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Ethiopia, Sudan eye mutually beneficial cooperation: *Sudanese Ambassador*

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

ADDIS ABABA – Sudanese Ambassador to Ethiopia, Elizein Ibrahim Hussein, emphasized the importance of strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries.

Briefing journalists on the current situation in Sudan, the Ambassador highlighted yesterday the shared history and geographical proximity between Ethiopia and Sudan, emphasizing the crucial role of their people in fostering strong ties.

“Our goal is to maintain good neighborly relations, promote positive diplomacy, and engage constructively with our Ethiopian counterparts,” Ambassador Elizein stated.

Addressing Sudan’s suspension from the African Union (AU), the Ambassador explained that the suspension occurred on October 26, 2021, stemming from disagreements regarding the civilian component of the transitional government. He expressed Sudan’s strong desire to resume its full participation within the AU, emphasizing the country’s historical contributions to the organization and its commitment to addressing African challenges.

Ambassador Elizein criticized the AU’s suspension decision, suggesting it may hinder Sudan’s efforts to find African-led solutions to its internal challenges.



He called for a more supportive approach from the AU, emphasizing the importance of respecting Sudan’s unique context, including its geography, people, history, and

contributions to the continent.

Acknowledging the challenging transition period Sudan is currently navigating, the

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Ethiopia taking part in CAADP

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA—An Ethiopian delegation led by Minister of Agriculture, Girma Amente is taking part in the African Union’s Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Special Summit, being held in Kampala, Uganda.

The summit aims to address challenges in Africa’s agriculture and food systems, focus on sustainable food production, and emphasize agricultural industrialization and trade as key to achieving lasting food security and

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Photo: Dagne Abera



Yohannes Ayalew (PhD)

Foreign banks entry transforms local banks: *Expert*

Page 3

Capital market drives Ethiopia’s financial sector

- Ethiopian Securities Exchange (ESX) officially launches today

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA - The launch of the Ethiopian Securities Exchange (ESX) today marks a crucial milestone for the country’s financial sector, accelerating its development and contributing to a more resilient economy, according to the Ethiopian Capital Market Authority (ECMA).

In a recent interview on “Ethiopia in Focus,” Billene Seyoum, Press Secretary for the Prime Minister’s Office, spoke with Hana Tehelku, Director-General of the ECMA. Hana emphasized that the capital market aligns with the government’s vision of private sector-led economic development and a sustainable economy.

Technological advancements play a vital



role in fostering a functional and vibrant capital market. The ECMA has been actively working to establish a robust regulatory framework and enhance its capacity to create an enabling environment

for the capital market.

Over the past years, the Authority has engaged extensively with potential issuers,

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Pharmaceutical companies thriving under economic reform

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- Private Companies engaged in pharmaceutical supply manufacturing expressed that they are experiencing improvements and competitiveness since the government introduced the homegrown economic reform.

The companies have appreciated the reforms, which have introduced incentives and eased operational challenges in the pharmaceutical sector.

The Ethiopian Pharmaceutical Supply Service, Director General Abdulkadir Gelgelo highlighted that the reforms have encouraged private companies to engage in the sector by allowing tax-free importation of machinery and improving supply chain accessibility.

“Local manufacturers can now cover up to 40 percent of domestic demand in some cases. Previously, we used to import syringes at a high cost, but today two local industries supply them to the market. Even gloves are largely manufactured by domestic manufacturers,” Abdulkadir noted.

He added that foreign investors are increasingly exploring opportunities in Ethiopia’s pharmaceutical industry.

Pharmacare Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Company, CEO Solomon Gebre-Amanuel emphasized the challenges faced prior to the reforms. “Because of lack of sufficient foreign currency, patients were not always treated with the necessary medicines,” he said.

However, local manufacturers are thriving since the homegrown economic reform put in place. “Our company, for example, has become more competitive due to improved access to foreign currency for importing inputs and machinery,” he added.

In addition to forex access, the reforms have reduced logistical costs and introduced incentives, including free taxation for industrial machinery and inputs. Industrial zones reserved for pharmaceutical manufacturing and government support covering up to 35% of local companies’ costs have further enhanced the sector’s growth, according to Solomon.

The reforms are attracting foreign investors and Ethiopia could be a hub for pharmaceutical manufacturing, with both local and international stakeholders benefiting from the improved environment, he indicated.

Ethiopia intensifies efforts to combat maternal, infant mortality

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA-The Ministry of Health (MoH) has revealed its aggressive efforts to tackle maternal and infant mortality rates, emphasizing the significance of the recent health policy amendment in modernizing the country’s health sector.

Yesterday, Ethiopia joined the global community in celebrating Safe Motherhood Month for the 38th time at the national level and the 19th time internationally, under the theme “Quality Labor and Delivery Care for All Women, for A Positive Childbirth Experience.” This year’s observance aims to ensure quality healthcare for women and the well-being of their children.

On this occasion, Health Minister Mekdes Daba (MD) stated that numerous initiatives have been implemented to reduce child and maternal mortality rates over the past years. The government has prioritized improving the accessibility, quality, and equity of healthcare services for over two decades.

According to the Minister, these efforts include expanding health stations and health care centers, enhancing the capacity of healthcare professionals, and prioritizing maternal and child health services.

“Postpartum hemorrhage is a significant contributor to maternal mortality. To address this, the MoH is actively working with relevant stakeholders to implement various interventions. For instance, the number of



main blood banks has increased from 48 in the previous fiscal year to 54 currently,” Mekdes added.

She further stated that maternal mortality rates have declined from 953 to 267 per 100,000 live births. While significant progress has been made, the current rate still falls short of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030.

Similarly, the infant mortality rate has declined from 49 to 26 per 1,000 children. To further improve maternal health outcomes, 370 ambulances have been distributed to various states across the country to facilitate timely emergency transportation during childbirth.

The Minister also highlighted the critical issue of cervical cancer, a leading cause of death among women, particularly in sub-

Saharan Africa. Research indicates that approximately 348,000 women succumbed to cervical cancer globally in 2022. In Ethiopia, it ranks as the second leading cause of death among women, following breast cancer.

Furthermore, the MoH has emphasized the significance of the recently amended Health Service Administration and Inspection Proclamation, which was ratified by the House of People’s Representatives. This amendment aims to improve the quality of health services by streamlining bureaucratic procedures and enhancing efficiency.

Moreover, the aforementioned proclamation is expected to play a crucial role in ensuring accountability, modernizing the health service, and improving the accessibility, equity, and quality of healthcare services across the nation.

Center supports Ethiopia to become medical tourism hub

• Official inauguration to take place on January 13

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA- The Time Mothers, Children Health and Surgical Center announced that it is supporting Ethiopia’s efforts to become a medical tourism hub by providing improved medical care.

In a press conference held yesterday, the center, which was established by a union of experienced physicians, disclosed that its official inauguration will take place on 13 January 2025.

The Center’s CEO Ataklti Tsegay (MD) said that the medical institution supports the national endeavor to become a medical tourism hub as projected under the 10-year strategic plan.

Accordingly, the center is playing due role in improving the quality and safety of health services in the country aided by the latest technological equipment, he said.

Guest of Honor Girma Ababie (MD), from Liyana Health Care mentioned that Ethiopia is implementing a medical tourism roadmap and the center appears as



an important option for many citizens who travel abroad to get treatment for cancer, infertility and other health problems.

Time Mothers, Children Health and Surgical Center, Obstetrician and Gynecologist Mekonen Negash (MD) on his part said that the laboratory equipped with modern apparatus and qualified personnel provides a 24 hour diagnostic services.

In addition to the services provided by the maternity and pediatrics department, the center also provides medical services. Led by its experienced surgeons, the center performs minor to major surgeries such as

liver and gallbladder, general abdominal, breast and thyroid surgeries, he stated.

In line with its official inauguration, the center, which is equipped with modern cleaning system, has prepared to provide a week-long health services free of any charges as of January 13, according to the CEO.

The center which was established by a union of specialist and sub-specialist doctors with years of experiences in maternal and child health and surgery, will be officially inaugurated on Sunday, January 13, 2025.

News

Foreign banks entry transforms local banks: Expert

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA - The entry of foreign banks would help local banks integrate with the global financial system by through enhancing their management capabilities to meet international standards, a banker said.

Amhara Bank CEO, Yohannes Ayalew (PhD) told *The Ethiopian Herald* that the entry of foreign banks will have a positive impact on the local ones as they bring valuable assets, including advanced management practices, technological expertise, and international banking experience.

He believes that competition will be a valuable learning experience, helping local banks identify and improve their weaknesses.

Yohannes acknowledged the potential threat to local banks is profit margins due to the increased competition but emphasized the need to transform this challenge into an opportunity for rapid advancement and growth.

He added their entry should be seen as necessary for Ethiopia's integration into the global financial system. Local banks have still limited international outreach for not having enough branches abroad but may open more after as they are going to compete with the upcoming foreign counterparts.

He said the local banks need to enhance their management capabilities to meet international standards, while strong risk management practices are essential for navigating a more competitive landscape.

The CEO further suggested that local banks should invest in research and technology in order to drive better economic activity and to remain competitive in the industry.

Yohannes also recommended the banks to consider mergers and consolidations to become larger, stronger banks with increased capital and market share. He noted that maintaining and improving quality asset is also crucial for financial stability and competitiveness.

Moreover, they need to upgrade capital reserves essential for enduring burdens since expanding their market base will help the local banks maintain their position even with the entry of foreign banks, he indicated.

Yohannes affirmed that Amhara bank is committed to utilize the competition from foreign banks as an opportunity for growth and strengthen its position in the market.

Recognizing possible challenges related to allowing foreign banks, he emphasized their potential for positive evolution and development in Ethiopian banking through strategic adjustment and improvement.

Ethiopia, Sudan...

Ambassador expressed hope for renewed engagement with Ethiopia through informal meetings.

He stressed the importance of listening to Sudan's perspective and proposed convening a session with the 15 member countries of the Peace and Security Council.

Ethiopia and Sudan share a long and multifaceted history dating back to ancient times.



State pins hope on tourism

• Secures over 29 Bln Birr

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA – The Oromia State Tourism and Culture Bureau has reported significant progress in boosting tourism revenue, securing over 29 billion birr during the past six months alone.

The Bureau's Tourism Development and Promotion Director Fantahun Tadesse highlighted the state's aggressive efforts to develop tourism destinations. "Despite setting a target of 31 billion Birr, we have already collected 29 billion," he said.

The region has attracted over 11 million domestic tourists and over 100,000 international visitors. Ongoing efforts focus on modernizing tourist destinations and equipping them with necessary infrastructure.

Recently, Oromia State Chief Administrator Shimelis Abdisa emphasized the Ethiopian

government's focus on five key sectors: agriculture, manufacturing, mining, tourism, and services.

"Recognizing the significant potential of tourism to drive economic growth, the government is committed to developing this sector," he stated.

The Chief Administrator acknowledged that while Ethiopia boasts abundant tourism potential, underdevelopment of infrastructure and destinations have hindered its full exploitation. He highlighted the state's efforts to harness its tourism potential and contribute to the economy.

Oromia is actively promoting the tourism industry through regulations and amendments aimed at stimulating growth. The Chief Administrator emphasized the government's strong commitment to the sector, noting that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) has identified tourism as a priority area for economic growth.

He indicated that the significant progress made in recent years in developing Ethiopia's tourism sector, leading to increased growth and job creation. The Chief Administrator noted that while many destinations remain underdeveloped, the country has immense untapped potential.

By the same token, Ethiopian Tourism Minister Selamawit Kassar lately reiterated the government's commitment to making Ethiopia a preferred tourist destination in Africa. This includes enhancing existing destinations and developing new ones that meet international standards.

The government is collaborating with international organizations like UNESCO to improve infrastructure and accessibility to historical sites and heritage. By increasing the number of tourism service providers and boosting tourism investment, Ethiopia aims to generate foreign currency and strengthen its economy.

Ethiopia taking part in...

economic transformation.

In his keynote address to the summit, Girma emphasized the need for collective and coordinated efforts by all member states to achieve food self-sufficiency in Africa.

He highlighted Ethiopia's achievements under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) over the past six years, transitioning from wheat import dependency to self-sufficiency.

The Agriculture Minister also explained Ethiopia's success story in advancing the nation's forest cover from 17 percent to 23 percent through the Green Legacy Initiative, which involved planting over 40 billion trees.

The Minister further noted that Ethiopia has aligned its national development plan with Africa's development agenda and achieved the 6 percent growth target set by the African program over the past five years, maintaining its position as a champion and model for African development.

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme summit will provide a platform to showcase achievements, share success stories, and discuss strategies to enhance agricultural productivity and resilience for the period 2026-35.

Since its inception in 2003, CAADP has been a cornerstone of Africa's agricultural transformation.

It has driven efforts to achieve a 6 percent annual growth rate in the agricultural sector and encouraged AU member states to allocate at least 10 percent of their budgets to agriculture.

Building on the 2014 Malabo Declaration, the CAADP agenda has focused on eradicating hunger, reducing malnutrition, and building resilient agricultural systems, it was indicated

However, with the continent falling short of meeting the Malabo Declaration targets by 2025, this summit represents a pivotal moment for African leaders to chart a new course for inclusive and sustainable agrifood systems.

Capital market drives Ethiopia's financial...

capital market service providers, and investors, both locally and internationally.

"As a regulator, the ECMA has undertaken comprehensive market development activities," the Director-General added.

Ethiopia's position as the third-largest economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, driven by economic reforms, strategic investments,

and a vibrant private sector, underscores its potential for growth. The establishment of the ESX signifies the government's commitment to nurturing a competitive capital market ecosystem.

The launch of the ESX has garnered significant international attention, with major media outlets like Bloomberg and

the Financial Times reporting on this breakthrough and its implications for investors across the globe.

Established a year ago, the ESX operates under Capital Market Proclamation No. 1248/2021, facilitating collaboration between joint-stock companies and the private sector.

Opinion

Reforming the federal system for peaceful governance

ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

Studies indicate that about 40 percent of the countries of the world pursue the federal form of governance. They preferred to establish the system for two purposes. One is the divulging of power from the center to the regions and the other is for integration, particularly in geographically vast countries.

In the countries where democracy is developed federal form of government established to attain two objectives, self-rule and shared rule. That means citizens in their regions govern themselves by electing their representatives at the same time they participate in the federal government particularly in the legislative part of the government. Based on merit people from the regions also serve in the central government as technocrat.

Regions also have their own legislative, executive and judiciary organs with defined roles to facilitate self-rule. Both shared and self-rule characterized by periodical election, rule of law and freedom of expression depending on the level of the society's education, culture and democracy.

Countries with homogenous ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and multi-ethnic societies pursue the federal form of governance. In Europe, Germany with a homogenous identity established a federal system. On the other hand, Switzerland, with a multi-ethnic society governed by a federal system, and both countries developed advanced democracy relied on respecting individual rights. The United States, with a multi-ethnic background and monoculture and language practices, has a federal system. The vastness of the territory of the country necessitates exercising self and shared rules. On the other hand, India, with its multi-ethnic and more than 800 linguistic groups, pursues the federal form of government. It has regional governments, but the regions are not mapped along ethnic lines.

Ethiopia historically experienced a traditional self-rule system. There were kings in their respective regions and a king of kings at the center. Kings had the supreme power. Regions such as Shewa, Wollo, Gojam, Jima, Wolayta and Kefa had their own kings until the last quarter of the 19th century. The military expedition of Emperor Menelik II to the southern parts of the country changed the political landscape and the subdued kings retained their autonomous rule while kings who attempted resistance faced military confrontation and were reduced to subjugated. The incorporated regions, as long as they paid tribute to the central government, continued their autonomous governance and kept their cultural and linguistic identity.

In the modern history of Ethiopia, the coronation of Tefferi Mekonen as Emperor Haileseilasie I in 1931 gave way for

establishing a highly central government by overriding the regional autonomous traditional rights. In the first decades of the Emperor's rule, all the neighboring countries were under colonial rule, and colonialists pursued a conspiracy policy to weaken Ethiopia. They approached and bribed regional lords to antagonize them with the imperial rule and according to historians, this and other reasons forced the emperor to establish a highly centralized government. Until the downfall of the Dergue regime, the unitary form of government prevailed.

In the same way as its predecessors, the current constitution crafted by the TPLF led EPRDF regime was imposed by the top-down approach without public consensus. The minute, which has all the discussants ideas documented in the minutes and put in the parliament, testifies to this. In the same way, an ethnic-based regional system was introduced. Many argue that the crafting of regional maps along ethnic lines posed horizontal violence among various ethnic groups and since its implementation millions have been displaced.

Most of the regional government constitutions divided the community along ethnic lines and bisecting the population as indigenous and migrants exposing the latter for various discrimination and eviction.

The constitution article 8 sub article 1 explains that the Ethiopian Nations Nationalities and peoples are the owners of the country's sovereignty. This statement totally denies citizens' rights to be sovereign. Here no citizen was consulted when such an idea was inserted in the constitution.

The designers of the constitution claim that the essence for establishing a federal system of governance is the divulging of power from the center to the periphery, but practically it is not. It is proved that several times regional governors have been removed and appointed from the center by party line rather than by election. The removal of former governors of the Tigray and Somali regions from power by the order of the central government can be mentioned in this regard.

Paradoxically EPRDF accused the past regimes as centrally authoritative regimes and claimed as if it is a champion of self-rule.

To the EPRDF, there was oppression and exploitation of nations and nationalities not of citizens and it denied that the nation experiences class struggle. The 1974 popular uprising which ended the reign of the imperial regime was the outcome of class struggle in which all citizens aspired for a better future and the building of democratic governance manifested by the prevalence of justice.

With the absence of democracy characterized by rule of law and freedom of expression, attaining a functioning federal system is unthinkable. Rather, it dragged

the nation into instability, conflicts and displacement. The last three decades of experience proved this.

No person was held accountable for the displacement of people and loss of life due to interethnic conflicts in various parts of the country because the regions constitutions allowed them to do so. The absence of rule of law and independent institutions made culprits continue their criminal acts with impunity.

Except in the 2005, in the EPRDF era, the five conducted elections were characterized by violence, vote rigging and unfairness. Hence while citizens, nation and nationalities are governed by unelected officials how could they exercise their rights to self and shared rule?

The authors of the constitution claim that the insertion of article 39 which allows nation and nationalities to secede from the federal unit brought guarantee to them to live together however, the constitution does not tell how their territory is demarcated in case they exercise their rights which is very complicated.

Article 46 also indicates that nations and nationalities have the right to establish their own regions but does not indicate their responsibilities leaving the country to be the most politically volatile.

The mapping of ethnically based territories also lacks transparency. Proponents of group rights said that the regional map was crafted based on the language, culture, and psychological makeup. But practically it is not. Only regions like Afar and Somali fulfill these criteria.

The past experience showed the regions were nominally autonomous because the state structure is controlled by the party line.

Regional leaders were appointed by the top ruling party officials rather than by their constituency. After the split of TPLF in 2001, because of the idea difference, dissidents were expelled from the party, and Gebru Asrat was one of the dissidents who lost his regional presidency. The fate of Abate Kisho, the former President of SNNPR was similar to Gebru Asrat.

Currently the ruling Prosperity Party is reforming the nation political landscape for the better and encouraging results are registered. The ruling party won the 2013 election and earned its legitimacy. Currently it is striving to mend the past political ills through dialogue and established the National Dialogue Commission. The commission is currently working on agenda collecting and most agendas are related to amending the constitution. We hope the outcome of the dialogue will bring peace and stability to the country.

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

Editorial

A decisive force behind Ethiopia's development

Although geographically detached from their homeland, Ethiopian Diasporas have largely been engaged in national matters. From financing the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam to ardently defending foreign meddling against Ethiopia, the community has been a decisive force in the socioeconomic and political undertakings of the nation.

Despite the polarized political views and differences in various lines, the Ethiopian Diaspora has at different times displayed a remarkable sense of unity and patriotism. The commitment of the community to stand by their homeland has never diminished with the change of government and times.

As witnessed in the last few years, the community Ethiopian Diaspora proved significant influence in international forums, advocating for Ethiopia's interests. The community has played a pivotal role in lobbying for favorable policies, foreign aid, and diplomatic support during critical moments in the country's history. The Diasporas also staunchly defended foreign meddling and misinformation campaigns directed against their country. The gestures are strong testimonials of the greater involvement of the community in the internal affairs of the country.

To unleash the full potential of the community, the incumbent has been putting in place various measures and initiatives. Engaging the community in the ongoing National Dialogue and other tall orders in the country is worth-mentioning. Earlier the government introduced Policies and frameworks, such as the Diaspora Engagement Policy and Diaspora Trust Fund to create an enabling environment for their involvement. These steps are vital to increase the contribution of the community to the overall well-being of the nation.

Among the myriads of contributions the community can make is financial remittance. Remittance has been a source of foreign currency earning for Ethiopia. There were some years in which remittance has outperformed the export income of the nation. And, the recent currency floating measure the Ethiopian National Bank introduced is leading to an uptick in the volume of remittances.

According to the National Bank of Ethiopia, remittances from Ethiopians abroad constitute one of the largest sources of foreign currency, often surpassing foreign direct investment and aid. These funds are vital for household consumption, healthcare, education, and small-scale entrepreneurial activities in Ethiopia.

Recent figures indicate that a total of 2.6 billion USD has been earned in remittance in the last five months. The Ethiopian Diaspora Service said that the last five months have seen a significant increase in foreign currency earnings owing to macroeconomic reform. The narrowing down of exchange rates in the formal and informal markets is also emboldening the community to resort to formal channels for money transfers.

The service also forecasts a huge increment in forex earnings in the coming holiday seasons, particularly *Timket*. Following the macroeconomic reform, remittances surged, growing by 145 percent compared to the first quarter of last year. The reform has made foreign currency more accessible to individuals and businesses through banks, boosting economic efficiency and competitiveness.

The Ethiopian Diaspora, estimated to number several million globally, plays an increasingly significant role in the socioeconomic development of Ethiopia. Beyond remittances, members of the Diaspora have increasingly invested in Ethiopia's key sectors, such as real estate, manufacturing, and agriculture. Initiatives like the Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund (EDTF) encourage collective investment in infrastructure, education, and other public goods, further solidifying their role in the country's development.

The Diaspora's expertise spans a variety of fields, including medicine, engineering, technology, and education. Over the years, programs have been established to facilitate knowledge and skill transfer. And if the various challenges including bureaucratic red tape are redressed well, the Ethiopian Diaspora could continue to be a powerful driver of the country's socioeconomic development, contributing financial resources, knowledge, and advocacy.

Opinion

Addis Ababa attracting more Airlines

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

Saturdays.

Ethiopia and the Arab world share deep-rooted linkages that date back centuries, encompassing trade, pilgrimage, and human travel. Despite this rich relationship, it has often been overshadowed by misunderstandings and a lack of recognition.

Since the coming of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) to power, there has been a renewed focus on strengthening diplomatic relations with Arab countries. This new leadership has emphasized the importance of our shared history and cultural ties, paving the way for more meaningful engagements.

Today, Ethiopia is actively building diplomatic relationships based on mutual respect and the welfare of its citizens. This effort is yielding positive results, allowing Ethiopia to assert its presence in regional discussions and counteract attempts by some countries to marginalize it from key issues.

The ongoing diplomatic initiatives highlight Ethiopia's commitment to fostering collaboration and understanding within the Arab world, ensuring that both regions can benefit from their historical connections and work together for a prosperous future.

The commencement of Air Arabia's flight operations to Addis Ababa is not merely about providing transportation; it represents a significant triumph for Ethiopia in the diplomatic arena. This move plays a crucial role in enhancing tourism and fostering economic growth in the country.

By increasing connectivity, Air Arabia's flights will facilitate a greater influx of tourists, allowing Ethiopia to showcase its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty. This surge in tourism is expected to create job opportunities across various sectors, from hospitality to transportation, thereby benefiting local communities.

Moreover, this development underscores Ethiopia's growing diplomatic ties with the Arab world, demonstrating the potential for collaboration and mutual benefit. As more travelers embark on journeys to Ethiopia, the country can further solidify its position as a vibrant destination that welcomes visitors from diverse backgrounds.

Air Arabia, which commenced operations in October 2003 from Sharjah International Airport, currently serves a wide range of destinations across the Middle East, Africa, Indian Subcontinent, and Europe. Recently, the airline announced the launch of its latest direct flight service to Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, further expanding its global network.

Starting January 30, Air Arabia will operate three weekly flights between Sharjah International Airport and Addis Ababa Bole International Airport, with departures scheduled on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and

Adel Al Ali, Group Chief Executive Officer of Air Arabia, expressed enthusiasm about the new route, stating:

"We are excited to add Addis Ababa to our expanding network. This addition underscores our commitment to strengthening connectivity and fostering economic and cultural ties between the UAE and Ethiopia. By increasing our destinations from Sharjah, we aim to support trade and tourism while continuing to provide affordable and convenient travel options."

Both the Addis Ababa and Tashkent routes reflect Air Arabia's ongoing commitment to broadening its network, catering to growing demand, and contributing to the economic development of the regions it serves.

I appreciate the commitment that Air Arabia continues to play a pivotal role in enhancing regional and international connectivity. The expansion aligns with the airline's strategic vision of supporting trade and tourism across key destinations while maintaining its reputation for affordable and efficient travel.

Ethiopia holds a significant place in Islamic history. The new flight will provide easier access for travelers from the Islamic world to visit Ethiopia comfortably. Historically, Ethiopia has been at the crossroads of different cultures and beliefs, where Christianity, Islam, and indigenous religions have coexisted for centuries. That is why we say Ethiopia has become a model of peaceful coexistence among religions for various historical reasons.

The introduction of Islam during its early days, particularly the refuge granted to the companions of Prophet Mohammed, laid the groundwork for a spirit of tolerance and coexistence.

This led to the establishment of the historical Alnejashi mosque in Tigray. It is also believed that the first mu'azzin, the person who calls for prayer in Islam, was Bilal al-Habeshi (Bilal ibn Rabah), a freed Ethiopian slave who lived from 580-640 and was faithful to the Prophet Muhammad.

Addis Ababa is also home to several international, continental, and national institutions, is also a popular destination for tourists and visitors who come to explore its historical, archaeological, natural, spiritual, and cultural museums.

For instance, the Bilalul Habeshi Community Museum, named after Bilal al-Habeshi, showcases Ethiopia's rich Islamic heritage could be cited, the historical Alnejashi mosque in Tigray among others.

This is a good opportunity to provide structured information to the Arab world regarding this route. Tour operators and event organizers should prepare to seize the opportunities for mutual benefit.

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Business & Economy



New impetus for economic progress, job opportunities

BY MENGESHA AMARE

Obviously, industrial parks are areas of the city or a town set up for industrial use instead of being employed for residential or commercial consumption. Industrial parks may include warehouses, distribution supply hubs, other factories, and they may be termed as trading estates or industrial estates, of course.

Since they are usually located in zones that are not within the central residential area of a city, they need to be bedecked with transportation facilities such as buses, railroads and freeways. Industrial parks or sites may also include other businesses such as storage facilities, plants that house chemicals, steel and beverage companies.

Having this in mind, *The Ethiopian Herald* conducted a short interview with Temesgen Mulatu, who graduated in engineering from Arba-Minch University, and working as an industrial consultant, to have a piece of information about the contribution of industrial national economic progress and job creation.

He said, “Industrial parks, also named as industrial zones or special economic zones include different economic concepts which are Free Trade Zones, Export Processing zones and Free Ports and others. The construction and operation of industrial parks development projects are widely used as the major economic development strategy for most policy and decision-makers. The Investment Commission, the federal government authorized zones to establish Industrial Parks depending on their geographic proximity, industrial sector development and labor market supply.”

As to Temesgen, currently, there are more than 30 industrial parks in different zones, special zones and city administrations of the country. Thus, these zones and city administrations are considered as the treated zones: Bole Lemi I Industrial Park, Bole Lemi II industrial Park, Kilinto Industrial Park, Addis Industrial Village, Hawasa industrial park, Dire Dawa industrial park, Kombolcha industrial park, Mekelle industrial park, Adama industrial park, Jimma industrial park, Bahir Dar industrial park, Debre Birhan industrial park, among others.

Industrial parks can be regarded as a solution to overcome a range of pitfalls and inadequacy thereby accelerating the economic development by attracting innovative businesses that can generate jobs, higher incomes and therefore more resources to companies, investments and institutions and to themselves, he added.

The Ethiopian government has been intensively engaged in the construction of industrial parks that are targeted to accelerate overall economic growth by providing productive employment opportunity for the population, technology, knowledge and skill transfer and export of manufactured goods which generate foreign currencies. However, a lot remains to be done

along this line to help Ethiopia grow well, he underscored.

Obviously, industrial parks also known as Industrial zones or Special Economic Zones include different economic concepts; the major goals of these industrial parks are producing export-oriented products and becoming competent in international markets.

According to Temesgen, despite having different names and forms, all industrial parks could be defined in the following way ‘It is a separately designed business place under the national boundary where the rule of business doing are different from other places in the country.’ The government also gives special treatment and support for international and domestic investors that operate inside the industrial parks. Some of these special procedures are flexible investment conditions, easily access to international markets and lower customs, taxations and regulatory environment and create an enabling environment for enterprises that operate inside industrial parks.

He said, “The impact of industrial parks development on industrial upgrading and technological transfer has mixed result. Different researchers concluded that industrial parks development would not play a significant role in terms of enhancing the skills and know-how of industrial parks workers. Yes, industrial parks development played a catalytic role in the expansion of industrialization in different countries.”

As to him, availability of quality infrastructure and institutional framework of the parks highly influence firm-level performance in parks. The performance of foreign firms’ is better than domestic firms in industrial parks. The authors also identified the knowledge and technical skills that foreign investors shared with domestic firms.

“The direct jobs generated under industrial parks development highly depend on the size of the space the parks have stretched and the country concerned. The employment generation role of industrial parks development is marginal for large countries. Whereas in large countries like Korea, Malaysia, and Indonesia insignificant number of the labors force were hired in industrial parks. Obviously, industrial parks of Ethiopia, despite their importance in the economy and export sectors, their employment contribution has so far been insignificant though hopes are rising along this line.”

He further stated that the industrial parks development directly enhances the skill and knowhow formation by providing workers both on and off-job training and experience sharing platform. Domestic employees of industrial parks’ firm are mostly sent to their headquarters abroad or elsewhere for management training, experience sharing, and advanced technical training. The other approach for skill formation is through upgrading the education system.

In industrial parks, educational institutions are established to enhance the technical and vocational skills of employees in industrial parks.

Honestly speaking, said Temesgen the development of industrial parks enhances the participation of domestic enterprises in the international value chain. These competitions enable firms to learn new knowledge and innovations which are important for human development. Yes, two types of value chain approaches are witnessed in due course of running industrial parks: producer-driven and buyer-driven value chain approaches.

In the producer-driven value chains approach multinational enterprises outsource the production parts. Under this value chains approach multinational enterprises would provide technology and innovation for partner local producers. On the other hand, under buyer-driven value chains approaches multinational enterprises are marketers of products only. Under this approach, partner producers acquire the necessary raw materials and technology themselves, Temesgen underlined.

According to Temesgen, there are different views on the social and environmental impact of industrial parks development projects. The social, economic and environmental impact of industrial parks is closely interrelated. Various evidences show that industrial parks that ignore the human resource development effect and environmental impact of industrial parks development projects are less likely to achieve their target profit from industrial parks development projects. On the other hand, industrial parks programs that provide due attention to the social and environmental impact of the parks’ will be successful. No doubt, the social impact of industrial parks development and expansion through the ratio of permanent women workers in the parks has been rising, he added.

Thus, this partnership will encourage the local producers to learn and adopt new technology and innovation from international producers.

Industrial park development negatively affects the market value of assets around the parks, too, due to a multitude of perceived dismantles such as noise, road crowdedness, congestion, environmental pollution and obstruction view, he opined.

There are many factors that optimize or diminish the economic impact of industrial parks development projects in Ethiopia. Yes, potential factors that optimize the impact of industrial parks include active government follow up the country has good practice and experience in building and managing global partnerships, most developing countries by sharing this experience; show high commitment to developing and expanding the global partnership to construct and operate industrial parks development.

The Ethiopian government has actively participated in the development of industrial

parks since the announcement of the proclamation of the industrial parks in 2015, indeed!

He said the major mandate of Industrial parks Development Corporation is to develop and closely administer industrial parks development in Ethiopia.

In the nation, he stated as the major obstacle to developing and expanding industrial parks is the lack of adequate infrastructures such as power, roads, water, sanitation and others around the parks, the government has to attach due emphasis to the issue. Of course, a lot remains to be done though the Ethiopian government built the necessary infrastructure before building the industrial parks.

Linkage with the domestic market and optimizing the economic impact of industrial parks development project generally in Africa and particularly in Ethiopia, policy, and decision-makers need to develop an environment that facilitates linkage between domestic private sectors and foreign enterprises investing inside industrial parks. One of the strategies that motivates this bond is to create an apt environment for local investors to start operations inside industrial parks.

“Besides, promoting transparency and communication within the community would be instrumental in coming up with sustainable and fruitful industrial parks development as transparency and community relations play a significant role. Furthermore, good bonding with the local business and the community is important to realize the sustainable development of the parks,” he accentuated.

As stated earlier, said Temesgen, currently, the Industrial Parks project is operating in 28 zones and special zones, and 2 city administrations. Thus, these zones, special zones and city administrations are considered as the treated zones and others as controlled zones. The government needs to work hard in due course of identifying the factors that affect the economic impact of industrial parks development projects which definitely have significant contribution to boosting the potential economic, social, environmental, technical, cultural, and political factors that optimize the economic impact of industrial parks development projects in Ethiopia.

In order to evaluate the economic impact of Industrial Parks development projects, domestic capital formation and the total number of employees employed in industrial enterprise have to be taken into account, he opined.

In a nutshell, as the infrastructure development as the major household/community level has had decisive impact on microeconomic growth of industrial parks and other development projects which are cornerstone for employment opportunities, enhanced knowledge and know-how at national level, the nation should well focus on these apparatuses and the core headways—industrial parks.

Art & Culture

Embracing release therapy: Empowering Ethiopian women together

BY LAKACHEW ATINAFU

My glorious childhood was not just about the aggregate sum of child raising activities like going swimming, collecting fruit and having adventures with horses. Among all of these, marketplaces were the very foundation for Rural Ethiopians, as they were interwoven with a diversity of people, items, animals and culture. There were highlanders, lowlanders, love, and hate all present.

It is truly a nostalgic journey towards marketing in Ethiopia, a nation rich in culture and history, boasting a vibrant marketplace that serves as a dynamic space for commerce and social interaction. The Ethiopian market is not just a place to buy and sell goods; it is a vital community hub that fosters communication, empowers women and instills pride in men. This article explores how the Ethiopian market serves as a platform for women's empowerment and a source of pride for men.

In Ethiopia, women play a crucial role in the economy, particularly in the informal sector. The market provides women with opportunities to start their businesses, sell handmade goods, and engage in trade. By participating in the marketplace, women not only gain financial independence but also build confidence and self-esteem.

The market environment encourages women to engage in dialogue, share experiences, and form supportive networks. These interactions help them develop communication skills that are essential for both personal and professional growth. Through workshops and community initiatives, women can learn from one another, share best practices, and collaborate on projects that benefit their families and communities.

Ethiopian markets are also a showcase of local culture, where women display traditional clothing, crafts, and food. This representation highlights their cultural heritage and fosters a sense of pride in their identity. By promoting their crafts and culinary skills, women become ambassadors of Ethiopian culture, gaining respect and recognition both locally and internationally.

Men in Ethiopia take pride in supporting the women in their lives, whether they are family members, friends, or colleagues. The marketplace is a shared space where men can show their support by purchasing from women-owned businesses. This support not only strengthens family ties but also promotes gender equality, creating a more balanced community.

Men also actively engage in the market, contributing to its vibrancy. They often play roles as traders, vendors, and customers, showcasing their skills and knowledge in



Women's participation in rural markets is essential for economic development and empowerment

various sectors. This involvement fosters a sense of community, where men feel proud to be part of a thriving economic environment that benefits everyone.

The Ethiopian market is a reflection of the nation's rich cultural heritage, and men take pride in this representation. From traditional music and dance to culinary delights, men often participate in and promote these cultural aspects, enhancing the market's appeal. Their involvement helps preserve and celebrate Ethiopian traditions, fostering a sense of belonging and pride.

The Ethiopian market stands as a testament to the resilience and strength of its people. It is a space where women find empowerment through economic independence and community support, and where men can take pride in their contributions to society. As the market continues to evolve, it remains a vital platform for communication, cultural exchange, and economic growth, reflecting the spirit of unity and cooperation that defines Ethiopia.

Through collective efforts, both women and men contribute to making the Ethiopian market a thriving hub of empowerment and pride, ensuring its role as a cornerstone of community life for generations to come. Marketplaces in rural Africa serve as vital hubs for economic activity, social interaction, and cultural exchange. For many women in these communities, markets are more than just places to buy and sell goods; they represent opportunities for empowerment, economic independence, and social cohesion. This article delves into the multifaceted importance of marketplaces for rural communities, with a

particular emphasis on the crucial role they play in the lives of African women.

Markets provide women with essential opportunities to generate income. Many women engage in small-scale farming, crafting, or trading, selling products such as fruits, vegetables, textiles, and handmade crafts. This income is often vital for supporting their families, ensuring access to education, healthcare, and basic necessities.

The marketplace encourages entrepreneurial spirit among women. Many women start their businesses to sell surplus produce or handcrafted items. By participating in the market, they gain valuable experience in managing finances, marketing products, and understanding customer preferences. This entrepreneurial journey fosters self-reliance and builds a foundation for future business endeavors.

In many rural communities, markets are the primary source of goods and services. Women often rely on these marketplaces to obtain essential items such as seeds, fertilizers, and household supplies. Access to such resources is crucial for improving agricultural productivity and enhancing the quality of life for their families.

Marketplaces serve as social hubs where women can connect, share experiences, and build supportive networks. These interactions are fundamental in fostering a sense of community, allowing women to exchange knowledge, resources, and even labor. Such networks can lead to collective action, enabling women to advocate for their rights and interests within the community.

Markets are a melting pot of cultures, where

women can showcase their traditions, crafts, and culinary skills. This cultural exchange strengthens communal ties and fosters a sense of identity. Women often participate in cultural festivals held in markets, which celebrate local heritage and traditions, enhancing community pride.

As women gain experience in the marketplace, they often take on leadership roles within their communities. Whether organizing market days, leading cooperatives, or participating in community decision-making, women's visibility in these roles challenges traditional gender norms and paves the way for greater gender equality.

Marketplaces offer informal education and skill development opportunities. Women learn valuable skills such as negotiation, marketing, and financial management through their daily interactions. Workshops and training sessions organized by NGOs or community groups often take place in market settings, further enhancing women's knowledge and capabilities.

Participating in market activities helps women develop financial literacy. Managing daily sales, budgeting household expenses, and saving for future investments are essential skills that women acquire through their market experience. Financial literacy empowers women to make informed decisions about their finances, leading to better economic outcomes.

Markets can also serve as points of access to healthcare services. Mobile clinics and health campaigns often set up in or near marketplaces, providing essential health services and information to women and their families. This accessibility is crucial in rural areas where healthcare facilities may be limited.

Markets play a significant role in promoting nutrition and food security. Women often sell fresh produce, which contributes to better dietary options for families. By providing access to a variety of foods, marketplaces help combat malnutrition and promote healthier lifestyles.

Cultural norms and gender biases can limit women's participation and success in the marketplace. Women may face discrimination in accessing resources or being taken seriously as business owners.

Inadequate infrastructure, such as poor market facilities and lack of transportation, can hinder women's ability to effectively engage in market activities.

Marketplaces are essential lifelines for rural communities in Africa, providing women with economic opportunities, social connections and avenues for empowerment. By fostering entrepreneurship, enhancing community bonds and promoting education, these marketplaces play a transformative role in the lives of African women.

Science & Technology

Revolutionizing traffic management in Addis with digital solutions

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

The Addis Ababa City Administration is currently engaged in various infrastructure development activities aimed at modernizing and improving services for residents and visitors. As part of these initiatives, the city administration is now working towards implementing various technologies to make the city smarter and more competitive. To facilitate the implementation of smart city development, the administration has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Ethio Telecom, as digital infrastructure is crucial in achieving this goal.

Following the implementation of the Addis Ababa Corridor Development Project, which was launched last year, Addis Ababa now has standardized road facilities. This project has completely transformed the city's old features and renewed its infrastructure in all sectors. The corridor development has opened a new chapter in modernizing the city's infrastructure and has sparked interest in introducing new technologies to better serve the residents.

The telecom and power infrastructure of the city has been transformed, allowing institutions to properly install digital technologies. These efforts by the city administration are transforming the overall development and socio-economic activity of the city and its residents' daily lives.

In introducing technological developments to the city, the Addis Ababa City's Innovation and Technology Development Bureau (ITDB) is implementing various initiatives and supporting institutions in adopting technology for service provision. ITDB is collaborating with the city's Transport Bureau and Traffic Management Authority to modernize the city's transportation and traffic management system by incorporating digital technologies. Among these efforts is the recent introduction of the Automatic Enforcement and Management System, a new application designed to manage the city's traffic and parking activities through digital technology.

According to the Traffic Management Authority (TMA), this new system aims to replace the traditional manual system of traffic management and parking administration with an automatic system. This is part of the authority's efforts to modernize the city's traffic system and vehicle parking. The corridor development project has improved the city's traffic flow, created new parking areas, modernized walkways, and replaced traditional intersections with traffic lights, resulting in smoother transportation activities in the city.

Additionally, the new system introduced by the TMA will further modernize the city's traffic management system. The Automatic Enforcement and Management System (AEMS) is a technology-supported system



Addis Ababa is introducing various initiatives to improve the road infrastructure and Smart Street standard of the city and the new traffic management software system is part of these efforts of the city in modernizing the sector

designed to transform the city's traffic management, parking administration, and traffic law enforcement. According to the Authority Director, Kibebew Mideksa, this system will introduce modern traffic regulations, save money on printing costs, streamline the process of obtaining licenses, modernize parking administration, reduce accidents, combat corruption, control vehicle theft, increase government revenue, manage illegal driving licenses, improve electronic payment systems, and modernize other basic services related to the traffic system.

Kibebew stated, "The system will transition the city's traffic law enforcement and parking administration from manual to digital." The application was developed in collaboration with Infra Tech PLC, a private software developer company. The new system will simplify traffic-related activities and parking administration in the city, allowing drivers to pay fines and fees digitally and modernizing traffic management and parking administration

overall, according to the TMA.

Attending the launching ceremony of the new application, Transport and Logistics State Minister Borwo Hassen said that the system will play a significant role in the smooth flow of transport and transforming the traffic management system of the capital. The State Minister stated that the newly developed digital software system will help properly manage traffic flow online, which will contribute significantly to creating a healthy and smooth transport system in Addis Ababa. "The AEMS will modernize traffic law enforcement by providing real-time data processing, faster response time, and greater control over traffic management," he reiterated.

For his part, Addis Ababa City Deputy Mayor and Public Service Bureau head, Jemalu Jenber (PhD), stated that the newly developed advanced software is compatible with the corridor development of the capital, which will improve the traffic flow of the city. According to him, the new software is a significant shift in the traffic management sector as it modernizes the sector and helps to reduce passenger inconvenience, infrastructure accidents, and save time and energy. Similarly, the new system will also contribute its share to economic growth, he added, calling for proper work to ensure the effective functioning of the application.

According to the Director-General of the authority, Kibebew Mideksa, the government is undertaking various measures to create a strong and modern traffic management system with the aim of decreasing traffic-related accidents and deaths. "The new system, which is officially launched today and ready for implementation, is a modern software system that will introduce a modern traffic management system to the public," he said, adding that the new system will play a significant role in the implementation of modern regulatory works

of the revised Road Transport Regulation number 557/2024.

According to the director, the new technology will totally transform the traffic fine from a manual pad system and parking payment into a digital system. This will help customers save their time and energy as it helps to pay the payments using digital payment systems. Advanced software calculates traffic fines and parking fees, supporting the country's and city's traffic management efforts. The system saves over 17 million Birr annually on traffic fine printing, reduces the hassle of returning license plates, and addresses issues in parking service payment, Kibebew noted.

For Mideksa, the upgraded software provides information on transport services and parking fees, solves road traffic flow problems, and saves the community time and money. "The AEMS is a cutting-edge solution designed to transform traffic management and law enforcement in Ethiopia," he said, adding that leveraging advanced image recognition technology, the system will enhance vehicle identification and monitoring, automate traffic fine collection processes, and improve the efficiency of crime investigations related to traffic incidents, the director stated.

Working in coordination with driver and vehicle licensing authorities, Ethio Telecom, and banks, the server, application, software, and devices are fully operational and ready for use, according to the authority. The authority urged traffic police and control experts to utilize the recently amended traffic law and management system to effectively manage traffic flow and prevent accidents. According to TMA, Addis Ababa is introducing various initiatives to improve the road infrastructure and Smart Street standard of the city and the new traffic management software system is part of these efforts of the city in modernizing the sector.

Society

When necessity is the mother of invention

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

Youth embodies vitality and potential. How one utilizes this vibrant phase of life can lead to meaningful outcomes. If young people harness their time wisely, they can reap the rewards of their efforts. Conversely, those who waste their time simply may find themselves filled with emptiness and regret in their later years.

Henok Ammanuel is a prime example of a young individual making the most of his time. With a sharp mind and ability for problem-solving, he has dedicated himself to addressing the challenges around him. Growing up in Gimbi Town, West Wollega Zone of Oromia State, Henok was keenly aware of the daily struggles faced by his neighbors, especially regarding electricity shortages.

Henok sometimes watches the lights go out when his mother begins baking or cooking food on the stove. On such incidents, while most people waited for the power to come back on, others resorted to traditional methods of using wood and charcoal. For Henok, this situation was more saddening and was not a thing that he simply accepted as it was. In fact, there was a blackout in many areas, including his place. The problem was serious and widespread. Understanding this, he decided to find some solutions and reduce the burden of people, not just his family, but the surrounding community and beyond.

Luckily, Henok's field of study is related to electrical engineering, and he has some knowledge and skills in various technological products. Being close to technical work has fuelled his interest and ambition to innovate something important in this regard. Over the years, he had participated in seven types of technological competitions held at national and continental levels (Africa). He won in the first place at the contests.

Likewise, in an international competition involving 61 countries, he ranked ninth. The win was a remarkable achievement considering the level of competition. It was a more significant achievement gained by the use of artificial intelligence technology in the judging process.

Henok's first win from Africa was in the Chinese competition where he represented Ethiopia. He was awarded a scholarship for free education by the Chinese Government. The achievement, strength and effort of this young man was soon caught the eyes of the Ministry of Labor and Skills. An opportunity to collaborate with like-minded young people was also created for him.

Henok, whose talent and dedication was not wasted in vain, found the opportunity to implement his creative idea that has been in his mind, mainly, meeting up with



Henok Ammanuel

young people who have similar talent and skills. Henok did not forget the lives of rural and urban residents who suffer from power outages. Thus, he started finding a solution that would benefit both rural and urban populations struggling with power outages. Even his friends were heartened when they contributed their ability to advance the technology. They combined their knowledge and decided to build a generator. They did it. Together, they developed a unique generator that is completely silent and does not pollute the environment, a marked improvement over traditional generators.

According to Henok, the self-charging generator will be used for rural and urban residents. Rural residents can charge it at 2,500 kilowatts of energy; and they can use it as needed. In urban areas, the generator will quickly start generating power within four microseconds of power outages. Once power is restored, the generator shuts off without a sound.

This self-charging generator is equipped with automatic technology. It even has the ability to recapture the energy it emits. It

spares no effort to give due importance to home and office services.

Henok and his two friends are at the starting point for their next plan to expand this technology. They have also a plan to develop an electric car in the future. For this purpose, they have set a design and aimed to mass-produce more than 50 cars per day.

Henok believes that with government support, their transition from prototype to production will be swift.

The young tech innovator said that his and his friends' plans will not be limited simply within Ethiopia; but expand beyond. They aim to expand their technologies to the broader African market and even beyond.

Henok is confident that his international recognition and his second degree, earned during his time in China, will yield significant contributions to their long-term vision.

His family has played a lot with the technological advancements Henok has achieved today. By supporting his idea,

Stating his own experience, Henok emphasizes that the best innovations arise from problems. For him, the creation of the generator was born from his frustration with frequent power outages and the impact they had on daily life. He strongly advises other young people to never ignore their technological ideas

encouraging his work, they threw the first stone for its fruition. They didn't turn their backs regarding the special talent they had noticed at his early age. Standing by his side, and providing the necessary support, they have enabled him to reach where he is now.

Henok's dreams for tomorrow are big and wide. He and his friends have set up a company by their own and plan to expand the technology, adding new capabilities. They also aim to change history by substituting imported raw materials at high cost with locally developed solutions.

Henok and his colleagues are committed not only to creating jobs but also to exporting their technology internationally. Their vision is clear: to solve problems through innovation, create opportunities for others, and contribute to the technological advancement of Africa.

Stating his own experience, Henok emphasizes that the best innovations arise from problems. For him, the creation of the generator was born from his frustration with frequent power outages and the impact they had on daily life. He strongly advises other young people to never ignore their technological ideas. If they have solutions to problems, they should pursue them with determination. Henok's story is a testament to what can be achieved when youth, creativity, and perseverance come together to solve real-world challenges.

Ethiopian *Genna* colorful celebration...

Continued from page 16

self in the local culture and traditions. One can join the festive processions, sample traditional Ethiopian cuisine, and interact with the friendly locals to gain a deeper understanding of the country's rich heritage and its fascinating culture.

This week, Ethiopians celebrated Christmas (*Genna*) in the historic town of Lalibela, a UNESCO inscribed heritage site, with a vibrant religious ceremony.

Accordingly, the celebration in Lalibela was marked by profound religious practices and traditional attires in the presence of North Wollo Zone's Archbishop Abune Ermiyas along with other esteemed clergy, honored guests, and numerous local and international tourists attending the ceremony.

Starting from the eve of the *Genna* night, the celebration, which commemorates the Birth of Jesus Christ, began hymns, songs, and traditional rituals.

Each year, the Christmas festival in Lalibela is celebrated not only for its profound religious significance but also for its vibrant appeal to tourists.

Meanwhile, Ethiopian Tourism Minister Selamawit Kassa revealed that efforts are underway to position Ethiopia as a preferred tourism destination in Africa by enhancing existing tourism destinations and expanding into new ones that meet international standards.

The Minister made the remark during the *Genna* celebration, the Ethiopian Christmas



that was observed warmly and colorfully in Lalibela, home to the UNESCO-listed Rock-Hewn Churches, a remarkable world heritage site.

Selamawit emphasized that the development and expansion of tourism destinations aims to ensure that local communities at all levels benefit from the sector.

In particular, the historical town of Lalibela, renowned for its rock-hewn churches, is currently in the spotlight as it celebrates the Ethiopian Christmas (*Genna*) festival, showcasing the Amhara State's unique cultural heritage.

Minister Selamawit stated the efforts exerted to improve infrastructure in this historical site. According to her, several activities are underway to develop tourism sites in collaboration with international organizations like UNESCO, to make these sites and heritages more accessible

for visitors; stressing that promoting infrastructures around cultural festivals and traditional events is essential for attracting more visitors to the country.

Moreover, the Minister added that increasing the number of tourism service providers and boosting tourism investment will help generate foreign currency and bolster Ethiopia's economy.

Ethiopia has ambitious plan to establish itself as a preferred tourist destination in Africa, with a strong focus on enhancing its global tourism profile, she noted.

In this respect, her Ministry is actively working on creating a more inclusive tourism sector that benefits all communities by developing the existing ones, expanding new destinations and leveraging technologies, she explained.

She mentioned about the government's

strong attention given to the development of Lalibela as a tourism destination to ensure its preservation and promote it for future generations, emphasizing the ongoing projects in the area to improve visitors' access and enhance the overall tourist experience, while encouraging community engagement in tourism initiatives.

Selamawit further pointed out that Ethiopia, with all these efforts, is poised to strengthen its position in the competitive tourism market, promising a sustainable and prosperous future for its tourism sector.

Minister Selamawit alongside with officials from the Amhara State underscored the importance of community involvement in tourism development, remarking on Ethiopia's wealth of natural and historical sites that deserve to be highlighted on the global stage.

In sum, the Ethiopian *Genna* celebration in Lalibela Town is a vibrant and colorful event that showcases the rich cultural heritage and spiritual devotion of the Ethiopian people. Whether one is a seasoned traveler or simply looking for a unique and memorable experience, the *Genna* celebration is a must-see event that will captivate one's senses and touches the soul. As Ethiopia continues to develop its tourism sector, events like *Genna* will undoubtedly play a central role in promoting the country's extraordinary natural and historical treasures on the global stage.

Come and join the festivities in Lalibela, and immerse yourself in the joy and unity of this special time of year.

Eswatini AGOA Trade Benefits Renewed for 2025

Mbabane — The southern African nation of Eswatini has secured continued eligibility for benefits under the U.S African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) for the 39 companies currently trading under AGOA, including some of Eswatini's biggest brands. U.S. Trade Representative spokesman Sam Michel confirmed Eswatini's eligibility in late December. Eswatini's exclusion from the trade agreement in 2015 followed the country's failure to meet benchmarks for democratization and respect for human rights and highlighted how the country's political situation negatively impacted the country's economy.

In a written statement issued on December 21, U.S. Trade Representative spokesman Sam Michel said the decision to continue Eswatini's participation in the African Growth and Opportunity Act was based on an annual AGOA eligibility review, which concluded that the list of eligible and ineligible countries will remain unchanged for 2025.

Eswatini, an AGOA member for 23 years, exported some \$23.5 million worth of goods in 2022. It is among more than 30 African nations, including Namibia, South Africa, and Mozambique, eligible for the U.S.-led trade initiative, aimed at boosting trade and economic ties between the United States and Africa through duty-free access.

Swazi businesswoman Sonia Paiva emphasized the importance of international trade agreements to grow businesses in Eswatini, citing the benefits of import duty removal and increased market access. She said that exclusion from such agreements could have detrimental economic

implications for businesses and citizens.

"We cannot afford to be excluded from such agreements, as the country faces the highest unemployment rate to date which affects over 50 percent of our population, which are mainly youth. We hereby continue to motivate our government to effectively put policies into place that will protect export businesses. With policies in place, trade agreements should be easier monitored for its compliance and implementation," she said.

Eswatini was temporarily suspended from AGOA in 2015 due to failure to meet benchmarks in democratization and human rights. The suspension resulted in thousands of job losses. However, the country was reinstated in 2017, reinvigorating its economic prospects and reinstating its eligibility for duty-free access to the US market.

Wandile Dlodlu, the deputy president of the opposition People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), expressed disappointment at the renewal of AGOA benefits to Eswatini, stating that the country's government continues to disregard the rule of law, arrest political activists and obstruct an international investigation into the assassination of human rights activist Thulani Maseko.

"We have MPs who are languishing in jail and have been convicted on the basis of the Suppression of Terrorism Act, for which not only was copied from the American version, but has been greatly supported by the same American government. And in our context, it is being used as a bush knife against pro-



democracy forces and human rights activists. And we think it's very much an inconsistency on the part of the government of the U.S. We have a very hostile political environment [here in Eswatini], wherein the same government that they are opening markets to have refused to allow the international community to conduct an independent investigation on the murder," said Dlodlu.

Sibusiso Nhlabatsi, a political analyst, criticized the renewal of AGOA benefits for Eswatini, also known as Swaziland. He argues that the American government's decision disregards the Eswatini's unfulfilled commitments, highlighted in the enduring political instability in Eswatini and the absence of a promised national dialogue to address the issues.

"The Americans are not as strict as they should

when they apply these AGOA benchmarks on the Kingdom of Swaziland. But the political situation in Swaziland, regardless of the fact that they renew these AGOA benefits, which is of course beneficial to certain business people, the political climax in Swaziland, will never be the same post-2021. And it is also disingenuous on the part of the Americans because there are commitments that the King made during the unrest, the commitment for dialogue, and this was even budgeted for. But the dialogue has not taken place yet," said Nhlabatsi.

Eswatini government spokesperson Alpheous Nxumalo has reaffirmed Eswatini's commitment to comply with all AGOA requirements and maintain strong diplomatic ties with the U.S. government.

Source: [VOA](#).



This is Ethiopia

Ethiopian *Genna* colorful celebration at Lalibela

BY TEWODROS KASSA

Ethiopia is home to numerous intangible cultural and religious assets. Being home to more than 80 ethnic groups, the country celebrates a variety of annual festivals that are celebrated with the gatherings of hundreds and thousands of people. Among these, the *Genna* celebration stands out as one of the most vibrant and spiritually significant festivals. Every year, the vibrant, historically and culturally rich town of Lalibela comes alive with the colorful festivities of the *Genna* celebration. This annual event is a time of joy, unity, and spiritual devotion, bringing together people from all walks of life to celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ in a unique and unforgettable way.

The Ethiopian *Genna* celebration, also known as the Ethiopian Christmas, is a time-honored tradition that dates back centuries. Celebrated on January 7th each year, following the Julian calendar, *Genna* is one of the most important festivals in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Lalibela, a sacred town in Ethiopia known for its ancient rock-hewn churches, is the

epicenter of the *Genna* celebration. The town's most famous attraction, the Church of St. George (Bete Giorgis), serves as the focal point for the festivities, with colorful processions, traditional music and dance, and religious ceremonies taking place throughout the town.

One of the most unique aspects of the *Genna* celebration in Lalibela is the reenactment of the biblical story of the Birth of Jesus Christ. Thousands of pilgrims and visitors gather in the town to witness this symbolic event, which includes dramatic performances, traditional chanting, and elaborate costumes.

For those fortunate enough to visit Lalibela during the *Genna* celebration, the experience is nothing short of magical. The vibrant colors, lively music, and welcoming atmosphere create a sense of unity and joy that is truly infectious. Whether a visitor is a devout Christian or simply curious about Ethiopian culture, the *Genna* celebration is a must-see event that will leave a lasting impression on one's heart and soul.

One of the best ways to truly experience the *Genna* celebration in Lalibela is to immerse

See *Ethiopian Genna* ... page 15

