



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



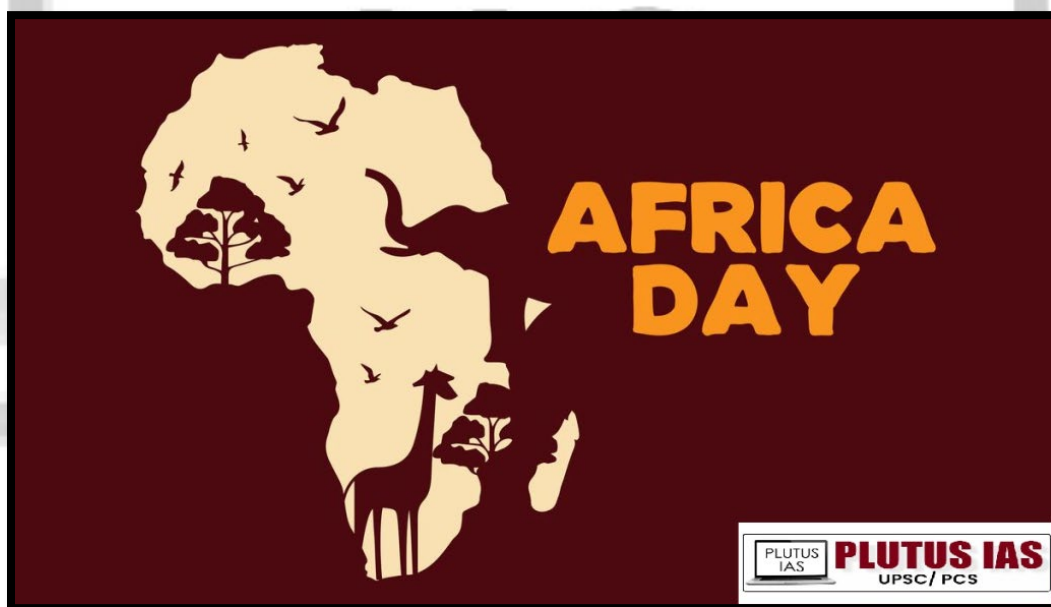
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## INDIA-AFRICA DIGITAL COMPACT: BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

Africa Day is observed annually on May 25 to commemorate the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, which later evolved into the African Union (AU). The day symbolises the continent's continued pursuit of unity, independence, and development. Amid this backdrop, the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy (2020–2030) has gained prominence for placing digital innovation at the core of Africa's socio-economic development agenda.



### INDIA-AFRICA: KEY AREAS OF COOPERATIONS

S.No.	Area of Cooperation	Key Highlights
1.	Digital & Technology	India Stack (Aadhaar, UPI), e-VBAB (tele-education & telemedicine), IT training via ITEC, hackathons, innovation hubs.

S.No.	Area of Cooperation	Key Highlights
2.	<b>Trade &amp; Economy</b>	India as a top African trading partner; duty-free access for African LDCs; MSME and value chain support.
3.	<b>Education &amp; Capacity Building</b>	Scholarships (ITEC, ICCR), vocational training, skill development, e-learning platforms.
4.	<b>Health Cooperation</b>	Generic medicines, Vaccine Maitri (COVID-19 vaccines), telemedicine, healthcare infrastructure.
5.	<b>Energy &amp; Climate</b>	Renewable energy cooperation via ISA; solar parks, mini-grids, green tech, sustainable agriculture.
6.	<b>Agriculture &amp; Food Security</b>	Training in farming techniques, irrigation tech, organic farming, agribusiness promotion.
7.	<b>Defence &amp; Security</b>	Maritime security, anti-piracy, defence training, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, peacekeeping.
8.	<b>Infrastructure &amp; Connectivity</b>	Concessional credit for roads, power, IT parks, digital infra; SAGAR vision for regional growth.
9.	<b>Multilateral Engagement</b>	Joint action in G20, UN, WTO; support for AU in G20; reform of global governance systems.

## RECENT ENGAGEMENTS AND INITIATIVES

- 1. India Stack Deployment:** India is offering digital public infrastructure solutions like Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker, and CoWIN to African countries to help build inclusive digital ecosystems.
- 2. e-VBAB (e-VidyaBharati and e-ArogyaBharati) Project:** Provides tele-education and telemedicine services to over 20 African countries, along with more than 20,000 scholarships for online education.
- 3. India-Africa Hackathons:** These encourage collaboration among young innovators from both regions in areas like artificial intelligence, fintech, agriculture, and healthcare.
- 4. ITEC Digital Training Programs:** Under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, Africa receives training in cybersecurity, digital governance, and IT skills.
- 5. Concessional Lines of Credit:** India has extended financial support for the development of digital infrastructure such as IT parks, broadband connectivity, and e-governance platforms.
- 6. Voice of Global South Summit:** India has used this platform to advocate for South-South digital cooperation, knowledge sharing, and inclusive technological development.
- 7. Support to African Union Digital Strategy:** India aligns its digital cooperation efforts with the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy (2020–2030), focusing on universal broadband, e-commerce, and cybersecurity.
- 8. Vaccine Maitri & Digital Health:** India supplied COVID-19 vaccines and extended support for digital health systems, including telemedicine and mobile health units across Africa.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF AFRICA FOR INDIA

- 1. Strategic and Geopolitical Importance:** Africa lies along critical sea lanes in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), making it vital for India's maritime security, SAGAR vision (Security and Growth for All in the Region), and Indo-Pacific outreach.
- 2. Energy and Natural Resources:** Africa is rich in oil, gas, uranium, and critical minerals (like cobalt and lithium), which are crucial for India's energy security and green transition.
- 3. Trade and Economic Partnership:** Africa is one of India's largest trading partners in the Global South, with growing investments in sectors like pharma, IT, agriculture, and infrastructure.
- 4. Support in Multilateral Forums:** African nations form a large voting bloc in the UN and other global forums. India seeks their support for global governance reforms and a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.
- 5. Development and Soft Power Diplomacy:** India's development cooperation, including capacity building, education, and healthcare, strengthens people-to-people ties and soft power outreach.
- 6. South-South Cooperation:** Africa is central to India's South-South cooperation model, promoting mutual growth through shared developmental experiences and digital public goods.
- 7. Countering Strategic Rivals:** Deepening ties with Africa helps India balance the growing presence of China and other powers on the continent and assert its own influence constructively.

## AFRICAN CONTINENTAL AS LAND OF GAMES: CHALLENGES FOR INDIA

- 1. Rising Chinese Dominance:** China's massive investments in infrastructure under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its deep economic integration with Africa overshadow India's comparatively modest engagements.
- 2. Limited Financial Capacity:** India's budgetary constraints restrict its ability to match the scale of aid, credit lines, and investments offered by China, the EU, and Gulf countries.
- 3. Geostrategic Competition:** Countries like the US, Russia, Turkey, UAE, and France are also increasing their footprint, turning Africa into a multipolar strategic arena, which dilutes India's relative influence.
- 4. Slow Implementation of Projects:** Bureaucratic delays and limited execution capacity hamper the timely delivery of Indian-funded projects, affecting India's credibility.
- 5. Security Instability in Some Regions:** Political instability, terrorism, and civil conflicts in parts of Africa (like the Sahel, Horn of Africa) pose risks to Indian investments and personnel.
- 6. Weak Private Sector Presence:** Compared to Chinese SOEs, Indian private sector involvement in Africa is limited due to risk aversion and inadequate government-industry coordination.
- 7. Lack of Comprehensive Institutional Frameworks:** Absence of a unified Africa strategy or institutionalized India-Africa FTA and limited engagement with African sub-regional bodies can hinder long-term influence.

## INDIA FUTURE APPROACH TOWARDS AFRICA

- 1. Digital Partnership:** Promote India Stack (Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker) to support Africa's digital transformation and inclusive e-governance.
- 2. Development Cooperation:** Scale up ITEC, e-VBAB, and concessional credit to co-create locally suited solutions in health, education, and agriculture.
- 3. People-to-People Connectivity:** Expand scholarships, skill development, and cultural diplomacy to build long-term goodwill and soft power.
- 4. South-South Cooperation:** Position Africa as a central partner in India's Global South leadership, ensuring mutual growth and respect.

- 5. Trade & Investment Boost:** Diversify trade and support African MSMEs; work toward an India-Africa FTA and integrated value chains.
- 6. Security & Maritime Engagement:** Strengthen defence ties, peacekeeping, and maritime cooperation under SAGAR and Indo-Pacific frameworks.
- 7. Green and Sustainable Development:** Collaborate on renewable energy, climate-resilient agriculture, and green technology through platforms like ISA.

## CONCLUSION

India's engagement with Africa is undergoing a strategic shift — from traditional aid and infrastructure to a future-ready, inclusive, and digitally empowered partnership. As Africa rises as a key player in global geopolitics, demography, and the digital economy, India is positioning itself as a trusted development partner rooted in shared colonial experiences, South-South solidarity, and mutual respect. The African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy (2020–2030) presents an unprecedented opportunity for India to leverage its digital public goods, capacity-building expertise, and private sector innovations to support Africa's growth story. However, to remain relevant and competitive amid intensifying geopolitical contests, India must institutionalise its Africa outreach through a coherent long-term strategy, enhanced financial commitments, and deeper integration with African regional and continental institutions.

## PRELIMS QUESTIONS

**Q. With reference to India's engagement with Africa, consider the following statements:**

1. The e-VBAB project is aimed at providing vocational training to African farmers on organic farming practices.
2. India Stack, including UPI and Aadhaar, is being offered to African countries to build inclusive digital infrastructure.
3. India is a founding member of the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy (2020–2030).

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1 and 3 only

**Answer: B**

## MAINS QUESTIONS

**Q. Discuss the significance of Africa in India's foreign policy and examine the emerging contours of the India-Africa Digital Compact.**

**(250 words, 15 marks)**



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