

Printed from

**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

---

# China wants India to go slow on Asia-Africa corridor

TNN | Sep 2, 2017, 10.51 PM IST

BEIJING: China has initiated a move to persuade India to go slow on the Asia Africa Growth Corridor, which New Delhi has formulated along with Japan. It is seen by many as an alternative Silk Road to tap the African market. Beijing is now trying to persuade India and South Africa to merge the project with the BRICS platform and keep its rival, Japan, out of it. Once merged into BRICS, India's influence on Africa through the project will also get diluted.

The project reflects one of the several differences that participating countries including India, Russia and South Africa has with the host of the upcoming BRICS summit at the Chinese city of Xiamen on Sunday.

This includes sharp differences between Russia and China over energy mix and other issues in the China-Russia gas pipeline, which has been delayed due to this reason.

The Asia Africa Growth Corridor project was planned by India and Japan with the active support of the African Development Bank and several African countries including South Africa who wish to reduce their dependence on Beijing, observers said. The idea is to "create a 'free and open Indo-Pacific region' by rediscovering ancient sea-routes and creating new sea corridors" by integrating the economies of South, Southeast, and East Asia with Oceania and Africa.

China sees the move as a source of major competition that will reduce its economic and political influence over the African continent. It is now trying to persuade both India and African countries to merge the initiative with the BRICS agenda so it can have better control over it.

"BRICS countries should consider how to respond to the opportunities and challenges presented by their enthusiasm for Africa and capitalize on this to increase cooperation," the state run Global Times said in a commentary.

China is also pushing the New Development Bank, the Shanghai based financial institution, which has been created by BRICS countries to expand its lending to different African countries even though they may not be members of the organization. Beijing invited two African countries, Egypt and Guinea, as observers at the Xiamen summit besides three other countries.

One of the invitees, Thailand, has been given a place at the table to return a favor Bangkok did to Beijing when it helped negotiate on China's behalf with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) on the vexed issue of the South China Sea.