

## Daily News Analysis

### The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

Saturday, 09 Nov , 2024

#### **Edition: International** **Table of Contents**

<b>Page 01</b> <b>Syllabus : GS 2 : Polity</b>	<b>SC overrules 1967 verdict on AMU's minority tag</b>
<b>Page 06</b> <b>Syllabus : GS 3 : Environment</b>	<b>Staying cool, but with clean tech, global collaborations</b>
<b>Page 08</b> <b>Syllabus : GS 3 : Environment</b>	<b>Caught IN THE cross FIRE</b>
<b>Page 11</b> <b>Syllabus : GS 3 : Environment</b>	<b>Tea industry calls for scientific quality grading</b>
<b>In News</b>	<b>Exercise AUSTRALIA</b>
<b>Page 06 : Editorial Analysis:</b> <b>Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations</b>	<b>The BRICS journey — gaining heft while in transition</b>

The Supreme Court recently overruled a 56-year-old judgment in the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) minority status case, offering new guidelines for determining the minority character of educational institutions.

# SC overrules 1967 verdict on AMU's minority tag

Recognition by law won't annul minority status, says seven-judge Bench in 4:3 majority judgment

Court returns case to a regular Bench to examine the question of the university's minority status

The 1967 ruling had held that a Central university cannot be considered a minority institution

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

An educational institution established by a minority community will not lose its identity once it is recognised through a statute, the Supreme Court declared on Friday in a 4:3 majority judgment by a seven-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud.

The majority judgment authored by the Chief Justice was based on petitions seeking minority status for the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). Chief Justice Chandrachud held that an institution established by a minority community was indeed a minority educational institution. But the onus was on the community to prove they had established the institution to preserve and retain their cultural fabric, he said.

Justices Surya Kant, Dipankar Datta, and S.C. Sharma dissented in separate opinions.

The court returned the case to the regular Bench to examine the question of AMU's minority status, based on Friday's verdict.

The petitioners had challenged the five-judge Bench judgment in the 1967 case of *S. Azeez Basha versus Union of India*, which had held that AMU was a Central university and cannot be considered a minority institution. The seven-judge Bench overruled the 1967 verdict that had held that religious minorities did not have the right to administer educational institutions not established by them, and cannot claim protection under Article 30(1) of the Constitution. Article 30(1) upholds the right of religious and linguistic minorities to establish and admin-

## Bench did not discuss case enough: judge

NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge, Justice Dipankar Datta, in his separate dissenting opinion in the Aligarh Muslim University case, revealed there was hardly any meaningful consultation on the judgment among the seven judges of the Constitution Bench. » PAGE 3

minister educational institutions.

The minority status of the AMU, established in 1875, was then restored by Parliament through the AMU (Amendment) Act in 1981. In January 2006, however, the Allahabad High Court struck down the provision of the 1981 law by which the university was accorded minority status. The issue was referred to a



**Seeking clarity:** The court's judgment was based on petitions seeking minority status for the Aligarh Muslim University. FILE PHOTO

seven-judge Supreme Court Bench in 2019.

The petitioners had argued that upholding *Azeez Basha* would jeopardise the minority status of several educational institutions, including recognised minority institutions such as St. Stephen's College, Delhi and Christian Medical College, Vellore.

"Article 30 extends to secular education as well,"

the Chief Justice wrote. He classified Article 30(1) as both an anti-discriminatory as well as a 'special rights' provision in favour of religious and linguistic minorities.

"A legislation or an executive action which discriminates against religious or linguistic minorities in establishing or administering educational institutions is *ultra vires* Article 30(1).

## AMU celebrates verdict, awaits expert opinion

GHAZIABAD

It was all celebration at AMU after the Supreme Court's verdict on its minority status, with Vice Chancellor Prof. Naima Khatoun saying, "We humbly accept the judgment of the Constitution bench and are discussing the details with our legal experts." » PAGE 3

the minority character of the institution. However, the onus is on the religious or linguistic minorities to prove that they had established the educational institution for the community to get the protection under Article 30(1). The right guaranteed by Article 30(1) was also applicable to universities established before the commencement of the Constitution, the majority judgment noted.

The CJJ observed that it was not necessary that an educational institution was established for the purpose of the minority community alone. It could have been "predominantly" for the benefit of the community.

The majority judgment said that an institution did not lose its minority character merely because the administration was no longer vested with the community.

- The case, stemming from historical debates on the AMU's foundation and status, saw a seven-judge bench revisiting critical issues related to minority rights, educational autonomy, and the interpretation of constitutional provisions.

## Overruling of 1967 Judgment

- Reversal of *S. Azeez Basha* (1967) Judgment: The seven-judge bench overruled the 1967 judgment which had denied AMU minority status. The majority opinion held that the 1967 ruling's narrow interpretation was wrong, particularly its formalistic view of the term "establish" in Article 30.
- Indicia for Determining Minority Character: The bench laid down new indicia (criteria) to determine the minority character of institutions. This involved examining historical efforts, the community's role in founding and funding, and the institution's objectives, not just statutory incorporation.

## Daily News Analysis

- **Historical Significance:** The bench emphasized that AMU's minority status should consider historical efforts by the Muslim community in its establishment, rejecting Basha's formalistic interpretation that had ignored the community's contribution.

### Interpretation of Article 30

- **Article 30 and Minority Rights:** The court reaffirmed that under Article 30, institutions established by minorities are entitled to protection and autonomy. Minority institutions can still be considered of "national importance" without losing their minority character.
- **Holistic Interpretation of Statutes:** The Court rejected the view that governmental recognition or support (e.g., land grants, recognition of degrees) would strip an institution of its minority character. It emphasized that statutory incorporation should not automatically negate minority status.
- **Liberal Approach to Religious Character:** The Court clarified that the presence of religious instruction or buildings (e.g., AMU's mosque or St Stephen's College church) is not necessary to maintain minority status. It argued that minority institutions do not need to be exclusively administered by the minority group to qualify for protection under Article 30.

### Impact and Future Implications

- **Change in Judicial Approach:** The new guidelines set a precedent for future cases involving minority educational institutions, particularly regarding whether minority rights can be waived or surrendered, a topic raised in past judgments like Ahmedabad St Xaviers (1975).
- **Pending Appeals and Future Determination:** The three-judge bench will now reconsider the minority status of AMU in light of these new principles, making prior rulings, including those by the Allahabad High Court in 2005, largely irrelevant.
- **Implications for Minority Institutions:** The Court's liberal stance on minority rights expands the scope of protection for institutions established by minorities, ensuring that the founding community's intent and history are central to any determination of minority status.

## Daily News Analysis

### Page 06 : GS 3 : Environment – Environmental pollution and degradation

As global temperatures rise, sustainable cooling solutions are critical to protecting vulnerable populations. The Quad nations, particularly India, are leading initiatives like the Wilmington Declaration to promote affordable, high-efficiency cooling technologies.

## Daily News Analysis

# Staying cool, but with clean tech, global collaborations

In a rapidly warming world, cooling is not merely a luxury but a necessity, especially for vulnerable populations. International cooperation on clean energy and cooling solutions is a crucial step toward addressing the climate crisis. On September 21, 2024, the Quad nations (Australia, India, Japan, and the United States) issued the Wilmington Declaration, which underscores the Quad's commitment to sustainable energy solutions, particularly focusing on high-efficiency cooling systems. This aligns with the earlier joint statement by India and the U.S., which detailed a road map for building resilient and secure global clean energy supply chains, placing a special emphasis on clean cooling technologies. Both statements highlight the urgent need to deploy affordable and energy-efficient cooling systems in climate-vulnerable regions while advancing global climate goals.

India's leadership in these efforts is particularly noteworthy. As part of the Quad's clean energy initiatives, India has pledged significant investments in solar and cooling infrastructure across the Indo-Pacific region. Along with the U.S. and India's joint plan to expand manufacturing capacities for high-efficiency air-conditioners and ceiling fans, these developments could significantly reduce the climate impact of cooling systems.

### Cooling-related emissions

The broader relevance of these international efforts can be seen through the lens of the Montreal Protocol and its Kigali Amendment (2016), which already set a precedent for collective global action on cooling-related emissions. As global temperatures rise, increasing demand for cooling makes it imperative for the world to adopt the lessons of these frameworks, reducing harmful emissions while transitioning to sustainable alternatives.

The Kigali Amendment expanded its scope to target hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), potent greenhouse gases used in cooling appliances. Left



**Zerín Osho**

Director of the India Programme at the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development (IGSD)

International cooperation on clean energy and cooling solutions is another crucial step in addressing the climate crisis

unchecked, HFCs could contribute to 0.52°C of warming by 2100. Maximising the Kigali Amendment's impact requires aligning the HFC phase-down with energy efficiency improvements. More efficient cooling systems could deliver about two-thirds of total greenhouse gas reductions by cutting electricity consumption. This would reduce emissions, lower air pollution from fossil fuel power plants, and save costs for manufacturers and consumers.

Climate change has heightened two critical threats related to cooling: the indirect emissions from inefficient air-conditioning and refrigeration systems powered by fossil fuels, and the direct emissions from harmful refrigerants. However, many countries still lack integrated energy efficiency and refrigerant standards. High-efficiency air conditioners using climate-friendly refrigerants are available, but inefficient models using outdated refrigerants still dominate many markets. Without stronger regulations, developing nations risk becoming dumping grounds for these inefficient appliances, exacerbating climate and energy challenges.

### Having a mission-mode approach

In 2024, parts of India experienced temperatures over 50°C, underscoring the need for cooling to ensure thermal comfort, preserve food, medical supplies, and industrial processes. India, one of the most climate-vulnerable nations, faces increasingly severe heatwaves that endanger millions. By 2030, an estimated 160 million to 200 million Indians could face deadly heatwaves annually. The country's workforce, heavily exposed to extreme heat, risks significant declines in productivity, health, and food security. Cooling demand is expected to surge, with air conditioner sales rising 16% for every degree over 30°C. By 2050, India may have the world's highest cooling demand, with over 1.14 billion air conditioners in use.

India ratified the Kigali Amendment in 2021, committing to reduce HFCs by 85% by 2047. The India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) targets a

20%-25% reduction in cooling demand, 25-40% in energy consumption, and a shift to low-global warming potential (GWP) refrigerants, demonstrating leadership in climate-friendly cooling. A mission-mode approach is needed to tackle these challenges. A national mission for sustainable cooling would require focused leadership, cross-sectoral collaboration, and coordinated efforts across ministries. Establishing an inter-ministerial working group, planning a launch event, and allocating an initial budget are essential. National capacity-building initiatives and dedicated budget lines must follow for long-term success.

### COP29 and the momentum of COP28

International commitments to clean energy cooling are encouraging, but technologies must remain affordable. The U.S.-India partnership and the Quad's initiatives emphasise deployment and local manufacturing of high-efficiency cooling systems. The challenge is in ensuring equitable access, particularly in developing regions where cooling needs are the greatest. Rising global temperatures require scaling up energy-efficient solutions without straining fragile electricity grids or leaving vulnerable populations behind.

India's proactive approach to cooling challenges, especially through the ICAP, positions it as a global leader in sustainable cooling. The country can protect its population from heat while leading the global fight against climate change, ensuring thermal comfort for all.

At COP28 (Dubai), 63 countries pledged to reduce cooling emissions by 68% by 2050. The Global Cooling Pledge, though non-binding, could provide cooling access to 3.5 billion people by 2050 and save \$17 trillion in energy costs. However, global action must accelerate to make this a reality. COP29 must build on the momentum of COP28 by expanding cooling commitments. This includes increasing participation in the Global Cooling Pledge and enhancing partnerships across sectors and nations.

- Through partnerships and policies, India is positioning itself as a leader in climate-friendly cooling efforts worldwide.

## The Wilmington Declaration and Quad's Commitment

- On September 21, 2024, Quad nations (Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S.) issued the Wilmington Declaration, reaffirming their dedication to sustainable energy and high-efficiency cooling solutions.
- This builds on the earlier India-U.S. roadmap to create secure, resilient global clean energy supply chains, focusing on affordable, energy-efficient cooling technologies in vulnerable areas.

## Daily News Analysis

### India's Leadership in Sustainable Cooling

- India has committed to significant investments in solar and cooling infrastructure across the Indo-Pacific region.
- In collaboration with the U.S., India aims to expand manufacturing capacities for high-efficiency air conditioners and ceiling fans, reducing the climate impact of cooling systems.

### Cooling-Related Emissions: The Role of the Kigali Amendment

- The Montreal Protocol's Kigali Amendment (2016) targets HFCs, potent greenhouse gases used in cooling systems, which could contribute to 0.52°C of warming by 2100 if unchecked.
- Aligning HFC reduction with energy efficiency improvements could achieve around two-thirds of potential greenhouse gas reductions by cutting electricity consumption.

### Emissions Challenges: Indirect and Direct Impacts

- Indirect emissions from cooling systems powered by fossil fuels and direct emissions from harmful refrigerants both pose climate risks.
- Many countries lack integrated efficiency and refrigerant standards, and outdated, inefficient cooling appliances still dominate several markets, creating environmental and energy challenges.

### India's Need for a Mission-Mode Approach

- India's extreme heat, with temperatures reaching 50°C, underscores the need for efficient cooling to protect public health, preserve food and medicines, and maintain industrial processes.
- Projections indicate that by 2030, 160-200 million Indians may face life-threatening heatwaves annually, with productivity, health, and food security at risk due to extreme heat.

### India's Cooling Action Plan (ICAP)

- India ratified the Kigali Amendment in 2021, committing to cut HFC use by 85% by 2047.
- The India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) sets a target for a 20%-25% reduction in cooling demand and a shift to low-global warming potential (GWP) refrigerants.
- Establishing a national mission for sustainable cooling with cross-sectoral collaboration and inter-ministerial coordination is essential to address these challenges.

## Daily News Analysis

### Global Partnerships and the Role of COP29

- The Quad's initiatives and the U.S.-India partnership focus on deploying affordable, high-efficiency cooling solutions, with equitable access being critical for regions most in need.
- COP28 (Dubai) saw 63 countries pledge a 68% reduction in cooling emissions by 2050 under the Global Cooling Pledge, aiming to provide cooling access to 3.5 billion people and save \$17 trillion in energy costs.
- COP29 must build on this by increasing global commitments, expanding partnerships, and scaling up sustainable cooling technology access.

### India as a Global Leader in Cooling Solutions

- India's proactive approach through ICAP positions it as a leader in climate-friendly cooling solutions, ensuring thermal comfort and supporting climate goals.
- By addressing its cooling needs, India can protect its population from rising temperatures while leading international efforts to combat climate change through sustainable cooling.

## Daily News Analysis

### Page 08 : GS 3 : Environment

Stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana has become an annual crisis, worsening air quality across North India, especially in Delhi.

- ▶ Despite government schemes and machinery subsidies, farmers find limited alternatives due to cost and narrow harvesting windows. Addressing this requires holistic solutions, including financial incentives and crop diversification support.



# Daily News Analysis

## CAUGHT IN THE FARM CROSS FIRE

Despite the solution in stubble burning over the years, farmers say the lack of incentives, plus the high cost of machines, push them to opt for stubble burning, particularly in the north of every state. **Nikhil M. Reddy** reports on the practice in Punjab and Haryana that causes smog to fill air over north India's Ganges plain



**S**ince stubble burning through the air in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other states in November when the weather is too hot to reap a crop under a sun, for the first time stubble burning has been seen in the north of every state. Farmers are at least three times more likely to burn stubble than in the past, according to a study by the National Bureau of Agricultural Extension, which says that stubble burning has increased by 100% in the last five years. The study also says that stubble burning has increased by 100% in the last five years. The study also says that stubble burning has increased by 100% in the last five years.

Major Singh, 48, a resident of Purnima village and a resident of Punjab says that the Government of India has taken steps to reduce stubble burning, but farmers are not getting any incentives. He says that the Government of India has taken steps to reduce stubble burning, but farmers are not getting any incentives. He says that the Government of India has taken steps to reduce stubble burning, but farmers are not getting any incentives.

The stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana is a major problem. It causes air pollution and smog, which is harmful to human health. The Government of India has taken steps to reduce stubble burning, but farmers are not getting any incentives. He says that the Government of India has taken steps to reduce stubble burning, but farmers are not getting any incentives.

The stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana is a major problem. It causes air pollution and smog, which is harmful to human health. The Government of India has taken steps to reduce stubble burning, but farmers are not getting any incentives. He says that the Government of India has taken steps to reduce stubble burning, but farmers are not getting any incentives.



## Overview of Stubble Burning

- Every winter, Punjab and Haryana experience extensive stubble burning, especially in paddy fields.
- This practice worsens air quality, particularly in Delhi, contributing up to 50% of its pollution during the paddy harvesting season.

## Daily News Analysis

- The phenomenon is worsened by cold, still air that traps pollutants, creating a thick, grey haze.

### Impact on Local Villages and North India

- Local residents, including farmers, face respiratory issues due to smoke inhalation.
- The AQI in the national capital recently spiked to levels exceeding 300, classified as 'very poor.'
- The air quality index (AQI) in regions close to Punjab, such as Patiala, frequently reaches unhealthy levels, often higher than in Delhi.
- Stubble burning affects not only India but has also been reported to impact air quality across the border in Pakistan.

### Reasons for Continued Stubble Burning

- Farmers cite a lack of viable alternatives and support, stating that without direct compensation, they are left with no cost-effective options.
- A central government scheme offers subsidies for machines to manage crop residue, but many farmers find it unaffordable or impractical.
- The delay in paddy procurement has further shrunk the already tight timeframe between paddy harvest and wheat sowing.

### Government Interventions and Schemes

- In 2018, the central government introduced subsidies for crop residue management (CRM) machinery, but these have not solved the issue completely.
- Machines include super-seeders (which plough stubble back into the soil) and balers (which collect stubble for use as fuel).
- Machines require powerful tractors, which many small farmers do not own, making the equipment inaccessible to them.

### Incentives vs Coercive Measures

- Punjab has requested a direct incentive of ₹2,500 per acre to help farmers manage stubble, but the central government has not agreed.
- While the state governments have taken some actions, including fines and FIRs, farmer protests have often led to the withdrawal of these penalties.

## Daily News Analysis

- In Haryana, a scheme offers ₹1,000 per acre to farmers who avoid burning stubble, resulting in reduced farm fires compared to Punjab.

### Environmental and Health Impact

- Delhi's levels of PM2.5 particles are over ten times the World Health Organization's safe limit during this season.
- Long-term exposure to PM2.5 particles can lead to severe health issues such as lung disease, stroke, and cancer.

### The Root Cause: Paddy as a Crop Choice

- The push for paddy cultivation in Punjab, initially encouraged by the Green Revolution, is one of the core issues.
- Paddy cultivation requires significant water resources, straining Punjab's groundwater and creating large amounts of stubble.
- Mechanisation has left longer stubble in the fields, making burning a convenient option for farmers with limited alternatives.

### Crop Diversification as a Long-Term Solution

- Experts suggest crop diversification, shifting from water-intensive paddy to other crops like sugarcane, as a potential solution.
- Farmers in Punjab report difficulties with alternative crops due to low procurement rates and delayed payments from buyers.
- The absence of government-backed MSP for crops other than paddy discourages farmers from diversifying their crop choices.

### Conclusion

- Stubble burning remains a complex issue, with economic, environmental, and social factors intertwined.
- Current policies and machinery subsidies have not adequately addressed the problem.
- A holistic approach, including financial incentives, crop diversification, and support for alternative crop markets, is essential to curb stubble burning in the region effectively.

## Daily News Analysis

### Page 11 : GS 3 : Environment

The Indian Tea Association (ITA) has proposed a quality grading system for tea to enhance competitiveness and consumer trust. This proposal aims to address challenges in the tea industry, including high production costs and compliance with pesticide residue limits.



# Tea industry calls for scientific quality grading

**Shiv Sahay Singh**

KOLKATA

As the tea industry in the country continues to grapple with quality issues the Indian Tea Association (ITA) emphasised on the introduction of a statutory scientific quality grading system from one leaf to five leaf marks on tea retail packets to enhance market competitiveness and consumer trust.

The proposal was made during the 141 Annual General Meeting of the Indian Tea Association where ITA chairperson Hemant Bangur floated the proposal during his speech.

Speaking on the issue of quality and compliance as



far as tea is concerned, Mr. Bangur emphasised that the industry is committed to ensuring safe tea consumption through rigorous maximum residue limits (MRL) compliance. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has set maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pesticides used in tea.

“The proactive measures taken by Assam and West Bengal State Governments and the Tea Board to foster an ecosystem of compliance, which is crucial for enhancing the brand equity of Indian teas, was commended.” the ITA chairperson said.

## Facing challenges

During the annual general meeting, the stakeholders of tea industry highlighted the challenges faced by the industry which included the “unsustainable increase in costs” amid “unremunerative prices” with “adverse weather conditions across Assam and Bengal” further aggravating the situation.

## Introduction of Quality Grading System

- ➔ The Indian Tea Association (ITA) has proposed the introduction of a statutory scientific quality grading system to improve market competitiveness and consumer trust in the Indian tea industry.

## Daily News Analysis

- The system would assign grading marks ranging from one leaf to five leaves on tea retail packets, providing a standard measure of quality.

### Emphasis on Quality and Compliance

- The ITA has highlighted the importance of ensuring safe tea consumption through rigorous adherence to maximum residue limits (MRL) for pesticides.
- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has set specific MRLs for pesticides in tea, and the industry is committed to meeting these safety standards.
- These efforts are intended to enhance the brand equity of Indian teas and ensure the safety of the product for consumers.

### Challenges Faced by the Tea Industry

- The tea industry is grappling with several challenges, including rising production costs, unremunerative prices, and adverse weather conditions in Assam and Bengal.
- These issues are further intensifying the difficulties faced by the industry.

### Tea Industry In India:

#### Challenges Faced:

- **Quality Concerns:** The industry struggles with inconsistent tea quality, affecting its market competitiveness and consumer trust.
- **Cost Pressures:** Rising production costs and unsustainable increases, coupled with low prices for tea, are leading to financial strain for producers.
- **Adverse Weather Conditions:** Unpredictable weather, particularly in Assam and West Bengal, significantly impacts tea production.
- **Pesticide Residue Compliance:** Ensuring strict adherence to pesticide residue limits set by FSSAI and global standards remains a challenge for maintaining tea safety and consumer confidence.
- **Lack of Modernization:** Limited investment in technology and innovation hampers the industry's growth and efficiency.

#### Way Forward And Steps Taken:

- **Quality Grading System:** Introduction of a statutory scientific grading system, from one leaf to five leaf marks, on tea packets to improve product transparency and consumer trust.
- **Cost Rationalisation:** Focus on cost management strategies and explore ways to increase tea prices to make the industry financially viable.
- **Climate Resilience:** Invest in climate-resilient farming techniques and diversification to counter the impacts of unpredictable weather patterns.
- **Compliance with Regulations:** Strengthen compliance with maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pesticides through better monitoring and certification processes.
- **Technological Advancements:** Promote innovation, modernization, and improved manufacturing techniques to enhance efficiency and maintain global competitiveness.

## Daily News Analysis

### In News : Exercise AUSTRAHIND

The 3rd edition of joint military Exercise AUSTRAHIND commenced at the Foreign Training Node, Pune in Maharashtra. The exercise will be conducted from 8th to 21st November 2024.



#### About Exercise AUSTRAHIND:

- It is a joint military exercise held between India and Australia.

## Daily News Analysis

- It is an annual event conducted alternatively in India and Australia. The last edition of the same exercise was conducted in Australia in December 2023.
- The Indian contingent comprising 140 personnel will be represented mainly by a battalion of the DOGRA Regiment and 14 personnel from the Indian Air Force.
- Exercise AUSTRAHIND aims to promote military cooperation between India and Australia through the enhancement of interoperability in the conduct of joint sub-conventional operations in semi-urban environments in semi-desert terrain under Chapter VII of the UN mandate.
- The exercise will be conducted in two phases – combat conditioning and tactical training phase and validation phase.
- Drills/ aspects to be rehearsed during the exercise will include response to a terrorist action of capturing a defined territory; establishment of a Joint Operations Centre; conduct of joint counter-terrorism operations like Raid and Search and Destroy Missions; securing of a helipad; employment of drones and counter-drone measures and Special Heli Borne Operations, among others.
- Significance: It will enable the two sides to share their best practices in tactics, techniques and procedures for conducting tactical operations.



## Daily News Analysis

**Page : 06 Editorial Analysis**



## Daily News Analysis

# The BRICS journey — gaining heft while in transition

**H**ow things change within a year. Russia's President Vladimir Putin made only a brief digital appearance at the BRICS 2023 summit in Johannesburg, despite host South Africa's decision to provide him diplomatic immunity against an ICC-issued arrest warrant linked to the Ukraine war. As the host and Chair of the summit this year, Mr. Putin dominated the show. The three-day summit pushed news about the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia to the back pages.

### Survival and a rejuvenation

The summit in Kazan, Russia (October 22-24, 2024) was the sixteenth in a series that began in 2009. Only four countries – Brazil, Russia, India and China – participated in the first two summits. South Africa joined the group at the third summit in 2011, giving it its present name, BRICS. The first decade recorded several accomplishments, but the second decade began on a difficult note. The outbreak of COVID-19 put China on the defensive; then the bloody clash between Chinese and Indian troops in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 brought ties between two member-states to a new low; finally, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered Moscow's confrontation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. All this made the grouping vulnerable.

Yet, it survived and showed signs of rejuvenation. The 15th summit's decision on expansion led to five new members: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Egypt, and Ethiopia. A disclosure by Mr. Putin that 34 more nations are desirous of joining the grouping signifies that BRICS is headed upwards. Post-summit, the Russian projection was that this grouping represents the 'Global Majority.'

This transition trajectory needs to be factored in while assessing the outcomes of the Kazan summit and their broad implications for the world. BRICS does not strive to create a new world order. It just wants to reform the present one so that it works for everyone. The grouping is driven by "the BRICS spirit", which is imbued with eight specific characteristics: mutual respect and understanding; sovereign equality; solidarity; democracy; openness; inclusiveness; collaboration, and consensus. It is committed to promoting intra-BRICS cooperation under three verticals: political and security; economic and financial, and cultural and people-to-people cooperation.

BRICS, initially a grouping of emerging economies, is now primarily a platform for Emerging Markets and Developing Countries (EMDCs). It is a combined grouping of the east and the south, juxtaposed to the Global North. There are notable anti-western tendencies within the BRICS, but its moderate members are



**Rajiv Bhatia**

a Distinguished Fellow at Gateway House, a former High Commissioner to South Africa, and the author of three books on foreign policy

committed to safeguarding its non-western orientation.

Pushing for comprehensive United Nations reform, the grouping devised at Johannesburg a careful formulation to support the aspirations of countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America, "including the BRICS countries" (meaning India, Brazil and South Africa) to play a more significant role in the UN, including its Security Council. This remained unchanged at Kazan; no further improvement was registered in favour of the three aspirants. None was expected as China's reluctance to go beyond this formula is an open secret.

Another significant element was the grouping's call for the elimination of unilateral economic sanctions. It depicts them as unilateral measures, aptly highlighting that they are contrary to international law and have far-reaching implications for human rights.

### Verticals and their focus

On the first vertical relating to peace and security, the summit focused on the conflict in West Asia, to which several paragraphs were devoted in the declaration. Paragraph 30 has scathing criticism for Israel's actions without any reference to the October 7 terrorist attack by Hamas. The grouping has called for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, unconditional release of all hostages, and the establishment of an independent 'State of Palestine'. Israel, whose military dominance of the region continues, was not impressed. Its response came in the form of a direct air attack on Iran, a member of BRICS.

With Russia as the chair of BRICS, the grouping said much less about the continuing war in Ukraine. Members were content with reiterating their national positions and calling for the end of war through dialogue and diplomacy while underlining the need to address "the root causes" of conflicts.

On the second vertical of economic and financial cooperation, the common currency issue received maximum attention. The decision taken was along expected lines. The use of local currencies in financial transactions between BRICS countries and their trading partners will be facilitated further. However, the issue of deeper financial and banking cooperation will continue to be studied by the Finance ministries of the member-states.

With Saudi Arabia still hesitant about joining BRICS fully, initial expectations of a massive capital injection into the New Development Bank remain unfulfilled. Therefore, the leaders restricted themselves to suggesting further improvement in the bank's workings and expressing their commitment to develop it into "a new type of MDB in the 21st century."

The third vertical aims to strengthen

people-to-people exchanges for social and economic development. Cooperation involving sports, culture, parliaments, civil society, business, and think tanks could have a beneficial long-term impact.

Finally, a crucial decision related to the grouping's expansion. The outreach session was held on the last day, with the participation of 34 states. Having approved the guidelines and criteria, a new category of 'partner state' was created. Thirteen countries have been invited to join the grouping as partner states. Latin America: Cuba and Bolivia; Eurasia: Belarus and Türkiye; Africa: Algeria, Nigeria, and Uganda; Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam; and Central Asia: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Clearly, the third expansion will further augment the BRICS family's share of the world population, international trade and GDP. Between now and the next summit in Brazil in 2025, most of these states may be included as partners, but they are expected to clamour for their early elevation as full members. Hence, the transition may continue for some more time.

### From India's lens

From India's perspective, BRICS figures among the top six plurilateral groupings today – G-20, Quad, BRICS, BIMSTEC (The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), G-7 (where India has a nearly permanent guest status), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). BRICS helps India to promote multipolarity in the world, exercise its strategic autonomy, deepen its relations with Russia, and effectively advocate the interests and agenda of the Global South. In addition, the latest summit served as a useful platform for the first meeting in about five years between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping. Bilateral negotiations resulted in an agreement on border patrolling arrangements and disengagement. Hence, this meeting, held on the summit's sidelines, heralded the beginning of a rapprochement between New Delhi and Beijing. As China-India relations improve, the strategic space for India to deal with its western partners may also expand.

India attaches a high degree of importance to making BRICS an effective instrument for international cooperation. This nation has made a tangible contribution in this direction and is eager to continue doing so. Initial caution over expansion has now been replaced by a sober calculation that increased membership, if handled properly, will enhance the influence of this plurilateral grouping. Above all, BRICS allows India to serve as a bridge between the west and the east and between the north and the south, thus turning New Delhi into a geopolitical sweet spot today.

There is a realisation now that increased membership has the potential to enhance the influence of this plurilateral grouping

## Daily News Analysis

### **GS Paper 02 : International Relations**

**UPSC Mains Practice Question:** Discuss the evolving role of BRICS in promoting a multipolar world order, with a focus on recent expansions and India's strategic objectives within the grouping. (150 words/10m)

### **Context :**

- The 2024 BRICS summit in Kazan highlighted the bloc's resilience amid global conflicts, expanding membership and aiming to reform the international order for inclusivity.
- New partnerships signal BRICS's growing influence in representing the Global South.
- India views BRICS as key to advancing strategic autonomy and fostering East-West relations.

### **Background and Context**

- The BRICS 2024 summit in Kazan, Russia, marked the 16th summit since the group's inception in 2009.
- Initially comprising Brazil, Russia, India, and China, South Africa joined in 2011, giving BRICS its current form.
- The group faced challenges in its second decade due to COVID-19, the India-China Galwan Valley clash in 2020, and Russia's conflict with NATO due to the Ukraine war, testing its unity and resilience.

### **Expansion and Global Representation**

- BRICS expanded at the 15th summit in 2023, adding Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran, Egypt, and Ethiopia.
- Interest from 34 additional nations indicates BRICS's appeal as a platform for emerging economies and developing countries, aiming to create a "Global Majority."
- Thirteen more nations were invited to join as "partner states," including Cuba, Algeria, Türkiye, Indonesia, and Kazakhstan, broadening BRICS's demographic and economic reach.

### **Core Mission and Characteristics of BRICS**

- BRICS seeks to reform the global order, emphasising inclusivity, solidarity, and equality, not establishing a new world order.
- Key areas of focus include political and security cooperation, economic and financial partnerships, and people-to-people connections.
- The group's ideology, "the BRICS spirit," advocates mutual respect, sovereign equality, democracy, and consensus, positioning it as a voice for the Global South.

## Daily News Analysis

### BRICS 2024 Summit Outcomes

#### ➤ Political and Security Cooperation

- The declaration addressed the conflict in West Asia, criticising Israeli actions and calling for a ceasefire, hostage release, and a Palestinian state.
- In contrast, the Ukraine war received limited attention due to Russia's BRICS leadership, with members reiterating calls for peaceful resolution.
- The summit opposed unilateral economic sanctions, highlighting their adverse impacts on human rights.

#### ➤ Economic and Financial Cooperation

- The idea of a common currency remains under study, with the current focus on facilitating trade in local currencies between BRICS nations and partners.
- Saudi Arabia's hesitance impacted funding expectations for the New Development Bank (NDB), leading to recommendations to enhance NDB operations without large capital inflows.
- Social and Cultural Collaboration
- The summit emphasised people-to-people exchanges in culture, sports, and civil society for long-term socio-economic development, aiming to foster closer connections across BRICS societies.

### India's Role and Perspective

#### ➤ Strategic and Diplomatic Significance

- BRICS is among India's six important plurilateral platforms, allowing it to promote global multipolarity, assert strategic autonomy, and support Global South interests.
- The summit facilitated a crucial India-China meeting, leading to border disengagement agreements and potentially improving bilateral ties.
- India values BRICS for enhancing its role as a bridge between East and West and North and South, expanding its diplomatic reach and influence.

#### ➤ Outlook on BRICS Expansion

- While initially cautious about expansion, India now sees it as beneficial, provided it is managed carefully to strengthen BRICS's influence.
- The group's potential to foster East-West and North-South dialogues aligns with India's geopolitical interests, reinforcing its position as a strategic global player.

### Conclusion

- The Kazan summit underscored BRICS's resilience and adaptability, with a vision to support inclusive global reforms rather than overhaul the current order.

## Daily News Analysis

- ▶ The addition of new members and partner states extends its influence, while India's involvement and expanding diplomatic ties highlight BRICS's significance as a balancing force in the international landscape.

