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Ethiopia, Madagascar cultivate thriving partnership

- Ethiopian Airlines catalyst for stronger ties



BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

ADDIS ABABA--The February meeting between Ethiopia and Madagascar's foreign ministers has injected new momentum into bilateral relations, fostering cooperation across sectors like tourism, agriculture, leather production, and aviation, according to the Malagasy's Chargé d'affaires.

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Deputy Ambassador Randrianantoandro Eric highlighted tourism as a key area of growing cooperation. Numerous Ethiopian agencies are actively involved in the Malagasy tourism sector, bringing tourists from various countries to experience the island nation's stunning beaches.

Ethiopian Airlines plays a pivotal role in facilitating this growth by connecting Madagascar with major cities worldwide within a day. The airline has significantly increased its flight frequency between the two countries, providing enhanced connectivity for business, tourism, and citizen mobility.

The deputy ambassador highlighted that

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Ethiopia marks Land Day, emphasizes sustainable land governance

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA - The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) underscored its ongoing collaboration with various stakeholders to reform the land governance system and address land tenure injustices.

Yesterday, Land for Life Ethiopia commemorated the 2nd Ethiopian Land Day under the theme "The Quest for Resilient Land Governance for a Better Life in Ethiopia." The event, which brought together policymakers, academics, civil society organizations, and private sector representatives, aimed to foster sustainable and equitable land governance in the country.

In her opening remarks, Yalemzewud Demissie, Head of the MoA's Rural Land Administration and Geospatial Desk, highlighted the Ministry's collaborative work

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Bold reforms propel Ethiopia's manufacturing sector

BY HAILE DEMEKE

Manufacturers have commended Ethiopia's bold macroeconomic reforms for driving significant progress and revitalizing the manufacturing sector. These reforms have greatly stimulated the manufacturing sector and alleviated foreign currency shortages, contributing to a more favorable economic environment.

Aimed at ensuring sustainable economic development, these reforms are addressing key challenges such as inflation and the high cost of living. Despite steady economic growth, rising prices and foreign currency constraints have posed persistent challenges. The reforms are showing promising results in mitigating these issues.

Industry Minister Melaku Alebel stated that

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Ethiopia accelerating green transition with EVs

BY HAILE DEMEKE

Climate change is emerging as a global threat, leading to serious economic and social consequences and impacting people's health. Addressing this problem requires significant measures. Therefore, Ethiopia is implementing a wide range of policies to tackle this pressing problem.

The transport sector is currently a major source of adverse environmental effects in Ethiopia affecting ecosystem, wildlife, and other environmental factors. The pressures induced by the transport system on the natural and physical environment are likely to exacerbate in tandem with Ethiopia's growing economy. A well-designed transport system reduces reliance on non-renewable resources, improves energy efficiency and fits into the environment in ways that avoid adverse effects.

State Minister of Transport and Logistics Bareo Hassen said that the government is embarking on series of reforms among



which modernizing the transport sector is at the forefront. Accordingly, the nation is making significant strides in reducing carbon emissions and transforming urban mobility by embracing electric transportation. Apart

from reducing greenhouse gas emissions and advancing the green economy, the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) plays significant role in Ethiopia's economy.

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Amhara State gears up for *Genna*, Epiphany

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA-Extensive preparations are underway to celebrate Ethiopian Christmas /*Genna*/ in Lalibela and Epiphany in Gondar, the Amhara State Government Communications Bureau has disclosed.

The Bureau Head Mengesha Fentaw (PhD) told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that these holidays attract a significant number of both foreign and domestic tourists.

In collaboration with local administrations and communities, the state government has undertaken various preparatory measures to ensure a successful celebration of Christmas in Lalibela.



Mengesha further stated that hotels and other service providers in the area are actively working to provide appropriate services to guests visiting for the holiday season.

Ethiopian Airlines has also announced the addition of extra flights to accommodate tourists arriving from abroad to celebrate the holidays.

He emphasized the importance of key stakeholders ensuring the adequate supply of water, electricity, and other essential services to prevent any disruptions.

Extensive preparations are underway throughout the state to ensure a secure and successful celebration of Epiphany, Mengesha remarked.

Ethiopian Christians celebrate Christmas on January 7th, marking the birth of Jesus Christ, and Epiphany on January 19th, commemorating His baptism in the River Jordan. Recognized by UNESCO as intangible world heritage, these holidays feature vibrant outdoor ceremonies reflecting Ethiopia's rich religious and cultural traditions.

Other January holidays include *Qana Zegelila*, adding to the festive atmosphere.

Ethiopia follows its own calendar, which is about seven to eight years behind the Gregorian calendar used in most of the world. This means that Ethiopian Christmas (*Genna*) falls on January 7th, not December 25th.



Power generation on track for 25,000 GW target

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) has announced that its dams are full following the recent rainy season, ensuring sufficient water for power generation to meet the planned target this year.

According to EEP Planning Bureau and Power Plant Operation Sector Manager Tiruwork Shiferaw, the dams have absorbed enough water during the rainy season to support full-capacity power generation. EEP is actively managing water levels in the dams to optimize power output.

Eight dams – Gilgel Gibe I, Finca'a, Melka Wakana, Tana Beles, Tekeze, Genale Dawa, Koka, and the Abbay Dam – are

currently full. Gilgel Gibe III and Amerti Neshie have adequate water levels.

EEP is striving to generate over 25,000 gigawatts (GW) of electricity per hour in the current fiscal year. The company is also undertaking renovations to improve water utilization efficiency.

Meanwhile, Ethiopian Electric Service (EES) reported a significant increase in customers, reaching 4.9 million. EES aims to connect an additional 600,000 customers this year. Since July 2024, 167,952 new customers have gained access to electricity.

Currently, 8,245 rural towns have access to electricity, a substantial increase from just 667 two decades ago. 25 mini-grids are under construction, with three already completed, benefiting 74,222 people.

State cultivates 18,000 ha land for disaster relief, school feeding

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA – Oromia State's Disaster Prevention Institution (*Busa Gonofa*) is cultivating crops on 18,000 hectares of land to address the impacts of natural and man-made disasters.

Busa Gonofa Head Moges Edaye told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the state aims to cultivate a total of 43,000 hectares of land. *BusaGonofa* will directly cultivate 24,000 hectares, while the remaining will be cultivated by branch offices in various districts.

It was learnt that a key focus of this initiative is to provide school feeding for nine million students in the state. A budget of 15 billion Birr has been allocated for this program.

While 8,000 hectares of cultivated land are dedicated to school feeding, challenges remain due to the late start of the agricultural season.

Busa Gonofa has collected around 5,000 quintals of crops from the 18,000 hectares cultivated so far. The institution is collaborating with the Agriculture Bureau's urban and rural safety net development programs to enhance these efforts.

Challenges facing the initiative include limited agricultural land, insufficient rainfall, and ongoing conflicts.

Busa Gonofa has 26 million members who contribute to the institution through membership fees and resource mobilization. These funds are used to support vulnerable populations, including students.

Authority eyeing to reduce metropolis road traffic fatalities

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA – Government has launched an updated road safety strategy aimed at significantly reducing traffic fatalities and injuries, the Addis Ababa city traffic management Authority disclosed.

This revised strategy, covering the period 2025-2030, aligns with global and national road safety goals.

The Addis Ababa City Traffic Management Authority General Director Kibebew Mideksa announced the new strategy during a press briefing yesterday. He emphasized that the revised plan incorporates the city's evolving infrastructure, particularly the ongoing corridor development projects, and reflects the latest global and national road safety best practices.

Apart from improving safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and other vulnerable road users, the strategy prioritizes creating a safe and efficient transport system for all road users, it was learnt.

The primary objective of strategy is to significantly reduce the number of road traffic fatalities and injuries through utilizing GIS mapping to identify high-risk locations ("black

spots") where fatal crashes frequently occur.

According to the general manager, the strategy will implement a combination of measures, including infrastructure improvements, regulatory changes, and enhanced enforcement.

The strategy specifically targets speeding and drunk driving, which are major contributors to fatal crashes and emphasizes collaboration with the Addis Ababa City Transport Bureau and other stakeholders.

Furthermore, the strategy promotes the adoption of sustainable transport modes, such as public transportation and cycling, to reduce reliance on private vehicles and mitigate climate change.

By promoting sustainable transport, the strategy aims to reduce vehicle ownership and traffic congestion, ultimately improving road safety.

The Addis Ababa City Transport Bureau Head Yabibal Addis on his part stated that the strategy aims to achieve a 25% reduction in road traffic fatalities and injuries by 2030. He highlighted the importance of implementing effective road safety interventions across all modes of transport, including mass transit systems.

News

Ethiopia, Madagascar cultivate ...

cooperation extends beyond tourism to encompass agriculture and leather production. He noted that Ethiopian researchers have conducted studies on sorghum cultivation in Madagascar, a crop that thrives in both countries' arid regions. This collaboration has yielded promising results, and efforts are underway to promote sorghum cultivation among smallholder farmers in Madagascar.

The scope of cooperation extends beyond sorghum to encompass other cereals, vegetables, and collaborative climate research initiatives. Furthermore, bilateral cooperation in the leather production sector presents a valuable opportunity for both countries to benefit from shared knowledge and expertise.

Recognizing the potential for deepening mutual benefits and addressing transnational crimes associated with free movement, the deputy ambassador noted that Madagascar has proposed draft agreements to the

Ethiopian government, which has expressed a willingness to further collaborate.

Regarding trade ties, while both countries engage in some level of bilateral trade, the volume remains relatively low, despite a slight increase last year," the deputy ambassador acknowledged. "However, significant growth potential exists, particularly within the framework of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)."

Madagascar offers a diverse range of potential exports for the Ethiopian market, including a variety of fruits, spices such as vanilla and cloves, precious stones, and seafood. Eric noted that Ethiopian businesspersons have shown particular interest in sourcing raw materials for soap production from Madagascar, among other products. Some Ethiopian entrepreneurs have already established a presence in Madagascar, operating businesses such as candle and mattress manufacturing units and barber shops.

The deputy ambassador emphasized the importance of fostering stronger business-to-business relationships between Ethiopian and Malagasy entrepreneurs. He noted that Ethiopian businesspersons import products from Madagascar and subsequently export them to Gulf countries, highlighting the potential for increased trade flows. A major challenge identified by businesses in both countries is the need to streamline regulatory processes, reduce domestic customs duties, and improve access to market information.

Eric stressed the importance of strong political relationships between leaders, which can provide crucial momentum for private sector engagement and the development of trade and investment. Harmonizing customs rules and facilitating trade integration are also critical steps in strengthening economic ties.

The modern relationship between Ethiopia and Madagascar has its roots in Madagascar's early independence years.

Ethiopia accelerating ...

The presence of petrol cars is significantly contributing to the climate change and as part of its green economy initiatives, Ethiopia has banned the importation of combustion engine vehicles while encouraging the adoption of EVs. This groundbreaking policy has created opportunities for EV manufacturers and private sector investors to thrive in Ethiopia's emerging market.

Above all the adoption of electric vehicles presents considerable advantages for the nation by facilitating a green transition and reducing costs associated with fuel imports for vehicles. Ethiopia spends approximately 4 billion USD each year on fuel imports, with the transportation sector being one of the main consumers. Currently, the country has over 100,000 EVs, and in its ten-year strategic plan, the government aims to increase this number to half a million. Therefore, to promote a green transition and foster the adoption of EVs, the incumbent is creating a supportive environment, Bareostated.

He emphasized the rapid growth of private electric vehicle assembly plants and the government's commitment to developing EV infrastructure, investing in clean energy technologies, and fostering public-private partnerships to accelerate the shift to greener transport solutions.

On the other hand, the government is developing necessary infrastructures of the EVs and developing charging station across the country. Ethiopia is in a period of transition to green transportation as part of its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emission. Understanding the challenge and adverse effects caused by the sector, the government is taking bold steps toward realizing a green economy and is committed to sustainable energy transition by unlocking its vast renewable energy potential.

EtiopiKar Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Samuel Addisalem told The Ethiopian Herald that the nation is making progress in reducing carbon emissions and the recent move taken by the government to ban fuel car importation is a testament of this commitment to realize green energy transition.

He believed that Ethiopia is aggressively working to shift its means of transport to EVs by leveraging its abundant renewable energy resources, which is important to reduce the nation's reliance on fuels and minimize environmental impacts. The CEO also expressed that the nation is observing an increasing demand for EVs.

Bold reforms propel Ethiopia's ...

the implementation of the macroeconomic reform process has notably transformed the performance of the manufacturing industry and has produced encouraging results. One key achievement has been in the area of import substitution, with the sector substituting approximately 816 million USD over the past three months alone. According to the Minister, the macroeconomic reform has alleviated the foreign currency shortage that had adversely impacted the manufacturing industry's performance and production capacity, enabling manufacturers to become more competitive.

Melaku stated that the macroeconomic reform has played a pivotal role in addressing key challenges in Ethiopia's economy. The reform has driven job creation, tackled rising inflation, corrected macroeconomic imbalances, alleviated foreign currency shortages, enhanced the competitiveness of financial sectors, and resolved other pressing issues. He also highlighted the manufacturing sector's longstanding struggle with foreign currency shortages, which has hindered its

contribution to the nation's economic growth.

Speaking to local media, Ethiopian Meat Producers Exporters Association (EMPEA) President Kalifa Hussein emphasized the reform's positive impact on the meat industry. He noted that the process has significantly mitigated the foreign currency shortage that previously constrained the sector's performance.

Kalifa also addressed challenges such as illegal trade, money laundering, and other issues, which have had a substantial impact on the economy. He pointed out that the reform has helped narrow the gap between the parallel market and the legal market, fostering a healthier economic environment. However, he acknowledged that rising domestic prices and livestock smuggling continue to hinder the meat industry's performance, contributing to a decline in revenue.

"Our abattoir industry is now receiving sufficient cattle following the reform and proper control measures," Kalifa remarked.

He further indicated that meat export performance has improved significantly since the implementation of the reform, with a reported increase of about 65% over the past five months.

Sharing the above, Vice President of the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, Ababayehu Girma, highlighted the severe impact of foreign currency shortages and delays in importing inputs on the manufacturing sector. He noted that these challenges have adversely affected production performance and the overall economy. However, he acknowledged that the macroeconomic reform has significantly alleviated these issues.

Ethiopian Development Bank President Emebet Melese (PhD) underscored the importance of maintaining foreign currency reserves to support imports. She warned that limited access to foreign currency could restrict capacity utilization in the business sector. The reforms, she added, have laid a strong foundation for improving capacity utilization and fostering sustainable growth.

Ethiopia marks Land Day, emphasizes ...

with stakeholders, particularly Land for Life Ethiopia, to promote people-centered land governance and drive progress in land governance reforms.

Yalemzewud further noted that the recently revised national rural land administration framework will be a significant milestone in addressing land fragmentation and ensuring equitable access to land for farming communities, including women. Noting the presence of 50 million land parcels in the highland areas, she explained that approximately 30 million of these parcels have received land ownership certificates. "Out of these," she added, "approximately 28 million are registered in the land information system."

Furthermore, the MoA is currently

implementing a land information system in 458 districts across the country, facilitating access to loans and enabling land transactions for farming communities. Yalemzewud added, "Approximately 60% of the land mass is utilized by pastoralist communities, who employ a unique land management system." She concluded by stating, "The event serves as a valuable platform for policy advocacy, knowledge exchange, and the initiation of actionable solutions."

The event also aimed to raise awareness about the crucial role of sustainable land management in improving livelihoods and fostering equitable development.

Melesse Damtie (PhD), Chairperson of the General Assembly of Land for Life Ethiopia, said this Day signifies the unwavering

commitment to establishing sustainable and equitable land management systems that empower communities and enhance livelihoods.

During the event, members of the Policy Thematic Group of Land for Life-Ethiopia reiterated the organization's strong commitment to fostering inclusive land governance.

Furthermore, a series of insightful presentations explored Ethiopia's land policy usage and institutional framework, examined the challenges and opportunities of resilient communal land tenure, and analyzed the role of agricultural investment in shaping food systems, providing a critical assessment of how land governance impacts food security and sustainable agriculture.

Opinion

AUs contribution for the continent's inclusive development

BY GETACHEW MINAS

Part II

Democratic values and culture would be expanded and entrenched across Africa would no longer be and considered as tentative gestures and figment of imagination is the deep end. Similarly, every African will perceive political elections to be free, fair and credible. Africans will also believe that democratic institutions, processes and leaders are accountable to the electorate.

It is counter imperative to think of that Africans would be able to perceive that the judiciary is impartial and independent and the legislature branch of government is independent and crucial component of the national governance process as the demos demand and a very natural essence for the wellbeing of humanity. All these activities are planned to be achieved by 2023 according to authorities. In the same period, the African Peer Review Mechanism has been assigned to all Member States and its positive impact on governance has to be registered. In this process each leader was to be reviewed by other leaders in a given period of time

Besides regional security, National capital markets will contribute is said to have been considered as a gear shifter for the development of financing and the proportion of aid in the national budget.

AU has made great effort in integrating member countries economically, politically, socially and culturally as its inception. In the economic integration effort, focus has been given to infrastructure and inclusive economic development. Priority has been given to industrialization led by the private sector in trade and sustainable utilization of natural resources.

Growth has not been all inclusive due to limited economic integration. Limited intra-African trade, low integration and infrastructure development are further obstacles to enhancing African competitiveness in the global economies. As a result, it has been difficult to eliminate poverty from Africa. The continent, therefore, needs to forge efforts towards continental integration.

There is also a need to boost intra-African trade and enhance connectivity through infrastructure development. It is reported that much has been achieved up to date, but the road ahead is still a long one. The AU continues to promote policies and programs for inclusive growth and development that generate employment and accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Measures to reduce or eliminate economic and social marginalization will also be promoted in every Africa country.

Support programs will be designed and implemented to encourage member states to adopt policies on inclusive growth and development. The AU is believed to have strengthened continental integration and

global cooperation arrangements such as accelerating the creation of Free Trade Area and harmonization of monetary policies. This also includes financial standards, labor market information, customs duties, and other measures that expand market access.

The AU will also redouble its efforts to encourage and boost private sector development through improved business climate in every member country. It will promote trade among member countries through support for the establishment of the African Trade Forum and facilitation of the forum on non-tariff barriers. Regarding private sector development, the AU will support the development and adoption of the Pan African Investment Code.

The above mentioned efforts will be accompanied by the development of private sector strategic plans and facilitation of the establishment of small and medium enterprise Charters in Member States. Special attention will be paid to promoting and facilitating entrepreneurship, through policy development, capacity building and information and experience sharing and exchanges among stakeholders.

The development of economic infrastructure between the various African countries is crucial for the integration of efforts to facilitate people to people relations. This is a precondition for facilitating intra African trade. Inadequate infrastructure is one of the factors impeding the successful integration of the African continent into the global trading system. Other impeding factors include high trade costs, especially for landlocked countries. Poor and inadequate infrastructure accounts for a large share of the transport costs for both coastal and landlocked countries in Africa.

Although progress has been made on infrastructure, there is still a need to accelerate the implementation of efficient and effective operations of the institutions responsible for transportation. The institutions have to ensure mobilization of sufficient resources for infrastructure development that support economic growth in African countries. Measures will be taken to complete the missing links in African transport infrastructure networks.

The AU will also increase the ratification of a number of common civil aviation, and marine and land transport policies and programs. Also, access to efficient, reliable cost-effective and environmentally friendly modern energy services will be promoted. The AU will also seek to ensure improved integrated water resource management for holistic development of Africa. It will strengthen the implementation of programs on tourism and postal services development.

Measures will be taken to harmonize standards, develop guidelines and frameworks, and facilitate their implementation. These measures will promote efficiency in the fields of transport, tourism, postal sector,

renewable energy geothermal, hydro, solar, bio-energy and wind. Fossil fuel will be explored and exploited through building harmonized arrangements for the African IT sector and information society. To implement the above mentioned strategies, programs, projects and actions, the AU departments of infrastructure and energy will be responsible.

Each activity and output under the above strategies will be inspected to check if the concerned AU departments and other external partners have fulfilled their duties. Institutions of member states are the principal actors in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of actions on the ground. Ethiopia is one of the actors in the facilitation of performance of AU departments.

Ethiopia's role in the AU has made Addis Ababa eligible to be the seat of the Head Quarters. It has also hosted several AU Summit which most of the leaders have attended. As a scholar put it, the AU has coordinated Africa's rise on the global stage and spearheaded efforts to achieve the vision of a united, prosperous continent. However, recent issues have emerged raising questions whether this historical HQ remains the right location as new challenges emerge. He referred to a commentary published in Modern Diplomacy advocating the relocation of the HQ of the AU from its current home in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This suggestion fails to deeply consider the historical and strategic rationale for locating the AU where it is. What is skipped is a deep appreciation for Ethiopia's crucial role in the liberation of Africa and why Addis Ababa was chosen as the seat of the AU. The relocation demands careful consideration of the factors, not an angry reaction to petty challenges.

Historically, Ethiopia has incurred immense costs in its endeavor to fully support the independence movements in countries that had suffered from harsh colonial rule. Ethiopian has helped in laying the foundations for pan-African cooperation. As the only independent African country to repel an Italian colonial invasion at the Battle of Adwa in 1896, Ethiopia came to symbolize independence from alien domination across the African continent. Following that, Emperor Haile Selassie opened the borders of Ethiopia to exiled African freedom fighters from all parts of Africa. Ethiopian provided them sanctuary to design ways and means for their struggles. Political figures like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania have received support and guidance from Ethiopia. The country, as the only independent entity in Africa has also contributed troops to help liberate territories suffering from colonial rule.

When the need to establish a pan-African institution, the leaders fully acknowledged the contributions Ethiopia made in locating the HQ of the OAU in Addis Ababa in 1963. They have fully recognized that Ethiopia is the home of African patriotism and independence. As the scholar put it rightly,

Ethiopia has continued hosting the AU since it replaced the OAU in 2002, incurring significant costs but gaining no special economic or political privileges in return.

Relocating the HQ now without serious consideration would only discredit the sacrifices and undermine the motives of the founding fathers of the OAU and AU. While Ethiopia faced internal and external challenges, its government has remained strongly committed to pan-African ideals and activities. Ethiopia has invested heavily in mediating conflicts across the region thereby promoting integration within the AU framework. Ethiopia has also contributed the substantial amount of financial and human resources to AU operations.

Ethiopia has remained as determined as ever to the goal of continental unity and cooperation pursued by the AU. Before making proposals for relocating the HQ of the AU, critics must propose concrete support to Ethiopia through its present difficulties rather than forsaking it. Relocating the HQ could seriously hamper the duties and responsibilities of the AU by demanding the transfer of staff and infrastructure to an unknown location. It may gratify short-sighted critics but such measure would imply risks that undermine the foundations of the AU and its access to Ethiopia's facilities.

A wiser strategy is to constructively engage with Ethiopia to address priority concerns. This is tantamount to affirming solidarity between the AU and Ethiopia in its historic role. This leads to a path that redoubles continental efforts towards conflict resolution and economic development that guarantee stability both in Ethiopia and in the AU member countries.

Currently, Africa is facing immense local and global challenges. These situations does not allow for hasty decisions to relocate the HQ of AU. This would require wisdom in deciding the AU to continue guiding the unity of the continent from within Ethiopia. A gentle and wiser approach would be to uphold the role of Ethiopia through renewed commitment to supporting its stability, addressing the challenges it faces.

Thus, with cooperation between member states, the AU would manage its difficulties from a position of principle based on history, rather than proposals that may compromise and endanger its future effectiveness. This effort would be strengthened by the role the Ethiopian government plays in providing modern facilities for the effective operation of the AU. Currently, the Corridor Development and other IT and infrastructural facilities in the country would promote Ethiopia as the most appropriate seat of AU and other international institutions.

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

Editorial

Ethiopia leads decarbonization with electric vehicle investment

While the most affluent nations of the world stumble and falter, countries like Ethiopia are taking the lead against global warming. And as planet Earth warms unprecedentedly, the call for following the footsteps of Ethiopia has become more essential.

In recent years, Ethiopia has positioned itself as a champion of green initiatives spearheading the effort and the fight against climate change. From planting millions of saplings to becoming the voice in green diplomacy, the country is a frontrunner in carbon emission activities.

Setting an example for the globe in terms of striking a balance between economic growths with decarbonization, the country is making remarkable strides in building a green economy.

With its ambitious green initiative, the country is making the utmost effort to build a green economy in all sectors, while keeping greenhouse gas emissions low. This dual approach to economic development and environmental protection underscores Ethiopia's commitment to addressing the global climate crisis.

At the heart of the country's green economy initiative lies the utilization of renewable energy. The nation is endowed with abundant natural resources, including hydro, solar, wind, and geothermal energy. Major projects, such as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), showcase the country's focus on clean energy production. The green project significantly reduces reliance on fossil fuels and contributes to regional energy security through exports to neighboring countries.

In addition to energy, Ethiopia is prioritizing reforestation and afforestation efforts. The Green Legacy Initiative, launched in 2019 by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has led to the plantation of billions of trees to combat deforestation, mitigate climate change, and restore degraded landscapes.

Transportation is another critical area where Ethiopia is advancing its green agenda. With its recent measures, the country is trying to promote the use of electric vehicles (EVs) and expanding public transportation systems, the country is trying to address urban air pollution and reduce emissions. Policies that incentivize EV adoption and develop necessary infrastructure are gradually transforming Ethiopia's cities into cleaner and more sustainable urban spaces.

The country has unveiled a 10-year strategy to double the number of Electric Vehicles (EVs) on its roads, aiming to increase the current count of approximately 70,000 to 152,000 by 2030. This effort is part of a broader push to replace fuel-powered cars and establish a greener and sustainable transportation system.

To support the growth of the EV sector, the government, along with private investors, is working to provide infrastructure, incentives like excise tax and VAT subsidies, and awareness programs. Additionally, efforts are being made to facilitate the tax-free import of charging machines, land access, and licensing.

The journey toward a green economy is not without challenges. Limited financial resources, technological gaps, and the need for robust infrastructure remain significant barriers. Moreover, the impacts of climate change, including droughts and erratic rainfall, pose additional hurdles to sustainable development.

Given Ethiopia's dedication to green growth, the international community has a crucial role to play in supporting this vision. Financial assistance, technology transfer, and capacity-building initiatives can help Ethiopia overcome existing obstacles and accelerate its transition to sustainability. Climate finance mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, should prioritize countries like Ethiopia that demonstrate strong commitments to climate action.

Partnerships with global stakeholders can facilitate knowledge sharing and innovation, enabling the country to develop localized solutions for its green economy goals. The recent engagement of United Arab Emirates companies is a case in point. And, supporting Ethiopia's efforts is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic move toward achieving global climate targets.

Opinion

Averting misinformation for further nurturing peace in Horn of Africa

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

It is abundantly clear that the Ankara Declaration signed between Ethiopia and Somalia will grease the wheels of stronger regional cooperation between the two nations, the Horn of Africa region and beyond at the earliest possible juncture. For the sake of truth, the pact is anticipated to resolve quandaries orbiting around the two nations as well as consolidate peace, stability, and other related aspects in the Horn of Africa region and beyond.

Apart from resolving longstanding diplomatic issues, the declaration will take the Horn of Africa to new frontiers and perspectives sooner rather than later. All things considered, the pledge to resolve confrontational matters through round table discussion will ensure stability and peace in the region through the passage of time.

In the present circumstances, following the Ankara Declaration, Ethiopia's arch foes have set in motion bending over backwards to drag through the mud the encouraging moves of the two nations. As nothing makes them happier than bewildering the international community as a whole, they over and over again come up with their bare-faced lies and cooked-up stories.

In a similar vein, as they have been displeased by the signing of the agreement between Ethiopia and Somalia, some groups have jumpstarted mystifying the international community with bogus stories that do not reflect the existing and concert reality on the ground with a focus on putting cold water on the positive moves of the Ankara declaration.

With respect to their cooked-up stories, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia released a press statement against the evil deeds of certain segments that have been working at all hours of the day and night to smudge the extremely significant move unfolding between Ethiopia and Somalia.

As stated by the press statement released by MoFA, Ethiopia is dismayed by the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Government of Somalia on 23 December 2024, which makes allegations against the Ethiopian forces for the incident in the town of Doolow, Somalia. This allegation is not true.

The press statement went on to say that the incident is instigated by certain elements intent on derailing the normalization of relations between Ethiopia and Somalia. These third parties are intent on destabilizing the Horn of Africa and are perennial spoilers of peace in the region. They should not be allowed to frustrate the commitment of the two countries to peace as expressed in the Ankara Declaration. The Government of Ethiopia will continue working with the relevant agencies of the Federal Government of Somalia to prevent similar incidents.

Ethiopia values and upholds its commitment to revitalize and deepen the fraternal

relations between the two countries in the spirit of the Ankara Declaration. The resolve and courage of the leaders of the two countries will also continue to reinforce the bilateral partnership and broader regional cooperation.

Often times Ethiopia's adversaries leave no stone unturned to up the ante in the Horn of Africa and put the region in a tight corner as well as between a rock and a hard place. More often than not they make every possible effort to turn the lives of the people of the region into a living hell.

Thanks to the heroic deeds of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, the country's adversaries have failed several times to materialize their dreams.

The two nations' promising strides without a shred of a doubt would take the Horn of Africa to new possibilities and fresh approach down the road. What is more, the Ankara Declaration gives a clear signal for external forces that have been bending over backwards to move the whole thing in the region from a bad to a worse one cannot attain their desired goal.

All their efforts have been getting off the track and turning out to be unachievable mission and insurmountable obstacle.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Mesganu Arga, held talks with Ali Mohamed Omar, Somalia's State Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation recently in Addis Ababa, according to MoFA.

On the occasion, Ambassador Mesganu emphasized that the peoples of Ethiopia and Somalia share inseparable opportunities for mutual prosperity. He stressed the importance of the two countries working collaboratively to address challenges and seeking solutions through dialogue and cooperation.

Ambassador Mesganu also acknowledged Ethiopia's considerable sacrifices to ensure peace in Somalia. The State Minister further reaffirmed Ethiopia's commitment to the implementation of the Ankara Declaration. He highlighted that strengthening the partnership between the two countries is essential for ensuring long-term peace, stability, and development in the region.

Somalia's State Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ali Mohamed Omar, for his part, reiterated Somalia's commitment to the swift implementation of the Ankara Declaration. He noted that his presence in Addis Ababa underscores Somalia's readiness to uphold the agreement, emphasizing the Somali government's commitment to strengthening peace and promoting mutual development through partnership with Ethiopia.

In a joint press briefing following the talks, the two state ministers affirmed their resolve to continue the ongoing dialogue, and work more closely on bilateral and regional issues of common interest.

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Business & Economy

Reasonable means for fiscal elevation: *Export promotion*



BY MENGESHA AMARE

Export promotion involves creating a favorable market environment for exports and aligning promotion policies with domestic industrial strategies, especially for high-tech products with proprietary rights. Export promotion strategy comprises policy interventions including exchange rate policies to any 'specific measures that generally amount to the government bearing a portion of the private cost of production of export.

With a view to further substantiating this notion; *The Ethiopian Herald* approached Samrawit Gobena, an economist graduated from Hawassa University in economics and agro-economics.

She said, "Export promotion refers to the shift from providing direct support to implementing a more market-oriented approach to enhance the export activities of enterprises, companies and organizations working on the area."

Ethiopia has started enjoying export promotion with a view to achieving economic growth and development. The very thing that needs to be taken into account in this regard is the strategy in the country could be used to match up the regional, continental and even international competition and the nation has to consolidate inward looking strategy and shifted to export promotion strategy to make a difference within the shortest time possible, Samrawit opined.

According to Samrawit, country's Gross National Product (GDP) has still been minimal though the economy of Ethiopia has grown from the export promotion strategy. True, the government is highly initiated to adopt the strategy and practically implementing towards economic growth. Since Ethiopia has currently been a country that is highly dependent on imports and insignificant amount of production, it has to well embark on promoting productivity and production as well as boom exports accordingly in a bid to having positive balance of trade as its imports have been more than its exports.

As to her, export credit agencies play an important role in providing access to capital. Traditionally, mostly supporting public Ethiopian or/and African buyers, there is a growing number of transactions with private businesses. But to support private sector development, a comprehensive policy framework is crucial.

Ethiopia is feeling extraordinary economic growth and myriads of companies have been creating jobs by developing the potential of numerous different sectors. Truly speaking, in Ethiopia, there is a fundamental change of

communal thinking regarding the future of economic growth, which is closely associated with the private sector.

She said, "As part of development thinking, export promotion strategies have been considered by the nation to stimulate economic growth. Export promotion strategy comprises policy interventions including exchange rate policies to any 'specific measures that generally amount to the government bearing a portion of the private cost of production of export. Definitely, Ethiopia has pursued export promotion policies in defiance of prescriptions of import substitution, achieved remarkable economic success. The economic growth in the nation resulted from shift from import substitution to export promotion policies."

The main products for exports in Ethiopia include coffee, sesame, minerals like gold, among others have been given due emphasis. Export promotion schemes can play an important part in the development strategies of countries, especially of developing countries like ours that seek to make exports an engine for economic growth. Membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) is a critical tool for participation in the multilateral trading system. To design successful export development strategies, it is fundamental that the government of Ethiopia and private exporters have a clear understanding of the applicable WTO rules and their implications for their specific individual characteristics.

The advantages of promoting exports are really numerous. Such a lucrative strategy could be of benefit not only to a limited group of citizens and the nation at large. Large capacity in the sector is required to convince importers to pay high prices. Ethiopia therefore needs to develop its infrastructural capacity, improve its financial and tax incentives, diversify its markets and exports, develop digital technologies and innovations, build the country's human capacity, and also develop favorable and consistent trade policies.

True, the country has adopted various development strategies such as import substitution industrialization (ISI) and export promotion strategies to come up with real change. Industrialization in the countries that adopted ISI led to its economic growth. Generally, the export promotion strategy entails all steps and programs focused on aiding current and potential exporters.

It is well recognized that Ethiopia is intensifying efforts to increase its export destinations across the continent as AfCFTA brings new opportunities to realize its ambitions, according to the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration. As to her, the country has intensified its efforts to promote

the export trade and expand destinations as the nation's trade balance has big gaps between import and export.

She said, "Ethiopia's import spending is much higher than our revenue from export. We are working on plenty of promotion activities under the ongoing reform to increase export destinations. Noting that bilateral talks and negotiations towards reaching most of the African countries are underway, she said the government is working with commitment to expand the export destinations of Ethiopia beyond the usual ones, both at the global and continental level."

Stressing that increasing production and productivity with quality is crucial for Ethiopia's export trade; she said: "production and export trade are inseparable. If you don't produce, you do not have the goods to export."

"In spite of periods of disruption for export trade due to local and international challenges, the export trade is now reviving following the restoration of peace in the northern part of the country, which is key to increase production and productivity," she pointed out.

As to her, the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration is undertaking promotions with priority to boost the export destinations. It is well recognized that AfCFTA is one of the opportunities for expanding Ethiopia's trade destination across the continent. Ethiopia, as a host of the African Union (AU), strongly supports continental integration, including through AfCFTA.

All industries in Ethiopia will considerably benefit from the AfCFTA in terms of exports or imports from the rest of Africa. Obviously, she said Asia, Europe and America, have been Ethiopia's main export destinations, and now AfCFTA brings huge opportunities to expand the country's export in many fellow African countries.

Samrawit further stated that the objective of the AfCFTA is to significantly boost intra-Africa trade, particularly trade in value-added production and trade across all sectors of Africa's economy by eliminating barriers to trade in Africa.

She further stated that protagonists of the AfCFTA underline the enormous opportunities of the free trade area, among others, increasing economic growth, forex generation, growing flow of FDI and create jobs.

As to Samrawit, Coffee, in particular, is Ethiopia's major export commodity. Ethiopia, which is known as the origin of arabica coffee, is recognized worldwide for its rich coffee quality, variety of flavors and aroma. The strategic geographical location with proximity to Middle East, Europe and Asia,

the recent Homegrown policy and strategy have provided opportunities for boosting the country's FDI in agricultural, manufacture and mineral exports and stimulate Ethiopia's economy.

She said, "The effectiveness of the export promotion strategy has been adopted in cases of Ethiopia's manufacturing. Given the importance of political commitment and motivation for the success of industrial policy, impacts have been evaluated with reference to the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) in which the country had set ambitious targets and means of achieving the targets. The export performances of many manufacturing firms have increased significantly when compared to those of firms in other industries in the nation."

As to her, improving access to raw materials through securing adequate supply of foreign currency, reducing transportation cost, directing importing and distributing of essential raw materials by the government, providing special support to domestic production of raw materials with the required quality standard has to be well fostered.

She said, "There should be flexible and prompt support by the government with minimum bureaucratic difficulties. True, creating market linkages both locally and globally, the government has been giving financial and technical support for exporters to promote products and participate on international trade fairs. The government has to make fundamental change if the country would like policies to bring about real change. Yes, export promotion is of significantly useful in cultivating the working culture so that current foreign companies as well as newly incoming firms would not see working culture as one of the problems, and improving the production capacity of local input suppliers in terms of technology, quality, timely delivery and operational flexibility."

Supporting innovation oriented activities of domestic companies and creating external linkages with other local and foreign firms would help mitigate capability limits.

As to her, it is extremely useful for Ethiopia to exploit the emerging inter-African trade opportunity initiated by African Union (AU) and other existing regional cooperation. This would help build comparative advantages and build better capabilities to compete regionally, continentally and even globally. It would also improve raw material supply. Besides, providing effective and genuine support in the due processes of production and exporting through establishing regular consultation with private firms is really promising, and undertaking subsequent evaluation on their performances is important.

Art & Culture

Why African painting is among the best in the world

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

The history of African painting as an art form can perhaps be divided between two distinct periods, namely pre-colonial and post-colonial African painting. Although undocumented this history might have several stages through which African painting had passed. Research on this aspect of African art is not only rare but also limited to studies conducted by European researchers some of which might be Eurocentric in their outlooks and biased against African art in general.

First of all, why painting is important as an art form in any society including in Africa? Let's start by defining what painting is all about. "painting is a visual art, which is characterized by the practice of applying paint, pigment, color or other medium to a solid surface (called the "matrix" or "support") The medium is commonly applied to the base with a brush but other implements such as knives, sponges, and airbrushes, may be used."

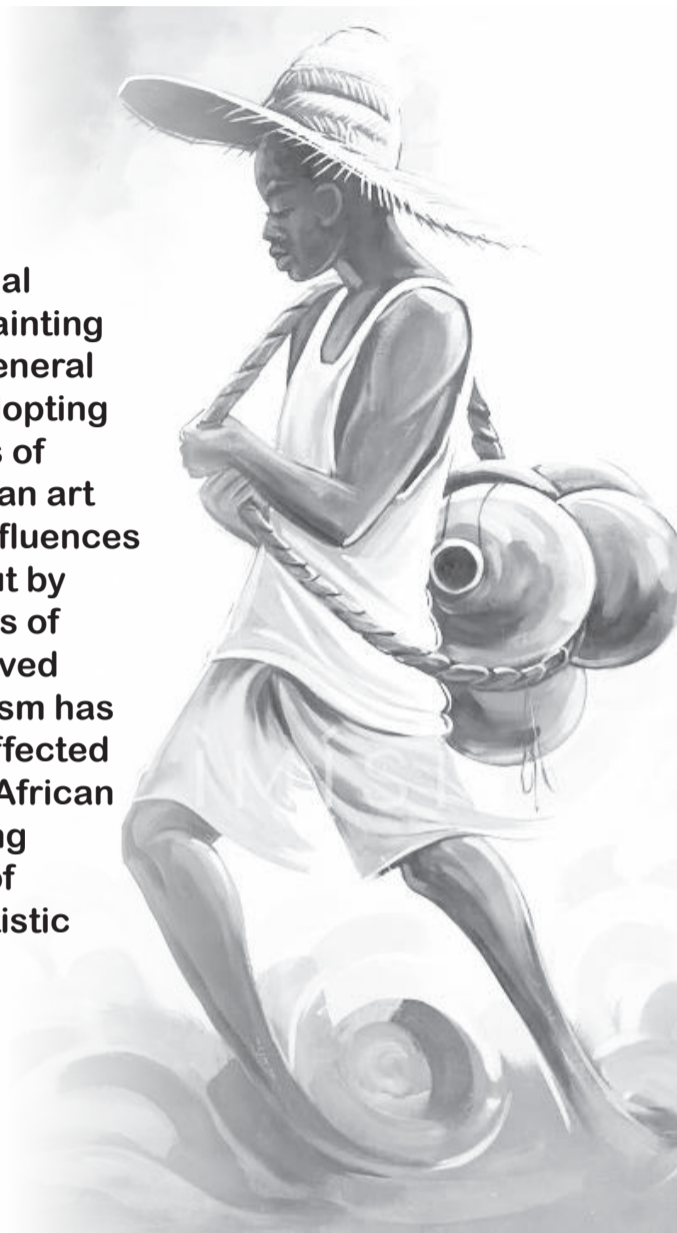
What is painting in art good for? "Painting is an important form of visual art, bringing in elements such as drawing, composition, gesture, narration and abstraction....Painting is important because it allows self-expression, encourages creativity and provides a way to communicate emotions and ideas that words sometimes cannot convey." This is of course a universal definition of the nature and use of painting as an art form. Moreover, there are five purposes for visual art. These are Ceremonial, Artistic Expression, narrative, Functional and Ceremonial. Ceremonial art is made to celebrate or commemorate something important in the culture, in ritual or worship, or in personal life.

The next question that comes to mind is the following: When did African start painting pictures and designs or symbols as art forms? "The origin of African painting and art can be traced back to prehistoric times, with evidence of rock art dating back tens of thousands of years. The rock art found in caves and rock shelters throughout Africa provides a glimpse into the early artistic expression of African societies." It is surprising to note that the man considered "the father of African visual art is an African-American called Aaron Douglas who defined modern visual language that represented black Americans in a new light.

There have been many studies or researches conducted to date African painting art. "The oldest images scientifically dated are in Namibia (the Apollo 11 caves) from about 24-27,000 years ago. Yet, most experts agree that Africa's rock art may date to more than 50,000 years ago." However, the issue of pre-colonial African arts or painting is highly controversial. For most of us pre-colonial means the period before the colonization of Africa. Yet, there are people who consider the pre-colonial period as, "when our indigenous ancestors inhabited the Philippines and the time before the coming of our first colonizers. Arts in this time were for ritual purposes or everyday use only."

Some recent studies about the oldest form

Post-colonial African painting and arts in general started by adopting both features of ancient African art as well the influences brought about by colonial forms of art. It is believed that colonialism has profoundly affected or impacted African art by bringing in elements of European artistic traditions



of African arts, including painting speak of "rock art", that is to say arts done on rock stones and caves. This is also true for the oldest surviving examples of human creativity which were done on rock or shaped from rock. Remains of the rock art discovered in South Africa have been dated from 70,000 to 100,000 years ago. These are the oldest examples ancient African art yet discovered.

Post-colonial African painting and arts in general started by adopting both features of ancient African art as well the influences brought about by colonial forms of art. It is believed that colonialism has profoundly affected or impacted African art by bringing in elements of European artistic traditions. According to one source, "Colonialism profoundly impacted African art introducing new materials and styles which denigrated traditional practices. European artistic traditions were imposed leading to the communication of African art and the emergence of new genres catering to colonial tastes."

Colonialism had a positive as well as a negative impact on the development of African art, including painting. European missionaries and colonizers were looking at ancient African art as being pagan in form and content and wanted to change it. They did this by encouraging the adoption of European art styles and techniques, leading to the loss of traditional African art forms and techniques. Colonial art in Africa was serving to promote the views, attitudes, philosophies and faiths of Europeans. It

generally served as a tool of propaganda and reinforced the dominance of colonizers over African art. In this sense, European art, while taking and using many features of African art such as reflected in the cubist art of Pablo Picasso and Matisse who adopted African wooden and metal masks as their starting point. In this way, European colonialism in Africa had a mixed result, or both positive and negative repercussions.

Post-colonial African painting and art in general continued with the colonial legacy without the colonialists in the sense that African artists found the opportunity to modernize their arts and bring it to the level of development their European counterparts had reached. Postcolonial African art was both adaptive and revolutionary as it adopted to the European and Western influences as well as by using art as a tool of struggle for the preservation and transformation of traditional African art in general. Postcolonial African art is defined as, "the art produced in response to the aftermath of colonial rule, frequently addressing issues of national and cultural identity, race and ethnicity."

The situation was hover different in African countries that had not experienced colonialism. Ethiopia is of course a classic example of a country that escaped colonial rule and thus man to maintain an autonomous, original and ancient art in general and painting in particular. As a result of this, Ethiopian arts and painting had a specific feature that differentiates it from arts in the rest of Africa while

sharing other features.

Art works on stones or rocks are the common features while Ethiopian painting developed unique tools and techniques. Ethiopian traditional painting is characterized by what some critics say is, "a simplistic, almost cartoonish figures with large, almond-shaped eyes. Colors are usually bright and vivid. Most paintings are religious in nature, often decorating church walls and Bibles.

Nowadays African as well as Ethiopian arts and painting enjoy wide popularity both within the continent and among international art lovers. Ancient African arts attracted increasing attention and enjoy high demands in art markets around the world. The originality and uniqueness of African arts become evident through new researches and writings, there is now a growing and interest in traditional art in particular that so far remained little known. Nowadays, thousands of African arts and artifacts that were stolen and taken to Europe during the colonial era are on display at major European exhibition centers. Parallel to this, there is also a highly lucrative legal or illegal online art market is offering stolen or legally acquired art products. This is the main reason why African governments are now fighting for the return of African and Ethiopian arts stolen during the colonial era. There is also an international movement of artists and intellectuals who are currently a coalition for the return these artifacts and paintings.

The campaign for the return of Ethiopian arts and artifact products is fueled not only by high demand in the art market but also by the rare and precious nature of these products that are believed to rank among the best in the world. However, the reaction from countries that currently possess these works of arts or artifacts can be described to be unenthusiastic or tepid at best or reluctantly cooperative or uncooperative in the worst case.

The British museum is one of the museums in Europe where Ethiopian and African arts products are found. For more than a century and a half, these works have been displayed in these museums. Despite the cordial relations between the respective countries, the issue of the return of those artworks has remained controversial. "The British Museum has long-standing and friendly relations with the National Museum in Addis Ababa and with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in London and in Ethiopia. British museums have long resisted campaigns for the return of artworks, often citing legislation that bans them from disposing of their collections. But the debate has heated up and British Museum said last year it would loan some works from Nigeria to a new museum."

The struggle for the return of African and Ethiopian arts and painting is bound to continue for various reasons. African art in general is a reflection and symbol of African identity, civilization and history. Aesthetically speaking, most African arts and painting are among the best in the world and this is enough reason to keep on fighting for their return to the rightful owners.

Science & Technology

Major tech milestones of 2024

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

The science, technology, and innovation sector has become one of the key pillars of Ethiopia's economic development, especially following the 2018 national reform. With the goal of transforming its economy and building a prosperous country, Ethiopia is placing a strong emphasis on technology transfer, local technological innovations, and scientific research. Similarly, accelerating the development of digital technology has become a top priority in recent years. Recognizing the role of technology and innovation in socio-economic development, numerous activities and measures were implemented in 2024.

Adopting new policies and strategies, reforming existing policies and strategies, investing in technology diplomacy, organizing national and international technology exhibitions, launching new initiatives such as the 5 million Ethio Coders program, and making Ethio Telecom stake available to the public were among the top technological developments in 2024.

The exposing to view of technology, innovation and startup products

Organized by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MIiT), Ethiopia has hosted national, continental, and international technology, startup, and innovation-related exhibitions. Additionally, national science and technology, robotics, and related fairs were organized at the national level.

One of the pioneering annual events in 2024 was the Science, Technology, Research, Innovation, Digitalization, and Entrepreneurship (STRIDE Ethiopia) expo, aimed at fostering collaboration and innovation in the sector. The expo took place from May 18 to 26 at the Science Museum in Addis Ababa, under the theme "Science Unlocks, Technology Connects, Innovation Drives."

In 2024, the National Robotics Competition, National Students Science and Engineering Fair, and the 8th National Health Innovation and Quality Fair were among the national exhibitions organized.



The announcement of flight-ready homemade aircraft, Tsehay 2

On November 29th, the Ethiopian Air Force (EAF) announced the successful production of their own aircraft, named Tsehay 2.0, which is now flight-ready. This achievement was celebrated during the Air Force's 89th founding anniversary, marking a significant milestone in their progress. This demonstrates the EAF's commitment to achieving their vision of becoming the largest air force in Africa by 2030.

The Launch of 5 Million Ethio Coder's Initiative

On July 23rd, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) launched the national coder's initiative, the 5 Million Ethio Coders Program, to provide online coding training for five million Ethiopian youths within three years. The initiative was a joint effort with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and is currently ongoing. The training aims to equip the younger generation with coding skills and promote digital literacy. Web programming, Android development, data science, and AI are among the training courses included in the 5 Million Coders Program.

Two weeks ago, the Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MIiT) revealed that, to date, approximately 360,000 youths are participating in the training nationwide. MIiT is closely monitoring the program by evaluating performances weekly. Since the program's inception in late July, around 360,000 youths have registered for the training, with over 78,000 already completing their training and receiving certifications. Campaigns are ongoing to raise awareness among the younger generation about the free online training, with plans to reach up to seven million youths by the end of the program.



(5 Million Ethiopian Coders Program Launching event at the Science Museum in Addis Ababa)



Ethio Telecom put on sale 10% of its share

In October 2024, the giant telecom operator in Ethiopia, Ethio Telecom, announced that it would be offering 100 million ordinary shares, equivalent to 10% of the company's capital, to the public for the first time in its over 130 years of service. The company currently has more than 79 million telecom subscribers in Ethiopia.

Ethio Telecom initiated the first Ethiopian capital market by selling a 10% ownership stake to Ethiopians, transitioning from a state-owned enterprise to a share company. Ethio Telecom was officially registered as a Share Company on June 21, 2024, in accordance with the Ethiopian Commercial Code, as stated by the telecom operator.

In this initial public sale of 100 million ordinary shares of Ethio Telecom, each valued at 300 birr, interested individuals can purchase shares. According to Ethio Telecom, any Ethiopian investor who meets the requirements set by the Ethiopian Capital Markets Authority can buy ordinary shares, starting from a minimum of 9,900 birr or 33 shares, up to a maximum of 999,900 birr or 3,333 shares. Ethio Telecom announced that the share sale will take place from October 16, 2024, to January 3, 2025. Citizens can acquire shares through Ethio Telecom's telebirr SuperApp.

Society



Preparations to attract more tourists

BY TEWODROS KASSA

With the upcoming festival season just around the corner, Ethiopia is preparing to welcome more tourists than ever before. The country is known for its rich cultural heritage, stunning landscapes, and vibrant festivals showcasing Ethiopian traditions. Currently, preparations are underway towards making the country ensure that international tourists have an unforgettable experience during the upcoming festivals season.

Ethiopia is a unique destination that offers a combination of breathtaking landscape, natural beauty, historical sites, and vibrant cultural experiences. During the festival season, visitors have the opportunity to witness traditional celebrations, colorful parades, and exciting events that showcase the best of Ethiopian culture. From the famous Genna festival, (Ethiopian Christmas) to the mesmerizing *Timkat* celebrations, (Epiphany) there are various tour experiences to visit Ethiopia during this festive time of year.

Recently, tour operators in Ethiopia are gearing up preparations to warmly welcome tourists for the upcoming festive season, encompassing Ethiopian Christmas (Genna) and Epiphany celebrations.

Representatives and owners of various tour operator companies told local media their dedication to providing outstanding services to visitors eager to immerse themselves in these culturally and religiously rich festivities.

Ethiopian Christians celebrate Christmas, known as “Genna,” on January 7th, commemorating the Birth of Jesus Christ. The holiday is marked with vibrant and colorful festivities throughout the country.

Ethiopian Epiphany, recognized by UNESCO as an intangible world heritage, is another significant celebration observed annually on January 19th. This event

commemorates the Baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist in the River Jordan.

The Epiphany celebration is renowned for its captivating outdoor procession and ceremonies that beautifully reflect Ethiopia’s rich religious and cultural traditions.

Ethiopian Tour Operators Association President Fitsum Gezahegne and CEO of Paradise Ethiopia Travel told ENA that tour operators are fully prepared to deliver high-quality services to tourists visiting Ethiopia during the Christmas and Epiphany celebrations.

This year, tour operators have expanded their offerings with a wider range of tour packages, which not only cater to traditional pilgrimage sites such as Gondar, Axum, and Lalibela but also include newer destinations like Hawassa, Wonchi, and Ziway.

This expansion comes in anticipation of a significant increase in tourists’ arrivals during the upcoming holiday season.

Tewodros Solomon, Founder and CEO of Tema Tour, also confirmed his company’s readiness to serve tourists.

He emphasized that the holiday season is a peak period for tourism in Ethiopia and reiterated his company’s commitment to providing exceptional services to both festival attendees and general tourists.

Tewodros highlighted the importance of new tourism projects, such as the “Dine for Ethiopia” initiative, which includes emerging destinations like Wonchi, Gorgora, and Koysha in attracting a greater number of tourists.

He further emphasized that these newly developed tourist destinations boast modern facilities and luxurious accommodations, addressing a significant gap in the Ethiopian tourism market for high-end travelers. He also highlighted that these developments are poised to revolutionize the Ethiopian tourism sector.

In Addis Ababa, the city’s allure has been significantly enhanced by the introduction of several new attractions, including Unity Park, Entoto Park, Friendship Park, the Science Museum, and the National Palace Museum.

These sites, alongside the renowned National Museum, have collectively transformed Addis Ababa into a vibrant hub for both cultural exploration and conference tourism.

Fikadu Mekuria, CEO of Karibu Ethiopia Tours, expressed his eagerness to welcome tourists during the upcoming holiday season. He emphasized the company’s commitment to delivering excellent and professional services to ensure a fulfilling experience for all visitors.

He also emphasized that Ethiopia’s rich cultural heritage, historical landmarks, natural beauty, and the development of new tourist destinations make it a highly attractive destination for international travelers.

On the other hand, Addis Ababa city has been accelerating smart city efforts encompassing expansion of technology and infrastructure, the city administration revealed.

The Innovation and Technology Development Office Head of Addis Ababa City Administration, Solomon Amare emphasized the critical role of fast network speeds in delivering digital services.

To this end, the City Administration is collaborating with Ethio Telecom to deliver high-speed network services, given the capital’s importance as a seat of the African Union and the host of numerous international organizations.

Currently, there is a national push for ‘smart cities’ amongst the leadership to incorporate into the country’s urbanization strategies; particularly Addis Ababa City Administration is working hard to become

a smart city hub in Africa.

The Head noted that a key aspect of this transformation is improving the efficiency and digitalization of service delivery among city institutions.

The initiative will be implemented across 58 institutions and 120 districts within the city’s 11 sub-cities, with a total investment exceeding 280 million Birr, Solomon said.

The “City Net” technology aims to modernize systems for tax collection, vital event registration, and complaint submission, significantly improving the city’s service delivery capabilities.

“This collaboration has led to the creation of ‘City Net,’ which connects all government institutions within the city through a unified network infrastructure,” Amare stated.

He added that this initiative represents a significant advancement, enabling effective sharing of data and resources among institutions.

According to him, the ongoing efforts to digitize procedures encourage institutions to render digital services by transitioning from manual to electronic and online services.

For instance, the Investment Office has already implemented such changes, allowing citizens to apply for permits and renewals from home, he said.

In sum, Ethiopia is taking several measures to attract more tourists during the upcoming festival season. The government has been investing in infrastructure improvements, promoting the festivals through marketing campaigns, and working with local communities to ensure that visitors have a safe and enjoyable experience. In addition, the country has been implementing initiatives to enhance the overall tourism experience, such as providing better tourist facilities, improving transportation options, and offering a wider range of cultural activities.

International News

Africa: World Bank Board approves \$47.7 million to improve the public sector in the First Result-Based Financing Program

Banjul — The World Bank today approved a \$47.7 million grant from the International Development Association (IDA) for The Public Administration Modernization for Citizen Centric Service Delivery (PAMP). The five-year PAMP Program-for-Results (PforR) is the first of its kind for The Gambia.

The PforR will support The Gambia's Public Sector to enhance domestic resource mobilization and financial reporting; human resource management; and citizen engagement with results focused on the education and health sectors. The successful achievement of targeted results will unlock additional fiscal space for the government to increase service delivery for citizens while strengthening controls for spending through government systems.

The PAMP PforR aims to monitor progress

in optimizing public revenue and financial reporting. This includes tracking the tax-to-GDP ratio, reducing tax expenditures as a share of GDP, and enhancing the accuracy and comprehensiveness of financial statements to increase transparency over government expenditures and public access to financial information. Additionally, the PAMP PforR will prioritize maintaining accurate data to ensure a more manageable payroll and efficient public employment over time that promotes gender equality and climate-responsive development particularly in the health and education service delivery sectors.

"I commend the Gambian Government for its steadfast commitment to transformative reforms that are driving development and unlocking new opportunities. This results-based financing underscores the

World Bank Group's strong dedication to advancing the reform agenda, enhancing public sector efficiency, and promoting greater transparency. Together, these efforts are paving the way for a more accountable, service-oriented government that benefits all citizens," said **Franklin Mutahakana, World Bank Group Resident Representative**.

"The PforR aims to improve the public sector by strengthening the operational capacity of Government institutions," said **The Task Team leader, Yousif Mubarak Elmahdi**.

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs is the lead implementing agency responsible for the execution of the Program.

Source: World Bank

Africa's debt burden eroding funds for sustainable development in LDCs

● Soaring repayment costs leave Africa's Least Developed Countries struggling to fund health, education and SDG priorities

Africa's rising debt burden is eroding funding for sustainable development in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), impacting heavily on health and education, says Ms. Oyebanke Abejirin, Economic Affairs Officer, at the Macroeconomics, Finance & Governance Division of the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

Making a presentation on the opportunities and challenges for Africa's Least Developed countries (LDCs), at the Second Session on the Committee on Economic Governance in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Ms. Abejirin explained that high debt servicing costs reduce the capacity for SDG-related spending causing a real decline in health and education funding across many countries.

She noted that debt distress worsens the public financial positions of African LDCs. Debt servicing reached a record 11.6% of the exports in 2022.

In 2021, she said, African governments allocated 4.8% of GDPs to debt servicing compared to 2.6% for health and 4.8% for education.

"Social protection systems in Africa LDCs are severely inadequate; only 12-13% of the population is covered," she added and stressed that inclusive, robust social protection "is essential to shield the LDCs from global and regional shocks including post-COVID-19 effects and climate change-related disasters."

Ms. Abejirin highlighted a need to strengthen domestic revenue generation to help close the significant gap in financing the SDGs in Africa.

According to Ms. Abejirin, African LDCs make up 33 of the 45 LDCs contributing to less than 1% of the global GDP despite having 10% of the worldwide population.

She emphasized Africa's need for a public debt sustainability framework that includes linking debt obligations to productive



investment, improving fiscal and debt transparency and developing a framework for responsible borrowing.

Sharing the Mozambique perspective on debt servicing, Ms. Pamela Mabanda, from the Ministry of Finance, said the country is experiencing a trade balance deficit, importing more than exporting with imports mainly consisting of intermediate and capital goods.

The sustainability of the economy, she said, is threatened by the high proportion of expenditure (almost 70%) going towards debt repayment, which limits resources for investment and support.

Strategies are being developed to address these challenges and improve the fiscal space for sustainable development.

"There is a need to improve domestic resource mobilization and reduce tax evasion, especially for the main imports in the country," noted Ms. Mabanda.

She emphasized the importance of fiscal consolidation to reduce expenditure and increase revenues through diversification of financial funds and a proactive approach to macro-fiscal risk.

Mr. Allan Mukungu, Economic Affairs Officer at UN ECA, discussed the inability

of African countries to finance their needs due to fiscal deficits, with an average public debt of 67% in 2024.

"Nine African countries are in debt distress and 11 are at high risk, making them vulnerable to financing issues. The focus should be on creating fiscal space to finance sustainable development and meet the Agenda 2063 aspiration," he said.

Mr. Mukungu pointed out the importance of the integrated national financing framework (INFFs) for financing SDGs.

"INFFs help to unlock financing for national development priorities by aligning available financing with the national development plans.

About the Economic Governance Committee.

The second Economic Governance Committee session was held in Addis Ababa in mid-November, with representatives from 31 countries in attendance.

The session aimed to discuss the issues and challenges of financing for sustainable development in Africa, with a focus on the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025.

Source: Africa Renewal

AI tool to provide mental health interventions in Kenya

NAIROBI, Kenya, — In a stride towards addressing Kenya's growing mental health challenges, the Shamiri Institute, a youth-led organization that provides mental health interventions, has developed an AI-powered digital platform—ShamiriOS—that aims to reinforce mental health interventions in the country.

An annual young mental health survey by Shamiri that assessed over 1300 Kenyan youth aged 12-24 across eight counties revealed that 37 percent of adolescents report moderate to severe anxiety and depression, with 61 percent indicating moderate to severe PTSD symptoms and 41 percent experiencing low well-being.

Furthermore, adolescents, particularly older students in Form Four and students from large towns, reported higher mental health issues, thus underscoring the urgent need for effective interventions, especially by leveraging technology.

According to the Shamiri Director of Technology, Shadrack Lilian, the Shamiri OS will serve different user groups in operations, both clinical and supply chain, through operation management and payment, clinical care, and management.

The tool also aims to empower patients through low-touch therapy intervention, communication between patients and therapists, and assessments.

"ShamiriAI harnesses the power of AI-driven tools to elevate the effectiveness of therapists and therapies alike. By leveraging Shamiri's extensive dataset, it provides personalized, data-informed mental health care that can be scaled to meet the needs of individuals across diverse communities," he stated.

Half of Kenya's population is 19 years or younger, with 42 percent having access to the internet and 53 percent owning or using smartphones; however, the lack of reliable internet access remains a key challenge.

According to Lilian, the OS is tailored to address the limited access to reliable internet and smartphones by offering a user-friendly experience that is optimized for low-data usage, making it highly accessible to young people in rural and underserved areas.

"This means that even those in low internet areas can engage with our mental health resources without the burden of constant data costs," he stated.

This software aims to provide accessible and affordable mental health care, rekindling hope in individuals who may lack immediate or otherwise access to mental health care.

Historically, mental health has relied primarily on human experiences and perspectives, which has hindered the rapid advancement of digital mental health; however, Lilian stressed that the government should leverage technology in addressing mental health by prioritizing nationwide digitization of healthcare services.

In Kenya, 1 in 2 people suffer from mental health issues, a menace driven by the accelerating rate of conflict, climate change, and economic instability. According to the Shamiri Report, Nairobi and Kiambu reported higher rates of depression and anxiety.

Source: Capital FM

Digital Ethiopia strategy ...

Accordingly, he said the implementation of Digital Ethiopia 2025 Strategy has raised internet users from 17 million to 42 million.

Furthermore, the strategy also fostered accessibility of electricity, development and number of additional data centers by both the government and the private sector.

“When the Digital Ethiopia 2025 Strategy was first launched, there were approximately 17 million telecom and internet users. Today, that number has more than doubled to over 42.5 million. Alongside, access to electricity services has also seen significant improvements.

The government has built large-scale data centers, and private sector investments have contributed to the construction of three-level data centers,” the State Minister emphasized.

The establishment of high-capacity data centers in the ICT Park has created favorable conditions for both domestic and foreign investors to participate in the sector.

He also noted that the activities carried out in the ICT Park over the past four years have fostered a conducive environment for investment, job creation, talent development, and the exchange of knowledge.

He added, “Efforts have been made to provide numerous government services online and to date, over 800 government services have been launched and are available for use. In addition, progress has been made in developing electronic commerce with an e-commerce strategy already in place and the government has also prepared digital government and e-government strategies,

both of which will soon be approved and implemented”.

The government has launched the 5 Million Ethiopian Coders program to build a digitally skilled society, he recalled.

Moreover, the country is charting a path towards a digitally inclusive future with the rollout of its five-year strategy, designed to bridge technological gaps and ensure equitable access to digital resources for all citizens, including underserved communities.

Accordingly, a Social Dialogue on an Inclusive and Transformative Digital Strategy, co-organized by Ethiopia’s Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MINT) and the International Labor Organization (ILO), was held; with funding from the Dutch Government.

The event brought together key stakeholders, including government officials, workers’ unions, and employer associations, to validate Ethiopia’s five-year national digital inclusive strategy.

The State Minister highlighted the transformative potential of digital technologies for Ethiopia’s growth and inclusion.

The digital revolution is reshaping our industries, societies, and the way we live and work today, He noted, emphasizing the need to bridge the digital divide.

He described the strategy as a roadmap to transform Ethiopia’s digital landscape, with ambitious goals such as expanding internet access from the current 35% of the

population to significantly higher levels, ensuring affordability, and fostering digital literacy and entrepreneurship.

The strategy also prioritizes the inclusion of marginalized groups, including refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Yishurun stressed, “No one should be left behind... whether local, host community, or refugee.”

The strategy aligns with Ethiopia’s vision of using technology as a force for social justice, bridging economic, educational, and social divides.

Yishurun pointed out that partnerships with the private sector and international organizations are critical for overcoming these obstacles.

“Digital inclusion is not just about technology; it is about people,” Yishurun reminded the audience, urging them to actively contribute to shaping Ethiopia’s digital future.

Chief Technical Advisor for the ILO, Stephen Opio, also highlighted the importance of partnerships in Ethiopia’s digital transformation.

“We are implementing several programs to facilitate access to education and training, employment with dignity, and protection for refugees and host communities,” he said.

Opio praised Ethiopia’s progress, noting that the digital strategy is on track to bridge the digital divide and scale up implementation.

The Dutch Government, represented by

the Deputy Head of Cooperation Sondaal Tiest, reaffirmed commitment to supporting Ethiopia’s digital inclusion goals.

Tiest emphasized the importance of aligning international interventions with Ethiopian priorities, such as integrating refugees and IDPs into national strategies.

The overarching goal is to strengthen the resilience and self-reliance of refugees, IDPs, and vulnerable host communities, he explained.

Both Ethiopian and international speakers acknowledged the challenges ahead, including infrastructure deficits, affordability issues, and regulatory barriers.

The forum marked a critical step in finalizing Ethiopia’s five-year digital inclusion strategy, setting the stage for a more equitable, connected, and prosperous nation. With strong support from stakeholders and international partners, Ethiopia is poised to become a model for inclusive digital transformation in the region.

In sum, the Digital Ethiopia Strategy is a bold and ambitious initiative that is driving significant change in the country’s digital landscape. One of the key pillars of the Digital Ethiopia Strategy is the improvement of digital infrastructure. This includes expanding access to high-speed internet, upgrading mobile networks, and increasing the availability of digital services across the country. By enhancing digital infrastructure, Ethiopia is laying the foundation for a more connected and technologically advanced society.



This is Ethiopia

Digital Ethiopia strategy transforming digital landscape

BY TEWODROS KASSA

In the world of rapidly advancing technology, countries around the globe are recognizing the importance of digital transformation to drive economic growth and innovation. Ethiopia is no exception, with its ambitious 'Digital Ethiopia Strategy' paving the way for a major shift in the country's digital landscape. The Digital Ethiopia Strategy is a comprehensive roadmap that aims to leverage technology and innovation to propel Ethiopia into a digital era. With a focus on enhancing digital infrastructure, promoting digital literacy, and fostering a thriving digital economy, the strategy aims to position the country as a key player in the global digital landscape.

Recently, the Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MoIT) has disclosed that the implementation of the Digital Ethiopia 2025 Strategy has led to a significant increase in the number of internet users. The Strategy has already exceeded 42 million internet users.

By addressing the existing gaps of the strategy and building an inclusive digital economy, the Ministry has revealed that



the Digital Ethiopia 2025 Strategy is under preparation.

State Minister of Innovation and Technology, Yishurun Alemayehu (PhD) told local media that the Digital Ethiopia 2025 Strategy, aligned with Homegrown

Economic reforms, has accelerated national reform efforts.

Over the past four years, substantial progress has been made in the implementation of the Digital Ethiopia 2025 Strategy, he said.

Among the key initiatives that have driven the sector's growth, the liberalization of the ethio telecom sector, issuing 10% of shares to private investors, has helped the digital sector to expand very fast, the State Minister said.

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