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- G20 Bharat Presidency: An Overview

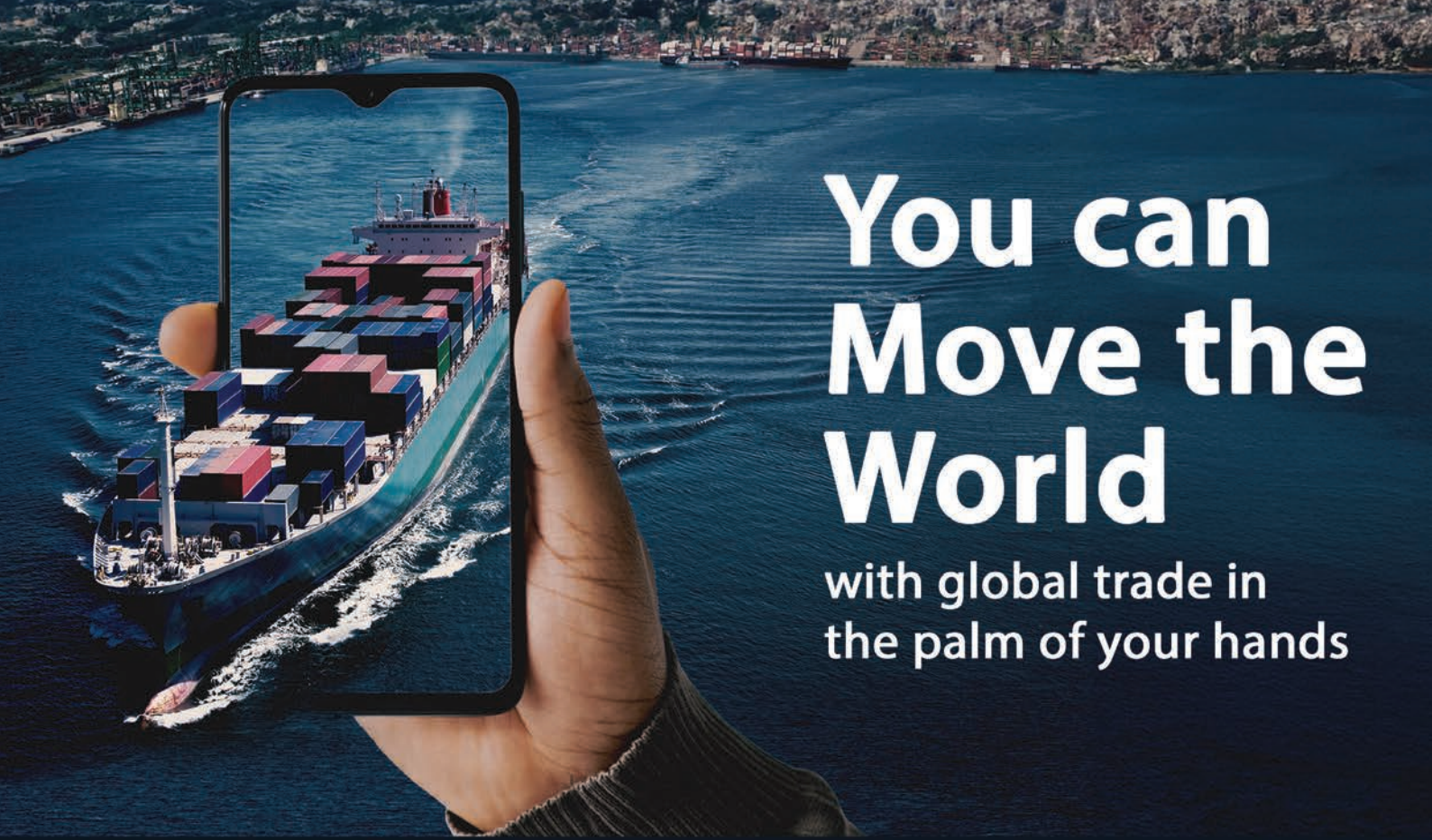
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G20 Presidency: India Ascends the Global Stage

As we commemorate the 75th Republic Day of India, it is with profound pride and contemplation that we unveil the **IN Diplomacy Special India Edition**.

India's journey in the past decade has been nothing short of extraordinary. An international traveller touching down in any of India's metro cities is immediately enveloped in a vivid testament to this growth. The transformation across the nation in infrastructure, modes of transport, and overall urban development is not just palpable but also emblematic of India's rising stature on the global stage. This progress was further spotlighted during India's much lauded G20 Presidency in 2023, an event that not only showcased India's diplomatic finesse but also opened up numerous avenues for international collaboration and admiration.

The bilateral relationship between India and Singapore has been fortified through decades of diplomatic ties, reaching new heights with high-level interactions and visits, including those by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to India and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. These engagements underscore the deep-rooted respect and admiration forming the cornerstone of this partnership.

Economically, the ties are equally robust. The year 2023 saw a remarkable \$17.203 billion in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from Singapore to India. The presence of major Singaporean companies across various sectors in India, and the strong footprint of Indian corporate giants in Singapore, highlights a symbiotic economic synergy.

Tourism and educational collaborations form other vital facets of this relationship. The significant number of Indian tourists visiting Singapore post-Covid has continued to bolster the island state's tourism sector and economy. In this edition we present a bird's-eye view of an umpteen number of options, Singaporeans visiting India can choose from. In the realm of education, the two countries are creating transnational educational pathways, fostering a deep interconnection between the upcoming generations of both nations.

In this special edition, we also have the honour of interviewing HE Dr. Shilpak Ambule, the new High Commissioner of India to Singapore, who shares with us India's G20 experience and other aspects of Singapore-India relations (on page 3).

This edition commemorates 25 years of Sun Media's engagement with the High Commission of India, Singapore, for which we are very grateful. We have been reporting on all the major India-Singapore milestones in the last quarter of a century. We will continue to bring the myriad dimensions of this flourishing relationship on our portal www.indiplomacy.com and our monthly printed edition of *IN Diplomacy* with a special section dedicated to India. Do stay tuned for a new **India and Singapore podcast series**, which will bring you views of movers and shakers in business, the arts, fintech and culture.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the High Commissioner and his team, our readers and advertisers. Your support has been greatly instrumental in bringing out this special edition. To all Indians and friends of India, we wish you a joyous Republic Day. Let us celebrate the strength and potential of the India-Singapore relationship, a beacon of mutual respect, cooperation, and shared growth.

Happy Reading!



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H.E. Dr Shilpak Ambule: India's G20 Impact and Diplomatic Milestones



In a wide-ranging interview with IN Diplomacy the High Commissioner talks about the far-reaching impact of India's recent G20 Presidency, a testament to its growing diplomatic influence on the world stage as well as the different aspects of India-Singapore relations, from bilateral visits and investments to the growing synergy in areas like fintech, green energy, and cultural exchange

(Top row):

1. The formal presentation of credentials to the then Singapore President Halimah Yacob
2. Before presenting the credentials, High Commissioner H.E. Dr Shilpak Ambule inspected the Presidential Guard-of-Honour.
3. High Commissioner H.E. Dr Shilpak Ambule with spouse Ms Mayuri Ambule with the then President of Singapore Halimah Yacob

The scale, scope, and outcome of the last G20 Summit presided over by India have been unprecedented; could you share some highlights that stood out?

HC: India's G20 Presidency was its diplomatic achievement of the year 2023. We were able to gather the most powerful and influential voices of the world and bring them together in a consensus with the voice of the Global South. It was difficult to reconcile but we were able to get there and bridge the gap. We saw the unanimous adoption of the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, which demonstrated the commitment of the G20 leaders to address global challenges in an inclusive, decisive and action-oriented manner. Mission LiFE (Lifestyle For Environment), envisioned by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, finds a prominent mention. We think it was important because Mission LiFE empowers each individual to play a strong role in combating climate change.

Organising G20 was a mammoth exercise logistically. With over 200 meetings in 60 Indian cities in all our 28 States and 8 UTs, across 40 different mechanisms including Sherpa and Finance Track Working Groups, as well as Engagement Groups, the size, scale and scope of India's G20 Presidency was unprecedented. In-person participation during India's G20 Presidency was amongst the largest ever. Over 100,000 participants, from 135 nationalities, attended our G20 Engagement Group and related meetings during our Presidency. This includes participation from G20 Members and 9 invitee countries – which included Singapore – and 14 international organizations.

Unique experiences showcasing India's diversity, inclusive traditions and cultural richness were also an integral part of the visiting delegates' programme. Millet-based dishes were incorporated in the menu, and a wide range of cultural performances and excursions were organized. Over 300 cultural events, with the participation of over 18,000 artists, showcasing local and national art forms, were held.

Regarding Prime Minister Modi's vision for India's role in the G20 and beyond – what aspects do you think will be relevant to Singapore and ASEAN?

HC: Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi envisioned an inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive G20 and I believe this vision has been realised. The inclusion of the African Union (AU) as a permanent member of the G20 was a big step in making G20 more inclusive. We hosted 'Voice of the Global South Summit' twice, in order to mainstream the Global South's concerns. The G20 Declaration seeks an ambitious goal of tripling the global renewable energy capacity by 2030. Under India's Presidency, Global Biofuel Alliance was established and there was a concerted push for Green Hydrogen. Following India's ethos through Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LiFE), which has been adopted in the Leader's Declaration, the guiding principles will make everyone of us a foot soldier in the combat against climate change. These are just some examples of how the vision of India's role in G20 has been realised.

To answer the second part of your question, let me begin by saying that Singapore is an important Strategic Partner of India and we have excellent bilateral relationships. Singapore has also been our country coordinator in ASEAN from 2021-24. Singapore was invited as a guest country by India during its Presidency in 2023. We appreciate Singapore's contributions made during various discourses in G20 meetings. As an important member of the global community, there is nothing in the outcome documents of G20 meetings that may not be relevant for Singapore. We look forward to continue our close coordination with Singapore on regional and multilateral matters, even beyond the G20.

There have been several bilateral visits between India and Singapore; could you brief the readers on the major highlights and outcomes of the recent visits?

“In Singapore, we have a very vibrant Indian diaspora which is contributing to the Singaporean economy in various ways and to the larger India-Singapore ties. They have been instrumental in helping shape the world's perception of India. They have shown through their ingenuity, hard work and resilience that they hail from a great civilisation... They are the real-time and on-the-field Ambassadors of India”

HC: In the year 2023, we continued to see many visits between India and Singapore in both directions. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong visited India from 8-10 September 2023 for attending G20 Summit where he met with Prime Minister Modi. He also participated in the Virtual Summit on 22 November 2023.

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Singapore on an official visit from 18-21 October 2023. He had several bilateral engagements with the leadership and senior Ministers of the Cabinet. EAM called on H.E. Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam, President of Singapore, and congratulated him on his recent election victory. EAM also called on Mr. Lawrence Wong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance. Both exchanged views on deepening engagement in the identified pillars of our cooperation viz. Fintech, Digitalization, Green Economy, Skills Development and Food Security. EAM also met Mr. Teo Chee Hean, Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security, Mr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Defence, Mr. Gan Kim Yong, Minister of Trade & Industry and Mr. K Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law. The visit presented an opportunity to further deepen the Strategic Partnership between India and Singapore.

We also had the visits of Education Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of State for External Affairs Shri V. Muraleedharan, and Minister of State for External Affairs and Education Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan Singh. The Chief Minister Shri M.K. Stalin of Tamil Nadu and Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Bhupendra Patel also paid a visit to Singapore.

In the other direction, Singapore's former Senior Minister (SM) Tharman Shanmugaratnam visited India to participate in the Raisina Dialogue and Neemrana Conference on 2-5 March 2023. During the visit, he met Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman. We had a lot of visits for G20 Ministerial meetings as well. DPM and Minister for Finance Mr. Lawrence Wong participated in the G20 Finance Ministers' Meeting on 15-18 July 2023 in Gandhinagar. On 01-03 March 2023, FM Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan visited India to take part in the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM). Mr. Gan Kim Yong, Minister for Trade & Industry participated in the B20 India Summit on 24-25 August 2023 in Jaipur. Several other Singaporean Ministers participated in various Ministerial meetings of G20.

Singapore is one of India's largest investors;

could you update the readers on the latest developments in this area?

HC: Singapore is the leading source of Foreign Direct Investment into India. We have had a very vibrant investment partnership over the years. Singapore is also amongst the largest sources of External Commercial Borrowings for India and the Foreign Portfolio Investment from Singapore has been extremely important for India. Over the last 20 years the total investment into India from Singapore is almost US\$153.393 billion and accounts for nearly 23 percent of the total FDI inflows. In FY 2022-23 Singapore was the largest source of FDI into India. FDI equity inflows in India from Singapore during 2022-23 stood at US\$ 17.203 billion. Top sectors attracting FDI Equity inflows from Singapore are: Services Sector, Computer Software & Hardware, Trading, Telecommunications and Drugs & Pharmaceuticals.

What is your advice to businesses interested in entering the Indian market and your comments on the ease of doing business there and any advice to those who are considering going to India?

HC: India is presently known as one of the most important players in the global economic landscape. Its trade policies, Government reforms, and inherent economic strengths have contributed to its standing as one of the most sought-after destinations. Also, technological, and infrastructural development being carried out across the country augurs well for trade and investment. Programmes such as **Digital India, Make in India** and **Atal Innovation Mission** have rationalized and expedited the investment processes in the country. In the last few years, the government has introduced several industry-friendly policies such as Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP), PM Gati Shakti, India Industrial Landbank, the National Logistics Policy and the National Single Window System to project India as the most attractive destination, not only for investments but also for doing business. In fact, sectors such as electronics, manufacturing and IT hardware have seen a high impact because of the PLI schemes. The PLI scheme currently covers 14 key sectors, and some new sectors are also expected to be included soon. So, for the investors the advice is to go ahead, identify the opportunity and invest in India!

For Singapore companies going to India, are there trends or types of industries the High Commission has identified or recommended to be there?

HC: India has the advantage of a large and cost-effective talent pool, a significant domestic market and a conducive business environment propelled by Government policies of economic reforms, targeted incentives, ease of doing business and infrastructure development. Some of the potential areas which would help in strengthening overall bilateral relations and offer interesting opportunities for Singaporean businesses entering Indian market would be **Skill Development, Fintech & Innovation, Energy and Green Projects, Smart Cities and Urban Infrastructure, E-Commerce, Manufacturing and Supply Chain Technology & IT Sector.**

From the tourism perspective there were many G20 Meetings held in various parts of India that benefitted from the exposure; what are your recommendations for Singaporeans?

HC: The tourism sector is a key driver for inclusive economic growth, involving local people and environmental sustainability. When over 200 meetings are hosted in over 60 cities of India, it is bound to have a tremendous impact on its tourism industry. The majority of these were non-metro cities like Srinagar, Udaipur, Guwahati, Indore, Jodhpur, Surat and Thiruvananthapuram. The Government focused on introducing the regions' heritage as part of the G20 experience for the incoming guests. Going in the true spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, which is a Sanskrit phrase meaning "The World Is One Family," the local governments also utilised the opportunity to showcase their hospitality and traditions. Their unique culture was exposed to foreign delegates who took a piece of this richness in their hearts back to their homelands. All this would go a long way in turning the tide for the Indian tourism industry.

Finally, the Indian diaspora is one of the largest of such communities in Singapore – what are your plans to engage and build on this resource for the benefit of both India and Singapore.

HC: In Singapore, we have a very vibrant Indian diaspora which is contributing to the Singaporean economy in various ways and to the larger India-Singapore ties. They have been instrumental in helping shape the world's perception of India. They have shown through their ingenuity, hard work and resilience that they hail from a great civilisation. I definitely plan to enthusiastically engage with them here through various platforms and continue to strengthen their role in the relationship. They are the real-time and on-the-field Ambassadors of India.

G20 Bharat Presidency: An Overview

India held the G20 Presidency in 2023 and the world leaders congregated for the Summit in September. Held between 9 and 10 September the Summit was preceded with more than 200 meetings that were held in 60 Indian cities, 28 States and 8 Union Territories. 100,000 delegates from 135 nationalities participated throughout the year. The historic New Delhi G20 Leaders' Declaration was adopted unanimously on the first day of the Summit. "The Grand Success of G20 Bharat Presidency: Visionary Leadership, Inclusive Approach" was published by the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) we bring you the excerpts

Ed Note: Bharat is India

India's 1950 Constitution already recognises the country as Bharat in Article 1 where it begins with the words "India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States." The name India was imposed by the British who colonised the country from 1858 to 1947. The use of Bharat is viewed as a return to the country's pre-colonial identity that is rooted in a rich cultural heritage and civilisation.



PM Shri Narendra Modi speaking at the Summit

In this special publication several eminent writers have contributed features on various aspects of G20. In his Foreword the former Foreign Secretary and G20 Chief Coordinator, Mr Harsh Shringla, who witnessed the organisational process of the G20 said, "Prime Minister Modi's vision for India's G20 was to democratize and decentralize the G20 process. Thus, a nationwide approach was adopted and meetings were organized across the length and breadth of the country. His vision provided a global platform for the potential and cultural diversity in India's States, Union Territories, and cities."

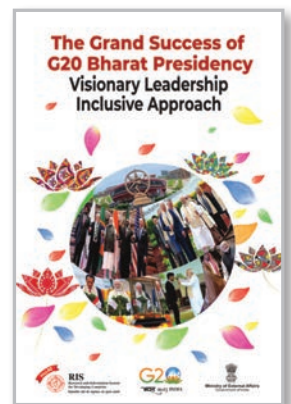
India held over 200 meetings in 60 cities across India. Unmatched in scale no previous presidency had ever ventured into such territory. Prime Minister Modi's faith in India's potential was more than justified as meetings were successfully organized in every single State and Union Territory, showcasing the rich cultural heritage and diversity, unique tourism potential, and development prowess of each region in India, wrote Mr Harsh Shringla.

Global Visibility

Prime Minister Modi deliberately called for the G20 meetings to be organized in cities that had not previously experienced such global attention, including those in the North-Eastern region. The presidency's impact also ushered in a transformation across states, elevating them to the stature of capable hosts for world-class conferences, armed with the essential physical infrastructure. This urban metamorphosis, encompassing enhancements, additions, and aesthetic improvements, bestowed many states with newfound confidence and global visibility.

The above was Prime Minister Modi's vision to take diplomacy to the people and use a pan-India approach to make every

citizen a stakeholder in India's Presidency. This was made possible through the highly effective concept of 'Jan Bhagidari' or Citizen Engagement. Over 1.5 crore citizens were actively part of the G20 process because of the Jan Bhagidari events within India, and 45 lakh people across the globe.



Available online at
www.ris.org.in

This unique approach to the G20 eventually culminated in the unprecedented New Delhi Leaders' Declaration. India achieved what many believed to be impossible, considering the strong geopolitical divisions within the G20. In today's ideologically charged world, India united the G20, ensuring that political differences did not hinder development.

What makes this declaration especially remarkable is how swiftly it was adopted. Typically, in complex multilateral processes like G20 negotiations, discussions often go down to the wire. However, Prime Minister Modi announced a consensus among member nations during the first half of the first session of the Leaders' Summit. Under India's Presidency, an impressive 112 outcomes and presidency documents were produced, more than doubling the substantive work of previous presidencies. The 83-paragraph-long declaration symbolizes a concerted effort to address global challenges while embodying a spirit of collaboration, cooperation, and shared responsibility. It is a historic and path-breaking declaration that has heralded a golden age of human-centric globalization.

G20 Summit Highlights



The high note on which India concluded the two-day G20 summit on September 10 showcased India's influence among the global powers and, more importantly, that the country has emerged strong globally.

India's G20 presidency was not contained within the four walls of meeting rooms. Diverse destinations and cultural showcase of India infused life into the presidency through 220 meetings in 60 cities, covering every State and Union Territory. With over 100,000 delegates and participants across these meetings, this truly became a presidency representative of diversity as shared by many delegates.

The summit's declaration overcame key differences among global players. The meetings also saw some breakthroughs in critical areas such as debt and climate change. It reflected Indian foreign policy priorities.

At the G20 Leaders' Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was seen holding hands, taking selfies and chatting informally with world leaders.

More than 30 heads of state, top officials from the European Union and guest countries and 14 heads of international organisations participated in the event.

The two-day event saw 15 bilateral meetings between PM Modi and other heads of states, including US President Joe Biden, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Italian PM Giorgia

Meloni, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Australian PM Anthony Albanese.

Media reports quoted India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar expressing satisfaction with Indian diplomacy's performance. He also highlighted the significance of the "Delhi Declaration" in shaping India's foreign policy and influence on the global stage.

"The grand success of G20 India Leaders' Summit, with 100% consensus from all countries on all issues has been possible only because of PM Narendra Modi's stature and standing of excellence at the global stage. It is truly an honour for me to be his Sherpa for India's G20 Presidency," shared Amitabh Kant on his social media.

Prime Minister Modi proposed a virtual session of the G20 which was held at the end of November to take stock of the suggestions and decisions made at the Leaders' Summit that concluded on September 10. In his concluding remarks at the final session of the summit in New Delhi, Prime Minister Modi noted that India's presidency of G20 would officially continue till November 30 and over two and-half months were left for its tenure as the head of the grouping. He handed over the gavel and offered best wishes to Brazil, which took over the mantle of the presidency for 2024.

Key Takeaways from G20

■ **G20 became G21:** The African Union has become a member of the global grouping. Africa, which has one-fifth of the global population, will now be represented on

the global stage. South African presidential spokesperson Vincent Magwenya said it signals an important step to the reforms the 55-nation bloc has sought in global and multilateral institutions, including the United Nations Security Council.

■ **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor:** India, the US, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, France, Germany, Italy and the European Union jointly signed a memorandum of understanding to establish the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. This corridor aims to foster economic integration and connect Asia with Europe.

■ **G20 joint declaration:** In a diplomatic triumph, India achieved a unanimous New Delhi Leaders' Summit Declaration on all developmental and geopolitical matters, despite differences over the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Bilateral meetings held by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with global leaders contributed to this consensus.

■ **Consensus on climate change:** A consensus emerged on addressing the climate crisis, signalling a significant victory. Contentious issues included commitments to reduce fossil fuel use, increasing renewable energy targets, and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

■ **Global Biofuels Alliance:** Prime Minister Modi announced the launch of the Global Biofuels Alliance to remove global dependence on fossil fuels. Nineteen countries and 12 international organisations, including both G20 members and non-members, have agreed to join this alliance.



1 - 4: World leaders at the G20 Summit 2023 held in India, under the theme 'One Earth, One Family, One Future',
5-9: The leaders paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat
10: Symbolic hand over of the G20 Presidency gavel to Brazil President Lula



Prime Minister Lee G20 Summit and Ministers' Visits

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong attended the G20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi, India, from 8 to 10 September 2023 at the invitation of Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, in India's capacity as the 2023 G20 Presidency



(Top): PM Shri Narendra Modi welcoming PM Lee to the G20 India Summit. (Above): PM Lee at the Session "One Earth" on Green and Sustainable Development

Under the theme of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "One Earth, One Family, One Future", the 2023 Indian G20 Presidency sought to promote inclusive growth and accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Prime Minister Lee participated in discussions on the importance of rules-based multilateralism, digital public infrastructure, health, energy transitions and sustainable development. He also had bilateral meetings with other Leaders on the sidelines of the Summit.

Prime Minister Lee was accompanied by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Finance and National Development, Ms Indraneel Rajah, and senior officials from the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loon also participated in the G20 Virtual Summit on 22nd November 2023.



Financial Collaboration - PayNow-UPI Linkage

One of the noteworthy developments in India-Singapore relations was the launch of the Real-time Payment Systems Linkage between India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Singapore's PayNow, creating the system PayNow-UPI linkage. This system has significantly eased money transfers between India and Singapore, providing a seamless and efficient financial channel for individuals and businesses in both nations.

The innovation was first brought up in 2018, when PM Modi visited Singapore and central banks from India and Singapore were able to discuss an innovative solution that would provide service to respective countries' citizens and strengthen bilateral ties between India and Singapore.

This initiative enhances economic ties and facilitates trade and investments, between India and Singapore. At the launch PM Lee Hsien Loong said, "I hope this strong partnership between

Singapore and India will continue to spawn innovative technology solutions and create more cross-border opportunities for our digital economies."

Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Mr. Lee Hsien Loong witnessed the momentous event via a video conference; the ceremony was held on 20th February 2023.



At the G20 FMM in New Delhi (from l to r) Foreign Minister Dr V. Balakrishnan and EAM Dr S. Jaishankar

Other Ministerial Visits

During the whole year, there were several ministerial visits by Singapore to India and vice versa.

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM)

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, participated in the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM) held in New Delhi, India, from March 1 to 2, 2023. He met External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. During the meeting, ministers emphasized the role of multilateralism in addressing global challenges, including reinforcing global supply chain resilience, ensuring food and energy security, enhancing cooperation on humanitarian assistance, and supporting developing countries in achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

Minister Balakrishnan highlighted the emerging challenges related to the bifurcation of technology and economies, emphasizing the need for strong multilateralism to address these global issues. He also stressed the importance of international collaboration to counter radicalization and terrorism within societies.

Minister Balakrishnan and Minister Jaishankar reaffirmed the India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable as a good platform for Singapore and India to collaborate in emerging areas including digitalisation, sustainability, healthcare and skills development.

Raisina Dialogue and Neemrana Conference

The Raisina Dialogue is India's premier conference on geopolitics and geo-strategy, organized by the Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with the Observer Research Foundation (ORF). Held annually, the 8th edition took place from 02-04 March 2023 in Delhi. Inaugurated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the event drew over 2500 participants from 100+ countries, including the then Senior Minister (SM) of Singapore H.E. Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam.

The theme, "Provocation, Uncertainty, Turbulence: Lighthouse in the Tempest?" explored global challenges across five thematic pillars. The conference, growing in stature over the past eight years, engages decision-makers, thought leaders, and experts in international affairs.

Defence Collaboration - Indian Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R. Hari Kumar Visits Singapore



The Indian Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral R. Hari Kumar, paid a visit to Singapore and met Minister of Defence, Dr. Ng Eng Hen, during the first week of March 2023. The meeting served as a platform to reaffirm the strong and long-standing bilateral defence ties between the two nations.

These interactions have not only deepened mutual understanding but have also strengthened cooperation between the Indian and Singaporean navies. Such collaborations are instrumental in ensuring regional security and stability.

In addition to meeting Singapore Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen, Admiral R. Hari Kumar also visited the Kranji War Memorial; inspected the Guard of Honour of Defence; met with Defence Force Rear-Admiral (RADM) Aaron Beng and Chief of Navy RADM Sean Wat; visited the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) at RSS Singapura-Changi Naval Base (CNB); co-officiated the opening ceremony for the inaugural ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise with RADM Wat; visited the RSN's Formidable-class Frigate RSS Supreme; and attended the 8th edition of the International Maritime Security Conference (IMSC).

Message from Minister for Trade & Industry Mr Gan Kim Yong on India's Republic Day



"Singapore and India share warm and longstanding bilateral ties, and our economic relations in trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges have been growing strongly. We congratulate India on its successful 2023 G20 Presidency, under which the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration was adopted with a commitment by G20 Members and Invitees to act in concrete ways through partnership to accelerate strong, sustainable, balanced, and inclusive growth. We also thank India for the warm and gracious hospitality extended to Singapore at all G20 meetings we participated in. Singapore wishes our friends from India a happy 75th Republic Day, and we look forward to deepening our friendship in years to come"

Mr Gan Kim Yong
Singapore
Minister for Trade & Industry

Opportunities in Tamil Nadu - Indian Chief Minister M.K. Stalin invites Singaporean Industrialists and Investors to Tamil Nadu

Indian Chief Minister M.K. Stalin embarked on a visit to Singapore on 24th May 2023, among other destinations, to attract industrialists and investors to Tamil Nadu. He extended invitations to industrialists for the Global Investors Meet scheduled for January 2024. The visit underscores the significance of economic cooperation between Indian states and Singapore.

Education Collaboration - Indian Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Visits Singapore

Indian Union Education Minister Mr Dharmendra Pradhan visited Singapore from 29th to 31st May 2023, where he met with Singaporean Minister for Finance, Mr Lawrence Wong. The primary focus of the discussions was to enhance bilateral cooperation in the education sector and skill development, as Shri Pradhan mentioned that 'Skills-Future' envisions making Singapore a nation of lifelong learners and a society that values skills mastery. Minister Pradhan's visit included meetings with educational institutions in Singapore, paving the way for potential collaborations between Indian and Singaporean universities. Minister Pradhan's visit to Spectra Secondary School allowed him to interact directly with students and teachers have a first hand feel of how the school prioritises skill-based education.



Minister Maliki Osman's Mission to Varanasi: G20 Development Ministers' Meeting 2023"

Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Second Minister for Education, Dr. Mohamad Maliki Osman, embarked on a working visit to Varanasi, India, from June 11 to 13, 2023. The visit centered around the G20 Development Ministers' Meeting (DMM), chaired by India's Minister of External Affairs, Dr. S Jaishankar, as part of India's 2023 G20 Presidency. The G20 DMM aimed to enhance international cooperation for the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and intensify efforts towards green development to address climate change. Minister Maliki engaged with counterparts from various countries and was accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, underscoring Singapore's commitment to global sustainable development efforts under India's G20 Presidency.

3rd Edition of Singapore - India Hackathon



Deputy PM, Mr. Lawrence Wong, visited Gandhinagar, Gujarat and jointly with India's Minister for Education & Skill Development, Mr. Dharmendra Pradhan, facilitated the winners of the 3rd Edition of the Singapore-India Hackathon. The event was held from the 14th to 15th July 2023. They had discussions regarding deepening engagements in all areas from "Schools to Skills".

Mr Lawrence Wong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Singapore said, "The Singapore-India Hackathon is unique and precious, supported by the leaders of both countries and is conceived from Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision."

G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Ministerial Meeting



Singapore's Minister for Sustainability and the Environment, Ms Grace Fu, participated in the G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Ministerial Meeting in Chennai, India on 28th July 2023.

G20 members and invited countries discussed issues related to the economy, circular economy, land degradation and biodiversity loss, and water resource management. On the sidelines of the Meeting, Minister Fu met her counterparts to exchange views and discuss bilateral cooperation on environment and climate sustainability issues.

G20 Health Ministers Meeting

Minister for Health Mr Ong Ye Kung attended the G20 Health Ministers' Meeting and Joint Finance and Health Ministers' Meeting in Gandhinagar, Gujarat from 18th - 19th August 2023. Discussions centred on global health issues, including enhancing prevention, preparedness, and response against health emergencies, strengthening pharmaceutical cooperation, and putting in place digital health strategies to improve health-care service delivery.

G20 Digital Economy Ministers' Meeting and Digital Innovation Alliance Summit Meeting

Singapore's Minister for Communications and Information, Mrs. Josephine Teo, participated at the G20 Digital Economy Ministers' Meeting (DEMM) and attended the Digital Innovation Alliance (DIA) Summit on 18th August 2023. Mrs. Teo reaffirmed Singapore's commitment to digital cooperation with her counterparts and discussed new areas of collaboration including data and AI governance, digital trade, cybersecurity, and combatting scams.

The DIA Summit aims to recognise and support innovators with digital solutions for world economies. Minister Teo engaged with Singapore start-ups and venture capitalists based in Bengaluru involved in the event. Six of these start-ups were selected for a pitching competition for a chance to receive mentoring sessions and connect with investors.

G20 Trade & Investment Ministerial Meeting

Singapore's Minister for Trade and Industry, Gan Kim Yong, attended the G20 Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting in Jaipur, India. on 24th - 25th August 2023. Minister Gan highlighted the importance of achieving tangible outcomes that can benefit businesses and people at the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference; empowering the integration of Small and Medium Enterprises into the global trading system; and embracing digitalisation to build a stronger and more resilient global economy.

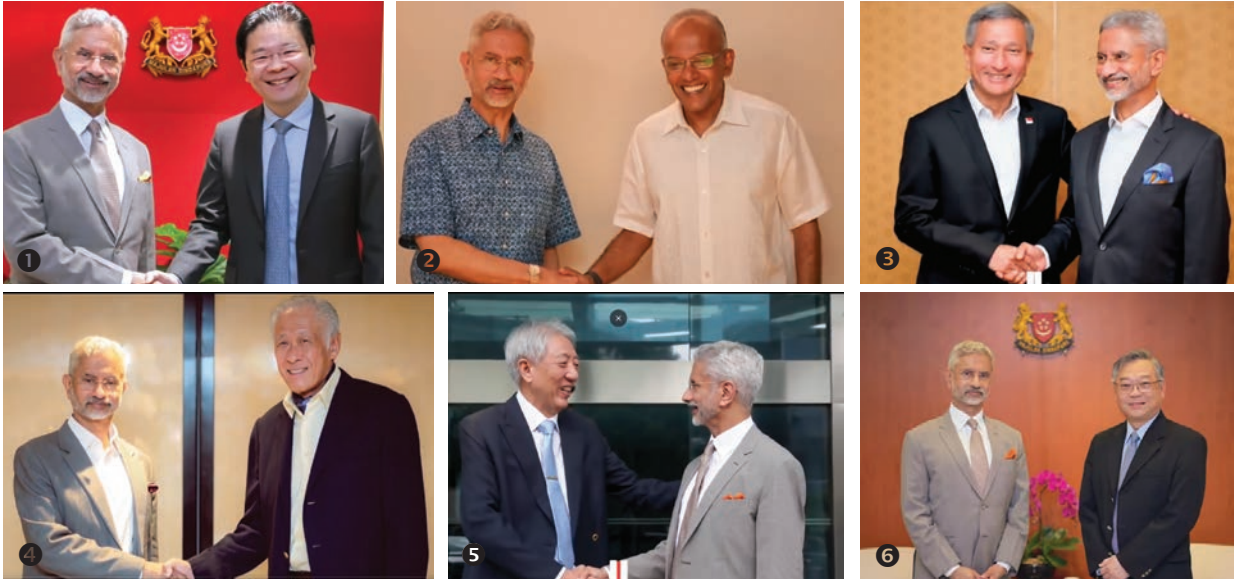
Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon Delivers Singapore Academy of Law Annual Lecture

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon was invited to deliver the opening address at the Singapore Academy of Law Annual Lecture on 8th September 2023. This event highlighted the importance of legal cooperation and exchange of knowledge between India and Singapore. Such interactions foster a better understanding of legal systems and promote the rule of law.

Continued next page...

Dr Jaishankar's Official Visit to Singapore: Opportunity to Deepen Strategic Partnership

India's External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar visited Singapore from 18th to 20th October 2023 and had several bilateral engagements. He met President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and senior members of the Singapore cabinet for a wide range of discussions



India's External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr S. Jaishankar with Singapore ministers 1. Mr. Lawrence Wong 2. Mr. K Shanmugam 3. Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan 4. Dr. Ng Eng Hen 5. Mr. Teo Chee Hean and 6. Mr. Gan Kim Yong

India's external Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr S. Jaishankar had several bilateral engagements with the leadership and senior Ministers of the Cabinet during his 3-day visit to Singapore from 18th to 20th October 2023. EAM called on Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam, President of Singapore and congratulated him on his recent election victory. EAM also paid a call on Mr. Lawrence Wong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance. Both exchanged views on deepening engagement in the identified pillars of our cooperation viz. Fintech, Digitalization, Green economy, Skills development and Food security. EAM also met Mr. Teo Chee

Hean, Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security.

EAM had a comprehensive discussion with Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister of Foreign Affairs on bilateral and global issues of mutual interest. He also met Dr. Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Defence. During their talks, both acknowledged the close bilateral defence engagement and committed to take it forward.

EAM had a productive meeting with Mr. Gan Kim Yong, Minister of Trade & Industry, to discuss new domains of cooperation. He also met Mr. K Shanmugam, Minister for Home

Affairs and Minister for Law to exchange views on strengthening bilateral partnership.

India's EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar's also chaired the Regional Conference of India's ASEAN and East Asia Ambassadors. EAM Dr Jaishankar tweeted in his 'X' account, "Our deliberations took stock of developments in the region and assessed their implications for India." Singapore's Minister of Defence Dr Ng also addressed India's regional heads of mission at the conference.

Dr S Jaishankar said the visit presented an opportunity to further deepen the Strategic Partnership between India and Singapore.

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Singapore Permanent Secretary (Defence), Mr. Chan Heng Kee, co-chaired the 15th India-Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue with Defence Secretary Shri Giridhar Aramanen

15th India-Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue

Singapore Permanent Secretary (Defence), Mr. Chan Heng Kee, co-chaired the 15th India-Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue with Defence Secretary Shri Giridhar Aramanen on India Service-to-Service interactions and bilateral exercises on 1st November 2023. During the meeting, both sides reviewed the existing defence cooperation between the two countries and agreed to enhance collaboration in Service-to-Service interactions and bilateral exercises. They also articulated steps to take forward cooperation in emerging areas like cyber security. Both

sides identified means to enhance existing areas of collaboration, especially in the field of maritime security and multilateral cooperation. The Defence Secretary appreciated Singapore's efforts in coordinating and co-hosting the maiden ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise in May 2023. He highlighted the potential of the domestic defence industry with the capacity and capability to meet the requirements of Singapore. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to fully implement the 'Strategic Partnership' based on mutual trust and understanding, common interests and shared values of democracy and the rule of law.

Millet Momentum

A 2023 Success Story

2023 marked a significant year in the global agricultural calendar as the United Nations declared it the 'International Year of Millets'. This declaration, primarily propelled by India's initiative, underscored the country's pivotal role in promoting these ancient grains. India's commitment was further highlighted through comprehensive national efforts and policies aimed at reinvigorating millet cultivation and consumption. This article encapsulates the essence of India's leadership in the global millet movement and outlines its efforts at the national level

P rime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's message during the opening ceremony of the International Year of Millets at the FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy, epitomized India's commitment and vision. He congratulated the United Nations and the Food and Agriculture Organization for their effort and emphasized the timeliness of this initiative, especially in the wake of a global pandemic and ongoing conflicts affecting food security. Modi highlighted millets as a sustainable solution, stating, "Millets are good for the consumer, cultivator, and climate," and underlined the importance of 'Millet Mindfulness' to foster global awareness and adoption.

Underpinning this global vision, India's domestic strategies and policies in 2023 demonstrated an integrated approach to promoting millets, or 'Shree Anna', as a key component of food security and nutrition. The National Food Security Mission - Nutri Cereals (NFSM-Nutri Cereals) played a central role in enhancing millet production and consumption. This mission encompassed a range of interventions, including demonstrations of improved practices, distribution of high-yield variety seeds, and promoting efficient water use. Additionally, initiatives like the Millet Missions in various states, including Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra, further reinforced India's commitment to millet cultivation. These state-level missions focused on enhancing millet production and popularizing their consumption.

To ensure farmer participation and profitability, the government incentivized millet cultivation through schemes like Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and setting minimum support prices (MSP) for major millet. This move was critical in making millet cultivation economically viable for farmers.

The Ministry of Food Processing Industries' Productivity Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, introduced in 2022, was another leap



towards boosting millet-based products' production. In tandem, the inclusion of millets in the Poshan Abhiyan and revisions in procurement guidelines under various public distribution systems highlighted the government's focus on millet as a crucial element in nutritional programs.

The year 2023 was not just about policy formulation but also about creating a nationwide movement. The government's commitment to ensuring remunerative prices for farmers and the increased public awareness about the health benefits of millets led to a surge in demand for these grains.

The International Year of Millets 2023, championed by India, was not just a celebratory declaration but a catalyst for a global shift towards sustainable and nutritious food practices. Prime Minister Modi's vision and India's comprehensive national efforts exemplified a model of agricultural sustainability and food security that has the potential to influence global agricultural practices in the years to come.

Solar Power Revolution: Leading the Way in Renewable Energy

India has injected US\$3 billion to boost domestic manufacturing and solidify India's position as a solar powerhouse



India currently stands 4th globally in solar power capacity. In the last five years, the country's solar installed capacity has experienced a monumental transformation, increasing from 21,651 MW to 70,096 MW in 2023. With ambitious targets and policies like the Production Linked Incentive (PLI), India is propelling itself to achieve 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030. The commitment is not just towards sustainable energy but towards securing a greener tomorrow for the entire planet.

Several global trend reports in 2023 show that solar energy is becoming not just an option but a global necessity.

The Government of India's commitment to solar power is not just in words but in comprehensive policies and initiatives. The Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) for the National Programme on High-Efficiency Solar PV Modules for achieving manufacturing capacity of Giga Watt (GW) scale in High-Efficiency Solar PV modules with an outlay of US\$3 billion has been introduced to boost domestic manufacturing and solidify India's position as a solar powerhouse.

An integrated capacity of 8737 MW has been added under the PLI (Tranche-I), while 39,600 MW of domestic Solar PV module manufacturing capacity has been allocated to 11 companies under Tranche-II, bringing in an investment of US\$12 billion and generating over 1 Lakh direct and indirect jobs.

Another critical initiative underlining India's commitment to solar energy is the Solar Park Scheme, designed to establish 50 Solar Parks of 500 MW and above with a cumulative capacity of ~38 GW by 2025-26. These solar parks act as hubs for solar energy generation, attracting investments and fostering a conducive

environment for solar power development. They are instrumental in achieving economies of scale, making solar energy more affordable and accessible. Under this scheme, so far, 11 Solar Parks with an aggregate capacity of 8521 MW have been completed, and 7 Solar Parks with an aggregate capacity of 3985 MW have been partially completed. In these parks, solar projects of an aggregate capacity of 10,237 MW have been developed.

New solar power capacity addition are transforming India's agricultural sector by setting up decentralised solar power plants, replacing agriculture diesel pumps with solar agriculture water pumps and solarising existing grid-connected agriculture pumps.

Rooftop Solar Programme for the residential sector and the Off-grid Solar PV Applications Programme for rural areas are also making solar energy accessible by providing subsidies. The support is not just financial; it's a strategic investment in a solar-powered future.

Moreover, the International Solar Alliance (ISA), launched in 2015 by the Prime Minister of India and the President of France, is a prime example of how collaborative efforts can steer the world toward a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future. It is a member-centric, collaborative platform focused on action aimed at creating 450 GW of renewable energy by 2030. It aims to enhance the widespread adoption of solar energy technologies by expanding energy access, ensuring energy security, and catalysing the energy transition within its member countries.

With 20 winners, SolarX: A Startup Challenge Africa Chapter, an initiative by ISA, is also bringing forth innovative and affordable solar energy solutions to Africa's power challenges. ISA is striving to unlock US\$1 Trillion in investments by 2030 by reducing the cost of technology and its financing and increasing the skills of the solar industry workforce.

India's vision for 2030 is a mosaic of renewable energy dominance with a significant fo-

cus on green growth to fight climate change and enable energy transition. Guided by the Panchamrit Policy (a 5-point policy outline), as announced at COP26, India has set following resolute targets to usher in a renewable revolution:

- 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030
- Meeting 50% of its energy requirement from renewable sources by 2030
- Reducing the total projected carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes by 2030
- Reducing the carbon intensity of its economy by under 45%
- Becoming a net zero carbon country by 2070

By 2047, India aims to become an energy-independent nation through a mix of electric mobility, CNG and piped natural gas, 20% ethanol blending and green hydrogen production. The country also aims to achieve 90% of its energy from renewable sources.

According to a KPMG report, India would require investments worth US\$350-400 billion annually by 2030 to meet its clean energy targets - a potential opportunity for global investors. India's energy transition can potentially create nearly 5 to 6 million jobs by 2030, touching 9-10 million by 2047.

In this energy independence journey towards 2047, emerging technologies hold the key. India has the potential to play an important role in clean technology manufacturing, driven by a supportive policy ecosystem, manufacturing clusters and a unique skill set. India aspires to adopt advanced technologies that promise secure, affordable, and sustainable energy for all.

Beyond the economic and technological advancements, the environmental benefits of solar power advancements include:

- **Mitigating climate change:** Solar panels significantly contribute to reducing climate change through their low ecological impact and minimised carbon footprint.
- **Reduced pollution:** Transitioning to cleaner energy sources reduces air and water pollution, promoting a healthier and sustainable environment.
- **Securing the planet's future:** Solar power's environmental benefits go beyond progress, which is crucial in ensuring a sustainable future.

Tamil Nadu Global Investor's Meet Attracts Singaporean Investors

Singapore a partner country at the Tamil Nadu Global Investors' Meet 2024 has signed S\$5 billion in planned investments between Singapore companies and GuidanceTN, the investment promotion agency of the Government of Tamil Nadu

Singapore is strengthening economic cooperation with the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, through expanded investments into the state's sustainability and infrastructure sectors. These investments were announced at the Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet (TNGIM) held in Chennai on 7 and 8 January 2024, where Singapore participated as a partner country.

The Singapore delegation was led by High Commissioner to India, Mr Simon Wong, with officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), and Enterprise Singapore (EnterpriseSG). About 60 business representatives from the Singapore Business Federation (SBF) and the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry were also there at the TNGIM.

The SBF, supported by EnterpriseSG, set up a Singapore Pavilion showcasing Singapore companies with a strong presence in Tamil Nadu, including Sembcorp, CapitaLand, YCH and Blue Planet, in sectors such as renewable energy, waste management and logistics. New MOUs signed to partner Tamil Nadu in high-growth areas

During the event, S\$5 billion in planned investments were concluded between Singapore companies and GuidanceTN, the investment promotion agency of the Government of Tamil Nadu. To be implemented over several years, the MOUs span across high-growth sectors such as sustainability and infrastructure, as well as collaboration in technology and skills.

For instance, to capture the fast-growing opportunities in India's digital economy, CapitaLand has committed to addition-



al investments in Chennai, to be deployed across business parks, logistics, warehouses and a data centre. Lionsbot, which designs and manufactures automated industrial-scale cleaning robots, will partner top universities in Tamil Nadu to drive the development of engineering and robotics talent. This includes setting up training laboratories and designing hardware and software courses.

"The latest pipeline of collaborative initiatives and associated investments show that Singapore companies are strategically building the breadth and depth of their engagement in Tamil Nadu. These also testify to the strong opportunities and investor friendly policies of the state," said Mr. Tan Soon Kim, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of EnterpriseSG. "EnterpriseSG is committed to deepening our support for companies interested to enter the market, and help them capture opportunities alongside Tamil Nadu's ambition to be a US\$1 trillion-dollar economy by 2030."

High Commissioner Wong delivered the opening remarks at the Singapore Session on 7 January, where he highlighted the potential for Tamil Nadu and Sin-

Seven Singapore companies – Blue Planet, CapitaLand, Everest Links, DBS, Sembcorp, Wah & Hua and YCH – exhibited at the Singapore Pavilion at the Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet to explore new business opportunities

gapore to be partners in exploring the export of promising renewable energy solutions, such as green hydrogen and green ammonia, from India to Singapore. The session also featured a fire-side chat, comprising CEOs from leading Singapore companies such as Sembcorp Industries, CapitaLand Investment, Blue Planet's QUBE Renewables, and Environ-Sens, on the topic of Partnership and Collaboration for a Greener Future. MTI and the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (SIPCOT) also co-organised a panel discussion at TNGIM on "A Framework for India's first Net Zero Industrial Park".

Tamil Nadu is often the first port of call for Singapore companies looking at South India, given the cultural and historical familiarity between both states. It is the second largest contributor to India's GDP, behind the state of Maharashtra. Tamil Nadu has a population of more than 72 million people and a GSDP of US\$354 billion.

India's Economy to Reach \$10 Trillion by 2030

The President of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Mr Borge Brende expressed his confidence in the Indian economy's growth trajectory in an interview with Business Today

In a significant statement, World Economic Forum (WEF) President Borge Brende has predicted that India's economy will reach the US\$10 trillion mark by the end of this decade. Brende has expressed confidence in the Indian economy's growth trajectory, emphasizing its potential to join the ranks of the world's largest economies.

Speaking to Business Today Executive Director Rahul Kanwal on the sidelines of the 54th annual World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting in Davos, WEF President Brende highlighted India's robust economic performance amidst global slowdown and geopolitical tensions.

"We think, in the coming decade, we can be speaking about a USD 10 trillion economy, at least in the coming two decades," Brende said, reflecting on India's economic prospects. The WEF President acknowledged India's rapid growth in the digital economy, which is expanding twice as fast as the rest of the economy, positioning the nation favourably on the global stage.

The optimism for India's economy is rooted in its significant growth rate, with Brende projecting an 8% growth for the current year. This positive



outlook comes despite global trade growth slowing to 0.8% last year from 3.4%. Brende's confidence in the Indian economy is further supported by its resilience in the face of rising oil prices and the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, which pose threats to global supply chains and have implications for oil-importing nations like India.

In his interaction with NDTV - an Indian TV channel, Brende elaborated on India's potential for exponential economic growth, likening it to a "snowball effect." He emphasized that continued reforms, geopolitical peace, and investments in R&D and infrastructure are key to realizing this ambitious economic goal.

Brende's remarks come at a time when India, currently the world's fifth-largest economy with a GDP of approximately

USD 3.7 trillion, is prepared to grow even faster due to its service-oriented economy and the global boom in digital services trade.

Brende also touched upon the global economic scenario, noting that despite slowdowns and geopolitical conflicts dragging down the growth outlook worldwide, there are signs of recovery. He expects the US to avoid a recession and China to regain momentum in the latter part of the year.

The WEF President further discussed the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on employment, suggesting that while AI may replace some jobs in the short term, it ultimately leads to higher productivity and welfare, which can help in eradicating poverty, particularly in economies like India.

Concluding his insights, Brende stressed the importance of global collaboration and trust-building, especially in a world facing significant geopolitical competition and challenges like pandemics, climate change, and cyber-attacks. The WEF 2024, under the theme of rebuilding trust in a fractured world, underlines the need for such collaboration to address these pressing global issues.

India's Digital Payment Surge

Behind this digital revolution are concerted efforts by the Indian government and the Reserve Bank of India

In the realm of digital payments, India has witnessed a monumental shift, spearheaded by the Unified Payments Interface (UPI). As of December 2023, UPI recorded a staggering 857 million transactions in the current financial year, a testament to its dominant role in India's digital payment landscape, commanding an impressive 62% market share in FY 2022-23. This surge in UPI transactions is a clear indicator of the country's move towards a digitalized economy.

The growth trajectory of UPI is nothing short of remarkable. Starting with a modest base in the financial year (FY) 2017-18,

UPI transactions stood at 9.2 million. This initial figure, though significant for its time, was just a glimpse of the potential of UPI. Over the next five years, these transactions witnessed an extraordinary increase, culminating in 837.5 million transactions by FY 2022-23.

This rapid growth represents a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 147%, a rate that signifies not just growth but a seismic shift in consumer behavior and technology adoption. The remarkable aspect of this growth is not just in the number of transactions but also in their monetary value. In FY 2017-18, the total

value of UPI transactions was US\$12 billion, a noteworthy figure for a nascent technology at that time. However, by FY 2022-23, this value had escalated to an astonishing US\$1671 billion. The CAGR of 168% in value terms is even more impressive than the transaction count, indicating that UPI is not only being used more frequently but also for higher-value transactions. Behind this digital revolution are concerted efforts by the Indian government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Government initiatives have been crucial, including incentive schemes for RuPay Debit cards and BHIM UPI transactions, advisories for improving payment infrastructure, the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan (PMGDISHA) for enhancing digital literacy in rural areas, and setting targets for digital transactions and merchant acquisitions for banks.

Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024

The 10th edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS) on 10-12 January 2024 set a new benchmark in global business forums



(Above & opp. page): VIP guests, delegates and many leading international organisations from more than 28 countries attended VGGS 2024

The Summit with the theme 'Gateway to the Future' saw participation from more than 28 countries and 14 organizations.

This global summit attracted a diverse group of international partners from Australia, Bangladesh, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Singapore, Tanzania, Thailand, the UAE, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Ghana, and Vietnam. This wide array of participants highlighted the growing global stature of the VGGS.

In addition to countries, several prominent organizations, including the American Chamber of Commerce in India (AMCHAM India), EPIC India-University of Chicago, Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC), Indo-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry, International Solar Alliance, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), and Korea Trade and Investment Agency also attended the Summit. The active involvement of these organizations highlights the VGGS's role as a platform for fostering international trade and investment.

Over the previous nine editions, the partner countries and organizations significantly contributed to high-profile representation and response for the summit, facilitating socio-economic and cultural collaborations. The state government of Gujarat recognised the crucial role of each partner country and organi-

zation in bolstering bilateral relations and contributing to the success of the VGGS. Their active participation was not only instrumental in promoting the summit across various platforms but also vital in enhancing collaboration, trade, and investment opportunities.

This year's summit was the most grandiose in its history, reflecting two decades of progressive evolution. It strongly corroborated Gujarat's developmental journey while embodying the state's commitment to socio-economic advancement, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a self-reliant and developed India by 2047 - Viksit Bharat@2047.

Over the years, Summit has evolved into a prominent platform for business networking, knowledge exchange, and fostering strategic partnerships for inclusive and sustainable growth. VGGS 2024 became an effective platform for attracting investments in emerging sectors such as semiconductors, green hydrogen, e-mobility, renewable energy, and FinTech among others.

The Vibrant Gujarat Global Trade Show 2024 was the focal point of the Summit. Spanning over 200,000 square meters, it was one of the world's largest trade shows. The show was focused on 'TECHADE and Disruptive Technologies', emphasizing the Champion Services Sector, which includes Digital India initiatives, India Stack, and emerging technologies like Industry 4.0, Smart Manufacturing, AI/ML, and applications in various service sectors.

The summit featured several thematic seminars on topics like Food Security, Advanced Technology, Startups & Innovation, Healthcare, Life Science, and Sustainability.

The Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024 symbolizes a new era of business opportunities and strategic growth, not only for Gujarat but also for India, marking a crucial milestone in the state and country's journey towards global leadership in various sectors.

The Singapore Business Federation (SBF) led a delegation of over 60 business representatives from nine companies, spanning sectors from technology and finance to infrastructure and environmental solutions. This delegation, participating in the Singapore Country Pavilion, highlighted Singapore's capabilities and intent to deepen business ties with Gujarat.

The Pavilion, supported by Enterprise Singapore, was officially inaugurated by Mr. Cheong Ming Foong, Singapore's Consul-General in Mumbai, and Mr. Prasoon Mukherjee, Vice Chairman of SBF's South Asia Business Group. This participation underlines the significance of VGGS as a global forum for business networking, knowledge sharing, and strategic partnerships aimed at inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Gujarat's economic clout, with a GSDP of US\$ 259.25 billion and a year-on-year increase of seven percent, makes it an attractive destination for foreign direct investment (FDI). Singapore, as one of the largest sources of FDI in Gujarat, plays a crucial role in this economic narrative. The FDI inflows from Singapore to Gujarat, standing at US\$2.2 billion between FY2017 and FY2021, underscore the deep economic bonds between the two regions.



The Singaporean delegation, led by Mr. Mukherjee and Mr. Kok Ping Soon, SBF CEO, met with Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel, the Honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat. This meeting was significant, not only for the exchange of business interests but also for the shared vision of developing Smart Industries Port Cities and allied infrastructure along the Gujarat coastline. Chief Minister Patel's

invitation to Singaporean companies to invest in these projects highlights the mutual commitment to fostering economic growth and development.

A cornerstone of Singapore's participation was the Singapore Country Seminar, held on January 10th at VGGS. Themed "Singapore and India – Working Together for a Greener, Brighter Future," the seminar was attended by notable dignitaries

including the Honourable Minister of Industries of Gujarat and the Singapore High Commissioner to India. This seminar was a crucial platform for discussing and reinforcing the bilateral cooperation between Singapore and Gujarat. The High Commissioner, Simon Wong, emphasized the substantial investments by Singaporean companies in Gujarat, acknowledging the supportive role of both Indian and Gujarati governments in facilitating these investments.

The seminar included a fireside chat featuring distinguished panelists like Mr. A. Nithyanand from Sembcorp Industries, Mr. Vinesh Natali from Meinhardt EPCM Group, and Mr. Nagesh Prabhu Chinivartha from Zigma Global Environ Solutions, Blue Planet Group. These discussions provided insights into the synergies between Singaporean and Gujarati businesses, especially in technology, energy, and environmental solutions.

MEDIA COVERAGE



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India Welcomes World to **MICE Conclave** *by Nomita Dhar*



(Above montage): Some of the inauguration activities for the launch of the 14th Conventions India Conclave

Delegates from around the world participated in the Conventions India Conclave, presenting India's world-class MICE options and showcasing Gujarat's hospitality and infrastructure. Inaugurated by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, it highlighted sustainable tourism's economic impact. It also included seminars, exhibitions, and vibrant cultural showcases of music, dance, local cuisine, and sightseeing tours, emphasizing Gujarat's diverse attractions

The 14th Conventions India Conclave, ICPB's annual flagship event, was held on 7-9 Dec 2023 at the Mahatma Mandir Convention & Exhibition Centre at Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat. The Conclave, a run-up to the 10th Vibrant Gujarat Summit, was inaugurated by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel.

The conference attracted a prestigious gathering that included domestic and international buyers, from places like Argentina, Spain, France, United Kingdom, United States and Singapore. Organized jointly by ICPB and Gujarat Tourism, the Conclave included, a three-day Seminar, an Exhibition, Business match-making sessions and was followed by post event farm tours organized by Gujarat Tourism.

Aptly themed "Sustainable MICE: Empowering Event Towards the \$ 5 Trillion Economy" the event served as an excellent platform

for buyers and exhibitors to network and share knowledge for exploring possibilities of bringing more people, conferences, and events to Gujarat. Several MoUs were also signed at the conclave.

Addressing the august gathering CM Patel said: "The success of Vibrant Gujarat Summit, which commenced in 2003 under Prime Minister Modi has shown Gujarat's ability to successfully organise global events". The CM further pointed out that: "Over 40 percent of the revenue in the tourism sector is derived from the MICE industry, and this sector also has the potential to generate employment."

Gujarat, as the host state to the Conclave, pulled out all the stops, to support the event. The cultural programme which put the spotlight on the rich and varied culture of the state along with the post tours to experience the many iconic tourist attractions of the state was appreciated by all.



(Above): 1 to 3: In pictures - participants on post event fam tours. 4: Garba dance performers. 5: B2B meetings between travel trade buyers and sellers

"India has huge monuments, amazing culture, lovely food something for everyone. It is the people who make me and my clients come back to India. It is how India makes you feel that makes it special. To all international travellers I would like to say, come experience India at my invitation and I can promise you will come again and again on your own, as India makes you feel at home."

Ms. Isabel Gil
Trade Buyer from Spain

The show stopper at the cultural programme was the Garba dance, at which foreign delegates at the event danced along with professional Garba dancers. The dance of Garba has been added to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation's Representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity. Celebrating the recognition, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Inspires us to preserve and promote our heritage for future generations".

Executive Director at India Convention Promotion Bureau, Ms Madhu Dubey, on the occasion shared that: "There has been tremendous development in infrastructure in Gujarat. Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition

Centre, has world-class facilities, which Global MICE players should consider." Sustainability is a hallmark of the venue which sprawls over 34 acres; it has a capacity of over 15,000 and state-of-the-art exhibition centres, seminar, and meeting rooms. Built on a railway station it is connected by a suspension bridge to The Leela Hotel and the unique eye-catching Dandhi Kutir, which houses a museum dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi and commemorates the historic march, which holds special significance in India's independence.

One of the participants, content creator and destination expert from Spain, Ms. Isabel Gil, who runs *Mi Viaje a la India*, said, "This is my first time in Gujarat and I am pleasantly surprised at the develop-



ment of the state, The Mahatma Mandir, Exhibition Convention Centre, is beautiful and a world-class convention centre, we are grateful for India's warmth and generous hospitality."

On being asked, why India? She said, "India has huge monuments, amazing culture, lovely food something for everyone." She added, however, "It is the people that makes me and my clients come back to India. It is how India makes you feel that makes it special. To all international travellers I would like to say, come experience India at my invitation and I can promise you will come again and again on your own, as India makes you feel at home."

Inviting Singaporeans to Explore **Incredible India**

Embark on a captivating voyage through the lens of G20 meetings in India, where diplomacy intertwines with the allure of travel. Join us on a visual odyssey that transcends conference rooms, igniting your wanderlust as we unravel the enchanting destinations that played host to global deliberations. Let the fusion of international discourse and breathtaking landscapes spark the adventurer in you, beckoning a journey beyond borders. Explore these destinations through our snapshots and find links to tourism websites, empowering you to plan your next adventure with ease.



(Clockwise from top left): ● PM Shri Narendra Modi delivered a virtual message to G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting in Goa in June. The PM underlined that tourism has the potential to create a harmonious society, "It is said that terrorism divides, but tourism unites."
● Delegates to the 3rd G20 Tourism Working Group (TWG) Meeting toured the sights in Srinagar. ● The first G20 Tourism Working Group meeting was held at Gujarat's Rann of Kutch to focus on rural and archaeological tourism potential. ● Delegates at the 4th G20 TWG and Tourism Ministerial Meeting visited the Aguada Fort in Goa

Scan the QR Code for more

For those who would like to know more there is a perfect jump-off point at the end of feature - a QR Code detailing the links to the State tourism authorities to unveil even more attractions and travel tips and info on how to get there, where to stay etc.



During India's G20 Presidency, tourism was taken up as one of the key sectors. Five priority areas of tourism were identified for deliberations: Greening the tourism sector, promoting digitisation, empowering the youth with skills, nurturing tourism micro, small and medium enterprises and startups, and strategic management of destinations.

India is a land where history, culture, nature, snow-capped peaks, and vibrant marketplaces converge. It promises an enriching adventure that transcends boundaries. One can begin the exploration at the iconic Taj Mahal in Agra, standing as a testament

to love and architectural brilliance. From the bustling streets of Delhi to the regal hues of Rajasthan, every step unfolds a new chapter in India's grand narrative.

One could venture into the southern realms, where the backwaters of Kerala offer a tranquil escape amidst verdant landscapes. Ayurvedic practices and houseboat cruises, promise rejuvenation for weary souls.

For those seeking a touch of adventure, the snow-capped peaks of Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand create a breathtaking canvas for trekking and exploration. The mystical charm of Rishikesh along the Ganges River invites



spiritual seekers and yoga enthusiasts to find solace.

The vibrant markets of the metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata and traditional bazaars, contemporary boutiques, offer a great shopping experience where each purchase tells a story.

For the foodies each region has something unique and one can go on a culinary journey and savour the diverse flavors of the country. Festivals are important and a great time to visit as well. The scenic landscapes, India's tapestry of wonders eagerly awaits your exploration.

So, pack your curiosity, bring your sense of adventure, and let India weave its enchanting spell on you. The adventure of a lifetime awaits as you step into a country where every moment unfolds as a unique chapter in the captivating story of its tourism landscape. Discover India – where diversity is not just celebrated, but lived and cherished.

Here is a selection of postcards from the regions where G20 delegates created memories.

Hanumangarh - RAJASTHAN



Hanumangarh is a city best known for its temples and its historical significance given that it was once part of the Indus Valley Civilization. Recent excavations in the area have revealed some stunning artifacts belonging to an era of great significance to human history.



New Delhi - DELHI UT

A symbol of the country's rich past and thriving present, Delhi is a city where ancient and modern blend seamlessly together. It is a place that not only touches your pulse but even fastens it to a frenetic speed.

Rewa - MADHYA PRADESH



Blessed with natural beauty, the city of Rewa is situated on the north-western end of Madhya Pradesh. The city has frolicking streams gushing from the mountains and lush green forests. Rewa is best known for the 'White Tiger Zoo and Safari'

Varanasi - UTTAR PRADESH



Varanasi is among the oldest living cities in the world and its antiquity finds place in ancient scriptures. Located along the Ganga it is a sacred place for all Hindus, Jains and Buddhists.

Kutch - GUJARAT

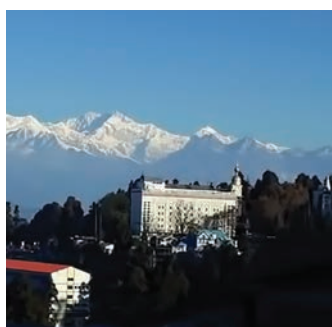


Kutch is a vast salt marsh desert in India that is home to many significant sites that belong to the Indus Valley Civilization. The nothingness for miles is both nerve-wracking and stunning with small oases of water bodies and shrub forests doubling up as homes for pink flamingoes and wild asses. The Kutch festival or Rann Utsav is a unique manifestation of the varied cultural ethos of the region famed for its ethnic flavor and celebratory zest.

Lawngtlai - MIZORAM



Situated in the southernmost part of the state, Lawngtlai culminates the high spring flows across the majestic rock structures called the Castle of Beino. The highest peak in Mizoram, Phawngpui or the Blue Mountain is in Lawngtlai. With the cliffs and rocky ledges on all sides providing natural shelter, Phawngpui is home to an amazing variety of birdlife.



Darjeeling - WEST BENGAL

Darjeeling is nestled in the Eastern Himalayan range in Northern Bengal. Also popularly known as the "Queen of Hills" is esteemed for its scenic beauty, snow peaks, vibrant green hills, views of tea plantations and multi-cultural offerings. For the nature lover, there are beautiful trekking routes and campsites near town, where one can enjoy the natural beauty of its surrounds and interfaces with the local folks.

Senapati - MANIPUR



Senapati District lies in the northern part of Manipur. Bordering Nagaland state, the Dzuko Valley in this district is a truly mesmerising verdant gift of nature. The highest peak of Manipur "Mount Iso" is also located behind this valley. The old village of Yangkhullen is a unique historical sight for every traveller visiting the region.

Golaghat - ASSAM



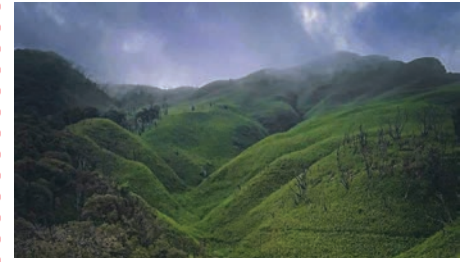
Golaghat, a quiet town in the heart of Assam, serves as the entrance to the untamed splendour of Kaziranga National Park. Hidden in these gorgeous surroundings, it provides a unique blend of culture and nature, making it an ideal starting point for exploring the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Experience Assam's beauty and beast together with exciting elephant rides or a thrilling jeep safari.

Itanagar - ARUNACHAL PRADESH



Set in the foothills of the Himalayas, the city is home to medieval Ita Fort, name literally meaning "Fort of bricks" dating as early as the 14th or the 15th century, and the Jawahar Lal State Museum which has on display handlooms and local crafts. Adorned with a beautiful gate at the base of the hill, a road spirals up to the Centre for Buddhist Culture, Gompa Temple.

Wokha - NAGALAND



Doyang Hydro Project is one of the most prominent tourist attractions of Wokha district. Another interesting aspect is the terrace cultivation being carried out in the valleys surrounding the Doyang River. Doyang is the place to be, for bird watchers as Nagaland is the 'Amur Falcon Capital of the World.'

Kasaragod - KERALA



Around 16 km to the south of the northernmost district in Kerala, Kasaragod lies the massive Bekal Fort. Situated comfortably on steep hills by the sea, the fort provides an imposing view from the beach. An observation tower fitted with beautiful peepholes, the Anjaneya Temple with its famous masonry, and two Theyyam sculptures built from laterite are among the primary attractions. It is also famous for its 'Blue Flag' beach.



Amritsar - PUNJAB

The Golden City of Punjab, is one of the most spiritually significant and historically rich cities of India. It is home to India's most serene and humbling sight, the Harimandir Sahib, famously known as the Golden Temple. It is the nucleus of the Sikh faith and draws the Sikh community from all over the world. Amritsar does not only provide nourishment to the soul, but also serves mouth-watering delicious authentic Punjabi food steeped in rich tradition.

Gangtok - SIKKIM



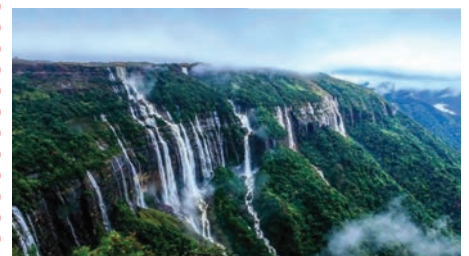
The name meaning hill-top, Gangtok can be safely said to be one of the most beautiful hill stations in the country. With everything in just the right amount, from a blend of cultural identities to urbanisation, Gangtok is a breathing and dynamic bit of paradise in the Northeast. It has an amazing view of Mt Khangchendzonga, the third highest mountain peak in the world.

Unakoti - TRIPURA



Tripura has beautiful rock-cut carvings and stone images at Unakoti. Most of these carvings are massive in size and carved into vertical walls open to the elements. Unakoti is said to have one less than a crore many rock cut carvings here. These carvings are located in a beautifully landscaped forest area with green vegetation all around which adds to their timeless beauty.

Sohra - MEGHALAYA



Sohra has stories hidden all over – in its rivers, cascades, and mist-shrouded hilltops. The plunging Nohkalikai and the thunderous Dainthlen are settings for immortal Khasi folktales while the three-tiered Wei Saw Dong is tucked away in a verdant forest. Sohra provides layers of sights and adventures.



LEH AND LADAKH UT

The Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs has recently declared some more areas of Ladakh open for International Tourism. Pangong Lake, in the Eastern sector of Ladakh, at a distance of 150 km from Leh across Changla Pass is one of the largest and most beautiful natural brackish lakes in the country.

GOA



As one moves from the north of the state to a more southerly direction, the landscape shifts from the more populace cities of Panaji to its quieter rural expanses of the village settlements of the south. Located here are the beach destinations of Colva, Benaulim, Mobor and tranquil Agonda with swaying palms and balmy breezes.

Rishikesh - UTTARAKHAND



Known as the world capital of yoga, Rishikesh is a sacred place with pleasant weather all year round. It is a big draw for pilgrims as well as fans of the Beatles. This gateway to the Garhwal Himalayas is very big on adventure sports like river rafting, trekking, camping and birding.

Warangal - TELANGANA



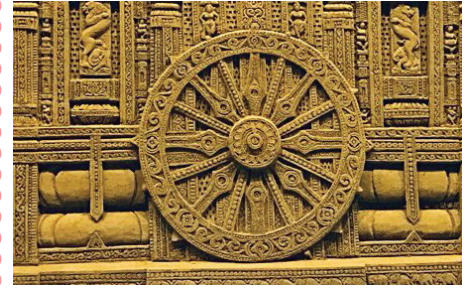
Once the capital of Kakatiya Kingdom the historical city of Warangal is bestowed with rich wildlife and admirable scenic beauty. Laknavaram Lake is undeniably one of the most popular places to visit here. An unmissable spot is the Thousand Pillars Temple, located at the base of Hanamkonda hill.

UT of DADRA and NAGAR HAVELI and DAMAN & DIU

Diu is a beautiful island union territory off the coastal belt in the Kathiawad region near the Veraval port. Diu is an alluring tourist destination for its beautiful beaches, colourful history and numerous tourist sites to explore. You can also enjoy many such touristy allurements at Dadra Nagar Haveli, now also a part of Diu and Daman.



Puri - ODISHA



The most famous tourist address of the state, the city is synonymous with Lord Jagannath and his siblings Lord Balabhadra & Goddess Subhadra. Puri is one of the Char Dhams (Four sacred places) of India. Besides the cult of Lord Jagannath and the mysticism attached to Puri, it is one of the few destinations where one can combine spiritual salvation with fun and adventure. The city is dotted with many old shrines and mathas (Ashram) each having its own little story.

Srinagar - JAMMU AND KASHMIR UT



Srinagar, spread along both sides of the river Jhelum, is located in the heart of the Kashmir Valley, spread on both sides of the river Jhelum. The Dal and Nagin lakes enhance its picturesque setting, while the changing play of the seasons and the salubrious climate ensure that the city is equally attractive to visitors around the year. Tulip Garden in Kashmir is Asia's largest tulip garden. It is commonly known as Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden, located on the banks of the famous Dal Lake.



Kadmat - LAKSHADWEEP UT

Kadmat has emerged as one of the most beautiful dive centers in India. Kayaks, sailing boats, pedal boats, skiing boats and glass-bottomed boats are also available. A great variety of fish including manta rays, sharks, and clear water with 20-50 meter visibility makes it an unparalleled dive destination for scuba divers.



Udhwa - JHARKHAND

Udhwa is a small village, in the Sahebganj district of Jharkhand. It is located on the flood plain of the river Ganga. Udhwa Bird Sanctuary attracts many different varieties of birds from different countries during the dry season of the year.

Gaya - BIHAR



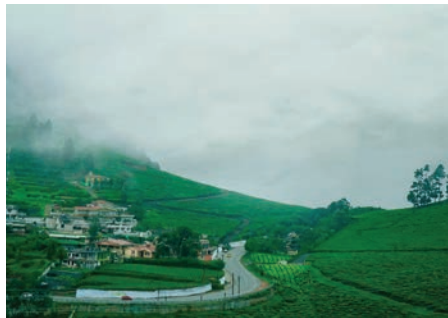
Gaya, once a small village, mushroomed into a city over the centuries on the banks of Phalgu River. This place is considered holy among the Hindus, the Buddhists, and the Jains. The Mahabodhi Temple (literally: "Great Awakening Temple"), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is an ancient, Buddhist temple in Bodhi Gaya, marking the location where the Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment.

Mysuru - KARNATAKA



Mysuru, the 'City of Palaces', is royalty and magnificence embodied; overflowing with history, sprawling gardens and tree-lined boulevards. One of South India's most fascinating cities, Mysuru has a plethora of places to visit and explore. It is renowned for its royal heritage and splendid monuments and buildings. This former state capital is a seamless blend of old-world charm and modernity.

Ooty - TAMIL NADU



Ooty is the "Queen of the Hills" in South India, in the state of Tamil Nadu. It draws throngs of tourists each year for its gorgeous scenic beauty, lofty hills, serene lakes, dense woods filled with wildlife and swathes of tea estates. Conservation of local flora and fauna is a big priority here.

Visakhapatnam - ANDHRA PRADESH



Visakhapatnam, also commonly known as Vizag, is one of the oldest port cities in the country. Situated in the heart of Andhra Pradesh, it is known for its picturesque beaches and serene landscape, as well as a rich cultural past, which makes it an ideal spot for a fantastic coastal vacation. The port of Visakhapatnam is renowned for being home to the oldest shipyard in all of India, and with a plethora of manmade wonders and natural spectacles.

Kurukshetra - HARYANA



Kurukshetra is a place of great historical and religious importance, revered all over the country for its sacred association with the Vedas and the Vedic Culture. According to Hindu mythology, Kurukshetra is spread over a circuit of about 48 KOS, which includes a large number of holy places, temples and sacred tanks.

CHANDIGARH UT



Chandigarh, the dream city, was planned by the famous French architect Le Corbusier. Picturesquely located at the foothills of Shivaliks, it is known as one of the best experiments in urban planning and modern architecture in the 20th century in India.

Malhar - CHHATTISGARH



Malhar is the historic treasure of Chhattisgarh's most ancient town. The town features in the list of "Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains of National Importance" maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India.

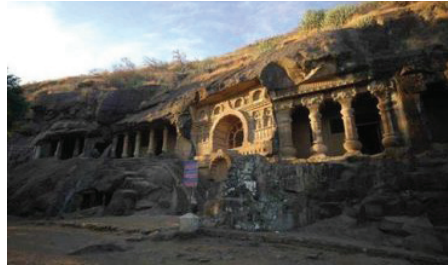
For a more immersive experience and to delve deeper into each destination, simply scan the accompanying QR code. It's your one-step landing to explore the beauty, heritage, and unique experiences that India has to offer. Whether you're a seasoned traveler or planning your first visit, let this guide be your compass to the wonders of India



Puducherry - PUDUCHERRY UT Nashik - MAHARASHTRA



A place of history and preserved colonial charm, sandy beaches, clean promenades, temples, monuments, heritage villas, quaint old-world town planning, spiritual mystique and a lingering French ambience define Puducherry's unique character.



Nashik is an ancient holy city in Maharashtra, a state in western India. It's known for its links to the "Ramayana" epic poem. On the Godavari River is Panchavati, a temple complex. Lord Rama was thought to have bathed at Ram Kund.

Swaraj Dweep - ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS UT



Swaraj Dweep is a picturesque natural paradise with beautiful white sandy beaches, rich coral reefs and lush green forest. This island, with beautiful sandy beaches fringed with a green canopy of rain-fed forests, beckons everyone to enjoy the frolic and fun in the azure sea.



Manali - HIMACHAL PRADESH

A gift of the Himalayas to the world, Manali is a beautiful township nestled in the picturesque Beas River valley. It is a rustic enclave known for its cool climate and snow-capped mountains, offering respite to tourists escaping the scorching heat of the plains. The place is a classic blend of peace and tranquility which makes it a haven for nature lovers and adventure enthusiasts.





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Kashmir Tourism Revival Changing Lives Daily



Tourism in Kashmir is currently undergoing a significant resurgence. To understand the dynamics of this revival, INDIplomacy sought insights from those directly involved. The feedback we received revealed a collection of inspiring comeback tales. We discovered that the combined efforts of local participants, supported by government initiatives, are laying the groundwork for a sustainable and flourishing future in Kashmir's tourism sector

Latif Ahmad, a shikara boatman on the serene Dal Lake, encapsulates the essence of Kashmiri hospitality. To him, hospitality isn't just a service; it's an art form deeply embedded in his daily life. Each day, he readies his shikara, adorning it with vibrant colors and traditional decorations, preparing to ferry tourists across the famous lake. His smile, as bright and welcoming as the Kashmiri sun, is his constant companion.

For Latif, the shikara is more than just a boat; it's a vessel that carries not only people but also experiences and memories. He takes great pride in showing visitors the beauty of Dal Lake, often narrated with stories and insights that only a local like him could provide.

The interaction with tourists from diverse backgrounds brings him joy and a sense of connection to the world beyond the lake's waters.

The recent revival of tourism in the region has been a boon for Latif. It's not just about the financial stability it brings; it's about the revival of his spirit and the joy of sharing his world with others. Each group of tourists brings new faces, new



Above: For Latif Ahmad his shikara is more than just a boat

stories, and new opportunities to create lasting memories. For many visitors, the ride on Latif's shikara becomes a highlight of their Kashmir experience, and for Latif, each journey is an opportunity to showcase his homeland's beauty and culture.

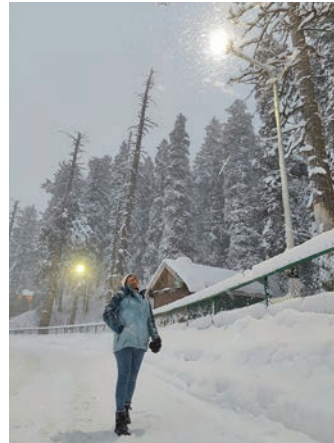
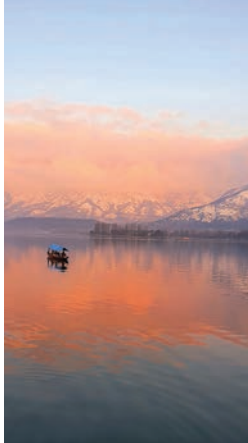
Latif's story is a testament to the resilience and warmth of the Kashmiri people. In his smile and through his work, he embodies the spirit of revival and hope that is

currently sweeping through the region. His satisfaction comes not just from making a living but from the immeasurable joy of making memories that visitors will cherish long after they leave the serene waters of Dal Lake.

Since the pandemic, Jammu and Kashmir have seen a remarkable increase in domestic tourism, fueled by enhanced air connectivity and significant infrastructure improvements. The region, now more accessible than ever, offers a diverse range of activities, appealing to various interests from serene retreats to adventurous escapades. This resurgence is not just a boost to the local economy but also a reaffirmation of the area's magnetic appeal, making it a top destination for Indian travelers seeking unique experiences within their own country.

In today's jargon, the most Instagrammable images of the valley are the neatly docked shikaras and the houseboats. The Chairman of Kashmir's Houseboats Owners Association (KHBOA), Mr. Manzoor Pakhtoon, shared his optimism about the industry's growth. KHBOA, established in 1934, plays a crucial role in preserving the region's unique

hospitality. Offering more than just accommodation, these houseboats on Dal Lake, Nigeen Lake, River Jhelum, and Chinar Bagh provide an authentic Kashmiri experience. Houseboat owners double as hosts, guides, and local tour organizers, offering a range of activities and showcasing the region's beauty.



Kashmir in various seasons. Photos by Sudeshna Majumdar

Infrastructure Upgrades

The local government and tourism authorities have made concerted efforts to upgrade the region's infrastructure. This includes better roads, enhanced tourist facilities, and the development of new attractions. These improvements have not only made travel smoother and more comfortable but have also opened up previously inaccessible areas to tourists.

A key factor in this resurgence has been the significant increase in daily flights to the region. Improved air connectivity has made travel to Jammu and Kashmir more accessible and convenient for domestic tourists. The region, once considered remote, is now just a flight away for millions of Indians, making weekend getaways and extended vacations more feasible. Jammu and Kashmir attracted a record 20.2 million tourists in 2023, including over 50,000 international visitors, thanks to its

diverse tourism offerings, especially in MICE tourism. The G20 Tourism Working Group meeting highlighted the region's potential in global event tourism, improving its appeal across various tourism sectors.

Local operators and houseboat owners like Manjoor Karnai and Ashraf Wangnoo have witnessed a surge in domestic tourism, attributing it to increased accessibility and the region's allure.

Irvinder Singh from Incredible Odyssey observed a renewed global interest in Kashmir. However, he noted that travel advisories in some countries still affect tourism growth.

Bashir Guroo, a Singapore-based agent, emphasizes the importance of sustainable tourism in the eco-sensitive region of

Kashmir. He advocates for tourism practices that preserve the natural paradise for future generations.

Changing Lives

The G20 meeting in Kashmir was not just a diplomatic event; it was a stage for the world to witness the harmonious blend of tradition and modernity in Kashmir. "United the World through Heritage and Innovation" was more than a theme; it was a reflection of Kashmir's journey and its aspirations. As the region opened its doors to global leaders, it also opened up new possibilities for tourism, international cooperation, and a sustainable future, firmly positioning Kashmir on the world map as a destination where heritage and innovation coexist in perfect harmony.

Neela Lad, the former Director of Tourism at the India Tourist Office in Singapore, beautifully encapsulates the essence of Kashmir's allure. Reflecting on her visits, she shares, "It's very peaceful and people are so warm and hospitable. In the last few years, we have visited several times with family and friends, and one has never had enough." Her words resonate with the experiences of many who find themselves repeatedly drawn to the serene beauty and warmth of Kashmir.

Digital Nomads Paradise



Kashmir holds an attraction for all types of travellers. Sudeshna Majumdar represents the new wave of digital-era professionals who blend work with wanderlust. As a tech-savvy individual, she has embraced the work-from-home culture, but with a twist - she chooses the breathtaking landscapes of Kashmir

as her office backdrop. During her numerous visits to Srinagar, Sudeshna sets up her workspace amid its serene beauty, merging the demands of her tech career with the tranquility of nature.

In Srinagar, Sudeshna's approach to work and exploration is remarkably adaptable. She immerses herself in the local culture, often using the city's local transport systems to navigate. This not only gives her an authentic experience of Srinagar's rhythm but also adds a layer of simplicity and adventure to her daily routine.

"I have made many friends here," Sudeshna shares, her words reflecting the deep connections she has formed in the city. Her frequent trips have transcended beyond conventional tourism, evolving into a journey of building relationships, understanding local customs, and experiencing life from a Kashmiri perspective. Her story is a testament to the changing dynamics of professional life, where scenic



destinations like Kashmir are not just retreats but also vibrant, productive workspaces. Sudeshna Majumdar's lifestyle exemplifies a harmonious blend of professional diligence, cultural immersion, and personal enrichment.

Exploring Kashmir is a sensory journey, from savoring its exquisite cuisine to immersing one's self in the natural splendour of Gulmarg and Pahalgam, and marveling at the historic Mughal Gardens. Kashmiri cuisine, with dishes like Rogan Josh and Dum Aloo, offers a taste of rich flavors and culinary traditions. Gulmarg, a snowy paradise, is ideal for skiing, while Pahalgam's serene landscapes promise tranquility. The Mughal Gardens, with their symmetrical beauty, reflect the region's historical depth.

The spiritual significance of the area is underlined by sites like the Kheer Bhawani, the Vaishno Devi Temple, and Amarnath Cave and Sufi shrines drawing millions of devotees. The regions also offer thrilling adventures such as skiing in Kashmir and trekking in Jammu, enhancing their appeal for diverse travellers.

Post-pandemic, tourism in these regions has seen a significant boost, with initiatives like the establishment of the Jammu & Kashmir Tourist Village Network to promote rural tourism and transform picturesque villages into tourist hotspots. The



(From left): 1: Shankaracharya Temple 2: G20 delegates experiencing traditional hospitality and hands-on craft 3: Ms Neela Lad enjoying Kashmir

government's increased budget allocation for tourism in J&K, aims to develop infrastructure and promote inclusive economic growth in remote areas.

There are several opportunities that have also emerged recently; these include innovative trends in Fashion and Handicrafts, and a rising demand for Vocational Education, Technical Institutions and Film-making in the valley.

Dr. Bhaskar Jyoti, a food technologist and a Senior Programme Director, who has been exploring training opportunities in the valley shares, "We envision a New Kashmir is equipped with enhanced skills and resources to foster the growth of a socio-economic entrepreneurial culture, focusing on industrial development and creating employment opportunities for the youth

within the valley. Our primary objective is to ensure sustainability while pursuing these goals. We are currently in the midst of establishing this Center in that region."

Carpets and Crafts have been an integral part of the Kashmir story. The owner of M K Exports Group Mr. Mudassir Khan says, "Tour-

ism has the power to breathe new life and experience new traditions; Kashmir has a lot to offer, and post-turmoil Kashmir is spreading its wings towards a new horizon. We are blessed with traditional arts and crafts, fostering innovation yet preserving cultural heritage for generations to come."

The Jammu and Kashmir government is also actively promoting film tourism, aiming to attract both national and international filmmakers to the region's scenic landscapes. The Film Policy, designed to showcase the valley's beauty and culture, also focuses on local talent integration in global cinema. Events like the National Film Festival of Jammu & Kashmir in Srinagar are part of this strategy, offering a platform for international collaboration and showcasing the region's creative ecosystem.



**Congratulations and Best Wishes to
the People and Republic of India
on Republic Day 26th Jan 2024**



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Showcasing **Indian Culture** at the G20

India's rich cultural heritage was shown at many of the G20 Meetings. Here are highlights compiled by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) that coordinated over 300 cultural programmes and 17,000 artists at over 60 locations during India's G20 Presidency. The ICCR has published 'Showcasing Indian Culture at G20' that shows the diversity of India's cultural heritage. To view online or download a copy visit www.indiplomacy.com



Buddhist Chanting
@ RIIG event (CSIR)
Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh
24th - 25th Mar 2023



Kathak Dance
@ 1st Sherpa Meeting
Udaipur, Rajasthan
4th - 7th Dec 2023



Bhutia Dance
@ StartUp 20 Event
Gangtok, Sikkim
18th - 19th Mar 2023

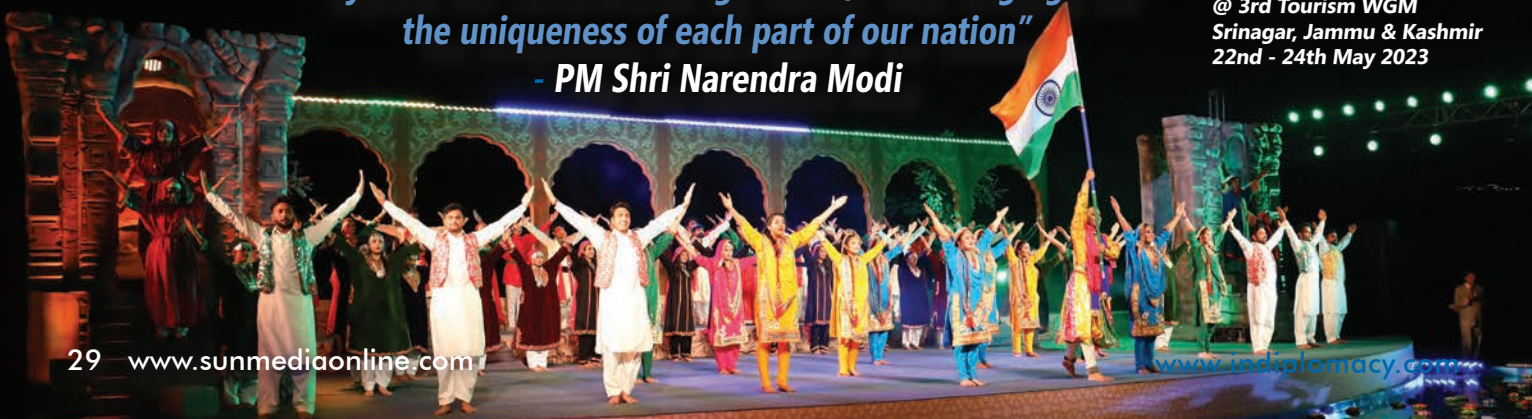


Manipuri Raas Dance
@ B20 Event
Imphal, Manipur
17th - 18th Feb 2023

"The G20 Presidency helps showcase parts of India beyond the conventional big metros, thus bringing out the uniqueness of each part of our nation"

- PM Shri Narendra Modi

Rouf, Gojri, Pahadi, Kud, Bhaddarwadi, Chakkari, Dogri & Tarren Dance
@ 3rd Tourism WGM
Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir
22nd - 24th May 2023





SingHealth

HAPPY REPUBLIC DAY

— 2024 —

***Congratulations
to the People and the
Republic of India
on their
75th Republic Day***

Singapore Health Services (SingHealth) is a healthcare group in Singapore with four hospitals, five national specialty centres, three community hospitals, and a network of primary healthcare clinics. With over 40 medical specialties and a faculty of 3,700 doctors, the group offers integrated care in a multidisciplinary setting.

SingHealth institutions have earned a reputation for setting standards in healthcare for the region. Patients enjoy the benefit of treatments with solid diagnostic and treatment medical technology in a wide range of medical procedures.

SingHealth Hospitals



Singapore
General Hospital



Changi
General Hospital



Sengkang
General Hospital



KK Women's and
Children's Hospital

National Specialty Centres



National Cancer
Centre Singapore



National Dental
Centre Singapore



National Heart
Centre Singapore



National
Neuroscience Institute



Singapore National
Eye Centre

Partner in Academic Medicine


SingHealth **DukeNUS**
ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTRE