

AFRICA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from Africa

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India Deepens Defence Partnerships across East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean

India has stepped up its defence engagement with East African and Indian Ocean partners through a series of high-level meetings and military exchanges in February 2026, signalling a growing emphasis on maritime security, capacity building, and technological cooperation across the region. Recent engagements with Tanzania, Seychelles, and Kenya reflect New Delhi's broader effort to strengthen strategic partnerships while contributing to stability in the Indian Ocean Region.

A key development was the fourth [Joint Defence Cooperation Committee \(JDCC\)](#) meeting between India and Tanzania, held in Zanzibar on 2–3 February. Officials from both countries reviewed ongoing defence collaboration and identified new areas for expansion, including military training, service-to-service cooperation, maritime security, and defence industry partnerships. Discussions also explored cooperation in emerging domains such as electronic warfare, cyber security, artificial intelligence, and counter-terrorism. Peacekeeping training and specialised capacity-building initiatives featured prominently, alongside the possibility of collaboration in military medicine. Notably, both sides agreed to initiate engagement between their respective air forces, complementing existing cooperation between the armies and navies. The meeting reaffirmed the implementation of a five-year defence cooperation roadmap guiding bilateral ties.

India's engagement with Tanzania continued later in the month, when a senior delegation from the Tanzania Peoples' Defence Forces [visited](#) India from 17–19 February. During the visit, Tanzanian

officials interacted with Indian defence personnel and toured cyber security facilities, highlighting a shared focus on technological expertise and cyber defence capabilities. The visit underscored the growing operational synergy between the two countries' armed forces and reinforced commitments made under the 2023 defence cooperation framework.

India also [strengthened](#) ties with Seychelles through high-level discussions in New Delhi on 10 February. India's Defence Secretary met Seychelles' Minister for Foreign Affairs and Diaspora and the Chief of Defence Forces to review ongoing security cooperation and chart future collaboration. Both sides reaffirmed their shared commitment to peace and stability in the Indian Ocean Region, with particular emphasis on maritime security, training, hydrography cooperation, and regular ship and aircraft visits. The upcoming joint military exercise *LAMITYE-2026* and Seychelles' participation in multilateral naval engagements hosted by India were welcomed as important steps in enhancing interoperability. Discussions were also framed within India's MAHASAGAR vision, which promotes inclusive and cooperative approaches to regional security and development, especially in maritime domains and long-term capacity building.

Further reinforcing India's outreach to East Africa, the fourth India–Kenya JDCC [meeting concluded](#) in Nairobi on 26 February. Both countries agreed to expand defence cooperation through enhanced training opportunities, deeper naval engagement, and collaboration in defence research and production. Plans were discussed to develop a new five-year roadmap aimed at broadening service-level interactions and instituting structured military exercises. Cooperation in advanced areas such as electronic warfare, cyber

security, and military medical services was also prioritised. Indian officials engaged extensively with Kenyan defence leadership and visited military training and medical facilities, highlighting a shared focus on professional development and institutional strengthening.

Together, these engagements illustrate India's evolving defence diplomacy in Africa and the Western Indian Ocean. Rather than focusing solely on traditional military cooperation, New Delhi is increasingly prioritising skills transfer, technological collaboration, and institutional capacity building. As maritime challenges, cyber threats, and non-traditional security risks grow more complex, India's partnerships with Tanzania, Seychelles, and Kenya signal a mutually beneficial approach aimed at fostering regional resilience, interoperability, and long-term security cooperation.

Kenyan Recruits in Russia's Ukraine War

The disclosure that more than 1,000 Kenyan citizens have been recruited to fight alongside Russian forces in Ukraine reveals how a distant European war is increasingly intersecting with Africa's economic and social realities. What initially appeared to be scattered incidents involving individual recruits has now emerged as a far more organised pattern of transnational recruitment targeting vulnerable populations. A Kenyan intelligence assessment presented to parliament in early 2026 indicates that economic desperation, weak regulation of overseas employment networks and global geopolitical competition have combined to produce an alarming new security concern. Reporting highlighted in the [Guardian investigation](#) shows that the number of Kenyan recruits is

significantly higher than earlier official estimates, suggesting the practice has expanded quietly over time.

Evidence suggests that many recruits did not initially intend to participate in combat. Recruiters allegedly approached unemployed youth, former security personnel and individuals seeking work abroad with promises of well-paid civilian jobs, particularly in private security roles. Instead, upon arrival in Russia, several reportedly underwent brief military preparation before being deployed to frontline positions. Accounts covered by [Reuters](#) and [DW News](#) emphasise the powerful role played by financial incentives, with salaries and bonuses far exceeding typical domestic earnings, making the offers particularly attractive amid rising unemployment and economic uncertainty.

Kenyan intelligence authorities have alleged that recruitment networks operated through a mix of private agencies, trafficking intermediaries and compromised officials within migration and employment systems. According to reporting cited by [Al Jazeera](#), travel routes adapted as scrutiny increased, with recruits increasingly departing through neighbouring African countries after tighter monitoring at Nairobi's main airport. Russia has rejected accusations of organised recruitment, maintaining that foreign nationals may legally volunteer for military service but denying any state-directed scheme.

Regardless of legal interpretations, the situation reflects a broader transformation in how modern conflicts sustain manpower. Prolonged wars create demand not only for domestic mobilisation but also for external recruitment, often drawing from economically vulnerable regions. In such

contexts, the distinction between voluntary enlistment and exploitation becomes blurred, particularly when individuals are misled about the nature of their employment.

Within Kenya, the human consequences are becoming increasingly visible. Families of recruits have protested publicly, demanding government intervention and clearer information about relatives believed to be trapped in combat zones. Personal stories documented by [BBC News](#) reveal how some recruits only realised they were entering a war after leaving home, raising serious questions about consent and labour protection.

At the continental level, the issue highlights Africa's complex position amid intensifying global rivalries. Reports that citizens from other African countries, including South Africa and Uganda, have also been drawn into the conflict demonstrate how international wars increasingly intersect with migration systems and informal labour networks. The limited collective response from regional institutions further underscores governance gaps in addressing cross-border recruitment practices.

For policymakers, the Kenyan case offers important lessons. Persistent unemployment and limited economic opportunities can make young populations vulnerable to exploitation by transnational actors. Existing migration oversight mechanisms remain ill-equipped to detect militarised recruitment disguised as overseas employment. Most importantly, contemporary conflicts are no longer geographically contained; their social and security consequences increasingly extend far beyond the battlefield.

As Kenya pursues diplomatic engagement to address the issue, the episode illustrates

a broader reality: modern warfare now operates through global labour flows as much as through conventional military alliances, transforming economic vulnerability into a new dimension of geopolitical competition.

Sudan–Uganda Tensions Rise After RSF Leader's Visit

Diplomatic tensions in East Africa have intensified after Sudan strongly condemned Uganda for hosting Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, leader of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), during a recent visit to Entebbe. Khartoum described the meeting as an affront not only to the Sudanese people but also to broader humanitarian principles, reflecting growing regional divisions over engagement with actors involved in Sudan's ongoing civil war.

According to reports, Sudan's Foreign Ministry denounced Uganda's reception of Dagalo, widely known as Hemedti, arguing that welcoming a figure accused of serious human rights violations undermines international norms governing relations between states. The ministry stated that hosting the RSF commander disregards the suffering of civilians affected by the conflict and risks legitimising a group accused of widespread abuses. Details of Sudan's reaction [noted](#) that Khartoum views the visit as indirect support for a rebel force fighting an internationally recognised government.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni confirmed that he met Dagalo at the presidential residence in Entebbe, emphasising that dialogue remains the only viable path to ending the conflict. Uganda has positioned itself as a mediator, with Museveni urging Sudanese factions to move away from identity-based politics and prioritise shared national interests.

According to an official statement released by the [Ugandan Presidency](#), Museveni reiterated calls for negotiations and African-led solutions aimed at restoring regional stability and preventing further escalation of violence.

Sudan's government, however, argues that engagement with RSF leadership risks normalising a group accused by international organisations of grave atrocities. Reporting by [BBC News](#) highlighted that Sudanese authorities accused Uganda of violating international law by hosting Dagalo. It further asserted that such diplomatic outreach undermines efforts to hold armed actors accountable. Both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF have faced allegations of abuses during the war, although rights groups have repeatedly accused the RSF of systematic violence against civilians.

The conflict, which erupted in April 2023 between forces led by General Abdel Fattah al Burhan and the RSF, has created one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Millions have been displaced and essential services have collapsed across large parts of the country. International investigations have linked RSF operations in Darfur, particularly the siege of El Fasher, to ethnic killings and other serious violations. Sudan [claims](#) that welcoming RSF leadership disregards documented crimes that some observers say bear characteristics of genocide.

The controversy also reflects wider regional sensitivities. Sudan has previously criticised neighbouring states for engaging RSF representatives, arguing that such meetings compromise neutrality in mediation efforts. The issue has recently expanded beyond Uganda. In Kenya, domestic political debate intensified after allegations that individuals linked to the

RSF obtained official travel documentation, raising [concerns](#) about regional involvement in the conflict and the credibility of mediation roles.

Uganda maintains that engagement with all parties is necessary to facilitate peace talks, while Sudan insists that diplomatic legitimacy should not be extended to armed groups accused of atrocities. The disagreement highlights the difficult balance regional actors face between mediation and perceived political endorsement.

As the war continues with no clear resolution in sight, the episode underscores how Sudan's internal conflict is increasingly reshaping regional diplomacy in East Africa. Competing interpretations of neutrality, mediation and accountability are placing neighbouring states in complex political positions, revealing the broader geopolitical strain created by one of Africa's most devastating ongoing conflicts.

Chagossians Challenge Deportation from Disputed Islands

A court order temporarily halting the deportation of four Chagossian men from the Chagos Archipelago has reignited international attention on one of the Indian Ocean's longest running colonial disputes, placing questions of justice, sovereignty and strategic security back at the centre of global debate.

The four men travelled by boat from Sri Lanka and landed on a remote part of the archipelago in an attempt to peacefully re-establish a presence on what they describe as their ancestral homeland. British authorities quickly issued eviction notices warning of fines or imprisonment if they refused to leave. However, a judge in the British Indian Ocean Territory granted an

[emergency injunction](#) preventing their removal for at least seven days, allowing legal challenges to proceed after concerns were raised about delayed permit decisions and the legality of deportation orders.

For the Chagossians, the episode reflects a deeper historical grievance rooted in their forced displacement during the Cold War. Between the late 1960s and early 1970s, the United Kingdom removed the entire Indigenous population from the islands to enable construction of a joint United States United Kingdom military base on Diego Garcia. Families were [relocated](#) to Mauritius and Seychelles under harsh conditions, leaving many in poverty and long term exile.

The archipelago remains largely closed to permanent civilian settlement, even as generations of displaced islanders continue campaigning for the right to return. Personal testimonies describe communities separated from their homes, culture and livelihoods, with many descendants never having seen the islands where their families lived for centuries. The expulsion has been widely criticised as a colonial injustice shaped by racial discrimination and strategic military priorities, themes explored in commentary examining how the islands were depopulated to serve [geopolitical interests](#) in the Indian Ocean.

The legal dispute unfolds at a sensitive political moment. London is attempting to finalise an agreement to transfer sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius while retaining control of the Diego Garcia military base under a long term lease arrangement. The agreement has triggered divisions within Britain and among Chagossian communities themselves, many of whom fear their right of return could remain unresolved despite sovereignty changes. Political [uncertainty](#)

surrounding the deal has grown amid parliamentary debates and consultations with Washington.

International attention has also intensified following criticism from United States President Donald Trump, whose intervention has complicated negotiations and highlighted the strategic importance of Diego Garcia, a base central to American military operations across the Middle East and Indo Pacific. For many Chagossians, however, the dispute is less about geopolitics and more about dignity and belonging. One of the men involved in the protest described returning peacefully to stand on his homeland again, underscoring the emotional weight carried by a community still living in diaspora decades after their displacement.

The broader injustice continues to shape discussions about colonial accountability and reparations. Advocacy groups argue that negotiations over sovereignty risk overlooking those most affected by past decisions, leaving unresolved questions about resettlement and compensation. The ongoing struggle, explored in reflections on the [continuing injustice](#) faced by displaced islanders, demonstrates how historical decisions taken in secrecy continue to influence diplomacy, law and human lives today. As courts consider the immediate fate of the four men, the case has become a powerful symbol of a larger unresolved conflict between strategic interests and the enduring quest of an exiled people to return home.

India Allocates 225 Cr. aid to Africa in 2026-27 Annual Budget.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her ninth consecutive Union Budget on 1 February 2026, public attention largely centred on domestic priorities such as tax administration

reforms, investments in education and employment, and continued infrastructure expansion. The Budget was [framed](#) around three key *kartavyas* or duties. First, it emphasised the need to accelerate economic growth by improving productivity, strengthening competitiveness, and building resilience against an increasingly volatile global economy. Second, it aimed to support citizens' aspirations by enhancing their skills and capacities, positioning them as active contributors to India's development journey. Third, it reaffirmed the broader vision of inclusive growth under *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas*, seeking to ensure that opportunities and public resources reach all regions, communities and sectors.

Yet India's domestic development agenda cannot be separated from its international ambitions. New Delhi's efforts to project itself as a credible development partner abroad are closely linked to the success of its own economic and social transformation. At the same time, the Budget reflects a cautious external outlook. Despite India's growing [global profile](#), allocations related to development diplomacy, particularly foreign aid, have remained largely unchanged from the previous year. This restraint suggests a careful balancing act as India navigates global economic uncertainty and rising geopolitical tensions, prioritising internal stability while maintaining a measured international development footprint.

India's has [allocated](#) 225Cr in aid to African countries in its present budget. It was the same the previous year. However according to the revised 2025-26 budget, it was 211.92Cr. In the financial year 2024-25, India had provided 201.83Cr in aid to the African countries. Compared to the year 2024-25, this year's aid allocation in the budget has increased substantially. On the other hand, there is separate aid allocation

to Mauritius, Seychelles, and Maldives. This year's aid allocation for Maldives and Mauritius has decreased as compared to previous year. Contrastingly, it has increased for Seychelles from 15Cr in the previous year to 19Cr this year.

India has reduced its aid allocations to the Maldives and Mauritius as part of a broader recalibration of its foreign assistance policy. Rather than signalling a withdrawal of support, the move points to a more cautious and strategic approach shaped by shifting budgetary priorities and economic considerations. The adjustment appears aimed at ensuring that development assistance is used more selectively, with greater emphasis on achieving measurable impact and advancing India's strategic interests while managing fiscal pressures at home. Meanwhile, the increased aid to Seychelles this year could be [attributed](#) to India – Seychelles Joint Vision for Sustainability, Economic Growth and Security through Enhanced Linkages, discussed earlier in February 2026 during the President Dr. Patrick Herminie's State Visit to India .

Taken together, the Union Budget 2026 reflects India's effort to balance domestic development priorities with its external engagement ambitions. While overall foreign assistance remains cautious, the pattern of allocations suggests a more targeted and strategically calibrated approach rather than a retreat from development partnerships. Stable aid to African countries signals continuity in India's South-South cooperation, while differentiated allocations in the Indian Ocean region indicate alignment with evolving geopolitical and economic interests. By prioritising impact driven assistance, India appears to be refining its development diplomacy to support both fiscal prudence at home and sustained strategic influence abroad.