

Meeting in Seattle Extremely Informative.

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The Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia Addisu Legesse , the President of Amara Kilil, Ato Ayalew Gobeze, and other Amara Kilil administrative officials held an important meeting yesterday Aug. 24, 2006 in Seattle, WA.

The meeting started by showing a video of Amara Kilil residents giving us a firsthand account of the economic development taking place in the region, and the resulting standard of living improvement on each of their own families. Then, President Ayalew Gobeze made a PowerPoint presentation demonstrating the current and planned activities by both the government and the private sector designed to further improve the economic, education, and health aspects of the people in his administration. He presented irrefutable facts and figures that were backed by pictures and testimonial evidence.

Among most important achievements, the most notable ones included:

A construction of three (3) new universities in Debremarkos, Dessie, and Debretsion that are planned to start operation in 2007, bringing the total sum of Universities in Amara Kilil to five (5) out of 25 Universities in Ethiopia. That makes 20% of the country's universities in Amara Kilil.

Built 17 government and 41 private technical and vocational colleges in Amara Kili alone.

3.2 million children enrolled in Elementary school. That is 84% coverage. 13 years ago, the number of children attending elementary school was 342,000.

Construction of hospitals and clinics giving 88% of the population access to basic health services.

A new construction and an upgrade of 15 electric power distribution substation in the region, including one with 100 KM radius coverage in Nefas Mewcha, South Gondar. Within the next 4 years, 50% of the urban and rural population will enjoy access to electric power.

New asphalt roads constructed and under construction included Gondar to Simien Mountains, Gondar to Addis Ababa , Gondar to Metema, Wollo to Gojam, and Addis Ababa to Woldia.

Significant improvement realized in agriculture sector as the result of good rainy season and utilization of fertilizers.

A sizable time of the meeting was afforded to the Deputy Prime Minister. Mr. Legesse used it to describe, in detail, the various challenges faced by the Federal government to improve the economic conditions of the country. He noted that as one of the poorest and a newly emerging democratic country, Ethiopia faces several hurdles. Not the least of it being the destabilizing forces operating in the Horn of Africa region. He singled out the irony of the "Ethiopian" opposition political parties corroborating with Shabiya, a self declared enemy of Ethiopia.

The usual suspects - chauvinist leaders of the extreme right wing opposition and the former representatives of the now defunct Kinijit-were at hand to hurl insults. They were asked to come in and participate in a civic manner, or nominate a person to voice their concern to the government

representatives. They chose to do the latter while the rest stayed outside. The ones outside lined up in a line and blocked the entrance at the door and spat at people who tried to come in to the meeting. They yelled out "Thief, Banda, and Hodam." And wished death to the Deputy Prime Minister, the consul general, and to everyone else they knew by name. Further, as the Somali and Oromo Muslim Ethiopians tried to come in, the demonstrators labeled them terrorists. As if that was not enough, at one point, they physically assaulted one Ethiopian.

Tens of Ethiopians who came and wanted to attend turned and went back. A keen observer is left to wonder that if some reasonable Ethiopians in America end up getting intimidated by chauvinists and compromise on their democratic right, what moral authority do they have to speak of liberating Ethiopians from the comfort of the local bars? They cannot even muster the courage to assert their god given right on the street of America.

Cognizant of the Diaspora Ethiopians fear of publicly dissenting with the opposition, and recognizing the importance of giving them alternative ways to listen to the discussions in the privacy of their home, the organizers of the meeting asked the local opposition sympathizer, Andenet, Ethiopian TV producer to conduct an interview with the Deputy Prime Minister. He admitted that he was not ready and did not have questions prepared. In the end, he and all other local Ethiopian community TV producers were given permission to tape the event. It is also to be noted that an extended half hour interview with the Deputy Prime Minister was conducted by the producer of Awede Ethiopia to be broadcasted soon.

PS: I was misquoted on the Seattle PI piece. Though I gave a more than 20 minutes interview, the reporter chose to publish selectively and out of context. I said "I think the government made a mistake shooting at the demonstrators, as it is wrong to take the life of anyone. And we are here to find out the governments side of the story on why it was forced to take a drastic measure." Further, after hearing what I had to say about my profession, I was asked if others and I intend to move back to Ethiopia, I replied "I did not think the country has a stable economy to support an influx of professionals such as myself."