

India-Ghana: Growing Together as Equals

Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's founding Prime Minister and one of Africa's most iconic leaders, was widely hailed as the Osagyefo, meaning "redeemer". Rightly so, as Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from colonial rule in 1957, under his leadership.

From Nkrumah's dream of African liberation and anti-imperialism to Modi's vision of a cohesive Global South, India-Ghana ties continue to strengthen this age-old spirit of sovereignty, self-reliance and mutual respect. In a powerful affirmation of this deep-rooted solidarity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stepped onto Ghanaian soil on July 2, 2025, marking the first official visit by an Indian head of government to the West African nation in over three decades.

On his arrival at Accra's Kotoka International Airport, the Prime Minister was received by Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama and greeted with cultural fanfare and a wave of warmth from Ghana's Indian diaspora. However, the grandeur of the visit was not just symbolic. The sojourn, as part of PM's five-nation tour, gave the much-needed clarity and push for a more stable and structured relationship with Ghana, significantly strengthening India's strategic commitments towards the prosperity and development of Africa.

For long, there has been a critical view of India's development partnership with Africa, particularly by Western policy analysts, who looked at India's investment as predatory and not making structural economic changes in Africa to make them self-reliant. Silencing the critics, the Prime Minister made the overarching goal of India's Africa policy amply clear. "Our development partnership with Africa is demand-driven.

It is focussed on building local capacities and creating local opportunities. Our objective is not just to invest, but to empower. To help develop self-sustaining ecosystems," PM said emphatically, in his historic address in the Parliament of Ghana. Ghana's multi-layered diplomatic engagement with India, characterised by widening interest in agriculture, infrastructure, technology, pharma, defence and culture, has now been taken to the level of a 'comprehensive partnership'.

The newly signed bilateral agreements, particularly on health, digital infrastructure and cultural exchange, will result in providing significant tangible outcomes from the high-level visit shortly. Sustained focus on health services and digital payment networks, as outlined during the visit, could be a significant growth amplifier in the region. Due to deficient capacity for pharmaceutical research and development (R&D), Africa manufactures less than 2 per cent of the medicines it consumes, making it heavily dependent on imports. With the plan to establish a vaccine manufacturing hub in Ghana, India is giving a major push towards Ghana's health sov-

ereignty and West Africa's rapid industrial growth. A stable domestic pharmaceutical manufacturing industry will not only better guarantee future supplies but also create high-paying manufacturing jobs and increase the overall economic productivity in the region.

India's traditional medicine systems (AYUSH) are also likely to get a major boost in Ghana. Being the second most populous country in West Africa, these bilateral initiatives will have significant outcomes and a multiplier impact on the entire region. Trade has always been a key priority between India and Ghana, with bilateral commerce touching \$3 billion. India's nearly \$2 billion investment in diverse sectors like infrastructure, energy, pharmaceuticals, and IT makes Ghana an important destination for private players. Ghana's abundant gold, oil, and newly discovered critical minerals (for EVs and the electronics industry) will further boost the bilateral trade, aiming towards doubling it in the next five years.

This likely upward trend in the bilateral trade, together with a more robust and reliable digital payment system in Ghana, by integrating India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) with Ghana Interbank Payment and Settlement Systems (GHIPSS), is poised to create West Africa's first cross-border real-time growth corridor.

Ghana plays a crucial role in ensuring regional stability in West Africa, being a key partner in transatlantic strategic engagement on governance, trade and security. As terrorism and transnational threats rise in the region, this partnership adds strategic depth to India's Africa outreach. PM's mantra of "security through stability" synergises with India's commitment to extend maritime security, defence supplies and cyber security to Ghana.

Post Operation Sindoor and amidst continuous realignment of the global world order, the visit can be seen as a significant diplomatic move that goes beyond the ceremonial gestures, and could result in developing an ambitious yet pragmatic blueprint for future collaborations, not just with Ghana, but also about India's deepening engagement in Africa beyond trade and economy to contemporary global issues. Elevating the diplomatic relations to the level of 'comprehensive partnership' will bring in more depth, momentum, as well as accountability in the bilateral relations between India and Ghana. After the inclusion of the African Union (AU) in the G20 as its 21st permanent member in 2023, the recent visit by the Prime Minister to Ghana has further reaffirmed India's positioning as a leader of the Global South, advocating for equity, reform in global institutions, and pro-Africa development models.



RAO NARENDER YADAV

(The writer is Director, African centre of India, a New Delhi based think-tank. Views are personal)