As the second decade of the 21st century comes to a close and thus 1/5th of a century that seems to have just started has flown by, it is a good opportunity to reflect about the recent past and to make some outlook for the time to come. While the first decade of the 21st century has probably been the Chinese decade, the second one looking at growth rates and development can be called the Indian one in a century that is supposed to become the Asian Century.

Though we saw some slowdown in the Indian and German economies last year, the reality of Indo-German development gives hope that the picture is not as bad as the news may like to suggest. And indeed the agenda of the recent Indo-German inter-governmental consultations was proof of an unprecedented range of collaborations in the making that are either supposed to be enlarged substantially or started with a lot of ambitions. The 21-page joint statement with 73 points and the 17 signed Agreements and MOUs are a highly promising stocktaking and an Agenda for a bright Indo-German future.

For IGCC, the year 2019 was full of records, top class and first-time events, future relevant projects and a plethora of high-profile visitors. We started with a record participation at IMTEX in Bangalore, celebrating its 50th anniversary. German companies from the beginning were partners of IMTEX, and it was a good coincidence that in the year 1969 when Naval Godrej founded IMTEX, his cousin Dr. B. P. Godrej was IGCC President and Dr. Günter Krüger started his career with the Chamber. IMTEX was immediately followed by a very successful Stuttgart Wine Fest in Mumbai and a delegation from NRW headed by Prof. Dr. Pinkwart, Minister of Economic Affairs, Digitalization, Innovation and Energy. He was one of the Chief Guests of the Bengal Global Business Summit and signed an MOU between West Bengal and NRW.

At the most appropriate time right after the UN Climate Summit in Katowice, German Environment Minister Svenja Schulze visited India with a high-level delegation of environment experts and gave a much recognised IGCC Founders’ Day Lecture.

IGTC trained its largest EBMP and PGPBA batches of 55 and 100 students in Pune and Mumbai respectively and had a stunning Indian blue-collar workers at various ITIs in a 2-year training program with elements of the German system of dual-education. In the next three years, they will train another 70,000, and they signed a separate MOU with GIZ to skill 40,000 Indian blue-collar workers in the next three and a half years.

In Delhi, we made the best again out of our homeless situation and had the largest ever Christmas Market this time at the Sunder Nursery, Nizamuddin. In Mumbai, we heavily invested in the Chamber’s infrastructure by completely rebuilding our headquarters. On time and in budget with the outstanding and most professional support from our co-founder, Siemens, we now have a brand new state-of-the-art office with virtually no stone left unturned.

The grande finale and the true highlight of the year for IGCC though was the participation of Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel and her delegation at IGCC’s AGM in Delhi. For the first time in the sixty-three years’ history of the Chamber, a German Chancellor addressed our AGM, appreciating the role of the Chamber and the German Chamber network. As such, it was also a recognition for the 125 years’ celebration of the AHK Network where IGCC is the largest of the lot.

Not only did the Chamber have a remarkably successful year but also the German industry in India as a whole. BASF announced the single largest investment plan ever in India with a volume of USD 4 billion. Deutsche Bank infused fresh capital of Rs.3,846 crores. Siemens rolled out the 100th steam turbine and built a 9000 HP electric locomotive with the first indigenous design and integrated propulsion system for the Indian railways.

With Tata Strive they educated 17,000 blue-collar workers at various ITIs in a 2-year training program with elements of the German system of dual-education. In the next three years, they will train another 70,000, and they signed a separate MOU with GIZ to skill 40,000 Indian blue-collar workers in the next three and a half years.

Bosch inaugurated its expanded Bidadari plant with an investment of Euros 31 million, and Chairman Dr. Denner announced that Bosch is going to develop the world’s largest R&D centre in Bangalore with more than 30,500 engineers. For the next three years, investments to the tune of Rs. 1,700 crores have been announced.

Mercedes-Benz in October sold 600 luxury cars in just one day and celebrated 25 years manufacturing in India. German SMEs like Peter Lacke, GB Neuhaus, FEV, Balluff, Nordrive, Homa, Steinmüller, Bert, Tramag and Zahoransky expanded their operations or started new joint-ventures. Global giants like T-Systems, Schott Glass, Röchling, Evonik, Nivea, Beiersdorf, Kion, Schwing-Stetter, Continental, ZF and Bosch-Siemens Home Appliance put up green-field plants or expanded their existing facilities thus getting ready for the growing Indian and international markets.

The Max Mueller Bhavans, Goethe Centres, PASCH and KV-schools saw an unprecedented run for German classes. Indian blue-card holders in Germany with about 1/3rd of a total of 105,000 blue-card holders are by far the largest group. Finally, the number of Indian students in Germany has reached an all-time high of more than 20,000, with 70% of them studying engineering.

One of the key messages Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel conveyed to IGCC in her AGM address which was also widely covered in the prime German TV news, was the role we have to play with the implementation of the new Federal law for qualified migration.

IGCC is supposed to provide guidance for potential Indians that would like to work in Germany - do marketing for the opportunities in Germany; cooperate and liaise with the partners from Max Mueller and Goethe centres who will teach the mandatory German; coordinate with the Embassy and Consulates with regard to the visa processing and availing of the required work permits. So after a solid 2019, a lot of work ahead for 2020. This will be the right forward pass for the Chamber’s 65th anniversary in just a year’s time.

In Germany, our Annual Delegation covered almost the whole length and breadth and highs and lows of the country - from the waters of the harbour in Hamburg and the Junghennich factory in Schleswig-Holstein over the traditional Rheinterrassen in Düsseldorf to the digital Siemens factory in the easternmost part of Bavaria to their brand new headquarters, followed by a beer tasting with HRH Prince Luitpold von Bayern to the peak of Germany the Zugspitze. Another highlight was the traditional India Day at IAA – the Frankfurt Motor show with the who’s who of the Indian and German automobile industry and politics, including the Indian Minister in charge and the VDA President.

Mumbai saw the largest German Days at the Racecourse with the most popular German National Day and a non-stop Oktoberfest along with presentations on studying in Germany, skilling with Germany, playing with Germany and celebrating with Germany for grown-ups, youngsters and even the kids.