

AFRICA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from Africa

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Visit to Nigeria

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to [Nigeria](#) on 16-17 November 2024, marked a significant milestone in the relationship between the world's largest democracy and Africa's most populous nation. Hosted by Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the visit underscored the growing cooperation between India and Nigeria in defense, trade, energy, and cultural exchange while highlighting shared aspirations for global reform and economic development. During the visit, both leaders reaffirmed the long-standing ties between the two nations and acknowledged their shared colonial legacies and commitment to democratic values, emphasising the importance of a robust partnership for mutual progress. In recognition of these ties, Nigeria conferred its highest national honour, the Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON), on PM Modi, highlighting the strength of the relationship.

A key focus of the discussions was the transformation of the India-Nigeria relationship into a strategic partnership. India is one of Nigeria's [largest](#) trading partners. There are over 200 Indian companies which have invested \$27 billion and created significant employment opportunities in Nigeria. [Defense](#) cooperation was also discussed during the visit with both countries agreeing to enhance collaboration in specialised military training, counter-terrorism, and defense equipment procurement. India's expertise in manufacturing light combat helicopters and advanced armaments was identified as a key area of interest. Naval cooperation, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea—a vital global trade route and a growing hotbed of piracy—was also highlighted. Joint maritime exercises and regular port calls by Indian naval ships have

significantly bolstered regional maritime security and anti-piracy efforts.

Energy cooperation was another crucial area of discussion. India expressed interest in securing long-term agreements for Nigerian crude oil and LNG, emphasizing its technical expertise in pipeline security and energy infrastructure. The leaders discussed opportunities for India to invest in Nigeria's energy sector, including infrastructure development and technology transfer. Finalizing the Economic Cooperation Agreement (ECA), Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA), and Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) was identified as a priority to strengthen economic ties further. The two nations also reaffirmed their commitment to United Nations Security Council reform, advocating for permanent representation of developing countries. Nigeria reiterated its support for India's bid for a permanent seat, reflecting their shared vision for equitable global governance.

Capacity-building initiatives were another highlight of the visit. India's Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) have contributed significantly to Nigeria's human resource development. The possibility of expanding scholarships and training programs in sectors such as healthcare, law enforcement, and space technology for Nigerian nationals were discussed, showcasing India's soft power and commitment to sustainable development. Both countries committed to deepening collaboration under the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). India's expertise in renewable energy, particularly in solar park development, was identified as a promising area for future partnership.

Prime Minister Modi's visit underscored the strategic importance of the India-Nigeria relationship, positioning both nations to address shared challenges and opportunities in a dynamic global landscape. The visit reinforced their partnership's potential to drive regional and global stability through mutual cooperation and shared aspirations.

Mauritius' Political Shift: A New Era of Governance and Strengthened Ties with India

Mauritius witnessed a transformative moment in its political history with the recent general elections. The opposition Alliance of Change, led by Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, secured a sweeping [victory](#), winning 60 out of 64 parliamentary seats. This is only the third time in Mauritian history that an election has resulted in such a decisive outcome. It underscores growing public desire for change after a decade of governance under former Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth. Dr. Ramgoolam, aged 77, returns to leadership for a third term, having previously served as Prime Minister from 1995 to 2000 and 2005 to 2014.

The election results reflect deep-seated [dissatisfaction](#) among the electorate, fuelled by economic hardships, governance issues, and scandals. High inflation, a depreciating currency, and an escalating cost-of-living crisis were key electoral issues. Furthermore, controversies such as a phone-tapping scandal and diminishing trust in key institutions, including the judiciary and police further eroded public confidence in the outgoing administration. A voter turnout of 80 per cent demonstrated a strong desire for reform, leading to the most significant electoral defeat for the ruling coalition since 2019. Dr. Ramgoolam's administration is likely to face several challenges. Stabilizing the economy is paramount, requiring efforts to curb inflation,

restore the currency's value, and diversify the economy by reducing reliance on offshore services and real estate. Rebuilding institutional trust is equally critical after years of perceived weakening. Furthermore, the new administration must also work to address pressing social issues, including the resurgence of drug-related problems and the urgent need for improved public welfare systems.

India has welcomed this political transition with optimism and reaffirmed its commitment to its longstanding partnership with Mauritius. Indian Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) congratulated Dr. Ramgoolam on his election and emphasised the deep bonds which India shares with Mauritius. The India-Mauritius relationship is built on a foundation of shared history, cultural connections, and strong diplomatic ties. Mauritius continues to be a key source of foreign investment for India, accounting for 25 per cent of total foreign direct investment since 2000. India has also contributed to Mauritius' strategic infrastructure development, notably through projects on [Agalega Island](#), which enhance the region's maritime security. Mauritius has consistently maintained stable relations with India. This resilience highlights the importance of fostering bipartisan relationships to ensure continuity in international partnerships, regardless of domestic political changes. The smooth transition of power reinforces Mauritius' reputation as a model of democracy in Africa. For India, this development is another affirmation of its deep and enduring ties with Mauritius, a relationship that continues to evolve and thrive in the face of changing circumstances.

Adani Group Faces Setbacks in Africa Following U.S. Charges

The Adani Group's ambitious investment plans in Africa hit a major roadblock following the

indictment of Mr. Gautam Adani in the United States. The charges, filed in New York in November, allege bribery and fraud involving funds raised from U.S. investors to secure contracts with the Indian government. While Adani has denied these allegations and emphasised its commitment to regulatory compliance, the fallout has been significant. Share values have plummeted, and credit downgrades by Moody's and Fitch Ratings have raised concerns about the group's ability to fund its ongoing and planned projects.

In [Kenya](#), President William Ruto announced the cancellation of two Adani-led projects, collectively worth \$2.8 billion, citing findings from investigative agencies and partner nations. These projects included a proposal to expand Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport and a power transmission initiative. Despite these setbacks, Adani's \$95 million port project in Tanzania remains on track, and its health insurance system in Kenya, developed in partnership with Safaricom, continues to operate amid public scrutiny. [Global repercussions](#) have also emerged. French energy company TotalEnergies, which holds a 20 per cent stake in Adani Green Energy, has suspended further investments until the allegations are resolved. Projects such as a green hydrogen initiative in Morocco and infrastructure developments in Egypt have also faced delays, highlighting uncertainty around the group's African operations.

Despite challenges faced by individual companies, India's broader engagement with Africa continues to grow stronger. Between 2018 and 2022, Indian investments in Africa surpassed \$26 billion, with trade reaching \$83 billion in 2024. This makes India Africa's [third-largest](#) trading partner after China and the European Union. Beyond economic ties, India has strengthened its diplomatic presence, with

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting Nigeria and President Droupadi Murmu touring Algeria, Mauritania, and Malawi to deepen partnerships and foster collaboration. While the Adani Group's challenges have raised questions, India's commitment to sustainable development and mutual growth ensures a promising future for India-Africa relations.

Gabon's New Constitution: Hope for Change or a Path to Entrenched Power?

The Gabonese people recently approved a new constitution in a [referendum](#) hailed by the ruling junta as a transformative step. With a reported 92 per cent approval rate, the draft constitution aims to end decades of dynastic rule, restore civilian governance, and set new democratic standards. Yet, behind the celebratory headlines lies a complex story of political intrigue, scepticism, and enduring questions about Gabon's path forward. The new constitution replaces a five-year, unlimited presidential term with a renewable seven-year term limit, ending the conditions that allowed the Bongo family's 55-year dynasty. It also bars presidential candidates with foreign spouses or lineage, effectively disqualifying ousted leader Ali Bongo Ondimba. The changes appear tailored to break with the past, preventing the return of dynastic rule. Transitional leader General Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema hailed the referendum as a "great step forward," describing it as a transparent process crucial for restoring constitutional order. Elections are scheduled for August 2025, two years after the military ousted Ali Bongo in the wake of disputed election results.

Despite the optimism, [critics](#) argue that the new constitution consolidates power in the presidency while eliminating the role of

prime minister. The creation of two vice-president positions raises concerns about unchecked executive authority. These changes, combined with Nguema's potential candidacy in the 2025 elections, cast doubts on the junta's commitment to genuine civilian rule. Many see the referendum as a strategy to legitimise Nguema's hold on power rather than a genuine move toward democracy. History provides ample reasons for scepticism: Africa's recent coup leaders have shown a troubling tendency to cling onto power, often ignoring initial promises of quick transitions to civilian rule.

The new constitution's adoption signals a turning point for Gabon, but its implications remain uncertain. If implemented genuinely, it could foster democratic governance and address long-standing grievances about corruption and inequality in the oil-rich but poverty-stricken nation. However, the prospect of Nguema's continued rule raises fears of military entrenchment under a civilian guise. For Gabon to break free from its authoritarian past, the 2025 elections must be credible and inclusive. Civil society and international observers will play a vital role in ensuring transparency and accountability.

Chad and Senegal End French Military Agreements, Redefining Sovereignty in Africa

Chad and Senegal became the latest African nations to deliver a blow to France's longstanding military presence on the continent. In a surprise announcement, Chad declared an end to its defense cooperation agreement with France. Hours earlier, Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye confirmed plans to

withdraw French troops from the West African nation. These decisions signal a pivotal moment in [Franco-African](#) relations and highlight Africa's growing assertion of sovereignty.

Chad's announcement, timed with the 66th anniversary of its republic, underscored its intent to redefine relations with its former colonial power. Chadian Foreign Minister [Abderaman Koulamallah](#) emphasised that Chad, now "mature and sovereign," no longer requires the French military's omnipresence. The statement, however, maintained a conciliatory tone, expressing a willingness for "constructive dialogue" in the future.

This development comes against the backdrop of France's diminishing influence in the Sahel. Once a pivotal ally, Chad hosted over one thousand French troops and served as the operational hub for counter-terrorism efforts in the region. French forces have long been intertwined with Chad's history, from colonial administration to more recent interventions like the 2019 bombing of rebel forces. However, growing discontent among the Chadian public and increasing diversification of security partnerships with nations like Türkiye, Hungary, and the United Arab Emirates are shifting the calculus. Chad's pivot toward other global powers, including Russia, adds further complexity. President Mahamat Idriss Déby's January 2024 visit to Moscow marked a subtle but telling shift, especially as he seeks to consolidate domestic support ahead of parliamentary elections.

Senegal's move mirrors Chad's rhetoric of independence. President Faye questioned the relevance of a foreign military presence in a sovereign state. While Senegal has

historically hosted French troops as part of its post-independence arrangements, shifting public sentiment and evolving geopolitical realities have altered this dynamic. The decision reflects broader dissatisfaction with the perceived colonial hangover and aligns with the continent's push for self-determination.

For France, these announcements highlight the [failure](#) of recent efforts to reconfigure its military footprint in Africa. President Emmanuel Macron's 2023 strategy to engage African nations aimed to replace traditional bases with smaller, less visible operations. Yet, these measures appear insufficient to quell growing anti-French sentiment. The termination of agreements

with Chad and Senegal exposes France's strategic vulnerabilities. The departures come amid rising competition from nations like Russia, China, and Türkiye, which have steadily expanded their influence in Africa.

The simultaneous announcements by Chad and Senegal mark a turning point in African geopolitics. Leaders are increasingly rejecting the vestiges of colonial influence and asserting control over their national security. For France, this signals the urgent need for a coherent, forward-looking policy that respects Africa's sovereignty while adapting to the continent's evolving realities.