help also Somalia to protect ourselves from attack as Al Shabaab and ISIS are in front of us.

And also in South Sudan, they complete the process and do reactions, making it a very resourceful country. So Ethiopia is beneficiary of peace and stability in this region. And the peace and stability of Ethiopia are very beneficial to them. So we'll fly together and stand up together. At the end, the objective of international relations is to maximize opportunities for the people.

So this needs peace and stability. And when we do that in the region, our continental organization and regional organization, IGAD, will be strong. A strong IGAD will give Ethiopia the opportunity to play its role in the continent and international community.

**Thank you very much, Ambassador.
It's my pleasure.**

Society

Educate the youth, empower Africa

BY STAFF REPORTER

Obviously, quality education has key significance in reducing inequality within the society and providing equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background or socio-economic status. However, by ensuring that every African child has an access to quality education, and no one is left behind, the continent can address most of its challenges and realize its development aspirations.

As the experiences of other developed nations and some other African countries indicated, quality education plays a significant role in equipping the young generation with better knowledge, skills and competence which are crucial to generate active, efficient and competitive human capital who can contribute meaningfully for the development of their countries, aside from improving their own and families' livelihood.

Africa, as a continent with a high level of illiteracy rates, is investing significantly to expand education facilities, access quality education for every child in the continent, empower its young generation and address most of the challenges thereby accelerating its economic progress and bringing sustainable peace.

Recognizing the pivotal role of education, the African Union is also working untiringly to help countries create a more inclusive environment, expand educational infrastructure, and access quality education for all. Mainly by prioritizing the topic, it is promoting education as a fundamental human right. This was also stated in each and every of Union's agendas.

For instance, in relation to the "International Day of Education" held on 24 January 2024 under the theme 'Learning for lasting peace', the irreplaceable role of education in fostering sustainable development, promoting peace, and empowering individuals to build a better future was highlighted.

In his statement, Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation with AU, Prof. Mohamed Belhocine said that through investing in education for lasting peace, Africa invests in the future of Africa, a future where every child in Africa can learn, grow, and thrive in a world free from the shadow of conflict. This aspiration is also the Organization's dedication to promoting education as a fundamental human right.

In the same way, this year's AU 44th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council Meeting and the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU Heads of State and Government of the African Union which is scheduled to be held from February 14 to 18th, in Addis Ababa declared 2024 as the Year of Education considering the urgent need to mobilize more resources for improved access to quality learning across the continent.

In his interview with ENA, Education, Science and Innovation Commissioner Professor of AU, Mohamed Belhocine



Quality education for Africa

stressed the need for mobilizing more resources to improve education in Africa.

According to the Commissioner, Africa comes from a baseline situation whereby poverty, nutrition, burden of debt, conflicts, and human-made or natural disasters are creating competing priorities for governments, the professor noted, adding that you may therefore somehow neglect some of these priorities when you have to deal with all these competing priorities.

After COVID-19, we realized that not only the progress that was made has been somehow stopped, but the situation is compounded now. "That is why this idea of having education as the theme of the year was put on the table because we think that with that we will be able to re-galvanize member states, the population and youth to think more about education," the Commissioner elaborated.

Despite positive trends, many African countries are struggling to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for education by 2030.

According to him, using Agenda 2063 as blue print African countries should give priority for quality education. He pointed out that, initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area and harmonized recognition of qualifications has key roles to enhance mobility and knowledge exchange. "In this regard, the AU's role lies in policy formulation, harmonization, and setting norms and standards, facilitating free trade and the movement of people. For instance, we (Africans) need to have a harmonized system of recognition of diplomas and qualifications at all levels in all countries. And that's what we are developing as a Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation. We are trying to formulate policies, to formulate strategies, norms, and standards, which will help countries to see whether they are at the same level or if there are gaps."

With regard to funding, Professor Mohammed stated that support through partners like the African Development Bank, UN agencies, and bilateral partnerships has been mobilized as the AU cannot fully depend on the contribution of member states.

Professor Mohammed also told ENA that "When we talk about resources, there is always the same situation. I mean, competing priorities are there. So to tell you that we have the necessary resources is not true, but we are trying to mobilize, we are also mobilizing resources through partners, through the African Development Bank, which is one of our key partners. But we have also cooperation and partnerships with many, many different sectors, starting with, for instance, UN agencies. The EU-AU Innovation Agenda and teacher training programs exemplify successful collaborations."

Stating that the global call for increased funding and innovative solutions, potentially inspired by the Global Fund model for HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis, had gained traction, the commissioner extended similar calls on education to address the out-of-school crisis in Africa. The commissioner mentioned that there are established international standards for financing, such as the expectation from UNESCO for countries to allocate 10-15 percent of their national budget to education. However, not all countries are able to meet these benchmarks. Additionally, due to the significant demographic youth population in Africa, the region is expected to have the highest proportion of young people globally in the near future. This demographic situation means that even with strong political will and commitment to achieve universal education coverage, there may be financial constraints due to insufficient GDP in certain circumstances.

So, the issue about how to better help these countries to get universal coverage of education and the idea of having better

coordination in terms of funding by financial and by multilateral partners has now come to the fore. "We can (now) think of a global fund which could help countries to reach universal coverage. And this is very important. As we are speaking now, the total young school-age population we have in sub-Saharan Africa in general is half a billion. And as we speak, 100 million of these children are not going to school or are not attending school. This is a huge mass of children."

According to him, many countries are doing their best. However, some are still lagging behind.

With 100 million children currently out of school, the AU emphasizes Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a second chance. The African Strategy on TVET and partnerships like the German Skills Initiative for Africa offer training opportunities.

Stressing the need to decolonize history education, and recognizing the prevalence of colonial narratives in curricula, the commissioner stressed that the AU advocates for teaching real African history written by Africans.

A comprehensive work on African history by African scholars exists, and translating it into digestible curricula for all levels is a key objective, the professor stated.

Commissioner Mohammed concluded by stressing the urgency of addressing the education crisis: "This is a huge problem for our continent and even beyond... These are the children who will try to cross borders... We need to show that there is an international idea to support what countries are already doing."

The AU's 2024 theme underscores the critical role of education in Africa's development and serves as a call to action for increased investment, collaboration, and innovative solutions to ensure quality learning for all.

Verbatim and Caption

PM Abiy addresses current socio-economic, political, diplomacy...

Ethiopia, Somalia friendship is deep-rooted

Over the last fifteen years, Ethiopians had paid huge sacrifices than anyone else for the peace and stability of Somalia. Ethiopia has no intention to inflict harm on Somalia as well as on any other country.

The people of Ethiopia and Somalia are bound by blood. Several Ethiopians died for the peace of Somalia. The friendship between the two countries is deep-rooted.

There is no country that paid as much as Ethiopia for the peace of Somalia. The peace of Somalia is Ethiopia's peace and the development of Somalia has is also important to the development of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia's quest for sea access

Ethiopia's quest for sea access is useful for regional cooperation and integration. Ethiopia, being a true friend of Somalia, doesn't wish any harm to come upon the latter.

Ethiopia's diplomatic achievements

Ethiopia becomes full membership of BRICS. Ethiopia's diplomacy is centered on its national interest, giving priority to relations with neighboring countries.

The country is connected in power grid with Kenya. Efforts are well underway to connect power grid same with Tanzania.

On GERD issue

As always, Ethiopia is ready to listen to the concerns of the brotherly people of Egypt to address the issues to the best of Ethiopia's ability. Egypt has to reciprocate Ethiopia's demands, as well.

The claims that Ethiopia's filling of the GERD will cause the Aswan Dam's water volume to decrease has been practically disproved. The GERD has proved the fact that there will be no significant damage to the lower riparian countries.

Addressing domestic challenges

The government has focused on devising lasting solutions to domestic challenges. The government's priority at this time is to answer the public's demand for development. Government is aggressively addressing the public's demands.

With respect to infrastructure, he said over 3,200 kilometer roads have been constructed over the past five years in the Amhara region.

Of these, 1,300 kilometers were completed and became functional. The



first of its kind bridge in Ethiopia was built with 2.4 billion Birr in the region.

Government's response to mitigate impact of drought

We are supplying emergency food aids to save lives in all drought-affected areas.

Drought used to recur traditionally every ten years. It recurred every seven years and now every three years, we're visited by drought in some corridors.

But we are precluding loss of human lives. The drought is just an environmental crisis, but we are mitigating the effects.

Verbatim and Caption

PM Abiy addresses current socio-economic, political, diplomacy activities to the HPR

P rime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) on Tuesday 06 February 2024 addressed the queries of the members of the parliaments at the 3rd year 14th Regular Session of the House of People's Representatives. During the session, he briefed the current political, socio-economic and diplomatic activities of Ethiopia. Here are the main points!



Economic Development

Ethiopia is amongst the world's fastest-growing economies. This fiscal year, Ethiopia is expected to register a 7.9% economic growth. The country has amassed some 4.5 billion USD in exporting goods and services to the global market in five months.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Ethiopia had generated around 1.5 billion USD in five months from Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The investment projects have created more than one million job opportunities.

Debt

During the past five years, Ethiopia has paid over 9.9 billion USD in commercial loans. Ethiopia has not taken any additional commercial loan during the past five years. The rumors that have been circulating about Ethiopia's loan repayment inability is baseless.



Pretoria Accord

The Pretoria Peace Agreement immensely benefited the people of Tigray. The agreement enables the people to pursue their daily lives without fear. Thanks to

the agreement, social services have already been restored.

The agreement already silenced the guns. Basic services are immediately restored following silencing the guns in the regional state.

The Federal Government's infrastructure renovation projects that have been undertaken in collaboration with the Tigray Interim Administration have enabled the Tigray people to obtain electricity, health, education, telecommunication, air transport and bank services.

Reconstruction efforts in Tigray

The restoration of airports costed about half a billion Birr. The restoration of over 1000 km of optical fibers, 475 Mobile Sites and more than 20,000 landlines as well as Ethio telecom's launching of 4G telecom service in 10 cities at a cost of more than 100 million Birr is another success gained after the Pretoria Agreement.

The National Bank of Ethiopia has injected 10 billion Birr liquidity to 600 commercial bank branches to recommence bank service in Tigray.

See PM Abiy addresses... Page 23