

Editorial of the Day – 23.01.2026

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1. BRICS India summit needs a green and resilient agenda

General Studies 2 – International Relation **Topic –** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

Sub Topic – BRICS Summit 2026; Climate Diplomacy; South-South Cooperation; Global Climate Finance.

BRICS India Summit – A Green and Resilient Agenda

Introduction

As India prepares to host the BRICS Summit in 2026, it stands at a pivotal juncture to shape the global narrative. Building on the institutional capacity demonstrated during its successful G20 presidency in 2023, India is uniquely positioned to define a summit focus that addresses the urgent concerns of the Global South. The provided text argues that Climate Resilience and an Inclusive Green Agenda must be central to this summit, reinforcing India's leadership while navigating a polarized global order.

1. BRICS as a Stabilising Force in a Polarised World

Filling the Global Vacuum –

Weakened Multilateralism – Collaborative global action is under strain due to geopolitical polarization.

Western Retreat – The U.S. is increasingly questioning the credibility of climate cooperation and promoting fossil fuel expansion. Its withdrawal from various international platforms has created a leadership void.

European Fatigue – European nations, traditionally climate leaders, are now preoccupied with domestic fatigue and security pressures.

BRICS' Role – In this context, BRICS can step in as a "stabilizer," fostering collective action on sustainability where traditional powers are receding.

India's Diplomatic Tightrope –

Managing Perceptions – Washington often views BRICS with suspicion, seeing it as an anti-American bloc challenging the dollar-centric order.

Balancing Ties – India must balance its leadership in BRICS with its robust strategic partnership with the U.S.

Key US-India Priorities – Maintaining a viable trade deal, avoiding punitive tariffs, and managing sensitivities regarding Russian oil imports.

Strategic Autonomy – India's success lies in "multialignment"—demonstrating the ability to lead the Global South while maintaining independent relations with the West, as seen during the G20 Delhi Summit.

2. Climate Change as a Shared Priority

Consolidating Developing-Country Coordination –

The BASIC Group – The existing coalition of Brazil, South Africa, India, and China remains effective and relevant.

Expanded Weight – An expanded BRICS platform amplifies the voice of developing economies.

Precedent (Belém) – Recent discussions have successfully protected development needs while navigating the transition away from fossil fuels.

Common Vulnerabilities –

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

Shared Risks – All BRICS nations face severe climate impacts, including permafrost thaw (Russia), stress on the Amazon (Brazil), Himalayan fragility (India/China), and coastal/riverine risks.

Mutual Interest – Collective action on adaptation, resilience, and equity is not just charity but a self-preservation imperative for the bloc.

Leadership in Global Governance –

Steering the Process – BRICS nations (Brazil, Egypt, UAE) have been instrumental in sustaining climate momentum post-COVID through their leadership in recent COP summits.

Countering Unilateralism – BRICS serves as a platform to respond to unilateral trade measures that dilute UNFCCC principles, such as Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms (CBAM).

3. The Centrality of Climate Finance

A Key Milestone – The BRICS Leaders' Framework Declaration on Climate Finance (Rio, July 2025) set the stage for prioritizing financial equity.

India's Voice – India has been a vocal champion for the Global South, articulating demands for accessible and adequate finance.

Engaging Global Institutions –

Institutional Void – With the U.S. reducing climate commitments and private capital retreating from ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) investments, public institutions are crucial.

Proposal – There is a strong case for inviting leadership from the World Bank and IMF to the BRICS Summit to bridge the funding gap.

Leveraging Economic Weight –

The Expanded Bloc – Now including Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, and the UAE.

The Numbers – Represents ~50% of the world's population, ~40% of global GDP, and ~26% of global trade.

Impact – This scale provides significant leverage to reshape the global financial architecture for climate action.

4. A Chance for India to Drive Change

Leadership Opportunity –

As the 2026 Chair, India can steer the group toward a Resilience and Inclusive Green Agenda. This focus unites the developing world and aligns perfectly with India's national interests.

Geopolitical Balancing – A proactive agenda allows India to balance China's ambitions for global climate leadership. It reinforces India as a credible, independent voice on sustainability.

Global Resonance & Continuity – An India-led focus on resilience will resonate with all members.

Strategic Link – It aligns with the priorities of Ethiopia, which is set to host COP32 in 2027, ensuring continuity in the climate narrative from India's presidency to future summits.

Conclusion

The 2026 BRICS Summit is a timely opportunity for India to reposition the grouping not as an anti-Western bloc, but as a stabilizing force in a fragmented world. By prioritizing climate resilience, equity, and sustainable development, India can leverage the economic weight of the expanded BRICS to address the urgent needs of the Global South. This approach will strengthen global climate governance while reinforcing India's own strategic autonomy and credibility as a bridge between the developed and developing worlds.

Source – <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/brics-india-summit-needs-a-green-and-resilient-agenda/article70539161.ece>

2. Noida is like many modern Indian cities. It has a broken system

General Studies 1 – Indian Society

Topic – Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Sub Topic – Urban Governance; Municipal Administration; Accountability in Public Service; 74th Constitutional Amendment Act.

Cracks Beneath Urban "Development"

Introduction

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While Indian cities like Delhi, Indore, and Noida boast visible signs of modernity—such as metro networks and high-rises—recent urban tragedies expose a crumbling foundation of governance. These incidents are not mere accidents but symptoms of systemic apathy, weak accountability, and a dangerous neglect of routine administration. They highlight a paradox where physical infrastructure grows while the quality of governance and safety standards declines.

1. Core Issues – The Governance Deficit

Failure of Responsive Governance –

Delayed Response – Incidents are characterized by sluggish emergency responses and poor disaster management.

Ignored Grievances – Citizens' complaints regarding basic threats (e.g., contaminated water, unsafe structures) often hit a wall of bureaucratic silence.

Violation of Trust – This non-responsiveness violates the core principle of citizen-centric administration, leaving the public vulnerable.

The Accountability Crisis –

Scapegoating – When tragedies occur, blame is typically shifted to lower-level functionaries (junior engineers, clerks) rather than addressing institutional lapses at the top.

Symbolic Action – As noted by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC), accountability remains symbolic (punishing a few) rather than systemic (fixing the process), ensuring that failures recur.

Neglect of Routine Administration –

"Concrete" Bias – There is an excessive focus on new, visible infrastructure projects ("concrete achievements") to gain public or political recognition.

The Cost of Neglect – This sidelines the "invisible" but critical work – maintenance of existing assets, routine safety audits, and regular inspections.

CAG Flags – The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has repeatedly flagged Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) for poor asset management and lack of maintenance records.

2. The Infrastructure Paradox

Creation vs. Care – Urban budgets are skewed heavily towards Capital Expenditure (CapEx) for new projects. Operation and Maintenance (O&M) funds are chronically insufficient.

NITI Aayog's Warning – Inadequate maintenance reduces the lifespan of expensive infrastructure and drastically increases disaster vulnerability (e.g., collapsing bridges, waterlogging due to clogged drains).

3. Erosion of Civil Service Ethos

Visibility over Service – The pursuit of media visibility and recognition is undermining the traditional civil service values of anonymity and neutrality.

ARC Recommendation – Civil servants must re-prioritize actual service delivery and public welfare over the optics of development.

4. Structural & Constitutional Dimensions

Structural Failures –

Fragmentation – Urban governance is fractured across multiple agencies (Municipalities, Development Authorities, Parastatals) leading to a lack of coordination.

Capacity Crunch – ULBs suffer from severe staff shortages and a lack of technical skills at the local level.

Lack of Metrics – There are no performance metrics linking staff appraisals to service quality or safety compliance.

Constitutional Mandates –

Article 243W – Mandates ULBs to function as institutions of self-government responsible for public safety and basic services.

74th Amendment – The spirit of this amendment—devolution of power—remains unfulfilled as states have been reluctant to devolve funds, functions, and functionaries.

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

Article 21 – The Supreme Court interprets the Right to Life to include the right to safe and dignified living conditions, making urban safety a constitutional right.

5. Way Forward – Fixing the System

Paradigm Shift – Move focus from "Asset Creation" to "Asset Management."

Mandatory safety audits for all public infrastructure. Creation of dedicated Urban Maintenance Funds.

Strengthen Accountability – Clear fixing of institutional responsibility rather than individual blame games. Time-bound action on citizen complaints (e.g., strengthening Right to Public Services Acts).

Professionalize Urban Administration – Capacity building for municipal staff. Utilization of technology (GIS, AI, IoT) for real-time monitoring and predictive maintenance.

Citizen-Centricity – robust grievance redressal systems. Active community participation in urban monitoring (social audits).

Conclusion

Urban development cannot be judged solely by the scale of infrastructure but by the quality of governance. True progress lies in safety, responsiveness, and accountability. Unless the "un-glamorous" tasks of routine maintenance and ethical administration regain centrality, India's urban modernity will remain a fragile illusion, constantly vulnerable to preventable tragedies.

Source – <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/noida-is-like-many-modern-indian-cities-it-has-a-broken-system-10489546/>

