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Photo: Berhune Tadele



Photo: Hadushe Aberha

## Ethiopia garnering acclaim for becoming global startup hub

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

**ADDIS ABABA** - Ethiopia's commitment to become hub of global startups is a vivid ambition for sustainable development, so said Global Innovation Initiative Group (GIIG).

The GIIG Co-Founder Jo Griffiths told *The Ethiopian Herald* that Ethiopia is ambitious to become a significant role player in Africa's startups landscape with a supportive government, international partnerships, and the growing young talent.

Griffiths elaborated that her Group

See Ethiopia garnering ... Page 3

## Faithful commit to peaceful coexistence celebrating 1445th Eid al-Fitr

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

**ADDIS ABABA** - Renewing commitment to spurring nationwide peaceful coexistence, Ethiopian Muslims here in the metropolis colorfully marked the 1445th Eid al-Fitr, the end of the fasting month of Ramadan yesterday.

Tens of thousands of Eid al-Fitr celebrants turned out to the prayer held at the Addis Ababa Stadium as part of the nationwide celebrations.

Addis Ababa Islamic Supreme Council Secretary Sheikh Hussein Beshir told *The Ethiopian Herald* that Ethiopia is a multi-religious country featuring peaceful coexistence and urged Muslims to maintain

and strengthen such unique culture.

It was learnt that the faithful had been extending various supports to the needy and contributing greatly to ensure sustainable peace during the holy month.

"The celebration of the holiday should be

See Faithful commit ... Page 3



Photo: Hadushe Aberha

## Diasporas pledge support to accomplish Abbay Dam

BY MESERET BEHAILU

**ADDIS ABABA** -The Ethiopian Diaspora Association expressed commitment to uphold their holistic support to the

See Diasporas pledge ... Page 3

## Gov't gives big break to EV manufacturers, assemblers

BY YESUF ENDRIS

One of leading green campaigners, Ethiopia, has been implementing the suspension of fuel and diesel-powered vehicles from entering the local market since late March. As the government takes this transformative measure, the electric vehicles (EV) market is waiting for investors with open hands.

The suspending measure taken on importing fuel and diesel-powered vehicles is a great opportunity and incentive given to electric vehicle manufacturers and assemblers, Transport and Logistics Minister Alemu Simie (PhD) told *The Ethiopian Herald*.

During his visit to the state-owned vehicle manufacturing and assembling firm-Bishoftu Automotive over the weekend, Deputy Prime Minister Temesgen Tirunch

See Gov't gives ... Page 3





# Nation secures over 58 mln quintals of wheat

BY MESERET BEHAILU

**ADDIS ABABA** – Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) announced that Ethiopia has harvested over 58.5 million quintals of wheat from 1.7 million hectares of land through irrigation activities.

MoA Public Relation and Communication Executive, Kebede Lakew told The Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the Ministry has collected more than 58.5 million quintals of wheat from this *Bega* season irrigation works while the harvesting is still underway.

He noted that the Ministry has applied traditional and modern mechanisms to harvest the product.

As to him, the nation has cultivated close to 3,000,000 hectares of land to collect



120 million quintals of wheat during *Bega* irrigation works.

“*Bega* wheat irrigation has been playing a significant role in boosting the production and productivity and help to improve the

food system. At present, the nation has created enabling environment to cover the necessary wheat demand by itself,” he added.

Kebede further stated that the country is on

the right track to produce adequate wheat both for export and domestic consumption.

The *Bega* wheat irrigation is one of the major agricultural activities the country is striving to ensure food security, he mentioned.

He stated that the government is paying serious attention to produce rice and encouraging green legacy, as well as expanding animal husbandry among its priority areas to realize food self-sufficiency.

“Government senior leaders and experts are working hand-in-hand to realize the expected result from the *Bega* wheat irrigation,” he noted.

It was to be recalled that the *Bega* Irrigation wheat production is initiated by the reformist government and it brings an appreciable outcome especially country’s aspiration to realize food sovereignty.

## Gov’t reforms crucial to further stimulate startups ecosystem: Startupper

**ADDIS ABABA** - The reform carried out by the government is favorable for startupper and further stimulate the sector, youths engaging in startups told ENA.

‘Startup Ethiopia Exhibition’ kicked off at the Science Museum in the presence of senior government officials earlier this week.

The exhibition runs from April 4, until April 28, 2024, it was indicated.

At the exhibition, youths presented their startups in various sectors including information technology, agriculture, health, education, energy, industry and finance.

Meron Sileshi presented her digital application called ‘Lersha’, which means ‘for agriculture, at the exhibition.

The startup provides a one-stop digital service to smallholder farmers to enable them to access farm inputs, mechanization services, and follow dynamic agro weather condition alerts using technology, she elaborated.

For this, Meron stated, the platform combines a mobile application, a call center, and LERSHA agents to facilitate transactions with farmers.

As startups are innovative ideas, they will take time for the society to adopt use them, she said, adding that the efforts being underway by the government are essential to promote and further stimulate the ecosystem.

Head of Operations at Noliga Engineering PLC, Kassa Dejene, said that on his part, they developed a turbine that can generate energy from any flowing water and a device that can easily generate energy from wind.

Noting that they received financial



Meron Sileshi



Kassa Dejene



Hana Berhanu

support from the government during the implementation of this innovative work, he said that the new legal system put in place by the government has created a conducive environment for startups.

Founder of Simbona Africa, Hana Berhanu on her part said Simbona Africa is a MedTech company engaged in locally manufacturing medical devices in Ethiopia.

Simbona has five products and works on any customer-based items. These

products are UVC light-based sterilization (non-medical) device, a phototherapy device, an infant radiant warmer, Oxygen Concentrator and Neonate and adult vein finder.

She mentioned that they were facing financial constraints while doing these jobs; stating that the activities being carried out by the government to address the financial challenges will motivate startupper.

Recall that the “Startup Ethiopia Forum” was held in the presence of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed at the Adwa Victory Memorial Museum on Thursday, April 4, 2024, where senior government officials, representatives of the private sector, and startupper attended the forum.

The premier noted that “Startup Ethiopia” aims to cultivate an environment conducive to youth entrepreneurship, fostering innovative problem-solving businesses.

He also announced several reforms that will create favorable conditions for startups, addressing previous operational bottlenecks.

## Ministry working on creating conducive environment for PwDs

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

**ADDIS ABABA**- Ministry of Health (MoH) stated that it is focusing on creating conducive environment for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) apart from having comprehensive rehabilitating services.

The ministry has designed a five year strategic plan to implement across the nation together with states and universities to create good environment for PwDs.

Approached by *The Ethiopian Herald* Service MoH Lead Executive Office Specialty and Rehabilitation Service Desk Head Ermias Mulatu (MD) said providing and expanding rehabilitating services for PwDs and birth defects such as facial deformities, Musculoskeletal, lip lift, development delay and autism.

Earlier, the ministry implemented early diseases protection policy and treatment service, but now it includes the fourth component rehabilitating services on PwDs and birth defects to get treatments such as physiotherapy, therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy to restore thereby improving the former body function system into new one in hospitals and health center, he added.

They are providing early identification, early treatment, intervention and early life changing for birth related defect children including autism.

“The Ministry is holding campaign on birth related defects, facial deformities and musculoskeletal traveling in four states to create awareness and conducive environment,” he said.

Musculoskeletal type, left lip, development delay needs assistive technology and research in national level to solve it, he added.

The ministry is working in collaboration with Nia foundation and local partners to create better setup for children with autism to contribute to the country’s development. Rehabilitation center service for disability needs to planned, develop expand more in states, he said.



## Ethiopia, Japan hold inaugural political consultation in Tokyo

BY STAFF REPORTER

**ADDIS ABABA** - Ethiopia and Japan held an inaugural political consultation, a significant milestone for diplomatic ties between the two countries.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the two nations convened their inaugural political consultation in Tokyo, Japan on 9th April 2024.

MoFA State Minister Ambassador Mesganu Arga and Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Kiyoto Tsuji co-chaired the meeting.

After the opening remarks by the co-chairs, participants engaged in a robust exchange of views, delving into the domestic landscapes of both nations and exploring avenues to strengthen bilateral ties.

Discussions encompassed diplomatic and economic relations, as well as broader Japan-Africa relations, it was indicated.

Speaking at inaugural political consultation, Ambassador Mesganu underscored Ethiopia's profound commitment to nurturing its relationship with Japan, highlighting the pivotal role of platforms like political consultations in bolstering bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

He advocated for the enhancement of trade



and investment links, recognizing the mutual benefits such collaboration could yield for the two countries.

Vice Minister Tsuji on his part, indicated Japan's aspiration for a robust partnership with Ethiopia.

The deliberations also saw a comprehensive

review of bilateral relations and constructive dialogue on various regional and multilateral issues of mutual concern.

This inaugural political consultation marks a pivotal step in deepening the bond between Ethiopia and Japan, paving the way for enhanced collaboration and mutual prosperity in the years to come.

### Faithful commit...

conducted preserving our shared values as Ethiopians. Muslim communities in collaboration with other Ethiopians should contribute their share to facilitate enduring peace and to accelerate development," Sheikh Hussein said.

For his part, Ethiopian Islamic Supreme Council President's Social Affairs Advisory Ustaz Ahmedin Jebel stated that the holy month's kindness and enthusiasm, culture of support and other volunteer activities should be continued as a routine of work

Addis Ababa Islamic Supreme Council Executive Committee Sabir Yirgu said that since Ethiopia is a multi-religious country, it requires strengthening the unique culture and preserving unity. This year's Salat praying Eid was hosted uniquely in the several gatherings.

He urged the faithful to show enthusiasm to the needy people while observing the holiday.

The Eid al-Fitr celebration in Addis was graced by the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council President Sheikh Haji Ibrahim Tufa, prayers, religious fathers, senior officials, invited guests and others.

### Ethiopia garnering ...

assists Ethiopian startups through facilitating access to funding, mentorship, and international visibility.

The Group is here to encourage startups and partners to collaborate through sharing experiences and the visibility of innovations, she said.

This day marks a significant milestone for Ethiopia's journey to be hub of startups for the successful reform activities conducted by the incumbent to let startups flourish and able to create new environment, she added.

The Global Startup Awards Africa is the biggest global independent competition in the world. Ethiopia is hub of many startup promoters in Africa and the hosting country of startup awards Africa next year, the Co-Founder expressed.

"Ethiopia startup" events aim to solidify this vision by fostering connections, providing resources, and showcasing the potential of Ethiopian innovation to the world.

"We have funds for startup and help Ethiopia build startup and create innovation economies. We have incredible network across 55 nations in Africa. In terms of visibility we can provide startup with networks to build national asset. Via the national asset, they are able to bring visibility to access new market, attract funding and create big network," she said.

She called on startups and stakeholders across Africa to team up so as to exploit potentials and tackle challenges together.

## Diasporas pledge support to accomplish...

completion of the construction of the Abbay Dam within the shortest time possible.

Diaspora Association Executive and Public Relations Head Abraham Tilahun told *The Ethiopian Herald* that the Diaspora community has an unwavering commitment to backing the construction of Abbay Dam financially, professionally, in advocacy, and other means.

Since its inauguration, Ethiopians in the Diaspora have contributed close to 114 million Birr to the mega dam and they have been playing an indispensable role in repulsing baseless allegations and external pressures that have been exerted by Ethiopia's historical enemies, he added.

"For instance, Egypt brought the Abbay Dam issue to the United Nations Security

Council 12 times to interrupt the construction progress. However, the Diaspora community combated the baseless and coordinated accusation due to the plaintiff standing on the wrong ground."

Abraham further stated that the support from the Diaspora community will be intensified until the grand project's completion with keeping unison and giving serious attention to the national interest.

Diaspora Board Advisor Ermias Mekonnen on his part said, "Though Ethiopia's historical enemies are working day-in and day-out to obstruct the construction of the iconic project, the Diaspora community committed to fighting against this irrational approach as it is a matter of national interest."

Egypt has been immensely attempting to disrupt the Abbay Dam construction through various mechanisms including recruiting lobbyists to disseminate false information and to confuse the international community, and draw the global actors' support to its cause.

However, the Ethiopian Diaspora community living in different countries of the world unmasked Egypt's lies even using the latter's language (Arabic) and appearing in the pro-Egypt media, Ermias underscored.

It is to be recalled that on April 2, 2024, Ethiopia commemorated the 13th anniversary of the launching of the construction of the Abbay Dam while the overall construction of the grand project reached 95.8 percent.

## Gov't gives big break to EV...

also told local media that electrifying transportation and some other infrastructures is a priority to the government.

The government needs public enterprises like the Ethio-Engineering Group [a parent company to Bishoftu Automotive] to manufacture and assemble electric vehicles and industrial machinery. The foreign currency that the government is spending on fuel is undesirable, Temesgen added.

For Alemu, investment in EV could be lucrative as the market demand is untouched. Moreover, the government will provide credit and incentives to electric vehicles manufacturers, assemblers and

importers while the scheme will be more beneficial to the former two.

As Ethiopia faces foreign currency shortage, the government is promoting local manufacturers, and assemblers are also expected to imitate the technology that will help them to transform to production.

Indeed, the first aim behind suspending fuel and diesel-powered vehicles is to create environmental-friendly and cost-effective transportation. "The number of vehicles is also too few to satisfy the demand, so manufacturing cars here in Ethiopia is greatly benefiting," he emphasized.

Industry Minister Melaku Alebel, on his part said that power stations for

electric cars could not lessen the demand since electrification is growing. As the local market is very lucrative to EV manufacturers, investors should think beyond importing and the government, on its part, is offering appealing incentives.

In a press briefing he held last week, Transport and Logistics State Minister Berea Hassen said that EV importers have been provided tax relief and those imported assembled and partially assembled cars are obliged to pay 15 and five percent customs tax respectively but no excise tax.

Firms that have been engaged in fully assembling EV are exempted from both excise and customs tax, according to him.



# Opinion

## Curbing discrimination, stigmatization among occupational minorities in Ethiopia

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

The author of this article wishes to make something clear from the outset. This is not an article about ethnic minorities but about occupational minorities in ethnic groups in the country whether they are minorities in each ethnic group or dominant ethnic groups in each region of the country. This is therefore not about minorities in general but about those marginalized groups in each ethnic group or outcasts simply because they are contributing to the society by producing some commodities that are used in rural Ethiopia.

According to Tesgay Daba (2022) the term 'Minority' is among the contested terminology in social sciences that has multi-faceted connotations across different contexts and content. In most cases, it is linked with a grouping that comprises membership with relatively few population sizes. However, the political essence of the term entails more of how socio-political space is occupied by the supposed group. Moreover, the concept of minority embeds deep-rooted ingredients like concerns of 'underrepresentation', 'marginalization', and 'subordination' in the socio-economic and political setting.

The minority groups in Ethiopia could be grouped into three broader categories namely endogenous, exogenous and marginalized minorities. Endogenous minorities comprise ethnic minority groups who reside in their 'native' land but assume a marginal role in the regional political realm due to their population size. Exogenous minorities are groups who migrated to the regional states that are not designated to their respective ethnic groups and became minority groups as a result of their dislocation from their ethnic fellows that are in most cases a majority in their place of origin. Marginalized minorities are those engaged in occupations that are socially marginalized occupations and livelihoods like potters, tanners, smiths, weavers, woodworkers, hunters, and pastoralists.

### Who are occupational minorities?

"Occupational minorities" generally refers to groups of people who are underrepresented or marginalized within specific occupations or industries due to factors such as discrimination, systemic barriers, or historical inequalities. These groups may face challenges in accessing employment opportunities, advancing in their careers, or receiving fair treatment and opportunities for professional development. Many African majority populations have kept professional minority groups under their rule. Throughout Ethiopia, there are specialized traditional artisans and women who have long practiced various trades such as blacksmithing, pottery, tanning, weaving, and woodworking.

These groups include Serategna and Waiyto among the Amhara people; Waata, among the Oromo, the Manjo among the Kafa, and the Fuga in Kembata and Wolayita. These low-caste occupational groups perform important tasks in the societies in which they live as an obligatory performance of duty. The occupational involvement of these communities is focused on the production of things that are considered vital and indispensable services for the rest of the population.

The occupational minorities are usually differentiated by the type of crafts they practice. *Mana*, for example, work as tanners in Kafa and as potters in Dawro. *Fuga* specialize as tanners in Yem, but as woodworkers in Gurage and potters in Kembata and Hadiya.

Professor Alula Pankhurst and Dena Freeman recognized four types of minorities known as respected polluters are least marginalized. Even before the reign of Emperor Menelik, they owned land. They are unusual in that they all owned land prior to Menelik's conquest, and they are the only groups not to be grouped in such categories as *Nefrwe* (smiths) and the *Shamer* (weavers) in Gurage, the *Yirfo* (smiths) in Yem, the *K'emo* (smiths) and *Shamano* (weavers) in Kafa, the *Kejo* (smiths) in Shekacho and the *Wogach'e* (smiths) in Dawro.

They are not accused of eating impure meat or of committing any polluting acts, and they are considered to be only slightly impure or not impure at all. They are not associated with fertility or thought to be particularly good healers. Contemporary respected non-polluters are not attributed magical powers and are not feared, but there is some suggestion that they were in the past.

Professor Alula and his colleague noted that the second category of minorities are those that are viewed by farmers as being fairly polluting, and also not good for fertility. Groups in this category include the *Awacho* (tanners) of Sidama, the *Ch'inasha* (potters) of Wolaita, the *Hawuda* (weavers, smiths, tanners, potters, butchers) of Konso, the *Degala* (tanners) of Dawro, Wolaita and Gamo, and the various groups of *Mana* (tanners, potters), with the exception of the *Mana* smiths in the communities of the Gofa area.

The third category of minorities are marginalized to a very great extent and are viewed by surrounding farmers as being extremely polluting and yet also associated with fertility. Groups in this category include the *Manjo* (hunters), the *Fuga* (woodworkers, tanners, potters) and possibly the *Hadiicho* (potters) of the Sidama.

The fourth category of minorities is the most marginalized of all. They are thought to be extremely polluting and they are also feared

for their alleged dangerous powers. Groups in this category include the blacksmiths of Oyda, Malo, Maale, Ari, Bako and Dime. These societies are all located in the general Gofa area of southwest Ethiopia.

Stereotyping of all kinds among the farming communities has targeted all these groups of occupational minorities at different levels. In Tigray, for instance, although official regional government policy is in support of the rights of occupational minorities, enough work is not being done to defend their rights to employment, movement and their quest to contribute to the economy of the region.

Regarding the *marginalized minority groups* because of their occupation, the marginalization takes place mainly in social activities, for instance, according to Susanne Epple (2018, p.173), 'eating and drinking taboos resulting in separation within these spheres are among the most obvious... another taboo is intermarriage between the members of groups of low and high statuses'. The FDRE Constitution lacks an apparent post to directly address the rights of ethnic and occupational minorities in the ethnic-based regional states it established. The federal constitution envisages ethnicity as the sole organizing principle, but it overlooked constitutional guarantees to minorities who are hardly labeled as ethnic groups per the regional or federal parameters of classifying groups as ethnic groups or not.

Accordingly, many people are discriminated against, alienated, abused, and marginalized based on their work, and set to decent status in contemporary Ethiopia. For instance, communities living in southern Amhara called Enewari Woreda, Beta Israel, and the Wayto – Amhara region, the Hadiicho, Mana, and Manja and 'Fuga'- 'Wood Workers' minority group in Gurage Zone living in the Central Ethiopia Region.

The *Fuga* in Omo valley of Kambata and Hadiya Zones of Central Ethiopia practice pottery and are restricted to a specific locality in the villages. The marginalization was so deep seated that male or female *Fuga* are not allowed to share the same lane in a village and have to give way for the rural non-*Fuga* people. The author has witnessed that the *Fugas* were provided with their own "church" in view of not being mixed with the rest of worshippers in churches.

*Fuga* school children, if they ever attend school, share the same plight of their parents. They remained victims of a subculture of fear and remained docile and socially irrelevant. Although the cast system in India is clearly visible dividing the entire society into three groups, namely the Brahmins which is cast of the nobility, the Kshatriyas and the Untouchables, in Ethiopia there has never been a cast system of the Indian type.

The stereotypes, discriminations and marginalization they face in their respective are of residence is just beyond imagination. Many are accused of possessing "evil eyes" that make children sick when they gaze at them. Mothers complain "buda ate up my child"

Just imagine, for centuries the people of Ethiopia have been using farm implements that are prepared by the "ketkatch or "bale ejie" in Amhara region and "tumtu" in Oromia. While Europe was wearing leather products during the Middle Ages, thanks to Ethiopian weavers the people of Ethiopia have been wearing woven cotton fabrics right from the period of Axumite civilization and this is because marginalized Ethiopian weavers were preparing traditional cotton fabrics from which very attractive clothing are made for women, men and children.

Historical facts indicate that tanners, weavers and blacksmiths across the country have participated in the victory at the Battle of Adwa by providing services based on their profession.

What should therefore be done to transform the lives of occupational minorities in Ethiopia? The author wishes to come up with several recommendations. Although the constitution has devoted far ranging democratic rights of citizens which is also compatible with global standards of human rights, the constitution should be amended to accommodate the political, legal, social and economic rights of endogenous, exogenous minorities and occupational minorities in the country.

Second, CSOs and other philanthropic organizations are expected to conduct advocacy activities for such groups and provide them integrated trainings which could include technical trainings and socio-psychological and legal support which will help them to effectively integrate into the societies in which they live.

Third, the level and quality of democracy and good governance in Ethiopia cannot be completed unless the constitutional and democratic rights of both ethnic and occupational minorities are upheld adequately. They need to be included in every aspect of social life in rural and urban areas of Ethiopia by effectively combating stigma and discrimination to which they are currently subjected.

As state earlier, the people of Ethiopia are indebted to these occupational minorities primarily because farmers who constitute 85% percent of the population depend on them for the production and repair of hoes and other farm implements they use during the farming seasons.

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

# Editorial

## The celebration is clearest indication of historic tolerance

Muslims across the nation have peacefully celebrated the 1445th Eid Al Fitr, which is the end of the annual fasting season during the holy month Ramadan. While Muslims spent the holy month with utmost faith, prayer and fasting the happiness and the blessings are the shared values for all Ethiopians who have held tolerance as their ages old culture.

Ethiopians have been celebrating the day for centuries since the coming of Islam to the country. Throughout the times Muslims have celebrated Eid with peace, love and respect to friends and neighbors as ordered by the religion. This practice is one of the precious values of the entire people of the nation and is likely to service in the coming centuries regardless of any internal or external problems.

The month of Ramadan is the most eagerly awaited season among Muslims across the world. IT is among deep and utmost prayer for God. It is also a time to pray for spiritual refreshment, peace, stability, success and blessings among others.

Though the month is a time of fasting and prayer for Muslims it brings people of other religions closer. Especially in Ethiopia it has been a long ingrained culture among followers of different religious to exchange collaborations during such solemn ceremonies.

As a matter of coincidence this year the fasting seasons Ramadan of Muslims and Lent of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians have started on the same day. Even throughout the year's followers of the two mainstream religions in the country have support each other during celebrations of their respective holidays.

For instance, on the eve of Eid Al Fitr members of the Community, young Christians and various members of neighborhoods grouped themselves to clean the road and public places that are designated for the celebration of Eid Solat by the large number of Muslims that gather from various corners. The community members from each neighborhood can easily consider the fact that Muslims are busy fasting and praying that day and may not be suitable for them to go out to the streets and do the cleanings.

Muslims rather reciprocate the good deeds of the Christians and other brethren during the other holidays. For instance, Christians in Ethiopia celebrate Timket or Epiphany, uniquely on the month of January. They take to the streets enmasse to accompany the arks or tabots of each Church to the places they stay overnight. On such occasion Muslims lend a hand in cleaning the roads that the tabots pass through.

By doing so Muslims and Christians share both the celebration and blessings of their prayers. Such tolerance and collaboration is among the ages old traditions of the country that need to be recognized as the cultural wonders of the nation. As the country passed through various twists and turns throughout the centuries such rich culture of tolerance and unity are the factors that kept the diverse people of the country closer and united together.

These spiritual values and disciplines have contributed not only in the tolerance between the followers of the religions but also in addressing harmful outcomes of political and economic crisis. Heeding to their respective religious orders people have been contributing to support victims of conflict, drought, and other sudden disasters that left people helpless.

It is high time the government, religious leaders and scholars, among others, come together to maintain these worthwhile cultural asset of the people to further advance vital national agenda like peace, national consensus and economic development.



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### Office of the CEO

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

### Advertisement and Dist. Department

email: etpresspromotion@gmail.com  
Tel. 011-156-98-73/011-811-13-15  
Telegram :- 0976084707 - press  
Editor-in-Chief: Worku Belachew  
email- workubelachew@press.et  
Address- Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-city  
Woreda - 05, House No----  
Tel- +251 111 26 41 98

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

### Deputy Editors-in-Chief:

Alem Hailu  
Elizabeth Mengistu  
Zekarias Woldemariam  
Desta Geberehiwot  
Daniel Beyene

Website: [www.press.et](http://www.press.et)  
email: [ethiopianherald@press.et](mailto:ethiopianherald@press.et)  
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# Opinion

## Alleviating setbacks to manufacturing industry in Ethiopia

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

There is potential for Ethiopia to move up the value chain and focus on value-added manufacturing activities, such as product customization, branding, and design. Investing in innovation, quality assurance, and product differentiation could enable Ethiopian manufacturers to capture higher margins and create more sustainable business models.

Ethiopia's manufacturing sector has the opportunity to prioritize sustainability, environmental conservation, and social responsibility. Embracing green manufacturing practices, renewable energy solutions, and inclusive business models could support long-term economic development while minimizing environmental impacts and promoting social equity.

While Ethiopia's manufacturing industries have achieved significant progress in recent years, there are still challenges to overcome. Addressing infrastructure constraints, improving access to finance and skills, enhancing the business regulatory environment, and expanding market access will be essential to unlocking the full potential of Ethiopia's manufacturing sector and driving inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

According to Ministry of Industry report produced a year ago, industries are producing below their capacity due to the reasons mentioned above. Currently, the manufacturing industry sector has a share of no more than seven percent of the total national product, and it is planned to increase this share to 17.2 percent in the next 10 years. In addition, there is a plan to increase the productivity of the current 50 percent of industries to 85 percent.

"Ethiopia Tamirt" national movement announced in April 2022 with the objective of solving the problems of the manufacturing industry by creating favorable conditions for sustainable development and competitiveness, enabling the sector to contribute to the economic structural transition..

The movement was in Ethiopia's efforts to sell competitive industrial products in the international market, to replace imported industrial inputs with domestic ones and to overcome the shortage of foreign currency. The pillars are engaging stakeholders, supporting the sector through research, providing sustainable support to the sector and promoting local products and productivity.

In 2022, more than 50,000 investors and stakeholders in the regions, zones, districts and city administrations participated, and made a great contribution to creating awareness and bringing the investor and the management closer together. This has helped to revive the sector. More than 352 industries that had stopped working have been brought back to work. 635 new industries have started production. Four thousand new investments have been

approved to enter the sector.

Information from the Ministry of Industry regarding the performance of the 2022/23 fiscal year indicated that import products worth more than 2.2 billion Dollars were substituted by domestic products. The production capacity of the country's industries has reached 55 percent. In addition to recording promising results in the implementation of the movement in terms of job creation, product supply and production of proxy products, a better job has been done in supporting the actors of the manufacturing sector to have market and raw material supply links, to improve their understanding and to produce to their full potential.

The manufacturing industries in the country still have more challenges that need to be adequately addressed to ensure quality and quantity standards that are acceptable at international markets. The link that was reportedly established with the universities in the country need to be exploited in terms of training and deploying qualified manpower in the manufacturing sector. The use of AI resources and other IT related automation services may be employed to ensure quality control and efficient utilization of raw materials.

In terms of producing highly qualified human resources for the manufacturing industries, it would be important to focus on need based approach as a means of addressing the manpower needs of the industries.

The 11 industrial parks that are currently in operation must be expanded as planned by the government and public-private cooperation in this regard is of crucial importance for the development of the sector.

There needs to be an operational linkage between various enterprises and manufacturing enterprises that depend on outputs from other manufacturing industries that produce spare parts and semi-processed materials that could be used as an input in various manufacturing enterprises.

For instance, while there is a possibility of harvesting high quality cotton for textile industries, there is no need to import raw cotton with higher prices. Import of raw materials for textile and apparel factories incurs more forex that is in a limited supply in the country.

BEING a member of BRICS, Ethiopia can seed more financial and technical support from enterprises and financial institutions in the member countries. The manufacturing sector in developing countries like Ethiopia face huge competition and other forms of challenges that could inhibit their production and productivity levels.

Moreover, small and medium sized manufacturing industries that are operated by cooperatives need to be supported so that they can grow into full-fledged enterprises that could produce export standard quality goods that can be presented on international markets.

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



# Business & Economy

## Aspiration for WTO membership: A realistic venture

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

Ethiopia is one of the rapidly growing countries in the world registering double digit economy for the last decade and a half. It has abundant natural resources with more than 120 million population. Its economic main stay is agriculture which is the means of living for 85% of the population. The sector contribution to the economy is immense. It is the major foreign currency earner supplying about 75% of raw materials to the emerging agro-industries and food to the urban residents.

The nation mainly exports agricultural products with no or very little value addition. Among the products, coffee, oil seeds, chat, Vegetables and fruits and floriculture can be mentioned here. As compared to other developing countries, Ethiopia's export volume is very small and the export destined countries are very few in number. Therefore, enhancing the quality and quantity of the export items and increasing the number of countries that receive Ethiopia's products is essential. The Ethiopian airlines, in this regard, plays pivotal role in enhancing the nation's foreign currency earning capacity through providing transport service to travelers and goods to and from foreign countries.

In fact, Ethiopia with enormous population is a land locked country in the Horn of Africa and heavily depends on the neighboring countries' ports for its import and export trades and the situation makes the country in a disadvantageous position. Ethiopia transacts 90% of its import and export trade through the port of Djibouti. The country currently leased the port to DP World (the Dubai Company) and the company imposes new fees for the port services as it wished arbitrarily which again put additional financial burden on Ethiopia which exacerbates inflation locally. The delay of export and import goods at the port of Djibouti due to congestion also incurs additional cost to pay for demurrage. Hence, joining the WTO is expected to reduce Ethiopia's expense for port services.

According to economists, foreign trade plays pivotal role in advancing the nation's economic growth. However, most developing countries suffer from trade imbalance that is to say, they import more goods and services than they export. As the result, they became highly indebted and allocate huge amount of their export earned income for debt services.

Similar to other countries, Ethiopia suffers from negative trade balance and while it earns about 3 billion USD from export annually, whereas it imports goods and services worth about 18 billion USD. Therefore, to close the gap Ethiopia should boost its export and realize its import substitution endeavor. Joining the World Trade Organization benefits Ethiopia because it can broaden its foreign trade destiny and diversifies its export items and helps to produce goods in qualitative manner so that it can penetrate foreign markets.

The WTO aspires for free trade by binding its Members with international commitments in terms of access to the goods and services markets, the use of economic policy instruments affecting trade, and the state support of agriculture.



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According to the World Trade Organization documents, the system helps promote peace among countries through trade integration and by making them to need each other. The system also serves to handle trade disputes among countries in constructive manner and long lastingly. The rules introduced by the WTO make life easier for all.

Freer trade cuts the cost of living of the population of the member countries and provides more choices of products based on their quality and raises incomes of the countries. It also stimulates economic growth, reduce government's expenditure for advertisement for their products and encourage good governance.

According to WTO, Peace is partly an outcome of two of the most fundamental principles of the trading system: helping trade to flow smoothly and providing countries with a constructive and fair outlet for dealing with disputes over trade issues. It is also an outcome of the international confidence and cooperation that the system creates and reinforces.

History is littered with examples of trade disputes turning into war. One of the most vivid is the trade war of the 1930s when countries competed to raise trade barriers in order to protect domestic producers and retaliate against each other barriers. This worsened the Great Depression and eventually played a part in the outbreak of World War II. Two developments immediately after the Second World War helped to avoid a repeat of the pre-war trade tensions. In Europe, international cooperation developed in coal, and in iron and steel. Globally, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was created. Both have proved successful, so much so that they are now considerably expanded—one has become the European Union, the other the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Putting the matter clearly, sales people are usually reluctant to fight their customers—usually. In other words, if trade flows smoothly and both sides enjoy a healthy commercial relationship, political conflict is less likely. What's more, smoothly-flowing trade also helps people all over the world become well off.

People who are more prosperous and contented are also less likely to fight. But that is not all. The GATT/WTO system is an important confidence builder. The trade wars in the 1930s are proof of how protectionism can easily plunge countries into a situation where no one wins and everyone loses.

The short-sighted protectionist view is that defending particular sectors against imports is beneficial. But that view ignores how other countries are going to respond. The longer term reality is that one protectionist step by one country can easily lead to retaliation from other countries, a loss of confidence in freer trade, and a slide into serious economic trouble for all—including the sectors that were originally protected. Everyone loses.

Confidence is the key to avoiding that kind of no-win scenario. When governments are confident that others will not raise their trade barriers, they will not be tempted to do the same. They will also be in a much better frame of mind to cooperate with each other. The WTO trading system plays a vital role in creating and reinforcing that confidence. Particularly important are negotiations that lead to agreement by consensus and a focus on abiding by the rules.

Ethiopia will hold a pivotal fifth-round World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting that would help the country in joining the organization, according to the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration.

Minister of Trade and Regional Integration, Gebremeskel Chala confirmed to local media that the meeting is anticipated to be held in the next month, May 2024.

Recalling Ethiopia first applied 20 years ago; the Minister stated that the negotiation endeavor was disrupted in recent years by the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges. However, he revealed that Ethiopia has been intensifying its efforts and he mentioned a delegation visit to the WTO Director-General in Geneva, Switzerland back in July 2023.

According to him, this visit resulted in a three-year timeframe for Ethiopia to finalize negotiations and secure WTO membership.

Consequently, Ethiopia has received around 180 questions and 9 documents from member countries and potential negotiating partners, the minister pointed out. These inquiries will be addressed on a dedicated platform that will be facilitated by the WTO itself.

Gebremeskel noted that Ethiopia's negotiating team to the WTO is well-prepared to navigate these discussions in a manner that ensures the nation's economic development and commercial competitiveness. Ethiopia has held observer status at the WTO since 2003, similar to the European Union. This role has allowed the country to gain valuable insight into the organization's workings and prepare for full membership.

The ministry is currently finalizing crucial documents required for WTO accession, he stated. These documents cover various aspects, including goods and services trade offers, import licensing procedures, information of public business enterprises, trade-related laws, and export subsidy and agricultural support details.

For Gebremeskel, Ethiopia's determination to secure WTO membership demonstrates its commitment to deeper global trade integration. By successfully navigating the upcoming negotiations, the country can unlock new economic opportunities, enhance its commercial standing, and participate more actively in the international trade system, it was learned.

# Art & Culture

## Solar eclipses, interpretations in different cultures

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

Natural phenomena are expressed in various cultures differently depending on the available knowledge and the prevailing belief systems. One could perhaps say that this was more or less the case since Adam and Eve appeared on earth. The first humans dwelt in heaven like natural surroundings at ease and with plenty of leisure and happiness until one day the Devil tempted them to transgress God's rules and instigating the sin that led to the fall of man. What is referred to in religious literature as "the forbidden fruit" was their undoing. This is at least what the Bible is teaching us in a nutshell.

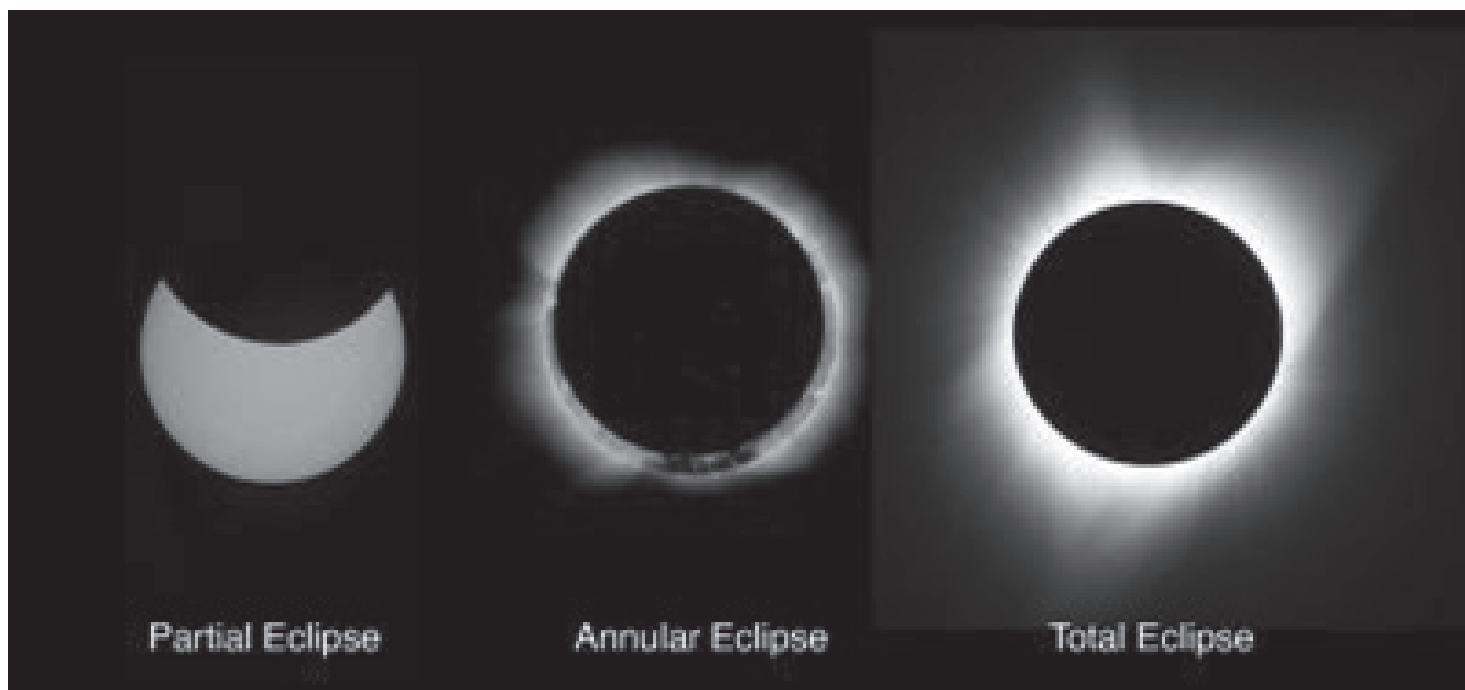
The interaction between man and nature however continued since then and this relationship is nowadays defined as follows. "Nature is the whole of the physical world; it is also what exists outside of any human action. Man is in nature but he acts upon it, thereby emancipating himself of it. He is part and parcel of nature. The human-nature relationship is the object in western societies at least, of contradictory representations."

Most of the times, man and nature live in harmony and without any major problems. However, this relationship is not always peaceful or harmonious. Man, although a conscious being, sometimes upsets the harmonious balance between the two knowingly or unknowingly. And this gives rise to natural calamities that affect man in return. This shows that man is not always in control of nature. Neither does he fully understand all natural phenomena. Some of them are easy to understand while others are more complex.

Lunar eclipse is one of the natural phenomena that is easily understood although it continues to fascinate the public as well as astrologists. Why a lunar eclipse occurs? Well, science says that the eclipse can happen only during full Moon when Sun and moon are on opposite sides of planet earth. At that point, the Moon can move into the shadow cast by Earth, resulting in lunar eclipse.

Human beings are said to have started to observe lunar eclipses a long time ago. According to available information, "Babylonians, Greeks and Romans considered solar eclipse an omen and the month in which the eclipse was recorded was considered important. Batammaliba people in Togo and Benin believe that Sun and Moon are fighting during an eclipse. The people encourage the sun and the moon to stop fighting."

People were giving various interpretations to the eclipses depending on their cultures and the prevailing levels of scientific information at different times. This is expressed in different literatures. What does solar eclipse symbolize? "An eclipse feels like a moment where something is strong or different. So if you have a story that's trying to comment on how, say, a certain



set of political or social relationships are wrong or how it's time for a change in your characters, an eclipse can be a symbol of that."

There are also many historical beliefs about eclipses in relation to African culture. "The Zulu people for instance, believed that the eclipse occurred when a celestial being, known as "the great shake of the sky" swallowed the sun or moon. This belief reflected a harmony between the natural and spiritual worlds, with the eclipse serving as a reminder of the persistence and power of ancestral spirits."

As we can see from the above, natural occurrences like solar eclipse can engender symbolic, social, emotional and energetic interpretations. These occurrences have also spiritual meanings. "In astrology, the spiritual aspects of the moon represent our deep emotional tides. Astrologists believe an eclipse is a life-changing time to seek change and usher in evolution."

Even scientists who study solar eclipse are said to be moved by the phenomenon even though they now know how and why it occurs.

As one observer said, "An eclipse can usher in endings for certain relationships and bring beginnings for others. It is a time of dynamic change." We can remember perhaps add by saying that weddings that take place during an eclipse could be interpreted positively or negatively. It can be used as an unforgettable moment for the couples who, in their old age, may remember the eclipse as the moment they tied the knots saying, "Remember that day when the sun suddenly went off as the we were about to cut the wedding cake? We had the creeps!"

Apart from this, there is no registered scientific evidence of a solar eclipse that has damaged any part of the human body although there may be brief atmospheric shifts due to the fast changes during the eclipse that last a few seconds.

In literature, solar eclipse is used as a sign or symbol that something is wrong or

different. "If you have a story that is trying to comment on how, say, a certain set of political or social relationships are wrong, or how it is time for a change in your characters, an eclipse can be a symbol of that."

In ancient cultures, solar eclipses were considered signs of doom and destruction. Ancient Greeks saw a solar eclipse as a sign the gods were angry at the king. Other cultures had developed legends in order to explain why solar eclipse occurred. In one culture for instance, solar eclipse is explained as a moment when a deity or other entity was swallowing the sun.

Speaking of legends, it is important to note that solar eclipses had given rise to some odd mythological interpretations. The ancient Chinese believed that solar eclipses occur when a celestial dragon devours the sun. They also believed that the same dragon attacks the moon during lunar eclipses. It was a tradition in ancient China to bang drums and pots and make loud noises during an eclipse to frighten that same dragon.

"The Egyptians, like most ancient cultures, also associated the observation of this solar phenomenon with the occurrence of misfortunes. It is also important to note that solar eclipse does trigger fear and foreboding that in turn trigger all kinds of concocted stories that circulate on social media these days. The majority of the stories are about doom and destruction taking the ongoing wars in the world as proof of the doomsday scenarios in the making. Most religions have their own interpretations.

To look at the solar eclipse from a more mundane perspective, we might perhaps indicate the major health hazard the eclipse has on our body. "Looking at the intense light from the sun even for just a few seconds can cause permanent damage to the retina (part of the eye directly responsible for our vision). Exposing your eyes to the sun without proper eye protection during a solar eclipse can cause retinal burns called solar retinopathy." Scientists advise to look

at the eclipse through safe solar view glasses or a safe, handheld solar viewer at all times.

For the last couple of weeks, the world's attention was caught by predictions of the solar eclipse that took place on April 8, 2024. According to Wikipedia. "A total solar eclipse will take place across North America, dubbed the Great American Total Solar Eclipse by some media...This eclipse is the first total solar eclipse to be seen in Canada since February 26, 1979 and the first in the United States since July 11, 1991. This year's eclipse will be the only total solar eclipse in the 21st century where totality will be visible in Mexico, the US and Canada. It will also be the last total solar eclipse visible in the contiguous United States until August 23, 2044."

Predictions of solar eclipses in Ethiopia are as follows: Partial solar eclipse is expected to take place in Ethiopia in September 7, 2024. Partial lunar eclipse will take place in August 28, 2026. There will also be other partial and full solar eclipses in the following years up to 2029.

Many of us have never experienced solar eclipse in Ethiopia. And yet the very news of solar eclipses taking place elsewhere in the world are usually exciting to most of us. What makes solar eclipse so exciting? First is the hype surrounding the event in the media. A natural phenomenon like a volcanic eruption is seldom reported in the media and hardly claim the headlines for so many days as solar eclipses do. The second reason may be the fear that is triggered by news and reports of solar eclipses in the media, some of which are alarming as if the world was to end during the eclipse.

There must be a global sigh of relief once the eclipse is over and life returns to normal. The longest lasting eclipse had lasted a little more than 4 minutes but these were minutes filled with excitement and expectations. Most of us must be wishing in our hearts that "the end of the world" pessimism to end as soon as possible. Imagine what would happen if the eclipse lasted for too long, say one hour? That would simply be horrifying enough to inspire a Steven King novel, if at all life continues afterwards.



# Indepth

## Pretoria accord files positive progress amidst challenges

BY EYUEL KIFLU

The brutal and devastating two-year war between the federal government of Ethiopia and the Tigray Liberation Front (TPLF) has concluded with the signing of an AU-brokered peace deal in Pretoria, South Africa. The two warring parties signed a 12-point peace agreement, including a permanent ceasefire that was agreed upon on November 2, 2022. This accord has brought relative normalcy to the region as the guns have kept silent.

The agreement has brought great hope for all Ethiopians, including people in Tigray, who have been embroiled in the conflict for two years. Services such as banking, telecommunications, roads, healthcare, education, and humanitarian aid, which had been suspended in the region, have now been reinstated. Both sides have reported progress at different times about the implementation of the agreement.

On March 11, 2024, the first strategic review of the accord's implementation took place in Addis Ababa, where the African Union highlighted the progress made and identified areas that require further joint efforts to fully implement the agreement.

According to a report from the Government Communication Service two months ago, officials responsible for banking, telecommunications, roads, healthcare, education, and aid work services were present in Tigray within weeks after the signing of the agreement. Through the allocation of budgets and the deployment of experts, these officials enabled the resumption of basic services in the region.

Efforts have also been made to continue the education related services, which was interrupted during the conflict. Human resource and institutional capacity building, training on the new curriculum, and the establishment of university management boards have been undertaken. The education quality improvement program allocated 165.8 million Birr for this purpose, and the regional education office is now operational. Additionally, over 517 million Birr was disbursed to the region through the Ministry of Finance for resumption of implementation of the accord during the first and second quarters.

Service reports indicate that 1.46 billion Birr has been provided in coordination with non-governmental organizations working in education, and a plan of 111.08 million Birr has been allocated for school projects in the 2016/17 E.C. Furthermore, over 440 million Birr has been allotted for the reconstruction of educational institutions, and the Oromia region and Addis Ababa City administration have



contributed approximately 114 million Birr for the education sector.

The Government Communication Service has announced significant investments in the mineral development sector of the region. The sector office has been equipped with necessary materials to boost production, and an exhibition highlighting investment opportunities in the region was recently held at the Millennium Hall, funded by the federal government.

One notable development is the reopening of the Messebo Cement Factory, which is now operational. Efforts are also underway to support gold producers, both in factories and through traditional methods, with the initiation of mining activities.

In terms of financial support, a total of 4.9 billion birr has been allocated for the capital budget, along with 11.4 billion birr for regular expenses and 400 million birr for sustainable development goals. In total, 16.7 billion birr was allocated to the region in the fiscal year 2015/16 E.C.

Furthermore, four universities in the region received a total of 5.1 billion birr in funding. Development partners have also contributed significantly as they provided 1.7 billion birr to Tigray region post-peace agreement.

Through various means, 1.7 billion dollars were provided following the peace agreement, while over 565 million dollars were invested in rehabilitation and climate change projects through a regional office established by the Ministry of Finance.

The Ministry of Labor and Skills and Ministry of Women and Social Affairs have provided training and financial support to empower sector offices and institutions in the region. Additionally, more than 7 million USD has been

allocated to address gender-based violence in Tigray region.

Gebrehiwot Gebre Egzabiher (PhD), Commissioner of Disaster Risk Management of the Tigray Region Interim Administration, noted the relative peace prevailing in most areas of the region following the Pretoria Peace Agreement during a meeting with the Environmental Protection Agency. He highlighted the cessation of hostilities and the provision of limited humanitarian assistance, particularly in relation to food and nutrition. He expressed gratitude to the federal government and other humanitarian organizations for their support in this regard.

He added that the Federal Disaster Risk Management Commission has provided humanitarian assistance to displaced and drought-affected citizens four times in the region. He also mentioned that humanitarian aid was provided to 15 cities a fortnight ago in regions that lacked support from other partners. Currently, the partners can only support 20 percent of their capacity, but there are plans to increase it. Presently, there is an urgent requirement for food aid for approximately 4.5 million citizens. The commissioner emphasized that around 1.1 million citizens are displaced and sheltered in various camps, and efforts should be made to facilitate their resettlement.

Mikael Hagos, coordinator of the health extension and promotion team at Tigray State Health Bureau, announced that before the conflict, there were 2,500 health extension professionals in the region, and now 1,700 professionals who have received training to enhance their psychological capacity and regain their previous work spirit have returned to their positions.

According to Mikael, as a result of the

war, 80 percent of health facilities in the region were damaged to varying degrees. The office is working closely with the Ministry of Health to address these issues. In collaboration with the ministry, the office has provided training to trainers to restart the delayed health extension programs.

Medical services that need immediate response are being provided in areas such as schools and in people's gathering. Efforts are being made to identify and treat children affected by food shortages. Additionally, Mikael explained that work is underway to address urgent diseases such as malaria and cholera.

Haysh Subagadis, the Head of Tigray Youth Affairs Bureau, stated that young people in different districts are endeavoring to start their own businesses, especially in agriculture. He also mentioned that although their numbers are small, there are young people who have initiated different jobs with the support of humanitarian organizations.

Haysh said that the Ministry of Labor and Skills, Women and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Peace are providing support in various forms to create job opportunities and offer training to the youth. He added that the non-functioning federal government infrastructures, which used to create job opportunities for the youth, and the lack of new investments have posed challenges, but efforts are being made to address the unemployment issue.

While progress has been made in the implementation of the peace agreement, challenges still remain. The conflict has caused significant damage to infrastructure, disrupted the economy, and created a humanitarian crisis. Rebuilding and providing assistance to affected areas will take time and require sustained efforts from the government, humanitarian organizations, and international partners.



# Law & Politics

## Commission walks towards its objectives

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

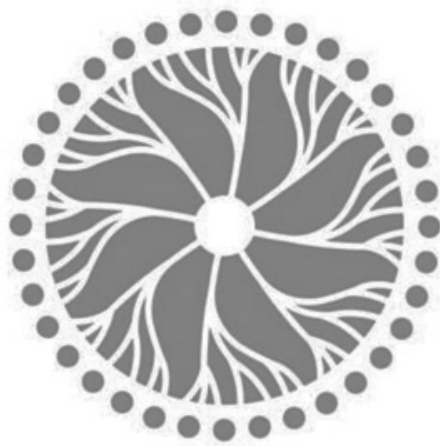
Conflicts, hate speeches, extremist thoughts, and many other negative actions have been the key reasons for many nations to be dismantled and disturbed their economic, political, and social progress. Such actions truly have unmatched impact on the overall social and political fabrics of any country. Some entities around the world use such motives to achieve their hoarded agenda by deliberately ignoring the aftermath of their activities. Though one could use those tools to get what it wants, it is clear that in the near future, the seeds of hate and extremism bear its unwanted fruits. Therefore, there must be a way to overcome such social challenges parallel with maintaining one's togetherness and unity by creating platforms to bring ideas to the table.

In the past few years, Ethiopian governments and the people have experienced the same thing as the country has been in continuous turbulence for a number of reasons. The country and its people have been going through some difficult and challenging times due to the bad seeds sown by some bodies. Those entities have intentionally created narratives to disturb the people and the government and stretch the nation between poles. So, every stakeholder in the country could not find the opportunity to come around the table and discuss the differences.

After the reformist government took power back in 2018, the people welcomed the new administration with full support hoping the new dawn for Ethiopia. The government again accepted the support from the people and engaged itself and promised to bring tangible success to the people and the country at large. At that time, the incumbent were in decisive moment to give response to bold challenges and continue as a country.

In good truth, there is always bumpy road when the country drives to a better form so that the government and all concerned parties along with the people played their role to get to their goals. After what had to be done is done, the government turned its face to bring about strengthen all-around unity through national dialogue and reconciliation. That essence of bringing unity led the country to find a way to achieve the target. In fact it is believed that the country has been waiting long to narrow differences and put patriotic personality in everyone's heart.

The current incumbent has done marvelous deed in relation to give due attention to the issue of national togetherness. To this regard, on the 29th of December 2021, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's House of Peoples' Representatives approved the establishment of the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission to realize its long awaited dream for the national consensus. As it was stated, one of the main objectives of establishing the commission is to pave the way for national consensus and keep the integrity of the country. From the inception of the commission, the people, government, and competitive parties hope that such move will bring positive and lasting changes all



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ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL  
DIALOGUE COMMISSION

over the country coupled with fostering nation's unity and togetherness.

In the past times, the government has shown its commitment to the realization of the dialogue by releasing a number of political prisoners, including opposition leaders and activists. Actions like this show the commitment of the incumbent for a genuine reconciliation, justice and inclusivity across the country. The commission has also been flexing his muscles to take some bold moves towards its objectives. Back in 2022, for instance, the commission has officially commenced its duties of holding discussion forums in relation to multiple issues of the nation to realize general consensus.

On top of that, on October 11, 2023, the commission has held a meeting with more than 60 official delegates of the international and diplomatic community at Skylight International Hotel, Addis Ababa. The meeting was planned to achieve some major objectives with the respected bodies including: briefing the recent developments and updates on what the Commission is up to, strengthening partnership and discussing the ways forward.

Eventually, international delegates and corps were well briefed and invited for a discussion on the updates and achievements of the commission so far. Accordingly, the delegates mentioned that they had built awareness regarding the core activities executed by the commission. Such discussion ultimately has the potential to show what the commission has been doing so far and creates a number of opportunities to strengthen partnerships with international bodies.

Besides, on February, 2024, the commission has concluded its series of virtual sessions with Ethiopian Diasporas. The sessions were also engaged with 154 participants residing in the West Coast of the United States of America. The discussion was all about ways to incorporate the diaspora in the national dialogue and provide diverse insights to enrich and bolster the ongoing process, according to a report from ENDC.

Having a stay previously with Ethiopian Press Agency, the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (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 aforementioned period. The Commissioner further stated that the agenda collection is to be implemented in the areas where the primary activities are fully completed.

"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.

Accordingly, in April 2024, the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) announced that over 130, 000 citizens have been involved in agenda collection, participants' identification, and other preliminary activities.

Just days ago, ENDC Spokesperson Tibebe Tadesse briefed the media. He stated that the commission has been undertaking various activities to identify dialogue participants and mapping about 1,300 districts across the country in a bid to make the process inclusive and participatory.

Tibebe also indicated participants' identification has been taking place in 940 districts across the country while the commission has finalized the two activities in 850 districts. Participants' identification would take place in the remaining districts in the coming weeks.

"Out of the 130, 000 citizens participated in the preliminary activities; more than 14,000 are selected to take part in the agenda collection for the final dialogue. The representatives are drawn from different states and segments of the society excluding Addis Ababa, federal institutions and Diaspora communities."

The spokesperson further highlighted that the commission has finalized the identification of representatives who will participate in the final dialogue in Afar, Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella, Harari, Sidama, South Western Ethiopia, South and Central Ethiopia states as well as in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa city administrations.

Participants' identification is taking place in Somali and Oromia states and after completing such activities, the commission would attain 70-75% of the total representatives that are required for the final dialogue. The remaining 25 to 30% will be filled by participants' identification and agenda collection activities in Amhara and Tigray states and preparation is underway to this end.

Currently, the commission finalized the preparations to launch the agenda input collection from public forums. In this regard, the state-level agenda collection forum is expected to take an average of eight to 10 days and it also needs preparations on labor force, logistics, security and other areas, he remarked.

**The commission has officially commenced its duties of holding discussion forums in relation to multiple issues of the nation to realize general consensus**



# Women in Focus

## Empowering Ethiopian women: Key to successful National Dialogue

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

It is clear that holding successful national dialogue is of critical importance for any country to address major fault lines, arrest differences, find amicable solutions and achieve national consensus.

With this same intention, the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission has been carrying out a number of important activities that are fundamental to hold successful negotiation and discussion forums among various segments of the society and key actors creating national consensus by identifying and addressing the longstanding inconveniences and disagreements.

Accordingly, the Commission is currently holding wide-ranging forums with various stakeholders and the general public to let participants elect their representatives who are engaged in agenda gathering and identification processes then after moving to the negotiation and discussion forums.

Meanwhile, the Ethiopian Women's Federation has announced that several efforts are being made to increase the participation of women in the national dialogue process.

According to Acting President of the Federation, Askale Lemma, a number of activities, including raising the awareness of women about the issue, are being made so that women's participation in the national dialogue process increases meaningfully.

As the Acting President told ENA, women empowerment works are being carried out to enhance the involvement of women not only as participants in the national dialogue processes; but also to enable them play key roles so that issues related to women can get due attention.

To this end, awareness raising activities are ongoing to sensitize women's organizations at all levels, from the federal to woreda levels by doing so to advocate for change.

In this regard, Ethiopian women's organizations that are operating in various parts of the country, especially in Dire Dawa, Oromia, Harari, Sidama, Southwest Ethiopia Peoples' and Somali states as well as other areas, are working in cooperation with the Federation, Askale added.

Stating that women from all levels of the federation have been selected to partake at the dialogue as moderators in the dialogue process and notifying the Commission, Askale said: "we are working hard to amplify women's agenda."

According to the Acting President, it is women who will benefit the most from the National Dialogue; thus, the works that have started to make the national dialogue a success will be further strengthened.

Oromia Women's Federation Vice President Etsgenet Haile on her part said that they are actively working to make women's agenda be better heard and put women's



### The role of Ethiopian women in the national dialogue process is crucial for achieving sustainable peace and development

agenda a priority in the national dialogue. To this effect, sufficient awareness raising works have been carried out in the State through organizing women's organizations into seven clusters. What is more, they are working closely with the National Dialogue Commission in the process of identifying partners and participants.

Dire Dawa City Administration Women's Association President Iftu Abbas also stated that women are the most prone to conflicts and disputes. They are the ones who are affected ruthlessly during wars. "Thus, we, women, should actively participate in the National Dialogue process to ensure lasting peace," she said.

She said that various activities are being

done by the administration so that women can understand the purpose and goal of the national consultation properly and become active participants.

According to her, women should have an active role in peace building activities and should be active participant of the process. She also noted that several activities are being carried out to ensure women's awareness about the National Dialogue.

Ethiopia has witnessed the active participation of women in the National Dialogue process, as they strive to contribute to peace building and the development of their country.

Various sources are indicating that women activists in Ethiopia have been advocating for their meaningful inclusion in the dialogue processes, recognizing the importance of their perspectives and experiences in shaping a more inclusive and sustainable future.

One significant initiative that supports Ethiopian women in their efforts to foster meaningful participation in the country's dialogue processes is the project aimed at promoting the inclusion of women. This project recognizes the need to address the political, security, economic, and socio-cultural barriers that women face in Ethiopia.

It is important to acknowledge that Ethiopian women face various challenges in their pursuit of active participation in the national dialogue process. However, despite these obstacles, women in Ethiopia have shown resilience and determination in advocating for their rights and contributing to the

dialogue process.

By empowering women and providing them with the necessary resources and platforms, this project aims to amplify their voices and ensure their active involvement in decision-making processes.

In 2022, Ethiopia held its first-ever national dialogue, which aimed to address historical and present issues faced by the country. This dialogue provided a critical platform for exploring the opportunities and challenges of inclusive dialogue processes. Ethiopian women actively participated in this dialogue, sharing their perspectives, concerns, and recommendations for a more inclusive and peaceful society.

The role of Ethiopian women in the national dialogue process is crucial for achieving sustainable peace and development. Their participation brings diverse perspectives, experiences, and solutions to the table, enriching the dialogue and ensuring that the voices of all segments of society are heard. By recognizing and addressing the barriers faced by women, Ethiopia can create an environment that promotes gender equality, inclusivity, and social progress.

Indeed, the National Dialogue process in Ethiopia holds immense significance in addressing the country's complex challenges and fostering sustainable peace and development. Within this critical process, the participation of Ethiopian women is essential to ensure that the dialogue achieves the expected outcomes and leads to lasting positive change.

To ensure the meaningful participation of Ethiopian women in the national dialogue process, it is essential to address the barriers that hinder their engagement. These barriers may include social norms, cultural practices, lack of access to resources, and limited representation in decision-making bodies. By creating an enabling environment that empowers women to participate actively and meaningfully, Ethiopia can unlock the full potential of its female population in shaping a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Without the active involvement of women, the national dialogue may fall short of its potential to address the diverse needs and perspectives of the Ethiopian population. Ethiopian women bring unique insights, experiences, and priorities to the national dialogue table, enriching the discussions and shaping policies that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all citizens.

Ethiopian women play a significant role in the National Dialogue process. Their active participation and advocacy for meaningful inclusion contribute to the development of inclusive policies, strategies, and solutions. By empowering women and addressing the challenges they face, Ethiopia can harness the full potential of its female population and build a more peaceful and prosperous future for all its citizens.



# Society

## Nurturing tolerance, embracing peace

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

Eid Al-Fitr, also known as the “Festival of Breaking the Fast” is a significant religious holiday celebrated by Muslims around the world. This holiday marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan, a time of fasting, prayer and reflection for Muslims around the world. Here in Ethiopia, the holiday holds a great significance for all Muslim communities.

Here in Ethiopia, Eid al Fitr is celebrated all over the country with unique cultural traditions and customs that reflect the cultural values of the society. Ethiopians mark the day with a blend of cultural practices and religious rituals that are unique to Ethiopia. Wearing special traditional attire, giving Zakat al Fitr, sharing meals and performing prayers are common in the month of Ramadan and during the holiday.

After one month of Ramadan fasting all Muslim communities have celebrated Eid al Fitr yesterday colorfully, and several Ethiopian Muslims are also seen expressing their gratitude to Allah and expressing the value of holidays to further practice local cultures and togetherness.

*The Ethiopian Herald* had interviewed Deputy Head of Ethiopia Digital Diplomacy Zayd Zeydan to hear his reflection about the role of religious and cultural holidays in bringing people of various backgrounds and enjoying common values.

According to him, Ethiopia is a land where several people with their distinct cultures, religions and identities are living in harmony. It is a land where the Christians live in harmony with their Muslim counterparts.

“Holidays are special times where these people are reflecting their togetherness. Eid al Fitr, which has several key religious aspects, is a true example of this.

Ethiopia as a land of multitudes has several cultural, public and religious holidays. And these special days have a significant role in unifying the public and express their togetherness. Eid al Fitr is one of these holidays where the Muslim community shows their love and compassion for others by giving to the less fortunate. The same is true for their Christian counterparts who always show love and compassion to their Muslim counterparts.”

This year’s Ramadan fasting month was unique for it coincides with the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians’ Abiy fasting month. The followers of the two religions had shown their love and harmony through fasting and prayer. This was a special experience.

Every fasting day has significance to all Muslim and Christian communities of Ethiopia. Through fasting we were able to experience humbleness and feel the suffering others. While celebrating Eid al Fitr, even during the month of Ramadan every Muslim had been showing kindness to the needy people. This culture of helping one another is a common practice among



**embracing the culture of tolerance, respecting history and loving one another irrespective of cultural or religious difference should be their banner**

the Muslim communities. This can take in the form of charitable donations, providing food and clothing to those people in need.

“Whenever there is an extra product, food or cloth it is a must to share some portion of it to others who are in need of our support. This is due to the fact that happiness should be a shared value. A given Muslim cannot be happy while his/her neighbor is suffering from hunger. One cannot enjoy Eid al Fitr while someone on the street is experiencing hunger. This is what the Creator needs from all humankind. However, this practice should not be a seasonal experience. It must not be experienced either in times of fasting or holidays. It should be day-to-day activities of all humankind.”

According to Zayd, in addition to enjoying sharing, Eid al Fitr is also a time where people practice forgiveness and reconciliation. “The month of Ramadan serves as a reminder of the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation to build strong and healthy relationships among the society. After all, what is the value of fasting and prayer without experiencing forgiveness? We, Ethiopians should embrace forgiveness and reconciliation as a means to ensure peace.”

Zaid also said that Ethiopia is a land of multitudes where people with different cultural backgrounds. These cultural and religious backgrounds should serve as a bridge to narrow all forms of differences. “Religious teachings and practices should serve as a means to bring peace and love. The more we practice the culture of forgiveness and nurture tolerance the more we can create heaven on earth; the more we cultivate love within our heart the more peaceful environment we can create for ourselves and the coming generation.

Whenever we experience earthly peace we can also feel what heavenly peace means.”

According to him, the Muslim communities have an age-old culture of supporting people who are in need. This culture must extend to all human kinds that need our support. “The Muslim communities have already displayed compassion and support to the needy within the past weeks of fasting. This support should keep its momentum on other days as well.”

Emphasizing on the value of giving and helping people in need and practicing compassion, in his message to the young generation, Zaid said that embracing the culture of tolerance, respecting history and loving one another irrespective of cultural or religious difference should be their banner.

In connection to 1445th Eid al Fitr Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council President, Haji Ibrahim Tufa has conveyed a message to all Muslim communities to mark the day prioritizing unity and brotherhood.

According to him, the Eid al Fitr is a special day that will cement togetherness among the society. In this regard, Muslims should practice the culture of nurturing peace and compassion.

Despite occasional tension and conflicts in the past, Ethiopians have a long tradition of respect and tolerance for different religious beliefs. Interfaith marriages and friendships are common, and religious holidays and traditions are often celebrated by people of all faiths.

Ethiopia is a shining example of how people from different religious backgrounds can live in harmony. The country’s history of religious coexistence serves as a model for the rest of the world, showing that it is possible for people of different faiths to coexist and thrive together.





## Published Weekly in Collaboration with Haramaya University

### HU's training on decision support system for agro technology transfer

BY DIRRIBA TESHOME

In the last week of March, Haramaya University (HU) School of Natural Resources Management and Environmental Sciences organized a training program on Decision Support System for Agro-technology Transfer (DSSAT) for Crop Simulation Modeling, and Impact of Climate Risks on Agricultural Production Systems collaboratively with the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and Vice President for Academic Affairs Office.

HU academic staff, Abdisa Alemu, pointed out that climate change and environmental degradation have been causing severe damage to agricultural production. "With the world's population growing, responsible use of resources is essential to meet the increasing demand for food."

It has been noted that factors like climate change and variability, environmental conditions, and their long-term implications on food security and environmental sustainability are becoming increasingly important. To better understand crop response mechanisms, computer simulation models that encompass the soil/plant/atmosphere system are playing a pivotal role. These models enable us to predict crop performance, resource utilization, and environmental impacts across diverse environments and management scenarios.

He said that DSSAT training equips academic staff and postgraduate students with skills to navigate the challenges of climate change.



"User-oriented simulation models simplify optimizing crop growth, assessing climate change impact, and providing adaptable management scenarios."

Likewise, trainer from the School, Girma Asefa, stated that the training program aimed to provide participants with additional skills and knowledge to effectively apply a comprehensive model in addressing real-world agricultural challenges. Specifically, the program focused on equipping participants with the skills to utilize the Windows-based Decision Support System for Agro-technology Transfer (DSSAT) Version 4.8.2 software. The goal was to familiarize the 38 staff members and postgraduate students of the University with an advanced computer model for simulating crop growth and yield, as well as soil and plant water, nutrient, and carbon dynamics.

DSSAT has played a crucial role in enhancing agricultural production by integrating data on soil characteristics, weather patterns, and crop

management practices. This has enabled farmers to optimize fertilizer application and planting dates, leading to a precision agriculture approach that has significantly increased yields. As a result, food security and economic stability have been ensured.

Trainee Tasisa Temesgen, also expressed that it effectively addressed the specific technological obstacles researchers have faced in both research and teaching activities. DSSAT has played a crucial role in enhancing agricultural production by integrating data on soil characteristics, weather patterns, and crop management practices. This has enabled farmers to optimize fertilizer application and planting dates, leading to a precision agriculture approach that has significantly increased yields. As a result, food security and economic stability have been ensured.

The model plays a significant role in improving crop yield under climate change. It provides valuable insights into potential impacts, guides

the development of adaptation strategies, assists in decision-making, and facilitates the optimization of crop management practices.

Another trainee, Dine Rashid, from the School, expressed that he had the opportunity to attend a crucial training session that helped him develop basic knowledge and skills on how to analyze and manage different data. These skills help him conduct cutting-edge research to solve the community's problems in his field.

Likewise, other trainees explained that they gained an in-depth understanding of the DSSAT-CSM model and its applications. This knowledge can be applied to enhance farm crop management, boost agricultural productivity, and promote sustainability through research or direct engagement with farmers. In addition, this training can also help improve the learning and teaching process.

In his closing remarks, Solomon Estifanos, Associate Dean of the College of Agriculture and Environmental Science, noted: "The knowledge and skills offered on the training will enable participants to make significant contributions to the scientific community and society as a whole. All the trainees need to continue their pursuit of excellence, to remain curious, and to apply what they have learned to their research and professional endeavors."

It took place from March 27 to 29, 2024, at College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences hall, HU Public and International Relations Directorate reported.