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G-20 Meet in Srinagar: A Force Multiplier for India's Global Esteem

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Background

The Group of Twenty (G20), formed with major countries like the USA, France, China, India, Russia, Canada, and some other developing and developed nations, is the principal forum for international economic cooperation among the members and stakeholder countries. It has a mandate to shape and strengthen the global architecture and exercise the governance over key transnational economic concerns. India has been conferred the honour of presiding over the G-20 for a year commencing December 1, 2022.¹

As a major step towards exhibiting its stand against all odds and despite manifest opposition from its proclaimed adversaries, i.e. Pakistan and China India boldly chose Srinagar as the venue for the recently conducted coveted G-20 Tourism Working Group Meeting.²

The Bold Decision and Its Implications

This bold decision and the announcement of it came at a time when even the tourists have been apprehensive about travelling to the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) due to the turbulent and sporadic incidents in the recent past. In fact, it's the first time in the past 70 years since independence that J&K has become the venue for an international event of G-20 stature.

As of now, the G-20 meeting held in J&K has conclusively focused upon five key result areas (KRAs), they are promotion of tourism, digitalization, skill development, promotion of MSMEs in expanding the commercial activity in the valley and management of the destination for all the constructive purposes. In addition, the meeting also focused upon strengthening the economic growth, preserving cultural heritage and promoting the comprehensive sustainable development in the J&K region as a whole.

India had specially invited Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain, and the UAE for this mega event. However, with China abstaining from this particular event in J&K, a few other sympathisers of China too abstained.³

Future Prospects

The G-20 summit has gone a long way in boosting the morale of the state administration in J&K. It offered the state administration an opportunity to reap the comprehensive benefits that are claimed to have resulted from repealing Article 370. Moreover, it has a positive impact on the tourism industry and other trade sectors in the region, besides giving Kashmir's tourism potential a powerful

international push, eventually positioning it on a global platform and bringing to the fore Kashmir's traditional art, culture and definitely, the centuries-old *Kashmiriat*.

This apart, the development of infrastructure through the creation of new hospitality facilities such as hotels, restaurants and transportation facilities has positively benefitted the hospitality industry in terms of creation and improvement of infrastructure in J&K. In addition, this also includes the development of smart roads and smart public transport system, the improvement of infrastructure and services, with an overall enhancement in the quality of life for Kashmiri citizens.⁴ All these developments taken together are expected to give a direct boost to the local business ecosystem by accruing the concomitant benefits.

The success of this major event also highlights the promotion of film tourism by offering opportunities for the shooting of films to the visiting delegates. Furthermore, it also places a much desired focus on the system of single-window clearance of the connected formalities for the film crew of the attending foreign nations.

The event also demonstrated the presence of numerous corporate leaders, leading businessmen and diplomats from Middle Eastern countries who actually carried out exhaustive tours of the entire Jammu and Kashmir region, exploring investment opportunities, during the past few months preceding the G-20 meeting.

The successful culmination of this mega event would certainly go a long way in accruing rich benefits to J&K in terms of enhanced business opportunities on the government as well as non-governmental business fronts.

Through this highly ambitious event successfully organised by India, Jammu and Kashmir have got a deliberate opportunity to showcase the prospects of business, market opportunities, eco-tourism endeavours by displaying its traditional and cultural assets before the leading global entities.

The bold decision taken by the Government of India to organise an international event of such a large magnitude in a province that has till recently been through a perpetual state of turmoil, is expected to go a long way in establishing India's credentials at the international level as a super strong nation that believes in taking calculated risks in order to safeguard its national interests.

This would also benefit J&K in many ways. This thought process stems from the fact that the decision to organise an international event like the G-20 was a confident yet premeditated action amidst militancy that has been creating havoc in J&K for a long time. Besides other things, this also

showcased the professionalism of India's security forces and intelligence agencies that through their professionalism of a very high order turned this seemingly difficult possibility into a hard reality.

Candidly speaking, the successful conduct of the G-20 event in J&K deserves to be regarded as a bold and well-calibrated decision taken by India. This has provided a golden opportunity for India to bestow global recognition on J&K, besides sending a strong message to our friendly neighbour about India's resolve to keep its geostrategic environment free from any fear. In other words, it successfully aims at keeping J&K fully protected in the face of any external disturbance whatsoever.

India, through its unrelenting efforts, has come to be in a much better and stronger position to decide and steer the course of global activity. By taking the developing nations along, India is virtually proceeding in the direction of establishing itself as a fast emerging superpower. Moreover, India now has reasons to believe that the constant upward rise of its popularity amidst the multipolar world of the day is placing the nation in a much stronger position than ever before.

The takeaways of the summit are likely to be even greater in terms of expectedly enhanced inward investments and further enlargement of the business environment. It is expected to be accomplished through the enhanced confidence of the foreign investors about the safety of their investments. It is also expected to offer a greater degree of business convenience through the friendly ecosystem that India appears to have developed. All this was possible because of the meaningful interactions held among various stakeholders during the course of the event.

Strategically also, India stands to gain greater yield first by virtue of being one of the most developed and powerful nations that are G-20 members and also through a strong message sent to the perpetual adversaries of India by emerging as a strong nation, i.e. the new India.

In short, the successful conduct of the G-20 meeting in trouble-torn J&K sent a strong message all across that the New India not only stands tall with pride and proven capability to safeguard its national interests but is also able to accomplish its obligations in a committed manner permeated with a high degree of statesmanship.

Notes:

¹ “G-20 and India’s Presidency. G-20 Development Working Group (DWG) meeting to be held in Mumbai from December 13 – 16, 2022. India will host over 200 meetings in over 50 cities across 32 different work streams. G20 delegates and guests to get a glimpse of India's rich cultural heritage and a year-long India experience. The theme of India’s G20 Presidency “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” or “One Earth · One Family · One Future” closely ties with LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)”, *Ministry of External Affairs, PIB*, December 10, 2022, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseFramePage.aspx?PRID=1882356>. Accessed on May 26, 2023.

² Krishnan, Murali, “Why is India hosting some G20 events in Kashmir?”, *DW News*, April 13, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/en/why-is-india-hosting-some-g20-events-in-kashmir/a-65300277>. Accessed on May 26, 2023.

³ Dr Prashant Prabhakar Deshpande, “Significance of holding a G-20 meeting in Kashmir”, *Times of India*, May 22, 2023, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/truth-lies-and-politics/significance-of-holding-a-g-20-meeting-in-kashmir/> Accessed on May 26, 2023.

⁴ “J-K Srinagar gets major makeover ahead of G-20 meetings”, *Economic Times*, May 13, 2023, <https://infra.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/urban-infrastructure/j-k-srinagar-gets-major-makeover-ahead-of-g20-meetings/100198278>. Accessed on May 26, 2023.

