

## India to partner with Japan and UAE to set up two projects in Africa

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File photo of PM Narendra Modi (centre) at the India-Africa Forum Summit. Over the past few years, India has been reworking its ties with Africa through high-level summits and top level visits. **(Photo: Reuters)**

- India will build a cancer hospital in Kenya in collaboration with Japan, it will partner with the UAE to set up an ICT centre in Ethiopia
- Analysts have welcomed India's plans, given the major forays of China into Africa since 2004-05

**NEW DELHI:** India is joining hands with Japan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to implement two projects in Africa as it seeks to extend its footprint on the continent where strategic rival China has made deep inroads, two people familiar with the developments said.

While India will build a cancer hospital in Kenya in collaboration with Japan, it will partner with the UAE to set up an information and communications technology (ICT) centre in Ethiopia, said the two people cited above, requesting anonymity.

The parties have held talks in recent weeks, one of the people said, adding that the details on implementing the projects are expected to be finalized shortly.

Analysts have welcomed India's plans, given the major forays of China into Africa since 2004-05.

Once seen as a major political influence in Africa, thanks to New Delhi's support for the freedom movements in many African countries, India has seen its popularity dwindle since the 1990s. But since the middle of the last decade, India has moved to remedy that—reworking its ties with Africa through high-level summits and frequent top level visits.

A study by Washington-based think tank American Enterprise Institute (AEI) estimates China's investments in Africa between 2005 and 2018 at more than \$220 billion. Another AEI study showed that Nigeria and Angola were major destinations for Chinese investments with Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia and South Africa bringing up the rear. Almost all these countries figured in China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that aims to link China by sea and land with South-East and Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

As a counter to BRI, India and Japan had announced the Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) with four major strands, including capacity building and human resource development in Africa, creating quality infrastructure and institutional connectivity, people-to-people partnership, and development and cooperation projects. It also envisaged developing capacities to sustain infrastructure, greenfield projects, power grids, agriculture and agro-processing, besides health and pharmaceuticals.

One of the two officials mentioned above did not specify whether the cancer hospital in Kenya would be built as part of the AAGC initiative, but described it as a "trilateral" cooperation venture with Japan, and similarly with the UAE in the case of the ICT centre in Ethiopia.

Analysts say that India is seeking partnerships with third countries in Africa given its resource constraints though New Delhi has undertaken many projects like the ambitious Pan African e-network project on tele-education and tele-medicine—that provides "integrated" satellite, fibre optics and wireless network between educational and medical institutes in Africa and India. The project also supports e-governance, e-commerce, infotainment, resource mapping and meteorological services.

Former foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal said India's expertise in skilling manpower, if backed by financial resources and technical expertise from countries like Japan and the UAE, could create quality projects in Africa.

In the case of India and Japan, there is a "mutual interest in doing things together" as both are wary about China's BRI, Sibal said. Both Japan and the UAE could make use of the political goodwill that India enjoys in Africa, making it a win-win situation for all sides, he added.

"Ethiopia has become a very big focal point for Chinese investments into East Africa," Sibal said. With India's ties with the UAE warming up considerably and the UAE looking to invest in India's infrastructure, it was natural that two countries should look at collaborating in third countries and regions like Africa, he added.

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