

Ethiopia's Path to Industrialization:

GOBEZ Launches the Country's First Private Industrial Bus Manufacturing Operation



Figure 1: First GOBEZ bus prototype at the JCBL partner site in India

Ethiopia, one of Africa's most populous nations, is pursuing an ambitious industrialization strategy. With the goal of joining the ranks of emerging economies in the coming years, the Ethiopian government is focusing on sustainable development. Driven by rapid population growth and above-average economic expansion, the demand for safe, efficient, and affordable transport solutions is increasing. Until now, Ethiopia has been almost entirely dependent on imports for buses and trucks — a situation set to change fundamentally.

GOBEZ: A Milestone for Ethiopian Mobility

Under the name *GOBEZ Bus Assembly & Manufacturing PLC*, a modern assembly facility for passenger buses is being established in Bishoftu, about 70 kilometers southeast of Addis Ababa. GOBEZ aims to create Ethiopia's first industrial-scale, privately-owned commercial vehicle production, reducing dependency on imports, lowering acquisition and maintenance costs, and generating sustainable jobs.

Who Is Behind GOBEZ?

GOBEZ was founded by a strong international consortium:



Figure 2: First road test of the GOBEZ prototype in India. From left: Julius Fischer, Markus Körner

- **Julius Fischer** is a serial entrepreneur and founder of several IT and industrial companies in Germany and Switzerland. With extensive experience in digitization, corporate leadership, and strategic management, he has built and developed numerous business models.
- **Markus Körner** is a senior executive and management consultant with 30 years of experience in leading projects and organizations in both the private and public sectors. Ethiopia is his second home.



Figure 3: First drive of the imported GOBEZ buses in Ethiopia. From left: Weyni Abraha, Tesfaye Teklehaimanot

- **Tesfaye Teklehaimanot** is founder and CEO of Kaleb Service Farmers' House PLC, a leading agro-industrial company in Ethiopia. By introducing German Claas harvesters, he has modernized agriculture and strengthened German-Ethiopian business relations for over two decades.
- **Weyni Abraha** is an entrepreneur and internationally trained business leader. After success in the Canadian real estate market, she is now spearheading vehicle assembly in Ethiopia, combining business development with social responsibility.

Production Site Bishoftu: Know-how Transfer and Job Creation

The new production and service campus includes:

- Assembly lines for buses
- Maintenance and repair workshops
- Administrative buildings
- A modern training center

Chassis are imported and customized locally to meet Ethiopian standards. In addition to production, GOBEZ provides extensive maintenance services — a key advantage in a country with limited spare parts availability.

Goals and Added Value:

- Over 300 direct jobs
- Indirect employment through local suppliers and service providers
- Training programs for staff and external professionals
- Knowledge development for sustainable industrialization

Global Partnerships Ensure Quality

The project has been supported by renowned international partners:

- **Mercedes** supplies the chassis, ensuring high standards of quality and reliability.
- **JCBL Limited** (India) provides the bus bodies and contributes in-depth expertise in vehicle construction.
- **Antony Farben GmbH / MIPA SE** (Germany) delivers the coatings, ensuring resistance to Ethiopia's environmental conditions.
- **IFE / Invest for Jobs** contributed €1 million in funding support.

Successful Launch: Prototypes Introduced, Demand High

The first prototypes have already been successfully presented in Ethiopia to potential customers including private operators, fleet owners, municipalities, and investors.

The response has been overwhelming:

- 400 expressions of interest
- 100 firm orders
- Full production capacity for 2025 already booked

Production halls in Bishoftu are completed, and the modernized facilities are ready to begin serial production.



Figure 4: A milestone on Ethiopia's path to "Mobility Made in Ethiopia": Markus Körner, Tesfaye Teklehaimanot, and Julius Fischer (left to right) in front of one of the first GOBEZ prototypes in Addis Ababa.

Vision and Outlook

GOBEZ is more than just a transport solution — it represents a vital contribution to regional economic development. Planned painting workshops for external participants will build local skills, open new career paths, and enhance long-term quality in automotive finishing.

In the long term, GOBEZ aims to expand its portfolio to include cost-effective school buses, addressing the growing needs of Ethiopian schools. Additional product developments in underserved segments are also being considered.

GOBEZ stands as a symbol of progress, independence, and sustainable development in Ethiopia. By 2030, the company aims to become a leading player in the country's commercial vehicle market and to help shape the future of mobility across Ethiopia.

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