

# 'Will help India step up manufacturing in green technology'

International Energy Agency (IEA) Executive Director **FATIH BIROL** tells Subhayan Chakraborty that nations are positioning themselves towards the new industrial age focused on green technologies, and that India should become a natural leader in battery, solar, and electric vehicle manufacturing. Edited excerpts:

**You will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a roundtable on energy on Monday. What will be the main focus of your discussions?**

This is the main purpose of my visit to India this time. I will discuss with the Prime Minister and other ministers about the IEA's support to create a road map on how India can quickly

step up manufacturing capacity for green technologies. I am also the head of the energy board of the World Economic Forum and I can tell you that there is a lot of competition among nations for positioning themselves towards the next chapter

of industrial growth. Given India's strong economic fundamentals, it should be one of the leaders of this new industrial age.

**What are IEA's official submissions on energy transition to India?**

India has had an impressive track record in green transition. In recent years, it has provided electricity to 500 million people, which is close to the population of Europe. Another initiative which does not get much headlines but has been discussed widely by IEA colleagues is the Ujjwala scheme, which has changed the lives of women and children. It has promoted renewables by widely distributing LED lights. Now, the next step for India would be to play an important role in clean energy technology manufacturing.

**Demand for renewable energy technologies have led to a meteoric rise in demand for critical minerals. How would this supply chain shape up?**

China remains a major player in critical minerals refining. Unlike oil and gas, key mineral deposits are everywhere but countries have not begun to tap into their production. Mining for these minerals is now mushrooming across the world. Outside China, we are seeing this in the US, Canada, and many Asian nations. The first major international forum for critical minerals will be organised by the IEA in June. I will invite India to that meeting to discuss how to divert critical mineral



**GIVEN INDIA'S STRONG FUNDAMENTALS, IT SHOULD BE ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THIS NEW INDUSTRIAL AGE"**

production and refining.

**You have said countries should not rely on one economy to make the green transition. Can you elaborate?**

Nations are now focused on the production of new technology, such as batteries, hydrogen electrolysis, and EVs. Today, these sectors are massively dominated by one country. Seventy-five per cent of batteries, 90 per cent of solar PVs, and 80 per cent of wind equipment are manufactured in China. China has made a very good move by reducing the cost of production of these technologies, the reliance on one single supplier or one country is always risky.

**India has refused to come on the Just Energy Transition Partnership discussion table as long as coal phase-out is on the agenda. How fair do you think this question is?**

Coal is still a big chunk of India's energy generation. It would be unfair to ask it to stop using coal, without it being replaced by another source of electricity. India is not responsible for the climate problem we have today. When we look at carbon emissions over the past 100 years, India's share is only 3 per cent of the global total, while its population is 18 per cent of the global total. There should be a gradual reduction in coal production, but not because it is asked by other countries. It should be reduced keeping in mind the health and well-being of India's population.

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