



East African Community is becoming an Economical and Political reality

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Addresses the Media onboard

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Hamid Ansari has said that the East African Community is taking shape as an Economical and Political Community and many of our programmes and initiatives in the region will no longer be purely bilateral but will have to be adapted to work for the entire community. He was addressing the Media Onboard Air India One aircraft while returning back from a 5-day visit to Rwanda and Uganda, today. The Minister of State for Social Justice & Empowerment, Shri Vijay Sampla and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that there had been a gap in high level visits to both of these countries and this visit filled that gap. He further said that the level of discussions in both the countries were extremely warm and cordial, adding that his meetings went beyond pro-forma. The meeting with the President of Uganda was substantive and productive and reinforced our long standing ties, he said.

The Vice President said that India's approach, as long standing friends, has been to give our African partners assistance in their developmental programmes in those areas where they want and it is them to convert that into specific requests. He further said that the broader issues of India's approach to cooperation with African Countries are well known and well appreciated. One issue of concern to both India and Africa is scourge of terrorism and there was a total meeting of minds in condemning terrorism in all shapes and forms, he added.

The Vice President said that the visit to Kigali Genocide Memorial was a tribute to the determination of the people of Rwanda and that he was glad that they were able to overcome that heart-rending disaster and re-build their country.

Reacting to a question on trade imbalance, the Vice President said that there was trade imbalance with Uganda as India exports a lot of things to them and their export basket to India was presently limited. He further said that there are two ways to address this; one by increasing the products in their export basket and two; instead of exporting finished goods from India to Uganda, some Indian manufacturers could set up their manufacturing units in Uganda.

Responding to a question on Parliamentary cooperation with both countries, the Vice President said that there is a need for having more Parliamentary interactions. He further said that a Parliamentary visit from Rwanda and Uganda will expose them to what is happening in India and witness our developmental programmes.

Reacting to a question on India sustaining engagements with Africa, the Vice President said that it was a part of Government's policy and that the India-Africa summit and various other initiatives make this evident. He further said that the sheer size of Africa with 54 countries and one billion people, create enormous chances of cooperation and of sharing our experience and skills which are useful to them. Africa also has enormous resources which can be useful as India's development requirements come up, he added.

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