

President Pranab Mukherjee to embark on 4-day visit to China next week

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New Delhi: President Pranab Mukherjee will visit China from May 24 to 27 during which he will hold talks with the top Chinese leadership, the Foreign Ministry here said today, announcing the first trip to the country by an Indian Head of State in six years.

Mukherjee will be visiting China at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart President Xi Jinping, the Foreign Ministry said.

Mukherjee, the first President to visit China after his predecessor Pratibha Patil's trip in 2010, will arrive in the highly industrialised Chinese city Guangzhou on May 24. The city has strong business links with India.

Besides interacting with the Indian community, which has over 3,000 businessmen, Mukherjee will also address India-China Business Forum to highlight the investment opportunities in India.

Top Chinese officials of the province are expected to attend the event. A number of Indian and Chinese businessmen are also expected to take part in the event, official sources said.

Later, he will arrive in Beijing on May 25 and attend a reception hosted by The Chinese People's Friendship Association for Foreign Countries (CPAFFC).

On May 26, he will address a meeting at the Peking university and later hold talks with Xi and also meet Premier Li Keqiang along with other Chinese leaders before leaving for home on May 27.

Mukherjee's visit would set off a series of high-level visits between the two countries as they seek to deepen bilateral engagement despite differences like China's attempts block India's bid at the UN to get JeM chief Masood Azhar banned.

The President's visit, which is a reciprocal visit to Xi's trip to India in 2014, will be followed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Chinese city of Hangzhou to take part in the G20 leaders summit to be held on September 4 and 5 this year.

Xi was expected to travel to India to take part in the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) summit scheduled to be held in Goa from October 15-16 this year.

Modi had made a high-profile visit to China last year.

- PTI