

Defence Soars: India's Journey of Leadership & Innovation

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Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's G20 presidency is focusing on inclusivity and highlighting its rich heritage across more than 50 cities. India is also striving to establish itself as a global leader, pushing forward with a vision for the future.

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the host of the G20 presidency, he decided to hold all G20 meetings and events in over 50 cities across India. This was done to promote inclusivity and showcase India's diverse culture and heritage. In the past, foreign visitors mainly focused on New Delhi and the Taj Mahal, giving the impression that India was only about these places and neglecting the rest of the country. By involving more cities, India aims to change this perception.



Prime Minister Modi made significant changes by holding meetings with heads of state in historic cities, hosting major events in various regions, organizing defense expositions in different towns to help small industries, conducting military commanders' conferences across states, and recently, moving Military Day parades to different centers. This made all Indians feel a strong connection and pride in their 7,000-year-old civilization. The world saw India from a new perspective and recognized its greatness as an emerging nation.

Reimagining G20 Meeting Venues: Promoting Diversity and Inclusivity

The G20 meetings and events consist of summits, ministerial gatherings, and delegation-level discussions. Each country has selected a G20 Sherpa to manage the programs and communicate with their country's representatives. Prime Minister Modi picked his favorite theme based on the idea of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," which means "the world is one family." The G20 is now focusing on the concept of "one earth, one family, and one future," which is India's mantra for a healthy and prosperous world.

Throughout the year, meetings will be held in seldom-visited places across India, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, to display the country's beautiful and diverse culture. Delegates and guests will experience India's rich traditions, including various delicious foods, different languages, and cultural heritage.

The celebrations began with the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland, a unique and stunning yearly event. Throughout the year, events have taken place in various places like Hampi, Karnataka; Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh; and Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, among others. These events have made all 1.4 billion Indians feel proud and included. It's also the biggest international event India has ever hosted, and it's being managed with elegance and flair.

In different parts of the country, more than a hundred monuments have been decorated with the G20 logo, inviting people to take photos with them. Besides that, there are numerous business events, seminars, and Ted Talks happening alongside, where regional products, handicrafts, technologies, lifestyles, environment, women-led initiatives, art, and culture are being showcased.

Ted Talks means powerful presentations given by experts, professionals, and inspiring individuals on various topics like science, technology, entertainment, design, and more.

Leaders in labor and employment had meetings in various cities like Amritsar, Kolkata, Raipur, Nagpur, and more. Civil society delegates gathered in Ladakh, Trivandrum, Kochi, Pune, and Jaipur. Academics and think-tanks convened in cities such as New Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Mumbai, and others. Business (B-20) conferences took place in Imphal, Aizawl, Gangtok, and Kohima. Additionally, youth, science, and space-related meetings were hosted in Nagaland and Sikkim.

This year's G20 summit is scheduled for September 9-10, 2023, at the newly built "Bharat Mandapam" Convention Centre in Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

"Delhi Sees Military Parades Relocated"

Since India gained independence, the Army, Navy, and Air Force used to hold their important parades in New Delhi, attended by high-ranking officials, diplomats, and military leaders. However, in 2022, the Prime Minister decided to move these parades to different regions so that regular people could feel connected and proud. The Indian Air Force (IAF) was the first to have its parade outside Delhi in Chandigarh, with a display of its aviation capabilities at Sukna Lake. This year, the IAF will celebrate its 91st anniversary with an air display at Prayagraj and Bhopal.

In 2023, the Army Day parade moved outside Delhi for the first time since 1949 and happened in Bengaluru at the MEG Centre. Before that, it used to take place at the Cariappa Parade Ground in Delhi Cantonment. On December 4, 2022, India celebrated Navy Day in Vishakhapatnam, where the Indian Navy demonstrated its combat capabilities through an 'Operational Demonstration.' These events display the strength of the armed forces to many Indians, making them proud of their country and inspiring some to consider joining the armed forces.

"Conferences of Combined Commanders Held in Various Cities"

Before 2014, the Combined Commander's Conference used to take place in New Delhi. However, in 2015, Prime Minister Modi changed the location and held the conference on board INS Vikramaditya at sea, near Kochi. In 2017, it was held at the Indian Military Academy (IMA) in Dehradun, in 2018 at Air Force Jodhpur, and in 2021 at Kevadia in Gujarat. The latest conference in April 2023 was in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. The conference focused on important topics like national security, jointness, and 'Atmanirbharta' over three days with the theme 'Ready, Resurgent, Relevant.'

Changing the location of the Commanders' Conference from the capital city allows commanders to have more networking opportunities and raises awareness of national security matters among local communities and regional media. Moreover, it contributes to the improvement of infrastructure development in the chosen locations.

Defense Expositions (DefExpo) Explained

DefExpo, India's flagship biennial event, showcases land, naval, and homeland security systems. It started in 1999 and was initially held at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, until the 8th edition in February 2014, organized by the Ministry of Defence (MoD). After becoming prime minister, Modi relocated the event out of Delhi. The 9th Defexpo-2016 took place in Goa, the 10th DefExpo-2018 in Tiruvudanthal, Kancheepuram district, near Chennai, and DefExpo2020 was held in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

In a significant move, DefExpo2020 was the first time the defense exhibition took place in Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state, aiming to tap into the potential for defense production. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) also unveiled the Uttar Pradesh Defence Corridor to attract investments in defense manufacturing. Subsequently, DefExpo2022 was held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, where an investor outreach event called 'Invest for Defence' focused on promoting indigenisation and self-reliance in the Indian defense industry for the first time.

Defence Corridors

India ranks among the top five military spenders globally and is rapidly emerging as a prominent defense manufacturing hub. To bolster the defense sector's growth and strengthen manufacturing capabilities, the government established two Defense Industrial Corridors (DIC) – one in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and another in Tamil Nadu. The UP Defense Industrial Corridor (UPDIC) comprises six nodes situated in Agra, Aligarh, Chitrakoot, Jhansi, Kanpur, and Lucknow. Likewise, the Tamil Nadu Defense Industrial Corridor (TNDIC) encompasses five nodes located in Chennai, Coimbatore, Hosur, Salem, and Tiruchirappalli. These corridors aim to create a supportive defense manufacturing ecosystem by facilitating efficient supply chains to promote production, testing, and certification. To facilitate this development, the government has acquired 1,608 hectares of land for UPDIC and 910 hectares for TNDIC. These strategic initiatives are set to bolster India's defense manufacturing capabilities significantly.

The government's plans include ensuring a guaranteed water supply and uninterrupted electricity (132 KVA) for defense and aerospace (D&A) manufacturing units. They aim to provide 4-lane heavy-duty highway connectivity, streamlined single window approvals and clearances, and labor permits to facilitate flexible employment conditions. Moreover, simplified procedures and a rationalized regulatory regime will be implemented to enable easy reimbursement of incentives and subsidies for the defense and aerospace industries.

Visits by foreign Heads of State

Prime Minister Modi invited foreign leaders to various cities in India so that they could explore different parts of the country, and the public could have a chance to see them up close. For instance, the 'Namaste Trump' event in February 2020 took place in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Similarly, there were one-to-one informal summits with Xi Jinping in September 2014 and October 2019, held in Ahmedabad and Mahabalipuram, respectively.

When Russian President Putin visited India in 2014, several Indian and Russian cities became sister cities, like Bangalore-Novosibirsk, Chandigarh-Ufa, Chennai-Volgograd, Hyderabad-Kazan, and more. During Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to India in 2015, he joined Prime Minister Modi in attending the Ganga Aarti in Varanasi. In September 2017, Abe and his wife Akei arrived in Ahmedabad, dressed in traditional Indian attire, and together with Modi, they embarked on a historic roadshow leading to Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram.

Transformation from Colonial New Delhi to the Capital of Resurgent Bharat

Prime Minister Modi initiated a significant redesign of central Delhi, the Indian Capital designed by Lutyens almost 100 years ago, to make it more functional for the 21st Century. India now boasts one of the world's finest futuristic parliament buildings. The Raj Path (King's Way) has been transformed into 'Kartavya Path,' signifying our 'sense of duty' and features larger public spaces and amenities. Additionally, there's a magnificent War Memorial where all Indians proudly pay homage to those who sacrificed for our present.

The statue of Subhash Chandra Bose, a national hero and prominent freedom fighter, now holds a prominent place. The upcoming ministerial buildings along Central Vista will be more functional and linked with underground high-speed rail connectivity. A Prime Ministers' Museum is established, giving equal importance to the achievements of all past executive heads. Once South and North Block are vacated, India will boast one of the world's largest museums. Moreover, functional and well-designed residences will replace the makeshift homes of the vice president and prime minister. Additionally, the heritage of Old Delhi has been restored after the redevelopment of Chandni Chowk.

India Accelerating Forward

Today, India stands as a prominent leader among developing nations and is soon to become the world's third-largest economy. It leads the way in global digital payments with groundbreaking transactions. The world marvels at India's Unique identity system "Aadhaar," the largest biometric ID system, and digital direct benefit transfer scheme. Achieving all this through innovative ideas, India has become an attractive investment destination. It's time for India to showcase itself, promote inclusivity, and lead by example. Democracy, as they say, is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.