



# Amid Nile dam tensions, Egypt recalls Aswan 50 years on

**H**alf a century since Egypt's ground-breaking Aswan dam was inaugurated with much fanfare, harnessing the Nile for hydropower and irrigation, the giant barrier is still criticized for its human and environmental toll. It is also a stark reminder amid high tensions today as Addis Ababa fills its colossal Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) upstream-of just how

volatile politics over the life-giving, but finite, Nile water resources can be. The Aswan High Dam was spearheaded in the early 1950s by charismatic pan-Arabist president Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Egypt, where the river provides some 97 per cent of water for more than 100 million people, is the final section of the Nile's 6,650-kilometre (4,130-mile), 10-nation journey to the

Mediterranean. For millennia, the North African country was at the mercy of the seasonal rise and fall of the river, dependent on the rainfall in nations far upstream. But the 111-metre-high and 3.6-kilometre-wide Aswan High Dam, dwarfing the far smaller Aswan Low Dam built under British rule in 1902, crucially gave Cairo power to regulate the flow.



A general view shows a felucca sailing at the Nile River in the Egyptian city of Aswan.

Pictures show the Ramses II complex at the ancient Egyptian temple of Abu Simbel, some 1120 kms south of the Egyptian capital Cairo.