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## How Ethiopia's BRICS membership financially imperative?

BY YESUF ENDRIS

Experts closer to the issue said the BRICS' expansion will enhance the competence of its affiliated New Development Bank's (NDP) competence in loaning infrastructural

developments across member states including Ethiopia.

In light of this, (NDB) President Dilma Rousseff stated that the Bank has financed 98 investment projects with an outlay of 33 billion USD since inception. Also, some

18.2 billion USD finance is in the pipeline for 76 projects that are set to execute in 2023-24.

As BRICS decided to add more six members including Ethiopia, economists predicted that the new members would demand more financial

*See How Ethiopia's ... Page 3*

**HOME OF WINNERS 2023**

Seno



## Corporation to build over 100 industrial parks

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

**ADDIS ABABA-** The Industrial Parks Development Corporation (IPDC) revealed a plan to build over 100 industrial parks in the coming years and contribute to Ethiopia's industrialization and economic dynamism.

The IPDC Office Head Fitsum Ketema

*See Corporation to ... Page 3*

## Corporation embarks on journey towards continental construction firm

BY BETELEHEM BEDLU

**ADDIS ABABA -** The Ethiopian Construction Works Corporation (ECWC) said it is vigorously working to become Africa's leading player in the construction industry, mentioning its expansion to Kenya and South Sudan.

ECWC CEO Yonas Ayalew told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the industry is undertaking several activities with an ambition of becoming a leading construction firm in Africa. Besides its Djibouti branch, the corporation is finalizing the legal process of the two offices

*See Corporation embarks ... Page 3*

Photo: Agape Ghion



Yonas Ayalew

## Dire Dawa generates over 165 mln USD export revenues

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

**ADDIS ABABA -** Dire Dawa City Administration Trade and Investment Bureau said that it has secured over 165.5 million USD from exports during the last fiscal year.

The Bureau has been working to increase the volume of export

*See Dire Dawa ... Page 3*



Ashenafi Mulugeta

## AAHTPA envisages revamping Addis in hospitality, tourism

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

**ADDIS ABABA-** The newly established Addis Ababa Hotel and Tourism Professionals Association (AAHTPA) expressed its vision to excel the knowledge and skills of hospitality professionals so as to make Addis Ababa a preferred tourism destination.

During the official establishment ceremony, Association President Ashenafi Mulugeta said that AAHTPA is dedicated to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and skill development among hotel and tourism professionals.

The association will also serve as a vital platform for professionals to come together, exchange ideas, and collectively contribute to the growth and development of the industry, he stated.

As to him, AAHTPA has designed a diverse range of activities and initiatives aimed at improving service standards, promoting sustainable practices and enhancing the overall visitor's experience in the capital.

"AAHTPA is driven by its vision to establish Addis Ababa as a globally recognized destination for hospitality and tourism. By fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing, the association empowers professionals to stay updated with the latest industry trends, technological advancements, and best practices. This, in turn, enables them to provide exceptional services and create memorable experiences for visitors," Ashenafi said.

Similarly, the association organizes regular training programs, workshops, and seminars supported by industry experts and renowned professionals so as to equip members with skills and knowledge to excel in their respective roles, ensuring the delivery of world-class services and maintaining Addis Ababa's reputation as a preferred tourism destination, he added.

Addis Ababa Tourism Office Head Hirut Kassaw (PhD) said that having knowledge-based associations would serve the tourism sector in tackling the underlying challenges in the sector.

Emphasizing that due attention should be given in making the capital tourism and trade center, health and education, she expressed her hope that the association would serve as a right hand of the tourism bureau.

Tourism State Minister Seleshi Girma on his part indicated the efforts that are being exerted to make the nation best tourist destinations.

The coming into force of the association would play a vital role to address industry-wide challenges and promote Addis Ababa as a premier tourist destination, he noted.

It was indicated that the association has officially started membership registration giving the green light to anyone who has a background in hotel and tourism industry to join.

# Institute strides to advance cloud seeding technology

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

**ADDIS ABABA-** Consolidated efforts are underway to advance the penetration of cloud seeding technology to augment rainfall in arid areas and supplement agricultural productivity, the National Meteorology Institute of Ethiopia (NMIE) said.

Cloud seeding is a type of technology that aims at inducing moisture in the clouds so as to cause rainfall. Many countries across the world have been using the technology to increase the magnitude of rainfall for various reasons.

NMIE's researcher Leta Bekele told *The Ethiopian Herald* that Ethiopia has planned to advance the cloud seeding technology that was begun in 2021 and install additional weather radars in the upcoming year. "Cloud seeding technology is reliant on the penetration of weather radars and we are working tirelessly to fill the radar shortage, raise rainfall coverage and supplement the farming activity."

Currently, Ethiopia has only two weather radars and some 10 additional radars are required to conduct the cloud seeding and



fill shortage of rainfall in the low-rainfall areas. "The radars provide information about weather conditions and cloud formation every five minutes."

Cloud seeding technology also requires modern technology, well-trained and competent pilots, scientific researchers and the active participation of the academia.

The researcher further noted that the deployment of more aircrafts in arid and semi-arid areas is vital to enhance the rainfall perception and mitigate the drought

that is prevailing in some parts of the country. "Cloud seeding technology has been implemented in Borena and Somali arid areas since 2021 and some results have been recorded."

NMIE was established by the council of Ministers in 2011 to give metrology related services which were previously given by Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia, Ethiopian Scientific Equipment center and Ethiopian Radiation Protection Authority.

# Huawei ICT competition offers international exposure

BY STAFF REPORTER

**ADDIS ABABA -** The Huawei ICT Competition has provided Ethiopian students with international exposure and developed their ICT knowledge and skills while gaining useful experience, so said Huawei Ethiopia.

As to the press release sent to *The Ethiopian Herald* on Tuesday, the Ministry of Education governance and infrastructure CEO Solomon Abraha (PhD) stated that the Huawei ICT Competition gives Ethiopian students international exposure and helps university students enhance their ICT knowledge and skills via gaining useful experience.

Appreciating the Ministry of Education for giving due attention to the improvement of ICT education, he urged the university students to join the opportunity to have invaluable experience and earn worldwide visibility.

As to the release, Huawei Technologies has been running the 7th Huawei ICT Competition 2023 in collaboration with the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, which has attracted over 1500 university students.

At the event, among 18 students, nine global final competition winners received Huawei tablets, while the rest of the regional



competition winners received Huawei armbands, according to the statement.

Huawei Ethiopia PR Director Liming Ye also stated that since ICT competitions typically cover a wide range of ICT topics, participants would have the opportunity to learn about new technologies and concepts and get hands-on experience with these technologies, which would help develop their practical skills.

He also claimed that an ICT competition may provide students with essential experience in problem-solving, teamwork, confidence building, improved exposure, and project management.

Tibebu Kaleb, one of the students who travelled to China for the global competition said that the contest provided him with the

opportunity to compete with students from other countries.

In the 2022-2023 ICT Competition, 63 students were able to attend the national ICT competition, it was learnt.

A total of 18 students who aced the national exam competed in the regional competition within Africa. Out of 18 students, nine won the third prize in the 7th Huawei ICT Competition Global Final, which took place in Shenzhen, China, from May 24-28, 2023.

The Huawei ICT Competition aims at driving the development of high-quality ICT talent and further contributes to a sustainable talent ecosystem. Huawei ICT Competition for 2023-2024 is launched, Huawei Ethiopia announced.

## Dashen Bank secures 40 mln USD loan to drive agricultural exports

BY STAFF REPROTER

**ADDIS ABABA** - Dashen Bank has secured some 40 million USD loan from the British International Investment (BII) and FMO, the Dutch entrepreneurial development bank.

In a recent joint press release issued by the institutions, the loan will play a crucial role in driving agricultural exports and providing much-needed access to foreign exchange in Ethiopia. Agricultural sector employs 80% of the population while generating 90% of the country's foreign currency through exports.

It stated the agricultural sector employing 80% of the population and generating 90%

of the country's foreign currency through exports. This loan is expected to have a significant impact to offer forex-denominated loans for the expenses associated with importing machinery and support farmers in increasing productivity across various areas like harvesting, logistics, and processing, ultimately leading to a boost in export earnings.

Dashen Bank CEO Asfaw Alemu said the forex-denominated financing will enable Dashen Bank to support export-oriented agribusinesses. Serving over 5 million customers and boasting a network of more than 800 branches spread throughout the country.

BII Managing Director and Financial



Services Head Stephen Priestley emphasized the significance of the partnership with FMO and Dashen Bank. It as a vital part

of a mobilization plan that aims to unlock untapped opportunities for commercial investment in Ethiopia's financial services sector in the years ahead.

BII, the UK's development finance institution and impact investor, has investments in over 1,300 businesses in emerging economies, with total assets of 7.7 billion Euros. In Ethiopia, BII's investment portfolio was valued at 110 million USD in 2021, with key investments including Safaricom Ethiopia, Family Milk, and SGI Ethiopia Growth and Transformation Fund.

FMO is a globally recognized bilateral private sector development bank operating across 85 countries with a portfolio of 13 billion pound.

## How Ethiopia's...

resources and significant loans from the Bank.

Following the approval of its membership in BRICS, the United Arab Emirates has also pledged to inject more finance and to preserve its status as a deep-pocketed contributor of the bank, the Russian Today reported.

Commenting on the issue to local media, National Security Advisor to Ethiopia's Prime Minister Redwan Hussein said the approval of membership in BRICS unlocks opportunities to obtain loans for development projects and investments.

Sharing the above rationale, International Relations and Political Science Prof. Biruk

Hailu stated that the NDB is expected to extend substantial finance to back infrastructural projects in member states with lower interests compared with the old-aged multilateral organizations.

The inclusion of new members supports the NDB's vocation of functioning as a true platform for cooperation between countries of the Global South, and will enable the construction of a financial structure that bears the mark of multilateralism and a multipolar world. Multiple and diverse voices will be heard, according to Rouseff.

Prof. Biruk also forecasted the NDB to grow fundamentally in terms of capital and geographical coverage. "The use of local currencies for international trades is also

about getting more agreements and the effect of using one currency seems to be reduced."

The academician; however, stressed that the NDB should not be seen as a mere funding institution and new member states are required to wage stock payments. "BRICS has taken over the fastest growing global economies... Ethiopia can be also mentioned as one of fastest growing countries surviving conflicts and international causes. Therefore, the country is expected to secure fair share from the benefit."

Demis Chanyalew (PhD), an economist, also advised the Ethiopian government to take bold steps in moving forward with BRICS and NDB's codes. "The diplomatic

and political decisions [of the government to engage in BRICS] have been taken in the right way. But, the economy needs more improvement to compete with the BRICS standard."

According to Demis, the World Bank, having the same mission with the NDB, has failed to satisfy the interest of the Global South and developing countries.

The background of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank was directly linked with some few countries' interest to exploit developing countries' resources in the name of funds and loans. Contrary, BRICS was initially formed to face such biases and to create a fair global economy, the expert emphasized.

## Corporation embarks...

in Kenya and South Sudan. Plan is also set to open branches in Egypt, Rwanda, Equatorial Guinea, and other African countries.

"Though finding a construction agreement is not an easy task, the Ethiopian Embassy has managed to find a construction company in Djibouti that has agreed to work with the corporation. We are now in a bidding process to work on a -60-million- USD worth project together."

Also, the corporation is undertaking road projects that connect Ethiopia with neighboring countries. Moreover, it has signed a contract to build a - 6.8 million- USD worth building.

Efforts have been exerted to join forces with Asian and European companies that have large portfolios in Africa's construction industry. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has facilitated discussions for the corporation with ambassadors of different countries to seek ways

of cooperation.

Mentioning the coming of several African delegations to witness the corporation's reform activities, the CEO revealed plans to open the first ever construction training center in Africa. "Though finding African construction firms in the continent is a difficult task, over 90 percent % of construction in Ethiopia has been undertaken by local contractors."

The corporation is now taking over the construction projects that were handed by foreign contractors. One of such examples is the ground + 21 building that is located around the Mexico neighborhood of Addis Ababa.

Moreover, the corporation has prepared construction models for road and water projects while it purchased software and hardware that would be used for building construction, Yonas remarked.

## Corporation to...

told The Ethiopian Herald that the establishment and expansion of industrial parks have been contributing greatly in job creation and forex earning apart from its benefits in knowledge and technology transfer.

"The IPDC has been supporting projects starting from feasibility studies to operations and we are encouraging the banks to develop a system to provide loans based on feasibility studies and other criteria to avert loss. Currently, the corporation focuses on expanding and diversifying Industrial Projects Services' (IPS) consultation, research and training activities to further ensure the completion of governmental and private sector projects."

The head further noted that the establishment of IPS under IPDC gives an opportunity to facilitate industrialization. Over the last 40 years, the IPS conducted some 600 feasibility studies for the government and private sector. "Contrarily, there were failed projects due to leadership and operation problems."

Noting the corporation's plan to ensure competitive IPS, Fistum mentioned the importance of cooperation among stakeholders particularly the private consultancy firms.

The IPDC has been operating 13 industrial parks across the country, it was learned.

## Dire Dawa generates...

products and promote regional integration thereby managed to generate 165.5 million USD last Ethiopian fiscal year, stated Bureau Head Aminu Teha.

He told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that his bureau is joining hands with importers and exporters to promote market linkage with neighboring countries such as Djibouti and Somalia aimed at increasing export revenues through improving the quantity and quality of products.

"Industries, which are currently operating or those being constructed by the Administration have been opened to visitors to help expand and enhance market linkage," he said.

The bureau has taken measures against 5,589 merchants and other manipulators who committed fraud to gain personal benefit from artificial inflation in fuel product. It is also working closely with stakeholders to control illegal and contraband trade through establishing a task force incorporated from representatives at district and kebele levels, Aminu expressed.

"Hence, over one million Birr was obtained from 41 thousand liters of fuel that was proposed to be

transacted illegally. Besides, close to six thousand illegal merchants have gotten into the legal trading system," he noted.

As to him, commendable outcomes were registered towards reining the ever-skyrocketing inflation. The bureau has managed to make over 750 million Birr transactions and saved 450 million Birr expenditure through the scheme.

"To balance the demand and supply and alleviate the burden of inflation, we have opened 60 Sunday Market places in four clusters comprising 38 kebeles and 22 town markets," he noted.

Accordingly, Dire Inclusive Farmers Unions and Cooperatives have supplied Sunday markets and other selected spots all over the city with about 59 agricultural and industrial products in addition to edible oil and sugar, Aminu stated.

By the same token, enterprises that have been engaged in urban agriculture under "Yelemat Tirufat" initiative are providing dairy products to urban dwellers, whereas about a million lower income public servants are subsidized with basic commodities at a reasonable price, it was learnt.

# Opinion

## Ensuring transitional justice to bring lasting relief, stability

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

In the last six successive decades, due to political instability, Ethiopians have been suffering from appalling injustice; human right violations, extrajudicial killings, torture and forceful migration and the victims, their families and relatives have not receive justice yet and continued living disgusted.

In the modern history of Ethiopia though constitutions and other criminal and civil laws were enacted, it has been hard to bring in justice to citizens, due to the absence of strong and independent institutions.

The Imperial regime, while it created few privileged class from some segment of the society, it left the mass to be marginalized from the day to day political, social and economic lives of the country.

The injustice prevailed in that era forced the mass to resent and rebel against the system and ultimately the old monarchy system was forced to cease its power by unconstitutional means. Though there were objection movements by students, farmers in different parts of the country and the labor force including taxi drivers, the governmental power was assumed by Derg, a military group.

The Derg regime, beginning from his creeping coup before toppling the old establishment, arrested the imperial regime officials and pledged to look their case through neutral court and established the investigative commission to prepare sufficient information to prosecute them.

But sooner, the regime utterly labeled them as oppressors of tenants and exploiters of the nation's wealth it interrupted the due process of the law before the completion of the trial of their case and murdered cold bloodedly 60 of the detained former regime high officials. All the victims and their parents denied justice.

Though the mass aspired to attain better political system in which citizens' rights are protected, free from repression and injustice, the aspiration was curtailed and the opportunity to attain democracy was missed.

The Derg regime which assumed power in 1974, instead of alleviating the past misdeeds and grievance, it repeated the past mistakes even in a larger scale and continued repressing its opponents putting them in jail, mass killing and disappearing. The absence of the culture of dialogue pushed all parties to engage in combat against each other.

Sooner than later, the opposition party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), labeled the Derg as Fascist Junta and waged urban guerilla fight against the regime.

Instead of resolving the minor ideological differences through dialogue, the Derg engaged in mass killing known as "Red Terror" (an imported motto from the late Soviet Union Revolution that had taken

**T**ransitional justice helps to provide compensation to victims of the violation of human rights and put in to account the culprits

place in 1917) on the members of the opposition EPRP members.

The opposition party members also made political blunder by killing the members of Derg and officials including the Kebele (lower level administrative office) officials and supporters of the government in a movement known as "White Terror".

According to sources, because of the killing drama from both sides, up to 10 thousand innocent Ethiopians were murdered and still were not served justice especially those who were victim of the "White Terror". The parents of the victims are still appealing to the pertinent officials both locally and internationally but obtaining justice is out of site.

In the later years, the ethno national parties; Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) as well as Eritrean people's liberation front (EPLF) continued their armed struggle in the peripheral regions of the country.

Desperate by the prolonged war took place in the northern part of the country, military officers attempted military coup in 1989 to overthrow the regime led by Col. Mengistu Hailamariam but it was in vein.

Pro Derg elements preempted the coup and arrested the generals who involved in the coup and their case was dealt through the military tribunal court. But the government interfered in the case and interrupted the due process of law and all the arrested Generals were murdered. The victims' parents, similar to the imperial regime's officials, were denied justice.

The war that had taken place in the north with EPLF and TPLF lasted for 17 years left hundreds of thousands to death and casualties.

In 1991, the Derg regime was overthrown by the coordinated struggle of EPLF and TPLF led Ethiopian People's Revolutionary

Front (EPRDF).

The new government, right after assuming power, arrested the Derg officials and established special prosecutor office led by Procurator Girma Wakjira. The former officials were labeled that they committed crime against humanity and prosecuted.

Nevertheless, the EPRDF government neither arrested nor prosecuted members of the EPRP who were suspected of killing pro Derg political actors. The judgment and perception of the matter from the outset was one sided. The trial took almost two decades and some of the prisoners passed away while they were behind the bar.

The rest were sentenced to death and later the sentence was changed in to life imprisonment. Ultimately after the intervention of patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, they left the prison by amnesty.

The EPRDF which regarded the Derg as foe assumed power and made trial on the officials whom it bitterly fought and in such circumstance, obtaining justice is a nightmare because the court could not be neutral rather it would be a tool to run the interest of the government established by the winners of the war.

In 2018 the TPLF led EPRDF regime ceased power and the new reformist government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) assumed power and asked pardon the public officially for the injustices committed in the past and announced that it pursue the path of pardon and amnesty.

The new government introduced new laws and reforms and the legal and the justice systems along with many improvements are witnessed.

Recently, the Minister of Justice, Gedion Timotheos announced that the transitional justice policy and a three year justice roadmap will be implemented in the next Ethiopian year.

The mid-term performance review of the 10-year development plan was held in the presence of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The meeting has also discussed on the second phase of the mid-term plan to be implemented over the coming three years. Gedion said that one of the issues evaluated was performance of the justice sector during the reform process.

He pointed out that amendments of the existing laws and endorsing new ones have been carried out in a participatory manner during the implementation of the first phase of the plan which could be considered as successful achievements.

However, the Minister said that violations of laws and rights due to conflict and instability as well as weak horizontal coordination among regional states have been some of the bottlenecks encountered during information gatherings.

He pointed out that more than 50 discussions were held in all regions to collect input in order to have options for the transitional

justice policy.

He recalled that transitional justice policy document which is expected to contribute for the sustainable peace, reconciliation and justice in Ethiopia has been developed. Apart from that, a three-year roadmap has also been prepared with a view to fundamentally change the entire justice sector, according to Gedion.

He illustrated that the road map contains several goals, including criminal law, administrative justice and digitalization of the documents among others.

The Minister further stated that the roadmap intends to expand community focused justice services and takes the values and culture of communities in to consideration in the implementation of the justice system.

Moreover, the Minister added that a new criminal procedure and evidence law that will make the justice sector more efficient will be approved and put into operation by next year. The new law is expected to modernize the previous procedures, provides alternative procedures, and introduces efficient and new procedures, he stated.

Activities have been carried out to implement the new policies including transitional justice in the next planning period.

The war took place in the northern part of Ethiopia has also claimed lives of many; caused destruction of infrastructures and institutions and loss of properties and left millions of Ethiopians internally displaced.

The two years' long war ended when the two parties, the federal government and TPLF, agreed on ceasefire and cessation of hostilities to settle the matter through negotiation. After weeks long debate, the two parties approved and signed the Pretoria agreement which paved the way for settling the matter peacefully.

The Pretoria agreement carried out under the auspice of African Union backed by USA and European Union crafted the road map and has served to attain transitional justice to bring lasting peace and relief to the country and its peoples.

Transitional justice helps to provide compensation to victims of the violation of human rights and put in to account the culprits. It is expected to deal cases related violation of human rights committed in the last fifty years.

However, all the cases of the violation of human rights are not necessarily get trial by court. Depending on the situation, some cases might be treated through amnesty, reconciliation and pardon.

But to reach on such consensus, the truth must be unequivocally explained and the culprits must pardon the victims genuinely.

**Editor's Note: The views entertained in this article do not necessarily reflect the stance of The Ethiopian Herald**

# Editorial

## Green, affordable energy for Africa: Challenging but possible!

Energy is an all-round treasure that has its hands in almost everything humans need in their lives. It is necessary to cook food, light the house, create healthy and educated society, facilitate transportation, do better business, and what have you. It has almost become a basic need to economies and societies.

It is difficult to imagine a time when people have existed without energy. Maybe the best sources of energy that existed in ancient times were biomass. The saddest thing is it is still one of the most accessible sources of energy among many people in many developing countries especially in Africa. What makes it very excruciating is that Africa is languishing in energy poverty while having abundant sources for energy development from water, solar, wind and nuclear, among others.

Africa lags in the development of clean and affordable energy as the development needs advanced technology and huge investment which it lacks a lot. However, by coordinating efforts towards alleviating the financial and technical gaps, African countries can address the continent's energy poverty. Governments should take it as a top priority and do their best to raise the continent's energy coverage as the issue of green and cost-effective energy is not a matter of choice but that of life and death for everyone.

People cannot become healthier without a clean energy supply. Youth cannot go to school and learn without energy. It is difficult to create as many jobs for the youth without opening massive industries that need adequate energy. This is but a very small piece of example the urgency of investing in green energy in Africa.

Ethiopia has been working ardently to utilize its energy potential, especially putting in place hydropower dams and wind farms. The country is endowed with a vast source of river basins that are suitable for the construction of hydroelectric power dams. Furthermore, the government of Ethiopia is trying to harness the country's potential of generating electricity from wind.

The Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP), a firm entitled to manage the country's power generation plants is currently running about 22 power stations of which 16 are hydroelectric and 4 wind farms. From these plants, it is currently generating about 4,818 MWs of electric power from hydroelectric power plants and some 324 MWs of power from its wind farms across the country. The remaining two stations generate power from steam and diesel, according to EEP.

The government executes such energy development projects by soliciting funding from donors, foreign bank loans and through economic cooperation programs.

The investment that the government has made in the energy projects is worth the outcome of the projects. The electric power has helped raise the country's electric power coverage somehow though still many people wait to get access. Furthermore, the availability of cost-effective and environmentally friendly energy sources has helped the country attract a considerable volume of investment in the manufacturing industry, tourism, education and health, among others.

On top of all these, Ethiopia's investment in the energy sector is benefitting the country not only in raising its energy coverage but also in earning foreign currency as it is being exported to neighboring countries like Kenya, Sudan and Djibouti. This has spurred not only the economy of the country but also added momentum to the country's economic diplomacy as well as regional integration contribution.

The efforts Ethiopia has so far wielded could be a good example of what governments can do to expand clean energy for people at a relatively cheaper price. They have to devise appropriate policy measures for the continent to fill the financial gap that is hindering its investment in the clean energy sector. Clean and green energy is not a matter of choice but survival for Africa.

# Opinion

## Russian, foreign experts discuss results of the BRICS Summit

Sputnik International Multimedia Press Centre hosted an expert Moscow-Rio de Janeiro-Delhi-Shanghai roundtable discussion to discuss the results of the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg.

Mikhail Golovnin, Director of the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences and member of the BRICS National Research Committee, and Vladimir Davydov, Chairman of the Presidium of the Scientific Council of the BRICS National Research Committee and Scientific Director of the Institute of Latin America of the Russian Academy of Sciences, spoke at the discussion in Moscow. The discussion was joined online by Carlos Frederico Coelho, Senior Researcher at the BRICS Policy Centre (Brazil); Binod Singh Ajatshatru, Director of the BRICS Institute of India in New Delhi; and Zhang Xin, Associate Professor at the School of Politics and International Relations and Deputy Director of the Centre for Russian Studies at East China Normal University.

Commenting on the issue of a potential BRICS currency and the development of the digitalization processes, Mikhail Golovnin had the following to say: "All BRICS countries are planning to introduce central bank digital currencies, CBDCs. And within the framework of these CBDCs there are projects for multilateral digital currencies, aka Multi-CBDC." The expert cited projects such as mBridge which includes China and the UAE, and Project Dunbar with South Africa. "The central problem is not the currency as such, but the organization of payments and settlements to bypass the monopoly mechanisms that are controlled by the leading developed countries," Golovnin noted.

Carlos Frederico Coelho noted the obvious economic and political strength of the association: "The BRICS countries have consistently emphasized the idea that they want to balance the international order and the economic system that formed after World War II. Naturally, this is a very ambitious project, and realization will take many years. It will require enormous political will. I think we can conclude that this political will exists, and the BRICS countries want to build a more multi-polar world."

Mr. Coelho noted that the inclusion of Argentina in the BRICS group was of

great importance for Brazil: "Of course, Argentina is Brazil's main trading partner in Latin America. Argentina has had great difficulties in accessing dollar capital markets over the past 25 years. From Brazil's point of view, Argentina is a very important country. We could streamline our monetary and currency relations."

Vladimir Davydov described the last summit as a breakthrough: "Recent years, in general, have been periods of low activity on the part of BRICS in the international arena and in bilateral relations between the members of this association." The expert stressed that the civilisational representativeness of the BRICS countries has significantly increased, and the accession of new Muslim countries professing Sunni and Shiite Islam will allow, among other things, a serious increase in the resource base of the New Development Bank. Davydov urged not to fear the growing diversity of the association: "We need to create a situation – and I hope it will be created eventually – where consensus does not become an obstacle to resolving strategic problems."

Commenting on the economic aspect of cooperation within the BRICS framework, Binod Singh Ajatshatru had the following to say: "It is time to carry out transactions in our own national currencies, albeit in a small volume, but nevertheless. We must create an integrated transaction system that will function within the BRICS framework, uniting China, India, Russia, Brazil and South Africa." The expert pointed out that the BRICS members need to be prepared for the Western structures to make efforts to sabotage BRICS initiatives.

Zhang Xin stressed that BRICS was going through a crucial stage of development, becoming a significant international organization and the voice of the collective south: "The most important part of BRICS is that the potential of this association and its foundations are very different from a number of other international organizations. BRICS countries are united not by a common cultural or religious context which has its strengths and weaknesses, but it is a very flexible and heterogeneous organization, and it has its own diverse agenda."

Source: Sputnik

**Editor's Note: The views entertained in this article do not necessarily reflect the stance of The Ethiopian Herald**



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The Ethiopian Herald

# Business & Economy

## Ethiopia's BRICS membership: A gateway to increased investment, trade relations

BY HIZKEL HAILU

Ethiopia's membership in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) bloc brings forth a multitude of advantages, particularly in terms of investment inflows and access to the New Development Bank (NDB) of BRICS. As one of Africa's emerging economies, Ethiopia stands to benefit significantly from its inclusion in this influential group of emerging markets. By leveraging BRICS membership, Ethiopia can attract increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), gain access to development financing and foster sustainable economic growth and development.

Scholars of the field agree that membership in the BRICS would open doors to increased FDI inflows into Ethiopia. As an integral part of the group, Ethiopia would attract attention from investors looking for promising opportunities in Africa. BRICS' nations collectively represent a considerable share of global FDI outflows, and Ethiopia's inclusion would position it as an attractive destination for investment. Increased FDI would spur economic growth, create employment opportunities, and contribute to infrastructure development and industrialization in Ethiopia.

Approached by the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), an economist and policy advisor, Constantinos Berhetesfa (PhD) said that Ethiopia's membership in BRICS will also pave the way to become a member of the NDB. It would indeed provide the country with additional financial support and potential debt reduction benefits.

As to him, Ethiopia, as a member of the NDB, would gain access to development financing from the bank. The NDB provides loans, grants, and other financial instruments to support infrastructure projects, sustainable development initiatives, and economic growth in member countries. Ethiopia could tap into these resources to fund crucial infrastructure projects, such as roads, railways, energy, and water supply systems, which are vital for economic development.

Furthermore, membership in the NDB would allow Ethiopia to diversify its sources of funding. Relying on a single source of financing can increase the vulnerability of a country's economy. By accessing funds from the NDB, Ethiopia can diversify its debt portfolio, potentially reducing borrowing costs and improving debt sustainability.

He further mentioned that the NDB offers competitive interest rates and loan terms to its member countries. Ethiopia could benefit from these favorable conditions when accessing financing from the bank. Lower interest rates would reduce the burden of debt servicing, freeing up resources for other development priorities and investments in key sectors of the economy.

According to him, Ethiopia's membership in the BRICS could provide opportunities to secure funding for projects aligned with its own sustainable development goals, such as renewable energy, climate change mitigation, and environmental conservation. Financing such projects not only contributes



to Ethiopia's sustainable development agenda but also enhances the country's attractiveness to international investors and development partners.

Documents also revealed that becoming a member of the NDB, can leverage the bank's financial resources, favorable loan terms, and expertise to reduce its debt burden, access additional funds for development projects, and promote sustainable development. This membership would contribute to Ethiopia's efforts to achieving its economic growth objectives and addressing its developmental challenges.

In addition to this, the NDB also offers technical assistance and expertise to its member countries. He also emphasized that Ethiopia could benefit from capacity-building programs, knowledge sharing, and best practices in areas such as project management, infrastructure development, and sustainable finance. This support can strengthen Ethiopia's institutional capacity, improve project implementation, and enhance its overall development effectiveness.

According to Surafel Getahun, Lecturer of Political Science and International Relations at Dire Dawa University, Ethiopia should view the BRICS bloc as an alternative economic coalition rather than just as a means to gain political influence.

He believes that the presence of BRICS will prompt financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank to explore schemes for improving their operations that ultimately benefit Ethiopia and other member countries. To optimize its engagement with various international organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, and other BRICS members, Surafel suggested that Ethiopia should establish a platform to facilitate productive relations.

Joining BRICS offers Ethiopia the advantage of reducing its dependence on USD and, as the largest importer; it enables the nation to borrow in other currencies like RMB. This alleviates the burden of borrowing and repayment, which was previously limited to the Dollar, he perceived.

Moreover, joining BRICS would facilitate deeper trade relations between Ethiopia and the member countries. As an emerging economy, Ethiopia would gain access to larger markets, expanding its export potential. The existing trade ties between the BRICS' nations would provide a platform for Ethiopia to diversify its export base and

reduce its dependency on traditional markets. Additionally, membership in BRICS could lead to preferential trade agreements and reduce trade barriers, enabling Ethiopian business actors to access new markets and increase their competitiveness on a global scale, he noted.

Citing Ethiopia's strategic geopolitical location, rapidly growing economy, and large population as key factors behind the country's admittance into the BRICS alliance, Surafel added that BRICS' nations have made significant strides in various sectors, including technology and innovation. Accordingly, Ethiopia's membership in BRICS would foster technological cooperation and knowledge transfer, allowing Ethiopia to benefit from the expertise and experiences of the member countries.

Collaboration in areas such as renewable energy, agriculture, manufacturing, and information technology could accelerate Ethiopia's technological advancement and promote sustainable development. The exchange of best practices and expertise would contribute to capacity building and human resource development in Ethiopia, he added.

As to him, BRICS membership would enhance Ethiopia's reputation as an attractive investment destination. Being part of a prominent group of emerging economies signals stability, economic potential, and growth prospects. This increased investor confidence would attract more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Ethiopia, as investors seek opportunities in countries with strong market potential and favorable investment climates.

By the same token, BRICS countries have established investment funds, such as the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) and the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). As a member country, Ethiopia would have access to these funds, which can provide financial support for infrastructure development projects, industrialization initiatives, and other priority sectors. This access to BRICS investment funds would augment Ethiopia's own efforts to attract investment and promote economic development.

Surafel further explained that BRICS membership would facilitate networking and collaboration with investors from member countries. Ethiopia would have

the opportunity to engage with BRICS counterparts through various platforms, such as investment forums, business conferences, and trade delegations. This expanded investment network would enable Ethiopian businesses and government entities to connect with potential investors, explore partnerships, and access new sources of capital.

Scholars also agree that BRICS countries possess advanced technological capabilities in several sectors, including manufacturing, infrastructure, renewable energy, and information technology. Ethiopia's membership in BRICS would create avenues for technology transfer and knowledge exchange, enabling Ethiopia to benefit from the expertise and experiences of the member countries. This transfer of technology would enhance Ethiopia's industrialization efforts, increase productivity, and improve competitiveness, attracting more investment in high-value sectors.

As to them, the membership would facilitate collaboration and investment in priority sectors identified by the Ethiopian government. The country's development plans emphasize sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, energy, infrastructure, and digital technology. BRICS member countries' expertise and investment in these sectors can complement Ethiopia's development objectives, leading to joint ventures, technology partnerships, and increased investment flows in areas aligned with Ethiopia's growth strategy.

This membership can also aid Ethiopia's regional integration efforts. The BRICS group has been actively involved in regional economic initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Ethiopia's participation in BRICS would strengthen its position within these initiatives, fostering regional trade expansion, market access, and investment opportunities.

Overall, BRICS membership would enhance Ethiopia's investment climate, attract more FDI, facilitate technology transfer, and expand its investment network. These advantages would contribute to Ethiopia's economic development, industrialization, and job creation, ultimately driving sustainable growth and prosperity. Through leveraging these trade-related advantages, Ethiopia's membership in BRICS could significantly enhance trade relations, expand export markets, and attract investment, thereby boosting Ethiopia's economic growth and development.

Ethiopia's potential membership in BRICS holds promising economic benefits for the country. Enhanced FDI, expanded trade relations, technological cooperation, and infrastructure development are among the advantages that Ethiopia's membership in BRICS could bring. By leveraging the platform provided by BRICS, Ethiopia can accelerate its economic growth, attract investment, and foster sustainable development. It is crucial for Ethiopia to continue engaging with BRICS nations and pursue its membership aspirations to harness the full potential of this influential group.

## Art & Culture

# Ashenda Festival: A colorful cultural celebration of young girls

BY NAOL GIRMA

Holding a little variant of names (Ashenda in the majority of Tigray), (Ashendiye in Lalibela), (Shadey in Waghimra), (Solel in Raya) and (Asynewari in Aksum), Ashenda is a young girls' festival. Ashenda is marked for several weeks in Tigray and Amhara regions right up to the weeks closer to the end of the rainy season, but is officially closed after the end of the two-week fasting season. It is an annual cultural celebration associated with northern Ethiopia, especially the Tigray and Amhara regional states.

The girls and young women, who the festival is for, adorn themselves in dresses called 'tilfi, which is a cotton dress ornamented on the front with amazing embroidery from the neck to the toe. They also wear their hair in the braided styles that have been developed for ages and ornament themselves with jewelry and Ashenda grass. The length of the festival, which usually takes place between August – September, varies from three days to one month depending on where in the region it takes place: shorter in urban areas, longer in rural areas.

Tigrayan young ladies excitedly anticipate Ashenda, the vibrant celebration, especially when the festival approaches each year. Young girls, young ladies, and particularly teenage girls experience euphoria on this day because it is their freedom day and they are given the go-ahead to spend a week or so singing and dancing out into the streets with friends and peers. In eye-catching costumes, they chant tunes and display their dancing styles to their hearts content. The Ashenda festival, a vibrant and time-honored cultural event, holds deep significance in Ethiopia's Tigray region. Celebrated primarily in late August to align with the Ethiopian month of Nehase, the festival brings together young girls and women in an exuberant display of communal songs and dances, fostering a strong sense of community and identity.

Last week, in the heart of Addis Ababa Tigray girls warmly celebrated the Ashenda festival at Millennium Hall in a concert organized by Fidel Lounge. Following the peace deal in Pretoria, the Ashenda festival is colorfully celebrated here in Addis Ababa and Tigray Region as a breath of fresh air and hope of peace is restored in the country after two years of conflict.

'We did not celebrate Ashenda in Addis Ababa because of the war in the Tigray region, said Mahlet Addis, one of the girls that attended the ceremony at Millennium Hall. At the festival, Tigray girls showed up for the celebration in traditional embroidered dresses and gold jewelry, their hair twisted into elaborate braids and curls



beaded headbands.

According to Mahlet, this year's Ashenda festival is unique because we have put behind our backs the gruesome unfolding during the past couple of years in our country and that is why we are very happy to exercise and showcase our culture after a long hiatus.

Rooted in history, Ashenda traces its origins back to the 4th century, during the rise of Christianity in the ancient city of Aksum. According to some scholars the festival evolved from the story of the Virgin Mary's ascension into heaven, accompanied by a procession of singing and dancing girls. This original story led to the tradition of girls performing group songs and dances during Ashenda celebrations. The festival's name itself, "Ashenda," is derived from the Tigrinya word for a tall green grass used to create decorative skirts worn around the waist.

While Ashenda has deep religious roots, it has grown into a broader cultural tradition over time, transcending religious boundaries. Elements such as women's attire and jewelry still carry religious symbolism, but the festival now serves as a platform for women and girls to exercise their freedom of expression. Lasting for three days, as determined locally, Ashenda sees girls and women moving door-to-door, celebrating with music and dance. Homeowners typically offer monetary gifts or other tokens, underscoring the festival's importance in community interactions.

Following a three-year hiatus due to the war, Ashenda's celebration has resumed this year. Yet, for many Tigrayan women and girls, there is a sober undertone to this year's festivities. Amidst the grief and trauma inflicted by the conflict, the celebration feels a bit muted.

The Ashenda festival, deeply rooted in history and tradition, holds a unique place in Ethiopia's Tigray region. Its evolution

from religious origins to a broader cultural celebration signifies the resilience and adaptability of this cherished event. However, the conflict in the region has cast a pall over the festivities, underscoring the complex interplay between culture and conflict in shaping the lives of the Tigrayan people. As Ashenda endures, it stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of the community, even in the face of adversity.

The name "Ashenda" came from the name of the tall green grass, estimated at around 80–90 cm minimum height that the girls make into a skirt and wear around their waist as a decoration.

Ashenda girl doesn't wear common clothes on this much-awaited event; since it is her special day, she would wear a special and colorful cultural dress with unique hairstyles and jewels on her neck, as well as ornaments on her hands, ears, and feet.

From the fact that all girls beautify themselves very carefully, the point is that all the women celebrants are beautiful during Ashenda. After a yearlong busy task, this time of the holiday is all about the girls and having fun. Parents know it is girls' time and they let them free of any household work.

After the girls get together and beautify themselves with new dresses, fancy hairdos, and jewelry, they take to the streets with a hand drum for three crazy days (in the urban) in groups, chanting different songs specific for that time. They hunt for men, circle around them, and request that to reward them as much as they can demonstrate beautiful cultural songs and dances. They form big groups around the men and dance and sing in order to solicit donations from the guys. There are such songs reserved for those who don't reward the girls a kind of culturally accepted insult. It is fine as long as you are not in a hurry and have lots of small bills to give out. There is no specific amount as to how much money one can give, one is welcome

to give any amount one can.

According to a local publication, the women and girls gather in a central place where they divide themselves into smaller groups before going house-to-house to sing, dance and entertain the people of their community.

It is a unique traditional Tigrayan festival celebrated in northern Ethiopia that is exclusively held for girls and young women. "Ashenda" is the name of a tall grass found in the country that the revelers use to embellish their celebration gowns. The girls dress in lively cultural attire with unique hairstyles and ornamental jewelry. Girls over 13 years of age and who are not married participate in the celebrations.

The celebration of Ashenda could be effectively used to create harmony and friendship among the peoples of Ethiopia and can also provide an excellent opportunity for promoting democracy in the sphere of culture.

Mahlet, explaining the celebration, noted that the fact that we have managed to mark Ashenda with our men counterparts after the bloodshed is heartening. We owe the Almighty gratitude.

Tigrayan people, who suffered a lot are morally strong. They are resilient. They could be exemplary, she added.

She further said that, pertaining to the dressing style, it is predominantly showcasing the ethnic groups in the region.

I was born and brought up here in Addis Ababa. My parents told me Ashenda was a girls' festival. I learned it is a festival girls participate in when they reach marriageable age.

Though the celebration is meant for young girls, to bequeath the culture to the coming generation, all women from all age groups are partaking in the celebration, she wrapped up.

# Indepth

## Ethio-UAE relations setting the bar high

BY SOLOMON WASSIHUN

Be it in English, French, or any of the widely spoken languages, an expression involving the word 'Black' is almost automatically associated with undesirable things and situations. To mention a few blackmail, black sheep, black market, black list, etc. However, as in every case, there are a few exceptions. In Amharic, for instance, there is an expression that means 'Black Guest'. Ethiopians use the expression to describe their guest, who deserves an extraordinary welcome and treatment.

Well, last week Ethiopia was busy hosting a 'black guest', the leader of the UAE, Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan, MBZ. The welcoming ceremony accorded to the sheikh was, to say the least, unprecedented and unparalleled over recent decades. Yellow daisy-patterned carpets, 21-gun salutes, cavalry escorts, brotherly hugs and handshakes, and awesome processions were all impressive and eye-catching events that became the talk of the town. It was a rare royal reception accorded to a foreign head of state.

Sheikh Mohamed himself expressed his appreciation of his visit to Ethiopia by writing, "I was pleased to meet Abiy Ahmed in Addis Ababa to discuss strengthening bilateral ties to serve the aspirations of our peoples through economic and sustainable initiatives. The UAE is committed to building bridges of cooperation that foster prosperity and stability for all."

The UAE leader deserves the warmest welcome he was accorded, as his country under his leadership proved itself to be a real friend to Ethiopia, standing by her side at the time of her needs, not once but on several occasions during the turbulent transition period in which it endured several political and economic challenges.

The crucial point that should be underlined is that the UAE stood by Ethiopia's side in those difficult times in defiance of the concerted pressure of several major world powers that were imposing economic sanctions against Ethiopia. Ignoring world powers' advice has consequences, and sooner or later would not be left unanswered. However, UAE leaders stood their ground and maintained their support for Ethiopia.

During the trying time of two years during which the conflict in northern Ethiopia had been raging on, the UAE was one of the few trusted allies that supported the united forces of patriotic Ethiopians to overcome a dangerous situation that posed an existential threat to the nation.

It is also to be recalled that the UAE leaders have played a supportive role in facilitating the peace initiative of the Ethiopian Premier in finally ending the Ethio-Eritrean war with the signing of a Joint Declaration

of Peace and Friendship in Asmara back in July 2018. Two weeks after the signing of the peace declaration, Sheikh Mohamed invited both the Ethiopian and the Eritrean leaders to his palace and honored them with the "Order of Zayed", the highest civil honor in UAE.

There was also a tripartite summit held among Ethiopia, Eritrea, and UAE, during which Sheikh Mohamed pledged his support for the peace agreement in the interest of maintaining a proper relationship between the two countries in a framework of good neighborliness and respect for international law.

State Foreign Affairs Minister, Mesganu Arega reiterates that the UAE is a time-tested friend and has built a strategic relationship with Ethiopia. "Our relationship with the UAE is vast and deep. We have agreed on several areas of bilateral cooperation. Moreover, the leaders of the two countries have strong confidence in each other and build close friendships. The diplomatic ties between the two countries have grown from regular to strategic. In previous times, we had ten bilateral agreements; now this week, we have made 17 additional new agreements. This is huge. It signifies the depth and the diversification of the areas of cooperation the two countries are engaged in" he says.

The statistical figures conform to what the Mesganu describes. Last year's report indicates the non-oil trade volume between the two countries reached USD 1.4 billion in 2022. The Ethio-UAE non-oil trade has surged by 180 percent over the last 10 years. Besides, about 130 UAE companies are active in Ethiopia, working in various sectors of investment. Out of these companies, most of them are huge companies with international reputations. UAE companies are active in the fields of real estate, trade, aviation, renewable energy, agriculture, mining, logistics and infrastructure, health, education, environment, and technology.

Being a young nation of a little over half a century, the UAE's history of diplomatic relations with Ethiopia only dates back three decades. However, the relationship between the two countries has taken a sharp upward trajectory in the last five years, after the incumbent reformist government took power in Ethiopia. A study paper on Ethio-UAE relations that was written two years ago asserts: "After [the onset of] the current Ethiopian reform and the coming of Abiy Ahmed to power as Ethiopia's reformist Prime Minister in 2018, the UAE has become Ethiopia's strategic partnership in economic aspects such as trade and investments and also politics."

It was a little over a month after taking office that the Ethiopian Premier paid a visit to the UAE. That was the first ever visit he made outside Africa as a head of government, signifying the priority his

government's foreign policy gave to the Gulf States.

The success of his first visit to UAE in May 2018 was immediate and resounding in that, only three weeks later the UAE leader, MBZ reciprocated by landing in Addis Ababa with his encouragement of senior ministers to pay a 2-day visit. The surprise did not end there. A day later, the UAE announced 3 Billion dollars in financial support in aid and investment to Ethiopia. The much-needed aid can be considered as a rescue package, and could not come at a better time. At that uncertain time of transition, the total foreign exchange left in the government's coffers was said to be equivalent to less than one month's worth of imports.

Following that diplomatic event, the relations between the two countries went on the fast track to an advanced level to where it could be considered as a benchmark for Middle-East-African relations. During the last five years, the Ethiopian premier has visited UAE at least five times and the UAE leader has paid a visit to Ethiopia two times.

The slogan written at the backdrop of the stage where Ethiopian and UAE senior officials recently signed 17 bilateral agreements reads "profound cooperation for mutual property". Indeed, the cooperation between the two countries is not a one-way donor-receiver kind of relationship. The UAE needs Ethiopia as much as Ethiopia needs the UAE.

Ethiopia needs the UAE's capital inflow to finance the huge development projects it plans to accomplish in its ten-year development plan. It also wants to share the skills and experience of UAE success in real estate development, logistics, and the hospitality industry.

On the other hand, as the UAE is an oil-rich nation, Ethiopia is rich in water and agricultural resources. What Ethiopia has is what the UAE and Middle Eastern countries want to secure badly. As the Ethiopian economy relies on imports of oil 90 percent of UAE food relies on imports. The unrivaled geographical proximity of vast agricultural resources in Ethiopia to the Arab world makes it the most desirable development partner.

The other major point that makes Ethiopia a desirable strategic partner for the UAE is its shared interest in the vital trade route of the Red Sea region which increasingly attracts the interest and competition of world powers. Both countries have a firm belief that the region should be free from the influence of religious fundamentalists and be a peaceful trade route linking the West and the East.

It appears that Ethio-UAE relations could have a significant impact on the Horn's peace and development and facilitate better relations among the nations of the Middle East with the nations in the Horn.

***The slogan written at the backdrop of the stage where Ethiopian and UAE senior officials recently signed 17 bilateral agreements reads "profound cooperation for mutual property". Indeed, the cooperation between the two countries is not a one-way donor-receiver kind of relationship. The UAE needs Ethiopia as much as Ethiopia needs the UAE***



## Law & Politics

# GERD negotiations for building trust, efficient utilization of the Nile

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

The tripartite negotiation between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is an issue that has gained significant attention globally. As the African continent's largest hydroelectric power project, the GERD has the potential to bring numerous benefits to Ethiopia, including increased power capacity.

By recognizing the underlying interests of each party involved, the nations can identify opportunities to resolve disputes without resorting to fighting. By engaging in direct dialogue and exchanging information, the nations can thoroughly discuss the issues related to the GERD project and identify potential areas of contention.

The GERD negotiation process is a vital avenue for addressing potential conflicts and disputes that may arise in the course of the project. By taking a proactive approach to conflict management, the three nations can establish amicable solutions to potential disagreements.

Through open and transparent communication, developing cultural exchange, and a shared understanding of the issues, the negotiation process can strengthen relationships between the nations involved and establish practical conflict resolution structures for addressing future challenges. Through negotiations, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt can address issues such as water allocation, drought management, and environmental protection.

The GERD project is a significant undertaking with long-lasting implications for the region. By engaging in a collaborative negotiation process, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt have an opportunity to develop mechanisms for ongoing communication, consultation, and joint decision-making, thereby promoting a culture of cooperation that extends beyond the immediate concerns of the dam.

The negotiation process will also create an avenue for addressing the broader socio-economic and environmental challenges faced by the three countries. By focusing on shared interests, such as water security, energy production, and sustainable development, the negotiations can serve as a catalyst for broader regional integration and cooperation. Through joint initiatives and projects, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt can address common challenges and capitalize on opportunities for mutual growth and prosperity.

The tripartite negotiation will serve as a model for peaceful dispute resolution and diplomatic engagement in the region. The ability of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt to come together and engage in productive negotiations showcases their commitment to resolving conflicts through dialogue rather than resorting to confrontational measures. This can set a positive precedent for other regional disputes, inspiring neighboring countries to adopt a similar approach to addressing their own challenges.



The ongoing tripartite negotiation involving Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is expected to have a profound impact on strengthening cooperation between the three nations. This negotiation process holds significant importance as it seeks to foster dialogue, understanding, and collaboration in resolving potential disagreements and conflicts surrounding the dam's construction and operation.

The tripartite negotiation will serve as a platform for open and transparent discussions among the three countries. By engaging in constructive dialogue, the three countries can share their concerns, interests, and aspirations related to the GERD project. Through this process, they can gain a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives and work towards finding mutually beneficial solutions.

The negotiation will foster trust and confidence-building measures among the three nations. Trust plays a vital role in any cooperative effort, and it can be built through effective communication, active listening, and respect for each other's viewpoints. As the negotiation progresses, the parties involved will have the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to cooperation, thereby strengthening the foundation of trust among them.

The negotiation process will provide an avenue for addressing potential conflicts and disputes that may arise throughout the various stages of the GERD project. Constructive dialogue and negotiation techniques will enable the parties to identify and analyze the root causes of these conflicts, leading to the development of effective conflict resolution strategies. By proactively dealing with disagreements, the three countries can prevent potential escalations that could harm their relationships and overall regional stability.

The negotiation will facilitate the establishment of clear and mutually agreed-upon guidelines for the operation and management of the GERD. As the dam's construction nears completion, it becomes crucial to define the rules and regulations governing its utilization. Through negotiations, the three nations can address issues such as water allocation, drought management, environmental protection, and the sharing of benefits derived from the dam.

The dam's construction and operation has also sparked concerns among downstream nations, particularly Sudan and Egypt, who are wary of water scarcity issues resulting from the GERD's reservoir. One of the primary objectives of the ongoing tripartite negotiations is to strengthen cooperation between the three nations.

The negotiations represent a milestone towards creating a more stable region as they provide a platform for fostering enhanced dialogue, understanding, and collaboration. The GERD negotiation is not only about solving a single issue, but it is also about creating a foundation for future cooperation.

The GERD negotiations can have a profound impact on other infrastructural projects in Africa. Providing a successful resolution to this grand-scale undertaking will position the continent as one with well-functioning development projects that benefit locals while being considerate of the environment.

The GERD negotiations are essential for strengthening cooperation between the nations involved. The negotiations promote a balance between the GERD's economic, social, and environmental aspects and provide an opportunity for developing frameworks and strategies that are mutually beneficial. Achieving a sustainable agreement is crucial for the GERD's success and can serve as the bedrock for future infrastructure projects in Africa.

The tripartite GERD negotiation is set to be a significant platform for open and transparent discussions among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. The negotiation process offers an opportunity for the three countries to engage in meaningful dialogue, share their concerns, interests, and expectations related to the project. In doing so, the nations can establish a shared understanding of each other's perspectives and work towards finding practical and mutually beneficial solutions.

The negotiation process can thus serve as a stepping stone for creating a more positive regional narrative of cooperation and collaboration in matters affecting the region. The negotiation forum can lead to more profound and informed discussions on issues relevant to the GERD's construction and operation. The GERD negotiation also presents a much-needed opportunity to build cultures of sustainable water usage within the region.

The ongoing GERD negotiations showcase an opportunity for three African nations to work together towards a common goal. The process demonstrates to other countries and regions that constructive engagement is possible, even in challenging circumstances. The GERD negotiation process serves as an avenue for creating a shared regional vision and a sense of shared destiny. Through the process, the nations can develop a common understanding of regional challenges and identify areas for cooperation in their national development agendas.

The ongoing GERD negotiation presents a unique platform for Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt to engage in constructive dialogue. Through the process, the countries can share concerns, interests, and aspirations related to the project while finding practical and mutually beneficial solutions. The negotiations can facilitate transparency, promote mutual understanding, and establish frameworks for collaborative approaches to development and water resource management.

The tripartite negotiation over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) will strengthen cooperation among the three countries, Ambassador Seleshi Bekele, head of the Ethiopian negotiation team with the rank of minister, said, according to information obtained from the Ethiopian News Agency.

Following the bilateral consultation between Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi of Egypt on July 13, 2023, the tripartite negotiation for the first filling and annual operation of the GERD commenced in Cairo, Egypt.

In his opening remark, Ambassador Seleshi stated that tripartite negotiations will strengthen cooperation among the three countries.

He also reiterated Ethiopia's right to utilize the waters of the Nile River to meet the needs of present and future generations. Ambassador Seleshi also noted the immense benefits the three countries will derive from the GERD.

He emphasized that Ethiopia will continue to stand firm by its position regarding the principle of equitable and reasonable utilization and will continue working to arrive at an amicable conclusion to the negotiation.

# Women in Focus

## “A life lived in the service to others is worth living”

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

She grew up witnessing the challenges most women go through at their young age, especially during their periods. As a teenager, she knew what it meant to experience a heavy menstrual flow without having access to sanitary pads while attending class.

Whenever she is on her periods, she has to remain at home for about a week fearing that her heavy periods may stain her clothes and her seat; and embarrassed her in front of her friends; thinking that they will make fun of her.

Since there was no easy access to sanitary pads in schools or it is not affordable to a teenage girl to have it, it was always her classmates who used to cover her stained skirt with their clothes.

Hanan Ahmed was born and raised in Addis Ababa. She had been working as a flight attendant in the Ethiopian Airlines and Emirates and then started designing Muslim women's outfits by blending Ethiopian cultural styles with that of Muslim.

Incorporating the designing training and the multi-cultural experiences in her parent's house (she was born from Muslim father and Catholic mother), Hanan began designing different types of costumes for Muslim women. When she designs the hijab, she used to add some Ethiopian features on it. This, in turn, started alluring and grabbing more customers, not only women but also men to her.

However, when the Coronavirus pandemic broke out and took control of the whole world, Hanan's business could not flourish as it was expected. It was at this time she diverted her energy and resources to produce face masks and head covers; now, she produces reusable sanitary products for women and elderly. She also manufactures sanitary pads, reusable adult diapers, bed protector underwear and fistula underclothes or period pants for the elderly community.

Hanan believes that every art, talent or passion should first serve the community that is suffering because of economic constraints or health related complications. “As a land where several people are struggling untiringly to fulfill their basic needs and economic constraints are preventing both rural and urban girls from accessing sanitary pads, using my skill, talent and passion to produce reusable pads gives me mental satisfaction,” she said.

When Hanan was fully engaged in the business, the roads she had gone through were not simple and smooth. Rather, she encountered a lot of challenges, including financial constraints and lack of workspace to produce the pads. For this reason, Hanan has gone far to the extent of selling her private vehicle so as to purchase machines that are necessary to run her business. “Besides not having money to



*Designer Hanan Ahmed with her daughter*

**“I want to create awareness among the society not merely by talking but also by contributing something to my sisters. Using my passion and creativity, I am trying to fill the gaps my Ethiopian sisters and elderly citizens faced”**

buy machines and other inputs, there were several challenges I faced. Luckily my perseverance did not let me down. When I started producing sanitary pads, I only had two employees and two sewing machines. However, currently, there are fourteen employees working with me.”

As a designer with a compassionate heart, Hanan does not always look for the best opportunity to come to her. She is a proactive woman who creates opportunities; she is also a woman who enjoys giving instead of receiving. For that reason, Hanan has combined her passion for design and compassion to help others by producing reusable sanitary pads and underwear that are mainly used for women or fistula victims.

According to her, helping others with God given talent and opportunities is a source of joy. “After all, what would be the meaning of life if we fail to support others while leading a prosperous life? What is the value of being a creative designer if I could not help and lessen the burden of my sisters or elderly citizens who are suffering from heavy menstrual flow or fistula through my talent?”

According to Hanan, every challenge we pass in life will teach us a lesson by mentioning her past experience. “When I was a student, I knew what it meant not having a sanitary pad. I also understand what it means for every Ethiopian woman/girl not to have money to buy a sanitary pad which is freely accessible in modern countries. What is unaffordable to some girls is a luxury to others. Some girls are

prone to various types of infections for not having sanitary pads. I was among them. As a little girl, I used to fear asking for extra money from my mother. So, there was a time that I used a single sanitary pad for longer hours than it is allowed. This has caused an infection on me and exposed me to miscarriage for not four times. I was even told that I have no chance of giving birth to a child. It is a miracle from God who blessed me with a beautiful and smart daughter.”

Hanan had gone through hard times as she quit her flight attendant profession and got back to Ethiopia for good. However, the challenges never crippled her from achieving her goals. As a woman who learned from her past experience, there was no time that she waited an opportunity to come to her. When she gave up her profession as a flight attendant and returned home, things were not as simple as she expected. But she kept on pursuing her dream and now ended up supporting others.

“All the challenges and the scar I had been through because of my gender identity, I was striving to be an independent and model sister to other women. We grew up in a society where speaking freely about menstruation is odd and taboo. This is still a major problem of the community. I want to create awareness among the society not merely by talking but also by contributing something to my sisters. Using my passion and creativity, I am trying to fill the gaps my Ethiopian sisters and elderly citizens faced.”

According to Hanan, access to sanitary pads is still a problem for several girls and women in Ethiopia. Recalling her recent experience in one of war affected regions, she said, a school girl who is residing with her grandmother and has no dime to buy a sanitary pad was forced to share and reuse the pads used by one of her friends. Helping these kinds of girls needs not only money; it also needs compassion and putting ourselves in their shoes. Coordinated effort of every Ethiopian will alleviate the problem. “I am an individual. I can't handle it all by myself. We should join our hands to help them. All it takes is kindheartedness!!”

Nurturing the spirit of independence through her activities is one of the goals of Hanan. According to her, every human being is born free and independent; however, because of traditional and cultural beliefs that the society imposes on them, most girls are deprived of their rights; and even have no right to talk about their rights.

Every woman is born with the same passion and creativity as man. However, owing to traditional beliefs and stereotypes attached to them, millions of girls and women are restricted from bringing out their potential and achieving success. “In this regard, it is my firm belief that the beautiful journey of every girl/woman should not be restrained by harmful and traditional opinions,” she concluded.

# Society

## Partnership to build a better future for young people, future generation

BY HIZKEL HAILU

Ethiopia and Japan have a long history of bilateral relations that dates back close to a century, when the two sisterly countries signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1930.

This treaty, as documents indicate, marked the first diplomatic relations Japan opened with an African country.

Since that time, the bilateral relations between the two countries have been growing remarkably in all areas, including trade, economics, education, health, technology, infrastructure development, people-to-people ties, cultural exchange, as well as other similar matters of mutual cooperation.

Japan has been involved in projects aimed at improving Ethiopia's transportation networks, energy infrastructure, and industrial capacity.

Additionally, cultural exchanges, such as art exhibitions, concerts, and collaborations in the academic sector to capacitate Ethiopia's human capital, which is the most effective way for the development of its economy, further promote mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's traditional values and heritages.

These collaborations and partnerships not only contribute to Ethiopia's socio-economic growth but also have strengthened a positive and enduring partnership between the two countries and their respective peoples.

As part of this cooperation in the education sector, a Japanese-funded library was recently inaugurated at Adea Model High School in Bishoftu Town, East Shewa Zone of Oromia State.

The establishment of such a well-equipped library does not only promote academic excellence by supporting students' culture of reading, but it will also have a transformative impact on the education sector.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the Japanese Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ito Takako, emphasized the significance of the new library. She stated that the well-equipped facility would provide students with a wealth of resources, enable them to broaden their perspectives and shape a brighter future. The Amb. highlighted the importance of fostering a passion for reading and knowledge acquisition among students, acknowledging Adea Model Secondary School's dedication to providing an environment conducive to personal growth.

Underscoring that education is the cornerstone of development, Amb. Takako affirmed her government's willingness to support the school. "The Government of Japan has a high regard for supporting Adea Model High School in its mission to provide quality education," she reiterated.

This grant does not only attest to Japan's commitment to fostering strong bilateral relations with Ethiopia but also empowers the young people of the latter by paving the way for a brighter future. The library stands



While Amb. Ito Takako, inaugurating the new library at Adea Model Secondary School

as a symbol of the enduring partnership between Japan and Ethiopia, reflecting their joint efforts to enhance educational opportunities and outcomes in the region.

Bishoftu Town Education Bureau representative Abu Negash also expressed the immense significance of the well-equipped library in enhancing learning opportunities. Recognizing the transformative impact it will have on educational outcomes, Negash emphasized that the availability of such resources will promote a culture of reading, enhance research capacity, and develop critical thinking skills among students.

The diverse collection of books kept in the library, research materials, and digital resources are expected to deepen students' understanding, broaden their horizons, and ultimately raise the overall quality of education in the state.

The school's principal, Tamrat Balcha, on his part, said that the library, as a hub of knowledge, supports not only academic studies but also boosts creativity and innovation skills and strengthens personal growth as well.

With its diverse range of resources, the library will empower students to become lifelong learners and prepare them for the challenges of the modern world. What is more, it serves as a catalyst for academic growth and future success, equipping students with the tools they need to excel in their academic pursuits.

The new library accommodates up to 100 students at a time and provides access to a large number of books and reference materials for 3,570 students. This valuable addition signifies a resolute dedication

to creating an environment conducive to holistic education. By encouraging independent research, critical thinking, and a passion for knowledge, the library fosters an atmosphere that promotes the overall development of students. It serves as a testament to the commitment of both Japan and Ethiopia to invest in education and empower the next generation of leaders, thinkers, and innovators.

The inauguration of the Japanese-funded library at Adea Model High School marks a significant milestone in strengthening diplomatic and educational ties between Japan and Ethiopia. This collaborative effort showcases the commitment of both nations to invest in education, nurture young minds, and shape a brighter future.

Approached by The Ethiopian Herald, Amb. Takako further discussed various projects and initiatives undertaken by the Japanese Government to support education and address challenges in the country. According to her, Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP), which focuses on building schools primarily in primary education, can demonstrate Japan's commitment to providing quality education to young students in Ethiopia.

Additionally, Japan has supported the establishment of vocational training centers for people with disabilities through its development assistance program, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Japan also provides training for teachers and those involved in the educational administration area. The collaboration between Japan and Ethiopia extends beyond education.

Mentioning that projects such as a water supply project in Bahir Dar and small-scale water projects in Oromia were facilitated by the Japanese government, she explained that these initiatives aim to provide access to clean water in drought-affected areas and create job opportunities.

While emphasizing the importance of peace and stability as a foundation for development, she stated that Japan has contributed about 3 million USD to the National Dialogue Commission to foster understanding among the people and address national issues. The Ambassador also highlighted Japan's humanitarian assistance through various international organizations.

Regarding Ethiopia's successes, such as the Green Legacy Initiative, Amb. Takako lauded the importance of environmental conservation. She mentioned Japan's own experience in recovering from the aftermath of World War II and the significance of having a green environment. She also revealed the role of education in creating awareness about the importance of environmental sustainability.

Extending her best wishes for a happy and prosperous Ethiopian New Year, Ambassador Takako further expressed her belief that the success and achievements of the country could be enjoyed by its people.

All in all, the bilateral relations between Japan and Ethiopia are multifaceted, encompassing education, infrastructure development, cultural exchange, and many more. Through collaboration and shared values, both nations are working towards a better future and promoting mutual benefits.

# International news

## BRICS+: Experts explain what the strategic entry of six new nations means for bloc

BY STAFF REPORTER

BRICS – the bloc of emerging economies comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – announced the admission of six new members to the group at the conclusion of the bloc’s 15th annual summit in Johannesburg last Thursday.

More than two dozen countries had applied, both formally and informally, to join the bloc, but the group’s leaders extended membership only to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and Argentina for now.

If they accept the invitation, these six new countries will become active BRICS+ members from January 2024.

According to experts, the expansion of BRICS is a calculated move by the bloc’s leaders, and there is a strong strategic reasoning behind inviting each of the six countries to the group, which will now be known as BRICS+.

“The BRICS seemed to have moved in a way that is poised to maximize their economic heft,” former White House economist Jo Sullivan told Al Arabiya English.

“Most of these countries are either key commodity producers, like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, or in the case of Ethiopia and Egypt, they are on the Red Sea that connects to the Suez Canal, which is a huge point of transit for a large range of commodities,” he added.

Why these six countries?

One of the prominent goals of BRICS is to enhance cross-border trade among member nations to boost the group economically and reduce the bloc’s reliance on the US dollar.

According to experts, BRICS invited Saudi Arabia and the UAE in view of their enormous wealth and abundant fossil fuels. Saudi Arabia is also one of the leading holders of US treasury debt – the national debt of the United States issued in bonds.

On the other hand, Egypt and Ethiopia share an advantageous location on the Red Sea near the Suez, a major route for global trade. The two nations are also regional powers in



Africa.

Iran – one of the most “interesting” choices according to many scholars – can assist BRICS with its vast knowledge and experience in conducting international trade while sidestepping Western sanctions.

“There are practically no economies that have been sanctioned as heavily as the Iranian economy by the US,” Sullivan said.

According to Sullivan, the inclusion of Iran will be a pointer towards the bloc’s seriousness in either dodging the impact of any future US sanctions or its ability to mitigate that blow, if and when it implements de-dollarization – a move away from the US dollar.

Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi also expressed his support for BRICS’s efforts to de-dollarize at last week’s summit.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran very resolutely supports the successful endeavors of BRICS, in line with de-dollarization from the trade and economic interactions between the members and also making use of local currencies,” he said.

Russia is already dealing with sanctions due to the ongoing Ukraine war, while India and China have had their own flirtations with US-imposed restrictions in the past. From that perspective, Iran may be the “harbinger” to overcome the threat of Western sanctions,

according to Sullivan.

The inclusion of Argentina, which is not a massive economy in South America, may also have a lot to do with the country’s openly-expressed desire to move its economy away from the US dollar by trading in local currency, a key issue among BRICS nations.

“Part of this (Argentina’s inclusion) has to do with Argentina’s keenness on de-dollarization,” Sullivan said. “The Argentinian economy may be one where they are willing to try de-dollarization and willing to experiment in terms of their currency system and achieving bilateral trade in ways that are likely to appear as appealing to BRICS.”

BRICS convened as populous regional powers, but the bloc is now looking to gather trade partners across the globe to further its economic might and achieve financial initiatives, along with holding some sway in the energy markets, according to BRICS expert, Mihaela Papa.

“The inclusion of these six nations is aimed at increasing trade opportunities and all of these states are interested in BRICS’ financial initiatives such as engaging with its financial institutions and transitioning to trade in local currencies,” Papa, a Senior Fellow at the Fletcher School, told Al Arabiya English

The road ahead

Following the expansion, BRICS now accounts for 36 percent of the global gross domestic product (GDP) and 47 percent of the world population, with 3.7 billion people residing in BRICS+.

According to experts, with 11 countries in the bloc, the group holds significant sway in bargaining with organizations such as the G7 and the global West in general.

Some scholars believe the inclusion of countries like Iran may push an anti-West agenda in the bloc, as countries like India and Brazil, who share cordial ties with the US, lean more heavily into the group that already has Russia and China and now Iran, who openly criticize the West’s dominance in the world order.

“BRICS has explicitly rejected anti-American positioning and emphasized new development ideas. However, accepting Iran is likely to enhance the group’s anti-American narratives and agendas, which have been gaining traction since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine,” Papa added.

While no statements were made by BRICS leaders on a common currency – except by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who said the group has established a “working group to study a reference currency” – the bloc’s expansion is a strong sign that BRICS may move towards conducting more trade in local currencies, according to Sullivan.

“Lula talking about it (reference currency) at the beginning and end of the summit means there was real progress in sort of keying up the development of the BRICS currency, though there has been no big announcement yet on that,” he said.

The individual might of these countries is expected to make a significant impact in bolstering the economic development of the bloc, by forging strong bilateral ties and creating a more balanced economic world order.

Source: AlArabiya.net

## Situation in Gabon, West Africa a big issue for Europe - EU’s Borrell

TOLEDO (Spain) - European Union defence ministers are to discuss the situation in Gabon, foreign policy Chief Josep Borrell said on Wednesday, adding that a coup, if confirmed, would heap more instability on the region.

A group of senior Gabonese military officers appeared on national television in the early hours of Wednesday and

said they had taken power, after the state election body announced President Ali Bongo had won a third term.

“If this is confirmed, it is another military coup which increases instability in the whole region,” said Borrell, speaking at a meeting of EU defence ministers in Toledo.

“The whole area, starting with Central African Republic, then Mali, then Burkina Faso, now Niger, maybe Gabon, it’s in a very difficult situation and certainly the ministers ... have to have a deep thought on what is going on there and how we can improve our policy in respect with these countries,” he said.

“This is a big issue for Europe,” he added.

The signs of a coup in Gabon come just weeks after members of the presidential guard in Niger seized power and established a junta.

Reporting by Andrew Gray, Sabine Siebold, Benoit Van Overstraeten; Writing by Sudip Kar-Gupta; Editing by Conor Humphries.

Source: Reuters