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The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

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CONTEXT: The Delhi summit offers India an opportunity to restore BRICS's original purpose

BRICS Member Countries



BRICS Partner Countries



What Is BRICS? – A grouping of **major emerging economies** that seeks to strengthen cooperation among member countries and **promote a more representative and equitable international order.**

**ORIGINAL OBJECTIVE –
EVOLUTION – 11 Members**

- **THREE PILLARS –**
- **NOT A MILITARY ALLIANCE –**
- **CONSENSUS & COORDINATION –**

Why is BRICS Important?

- **Economic Weight –**
- **Global South representation:** Asia, Africa, the Middle East & Latin America
- **Strategic significance:** Bridge – Different Geopolitical Camps.
- **Development finance:** The New Development Bank (NDB)

NORMATIVE + MATERIAL

India's Role in BRICS

REFORMED MULTILATERALISM + STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

- New Development Bank
- Counter-terrorism
- Multilateral reform
- Global South
- Technology cooperation



49.5%
Population



40%
GDP



26%
Trade



CONTEXT: The Delhi summit offers India an opportunity to restore BRICS's original purpose

"Non-West" vs "Anti-West": The Central Debate

Meaning -
India's position ?

The China Factor: India's Biggest Strategic Challenge

India wants: **BRICS** → **Multipolarity** → **Greater Representation**

Rather than: **BRICS** → **China-led bloc** → **Confrontation with the West**

This creates a **Fundamental Tension**.

BRICS Expansion: Greater Representation, Greater Complexity

Why expansion is Beneficial? - Global South, Markets, Bargaining Power

But expansion creates problems -

- **Heterogeneity** - Pol. Sys., Strategic Priorities, Eco. Struc.
- **Conflicting Interests** -
- **Consensus becomes Harder** -
- **Agenda Dilution** -

De-dollarisation: Opportunity and Limitations

Why members are interested? - Sanctions, Transaction Costs, Financial Autonomy, Intra-BRICS Trade

Difficulties? - Trust, Stability, Rooted Structures

ALTERNATIVE: Local-currency settlement + interoperable payment systems
+ CBDCs + greater financial connectivity.

Other Challenges

- **Russia-West confrontation** -
- **Limited institutionalisation** -

BRICS & Emerging Areas Of Cooperation

- Climate Change - CBDR-RC
- Energy Security - +Renewables
- Technology -
- Food security -

Way Forward: India's Agenda

- **Reformed Multilateralism** - UN, IMF, WB, WTO, etc.
- **Keep BRICS Non-West, not Anti-West**
- **Consensus-based Decision-making**
- **Practical Economic Cooperation** - SC Resilience, etc.
- **Manage Expansion Carefully**
- **Global South Leadership**
- **Technology Governance**

Mains Practise Question

BRICS is evolving from an economic grouping of emerging economies into a broader platform for Global South cooperation and reformed multilateralism. Examine the opportunities and challenges associated with its expansion, with particular reference to India's interests.

(15 Marks, 250 words)



What is ISRO's Future?



CONTEXT: India needs a strong ISRO precisely to build a strong Indian space industry.

The Core Issue

The **Indian Space Policy 2023** – greater participation of private industry – ISRO – advanced R&D, space exploration, human spaceflight and strategic/national missions.

- ISRO → Frontier R&D + Strategic Missions
- Industry → Mature technologies + Manufacturing + Commercialisation
- IN-SPACe → Regulation + Authorisation + Facilitation
- NSIL → Commercialisation

ISRO employee organisations – **lack of clarity regarding future staffing, recruitment and outsourcing of core activities.**

Why Is India Encouraging Private Participation?

- **Scale** – Pvt. Capital
- **Faster innovation** – RLVs, EOS, Communication, SBAs
- **Commercialisation**
- **Global market** – space-launch/service provider
- **Employment** – Space Sector Venture Capital Fund

Why Are ISRO Employees Concerned?

A. Uncertainty over jobs – production gradually shifts to industry?

B. Outsourcing of core functions – risk of losing –

C. Loss of strategic autonomy – Not JUST Commercial!

D. Skill erosion – technical expertise?

Why ISRO Cannot Remain Static Either?

India's long-term space vision includes:

- **Bharatiya Antariksh Station by 2035**
- **Indian Crewed Lunar Mission by 2040**
- Reusable Launch Technologies
- Lunar and Planetary exploration
- Advanced Space Science Missions.

Major Issues with the Current Model

- Public interest vs Commercial interest – VRCs
- Strategic vs non-strategic activities –
- Foreign Capital and Strategic Autonomy – Data, IP, etc.?
- Regulatory Capacity – Debris, Spectrum, Traffic Management, Liability, etc.
- Unequal Access to Infrastructure –

The Way Forward

- Adopt a transparent ISRO transition policy
 - Tech. Transfer
 - Recruitment
- Protect core competencies
 - LVs, SSs, Propulsion
 - Human Spaceflights
 - Deep-Space Missions
- Adopt a "core + ecosystem" model
- Reskill & Upskill ISRO employees
- Build an Indian space manufacturing ecosystem – Robust SCs
- Keep developmental objectives intact –

ISRO = Brain + Frontier Technology + Strategic Capability

Industry = Scale + Manufacturing + Commercialisation

Start-ups = Innovation + New Applications

IN-SPACe = Regulation + Facilitation

Mains Practise Question

Examine the concerns associated with the changing role of ISRO under the Indian Space Policy, 2023 and suggest a way forward.

(10 Marks, 150 words)



Newspaper : The Hindu, **Page No :** 9

Accountability collapse

The data for the charts were sourced from annual Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India reports. DataMeet's Delhi municipal spatial data was used to plot the map. Incidents plotted in the map were sourced from media reports. With inputs from Gauri Singavarapu and Gandla Sneha, who are interning with The Hindu's Data team



CHART 1: Deaths due to building collapses have increased in Delhi. Y-axis scales are different for All India and Delhi

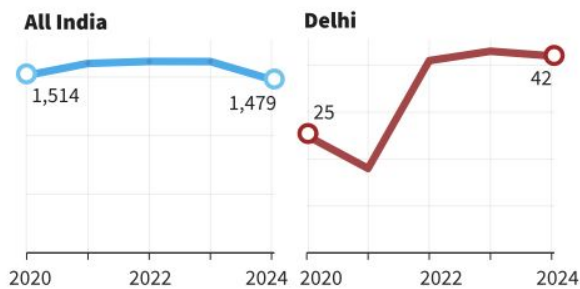
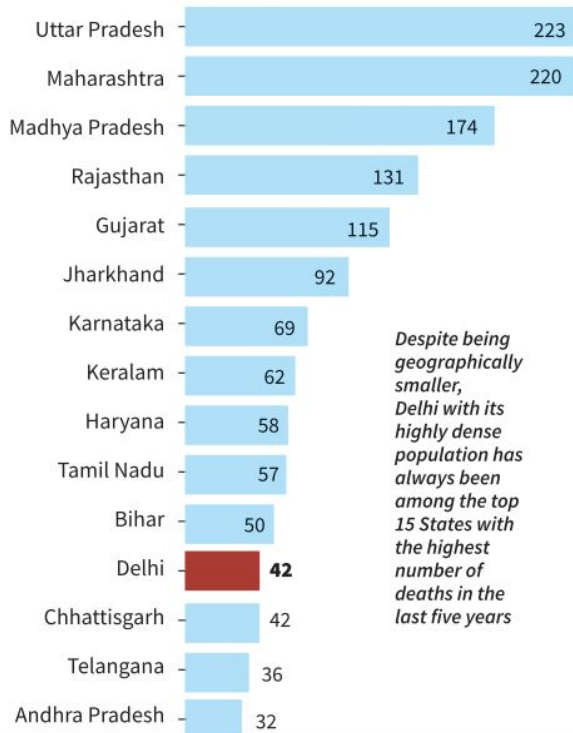
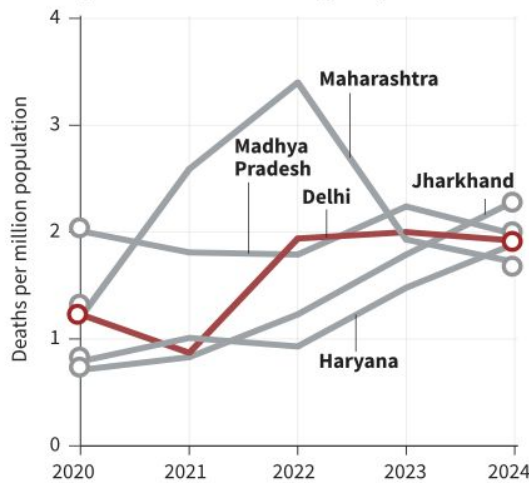


CHART 2: The 15 States (or UTs) with the highest number of deaths due to building collapses in 2024

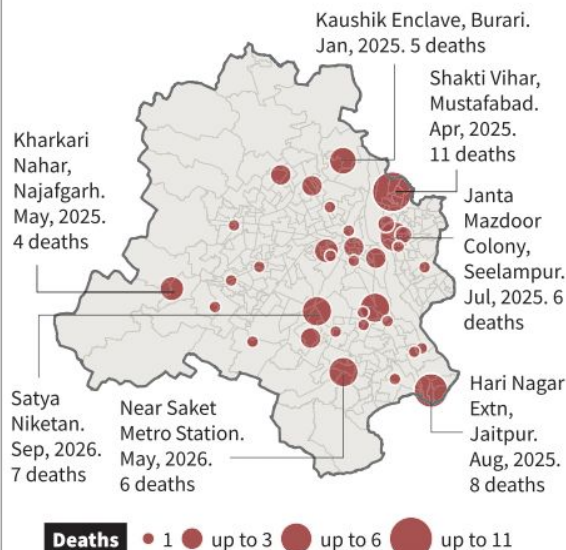


Despite being geographically smaller, Delhi with its highly dense population has always been among the top 15 States with the highest number of deaths in the last five years

CHART 3: Delhi recorded the second or third highest deaths per million due to building collapses since 2022



MAP 1: In at least 34 incidents of building collapses since 2024 in various parts of Delhi, over 90 people were killed



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Health
Newspaper : The Hindu, Page No : 10

Key Takeaways: Nicotine Pouches in India

What are nicotine pouches?

- **Tobacco-free, smokeless nicotine products** containing nicotine, flavourings and plant-based fibres.
- Placed between the **lip and gum**, where nicotine is absorbed into the bloodstream.
- Increasingly entering Indian cities through **online platforms, hookah shops and gig-delivery services**.

Major regulatory gap in India

- **COTPA, 2003:** Primarily regulates tobacco products; nicotine pouches are arguably outside its statutory definition.
- **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940:** Nicotine is not expressly listed as a drug, although nicotine gums and patches are approved as therapeutic products.
- **PECA, 2019:** Bans electronic cigarettes/vapes, but nicotine pouches are neither electronic nor do they produce vapour.
- Their classification as **"food"** is also legally arguable because Indian food laws have a broad definition encompassing substances meant for human consumption.

WHAT IS A NICOTINE POUCH?

Nicotine pouches are small, tobacco-free pouches that deliver nicotine without smoke, vapor, or tobacco leaf. Simply place a pouch under your lip and enjoy a discreet, convenient experience.



TOBACCO-FREE

No tobacco leaf, no smoke, no ash.



DISCREET

No smell, no vapor. Use anytime, anywhere.



CONVENIENT

Easy to use, no charging or maintenance.



VARIETY

Wide range of flavors and strengths.



HOW TO USE



1. Open the can



2. Place under your upper lip



3. Enjoy for 5-45 minutes



4. Remove and dispose responsibly



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Health
Newspaper : The Hindu, Page No : 10

Import status

- Following changes to the **Harmonized System**, oral nicotine products received specific customs classifications.
- **ITC-HS 2404 91 30** covers tobacco-free single-use nicotine pouches and is classified as **"restricted"**, meaning specific permission/licensing is required for import.
- They are therefore **not equivalent to banned e-cigarettes**, but neither are they freely importable.

Duty-free shops

- Their presence in some airport duty-free stores raises further regulatory questions.
- The *Flemingo Duty Free Shop v. Kaushik Bhattacharya* (2024) ruling does **not mean Indian laws cease to apply** within duty-free shops.

Public-health concern

- WHO warned about the dangers of nicotine pouches in **May 2026**.
- Easy availability through digital and delivery channels could **normalise nicotine consumption**, particularly among younger populations.
- Delayed regulation could create a market similar to the **illegal vape market**, encouraging smuggling once demand becomes entrenched.

Way Forward

- Government needs a **clear, transparent and health-oriented regulatory framework**.
- The article argues that the government can use the **Customs Act and Foreign Trade Act** to prohibit import and sale on public-health grounds.
- Regulation should ideally precede widespread adoption rather than respond after the market becomes established.



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Economy
Newspaper : The Hindu, Page No : 10

Vision

To be the most authentic official source for data and policy analysis on the hydrocarbon sector in the country.

Mission

- ☑ To strengthen the existing data system in PPAC by adopting the latest techniques and best practices.
- ☑ To render effective assistance to the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas in the discharge of its responsibilities, particularly pricing of petroleum products and administration of subsidy schemes.
- ☑ To monitor and analyse developments in the domestic oil and gas sector.
- ☑ To undertake analysis of domestic and international energy markets.
- ☑ To develop a cooperative framework for exchange of information and conduct of studies with other countries and international organisations in the energy sector.

Objectives

- ☑ To ensure effective administration of the subsidy schemes notified by the Government.
- ☑ To monitor and analyse trends in prices of crude oil, petroleum products and natural gas and their impact on the oil companies and consumers, and prepare appropriate technical inputs for policy making.
- ☑ To monitor developments in the domestic market and analyse options for policy changes in pricing, transportation distribution of petroleum products.
- ☑ To collect, compile and disseminate data on the domestic oil and gas sector in a continuous manner and maintain the data bank.
- ☑ To ensure quality of data in terms of prescribed parameters such as accuracy, completeness and timeliness.
- ☑ To prepare periodic reports on various aspects of oil and gas sector.



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Institutions
Newspaper : The Hindu, **Page No : 6**



Indian Council of Agricultural Research
CENTRAL MARINE FISHERIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute was established by Government of India on February 3rd 1947 under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and later it joined the ICAR family in 1967. During the course of over 78 years the Institute has emerged as a leading tropical marine fisheries research institute in the world.

Since its inception, the CMFRI grew significantly in its size and stature and built up adequate research infrastructure and recruited qualified staff. During the first half of the five decades of its existence, the CMFRI devoted its research attention towards the estimation of marine fisheries landings and effort, taxonomy of marine organisms and the bio-economic characteristics of the exploited stocks of finfish and shellfish. This research effort contributed significantly to India's marine fisheries development from a predominantly artisanal, sustenance fishery till the early sixties to that of a complex, multi-gear, multispecies fisheries.

One of the major achievements of CMFRI is the development and refinement of a unique method for estimation of fishery catch and effort from the over 8000 km coastline called the "Stratified Multistage Random Sampling Method". With this methodology the Institute is maintaining the National Marine Fisheries Data Centre (NMFDC) with over 9 million catch and effort data records from all maritime states of India of more than 1000 fished species.



Headquarters of ICAR-CMFRI at Kochi, Kerala, India



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Defence
Newspaper : The Hindu, **Page No : 12**

About Defence Acquisition Council

- It is the **highest decision-making body** of the **Defence Ministry** on procurement.
- The main **objective** of the DAC is to ensure **expeditious procurement** of the **approved requirements of the armed forces** in terms of capabilities sought and time frame prescribed by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.
- **Formation:** It was formed after the **Group of Minister's recommendations** on 'Reforming the National Security System', in 2001, post-Kargil War (1999).

Defence Acquisition Council Composition

- The **defence minister** is the **chairman** of DAC.
- Its **members** include **Chief of Defence Staff** (CDS) and chiefs of Army, Navy and Air Force.

Defence Acquisition Council Functions

- Give in principle approval of a 15-year Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP) for defence forces.
- Accord of acceptance of necessity to acquisition proposals.
- Categorisation of the acquisition proposals relating to 'Buy', 'Buy & Make', and 'Make'.
- Look into issues relating to single vendor clearance.
- Take decisions regarding 'offset' provisions in respect of acquisition proposals above Rs 300 crore.
- Take decisions regarding the Transfer of Technology under the 'Buy & Make' category of acquisition proposals.
- Field trial evaluation.



Q1. With reference to nicotine pouches, consider the following statements:

1. They are tobacco-free, smokeless products containing nicotine, flavourings and plant-based fibres.
2. Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, nicotine is expressly listed as a drug.
3. They are legally equivalent to banned e-cigarettes in India.
4. They are freely importable into India without restriction.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) Only Three
- d) All Four

Answer: a

Q2. With reference to BRICS, consider the following statements:

1. BRICS was initially formed by Brazil, Russia, India and China, with South Africa joining later.
2. The New Development Bank is headquartered in Beijing, China.
3. BRICS is a formal military alliance with a mutual defence commitment among its members.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 2 only
- d) 1 and 2 only

Answer: a

Q3. With reference to ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, consider the following statements:

1. It was established in 1947 under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.
2. Its headquarters are at Kochi.
3. It is involved in estimation of marine fisheries landings and effort, taxonomy of marine organisms, and analysing bio-economic characteristics of exploited finfish and shellfish stocks.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: d

Q4. With reference to the Defence Acquisition Council, consider the following statements:

1. It was formed following the Group of Ministers' recommendations in 2001.
2. The Prime Minister is the chairman of the Council.
3. Its members include the Chief of Defence Staff and the Chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: c

Q5. With reference to space sector bodies, consider the following statements:

1. IN-SPACe's role includes Regulation, authorisation, and Facilitation.
2. NSIL is the commercial arm of ISRO responsible for commercialisation and market-facing deployment of Indian space products and services

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c





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