

PATRIOTS' VICTORY DAY

A day of pride and gratitude, but don't let us rest only on past laurels

4th May 2017 – LONDON

On 5th May this year, Ethiopia celebrates the 76th Anniversary of the end of Italian occupation - brought about by her patriots' 5 years (1935-1941) resistance to fascist Italy's second attempt to turn Ethiopia into a fully-fledged colony – with a sense of pride of place at thwarting yet another attempt by fascist Italy to subjugate Ethiopia, as well as with gratitude to those who gave their yesterday for our today. The historical significance of the day is second to none.

Self-motivated, but compared to Italy poorly armed, patriots from the four corners of Ethiopia, driven by none other than that renowned Ethiopian die-hard resistance to foreign domination of any sort, and taking inspiration from the heroic deeds of their forefathers who had meted out a mortifying defeat on imperial Rome at the Battle of Adwa in 1896, chose their own local co-ordinators – in the absence of a central command whose head, Ethiopia's last Emperor, had left the country in order to appeal to the League of Nations – ignited a nation-wide resistance movement which, five years to the day, successfully dislodged fascist Italy from its Ethiopian power base.

The focal-point of The Day of Remembrance is Addis Ababa, where the President lays a wreath at the Cenotaph in Arat Kilo, before bemedaled and sabre-rattling veterans, whose number is dwindling as the years pass, march past invited guests and an adoring crowd of Addis Ababans. In recent years, however, there have been calls for the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the House of Peoples' Representatives (HPR) as well as, in future, leaders of opposition parties with seats in the HPR, to follow suit, in line with Remembrance Day celebrations in developed democracies.

This year's Patriots Victory Day comes as Ethiopia strives to achieve its democratisation and sustainable development, a journey that is not without challenges. On the one hand, the continuation of last year's El Nino-induced drought in parts of the Somali Regional State is overstressing the Government's ability to address the devastating impact of drought by dipping deeper into the public purse as in 2015/2016. On the other hand, the nation's union of nations, nationalities and peoples has come under attack from reactionary and extremist forces from within and without, at a time when the nation is in the midst of industrialisation. And who among Ethiopians, save a small number of quislings in the service of Ethiopia's traditional enemies, would derive satisfaction from Ethiopia's failure to conquer poverty and remain a shining example of an oasis of stability and tranquillity in a troubled Horn of Africa. So, it's high time that Ethiopians realise that, while it is right and proper for us to observe, with pomp and ceremony, victories our fathers had secured for us, we also need to accept the dire truth that resting only on past laurels is a luxury that we can ill afford.

Seldom have Ethiopia's obtaining conditions been so stunningly atmospheric as today for this generation of Ethiopians to write their own laurels; by exerting our concerted efforts we must defeat poverty in Guba as we defeated the Italians at Adwa. Ethiopians are surely writing their own laurels by buying GERD bonds and by proactively joining the war on poverty as they make use of the Government's self-help initiatives for unemployed youth.

Have a wonderful Patriots Victory Day!

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