



Ethiopian News

January – February 2021

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Ethiopia Decides: Let the Election Season Begin!.....	2
Countering Disinformation: Ambassador responds to British media on Tigray situation.....	3
Ambassador Teferi embarks on a virtual trip to Bath.....	5
Chatham House hosts webinar on Ethiopia's upcoming elections.....	7
Tigray Situation Update.....	9
Ethiopian Airlines delivers Africa's first COVID-19 vaccines.....	17
Foreign Secretary Raab visits Ethiopia.....	19
Embassy hosts webinar on the Horticulture Industry.....	23
Africa's free trade area opens for business.....	26
Ethiopia receives WTTC's Safe Travels Stamp.....	27
Ethiopian Diaspora remits \$1.4 billion in 5 months.....	30

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UK in Ethiopia:

**Visits by Dominic Raab and Alok Sharma reaffirm
century-old Ethio-UK partnerships**



Ethiopia Decides Let the Election Season Begin!

Electoral Board announces final schedule of the upcoming national elections

The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) has officially announced that the upcoming 6th National Elections will be held on the 5th June 2021. The Board further outlined a new schedule of activities to be undertaken in the course of the general election.

Accordingly, some 45,000 polling stations shall be opened in January, while training of poll workers will be carried throughout February. Registration of candidates shall take place in the final two weeks of February and campaigning starts in the second week of February and ends on 31st May 2021. From 6th June, polling stations will begin releasing results and the final national election results will be announced by the Board thereafter, up until 28th June.

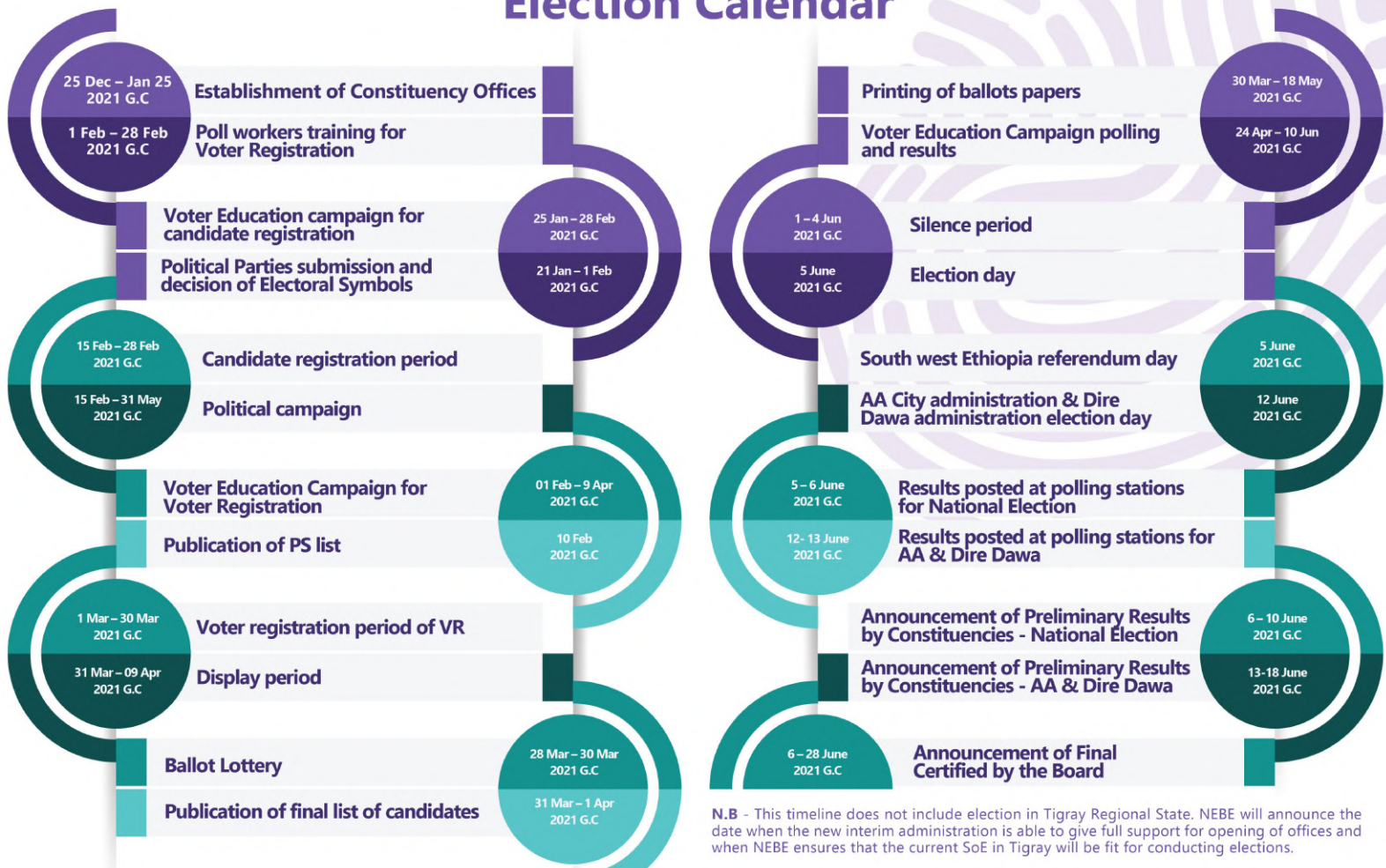
In a bid to advance grassroots civic participation during the period of the election, the Board has also called upon local civil society organizations to submit expressions of interest to observe the

upcoming national elections. The announcement followed the Board's approval of the election observer's code of conduct after a series of consultations with CSOs and other relevant stakeholders.

Meanwhile, the Board has recently announced the deregistration of the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), after rigorous investigations into the party's statements and actions, verifying that the party engaged in the use of force to trigger violence. TPLF is therefore devoid of its legal entity and that the leaders of the party can no longer continue to perform any task in the name of the organization.

It is to be recalled that the Board had decided that the schedule for election in Tigray will be announced in due course following close consultations with the provisional regional administration and local communities, which would allow adequate time for preparations to ensure a free and fair election.

Election Calendar



N.B - This timeline does not include election in Tigray Regional State. NEBE will announce the date when the new interim administration is able to give full support for opening of offices and when NEBE ensures that the current SoE in Tigray will be fit for conducting elections.

Follow the Ambassador on social media

As part of efforts to further increase his engagements during his tenure, particularly with the Diaspora and British stakeholders, Ambassador Teferi is now on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram!



In his first post, the Ambassador said that he looks forward to “using this platform to promote Ethiopia and further enhance the century-old Ethio-UK ties with our friends and development partners, and most importantly engage with the Ethiopian Diaspora in the UK.”

Follow the Ambassador using the handle **@EthioAmbUK** across all three platforms.



@EthioAmbUK

Countering Disinformation: Ambassador Teferi responds to British media on the situation in Tigray

Given the rise in fake news and disinformation online on the current situation in Ethiopia, especially on social media, the Ambassador has been busy responding to some key British media outlets with regards to their coverage. To name a few, letters have been written to The Independent Catholic News, The Guardian and The Observer, and BBC News. The State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Redwan Hussein also wrote to The Economist.



Most articles usually fail to contain a balance of sources and rely heavily on a series of unverified reports with no evidence to corroborate them.

...report impartially and robustly



In a statement to *the Independent Catholic News* which reported a “*Massacre at historic church*” in Askum, the Ambassador said: “Reports of a “massacre” at the St Mary Tsion Church in Askum, which houses the Ark of the Covenant, are unfounded and based on unverified reports and rumours from malicious “international experts”.

These very serious claims are the results of a sophisticated disinformation campaign orchestrated by disgruntled political groups bent on stoking instability and using religion as a weapon to sow confusion amongst the international community, to derail the on-going reforms taking place in my country. To publish such claims without verification or evidence to corroborate them is both irresponsible and dangerous.



Ethiopia, a deeply religious society and a country of ancient civilisations with a culture of religious tolerance at their core, is synonymous with a strong tradition of hospitality and respect between its diverse peoples. In fact, the Constitution guarantees freedom of worship. Therefore, places of worship such as churches and mosques are protected by law and are considered part of Ethiopia's rich millennia-old cultural heritage. The thought of such atrocities happening in one of Ethiopia's most ancient and sacred sites is unthinkable. To date, there has been no physical evidence of a "massacre" in Aksum.

Given the current situation, Ethiopia is at a critical crossroads in its efforts to build a more democratic and prosperous society, so I strongly encourage you to report impartially and robustly, given that misinformation and disinformation campaigns on the situation are rampant online. We also urge the international community, the media, and the public not to fall victim to these campaigns, by remaining vigilant, interrogating sources, and exercising caution before publishing and sharing unverified reports.

The Telegraph

Similarly, in response to an article published in *The Telegraph* titled, "Churches and mosques in Tigray 'vandalised and looted' in Ethiopian purge", the Ambassador said:

"The facts on the ground are entirely detached from the situation painted herein by TPLF affiliates and those fooled by their campaign of misinformation. Instead, evidence shows that TPLF forces, in their fight to overthrow the Government of Ethiopia, used ancient churches and mosques as shields, hiding places, and depots to store their military supplies. This is being done with the ill-intent of destroying these sites, in a desperate move to receive the attention of the international community."

"The Government of Ethiopia is fully aware of the significance of the country's ancient religious sites and remains fully committed to their protection."

Misrepresentation of the Government of Ethiopia

The Economist

State Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Redwan Hussein, responded to *The Economist's* article, "Ethiopia's government appears to be wielding hunger as a weapon", on behalf of the State of Emergency Media Task Force.

In the letter, the State Minister said:

The Government of Ethiopia condemns in the strongest of terms the accusation that it is "using hunger as a weapon". After citing "accounts", quoting "frettings" of a certain "Western diplomat" and hesitating that it is "impossible to know", the article then proceeds to make such an unconscionable and serious claim.

In the past month, the Government of Ethiopia has mobilized and delivered more than 31,000 metric tons of food, non-food items, and medical supplies to the region of Tigray. In addition, the Government of Ethiopia is putting in place necessary security protocols to protect civilians, stabilize the region and capture remaining suspects of treasonous crimes.

This article trivializes the constitutional obligation of the federal government of Ethiopia and resorts to a wholesale insult that "the government is too incompetent". The Ethiopian National Defense Forces and other security institutions have demonstrated exceptional courage and skill in this law enforcement operation. There is a delicate and cautious balance that is to be observed in guaranteeing basic necessities while maintaining security in the Tigray region. Federal agencies, utility companies, and other service providers are working at full speed to restore services in Tigray. They are doing so in the wake of the TPLF's and its militia's well-documented acts of vandalism against public and private infrastructure and assets including telecom, transport, energy, and banking. Reconstruction will take time and this air of disconnect and mystery is fuelling misinformation as the one in this article.

The article neglects to consider the TPLF's history of systematic human rights violations. Like the rest of humanity, the people of Ethiopia seek peace and the rule of law. TPLF has been the grand sponsor of destabilization, terror, and massacres for the past three decades and it has not eased its thirst for absolute power even after it was unseated through widespread protests and the electoral rules of the coalition which TPLF itself had engineered. Thanks to our millennia-old tradition of statehood, Ethiopians are fierce believers in justice. And in this land of justice, actions have consequences.

In this complicated and high-stakes operation, humanitarian, diplomatic, and media agencies will have to endure the inconvenience of heeding the direction of the government. The success of this operation necessitates that as Tigray transitions to rebuilding and recovery.

The gravest error this article makes is its short-sightedness. Ethiopians have a dream for peace and prosperity. The past two years have been profoundly painful for all Ethiopians, but the Government of Ethiopia believes we are headed in the right direction. Magnifying troubles and echoing accusations of past regimes within the article as a comparison to this administration is a mere distraction. Ethiopians will not watch helplessly and idly as history repeats itself. This is exactly why the Government of Ethiopia has been determined in preventing spoilers such as TPLF from hijacking our new chapter.

The Government is implementing historic reforms across economic, political, and social sectors. Ethiopia is poised to enter a new era and the Law Enforcement Operation in Tigray is a costly but necessary step in the right direction.

It is regrettable that the Economist assumes that leaders in Africa are either evil or incompetent.

Ambassador Teferi embarks on a virtual trip to Bath

Bath has always been the first port of call outside London for Ethiopian Ambassadors to the Court of St James, and the virtual visit of Ambassador Teferi Melesse to three institutions in the historic and spa City of Bath on 28th January was no exception.

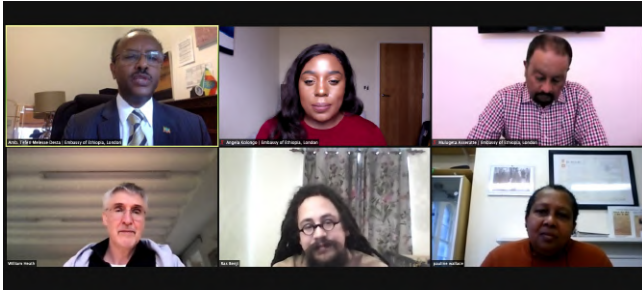


The origin of Ethio-Bath relations is Fairfield House, the 2-acre Georgian former home of Emperor Haile Selassie I, which after his return from five years of exile in the UK, donated it to Bath and Somerset County Council as “a token of appreciation for the warmth of hospitality residents of Bath offered to us and our family.”



Fairfield House

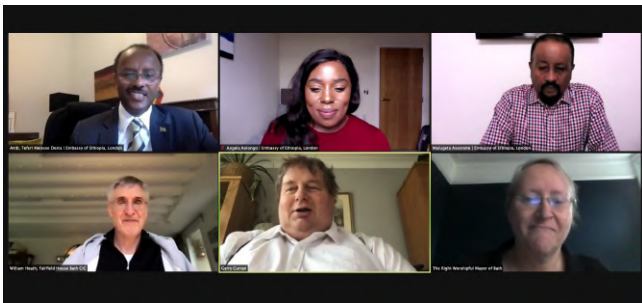
Discussions with the directors and custodians of Fairfield House focused on the historical and cultural links between the City of Bath and Ethiopia, securing Emperor Haile Selassie's legacy for future generations, and how to further enhance diaspora engagement with the former home of the Emperor.



On the occasion, Ambassador Teferi expressed the appreciation of the people and Government of Ethiopia to custodians of the House for keeping the Emperor's legacy alive in Bath and for strengthening the historic bonds between Ethiopia and the UK. The Ambassador also vowed to pay a courtesy visit to the House once COVID restrictions have eased and suggested the hosting of an annual "Ethiopia Day" celebration at Fairfield House.

The next stop on Ambassador Teferi's virtual visit was the Mayor's Office.

In his meeting with the Mayor of Bath, Councillor Manda Rigby, and her deputy, Councillor Gerry Curran, Ambassador Teferi appreciated the shared history between the City of Bath and Ethiopia and vowed to work together with them to sustain the Emperor's legacy, and further enhance the multi-faceted links with the City Bath.



Councillor Manda Rigby on her part said that the Council and people of Bath always have and always will be proud of the historic links between the City

and Ethiopia, and that she looks forward to strengthening the links to keep the Emperor's legacy alive.



Emperor Haile Selassie with the Mayor of Bath in October 1954

The last stop on this trip was Bath Spa University.

The Ambassador met and held discussions with the University's Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Sue Rigby, and senior management, to hear about their already-existing partnership with Addis Ababa University in research and knowledge exchange, as well as the University's collaborative partnership with Fairfield House.



Thanking them for their accomplishments so far, Ambassador Teferi encouraged the University to strengthen its collaborations with Addis Ababa University and explore new areas of partnerships with other universities in Ethiopia.

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Chatham House hosts webinar on Ethiopia's upcoming elections

On 3rd February, Chatham House's Africa Programme hosted a webinar on Ethiopia's upcoming elections, which are scheduled to take place on 5th June 2021.

Titled *"Ethiopia's Elections: Context, Challenges, and Prospects for Pluralism"*, panellists at the virtual event discussed preparations for the upcoming polls, whether the Federal Government will be able to deliver secure, free, and fair elections under the current conditions, and the priority issues likely to be raised during the campaign period. They also reflected on the long-term trajectory of Ethiopia's democratic transition.

The Panellists were **Birtukan Mideksa**, Head, National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), **Dr. Gedion Timothewos**, Attorney General of Ethiopia, **Professor Berhanu Nega**, Chairman, Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (EZEMA), and **Professor Beyene Petros**, Chairman, Ethiopian Social Democratic Party (ESDP).

Birtukan Mideksa said the upcoming election would be a substantial national undertaking where 50 million people are expected to register for voting in all of the regions in Ethiopia. "All of the political parties will have equal access to public facilities and the media, although the number of candidates, gender, and disability issues will be considered in the latter," she said.

"Changes in nominating and appointing board members of NEBE and increment of engagements with civic society would pave the way to a fair and free election," she added.

Given the legal and institutional level reforms that his office took so far, Attorney General Dr. Gedion on his part said, the upcoming election is a step on the long-term view to building a democratic system in the country.

Training is being provided to the law enforcement personnel to adopt the position of restraint and moderation during the election period, he said, adding that it would be the **"most genuine election we have entertained so far"**, although it might not be flawless.

Professor Beyene acknowledged the various reforms and Prime Minister Abiy's initiatives that have helped competing political parties to have a say in different matters.

He also cited issues related to financing elections, unpaid civil servants and candidacy, and lack of updates on election monitors and observers as challenges that he has observed.

Professor Berhanu Nega, on his part, said the upcoming election would be "our chance to see a democratically elected government that is expected to entertain huge national questions in a civilized manner, without resorting to violence."

"If we can succeed to have a genuine election in Ethiopia, the implication will be great to the rest of the continent and the future generation of Ethiopians," he added.

At the conclusion of the webinar, Ambassador Teferi expressed his gratitude to the distinguished panellists for their insights and thanked Chatham House for organising "this important and timely platform for debate".

Noting that the upcoming historic elections represent "a critical juncture in the modern history of Ethiopia", the Ambassador affirmed that the Ethiopian Government would continue to prioritise the safety and security of its citizens across the country as the elections loom.

"By ensuring law and order in all regions of Ethiopia, the Government will uphold its duty to establish the peace necessary for a secure pre-and post-election environment," the Ambassador said, adding that "Alongside these activities, the Government, together with its partners, will ensure that the Election Board receives all the support it requires to fulfil its constitutional mandate."

The Ambassador also called upon partners in the international community, including in the UK, to stand in solidarity with Ethiopia in the challenges to come.

The Ambassador's remarks, including a link to the full webinar, can be found on our website at <https://bit.ly/CHAfrica-Feb2021>.

Highlights of the webinar – *"Panel confirms Ethiopia prepping for June elections, Chatham House Africa Program"* - as written by Venus Easwaran, a member of the Ethiopian Diaspora in the UK, can be found at <http://bit.ly/2OxBXLL>.

The Ambassador's Diary

A brief summary of some of the Ambassador's engagements with UK stakeholders

5th February: At a virtual meeting held between Ambassador Teferi and Wera Hobhouse (LibDem) MP for Bath, both agreed to use the former home of Emperor Haile Selassie - donated to Bath and Somerset Council - as a springboard towards the consolidation of Ethiopia and the United Kingdom.

The Ambassador briefed Ms. Hobhouse on Ethiopia's ongoing efforts at broadening the horizons of democracy, upholding the Rule of Law, and removing impediments to freedom of thought and expression.

On **2nd February**, the Ambassador met with Conciliation Resources - Jonathan Cohen (Executive Director) and Aden Abdi (Programme Director - Horn of Africa) - to learn of their work in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, which included working with governments, civil society, and the community leaders to support peace mediation and dialogue, rehabilitation, and reconciliation efforts.

Ambassador Teferi on his part noted their work in Ethiopia and briefed them on the situation in Ethiopia. The Ambassador reaffirmed the Embassy's commitment to continue working with them as they seek to establish an office in Addis Ababa.

1st February: Ambassador Teferi held a virtual courtesy call with Moazzam Malik, Director-General for Africa at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office to discuss bilateral and regional cooperation between Ethiopia and the UK.



During the call, Ambassador Teferi briefed the Director-General on the ongoing rehabilitation activities in Tigray and the Government's effort to uphold the rule of law in the country.

On his part, the Director-General highlighted the importance of the UK's relations with Ethiopia, while noting its continued commitment to support Ethiopia's democratic reforms. He also gave an account of his recent visit to Addis Ababa as part of a delegation led by Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab.

On 14th January, the Ambassador attended the virtual launch of the first Ethiopian-owned technology share company, eTech. The launch was held in Addis Ababa in the presence of government officials, shareholders, and guests.

Established by Ethiopian technologists across the globe, the company mainly deals with software development, cybersecurity, telecommunication, fintech, and infrastructure development.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Teferi highlighted the importance of diaspora professionals in technology and knowledge transfer as well as capacity building, and also encouraged more diaspora to give back to their country.

Dr. Abraham Belay, Minister of Innovation and Technology, on his part said, "the establishment of this first technology company in our country is historic" and reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to establishing more technology companies, such as eTech, and vowed to work closely with them to support the country's economy.

Echoing the Minister, Dr. Shumete Gizaw, Director General of INSA, on his part said, the establishment of eTech S.C. brings huge potential and capacity for Cyber Security in Ethiopia.

Tigray Situation Update

Highlights:

- There have been recent positive engagements with the Government of Ethiopia by senior UN officials, including the Under-Secretary General for Safety and Security, the High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme.
- British Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, has also visited a WFP warehouse to see first-hand the vital role that UK aid is playing in helping those most in need of humanitarian assistance.
- The government is working with more 26 international organisations, including UN agencies, to reach people in need
- More than 2 million vulnerable people have so far received humanitarian assistance - 70% of food items covered by the Ethiopian government and 30% by development partners and NGOs
- A joint WFP/UNHCR/ARRA food distribution for 30,000 Eritrean refugees in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps took place 20-25 January and the distribution of core relief items to 5,000 households is ongoing.
- ARRA is working closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNHCR to repatriate 60,000 citizens that fled to Sudan from Tigray following the law enforcement operation in the region
- WFP accepted a request from the Government to augment the transportation capacity of the Government and partners to deliver humanitarian assistance into and within Tigray.
- There is enough stock supply in Mekelle to support 2.5 million people for the next two months
- 92 distribution centres in the Region have been activated, with additional distribution centres in neighbouring Gondar and Wollo still working in the post-operation phase
- Humanitarian agencies and relief organisations are currently enjoying access to 85% of humanitarian aid corridors in the Region following Government efforts to secure previously unsafe areas.
- The Government is “moving with urgency” to approve requests for movement of international staff into and within Tigray, to ensure that humanitarian assistance programmes can be expanded.
- The government has sent medical supplies to 88 health facilities in the Region. An estimated 1.5 million worth of vaccines have also been distributed.
- Significant parts of Tigray have now had their electricity supplies restored, including the cities of Adwa, Axum and Shire. Similarly, banking services and telecoms are being restored across the Region following their disruption and sabotage by TPLF forces and affiliates.

...visit by UNHCR Commissioner

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, was in Ethiopia from 29th January to 1st February to meet with government officials, the diplomatic community, donors and UN and NGO partners.

He also met with local officials and Eritrean refugees during a visit to Mai Aini refugee camp, one of the four Eritrean refugee camps in the Tigray region, accompanied by the Minister of Peace, Muferihat Kamil, the Director-General of Ethiopia’s Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs, and Ambassador Redwan Hussein, State Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



The purpose of his visit focused on the overall humanitarian situation in the Tigray region, particularly on the situation of Eritrean refugees that are hosted there.

In a meeting with the Minister of Peace, Muferihat Kamil, the Minister briefed the UNHCR Chief on various activities Ethiopia has been undertaking in connection with humanitarian assistance and refugee affairs. The two also discussed future areas of collaboration.

Deputy PM Demeke Mekonnen told Mr. Grandi that the government of Ethiopia is fully committed to addressing the outstanding issues related to refugees alongside the rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in Tigray.

“The problems are clear, and our government is focused on how to reorganize itself and how to

restore law and order and to maintain regular system there (Tigray)", Deputy PM said, adding that the government of Ethiopia is committed to rehabilitation, reconstruction, and humanitarian assistance issues and at the same time, addressing issues related to refugees in Tigray Region.



Mr. Grandi on his part said that "We had a very productive meeting. We discussed the humanitarian situation in Tigray and how to accelerate efforts to reach the people in need of humanitarian assistance".

Citing Ethiopia as the home refugees for decades, he said "I have come here in Addis Ababa because Ethiopia is a very close partner of UNHCR. Ethiopia, throughout its recent history for decades has hosted hundreds of thousands of refugees from all neighbouring countries."



Filippo Grandi with President Sahle-Work

President Sahle-Work Zewde also held discussions with Mr. Grandi where he said he has seen some encouraging progress.

At a press conference following the conclusion of his visit to Ethiopia, the UNHCR Chief commended Ethiopia's long-standing support for refugees over the years.

"Ethiopia, as you probably know is one of UNHCR's most important partner countries, a country in which we have worked for decades, and more importantly a country, and that's the reason why we've been here for so long, that has hosted for those decades millions of refugees: 800,000 - 900,000 at the current count. And not only that, but Ethiopia is a country that has been quite exemplary in many aspects of refugee assistance."

With regards to the situation in Tigray, Mr. Grandi said:

"I do want to appreciate what the government is already doing to address this situation and reiterate that the UN and the international humanitarian community is ready to help and step up and I think that this step up, and they said this to the Prime Minister, is very important if we want to avoid a further widespread suffering of people."

"It is very positive that clearances were obtained in recent days to deliver cargo to the warehouses in Tigray in particular in Mekelle. I think that the next step is really to make sure that these goods, this cargo, food in particular, but also non-food item gets out and gets to the people who need it in the civilian population in all parts of the country, and I was very happy to hear the Deputy Prime Minister talk about the need to make joint assessments between the UN, the NGOs and the Government so that we can further refine our intervention."

On the specific issue of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia:

"I visited the Mai Aini refugee camp, and we met and spoke, together with the Minister of Peace and her delegation, to the refugees residing there. Some, most of them have resided for many years, maybe up to ten years in Mai Aini, but we also were able to

meet some of the almost 3000 refugees that have now been relocated or have relocated themselves from the other two camps Hitsats and Shimelba.

“I was glad to hear the Minister of Peace assure them several times that the situation in these two southern camps was secure, they were welcome there, and that they would be supported and assisted.”

Looking forward, the UNHCR Chief said:

“The Government is rightly concerned that we need resources to respond to this crisis. I remind you that UNHCR alone with ARRA is dealing with South Sudanese refugees in Gambella, with Somali refugees in the Somali region, with Sudanese refugees in Assosa, that although the IDP population in the country has decreased in other regions other than Tigray there are still areas of IDP operations that need to be supported and I think that for this of course international assistance is necessary...You know that the United Nations has appealed for one 170 million dollars specifically for operations in Northern Ethiopia, there has been a good response, 65% has been funded, but we need more to come through because the needs, in my opinion, will escalate as we go forward.”

...More than 60,000 refugees to be repatriated from Sudan

Ethiopia's Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs announced a decision to repatriate more than 60,000 refugees who fled to Sudan from the Tigray Region and will closely work with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNHCR.

In support of the government-led response in Sudan, UNHCR and Sudan's Commission for Refugees (COR) continue to relocate the refugees from the arrival locations at the border to the designated refugee camps, further inland in Sudan's Gedaref State.

...Agency working to provide improved services for Eritrean refugees

Ethiopia's Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) has said it is working towards providing improved services to Eritrean refugees hosted in Tigray.

ARRA Director-General, Tesfahun Gobeza said Ethiopia is not only a country hosting one of the largest number of refugees but also has put a policy in place to integrate them.



ARRA Director-General with UNHCR Commissioner, Filippo Grandi

He added that various works were undertaken over the last six months to improve the refugee camps.

Erroneous information being spread that the Eritrean refugee camps were attacked during the law enforcement operation is contrary to the reality on the ground, Tesfaun added.

...WFP Chief commends Ethiopia for assistance provided to the people of Tigray

On 6th February, Ethiopia's Minister of Peace, Muferihat Kamil, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, David Beasley, and the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ethiopia, Catherine Sozi, went on a joint visit to Mekelle in Ethiopia's Tigray Region, aiming to highlight the need for a strong partnership to rapidly scale up the Government-led collective response to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of people in the Tigray Region.



Mr. Beasley commended the emergency food assistance that the Government and partners have already provided to the people of Tigray since the onset of the crisis, reaching almost 1.7 million people with emergency food distributions. 26,000 Eritrean refugees residing in two camps have also received food and nutrition assistance.

There have been recent positive engagements with the Government of Ethiopia by senior UN officials, including the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, the High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme.

These engagements have acknowledged the commendable measures being undertaken by the Government and partners to address humanitarian needs in Tigray.

- David Beasley, WFP Chief

“But we must do more, together, to meet the needs of the population,” said Mr. Beasley, noting that, “Latest preliminary estimates indicate that 2.5 to 3 million people in the region require emergency food assistance.”

Peace Minister Muferihat Kamil on her part indicated that the Government of Ethiopia has welcomed recent positive engagements with the Government by senior UN officials, including the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, the High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme.

“To ensure that humanitarian assistance in Tigray can be expanded and intensified without delay, the Government is moving with urgency to approve requests for international staff movements into and within Tigray,” said the Minister, adding that, “Several such requests have been approved over the past few days and the process of rapid and streamlined approvals will continue. The Government will also review visa requests for international humanitarian staff with urgency and priority. Communication capability for UN and humanitarian partners with significant operations in Tigray will be enhanced.”

Confirming the critical importance of enhanced operational presence and communication capability to allow UN agencies and humanitarian partners to scale up humanitarian interventions in Tigray, Ms. Sozi said, “These recent and anticipated developments related to staff movement approvals and communication capability will allow international agencies to design and manage operations safely and responsibly, in close partnership with the Government. This is a tremendous step forward.”

On the occasion, Mr. Beasley announced that WFP has accepted a request from the Government of Ethiopia to augment the transportation capacity of the Government and partners to deliver humanitarian assistance into and within Tigray. WFP has also agreed to provide emergency food relief assistance to up to 1 million people in Tigray and launch a blanket supplementary feeding intervention to assist up to 875,000 nutritionally vulnerable children and pregnant and lactating mothers.

These agreed WFP contributions will require \$107 million to be implemented over the coming six months in areas and communities jointly identified and prioritized with the Government based on joint assessment where feasible.

WFP will continue to provide food assistance to Eritrean refugees in the Tigray Region, working closely with the Government’s Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs and the UN Refugee Agency. WFP will also continue to procure and deliver food supplies on behalf of the Government, including 300,000 metric tons of wheat scheduled for delivery from February.

...Attorney General release results of investigation into TPLF's armed attack against defense force

The Attorney General released results of the criminal investigation into the grave offences committed by TPLF's armed attack against the North Command of the National Defence Force.

As Taskforce composed of the Ethiopian National Defense Force, the Office of the Federal Attorney General, the Federal Police, and other relevant security institutions conducted the investigation.

In the Press Release, the Attorney General said the investigation has so far established the commission of three major crimes: high treason, crimes against the Constitutional Order, and terrorism.

Arrest warrants have been issued to 349 suspects individuals for committing treason, attack on the sovereignty of a nation, and terrorism offences. Of the total, 124 have been arrested so far.

The investigation further uncovered that the November 3rd treasonous act committed by the rogue members of the Ethiopian National Defense Force against the Northern Command by the order of the TPLF leadership was not an isolated and spontaneous attack. According to evidence collected, TPLF had prepared a detailed plan to stage an armed insurrection, as a continuation and finale of the violence, it has been financing and orchestrating over the last three years.

Furthermore, investigations reveal that before the change of administration at the federal level in 2018, the Tigray Regional State had recruited 5,000 militia members per annum, while after the reform, it recruited 47,173 and 37,373 militia members per annum in 2018 and 2019. These massive recruitments resulted in a situation where the TPLF was able to command an irregular militia force with more than 170,000 members.

These strategies and pre-meditated plans and actions clearly show that TPLF undertook a massive preparation to wage war against the Federal Government to regain its dominant position.

With regards to the Maikadra massacre, the investigation team identified 279 suspects who

were directly involved in the ethnically motivated massacre. Of the total, 36 have been detained. The rest are believed to have fled to Sudan claiming refugee status. So far, 117 graves of victims of the massacre have been identified and are undergoing forensic investigation.

Investigations into these heinous crimes are still ongoing.

...reports of mass civilian casualties untrue

Ethiopia's State of Emergency Fact-Checking Service issued a statement rejecting reports of massive civilian casualties in the Tigray region during the law enforcement operations.

In a statement, the Office said that the reports by various international media outlets were "unsubstantiated and politically motivated."

"The Government of Ethiopia has managed to conduct the operation carefully but regrets in case of any casualties to civilians during the law enforcement operations. Even one death of an innocent civilian is too many," the statement said.

"The fact that we have not found ourselves with significant civilian casualties is a testament to the careful planning and professionalism of our defense forces."

...Joint taskforce established to investigate concern over violence against women in Tigray

A joint taskforce has been established to investigate the increased concern over violence against women in Tigray regional state.

The special taskforce was formed by the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth (MoWCY) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

The special taskforce comprised of teams from MoWCY and the military will be on a fact-finding mission to investigate and ascertain facts on the ground.

The Government of Ethiopia has a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of sexual violence.



...Over 240m Birr worth of damage on electricity infrastructures; EEP working hard to repair

According to Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP), the TPLF rebels have caused damage worth over 240 million Birr on electricity services and infrastructures in Tigray regional state during the law enforcement operation.

To repair the damage, EEP has deployed over 120 senior experts to conduct an inspection. Out of the 17 power distribution stations in the region, 14 are now fully operational. The remaining three are under repair.

...update on telecom infrastructure maintenance and service resumption

Ethio telecom has been working hard to restore telecom services in Tigray by maintaining the damaged telecom infrastructure and replacing lost telecom equipment.

So far, 363 mobile sites have been restored and as a result, mobile services and fixed services have resumed in the region, including in Mekele, Adwa, Aksum, Wukro, Humera, Maikadra, Negash, and several other towns and cities.

Also, attention has been given to help banks restore their services through availing Fixed Broadband Service in the Region. In this respect, bank services have been restored in Mekele and Adigrat since January, and lately with banks in Shire Andasellase, Aksum, and Adwa.

...Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia travels to Mekelle

A delegation from the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia went on a 3-day visit to the Tigray Region from 8th February where they are set to meet with members of the community, church leaders and elders, the regional government, and stakeholders to discuss the challenges faced during the law enforcement operation, and in particular, damage caused to churches.

The council is a local initiative composed of heads of the various religious institutions in Ethiopia in a bid to promote peace, tolerance, and religious freedom amongst the people of Ethiopia.

...Ministry announces efforts to restore health facilities

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental partners and the regional health bureau administration, is providing the necessary support for emergency response and restoration of health services in different parts of Tigray.

Together with an estimated 71-million-birr worth of medications and medical supplies that were sent to the region a few weeks ago, the Ethiopian Pharmaceutical Supply Agency Hubs of Mekelle and Shire also have more than 500-million-birr worth of medicine and supplies in storage and are being distributed to hospitals and health centres.

So far, the distribution of medicines and supplies has reached 88 health facilities in various *woredas* of Tigray. Efforts are underway to increase the reach. An estimated 1.5 million worth of vaccines has also been distributed.

37 million birr has been transferred to the regional health bureau so far for rehabilitation and strengthening of health services.

To reinstate COVID-19 testing, care, and treatment, preparations are being made with the regional team to reinstate the service.

Out of the total 40 hospitals in the region, 15 are currently functioning at full capacity and 5 are partially functional, while 68 health centres are fully operational.

The Ministry of Health is working in close collaboration with the regional health bureau and other stakeholders for the full functionality of all the health facilities.

Together with the food aid provided by the National Disaster and Risk Commission, mobile medical teams are also screening and giving medical and nutritional support to internally displaced people in the region especially to vulnerable women and children.

...President Sahle-Work calls on all Ethiopians to join hands in rebuilding Tigray

While on a visit to Mekelle City, President Sahle-Work Zewde called on all Ethiopians to join hands in the rebuilding and rehabilitation efforts underway in Tigray.

President Sahle-Work visited the Ayder Referral Hospital, the Federal Food Stockpile in Mekelle, and shelters of the displaced who fled their homes.

The President also consulted with religious leaders and elders of the community on the ongoing rehabilitation activities in the Region, who in turn urged the government to address the adverse situation related to joblessness and equip public institutions with necessary equipment so that they can resume services.

Community representatives further called on the government to prioritize peace and health care service delivery and strengthen the ongoing humanitarian assistance in the region.

President Sahle-Work on her part affirmed the Government's commitment to rebuilding the region. "The government is aggressively working to fully restore peace and return the overall activity to normalcy," the President said.

...PM Abiy urges diaspora to fight against spread of false information

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has called on Ethiopians and friends of Ethiopia to fight against the spread of false information aimed at spoiling the image of the country.

Those who did not concede the death of the Junta are still disseminating wrong information in collaboration with enemies of the nation, the Prime Minister said.

**I call upon you to defeat
disinformation by telling the
international community about the
truth and current situation in your
country.**

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed

#StandWithEthiopia

...Diaspora take part in #UnityForEthiopia campaign against disinformation

On 7th February, Diaspora Ethiopians from all corners of the globe took part in a Twitter campaign titled #UnityForEthiopia, aimed at countering the intensified disinformation and misinformation campaigns by the TPLF about the current situation in the country.

Seyoum Assefa, the campaign's committee member, said that the campaign should be countered before it instigates violence.

Seyoum explained that TPLF sympathizers are using manipulated contents to give a false representation of the situation in Tigray.

Noting that the campaign is intended to counter this misrepresentation of facts, Seyoum added that every Ethiopian has the responsibility to take part in the media campaign.

LOCAL NEWS

Covid-19 Situation Update

...cases exceed 140,000

As of 14th February, Ethiopia has registered 147,092 COVID-19 cases with 128,742 recoveries and 2,194 fatalities.

So far, 2,046,852 tests have been conducted. COVID-19 medical tests conducted in Ethiopia so far are among the highest in Africa, next to South Africa and Morocco, according to recent figures from the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Ethiopia is the fifth-highest case country in Africa after South Africa, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt.

...Health Minister Dr. Lia to lead COVID-19 vaccine procurement, distribution program

The Health Minister Dr. Lia Tadesse along with Canadian Minister of International Development Karina Gould and Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister and COVAX AMC Engagement Group co-chair, Retno Marsudi will lead the COVID-19 vaccine procurement and distribution program for 92 COVAX AMC member countries.

The COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) Engagement Group is a forum between the AMC member states and donor countries aimed at procuring and distributing vaccines for AMC member states.

Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister and COVAX AMC Engagement Group co-chair, Retno Marsudi said it is a huge responsibility for Indonesia to enable all countries to have equal access to the vaccine through multilateral networks. We will attempt to shoulder the huge responsibility as aptly as possible.

Although COVAX will find it challenging to meet the target of procuring vaccine in the wake of limited resources and preparations of all countries to accept the COVID-19 vaccine, Marsudi expressed the belief that close cooperation among all nations would help to achieve the target.

...Ethiopia to get 9 million COVID-19 vaccines

Ethiopia has secured nine million doses of coronavirus vaccines to be administered in the next two months. The first batch of the vaccine will be received by the end of March or the beginning of April.

Health Minister, Dr. Lia Tadesse, told Reuters, "For now up to April we have been allocated close to nine million doses...Within this year we want to make sure we get at least 20% of the population."



According to local reports, Ethiopia will receive the vaccine made by AstraZeneca PLC – a British-Swedish multinational pharmaceutical and Biopharmaceutical Company with its headquarters in Cambridge, England.

During the vaccination, priority will be given to health workers, public health professionals, vulnerable members of the society, and public transport workers.

As part of the vaccination drive, 20 million doses will be administered by the end of the year.

Ethiopia is one of the 92 developing countries that have been given priority to take delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Ethiopian Airlines delivers Africa's first COVID-19 vaccines



Ethiopian Airlines on 6th February announced that it has delivered the first COVID-19 vaccine shipment to Africa - from Beijing to N'Djamena via Addis Ababa.

We are glad that we have launched the delivery of our mission-critical service with the distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine. We will be repeating the remarkable and globally recognised success in leading the fast delivery of PPE a few months ago with similar delivery speed, professional handling, and maintaining the cold chain during the global vaccine distribution.

Ethiopian Group CEO Tewolde GebreMariam.

The vaccine delivery was part of the partnership agreement Ethiopian Airlines signed with Cainiao Smart Logistics Network, the logistics arm of China's Alibaba Group, to launch a cold chain air freight for transporting temperature-controlled medicines.

Previously, Ethiopian Airlines had announced the launch of a cold chain air freight to transport temperature-sensitive medicines, including Covid-19 vaccines.

The cargo terminal in Addis Ababa is equipped with different temperature storage facilities ranging between -23 degrees to -25 degrees making its Pharma Wing one of the best suited for handling pharmaceuticals and all types of temperature-sensitive healthcare supplies.

Ethiopian Airlines is also a major cargo partner of WHO, WFP, donor governments, and philanthropists in facilitating the flow of essential medical supplies owing to the massive cargo facility including Pharma Wing, large and dedicated freighters, and well-trained manpower.

Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics Services, the cargo unit of Ethiopian Airlines Group, was instrumental in facilitating the flow of medical supplies including PPE across the globe in support of the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic by deploying its state-of-the-art cargo terminal, which is the largest in Africa, with an annual capacity of around one million tons and compartmentalised temperature-controlled cold storage facilities.

...health screening measures in airports increased

Ethiopia is boosting health screening measures in airports to prevent transmission of the new COVID-19 strains recently reported in countries such as the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Nigeria.



The new state-of-the-art terminal at Addis Ababa Bole Airport is designed with an emphasis on biosafety measures

In addition to health screening measures at airports, the Ministry of Health is also tightening control at border points with neighbouring countries as part of measures to prevent the transmission of the new strains into the country."

...Addis Ababa launches six-month-long COVID-19 prevention campaign

The City Administration of Addis Ababa launched a six-month-long campaign to enhance the prevention measures of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Out of the total COVID-19 infections in Ethiopia, more than 50% are reported in the capital Addis Ababa.

The campaign launched under the theme “Wear Mask to Get Service!” aims at enhancing health procedures that have been put in place to curb the spread of the pandemic in the city.



During the launching ceremony, Health Minister, Dr. Lia Tadesse said reinstating resident’s prudent actions, which has been dwindling after the state of emergency was lifted, is one of the core objectives of the campaign.

It also focuses on the implementation of various preventive mechanisms including distancing and wearing of masks by the people to contain the spread of the pandemic in the city, she added.

The minister further called on public and private institutions to participate in the campaign by providing water and soap outside of their gates as they used to do during the state of emergency.

...“No Mask No Service” campaign launched in schools

Ethiopia launched the “No Mask No Service” national campaign as part of efforts to fight coronavirus pandemic across the country.

The measure, which is effective at all schools, will play a vital role in curbing the spread of the virus in schools, therefore, protecting the teaching-learning process from disruption.

The Ethiopian government has been urging the public to implement COVID-19 precautionary measures to contain the spread of the virus.

Last October, the government distributed 50 million face masks to 46,000 schools across the country as classes resumed after months of closure.

...Workers affected by COVID-19 to be supported in new project

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) launched a project to support domestic garment and textile sector workers and enterprises affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project will be implemented with the \$4.5 million financial support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

During the launching program, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Dr. Ergogie Tesafye said due to COVID 19 pandemic, the world of work has been affected seriously and eventually posed a challenge to the domestic garment and textile enterprises.

The project will be crucial to support garment and textile workers and enterprises to continue to operate, retain their workforce and mitigate the social crisis, she said.



STAY SAFE: WEAR A MASK

Foreign Secretary Raab visits Ethiopia

The British Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Affairs, The Rt Hon Dominic Raab, made his debut visit to Ethiopia as part of a wider tour of East Africa, which had seen him visiting neighbouring Kenya and Sudan.

During his time in Ethiopia, the Foreign Secretary held bilateral engagements with President Sahle-Work Zewde, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Demeke Mekonnen.

Discussions covered a wide range of issues including the ongoing situation in Tigray; economic reforms and prosperity; the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) tripartite talks, Ethio-Sudan border issues, climate change, and COVID-19, amongst others.



As part of his visit to Ethiopia, the Foreign Secretary visited a World Food Programme (WFP) warehouse in Gondar, the Foreign Secretary saw first-hand the vital role that UK aid is playing in helping those most in need of humanitarian assistance.

The WFP warehouse in Gondar is central to distributing humanitarian aid such as food and sanitation supplies to those displaced by the crisis in Tigray.

The UK is providing £11.4 million of humanitarian support – with money for healthcare and clean water, as well as shelter, nutrition kits, and

protection for children. This is in addition to a £94 million package to support Ethiopia's response to the triple threats of COVID-19, climate change, and locusts, which are having a devastating impact on the country.

Arriving back in Addis Ababa the Foreign Secretary met with President Sahle-Work to discuss bilateral and regional issues as well as the strong multi-sectoral ties between the two countries.



The two also visited a school, accompanied by the Minister of Education, to see how the UK is supporting girls' education through the Department for International Development (DfID).

Foreign Secretary Raab also spoke to Prime Minister Abiy about humanitarian access and a solution to the Tigray crisis, as well as climate change and prosperity.

In talks with the Deputy PM and Foreign Minister, Demeke Mekonnen, the Foreign Secretary was briefed on the provision of humanitarian assistance in Tigray and the progress being made in rehabilitating the Region.

On the occasion, Mr. Raab signed a climate partnership agreement with Deputy PM Demeke for collaboration between the UK and Ethiopia ahead of COP26, the UN climate change conference.

As UK will be hosting this year's climate change conference, DPM Demeke expressed Ethiopia's commitment to continue to address the effects of climate change and said that the implementation of its climate resilient and green economy strategy is well underway, including achieving the target of planting 20 billion seedlings in four years.

Mr. Raab on his part applauded the government's efforts with regards to the development of renewable resources and said that Ethiopia is a beacon of hope for the region when it comes to addressing the effects of climate change.

Speaking at the end of his visit to East Africa, Mr. Raab said, "This trip has been an invaluable opportunity to strengthen key partnerships in East Africa, boosting trade, security, and our ability to tackle global challenges including Covid-19 and climate change. We are committed to bringing the best of British expertise to the region, defusing tensions, doing business with integrity, and forging strong partnerships on health, climate, and other global challenges."

In addition to this, the Foreign Secretary also announced a £3 million UK fund for the development of the private media which will be managed by a consortium led by BBC Media Action.

The consortium will bring together national and local media organisations to help them navigate challenges including how to identify and counter misinformation, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their operations and their audiences, and how to more effectively secure funding for their organizations.

"By supporting local reporting in Ethiopia, and making sure journalists have the right skills and resources to gather stories, investigate issues and highlight local and national successes, the UK is helping to support ethical and professional media," the Foreign Secretary said.

Caroline Nurse, CEO of BBC Media Action said: "The PRIMED (Protecting Independent Media for Effective Development) initiative will use this UK funding to offer targeted training, capacity building, and support to a range of non-state media organisations to support and defend media sustainability.

Alok Sharma visits Ethiopia in first foreign visit since his full-time appointment as COP26 President



COP26 President-Designate, Alok Sharma, visited Addis Ababa and Gabon last month to discuss how the UK can work with Ethiopia to address climate change challenges.

In his first overseas visit since becoming full-time COP26 President, Mr. Sharma met leaders from government and civil society, stressing the need for urgent climate action ahead of the important UN climate change summit the UK is hosting in November 2021, COP26.

His visit to Addis reaffirmed the UK-Ethiopia climate partnership signed by the UK Foreign Secretary, during his recent visit, which will step-up cooperation ahead of COP26.

Following high-level talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Demeke Mekonnen Hassen, and other senior ministers, Mr. Sharma launched Ethiopia's 'Enfluencers' (Ethiopia, Environment, Earth, Education, and Entertainment) Network, a group of young environmental activists and influencers who are working to raise awareness and build support for climate action.



Speaking at the end of his visit, Mr. Sharma said:

“Globally, we must go further and faster to protect people from the worst impacts of climate change, and climate-vulnerable countries should be at the heart of that process.”

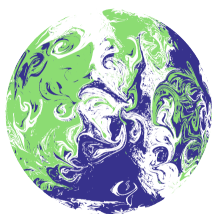
I have been impressed by the ambition and determination I have seen on this visit, particularly from inspiring young people in Ethiopia. I will continue to work closely with my friends in Ethiopia and Gabon and hope that both countries will continue to show leadership on climate action, which has such a vital role to play in the COP26 process.

British Ambassador to Ethiopia, Alastair McPhail, said:

“I’m glad that COP26 President Alok Sharma has recognised Ethiopia’s importance in the fight against climate change, in choosing it as the site of his first overseas visit in the role full-time. Ethiopia is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, but it is also a country with an admirable and ambitious green agenda.”

While in Ethiopia, Mr. Sharma also met the Minister of Agriculture, Oumar Hussein; Minister of Finance, Ahmed Shide; Mr. Mensur Dessie and Mr. Abdeta Debella from the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Commission, and Mr. Gebru Jember to discuss Ethiopia’s negotiating priorities for COP26; and Ambassador Josefa Sacko, AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture.

This year, the UK will host the UN climate change conference COP26, in Glasgow with partners, Italy.



**UN CLIMATE
CHANGE
CONFERENCE
UK 2021**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

This will provide an opportunity for the world to come together and commit to urgent action.

100MW Assela wind farm to be constructed



As part of efforts to expand its green energy capacity to meet ambitious renewable energy targets, it was announced that a 100MW Assela wind farm will be constructed in Ethiopia following the signing of an agreement between Siemens Gamesa and Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP).

The wind farm will be located between the towns of Adama and Assela, approximately 150km south of Addis Ababa, and will contribute to clean and affordable power for the country’s electricity grid.

It will be made up of 29 SG3.4-132 wind turbines and is expected to be commissioned by the start of 2023. The project will generate about 300,000 MWh per year. Siemens Gamesa will provide full engineering, procurement, and turnkey construction.

...Renewable energy in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has abundant and untapped renewable resources covering wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass, and the country aspires to be a power hub for the Horn of Africa. The National Electrification Program, launched in 2017, outlines a plan to reach universal electricity access by 2025 with the help of off-grid solutions for 35% of the population.

Ethiopia has also set an ambitious target to supply 100% of its domestic energy demand through renewable energy by 2030.

According to the African Development Bank, Ethiopia has abundant resources, particularly wind with a potential 10GW of installation capacity and having installed 324MW at present.

34th African Union Summit takes place virtually

The 34th Ordinary Session of the African Union Summit was held on 6th February under the theme: “Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want”.

This year’s Summit was held virtually due to the containment measures instituted as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.



Prime Minister Abiy and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Demeke Mekonnen, attend the virtual AU Summit

The assembly, among other things, deliberated and considered the report on the institutional reform of the AU, report on the progress of the AU response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa, as well as elections and appointments of the leadership of the AU Commission.

...President Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo appointed new Chairperson

H.E. Felix- Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), was elected as the new Chairperson of the African Union for the year 2021, taking over from H.E. Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa.

In his acceptance speech, President Tshisekedi said it is a unique privilege for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to be given this opportunity as Chair of the African Union at a symbolic and highly significant moment when “we are celebrating the sixty years of the disappearance of a worthy son of the Congo and Africa, Mr. Patrice Émery Lumumba, who strongly believed in the great destiny of Africa.

The incoming Chair of the Union commended President Cyril Ramaphosa, who, in difficult conditions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, was able to mobilize the efforts of all the countries of the continent and partners to face this challenging moment.



He also thanked Ethiopia’s President Sahle-Work Zewde and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister, for the warm welcome that the Ethiopian people have “never ceased to give AU Member States during our meetings at the headquarters of the organization”.

Highlighting the theme of the year 2021, the new AU Chairperson Tshisekedi said, Arts, Culture, and Heritage constitute the foundation of the African renaissance and offers the opportunity for Africans to return to their roots.

...Moussa Faki re-elected as Chairperson and Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa becomes first female Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission

Moussa Faki Mahamat from the Republic of Chad has been re-elected as the African Union Commission Chairperson for another four-year term from 2021-2024.

Faki will be deputised by Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa from Rwanda. Dr. Nsanzabaganwa secured the majority of votes in a highly contested position which saw two other female candidates vying for the post.

Dr. Nsanzabaganwa becomes the first female to occupy the position of Deputy Chairperson.



Embassy hosts webinar on the Horticulture Industry

As part of the “Doing Business in Ethiopia” webinar series focusing on different sectors of investment in Ethiopia, the Embassy hosted its first webinar of 2021 on 4th February.

On the occasion, government officials and industry experts discussed the opportunities for trade and investment in Ethiopia’s booming horticulture industry.

Horticulture is among the top of Ethiopia’s priority agricultural sectors and the government has been giving the necessary support and incentives for investors. The sector is the fifth-largest foreign revenue earner for the country and has created employment opportunities for over 200,000 Ethiopians. The government also provides several incentives for investors in the sector including tax exemption and duty-free importation of machinery construction materials, spare parts, raw materials, and vehicles.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Teferi highlighted the importance of Ethio-UK bilateral relations, saying that the UK, over the years, “has demonstrated to be a good friend of Ethiopia” and that this was evident in the UK government’s announcement in December that it will double the amount of export finance available to UK companies doing business in Ethiopia.

The development of Ethiopia’s horticultural sector has been one of Ethiopia’s major success stories in recent years. With vast land, favourable climate, and abundant resources, this sector has attracted huge investment flow and has been steadily penetrating international markets over the last two decades.

Ambassador Teferi Melesse

“With new reforms underway, my government is seeking to incessantly employ policies and strategies for positioning Ethiopia as an attractive haven for productive investors,” the Ambassador said. “Appropriate institutional frameworks and very generous incentives have been put in place to encourage foreign investment inflow to our country.”

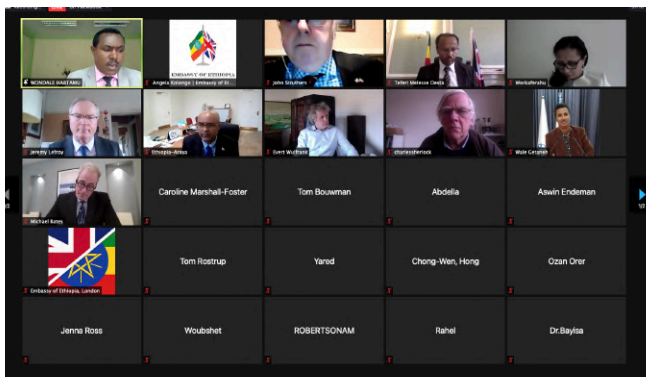
...Ethiopia a key trading partner of the UK

The Rt. Hon. The Lord Bates, the British Prime Minister’s Trade Envoy to Ethiopia, said, “With almost 15 years of continuous double-digit or near double-digit growth, this strong economic performance, with rising incomes and rising potential showcases why Ethiopia is a primary trading partner of the United Kingdom.”

“Horticulture remains an important Ethiopian export to the UK, with cut flowers forming 12% of total exports, some \$7.7million in value,” Lord Bates said, adding that “With Valentine’s Day around the corner, I expect our local shops to be stocked with Ethiopian flowers.”

“Ethiopia is rich with farmland and richer in the potential to explore greater investment in agriculture, agro-processing, and an ever-greater diversity of farming products to be produced and sold...Ethiopia can be a breadbasket not just for the UK, but for the world. I hope that we can continue to encourage and explore greater UK-Ethiopian investment in this sector.”

Among the distinguished speakers was Mr. Wondale Habtamu State Minister at the Ministry of Agriculture, who provided an overview of the horticulture sector and the incentives available for investors. Also from Ethiopia were Dr. Bayisa Bedada, Commissioner, Oromia Investment Commission, Dr. Getahun Mekonnen, Deputy Head, Amhara Industry and Investment Bureau, and Mr. Tewodros Zewdi, Executive Director, Ethiopian Horticulture Producer Exporters Association.



We also heard from companies that have ventured into Ethiopia’s horticulture sector, including AfriFlora, Perennial Foods, and Durabilis, as well as the people behind the logistics at Ethiopian Airlines and Flying Swans in the Netherlands. Mr. Jeremy Lefroy, the former British Trade Envoy for Ethiopia also took part.

Watch the webinar in full via our website at:
<https://bit.ly/InvestEthiopia-Horticulture>

Bure Integrated Agro-Industrial Park inaugurated

Prime Minister Abiy inaugurated the Bure Integrated Agro-Industrial Park (IAIP) in Amhara State on 7th February.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by government officials including the Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen; President of the Amhara Regional State, Agegnehu Teshager; and other senior federal officials.



With a total investment of over \$169 million, the Bure IAIP, which is located on 260.5 hectares of land in the first phase, is complete with water, electricity, and telecom connectivity, roads, and other infrastructure, including offices factory sheds, and staff accommodation.

The IAIP will focus on the processing of edible oil, maize, soya beans, honey, milk, meat, and horticulture, as well as poultry and eggs, for export to the global market. To date, 15 investors, including local and foreign companies, are at various stages of contracting with the regional office for occupancy at the IAIP.

In addition to Bure IAIP, three others - Bulbula IAIP in Oromia, Yirgalem IAIP in SNNP (now Sidama), and Baeker IAIP in Tigray - will be inaugurated in the coming months. The IAIP initiative is expected to help drive the structural transformation of the economy and support Ethiopia in reaching its Vision 2025 goal of becoming a light manufacturing hub in Africa.

Ethiopia, UK sign MoU to collaborate in Agro-processing investment

The Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the UK-funded Manufacturing Africa Programme to attract agro-processing investment to the country.



Manufacturing Africa has so far facilitated seven agro-processing investments to Ethiopia thereby creating market access for smallholder farmers in several parts of the country.

Telecoms licences bid extended

The Ethiopian Communications Authority (ECA) announced the extension of the deadline for telecom firms to bid for new operating licences.

Firms will be required to submit their bids by 5th April, up from an earlier deadline of 5th March.

Ethiopia's telecom industry is considered the big prize because of the huge market size – more than 100 million people.

As part of efforts to liberalise the economy, the government plans to sell a 45% stake of Ethio telecom.

Winners will be given full operating licences, but they will not be allowed to offer mobile phone-based financial services. They will also be required to set up their network infrastructure, such as cellphone towers.

...Orange and Vodafone confirm plans to bid for licences

Orange and Vodafone have confirmed that they are planning to bid for Ethiopian telecoms licences. An Orange spokesperson told *Capacity Media*: “We remain fully engaged in the ongoing process to open up the telecoms market in Ethiopia.”

“Africa is a significant part of the group’s growth strategy so we believe that Orange can bring real added value to the Ethiopian population with a high-quality, high-speed, digital, multi-service offer which we believe will enable the widest possible access to the internet and the development of services for business and the public sector in Ethiopia,” said the official.

“We have a dedicated team working on this proposal and we’ve opened an office in Addis Ababa to facilitate our exchanges with the authorities and potential partners.”

At the same time, Vodafone also confirmed that it has given an indication of interest to ECA. “The opportunity is huge. There are not many places in the world that still need to liberalise telecoms.”

... Ethio Telecom generates over \$650 million in 6 months

In related news, Ethio telecom generated \$650 million (25.57 billion birr) revenue in six months, achieving 95% of the target and a 12.3% increase from the same period the previous year.

Ethio telecom CEO Frehiwot Tamru said the achievement was a result of the network optimisation works carried out to enhance customer experience and satisfaction.

Mobile voice accounts for 49% of the total revenue, while data and Internet contributed 26% and value-added services 11%.

She said the number of mobile voice subscribers has reached 48.9 million; data and Internet users 23.5 million and fixed-line services 981,000.

Frehiwot also revealed that the number of Ethio telecom subscribers has reached 50.7 million, an increase of 11.2% from the same period last year.

Ministry launches online trade registration, licensing system

The Ministry of Trade and Industry launched Ethiopia's first-ever online trade registration and licensing system in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen and other high ranking government officials.



The new system is said to enable members of the business community to get their trade registered and licensed without a physical presence to headquarters of ministerial and regional bureau of service providing institutions.

Trade and Industry Minister, Melaku Alebel said the business community can now use the system to apply for registration and license services virtually from anywhere in the country and beyond using computers, mobile phones, and other modern devices.

The system removes unnecessary hassles, cost, cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, and saves time for the business community, he noted.

Noting that the online system will improve the competitiveness of businesspeople at continental and international trade, the minister said the system is part of the trade reform that the country needs, adding that the ministry is working to make the country one of the top 50 countries in ease of doing business by 2030.

For further information visit <https://etrade.gov.et>.

Africa's free trade area opens for business

1st January 2021 saw the opening of African markets under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement. Trade under the AfCFTA was expected to be launched on 1st July 2020 but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



The new market is estimated to be as large as 1.3 billion people across Africa, with a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of \$3.4 trillion – this will be the largest free trade area since the establishment of the World Trade Organization and has the potential of lifting up to 30 million Africans out of extreme poverty, according to the World Bank.

It is also expected to boost intra-African trade, promote industrialization, create jobs, and improve the competitiveness of African industries on the global stage.

"Today is a historic day for Africa. In 1963 the founders of the Organization of African Unity had a vision of creating an Africa common market. The start of trading under the Africa continental free trade area today is an operational start towards the Africa common market. It has been a long journey of focus, determination, and resilience," said Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

Taking to Twitter, Prime Minister Abiy said, "Congratulations to our continent for the beginning of trading under AfCFTA. The new frontier for Africa is indeed regional integration, where minds are open to ideas and markets are open to trade. Trade defuses the most fraught relations and integrated markets generate prosperity."

So far, the Agreement has been signed by 54 of the 55 African Union member states. 34 of those countries have ratified it as of early December.



Ethiopia receives WTTC's Safe Travels Stamp

"This decision reflects Ethiopia's commitment to maintaining the standard safe travel protocols and procedures as we reopen our doors to tourism and international visitors."

– Hailemariam Desalegn, Chairman, Ethiopian Tourism Board

Ethiopia is the latest destination to be awarded the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Safe Travels Stamp – the world's first-ever global safety and hygiene stamp – following major steps implemented by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism last year to ensure safety for residents, travellers, and workers and businesses in the tourism value chain, as Ethiopia reopened its borders to international visitors.

Ethiopia is among 200 other major popular holiday hot spots around the world such as Kenya, Turkey, Portugal, Argentina, Tunisia, and Indonesia, who together are using the stamp to reassure travellers and restore confidence to travel.

WTTC, which represents the global Travel and Tourism private sector, created the Safe Travels Stamp in May 2020, to allow travellers to identify destinations and businesses around the world which have adopted the global standardised health and hygiene protocols. The globally recognised

Stamp has also helped revive the global travel and tourism sector, which has been left devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gloria Guevara, WTTC President and CEO said, "Ethiopia is an incredibly important destination and is becoming more popular each year. Last year, Travel and Tourism supported 1.96 million jobs in the country and contributed nearly 6.7% of the country's total GDP, which shows just how important its Travel and Tourism sector will be to the country's economic recovery, once the COVID-19 pandemic has been combatted."

We are pleased to see Ethiopia's Ministry of Tourism implementing a number of enhanced health and safety measures, in line with our global protocols, to ensure safe travel, and we are delighted to recognise their efforts through the WTTC Safe Travels stamp.



H.E. Dr. Hirut Kassaw, Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Sport said, "Tourism is a strategic priority for the government and significantly contributes to the development of our national economy. We have created a partnership with the private sector and responded quickly to COVID-19 safety measures. With the current success in obtaining the safe travel stamp, I am confident that appropriate measures will be taken to ensure the health and safety of tourists and destinations nationwide. We are now ready to welcome tourists to visit Ethiopia."

Ambassador Teferi said, "Receiving the WTTC stamp of approval is a strong testament to the government's commitment to ensuring a safe environment for residents and tourists as we welcome international visitors. This is a major boost for the sector and will help with efforts in rebuilding confidence in travellers in this 'new normal' of the COVID-19 world."

"Ethiopia is an ancient country whose unique cultural heritage, rich history, and remarkable biodiversity is reflected in a tally of 9 UNESCO World Heritage Sites – more than any other country in Africa – and 4 under UNESCO's lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Add to this, spectacular landscapes, and a wealth of mammals and birds

found nowhere else in the world, make Ethiopia one of the most attractive and popular emergent tourist destinations in Africa. I, therefore, invite you to visit Ethiopia to discover why we are the 'Land of Origins'."

Since the launch of the WTTC Safe Travels Stamp, destination countries and cities, around the world have now adopted WTTC's new protocols. As part of its Safe Travels protocols, these worldwide measures provide consistency and guidance to travel providers and travellers about the new approach to health, hygiene, deep cleansing, and physical distancing. The protocols were designed following guidelines from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and taking best practices from WTTC's Members into account.

Eligible businesses in Ethiopia such as hotels, restaurants, airlines, tour operators, restaurants, outdoor shopping, transportation, and airports, will be able to use the stamp once the health and hygiene protocols, outlined by WTTC, have been implemented.

Read the full press release via our website at <https://bit.ly/EthiopiaWTTCSafeTravels>.

VISIT ETHIOPIA

#LANDOFORIGINS

**Safe
travels**



New MICE tourism initiative launched to exploit tourism potential

Meet in the Land of Origins

Tourism Ethiopia launched the Ethiopia Convention Bureau and the new MICE tourism brand for Ethiopia to exploit tourism potential.

The launch event of the new initiative was attended by senior government officials, including President Sahle-Work Zewde and former Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn.



President Sahle-Work, in her remarks, highlighted the importance of such initiatives for the growth of the country.

"The Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions and Events sub-sector of tourism which is being launched today is one that will take us far if we implement it well," she said. "It is imperative that we commit to crafting inclusive, resilient, and well

thought out strategies for this initiative to be successful," the President added.

Tourism Ethiopia CEO, Sileshi Girma on his part said Ethiopia's share in hosting international events in Africa is low although organizing events has a huge opportunity for countries like Ethiopia.

Out of the more than 450 international meetings held in Africa, most are held in South Africa and Rwanda, he said.

Pointing out Ethiopia's plan to attract 7 million tourists per year in its 10-year perspective development plan, Sileshi stated that MICE tourism development is necessary in addition to natural, sports, and recreational tourism to achieve the plan.

He stressed the need for an institution that leads and coordinates the sector to become a winner in the global market.

The Ethiopia Convention Bureau will have a vital role in building convention centres, expanding investment, and promoting competitiveness in the global events organizing market, the director-general said, adding that the launch of the Ethiopian Convention Bureau will enable Ethiopia to benefit from hosting regional and international events.

9,000 people take part in the Great Ethiopian Run – COVID-19 measures in place

A total of 9,000 participants took part in the mass races of the rescheduled 2020 Great Ethiopian Run on 10th January, which were staged in three waves set off at fifteen-minute intervals.

The race took place under tight COVID-19 measures implemented by the race organisers that saw temperature checks on all participants as they arrived at the start, mask-wearing before and after the run, including in the medal area, and social distancing enforced in the line-up of participants in the separate wave starts. Over 210 elite athletes were also tested for COVID-19 two days before the race.

Accompanied by several well-known faces from Ethiopian running including Berhane Adere, Gete Wami and Aselefech Mergia, and by the mayor of Addis Ababa Adanech Abiebe at the start, Haile Gebrselassie took on the starter's duties as well as presenting prizes at the finish.

Among those receiving prizes were a number of barefoot runners who ran in honour of the founding father of Ethiopian athletics Abebe Bekila.

The first foreign ambassador to cross the finish line was the newly-arrived Finnish ambassador to Ethiopia Outi Holopainen. With 41 marathons already completed, her running credentials make her one of the strongest ever ambassadors to have taken part in the race.

SPORTS

Lemlem Hailu's U20 indoor world record ratified

Lemlem Hailu's world U20 indoor 1500m record of 4:01.57, set last year, has been ratified.



The Ethiopian middle-distance runner clocked her record-breaking time at the World Athletics Indoor Tour meeting in Lievin on 19th February 2020, setting her fourth PB within three weeks.

Hailu's time was an improvement on her own world U20 indoor record of 4:01.79 that she had set in Torun on 8 February 2020. She had set PBs in both of her races before that, too: 4:08.32 in Karlsruhe and 4:05.08 in Ostrava. Hailu, the 2017 world U18 champion, now sits at 18th on the senior world indoor all-time list.

Gashaw and Gebreselama crowned Great Ethiopian Run champions

22-year old Abe Gashaw and twenty-year-old Tsige Gebreselama won the men's and women's elite races respectively at the rescheduled 2020 Total Great Ethiopian Run 10km, held on 10th January.



For Gashaw it was his second victory in the race, having won previously in 2016. His winning time was 28:19. For Gebreselama her victory was even sweeter because she had come close to winning two years ago when the race took place near Jan Meda, being denied victory only because of a misdirection in the race's final 200m. But there was no mistaking the class of her victory this time around as she pulled ahead of the field soon after halfway and stayed clear from then on. Her winning time was 32:32.

DIASPORA CORNER

Ethiopian Diaspora remits \$1.4 billion in 5 months

According to the Ethiopian Diaspora Agency. Ethiopia received \$1.4 billion from remittances over the past five months.

Director General of the Agency, Selamawit Dawit said, "We have done a lot of work in terms of promoting legal means and mobilizing legal means for the Diaspora to use and have the best possible performance on remittances. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Ethiopian Diasporas have sent \$1.4 billion past five months so far."

Noting that though the largest remittances were sent from North America, money transfer from Ethiopians in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa are rising.

The Director General also added that 2,637 Diasporas have opened Ethiopian bank accounts and deposited \$3.5 million in the first six months of the current fiscal year.

Similarly, 35 diasporas have taken investment licenses during the stated period.

According to the Agency, last year some \$3.7 billion remittance money was sent by Ethiopian Diaspora.

Diaspora ramp up support for #DineForEthiopia, national projects

In an exclusive interview with local broadcaster FBC, State Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Birtukan Ayano, said the Diaspora has been on the frontlines in supporting national initiatives at home over the last couple of years.

Members of the Diaspora are ramping up their response to the government's call through supporting development initiatives and humanitarian activities, the State Minister noted.

Koysha, Wenchi, and Gorgora national projects which are being carried out under the "Dine for Ethiopia" national initiative are witnessing increasing support from the Diaspora community. Involvement of the Diaspora is coming in the form of knowledge exchange, financial support, and technology transfer, among others, the Minister said.

Ambassador Birtukan underlined that the Diaspora is enjoying a true sense of belongingness to all the social, economic, and political activities in the country. The first phase filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is also among the mega projects that motivated the Diaspora Community to reinforce their support, according to the State Minister.

Selamawit Dawit, Director General of Ethiopian Diaspora Agency, on her part, said that the breakthrough in the ongoing national reform agenda served as a turning point for the materialisation of the increased participation of the Diaspora in the overall activity of the country.

Regarding support of the Diaspora to national mega projects, Selamawit said the active involvement of the Diaspora ranges from the Beautifying Sheger Project to the recently-launched national projects of Koysha, Wenchi, and Gorgora parks development.

Successful completion of Unity and Entoto Parks have also inspired the Diaspora to augment their contribution to the "Dine for Ethiopia" national initiative that includes Koysha, Wenchi, and Gorgora Parks development in the country, Selamawit added.

Ethiopians in UK unite in support of those affected by conflict

10th January saw the successful conclusion of a virtual fundraising event, hosted by the Embassy in collaboration with the Ethiopian Taskforce UK, to support those who have been displaced and affected by recent conflicts in Ethiopia.

In his opening remarks at the event, H.E Mr. Demeke Mekonnen Hassen, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs congratulated the Diaspora on the fundraising drive, encouraging them to continue their efforts to contribute to greater peace and development in Ethiopia.

Ambassador Teferi, on his part, thanked the Ethiopian diaspora in the UK for their continuous efforts during 2020 to support development projects and humanitarian initiatives, urging them to continue to stand in solidarity with their fellow countrymen and women in the upcoming year.

Other speakers at the event included: H.E. Ambassador Birtukan Ayano, State Minister of Foreign Affairs, who emphasised the importance of the Diaspora and Government working hand in hand to ensure ongoing reforms; H.E. Mr. Mitiku Kassa, Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commissioner, who provided a briefing on the current humanitarian situation and coordinated efforts to address needs on the ground; and H.E. Mrs. Selam Dawit, General Director of Ethiopian Diaspora Agency, who highlighted the many contributions the Diaspora have made to support Ethiopians over the last year.

Finally, the Taskforce assured that they would redouble their efforts to stand by Ethiopia during the upcoming year by launching further initiatives to support their motherland.

Full coverage of the virtual fundraising event is now available on our YouTube page: <https://youtu.be/wPgeDylLe5c>.

Toward a Peaceful Order in the Horn of Africa

PS
Project Syndicate

Excerpt from Prime Minister Abiy's Op-Ed in Project Syndicate:

"No government can tolerate its soldiers and innocent civilians being ambushed and killed in their dozens, as happened at the hands of the TPLF last autumn. My primary duty as prime minister and commander in chief of the national armed forces, after all, is to protect Ethiopia and its people from internal and external enemies."

"Our operations in Tigray were designed to restore peace and order quickly. In this, we succeeded, but the suffering and deaths that occurred despite our best efforts have caused much distress for me personally as well as for all peace-loving people here and abroad."

Ending the suffering in Tigray and around the country is now my highest priority. This is why I am calling for the United Nations and international relief agencies to work with my government so that we can, together, deliver effective relief to all in Tigray who need it.

"An Ethiopia free of the TPLF will champion peace and inclusive development. Internally, our "New Ethiopia" will be based on equality among all of our constituent groups, including the suffering people of Tigray. Externally, we will act in a way that recognizes that our national interests are inseparably linked to those of our neighbours."

"Only an Ethiopia at peace, with a government bound by humane norms of conduct, can play a constructive role across the Horn of Africa and beyond. We are determined to work with our neighbours and the international community to deliver on this promise."

Read more: <http://bit.ly/PMAbiy-PSOpEd>

The untold story of the Ethiopian king who built the incredible rock-hewn churches in Lalibela



Stacked in the heart of Lalibela, a town in northern Ethiopia, are 11 spectacular medieval churches that were carved from a single volcanic rock some 900 years ago. The

magnificent medieval structures have turned the mountain town into a major attraction site over the years for local and international visitors and pilgrims, especially worshipers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.



All the churches at the site are elaborately carved and are underground, connected by tunnels, and surrounded by rock-hewn trenches...And the construction of these incredible 12th-century churches is all thanks to Ethiopian King Gebre Meskel Lalibela, who, according to his hagiography, carved the churches over 24 years with the assistance of angels.

To date, the complex remains a wonder to many and so was the life of King Lalibela (others refer to him as emperor). History says when he was born, a swarm of bees surrounded him. His mother regarded this as a sign that he would be a long and prosperous king. And so it was, as his reign as king of the Zagwe dynasty for forty years was largely successful.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/KingLalibelaF2F>

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