

## **GIFT IFSC: Emerging as a preferred new age global financial centre**

### **By Dr Dipesh Shah**

The Government of India implemented a major financial sector reform by establishing the country's maiden International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in GIFT City, Gujarat. The IFSC has been developed as a unique international financial jurisdiction within onshore India, which has been designated as a non-resident zone under the Foreign Exchange Management (FEM) Act. This special status enables financial transactions to be carried out in any of the notified fifteen foreign currencies, including USD, GBP, Euro and Yen.

The IFSC has been set up with two primary objectives namely:

- a) Onshoring India-centric international financial services business, and,
- b) Serve as a preferred gateway for channelising global capital flows into and out of the country.

Over the last few years, GIFT IFSC has made remarkable progress in positioning itself as a 'New Age Global Financial Centre,' providing an ideal platform for the global financial services industry to integrate more efficiently with the Indian economy. A key landmark in IFSC's journey so far has been the establishment of the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) as a unified statutory body for the development and regulation of IFSCs in India. Since October 2020, IFSCA has assumed its statutory powers and has notified over 29 regulations and more than 14 frameworks encompassing the entire spectrum of financial services, including - banking, capital markets, insurance, the fund industry, fintech, aircraft leasing, ship leasing, and global corporate treasury centers. The Government endeavours to develop GIFT IFSC as an internationally recognised financial centre with trusted business regulations, competitive tax regime and ease of doing business.

Today, the GIFT IFSC initiative is a testament to India's firm resolve to undertake bold and transformative reforms in the financial sector. This ambitious project is envisaged to catalyse global capital flows into the country and accelerate the integration of the Indian economy with the global financial ecosystem. As of July 2024, more than 600 + entities across banks, capital markets, insurance, fintech, aircraft leasing, ship leasing, bullion exchange, etc. have been registered with the IFSCA. The financial service market is gaining momentum with healthy and growing participation of global and domestic financial services institutions. The business growth in some of the key sectors is highlighted below:

**Banking Sector:** The Banking ecosystem in GIFT IFSC is rapidly evolving with a healthy mix of foreign and domestic banks, primarily catering to the foreign currency borrowing requirements of Indian corporates and public sector enterprises through external commercial borrowing, trade finance, etc. Transactions under these heads, previously booked from overseas financial centres are now being booked out of GIFT IFSC. As of March 2024, the total asset size of IFSC Banking Units (IBUs) crossed USD 60 billion, and the cumulative value of transactions undertaken by IBUs crossed USD 795 billion.

**Fund Industry:** The growth of a robust fund industry in GIFT IFSC is has a transformative impact in catalysing global capital inflows into India, including for the start-up ecosystem. Previously, pooling of international capital for investments in India was structured through funds (private equity, venture capital, hedge funds, etc.) set up in offshore jurisdictions. Now, with enabling regulations, a competitive tax regime, and beneficial cost of operations, GIFT IFSC is emerging as a preferred jurisdiction for the pooling of global capital by foreign and Indian fund managers. In the last three years, there has been rapid growth in Fund Management Entities (FMEs) and Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) registered with IFSCA. The cumulative FMEs and funds registered rose from 39 and 33 in September 2022 to 114 and 120, respectively, in March 2024.

**Aircraft Leasing:** The aviation industry in India is on the cusp of unprecedented growth, with a strong order book of more than 1500 + aircraft placed by Indian airlines and a projected demand for over 2,200 aircraft by 2042. Currently, most aircraft operated by Indian airlines are leased from offshore lessors that have access to competitive capital costs. The aircraft leasing and financing business, the most profitable segment in the aviation value chain, was entirely residing in foreign jurisdictions. Recognising the immense potential of aircraft leasing and financing business, IFSCA introduced the enabling leasing framework, and the Government supported the endeavour by providing several tax incentives. In three years, green shoots have been visible in IFSC with more than 28 aircraft lessors already registered. These have leased more than 120 + aviation assets, including commercial aircraft, helicopters, aircraft engines and ground support equipment.

**Foreign universities initiative:** The IFSC, being an offshore jurisdiction is uniquely positioned to become an 'International Higher Education Hub' by attracting top-quality international universities which are keen on exploring India for its talent and demographic profile. IFSCA achieved a significant milestone in FY24 when Australia's Deakin University became the first foreign university to be granted final registration for their International branch campus in GIFT IFSC under IFSCA (setting up and operation of international branch campus and

offshore education centres) Regulation, 2022. University of Wollongong of Australia became the second foreign university to receive in-principal approval for their international branch campus in GIFT IFSC.

**Global In-House Centres:** Globally, information technology and digital practices have facilitated the cross-border flow of services such as - accounting, auditing, taxation, book-keeping and has fuelled the growth of Global In-House Centres (GIC). GIFT IFSC, is uniquely positioned to offer such services to global clients. A leading US institution, i.e. Bank of America has already set up a large GIC unit in GIFT IFSC, which is providing in-house support services to the bank's global operations. Several other international firms are now looking at the GIC opportunity in GIFT IFSC.

In the future, GIFT IFSC is slated to play a significant role in achieving the vision of a developed India@2047.

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## Neighbourhood First Policy

India's Neighbourhood First Policy is a reflection of the truism that neighbours are a primary foreign policy priority for any country.

India has historically committed its largest and best resources to its neighbourhood, be it economic, political or diplomatic. Today, India's Neighbourhood First Policy is the foundation of its global outreach.

Within the country, the Policy has helped to raise awareness about the importance of the neighbourhood, above all in the Government of India. Given the diverse nature of the country and cross-border linkages rooted in history and culture the Policy is paying dividends by promoting regional integration and advancing peace and stability.

The decision by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to invite the Heads of all neighbouring countries for his swearing-in ceremony on three successive occasions in 2014, 2019 and 2024 was unprecedented and represented an altogether new way of engaging with neighbours. The presence of the Leaders was a celebration of a common sub-continental identity. It was also a celebration of democracy.

India, by virtue of its size and resource endowments, is the partner of choice for its neighbours. India's aid programmes amounting to billions of dollars at highly concessional terms extend to all walks of life and all sectors. These range from hard infrastructure to skilling and education to disaster preparedness. They have impacted millions of beneficiaries and transformed the remotest regions in a sustained manner. Over time, the Neighbourhood First Policy has evolved into a well-knit and integrated system.

The Policy is rooted in the philosophy of '*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*', or the world is but one family and the policy of '*sabkasaath, sab ka vikas sab ka vishvas*'. It thereby embodies the principles of universality, equity and fairness. Apart from development, regional integration is a key objective. This is achieved by putting in place asymmetric and resilient connectivities involving people to people movement, air, rail, road links, energy pipelines and supply and value chains. Neighbours are given the first right of access to the Indian market, Indian educational institutions and Indian medical facilities.

The growth of the Indian economy serves as the engine of regional growth. It commits India to share its economic successes and enable neighbours to benefit from economies of scale. The Neighbourhood Policy is the embodiment of the principle of '*prosper thy neighbour*'. The record shows that the economic performance of those who have moved faster with integration has been better than others. Conversely, those countries who have integrated more with India have better withstood external shocks.

India has come to the aid of its neighbours in times of difficulty such as during the Covid crisis or the energy and food price shocks after the Ukraine conflict, or even in time of natural disasters. Notable examples in the recent past include provision of urgent humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, economic bail out of Sri Lanka, supply of vaccines and essential commodities to Bangladesh and budgetary support to the Maldives immediately after the pandemic. India is thus not only a first responder but also a safety net for its neighbours.

The Policy is characterized by country specific targeted interventions rather than a one size fits all approach. Focus on building mutually beneficial bilateral partnerships lies at the heart of the Policy.

Where necessary, mechanisms have been put in place to promote sub-regional cooperation. A sub-regional power grid is taking shape between Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh passing through Indian territory.

It is recognized that peace and security are indispensable conditions for progress. The Policy is geared to be sensitive to and respect each other's sovereignty and security concerns. The philosophy is that security is mutual and not a zero-sum game, whether it relates to terrorism or climate change. Capacity building is a key means to achieving security for all.

In recent years, the vision of the neighbourhood has extended to regions beyond the sub-continent. These include the Indian Ocean Region, West Asia and the Gulf States, Central Asia and East Asia. These regions are given priority in allocation of resources and attention so as to rebuild the linkages that existed in the pre-colonial era and to shape new ones. India's influence and imprint in this wider geography is growing rapidly.

For reasons of its own making, Pakistan has remained an outlier in the sub-continent's integration process. China, which also shares a long border with India, has to come to terms with a rising India and needs to abandon the policy of trying to contain India in its neighbourhood.

India's Neighbourhood First Policy is ambitious and bold. It is neither dogmatic nor doctrinaire. It is successful because it is responsive and sensitive to the needs of the times.

**Pankaj Saran**  
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**Former Deputy National Security Adviser**  
**Convenor, NatStrat, India**

## **The Global South and the Summit of the Future**

by Ambassador (Retd.) Asoke Mukerji

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is scheduled to convene for a “Summit of the Future” in New York on 22-23 September 2024. The outcome of this meeting of world leaders will be the adoption of a “Pact for the Future”. During the past year, the details of the Pact have been discussed among the 193 UN member-states under the co-facilitation of Germany (representing the developed countries of the North) and Namibia (representing the developing countries of the South). The objective of the Pact is “to safeguard the future for present and coming generations”.

India’s approach towards the UN’s Summit of the Future was articulated by Indian External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar in 2023. He emphasized the need to demonstrate “genuine solidarity” to generate “real trust” and integrate the “sentiment of the Global South” in preparing for the Summit. During the discussions in the UNGA in May 2024, India cautioned that if these essential elements were missing from the process, the Summit of the Future would become a “Summit of the Past”, condemning the United Nations “to a perilous vicious cycle of fading into irrelevance.”

The Global South consists of developing country member-states of the UNGA, many of them former colonies of European powers in 1945 who did not negotiate the UN Charter. Their membership of the United Nations began with the historic process of decolonization that began after India’s independence from British colonial rule in August 1947.

The Global South became a majority in the UNGA, propelled by the Decolonization Resolution of December 1960. The first visible expression of solidarity of the Global South in multilateralism was the successful adoption by a two-third majority vote of UNGA resolutions in December 1963 to amend the UN Charter. These amendments resulted in expanding the representation of the Global South in the UN Security Council (UNSC) that controls decisions on peace and security, and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that controls UNGA decision-making on socio-economic issues.

Since 1960, the process of consolidation and prioritization of Global South priorities has been marked by several negotiating landmarks in multilateral institutions. This was due to the solidarity and sentiment of the Global South, based on trust in the effective and equitable functioning of the interlinked post-war multilateral system.

Among the Global South’s achievements have been the creation of the non-aligned movement in September 1961 which today brings together 120 member-states in the UNGA; the establishment of the Group of 77 (or G-77) in 1964 which today represents 134 out of 193 member-states in the UNGA; the creation of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) by the UNGA in 1965; the adoption of the G-77 Charter of Algiers in 1967 calling for a New International Economic Order; the Decision on

Differential and More Preferable Treatment (also known as the Enabling Clause) for developing countries in the GATT (precursor of the World Trade Organization) in 1979; the UNGA Declaration on the Right to Development (DRTD) as an inalienable human right in 1986; and the Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) provision of international law, codified by the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992.

Through patient and forward-looking negotiations in the UNGA between 1960-2015, the Global South/G-77 has succeeded in bringing “development” into the mainstream of multilateralism. The unanimous adoption of Agenda 2030 by the UNGA in September 2015, with its 17 Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) is an acknowledgement of this fact. Agenda 2030 converges the common interests of the Global North and Global South into an integrated human-centric framework, in which peace, security, and development are interlinked. This is the sentiment that the Global South seeks to integrate into the vision of the Summit of the Future.

The UN’s SDG Summit in 2023 held to assess the implementation of Agenda 2030 warned that “numerous crises” since 2015 were derailing this vision. Three broad trends may be seen as contributing to these crises.

The first is a revival of the North-South divide, which undermines trust in the equitable functioning of multilateral institutions. During the Covid pandemic the World Health Organization was unable to ensure the adequate supply of vaccines to the Global South, due to stockpiling in the Global North. The World Trade Organization was forced by the Global North’s dominant hold on intellectual property rights on vaccines to postpone a decision on waiving these rights to enable manufacture of vaccines in the Global South.

The second is an increasing recourse to the use of armed force, instead of diplomatic negotiations, to resolve conflicts. The ineffectiveness and inadequacy of the UNSC’s authority due to the veto power of the P5 has been exposed by the large-scale human suffering and destruction in the violent conflicts caused by the use of armed force in recent years. Even existing unanimous resolutions of the UNSC for the political settlement of conflicts such as Afghanistan (UNSCR 2513), Ukraine (UNSCR 2202), and Palestine/Israel (UNSCRs 242, 1860) have not been enforced. A corollary to this is a gradual usurpation of UN Charter provisions for enforcing UNSC decisions, such as economic sanctions and use of armed force, by non-UN bodies like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This impacts directly on peace, security, and development in the Global South.

The third is the weaponization of interdependent economic interlinkages, which have been painstakingly negotiated on the basis of agreed principles of special and differential treatment, as listed above, by the Global South in multilateral institutions and specialized bodies. A powerful combination

of governments and corporations based in the Global North have actively sought to circumvent these interlinkages through the extra-territorial application of their domestic laws and policies. This has implications for the sovereign participation of the countries of the Global South in multilateral cooperation. It has also tangibly increased socio-economic costs on the implementation of Agenda 2030.

Unless checked, these three trends can have a deleterious impact on the Global South, particularly on the application in a human-centric manner of new digital technologies to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2030. The Summit of the Future's consideration of a Global Digital Compact requires special attention to these sentiments of the Global South, in order to bridge existing digital divides enumerated during the UNGA review of the UN's Tunis Agenda on an Information Society in December 2015.

At the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting of the United Nations in 2020, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi had emphasized:

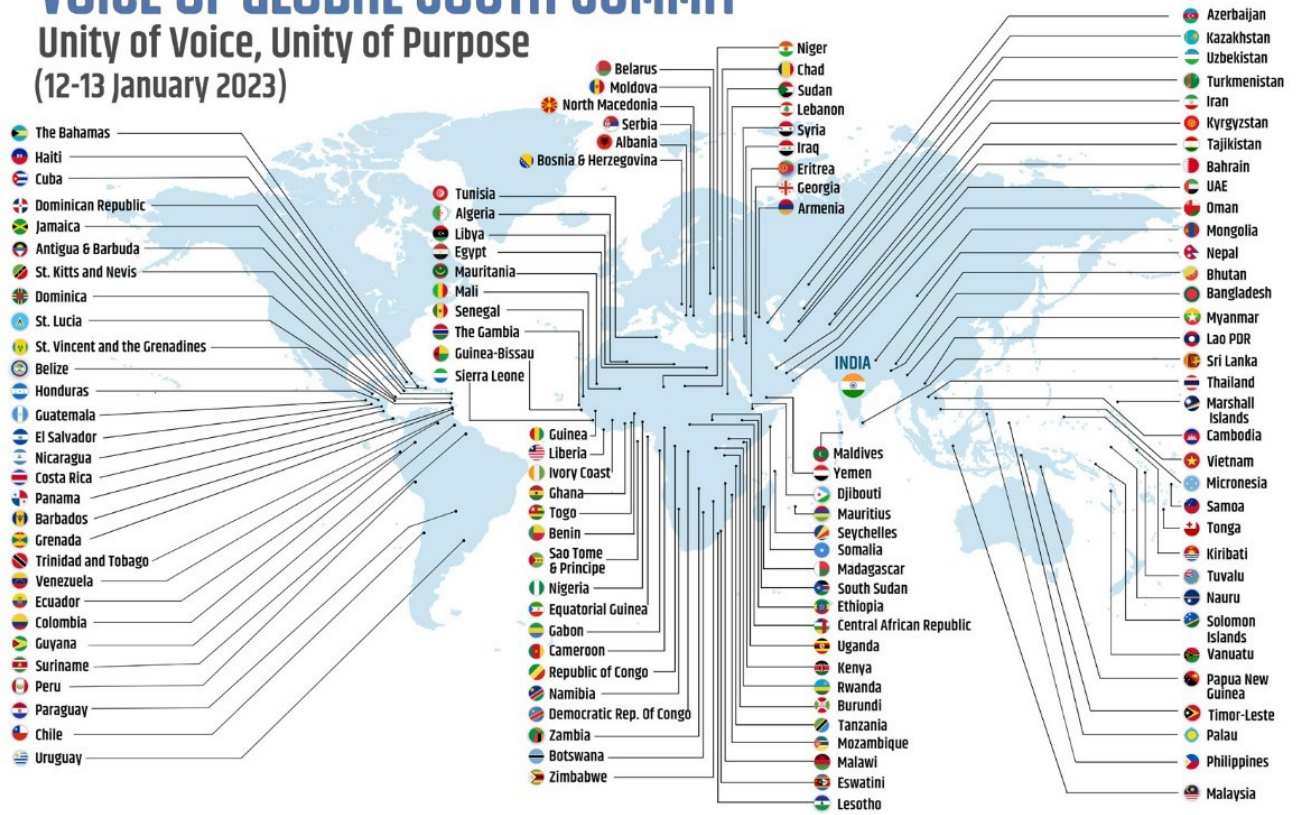
*“We cannot fight today's challenges with outdated structures. Without comprehensive reforms, the UN faces a crisis of confidence. In today's interconnected world, we need a reformed multilateralism—that reflects today's realities, gives voice to all stakeholders, addresses contemporary challenges and focuses on human welfare.”*

This is the reason why the Global South's focus during the Summit of the Future must be to seek effective multilateralism on the ground. A decision to convene a UN General Conference, as provided for in Article 109 of the UN Charter, to review the UN Charter in September 2025 would be an appropriate way to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of multilateralism by integrating the aspirations of the Global South.

# VOICE OF GLOBAL SOUTH SUMMIT

Unity of Voice, Unity of Purpose

(12-13 January 2023)



## GEOPOLITICS OF THE INDO-PACIFIC

Way back in 1890, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, a lecturer in naval history and the president of the United States Naval War College, published *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, a revolutionary analysis of the importance of naval power as a factor in the rise of the British Empire. Mahan argued that British control of the seas, combined with a corresponding decline in the naval strength of its major European rivals, paved the way for Great Britain's emergence as the world's dominant military, political, and economic power. Mahan and some leading American politicians believed that these lessons could be applied to U.S. foreign policy, particularly in the quest to expand U.S. markets overseas.

The United States of America considers itself a maritime power and more recently, as an Indo-Pacific nation. The concept of Indo-Pacific was first enunciated by the late Japanese leader Shinzo Abe in August 2007. In a speech to the Indian Parliament, he said presciently: "We are now at a point at which the Confluence of the Two Seas is coming into being. The Pacific and the Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity." Building on the informal cooperation between US, Japan, India and Australia during the Tsunami that hit Asia in 2004, a quadrilateral security dialogue (hereinafter referred to as Quad) was suggested by the late Japanese leader Shinzo Abe in 2007. But by 2008, the initial enthusiasm wore off with both Australia and India at various times expressing reluctance. It took until March 2018 for the Quad to really be institutionalised. Geopolitics was evident when in one of the first reactions to this renewed initiative, the Chinese Foreign Minister then (and now) Wang Yi said it was a "headline grabbing" idea which will "dissipate like sea foam". Well, the Quad is here to stay and far from dissipating like sea foam has gone from strength to strength, much to the angst of China. More on this later.

It is easy to understand why the Indo-Pacific is important for democratic countries which believe in keeping sealines of communication open and advocate a rules-based maritime order. The region is home to more than half the world's population, and it accounts for 60 percent of global GDP as well as two-thirds of global economic growth.

Japanese leader Abe's genius lay in enunciating an integral view of both the Indian and Pacific Oceans by arguing that maritime security is indivisible and inalienable. Of course, for the United States of America, Australia and Japan the Pacific Ocean is the world's largest and deepest ocean covering more than 30 per cent of the Earth's surface. The sheer economic importance of this in the form of minerals, oil & gas, fishing grounds etc cannot be overstated. It also matters because of climate

and food security. Equally, from a geopolitical perspective, China wants the United States of America out of the Pacific so it can call the shots there. China views the US as an extraneous power which has no business being in the Pacific, which it considers as its own backyard. The US, on the other hand, considers itself as an Indo-Pacific power and recognises the region as vital to its security and prosperity. The United States has expressed determination to strengthen its long-term position in and commitment to the Indo-Pacific. With this in mind, the United States of America intends to focus on every corner of the region, from Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia to South Asia and Oceania, including the Pacific Islands. In a quickly changing strategic landscape, the United States of America believes its interests can only be advanced if it firmly anchors itself in the Indo-Pacific and strengthen the region alongside its closest allies and partners.

India deciding to join and work with Quad countries is a strategic move of great import. It can even be described as the most important geopolitical strategy of India's since the end of cold war. The reason for this important move must first and foremost be traced to China's aggressive designs in the region. China believes it is entitled to a permanent maritime presence in the Indian Ocean. This is of recent vintage dating back to 2008. China believes while it is called "Indian Ocean" it is certainly not India's Ocean! However, it does not admit of the same logic when it comes to South China or East China Sea; it can be argued equally that this is not China's Sea after all! For India, there is a twin challenge posed by China: one which is maritime and the other which is continental. India cannot allow either the Indian Ocean or the Himalayas to be dominated by China. India knows that in the Himalayas, it must bear the cross all by itself. In the Indian ocean however, India is enlisting help from its partners and friends and has decided on a series of plurilateral or mini-lateral groupings to counter China. This is based on the sober assessment of a significant power differential between China and India.

India is aware that the US and its Western allies are more focused on the Pacific theatre. This has led India to undertake several initiatives of its own in the Indian Ocean. Some of these are: Indian Ocean Naval Symposium which seeks to enhance maritime cooperation among the littoral states of the Indian Ocean region; SAGAR or security and growth for all in region; Colombo Security Conclave involving India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Mauritius; and the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region which enhances efforts to combat maritime security threats. Finally, India is a part of the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA), a Quadrilateral Security Dialogue initiative that aims to offer an integrated and cost-effective awareness to its members so they can fully monitor the waters on their shores.

All this is to say that, geopolitics will continue to drive strategy of different countries in the all-important Indo-Pacific region.

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## India and Reformed Multilateralism

Multilateralism is in crisis. With every turn of events, multilateral systems and international organisations are being debilitated almost always at the cost of the Global South. The United Nations stands paralysed. Even as, on the one hand, international laws and agreements are adopted to strengthen the rules-based international order, on the other hand, these are being violated with impunity without accountability.

But the problem is much deeper. Majority of developing countries have become bystanders in the unravelling of the world order. Their only insurance i.e. universal participation in decision-making, is vanishing. Instead, they are being presented with two differing, even opposing, world views which they have been asked to subscribe to.

Almost all current problems, whether in the UN, WTO, IMF or the World Bank, can be traced back to the inability of the multilateral system to accommodate the new and emerging powers in the post-World War 2 architecture. Multilateralism is caught between those who fight to preserve the status-quo of 1945 and those who demand reform to reflect current realities which is more multipolar.

India has been the biggest votary of strengthening multilateralism over the years. But, in a changed world, if the most populous country and the fifth largest economy, with a track record of multilateralism, democracy and a civilizational ethos of humanity, cannot be given its due in global governance, then there is need for reform. In fact, it was at the 10th annual summit of the BRICS in 2018 in Johannesburg, South Africa, that Prime Minister Modi proposed for the first time his vision of “reformed multilateralism” to give major emerging powers a voice in global governance.

India’s track record in the recent past and its two-year stint in the UN Security Council (2021-2022) have numerous examples, if at all examples are required, of how we bridged or overcame differences to build a more inclusive multilateral world. Accosted with global challenges like covid, climate change, digital and AI divide, terrorism etc, and sprouting of conflicts which threaten international peace and security, India has become indispensable in finding solutions.

Lest we forget, when the world was reeling under covid, and countries were hoarding vaccines for themselves, it was India which came forward to produce and distribute vaccines. For our *Vaccine Maitri*, we prioritized small and vulnerable countries and saved numerous lives.

In December 2021, in UN Security Council (UNSC), we successfully thwarted a move to wrest climate change from the inclusive UN Framework Convention on Climate Change-led process (UNFCCC), where all countries are present, and bring it under the ambit of UNSC – effectively putting climate action at the mercy of five permanent members (P-5), who are the major historical polluters. India

underscored that the draft resolution “seeks to hand over that responsibility to a body which neither works through consensus nor is reflective of the interests of the developing countries.” The draft was defeated through a vote since India voted against, while Russia exercised the veto. If it had succeeded, climate change architecture would have, by now, kept out the voice of the Global South, especially the most vulnerable and the Small Island Developing States. India yet again came on the side of inclusivity and multilateralism. It was in the same vein that India was instrumental in setting up the International Solar Alliance which now has 100 member countries.

G20 is now an influential plurilateral group consisting of major economies taking decisions on global economic and developmental issues which impact all other countries as well. However, a glaring lacuna was that it was not fully representative of the smaller and medium sized states of the Global South. To bridge this gap, when India took over G20 Presidency (2022-23), Prime Minister Modi convened the Voice of Global South Summit where 125 developing countries participated. The Summit’s outcome was channelized into G20 discussions during India’s Presidency making sure that G20 took informed and inclusive decisions affecting the vast majority. In addition, India lobbied and inducted African Union into G20 – a huge step for a continent which has not been adequately represented either in G20 or UNSC or in other international bodies.

Needless to add, India has been at the forefront of efforts to reform the UN Security Council. Dealing with conflicts is the business of UNSC but inability to deal with them has become its hallmark. When the UN was established, there were 51 member states. Now we have 193. But we still have only five permanent members, who are polarized and have paralysed decision-making in the Council. The days when a small group of countries decided what the world should do are over. The logical fall-out of an unreformed Security Council is the emergence of other power centres to challenge it leading to fragmentation of the world order. Unless there is legitimate, representative and permanent representation of the Global South, especially that of the largest country India and a continent of 54 countries Africa, we cannot have meaningful decisions in the Council.

Our support to the developing world was reinforced during India’s stint in UNSC, where we stood for their territorial integrity, increased humanitarian assistance, correcting historical injustice, reform, development partnership, fighting terror and for peaceful resolution of disputes.

However, it was India’s independent and proactive stand during the Ukraine war which acted as a catalyst in helping other developing countries voice their dissatisfaction on a military solution being pursued and call for diplomacy and dialogue even in the midst of intense fighting and high emotions, when all levers were being weaponized. In effect, this was India saying that we do not have to

choose sides between warring blocs however big or important they may be. This was India saying that we stand for another world view which seeks the path of dialogue over war, seeks an inclusive world over polarization and fragmentation, seeks independence of policy-making over coercion of small and medium states in their decision-making, seeks territorial integrity over occupation and seeks reformed multilateralism over status-quo or unilateralism.

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# Nalanda: The Earliest-known University

By Prof. Benoy K Behl

Art Historian, Filmmaker and Photographer

At the ancient university of Nalanda, there was a spirit of vibrant intellectual thought, a climate of discussion and debate. The many 'acharyas', or learned professors, at Nalanda authored hundreds of works on philosophy, metaphysics, psychology, logic, medicine, astrology, arts, literature and other subjects.

The study at Nalanda was of life itself and what is reality. It was based not upon faith but on unshakable logic and pursuit of the truth. The study was of our minds, our perceptions and what is knowledge itself. The intellectuals here analysed the qualities which led to Enlightenment through knowledge and sought to create a logical path which could lead us to true and lasting awareness. A path which would work for all.

This was the first known, great university of the world. Nalanda was also at the apex of a consortium of universities which developed in ancient and early medieval times in South and South East Asia. It was from these ancient universities that concepts of rigorous and logical study finally spread to other parts of the world, leading to the founding of universities in Europe. The consortium of universities with Nalanda at its apex, included: Vikramshila, Odantapuri, Somavihara Paharpur, Sumatra Indonesia, Takshashila, Palkh (now in Afghanistan). Nalanda was the earliest-known University in the world and this was the first consortium. It is quite amazing to see that such study and sharing of universal knowledge took place in the First Millennium.

The Government of India is making a notable effort to revive the real legacy of Nalanda, so that people can see the value of this tradition and how it enriches the tapestry of global knowledge. What is more, the comparative study of the Nalanda tradition, and modern science can definitely uplift our civilisation. This ancient tradition is a science of life which can help us so much.

## **Nalanda in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The honourable Prime Minister of India inaugurated the new campus of Nalanda University, an international university, close to the site of the ancient ruins of Nalanda, in Bihar, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, 2024.

The modern Nalanda University was established as an “international institution for pursuit of intellectual, philosophical, historical and spiritual studies”. The impetus to setting up this institution came under the leadership of Hon. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, when a major push was given from 2014 onwards, to establishing the University as an international center of learning and scholarship, reminding the world of the 21st century of the eminence of ancient Nalanda.

This international university, apart from India, has participation of 17 other nations: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Mauritius, Myanmar, New Zealand, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

The University has 137 scholarships for international students. It offers Post Graduate and Doctoral research courses and short-term certificate courses. It has 6 schools, the School of Buddhist Studies, Philosophy & Comparative Religions; the School of Historical Studies; the School of Ecology and Environmental Studies; the School of Sustainable Development and Management; the School of Languages and Literature; and the School of International Relations and Peace Studies which is yet to commence.

A Library with a capacity to hold 3,00,000 Books and serving up to 3000 users is scheduled to be completed by September 2024. This would be in keeping with the glorious tradition of the original Nalanda University.

### **Ancient Nalanda**

The best-known Buddhist universities, Nalanda, Vikramasila and Odantpuri, were in Eastern India, in the region of present-day Bihar. The greatest of these centres of study was at Nalanda. It was a hub of learning where pilgrims and scholars came from all corners of Asia.

Nalanda was visited by the Buddha himself. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, Emperor Ashoka is believed to have made offerings to the *chaitya* of Sariputra and erected a temple here. However, the origins of the university itself are obscured in the mists of time. The medieval Tibetan historian Taranatha mentions that the great Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna who was born in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE taught here.

Excavations at the Nalanda site have revealed numerous *stupas*, monasteries, hostels, staircases, meditation halls and other structures. These speak of the splendour of the university which was also famed for its three magnificent libraries.

The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang of the 7<sup>th</sup> century writes that, of the myriad Buddhist establishments of India, Nalanda "is the most remarkable for its grandeur". The priests and other residents "always reach to the number of ten thousand".

Another Chinese traveller I-Tsing travelled in India at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. He reported that in these monasteries Buddhist sutras were taught as well as Sanskrit grammar, Indian Logic and Metaphysics, fine arts and medicine.

There was a rigorous oral entry examination and only the best students were given admission. It was a residential university where the staff and students had free board and lodging. No tuition fees were charged. Xuanzang records that there were students here from Tibet, China, Korea, Japan, Sumatra, Java and Sri Lanka. It was truly an international university.

The highest intellectual atmosphere of debate and scholarship was maintained at the Nalanda university. This was the thriving intellectual environment of Nalanda which produced the most notable Buddhist thinkers who brought about significant developments in Buddhism.

### **Famous Intellectuals of Nalanda**

The most revered name in Mahayana Buddhist philosophy is that of Nagarjuna who was born in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, in South India.

He was a luminary of the Nalanda University and he formalised the concept of Sunyata or 'Emptiness'. The Madhyamika School of Buddhism, or 'The Middle Path', was created on the teachings of Nagarjuna.

Dinnaga of the Nalanda University was born at Kanchipuram in South India. He lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and is known as the founder of the system of Buddhist Logic. He authored over a hundred treatises on the subject, most of which are still preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations.

When Xuanzang visited Nalanda, he studied under the famed guru Dharmapala. The teacher was also known for having spread the knowledge of Buddhism in Indonesia.

One of the noted students of Dharmapala was the brilliant logician Dharmakirti. He lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and was born at Tirumalai in South India. Dharmakirti's writings mark one of the highest points reached in speculative philosophy.

The learned Santaraksita of the Nalanda University founded the first monastic order in Tibet. He also modelled Samye, the first monastery of Tibet, on the Odantpuri Mahavihara in Eastern India. At his suggestion, the Tibetan king also invited Guru Padmasambhava, who was then teaching in the region of Kashmir at that time. Padmasambhava, who was also of the Nalanda University, went on to become the most revered person in the entire Himalayan and trans-Himalayan region, where he is known as the 'The Second Buddha'. The Guru swept across the mountains, establishing Buddhism in Ladakh, Lahaul-Spiti, Kinnaur, Tibet, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh.

Atisa or Dipankara Srijnana (980-1054) was born in East Bengal, studied at Nalanda University and then became one of the leading teachers at the University of Vikramshila, also in Bihar. He was invited to Tibet by King Yeshe 'Od and he accepted his invitation at the age of 60, in CE 1040. He left Vikramshila and stayed in Tibet until his death. He consolidated the true knowledge of Buddhism in that land.

### **The Art of Nalanda**

Nalanda marks the beginning of the Pan-Indian medieval idiom in art. The perfected human form was created in Indian art by the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, to help in meditation and to awaken the grace within us. At Nalanda, in the post-Gupta period, the focus came on the dynamism of the intellect, which analyses in acute detail the qualities which lead to *nirvana*. This is seen reflected in the vitality and sharp features of the stucco sculptures found at Nalanda. The figures have a greater stylization than in earlier Indian art.

Angular and dynamic relief made in the plinth of stupas was a common feature during the Pala period. This is found beginning at Nalanda and spreading across Eastern India and Bangladesh, going up to Tripura, where it is seen in the remains of the Pilak stupa in Udaigiri District. The educational and cultural legacy of the Nalanda University is remarkable.



1. Nalanda University, Bihar. The university of Nalanda was one of the greatest centres of learning that the world has seen from the 4th to the 12th centuries. Photograph by Benoy K Behl



2. Seal found at the Nalanda University. This was a vast educational institution with thousands of scholars and teachers. It must have required a complex and effective administrative system. (Collection: ASI Museum, Nalanda) Photograph by Benoy K Behl

3. There is a distinct and fine school of art which



developed at the university. The style spread through eastern India and beyond the shores of the country. Photograph by Benoy K Behl



4. 17<sup>th</sup> century painting of Nagarjuna, one of the greatest Indian philosophers. He was born in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE in South India. The medieval historian Taranatha, writes about him as one of the luminaries who taught at the Nalanda University. His work is a cornerstone of Buddhist philosophy and he is deeply revered in the Buddhist world till today. (Collection: Bihar State Museum, Patna) Photograph by Benoy K Behl



5. Dinnaga, 17th century painting. Dinnaga was born in one of the greatest centres of religion in India, Kanchipuram. He made profound contributions to the systematic development of Mahayana Buddhism. (Collection: Bihar State Museum, Patna) Photograph by Benoy K Behl



6. Shantarakshita. The great Buddhist teacher Shantarakshita from the Nalanda University, who helped to establish Buddhist culture in Tibet. It was he who invited Guru Padmasambhava to Tibet. Photograph by Benoy K Behl



7. Padmasambhava. The great Guru Padmasambhava, known in the Himalayan regions as the Second Buddha, was responsible for the spread and establishment of Buddhism throughout the Trans-Himalayas and Himalayas. He had studied at Nalanda. Photograph by Benoy K Behl



8. Atisa, Mural, Tholing Monastery, Tibet. Photograph by Benoy K Behl



**9.** Atisa, Golden Abode of Shakiyamuni Temple, Elista, Kalmykia, European Russia. The temple at Kalmykia honors 17 great Acharyas of the Nalanda University. It is fascinating to see how the traditions of Nalanda spread across Indonesia, Tibet, Mongolia, Buryatia, Kalmykia and other countries. Photograph by Benoy K Behl



**10.** Bodhisattva, Main Temple, Nalanda Site, c. 7<sup>th</sup> Century CE, Bihar, India. Photograph by Benoy K Behl

11.  
Detail  
of  
Relief  
Figure  
with a  
Sword,



Nalanda Monastic University, Bihar, India. Photograph by Benoy K Behl

## **The Araku story**

By Rohini Mukherjee

[www.arakucoffee.in](http://www.arakucoffee.in)

[www.arakucoffee.com](http://www.arakucoffee.com)

The opening of Araku café in Paris in 2017, marked India's arrival on the world map of speciality coffee. It was the tribal farmers of Araku Valley, a rich biodiverse region on the borders of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha that have placed India there.

The story of Araku Coffee dates back to the year 2000, when the Naandi Foundation started interacting with the local community there. Conscious of the unique cultural and historical heritage of *adivasi* (tribal) communities, Naandi Foundation focused on developing a deeper understanding of their culture and the environment they lived in. The tribal farmers who had been relying on the traditional shifting cultivation were slowly introduced to regenerative agriculture practices. By 2005, these farmers had started working with Naandi Foundation on growing and improving the quality of their coffee crops. Coffee plantation not only provides better income but also helps in afforestation since it is grown under shade. It provides round the year employment to the local inhabitants and their family members.

The entire valley witnessed a turned around in a short span of 10-15 years. Now it boasts of the world's largest tribal organic coffee farmers' cooperative, massive annual forest festivals resulting in the planting of 49 million trees, a world-class organic coffee brand with a flagship store in Paris and exports to more than 12 countries. The tribal farmers and their families are now in the coffee and pepper business, some have their own orchards; they are also growing paddy, pulses and millets using organic regenerative agriculture and are living testimony to the efficacy of a model that ensures economic and ecological security. Araku stands as a testimony to the power of democratic participation in the form of the tribal farmers' cooperative, which now boasts a 40,000+ membership, regularly conducts democratic elections, and has a current executive body with 50% women.

Araku is an example of how globalisation can be leveraged to benefit the smallest farmer in a remote corner of the world – innovative financing models introduced by European companies; international coffee experts frequenting the valley to support the adoption of the 19 steps to world-class coffee; a flagship store in Paris and a score of gourmet partner stores in Paris selling the premium speciality coffee grown here. Buoyed by the success in Paris, a first-of-its-kind large format Araku Cafe was opened

in Bengaluru, India, in 2021. This not only serves the best coffee and food but has also become an interactive cultural space to spread the new food vision guided by Arakunomics. Signature coffee equipment borne out of a landmark collaboration with Norwegian design duo Anderssen & Voll – the first of its kind for Indian coffee – was launched first in France and then in India in 2018. Araku opened a restaurant in South Mumbai.

Araku Coffee is now a premium luxury social enterprise with high socio-economic and ecological impact that has demonstrated how India can excel globally across the entire value chain from soil to foil. It is a matter of pride for the Naandi team that Araku coffee was included as one of the prized items in the Government of India's gift hamper presented to visiting heads of state at the G20 Summit in 2023.

Gems of Araku is an annual harvest festival that celebrates the seasons' speciality coffee micro-lots and the farms and farmers of Araku for their contribution to creating this world-class coffee. The event brings together over 20,000 farmer families and coffee experts from across the globe to discover extraordinary coffee lots. Over 1800 micro-lots each season are put through a rigorous evaluation by professional coffee cuppers following international cupping protocols.

Since 2009, the event has helped unite over 40 coveted international jurors and Araku farmers to perfect coffee quality. These stimulating interactions have helped incorporate the best farm and processing practices and raise the coffee to international standards by improving the quality of the beans year after year.

In the pursuit of excellence, Araku farmers are continuously learning about and honing their coffee terroirs to enhance coffee bush health, build soil organic carbon, and regenerate the Araku Coffee landscape. And the proof is in the cup. As the soils get richer and coffee flavour notes more complex, Gems of Araku, currently in its 16<sup>th</sup> edition, top micro-lots score ratings as high as 94 out of 100 from professional cuppers.

Internationally acclaimed for their quality, the 'Gems' of Araku has now reached over 42 countries including - Korea, Japan, France, the UK, Germany, and the USA. The event has helped nurture an Indian-origin international coffee brand produced by small and marginal tribal farmer families of Araku by taking it to the global buyer and consumer.

The biodiverse, carbon-rich, wealth-creating model for agriculture, christened Arakunomics by Naandi, was awarded the Food System Vision Prize by the Rockefeller Foundation in 2020 and the Seeding the Future Prize by the Institute of Food Technologists in 2023. It is now being replicated in other geographies of India with complex agrarian realities, such as the Vidarbha region in Maharashtra, ground-water-depleted districts in Punjab and forgotten border districts in northern Uttar Pradesh.

The next stop for Araku Coffee could be either in North America or the Middle East.

This is an India Rise story, an Atma Nirbhar Bharat story.







## **India's Global Climate Leadership**

India is the world's largest country in terms of population, comprising around 17% of the global population. It is also the fifth largest economy in the world, on its way to becoming the third largest economy by 2030. Yet, its contribution to cumulative carbon dioxide emissions since the industrial revolution are a mere 3.4% of the world total and at 2 tons its current per-capita emissions are less than half of the global average of 4.7 tons.

India's per-capita carbon footprint is also the lowest among the G-20 countries with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) acknowledging India as the only G20 nation in line with 2-degree centigrade upper limit for global warming. Additionally, the IFC has highlighted that India's GDP grew by a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of about seven per cent between 2005 and 2019, whereas the emissions grew at a CAGR of about four per cent. This would appear to underscore India's relative success in decoupling economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions, reducing the emission intensity of its GDP and being a possible model for the globe in general and the global South in particular.

Leading India's determination to be part of the solution on climate change, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a five-point climate action plan (Panchamrit) for India at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting in Glasgow in November 2021. This included the key commitment of achieving Net Zero emissions by 2070 along with four elements of the pathway. These, enumerated below, were later incorporated in India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):

1. Reach 500 GW of non-fossil fuel generation by 2030
2. 50% of India's power requirements would come from renewable energy by 2030
3. Reduction of total projected carbon emissions by one billion tons till 2030
4. Reduction of the carbon intensity of the economy by 45% by 2030, over 2005 levels

Many of these goals upped the already significant targets set by India for itself following the UNFCCC meeting in Paris in 2015. This was possible given the fact that India had achieved its NDCs well ahead of time. In-fact, in so far as use of non-fossil fuel resources for energy, India achieved 40 percent cumulative electric power installation capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy sources in 2021, nine years before the initial target year of 2030.

Further, between 2017 and 2023, India added around 100 GW of installed electric capacity, of which around 80% is attributed to non-fossil fuel-based resources. As of now, the share of non-fossil fuel-based resources in installed electricity capacity has reached 45.4 percent. And the key target of 33 percent reduction of emissions intensity of GDP by 2030, from the 2005 level, was met in 2019, 11 years ahead of time.

Apart from the four pathway elements, India has undertaken to create an additional carbon sink of between 2.5 to 3 billion tons of carbon dioxide equivalent through

additional forest and tree cover by 2030. As of date, around 1.97 billion tons of carbon dioxide equivalent sinks have been created putting India on track for achieving this Nationally Determined Contribution.

Two other initiatives by India are of global importance.

The first is LiFE – Lifestyle for Environment, a mass movement launched at Glasgow by Prime Minister Modi to encourage the adoption of sustainable lifestyles to address the challenges of environmental degradation and climate change. The G-20, in its communique issued in New Delhi in September 2023, emphasised the importance of behavioural and lifestyle changes as pillars in the strategic plan adopted for advancing energy efficiency across all demand sectors by 2030.

The second push by India is on the development of alternatives to carbon intensive fossil fuels. As a part of this a major effort is the National Green Hydrogen Mission which seeks, by 2030, the development of green hydrogen production capacity of at least 5 million metric tons per annum with an associated renewable energy capacity addition of about 125 GW. This could result in an annual abatement of nearly 50 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions.

India's efforts on climate change are not only domestic but also seek build global partnerships. At the UNFCCC meeting in Paris in 2015, India joined hands with France and launched the International Solar Alliance (ISA) which today has 119 signatories to its framework agreement and is in the forefront of deploying solar energy solutions in the global South to mitigate climate change. India's huge domestic efforts on pushing solar power have led to majorly reducing the cost of solar power and hence vastly increasing interest in its adoption at home and acting as a model across the global South. In 2019, India established the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure which led to the launch at Glasgow in 2021 of the Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS), a flagship initiative designed to achieve and deliver resilience and climate adaptation solutions to the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). At the UNFCCC meeting in Dubai in 2023, India collaborated with Sweden and launched the second phase of the Leadership Group for Industry Transition (Lead IT) 2.0 and at the G-20 Summit in Delhi India joined many countries across the globe in launching the Global Biofuels Alliance. India through its ambitious policies, successful renewable energy growth trajectory, along with effective achievement of international commitments has strongly demonstrated climate leadership at the global level. With climate change being seen by many as the defining challenge of our times, India's has assumed a pivotal role in tackling climate change, both in terms of its actions and as the leading voice of the global south for sustainability.

*Manjeev S Puri*

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## ***BIMSTEC: Infusing new energies and a new commitment***

by Anil Wadhwa

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an organization which brings together Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal. The aim of this regional organization is to bridge the gap between South and South East Asia, to enhance the potential of the member countries and the Bay of Bengal region, and mitigate the adverse effects of globalization by utilizing regional resources and geographical advantages. The region covered by BIMSTEC is home to around 1.73 billion people, with a combined GDP of over US\$5.2 trillion. A permanent Secretariat for the Organization has been functional in Dhaka since August 2014 and the Permanent Working Committee provides direction during the intra Summit periods. The entry into force of the BIMSTEC Charter in 2022 provides it with a legal personality and an ability to engage in structured diplomatic dialogue. The Bay of Bengal connects international maritime trade routes between the India and the Pacific Oceans. Maritime connectivity is the key to trade and security. BIMSTEC nations are a powerhouse in some of the global products and services such as garments (Bangladesh), digital services (India), maritime services (Sri Lanka), consumer durables (Thailand), and tourism (Nepal and Bhutan), among others. Therefore, greater cooperation amongst them will lead to higher trade and growth within BIMSTEC, which is increasingly seen as an alternative to the stalled SAARC.

BIMSTEC is a sector driven Organization, and by 2014, it had added 14 sectors as focus areas of cooperation. The fifth BIMSTEC virtual Summit in Colombo narrowed down the sectors for cooperation to seven – (i) Trade, Investment and Development; (ii) Environment and Climate change, (iii) Security; subsectors: Counter – Terrorism and Transnational Crime; Disaster management; Energy, (iv) Agriculture and Food Security; sub-sectors: Agriculture; Fisheries and Livestock (v) People to people Contact; subsectors: Culture; Tourism; People to People Contact (vi) Science and technology and Innovation; sub sectors: technology, health, human resource development (vii) Connectivity. India is the lead country for the security and energy sectors.

BIMSTEC has completed an MOU on Grid interconnection, a Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, and an MOU on mutual cooperation between Diplomatic academies / training institutions. Important documents related to Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC key mechanisms, sectoral mechanisms, and External relations (BIMSTEC MOUs on relations with UNSECAP, UNOPS, World Bank, UNODC, IORA) have been readied. An Eminent Persons Group has been mandated to make recommendations on the future directions of BIMSTEC. The Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation will be signed and the BIMSTEC Bangkok vision 2030 will be launched at the 6<sup>th</sup> Summit in Bangkok in September 2024.

In the words of Prime Minister Modi BIMSTEC is ‘a natural platform to fulfil our key foreign policy priorities of Neighbourhood First and Act East “as it connects “not only

South and South East Asia, but also the ecologies of the Great Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal". Aggravated security concerns due to Pakistan's continued pursuit and support for terrorism, and China's expanding presence in the Bay of Bengal have raised apprehensions amongst the South and South -East Asian nations

Speaking at the BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers retreat in New Delhi on July 11 in New Delhi, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that the BIMSTEC nations must be determined to infuse new energies, new resources, and a new commitment into cooperation among the Bay of Bengal nations. He singled out connectivity, institution building, cooperation in trade and business, collaboration in health and space, digital public infrastructure, capacity building, and societal exchanges, as well as weighing on the merits of new mechanisms as the future directions for BIMSTEC.

India has already invested in the India – Myanmar -Thailand Trilateral Highway, the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project and the BIMSTEC Motor Vehicles Agreement in order to improve connectivity and trade - even as these projects are currently bogged down due to instability in Myanmar. India has also striven to improve connectivity in its North East region which is being linked to the BIMSTEC backed projects in the Bay of Bengal area. India has offered to host the BIMSTEC energy Centre in Bengaluru, and the addition of specialized areas within the current energy scenario for the BIMSTEC region in Cyber Security, Green Hydrogen and Energy transition. The BIMSTEC Centre for weather and Climate will be established in India. India has extended a grant of \$ 1 million to strengthen the BIMSTEC Secretariat. For the first time, an Indian diplomat, Indra Mani Pandey is the current Secretary – General of BIMSTEC.

Progress on the BIMSTEC FTA is slow but is making steady and crucial progress. The organization has done well in strengthening security cooperation – the annual meetings of national security advisers and army chiefs are held. Countries like India can take the lead in increasing maritime domain awareness within BIMSTEC by strengthening capabilities wherever desired through the navy and coast guard, and setting up of Regional Information Sharing Centres (ISCs). Cooperation needs to be strengthened to counter terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization. Strengthening the Buddhist connection, connecting through border community zones, cultural art forms and cinema need to be encouraged. The presence of marine resources present regional opportunities in the joint development of a blue economy, and fostering mountain economy, especially in countries like Bhutan. A revitalization of the Business and Economic Forums and meetings of universities, cultural organizations, civil society, media and parliamentarians are on the cards.

In order to emerge as a vibrant regional Organization, BIMSTEC Member States will need to introduce trade facilitation steps, harmonise their national technical means, strengthen regional value chains by linking south and south east Asia and setting up industrial parks for investments by countries of the region. Sea borne trade and coastal shipping between the countries of the organization has to be made viable,

multimodal transport models made more prevalent, and coastal and border economic zones developed. Members of the Organization must push for cross border energy trade, a functional BIMSTEC energy grid and regional renewable energy cooperation.

*\* Anil Wadhwa was Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs between 2014-16. He served as India's Ambassador to Italy, Thailand, Oman, and Poland. He led the Indian delegation at BIMSTEC meetings in Bangkok between 2012-14.*

# INDIA- AFRICA RELATIONS

By Ambassador A R Ghanshyam

## India and Africa – Relations in the Past and Present

1. Relations between India and Africa go back to ancient times of the Indus Valley civilization (3300 to 1300 BC). Egyptians (3150 BCE to 30 BCE) and the kingdom of Aksum (100 CE to 940 CE) have had trade relations with ancient India.

2. In recent times, India was one of the earliest colonies to be freed from the British Empire. After independence, Indian leaders spearheaded the long struggle for decolonisation of Africa at the United Nations which elder Africans recollect with nostalgia. British authorities took many skilled Indians to their African colonies because of the advantage of language as well as skills. In several English speaking African countries, contribution of Indian doctors and teachers is widely recognised.

3. After presenting my credentials on March 05, 2014 when I sat down for an informal chat with then President of Nigeria HE Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan I distinctly recall his words, *“You know Ambassador, an entire generation of Nigerians were taught by Indian teachers, treated by Indian doctors and grew up wearing Indian apparel and watching Indian movies. Wherever you go in my country you will find that your country has enormous goodwill.”* That was very much evident when I travelled across the country during my tenure as High Commissioner. At that time Nigeria accounted for a quarter of the GDP of Africa and close to a fifth of the continent’s population. Then as well as now, Nigeria is the largest trading partner of India in Africa with bilateral trade close to US\$ 20 billion till the Ukraine war. However, thanks to concessional oil supplies from Russia, African suppliers may have lost out in the short run. There would be many African countries with whom we would have similar close relations.

4. A very sought-after Indian initiative in Africa is the *Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme* which began in September 1964. Mid-career training is provided to civil servants, new entrepreneurs and experts through short term courses that range from a few weeks to several months. The Ministry of External Affairs states on its website, [www.itecgoi.in](http://www.itecgoi.in) that more than 225,000 participants from 160 countries have been trained under this programme since its inception, a significant number from Africa. ITEC is very popular in Africa because the training imparted has been found extremely useful and is greatly appreciated by one and all in Africa.

5. The head of an Angolan Banking Training Institute came to my office in Luanda, in the summer of 2008 when I was Ambassador to Angola. He

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mentioned that the Indian ITEC course on Environmental Auditing is essential for Angola and he barely gets one or two seats a year for his officers which is grossly insufficient. He enquired if he could send about 50 officers to India to attend this course. He had many who spoke good Portuguese but limited English and that was a constraint. I thought for a while and suggested to the visitor that if Government of Angola can provide an appropriate classroom, local accommodation and transport for our Professors and also local interpreters for English to Portuguese translation, I would discuss the proposal with authorities in India to bring the faculty from India to Angola for the month-long course. He was pleased no end and immediately agreed. It was not difficult to persuade Gol on the proposal thanks to the huge savings it generated and the tremendous goodwill it earned for us. About 50 people many of whom had limited knowledge of English were thus trained by Indian professors for five weeks. Such innovations can be undertaken by our Envoys in other countries too which would save us huge costs, train a much larger number of trainees and trainers and also earn enormous goodwill.

6. In his inaugural address dated June 14, 2023 to the 18<sup>th</sup> CII-EXIM BANK Africa Conclave in New Delhi, External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar informed the audience that (i) India has extended concessional loans of over US\$ 12.37 billion under which 197 projects had been completed (now 206 projects in 43 countries), 65 were under execution and 81 at the pre-execution stage. Among the projects are drinking water schemes, irrigation, rural solar electrification, power plants and transmission lines to cement, sugar & textile factories, technology parks and railway infrastructure. (ii) During COVID-19, India provided medical support to 32 African countries and 'Made in India' COVID vaccines to 42 African countries. We now encourage Indian Pharma manufacturers and vaccine producers to explore joint manufacturing facilities in African countries. (iii) India provided 42,000 scholarships since the India Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) –III in 2015 in New Delhi. It is a matter of pride for India that several high ranking leaders, ministers and officials from Africa have studied in Indian universities. Apart from these, a large number of students and officials from Africa have also trained under the ITEC program. (iv) Under the second phases of e-VidyaBharti and e-ArogyaBharti networks launched in 2019 for tele-education and tele-medicine, over 14,000 youth from 22 African countries have enrolled for various degrees and diploma courses. India has partnered with African countries in promoting digital transformation through setting-up of IT Centres, S&T Parks and Entrepreneur Development Centre (EDC), etc. (v) Our development partnership focusses strongly on Digital, on Green, on Health, on Food and on Water. (vi) On the trade and economic front, India's bilateral trade with Africa reached US\$ 98 billion in 2022-2023. (vii) For many years now, 33 of the 54 African countries termed "*Least Developed Countries*" by the United Nations have been accorded duty free export to India of their exports to India covering over 98% of the tariff lines of India.

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7. In his address on the occasion of Africa Day on June 25, 2024 EAM Dr S Jaishankar noted that besides training military officers from several countries in our military training institutions, India has also contributed to the setting up of Defence Academies and Colleges in Nigeria, Ethiopia and Tanzania. Training teams in several African countries like Botswana, Namibia, Uganda, Lesotho, Zambia, Mauritius, Seychelles and Tanzania among others have been working. India is the third largest contributor to the UN Peace-Keeping Operations with nearly 5000 Indian personnel currently serving in five Peacekeeping Missions in Africa.

8. A sunrise sector for India-Africa cooperation is the domain of military supplies keeping in view rising rising security challenges in the continent. India has supported by providing reliable and affordable military hardware The top three African countries to import made-in-India arms between 2017 and 2022 were Seychelles, Mauritius, and Mozambique. More are joining the list now. India has exported indigenous self-defence equipment such as armoured vehicles and interceptor boats to Mozambique, which has helped boost its defence preparedness and military capabilities. Besides conventional arms, India has also supplied patrol craft and light helicopters to several African countries. Although India's current arms supply to Africa accounts for about 15% of its total defence exports, there is potential for further growth.

### **India Africa Relations – the Future.**

9. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address to the Ugandan Parliament on July 25, 2018 outlined ten guiding principles deepening India's engagement with Africa - (i) Africa will be at the top of India's priorities. (ii) India's development partnership will be guided by Africa's priorities to build local capacity of indigenous talent and skill. (iii) India will keep its markets open and make it easier and more attractive for Africa to trade with India. India will support Indian industry in investing in Africa. (iv) India will harness her experience of digital revolution to support Africa's development; improve delivery of public services; extend education and health; spread digital literacy; expand financial inclusion; and mainstream the marginalised and equip the youth of Africa for their place in the digital age. (v) Africa has 60 per cent of the world's arable land, but produces just 10 per cent of the global output. India will work with Africa to improve Africa's agriculture. (vi) India and Africa will work as partners to address the challenges of climate change to ensure a just international climate order; to preserve our biodiversity; and adopt clean and efficient energy sources. (vii) India will strengthen cooperation with Africa in combating terrorism and extremism; keeping our cyberspace safe and secure; and supporting the UN in advancing and keeping peace. (viii) India will work with African nations to keep the oceans open and free for the benefit of all nations. (ix) As global engagement in Africa increases, India and Africa must work together to ensure that Africa does not once again turn into a theatre of rival ambitions, but becomes a nursery for the aspirations of Africa's youth. (x) Just as India and Africa fought colonial rule

together, we will work together for a just, representative and democratic global order that has a voice and a role for one-third of humanity that lives in Africa and India. India's own quest for reforms in the global institutions is incomplete without an equal place for Africa. That will be a key purpose of our foreign policy.

## **Conclusion**

10. There are four core areas in which India has comparative advantages over its rivals in Africa viz., Health, Education, Agriculture and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). A new many leaders of the continent are highly keen that India hand holds the continent in these areas. In the health sector Africa carries 20% of the disease burden of the world with only 5.5% of the global medical workforce (3.6 million health workers of the world's 65.1 million). In Education, a recent report prepared by UNICEF for African Union notes that although enrolment of children in schools has stunningly improved in the last couple of decades, in 2019, 17% of children who should have been in primary schools were not in school. The percentage for Lower Secondary and Upper Secondary schools is 33% and 53%. This is an important area in which Africa and India can work together. With 23% of the world's agricultural land and 60% of the world's uncultivated arable land, Africa can be the bread basket of the world. India is sought after by Africa in this domain. More than half the 1.5 billion population of Africa is less than 19 years of age. While modern technology and large scale manufacturing can create employment, it is the MSME sector which holds the real strength for creating employment for the billion-strong workforce which is emerging in Africa in the coming years. India has the experience and knowledge in this domain which will be extremely useful to Africa.

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