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## Tanzania becomes India's strategic partner: A significant move to actualise

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India and Tanzania have elevated ties to the level of strategic partners during the four-day visit (8-11 October 2023) of Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan to India. The two countries also agreed on a five-year roadmap to significantly expand defence cooperation. A total of six agreements provides for cooperation in the digital domain, culture, sports, maritime industries, and white shipping information sharing.

She was accompanied by a high-level delegation including the Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation Hon. January Makamba (MP), and other members from different sectors, Senior Government Officials as well as members of the Tanzania Business Community, reflecting the importance of the visit.

On this occasion, PM Modi said that this was a historic day in the relations of the two countries as they were transforming the age-old relations into a strategic partnership. India's relations with Tanzania date back several centuries when traders from the western coast of India first travelled to East Africa along the maritime route for trade and commerce. During World War I, the Indian Army was sent to German East Africa (now Tanzania) to fight against the German forces. This theatre was one of most interesting in terms of operations. While the Indian Army was led by the Boer commando and later PM of South Africa Jan Smuts, the German forces were led by the famous master of guerrilla warfare Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. Both sides used locals successfully. In all 46,906 Indian soldiers participated in this theatre during the World War.

The Joint Statement issued on this occasion underscored that India and Tanzania are maritime neighbours with a long history of trade and people-to-people linkages therefore Tanzania has an important place in India's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region). Both sides assured cooperation on the Indo-Pacific noting the African Union's vision for peace and security in Africa with a focus on the development of a Blue/ocean economy including tourism, maritime trade, services and infrastructure, marine scientific research, capacity in seabed mining, ocean conservation and maritime safety and security.

Defence cooperation between the two countries is on the increase. The 2nd Joint Defence Cooperation Committee meeting was held in Arusha (28th – 29th June 2023) resulting in a five-year Roadmap for Defence Cooperation between the two countries. Earlier, the Defence Minister of Tanzania came to India in February 2023, during which the plans to enhance defence cooperation were finalised. This included the deployment of the Indian Military Training Team (IMTT) at the Command and Staff College in Duluti. The two countries are also planning to expand cooperation in defence industry.

A crucial decision was taken to enhance maritime cooperation. Both are maritime neighbours who face common maritime security challenges. The first ever India-Tanzania Joint Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance exercise was conducted in July 2023, while earlier a bilateral maritime exercise and a trilateral maritime exercise involving India, Tanzania and Mozambique in the Mozambique Channel were held in October 2022.

Trade between the two countries is increasing. Despite the global disruption and challenges posed by the Pandemic, bilateral trade has witnessed strong growth from both sides and today stands at close to \$6 billion. EAM aptly remarked: "India has grown as an economic powerhouse and this offers opportunities to businessmen from Tanzania to be part of our growth story. While India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, Tanzania has also displayed impressive economic performance."

India is also aiding in education, skill development and ICT development. India has offered 450 Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) scholarships for capacity building and 70 Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarships for long-term programmes in 2023-24. India also offered assistance in space technologies and digital public infrastructure under India Stack including

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Digital Unique Identity (Aadhar). The first overseas campus of IIT Madras is functioning in Zanzibar, which has the potential to become the premier centre for technical education in the African continent.

The significance of the elevation of ties to the level of strategic partnership goes beyond the bilateral dimension. It is a move toward the actualisation of the India-driven Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, which is part of a larger project of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). EAM Jaishankar pointing out the significance stated: “Our cooperation can make a notable contribution to maintaining peace, prosperity and security and ensure secure, free and open shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean.”

The Asia- Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) was announced in partnership with Japan in 2017. It is based on the four pillars of development and cooperation projects, quality infrastructure and institutional connectivity, enhancing capacities and skills, and people-to-people partnership. This aims at improving growth and interconnectedness between and within Asia and Africa for realizing a free and open Indo-Pacific region. The AAGC gives priority to development projects in health and pharmaceuticals, agriculture and agro-processing, disaster management and skill enhancement.

In the current situation, Africa is invaluable for India both economically and geopolitically. Besides this being rich in mineral resources, it can help in diversifying India’s energy sources. It can also help in facing the food security challenges and provide space for Indian investments. Geopolitically, African countries can help India in reforming the UN.

It also provides India with a space to display its soft and hard power. India is assisting African countries in capacity building. India’s economic engagement with African countries has increased in the last 15 years with several public and private sector companies from India investing in Africa. India is the second largest investor in Africa after China. With the African Union as a permanent member of BRICS and Tanzania as a strategic partner, India can hope to actualise AAGC and India can emerge as a trading and manufacturing hub between Southeast Asia and Africa.

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