Nine patients have been diagnosed positive for COVID-19 in tests carried out yesterday at Quarantine Centers Adibara (2), Girmaika (2), and Om-Hajer (1) in Gash Barka Region and (5) in Senafe, Southern Region.

All the patients are nationals who returned from Ethiopia recently.

On the other hand, 14 patients who were receiving medical treatment in hospitals in the Southern (13) and Central (1) Regions have recovered fully and have been released from these facilities.

The total number of recovered patients to-date accordingly stands at 405, the total number of confirmed cases in the country has risen to 461.

In its 13th Commencement on 23 October held in the new normal of standard virtual format, the College of Engineering and Technology conferred 18 Degrees to 129 and Diplomas to 237 Graduates in Chemical, Computer, Civil, Electrical, Electronics, Mining and Marine Engineering.

Speaking at the event, the Dean of the College, Dr. Kahsai Niguse stated that owing to the effort made in the last two years, laboratories and workshops have been put in place to reinforce the pedagogy which is based on theory and practice.

Congratulating the students, Dr. Kahsai called on the graduates to serve their people with commitment and dedication and continuously drive to develop their capacity.

College of Engineering and Technology was set up in 2004 under the umbrella of Eritrean Institute of Technology and has so far graduated 5,630 students.

In related news from the Eritrean Institute of Technology, Mai Nefhi College of Science conferred 1st Degrees to 291 and Diplomas to 61 graduates in its Commencement on 22 October in the fields of Computer Science, Marine Biology and Fisheries, Mathematics, Statistics, Natural and Earth Sciences.

The ceremony was conducted in a virtual format due to the COVID-19 Guidelines.

Pointing out that the education policy of Eritrea focuses on nurturing self-reliant, skilled and productive citizens, Prof. Gebrai Asgedom, Dean of the College of Science, stated that huge investment is being made on colleges to that end and called on graduates to live up to expectation.

Prof. Gebrai went on to say that the college in partnership with various ministries and institutions worked hard, in addition to researches it conducts, to correspond the curriculum of the college with the national development programs.

Mai-Nefhi College of Science was established in 2004 under the umbrella of the Eritrean Institute of Technology and has graduated 3,335 students in the last 13 commencements.

Thanks to awareness raising campaigns being conducted in Anseba Region, encouraging outcome is being registered in the pre and post-natal healthcare services.

According to Mr. Biniam Fissehatson, head of family and community health unit at the Ministry of Health branch in Anseba Region, the number of pre-natal service has increased from 79-88% and pregnant women delivering in health stations from 64-78% in the last 9 months; vaccination coverage has also increased by 7% compared to that of last year.

Mr. Biniam said that maternity waiting rooms are being constructed with the cooperation of the Ministry of Health and the community aimed at helping women who are compelled to travel over 10km to get healthcare services.

There are a total of 35 health facilities in Anseba region including one regional referral hospital, three community hospitals, 5 health centers and 25 health stations.

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Earlier this month, the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning human rights violations in Eritrea. The outlandish tone and content of the resolution betrays apparent frustration arising from the utter failure of the destabilization policies that the EP has pursued in past 20 years. Several points are well in order.

First off, the allegations raised by the European Parliament are utterly false and land far wide of the mark. As just one example, allegations about the seizure of “Catholic-affiliated schools and health facilities, thus negatively affecting the health and education rights of the population,” greatly distort the policies and delivery of health and education programmes in Eritrea, and, fail to stand the scrutiny of statistical figures available in the public domain.

Second, the European Parliament’s recent resolution is cynical and extremely hypocritical. For one, many of the EP Member States condemning Eritrea in a condescending, arrogant, manner are hardly paragons of virtue. To provide several brief examples: appalling practices against migrants and refugees; a dramatic rise in far-right ideologies, extremism, racism, xenophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment; and interventionist foreign policies that have plunged many parts of Africa and the Middle East into chaos and destruction under the guise of human rights.

It would be remiss to fail to point out that for decades most of the European Parliament Member States were at best silent and at worst complicit as the human rights of Eritreans were violated and trampled upon by a succession of neighboring regimes. For instance, from 1950 to 1991, not once did Eritrea, the scene of Africa’s longest, and victim of some of the grossest violations of human rights, figure on the agenda of the EU and other international institutions where major EP member States enjoyed pivotal diplomatic clout. After Eritrea’s independence, and the subsequent border war, the international community, including the European Parliament, overlooked, if not actively supported, the illegal military occupation of large swathes of sovereign Eritrean territory and the unrelenting aggression that Eritrea was subjected to by the previous TPLF-dominated Ethiopian regime. The historical record is clear in showing just how substantial European states’ support – financial, political, and diplomatic – was to the TPLF regime. This was, of course, despite the fact that the TPLF regime was flagrantly violating international law and that the European Union was one of the principal guarantors of the Algiers Peace Agreement, which ended the 1998-2000 Eritrea-Ethiopia war. Throughout those many years of conflict and suffering for the Eritrean people, the EP Parliament did not adopt a single resolution to deter war and promote peace.

Within this context and backdrop, the European Parliament’s accusations about the supposed “lack of dividends” from the recent Eritrea-Ethiopia Peace Agreement or national service – extended due to the long period of “no war, no peace” and the TPLF regime’s illegal military occupation of Eritrea – are cynical and disingenuous.

To add salt to the wound, many European Parliament Member States also supported illegal sanctions against Eritrea, in the process unjustly harming Eritrea and its population. Even today, many of the Member States unjustly condemning Eritrea have supported and worked with different individuals and subversive groups whose main goal is destabilization, regime change, and, ultimately, rolling back Eritrea’s hard-won independence and sovereignty. These latter elements have politicized and “weaponized” human rights issues for their own personal benefits and agendas.

Human rights are not simply an ideological exercise for Eritrea. It is indeed a country that emerged out of a long, difficult struggle for human and national rights. As such, non-discrimination, equality, inclusion, peace, justice, freedom, and ensuring respect for human rights and human dignity are key and innate values underpinning Eritrean society.

Despite difficult circumstances and numerous challenges, the objective, sensible fact is since its independence the country has made significant strides in many areas. To briefly note, it has improved educational and health services, which have helped increase school enrolments and literacy, improved life expectancy, reduced maternal and child mortality, and successfully combated various diseases (such as polio, malaria, measles, TB, and HIV, among others). It has also made progress in realizing the right to development and providing basic social services (such as water, housing, and electricity), promoted equality and tolerance, greatly reduced various forms of violence and discrimination, increased agricultural productivity and food security, reduced poverty, and developed much infrastructure. As well, government efforts, such as social safety nets, household income supplementation packages, microfinance, and programmes for women’s empowerment and education, have broadened the spectrum of rights to be enjoyed by all.

Importantly, in order to ensure equal access for all citizens, especially low income and rural communities, various social services are provided to citizens either free of charge or at highly subsidized rates. In recognition of some of its remarkable achievements, accolades have been expressed by the United Nations General Assembly and the African Union (such as for Eritrea’s success in malaria control).

Eritrea’s stance and objectives on political and civic rights are similarly clear and unequivocal. Prolonged war and other externalities have however affected the pace and scope of the legislative and institutional frameworks that it had embarked on with earnestness immediately after independence.

Although a very young and relatively small country (both by population and geographic size), and despite its modest resources and humble means, Eritrea is also making important contributions to regional peace, stability, and security in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. As well, just two short years ago, Eritrea and Ethiopia agreed to end their longstanding conflict, which will help to encourage peace, cooperation, development, and better livelihoods across the region.

Eritrea is party to key international and regional human rights treaties, including some of their optional protocols. In addition, it is party to several international legal instruments dealing with international humanitarian law and labor. The Government of Eritrea undertakes continuous efforts to harmonize existing legislation with the international human rights instruments that it is a party to, as well as with other human rights concepts that have attained the status of customary international law. Moreover, the Government is making the necessary preparations to accede to the remaining core international human rights treaties.

In the event, Eritrea will and will not accept interference in its internal affairs or political pressure on its sovereignty under the veil of human rights. It is well to keep in mind, too, that meddling and interfering in the internal affairs of another State under any pretext whatsoever is a clear violation of Article 2 of the United Nations Charter.

For all these considerations, Eritrea rejects the European Parliament’s resolution, which is utterly unfounded in substance and malicious in intent. Eritrea remains steadfast and unwavering in its commitment to human rights, and it will continue to work to improve the lives and consolidate the rights of all of its citizens.

Eritrea Rejects EP Resolution

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Empowering the Youth: Generating and Disseminating Wealth

On the cover page of its 17th edition, the Defense Ministry’s magazine quoted President Isaias Afwerki as saying: “There are two things we need to achieve through hard work … we need to create wealth and distribute wealth.” The development pilot projects at Logo and Misilam dams, like other development projects nationwide, are good illustrations of how Eritreans intend to create and distribute wealth.

Many dams have been built over the years in the country to serve as hubs of social transformation. As we have seen in previous editions of #UnderstandingEritrea, the construction of Logo and Misilam dams have resulted in the empowerment of communities who live in villages around the dams. The communities now have access to potable water and have made a transition from traditional to modern farming and animal breeding, all of which have raised their standards of living.

“Creating and distributing wealth” is the mantra guiding the future development path of the nation. But who generates the wealth? The youth, of course! The Government of Eritrea’s scheme of national development heavily relies on its human resource, and the overwhelming majority of the Eritrean population is made up of the youth. With access to free education from primary school all the way to higher education, it is not difficult to imagine the prospects of Eritrea as a nation that is endowed with a lot of educated and skilled youth, who work in a variety of capacities as prime movers of change. During our visit at the Logo and Misilam development projects we saw firsthand young college graduates and trainees on site engage in activities that contribute to the social transformation of Eritrea.

Mr. Semere Tareke, the supervisor whom we met in Metal Workshop 1, said the unit was formed in March 2015 with 80 students from the 27th round in Sawa, who were given intensive vocational training in metal works. Since then the unit has been recruiting every year graduates from the vocational school in Sawa. They leave their trademark in the work they have done even far from Logo Dam area where they began as amateurs before they became skilled professionals who contribute immensely to Eritrea’s national development.

For example, the Logo Dam plant has five metal workshops that cater to the construction and assembly of water tanks nationwide. Each unit, composed of hundreds of welders, covers specific geographic areas, allowing the four units to deploy their workforce to different locations simultaneously.

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Mr. Semere told us that some members of the unit who had been his students at the project have become trainers while others have become experts in making and installing water tanks in other parts of the country. He says that he is gratified to see his former students leave the unit after having learned important skills. He expressed his appreciation for their enthusiasm and endurance working in an open air under a scorching sun.

Mr. Semere is currently supervising the training and performance of 180 students who joined his unit not long ago. So far his unit has overseen the development of 600 young Eritreans who engage in metal works. They all learned while being extremely productive. In fact, works related to water distribution operated by the youth from Metal Workshop 1 have been deployed from Adi Halo to Adi Ke, Gherghera, Laguyen, Attarib and others. In Asmara, their water tanks can be seen at the hills in Arbaete Asmara and Mai Chehot. The youth from Metal Workshop 1 have also worked at infrastructures for water distribution systems in the Northern and Southern Red Sea regions, including Gahtelay, Massawa, Assab, Wia and Laite.

The workshop at Metal Workshop 5 is slightly different from the other four as it includes wood, plastic and designing works. It is the most recent establishment in the Logo project and has 556 students and college graduates, equipped with the latest technologies.

Logo and Misilam projects have become youth training centers and hubs for social transformation. As we’ve seen in previous editions of #UnderstandingEritrea, we have witnessed the youth working hard everywhere we went. At the community farms, we met agronomists who assist farmers in making the transition from traditional to small-scale commercial farming, and as part of the awareness raising campaigns, we have seen college graduates travel village to village to teach the communities public health and modern farming. We have also seen how the youth made solar farms and generate power to be supplied to villages. At Misilam dairy project we met veterinarians and animal science graduates working hard to multiply imported cattle breed by thousands so that they could be given to farmers all over the country and boost milk production.

Overall, in the journey we made to “understand Eritrea,” we have come to realize that after building dams and collecting water, one of the grand goals of the Eritrean government is empowering the youth by creating opportunities for learning and developing skills to assist the nation reach its development goals that put the peoples’ interest first. Indeed, there is no question that by arming the youth with the needed knowledge and skills Eritrea is poised to multiply its potential to generate and evenly disseminate wealth.
The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every aspect of human life, from small personal matters such as going out with friends to big political and economic matters such as elections and businesses. Graduation is no exception.

Students all over the world have not been able to celebrate what they were able to successfully complete after years of relentless hard work. There is no question that having gone through a number of late study nights, missed birthdays of loved ones and sacrifices of important dinner invitations, a graduation ceremony is the most anticipated moment in a student’s career. Whoever made it to this day, they earned their place in the finish line and deserve to be recognized for their efforts. The cancellation of the in-person attendance of this most coveted day irks not only the students but also family members, friends and other supporting networks, who made incredible sacrifices to get the graduates to where they are now and have always dreamt of cheering them on during their happy moment on graduation day.

However, as a member of this year’s graduating class, I also believe that the crisis has bestowed upon us the gift of “more time”. Before the pandemic, time was flying and so were we. The world was moving so fast that we have become so caught up with paving the way for our personal success forgetting why and for whom we have been making all the efforts. I hope that the time we spent under lockdown has allowed us to take a step back and contemplate, giving ourselves a chance to explore what it all really means for us as members of the Eritrean society and as professionals in our respective fields.

Personally, self-reflection has made me realize that behind the nice dresses, graduation caps and gowns, tasty food and shiny decorations lies the true meaning of graduation: a fresh start. A fresh start for us and for the whole community we will be serving. The word “graduate” comes from the Latin term “gradus” which means “a step towards something”, showing us that this is the time to take a step forward and harness the knowledge and skills we have acquired in college to serve our communities to the fullest.

After all, why have we been learning and working so hard? To build a better world by coming together and utilizing each and every one of our unique skills and talents. That, of course, demands a great deal of selflessness and love for one another which luckily is not a new concept to the Eritrean society. Our history shows us that selflessness and empathy have been crucial weapons used in overcoming colonialism, war and sanctions and are still proving to lead us along the same trail in the fight against the Corona virus.

We might be graduating without the usual rituals and pomp but that is not what matters because today our country needs us more than ever. At a time when uncertainty, fear and hopelessness are prevalent all over the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our hope, passion, drive, creativity and energy are most necessary to come up with a way forward for us and our fellow Eritreans. We must take this responsibility at heart and work towards building a better nation for all of us.