

Third India-Africa Forum Summit kicks off today

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India on Monday will host the third edition of the India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi to further strengthen its political, economic and diplomatic links with the African continent. The major focus of the week-long summit would be the tapping of unbounded opportunities and expanding two-way engagement in varied sectors with the African continent, which will see participation by 54 nations. On October 26, India will host top officials of the African nations while on October 27, external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj will host her African counterparts. The summit meeting will be held on October 29, in which heads of states and governments will participate.

A total of around 1,000 delegates, including heads of government, ministers, officials and business leaders are expected to descend on Delhi for the event. The king of Morocco, 40 heads of state and the influential African Union will also participate in the event. This is the biggest diplomatic event to be hosted by India in the last three decades, and is seen as its effort to consolidate the historical ties with the continent, endowed with large reserves of minerals and hydrocarbons. The NDA government believes a vibrant India and a resurgent Africa have a vision of a close partnership and that the summit will provide a platform to develop a new paradigm of cooperation. Almost all African nations have huge tracts of fertile land and India feels there is huge scope for exploiting potential in the agricultural sector in the continent. A number of Indian companies are keen to invest in agri sector.

Food security is a major concern for African nations and India feels it can provide expertise to help Africa boost its agricultural production. Some countries in Africa have huge reservoirs of oil and gas, and India is keen on forging closer cooperation with them in the energy sector. Indian companies have already invested in the oil sector in Mozambique and Nigeria. “The event will take place between October 26-30 and the participation will be at three levels “, Navtej Sarna, secretary, west, ministry of external affairs, said adding the first level would be at the head of government level, followed by the foreign ministers at the second, and senior government officials at the third. The attending African leaders will be welcomed by a camel-mounted music performance of the Border Security Force (BSF) music band, and will be at the entrance of the 18,000-sq metre Indira Gandhi sports complex in the capital. A 30-second musical composition for each guest will be played. Fifty-four countries are participating in this summit.

Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) will host a dinner on October 28 for the leaders attending the summit and will also have marathon bilateral meetings with counterparts from African countries. Though India has hosted several summits since 1983, this could be the biggest event in terms of number of participants. While the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) summit saw 51 heads of government and states in attendance, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) had 33 world leaders in attendance. This time, India has invited heads of all 54 African nations. The first summit was held in New Delhi in 2008 and Ethiopia hosted the second in 2011. African countries account for over 60% of the total concessional lines of credit that India extends.