

Following in China's Footsteps, Modi Proposes 'Asia-Africa Growth Corridor'

BY [PTI](#) ON [23/05/2017](#) •



Narendra Modi shakes hands with Akinwumi Adesina President of African Development Bank during the inaugural function of the institution's 52nd annual meeting at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar. Credit: PTI

Gandhinagar: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday pitched an “Asia-Africa growth corridor” supported by Japan and India – a move that comes days after China launched its ambitious OBOR (One Belt, One Road) initiative.

Declaring the 52nd Annual General Meeting of the African Development Bank Group open, being held for the first time in the country at Mahatma Mandir here, Modi stressed on stronger ties with African countries and said the continent is a top priority for India.

He said, “India is working with Japan to support development in Africa. I recall my conversation with Japanese Prime Minister (Shinzo) Abe when I was in Tokyo last year”

“In our joint declaration, we mentioned about Asia-Africa growth corridor and proposed further conversation with our brothers and sisters of Africa,” the prime minister said in his inaugural speech.

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.

“Indian and Japanese research institutions have come up with a vision document, which was prepared in consultation with think tanks of Africa. I understand that the vision document will be presented in the board meeting later,” Modi was quoted as saying.

“The idea is that India and Japan along with other willing partners work jointly in sectors like skill development, information technology, manufacturing, health and connectivity,” he said.

He 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.

“India’s partnership with Africa is based on a model of cooperation which is responsive to the needs of African countries,” Modi said.

He said India is the fifth largest investor in Africa as in the last 20 years it has invested \$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 in 2014-15,” he said.

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

In his address, the prime minister gave a firm assurance of support to Africa for a better future.

“India cannot compete with Africa in long distance running,” he said on a lighter note. “But I want to assure you that India will always stand with you, shoulder to shoulder, in the long and difficult race for better future.”

Modi said that India has in the last three years improved on all macro-economic indicators.

Both Africa and India share common challenges such as uplifting poor and empowering women, he pointed out.

“We have to overcome these common challenges within the financial constraints,” Modi noted.

He also suggested the African nations to adopt some of the reforms that his government has implemented in recent times, such as direct subsidy transfer, LPG connection to poor, *neem* coating of urea and soil health card.

Invoking the bond between India and Africa since colonial era, he said the ties have only become stronger.

“Mahatma Gandhi, a Gujarati, perfected his tools of non-violence in South Africa. India had strong ties with Africa for centuries and it only became stronger with time. Africa is a top priority for India’s foreign and economic policy,” Modi said.

Those who shared the dais with Modi included Union finance minister Arun Jaitley, Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani, African Development Bank president Akinwumi Adesina, President of Senegal Macky Sall, President of Benin Patrice Talon and vice president of Ivory Coast Daniel Kablan Duncan, among others.

After his address, Modi visited the industrial exposition of African companies at the venue. He then held one-to-one meetings with various heads of state from Africa at the Mahatma Mandir.

<https://thewire.in/139280/following-in-chinas-footsteps-modi-proposes-asia-africa-growth-corridor/>