

AFRICA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from Africa

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Ethiopia inaugurates GERD amid tensions with neighbours

On 9 September 2025, Ethiopia marked a historic milestone by officially inaugurating the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Africa's largest hydroelectric project. Valued at \$5 billion, the dam stands on a key tributary of the Nile and promises to [deliver](#) 5000 megawatts of electricity to millions of Ethiopians, bolstering the country's economic ambitions. With a population of over 120 million, Ethiopia views GERD as central to powering growth and development. While hailed domestically as a symbol of progress, the project has intensified tensions with downstream Egypt and Sudan, which fears the dam will jeopardise its vital water and irrigation supplies, unsettling regional stability.

In 2011, the construction of Dam raised concerns in the neighbouring Egypt and Sudan about the potential reduction in downstream water levels. This raised [tensions](#) with the neighbouring nations with Egypt describing the development as a security threat, leading to a draught in the downstream nations. The concerns of the downstream nations also [emerge](#) from the colonial-era agreements, like the 1929 Anglo-Egyptian and 1959 Egypt-Sudan agreements, allocating Nile's water exclusively to these nations. Egypt's Foreign Ministry has also [raised](#) these concerns to United Nations Organization (UNO) citing that the inauguration of the dam has "violated international law".

Egypt, home to around 108 million people, relies on the Nile for nearly 90% of its freshwater, making the river nothing short of lifeline. Cairo has [warned](#) it will "take all appropriate measures" to safeguard its people's interests, though it has stopped short of direct action against Ethiopia. Instead, Egypt has strengthened ties with Addis Ababa's regional rivals, particularly Eritrea. On the other hand, Sudan's Roseires Dam, situated roughly 110km downstream of the GERD, could be at [risk](#) if Ethiopia releases large volumes of water without prior coordination, raising concerns about safety and water management. Consequently, Sudan has aligned with Egypt in [demanding](#) a legally binding deal on the dam's filling and operation, though it also stands to gain from improved flood control and access to affordable electricity.

Ethiopia presents the GERD as a project with regional benefits. Ethiopian Water Minister Habtamu Itfa [highlighted](#) that downstream water levels during the dry season are three to four times higher than before, enabling expanded irrigation in countries like Sudan. Experts emphasise careful planning to maintain year-round flows. Yacob Arsano of Addis Ababa University [stressed](#) that Egypt continues to receive water, calling for calm, constructive dialogue among Nile Basin nations. Dessalegn Chanie Dagneu, Ethiopian Member of Parliament, [noted](#) GERD could foster regional integration, mitigating floods and silt while promoting

cooperation. The dam is positioned as a national achievement and a platform for regional collaboration.

The GERD embodies Ethiopia's national ambition and offers potential regional benefits, from increased irrigation to flood control. While tensions with Egypt and Sudan persist, careful management and dialogue could transform the dam into a symbol of shared growth, cooperation, and sustainable development across the Nile Basin.

Visit of Prime Minister of Mauritius to India

Prime Minister of Mauritius, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, arrived in Mumbai on an eight-day visit to India on 9 September 2025. This was his first overseas bilateral visit to India in his present term. Dr. Ramgoolam had earlier visited India in May 2014 to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During his current visit, Dr. Ramgoolam [called](#) on President Droupadi Murmu and held discussions with Prime Minister Modi to further enhance the Strategic Partnership. He also visited Varanasi, Ayodhya and Tirupati. In Mumbai, he attended a business event.

In Varanasi, Prime Minister Modi and Dr. Ramgoolam [underscored](#) the deep-rooted civilizational links, shared values, and enduring people-to-people connections that have shaped the unique bond between India and Mauritius. Their [bilateral discussions](#) explored the full spectrum of cooperation, with a focus on development

partnerships and capacity-building initiatives. Both leaders also focused on opportunities to broaden collaboration in critical sectors such as health, education, science and technology, and energy, while embracing emerging areas including renewable energy, digital public infrastructure, and the blue economy. The meeting reaffirmed the commitment of both nations to strengthen ties for mutual prosperity and regional progress.

The media briefing by [Ministry of External Affairs](#) emphasised Mauritius as an “integral part of India's Neighbourhood First policy and our region, MAHASAGAR, which is Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions”. It also highlighted the India-Mauritius relations as crucial for their commitment to the Global South. It further outlined evolution of New Delhi's partnership with Port Louis from being the first responder and security provider to diverse areas like development cooperation, capacity building, maritime security, science and technology initiatives, educational exchanges, health care development. President Murmu expressed [confidence](#) that with the vast leadership experience of Prime Minister Ramgoolam, India-Mauritius long-standing bilateral ties will further strengthen in the times to come.

In the [media briefing](#) by India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, it was stated that during this visit, both countries agreed on a comprehensive Special Economic Package to strengthen bilateral

cooperation. Key initiatives include developing Port Louis, enhancing maritime security, supporting the Chagos marine protected area, and providing financial assistance for infrastructure projects such as hospitals, airports, roads, and veterinary facilities. Agreements were signed to boost energy, science, technology, oceanography, and space collaboration, including a 17.5 MW floating solar plant and satellite capacity building. Civil service training under Mission Karmayogi and academic partnerships were also established. These measures aim to deepen development ties, ensure regional stability, and elevate the India-Mauritius partnership for mutual prosperity in the Indian Ocean.

Prime Minister Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam's visit to India reaffirmed the historic friendship and strategic partnership between the two nations. The wide-ranging discussions, landmark agreements, and the announcement of a Special Economic Package underscore the shared vision of India and Mauritius for mutual growth, regional stability, and prosperity. By deepening cooperation across infrastructure, health, education, science, technology, energy, and maritime security, the visit has set a strong foundation for future collaboration. Building on Prime Minister Modi's earlier visit to Mauritius, this engagement marks another significant milestone in advancing the enduring ties that bind the two nations as trusted partners in the Indian Ocean.

Egypt Completes Troop Deployment Plans to Somalia

On 8 September 2025, Egypt finalised its troop deployment plans to Somalia through a bilateral security cooperation [agreement](#) between Cairo and Mogadishu. The Egyptian deployment seeks to strengthen Somalia's fight against terrorism and contribute to stabilising conflict-affected regions. With Al-Shabaab continuing to endanger security and livelihoods, the initiative reflects a shared commitment to restoring peace, reinforcing state capacity, and supporting long-term regional stability.

The Somali federal government has not publicly disclosed the full timeline or scale of the deployment. However, informed [sources](#) indicate that Egyptian forces will undertake training, advisory, and logistical functions, while over 1,000 personnel are expected to participate directly in combat operations as part of African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission (AUSSOM).

Egypt's move to send troops to the AUSSOM is intended to [strengthen](#) Somalia's fight against terrorist groups. Yet, in practice, it risks [deepening](#) external involvement in Somalia's fragile internal affairs, where local conflicts could escalate into broader regional power struggles and proxy rivalries. Ethiopian executives have expressed [bitterness](#) about Egypt's involvement in Somalia, and stressed that the presence of Egyptians troops in AUSSOM could trigger a conflict between

them. On the other hand, Egypt has opted for a more aggressive approach towards Ethiopia over Nile Dam, by mobilising military hardware and support for Somalia since 2024.

Egypt's growing role in Somalia comes at a sensitive time in its fraught relationship with Ethiopia. Cairo worries that Ethiopia's Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the [Blue Nile](#) could jeopardise vital water supplies, while Mogadishu is [angered](#) by Ethiopia's deal to lease coastal land from Somaliland in exchange for recognising its independence. Against this backdrop of mistrust, Egypt's troop deployment in Somalia is viewed by Addis Ababa not as support for stability, but as a strategic move that threatens its interests.

Amid these tensions, Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has declined any possibility of the two heavyweights clashing in Somalia. In an interview with the [BBC](#), Somali President dismissed fears of a proxy war between Egypt and Ethiopia playing out on Somali soil. He explained that the two nations' troops would be stationed far apart, separated by hundreds of kilometres, leaving little room for direct confrontation. Mohamud stressed that there was no incentive for either side to disrupt the other, noting that Egypt had no reason to provoke Ethiopia, nor Ethiopia to challenge Egypt's peacekeepers. He emphasised that Somalia's priority was stability, and external forces should focus on supporting, not destabilising, its fragile peace.

The Egyptian deployment of troops to Somalia, while framed as a step towards stability, highlights the Horn of Africa's fragile balance. With Ethiopia entangled in disputes over the Nile Dam and Somaliland, Cairo's involvement risks entrenching Somalia in wider rivalries. Although President Mohamud insists the likelihood of direct confrontation is low, the deeper danger lies in Somalia becoming collateral damage in Egypt–Ethiopia hostilities. For the region's long-term stability, restraint, cooperation, and prioritising Somalia's peace over power politics are essential to prevent local conflicts escalating into regional crises.

Senegal-Mali trade under threat as militants block key trade routes

In recent weeks, Islamist militants have imposed blockades on key highways in Mali, where the lorry drivers have increasingly faced ambushes and arson attacks. In an attempt to ease the public frustration, Malian Prime Minister Abdoulaye Maiga [acknowledged](#) the severity of the crisis and pledged stronger security measures at the United Nations General Assembly. The blockades mark a dangerous [escalation](#) of Mali's long-running jihadist insurgency, threatening vital fuel supplies in the already fragile, landlocked country. Analysts [warn](#) that al-Qaeda-linked groups appear intent on isolating the capital, Bamako. The crisis also highlights the Sahel's growing role as the global epicentre of terrorism, responsible for over half of worldwide terror-related deaths.

The blockade began after six Senegalese lorry drivers were briefly kidnapped by the militants in early September 2025 and is [believed](#) to be a strategy of “Economic Asphyxiation” by the Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) militants. The blockade is in key locations of Kayes and Nioro-du-Sahel. Both of these are [important](#) routes facilitating food supply and linking Mali to Mauritania respectively. The Dakar-based Timbuktu Institute [warned](#) that the militants aim to “destabilise, or even suffocate the Malian economy, isolate the capital Bamako and increase economic pressure on the Malian transitional regime”. Furthermore, experts fear that if the embargo announced by the JNIM militants is successfully implemented, it could [paralyse](#) western Mali.

Malian authorities had initially [dismissed](#) reports of a blockade in Kayes as foreign media’s “information warfare,” attributing it to the seasonal rains rather than militant activity. The army portrayed extremist attacks as the desperate actions of a retreating enemy. Yet, [growing accounts](#) of ambushes, kidnappings, and arson forced a tougher response. Officials claim to have bombed a JNIM base, killed dozens of fighters, freed hostages, and launched major offensives along key transport routes. Reinforcements were also deployed to secure convoys. Yet, residents [insist](#) militant checkpoints persist, and with transport companies halting services, vital trade routes remain paralysed, deepening local hardship and insecurity.

Mali is Senegal’s largest trading partner, with [exports](#) worth more than \$1.32 billion in 2024. Kayes [accounts](#) for approximately 80% of the Senegalese gold production and is deemed as Mali’s “gateway to Senegal”. On the other hand Mali, being a landlocked region, is heavily [dependent](#) on the neighbouring ports for fuel, food, and manufactured goods, making Kayes an essential region. The blockade in Kayes not only signals JNIM’s threat to encircle Bamako but also its widening footprint in the region as it was traditionally [concentrated](#) in the northern and central Mali.

The security crisis which began in 2012 in Mali has deepened as al-Qaeda-linked JNIM continues to expand its reach into southern regions, disrupting key trade routes from Senegal and Mauritania. Attacks on tankers and buses have crippled economic lifelines, threatening over \$1.32 billion in Senegalese exports and undermining regional trade. While Mali’s army, backed by Russian ‘Africa Corps’ mercenaries, struggles to respond, the blockade highlights state fragility. Thus, the initial tactical disruption now risks evolving into a drawn-out siege, signalling a dangerous new phase with cross-border repercussions.

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger withdraw from International Criminal Court

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger announced their withdrawal from International Criminal Court (ICC) on 22 September

2025 after serving one year notice period. Their [withdrawal](#) from the Rome Statute is on the grounds of selective justice, inability to handle proven war crimes, and being a “tool of neo-colonial repression”. They have further [accused](#) the ICC for targeting less privileged countries echoing criticism from Rwanda’s President Paul Kagame accusing the ICC of holding ‘Anti-African’ bias. The three states have highlighted their intention to [create](#) “indigenous mechanisms for the consolidation of peace and justice”.

Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali, all currently under [military rule](#), have broken away from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) after rejecting its demand to restore democratic rule and formed their own group, the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). In a major shift, the AES nations have [distanced](#) themselves from traditional defence partners, especially France, and are instead forging closer ties with Russia. This marks a significant realignment in the region’s security and political landscape, reflecting the countries’ desire for greater autonomy and new alliances amid ongoing instability.

In April 2025, [United Nations](#)’ experts warned that the reported summary executions of dozens of civilians by Malian forces could amount to war crimes. Their concerns come against the backdrop of an ongoing International Criminal Court investigation, launched in 2013, into alleged [war crimes](#) in Mali’s northern regions of Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal. These areas had previously fallen under the control of armed groups, and the ICC has long been examining accusations of

atrocities committed during that turbulent period of conflict and instability.

The ICC continues to face political pushback from those resisting accountability. Under U.S. President Donald Trump, [sanctions](#) were imposed on ICC officials, a UN expert, and Palestinian rights groups to hinder investigations in Palestine. Russia, in retaliation for the ICC’s 2023 arrest warrant against President Vladimir Putin over alleged war crimes in Ukraine, [issued warrants](#) against the prosecutor and eight judges. Despite such pressures, ICC member states and civil society have defended the court’s mission. While Burundi withdrew in 2017 and Philippines in 2019, [accountability](#) was reinforced when former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte was arrested in March 2025 under an ICC warrant.

The decision of the three Sahel states to leave the ICC came as little surprise, given the series of coups that installed military governments between 2020 and 2023. Since then, their armies have been locked in a [brutal fight](#) against armed groups linked to al-Qaeda, which continue to hold territory and launch deadly assaults on military bases. At the same time, rights groups like [Human Rights Watch](#) have raised serious concerns, accusing not only the fighters but also the armies and allied forces in Burkina Faso and Mali of committing possible atrocities against civilians in the conflict. They have further claimed that the withdrawal of these countries from the ICC “will jeopardize access to justice for victims of atrocity crimes, putting all civilians at greater risk”.