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PM Narendra Modi bats for Asia-Africa growth corridor

The pitch comes close on the heels of China launching its multi-billion dollar OBOR initiative.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday pushed for an "Asia-Africa growth corridor" supported by Japan and India -- a pitch coming days after China's ambitious OBOR (One Belt, One Road) initiative taking off.

Declaring the 52nd Annual General Meeting of the African Development Bank group open, which is being held for the first time in the country here, Modi said, "India's partnership with Africa is based on a model of co-operation which is responsive to the needs of African countries."

Pushing for a growth corridor between Africa and Asia, he said the project was discussed during his recent trip to Japan.

The pitch comes close on the heels of China launching its multi-billion dollar OBOR initiative, a pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, which aims to connect the Eurasian landmass and Indo-Pacific maritime routes.

"During my visit to Japan and after meeting with Prime Minister (Xi Jinping) about the Belt and Road initiative...

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"Research institutes of India and Japan have come up with vision documents in consultation with African think-tanks on how to take forward this growth corridor," Modi said, adding that this vision document would be presented at the board meeting later.

"The idea is India, Japan and other willing partners would explore joint initiative in development of skills, infrastructure, manufacturing and connectivity," he added.

Modi said Africa figured on top of India's priority as a growth pole.

"After assuming office in 2014, I have made Africa a top priority for India's foreign and economic policy," Modi told the gathering of 3,000 delegates mostly from Africa, which also included heads of state and senior government functionaries.

He said India is the fifth largest investor in Africa, as in the last 20 years it has invested USD 54 billion.

"Africa-India trade has multiplied in the last 15 years, it has doubled in the last five years to reach near 72 billion dollars in 2014-15," Modi said.

Modi also recalled the centuries' old association of India with Africa, especially between trading communities from Western states such as Gujarat.

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