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Media occupies center stage in instilling democratic values: Premier

BY ABDUREZAK MOHAMMED

ADDIS ABABA – Press and media occupy center stage in instilling democratic values in society, ensuring transparency in the mechanisms of the government and encouraging consensus on major issues of national concern, said Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed.

Addressing the “UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize” state dinner at Sheraton Addis Hotel Thursday evening, Dr Abiy noted that the government of Ethiopia has no misconception that a free, independent and responsible media

– augmented by the efforts of citizen journalism – is an imperative prerequisite for building a viable democratic political order.

It is important to highlight that freedom comes with responsibilities, he said. “Media establishments and citizen journalists need to seize this current enabling environment and use their voice and pen with ethical considerations.”

He connoted that we need to move away from sensationalism towards conscious reporting and information sharing. And also, Ethiopia’s growth and democratization process will further be

enriched when the focus of attention of media entities is geared towards news analysis, knowledge sharing and building the critical engagement skills of a society in transition.

The price that many have paid in life and freedoms for this opportune time to arise is a moment that needs to be capitalized on for peace and growth dividends, to him.

When press and media play a role in catalyzing society to bridge the lines of divide, build understanding and tolerance, and unite in a common cause, then we are serving the people in whose name we raise our pens and our voices, he added.



The need to redouble effort, renew commitment towards press freedom

BY ZELELEM GIRMA

The significant forward in ranking under the 2019’s world press freedom index is the clear recognition for the remarkable progress made in Ethiopia over the last twelve months, and an inspiring power to redouble government’s effort and renew its commitment to build a democratic nation, officials and journalists asserted.

From May 1-3, thousands of journalists, media assistants, officials and other pertinent stakeholders gathered here in African Union Head Quarter to celebrate and evaluate the fundamental principles of press freedom around the world, and to pay tribute to journalists who lost their life in the exercise of their profession.

On May 2 morning session, President Sahlework Zewdie started making a speech on the podium by asking everyone what they feel when

Photo : Hadush Abraba



Panelists in discussion at World Press Freedom Day forum

their country falls at the bottom of press freedom index.

In this regard, President Sahlework said that obviously, our record of accomplishment of the past was far from re-assuring freedom

of expression as enshrined in the constitution; that is the reason why the country ranked at the bottom of the world press freedom index.

Explaining various reform measures taken over the last twelve

months, President Sahlework said that the one that expands freedoms, particularly in ensuring the right to freedom of expression, is among the major steps taken to make significant

See The need to ... page 2

Japan regards Dr. Abiys initiative for regional peace, stability: FM Taro Kono

• Taro Kono to arrive here today for official visit

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA -- Japan highly regards the initiatives of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy for peace and stability of the region, according to Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Foreign Minister Taro Kono further said the potential of Africa is drawing attention in Japan because of its population growth, natural resources, and high economic growth, and there is rapidly growing interest regarding Africa for

investment and business aspects.

Kono is scheduled to arrive here today for an official visit to Ethiopia, it was learnt.

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald* conducted through email before his state

visit, Kono reiterated that Japan places importance on the peace and stability of the Horn of Africa and surrounding regions. He further praised the leadership role of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed. He further

See Japan regards ... page 2

Negasso, spiritually nurtured for a decent political career Acquaintance

• Remains of late President Gidada to be laid to rest tomorrow funeral

BY HAILE DEMEKI

ADDIS ABABA – Former President Gidada has set a unique example for Ethiopians as he has demonstrated a humble spiritual ethos in his career, according to reports from his hometown and beyond.

Negasso is son of Gidada Solan, a veteran known theologian in town who retains a theocratic influence there.

Negasso embarked on a political chapter in 1990 as a member of the former Oromo People’s Organization (OPO), which makes up one of the coalitions of the ruling Ethiopian People’s Front (EPRDF).

His political career manifests the way he followed a different path from his father. He chose to lose all the political struggle for the cause of his roots.

Rev. Chali Yoseph

See Negasso, Spiritually ...

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crucial to set the system on the right course, says Adanech.

The Authority has recently launched a National Tax Revenue Movement under the theme "Delivering on my responsibility I demand my rights!" across the

overcome the problem it is better to make strong law on tax issues, she elaborated.

On the other hand use of technology such as cash register machine and VAT is on the right track. It clearly indicated the

Register machine (ESBIM). ADB introduced a program of technical assistance to build the capacity of ERCA, to utilize the massive information in their data base to guide policy and daily operation. Ethiopia needs much

tax GDP rate to approximately 18-20 percent for a constant GDP. This is a huge gain but still effort required to sustain growth rate of 11 percent over the next ten years. Thus, Ethiopia needs much more comprehensive tax reform.

Japan regards...

praised Dr. Abiy efforts to reestablish diplomatic relations with Eritrea.

In August 2019, Japan is planning to hold the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7), Kono said adding the important themes of TICAD7 include business promotion and innovation, resilient and sustainable society, as well as peace and stability.

Last year, when Ethiopia and Eritrea reestablished diplomatic relations, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan was signed. Based on such developments, Japan believes that now is the time for Africa itself to move forward its own conflict resolutions.

Full content of interview with Foreign Minister Kono is available inside.

Negasso, spiritually

Ethiopia Mekana Yesus Betel Synodos of West Wellega told *The Ethiopian Herald* that, Ethiopia lost great person which is unique in his behavior. He did not act as a president, lived as an ordinary person, and even did not own a car. I believe that there is no one who did not own one while holding presidential title. This indicates that, how much he is pure and he commits and stands for the development of the country. Chali stated that, as I know him he is lovable individual by Ethiopian peoples.

Rev. Teferi Berkessa Ethiopian Mekane Yesus Betel Synodos at Addis Ababa for his part said that, his contribution to religious sector beyond political activity is so interesting. He works both in religious institutions apart from politics. His commitment towards shaping youth is good.

In Ethiopia, one of the milestones of Dr.

Negaso's political activities in early '90s was to become a member of the Constitutional Drafting Committee, which was tasked to draft the present Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE).

Meanwhile Remains of former president Dr. Negasso Gidada will arrive home from Germany this morning and be laid to rest here in Addis tomorrow, according to the National Funeral Ceremony Task Force.

According to the Task Force, Dr. Negasso's funeral will be held at the Cemetery of St. Peter and Paul here in the capital at 3 PM in the presence of senior government officials, family members and friends.

Prior to the funeral, Dr. Negass will be accorded official farewell ceremony at the millennium hall Sunday morning, it was learnt.

Approached by *The Ethiopian Herald* Ato Lij Daniel Jote Mesfin, the President of Ethiopian Patriots Association, stressed that the current generation should recall the history of those patriots since it has greater association with the history of Ethiopia. The patriots had had a solid stand in fighting against enemy of their country.

Lij Daniel underscored that this generation also needs to stand firm in fighting against internal and external enemy of our country in order to rebuild a stronger Ethiopia. The people of Ethiopia are renowned by hospitality and tolerance.

Some of the veteran patriots and family of patriots stressed that these heroic patriots need to be remembered by Ethiopians throughout history. There are some patriots who have played a vital role in the fight, but forgotten are not being cited as patriots. A lot should be narrated about these patriots, as to them.

Workineh Aklilu, Advisor at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, appreciated the bravery of the patriots to block the ambition of Italy to colonize Ethiopia and control East Africa through her. They have paid whatever it costs to keep the sovereignty of this great nation, he said.

The councilor explained that Italian troops waged war for the second time after about forty years to avenge of the defeat at the battle of Adwa. The strategic modern Italian troop embarked into our country from four corners. However, these brave Ethiopian patriots have stood against the advancement of the troop. They have been fighting against the fascist strategically, as to him.

Vice-professor Abebaw Ayalew, Director at Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage, explained the course of the war between the patriot and the colonial power in the year 1936 to 1941. Besides the strong confrontation from the patriots, the land feature of the country, dense population settlement have played their part in nuzzling the ambition of Italy

The need to...

improvement over the past one year.

Of these, the release of journalists and activists in detention, the lifting of ban in some media outlets, the revision over some inhibiting laws and regulations, and the media landscape in Ethiopia has shown dramatic transformation, she stressed out.

Indeed, because of these reform measures, today there are no journalists behind bars; Ethiopia has made a significant leap forward in its ranking in the 2019's world press freedom index, President Sahlework asserted.

According to her, the theme of this year's world press freedom day is indeed very relevant and timely for Ethiopia, as we geared up to organize national election next year.

"This certainly encourages us to redouble our effort and renew our commitment to democratic and media reforms into the promotion and protection of human rights and

what we write or broadcast. Most importantly, we will be needed in the making of the journey to a democratic Ethiopia. The government needs us to stand on its side in the fight against corruption, and holding it to be accountable when failures observed. These promises are not simple promises," Tsedale says.

President Sahlework, in this case, says that media plays an important role in facilitating political discourses, and enhancing the public understanding between the political platforms and the contesting parties.

As to Tsedale, state-owned media funded by public finances dominated and continue dominating the media space which would not bear fruit for cultivating independent and vibrant media that the country needs.

As the result of complex dynamics such as demotivated human resources, lack of public respect for the profession and the creeping media law could not support

Many of them remained to be influenced by boardroom members and editors whose primarily loyalties is pre-politics than media ethics, Tsedale evoked.

Nadia Khiari, Press Cartoonist and Creator of Willis from Tunis, I am very proud of Ethiopia, which should be a model showing up resilience.

"Today, the challenges are immense since there are horrible and tragic attacks of journalists by censorship, displacement, and other environmental issues. Along with militarization, journalists are the first victim in the fragile situation," Nadia reflects.

Asked why journalists are targeted while exercising their profession, Former director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Nairobi, Wambui Kiai, says that journalists are targeted because of different interests because they operate in the public sphere.

As to Wambui, when journalists operate in the public sphere, they often

Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in United Kingdom, says the British government takes practical steps to help media professionals improve their skills here in Ethiopia providing trainings in the Embassy by international experts for the last two years.

"The UK plays its part for media freedom to legally protect journalists while doing their jobs and to promote a free media, he said adding that, journalists must follow the footsteps of many brave African writers, thinkers and journalists who fight for freedom of press exposing self for personal risk."

Jeremy Hunt also quoted the greater freedom fighter Nelson Mandela, on a free press, that a critical, independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of any democracy. The press must be free from state interference, and must have sufficient independence from vested interests to be bold and inquiring without fear or

An exclusive interview conducted through email with H.E. Mr. Taro Kono, Foreign Minister of Japan prior to his official visit to Africa and Ethiopia

Herald: We would like your Excellency to reflect on the meaning of your visit to Africa and Ethiopia on this occasion.

Taro Kono: In August 2019, Japan is planning to hold the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7). The important themes of TICAD7 include business promotion and innovation, resilient and sustainable society, as well as peace and stability. On my visit to Africa this time, I would like to promote cooperation with African countries toward the success of TICAD7.

Ethiopia is a country that has long enjoyed exchanges with Japan. His Majesty the Emperor Emeritus and Her Majesty the Empress Emerita, who abdicated last month, visited Ethiopia in 1960, when they were Crown Prince and Crown Princess. This is my second visit following last one in August 2017, and I am pleased to set foot on Ethiopian soil again.

Ever since the inauguration of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy, various epoch-making developments have been made both in and around Ethiopia. On the diplomatic front, Prime Minister Abiy is leading the efforts towards peace and stability in the Horn of Africa region, including the reconciliation with Eritrea and resuming diplomatic relations. Positive changes are also witnessed inside the country. Ethnic harmony as well as reforms in various areas are being promoted in Ethiopia under freedom and democracy.

Japan holds in high regard Prime Minister Abiy's efforts in diplomatic and domestic affairs. During my visit to Ethiopia, I

would like to exchange views on how Japan can support these initiatives by the Government of Ethiopia.

Herald: As Your Excellency is much aware that the security situation in the Horn of Africa including Ethiopia is significantly improving after His Excellency Prime Minister Dr. Abiy came to power, and Japan is also known for supporting peace-building efforts in the region. Can you reflect on these issues? What do we expect from this visit in terms of supporting peace and stability in the region?

Taro Kono: Japan has been supporting peace and stability in the Horn of Africa and its surrounding regions through (1) dispatching personnel to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), (2) promoting the peace process in South Sudan and (3) supporting counter-terrorism measures in Somalia through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), (4) dispatching instructors to the Peacekeeping Training Centers in Kenya and Ethiopia, (5) conducting anti-piracy operation off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, and more.

Japan, which places importance on the peace and stability of the Horn of Africa and surrounding regions, highly regards the initiatives of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy who has reestablished diplomatic relations with Eritrea and taken leadership for regional peace and stability.

Last year, when Ethiopia and Eritrea reestablished diplomatic relations, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution



of the Conflict in South Sudan was signed. Based on such developments, Japan believes that now is the time for Africa itself to move forward its own conflict resolutions. This year, Japan provided 1 million USD as the first donor country to the committee composed of the Government of South Sudan and opposition groups. Also, we, invited Minister of Foreign Affairs Osamu, discussed peace and stability in the Horn of Africa region.

At TICAD7 to be held in Japan this August, an important theme to be taken up is such efforts for peace by Africa itself. Japan will continue to extend support to the efforts towards peace-building in Africa in an active manner, particularly in national institution-building. On my visit this time, I will directly extend an invitation to TICAD7 from Prime Minister Abe

to Prime Minister Dr. Abiy, and will invite him to lead discussions regarding peace and stability in Africa, together with Japan.

Herald: The Nairobi Declaration of TICAD6 recognizes the importance of private investment as a vital engine of economic and social development on the continent. However, the reality on the ground shows that private investment from Japanese companies to Ethiopia as well as other African countries lags behind, compared to some other countries. Your Excellency, can you tell us what your government has planned to improve Japanese private investment to Ethiopia as well as other African countries so far, and what are the future prospects in this regard? And also if you could tip us on the promises of the upcoming TICAD 7?

Taro Kono: The potential of Africa is drawing attention in Japan because of its population growth, natural resources, and high economic growth, and there is rapidly growing interest regarding Africa for investment and business aspects. Amidst this, against the backdrop of Ethiopia's abundant labor force, and low electricity costs, the country is garnering attention from Japanese companies as a manufacturing base.

In the TICAD process in recent years, great expectations have been expressed by both Japan and Africa regarding the promotion of Japan-Africa business relations. Taking into account such a situation, the Government of Japan is examining ways to establish a platform for enhancing Japan's public-private cooperation with the goal of promoting trade

and investment with Africa.

At TICAD7 as well, we are considering dedicating one of the plenary sessions to a public-private business dialogue, in order to hold a direct discussion between Japanese companies and African summit leaders regarding requests and views concerning the improvement of the business environment, investment policies, and more. Other many business-related side events are also being envisaged.

In this way, the Government of Japan is ready to encourage Japanese companies advancing to Africa through the TICAD process. Meanwhile, there still exists issues which restrict business promotion in Africa such as lack of transparency in administrative procedures, regulations on foreign investment such as demands for local content and foreign currency remittance regulations, as well as problems of corruption and counterfeit products. Furthermore, lack of basic infrastructure for accepting large-scale private investment needs to be dealt with.

In order to encourage investment by Japanese companies, resolving such issues is crucial. Japan will utilize tools such as Official Development Assistance (ODA) and provide support that are unique to Japan for African initiatives. In Ethiopia, Japan is providing assistance for improving productivity, key to the development of manufacturing. The Ethiopian Kaizen Institute (EKI), a center established to share Japanese "kaizen (continuous improvement) spirit" with the people of Ethiopia, is one example of such assistance.

