



The Ethiopian Herald

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Addis to Warsaw connectivity elevates partnership

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

ADDIS ABABA- The commencement of the direct flight from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to Warsaw, Poland, elevates the socio-economic and people-to-people partnership between the two nations, it was stated.

The Ethiopian Airlines Group announced the start of the direct flight between Addis Ababa and Warsaw on Monday.

Delivering an opening speech at the inaugural ceremony, Mesfin Tassew, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO said that *Ethiopian* is celebrating its inaugural flight to the historic city of Warsaw, Poland, home to the largest castle in the world, the Malbork Castle.

Mesfin also noted, “Our two countries have built strong

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Ethiopia, Somalia agree to pursue dialogue

• To meet in September

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- The foreign ministers of Ethiopia and Somalia have agreed to pursue dialogue to resolve their issues and ensure

regional stability, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) announced.

In a press release issued yesterday, the MoFA detailed the deliberations between Ethiopian

Foreign Affairs Minister Taye Atske-Selassie and Somalia’s Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Minister Ahmed

See Ethiopia, Somalia ... page 3



Ergoie Tesfaye (PhD)

Ministry eyeing collaboration, innovative approach to pressing challenges

Page 3

African experts advocate long-term benefits of atomic energy

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA - With 600 million people in Africa lacking access to electricity, atomic energy experts are urging governments to actively seek sustainable solutions, highlighting the sector’s long-term benefits. The experts; however, acknowledged that the path to generating nuclear power on the continent may be long and challenging.

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Nigerian Atomic Energy Commission Chief Executive Officer and AFRA National Coordinator for Nigeria, Yusuf Amino Ahmed, emphasized that Africa should invest in atomic energy, similar to other continents.

See African experts ... page 3



News



Gov't allots over 1 bln Birr to treat acidic soil with lime

BY MENGESHA AMARE

ADDIS ABABA- The government has allotted over one billion Birr to treat acidic soil with limestone, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) said, adding that it is a crucial step for enhancing *Meher* agricultural production and productivity.

In an interview with the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), MoA Public Relations and Communication Chief Executive Kebede Lakew emphasized the importance of diagnosing acid-affected soil using lime to boost production and productivity during the *Meher* farm season.

The government has allocated approximately 1.4 billion Birr to purchase lime for diagnosing acidic soil, thereby increasing agricultural output. Efforts to purchase lime from producing factories are well underway, and these factories are being made easily accessible to farmers to facilitate lime procurement.

Acidic soil diagnosis for the *Meher* farm season is actively taking place in five states, including Amhara and Oromia, covering about 100,000 hectares of land. Kebede highlighted that special emphasis is being placed on inputs that significantly enhance agricultural production, such as soil fertilizers, artificial fertilizers, crop protection from locusts and diseases, agricultural mechanization, and the use of select seeds.

He also mentioned that various measures are being implemented, including the use of select seeds, fertilizers, and other agricultural inputs.

“Since acidic soil treatment requires substantial financial resources, the MoA is collaborating with the Ministry of Mines and the Ministry of Finance. As a result of this coordination, the Ministry of Finance has allocated over one billion Birr.”

Soil acidity comes from the build-up of hydrogen and aluminum ions in the soil, which pushes out essential nutrients and hampers plant growth. Agricultural limestone, or lime, is an alkaline substance that can reverse the process. On average, five quintals of lime is required to treat a hectare of acidic soil, it was learned.

Education quality ushers Africa's global competitiveness

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA-Education International Africa has urged governments across the continent to prioritize and ensure quality public education, which according to it, is the only way to remain competitive globally.

Education International Africa Director Dennis Sinyolo (PhD) told *The Ethiopian Herald* that Africa needs quality education to remain competitive on the international stage. Children across the continent attend schools to access quality public education, but this can only be achieved if governments emphasize education and allocate adequate budgets to the sector.

According to Sinyolo, Africa's education quality remains low due to numerous challenges, including a lack of proficient teachers, insufficient training, inadequate infrastructure, and low investment. Many African governments are not investing sufficient budgets in education. For example, the United Nations system stipulates that countries should allocate 6% of their gross domestic product (GDP) to education, but many African countries falls short of this benchmark.

The director further stated that although Ethiopia allocates at least 20% of its national budget to education, the country



Dennis Sinyolo (PhD)

still needs to invest more. Several factors hindering education quality in most African countries, including low monthly salaries for teachers, unsuitable working conditions, sporadic conflict, low-standard schools, and insufficient numbers of proficient teachers, he elaborated.

“Proper planning can play a significant role in ensuring quality education by bringing together key stakeholders including civil societies, organizations, academicians, and others to tackle challenges collectively.”

Conducting research and properly utilizing

evidence is critical to bridging gaps in the education sector. Without adequate financing, even the best education policies or plans will not be effective. Therefore, Africa needs to address legislative and constitutional issues to realize quality public education, he emphasized.

Although the quality of education and the quantity of well-equipped schools and well qualified teachers has steadily increased since the onset of the colonial period, there are still inequalities evident in Africa's existing educational systems based on region, economic status, and gender.

Sidama readies 285 mln seedlings for GLI 2024

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- Over 285 million seedlings have been prepared for the Green Legacy Initiative (GLI) 2024 program, as disclosed by Sidama State's Agriculture and Natural Resource Bureau.

The Bureau's Head, Memeru Moke, told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the state has readied approximately 285 million seedlings out of the planned 300 million saplings. He emphasized that food self-sufficiency and a climate-resilient economy can be ensured through the proper implementation of forest development activities and the Green Legacy Initiative.

Mentioning the state's progress, Memeru indicated that Sidama has planted over 850 million seedlings since the initiative's inception, with an 85% success rate. The state's capacity for preparing seedlings has increased from 57 million to 300 million. “However, due to the emphasis on quality in the 2024 program, the state plans to plant 300 million seedlings.”

The head further stated that the GLI 2024 also prioritizes planting seedlings that contribute to food self-sufficiency. Of the 300 million seedlings set to be planted, 285 million are already prepared, and around 22 million saplings have already been planted.

Preparations for the plantation have been finalized, with about 11,000 hectares of drilled land ready. Several activities aimed at benefiting farmers through the duplication



of fruit seeds and planting improved seeds are underway. Last year, over five million avocado seeds were planted, and 3.7 million avocado seedlings are prepared for planting

this year.

The state expects to plant around 300 million seedlings in this year's Green Legacy Initiative, Memeru concluded.

News

Ministry eyeing collaboration, innovative approach to pressing challenges

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA- Addressing global pressing challenges requires collective efforts and innovative solutions to ensure a bright future for all human beings, the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA) stated.

The Global Citizen Summit 2024 commenced yesterday in Addis Ababa, focusing on climate change, health, digital economy, entrepreneurship, peace and conflict resolution, illegal migration, and the empowerment of women and children.

Speaking at the occasion, MoWSA Minister Ergogie Tesfaye (PhD) stated that global health crises, climate change, social inequality, peace and security issues, and the digital environment require collaborative

efforts paired with innovative solutions to secure a sustainable future for humanity.

“While transforming global thought, we must acknowledge the significant challenges that Ethiopia, Africa, and the rest of the world are facing. Despite progress, Africa and Ethiopia still struggle with access to quality healthcare and the burden of infectious diseases.” She emphasized the importance of working together to develop sustainable healthcare solutions.

Ethiopia, like many other countries, is experiencing the devastating impact of climate change, which is why the country has taken the initiative to plant 32 billion seedlings over the past years, Ergogie elaborated.

Regarding peace and security, the Minister noted that Ethiopia has faced significant

challenges in recent years. “To overcome conflicts, we must address their root causes, promote dialogue and reconciliation, and ensure peace-building efforts.”

OYES Global Foundation Executive Director Kemal Abdella also spoke at the event, stressing that fostering global partnerships is critical to addressing emerging issues. Establishing platforms for collaboration is essential to tackle common challenges.

“Collaboration, dialogue, and shared goals are lasting solutions for societal challenges. This forum will enable diverse voices from across the world to form partnerships.”

According to Kemal, youth from more than 30 different countries participated in the forum and deliberated on various major issues to provide appropriate solutions.

African experts ...

The CEO further noted that the establishment of the African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development, and Training related to Nuclear Science and Technology (AFRA) also aims to create synergies in financial and expertise capacities.

“Africa has the potential to leverage nuclear science and technology for economic development in various countries. Therefore, we must enter into cooperative agreements with all African member states,” Ahmed stressed. He highlighted that these agreements aim to use nuclear science and technology across different fields, including agriculture, human health, water resources, and environmental protection.

The expert pointed out that Africa is losing significant resources due to the absence of nuclear energy. In agriculture, for example, the continent faces substantial post-harvest losses. “The best way to address this is by utilizing nuclear technology radiation. In the medical sector, nuclear technology is already being used for therapy and diagnosis.”

According to him, AFRA members are committed to continuing to finance projects and international cooperation could help African countries realize their nuclear schemes. “For instance, the cooperation agreement between Ethiopia and Russia is a constructive step toward achieving atomic energy in Ethiopia. China is also collaborating with African countries in this sector.”

AFRA National Coordinator for Ethiopia Abeba Getu mentioned that Ethiopia is actively supporting the AFRA’s progress and realizing its plans for atomic energy. “Ethiopia is working on 29 projects with AFRA, focusing on the peaceful application of nuclear science. Human resource capability building is another area of cooperation that Ethiopia is involving.”

Abeba added that a significant number of Ethiopians have been trained with AFRA’s support.

Ethiopia, Somalia agree ...

Moallim Fiqi, facilitated by the Turkish government.

The statement noted that the ministers met in Ankara and had a candid, cordial, and forward-looking exchange concerning their differences, exploring perspectives

towards addressing them within a mutually acceptable framework.

Both Ethiopia and Somalia reiterated their commitment to the peaceful resolution of differences and expressed their appreciation to Türkiye for its facilitation and constructive

contributions. They also expressed gratitude to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for initiating this dialogue.

The two ministers agreed to meet again in Ankara on September 2, 2024, for a second round of discussions, the release remarked.

Addis to Warsaw connectivity ...

economic and diplomatic ties, fostering collaboration in various sectors including trade, tourism, and cultural exchange. This new route will further strengthen our bilateral relations, opening new avenues for cooperation and growth.”

The CEO further mentioned that Warsaw will be Ethiopian Airlines’ 24th destination in Europe and more than 135 destinations globally, adding, “This expansion marks a significant milestone in our continuous efforts to connect Africa to the rest of the world, enhancing our global network and facilitating the movement of people and goods across continents.”

“Our expansion into Warsaw is a testament to our belief in the immense potential of Poland and its thriving economy,” Mesfin stated.

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Polish Ambassador to Ethiopia Przemyslaw Bobak stated that such direct flights connect people. “This type of connection brings societies closer together, including ordinary people, politicians, artists, and the business community.”

The ambassador also acknowledged the existing partnership between the two countries. “We have always been very good

friends, and our political, economic, and people-to-people contacts are positive. The flight will help us make it even stronger.”

Speaking of people-to-people relations, Ambassador Bobak mentioned that Poland has many good universities and foreign students who are skillful and competitive. “Those who want to deepen their academic knowledge in our academic institutions are welcome to join them.”

He added that the Polish Government offers special scholarships for second-degree students. “There are many young Ethiopians who apply and are able to get this scholarship.”

UN launches global campaign to enhance road safety

ADDIS ABABA- The United Nations launched a new global road safety campaign to improve traffic safety and create inclusive, safe and sustainable streets.

Starting in New York, the campaign will run through 2025, reaching approximately 1,000 cities in more than 80 countries through billboards, social media and other platforms.

Under the motto *MakeASafetyStatement*, the campaign will also amplify the core messages of the New Decade of Action for Road Safety, which aims to halve the number of road-related victims by 2030.

“Road safety is not high enough on the political agenda in most countries. While we know the remedies to road crashes, action is lagging behind,” UN Special Envoy for Road Safety, Jean Todt, said.

“With this campaign, together with the celebrities that are joining us, and our

partners JCDecaux and Saatchi & Saatchi, we are trying to revert this and mobilize the political will that is needed to increase actions and financing to save millions of lives,” he added.

Thus far, 14 celebrities, including tennis legend Novak Djokovic, Oscar-winning actress and UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Michelle Yeoh, and supermodel Naomi Campbell, have pledged their support to campaign.

Each contributed their own statement, such as “I drive slowly” or “I don’t drive under the influence.”

At a press briefing at UN Headquarters in New York, Todt highlighted that road accidents are the “number one killer” for individuals aged 5 to 29, with the vast majority in low- and middle-income countries.

He noted that each year, 1.2 million people

die on the road, and a further 40 to 50 million are injured, many seriously.

“It is a burden for the victims [and] for the family, but it is also a high cost for the countries,” Todt continued, adding that the “prescriptions” for this issue include education, communication, law enforcement, alongside quality of roads, and vehicles.

As a motor racing executive and former rally car co-driver, Special Envoy Todt highlighted that simple measures like fastening seatbelts in both front and rear seats or wearing a helmet could significantly improve safety.

Additionally, drivers and riders must refrain from using drugs, alcohol, or phones while operating a vehicle, and should avoid speeding.

The campaign launch follows the recent adoption of a resolution by the General

Assembly to improve road safety worldwide.

Adopted last week, the resolution calls for increased efforts to reduce road deaths and injuries by implementing the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030.

It urges Member States to ensure that road safety becomes a “political priority,” inviting those that have not yet done so to “consider adopting comprehensive legislation on key risk factors” such as the non-use of seat belts, child restraints, and helmets, as well as drinking and driving, and speeding.

Member States are also encouraged to create “ministerial coordination mechanisms”, notably among the health, transport, education, infrastructure, interior, and environment ministries, to address cross-cutting issues, ENA reported.

Opinion

Syndicate Loan

BY GETACHEW MINAS

A syndicate loan is a loan made available to a single borrower by a group of lenders. The lenders work together to provide funds for a borrower. This kind of loan is mainly used for large-scale financing needs of an individual.

The need for such a borrower would be difficult for a single financial institution to handle alone. Such huge loans may be needed by major corporations involved in big projects. These projects are mostly large infrastructure undertakings, or huge capital expenditures in industrial or agricultural ventures. A single borrower may also apply for loan from a single lender, which is the major modality of accessing fund from financial institutions in Ethiopia.

For multiple lenders the loan is provided by a group or syndicate of banks or financial institutions. Each of these institutions contributes a portion of the total loan amount required by a single borrower. Such a borrower is normally engaged in huge investments in different sectors of the Ethiopian economy. The borrower may also be engaged in a huge investment in a given sector only. The borrower may be a joint operator of activities in collaboration with other investors in a variety of activities.

A borrower accessing syndicate loan is required by law to enter an agreement with the lenders. Despite having several lenders, there is one common agreement that determined the terms and conditions of the loan. This precludes different interpretation of the agreement by the parties to the loan. A common loan agreement prevents a waste of time caused by misinterpretation of a clear and objective contract. This is a wise strategy in keeping litigations at bay.

This enables focusing on the implications of a clear and objective loan agreement by its signatories. In fact, there are only two parties to such an agreement and these are the borrower and the syndicate lenders or financial institutions. This is a lesson to be applied by all Ethiopian banks when handling syndicate loans, if there are any.

It seems that most borrowers in the country are looking for funds only to supplement costs of projects already underway. These may be called marginal borrowers whose need may be satisfied by a single lending institution.

Furthermore, funds are to be released at different stages based on certificate of performance approved by inspectors of the lending institutions. No fund is given to the borrower in lump sum at once without periodic performance of work. This requires work plan that is agreed upon by both the lenders and the borrower. The work plan shows project activities with agencies responsible for implementing them. It also indicates the time span and persons

Such a borrower is normally engaged in huge investments in different sectors of the Ethiopian economy. The borrower may also be engaged in a huge investment in a given sector only

responsible for each activity. The plan shows the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of project activities. Based on M&E, low performance and failure to fulfill project objectives lead to strict measures by the Ethiopian financial authorities on the person responsible for underperformance. If there is failure in achieving projects, this indicates abuse of funds borrowed from the financial institutions. Failure in performance of bank financed projects has to be immediately corrected before the next round of releasing fund. In this way, financial institutions prevent abuse of syndicate loans provided to an implementing agency or individual borrower.

Syndicate loans are closely checked by financial inspectors based on agreements signed by the lenders and the borrower. Inspection takes place in line with program of project implementation by a borrowing enterprise. Syndicate loans may be inspected by lending institutions through joint team of inspectors. Each lender will have to assign its inspector to the team to ensure the safe performance of the syndicate loan. Inspection report is written jointly by inspectors representing their specific lending institution.

The joint report guarantees that the syndicate loan is used by the borrower as per the agreement they entered into. Any loan performance should be checked against agreed framework that guides periodic activities of the borrower. Any digression of project activity has to be reported to the lending syndicate before it is too late to take immediate actions for correction. The lending community believes in the saying that "a stitch in time saves nine." In other words, errors have to be corrected in time before they go out of reach.

Initially, a syndicate loan requires a lead arranger or lead banks or underwriters who are appointed to coordinate the loan. Representing the lenders, they are authorized to negotiate terms and conditions with the borrower. Usually, the lead arranger is entitled to take on the major share of the loan and conducts the administrative duties and tasks. "Lead banks" or other financial institutions pledge to buy all the unsold shares in an issue of new shares. The issues are guaranteed success as the "underwriters" will buy whatever is not sold in the market.

These banks and underwriters coordinate the syndicate loan to be provided to the single borrower. Of course, all single borrowers may not be successful in their enterprises and may fail to meet their obligations of paying back the loan. Taking the experience in Ethiopia, there is a risk of default by the borrower due to unforeseen circumstances. This risk is spread among several syndicate lenders. Risk sharing is, therefore, expected for several reasons.

The borrower may be facing shortage of productive inputs for the production of goods and services. The borrower may not be in a position to employ much needed skilled workers within the country. There may be lack of knowledge of what the consumers need both at home and abroad.

The markets may be highly competitive, making prices lower, causing concern for the borrower who invested in the home country. This situation may not be conducive for single producers who started business by borrowing from syndicate lenders. The borrower may face the risk of default which is spread among all the syndicate lenders. However, the exposure to such risk is shared by all lenders. Individually, the syndicate financial institutions involved face lesser risk of default by the borrower than a single lender. If there is any such opportunity in the Ethiopian financial institutions, the borrower will be a beneficiary of diversified financing. A single borrower benefits from accessing a larger amount of capital with more favorable terms. This situation reflects the competitive nature of the syndicate lenders.

The syndicate loan process mainly involves mandate, information, syndication, documentation and disbursement. The borrower may mandate one or more financial institutions to arrange the loan. The mandated bank may define the terms and conditions of the syndicate loan. It also arranges for the transfer of loan to the borrower based on the agreements entered. In case of default, the bank takes immediate legal action against the borrower as experienced in Ethiopia. The mandated bank is also accountable if it fails to take immediate action against a defaulter.

However, it takes into consideration the reasons that forced the borrower to fail in fulfilling his/her obligation. If the reasons

for the failure of repayment of debt are acceptable by the syndicate, the modality of loan payment may be adjusted to the reality. However, such decisions have to be based on strategic information that covers the real situation regarding the ability of the borrower to design a project with its implementation modalities.

The decision on the syndicate loan is also based on the analyses of economic and social environment in which the loan is offered to the borrower. The capacity of the borrower to face unforeseen challenges in the process of production and marketing is also analyzed. All these and other situations are taken into consideration by the syndicate lenders to minimize default by the borrower. Also, the loan arrangers prepare detailed information regarding the financial status of the borrower.

This information shows the project details and the purpose of the loan. Those who arrange the loan also invite other banks to join the syndicate. They are required to be committed to providing a certain portions of the loan. Of course, the loan agreement is documented as a legal one. Also, other related documents are finalized and signed by all parties involved, including the borrower and the lending institutions.

After the loan agreement is finalized and documented, the process of disbursement follows. The loan funds are disbursed periodically to the borrower according to the agreed terms. Any breach in this process is illegal and the upset and disturbed party may be compensated. Syndicate loans are mainly and commonly used by large enterprises or corporations.

This loan is also used by governments to fund various development projects. These projects may be derived from long-term development plans of the governments. The syndicate loans may be used to finance these projects provided that the repayment of loan is fully guaranteed by the borrower. Also, project developers ensure effective implementation by assigning efficient managers.

Similarly, private entrepreneurs are given the opportunity to access syndicate loan for financing project activities. This loan may be used to fund significant and complex projects in any sector of the Ethiopian economy. The financial institutions in Ethiopia may have to provide syndicate loans to individual borrowers engaged in huge investments in different sectors of the economy.

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

Editorial

Keep fighting the good fight against climate change

Ethiopia is putting forth its utmost effort to address climate change, mitigate the adverse consequences of climatic variability, and contribute its share to green growth and the green economy.

Mainly, by initiating and implementing various policies and strategies, such as the Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) Strategy and the Green Legacy Initiative, among others, and investing hugely in clean energy projects that are central to averting climate change related challenges, the people and government of Ethiopia are working diligently.

Accordingly, as a result of the persistent endeavors carried out over the past five years, essentially, in its Green Legacy Initiative, Ethiopia is witnessing encouraging progress. Following the annual all-embracing reforestation programs that were being implemented over the last five consecutive years, it has been possible to bring about tangible results in rehabilitating degraded lands and increasing the nation's forest cover.

As various reports indicate, during the last five years of the Green Legacy Initiative, more than 32 billion tree seedlings were planted across the nation. Ethiopia's forest cover has improved greatly as a result. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (Ph.D) revealed the good news recently at the pre-launch program of the Green Legacy. He said the encouraging activities of the last few years have brought about concrete results. Ethiopia's forest cover has stood at 23.6 percent mark in 2023 from a 17.2-percent in 2019.

Enunciating a plan to plant 7.5 billion seedlings in this year's major rainy season, the Premier emphasized the need for further strengthening and sustaining the efforts so as to rehabilitate degraded lands, re-green Ethiopia, and promote a green climate-resilient economy. The result of such endeavors knows no bounds.

Concurrent with its Green Legacy Initiative, Ethiopia has also devised a long-term net-zero and climate-resilient 2050 strategy, and is working to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, which will enhance its ability to plan for de-carbonization of the economy. In the same way, it is investing hugely in developing its untapped water resources and promoting clean energy, not to mention the Abbay Hydroelectric Dam.

Noticeably, Ethiopia understands the growing burden of climate change and its devastating impacts. Further, it realizes the unparalleled burden that developing countries have to shoulder.

It is an open secret that these days, the threats of climate change are increasing at an alarming rate and are felt among the global community. At present, it is common to learn about unequalled incidents and experience which has a direct bearing with the impacts of climate change such as shifts in temperature and weather patterns, increased rainfall, extreme floods and droughts, and many more calamities.

The situation is worsening and devastating when it comes to developing countries that have the least capacity to invest in adaptation measures.

Considering this, Ethiopia is working determinedly to promote climate change adaptation mechanisms not only within its own territory but also in its neighboring countries. By doing so, it is playing an exemplary role in initiating and implementing ambitious climate change activities to prevent climate change and minimize the burden of the problem. It will further strengthen its efforts and apply every means to contribute to reducing global carbon emissions to net zero because each and every effort can make a big difference.



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Office of the CEO

Tel. 011-126-42-22

Fax. 251-011-156-98-62

email- epa@press.et

Advertisement and Dist.

Department

email: etpresspromotion@gmail.com

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

Telegram :- 0976084707 - press

Editor-in-Chief: Worku Belachew

email- workubelachew@press.et

Address- Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-city

Woreda - 05, House No----

Tel- +251 111 26 41 98

Managing Editor: Wakuman Kudama

Email: wakuma220@gmail.com

Deputy Editors-in-Chief:

Alem Hailu

Elizabeth Mengistu

Zekarias Woldemariam

Desta Geberehiwot

Daniel Beyene

Website: www.press.et

email: ethiopianherald@press.et

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The Ethiopian Herald

Opinion

Green Legacy Initiative a practical tool for promoting unity in Ethiopia

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

Part -I

The Green Legacy Initiative (GLI), launched by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, aims to combat deforestation and climate change by planting billions of trees across Ethiopia. Beyond its environmental goals, the initiative also serves as a powerful tool to promote national unity.

The GLI has mobilized millions of Ethiopians from various regions, ethnicities, and backgrounds to participate in tree-planting activities. This collective action fosters a sense of shared responsibility and national pride.

The act of planting trees together symbolizes a collective effort to build a sustainable future, transcending ethnic and political divides. It serves as a unifying activity that brings people together for a common cause.

As the author has previously mentioned that the initiative is instrumental in creating employment opportunities in nursery management, tree planting, and forest management, benefiting communities across the country and reducing economic disparities. It serves as a means of battling poverty in households and communities.

Improved environmental conditions lead to better agricultural productivity, water conservation, and overall quality of life, which can alleviate tensions and promote social cohesion.

The GLI promotes environmental education and awareness, encouraging citizens to appreciate and protect their natural resources. This shared understanding of the importance of environmental stewardship can strengthen national unity and solidarity.

Involving young people in the initiative fosters a sense of responsibility and unity among the next generation, ensuring long-term commitment to both environmental conservation and national cohesion.

The initiative respects and integrates traditional ecological knowledge from various ethnic groups, promoting cultural appreciation and unity. Tree-planting events often coincide with cultural celebrations and festivals, enhancing the sense of community and national identity. The Ethiopian government's inclusive approach to the GLI, involving local communities, NGOs, and international partners, ensures broad-based support and participation.

The decentralized implementation of the GLI allows regional administrations to tailor the initiative to their specific needs, fostering a sense of ownership and cooperation across different regions.

Planting trees offers a wide array of social and psychological benefits that contribute to individual well-being and community cohesion. Here are some key advantages: Engaging in tree planting can significantly reduce stress levels. The act of gardening and being in nature helps lower cortisol levels, which are associated with stress.

Being around greenery and participating in outdoor activities can boost mood and reduce

symptoms of depression and anxiety. Natural settings provide a calming effect that can improve overall mental well-being.

Planting trees provides a tangible sense of accomplishment. Watching a tree grow and thrive due to one's efforts can enhance self-esteem and give a sense of purpose. Knowing that planted trees will benefit future generations can give individuals a sense of legacy and long-term impact, fostering a sense of fulfillment.

Tree planting often involves group activities that encourage social interaction. These shared experiences can strengthen community bonds and foster a sense of belonging. Participating in tree-planting initiatives can bring together people from diverse backgrounds, promoting inclusivity and mutual understanding.

The physical activity involved in planting and caring for trees provides a healthy form of exercise, which can improve overall physical health and fitness. Spending time outdoors while planting trees increases exposure to sunlight, which boosts vitamin D levels and improves physical health. Tree planting can serve as a practical educational tool, raising awareness about environmental issues and the importance of sustainability. Participants can learn valuable skills related to horticulture, teamwork, and project management.

Trees improve the aesthetic value of neighborhoods, making them more pleasant places to live. This can enhance residents' satisfaction and pride in their community. Trees improve air quality by absorbing pollutants and producing oxygen, contributing to better respiratory health for the community.

Trees often hold cultural significance and can be a source of identity and heritage for communities. Planting trees can help maintain these cultural connections. Caring for a living tree can create a strong emotional bond between individuals and their environment, fostering a greater appreciation for nature.

Tree planting is a simple yet powerful activity that yields significant social and psychological benefits. It enhances mental health, fosters community cohesion, provides physical exercise, and contributes to a better quality of life. By engaging in tree-planting activities, individuals and communities can create a positive impact on both their immediate environment and their well-being.

The people of Ethiopia are still using traditional self-help activities which are based on pulling human resources together to accomplish individual and community activities which may include agricultural activities like weeding, building houses and other types of activities. In this sense planting trees in the context of National Green Legacy Initiative through collective and united effort of the people of Ethiopia is not an entirely new phenomenon.

When Ethiopians of all walks of life come together every year to plant billions of trees and will also use the occasion as developing and rallying behind common narratives that would strengthen their unity towards their socio-economic development.

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

Business & Economy



Farmers expressed their dismay over the devastation of the enset plant caused by harmful bug infection



Due attention to the East African remarkable crop: *Enset*

BY ANTENEH YILMA

Agriculture is not just a means of producing food; it is also an art form. When dedicated farmers tend to their farms, the resulting produce is just as beautiful as a decorated design of traditional clothing. This is especially true for the *Enset* Plant, which has been cultivated for over 10,000 years in Ethiopia. It's the only edible species of its kind in Africa and possibly the world.

Today, this crop serves closet of life yielding multiple purposes, providing food and nutrition security, cash crops, and environmental conservation for over 30 million people in the South, Southwest, Central, and Oromia regions, expanding towards the Northern parts and that of East Africa as a whole.

Homeland of over 120 million people, Ethiopia, is luckily enriched with abundant natural resources that gear its development towards inclusive prosperity. What is needed is seeing things with opened eye and giving due consideration if the target is to dump poverty and ensure development.

It is a trend often times being said that Ethiopia is full of resources. But those resources have not been utilized fully for growth and development. Still we have remained with not unleashing the potential in different aspects for example agriculture including crops, plants, animals, mineral and others.

Until recently *Enset* was a crop for which less attention rendered comparing to its diverse purpose as a means of food source with different nutritional value. Other indigenous plants, animals or crops have been lost due to various natural phenomenons which posed disasters, but *enset* resists drought and sustains itself for long and consumed both by human and animals.

So far, *enset* was not known that it is such significant crop which is eaten by both human and animals. Even there was

an attitude in which regards the crop as useless with no advantage and because due attention was not given by concerned bodies; but nowadays, it is being studied and tremendous results are being released on its sustainable agro ecosystems resilience, agronomy and variety improvement, *enset* processing technology, value addition and marketing of indigenous food products and other aspects.

Traditionally, people have wondered how a single plant like *Enset* can feed thousands. Some have even used lyrics to celebrate *Enset* as a wonderful, all-purpose plant given by Almighty God to humanity and when the pertinent officials know about its value, they will never refrain to reward the farmers.

Enset products, along with its different Ethiopian cultural food counterparts, for example, in the Kembata area (Atakana, Bilambilo, Mucho) and the Sidama area (Bursame, Chukame, Omolcho), and other areas, are very unique in their kind and nutritional content. They are used as a main dish. All *Enset* cultural food counterparts in the Kembata, Gurage, Hadiya, Silte, Wolayita, Sidama, Sheka, Gedeo, and Oromia areas are not only mentioned as a food, but also as a rich source of carbohydrate starch, fat, and unique amino acid proteins that satisfy for a long time once eaten.

Enset is much more accessible to the stallholder in the area than other crops due to its various food alternatives. Currently, *teff* is extraordinarily priced at over 10,000 Birr per quintal, while a single *enset* costs up to 1,500 birr and provides an abundance of products such as kocho, bu'la, ha'micho, leaf for sell and animal feed, fiber and composting. This affordability enables the farmers to access *enset* products and also profit from selling them. Additionally, from existing data sources, *enset* makes a substantial contribution to the national agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP),

as illustrated in the table below.

Generally, *enset* is needlessly neglected that should never be neglected, with too much high economic and nutritional value in east Africa. Therefore, immediate concern by all stakeholders should be given to rescue *Enset* from an epidemic (*Enset* bacterial wilt) that has been tearing farmers. It is also mandatory to enhance the productivity of *enset* since it is a crop that competently answers the quest of the nation's food security.

If all stakeholders give due attention to

the crop scale upping the product and productivity of *enset* will be possible. Attention can be rendered in terms of for example, encouraging value additions of *enset* products like making processing *enset* flour for the bakery to prepare cake, cookies and best bread serving as a delicious diet for diabetic patients with low glycaemic index or gluten-free bread as comfortable as bread baked from that of the 'teff' flour.

It is recently proved that, *enset* can play the role of being a super food both for Ethiopians and foreigners.

Table: Trends in *enset* contribution to national agricultural GDP

Year	Nominal Agricultural GDP (Billion Birr)	Value of <i>enset</i> produced (Billion Birr)	Share to the nominal Agricultural GDP (%)
2012/2013	251.80	110.75	43.98
2013/2014	267.80	33.69	12.58
2014/2015	274.00	227.42	83.00
2015/2016	573.10	241.21	42.09
2017/2018	600.90	295.73	49.21
2018/2019	624.00	335.49	53.76

Source: Estimation adopted from data of Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia

During my trip to the Guraghe zone (eastern and western parts); I was invited to attend an innovation platform organized by EIAR and Wolkite Research Center. There, I learned about the *enset* plant and farming system, which are endangered by *Enset* Bacterial wilt infections, where a farmer lost up to 150 matured *enset* plants- which is a great economic loss after nurturing the crop by a farmer about six to seven years (pictures in below).

The occurrence of the disease on *enset* has been well established since 1938 in Ethiopia, according to professionals. Despite many efforts to maintain the natural balance under

control, the disease pressure has reached its climax since 2000. As a result, this strategic crop and its natural farming system are observed to be in a diminishing state. It is necessary to give urgent attention to the farming system and productivity, as it is threatened by the rival bug.

The government is currently striving for several development actions, in which *enset* is considered as a strategic commodity that opens windows of opportunity to invest in the *enset*-based farming system. It appears too late and much effort is needed to exploit the untapped and forgotten resource.

Art & Culture

Musical life devoted to black African women (Judy Mowatt)



BY SOLYANA BEKELE

Judy Mowatt's album "Black Woman:" an ode to African women, everywhere

When discussing the objectives of her musical career, Judy Mowatt says, "I wanted to express *myself* and the kind of songs *I* wanted to sing." This, for her, meant centering African women's experiences in her works and explicitly stating "for you I dedicate my song" in her 1980 solo debut album "Black Woman."

With this realization, Mowatt wanted her first solo album to be dedicated to African women. She says "when I look at slavery, and I see the degradation and I see the pain that my mothers and foremothers suffer, the "Black Woman" album came forth out of all of that experience."

Judy Mowatt before *Black Woman*

By 1980, Mowatt had already toured the world many times over as one of three vocalists of the I Threes—the two others were Marcia Griffiths and Rita Marley who were also artists in their own right.

Judy Mowatt toured for the albums "Natty Dread," "Survival," and "Uprising," to name a few and, as someone who ascribed to the Rastafarian faith, saw the tour as more of a spreading of the ideals and teachings of Rastafarianism through reggae music.

For Mowatt, and the Wailers overall, music wasn't simply a means of having a good time and reveling in escapism. In fact, it was quite the opposite.

Mowatt says, "When you release a song, sometimes it'll go somewhere where you'll never be able to go. It goes ahead of you." Music was a means of instilling a collective consciousness among the dispersed African Nation.

As part of this mission, reaching the African audience within the United States was an important goal for the Wailers. So much so that in 1980, at a time when Bob Marley and the Wailers were world-famous artists, they decided to open for the Commodores—a band that most argue, under normal circumstances, would've been an opening act for the Wailers.

Reggae's role in African resistance

As a genre, reggae aspires to discuss



material conditions of the African working class under colonialism—through music influenced and inspired by African beats—while also calling for revolution.

In the third track "Slave Queen," Mowatt repeats the lines, "slave queen. African queen...war queens, remove the shackle from your mind," and, "consider your beautiful richness, your quality."

Mowatt not only uplifts African women to realize their individual quality, but also actively calls for them to shed the mental manifestations of colonialism (the idea of freeing oneself from "mental slavery" was also a staple in the chorus of "Redemption Song" by Bob Marley).

This album was part of a plethora of reggae albums of its time that critically spoke of and explicitly stated the violent history that consolidated the colonial mode of production.

In the sixth track "Black Woman" (the album's namesake), Mowatt sings, "we are forsaken once in the plantation/ lashes to our skin/ on auction blocks we were chained and sold/ handled merchandise."

But instead of dwelling on that, Mowatt calls for resistance with the lines, "but no need for that now/free us, stand on back now/ help me sing my song."

Combatting the special oppression of African women

Colonialism impacts every aspect and

fabric of our reality. It is a world order that has been imposed on us since the very first African was stolen from Africa and brought to the "new world" to toil until their last breath.

African women under colonialism have been vehemently unwilling participants in the violent process of birthing children for white slave owners and nursing white children, which created a social and economic order that comforts none other than the white ruling class.

This oppression wasn't something that magically disappeared with the so-called Emancipation Proclamation.

According to a 2020 maternal mortality rate study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, black women in the United States are 2.9 times more likely to die during childbirth than white women are.

This chasm of a disparity is something the African People's Socialist Party (APSP), through the work of the Black Power Blueprint, has addressed by working to establish the Uhuru Wa Kulea ("Freedom to Nurture") Women's Health Center in St. Louis.

African Internationalism, the guiding theory of the APSP, and the 14-Point Platform (see pg. 10) recognizes this condition and its modern iterations on African women and expresses the need for all African people to combat it.

This theory properly identifies the fundamental base for the special oppression of African women as colonialism, rather than the explanation of feminism that removes the question of slavery and colonialism and instead places primacy on patriarchy.

This is what makes the African National Women's Organization (ANWO), under the leadership of the APSP, truly significant. Rather than a formation to struggle for "women's rights" within the colonial mode of production, ANWO recruits African women into revolutionary political life to fight to end colonialism, as part of the overall struggle to liberate the entire African Nation.

Point 9 of the Platform, for example, state, "We want an end to the political and social oppression and economic exploitation of African women," and highlights the importance of, "the destruction of the special oppression of women and the elevation of women to the rightful place as equal partners and leaders in the forward motion of the development of human society and as leaders, makers, and shapers of human history."

Black art for revolution

Cultural expressions like song, dance, poetry, writing and so much more have been a significant—and not necessarily talked about—form of resistance throughout African people's history.

Some (Richard Wright in "The Blueprint for Negro Writing" comes to mind) saw that the black artist who seeks to portray the lives of black people has, "a serious responsibility. In order to do justice to his subject matter, in order to depict Negro life in all of its manifold and intricate relationships, a deep, informed, and complex consciousness is necessary..."

Works like "Black Woman" are one of many ways that African people have taken that responsibility seriously, to build that collective consciousness—the African identity—and from that, fight the good fight that is the coming revolution.

Culture for the African Revolution!

Join ANWO!

Support Uhuru Wa Kulea!

Global Affairs



Development finance: how it works, where it goes, why it's needed

The upgraded Kudube pedestrian bridge in Hammanskraal, South Africa. Photo by Frennie Shivambu/Gallo Images via Getty Images

Development finance is the invisible glue that connects public and private financing for projects that have social, economic and environmental outcomes. These include improved infrastructure, better waste management and sanitation, financial inclusion, clean energy and sustainable agriculture.

The goal of development finance is to create positive social, economic or environmental outcomes through investments made by financial institutions such as banks, insurance companies and pension funds in addition to contributions made by development finance institutions, multilateral partners and NGOs. These investments generally generate spillovers into the development agendas of African countries. The contribution of NGOs such as philanthropic and civil society organizations may not be financial. Their contributions come through advocacy, activism, community engagement, research or social services. Development finance experts Latif Alhassan and Bomikazi Zeka explain how it works.

Why is it important?

Development finance addresses the failures or limitations of traditional financial institutions such as banks. It does this by allocating resources to social needs such as education, health, infrastructure and energy.

The essence of development finance is to mobilize both financial and non-financial resources through partnerships among development funders and stakeholders. The aim is to achieve development outcomes

that would not have happened without their intervention or contribution.

The Infrastructure Consortium for Africa is an example of this kind of partnership. It is made up of multilateral partners and development finance institutions. In 2019/2020 it mobilized and invested US\$83 billion for the development of energy, water, transport and sanitation infrastructure.

Development finance can also draw in additional funding from private entities to finance projects with socially and environmentally desirable outcomes. Traditional financial institutions such as banks don't have the incentives to do this. However, a network of development funders and stakeholders can help raise funding. It can also draw on different kinds of expertise.

What's the difference between development finance and corporate finance?

Corporate finance emphasises the principles of risk and return. The funding of any economic activity largely depends on how risky the activity is and its ability to generate revenue. Institutions like banks, asset managers and insurance companies make investment decisions on the basis of risk versus return. This makes it harder to fund projects and activities with sustainable development outcomes because the risks are often high. And revenue streams aren't always assured. An example would be providing finance for small businesses.

Development finance considers other factors alongside risk and return. Social impact may be one. Because it applies a wider lens, other key players are more involved. They include governments at the national, provisional and local levels, multilateral partners (such as donor agencies and climate

funds), development finance institutions like the World Bank Group, African Development Bank, Afrexim Bank, Industrial Development Corporation, Development Bank of Southern Africa and Development Bank of Nigeria.

Financial institutions, such as banks, insurance companies, investment companies and pension funds, also get involved sometimes. But this is usually through the use of responsible investment strategies. These incorporate environmental, social and governance factors into investment decisions.

Development funders provide more than just debt and equity capital. They provide concessionary loans, venture philanthropy, project finance, grants, sustainable financial instruments (such as green bonds and other forms of responsible investing) and advocacy or activism engagements.

Development finance institutions are intentional about promoting sustainable development. Instruments such as venture and patient capital recognise that small businesses face funding and cash flow challenges. They allow for more flexibility in lending arrangements.

How do countries access it? Is it harder for African countries?

In Africa, development projects have traditionally been funded by national governments through annual budgetary allocations. In some cases, national development banks have been set up.

The problem with relying on national budgets is that it places a lot of pressure on the taxpayer as a source of revenue.

Huge financial commitments are required for countries on the continent to achieve the development goals they've set for themselves.

For example, the African Union plans to transform Africa into a global powerhouse by the year 2063. For its part, the United Nations has an agenda for all countries to carry out a sustainable development plan by 2030.

The annual estimated funding requirement to achieve these plans is US\$200 million. The financing gap for the African context until 2030 is US\$1.6 trillion.

Collaboration with development funders and stakeholders is needed to achieve this.

What three things stand out as windfalls from development finance?

Firstly, stimulating economic activities by financing the initiatives of vulnerable or marginalized groups, for example, women-owned businesses find it difficult to access funding. Development finance institutions are well placed to step in. Examples include the Development Bank of Ghana, Development Bank of Namibia, Development Bank of Mauritius and Eswatini Development Finance Corporation. They can help local businesses to keep afloat during tough times. For example, the Small Enterprise Finance Agency was set up in South Africa to help businesses affected by the rioting in 2021.

Secondly, assisting with infrastructure development, projects can be funded that align with the needs of communities, private stakeholders and the public sector.

Thirdly, financing global challenges such as the just energy transition and the effects of climate change. For instance, development finance institutions have spearheaded the funding of climate mitigation and adaptation measures, through the provision of US\$120 billion in 2012. This went up to US\$200 billion by 2018.

Law & Politics

Debunking the futile campaigns of deal spoilers

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

To expedite sustainable prosperity and holistic development, the country has been exploring various initiatives. The recent accord between Ethiopia and Somaliland that awards the former a sea outlet is the grand one. In contradiction to the very essence of the landmark deal, some entities near and abroad, new or old adversaries have tried to paint a wrong picture of the accord.

The country's genuine and amicable approach to its relations with neighboring nations has been upsetting some entities as they unsuccessfully try to thwart the country's efforts.

From working with their proxies to trying to make a direct intervention, the foes have been switching to different tactics to stand in the way of development although to no avail. Since the signing of the agreement, there has been a futile uproar from various actors most notably from Ethiopia's arc enemies.

Leaving aside the greater positive impact the agreement can have on both countries and the regions, the entities try to stir tension and sow discord between nations. The aim is to disrupt cooperation and interventionist policies to advance their goals.

In good faith, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) deal between the Federal Government of Ethiopia and Somaliland is mainly allowing the former to have sea access and for the latter to have major political and economic benefits including some share from Ethiopian flagship projects.

Ethiopia has suffered from not having genuine sea access and the people have faced so many challenges during the past few decades.

It has been calling its neighboring states to free the nation from geographical prison to a state that can access the nearest water part. Ethiopia has also stated that any country that wishes to make a knot will have a mutual benefit through a win-win approach as Ethiopia, more than ever, was open to any negotiation.

In this case, Ethiopia has never asked to return any favor that the country did to its states and the region at large. Answering the call, Somaliland opened its doors to reach an agreement with Ethiopia. Unfortunately, some regional states that Ethiopia was there for in their hard times ignore its call to regional cooperation.

From the get-go, the two parties have faced several formal and informal pressures from various sides as those powers never want to see two parties prosper together. Even, nations whom Ethiopians paid their lives for their existence turned their face and stood with the nation's historic enemies and spoilers.

Besides, those agreement spoilers use their connections together with some blocs to change the direction of the accord. In good truth, those nations and blocs have done nothing to the economic, political and



societal integrity of the Horn as Ethiopia did for so many years.

Spoilers and historic enemies of Ethiopia and the ones who are responsible for the unrest in the Horn of Africa are still working to dismantle the region by creating rifts and sowing grudges among the member states. Knowing this, some Horn countries have still been sticking with them and working for a common agenda that particularly hits and weakens Ethiopia. It is important to understand that some nations still have some concern and worry if Ethiopia becomes the powerhouse of Africa, and Ethiopia is working to prove that.

In a previous interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Somaliland Ministry of Information Director General Mustafe acknowledged the external meddling from some entities that tried to besmirch the very intent of the agreement and bewilder the international community with coordinated propaganda.

The Director General said, "Some Arabian entities that have issues with Ethiopia on the Nile are trying to use us as a weapon to attack our brothers in need. But surely, Somaliland cannot serve as a bullet to hit Ethiopia. We believe Ethiopia is the second country for Somali-landers. Ethiopia was there by our side when we were being subjugated and chased by a dictatorial rule."

In a similar vein, those spoilers have left every stone unturned to unhinge the world and other global entities to understand the accord in a much-skewed way. Not only that, those parties have also used religion and regional blocs as their shield to attack Ethiopia and the agreement. In this case, the Arab League could be a textbook example to be manipulated and used by some member states for their political consumption.

Though all the attempts previously tried by those spoilers have not been successful and

could not hit the target as they expected, they, now, come up with another tactic in spreading fake news and narratives to the entire world, try to make them confused. The current influx of unreal information in various social media accounts and websites is the perfect illustration of their utmost effort to make the accord obnoxious.

Some reports signing up for fake accounts and using the logo of the Office of Prime Minister, actors are spreading a false press release that seems to be from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia that states Ethiopia's readiness to avoid the agreement as so many pressures have imposed onto the country.

Such kinds of last-minute show how desperate and unsuccessful those entities are. Ethiopia has been working aggressively to the successful implementation of the agreement, and the same is true from the other side.

On the other hand, the Government of Ethiopia through its responsible stakeholders like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs keeps informing the people and the international community that the current reports circulating on most social media platforms are fake and have no genuine ground.

Accordingly, in its recent announcement, the Office of the Prime Minister advised the people of Ethiopia and the international community to be very cautious about the fake reports and content circulating online about an MOU with Somaliland.

Again, the Office voiced that local, regional, and international matters of official communications of the country are only disseminated through the PMO's official channels, adding "We urge everyone to remain vigilant against such fake content that misuses our official logo."

The Director General said, "Some Arabian entities that have issues with Ethiopia on the Nile are trying to use us as a weapon to attack our brothers in need. But surely, Somaliland cannot serve as a bullet to hit Ethiopia"

Planet Earth

Why has Ethiopia become conducive for horticulture developers?

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

Ethiopia is a country blessed with various natural resources. Investors who recognize this are now flocking to this East African country to invest in agro-processing and make a good fortune. Today, both local and international investors are exporting their products to foreign countries.

Ethiopia boasts a suitable climate, proximity to Middle East and EU markets, cheap and abundant labor, and a reliable transport system that supports the growth of the floriculture industry. Like many other developing nations, Ethiopia is pursuing rapid economic growth, diversifying its export base, and earning foreign exchange to reduce vulnerability to price volatility in international markets.

The first floriculture companies emerged in the early 1990s, and with government support, Ethiopia has attracted foreign investors in recent years to export cut flowers, mainly to European markets. Investors are enticed with an improved investment code, a five-year tax holiday, duty-free imports of machinery, easy access to bank loans, and readily trainable labor. Moreover, this development has created employment opportunities for unemployed citizens, with women accounting for 70 percent of the workforce in rural areas.

The flower subsector of the horticulture industry in Ethiopia is only 20 years old but has quickly become one of the top four countries in supplying quality flowers to the world, ranking second in Africa after Kenya. The conducive agro-ecology and topography of Ethiopia make it an attractive destination for investors in agro-forestry? and agro-processing. The country's railway infrastructure connecting Djibouti and Ethiopian Airlines' direct flights to market destinations, especially European countries, provides efficient logistics at reasonable costs.

The government's incentives, such as five to seven years of tax relief and duty-free imports of capital goods, have encouraged more investment in the flower sector. Over the past years, flower exports have shown an annual growth rate of 9.8 percent, with increasing market destinations leading to better selling prices and a reliable source of foreign currency. However, the flower sector's growth area is limited to 1,700 hectares of land, and further investment could significantly alleviate foreign currency shortages.

While Kenya has been a leader in exporting cut flowers since the 1990s, Ethiopia is quickly catching up, surpassing countries like South Africa and Mozambique. European markets are the primary destination for Ethiopian flowers, with 76 percent of exports going to Europe, followed by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

The Aalsmeer Flower Auction in the Netherlands, the largest in the world, plays a crucial role in distributing Ethiopian flowers globally. Ethiopian flowers exported to this market are bought by European wholesalers and distributed to various countries.

In nine months, Ethiopia earned more than \$390 million from the flower export trade

in the past ten months, with the Netherlands being the primary destination.

Tewodros Zewdie is the Executive Director for the Ethiopian Horticulture Producers and Exporters Association. According to him, the association is deploying utmost efforts to ensure the competitiveness of Ethiopian-based horticulture exporters.

The association he has led is undertaking evidence-based policy advocacy interventions to create a better business environment for the sector operators. In doing so, various amendments are undertaken towards revising policies, proclamations, directives, regulations, among others.

So far, the association has managed to offer training exceeding 10,000 workforces of the industry on a wide spectrum of issues including compliance, crop-specific topics, biological control of pests, integrated pest management, solid and liquid waste management aimed at elevating and building the capacity of the horticulture sector operators, according to Tewodros.

Mentioning the presence of potential partners globally, he said the association has been linking Ethiopian-based growers with international buyers through business-to-business schemes, thereby executing ranges of sales agreements with buyers in Europe, the Middle East, Far East, North America, and other destinations.

Furthermore, HortiFlora Expo, which brings wide segments of Horticulture supply chain actors under one roof, has brought lots of buyers from Europe, the Middle East, Far East, US, and Canada, as well as African Countries. Besides, it has given additional impetus to members to broaden its market destination.

Recently, the GCS, in cooperation with the Ethiopian Horticulture Producers and Exporters Association (EHPEA), prepared an awareness-raising horticultural farms' visit to media practitioners.

Addressing the gathering, Government Communication Service State Minister Selamawit Kassa mentioned that the farms visited by the media crew are the manifestation of the government's prime attention to the sector and its unwavering support to horticulture companies. The sector yielded 344 million quintals during the past 10 months of the current fiscal year. Selamawit indicated that the performance is exceeding the plan by 26 million quintals. Compared with last year's same period, the current performance has a 222 million quintals increment.

"The result indicates the special attention given by the government to inspire private investor's involvement in the sector. This shows the possibility of maximizing production by providing increased assistance to businesses."

Previously, there were various grievances related to service provision, including the provision of land, which remains a concern for investors.

The sector is the second largest in terms of boosting forex to the country and the



opportunities in the global market. According to Tewodros, the industry kept on bringing more than half a billion USD every year.

He stated that the cost of doing business in the horticulture sector is getting expensive in many countries, and hence it is becoming a windfall opportunity for Ethiopia to lure more investment.

"Ethiopia is one of the top five producer and exporter countries in the cut flowers globally following Columbia, Ecuador, the Netherlands, and Kenya, however a lot remains to be done in fruit and vegetable. Also, Rwanda and Uganda are also on the pipeline to create favorable conditions for investors.

"We have been engaging in various tasks such as carbon and water footprint reduction, expanding investment lands of the horticulture farms to create a better enabling environment for members in the sector," he remarked.

He also called on the government and other stakeholders to ensure sustainable peace and put consolidated efforts to unleash the potential of the country to help attract more investors in the sector.

State Minister Selamawit further noted that many investors are keen to increase their businesses and request an increased amount of foreign currency supply to purchase inputs for production and land. "From the field

visit, we understood that the sector generates a significant amount of hard currency by producing flowers and vegetables on a plot of land."

Indicating the requirement of different infrastructure including seamless logistics and power supply for efficient horticulture farming, she pointed out that the government has shown special concern for the sector by providing attractive incentives.

One of the business community's primary grievances was the delay of horticulture products in ports, which has been reduced from 12 days to 9, and efforts are yet underway to further minimize it.

Selamawit also expressed appreciation for investors' courage and enthusiasm for the sector's development and Ethiopia's economic progress.

The various technologies applied in the horticulture sector can also be utilized in the Yelemat Tirufat projects, which are implemented in every household with a small plot of land. Indeed, the horticulture sector is effective in utilizing a small number of people and a small plot of land.

The government has given prime attention to the horticulture sector, the State Minister noted, adding that initiatives like the Green Legacy are going parallel to this with a vision of ensuring food security by planting a number of seedlings.