Bahir Dar City Profile

Physical Feature /Characteristics

Location
Metropolitan Area of Bahir Dar is found in the Bahir Dar Zuria Wereda. It is specifically located in the central part of Amhara National Regional State encircling the periphery of Lake Tana's southern tip. The metropolitan area of Bahir Dar stretches about 25 km radius from the center of Bahir Dar city proper.
Bahir Dar, the city proper, is located at the center of the metropolitan area, its absolute geographical location is at about 11o37' north latitude and 37o25' east longitude. As of the relative location, it has a road distance of 550 kms via Bure and 460 kms via Motta from Addis Ababa while the air distance from Addis is a 55 minutes air flight.

Topography
Bahir Dar Metropolitan Area is mostly characterized by flat plain topographic landscape however; there are some pockets of land with hills, rugged and undulating features. The elevation of the metropolitan area is between the range of 1650 meters above sea level and 2100 meters above sea level. When it is viewed specifically, the average elevation of Bahir Dar city is estimated in between as low as 1786 meters above sea level (near the lake shore) and as high as 1886 meters above sea level (near Bezawit hill).

Naming
Bahir Dar city got its name during Emperor Yikunoamlak. In the reign of Yikunoamlak, monks, who donated Holy Arks and established churches, on their journey from Gorgora to Lake Tana Islands wanted to establish a church with just a Holy Ark remaining at their hands. One monk asked "where shall we establish the church?" another monk replied "Let it be near the sea/lake". Then the name of city consequently was derived from this response. Bahir Dar in Amaharic language means "near the sea/lake". Moreover, legend tells us that the Holy Ark was named Mary Savior Church which was established at the beginning of 14th century.
Others, however, also believe that Bahir Dar had another name, and that name was given in Nilotic language even if it was not recorded and the meaning of the name is still unknown.
Plan History
The urbanization process of Bahir Dar was started during the Italian occupation, and it was in 1948 that the government launched the planning process of Bahir Dar, by which roads of the city were improved by constructing new ones and also by upgrading the old ones. The first fully-fledged master plan was prepared by a German expert in 1965. Then after, the then Ministry of Urban Development and Housing prepared detail plan in the late 1970s. In 1996 a master plan was also prepared by National Urban Planning Institute. The latest one is prepared by Federal Urban Planning Institute in 2006.

Municipal status
According to the 2004 classification of urban centres of the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS), Bahir Dar has acquired a status of metropolitan city Administration.

Role of the City
Currently, the city is serving as a regional capital of the Amahra National Regional State. Moreover, due to its natural beauty, its location along the northern historic route as well as the availability of standardized tourist facilities, it has become one of the major tourist centres of the country.

Lake Tana
Lake Tana is the only lake water in the metropolis. It is the source of the Blue Nile and covers more than 3,000 km² of the total drainage area of 15,320 km² above the outlet. The Lake has a maximum depth of 14 meters. Lake Tana stores 29.175x10⁹ m³ of water and is the largest highland Lake in Ethiopia and occupies a wide depression on the Ethiopian plateau, which contributes 90% of the main Nile flood and about 70% of flow diurnal normal year. More than 40 rivers feed the lake, of which Gilgel-Abay, Ribb, Gumera, Megech, Gelda and Infranz contribute more than 95% of the inflow. The only surface water that drains the lake is the Blue Nile. The present Lake was formed by the relatively recent lava flows, which dammed off the previously eroded valley during the Pliocene.

Ground Water
The studies so far made in the area indicate that there is good potential of groundwater in Bahir Dar Metropolis. A groundwater level inventory in 2002 indicates that the ground water level varies from 1 meter above sea level to 30 meters above sea level. The general groundwater flow in the area and the vicinity is towards the lake and Abbay River, which is the same direction as that of the surface water. However, there are varying local directions of groundwater flow and the variations are controlled by fractures. The overall groundwater flow direction appears to be controlled by the morphology of the area.