

India's G20 Presidency: The Important Domestic Component

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India will be holding the G20 Presidency from Dec. 1, 2022 till Nov. 30, 2023. The theme of India's G20 Presidency is "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" which means "One Earth, One Family, One Future."

This is a crucial time for India to lead the G20, given the current economic and geopolitical situation. The G20 Bali Leaders declaration while commenting on the global situation stated: "We met in Bali on 15-16 November 2022, at a time of unparalleled multidimensional crises. We have experienced the devastation brought by the Covid-19 pandemic, and other challenges including climate change, which has caused economic downturn... This year, we have also witnessed the war in Ukraine further adversely impact the global economy."

First, India would like to reduce the frictions between the West and Russia, which have widened even more after the Russia-Ukraine war. Western countries were not happy with Indonesia's decision to invite Russian President Vladimir Putin to attend the G20 Bali Summit (finally Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov attended instead of Putin). India so far — like many other countries — has not toed the Western line vis-à-vis Russia. New Delhi's decision to purchase oil from Russia at discounted price has been a major bone of contention with the US, though publicly Washington has reiterated the point that it has no problem with India or any other country purchasing Russian oil at discounted prices.

At the same time, like other countries, India has been pushing for an end to the war. This was evident even at the Bali Summit. The joint declaration after the G20 Summit at Bali stated that 'today's era must not be of war.' It would be pertinent to point out that on the sidelines of his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at Samarkand Uzbekistan, Indian PM Narendra Modi had said the same.

Second, the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war are likely to impact global supply chains and the trajectory of the global economy in the imminent future. India is likely to push for ensuring that geopolitical disruptions do not impact global supply chains of food, fertilisers and medical products.

Third, the issue of climate change is likely to be high on the agenda. The Indian PM while commenting on the steps which India will take, as chair of G20, to fight climate change in a write-up said: "For healing our planet, we will encourage sustainable and environment-friendly lifestyles, based on India's tradition of trusteeship towards nature."

India can play an important role in highlighting the role of the Global South in the current geopolitical and economic landscape. The Indian PM Modi while referring to the Global South, said that during its Presidency, India will amplify the voices of the Global South

which often get relegated to the margins.

One of the interesting aspects with regard to India's presidency of the G20 is the emphasis on 'peoples' participation' and also the opportunity which cities outside the national capital will get to showcase themselves through events being held there. While the G20 leaders' summit will be held in Delhi, 200 events are likely to be hosted in 50 cities including Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Pune, Thiruvananthapuram, Chandigarh, Jodhpur, Chennai, Indore and Lucknow.

The first G20 Sherpa meeting was held in Udaipur. It would be pertinent to point out that in recent years, several international events and bilateral meetings have been held outside the national capital. One such example is the 2nd informal summit between Indian PM Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2019 held at Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu).

One of the G20 meetings pertaining to education will also be held in the holy city of Amritsar (Panjab) home to the Sri Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) – a border town. The last international event to be held at Amritsar was the Heart of Asia Conference (Istanbul Process) in December 2016 attended by 40 countries. It is being hoped that this event will help in sprucing up the city and give a boost to the infrastructure as well as the tertiary sector of the city. As a result of disruption of trade between India and Pakistan from 2019, the economy of not just Amritsar, but other areas of the border belt, have got impacted significantly. The Punjab government has already begun to give priority to the event, and stated this event is an important opportunity for the state to show case itself, and to project itself as an important investment destination.

While all eyes are understandably on the important global issues, discussed earlier, and India's stance as president of G20, there is a strong domestic component as well. As mentioned earlier, several cities will get an opportunity to highlight their economic potential as well as heritage and culture.

[Photo by Official website of G20]

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author.

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