



President of India reaches Djibouti; addresses Indian Community in Djibouti

Posted On: 03 OCT 2017 10:30PM by PIB Delhi

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, has reached Djibouti today (October 3, 2017) in the first leg of his State Visit to two African countries - Djibouti and Ethiopia. The Prime Minister of Republic of Djibouti, Mr. Abdoukader Kamil Mohamed received the President at Ambouli International Airport. The two leaders then engaged in a short round of talks on bilateral relations and themes of common interest to both countries.

This is President Kovind's first overseas visit after assuming office. It is also the first visit to Djibouti by an Indian Head of State or Head of Government. Shortly after leaving the airport, the President paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi by garlanding the bust of the Father of the Nation on Djibouti's Nelson Mandela Avenue.

Later in the evening, the President addressed an Indian Community reception hosted by the Ambassador of India to Djibouti, Shri Anurag Srivastava. The reception was attended by about 200 people, roughly half the Indian/Indian origin population in Djibouti, some of them descendants of Indian traders who migrated from Jamnagar and Rajkot over 100 years ago. More recently, Indian blue-collar and white-collar workers, employed in the port in Djibouti or in IT companies, have added to the diaspora.

Addressing the gathering, the President said that while we have an Ambassador to represent our government, every member of the Indian community present here is a representative of our nation. In whatever capacity they have made Djibouti their home - be it as traders, as professionals, or as skilled workers, they have shown a spirit of selfless and dedicated service to the people around them. They have, while preserving their traditions, family values and strong work ethic, adapted very well in their adopted home, becoming pillars of support for the local community and a source of pride for India.

The President said that the rise of India is opening new opportunities for collaboration. Our diaspora has an important role in building bridges between India and the world. India is on a high growth trajectory. There is optimism and excitement in our country. We have undertaken to transform the lives of ordinary people by 2022 when we celebrate 75 years of our Independence. We want to embrace and connect with our diaspora abroad, the President said. He invited the Indian diaspora to partner in the rise of New India.

The President said that it was his first visit outside India after being elected President. That it was to Africa is no coincidence but a conscious decision on our part. Our relations with this beautiful continent have a special place in our hearts, and we remain ever committed to deepening our fraternal bonds with the African people.

The President said that historical links and people-to-people contacts have existed between India and Djibouti since times immemorial. We must now try to rediscover this shared history and identity. Much effort is required to resurrect our common heritage, not just for old times' sake but to build a contemporary partnership. Prospects of the blue economy and the connect of the Indian Ocean provide immense possibilities to build a sustainable future.

The President said that Djibouti is a strategically located country, just off the Gulf of Aden. It is an important Indian Ocean partner country for India. During the Yemeni crisis of 2015, Djibouti was supportive of Indian efforts to evacuate Indian citizens, and those of other countries, as part of Operation Rahat, and offered use of an air strip.

President Kovind continues his visit to Djibouti tomorrow (October 4, 2017).

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(Release ID: 1504726) Visitor Counter : 127

