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Railway reform opens doors for investor engagement

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- Ministry of Transport and Logistics has reformed the legal and structural policy in a bid to enhance investor engagement in the sector and improve the international trade competitiveness as well.

During the workshop on Railway and Logistics Reform in Ethiopia held yesterday, Transport and Logistics Minister Alemu Sime (PhD) said that the government has implementing

See Railway reform... page 3



Getachew Negash



Sahle Teklie

Institute emphasizes peace as key to Ethiopia's tourism success

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDISABABA-The Tourism Training Institute (TTI) has called on all citizens, including armed entities, to engage in discussions aimed at fostering peace to enhance the benefits of the tourism

See Institute emphasizes ... page 3

Abbay Dam: New dawn for Ethiopian, African dev't

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) recently congratulated Ethiopians on the near-completion of the Abbay Dam, describing its current status as a "historical arc" that cannot be reversed.

Abiy emphasized that the dam is a monumental project everyone should witness, standing as a powerful lesson for the entire African continent. He urged riparian countries like Sudan and Egypt to support the project, stating, "Ethiopia is sharing its resources with other nations for mutual development. If the lower riparian

countries manage these resources wisely, it could significantly enhance their progress." He assured that as construction advances, the dam will further improve water supply.

Experts consulted by the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) underscored the Abbay

See Abbay Dam:... page 3

Gov't underscores private actor's role in promoting AfCFTA

• Study unveils AfCFTA barriers

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – The Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration (MoTRI) said it is working with stakeholders to promote market access in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The ministry made the remark at a workshop organized by Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) and KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG (KAS) in collaboration with the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association under the theme "Navigating regulatory barriers to trade and find out the pathways: Maximizing private sector under AfCFTA in Ethiopia."

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Backing Pan-African trajectory is helping Africa grow

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AI for Africa: Leveraging AI for sustainable development

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Amb. Ervin Massinga

U.S. reignites education partnership with Ethiopia

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA - The U.S government in partnership with the Ministry of Education has been contributing to improve and expand access to education, said the U.S Ambassador to Ethiopia.

The U.S. Embassy in collaboration with Addis Ababa University held a Presidential Seminar on the enduring of legacy and the impact of the U.S. government's Point Four Program in Ethiopia.

Speaking on the occasion, the U.S Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ervin Massinga stated that the program has played a pivotal role for Ethiopia's development journey contributing its part in key sectors such as education, public health and agriculture. It has been providing technical supports for various sectors. Mainly the U.S. in collaboration with the Ethiopian government in the efforts of improving and expanding access to education in Ethiopia.

Between 1952 and 1961, the U.S. helped to establish Haramaya and Jimma agricultural colleges, which became universities, Gondar health institute (Gondar University). Hence, the longstanding partnership between the two countries particularly in education sector has contributed towards enrollment rate increase, he said.

Currently, it has been assisting public universities to improve governance and quality of education. In response to the university system transition to autonomy, public diplomacy is helping university leaders to adapt policy, practices, and organizational cultures to more independent governance structure to encourage innovation, academic freedom and others, Ambassador added.

"The Americans from various universities are working with equivalent Ethiopians to adapt institutions that train and empower institutions building to contribute to build Ethiopians' capacity and around the world. Prof. Gebisa Ejeta story is exemplary for Ethiopians."

For his part, Addis Ababa University Interim President Samuel Kifle (PhD) said that the U.S's initiatives shaped Ethiopia's development. The 120 years partnership advanced societal improvements in enhancing education, agricultural practices and fostering economic developments.

Redat Healthcare offers free screenings for EPA staff

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA- Redat Healthcare has launched a program offering free health screenings and consultation services to Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) staffers. The initiative aims to detect and treat both communicable and non-communicable diseases at an early stage.

During the event, Redat Healthcare CEO Misgana Solomon emphasized the organization's commitment to early disease detection and preventing unnecessary health complications. "Our program provides free screenings for blood pressure, diabetes, breast cancer, and cholesterol levels among EPA staff. This initiative aligns with our mission to promote early disease detection and prevent avoidable health issues," she stated.

EPA Multidisciplinary Affairs Department Head Birhane Solomon highlighted the importance of these screenings for employee well-being. "Annual screenings and check-ups are critical for preventing health crises. We are grateful to Redat Healthcare for offering this valuable service, which plays a vital role in early detection and treatment, benefiting both our staff and the broader community," she said.



Photo: Dagne Abera

EPA employee Fantanesh Kinde added, "We have never had a regular practice of conducting health screenings to identify issues before they worsen, which often results in expensive treatments. We usually seek medical care only when problems become severe, making them harder to treat."

Moges Tesfa, also from EPA, commended Redat Healthcare's initiative, stating, "These screenings are crucial for understanding our health status and taking necessary action in a timely manner. Regular check-ups are essential for preventing both communicable

and non-communicable diseases and for maintaining overall well-being." He also noted that, despite efforts to curb non-communicable diseases in Ethiopia, their prevalence continues to rise due to a lack of awareness and early intervention.

Limited access to regular health screenings has worsened medical challenges, especially in workplaces where employees prioritize work over health. To address this, Redat Healthcare has launched a community-driven initiative promoting early disease detection and prevention.

AASTU receives ISO 9001/2015 certification

• *Aims for excellence in science, technology*

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA- Addis Ababa Science and Technology University (AASTU) has been awarded the prestigious ISO 9001/2015 quality management certification, as part of its efforts to become a center of excellence in science and technology within the next five years.

During the certification award ceremony yesterday, AASTU President Dereje Engida (PhD) stated that the university has been working aggressively to position itself as a leader in science and technology. He noted that the certification demonstrates AASTU is on the right track to achieving its vision. "AASTU has intensified its focus on quality, teaching, research, and community service. Leading the science and technology sector remains a top priority," he said.

The President further explained that AASTU has been striving to internationally accredit all academic programs over the past five years. This December, the university plans to invite international evaluation bodies to assess four applied science programs, while self-evaluation reports for nine engineering programs will be prepared for submission to international evaluators.

Dereje also highlighted AASTU's ongoing efforts to bridge the gap between academia and industry by producing skilled graduates capable of addressing the country's urgent needs. The ISO certification, he added, will enhance customer service, streamline



operations, expand market accessibility, identify and mitigate risks, and boost the university's reputation.

Looking ahead, AASTU will work toward achieving ISO 17025 laboratory and academic accreditations to build on this success, Dereje noted.

Sentayehu Woldemikail (PhD), State Minister for the Center of Democracy under the Office of the Prime Minister, praised AASTU's achievement. He emphasized that the quality certification reflects AASTU's commitment to excellence, and urged all stakeholders to uphold the university's high standards in the future. "Maintaining quality and commitment must be a continuous

process to realize the goal of becoming a center of excellence."

Sentayehu also noted that AASTU's implementation of international quality management systems positions it as a leader in academic excellence among Ethiopian government universities. He added that the certification will enhance service delivery for clients and improve the quality of education provided to students.

He called on all relevant parties within AASTU to contribute to the university's goal of becoming a center of excellence in science and technology and achieving international competitiveness in the coming years.

News

Gov't underscores...

The event was aiming at navigating and overcoming possible challenges in AfCFTA and enhancing private sector's and exporters outreach.

Speaking at the workshop yesterday, MoTRI Senior Expert Gebretsadik Tassew said that the government in collaboration with stakeholders has been working to effectively implement the agreement and promoting the private sectors to promote the established market access.

Apart from exchanging experiences on how Ethiopian companies access the preferential market, the workshop helps catalyze stakeholders and the business communities pressing issues while implementing the AfCFTA.

He said, "Ethiopia has finalized preparations to offer goods and service offers to the areas in the near future. The implementation of the AfCFTA is highly believed to boost the inter Africa trade and promote African infant

industry to use inputs originated across the continent which in turn grow the economies."

"Enhancing trade competitiveness requires holistic trade development strategy, thus trade facilitation measures are a pillar to enhance foreign trade efficiency and ensure economic development of the country and trade competitiveness and market integration."

Reforming and modernizing border management, changing transportation policies and infrastructure investments are critical in this regard. The business community also requires capacity building training, technical and financial support to fully leverage the establishing market access.

For his part, International Trade Policy Expert Jaletto Gemedi stated that procedures and laws set to promote the business regulation and public safety are causing regulatory barriers through complex licensing systems, inconsistent enforcement and procedural inefficiencies impacting SMEs, international

trade and operational delays.

According to the conducted research, lengthy custom procedures, inconsistent standards, corruption and bureaucratic red tapes are also the dragging bottlenecks on the AfCFTA implementation, Jaletto remarked.

"Traders are also encountered forex shortages, sampling techniques confirmation and local credit shortages during importation," he added.

Various cross-border trading, security issues and inefficient infrastructures need to be given due attention while facilitating the agreement, it unveiled.

Similarly, limited financial access, complex bureaucracy and customs procedures, cultural biases and lack of stakeholders support are taken as major barriers that disproportionately affect women and youth business communities.

As to him, over 80% of the communities have

no awareness about non-tariff monitoring mechanisms.

In addition to the digitization system for application taking by MoTRI, he stressed Ethiopia's effective regulatory system should be effective to bring about robust private sectors in the international trading system.

Moreover, the regulatory frameworks remain bureaucratic and lack inclusivity, information dissemination insufficiency, and lower public awareness of agreements including AfCFTA.

Improving stakeholders' engagement in policy formulation and sector specific initiatives that address challenges faced by women and youth in small businesses should also be undertaken.

Apart from harmonization in line with Pursuing WTO membership and implementation of COMESA, IGAD and AfCFTA, he said that setting preferential treatment and prioritizing women's opportunities in procurement and industrial sectors engagement remains crucial.

Railway reform...

reform measures strategies and policies in the sector with promising results, but much work needs to be done in the railway sector.

Railway transportation enhances global supply chain efficiency reducing environmental impact. Ethiopia has the potential both economically competitive and alternatives on flights and passengers transport. So contributing significantly to the continent's economic development, Ethiopia is one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. However, it remains one of the weakest in rail logistic globally, he said.

Addressing the inadequate capacity and policy frameworks in rail transportation in Ethiopia are crucial pillars of the modern logistics and economy, he said.

The integrated logistics sector reform

roadmap aims to transform the railway system, introduce competition, and address identified issues for effective rail and surface transport reform. The reform enhances trade efficiency and achieves the nation's transport perspective plan, crucial for socio-economic and political development in the Horn of Africa (HoA), according to the Minister.

Finance State Minister, Semereta Sewasew also remarked that the government has developed a comprehensive logistics reform roadmap aimed to transform logistics sector through targeted investment regulations, and the strengthening public private partnership.

The government recognized that in order to foster sustainable economic growth, there must be modernize and strengthen logistics

infrastructure which is the cornerstone of the economy.

"And, it is the realm that we have undertaking the logistic sector reforms that have been clearly stimulated within the home-grown economic reform. But we have made significant strides in recent years. We must acknowledge the challenge of persist our railway and dry ports are currently operating below their potentials. They are hampered by inefficiencies and prevent us from meeting the growing demands of the growing economy," she noted.

Infrastructure inadequacy, outdated regulatory frameworks impact, incapable technology are just a few challenges. The ultimate goal of the reform is to create an integrated logistics network and ensure that official improvement of goods and services

throughout the nation, she said.

The World Bank Group Country Director Mariam Salim on her part, appreciated the reform saying "This is a significant accomplishment reflecting the hard work collaboration, and commitment of all stakeholders.

"I commend everyone from the minister of Transport and Logistics, Ministry of Finance and related agencies for coming together to tackle the logistics challenge- a critical development agenda," she said.

One of the key challenges undermining Ethiopia's international competitiveness is inefficient trade logistics. Several World Bank reports are highlighted the railway sector in Ethiopia as a significant constraint and a major bottleneck for future economic growth, she underlined.

Abbay Dam: New...

Dam's critical role in strengthening regional integration, boosting power supply, and facilitating economic growth.

Haramaya University economics lecturer Frezer Tilahun highlighted the dam's substantial social, economic, political, and regional importance for Ethiopia and its neighbors. He noted that the dam would enhance Ethiopia's power supply to manufacturing industries, enabling them to operate at full capacity. This, in turn, would boost productivity and help transform the country's agriculture-led economy into one driven by industrialization.

Beyond generating electricity, the dam will serve multiple economic purposes, such as tourism, job creation, irrigation, and fisheries. Frezer remarked that the project demonstrates Ethiopia's capacity for self-reliant development and encourages the country to maximize the economic benefits of the Abbay River.

Ethiopia has already begun exporting power to neighboring countries, with South Sudan, Tanzania, Somaliland, and Somalia have expressed interest in purchasing electricity. This fosters economic integration based on a mutually beneficial "give-and-take" principle, promoting shared development, a sense of ownership, and better service delivery.

Economic expert and policy advisor Costantinos Beruhtesfa (PhD) added that diplomatic efforts surrounding the Abbay Dam should be strengthened moving forward. He pointed out

that the dam would significantly boost both domestic and export power supply, with efforts already underway to provide power to countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Djibouti, Somaliland, and Somalia.

He also highlighted the potential benefits for Egypt and Sudan as the dam's reservoir becomes fully operational. Power generation, transportation, and distribution, he said, are key components of regional integration. Abbay, Koisha, and Gibe dams will become central power hubs in the future.

Costantinos urged the Ethiopian government to ensure lasting peace in these areas and encourage the private sector to invest in tourism.

Construction of the Abbay Dam began in 2011 in the Benishangul-Gumuz State, approximately 14 kilometers east of the Sudanese border. Designed to generate over 5,000 megawatts, the dam is expected to double Ethiopia's electricity production, which currently serves only half of the country's population of over 120 million.

Ethiopia is recognized for harnessing the Abbay River for electricity generation, flood control, irrigation, sediment management, navigation, and fishery production. Upon completion, the Abbay Dam will be Africa's largest, measuring 1,800 meters long and 155 meters high. As the "Water Tower of Africa," Ethiopia is leveraging its water resources to drive economic progress, with the primary goal of accelerating industrialization.

Institute emphasizes...

industry in Ethiopia.

To commemorate this year's World Tourism Day, the institute organized a one-day panel discussion focused on the theme "Tourism and Peace." Stakeholders gathered to explore ways to ensure and sustain peace while maximizing the nation's tourism potential.

During the discussion, the Institute's Director-General Getachew Negash emphasized that tourism and peace are inseparable, describing their relationship as symbiotic. "We have been producing skilled human resources and hotel professionals for the tourism industry, filling the gaps in the sector and providing robust support," he stated.

This year marks the 37th National World Tourism Day and the 45th globally, centered around the theme "Tourism and Peace". Getachew noted that tourism is inclusive, connecting diverse societies and serving as a reliable source of income

for the nation while enhancing its image.

Senior Tourism Researcher Sahle Teklie presented a paper titled "Tourism and Peace: A Symbiotic Relationship" during the panel. He explained that peace is a state of harmony and security, asserting that tourism fosters social reconciliation and serves as a form of soft diplomacy that helps build strong bilateral relations with other nations.

Sahle also indicated that tourism is a major economic driver, contributing 10% of global GDP and supporting millions of jobs. He stressed that a peaceful environment is crucial for the tourism industry to flourish, adding, "Tourism can transform communities by creating jobs, fostering inclusion, and strengthening local economies."

World Tourism Day is celebrated annually on September 27 across the globe, underscoring the vital connection between tourism and peace.

Editorial

Downstream must not waste time to benefit from the regional bonanza

Ethiopia once again reiterated its firm position on the equitable and fair utilization of the Abay River in the ongoing UN Assembly. Ethiopia, although contributing a hefty share of the common resource has been taking the lead to spur Regional Corporation and undo age-old misuse and unfair monopolies keeping possible growth at bay. Yet since the onset of the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) and later the Abay Dam, Ethiopia has been the front runner to rally riparian nations on board and come up with a common mechanism to manage the shared precious resource.

The country's leadership has been corroborated by practical measures. Being among the first signatories of the CFA, the country also signed the Declarations of Principle and the 2017 Memorandum of Understanding with Sudan and Egypt. Now that CFA has been ratified by the number of required countries, there is an increased call on downstream nations to join upstream nations and work for common socioeconomic development. At the heart of regional cooperation is Ethiopia. Paradoxically, while the major contributor of the river follows the path of negotiation and cooperation, downstream countries which contribute nothing have been fixated on maintaining a colonial monopoly.

Last week, Ethiopia, in the UN General Assembly, encouraged Egypt to ratify the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) on the Nile River that would return the country to peaceful conduct of its relations with the riparian states.

Ethiopia also urged the downstream country to choose the path of negotiation and international law as well as reorient its colonial-based policy on the Abay (Nile River).

Ethiopian Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations delivered his country's first right of reply to the unfounded accusation of Egypt against Ethiopia in its policy statement at the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA79.)

The diplomat emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and development in managing the shared water resource, local media reported. Egypt is thus encouraged to ratify the CFA and play a constructive role in regional development, Ambassador Yoseph Kassaye stated.

"Egypt has the golden opportunity to return to the peaceful conduct of its relations with the Nile River riparian states. Egypt is thus encouraged to ratify the CFA and play a constructive role in regional development," he underlined.

Contrary to Ethiopia's bold position, Egypt has continued to make baseless accusations and unfounded claims. But such efforts are doomed to fail. Egypt should no longer waste time on futile deeds but needs to make up its mind and ratify the agreement.

As the basin stands at a critical juncture, it is imperative that downstream countries consider ratifying the CFA and engaging in meaningful cooperation with their upstream neighbors. The agreement is soon to be signed into law under the auspicious of the African Union.

The African Union serves as a vital mediator in the ongoing dialogue over Nile water rights. Its emphasis on continental unity and cooperation aligns perfectly with the objectives of the CFA.

Egypt and Sudan must recognize that cooperation, rather than confrontation, is the key to sustainable resource management. The CFA represents a pivotal opportunity to establish a shared vision for the Nile that respects the rights and needs of all countries involved.

In an era marked by increasing environmental challenges and dwindling resources, it is essential for all Nile Basin countries to come together. It is time for Egypt and Sudan to seize this opportunity, engage with Ethiopia in a spirit of partnership, and commit to a future where the Nile continues to nourish and sustain all its riparian states.



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The Ethiopian Herald

Opinion

GERD, from the perspectives of history and international law

BY SOLOMON DDIBABA

Although the first practical attempt to build a dam for Ethiopia on the Blue Nile was commissioned in 2011 at a ground breaking ceremony at Guba Mountains of Benishangul Gumuz, the nation has been attempting to build her own dam for almost a century in an attempt to reverse a gross miscarriage of justice and the right to use ones natural resources. History records that King Lalyibela was also intending to build a dam on Abay. Today, Egypt is trying to use an expired card to pressurize Ethiopia on the issue of a dam that has already started generating power. GERD did not just drop out of the blue; it has much stronger historical back ground as more dams on the river are to come.

Let us look into the historical background to the colonial ambitions for the control of not only the waters of the Nile but also the colonization of the entire region by the colonial forces of those days.

The 1902 Treaty between Ethiopia and Britain has often wrongly been referred to a Treaty between Ethiopia and Egypt and that this treaty addressed the use of the Nile Waters. However, such a treaty did not exist between Ethiopia and Egypt. In fact, the treaty that was being discussed was between Ethiopia and Great Britain. At that time, Egypt was a protectorate of the British Empire and the Egyptian government of the time cannot make international treaties.

According to Cheeseman, (1968), the infamous 1902 treaty was drafted primarily to establish the borders between Ethiopia and the Sudan and not so much about the use of the waters of the Nile. At that time, the Sudan was under British rule. This treaty took many years to draft and negotiate and while the borders for the countries were central reason for the treaty, the Nile, or the use of the Nile water, was not.

One of the articles, Article III of this 1902 treaty discussed the use of the Nile waters. The English version, as reviewed by Britain, read: "His Majesty the Emperor Meneilik II, King of Kings of Ethiopia, engages himself towards the Government of His Britannic Majesty not to construct or allow to be constructed any work across the Blue Nile, Lake Tana, or the Sobat, which would arrest the flow of their waters except in agreement with His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of Sudan." However, the Amharic version did not oblige Ethiopia to seek permission from the British Government. This has an eerie similar to the misrepresentation of Ethiopia's position under the Wuchale Treaty that led to the Battle of Adwa.

In November 1922, the British government, which then administered Sudan and Egypt as its colonial protectorates, was interested in building a dam across the Blue Nile with a view to further bolster an already thriving cotton-farming enterprise in Egypt and Sudan. Even though the British plan contained various concessions and payments. (See Cheeseman, 1968. Lake Tana and the Blue Nile: An Abyssinian

Quest, new impression, Frank Cass and Company Limited).

In 1927, around the time Cheesman was surveying the Blue Nile, Ras Teferi Mekonnen, a delegation, led by Dr. Martin (also known as Hakim or Dr. Workneh), was dispatched to the United States to obtain the government's help in getting the J. G. White Corporation to build a dam at a cost of USD 20 million. When the news of such a scheme was published in the media, the response from Great Britain, which, as was noted above, then administered Egypt as a colonial protectorate and had a vested interest in the implementation of such a deal, was swift. The British business community, in particular, had reaped enormous profits from the highly lucrative cotton cultivation in Egypt, spread over various parts of the Nile basin.

The second attempt to build the Dam came four decades later, in 1958, again under the direct leadership of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I. In this attempt, the United States government was persuaded to direct the U.S. Bureau of Land Reclamation to carry out an extensive, six-year-long study of the Blue Nile for both electricity generation and industrialized agriculture expansion. The findings of this comprehensive report, which had weighed the relative merits of various dam-construction and mechanized agriculture sites, made a series of recommendations which echoed the recommendation for a suitable site which, as noted above, Chessman had made some thirty years earlier. However, although His Imperial Majesty had a close relationship with the United States, Great Britain--and the multilateral institutions these nations kept represented--successfully thwarted the effort, and Ethiopia's quest did not go further. Still, undeterred by this stinging set back, Haile Selassie's government used this milestone to set the agenda for the next generation, by printing a picture of the dam on the Ethiopian banknote of 50 Birr, accompanied by the emperors prophesy that future generations of Ethiopian leaders would one day succeed in building bigger dams.

The third attempt was made by the Derg under President Mengistu Haile Mariam, but this quest focused primarily on irrigation and mechanized agriculture. Although the Derg was embroiled in continuous warfare against separatist groups throughout its tenure, it did make a significant effort to relocate people affected by famine to areas where irrigation would be possible throughout the year and set up new towns like Pawe, in Gojam. It is one of the first significant efforts in Ethiopia to diversify agriculture and move away from total dependency on rain.

The last but successful, attempt to erect a dam across the Blue Nile was carried out in 2011, under the leadership of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. The project was accidentally rolled out at an opportune moment when Egypt, which had always objected to any work on the Blue Nile, was far too preoccupied with the widespread uprisings sweeping the Middle-East at the time to thwart the start of the project.

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

Opinion

Backing Pan-African trajectory is helping Africa grow

BY MENGESHA AMARE

It is well recognized that African states are working hard to emancipate their respective people from underdevelopment and state of lagging behind the world. Especially after the advent of Pan-Africanism, which is a viable movement, an ideology and a geopolitical project for liberating and uniting African people and the African Diaspora around the world, the continent has been endeavoring towards unity, independence and strengthened economic, social and political spheres thereby respecting African sovereignty and destiny.

Undeniably and even plainly stipulated, in times gone by, Pan-Africanism has often taken the shape of a political or cultural movement. It has also predominantly aimed at promoting the unity and solidarity of the African states, coordinating and intensifying their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of the continent, defending their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence as well as eradicating all forms of colonialism from African soil.

In due course of fostering all tasks of entirely emancipating Africa, the deed of some members of the African Union, and even that of the Arab League, particularly these days, is against the notions and ultimate goals of Pan-Africanism and regional integration.

Such an outmoded nation has to be advised in advance before exacerbating a regional threat. True, citing Ethiopia's case of damming its own river with a view to lighting the dark version of its territory where 65% of its population has been residing, the nation has time and again provoked futile attempts which have got Ethiopia annoyed.

Such unhealthy move would be of a pretty bottleneck hindering the smooth flow of activities in the Horn of Africa in particular and across the entire region in general. Furthermore, even though it has become an Arab league member, and even assumed to be the leader, the country has not yet been doing proper works for the progress of the precious continental initiative—Pan African trajectory.

Historically speaking, at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, various encouraging story-lines on Africa began to emerge. At an economic level, there seem to be positive signs and numerous reports point to Africa as a 'new growth frontier, indeed!' At a political level, peace and stability are increasingly becoming a trend, although challenges remain and new conflicts do still surface.

There is an all time remembered and golden maxim out of the vocal cavity of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana stating 'Our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa'. Yes, this maxim has born fruits and the liberation of the entire continent has been

fueled well to publicly declare Africa's independence.

This phrase/statement demonstrated his profound commitment to African unity or Pan-Africanism. It can be said to have its origins in the struggles of the African people against enslavement and colonization. Undeniably, the continued relevance of Pan-Africanism is rooted in the continuity of the domestic and global forces that propelled its emergence almost two centuries ago.

Most definitely, flourishing Pan-Africanism has required the firm commitment of all member states and those who have developed grudge over elements belittling Africa.

The question is, in view of the ongoing reforms at the African Union, how can the organization foster a new form of Pan-Africanism that can lead to the repositioning of Africa in global affairs? The response is an outright 'it is through cementing unification.' However, as stated earlier, some countries of the continent have acted purely against the long-targeted missions of Pan-Africanism. For instance, countries like Egypt are expected to promote cooperation between/among the East African countries that share the Nile and need to stand for just and equitable water share.

No doubt, such cooperation on the Blue Nile will need much greater trust between the parties. To achieve this trust, the countries and their people will have to overcome centuries of cultural and political preconceptions. This will require much patient work and interaction, which is not easy in the current climate. To this end, of course, all member states have to move in unison and foster cooperation instead of exacerbating confrontation citing minor aspects.

This doesn't mean that the issue of the Grand Abbay Dam needs to be overlooked, but it can always be the source of amity and fraternity if countries can think out of the box and ready to respect others' rights and interest. So as to free Africa and unite its people, all members of the AU have to join forces and work together. It is a conscious acknowledgment of the fact that ultimately; the unity of officialdom is incomplete without the unity of the people; the defeat of tribalism and of narrow territorial African nationalism; free movement of the people; and the restoration of the African personality.

So far, there has been African cooperation so as to create and materialize the pan-African dream of one continent, one people and one destiny. So, the nations working against this immense target have to be well advised and practically translated.

Yes, Africa underpins the need for a Pan-African response that can propel African countries to collectively advocate for, challenge, and possibly alter the global order in ways that can ensure a better deal for the people of the continent and the world in general.

The question here is how the AU can utilize Pan-Africanism to renegotiate Africa's position and its contribution in the evolving international order. This is done with the full consciousness of the past and current challenges confronting the intergovernmental organization, such as lack of resources and overdependence on external funding, lack of political will, and dysfunctional nature in the operations of the organs.

Although there is no single or unified approach to conceptualizing Pan-Africanism, it served as the rallying point for the crystallization of forces that drew attention to the challenges of racism, colonialism, neocolonialism and the associated dehumanization, and oppression of Africans in the Diaspora and the mother-continent from the late nineteenth century.

Pan-Africanism also served as an ideological force for the liberation of colonized people in Africa in the twentieth century. Not only does Pan-Africanism focus on mobilizing Africans across all spheres to take pride in their roots and collaborate for socioeconomic transformation, but it is also fore-grounded on engaging with the rest of the world within the logic of correctly identifying its interests and negotiating as a collective to realize these interests.

Through the AU, Pan-Africanism can contribute to the imagination of the political, social, and economic structures in Africa again, away from the political legacy of the imperial logic that informed the current structures. In other words, Pan-Africanism can serve as a reinvented ideological force for resistance against the subordination of Africa in the global order through paying conscious attention to the unresolved political question that continues to undermine its unity, collaboration, and collective action.

African identity and cooperation, reinvented or new Pan-Africanism would revisit Nkrumah's idea of unity through the lens of African identity, politics, and engagement with the old and new generations of Africans at home and beyond instead of widening differences citing minor and irrelevant reasons like what Egypt has been doing.

By focusing on the interests of the people, especially marginalized workers and underpowered groups, new Pan-Africanism can contribute to the effort of creating a new world order that promotes more collaboration, cooperation, and human development through the infusion of all sorts of human values. To this end, all members of the African Union including Egypt, which has undertaken irregular activities against the region's stability, have to take the right track as backing Pan-African trajectory is helping Africa grow.

The contribution of Pan-African move to international relations lies in the ways in which it re-engages with the political question and the contradictions of the neocolonial state structure in Africa as the

main challenge undermining the success of Pan-Africanism. The effectiveness of the AU in its efforts to promote Pan-Africanism as a means of engagement with the rest of the world has to be properly and strongly flourished and cemented via the help of multiple actors at the international level to reshape the global order centering the main goal of global governance.

It must be noted that despite the promise and the potentials of the new Pan-Africanism to achieve the above objectives, there are several challenges that stand in the way. The current neocolonial state structure has worsened incidences of xenophobia, ethnic conflicts, religious extremism, and the rise of nationalist political parties. The AU itself faces both operational and strategic challenges that continue to affect its efficiency. It is this time that the African Union needs to work on the unification of its member states.

Besides, the quest how can the AU ride on the new Pan-Africanism to foster an African identity that can help reposition the continent in global affairs needs to be well replied. How can Pan-Africanism enhance the full realization of Agenda 2063 under the purview of a stronger and more effective AU? These questions have to be well dealt with through working hard and moving in unison.

If Pan-Africanism was potted as an ideological touchstone and a philosophical resistance to the enslavement, subjugation, and marginalization of Africans wherever they may be, by no means member countries could act out of the track and miss the right trajectory even if there are objections emanating from some gaps. However, what Egypt is doing particularly these days, under the guise of its grudge in relation to Ethiopia's Grand Abbay Dam, is a spoiling scenario and a baseless futile attempt, indeed!

Although it may not be a magic wand for the immediate transformation of Africa, it does possess in it an ontological basis through which the African condition can be redefined and re-interpreted economically, socially, and politically.

From the period of attaining independence, African countries have projected their interests for a mutually beneficial multilateral order under Pan-Africanism. Under the purview of the AU, a stronger Africa can also work with other like-minded countries to push for new modes of trade and finance that foster inclusive development.

Generally, taking all this into account, the international community is expected to take steps against the county, Egypt, to reshape its stance and stand by the side it all sisterly nations to make the vision of Pan Africanism real.

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

Art & Culture

The Story of *Irreechaa*: *Baga ittin isin gahe!*

BY FAYYIS OROMIA

I want to say to my hitherto readers, including my critics, have a life of Ora-omo aka Life of Oromo i.e. life of resurrection which means life of a NEW beginning and success in the rest of your life's journey. I will try to explain what is meant by Oromo life in this article.

First let me try to elaborate what I mean by life of resurrection.

This term is often used by all three major Judeo-Christian religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). But its origin seems to be from earlier beliefs like *Waaqeffannaa* as we will look at it below.

Nowadays, resurrection is used as a metaphor for the new beginning towards success, new start, new plan, new goal setting, new life journey, and after having experienced death. For Oromo people, resurrection may mean a new start and success after setbacks in our hitherto liberation journey. How is the process of resurrection viewed according to Oromo religion (*Waaqeffannaa*)?

To be successful in push forward, Oromo people need to empower our Oromo emancipation wing which would mean striving to give confidence and power to ourselves- so that Oromo people can be free from setback

As we approach *Irreechaa* (*Irreessaa*, *Eretcha*, or *Irreensa*) celebration, we have to think about the two meanings of the word *Irreessaa*. *Irreessaa* can be defined as both thanksgiving and empowering. Let us celebrate this year's *Irreechaa* in both senses. Let us give thanks to *Waaqa* and as well empower our nation.

We can empower the great Oromo nation in two ways. First, we should start by coming together before *Waaqayyoo* and committing ourselves to *Tokkummaa*. Secondly, by avoiding all possible things that contribute to our division and subsequent weakening like the inner wrangling we have among ourselves. I hope the *Irreessaa* holiday will be the time to empower Oromo nation and all for the new start and for devising new and more efficient means of struggle to achieve our *Kaayyoo*.

The story of *Irreechaa*

Here I will demonstrate how the notion of resurrection is original to Oromo religion before it was taken over by Judeo-Christian beliefs. The celebration of the first harvest of the Ethiopian Spring in September is a story told by the late Poet Laureate Tsegaye G/Medhin (Tsegaye was an Oromo poet who wrote mainly in Amharic). He narrates the story as follows. "12,000 years ago, *Asra* the God of sun and of sky, God of Cush Pharaoh, begotten *Sete* the older son, *Ora* the younger son and a daughter named as *Asis* (*Atete* or *Adbar*).

The older *Sete* killed his younger brother *Ora* and *Asis* (*Atete* or *Adbar*) planted a tree (*Odaa*) for the memorial of her deceased brother *Ora* at the bank of Nile in Egypt where the murder had taken place, and she



Oromos chose mountain tops or riverbanks not to worship the mountains or rivers. For instance, they go to the mountain top to get away from any noise and worship God (*Waaqa*) with concentration. And they go to riverbanks or a lake because they believe that green is holy, water is life and the places are peaceful where the spirit of God is abundant

requested her father who was the God of Sun to make peace among the families of *Sete* and *Ora*. Then rain has come and the tree (*Odaa*) grew. It symbolized that peace has taken place. Later, during the Stone Age, the tree that had been planted for the memorial of the killed, *Ora* was substituted by a statue of stone that was erected 8000 years ago.

The festival for the *Ora* statue has been celebrated in September of every year when Nile flows full in Nubia and black Egypt. In Ethiopia, during the Axumite and pre-Axumite period a great festival has been held around the statue that was planted by *Asis* (*Atete* or *Adbar*) for the memorial of *Ora*, the son of the sun's God, who risen up from death (*Ora-Omo* or *Or-omo*) for the purpose of celebrating the peace made between the two brothers. After the memorial was the great herald performed in thanking the God of sun and of sky with *Chibo*.

The Eyo KA Abebaye, the traditional and popular song performed at *Demera* events and during the Ethiopia New Year, has been performed since then. "KA" is the first name of God that our Cush Fathers have inherited to us before the introduction of Christianity and Islam to our sub-region. Since that time the Oromo, Gurage and other nations in southern Ethiopia have been calling God as "Waka or *Waaqa*".

Therefore, it should be noted that when Oromos sing *Eyoka* or *Eyoha* at New Year, we praise "KA", the God. "*Gadaa*" or *KA Aada*" is the law or rule of God. "*Gadaa*" (*KA Aada*) is the festival by which the laws and orders of God are executed. Japan, China and India reached their current stage of civilization following basic cultural traditions; they inherited from their forefathers (Hindu, Shinto and Mahiberata).

They also kept their own beliefs intact, even at the time when they were receiving Islam, Christianity, and other ideologies such as democracy. They did not come this far by undermining the culture and traditions of their forefathers.

Culture is the collection of many Chibos or Demeras. "*Irreechaa*" or "*Irreessaa*" one of the part and parcel of *Gadaa* (*KA Aadaa*) system is the corner stone of and the turning point to the new year for which *Asis* (*Atete* or *Adbar*) has put up the dead body of her brother, *Ora* who was killed by his older brother (like Abel of Bible) from the place where he died at the river bank of Nile and planted a statue".

The Oromo people of Ethiopia believed in one Supreme Being called *Waaqa* (Equivalent of God) since time immemorial. Their religion is called "*Waaqeffannaa*" which means believing in one God that is the creator of the whole universe. *Irreechaa* means a celebration where people get together and perform their prayers and thank God for the rain, good harvest, peace and all the blessings that he has afforded them.

Waaqeffannaa is a religion that is free from anything and an integral part of the *Gadaa* System. Our forefathers hold fresh green grass and flowers to perform their prayers and thank their God by going to mountains, to the lake or a riverbank.

Oromos chose mountain tops or riverbanks not to worship the mountains or rivers. For instance, they go to the mountain top to get away from any noise and worship God (*Waaqa*) with concentration. And they go to riverbanks or a lake because they believe that green is holy, water is life and the places are peaceful where the spirit of God is abundant.

In the Oromo culture, the rainy season is considered as the symbol of darkness. At the beginning of September; the darkness is gone, rivers run shallower and cleaner, and the mud has dried up. As sunshine rules the land, the Oromo people go out to celebrate this great natural cycle with the spirit of worshipping God (*Waaqa*).

It is interesting to see that the meaning of the word Oromo means *Ora-Omo*, the resurrected *Ora*, the resurrected human being, the person of the new beginning and success. Do we want to be Oromo in such a sense? This year when we celebrate *Irreechaa* around the world where Oromos reside, let us consider having the life of Oromo or the life of *Ora-Omo*, the life of resurrection, which in general means life of new beginning and success after the hitherto failure or after the repeated setbacks we had based on many factors which are in and out of our control.

I hope Oromos everywhere will commit themselves to such a new beginning for the success both in our collective national interest and individual personal life.

May *Waaqayyoo* help lead such an Oromo life.

Merry *Irreechaa* to Oromo! May *Waaqayyoo* bless Oromia.

Science & Technology



AI for Africa: Leveraging AI for sustainable development

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its involvement in diversified sectors is unprecedented. AI is fueling the fourth industrial revolution and the role of technology in socio-economic developments. Despite on its initial phase, AI touches every sector and its fast development makes the future of the sector unpredictable. Despite the concerns with regard to its risks and threats for humanity, the development of AI and its familiarity with every sector is growing where the future of AI is even more unpredictable.

Despite AI comes with known and unknown challenges, its potential in transforming and promoting sustainable development is imminent. Especially, deploying AI in developing regions like Africa can transform development endeavors. Adopting AI in critical sectors like agriculture, healthcare, education and energy can foster economic and infrastructural development and even environmental sustainability. Despite it comes with new challenges and risks, adopting AI and preparing to manage it to use properly is a timely task for countries, especially for the developing countries.

Yes, AI comes with threats and risks. Still tardiness in applying it would become the highest risk for countries. Instead, countries should deploy AI and invest on developing the new technology so as to manage the threats and exploit the potential benefits of the technology. In this regard, countries have to focus on implementing AI and investing on introducing best practices and policies for developing safe, transparent, accountable and manageable AI technology so as to exploit its potential benefits and to manage the risks. Hence, in addition to introducing the technology, developing countries should give due focus to address the matters of AI governance, establish frameworks and standards, ensuring deployment align with ethical principles and international norms should be the concern of countries.

Countries should understanding the enormous potential of AI in socio-economic growth, despite the challenges of the sector. To minimize the risks and challenges,

investing on researches and governing frameworks is crucial to mitigate the risks effectively and to harness the benefits in a way that is inclusive and sustainable. To exploit the full potential of AI, it requires investments in infrastructure, education, and governance frameworks so as to create an environment where AI-driven innovation thrives.

Despite the debates whether AI is a blessing or a threat for the wellbeing of human beings, remaining behind is a serious threat for the developing world. Hence, adopting the technology and investing on AI and AI education is a timely action. Yet, developing countries are remaining behind in adopting the technology, despite limited activities here and there. In this regard, investing in human resource development and creating a favorable ecosystem for AI is crucial for the developing world.

Understanding the role of AI, Africa started investing on the technology, though with limited capacity. In this regard, investing on human resource development gets new attention in the sector. In July 2024, African Development Bank (ADB) and Intel have announced a partnership to train three million Africans and 30,000 targets to revolutionize the African digital ecosystem and economic growth by tackling socio-economic challenges and enhance productivity in the agriculture, health, and education centers.

The program targets making AI accessible for all, breaking down barriers related to geography, gender and ethnicity. It also aims assisting African countries and regional bodies develop harmonized policy and regulatory frameworks for AI, 5G, Wi-Fi 6E, data and cloud technologies. And, recently, on September 10-11, a continental forum on AI was organized in Lagos, the "Global Inclusivity and AI: Africa" conference. It highlighted Africa's enormous potential to leverage AI for sustainable socio-economic development of the continent and accelerating development goals.

Properly applied and managed AI can advance SGDs and address key challenges like global health, food security, education and climate change. Accordingly, Africa should play its role in in shaping global AI system and in ensuring ethical AI

development. Ethically managed, safe and transparent AI technology has the potential to drive economic growth, improve social wellbeing and address pressing global challenges. Exploring the opportunities and challenges of AI development and deployment should be the priority of countries instead of leaving the technology for others.

AI can improve social wellbeing and address societal challenges such as poverty, healthcare, education, and climate change. Hence, building AI ecosystem and exploring strategies for fostering vibrant AI ecosystem in Africa, including investments in research, talent development and infrastructure needs urgent actions in the continent. Cooperation among the continent's countries and with international community is crucial in this regard so as to harness the benefits and mitigate the potential risks of the technology.

During the AI conference, Minister of Communication, Innovation and Digital Economy of Nigeria, Bosun Tijani (PhD) highlighted the potential of AI to leapfrog traditional development challenges and create new opportunities for growth, according to reports. "AI is not just another technology trend; it is a significant catalyst for the change that our country needs," Tijani said. "It offers us the chance to unlock new possibilities and create a more inclusive and prosperous future." Implementing AI and properly exploiting its potentials can transform Africa's health system, education, agriculture and climate change.

Recent researches on AI and digitalization indicated that accelerating AI and digitalization can transform development endeavors significantly. According to a recent study entitled "The Digital Opportunity of Sub Saharan Africa", AI can contribute up to USD 30 billion GDP in Sub-Saharan Africa. The research, conducted by the financial support of Public First Consulting Company revealed that by developing and deploying AI, Sub-Saharan countries can earn up to 30 billion USD Gross Domestic Products (GDP) in the coming ten years.

According to the study, 70 percent of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa is youth under the age of 30 and from this energetic youth population, more than 76 percent have

access to internet. In this sub-continent, developing internet access by one percent can boost Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by six percent, according to the study.

Citing the research, Forbes Africa stated that AI can accelerate digital economy in Africa by facilitating work activities, accelerate innovation and minimizing cost of doing business. Recommending countries to invest and develop on AI, the study concluded by suggesting developing AI based education system and talent cultivating for the proper development and utilization of AI in this sub-continent and beyond.

Similarly by using AI, Africa can develop the representation of African languages in the technology industry. Despite Africa is home to over 2,000 languages, the representation of these African languages in technology is limited. As a result, African languages have no place in scientific researches and technological development. By deploying one-source AI models, Africa can develop the representation of African languages in the technology and scientific researches.

In developing and deploying AI, Ethiopia is investing its maximum efforts and registering a significant progress. By creating conducive environment for AI development, by establishing national institution, adopting new policy, the country turns its face in infrastructural development and training skilled human resource in the sector. As part of its efforts in developing AI, Ethiopia launched AI Summer Camp training program for the youth generation. The program started three years ago graduated third batch of trainees this summer.

Attending the graduation ceremony of the 2024 AI Summer Camp trainees of the Ethiopian Artificial Intelligence Institute, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) stated that investing on the youth generation develops their technological potential and is cultivating tomorrow's scientists. "You are a testament to our efforts in addressing the challenges of our country and advancing the Digital Ethiopia strategy. I trust that the 200 visionary young minds here today will turn this beginning into remarkable achievements," PM Abiy stated during the graduation ceremony of the 200 youths of the 2024 AI Summer Camp trainees.

Society

“*Irreechaa* for our cultural renaissance”

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

As the vibrant festival of the Oromo people, *Irreechaa* is around the corner, Addis Ababa is buzzing with excitement to mark it colorfully and warmly.

With all preparations officially completed, the vibrant city- Addis Ababa- is set to host this significant cultural event, which celebrates gratitude and unity among the Oromo community.

Concerning the event, Addis Ababa Culture, Arts and Tourism Bureau Head Hirut Kasau (PhD), conveyed a message emphasizing this grand festival’s importance not only as a celebration of cultural heritage but also as a moment to strengthen community bonds and promote inclusivity.

The Head told the media that the *Irreechaa* Festival will be celebrated on October 5, here in Addis Ababa with the theme “*Irreechaa* for our cultural renaissance.” In her statement, Hirut highlighted that Ethiopia is a diverse nation that allows ethnic groups to live together and respect each other.

She explained that *Irreechaa* Festival is a time when the Oromo people move from the previous old year to the New Year and give thanks to the Creator and, it is a time they wish happiness and joy to their friends and relatives. “*Irreechaa* is a festival of togetherness, sympathy, gratitude, and best wishes and happiness are expressed. Thus, men and women, children and adults regardless of any differences celebrate it warmly adorned in traditional clothes, which strengthens mutual bonds.”

Hirut also said that everyone should play their part so that *Irreechaa* preserves its cultural and traditional values and pass it on to future generations.

As the festival is widely attended by nationalities and foreign tourists, Hirut asked every individual to take responsibility for the successful celebration of the festival. She also said that the festival serves as an opportunity to reflect solidarity; and will make a significant contribution to facilitating economic activity.

Hirut also called upon residents and service providers of Addis to welcome and treat guests in a proper way so that to make the festival more impressive and unforgettable.

In related news, Arada Sub City indicated that all necessary preparations have been made to celebrate *Irreechaa* 2024. Chief Executive of Arada Sub-city, Getahun Abera, stated that arrangements have been made to celebrate the *Irreechaa* festival in a way that further strengthens brotherhood and sisterhood.

He mentioned that the festival is part and parcel of the Geda System and has a vital role in strengthening solidarity by connecting people with each other.

In his message, Getahun urged the residents to do their part to promote the culture as



the festival is a reflection of reconciliation, peace and hope and also embraces all communities in diversity. He also explained that celebrating the festival in Addis Ababa has great economic benefits.

Reflecting her view regarding the festival, Birtukan Hailu, a resident of Addis Ababa said that Ethiopia is a country rich in diversity, with numerous holidays and public festivals that demonstrate the unique identities of its various ethnic groups. Each celebration offers a glimpse into the cultural fabric of the nation, showcasing the values, beliefs, and customs that define Ethiopian society.

Birtukan emphasized that such street festivals are not merely events; they also serve as powerful platforms that express of cultural identity. Each holiday, including *Irreechaa*, embodies the unique heritage of the people who celebrate it. *Irreechaa*, in particular, is a vibrant manifestation of the Oromo people’s traditions, marked by colorful attires, music, and communal gatherings. This celebration allows participants to connect with their roots, reinforcing a sense of pride and belonging among community members.

In Birtukan’s view, *Irreechaa* is more than just a festival; it is a celebration of Ethiopian identity, unity, and resilience. As Ethiopians gather to honor their traditions and express their solidarity, they reaffirm their commitment to fostering harmony among all citizens. The festival depicts the beauty found in diversity and the strength that comes from coming together as one community.

Tesfaye Ayano is another resident in Addis. Speaking to local media regarding *Irreechaa* Festival, mentioning the cultural roles of the event, he said, one of the most profound aspects of *Irreechaa* is its role in fostering solidarity among Ethiopians. The festival transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries, bringing together people from different backgrounds to celebrate their shared humanity. “This communal aspect is crucial, especially in a country as diverse as Ethiopia, where unity is essential for social cohesion. *Irreechaa* serves as a reminder of the strength found in diversity, encouraging individuals to come together in harmony.”

Tesfaye noted that during this festival, participants express their appreciation

for the blessings bestowed upon them throughout the year. Whether it is through songs, dances, or offerings made at sacred sites, the festival embodies a spirit of thankfulness that resonates deeply within the hearts of the people. This collective acknowledgment of the past fosters a hopeful outlook for the future, reinforcing the importance of gratitude in daily life.

Moreover, Tesfaye pointed out that *Irreechaa* plays a vital role in bridging generations. The festival provides an opportunity for elders to pass down cultural knowledge and traditions to the younger generation. Through storytelling, music, and dance, the rich heritage of the Oromo people is preserved and celebrated. This intergenerational exchange strengthens community bonds and ensures that cultural practices are not lost in course of time.

Irreechaa festival, set to take place on October 5, 2024 in Addis Ababa, is more than just a public celebration; it is a profound reflection of the Oromo people’s solidarity and togetherness. This cherished event describes the community’s resilience, cultural richness, and shared values. As participants gather to express gratitude for the blessings of the past year, they also reinforce their commitment to unity and harmony within their society and associates. *Irreechaa* stands as a testament to the strength found in diversity and the importance of coming together to celebrate one’s heritage, fostering a sense of belonging and pride among the Oromo people. As the festival unfolds, it will undoubtedly create lasting memories among participants.

In conclusion, the annual *Irreechaa*, the Thanksgiving Festival of the Oromo people will be celebrated warmly and colorfully this weekend, on October 5, 2024 and on October 6, 2024, in the capital Addis Ababa and Bishoftu respectively.

Business & Economy

Promising strides in spurring livestock market, fertilizer supply

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

As the government is subsidizing soil fertilizer, which is one of the most important inputs for increasing production and productivity, the desired goal is being achieved despite some pitfalls. As a matter of fact, the budget allocated for this has been growing year by year, and the amount of fertilizer provided has also been increasing.

Notwithstanding the fact that the government is committed to increasing the production and productivity of the sector by allocating the budget needed for soil fertilization, the process of purchasing and providing fertilizer to farmers have been coming across some logjams that need urgent needs.

In fact, the delinquent and long-standing roadblocks in the agricultural sector have been drawing to a halt. In actual fact, this result has been attained after passing through multifarious twists and turns. With the change in the procurement system implemented now, it has been possible to purchase and deliver fertilizer at an affordable price.

For the sake of truth, the actual effectuation of the National Livestock Market Information System in Ethiopia has been playing an extremely important role in assisting concerned bodies getting themselves involved in the sector. In the present circumstances, the federal government of Ethiopia has been working to support the livestock sector of the country with a focus on taking the area to new frontiers.

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) has announced plans to construct 18 livestock collection centers across nine pastoralist and semi-pastoralist clusters, aiming to enhance Ethiopia's livestock market.

Program Manager for the De-Risking, Inclusion, and Value Enhancement of Pastoral Economies in the Horn of Africa Project (DRIVE) Jemal Aliye recently told The Ethiopian Herald that the centers will be built in key livestock areas, with three clusters in Oromia, three in Somali, one in Afar, and two in the South Ethiopia and South West Ethiopia states. Each cluster will have two collection ranches in areas with strong livestock resources.

The construction of these ranches will strengthen pastoralist cooperatives and improve market access. This fiscal year, bids for the construction of 10 collection ranches have already been announced. The centers will feature facilities such as watering, feeding, and resting areas for livestock.

To address health-related challenges, the government and its partners are installing international-standard laboratories and training experts to meet global market requirements. He noted that a three million USD shipment of laboratory materials is expected, and the MoA is finalizing plans to assess and improve existing livestock laboratories.



One of the livestock collection centers

Ethiopia's five livestock quarantine centers are crucial to the sector, but a feasibility study suggests that additional quarantine centers and ports are needed. With these initiatives, the country's livestock market is set for significant growth in the near future.

The livestock population includes over 71 million cattle, 43 million sheep, 54 million goats, 57 million poultry/chickens, 13.33 million equines, and 7 million bee colonies.

It is interesting to note that as opposed to its potential, Ethiopia's livestock export is irrelevant and lower than the average medications is unpleasantly impacting the effectiveness and superiority of livestock products in the long run pouring cold water on the revenue generated from the sector.

In order to achieve the pursued objective serious measures should be taken with the objective of making certain the quality and safety of drugs used in animal husbandry to protect both animal welfare and consumer health.

Ethiopian Embassy in Beijing hosted in the recent past Ethiopian Livestock Value Chains Experience Sharing and Business Dialogue Forum, as learnt from local media. The forum aimed to bolster bilateral cooperation and investment in Ethiopia's thriving livestock sector, according to Ethiopian Embassy in Beijing.

Ambassador Tefera Deribew in his keynote speech highlighted the sector's important role in Ethiopia's national economy and its vast potential for growth. He emphasized the government's strategic initiatives to modernize the livestock value chain, enhance productivity, and ensure sustainability.

Senior Advisor, Office of the State Minister for Livestock and Fisheries in the Resources Development Sector of the Ministry of Agriculture, Alemayehu Mekonnen provided a detailed narration of these initiatives.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Representative of the Regional Office in China, Kargbo Stephen also shared his experiences during his time in Ethiopia and China.

In conclusion, Ambassador Tefera invited and encouraged Chinese livestock-product

importers to consider Ethiopia for quality organic livestock-products. He also urged Chinese Investors to invest in Ethiopia, exploit the huge market access in and around Ethiopia for livestock products, and utilize the incentives available for Investors.

It is crystal clear that the government of Ethiopia has been putting forth efforts to sufficiently tap the potential of livestock possessions for the gross national product by supporting the country earn noteworthy amount of foreign currencies from the sector.

Ethiopia has encouraging investment potential to progress the livestock sector of the country on the grounds that the lives of millions of people count on livestock farming.

The export earnings from the livestock export trade have not been adequate considering the existing livestock potential of the country, which is the biggest in Africa and among the greatest potential livestock possessions in the world.

In order to enable the sector to play its role in consolidating the country's foreign economic activity, the nation has been implementing a livestock strategy with the intention of increasing productivity in a number of respects.

To this point, the government of Ethiopia has been exerting efforts to adequately tap the potential of livestock resources for the national economy considering the fact that livestock sector contribution is vital for the success of the country's home grown development plan.

It should be underlined that as compared to other African countries, Ethiopia has a huge beef cattle population. The beef cattle production sector paves the way for the livelihoods of pastoral farmers in Ethiopia.

Speaking at a media briefing recently, the De-Risking, Inclusion, and Value Enhancement of Pastoral Economies in the Horn of Africa Project (DRIVE), Program Manager Jemal Aliye highlighted that 90% of Ethiopia's livestock export earnings come from pastoralist and semi-pastoralist regions. These areas are critical to the country's economy but are increasingly

vulnerable to recurring droughts and other challenges.

Jemal called on pastoralists to take advantage of the insurance, which provides financial support during times of scarcity by covering the cost of feed, medicine, and other necessities for livestock, including cattle, goats, sheep, and camels.

Ethiopia has 187 pastoralist and semi-pastoralist districts, with livestock insurance currently available in 70 districts identified as drought-prone. Over the past 12 years, 20,000 livestock insurance policies have been purchased, though Jemal noted the average annual uptake has been only 500 to 600 policies.

As the livestock sector plays a significant role in garnering investors from various parts of the country, overseas investors from various parts of the world should get themselves involved in this area shorn of batting an eye almost immediately.

By the same token, pertinent bodies should bend over backwards to smooth the path of livestock sector in every corner of the country.

Taking the positive moves unfolding in the livestock sector into account, everyone should work in coordination for bridging potential gaps. More to the point, as illegal cross-border cattle trade is being witnessed in the Horn of Africa, the move has kept on posing a threat to country's income. Unless nations in the region spare no effort to tackle the challenges in unison, the situation will keep on going from the frying pan into the fire.

In point of fact, the federal government should endeavor to modernize the export structure ticking all the boxes required to take the sector to the next level and enable investors to join the legal working system. Reasoning from this fact, illegal traders through the passage of time will get back to the right track.

As it is possible to make the future rosy for the livestock sector, stakeholders should contribute their share breathing new life into the national and regional economic progress.

Ethiopia launched its first livestock export to Djibouti by rail, the CEO of Ethio-Djibouti Railways, Takele Uma disclosed, according to information obtained from ENA.

"Today, we are launching our first livestock export from Adama to Djibouti by rail. This approach will maximize the use of our open wagons, which were previously used only for imports," Takele pointed out

According to him, the beginning of railways transport will also boost export meat quality by minimizing transport stress on animals, showcasing Ethiopia's commitment to efficient and sustainable trade.

The move demonstrates Ethiopia's dedication to enhancing capital flows across borders, Takele added.

Street festivals...

Oromia Communication Bureau.

The Geda system symbolizes peace, unity, and harmonious coexistence among people. It is a traditional system of governance by the Oromo people in Ethiopia where it is developed from knowledge gained by community experience over generations.

The Oromo people celebrate *Irreechaa* to thank *Waaqaa* (God) for the blessings and mercies they have received throughout the previous year. This festival marks the beginning of *Birraa*, the sunny season following the end of the dark, rainy, stormy months.

Irreechaa does not only express gratitude to *Waaqaa* but also welcomes the new season of plentiful harvests, highlighting the connection to nature.

Head of Oromia Communication Bureau, Hailu Adugna stated that *Irreechaa*, which is part of the UNESCO inscribed intangible world heritage of the Geda system will be celebrated on this Saturday in Addis Ababa and on Sunday in Bishoftu. "The festival will be celebrated with a colorful ceremony on Saturday, October 5, and Sunday, October 6, 2024, at *Hora Finfine* in Addis Ababa, followed by *Hora Arsede* in Bishoftu, Oromia State," he reiterated.

He also mentioned the key aspects of the Geda system- national unity, reconciliation, and solidarity- and emphasized the



importance of getting this significant celebration understood and appreciated by everyone.

Jamila Simbiru, Head of the Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, noted that *Irreechaa* is a festival serving as a season to thank the Creator for the peaceful end of the rainy season.

According to her, *Irreechaa* Festival promotes values of gratitude, solidarity, love, peace, unity, and forgiveness. Therefore, she encouraged the media to promote this significant festival. During the *Irreechaa* festival, friends, family, and relatives come together to celebrate with joy, strengthening social bonds.

The event is annually celebrated throughout the Oromia State and around the world where Diaspora Oromos reside, particularly in North America and Europe.

According to experts, *Irreechaa*, a cultural festival, is observed by the Oromo people at the beginning of spring as a time of peace, reconciliation, unity thanksgiving, and forgiveness. *Irreechaa* is 'Thanksgiving Day' for the Oromo people after the end of the rainy season. It is celebrated for all the things that God has done for people like bringing rain, peace, health, fertility, and abundance, and for the beautiful weather they have cherished. In the course of *Irreechaa* festivals, people extend gratitude for the last year's achievements and pray the New Year to a peaceful year, filled with peace, prosperity and love and a bright future filled with bounty of productivity.

The Oromo people consider the winter; a rainy season that lasts from June to September as a time of difficulty because the rainy season causes much mud and the surroundings are covered

with heavy clouds. The heavy rains are also accompanied by thunder and cold weather. The weather conditions make life inconvenient for human movements. The heavy rains may cause rivers to overflow and family relationships to fall into difficulty. Therefore, the *Irreechaa* a festival is all about rekindling about family connections, hope and joy. Friends and relatives who missed each other and the beautiful nature for a long time due to the rainy seasons yearn to get together for the blessings and festival of *Irreechaa* is the long awaited festival by the Oromo people.

Moreover, the festival is a time for the Oromo people to celebrate their culture and traditions. People during the festival wear colorful traditional attires as well as sing and dance. It is one of the best festivities of Ethiopia where cultural singing and dancing are common. This grand festival attracts a large number of the Oromo people including the Diaspora community and people from all parts of the country regardless of age, religion, political affiliations and sex to come together and celebrate the festival with extraordinary love, chanting, and unity. It is a time to honor nature and extend thanks for the blessings of brotherhood. In addition, the concept of the festival is also preaching peace and reconciliation as an integral part of the daily activities of the Oromo people.

Delaying the EU's anti-deforestation law is not an option

The EU's new deforestation law was seen as a breakthrough in the global battle against forest loss, but it's provoking fractious debate among governments and producers.

Initially the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) was hailed as a game-changer in the fight against illegal forest clearing.

It was the first law of its kind in the world – and when it came into force in June 2023 it had an overwhelming democratic mandate from EU member states and the European Parliament.

The law signalled their resolve to end EU complicity in global forest destruction by only allowing EU market access to companies that can prove their products made from cattle, wood, cocoa, soy, palm oil, coffee and rubber are deforestation-free.

Agricultural production is the biggest driver of deforestation on the planet, and these specific commodities' impact on forests and peoples' rights has been nothing short of catastrophic.

But as the EUDR's implementation day – December 30, 2024 – edges closer, the positivity has been supplanted by a barrage of negative stories.

In March, Austria's agricultural ministry called for implementation to be postponed. This appeal has been echoed by agricultural ministries in Czechia, Finland, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden, as well as the European People's Party (EPP). The debate around the law has grown increasingly fractious.

In May, the US Secretaries of Commerce and Agriculture wrote to the European Commission demanding that the EU delay

the law, as it posed "critical challenges" to American producers.

Meanwhile South American diplomats warned it would aggravate Europe's cocaine problem, as poor Peruvian and Colombian farmers wouldn't be able to prove that their coffee or cacao wasn't grown on deforested land and would shift to farming coca leaves instead.

As well as more cocaine on their streets, Europeans would find fewer diapers, sanitary pads and other hygiene products on their supermarket shelves, according to US paper-makers. At the same time, the European timber industry claimed that the law was "a huge regulatory and administrative monster".

And all this came against a backdrop of warnings about price rises for food, drink and other goods.

So how did a law designed to tackle one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time become so divisive? And what is the true picture on the ground as industries prepare to implement the law?

Two things are abundantly clear. The first is that agricultural deforestation is a deep-seated, complex problem, and eliminating it presents real challenges.

Fern, which first called for a law to combat the illegal deforestation tainting the EU's imports of agricultural commodities a decade ago, has consistently highlighted one of the biggest challenges: ensuring that the smallholders who could be affected by the regulation receive the specific support they need, and that companies don't squeeze them out of their supply chains.

Second, powerful vested interests within affected industries and EU member states are intent on sabotaging it.

A proper assessment paints a different picture.

Away from breathless headlines about Europe being flooded with cocaine, the humdrum work of preparing for implementation is steadily progressing.

Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana are the world's biggest cocoa producers, and Europe is their largest market. The new law therefore could have a profound impact on those countries' economies and peoples' lives.

While European industry and big US wood companies are claiming they can't meet the EUDR's requirements in time, Ghana's cocoa regulator, COCOBOD, recently stated that their traceability system – which will prove sustainability by tracing cocoa beans from the farm where they're produced to the port of shipment – will be operational from October 2024.

In Cote d'Ivoire, a similar story is also unfolding.

The Ivorian government has been distributing ID cards to farmers that will increase traceability and allow them to receive e-payments. Though this system will take time to roll out, it will stop the widespread fraudulent underpayments which are so damaging to small-scale farmers' livelihoods.

It's no surprise then that a group of 120 Ghanaian and Ivorian civil society and farmer organisations recently wrote to EU decision-makers, expressing their deep concerns about member states trying to delay the EUDR.

Indigenous land rights

Their call was echoed by more than 170 NGOs from around the world, including Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil (APIB), which represents more than 300

Brazilian Indigenous Peoples' groups.

APIB have long been at the forefront of efforts to protect the Amazon and Brazil's other precious biomes from the ravages of agribusiness and loggers. They see the EUDR as a way of not just protecting nature but helping to safeguard Indigenous Peoples' territorial rights. Earlier this year, APIB called for the EUDR to be extended into non-forest biomes such as the Cerrado.

Some consumer goods giants who will be affected by the EUDR are also defending it: in July, Nestle, Mars Wrigley and Ferrero wrote to the European Commission defending the law as "an important step forward in driving the necessary transformation of the cocoa and chocolate sector".

They called for more EU support, which should include funds to help smallholders adjust to the law's demands, and equitably negotiated partnerships with the countries producing goods that fall under the legislation's scope.

Last year, the world lost an area of forest almost as big as Switzerland; destruction that released about a half as much carbon dioxide as the United States does annually through burning fossil fuels.

Delaying or abandoning the law on the eve of it being applied is not an option, but its success depends on how it's implemented: how the EU rises to its inevitable challenges, and how far the EU is prepared to increase its support to affected smallholders and countries.

We need to redouble our commitment to making it work and oppose those resisting it out of short-sighted self-interest.

Source: *Climate Home news*



This is Ethiopia

Street festivals attracting more tourists in Ethiopia

BY TEWODROS KASSA

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) data, street festivals play a significant role in promoting tourist inflow to a given country.

Ethiopia is the leading country in Africa to register tangible and intangible heritages, manuscripts, and biosphere reserves by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). As the nation has many tourist heritages, efforts are underway to inscribe many more attractions in the prestigious list of UNESCO.

In Ethiopia, the month of Meskerem (September) is a high tourist attraction month as it is a time when the rainy, cloudy and chilly season comes to an end, the sky turns to light blue and everything turns green. In *Meskerem*, the weather starts warming, flowers blossom and the land adorns itself with green grasses and *Adey Abeba*, a flower that grows only from September to November.

During this season, the country marks

numerous street festivals including *Demera Meskel* (Finding of the True Cross), *Gifata* (Wolaita peoples' New Year festival), and *Irreechaa* (Oromo people's Thanksgiving celebration), among others. These festivals enable visitors to discover Ethiopian cultural assets, observe every aspect of the public, and witness the hospitality of Ethiopians.

Accordingly, street festivals enable tourists spend a splendid and unforgettable time in connection with the holidays. During the marking of these street festivals, the number of tourists' inflow to the country reaches its peak. The improvement in providing luxurious touristic services with various tourist service rendering institutions is also catalyzing the growing tourism sector in the country.

That is why international tourist inflow to Ethiopia surges from the month of September to the end of January annually. Thus, the country has been doing its level best to promote tourist inflow, and increase the number of days tourists stay in the country through undertaking various measures.



Celebration of Irreechaa, Thanksgiving festival of the Oromo people

The Geda System, which is the social, political, and cultural reflection of the traditional Oromo people, was registered in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in October 2016.

The Oromo Thanksgiving festival, *Irreechaa* takes place every year in October

all over Oromia, Ethiopia. *Irreechaa* means a celebration where people get together and perform their prayers and thanks to the Creator, God.

The *Irreechaa* Festival rooted in the Geda System maintains national unity, reconciliation and solidarity, according to

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