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"International Schools" face downgrade unless 30% foreign students rule met

By Eyasu Zekarias

Ministry of Education is poised to strip "international school" status from leading private institutions unless they enrol at least 30 percent foreign students, sparking parental uproar over disrupted education, higher fees and a potential exodus of expatriate families.

Sources close to schools like Cambridge Academy Ethiopia and Flipper reveal an imminent directive reclassifying non-compliant institutions as "local" schools, forcing abandonment of international curricula such as IB, British and American programmes in favour of Ethiopia's national system. Originally intended for diplomats' children, these schools now serve affluent Ethiopians seeking global competitiveness — a trend the ministry seeks to curb.

"We've been told: no 30 percent foreigners, no international status. Next year, it's local curriculum for all," one parent quoted a school briefing. Families paying premium fees in foreign currency decry a breached "educational contract," warning of academic

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The "Board of Peace": Trump's path to monarchy in a new gilded age

In a lavish ceremony at Davos on 22 January 2026, President Donald Trump unveiled his "Board of Peace" — a self styled international body chaired by himself for life, ostensibly to mediate conflicts from Gaza to Ukraine. With early signatories like the UAE, Hungary and Azerbaijan, and invitations to 60 nations, Trump hailed it as "the most prestigious board ever formed," hinting it could eclipse the UN. Elon Musk's quip — "Peace or piece? Like a little piece of Greenland, a little piece of Venezuela?" — drew laughs, but beneath the jest lies a darker truth: this is no peace initiative. It's the blueprint for a new world order where wealth reigns supreme, ordinary citizens are disenfranchised, and Trump crowns himself king.

Let's be clear: the Board of Peace is Trump's long cherished fantasy of unchecked power realised. Absent key allies like France, the UK, Germany and Canada, who cited conflicts with the UN Charter, the board reeks of selective legitimacy. Leaked drafts reveal Trump's indefinite chairmanship, even post presidency, positioning him as a global arbiter above elected leaders. Critics, including Slovenia's PM Robert Golob, call it a "dangerous interference" in the international order. Musk's "piece" joke wasn't just wordplay; it evoked Trump's past obsessions with annexing Greenland and eyeing Venezuela's oil — territorial grabs dressed as diplomacy.

This board accelerates a profound shift: from multilateralism to oligarchy. Trump's second term, buoyed by billionaire backers like Musk (who donated over $250 million to his campaign), has already slashed regulations, gutted taxes on the ultra rich and weaponised tariffs. Global billionaire wealth exploded three times faster in 2025 post election, hitting records with Musk as the first half trillionaire. The board entrenches this, sidelining the UN and empowering a cabal where admission fees (rumoured at $1 billion, as Putin jested) favour the wealthy.

Wealth won't just be "unfairly treated" — it will rule. Billionaires are already 4,000 times more likely to hold power than average citizens. Trump's board amplifies this: imagine Musk, with his X platform amplifying propaganda, dictating ceasefires while BlackRock's Larry Fink shapes investment flows. The poor? Repressed. Protests against austerity — from Kenya's Finance Bill riots to Argentina's union crackdowns — face tear gas, not tax hikes on yachts. Unequal nations are seven times more prone to democratic erosion, and Trump's vision delivers exactly that: policy for plutocrats, crumbs for the masses.

Trump as king? He's always craved it. His "America First" rhetoric masked monarchic impulses — lifelong board chairmanship is the clincher. With the board eyeing UN functions, he positions himself as global sovereign, mediating via Mar a Lago summits flanked by oligarchs. Allies snub it because they see the endgame: a world order where US veto power trumps sovereignty, and wealth buys vetoes too. France balked at the charter's Gaza omissions; the EU fears irrelevance.

This isn't hyperbole. History warns us: unchecked wealth breeds tyranny. Louis Brandeis nailed it a century ago: "We may have democracy, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both." Trump's board chooses the latter, a gilded cage for the world.

Africa, our home, feels this acutely. Our growth hovers at 5 percent amid debt traps and aid cuts, while billionaires extract minerals for AI chips. Trump's tariffs hit our apparel exports; his board ignores our conflicts unless they serve elite interests. Wealth concentration here — tycoons in construction and telecoms — already stifles competition. A global board amplifying that? Recipe for neocolonialism 2.0.

Yet resistance endures. Kenya's Gen Z forced a cabinet sacking; Uruguay's Mujica rose from prison to presidency on people's power. Trade unions narrow wage gaps; civil society demands NIRPs (National Inequality Reduction Plans).

Trump's board is a coronation, not conciliation — crowning wealth as the new deity in a world order where the rich feast and the rest fast. But history bends toward justice when the many unite. Demand wealth taxes, end billionaire buyouts, reclaim multilateralism. Peace isn't pieced out to the highest bidder; it's won by the world's collective will.

■ By Adamu B. Garba II

COMMENT

There will be three centers of power in the new world

What analysts have speculated about for two decades is now codified policy: The post-Cold War epoch of unipolar American hegemony, draped in the language of liberal internationalism and universal values, has been formally terminated. The West's 'moral pretense' – the insistence that its foreign policy was primarily driven by democracy promotion and human rights – has been exposed as an untenable fiction in the face of stark national interests.

In its place, a transactional Tripolar Order has been institutionalized. This structure, defined by the United States, China, and the Russian Federation, can now be called the finalized operational manual for 21st-century geopolitics.

For Africa, this represents the most significant geopolitical recalibration since the Berlin Conference of 1884, when the Western colonial powers converged in Germany to formalize the Scramble for Africa and the 'effective occupation' of its territories. The difference now is that the continent is not a blank slate for European division, but a managed space under new, non-Western actors.

The US in Africa: What's different now?

Contrary to the myth of a globally engaged superpower, the United States has executed a deliberate and historic retrenchment. Its latest National Security Strategy paper is a document of strategic contraction. The primary focus is unambiguous: the consolidation of the American hemisphere. This 'Fortress America' doctrine prioritizes economic and security integration from Canada to Chile, turning the Western Hemisphere into an impregnable zone of influence. Secondary interests are reserved exclusively for the Anglosphere – the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand – culturally and institutionally aligned nations that serve as force multipliers.

The critical passage for Africa and Asia is what the document omits: a strategy for direct engagement. The US has officially disengaged from strategic competition on the African continent. It will close remaining bases, cease military aid designed for influence, and end its democracy and governance programs. Washington's approach is now one of efficient outsourcing. Its insatiable need for cobalt, lithium, and rare earth elements – the lifeblood of its digital and green economies – will no longer be sourced through messy dealings with individual African states. Instead, the US will procure these resources via bulk, state-to-state transactions with the continent's recognized managers: China and Russia. Africa, to Washington, is now a wholesale warehouse, not a diplomatic playground.

The Eastern and Southern hegemon, master of the supply chain

China's sphere, recognized in the tripartite understanding, is vast and economically coherent. It encompasses South Asia, East Asia, and the mineral-strategic spine of Africa: Central Africa (notably the Democratic Republic of the Congo), East Africa (with its ports and belts), and Southern Africa. A confidential but binding US-China trade pact has cemented this.

The terms are a masterpiece of realpolitik: China, through its state-owned enterprises and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) infrastructure, guarantees the secure, uninterrupted extraction and transit of critical minerals from its African zones to global markets. In return, the US has consented to transfer key advanced technologies (as exemplified by the Nvidia chips deal) and, more significantly, has ceded strategic control of regional security surveillance and satellite dominance in these territories to Beijing. China no longer merely invests in Africa; it administers its resource nodes and information domains. It is the undisputed, vertical monopolist of the green and digital transition's supply chain.

Russia: The Northern and Western European security guarantor

Russia's domain, formalized by the impending 'Putrump' accord (the strategic understanding between the Putin and Trump administrations on the general conditions for the Russia-Ukrainian Peace deal and the future of Europe), is one of hard security and political patronage. It stretches from a Finlandized Europe across the Mediterranean to North Africa, West Africa, and key Central African states.

The US decision to withdraw support for Ukraine was not an isolationist whim but a calculated move to remove the final military hurdle to Russia's pacification of Europe. With Ukraine neutralized, European nations, lacking credible autonomous defense, will gradually accommodate themselves to Moscow's security and energy dictates.

In Africa, Russia's offering is not economic miracles but political survivability and security. Through vehicles like the Africa Corps, Russia provides a service no other power can match: security in the face of internal rebellion and Western-instigated instability. It trades in the currency of sovereignty, making it the paramount power across the Sahel and into the coastal states.

Africa remapped: The collapse of Francafrique

The colonial ghosts of Europe are being exorcised. The influence of France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Portugal, and Spain – maintained through the CFA franc, military bases, and paternalistic diplomacy – is in terminal decline. By 2028, it will be a historical footnote. Any African leader still orchestrating their security or economic policy through Paris or London is piloting their nation towards irrelevance and poverty in the new order.

Africa now exists under a collaborative duopoly: Russian security stewardship and Chinese economic administration, and this is a synergistic partnership.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), long viewed as a vehicle for Franco-Nigerian influence, is fracturing. The principle of collective security has been shattered by the defiance of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) – Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. The AES is the prototype for Russia's African sphere: a military-political compact underwritten by Moscow's security guarantee. Its appeal is gravitational. I would project that Guinea-Bissau, Togo, Ghana, Senegal, and Mauritania might seek membership by 2026, drawn by the promise of regime security outside Western condemnation. Chad and the Central African Republic will likely pivot from their regional bodies to this more potent alliance. What could remain of ECOWAS will be a geopolitically insignificant rump of coastal states – Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Liberia – technically intact but stripped of its strategic purpose.

My homeland, Nigeria, exemplifies the new managerial logic. The nation is not being torn apart but is being efficiently managed according to zonal competencies. The Northwestern and Southwestern regions, facing acute internal security challenges, naturally fall under Russia's security purview. Simultaneously, the Central, Eastern, and Northeastern zones, rich in minerals and requiring massive infrastructure, align with China's economic and developmental framework. This is not a conspiracy but a rational division of labor by the resident powers, ensuring stability and resource flow without destructive competition.

What's in it for Africa?

African elites should internalize these foundational truths to navigate the coming decades. The Westphalian myth of equal sovereignty is dead. In the Tripolar Order, sovereignty is stratified. Nuclear capability grants absolute sovereignty. All other nations possess only a conditional, delegated sovereignty, exercised within the boundaries and interests of their managing superpower.

Institutions like the United Nations, WHO, and NATO are becoming artifacts of a bygone order which will likely be repurposed as administrative tools for the Tripolar directors.

The era of aid, grants, and moralistic conditionalities is over. The only remaining '-ism' is transactionalism. Foreign policy is now pure quid pro quo. China seeks resources and strategic alignment; Russia seeks political loyalty and economic concessions; the US seeks secure resource flows. African leaders should become master dealers, offering clear assets (minerals, ports, votes in defunct international bodies) in exchange for tangible returns (infrastructure, weapons, regime security).

Fantasies of US military intervention – to save democracy, to fight terrorism, to stop genocide – must be abandoned. The United States will not deploy troops to Africa; its entire African policy is now subcontracted. Africa's peace and conflict are solely the domain of the Russian security apparatus and, where its investments are threatened, the Chinese.

For Africa, the philosophical debate seems closed. The question is no longer "Who should we partner with?" but "How do we optimize our position within the existing framework?" The path forward demands unflinching pragmatism, transactional brilliance, and a clear-eyed alignment with the relevant power structure.

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Industrial Parks train 350,000 workers, but only 20% remain amid low wages and market crisis

By Eyasu Zekarias

Ethiopia's industrial parks — once hailed as engines of manufacturing growth — are bleeding skilled labour, with only 20% of 350,000 trained workers still employed in the sector, according to a new Policy Studies Institute (PSI) survey.

The comprehensive study, presented at a PSI consultative forum on industrial parks and special economic zones, reveals that while parks have invested heavily in training since the first facility opened in 2007, high turnover, low wages and global market shocks have slashed the active workforce to roughly 70,000.[conversation context]

Dr. Alemnew Mekonen, PSI lead researcher, called the situation "alarming." "Parks have trained over 350,000 workers, but now employ just 70,000. Retention rates are critically low," he said, pinning blame on wages that fail to match urban living costs, particularly for rural youth — especially women — entering factory work for the first time.

Ethiopia operates 24 public and private parks spanning 4,600+ hectares, which peaked at 90,000 employees and 40% of national manufacturing exports. But the AGOA suspension has triggered a sharp downturn: 28% of firms report major export declines, 24% have pivoted to domestic markets, and 14% seek new buyers abroad. This has forced 39% workforce cuts across parks.

Sisay Sintayehu, PSI researcher, highlighted parks' vulnerability: factories import 95% of raw materials, with local linkages below 5%. Foreign currency shortages exacerbate the problem, while inflation and unaffordable housing near hubs like Hawassa and Bole Lemi drive workers away.

The study draws lessons from manufacturing success stories. China selected special economic zones based on rigorous location analysis, resource flows and market access, powering 60% of exports. Vietnam ties investor incentives to performance, pairs vocational training with worker housing, and offers long-term land leases (up to 70 years) for top exporters.

Researchers urged Ethiopia to abandon politically driven park locations for economically viable sites, enforce local supply chain mandates, and shift to results-based tax breaks. "Choose investors on economic merit, not political pressure," Dr. Alemnew said, calling for legal frameworks linking foreign firms to domestic suppliers.

Despite vocational investments, the "industrial dream" is colliding with urban realities. Without wage reforms, housing solutions and market stabilisation, Ethiopia risks squandering its park infrastructure and trained manpower at a time when manufacturing revival is critical for jobs and exports.

Regional fee disparities threaten health insurance rollout, experts warn

By Eyasu Zekarias

Disparate user fees across regions risk undermining the national Social Health Insurance (SHI) system, experts cautioned at a key forum, warning of financial waste, inequity and cutthroat competition for limited funds as coverage expands to government employees and health workers.

At the 22 January 2026 launch of SHI for public health professionals — where the government pledged to fully cover the expected 6 percent salary contribution — participants flagged inconsistent regional pricing as a "key threat." While Ethiopia boasts a national SHI framework, implementation falls to regional branches with autonomy to set service fees, creating wild variations for identical treatments.

"Without national fee harmonisation, health facilities will hike prices to capture more from the national fund," one expert noted. "Regions will compete destructively, draining resources and skewing access unfairly."

The pooled insurance fund — built on mutual contributions — cannot sustain high-cost regions subsidising identical care elsewhere. A patient in one area might exhaust disproportionate funds for the same procedure, eroding equity and trust.

Registration lags compound concerns. Of nearly 500,000 public health facility employees, only 170,000 (24 percent) have enrolled. The Ethiopian Health Insurance Service blames social media misinformation — rumours of "government wage theft" via 6 percent deductions — alongside hurdles like national IDs, institutional TINs and full family data requirements.

"We're countering false narratives that insurance steals salaries," officials stated. "It guarantees their health security."

Federal employees face access confusion: current rules limit them to federal hospitals, stranding workers in peri-urban areas like Sululta, Burayu, Sebata and Dukem far from such facilities.

Over-reliance on government diagnostics risks service gaps, participants urged. While community pharmacies now link to SHI, specialised care demands broader private inclusion — from labs to clinics — to boost capacity and member satisfaction.

A critical bottleneck: "Health Informatics" shortages. Hospitals lack diploma-level IT staff for data quality, risking inconsistencies, payment delays and breaches. "Without permanent IT professionals and proper structures, the system falters," one official warned.

Ethiopian Health Insurance Service Director General Tesfaye Worku framed SHI as central to universal health coverage and national productivity. The government fully funds health sector civil servants' contributions — a "historic" step alongside Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) expansion.

In 2024/25 alone, Gudeta Abebe, Executive Lead for Member Administration and Resource Mobilization, reported 7 billion birr allocated to quality care access. "This demonstrates commitment to healthy citizens driving development," he said.

Yet as SHI scales, harmonised national fees, private sector integration, streamlined registration and IT capacity emerge as make-or-break priorities. Without swift fixes, Ethiopia's health insurance ambition — equitable coverage for all — risks fracturing along regional, technical and informational fault lines.

PHOTO: Anteneh Akililu


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CBE launches sovereign remittance platform to shield diaspora funds from global politics

PHOTO: Anteneh Akililu

By Eyasu Zekarias

Ethiopia has launched a state-controlled digital remittance network to safeguard its critical foreign exchange inflows from international sanctions and political pressures, breaking decades of reliance on Western-dominated payment systems.

The Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE), in partnership with local tech firm EagleLion System Technology, unveiled CBE Connect Digital Wallet — a national infrastructure designed to capture the full $35 billion in annual diaspora remittances currently lost to informal hawala channels. Currently, only 22 percent ($7.2 billion) flows through formal systems, leaving the rest smuggled and beyond government reach.

For decades, Ethiopia — like many developing nations — depended on high-fee international couriers and third-party remittance giants. Transfers faced days-long delays, 10 percent broker commissions and vulnerability to sudden banking bans or sanctions. CBE Connect aims to rewrite this equation.

"This is not just a new app but national infrastructure," declared Besufekad Getachew, CEO of EagleLion System Technology, at the launch. "Ethiopia has built its own global remittance network — ensuring our financial lifelines cannot be blocked by foreign political actors." [file:24 context]

The platform's API Gateway allows global fintechs and remittance firms to connect to Ethiopia's entire banking system within 1–2 days. Partner firms deposit funds into CBE accounts, instantly distributed to recipients across all 70+ million Ethiopian bank accounts — bypassing costly settlement intermediaries.

CBE Connect was developed through on-the-ground research in major Ethiopian diaspora hubs: Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the UAE. In South Africa, where migrants resort to cash smuggling for lack of legal channels, the wallet offers a secure digital alternative. In Saudi Arabia, direct partnerships with platforms like STC Pay enable Riyadh workers to send birr home in minutes via familiar apps.

A landmark policy shift came from the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE), granting CBE Connect exclusive rights to offer Dollar Wallet services — previously illegal for individuals to hold foreign currency digitally. Users can now receive dollars/euros, convert to birr, and access home/car loans directly through diaspora-targeted services.

Ephraim Mekuria, CBE Executive Vice President for Corporate Banking, highlighted CBE Connect's edge over existing wallets like CBE Birr and Telebirr: multi-currency transfers, forex services, Visa/Mastercard compatibility and interbank instant transfers. Future expansions target export LC payments, microfinance and merchant services.

By slashing fees and settlement delays, the platform incentivises formal channels over black-market hawala. EagleLion's StarPay app, launched 16 January 2026, complements CBE Connect as a merchant payment solution.

CBE now acts as Ethiopia's central payment rail, with pre-funded accounts eliminated and commissions collapsed. Diaspora senders save significantly, while Ethiopia gains billions in usable reserves to stabilise the birr, fund imports and ease forex shortages.

The sovereign wallet arrives amid global financial fragmentation — SWIFT exclusions, sanctions weaponisation and rising African pushback against dollar dominance. For Ethiopia, with its 130+ million population and vast diaspora, CBE Connect signals economic self-determination: remittances as national asset, not foreign vulnerability.

Health Minister seeks global aid to end childhood cancer "Nightmare"

By our staff reporter

State Minister of Health has issued an urgent plea for international partnerships to combat a dire shortage of chemotherapy drugs and diagnostic tools threatening thousands of children with cancer each year.

State Minister Dr. Dereje Deguma described childhood cancer as a "nightmare" during the inauguration of the Ethiopian Society of Pediatric Haematology and Oncology (ESPHO), warning that irregular drug supplies force families to abandon treatment midway. With 6,000–8,000 new cases annually — over 10 percent of the country's 80,000 total cancers — only 20 percent of patients receive timely diagnosis, often arriving at hospitals in advanced stages with slim survival odds.[conversation context]

"Drug availability is inconsistent," Dr. Dereje stated. "This chronic shortage creates heartbreaking situations where families must stop treatment for lack of medicine." Despite government subsidies, life-saving chemotherapy remains erratic, compounding low diagnosis rates and limited advanced equipment.

Most patients reach facilities only after the disease progresses severely, when treatment windows narrow dramatically. The minister stressed that global cooperation is essential to secure steady supplies and diagnostic capacity, ensuring Ethiopia's progress in expanding medical access isn't derailed.

The ESPHO launch signals a professional milestone after 15 years of advocacy by specialists. Previously, childhood cancer treatment was virtually nonexistent; now dedicated units operate nationwide.

ESPHO President Dr. Abel Hailu hailed the pioneers who "carried the torch of hope." Key milestones include Jimma University Medical Center's first chemotherapy in August 2016, followed by Mekelle Ayder (2017), Gondar University (2020) and St. Paul's Hospital (2021). Hawassa, Wollega, Bahir Dar and Ambo hospitals are establishing units, decentralising care beyond Addis Ababa.

"From no service at all, we're building regional capacity," Dr. Abel said, crediting over 30 locally trained pediatric hematology-oncology specialists from the past decade.

Ethiopia has transformed a void in pediatric cancer care into functional centres, but experts warn that facilities alone won't suffice. Skilled manpower growth is promising, yet sustained drug supplies, transparent diagnostics and international support remain critical to convert infrastructure into lives saved.

The minister's call comes amid broader health system gains — rural outreach, hospital upgrades — but underscores childhood cancer's unique urgency. ESPHO positions itself as the government's key technical partner, aiming to professionalise response to a disease once dismissed as rare or untreatable in the region. Without global solidarity, Ethiopia risks consigning thousands more children to preventable tragedy.

Industrial Parks train 350,000 workers, but only 20% remain amid low wages and market crisis

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NBE enhances transparency in foreign exchange auctions

By our staff reporter

The National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) has taken steps to improve transparency in its special foreign exchange auctions by adopting a more informative approach, supported by newly issued guidelines that align with international best practices. These efforts, which include restricting foreign exchange interventions to auctions, have been positively received by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In its most recent auction on Tuesday, March 20, the central bank provided more detailed results, marking a departure from its previous practices. This change follows the introduction of foreign exchange auctions as part of the broader economic reforms and forex market liberalization initiated in mid-2024.

Commercial banks had previously expressed frustration over the lack of transparency in the auction process, reporting that procedures and outcomes were not clearly communicated, leaving them uncertain about how bids were evaluated.

An anonymous banker told Capital several months ago, "We were only informed verbally that our bid was unsuccessful and were instructed to collect the funds we offered."

An international banking expert at one of Ethiopia's 32 commercial banks noted that while banks submit bid rates via email as directed by the NBE, the bidding mechanism itself remained unclear. "We have no information about how the bidding works," he stated last April. "We do not even know who opens our emails or whether our bid details are shared."

Another banker mentioned that their bank was disqualified for bidding below the average rate, while a different institution reported its bid was rejected for being slightly above the average in the third auction held on April 1, 2025.

Criticism also extended to the NBE's announcement of results, which bankers claimed lacked sufficient detail, previously revealing only the average rate and the number of successful banks without listing participants or full outcomes.

In response to feedback from market participants and international partners, the NBE issued special foreign exchange auction guidelines on December 30.

These guidelines clarify that allotment is based solely on bid prices, with multiple rates applied for successful bids.

Rates are arranged from highest to lowest in sales auctions and from lowest to highest in purchase auctions until the offered amount is exhausted. In cases of tied bids, foreign exchange is distributed equally among those bidders.

The guidelines also specify that auction results must include the marginal rate, weighted average rate, highest and lowest bid rates, and the number of participants.

The most recent auction exemplifies these improvements. The NBE reported that 21 banks participated, with 15 successfully securing foreign exchange. The lowest bid rate was 150 birr per USD, the highest was 155 birr, and the weighted average rate of successful bids was approximately 154.92 birr per USD. The marginal rate stood at 154.78 birr. The central bank allotted USD 70 million against a total bid amount of USD 94.7 million.

Over the past two months, following the release of a four-month auction schedule, the NBE has sold USD 390 million, including USD 150 million outside the originally published schedule.

The IMF recently acknowledged these developments, stating: "Ongoing efforts by the National Bank of Ethiopia to strengthen FX market functioning are welcome, including publishing FX auction guidelines consistent with international best practice and limiting FX intervention to auctions."

"International Schools" face . . .

Continued from page 1

whiplash for students steeped in inquiry-based international systems now facing rote national exams.

The policy emerges from the Ministry of Education's November 2025 Non-Governmental Educational Institutions Regulation under General Education Proclamation No. 1368/2025, targeting private, international, religious and NGO-run schools. It introduces a two-tier accreditation process with provisional "pre-accreditation" for institutions meeting 85 percent of requirements within one year, followed by full certification. Financial rules mandate foreign-community schools prove 30 percent home-government funding while self-covering 70 percent, alongside triennial fee caps requiring three-month parental consultation for hikes and mandatory legal receipts. All education must remain secular, free of political or religious doctrine. Curricula, if foreign, require certification by their country of origin and registration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with only one curriculum permitted per licence. Teachers and administrators must master their curriculum, while schools ensure student safety, special needs support and parental engagement.

The Ministry insists international curricula must genuinely serve foreign nationals, not become "havens" bypassing national standards for wealthy locals.

"Wealthy families built children's futures on international paths — university abroad, global careers," one parent lamented. Sudden methodology shifts risk "extreme stress and alienation." Expatriates may shun Addis Ababa without reliable international options, while affluent Ethiopians accelerate overseas study — draining forex and talent.

Schools are scrambling. "Rumours circulated; now confirmed. International schools are uniting to respond," parents reported. Capital's repeated outreach to the Ministry yielded no comment.

Analysts predict dual impacts: fewer foreign professionals accepting Ethiopian postings without schooling continuity; early expatriation of elite youth, accelerating capital flight. The 30 percent threshold — realistic for embassy schools, brutal for expat-plus-local hybrids — could shutter or downgrade sector leaders.

Ethiopia faces alarming surge in Cyberattacks targeting critical infrastructure

By our staff writer

Ethiopia is currently the most vulnerable country in the world to malware attacks, according to an assessment from a senior Israeli cybersecurity expert. Government entities and critical infrastructure, including the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and the telecommunications sector, have been repeatedly targeted.

At an Executive Cybersecurity Workshop organized by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology and the Ethiopian Cyber Security Association, in collaboration with the Embassy of Israel, Andrew Pelled, Vice President of the cybersecurity firm Cyber Integrity, discussed the severe challenges facing Ethiopia. He noted the rapid expansion of digital services, stating, "The population is very large, but the services are growing. With more digital services come more risks, attacks, and challenges."

Pelled referenced an INTERPOL assessment that ranked Ethiopia first globally for malware attack detections in 2024. He indicated that the country faces a risk four times higher in critical sectors such as government, telecommunications, banking, and national infrastructure, including essential services like electricity. He explained that there is a significant gap between the pace of digital adoption and the implementation of robust security measures. "As we encounter more challenges, we must implement solutions quickly and securely," he added.

The primary cyber threat vectors in Ethiopia are phishing, ransomware, distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, Business Email Compromise (BEC), and mobile fraud, with critical infrastructure and financial institutions being frequent targets.

Drawing on over fifteen years of experience in cybersecurity and digital resilience, Pelled reported that in the first half of 2024 alone, Ethiopia experienced 4,623 attacks on banks. "These attacks ranged from sophisticated fraud attempts to large-scale credential theft operations, jeopardizing the stability of the financial ecosystem," he stated.

He also highlighted the scale of DDoS attacks, noting that 40 billion attempts were recorded against telecom networks in just 14 days, threatening nationwide connectivity and causing significant service degradation. Attacks on critical national assets are another major concern, with many ministries and the GERD facing sophisticated attempts aimed at data theft, service disruption, and the compromise of operational technology/industrial control systems (OT/ICS).

Phishing remains the primary method for initial compromise in Ethiopia. "Threat actors are using AI-generated texts and sophisticated impersonations of trusted entities—such as local banks and government ministries—to deceive users," Pelled explained.

Ransomware has also emerged as a significant threat to financial organizations, focusing on encrypting data and sensitive information. "These attacks lead to severe operational downtime, financial loss, and reputational damage," he noted, adding that recent incidents indicate a shift toward "double extortion," where attackers threaten to leak data if the ransom is not paid.

Israeli Ambassador to Ethiopia, Avraham Neguise, emphasized that as Ethiopia undergoes an impressive digital transformation—expanding e-government services, fintech, digital infrastructure, and innovation ecosystems—safeguarding digital assets is increasingly critical.

"Israel is proud to partner with Ethiopia on its journey toward a secure and innovative digital future. Our two countries share a long-standing relationship based on mutual respect, friendship, and practical cooperation," he stated. "Over the years, Israel and Ethiopia have collaborated in areas such as agriculture, water management, health, and education. More recently, this cooperation has extended into the realms of digital technology, high-tech, and innovation, reflecting the evolving needs of modern economies."

He underscored that Israel is globally recognized as a leader in cybersecurity.

ECMA shields small savers in new investor protection fund, bars big corporations

By Eyasu Zekarias

Ethiopian Capital Markets Authority (ECMA) has unveiled draft rules for a landmark Investment Protection Fund that prioritises compensation for small private investors while explicitly excluding large corporations and institutional players — a move designed to build public trust in the nascent financial sector.

Announced during a stakeholder forum on the draft regulation — grounded in Article 103 of Capital Market Proclamation No. 1248/2013 — the fund covers losses from broker negligence, fraud or insolvency, but not market fluctuations. Sirak Solomon, ECMA's senior legal advisor, emphasised its focus: safeguarding everyday savers channeling hard-earned bank deposits into shares for their children's future or rainy days.

"Small investors can't afford lengthy court battles like big firms," Sirak stated. "This fund protects their life savings from service provider failures."

The fund targets the vulnerable "transition period" — from handing cash to a broker until shares hit the market. If a broker misappropriates funds, diverts money improperly or collapses, compensation kicks in swiftly, bypassing litigation.

Crucially, it excludes investment losses from price drops. "We avoid the word 'guarantee' — market risk is yours alone," ECMA clarified. Examples of covered claims: brokers pocketing payment without buying securities. Uncovered: bonds tanking due to economic shifts.

Maximum payout caps at 100,000 birr per investor — mirroring bank deposit insurance — sufficient for most retail participants in Ethiopia's emerging market. "Lose 30,000 birr? Full recovery. Lose 5 million? Capped at 100,000," Sirak illustrated.

To recover payouts, ECMA introduces "whistleblower fees" rewarding tips on hidden or stolen broker assets. Detailed operations — payment processes, compensation committee rules — fall to flexible ECMA directives, avoiding repeated cabinet approvals for minor tweaks.

Excluding giants signals to corporate Ethiopia: no government backstop. Institutional investors must rigorously vet brokers and banks, fostering market discipline.

For ordinary citizens, the fund marks a trust-building milestone. By shielding small savers — not tycoons — from broker misconduct, ECMA aims to lure depositors from banks to stocks, fuelling capital market growth.

As Ethiopia builds its exchange and disclosure regimes, this retail-first safety net underscores social equity: the little guy's savings matter more than boardroom bets. With rules finalised, public uptake could redefine how Ethiopians grow wealth beyond fixed deposits.

Africa's FDI falls one-third as capital rushes to data and tech hubs

By our staff reporter

Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows to Africa fell by about one-third in 2025, even as global FDI rose 14 percent to an estimated USD 1.6 trillion, according to a new UNCTAD Global Investment Trends Monitor released in January 2026. The report warns that lower income economies, including most of Africa, are being left behind as capital concentrates in data centres, semiconductors and rich country financial hubs.

UNCTAD estimates that FDI to Africa dropped from USD 96 billion in 2024 to about USD 59 billion in 2025, reversing the previous year's spike that had been boosted by a single large transaction. While global flows to developed economies surged 43 percent and high income economies saw a 22 percent rise, developing economies overall recorded a 2 percent decline, with Africa among the hardest hit.

Egypt remained the continent's top FDI destination with inflows of around USD 11 billion, while Angola moved back into positive territory at roughly USD 3 billion after nine years of net divestment. Mozambique's inflows jumped 80 percent to USD 6 billion as work resumed on major LNG projects, but these gains were not enough to offset sharp declines elsewhere on the continent.

Across Africa, announced greenfield projects – which indicate future investment – held up better than flows but were still fragile. The number of greenfield announcements ticked up 6 percent to 845 projects in 2025, yet international project finance deals, crucial for infrastructure, fell 7 percent in number.

UNCTAD notes that FDI to lower income countries worldwide fell 5 percent to USD 159 billion in 2025, underlining "persistent challenges" in accessing external finance, managing high risk perceptions and overcoming structural vulnerabilities. Africa, where most states fall into this category, is particularly exposed as FDI remains a critical source of long term capital for infrastructure and industrialisation.

Although Africa's greenfield project count rose modestly, the value of such projects across lower income economies fell 30 percent to USD 189 billion, with most sectors registering lower investment except data centres, which saw a 44 percent increase. International project finance in lower income countries proved relatively resilient, with total value up 7 percent to USD 218 billion, but project numbers still declined.

Globally, UNCTAD identifies data centres and semiconductors as the standout winners of 2025, together reshaping the FDI landscape. Data centre greenfield projects alone attracted more than USD 270 billion – over one fifth of all announced investment – led by France, the United States and the Republic of Korea, with emerging markets such as Brazil, Thailand, India and Malaysia also among the top hosts.

By contrast, sectors that are central to Africa's development agenda weakened. Greenfield investment in renewable energy fell 28 percent worldwide to USD 197 billion, while the value and number of international project finance deals in renewables dropped to their lowest levels in four years. Investment in extractives and critical minerals, where African countries had hoped to leverage resource endowments, also declined sharply, with project values down 36 percent and critical minerals projects down 63 percent compared to 2024.

Infrastructure related greenfield and project finance deals – spanning power, transport, telecoms and real estate – shrank 10 percent in number globally in 2025, although total value remained broadly flat due to a few mega deals. For Africa, where regional integration and industrial corridors depend on roads, ports, power and digital backbones, the continued slide in international project finance represents a structural risk.

UNCTAD highlights that international project finance is now at a five year low, while domestic sponsors have begun to fill some of the gap, especially in renewable energy, with a 58 percent increase in the number of domestically led deals and a 21 percent rise in value worldwide. However, most African countries lack the fiscal space and capital markets depth to replace foreign sponsors at scale.

Looking ahead to 2026, UNCTAD sees highly uncertain prospects. A further rise in global FDI is possible as borrowing costs ease and mergers and acquisitions accelerate, but the agency warns that geopolitical tensions, regional conflicts and policy fragmentation will likely keep real project activity subdued.

Any growth in flows, it argues, will probably be driven by a handful of mega transactions and conduit flows through financial centres, with capital increasingly concentrated in strategic sectors like data centres and AI related semiconductors rather than broad based industrial or infrastructure projects in poorer regions.

For Africa, the numbers underscore a widening investment divide: as capital races into digital infrastructure and advanced manufacturing in rich and emerging hubs, the continent risks being further sidelined unless it can attract and structure deals that link its energy transition, resource base and large young market to these new global investment priorities.

Africa's poverty rises as billionaire power grows: Oxfam

By our staff reporter

A hard-hitting Oxfam report has spotlighted Africa's alarming slide into deeper poverty since 2020, even as billionaire fortunes explode globally, creating fertile ground for elite control and democratic backsliding across the continent.

The report titled 'Resisting the Rule of the Rich' reveals that poverty reduction has stalled worldwide, with numbers rising sharply in Africa. Nearly half the global population (48%, or 3.83 billion people) lived in poverty in 2022, while one in four faces moderate or severe food insecurity — up 42.6% since 2015.

Billionaire wealth has hit record highs, surpassing 3,000 individuals for the first time. In 2025 alone, fortunes grew three times faster than pre-Trump averages, with Elon Musk becoming the first half-trillionaire. This surge coincides with hunger affecting one in four people globally, including 92 million in Europe and North America.

Africa exemplifies the disconnect: extreme wealth concentrates while poverty climbs, enabling "oligarchic" influence over politics. Billionaires are 4,000 times more likely to hold office than ordinary citizens, buying elections, media and policy via donations and lobbying.

Faced with protests against unaffordable living costs and austerity, governments opt for crackdowns rather than taxing the rich. The report details brutal responses in Kenya (39 killed, 71 abducted in 2024 Finance Bill protests) and Argentina (1,155 injured under Milei's billionaire-backed reforms).

In Africa, this plays out amid debt crises and inequality, with elites scapegoating migrants to distract from systemic failures. Unequal countries are up to seven times more likely to see democratic erosion — undermining judiciaries, restricting liberties and normalising authoritarianism.

Oxfam demands National Inequality Reduction Plans targeting Gini coefficients below 0.3 and an International Panel on Inequality like the IPCC. Governments must tax super-wealth, ban rich campaign finance, regulate lobbying and protect civic space.

Trade unions, civil society and grassroots movements are hailed as counterweights, with successes like Uruguay's José Mujica showing the power of mobilising the poor.

The report concludes: Africa and the world face a stark choice — oligarchy or democracy. With billionaire power at its peak, the continent must prioritise redistribution to safeguard freedoms and halt poverty's rise.

Africa Report flags Ethiopia's low farm productivity, calls for tech-led transformation

By our staff reporter

A major new Africa-wide study has warned that Ethiopia must move far more aggressively on technology, research investment and digital tools if it is to unlock the full potential of its agricultural sector and tackle persistent rural poverty.

The 2025 Annual Trends and Outlook Report (ATOR 2025), released by AKADEMIYA2063 under the AU's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), finds that most of Sub-Saharan Africa's growth, including in Ethiopia, still comes from expanding cultivated area rather than from innovation and efficiency gains. While countries like those in Asia used improved seeds, irrigation, mechanisation and research to raise yields and cut poverty, African productivity remains "stagnant" once land expansion is stripped out.

The report shows that African governments, Ethiopia among them, still spend well below the CAADP target of 10 percent of national budgets on agriculture, and even less on long-term research and development. Public agricultural research spending across Sub-Saharan Africa averages just over US$2 billion a year, far behind regions that successfully used science to drive a Green Revolution.

Authors argue that this underinvestment directly limits total factor productivity (TFP) – the efficiency with which land, labour and capital are used – and slows structural transformation. Micro-level studies cited in the report indicate that, for many smallholders, productivity growth has been flat or even negative, contributing to only modest reductions in extreme poverty and hunger since 1990.

ATOR 2025 stresses that Africa's problem is no longer a lack of technology but the failure to adopt and scale it. It highlights digital agriculture, artificial intelligence, geospatial tools, improved seeds, biotechnology, mechanisation, modern irrigation, insect farming and aquaponics as proven or emerging solutions that could raise yields, cut losses and build resilience if properly deployed.

A new "Untapped Potential Index" shows that many countries, including Ethiopia, have high needs and growing readiness for AI and geospatial tools in agriculture but very low actual use, pointing to a large gap between opportunity and reality. Digital advisory platforms, for example, have been shown to boost yields and incomes when tailored to local conditions and embedded in trusted relationships, but weak infrastructure, low digital literacy and limited finance are holding back scale.

The report repeatedly notes that technology alone will not transform Ethiopia's agrifood system without stronger institutions, coherent policies and lower transaction costs. It calls these "the real technology frontier" – arguing that improved seeds, fertilisers and digital tools only deliver impact when backed by predictable regulation, effective extension systems, producer organisations and functioning markets.

Seed policy and regulatory frameworks are singled out as a core challenge in many African countries, where slow variety release, weak quality control and fragmented markets limit farmers' access to climate-resilient, locally adapted seed. ATOR 2025 urges more harmonised, science-based rules at regional level, and better integration of informal and farmer-managed seed systems, which remain vital for smallholders.

Producer organisations and cooperatives are highlighted as critical intermediaries for complex technologies, from AI-driven advisory to digital finance. By aggregating demand, brokering partnerships with service providers and building trust, they can help smallholders adopt innovations more quickly and fairly.

The study also underlines the importance of data and monitoring for policy decisions, noting that CAADP's Biennial Review has improved accountability but still suffers from gaps and delays in national statistics. It calls for stronger use of digital tools, geospatial data and real-time information systems to track yields, climate risks, market flows and investment impacts.

For Ethiopia, which is already rolling out digital farmer registries and advisory hotlines, the report suggests that scaling such systems – and ensuring they feed into planning and budgeting – will be central to building a more evidence-based agricultural strategy.

Comparative chapters on China and Latin America show how long-term investment in research, extension, rural infrastructure and innovation systems allowed those regions to shift from land expansion to productivity-led growth. They also demonstrate how targeted use of digital tools, intelligent input management and value-chain integration improved efficiency and competitiveness.

The report argues that Ethiopia and its neighbours can draw on these experiences while tailoring solutions to local conditions, especially by prioritising agricultural R&D and technology adaptation, building digital and climate-intelligence infrastructure, empowering producer organisations and SMEs as innovation partners, and aligning public spending with high-return interventions rather than short-term input subsidies.

Overall, ATOR 2025 frames the next decade as a decisive window for Africa's agrifood transformation under the newly adopted Kampala Declaration and CAADP Strategy and Action Plan 2026–2035. It urges governments, including Ethiopia's, to treat science, technology and innovation as "strategic assets" and to move from ad hoc reforms towards integrated, innovation-driven strategies.

With the right mix of investment, governance reform and inclusive digitalisation, the report concludes, countries like Ethiopia can shift from simply expanding farmland to leading on climate-smart, technology-enabled agriculture – turning a lagging sector into a driver of jobs, resilience and shared prosperity.


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Spotlight

Ever catch the perfect picture with your digital camera or camera phone and wish you could find a way for others to experience it? Here is your chance. If you find yourself at the right place at the right time and happen to catch an amazing scene you believe someone else should see, send us your news pictures with no more than 30 words to spotlight@capitalethiopia.com and we will publish it.

Global Supply Chains Enter Era of Structural Volatility, World Economic Forum Report Finds

Global value chains have entered an era of structural volatility, according to a World Economic Forum report released today, forcing companies and governments to reevaluate how and where they invest and produce. The report finds that nearly three in four business leaders now prioritize resilience investments, with 74% viewing resilience as a driver of growth.

Set against a backdrop of geopolitical fragmentation, accelerating technological change and mounting resource constraints, the new report – Global Value Chains Outlook 2026: Orchestrating Corporate and National Agility – developed in collaboration with Kearney, examines how companies and governments can remain competitive as disruption becomes a permanent feature rather than a cyclical shock.

“Volatility is no longer a temporary disruption; it is a structural condition leaders must plan for,” said Kiva Allgood, Managing Director, World Economic Forum. “Competitive advantage now comes from foresight, optionality and ecosystem coordination. Companies and countries that build these capabilities together will be best positioned to attract investment, secure supply and sustain growth in an increasingly fragmented global economy.”

RT LAUNCHES FREE ONLINE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE COURSE FOR FOREIGNERS

RT’s multimedia project ‘Gateway to Russia’, designed for international audiences, has launched a free online Russian language course for beginners aiming to reach the A1 (Elementary) proficiency level. Lessons are currently available in English, with plans to roll out versions in additional languages later this year.

In addition to grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics, learners will explore Russian culture and everyday life. All course modules are connected by a cohesive storyline featuring an Englishman traveling by train across Russia.

The course comprises 21 main units plus a dedicated section on the Russian alphabet and pronunciation. Each unit includes reading and listening to dialogues, grammar explanations, vocabulary building, interactive exercises, video content, and listening practice. Every module concludes with a progress test.

The RT project ‘Gateway to Russia’ enables foreign users to not only learn the Russian language, but also deepen their knowledge of Russian history and culture. Additionally, it offers information on citizenship, education, and relocation to the country.

Ethiopia, India agree on visa-free travel for diplomats

Ethiopia and India have signed an implementation agreement granting mutual visa-free travel for holders of diplomatic passports and announced that work has begun on a highly sensitive data center project for Ethiopia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), underscoring a deepening of bilateral cooperation.

The agreement on the exchange of diplomatic notes was signed on January 15, 2025, at the Indian Embassy in Addis Abeba by Anil Kumar Rai, Ambassador of India to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the African Union, and Ambassador Dewano Kedir, Director General for Middle East, Asia, and Pacific Affairs at Ethiopia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The exchange of notes enables the immediate implementation of the visa waiver, which both sides described as a significant step toward enhancing diplomatic mobility and institutional collaboration. The Ethiopian Embassy said the agreement reflects a high level of trust and a shared commitment to facilitating smoother diplomatic engagement.

TAXI QUOTES

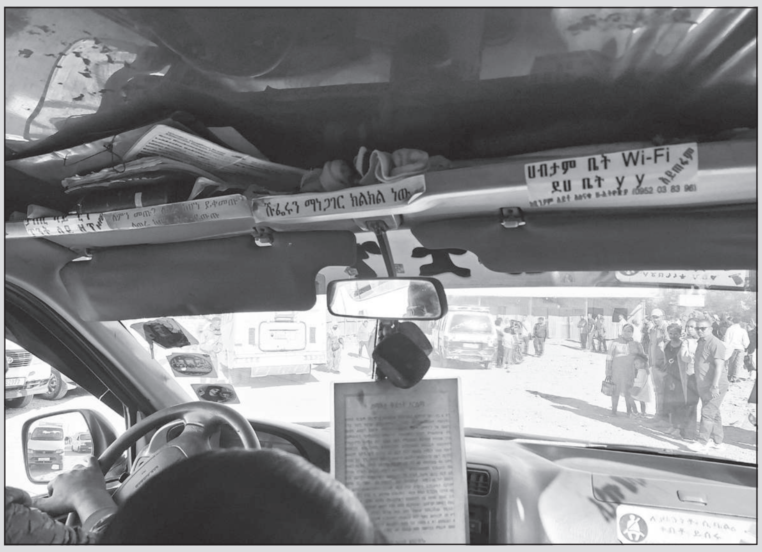


PHOTO: Anteneh Akilu

SIDEWALK PROJECT

PHOTO: Anteneh Akilu

LIVING THAT HOG LIFE

PHOTO: Anteneh Akilu

Women in Conservation to take center stage at The Global Conservation Tech and Drone Forum 2026

The Global Conservation Tech & Drone Forum (GCTDF 2026) has announced the inclusion of the Women in Conservation Forum (WiCF), to be held on Monday, 2nd March 2026 in Nairobi.

This initiative, backed by key government and conservation partners including Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Action Labs, and funding sponsors - The Wildlife Society and Island Foundation, underscores the Forum's commitment to amplifying the indispensable role women play in conservation across Kenya and Africa.

In Kenya and throughout the continent, women are at the forefront as community conservancy leaders, wildlife rangers, researchers, and advocates. Their unique perspectives are critical for effective, inclusive conservation outcomes.

The WiCF is designed to honor this contribution by creating a focused space for women practitioners, policymakers, researchers, private-sector leaders, and global partners to connect.

Egypt shifts narrative on GERD, demands compensation from Ethiopia

Egypt has shifted its public stance on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), with the country’s Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Hani Sweilem, demanding that the dam pay compensation for the damage it has caused to Egypt and Sudan.

Speaking during a plenary session of the Egyptian Senate on Sunday, Minister Sweilem said that no dam of GERD’s scale has ever been constructed on the Nile River through unilateral action. He claimed the dam has already reduced Egypt’s share of Nile water by 38 billion cubic meters from its allocated 55 billion cubic meters.

According to Sweilem, Egypt’s water demand has now risen to 88.5 billion cubic meters, while its allocated share remains at 55.5 billion cubic meters. “We reuse 23.2 billion cubic meters annually to bridge the water gap, and treatment plants contribute an additional 4.8 billion cubic meters,” he said, adding that Egypt’s per capita water share has fallen to 500 cubic meters—half the global average of 1,000 cubic meters per person.

IATA and CFM International Renew Pro-Competitive Agreement on Engine Maintenance

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced the renewal of an agreement with CFM International (CFM) through February 2033, supporting increased competition in the market for maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) services for engines manufactured by CFM, a 50/50 partnership between GE Aerospace and Safran Aircraft Engines.

“Airlines have long struggled with the aftermarket business practices of manufacturers, which have limited competition and resulted in high costs for airlines. These pressures have become even more acute as limited maintenance capacity and aerospace supply chain constraints have driven up costs and grounded aircraft. A recent IATA study estimated that these challenges added $5.7 billion1 to engine leasing and maintenance costs for airlines in 2025.

The renewal of this agreement is well-timed. While not a panacea, the practical and pro-competitive aftermarket practices that this agreement obligates are essential for a healthy industry in the long-term. Critically, if used to its full potential, this agreement will also provide much-needed short-term cost and capacity relief for airlines as they work to meet customer demand amid ongoing aerospace supply chain failures. CFM should be commended for taking the lead with this important reform and other manufacturers must take notice and step up,” said Willie Walsh, IATA’s Director General.

Capital NEWS IN BRIEF

Ugandan President's Son Threatens Opposition Leader

Uganda's army chief, who is also the son of long-serving president Yoweri Museveni, said he wants opposition leader Bobi Wine dead, days after Wine claimed he had been forced into hiding. General Muhoozi Kainerugaba's comments come after Museveni won an eighth term following an election on Thursday that was widely criticised by poll observers and rights groups. The embattled opposition, led by 43-year-old Bobi Wine -- real name Robert Kyagulanyi -- says they faced violence and intimidation ahead of the vote, with international bodies also accusing the government of "brutal repression". "We have killed 22 NUP terrorists since last week. I'm praying the 23rd is Kabobi," Kainerugaba posted on X late Monday night, referring to Wine and his National Unity Platform (NUP) party.

(AFP)

Sudan to Get Chinese Transformers for War-Damaged Power Grid

Sudan’s energy ministry is working with Chinese firm Siyuan Energy Company to supply transformers and mobile power stations to repair infrastructure damaged by the country’s civil war, a ministry statement said on Tuesday. The electricity sector has suffered extensive damage in the 20-month conflict, with approximately 150,000 kilometres of transmission lines and 15,000 transformers affected, according to ministry figures. Key power stations in Bahri, Garri and Jebel Aulia have also been severely damaged. Consulting Engineer Mu’tasim Ibrahim Ahmed met the regional director of Siyuan Energy Company in Cairo on Tuesday to discuss accelerating the delivery of hydroelectric generation transformers, the statement said. Both sides agreed the Chinese company would conduct field assessments of war-damaged stations in Sudan and urgently supply emergency mobile transformation stations to provide immediate relief, it added. They also discussed adding more transformers to their agreement.

(Sudan Tribune)

Somalia Confirms Talks on Red Sea Security Pact with Saudi Arabia and Egypt

Somalia’s federal government has confirmed the existence of a proposed three-way security agreement with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, aimed at strengthening cooperation on Red Sea security and expanding military collaboration, a government spokesperson said. The agreement, which officials said is still being finalized, focuses on boosting strategic security coordination, deepening military ties and reinforcing the three countries’ joint role in regional stability. ... The confirmation comes after Somalia recently canceled security and port agreements with the United Arab Emirates, accusing Abu Dhabi of violating Somalia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Somali government cited the transfer of a leader linked to Yemen’s separatist movement from within Somalia without informing the federal authorities. Officials close to the talks said Saudi Arabia has applied diplomatic pressure on Somalia to scale back its ties with the UAE, amid growing tensions between the two Gulf powers, both members of the OPEC+ alliance. The rift has been fueled by disagreements linked to the war in Yemen and broader regional influence.

(Garowe Online)

Somali President Visits City Claimed by Breakaway Region

Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud on Friday visited a provincial capital claimed by the breakaway region of Somaliland -- the first visit there by a sitting president in over 40 years. The visit to Las Anod, the administrative capital of the Sool region, comes amid heightened diplomatic tensions in the Horn of Africa after Israel officially recognised Somaliland, drawing strong opposition from Mogadishu. Mohamud was attending the inauguration of the president of the newly created Northeast State, which became Somalia's sixth federal state in August. It was the first visit by a Somali president since 1984. Somalia is a federation of semi-autonomous states, some of which have fraught relations with the central government in Mogadishu. The Northeast State comprises the regions of Sool, Sanaag and Cayn, all territories Somaliland claims as integral to its borders.

(AFP)

South Sudan’s President Fires Interior Minister, Wife of Detained VP Machar

The president of South Sudan has dismissed his interior minister, the wife of a detained opposition leader with whom he was running a unity government following a peace agreement that ended a five-year civil war. President Salva Kiir on Monday evening removed Interior Minister Angelina Teny, a senior opposition figure and the wife of detained First Vice President Riek Machar. No reasons were given for the dismissal. Kiir replaced her with Aleu Ayieny Aleu, a veteran loyalist who previously served as interior minister from 2013 to 2015. The move further weakens the 2018 peace agreement, which allocated the Interior Ministry to the opposition under a power-sharing arrangement. Machar, a former rebel leader who joined the unity government in 2020 following the peace agreement, remains in detention with several associates, facing treason charges linked to violence in Nasir in Upper Nile state.

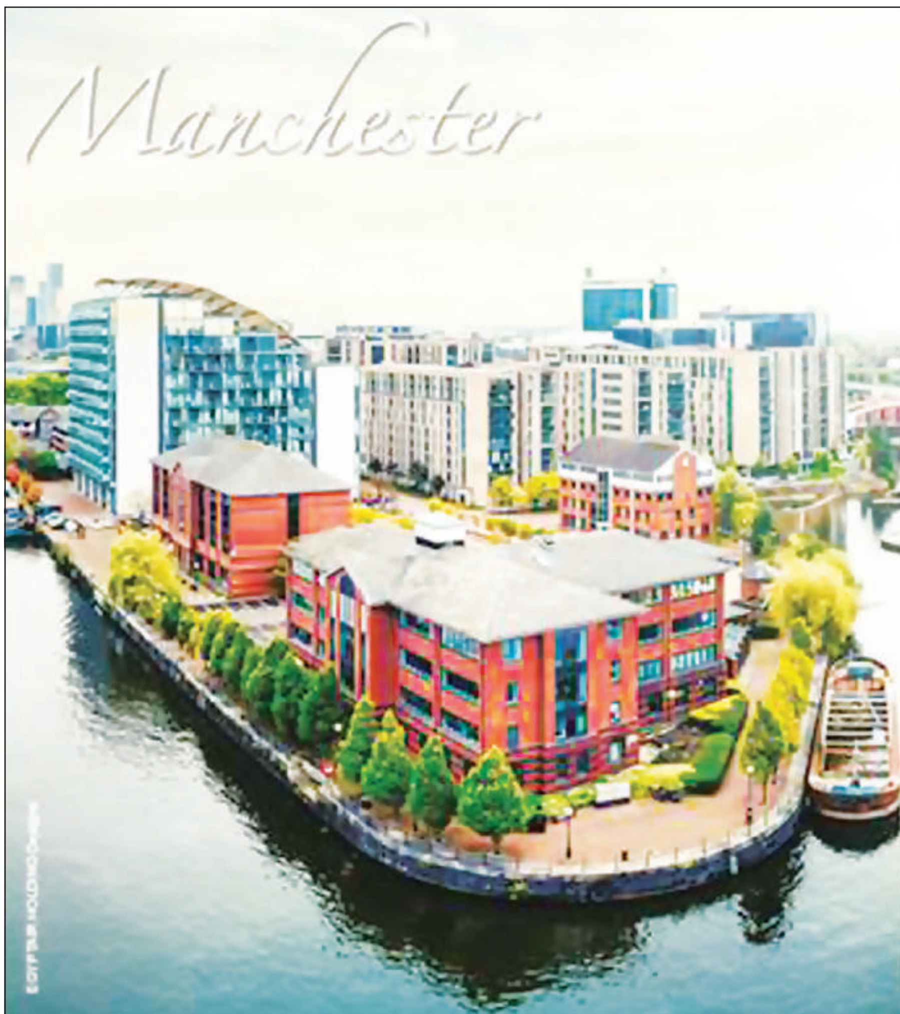
(Africanews)

Term of the Day

INFERIOR GOOD

Definition

"Inferior good" is an economic term that describes a good that people buy less of when they earn more money. These goods fall out of favor when incomes and the economy improve, as consumers begin buying more costly substitutes instead.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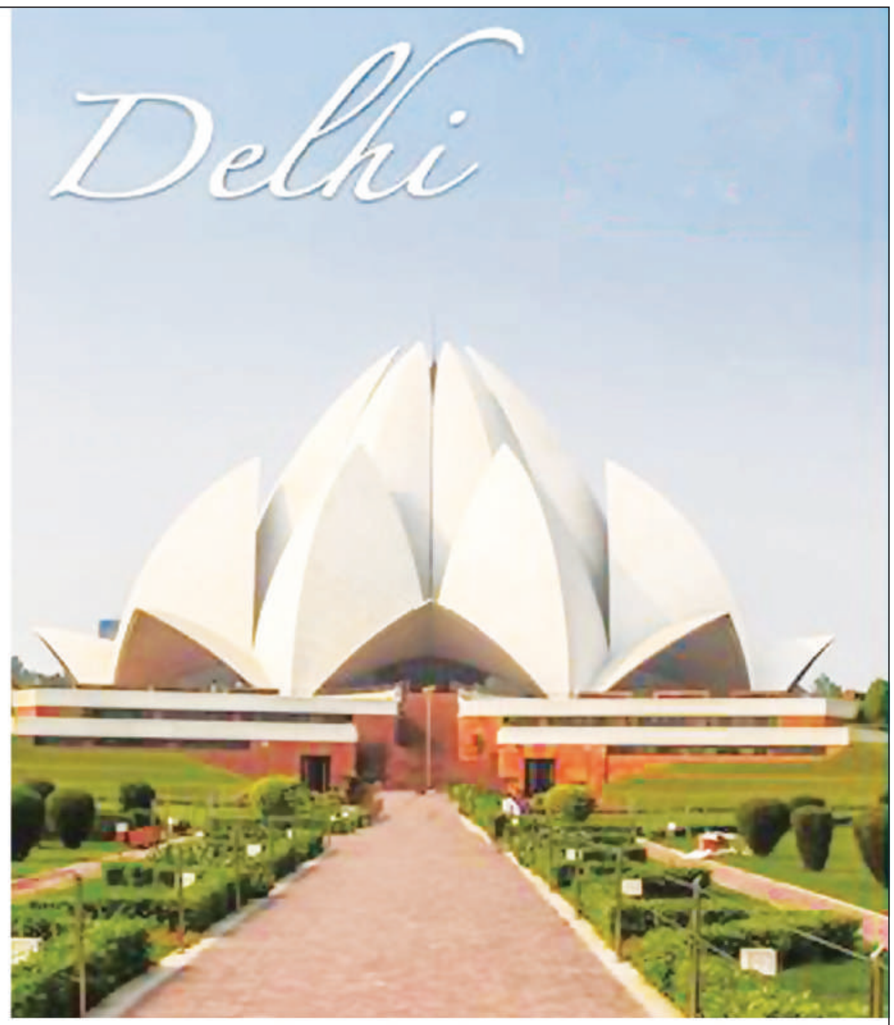
Delhi


Newark


Dhaka
BANGLADESH
EGYPTAIR
A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

TikTok and The Attention Economy

Alazar Kebede

The recent IShowSpeed's visit to Addis Ababa became a highly visible moment of digital-era cultural exposure, blending influencer spectacle with global attention. The American livestreamer arrived in Addis Ababa as part of his broader Africa tour and immediately drew massive online audiences, with hundreds of thousands watching live and millions more viewing clips afterward. His presence turned ordinary city spaces into global stages in real time.

During his stay, IShowSpeed engaged with both everyday urban life and symbolic national sites. He visited landmarks such as the Adwa Victory Memorial, explored areas like Merkato, and participated in elements of Ethiopian culture, including traditional food and coffee ceremonies. These moments often spontaneous, unscripted, and emotionally expressive, resonated strongly with his young, international audience.

The impact extended beyond entertainment. For Addis Ababa, the visit functioned as a form of informal digital diplomacy and tourism promotion, showcasing the city to demographics rarely reached by traditional media or marketing campaigns. Ethiopian officials, local creators, and residents actively interacted with the streams, amplifying their reach and framing the visit as a positive spotlight on the country's history, hospitality, and modern urban life.

At the same time, the event illustrated the power of TikTok and the attention economy. A single influencer, operating outside formal institutions, was able to shape global perceptions of a city within hours through algorithm-driven visibility. IShowSpeed's Addis visit underscored how contemporary cultural narratives are increasingly formed not by broadcasters or governments, but by platforms, personalities, and real-time audience engagement.

TikTok is often discussed as a social media platform, a national security concern, or a cultural fad. These frames miss the larger point. TikTok is not merely an app; it is one of the most sophisticated and consequential engines in the modern attention economy. To understand TikTok is to understand how attention has become the most valuable, and contested, resource of the digital age, and how its extraction is reshaping culture, politics, labor, and even the way individuals experience time and selfhood.

The attention economy rests on a simple premise: human attention is finite, monetizable, and highly predictable when captured at scale. Platforms compete not for subscription fees, but for minutes and seconds, which are then converted into advertising revenue, behavioral data, and influence. TikTok represents a decisive evolution in this model. Unlike earlier social networks that relied on social graphs, who you know, who you follow, TikTok is built almost entirely on an interest graph. Its algorithm does not care who your friends are. It cares only about what holds your gaze.

This distinction matters. TikTok's "For You" page is not a feed curated by social relationships or conscious choice, but by continuous behavioral experimentation. Every swipe, pause, rewatch, and abandonment is a signal. The platform runs millions of micro–A/B tests daily, optimizing relentlessly for one outcome: retention. The result is an experience that feels uncannily intuitive, even addictive. Users often report that TikTok understands them better than they understand themselves. From the platform's perspective, that is not a side effect; it is the product.

Critics often focus on content quality short videos, trends, memes, and dance challenges as evidence of cultural decline. This critique is superficial. The real shift is not in content length or style, but in how culture is produced and consumed. TikTok collapses the distance between creator and audience, virality and obscurity. A teenager in a bedroom can reach millions overnight, not because of social status or institutional backing, but because an algorithm deems the content engaging. This democratization is real, and it has enabled new voices, subcultures, and forms of creativity to flourish.

Yet democratization in the attention economy comes with strings attached. Visibility is no longer earned primarily through sustained excellence or credibility, but through performance optimized for algorithmic preference. Creators learn quickly what works: rapid hooks, emotional intensity, controversy, novelty. Subtlety, nuance, and long-term thinking struggle to survive in an environment where the first two seconds determine success or failure. The platform does not reward truth or wisdom; it rewards watch time.

This has implications far beyond entertainment. Political discourse on TikTok is increasingly influential, particularly among younger users. Complex policy issues are compressed into sound bites. Moral outrage travels faster than deliberation. Misinformation spreads not necessarily because users are malicious or ignorant, but because the system privileges emotionally charged content that keeps people watching. In this sense, TikTok does not merely host discourse; it shapes its incentives, often in ways that are misaligned with democratic deliberation.

The attention economy also reshapes labor. Influencer culture is often portrayed as frivolous, but it is better understood as a precarious form of digital piecework. Creators are effectively independent contractors producing content for a platform they do not control, subject to opaque algorithmic changes. Income is unstable, burnout is common, and success requires constant production. The algorithm never sleeps, and neither, it seems, can the creator. In this way, TikTok mirrors broader trends in the gig economy: flexibility paired with insecurity, autonomy paired with dependence.

At the individual level, the costs are more subtle but no less profound. TikTok excels at fragmenting attention. Its endless scroll, short-form videos, and rapid topic shifts train the brain to expect constant stimulation. Many users report difficulty concentrating on tasks that require sustained focus—reading long articles, studying, or even holding conversations without checking their phones. This is not a moral failing; it is a predictable outcome of repeated conditioning. When an environment is optimized to capture attention, attention itself is reshaped to fit the environment.

Defenders of TikTok rightly note that moral panics about new media are nothing new. Radio, television, and video games all faced similar critiques. There is truth in this. However, the scale and precision of today's attention extraction are unprecedented. TikTok does not merely broadcast content; it personalizes it in real time, using vast datasets and machine learning models refined through continuous feedback loops. This is not mass media in the traditional sense. It is individualized persuasion at industrial scale.

The geopolitical concerns surrounding TikTok—particularly its Chinese ownership—are often framed in terms of data security and foreign influence. These issues are important, but they risk obscuring a more uncomfortable reality: even if TikTok were owned by a domestic company, the core dynamics of the attention economy would remain. The problem is not one platform or one country. It is an economic model that treats human attention as a resource to be mined, optimized, and sold.

What, then, is the alternative? Calls to ban TikTok may offer political catharsis, but they do little to address the underlying incentives that drive platform behavior. Regulation focused on transparency, data usage, and algorithmic accountability is a more constructive starting point, though it is technically and politically challenging. At the individual level, digital literacy and intentional media consumption can mitigate harm, but placing the burden entirely on users is unrealistic.

Ultimately, TikTok forces a broader societal question: what kind of attention economy do we want? One that maximizes engagement at all costs, or one that aligns technological innovation with human flourishing? Attention is not just a commodity; it is the foundation of learning, empathy, and civic life. How we design systems that compete for it will shape not only markets, but minds.

TikTok did not invent the attention economy, but it has perfected it. Whether that perfection serves us or consumes us remains an open question.

The Dynamics of Digital Milestones in the New Chronicle

By Gezachew Wolde

The evolution of technology has become a crucial factor in defining, studying, and understanding generations and their connections.

Each generation is now characterized not solely by chronological events but by the specific technological advancements that shaped their upbringing and the habits these technologies fostered.

The shifting dynamics of human behavior, driven by evolving technology, are redefining generations in unprecedented ways. Technology is transforming how new generations process information and adapt their lifestyles.

Digital societies have evolved from simple interest-based groups into powerful ecosystems that transcend traditional boundaries of geography, culture, and kinship. These digital realms are profoundly reshaping human relationships.

Online communities often surpass geographical or familial limits, enabling relationships—such as marriages and business partnerships—to form. The launch of the iPhone in 2007 revolutionized communication, socialization, and media consumption. The rise of social media from 2004 to 2012 redefined identity, relationships, and activism.

People now use digital platforms to cultivate virtual intimacy for both intellectual and romantic connections, fostering deep emotional bonds often before meeting in person.

Many relationships today begin on dating apps or social platforms, and even within online gaming communities, where initial attraction grows through text, voice, pictures, and video chats, resulting in strong connections that transcend distance.

This trend has accelerated the use of social media, messaging apps, video calls, and online communities. Dating apps like Tinder and Bumble, along with niche forums, enable people to connect across continents, breaking down geographical barriers.

The constant accessibility of digital communication allows for daily interactions and real-time sharing of thoughts and emotions, fostering trust more quickly than traditional in-person courtship.

Geographic distance is less of a barrier now; couples may go months or even years without meeting, yet still cultivate strong, loving bonds virtually. Many modern couples fall in love online, with their relationships flourishing before ever meeting face-to-face.

Cross-cultural marriages are becoming increasingly common, facilitated by shared interests and values discovered through online communication, thanks to technology.

Privacy, authenticity, and digital literacy are now core values for generations, helping individuals navigate the modern technological landscape while prioritizing meaningful connections.

The rise of digital platforms has also revolutionized job hunting, making it easier to secure employment both locally and internationally. Today, international employment processes—from application to document submission to contract execution—are conducted entirely online.

You can browse and apply for jobs worldwide from the comfort of your home using major platforms like LinkedIn, Indeed, and Glassdoor, as well as specialized country-specific job boards.

Technology is boldly redefining relationships and even classifying generations. Historical events like wars, economic crises, and political movements are no longer the sole means of defining generational cohorts.

The study of human behavior, shaped by technological advancements and associated habits, is gaining attention for classifying generations. Terms like Zillennials, Generation Alpha, iGeneration, Gen Y, Gen X, and Gen Z reflect the influence of technology in shaping these groups.

Zillennials (or Zennials) are a micro-generation born between the late 1990s and early 2000s, situated between Millennials and Generation Z.

Generation Alpha is the first cohort to be born entirely in the era of smartphones, AI, and social media.

Generation Y, commonly known as Millennials, includes individuals born roughly between 1980 and 1994. They grew up during the rise of personal computers, the internet, and early social media platforms, making them the Digital Pioneers. Their technological journey began with dial-up internet, mobile phones, and the emergence of social media.

Generation X, typically defined by birth years from 1965 to 1979, experienced technology in childhood without digital connectivity. They adapted to computers, the internet, and mobile technology as adults.

The iGeneration (iGen or Gen Z) consists of those born between 1995 and 2012. They have never known life without the internet, having grown up with smartphones, social media, and high-speed connectivity. This generation has always had access to internet and mobile technology, engaging with the tech landscape through platforms like TikTok, streaming services, and AI.

The intersection of technological advancement and changing human behavior is reshaping how generations are classified and understood. From the analog childhood of Generation X to the digital familiarity of Generation Alpha, each generation's identity is profoundly influenced by the specific technologies that shaped their formative years.

Digital platforms facilitate online connections, fostering emotionally supportive friendships between strangers based on shared humanity. The phrase "The sky is the limit" traditionally conveys boundless potential, but in today's digital world, the possibilities are even more expansive, often described as limitless.

Digital technology transcends physical, geographical, and temporal boundaries, granting unprecedented access to information, connections, creativity, and innovation worldwide.

Historically, relationships were often based on proximity—who you lived near, worked with, or were born to. Today, connections can be formed based on shared interests established through digital platforms, transcending biological and geographical boundaries.

Virtual intimacy has emerged as a defining feature of modern relationships, profoundly altering how we form, experience, and maintain connections through technology.

Digital payment platforms have created a new norm, enabling users to conduct transactions with unprecedented ease and speed across physical boundaries. Social media and e-commerce sites offer highly tailored experiences, significantly influencing consumer decisions and brand selection.

Moreover, innovative digital content platforms are redefining learning and information dissemination, overcoming traditional barriers and making education more accessible and interactive than ever before.

These technological milestones, characterized by their instantaneous, borderless, and deeply personal nature, are reshaping how people think, feel, and relate to the world, providing original and transformative digital experiences that impact many facets of human life.

The generational boundaries, once defined by human adventure and historical events, have now shifted to digital time zones, marking a new chapter in history shaped by the dynamics of technological milestones.

You can reach the writer via gzachewwolde@gmail.com

Beyond the Blueprint and unto the Human Algorithm

By Befikadu Eba

In the financial districts of the world, from London to Singapore, the story of India's Aadhaar project is often cited not as a simple case study, but as a monumental cautionary tale of ambition outpacing execution. In 2009, India launched one of history's most audacious technological endeavors: to biometrically register over a billion citizens into a single, sophisticated digital identity system. The vision was transformative - to purge corruption from welfare schemes, unlock financial inclusion, and create a seamless digital economy. The world watched in admiration. Yet, for years, the project's promise was shadowed by a stark reality - the cutting-edge system, built with private-sector agility, was handed to a vast, fragmented, and digitally unprepared state bureaucracy. The result was a painful period of exclusion, where the failure of a fingerprint scanner in a remote village could mean the denial of essential food rations. The system was world-class, but the human and institutional capacity to integrate, manage, and ethically govern it at the "last mile" was not. The grand vision was held hostage not by its own design, but by the critical gap in the expertise required to bring it to life.

This global precedent stands as more than a distant lesson. It is the crucial framing for understanding the sheer, groundbreaking magnitude of what Ethiopia is now undertaking. The "Finance Forward" agenda, championed by His Excellency, PM Abiy Ahmed (PhD), is not a simple policy adjustment - it is a transformative and unprecedented re-creation of the nation's economic foundations. Never before in Ethiopia's history has there been such a comprehensive and visionary blueprint to simultaneously construct sovereign institutions, launch a domestic capital market, and digitally rewire the entire financial ecosystem. This represents a paradigm shift of audacious scope, a deliberate leap from a state-led development model to a modern, integrated, and market-enabled economy. Its core principles are both profound and unimpeachable: institutional strength as the bedrock of true independence, capital efficiency as the engine of equitable growth, and digital integration as the non-negotiable gateway to global competitiveness.

To celebrate this historic vision is to also acknowledge the monumental key to its realization. Its success is entirely dependent on a parallel undertaking of equal revolutionary importance - the systematic cultivation and integration of a new generation of Ethiopian expertise directly into the engine of government. The blueprint for a modern economic architecture has been boldly unveiled.

Now, the defining national mission must be to forge the master builders, the engineers, and the ethical stewards who can transform this visionary document into a resilient, inclusive, and dynamic reality.

The specific interventions outlined - from fortifying monetary policy frameworks to launching a domestic capital market and professionalizing state asset management - are not administrative tweaks. They are highly technical, globally interconnected undertakings. A modern central bank navigating volatile international capital flows requires more than prudent officials. It needs teams of econometric modelers, market operations specialists, and financial stability analysts who speak the complex language of global finance. A strong securities exchange is not defined by its trading floor but by the invisible web of trust enforced by regulators who are experts in fintech surveillance, corporate governance law, and behavioral economics. The proposed digital infrastructure for finance will be only as strong as the cybersecurity architects and data governance experts who protect it. This demands a targeted import of skills that the traditional civil service, for all its dedication and institutional memory, was not designed to house. Appreciating the reform agenda, therefore, begins with appreciating this stark human capital imperative.

This strategic infusion of talent serves as the primary catalyst for the profound institutional culture shift the reforms implicitly demand. New experts, trained in data-driven decision-making and collaborative problem-solving, naturally act as bridges between long-isolated ministries. Their professional ethos - oriented around transparency, peer review, and measurable outcomes - can gradually reshape organizational DNA, turning bureaucratic silos into networked, missionoriented teams. This directly enables the "coordination and connectivity" emphasized as vital for success, ensuring that the National Bank, the Ministry of Revenues, and the Ethiopian Investment Holdings are not just reformed in isolation but are harmonized in purpose and operation.

Moreover, this new cadre of professionals is the single most potent signal of credibility to the outside world. International investors and multilateral institutions do not assess commitment through policy documents alone. They scrutinize the human capital within key agencies. Encountering regulators, negotiators, and policy directors with world-class expertise and professional credibility builds immediate trust. It demonstrates that Ethiopia is not merely borrowing concepts but is internalizing the complex knowledge required to steward them responsibly. This elevates the nation's standing in every negotiation, from debt restructuring to attracting foreign direct investment, thereby materially strengthening the very sovereignty the reforms aim to secure.

Ultimately, however, the highest purpose of embedding this expertise is to safeguard the equity and public trust at the core of the national project. The lesson from experiences like Aadhaar is that technologically sophisticated systems, without deeply contextual and ethically grounded management, can inadvertently deepen inequality. The new financial architecture must be built and overseen by professionals who are as committed to inclusive design as they are to macroeconomic stability. They must engineer capital market rules that protect the small investor, design tax systems perceived as just, and ensure digital platforms serve the farmer in a remote rural village as reliably as the entrepreneur in Addis Ababa. Their skill ensures that the immense power of these new institutions translates into broad-based prosperity, preventing progress for the few and exclusion for the many.

The "Finance Forward" vision rightly sets a destination of economic sovereignty and transformation. Its full realization now depends on a national commitment of equal boldness: the commitment to invest in, attract, and empower the people who can build the journey. This requires a deliberate talent strategy - meritocratic, competitive, and clear-eyed - that draws from our universities, the global diaspora, and the dynamic private sector. It means creating public sector roles that challenge the best minds and reward performance. The plan for a new economic engine is on the table. The nation must now forge the engineers.

Befikadu Eba is Founder and Managing Director of Erudite Africa Investments, a former Banker with strong interests in Economics, Private Sector Development, Public Finance and Financial Inclusion. He is reachable at befikadu.eba@eruditeafrica.com.

Entrepreneur PROFILE:

RESUME

Name: Beza Mengistu

Education: : Master's candidates

Company name: ZERAF DESIGN

Title: Founder & Creative Director

Founded in: 2023

What it does: High-end creative design and contemporary fashion

Hq: Addis Ababa / Online

Number of Employees: : 4 permanent and 11 contractual workers

STARTUP CAPITAL

190,000 birr

CURRENT CAPITAL

Growing

BIG PICTURE

Reason for starting the Business: To bridge the gap between traditional craftsmanship and modern, global creativity

Biggest perk of ownership: Having the creative freedom to set my own trends

Biggest strength: Consistency, vision, and the ability to turn challenges into creative opportunities

Biggest challenge: Managing rapid growth while maintaining the high quality of every single piece

Plan: To establish ZERAF as a leading creative fashion brand in Africa that exports the "African Aesthetic" to the world

First career: Designer

PERSONAL

Most interested in meeting: Virgil Abloh and Any visionary global fashion icon

Most admired person: Donatella Versace

Stress reducer: Sketching new ideas or a quiet cup of Ethiopian coffee

Favorite pastime: Exploring local markets for inspiration and fabrics

Favorite book: Creativity, Inc. by Ed Catmull and Amy Wallace

Favorite destination: Milan and Paris (for the fashion) or the Ethiopian highlands (for the soul)

Favorite automobile: Hyundai, SUV's

DAILY EXCHANGE RATE

Jan. 23, 2026

Commercial Bank of Ethiopia

CURRENCY	BUYING	SELLING
US DOLLAR	151.60	154.6408
POUND STERLING	198.3835	202.3512
EURO	176.5027	180.0328
SWISS FRANK	184.981	188.6806
SWEDISH KRONER	15.8198	16.1362
NORWEGIAN KRONER	14.7246	15.0191
DANISH KRONER	23.1929	23.6568
JAPANIS YEN	0.9582	0.9774
CANADIAN DOLLAR	107.5779	107.5779
SAUDI RIYAL	40.402	41.2101
UAE DIRHAM	41.2821	41.2821

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NATIONAL BANK OF ETHIOPIA

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (REOI)

Country:

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Client:

National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE)

Assignment Title:

Design, Development, and Implementation of a Financial Transaction Data Exchange Platform with Integrated Anomaly Detection and Analytics System

Selection Method:

Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS)

Procurement Reference No.: NBE/ICB/REOI/G/01/2026

1. Background

The National Bank is undertaking a strategic initiative to strengthen its oversight, monitoring, and analytical capabilities across the financial market. As the central monetary and regulatory authority, the Bank has a mandate to safeguard financial market integrity, enhance transparency, and detect irregular, abusive, or illicit activities that may undermine macroeconomic stability and financial system confidence.

In recent years, the increasing volume, velocity, and complexity of transactions across commercial banks, trade and customs systems, remittance channels, and other financial intermediaries have created significant challenges for effective supervision and oversight. Data is currently fragmented across multiple institutions and systems, limiting the Bank's ability to obtain a consolidated, timely, and holistic view of market activity. These data silos reduce the effectiveness of traditional monitoring approaches and constrain proactive risk identification.

To address these challenges, the National Bank intends to establish a centralized Financial transaction Data Exchange Platform integrated and advanced anomaly detection, analytics, and investigation capabilities. The envisioned solution will consolidate financial data from all participating institutions into a single, governed platform and apply modern data engineering, graph analytics, alerts and machine learning techniques to detect suspicious patterns, abnormal behaviors, and emerging systemic risks that may not be visible through conventional rule-based methods.

This initiative represents a transition from fragmented, retrospective analysis toward **a near real-time/real-time, data-driven supervisory model.** The solution is expected to support both operational investigators and senior leadership by providing intuitive investigative tools, consolidated case views, and executive dashboards that enable informed decision-making and timely regulatory intervention.

Accordingly, the National Bank is issuing this **Request for Expressions of Interest (REOI)** to identify qualified and experienced vendors with proven capability in regulatory data platforms, financial crime analytics, FX monitoring, and large-scale on-premise deployments. The purpose of this REOI is to assess market capability, solution maturity, and delivery readiness ahead of a potential formal procurement process. Participation in this REOI does not constitute a commitment to proceed with a tender but will inform the Bank's subsequent procurement strategy.

2. Objective of the Assignment

The objective of this assignment is to **design, develop, and deploy a full-scale, production-grade Financial Transaction Data Exchange Platform** and integrated **anomaly detection, analytics, alert and reporting** capabilities that will:

- Consolidate transactional data from all relevant institutions into a unified repository
- Enable advanced analytics and machine-learning-driven detection of anomalous and illicit financial activities
- Provide investigators, analysts, and senior management with actionable insights and alerts through intuitive dashboards
- Strengthen NBE's regulatory oversight, financial integrity monitoring, and decision-making capabilities

The objective of this implementation is to establish **a centralized, secure, and production-grade Financial Transaction Data Exchange and Anomaly Detection Platform** that enables the National Bank to obtain a consolidated, timely, and accurate view of finacial transactions across the financial sector. The solution aims to strengthen regulatory oversight, enhance **financial market integrity**, and support proactive identification and investigation of abnormal, suspicious, or illicit financial activities.

Specifically, the implementation seeks to **eliminate data fragmentation** by aggregating data from all participating banks and relevant institutions into a single governed platform, supported by robust data ingestion, standardization, and quality controls. By applying advanced analytics, graph-based relationship modeling, and machine-learning-driven anomaly detection, the system will enable the Bank to detect complex transaction patterns and emerging risks that are not easily identifiable through traditional monitoring methods.

The solution is also intended to **support operational efficiency and informed decision-making** by providing investigative analytics tools for analysts and compliance teams, as well as executive dashboards for senior management. These capabilities will allow users to visualize networks, investigate cases, monitor system performance, and track financial market risks in near real time. Ultimately, the implementation aims to enhance the Bank's supervisory effectiveness, improve regulatory responsiveness, and lay a scalable foundation for future data-driven supervision and advanced analytics initiatives.

2.1. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this implementation are to:

1. **Centralize Financial Transaction Data**

Establish a unified Data Exchange Platform that consolidates transactional data from all banks and relevant sources into a single, governed repository.

2. **Improve Data Quality and Governance**

Enforce standardized data models, validation rules, and transformation processes to ensure consistency, accuracy, and reliability of financial data.

3. **Enable Advanced Anomaly Detection**

Deploy machine-learning and graph-analytics-based detection capabilities to identify abnormal transactions, networks, and systemic risk patterns with reduced false positives.

4. **Enhance Investigative Capabilities**

Provide analysts and investigators with intuitive tools for visualization, case management, and deep transaction analysis through a unified investigative interface.

5. **Strengthen Executive Oversight**

Deliver executive dashboards offering high-level insights, trends, and performance metrics to support strategic supervision and regulatory decision-making.

6. **Support Near Real-Time Monitoring**

Enable timely ingestion, analysis, and visualization of transaction data to improve responsiveness to emerging risks and market anomalies.

7. **Ensure Production Readiness and Scalability**

Implement a robust, secure, and scalable on-premise solution suitable for nationwide deployment and long-term operational use.

8. **Lay the Foundation for Future Analytics**

Establish an extensible data and analytics architecture that can support future big data, AI, and advanced supervisory analytics initiatives.

The assignment is intended as a **full production implementation**, not a proof-of-concept.

3. Scope of the Assignment

The scope of work includes, but is not limited to, the following components:

3.1 Financial Transaction Data Exchange Platform

Design and implement a secure, interoperable platform to aggregate data from all commercial banks and other relevant systems into a centralized repository. The platform shall enforce strong data governance, standardization, validation, and timestamping to ensure data quality and integrity.

3.2 Data Ingestion and ETL Integration

Develop robust, automated ETL pipelines capable of ingesting both batch and real-time data through secure APIs, message queues, and SFTP mechanisms. The system shall cleanse, standardize, and harmonize heterogeneous data formats into a common data model.

3.3 Anomaly Detection Engine

Implement advanced analytics leveraging machine learning, graph analytics, and link analysis to detect anomalous all transaction patterns at micro and macro levels. The system shall support continuous learning based on analyst feedback to improve detection accuracy and reduce false positives.

3.4 Analytics Dashboards and Reporting

Develop investigative dashboards for analysts and investigators, including link analysis, timelines, and drill-down capabilities, as well as executive dashboards providing high-level metrics, trends, and risk indicators. The solution shall support reporting, alerting, and case management workflows.

4. Implementation Approach

The assignment shall be delivered as a **fully integrated, production-ready solution,** covering:

- End-to-end system integration
- Comprehensive testing and validation
- Nationwide readiness for all participating institutions
- Support for go-live and operational handover

The solution must be scalable, resilient, secure, and suitable for long-term regulatory use.

5. Technology and Deployment Requirements

- **Deployment Model:** Fully on-premise deployment within NBE infrastructure
- **Architecture:** Modular, scalable, and vendor-neutral
- **Technology Stack:** Preference for open standards, open APIs, and open-source components where feasible
- **Integration:** Secure APIs, Automatic message queues, and SFTP-based ingestion mechanisms
- **Security:** Compliance with industry best practices for encryption, access control with multifactor authentication, and data protection

6. Data Integration Responsibilities

- NBE and participant institutions will provide access to raw data
- The selected vendor will be fully responsible for data cleansing, transformation, standardization, and loading
- Custom transformation rules shall be developed to harmonize institution-specific data formats

7. Vendor Eligibility and Qualification Requirements

Interested firms must demonstrate the following:

7.1 Domain Experience (Mandatory)

- Proven experience in transaction and communication anomaly detection, actor behavior analysis, CTF, FX monitoring, financial crime analytics, or regulatory supervision
- At least two (2) comparable deployments in central banks, FIUs, or regulatory institutions

7.2 Geographic and Contextual Experience (Preferred)

- Experience in African or comparable emerging-market environments
- Familiarity with heterogeneous banking systems and on-premise regulatory environments

7.3 Delivery Speed and Readiness (Mandatory)

- Proven ability to deliver production-ready systems within short implementation timelines
- Use of mature, non-experimental components

7.4 On-Premise Deployment Capability (Mandatory)

- Demonstrated capability to deploy and support solutions in sovereign, regulator-hosted environments

7.5 Big Data and Scalability Readiness (Mandatory)

- Ability to process high-volume and high-velocity data
- Compatibility with future big data, AI, and analytics platforms

7.6 Sustainability and Knowledge Transfer (Mandatory)

- Structured knowledge transfer and training for NBE staff
- Comprehensive documentation and handover
- Avoidance of long-term vendor dependency

8. Conflict of Interest

Interested firms shall disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest. Firms with undisclosed conflicts may be disqualified in accordance with applicable procurement policies.

9. Submission Requirements

Interested firms shall submit:

- Company profile and legal registration documents
- Summary of relevant experience and comparable assignments
- Description of proposed technical approach and implementation readiness
- Any additional information demonstrating capability to deliver the assignment

EOIs shall be submitted in English, in both hard and soft copy, duly signed and stamped by authorized personnel.

10. Selection Method

Shortlisting and subsequent selection shall be conducted in accordance with the **National Bank of Ethiopia Procurement Manual, using a Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS)** method.

No.	Description	Weight (100%)
1	Specific experience	60%
1.1	Bidder must submit at least five certificates of satisfactory execution of contracts related to the assignment provided by contracting parties to the course of the last five (5) years	40
1.2	Bidders must submit previous work experience in Implementation of a Data Exchange Platform with Integrated Anomaly Detection and Analytics System for Central Banks for financial institutions.	20
2	General experience	30%
2.1	>5 years' experience	30
2.2	4-5 years' experience	25
2.3	2-3 years' experience	20
2.4	<2 years' experience	15
3	Clarity of the proposal/EOIs	10%

Documents required from applicants

a. Certified copy of valid registered VAT or equivalent.

b. Certified copy of valid tax identification Number (TIN);

c. Renewed trade license for this fiscal year;

d. Valid Tax clearance certificate.

The final selection of the organization to conduct the study shall be based on a quality-and cost-based selection (QCBS) method through request for proposals.

On all pages of the EOI proposal document, the organization's stamp should be sealed near the authorized signatory, and all pages should be numbered, dated, signed, and stamped. The application must be signed by an authorized individual. Additional sheets that the applicant must attach should be numbered and submitted as a package with a signed letter. The applicant may provide any additional information he or she believes is necessary to demonstrate his or her ability to perform the proposed system.

1. The Expressions of interest (EOIs) and all documentations shall be submitted in English, one original and one copy (in hard and softcopy) having been signed on each page by authorized personnel and delivered to the address below on or before **February 12, 2025 until 4:00 PM** in the Afternoon. The Applications will be opened on **February 13, 2025 at 10:30 Am** in the morning at the Office of National Bank of Ethiopia. Documents received after the deadline will not be considered valid and will be returned unopened.
2. The Employer reserves the right to accept any part of or all applications and the right to reject any part or all applications.
3. Late submissions shall be rejected.
4. The following addresses is for processing activities such as for issuance of documents and/or for clarification regarding the invitation.

Attention: Procurement Services Management Directorate

National Bank of Ethiopia

P. O. Box.5550

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Interested and eligible applicants may obtain further information from the Procurement Services Management Directorate with the following telephone and e-mail addresses.

Tel. +251-11- 517-5167, +251-11- 517-5165, +251-11- 517-5162/5161

E-mail: psmd@nbe.gov.et

INTERVIEW

With the privilege of speaking with a remarkable figure whose journey embodies resilience, vision, and profound generosity, Lemma Getachew hails from the historic walled city of Harar, Ethiopia. Thirty-six years ago, a young Lemma fled conflict, found refuge in Somalia, then built a new life in the United States — from taxi driver to licensed pharmacist, business magnate and philanthropist. Now CEO of The Inspirion Group, the Ethiopian-American developer shares his inspiring story of turning adversity into achievement while uplifting his homeland. Excerpts;

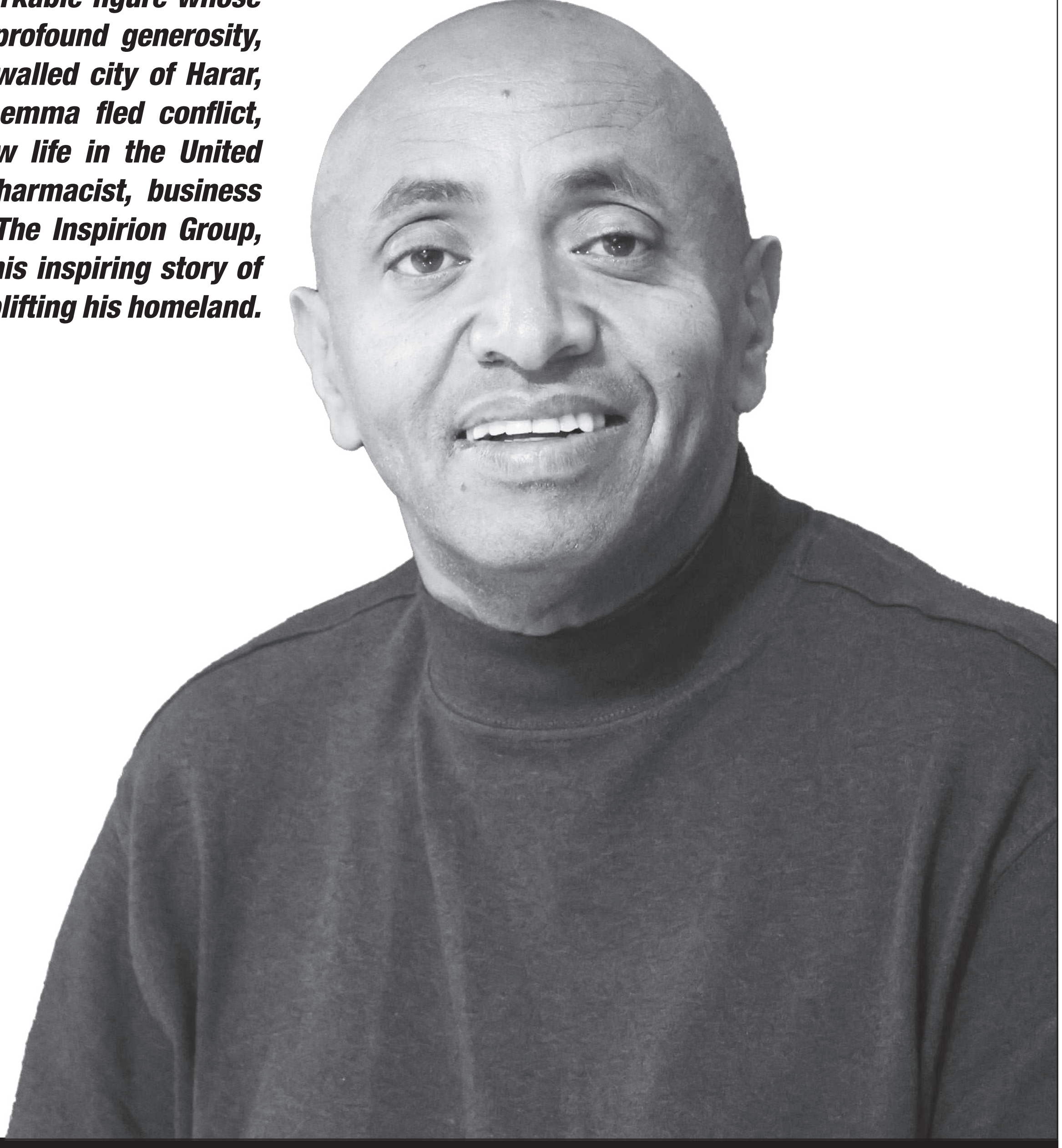

PHOTO: Anteneh Akilu

FROM HARAR STREETS TO AMERICAN EMPIRE

Capital: Before we discuss your major business successes, let's go back. It's said you were involved in business as a child. What was it like when you came to Addis Ababa from Harar as a refugee during the Ethio-Somali War?

Lemma Getachew: It's true; my business life started in early childhood. At that time, I was a fourth-grade student—around 11 or 12 years old. I would go around the Kazanches area in Addis Ababa selling gelato. We walked as far as Bambis, sold everything within an hour or two, and returned.

Capital: How did the opportunity to go to America come about?

Lemma: Yes, the story goes like this: I dropped out of university in the late 1980s. Then, along with my Somali friends, I went to Mogadishu and stayed there for about eight months. One day, while I was at the UNHCR to collect some money my brother—a medical doctor based in the U.S.—had sent me via Geneva, the UNHCR Director in Somalia and an immigration official from the U.S. Embassy happened to be there.

At that time, most refugees were coming from the Wollo famine and didn't speak English. When they saw me, they asked, "Young man, what are you doing here?" I shared my story with them. They informed me they could facilitate my move to the U.S. if I had a sponsor there. Since my brother had already sent sponsorship papers, this opportunity allowed me to enter the U.S.

Capital: When you arrived in America, did you go straight into education? How did you complete your studies?

Lemma: Yes, I went directly to Howard Community College to study Pre-Pharmacy. Then I attended Long Island University and graduated as a pharmacist. I supported myself through school by driving a taxi, which provided quick cash. Although the government had given me a loan, driving the taxi allowed me to pay for my education and complete my studies within two to three years.

Capital: How did you transition to business after your pharmacy studies? Did you start as an employee?

Lemma: I worked 12 hours a day for a large corporation and was a loyal employee. On weekends, I would work from 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM. One day, without consulting me, they hired someone else for my position and transferred me elsewhere. They treated me with contempt, thinking, "This guy is a fool; he'll work wherever we send him." I was furious and decided to quit.

When I applied to another corporation, the Pharmacy Director wasn't available, so I spoke with the Vice President instead. At that time, there was a shortage of pharmacists. During our conversation, I unexpectedly mentioned, "I have my own company." He asked me to submit paperwork, and I used that one-month window to register and establish my company. I started working at $50 an hour and eventually began hiring my friends, growing my pharmacist staffing company.

Capital: When did you shift into "Home Care" and open your own pharmacy?

Lemma: Around the year 2000, a friend informed me he had opened a Home Care business in Minnesota. Other pharmacists advised against leaving a stable job for elderly care, but I didn't heed their warnings. I hired a retired nurse and launched the business. Later, an elderly gentleman named Mr. Godan offered me a building to open my own pharmacy, so I purchased a closed-down pharmacy to start. That pharmacy became very successful.

Business significantly expanded when we began "Compounding"—preparing medications in ointment form. We became the number one compounding pharmacy in Ohio and ranked fourth across several states, with up to 300 sales representatives and many professionals.

Capital: As part of your large conglomerate, you have also ventured into real estate. How many apartments do you currently own? What are the "Addis View" and "Midtown" projects?

Lemma: I entered real estate by initially buying 40 units, and later expanded to 1,000 units. Currently, I am developing a significant project called "Addis View," which will eventually be a 500-unit apartment complex. "Midtown" is a luxury apartment building located downtown.

Capital: How long did you remain in the pharmacy business before transitioning to real estate? What challenges did you encounter?

Lemma: I stayed in the pharmacy sector for three or four years. My biggest challenge was pharmacy benefits management, a large Fortune 500 company that controls both insurance and pharmacies. They had the right to audit the drugs sold through my pharmacy.

I learned that the price of a drug called "Doxycycline" was set to increase from five cents to five dollars, so I bought it in bulk and stockpiled it. As a result, the company filed an audit claim to remove me from the market.

Capital: Isn't it challenging to compete against such billionaire companies? How did you succeed?

Lemma: I outsmarted them. I hired expensive lawyers to buy time. While dragging the case through court and arbitration, I opened another pharmacy in my wife's name in the same city. While they were occupied with the lawsuit, I generated millions of dollars at my main pharmacy. Ultimately, we settled with an agreement that I "wouldn't open a pharmacy for three years."

By then, I had made the money I wanted and transitioned all my customers to the pharmacy I opened in my wife's name. I thank God for my journey from Ethiopia and my ability to compete with such large companies.

Capital: This tactic of exploiting legal loopholes is something President Trump also employs. As a businessman, how do you feel about using legal loopholes?

Lemma: While I'm not necessarily proud of it, it is a legal avenue allowed by the American system. For instance, when Trump claims, "I don't pay taxes," I can't deny that I don't pay taxes either. Why? Because there are lawful methods permitted by the government, such as "Depreciation" and other expenses. Under real estate law, you can reduce the value of a property each year for 30 years and avoid taxes. This is why two out of three millionaires in America have made their wealth through real estate. I paid significant taxes when I owned the pharmacy, but now that I understand the real estate system, I've legally minimized my tax burden.

Capital: In business, competitors or large corporations might resort to lawsuits. How can one navigate such pressures?

Lemma: The key is to understand the system. If the law provides a loophole, you should utilize it to protect your business. When I say I "outsmarted" them, I don't mean I broke any laws; rather, I found a way to navigate the same legal framework they used to challenge me. A businessman shouldn't give up in the face of challenges; instead, they should develop a strategy supported by experts. My experience with taught me valuable lessons.

Capital: How did you transition into the real estate business, given your background as a pharmacist?

Lemma: While working as a pharmacist, I purchased a 40-unit apartment building, and the profits were substantial. I began to question, "Why am I working so hard in pharmacy?" and ultimately decided to switch to real estate full-time. At one point, I managed a thousand units. There is no business as lucrative as real estate in America, and I encourage anyone who has the means to pursue it.

Capital: Is there a recommended starting point for individuals new to business?

Lemma: It depends on your circumstances. I began as a single-house landlord and expanded from there. The most important thing is simply to start.

Capital: What drives your tendency to hire highly knowledgeable experts for your projects?

Lemma: My understanding of the business has allowed me to "outsmart" the market. However, the real secret is hiring people who are smarter than you. For example, my wife and I brought on a Jewish professional named Mark Shelles, from whom we learned a great deal, particularly about securing business incentives from the U.S. government.

Capital: Can you explain the "Midtown" project that received government support?

Lemma: "Midtown" was an apartment building that had been closed since the 1970s due to asbestos contamination. After I renovated and reopened the building that the government had shut down, the city recognized its immense value. By introducing 80 luxury units, we attracted 80 affluent residents to the area, boosting local commerce. Consequently, the government provided not only financial support but also a 30-year tax abatement. The Mayor himself encouraged us to proceed because it was crucial for the city's economic vitality.

Capital: Is your current focus on "Addis View" and new construction?

Lemma: Yes, I've shifted my focus from old buildings to new construction. "Addis View" is situated near University Circle, the cultural and educational district in Cleveland, Ohio. In the future, we plan to build up to 500 modern apartments there. New buildings are easier to manage, have lower operational costs, and attract professional tenants who pay their rent on time.

Capital: What did you learn from your experience with old apartments?

Lemma: While old apartments can be suitable for beginners, they often come with significant headaches. Buildings from the 1970s frequently have boiler and elevator issues that can lead to unexpected expenses, which can quickly erode your profit margins. For instance, my new 80-unit apartment downtown is more profitable and energy-efficient than my previous 400-unit property, "Shoregate Towers."

Capital: You've also ventured into Japanese cuisine. As an immigrant from a small town in eastern Africa, how did you get involved in this business?

Lemma: It started when my family and I wanted to dine at a nearby Japanese restaurant but found ourselves facing a long wait. This made me realize the potential attractiveness and profitability of the business. I reached out to friends who knew a chef skilled in Japanese cuisine, and that led to the establishment of our restaurant. Honestly, I don't run the business alone; our employees and management are integral to its success. What brings me more joy than money is hearing people in American cities say, "The Teriyaki is wonderful." Knowing that I came from a distant land, that people trust me enough to enjoy my food, and that I've created jobs for the community makes me feel I've achieved something significant.

Capital: How many employees do you currently have, and how many of them are of Ethiopian origin?

Lemma: We currently employ over 550 people across both the restaurant and real estate sectors, many of whom are Ethiopians. I have trained and mentored numerous individuals, and many have gone on to achieve great success, becoming engineers, sociologists, and master's degree holders. For example, I entrusted a young man named Wossen with managing hundreds of employees when he was just 18, and he is now thriving. Additionally, I have employed Palestinians and others who have become millionaires today. Their success is a source of great honor for me.

Capital: It is said you faced a health crisis a few years ago. How did that experience change your perspective on life?

Lemma: I was always busy and never took time to rest. My health issue made me truly understand the meaning of life. Helping others is part of my nature. My wife and I were among the first to sponsor those in need through "Mary Joy Ethiopia," a humanitarian organization. However, after my illness, my outlook on life changed dramatically. I realized that life isn't solely about making money.

I read a book featuring interviews with individuals in hospices nearing death. Many expressed regrets like, "I wish I had done more good" or "I wish I had spent more time with my family," but no one said, "I wish I had made more money." God has blessed me with more than I could ever need; now, the greatest purpose in my life is to bring a smile to someone's face.

Capital: Your support in areas like Harar and Southern Ethiopia, including Arba Minch, is highly regarded. What motivates this?

Lemma: The joy I witnessed on the faces of children when I brought water to a kindergarten in Harar still resonates with me. Those children didn't know me, yet they held my hand as if I were their father. Their smiles bring immense joy to me and my children. Our principle is to share what little we have. I believe current investors in Ethiopia have a long way to go in fulfilling their social responsibilities.

My neighbors in America don't just give money; they teach skills that can change lives. I am confident that the computer donation we made in Harar will transform a student's life and contribute to the nation's development. As John F. Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country"—that is my motto. We have donated over 300 computers to the school in Harar.

Capital: It's said you do charity work in various parts of Ethiopia?

Lemma: Yes, my wife and I strive to help to the best of our ability. For instance, when we learned about a water shortage in an area called Dawro in Southern Ethiopia, we arranged for a water well to be drilled. When the city elders found out, they traveled 250 kilometers to Addis Ababa to thank me; it deeply touched my heart. Additionally, we established a computer lab for students, donating 51 computers and a digital storage system containing 27,000 books. We plan to expand our efforts beyond Harar and Southern Ethiopia to other parts of the country.

Capital: How do you observe the current youth and the business environment in Ethiopia?

Lemma: I am very optimistic about the current generation. In our time, the youth focused primarily on politics. Now, they are brimming with business and technology ideas. I spoke to medical students in Arba Minch and was impressed by their questions and innovative thoughts. They aren't waiting for the government to hire them; they are eager to create their own opportunities. This gives me great hope for the country. I want to inspire the youth by sharing my failures and successes. When I failed out of Addis Ababa University, I thought it was the end of the world, but I persevered and reached this point. Sharing this experience is my duty as a citizen.

Capital: Management is one of the key challenges for Ethiopian business owners. There is a problem where a businessman's company dies with him. What is your advice on this?

Lemma: This is indeed a significant management challenge. I require my son to work as a regular employee in my company so he can learn the business from the ground up. Regardless of one's opinion of Trump, his approach to raising his children is worth emulating. His children started by driving tractors. An investor should not spoil their child; instead, the child must be tested to become self-sufficient. The mindset of "I am rich because my father is rich" can ruin children. I tell my children that I was once a taxi driver, ensuring they understand that life is not easy and that they must work hard for what they achieve.

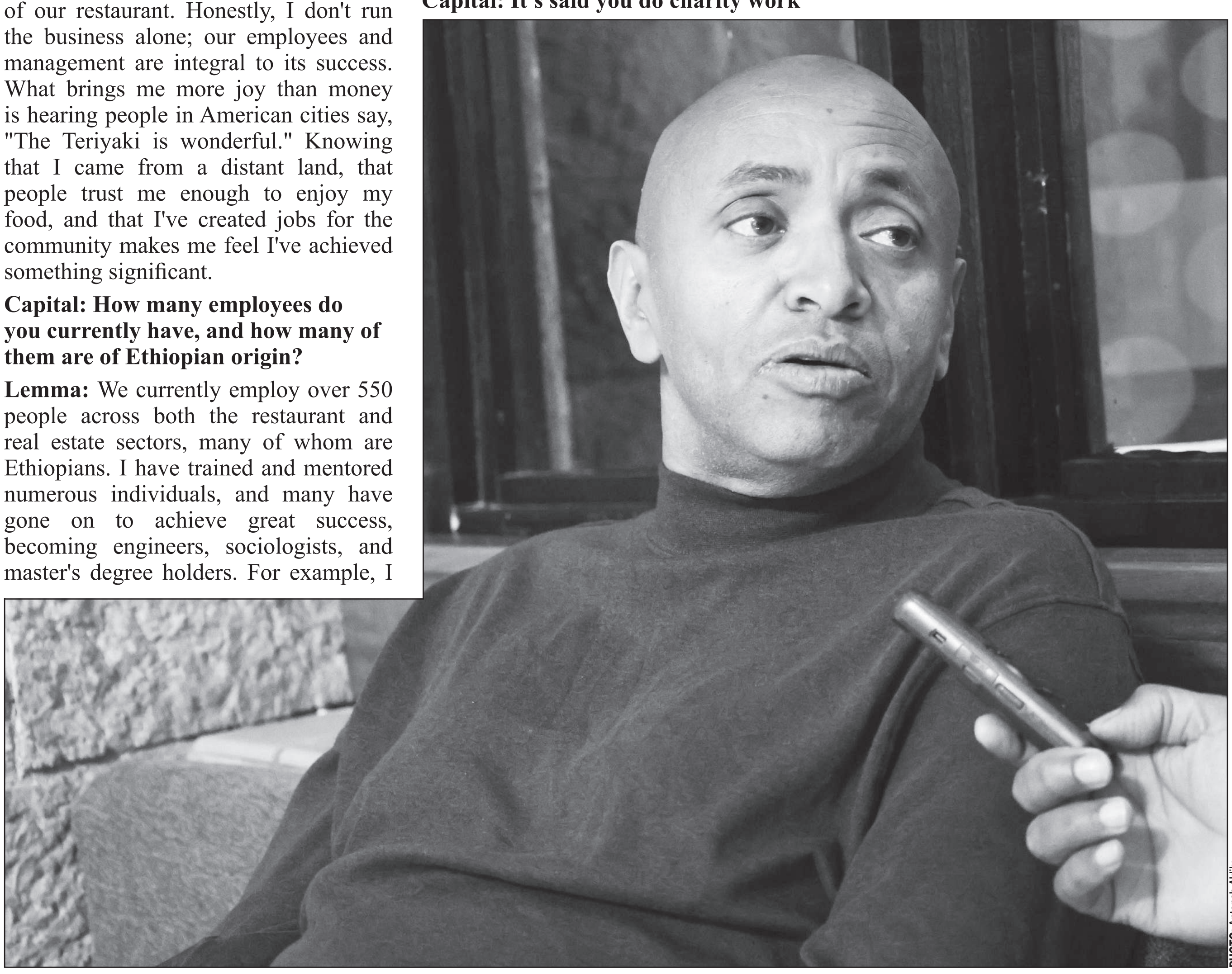

PHOTO: Anteneh Akililu


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IVECO AMCE

Invitation to Bid for the Procurement of Contractors for Aluminium Cladding and Glazing Works

The Automotive Manufacturing Company of Ethiopia Share Company (AMCE) is seeking to engage a qualified GC/BC4 construction firm with demonstrated expertise in aluminium cladding and tempered glass curtain wall systems for the renovation of its workshop façade. We invite eligible bidders to participate in the bidding process for this project.

1. Bid Participation: Interested bidders can obtain the Terms of Reference (TOR) document by making a non-refundable payment of **Birr 500.00** (Five Hundred Birr) at the Purchasing and Logistics Department. The document collection period is from **January 26, 2026, during office hours from Monday to Friday, 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM and 1:30 PM to 5:30 PM.**

2. Required Documentation: Bidders must submit copies of their renewed Trade and Professional Licenses for the year 2018 EC, along with their TIN, VAT certificates, and tax clearance, as part of their bid submission.

3. Submission Requirements: The technical proposal must include all necessary documents, such as proof of successful completion of similar projects, qualifications, and any other legal documentation related to the project and CPO. These should be submitted in a sealed envelope as specified in the TOR document.

The financial proposal must include a detailed cost breakdown for the project, also submitted in a separate sealed envelope. Please ensure that both the technical and financial proposals are submitted in separate envelopes.

4. Submission Location: Bids should be submitted to the Purchasing and Logistics Department at the Automotive Manufacturing Company of Ethiopia (AMCE).

5. Bid Bond Requirement: Each bid must be accompanied by a bid bond of Birr 200,000.00 (Two Hundred Thousand Birr) in the form of a CPO only.

6. Compliance: Bidders are expected to adhere to all requirements outlined in this invitation and the TOR.

7. Submission Deadline: The deadline for submitting bid documents is **February 10, 2026, at 11:00 AM. Bids will be opened on the same day, February 10, 2026, at 11:30 AM** in the AMCE Meeting Room, in the presence of bidders or their representatives who choose to attend.

8. Discretionary Rights: AMCE reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids at its discretion.

9. Further Information: For additional information, interested bidders may contact Tower Consult at the following:

- **Telephone: +251911232683 / +251913978319**
- **Email: dawital2002@yahoo.com / merondejeneheyi@gmail.com**

IVECO AMCE

Invitation to Bid for Bulk parts sales for various IVECO models

The Automotive Manufacturing Company of Ethiopia (AMCE) invites eligible bidders to participate in the bidding process for the sale of various IVECO model spare parts.

1. **Bid Participation:** Interested bidders may collect the list of spare parts by making a non-refundable payment of **Birr 500.00** (Five Hundred Birr) at the Purchasing and Logistics Department. The collection period is from **January 26, 2026, office working days from Monday through Friday, from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM morning time and 1:30 PM to 5:30 PM afternoon time.**
2. **Required Documentation:** Bidders must submit a copy of their renewed Trade License, TIN, VAT certificate, and tax clearance along with their bid offer.
3. **Initial Bid Offer: Birr 1,680,000.00** (One Million Six Hundred Eighty Thousand Birr) before VAT, covering all parts listed in the TOR document.
4. **Submission Requirements:** All required documents (including financial offers indicating whether they are before or after VAT, renewed licenses, TIN and VAT certificates, tax clearance, and CPO) must be submitted in a sealed envelope corresponding to the specific bid.
5. **Submission Location:** Bids should be submitted to the Purchasing and Logistics Department at the Automotive Manufacturing Company of Ethiopia (AMCE).
6. **Bid Bond Requirement:** Bid must be accompanied by a bid bond of Birr 100,000.00 (One Hundred Thousand Birr) in the form of a CPO only.
7. **Compliance:** Bidders are expected to comply with all bid requirements outlined in this invitation.
8. **Submission Deadline:** The deadline for submitting bid documents is **February 10, 2026, at 10:00 AM. Bids will be opened on the same day, February 10, 2026, at 10:30 AM** in the AMCE Meeting Room in the presence of bidders or their representatives who choose to attend.
9. **Discretionary Rights:** AMCE reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids at its discretion.
10. **Further Information:** Interested bidders may obtain additional information from the Purchasing and Logistics Department at the following contact details:

- **Telephone: 011 646 33 11 / 011 646 33 46**
- **Email: eskinder.wsenbet@ivecogroup.com**

unicef | for every child

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR

Rebidding of Lot-5 and 6 of Rehabilitation and upgrading of school WASH and Menstrual Health Management/MHM/ facilities for 4 Secondary Schools in Afar Region

LRFP-2026-9200050

Topic- UNICEF (Ethiopia) wishes to request eligible bidders to participate in a Request for Proposal (LRFP) for **Rebidding of Lot-5 and 6 of Rehabilitation and upgrading of school WASH and Menstrual Health Management/MHM/ facilities for 4 Secondary Schools in Afar Region.**

Details of this bid's requirements and eligibility criteria can be found in the bid document.

Interested and eligible bidders can get the bid document with the below links;

2merkato.com – **https://tender.2merkato.com/tenders/69733a990a538a4a78000001**

Any query or clarification regarding this bid shall be sent through an email to **eth-supplyQAconstruction@unicef.org** before or **on 6 January 2026.** There will be a pre-bid meeting on **29 January 2026 @ 3:00 PM.** Bid clarification will be communicated on the same website at 2merkato.com to the public. While sending your request for clarification, please ensure that you specify the LRFP number in the subject email, and provide the name of your company, contact person, and email.

The due date for submission of proposals/Bids to the UNICEF Addis Ababa Office is on or **before 11:59 PM (East African Time) on 11 February 2026.** Please read the LRFP for detailed requirements and due dates.

Please quote the respective LRFP (request for proposal) numbers with the request for the

REBIDDING OF LOT-5 AND 6 OF REHABILITATION AND UPGRADING OF SCHOOL WASH AND MENSTRUAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT/MHM/ FACILITIES FOR 4 SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AFAR REGION.

Submission of bids should be done as per the below requirements.

a. Technical bid submission should be with a separate email from the Financial bid submission
b. RFP reference and whether Technical or Financial submission should be indicated on the Subject of the email.
c. ONLY email submissions are acceptable through **ETH-Tenderconstruction@unicef.org**
d. To reduce the risk of late delivery emails should be sent in good time before the deadline of the bid submission.

An Ethiopian artist's Russian journey: 33 years that changed his life and art

When Tesfaye left Addis Ababa for Leningrad in 1990, he expected a few years of study. Instead, more than three decades later, Russia has reshaped his art, language and identity. The Ethiopian painter now says he no longer sees the world only "in an Ethiopian mirror, but in a Russian one" as well.

Born in the capital to a family of seven children, Tesfaye was inspired early by his father, a builder who constantly sketched plans and designs at home. Those drawings sparked his own urge to create, leading him to art school in Ethiopia and eventually to a Soviet scholarship at the prestigious Ilya Repin Institute. The opportunity grew out of Ethiopia's post 1974 revolution alignment with the USSR, which brought cultural exchanges, infrastructure projects and study programmes for Ethiopian students.

Arriving in St. Petersburg, he struggled with the cold and the city's monumental scale after a childhood of sun and low rise neighbourhoods. But daily walks, a bicycle and a growing circle of Russian friends helped him adapt. His Russian teacher pushed students out of the classroom to learn on the streets, and in the early 1990s curious locals welcomed conversations with foreign students.

Those encounters deepened into friendships built around a shared love of Russian culture. Tesfaye was already proud of the link between Ethiopia and Russia through Alexander Pushkin's Ethiopian ancestry; learning the language allowed him to read the poet in the original and appreciate, as he puts it, "the brilliance of his rhymes" that no translation can fully capture. In the dormitory, he reciprocated by hosting Ethiopian tea nights with spices and herbs from home.

A chance suggested by a seminarian friend, Misha, opened Europe to him. In 1995, Tesfaye submitted religious paintings for a trip to Geneva. All 12 works sold on the first day of their exhibition, giving him his first significant income and connecting him with a gallery owner who later sold his African themed canvases to wealthy clients. It taught him how differently art could be valued outside the classroom.

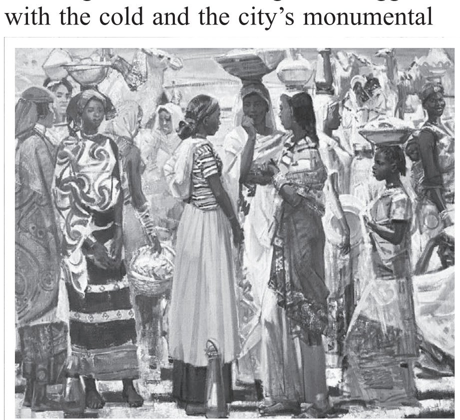
Art school also brought love. His painting teacher, Yaroslav Shkandry, often welcomed his daughter Nadezhda to the studio. Mistaking his Ethiopian name "Atsbeha" for a woman's, she went to the student hostel seeking the artist and instead found a tall Ethiopian with dreadlocks, vinyl records and a beret. The misunderstanding led to a relationship and eventually marriage. Tesfaye remembers those years as "a microcosm of the world," with students from across Russia and former Soviet republics painting by day and reciting poetry over wine by night.

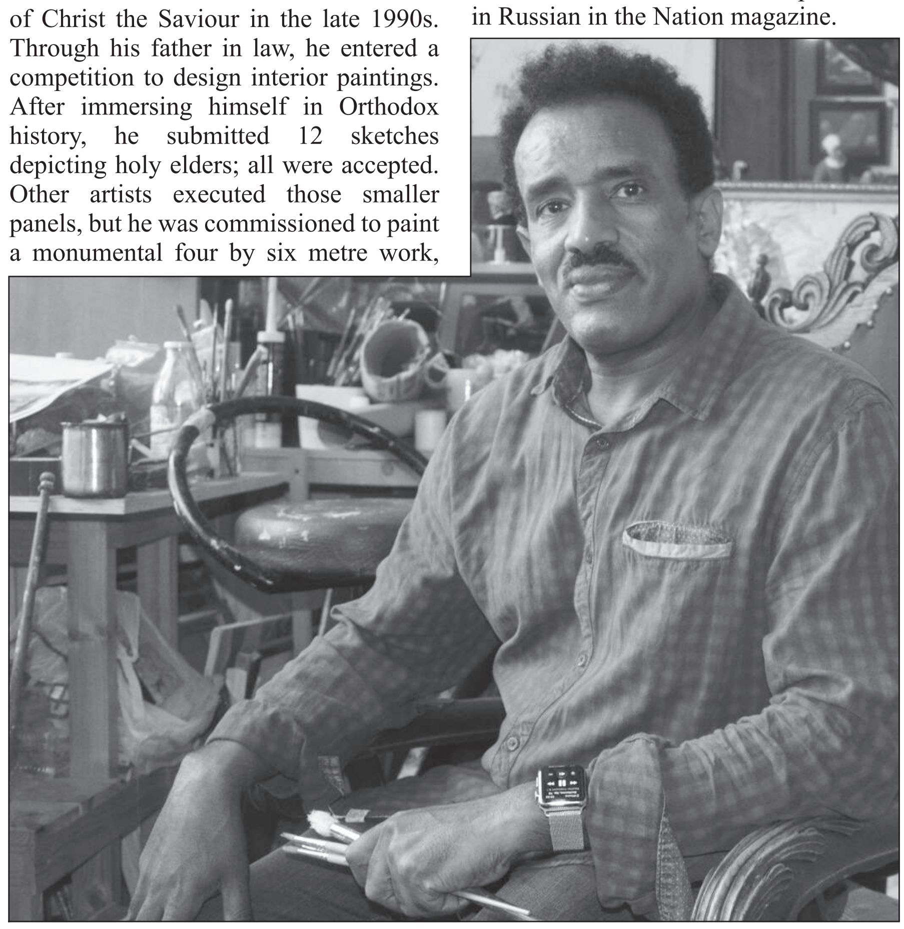
A major turning point in his career came when Moscow rebuilt the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in the late 1990s. Through his father in law, he entered a competition to design interior paintings. After immersing himself in Orthodox history, he submitted 12 sketches depicting holy elders; all were accepted. Other artists executed those smaller panels, but he was commissioned to paint a monumental four by six metre work, "The Seventh Ecumenical Council." The project earned him a medal from the Russian Academy of Arts and cemented his standing within Russia's artistic community.

Today, Tesfaye lives in St. Petersburg, rides his bicycle through its streets in summer and plunges into icy water on Epiphany in winter. He dreams in Russian, sometimes even when speaking to his Ethiopian family in his sleep, and says his thoughts and visual imagination now "belong to here." Yet his roots in Addis Ababa and his father's sketches remain at the core of his work, which often blends African light with Russian themes.

What began as a Soviet scholarship has become a lifelong bridge between two cultures. In his paintings and in his life, Tesfaye continues to translate not just languages, but entire worlds, between Ethiopia and Russia.

A full version of this article was published in Russian in the Nation magazine.





HOT MUSIC TABLE

JANUARY 15 - JANUARY 21, 2026

HOTTEST ARTISTS

RANK	ARTIST	RADIO	TV	TOTAL PLAY
1	Yehunie Belay	432	172	604
2	Aschalew Fetene	110	68	178
3	Neway Debebe	95	12	107
4	Fikeraddis Nekatibeb	52	36	88
4	Solomon Tigabe	42	46	88
5	Dawit Tsige	60	26	86
6	Abdu Kiar	68	5	73
7	Hana Girma	39	31	70
8	Michael Belayneh	57	1	58
9	Tesfaye Taye	22	34	56
10	Addis Legesse	38	17	55

THIS DATA IS GATHERED BY A 24/7 AUTOMATED RECORDING & ANALYZING AII SYSTEM FROM 35 TV & RADIO STATIONS. THERE WERE MORETHAN 5,799 TOTAL MUSIC PLAYS ACROSS THE BROADCAST MEDIUM FOR THIS WEEK.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY - OMNIMEDIA ETHIOPIA

HOTTEST TRACKS

RANK	TRACK	ARTIST	RADIO	TV	TOTAL PLAY
1	Zegelila	Yehunie Belay	432	172	604
2	Enatewa Gonder	Aschalew Fetene	71	29	100
3	Shir Bila	Solomon Tigabe	42	46	88
4	Hayyee	Hana Girma	32	28	60
5	Zarem Atirsagn	Fikeraddis Nekatibeb	28	30	58
6	Sodo	Tesfaye Taye	22	34	56
7	Amoraw Kamora	Aschalew Fetene	34	21	55
8	Awdamet	Birtukan Dubale	47	7	54
9	Awdamet	Amsal Mitke	33	20	53
10	Melkam Ametbal	Abdu Kiar	48	3	51

Society

By Tesfu Telahoun

Ethiopia's Corporate Governance Code Reform: An Idea Whose Time Has Come

By Tesfaye T. Lemma

Ethiopia stands at a crossroads. The Ethiopian Capital Market Authority is building infrastructure for securities trading. Foreign investors are evaluating opportunities in one of Africa's largest economies. Yet Ethiopia lacks what has become standard across the continent: a comprehensive corporate governance code.

Nigeria adopted its National Code of Corporate Governance in 2018. Ghana launched its code in 2022. Kenya has operated under governance standards since 2002, comprehensively revised in 2015. Egypt updated its code in 2016. South Africa has refined its King Reports through four iterations since 1994. Mauritius developed its first code in 2003. Even Tanzania and Uganda have established frameworks.

Ethiopia is now a latecomer to institutional development that has reshaped African corporate landscapes. A comprehensive governance code would fundamentally transform how Ethiopian companies operate, access capital, and contribute to development. The question is not whether Ethiopia needs such a code but how to develop one that learns from regional experiences.

What a Code Would Achieve and the Costs of Its Absence

South Africa's experience demonstrates how governance frameworks reshape corporate ecosystems. Research on companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange shows that better-governed firms, measured by compliance with King Code principles, consistently outperform poorly-governed peers in financial returns. The mechanism is straightforward: good governance reduces information asymmetry between companies and investors. When boards demonstrate independence, financial reporting is transparent, and minority shareholders enjoy meaningful protections, capital flows more readily at lower cost.

Kenya's experience illustrates governance codes' role in capital market development. Though the Nairobi Securities Exchange lists only sixty-six companies, Kenya's requirement since 2016 that all securities issuers comply with comprehensive governance standards has attracted foreign portfolio investment disproportionate to market size. The Capital Markets Authority requires annual governance audits by professionals accredited through the Institute of Certified Public Secretaries of Kenya, providing external verification that governance claims are credible rather than self-reported.

For Ethiopia, a governance code would provide the institutional foundation for capital market growth. Without standardized practices, Ethiopian securities will trade at discounts reflecting governance uncertainty. A 2026 risk assessment identified corporate governance as an emerging concern for Ethiopia, with investors conducting deeper due diligence on "opaque structures, related-party risks, and inconsistent documentation." Without clear national standards, each investor must independently assess whether Ethiopian companies meet minimum thresholds, increasing costs and reducing capital flows.

Nigeria's experience before 2018 illuminates costs of fragmentation. Prior to the unified National Code, Nigeria operated with sectoral codes for banks, insurance companies, pension operators, and telecommunications while many companies fell under no specific framework. Companies operating across sectors faced conflicting requirements. Large private companies not subject to sectoral regulation operated in governance vacuums. Investors lacked unified reference points for what constituted good governance.

Ethiopia faces analogous fragmentation. The National Bank regulates banks through directives including governance provisions. The Capital Market Authority is developing standards for securities issuers. State-owned enterprises operate under the 2020 Code of Corporate Governance for Public Enterprises. But large private companies in manufacturing, construction, trade, and services operate without clear governance frameworks beyond the Commercial Code, which research consistently identifies as inadequate for modern corporate complexities.

Egypt's approach shows how codes influence enterprises beyond formal requirements. Egypt's Corporate Governance Code, issued by the Egyptian Institute of Directors under the Financial Supervisory Authority, applies formally to listed companies but provides frameworks for state-owned enterprises and large private companies. Though voluntary for non-listed entities, the code has shaped expectations across Egypt's corporate sector because international partnerships and development institution financing increasingly require governance certifications.

Learning from Regional Experiences: What Works and What Doesn't

South Africa's King Reports represent African governance codes' most sophisticated evolution. King IV reduced principles from seventy-five in King III to sixteen, recognizing exhaustive rules create compliance burdens without proportionate benefits. It shifted from "apply or explain" to "apply and explain," assuming organizations practicing good governance will have applied all principles but may implement them differently based on context.

Yet even South Africa faces governance challenges. State-owned enterprises, including Eskom, have experienced governance failures resulting in massive losses despite formal compliance. These failures reveal codes alone do not guarantee good governance. Effective governance requires genuine board independence, credible enforcement with real consequences, and professional expertise among directors and regulators.

Nigeria's 2018 code illuminates implementation challenges Ethiopia should anticipate. Research examining the code's first years identifies critical problems. First, the code did not replace existing sectoral codes but layered atop them. When national provisions conflict with sectoral requirements, for example, different independence standards for board composition, the legislation provides no hierarchy or resolution mechanism. Companies in regulated sectors navigate overlapping requirements without clear guidance on which standard prevails. A bank must comply with Central Bank directives and simultaneously report compliance with the national code, creating confusion and costs without corresponding benefits.

Second, Nigeria's voluntary "apply and explain" approach limits enforceability. The Financial Reporting Council can monitor and report but has limited sanctioning authority beyond reputational pressure. Sectoral regulators have stronger enforcement powers, reinforcing sectoral over national standards. Third, announcing a code does not automatically create capacity to implement it. Many Nigerian companies lack directors with governance training. Board members appointed through family, political, or business relationships may be successful but unfamiliar with fiduciary duties or audit committee oversight concepts.

Ghana's November 2022 National Corporate Governance Code offers a different model. Rather than attempting to replace sectoral frameworks, Ghana's code explicitly positions itself as harmonizing them while preserving sectoral specificity. It establishes thirteen core principles applicable across sectors while explicitly endorsing existing sectoral codes from the Bank of Ghana, Securities and Exchange Commission, and National Insurance Commission. This pragmatism reflects political reality: sectoral regulators have established turf and expertise. Attempting to eliminate sectoral codes would provoke bureaucratic resistance that could derail reform entirely.

Kenya's phased implementation provides valuable lessons. When Kenya gazetted its comprehensive Code of Corporate Governance Practices for Issuers of Securities in March 2016, it didn't become fully applicable until March 2017, allowing companies twelve months to align governance structures. Moreover, Kenya invested heavily in capacity building. The Capital Markets Authority partnered with the World Bank to conduct training. Master classes for CEOs, CFOs, and company secretaries preceded full implementation. The Institute of Certified Public Secretaries developed accreditation programs for governance auditors.

Egypt demonstrates the importance of iterative improvement. Egypt's first code appeared in 2005, was revised in 2011 to incorporate corporate social responsibility and enhanced disclosure, then updated again in 2016. The 2016 code expanded to encompass state-owned enterprises explicitly, recognizing their importance in Egypt's economy. This evolution demonstrates that first-generation codes inevitably require revision as implementation reveals gaps.

Mauritius provides cautionary lessons about selective compliance. Research tracking Mauritius's 2004 code implementation through 2007 found reasonable compliance with highly visible requirements—companies appointed non-executive directors and established audit committees—but deeper investigation revealed selective compliance. Many boards claimed independence for directors with obvious conflicts. Audit committees existed on paper but exercised minimal oversight. Directors' remuneration remained opaque despite transparency requirements. Companies implemented visible, low-cost elements while resisting costly accountability requirements.

Why Simply Copying Won't Work: Ethiopia's Specific Context

Ethiopia's governance challenges differ importantly from those that shaped codes elsewhere. Research on Ethiopian corporate governance identifies concentrated ownership and political connections as defining features. Ethiopia's large businesses divide into state-owned enterprises, party-owned companies, and family-controlled private companies. When control structures are examined, ruling party influence extends across both SOEs and party enterprises, with some family businesses maintaining complex associations with political actors.

This ownership concentration creates different governance problems than dispersed shareholding environments where UK or Australian codes originated. Anglo-American codes emphasize protecting minority shareholders from management abuse, assuming the central problem is agency conflict between shareholders collectively and managers. Ethiopia's problems center on conflicts between controlling shareholders and minority stakeholders, between public and private interests in state-influenced enterprises, and between formal structures and informal relationship networks.

Research documents enforcement deficits across multiple dimensions. The judicial system faces capacity constraints and perceptions of political influence. Shareholder protection laws exist but are inadequately enforced, with courts handling cases slowly and inconsistently. Studies identify discriminatory enforcement between state and private banks, with regulators applying different standards based on ownership. Research examining Ethiopian boards documents widespread deficits in director knowledge and skills, with directors often appointed through political connections rather than professional qualifications.

Related-party transactions present particularly acute challenges. Research documents extensive related-party relationships between companies, political actors, and controlling shareholders that would violate codes in most jurisdictions but operate openly in Ethiopia. Family businesses engage in transactions with other family companies without independent oversight. SOEs transact with party-owned companies through arrangements blurring commercial and political considerations.

Political instability represents another Ethiopian-specific challenge. Research on Ethiopian banks from 2014-2023 found political instability significantly impacts financial performance, particularly for institutions serving conflict-affected regions. Some banks "suffered tremendously" affecting returns on equity and operational capacity. Directors must navigate governance responsibilities while operating where violence, displacement, and regulatory disruption can occur unpredictably.

What Ethiopia Must Do

Ethiopia must develop a code reflecting Ethiopian political economy, institutional capacity, and business structures while drawing on international experience. The first imperative is genuine multi-stakeholder engagement. Ghana's code emerged from extensive consultation involving the Institute of Directors, professional bodies, academia, government, regulatory agencies, and business associations. This inclusive process created stakeholders who felt ownership because they shaped content. Nigeria's more technocratic approach, where the Financial Reporting Council drafted with limited broad engagement, contributed to implementation difficulties.

Ethiopia should convene a National Corporate Governance Council representing the National Bank, Capital Market Authority, Ministry of Finance, professional bodies, business associations, and civil society. This Council should drive development through working groups, public consultations, exposure drafts, and iterative revision. The process will take longer than expert-driven drafting but produces better code with stronger implementation prospects.

The code's architecture must balance comprehensive principles with sectoral flexibility. Ethiopia should establish core principles applicable to all entities above certain thresholds: ethical leadership, board composition including independent directors, audit committees, risk management, stakeholder engagement, transparency, and accountability. Simultaneously, permit sectoral regulators to impose additional requirements. Critically, the code must establish clear hierarchy: where sectoral standards are higher, they apply; where silent or lower, national principles apply; where conflicts arise, a designated body adjudicates.

Enforcement mechanisms must be designed into the code. For listed companies, the Capital Market Authority should have enforcement jurisdiction with power to audit, investigate, and impose penalties from warnings to delisting. For banks, the National Bank exercises similar authority. Sanctions should include financial penalties, mandatory remediation, public disclosure of non-compliance, and in severe cases, director disqualification. Without credible consequences, companies will engage in selective compliance.

Capacity building must parallel code development. All directors of public companies, listed entities, and SOEs should complete certified governance training within twelve months of appointment. Professional certification programs should be developed through partnerships with regional institutes of directors. Ethiopian universities should incorporate governance modules into business programs. Company secretaries need similar professionalization, with clear qualifications including governance training and certification.

Phased implementation allows learning and adjustment. Ethiopia could begin with companies seeking capital market access, requiring full compliance as a condition for securities issuance. Second phase could encompass banks, building on National Bank directives. Third phase might cover other public companies and large private entities above thresholds. This sequencing allows regulators to develop enforcement capabilities gradually and permits code revision based on implementation experience.

State-owned enterprise governance deserves particular attention. Following Egypt's model, Ethiopia could integrate SOE governance into the comprehensive code while recognizing their distinct characteristics. SOE boards should include independent directors from private sector backgrounds, not only political appointees. Appointment processes should be transparent and merit-based. SOE governance reporting should serve dual accountability: to the state as owner and to the public through transparent financial reporting.

Finally, Ethiopia must commit to iterative improvement. The code should include provisions requiring formal review every three to five years, with revisions based on implementation experience, stakeholder input, and evolving international standards.

The Path Forward

Ethiopia cannot afford continued governance gaps that create uncertainty, increase capital costs, and signal institutional immaturity. A comprehensive code would provide foundations for capital market development, establish standards facilitating business activity, create transparency attracting investment, and position Ethiopia competitively in global markets.

But Ethiopia must proceed thoughtfully. South Africa demonstrates iterative evolution elevating governance standards. Kenya shows systematic capacity building enables implementation. Ghana illustrates pragmatic harmonization of national principles with sectoral specificity. Nigeria warns against layering requirements without resolving conflicts. Mauritius cautions that selective compliance undermines effectiveness without robust enforcement. Egypt demonstrates addressing state-owned enterprise governance explicitly.

Ethiopia's code must reflect Ethiopian realities: concentrated ownership, political connections, capacity constraints, enforcement challenges, and political instability. Importing Anglo-American models designed for different contexts will fail. Ethiopia should develop principles addressing Ethiopian challenges while drawing on proven international practices appropriately adapted.

This requires sustained commitment from political leadership, regulatory agencies, professional bodies, business communities, and civil society. Code development through genuine engagement will take time but produces better results. Capacity building must parallel development. Phased implementation allows learning. Integration with capital market development creates incentives for quality.

Ethiopia has delayed long enough. The Ethiopian stock exchange has just been established, with only two or three companies listed and many more in the pipeline. As these capital markets develop and investment flows increase, governance gaps will impose growing costs. Without a comprehensive code establishing clear standards, well-governed Ethiopian companies will pay higher capital costs because investors cannot easily distinguish them from poorly-governed peers. Even now, in private capital markets—bank lending, private equity, development finance—Ethiopian enterprises face governance uncertainty premiums that increase borrowing costs and reduce valuations. A comprehensive code will not solve all problems, but it establishes frameworks within which solutions develop and allows well-governed companies to signal quality credibly.

The time for Ethiopia's corporate governance code has come. Regional peers are not waiting. International investors are evaluating alternatives. Ethiopia should move forward deliberately but decisively: convene the National Council, begin consultations, study regional experiences, develop principles reflecting Ethiopian contexts, build capacity, plan implementation, establish enforcement, and commit to improvement.

The opportunity is clear. The path is knowable. Ethiopia must seize this moment to join African nations with comprehensive frameworks, learning from their experiences to build something adapted for Ethiopian needs. The work begins now.

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The federal domain as the last stronghold of Ethiopia's language policy crises

By Mesfin Wodajo

This brief rejoinder targets an article published on the title **"Ethiopia's Language Crisis Is Not About Identity. It Is About a Bad Theory of Language"**, on December 28, 2025 by Tesfatsion Domenico on Capital. This review focuses mainly on the sociolinguistic aspects of the paper based on my own academic background.

A brief summary of the author's article

The author rightly begins by stating that the problem of language crisis in Ethiopia does not emerge from linguistic identity and multilingualism. He argues that a flawed theory of language management that considers languages as fixed territorial entities rather than a flexible social structure is the cause of the linguistic crises. The state's policy enforces territorialized region-bound language policies that halted linguistic mobility and created linguistic elitism and deepened socioeconomic inequalities is central to his arguments. He also relates the problem within the global linguistic context where unequal access to languages like English further entrenches exclusion. The author openly argued linguistic purism doesn't represent Ethiopia's sociolinguistic reality. His work generally calls for a shift from language-as-identity approach to language-as-infrastructure, a repertoire-based approach, and the use of Amharic as a shared public utility, normalizing code-switching in institutions, and aligning policy with how people actually live and communicate.

Even though I share some important points with this author, I strongly believe that the author has dislocated the very important locus of the argument from the centre to the margin. The sociolinguistic margin cannot provide any solution for the language policy crisis at the sociolinguistics centre. In this regard, the author seems to be looking for a right solution in a wrong spot. My reflection on his article is based on my own arrangement of specific points from the viewpoint of socio linguistics.

Which language policy?

The author commences discussion with a fascinating story of a trader from Walaita Sodo, a job seeker in Adama and a driver in Mojo. The story highlights how the sociolinguistic dynamics of context-bound switching between different languages is a real currency to make a living in multilingual Ethiopia. Ethiopia's language policy, he claims, overlooks this reality.

It is not clear which language policy he is referring to in this context. Ethiopia had a number of language policy regimes, the pre-1991 assimilationist vs. the post 1991 pluralist (relative); the pre-occupation de facto or the post-occupation de jury, or the post-EPRDF multilingual federal working language. All these language policies have their own peculiar sociolinguistic features and ideological orientations.

Indeed, there are some scholars who argue that Ethiopia never had a language policy. That is not true seen in light of the literature of language policy in sociolinguistics. Some even state that the new post-EPRDF Ethiopian language policy is the first language policy in the country. Language policy can be overt or covert, written or unwritten, de facto or de jury, etc. Those countries believed to have no overt language policies do really have language policies. The USA, for instance, did not state its language policy in any legal document, including its constitution, yet its language policy is known as "the no language policy policy".

The post-EPRDF language policy, the newly designed language policy, not yet put to practice though, designates five federal working languages: Afaan Oromoo, Amharic, Tigrinya, Somali and Afar. This language policy clearly and openly recognises the linguistic diversity in Ethiopia, and it overtly aims to secure national integration through multiple national link languages within the federal domains.

In fact, the imperial language policies of Ethiopia are the ones that undermine and disregard the multilingual scenery of Ethiopia. If the author is referring to imperial language policy regimes, his claims are appropriate.

The obsession with linguistic purism, Africa

The question on why African states are obsessed with linguistic purity is fair enough to ask. African leaders must believe in and accept the true heteroglossic reality of the continent and the people. This also holds true for Ethiopia. The history of language policy of Ethiopia clearly shows that we have come a long way, and in 1991, thanks to the struggle made by the people, the country effectively transitioned from linguistic nationalism and linguistic pluralism. A huge number of Ethiopian languages began to enjoy linguistic autonomy, and multilingualism was liberated, and the country has embarked on a process of nation-building on the basis of linguistic pluralism.

Indeed, there were challenges, yet the collective picture shows a huge sociolinguistic progress compared to the past. The only domain that remained monolingual despite the heteroglossic truth on the ground is the federal administrative domain that is still run by a single federal working language. The federal domain is the real example of linguistic purism at work in Ethiopia.

Poor language management, not multilingualism, as cause of linguistic crisis

The author is perfectly right, multilingualism is not a problem, but our mistaken belief of it is. For instance, the country's pre-1991 obsession with linguistic nationalism has been the major source of political crises. Linguistic nationalism has been nowhere closer to the sociolinguistic situation in Ethiopia. The attempt of putting it to practice during pre-1991 Ethiopia was a total disaster.

True, we need to fix our ill-perceived views of linguistic diversity. There are a number of scholars in Ethiopia that believe linguistic diversity is a curse, a source of poverty and a cause of disunity. Socionlinguists clearly argue that no empirical evidence has so far proven this claim. On the contrary, research showed that linguistic diversity has a number of incredible benefits.

The views of linguistic diversity in Ethiopia over the last three decades

The author argued that languages have been viewed as fixed entities over the last three decades.The truth is that the last three decades is a time where Ethiopia's true nature of linguistic diversity is recognized. Speakers of different Ethiopian languages enjoyed the use of their own language in politics, administration, media, and education.

Children have gotten an incredible chance of exploring the world with their own mother-tongue within the primary educational domains. This is a scientifically justified move, and it is not just politics. The pre-1991 fixed and monolithic view of Ethiopia's linguistic diversity was made to come to terms with its own true reality. This is a period where ascribed identity is replaced by a claimed identity.

The mythology of one language and one nation

The author seems to argue that the EPRDF constitution put in place one language-one-region policy.

The Ethiopian constitution clearly states that regions choose their own working languages, and Amharic is used as a federal working language. It only gave regions to choose, and it did not impose. Yet, the problem with the constitution is that it clearly imposed a single language as a sole federal working language in a multilingual country. That cannot be inclusive, pluralistic and democratic when it comes to the federal domain. Yes, Ethiopia is multilingual, and that is why it needs to have a multilingual federal language policy model.

The territoriality of linguistic rights

The author argues that the Territorially based language right in post-1991 Ethiopia has turned regions to linguistic islands. It is true that the current Ethiopian language policy recognises collective language rights. It also acknowledges individual language rights though the translation on the ground is very poor.

There is no problem with territorial language policy, yet what is important is to devise a mechanism of horizontal link among the different language policy regions. The most dangerous linguistic island within the Ethiopian state is the federal domain, particularly the capital city, that keeps alienating non-Amharic speakers from public affairs.

When setting, not choice, shapes multilingualism

The author suggests that a graduate from Gambella needs Amharic to succeed in the federal domain. This might be true for the stated speaker, as their regional working language is already the same, but it may not work universally for all linguistic groups in Ethiopia. Here, the author generally intends to defend the most exclusive monolingual island, the federal domain, and continuously draws his examples from linguistic margin.

Speakers do not need anyone's permission to use their own languages locally, yet the problem is language use in the public sphere which is under the monopoly of a single working language, in federal domains for instance.

Let us take a young Oromo, graduate of Wallaggaa University, who does not speak

Amharic, how can he/she compete for jobs in a monolingual linguistic island of Addis Ababa city, the federal domain, that has already shut down its doors to the multilingual reality of Ethiopia.

Societal communicative flexibility

The state has to fix its language policy to create a communicative platform for citizens. It is not appropriate for speakers of very important major languages like Afaan Oromoo to learn Amharic when it is easy to designate Afaan Oromoo as the federal working language of Ethiopia. This guarantees national integration, and expands the communicative circle for Afaan Oromoo speakers and broadens employment opportunities for a number of young people in Ethiopia.

Monolingualism and the elite circle

The author believes that the current Ethiopian language policy empowers the elite circle. That may be true, yet still the way out of this elite closure is to increase the number of federal working languages. The question is in fact who the elites are.

Why should there be only one federal working language? Why is the author obsessed with that? Why should children transition to a federal working language? Who should transition? And who shouldn't? The author never makes these points clear.

The author contradicts himself here. Does this really work for mega languages? It is this 'transition' view that is really creating hierarchy. I think the author better argues for functional complementarity instead.

De-sentimentalization and linguistic hierarchy

It is true that linguistic hierarchy is a global phenomenon, and languages like English and French, foreign languages to us, and they are also operating systems of global trade, diplomacy, science and digital life. That is true,yet the author's attempt of locating these languages outside their speech communities is a misplacement.

There are linguistic communities that own these languages, take pride in them, and cherish them as their symbols of national identity and pride. It is true that mastering these languages is a socioeconomic, political and technological empowerment, regardless of what ethno-linguistic background the speaker possesses.

The misrepresentation here, however, is the de-sentimentalization and exclusive instrumentalization of languages as if they are neutral vehicles of communication. Seen from the viewpoint of critical sociolinguistics, such a strategy of de-sentimentalization of a language could be an expression of implied sociolinguistic ideology.

Multilingualism is not a threat

Countries like Switzerland, Canada and South Africa do really understand the role of linguistic diversity in the process of nation building. If we take South Africa, for instance, the implementation of multilingual language policy,11 official languages covering about 98% of the entire population, marks the country's aspiration of creating inclusive, pragmatic, pluralist and democratic sociolinguistic communicative infrastructure empowering citizens to navigate socioeconomic and political space.

The post-1991 sociolinguistic transformation in Ethiopia has obviously created a wider sociolinguistic space for non-Amharic speakers. Compared to the pre-1991, imperial and socialist language policies, that overtly employed linguistic nationalism, the post-1991 Ethiopian language policy, in general, employed linguistic pluralism, except the sociolinguistics situation of the federal domain that maintained the old fashioned linguistic singularism.

It would have been far more convincing had the author discussed how the federal linguistic singularism has left a significant number of Ethiopians outside socioeconomic and political realms of their own country.

English and structural exclusion in Ethiopia

The situation of English within the Ethiopian sociolinguistic landscape needs a very careful consideration as opposed to the situation of anglophone African nations where English, the ex-colonial language, has a stronghold because of the colonial past. English, a language that assumes the highest position in Ethiopia as a medium of instruction in secondary schools and all the way to university levels, is really endangered within the Ethiopian educational system.

Students of higher education institutions in Ethiopia, the professors themselves, even a large number of professors directly trained in teaching English, could hardly communicate in English language. A number of studies have confirmed that the quality of English is already poor in Ethiopia, and the de facto medium of instruction in many Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions is already Amharic.

Amharic-English codeswitching is very rampant in Ethiopian universities. The tragedy is that the Amharic-English code-switching in Ethiopian university classrooms, where a large number of students come from different linguistic backgrounds, has brought about academic disadvantage to a great many students who could not speak Amharic.

This is an real manifestation of linguistic human rights violation and academic discrimination within the Ethiopian higher education system. Any scholar who cares about linguistic diversity and the dynamism of linguistic and cultural identity should feel the pain these young people go through due to such a discriminating linguistic and academic environment. I think, that is what structural exclusion means for millions of non-Amharic speakers in Ethiopia

Amharic-English global parallelism, trade and technology

The author explains the parallel emergence of Chinese Mandarin and English in building communicative infrastructure for trade and technological networks, and he appreciates this phenomenon as a pragmatic approach suggesting that the situation in Ethiopia is not pragmatic and endorses linguistic purity. He argues that Ethiopia risks reproducing internal linguistic rigidity.

This argument, revealing his implied position on the role of Amharic, is built upon fallacious assumptions of the sociolinguistic situation of Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a multilingual country with very important and competing mega languages like Afaan Oromo, in addition to Amharic. The building of communicative infrastructure for trade and technology networks without regard to such sociolinguistic reality is counterproductive.

Linguistic purism, the pure speaker

Identity can be either ascribed or claimed. In sociolinguistics, it is believed among scholars that the claimed identity is by far more authentic than ascribed identity. If people say who they are, and tell what language they speak, then who are we to say they're not what they say they are.

We describe identities, we don't prescribe them. The role of a sociolinguist is not about worrying whether a certain ethnolinguistic groups and their language can be counted neatly or not, but it's about finding a communicative infrastructure that build inter-linguistic communication beyond ethnolinguistic fault-lines among different language speakers.

There is no such thing as “a pure” speaker of any language. A pure speaker of a language must be a speaker of a poor language. Yes, a Wolaita native speaker might speak Wolayttatto at home, Amharic in the neighborhood, and English online. That is really interesting.

Yet, let me give my side of the story. I was born and grew up in Nekemte town during the socialist regime. I was educated in grade 1 and grade 2 in Amharic as a medium of instruction, and in grade three, I began to learn in Afaan Oromoo as a medium of instruction, following the sociolinguistic change of 1991. This, coupled with my many years of experience of teaching at Bahir Dar University, gave me a wonderful opportunity to develop a native like control of Amharic, my second language.

A huge number of young people of the post-1991 generation in the town I grew up in, Nekemte, do not speak Amharic as fluently as I do. I hope the author wouldn't dare to say “They must have spoken Amharic.” These young people communicate in Afaan Oromoo at home and in the neighborhood, and they use English online. How could they communicate in the federal domain if they cannot speak Amharic?

You know, Amharic speakers are relatively monolingual compared to speakers of other Ethiopian languages. How could they communicate with non-Amharic speakers?

Should non-Amharic speakers be compelled to master the glorious language of the

Empire? The point is that the author’s implication that everyone in Ethiopia speaks Amharic is far from the truth.

A striking number of Ethiopians are still mixing languages, and code-switching is a very common phenomenon, exactly the same way multilingualism is already a norm in the country. I think no one is imposing any category on the people, yet their claimed identities are far more recognized in the post-1991 as opposed to pre-1991, the period of ascribed identity.

Linguistic diversity is not a political construct of the last three decades. It had always been there in Ethiopia. The author does not seem to be interested in looking into the true multilingual scenery of Ethiopia with competing mega languages like Afaan Oromo which could contribute quite significantly to the process of pragmatic, pluralistic, inclusive and democratic nation building in multilingual Ethiopia.

Towards a conceptual shift, away from symbolic debate

The author lacks consistency in argument; at times, he de-sentimentalize languages and argues from the instrumentalist view point. At other times, he brings in the view that language is not just a matter of mere communication. He swims between the two points of views as it suits him.

Yes, language is a social action. It's a power. It's about mobility. That is true. He associates the existence of language with institutions. Yes, languages could be institutional.Yet he never delves into the role that institutions could play in constraining speakers within multilingual settings.

Institutional ideologies could really strangle people speaking different languages not to participate in socioeconomic and political affairs of their country. In Ethiopia, a great number of institutions, particularly in federal domains, systematically constrain some languages while empowering others. That can be considered as one of the most serious challenges that affects horizontal communicative infrastructure among the diverse ethnolinguistic groups in the country.

The author seems to be uninterested in raising the current and visible language use problem observed in the federal domain due to exclusive and rigid monolingualism in federal settings in Ethiopia.

It is true that languages could be learned formally and informally. It is important to understand that not only attitude towards languages but also the existing socioeconomic and political structure affects who learns what language and why. The author overlooks such very important issues of institutional power asymmetry and how they affect language use on the ground, particularly in the federal domains, including the capital city.

Language policy as a transport policy

Language policy should put access to linguistic resources, mobility and participation of citizens into consideration. No argument on this. The question, however, is whether it is possible to divorce language and identity. Identity is multiple, dynamic and relational. There is also this thing called salience in identity. The salient identity of a certain ethnolinguistic group is what the members believe is the core representation of who they are.

In the African context, for some groups, religion might be a salient identity, for other groups, language could be a salient identity, and so forth. Here I'm talking about a claimed identity, not the ascribed one. If a given ethnolinguistic group claims a certain salient identity, for example language, who am I to tell them that they're wrong. As scholars, we could describe, interpret and explain, we don't prescribe.

Linguistic practice, not administration

I think what is far more important is being able to facilitate inter-linguistic horizontal communicative infrastructure among different language speakers in Ethiopia. Achieving such a noble goal is very difficult in a country where the federal domain is solely controlled by a single working language.

A genuine quest for inclusive national integration and expanded sociolinguistic circle of public engagement for citizens begins with challenging the federal linguistic melting pot that does not give space for the dynamic multiple linguistic identity.

Building bridges, not defending boundaries

The author repeatedly raises the challenge of linguistic mobility across multilingual Ethiopia. It is true that language policy is mainly territorial based in Ethiopia, but linguistic boundaries are not rigid as he claims them to be. Language contact zones in Ethiopia have always been multilingual at individual level, not just at societal level. It is naturally impossible to defend linguistic boundaries in multilingual countries like Ethiopia since they are mostly harmonious and speakers easily navigate them.

Take the Oromia National Regional State, for example. The region is operating in three languages: Afaan Oromo, Amharic and English, even violating the regional constitution that designates Afaan Oromoo as the sole regional working language. It is apparently clear that linguistic mobility is never hindered in this region.

Contrarily, monolingual Afaan Oromoo speakers of the region, including those living in and around the capital, Addis Ababa, are experiencing linguistic exclusion, and suffering communicative barrier, within the city’s public domains, for not being able to speak the sole federal working language of the city, Amharic. There is a clear vertical and horizontal communication challenge for non-Amharic speakers in the capital. This is the real meaning of the linguistic mobility problem in the Ethiopian sociolinguistic context.

Languages as economic infrastructure

Teaching of Afaan Oromo in Addis Ababa city as a subject might enrich Amharic speakers’ linguistic capital to navigate the larger economic geography of the country. It's equally important to create a wider economic geography for non-Amharic speakers in Addis Ababa city. The benefit has to be mutual and bidirectional. The best recipe for this to come true is the promotion of Afaan Oromo to the status of the federal working language of Ethiopia though the author utters no word about this very important language policy issue.

De-ethnicizing Amharic

The author ignores how the historical power relationship between ethno-linguistic groups and their languages could display in the present sociolinguistic relations among different language speakers in a multilingual Ethiopia. I am a believer that the present is shaped by the past and the future will be the making of the present. The author misses this core truth in his analysis of Ethiopian language policy.

The idea that Amharic is a common operating system of the Ethiopian market is misleading, and it overlooks the real sociolinguistic context of the country. The status of Amharic as the national language of Ethiopia has already been reduced to the status of a federal working language in post-1991 Ethiopia. Therefore, the representation of the language as the sole national lingua franca of the country needs empirical justification.

Also, the degree of Afaan Oromoo-Amharic bilingualism among the post-1991 generation, in Oromia, is not as significant as it was for the pre-1991 generation. Amharic has already shrunk in its occupation of geopolitical space in the Oromia National Regional State following the change of its status in 1991. Therefore, the author's view is far from the truth in this regard.

Amharic cannot be the sole national link language in the current sociolinguistic situation in Ethiopia, and it is hardly possible to impose it as such under the pretext of reversing economic self-execution. The author would have come up with a very interesting sociolinguistic solution where mega Ethiopian languages like Afaan Oromoo, Amharic and others could be used as a national link languages in building a platform for inclusive, pragmatic, pluralistic and democratic nation building, the way South Africans did.

The argument for the maintenance of the Amharic as a sole national link language in Ethiopia sounds like putting an old wine in a new jar, knowing that the jar could not sustain it.

Normalizing code-switching

The author has mixed up the idea of code-switching and polyglossia. Bilinguals could code-switch or code-mix between matrix and embedded languages, and that's normal and natural. This is different from the situation where heteroglossic individuals use different languages depending on the linguistic contexts they are in. This is also normal in multilingual countries.

I believe the kinds of problems the author raises with regard to linguistic mobility can be resolved by designating multiple official languages at federal level in Ethiopia, instead of arguing for the imposition of a singular lingua franca across the board in the country. This can be designed using the three-plus-or-minus language policy model at a national level, putting regional, sub-regional, national/federal communicative infrastructure into consideration. This way it is possible to create a unified multiple national identity in Ethiopia in the long run.

Fluid people, rigid map

The map might be rigid, but ethnolinguistic boundaries have always been porous, and linguistic border areas have always been multilingual, both at individual and societal levels. The transition between linguistic boundaries have always been smooth and harmonious in Ethiopia. The post-1991 Ethiopian language policy has already crossed the boundary of the 19th century argument of linguistic nationalism.

We already have a multilingual language policy with some challenges within the federal domain-the federal domain being monolingual. Adopting multiple federal link languages in Ethiopia, in addition to the already existing one, Amharic, could create a dynamic and inclusive sociolinguistic platform where non-Amharic speaking citizens could also participate and contribute to socioeconomic and political development of their country.

That is the modern pluralistic view of language policy.

Languages as repertoire, not as flags

Languages are both flags and repertoire. They are the markers of their speakers' linguistic identity, If the speakers say so. And they are also a very important capital of making a living in a multilingual setting. In sociolinguistics, languages are both the markers of identity, and the means of communication.

Every language policy decision and language planning action needs to put the sentimental and instrumental dimensions of languages into consideration. And this is far more important in multilingual countries like Ethiopia where the question of languages is a very serious issue, since sociolinguistic reductionism is not affordable in such a sociolinguistic setting.

Language as economy, mobility and power

The fact that language marks identity is as important as its role in economic mobility. In Ethiopia, especially, the question of linguistic identity has long been at the core of political mobilization for a number of ethnolinguistic groups. The various ethnolinguistic groups are very much aware of how language plays the role of empowering or excluding, and oppressing or liberating. They are very much aware of the real costs of not being able to effectively communicate in a multilingual public sphere. That is why every dialogue surrounding the issue of language policy in Ethiopia must be able to target a democratic, inclusive, pragmatic and pluralistic integration.

Policymakers need to understand languages as markers of identity and as tools of communication. Such understanding could lead to sound language policy decisions in multilingual countries like Ethiopia where the issue of language is very political. The federal domain in Ethiopia seems to be the last stronghold of the country’s failed project of linguistic nationalism. Ethiopia needs to transform the socio linguistic setting of the federal domain and create an inclusive sociolinguistic context where citizens, particularly speakers of mega Ethiopian languages, could participate in economic, social and political affairs of the country through communicative infrastructure that facilitates both vertical and horizontal integration. This can strengthen the creation of a unified multiple national identities in the future.

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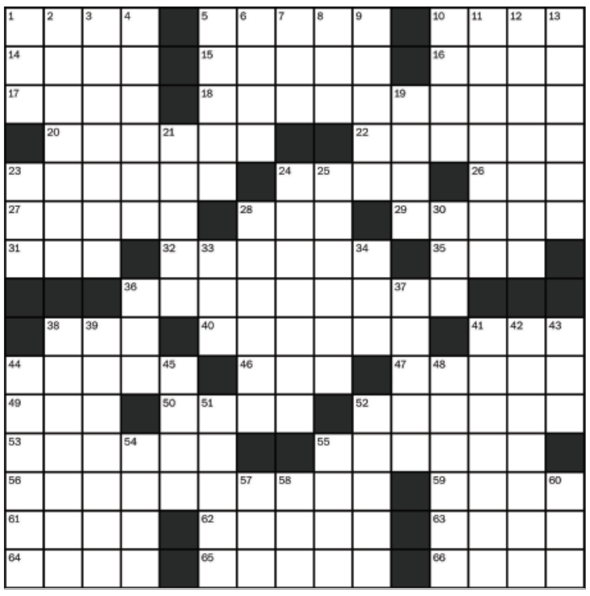
Entertainment

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



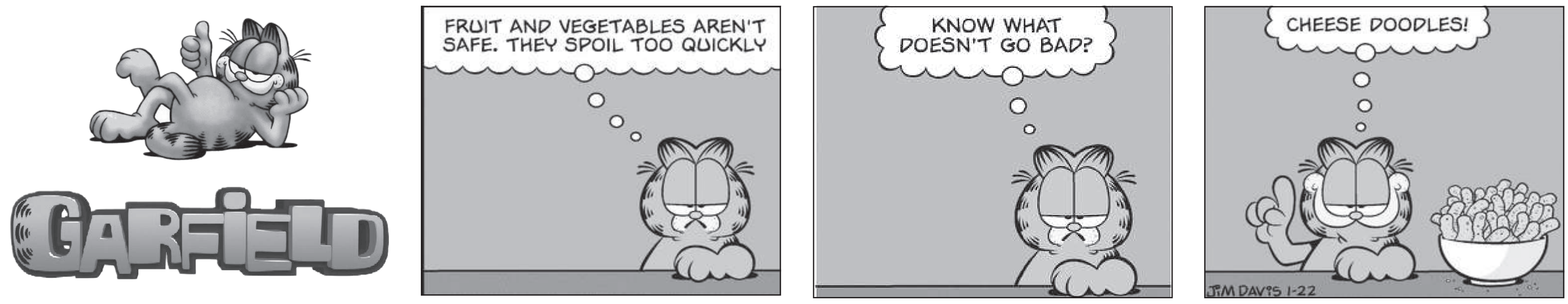
ACROSS

1. Self motivators?
5. Teeny
10. Brand new
14. Coming up
15. Health care cost
16. Sorbet berry
17. Toy company acquired by Mattel in 1997
18. *"What did you just say?"
20. Workout wear
22. For adult audiences
23. "That one's for you"
24. Put through an X-ray
26. "Succession" surname
27. Juvenile retort
28. Shearing day sound
29. Katherine Moennig's "The L Word" role
31. Shaming syllable
32. Renaissance faire competitions
35. "Confirmed, captain"
36. *Folks who may be at the point of no return?
38. Chaotic crowd
40. "Begin"
41. "The Price Is Right" network
44. Top medals
46. Soap ingredient
47. Wuhan welcome
49. Tally
50. Golfer's pocketful
52. Devices at a counter- service restaurant
53. Emphatic assertion
55. Opulent
56. *Raspberry
59. Reddit Q&As
61. Bronte sister
62. Works for
63. Egyptian river
64. Cleaning cloths
65. Tickle pink

DOWN

1. Tonsillectomy doc
2. Jumbo jets?
3. *Beef cut that may be braised
4. Reaches a new low?
5. Adam of "Severance"
6. Mineral hardness eponym
7.Mimic
8. Loose
9. Stretchy fabric
10. Gordita dough
11. Freezeframe?
12. "Give me a single example"
13. Rainbow pattern
19. Garden fixtures
21. Spanish wine
23. Actress Dennings
24. Struts with style
25. Vintage sunglasses shape
28. Seat belt fastener
30. Owns
33. Maker of Stick & Stay plates and bowls for kids
34. Head south?
36. "More info soon"
37. Like much music
38. Biotech firm developing cancer vaccines
39. Dated ditty
41. Savory party snack, and what can be found in the answers to the starred clues?
42. Leave nothing to the imagination
43. Distress call
44. Stonewall Inn, for one
45." - : Soulsville U.S.A.":HBO documentary about a record label
48. Invasive lizard in Florida
51. "Cabaret" role for Alan Cumming
52. Intrinsically
54. French model Rau
55. First step, say
57. "2001" supercomputer
58. Historical period
60. "Comprende?"

Solution: see below



WEEKLY HOROSCOPES

Aries

You're in a powerful position now. Step up and take action to get what you want. You can be a catalyst for change simply by being who you are. Be diplomatic as emotions could be running high. Making others do what you want without considering their feelings won't bring the best results. Even if you know you're right, resist the desire to give orders. Be simple, direct, and honest.

Cancer

Those who like to move in progressive directions can get stressed by a workplace that insists things stay as they are. Structures that no longer feed your heart can change radically with little or no warning. This is a real opportunity to follow your heart. Network with friends and online to improve your prospects. This is a good time to work alone. This period is fortunate for teamwork and meeting co-workers away from the job.

Libra

Trust your inner voice. No matter what your situation, behave as if all will be well. Optimism and excitement are important generators of interest for anything you do. Finish all you can before you start anything new. Do your best to have good relationships with superiors. This is a positive time to improve your current position or find something better. Magical coincidences are possible now.

Capricorn

Now it's important to be sure of your own value as a person. Do your best to find happiness in ordinary responsibilities. Do your best to stay calm and focused on your job. When you're centered within yourself, it's easier to lead others. You might feel lazy and self-indulgent. If possible, take a break. Taking an interest in co-workers builds morale. Network to improve your career prospects.

Taurus

This is generally a positive period. Problems can be corrected if you take a slow and careful approach. It's possible to have too much confidence or be too opinionated. Be sure you're on the same page as everyone else. Events can bring a situation that seems to be working out but still isn't complete. Someone could be hiding or not facing important facts. This period is good for researching job prospects.

Leo

You may feel very moody or emotionally vulnerable now. Jealousy or feelings of insecurity can create unnecessary problems. Do your best to be confident. Events will bring improving relationships with co-workers. You might be surprised to discover you have the same perspective or long-term goals. It's a positive time for team projects. An unsettled situation on the job can undermine your hopes. It isn't your responsibility to fix it.

Scorpio

You'll need willpower to stay focused early now. It's important to do what is expected and not become distracted. If stressed, do your best not to lapse into worry or anxiety. Talk to the supportive people around you. This is a good time for a careful review of any detailed work. Ask for help if you're just learning. It's important to communicate your needs. Be sure everyone understands what is expected.

Aquarius

You have a strong work ethic, but you can sometimes put your own needs second. What can you do to create a better balance of work and play? This is a lucky time to network with others to improve your situation. Focus on excellent customer service. Do research to help yourself or others. You can shine as a wise leader with a generous heart. Assume you know your job and that people appreciate you.

Gemini

There may not be enough value placed on positive relationships or the communication of feelings in the workplace. You have an opportunity to improve morale if you can get people talking. A fortunate energy promises success with technical issues. Problems come if you cling to the past. This period has the potential for making a significant, positive change. Your desire for success or to make a good impression could mean overtime.

Virgo

It might be time to break with tradition now. How do other people's expectations stand in the way of your career ambitions? Even if you have a job you like, this is an excellent time to think about upgrading or changing your current position. Do your best to make a good impression. Be especially careful about your clothing. Surrender old patterns and be open to trying things in new ways. Dare to reinvent yourself.

Sagittarius

It's important to be a good listener. Ask careful questions if you have any doubts. Superiors, co-workers, and customers will appreciate your interest. You can help build morale by bringing in a snack or going out to eat with co-workers. You could feel moody. Try not to take thoughtless remarks personally. Be receptive and open. This isn't the time to aggressively take the lead. Consider upgrading your wardrobe.

Pisces

This can be a very social period. It's excellent for teaching or learning opportunities. Others will turn to you for good ideas and advice. Plan to have a good time, even at ordinary events. Be generous, with no expectation of special recognition. This is an ideal period for any group effort or leading a team. Creative interests will be especially satisfying. Some events can see you feeling resentful. Avoid reacting with injured pride.

		8	6		3			
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			4	1				
4	9	2			3			
		6			8			

Sudoku

The game is easy, the rules are simple. All you have to do is make sure you fill every 3x3 box every row and every column, without repetition, using the number 1-9.

Word search

F	R	V	O	Y	A	G	E	R	E	R	O	O	Y
E	A	E	D	N	O	L	S	E	L	S	R	L	R
R	S	B	S	I	S	K	O	O	O	N	S	E	R
E	U	O	A	S	E	R	K	N	H	A	P	S	E
N	L	R	E	J	R	I	I	L	M	I	O	E	B
G	U	I	K	S	O	K	S	N	R	S	C	L	N
I	I	A	B	C	L	R	S	R	O	S	K	L	E
C	N	A	L	U	M	O	R	W	W	A	P	E	D
A	O	K	E	L	T	T	U	H	S	D	O	C	D
P	I	C	A	R	D	B	O	R	G	R	R	A	O
L	E	U	H	U	R	A	A	A	T	A	J	N	R
P	H	K	L	I	N	G	O	N	I	C	N	Y	G
U	A	T	R	A	N	S	P	O	R	T	E	R	R
A	R	C	H	E	R	Y	N	I	A	T	P	A	C

CARDASSIANS
TRANSPORTER
SPOCK
FERENGI
KIRK

ROMULAN
VOYAGER
CAPTAIN
NACELLES
ARCHER

BAJOR
PICARD
SHUTTLE
RODDENBERRY
SULU

BORG
UHURA
KLINGON
WORMHOLE
SISKO

Crossword Solution

30ኛ ዓመት

CAPITAL WARMLY CONGRATULATES THE REPORTER ON ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY, A REMARKABLE MILESTONE IN ETHIOPIAN JOURNALISM. OVER THE PAST THREE DECADES, YOUR DEDICATION TO ACCURATE, INDEPENDENT, AND PUBLIC-INTEREST REPORTING HAS STRENGTHENED OUR COUNTRY'S MEDIA AND DEMOCRATIC DISCOURSE. WE ARE PROUD TO STAND BESIDE YOU AS PARTNERS IN THE FOURTH ESTATE AND WISH YOU CONTINUED SUCCESS AND NEW HORIZONS IN THE YEARS TO COME.

Capital SPORT

Hawassa Lake Half Marathon to attract runners from over 20 countries

By our staff reporter

The 14th Ethio Telecom Hawassa Lake Half Marathon is set to welcome elite athletes and mass runners from more than 20 countries when it takes place in the southern Ethiopian city on Sunday, February 8, 2026.

Organised by Great Ethiopian Run in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, the event is Ethiopia's only internationally recognised half marathon and has grown into a week long sports and cultural festival showcasing the country's natural beauty and hospitality. The race programme includes the flagship 21km half marathon, an 8km mass run and children's races, alongside side events such as a hike on Mount Tabor and a lakeside barbecue night.

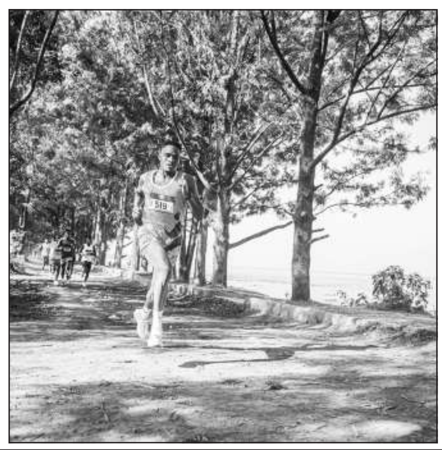
This year's Hawassa race is the second stop in the "Discover Ethiopia Classics", a six city series designed to promote Ethiopian nature and culture through road running events. The series began in Debre Birhan and will continue in Jimma, Bekoji, Arba Minch and Harar in the coming months, each hosting similar race and tourism programmes.

Since its inception, the Hawassa Lake Half Marathon has built a reputation as a launchpad for major Ethiopian stars. Among its most famous alumni is Tamirat Tola, who won his first major international title at Hawassa in 2005 before going on to become an Olympic and World Championships medallist for Ethiopia.

Organisers expect more than 500 participants to travel from Addis Ababa and overseas to Hawassa for this year's edition, with total race entries — including local residents — projected to reach around 5,000. Athletes from at least 21 countries and all regions of Ethiopia are due to take part, reinforcing Hawassa's profile as one of the country's leading tourism and sports destinations.

"The Hawassa Lake Half Marathon is more than a race; it is an occasion to celebrate Ethiopia's natural beauty and warm hospitality," said Great Ethiopian Run General Manager Dagmawit Amare. "Working with the Ministry of Tourism, we are promoting Hawassa as a centre for both sports and tourism, and showing international visitors why it should be on the map for global athletics fans."

The 2018 Ethio Telecom Hawassa Lake International Half Marathon is being staged with support from the Ministry of Tourism, Ethio Telecom, Telebirr, Dashen Bank, Pepsi, FABB beauty soap, Top water, Haile Hotels & Resorts and Afran Hospital.



The socioeconomic pain from macro reforms needs remedial intervention at source

By Matias Assefa

Back in May 2024 several high-caliber economists and practitioners gathered in Berlin to discuss principles that should guide policymakers and finally came out with the Berlin Declaration. And there was a striking degree of consensus that policy reforms along the lines of market-liberal, "Washington Consensus" orthodoxy have disappointed in many countries. Specifically, pro-market policies have not focused enough on people's real problems such as shared prosperity and decent jobs and, instead, resulted in an ever-rising income and wealth inequality. Not to mention depriving developing states and their citizens of control over key strategic interests. In fact, in one document cited by the influential economist Dani Rodrik, none other than the World Bank had already warned people "to be skeptical of top-down, comprehensive, universal set of solutions," recommending instead selective, modest and local context-driven policy reforms.

So it is an interesting coincidence that Ethiopia adopted "comprehensive macroeconomic reforms" à la the Washington-Consensus, best-practice tradition only shortly after the latter's postmortem was held in Berlin. To be fair, Ethiopia is only one among dozens of developing countries that have recently resorted to such policy reforms under intense fiscal and debt pressures. Ethiopia's policy reforms have come in the form of conditionality attached to the IMF's four-year Extended Credit Facility arrangement. The economic program has a distinctive focus on short- and medium-term macro stabilization, putting fiscal discipline, reorientation of public expenditures, tax reform, unified and competitive exchange rate, and financial liberalization at the top of the wish list. However, while the extra capital inflow secured from international financial institutions has definitely alleviated our national financial crunch, the macro stabilization program has deepened the socioeconomic pressure on typical Ethiopians.

Notwithstanding officially slowing inflation, Ethiopians are currently going through a dreadful cost-of-living distress and more anxious about affordability than ever before. True, we had difficulty in making ends meet even in pre-reform years. But the IMF-supported program could not come at a worse time, with prices of basic necessities subsequently jumping two- or three-fold. Most people's purchasing power has gone through the floor. Middle- and lower-income households, who have no surplus to spare, are shouldering the heaviest burden – even more so in urban centers like Addis Ababa, where an increasing number of people are downgrading consumption to goods of cheaper variety, from sheger bread to "Sunday market" vegetables and to other items from street vendors. The overall consumer confidence could only have plunged.

How do we know that the macro stabilization program has hurt the typical consumer? Anyone who demands protest demonstrations as proof is foolish. Let's instead look at the program's main manifestations to date – namely, steep currency devaluation, tax escalation and subsidy cuts/removals. First, there has been a move toward a floating exchange rate regime in order to eliminate exchange rate overvaluation, which the IMF believes is "the source of deep, longstanding macroeconomic distortions." So the birr has duly obliged and relinquished all its value in Forex in a year. However, not only that the regime change does not guarantee either confidence or a real exchange rate competitive enough to accelerate non-primary exports, but it has clearly inflated the values of many goods via import prices and price-setting behavior that incorporates inflationary expectations.

What about tax reform? It is supposed to broaden the tax base over time while lowering marginal rates, thereby enhancing the federal government's fiscal position. It is not meant to take a spray-gun approach to taxation, including within the tax base whatever was untaxed or now looks taxable, or to push rates as high as possible, especially quickly. But the government has now levied or increased taxes on such basic goods and services as water, electricity, transport, modest owner-occupied homes, house rental incomes with too low a threshold, and retail mobile and digital transactions. One might argue that the prices of some of these are lower than regional averages, but our income per capita, adjusted for price level differences, is also significantly lower than the Sub-Saharan African average. Moreover, a tax reform is supposed to be distributionally at least neutral if not progressive. So the authorities' increased use of a uniform value-added tax (VAT) to raise additional revenue, not even exempting basic food items and given limited coverage of social protection programs, represents a serious hit to the average consumer, especially in urban areas. This is because a VAT, being a tax on final consumption, is regressive in its incidence, falling most heavily on the poor and middle class, as the latter consume a higher fraction of their income than the rich. You may counter by pointing to the collected money's welfare-improving effect on the poor, but that is far from being a sure thing.

Even more frightening, the reform program appears to have envisaged imposition of VAT and excise on fuel starting in the fiscal year 2025/26. This will indeed be very bad news, if acted upon. Mind you, fuel prices have already been increased three times in just under a year, by withdrawing subsidies, prompting additional inflationary pressures. True, fuel prices for an importing country normally reflect the global price of crude oil. But this should not be enforced at a time when the vast majority of people are already facing a major price shock and workers have seen overall consumer prices rise a lot faster than their wages, while carrying effective tax overburden. Why not? Because subjecting fuel to taxation will increase transport prices and operating costs of businesses even more, which will inevitably be passed onto consumers, not to mention reignite the general price level. So full cost recovery and further taxation in the provision of fuel (and also utilities) may gratify the IMF, but almost surely hurts ordinary families. A fuel tax is not compelling as an excise either, when our public transportation is inefficient and there is as yet no viable replacement in the market for energy.

But hasn't the government set a goal to increase our tax-to-GDP ratio? Well, the first thing to remember is that tax is a policy instrument, not an objective. Second, the tax take varies with the business cycle regardless of tax policy (e.g., our tax-to-GDP ratio averaged 12% over the period 2009/10-2017/18, higher than current program target of 10%), so too much focus on the ratio is unwarranted. Last but not least, the government must beware of its triumphalism over the post-reform astronomical growth in tax revenue that is attained in no small part on the back of severe financial and mental strains for many households, workers and small businesses.

There's more. To increase non-tax revenue, the authorities have also made some mind-blowing upward changes in governmental service charges, fees and fines, which play their part in the cost-of-living story.

Turning to public expenditure priorities, our government is correct to make an effort to save taxpayer money by reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, avoiding vanity projects, and cutting out waste and corruption in the management of worthwhile projects. There are also circumstances in which indiscriminate subsidies can be adjudged socially undesirable. Nevertheless, free-market ideologues' "shoot-at-sight" approach to state subsidies in the name of raising efficiency is misguided (and, of course, hypocritical). Subsidies and transfers are key tools of income redistribution. And our subsidies for things like food, edible oil, water, electricity (home use), public transport, residential housing and fertilizers should not be dismissed as "waste and resource misallocation." Rather, they should form part of the social safety net, as cutting or eliminating them would leave the poor majority worse-off and thus likely worsen poverty and social insecurity. As the saying goes, "a government is an insurance company with an army," prioritizing spending based on public preference. So Ethiopians would also prefer to maintain the aforementioned subsidies – inasmuch as we value democratic consent in policymaking.

The point is, efficiency should not trump everything else, especially equity. If helping citizens to put food on the table results in a modest reduction in budgetary position, efficiency or growth, so be it – after all, growth will not trickle down to enrich everyone. It can also be viewed as a cost worth paying to avert the risk of sociopolitical crisis.

The IMF, for its part, says that part of their loans is to "strengthen targeted subsidies or social safety nets in order to help the poor and vulnerable groups." Indeed, the government has given assistance along the same line, already accustomed to allocating life necessities like housing among citizens based on the "poorest of the poor" criterion. But think about it: Ethiopia is a low-income country where more than two-thirds of the population lives in multidimensional poverty. In this context, how can one make a distinction between targeted and untargeted subsidies in any meaningful sense? The "targeted social safety nets" advocated by the IMF are at best palliative and do little for the disadvantaged who make up the bulk of our population. Contra the IMF, what we need is proportionately universal social protection.

All in all, the anticipated socioeconomic pain from the IMF-supported reform program has well and truly begun to bite. But the worst may be yet to come as the inflationary impact of policy changes takes time to fully manifest. Yes, the government insists that it is taking temporarily painful means to beneficent long-term economic ends. But the means should not be grossly disproportionate to the ends. And mustn't a society first survive to reach the long run?

Meanwhile, the IMF is worried about maintaining the reform momentum and whether quantitative targets are met – which would probably mean that there is no end in sight to the affordability nightmare that currently haunts Ethiopians' sleep.

So what can be done? The authorities in effect reduced their "policy space" when they signed up for the IMF lending program and may not want to deviate from the latter now and risk losing the Bretton Woods institutions' badly needed finances and approval. However, pragmatism dictates that they put the brakes especially on their fiscal efforts to meet overzealous budget targets by escalating taxation and suppressing subsidies, which typically end up pushing living costs upward for the majority vulnerable population, for which no targeted assistance will compensate.

The stakes are high, not least in the political field. Economically painful reforms are a proven political loser, not a winner. If the public discontent over kitchen-table issues continues unabated, it can produce a political backlash in one way or another. Or will the government get away with it? We'll have to wait and see.

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