



13 September, 2024

BRICS Summit

Context: NSA Ajit Doval will attend BRICS meeting in St. Petersburg, meeting Russian and possibly Chinese counterparts.

➤ Overview:

- NSA Ajit Doval will attend a BRICS and BRICS Plus security meeting in St. Petersburg, engaging with Russian NSA Sergei Shoigu and possibly China's Wang Yi.
- In July, EAM S. Jaishankar met Wang Yi twice—in Astana during the SCO Summit and in Vientiane at an ASEAN-India meeting—to seek an early LAC resolution and rebuild relations.



BRICS is an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

- Introduced by Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs in 2001; initially just BRIC without South Africa.
- **Current Representation:** Represents about 37.3% of the global economy and about 40% of the world's population.
- **Chairmanship:** Rotates annually among member countries.
- **Principles:** Openness, pragmatism, solidarity, non-bloc nature, neutrality.

➤ Agenda of BRICS

- **International Terrorism:**
 - Focus on global counterterrorism efforts and security cooperation.
- **Climate Change:**
 - Joint actions and strategies to combat climate change.
- **Food and Energy Security:**
 - Ensuring global food and energy stability and equitable access.
- **International Economic and Financial Situation:**
 - Coordinated responses to global economic and financial challenges.
- **Reform of Bretton Woods Institutions:**
 - Advocating for changes in the IMF and World Bank to better represent emerging economies.
- **Trade Protectionism and WTO:**
 - Promoting free trade and opposing protectionist policies.

➤ Evolution of BRICS

- **2006:** Informal BRIC formation during G8 Outreach Summit.

- **2009:** First BRIC Summit held in Yekaterinburg, Russia.
- **2010:** South Africa joins, creating BRICS.
- **2011:** South Africa's first BRICS summit participation in China.
- **2014:** Fortaleza Declaration, establishment of New Development Bank (NDB).
- **2015:** Ufa Declaration on global governance and economic cooperation.
- **2021:** 13th BRICS Summit under India's Chairmanship.
- **2022:** Beijing Declaration on support for Russia-Ukraine dialogue, COVID-19 cooperation, and digital transformation.
- **2023:** 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, focused on Africa, endorsed G20 Presidencies, supported UN reform, and highlighted human rights and food security.
- **2024:** 16th BRICS Summit in Russia, aims for just global development and security, under the theme "**Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security**"

➤ Initiatives:

- **BRICS National Security Advisors' Meeting:** Addresses counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, and regional security.
- **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA):** Financial mechanism with \$100 billion capacity for liquidity support.
- **New Development Bank (NDB):** Provides funding for infrastructure and sustainable projects; headquartered in Shanghai.
- **Events:** BRICS Parliamentary Forum, Film Festival, Youth Summit, Academic Forum.

➤ India's Role in BRICS

- **Strategic Cooperation:** Platform for global engagement on security, terrorism, and trade.
- **Economic Benefits:** Access to large markets and funding from NDB.
- **Multilateral Reform:** Advocates for a more inclusive global order.
- **South-South Cooperation:** Promotes trade, investment, and technology transfer.
- **New World Order:** Supports India's role in global governance.

➤ Challenges Facing BRICS

- **Overlap with IBSA:** Potential duplication of efforts with the India-Brazil-South Africa grouping.

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- **Economic and Trade Disputes:** Internal conflicts and economic slowdowns.
- **Geopolitical Tensions:** Diverse interests and regional disputes (e.g., China-India tensions).
- **Dominance of Major Powers:** Influence of Russia, India, and China may overshadow Brazil and South Africa.
- **Currency and De-Dollarization:** Proposed common currency faces challenges; de-dollarization requires broad global adoption.

➤ Expansion of BRICS

- **First Phase:** Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and UAE to join from January 2024.
- **Reasons for Expansion:** Increase global influence, address anti-western sentiment, and offer new opportunities.

Universal Basic Income (UBI)

Context: Recent jobless growth prompts countries to consider Universal Basic Income (UBI) to address insufficient employment generation.

➤ Overview:

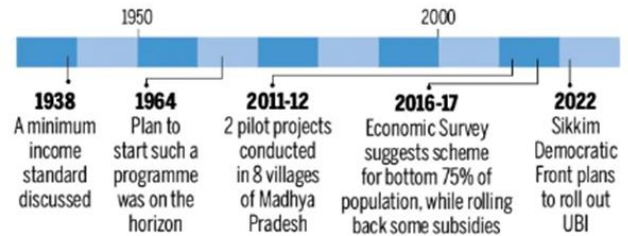
- The idea of UBI has gained traction, especially after the ILO's report linking decreased job growth and inequality to automation and AI.
- India's existing cash transfer schemes suggest challenges in implementing a pure Universal Basic Income model.

Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a social welfare proposal where all citizens receive a regular, unconditional payment from the government. This income is designed to cover basic living expenses, alleviating poverty and potentially replacing more complex welfare programs. Here's a closer look:


➤ Benefits of UBI:

- **Poverty Alleviation:** Reduces poverty and income inequality, covering basic needs like food, healthcare, and housing.
- **Health Benefits:** Lowers stress and improves mental and physical health; enhances access to healthcare and nutrition.
- **Simplified Welfare System:** Streamlines welfare by replacing multiple programs, reducing bureaucracy and costs.
- **Enhanced Freedom:** Provides financial security, allowing freedom to choose work, education, or fulfilling activities.
- **Economic Stimulus:** Boosts consumer spending, supports businesses, and encourages entrepreneurship.

INDIA'S TRYST WITH INCOME SUPPORT



UBI ACROSS THE WORLD

US Alaska Permanent Fund distributes part of the state's oil revenues to all residents on per-capita basis	Kenya Largest experiment underway with some villages receiving \$0.50-1 a day	France A senate committee has recommended an experiment
Stockton, California Secured funding from private non-profits to launch a small project with about 100 participants receiving \$500 a month for about 18 months	Brazil Has run experiments	UK & Germany Studies have been conducted
Finland Scheme started in 2017 to pay 2,000 jobless people assistance of €560 a month stopped last year	Canada Ontario plans to test a basic income scheme	Scotland Committed funds to conduct an experiment
		Barcelona, British Columbia Plans to start experiments
		Switzerland Plan to give everyone right to basic income defeated in 2016

➤ Challenges to UBI:

- **Cost and Fiscal Sustainability:** High costs may necessitate tax increases, spending cuts, or debt, potentially causing inflation or labor market distortions.
- **Incentive Issues:** Might reduce work motivation, lower productivity, and foster dependency, impacting skill development.
- **Inflationary Pressures:** Increased cash flow could raise prices, reducing the real value of payments.
- **Potential for Dependency:** Risks creating reliance on government support, potentially decreasing employment incentives.

➤ Alternatives of UBI:

- **Quasi-UBI (QUBRI):** Universal cash transfers with exclusions for wealthier individuals, like targeted rural assistance.
- **Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT):** Cash or subsidies transferred directly to accounts, reducing inefficiencies and corruption (e.g., PM Kisan).
- **Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT):** Cash based on conditions like school attendance or vaccinations, incentivizing positive behaviours.

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- **Other Income Support Schemes:** Specific assistance for vulnerable groups (e.g., elderly, disabled).
- **Employment Guarantee Schemes:** Legal job guarantees, such as MGNREGA, ensuring employment opportunities.
- **Universal Basic Services:** Provides essential services (healthcare, education) instead of direct income, aiming to reduce inequality and improve living standards.

Second Asia Pacific (APAC) Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation

Context: The Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation is held in New Delhi, addressing the region's expanding travel needs.

➤ Overview:

- The ICAO Asia Pacific (APAC) Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation is a two-day conference scheduled at Bharat Mandapam.
- The Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation focuses on airport development to meet growing travel demands, uniting global leaders to explore opportunities and forge partnerships.
- Celebrating 80 years of ICAO and the Chicago Convention.



➤ Second Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation

- The first Ministerial Conference of the Asia Pacific Region was held in Beijing, China, in 2018.
- **Organiser Details:** The second Ministerial Conference is jointly organised by the Indian government and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Asia Pacific.
- **Participation:** The conference is expected to attract around 250 representatives from 41 countries, underscoring the Asia Pacific region's critical role in global air traffic.

- **Conference Goals:** The primary aim is to establish a comprehensive roadmap for advancing the civil aviation sector in the Asia Pacific region.

➤ About the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

- **Headquarters:** Montreal, Canada
- **Formation and Purpose:** Known as the Chicago Convention, ICAO was established on December 7, 1944, by 52 states and became a specialised agency of the United Nations in 1947.
- **Membership:** As of 2024, ICAO has 193 member states. India is a founding member, having joined in 1944.
- **Strategic Objectives:**
 - **Safety:** Enhance aviation safety worldwide.
 - **Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency:** Improve air traffic management and infrastructure.
 - **Security and Facilitation:** Ensure secure and efficient air travel.
 - **Economic Development of Air Transport:** Promote the growth and sustainability of the aviation sector.
 - **Environmental Protection:** Address the environmental impact of aviation.

➤ Themes of Discussion

- **Regional and Global Coordination:** Focus on aligning aviation matters of both regional and global significance.
- **Collaboration:** Foster collaborative efforts on a common platform for regional aviation growth.
- **Harmonisation:** Promote consistent and synchronised development within the region.
- **Post-Pandemic Recovery:** Work towards creating a safe, resilient, and dynamic air transport system for the Asia Pacific region in the aftermath of the pandemic.

➤ Aviation Growth in India

- **Surge in Aircraft Numbers:** India's aviation market is the fastest-growing globally, with aircraft numbers doubling from 400 to over 800. Over 1,200 aircraft were ordered in the past year.
- **Expansion of Airports:** Airports in India increased from 74 to 157, enhancing regional connectivity and accommodating more passengers.
- **Government Initiatives:** The UDAN scheme improves air travel access for remote areas, integrating them into the national network and boosting economic development.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Ladakh Zanskar Festival



The 9th edition of the Ladakh Zanskar Festival will be held on September 13-14, 2024, in Sani Village, Zanskar Valley, Ladakh.

About the Ladakh Zanskar Festival:

- The Ladakh Zanskar Festival is an **annual two-days cultural celebration of Zanskar's culture, tradition** and unity.
- The festival **aims to promote tourism in the Zanskar region** while preserving and showcasing its unique spiritual and artistic legacy.
- The **Cham dance**, performed by monks in **elaborate costumes** and **folk dances** by local communities are major attractions.
- The dance is also performed on **Tsechu Festival** which is the yearly spiritual festival carried out in many **monasteries in Ladakh**.
- Traditional Zanskari dishes, including **thukpa** (a noodle soup) and **butter tea**, are offered to visitors.

Vertical Launch Short Range Surface-to-Surface Air Missile



Recently, the Vertical Launch Short Range Surface-to-Air Missile was successfully test-fired from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur in Balasore district, Odisha.

About the Vertical Launch Short Range Surface-to-Air Missile:

- The Vertical Launch Short Range Surface-to-Air Missile (VL-SRSAM) is a **ship-borne, short-range surface-to-air missile**.
- This test aimed to validate multiple updated elements of the weapon system, including the **Proximity Fuse** and **Seeker**.
- It has been indigenously developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** in collaboration with the **Indian Navy**.
- The missile is designed to **neutralize various aerial threats** at short ranges, including enemy aircraft and **sea-skimming missiles**, which are low-altitude, radar-evading threats often used in anti-ship warfare.

NITI Aayog



The Recently, NITI Aayog released the report "Future Pandemic Preparedness and Emergency Response: A Framework for Action," outlining a blueprint for strengthening India's public health infrastructure and rapid response to future emergencies.

About the NITI Aayog:

- The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) is a **policy think tank and government organization** that advises the Indian government on policies and programs.
- It was **established in 2015 to replace the Planning Commission**.
- It is based on the 7 pillars of effective governance-**Pro-People, Pro-Activity, Participation, Empowering, Inclusion of all, Equality and Transparency**.
- The composition of NITI Aayog includes the **Prime Minister as Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson appointed by the Prime Minister, a Governing Council comprising Chief Ministers of all states and Lt. Governors of Union Territories**.
- NITI Aayog has launched various initiatives and campaigns, such as: **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), Startup India, Digital India, Transforming Urban India (AMRUT, Smart Cities Mission), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) localization**, etc.

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Place in News

Gaza Strip

Recently, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that a quarter of Gaza war injuries are "life-changing," with 22,500 people needing long-term rehabilitation.

Location: Gaza Strip is situated on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Political Boundaries: Gaza Strip is bordered by Israel to the north and east and Egypt to the south.

Physical Features:

- The highest point in the Gaza Strip is **Mount al-Muntar**, also known as Mount Gerizim.
- The Gaza Strip has a **Mediterranean climate** with hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters.

Historical Background:

- After Israel declared its statehood in **1948**, the Gaza Strip was controlled by **Egypt** for nearly two decades.
- In **1967**, Israel gained control of Gaza during the **Six-Day War**.
- In **2005**, Israel withdrew around **9,000** Israeli settlers and its military forces from the Gaza Strip, leaving it to be governed by the internationally recognized **Palestinian Authority**.

Current Governance:

- The Gaza Strip is currently governed by Hamas, a Palestinian Islamist organization that took control in **2007** after winning elections.
- Hamas does not recognize Israel's right to exist.

Blockade: Israel has imposed a **land, air and sea blockade** on Gaza since **2007**.



POINTS TO PONDER

- Which reference app was launched recently by Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) in collaboration with Bhashini to make e-commerce inclusive? – **Saarthi**
- Which ministry recently launched the Trade Connect e-Platform to assist India in achieving its ambitious export goals? – **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**
- Which project has recently received approval by the central government for the transfer of 256 acres of salt pan land in Mumbai from the Centre? – **Dharavi Redevelopment Project**
- Which scheme recently received approval from the Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister of India, and is associated with the Ministry of Heavy Industries? – **PM E-DRIVE Scheme**
- What portal was launched under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana during the 4th anniversary of PMMSY? – **National Fisheries Development Program Portal**

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