

# Never mind the quantity, India shows, it is the quality of ideas that matters

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AS WE look at the sheer volume of ideas in the 2020 Summit, perhaps we should consider that the Indian Government has supported an economic miracle simply by adopting two ideas - building the world's cheapest telecoms sector and backing public-private partnerships (PPPs) in aviation.

After the summit, can we, like India, identify the two or three big drivers of change and clear their path?

India took a big decision on telecommunications - realising that it could not afford the infrastructure for land lines - opting for the lowest-cost mobile telephones combined with the fastest internet in the world. In an instant, India was open for business.

The effect has already been huge, with about 8 million new mobiles sold each month, and with 300 million users.

Facing the need to help business travel and trade (and facing a growing host of overseas visitors), India realised that it could not afford to own and run its own infrastructure, so it turned to public-private partnerships (PPPs). The modernisation of the Delhi and Mumbai airports plus the new Hyderabad and Bengaluru airports are prime examples. India's first PPP airport was Cochin in the southern state of Kerala, and this has made profits since opening in 1999, with profits today at 35%.

In the past year 96 million passengers flew in India - just four years ago the number was only 48 million. By 2010 there will be 145 million passenger flights a year.

Both of these were big ideas - telecoms allowed India to leap across 50 years and become a leader in the field, while aviation meant a diverse and disorganised country could come together.

Foreign investors are racing into India, with the smart money moving into new areas. Early investors went for the technology sector, but new money is also going into real estate, infrastructure, media and health care.

This is where the 2020 Summit missed one big idea - while we trade with most of the world, could we benefit from a special focus on all aspects of our relationship with India? A bank of friendship already exists and it is time to build new forms of regular business leadership dialogue

- perhaps, Indians being even more sports mad than we are, held in conjunction with major sporting events.

As India has shown, building the future can come down to two or three core ideas, and one of those could be to tie our future much more closely to South Asia.

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