

By Guardian Correspondent

Africa-India relations refer to the historical, political, economic, and cultural connections between India and the African continent. However, in modern days and with the expansion of diplomatic and commercial representations, India has now developed ties with most African nations.

With expansion of diplomatic and commercial representations, trade between India and Africa continue to grow, with India among Africa's largest trading partners.

Addressing the Parliament of Uganda on Wednesday this week, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid out a vision for engagement with Africa, emphasizing that Africa will be at the top of India's priorities with a sustained and regular engagement.

The PM stressed India's old connections with Africa in terms of moral principles, emotional bonds and objectives of prosperity to meet aspirations of the people, particularly the youth.

Areas identified for India-Africa engagements seek to deepen India's engagement with Africa, guided by priorities of each country. "It will be on terms that will be comfortable for you, that will liberate your potential and not constrain your future. We will rely on African talent and skills," the premier declared.

"We will build as much local capacity and create as many local opportunities as possible. We will keep our markets open and make it easier and more attractive to trade with India. We will support our industry to invest in Africa.

"We will harness India's experience with digital revolution to support Africa's development; improve delivery of public services; extend education

and health; spread digital literacy; expand financial inclusion; and mainstream the marginalized.

"This will not just be our partnership to advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also to equip the youth of Africa for their place in the digital age," he further stated.

"Africa has 60 per cent of the world's arable land, but produces just 10 per cent of the global output. We will work with you to improve Africa's agriculture.

"Our partnership will address the challenges of climate change. We will work with Africa to ensure a just international climate order; to preserve our biodiversity; and, adopt clean and efficient energy sources.

We will strengthen our cooperation and mutual capabilities in combating terrorism and extremism; keeping our cyberspace safe and secure, and supporting the UN in advancing and peacekeeping.

We will work with African nations to keep the oceans open and free for the benefit of all nations. The world needs cooperation and not competition in the eastern shores of Africa and the eastern Indian Ocean.

That is why India's vision of Indian Ocean security is cooperative and inclusive, rooted in security and growth for all in the region.

This is especially important to me: as global engagement in Africa increases, we must all work together to ensure that Africa does not once again turn into a theatre of rival ambitions, but becomes a nursery for the aspirations of Africa's youth.

Just as India and Africa fought colonial rule together, we will work together for a just, representative and democratic global order that has a voice and a role for one-third of humanity that lives in Africa and India.

India's own quest for

Africa will be at the top of our priorities - India



Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni chats with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Entebbe State House on Tuesday. FILE photo

reforms in global institutions is incomplete without an equal place for Africa. That will be a key purpose of our foreign policy."

In the context of the Indian PM's speech, a round table meeting at the University of Dar es Salaam discussed and evaluated various elements of engagement between India and Africa.

The event was attended by

the Principal of the School of Social Sciences, Prof. Alexander Makullo, the Indian High Commissioner, Sandeep Arya, Professor of International Relations, Mohabe Nyarabu, Prof. Umamu, Economics Prof. Humphrey Moshi, Political Science lecturer Dr. Ngwaza Kamata, Prof. Rasool Minja, Dr. Anand Kumar, Dr. Shah, Dr. John Jingu and

other academicians and researchers of the university. Prof. Nyarabu noted the elements of India's engagement with Africa and the Indian Prime Minister's thoughts for developing it in the coming years in specific areas such as trade and investment, development, digital technologies, agriculture, cyber security and maritime cooperation.

The Indian High Commissioner drew attention to the different elements of cooperation between India and Tanzania linking them to the policy outlined by the Indian Prime Minister.

He mentioned India's large-scale water supply projects in Tanzania, India as the most important export destination for

Tanzanian products, India's significant investments in Africa, synergies in the field of agriculture and digital technologies, particularly ICT and common interests in open and free ocean.

The PM has also noted India's involvement in capacity building in sectors such as water, agriculture, IT, energy, management, finance, accounts and

mentioned Indian grant projects of an IT Centre at Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology, Arusha as well as cancer treatment facility at Bugando Medical Centre in Mwanza.

Prof. Mohabe Nyarabu noted the elements of India's engagement with Africa and the Indian Prime Minister's thoughts for developing it in the coming years in specific areas such as trade and investment, development, digital technologies, agriculture, cyber security and maritime cooperation.

Development Studies Prof. Severine Rugumamu suggested the need for defining the nature of relationship between India and African countries and the importance of jointly defining the areas of cooperation and specific projects between African countries and their partners.

Prof. Humphrey Moshi acknowledged the value of the developmental experiences of countries such as China and India, and the need for developing a strategy for engagement which was collaborative and mutually beneficial.

Dr. Ngwaza Kamata observed that India stood with Africa during the phase of colonial times and the struggle for freedom, and it would like to see a closer position of India as the African countries seek national development and progress.

Some scholars suggested greater opportunities in capacity building support so that African countries could absorb modern technologies and industries, highlighted the relevance of innovation hubs for a digital revolution in Africa, underlined the importance of agriculture and irrigation for mutual cooperation between India and Africa and underlined the need for more active collaboration between India and Africa for mutual benefit.