



सत्यमेव जयते
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PRESS RELEASE

Shri V. Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs interacted with the Indian community in Nigeria, Benin and Chad on 4th June 2021

Shri V. Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs [MOS(VM)] held a 75-minute interaction with over 300 members of Indian community based in Nigeria, Benin, and Chad today, in virtual mode. The objective was to engage with the Indian community on their welfare and well-being, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Representatives of leading community organizations (Indian Cultural Association Lagos, Indian Professionals Forum Nigeria, Sanyukt Bharatiya Association (SABHA), PIOCCI Nigeria Chapter, Indian Cultural Association Abuja, Kerala Samajam Lagos, Indian Language School Lagos and Indian Association Benin) thanked Government of India for over 35 VBM/charter flights, support for visa/resident permit extensions and supply of SII Vaccines under Covax to Nigeria and Benin that have benefitted both Nigerian/Benin nationals and resident expatriates including the Indian community. High Commissioner Abhay Thakur highlighted the Indian community's contributions to the country of their residence and recalled that ICA Lagos was conferred the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award in January 2021.

MOS(VM) stated that the world has been ravaged by the pandemic, and India too has been deeply impacted. The Government swung into swift action soon after the second wave started in India. To meet the increased domestic vaccination demand, the Government enhanced its focus on vaccinating all. So far, over 22 crore vaccine doses have been administered. The Government ensured that poor & vulnerable sections of the society are not suffered due to the movement restrictions imposed by various States to contain the spread of COVID.

He added that the Prime Minister has personally been monitoring, advising various departments & state Governments of containment of COVID, providing relief to the poor & ensuring the availability & supply of medical equipment & essential medicines. He has been holding a series of meetings with medical experts, vaccine manufacturers, doctors, Chief Ministers & officials at the District level. The government also facilitated faster imports of key medical devices by relaxing the conditions for clearances, approved 25 new manufacturing sites for Remdesivir production, decided to procure 1 Lakh Portable Oxygen Concentrators from PM CARES fund, and 551 PSA Oxygen Generation Plants across the country through PM CARES. The large-scale production of vaccines for both India and abroad, our own indigenous R&D in the form of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin and DRDO's 2DG, the countless trainloads of oxygen containers networking tirelessly across the country, our intense engagement with foreign countries to ensure timely supplies of medicines and equipment, and our own massive vaccination drive in the country, are testimony to India's firm resolve to defeat the pandemic.

MOS(VM) paid tribute to India and its leadership that the fight against the pandemic has been fought hard and is being won. The case load is reducing, number of deaths are decreasing, and the recovery rate is healthy. India is winning this fight convincingly. The Government is sensitive and responsive to the needs of the nation.

On the economic front, MOS(VM) stated that the government has taken several measures to ensure that the growth of the economy is accelerated. Recently, Productivity Linked Incentives schemes have been launched in various sectors including Pharma, electronics hardware manufacturing & White Goods (Air Conditioners and LED Lights) to make Indian manufacturers globally competitive and to attract investment. The government is committed in its efforts to create economies of scale, enhance exports and make India an integral part of the global supply chain in various areas.

On various welfare measures, MOS(VM) said that the financial benefit under PM-KISAN has been extended to over 9 Crore farmer families. Recently, an allocation of Rs 26000 crore were made for Free food grains to States / UTs for distribution to beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY-III). He expressed confidence that India's economy will bounce back very strongly.

MOS(VM) lauded members of Indian community for their resilience and significant contribution to building bridges of friendship with the people of their respective countries of residence. He appreciated their local welfare activities, including food and medicine donations and

healthcare support to Indian and local communities alike. He complimented the Indian Language School (ILS) Lagos for adapting quickly and providing online teaching to its 1800 students, despite the hurdles of the pandemic. Recalling his first visit after assuming office to Nigeria, MOS(VM) stated that Nigeria is India's largest trade-investment partner in Africa and a valuable partner in articulating the cause of the developing world, including at the UN and WTO. He assured the audience that "ensuring wellbeing and welfare of Indians abroad and PIOs" is a primary focus for Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

At the end of the interaction, MOS(VM) virtually launched the revamped website of Indian Professional Forum (IPF) Nigeria.

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