

The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

Saturday : 12 Sep, 2026

Edition : International ; Table of Contents

Page 03 Syllabus : GS II : International Relations / Preliminary Examination	Negotiators of member countries work late into the evening to arrive at consensus for 'Delhi Declaration'
Page 04 Syllabus : GS III : International Relations / Preliminary Examination	India building economic bridges amid rise in global trade barriers, says Modi
Page 05 Syllabus : GS II : Social Justice and Governance / Preliminary Examination	SC seeks timeline for FSSAI's food warning label roll-out
Page 06 Syllabus : GS II : Social Justice / Preliminary Examination	A bigger BRICS, shaped by India's vision
Page 06 Syllabus : GS II : Indian Polity / Preliminary Examination	More heft
Page 06: Editorial Analysis Syllabus : GS II : International Relations	The BRICS bank — an alternative that wasn't

The 18th BRICS Summit hosted at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi presents a pivotal moment for Indian diplomacy. The article highlights the complex task of forging the "Delhi Declaration" consensus among 11 member nations. The diplomatic stalemate stems from conflicting language surrounding conflict in West Asia between members Iran and the UAE. India's strategic push for a joint outcome document underscores its position as a bridge-builder between competing interest blocs within the Global South.

Negotiators of member countries work late into the evening to arrive at consensus for 'Delhi Declaration'

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

As New Delhi prepared to host the BRICS Summit of 11 emerging economies, negotiators were working late into the evening on Friday to forge a consensus for the "Delhi Declaration". Diplomatic sources and officials said that all member countries had agreed to "almost all the text, with the exception of one paragraph", indicating that the references to the war in Iran started by the U.S. and Israel, and Iran's attacks on installations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other West Asian countries, had still not been resolved.

Both Iran and the UAE are members of the BRICS grouping. Their tensions have held up a joint statement at all BRICS ministerial meetings this year, and at the crucial meeting of Foreign Ministers in mid-May, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar issued a "Chair's Summary" instead.

"We continue to engage on [the] Outcome Document", an official privy to the negotiations told *The Hindu* on Friday, while others said they remained hopeful of a breakthrough, as India was able to do in



Gearing up for summit: Prime Minister Narendra Modi poses during a photo session with participants of the BRICS Business Forum in New Delhi on Friday. REUTERS

2023 by forging a joint statement at the G-20 Summit after the Russian war in Ukraine had divided members.

'Equal condemnation'

In the current series of negotiations, Iran has been pitching for a clear condemnation of the U.S. and Israel's actions, and the UAE wants "equal condemnation" of Iran's actions, a diplomat told *The Hindu*. However, Iran has contested this in Sherpa meetings, insisting that it would be akin to Iran criticising itself. Tehran has contended that its attacks on the Gulf region were in "self-de-

fence", limited to U.S. military and ancillary installations, the sources said.

The top leaders of eight BRICS countries, including Russia, India, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa, Indonesia and Iran, will meet around the table at the Bharat Mandapam complex in New Delhi on Saturday afternoon for the first time since the Iran war began. Brazil heads to elections shortly, and President Lula da Silva will be represented by Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira, while UAE President and Ruler of Abu Dhabi Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who is visiting Germany at pre-

sent, will be represented by his son, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Saudi Arabia, which was granted BRICS membership in 2024 but has yet to join formally, has sent Foreign Minister Farhan bin Saud.

On Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is understood to have stressed the importance of a joint statement from the BRICS coalition in each of his bilateral talks, including with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian as well as Russian President Vladimir Putin, who, as a strong ally of the Iranian government,

has considerable sway with Tehran.

All eyes will also be on Mr. Modi's meeting with the UAE Crown Prince on Saturday morning, before the joint session. Diplomatic insiders say the decision by the UAE President to send his son, and not a Minister, is an indication of the importance of the Summit.

Iran outreach

The government's outreach to President Pezeshkian was apparent from the moment he landed, with a red-carpet welcome accorded to him. Mr. Modi was seen personally leading Mr. Pezeshkian at the BRICS Business event, while holding his hand firmly. On Saturday, according to an advisory by the External Affairs Ministry, Mr. Pezeshkian will be the only BRICS leader to meet President Draupadi Murmu as well.

Apart from Iran and the UAE, which has been targeted repeatedly by Iranian drone and missile strikes, other members of BRICS have been severely hit by the economic disruptions caused by the war.

"In the backdrop of geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainties, the

participation of all these leaders in the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi is a reiteration of their collective confidence and commitment to BRICS," said former Secretary for Multilateral and Economic Relations Dammu Ravi, who ran many of the negotiations for BRICS and other groupings in the Ministry of External Affairs.

"It's an excellent opportunity for India to put focus on finding solutions to the challenges of an aspiring global south, in a trilateral framework by combining each other's strengths," he added.

The main session of BRICS leaders will be held on Saturday afternoon around the theme of "Global Governance and Strengthening Multilateralism". United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, who met with Mr. Modi on Friday evening, will also be present for the session Mr. Modi and other BRICS leaders will attend an exhibition showcasing Indian innovation and will take part in a "joint tree plantation" ceremony, the Ministry said. This is the fourth time that India is hosting the BRICS Summit, after 2012 in Delhi, 2016 in Goa and 2021 virtually.

Key Takeaways & Core Analysis

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Daily News Analysis

- **The Core Diplomatic Deadlock:** Negotiations stalled over a single paragraph referencing West Asian conflict. Iran demands explicit condemnation of U.S. and Israeli actions, whereas the UAE demands equal condemnation of Iranian retaliatory drone/missile strikes.
- **Precedent of Bilateral Discord:** Iranian-UAE tensions have previously blocked joint statements during 2026 BRICS ministerial meets, forcing India to issue a "Chair's Summary" in May.
- **India's Consensus Strategy:** PM Narendra Modi engaged in intensive side diplomacy—meeting Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and UAE representatives—to leverage economic and political influence toward a joint declaration.
- **Representation Dynamics:** Leaders from 8 member nations attended in person, while Brazil sent its Foreign Minister due to upcoming elections, and the UAE sent the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.
- **Theme & Global Significance:** The summit focuses on *"Global Governance and Strengthening Multilateralism"*, serving as a venue for energy security, trade continuity, and supply chain management amid broader geopolitical disruptions.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Civil Services Perspective)

- **GS Paper-II: International Relations & Groupings**
 - **Evolution of BRICS:** Originating as BRIC in 2006 (South Africa joined in 2010), the grouping expanded to 10+ members (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia) to represent over 40% of world population and over 26% of global trade.
 - **Institutional Mechanisms:** New Development Bank (NDB) and Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) serve as alternative financial institutions to the IMF and World Bank.
 - **Multilateralism vs. Bilateralism:** Illustrates the challenge of achieving consensus-based declarations in multilateral forums when member states engage in active regional conflict.
- **GS Paper-II: Strategic Autonomy & India's Foreign Policy**
 - **Strategic Hedging:** India maintains robust multi-alignment—balancing relations with Western partners (US, Western nations) alongside BRICS members (Russia, China, Iran).
 - **Voice of the Global South:** India's effort to channel BRICS away from a security-centric anti-Western stance into a development-oriented cooperative framework.
- **GS Paper-III: Energy Security & Geopolitics**
 - Strategic vulnerabilities associated with the Strait of Hormuz, global oil price volatility, and supply chain dependencies affecting emerging economies.

Conclusion

Daily News Analysis

The ongoing deliberations in New Delhi showcase India's growing role as a consensus broker in multilateral diplomacy. Navigating the geopolitical fault lines between Iran and the UAE, while managing broader global economic disruptions, determines whether BRICS can project unified leadership for the Global South. Achieving a "Delhi Declaration" reinforces the premise that multilateral dialogue remains essential for global stability amid rising geopolitical polarization.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: With reference to BRICS, consider the following statements:

1. BRICS was originally formed as BRIC before South Africa became a member.
2. The New Development Bank was established to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects.
3. The Contingent Reserve Arrangement is intended to provide a framework for financial support during balance-of-payments pressures.
4. All decisions within BRICS are taken through a legally binding treaty-based voting mechanism.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 1 and 4 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans:A)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "India's role in BRICS reflects a shift from bloc politics towards issue-based strategic autonomy." Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

At the BRICS Business Forum held in New Delhi under India's presidency, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian addressed core geopolitical and economic shifts. Against a backdrop of rising global protectionism, supply chain vulnerabilities, and geopolitical conflicts, the leaders presented distinct visions on multilateral trade, de-dollarization, and economic resilience.

India building economic bridges amid rise in global trade barriers, says Modi

At the BRICS Business Forum, PM calls for freedom of navigation; Putin says leading powers of the late 20th century being replaced by emerging economies; Pezeshkian highlights link between economic security and national security, urges BRICS nations to expand trade in local currencies

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday highlighted the issue of rising trade barriers and constrained sea trade routes, saying India was building bridges among these constraints and using its presidency of BRICS this year to establish new cooperation networks among the BRICS nations. He was speaking at the BRICS Business Forum in New Delhi.

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke about how the leading powers of the late 20th century were being replaced by new emerging economies and that this competition was now taking "ugly forms" such as military attacks and threats of secondary sanctions.

During his speech, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian highlighted the dangers of the global financial system being dependent on only a few countries and called for increased BRICS trade in local currencies. He also said that the attacks by the U.S. and Israel on his country showed how economic security could not be separated from national and regional security.

Mr. Modi took note of the fact that BRICS coun-



At the forum: Prime Minister Narendra Modi holds the hand of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian as they walk alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa. ANI

tries represented 50% of the world's population, 40% of global GDP, and more than 25% of global trade.

Cooperation networks

"Not only that, over these years, while global GDP has increased by around two-and-a-half times, the combined GDP of BRICS countries has increased by around four-and-a-half times," he said.

Mr. Modi said that while trade barriers were increasing around the world, India was building economic bridges. "Since 2014, we have entered into free trade agreements with around 40 countries," he

said. "Here too, our approach is the same: reduce barriers and increase opportunities for businesses. Therefore, under our presidency [of BRICS in 2026], we have established new cooperation networks in areas such as agriculture, health, skills and smart grids," he said.

He added that India has taken additional initiatives such as the BRICS Incubator Network, BRICS MSME Portal, and Start-Up Innovation Fund to connect start-ups and MSMEs with markets and finance.

Profound global shifts

"Global trade can move forward only when sea

lanes are secure, supply routes remain open and seafarers are safe," Mr. Modi said. "Therefore, India is a strong supporter of freedom of navigation and the safety of seafarers."

Mr. Putin spoke about how the world is currently undergoing structural, deep, profound shifts.

"Which is explained by the fact that the so-called old leaders that used to be the vanguard of economic growth in the second half of the 20th century are being replaced by new engines of growth," he said. While acknowledging the fact that these countries still possess well-developed infrastructure, and

technological and scientific advantages, Mr. Putin said it was in the nature of humanity and the economy to change.

He added that this change was accompanied by Russia's "Western competitors doing everything to get back their erstwhile competitive edge".

"Sometimes this competition is taking ugly forms," Mr. Putin noted. "Sometimes there are measures resorted to of a physical nature, when pipelines are being destroyed, when attempts are undertaken to block international transport corridors, to seize maritime vessels, other illegal restrictions are being applied."

"And there's also the threat of so-called secondary sanctions against those who do not want to follow someone else's interest and rather look after their own," he added, without mentioning India or the U.S. threat to impose 100% tariffs on India as a penalty for its Russian oil imports.

Mr. Pezeshkian also noted the "increasing use of economic instruments to exert political pressure", and asked the assembled leaders what the BRICS response would be to the ongoing global challenges.

"We believe that the true strength of BRICS is

not confined merely to the size of its members' economies," he said. "Rather, it becomes more apparent when these capacities are transformed into a network of trade, investment, and joint financing that is a transition from potential cooperation to operational."

Mr. Pezeshkian talked about how the decades of sanctions Iran has faced has now entered a new phase as a result of the "active military act of aggression of the United States and the Israeli regime" against Iran.

"This act of aggression, in addition to its human and material losses, once again revealed an important reality: economic security cannot be separated from national and regional security," he emphasised.

"Therefore, by creating resilient capacities for the economies of its members and the global south, BRICS must create an environment in which no country can disrupt the legitimate trade of another country through monopolising a financial instrument or technology," Mr. Pezeshkian said.

He said that one of the most important steps the BRICS countries could take was to expand the use of national currencies in trade.

Key Takeaways & Core Analysis

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Daily News Analysis

- **India's Multilateral Economic Strategy:** PM Narendra Modi highlighted that while global trade barriers are climbing, India is expanding connectivity through free trade agreements (FTAs with ~40 nations) and functional frameworks like the BRICS MSME Portal, Start-Up Innovation Fund, and Incubator Network.
- **Maritime Security & Supply Chains:** Modi underscored that global trade depends on safe sea lanes and freedom of navigation, reinforcing India's commitment to maritime security and seafarer safety.
- **Structural Global Economic Shifts:** Russian President Vladimir Putin observed that 20th-century economic leaders are being replaced by emerging growth engines, leading to non-market tactics such as physical supply disruptions, corridor blockades, and secondary sanctions.
- **Financial Autonomy & Local Currencies:** Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the intersection of economic and national security, urging BRICS to reduce vulnerability to unilateral sanctions by expanding trade settlements in local currencies.
- **Macroeconomic Weight of BRICS:** BRICS countries account for nearly 50% of the world's population, 40% of global GDP, and over 25% of global trade. Over recent decades, the combined GDP of BRICS members grew at nearly twice the rate of the global economy.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Civil Services Perspective)

GS Paper-II: International Relations & Groupings

- **Multilateralism vs. Minilateralism:** BRICS serves as a platform for emerging economies to push for reforms in global governance institutions (UN, IMF, World Bank) and advocate for a multipolar world order.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** India balances its ties with Western alliances (such as Quad) alongside global South-focused groupings like BRICS and SCO to avoid single-bloc alignment.
- **De-Dollarization & Local Currency Trade:** Mechanisms like the BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism aim to expand local currency trade, reducing exposure to Western financial tools (e.g., SWIFT, dollar clearing).

GS Paper-III: Economy, Infrastructure & Logistics

- **Global Supply Chains & Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs):** Chokepoints (such as the Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, and Malacca Strait) are critical to India's energy imports and trade security, making maritime law (UNCLOS) and freedom of navigation strategic priorities.
- **Trade Protectionism & Bilateral FTAs:** India's pivot toward bilateral/regional FTAs addresses rising global tariff barriers and secondary sanction threats.
- **MSME Ecosystem:** Integrating MSMEs and startups into global value chains via regional hubs enhances export diversification and economic resilience.

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Conclusion

The deliberations at the BRICS Business Forum reflect a significant shift in global economic geography. While Russia and Iran emphasize counter-measures against Western sanctions and trade monopolies, India advocates for open supply chains, maritime security, and lowered trade barriers. India's approach highlights its strategic goal to leverage BRICS as a platform for global development, financial inclusion, and economic cooperation without fragmenting global trade into hostile blocs.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: With reference to BRICS, consider the following statements:

1. BRICS seeks greater representation of emerging economies in global governance institutions.
2. BRICS cooperation is confined exclusively to economic and financial matters.
3. The grouping provides a platform for discussions on alternative financial and payment arrangements.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Ans: A)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: "BRICS is increasingly becoming a platform for economic cooperation as well as a forum for reshaping the global governance architecture." Discuss. **10 Marks, 150 Words)**

A Supreme Court Bench comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K. Vinod Chandran expressed strong reservations regarding the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) proposed two-phase rollout for Front-of-Pack Warning Labels (FoPL). Examining a PIL filed by the non-profit *3S and Our Health Society*, the Apex Court cautioned that without a clear, scientifically backed timeline, Phase II could be "indefinitely postponed". The Court directed FSSAI to file a detailed affidavit responding to key ambiguities within 10 days.

SC seeks timeline for FSSAI's food warning label roll-out

The regulator has proposed a two-phased approach to give consumers and the industry time to adapt to the new guidelines; top court warns the second phase could be 'indefinitely postponed'

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has put the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) two-phase rollout of front-of-pack warning labels (FoPL) under the scanner, warning that the second phase could be "indefinitely postponed" in the absence of a clear timeline. The court also asked the Centre to consider introducing nutritional education in schools to help children understand food labels and make informed dietary choices.

Under the proposed rollout, warnings would initially apply to packaged foods high in two or more nutrients of concern — added fat, added sugar and salt — and would be extended in the second phase to products high in even one of them. The FSSAI had proposed the phased approach to give consumers time to adapt to the new labels and the food industry time to reformulate its products.



Warnings would initially apply to packaged foods high in two or more nutrients of concern — added fat, added sugar and salt.

mulate its products.

"Assessment of consumer acceptability or giving the industry adequate time for reformulation cannot be reason enough for this uncertainty in time. Therefore, a reasonable, scientifically justified and clearly defined timeline or transitional period which divides the two-phases must be indicated, for the approach of the FSSAI to be a workable one," a Bench comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K. Vinod Chandran said in an order passed on Thursday night.

It asked the FSSAI to consider an alternative

model, under which products with the highest levels of nutrients of concern would be brought under the warning regime first, followed by those with lower thresholds.

Children 'vulnerable'

Acknowledging that children are particularly "vulnerable" to "impulse or uninformed dietary decision-making", the Bench also asked the Union government to incorporate nutritional literacy into school curricula, teaching children how to interpret nutritional information.

The top court passed

the directions while hearing a PIL filed by the non-profit *3S and Our Health Society*, represented by advocate Rajiv Shankar Divedi, seeking mandatory front-of-pack warnings on packaged foods high in sugar, salt and saturated fats.

The court also questioned why a warning should initially require a product to be high in at least two nutrients of concern when excess levels of even one could pose health risks. It noted the petitioners' contention that the two-nutrient requirement lacked scientific basis and would leave many products outside the first phase. It took note of concerns raised by stakeholders against placing ultra-processed foods on the same footing as minimally processed packaged foods, given the greater nutritional benefits of the latter. The court directed the FSSAI to file an affidavit within 10 days setting out its responses and clarifications, and posted the matter on September 28.

Key Takeaways & Core Analysis

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028

Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699

G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Daily News Analysis

- **Scrutiny of the Two-Phase Plan:** FSSAI proposed applying warning labels initially to foods high in **two or more** nutrients of concern (added fat, added sugar, and salt), reserving single-nutrient warnings for Phase II. The Court rejected indefinite transition periods and questioned why single-nutrient risks (e.g., high salt causing hypertension) should be delayed.
- **Alternative Tiered Model:** The Court suggested an alternative rollout—targeting products with the **highest concentration levels** of nutrients of concern first (e.g., ultra-processed junk foods), followed by products with lower thresholds.
- **Added vs. Total Nutrients:** The Bench flagged a deviation from a 2021 stakeholder consensus. FSSAI's current proposal focuses on *added* sugar and *added* fat, whereas previous consensus favored *total* sugar and *saturated/trans fat* metrics.
- **Nutritional Education in Schools:** Highlighting children's vulnerability to impulse dietary choices, the Court directed the Union Government to explore integrating label-reading and nutritional literacy into school curricula.
- **Symbol & Color Design Concerns:** The Bench questioned whether the proposed "red hexagon" logo might create confusion among Indian consumers who associate red with non-vegetarian products, and asked FSSAI to clarify logo size, font, and layout standards.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Civil Services Perspective)

GS Paper-II: Governance, Public Health & Regulatory Bodies

- **Statutory Role of FSSAI:** Established under the *Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006*, FSSAI sets science-based standards for food items to ensure safe and wholesome food for human consumption.
- **Judicial Review of Regulatory Policy:** Highlights how the judiciary intervenes to uphold the **Right to Health** under **Article 21** of the Constitution by ensuring regulatory bodies act with clarity and urgency.
- **Public Health Interventions:** Combating the rising burden of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases through preventive regulatory frameworks.

GS Paper-III: Economics, Food Processing & Industry

- **Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs) vs. Reformulation:** Balancing public health imperatives with industrial feasibility—giving manufacturers reasonable timelines to reformulate products without compromise.
- **Informational Asymmetry in Consumer Markets:** Front-of-Pack Labelling reduces information asymmetry, enabling consumers to make informed dietary choices over complex back-of-pack nutrition tables.

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's intervention underscores the necessity of a transparent, scientifically sound, and non-delayed regulatory framework for packaged foods. By demanding a defined timeline and emphasizing child-centric nutritional literacy, the judiciary reinforces public health as an integral aspect of the fundamental Right to Life. A robust FoPL framework will align Indian food regulations with international best practices to mitigate long-term NCD risks.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: With reference to Front-of-Pack Labelling (FoPL), consider the following statements:

1. It is intended to provide consumers with easily understandable nutritional information on packaged foods.
2. It can help consumers identify products containing excessive levels of nutrients of concern.
3. It is applicable only to unprocessed agricultural commodities.
4. It can be used as a tool for preventing diet-related non-communicable diseases.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1, 2 and 4 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: A)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: Front-of-pack food warning labels represent an intersection of consumer rights, public health and regulatory governance. Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

In this opinion analysis, Ambassador Mohan Kumar evaluates the geopolitical and economic significance of the 18th BRICS Summit hosted in New Delhi. With its expansion to 11 full members and numerous partner nations, BRICS now represents an economic bloc whose purchasing power parity (PPP) output surpasses that of the G-7. India's strategic stewardship focuses on steering BRICS away from divisive political paralysis toward constructive, functional economic and technological cooperation.

A bigger BRICS, shaped by India's vision

The BRICS summit in New Delhi (September 12-13, 2026) will be a landmark one for a couple of reasons. First, it takes place against the backdrop of geopolitical turbulence unleashed by a combination of forces: raging wars and conflicts, a breakdown in global governance and the changing nature of global alliances. Second, the BRICS now has 11 prominent members (and about 10 of them who are partner countries) and its collective economic output (in purchasing power parity) outstrips that of the G-7, making it the one of the largest and most important transcontinental grouping outside of the West. Last but not the least, technological forces such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing are being weaponised with both great powers trying to win the battle for tech supremacy.

India's BRICS moment

India must be credited with thorough preparation for this summit. In many ways, India has followed the successful template established when it hosted the G-20 Summit in New Delhi in 2023. In a similar vein, around 350 meetings were conducted by India in cities across the country, with as many as 22 held at the ministerial level. India has announced that it will focus on "building resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability", thus giving a new twist to the BRICS acronym. In doing so, India is seeking to refocus and recalibrate the BRICS agenda.

BRICS has traditionally comprised three pillars: political and security; finance and the economy; and, finally, culture and people-to-people exchanges. While all three pillars are important and, indeed, interlinked to an extent, it is the view of this writer that the agenda pursued by India relates more to the second and third pillars than to the first. The leaders will largely decide what to do with the big geopolitical issues of our times. However, substantive outcomes seem assured, given the outcome of the meetings chaired by India so far.



Mohan Kumar

Former Indian Ambassador to France and currently Dean/Professor at the O.P. Jindal Global University

BRICS, which is now too big to fail, confronts geopolitical turbulence while pursuing practical cooperation

Hence, this writer's sentiment is that, no matter what happens at the summit level, BRICS will have much to show in terms of cooperation across various areas. Quite simply put, BRICS is now too big to either ignore or fail.

Building resilience, driving innovation

When it comes to resilience, the work done by BRICS under India's stewardship has been stellar. This includes the launch of the BRICS Digital Centre of Excellence for Smart Grids and Energy Storage, the adoption of the BRICS Logistics Supply Chain Cooperation Framework, and the establishment of the Centres of Excellence on Agro-Ecology and Regenerative Agriculture, to name just a few initiatives. Once operationalised, these initiatives will provide the ballast needed for BRICS countries to become truly resilient.

On innovation, India has tried to push the envelope within BRICS. Proposals such as a start-up innovation fund, an incubator network, a digital public infrastructure repository, a science and research repository, and the action plan of the BRICS Working Group on research infrastructures and mega science projects will be beneficial to all BRICS members, particularly since they are not all at the same level of development when it comes to scientific research.

On cooperation, the BRICS leaders will hopefully endorse recommendations pertaining to, but not limited to, revitalising the multilateral trading system; welcoming the network of centres of excellence on mental wellness; enhancing the digital capacity of women; and, more broadly, intensifying cooperation in areas such as education, youth skilling, and the BRICS Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Cooperation Portal. All of these initiatives provide concrete benefits to the man (or woman) in the street in BRICS countries.

It is particularly comforting to note that

"sustainability" is very much part of the Indian agenda. The Brazilians made it the centrepiece of their BRICS agenda last year, and India seeks to build on where its Brazilian friends left off. There are specific areas of cooperation under this rubric: combating desertification; developing guidelines for disaster management and forest-fire preparedness; the BRICS forum on sustainable aviation fuels; and advancing climate resilience through people-centric and community-based adaptation. The last of these is critical, since international fora tend to focus almost exclusively on mitigation.

The central tenet of the Indian agenda, as may be seen from above, is to create a collaborative platform that enables the sharing of knowledge and best practices, facilitates joint research, and promotes capacity building. If this is not a people-centric, humanity-first approach, then what is?



Keeping BRICS on course

BRICS is here to stay and will, slowly but steadily, help its members achieve two central objectives: enhance their strategic options and drive geopolitics towards a truly multipolar world. These are, of course, organising principles of India's foreign policy. In a world characterised by geopolitical uncertainty, other countries, too, see enormous value in adopting a foreign policy based on these principles. If there is one caveat for the BRICS grouping, it is this: it must avoid getting caught in geopolitical currents that are not necessarily of its making and certainly not of any strategic value for its members. All eyes may be on leaders such as Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as it should be. But the bigger picture remains that of the BRICS grouping living up to its full potential. The Delhi Summit ought to make concrete progress towards that end.

The views expressed are personal

Key Takeaways & Core Analysis

- **Recalibrating the BRICS Acronym:** India redefines BRICS to stand for **B**uilding **R**esilience, **I**nnovation, **C**ooperation, and **S**ustainability, establishing a tangible, developmental focus for the expanded grouping.
- **Shift to Non-Geopolitical Pillars:** While BRICS rests on political/security, economic/financial, and cultural pillars, India's agenda emphasizes functional economic and social initiatives over intractable security divisions.
- **Building Resilience:** Key operational initiatives include the BRICS Digital Centre of Excellence for Smart Grids and Energy Storage, the Logistics Supply Chain Cooperation Framework, and Centres of Excellence on Agro-Ecology.
- **Driving Innovation:** To bridge scientific gaps among members, India championed mechanisms such as the Start-Up Innovation Fund, BRICS Incubator Network, BRICS MSME Portal, and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) sharing.
- **Sustainability & People-Centric Focus:** Building on Brazil's prior agenda, India prioritized combating desertification, disaster preparedness, sustainable aviation fuels, and community-based adaptation over purely top-down mitigation goals.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Civil Services Perspective)

GS Paper-II: International Relations & Groupings

- **Shift in Global Economic Power:** An expanded BRICS representing over 40% of the global population and over 40% of global GDP (PPP) challenges traditional Western-dominated forums (G-7) and pushes for multipolar governance.
- **Strategic Autonomy & Hedging:** India utilizes BRICS to assert its foreign policy principles—enhancing strategic options, leading the Global South, and preventing the grouping from turning into an anti-Western security bloc.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) Diplomacy:** Deploying platforms like UPI, Aadhaar-like frameworks, and open-source tech stacks as tools for international development cooperation.

GS Paper-III: Agriculture, Energy & Environment

- **Climate Adaptation vs. Mitigation:** Emphasizing community-level resilience and agro-ecology addresses immediate vulnerabilities of developing nations without tying them to restrictive emission mandates.
- **Supply Chain Security:** Multilateral logistics frameworks reduce trade vulnerabilities caused by geopolitical choke points and unilateral trade restrictions.

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Conclusion

Ambassador Mohan Kumar underscores that BRICS has grown "too big to ignore or fail". India's leadership at the Summit demonstrates a pragmatic approach: while geopolitics can divide multilateral bodies, shared economic interests, technology transfers, and sustainability goals offer a path forward. By prioritizing humanity-first and people-centric development, India reinforces its position as an indispensable bridge between the Global South and global governance networks.

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: "India's BRICS strategy seeks to convert a geopolitically diverse grouping into a platform for functional cooperation." Discuss. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

The editorial highlights the strategic challenges and diplomatic opportunities for India as it hosts the 18th BRICS Summit at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. Amid growing geopolitical tensions, bilateral friction among members, and global economic friction, India's presidency offers a crucial chance to forge consensus and solidify its position as an indispensable power on the global stage.

Key Takeaways & Core Analysis

- **Consensus-Building in an Expanded Group:** Hosting an expanded 11-member BRICS (following the inclusion of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia) presents higher diplomatic friction compared to the original 5-member grouping.
- **Intra-BRICS Geopolitical Tensions:** Managing divergent positions—particularly between Iran and the UAE over West Asian security conflicts, as well as BRICS' traditionally critical stance on Israel—tests India's diplomatic balancing act.
- **Navigating Western Friction:** Managing relations with the United States amid threats of tariffs and accusations over de-dollarization/intra-BRICS payment systems while preserving India's strategic autonomy and Indo-Pacific priorities.
- **Global Macroeconomic Weight:** BRICS now encompasses 50% of the world's population, 40% of global GDP, and 25% of global trade, making it a key economic counterweight to the G-7.
- **India's Global Ambitions:** Reconciling internal geopolitical fractures within BRICS enhances India's status as a bridge-builder between the Global South and Western alliances.

More heft

The BRICS Summit allows India to advance its global ambitions

Forging a joint statement at a major multi-lateral conference, in the midst of global conflicts where members are involved is never easy – for India, hosting the BRICS Summit in Delhi is the second time in recent years, since the G-20 Summit in 2023, that it has had to shoulder such a responsibility. That, however, is not the only reason India's BRICS presidency comes at a difficult time. The past few occasions India has hosted the coalition of emerging economies – in 2012, 2016 and virtually in 2021 – it was a smaller grouping of just five major powers, where managing consensus was easier. Since the expansion in 2024 – adding Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE – and Indonesia's induction in 2025, BRICS' identity has evolved, but a common focus remains elusive. In addition, global conflicts involving BRICS members have grown. The war involving Iran has heightened this impact, as Iran, a victim of the U.S.-Israel strikes, as well as the UAE that was attacked by Iran in retaliation, are members that have been unwilling to agree to a common narrative on the problem. India's position on Israel also came into conflict with other members earlier this year, as the grouping has traditionally taken a much more critical line on Israel's actions. The largest share of New Delhi's problems as host comes however from the United States, where President Donald Trump has accused it of plotting to overthrow the U.S. dollar's domination of the global economy, and has been threatening tariffs on all members for planning to increase intra-BRICS payments and trade. As the Modi government seeks to restore ties with the Trump administration, on trade and its Indo-Pacific strategy, hosting BRICS also risks invoking America's ire, however irrational.

As a result, a success in reconciling all these different strands at this time would indeed be a shot across the bow for the grouping and a big win for Indian diplomacy. Since it was first conceptualised 25 years ago, and a summit convened in 2009, the BRICS countries have risen in global stature and economic heft, benefitting intra-BRICS trade. Today, BRICS accounts for half the world's population, two fifths of the global economy and a fourth of global trade; it also includes many of the world's top energy producers and biggest consumers. While the grouping prefers not to be called anti-western it is certainly a powerful counter to the G-7, and western-led thinking. Being part of BRICS gives India more heft in advancing its ambitions on the global high table, and its presidency has ensured it prominence on the world stage, as leaders and representatives of 11 BRICS countries including Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin and Masoud Pezeshkian begin deliberations on Saturday at the Bharat Mandapam to discuss the future of global governance.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Civil Services Perspective)

GS Paper-II: International Relations & Global Groupings

- **Multipolarity & Strategic Autonomy:** India's participation in both Western-aligned frameworks (Quad, I2U2) and Global South-focused blocs (BRICS, SCO) exemplifies non-alignment and strategic hedging.
- **Global Governance Reform:** Advocacy for reforming Bretton Woods

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Daily News Analysis

institutions (IMF, World Bank) and the UN Security Council (UNSC) to better represent emerging market economies.

- **De-dollarization & Local Currency Trade:** Implications of local currency settlement mechanisms (like the BRICS Pay/Interbank Cooperation System) on global financial architecture and sovereign monetary sovereignty.

GS Paper-III: Indian Economy & International Trade

- **Trade Integration & Supply Chains:** Navigating global trade barriers, protectionism, and maritime security to safeguard export corridors and energy supply chains.
- **Energy Geopolitics:** Balancing oil imports and trade diversification with key energy producers (Russia, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia) within the BRICS framework.

Conclusion

The 2026 Delhi Summit serves as a key test for Indian diplomacy. By balancing complex geopolitical interests, promoting economic cooperation, and fostering consensus among diverse member nations, India reinforces its position as a central leader for the Global South and an influential player in global governance.

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: "India's strategic autonomy in the 21st century is increasingly being expressed through multi-alignment rather than non-alignment." Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

The BRICS bank — an alternative that wasn't

When India hosts the 18th BRICS summit in New Delhi on September 12-13, 2026, under the banner of "Humanity First", the occasion will be draped in a familiar promise: that the bloc is building an alternative to the western-dominated global financial order. A new bank to rival the World Bank. A reserve fund to free countries from the International Monetary Fund. A path away from the dominance of the U.S. dollar. Seventeen years into the BRICS project, it is worth asking a blunt question: has any of this actually materialised?

The short answer is no; the reasons have less to do with intention than with structure. The BRICS countries, for all their rhetoric about reshaping the world, are deeply enmeshed in the very system that they claim to challenge. The institutions they built reflect that reality.

The same bank, different nameplate

The New Development Bank (NDB), launched in 2015, was BRICS's flagship creation. It was supposed to offer developing countries an alternative to the World Bank: loans without the political strings, governance without western dominance, financing in local currencies rather than dollars.

A decade later, half of the NDB's outstanding bonds are denominated in U.S. dollars, with the Chinese yuan making up most of the rest. The South African rand accounts for just one per cent. Local currency lending, which the bank's own leadership set as a target of 30% of its portfolio by the end of this year, sat at roughly 22% as of mid-2025. The NDB's first rupee-denominated bond was still in planning stages as late as September 2025, a full decade after the bank opened for business.

The NDB courts the same western credit-rating agencies (S&P, Fitch, Moody's) that the BRICS governments publicly criticise as biased against developing countries. And when those agencies' rules collided with bloc solidarity, the ratings won. In March 2022, days after Russia invaded Ukraine, the NDB froze all operations related to Russia, a founding member and 20% shareholder, to protect its own credit standing in New York. Russia has since relinquished its turn at the NDB's rotating presidency, extending the Brazilian incumbent's term to 2030. Whatever else this is, it is not an institution that operates outside western financial discipline.

The bank's total project approvals reached \$39 billion by the end of 2024. To put that in



Sushovan Dhar

Member of the Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt (CADTM)

perspective: the World Bank Group commits roughly \$100 billion every year. In a full decade of operation, the NDB has approved less than what its supposed rival disburses in six months. More importantly, the NDB co-finances projects with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) rather than offering a genuine alternative to them. The relationship is complementary, not competitive. That may be smart banking, but it is a far cry from the institution's founding rhetoric.

The safety net nobody uses

Alongside the NDB, the BRICS countries established the Contingent Reserve Arrangement in 2015: a \$100 billion pool of foreign exchange reserves meant to help member-countries weather financial crises without turning to the IMF. In principle, this was the most radical idea in the BRICS repertoire: a mechanism that could, over time, break the IMF's monopoly on emergency lending to the Global South.

In practice, the CRA has never been activated. Not once in a decade. And a closer look at the fine print reveals why. Any member-country that wants to draw more than 30% of its allotted share must first enter into a programme with the IMF. The escape hatch, in other words, leads right back to the institution that it was supposed to escape. The CRA has no permanent staff, no independent surveillance capacity, no research wing. It is, in effect, a promissory note dressed up as an institution; one that, by its own rules, cannot function independently of the very body it was created to rival.

If there is one idea that captures the public imagination about BRICS, it is de-dollarisation: the notion that the bloc will reduce the world's dependence on the U.S. dollar and shift global trade toward local currencies. Media coverage of every BRICS summit amplifies this promise. The reality is more modest than the headlines suggest.

The 126-point declaration issued at the Rio summit in July 2025 – the bloc's most comprehensive statement to date – does not contain the word "de-dollarisation" even once. Russian President Vladimir Putin himself stated in November 2024 that the bloc has "not sought to abandon the dollar". India opposes any move toward a common BRICS currency, fearing trade reprisals from Washington. South Africa considers the idea too risky. China prefers the gradual internationalisation of the yuan on its

own terms. When U.S. President Donald Trump threatened a 10% tariff surcharge on countries aligning with "anti-American" BRICS policies, the bloc offered no collective response. The episode was revealing: it showed how little it takes to deter the BRICS from even the appearance of challenging the dollar system.

Perhaps the most telling detail is what the BRICS actually ask for when they talk about reforming global finance. The declarations issued at both the Kazan summit in 2024 and the Rio summit in 2025 call for a "quota-based and adequately resourced" IMF. Read that carefully. The BRICS are not calling for the IMF to be replaced, restructured, or even fundamentally reformed. They are asking for a bigger say within it.

The problem is structural. The U.S. holds 16.49% of IMF voting rights, and all major decisions require an 85% supermajority. This gives Washington, and Washington alone, an effective veto over every significant decision that the fund makes. The BRICS countries know this.

They have known it for decades. And yet their official position is to ask for more chairs at a table whose rules guarantee that the outcome will always be decided by someone else.

What this tells us about BRICS

The bloc's defenders will point out that the NDB has financed real infrastructure, that its expansion to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates reflects a genuine desire among Global South countries for alternatives to western-led institutions, and that the frustration driving the BRICS agenda: with IMF conditionality, with dollar hegemony, with a financial system designed in 1944 by and for the industrialised West.

But the gap between the rhetoric and the record matters. The BRICS countries have not built an alternative financial architecture. They have built a set of institutions that operate within the existing one: lending in dollars, deferring to western rating agencies, designing safety nets that require IMF approval, and pledging loyalty to the very governance structures they publicly denounce. As India prepares to chair the bloc, the honest question is not whether BRICS can reform the global financial order. It is whether the governments that make up the bloc have any material interest in doing so, or whether, for their ruling establishments, a better seat at the existing table has always been the real objective.



BRICS promised a new financial order through the New Development Bank, but the truth is that it remains deeply tied to the old one

GS Paper II: International Relations

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Questions: "The BRICS financial architecture has emerged as a complement rather than a complete alternative to the Bretton Woods system." Examine. **15Marks, 250 Words)**

Context

In this analytical piece, Sushovan Dhar (Member of CADTM) critically assesses the 17-year operational record of the BRICS financial architecture as India chairs the 18th Summit in New Delhi. The author argues that despite anti-hegemonic rhetoric promising alternatives to Western-led institutions (such as the World Bank, IMF, and U.S. dollar), BRICS institutions remain structurally embedded within, and reliant upon, the existing global financial system.

Key Takeaways & Core Analysis

- **Structural Constraints of the New Development Bank (NDB):**
 - **Currency Dependencies:** Half of NDB's outstanding bonds are denominated in U.S. dollars, while local currency financing accounts for only ~22% of its portfolio (missing its 30% target).
 - **Western Credit Ratings Compliance:** The NDB relies on credit rating agencies like S&P, Fitch, and Moody's; to safeguard its credit standing, it froze all Russia-related operations in March 2022 following the Ukraine conflict.
 - **Scale and Co-financing:** Cumulative NDB project approvals (~\$39–\$43 billion over a decade) are eclipsed by the World Bank Group's annual commitments (~\$100 billion per year). NDB often co-finances projects alongside Western Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs).
- **Limitations of the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA):**
 - The \$100 billion forex pool has never been activated.
 - **IMF Conditionality:** Member countries requesting more than 30% of their allotted share must first secure an IMF program, linking the CRA's functionality directly back to the IMF.
- **Re-evaluating De-Dollarization:**
 - Member nations hold divergent priorities regarding a alternative reserve currency: India fears trade fallout with Washington, South Africa deems it risky, and China prioritizes internationalizing the Yuan independently.

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Daily News Analysis

- Recent Summit declarations refrain from calling for an alternative to the dollar, focusing instead on expanding local currency trade settlements and acquiring greater voting shares within existing Bretton Woods institutions.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Civil Services Perspective)

GS Paper-II: Important International Institutions & Global Governance

- Bretton Woods System & Governance Deficits:** The structural dominance of Western powers (e.g., the U.S. 16.49% voting share giving an effective veto over 85% supermajority decisions) drives emerging markets to seek voting quota reforms.
- Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs):** Comparative frameworks between traditional MDBs (World Bank, ADB) and non-Western initiatives (NDB, AIIB) regarding governance, conditionality, and credit standards.

GS Paper-III: Indian Economy & International Finance

- De-dollarization & Local Currency Settlement Mechanisms:** Operational challenges in scaling local currency cross-border trade, including market illiquidity, exchange rate volatility, and capital account restrictions.
- Global Safety Nets (GSNs):** The role of regional financial arrangements (RFAs) versus global institutions (IMF) in addressing balance-of-payments crises in developing nations.

Conclusion

Sushovan Dhar's critique highlights the structural reality facing the BRICS bloc. Rather than constructing a parallel, revolutionary global financial system, BRICS institutions function as complementary frameworks that operate largely within the boundaries of existing Western-led financial discipline. For emerging economies like India, the focus remains on securing equitable representation, expanding local currency trade, and hedging financial risks without severing ties with global markets.



**Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind
Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com**