



Gujarat's Mission and India's Vision towards Climate Change

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Distinguished Friends, Fellow Speakers, Ladies and Gentlemen, It gives me immense pleasure to be a part of this wonderful event and interacting with such a diverse audience at this global platform. I take this opportunity to extend my warm greetings to all of you.

Friends, climate change looms large over us, and it would not be an overstatement to say that climate change is the biggest and most pressing challenge facing Planet Earth. It poses an existential threat to the world as we know it, and to humanity and to millions of other species that call this Planet Home. Finding a way to tackle climate change is not an option, but the only option. I congratulate IOD for hosting this event to discuss this very important topic at a very opportune moment.

Friends, I am going to speak about the steps Gujarat, which is one of the most industrialised and industrious states of India, has taken to contribute to India's vision and commitment towards addressing climate change. Many of you must be aware that Gujarat is the home to the largest diamond polishing hub, home to the world's largest refinery complex, the largest ceramic nucleus, the hub of some of the largest pharma manufacturing clusters, and the leader in many other segments.

While Gujarat is known as the industrial powerhouse of India, the state is also pioneer in use of natural gas and renewable energy. Let me take this opportunity to give you a glimpse into the various path breaking green initiatives that have been implemented to build a sustainable and climate resilient future for the people of Gujarat, and new initiatives that have been rolled out.

Friends, it is a matter of pride for all of us that it was under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji, when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat which the state took the initial steps to emerge as India's gas capital and the leader in renewable energy.

I will first speak about the natural gas initiatives converting Gujarat to a Gas based economy or we call it as GASONOMY. Under the Hon'ble PM's leadership, the Gujarat government embarked on developing a state-wide Gas Grid network, first of its kind, connecting all possible gas sources with consumers, and transforming the state into a gas-based economy in just a decade. It is the result of several concerted efforts by the state and all the stakeholders that natural gas accounts for over 25% of Gujarat's primary energy basket, which is four times the national average of 6-7%, and even higher than the global average of 24%.

Thousands of industries and factories, and millions of vehicles that were earlier using traditional fuels, are now powered by natural gas. The shift to a cleaner fuel has led to a reduction of lakhs of tonnes of carbon emissions, and its positive impact on the environment can be imagined.

The Government of India, under the leadership of Hon'ble PM, aims to increase the share of gas in the country's primary energy basket from 6.5% at present to 15% by 2030. We have over 25% contribution from natural gas in the energy basket and we will work harder to ensure that India achieves its target earlier. I assure you that Gujarat is ready to play a vital role in realising his vision toward cleaner energy.

Friends, while climate change is attracting a lot of attention now and economies world over are focusing efforts on transitioning from traditional energy sources to renewable energy sources to tackle global warming, many of you may not be aware that Gujarat was the first state at sub-national level in the whole of Asia to launch an independent Climate Change department way back in 2009 itself. The Department was tasked with the responsibility to take actions required for mitigation of and adaption to climate change, and is another example of the foresightedness of Hon'ble Prime Minister.

Over the years, the state of Gujarat has emerged as the hub of renewable energy. This journey also began under his dynamic leadership.

Friends, Gujarat first introduced a Solar Power Policy way back in 2009 to promote solar energy generation. Everyone knew the unlimited potential of Sun as the planet's most abundant source of energy, but few solar power projects were operational in the country until then. Under this policy, the state established Asia's largest multi-developer Solar Park at a single location at Charanka village in North Gujarat with an installed capacity of over 730MW.

India has been worshipping the Sun God since ages. But in 2009, few would have imagined that within a decade, India would be showing the World the path of 'One Sun, One World, One Grid'.

The Solar Power Policy also played the role of a catalyst in transforming the state into an integrated solar generation hub. In just over a decade, Gujarat has scaled up solar power generation capacity to more than 6,000 MW.

I am happy to inform you that the Gujarat government has firmed up plans to increase this capacity manifolds in the very near future by accelerating development of large solar power projects, small scale distributed systems, and setting up ultra-mega solar parks. Gujarat government also has policies to encourage industries, farmers and common households to generate their own electricity using solar power.

I would like to draw your attention to initiatives such as

converting Modhera Town in Mehsana, home to an ancient Sun Temple, into a Net Solar Energy Positive town by enabling it to meet its energy requirement through solar power.

Gujarat was also the first state to set up rooftop solar panels on canals under the Canal Solar Power Project in 2014, doing away with the need to acquire land for setting up solar projects, and also limiting evaporation of water from the canals.

Friends, Gujarat is also among the leading states in India as far as tapping wind energy is concerned. The state is home to nearly 9,000 MW of wind power generation capacity, one of the highest in the country.

On the whole, the state accounts for more than 15,000 MW of renewable energy capacity, which is around 15% of the country's renewable energy capacity and 42% of total energy capacity of Gujarat. The world's largest hybrid renewable energy park, with more than 30,000 MW of wind and solar projects, is being developed in the dessert area of Kutch.

Apart from the huge environmental impact, renewable energy has also made significant contribution in the socio-economic development of Gujarat by creating employment opportunities, promoting entrepreneurship, strengthening energy security, and boosting infrastructure development in interior pockets as well as in coastal areas.

Earlier this year, the Gujarat government unveiled a "State Action Plan on Climate Change" aimed at building a sustainable and climate-resilient future in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Besides health, The Plan covers aspects such as renewable energy, energy conservation, forestry, coastal areas, tribal areas, animal husbandry, and agriculture. The Plan will involve people, mobilise private and public investment, as well as various policy measures.

Friends, most recently, the Gujarat government has announced the Gujarat State Electric Vehicle Policy, which aims for transition of the transportation sector towards electric mobility, by encouraging investments into the sector, and improving quality of environment by reducing air pollution. The policy offers subsidies on electric vehicles as well as for charging infrastructure, and incentives on manufacturing of EVs and components. Going forward, Gujarat envisages continuing to explore emerging areas like solar wafers, solar cells, solar batteries, Energy Storage, Electric Vehicles, etc.

Since the topic of this conference is climate change, I believe it will be apt to share the story of the environmental transformation of Morbi, the largest ceramic manufacturing cluster in India. The National Green Tribunal banned use of coal gasifiers in ceramic units in 2019 due to environmental concerns. The whole industry was staring at a shutdown, but the state PSUs rose to the occasion and within days the infrastructure to supply gas to the units was put in place. Within months of the shift from coal gasifiers to natural gas, PM2.5,

PM10 and SO2 concentration in Morbi were down by 75%, 72% and 85%, respectively. Morbi's transition to a greener fuel and its transformation have become a global case study.

Friends, as you are aware that the world leaders had met at Glasgow in November for the United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP26 Summit, to discuss climate action. Hon'ble PM made India's commitment for increasing its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW and meeting 50% of the nation's energy requirements from renewable energy by 2030. He also pledged that India will achieve Net-Zero carbon emissions by 2070.

I am confident that the renewable energy push, coupled with smarter use of cleaner fossil fuels, and moving into emerging fuels like green hydrogen, will set India on course to achieve the net-zero targets well within the deadline.

I assure you that Gujarat is committed to further tapping renewable energy sources in a manner that would position them as the mainstream source of energy supply as well as emerge as a key contributor to the 500 GW renewable energy capacity target before the 2030 deadline set by the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

Friends, climate change is real, and the time to start addressing it is now.

As Hon'ble PM had noted in his address at COP26, "Daily choices of billions of people around the world will take the fight

against climate change, billions of steps forward every day."

I urge all of you to make conscious choices every day.

Before I finish, I would like to say a few words about Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, the pre-eminent industry event of India. The Gujarat government is hosting the 10th edition of the biennial Summit in Gandhinagar with the central theme of "From Atmanirbhar Gujarat To Atmanirbhar Bharat". Hon'ble PM Narendra Modi Ji will inaugurate the Summit on January 10. The 3-day Summit will witness multiple seminars, roundtable conferences, conventions, B2B and B2G meetings focussing largely on green mobility, clean energy, innovation, sustainability, natural agriculture, futuristic economy & technology, and many more. I request you to block your dates and be a part of Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2022.

In the end, I thank IOD for giving me this opportunity to interact with you all. I am sure that with our concerted and wholehearted efforts, we will definitely be able to provide a better, greener, and cleaner tomorrow to our coming generations.

Thank You.

Excerpts from the 'Guest of Honour Keynote Address' delivered by **Mr. Pankaj Kumar, IAS, Chief Secretary, Govt. of Gujarat, at IOD's '22nd World Congress on Environment Management and Climate Change 2021, held virtually on December 08, 2021.* ■