



Ethiopian News

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24th AU SUMMIT

2015 Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063

23 - 31 January, 2015 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



Ethiopia sees the launch of the Addis Ababa City Light Rail.

The project cost \$475 million and is the first of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa.

Services will begin in May after standard trials.

Continued on page: 7

24th African Union Summit; new chairman announced



The 24th Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) took place in Addis Ababa from 23rd to 31st January 2015 under the theme, ***“Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063”***.

The main meeting of the Heads of State and Government took place from 30th to 31st January, where distinguished speakers spoke of the progress and some of the challenges that Africa faces, as well as proposals for the way forward.

The opening ceremony also saw the election of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe as the Union’s Chairperson for the year 2015, taking over from Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz.



Speaking at the opening ceremony, Dr Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the AU Commission, said Africa has no choice but to move forward and upwards. The continent, she said, has been climbing, “a step at a time, up the steep cliff towards

peace, prosperity and the restoration of the dignity of its people”.

The Chairperson recalled that, at the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Organisation of African Unity in 2013, the continent’s resolve to be in charge of its destiny informed its decision to develop Agenda 2063 “through a people-driven process for the realization of our vision for an integrated, people-centred, prosperous Africa at peace with itself”.



The Agenda 2063 framework document, presented for adoption by the Heads of State and Government, outlines the aspirations and concrete programmes to steer the continent for the next fifty years: to diversify African economies and industrialise; to have a skills and entrepreneurial revolution, unleashing the creativity and energy of young people, and to effect an agricultural and agro-processing transformation, so that Africa can feed itself and contribute to feeding the world.

Issues of peace and security dominated many of the presentations by African and visiting Heads of State and Government. Many of the leaders condemned terrorism in very strong terms, with the outgoing Chairperson of the African Union Mr Mohammed Ould Abdelaziz saying, “Terrorism remains a global scourge and fighting it requires cooperation at the international level.”

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa also featured prominently in the talks. The AUC Chairperson praised the work of the 835 African health workers who were deployed to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone under the auspices of the African Union Support to the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (ASEOWA). She also extended her gratitude to the

ASEOWA head of mission Dr Julius Oketta and the African private sector that is raising funds to keep the health workers on the ground until the affected countries are declared Ebola free. There are signs that, due to the work of the ASEOWA health workers among others, the Ebola crisis is now abating, with the incidents of infection and death from the disease vastly decreasing.

The new AU Chairperson, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, meanwhile accepted his position saying "By electing me to preside over this august body, with full knowledge of the onerous responsibility that lies ahead, I humbly accept your collective decision".



He urged Africa to take charge of its destiny and pledged to work for Africa's development particularly in the area of infrastructure development.

The meeting of African Heads of State and Government concluded on 31st January with the adoption of decisions and declarations to guide the work of the African Union this year. Robert Mugabe expressed satisfaction about the adoption of the AU Agenda 2063 framework, "we have rededicated ourselves to the Pan-African ideals of our founding fathers for the Africa we want," he said. He called on AU Member States to implement all the decisions adopted during the summit "as that is the only way African states will leverage their resources for the benefits of their people".

The AU Chairperson further called on the Member States to contribute fully to the decision adopted by the summit on the alternative sources of financing the AU's activities. He also commended the solidarity shown by all Africans during the great mobilization to combat the Ebola epidemics.

Some of the key decisions adopted during the 24th AU Summit include:

The Assembly recommended the extension of the mandate of the ASEOWA and called upon Member States who have not yet done so to lift all restrictions imposed on Ebola affected countries. The assembly also requested that the international financial institutions and partner countries cancel the debt of the three affected countries (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone), approved the recommendation to urgently convene a Global Conference on the Ebola epidemic and appealed to the scientific community to accelerate the search for a vaccine against Ebola.

On the Establishment of the African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (African CDC), the Assembly expressed satisfaction about efforts made by the Commission to speed up the process for the establishment of the Centre by mid-2015.

On the continent-wide solidarity against Boko Haram, the Assembly welcomed and supported the efforts deployed by Member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Republic of Benin for having agreed to deploy national contingents and establish a Joint Military Staff Headquarters for conduct of military operations against the Boko Haram terrorist group.

It expressed its high appreciation to the Republic of Chad for the timely intervention to assist the Republic of Cameroon in combating the Boko Haram terrorist group and called on all Member States to render every possible assistance towards defeating the dangerous Boko Haram Group.

On the report of the High Level Committee on the Post 2015 development Agenda, the Assembly endorsed the formation and the Terms of Reference of the African Group of Negotiators on the Post 2015 Development Agenda which will be the single negotiating body acting on behalf of the continent.

The full text of the decisions, declarations and resolutions will be available on the African Union website soon on <http://www.au.int/>.

The 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union will be held in South Africa in June/July 2015.

Ethiopian education minister attends Education Forum; holds partnership discussions with universities



A delegation led by H.E. Mr Shiferaw Shugute, Ethiopia's Minister of Education, participated at the Education World Forum in London from 19th to 21st January. The Minister was accompanied by his Deputy, H.E. Mr Wondwossen Kiflu, State Minister.

This year, the Forum, attended by more than 80 International Education Ministers, focussed on three main areas - accelerating teaching quality, improvement in balancing skills- and knowledge-based education, and constructing compelling cases for national investment in education.

The Minister met the Rt. Hon. Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development, at the opening reception, where they discussed the whole of DFID's programme in Ethiopia, and in particular the education sector. The Minister also explained the achievements made in expanding the education sector and in improving the quality of education.

The Minister held parallel bilateral discussions with Baroness Lindsay Northover, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for International Development, on the education reforms undertaken in Ethiopia and the achievements made at primary, secondary and tertiary levels and in technical and vocational training in Ethiopia. Minister Shiferaw also gave a detailed explanation of the protracted efforts made to improve the quality of education at all levels.



The delegation with Baroness Lindsay Northover

During his visit, the Minister met his counterparts from Africa, Asia and Europe, and companies that engage in the education sector.

The delegation also had briefing sessions with experts from DFID, on research programmes, including diagnostic research, which the British government is planning to undertake in the coming months.

The purpose of the diagnostic research is to work together with programme countries like Ethiopia to assess the education system and discover its strengths and weaknesses, with the aim of revamping the education system.

The diagnostic research is also expected to identify gaps and introduce new elements into education system planning, designed to serve for the next five to ten years.

Minister Shiferaw, in his meeting both with the Secretary of State and with the technical group, stressed the importance of expert groups led by DFID helping to build the capacity of university leaders, especially enhancing their capacity to manage higher institutions in organising course structure and building up the research and development capacity of Ethiopia's higher institutions.

In relation to higher education, he raised how DFID could be of help in improving the capacity of lecturers through inter-higher institution co-operation, networking and other proven mechanisms.

The Minister also met and held discussions with Professor Martyn Poliakoff, Foreign Secretary of the Royal Society and Rector of the University of Nottingham, on how to strengthen the existing co-operation and the way forward.

At the University of Bradford, Minister Shiferaw held discussions with Professor Robert M. Parkin, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Transfer; Professor Donnal Lee, Dean of Faculty and Professor David J. Francis, Department Head of Peace Studies at the university. The minister appreciated the university's efforts in providing scholarships and capacity building programmes, and also reiterated the government's

keen interest in working with the university in implementing Peace Education programmes.

The Delegation also visited EON Reality, the world class Virtual Reality Corporation in Manchester, which works in the area of technology-based knowledge transfer for industry, education, and ‘edutainment’ and 3D visualization solutions that improve communication and knowledge transfer – such as simulation-based learning and training.

The delegation was received by Mr Ken Swain, Managing Director, and Mikael Jacobsson VP of Business Development Europe. Mr Swain expressed his interest in establishing this pioneering technology training facility in Addis Ababa to help improve training and vocational training schemes. The minister appreciated the initiative and has confirmed his support.

Poverty in Ethiopia Down 33 Percent Since 2000

According to the World Bank’s latest Poverty Assessment report, poverty in Ethiopia fell from 44% in 2000 to 30% in 2011. The decline was underpinned by high and consistent economic

growth, with agricultural growth being the main driver. Since 2005, agricultural growth has been responsible for a reduction in poverty of 4% a year, suggesting that the agricultural growth strategy pursued by the Government of Ethiopia has paid off.

Government spending on basic services and effective rural safety nets has also helped the least well-off in Ethiopia. The Productive Safety Net Programme alone has pushed 1.5 million people out of poverty, the report says.

The pace of poverty reduction in Ethiopia has been impressive, especially when compared with other African countries; only Uganda has had higher annual poverty reduction during the same period. Health, education, and living standards have also improved, with undernourishment down from 75 percent to 35 percent since 1990. Infant and child mortality rates fell considerably since 2000.

“The average household in Ethiopia has better health, education and living standards today than in 2000”

FIGURE 1.1: Progress in health, education and living standards in Ethiopia from 2000 to 2011



Source: Ethiopia Demographic and Health Surveys, Carranza and Gallagos (2013).

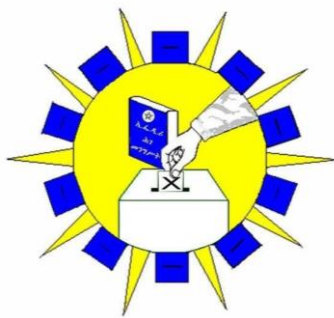


“Although Ethiopia started from a low base, its investment in pro-poor sectors and agriculture has paid off and led to tremendous achievements in economic growth and poverty reduction, which in turn have helped improve the economic prospects of its citizens” - Guang Zhe Chen, World Bank Group Country Director for Ethiopia, said.

The full report can be accessed on the World Bank website.



Millions register for Ethiopia's May elections



More than 30 million Ethiopians have so far registered to vote in the 24th May elections, exceeding all expectations according to the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE).

45,000 polling stations have been established across the country.

The registration, which opened on 9th January, will run until 19th February and officials expect up to 35 million people of voting age to register.

Communications Office urges stakeholders to make upcoming general elections successful

The Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO) has called on stakeholders to play their part in making the May general election democratic, fair and peaceful.

GCAO State Minister, Ewnetu Bilata, told journalists in January that the public, the government and contesting political parties need to play a leading role to make the election a success.

Contesting political parties should abide by the negotiated election codes of conduct so as to make the election fair and peaceful, Ewnetu said.

If political parties have any questions or problems regarding the election, they should find a solution by talking to the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, he said.

Political parties who violate the code of conduct will be accountable for violation of the code, he added.

According to Ewnetu, efforts are underway to make the upcoming general election more successful by drawing valuable lessons from the four general elections conducted in past years.

Over 90% of the total eligible voters in the country had participated in the general elections conducted in previous years, he said. Over 35 million voters are expected to take part in the upcoming election.

Current voter registration is high, testimony to the growing awareness of people’s need to exercise their democratic rights.

Registration of party candidates completed

The registration of party candidates took place between 25th December and 11th February.

In an interview with the Ethiopian News Agency, Ato Demisewu Benti, Public Relations Director at the NEBE, said that out of a total of 60 political parties, 38 had so far fielded some 1,306 candidates, of whom 238 were women, to run for the House of People’s Representatives.

Thirty one parties have also registered 2,567 candidates, of whom 682 were women, to run for seats in the Regional States and the two City Administration Councils of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.

So far, according to Ato Demisewu, the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has registered 457 candidates to run for the elections at the House of People’s Representatives while the opposition Ethiopian Federal Democratic Union Forum (MEDREK) has registered 214 candidates.

Campaigning is now set to start from 23rd February.

The 13th February issue of *A Week in the Horn* covers more updates: <http://goo.gl/fYCicX>



Addis Ababa Light Rail begins testing phase

H.E. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn officially launched the testing phase of the Addis Ababa City Light Rail Transit on 2nd February.

Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Demeke Mekonnen, Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, Addis Ababa's Mayor Mr Diriba Kuma, diplomats, other dignitaries and thousands of residents, took to the streets to usher in Ethiopia's new chapter in infrastructure development.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, speaking on the occasion, said because of active public participation and committed leadership, all mega development projects across the country are on the right track.

The PM said that active public participation is crucial to all nation building. The Ethiopian Government is working to ensure a sophisticated and modern carbon neutral transportation system.

He thanked the city's residents for their patience during the construction of the line and said that, as well as solving transport problems in the city and reducing carbon emissions, the knowledge and technology transfers involved would enable the country to use its own human resources in future rail projects.



Mayor Diriba Kuma said the project was part of “a journey towards an Ethiopian renaissance” and the government would continue to invest in

infrastructure expansion to fuel socio-economic development of Ethiopia.



Eng. Dr Getachew Betru, CEO of the Ethiopian Railway Corporation, said personnel are being trained to operate and manage the new railways.

Attendees of the launch were able to ride on the 9km Kaliti to Meskel Square section of the network, which will have two lines running 16.9 km north-south from Menelik Square to Kaliti and 17.4 km east-west from Ayat to Tor Hailoch, with a 2.7 km shared section between Lideta and Meskel Square.



So far, 19 of the 70% low-floor trams, which have a maximum speed of 70km/h, have reached Addis Ababa and the remaining 22 trams will be transported to the capital soon. The trams have tinted windows and rubber components to resist premature aging from the effects of strong sunlight at altitudes of 2,400m.

Boarding stations for passengers are also under construction, ready for the grand passenger launch

in May. It will be the first city metro to operate in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The 34km two-line network, which was constructed by China Railway Group, will be maintained by China Railway Engineering Corporation (CREC) and Shenzhen Metro Group under a \$116 million five-year contract awarded by the Ethiopian Railway Corporation (ERC) last year.

Construction of the \$475 million project began in January 2012. Once fully operational, it is expected to carry around 60,000 passengers in all four directions, thus easing traffic congestion.

...new Ethio-Djibouti railway to start early 2016

The Ethiopian Railways Corporation said that the 700km railway line linking Addis Ababa and Djibouti will open in the first half of 2016.

The \$4 billion line, currently under construction, is part of the government's plan to construct 5,000km of railway lines across the country by 2020.

11 new universities to be opened in second GTP

Education Minister, Shiferaw Shigute, said eleven new universities will be opened across the country during the second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) period, as part of the government's efforts to fairly distribute institutions of higher learning in the coming five years.

The second GTP will begin at the end of the year and last until 2020.

Between the early 1950s and mid-1980s, Ethiopia had only two universities and graduate studies did not begin in earnest till 1979.

As a result of government prioritising in the last 20 years, a quarter of the population now attends school.

Education coverage is growing fast, owing to the existing 35 universities and more than 32,000 primary and secondary schools, the minister said. The number of students attending government universities has exceeded 387,000.

100% potable water coverage in second GTP

The Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy (MoWIE) said Ethiopia will attain 100% potable water coverage in the second phase of the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) period.

Officials said that clean drinking water coverage will reach 80.83% by the end of this Ethiopian fiscal year, up from 76.7% in the previous one. Efforts are under way to attain the 100% target ahead of the end of 2nd GTP period.

Ethiopia spends 5 to 7 billion birr annually to build new water installations and expand the existing ones. The number of potable water installations has now reached 161,813 from 94,400 four years ago. Efforts are also underway to build additional ones.

Regional Airline of the Year: Ethiopian Airlines

Ethiopian Airlines will be among winners at this year's Air Transport World's (ATW) Airline Industry Achievement Awards, scheduled to take place on 25th February.

Ethiopian Airlines CEO Tewolde Gebremariam said in a statement, "It is a great honour to receive this prestigious recognition from one of the leading global travel media. We continue to register remarkable success, despite the very challenging operating environment in Africa with traffic rights restrictions, infrastructure limitations, much higher jet fuel prices than in the rest of the world, and now disease outbreak."



Tewolde said, "We owe this award, first and foremost, to the patronage of our customers, who continue to fly with us in record numbers."

Established in 1974 to recognize excellence in the air transport industry, the ATW Awards are the

most coveted honour an airline or individual can receive. They are bestowed upon individuals and organizations that have distinguished themselves through outstanding performance, innovation, and superior service.

Ethiopian takes delivery of 11th Dreamliner; becomes the 1st Airline in Africa to own and operate the B787 full flight simulator

In early February Ethiopian Airlines, the largest and most profitable airline in Africa, took delivery of its 11th Boeing 787 Dreamliner, boosting its fleet, in the presence of CEO of Ethiopian Airlines Group, Mr Tewolde Gebremariam, US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ms Patricia M. Haslach and Ethiopian Tourism Organisation Head, Solomon Tadesse.



One of the new routes to be served by the B787-8 will be Addis Ababa-Dublin-Los Angeles, starting from June onwards, which will allow the airline to offer the Irish market another option to reach the West Coast of the United States non-stop out of Dublin. This is also the only non-stop connection between Ireland and Africa.



Ethiopian Airlines also announced new destinations in Europe, China and the Far East, including Tokyo Narita which will be served via Hong Kong, making Ethiopian the number one African carrier to the South and Far East. Tokyo will be the airline's 11th destination in Asia.

Founded on the 21st December 1945, the airline turns 70 this year, making it a pioneer in African aviation.

The company reported the highest ever number of passengers carried - over 6 million last year, and record turnover and profits for the financial year.

Continuing its aviation technology leadership in Africa, Ethiopian acquired the first ever B-787 Dreamliner full flight simulator in Africa.

The installation and construction of the full flight Simulator is in progress at Ethiopian's main Hub in Addis Ababa and the first pilot training in the B-787 flight simulator will start in March, 2015.

Ethiopian was the first airline in the world, outside Japan, to receive and operate the B-787 Dreamliner in August 2012. Currently, the airline is the largest operator of the B-787 in Africa.



The CEO of Ethiopian said "With the B-787 Flight Simulator, we will be fully self-sufficient in providing in-house training for our pilots on the B-787 aircraft, which has become our core fleet on our mid and long range routes.

Over the last four years, we have invested \$80 million in expanding both the scope and scale of our Academy. In line with our 15 years strategic roadmap, Vision 2025, we will continue to invest

heavily in our Academy with the objective of increasing its annual intake capacity from 1,000 trainees to about 4,000 by 2025."

The Ethiopian Aviation Academy is certified by the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority, the U.S Federal Aviation Administration, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), and IOSA (IATA Safety Audit). The Academy has been providing training for pilots, maintenance technicians, cabin crew, marketing and leadership for the airline and other sisterly carriers in Africa for more than six decades.

TRADE & INVESTMENT

Heineken inaugurates Ethiopia's biggest brewery

Heineken officially inaugurated its new state-of-the-art brewery at a green-field site in Kilinto on the outskirts of Addis Ababa on 15th January, in a ceremony attended by 300 guests including H.E. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn.

The €110 million new brewery is part of a total €310 million investment in the country by Heineken since 2011.

With a total capacity of 1.5m hectolitres, the Kilinto brewery is already producing the recently launched



PM Hailemariam Desalegn (centre) pushes the button to officially start production

Walia® beer together with Bedele® and Harar® beer brands. The site will also brew other brands including the flagship Heineken® beer.

Employing around 280 people, drawn from the local workforce, the new facility complements the

already established Bedele and Harar breweries; which were acquired from the Ethiopian government in 2011.

Speaking at the opening, Jean-François van Boxmeer, Chairman of the Executive Board and CEO of Heineken, said: "Our inauguration marks the latest chapter in our Africa story, which began over 100 years ago. Today, we are a proud partner for growth in the region with a long-term ambition to create sustainable businesses. This is certainly the case in Ethiopia, which is progressively unlocking its natural potential for its people, and bringing prosperity to both the cities and agricultural regions. Through our local barley sourcing project, we can be certain that the positive effects of our investment here spread well beyond the brewery gates. The CREATE project that we announced in 2013, where the partners share the goals of improving the income of smallholder barley farmers and improving access to markets, will help us to increase our local sourcing of malt barley."

PM Hailemariam said, "Heineken's investment underscores the belief and confidence that the foreign investment community has in our country as a credible and safe investment destination. I also want to acknowledge Heineken's commitment to addressing key social issues such responsible consumption messages, clean water availability and sustainable local sourcing; as well as health and safety issues in and around its breweries."

Johan Doyer, MD of Heineken Ethiopia, added: "This new facility, which more than doubles our potential output, will enable us to satisfy rising demand for local and international brands. In 2014, we launched our Walia® beer brand and its success has shown that the beer category in Ethiopia has huge potential. This modern, flexible and efficient brewery will help us meet that demand and bring new and exciting products to market. We have recruited local talent and will build the skills and capability of a committed workforce. With the opening of this brewery, Heineken Ethiopia has now reached a key milestone. Our next challenge is to prepare for the production of our flagship Heineken® beer which will provide a super-premium choice for our consumers and trade customers."

Africa Hotel Investment Forum returns to Addis

Bench Events, the organiser of the Africa Hotel Investment Forum (AHIF), announced that the conference will return to Addis Ababa in 2015, taking place at the Sheraton Hotel from 30th September until 1st October.

Matthew Weihs, Managing Director, Bench Events, said: "AHIF 2014 was such a great success that we felt compelled to return. We were honoured by the presence of Ethiopia's Prime Minister; we were inspired by the accomplishments of Haile Gebrselassie, one of the world's greatest long distance runners; we were impressed by the media attendance (76 journalists on day one); and we were delighted by the level of interest shown by the business community, with a record number of delegates, sponsors and many of the major global hotel brands announcing new initiatives and hotel openings...This September, I'm expecting to see more involvement from the local market which will make AHIF more productive, because international companies are keen to find the best local partners."

Samuel Tafese, President, Sunshine Business said: "Considering the considerable interest from other countries in hosting the Africa Hotel Investment Forum, to have secured the event for a second year is a huge opportunity for Ethiopia."

Solomon Tadesse, Chief Executive Officer, Ethiopian Tourism Organisation, said: "AHIF 2014 was an absolute success because it gave local hoteliers and investors the opportunity to meet international hotel owners, service providers and investors in their own city. ETO recognises the importance of different stakeholders in the tourism sector and is working hard to foster collaboration and alignment throughout the public and private institutions."

AHIF is the premier hotel investment conference in Africa, attracting many prominent international hotel owners, investors, financiers, management companies and their advisers.

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) said the Travel & Tourism sector in 2013 was responsible for 10.3% of Ethiopia's GDP and has generated 2.5 million jobs, 9.5% of total Ethiopian employment in 2013.



\$191 million plus earned from manufacturing

Ethiopia earned \$191.4 million US from the export of manufacturing products in the first half of this Ethiopian budget year.

Textile and garment exports generated \$39.9 million, while leather and leather products and meat and milk products made \$64 million and \$49.9 million, respectively.

Food, beverages and pharmaceuticals; chemical and construction inputs produced \$19.3 million, \$8.3 million and \$10.4 million, respectively.

Revenue from manufacturing has shown 18% growth on average during the past four years.

Over \$81 million earned from live animal export

Ethiopia earned \$81.81 million from live animal exports in the first half of this Ethiopian fiscal year, from the export of 303,849 heads of live animals.

Ethiopia stands first in Africa and 10th in the world in livestock population.

CULTURE & TOURISM

Ethiopia wins bronze Wanderlust Award



Ethiopia won bronze at the *Wanderlust* Magazine Travel Awards, which took place on 29th January at the Destinations Travel Show in Olympia, London.

In the Top Country category, Ethiopia received a satisfaction rating of 97% from *Wanderlust* readers.

It was a tight race for Ethiopia, with New Zealand in the top spot with a satisfaction rating of 97.38%, while Namibia won second place with 97.37%.

Mr Dida thanked *Wanderlust* readers for all their votes and encouraged people to consider Ethiopia for their next trip.

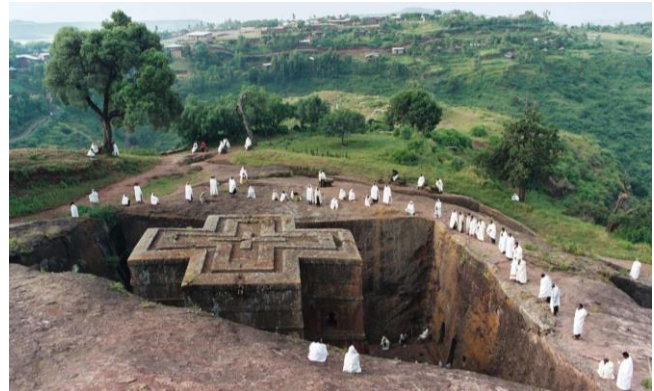
UK TV Presenter, Simon Reeve won the Gold Award for Top TV Programme – **Sacred Rivers** – in which he travels from source to sea along the world's

longest river, the Nile. His journey took him from the holy source of the Blue Nile in the Ethiopian highlands, through the desert of Sudan and onwards through Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea.



Mr. Terefe Dida, Minister Counsellor for Trade, Investment and Tourism receives the award on behalf of Ethiopia. He's pictured here with (l-r) Phoebe Smith – Editor of Wanderlust magazine, TV Presenter Julia Bradbury and Lyn Hughes – Wanderlust Co-Founder & Editor-In-Chief

On receiving the award on behalf of his team, Simon reflected Mr Dida's previous comment and spoke highly of Ethiopia, especially Lalibella, where he said his friend experienced a "spiritual awakening".



"Although New Zealand is back on top, it is particularly interesting to see Ethiopia voted third - having not even made the top ten last year. With its rare wolves, rock-hewn churches, mighty mountains and elaborate coffee ceremonies, this country is fascinating. I wonder if it could become the new Namibia?" commented Lyn Hughes of *Wanderlust*.

The awards are based on readers' travels from December 2013 to November 2014 and results are based on an average satisfaction score (converted to a percentage) rather than the number of votes cast. This year, almost 3,000 of the publication's readers voted and a total of 208 countries were nominated.

Ethiopia voted top destination in Africa for travel in 2015 by Rough Guide readers

The people have spoken! Last year, *Rough Guides* recommended Ethiopia as the top country for travel, and this year *Rough Guides* readers have done the same.

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

At number 7, here's what they say about Ethiopia.

"From the dramatic Great Rift Valley to the lush highlands, the diversity of Ethiopia's landscapes might surprise you. This is one of the most beautiful countries in Africa, and visitors find themselves entranced by the stunning lakes, sprawling national parks and delicious national cuisine."

Last year they said, "This culturally rich East African nation has always been an enticing destination, and though it remains poor, independent travel around the country is becoming easier thanks to a boom in small hotels and restaurants. Take your pick of spell-binding attractions: untouched national parks, the ancient cities of Axum, Harar and Lalibela, the world's first coffee plantations, the largest cave in Africa at Sof Omar and the continent's largest concentration of UNESCO sites."

Ethiopia featured in Kuoni's 2015 trend report

Kuoni's latest trend report features Ethiopia for the first time as part of its "New for 2015" programme.



Fasilides' castle in Gondar

"Ethiopia has been added to Kuoni's 2015 programme. While it remains largely undiscovered, getting there and around is eased by direct

Ethiopian Airlines flights to Addis Ababa from the UK, and a reliable domestic service. In the short-term, most travellers are expected to join touring holidays given the peace of mind offered by travelling with an expert guide."

Second Tourism Council assembly held

The second assembly of the **Ethiopian Tourism Transformation Council** was held on 15th January at the office of the Prime Minister in the presence of Ministers and senior government officials.

PM Hailemariam Desalegn said that in order to grow, and generate more income, the tourism sector should be transformed, and that every stakeholder must facilitate this process. He stressed the need for a Think Tank which could help transform tourism opportunities.

The PM said "tourism development should benefit community members so that it will encourage them to take care of nearby tourism sites."

Culture & Tourism Minister, Amin Abdulkadir, said the Ministry is using scientists, musicians and other celebrities to promote tourism destinations.

Hotel grading begins for 600 hotels in Ethiopia

The Ministry of Culture & Tourism (MoCT), and consultants from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) have begun grading and accreditation of 200 hotels in Addis Ababa and 400 hotels in the rest of the country, following a consultancy agreement signed on 28th December 2014 between the Ministry and the UNWTO.



According to the Hotel-Rating Requirements & Classification document, in order for a hotel to be eligible, it has to have at least 10 rooms and fulfil all the legal regulation requirements for health, safety and security, fire, environmental requirements for



waste management and have certified documentary evidence of compliance. Skilled, qualified and certified staff are also required for all stars.

The document listed specifications under 12 evaluation categories that range from exterior building, parking, gardening, safety and security, housekeeping and maintenance to kitchens. Decoration, lighting, electronic appliances, flooring, escalators and so forth are also scrutinised.

Grading is based on the score given on all these evaluations. An 80% plus score is awarded five stars. 70, 60, 50 or 30 is awarded four, three, two or one star respectively. The results of the hotel grading will be announced in September.

***Ethiopians at home and abroad celebrate
Timket***

Timket (Epiphany), a three-day occasion marking the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River, was celebrated all over Ethiopia from 17-19th January.

In his annual address, attended by believers, diplomats and tourists in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarch, His Holiness Abune Mathias said Timket is the symbol of the unity, equality, culture and togetherness of all Ethiopians. The doctrine helped Ethiopians to maintain their unity and coexistence, His Holiness said.

He urged Ethiopians to maintain this important holiday as it held values which enable people to live together peacefully worldwide.

Development, brotherhood and respect have been strengthened by the prevailing equality and peace in the country, he said.

He added that his church had launched an international campaign to convince the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to include Timket in its world heritage list.

Last year, UNESCO included Meskel, (finding of the true cross), in its Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

Thousands of tourists make their way to Gondar in northern Ethiopia each year to experience this unique celebration. Festivities start on the eve of

Timket, when a *Tabot*, a replica of the Ark of the Covenant covered in silk, is carried in procession on the head of a priest, from the church to a water pool, accompanied by tens of thousands of believers, chanting, dancing and beating drums, as in the Old Testament.



A priest carrying a Tabot in a Timket ceremony



Crowds gather at the Fasilides' Bath in Gondar, Ethiopia, to celebrate Timket

Priests and believers complete an overnight vigil around the Arks till dawn, when the crowds gather around a pool. The chief priest blesses the water and many jump in, symbolically renewing their baptismal vows, others are sprinkled with water. The Arks are then paraded back in the same way.

...Timket marked at Liverpool Cathedral

Hundreds of Ethiopian Orthodox Church followers made a pilgrimage to Liverpool on 23rd January, to mark the 2,000-year-old festival of Timket at the iconic Liverpool Cathedral.

Led by Ethiopian Orthodox Archbishop of Europe, His Grace Abuna Entos, with dozens of priests and choirs from all over the UK and Europe, it began with a night vigil of singing, chanting and prayers.



One of the highlights of the celebration included the parading of *Tabots* – replicas of the tablet of stone on which the 10 commandments were inscribed.

Festivities continued the following day with mass, baptisms, chanting, lectures, an exhibition and Ethiopian food.

Ethiopia has the best coffee!..New research shows shaded coffee farms in Ethiopia are the world's most bird friendly

According to an article by VOA, an international group of coffee experts has rated Ethiopia's coffee as the best in the world.

They travelled the world to find the best tasting coffee but kept returning to Ethiopia, where importers like Morton Wengersgaard say the climate produces top quality coffee beans, wrote Marthe van der Wolf.

Finding the best beans is a matter of taste, literally through 'cupping' - tasting and comparing coffee from different roasted beans, grading and then pricing them. But before the tasting, coffee beans are analysed in small coffee labs, assessed and screened, a very difficult and lengthy process, according to a lab worker.

Consumers in more than 120 countries have Ethiopian coffee, making it a top export earner - more than \$840 million a year is attained in revenue. "But not all the best coffee leaves Ethiopia. With 40 percent of coffee production consumed at home, it remains an important part of everyday life at work, at home and at ceremonies."

"Coffee is a top export for the country. But at home, it is a source of national pride. Ethiopians feel good about their coffee, and enjoying a drink with friends is a longstanding tradition."



A recent study showed that shady coffee plantations in Ethiopia, where coffee has been grown for at least a thousand years, hold more bird species than any other coffee farms in the world.

Research suggests that "traditional cultivation practices there support better bird biodiversity than any other coffee farms in the world...coffee is traditionally grown on plantations shaded by native trees. These farms boasted more than 2.5 times as many bird species as adjacent mountain forest."



Fancy a try of this kind of coffee? Try *Bird & Wild's* Yeti Farm Forest Coffee from Ethiopia. Yeti Farm was the first coffee farm in Africa to gain Bird Friendly certification. The farm is nestled in the western highland forests of Ethiopia, where the original varieties of Arabica coffee are thought to originate. The farm is spread across a number localised forest areas, each producing coffees with unique and interesting characteristics. *Bird & Wild* claim to be the UK's only shade-grown bird friendly coffee company.



Shakespeare's Hamlet in Ethiopia

Ethiopians enjoyed William Shakespeare's Hamlet in January, to celebrate the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, which saw Shakespeare's Globe embark on a two-year global tour of Hamlet to every country in the world.



The 'Globe to Globe Hamlet' was performed at Ethiopia's National Theatre, in collaboration with the British Council.

Dominic Dromgoole, Artistic Director of Shakespeare's Globe and Director of Hamlet said: "Globe to Globe Hamlet was created with the aim of performing Hamlet to as many people as possible, in as diverse a range of places as possible. The central principle of the tour is that Shakespeare can entertain and speak to anyone, no matter where they are on earth; and that no country or people are not better off for the lively presence of Hamlet."

The Tour opened at Shakespeare's Globe on 23rd April 2014, the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth. Sixteen extraordinary men and women will travel across the seven continents, performing in a huge range of unique and atmospheric venues.

Hamlet is Shakespeare's longest play and among the most powerful and influential tragedies in English literature. The play was one of Shakespeare's most popular works during his lifetime and still ranks among his most-performed, topping the performance list of the Royal Shakespeare Company and its predecessors in Stratford-upon-Avon since 1879.

UK launch for Difret set to coincide with International Women's Day

Difret, a 2014 Ethiopian film written and directed by Zeresenay Berhane Mehari, with Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie serving as the executive producer, will be released in UK cinemas on 6th March, with additional screenings on 8th March on International Women's Day.



Set in Ethiopia and based on a real-life story, the film tells the story of a bright 14-year-old girl who is kidnapped on her way home from school when men on horses swoop in. The brave Hirut grabs a rifle and tries to escape, but ends up shooting her would-be husband. Meaza Ashenafi, an empowered and tenacious young lawyer, arrives from the city to represent Hirut and argue that she acted in self-defence. Meaza boldly embarks on a collision course between civil authority and customary law, risking the ongoing work of her women's legal-aid practice to save Hirut's life.

DIASPORA NEWS

Ethiopia Diaspora Day declared

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has declared 16th August (*Nihase 10*) Ethiopian Diaspora Day.

The Day provides an opportunity for the Ethiopian Diaspora all over the world to connect with the people at home and give a chance for young Ethiopians abroad to see something of their country and fully experience its culture. The Day also offers an occasion for members of the Diaspora to engage

with one another as well as visit Ethiopia, encouraging Diaspora tourism.

It will give participants the chance to assess and evaluate Diaspora activities accomplished during the year and allow Diaspora members to make suggestions on matters of concern. It will stress that the Diaspora is an extension of Ethiopia overseas.

August 16 has been chosen because it is when schools will be closed in most of Europe and the United States, a convenient time for families to come to Ethiopia.

Government committed to supporting Diaspora

The Government Communications Affairs Office said the government welcomes Ethiopian Diaspora investment in their home country, and that it will fully support them.

Minister Redwan Hussein said the government is committed to addressing challenges the Diaspora faces during the implementation of projects, and explained the need for the Diaspora to work with the government to solve challenges and enhance the overall development of the country.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ethiopia gets Guinness World Record for most people tested for HIV in a single venue



It's official! Ethiopia has received the Guinness World Record for the "Most people being tested for HIV (single venue) - eight hours".

Achieved last year on 30th November during World AIDS Day, the Ministry of Health in partnership with UNAIDS tested 3,383 people for HIV at Gambella Stadium.

Agreement signed for construction of Meles Zenawi Memorial Park

An agreement has been signed between the Meles Zenawi Foundation and Varnero Construction Plc for the construction of the Meles Zenawi Memorial Park at a cost of over 383.4 million birr.

Construction of the park, to be situated in Gulele, Addis Ababa, will completed within two years.

In addition to reflecting the life history and vision of Meles Zenawi, the park will comprise offices, libraries, research centres and guesthouses.

Forest coverage in SNNP reaches 19 percent

Forest coverage in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's (SNNP) Regional State has reached 19%, from 11.5%, following watershed management carried out over the past years.

In order to attain the target set out in the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), 2.4 billion seedlings were planted in the region in the last four years and 700 million seedlings were planted last Ethiopian rainy season alone, to help attain Ethiopia's green economy development strategy.

SPORTS

Genzebe Dibaba to chase world indoor 5000m record in Stockholm; nominated for Laureus Sportswoman of the Year Award

Organisers of XL Galan in Stockholm have announced that Genzebe Dibaba will attempt to break the world indoor 5,000m record on 19th February, a mark set by compatriot Meseret Defar back in 2009, which is 14:24.37.



At the same meeting, Dibaba ran a world indoor 3,000m record of 8:16.60, taking more than seven seconds off the previous record, which had also been held by Defar.

It was the second of Dibaba's three record-breaking runs, coming after her 1,500m world indoor record in Karlsruhe and before her two mile world indoor best in Birmingham.

Dibaba has never before run over 5,000m indoors. She has an outdoor best of 14:28.88, set at the IAAF Diamond League meeting in Monaco last July.

And for these records, Genzebe was recently announced among a “glittering collection” of the world’s greatest sports stars for the 2015 Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year Award.

She faces tough contenders in her category including Valerie Adams who was named IAAF Women’s Athlete of Year last year (Genzebe was also up for this award at the time), Marit Bjørgen who is the most decorated female Winter Olympian; Tina Maze of Slovenia; Li Na of China and Serena Williams who’s won 18 Grand Slam in her career, level with Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova.

The winners will be revealed at the Awards Ceremony in Shanghai on 15th April.

Good Luck Genzebe!

Sileshi Sihine elected president of Ethiopian Athletes’ Association

Ethiopian long distance athlete, Sileshi Sihine, has been elected president of the newly formed Ethiopian Athletes’ Association, initiated by the Ethiopian Athletics Federation (EAF).

Joining Sihine are six other athletes elected as board members including Olympic champion Meseret Defar as Vice-President; Yemane Tsegaye as Secretary; Markos Geneti as Treasurer, Fantu Magiso and Musenet Geremew.

Athletics roundup

Records broke in Houston...

On 18th January at the 43rd Chevron Houston Marathon, Yebrqual Melese ran the second-fastest time ever by a woman in Houston with 2:23:23 while Birhanu Gidefa took the men’s title in 2:08:03, a lifetime best and the eighth-fastest time ever at Houston.



It was the seventh straight sweep of the titles by Ethiopia which filled the top five places in the women’s race and the three podium positions in the men’s contest.

In the women’s race, Guteni Imana finished second in 2:23:32, the third-fastest time ever at Houston and a seven-minute improvement on her previous best. Biruktayit Degefa Eshetu finished third in 2:23:51 – the race’s fifth fastest time.

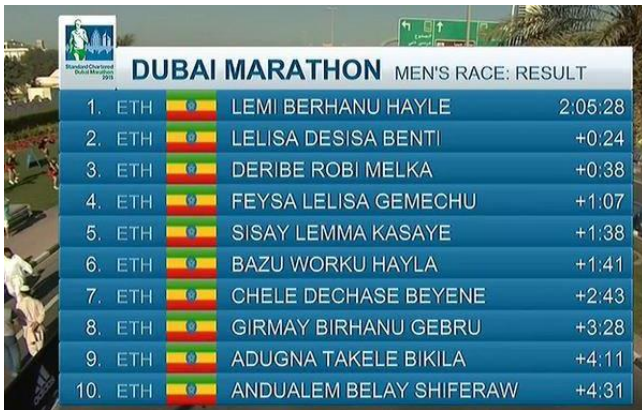
In the men’s race, Gebo Burka’s 2:08:12 made him the ninth-fastest in race history, while Debebe Tolossa finished third in 2:09:07.

...Ethiopians dominate Dubai

At the Dubai Marathon on 23rd January, Ethiopia dominated the men’s and women’s races. Aselefech Mergia made a superb comeback in the women’s race finishing in 2.20.02. Lemi Berhanu Hayle won the men’s race in a world-leading time of 2.05.28.



The first 10 places went to Ethiopia in the men’s race! In the women’s race, 7 of the top 10 spots went to Ethiopia. Kenenisa Bekele had to drop out just beyond the 30km mark, appearing to suffer from a leg injury.



DUBAI MARATHON MEN'S RACE: RESULT			
1.	ETH	LEMI BERHANU HAYLE	2:05:28
2.	ETH	LELISA DESISA BENTI	+0:24
3.	ETH	DERIBE ROBI MELKA	+0:38
4.	ETH	FEYSA LELISA GEMECHU	+1:07
5.	ETH	SISAY LEMMA KASAYE	+1:38
6.	ETH	BAZU WORKU HAYLA	+1:41
7.	ETH	CHELE DECHASE BEYENE	+2:43
8.	ETH	GIRMAY BIRHANU GEBRU	+3:28
9.	ETH	ADUGNA TAKELE BIKILA	+4:11
10.	ETH	ANDUALEM BELAY SHIFERAW	+4:31



On 3rd January, Mare Dibaba won the Xiamen marathon in 2:19:52 for the second year in succession, taking more than one-and-a-half minutes off the course record she set last year.

Last year she took 61 seconds off the course record and crossed the line five minutes ahead of her nearest rival.

Compatriot Meseret Legesse came in second in 2:27:38, while in the men's race, Abrha Milaw finished third in 2:08:09.

ETHIOPIA IN THE NEWS

ETHIOPIA'S CAMELOT

Hannah Jordan writes about the history of Gondar...complete with fairy-tale castles.



"Grand castles, strangely reminiscent of medieval Europe, hide behind thick walls in Ethiopia's north-western region. At first glance, only shadows of a past culture linger in this section of the ancient city

of Gondar. Yet the castle compound offers a curious addition to the otherwise lively town surrounding it. Transformed by many hands throughout its history, Gondar - nicknamed the "Camelot of Africa" - stands as a beacon of Ethiopia's bygone age, from royal and religious roots to cultural crossings and clashes."

Selamta <http://goo.gl/eh7OgY>

The Simien Mountains National Park – life on the edge



"While the snows of Kilimanjaro may be the true 'roof of Africa', the Simien Mountains may be a worthy challenger. A land of staggering beauty, deep valleys and sudden precipices, the Simiens are home to some of the most incredible views and species on this continent. It is a special place. You need to experience it to understand it."

AG africa <http://goo.gl/11tRVQ>
GEOGRAPHIC

Teff: Ethiopia's Gluten-Free Gift... Adventures of the world's smallest grain



"Despite its smallness, teff is big on nutrition. It is an excellent source of essential amino acids, including lysine, which is usually absent from grains, and rich with minerals such as magnesium, zinc, and calcium."



“All whole grains have some calcium but teff is kind of off the charts...One cup of teff has about the same calcium as a half cup of cooked spinach.”

Teff’s other big draw is that it is gluten-free - a necessity for those looking to avoid gluten.”



<http://goo.gl/Bdf07C>

Ethiopian raw beef dish what doctor ordered if you’re low on iron



When Ethiopians need an iron health boost, they don’t turn to supplements - they eat *kitfo*, says Bebeta Asfaw.

Kitfo is a traditional Ethiopian dish that consists of marinated minced raw beef and is usually eaten with a sourdough-risen flatbread called *injera*.

The New Zealand Herald <http://goo.gl/bDVrxD>

Ethiopia, phone home: Space observatory sees country’s future in the stars

James Jeffery talks about Ethiopia’s first space observatory, the Entoto Observatory and Research Center, which will enable the economy to reap benefits of technology.

“Space technology is often considered a luxury only for developed countries, but it’s actually a basic and vital need for development.”

— Solomon Belay

director, Entoto Observatory and Research Center

“The observatory...has already opened its doors to researchers and students, and by the end of January,

its two telescopes are expected to be declared fully functional by a panel of scientific inspectors.

At the same time, a feasibility study is well underway for construction of another space observatory at Lalibela, home to Ethiopia’s famous rock-hewn churches.”

These observatories will kick-start space science technology in Ethiopia - an important boost to development, those involved say, as the technology has applications in myriad areas in the public and private sectors.”



<http://goo.gl/Xp3ReI>

NOTICE

RECEPTION OF EBC CHANNELS

The Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) recommends using ROKU, a streaming device which can be purchased for around \$50 (£33), in order to receive the following new channels.

- EBC 1 • EBC 2 • EBC 3 • Amhara TV • SNNP TV •
- Tigray TV • TV Oromiyaa • ESTV •
- FM Addis 97.1 • EBC National Radio •
- Amhara Radio •

New Business Visa Application Procedure

New business visa regulations became effective as of 19th January 2015.

Applicants seeking to apply for a business visa to Ethiopia will now require approval from the Main Department of Immigration and Nationality Affairs in Addis Ababa.

Applicants are encouraged to submit a formal application letter to the Immigration Office requesting visas, with details of their trip. Once approved (normally within a few days), the Embassy will be able to issue a visa straight away.

Applicants are advised to allow **at least 2 weeks** before the date of travel.

Consular Office Telephone: 0207 838 3897/98.