



# INDIA'S GROWING STATURE A RISING POWER

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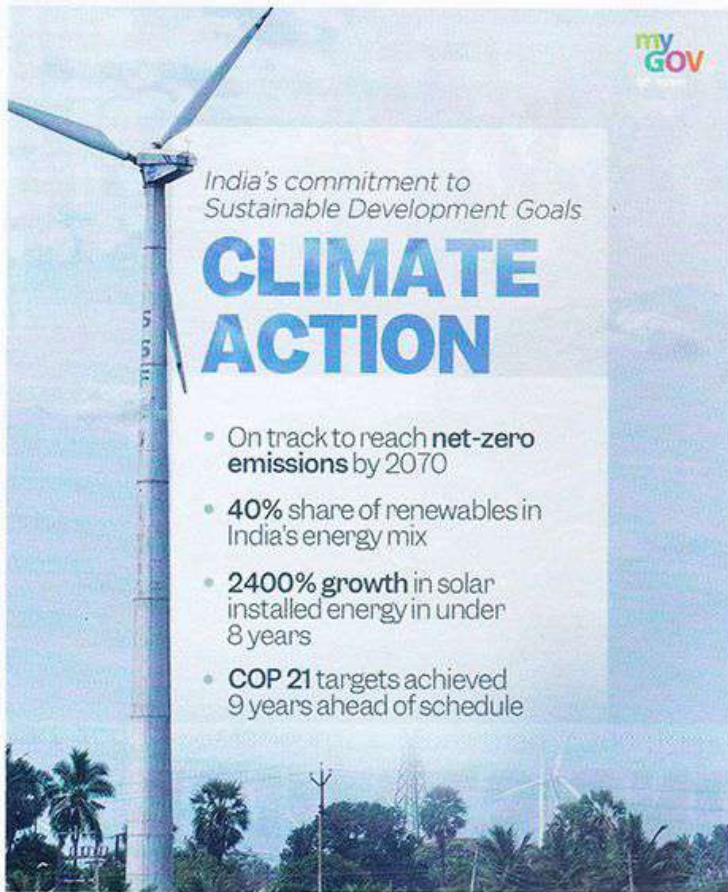
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**A**t a time when geopolitical contestation and conflicts have riddled the world over political, ideological, and territorial differences, the international community yearns for a new direction beyond the binary choices offered by competing powers. The Covid-19 pandemic struck a mortal blow to economies around the world. The post-Covid recovery phase, which ought to have seen the global community come together, is instead witnessing deep divisions. The multilateral system,

including the Bretton Woods structures, has failed to deliver. Help and hope are scarce for the distressed economies, especially in the Global South, which face the multi-pronged challenge of disruption in the availability of food, fuel, fertilisers, and developmental finance.

It is at a key point of inflection in geopolitical tumult that India has set an example for the rest of the world through its leadership of the G20, its values-based approach, its emphasis on global cooperation, and a human-centric vision of peace



and progress for all. India's Presidency of the G20 this year, despite doubts expressed by the perennial naysayers in India and around the world, was a big success in building consensus on key issues such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), macro-economic stability, digital public infrastructure, climate challenge, a just and equitable green transition, and reforms of multilateral structures. India's image as a credible power, assiduously built over the past few years, has been further consolidated as a result of the vaccines and healthcare assistance it extended to countries around the world at the height of the pandemic.

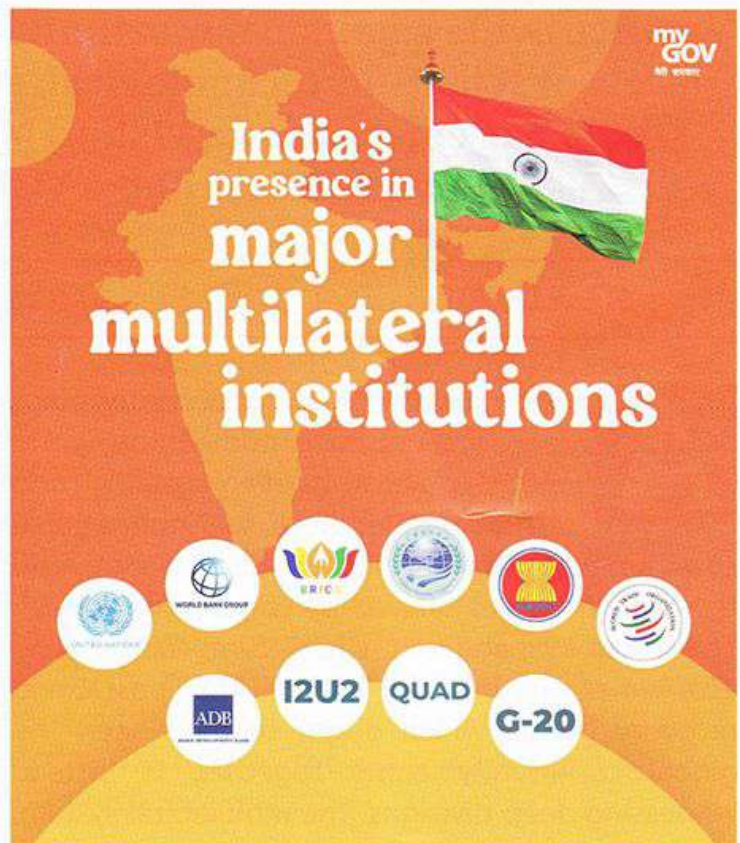
### Indian Leadership

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is no longer perceived as an observer on the global stage. It is now a key player in shaping outcomes. One example, based on the G20 motto of 'One Earth One Family One Future' and the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, is the inclusion of the African Union (AU) into the G20 at the New Delhi Summit, hinged on India's strong advocacy of 'leaving none behind'. This momentous development, which makes the G20 structure more representative, highlights India's role as a true friend of the Global South.

The positive outcomes reflected in the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration resonate well with many initiatives taken by the Modi government in recent years. Apart from the vaccine assistance programme during the pandemic, it is pertinent to mention the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), and Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS). To this list should be added the Green Grids Initiative—One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG), which was proposed by PM Modi at the First Assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in 2018.

### Mission LiFE and Climate Crisis

Climate change and environmental degradation have emerged as two of the world's greatest challenges, with the potential to create unimaginably adverse consequences for future generations. It is here that India has pointed to a different path for ameliorating the situation, beyond science, technology, and the exploitative mercantilism that characterises the fissures between the developed West and the distressed Global South. India has offered a new moral compass, first expounded in Glasgow by PM Modi through Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment), which places individual behaviour at the centre of the global climate action debate.



Now codified as the G20 High Level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development, this mission intends to propagate a global network of individuals committed to environmentally-friendly lifestyles based on sustainable consumption patterns. On its part, India is the only G20 country to have achieved its Paris Agreement Goals well before the stipulated target of 2030. Even US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate Change John Kerry acknowledged that India is an indisputable world leader in clean energy.

PM Modi has announced ambitious targets for 2030, including installing 500 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity and reducing the emission intensity of its economy by 45 per cent. India's clean energy transition and global climate mitigation promise to demonstrate the commitment of its leaders at the highest level. India expressed its intention to intensify its climate action by presenting an updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). This update is a step towards India's long-term goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2070.

### Clean Energy

Similarly, at the G7 Summit in June 2022, PM Modi highlighted India's efforts towards clean energy. He noted, "India has the world's first fully solar-operated airport. India's huge railway system

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**218 Million** registered users

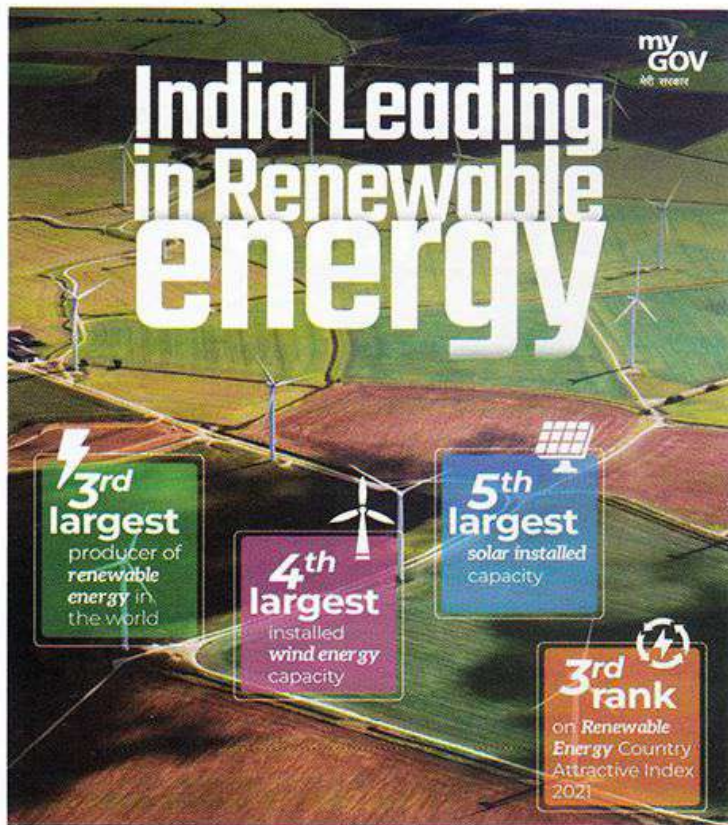
**CoWIN**  
World's largest digital Vaccination Drive  
**2.15 Billion** vaccine doses administered

will become net zero in this decade. We achieved the 40 per cent energy capacity target from non-fossil sources nine years before time". Besides these multilateral commitments and proposals, India has also signed bilateral clean energy partnerships with the EU, Japan, and the US.

India and the US have together revamped the US-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (USISCEP). The partnership aims to advance energy security and innovation, scale up emerging clean energy technologies, and deploy technical solutions through five key pillars:

- i. Responsible Oil and Gas Pillar
- ii. Power and Energy Efficiency Pillar
- iii. Renewable Energy Pillar
- iv. Sustainable Growth Pillar, and
- v. Emerging Fuels and Technologies.

Yet another initiative is the EU and India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership (CECP), which was established in 2016. This aims to promote clean energy cooperation and the implementation of the Paris Agreement by increasing the deployment of climate-friendly energy sources such as solar and wind energy. Current areas of cooperation include activities in offshore wind energy, roof-top solar panels and solar parks, integration of renewable



April 2022, the Prime Minister said that the Government aims to establish India as one of the key partners in global semiconductor supply chains. He said India has “an exceptional semiconductor design talent pool, which makes up to 20% of the world’s semiconductor design engineers.” Moreover, most of the top 25 semiconductor design companies have their design or R&D centres in our country.

The trilateral Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, launched in collaboration with Australia and Japan, is another significant step in addressing the supply chain crisis. This initiative aims to coordinate and incentivise supply chain diversification away from China and towards the three countries and like-minded partners. Alongside developing new initiatives, international players must also examine the wider implications of potential monopolies and supply chain disruptions with regard to lithium, cobalt, copper, nickel, and rare earths, many of which are critical to green technologies and digital infrastructure.

energy and storage, smart grids, biofuels, and energy efficiency in buildings. This partnership was reconfirmed in the joint statement at the EU-India Summit in October 2017, and later in July 2020, the EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025 was agreed.

The focus on energy is not only generic in nature but also specific. India will be a significant benefactor of the emerging global energy trade in hydrogen, and the country might eventually become a net energy exporter. In order to export green hydrogen and establish hydrogen hubs in various locations around the nation, India can imitate the Australian models. PM Modi has said that soon India will become a critical component in the supply chain of not only green hydrogen but also other important arenas, so as to ensure safe and secure alternatives to the ongoing disruptions. This would provide India with a quantum leap in its efforts to combat climate change.

### Resilient Supply Chains

In December 2021, the Government announced a nearly \$10 billion production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme to encourage chip manufacturing in India. In March 2022, the Union Cabinet approved the Semicon India programme to develop the semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem. At the Semicon India Conference in

### Digital Infrastructure

India has emerged as one of the fastest-growing digital economies in the world. There has been rapid digitalisation in India in the past few years. On 1 July 2015, the Prime Minister launched Digital India to transform India into an empowered digital economy. Since then, there has been a meteoric rise in mobile ownership across India in the last eight years. Digital India aims to increase the affordability and accessibility of the internet to Indian citizens and also to improve the digital infrastructure across the country.

Technology adoption by the Government has ensured a remarkable increase in transparency in governance. Today, almost all government programmes have a digital dashboard that provides all the details of beneficiaries. In 2021, India reported 48 billion real-time digital transactions, or 40 per cent of the global total. Interestingly, this is nearly three times higher than China and seven times greater than the combined real-time payments volume of the world’s leading economies: the US, Canada, the UK, France, and Germany. India’s digital transformation under PM Modi has not gone unnoticed. Around the world, countries have evinced interest in the Indian model of the UIDAI, Aadhaar and the unified payment portals that link India’s huge population into a seamless whole.

## Yoga and Ayurveda

India has traditionally excelled at contributing to the global good, as evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, when it provided free vaccines to nearly 100 countries and sent food aid and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, Ukraine, and several African countries. India has supported prevention over cure not only by exporting vaccines but also by promoting healthy living habits. The western notion of disease and medicine differs from the eastern version. India believes in food and traditional practices like yoga as part of medicine that can stimulate the holistic development of an individual.

As early as in his UNGA speech in 2014, he sought to promote this while proposing the International Day of Yoga. Sharing the great Indian legacy of Yoga with the world was a personal gift to humankind. Today, countries around the world see merit in the holistic health practices offered by India's ancient civilisation, transcending ideological and religious barriers. Until India offered to share its patrimony through such a path-breaking initiative, Yoga was practised overseas in expensive studios and also subjected to idiosyncratic interpretations, even being made part of sporting competitions! This initiative revived the true practice of Yoga in its purest form, making it available to the masses around the world.

During Covid, the Government promoted Ayurvedic medicine or simple home remedies to boost natural immunity. It is not an alternative to allopathic medicine, but a complement to it. The Indian initiatives were leading the discussion at the WHO regarding delaying the intellectual property of vaccines. India exported medicines and other equipment to help various countries and became the first respondent in the Indian Ocean region. Vaccine Maitri helped deliver vaccines to 101 countries. In addition, India has provided open-source apps like CoWIN and Arogya Setu to other developing countries. The government proclaimed these as Digital Public Good, which 50 countries have utilised for their vaccination drives.

## International Year of Millets

On the food security front, recognising the potential of millets to meet domestic and global nutritional needs, the Government of India proposed to the United Nations that 2023 be

declared the International Year of Millets (IYoM-2023). This proposal garnered support from 72 countries, and on 5 March 2021, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) officially declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets. This is a primary food crop in semi-arid tropical regions, where conventional food crops struggle to thrive due to limited rainfall and poor soil quality. Millets also boast superior nutritional content in comparison to major cereal crops, contributing to food security and dietary health. They are particularly resilient to drought and extreme weather conditions, making them naturally adapted to such challenging environments.

With increasing concern about lifestyle diseases like diabetes and the prevalence of refined diets, modern consumers are gradually turning to gluten-free millets as a viable substitute for staples like wheat and rice. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated this shift, with both urban and rural populations embracing millets to boost their nutritional intake and enhance their immunity. The health benefits of millets received a huge boost during India's G20 presidency. Scores of dishes made of millets were offered to thousands of foreign and Indian participants at the hundreds of G20 events held in India. As the Think20 Chair of India's G20 Presidency, this writer is proud to state that millets featured prominently at each of the events organised by the Think20 engagement group.

## Conclusion

There has been a tremendous change in India's trajectory over the last nine years. India has now entered the period of Kartavya Kaal, which will provide a golden opportunity for India to achieve unprecedented levels of scientific, technological, economic, and social progress. When India marks the centenary of its Independence in 2047, it will be a responsible global power. It will achieve this dream on behalf of all the Indian people, particularly the youth. India will rise to the pinnacle of glory because it is today willing to assume a leadership role in diverse areas and contribute to the greater good. Today, India has emerged as a Vishwa Mitra (global friend), a Vishwa Guru (global teacher), and a Vishwa Vaid (global physician) in sharp contrast to many others embroiled in trade, military, or ideological confrontation. □

*(Views expressed are personal)*