

PRESS RELEASE

Inauguration of Mahatma Gandhi Centre in Djibouti

The **Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Leadership and Entrepreneurship** in Djibouti was inaugurated today by the President of Djibouti H.E. Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh. The event witnessed participation from senior Government functionaries and members of the diplomatic corps.

2. Speaking on the occasion, President Guelleh expressed his deep sense of gratitude India for the supporting the development of this Centre. He stated that the Centre would be a shining example of India's willingness to contribute towards development of Djibouti as per priorities identified by his government. It would be a lasting symbol of India's development cooperation with Djibouti. He stated that the Government of Djibouti has always been keen in sharing Indian experience in development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) particularly through promotion of entrepreneurship so as to create job opportunities for youth. He encouraged the youth of Djibouti to benefit from the Centre, particularly the Innovation workshop which offers insights into artificial intelligence, nanotechnology and robotics.

3. External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj message on the occasion was read out by Ambassador of India to Ethiopia, Djibouti and the African Union, Shri Anurag Srivastava at the inaugural event. In her message, External Affairs Minister said that the Centre was a befitting tribute to Mahatma Gandhi in the year of celebrations of his 150th birth anniversary. It was also appropriate that the Centre be named after Mahatma Gandhi who provided leadership and inspiration for the entire world. She congratulated the Government of Djibouti on the successful completion of the project in a short period of time despite the challenges. She conveyed that India would continue to partner with Djibouti in fulfilling her development priorities inspired by the ten guiding principles of our engagement with Africa as outlined recently by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

4. Following a request from the Government of Djibouti, Government of India had provided grant assistance of US \$ 5 million to develop an SME Incubation Centre in November 2016. The Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Leadership and

Entrepreneurship presently consists of an incubator cum accelerator, a state of the art innovation centre and an information resource centre. It has been constructed in a short period of two years. The Centre which is powered by solar energy, has been established to expose youth to the entire ecosystem of entrepreneurship as also provide necessary support to young entrepreneurs.

5. The Mahatma Gandhi Centre will provide a fillip to employment creation, development and strengthening of private sector and systematic growth and development of enterprises, particularly in knowledge-based and services sector of Djibouti. The Centre is going to be the premier institution in Djibouti to support and train youth and equip them with requisite skills as future entrepreneurs so as to contribute towards economic and social development of Djibouti.

6. Historical links, cultural affinities and people-to-people contacts between India and Djibouti have existed since times immemorial. Contemporary bilateral relations are marked by mutual respect and understanding on various bilateral, regional and multilateral issues. Djibouti extended extraordinary support during Operation Rahat in April 2015 to support the evacuation of Indians and other nationals from war-torn Yemen. India, within the rubric of South-South Cooperation, has extended lines of credit amounting to US \$ 49.13 million to the Government of Djibouti for construction of a cement factory. President Shri Ram Nath Kovind paid a State Visit to Djibouti on 3-4 October 2017 which was the first visit abroad by President after assuming office. President Guelleh visited New Delhi on 11 March 2018 to participate in the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance and earlier during the IAFS-III in October 2017.

Djibouti

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