

India-Tanzania friendship on an upward trajectory

Coinciding with the 69th Republic Day of India on 26th January 2018, 'The Guardian' spoke to the High Commissioner of India to Tanzania about the relations between the two countries and opportunities in various areas of bilateral cooperation. The responses are as follows:

Q1: We heard that India is celebrating Republic Day on 26th January. Could you share more about it?

A1: We celebrate 26th of January as the Republic Day of India to mark the coming into effect of the Indian Constitution on this day, 68 years ago. This is also the year of 70th anniversary since India's independence in 1947. It is a day to reflect on India's advances as a flourishing democracy (largest in the world), economic growth to be among fastest growing emerging economies, national developmental achievements to meet the aspirations of our people and our rich socio-cultural fabric. Our Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi has called for building a New India by 2022 as a secure, prosperous and strong nation, offering equal opportunity for all and harnessing modern science & technology for improving in various ways the lives of the people of India.

Q2: How will you describe the trend in India-Tanzania relations in the last couple of years?

A2: India-Tanzania friendship is rooted in a strong foundation of long-standing mutual political understanding at the level of the governments, deep economic linkages, and affinity between the people of the two countries. All the three elements of the relationship are registering an overall positive trend and we expect to achieve higher levels of cooperation and collaboration in the times ahead. In the last six months, the Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment, Mr. Charles Mwijage visited India to meet his counterpart on economic cooperation and hold a forum on trade and investment with business community, Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee of India visited Tanzania to discuss security cooperation and Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs of India held consultations on bilateral cooperation with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India. There have been similar exchanges among the business people, public personalities, academicians and others.

Q3: What role will India play in Tanzania's drive for industrialization and economic development?

A3: India is the leading trading partner of Tanzania with a trade turnover of over USD 2.1 billion in 2016. As per the latest TRA data, during Jan-Nov 2017, Tanzania's exports to India have increased by 50% to USD 895 million and India's exports to Tanzania increased marginally to USD 1.03 billion. India's share in Tanzania's exports as well as imports has remained high, amounting to over 22% of Tanzania's exports worldwide and about 15% of Tanzania's global imports. In a similar vein, India's cumulative investments into Tanzania stand at USD 2.13 billion spread over 420 projects generating employment to 54,406 people, as per the TIC data.

These trade and investment figures are indicative of India's prominent role and opportunities for cooperation in Tanzania's economic growth and development.

Another interesting aspect of our bilateral economic relations is the growing interest among major Indian engineering companies such as Larsen & Toubro, Shapoorji Pallonji, KEC, Kalpatru, Megha Engineering apart from that of already established Indian groups here such as Tata International, auto-companies, Kamal Group, banks and others. We expect that these endeavours will translate into new projects, investments and greater business collaboration between India and Tanzania businesses in the coming years.

Q4: We understand that India supports development projects in Tanzania. What are the new developments in this direction?

A4: There are three concrete elements of development partnership between India and Tanzania. First, human skill development comprising more than 400 officials and specialists from Tanzania attending short-term training courses in India every year in areas such as information & communications technology/ software, energy, water, agriculture, engineering, public administration, financial and human resource management, banking, audit & accountancy, standardization, law enforcement, rural development, entrepreneurship, etc. We are glad that these courses also involve officials deployed in regions and various technical offices across Tanzania and rapid growth in these courses in the last few years is contributing positively to capacity enhancement.

Second, Indian grant projects were recently concluded in terms of establishing an information technology centre at the Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science & Technology, Arusha; setting up of a radiation therapy cancer treatment facility at Bugando Medical Centre, Mwanza; provision of over 130,000 secondary school books of Maths and Science for schools in Tanzania. We also undertake hydrographic surveys jointly with the authorities in Tanzania towards preparation of navigational charts in locations identified by the government of Tanzania. A couple of other grant projects are at the stage of planning at implementation in this year.

Third, soft credit lines from the EXIM Bank of India have financed projects in the field of water supply, agriculture and transport in recent years. The recent completion of Ruvu water project brought 130 million litres per day of water to over 700,000 residents of Dar es Salaam (Kibamba, Kimara and nearby localities), which comprised building pumping stations, water transmission lines, water treatment plants, reservoirs and distribution system at the cost of USD 100 million; President Magufuli inaugurated this project in June 2017 and conveyed his appreciation. Later, we launched the construction of another water supply project to the towns of Tabora, Nzega, Igunga and about 70 villages en route at a cost of over USD 250 million which should be completed around end-2019 with the cooperation from the government of Tanzania. One more water project is being launched in Zanzibar. A couple of other projects are at the stage of finalization between the two governments. The supply of Indian tractors, farm

implements and vehicles supported by EXIM Bank have also played a positive role for the farmers and security needs in Tanzania.

Q5: Indians and Tanzanians have known each other for centuries. What role does this friendship play in the relations between the two countries?

A5: Mutual affinity and appreciation among the people of India and Tanzania for each other is a very strong pillar of the friendship, which President Magufuli described as “fraternal” ties between the two countries and their people. This affection comes after centuries of knowing and understanding each other, and recognizing the value and importance of the friendship between the two countries. Cultural exchanges between the two countries draw considerable interest from the people on both sides and are progressing well. Next week, we expect a dance group from Tanzania to travel for two weeks to India with the support of the Government of India. These close relations also translate into travel for tourism (Indians are the fifth largest source of tourists to Tanzania as per the Ministry of Natural Resources & Tourism of Tanzania), thousands of Tanzanian students studying in India, similar numbers travelling for medical treatment, many Indian specialists conducting specialized surgeries in Tanzania periodically and active academic exchanges. These broad-based contacts among the people of the two countries provide a unique and special character to the friendship between the two countries.

Q6: India and Tanzania have had similar approaches in the international arena - members of Non-Aligned Movement, South-South Cooperation, and positions in international forums. We hear very little now about these convergences?

A6: I believe that convergence in the approaches of India and Tanzania in the international arena remains as strong as ever. India and Tanzania engage with similar approaches in UN forums on the issues of sustainable development, trade, climate change, peace & conflict situations, etc. As developing countries, we have similar interests on trade matters, financing for development, dealing with the impact of climate change requiring access to green technologies and finances, peacekeeping role in conflict areas where Tanzania is playing important role and India traditionally has been one of the largest contributors. India and Tanzania support ‘democratizing the UN Security Council’, for which we have proposed expansion of its permanent membership by inclusion of, inter alia, India and representation from Africa. Among one of the recent initiatives, Tanzania has signed the Framework Agreement for the establishment of the International Solar Alliance, which will hold its first Summit in March 2018 in India. Perhaps, the global discourse has become more focused on economic elements centred around national developmental objectives.

Q7: What is the relevance of India’s economic growth and progress for Tanzania and the bilateral relationship?

A7: India is a developing country with similar priorities in terms of developmental pursuits to meet growing aspirations of their people; India’s model of democracy, governance, economic development, inclusive growth, harmonious social fabric, sustained efforts for nation-building,

deployment of science & technology for development, and economic reforms have delivered sound results. India's pre-eminent position in the field of information technology, particularly computer software and outsourced business processes, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, automobiles, engineering goods, food processing, education facilities and traditional strengths in sectors such as garments and textiles, leather, gems and jewelry offer opportunities for greater economic cooperation, especially at the level of small and medium-scale enterprises. India's growth has enabled greater participation of India in development partnership with Tanzania and other countries, as visible in our growing development cooperation here. I am confident that bilateral cooperation has enormous potential to grow and expand in the years ahead and we are firmly moving forward in that direction.
