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ATI underscores promoting integrated market to transform food system

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – The promotion of integrated policy frameworks, agricultural technologies and markets would have a paramount importance to promote productivity and food system, the Agricultural Transformation Institute (ATI) said.

Agricultural Economic Society of Ethiopia held yesterday a panel discussion under the theme: “Changing Agricultural Landscapes in Ethiopia: Role of Integrated Policies and Markets in Food Systems Transformation” in the presence of pertinent academia, NGOs, private sectors.

Speaking on the occasion, ATI CEO Mandefro Nigussie (PhD) stated that Ethiopia has been undertaking agricultural transformation through cluster farming to facilitate agricultural market dynamics by identifying strategic commodities to promote production and productivity.

Boosting production and productivity via agri-technologies, services and finances is central to ensure food security where in the country coming from mass production by identifying strategic commodities to ensure food security, he underscored.

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FX auctions last straw for parallel market

BY YESUF ENDRIS

As the gap between formal and parallel market foreign currency prices persists,

several African nations, including Ethiopia and Nigeria, are turning to auctions to address this issue. Ethiopia recently conducted a USD auction with an average exchange rate of 107.9 Birr per USD, while

the Central Bank of Nigeria auctioned 876.26 million USD last Tuesday.

The National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE)

See FX auctions last ... page 3

Ethiopia develops enduring culture of hospitality: Saudi Tourists

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA - Ethiopia has built an enduring culture of hospitality in receiving visitors with warm welcome since the reign of King Al Najashi, Saudi visitors said, while pledging to bring beloved ones with them to enjoy country’s picturesque nature.

In an interview with the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), tourists who came from Saudi Arabia’s Jazan region have lauded

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Hassan Munir



Abdul-Ilah Ahmed



Abdullah Nasser Al-Sheikh

ENDC to commence agenda gathering in Harari

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

HARAR-The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) announced it has finalized preparations to commence agenda gathering in Harari State on August 10, 2024.

In a press briefing he gave yesterday, ENDC Commissioner Mohammed Derir (Ambassador) stated that the agenda gathering would involve over 1,000 people

from various concerned bodies. Mohammed also noted that the Commission has already identified participants from different segments of society in nine districts to take part in the gathering.

The agenda gathering will include discussions among community representatives, political parties, and government bodies (legislative, judicial, and executive). Additionally, representatives from

See ENDC to commence ... page 3



Enterprise enhances Ethiopian products' global market access

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA -The Ethiopian Conformity Assessment Enterprise (ECAE) is offering extensive testing, inspection, and certification services in a bid to ensure acceptance of Ethiopian products in international markets.

ECAE Certification Director Amsalu Enyew told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that they are providing three core services: testing laboratories, inspection, and certification, to industries, the public, educational, and service-providing institutions, facilitating the acceptance of their products in global markets.

ECAE offers these services domestically through nine branches nationwide and is expanding to provide inspection services to

neighboring countries, including Djibouti, to build capacity and increase income while benefiting the region.

"In order for these products to pass through customs, we provide physical inspections for each product or service by laboratory tests or various audit procedures. If they comply with Ethiopian standards, we issue an internationally recognized certificate, helping Ethiopian products gain acceptance in global markets and become competitive," Amsalu explained.

ECAE operates nine laboratories and provides certification services, including product and system certification, to industries and the public.

"We certify occupational health and safety management systems, environmental management systems, food safety



Amsalu Enyew

management systems, and educational management systems," he added.

ECAE provides conformity certificate

services for Ethiopian products, conducting conformity assessment studies within the scope of supply chain services, which help industries and service providers improve efficiency, performance, and quality.

"We prepare procedures, forms, and assign auditors to evaluate industries that meet the rigorous requirements set by ISO: 2015 standards, ultimately providing certification that helps them become competitive and create new opportunities," the director noted.

ECAE has been modernizing its testing laboratory, inspection, and certification services to provide high-quality and effective services. It stands as a major conformity assessment organization in Ethiopia, dedicated to supporting the industry and the public.

Ethiopia, partners joining hands to utilize nuclear technology for dev't

BY MESERET BEHAILU

As implementing nuclear energy has manifold advantages such as protecting air quality, using medical purpose, agriculture, proficient human resource, and the likes, Ethiopia has been striving to make use nuclear technology working together with China and Russia, said MInT.

The Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MInT), Belete Molla (PhD) recently visited the China Nuclear Power Authority. During the course the visit, Belete discussed with the China Atomic Energy Authority (CAEA) Vice Chairperson, Liu Jing areas on the widely implemented agreements between the two countries in the way forwarding nuclear power for peaceful purposes, especially in the development of human resources.

Belete said that Ethiopia wants to reach the level of development that China has achieved in using nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. China has been practicing universal development support in Ethiopia. He appreciated China's support for training Ethiopian experts in the field of nuclear technology so far. In this regard, Ethiopia prompts to expand similar activities in nuclear field.

According to the information gained from MInT official page, Ethiopia is working closely with The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to utilize nuclear power for development. Belete asked the Chinese to support Ethiopia's proposal submitted to IAEA to build an African nuclear technology training center in Addis Ababa.

The two bodies discussed about the possibility of expanding the context in which universities in Ethiopia work in cooperation with Chinese universities and institutions in the field of nuclear education and research.



CAEA's Vice Chairperson, Liu Jing on his part said that his country supports Ethiopia's effort to develop nuclear technology, starting with the development of human resources.

Jing indicated that a tripartite agreement will be made between the African Union, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Chinese government to establish a training institute in Africa at the meeting to be held in FOCAC in the coming September. In this agreement, the international institutions and China will support to African Union and Ethiopia. The processes, strategies, and actual results that have led China from developing small research reactors to where it is today are described- in the visiting.

By the same token, Ethiopia and Russia had signed a cooperation agreement roadmap in the field of useful atomic energy to implement on the development aspects. This document was signed between Belete and Director General of ROSATOM (Rosatom State Nuclear Energy Corporation) Alexey Likhachev on the sidelines of the 2nd

Russia-Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum in St. Petersburg a year ago.

According to local media report, the two parties plan to join forces to develop Ethiopia's national nuclear infrastructure, organize technical tours and seminars, and hold meetings of specialized working groups. The roadmap will take 2023-2025 to explore the possibilities of building nuclear power plant of large or small power capacity, as well as a Center for Nuclear Science and Technology in Ethiopia.

"Ethiopia wants to use nuclear technology for health, agriculture and energy supply sectors," said Belete.

For his part, Alexey Likhachev said that building the capacity of Ethiopian experts in atomic science is the primary focus of the agreement. He mentioned that ROSATOM is working on the construction of 33 nuclear research centers in 8 countries.

Following the aforementioned roadmap agreement, Ethiopia is working to utilize nuclear energy for peaceful purpose in close

with Russian nuclear energy companies, according to MInT. Work is being undertaken to build a nuclear science and technology center and a national nuclear power station in Ethiopia and to develop its national nuclear infrastructure.

MInT Office Head, Desta Abera, said that cooperation with ROSATOM on facilitating the transfer of knowledge, experience and technology lays a foundation to the journey towards a nuclear energy program in Ethiopia.

Through the bilateral cooperation, priority is given for the program to be safe and environmentally friendly. In addition to its importance in boosting to the country's economy, the bilateral cooperation on the construction and peaceful atomic energy program will further strengthen the Ethiopian-Russian relations, it was further indicated.

Furthermore, Ethiopia has a long standing relationship with the two countries in various development issues whilst the nations are members of the BRICS family.

News

FX auctions last ...

conducted a forex auction involving 27 banks, which significantly narrowed the gap between official and parallel market exchange rates, according to the bank's Governor. Nigeria reported similar results.

Zemedeneh Nigatu, Chairperson of Fairfax Africa Fund, praised the NBE's FX auction as a transparent mechanism for price discovery that reduces speculation and market distortion. He stressed the need for sustainable solutions alongside immediate effects, noting that Ethiopia's shift to a floating exchange rate regime is impacting foreign exchange reserves in banks. The government expects this transition to stabilize the forex market over time.

Zemedeneh, who is economist by profession, proposed that maintaining a stable FX price as the exchange rate approaches equilibrium is crucial. He suggested that banks adapt their business models to the new economic conditions and exchange regime to attract and retain customers with competitive prices.

Governor Mamo Mihretu of the NBE anticipates that more banks will follow this trend, with increasing FX volumes in the coming weeks.

Finance expert Million Kibret emphasized the importance of supportive measures for effective macroeconomic reforms. He highlighted that liberalizing the local market for foreign importers and resellers could improve FX flow and reduce the oligopoly among importers that has impacted the forex market.

According to the NBE, a limited number of importers had dominated the forex market via the parallel market, causing reserves in banks to dwindle. The Diaspora community, traditionally transacting through the parallel market, is expected to shift towards the formal market as the gap narrows.

Another critical measure for market stabilization is the forex reserve policy, which allows banks and investors to retain a larger share of the forex they generate from exports. Million explained that the National Bank will progressively permit exporters to fully retain their forex earnings, significantly diminishing the parallel market's role.

Bankers share this optimism regarding forex reserves. Ephrem Mekuria, Deputy President of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, noted that the exchange rate between formal and parallel markets is converging, with improved forex flow into banks stimulating the economy. Derbie Asfaw, CEO of the Cooperative Bank of Oromia, commended the financial and macroeconomic reforms for fostering greater forex liquidity within banks.

While the immediate effects of forex auctions have been promising, long-term stability requires comprehensive and sustainable measures. The ongoing adaptation of banks to the new economic environment and continued reforms will be crucial in bridging the gap between formal and parallel forex markets, as indicated by the NBE.

Ethiopia develops enduring culture of hospitality...

Ethiopia's natural and man-made attractions including the hospitable culture of the people.

Among the visitors, Hassan Munir said that Ethiopia is endowed a moderate climate and attractive nature and has the most beautiful cities with a warm climate, especially in the city of Bishoftu, which has picturesque views and several lakes with fresh water.

Bishoftu is also blessed with forests and lakes that shelter ducks, geese and a large number of marine and wild animals, he mentioned.

Hassan added that he promised his family to accompany him when he returns to Ethiopia for the second time for the purpose of entertainment and enjoyment, because it has attractive natural places and many tourist areas and nature reserves.

He pointed out that Ethiopians are distinguished for their welcoming culture since the time of Al Najashi to the present day, and they are a very kind people.

Hassan expressed that he considers Ethiopia as his second country thereby

does not feel like a stranger to be here.

It is a country of safety and peace, he said, adding that he travels freely in any place he wants and has not encountered any problem so far.

For his part, Abdullah Nasser Al-Sheikh, a teacher in a Saudi school, said that he had visited Ethiopia for the fifth time and feels comfortable and reassured.

Lauding the peace and stability of the places he has visited so far, Abdullah expressed that he has witnessed a remarkable development in architecture, tourism and entertainment activities.

He said that he had visited Entoto Park, an attractive natural site in Addis Ababa that is suitable for attracting tourists for its trees and hospitality services.

Abdullah added that the park has been prepared for the enjoyment of foreign tourists and is full of tourist supplies of popular and modern foods that visitors would like to taste.

According to him, Sululta, Hawassa, Sodere, and Wondogenet, Bahir Dar and other tourist sites in Ethiopia are the

places Abdullah has visited.

He expressed his amazement in his visit to the country from the diversity of nationalities and peoples to the nature, which is charming and dazzles visitors with splendid view.

Abdullah believed that the land of Ethiopia is adorned with the green trees as far as the eye can see, and the hills embraced by the clouds as well as the heavy rain add to the moderate weather and softening the atmosphere.

Another Saudi tourist Abdul-Ilah Ahmed, who accompanied his family on his visit to Ethiopia, expressed that he felt a psychological comfort and enjoyed the picturesque views of the country while watching the attractive recreational sites.

Admiring Ethiopia's fauna and flora including animals and birds, he said that he will also visit other tourist sites in Ethiopia, especially Sodere and the natural hot waters, which are considered to be among the best tourist sites in the country.

ATI underscores promoting...

He also said that policies in the agri-transformation value chain helps towards setting directions to have valuable and vibrant significance to offset the existing challenges regarding food security, export and other critical areas.

Having said a well-functioning market requires infrastructure, quality control among many others, he emphasized that advancing strategic commodities is the only option to ensure food security.

Moreover, he said the opening up of the new macroeconomic policy will attract foreign earnings and address the shortcoming witnessed in the agriculture sector and boost production and productivity.

According to him, the Ethiopian food system roadmap identifies 18 major challenges and grouped them in 7 clusters in line with the home grown economic reform and SDGs.

The major challenges in the food system facing in the country include rising unemployment, inflation, drought, flood, conflict and slow adoption of technologies.

Mentioning the presence of 16 million smallholder farmers and agro-pastoralists in the country, he stressed that access

to input, service and finance should be given due attention as they are creating productivity differences.

One of the panelists, Alemayehu Seyoum (PhD) remarked that the agricultural landscapes in Ethiopia are undergoing a significant transformation, influenced by the interplay of integrated policies and market dynamics.

He said adding that the evolution of food system markets is not isolated but symbiotic, necessitating a strategic approach to promote progressive change.

"The current state and dynamics of agricultural markets can be succinctly described as a complex interplay between inputs and output markets, shaped by measures taken domestically and outside intervention such as subsidies and protective measures."

The changing landscape is further characterized by global trends, such as the integration into Global Value Chains, and the advent of technology, including digitization, which offers new avenues for innovation and efficiency, he noted.

AEST President Endeshaw Habte (PhD) for his part stated that providing policy advice

in the agriculture sector and investigating how markets and integrated policies can be utilized to boost opportunity with the changing agricultural landscape.

Transforming agriculture would usher the rural development activities thereby bringing a structural shift in the economy from agriculture to other sectors, he noted.

Endashaw (PhD) stated that agricultural mechanization requires ranges of preconditions which include the availability of ample plot land, bringing adjacent plots, availability of capital and modern technologies and other inputs that promote productivity and market outreach.

Market which involves input market that involves modern technologies to circumvent small plot by cluster farming.

He said: "It is also critical to increase the utilization of cutting-edge technologies and digitalization in the sector in the market information system and to be aware of what to produce and in demand in the market. Besides, productivity requires input access to capital and proper land management tools to increase productivity."

ENDC to agenda...

institutions (associations), public figures, and influencers are expected to take part. "Agenda gathering is an essential part where all the aforementioned participants and representatives will identify core agendas that are believed to be essential and need to be reached national consensus," he underscored.

Noting that the agenda gathering will

take place over six consecutive days, the Commissioner called on the people of Harari State to participate actively, emphasizing the importance of the gathering for regional and national benefits.

Commissioner Tegegnework Getu (PhD) added that the agenda gathering would play an essential role in the main

National Dialogue. He further indicated that once agenda gatherings are completed nationwide, the Commission would set the agenda for the National Dialogue as per its mandate.

The ENDC expressed its gratitude to all participants and representatives for their essential contributions.

Opinion

Invaluable step for resolving political discrepancies through dialogue

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

The history of nation building carried out in many countries took similar approach and almost all were conducted through military means. The 1888 Berlin conference derived by the scramble for Africa paved the way for the creation of political maps of the African countries and later laid ground for the subjugation of them.

The maps were crafted and demarcated by European colonizers without the will of the indigenous people through coercive measures except the ancient countries of Ethiopia and Egypt. In other words, the political map of the African countries is the outcome of the colonization ambition without considering the reality on the ground.

After their independence in 1960s, conflict born to border disputes among the countries was common on various parts of the continent. After the establishment of the then Organization of African Union (OAU), the problems were resolved through dialogue. The OAU convention declared the legality of the existing political maps crafted during the colonial period.

Similarly, the history of some European countries' nation building was not an exception and the then unification of Italy and Germany can be mentioned as the case in point in this regard. Garibaldi unified Italy starting from south to north by force and in a similar manner Bismarck unified the divided 38 regions of Germany by "Iron fist". What makes different these countries from African countries was that in the later decades they succeeded in establishing peaceful and democratic nations with strong economy.

The history of the United States also proved this approach. The Anglo-Saxon migrants settled in North America since the 16th century and laid the ground for the establishment of United States of America (USA) by subjugating the indigenous population by force. Later, the introduction of constitution in 1789 played pivotal role for the establishment of USA with strong economy and viable democratic political system. The secret behind the political continuation is the constitution drafted and ratified by consensus.

The establishment of Australia is not an exception, in fact. The country was created by European settlers by marginalizing the indigenous people economically and politically. Today, Australia is one of the richest countries in the world with advanced democratic system. Therefore, one can understand that in the past, nation building by force was a common phenomenon in the history of mankind and the global realm that nation builders did what time allowed them.

In Ethiopia, the modern nation building project attempted by Emperor Tewodros II and realized by Emperor Menelik II in the last quarter of the 19th century through military means still perceived by some political groups as controversial move.

It is undeniable fact that there were established states with their own kings before the emperor's aggression to the southern regions of the country. The Emperor's move faced resistance from different local kings where some resulted in bloodshed fighting while others surrendered through negotiations and secured their autonomous status then.

The coronation of Emperor Haile Silassie I in the earlier years of the 20th century further consolidated the nation building project and attempted to establish more centralized government by eroding the regional kings' autonomous power.

Emperor Haile Silassie I introduced constitution in 1930 for the first time to establish modern political system, which defined the state structure with legislative, judiciary and executive branches. The constitution also declared that the emperor had absolute power.

In the later decades, the nation building project continued through emperor territorial control consolidation and political power booming. Among the good deeds of the Majesty is expansion of education. The expansion of education in the 1960s created elite groups who raised questions against the political viability of the imperial regime and forwarded their demand for change. However, the old imperial regime adamantly rejected the intellectual community's demand. In line with this, since 1940s, armed resistance forces waged war against the imperial government in, Tigray, Bale and Gojam regions but were forcefully silenced.

The quest for democracy and freedom of expression coupled with the aggravating poverty and famine witnessed in the country gave birth to the outbreak of the Ethiopian revolution and the demise of the imperial status quo in 1974.

The coming to power of military regime in the earlier times brought some glimpse of hope on generation long aspiration for attaining democratic rights and addressing ethnic grievances. However, the regime continued the old way of governance through repressing opponents and ignoring the fundamental rights of citizens.

The regime failed to accommodate various interest groups' political aspirations to resolve differences in dialogue and indulged in civil war particularly in the northern part of the country and ultimately it was overthrown by the TPLF led rebels' group, EPRDF. The regime change again brought hope for the reign of peace, stability and democracy. The EPRDF government introduced new constitution in 1995, but many argued that the process of the draft and ratification of the constitution was manipulated by the ruling TPLF politicians for their own sake.

The constitution was big on paper by recognizing freedom of expression; the right to association and all human rights ratified by the United Nation Convention in 1948 and made them part of it. Similar to individual

rights, the group rights including right to self-determination up to succession, which is still controversial, is also enclosed in the constitution. The regime was criticized by promoting group rights by denying individual rights which posed horizontal conflict among ethnic groups.

Surprisingly, putting all kinds of rights on paper and implementing them became different matters since what is practically carried out and what is stipulated in documents are diametrically different. The administration prohibited the establishment of independent institutions and put the three branches of the government, the legislative, judicial and executive under its orbit.

Though the constitution stipulated the flourishing of multi-party system, opposition parties were precluded from getting enough space to struggle in a peaceful manner. Besides, all the elections conducted during the reign of the regime were conducted to satisfy the ruling party's will and served to perpetuate its power tenure.

Therefore, similar to the past regimes, Ethiopia lost the chance to attain power succession through peaceful manner by considering the citizens' ambition for attaining democracy. Since it was ignorant to put the laws on the ground, it received similar fate of its preceding regimes. In 2018 after retaining its power forcefully the EPRDF left its power unceremoniously.

The reformist government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), cognizant to the vitality of resolving the generational long contradiction and grievances committed by successive regimes, established National Dialogue Commission (NDC), which started its tasks two years ago. The Commission has drawn important lessons from some African countries which passed through negotiations to resolve their past grievances committed by regimes and non-state actors.

In the case of Ethiopia, there are parties still raising questions on the very process of the nation building as they have claimed that their territory was annexed by the central government forcefully during the nation building. Ensuring individual rights, advocates also strived for meeting their aspiration. Therefore, participants should anticipate addressing historical grievances and ensuring citizens' generation long political aspiration. In addition, they should understand that they have no capacity to change the past misdeed. Thus, they can and should play positive role for their people's future today.

Among the African countries which experienced national dialogue for resolving their political differences; South Sudan, Tunisia, Liberia, Libya and Sudan can be mentioned and except Liberia and Tunisia the rest are unable to resolve their root cause of political disparity and Ethiopia can draw lessons from the fruitful trajectories of the

successful nations.

According to the senior United Nations Conflict Resolution Experts, the dialogue commission should be independent and free from the manipulation of any interest groups to meet the objectives of the national dialogue. It is believed that the National Dialogue Commission fulfills such criterion.

Recently, the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) has announced that the agenda gathering phase will be carried out in three regions and a City Administration this week. The commission revealed recently that the agenda gathering process will be conducted in Gambella, Benishangul Gumuz and Harari regions as well as Dire Dawa City Administration.

In his press briefing, Chief Commissioner of ENDC Professor Mesfin Araya said that the commission has already finalized the process of identifying participants in ten regions and two city administrations.

The Commission is also anticipated to complete the agenda gathering process in the remaining regions before 5th September 2024. According to the Chief Commissioner, over the past two and half years, the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission has carried out tremendous preparatory activities in various phases to conduct the nationwide dialogue with a view to addressing Ethiopia's multiple political challenges.

He recalled that the process of agenda gathering in Addis Ababa was held successfully in the presence of participants drawn from 119 Woredas and over 2000 participants including various stakeholders. Following the launching of the national dialogue in the capital last May 2024, top agenda on the table have been identified and refined.

"We learned a lot from the Addis Ababa agenda gathering process," he said, adding that this lesson will be implemented during agenda gathering in the regions. "The agenda gathering process has been continued and being carried out where all segments of the society give their willingness for discussion on the agenda," Mesfin pointed out.

Noting that various activities have been carried out to ensure participation of all stakeholders, the Commissioner indicated that similar activities will be intensified in other parts of the country. The process of participant identification was held in some parts of Amhara region and it is expected to continue in Tigray region, it was learned.

In sum, all interested groups and stakeholders should recognize that they should take the historic opportunity created by the government to resolve generation long political differences through dialogue and healing the past wounds. To this end, all citizens and stakeholders should exert their maximum effort thereby creating a stable and economically advanced nation.

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

Editorial

Nation's economic reforms: A turning point for foreign investment and trade growth

Ethiopia has been undergoing historic and sweeping economic reforms. With the market opened up and public enterprise privatized, the country has been taking bold measures to stimulate its growing economy and spur investment.

In recent years, the country has emerged as one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, driven by a blend of strategic government initiatives while the inflation and rising cost of living remain major hurdles. To sustain and accelerate this growth trajectory and overcome impediments, the nation has been putting in place various economic reforms.

One critical move that could significantly boost Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is the strategic 10-year homegrown economic plan. Close watchers of Ethiopia's move are praising the policy shifts as a worthwhile move to spur trade and entice foreign direct investment while expressing some potential threats.

The recent reform is fully backed by the IMF's Extended Credit Facility (ECF) program, which is under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT). The fund is a four-year arrangement that allows providing Ethiopia with 3.4 billion USD. The representative disclosed that about 1 billion USD was disbursed immediately after the Board's approval.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said the economic reform would help curb forex crunch and spur investments and trade. And, in an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Tobias Rasmussen, IMF Resident Representative in Ethiopia welcomed the measure while vowing full backing. "The market-based exchange rate will alleviate the acute shortages of foreign exchange that previously existed, and it will promote export and investment activity," said Rasmussen.

Currency floating exchange rate plays a pivotal role in influencing investment decisions, trading partnerships and overall economic health. According to economists, the currency floating exchange rate increases the costs for foreign businesses seeking to establish operations or expand existing ones. Conversely, depreciation can enhance competitiveness, making a country's exports cheaper and more appealing to international markets while simultaneously attracting FDI.

After fifty years, Ethiopia has undertaken major social, political, and economic reforms, which represent a historic change. In order to change the economic structure resurrect state-owned institutions and create the conditions for national prosperity, the nation is implementing a wide range of digitization initiatives along with monetary and fiscal policies.

By introducing the currency floating exchange rate, the government would address this imbalance, allowing goods produced in Ethiopia to be priced more competitively. This, in turn, could attract foreign firms looking to capitalize on a cheaper labor force and resources, further stimulating local production and job creation.

This influx of FDI could lead to technology transfer, workforce training, and knowledge sharing—elements that are crucial for a nation's development and long-term economic sustainability. As foreign firms establish themselves in Ethiopia, they create jobs, enhance productivity, and generate tax revenue that can be reinvested into social services and infrastructure.

In addition to promoting FDI, the market-based exchange rate could help correct trade balances that have been skewed by high import costs. Ethiopia is heavily reliant on imports for various goods, from machinery to consumer products. A lower currency value makes imports more expensive, potentially spurring local production initiatives as businesses look to substitute imports with locally made products. This shift not only fortifies the local economy but also fosters entrepreneurship and innovation.

However, the measure must be accompanied by robust policies to mitigate potential negative impacts, such as inflation and increased cost of living. The government must ensure that proper mechanisms are in place to shield the most vulnerable populations from possible impacts of the move. Through encouraging investments in local production capacity and incentives for domestic businesses, the Ethiopian government can create an environment where FDI can flourish.



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Opinion

Capital market comes at the right time in Ethiopia

BY STAFF REPORTER

Even though the capital market is well known in many developed economies, it is a new phenomenon in Ethiopia. The government launched the Ethiopian Capital Market Authority recently which in turn paved the way for the launching of the Ethiopian Securities Exchange (ESX) which is highly anticipated to play a big role in the growth of the financial sector as well as the economy at large.

The recent macro-economic reform that the government introduced has brought many discussions among scholars, politicians, and the media at home and abroad. Indeed the reform is a big topic of conversation as it has been an issue that has been surrounding the political and economic arena for a long time.

As part of the reform, the government has opened up the financial sector much wider to the private sector as well as foreign direct investment that is intended to bring about robust economic growth. The government is taking several measures to ensure the effectiveness of the reform in particular as well as to drive the overall economy towards sustainable development. One such action is the efforts to streamline the operation of the Ethiopian Security Exchange (ESX).

The capital market today is a reality met in any modern economy. It is a market the necessity of which is unchallengeable, an extremely dynamic and innovative structure, permanently adapting to the economic environment and at the same time an influential factor of it, generating opportunities and to the same extent risk for all categories of participants to the economic activity, being a replica of a national economy to a small scale, but especially representative.

Theoretical and empirical studies on the theoretical and empirical research produced in the past 20 years on the causes, effects, and sequencing of capital markets development confirm the potential benefits of capital markets to economic growth. In particular, a strong correlation has been found between capital markets and economic growth. Indeed this assertion is conditional as there is a need to ensure the co-development of the productive sectors to ensure the effective contribution of the capital market for the financial stability and ultimate economic growth of a country.

The burden of evidence shows that an effective stock market or capital Market Plays a significant role in the growth of a country's economy and the stability of the financial sector in many ways. Among such contributions is the way it rectifies the financial and economic activities of the country so that it can pass through a modern, professional and careful path towards success.

In this regard, one expects a positive correlation between stock market coverage (total market value as a fraction of gross domestic product [GDP]) and growth from

this effect. Also, the gains from efficient stock markets may be greater if disciplining managers through other means is ineffective.

In addition to providing performance measures to be used in employment contracts, the stock market disciplines managers indirectly through change of ownership. If the managers are not doing a good job, the stock price declines below the potential value of the assets. Such firms are then takeover targets for investors who will increase the value of the shares by replacing current managers. Managers would refrain from productivity-decreasing actions when faced with the threat of takeovers.

Another key growth contribution of an efficient stock market is its effect on entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur considers not only the profits generated in a new venture but also the possibility of a lump-sum gain through selling the venture to the public. If the stock markets are not efficient, the public offering largely disappears as a result of high transaction costs or the uncertainty of getting a fair price in the stock market. Thus, inefficient stock markets may reduce the incentive to enter new ventures, reducing the overall long-term productivity of the economy.

In the context of stock markets, liquidity is of paramount importance. The effective generation and dissemination of specific information requires easily concluded trading, which in turn implies liquidity. A market is liquid if transactions of large size can be made instantaneously and continuously without moving the price significantly. All of the benefits listed above will be substantially hindered if the market for stocks is not liquid.

Indeed, illiquidity and increased transaction costs are the most important symptoms of inefficient stock markets. Such inefficiencies may be caused by the market power of brokers or other individuals, which increases the transaction costs, and by the dominance of the market by a small number of firms or individuals. The latter may result in the manipulation of stock prices, keeping them artificially low or high to suit the purposes of those in power.

However, the net result is the eradication of the gains to be obtained from the stock market. Such inefficiencies can also result in the loss of public confidence in capital markets, leading to reduced participation of the public and thereby making the situation worse.

Finally, an efficient stock market reduces the transaction costs of trading the ownership of the physical assets and thereby opens the way for the emergence of an optimal ownership structure. Certain individuals possess the entrepreneurial spirit for "new start" ventures and such entrepreneurs should be involved in the innovation phase of a firm's development. As the firm matures, it should transfer ownership to another class of investors, one that specializes in running mature firms. The entrepreneurs can then move on to another fledgling company.

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

Business & Economy

EthSwitch for financial institutions efficient interoperability

BY MENGESHA AMARE

Consumers, officers belong to government or non-government organizations, merchants, agents and others are no more given hard time in due course of fostering marketing and running swift business transaction as banks, micro finance institutions and other related finance entities are well amalgamated and create a huge financial hub. This colossal entity has employed ATM, POS, mobile, internet/web as well as other state-of-the-art machines to advance transaction.

This huge financial hub termed as EthSwitch, has envisaged for making payments simple and affordable thereby being the best-in-class Payment Network in Africa by 2035 with core values including integrity, security, innovative, customer focused, enabling digital environment etc.

At an event organized to coach media professionals about business reporting, Yilebes Addis, EthSwitch Chief Executive Officer (CEO) said EthSwitch was established as a Share Company owned by all Banks, be they are Public and private ones.

In this contemporary world where digital operation is the most common one, the world over has been intertwined more than ever before. Yes, the digital era highly attracts digital technologies like computers, the internet, mobile phones, and they have been widely used and adopted thereby changing the social, economic and even political trajectories in many countries of the globe is prettily gaining momentum.

Ethiopia is not exceptional in this regard. Basically, the digital era refers to a time where information is easily accessible online without limitations of space and time, enabling advanced learning innovations utilizing technology. Besides, digital era in Ethiopia has comprised a number of components and fervently entertained to the current period characterized by digital technologies like EthSwitch.

Congratulations Ethiopia! The scheme designed by the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE), EthSwitch, is seriously targeting at providing citizens with core services like interoperability, domestic scheme, national Payment Gateway, Shared Service and Platform and clearing and Settlement and Reconciliation thereby enabling users run at ease activities such as bill Payment, remittances, tax Payment, e-Commerce, ticket Payment, bulk Payment, merchant Payment through QR, among others. Besides, the state of the art appliances including ATM Interoperability, Ethio-Pay Card Scheme and the like are being widely used.

As to Yilebes, EthSwitch was established mainly to provide simple, affordable, secure, and efficient e-payment infrastructure services to retail payment service providers, and through them, to end users in Ethiopia by deploying state-of-the-art technology along with highly skilled and motivated professionals. The underlying mandate of the company is to contribute to the modernization of the national payment systems and the attainment of financial inclusion in the country.

He said, "EthSwitch, the National Switch, is owned by the National Bank of Ethiopia, all banks either Private or Public, Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), Payment Instrument Issuers (PIIs), and Payment Services Providers (PSOs). It is mandated to Create Interoperability between



financial institutions, implement a Domestic Payment Scheme, provide a National Payment Gateway, serve as Central Interconnectivity for Clearing and Settlement, and provide Shared Platform/Infrastructure services."

The CEO further elucidated that as a share company establishes with equal investment by all private and public banks in Ethiopia in 2011, EthSwitch is open to participation for all financial institutions, payment system operators and Payment Instrument Issuers licensed by the NBE. It is a business company that operates with no profit maximization, but cost recovery and re-investment motives.

"Governed by an established corporate governance structure, where the Shareholders' General Assembly is the supreme governing body, and the Board of Directors, EthSwitch is comprised elected members who oversee the overall operation of the company which will be led by the CEO, that manage the day-to-day activities of the Management team," he explained.

As to him, owners and operators of the unifying e-payment platform for Ethiopia (EthioPay) which consists of a national e-payment switch, clearing and settlement system is well applied.

In today's rapidly digitizing world, Ethiopia's financial landscape is undergoing a monumental shift, propelled by the transformative power of digital banking. Advanced technologies and widespread internet penetration have ushered in a remarkable evolution in the banking sector, completely transforming the delivery and consumption of financial services. The current state of digital banking in the country not only reflects the substantial progress made thus far but also highlights the immense potential that lies ahead.

Digital-banking ecosystem in Ethiopia has experienced a remarkable surge, fuelled by the government's ambitious Digital Ethiopia initiative and the increasing prevalence of the technological revolution has empowered millions of citizens, spanning from urban hubs to rural areas, by granting them convenient, secure and efficient access to financial services.

Popular digital-banking services, such as mobile applications, online payments and digital wallets, have gained widespread adoption—fundamentally reshaping how individuals manage their finances, conduct transactions and interact with financial institutions. One of the key advantages of digital



banking lies in its ability to bridge the gap between the urban populace and the unbanked or under banked, especially in rural areas.

Digital banking has enabled individuals, regardless of their geographical locations and strata, to access essential banking services conveniently. With a Smartphone and internet connection, individuals can open bank accounts, make transactions, check balances and even avail themselves of credit facilities.

Digital wallets and mobile payment platforms have gained immense popularity, allowing individuals to make transactions, pay bills and shop online without physical currency. This has particularly benefited the unbanked population, who previously relied heavily on cash transactions.

In the context of financial inclusion, digital banking also offers opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs. Digital lending platforms, enabled by digital-banking infrastructure, provide easier access to credit for these businesses, which often face challenges obtaining loans through traditional channels.

The digital public infrastructure in Ethiopia has been a game-changer, enhancing accessibility and inclusivity in financial services. Also, collaboration between banks and ecosystem players has become essential in the digital era to deliver holistic financial solutions.

However, infrastructure limitations remain a barrier, particularly in rural and remote areas, where reliable internet connectivity and power supply are limited. This hampers the seamless delivery of digital-banking services and impedes access for a large population segment.

Security concerns arise as digital transactions increase in volume. Safeguarding customer data and ensuring secure transactions are paramount to maintaining trust in digital-banking platforms. The future of digital banking in the country holds great promise, with several emerging trends reshaping the industry and driving its growth. These trends are set to transform how banking services are delivered and experienced by customers.

Open banking, for instance, is gaining traction in Ethiopia, paving the way for a more collaborative and customer-centric banking landscape. By allowing customers to share their financial data with authorized third-party providers securely, open banking fosters innovation and competition.

The potential of digital banking in Ethiopia presents an exciting and promising future. To fully harness these emerging trends, addressing regulatory and security challenges is paramount. Establishing robust frameworks to safeguard customer interests, ensure data privacy and security, and maintain transaction integrity is crucial.

The journey ahead is exciting, and with the right vision and collaboration, digital banking will play a pivotal role in shaping Ethiopia's financial future. No more looking over manuscript statements or withdrawal slips, and hard currency trends are not used any longer. Yes, thanks to the advent of digital banking, individuals, companies and organizations can now easily make transactions, check their account balance or even make transfers just with a single click of a button on their Smartphone, desk top or any other digital device through digital banking.

Digital banking represents the seamless integration of banking services into the digital world, enabling users to manage their finances through the internet or mobile devices. This modern approach to banking is reshaping the financial landscape, offering a blend of convenience, speed, and accessibility previously unattainable through traditional banking methods. At its core, digital banking encompasses all the transactions, savings, and investment activities that once required a visit to a bank branch, now accessible via cell phone or computers.

Digital banking is built on several key components that together create a robust and versatile financial ecosystem. Online banking websites and mobile banking apps form the backbone of digital banking, offering users the ability to perform transactions, check balances, and manage their accounts from anywhere. The shift towards digital banking brings numerous advantages over traditional banking models.

Transitioning to digital banking begins with selecting a digital bank or a traditional bank that offers comprehensive online services. Mobile banking apps now offer a comprehensive suite of features, from basic account management and transaction capabilities to more sophisticated services like mobile check deposits, real-time notifications, and personalized financial insights. The future of financial services is set to transcend traditional banking boundaries, with the integration of banking services into non-financial platforms emerging as a key trend.

As digital banking continues to evolve, regulators are faced with the task of ensuring a secure and stable financial environment while fostering innovation. Digital banking refers to the use of digital technologies to deliver banking services and manage financial transactions over the internet.

Reflecting on the digital banking revolution, we've explored its evolution from traditional methods to the forefront of financial technology, highlighting the significant benefits, including convenience, efficiency, and enhanced customer experiences. The digitization of a bank involves developing new channels and products, adapting to technological infrastructure, and changing organizations to strategically position themselves in the digital environment. In developing countries, banks have embarked on this process before and are now at the stage of meeting new customer needs and can compete with further technical and financial service providers.

Art & Culture

Nigeria's soft power, African universities and challenges of teaching and learning

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

Education is defined as “a system of formal teaching and learning as conducted through schools and other institutions. Levels of education in modern societies can go from preschools to colleges and universities.” Education developed from the human struggle for survival and enlightenment. It may be formal or informal. Informal education refers to the general social process by which human beings acquire the knowledge and skills needed to function in their culture. Formal education refers to the process by which teachers instruct students in courses of study within institutions.

The subject of our discussions here is not education as such but what we may call the tools or methods of education. In its broader definition, education which the basis of inventions in science technology and engineering, is sometimes considered a projection of soft power by a country over a specific region without the need for military coercion or by peaceful means.

Soft power is often a term current in political or military disciplines. Yet, soft power or the power to influence with high quality of products and services encompasses and include human activities beyond military or political spheres. Soft power is defined as “that ability to influence or persuade another or others through persuasion and personal attraction.” The British and American educational systems are often considered reflections of soft power as they impact or influence the knowledge transfers to other countries by peaceful means.

Broadly conceived, “a country's soft power can impact positively on its economic prospects by influencing perceptions, building trust and creating a positive environment for investors and trade partners.” In this sense, Nigeria's excellence in higher education and educational teaching quality can be considered as an influential soft power as other countries learn from it and spread it at even at the regional level.

According to recent information based on a report by the Times Higher Education, Nigeria is leading top Ten African Universities with best teaching skills. Nigeria is not only leading top Ten African Universities in teaching skills. It is also the leading country as it occupies the first rank in the size of its economy on the continent. Nigeria is leading the continent in many areas such as the cultural industry, i.e. music and cinema, as well as for its impact on African politics although its internal politics is often in turmoil. “Nigeria with four universities, leads the pack in the list of African top 10 tertiary institutions with the best teaching skills. For generations before the arrival of Europeans, Nigerians taught their children informally about their culture, work, survival skills, and social activities. Some societies gave more formal instruction about society and culture as part of young peoples' rites of passage into adulthood.

In Islamic communities, students studied the Qur'an (Koran) and read other religious texts written in Arabic. Many of the more able students pursued higher Islamic studies and became teachers, clerics, or legal scholars. By 1919 northern Nigeria had about 25,000 Qur'anic schools. A large number of Islamic schools are still in operation.

Nigeria's excellence in higher education and educational teaching quality can be considered as an influential soft power as other countries learn from it and spread it even at the regional level

“It is a universal truism that education is a pivotal tool in turning the trajectory of Africa's socioeconomic growth and development. No doubt, one of the often complained shortfalls of Africa's tertiary institutions is the teaching quality when compared to their counterparts in Europe or the United States of America for that matter.”

The educational systems in Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular, currently face tremendous problems relevant to quality of education. It is to be recalled that higher institutions of learning in Ethiopia have been, and still are, targets of criticism for their allegedly poor quality of teaching and learning, resulting in generally poor educational quality.

This kind of criticism, although often unwelcome or discouraged by the educational authorities, nevertheless reflects the attitudes and opinions of many educators, researchers as well as parents and their children who bear the brunt of the declining educational quality that would inevitably be reflected on national performance in the economy and national development in general.

The main factor behind the sharp fall in the quality of education at the level universities and colleges is often mentioned as being the poor training teachers or lecturers receive at teacher training institutions that are themselves become the victims of the general educational crisis.

It would be tautological to say that poor teacher training produces poor students and ultimately impact the entire educational system. This crisis is of course the result of decades of neglect, lack of initiatives to critically evaluate the system, and the inherent tendency to copy paste curricula from foreign sources instead of basing the national



educational system on home-based traditional and modern educational values and practices. Ethiopia has never been colonized by foreign powers and it had the opportunity to generate a genuinely home-based educational system on the basis of the centuries-old traditions and practices as well as modernize it with modern educational concepts.

With regards to the situation in most African countries, the educational systems were copied from former colonial powers, either from France or Britain in what is known as Francophone or Anglophone Africa. It is a well-documented fact that Africa had educational systems that go back to many centuries. “In ancient Egypt, which flourished from about 3000 BC to about 500 BC, priests in temple schools taught not only religion but also the principles of writing, the sciences, mathematics, and architecture.”

The situation was more or less similar in ancient Abyssinia, now Ethiopia, where church education on the basis of the Ge'ez script had reached advanced stages during the Axumite period back in the 4th century. However, history has never been kind to Africa in its educational development as it was in other areas. Countries like Egypt and Ethiopia that were at the forefront of education and learning in philosophy, astronomy and mathematics could not continue at a faster pace and were overtaken by European colonial rule that undermined local education in those countries and replaced it with colonial education that contributed to their retardation.

What are the main teaching skills at every level of the educational hierarchy? These are excellent communication, confident to present in front of a group, the ability to break down concepts and share them, problem-solving abilities, creativity, flexibility, organization and time management and conflict resolution.”

Why are teaching skills important at all levels of the teaching-learning process? Why should teachers acquire good teaching skills? These are important questions because they directly or indirectly impact the quality of education. Teachers armed with good teaching skills are bound to boost the quality of education at all levels. On the contrary, teachers with poor teaching skills most likely fail to communicate the knowledge required by the students. Poor teaching skills are similar to poor communication skills and without good communication between teachers and students there are bound to be poor or inefficient knowledge transfer.

One of the qualities of good teaching is therefore the ability and skills in communication. “Some qualities of the good teacher include skills in communication, listening, collaboration, adaptability, empathy and patience. Other characteristics of effective teaching include an engaging classroom presence, exchange of best practices and a lifelong love of learning.”

Africans value education and all governments see improving educational access and quality as essential to national economic and political development. Despite scarce financial resources, many countries have made noteworthy achievements in raising literacy rates in recent decades. Adult literacy rates of 70 percent or more are characteristic of East, Central, and southern Africa, except, notably, in Somalia, Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique.

Gains have been less impressive in West Africa: Many countries still have literacy rates below 60 percent, and the rates in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Sierra Leone are among the world's lowest. Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria are notable exceptions, with particularly high literacy rates. Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria in North Africa have rates of 90 percent or higher. Females have significantly lower literacy rates than males across most of Africa.

Africa is of course playing catch up with the rest of the world but as a later comer to modern education, the continent is often bleeding from brain drain as its best educated sons and daughters often choose to study and work in Western countries thereby denying their own people of the opportunity to enjoy quality education. The brain drain that is continuing unabated is depriving Africa not only of its educated human resources but also the best and brightest in all educational fields who could have realized Africa's dream of rising from poverty.

The West provides ample and quality educational opportunities to students from all over the world including China. The difference is that Chinese students study in Europe or America and return home to help national economic development. Students from Africa are often criticized for neglecting the needs of their continent and spending the rest of their lives in the West instead of serving their compatriots back home. It should not therefore come as a surprise if the best African educators are based abroad while the continent is in urgent need of teachers who could uplift education in their respective countries.

Science & Technology

National Math Challenge aims at honing mathematical skills, churning out mathematicians

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

In 1959, the first International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) was started in Romania with seven participant countries. The IMO is now an annual contest where over 100 countries are participating in the worldwide competition by sending a group of six high school students.

Annually, the IMO organizes the international mathematics competition where countries from around the world send students to compete internationally. IMO is among the oldest international scientific competitions.

Mathematics is the base for science and scientific knowledge. Countries give due attention to developing the knowledge of their generation in the mathematics field. If we look at the top students in mathematics, they are students of developed and technologically advanced countries. Countries like Russia, China, USA, Korea, Iran and related countries are at the forefront in displaying the best results at the IMO competition.

Today, as the world competes to own sophisticated technologies, each country gives due focus to the hard science field. Mathematics is the base in this regard. Hence, nurturing the passion of students early to love mathematics is crucial to create future mathematicians and scientists. Especially, developing countries still struggling to develop local research and technologies, have to give due attention to the development of mathematics knowledge during the early grades.

Despite mathematics being the seedbed of science, there is a negative attitude by most students about the subject. They assume that mathematics courses as tough to understand. Hence, upturning this misunderstanding or prejudice towards mathematics courses needs special interventions to make mathematics the favorite subject for students, especially during the early classes.

To change the negative attitude towards mathematics education by inspiring students and sensitizing the young generation that mathematics is not a monster, Kebede Atnafu founded My Soroban Ethiopia.

Established seven years ago, My Soroban Ethiopia organized an annual national mathematics competition for students from grade three to grade 12 and this year's My Soroban contest was held at the Millennium Hall from 04 August to 07 August where 50 representatives of 50 cities participated in the national contest. The national competition, according to Kebede, is the final and sixth round competition where the top three students from each class (grade 3-12) during five-round competitions at their cities represent the city to win at the national level.

Speaking to EBC, Kebede said that he was a math teacher for over 13 years. After teaching for many years, he founded My Soroban Ethiopia to promote top students in mathematics. Its goal is to cultivate talents, to inspire students to love mathematics, and to create future mathematics specialists. As to him, so far, the competition is bringing



Medals prepared for the national mathematics competition winners during this year's contest

meaningful outcomes as it develops a culture of positive competition to win the national contest. An 11 year old Nigus Dawit is a grade six student who attended the past two national math contests organized by My Soroban Ethiopia and is among the finalists for this year's national competition. Mathematics is his favorite subject and attending in the national competition is helping him to develop his knowledge, as to him. He said that "Mathematics is not a difficult subject; students can make mathematics their favorite course and the students' attitude towards the subject matters to make the subject their favorite or tough subject."

In his third round participation in the annual national mathematics competition, Nigus is confident to win the grade six contests to become a winner from 50 students gathered from 50 cities.

The national mathematics competition is prepared annually with the motto of "Smartness leads one to the helm" and this year's competition was attended by students gathered from 50 different cities from across Ethiopia. The 50 cities send three students from each grade, from grade 3 to 12. These students are selected through five-round competition processes starting from school at the city level. And finally, the top three students from each grade represent the participant city, Kebede stated. After the five-round city-level competitions, the students gathered in Addis Ababa to attend and win the national competition.

According to the founder and CEO of My Soroban Ethiopia, Kebede, in addition to cultivating the talents in mathematics, inspiring students and avoiding the negative attitude towards mathematics education among students, the competition aims to select top students to represent Ethiopia at the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) in the future. Despite Ethiopian students' talents to compete at the international level; due to the absence of a mechanism to select and send Ethiopian students, Ethiopia never attends the IMO competition. Now, by strengthening My Soroban's contest, he is hopeful and confident



Participant students at Millennium Hall during the annual Mathematics Competition organized by My Soroban Ethiopia (pic: from My Soroban)

to send Ethiopian representatives to continental and international mathematical competitions.

As to Kebede, to nurture the talent of students in mathematics, it is vital to invest in them during their early ages and early classes. As to him, even scientifically, children naturally capture mathematics and other fields from the age of six to 13. "If children are supported during this age, they will become top students and scientifically there is no child lazy by nature," he stated adding it is a matter of practice and study to become top students, especially in mathematics.

In addition, for him, it is also important to support children's mathematics learning practically by allowing them to practice like abacus and the like. "Abacus and similar practical methods can help children to easily understand addition, multiplication, division, and subtraction during the early classes," Kebede stated. Making the teaching-learning process easy and attractive to children, can help them to easily understand mathematics early and also change the negative attitude towards mathematics. For Kebede, mathematics is not a single subject; it is the base for other subjects.

My Soroban Ethiopia, the company behind the National Annual Mathematics Competition was started before the outbreak of COVID-19, almost seven years ago. The competition

aims to improve the knowledge and talent of students in mathematics by inspiring top students. And during the past years' contests, Kebede sees significant improvements in students developing their knowledge as the students study further knowledge to win the competition. As to him, the National Mathematics Competition highly promotes students to further their mathematical knowledge and to become competitive.

During this year's national math competition organized at Millennium Hall, over 4,000 students from 50 different cities had attended the competition. These top students from each city compete to win the national competition. As to the CEO, the top ten students from each grade, from grade three to grade 12, will be awarded. The top-ranking students from each grade will be awarded 50,000 birr.

The major goals of the competition as enumerated by Kebede are changing the negative attitude of students towards mathematics education by making math a favorite subject, recognizing top students to develop their math knowledge, cultivating top talents to represent Ethiopia at the IMO in the future, and to churning out future mathematicians by promoting them early. In the future, My Soroban dreams of seeing Ethiopian top students to represent Ethiopia at continental and international mathematical Olympiads.

Society

What will Africa look like if we have more women leaders?

BY MEKDES TAYE (PhD)

Females make up a half share of the population of the globe. As various sources show, this share is going up in some continents like Africa. This did mean that the countries' existence and interaction is supposed to be taken by over half portion- females. Though this is the logical expectation to be seen in the continent, African females are not yet showing up themselves in certain areas of leadership positions. The root cause of this fact is the socio-cultural well-being of the society. Even though institutions, NGOs, governmental associations and various associations have been working to assure gender equality and adopt certain policies, the effect is far from the attempted goal.

For this low achievement of these organizational efforts, different critics argued that the rooted patriarchy is the key to be addressed through consistent and devoted training and advocacy. Since the attitude of the people was built for centuries and is highly manifested in various socio-cultural and political sections, it needs a firm and committed stand which should be facilitated by policies and sound implementations. This is the way to transform society since the females are struggling to transform within untransformed society.

Thus, the question is why women are needed to be in leadership positions? Scholars in sociology and politics believe that women is more sensitive and nearer to the community than their male counterparts comparatively. This means that the problems, frustrations, aspirations, feelings and threats of the society are best understood by woman than man.

This means that she has been taking these issues in her mind since she is practically passing through such things. Thus, when she took a leadership position, she could act ahead of confronting these issues. In line with this, the former President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson, said that "when women are elected in a village council or to a national parliament, they have an influence on public investment, on health sector and education. When there are more women in the parliament, they can represent the major and hot issues of the society. When they are there in a good number, women can serve as a role model for girls and that could make a difference in the long run."

The president was also asked about the measures that she took while she was in the position regarding the issue. The journalist raised this question after remarking on the increased number of women who took leadership positions in the country following the president's leadership. She replied: "We open the political space so that more and more women use that space and get into leadership positions. This is I think what African women leaders need to do."

These days, the equal engagement and representation of all forms of the society is progressively demanded by the people. Thus, sustainable development and transformation without the critical consideration of these sections is unthinkable. This was also the



These days, the equal engagement and representation of all forms of the society is progressively demanded by the people. Thus, sustainable development and transformation without the critical consideration of these sections is unthinkable

primary focus of African Union Summits which took place in recent years. The issue of women is becoming one of the exceeding concerns for the summits. Although the figures and qualities have not been achieved in the continent, the issue remains very controversial till this moment.

If then what could the continent look like if more women took leadership positions? The former Liberia President Ellen Johnson was once talking with Shaka Ssali, the host of Strait Talk Africa, to be aired on VOA. He asked her to suggest on the impact of having women leaders in Africa. Here is her thought. "African women have a great responsibility when it comes to leadership. We have to work together to set examples to inspire young women to achieve their leadership goals. When a woman leads not only there can be economic management and financial success, but also we can make the world a better place than we found it."

This woman's words were originated from what she practically did while she was in the position. For these deeds, she received recognition before the globe. She mobilized women and girls and changed their lives and organized an association that aimed at enhancing women's and girls' knowledge and skills in leadership. She has brought a good number of females into the front to take leadership positions.

UN Women in collaboration with USAID was investigating the tangible changes that the continent saw with women leaders. Kah Walla (a candidate who ran for Cameroon's Presidential election in 2011) was the first one to be asked about the issue. Here is her say. "African women have the responsibility of changing the situation as Africans; to be able to have efficient organizations and efficient countries. We have to work hard to build a country that is ready to respond to the needs of the people who live there. I have a firm believe that women can do this. We, women, have all the ability, all the resources and capacity."

Nigozi Okonjo iweala (PhD), (Corresponding Minister of the Economy and Minister of Finance, Nigeria), believed that every individual has the capacity to contribute to change. But when African women get at leadership, their voices are going to be heard in the right place, time and on behalf of people; not only other women and girls but also many girl children.

Each African woman has a say on various topics. But she didn't have an appropriate platform to utter her inside. However, leadership positions are key to open the gate for females. Though all female girls could not get that opportunity, if women leaders are there, they can represent and echo the minds of others better than the male ones.

Wangari Maathai, Kenyan and the first Black African woman to win the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize, argued that "Advocacy should be given to women. They should be given an opportunity to be in decision-making positions, to hold power and to challenge women that one day they have that power and will use it better than their male colleagues." Besides this, Juliet Asante of Ghana strongly believed that "African women are committed to improving the quality of Africa."

The two former female presidents of Liberia and Malawi practically showed that when African women take a leadership position, they have the ability to address the masses with an influential approach. These women were able to mobilize millions of females in their countries and extend their service to other countries of the continent. In here, I believe that their sex and social placement helped them to understand the controversial issues of their people. This had facilitated them to segment

and level the enacted issues according to their importance and immediacy for the people.

In Ethiopia too there have been very strong, committed, and successful women leaders. Since recent years, women are increasingly coming to the frontline of leadership. In relation to the deeds of the two above mentioned presidents, let me walk you through Meaza Ashenafi's experience.

Meaza Ashenafi is a very strong woman whose contribution, I found, is very relevant in the process of combating women's challenges in Ethiopia and Africa. She is a devoted lawyer who became the first female chief justice of the Ethiopian Supreme Court. Meaza did know and understand the basic challenges of Ethiopian women and reacted to that in practice. She did two important solutions. The first one was she had initiated her lawyer colleagues and formed an organization that aimed at mobilizing women and men forward to avoid women violence and humiliation.

She said, "I feel women lawyers needed to get organized because we pioneered people. This was in the 90th when we established an association. We pioneer advocacy and promote the rights of women. This mobilization skill helped me and my colleagues to move into another sector which is the business sector. So, I believe that women need to organize and work together since the collective action is needed to make a change." Since they were effective in their approach, the organization was too impactful as she mentioned it in her interview. "People listen to us because we have legal skills and that we are using the law as a tool to sort out arguments on cases."

This association was successful in mobilizing a good number of women and the rate of females' violence and harmful cultural practices against women were diminishing significantly. Here the point is that, this woman had initiated this association and convinced her friends to join her since she was a well-alerted woman about the basic threats of society and she was skilled and confident in solving the problem. As she said, the association had brought a change. Thus, she shines for society and transforms it into an informed being.

Meaza feels that the essence of patriarchy in Ethiopia and Africa is progressively challenged these days. "Things are moving forward. We are witnessing an increasing number of women representatives in politics ...legislative... executive branches."

As the cited women leaders said; based on their own practical political experiences, African women have the potential, skills, knowledge, confidence and commitment that can equip them in any leadership position. The maximum effort they demand is the prevalence of a transformed society. They are the reliable sources of information about the society. Thus, they know how deepen the issue is and act accordingly with a critical and systematic approach better than males is my justification. Let me borrow the words of Wangari Maathai as a closing remark. "When more women come to leadership, the world will be better managed."



This is Ethiopia

Lucy, the fossil skeleton that impact human origins science

BY STAFF REPORTER

Ethiopia is often referred to as the “Cradle of Humankind” due to its fascinating history, ancient civilization, and jaw-dropping fossil discoveries that changed the perception and understanding of the evolution of humankind and allowed archeologists and scientists to have some clue about the human species; to have a clearer picture on the history of human evolution.

The country is home to several significant archeological findings that give a useful understanding of the history of life on Earth, including the remains of *Ardipithecus ramidus*, the *Homo habilis*, and *Homo erectus* fossils that further trace the trajectory of human development.

What is more, the country is also home to one of the oldest civilizations in the world; with a history that dates back thousands of years.

As the cradle of humankind and the center of ancient civilization, the nation is one of the few countries that attract the attention of archeologists, paleoanthropologists, scientists, and tourists. Among several archeological discoveries Lucy; locally called “Dinkeneshe” is one of the discoveries in Ethiopia that gives clues regarding the evolution of humans, and where life and humans came from.

Lucy, scientifically classified as *Australopithecus afarensis*, was discovered by a team of paleoanthropologists led by Donald Johanson at the known fossils site Hadar, in Ethiopia. The skeleton was notable for its remarkable completeness, with approximately 40 percent of the skeleton being found.

The finding of Lucy’s remaining part was groundbreaking, as it provided tangible evidence that bipedalism, or the ability to walk on two legs, had developed long before the evolution of larger brains. This shifted paradigms, suggesting that walking upright was a crucial adaptation that would lead to our eventual emergence as *Homo sapiens*.

In the annals of human history, few discoveries have had as profound impact as the finding of “Lucy,” one of the oldest and most complete hominid skeletons ever unearthed. Discovered in 1974 in the Afar State of Ethiopia, Lucy represents a significant milestone in augmenting the understanding of human evolution and amplifying Ethiopia’s reputation as the origin of humankind and a key player in the history of humankind’s history.

Dating back about 3.2 million years, Lucy offered critical insights into the morphology and behavior of early hominids. Standing about 3.5 feet tall and weighing around 65 pounds, she possessed both human-like and ape-like features. Her relatively small cranial capacity pointed to a primitive brain, while her bipedalism showcased an important evolutionary leap toward modern human

locomotion.

This year, the discovery of Lucy turns 50. Concerning this, last Tuesday, an anniversary program was held here in Addis Ababa, at Adwa Victory Memorial Museum, to mark the 50th anniversary of the finding of Lucy’s remains under the theme “Half a Century of a Remarkable Finding.”

Including Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), and Paleoanthropologist Donald Johanson, who is known for the discovery of the remains of Lucy, the event was attended by several Paleoanthropologists, scientists, and guests among others.

Speaking at the event, Tourism Minister, Amb. Nasise Chali said that the discovery of Lucy’s (Dinkeneshe) remains has manifested that Ethiopia is the birthplace of humanity. According to her, Lucy heralded Ethiopia as the origin of Mankind, underscoring the country’s significance in studies of the origin of human fossils. She also said that the discovery of Lucy’s fossil, which was confirmed to have lived on Earth 3.2 million years ago, is a unique historical opportunity.

Amb. Nasise stated that the main purpose of commemorating the 50th anniversary of the discovery of Lucy’s remains is to promote to the world that Ethiopia is the true cradle of humanity. “It is important to show evidence that there are many findings that prove Ethiopia’s land of origin.”

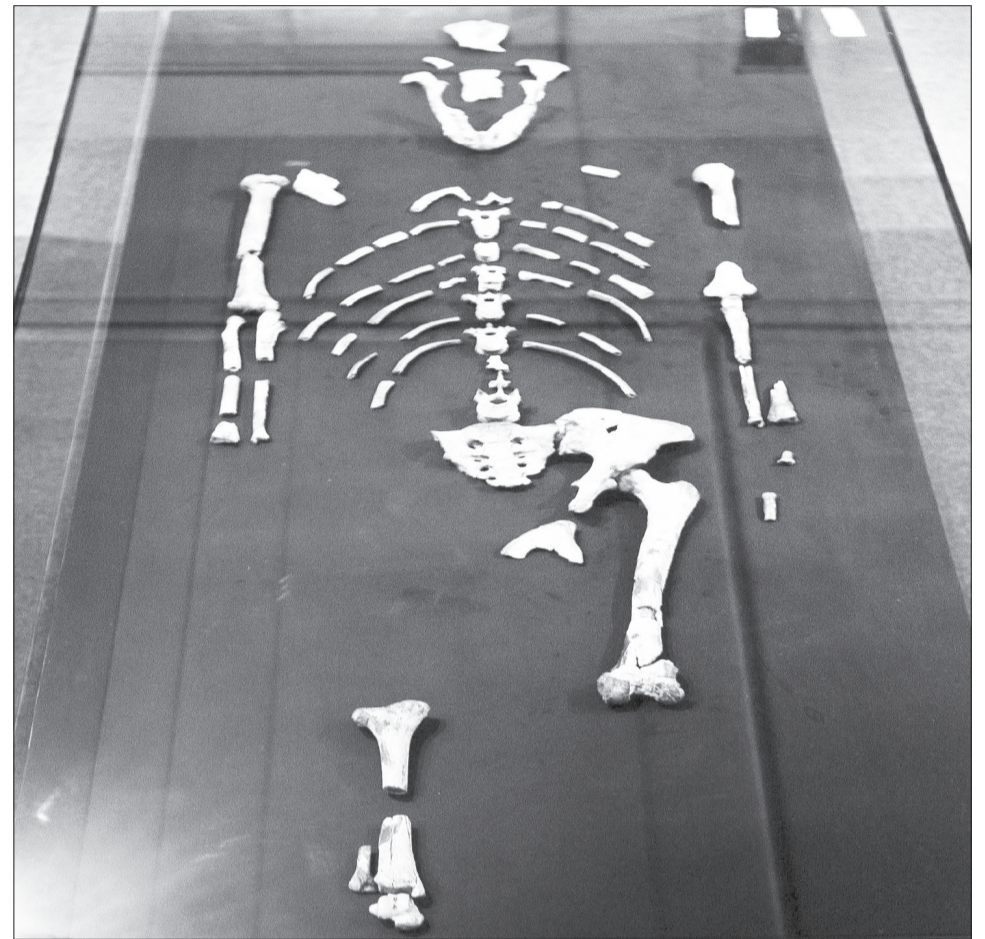
In his short stay with ENA, American Paleoanthropologist Prof. Donald Johanson also underscored that the discovery of Lucy brought a new insight into human evolution. Prof. Donald, who is also known for discovering the remains of Lucy, said that all humans can trace their roots back to Ethiopia, and the slogan “Ethiopia Land of Origin” is appropriate.

“I am so happy and so thrilled and so honored to have been invited to give the keynote at this conference, and to be with my colleagues, to have an opportunity to talk about Lucy and how important she has been for our understanding of human evolution and how the spotlight is on Ethiopia. It has a record of fossils from 6 million years ago up to the present. So it is a very important country and helps us understand who we are, where we came from and our place in the natural world,” he stated.

Ethiopia is one of those countries that are so diverse, Prof. Johanson stated, and noted “It has so many things to see. You never run out of places to go or places that will thrill you to spend time here in Ethiopia.”

“I was thrilled to be part of the 50th anniversary of Lucy’s skeletal remains discovery celebrated under the theme ‘Half a Century of a Remarkable Finding’ in Addis Ababa.”

Recalling that there was no huge number of scholars in paleoanthropology during his first visit, Professor Johanson said today there are young Ethiopian scholars who are doing



Skeleton of Lucy

Lucy herself remains a subject of study and fascination. The original skeleton is housed at the Ethiopian National Museum in Addis Ababa, attracting scholars and tourists alike

studied, bringing to light various aspects of life millions of years ago, including diet, environment, and social structures.

Indeed, the study of Lucy and her contemporaries has unveiled the complexities of early hominid life, including their adaptation to changing environments and their evolutionary journey toward modern humans.

Lucy herself remains a subject of study and fascination. The original skeleton is housed at the Ethiopian National Museum in Addis Ababa, attracting scholars and tourists alike. In recent years, advanced imaging technologies, such as CT scans and 3D modeling, have allowed scientists to study her remains without physical interference, leading to new insights about her life and environment.

Furthermore, Lucy has transcended the realm of science, becoming a cultural icon. Various exhibitions have showcased her remains in museums worldwide, sparking interest in anthropology and human origins. Documentaries and educational programs have drawn attention to the significance of her discovery, promoting a deeper understanding of our shared history.

Ethiopia, the Origin of Mankind, a country with a rich history and vibrant culture, and the home of Lucy has continued to make strides in various fields, showcasing its greatness on the global stage. The various reforms taken by the government are bearing fruits. From economic growth and infrastructure development to social progress and environmental initiatives, Ethiopia’s current achievements highlight its potential and promise for the future.

cutting-edge research and making fantastic discoveries.

“I encourage the Ethiopian youth, to get involved in this study of origins, because it’s so important for you to learn more about Ethiopia and teach the world about the importance of this wonderful country,” he urged.

Since her discovery, Lucy has become a symbol of human evolution, capturing the imaginations of scientists and the public alike. Her fossils have been extensively