

In a first, Vibrant Gujarat Summit to observe ‘Africa Day’ with eye on China

“Africa Day is being organised in consultation with the Ministry of External Affairs,” said S J Haider, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Gujarat.

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Gujarat government in consultation with the Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is for the first time organising “Africa Day. (Photo by Javed Raja/File)

To tap the resource-rich and rapidly developing African continent, the Gujarat government in consultation with the Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is for the first time organising “Africa Day” at the upcoming Vibrant Gujarat Summit where the heads of states, including Paul Kagame, President of Republic of Rwanda, and Abiy Ahmed Ali, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, will remain present.

“Africa Day is being organised in consultation with the Ministry of External Affairs,” said S J Haider, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Gujarat, while speaking about the event that will be held as part of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit scheduled from January 18-20. The ‘Africa Day’ event will be organised on January 19 at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar.

The move to increase trade ties with African countries began in 2017 when the African Development Bank (ADB) organised its annual meeting where both India, Japan and African countries resolved to create an Asia-Africa Growth Corridor in response to China’s OBOR (One Belt One Road) initiative. “Of the 54 African nations, we have received positive response from 32 nations... The President of Rawanda, who is also the chairman of the African Union, and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia will be coming,” he said, adding that 10-15 ministers, 25 ambassadors and 250 business leaders from Africa are expected to attend the special day that is being organised as part of the Vibrant Summit.

Taking about the interest in the event, Haider pointed out that about 800 Indian businessmen have already registered themselves for 'Africa Day'. Currently, South Africa and Morocco are the two African countries who are among the 15 "partner countries" for the summit. The Moroccan delegation will be led by Minister of Industry, Investment, Trade and Digital Economy.

Sectors such as healthcare, pharmaceutical, chemicals and petrochemicals, textiles, renewable energy, agribusiness, gems and jewellery, mining and minerals, and aviation are some of the focus areas for African delegations. "Gujarat exports to 51 of the 54 African countries, which amounts to USD 19.6 million," Haider claimed.

At least 12-15 MoUs are expected to be signed during the event. Site-visits for dignitaries will also be organised to Zydus Hospital, UN Mehta Institute of Cardiology, Amul's Dairy Processing Plant, IIT-Gandhinagar and GIFT City. A cultural evening has also been planned.

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