

'Indian Speaker's visit crucial for robust Indo-Tanzanian relations'

LOK SABHA speaker of Indian Parliament, Om Birla is in Tanzania for three days visit (18th -20th) for parliament cooperation between the two countries explain how Tanzania will benefit from his tour. Our Correspondent Beatrice Philemon interviewed him on a number of development issues and what Tanzania can learn from India as well.

QUESTION: Can you tell us about the agenda of your visit to Tanzania and what should Tanzanians expect from your visit?

ANSWER: We believe that the current visit of the Indian Parliamentary Delegation to Tanzania is very significant in the backdrop of the deepening Indo-Tanzanian relationship which has evolved, in recent years, into a modern and pragmatic partnership with greater emphasis on diversified trade, investment and economic engagement, development partnership covering capacity building, training, concessional credits and grants, and mutual understanding at political level.

India-Tanzania relations are marked by longstanding friendship and closeness, vibrant economic ties, wide ranging and substantive development partnership and historical people-level linkages built over centuries-old commercial exchanges.

The periodic high-level visits between our two countries have been an important feature of sound political ties, understanding and appreciation over the last fifty years.

Our current visit assumes special significance which comes fifty years after the visit of the Indian Parliamentary Delegation led by Dr. G.S. Dhillon, Speaker, Lok Sabha from 10 to 13 October 1972.

India believes in the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (The World is like one family). As Parliamentary institutions are nodal pillars of our democratic governance; it will be well for both our nations to encourage regular interaction between our Parliaments and parliamentarians. I am sure that this visit by our Parliamentary Delegation will further enhance and deepen our bilateral relationship.

Q: How does Indian parliament cooperate with the government to expedite the legal framework required to reform key economic sectors like agriculture, education and others?

A: The Parliament of India as the apex democratic institution in the country has always remained at the forefront of translating constitutional values and ideals into action by enacting appropriate laws towards building a better future for the society.

With the mandate from the Constitution and the directives given in the Directive Principles of State Policy, the Parliament of India has been enacting suitable laws over the years to keep pace with the time and needs.

By enacting several progressive legislations, our Parliament has provided a direction and helped people realise their dreams - socially, educationally and economically.

There are many landmark legislations enacted by our Parliament including: The Companies Act, 1956; The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; The Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986; The Right to Information Act, 2005; The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005; The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009; The National Food Security Act, 2013; The Central GST Act, 2017; and The Integrated GST Act, 2017; among others.

All these legislations are crucial for social transformation and the Parliament has led by example and showed its maturity and wisdom over the years by bringing about consensus on various landmark legislations.

Our political parties have also played a major role in this respect by setting aside their political differences and joining hands together when it comes to important Legislations concerning national issues.

Q: Under your leadership, what have been the major achievements and milestones for Indian parliament? Any such experience/achievement that Tanzania could learn from



Speaker of Indian Parliament, Lok Sabha

India?

A: It has been close to four years now that I have had the privilege of presiding over the Lok Sabha—the Lower House of the largest democracy in the world.

I am glad to have enjoyed the unstinted co-operation and support of the Honorable Members which has been the constant source of inspiration for me.

The Seventeenth Lok Sabha, in its journey so far, has many landmark achievements.

There were path-breaking legislations, insightful discussion, constructive debates, landmark committee recommendations, outreach initiatives, among others, all of which upheld people's aspiration and the dream of the New India.

It has been our constant endeavour to create an enabling environment for Hon'ble Members, with all relevant work amenities, smart research cum information support, advanced infrastructure, and up-to-date digital cum IT tools.

Besides, sessions for awareness generation on issues of topical concern, capacity building programmes, welfare facilities, health camps, easily accessible e-resources, and expeditious medical assistance, were ensured to facilitate productive participation of Hon'ble Members in the House.

Another challenge we faced was coping with the catastrophic impact of the COVID pandemic. By initiating appropriate measures like speeding up the vaccination drive, insistence upon observing COVID appropriate behaviour, regular testing camps, shift-wise sitting of the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, and staggered cum rotational working modes, we were able to seamlessly sail through those harsh and challenging times.

The Seventeenth Lok Sabha has, in fact, set a new paradigm and tall benchmarks in terms of overall work excellence and productivity that will continue to inspire the future journey of the Parliament of India.

The Parliament of India is constantly promoting the strengthening of the democratic traditions and institutions of India. Sharing the idea of 'One Nation, One Legislative Platform' as propounded by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, we are taking steps for the realization of the same on a priority basis.

Through this initiative, the proceedings of all legislatures—both Houses of Parliament and State Assemblies and Legislative Councils will be available on one platform.

The New Parliament Building which is on the verge of completion will also be a landmark in India's parliamentary history and a milestone moment in the celebration of Aazadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, commemorating the glorious 75 years of our Independence.

The New Building is designed to be equipped with latest state-of-the-art facilities to meet all the requirements of modern Parliament and also the expected demands of future times.

The Parliament of Tanzania, like its counterparts, in other countries is the Supreme Legislature of the country. I have no doubt that the Parliament of Tanzania, like in India would continually evolve with the needs and requirements of the changing times.

Q: We would like to know on various Indian laws on investments and how the parliament through those promote the country's economic prosperity?

A: Today, India is one of the most preferred destinations for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) owing to its liberal FDI policy, strong macroeconomics fundamentals, its democratic governance system, and improvement in its ranking in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report.

The total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow in the country increased from USD 81,973 million in FY21 to USD 84,835 million in FY22, reflecting increased foreign investment opportunities in the country. To promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), reforms in the FDI Policy have been undertaken in sectors such as Defence, Insurance, Petroleum & Natural Gas and Telecom.

Further in the trading sector, 100% FDI is permitted in Single Brand Product Retail Trading (SBRT) and 51% FDI is permitted in Multi Brand Retail Trading (MBRT).

The Government has launched 'Make in India' initiative to facilitate investment, foster innovation, build best in class infrastructure and make India a hub for manufacturing, design and innovation.

Further, investment outreach activities are done through Min-

istries, State Governments and Indian Missions abroad for enhancing international cooperation and promoting foreign investment in the country.

The key laws that govern foreign investment in India are the FDI Policy, issued by the DPIIT and the Foreign Exchange Management Act 1999 (FEMA) and the rules and regulations issued there under.

Furthermore, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued the Foreign Exchange Management (Mode of Payment and Reporting of Non-Debt Instruments) Regulations 2019, for investment in India by a person resident outside India.

In recent times, the Parliament of India has passed many legislations including: The Special Economic Zones Act, 2005, The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006, The Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2021, The Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021; etc.

To make, India an attractive and investor friendly nation and to stimulate growth. The intent is to remove policy bottlenecks that may be hindering investment inflows into the country.

Changes are made in the policy after having intensive consultations with stakeholders including apex industry chambers, Associations, representatives of industries/groups and other organizations taking into consideration their views/comments.

Q: India is now the world's 5th largest economy. India is an important trade partner of Tanzania. How can India help Tanzania in promoting its exports and industrial development?

A: India offers 98 per cent Duty Free Tariff scheme to Tanzania. This has helped to promote Tanzania's exports to India.

Last year we had a balanced bilateral trade of USD 4.58 billion with USD 2.2 billion of exports from Tanzania. India has remained number one export destination for Tanzania.

As per Tanzania Investment Centre our investment since 1990 has reached USD 3.68 billion. In the last one year there has been a positive trend in investments in agro-processing, animal vaccines, pharmaceuticals, hospital and ports, among others. India is also working with Tanzania on capacity building.

As you know Tanzania is India's biggest development partner in Africa with USD 1.1 billion line of credit, annual about 700 scholarships and capacity building training.

Recently, a 29 member delegation from Tanzania Chamber of Commerce & Industries (TCCIA) attended a customised multi-sectoral training programme in India.

India is a leading country in organizing exhibitions and trade fairs in Tanzania. In 2022, 8 big exhibitions in different sector took place with more than 700 Indian businesses participating in it. These events help in promotion of Tanzanian exports and investment in Tanzania.

Q: How does India want to engage with Tanzania in parliamentary matters? What should be the ideal way forward?

A: We have had several exchanges of parliamentary delegations in the past. A parliamentary delegation from India had attended 55th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Tanzania in 2009.

A delegation of Indian origin MPs had attended the first PIO Parliamentarian Conference in New Delhi in January 2018.

These visits have added value to our political relations and we should strive to have frequent exchanges of parliamentary delegations aimed at renewing Parliamentary contacts and strengthening bilateral Parliamentary cooperation and dialogue.

Our Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies (PRIDE) organizes capacity building programmes catering to parliamentarians/government officials of Parliament of friendly foreign countries under the ITEC programme.

We are happy to see regular participation from Tanzania. Tanzania is a major beneficiary of training courses allocated under India's ITEC & ICCR scholarships. India has offered 450 ITEC seats and 70 ICCR scholarships for 2022. Since 1972, about 4600 Tanzanians have benefited from the ITEC scholarships programme.

We are also ready to organize workshops specifically catered for Tanzanian parliamentarians on the areas of their interest on request from Tanzania.

If Tanzania has any specific proposal in mind relating to parliamentary cooperation, we are ready to consider it positively.

Q: India is the new Chair of G20. What can other developing countries of global South including Tanzania expect from India's presidency?

A: India has assumed the G20 Presidency for one year from 1 December 2022 to 30 November 2023. Under India's G20 Presidency, the G20 Agenda is pertaining to the main theme of the Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: One Earth * One Family * One Future.

The theme of the 9th P20 Summit will be focusing on India's Presidency's theme from the Parliamentary perspective. India would draw attention of participating Delegates towards the ancient and rich democratic traditions of our country, showcasing the history of Indian civilization as "mother of democracy".

India plans to utilise this opportunity to address pressing issues of developing countries/global South and it would be impossible to do so without considering the African continent. Our G20 priorities will be shaped in consultation with not just our G20 partners, but also our fellow partners in the global South, whose voice often goes unheard and for this we seek support of our friends in Africa including Tanzania.

India's G20 priority will be to continue pressing for reformed multilateralism that creates more accountable, inclusive just, equitable and representative multipolar international system that is fit for addressing the challenges in the 21st century.