



'Bharat Mandapam', the main venue for the G20 summit, in New Delhi on Tuesday

PHOTO: REUTERS

India's presidency: The highs and lows

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Even as the Ukraine war continues to create an impasse in finalising the Group of Twenty (G20) leaders' communiqué, several groundbreaking initiatives introduced by India during its G20 Presidency may become some of its most enduring contributions to the global platform.

In March, foreign ministers from G20 nations held their inaugural discussion on the topic of narcotics, calling for swift intergovernmental cooperation to combat the rampant global drug trade. India introduced this topic as a key theme at the meeting, among several other firsts that India has pioneered within the G20. These initiatives are set to continue as part of the official discussion format. These include the first-ever G20 conference on cybersecurity, the launch of the Startup20 engagement group, and the establishment of a new disaster reduction working group. Brazil will take over the responsibility for advancing these and other initiatives when it assumes the annual G20 Presidency later this week at the G20 summit.

New opportunities

New Delhi aimed to showcase the remarkable growth in the number of registered startups in the country, making it the third-largest startup ecosystem globally.

Despite being dogged by a funding winter throughout 2023, India managed to convene 600 delegates from 22 countries for a Shikhar summit in Gurugram in July, leading to the formation of the new Startup20 engagement group.

The policy communiqué crafted by this group includes the development and adoption of a framework for defining startups and the creation of a networked institution to support startups and ecosystem stakeholders across the G20. However, unanimous agreement among member nations to increase access to capital and ease market regulations for startups may prove to be two of the most far-reaching initiatives agreed upon by the participating countries.

At the meeting, Saudi Arabia emerged as the first country to endorse and support the Startup20's call for allocating an ambitious \$1 trillion annually into the startup ecosystem by 2030. In an effort to synergise global science advice mechanisms inclusively and with an action-oriented approach, India hosted the inaugural meeting of G20-Chief Science Advisers Roundtable in the scenic Ramnagar, located in Uttarakhand's Nainital district.

This meeting focused on harnessing opportunities in One Health, a joint global action plan involving several United Nations (UN) agencies aimed at creating a global framework to integrate systems and capacity for better prevention, prediction, detection, and response to health threats. It emphasised the need for immediate and universal access to publicly funded scholarly scientific knowledge for communities within and beyond G20 member nations.

New-age threats

India underscored that cybersecurity is no longer confined to the digital realm but has become a matter of national and global security concern. Presided over by Home Minister Amit Shah, the cybersecurity conference held in July addressed evolving technologies such as artificial intelligence, the metaverse, and non-fungible tokens. It brought together two international agencies, Interpol, and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

Among other concerns, it highlighted the potential for the metaverse to create new opportunities for terrorist organisations, primarily for propaganda, recruitment, and training. India pointed out that the metaverse also opens the door for more sophisticated identity impersonation, known as 'deep-fakes'. Criminals can utilise enhanced biometric information to impersonate users and steal their identities.

New Delhi successfully convinced G20 nations to unite on disaster risk reduction and establish a dedicated working group. The argument put forth was that current economic choices and development pathways do not align with previous global commitments, such as the Sendai Framework and the 2030 agenda for reducing disaster risk.