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Raising red flag on banks' competitiveness

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

The entry of foreign banks into Ethiopia is expected to impose fierce competition on local banks, pushing them to develop new products, adopt advanced technologies, and strengthen their operations, according to experts.

As Ethiopia opens its financial sector to foreign competitors, local banks will need to innovate and adapt to the new competitive landscape, which poses a significant challenge to the country's banking industry. Getachew Beshahwred, Founder and CEO of Bruh Finance, told *The Ethiopian Herald* that while the participation of foreign banks can be advantageous, it must be managed properly within Ethiopia's financial sector.

Getachew noted that this development could present opportunities for local banks if they collaborate with international counterparts. He emphasized that the Ethiopian financial

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FDRE Government Communication Service

Gov't urges TPLF to respect board's decision

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA - The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) ought to respect the decision made by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) regarding its legal

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Uprooted voices: IDPs call for peace, unity at Nat'l Dialogue

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

Internally Displaced People (IDPs), forced to flee their homes due to conflict, are estimated to number 63.8 million globally, according to UNHCR. As some of the most vulnerable individuals in the world, IDPs are uprooted from their homes and livelihoods, often facing dangerous conditions and continued risks.

In the ongoing agenda gathering phase of the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC), held in Harari State and Dire Dawa City Administration, IDPs have been a significant focus of discussion.

Ziyad Abdela, displaced from Somali State six years ago and now residing in Harari, is participating in the dialogue. "We know what we have gone through due to instability.



Ziyad Abdela

There is nothing in this world better than having peace," he stated.

Ziyad, who has been living in temporary



Tajer Mohammed

shelter in Harari, emphasized that the community is the first to suffer from instability. "Resolving disagreements by sitting around a table should be the first



Semira Abdi

option. Nothing good comes from war." He called on all concerned parties, including political groups and the government, to

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Photo: Hadash Abreha

Youth to drive socio-economic dev't via digital innovation : MoWSA

BY ASHENAFI ANMUIT

ADDIS ABABA - The Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA) has called on Ethiopian youth to harness the power of digital technologies to accelerate the nation's socio-economic development.

This call was made during the 24th International Youth Day celebration, which was observed for the 21st time at the national level under the theme "From Clicks to Progress: Youth Digital Pathways for Sustainable Development."

The event brought together government officials, international representatives, and youth from across the capital.

In her address, MoWSA Minister Ergogie Tesfaye (PhD) highlighted the significant potential of young people to leverage digital tools to contribute to the country's development sectors. She pointed out that the government's recent "Five Million Coders" initiative has opened up vast opportunities for youth to engage in technology-driven

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News

Dire Dawa kicks off agenda gathering for lasting harmony

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

DIRE DAWA- The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) has initiated the agenda gathering phase in Dire Dawa City in the course of the National Dialogue process in which the nation is conducting to achieve lasting peace and harmony.

At the opening of the event yesterday, ENDC Commissioner Amb. Mohammed Dirir emphasized that dialogue should be the primary method for expressing ideas about Ethiopia's future.

He noted that power struggles can only disrupt peace among societies and deplete the nation's resources, while dialogue offers a path to a win-win solution.

The Commissioner also stressed the importance of recognizing that no wound is beyond healing through discussion. "The culture of resolving differences through dialogue not only



Amb. Mohammed Dirir

brings mutual benefits to all actors, but it also ensures a better future for the next generation."

He added that the nation is in the process of healing its longstanding wounds through peaceful and respectful

discussions. The ENDC has been conducting pre-preparation activities to ensure the success of the agenda gathering discussions in the city administration.

The agenda gathering is set to take place over seven consecutive days, starting from yesterday. During the first three days, community representatives will hold discussions and appoint individuals who will participate in the dialogue with representatives from the Dire Dawa City Administration, political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other stakeholders, Mohammed elaborated.

The Commissioner called on the people of Dire Dawa to make every effort to bring forward issues that need to be addressed in the National Dialogue, with the goal of resolving challenges and moving Ethiopia forward.

Coders' initiative vehicle to transform country's economy: Officials

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopia's lately launched 5 million coders initiative would transform country's economy through promoting technology transfer and ensuring competitiveness, Officials indicated.

Recently, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed launched the 5 million coders initiative in which the program will be implemented in collaboration with the Government of United Arab Emirates in the coming three consecutive years.

Senior Advisor with the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Abiot Bayu (PhD) told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that digital skills and technology are critical to the country's economic development.

He believed that the digital technology addresses challenges in health, education, agriculture, manufacturing, marketing and other areas.

As to him, Ethiopia is delayed in digital skill advancement compared with other countries although the aforementioned training program helps to improve this. Besides, in order to make Ethiopia competitive in digital skills at the global level, the initiative is designed and to benefit many citizens.

Activities such as opening up the telecom sector, introducing new technology, changing education curriculum and others have been undertaken to realize Ethiopia's competitiveness at the global level, Abiot said.

"The 5,000,000 coders training program

is fundamental to ensure digital Ethiopia 2025 strategy while expanding infrastructure to produce proficient citizens in the field," he added.

Abiot further stated that a Federal and State-led committee has been established to implement the program. So far, over 92,000 citizens have been attending the training in that regard.

Ethiopian Artificial Intelligence Institute Director General Eng. Worku Gachena (PhD) on his part said that cooperation is timely and crucial to realize digital competitiveness in the international arena.

He added that Ethiopia is working hard to exploit digital technology to ensure development so that private and public institutions need to have effective system that saves time and resources.

Achieving world-class competitiveness requires applying cutting-edge technology in agriculture, health, finance and other sectors, according to Eng. Worku.

Ministry of Innovation and Technology, National Network Facilitating Project Leader Daniel Adino said that drawing lesson about utilizing technology for development is crucial. He mentioned that countries like India, China, and others have built a strong economy assisted by technology.

"The Coders training initiative would bring a paramount significance in digitalizing the national data system. It will help to save foreign currency that Ethiopia spends on technology and create jobs," he said.

Siket Bank reports 1.6 bln Birr gross profit for 2023/2024

• *Donates 2 mln Birr to Gofa landslide victims*

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA – Siket Bank reported a gross profit of 1.6 billion Birr before tax and provisions for the 2023/2024 fiscal year.

CEO Damtew Alemayehu presented the annual business performance at a gathering of bank staff and board members Saturday.

Damtew highlighted that the profit represents a 49% increase compared to the previous year. The bank's total assets grew by 30%, reaching 15.8 billion Birr, while total capital rose to 7.9 billion Birr.

Additionally, the bank generated an income of 2.3 billion Birr, marking a 42% increase from the previous year. Siket Bank's customer base expanded to 537,428 with 152 branches, including new locations in rural areas. The total deposits reached 4.9 billion Birr, he elaborated.

The bank extended loans totaling 3.9 billion Birr to customers, small and micro enterprises, youth, and women during the period. Siket Bank is also developing core banking software to connect all its branches.

In its commitment to social responsibility, the bank provided 10 million Birr in support to those in need and two million Birr in humanitarian aid to landslide victims



Damtew Alemayehu

in Gofa Zone of South Ethiopia State during the annual performance review, the CEO remarked.

Siket Bank is one of the new entrants of Ethiopia's thriving banking industry.

News

Raising red flag on banks' ...

sector, including both banks and insurance companies, remains relatively small but has immense potential for growth. Over the past twenty years, the sector has seen significant expansion, yet there is still much room for improvement.

Having worked as an accountant in London for the past 30 years, Getachew highlighted that the impending entry of foreign banks will bring intense and beneficial competition, ultimately benefiting consumers and the economy. He pointed out that Ethiopia currently has 31 operating banks, which are quite small compared to banks in other countries. To compete effectively, these banks must increase their capital base, either through new capital infusions or mergers, as the government has recently suggested.

Moreover, Getachew stressed that foreign banks could introduce new technologies and skilled labor, which would enhance competition and significantly improve the banking and insurance sectors-provided if it is managed properly. He also pointed out that most local bank activities are currently limited to cities and major towns, and they must expand their reach to rural areas where a significant number of people live. Without such changes, local banks will struggle to compete once foreign banks enter the market.

The Ethiopian government has allowed foreign banks to acquire shares in local banks and establish subsidiaries, and in some cases, they may be permitted to take over local banks. While this scenario could have advantages if managed well, it

will also introduce a considerable level of competition, which Getachew believes will benefit consumers and the economy as a whole.

He emphasized that finance is the engine of growth, and equitable access to financial services is critical for the development of the country. Additionally, the expert noted that banks and insurance companies employ many people and contribute significantly to tax revenues, making the maintenance of peace crucial for sustained growth.

Public policy expert Costantinos Berhtesfa (PhD) added that the entry of foreign banks into Ethiopia's financial sector would help address the scarcity of foreign capital flow. While the participation of foreign banks could alleviate some financial challenges,

Costantinos cautioned that policies must be carefully implemented in line with the country's economic interests.

He emphasized that Ethiopia has previously prohibited foreign banks from participating in the sector, allowing only domestic investors to purchase bank shares. As a result, the country missed the opportunity to benefit from the contributions of potential foreign banks, which have facilitated development in nations such as the UAE, Singapore, China, and Vietnam.

According to Costantinos, foreign capital is essential for development; without it, governments may become reliant on aid, remittances, or export income to obtain the foreign currency needed for importing goods and implementing projects.

Uprooted voices: IDPs...

prioritize peace above all else.

The National Dialogue is seen as a crucial platform for resolving challenges through discussion. Ziyad believes that for the nation to achieve its goals, it is vital to resolve differences through dialogue.

Another displaced individual, Tajer Mohammed, who was displaced from Jijiga and is now in temporary shelter in Harari, shared a similar experience.

Representing the displaced community, Tajer expressed hope for the successful implementation of the National Dialogue. He emphasized that the dialogue holds deep meaning for those displaced by instability. "As victims of instability, we place great value on the dialogue. Its success could be a green light for many of us to start fresh and reunite with our loved ones."

Tajer highlighted that by resolving differences through dialogue, Ethiopia could transform the lives of many, leading to meaningful change. He stressed that issues such as displacement, instability, and unemployment could be addressed through the National Dialogue. He called on

participants in the dialogue to be responsible and to serve as the voice for those they represent, urging them to be ready to make sacrifices for a better future for the coming generations.

For Semira Abdi, another representative of IDPs, the National Dialogue plays a multifaceted role for the country. She emphasized the importance of overcoming the long-standing challenges that the nation faces. Currently staying in a temporary shelter in Harari, Semira recounted the painful experiences she has endured over the years. She stressed that dialogue is crucial for peacefully resolving insecurities and conflicts. While avoiding disagreements may be impossible, discussion should be the primary approach, considering the impact it has on others.

Semira highlighted that the National Dialogue is essential for fostering a culture of peaceful conflict resolution.

The ENDC is continuing its agenda gathering discussions in both Harari State and Dire Dawa City Administration, with the voices of IDPs playing a central role.

Youth to drive socio-economic...

ventures, create decent jobs, and improve their economic standing.

The Minister urged the youth to play a pivotal role in ensuring peace and fulfilling their responsibilities as citizens. Beyond their economic contributions, she underscored the critical role of youth in sustaining peace, democracy, and advancing the nation's broader aspirations. "It is high time for the youth to stand with the country to eliminate poverty and address pressing regional and continental issues."

Minister Ergogie also expressed her gratitude to UNICEF and UNFPA for their ongoing support and reaffirmed her ministry's commitment to empowering youth, which, in turn, strengthens societal engagement.

UNICEF Deputy Representative Mariko Kagoshima, speaking at the

event, emphasized the crucial role of Ethiopian youth, noting that over 70% of the population is under 30 years old. She stressed that young people are not just passive recipients of information but active participants in shaping their communities and the world. Their creativity, energy, and innovative spirit, she said, are essential for driving sustainable development and tackling current challenges.

In an increasingly digital world, Kagoshima emphasized the vast opportunities technology provides for youth engagement and empowerment. She encouraged the youth, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders to embrace the event's theme and support young people in becoming architects of Ethiopia's sustainable future.

Gov't urges TPLF to respect...

reinstatement as it conforms to the Pretoria Peace Agreement, the Federal Government Communication Services (GCS) urged.

In a statement released yesterday, GCS has urged the party to respect the decision made by the NEBE in accordance with the spirit of the Pretoria Agreement which commands TPLF to be abided by the constitution and constitutional organs including the national election board.

According to the service, the federal government has discharged its obligations as per the agreement such as removing TPLF from the terrorist list and facilitating amendment of laws

to address the party's legal status issue which has now been effectively resolved.

"By closing the chapter of the issue of registration and legality, all stakeholders should now focus on sustaining peace, reconstruction and development agenda," it added.

On Friday, NEBE had rejected TPLF's request to reinstate its pre-war legal status, instead granting it a certificate of legal personality as a new political party under special conditions. The board stated that there is no legal basis to reinstate TPLF's pre-war legal status.

Few days ago, NEBE based on the confirmation given by the Ministry of Justice and documents submitted by

the party, decided to register TPLF as a political party under special consideration.

This, the statement recalled, was in accordance with Article 2 (1) of the recently amended Election Proclamation No. 1332/2016.

The statement recalled that the government revoked TPLF's legal political status since the TPLF was clearly involved in outrage against the Constitution.

The Board examined the request and decided on May 12, 2023, thus there was no legal provision in Proclamation No. 1162/2019 that allowed for the restoration of the party's former shape

and posture.

Its former existence as a party was dissolved due its involvement in rebellious activities, and as a result could not win its compliant of regaining its former status.

It is clear that the TPLF is bound to a legal obligation to work in compliance with the country's political parties registration law and the mandate of the election board.

Therefore, regardless of the Pretoria Agreement, the issue of the legal personality of the TPLF is a matter that should be resolved only in accordance with the relevant laws and the procedures of the NEBE, the statement disclosed.

Opinion

National dialogue in parrying Ethiopia's logjams

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

There is no doubt that national dialogue lends an impetus to resolve backlogs of existing quandaries unfolding among the various nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia. Whenever something happens, they almost immediately put in place their respective conflict resolution mechanisms. Since time immemorial they have been troubleshooting hitches in their own ways before the situation jumps from the frying pan to the fire.

Under any circumstances, they bend over backwards to make peace happen utilizing their own effective techniques devoid of the interference of third party through a successful round table discussion. No matter what the cost may be, they resolve predicaments in their distinctive way making the most of their own conflict resolution mechanism. In view of the foregoing, their endeavors have been coming to fruition and bringing results.

In the same way, Ethiopia has gone through many twists and turns to reach where it is in the present climate. To ensure lasting peace and stability, the country is at the ready to check through its political history and design its way with the purpose of smoothening the progress of peace, stability, and prosperity in the shortest possible time.

As national dialogue undertakes the role of resolving a backlog of glitches, restoring peace and tranquility in every crack of the country, concerned bodies should do the whole lot they could to bring about the anticipated goal in the shortest possible time.

It is known that if national dialogue is correctly implemented, bringing about peace in every corner of the country will be as easy as falling off a log. In actual fact, up to this juncture, a wide spectrum of nations conducted national dialogue employing numerous effective techniques with a focus on sowing the seeds of peace in every square inch of the country and guaranteeing peace.

Notwithstanding the fact that national dialogue is not a cure-all, it assists the progress of building common ground and accommodating a wide array of polarized thoughts. As the importance of inclusive dialogue is undisputable in resolving difficulties quite a lot of nations undertook national dialogue with the purpose of restoring peace in every part of their respective nations.

Historical experiences have demonstrated that national dialogues have been imperative in creating a gray line and narrowing differences thereby cementing national unity in various parts of the world. Besides, nations have used the national undertakings to make stronger their democratic values and enhance the culture of tolerance.

For the sake of truth, it is the most



photo:- Inclusive Peace Newsletter

Women's Participation in the national dialogue process is remarkable

heartening decision for Ethiopia to come back to its political history and design its way forward for reconciliation, stability, and affluence on account of socio-economic context and the unsettled political backgrounds.

Likewise, it is important to note that on the heels of backlogs of predicaments surfacing in some parts of the country, Ethiopia has been passing through many twists and turns. To get to the bottom of the problem, the incumbent has been at the ready to carry out all possible efforts from widening democratic and political space to staging national dialogue.

In light of the current situation, the Commission has been getting itself involved in a diverse range of fruitful undertakings that can wind down piled up conflicts. As a matter of fact, most of the conflicts that spark in various parts of the country have been chalked up to socio-economic problems and other related aspects.

The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) announced the successful completion of agenda gathering consultative chapter in Gambela Region held recently, according to information obtained from local media.

Representatives of all communities, political parties operating in the region, religious institutions, civic organizations, government bodies and prominent personalities participated at the consultation. The stakeholders have discussed thoroughly and gathered agenda items that they believe are important for further deliberations at the next level of the national dialogue.

After the conclusion of the consultation, the identified agenda items were submitted to the Council of Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission. On the occasion, Commissioners of ENDC, Melaku Woldemariam said that, the agenda gathering consultation held for one week in the region has been successfully completed. The stakeholders have actively participated in the consultations by freely contributing their ideas that they think are beneficial for lasting peace in Ethiopia, the Commissioner indicated.

He also extended gratitude to the participants for their active participation in the process which is believed to be important step forward for the betterment of the people and the country. Ethiopia has been going to the ends of the earth to resolve the age-old contradictions of the country through an inclusive and open-minded dialogue. This agenda gathering process is a crucial step towards securing a lasting peace and shaping the country's future, it was learned.

In point of fact, setting up of national dialogue plays a valuable role in averting potential scuffles, and overhaul hostilities of plurality of types through dialogue with the public through the passage time. No matter how long it takes myriads of nations worldwide held national dialogue. Reasoning from this fact, the endeavors of some nations set in motion bearing fruits while others failed to accomplish the desired goal.

Similarly, the National Dialogue plays a huge role in resolving backlogs of problems that have been pouring cold water on the social fabric of the people of Ethiopia residing under the country's skies with love, harmony, togetherness and other related aspects.

It is recalled that the Ethiopian government has lately established National Dialogue Commission to build a common view among different groups and citizens for exchange of ideas in the context of its nation-building process.

If the people of Ethiopia stand by the side of the National Dialogue Commission with goodwill, the country for sure will resolve logjams of problems rooted among the various Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia.

There is no doubt that if everybody from all walks of life play a part in the national dialogue commission with commitment and determination, Ethiopia for sure will attain the sought after goal. The upcoming national dialogue should be taken as a golden opportunity to curb political glitches. If the general public stand by the side of the federal government in smoothening the path of the national dialogue, Ethiopia will accomplish the desired goal jump started breathing a sigh

of relief and going in the right direction at the earliest possible juncture.

ENDC's Public Relation Head and Spokesperson, Tibebe Solomon told The Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that, the process of collecting agenda for the national consultation is under final stage in various states of the country except Amhara and Tigray.

Meanwhile, efforts are being put to conduct the agenda collection in the aforementioned two states when peace maintained over time, he indicated. The ENDC is striving to ensure an inclusive and participatory dialogue so that all parties should be part of the process standing for common goals, Tibebe stressed.

He further stated that Addis Ababa, Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz have finalized the agenda gathering process and submitted the document to the commission.

"The agenda gathering process is underway in Dire Dawa City Administration and Harari States. The commission also works with stakeholders to ensure inclusive and participatory National Dialogue across the country," he noted.

Tibebe also said that the preliminary and the preparation works are done properly so that agenda identification would be done when the places took the selection of participants.

In a similar manner, the commission is working in close collaboration with the stakeholders to operate parallel activities in Amhara and Tigray states where participants of the process not yet identified, according to him.

Though activities are being done to ensure all-inclusive, participatory and credible national dialogue, the occurrence of conflicts in some parts of the country is affecting the process thereby the Commission is joining hands with stakeholders to resolve the problem, he noted.

Taking the current circumstances of the country into account, the national dialogue should be held in a jiffy to circumvent predicaments and get the country back on track in a little while. In doing so, sowing the seeds of peace in the length and breadth of the country will be as easy as falling off a log and like taking candy from a baby.

It is abundantly clear that agenda setting will be concluded across the country just around the corner. Above and beyond, the commission should give priority to make peace happen in conflict ridden areas to pave the way for agenda selection. As failing to do that will not help attain the target, the commission should move heaven and earth to accomplish its objectives and grasps its opportunities.

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

Editorial

Unwavering stance to peaceful solutions

During his telephone conversation with Turkish President, PM Abiy Ahmed has expressed appreciation to the president's efforts to mediate and solve the misunderstanding between Ethiopia and Somalia. Indeed the president's efforts to address the row peacefully are welcome move that is expected from a friendly nation.

Ethiopia also has reaffirmed its unwavering stance to adhere to peaceful and diplomatic means to address the tension that arose between the countries as well as in all cases that surround the peace, stability and development of the East and Horn of Africa region.

It is crystal clear that Ethiopia has been paying the entire necessary price to maintain the peace and stability of the region considering it almost a domestic issue. Its endeavor to secure a free access to the sea should also be seen with this context and as the country is handling the matter so far, it could not be a reason for chaos in the region.

As a country that has housed over 120 million populations, Ethiopia always strives to build an economy that can accommodate the ever growing needs of its people. But the country would face unbearable challenges to its economy if it continues to pay such large amount of money for its huge sum of import and export. Furthermore, it is undeniable that the country with its big population number and huge economy should not remain passive in safeguarding the security of the region that is related to sea access.

For this end Ethiopia always looks for peaceful and agreeable means to possess secure access to the sea. However, it has shown its responsible moves by refraining from unacceptable and provocative means of sea access.

Taking the issue into a serious account, of course, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan held talks with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed about smoothening ties between Ethiopia and Somalia. The leaders also discussed enhancing bilateral ties between Ethiopia and Turkey, particularly focusing on doubling trade volume and strengthening cooperation apart from solving the problems revolving around the bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Somalia.

Turkey has facilitated a resolution to the misunderstanding between Ethiopia and Somalia. Basically, the importance of providing Ethiopia, the second most populous nation in Africa, with access to the sea through a mutually agreeable approach is an incomparable step to nurture common growth.

Furthermore it assists the overall efforts of ensuring peace and stability in the East and Horn of Africa as Ethiopia is an anchor state in the region both economically and politically. Ensuring the peace and development of Ethiopia contributes greatly to the prosperity of the region.

Unequivocally, bringing an end to tensions between Ethiopia and neighboring Somalia needs to be well focused as the former is always working to bolster regional peace and security. Such an alluring effort, which potentially attracts unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries, would facilitate the process peace and security on Horn.

Ethiopia also reaffirms its usual commitment towards reinforcing the peace and development of the region through tuning to the peaceful and diplomatic efforts of friendly nations.



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Tel. 011-126-42-22

Fax. 251-011-156-98-62

email- epa@press.et

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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

Tamrat Tola reawakens Ethiopian athletic fans

BY STAFF REPORTER

The astounding finish by Tamrat Tola has reawakened the diving mood of many Ethiopian athletic fans who were highly pissed off by the performance of the team at the Paris 2024 Olympics. His gold medal in the men's marathon category has not only fascinated many because of the mere scores that the country would earn at the Olympics, but is also reminiscent of the past glorious performances of its athletes in the Olympics Marathon.

Long-distance running is an iconic and beloved sport among Ethiopians. Victory in the long distance was pioneered by the all-time famous athlete Abebe Bikila at the 1960 Rome Olympic Games. His trophy came to be a unique phenomenon as he was able to run the rough course of the city barefoot and score a new Olympic record. Yet the other amazing thing was that Abebe passed the qualifier only as an injury reserve since the entrant athlete to the competition was Wami Biratu. Wami, 107 years old now still tries to be in his athletic outfits and do some exercises as well as run a few kilometres defying his aging. One can imagine what kind of a miracle he could have shown to the world 64 years ago if he didn't encounter an illness.

Fortunately, his successor Abebe did a marvellous job that thrilled the world. Still at the Paris 2024 games Tamrat Tolla has replicated what happened in the Rome Olympics. He was on the reserve list of the Ethiopian Olympic team as the entrant athlete for the contest was Sisay Lema. Yet due to reasons related to wellness, Tamrat Tolla had to replace him.

Tamrat not only accomplished the mission he was given by the team and his people, but he managed to repeat the history of Abebe Bikila as he broke the Olympic record. Except for running on the shoe, unlike what Abebe braved, he was able to repeat the same scenario which, according to what Wami Biratu said during an interview "Ethiopia was able to win gold medal even with its reserve athletes".

The last time the country won marathon gold medal was at the 2000 Sidney Olympic by athlete Gezahegn Abera. Since then the country has successfully participated in the Olympic Games that took place every four years roaming around the different corners of the planet. It was able to shine in middle and long-distance races. Yet the glorious history made by Abebe in 1960 was not repeated until Tamrat brought it back to Paris in 2024.

Some sources also indicate that Abebe's victory was an eye-opener not only for Ethiopia but the whole of East Africa where globally renowned athletes sprouted. The ability of East African athletes was

“Ethiopia was able to win gold medal even with its reserve athletes”

announced to the world in the 1960 Olympics as barefooted Abebe Bikila took the gold medal in the Marathon. Bikila repeated in 1964 and the floodgates were opened.

The victory of Abebe Bikila opened the way not only for the inspiration of East African athletes but also for the establishment of the Ethiopian Athletics Federation in 1961, which afterwards the country was able to collect about 45 Olympic medals.

The rich cultural heritage and geographic landscape of Ethiopia have been credited with contributing to the country's distinguished history in athletics. In Ethiopian society, athletics, especially long-distance running, has always held a significant place. (allinn.com)

Unique physiology endows Ethiopians with an inherent athletic nature, though it wasn't until the second half of the twentieth century that Ethiopian athletes started to be recognized internationally. The Rome Olympics in 1960 saw Abebe Bikila make history by winning a marathon race running with bare feet and becoming the first African to win a gold medal. This victory not only took Ethiopian sports to the global stage but also inspired subsequent generations of athletes within the country.

Long-distance running, especially marathon has been deep inside the heart of every Ethiopian ever since Abebe Bikila ushered in that unrepeated victory more than six decades ago. Since then Ethiopia has seen many elegant athletes in marathons, 10k and 5k among others both in the men's and women's categories. The number of highly talented and elite athletes it produced over the years has raised the name of the country to the extent that it was almost considered a center of excellence in the field.

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

Business & Economy



The manufacturing industry will be stimulated by implementing the economic reform

Tackling long heaped macro-economic challenges

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

Ethiopia has experienced macro-economic challenges since long ago which is manifested in inflation, foreign currency crunch, unemployment, illegal trade, and budget deficit and, fluctuating currency exchange rate. The challenges were further exacerbated by external shocks like the war between Ukraine and Russia, and the disturbance of trade route on red sea because of the Yemeni Rebels group Hautis missile attack on ships fleet posed trade hurdles following the war between Israel and Hamas and caused price rising of basic commodities such as fertilizer, cooking oil and petroleum.

Earlier to the power assumption of the current reformist government, various measures were taken by the previous regime to tackle the problem including the official devaluation of local currency but failed to bring significant outcome.

In fact, the government had worked on infrastructures development such as roads, electric power generations, and constructed industrial parks and introduced new laws to attract foreign investment and enhance their production capacity. But due to power outage, shortage of inputs and spare parts, the manufacturing sector produced below its average capacity.

Besides, security challenge hampered the movement of products and shortage of capital and less trained labor force affected their production capacity. Aiming to tackle decades' long macro-economic havoc, the government in power took bold measure recently by introducing currency exchange rate reform to be governed by demand and supply. It has embarked on implementing sustained macroeconomic policy with the aim of achieving continuous growth and ensuring comprehensive benefits for citizens.

Recently, the Minister of Planning and Development, Fitsum Assefa (PhD), has made explanation on Ethiopia's full implementation of macro-economic reform policy. She noted the dire consequences of economic and development situations which had existed before the reform, failing to meet the development goals of the nation. Aiming to reverse the situation, the current government resorted to prepare a Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda.

Low level of domestic revenue and foreign exchange earnings, substandard level of project performance policy constraints and structural shortfalls, inability of the private sector to play the leading role in the economy, low level of production and productivity as well as dwindling employment opportunities were among the major features of the economy.

In order to alleviate these problems, she recalled that the government put in place a Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda to resolve the challenges and avoid the full-fledged economic crisis the country could have faced. The government focused on three pillars of the reform program during the first phase of the Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda implementation which registered concrete results, she said.

As a result, the financial and fiscal policy sub-sectors of the macroeconomic policy reform and measures taken to modernize government revenue administration and the level of government revenue grew to a much higher level. Measures taken for effective management of government expenditure, enhanced investments as well as completing projects on schedule with the desired quality have ushered in promising results in major sectors of the economy.

Hence, by resolving chronic structural challenges in public development enterprises, the government has managed to ensure their profitability she said, adding that by totally closing down commercial loans, it was possible to markedly reduce the huge stockpile of state debt that was accumulated over time.

In terms of introducing viable structural reforms, a number of legal reform programs were conducted to streamline pathways to better trade and investment as well as enhance production and productivity, where achievements have been made in various sectors through raising competitiveness, she explained.

Sustaining the results obtained during the first phase of the Home Grown Economic Reform Agenda, the government was able to effectively embark on the implementation of the macroeconomic reforms. According to the Minister, the decision made by the government was timely and would pave the way to the prosperity of the country.

Moreover, she noted that the government

was conducting rigorous researches for the last five years in collaboration with local and international professionals on how to implement the programs and reduce the resultant negative effects and pressures of the development programs.

The Minister further stated that, the national macroeconomic reform program rests on four pillars whose implementation will enable the country to resolve outstanding economic challenges and ensure measurable and stable economic development.

Accordingly, by managing price fluctuations through short, midterm and long term measures and increasing production and productivity, the country can obtain concrete results.

The Minister added that, through increasing foreign direct investment and remittances as well as curbing illicit trade and contraband, the country can register tangible results. Further, the full implementation of the macroeconomic reform policy fosters social development, alleviating poverty reduction programs of the nation, she elaborated.

The digitalization of public services which started earlier will be further strengthened, Fitsum added. According to her, reducing the economic vulnerability of various sectors of the society and to reduce the negative effects that may surface up, the government will continue to subsidize the prices of commodities like fuel, fertilizers, and other essential items.

She added that, developmental safety net programs will be strengthened while salaries of public servants in low income bracket will be increased to enable them to withstand possible economic shocks.

Many countries which introduced the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank induced structural adjustment program and changed their exchange rate regime experienced some economic upside downs including inflation, unemployment and scarcity of basic commodities and to reverse the situation, the governments took subsidizing the poor segment of the society as a way out and enabled to withstand the challenge that the community faced.

In the case of Ethiopia however, obtaining loan in the form of hard currency because of the introduction of new exchange rate governed by demand and supply brings

opportunities and among other tackles foreign currency crunch, boost export and reduce illegal trade. Currently because of shortage of hard currency, importers need to wait for months to obtain it and the delay of imported goods such as industrial and agricultural inputs in turn negatively affected production. Hence, such business havoc should be addressed sooner.

The availability of sufficient hard currency in the market enables exporters to boost their export and raise their income because of the rise of the value of Dollar. But to export more agricultural commodities, the security challenges should be addressed. Due to the conflict ignited in Oromia and Amhara regions the movement of human capital, agricultural and industrial inputs, and agricultural products are restricted which again critically affected the export sector and the economy at large.

The other thing that should be considered is building the capacity of institutions which implement the reform program. As it is understood in the past the government, in order to make public institutions efficient and effective, it implemented structural change and it also introduced new public servants' evaluating mechanism but still some institutions found ineffective and failed to deliver as per the institutions required.

Therefore, appointing committed leaders in the institutions is helpful to implement the reform program. The other thing that should be addressed critically is corruption. The government repeatedly announced that corruption has been rampant and citizens always complain that they do not get services in some public institutions without paying bribes. Investors also complain that the inefficient bureaucracy made them to do their business in snail pace. Some even lost hope on the business environment and demand the government to take remedial actions.

The auditor general while it presented its annual audit report to the House of Peoples Representatives revealed corruption has been rampant in various public institutions and such practices critically affected the nation's economy and unless the situation is reversed, the money obtained in the form of loan from the International Monetary Fund may find its way to the unknown destiny. Therefore, all ill practices which do not go in line with the government economic reform should be halted.

In the Sphere of Diplomacy

Belt and Road Initiative vows green infrastructure with connectivity

“My son in primary school did not attend a birthday celebration because it was cancelled due to bad air - and we live in Seoul, a great place to live,” said Dr. Frank Rijsberman, director-general of the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI).

He was speaking to delegates of a forum that discussed creating environmental policies while enabling economic and regional cooperation among countries in the Belt and Road route during the 51st annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) that concluded over the weekend.

The initiative covers more than 65 countries - or more than 60% of the world's population - that includes Africa and Europe and plans to mobilize 150 billion dollars in investments over the next five years.

The forum took cues from Rijsberman's story of living in Seoul, the capital city of South Korea, one of the poorest countries that in 50 years became an example for many developing countries to demonstrate the importance of economic growth while being mindful of air quality and the overall livability of the environment.

The “Green Growth and Regional Cooperation” forum was a side event hosted by GGGI with an expert panel that discussed China's proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and, with many references to “green growth,” “green policies” and “green investments,” looked at putting in place policies to accelerate green investments and green technology while exploring ways to create opportunities that address poverty across countries.

“Climate change is already exacting its toll, particularly in the Asian region, so rapidly that technological and economic growth (that may have worsened issues like air quality) should also be our most immediate driver of action to do something,” said Rijsberman.

He said there is a need for countries to have “green growth,” a new development approach that delivers environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive economic growth that is low-carbon and climate resilient; prevents or remediates pollution; maintains healthy and productive ecosystems and creates green jobs, reduce poverty and enhance social inclusion.

Rijsberman said the GGGI will join the Green Belt and Road Coalition and currently cooperates with the China Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the ASEAN Center for Environmental Cooperation on regional cooperation and integration that facilitates sustainable urban development and supports high-level policies and impactful knowledge sharing on the adoption of sustainable growth in the Belt and Road countries.

Prof. Dongmei Guo, China state council expert of the China-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Center, said the BRI brings together two regional trade corridors: the Silk Road Economic Belt that will link China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea through Central Asia and West Asia with three routes: China-Central Asia-Russia-Europe through the Baltic Sea; China-Central Asia-West Asia-Persian Gulf through the Mediterranean Sea and China-Southeast Asia-South Asia through the Indian Ocean; and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road that stretches from the South Pacific Sea to Europe with two roads — Coastal China-South China Sea-Indian Ocean-Europe and Coastal China-South China Sea and South Pacific.



Belt and Road Initiative Vows Green Infrastructure with Connectivity

The initiative covers more than 65 countries - or more than 60% of the world's population — that includes Africa and Europe and plans to mobilize 150 billion dollars in investments over the next five years. Initiated in 2013, the BRI aims to create the world's largest platform for economic cooperation, including policy coordination, trade and financing collaboration, and social and cultural cooperation.

“The BRI provides great opportunities for promoting green transformation and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2030,” said Guo, mentioning environmental-related SDGs 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15 as the same targets envisioned in the initiative. “The global sustainable development process has entered a new stage through the BRI and it must be green.”

Goals 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15 enjoin countries to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation and sustainable consumption and production patterns, to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development and to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Guo said among some of the concerns in the countries along the route are water shortages, water pollution, agricultural pollution, tailings, industrial wastes, and nuclear waste for Central Asia, biodiversity loss, water pollution and urbanization-led pollution in South Asia, and biodiversity, forest fire and haze brought by conventional pollution in Southeast Asia.

Winston Chow, GGGI country representative for China, said the program is still in its initial phase but is seeing an estimated investment of 500 billion dollars through 2030 that will be invested in the developing world along the BRI route, with 300 billion of that being carbon-related.

“What that means is that we have to consider the impacts of these economies in the long term and a major opportunity to decarbonize, which is a big step as we enhance global development,” he said. “We have to look at 2030 development goals and align our efforts at helping member countries contribute as they implement development projects.”

Organized under five guiding tasks of policy coordination, unimpeded trade, facilities connectivity financial integration, and people-

to-people bond, Chow said the BRI aims to utilize Chinese government policy, financing and technology in enhancing strong projects in the developing world. The GGGI will facilitate the work with member states on how to deploy green projects and we have talked to a number of country governments such as those in Mongolia, Jordan, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Vietnam and the Philippines.”

He cited the strong collaboration with Mongolia after its policy makers were introduced to energy efficiency with air quality restrictions and environmental impact reductions through the introduction of the electric vehicles tariff in the capital Ulaanbaatar that successfully reduced bad air from 2016 to 2017.

Jordan, Indonesia and Ethiopia are also underway in their ecological restoration and water treatment practices. Transformative projects among Chinese technologies in solar energy use, e-transportation and e-mobility technology, land restoration, water and solid waste treatment and solar, wind and energy building efficiency projects will also be shared as well with participating countries.

But with BRI being recently introduced, Chow mentioned a few challenges in financing schemes such as gaps between what China wants to invest in and what developing countries are ready to do but have financial needs that are complex to underwrite. For instance, he said “the debate is still out on countries that have electricity grids not quite ready for global energy integration that may not necessarily yield benefits financially or socially.”

The gap is also shown in Chinese investments in green projects that can be worth 100 million dollars but some countries can only do projects in the 20 or 30 million range. He cited BRI large scale projects such as airports in Cambodia or Vietnam's hydropower plants and dams.

In his press conference prior to the GGGI side event, ADB President Takehiko Nakao lauded China's Belt and Road Initiative as a key program to connect countries and regions and to broaden integration and cooperation across Asia, and that the ADB will participate in this initiative when needed. He enjoined countries along the route to be careful not to take out excessive loans when they get involved in the initiative to finance their projects and to look closely at the benefits the projects can give to their citizens.

“If countries borrow too much for certain projects without seriously looking at the feasibility, it

might bring more trouble in repayment,” he said, stressing the need to “look at debt sustainability issues very seriously.”

Ayumi Konishi, special senior adviser to the president of ADB, told the side event “the ADB intends to cooperate with BRI because of its strong preference for green projects such as renewable energy or sustaining transport projects.”

Since the BRI initiative was announced in September 2013 advocating for improved connectivity for shared prosperity and after China signed an agreement with six multilateral development banks, he said the ADB is in agreement as “we share the same vision; we need the entire portfolio of cooperation projects to make them greener and make them less vulnerable to potential bad impacts of climate change.”

Rijsberman, GGGI's director-general, said the GGGI, a treaty-based international organization headquartered in Seoul, South Korea, is seeing good examples of green efforts such as the Pacific greening in Vanuatu, the eco-towns in the Philippines, the business models in Indonesia that prevent fires and rehabilitate forests, the efforts in Rwanda to eradicate plastics and the biodiversity protection efforts in the Greater Mekong area.

“Efforts go beyond protecting environment but more on promoting it,” he said, stressing that such initiatives are all anchored on landmark agreements such as the UN SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement.

The 2018 ADB Annual Meeting, themed “Linking People and Economies for Inclusive Development,” was held on May 3-6 2018 in Manila, its headquarters. It gathered more than 4,000 delegates and brought together experts of different disciplines who discussed framing global economic shifts, re-examined governance structures, explored governments and development institutions' adapting new opportunities while addressing challenges presented by an increasingly digital future.

The ADB estimates Asia's infrastructure needs could reach 22.6 trillion dollars through 2030, or 1.5 trillion annually. If climate change adaptation measures are adopted, the cost would rise to over 26 trillion. Established in 1966, it is owned by 67 members—48 from the region. In 2017, ADB operations totaled 32.2 billion dollars, including 11.9 billion in co-financing.

(SOURCE: INTER PRESS SERVICE)

Ethiopian: Ascending to Vision 2035

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

The Ethiopian flag carrier, the Ethiopian Airlines has been serving as Ethiopian winged diplomat in promoting the country and enhancing people to people relations. The airliner has overcome so many defamatory allegations throughout its history, but, the company keeps climbing the ladder of success and become the beacon of Africa and the black people at large.

Ethiopian, with its decorated achievements, has taken the responsibility to represent the nation in various occasions, and the group has done it well.

It has been putting the bar high in terms of all the expected service provision qualities that the industry requires. The *Ethiopian* has been an icon not only for Ethiopia, but for all Africa in order to promote Pan Africanism and to achieve its objectives of serving the people with Ethiopian hospitality and touch.

The airlines is committed to fulfill its dream of becoming one of the biggest and the best air transport providers across the world. Having joined and become a member of major alliances, like the Star Alliance, the company has registered tangible accomplishments to live up to its dream.

Besides, awarded as the best airlines in Africa several times, the group has not stopped its effort to exceed its quality and service to its highest end. The Ethiopian Airlines has shown its tireless effort to expand its facilities not only in Ethiopia but also in Africa by establishing overseas investments with some African air transport providers like Malawi, Zambia and Togo Airlines.

The Airlines Group has also planned to set a ten-year plan, which is called Vision 2035 so that it will be one of the competitive, major and high-valued airlines in the world. To achieve its goals, the Ethiopian Airlines Group has planned to construct the largest airport in Africa in the coming few years.

To this end, the *Ethiopian* has already started its journey to meet the set objectives, and lately the group has signed an official agreement with the International Company, DAR for the design work and supervision.

During the signing ceremony, both parties delivered speech and briefed the media. Mesfin Tassew, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO, stated, "We have just signed an agreement between Ethiopian Airlines and DAR to cooperate in the development of a new mega airport which will be built in a place called Abusera, Bishoftu. And we are extremely pleased to sign this agreement."

The CEO also stated about the scope of the agreement saying DAR is responsible to design the detailed of the new airport and to assist Ethiopian Airlines in the selection of the contractors who will build the new airport facilities. The accord also incorporates supervision of the construction work from the beginning to the end.



This project, as to Mesfin, will cover an area of around 35 thousand meter square (35 kilometer square), and it will have two phases, and it will take five years to complete the project. The first phase includes the construction of the airport facility that will have the capacity of serving some 60 million passengers. And, when the second phase of the construction is finished, it lifts the capacity of the airport to handle more than 100 million passengers per year.

"The coming one year will be primarily used for the development of the detailed design of the airport and selection of the contractors who will build the new airport. It is a new chapter in the history of Ethiopian Airlines," Mesfin said.

Comparing the passenger capacity of the current Bole International Airport, and the new airport project, Mesfin mentioned that Bole airport has a maximum capacity of serving around 25 million passengers per year. The airlines growth in terms of number of passengers is more than 20% per year as it has transported 17.1 million passengers in the last fiscal year.

On the other hand, the new airport, which will be planned to build, will be the largest airport in Africa and it will enable Ethiopian Airlines to realize its Vision 2035, which targets to transport over 60 million passengers by 2035, the CEO noted.

"We are very excited to start this project and we hope that DAR will design an ultra-modern airport with all the modern facilities that modern airports have. I would like to take this opportunity to thank DAR to partner with Ethiopian Airlines in the development of this mega airport."

As the number of passengers going up, the existing Bole international Airport will be congested in matter of few years so that the construction of the new airport city is necessary to be meet the desired goals.

Speaking of the new airport project, Mesfin elucidated, "The new Airport will include a big terminal with over 270 aircraft parking spaces and four runways. At Bole Airport, we have only one runway that can be used at any one time, but the new airport will be provided with four parallel runways. At the same time, the facility will include

Parallel to the project, the Airport has been working on resettlement as the project area is occupied by farmers, so they must be resettled and continues their life as it is. In addition, the Airport has received a pot of land from the regional government for the project.

"There is another project going on that will enable us to resettle the farmers and free up the land for the big project. We have also selected another consultant to design the new resettlement place. We are going to build residential houses and shops, shop facilities, and at the same time, agricultural facilities where the farmers to be displaced will earn their living."

Speaking of the project finance, Mesfin elucidated that the Airlines Group has planned to finance the project with loan; adding that "There are many companies that have shown interest to finance this project, but that will be determined at a later stage."

By the same token, Tariq Al Qanni, Operation Director of DAR, on his part stated, "Ethiopian Airlines has been a pioneer in Africa and we all know that we all rely on Ethiopian Airlines for connectivity between many African countries, not only Ethiopia, to other continents around the world."

As to Tariq, DAR, the broader Sidara global network, the signature architect, Zaha Hadid, and the international interior designer, Pascal Watson, all were handpicked to meet the expectations and the challenges that are envisaged to design this project.

"We are a one-stop shop," said Tariq, adding "the way we deliver design is integrated, comprehensive. We manage the entire project with a single point of viability coupled with our vast experience in the design of airports from major aviation hubs" make us unique and suitable for the job.

"Since 2019, we have been working with Ethiopian Airlines on the delivery of many projects within the Bole International Airport premises, and we believe that this relationship had to conclude with this significant and remarkable project and with the signature of this contract. We promise Ethiopian Airlines that we will be delivering an iconic project."

The *Ethiopian* has been an icon not only for Ethiopia, but for all Africa in order to promote Pan Africanism and to achieve its objectives of serving the people with Ethiopian hospitality and touch

all additional infrastructures that are needed to operate the airport like any other international airport. It will have aircraft maintenance facilities, catering facilities, and the fuel distribution system will be automatic."

Furthermore, the project will be connected to the capital city, Addis Ababa using rapid rail transport, and it is part of the project. In parallel with the railway, as to the CEO, we will also have highway road connectivity between the airport and Bole Airport. As the project is very big, the first phase requires up to six billion USD, but this is going to be determined after the detailed design by DAR.

Society

Addressing health problems via summer volunteer programs

BY TEWODROS KASSA

Currently, Ethiopia is in a high rainfall season. During this season, schools across the country are closed for vacation. Thus, the season is a peak season when free voluntarism services are mobilized throughout the country; and several youths participate in volunteering activities that have greater importance in addressing the challenges of the community, mainly those individuals who need support.

This year, the Ethiopian government announced the annual National Summer Voluntarism Service Program and revealed that a goal was set to impact the lives of more than 50 million Ethiopians substantially. And some 39 million volunteers are expected to participate in the ongoing national summer voluntarism services.

Accordingly, the annual summer voluntarism services campaign significantly contributes to improving the lives of millions of people in need across the country. Renovating and reconstructing the depleted houses of the disadvantaged segments of society and elderly people, donating blood, providing free medical services, participating in the green legacy tree seedling initiative, free tutoring by university students, and farming activities in rural areas, among others prove that the national summer voluntarism services ensure that no one is left behind.

The nationwide campaign, operating under the theme "Benevolence and Unity for Ethiopia's Ascendance," aims to cultivate a spirit of solidarity and collective advancement through voluntary community services which is a deeply rooted in Ethiopian cultures and traditions, in addition to addressing the challenges of the community.

Therefore, youths and different professionals in various sectors are joining hands to the successful accomplishment of this year's national summer voluntarism services campaign.

As part of this effort, various health institutions in Addis Ababa and states are currently offering free health awareness and medical treatment services to the community.

For instance, Yekatit 12 Hospital Medical College in its summer volunteering program is offering free examination and medical treatment services to nearly 10,000 - 12,000 residents of the city who cannot pay for treatment. According to the Hospital, the medical practitioners and the staff are providing surgical



services to the patients who have been in the surgery waiting list of the Hospital for a longer time, not less than a year.

According to the Hospital's schedule, it is targeted to carry out 23 surgical, 3 cholecystectomies, and 20 above-neck surgeries this summer voluntary program.

Various hospitals in the capital are also offering free medical treatment services to the community including conducting blood pressure, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS tests and cervical cancer and pre-cancer detection services after identifying the needy.

Similarly, the Ayder and Aksum Comprehensive Specialized hospitals, in Tigray State have commenced provision of free medical services targeting to benefit more than 22,000 individuals at a summer voluntary service.

Ayder Comprehensive Specialized Hospital Deputy Medical Director Meskelu Kidu (MD) told ENA that, the Hospital provides voluntary support every year in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.

Accordingly, there is also a blood donation program and it is targeted to collect 1,000 units of blood in coordination with Mekelle Blood Bank,

he added.

Concurrent to this, the Hospital's health professionals are providing awareness creation training to the community on health and health-related issues especially communicable diseases.

The free medical treatment services will be given in selected places in Mekelle Town. Further, awareness creation works on health protection will also be given to girls in connection with the Ashenda Festival, he remarked.

Mentioning the plan to access the services for more than 11,000 residents in Mekele in this year's voluntary service, he said the service provision will run up to the end of this month.

On his part, Aksum Comprehensive Hospital Deputy Medical Director and Voluntary Service Coordinator Abraha Hagos (MD) said that, the hospital in collaboration with the Ministry of Health is providing voluntary service within its premises and in four areas; located in Aksum Town.

More than 11,500 individuals sought to benefit from the free medical services on communicable and non-communicable diseases including eye treatment, he noted.

As to him, in the past four days, more

than 2,000 citizens have benefited from the free medical treatment services.

In addition, awareness-raising training has been given to more than 3,600 members of the community focusing on disease prevention and precaution measures, he said. A green legacy tree seedling program is also the other program that will be held in places selected by the Aksum Town Administration, he added.

Meanwhile, the ALERT Comprehensive Specialized Hospital revealed that general health examination and counseling services were given to over 410 student-parent communities by the Holistic Opportunity for Humanity Organization.

A medical team led by the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health provided free health care services including general check-ups for eye, skin, diabetes, blood pressure, and internal diseases to students' parent communities.

Awareness-raising training was also given to parents and students on ways they can maintain hygiene and protect themselves and their children from infectious and waterborne diseases that happen in rainy seasons.

It is believed that several citizens will be exposed to unnecessary health and economic crises due to the lack of awareness. During this time, numerous individuals face the challenges of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Thus, expanding the experience of such hospitals and health professionals through successive awareness creation efforts is important to save millions from unwanted economic loss and stress due to health problems.

Accordingly, supporting the needy in the health sector and providing free medical treatment services for these segments of society will realize the country's efforts of availing health services to vulnerable communities and build a healthy and productive society.

In sum, there is nothing more critical than health. Different countries with better health services access will have a better opportunity to boost their economy and improve the socio-economic lives of the society. Ensuring societal health and addressing health service problems will have significant contributions to realizing this. The ongoing voluntarism service will help save millions of currency, especially in the health sector where patients relive from their psychosocial trauma easily. Expanding such voluntarism services in the health sector is also crucial to address the health service gap witnessed in the rural part of the country.

Planet Earth

Carbon trading: An opportunity for economic development

BY STAFF REPORTER

Africa's carbon market offers a powerful means to address climate change and uplift communities. The tangible benefits seen in the projects in across Africa highlight the potential of carbon credits, both environmentally and socio-economically. As regulations evolve, governments have the opportunity to address current challenges and meet national priorities by crafting policies that prioritize local needs and ensure sustained advantages. By championing local expertise and fostering shared benefits, Africa can realize the carbon market's dual promise for its people and the environment.

Carbon trade is the buying and selling of credits that permit a company or other entity to emit a certain amount of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases.

Climate change is a driver for change through which new value can be realized for businesses or institutions in Africa—thus benefitting local economies and people. For those that contribute to climate change through the direct or indirect emission of GHGs, they can act to reduce these emissions and pay for the costs in part by generating emissions reduction credits that are tradable assets.

Reducing the carbon footprint for businesses is of course part of good corporate citizenship, but if non-obligatory reductions can be monetized at the same time, it is more likely that such actions can be realized more quickly and scaled-up. Likewise, for small-scale activities implemented by SMEs, such as decentralized waste management, carbon credits can provide additional revenue streams far into the future, thereby increasing the viability and sustainability of business models. To what end? Carbon market vehicles can be a mechanism to channel new investment into Energy Security in Africa. They can also help African countries to meet their voluntary greenhouse gas reduction targets as well as their national renewable energy targets.

For African countries, trading of carbon credits represents an opportunity for economic development, job creations, access to climate finance and a driver for change that can contribute to the global fight against climate change, the realization of the Aspirations of Agenda 2063, and the sustainable development goals.

Recently, the Africa Multi-Stakeholder Conference on Carbon Markets is underway at the African Union Headquarters here in Addis Ababa. The concerned bodies who drown from various African countries were assembled to talk on the carbon trade and agreed to collaborate and take decisive action to harness the potential opportunities in carbon trading.



The overall goal of the conference is to provide a platform for the African continent to deliberate on carbon markets, the approaches and opportunities they present, the threats they pose and possible options the continent can explore, taking into consideration its circumstances.

Harold Bundu Saffa is Environmental Issues Permanent Representatives Subcommittee Chair. He said that Africa finds itself at a critical juncture where economic development must align with the imperative to address a rapidly changing climate.

The African continent is not the primary driver of the global climate crisis, yet it disproportionately bears the burden of its consequences. Africa faces prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall patterns, soaring temperatures, and intensified extreme weather events, all posing existential threats to food security, water resources, and the livelihood of countless communities.

Compounding these pressing challenges is the stark reality of insufficient climate finance, which limits the continent's ability to effectively address the multifaceted climate crisis, the chair elaborated.

The African region has the potential to leverage its rich natural resources to unlock economic value, accelerate sustainable industrialization, and promote economic transformation and diversification.

Therefore, this conference provides a crucial platform for Africa to collaborate and catalyze action in harnessing the potential opportunities in carbon trading.

The conference will ensure that Africa receive fair pricing for its carbon in global

credit markets and develops markets based on African principles and priorities rather than foreign ontologies or epistemologies.

Carbon-trading deals involving forestry projects in developing countries could reduce poverty at the same time as they offer an inexpensive way to off-set carbon dioxide emissions. Under the clean development mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto Protocol, industrialized nations are allowed to meet part of their carbon emission reduction commitments by carrying out reforestation and clean energy projects in developing countries.

Policy and development agents at all levels should make sure that farmers get the required financial and technical supports to be effectively link to existing carbon markets. A policy environment that enables the necessary institutional mechanisms for community participation would be needed for the carbon trading afforestation contracts to work and bear fruits.

The use of forests to reduce emissions is not only financially viable, but could also bring significant benefits to the local communities involved. For Ethiopia, carbon trading also represents an opportunity to fund sustainable through financial inflows. However, with a low share of global carbon trade, there are strong concerns that Ethiopia is losing out this valuable opportunity. Markets for environmental services have been growing in recent years wherein more and more people are willing to pay for carbon project benefits.

Africa possesses vast ecosystems crucial for carbon storage, Saffa said, adding that the Congo forests, dubbed the world's

second long to absorb about 1.2 billion tons of CO₂ annually.

The Congo basin was roughly 8 percent of the world's forest base carbon. However, this significant contribution is not reflected proportionally in the carbon trade.

AU/AfCFTA Relations and Trade Policy Director, Yusuf Daya said carbon market is crucial for exploring and implementing solutions that not only mitigate environmental issues but also foster economic growth and social development.

The potential economic benefits of carbon credit markets are essential; many African countries possess vast forests, savannas, and other ecosystems that act as significant carbon sinks.

By participating in carbon credit markets, these nations can monetize their natural assets, attract investments, and generate revenues to support development, the director noted.

This revenue can be reinvested in local communities, infrastructure, sustainable development projects, driving economic growth and reducing poverty.

According to him, there are, however, challenges that need to be addressed, including establishing robust regulatory frameworks, ensuring transparency and accountability and building capacity for monitoring and verification.

The three days conference has brought together government representatives from AU member states, representatives of regional economic communities, private sector entities and CSOs, among others.