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AfCFTA critical to expedite economic integration, peace in HoA

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA –Facilitating the operation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is instrumental to foster economic integration and build lasting peace in the Horn of Africa (HoA), the Ministry of Peace (MoP) said.

The Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) in collaboration with the MoP and Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) held a panel discussion yesterday on regional peace and stability matters.

Speaking at the occasion, the MoP Minister Binalif Andualem stated that Ethiopia has a huge responsibility to ensure enduring peace and stability as well as to foster economic integration in the HoA. In this regard, facilitating the operation of the AfCFTA would expedite efforts that aim to build solid peace and economic interconnectedness in the region and the entire continent at large.

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Photo: Hadush Abreha

Ethiopia's Grand Street Iftar hallmark of Unity: Council

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- Aside from showcasing Islamic history, the Grand Street Iftar

promotes communal harmony and displays the hallmark of Ethiopia's unity to the world, Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council said.

The Council President Sheikh Haji Ibrahim Tufa on Wednesday said that the Iftar gathering was celebrated with impactful programs while remembering brothers and sisters who are in

See Ethiopia's Grand ... page 3

Curtailling hate speech pandemic

• Gov't urged to get tech companies work on matter

BY EYUEL KIFLU

Hate speech has become pervasive in social media with global calls on big tech companies to tighten online content regulation. And, experts are urging Ethiopia to closely work with the companies to curtail the growing national threat.

With the number of mobile subscribers and social media users increasing, the experts stressed need for a coordinated measure to mitigate the threat whose repercussion could prove more serious in diverse populations like Ethiopia.

Over the years, the spread of hate speeches, bullying, and fake information has seen upticks with the expansion of social media

See Curtailing hate ... page 3



Photo: Berihun Tadele

Professor Mesfin Araya

ENDC to embark on agenda collection soon

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA - The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) announced that it is going to collect agenda within ten days across some selected ten states.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency

See ENDC to embark ... page 3

New initiative to foster women's financial inclusion: NBE

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- The National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) has launched the Network of Ethiopia's Women in Finance (NEWFin), initiative designed to bridge the gender gap in leadership within Ethiopia's financial sector and foster women's financial inclusion.

At the launching ceremony, NBE Governor Mamo Mihretu stated that the pioneering initiative would help to address the issue of access to finance, and contributing to women's economic empowerment nationwide.

"NEWFin is a commitment to transforming the financial sector which truly empowers women and enabling them to thrive as leaders and drive gender equality."

Through targeted actions, skill training, networking, mentorship programs and advocacy for gender inclusive policy, it seeks to address the barriers of women in career, progression and representation in leadership roles, he noted.

As to him, the underrepresentation of women in the financial sector both in the demand, and supply sides, is not merely a matter of equity but it is a matter of efficiency, sustainability, sound policy and public confidence.

On the demand sides, addressing the gender gap in account ownership, access to capital, can bring tangible results to both financial institutions and to wider economy.

Researches consistently show that organizations with diverse leadership outperform their peers with reputability,



innovation and risk management, he said. In Ethiopia, women currently hold 11 to 15 of senior management positions across financial institutions which hinder collective growth.

Moreover, the social structure including the working environment makes it also difficult for women to balance work and life. So, many of them are forced to choose one of the other, he stressed.

In response, the second national financial inclusion strategy is gender intentional which not only mainstreams action and achieving gender equality in financial services but also includes a dedicated action program with seven priority actions and initiatives aimed enhancing women's access to finance.

He further highlighted the launching and implementation of the first financial inclusion strategy marked historical milestone which helped double financial inclusion levels. In 2014, 22% of the population had an account, this increased to an estimated 45% in 2020 and more than 50% in 2022.

However, one of the areas that the first strategy did not make a progress was in

women financial inclusion. Thus, the second strategy noted the widening gap between men and women in financial inclusion.

"The mission of closing the gender gap in financial sector is a defining and key priority for NBE. Thus, we are dedicating to fostering an environment where women's voice are heard as well as shape the future of Ethiopia in financial sector," he underscored.

ZamZam Bank CEO Melika Bedri noted that NEWFin is a big initiative taken by the NBE which not only targets addressing the gender gap of women but also promoting inclusive policies in all terms.

The newly appointed Chairperson of NEWfin further indicated that it also aims at making the financial sector work better for women.

It is critical to having more women have a seat at the table when it comes to making decision around financial sector, said World Bank, Head of Africa, Gender Innovation Lab (GIL), Michael O'sullivan.

He stressed that the initiative is vital to expand and deepen the network of women leaders within management positions across financial institutions.

Nation toiling to unlock tourism for Nat'l dev't

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Tourism actors said the country is revising laws and improving services to boost the smokeless industry's contribution for national growth.

In an interview with local media, Ministry of Tourism, Strategic Unit Coordinator Tewodros Derbew said that the country is working to improve the tourism sector to play a significant role in expanding business, improving institutional capacity, creating jobs, addressing foreign currency crunch, ensuring competitiveness, among others.

As to him, the Ministry is revising policies and strategies and preparing a new legal framework in a view to realize adequate benefit from the tourism sector sustainably.

Addis Ababa Culture Art and Tourism Bureau, Tourism Sector Deputy Head Haftay Gebregziabher on his part stated that his Bureau is working in close cooperation with Addis Ababa University to ensure quality and sustainable services in the tourism sector.

Melese Worku, who is from the Tourism Institute, suggested the necessity of filling the cooperation gap in the sector as timely and critical to achieve significant outcome in the sphere.

He further stated that his institute provides training on tour guiding, marketing management and hospitality, and food and beverage services.

Hotel and Tourism Expert Solomon Taye on his part said Ethiopia has untapped resources though it is not gaining significant benefit from the sector due to various reasons.

Of the challenges, lack of stakeholders' integration and poor advertising and information gap are the main serious factors that hindered the development of the sector.

He believed that tourism has become one of the five national economic pillars of the country since the coming of the reformist government.

Ethiopia generates over 716 mln. USD exporting coffee

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

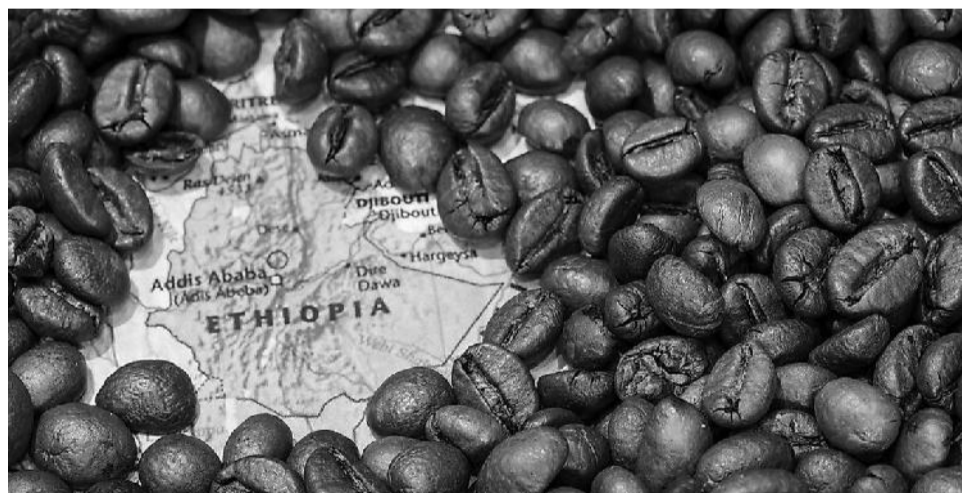
ADDIS ABABA – The Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority announced that the country has earned over 716 million USD from coffee exports over the past eight month of the current fiscal year.

Authority's Public Relations and Communication Director Sahlemariam Gebremedhn told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the country has amassed about 716.35 million USD from 150,430.55 tons of coffee export to the international market in the stated same period.

Reminding the country's plan to obtain 1 billion USD exporting 211,370 tons of coffee to the international market in the same stated period of the fiscal year, he said the performance reaches 67% the target.

Compared to the last same budget year, he said, adding that this year's export volume exceeds 7,228.78 ton. Consequently, there is a slight decrease due to the decreasing volume of the global coffee market.

He said, "It secured about 88.64 million USD from 19,245.90 tons of coffee last February. Thus, it shows a slight difference



compared to the same period. Saudi Arabia, South Korea, America, Germany, Japan, Belgium, China, Sudan, UAE, Italy are the main Ethiopian coffee destination countries."

Most importantly, he said that the products exported to major Ethiopian coffee destination countries accounted for 80% of the total coffee trade and 79% of the total revenue.

"The country earned 152.36 million USD exporting 37,614.41 tons of coffee to Saudi

Arabia, which is the leading buyer of Ethiopian coffee," he remarked.

In the similar note, it has secured 72.84 million USD by exporting about 12, 583.89 tons of coffee to South Korea. Besides, it has managed to hit 60.27 million USD exporting 9,438.15 tons of coffee to America.

The director also indicated that they are currently undertaking multifaceted undertakings to enhance the quality and productivity with a view of generating more revenue.

News

Curtailling hate Speech...

sites. Worldwide, there have been mass shootings, terrorist attacks, and divisive acts which according to experts are ascribable to the growing online hate speeches.

From the U.S. to the European Union, countries continue to put more pressure on tech companies to ensure regulated online content. Lately, the U.S. Senate subpoenaed bigwig tech companies for Q and A session. During a recent intense hearing, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg expressed his apologies to families who have reported that their children suffered harm as a result of social media usage.

It is customary for social media platform CEOs to face questioning in the U.S. and other developed countries. However, the responsibility of social media service providers for the unethical content and its impact in developing countries remains a contentious issue.

Countries like Ethiopia have experienced the detrimental effects of hate speech and the dissemination of fake information through various social media platforms, leading to instability, turmoil, ethnic clashes, and numerous other problems.

A report released last year by the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) indicated that

Facebook accounts for the highest share of hate speech in the conflict that occurred in northern part of Ethiopia.

The companies' accountability for the content on their platforms is not on par with that in developed countries. While some platforms have established liaison offices in Africa in recent years, the impact and user base remain relatively limited, possibly due to a lack of understanding of local laws or regulations.

Social media has had a detrimental effect in Ethiopia since the new government came into power in 2018, linking it to conflicts in states like Tigray, Oromia, and Amhara. Berhan cited examples of ethnic tension, killings, fear-mongering, and the propagation of hate speech and violence-inciting content online, said BerhanTaye, who is a Technology and Society researcher.

In an exclusive interview with The Ethiopian Herald, Berhan expressed deep concern over the consequences of such content, including targeted assassinations of government officials and civilians. Platforms like Facebook, Telegram, and TikTok exacerbate the country's problems and bear direct responsibility for the harm caused to individuals.

She highlighted the challenges faced by Ethiopia, such as economic struggles, and emphasized that dealing with the problems arising from social media platforms becomes even more daunting.

EMACommunication Affairs Executive Officer, Abdu Alistated that discussions were held with Facebook to establish guidelines aligned with Ethiopia's community guidelines. As a result, an agreement was reached to track the dissemination of fake information and hate speech on the platform and ensure timely responses.

"Facebook has made significant changes to comply with Ethiopia's proclamation, which requires social media companies to remove content containing fake information or hate speech within 24 hours."

However, Berhan criticizes the lack of accountability and implementation despite the existence of laws to address these issues.

Berhan calls for an open and honest dialogue between the government and social media platforms, emphasizing the need for more effective governance and regulation. She firmly believes that social media content plays a significant role in the chaos in Ethiopia and emphasizes the urgency of addressing this issue.

Ministry of Justice's Legal Education Training Assistant Attorney General Mesfin Mekonen elaborated that Ethiopia has a legal framework, including the "Broadcast Law 1238/13 Article 8," which requires institutions and service providers to make efforts to control and prevent the spread of hate speech and false information.

The law also mandates that if hate speech is detected on their platforms and a complaint is received, the content must be filtered and deleted within 24 hours. However, the actual implementation of these measures requires further investigation.

Mesfin suggests that institutions should be reviewed, and reports on their performance should be submitted. While according to the Broadcast law, these institutions may not face direct penalties, they bear responsibility for the spread of hate speech and false information, because the law not state direct penalty on them.

The interviewees suggest that addressing this issue requires collective action and regulation of the platforms. It is also important to create awareness about the responsible use of social media and promote media literacy at various levels.

ENDC to embark...

(EPA), ENDC Chief Commissioner Professor Mesfin Araya said that finalizing participants' identification in ten states, the commission is on the final stage of selecting woreda representatives who are to be involved in the agenda collection process within the aforesaid period.

The Commissioner further stated that the agenda collection is to be implemented in the areas where the primary activities are fully completed. Accordingly, stakeholders along with the representatives of each woreda are expected to table their agenda for discussion.

"The commission is ready to hold agenda collection progress in Addis Ababa, Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, Sidama,

Harar and Dire Dawa. And, representatives drawn from each woreda are expected to gather and present worthy ideas to the commission," he said.

Stating the commission's core role in the due process, Prof. Mesfin underscored that trainings are given to some 106 instructors drawn from various universities and acquainted with the respective communities' culture and tradition to facilitate the process.

Despite the remaining challenges posed in the state, the Commissioner said that it has conducted chains of fruitful discussion with the Amhara State and reached some agreement to disarm armed groups to table their views. In the same vein, it is looking forward for the call to Tigray state's response

to involve in the issue.

Reminding the chaos caused by conflicts in the past several years, he called on some political parties and other hesitant entities who are encountering the conflict to get involved and table their issues freely to ensure lasting peace across the country.

Praising the role of media professionals who are playing a due role for the successful progress of the national dialogue, he stressed that this needs to be further strengthened.

It was in 2022 that the ENDC officially began its duties of undertaking discussion forums in various parts of the country to realize general consensus on major national issues in the long run.

Ethiopia's Grand...

mysterious circumstances because of displacement.

"I would like to urge you all to help those who are out of their homes. We consider the people are need of peace. So, all should to take its responsibility to restore needed peace," he said during the event.

Addis Ababa Islamic Affairs Council President, Sheikh Sultan AmanEba on his part said that the Grand *Iftar* has showcased how Ethiopian Muslims are thriving to preserve peace and stability.

He further urged all Muslim residents of the city to support projects, including the construction of modern mosques and governmental infrastructural development projects which are being carried out in various areas of the city.

Speaking to Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), Ustaz Abubeker Ahmed also said that the Street *Iftar* preaches not only religious beliefs but also brings people from all walks of live together.

The *Iftar* is almost new to Ethiopia, but progressing through time since the introduction year, he commented.

"We gathered to praise unity and solidarity. The ultimate goal [of Ramadan] is uniting peoples who were disintegrated. As Ethiopians, It would help us to promote our unity to the globe; it is already becoming World's largest *Iftar* gathering," he suggested.

As a country, Ethiopia has been challenged with several societal problems. This event and the month of Ramadan teaches to write-off problematic habits and to build new phases benefiting all people, he noted.

Ethiopia is the country with precious Islamic history. It was the first country to welcome Islam during that hard time. So, this *Iftar* program will promote the forgotten history, he added.

AfCFTA critical...

Ethiopia is committed to the realization of economic integration vision and its Foreign Policy gives equal weight to neighbor's peace to its internal stability and this principle is the root cause for the country's huge involvement in peace-enforcing missions in the HoA. Ethiopia also believes that the trade supply-chain among countries should be supported by proclamation and other legal frameworks, Binalif elaborated.

According to him, having considered its huge responsibility in the HoA, Ethiopia should focus on activities that foster regional economic integration and stability through consultation, cooperation, discussion and others. The country should also devise mechanisms to overcome challenges that have been posed by lack of peace and conflict in the strategic region.

Evidently, Ethiopia has been experiencing relative peace in most areas and enduring



peace will be ensured through the active participation of citizens. This lasting peace offers an opportunity and capacity to resist external challenges and pressures.

For his part, EEP Director General Ashebir Balcha said that the country has been

hugely working to integrate the HoA as well the continent via electricity. "Currently, Ethiopia sells electricity to four countries and plan set to provide power to another three states that would greatly contribute to pacify the volatile region."

Opinion

Nurturing generation to shape nation's future

BY MENGESHA AMARE

A country is firmly built by its own citizens since no one can come and act accordingly to make the nation and boost its prosperity and real growth. The commitment and oath of the generation has to necessarily encompass a much broader range of engagements to make the national efforts quite plausible and improve the lives citizens at home and who reside abroad. Yes, citizens should not be far from keeping that promise, be they are senior citizens, the adult generation, the current generation or the third generation, who have been residing abroad—the Diaspora.

Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed recently reached out to second-generation Ethiopians scattered across the globe through the #BackToYourRoots campaign, and he passionately urged the Ethiopian Diaspora to reconnect with their ancestral roots, inviting them to embrace their rich cultural heritage and play a pivotal role in the nation's development via leaving a lasting legacy.

The call has run genre by genre. The first has targeted at familiarizing the invited with their country of origin and they will witness it physically. The second one is they may consider about doing business in Ethiopia. They may come with their knowledge, wealth, and experiences and will be able to share that as well. They will also be able to contribute to the continuation of the socioeconomic development of the country.

This current generation of the youth of course needs to coordinate with one another and senior citizens to help Ethiopia make its vision a success. They are the first cohort to experience a labor market that practically demands postsecondary education for economic triumph. As many young people have a lack of trust in the ability of existing institutions and leadership to meet their concerns, they have to make a long trek in all aspects to be knowledgeable about their country. Unequivocally, Ethiopia needs genuine renewal, and any renewal of the social contract must include a profound deepening of solidarity between generations. The youth need to believe that they have a stake in society and a viable future.

Such an appealing solidarity between generations should extend not only to those currently alive but also to their children and grandchildren. Since the way in which people live, work, eat and interact with each other is likely to look very different in the future, the dominant political and economic incentives remain weighted heavily in favor of the short term and status quo, prioritizing immediate gains at the expense of longer-term human and planetary well-being. True, decisions made today will shape the course of the nation for centuries and millennia.

Ethiopia is today home to over 120 million generation of all sorts, the youth, the elderly, women and girls, the disabled and so on. The youth have to be well educated or more

connected to help the nation achieve the set targets. Providing the youth with priorities to meaningfully include them in decision-making is indeed of paramount importance in delivering immediate returns, as well as builds human capital and social cohesion for the longer term thereby coming up with a stable, peaceful and economically sovereign as well as socially well intertwined nation.

The positive actions, on which citizens have now capitalized, would help the country have opportunities for younger generations to have a voice in decisions that positively affect the reality.

At national level, the youth have been formally recognized as critical actors within national and state frameworks on peace and security, sustainable development, climate change, human rights and humanitarian actions. The interests of younger and future generations have to be increasingly considered by the nation, the government and other segments of the society.

Many people have long believed that hard work and ambition determine economic success and that this country is exceptional at promoting opportunity from the bottom up. It is the essence of Ethiopians' aspiration—the idea that each subsequent generation will do better than the one that came before and that together a rising tide will lift all vessels. The government of Ethiopia and the country itself may be right to be worried about today's children, the new generation, be they are at home or abroad.

Not only is Ethiopia rich in natural resources, tangible and intangible heritages, a range of untapped wealth and so on but is it also very much affluent with productive, competent and ethical human capital. This generational series has resided at home and abroad and capable of reproducing, transforming and reinforcing various leadership contexts to confidently transform the nation.

Though the new generation is often referred to as the fresh one, sandwiched between the large and culturally powerful ones, today, is the right time to engage this entire category accordingly to ever-changing trajectory of Ethiopia.

Since there is no single solution to all concerns, indeed, the government has to well expand the Diaspora consultation for they have a firm stake in the development and growth of their country. Yes, improving economic mobility—especially upward course from the bottom—requires a multifaceted approach recognizing the systems of advantage and disadvantage at work within communities and institutions.

Premier's call for the second generation is of paramount importance in resonating with Ethiopia's historical wealth dating back to ancient civilizations reflecting the country's cultural depth woven from diverse ethnicity, languages, and traditions. His call for the second generation Ethiopians living all over the world is aimed at urging them

to reconnect to their multicultural roots, connect to their history and leave their legacy.

The global Ethiopian community has accounted for millions of individuals, with substantial populations in various continents. True, vibrant Ethiopian communities thrive in countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, and across Europe, contributing to a diverse global Diaspora.

These scattered communities maintain unwavering connections to Ethiopian culture, language, and traditions, preserving a profound sense of identity and heritage. Beyond cultural preservation, the Diaspora's significance lies in its contributions to Ethiopia's development. Remittances from Ethiopians abroad significantly impact the country's economy, supporting families and fortifying sectors like education and healthcare.

The second generation has thus developed invaluable expertise, driving entrepreneurship, technological innovation, and infrastructure development, which would be significantly useful in backing the nation to grow. Their global exposure positions them as pivotal agents for progress within Ethiopia for all Ethiopians growth and change.

As learnt from the message of the call, the three rounds the first aimed at setting the foundation, encouraging dialogue, and fostering connections among second-generation Ethiopians globally, then deepening engagement, galvanizing the Diaspora, and stimulating discussions about heritage, identity, and contributions towards Ethiopia's progress and the third is emphasizing action and implementation, inviting physical and intellectual return and active participation in developmental projects, cultural exchanges, and nation-building efforts within Ethiopia.

Not only aims the initiative at encouraging physical return but also igniting a renewed sense of responsibility and pride among second-generation Ethiopians worldwide. It beckons their active engagement in nation-building, cultural preservation, and the collective journey towards unity and prosperity.

As the global Ethiopian community responds to the Prime Minister's passionate plea, the initiative holds the promise of rejuvenating Ethiopia's social fabric, harnessing the Diaspora's boundless potential, and inscribing a new chapter in the nation's history—a chapter built on unity, resilience, and collective progress.

The call for homecoming has provided the second generation of Ethiopian Diaspora with benefits for the Diaspora and the country as well. The second-generation of Ethiopian Diaspora, who are born and live outside of their origin of country, are believed to be a large number, indeed! Hence

the invitation is of dominant importance in reconnecting this part of the Diaspora with their ancestral root, helping them acquaint with the unique culture, values and history as well as fostering the ongoing overall transformation efforts in Ethiopia.

Cognizant of the fact that Ethiopia has huge second generation Diaspora in various parts of the world, the homecoming enables them to connect with their kinship, culture, and hospitality in their country of origin. The Diaspora will also be able to see physically the internationally acclaimed historical, religious and cultural heritages of Ethiopia that they may only know from afar.

The visit has helped, is helping and even will help them see what Ethiopia looks like now ranging from geographic location to the other dynamic aspects of the country including population, culture, history and hospitality among other things. They will also be able to witness physically how Ethiopia's historical heritages and other tourist sites are marvelous.

Relentless efforts are being exerted in Ethiopia to transform the nation in various sectors including tourism. The second generation of the Diaspora will also be able to explore business and investment opportunities as most of them are believed to have acquired a great deal of knowledge, skill, wealth and experiences in ranges of fields and they could contribute to the continuation of national building efforts.

Nowadays, the youth in particular have got connections and this kind of social gratification is quite useful in due course of beefing up progress. The generational picture of today, although not coherent, has to be well coordinated and intertwined keeping values, norms and social strata.

The second generation is expected to back the efforts towards abating unemployment, the effect of poverty and underdevelopment via creating highly dynamic job market transformations and changing family patterns so as to make the new generations confident enough to address all sorts of upheavals.

Since the youth from the second generation category are rich in knowledge, skills and even wisdom as well as educated and technologically savvy, they have to capitalize on such invaluable assets to well transform their country of origin.

In sum, the new generation is duty bound to take over the country with its future. Thus, the generations, be they are at home, second generation Diaspora, senior generations/citizens, are a pioneer one in instilling good working culture, being well aware of their country's history, boosting ancestors' national legacy and other related factors.

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

Editorial

The epitome of Ethiopia's religious coexistence

In a world plagued by religious conflict and intolerance, Ethiopia continues to serve as a beacon of hope in religious co-existence and harmony. Having a special place both in Christianity and Islam, the country to this very day remains to be the hallmark of peaceful co-existence.

The ethnically and religiously diverse nation contrary to some group's negative narrative and portrayal has been a country of religious equality and home to those persecuted. There is enough solid historical evidence and religious teachings that play into the country's longstanding values.

Some adversaries have been trying to sow division and discord among the different Ethiopian faithful as they try to depict the country as discriminating against religious groups. The fact is, since time immemorial, the country has been a refuge to faithful persecuted because of their religious affiliations and the country is a holy place in the teaching of Christianity and Islam. Contrary to naysayers and the country's foes, religious diversity is a source of pride and strength.

Followers of different religions coexist peacefully and harmoniously. This unique feature and Ethiopian value is the most cherished practice that could serve as a lesson to a world marred by religious extremism and sectarian violence. And, Ethiopians feel great pride in their distinctive blend of religious diversity, which also serves as a model for the rest of the world.

The humility and humbleness of the Ethiopian faithful are best witnessed during the holy months of Lent and Ramadan which are the fasting seasons of Christians and Muslims. On Wednesday, the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council hosted a grand street *Iftar* that brought together thousands of Ethiopian Muslims for an evening *Iftar* in Addis Ababa. The grand ceremony is a continuation of the Street *Iftar* program that began four years ago. Aimed at strengthening unity, peace, and solidarity, the ceremony held at Meskel Square in Ethiopia is a testament to the country's longstanding tradition of tolerance and respect for all religions. The religious gathering, where Muslims came together to break their fast and celebrate depicted the true spirit of religious coexistence and unity that defines the beautiful nation of Ethiopia.

At a time when religious tensions and differences are on the rise internationally, the Grand *Iftar* ceremony's message of unity and brotherhood is especially poignant. In a world where religious identities are sometimes exploited as a tool for dividing people, the Meskel Square incident is a potent reminder of the strength of solidarity and unity in the face of hardship.

In a world desperately in need of healing and understanding, Ethiopia sets an example of religious tolerance and national unity where all can coexist in peace and harmony, regardless of faith and creed. During the occasion, Islamic Affairs Supreme Council Head Haji Ibrahim Tufa said Muslims must console the poor and needy, and show solidarity and unity during this month of Ramadan. The Muslim community should also consolidate unity, and solidarity, and maintain peace in the community, he added. The Grand Ethiopian Street *Iftar* coordinator, Ustaz Abubeker Ahmed noted on his part that Ramadan is a month of togetherness.

The Grand *Iftar* is not simply a gathering of Muslims, but a celebration of the shared humanity that unites all Ethiopians. It stands as a powerful symbol of hope and solidarity. The fact is *Iftar* is only the epitome of Ethiopia's togetherness. Diversity is beauty in the country and it will continue to be a peculiar virtue of the nation.

Opinion

Addis corridor projects connecting dots of devs

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

No one detests change and transformation. However, the transformation journey is not as easy task as we imagine and talk about it. Transforming from one step to the other requires the commitment of all engaged in that process. Since its inception, the city had not had a design until the invasion of Italians. By the late 19th century, people built small cottages following the construction of the then Emperor Meneilk II and Empress Taytu.

Even though the King had strived a lot in establishing various infrastructures, he did not think about the design and architecture of the city. The king then formed his imperial palace in 1887. Addis Ababa became the empire's capital in 1889, and subsequently international embassies were opened. Urban development began in the 20th century, without any prior planning. For long, the city had no design and architecture that any capital city required to have.

Addis Ababa saw a wide-scale economic boom in 1926 and 1927, and an increase in the number of buildings owned by the middle class, including stone houses filled with imported European furniture. The middle class also imported newly manufactured automobiles and expanded banking institutions. During the Italian occupation, urbanization and modernization steadily increased through a master plan and continued after the occupation. Subsequently, master plans were designed by French and British consultants from the 1940s onwards, focusing on monuments, civic structures, satellite cities and the inner city.

Similarly, the later Italo-Ethiopian master plan (also projected in 1986) concerned only urban structure and accommodation services, but was later adapted by the 2003 master plan. Though there was a change of regimes, the design or beauty of the city remained the same. As a result, the city was filled with old shabby houses and buildings and was not able to represent Africa and Ethiopia as well.

Aside from the construction of some condominium houses which aimed at easing the shortage of shelter; investors, associations, and individuals were engaged in the same job on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. However, there were no practical tasks of beautifying the central parts of Addis Ababa even though the EPRDF had set a vision of declining the three faces of Addis Ababa to two. This does not mean, modern apartments and villas, and skyscrapers appeared here and there. Since the reform government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) came to power, some old parts of the city have begun to transform into modernism.

Beginning from renovating the old Meneilk II place with Dine for Sheger projects, the incumbent expanded the tasks of glossing Addis Ababa city to truly represent its name -New Flower. Even though it is not enough, individuals have still been contributing their

share for the successful accomplishment of the projects. The Ethio-China Friendship Park, which was also constructed near the palace, added another eye-catching scenery for the city. When one comes across at night, the colorful light and water fountains within the park grab the attention of people passing by.

On the other hand, the recreation centers at Mount Entoto are also another manifestation of the transformation of the capital into a modern city. Visitors of Entoto have also enjoyed using the recreation facilities and the panoramic view of the capital. Now, thanks to the Sheger River project, the river basins of the city are turned from dirt to green areas which seize the attention of youths.

The newly established Adwa Memorial Museum is also another signal for the transformation of the city to modernization. The museum is a landmark project that immortalizes Ethiopia's successful defiance against Colonialism. Apart from providing beauty for the centerpiece of Arada town, it has the historical significance of the city to the rest of Africans.

The new and renovated projects in Addis Ababa will sustain Ethiopian diplomatic hospitality to the world. So far, no place has given tribute to our forefathers and mothers who made sacrifices for the freedom of Ethiopians and Africans as well. This museum is imperative in connecting the past and the present.

The development of this museum practically showcases that Addis Ababa is the diplomatic city of Africa. It also generates income from those who are interested in visiting the museum aside from serving as a centre of information for historians interested in studying the history of black people. Now, redevelopment tasks have been carried out to connect all the development projects of Addis Ababa by renovating the ugly faces found around the museum as they are hiding the beautiful scenery of the area.

Here, the point that every citizen and foreigner should understand that environmental transformation is the process of transitioning to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly society. While this process is critically important, it is also complex and multifaceted, requiring the efforts of individuals, businesses, and government. All who make sacrifices for the corridor development of Addis Ababa will be happy when they see the result of the project. So everyone should come first and assist the project as per his/her level of capacity.

To achieve lasting and meaningful city transformation, the corridor development project is decisive and everyone should back the project. Such sort of redevelopment tasks should further be scaled up to other towns in anticipation of having the best cities that are competitive with others and grab the attention of tourists as well as international organizations.

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



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Business & Economy

Drawing invaluable insights from past mishaps: A drive for real economic progress

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

For centuries, Ethiopia had been ruled by monarchies, subjecting the people to harsh governance and hindering economic progress. The feudal economic system entrenched for millennia impeded development, leaving farmers trapped in subsistence living. Exploitation and oppression festered, creating a society yearning for change.

The popular revolution of 1974, which abolished the imperial system, initially brought hope for political and economic advancement. However, the Derg military rule derailed the progress, plunging the nation into chaos for 17 years. Although the downfall of the Derg regime in 1991 ignited hope, the subsequent EPRDF regime governed undemocratically, leading to public discontent and its eventual removal in 2018.

Yared Hailemeskel, an economist based in London, delved into various aspects of Ethiopia's economy in a recent interview with local media. He highlighted the long-standing dominance of a monarchical system, where decision-making and enforcement rested in the hands of authoritarian rulers. This power dynamic, detached from public needs and aspirations, became deeply ingrained in Ethiopian politics.

Despite controversial policies under the EPRDF administration, some positive economic improvements were witnessed. Notably, from 1991 to 1995, the party initiated financial system liberalization and state asset privatization, reversing the previous socialist economic doctrines.

However, these policies lacked public consent, and limitations were evident. Ethiopia now faces challenges that overshadow its economic gains, raising concerns about the system's sustainability.

The lack of political plurality and repression of opposition parties can be seen as obstacles contributing to the downfall of the EPRDF. Yared further emphasized that the adoption of an ethno-nationalistic governance model, influenced by socialist ideology imported from the Soviet Union, accelerated the regime's collapse.

The inability of this ideology to engage in meaningful dialogue, question fundamental concerns, and address the needs of the Ethiopian people played a significant role in its demise.

Yared stressed that regardless of the philosophical framework a government adheres to; it should always evolve, meet the needs of the population, and be responsive to changing times.

During the early years of the EPRDF's rule, its political ideology enjoyed widespread acceptance. However, as the political system lost integrity, the people yearned for change, leading to widespread dissatisfaction.

The ruling government's policies and philosophies bore resemblances to both the



A view of streets and high rise apartment buildings in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Africa renewal

monarchical era and the Derg dictatorship. These policies resisted considering diverse perspectives, concentrating political repression and economic control within the government and its affiliates.

The situation deteriorated after the announcement of the 2018 election results, where the EPRDF secured almost all parliamentary seats. Resentment emerged across the country, sparking massive demonstrations that eventually led to the downfall of the party.

Seizing this opportunity, an internal political transition took place, instilling newfound hope among the public. Ethiopia has undergone significant political reforms that expanded political freedoms but also brought long-suppressed ethnic tensions to the surface.

However, although notable political reforms occurred, significant economic reforms are yet to be fully implemented compared to the extensive legislative measures undertaken during the EPRDF's tenure.

During the Derg regime, Ethiopians were prohibited from establishing banks or owning private organizations, and government-controlled public entities. Under the EPRDF, however, significant reforms abolished these restrictions, allowing Ethiopians to participate in the private banking sector and privatizing government-owned entities. However, the current government might approach the liberalization or privatization of the telecom service and financial sector differently.

Ethiopia's socioeconomic challenges are deeply rooted, stemming from decades of authoritarian rule, historical ethnic divisions, land disputes, marginalization of remarkable sections of the community, and perceived inequalities. These factors have significantly contributed to the prevailing tensions in the country.

While the political transition initially attracted interest from investment groups and investors, bureaucratic barriers hindered

their plans, leading to withdrawal of investments. This bureaucratic hurdle acts as a deterrent, impeding potential inflows of investments into the country.

Although the current government inherited political and economic challenges, it has made efforts to address past mistakes and achieve economic progress. However, the outbreak of war in the northern part of Ethiopia has posed a setback to the economic achievements witnessed.

Currently, the nation faces various economic challenges, including negative trade balance, foreign currency shortages, illegal trade, inflation, and corruption. Conflicts in various parts of the country further hamper trade and business activities.

The abduction of citizens during travel has caused fears among drivers and increased transaction costs for agricultural products. It also affects the value chains for supplying agricultural inputs to farmers.

A recent study revealed that the absence of peace and security in remote areas has created opportunities for illegal traders to smuggle cattle and agricultural products to neighboring countries, putting further pressure on the economy.

According to Yared, Ethiopia has the potential for economic growth by harnessing its abundant natural resources such as arable lands, a productive labor force, water, minerals, energy, and tourism. However, without political stability, achieving development goals is extremely challenging.

To overcome these challenges and achieve real economic progress, Ethiopia needs to prioritize several key areas. Firstly, there must be a genuine commitment to democratic governance, ensuring the protection of human rights, freedom of speech, and the rule of law. This will create conducive environment for political stability and attract both domestic and foreign investments.

Secondly, economic reforms should focus

on creating a transparent and business-friendly environment. Streamlining bureaucratic processes, reducing corruption, and improving the ease of doing business will encourage investment and stimulate economic growth.

Thirdly, investing in infrastructure development is crucial. This includes improving transportation networks, expanding access to electricity, and enhancing digital connectivity. Infrastructure development will not only facilitate trade and commerce but also create employment opportunities and promote regional integration.

Fourthly, the agricultural sector, which employs a significant portion of the population, should be modernized and made more resilient. This can be achieved through investments in irrigation systems, agricultural research and development, and access to finance and markets for smallholder farmers.

Fifthly, there should be a focus on developing human capital through investments in education, healthcare, and skills training. A well-educated and healthy workforce is essential for driving innovation, productivity, and overall economic development.

Lastly, promoting regional integration and international cooperation can unlock new opportunities for trade, investment, and economic growth. Collaborating with neighboring countries and participating in regional economic communities can expand market access and attract foreign direct investment.

Ethiopia has immense potential for economic progress, but it requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach to address its historical challenges and current issues. By learning from past mistakes, fostering political stability, implementing economic reforms, and investing in key sectors, Ethiopia can pave the way for sustainable and inclusive development, he opined.

Art & Culture

Beyond gaming and scrolling-the new internet culture that matters

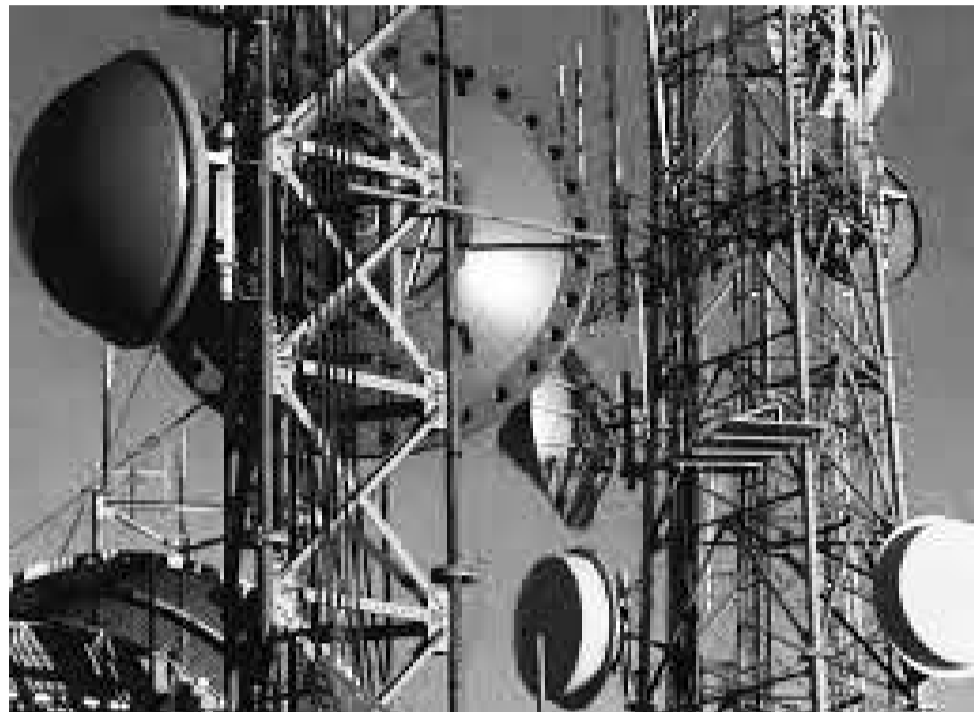
BY MULUGETA GUDETA

Let us start by acknowledging the undeniable: the Internet has brought about a technological revolution that is, perhaps for the first time in history, that is benefitting both the rich and the poor in almost equal measures. Jeff Bozos and a retail seller in Mercator can access the same applications and discover similar business opportunities if they put their efforts into the apps. All past technologies were asymmetric in their impacts. They tended to serve the rich of this world more than the poor and underprivileged. Internet and related technologies have, so to say, democratized knowledge to unprecedented levels. The opportunities for growth are there and it all depends on how you make use of the available technology.

There are many people in this country who buy the latest technology and use a low percentage of it. According to some estimates, smart phone users in Ethiopia make use of around 25% of the total potential of their devices. Why? Because they do not have the skills to use them at optimal levels. Most of them are said to be using applications that are meant for entertainment rather than for education or research. And among these users a high percentage are using social media that requires no skill at all. That is why even teenagers and even toddlers are these days attracted to these apps in growing numbers.

This is one aspect of the problem. The flip side of this is that both mobile phones and applications are invented by foreign companies and are meant for global consumers most of whom are living in developing countries and as such are not literate or skilled enough to differentiate between making good use of the machines or abusing them. It is natural that they choose to use the easier apps that appeal to their emotions. You cannot tell the average user to use more sophisticated apps that require skills and learning.

You may not be an internet guru but common sense might tell you that problem is twofold. On the one hand, most internet users have to deal with the problem of awareness as to how and what app they should use to promote their more serious interests like finding jobs, starting online business, read books, acquiring skills in various areas or look how devices and technologies work and for what purpose... etc. When computers first appeared in this country, there were many schools and training facilities that helped users get basic ideas on how to use the devices. There are no facilities that could orientate smart phone users as to the limitless potentials these devices offer to the users not only for entertainment but also for making money or improving their lives. On the other hand the devices have become so simple and attractive to use and nobody bothers what



other features lay hidden inside the phones.

The second problem is the shortage or absence of qualified personnel who could give the lessons on the latest features of computers and mobile phones that could be of help to the users in many ways and remain underutilized simply because the skills or knowledge is not there.

Computer technology first appeared in the 1980s and it has now conquered almost the entire world in less than 40 years. In the not so recent past, satellite TV was considered a luxury exclusively enjoyed by the super-rich. Now, the shacks and even plastic shelters in Addis are equipped with flat TV and satellite reception devices. What looked like a dream has manifested itself as reality and that is terrific. We may perhaps call this trend the democratization of technology that is triggered by the market and globalization.

“In the meantime a distinctive Internet culture has emerged. Wikipedia defines internet culture as, “a quasi-underground culture developed and maintained among frequent and active users of the internet who primarily communicate with one another online as members of online communities, that is, a culture whose influence is “mediated by computer screens” and information communication technology, specifically the internet.”

Another definition of internet culture or cyber culture as it is often referred to, is the culture that has emerged, or is emerging, from the use of computer networks for communication. The main actors in this culture are young people whose coming of age coincided with the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Every generation usually goes through some kind of innovation or industrial or technological revolution starting from the industrial revolution and going all through the last 200 years. This generation is shaped and inspired by new technology and in turn shapes and impacts the new technology in

a novel way.

When we come to Africa, there is a certain degree of retardation in the adoption of internet culture because it was born and raised in the industrial countries and then slowly introduced to the developing world. Even within Africa, the degree of penetration of internet culture varies from country to country depending on their level of educational or economic development. Thus, North African countries relatively more developed than Sub-Saharan countries in terms of the spread of internet culture or ICT development.

Now and then, we come across news of African or Ethiopian young people taking part in international software development competition and scoring good results and that is really heartwarming. Very recently, or a couple of weeks back, three Ethiopians were honored for their works in the area of computing and that is really encouraging. A decade or so ago, we were talking about computers becoming the new normal in technological development and now we are seeing that development have even surpassed the reality on the ground faster than anyone expected.

Many young Ethiopians have won international and continental awards for innovations in science, technology and cyber technology. Ethiopia is also notable for enrolling more young people in science and technology learning at university than any African country. This is not only very encouraging but also a source of inspiration for younger Ethiopians who, besides gaming and scrolling on their tablets and mobile phones, are embarking on the more serious aspects of the new Internet revolution. By linking technology and computer apps to solving the major economic and social problems the country is facing, these young innovators are bound to shape the development of the country in the near future.

Ethiopia is a land of contrasts where

tradition and modernity rub shoulders in an environment of competition and cooperation. Almost all the economic, social and technological sectors need innovation and new ideas for change and development. On the other hand, traditional sectors to be slowly joining the race for modernity because they are, knowingly or unknowingly, being subverted by the irresistible technological advances. In this race, the new generation of innovators have one major advantage in that they are not forced to invent the wheel but build on the technical cyber infrastructure that is already available. Their main task consists of marrying modern cyber technology to the needs of traditional sectors in the context of applying inventive solutions to traditional practices. And this is in turn a purely software development challenge where the talents and innovative or imaginative capacities of our young people are challenged. It is encouraging to note in this context that young Ethiopians or Africans in general have proved their mettle by living up to the technological challenges of modernization in business, agriculture, industry and in cyber technology software development.

In 2023 for instance, a ninth grader Ethiopian-born teenager Human Berkeley in Virginia, USA, has won the prestigious award from 3M and Discovery Education, considered one of the country's top middle school science competitions. Human won the award for inventing soap to treat skin cancer and was named America's Top Young Scientist. During the award ceremony Human was quoted as saying that, “he envisions in the future ahead teenagers revealed that he envisions himself leading a team of professionals in the development of innovative electrical systems that will shape the future of technology. “Alongside my professional success, I hope to have a fulfilling personal life with a loving family and a strong network of friends. I also hope to have given back to my community by mentoring aspiring engineers and supporting initiatives to promote STEM education.

Human Berkeley's assertion is also relevant to all young Ethiopian engineers and software developers who are working hard now to build a better future for tomorrow. These youngsters need further encouragement and support because they differ from their counterparts who could develop along the same line instead of spending their times playing games and scrolling all day and night in search of social media sites that do not contribute to their knowledge or skill development. Of course millions of Ethiopian youth live in difficult circumstances because of the prevailing poverty, joblessness and lack of opportunities. Yet, there are also young people who have the educational preparations, the skills and trainings to contribute to the building of a vibrant and health internet culture in Ethiopia.

Science & Technology

Revolutionizing connectivity: The remarkable telecom development in Ethiopia

BY LAKACHEW ATINAFU

Ethiopia, a country in the Horn of Africa, has witnessed a remarkable transformation in its telecommunications sector over the past decade. With a rich history and diverse culture, Ethiopia is emerging as a telecommunications powerhouse, driving economic growth, digital inclusion, and socio-political change. This article delves into the journey of telecom development in Ethiopia, highlighting key milestones, initiatives, and their impact on the nation's progress.

Telecommunications in Ethiopia has a history dating back to the late 19th century when the country introduced telegraph services. However, until recent years, Ethiopia remained largely disconnected, with limited access to communication technologies. The sector was monopolized by the state-owned Ethio Telecom, hindering competition and innovation. Ethio telecom has inaugurated today an Experience Center at the Adwa Victory Memorial Museum.

The center features a retrospective of telecom technological development processes, narrates the current level of technological advancement, and predicts emerging technological development trends.

It is also organized to showcase the historical development stages of Ethio telecom, displaying telecom gadgets while highlighting the present and future levels of technological excellence.

Launching the Experience Center, CEO of Ethio Telecom, Frehiwot Tamiru said the center provides residential and enterprise customers with the opportunity to exhibit, engage with, and experience the latest technologies firsthand.

The center will also showcase existing products and services, allowing customers to test new digital technologies, and explore technological breakthroughs, she added.

The center also showcases state-of-the-art technology, presenting verticals such as the health care sector, agriculture, and education, a valuable opportunity to modernize their facilities using cutting-edge solutions, it was indicated.

This initiative is also designed to establish a streamlined systems capable of reducing costs, minimizing resource wastage, and enhancing overall productivity ultimately paving the way for the digital transformation of our country.

It is instrumental to the ongoing efforts aimed at enhancing our country's digital economy, elevating the standard of living for citizens, and driving societal transformation through technological

advancements.

The center was planned to function as a testing ground for comprehensive solutions with the potential to drive significant advancements and innovation within the industry, among others, smart Home Automation, tele birr financial transactions, immersive visitor experiences, Fintech integration as well as smart agriculture techniques, smart Tourism services and remote patient monitoring.

Ethio telecom has been providing telecom services in Ethiopia for 130 years.

Recognizing the significance of robust telecommunications infrastructure, the Ethiopian government embarked on a path of liberalization and policy reforms. In 2019, the government announced plans to liberalize the sector, opening doors to private investment, competition, and technological advancements.

As part of the liberalization process, Ethiopia issued licenses to two multinational telecom giants, allowing them to establish operations in the country. This move marked a significant shift in the telecom landscape, introducing competition, diversifying services, and fostering innovation. These new players brought with them substantial investments and expertise, creating conducive environment for growth.

One of the primary focuses of telecom development in Ethiopia has been the expansion of network infrastructure. Investments have been made to improve connectivity, particularly in rural areas, where access to telecommunication services was historically limited. The deployment of fiber-optic cables, satellite technologies, and mobile networks has significantly enhanced the reach and quality of services across the country.

Ethiopia has witnessed a drastic increase in internet penetration, empowering citizens with access to information, education, e-commerce, and digital services. The government has implemented initiatives to bridge the digital divide, promoting digital literacy programs and providing affordable internet access to underserved communities. This has opened up new opportunities for entrepreneurship, job creation, and empowerment.

The introduction of mobile money services has revolutionized financial inclusion in Ethiopia. Mobile payment platforms have gained immense popularity, enabling individuals to conduct secure transactions, access banking services, and transfer funds conveniently. This has empowered the unbanked population, accelerated economic growth, and facilitated the growth of a digital economy.

Telecom development has played a pivotal role in transforming governance in Ethiopia. The government has embraced

e-governance initiatives, leveraging technology to enhance service delivery, transparency, and citizen engagement. Online platforms for government services, digital identification systems, and electronic voting mechanisms have streamlined administrative processes, fostering a more efficient and accountable government.

The telecom revolution in Ethiopia has had far-reaching socio-economic implications. It has stimulated economic growth, attracted foreign investment, and created employment opportunities across various sectors. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have flourished, leveraging digital platforms for market expansion and innovation. Additionally, access to information and communication technologies has improved healthcare delivery, education, and agricultural practices, empowering communities and fostering inclusive development.

To boost the telecom sector and take advantage of its potential for development, the Ethiopian government can consider implementing several measures. Here are some steps that could be beneficial:

The government can introduce reforms to encourage competition in the telecom sector. This can involve ending the monopoly of the state-owned Ethio Telecom and allowing private companies to enter the market. Competition can drive innovation, improve service quality, and enhance affordability.

Establishing a transparent and robust regulatory framework is crucial. The government should enact laws and regulations that promote fair competition, protect consumer rights, and ensure a level playing field for all operators. The regulatory body should have the authority and capacity to enforce these regulations effectively.

Investing in the expansion and improvement of telecom infrastructure is vital. This includes expanding network coverage to underserved areas, enhancing the quality and capacity of existing networks, and deploying advanced technologies like 4G and 5G. Infrastructure development will enable better connectivity and support the growth of digital services.

The government can provide incentives to attract domestic and foreign investment in the telecom sector. This can include tax breaks, subsidies, and streamlined processes for obtaining licenses and permits. Encouraging private investment can bring in expertise, capital, and technology, leading to sectoral growth.

Efficient management of radio spectrum is crucial for the telecom sector. The government should establish clear policies for spectrum allocation, ensure fair distribution among operators, and

encourage spectrum sharing where appropriate. This will enable operators to provide reliable and high-quality service.

Promoting digital literacy and skills development is essential for the effective utilization of telecom services. The government can invest in educational programs, vocational training, and awareness campaigns to empower citizens with digital skills. This will facilitate the adoption of digital services and promote entrepreneurship in the tech sector.

Leveraging telecom infrastructure for e-government services can enhance administrative efficiency, transparency, and public service delivery. The government can develop and promote online platforms for various government services, such as online payments, tax filing, and citizen engagement. This will improve governance and contribute to overall development.

Collaboration between the government, telecom operators, and other sectors is crucial. Engaging stakeholders from sectors like finance, healthcare, agriculture, and education can lead to innovative solutions and the development of relevant digital services. Public-private partnerships can also be explored to leverage resources and expertise.

Consumer Protection: Ensuring consumer protection is crucial for building trust and confidence in the telecom sector. The government should establish mechanisms to address consumer complaints, enforce quality standards, and protect user privacy and data security. Regular monitoring and audits can help maintain service standards and hold operators accountable.

Enhancing international connectivity is important for the integration of Ethiopia into the global digital economy. The government can work towards improving cross-border fiber optic links, establishing redundant connections, and promoting international collaborations. This will facilitate international communication, trade, and access to global markets.

It's important to note that the specific strategies and priorities may vary based on the country's unique context and requirements. The Ethiopian government should conduct thorough research, engage stakeholders, and seek expert advice to develop a comprehensive and tailored plan for boosting the telecom sector.

Ethiopia's telecom development journey has been nothing short of transformative. The liberalization of the sector, expansion of network infrastructure, and digital inclusion initiatives have propelled the nation forward, connecting millions, fostering innovation, and driving economic progress. As Ethiopia continues to embrace technology, it is poised to become a regional leader in telecommunications, unlocking new opportunities and shaping a brighter future for its citizens.

Society

Empowering women, children: A path to sustainable development

BY HIZKEL HAILU

The Harari Region is not only known for its rich cultural heritage but also for the resilience and compassion of its people. For generations, the Harari community has fostered a spirit of unity and mutual support, valuing the well-being of every individual. In this close-knit society, the plight of vulnerable groups, particularly women and children, has always been a top priority.

Recognizing the immense potential for positive change, the Harari Regional State Women and Children Bureau has taken remarkable strides in empowering women and children, working towards a future where no one is left behind.

Habiba Seid, a resident of Harar city was once trapped in a life of street begging. However, thanks to the golden opportunity provided by Harari Regional State Women and Children Bureau, she is now able to leave behind her street life and embark on a new path.

Habiba's new found livelihood comes from running her own shop where she sells goods. As to her, this entrepreneurial venture not only allows her to support herself but also provides for her four children and their father. "The stability and independence I have gained through this opportunity have undoubtedly brought me immense joy and satisfaction".

Having experienced firsthand the life-changing impact of the bureau's program, Habiba now harbors an ambitious goal for the future. She aspires to extend the same kind of support and assistance to other street families in her village. Motivated by her own transformation, Habiba desires to become a catalyst for change in her community, enabling others to break free from the cycle of poverty and street life.

Habiba also said that the vision goes beyond personal success and encompasses a collective effort to uplift those around her. Through sharing her experience and knowledge, Habiba aims to empower and guide other street families, helping them access similar opportunities for a better life. Her desire to pay it forward reflects her gratitude towards the bureau and her commitment to making a positive impact in her community.

In a recent exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Meftuha Alyyi, Deputy Head of the Harari Regional State Women and Children Bureau shed light on the intensive efforts being made to support women and children in need. The bureau is actively involved in establishing associations, providing training programs, and raising awareness to bring about lasting change in their lives. With a focus on economic empowerment and social support, the bureau aims to uplift vulnerable individuals and create a more inclusive and

prosperous society.

According to her, the Bureau is serving as a driving force in empowering women, recognizing their vital role in the region's development, she noted. As to her, the bureau has implemented a range of initiatives aimed at providing women with the necessary tools and resources to break free from cycles of poverty and achieve economic independence.

Through comprehensive training programs that encompass business skills, savings methods, and self-building strategies, women are equipped with the knowledge and confidence to start their own businesses and contribute to the region's economic growth.

"One of the key objectives of the Women and Children Bureau is to empower women economically. To achieve this, the bureau organizes training programs that equip women with essential business skills, savings methods, and self-building strategies. These trainings are aimed at empowering women to become financially independent and self-reliant".

Additionally, she explained that her office has facilitated access to loans and workspaces for women who require additional support. As a testament to their commitment, she revealed the bureau has provided each of the 70 women among those who received business skill training with a 50,000 birr initial capital loan during the first half of the fiscal year. Consequently, approximately 150 women have successfully established their own businesses, contributing to their personal growth and the economic development of the region during the past six months.

Recognizing the importance of awareness and social support, she illustrated that her office utilizes various channels to disseminate information and create awareness among the wider community. The bureau actively employs regional FM radio programs to reach a broader audience and educate them about the rights, challenges, and opportunities for women and children. By fostering a supportive and informed society, the bureau aims to break down barriers and address social stigmas, ultimately leading to positive societal change, she added.

In addition to the efforts in empowering women, the Bureau is deeply committed to assisting street children and their families. "Collaborating with Tesfa Harari People Volunteer Organization, our office has provided a lifeline for 73 street children, enabling them to transition from the streets to a safe and nurturing environment.

Simultaneously, the bureau recognizes the importance of addressing the root causes of child homelessness by supporting the families of these children. By granting financial assistance to approximately 300 children's families, amounting to 20,000



Meftuha Alyyi, Deputy Head of the Harari Regional State Women and Children Bureau

"One of the key objectives of the Women and Children Bureau is to empower women economically. To achieve this, the bureau organizes training programs that equip women with essential business skills, savings methods, and self-building strategies"

birr for each, the bureau aims to create sustainable solutions that help uplift the entire family unit".

The Bureau has taken a holistic approach to community development by organizing those women into 10 different associations. These associations engage in various income-generating activities such as opening small shops, engaging in small trades, and livestock production, she added.

Through fostering entrepreneurship and providing opportunities for sustainable livelihoods, the deputy head accentuated that the bureau is not only uplifting individuals but also contributing to the overall economic growth of the region. These community organizations serve as a

platform for women to support each other, share experiences, and collectively work towards eradicating poverty.

All in all the Harari Regional State Women and Children Bureau's tireless efforts in empowering women and children have resulted in tangible change and improved livelihoods. Through comprehensive training programs, financial support, and community initiatives, the bureau has successfully provided women with the tools and opportunities needed to become economically independent.

With the unwavering commitment to empowering women and ensuring the well-being of children, Meftuha explained that her office has ushered in a wave of positive change in the Harari Region. Through providing training, financial support, and community initiatives, it is possible to unlock the potential of countless individuals, paving the way for sustainable development and a brighter future.

Simultaneously, their efforts in rescuing street children and supporting their families have brought hope and stability to vulnerable individuals. Recognizing the transformative power of these initiatives, it is essential that stakeholders, including investors, NGOs, and the diaspora, join hands with the Bureau in their mission to eradicate poverty, create sustainable development, and build a brighter future for Harari Region and the entire country. As to her, together, it is possible to build a future that upholds the values of the Harari community - resilience, unity, and a deep commitment to the welfare of all.

Ethiopian role...

the beauty and charm of Ethiopia, the country's tourism industry is set to flourish and contribute to its overall economic growth and development.

Among the leading potentials of the country, Ethiopian stands high in its significant contributions to the country's tourism. The airline is one of Africa's leading airlines, and it has been playing a significant role in boosting the inflow of tourists to Ethiopia over the years. Realizing and sustaining the airline's competitiveness in the global aviation industry will create a better opportunity to make the country the epicenter of air transportation.

The airline recently acquired the Airbus A350, which is known for its fuel efficiency and comfortable cabin. This new addition to the fleet has enabled Ethiopian Airlines to provide its passengers with a more comfortable flying experience while reducing its carbon footprint.

Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tasew told local media that the airline always strives to excel in service delivery and enhance customer convenience.

The CEO mentioned the various infrastructure facilities undertaken by the airline to this effect.

According to him, the airline's ongoing efforts to enhance convenience and efficiency in its services include infrastructure expansion, increased fleet size and number of destinations, as well as improved service delivery. New procedures are in place to further improve services in a sustainable manner, the CEO stressed, adding that all the stakeholder institutions in the airport are demonstrating commitment to discharging their responsibilities accordingly.

Ethiopian Airlines has won several prestigious awards over many years, for recognition of, among others, its continued rapid growth, increased profitability and outstanding contribution to aviation development in Africa. The airline has transported over 13.8 million passengers and 713,875 tons of cargo in the year 2022/23, he indicated.

It is obvious that, Ethiopian Airlines is the country's flag carrier company which is ideal for marketing major Ethiopia's tourist destinations,

immense cultural and historical, and natural attractions, among others. The airline has also been working with hotels and other tourism-related businesses to provide tourists with a seamless travel experience.

As Ethiopia continues to work towards becoming a top tourist destination in Africa, Ethiopian Airlines has been instrumental in making sure that the country is well connected to the rest of the world. The airline has been expanding its network of flights to different parts of the world, making it easier for tourists to travel to Ethiopia.

For instance, the Airlines expanded its flights to numerous tourist hotspot areas across the globe. Thus, the airlines could utilize this opportunity to gain the attention of international tourists and promote to discover the nation's tourism sector.

Ethiopian Tour Operators Association Chairman Daniel Tesfaye told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the government's huge infrastructure development projects of the past few years are creating a conducive environment for international visitors.

As to him, the country's diplomatic activities need to be strengthened to sustain and promote the gained momentum about international tourist influx. "Understandably, the tourist influx has greatly impacted various factors and it is crucial to keep the momentum."

On his part, Association's former Chairperson Nahom Admasu said that the collaboration of different stakeholders including the Ministry of Tourism, Ethiopian embassies and Ethiopian Airlines with tour operators is important to enable the country to get sufficient benefit from the sector.

In sum, Ethiopia's role in boosting the country's tourism industry is crucial for its economic growth and global reputation. By investing in infrastructure, promoting sustainable practices, and forging partnerships with international organizations, Ethiopia is on track to becoming a premier travel destination in Africa. Travelers who venture to Ethiopia will be rewarded with a vibrant tapestry of history, culture, and natural beauty, making it a truly unforgettable experience.



This is Ethiopia

Ethiopian role to boost country's tourism

BY TEWODROS KASSA

Ethiopia, a country rich in history, culture, and natural beauty is rapidly emerging as a top tourist destination in Africa. With its diverse landscapes, ancient sites, and vibrant culture, Ethiopia has the potential to become a must-visit destination for travelers from around the world.

Thus, it is important to explore ways of generating more from the tourism sector. In doing so, the government undertaking various efforts to boost the country's tourism and attract more visitors.

No doubt, the government has recognized the importance of the tourism sector and has taken proactive steps to promote the country as a premier travel destination. One of the key initiatives is the development of infrastructure, including roads, airports, and hotels, to enhance the overall tourist experience.

By investing in infrastructure, Ethiopia aims to make it easier for travelers to access



popular attractions and explore the country's hidden gems.

Moreover, the government has implemented marketing campaigns to raise awareness about Ethiopia's unique offerings, such as its UNESCO World Heritage sites, traditional festivals, and diverse wildlife. These efforts have proven successful in attracting a growing number of international tourists

who are eager to experience the beauty and culture of Ethiopia.

In addition to infrastructure development and marketing, the Ethiopian government is committed to promoting sustainable tourism practices that preserve the country's natural resources and benefit local communities. Initiatives such as community-based tourism projects and wildlife conservation efforts

aim to ensure the sector's competitiveness with other countries.

Moreover, by supporting sustainable tourism, Ethiopia not only protects its natural heritage but also creates economic opportunities for local residents. By engaging with local communities and involving them in tourism activities, Ethiopia fosters a sense of pride and ownership among the people, leading to a more authentic and rewarding travel experience for visitors.

As the country continues to invest in its tourism sector and implement sustainable practices, the future looks bright for the country's travel industry. With its stunning landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and warm hospitality, it has the potential to become a leading destination for travelers seeking authentic and transformative experiences.

By leveraging its natural and cultural assets, adopting innovative marketing strategies, and fostering partnerships with key stakeholders, the country is well on its way to becoming a top player in the African tourism market. As more travelers discover

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