SAMUEL NYANDEMO

"Further expansion is likely to capture Ethiopia. However, conflict of interest should be expected

Hard part begins for bloc after DRC entry in group

President Tshisekedi says historic deal paves way for harmonisation of the country's policies with those of the EAC

by Herald Aloo
@PeopleDailyKe

North Kivu Governor Lieutenant General Constant Kongba Ndima (centre) and EquityBCDC Managing Director Celestin Muntuabu (left) look through product fliers at the EquityBCDC stand in Goma during a recent Kenya – DRC Trade Mission. FILE

After East African Community (EAC) successfully tapped DR Congo into the formidable economic bloc, the focus is fast shifting to harnessing the region's potential amid questions about who is next in this charm offensive.

DR Congo's entry means the removal or reduction of import taxes between the region and the mineral-rich country giving the bloc an alternative trade route on the Atlantic side, other than the Indian Ocean seaports shared by Kenya and Tanzania. It is all systems go, with trade at the top of the move after DRC President Felix Tshisekedi said the historic deal paves the way for the harmonisation of the country's policies with those of the EAC.

Tshisekedi said DRC banks on a surge in intra-EAC trade and reduction of tension amongst the EAC Partner States after the deal.

"It is the desire of DRC to see the creation of a new organ in the EAC that is solely focused on mining, natural resources and energy that will be based in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo," he said.

With an additional 90 million people, the EAC has gained a vast market base that can further spur investment in goods and services, experts anticipate that Ethiopia will be next to join the bloc, but they have cast doubt on Somalia and Sudan.

"Further expansion is likely to capture Ethiopia. However, conflict of interest should be expected where a state is in other trade blocs, which will build unnecessary cumbersome procedures in terms of tariffs," says Samuel Nyandemo, an Economics lecturer at the University of Nairobi.

"However, this will force EAC to reorganise certain components to accommodate the interests of its new members," he added. In total, the EAC economic bloc now boasts close to 300 million people and should Ethiopia come on board, the block will have 420 million people.

EXPANDED MARKET

- **President Kenyatta recently called on Ethiopia to end a war that has subdued the utilisation of common infrastructure projects between the two nations.**
- **Ethiopia is known for its agro-based industries such as leather and coffee while Kenya enjoys a relatively advanced man**

Common market

Last year, EAC chair president Uhuru Kenyatta proposed expansion of the bloc to include Central, Northern and South African states by amending certain components of the EAC Treaty. These components are the customs union, the common market, the monetary union, and the political federation.

Having been influential in the DRC's admission, Kenya's agenda has always hinged on bolstering regional trade and expanding businesses through unlocking opportunities within East and Central Africa. Its partnership with the private sector to intensify investment seems to be a wooing strategy that will eventually open doors for Ethiopia's entry to the bloc.

Ethiopia has not applied to join EAC, but the recent entry of Kenya's telco giant Safaricom and three multibillion projects by KenGen in under two years are chequebook exchanges showing intents of liberalising regional trade.

In 2020, Uhuru Kenyatta and his Ethiopian counterpart prime Minister Abiy Ahmed launched the Sh800 million One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) at the Moyale border in a wide range of infrastructural development aimed at cementing a robust regional value chain.

OSBP, together with the 500km Hawassa-Moyale road, consolidates easy border clearances for transits and travellers, reducing the need for a double approval process between Kenya and Ethiopia.

Balala calls for harmonised tourism protocols to boost revival of sector

GROWTH: Kenya's tourism protocols must be compatible with internationally accepted principles to increase tourism numbers even as the sector continues to shake off pandemic shocks.

Tourism Cabinet Secretary Najib Balala said inconsistent protocols and costs that are beyond the reach of locals are having a negative impact on the growth of tourism.

On the one hand, they cannot attract foreign tourists while on the other, they are beyond the reach of local tourists. "Now it's much better than before. Last year, it was total chaos, in some countries you had a green light but on reaching your destination, you are turned back," said Balala (*pictured*).

Travel management

Balala was speaking during the rebranding of the 65 year-old travel management company, Express Travel Group to Hemingways Travel.

The CS noted that despite being one of the hardest-hit industries in the wake of Covid-19, Kenya's tourism earnings grew by 65.4 per cent to Sh146.51 billion in 2021.

This was compared to Sh88.56 billion in 2020 that the industry players attributed to the implementation of various interventions by the government to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the sector, including a focus on domestic tourism.

– Jacktone Lawi

BRIEFLY

State tightens noose on crooked real estate agents

Rogue real estate agents who have in the past been accused of conning Kenyans of money will be up against a raft of regulations after the government established an oversight authority.

This aftter Estate Agents Registration Board called on all the real estate agents to register with the agency, which means that customers seeking real estate services provided by real estate agents can demand for proof of registration from their agents.

"All consumers of the Estate Agents are hereby notified that the Estate Agents Act Cap 533 of the Laws of Kenya makes it mandatory for all estate agents to be registered by the board," said Rose Nabiswa, the registrar Estate Agents Registration Board in a statement.

"In order for the board to continue protecting the interests of the public, and enhance professionalism in the real estate sector, consumers are advised to ask the real estate agents they deal with for proof of registration and verify them through the Kenya Gazette notice," said the board.

Kenyans have for the longest time lost millions of shillings to rogue agents who claim to repseny the owners of property only to fleece them. **– John Otini**

NYS Tumaini farm throws lifeline to potato variety

Nyandarua-based National Youth Services (NYS) Tumaini potato multiplication centre has started producing certified seeds for the popular Shangi potato variety. This has given the variety a lifeline as it faced extinction because farmers have been setting aside their harvest as seeds for the next season. The recycling has not only led to a dip in harvest per acre but quality has also been dwindling over time. Shangi matures fast and is popular among chips makers and also loved by households because it cooks fast. Ndabiri Nyaga, NYS Centre Commander said yesterday that production of Shangi seedlings has seen demand for the variety rise sharply. "We are in the process of putting up eight more green houses for the production of seeds to meet the increased demand," he said. **– David Macharia**

Bamburi diversifies product offering to increase revenue

Bamburi Cement has diversified its product offering and will now produce ready to use tile adhesives as it looks to tap into the specialised mortar sector. The cement manufacturer has launched the Bamburi TectorCerum SETI 300', a cementitious mortar product designed for placement of porous tiles including ceramics, terracotta, earthenware and natural stone tiles even as it looks to grow its Revenue streams. Bamburi Cement's head of innovation and technical services, Fidelis Sakwa said the introduction of the new product into the market was in response to consumer needs and alignment with the global construction trends in modern tiling which require more specialized tile adhesive solutions.

"Innovation is a key lever in the company's building for growth strategy and this milestone is a result of continuous investment in research and development coupled with paying attention to customer's needs," he said. **– Jacktone Lawi**