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ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT AND TECH NATIONALISM: FROM IMPORTING TECH TO EXPORTING INNOVATION- INDIAN'S NEW CHAPTER

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Keywords	Abstract
<p><i>Atmanirbhar Bharat,</i> <i>Tech Nationalism,</i> <i>Innovation,</i> <i>Self-Reliance,</i> <i>Digital India,</i> <i>Technological Sovereignty,</i> <i>Economic Policy.</i></p>	<p>To promote local manufacturing, reduce reliance on imports, and make India a self-sufficient economy, the Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) project is a significant policy focus of the Indian government. This research study examines the Atmanirbhar Bharat project in depth, including its background, policy measures, challenges, opportunities, and potential effects on the Indian economy and international relations. Make in India, Digital India, Start-up India, and Semicon India are some of the national programs the government is launching to boost homegrown manufacturing, encourage innovation, and establish strategic independence in vital areas such as renewable energy, defence, electronics, and artificial intelligence. This research examines the public-private partnerships, legislative frameworks, and institutional changes that have helped India transition from a technology importer to a potential innovation exporter. In addition, it delves into issues such as technology gaps, supply chain dependence, and global rivalry, while highlighting India's ability to spearhead accessible, inclusive, and sustainable technological solutions. In the end, Atmanirbhar Bharat is more than an economic plan; it is a new chapter in India's quest for technological independence and modern national pride.</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of his power pack proposal, ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT—also known as self-reliant India—announced a financing package of over 20 lakh crores to the people of India on May 12,



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2020. The goal of this initiative is to make India self-sufficient.

Modi, as prime minister, established a connection between the Atmanirbhar Bharat plan and antiquated Indian literature. He revealed that the mantra "ESHAH PANTHAH"—meaning independent and self-sufficient—is found throughout the shastras. While many academics saw the word "self-sufficient" as revealing India's isolationist policies, Prime Minister Modi used the phrase "self-reliant" in his address. According to Prime Minister Modi, the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is well underway, and it is not only a goal but a duty to ensure that the 21st century is remembered as the Indian century. He used the phrase "VASHUDAIV KUTUMBAKAM" to say that the only way we can do this is by working together as a family. The five pillars that make up Atmanirbhar Bharat are as follows: the economy, which should see not a giant leap but a series of minor adjustments to transform this situation into an opportunity; infrastructure, which represents digital and modern India; systems, which refer to technology of the 21st century; democracy, which is the driving force behind Atmanirbhar Bharat; and demand, which refers to an increase in both supply and demand. About 10% of India's gross domestic product is allocated to the Atmanirbhar Bharat package, amounting to about 20 lakh crores. The government of India has introduced reforms to improve the country and bolster the Make in India agenda, which centre on land, labour, liquidity, and class.

The term "Techno-nationalism" is a novel blend of "nationalism" and "technology," emphasizing a country's technological independence and creativity. The phrase "Techno-Nationalism" refers to a popular technical trend and tactic used by Western nations, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Canada, and Japan. China subsequently adopted this approach to its fullest extent. After the fall of Western-led domination after 1945, China began to adopt this philosophy, and now, in the 21st century, fierce competition between Western firms and their Chinese counterparts is driven by this principle. Even in the twenty-first century, this technological fad is in its infancy in places like Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and India. Thus, techno-nationalism originated in the West and was subsequently adopted by China. However, before we get into the breadth of that topic, let us define techno-nationalism. According to Wikipedia, "Techno-nationalism is a way of understanding how technology affects the society and culture of a nation" [1]—a simple version of the concept. The nationalist project's primary focus on technology to foster greater unity and national pride is a typical example. The ultimate goal of this technical philosophy is for a country to become technologically and industrially independent, so that it may capitalise on its influence and eventually dominate other nations.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

With a focus on the hotel and tourism industry in Himachal Pradesh, Kumar and Pathania [2] sought to understand the underlying mechanisms of the Make in India initiative and to evaluate its social and economic effects by surveying industry stakeholders. A variety of statistical and mathematical methods, including the Chi-square test, AM, standard deviation, percentage, and simple average, were used to assemble the primary and secondary data. It is established that the goals of the Make in India program—making India self-sufficient, creating employment, raising revenue, and improving tourist and hospitality infrastructure in Himachal Pradesh—are being achieved.



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The government's decision to launch the Aatmanirbhar Bharat plan was driven by two key concerns, according to Lal et al. [3]: the need to modernise MSMEs and to reduce our reliance on imported goods. The study relied on secondary data culled from online resources, such as articles and research papers, and had a descriptive bent. It has been noted that the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan would expand employment opportunities and enhance exports, both of which would contribute to a rise in the country's gross domestic product.

From a global perspective, Shettar [4] has described the effects of the Made in India initiatives. The research highlighted the primary focus of the Make in India initiative: the impact of FDI on India's manufacturing sector. The report goes on to detail the four tenets of the Make in India program: innovative processes, cutting-edge infrastructure, emerging industries, and a fresh perspective. According to research, the Indian economy may become completely self-sufficient if these four points are followed.

Research by Nandan [5] shows that the government's Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative is shifting focus from developing to developed economies, and that this shift would affect the whole economy. Everyone and every vulnerable group in society stand to gain from the plan. India has the potential to reach new heights of growth with this initiative. If it is entirely successful, it will serve as an example for other economies worldwide.

Research papers, journals, websites, and newspapers were among the many secondary sources from which Agarwal [6] drew information for his study. According to his research, the foundation of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiatives lies in the idea of connecting the local with the global. The primary goals of the program were to increase the utilisation of local goods and to support micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The secondary goals were to reduce reliance on foreign economies and to implement an import substitution strategy. An appropriate strategy for India's economic independence would be to increase exports while simultaneously decreasing imports.

3. TECHNO-NATIONALISM, AN EMERGING TREND IN INDIA

India faces a new battleground in techno-nationalism as it grows in power, but this is nothing new for countries like the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, and China. Information, technology, and software are the weapons of choice in this new battlefield, where demands from Indian residents may either hurt or help a country's economy on a global scale. Anyhow, India has these weapons for professional use. Indians have recently gotten embroiled in nationalist rhetoric and anti-Chinese emotions, making them an easy target for media attention. "Following the Ladakh clashes and the loss of Indian soldiers, there were numerous images on television and social media depicting Indians vandalising and stomping on Chinese goods, such as televisions and mobile phones." [7]. In response to public demand, India began restricting and eventually banning a variety of Chinese goods on business grounds, just as China has done with foreign goods in the past. Concurrently, India is screening Chinese investments and letting Chinese businesses compete for infrastructure projects in the country. A huge setback for techno-globalism—and particularly for China's globalist ambitions—is the emergence of techno-nationalism worldwide. Indian Prime Minister Narendra



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Modi has launched a plan dubbed 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' or 'Self-Reliant India' to capitalise on the growing anti-China sentiment in the country and globally. The plan aims to entice multinational corporations to set up shop in India, where they can build their industries and businesses. Atmanirbhar Bharat also promotes Indian companies and their products, starting with protective gear that is made in India rather than imported from China. "Atmanirbhar Bharat" is essentially a rebranding of the "Make in India" initiative, with slogans like "Vocal for Local" added to the mix. So, "Atmanirbhar Bharat" entails pouring a ton of money into India's research and development division and other parts of the country that build its technology and industries, all to put India in a position to indirectly corner China eventually. On the flip side, social media campaigns like "Software in a Week and Hardware in a Year" were promoted by activists like Sonam Wangchuk, who urged the Indian public to reduce their use of Chinese goods voluntarily. To promote self-sustainability—another term for Techno-nationalism—the Indian government seems to be progressively capitalizing on the populace's anti-China feeling. Also, the Indian government launched an app development competition on July 4, 2020, as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Scheme, to honour the top Indian apps in various categories such as E-learning, Office Productivity, Social Networking, Entertainment, Health & Wellness, Industry (including Agritech and Fintech), News, and Games. The Indian government's stance towards China reflects a new trend in the country: techno-nationalism. As a result, the Indian government has an opportunity to channel its patriotism into self-developed technologies that would allow the country to remain autonomous. It would be easy for any nation to control geopolitics and dominate global technology if it could harness the Techno-nationalism trend or philosophy. In any case, the "Galapagos Syndrom" should not affect India's new startups. This gives the Indian government a chance to cite nationalism as an excuse for the technological advancements. If a nation's techno-nationalist ideology takes hold, it will have a stranglehold over international politics and technology.

When it comes to information technology, India is among the top nations in utilisation, but China is not far behind. It is necessary to support new ventures in this industry alongside well-known IT companies such as Infosys, Wipro, TCS, and Tech Mahindra. Both the Indian government and private enterprises in India (such as ONGC, Indian Oil, Reliance Group, HAL, Tata Motors, Hinduja Group, Mahindra & Mahindra, and SBI) have strong reputations in other industries. When it comes to sales and reliability, Indian motor firms, such as Bajaj and TVS, are gradually catching up with many Chinese brands sold in African nations. Despite the current coronavirus epidemic, pharmaceutical firms in India, such as Serum Institute of India, Zydus Cadila, Bharat Biotech, and Indian Immunological Limited, are hard at work developing new treatments and vaccines. Following China's lead in preserving its enterprises at crucial times, India should encourage start-ups while also supporting existing businesses if it wants to become self-sufficient.

So, techno-nationalism is all the rage in India, but instead of depending on imports from an enemy nation, India could promote and sell its own products. Regardless, naysayers contend that the Indian government is merely taking anti-China measures to appease hyper-nationalist sentiment; they predict that the government will soon lift bans on Chinese applications and businesses. Many



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investors still believe that corruption, unfair processing delays, subpar ground-level transportation, and specific industrial policies discourage them from investing in and developing their industries and businesses in India, despite the country's strong demographics, robust economic growth, and sound governance.

4. EXPORTING INNOVATION AS A GLOBAL POWERHOUSE

As measured across 139 economies by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), India's innovation journey reached a new milestone in 2025, rising to 38th place in the Global Innovation Index (GII). India has made significant progress over the past decade, rising from 81st in 2015 to 48th in 2020, 40th in 2022, 39th in 2024, and now 38th in 2025. A dynamic innovation ecosystem is being built, as seen by this trend.

India has surpassed all other lower-middle-income nations to become the leading innovator in Central and Southern Asia. India is at the forefront of innovation, as shown by its top-ten rankings in key innovation outputs, including ICT services exports, late-stage venture capital transactions, intangible asset intensity, and unicorn values. India is now clearly a contender, not just a hopeful contender, in the global innovation race, as shown by these victories.

The country is proud of its ascent. The unrelenting efforts of Indian entrepreneurs, startups, and research institutes, together with the country's policies, reforms, and investments, are paying off with tangible worldwide recognition. Nowadays, India's economic identity is inextricably linked to innovation, which gives it both pride and competitiveness.

Innovation & Nation-Building: Atmanirbhar Bharat, Manufacturing & Viksit Bharat

The goals of Atmanirbhar Bharat (independent India), Viksit Bharat (a developed India), and the current innovation boom in India are all closely related. These are not separate catchphrases but rather interrelated tactics driven by new ideas.

India has aimed to shift its manufacturing focus from low-value assembly to high-value, design-intensive, technology-driven manufacturing through initiatives such as Make in India and the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) programs. The fact that India is making headway in the GII is evidence that these tactics are paying off. Growing in-house competence in areas such as renewable energy, semiconductors, military tech, space, biotech, and clean energy is helping reduce reliance on foreign technology and increase resilience.

In addition, India's goal of Viksit Bharat is being bolstered by the momentum of innovation. Innovations in healthcare, financial technology, climate change mitigation tools, and digital infrastructure are paving the way for more equitable and long-term growth. In modern times, innovation has shifted from an afterthought to an essential part of India's economic and social development.

- **Where India Stands: Global, Asia & South Asia Perspectives**

Among developing countries, India stands out as a genuine innovation force, ranking 38th globally. Although the United States, South Korea, and Switzerland are now at the top of the innovation food chain, India is slowly but surely closing the gap.



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India is in a league of its own in Asia when it comes to innovation, competing with Japan, Singapore, and China. Given the size and variety of its economy, India's ascent is remarkable.

No one can threaten India's dominance in South Asia. Because of its status as the regional innovation anchor, India's influence grows, while its neighbours' economies fall far behind. Indian cities Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Mumbai are among the world's most renowned innovation clusters, helping the country improve its national score and compete on a cluster-to-cluster basis with other major cities. The innovation narrative of India stands out for its twin accomplishments of regional supremacy and worldwide recognition.

- **What Drives India's Innovation Surge**

An interdependent web of factors is propelling India's innovation pace. With hundreds of high-growth enterprises and over 100 unicorns, India has become one of the world's leading startup ecosystems. Ideas can scale quickly thanks to strong digital infrastructure, widespread internet access, mobile adoption, and financial innovations.

Legislative revisions about IP rights, business-friendliness, and targeted financing have strengthened the framework. In addition to the growing body of scientific work produced by universities and other research organisations worldwide, the robust network of partnerships between businesses and educational institutions is a fertile ground for practical innovation. India's innovation clusters draw in people, money, and ideas, and the country's exports and foreign partnerships are energising its ecosystem. Start-ups, policies, human capital, and global integration all work together to keep India at the top of the GII rankings.

- **Sharpened Edge: India's Global Competitiveness**

Increased global competitiveness is a direct result of innovation in India's economy. In industries that rely heavily on information and cutting-edge technology, the country is attracting increasing international investment. As it gains a stronger position in global value chains, its export profile is shifting toward high-value services and integrated technological solutions.

India is becoming more attractive as a location for investment in manufacturing, research and development, and design, driven by its innovation capabilities, especially as global supply networks undergo restructuring. Reducing reliance on imports, increasing strategic resilience, and improving the trade balance are all outcomes of stronger local innovation. Significantly, innovation is driving productivity gains across every industry—from agriculture and logistics to energy, health, and governance—making India's economy more competitive overall.

- **Leading the New Global Economic Order**

Technology is of utmost importance as the world order changes. India has a leg up in this transition because of its recent surge in the innovation index. India is quickly becoming a preferred partner for nations in the Global South, thanks to its reputation as a credible "innovation middleweight" and its expertise in inexpensive technology, digital public goods, and scalable innovation models.

Now that semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and renewable energy are at the core of global politics, India is more than simply a technology consumer. Its ability to negotiate,



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co-create, and establish global standards is facilitated by its expanding innovation platform. In addition to redistributing power in the global innovation landscape away from the North, this boosts India's influence in areas such as trade, digital governance, and international scientific forums.

- **Futuristic Outlook: R&D, Innovation and Start-ups**

If current trends continue, India might join the ranks of the world's 20 most innovative countries over the next five to ten years. To that end, the Indian government is investing heavily in cutting-edge fields, including space exploration, biotechnology, quantum computing, renewable hydrogen, and artificial intelligence, and addressing issues in inputs such as infrastructure, clear regulations, patient funding, and lab space.

With more backing for deep-tech start-ups, India's start up scene is going global and growing in size. More and more, grassroots creativity, technological commercialisation, and academic-industry partnership are penetrating smaller towns and rural regions. Further, India can influence rather than follow global trends through international collaboration in research and standards-setting.

Years of institutional changes, ecosystem development, and entrepreneurial resilience led to India's leap from 48th in 2020 to 38th in 2025 on the Global Innovation Index. Atmanirbhar Bharat, manufacturing expansion, and the goal of Viksit Bharat are all bolstered by innovation, which is now an integral part of India's development path. Since innovation is universal, dispersed, and interconnected globally, increasing funding for frontier research will boost innovation capabilities. Going forward, India will do more than keep climbing; it will change the face of innovation worldwide. This proud occasion marks the start of a new age where innovation will define India's place in the ever-changing global ecosystem, not the endpoint.

5. CASE STUDIES

A. The Case of Techgentsia

The TGT scenario illustrates how techno-nationalist concerns influence and shape national innovation systems. Among the many Indian businesses that gained notoriety during the epidemic was TGT, which makes videoconferencing software. The government opted for indigenous technology due to the fast spread of COVID-19. With the announcement of the Innovation Challenge for the Development of Video Conferencing Solution under the 'Make in India' initiative, MEITY aimed to find local products that could serve as secure alternatives for virtual meetings. The goal was to build an ecosystem for a scalable, powerful videoconferencing solution that offered advanced privacy and security settings. Its stated goal was to discover and promote viable alternatives to software tools developed in other countries. For techno nationalists, the state's role in a vital industry—the provision of encrypted communication services to Indians—resonates. Underlying the challenge's character, host, competition conditions, and monetary incentive are nationalist overtones. TGT took home one crore rupees for its top-tier video conferencing software, VCONSOL. As a result of efforts spearheaded by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), the software was subsequently transformed into BharatVC and made available on the Meghraj Cloud. With NIC's research and development backing, Bharat VC was touted as a collaborative effort between the two organisations. Meetings at the highest levels of government agencies are being held



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using it as "India's official video conferencing solution" [8].

According to the product description, VCONSOL is an Indian-made, enterprise-grade video conferencing system that works with iOS, Mac, Windows, Android, and Linux. Thanks to AES-128-GCM encryption, it is safe, reliable, and easy to use [9]. When it comes to encryption, AES-128-GCM is among the most powerful and secure options available. With both nation-state and non-state actors posing growing cyber threats, VCONSOL provides a solid communication platform that strengthens India's cyber defences. As nations rely on cyberspace for economic and military purposes, non-state actors have discovered new vulnerabilities. The tool's indigenous origins highlight its "national" element. Security and national interest inform the state's reliance on indigenous technology, which, in turn, establishes a connection between the state and technology.

B. Zoho Zia LLM

New AI-powered solutions to automate processes for organisations, speech-to-text systems for English and Hindi, and Zoho Corporation's own large language models (Zia LLM) are all part of the artificial intelligence (AI) products that the company has unveiled. Sales, customer service, and data analysis are just a few of the departments that will benefit from these new technologies.

When asked about the news, Zoho Chief Scientist Sridhar Vembu said, "Our big AI announcement today" on X. Zia LLM is the first of three in-house models that address different business use cases; each model has 1.3 billion, 2.6 billion, and 7 billion attributes, respectively. Second, two fully native English and Hindi automated speech-to-text models, fine-tuned to run on cheap, rudimentary hardware.

Using NVIDIA's artificial intelligence technology, the Zia LLM was built entirely in-house. Report summarisation, data extraction, question answering, and code development are just a few examples of real-world business activities that informed the model's training. Zoho can match AI power to the proper work with their three distinct model sizes.

Additionally, Zoho has released two models for voice recognition that can translate spoken Hindi and English into text. These have been thoughtfully engineered to perform admirably and provide precise results even on devices with constrained processing capabilities. Eventually, other languages from Europe and India will be incorporated.

6. CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Economically, infrastructural, systemically, demographically, and demand-wise, Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan aims to improve the country's economy. Every circumstance has its own set of drawbacks. While some academics have voiced their disapproval of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, others, including Udit Mishra, have denied that it is a BJP plan and pointed out that India has already undertaken similar missions. Additionally, he said that the word Atmanirbhar may mean either "self-sufficient" or "self-reliant," with the latter connoting a good quality and the former a less desirable one. With Atmanirbhar Bharat, India will become a nation that isolates itself. Prasanna Mohanty said that Modi was lost and had failed to provide any meaningful explanation of what Atmanirbhar Bharat meant. In Ashok Desai's words, the prime minister was an expert sloganeer. Poverty and



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migrant work were the author's focal points. Local industry would face competition from the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. Lending to small-scale manufacturers and industrialists is always tricky, and he pointed out gaps in the banking and financial sector's strategies as the reason.

The Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan: Some Criticisms:

- A protectionist stance: this policy's foundation is protectionism, which will hurt free trade and deter foreign direct investment. Exports from India to other nations would suffer as a result.
- Lack of clarity: Critics said that the government's plan to achieve self-reliance was unclear. To achieve its aim of reducing imports and increasing local production, the government has not offered a transparent plan.
- Scope is limited: One criticism levelled against the program is that it places too much emphasis on manufacturing at the expense of other vital economic sectors, such as agriculture and services. Another is that its scope is too narrow.
- Dependence on government support: This strategy creates market distortions and inefficiencies by relying on government backing. As a result, businesses may also develop an unhealthy reliance on one another.
- Consumer impact: The plan may lead to higher consumer costs, as local manufacturers may struggle to compete with imported goods on quality and pricing. People with lower incomes who depend on cheap imports may suffer as a result.
- 'Road to a UK-India Free Trade Agreement: Published in 2021 by the UK-India Business Council (UKIBC), the document titled "Road to a UK-India Free Trade Agreement: Enhancing the Partnership and Achieving Self-Reliance" details the negotiations between the two countries. According to the UKIBC's annual study on doing business in India, almost 77% of UK firms saw Atmanirbhar Bharat as a positive development rather than a negative one. However, international firms with operations in the UK and elsewhere may find some of the program's enhancements to be harmful.

Some other concerns:

- Problems with Liquidity: The fiscal and monetary measures under the Rs 20 lakh crore plan focus on monetary injections and credit guarantees for financial institutions rather than the broader economy. Since banks constitute the bulk of the package, the RBI would communicate liquidity measures to them and the general public via them. This shift would be less seamless than expected since monetary policy is not well transmitted.
- Decreased Total Demand: The lockout reduced overall demand; hence, a monetary boost is required. However, the package is flawed because it ignores the fact that investment will increase only when people in all economic sectors have disposable income. It is too reliant on loan infusion.
- Difficulty in Obtaining Capital: The government is trying to fund its plan to acquire a share in PSUs by disinvestment, but this would put even more pressure on the already modest debt burdens of most Indian businesses. The historically low rupee-dollar exchange rate also



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makes financing on global markets difficult.

- **Inadequate Backward and Forward Linkage:** If the rest of the domestic economy is not revived, the micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) sector might face a demand crunch and see its production grind to a halt. The stimulus package accounts for over 10% of India's GDP, indicating the budget deficit has widened. However, with the government's focus on reducing the budget deficit, funding it could be not easy.

The government must address opponents' concerns and implement Atmanirbhar Bharat in a way that benefits all stakeholders, even if the program increases domestic production and reduces reliance on imports.

7. CONCLUSION

Atmanirbhar Bharat is more than just an economic reform plan; it represents India's ambition to reshape its position in the innovation hierarchy and attain technical independence. Strategically, there has been a shift from reliance on imported technology to domestic production and export, reflecting increased self-assurance, competence, and national purpose. By incorporating programs such as Digital India, Startup India, Make in India, and Semicon India, the nation has begun to create an environment that encourages sustainable industrial growth, empowers entrepreneurs, and enhances research and development. However, this dream can only come to fruition via unceasing funding for schools, labs, digital literacy, and international cooperation. Issues such as equal access to technology, supply chain resilience, and intellectual property protection require a forward-thinking, coherent policy response. Together, Atmanirbhar Bharat and tech nationalism represent India's will to transform itself from a technology consumer to a producer and exporter of cutting-edge innovations, marking the beginning of a more independent, inclusive, and future-proof era for the country.

8. AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript..

9. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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