



ERITREAN NATIONALS HOLD SEMINAR IN GERMANY



Ambassador Fesehatsion Petros, Eritrean Ambassador in Italy, conducted seminar to Eritrean nationals in Germany.

At the seminar, Ambassador Fesehatsion gave extensive briefing on the objective situation of the pandemic in Eritrea and at the global level as well as the burden it

is posing. Ambassador Fesehatsion also called on the nationals to strengthen contribution in the fight to control the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

Ambassador Fesehatsion went on to say that as a result of the strong guidelines issued by the Government of Eritrea to control

the pandemic and participation of nationals in implementing the guidelines, encouraging result is being registered.

At the seminar in which over 700 nationals from different German cities and other European countries took part, Ambassador Fesehatsion expressed appreciation for the contribution the nationals extended to the effort the Government of Eritrea is conducting to curve the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chairman of the Eritrean National Committee, Dr. Tesfai Ablelom, the Charge d'Affairs at the Eritrean Embassy in Germany, Mr. Yohannes Woldu and the head of Community and Public Affairs, Mr. Kahsai Tewelde, also commended the contribution the Eritrean nationals in Germany and other European countries are extending to the effort to control COVID-19 pandemic.

EFFORT TO DEVELOP VEGETABLES FARMING

Vegetables and fruits farmers in Hagaz sub-zone expressed readiness to develop their products both in quantity and quality to supply the market with fair prices.

The farmers said that compared to that of 2019 the area has received ample rainfall and that they are expecting to collect bounty

harvest. The farmers also said that the advice they are being provided by agricultural experts, the machinery and pesticides as well as modern fertilizers support they are being provided with fair price are significantly contributing in the development of their farming

activity. Indicating that there are 48 vegetables and fruits farmers in the sub-zone cultivating on over 657 hectares of land, Mr. Eyob Tesfai, head of the Ministry of Agriculture branch in the sub-zone, called on the farmers to apply the professional advice from agricultural experts for better development of their activity.

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Nine patients have been diagnosed positive for COVID-19 in tests carried out yesterday at Quarantine Centers in the Central and Northern Red Sea Regions.

Out of these, six patients are from Quarantine Centers in Asmara, Central Region. The other three patients are from Quarantine Centers in Ghindae (2), and Mahmimet (1), in the Northern Red Sea Region.

On the other hand, thirty patients who have been receiving medical treatment in the Central (19), and Northern Red Sea (11), Regions have recovered fully and have been discharged from these facilities.

The total number of recovered patients to-date has accordingly risen to 2418 while the number of deaths stands at seven.

The total number of confirmed cases in the country to-date has increased to 2922.

Ministry of Health
Asmara
5 March 2021

NEWS BRIEF

HEALTH FACILITIES INCREASE

The number of health facilities in Gelalo sub-zone, Northern Red Sea region, has increased significantly.

According to Mr. Mahmud Ahmed, a nurse from one of the health facilities, the number of health institutions that was two before independence has increased to 6 and that with the growing awareness of the public on health issues the health facilities are providing commendable health service.

Mr. Mahmud went on to say that as a result of the sustainable awareness-raising activity, the number of pregnant women delivering at health facilities is also increasing and that the number of death rate due to delivery has significantly been reduced.

Sustainable vaccination programs as well as popular environmental sanitation activities are being conducted with a view to control the prevalence of communicable diseases, Mr. Mahmud added.

Currently in Gelalo health facilities there are 36 health practitioners providing health service to the public.

POPULAR DEVELOPMENTAL CAMPAIGN

Residents of the 12 sub-zones of the Southern region are conducting popular developmental campaign in connection with 8 March, International Women's Day, under the theme "Eritrean Women: Pillar of Resilience and Development".

According to report the popular campaign includes soil and water conservation and construction of terraces and water diversion schemes with a view to develop agricultural productivity.

Ms. Rigbe Woldemicael, head of Political Affairs at the National Union of Eritrean Women branch in the Southern region, said that the popular campaign is part of the activity to commemorate the International Women's Day.

The head of the National Union of Eritrean Women in the region, Ms. Tekea Teweldebhan, on her part commended the strong participation the nationals are demonstrating in the popular campaign.

ENCOURAGING EFFORT TO EMPOWER WOMEN

Encouraging effort is being made with a view to strengthening the economic and educational capacity of women. The comment was made by Ms. Senait Mehari, Head of Socio-economic Department of Women, in an interview she conducted with Erina in connection with 8 March, International Women's Day.

Ms. Senait went on to say that parallel with the effort to increase awareness of women, the National Union of Eritrean Women is making an effort to strengthen the capacity of women to enable them to become productive members of society.

Indicating that 40 million Nakfa soft loan has been extended to 14 thousand women, Ms. Senait said

that the beneficiary women are engaged in agricultural, trade, and other activities.

Regarding the development of the educational capacity of women, Ms. Senait pointed out that the union has established training centers in all the regions of the country.

The union is also extending material and financial support to disadvantaged women that are taking care of families of martyrs, orphans, as well as elderly citizens, and that beneficiary women, are demonstrating encouraging effort to improve their livelihoods with the support they are provided, Ms. Senait added.

According to Ms. Senait, the



national union has also exerted encouraging effort to eradicate harmful practices and that the FGM practice that was 95% in 1995 has significantly dropped to 33% with women aged from 6 to 15 and to 12% with children under 5 years of age.

Development

FT Dairy Products and Promising Prospects



Mussie Efriem

At a farm in Daeropoulos, Central Region, Mrs. Freweini is using her over 27 years' worth of knowledge to empower young girls. The going has not always been easy, yet she has built a reputable brand in Eritrea.

Dairy farming is an enterprising business in Eritrea today, in part due to a substantial demand for milk and its associated products. Starting off in Elabered, Halhale and Adi Seguedo as a preserve of Italian farmers during the colonial period, the business has grown to become a major source of income for many Eritreans. For nearly twenty years, FT Dairy, a family business, has been producing traditionally spiced and smoked butter and velvety cheese cream, best known by its Italian name *panna*.

Returning home in Asmara in 1991 after 14 years in combat, Mrs. Freweini Tesfayohannes, a former freedom fighter, and a nurse by profession, then in her early thirties, founded the company. She turned her backyard and kitchen space of the house she'd rented then, into the seedlings that gave life to FT Dairy Products. At the time, her co-parent Mr. Temesghen Tekie was away on a national campaign to eradicate blindness caused by cataract. In 1992, following the birth of their first child, the demand for a daily supply of milk for the baby took a toll on them. This saw them buy one cow to supplement the domestic supply of milk, while selling the rest to boost their meagre.

Their enthusiasm turned their kitchen into a laboratory where

aimed at assisting freedom fighters in their new ventures. Under the program, Mrs. Freweini quit her nursing profession and was assisted to start a mini dairy farm.

With a loaned initial capital, Freweini built up their first cattle cottage in Adi Seguedo. As the business picked, the couple was able to pay off the loans while selling milk in the neighborhood. Initially, Mrs. Freweini would make deliveries on a bike, however, as production increased, *Lazza Farm Products* started selling the milk to Asmara Dairy Factory.

In 2002, Freweini made more investments. At the time, she purchased Holstein cows from Elabered Dairy Farm. As time went by, she got better and better in cattle breeding and milk production. Over

(AWAN). A major breakthrough for the business was realized when the Ministry of Agriculture gave support and linkages.

In 2006, the plant was officially recognized as a milk producing and processing plant. At that time, the company stopped selling milk and begun producing milk alterations for the market. As there was no mechanization at the time, most of the work was then done manually using traditional methods for many of the products. In the process, the National Animal and Plant Health Laboratory, under the Ministry of Agriculture, kept monitoring regular safety control tests to ensure the quality of FT milk products was upheld. In 2012, *Lazza Farm Products*, underwent major changes introducing small scale machineries. The plant was expanded on a 500-meter piece of land detached from the farmland. The transition was overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture and PUM.

Since that time, FT has grown substantially. Starting with 350 liters of milk a day from their own cows and the 150 liters of milk from other farmers, the company now produces 1000 to 1200 pieces of 250-milliliter yogurt packs and above 10kg butter daily. In addition to yogurt and butter, they produce different types of cheese and cream. Due to its consistency on standards and quality, *Lazza Farm Products* was recently awarded certificate a recognition for its consistency in the quality of products.

The farm has extended to include cows, horses and over a hundred

sheep. Currently, there are at least ten full time employees and over two dozen temporary employees. Mrs. Freweini says her vision is to make milk products available in the whole nation at the lowest price possible. The *Jeebna*, for example, one of the earliest *Lazza Farm Products* cheese product, is widely appreciated in the lowlands of Eritrea. The price of milk in Eritrea is determined by the cost of animal feed. According to Mr. Temesghen, the company tries to solve this by making animal feed from byproducts that have nutritional value. The company has plans to make significant contributions to the national food security program.

Despite many false pitfalls faced by the company, Mrs. Freweini hopes to advance to modern sealing and packaging systems. In a many way, Mrs. Freweini's life and success story best represent the spirit of a typical Eritrea woman. She was a young woman who devoted her youth and life for liberation, women emancipation, and social transformation. Then, as a mother, she worked tirelessly to sustain her family. And as a businesswoman, she now puts two principals at the core of everything: family and the society. The reason why FT products have been loved for 20 years now is not only because of its quality but its fair pricing too. Mrs. Freweini makes her product with so much care, as for her, milk produce has always been about 'family'. One key pillar in the company is gender equality and empowerment. At the milk plant, Mrs. Freweini continues to empower young women, educating and sharing valuable lessons on milk production with them.



Mrs. Freweini learned and practiced milk alterations. Her husband, Mr. Temesghen, a Pharmacist by profession, was always a big helping hand as his knowledge on science and chemistry assisted his wife's curiosity in understanding milk and the science in milk products. They read, studied, and practiced hard. Their limited knowledge in agriculture did not deter them from thinking big. Mrs. Freweini figured out that they could do better than they had been with only one cow and proposed breeding cattle as a business idea to her husband, an idea he supported.

At the beginning, the couple faced big challenges. They bought six cows, but only one was lactating and it died after a short while. They also faced opposition from the community. In 1996, the couple started the project as a cottage industry at the courtyard in their house. However, their courtyard was not big enough to accommodate many animals. A year later, Mrs. Freweini applied and enrolled in the Demobilization Program, which was

the course of time, she attended both short- and long-term trainings on farming, food (milk) processing and other professions relevant to her business in Eritrea and abroad in Kenya, China and the USA. At the same time, she represented her business in several conventions under the umbrella of African Women Agribusiness Network



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Alex De Waal: Herculean Task to Resuscitate the TPLF

By: *Bana Negusse*

This week, *Foreign Policy* (FP) featured an article entitled, “From Pariah to Kingmaker”, authored by Alex de Waal (3 March 2021).

The piece is less concerned with delving into an objective and academic discourse of the ongoing situation in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia than whitewashing decades of TPLF crimes and scapegoating Eritrea. Evidently, the author remains immersed in the herculean task of somehow resuscitating whatever remains of the TPLF.

As it is almost invariably the case with news reporting and analysis on the conflict in northern Ethiopia these days, the article is replete with appalling misinformation, glaring contradictions, huge presumptions, and substantial oversights. To highlight a few: the international sanctions against Eritrea were imposed in 2009 (not 2007) while the Constitution, developed through a two-year-long drafting process, was adopted by an 862-member Constituent Assembly in late 1997.

Although existential issues of preserving sovereignty and territorial integrity affected the subsequent tempo and pace of Eritrea’s political process of nation-building, the country’s considerable achievements in health, education, and social sectors have undoubtedly helped to ensure tangible progress in the quality of life for millions of Eritreans who are today free from hunger, disease, and ignorance.

The author’s references to migration and economic stagnation are hypocritical and myopic, overlooking the foreign-instigated “strategic depopulation” campaigns and the harsh impact of illegal sanctions.

Moreover, the author makes various disparaging presumptions on Eritrea’s military capacity while simultaneously insinuating, as well as lamenting, its pivotal role in the region. Unsurprisingly, he also refers to alleged Eritrean crimes in Tigray, vicious

allegations which are utterly false and maliciously fabricated for ulterior political ends. Somehow, the author claims that Eritrean troops are exacerbating the conflict between Ethiopia and Sudan, despite the key fact that Eritrean officials have actually been engaging in shuttle diplomacy and stressing calm and patience

should therefore be marshaled and delivered to those in dire need with the requisite urgency. This is a task that the Ethiopian government is shouldering earnestly. And as underlined in the government’s latest report, there is much foot-dragging by the international community in terms of actual and concrete assistance

for lasting peace, stability, and security in Ethiopia and the surrounding region.

The TPLF doggedly sought to stymie any efforts at reform and positive change. Feeling marginalized, as well as deeply bitter and resentful about its loss of power and control over

of a simple uprising that the author tries to convey, the objective was to totally neutralize the Northern Command, overthrow the Ethiopian government, and subsequently march on to Asmara to carry out its long avowed “regime change” agenda. (It also wanted to redraw the boundaries of Tigray Region in Ethiopia, as



to both sides. Notably, both Ethiopian and Sudanese officials have expressed appreciation to Eritrea for its positive role.

As one skims through the article, it is quite remarkable to see how Eritrea, a country that the author spent years portraying and describing as a “feeble, poor, failed state, with a weak, unmotivated, crumbling military”, is styled as pulling the strings and controlling the Horn of Africa – something that even the richest, most powerful countries in the world, have been unable to manage.

The discourse on the humanitarian situation in the Tigray Region that the author dwells on is again woefully off track. True, the poor farmers and civilian population in the region are victims of the reckless crimes of the TPLF clique. All necessary humanitarian support

albeit vociferous leap-service and pontification.

But grave as this is, the humanitarian crisis cannot eclipse the high crimes and culpability of the TPLF clique which fomented the unprecedented crisis in the first place. The author’s convoluted aim is to conflate the two categorically different issues in order to downplay and gloss over the TPLF’s crimes.

Let us recall that after being swept from power in 2018 largely as a result of years of mass popular protests across the country, TPLF officials remained unbowed and unrepentant – even proud – of their cruel past, constantly boasting that their rule represented a “golden era” and raising themselves up to be the embodiments of greatness and nobility. Since 2018, the TPLF also worked to scuttle the positive developments and sincere efforts

looted state resources, the TPLF retreated from Addis Ababa to its base in Tigray. From there, it worked to promote conflict, tension, and chaos, in the hopes that the resultant instability and insecurity would prevent and roll back the reforms underway and ultimately topple the Federal Government. This would allow the clique to sneak back to power to restore its former dominance.

Over the past several years, the TPLF was actively preparing for war, stockpiling weapons, and training militias – using funds that were actually meant for the development of the country. In the past two years in particular, it stoked tensions and dangerously ratcheted up violent, extremist, and hateful speech. Then, on 3 November 2020, the TPLF, hoping to salvage its lost power, launched a massive military attack on Ethiopia’s Northern Command. Contrary to the image

well as the international border with Eritrea.)

Of course, the recent FP article is hardly surprising since the author, a self-described long-time close friend and key confidante of the high-level TPLF leadership, has spent decades working to portray the group in the best light possible (to the extent of spreading outright fabrications) while vilifying Eritrea. In the past few months, he has even continued to praise TPLF officials, ignoring the considerable blood on their hands and whitewashing their long history of serious crimes and grave atrocities.

However, although the author may understandably be deeply hurt and dismayed by the TPLF’s precipitous fall from power, it does not allow him the right to disseminate misinformation and overlook the indelible facts that underpin the prevailing situation.



Fighting Harmful Traditional Practices

Simon Weldemichael

Despite international conventions and national laws prohibiting harmful traditional practices, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage continue today throughout the world. These harmful traditional practices are carried out mainly because of negative attitudes about girls and women and have devastating and long lasting health, psychological and emotional consequences. They ruin women's body, mind and spirit.

In Eritrea, women are traditionally marginalized and, in most instances, have limited access to social and economic benefits compared to men. During the struggle for independence, the EPLF sought to end the marginalization of women and called on women to join the struggle. It provided a safe space for women to increase their participation and contribution. The EPLF believed that the struggle for the emancipation of women could not be seen as separated from the struggle for the national liberation of the entire society and nation.

The first step taken by the EPLF was to raise the consciousness of the society. As a result, for the first time in Eritrea's history harmful traditional practices were questioned and outlawed, social barriers that limited women to realize their full potential were removed and women's voice was raised. In 1979, representatives of Eritrean women from all walks of life gathered in Arag, a liberated area at the time, and had a founding congress of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) under these slogans: "Emancipation through equal participation in the struggle" and "A revolution cannot triumph without the conscious participation of women".

Following Eritrea's independence, the Government issued legislations that criminalized the conduct of harmful traditional practices, and conducted campaigns to raise people's awareness of the harmful practice. Efforts were made to create an environment, where

women and girls can comfortably and safely live, play, work and learn. The elimination of the harmful traditional practices is seen as vital for women's physical and emotional safety. Coordinated efforts are made to expand the space where Eritrean women feel comfortable and enjoy the freedom to express themselves without the fear of judgment or harm.

To abolish FGM, the Government issued a proclamation in March 2007 by making it a criminal offence to perform female circumcision. According to



many, including, but not limited to, psychosexual. Reducing or eliminating the sensitive tissue society, before marriage.



the proclamation a person who is found guilty of performing female circumcision is imprisoned for two to three years and fined five to ten thousand Nakfa.

Female circumcision is performed on infants that are a few days or months old. The reasons for the practice are

of the outer genitalia, particularly the clitoris, is widely believed to weaken the sexual desire in girls. Therefore, by lowering their sexual desire, the society felt it could increase the probability for girls to maintain their virginity, which is highly valued by the



Eritrea has made great progress in ending harmful practices against women and girls. In an interview this week, head of the NUEW's Socio-economic Department, Ms. Senait Mehari, said the women's union has made strong efforts to eliminate harmful traditional practices. At independence 95% of Eritrean women underwent female circumcision. But the number went down drastically according to a study conducted in 2010. For girls aged 6-15 years, 33%, and for girls under 5 years, 12% underwent female circumcision. Although the result is encouraging a lot remains to be done to bring the number to zero.

Child marriage is another harmful traditional practice which deprives women of their right to health, education, and safety. It increases the risk of complications

during pregnancy and childbirth due to the physical immaturity of the girls. Globally, many such young girls die during pregnancy and childbirth. To discourage the practice, child marriage has been criminalized in Eritrea and campaigns have been carried out.

A number of the international human rights instruments address child marriage and other harmful traditional practices. The 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' states that "betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory." The 'Convention on the Right of the Child' considers any marriage of a girl younger than 18 years old a child marriage. In the same vein, the Civil Code of Eritrea states that "a man and a woman who have not both attained the full age of eighteen years may not contract marriage."

Globally, girls who are not enrolled at school are at high risk of being married early. If girls can stay in school and complete their education, they are less likely to marry at a young age. The expansion of education in Eritrea has definitely contributed towards reducing underage marriage of girls, and the social transformation in the country has helped women to raise their status. The Government is working to protect and promote human rights of women by fighting against FGM, child marriage and other harmful practices.

Harmful traditional practices have a high cost to national security and prosperity. Any physical and psychological damage done to girls creates additional burden to the national healthcare and social welfare services. It is true that the harmful traditional practices are deeply rooted in the culture of the society, but their elimination cannot be left to the whims of the society. Their elimination can only be guaranteed through a careful enforcement of a legislation and on-going awareness raising campaigns.