



Ethiopian News

Summer 2020

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#ItsMyDam!

Ethiopia celebrates historic first filling of the GERD



© Abinet Teshome

Ethiopia Celebrates completion of the first phase of the GERD

A key historical moment was celebrated when the first-year filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam was achieved, with no effect at all on the downstream flow of the Nile River, or the 'Abay' as it is known in Ethiopia. The filling of the Dam was made possible by a particularly heavy rainy season, which is ongoing.

The news was announced on 19th July and brought joy and a great sense of satisfaction to Ethiopians, from rich to relatively poor, most of whom had contributed to the construction of the Dam, according to their means, by investing in Bonds. Senior government officials congratulated the public on their invaluable contribution and spoke of the transformative nature of the GERD.



This satellite image shows the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on 28th July.

President Sahle Work Zewde commented that July 19, 2020 will forever remain an historic day for Ethiopia and Ethiopians. "Congratulations!" she said. "We are translating our dreams into reality." She recalled that generations of Ethiopians and former leaders had sought to utilize the Nile waters but failed because of "innumerable obstacles". "Despite failures," she said, "they were rightfully hopeful that future generations of Ethiopians will one day build a dam on the river.

The current generation has fulfilled the dreams of its forefathers. Those who were doubtful have seen the results today. As long as we utilize our resources and potential with unity and commitment, nothing would be impossible to achieve."

The President added, "Our utilization of the Nile waters creates an opportunity to further strengthen cross-border relations among neighbouring countries. The development of the dam has reached a point of no return, a triumph for all stakeholders who have been trying hard to build peace and ensure security in the region." The president concluded, "We should not forget that we have a lot to do to achieve our dreams of development. Let us think big and aim to reach the stars. No challenge stands for long if we are united and work together."

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said:

"Ethiopians have proved that they know how to execute nationally focused projects. I think the world will surely understand that the dam is a turning point for Ethiopia's move towards standing on its own two feet and beating poverty."

The Prime Minister stressed that "the dam will benefit the lower riparian countries, and Ethiopia has no intention of harming Sudan and Egypt during the construction and operation of the dam." He extended his gratitude to the millions who had raised funds and to those who had participated in negotiations. The PM also praised former Ethiopian Prime Ministers for their contribution to the success of the dam.

Ethiopia's Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy, Dr Seleshi Bekele, was also among the first government officials to congratulate Ethiopians. "The first phase of the filling of the Dam was successfully completed, letting the reservoir hold the required 4.9 billion cubic metres of water that flows from the top of the dam. This was achieved without interrupting the continuous flow of water to the lower basin, and is a major milestone that will enable us to generate two turbines next year."

On 2nd August, Ethiopians at home and abroad voiced their support to the GERD at events held under the theme, **"Our Voice for Our Dam"**. Thousands flooded the streets of Addis Ababa dressed in national dress, waving Ethiopia's flag and holding up banners. People in cars honked their horns, others played loud music, and danced in public spaces to mark the occasion. Similar events were held in other cities in Ethiopia.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen, called on the public to rally behind the dam and support the completion of its construction.

"Today is a date in which we celebrate the beginning of the final chapter in our dam's construction...We want the construction to be completed soon and begin solving our problems once and for all."

Demeke Mekonnen, Deputy Prime Minister

Here in London, diplomats and staff joined the merriment at an event on 3rd August.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Head of Mission, Amb. Ababi Demissie, noted the momentous achievement and thanked Embassy staff for their commitment and contribution towards the GERD. He also appreciated the Diaspora's support, dedication and contribution towards the construction of the Dam.

Urging them to stand together for Ethiopia's principled stand over the construction of the Dam, he added "I look forward to seeing the final conclusion of the GERD, which will benefit millions of Ethiopians and people in the wider region."



Diplomats and Staff celebrate the first filling of the GERD at the Embassy on 3 August 2020

ETHIOPIA IN UK



#ItsMyDam: Ethiopians and Friends of Ethiopia in the UK support GERD in virtual campaign

From 2nd–5th July, a global virtual campaign aimed at raising awareness and support for the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) took place.

Organised by United Ethiopians for Peace and Reconciliation (UE4PR), a UK-based civic organisation, in collaboration with Global Knowledge Exchange Network (GKEN) and Ethiopia International Professional Support of Abay (EIPSA), the campaign informed members of the international community of the Renaissance Dam, the negotiation processes, and also raised vital funds for the completion of the dam.

As part of the campaign, all Ethiopians and friends of Ethiopia were urged to join hands and be Ambassadors of the GERD by spreading GERD-related news and campaign material using the hashtags **#ItsMyDam** **#እኔምለካይአለሁ** across Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Launching the campaign, Ethiopia's foreign Minister, H.E. Gedu Andargachew, in a video message to the Diaspora, called upon Ethiopians and foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin to redouble their support and reach out to foreign government institutions, civic organisations, and the media in their respective countries and advocate Ethiopia's fair and principled position on GERD and generate support for the dam.

The Foreign Minister has also hosted several webinars in collaboration with Ethiopian Embassies all over the world, providing insight into the dynamics of current GERD negotiations.

...Diaspora support

The GERD is a source of national pride for many Ethiopians – the dam is being built for Ethiopians, by Ethiopians. Most of the funds for the dam have been also been raised from Ethiopians through the purchase of bonds.

Heeding the call, Ethiopians in the UK and abroad took part in the campaign, which saw thousands posting social media content and videos of themselves in support of the GERD and encouraging others to continue with their support to see the completion of the dam.



Ethiopian diaspora visit the Embassy in support of the GERD

On 30th July, members of the Ethiopian Community including their children, visited the Embassy to extend their commitment to the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

Welcoming them to the Embassy, Deputy Head of Mission, Amb. Ababi Demissie, thanked them for their kind gesture and continued support.

For information on how to support the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, please contact our Diaspora Department on 07939956086 or 07575827053.

...the GERD will benefit Ethiopia and neighbouring countries



In a video message, Professor John Struthers, Professor of Economics and Director of CAREED (Centre for African Research on Enterprise and Economic Development) at the University of the West of Scotland, who also happens to be Ethiopia's Honorary Consul to Scotland, outlined

the economic benefits that Ethiopia will reap from the GERD project.

“The sheer scale of this project will produce an extra 6GW of hydropower electricity, in a country where perhaps no more than 25–30% of the population have access to electricity will be truly transformational. It has been estimated by some economists that the supply of electricity will be double what the country actually needs. Therefore, Ethiopia could become the largest exporter of electricity on the continent of Africa. Moreover, in terms of GDP growth, some estimates suggest that this could be as high as 35–40% over the next 10-15 years.”

“The GERD project will be a game changer. Not just for the country, not just for the economy, but also for the people of Ethiopia.”

Former MP and British Prime Minister Trade Envoy to Ethiopia, Jeremy Lefroy in a statement said the GERD will “bring substantial additional benefits to Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt in preventing flooding and silting, and a more reliable water supply. I respectfully encourage all parties to bring the current negotiations to a successful conclusion so that the resources of the majestic Blue Nile may be used for the welfare of all who depend on it.



“I appreciate just how important the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is for producing sustainable low carbon power for Ethiopia and all countries in the region...This is an opportunity to show the world how natural resources can be shared peacefully and cooperatively between sovereign nations.”

- Jeremy Lefroy

...Solidarity through art

London-based Anna Chojnicka, who spent four years living in Ethiopia working for Reach for Change, supporting social entrepreneurs, has also been showing her solidarity with Ethiopians through a special form of art - #BananaArt.



During the UK lockdown, Anna started doodling on a banana after self-isolating with suspected coronavirus...and her #BananaOfTheDay series was born.

Anna imprints/bruises bananas using a comb and thread-cutter and the results are a wide variety of designs which include iconic scenery, famous stars, and of course, her beloved Ethiopia. Her banana art related to the GERD have been going down a storm, even earning her a spot on Ethiopian television and on the BBC.

From a woman carrying firewood, to a child learning in the dark, to a girl fetching water, Anna's banana art has touched many Ethiopians.



In a recent social media post answering why she's supporting the GERD through her art, Anna said, "The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam...has the potential to transform the country, lifting people out of poverty by bringing power to industry and homes across Ethiopia...I am showing support for the dam because all countries on the Nile stand to benefit if the right agreement is reached peacefully, and because for generations, Ethiopia has not been able to benefit from the Nile waters."

“People in Ethiopia deserve to be able to empower themselves and build a more prosperous future using their fair share of their own natural resources. I obviously care because I lived there and love Ethiopia, but also just because it's the equitable and right thing.”

Anna Chojnicka

A playlist of all the video content from the #ItsMyDam virtual campaign can be found on our Facebook page at <https://bit.ly/FBxItsMyDam>.

The GERD, which is now more than 74.5% complete, is under construction on the Abay River in Ethiopia's Benishangul Gumuz regional state.

Deputy Head of Mission, Ababi Demissie, completes his tour of duty

Deputy Head of Mission, Ambassador Ababi Demissie, completed his tour of duty in the United Kingdom on 7th August.



Speaking at his farewell gathering at the Embassy, Ambassador Ababi thanked all staff and diplomats for their support and dedication to the people and government of Ethiopia.

In a message of thanks to the Ethiopian community in the UK and friends of Ethiopia, Mr Demissie said:

“Since I took up my post here in August 2016, the support from the diaspora and friends of Ethiopia has been exemplary and we have worked together for a common cause and achieved a lot, especially after the new government took over.”

“The sense of ownership from the diaspora has been unbelievable, particularly their contribution to the global virtual campaign which gave clear and unstinting support to completing the construction of the GERD, and in fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic. This brought the diaspora together in their drive to contribute to their home country's social and economic development process. I look forward to following your progress, keeping up the momentum, contributing to your motherland.”

Ms Roza Yerukneh, Head of Diaspora Affairs, will now act as Charge d'Affaires a.i. until the arrival of the incoming Ambassador, H.E. Teferi Melesse.

In July, the Embassy also bid farewell to Mr Zerihun Abebe, Head of Political Affairs, who will transfer to the Ethiopian Embassy in the Sudan.

Maaza Mengiste's *The Shadow King* longlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize

Maaza Mengiste's acclaimed second novel, *The Shadow King*, has made the Long List for the 2020 Booker Prize!



Set during Italy's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia, the novel explores female power and casts light on the women soldiers written out of African and European history.

With the threat of Mussolini's army looming, the recently orphaned Hirut longs to do more than care for the wounded and bury the dead. When Ethiopia loses hope, it is Hirut who offers a plan to maintain morale, and soon inspires other women to take up arms.

In January this year, the Embassy hosted the UK launch of the novel where Maaza said it took her ten years to research and write the novel, and in the process, she ended up learning Italian.

When asked why she focused on women she said that that wasn't her plan, initially. Her research changed everything when she started finding hints and old photographs of Ethiopian women who had been enlisted into the army.

The longlist of 13 books was selected by a panel of five judges, including Ethio-British writer and broadcaster, Lemn Sissay. The list was chosen from 162 novels published in the UK or Ireland between 1st October 2019 and 30th September 2020.

The Booker Prize for Fiction is open to writers of any nationality, writing in English and published in the UK or Ireland.



The shortlist of six books will be announced on 15th September. The 2020 winner will be announced in November. The winner of the 2020 Booker Prize receives £50,000 and can expect international recognition. The shortlisted authors each receive £2,500 and a specially bound edition of their book.

Yorkshire Wildlife Park opens new "Experience Ethiopia" reserve

On 4th August, British TV star, Helen Skelton, opened award-winning Yorkshire Wildlife Park's new "Experience Ethiopia" reserve.



The BBC Countryfile presenter toured the new Experience Ethiopia section of the park and got up close and personal with the spotted hyenas, in the Hyenas of Harar reserve and the Simien Mountains with a troop of Gelada Monkeys.

Hyenas, Granada and Speedy, are an exotic addition to the park, with an unmistakable call that sounds like laughter. They can be originally found in Ethiopia and sub Saharan Africa.

A family of 13 Gelada monkeys has expanded the collection of primates in the Simien Mountains Reserve at the park. They can only be found in the high mountain meadows of Ethiopia and are the

world's most terrestrial primate and the last surviving species of ancient grazing primates.



Helen Skelton feeds one of the Hyenas in the Ethiopia enclosure

Living at high altitudes, they are adept rock climbers. The leader at the park is a dominant male called Harry – he is easily spotted with his handsome mane of long hair.

Helen, who hosted Channel 5's Big Week at the Zoo from the park, said "It's brilliant to be invited along here today to meet the new additions, I feel like I've got the golden ticket as I've managed to get a sneak preview of the new arrivals."

John Minion, CEO of the 150-acre park at Branton, near Doncaster, said "It's been a very hard year for us at Yorkshire Wildlife Park, with huge revenue losses from the lockdown. We are very grateful for everyone's support especially all those who have come back to visit the park since reopening."

"It's great to have some positive news and to welcome new animals to the park – we have lots more exciting things lined up for the future too."

For further information, please visit: www.yorkshirewildlifepark.com.

LOCAL NEWS

Ethiopia COVID-19 Situation Update: Cases surge past 21,000

The threat of the Coronavirus pandemic is on the rise in Ethiopia. In the last few weeks, the virus has taken hold across the country, with Addis Ababa the epicentre of the pandemic with three quarters of the confirmed cases.

As of 7th August 2020, Ethiopia reported 21,452 cases with 9,415 recoveries and 380 fatalities.

Ethiopia confirmed its first case of COVID-19 on 13th March and has so far conducted some 468,814 laboratory tests.

...campaign to conduct 17 million COVID-19 tests in one month launched

On 2nd August, the Ministry of Health launched a nationwide month-long COVID-19 testing campaign - Community Based Activities and Testing (ComBAT).

Ahead of the launch, PM Abiy said "As a nation, we took COVID-19 prevention measures early on and did well collectively...better prepared with 45,000-capacity quarantine facilities and local production of hand sanitisers...we are now witnessing a rapid spread so should confront complacency...increased testing is key to knowing the trend of COVID-19 nationally, so as to enable effective decision making on various fronts. ComBAT will determine the next steps to undertake in the new year," which falls on 11th September.

The PM urged "all stakeholders to participate" and encourage all "segments of our society to get tested, in line with Ministry of Health plans."

Minister of Health, Dr Lia Tadesse, said the pandemic is rapidly spreading. Government efforts to curb the pandemic are nothing without the active participation of the general public." She urged them to get tested, wash their hands, wear masks and keep distances to curtail the spread of the virus.



Help support Ethiopia through the Coronavirus crisis by donating to our appeal

Your donations will help provide essential support to the vital work that the Government of Ethiopia is doing to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the people of Ethiopia.

HOW TO DONATE

By Bank Transfer

Bank: Lloyds Bank
Account No: 43178968
Sort Code: 30-65-41

By Cheque

Cheques should be made out to “**The Ethiopian Embassy in London**” and mailed to:

Embassy of Ethiopia
17 Princes Gate
LONDON SW7 1PZ

HOW YOUR DONATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Your donation today can help people in urgent need

£50 can provide a food and water for vulnerable families

£100 can provide vital PPE for frontline healthcare professionals

£500 can contribute to the procurement of life-saving medical equipment for healthcare facilities

DONATE TODAY. SAVE LIVES.

Statement from the Office of the Prime Minister on Current Issues in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Government was deeply saddened by the tragic killing of Hachalu Hundesa, the Oromo musician and rights activist on 29th June, which sent shock waves of anger and frustration throughout Ethiopia and beyond. Protesters took to the streets in Oromia region and the capital Addis Ababa on 30th June to demand justice, but not all of the gatherings were peaceful. Within two days, 160 people had been killed, hundreds wounded, and many private and public properties destroyed. The government sought those involved in the killing of Hachalu, and three suspects were arrested.

Some social and traditional media claimed the government had "unlawfully" arrested opposition leaders, that the democratization process is rolling back and that the government continues to "marginalize" certain ethnic groups. This is false. We need to address the deeper causes of the violent outbreaks.

Aggrieved forces perpetuate political tensions

When Prime Minister Abiy came to power in 2018, Ethiopia ushered in a new era of democratization and economic, political and social transformation. Opposition leaders, banned media groups in exile and armed groups, were given amnesty and welcomed back home, and more liberal laws were introduced, including freedom of expression and media freedom. Ethiopia re-established diplomatic ties with Eritrea.

These reforms brought hope to many, but they aggrieved some forces, and the government has since been under pressure from anti-peace elements. To take one instance, Hachalu's family wished him to be buried in his birthplace of Ambo, but a group including opposition leaders forced its return to Addis Ababa. Security forces retrieved the body and arrested more than 35 people, who were in possession of rifles, handguns and security radio transmitters. Other political leaders suspected of attempting to undermine the constitutional order were arrested. No one is above the law, even the most prominent activists and politicians.

The media and ethnic tensions

When the political space opened up two years ago, dissenting voices resurfaced and political views were openly expressed on national media, but this came at a cost. Some opposition parties and political figures, among others, misused the new freedom and verbally abused members of ethnic and religious groups. Some accused the government of "destroying the federal system, bringing back the old centralist government system." They called the PM 'Naftegna', (military occupiers who settled in Southern Ethiopia from the late 19th century), and the accusations led to targeted attacks on ethnic Amhara and their property in the aftermath of Hachalu's death. Some accused Hachalu Hundesa of "supporting the government of Abiy, forsaking the cause of Oromo". In an interview he gave Hachalu said he had not forsaken the Oromo cause. The PM and his administration were also accused of forgetting the Oromo people. But all facts on the ground speak otherwise – the government will continue working with *all* ethnic groups to ensure that political and economic marginalization and exclusion based on ethnicity will never take place on our soil again.

Many agitators reside in the comfort of big cities in Europe and North America. They aim to fuel ethnic conflict in Ethiopia, particularly between the most populous ethnic groups, the Oromo and Amhara.

The government restored peace at the beginning of July, and is holding to account all those involved in the violence, in accordance with the Constitution and the laws of the land, and remains committed to democracy and respect for human rights.

Election

The election that was to take place in mid-August, was postponed because of COVID-19 and will be held once the pandemic is quelled. Political parties are encouraged to define and develop their policies and engage in constructive dialogue. The media should carry out their work in accordance with the laws of the land and media ethics. The government will continue undertaking activities and projects that will guarantee the Ethiopian people a prosperous and dignified life.

Our commitment to maintaining peace and order, strengthening relations with neighbouring countries and ensuring the prosperity of all Ethiopians, is as vigorous as it was two years ago.

The full statement is available on our website at <https://bit.ly/PMOethiopia-Jul20>.

Ethiopia vaccinates nearly 15 million children against measles despite COVID-19 challenges

Nearly 15 million children have been vaccinated against measles in an effort by the health authorities to maintain essential health services, even as they battle to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 10-day nationwide campaign was conducted under the leadership of the Ministry of Health with support from WHO, UNICEF, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



The vaccination campaign was initially scheduled for April but was suspended and resumed in July.

The campaign's target was 15 million children aged 9–59 months and it attained 96% coverage (14.4 million), showing that even with an ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, countries can continue to carry out life-saving mass vaccinations.

UK Minister for Africa visits Ethiopia

UK's Parliamentary Undersecretary of State (Minister for Africa), James Duddridge MP visited Ethiopia from 27th–29th July.

During his stay, he met senior Ethiopian Government officials and discussed bilateral as well as other issues of common interest.

Mr Duddridge held fruitful discussions with President Sahle-Work Zewdie, Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, Foreign Affairs Minister Gedu Andargachew, Minister of Water,

Irrigation and Energy, Dr (Eng.) Sileshi Bekele and High-level officials of the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Health.

Mr Duddridge and Ethiopia's Minister of Finance, Ahmed Shide signed two grant agreements amounting to £105 million.

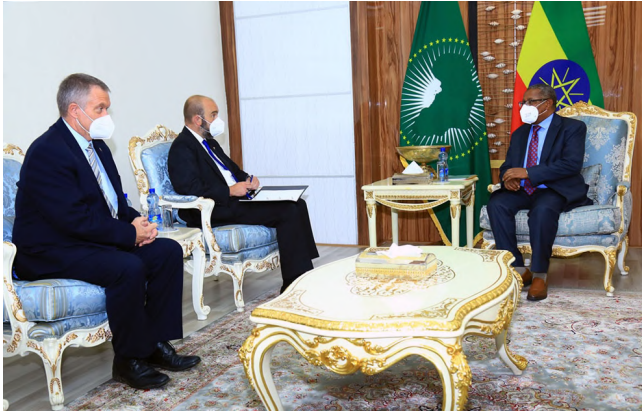


A first grant agreement, amounting to £60 million, will be used for the implementation of land investment for the transformation phase 2 programme. The programme aims to bring transformative, systematic and sustainable change in land certification and marketing systems in Amhara, Oromia, Tigray and SNNP regional states.

The second grant, amounting £45 million, will be channelled into the economic transformation programme, designed in line with Ethiopia's outward oriented, manufacturing-led, sustainable and inclusive growth programme. The programme aims to support the Ethiopian government's vision of export-led manufacturing growth through foreign and domestic investments. The programme will be implemented in Industrial Parks (IPs) built in Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and SNNP regional states.

In his meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E Gedu Andargachew expressed gratitude for the continued development assistance offered by the UK Government which is pertinent to the success of its development efforts.

Mr Gedu also informed the Minister that the new leadership in Ethiopia is willing to further strengthen the cooperation with the UK in areas of common interest.



Mr Duddridge with H.E. Gedu Andargachew

The two also exchanged views following Minister Gedu's briefing regarding the status of on-going dialogue between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt on GERD and the role of AU in the negotiation process. The discussion included the measures Ethiopia is taking to curb the spread and mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr Duddridge also held talks with Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy, Dr Seleshi Bekele, who provided a briefing on the development activities that Ethiopia has been undertaking in the areas of safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, irrigation, watershed development and energy. He briefed the UK Minister on the current status of the GERD and its benefit to Ethiopia and downstream riparian countries. According to a tweet by the Ethiopian minister, "the Government of the UK anticipates a win-win solution so that all three countries, i.e. Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia, reach an agreement over the GERD negotiation."

On the final day of his visit, Mr Duddridge met and held discussions with President Sahle-Work Zewde, Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, and Oromia Regional State President Shimelis Abdisa.

At a press conference, Mr Duddridge said the UK welcomed the continued tripartite negotiations between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt on GERD. "We welcome President Cyril Ramaphosa's mediation. We welcome the continued technical discussions on the dam." He urged the countries to continue with their discussions, as it is important for the development of the region. "The dam is not just power for Ethiopia, but it will be sold to Sudan, it will be sold across the region," he said. Mr Duddridge stressed the importance of the African Union in resolving the dispute.

Ethiopia unveils first locally-assembled electric car

On 27th July Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed received the first electric car fully assembled in Ethiopia by Hyundai Marathon Motors.



Ethiopia's distance running legend, Haile Gebrselassie, presented the car to the Prime Minister. Marathon Motors is a joint venture between South Korea's Hyundai Motor Company and Haile Gebrselassie.



Prime Minister Abiy is accompanied by Haile Gebrselassie on a test drive

The PM hailed the development tweeting, "As we transform Ethiopia's greening and climate resilient aspirations into concrete actions through the #GreenLegacy initiative, this morning I received the first electric car fully assembled in Ethiopia. No - emission cars can help reduce pollution."

According to local reports, the electric car is fully battery operated with no gas emissions and is unique to Ethiopia as it can be charged anywhere without a need for charging stations.

Once fully charged, the electric car travel 300 kilometres. The plant, which opened in March, has the capacity to produce 10,000 cars a year.

Ethiopia plants 4.1 billion trees as part of 2020 Green Legacy Initiative

Under the initiative, five billion seedlings will be planted across Ethiopia during the rainy season to help curb the effects of climate change and deforestation

According to the Green Legacy Initiative steering committee, Ethiopia has so far planted more than 4.1 billion trees out of the intended 5 billion, attaining 83% of the set target for this year.

Officially launched by Prime Minister Abiy on 5th June, coinciding with World Environment Day, the tree-planting campaign is a demonstration of Ethiopia's efforts to sustain biodiversity and commitment to green, climate-resilient growth.

The Prime Minister applauded the progress and called on all stakeholders to play their part in ensuring Ethiopia meets the 2020 set target. He urged the community to nurture the initiative to national culture level.

During this year's rainy season, which runs until October, five billion tree seedlings will be planted to help curb the effects of climate change and deforestation, with an ambitious target of planting 20 billion trees over the next four years.

Despite the global pandemic, Ethiopia is committed to meeting its target. National efforts will mobilise planting at household and community level, adhering to social distancing and other COVID-19 preventive measures.



Addis Ababa residents planting seedlings on 2nd August



Ethiopia launches national policy to encourage walking and cycling



On 3rd June, World Bicycle Day, Ethiopia virtually launched a national policy – the **Non-Motorised Transport Strategy 2020-2029** - designed to promote cycling and walking.

The policy came amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw many Ethiopians abandon public transport, fearful of catching the disease on crowded buses and trains.

Inaugurated by H.E. Dagmawit Moges, Ethiopia's Minister of Transport, it brought together key development partners, such as the UN Environment Programme, UN Habitat, the Institute of Transport and Development Policy, and other experts and organizations who helped frame the strategy.

"This government is committed to adopting a more equitable approach that addresses the mobility needs of all citizens," said the transport minister.

Ethiopian cities face the challenge of moving around their citizens while contending with increasing traffic, deaths from road accidents and high levels of air pollution. Road planning and infrastructure building has largely been car-centred and many streets lack continuous walkways and bike lanes. In future, Minister Moges said, a range of government bodies will participate in "the transformation of Ethiopia's streets and public spaces". All road building funded by the national government will need to incorporate high-quality non-motorized transport facilities.

The strategy is timely as cycling and walking allow commuters to respect social distancing guidelines which are also far better for the environment.

Officials hope the new strategy will dissuade some commuters, especially in large cities such as Addis Ababa, Aksum and Hawassa, from reverting to a dependency on cars.

1.4-million-year-old axe made of bone found in Ethiopia

Archaeologists in Ethiopia have discovered a 1.4-million-year-old bone hand axe likely made by the ancient human ancestor *Homo erectus*.



The five-inch-long tool - unearthed at the Konso archaeological site in southern Ethiopia - is one of only two known bone axes crafted more than one million years ago.

The findings, published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, said the tool's maker created the axe's honed edge by carefully flaking off chunks of bone. Tools previously uncovered at the Konso site provide evidence that *Homo erectus* was skilled at sculpting instruments out of rock; the new discovery indicates that his/her skillset might have applied to bone, too.

Fashioned from a hippopotamus' thigh bone, the axe suggests "Homo erectus technology was more sophisticated and versatile than we had thought," co-lead author Gen Suwa, a paleoanthropologist at the University of Tokyo, said.

The axe was likely made by cleaving off a piece of the hippo's femur. An ancient hominin further shaped the tool with the aid of a stone or bone hammer.

A similarly ancient specimen found in Tanzania's Olduvai Gorge is the only other bone hand axe dated to more than one million years ago. Made of an elephant bone, the tool dates to between 1.3 and 1.6 million years ago. According to *Science News*, it displays less intricate craftsmanship than the axe found at Konso.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Ethio-Telecoms sees 31% revenue increase

Ethio-telecom announced a \$1.37 billion (47.7 billion birr) income last Ethiopian budget year, which ended on 7th July due to expansion of the network and more customers.



Firehiwot Tamiru, CEO of the company, said the revenue also increased by 31.4% compared to the preceding budget year. The number of Ethio-telecom customers reached 46.2 million, showing 5.8% growth compared to the previous year.

As part of wider reforms launched by Prime Minister Abiy, efforts are currently underway to liberalise the economy.

In June, the Ethiopian Communications Authority said it received twelve bids for two telecom licences following the announcement of plans to allow foreign and private investors into key state-owned companies.

Among those interested are the Global Partnership for Ethiopia (a consortium of telecom operators made up of Vodafone, Vodacom, and Safaricom), Etisalat, Axian, South African company MTN, Orange from France, Saudi Telecom Company, Telkom SA, Liquid Telecom, Snail Mobile, and the two non-telecom operators, Kandu Global Telecoms and Electromecha International Projects.

Ethiopia's telecoms industry is considered a big prize given the country's population of 110 million people and potential for data services and mobile-money growth.

\$66.4 million earned from electricity exports

Ethiopia earned \$66.4 million from the export of electricity to Sudan and Djibouti during the just-concluded Ethiopian Fiscal Year, surpassing the previous year's achievement by \$11.5 million.

\$29.3 million was gained from selling energy to Sudan and \$37.1 million was from Djibouti.

Ethiopia is currently working to create integration through electricity with additional African countries including Tanzania, South Sudan and Somaliland.

According to Ethiopian Electric Power, the transmission line that links Ethiopia's power grid to Kenya will go operational soon.

In Memoriam – John Small

The Embassy was deeply saddened to hear news of the passing of John Small, CEO of the Eastern Africa Association.



John was a close ally of Ethiopia who worked hard to promote UK investment in Ethiopia and the wider region.

The Embassy avails itself of this opportunity to transmit its heartfelt condolences to John's wife, Anne, his family, friends, and colleagues. May He Rest in Peace.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM



COVID-19: Entry Requirements for Travellers to Ethiopia

Amid the ongoing global coronavirus pandemic, new health guidelines have been put in place for all travellers entering Ethiopia.

Effective immediately:

1. All travellers arriving at Bole International Airport who **provide a certificate showing a negative COVID-19 RT-PCR antigen test**, taken within 72 hours of your arrival to Ethiopia will be subject to mandatory self-isolation at home for 14 days. Additionally, travellers will be required to provide a sample upon arrival. Travellers who do not have a negative COVID-19 RT-PCR test will be placed into mandatory quarantine for 7 days, at a designated site. After 7 days, you will be tested for coronavirus and if you test negative, you will be required to self-isolate at home for the remaining 7 days.
2. Travellers who provide RDT antibody tests will be quarantined for 7 days at a designated site. After 7 days, you will be tested for coronavirus and if you test negative, you will be required to self-isolate at home for the remaining 7 days.
3. Ethiopian returnees are required to consult with their nearest Ethiopian Embassy or Consulate before planning their trip to Ethiopia. This is to help returnees obtain the correct information about getting tested at the country of origin. Returnees who cannot provide a negative RT-PCR COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours of arrival to Ethiopia will be placed into mandatory quarantine for 7 days at a designated site.
4. For diplomats, the previous circular still applies.

Government reforms to drive Ethiopia's untapped tourism potential: JLL



World-leading real estate investment and advisory firm JLL has released a report on the hotel industry in Ethiopia – on the factors that make Ethiopia a unique tourist destination, and the impact of COVID-19 on tourism in the region.

With a population of over 110 million, Ethiopia has one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa and is undergoing rapid political reforms as a result of widespread initiatives, including international cooperation and working for peace following the historical agreement which ended the two-decade stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea, opening up a new dimension of possibilities for cooperation between the two countries. These events are expected to benefit the hotel sector.

“With domestic tourism likely to recover first following the pandemic, Ethiopia should tap into the domestic and regional market as a short-term solution to revive its tourism industry,” says David Desta of JLL.

Addis Ababa is expected to see an increase in corporate, NGO, and diplomatic demand over the next few years. Ethiopia currently has upward of 21 internationally branded hotels under development, which in theory could add around 4,300 rooms.

With poor hotel infrastructure in major tourist destinations throughout the country, opportunities

abound to develop hotels and lodges in these areas to attract domestic and international travellers.

Despite this year's decline in tourism, there is still tremendous potential for Ethiopia. It is home to nine world heritage sites and the government has highlighted tourism as a key contributor to economic growth and plans to improve the investment landscape of the tourism sector, to address potential hurdles investors may face. This includes relaxed visa policies, which enable nationals as well as residents from the African Union to obtain visas on arrival. This has not gone unnoticed and the Africa Visa Index upped the country 32 places to secure a position in the top 20 in 2019. International visitors from 2014 to 2019 have yet to pass one million. As of March 2020, international arrivals decreased by 35.5% year-on-year to 118,950 mainly due to flights cancelled by Ethiopian Airlines, which flies to over 80 destinations worldwide from Addis Ababa.

“The impact of COVID-19 in Addis Ababa has seen 88% of hotels either fully or partially closed and the market will take some time to recover. The opening up of the economy represents the most significant opportunity to fuel this recovery, as this will increase the number of multinationals that are based in the country, and in doing so increase hotel demand”, says JLL.

VISIT ETHIOPIA

STAY HOME TODAY, #TRAVELTOMORROW



Radisson to open sixth hotel in Addis Ababa

Radisson Hotel Group has added six additional hotels to its African portfolio, further demonstrating its commitment to the continent.

Radisson Hotel Group's fifth hotel in Ethiopia, scheduled to open in 2021, is located 4km from Ethiopia's newly expanded Addis Ababa Bole International Airport terminal, now the biggest airport aviation hub in Africa, expected to accommodate 22 million passengers a year.

The 114-room hotel will boast a wide variety of food and drink outlets, offering guests a truly local experience in a traditional Ethiopian specialty restaurant and bar, and appease international taste-buds in a bespoke all-day-dining restaurant which leads out to a pool bar. In addition, the hotel will have a third bespoke panoramic bar.

Elie Younes, Radisson Executive Vice President & Chief Development Officer said, "We believe in the vast potential of Africa. The addition of the six hotels...places us firmly on track to reach over 150 hotels in operation and under development across the continent within the next five years."

EMBASSY NOTICE

COVID-19 Update: Resumption of Visa Services

From Monday, 3rd August 2020, the Embassy resumed processing visa applications – a service that had been temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Until further notice, the Embassy will accept all routine visa applications by post only. Applications made in person are not accepted. You may also apply for your visa online at www.evisa.gov.et or on arrival at Bole International Airport.

For emergencies, please contact us on 0207 838 3898 or by email on ca@ethioembassy.org.uk.

For further information, visit our website at www.ethioembassy.org.uk/consular-services.

SPORTS

Kenenisa vs Eluid London Marathon showdown confirmed for 4th October

The long-awaited head-to-head between Ethiopia's long distance great, Kenenisa Bekele and Kenya's Eluid Kipchoge will take place on Sunday 4th October 2020, after months of intensive work and consultation with London's authorities.



There will be no mass participation due to COVID-19 but the elite races for men, women and wheelchair athletes will take place on an enclosed looped course in St James's Park in a secure biosphere and times will be eligible for Olympic qualification.

Defending champion, Eluid Kipchoge, who became the first man to run a sub-two-hour marathon in an unofficial race in Vienna last October, is seeking a record fifth London title.

He holds the official world record of two hours, one minute, 39 seconds - two seconds faster than Ethiopia's Kenenisa Bekele, who has three Olympic and five world championship golds over 10,000 and 5,000 metres, distances over which he still holds the world record.

There will be no spectator access to maintain the biosphere but BBC Sport will broadcast coverage during the day.

In 2021, the London Marathon will move from its usual April date to Sunday 3rd October to give the best chance for the mass race returning in 2021.

2020 Great Ethiopian Run postponed

Great Ethiopian Run has announced the postponement of the 2020 TOTAL Great Ethiopian Run International 10km race due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 20th edition of the race was scheduled to take place on 15th November 2020.

The Great Ethiopian Run, Africa's biggest road race, is an annual 10-kilometre road running event which takes place in late November in Addis Ababa.



Celebrated as one of the liveliest and most colourful races in the world, the Great Ethiopian Run is Ethiopia's biggest street party, with over 40,000 Ethiopians and tourists running, walking and dancing their way along the route, led by Ethiopia's celebrated international runners.



Further details and a new race date will be provided in September.

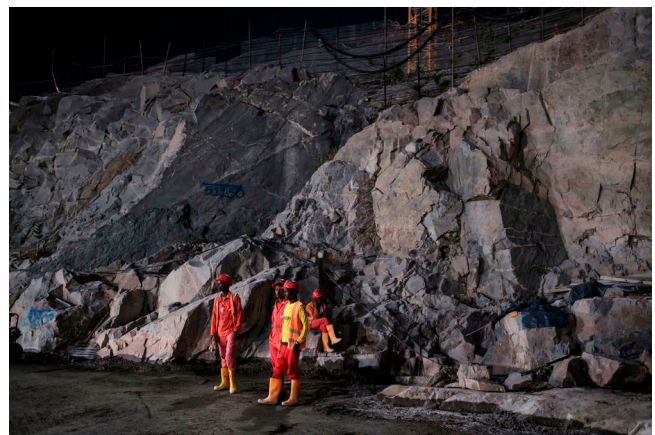
ETHIOPIA IN THE NEWS

How the Grand Renaissance Dam might spark basin-wide water cooperation

THE CONVERSATION

Ethiopia's on-going construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile River has attracted speculation that it could lead to a 'water war'.

There is no doubt that the dam has become a source of serious tension among Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan. But in his view, Ashok Swain, Professor of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, argues that a war is very unlikely.



Construction workers stand next to rock wall at the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia on December 26, 2019.

“In fact, the dam has helped to shift longstanding power relationships and could pave the way for more cooperation among all the countries that depend on the Nile.”

Although some claim the Amazon River is longer, the Nile has historically been known as the world's longest international river. It passes through 11 countries. The current distribution of its waters is limited to only two – Egypt and Sudan – under the 1959 Nile Agreement. Out of the total annual flow of the Nile, measured at Egypt's Aswan Dam as 84 billion cubic metres, Egypt takes 66% of

the water and Sudan 22%, and the remaining 12% goes to evaporation.

Almost 86% of the water reaching Egypt originates from Ethiopia. This can rise to almost 95% in rainy seasons. Despite Ethiopia's massive contribution to the Nile River flow, its use of the water from the river system is almost nothing.

Ethiopia's motives to build this massive hydropower dam are quite obvious. Only 10% of its hydropower potential is tapped while only 25% of the population has access to electricity. The Ethiopian government plans to supply electricity to more of its population. It also intends to sell surplus energy to neighbouring countries.

For its part, Ethiopia sees the dam as a matter of national pride and a symbol of its economic success. It has received some support from Sudan, which hopes to buy cheap hydropower. The dam may also help to prevent seasonal floods, regulate the river flows and extend the life span of Sudan's dams by preventing silting.

Several other White Nile riparian countries like Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda also support Ethiopia's right to build the dam.

The Ethiopian dam project has the huge potential to be not only a massive source of hydropower production for energy-starved, under-developed Ethiopia, but it will also help to facilitate economic integration in the region.

An agreement over the filling and operation of the dam among Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan will build a strong foundation for future transboundary water cooperation in the Nile basin.

Read more: <https://bit.ly/GERDcooperation>.

Lalibela: 11 churches, each sculpted out of a single block of stone 800 years ago



If faith is a mystery, there are few places in the Christian world where the mystery is deeper than in Lalibela.

800 years ago, an Ethiopian king ordered a new capital for Christians. At 8,000 feet, on the central

plateau of Ethiopia, stand 11 churches, each carved from a single, gigantic, block of stone. No bricks, no mortar, no concrete, no lumber — just rock sculpted into architecture...not much is known about who built them, or why. But the faithful of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church say there's no mystery really. The churches of Lalibela were built by angels.



The northern highlands of Ethiopia rose 31 million years ago when fissures in the earth flooded the Horn of Africa with lava a mile deep. On hillsides you can still see columns of lava frozen in time. Iron made the basalt red and gases trapped inside, made the stone light, as light and pliable as air. Christians laid their mark on Ethiopia before the year 400. They found the ancient stone welcomed the bite of a chisel. The churches were carved around the year 1200 by people called the Zagwe.

Their king, Lalibela, is said to have traveled the 1,600 miles to Jerusalem. Legend has it, when he returned and Jerusalem fell to the Islamic conquest, Lalibela ordered a new home for Christianity.

CBS News talks to Fasil Giorghis, an Ethiopian architect and historian, about the history of these "rocks of ages".

“This is considered to be a holy place, that coming here as a devout Christian is a very strong sign of their belief. Some people travel hundreds of kilometers to get here on foot. On foot. And they have been doing it for several centuries... The churches are open for worship year-round.”

Read more: <https://cbsn.ws/33D8xBi>.

Towers of Tigray: first ascents in a land of ancient climbing traditions



The history of climbing in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia is ancient, with priests and worshippers having scaled rock towers and cliffs to reach their sacred churches dating back to as early as the 4th century...the practice continues today.

Watch The North Face's latest film featuring climbers Caroline Ciavaldini and James Pearson, and their young son Arthur, as they uncover a confluence of climbing cultures, where ancient traditions meet first ascents.



I'm not a religious person but having stepped on the top of one of these towers for the first time and having felt the power that it brings, I think I can understand why they want [the church] to be up there.

~ James Pearson, Once Upon a Climb.

Reaching hundreds of metres into the sky, the imposing towers of the Tigray region are largely unclimbed. But with cracks begging for fingers to find purchase, as curious explorers, Caroline and James were captivated. Warming up on a route first climbed in 2005 and graduating onto an unclimbed tower of unpredictable rock, they confirmed their position as true expedition climbers.

Watch the film here: <https://bit.ly/TowersOfTigray>

How Ethiopian art secured its spot on the world's stage



Over the last five years contemporary Ethiopian artists have been making a name for themselves on the global art market, but it's been a long time coming.

Founded in 1958, the Ale School of Fine Art and Design in Addis Ababa is one of the oldest fine art schools in Africa, and it was at the heart of Ethiopia's modernist art movement. The vast majority of the country's modernist artists trained or taught there - including the painter and poet Gebre Kristos Desta, who is considered the grandfather of this movement, and Wosene Kosrof, who emigrated to the US and whose work is in the Smithsonian and the UN's New York headquarters.

Today, many of the school's former students are the country's art stars, including Dawit Abebe, whose dramatic paintings often feature foreboding figures with their backs to the world. And Wendimagegn Belete, who specializes in textile and paint collages, or Ephrem Solomon, whose powerful woodcut-inspired paintings have been collected by institutions across the globe, including The Studio Museum in Harlem.

Kristin Hjellegjerde, who runs her eponymous galleries in London and Berlin, represents Abebe, Belete and Solomon, and says that Ethiopian artists have a specific aesthetic. "They tell stories," she said, "they have a unique language that talks to you."

That "language" is informed not only by the country's vast art lineage, which dates back to 4th century church paintings, but also by the fact that Ethiopia was so insular for so long, with local practices remaining largely unaffected by wider art-world trends.

Now, though, artists are in a better position to share their aesthetics and narratives with the world. And as Ethiopia opens up, a fledgling collector base is developing. "We have been telling people 'You guys have a goldmine here and you need to take notice' because once the world gets a hold of this, it is going to be unaffordable here," said Rakeb Sile, co-founder of Addis Fine Arts, which has galleries in both Addis and London.



"Untitled XLIV" by Merikokeb Berhanu, 2020 Credit: Merikokeb Berhanu/Dawn Whitmore/Addis Fine Art

Work by Elias Sime, a multidisciplinary artist known for his relief sculptures - and another Ale alumnus - has already found a global audience. Last year he was one of two artists to win the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art Award, and this year he has been shortlisted for the Guggenheim Museum's Hugo Boss Prize.

In addition, a new generation of artists is also going beyond painting, once the country's mainstay medium, to experiment with photography, video, installation and performance art. Video artist Ezra Wube established the Addis Video Art Festival in 2015, and since 2010, celebrated photographer Aida Muluneh has spearheaded Addis Foto Fest.

Another reason Seyoum Konjit Seyoum, who founded Asni Gallery in 1996, believes that Ethiopia has taken a while to get a noticeable role on the global art stage, is because alongside the country's insularity the wider art world wasn't looking in either - for many years, there wasn't much attention paid to the country's artistic output.

"Ethiopia had to wait [for] its time to shine," she said. And, thanks to the number of artists, curators, gallerists and art practitioners promoting Ethiopian contemporary art in a number of ways, now is proving to be a truly inspiring moment."

Read more: <https://cnn.it/3ijIjhT>

Olympics Flashbacks: The Science of Barefoot Running and Winning Gold

INVERSE

In the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome, a previously unknown marathon runner named Abebe Bikila stunned the crowd. The 28-year-old former bodyguard representing Ethiopia sped through Rome's cobblestone streets and - just half a kilometer from the finish line - pulled ahead.

Bikila sprinted so quickly that he came in at 2 hours, 15 minutes, and 16.2 seconds. This was 25 seconds before the next finisher. He broke the world marathon record and became the first East African to win a gold medal at the Olympics. All without shoes.

Bikila was the first, and only, modern Olympian to win the marathon running barefoot. When asked about his decision to run in bare feet, he said:

"I wanted the world to know that my country, Ethiopia, has always won with determination and heroism."



Abebe Bikila running during the 1960 Olympic marathon. International Olympic Committee

The science: Bikila's barefoot victory may inspire distance runners and 5K enthusiasts alike to leave their sneakers at home.

"Bikila may have been on to something," Carey Rothschild, a physical therapist, and researcher at the University of Central Florida in Orlando told Science Daily in 2012. "The research is really not conclusive on whether one approach is better than the other. But what is clear is that it's really a



matter of developing a good running form and sticking to it, not suddenly changing it."

It turns out, without shoes, people have a fundamentally different stride. "In general, barefoot runners land on the ball of the foot before letting down the heel – this is called a forefoot or midfoot strike, and they also tend to take shorter strides, have less of an overstride, and have a higher step rate [about 180 steps/minute]," Lieberman says. "But there is a lot of variation that depends on skill, speed, surface, and other factors."

If you want to try running barefoot, it is crucial to transition slowly, carefully to build up strength, and learn to run properly, Lieberman cautions. This is also true if you want to try out minimal shoes like Vibram's five-fingers or Nike Frees.

Read more: https://bit.ly/Inverse_AbebeBikila

Africa Olympic stories: Derartu Tulu, the first black African woman to win gold



In 1992 Ethiopian Derartu Tulu became the first black African woman to win Olympic gold, pulling off a spectacular victory to triumph in the 10,000m final at the Barcelona Games.

The philosophy that took Derartu Tulu to greatness is simply expressed: "You need to be tough in everything you do."

The Ethiopian had a stunningly successful Olympic career. 10,000m gold in 1992, the same again at Sydney 2000, and a bronze at Athens 2004. In a strong field, she remains one of the most popular athletes in her country's history.

But she did not start out with a love of running. Indeed, her preference was for her feet not to even touch the ground - as what she loved as a girl was

horse riding! But having got into running, she had shown enough potential to make the Olympic squad for Barcelona 1992, aged just 20.

However, while there was expectation that the event would see the first gold medal for an African woman, it was not Tulu who was linked with it. Instead, with South Africa now readmitted to the sporting world as it put in place reforms to end Apartheid, road race star Elena Meyer was the favourite.

It was clear with some laps to go that there would indeed be a first African female gold medallist. But which it would be was very uncertain. Tulu was still in Meyer's shadow as they came to the bell. At that moment, however, she made her move and took the lead and did not let it go. It was a historic moment - not only the first African female gold medallist, but the first black one too.



Tulu and Meyer made history together

"After I won gold in Barcelona, many women runners started thinking that it is possible to win big competitions."

But she does not only work to inspire female runners. She has been the president of the Ethiopian Athletics Federation (EAF) since November 2018, where she is working to change Ethiopia's athletics results.

Read more: <https://bbc.in/2CYsPuf>

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