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Investors pinning hopes on revised Nat'l horticulture strategy

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

Apart from the abundant natural resource endowments with vast agro-ecological areas suitable for range of floricultural crops, Ethiopia's horticulture sector not

yet yielding the required result due to poor infrastructure, shortage of skilled manpower, finance, and security challenges.

To improve the productivity in the sphere, the government and stakeholders have revised the previous national horticulture

strategy that was not successful for lacking timeliness, failed to engage private sector and ensure technological advancement.

Investors engaged in the horticulture sector have also expressed their major concerns in the sector.

See Investors pinning... page 4

Metropolitan to collect 230 bln Birr tax revenues

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Some 230 billion Birr tax revenue would be collected in the capital in 2024/25 fiscal year, Addis Ababa Mayor disclosed.

Addis Ababa Revenues Bureau hosted the 2nd Phase tax revenue mobilization program yesterday.

At the event, Mayor Adanech Abebie said that the metropolitan city has planned to collect 230 billion Birr revenue from tax in 2024/35 fiscal year making use of technologies and modern approaches.

See Metropolitan to collect... page 4



Ethiopia's BRICS Membership to drive economic growth: UNDP Advisor

ADDIS ABABA(ENA)-Ethiopia could successfully capitalize on BRICS membership to drive economic growth and development, a development advisor at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Gedion Jalata told ENA.

See Ethiopia's BRICS ... page 4

GLI spurs regional, global connectivity: PEHA

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

MODJO - Ethiopia's the Green Legacy Initiative (GLI) has a huge contribution to speeding up national, regional and global connectivity, said the Public Enterprises Holding and Administration (PEHA).

This was disclosed when the PEHA staff with pertinent institutions undertaken tree plantation program in Modjo area of Oromia state yesterday.

Speaking at the occasion, the PEHA Director General Habtamu Hailemichael stated that the GLI has been positively changing the working culture of Ethiopians.

The program would highly contribute capacitating renewable energy, ensuring food security, mitigating climate and

See GLI spurs regional ... page 4



Hope graduates 388 TVET students

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA---Hope Enterprises graduated about 388 students in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programa

The enterprises had provided TVET training during last six months and graduated 388 students in four programs such as building electrical installation, hotel kitchen operation, basic apparel production and basic automotive technology in short term training scheme, it was learnt.

During the graduating ceremony, Hope Enterprises Executive Director Tilahun Abegaz said that the enterprises carried out its 35th graduation ceremony and out of 388 graduates, 204 are male and while 184 are female ones.

“The company offers skill training for the disadvantages and vulnerable youths in a bid to make these individuals self-reliant through hands on training.”

Tilahun stated that the enterprises have been creating educational opportunities for children starting from lower grade to university level in its selected schools and colleges in Oromia, Amhara, Sidama, Benishangul Gumuz and Gambella states.

Conveying message to the graduates, Executive director said that they should keep on learning and honing skills throughout their life.”

Hope Enterprises Addis Ababa Branch Manager, Mintesint Kasaye on his part noted that the enterprises are feeding and teaching 5,000 children nationwide as well.

“Our company is doing various development works on the basis of the low economic capacity of the society to achieve the nation’s anti-poverty struggle, produce qualified and competitive professionals in the market and reduce unemployment problem in the nation.”

During the past one year and six months by collaborative work with Freedom Fund in a pilot project named Trive pilot project about 120 female migrant returnees have been trained and connected with employees’ organization thereby changing their life conditions and skills as well.

Institute pushes for Nat’l AI adoption policy

• Commences third batch AI Summer Camp

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

ADDISABABA- The approval of National Artificial Intelligence Policy, the first for Ethiopia, by the Council of Ministers is a critical step to develop AI technology in Ethiopia, Ethiopian Artificial Intelligence Institute (EAIL) Director-General disclosed.

This was noted yesterday during the official commencement of the third batch AI Summer Camp 2024 training of talented youths by EAIL.

On the occasion, EAIL Director General Worku Gachena (PhD) disclosed that Ethiopia is extensively working to develop AI technology.

National AI Policy is essential for the development of the sector; Worku said adding after two years preparation, the National AI Policy was approved on last June by the Council of Ministers.

The approval of the AI Policy is a critical step for Ethiopia to move forward in AI. Strategies and frameworks were also



Worku Gachena (PhD)

prepared by the institute along with the policy to create conducive ecosystem for AI, he added.

Meanwhile, Worku stated parallel to creating AI institute, adopting AI policies and strategies; Ethiopia is focusing on developing human resource on the AI technology. The AI Summer Camp, started three years ago by the institute aims to

cultivate talents of the youth generation so as to develop skilled human resource in the AI technology.

“During the first round, the institute accepted only 13 youths and it developed its capacity during the second round to accept 30 youths” Worku stated. The Director General added that in the third round AI Summer Camp this year, the institute accepts 200 youths. During their stay for two months, theoretical and practical courses on python, IOT, machine learning and robotics will be given for the trainees, he stated.

The institute prepares favorable training places and materials for the trainees and over 40 professionals based in Ethiopia and abroad will participate in providing the training, it was learnt. Worku added the 200 youths were selected from 3,000 youth applicants for the third round AI Summer Camp and he urged the youth who received the opportunity to develop their talents to become the next influencers in the AI technology.



Institution underscores youth’s immense role in climate action

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – A US-based institution dubbed Serve Global said that it has been providing empowerment and skill-building platforms for the youth to capacitate their huge role in climate change response to meet their dreams and national development aspirations.

Serve Global held a youth-led workshop yesterday on tree planting and wetland restoration as a mitigation response through homegrown conservation knowledge and practices.

Institution Deputy Country Director Tariku Negash told the Ethiopian Press Agency that the institution is facilitating structures and supportive platforms to nurture skilled, responsible youth who aspire to contribute not only on the national development issues but also regional and global issues including climate change.

Hailing the Green Legacy Initiative which would be exemplary for other countries, he emphasized that extensive intervention, sensitizing forums awareness creation should be prioritized to bring about a profound outcome on the youth towards tackling the recurrent drought, conflict and

in other threats.

To date, there are over 3,000 youth in their network and out of them about 500 youth are currently contributing their role in various community issues such as on climate change, education, health among other interventions, Tariku added.

On his part, Ethiopian Institute of Water Resources Lecturer and Researcher Taye Alemayehu (PhD) said that it is highly critical to invest in the youth to contribute their immense role to the environmental protection that pays in return to the overall development through utilizing the resources wisely.

Taye (PhD) has also elaborated that water is a great threat if not well managed and utilized, so the community needs to work with a great enthusiasm to reverse the water access scenario in the metropolis and elsewhere through research-based engagements on river sides, ground water and others.

He said: “Water is not merely a precious resource but also social, economic, cultural and political good.”

After thoroughly discussing the ongoing upgrading activities and development of the metropolis, he emphasized the need to

promote water management systems to meet the ever increasing demands by enhancing the productivity of wetlands through well-planned urban design.

Mentioning the pressing concerns such as climate variability and water stress, he elucidated that the country’s water quality management interventions and initiatives need to be highly strengthened to fight pollution.

Water quality issues is not something that one institution does, it needs collaborative efforts of the government, stakeholders and other pertinent actors to ensure water security and sustainable development, he noted.

Eco-justice Ethiopia Founder and Executive Director Eskedar Awgichew remarked that aligning homegrown conservation mechanisms would be of significant on environmental conservation to ensure communities benefit.

In alignment with their mission, Eskedar stated that they are working on international environmental negotiation forums, environmental protection institutions and youth across the country on the ways to advance green economy management systems.

Editorial

Swimming with the tide

Rolling out meticulously chalked-out national goals and throwing one's full weight behind their attainment warrant foolproof of a rosy future down the road. All the more so, if the set objectives align with continental and global thrusts for the better. Swimming with the tide helps a nation gain enthusiasm and garner support.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) entails 17 agendas the UN put to see to the furtherance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) within the timeframe up to 2030. No poverty, zero hunger, good health & well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water & sanitation, affordable clean energy, decent work, economic growth, industry, innovations, and infrastructure are but to mention a few.

It is to be recalled that in 2015 before the ball of SDG got rolling, the global community and the UN had opted to emulate and scale up Ethiopia's best experiences as well as registered achievements in the health sector.

The entailments of SDG mentioned above, in one way or another, are streamlined with Ethiopia's development plans and economic reforms. Activities to the required effect have been underway.

Towards poverty reduction, palpable works are undertaken by the incumbent. Ethiopia has turned a sought-after investment and tourist destination. Tapping inventors on the back and promoting startups are made a point.

When it comes to creating job opportunities, ways are facilitated to work here and abroad provided their safety and security are ensured. Agreements are inked with various countries. To slash the level of poverty, putting in place a program entitled Yelema Turufat citizens are made to produce nutritious foods optimizing things in the constraint of space. Currently, citizens are benefiting themselves by engaging in poultry and gardening. Currently what has become a concern is surplus yields but not a dearth of harvest.

In its multifaceted program of buttressing product and productivity Ethiopia has become successful. As such it has managed to unchain itself from poverty syndrome and ensure self-sufficiency in food. Coming up with bumper harvest in wheat and rice, among others, it has become successful. If in case of shortage surfaces, it has a salted-away products for ready use to parry disastrous that beg for emergency actions.

About rendering a quality education key to underpinning product and productivity the country is striving to improve teachers' efficiency at every echelon, facilitating benefits to teachers, enabling research activities, and barring doors on cheating. Facts on the ground show things are promising.

Regarding ensuring gender equality and promoting women's empowerment from the onset of the reform various policy amendments were made. Conspicuous steps are taken to ensure the 50:50 proportions starting from the PM cabinet. Accordingly, women in the country are displaying their caliber as their male counterparts if not better.

Concerning the supply of potable water and sanitation, outlaying a huge budget, the government is striving to reach every corner of the country with the supply of clean water and to build a large number of latrines where shortages are sensed.

In its green development initiative, Ethiopia is displaying a commendable feat by exhibiting a renewable electric source whose boons go beyond its perimeter. Here it suffices to mention the Grand Renaissance Dam and Koisha hydropower dams. Given these facts, it is not hard to surmise that apart from being an ardent proponent of environment protection, it is also working as an ally in catering to the demands of other countries for renewable energy.

The enumeration above is but to afford a chink to Ethiopia's push to the required effect. Otherwise, it is active in all of the 17 branches.

The cumulative effect no doubt will make the country a looked-forward country in Africa for habitation. Here, it is worth recalling Addis' Corridor Development Project.

There is no gainsaying that Ethiopia needs all due support from stakeholders for the far-reaching and multifaceted development activities it is undertaking.

It is against the aforementioned backdrop Addis Ababa is selected to Host the Preparatory Conference for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development from July 22-26, 2024. The Fourth International Conference that will be held in Spain in 2025 will feed on the abovementioned one. It is to be recalled that Ethiopia hosted the 3rd FFD in 2015, and the Conference endorsed the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) as the most ambitious global financial framework to mobilize resources for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals and means for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Opinion

Agenda selection a critical step in the process of national dialogue in Ethiopia

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

Agenda selection is a critical step in the national dialogue process, as it determines the issues that will be discussed and addressed. An inclusive, transparent, and strategic approach to selecting the agenda ensures that the dialogue is relevant, comprehensive, and capable of addressing the root causes of conflict and division. Here's a detailed guide on how to approach agenda selection in national dialogue:

Conducting initial consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, including government officials, opposition parties, civil society organizations, ethnic and religious groups, youth and women's groups, and marginalized communities could be the first step towards agenda selection.

Identifying historical grievances and longstanding issues that have contributed to conflict and division is of paramount importance in agenda selection.

Addressing urgent and current crises, such as political instability, economic challenges, or human rights abuses could be several of the core issues in agenda selection.

Considering the future aspirations of different groups, including visions for governance, development, and social cohesion pays off in the long run of a national dialogue.

Thematic topics might include constitutional reform, governance structures, electoral processes, power-sharing arrangements, and decentralization.

Discussions could cover economic policies, resource distribution, development strategies, and addressing inequalities.

These might include social justice, human rights, ethnic relations, education, health, and social services.

Focus may be made on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration of combatants, security sector reform, and addressing violence.

Consider environmental policies, climate change adaptation, and natural resource management.

Identifying issues that require immediate attention and resolution to stabilize the situation in a country could also be considered in a greater detail.

Set long-term goals and issues that need to be addressed over an extended period is an important step in the process of agenda selection for a national dialogue.

It is also important to decide on the sequence in which issues will be addressed, ensuring that immediate concerns are tackled first, followed by medium- and long-term issues.

Ensuring that the agenda reflects the interests and concerns of all segments of society, especially marginalized and underrepresented groups must be carefully considered.

Implementing measures to ensure that issues affecting women, youth, and other marginalized groups are prominently featured on the agenda selection will make the agenda selection process more inclusive.

Communicating the selected agenda clearly to the public, explaining why certain issues were chosen and explaining how they will be addressed is an important task to be accomplished by the media houses in a country.

Establishing mechanisms for ongoing feedback from the public and stakeholders throughout the dialogue process makes the agenda selection and the entire dialogue

process more participatory and transparent.

It is also very useful to keep the agenda flexible and adaptable to incorporate new issues that may arise during the dialogue process.

Regularly reviewing and preparation of the agenda to ensure it remains relevant and comprehensive.

Ensuring that there is a legal and institutional framework to support the agenda-setting process, providing legitimacy and structure is also no less important.

Forming a dedicated committees or working groups to handle specific themes or issues on the agenda can make the agenda selection process more meaningful.

Given the above points set on agenda selection the author wishes to further expound on the elemental aspects of agenda selection in a dialogue process to be conducted in Ethiopia.

For more than three decades and probably even for half a century, Ethiopia and Ethiopians have been grappling with multiple sets of challenges that needed a meaningful and applicable solutions. The nation was pushed into internal and external wars that resulted in the loss of hundreds and thousands of lives, public and private property.

The nation was engulfed into ethnic conflicts that sporadic civil strife that spread a spirit of animosity, revenge and hatred among the people of Ethiopia. This has resulted in the multiplication of the scale of poverty and destitution in the country with heavy dependence on food aid and galloping foreign debt.

The recurrent drought and adverse climatic conditions that were triggered by climate change has made the country one of the 20 vulnerable countries on climate change across the world. Food insecurity and drought triggered internal displacements and a considerable level of disruption of family fabric in Ethiopia.

Periodic epidemics in the form of water borne diseases, malaria, malnutrition induced illness, and more recently COVID-19, and HIV and AIDS have seriously affected the state of health in the country. Inadequate health infrastructure and shortage of well-trained medical professionals have seriously affected prevention and control of the top 10 killer diseases in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia faces a variety of political challenges and obstacles that have significant implications for its stability and development of the country and which remained unsolved for ages.

Ethiopia's system of ethnic based federalism enshrined in the current constitution of the country, where regional states are largely based on ethnicity, has led to competition and conflict among different ethnic groups. Misconceptions on the merits of the federal order and misinterpretation of the constitution along with shortfalls in the provisions of the constitution itself have led to serious political misunderstanding among political parties in the country.

Persistent ethnic tensions and violence have been a major challenge, exacerbating divisions and leading to displacement and loss of lives. There is no better example than the war that has been going on the northern part of the country over the previous two years.

The political landscape is fragmented with numerous parties, many of which are aligned along ethnic lines, making consensus and unified action difficult. In addition, deep political polarization between different factions and parties undermines efforts at national unity and reconciliation.

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



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Ethiopia's BRICS...

For months now, Ethiopia has officially become the newest member of the BRICS group of nations, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa among other new members.

According to Gedion, this historic achievement is set to unlock a myriad of advantages for Ethiopia particularly, in facilitating its import and export activities without the constant reliance on some foreign currency, a longstanding challenge for the country.

One of the primary advantages of BRICS membership is the establishment of the New Development Bank, the idea of using local currencies for trade with the group of countries in this bloc.

This could help Ethiopia in terms of diversifying currencies for its export and also import trade endeavors, Gedion explained.

He further stated that it is beneficial for Ethiopia as it could give the ability to conduct trade and transactions using non-dollar currencies, Gedion said, adding that will greatly ease the financial constraints the country has faced for years.

For the advisor, the move opens up new avenues for growth and collaboration.

"... BRICS is opening the New Development Bank, which means it is coming up with a new currency. So this could help Ethiopia in terms of its export and also import"

Gedion highlighted that Ethiopia's membership in BRICS is a testament to its growing global influence and importance.

"Being accepted as a BRICS member is a remarkable achievement that underscores Ethiopia's standing as a key player in global economics and diplomacy. This will strengthen

Ethiopia's negotiating power and allow it to forge closer ties with other emerging economies, to the benefit of its people," he revealed.

Furthermore, Gedion emphasized the opportunity for Ethiopia to learn from the development experiences of other BRICS members, particularly China.

"China managed to lift over 700 million people out of poverty in less than 30 years. This can be, I think, a good lesson for African countries," he said.

"I think, so many benefits as members of the BRICS country. As you know, collaboration between these countries is enhancing trade, as well as investment and development assistance. Coming from BRICS countries to BRICS countries will be a priority than other countries."

Gedion also highlighted the significance of the

partnership between Ethiopia and China, noting that it has been growing ever stronger.

Sharing his view on infrastructure development, Gedion believes that Ethiopia can greatly benefit from the expertise of BRICS countries.

"We can learn a lot from China, as well as soft infrastructure like education, health, and other sectors of the economy," he stated.

As Ethiopia embarks on this new chapter as a BRICS member, the country is poised to reap significant rewards that will strengthen its economy, enhance its global influence, and improve the lives of its citizens.

Moreover, Ethiopia's membership in this emerging bloc is being considered as a historic development that marks a crucial step in the East African nation's journey towards sustainable development and prosperity.

GLI spurs regional...

creating conducive environment for tourism, improving land fertility, generating foreign exchange earnings and others.

The country has been implementing the initiative beyond carbon financing considering national and continental outcome. The program is one of the initiatives that a country has planned to improve lives of future generation, he reiterated.

Furthermore, Ethiopia has been planting tree seedlings in neighboring countries aiming to strengthen regional ties and to showcase future betterment. Moreover, the program has an immense benefit realizing national, regional and global connectivity, he added.

According to Habtamu, since the launching of the initiative, country's forest coverage reached 23.6% from 3%. It not only increased

forest coverage, but also create several jobs.

For his part, the Ethiopian Toll Road Enterprise (ETRE) Executive Director Mustefa Abasimel said that the effort requires not only planting, but also preservation and protection to ensure 100% survival. The enterprise is committed to strengthen facilitating the overall economic development and sustaining the safety and beautification of

roads.

The ETRE has organized over 500 farmers in the locality to preserve and protect these planted tree seedlings. The initiative is fundamental to create resilient and sustainable economic transformation, he said.

The GLI is a showcase for Ethiopia's commitment to multifaceted response to the climate change impacts, Mustefa noted.

Investors pinning...

FRI-EL Ethiopia Farming and Processing Plc grows cotton, vegetables, fruits, spices as well as oil seeds on 3,000 hectares of land and exports to Somaliland, Djibouti and Saudi Arabia countries.

The company Business Operations Manager Fasica Seyoum said that lack of skilled manpower, and infrastructural problems such as power cutout are affecting productivity. Therefore company is forced to use solar energy and fuel for generator is extravagant.

Moreover, broker's intervention and lack of integration among institutions such as TVET is other difficulty in the sector, he stated.

Thus, the company expects that revised strategy would solve the aforementioned challenges. In addition, the government needs to allow companies to import cold chain logistics in bulk as it is essential in horticulture sector, Fasica suggested.

The effective implementation of the strategy would allow the nation to ensure food security, enhance export capacity, substitute import and create more jobs, he added.

Ababayew Gebreselassie, from Abyssinia Horti Company, which started operation since 2019, exports flower for countries in Europe, US, Japan and far east. Nonetheless, it has stopped operating due to instability in the Amhara State.

As to her, the company has been operating without power for two years and much hasn't been changed despite

the request to concerned institutions. One of its sister company located in Oromia State has operated more than 14 years exporting to various countries across the globe despite insecurity in the area.

"Compared with coffee production, flower production has been developing with small lands. Had it been given vast land, its contribution to the economy would have been higher." Thus, she expressed her hope that the revised strategy would solve the major constraints in the sector and enable them to return to business.

Although the country has over 27,000 hectares of land occupied by horticulture sector, only the 21,000 hectares is developed, State Minister of Agriculture Sofia Kassa (PhD) said adding that the rest is not developed due to various reasons.

Though the security problem in Amhara State interrupted business, few companies have partially gone operational recently. "The nation could earn about 100 million USD if it had used the lands for the production of horticultural crops effectively."

The revised national horticulture strategy is expected to solve the major challenges in the horticulture. The 2017-2026 E/C strategy, which is prepared with the contribution of all essential actors, will be carried out with the budget of 24 billion USD gained from government, partners and private sector.

Ethiopian Horticulture Producer Exporters Association (EHPEA), Executive Director Tewodros Zewdie, mentioned that the revised strategy would play a significant role in addressing agro

logistical challenges, improving good agricultural practice and creating more skilled manpower.

Besides expanding the opportunity to become competitive at international level, it would provide agro-processing input, enhance economic contribution and improve financial and input provision.

With regard to cold chain logistic, the association has undertaken serious talks with different stakeholders to address the problem in no time. Similarly, in relation to importing electrical cold truck, it is performing activities to come up with better solution.

The horticulture sector is generating more than five hundred million annually, which could be doubled with more land provision. Tewodros noted that discussion is being held with concerned bodies to return the companies in conflict areas to business.

Similarly, efforts would be exerted to develop fruits and vegetable crops hugely. "With the increasing of the world population, the demand for fruits and vegetables would likely to increase. Thus, as a country with rich potential for fruits and vegetables production, Ethiopia has huge potential," he said.

The revised national horticultural strategy, which will be operational soon, is said to pinpoint strategic areas that is hindering the nation from gaining the right amount of benefit. It would also identify potential corridor for fruit and vegetable production, build horticulture parks, and expand agri-commercialization and cluster, among others.

Metropolitan to collect...

The city has been carrying out various development activities in reducing inflation, constructing markets and the Adowa Victory Memorial Museum, and creating some 300,000 jobs during the just ended fiscal year, she mentioned.

The city administration has completed a total of 18,091 projects, excluding the corridor development, during the aforesaid period, she noted.

Thought the revenue showcasing progress so far, the city administration has not adequately collected revenues compared with that of the city's potentials, according to Adanech.

Addis Ababa Revenues Bureau Head Adem Nuri on his part said that the city has been implementing various activities to improve the tax revenue collection mechanisms and realize competitive city at the international level.

Using the past year fruitful outcomes as a benchmark, the Bureau has planned to collect 230 billion Birr revenue from tax in the 2024/25 budget year.

Adem noted that the collection of tax earnings increased by an average of 15 billion Birr (23%) since the reform. Similarly, 35% tax collection is recorded in the past two years alone and the Bureau achieved a revenue over 147 billion Birr (97%) in the just ended Ethiopian fiscal year.

He further stated that the main secret of this remarkable result is procedural amendment, awareness creation, the due emphasis given by the mayor towards improving tax collection, and the likes.

"Though the Bureau strives to modernize the tax revenue collection system, corruption and malpractices are serious challenges that hinder the bureau from achieving more. To end the problem, the Bureau is working hard in collaboration with concerned bodies," Adem stressed.

Opinion

Opportunities, considerations in Ethiopia's pursuit of seaport

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

In the wake of the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Ethiopia and Somaliland, people from all walks of life have been over and over again tossing around their ideas, feelings and thoughts.

It should be borne in mind that the Government Communications Service (GCS) of Ethiopia, in the recent past on the subject of the issue, said the MoU signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland includes wide scopes of cooperation in social, economic, political, and military fields. It enables Ethiopia to gain a military base and access commercial maritime services through reciprocity and a lease agreement.

The comprehensive MoU for partnership and cooperation reflects efforts made by the two parties to further strengthen their friendship and respond to the historic questions of both parties. The new agreement will facilitate a strategic partnership in a sustainable manner based on clear details and transparency.

As clearly outlined in Ethiopia's foreign policy, Ethiopia gives priority to its neighbors. The country seeks to find solutions to its neighbors' problems by working together.

Ethiopia and Somaliland will complete the detailed process of the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for partnership and cooperation and translate the agreement into implementation, Ambassador Redwan Hussein, Prime Minister's National Security Advisor said.

The agreement allows Ethiopia to have a commercial port and military base in the Red Sea coastline of Somaliland.

On the subject of the issue scholars have been articulating the benefits the Horn of Africa secure out of the peace deal.

"If Ethiopia regains a sea outlet, the Red Sea region would be relatively more peaceful because of Ethiopia's role in regional stabilization," Mulugeta Debebe (PhD), a Political Science lecturer at Ethiopian Civil Service University said.

He emphasized that maritime security across the Red Sea requires collaboration, which Ethiopia is currently advocating for. If Ethiopia achieves its aspiration of securing a sea outlet and establishing a coastline military base, it will significantly contribute to maritime peacekeeping. Conflicts along the coastline would also be more manageable.

As a country that collaborates with global powers on peacekeeping missions, Ethiopia's involvement in the maritime arena would mirror its existing partnerships, according to Mulugeta.

He also highlighted that Ethiopia's history is characterized by peacekeeping rather than aggression. Therefore, its presence along the coastline would not be a destabilizing factor. He argued that fighting terrorism in the Horn of Africa (HoA) would be less fruitful without Ethiopia's maritime presence.

Currently, Ethiopia's peacekeeping forces are active in several hotspots in the HoA. Mulugeta suggested that Ethiopia's role would be even more significant if it were



allowed to deploy its forces at least in one coastline base. "Countries opposing Ethiopia's aspirations should reconsider the potential for cooperation. With a population of about 120 million, Ethiopia's lack of access to the sea could lead to internal crises that would adversely affect neighboring countries," he warned.

Shimelis Hailu, a Political Science lecturer at Addis Ababa University, agreed, noting that the trade route from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean offers considerable economic benefits if managed properly. However, the ongoing geopolitical crisis is transforming this opportunity into a threat necessitating regional cooperation.

"The intervention of foreign forces with self-serving interests is preventing the region from recovering from conflicts. Ethiopia's request for a sea outlet has a logical basis. The region needs not only to accommodate Ethiopia's interest but also to form a union to combat insecurity."

The existing conflicts are often driven by proxy wars, with non-regional actors support conflicting parties. It was also a deliberate strategy to isolate Ethiopia from the politics of Red Sea. The economic vulnerability of Red Sea countries, particularly in East Africa, also invites external intervention. Economic integration is crucial. A society integrated economically is less likely to engage in conflicts.

The agreement will in fact hasten integration of the region as well because the economic cooperation, military cooperation, socio-economic cooperation, cultural interaction among the neighboring peoples would fasten and enhance the integration of the region as well. So, the recent agreement signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland would contribute to this very big objective.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), a Political Science Scholar Prof. Biruk Hailu in the recent past stated that Ethiopia's acquisition of a sea gate in the strategic, yet volatile region is of great significance to the area's maritime security and repulsing criminal activities.

As to him, the security of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden will be more guaranteed if

Ethiopia has direct access to a seaport and can participate well in maritime issues. Besides, the seaport plays a critical role in intensifying its commercial activities and deploying the naval forces. Therefore, Ethiopia's aspiration to direct access to port is justifiable and reasonable on legal, moral and other grounds.

Taking its large population and economic prowess into account, Ethiopia has been suffering a lot in the past 30 and plus years due to the absences of direct access to seaport and the loss has also had a lasting impact on its security and the public wellbeing.

Ethiopia's acquisition of a seaport from Somaliland comes based on two sides' interests and a win-win approach, not by any pressure or coercion.

Haramaya University Assistant Professor of Economics, Habtamu Legese little while back told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that pursuing a win-win approach enables Ethiopia accessing seaport which is crucial to achieve rapid development via facilitating trade activity maintaining trade balance as well as attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

He, moreover, noted that the country has been spending about two billion USD annually for port rent fees which could have subsidized the economy. As to him, 71% of the world's trade is done via water transport as it reduces cost of transportation.

Citing a 2014 UN study, Habtamu stated that landlocked countries spend an average of 3,204 USD for export transaction compared to those who expend only 1,268 USD for having seaport access.

Likewise, he pointed out that the landlocked states that import products spend 3,884 USD for one container whereas nation with sea access spend only 1,443 USD.

Thus, absence of seaport creates bottleneck on the landlocked nations that decreases FDI, hinder their competitiveness and affect trade balance, that's why Ethiopia needs to apply a wise approach to find access to seaport to overcome these challenges, according to the economist.

Civil Society Organizations Authority said it is working on raising public awareness about

the significance of seaport for economic and societal development.

Authority Chief of Staff Befikadu Woldesenbet recently told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the authority is clarifying the public on the importance of accessing seaport to realize economic and societal development.

Since civil society organizations have a strong relationship with the community, they are working to explain citizens from all walks of life about the importance of seaport to create better understanding in that regard, he noted.

He stated that the civil society organizations are expected to discharge their responsibility of clarifying the importance of accessing seaport for economic and societal development.

Scholars attested that the attempts underway to realize the Ethio-Somaliland MoU need to be strengthened as the issue of securing outlet to the sea has legal basis.

The memorandum of understanding signed with Somaliland is based on the principles of mutual development and give and take that are based on international law, according to information obtained from local media.

A university lecturer, Adane Korbo, said the issue of Ethiopia's quest for access to the sea and ports should in no way be contested.

Using every peaceful and feasible opportunity to ensure national development is an appropriate decision that provides better future for the upcoming generation, he added.

Although the sea port is outside the country, such a demand has legal basis that is supported by international law, according to Adane. Using natural resources outside of one's territory is a common practice and Ethiopia can follow as there is no law that prohibits using port facilities based on the principle of give and take and without harming the interest of the concerned countries, he elaborated.

As Ethiopia is striving to Access Sea and ports in a peaceful manner through mutual agreements, all countries that have coastline need to allow it to access these based on mutual benefits.

By the same token, a lecture of economics at the same university, Yishaq Negussie said that using such resources is part of a business law, provided that it is based on mutual understanding. He noted that it is better to work on exploiting such an opportunity instead of setting the issue for creating an undesirable agenda.

Somaliland will have access to economic gains from Ethiopia by offering Ethiopia access to the sea, and Ethiopia will benefit from port development in the territory of Somaliland.

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

Business & Economy

Manufacturing industry sector stimulating investment in Somali region

BY BACHA ZEWDIE

In Somali National Regional State, which has been enjoying the blessing of peace for the past six years following the national reform; the development works done in all sectors are proof that a favorable environment has been created to overcome the age-old development problems. The region is seen practicing a new work culture in the agricultural sector, especially irrigation development. Its performance in the road infrastructure sector is also promising.

One of the fastest changing sectors in the region is investment. Following the peace and stability that the region has achieved, the local natives who were living in exile have accepted the call and have returned to their country and are investing in the region's development activities.

These natives of the region are actively participating in agriculture and education sectors as well as hotels, education sector and construction of factories. Among the investment activities carried out in various sectors of the region, the works carried out in the manufacturing industry sector are notable.

The manufacturing industry sector has greatly stimulated the region's investment potential; the investments are contributing to moving the economy, changing the environment and creating employment for many people.

The total number of factories (small to large) in the Somali region before the reform was no more than 85. However, since then, 230 new and huge factories have been built, the Head of the Region, Mustafe Mohamed confirmed.

"Suweys Motors Company" is one of the factories operational, which runs a large economy and is an asset to the region and the country. The company is located in Jigjiga city and assembles "Jetur" and "Suzuki" Dzire cars and supplies to the local market.

This factory, in which 250 million Birr, has been invested for its construction, will also mobilize a lot of capital to import car parts to be assembled in the country. Abdi Ibrahim, Deputy Manager of Suweys Motor Company said that the factory has started assembling five cars a day and supplied to the local market. Within a month of starting the business, it sold 40 Jettur and 12 Suzuki Dzire cars in just two weeks.

Noting that there is a high demand for purchases, the deputy manager announced there are many people who have queued up to buy in advance. He also stated that the company is working with the vision of not only meeting domestic demand but also exporting cars to neighboring countries.

Abdi said that the factory has created permanent job opportunities for 300 people in the short period of its operation. When it expands and extends its business chain in the future, it will create job opportunities for many other citizens.

"Sahid Metal Industry Engineering" is



The newly operational vehicles' assembly plant in Somali region

another giant heavy vehicle component manufacturing and assembly company located in Jigjiga city. The head of the company's marketing department Nesir Yasin said that the Company uses its own molding machines to manufacture truck bodies and fuel tankers. He also explained that they import heavy trucks with only engine and cabin, and then make and assemble the rest of the body in the factory and make the vehicles complete and market them.

As to him, the Company has created job opportunities for 270 people. Employees who started working in the company from scratch have today become highly paid.

Shinile is the capital city of the region's City Zone, which has the largest industries in the region, next to Jigjiga. As Shinile is located on the Ethio-Djibouti highway, it is an economic corridor that makes its own contribution in terms of facilitating foreign and domestic trade. As a result, factories have been built to distribute their products to different parts of the country and abroad.

According to Ibrahim Robli, the chief administrator of Shenile District; in the district, especially in Shenile city, Tone and Mermarsa kebeles have been identified as industrial villages. The increasing number of industries contributed to the peace of the area.

He also mentioned that the factories are creating job opportunities for many people from the time of their construction until the time they are put into operation. He added that many job seekers of the area and from other parts of the country are employed in the factories. There are factories that produce various products in the zone, and the granite and marble factory has brought good opportunity to all those who are building houses in the area, especially in Dire Dawa and the surrounding.

He also explained that there are factories that manufacture water tanks that can hold 10,000 to 25,000 liters, sponge mattresses, cans, soap and potable water.

He pointed out that the district is where income and expenditure business is

transacted, which is convenient for investors engaged in investment fields. Keeping all this in mind, he called for investors to come and engage in various activities.

Besides, 125 hectares of land has been prepared for investors who want to invest in real estate and manufacturing industries. Water and electricity infrastructure is ready to provide efficient accommodation and is waiting for the developers, he noted.

As to him, the new asphalt road that is being built from Shenile-Dire Dawa will create a favorable environment for investors in the city, and it will also create more potential for business activities in the area.

The investment office of the district is managed by the deputy director of the region. He mentioned that the peace and tranquility of the area is safe, and invited investors to come to the area and engage in the development.

One of the huge factories built in Shenile city is "Ephopic Foam and Plastic Factory". Muaz Birhanu, the company's production manager said that the company produces fiber glass water tanks, plastic tubes, chairs and sponge mattresses.

The factory has been operating for five years. It has been established with a capital expenditure of up to 600 million Birr. It can produce 25 to 30 fiber glass water tanks per day of different sizes that can hold 500 to 10,000 liters.

So far, it has been working in one shift and has created job opportunities for 150 people. When it starts working 24 hours, it will triple the number of employees and create job opportunities for 450 citizens. In addition to the domestic market, the plastic products are also available to countries such as Djibouti and Somaliland.

The sponge factory located in the same premises produces up to five thousand mattresses of different sizes per day (in eight hours). Stating that the product will be completely supplied to the local market, especially to Eastern Ethiopia, Muaz also mentioned that the limited market is a

challenge for the factory to not produce at its full capacity.

Mentioning that they will import products for the factory from foreign countries, the manager said the proximity of Shenile to the port of Djibouti is convenient for providing resources and exporting the products.

The manager also mentioned that lack of foreign currency is causing problems in their work. Due to lack of foreign currency, he could not provide complete resources, and said that due to these problems, the factory is sometimes forced to stop.

The other owner of "Wabi Group Marble and Granite Factory" who is engaged in investment work in Shenile district is Tahir Abdi. He said that the government's call and assistance to investors to enter their country and participate in development work and the peace achieved in the region has created a favorable environment for them to enter their country and participate in development work.

He and his friends have stated that they have established "Wabi Group Marble and Granite Factory" with a capital of 1.5 billion Birr.

As he said, the construction of the factory has been completed and it is being prepared to start production to meet the local demand by producing different shaped products for paving of buildings from stone and marble and to replace similar products that are imported. He also has a vision to provide the product to the foreign market. It is also bringing in the local resources that are used for the factory.

In terms of job creation, he said that more than 100 workers have been employed during the installation process of the factory, and when it starts working at full capacity, it will be done in three shifts.

Tahir further explained that the factory will start working soon. But, if the current power outage continues, it will affect the production. Thus, they have requested that the concerned parties pay attention to the issue of power outage.

Planet Earth

Research centers developing coffee varieties that can beat climate change, diseases

BY FIKADU BELAY

In Ethiopia, agriculture is the engine of the economy; it covers over 80% of the economy of the country, employs the majority of the population and contributes significantly to the country's GDP. Out of all the agriculture sectors, coffee plays a significant role in earning huge amount of foreign currency and creating considerable number of employment opportunity.

Therefore safeguarding the production of coffee in particular and the agriculture sector in general is an issue that should be given priority. The government and relevant stakeholders should take all the necessary actions to prevent possible threats against the sector. The most common threats to the agriculture sector are climate change and diseases, among others.

Research and innovation should focus on developing new technologies that can prevent the possible threats or resist them. Among such technologies is the research and development of coffee varieties that are able to resist climate impact and diseases.

Addressing the effects of climate change is, therefore, not only an environmental imperative but also a critical economic necessity. To ensure a strong economy, it is essential to implement a comprehensive strategy that combines efforts to mitigate the causes of climate change and adapt to its consequences. This will involve transitioning to renewable energy sources, investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, and supporting the development of green industries and technologies.

Therefore, coffee production is one of the green industries that can play a role in addressing climate change, as sustainable coffee farming practices can help sequester carbon and preserve forests. Additionally, the coffee industry provides crucial economic opportunities for many developing regions, supporting local livelihoods and economic development.

Currently, some research shows that Ethiopia's coffee sector faces significant challenges, including aging trees, pests and diseases that threaten the sustainability of production. In response, the country's networks of agricultural research centers have been at the forefront of developing innovative solutions to bolster the industry.

One such initiative is the focus on improving coffee seed varieties. Researchers have identified and propagated new coffee cultivars that exhibit enhanced disease resistance, higher yields, and improved cup quality. These improved seeds are then distributed to farmers, empowering them to cultivate more robust and productive coffee trees.

Through the tireless efforts of these research centers, Ethiopia's coffee growers are better equipped to meet the growing global demand for their exceptional product. As the country continues to invest in the future of its coffee sector, the rich traditions and flavors of



Ethiopian coffee are poised to captivate coffee lovers worldwide for generations to come.

In the southwest region of Ethiopia, the agricultural research centers are spearheading efforts to bolster the country's profitable coffee industry. The Mizan Tepi University Research, Community Services, and Jimma Agricultural Research Center are working diligently to identify, protect, and cultivate high-yielding and disease-resistant coffee varieties to support the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

Girma Tilahun (PhD), Deputy President of Mizan Tepi University Research and Community Service, told *The Ethiopian Herald* that their primary focus is on safeguarding the diverse coffee species found in the region. "We are committed to conducting extensive research to not only increase the value of coffee production but also ensure that our farmers can earn better incomes," he stated.

He stated that the coffee sector in Ethiopia has faced significant challenges in recent years, with crop diseases and climate change taking a toll on production. To address these issues, the research centers are collaborating with various stakeholders to find sustainable solutions.

"We are working closely with other concerned parties and utilizing research-based approaches to mitigate the impact of these problems and prevent serious damage to coffee production," he explained.

On his part, Girma Hailemikeal (PhD), Director of the Jimma Agricultural Research Center, highlighted the remarkable progress made in developing high-performing coffee varieties. "The center has researched and distributed 49 improved coffee seeds, 40 of which have been carefully selected, and the remaining 9 are hybrids," Girma said.

These improved coffee seeds, according to

By empowering smallholder farmers with high-performing and climate-resilient coffee varieties, as well as providing comprehensive support through training and technical assistance, the research centers are paving the way for a thriving coffee industry in Ethiopia

him, are not only highly productive but also disease-resistant, making them an attractive option for farmers. "The old coffee seeds can yield up to 17 quintals per hectare, while the hybrid improved coffee seeds can reach up to 19 quintals per hectare," he noted, adding that the demand for these improved seeds is steadily growing.

Mizan Tepi University research and community service have also implemented innovative approaches to ensure the widespread adoption of these improved coffee seeds. "We have set up workshops in the districts where the selected coffee varieties are being planted in the farmers' fields, and we provide close supervision to ensure proper care and management," Girma explained. Also, the Jimma Research Center promotes sharing the above idea through collaborative research and knowledge dissemination.

In addition to the focus on coffee, the Research Center is also working on diversifying the agricultural landscape by exploring the potential of other cash crops and livestock. "Apart from coffee, we are also conducting research on livestock production, including Maji sheep and Sheko cattle," the Deputy President revealed.

The Jimma Agriculture Research Center, on the other hand, is expanding its scope to include a wider range of cash crops and horticultural products. "Our research efforts cover not only coffee but also soybeans, sorghum, and various animal feed crops," Girma said.

Recognizing the importance of soil and water management, the research centers are also addressing these critical issues. "We are working closely with agricultural experts to prevent the expansion of acidic land and find ways to rehabilitate it. Additionally, we have initiated irrigation-related projects to support sustainable agricultural practices," Girma explained.

The collaborative efforts of the research centers have already shown promising results, with farmers in the region experiencing increased yields and improved resilience to environmental challenges. "The coffee varieties developed by our centers are not only more productive but also better equipped to withstand the effects of climate change and crop diseases," Girma highlighted.

Furthermore, the government should increase support and funding for research centers like the Jimma Research Center to further develop the coffee economy in the region. These centers should work to not only improve coffee production, but also explore the potential of other cash crops and spices. Involving private investors and companies can help leverage additional resources and expertise to diversify and strengthen the agricultural sector.

As the coffee industry continues to play a pivotal role in Ethiopia's economy, the work of these research centers is crucial to ensuring the long-term sustainability and growth of the sector. By empowering smallholder farmers with high-performing and climate-resilient coffee varieties, as well as providing comprehensive support through training and technical assistance, the research centers are paving the way for a thriving coffee industry in Ethiopia.

Art & Culture



Joyously marking Vaska festival together

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

Recently, the Embassy of Sri Lanka held a cultural festival called Vesak in the presence of the diplomatic community in Addis Ababa. The ambassador's residence was accentuated by colorful traditional candles that brightened the day. The snow white tent made a color match with the white clothes worn by the Sri Lankan community in Addis including the ambassador himself. Eye candy decorations and melodious traditional music played softly electrified attendees to the extent of making them feel as if they were in heaven.

In the program held in Addis, children, youngsters, and members of the diplomatic community residing in Addis Ababa arrived and eagerly waited for the program to start, sitting in the salon of the ambassador's residence. The mouthwatering traditional Sri Lankan dishes arrayed lent flavor to the event. The dishes I tasted soon after the program helped me learn a bit about Sri Lanka without physically going there. I realized the commonalities between the dishes of the two countries after I went for the spicy foods that resembled ours.

Without delay, a lady donning a white costume came to the podium to introduce the whole program and invited Ambassador K.K. Theshantha Kumarasiri to make opening remarks. He explained that the event was meant to mark the International Day of Vesak, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly and celebrated in many countries around the world, especially in South Asian and East Asian countries like India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia. A multitude of other countries also celebrate Vesak.

Vesak marks the day when Buddha was born as a prince and attained enlightenment. He understood the supreme truth of the world and introduced a philosophy about life. Buddha taught that life is inherently full of suffering and explained how to overcome this suffering.

Buddhists believe in rebirth, where individuals may be reborn as different beings, leading to continued suffering. Buddha provided a solution by introducing a path to enlightenment, a state of mind called Nibbana, where one purifies one's mind and eliminates hatred and ill will. This path, known as the middle path, has helped millions of people achieve enlightenment and end the cycle of rebirth and suffering.

The light festival is celebrated to honor Buddha, who showed us a new way to parry pain.



Buddhists celebrate this festival to show respect to Lord Buddha for providing a new path in life. In today's world, where many people are suffering, we promote the middle path as a way to realistically analyze life, find solutions, help one another, and foster compassion and love. This is the message we are promoting through this festival.

"The main purpose of this festival is to introduce the culture to Ethiopians, our friends around the world, and showcase what we have to offer. It is a platform where we share our knowledge, experiences, and remedies for the conflicts in the world, as the world is currently polarized and many people are marginalized."

There are numerous individuals suffering due to climate change, political conflict, and various other reasons. Therefore, we must find solutions to these problems by creating goodwill, offering compassion to others, extending a helping hand, and providing wisdom to address these issues realistically. This is the true meaning of the festival.

In every philosophy and religion, the fundamentals are similar, with additional segments added over time, such as rituals influenced by climate conditions, region, and cultural factors. Despite these variations, the fundamental principles of love and liberation from suffering are consistent across religions like Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.

I have witnessed many religious festivals in this country, such as the large gatherings near

churches every Sunday where thousands of people march to worship God and Jesus Christ.

Ethiopia's cultural, religious, and geographical diversity is evident, but the Christian religion serves as a unifying force in this predominantly Christian country. Religion plays a significant role in bringing people together, fostering harmony and unity, which is truly remarkable and something I have come to appreciate during my time here. The harmonious society in Ethiopia, where people embrace each other despite differences, is truly inspiring and has been a valuable lesson for me.

All the lanterns showcased in the event were created by Sri Lankans living and working in Ethiopia, some of whom work in the Hawasa Industrial Park. Last year, we also celebrated this lantern festival, with all the lanterns made by Sri Lankans working here.

Additionally, a few lanterns were made by my embassy staff. The illuminated lanterns symbolize the teachings of the Buddha, representing the wisdom he shared that has liberated millions of people from suffering and the cycle of rebirth.

Ultimately, they signify satisfaction and the liberation of life, reflecting the Buddha's teachings of new wisdom. These colors and illuminations pay homage to the Buddha and his teachings that offer liberation.

Born in India and ordained in Sri Lanka, there was a special guest at the celebration. Reverend Bhikkhu Mahenda is a revered Buddhist monk whose journey from a successful career spanning

various fields of study and practice, such as finance and engineering, to a life devoted to meditation and mindfulness, has captivated audiences worldwide.

During his time in Ethiopia, Reverend Bhikkhu Mahenda shared his wisdom. He discussed the Indic system's perspective, which includes multiple types of meditation. In fact, there are three main types of meditation.

The first type is called Samatha meditation, which is a way to calm the mind and observe its impurities. This practice is known by different names in various countries, such as Dhyana in India, Yoga, and Samadhi, Dhyana in Sri Lanka, Dhyana in Pali tradition, Chan in China, and Zen in Japan. Despite the different names, the underlying principle remains the same – calming the mind to gain insight.

The purpose of calming meditation is to look within oneself and address impurities like greed, hatred, and delusion. By calming the mind, one can observe these impurities and develop strategies to eliminate them. While calming meditation can reduce apparent impurities like anger, depression, and anxiety disorders, it is not enough to completely eliminate them. The ultimate goal, as taught by Lord Buddha, is achieved through the second level of meditation called Vipassana.

Vipassana, a Sanskrit word meaning "sees in a special way," involves looking at life from the perspective of three characteristics: impermanence, suffering, and non-self. By understanding and accepting these truths, one can remove impurities from the mind gradually. This meditation requires mindfulness and critical insights into the nature of existence.

The third type of meditation, Brahmavihara or divine abodes, focuses on cultivating loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity. These qualities help purify the mind by eliminating hatred and fostering positive emotions towards oneself and others. Practicing these meditations can lead to a greater sense of peace and well-being.

Reverend Bhikkhu Mahenda emphasizes the importance of regular practice and patience in achieving the benefits of meditation. While it may take time to see significant changes, the key is to start walking on the path towards self-discovery and inner peace. By incorporating these meditative practices into daily life, individuals can develop a greater sense of awareness and compassion towards themselves and others.

Society

Garnering volunteerism for common good

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

The world becomes a better place for all when we share what we have with others, show compassion and togetherness, give care and provide the required support for those in need of it whether it is financially or materially or volunteering time, energy, knowledge and skills to benefit others. In this regard, volunteers are always at the frontline in dedicating their time, energy, finance, expertise and the like for the common good of all.

In fact, volunteering does not have a one side benefits but it will also benefits individuals who are engaging in a certain activity. One can learn a number of lessons that could last for a lifetime.

Volunteers in their engagements will experience new things, strengthen ties with peers and the community through allowing developing new skills in public services which yield positive social impacts. What is more, through volunteering, they could be role models and inspire young people. When young people witness the firsthand passion, dedication and tangible impact of volunteers, it can ignite a spark within them, motivate them to emulate the experience and build upon the example set before them.

Through sharing their personal stories, challenges and successes, volunteers can humanize the work of public services and social impacts, demonstrating that these pathways are accessible and fulfilling, even in the face of adversity. This authenticity and reliability are crucial in encouraging youth to see themselves as agents of change, capable of making a meaningful difference in their communities and beyond.

It is clear these days that volunteers in Ethiopia are producing tangible outcomes in all aspects they are engaged in, whether it is on a regular or seasonal basis.

Volunteer Health Services (VHS) is one of the organizations engaged in charity works and undertaking various activities to benefitting the community targeting on providing health and medical services. Mainly, by giving due emphasis to Tuberculosis (TB), the organization is undertaking several activities in fighting TB.

Recently, on July 10, 2024, the organization conducted a focus group discussion at the Drug-Resistant TB (DRTB) ward of Yirgalem Hospital.

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, VHS Executive Director Endalkachew Fekadu said that volunteerism is one of the ways to lessen the social, economic and health burden of the society and to shape the coming generation. In this respect, VHS is working to translate the value to the ground through the practical engagement in fighting TB.

“VHS is an all-inclusive, nonpartisan group, working to increase participation in the local healthcare system, to inspire individuals in the community to become identified, informed, empowered and involved through



Members of VHS engaging in volunteering activities at DRTB ward, Yirgalem Hospital

a nationwide network of patients, volunteers and relevant stakeholders. We are motivated by our belief that medical issues affect peoples' lives in a multitude of ways; and the contributions of affected communities are necessary for a strong community and a vibrant and prosperous nation.”

According to him, VHS goal to see TB-free Ethiopia is underpinned by a holistic approach that encompasses policy advocacy, empowerment, and community mobilization efforts.

As part of this effort, the organization organized a focus group discussion at the Drug-Resistant TB (DRTB) ward of Yirgalem Hospital to provide a platform for TB patients, share their experiences, discuss challenges and foster a sense of community among those affected by tuberculosis to strengthen TB control efforts and address systemic barriers to care, he remarked.

Through strategic advocacy campaigns, engagement with policymakers and participation in policy forums, the organization has been playing a pivotal role in shaping national TB policies and strategies in Ethiopia. As to him, advocacy efforts have resulted in increased funding for TB programs, improved access to TB services, and the integration of TB services into primary healthcare settings.

Recognizing the importance of empowering TB patients to advocate for their rights and access quality care, VHS has implemented a range of empowerment initiatives. From providing counseling and psychosocial support to offering vocational training programs and organizing income-generation activities, efforts have been exerted in equipping TB patients with the tools and resources they need to lead healthy and productive lives.

By fostering a sense of agency and self-sufficiency among TB patients, it was possible to transform lives and empower

Volunteers in their engagements will experience new things, strengthen ties with peers and the community through allowing developing new skills in public services which yield positive social impacts

individuals to become agents of change in their communities, according to him.

In their quest to reach the most vulnerable populations and raise awareness about TB, the organization has conducted extensive community outreach initiatives. Through health education sessions, door-to-door campaigns, and TB screening events, it was enabled to practically engage communities at the grassroots level and disseminate vital information about TB prevention, diagnosis, and treatment ways. Primarily, the community-led approach has not only increased TB awareness but also reduced stigma and discrimination associated with the disease.

According to him, at the group discussion and get-together meeting, key topics such as treatment adherence, stigma, and the impact of TB on daily life were discussed thoroughly.

On the occasion patients shared their

personal stories regarding their TB journeys, discussing the physical and emotional challenges they have gone through. Common themes that were entertained at the event included the side effects of medication, the importance of family support, and the psychological burden of isolation. The healthcare providers offered insights into the medical aspects of TB treatment and addressed patients' concerns, emphasizing the importance of adherence to treatment regimens for successful outcomes.

The event concluded with a feedback session where participants expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to connect with others facing similar struggles. Many highlighted the need for more such gatherings to maintain motivation and support throughout their treatment.

Overall, the focus group discussion and get-together were highly successful in achieving their goals of fostering community engagement, sharing knowledge, and providing emotional support to TB patients. The insights gained will inform future patient-centered care initiatives at the hospital, especially at the Drug-Resistant TB (DRTB) ward.

Responding to the VHS engagement in advocating volunteerism, Endalkachew said: “since the act of volunteerism is an important platform to share skills and knowledge to younger professionals, we will keep on practicing it. Through their active engagement, volunteers could inspire youth through hands-on experiential learning opportunities, sharing experiences.”

He also urged professional associations to engage in volunteer activities. Whether it is by tutoring underprivileged students, restoring natural habitats, or providing aid to vulnerable populations, volunteers can give a direct window into the external realities; and the sweeping rewards of engaging in community services.

Law & Politics

Charting out a better future through national consensus

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

It takes national salvage for a nation's wound to heal. And, it is through National Dialogue that past agonies and future calamities are redressed. Different nations at different times have resolved bones of contentions through National Dialogue and found their path towards sustainable peace stability and socioeconomic growth. And Ethiopia has embarked on the toll order in an attempt to tackle years of disputed matters and polarized views.

For many, holding a National Dialogue is not an end by itself, the issue of transparency and accountability is of much importance. With these elements fulfilled, National Dialogue is the right prescription to create a national consensus.

There were times when the country tried to resolve divisive issues, but the efforts failed due to many reasons. Disputed and polarized political views on major national issues continue to source of conflicts and instability.

In what could be said a promising move the country has begun to stage a National Dialogue with the process entering a critical stage.

In a country where most disturbing issues are caused by political stands and false narratives, such a stride to let people talk on the points that used to be neglected is important. The Dialogue is expected to chart the future of the country in its journey to national consensus. It is expected to lay a solid foundation for the nation's future endeavours so that people will be able to live their peaceful lives.

To realize the National Dialogue, the incumbent has been taking various steps, from its inception to the current steps. The National Dialogue Commission has also been working on taking its responsibilities to the finishing line. The commission has started its journey by opening itself to the whole community so that everyone will be able to take part and present its idea in the process.

In a very recent scenario, the commission has held its first idea-gathering event here at Adwa Victory Memorial Hall in Addis Ababa. It was the first of its kind that Ethiopia has waited for so long. The commission has also incorporated all the parts of the society so that the country will resolve its deep-rooted problems once and for all. Besides, the commission has called even the armed groups, who took up their gun and struggle, to the discussion table and let them say their point.

All-inclusive participation is key to better outcomes. The commission has been functioning to ensure the participation of women, youth, and all responsible stakeholders in the process.

In the current climate, the commission has



The Dialogue is expected to chart the future of the country in its journey to national consensus. It is expected to lay a solid foundation for the nation's future endeavours so that people will be able to live their peaceful lives

been finalizing its preparation for holding its upcoming rounds of the idea gathering events in all regional states including Dire Dawa. It is reported by Mulugeta Ago, National Dialogue Commission Commissioner, that the participants on the agenda selection forwarded their views and issues for discussion in a free, participatory, transparent and inclusive manner.

The Commissioner added that the agenda selection process was a learning forum in which inputs were forwarded from the participants in a participatory, free, inclusive and democratic discussion.

Accordingly, the agenda selection process will soon proceed in Dire Dawa and other regional states except for Amhara and Tigray, he said.

According to Mulugeta as of next week, preparations will be made by coordinators, responsible officials and other professionals to facilitate the upcoming agenda selection processes in the areas mentioned above.

The Commissioner called upon all citizens to contribute their part to the success of the agenda selection process which is a major step in conducting a national dialogue across the country and use this opportunity to build a democratic national state.

He thanked all those involved in the startup process and advised the public to effectively realize the advantages of conducting a national dialogue in Ethiopia.

By the same token, speaking of inclusiveness and participation, the commission ensures the adequate representation of youth and the younger generation in the process. It has opened the doors for the young part of society to put its mark in the dialogue. Taking steps, the commission has lately had a productive meeting with representatives from different higher education institutions to actively participate in the succession of the national dialogue.

Zeyohanes Tobiyaw Adamu, Debre Markos University Student's Council Representative, noted that the National Dialogue could be instrumental in resolving the existing instability in various parts of the nation. Through effective implementation, he added that it would play a major role in resolving differences thereby transferring a better country for the future generation.

The youth constitutes a large portion of the total population and is equipped with many skills, as a result, they can use various technologies and the social media platform for essential purposes. They have to filter the information gathered on social media platforms and use it in a reasonable way as a means to sensitize society, he stressed.

The youth is also expected to play a major role in using the platform for valuable discussions as well as take part in the National Dialogue. They should be conscious of the false information that circulates on different social media platforms; hence, youth should use it with responsibility, him.

In addition, admiring the efforts that ENDC put towards making the National Dialogue a success, Addis Ababa University Student's Council Representative, Yishak Tesfaye, mentioned that youth need to play a lion's share in the dialogue. "It knocks the door of each individual; we all are responsible to play a role."

It is those who have been in hardship during wars that value peace the most, he said, adding that the dialogue would be more valuable to such areas. Nonetheless, the commission is expected to bring about perceptual change in the society.

For Gambella University Student's Council President, Parelek Chock, no good would come out of conflicts, thus youth are expected to play their role to ensure peace in the country. Since the nation is focusing on addressing issues and healing historical traumas to move forward, the youth needs to contribute its role in every possible way.

Again, Semera University Student's Council President, Abudi Mohammed Haji, on his part said engaging the youth in National Dialogue would allow for addressing longstanding challenges and reaching to consensus which is critical for the nation. The National Dialogue could enable the youth who are very energetic and skilled to get to know each other and exchange their inner thoughts, as to him.

Moreover, they are expected to sensitize society to clear the blurred perception towards some of the issues that are constraining the people to reach an agreement. The National Dialogue Commission should also organize various discussion forums on conflict-ridden areas.

EPHREM ENDALE

Between you & me

‘Everyone Does it;’ “So!”

Recently a relative in her mid-twenties was ranting over something accusing a certain group which she referred only as “They...” for cheating her into something. I mean the young lady was so angry that she was, as they say, all claws and fangs. If any member of the “they” had been around you wouldn’t imagine what would have happened to her failing to tame her anger. When she told her only bits and pieces of her story I tell you it was hard to stay calm. It so happened that she had a few friends with whom she goes places. There were three of them. Their group was supposed to be a collection of serious meaning young girls not given too much of present day life detours which is taking many onto the wrong tracks. Of course if you think this reputation won them the standing ovation I’ve to tell you you’re missing on how the minds of people seem to work these days. For many the four in some ways were outcasts of sorts since they’re not seen in many places the ‘young crowd’ converges.

Over time two of the three begin displaying behaviors which in no way was theirs and the other one which was this relative I’m telling you about, was worried. Then they started asking her to a certain place she would enjoy and that they discovered lately. Well, after all they were friends and she had no reason to be suspicious of anything out of the normal. One weekend they go to this ‘new’ place and to her surprise it was a residential house. Of course, the living room and subsequent rooms had nothing residential about them. Anyway after that she didn’t want to go into any details. However, from the little

she told us there were other young girls and also young men, everyone was tipsy or dead drunk except this relative and a couple of other girls she said were new to the place. At a certain time the lights went dim and what she said started happening sounded some scene out of some story hastily crafted story. The men started catching the hands of the young girls randomly and dragging them into inner rooms. And, here comes the juice of the story, the young women were more than willing to be dragged! None of us had the courage to ask what was happening in the inner rooms! She says she practically jumps out of the door, out of the compound and before she knows it she was in a minibus taxi to her home.

Late that night one of her friends calls and when she answers the friend was angry that she left so suddenly. This relative warned her to never, ever do such a thing like taking her to such a place. And what the friend says wrapped it all up;

“Why are you so angry? Everybody does it!” believe me for the meek and the “Everybody does it!” play could turn out to be a trap, a nasty one too!

I never went anywhere else close to chewing khat even though some of my friends were regulars. Also never smoked. Look, having lived in the area I used to live for practically all my life (until recent months!) I tell you that is not as easy as it sounds. The temptations, the pushes, the peer pressures and the like corner you from every side and the frequency of your “No thank you;” could keep and does keep,

many significant distances from you. In fact, in the worst of cases say by not falling for the “Everybody does it!” trap you could be taken for an arrogant, self-patting creep! “Who does he think he is anyway?”

I don’t know the details but one thing about being in writing business around here is that you’re expected to chew khat. You are told everybody does it and you’ve no reason for you to stay on the sidelines. You’re told it boosts your creativity genes so thoroughly that every word you put on paper would be worthy of some ‘best quotes of the century’ list. There was this friend I respected very much who’s now departed and probably in a much better world than ours. I remember him falling for the “Everybody does it!” and ending up as the worst drunkard you could imagine to the extent that it cost him even his marriage. And him being a sports crazy guy you wouldn’t have ever suspected he’d veer so far away from the more or less life he was leading. But he did and it was a very sad ending for his family. And behind it all there was this supposedly best friend who day by day filled him with all kind of stories urging him to go out into the world and finally managed to succeed.

“How about going to a real trendy and hot place tonight? You know, like that place they call Chechnya. They say once you’ve gone there you’ve gone to the real Las Vegas!”

“No way! I’d be willing to go anywhere but there.

“What’s wrong with it?”

“But everybody does it!” So! So what everybody does it! I mean there is a clear and heavy red line

These days some people trying to convince you about something miss the lines so bad they indulge in tirades you wouldn’t expect from someone trying to win you over about something. They don’t acknowledge your position and admit, “Well the guy has his position on the matter and it doesn’t mean he is in the wrong for not towing the line what everyone is supposedly towing!” had we had such people even as little as in the hundreds I tell you this world would have been a far better place.

Not that the temptation to do what ‘everybody does it’ never nudges your weaker genes. There are instances where seeing things from the outside nudges your weaker genes and maybe drive you to philosophize. “Maybe I’m overdoing things. Maybe by staying back and locking myself in house every night I’m distancing myself from those moments where life is all laughter and glee. There can be nothing wrong with having a couple of beers with friends once in a while. Well, it’s your life, it’s your choice. But when you are supposed to be very close to being a teetotaler with maybe a couple of bottles a year at the most having a couple “once in a while” would be a big leap; and there is no guarantee the leap would take you the other side safely.

Before jumping into what “Everybody is doing;” maybe it’s better to give things a second serious thought.

How Did They Come to This?

I’m country western music fan; and while I enjoy many of the tunes, especially the older ones, one stands out; “West Virginia.” It is as if I was originally from that place and I was the nostalgic guy who isn’t giving up that easily. Ages back I was part of an African media team on a six week workshop. This friend of mine already there was driving me around and I fumbled with his radio looking for some country music channel. It didn’t take me long before I found one. Believe me I didn’t listen for fifteen or twenty seconds when my friend reached over and turned it off. What! And he knows my very soft genes for country music. I asked him (probably shouted at him! a couple of decades have passed and don’t blame me if I forget the details in times when it seems we’re moving ever closer to forgetting ourselves!) what the hell he was doing. He said it would make the African Americans driving by angry. I protested and finally we decided to close the widows and keep the volume down. It was a sort of revelation for me that even music could be polarizing.

Watching what has been happening these past few days I couldn’t help wondering what the hell was happening with the country though my reaction has nothing to do with my West Virginia fan story. This time it seems to be about politics; it seems to be about the lefties and the righties. Or is it? Isn’t this the billion dollar question? Is what has been happening the past few years and what seems to be happening now about differing political lines and political lines only? I mean weren’t such things supposed to be Third World stuff? Americans going for each other’s throats over differing political beliefs!

One thing is sure; though no one can claim to

know about that vast country everything there is to know (Even the politicians and the media crowd don’t seem to be that smart!) from what we can see it’s only fair to say America is changing in ways we never expected. Many of those things we took for granted when it comes to the US seem to be being blown away down like a pack of cards disturbed by strong winds. It’s sad when the very nice things you took for granted and even dreamt asking ourselves “When, oh when will my own country be so lucky?” Going to America by itself was supposed to be the last leg of the journey going to heaven. Yes, why not! America and Heaven were supposed to be next door neighbors! Hmmm... I mean what more could there be than finding oneself in the most democratic of all countries? Experiencing what a free society actually means and feels? What a couple of big bites of McDonald’s sandwiches would have tested? What it means for all your rights being respected and you being shielded from any outside abuse and harassment by the law and order system in place? Look I’m not saying all these things are as we expect them to be because may times than not what you see isn’t always what you get! But then that wouldn’t hurt the picture of the America we’ve built in our psyches over decades. Some pictures aren’t that easily altered or erased. But believe me after last Saturdays outrage of the assassination attempt on the former president Donald Trump it is impossible to keep those glittering pictures and dreams intact.

There were times when we thought truth means what you heard, watched and read in the Western especially American mainstream media. There were times when none of us disputed some news item which appears in the mainstream

media however bizarre it might sound. There were times when next to the Almighty our destiny lay in the hands of the Westerners who wished and worked for the best interests of we poor and powerless folks. There were times when we thought that some vocabulary even though present in the dictionaries didn’t work for America. Even if the American media used those words and terms it would be in connection with things foreign and not local. But that seems to be going into the history books. As the attempt on Mr. Trump were shocking so were some comments we read and saw! How come people are spa cold-hearted! Against their own country man by little things are changing and so are presentations. Some reactions leave you quizzing yourself what the hell really is happening in that country.

We’re reading so-called opinions that whatever the result come November there would be trouble on the streets of the country.

Jack Black has said he’s cancelled the rest of the Tenacious D world tour after his band mate Kyle Gass sparked an outcry with a comment about the assassination attempt on Donald Trump.

The comedy rock group was on stage in Sydney, Australia, on Sunday when Gass was asked to make a wish after being presented with a cake for his 64th birthday.

He appeared to reply: “Don’t miss Trump next time.”

And this one comes from a teacher responsible for working on the minds of the young to make them better and prepare them for the world that awaits them. She writes; “Wish they had a better scope”. What! Are we really talking about a country which for decades has been seen as

an icon of freedom and prosperity? Mind you this one is a teacher. We are not talking about behind-the-curtain chit chats. We are not talking about unverified third party information. This lady just said it herself. Sad; it’s really sad what we humans are coming to. And such kinds of behaviors were supposed to be Third World material, weren’t they? Not that there is any serious research or whatever concerning this conclusion; but the outstanding notion in the West is that all the leftovers of life, all the despicable behaviors, and all the bad things are Third World countries. No! No! No!

Here is one comment concerning the attempt which would knock you off whatever it’s you’re sitting or lying on. “The last thing America needed was sympathy for the devil but here we are.” If this had been written by some ill-intentioned person, many of which that country seems to have, you’d have just ignored it. But no, it wasn’t any such person. It was posted by a certain elected democratic representative. Now you’d be pardoned a thousand times if you think maybe, just maybe America has the wrong people in the wrong offices and that’s reason for things turning into what it never was supposed to be; a country where elections don’t bring calm but chaos! Isn’t that, again, Third World stuff! It isn’t about dogging for any implied meaning. It is all there when he says it in the open. Come on, does it really startle anyone if the political machine fails to work with such guys holding the steering wheel? I say it doesn’t.

We hope the coming months leading to November would about calm not only for America, but for the whole world! And another million dollar question is, “How the hell did America come to this?”

In Pictures

Gorgora, a pristine backdrop on Lake Tana adds jewel to the recreation industry

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

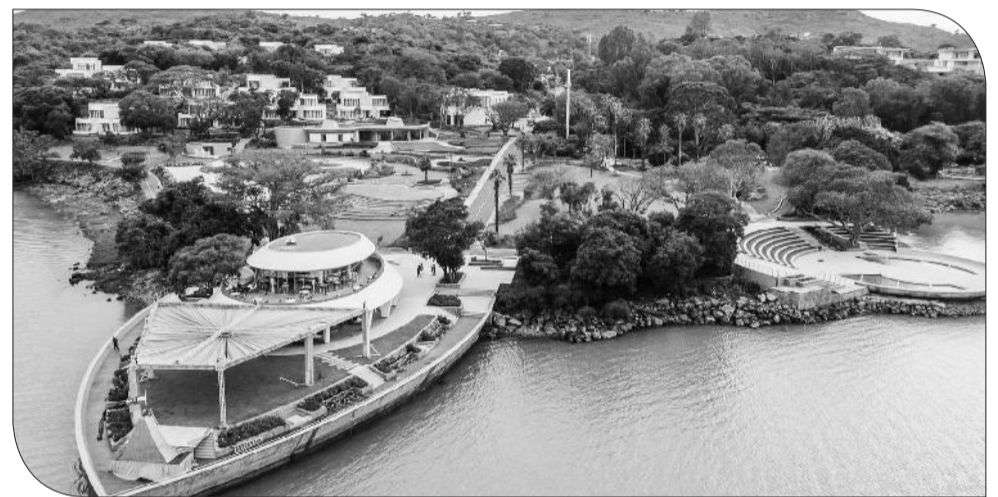


PM Abiy innagurates Gorgora Eco Resort

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) inaugurated the Gorgora Eco Resort Project last week, one of the national projects of his “Dine for Ethiopia” initiative. Gorgora Eco Resort project is part of PM Abiy’s “Dine for Ethiopia” initiatives that made substantial strides in developing tourism destinations in Ethiopia like the Halala Kella, Chebera Churchura and Wonchi projects.

Gorgora, with its unique features and beautiful topography now becomes among the beautiful and luxury tourist destination places in Ethiopia.

The Gorgora Eco Resort, with modern and luxury facility, beautiful topography, wonderful history and traditions is expected to attract tourist influx of both local and international tourists. Gorgora Eco resort, found at the backdrop of Lake Tana is rich in natural, traditional and manmade attractions.



Gorgora, found at Lake Tana, between the beautiful Bahir Dar city and the historic city of Gonder, is a preferable tourist destination for tourists.

PM Abiy discusses with Ireland DPM, FM

A delegation of the Government of Ireland led by Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Defence Minister, Micheal Martin arrived in Addis Ababa for official state visit. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) received the Ireland delegation at his office. The two sides held discussions on bilateral and multilateral issues.



ENDC Chief Commissioner discusses with Ireland delegation

The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission Chief Commissioner, Professor Mesfin Araya received the delegation of Ireland led by Micheal Martin, Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Defence Minister at his office.

The two sides discussed on the ongoing national dialogue process of Ethiopia. According to the information from NDC, Ireland is committed to support Ethiopia’s National Dialogue.