



## Digitization initiatives reshaping Ethiopia's economic landscape

**BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT**

**ADDIS ABABA** – Apart from reshaping Ethiopia's economy, digitization initiatives are vehicles to expedite Ethiopia's journey to prosperity, said Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) .

Ethiopia's Digital 2025 journey performance evaluation forum held yesterday under the theme of "Building inclusive and prosperous digital Ethiopia" in the presence of senior government officials, scholars and various stakeholders.

Speaking at the forum, Prime Minister Abiy said that the country has been aggressively implementing digitization strategy in various institutions to change

*See Digitization initiatives ...page 3*



**Julieta Valls Noyes**

### U.S. to support Ethiopia, Chad in overcoming Sudanese refugee crisis

**BY YESUF ENDRIS**

**ADDIS ABABA**-The U.S. Bureau of Population and Refugees announced that it will enhance cooperation with Ethiopia, Chad and other international

*See U.S. to support ...page 3*

## Ethiopia to equip TVET students with train technologies

**BY YESUF ENDRIS**

**ADDIS ABABA**-With the support of the China-based LUBAN Workshop, Ethiopia will launch a train technologies vocational training center, which would also host East African students, next year, the Ministry of Labor and Skills (MoLS) announced.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), MoLS State Minister Teshale Berecha (PhD) said that an agreement was reached with the Chinese government to launch a vocational training center that is set to be operational in the coming year.

The state minister further noted that the center is planned to be erected in the premises of the Federal Technical and

*See Ethiopia to equip...page 3*

## CBE builds up reputation adhering to compliance

**BY BETELHEM BEDLU**

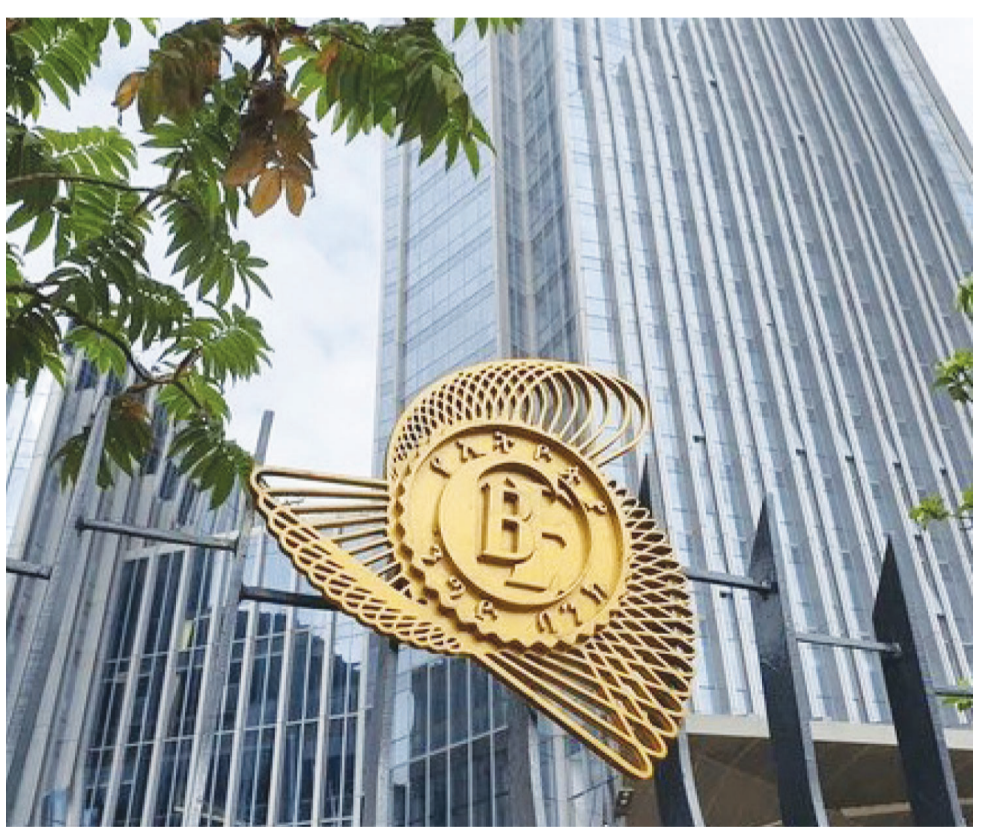
**ADDIS ABABA**- Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) expressed attempts to boost its reputation through proper implementation of compliance.

Celebrating Compliance Day for the third time, CBE's President Representative Ephrem Mekuria said that the bank is striving to make compliance part of its daily activities.

He mentioned that compliance enables the bank to ensure that all its activities are aligned with regulatory and ethical requirements when dealing with customers, investors and governing bodies.

As banks are expected to adhere to all laws, regulations, and ethical standards that apply to its operations, compliance plays significant role in creating trust and

*See CBE builds ...page 3*





# News

## Multilingualism fosters society's bond, nation-state building

### • Addis marks Int'l Mother Tongue Day

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

**ADDIS ABABA-** Creating a multilingual society fosters bonds among the people as well as consolidates the building of the nation-state, the Addis Ababa Culture, Arts, and Tourism Bureau said. The office marked International Mother Tongue Day yesterday under the theme "Multilingual Education is a Pillar of Intergenerational Learning." The day was observed for the first time in Ethiopia and for 24 times globally.

Speaking at the occasion, the Bureau Head Hirut Kassaw (PhD) stated that learning in the mother tongue has paramount importance to the generation especially for children. "We can develop our languages more than the current level and get proper benefits by making them accessible to the rest of the world.

As language is a key communication tool, the existence of multilingualism would ensure unity and cohesion among the society in their day-to-day lives.

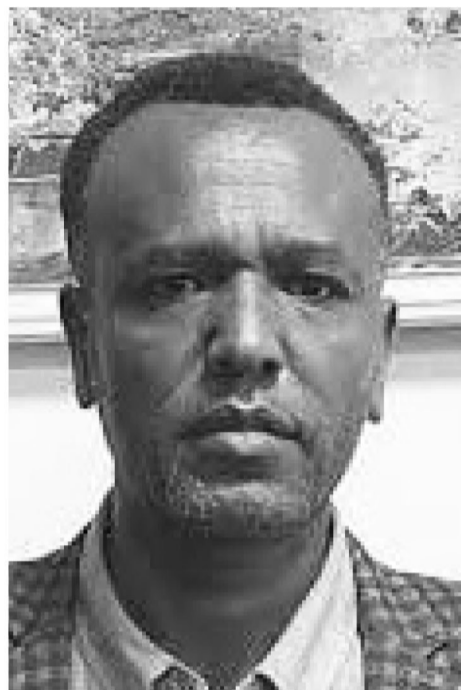
It is the right of every Ethiopian to use their mother tongue and until now, 51 languages are being integrated into the school education system. We have to develop the remaining languages so that more Ethiopians can teach their children in their respective mother tongue."



Hirut Kassaw (PhD)

The national language policy that aims to create a multilingual society has been approved years back, the bureau head elaborated.

The Addis Ababa University (AAU) President Office Head in the Rank of Vice President Matiwos Ensermu (PhD) indicated learning in one mother tongue is the international right of anyone but knowing the additional language is advantageous for an individual to communicate with others



Matiwos Ensermu (PhD)

easily and living harmoniously.

The AAU-affiliated Academy of Ethiopian Languages and Cultures is working in focus to ensure language inclusiveness and giving diversity a prime emphasis, Matiwos added.

The event was held by the Addis Ababa Culture, Arts, and Tourism Bureau in collaboration with the AAU.

It is to be recalled that Ethiopia has approved five working languages in the year 2020.

## Cheha intensifying summer irrigation to ensure food security

BY FIKADU BELAY

**CHEHA** – The financial, material and technical supports are enhancing food security efforts in Cheha Woreda of Central Ethiopia state, local officials and beneficiaries expressed.

East Gurage Zone Cheha Woreda Agriculture Department Office Head Ahmed Mohammad told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that efforts are underway to foster connections between farmers and local merchants to establish strong market linkage for the producer community, given the perishable nature and limited shelf life of vegetables.

Recognizing the challenges faced by young individuals engaged in irrigation projects, in terms of accessing stores, financial services, and resources, Ahmed emphasizes the importance of capacitating young people to gain valuable practical experience about summer irrigation activities.

The East Gurage Zone Agriculture Department Office Deputy Head, Aklilu Kasa reaffirmed his office's commitment to support irrigation projects not only in Cheha but also in other districts.

Akililu further stated that agricultural experts of the region closely collaborate with farmers to optimize land utilization, reduce costs of living, and ensure food security for the entire community.

As to him, partnerships with local authorities are being strengthened to provide farmers with access to high-quality seeds, tractors, and hatchery machines.

Furthermore, collaborations with Omo Bank are being strengthened to provide financial support to the farmers, he added.

He said the Zone is committed to promote the significance of sustainable irrigation practices in ensuring food security.

The initiative paves the way for a prosperous and self-sufficient future, ensuring a steady supply of nutritious food for the region and beyond, he indicated.

In an endeavor to bolster food security, the youth organization of the East Gurage Zone in Cheha Woreda has made significant strides in summer irrigation, cultivating a diverse range of crops, EPA has learned.

Yamni Vegetable and Fruit Association General Manager, Daniel Shfata said that the Association cultivates about 30 hectares of land with tomatoes, cabbage, lettuce, carrots, and watermelon among others not only for members' consumption but also to supply the market.

Praising the financial and resource support of the Cheha Woreda, Daniel said that currently the Association generates more than 10 million Birr and created a total of 200 jobs in a permanent and temporary basis.

## Authority ready to digitize services

### • Introduces new logo

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

**ADDIS ABABA** - The necessary preparations have been finalized to digitize and integrate the overall services, the Addis Ababa Food and Drug Authority said.

The above was disclosed yesterday when the Authority introduced a new logo to the public as part of the rebranding and reform activities.

Speaking at the occasion, the Authority Executive Director Muluemebet Tadesse said that rebranding is part of the various reform measures that aim to modernize and improve the service delivery.

According to her, to maintain food and drug safety, the participation of relevant stakeholders has an immense role.

As the safety of food and drug is intertwined with public's wellbeing, the government has been revising some proclamations that would empower the Authority and enable it to render quality services.

Muluemebet also noted that the Authority



has been working to improve the service delivery as part of the reform agenda while it witnessed the government's avid support to the realization of its vision.

"The penetration of science and technology is part of our reform agenda and we have been working to digitize and integrate our services and we have launched the licensing of health experts via online."

The director further highlighted that the new logo and other rebranding activities aim to

provide efficient and quality service to the growing customers. As part of creating qualified health institutions and to ensure the safety of food and drug mobilization, the Authority has been applying technology based monitoring and administration systems.

Furthermore, the Authority has carried out consolidated efforts to minimize medical errors and to ensure justice for those affected by medical errors, she remarked.



# News

## UEWCA launches women's collective website

BY STAFF REPORTER

**ADDIS ABABA**-The Union of Ethiopian Women and Children Associations (UEWCA) yesterday officially launched a women's collective website.

On the occasion, FDRE House of Peoples' Representative Elected Women's Co-chairs Chairperson Kimiya Jundi said that the launch of the women's collective website will have significant contributions to scale-up women empowerment through establishing an easier information sharing platform among organizations working in the field.

According to her, the collective works of different organizations will lead to success and solve women's challenges.

Therefore, it is important to effectively utilize the digital technology so as towards empowering women and transforming their futures, she noted.

"The collective women's website will be an ideal location to access important researches about women conducted by various organizations and individuals," she said.

On her part, UEWCA Executive Director Azeb Kelemework said that the main

objective of the collective women's website is to provide a platform where women organizations discuss, disseminate their achievements, share experiences and resources, among others to advance women empowerment and gender equality in the country.

In addition, the website will be a better platform to be a source of well-organized information about women.

As to her, the website will disseminate verified information, become voice to the voiceless women, and promote women across the country to share stories easily.

Accordingly, it is a collective website embracing the collective effort of all Ethiopian women organizations that strives to advance women's future.

Participants of the launching workshop also accentuated the relevance of the collective website to strengthen collaborations among organizations working on women.

The women's collected website was launched by UEWCA supported by Global Affairs Canada through Plan International Ethiopia under Women Voice and Leadership (WVL) Program, it was learned.

## Digitization initiatives reshaping...

the situation that was mainly challenged by debt crisis thereby managing to register remarkable achievements.

The Premier further remarked that it is also highly significant to take digitalization initiative and follow up their progression as a pillar to escape from economic fractures and realize the country's journey to prosperity.

"The productivity of sectors such as industry, agriculture, mining, and tourism among many others will not be realized without leveraging the digital era," the Premier underscored.

More importantly, the PM indicated that generating and accumulating data would facilitate the digital economy as it build bridges among sectors in a way that promotes knowledge in the sphere.

Moreover, private sectors and innovators are also game-changing actors that play a crucial role to the development of digital economy aspirations, he noted.

Data mining and well facilitated data accumulation makes the digital age journey more accessible and accelerates the effort to ensuring digital economy, the PM stated.

The Premier further emphasized that

simplicity and mind shift would be foundational factors that need to be well articulated. Besides, energy, data and digital ID are also core enablers of the digital era that benefit the entire society.

Propelling artificial intelligence and other recent initiatives are contributing hugely towards tackling cyber related challenges and other dawn siding hurdles, he added.

Compared to analogue payment transaction system, the PM indicated that the country's digital transaction system is significantly improved.

The Premier said: "This kind of forum is a milestone to entertain various policy inputs, shared ideas and insights that are believed to strengthen institutional capacity. Modernizing the financial capacities of AI, INSA and MinT's should be a prime activity for the government that help the nation realize its prosperity aspirations."

He has also reaffirmed commitment to create a favorable playground for private sectors and startups in terms of finance, policy and strategy shift among other supports.

## Ethiopia to equip TVET...

Vocational Training Institute where the Engineering Practice Innovative project of the Luban Workshop is installed.

ETVTI Deputy Director General Haftu Gebregziabeher, for his part, indicated that the institute has employed the latest laboratory apparatus and helped students and trainers in the support garnered from the Chinese government.

"The global industrial processing system is changing as technological advancement intensifies, and Ethiopia's educational system, on the other hand, has entered into a new phase. So, we are planning to implement a new training approach guided with Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality."

More than 1,500 students have already graduated with the desired skill and technological expertise, and almost all of them are capable of joining both the local and foreign markets. Moreover, Ethiopian students are involved in international technological workshops. "We are claiming world skill workshop's international membership and approaching the final stage to its realization," Haftu remarked.

Ethiopia is one of ten African countries in which China has opened its Luban workshop aimed to extend its technological experiences, *The Ethiopian Herald* learned.

## U.S. to support Ethiopia, Chad in...

organizations to alleviate the suffering of Sudanese refugees.

A week after her official visit to Ethiopia and Chad, the U.S. Population and Refugee Bureau Assistant Secretary Julieta Valls Noyes has issued webinar press briefing yesterday.

In her presser, she acknowledged Ethiopia and Chad are countries receiving higher numbers of refugees.

Both Ethiopia and Chad are regional leaders playing essential roles in receiving Sudanese refugees. Since early 2023, Ethiopia has welcomed nearly 50,000 refugees from Sudan. At the time of instability in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia's response remains absolutely critical, she stated.

While she was in Ethiopia, she visited government offices responding humanitarian crises including the Refugee apparatuses, she said.

The Ethiopian government is working closely with humanitarian actors including

international organizations... [] their role in escaping migrates from the violence in Sudan is valuable. Totally, Ethiopia hosts more than 1.1 million refugees, according to her statement.

The support of the U.S. and other donors advance resilience of refugees, she remarked.

Speaking about refugees in Chad, she stressed that the U.S. appreciates Chad as it has embraced immense challenges while welcoming refugees most recently... [] half million refugees and over 100,000 returnees arrived in a year in Chad.

Eventhough, she remarked that the resource to support refugees in both countries is limited. "I was personally devastated to hear from so many survivors and victims of gender-based violence who remains profoundly traumatized by their experiences."

Hosting countries are struggling to find resources to help refugees and the U.S. prioritizes the need of Sudanese refugees based in the region, she added.

## CBE builds up reputation adhering...

transparency and minimize foreseeable threats, he noted.

Thus, the major objective of the day is to identify the expected challenges that banks could face when joining the capital market and suggest sound solutions, he stated.

Ephrem said compliance involves ensuring that all the bank's activities align with regulatory and ethical requirements. Thus, celebrating the day helps to raise awareness as well as making compliance part of the daily activities of the bank.

Risk Management and Compliance Deputy President Firew GebreSelassie on his part stated that compliance enables banks to identify and mitigate the threats.

Capital market would create long-term financial accessibility, expands sources of finance, increase financial management, and encourage institution's administration and transparency, he expressed.

Thus, developing countries could enhance economic growth, financial stability, and better future through having proper understanding and implementation of capital market, as to him.

Hence, he said, proper implementation of compliance is instrumental in curbing fraud, financial crimes, unethical deeds and negligence in banking sector.

Presenting a paper at the discussion, Dakito Alemu (PhD), Capital Market Senior Advisor, within Addis Ababa University stressed that managing regulatory compliance has become challenging for banks.

To mitigate the compliances, banks must establish and communicate clear compliance policies and procedures to everyone understands their compliance responsibilities, he said, adding that banks need to conduct regular compliance risk assessment to identify, evaluate and mitigate emerging risks.

He added that regular training and education programs are essential to keep employees updated on regulatory changes and best practices.

Apart from applying compliance audit and monitoring, he advised the use of technology solutions since banking compliance software provides tools for tracking, automating, managing compliance activities, reducing risk of non-compliance.

# Opinion

## Catching up with proper channel for lasting peace

BY MENGESHA AMARE

Unequivocally, peace is a common good that has to be well taken care of, and so is health for individual life. This priceless communal asset can be prettily nurtured and/or spoiled following human actions accompanied with the intent of individuals, groups or other segments of the society. No matter what intention citizens do have nothing is equaled by peace itself as no one benefits out of the lack of stability and peace or mayhem and upheaval. Since the society, in any given country is the source of every sacred or cursed actions, presenting a number of issues about which citizens have been worried giving them discretion to judge, discuss and devise lasting solutions by their own is attested an incomparable avenue to have a stabilized and placid nation.

Cognizant of the fact that garnering a range of inputs forwarded from the society following bottom up approach would be the best way to dig out the sources of myriads of problems and come up with lasting solutions, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed recently held talks with a variety of segments of the society drawn from different parts of the country like academicians, religious leaders, the business community, students, the youth and the like to discuss ways to restore peace, consolidate government-people ties, rehabilitate the displaced people and the way forward.

As Ethiopia has been challenged with a number of factors such as the issue of peace since recently, the country has been preparing itself for lasting peace devising a number of remedies itself entertaining the very maxim cascaded out of 'African solutions to African problems.'

True, the nation has all the time been a pioneer in terms of being role model for other African states and is presumed to be the best dealer of disagreements, rivalries and some sorts of antagonistic gestures.

Of the various ways that have to be employed by the country to bring about lasting peace, close talks, heartiest dialog, honest and open discussion raising the cardinal concerns that have highly compromised the peace, stability and cooperation among citizens have to be well embarked on and have come to the forefront. The effort geared towards bringing about perpetual peace has to move quickly as first hoped, too.

So long as every citizen, be they are government bodies, armed forces, factions those have been dissatisfied with the administrative mode and other irregularities, have to comply with the rules and regulations stipulated in the country's laws. The process of peace has also to be plain as well that both sides

are interested in reaching a deal beyond an informal motion. The country needs to have a comprehensive agreement to heal wounds for good. There should be absolute accord and concrete social assimilation. Discussions in this regard have also to be made feasible and translated into practical actions to make a different.

The various discussions, dialog and close talks have been held aim to move toward a settlement via many channels. To mention but a few, holding close discussions to sort out root causes of disagreements, raising public awareness about the significance of bridging gaps and peace and tranquility for bringing about growth and prosperity and resolving disparities for good thereby bringing about real social, economic and political shifts.

Ethiopians might be forgiven for thinking that peace talks and national dialogue in their country add up to no more being taken for a bumpy ride on the back of a motorbike around a small town, with the rider giving a blessing, waving and moving on.

The very important thing that needs to be taken into account in this regard is discussions, dialog and/or consultative seminars have not to be held for the sake of reporting and listening to the heartbeats of the society through their representatives; instead it is quite decisive to solicit inputs from the intentions as well as utterances of the public so as to further enrich ideas and come up with a sound decision at the end of the day.

Yes, exploring the foundations and trajectory on the ongoing discussions would help flourish the already commenced reform. Basically, the long heaped, accumulated, unknowingly or calculatingly orchestrated mishaps would never be cleansed and the age old structural problems cannot be altered overnight, absolutely.

In principle, either all the blessings or evils have all the time emanated from the society as nothing could be beyond or out of the sight of the entire society. Hence, discussing all rounded concerns with the society or through representatives as conveniently as possible is the best way to device lasting solutions to the problems. This in turn highly requires government's commitment to have capable, free and responsible institutions to deal with issues serving societal interests incorporating the fundamentally raised ideas and concerns. Yes, it is this time the discussions and dialog would hit the set target.

No doubt, the process requires time to build institutional capacity that can carry the reforms by the government and the will and commitment of the people to engage actively and proactively in the democratization process through developing genuine discussions and honest conceptualization. The discussions should

be held with members of contending political parties and armed factions in various parts of the country such as in Oromia and Amhara regional states, too.

If the country is committed to bring about lasting peace as the concept itself knows no boundary to let some segments of citizens alone and firmly embrace some others. In so doing, the politics would be well framed and citizens would develop sense of belongingness thereby starting to work for their country and the fellow citizens. That is the real meaning of discussion and close conversation about common national agenda.

Here, the government would play a pivotal role in fostering conditions as it is more than anyone else responsible for making the nation. The hot issues revolving around territorial demarcation, the state of national flag, the concern of the constitution and the not yet cited common concerns of all Ethiopians would be very much easy if the government, line ministries and even the concerned bodies up to the lower structure are willing to work from dawn to dusk to well nurture positive narrations and break the distorted narrations that were calculated to make disparities among nationals much more wider. Definitely, it is possible to resolve problems without suppressing citizens' right. Besides, discussions can be means to facilitate the transition from war to peace thereby ending armed hostilities. They are opportunities indeed to agree new political, constitutional and economic arrangements to address the underlying problems from which the country is suffering right now via laying the foundations for a more inclusive political, economic and social settlement.

Surely, many wars have ended through holding close discussions, understanding one another, authenticated dialogs and public discussions at the grassroots levels. This approach should not restrict the opportunities for other political groupings, organized civil society, and marginalized populations such as women and displaced people. Such an audacious move is important to help produce broadly legitimate peace agreements, strengthen the capacity for inclusive political participation in future governance, and facilitate a degree of political reconciliation and amity thereby creating a peaceful nation. A common feature in all cases is that space for broader public participation would ultimately open leeway for all to come to the right track. A more inclusive dialog/discussion or negotiation process may evolve as a distinct phase within an overall peace process, in fact.

The public discussion undertaken with various segments of the society across the nation has to be expanded to reach out to the unreached as counter misconceptions of enemy help reduce the level of negative attitude towards one another, build consensus

among compatriots of the same nation, facilitate communication between conflicting parties and provide an outlet for emotional expression, propose options and solutions to the conflict and influence the balance of power in a conflict. Citizens have to develop spirit of unity, but unity is not being one and the same or similar as some conflict entrepreneurs now and then pronounce.

Yes, during the discussion, participants discussed matters of common concern centering the peace pillars and ways to resolve disputes. It was really a good step to open doors for lasting peace and even religious leaders shared their profound insights and perspectives.

They also emphasized the importance of transcending religious and ethnic differences to foster unity and coexistence within the community via embracing the values of love, forgiveness, and tolerance, individuals can bridge divides and work towards a harmonious society.

In sum, the bad day for Ethiopia has to be seen off and the nation has to emancipate from the vicious circle of abject poverty. Here discussing problems closely, devising possible solutions commonly and passing sound decisions is an incomparable avenue for trekking to the unwavering and quite stable country. No question about it, the political elites must respect the aspirations of the general public and prettily get their voices heard loud.

Peace requires genuine dialogue and discussion, not mere rhetoric. The people of Ethiopia must be heard, consulted and engaged in peace building efforts across the country, as started earlier. It is really a promising move towards everlasting peace and tranquility. Public discussion at the national level is an opportunity that would help pave the bright future of the country and build its unshakable future. Yes, discussions must be exploited to build a common interest of national significance. That is how a country is built and passed on to posterity.

Obviously, wider discussion or public dialog is a process for changing and building relationships, not just hashing out technical solutions to technically defined problems. In due process of bringing about lasting peace, indeed, the general public often does better than the government. That is why it is recurrently heralded that holding a wider public discussion is equivalent to catching up with the proper channel for lasting peace.

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



# Editorial

## One more to go!

The construction of Ethiopia's hydro-power facility at the River Abbay (the GERD) is inching closer to completion.

The self-financed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project (GERD) serves as an emblem that heralds the dawn of a new era in the Nile Basin. The brute period of colonialism and most of its bequests faded out owing to the bravery of Africans. Some quarters are attempting to resuscitate the wicked colonial legacies. The attempts are, of course, dead on arrival. There is no denying that the plots of these elements are potent to prolong the days of underdevelopment in the Nile Basin if go unchecked.

Truth must be told. The Nile belongs to the riparian states. Any agreement that was entered into with the intention of monopolizing the waters is unacceptable. The majority of the Nile Riparian States had asserted their equal rights on the waters of the Nile when they negotiated the Cooperative Framework of Agreement on the Nile (CFA) for over a decade. Today, five of the states; Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and Ethiopia—green lighted the CFA at their respective legislatures. Kenya signed the document on May 19, 2010.

The long and arduous journey yields sweet fruit when the sixth country passes the document. Submission of six instruments of ratification to the African Union would be ensued by the establishment of the Nile River Basin Commission (NRBC). And cooperation among the Nile Riparian States would stand on a rocky base.

With the exception of a few, most of the Nile riparian states have not only demonstrated their unmatched commitment to developing the region, but also ascertained a strong will to resolve disputes amicably. The courageous move is a ticket for posterity to live in peace and harmony.

The region is rich in natural resources, to say the least. It is endowed with vast arable land, water resources, and the like. Upstream countries like Ethiopia, by expanding their water retention capacity through investing in reservoir projects, can ensure the water security of the region. At current posture, as most of the rivers in Ethiopia are transboundary, the country's water retention capacity is very low.

In addition, hydro-power generation in upstream countries can quench the region's ever-increasing demand for energy. Similarly, downstream countries can invest in agriculture, and supply the region with the much-needed agricultural produce.

It is in light of this that Ethiopia is constructing the hydro-dam through investing its meager budget. Ethiopians from all walks of life are also financing the project immensely. The different fundraising activities have so far generated over 18 billion Birr.

There must be one question that comes to the reader's mind: Are Ethiopians bearing the burden to consuming the energy only for themselves?

The answer is not complex. Ethiopia's neighbors including Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan are being supplied with clean energy. Ethiopia is prepared to supply the same to Tanzania. In five years, Ethiopia's clean energy blessing will reach South Africa. Currently, Ethiopia exports ten percent surplus energy to its neighbors. Nothing compares to Ethiopia's mutual interdependence exercise.

The scale and proportion of the cooperation can even grow beyond this. But unilateral efforts would put it at a snail's pace. Countries that are in the process of ratifying the CFA should expedite the process to fast track the cooperation.



## The Ethiopian Herald

Established in 1943

Published daily except Mondays  
By The Ethiopian Press Agency

### Office of the CEO

Tel. 011-126-42-22

Fax. 251-011-156-98-62

email- [epa@press.et](mailto:epa@press.et)

### Advertisement and Dist.

#### Department

email: [etpresspromotion@gmail.com](mailto:etpresspromotion@gmail.com)

Tel. 011-156-98-73/011-811-13-15

Telegram :- 0976084707 - press

Editor-in-Chief: Worku Belachew

email- [workubelachew@press.et](mailto:workubelachew@press.et)

Address- Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-city

Woreda - 05, House No----

Tel- +251 111 26 41 98

### Managing Editor: Wakuman Kudama

Email: [wakuma220@gmail.com](mailto:wakuma220@gmail.com)

### Deputy Editors-in-Chief:

Alem Hailu

Elizabeth Mengistu

Zekarias Woldemariam

Desta Geberehiwot

Daniel Beyene

Website: [www.press.et](http://www.press.et)

email: [ethiopianherald@press.et](mailto:ethiopianherald@press.et)

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The Ethiopian Herald

# Opinion

## How Abbay Dam started paying back nation even before going operational

BY ZEKARIAS WOLDEMARIAM

After 13 years of perseverance, hard work and endurance, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) lately well known as Abbay Dam is now nearing its long-awaited completion. It is said to have reached about 95 % of the total construction. Over the years so much has been said and written about the dam, the river, the people's feelings and commitment as well as the government's capability to properly discharge its completion.

As a result of the strange path followed to the realization, the whole process of the construction of the dam has left a historical, unique and inspirational fingerprint in the minds of the people and friends of Ethiopia.

It is estimated that there are more than 150,000 rivers in the world. This is even a very modest estimate and one can easily understand how they have spread on earth like blood vessels. It would not be an exaggeration to say that human life and all the civilization are highly related and intertwined with rivers. Rivers provide almost everything that humans and animals need for their survival. Rivers give us drinking water, irrigation water for crops, power for hydroelectric dams, and a place for recreation. They also help to control flooding and erosion.

Out of all those thousands of rivers, very few of them are mentioned through the global media, academia or institutions for specific reasons. One of such prominent rivers is the Nile. In terms of water regime, the Nile River is the second-largest river in the world next only to the River Amazon of Latin America. Even though it is sometimes contested, considering the long distance that it travels, the Nile is said to be the longest in the world with 6000 km.

No matter how the Nile has the above features that make it famous and prominent globally, it has been given a paradoxical attribute at home. As mentioned above rivers are almost the sources of everything for humans and nature in general. Yet this giant of the world's rivers has never done a little of such favour to the nearby people, especially in Ethiopia where the vast majority of its water originates from.

This north-flowing river is a transboundary water body that interconnects more than 10 countries in central, east and north Africa. Therefore, the utilization of the river is supposed to be regulated as per the provisions of transboundary rivers of the world.

However, taking advantage of colonial period agreements two of the downstream countries, Egypt and Sudan have been utilizing the water unfairly for decades. But Ethiopia has never been included in the colonial period agreements through which the two countries unfairly shared the entire water of the river.

But Ethiopia has never kept idle from looking for means of harnessing its water resources for its development purposes. In the past, it has carried out the construction of hydroelectric, irrigation and potable water dam constructions on other rivers via the financing of international donors or friendly nations as well as the project

contracts taken up by foreign companies.

Contrarily such a way of utilizing the river Nile was impossible as the downstream countries posed diplomatic barriers to other countries and donors from providing financial and technical support. This was however a blessing in disguise. The government and people of Ethiopia were inspired to solicit the financing and technical requirements for the construction of the dam from the citizens and benevolent friends without knocking on the doors of foreign financiers or donors.

To make a long story short, what the downstream countries did to Ethiopia was to examine its latent potential for development. It has reminded Ethiopians, as well as many scholars and figures of developing countries that the best way to develop through one's natural resources is to be capable of harnessing it.

One can imagine the large amount of foreign currency a poor or developing country would spend to build such a big dam and spend the revenue for the coming decades on paying back the loan. But what makes Abbay Dam a pure asset is that the government has never taken a single penny in the form of a loan for the construction. This means all the income that the dam generates would be able to finance other development projects.

The other big takeaway from the more than decades spent on the construction of the dam is that many Ethiopians have been directly involved in it gaining a lot of experience and knowledge. This would in the long run encourage the country to compete continentally and globally in building similar infrastructure especially where there are political and diplomatic bottlenecks.

Even more than that the dam has created the spirit of capability in the minds of the people as many people are heard exclaiming the slogan "Yes we can" and "Possible" This theme now works in many other sectors that are not yet exploited but have the potential to revamp the development of the economy.

The country is now executing many transformation development projects in all corners. Among such development projects are ecotourism sites, parks and resorts, manufacturing and agro-processing industrial parks ...etc. The majority of these projects are being executed with the finance raised through local initiatives like Dine for the nation, Dine for Sheger ... etc where concerned and benevolent citizens contribute the funding.

These projects are likely to generate a considerable sum of foreign currency as well as create jobs that are of high priority to the country of about 120 million people. The innovative way of selecting, designing and implementing the projects as well as soliciting the finance locally is a legacy that would be left to the future generation. It is also an outcome of the inspiration and experiences gained through the commitment given to the construction of the iconic Abbay Dam. This makes Abbay Dam unique in that it has started benefiting the people and the nation even before it is fully completed, and inaugurated.

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



# Business & Economy

## Transformations of Jigjiga city: A beacon of progress, development

BY HIZKEL HAILU

Jigjiga City, located in the Somali Regional State of Ethiopia, has undergone remarkable transformations over the past five to six years. The city has experienced significant improvements in various sectors, including infrastructure development, water services, economic partnerships, investments, job creation and tax payment performance. These developments have not only enhanced the quality of life for the city's residents but have also positioned Jigjiga as a thriving economic center in the region.

The Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) has reached out Shafi Ahmed, Mayor of Jigjiga City in order to discuss in detail the key areas of progress and highlights the significant changes that have taken place, contributing to the city's overall growth and development. According to Shafi, one of the most noticeable advancements in the City has been in infrastructure development.

Over the past few years, the city has witnessed a surge in construction projects, particularly in housing. The construction of numerous houses has addressed the pressing housing needs of the growing population, ensuring that more residents have access to decent living spaces.

Furthermore, there has been a significant expansion of the road networks within the city. The coverage of asphalt roads has increased from 10.6 kilometers to an impressive 28.5 kilometers, facilitating smoother transportation and enhancing connectivity. This expansion has not only improved accessibility within the city but has also boosted trade and commerce, as goods and people can move more efficiently, he noted.

He further explained that coupled with the city's internal road network, efforts have been made to improve rural and urban alternative roads, connecting Jigjiga City with the surrounding areas. These infrastructure developments have opened up opportunities for trade and economic growth by connecting previously isolated communities and facilitating the movement of goods and services.

Noting that access to clean and reliable water is essential for the well-being and quality of life of any community, he mentioned that Jigjiga City has placed a strong emphasis on improving water services. Over the past few years, the City Administration has made significant strides in increasing water coverage, with the goal of reaching 100% coverage from the current 60% accessibility.

Water supply infrastructure has been expanded and upgraded, ensuring that more households have access to clean water sources. The implementation of water projects, such as the construction of new reservoirs and the rehabilitation of existing water sources, has played a crucial role in meeting the growing water demand of the city's residents.



Shafi Ahmed, Mayor of Jigjiga City Administration

**The city's favorable business environment, coupled with its improved infrastructure and access to markets, has made it an attractive destination for local and international investors**

These efforts have had a transformative impact on the lives of the people in Jigjiga City. Access to clean water has improved hygiene and sanitation, reducing the prevalence of waterborne diseases. Additionally, reliable water sources have allowed residents to engage in income-generating activities such as urban agriculture, contributing to poverty reduction and economic empowerment.

"An exciting development in Jigjiga City's journey of progress has been the establishment of an economic partnership with Somaliland. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Ethiopian government and Somaliland has opened up new avenues for investment and economic growth," he said.

As to him, the MoU provides enhanced access to ports and transportation networks in Somaliland, offering a strategic

advantage to Jigjiga City. This improved connectivity has boosted trade activities and has the potential to attract foreign direct investment. The partnership has created opportunities for Jigjiga City to position itself as a key trade hub in the region, leveraging its geographical location and fostering economic integration.

The presence of the Berbera dry port in Somaliland has played a pivotal role in attracting investments to Jigjiga City. The port's proximity and efficient import-export processes have facilitated smoother trade flows, making it an attractive destination for businesses. This influx of investments has contributed to job creation, economic growth, and the overall development of the city, he added.

As to him, the City Administration, in collaboration with various stakeholders, has actively promoted investment opportunities in sectors such as services, manufacturing, real estate, tourism, and urban agriculture. The city's favorable business environment, coupled with its improved infrastructure and access to markets, has made it an attractive destination for local and international investors.

Mentioning that addressing unemployment and creating sustainable job opportunities have been key priorities for Jigjiga City, the Mayor avowed that the administration has implemented initiatives aimed at reducing unemployment rates and providing livelihood opportunities for its residents.

Over the past five years, Jigjiga City has witnessed a significant increase in job creation. More than 7,000 temporary and approximately 2,000 permanent job opportunities have been generated annually, he revealed. These employment opportunities span various sectors, including construction, manufacturing, services, and agriculture. The growth in

job creation has not only improved the economic prospects of individuals but has also contributed to poverty reduction and social stability.

Furthermore, the Administration's efforts to improve tax payment performance have yielded positive results. Through awareness campaigns and enhanced tax administration systems, businesses and individuals have shown increased compliance with their tax obligations. This improved tax collection has provided the city administration with the necessary revenues to sustain its development initiatives and provide essential public services.

"Our efforts have been fruitful, as we have set ambitious targets for tax collection. For the current fiscal year, we aim to collect 1.5 billion Birr, a significant increase from our benchmark of 150 million Birr in the 2020/21 fiscal year. The increased tax compliance indicates a notable shift in the mindset and behavior of businesses and individuals towards fulfilling their tax obligations, which is crucial for sustaining the city's development initiatives and public services", said Shafi.

As to him, the City is investing in digital infrastructure recognizing the role of technology in driving development. Jigjiga High-speed internet connectivity has been expanded, enabling residents to access online services, e-commerce platforms, and digital education resources. This digital transformation has opened up opportunities for entrepreneurship, innovation, and remote work, contributing to economic growth and job creation.

All in all, the Mayor highlighted that Jigjiga City has undergone remarkable transformations over the past five to six years, positioning itself as a beacon of progress and development in the region. The city's commitment to infrastructure development, water services improvement, economic partnerships, investments, job creation, and tax payment performance has yielded tangible results. The expansion of road networks, increased housing availability, and improved water services have enhanced the quality of life for residents.

Moreover, the partnership between the Government of Ethiopia and Somaliland coupled with the presence of the Berbera dry port have attracted investments, stimulated trade, and positioned Jigjiga City as a thriving economic center. Job creation initiatives have provided employment opportunities and contributed to poverty reduction, while efforts to improve tax compliance have ensured the sustainability of development projects, he accentuated.

As Jigjiga City continues to evolve and grow, it serves as a testament to the transformative power of effective governance, strategic partnerships, and a commitment to the well-being of its residents. The city's remarkable progress stands as an inspiration for other regions and cities striving for development and prosperity.



# Art & Culture

## All the way back to the roots

BY NAOL GIRMA

It is not surprising to see many children who have lost their family in different situations being adopted by people from the cultures of distant worlds and raised by new parents. As a kid, finding oneself in a new country, a new family, and a new culture may not be much difficult to adapt with. Meanwhile, things may become different when the child grows up because he or she would desire to find out or learn about his or her ancestors.

Raim (insisted on not giving his second name for personal reasons), a German citizen whose roots are from Ethiopia, is a twenty-eight years old sportsman who was adopted by German parents when he was three. He considers his adoptive parents as saviours. He came to Ethiopia two weeks ago, searching for a certain identity that his ancestors left. When The Ethiopian Herald approached him for an interview, he barely speaks his first tongue, Amharic, but he was so fluent on his German and speaks good English with a German accent. He sounds like a typical German in his English. There seems to be nothing African left of him except his strong spirit, brown skin, tick black hair and Ethiopian bone structure.

Meanwhile, Raim is also trying hard to get back to his roots as he manages to learn and speak some Amharic words and keep on being sociable with young Ethiopians he meets in the capital Addis. When he speaks of his feelings about being here, in his birth place, one could observe a very transparent excitement in his eyes. He also said when the plane he was on-board arrived at Addis Ababa airport and as soon as he alighted from the plane, the first thing what he did was taking a deep breath of the cool air.

"I am so happy that I have returned home. I've been missing the ancestral bondage and the culture for many years," he said. According to Raim, cultural values may differ from place to place, but they also have their own unique image and beauty as they are. He also said that he had been to the National science Museum, Unity Park and other places and was astonished by the things he had observed. As he visited the museum, he was not only seeing old materials but also learning about the history of his ancestors. "I have learnt about the history of the Adwa victory. I have seen Lucy's skeleton and other heritage. I have observed how our ancestors were strong," he noted.

When Raim spoke of the cultural difference between the western world and Ethiopia with his little experience here in the City, he said there is much difference. For instance, in Germany, Catholic and Protestant religions are more prevalent, and in Ethiopia, Orthodox by itself is like one big culture, based on his observation. He also said the Ethiopian Orthodox church traditions are also appreciated in German.

Some traditions could be considered as

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**There is one thing that he wants to be spread as a culture in Ethiopia, which is sport. He wants to create a healthy way of life for the youth living on the streets and help them with all his full capacity**

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culture for the fact that people see them as normal even if they are medically harmful. Ethiopians may enjoy their local drinks like Araki, Tella and Tej while Germans like their beers. This similarity of culture reminds the writer of this article a journalist author's experience in German. This Journalist, who still is the Editor in chief of the Addis Admas newspaper on his book that narrates his travel story to the western world, wrote about a special situation that he observed in a famous German bar.

His close female friend invited him to that bar, saying it is the best place to find a good beer in town. However, the way the beer was served was strange for the journalist.



His glass was filled with a little liquid, and the rest of it was filled with the foam of the beer. He just finished the beer with one shot and asked his friend to order another one for him. His girlfriend was shocked by the way he drank but had no choice except to ask for more beer for him. But the waiters were too busy rushing around to serve here and there and nobody heard her call. When she looked up, she would see a bell above her head.

She thought of it as something helpful and rung the bell. Immediately, the whole bar was full of applause and the owner of the bar came straight to the Ethiopian woman and journalist. "Did you won a lottery or is it heritage money?" said the owner. The poor girl, so nervous and confused, replayed "I am sorry but I thought the bell was to call on the waiters." However, ringing that bell meant that "everything in the house is on me or I will pay for all the customers in the house!"

"Well, the owner has understood the situation and told the crowd there was a mistake, so the girl was pardoned to walk out free with me", as the journalist wrote on his book. The girl has been in German for many years and the fact that she has been working hard and spending less time around made her strange to the custom or tradition in that bar even though she knew it was the best in town. In this case migration is supposed to be one of the natural platforms for human beings to share and develop culture, wisdom, civilization etc.

It was indicated that the past few years have been immigrants difficult times for wars, illegal human trafficking and boat accident were at high level claiming the lives of millions of migrants traveling to host countries. This way the positive images of migration have been shadowed by terrible stories.

Even though Rami is not an immigrant, he strongly believes that black people are very tough and smart outside their homelands as long as they support each other and work together. He also said the built up and on-going projects of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed are signs of a better progress in Addis Ababa.

Raim is a sportsman who eats only once a day and he says, "It's good for his health." For him, eating many times or too much a day is not healthy or does not give strength. This perspective of his seems to have been recreating the bondage with his ancestors, who may have lived with religious fasting, praying the whole day and eating little. This life of the monks in monasteries has long-lived in Ethiopia and their strength with health has always been a proof.

Somehow, there is one thing that he wants to be spread as a culture in Ethiopia, which is sport. He wants to create a healthy way of life for the youth living on the streets and help them with all his full capacity. Yet there is much to do with the ancestral bondage and he is still on his journey to the centre of the roots.



# Global Affairs

## Women's land rights in farming need further recognition

In the developing world, land rights for women remain tenuous in the agricultural sector. But if women farmers are recognized as landowners in their own right, it can lead to greater economic empowerment and be a positive step towards eradicating poverty.

This formed part of the wider discussions that are being hosted during the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission for the Status of Women (CSW68) in New York. The leading theme of CSW68 and its side events is the effort to accelerate gender equality by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions.

In the context of the agricultural sector, what this would entail was the subject of its own side event, hosted in New York on March 14.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Government of Canada convened the discussion "Harvesting Empowerment: Women's Resource Rights to Advance Gender Equality, Poverty Alleviation, and Food Security in Agriculture" to discuss a transformative agenda for ensuring women's rights over land in rural areas. The event showcased efforts made by IFAD and its partners to enact what they call a transformative gender approach to empowering women and local communities at large to access their rights to land and resources.

In rural areas, women play a key role in the management of their households and their farmland. However, it remains rare for women to be legally recognized as landowners. IFAD Lead Technical Specialist for Gender, Targeting, and Social Inclusion, Ndaya Beltchika, said as she opened the event that collective action and cooperation are needed in order to ensure resource rights for women, particularly in rural areas. "Empowering women transforms livelihoods and the agricultural landscape," she said.

Since 2021, IFAD, in partnership with the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), has launched a [global initiative](#) to integrate a gender transformative approach in developing interventions to promote resource rights for women, such as through policies, tools, and practices. It has been implemented in six countries where IFAD is currently delivering interventions, such as Kyrgyzstan, Uganda, and Bangladesh. It involved conducting a gender analysis of the barriers that prevent gender equality in rural communities, as well as identifying the needs and priorities of the participating communities. While the analytical framework is the same, the recommendations are context-specific and differ across each country due to socioeconomic, cultural, and political



Women's land rights formed part of the discussions of the 68th session on the Commission for the Status of Women. Credit: Naureen Hossain/IPS

factors.

"How can we take that gender analysis and apply it locally?" said Elisabeth Garner, Scientist and Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Lead, CIFOR. According to Garner, this strategy has made it possible for locals to motivate responses and elevate community needs. This has included IFAD and its partners providing additional training on human or legal rights for poorer communities. In Bangladesh, for instance, through this framework, it has allowed them to work with marginalized communities to empower them and strengthen their climate change responses.

Citizen-driven efforts for visibility and data can make a difference for marginalized communities, including women, grassroots efforts raise awareness at the local and national level. Esther Mwaura-Muiru, the Global Advocacy Director for the Stand for Her Land campaign, added that "all too often, it is up to civil society to knock at the doors" of government institutions. She cited Kenya as an example, where 80 percent of farmers are women. Through grassroots and community-led efforts, the Kenyan government was able to collect data on the number of women who reported owning land. This had the effect of tracking data on the crops and seeds that these farmers grew. Though Mwaura-Muiru said that in order to reduce the exclusion of women, there had to be multiple ways to show proof of ownership.

"Land is pre-conditional to gender equality and sustainable development," she said.

While a transformative gender approach is possible to address poverty and strengthen

financial access for poor communities, this alone will not be enough. Making structural changes can also require societal acceptance. According to Moni Rowshan, Deputy Executive Director of the Association of Land Reform and Development (ALRD) Bangladesh, ensuring total rights to land and resources for women will require a change in society's mindset. The contributions of women are not always recognized as farming, even by women themselves. As Rowshan told IPS, when they do not recognize their work in the homestead as farming, there is a tendency to minimize their effort or credit themselves as supporting their male relatives who run the farms.

If more women own land, then men may have less. The structural shift this could cause is likely to be met with resistance due to underlying sociocultural discrimination against women's involvement in the agricultural sector and, by extension, women's rights. This mindset can both reinforce and be influenced by laws that recognize land rights for men, but not for women.

However, this does a disservice to the women who are at the "frontier of food supply" for their families, the nation, and the rest of the world. Rowshan also added that, compared to their male counterparts, women farmers do not typically have access to modern tools to till and harvest crops, and have to work with fewer resources and use older, indigenous techniques. While the government should take measures to implement and enforce laws that recognize women's land rights, society must also recognize the efforts of grassroots activists and farmers who

advocate for land rights. "If society and government institutions do not recognize women as farmers, these supports are not going to them," she said.

In cases where the government may have existing programs for farmers and women, those who would benefit from them are typically not aware they exist. Rowshan told IPS how, through the Stand For Her Land campaign, women in Bangladesh learned to articulate their demands and increase their understanding of legal issues as they pertained to them. "Once they talk about that, they bring other stakeholders like the government and different agencies to listen to them. The government does have some programs for farmers and women, but these are not reaching them. So once they interact regularly, support starts coming to them. The more they are involved and present, the more support they can get," she said.

Land rights for women mean greater economic empowerment through ownership of farming land or property and additional access to resources. By investing in women's resource rights, investments are made to eradicate poverty through generating income and increasing food security. This would reflect the reality in many countries of the legitimate role that women play in the agricultural sector as farmers and landowners in their own rights. As the event reached its conclusion, there was a call for partnership and cooperation in raising the effort to promote women's land rights. This level of recognition may only be achieved when all stakeholders involved can agree to this reality.

(SOURCE: INTER PRESS SERVICE)



# Law & Politics

## The justified quest for access to the sea

BY SOLOMON WASSIHUN

Ethiopia is the only landlocked country in the Horn of Africa that is almost entirely dependent on maritime services via the ports in the troubled Red Sea region. At the same time, Ethiopia is the most populous country in East Africa, let alone the Horn of Africa. That is an unfair and unjust situation by any standards.

The quest for access to the sea is not just a question of economic benefit. It is not an issue that has suddenly emerged and is being pushed by the Ethiopian government to maintain its popularity and attract public attention, as some critics willfully believe.

The quest for direct access to the sea is a broad-based, popular movement. It is a cause that is vehemently supported by all Ethiopians regardless of their political orientation. In January this year, the Joint Council of Ethiopian Political Parties expressed its full support for the agreement signed by Ethiopia with Somaliland to secure access to the sea and called on all political parties and the general public to play their part in agreeing on a reality.

Similarly, the need to find access to the sea has also already become a serious issue that Ethiopian scholars from various disciplines are racking their brains over. Last November, top Ethiopian scholars deliberated at the most prestigious research college, the AAU at a seminar titled, Fair and Equitable Port Use for Sustainable Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa.

Looking back, Ethiopians share a sense of betrayal and resentment against the Ethiopian leadership in the early 1990s when Ethiopia became a landlocked country again. Ethiopians widely believe that the then leadership had pulled out all the stops to secure Ethiopia a corridor to the sea while negotiating the independence of the former province of Eritrea. Time will tell why the then-Ethiopian leadership chose to rush for Eritrea's independence without following the due process of international law and interestingly became the first government to recognize Eritrea as a sovereign state.

Ethiopia's right to direct access to the sea, which was irresponsibly relinquished in 1993, was last secured by the imperial regime in the 1940s through arduous diplomatic wrangling with the colonial powers. Emperor Haile-Selassie and his diplomats had to wage an intense diplomatic battle for more than seven years, travelling around the world, from Latin America to the Far East, to win the opinion of the member states of the UN Security Council. Eventually, they were able to peacefully secure the reintegration of Eritrea with a federation arrangement in December 1950.

The Europeans were highly resistant to

**Ethiopia's access to the sea could not only accelerate the growth of its national economy but also expedite the economic integration of the sub-region**

Ethiopia's move and they unsuccessfully tried to limit Ethiopia's demand for full restoration of its natural sea border territories by offering a corridor at Assab that provided direct access to the sea while maintaining their occupation of Eritrea as a British protectorate. The emperor rejected the offer and continued his diplomatic struggle until he had the UN pass a resolution in Ethiopia's favour - the decision to rejoin Eritrea with Ethiopia with the federal arrangement as per the UN resolution, Resolution 390A(V)

That glimpse of history indicates that Ethiopians have always been keen on maintaining unfettered access to the sea since it is an essential condition to maintain their national security. If we go back even further in the past, we find an even more compelling lesson about the essentiality of sea access for Ethiopia. One of the most powerful Ethiopian states, the Axumite kingdom, weakened and later collapsed in the 8th century mainly due to the loss of its access to the sea due to the rise of more powerful adversaries on the Red Sea.

Distant observers may argue that Ethiopia, like any other land-locked nations need not be anxious about securing direct access to the sea. True! Such land-locked nations like Uganda, Rwanda, and South Sudan may comfortably get indirect maritime services through neighbouring transit nations like Kenya and Tanzania. The trouble the observers overlook is that the port these landlocked nations depend on is not in the Red Sea region, one of the most militarized and politically charged geographical locations in the world.

The Red Sea region is increasingly volatile, and very unpredictable, and is attracting more actors from far and near due to its strategic economic and political importance. It is therefore potentially hazardous for Ethiopia to remain landlocked, continuing to be dependent on others for maritime access, maintaining its interests, and defending against any national security threat coming from the Red Sea.

Perhaps, it is the unpredictability of the geopolitics of the Red Sea region that compelled the Ethiopian government to re-establish its Navy in 2019, a generation after its liquidation following the secession of the coastal province of Eritrea, along with the port city of Assab, which was a separate autonomous region during the Derg regime.

Moreover, veteran political observers have often witnessed the mixing of the rivalry to get the upper hand in the Red Sea geopolitics with the struggle to maintain Nile politics. This fact makes Ethiopia's need for access and maintaining a strong presence in the Red Sea even more important.

The ongoing conflict in Gaza initiated the reaction of the Yemeni fighters, and

that reaction in turn induced the counter-response of the Americans and other Western powers. This chain of events resulted in the latest spike in the wave of tension on the Red Sea.

Due to the highly charged political and military atmosphere, minor tensions and confrontations happening in and around the Middle East have a high probability of catalyzing a chain of reactions that may reshape the geopolitical landscape of the Red Sea region. Ethiopia, whose fate appears to be intertwined with the sea, cannot afford to be a bystander under such a consistently unstable and unpredictable environment, and rather it should be well prepared and proactive to secure its national interests against the influence and interference of external powers.

The incumbent Ethiopian leadership is exerting maximum effort to secure reliable and economically viable alternatives to the sea access locations including those outside the Red Sea region. The government is carrying out this task based on the principles of international law, peaceful engagement, non-interference, sharing resources, and achieving mutual benefits. It is a foregone conclusion that Ethiopia's access to the sea could not only accelerate the growth of its national economy but also expedite the economic integration of the sub-region. It is worth mentioning here what the Director General of the Ethiopian Federal Law and Justice Institute said on this issue: "Ethiopia's deal with Somaliland is legitimate and accepted by international norms."

However, due to the concerted work of those adversary powers and their cheerleaders who work tirelessly to make sure that Ethiopia remains mainly a stagnant subsistence economy dependent on foreign aid, Ethiopia's quest for reliable access to the sea has been challenged by deliberate misinterpretations. It has even been wrongly described as a violation of the sovereignty of neighbouring countries, and malicious propaganda is being supported by the biased international media campaign. Ashad was the case in the 1940s, Ethiopians have faced unjust and illogical stiff resistance by powers from far and near against its plans to secure sea outlets for commercial maritime and defence purposes.

The more intriguing is that Ethiopia is not the only one that intends to make a port deal with Somaliland. UAE has already made and is working on a deal it struck with Somaliland to develop the Barbara port. No audible noise has ever been made over the Dubai deal. This indicates that it is not what, but who is making the deal with Somaliland that determines the nature and the extent of reactions by external powers and the international media.



# Planet Earth

## University graduates prosper after developing irrigation farming

BY FIKADU BELAY

Daniel Shifeta, a resident of Cheha woreda in the East Gurage Zone, is a graduate of the Department of Horticulture at Samara University. Despite his educational background, finding employment in his field proved to be so challenging that he had to lead a period of unemployment for quite a few years.

Undeterred by this setback, Daniel took the initiative to collaborate with four of his friends approximately eight years ago. With a loan of 28 thousand birr obtained from the district, they established the Yamni Vegetable and Fruit Growers Association, an irrigation farm on a one-hectare plot of land.

Their efforts have yielded remarkable results as the association at present cultivates approximately 30 hectares of land, yielding crops such as tomatoes, cabbage, lettuce, carrots, and water melon. Beyond covering their subsistence, they are able to supply the market. Today, the association generates more than 10 million birr, Daniel told the Ethiopian Press Agency.

Summer irrigation plays a crucial role in the agricultural practices of the Gurage Zone in Ethiopia. Located in the Central Ethiopian regions, the East Gurage Zone has diverse agricultural activities, with a significant focus on crop cultivation. The region's reliance on irrigation during the summer months is driven by the need to ensure water availability for crop growth and maximize agricultural productivity.

Moreover, the Gurage Zone benefits from its geographical features, as it encompasses several rivers and streams. These water resources serve as a reliable supply for irrigation purposes during the summer. Farmers tap into these bodies of water, utilizing pumps and storage structures to divert water into their fields.

The proximity to water sources enables farmers to establish irrigation networks and efficiently manage water distribution among different plots and crops. However, it is important to note that the availability and accessibility of water resources can vary, and adequate infrastructure must be in place to ensure equitable water distribution.

Summer irrigation ensures a continuous water supply for the crops, reducing the risk of yield loss due to drought stress and water scarcity. By providing the necessary moisture, irrigation enables farmers to grow a variety of crops, including cereals, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables, and fruits, thus contributing to food security and income generation in the region.

The association has provided employment to around 100 full-time employees and an additional 100 temporary workers. Moreover, they engage in animal husbandry, processing, and presenting the community's agricultural output while also cultivating plants that serve various purposes, including food production, Daniel noted.

Recognizing the challenges faced by young individuals in terms of accessing stores, financial services, and resources, Ahmed



**Aklilu Kassa**

Mohammad, the head of the Cheha woreda agriculture department office, emphasizes the importance of establishing experience exchange programs.

According to him, summer irrigation is currently being practiced on a total of 340 hectares of land within the woreda. This indicates the extent of agricultural land that benefits from irrigation during the dry season. The implementation of summer irrigation on this scale underscores the importance of water management.

These programs enable young people to gain valuable practical experience in summer irrigation work. Additionally, efforts are underway to foster connections with local merchants to establish strong market links for the producer community, given the perishable nature and limited shelf life of vegetables, he said.

Aklilu Kasa, head of agricultural crops and deputy head of the East Gurage zone agriculture department office, stated in his part the zone's commitment to irrigation projects not only in Cheha but also in other woredas.

He stated that the agricultural specialists of the region closely collaborate with farmers to optimize land utilization, reduce living costs, and ensure food security for the entire community.

In recent years, there have been concerted efforts to improve summer irrigation practices in the Gurage Zone through various initiatives and programs. The Central Ethiopia region started 30-40-30 initiatives. Thirty different varieties of fruit should be planted in the first year, forty different varieties of fruit seedlings



**Daneal Shifeta**

in the second year, and thirty different species in the third year of planting. As a result, a farmer will have a total of three years' worth of fruit varieties, totaling one hundred. These initiatives aim to enhance the income of the farmers and ensure food security in the communities.

This initiative helps to enhance water management practices, promote sustainable irrigation techniques, and provide training and capacity building to farmers. For instance, educational programs have been conducted to raise awareness about efficient irrigation methods, water conservation, and the importance of crop water requirements. Additionally, the introduction of modern irrigation technologies, such as solar-powered pumps and water-efficient irrigation systems, has been encouraged to optimize water use and reduce energy costs.

The impact of summer irrigation in the East Gurage extends beyond crop production. It has positive implications for income generation, poverty alleviation, and rural development. By enabling farmers to cultivate high-value crops during the dry season, irrigation opens up opportunities for market engagement and diversification. It enhances the region's economic prospects, especially through the production of cash crops like vegetables and fruits, which fetch better prices in the market. Increased agricultural productivity also reduces dependency on food aid and contributes to the overall economic well-being of farming communities.

Daniel remarked on the persistent challenge of inadequate access to loans, stores, and essential

resources for youths engaged in various youth associations. This limitation hampers the potential for growth and development among young individuals. Addressing this issue is crucial to empower and support the youth in their endeavors, enabling them to contribute effectively to their organizations and communities.

It addresses the challenges across the sector, minimizing yield losses and ensuring food security. Through the adoption of small-scale irrigation schemes, efficient water management practices, and the utilization of local water resources, farmers in the Gurage Zone can enhance agricultural productivity, income generation, and rural development. Moreover, sustainable irrigation practices contribute to environmental conservation and long-term agricultural resilience. Continued support, investment, and capacity building in summer irrigation can further empower farmers and foster sustainable agricultural development in the Gurage Zone and similar regions.

Furthermore, summer irrigation has environmental benefits in the Gurage Zone. Efficient water management practices minimize water waste, reducing the strain on local water resources. By optimizing irrigation techniques, farmers can conserve water, mitigate soil erosion, and prevent land degradation.

Additionally, irrigation facilitates crop rotation and intensification, as farmers can cultivate multiple crops within a year, enhancing soil fertility and reducing the incidence of pests and diseases. These sustainable agricultural practices contribute to the preservation of the region's natural resources and the long-term resilience of the farming systems.

Aklilu stated that to fulfill the equipment initiative, partnerships with local authorities are being pursued to provide farmers with access to high-quality seeds, tractors, and hatchery machines. Furthermore, collaborations with Omo Bank are being explored to facilitate financial support for the farmers.

He said the zone is committed to the dedication of local communities and regional authorities to underscore the significance of sustainable agricultural practices in strengthening food security.

Through the empowerment of youth and the establishment of collaborative networks, this initiative paves the way for a prosperous and self-sufficient future, ensuring a steady supply of nutritious food for the region and beyond, he added.