



The Ethiopian Herald



Vol LXXX No 266 17 July 2024 - Hamle 10, 2016

Wednesday

Price Birr 10.00

Scholars eyeing public diplomacy to settle Ethio-Somalia row

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – Strengthening various public diplomacy channels would be of a significant milestone to end the Ethio-

Somalia diplomatic row, so remarked scholars in the area.

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Haramaya University

Political Science lecturer Emiru Gemechu (PhD) stated that it is a high time for all diplomatic communities, scholars, members

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ATI unveils digital projects to connect farmers, customers

ADDIS ABABA (ENA)- The Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Institute (ATI) has launched two projects that seek to enhance agricultural input and output market system.

The projects officially launched yesterday are the Development and Implementation of Digital Market Linkage Platform and the Automation of eVoucher 2.0.

Speaking on the occasion, Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Institute Deputy Director-General Firew Tegegn said one of the duties of the institute is identifying challenges in the agricultural sector and finding solutions.

These digital projects are part of the activities of the institute, he stated, adding that such efforts will be further reinforced.

See ATI unveils ... page 3



Ethiopia secures over 1.4 bln USD exporting coffee

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority (ECTA) disclosed that the country has earned 1.43 billion USD from exporting 298,500 tons of coffee during

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Luis Nani hails Ethiopia's fascinating history, culture

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA - Portuguese professional footballer and former Manchester United star, Luis Nani applauded the uniqueness of Ethiopia's history and culture.

He was also pleased to visit Ethiopia for the first time and pledged support for young footballers.

Approached by *The Ethiopian Herald*, the footballer stated that as Ethiopia is one of most beautiful nations in the world, football stars must come and visit the country.

The Portuguese professional said that he was so satisfied by Ethiopian hospitality.

"This country is beautiful and has a lot of potentials in every aspect including defense and historical places that need to be known and explored further."

See Luis Nani ... page 3



News

Call for active youth participation in Nat'l Dialogue

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- Representatives from different higher education institutions urged youths to play active role towards the success of the National Dialogue.

The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission had recently conducted fruitful discussion with youths drawn from all over the country.

Zeyohanes Tobiyaw Adamu, Debre Markos University, Student's Council Representative, noted that the National Dialogue could be instrumental to resolve 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 better country for the future generation.

The youth constitutes large portion of the total population which is equipped with many skills, as a result, they could use various technologies and the social media platform for essential purpose.

They have to filter the information gathered on social media platforms and use it in a



Abudi Mohammed Haji

reasonable way as a means to sensitize the 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 at 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, as to him.

Admiring the efforts that ENDC put towards making the National Dialogue a success,



Parelek Chock

Addis Ababa University Student's Council Representative, Yishak Tesfaye, mentioned that youth need to play a lion 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 values 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 on 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 need to contribute its role in every possible ways.

Semera University Student's Council President, Abudi Mohammed Haji, on his part said engaging the youth in National Dialogue would allow 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 the society to clear the blurred perception towards some of the issues that are constraining the people to reach to an agreement. The National Dialogue commission should also organize various discussion forums on conflict ridden areas.



Ethiopia advancing in orofacial cleft treatment

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA-The tradition of hiding birth defect regarding orofacial clefts is declining in Ethiopia, Yekatit 12 Hospital Medical College said as it has treated several babies born with cleft lip and cleft palate.

Almost one baby out of 652 has this birth defect, the hospital disclosed while citing its research conducted in Addis Ababa.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Plastic Surgery Department Head at the Hospital, Dr. Mekonnen Eshetie said that the institution has treated some 200 babies born with cleft lip and cleft palate in 2023/24.

The tradition of hiding such birth defects is declining parallel to the growing number of patients coming to the hospital, he noted.

The hospital is now the most known Ethiopian infirmary receiving the largest

number of affected babies, according to him.

New born babies with Cleft lip and cleft palate needs dental and hearing treatments in which the hospital is delivering such associated services, he indicated.

Moreover, children at the age of toddler and above are being treated, Mekonnen said, adding that parents of the children have also been trained and advised.

If practitioners found a newborn baby with cleft lip, the plastic surgery will be done at the age of three months. However, he expressed that if the newborn baby has both cleft lip and cleft palate, then the surgery will be done after nine months.

Drug addiction and malnutrition of pregnant mothers are two major factors dominantly leading to cleft lip and cleft palate in Ethiopia, according to the Head.

Globally, one baby out of 700, born with Cleft lip and cleft palate, he added.

Foreign banks entry brings alternative services: *Experts*

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA - The presence of foreign banks in Ethiopia would play a big role in accessing alternative financial services and maximizing competition between local and foreign banks, said Economic Experts.

Approached by the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) Economic Experts stated that allowing foreign banks to operate in Ethiopia would bring several benefits. 'Such banks would greatly contribute to tackle foreign exchange crunch, enhance investment and use of technology, ensure financial accessibility and create jobs among others.'

Haramaya University Economic Lecturer and Researcher Assistant Professor Habtamu Legesse said that the foreign banks entry in Ethiopia would also lure anchor investors apart from boosting production and creating ample jobs.

Furthermore, the move would increase FDI and support to overcome economic challenges, he said.

"Still now, the bank accessibility in rural areas is low, thus, the foreign banks would ensure the overall financial accessibility."

Since the local banks are now providing loans to investors only, the foreign ones would pay heed to those who have not been benefited from such service, it was learnt.

He advised the local banks to extend



financial accessibility via mobile technologies rather than opening branches. Such effort requires huge preparations plus the national banks of Ethiopia should consider the adjustment of interest to encourage saving.

For his part, Hawassa University Marketing Lecturer and Researcher Prof. Birhanu Burji stated that foreign banks would bring high financial technologies to the sector. There is also a chance to receive all financial services at home. The competition between local and foreign banks would enable customers to get alternative or better services.

Accordingly, the government should devise limitation with directives or proclamations for local banks that might be forced to be out of the market due to foreign banks capital and technologies.

News

Russian Ambassador lauds ongoing corridor dev't in Addis Ababa

ADDIS ABABA - Russia's ambassador to Ethiopia Evgeny Terekhin hailed Ethiopia for its ongoing massive corridor development project aimed at transforming and uplifting the image of Addis Ababa.

Ambassador Terekhin also appreciated Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative to combat the impacts of climate change. According to the ambassador, the ongoing Addis Ababa corridor development project including the mega Chaka house project are anticipated to transform the face of the capital by meeting international smart city standards.

Approached by ENA, the ambassador noted that transforming Addis Ababa is paramount, considering the city's current burgeoning diplomatic significance.

"Addis Ababa has taken the third place in the world in terms of the number of diplomatic missions being located here. It is considered to be not only the diplomatic hub, actually the diplomatic capital of Africa, especially taking into account that the African Union headquarters, UN Economic Commission for Africa also situated here as well as many other international organizations."

However, Terekhin, who lived for many years in Addis Ababa, acknowledged the past controversies on the city's status as a political capital of Africa.

"A few years ago, there was a certain contradiction on the status of Addis Ababa as the diplomatic heart of Africa and its composition as a city compared with many of the capitals."

Currently, Addis Ababa has embarked on corridor development activities and the city administration has unveiled a lot of newly built roads and buildings.

Acknowledging the challenges associated with corridor development efforts particularly, its impact on livelihoods, Ambassador Terekhin hoped it would certainly enhance living conditions for residents and ultimately leads them into a better lives.

"The time has come to change the mode of living and the composition of the city. Of course, any change is a painful process. I understand it quite well, because, of course, it touches upon the livelihoods of many people. But what is painful today, and what is unusual today, and sometimes

even unacceptable to somebody today, tomorrow it will become desirable." To this effect, the ambassador expressed particular admiration for the ongoing Corridor Project and Chaka Project that are transforming Ethiopia's capital.

For instance, the ambassador admired the recently inaugurated road near the Russian embassy in Addis Ababa in the presence of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

"Of course, we admire and highly appreciate some of these projects, especially the Creditor Project or Chaka Project, which are now being realized here in the capital city. The road passing by our embassy was inaugurated just a couple of days ago, with the participation of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

It is a special reason for our pride because now when we are getting out of the gates, we are not getting into a village but a modern capital city. You may see that it is a great change."

The ambassador's remarks underscore Ethiopia's commitment to progress, ensuring its diplomatic legacy flourishes alongside a

modern and thriving Addis Ababa.

Speaking on the Green Legacy Initiative which was spearheaded by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Ambassador Terekhin stated the campaign has been becoming consequential to see climate-resilient Ethiopia.

He further appreciated the constructive position Ethiopia is taking regarding the burning issues of global character like climate change.

"We can mention the Green Legacy Initiative, put forward by your Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, which now is starting to serve as an example to many other countries on the continent. We can see from day to day that more and more countries are following the same pace and we appreciate Ethiopia's constructive position in different international arenas," Terekhin underscored.

Asked about Ethiopia's diplomatic approach and its contribution, he revealed the country's role is colossal in founding international and continental organizations.

"No so many countries in the world where you could find which have such a glorious diplomatic history behind," he elaborated.

Scholars eyeing public diplomacy ...

of Diaspora and other segments of the community to reinforce diplomatic engagements in addressing differences between the two sisterly countries.

Taking the experiences of various landlocked countries' seaport accession and related issues, he pointed out that stakeholder's concerted efforts are crucial to navigate the root causes of the differences between the two sides in a bid to promote cooperation and ensure lasting peace in the Horn of Africa (HoA).

"It is also highly critical to get rid of outdated diplomatic ventures and steadfast the modern diplomatic approaches that go along with the 21st Century through strengthening cooperation and partnership in the region."

Ethiopia has been taking win-win approaches aimed at ensuring common interest, he indicated.

Seconding the above rationale, Addis Ababa University Human Rights and Federalism Researcher Sisay Mengistie (PhD) stressed that the ongoing diplomatic efforts of both sides should focus on avoiding the escalation of the disagreement and using exhaustively peaceful avenues to restore their diplomatic ties.

He underlined the need to conduct meetings between Ethiopian and Somali scholars as well as diplomats residing across the globe with a view to maintaining peaceful relationships.

"Apart from promoting the people-to-people ties and socioeconomic significance in between, Ethiopia's quest for sea outlets will have a

paramount contribution towards ensuring peace and security for the region," he highlighted.

Commending Ethiopia's all-weather partnership with Somalia particularly during hard times, he called on the latter to go back to negotiating table.

He, moreover, urged both countries to turn a deaf ear to those who are trying to fuel conflict.

As to him, scholars, diplomats and others have to discharge their due role in settling the diplomatic row between the two countries

It is to be recalled that foreign ministers of both countries held the first discussion in Ankara, Turkiye, for mediation on the first date of July and scheduled to convene the second round dialogue in coming September.



Ethiopia ...

2023/24 fiscal year.

Briefing journalists yesterday, ECTA Director General Adugna Debela (PhD) said that this year's export volume has seen a 50,000 tons of coffee product increment compared with the same period last year.

According to the Director General, the country had secured 218 million USD by supplying 46,000 tons of coffee to the world market last June alone. Of this, 90 % of the activity was done through vertical integration strategy, he stated.

"Utilizing the vertical integration approach helps to provide world standard coffee to the international market, avoid bureaucratic red tape, and ensures farmers benefit. Though a number of challenges are existed such as the Red Sea problem, lack of containers, and logistics constraints, it has gained remarkable revenue from coffee even exporting through airlines cargo," he added.

Adugna remembered that some 1.42 billion USD revenue had been obtained last year from exported coffee. It means that this year's revenue is the first of its kind in the history of country's coffee export, he said.

He further stated that Saudi Arabia and China respectively have imported 55,000 and 25,000 tons of coffee in the just ended Ethiopian fiscal year.

Adugna also noted that the U.S, Germany, Belgium, Japan, Spain, and Saudi Arabia are the leading countries of Ethiopian coffee destinations. The Ethiopian coffee product is exporting to Middle East and Far East countries. Currently, Ethiopian coffee product is being exported to more than 60 countries across the globe.

Luis Nani hails Ethiopia's ...

Elucidating the way the visit helped him to understand the history and identity of Ethiopia, Nani mentioned that the people welcomed him warmly when he arrived in Addis Ababa.

He also learned that Ethiopian traditional dish is tasty and diverse.

"I have visited some historical places like the historic Adwa Victory Memorial Museum, National Museum and Ethiopian Air Force Headquarters and that was interesting," he said.

Nani also expressed gratitude to the people of Ethiopia for the love and respect they showed

him during the course of his visits.

He also said that he would like to share his experience to help Ethiopia achieve its aspiration in football sport.

"I came here to share my all experiences," he said, adding that he wants to motivate young players in Ethiopia and Africa as a whole.

"I want to know more about each African country. Coaches and young players want to become professional. To reach higher level, there are a lot of things we can give to them."

He said that he want to support and share his

football experience to Ethiopian footballers and Mechal sport club that invited him to come to Ethiopia in connection with the club's 80th anniversary.

The Former Portugal and Manchester United winger Luis Nani and Super Eagles striker Nwankwo Kanu were arrived in Ethiopia on 12th July 2024 to attend the 80th anniversary of Mechal Sports Club as guests of honor and held talks with the Chief of General Staff of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Field Marshal Berhanu Jula and other sport experts during their stay in Addis.



ATI unveils ...

The projects are aimed at ensuring a sustainable market, providing better production and agricultural inputs distribution as well as providing up-to-date information on market ties.

They will also enable farmers to provide products without any interference, in addition to strengthening the linkages between farmers and consumers of agricultural products, it was learned.

Opinion

Multiple Identities: challenges, opportunities

BY GETACHEW MINAS

Multiple identities may refer to several conditions in which an individual or entity acquires more than one personality. A person may have several distinctive identities. Psychologists refer to multiple identities which may relate to several personality situations. These conditions relate to a person having several personalities in different conditions. Each of these conditions has its own pattern of understanding and interacting of a person with members of a society.

In different countries, including Ethiopia, each and every person has distinctive identities that make up his personality. Every person has marks of association with several community members such as language, ethnic and gender. These marks are indelible from the person who is identified with them. Sociologists refer to multiple identities that play various roles within communities. They study persons who adopt different images in different situations, such as being parents, employee, friends, and community members. Each of these roles comes with multiple expectations and attitudes.

Multiple identities may also relate to the familiarity and understanding of individuals who belong to more than one cultural group. This may involve bicultural or multicultural persons who constitute several cultural norms and traditions. In Ethiopia, it may be difficult to identify an individual as having a single identity without being associated with certain cultural group.

As Ethiopians migrate out of their place of origin, they are bound to mix with other people of different traditions. Through intermarriage with different ethnic and tribal groups, they are bound to have children with mixed blood. These children are bound to have multiple identities and profiles. In the modern digital world, these multiple identities may be referred to as having different profiles across various neighboring communities within the country. With communal authorization, these multiple identities may be assumed for various purposes. In a few cases this may be linked to issues of fraud or protection.

In Ethiopia, a few but qualified persons may be entitled to multiple identities for literary and artistic purposes. Authorities in the field assert that in literature and the arts, actors or characters might have multiple identities for the purpose of acting on the stage. They also use these

identities in shows or presentations through the multimedia. They apply it as a narrative device to explore identities and transform actors into personalities. These process demands highly qualified directors of drama or theatre to be reflected on the stage. These directors take into consideration the capacity of the audience interested in the presentations.

The appreciation of the themes of the drama by the audience reflects the success of the director in charge. On the stage the audience may be confronted with multiple identities. These identities require understanding the specific context of the presentation. In other words, it is absolutely necessary to grasp the values and meanings of the drama in which “multiple identities” are used. This is crucial for interpreting the meaning and purpose of the presentation as accurately as possible.

The assessment of the capacity of persons with multiple identities is critical for the success of policy, program and project to address their interests or needs. In the case of Ethiopia, multiple identities may refer to the complex and multifaceted nature of the people. Ethiopian identity may be shaped by its diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural heritage. The country is home to over 84 different ethnic groups. Each has its own distinct values, culture, language, traditions, and customs. These factors are major indicators of diversity in various parts of the country. They reflect in a significant manner the various aspects of the identity of the country. These elements influence the social, political, and cultural dynamics of Ethiopia. They do reflect that the diversities are elements of unity among different ethnic, tribal, religious, traditional and cultural groups. They are all interlinked by traditional and modern means of political, economic and social factors that are crucial for the unity of Ethiopia.

Sociologists and other experts are of the opinion that the major aspects of multiple identities in Ethiopia are ethnic diversity, linguistic pluralism, cultural wealth, religious diversity, and historical identity. The country is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Africa. Each ethnic group has its own language that is spoken by people within its domain and beyond. This reflects that there is linguistic pluralism within the borders and across neighboring ethnic zones.

The Ethiopian Constitution recognizes all Ethiopian languages in the country with Amharic serving as the working language of the Federal government.

However, regional states have the right to establish their own working languages. This is just a reflection of cultural wealth enjoyed by all. Ethiopia has rich cultural heritages that include ancient civilizations, historical sites and religious traditions. Each of these heritages is an integral part of the national identity of which Ethiopians are proud.

They do reflect the pride of Ethiopians at different times in different parts of the country. They conduct periodic festivals accompanied by music and dance. They wear traditional attires that are colorful with significant variations across different regions. The music, dance, and colorful traditional clothes do reflect rich cultural variety and mixture within the country. Moreover, religious diversity is reflected in different regions of the country showing interreligious respect about which the Ethiopians are proud.

The country comprises of religiously diverse people, with Christianity, primarily Ethiopian Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic, and Islam. They also have traditional religions being practiced in different parts of the country. Religious activities and celebrations have a major role in the daily lives of Ethiopians. They do contribute to the cultural wealth of the country that attracts tourists and Ethiopians from different parts of the country.

Among the multiple identities in Ethiopia, the most significant and unique one is historical identity. Being one of the few African countries that successfully defended itself against colonialism, Ethiopia has become as source of national pride and inspiration. The Battle of Adwa in 1896, where Ethiopian forces defeated Italian invaders, is a source of national pride. The Ethiopians had also curtailed the Italian occupation of their country during WW II. They had repulsed the Somali invasion of 1977 in the eastern part of the country. This invasion was a devastating one in which civilians had been temporarily displaced from their place of residence. These incidents and other historical defense of the country proved that Ethiopians are great defenders of their freedom in all places at all times.

The invaders of various intent and colors have now designed new strategies of dividing the country along ethnic lines for the purpose of weakening it. This design helps the alien forces to indirectly control and exploit the natural resources of the country. They do this at the expense

of the Ethiopian people who are left to starve in internecine battles as a result of which they are forced to look for food aid from these external foes.

In the recent past, Ethiopian political structure has been a Federal system that is based on ethnic federalism, with regions formed mainly on ethnic basis. Experts think that this system has been designed to accommodate the ethnic diversity but it has also caused tensions, pressures, apprehensions and conflicts. The political system has been manipulated and influenced by ethnic affiliations, attachments and connections which have played a major role in governance and representation. Political scientists have been suggesting that these developments have led to challenges and opportunities. The challenges included ethnic tensions and conflicts which have been recurring, chronic and persistent issues that have sometimes escalated into violence. Consequently, balancing national unity with ethnic autonomy has remained a complex and intricate challenges for Ethiopian leaders.

There have been, however, opportunities that promoted the multiple identities of Ethiopians that could enhance a sense of “unity in diversity.” These conditions and circumstances would help in promoting inclusive governance. Inclusivity of all the diverse people of the country ensures equitable development. These situations might create favorable conditions that reduce ethnic tensions encouraged by alien forces. These forces would take advantage of ethnic conflicts to exploit the natural resources of a weakened Ethiopia. They continue to discourage and depress any attempt by the people to promote their unity.

Comprehending and appreciating the multiple identities of Ethiopia has become crucial for addressing the challenges the country has faced. Harnessing, binding and attaching its human and natural resources potential is a key for its amicable, congenial, harmonious and prosperous economic and social development. This is a crucial precondition for the coexistence of people with common history and multiple identities in Ethiopia.

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

Editorial

Backing access to sea is backing regional cooperation

The Red Sea has been a flashpoint of hostilities disrupting global commerce as state and non-state actors pit against each other in a proxy war. The strategic place has been the eye of the storm hosting the military bases of dozens of nations including heavyweight nations. Caught in direct and proxy wars, now the actors have been vying to control the area which is a significant lifeline of global trade. The growing confrontation and hostility pose a security threat to regional countries sending a solid signal to countries like Ethiopia that seats kms away from the sea albeit with no outlet.

The growing uncertainty hovering over the region mounts pressure on Ethiopia to look for alternative sea outlets and diversify port access. The increasing conflict in the region has already impacted international trade forcing operators to use long routes costing dearly and delaying shipments. This in turn affected economies as the world struggled to ensure a safe import and export process.

The security crisis in the Red Sea has delayed global maritime transport and impacted the East African economy. Simultaneously, the presence of foreign military forces along the Red Sea coastlines adjacent to East African countries is growing. This raises concerns about long-term peace in the region, especially since Ethiopia has lacked a sea outlet since 1991, reported the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported.

There is also a bad omen that the region is tattering into a more dynamic security situation. The looming threat appears to be more serious and harsh on landlocked nations like Ethiopia. Taking the fluid situation in the region into consideration, Ethiopia has been boldly pushing for securing a sea outlet and alternative port access through negotiations and bilateral cooperation.

The country has openly asked neighboring nations to consider its proposal but Somaliland responded positively with the nations entering an agreement thus after.

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

"Countries opposing Ethiopia's aspirations should reconsider the potential for cooperation. With a population of 120 million, Ethiopia's lack of access to the sea could lead to internal crises that would adversely affect neighboring countries," he warned.

"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."

In his last address to lawmakers, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said "We made our intention clear and asked our coastal neighbors to give us access and it was Somaliland that agreed to our terms, this does not mean Ethiopia is trying to harm the interests of Somalia. We could not have sent our troops to pacify Somalia had we been looking to destabilize Somalia," said Abiy. Regarding the quest for access to the sea, he added, "We are a great country and good partners. We always aspire to keep our relations on a win-win base."

True to the Premier's word, Ethiopia has been spearheading regional integration and the sea access deal is the hallmark of its efforts. In contradiction to naysayers and opponents of the accord, the deal will open a new era of cooperation. Collaboration and cooperation are the way forward to meet the growing socioeconomic needs. It is particularly a must in the Horn region where infrastructure is scarce and supporting the Ethio-Somaliland deal is a great impetus.



The Ethiopian Herald

Established in 1943

Published daily except Mondays
By The Ethiopian Press Agency

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The Ethiopian Herald

Opinion

The entry of foreign banks needs to be carefully assessed

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

Allowing foreign banks to operate in Ethiopia offers numerous advantages, including increased financial inclusion, enhanced competition, access to international capital, and improved financial stability. These benefits can significantly contribute to Ethiopia's economic development and integration into the global economy, provided that regulatory measures are in place to manage potential challenges.

If local banks in Ethiopia are to survive the influx of foreign banks, they need to reestablish themselves based on the directives of the NBE and relevant banking laws of the country.

The proclamation that allows foreign banks may subject local banks to a number of challenges.

Local banks may struggle to compete with the advanced technologies, global networks, and financial strength of foreign banks, potentially losing market share. Moreover, increased competition can lead to reduced profit margins for local banks as they try to match the services and pricing offered by foreign banks. On the other hand, the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) may face challenges in regulating and supervising a more complex banking sector with diverse foreign entities.

Ensuring that foreign banks comply with local regulations and standards can be difficult, especially if these banks operate under different international regulatory frameworks. Foreign banks might prioritize the interests of their parent companies or countries, potentially influencing local economic decisions and policies. There is a risk that foreign banks may repatriate profits to their home countries, leading to capital flight and reduced domestic investment.

The entry of large foreign banks can introduce systemic risks if these banks dominate the market and their failure impacts the entire financial system. Foreign banks might engage in riskier financial practices that are unfamiliar to local regulators, potentially destabilizing the banking sector. Foreign banks may face challenges in understanding and adapting to local business cultures, customer behaviors, and market conditions. Products and services offered by foreign banks may not always align with the needs and preferences of local customers.

Local banks may downsize or close branches due to increased competition, leading to job losses in the banking sector. While foreign banks may introduce advanced technologies, there may be a skills gap among the local workforce, necessitating significant training and development efforts. Foreign banks might exploit differences in regulatory frameworks between their home countries and Ethiopia, leading to regulatory arbitrage. This could give foreign banks an unfair competitive advantage over local banks that are strictly regulated.

The Government of Ethiopia might be forced to introduce several mitigating factors, including enhancing the capacity of the NBE to effectively regulate and supervise both local and foreign banks, developing regulatory standards that align with international best practices while addressing local market conditions, providing incentives for local banks to upgrade their technologies and services to compete effectively, encouraging partnerships and joint ventures between local and foreign banks to facilitate knowledge transfer and capacity building, implementing measures to manage and control the repatriation of profits by foreign banks. Ensuring that foreign banks operate in a manner that supports national economic goals and priorities is also very important.

Conducting thorough risk assessments and implementing robust risk management frameworks for foreign bank operations is also of critical importance. Nonetheless, developing contingency plans and crisis management protocols to address potential failures of foreign banks must also be seriously considered.

The implementation of the proclamation that allows foreign banks to operate in Ethiopia evidently presupposes several important factors. In the first place, both local public and private banks and foreign banks need to deploy a well-trained and highly skilled workforce that can work in the sector with the maximum level of efficiency and swift performance.

Local banks operating in Ethiopia need to take the option of joining and having access to the capital market that is under formation in the country. This will help to enhance their competitive capacity and crisis-free operation.

Ethiopian local banks have some level of access to ICT and have digitalized most of their activities through the use of ATMs and mobile banking as well as some level of AI, but they need to boost their capacity to the level of international standards if they wish to remain in the competitive market of the banking sector.

On the other hand, local banks need to put preferential interest rates to lure more customers and to avoid the influx of new customers to the foreign banks that are operational in the country. In addition, they need to devise pro-poor loan policies and revise their older loan systems that are based on collaterals as a means of reaching out to millions of customers.

The local banks need to conduct protracted marketing and promotion to introduce their new ways of doing business and their innovative ways of conducting a modern banking system which will ensure their ability to remain in the market.

Partnering and buying shares in foreign banks is another alternative option that

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

Business & Economy

Ethiopia's diverse efforts to bolster manufacturing sector, stimulate economic growth

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

It should be emphasized that Ethiopia has been playing a paramount role in taking the country to the next level of accomplishment putting a wide spectrum of fruitful approaches into effect. On top of that the private sector has been playing a large role in breathing new life into the country's economy in different shapes and forms more than ever before.

Reasoning from this fact, the country has been attaining the sought after goal and reaching new heights at the earliest possible time.

Ensuring the competitiveness and effectiveness of the manufacturing industry is critical to build a shock-resilient economy, the Ministry of Industry (MoI) recently said expressing its desire to reexamine the sector.

It is recalled that the MoI held a panel discussion in the recent past with relevant stakeholders on maximizing domestic production, export competitiveness and import substitution as well as scaling up industrial capacity and other related issues.

At the event, Industry Minister Melaku Alebel said that attention has been given to the manufacturing industry not only to create jobs, but it is considered as core sovereignty issue.

"Ethiopia has been heavily importing high-level food and food related items, clothing, chemical, engineering and metals from abroad and to balance the situation, the country prepared import substitution strategy."

So far, the country identified some 96 imported items to substitute in local capacity in the future and it has fully shunned importing some products and exporting these items to neighboring countries.

Melaku further noted that the "Made in Ethiopia" Movement requires investing in skilled labor force, quality inputs, infrastructure quality development, improving logistics systems, standardizing certification processes and others. The movement has been registering results in increasing products' quality and shed the light for the need for continued improvement via technical support, standardized production processes, and strong regulatory systems.

The export of goods, including oil seeds, crops, gold, and coffee, grew by 4% compared to last year's performance, generating more than 10 billion USD.

Ethiopia also saved 2 billion USD through import substitution in agriculture and industry, with over 40% of products now being produced locally. Banks registered a 24% profit increase, and savings accounts grew from 38 million Birr to 100 million Birr. Currently, 47 million people use mobile banking services, PM Abiy elaborated.

Over 3.8 million jobs were created, with



around 3.4 million locally and 332,000 abroad. Additionally, 60,000 citizens were employed through remote work.

Deputy Director General of Ethiopian Diaspora service, Belayneh Atnew revealed to the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) that this figure represents a 50% increase compared to the previous budget year.

"Over the past five years, we've seen an average of about 4 billion USD annually in remittances. This year's surge to over six billion USD is a promising trend for future remittance collection," Belayneh stated.

Noting that rise in remittances is not the only positive development; the deputy director said Ethiopian Diaspora Service has also been actively engaging diaspora members in the country's economic growth. Belayneh pointed out that 273 diaspora members have been engaged in various investment sectors.

Regarding expenditure and revenue, the government collected approximately 466 billion Birr and spent about 716 billion Birr, resulting in a budget deficit of 2.5%. However, contraband, illegal trading, and tax evasion remain major obstacles to tackling inflation.

The government collects taxes from 64,000 individuals and companies, amounting to 7% of the nation's GDP, and granted more than 10 billion Birr in tax exemptions for food items. The nation has not taken any commercial loans and has reduced its international debt to 17.5%, according to the premier.

The industrial sector also saw success, registering 10.1% growth and the production capacity of existing industries reached 30% due to critical government interventions. Under the "Made in Ethiopia" movement, over 390 factories commenced production, and 217 factories became operational in Tigray State.

The production of smart poles marks a significant milestone for Ethiopia's local manufacturing industry, which has seen growth from 30% to 40%, as said by the Ministry of Industry (MoI).

MoI Minister Melaku Alebel highlighted the government's focus on the manufacturing sector to enhance local production capacities and reduce import dependency through

reforms and policy frameworks.

The minister elaborated that the development of smart poles, a recent phenomenon in the country, has gone through various complex phases. He emphasized that this achievement is a major milestone for the manufacturing sector, demonstrating its capability and potential.

It also creates enabling environment for raising financial capital development and reducing risk. As to him, Capital market is "The New Territory to The Growth Momentum of Ethiopia" alike the homegrown economy, the system is designed to forwarding the national economy in the years to come.

Besides, he noted, the capital market allows private investors to utilize the system to assist the Ethiopian economic growth thereby facilitating the necessary requirements and special approach to attract foreign direct investment.

AXIS Co-Founder, Mark Duffy for his part said, "Capital market will benefit Ethiopia through sharing technology, experience, and knowledge from various companies. I have many years' experience in the area and have been sharing my knowledge to Ethiopia over some years in the past so as to encourage economic growth. In my country (Ireland) gaining a plenty of advantages following the utilization of capital market."

He advised that Ethiopia needs to careful preparations on the sharing of external experiences, and the likes to implement the capital market properly and ensure the national interest.

Ethiopia's Minister of Industry, Melaku Alebel, and Chairman of China International Development Agency, Luo Zhaohui held a productive bilateral discussion in Beijing recently.

During the occasion, the Minister firmly asserted Ethiopia's remarkable economic achievements in various fields, proudly stating that the country has successfully created numerous job opportunities for the youth.

Furthermore, the Minister underlined the priority areas where partners' intervention is crucial to address gaps, using Ethiopia's green legacy initiative as a prime example.

He also emphasized the importance of identifying and addressing global challenges through joint actions. Finally, he called upon partners, including China, to collaborate in addressing global challenges through coordinated planning and consultation. Luo Zhaohui on his part expressed China's strong commitment to supporting Ethiopia's economy across all sectors.

He noted that significant efforts have been made to train professionals, enhancing their capacity to play a leading role in strengthening Ethiopia's economy.

The government has been formulating viable policies that prioritize the private sector's economic engagement and pave the way for a competitive business environment, a noted economic expert said.

Global Chairman of Fairfax Africa Fund Zemedeneh Negatu recently told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the country is carrying out policy shifts to break up the monopolistic business model to competitive approach and to materialize economic stability.

The formulation of a viable policy framework is also a significant milestone that has played a huge role in Ethiopia's economic transformation and building a vibrant private sector.

Zemedeneh, an economist by profession, further noted that the country has untapped investment opportunities in agriculture, technology, infrastructure and other priority sectors that could lure the attention of foreign companies.

Commending the government's commitment to maximize the economic role of the private sector, he underscored that financial policy change is also critical to reverse the old model of easy money-profit making to a value added economic model. "Ethiopia has an untapped productive market potential, growing local market and affordable labor cost to attract private investment in the manufacturing industry."

Citing various countries' development experiences as benchmark, the economist stressed the need to strengthen the Public-Private-Partnership scheme as a key to enhance the product and productivity of the manufacturing sector and help it to grow from the current early stage of development.

"Ethiopia also requires a well-articulated education system and industrialization and infrastructure are also the hugely-contributing factors for a stabilized macroeconomic environment, to arrest the soaring inflations and help foreign investors to make the right decision.

According to Zemedeneh, the government is taking bold steps with various initiatives including the 'Made in Ethiopia movement' in a bid to attract foreign investors' involvement in Ethiopia's economy and pave the way for private sector development, promote import substitution and foreign exchange earnings.

Art & Culture

A pen devoted to blacks' freedom fight



BY ALEM HAILU G/KRISTOS

As part of my bid to introduce esteemed readers to prominent people across the globe, I have come across a young journalist Solyana Bekele from America.

She adores delving into black freedom fights and quests for democracy with a particular focus on the role of art in the resistant movement of black people especially in America and the Caribbean islands.

You are already familiar with the might of her pen as she demonstrated it dissecting the works of Bob Marley throwing light on his biography and subsequent articles of similar nature she contributed to *The Ethiopian Herald* recently.

In politics and social activism too, she has a pelted eye and a sharp mind that could influence the audience's mindset. Her writing knack carries readers away. I hope you will like the e-mail interview. Good read. Excerpts:

Brief us about yourself your upbringing and your lineage.

I was born and raised in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia until I turned nine and my parents decided it was high time we left for the perceived comforts of Western society. I was quite young when I left Ethiopia, but old enough to have an awareness and love of my Ethiopian and African identity. This was an identity that I thought would forever paint me as an outcast once I left home because I thought it meant that I would forever be untethered from the people I was familiar with. But it became something that made me connect to a people and a movement bigger than myself even though I was far from home.

Regarding your academic pursuit, what was it like? Were there ups and downs?

My long-term goal is to be a professor in Black or African studies with a focus on Black/African radical ideologies and movements. I'm currently a graduate student working on my Master's in Africana Studies at the University of Delaware, a step toward the long journey that is the path to a professoriate.

It is still somewhat early in my academic journey but like any other student, its ups and downs are marked by late nights of reading, dealing with the ambiguousness of the early days of research, and managing all that while working as a teaching assistant. I'm currently in the early days of researching for my thesis which will be about the Ethiopian Student Movement, examined under the framework of the Black Radical Tradition.

How and when did you join *The Burning Spear*?

I joined *The Burning Spear* newspaper through a mutual friend who thought I could



Journalist Solyana Bekele

contribute well as a proofreader. I joined back in March 2020, and about a year or so later became its managing editor and occasional contributor.

As the proud granddaughter of Kebede Anissa, a premier journalist known for coining "*Ethiopia Tikdem*," I'm excited by what seems like a continuation of his writing legacy be it in my academic or journalistic work.

Journalism and politics largely overlap. Besides, you are a social activist concerned about genuine freedom and democracy. Are these factors attributable to the facility of your pen as seen in *The Burning Spear*?

Journalism and politics indeed overlap. It was with that recognition I chose to do my bachelor's in political science with a minor in journalism at Hampton University. Being part of the *Burning Spear* (which is the official organ of the African People's Socialist Party) was an opportunity for me to merge these two interests of mine in a practical sense.

The Burning Spear's journalism is explicitly written for the edification and in the interest of the African working class, wherever they may be located. It centers the African working class's perspective and serves as its

voice in an effort to build toward a genuine revolutionary freedom and democracy—much like the Black Panther Newspaper, or Marcus Garvey's the Negro World did in their respective times.

Could you highlight the salient issues about black resistance and quests for freedom you carried across via your probing articles?

As per *The Burning Spear's* credo, with my articles I talk about the various issues in politics, films, or our own economic work in the aim to center the Black/African working class perspective. For example, I recently wrote a review of the movie "They Cloned Tyrone," to see how the various ways the film explores and comments on the quotidian Black exploitation manifest in the very food we eat, the products we put on our bodies, and the communities we live in. I also did a film review of "Oppenheimer," raising some of the issues with the apologist or sympathizing narrative it was, unwittingly or not, peddling about the creator of the atomic bomb.

Thro

On African Studies, what are its pros and cons? Africa has not yet obtained democracy and freedom in the true sense of the word. There is even a saying white

colonizers have ceded their place to black colonizers in Africa or colonialism has given way to Neocolonialism. What is your take on this observation?

I think this is a very accurate description of the current issues African people face within the continent. The very same economic and political issues that Kwame Nkrumah raised in his book *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* is still very much a reality. Nkrumah says that a neo-colonial state is a state that is "in theory, independent, [with] all the outward trappings of international sovereignty," but "in reality its economic system and thus its political policy are directed from outside." Though Nkrumah centers his study in Africa, this is not an African problem but a situation within which any colonized country finds itself.

For some, the era of independence marks the end of colonial economic exploitation in Africa, but a serious inquiry into the economic relationship that Africa is still locked in paints a different picture. Though Africa is among the richest, if not *the* richest, in the amount and diversity of natural resources, African countries still have not "caught up" with the west in any sense of the word. African countries are forced to export unfinished goods and resources (at low price points), to be manufactured into finished products and sold at higher price points in the West and back to African countries, as well. A significant part of this disparity is the fact that the very land from which these invaluable resources are exhumed are not owned by African people—or if it is, it's owned by neo-colonial compradors with no interest in using the riches of the land for collective self-determination.

For Nkrumah, a united socialist Africa was the solution to finally untethering this dependent relationship that the current economic relationship puts Africa under. To this many, including me, agree and see as the only viable option to real progressive change.

Expound on the role of art in the freedom fight.

Art and culture are important fronts in any liberation struggle. Art and culture can be used as a reflexive act of looking into oneself and one's people, and by doing so light the spark and awaken the consciousness needed to bolster a liberation struggle. For African and colonized people, this is a paramount task because colonialism brought with it cultural imperialism—the disruption and sometimes extermination of African people's cultures in various forms. In the wake of this devastation, a liberation struggle must necessarily incorporate a cultural component of its overall struggle because it implicates the very being and identity of any given group of people.

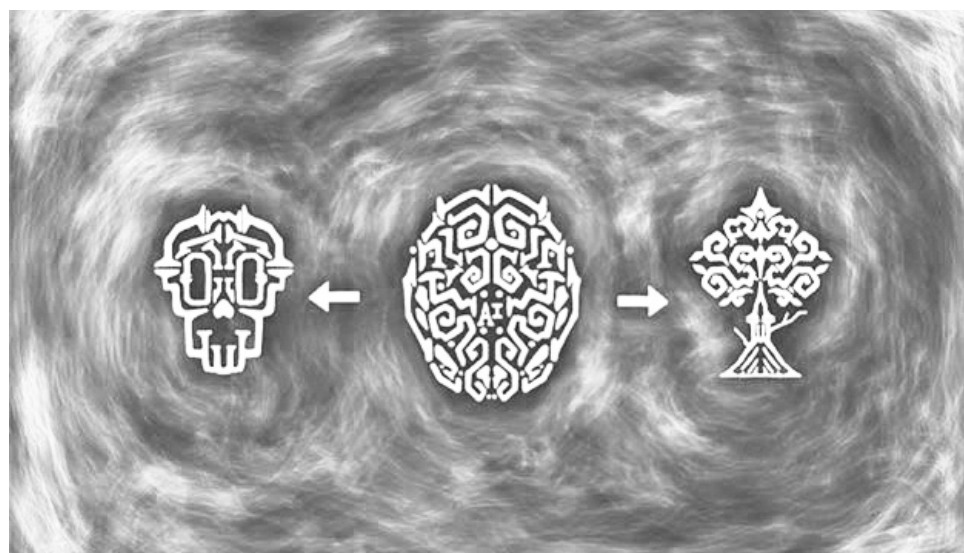
Global Affairs

Is Artificial Intelligence the way forward or backward?

Contrary to popular belief, artificial intelligence has been a cornerstone of technological progress for much longer than the past few years. Computer scientist Alan Turing brought forth the concept of computers solving complex human problems with his invention of the Turing Machine in 1936. This machine provided solutions to a seemingly infinite number of problems, yet the technological limitations of the early 1900s proved that this number was indeed very finite. Flash forward to the 2020s, artificial intelligence has become a widespread practice, impacting different fields such as music, art, science, forensics, finance, agriculture, and many others. Although artificial intelligence has been hailed as the future of human progress, it also poses a risk to this future due to its significant carbon footprint.

AI systems require lengthy periods of training and development in order to be effective for use by the general public. This developmental period is costly in terms of its electrical output. According to the Earth.org article “The Green Dilemma: Can AI Fulfill Its Potential Without Harming the Environment?”, the computing power that it takes to train AI systems doubles every 3.4 months and AI is expected to contribute to 14 percent of global emissions by 2040. Furthermore, studies show that the carbon footprint from training AI systems is larger than the combined outputs of planes and cars. The staggering emissions caused by AI have a direct effect on the greenhouse effect, climate change, and global warming, all of which pose a great risk to the environment.

In addition, artificial intelligence has the



ability to amplify existing environmental concerns. One such example is the issue of electronic waste, or E-waste. E-waste refers to the discarding of electronic items when they are damaged or at the end of their lifespan. According to “The Growing Environmental Risks of E-Waste”, this discarded material can leak toxic chemicals into the environment, such as lead, mercury, and arsenic, which are linked to severe health issues such as cancer, miscarriages, and brain damage. The article, “The Environmental Impact of AI” states that this is a serious issue as E-waste “is a significant environmental problem as it contributes to soil, water, and air pollution. It is essential to develop sustainable and responsible practices for the disposal and recycling of electronic waste”. Although many don’t see any potential drawbacks when it comes to AI, there are real consequences that can have extremely detrimental effects on the environment. E-waste is linked to damage in ecosystems as well as

losses in biodiversity. This can cause changes in our access to water, food, and air. It is imperative that we find a way to mitigate the effects of E-waste as it can greatly impact the longevity of Earth.

Furthermore, artificial intelligence promotes hyperconsumerism worldwide which leads to larger amounts of waste in landfills. Hyperconsumerism is the consumption of goods that exceed the basis of necessity. This can be seen particularly in social media, in which algorithms select advertisements based on a user’s activity. AI is specifically linked with fast fashion, which is an environmental problem in its own right. The Harvard Magazine article “AI and Consumerism” states that corporations often use “black-box algorithms” which employ a lack of transparency regarding pricing and origin to deceive consumers into purchasing products. This lack of transparency makes users believe that they

are purchasing goods in an efficient way, encouraging them to purchase beyond the point of necessity. As seen in fast fashion, these goods are often made using low quality materials and cheap or even illegal labor. These goods are easily damaged and therefore, end up in landfills and necessitates the consumer to buy more, which repeats the cycle.

Despite all of these drawbacks, it is important to note that artificial intelligence has the ability to mitigate the environmental issues that it exacerbates. As discussed earlier, a primary consequence of AI is the waste it produces. AI has the ability to help in global waste management. The article “9 Ways AI is Helping to Tackle Climate Change” states, “Greyparrot, a software startup based in London, United Kingdom, has developed an AI system that analyzes waste processing and recycling facilities to help them recover and recycle more waste material”. This system has the potential to significantly elongate the longevity of the planet as waste heavily contributes to the release of methane and global warming. Systems like this can recycle landfills, clean oceans, reduce pollution, and therefore benefit local flora and fauna. Most importantly, AI is helping the world to lower carbon emissions. Carbon emissions are responsible for much of the world’s environmental crises and are linked to a vast array of health problems. The same article states that AI is being used to help companies track their carbon emissions and provide them with ways to reduce them altogether by 20-30 percent, although artificial intelligence has the ability.

SOURCE: - (INTER PRESS SERVICE)

The entry of foreign banks ...

banks in the country can try. Although professionals in the banking sector have the liberty to have access to better working conditions and remuneration, local banks need to develop management and staff retention policies to retain their experienced managers and line staff.

As part of their development plan, banks in the country need to engage in developing investment schemes for local industries that are operating in agriculture and the manufacturing sector.

Conducting regular and extensive research on the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of fiscal and monetary policies of the country will help them to discern their growth areas and weak links in a more proactive manner. They need to forecast local and global financial situations to avoid any possible financial and monetary crisis that they can encounter.

Among other things, domestic banks can employ well-trained and skilled consultants that can conduct monitoring and evaluation of their activities as a means of conducting fair, clean, and policy-compliant activities.

Local banks need to invest in digital banking technologies to offer online and mobile banking services, improving convenience and accessibility for customers. They should be able to collaborate with fintech companies to introduce innovative financial products and services, enhancing customer experience and operational efficiency. They can develop and offer tailored financial products and services that meet the specific needs of local customers.

Local banks may implement customer relationship management (CRM) systems to better understand and serve customer needs, enhancing satisfaction and loyalty.

Introducing a wider range of financial

products, including loans, insurance, investment services, and wealth management, to attract different customer segments is useful for expanding the social base of their operations.

Focusing on providing specialized services for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), a crucial segment in Ethiopia’s economy. Offering competitive interest rates on loans and deposits, and reducing fees for banking services to attract and retain customers.

Utilizing a deep understanding of the local market conditions, culture, and customer preferences to offer relevant and effective banking solutions is of critical importance. Maintaining flexibility and agility to quickly adapt to changing market dynamics and customer needs is an important strategy to be implemented by local banks. Building a strong, trustworthy brand by providing reliable and transparent services will be

instrumental in marketing and image-building for local banks. Local banks need to actively seek and incorporate customer feedback to continuously improve service quality and address concerns.

All in all, the prevalence of peace and stability in the country is the most important precondition for the operations of both local and foreign banks. The government and the entire population in the country need to work together to ensure lasting peace and stability by conducting peaceful dialogue with all concerned to ascertain favorable working conditions not only for local and foreign banks but also for the peaceful development of the national economy.

The entry of foreign banks into the Ethiopian financial and fiscal system needs to be carefully assessed and managed to ensure that the economic sovereignty and national interest of the country are best assured.

Law & Politics

Championing regional integration through AfCFTA

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

Achieving regional integration is a key to meet the growing demand development. In the Horn of Africa where infrastructure is scarce, fostering integration is the magic bullet to spur growth in the region. Every nation in the region must play a role in creating a better environment for one another in terms of socio-economic well-being.

Cognizant to the umbrella 2063 Agenda of the African Union, regional blocs of the continent have been designing their agenda suitable to their geopolitical area. The Horn of Africa, in particular, has been working on bringing a sense of brotherhood and co-existence among the regional countries to resolve their common challenges. To achieve the sought-after objectives, countries in the region have started implementing some bold activities in relation to developing infrastructure and economic partnerships with one another.

There are some specific strides that nations in the Horn have taken in the past few years. The recent agreement between Ethiopia and its counterpart South Sudan to develop infrastructures like the construction of a road that connects the two countries can foster the two nations' overall partnership. And, it is also a leap forward to integration.

As Ethiopia is one of the largest nations in Africa in terms of its economy, geographic cover area, and population, the country shares its borders with six different neighbouring nations. Such a bond of connection pushes Ethiopia to exert its maximum effort to develop connectivity.

The nation has been a bold player in the region to foster regional integration. A simple example that Ethiopia has been doing could be its initiative to address the power demand of the region through its gigantic electric power plants such as the Abbay Dam. It distributes electric power to its neighboring nations though some are not even able to pay their bills. Ethiopia is also a pioneer in providing standard transport services through its flag carrier, the Ethiopian Airlines.

On top of that, all the actions taken to enhance the connection among regional states in infrastructure, energy, and other things lead to a more comprehensive way of doing business and socio-economic partnership. To this end, Ethiopia is now working on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to be effective in the nearest possible time.

In fact, AfCFTA is an arrangement between two or more countries which



seeks to create conditions for the free flow of trade amongst themselves. As to documents, the AfCFTA is designed to establish an integrated African market that enables the free flow of goods and services across Africa's internal borders. It also aims to boost the continent's trading position in global markets.

Making the road to regional integration smooth, Ethiopia took paramount steps. It fosters the region in trade connections through initiatives like AfCFTA. As such initiative needs infrastructure, Ethiopia leads the way in enhancing its infrastructural connectivity among the regional nations. To become a hub of economic and trading fairs, countries like Ethiopia make sure that they provide the necessary infrastructures for their customers to trade easily.

In the past few years, the government of Ethiopia has been working tirelessly on infrastructure, both internal and trans-boundary. The country has been working with Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, Eritrea, and many others regarding transport and energy sectors. Ethiopia's commitment is still at its peak to put its fingerprint on regional integrity. Such acts of commitment reciprocate Ethiopia with numerous economic advantages in the coming few years.

Accordingly, having stayed with local media, Melaku Desta, African Trade Policy Center Coordinator at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), stated that Ethiopia is actively pushing for regional integration not only in terms of trade but also several areas such as infrastructure and energy;

and it can be described as even a leader of the African integration journey. Ethiopia can be seen as an active participant and a leader in the journey towards African integration.

This involves efforts to improve and expand physical connectivity such as roads, railways, ports, and energy networks that link Ethiopia with its neighbouring countries and the broader region. By investing in and enhancing infrastructure, Ethiopia aims to facilitate smoother trade flows, foster economic cooperation, and strengthen political ties with its regional neighbours, Melaku elaborated.

He further explained that historically, Ethiopia has not been extensively engaged in regional integration efforts. Its approach to such initiatives has often been characterized as reluctant. However, over the past six years, Ethiopia has significantly shifted its stance on regional integration by actively leading both the negotiations and the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement.

"Ethiopia is actively pushing for regional integration not only in terms of trade but also in several areas in terms of infrastructure, energy trading and others. I think right now, Ethiopia can be described as an active participant and even a leader of the African integration journey"

Participation and implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offer immense benefits to Ethiopia, he noted. The AfCFTA aims to create a favourable business

environment for Ethiopian businesses within the country and to unlock market opportunities across the entire continent, which comprises 1.4 billion people with a collective spending capacity exceeding 3 trillion US dollars. Accordingly, companies deciding to invest in Ethiopia and establish a production plant can benefit significantly.

They are not limited to the capacity of the Ethiopian market alone, the coordinator said, adding that through the AfCFTA, they can produce goods for a vast market across Africa without facing restrictions, duties, tariffs, or other barriers such as quantitative restrictions or quotas.

For his part, Yonas Bekele, Transport and Infrastructure Economist at ECA, emphasized that infrastructure integration in Africa is now more crucial than ever.

It serves to recalibrate Africa's growth strategy by boosting intra-regional trade, Yonas added, "We know that infrastructure development and integration can act as a catalyst for trade innovation and income improvement in the continent. But the importance of infrastructure development for intra-regional or integration in the continent has been duly recognized by our member states, including Ethiopia."

"Ethiopian infrastructure success includes, developing Ethiopian airlines, upgrading the network of trunk roads, rapidly expanding access to water and sanitation, including the ongoing corridor development that elevates the city's reputation serve as a cornerstone for the construction of the modern urban centre," according to Yonas.

INTERNATIONAL News



Rwandan President Paul Kagame

Kagame wins Rwanda vote in landslide - partial results

Rwandan President Paul Kagame is on course to extend his 24-year rule by another five years in a landslide victory, with most of the votes counted from Monday's election.

He has 99.15% of the vote so far, with about 79% of ballots counted, partial results announced by the electoral commission show.

The 66-year-old again faced no meaningful opposition, with leading figures banned. His two opponents shared less than 1% of the vote.

Mr Kagame thanked Rwandans for their trust in an address at his Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) party headquarters.

"These are not just figures, even if it was 100%, these are not just numbers. [They] show the trust, and that is what is most important," Mr Kagame said.

His opponents - environmentalist Frank Habineza and ex-journalist and government adviser Philippe Mpayimana - have 0.53% and 0.32% respectively.

The full provisional results are due by 20 July and final ones by 27 July.

The results come as no surprise.

They mirror the 2017 election's outcome that had the same candidates taking part - which Mr Kagame won with 98.8% of the vote.

At least three aspirants were disqualified from running, including [Diane Rwigara](#), an outspoken critic of Mr Kagame.

The electoral commission says 98% of the more than 9.5 million eligible voters took part in the elections.

They were voting for a president and 53 legislators.

Elections for 27 special seats meant for women, young people and people with disabilities will take place on Tuesday.

Mr Kagame has been the de-facto leader of Rwanda since the end of the 1994 genocide and president since 2000.

Rights groups accuse him of curtailing freedoms since taking office, while his supporters say he had presided over economic growth and helped end ethnic divisions.

Source: BBC

Leaving Syria's civil war to be a mercenary in Africa

For more than 10 years, Abu Mohammad has been living in a tent with his family in northern Syria, displaced by the long-running civil war. Unable to earn enough to support them, he, like hundreds of others, has decided to travel via Turkey to Niger to work as a mercenary.

Abu Mohammad (not his real name), who is 33, and his wife have four young children - they have no running water or toilet and rely on a small solar panel to charge his phone. Their tent is sweltering in summer and freezing in winter, and leaks when it rains.

"Finding work has become extremely difficult," he says. He is a member of Turkish-backed opposition forces that have been fighting President Bashar al-Assad for more than a decade.

The faction he works for pays him less than \$50 (£40) a month, so when Turkish recruiters appeared offering \$1,500 a month to work in Niger, he decided it was the best way to earn more money.

He says Syrian faction leaders help facilitate the process and after "faction taxes and agents" he would still be left with at least two-thirds of the money. "And if I die in battle [in Niger], my family will receive compensation of \$50,000," he adds.

Violence in West Africa's Sahel region has worsened in recent years as a result of conflict with jihadist groups. Niger and its neighbours Mali and Burkina Faso have all been affected - and all three countries have experienced military coups in the past few years, partly as a result of the instability.

Abu Mohammad plans to leave his family in Syria while he works as a mercenary in Niger. Abu Mohammad is not alone in wanting to go to Niger. Ali (not his real name), who lives in a tent in rural Idlib, joined Syria's opposition forces 10 years ago when he was 15. He says he is paid less than \$50 a month too, which lasts him five days. He has had to borrow to support his family and sees Niger as the only way to pay off his debts. "I want to leave the military profession entirely and start my own business," he says.

And for Raed (not his real name), another 22-year-old opposition fighter, going to Niger feels like the only way to build up enough money to "achieve my dream of marriage and starting a family".

Since December 2023, more than 1,000 Syrian fighters have travelled to Niger via Turkey, according to the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), which monitors the conflict in Syria through a network of sources on the ground. They tend to sign up for six months, but some have now extended the contract to a year.

The Turkish connection

Before they go, the official line is that the men will be protecting Turkish projects and commercial interests in Niger.

Turkey has extended both its political influence and business operations in the region, selling equipment such as drones to Niger to help it combat militant jihadist groups. It is also involved in mining the country's natural resources, which include gold, uranium and iron ore.

But the recruits know that despite what they are told, when they arrive in Niger, the reality can be very different.

The SOHR and friends of mercenaries who have already worked in Niger told the BBC that Syrians had ended up under Russian



command fighting militant jihadist groups in the border triangle between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso.

Niger's democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum was overthrown a year ago, and since then the junta has cut Western ties.

"Niger started looking for new allies and found a suitable alternative in Russia," explains Nathaniel Powell, a researcher on the Sahel at Oxford Analytica. "Russian weapons are cheaper than Western ones. Russia also offers military resources and training and shows a willingness to adapt to local requirements without imposing strict conditions, unlike its Western counterparts."

After the coup, demonstrators in Niger showed their support for Russia's presence in the country.

The prospect of fighting under Russian command poses a dilemma for Syrian fighters who are opposed to the Syrian regime because Russia has been a staunch supporter of President Assad.

"We are mercenaries here and mercenaries there," says Abu Mohammad, "but I am on a Turkish mission, I will not accept orders from the Russians."

But he may not have a choice, as Raed acknowledges. "I hate these forces but I have to go for economic reasons," he says.

They are all still waiting to sign their contracts which they will do "just before or during travel", says Raed. He explains that the process is secretive and he knows one man who was imprisoned by a Syrian opposition faction "for leaking some details of the operation in Africa and the registration mechanism".

The recruits we spoke to said their faction leaders had told them that a Turkish company called SADAT would look after them once the contracts were signed and would be involved in arranging their travel and logistics.

About five years ago, Abu Mohammad went to Libya where he worked as a mercenary for six months and says that was also arranged by SADAT.

The SOHR also claims that, based on information from other mercenaries who have already been to Niger, SADAT is involved in the process.

We have not been able to independently verify these claims. We contacted SADAT, which vehemently denied recruiting or deploying Syrian fighters to Niger, saying the claims "had no connection with the truth... we do not carry out any activities in Niger". It also said it had no activities in Libya apart from a "military sport" project more than a decade ago which it had had to withdraw from because of the crisis there.

The company added that it did "not provide services to non-state actors" but rather provided "consultancy, training and logistics services to armed forces and security forces in the field of defence and security according to the Turkish Commercial Code".

But private companies are used by the government in Ankara to recruit and send Syrian mercenaries to Niger, according to the SOHR. The organisation's director, Rami Abdul Rahman, accuses the Turkish state of exploiting Syrians with no money and dire economic prospects.

The BBC put these allegations to the Turkish ministry of foreign affairs, but we have not received a response.

This is not the first time the Turkish government has been accused of sending Syrian fighters abroad. Several reports, including one by the US Department of Defence, have documented Turkish-backed Syrian fighters in Libya - Turkey previously acknowledged that Syrian fighters were present there but did not admit recruiting them. It has also denied that it recruited and deployed Syrian mercenaries to the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region in the Caucasus.

Life in Niger

Conditions in Niger mean that staying in touch with families in Syria can be very difficult. When the recruits arrive their phones are confiscated, according to Abdul Rahman of the SOHR. And Abu Mohammad says that his friends in Africa "can contact their families once every two weeks, sometimes less".

He adds that they can't speak to their wives or parents themselves, and communication has to go through their superiors in Niger "who reassure the fighters' families that they are fine".

Ali adds that some of his friends who travelled to Niger told him they spent most of their time "inside military bases, waiting for orders to fight".

And not all of them make it home. According to the SOHR, nine have been killed in Niger since December 2023. The bodies of four of them have been returned to Idlib but have not yet been identified.

Raed and Ali say their families do not want them to go, so they may end up lying and pretending that they are going to Turkey to train for a few months.

Abu Mohammed's family is not keen on the idea either. "If I had the means to live a decent life, I wouldn't do this kind of job if you offered me a million dollars," he says, but adds: "If my son asked me for a bike, I could never afford it - it's these things that are pushing me to go."

Source: BBC

Planet Earth



Indigenous soil conservation practices: A path to greener future

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

Soil conservation is a set of practices that protect the soil from degradation. Viewing the soil as a living ecosystem is essential for soil conservation, which involves returning organic matter to the soil continuously. Soil conservation is similar to preventive maintenance for a car.

Deforestation often leads to large-scale erosion, soil nutrient loss, and, in some cases, total desertification. Techniques such as crop rotation, cover crops, conservation tillage, and planted windbreaks can improve soil conservation, impacting erosion and fertility.

African cultivators use various techniques like crop rotation, crop mixtures, manure application, protection of nitrogen-fixing trees, terrace building, pitting systems, drainage ditches, and small dams in valley floors to conserve soil and water and prevent soil degradation.

Similarly, Ethiopians employ indigenous techniques to prevent soil degradation. Terracing, contour ploughing, crop rotation, fallowing, mixed cropping, surface mulching, weed heap, manure, agroforestry, and field boundaries are essential physical and biological indigenous soil water conservation mechanisms.

Implementing best management practices (BMPs) such as agronomy, organic fertilizers, agroforestry practices, minimum soil disturbance, area closure, water management, hillside terraces, fanya-juu terraces, soil bunds, stone bunds, afforestation, and reforestation are crucial mitigation measures.

Various conservation techniques like bench

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Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative has fostered an environment conducive to the dissemination of indigenous knowledge on soil preservation across the country

terraces, soil bunds, stone bunds, check dams, trenches, preserving area enclosure, and re-afforestation are critical in preventing soil erosion and protecting soil fertility in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia has various Indigenous Knowledge systems across different regions. The Konso people, in particular, have unique indigenous knowledge that they use for weather forecasting, traditional medicine, soil conservation, and environmental protection to increase productivity.

Knoso terracing is one of several indigenous soil conservation practices found in Ethiopia. The Konso people live on the outskirts of the Rift Valley in southern Ethiopia. Konso farmers have developed a terracing system in which they build walls or steps on the slopes of hills to create level areas for cultivation. This practice slows down the flow of water and reduces soil erosion.

In Konso, soil and water conservation practices include terracing, agroforestry, intercropping, crop rotation, and conservation agriculture. Konso farmers have developed a system of terracing that includes building walls steps on the slopes of hills to create level areas for cultivation.

The Konso Cultural Landscape is an arid property in Ethiopia's Konso highlands that includes stone walled terraces and fortified settlements. It is a spectacular example of a living cultural tradition that has endured for 21 generations (more than 400 years) and has adapted to its dry, hostile environment.

This indigenous soil conservation practice has gained worldwide recognition. The town and surrounding villages were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2011 as a cultural landscape due to their unique cultural traditions and significance to the Konso people.

Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative has fostered an environment conducive to the dissemination of indigenous knowledge on soil preservation across the country. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, along with First Lady Zinash Tayachew, recently planted trees as part of this initiative.

Community members from Harar and Konso also took part in the planting activity

on the terrace they built inside the Chaka Project, using their indigenous skills to preserve soil. In this regard, the eucalyptus trees in the area have been replaced with indigenous tree seedlings.

During the planting, the premier stated that this year's Green Legacy program will be conducted differently than previous ones. Individuals from Harar and Konso worked on terraces within the Chaka Project to prevent soil erosion in the surrounding area. According to the premier, this has helped to address the challenges that had previously made it difficult to plant seedlings in the area due to soil erosion.

He also emphasized the importance of expanding similar indigenous knowledge that exist in other parts of the country, praising Harar and Konso farmers for completing the terrace work in such a short period of time. Activities are underway to increase Addis Ababa's forest coverage to 30%, with the goal of changing the city's image.

Ethiopia has been conducting extensive seedling planting activities for the past five years. The country has so far planted 32.5 billion seedlings. The country's goal for this year is to reach 40 billion seedlings out of a total target of 50 billion. As a result, the nation is aiming to plant 7.5 billion seedlings this planting season.

Ethiopia's forest cover increased from 17.2 percent in 2019 to 23.6 percent by 2023.

People worldwide, especially in Africa, should learn from Ethiopian ingenious soil conservation practices to preserve the earth we live on. By replicating these practices globally, we can work towards a sustainable future.