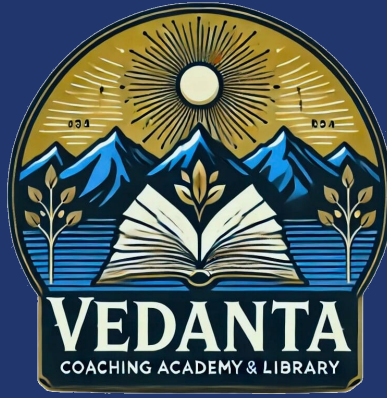




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The Hindu *Analysis*

THURSDAY · 24 SEPTEMBER 2026



Election Commission

OIC & Kashmir

SAT-SAAW Glide Bombs

OECD Outlook

BRICS Delhi Summit

Quality Control Orders

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Compiled by Sapna Chauhan

UPSC · HPAS · STATE PSC

Opposition calls for CEC's exit over 'illegal conduct' — the question of a collegial Election Commission

WHY IN NEWS Opposition parties sought the removal of Chief Election Commissioner **Gyanesh Kumar** after an *Indian Express* exposé claimed that the other two members of the Commission, **Sukhbir Singh Sandhu** and **Vivek Joshi**, had formally recorded objections at least **14 times in the last 10 months**. The Congress has demanded a Supreme Court-monitored probe; the INDIA bloc is to meet on the issue.

Opposition calls for CEC's exit over 'illegal conduct'

Gyanesh Kumar under fire after expose on several objections by fellow Election Commissioners; Congress calls for SC-monitored probe; INDIA bloc to meet soon to discuss the issue, says Mamata

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Wednesday sought the removal of Gyanesh Kumar as the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) after an *Indian Express* expose claimed that two of the three members of the Election Commission (EC), Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, had formally recorded objections at least 14 times over the last 10 months. The two commissioners said major decisions were being made in the name of the full EC without their knowledge, several of which they called "unauthorised and illegal".

Declaring that "vote chori" is a crime against the Indian people and a direct attack on the Constitution, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul

Under scanner

The allegations against the CEC come amid widespread complaints about the SIR exercises and apprehensions about the poll body's conduct

KEY ISSUES RAISED

- Centralisation of electoral database
- Alteration of Form 6
- Authorisation of appeals against voter inclusion
- 97 eligible voters from Goa being left out of the roll



Sukhbir Singh Sandhu
Election Commissioner



Gyanesh Kumar
Chief Election Commissioner



Vivek Joshi
Election Commissioner



All official orders, decisions, and administrative directions issued by the commission carry full legal sanctions - EC STATEMENT



Vote chori

is a crime... The BJP, RSS, and EC who organised it have committed an act of treason. Justice will be served



RAHUL GANDHI,
LoP in Lok Sabha

Gandhi, said "the BJP, RSS, and EC who organised it have committed an act of treason. Justice will be served."

Under the 2023 law governing the EC, all decisions should be made unanimously where possible. Where the CEC and the commissioners disagree,

the majority should prevail, the law says.

According to the *Indian Express* report, the two commissioners red-flagged several issues, led by the centralisation of the database of electoral rolls. In May, Mr. Joshi had reportedly proposed an audit to certify that "no one except

the concerned statutory authorities has any credentials to make any change in the data base".

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◆ WHAT THE REPORT ALLEGES

- ▶ The two Election Commissioners said **major decisions were being taken in the name of the full Commission without their knowledge**, several of which they called "unauthorised and illegal".

- **Issues red-flagged:** centralisation of the database of electoral rolls; alteration of **Form 6**; authorisation of appeals against voter inclusion; and 97 eligible voters from Goa being left out of the roll.
- In May, Mr. Joshi reportedly proposed an **audit** to certify that "no one except the concerned statutory authorities has any credentials to make any change in the data base".
- The allegations come amid widespread complaints about the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** exercises and apprehensions about the poll body's conduct.
- Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha **Rahul Gandhi** called "vote chori" a crime against the Indian people and a direct attack on the Constitution.
- **EC's response:** "All official orders, decisions, and administrative directions issued by the commission carry full legal sanctions."

◆ THE LEGAL CORE OF THE DISPUTE

- Under the **CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023**, all decisions should be made **unanimously where possible**; where the CEC and the Commissioners disagree, **the majority prevails**.
- This codifies the principle laid down in **T.N. Seshan v. Union of India (1995)**: the CEC is only *first among equals*; the multi-member Commission functions collectively and by majority. A CEC acting unilaterally on matters meant for the full Commission would therefore raise questions of legality, not merely propriety.
- **Why it matters:** the credibility of the ECI rests not only on who appoints it but on how it decides. Recorded dissent, if ignored, weakens the internal check that a three-member body is designed to provide.

VALUE ADDITION · ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

- **Constitutional basis:** Article 324 (Part XV, Arts. 324–329) vests the *superintendence, direction and control* of elections to Parliament, State Legislatures and the offices of President and Vice-President in the ECI. Established on **25 January 1950** (National Voters' Day). Secretariat: New Delhi.
- **Not covered:** Panchayat and municipal polls — conducted by **State Election Commissions** (Arts. 243K and 243ZA).
- **Composition:** CEC + such number of ECs as the President may fix. Single-member originally; made multi-member on **16 October 1989**, reverted in 1990, and **multi-member since 1993**. Presently: CEC + 2 ECs.

APPOINTMENT UNDER THE 2023 ACT

Stage	Composition / Rule
Search Committee	Headed by the Union Law Minister + two officers not below Secretary rank; prepares a panel of five names
Selection Committee	Prime Minister (Chair), Leader of Opposition / leader of the largest Opposition party in Lok Sabha, and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the PM
Appointment	By the President on the Selection Committee's recommendation

Tenure & salary

6 years or up to 65 years of age, whichever is earlier; salary and service conditions equal to a Supreme Court Judge

- **Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India (2023):** a five-judge Constitution Bench unanimously held that, until Parliament made a law, appointments would be on the advice of a committee of the **PM, LoP and CJI**. The 2023 Act replaced the CJI with a Cabinet Minister.
- **Removal:** the CEC can be removed only *in like manner and on like grounds as a Supreme Court Judge* (special majority of both Houses). An EC can be removed only on the **recommendation of the CEC** (Art. 324(5)). The CEC's conditions of service cannot be varied to his disadvantage after appointment.

PRELIMS POINTERS **Form 6** – inclusion of a new elector · **Form 7** – objection to / deletion of a name · **Form 8** – shifting, correction, replacement of EPIC · Revision of rolls under the **Representation of the People Act, 1950** (SIR invoked under Section 21(3)) · **Art. 325** – no one excluded from rolls on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex · **Art. 326** – elections on the basis of adult suffrage · **Art. 329** – bar on courts' interference in electoral matters.

PYQ FLASHBACK · UPSC PRELIMS 2017

Consider the following statements:

1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body.
2. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs decides the election schedule for the conduct of both general elections and bye-elections.
3. Election Commission resolves the disputes relating to splits/mergers of recognised political parties.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 3 only

Answer: (d) – the ECI is a three-member body; it (not MHA) fixes election schedules; it decides party split/merger disputes under the Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968.

SYLLABUS LINK · GS 2 – Appointment to various constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various constitutional bodies; Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.



GS PAPER 2 · IR

THE HINDU · PAGE 11

India rejects OIC Group's remarks on Kashmir

WHY IN NEWS India on Wednesday **categorically rejected** the references to Kashmir in the Joint Communique of the **Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir** of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), saying the body has "no locus standi" on matters strictly internal to India.

◆ WHAT WAS SAID

- ▶ The Group – **Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye** – met on Tuesday, expressed "deep concern" about the **India–Pakistan conflict of May 2025** and termed India's strikes against terror targets inside Pakistan "unlawful".

- ▶ It claimed durable peace in South Asia depends on settling the J&K dispute "in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri People".
- ▶ **MEA's reply:** the entire Union Territories of **Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh** are "integral and inalienable" parts of India; repeated endorsement of motivated narratives "only raises serious questions on the credibility of OIC". The Group would be "better advised to counsel Pakistan, which supported and sponsored terrorism".

India rejects OIC Group's remarks on Kashmir

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India on Wednesday categorically rejected the references to Kashmir in the Joint Communiqué of the Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

"The OIC has no locus

standi to pronounce on matters that are strictly internal to India. The entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are integral and inalienable part of India, and no amount of repetition of politically motivated propaganda can change this reality. Repeated endorsement of such motivated narratives only raises serious questions on the credibility of OIC," the External Affairs Ministry said.

The Group, consisting of Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye, which met on Tuesday, expressed "deep concern

about the India-Pakistan conflict of May 2025, and termed India's strikes against terror targets inside Pakistan "unlawful".

The conflict had "once again shown that durable peace and stability in South Asia will remain contingent upon the final settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri People", it said.

The MEA said the Group will be better advised to counsel Pakistan, which "supported and sponsored terrorism".

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◆ READING INDIA'S POSITION

- ▶ **Bilateralism:** India holds that all issues with Pakistan are bilateral under the **Simla Agreement (1972)** and the Lahore Declaration (1999), leaving no role for third parties or old UNSC resolutions.
- ▶ **Institution vs. members:** India separates the OIC as a platform (often shaped by Pakistan) from its strong bilateral ties with key members — UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia. India was the '**Guest of Honour**' at the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Abu Dhabi in 2019.
- ▶ **Operation Sindoor (May 2025)** — precision strikes on terror infrastructure after the Pahalgam attack — was framed by India as measured, non-escalatory counter-terrorism; the Contact Group's language seeks to recast it as unlawful aggression.

VALUE ADDITION · ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION

- Intergovernmental body representing the **collective voice of the Muslim world**; the **second-largest intergovernmental organisation after the UN**.
- **Established:** 25 September 1969 at the Rabat (Morocco) summit, convened after the arson attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque. Renamed from *Organisation of the Islamic Conference* in **2011**.
- **Headquarters:** Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. **Members:** 57 states across four continents. **India is not a member** — it was invited to the 1969 Rabat summit but disinvited under Pakistani pressure.
- **Organs:** Islamic Summit (supreme body), Council of Foreign Ministers (annual), General Secretariat. The **Contact Group on J&K** was set up in 1994.
- **Objectives:** promote Islamic solidarity, safeguard the interests of the Muslim *Ummah*, foster international peace and harmony.

PRELIMS POINTERS **Locus standi** – the right or capacity to bring an action or appear in a matter · Rabat – Morocco; Jeddah – Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia · India has the world's third-largest Muslim population, a point often cited in India's case for engagement with the OIC · J&K and Ladakh became separate UTs under the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 (effective 31 October 2019).

SYLLABUS LINK · GS 2 — India and its neighbourhood; Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.



PRELIMS · DEFENCE

THE HINDU · PAGE 12

MoD signs ₹811-crore deal to buy 160 glide bombs for IAF

WHY IN NEWS The Ministry of Defence signed a **₹810.79-crore contract** with **Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)** to procure **160 Satellite Smart Anti-Airfield Weapons (SAT-SAAW)** and associated equipment for the Indian Air Force, under the **Buy (Indian-IDDm)** category.

MoD signs ₹811 cr. deal to buy 160 glide bombs for IAF

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a ₹810.79-crore contract with Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) on Wednesday to procure 160 Satellite Smart Anti-Airfield Weapons (SAT-

SAAW) and associated equipment for the IAF. The weapon is expected to enhance stand-off precision strike capability.

According to the Ministry of Defence, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh was present when the contract was signed in New Delhi under the Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured) category.

The SAT-SAAW is an air-to-ground precision-guided glide bomb designed to neutralise enemy airfields from stand-off range.

The Hindu, 24 September 2026 · Page 12

- ▶ **SAT-SAAW** is an **air-to-ground precision-guided glide bomb** designed to neutralise enemy airfields — runways, hardened shelters, radars — from **stand-off range**, i.e., from outside the reach of enemy air defences.
- ▶ The weapon is expected to enhance the IAF's **stand-off precision strike capability**. The contract was signed in New Delhi in the presence of Defence Secretary **Rajesh Kumar Singh**.
- ▶ The SAAW family is indigenously developed by **DRDO's Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad**; it is a light (~125 kg class) weapon with a range of about 100 km.

PRELIMS POINTERS **Stand-off weapon** – launched from a distance sufficient to evade the target's defences · **INS** – self-contained navigation using accelerometers and gyroscopes, immune to

jamming · Anti-airfield weapons aim to deny the enemy use of runways (counter-air operations) · Positive Indigenisation Lists under DAP 2020 bar the import of listed items beyond set timelines.

VALUE ADDITION · GLIDE BOMBS & DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

- **Glide bomb:** a precision-guided munition that travels long distances **without powered propulsion**, using aerodynamic lift from wings. Guided by **GPS/satellite navigation, Inertial Navigation System (INS) or laser**. Cheaper than missiles; allows the launch aircraft to stay beyond enemy air-defence range.
- **LRGB 'Gaurav':** indigenous air-launched weapon for accurate strikes on land targets from stand-off distances. Demonstrated nearly **100 km** with pin-point accuracy; operational range **30–150 km**. Winged 'Gaurav' **≈ 1,000 kg**; non-winged 'Gautham' **≈ 550 kg**. Navigation: INS + satellite guidance + digital control.
- **Buy (Indian-IDDMM)** — *Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured* — is the **highest-priority category** under the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020, requiring at least **50% indigenous content**.
- **Bharat Dynamics Ltd:** Hyderabad-based Defence PSU (Miniratna Category-I) under the Department of Defence Production; manufactures Akash SAMs, Astra air-to-air missiles, anti-tank guided missiles and torpedoes.



DRDO's Long-Range Glide Bomb 'Gaurav' — the heavier, winged member of India's glide-bomb family

SYLLABUS LINK · Prelims — Science & Technology (Defence); GS 3 — Indigenisation of technology and developing new technology; Security.



PRELIMS · ECONOMY

THE HINDU · PAGE 13

OECD forecasts India's growth at 7.1% in 2026–27

WHY IN NEWS In its **Economic Outlook Interim Report (September 2026)**, the OECD raised India's 2026–27 growth forecast to **7.1%, up from 6.3%** projected in June — the latest global body

to do so, after **Moody's, S&P Global and Fitch Ratings** raised their outlooks for India over the last week.

OECD forecasts India growth at 7.1% in '26-27

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has become the latest global body to raise its growth forecast for India in the last week, predicting that India's economy will grow by 7.1% in 2026-27, up from

6.3% forecast in June.

This comes soon after the three most-recognised global ratings agencies – Moody's, S&P Global, and Fitch Ratings – raised their respective growth outlooks for India over the last week. The OECD, in its Economic Outlook Interim Report September 2026 released on Wednesday, said

that several countries have been able to mitigate the damage from the West Asia crisis by rapid growth in artificial intelligence-related investment and production in many economies.

For India, however, it said domestic demand and government policy cushioned the impact.

"This was also the case

in China, whilst growth in several other G20 emerging market economies, such as India, Indonesia and Brazil, was underpinned by resilient domestic demand and government policies that cushioned households and firms from the impact of higher energy prices," the report said.

The Hindu, 24 September 2026 · Page 13

- ▶ The OECD said several countries mitigated damage from the **West Asia crisis** through rapid growth in **artificial intelligence-related investment and production**.
- ▶ For **India**, however, **domestic demand and government policy** cushioned the impact. This was also true of China, while growth in G20 emerging economies – **India, Indonesia and Brazil** – was underpinned by resilient domestic demand and policies that shielded households and firms from **higher energy prices**.
- ▶ **Takeaway:** India's growth is increasingly **consumption- and policy-led** rather than export-led – a buffer against external shocks, but one that places a premium on fiscal space and energy security.

VALUE ADDITION · OECD

- **Established:** 1960–61 (Convention signed in Paris, December 1960; in force 1961), succeeding the **OEEC (1948)** that administered Marshall Plan aid. **Headquarters:** Paris, France.
- **Members:** 38 countries, primarily developed economies – often called a "club of rich nations". **India is not a member** but a **Key Partner since 2007** (with Brazil, China, Indonesia and South Africa), engaging in policy dialogue, data-sharing and research.
- **Objectives:** promote prosperity and inclusive growth; encourage free-market economies; improve living standards and well-being; strengthen global economic governance.
- **Key outputs:** Economic Outlook (twice a year, with interim updates), **PISA** (student assessment), Employment Outlook, Better Life Index; hosts the **OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on BEPS** behind the two-pillar global minimum tax. The **FATF Secretariat** is housed at OECD headquarters.

PRELIMS POINTERS "Big Three" credit rating agencies – Moody's, S&P Global, Fitch · Other growth forecasters: IMF (World Economic Outlook – April & October), World Bank (Global Economic Prospects – January & June), ADB (Asian Development Outlook) · G20 includes India, Indonesia, Brazil, China among emerging economies.

SYLLABUS LINK · Prelims – Economic and Social Development, International organisations; GS 3 – Indian economy: growth, development and employment.



India and the plausible multilateralism of BRICS

WHY IN NEWS The **18th BRICS summit, held in New Delhi on September 12–13, 2026**, was the first annual summit since the U.S. and Israel launched war against Iran on February 28, 2026. Hosted by India — a close strategic partner of the U.S. and Israel — it brought together the Presidents of Iran, Russia and China. The authors (Varghese K. George & Stanly Johny) argue that BRICS offers India space to pursue **strategic autonomy** amid intensifying great-power rivalries.

◆ THREE VIEWS ON BRICS IN INDIA

- ▶ **Optimists:** BRICS can multipolarise the global order or expedite that transition. **Sceptics:** internal divisions and possible domination by Russia and China. **A third group** writes it off as an annual gathering generating "strategic noise" and urges India to focus on its U.S. partnership.

◆ CONSENSUS IN DELHI — WHY THE SUMMIT WAS A SUCCESS

- ▶ New Delhi forged consensus among all **11 members**, including the **UAE and Iran**, which are in an undeclared conflict. The **Delhi Declaration** shows members still value a BRICS worldview built on a more representative global order.
- ▶ Consensus required compromise: PM Modi was in Israel two days before the war began, and India initially refrained from condemning the attacks or the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, while Pakistan stepped in as a mediator. India then **repositioned itself as a traditional balancer** — it endorsed the SCO's **Bishkek resolution** condemning strikes on Iran and hosted Iran's President **Masoud Pezeshkian**.

◆ WHY BRICS STILL MATTERS FOR INDIA

- ▶ **Balancing without damage:** SCO and BRICS let India restore its balancing posture without harming bilateral relationships.
- ▶ **India–China guardrails:** despite no immediate border resolution, multilateral forums keep both engaged even when high-level bilateral visits stall — deepening mistrust between major powers only sharpens the security dilemma.
- ▶ **Convergence on global issues:** AI regulation, trade and finance rules, climate change and reform of multilateral bodies — members agree that **unilateralism by any bloc** hurts their interests.
- ▶ **The Washington predictability:** the U.S. approach centres on its own dominance; India was hit by varying tariffs and the U.S. House passed a **Russia sanctions Bill (September 16)** threatening tariffs of up to 100%.

◆ INDIA'S LEARNING

- ▶ The strategic partnership with the U.S. remains important, but India must not become **a frontline in the U.S.–China competition**. Countries that become frontiers in great-power rivalries pay a huge price — Pakistan, the UAE and Ukraine illustrate this.
- ▶ BRICS is not like the G-7, where American primacy is accepted. Its **internal divisions prevent domination** by any one country, while **external convergence** — the shared belief that the post-

war order is unfair — holds it together. This dialectic is "part of the reason why it should exist and flourish".

India and the plausible multilateralism of BRICS

BRICS gatherings always trigger heated debates in India. The primary reason is the importance that the strategic and policymaking community, comprising both optimists and sceptics, attaches to this platform, of which India is an integral pillar. While optimists argue that BRICS could function as an institution capable of multipolarising the global order, or expediting that transition, sceptics highlight the grouping's internal divisions and worry about its possible domination by Russia and China. A third group writes off BRICS altogether, dismissing it as little more than an annual gathering that generates strategic noise. They argue that India should be wary of close association with the grouping and instead focus on preserving and expanding its partnership with the United States, which, in their view, is the only viable path to India's rise.

The 18th BRICS summit, held in New Delhi on September 12-13, 2026, attracted greater national and global attention because of its timing and location. It was the first BRICS annual summit since the U.S. and Israel launched their unprovoked war against Iran, in India's extended neighbourhood, on February 28, 2026. The summit, which brought together the Presidents of Iran, Russia and China, among other leaders, was hosted by India, a close strategic partner of the U.S. and Israel.

Consensus in Delhi

Despite its internal contradictions and the broader chaos enveloping international politics, the summit can be seen as a success on multiple levels. That New Delhi could forge a consensus among the 11 member-countries, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Iran, which are involved in an undeclared conflict, was itself an achievement. The Delhi Declaration shows that, despite their differences and even disputes, member-countries continue to find value in supporting a BRICS worldview rooted in the pursuit of a more representative global order.

The consensus was reached through compromises by all parties. Consider India's position. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in Israel just two days before Israel and the U.S. started bombing Iran. India initially refrained from condemning the attacks or the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. This created an impression that New Delhi was siding with the U.S. and Israel. India also watched from the sidelines as Pakistan seized on the diplomatic opening created by the war and stepped in as a mediator between the U.S. and Iran. But India quickly repositioned itself as a traditional balancer in West Asia.

Multilateral platforms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and BRICS provided New Delhi with space to restore that balancing posture without causing strategic damage to its bilateral relationships. India strongly endorsed the Bishkek resolution of the SCO in September, condemning the strikes on Iran and expressing condolences to the country



Varghese
K. George



Stanley Johny

The very structure of BRICS offers India space to pursue strategic autonomy amid intensifying great-power rivalries

over the killing of Khamenei. It also hosted Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian for the Delhi BRICS summit, even as the war in West Asia grinds on. The image of Mr. Modi walking hand in hand with Mr. Pezeshkian is unlikely to fade any time soon in Washington or Tel Aviv.

Second, while there is no immediate resolution to the border problems with China, which continue to simmer, there is momentum in efforts to reset ties. Multilateral forums such as BRICS provide a platform for India and China to remain engaged even when high-level bilateral visits are not taking place. Their differences are not going to disappear; they have to learn to manage their troubled relationship. History suggests that a lack of engagement between competing major powers can only deepen mistrust, while deepening mistrust, combined with the security dilemma stemming from their competition, could have dangerous consequences. So, it is important for India and China to stay engaged, bilaterally and multilaterally, creating guardrails for competitive coexistence.

Third, on all the major global issues of the present — artificial intelligence regulation, the rules governing global trade and finance, climate change, border conflicts, and the role and status of multilateral bodies — BRICS members may have different approaches and priorities, but they converge on the point that unilateralism by any bloc or power is detrimental to their interests and to the planet.

The Washington predictability

The context in which the Delhi summit was held is also crucial. The total predictability of the U.S. approach — rather than the unpredictability that some commentators labour to establish — towards the rest of the world is that it does not care much about anything other than its own dominance. Several BRICS members have had their own difficult experiences with the U.S., and they are trying to chart their own paths forward. India, a few months ago, was slapped with varying tariffs by Washington. India was also one of the countries most affected economically by the U.S.-Israel war on Iran. On September 16, the U.S. House passed the Russia sanctions Bill, seeking to impose tariffs of up to 100% on countries including India.

India's foreign policy under Mr. Modi has been interpreted by a section of the strategic commentariat as an evident tilt towards the U.S. camp. Statements by Mr. Modi himself in the early years of his premiership that India had overcome its "hesitation of history" in ties with Washington gave further impetus to this view, though there has also been the parallel official formulation of 'sabke sath' foreign policy, or multi-alignment. India has always had a more complex view of history. And even if it has overcome its "hesitation of history", it has not abandoned the hesitations of its strategic realism.

When India looks back at history and looks around the world today, it sees that countries that

become frontiers in great-power rivalries often pay a huge price. If Pakistan's story is not instructive enough, there are two live battlefronts that illustrate this every day — the UAE and Ukraine.

The UAE and Iran would have been better off dealing with each other than facing the situation in which they currently find themselves. The UAE-Iran bilateral meeting on the sidelines of BRICS in Delhi marks an acknowledgment of this lesson and a quest to use multilateral platforms to address bilateral challenges. Ukraine, which, backed by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), has been fighting Russia for more than four years, does not have any such platform to maintain direct contact with Moscow — which leaves Kyiv's diplomatic options totally dependent on the whims and wishes of Brussels and Washington.

India's learning

This is not to argue that India should downgrade its relations with the U.S. The strategic partnership with Washington is extremely important for India's progress and development, but what India must not allow itself to become, at any cost, is a frontline in the U.S.-China competition. BRICS enables India to pursue that path without having to champion an anti-U.S. agenda or undermine its cooperation with Washington. The U.S., which had come to terms with India's firm adherence to strategic autonomy, has recently been pushing the envelope to draw New Delhi into a more subordinate relationship. For Washington, this is an ongoing theme. But India should pursue multiple pathways to its rise rather than succumb to the temptations of unequal great-power alliances.

While it is true that there are serious internal divisions among BRICS members, there is also a larger reality of external convergence of interests among them. BRICS is not an organisation like the G-7, where American primacy and the western order are accepted by all member-countries. Nor is it the case that every multilateral or plurilateral grouping is converging on all points.

The divisions within BRICS, to a certain extent, prevent any one country from dominating the grouping, while the external convergence of interests — their shared belief that the post-war international system is unfair and that a more representative order should be built — could hold the group together as it lays the foundations and builds the blocks of a new order. The dialectical relationship between internal contradictions and external convergence could ultimately produce a synthesis, which is increasingly evident in the case of BRICS. The contradictions within are therefore not a reason to question the grouping's existence; they are, in fact, part of the reason why it should exist and flourish.

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VALUE ADDITION · BRICS AT A GLANCE

- **Members (11):** Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and UAE — a platform for consultation on global political and economic governance.
- **Origin:** BRIC formalised at the first meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers on the sidelines of UNGA, New York, **2006**; first summit at **Yekaterinburg, Russia (2009)**.
- **South Africa** was admitted at the BRIC Foreign Ministers' meeting in New York (2010) and attended the 3rd summit at **Sanya (2011)**.
- **Expansion:** Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE became full members from **January 2024**; **Indonesia** in **January 2025**.

- **Partner countries (2025):** Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.
- **Institutions: New Development Bank** (HQ Shanghai; agreed at Fortaleza, 2014) and the **Contingent Reserve Arrangement** (US\$100 bn). India has chaired BRICS in 2012, 2016, 2021 and 2026.

PRELIMS POINTERS **SCO** – HQ Beijing; RATS in Tashkent; India a full member since 2017 • **Bishkek** – capital of Kyrgyzstan • **Strategic autonomy** – freedom to take foreign-policy decisions on national interest without alliance obligations • **Multi-alignment** – engaging simultaneously with rival power centres.

SYLLABUS LINK • GS 2 — Bilateral, regional and global groupings affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.



GS PAPER 3 · EDITORIAL

THE HINDU · PAGE 6

Quality control and India's manufacturing growth

WHY IN NEWS Writing in the editorial pages, Prerna Prabhakar (CSEP) and Nancy Gupta argue that India's **Quality Control Order (QCO) reassessment** must go further. Concerns over QCOs and other non-tariff barriers surfaced at the **WTO's eighth Trade Policy Review of India (July 2026)** — raised by the EU and U.S., and by BRICS members Brazil, China and Indonesia.

◆ THE QCO JOURNEY

- Products under QCOs expanded rapidly — **88 in 2019 to 765 by December 2024**. The pace slowed by end-2025 as several QCOs, especially on **intermediate goods**, were revoked or suspended over concerns on input availability, costs and supply-chain disruption.
- **The government's new order:** the **Transition Facilitation (Quality Control) Order, 2026**, notified by **DPIIT on June 25, 2026**, allows eligible firms struggling to obtain **BIS Scheme-I** certification to source products temporarily from **BIS Scheme-II**-licensed suppliers in sectors such as **toys, footwear and air conditioners**, subject to eligibility criteria and approval by a DPIIT committee.
- Still, **more than 600 QCO-covered products** remain to be reassessed — including critical intermediates for chemicals, steel, textiles, machinery and electronics, rubber and plastics.

◆ FINDINGS OF THE CSEP STUDY (CHEMICALS)

Indicator	Finding
First chemical QCO / coverage	2018; rose to 52 chemical products by 2024
Share of chemical-using firms exposed on the input side	11.8% (2019) → 56.6% (2024)
Larger firms	+9.6% production but a sharp -37% gross value added — output sustained at the cost of value addition, passing costs on through prices

Smaller firms

No significant effect on production or GVA, but a steep **-47.6% decline in profitability**

Quality control and India's manufacturing growth

India needs firms that can grow, integrate into global value chains and compete internationally. To make this happen, the Quality Control Order (QCO) reassessment exercise needs to move forward.

Concerns over India's QCOs and other non-tariff barriers also surfaced during the WTO's eighth Trade Policy Review of India, held in July 2026, and were raised not only by major trading partners such as the European Union and the United States, but also by fellow BRICS members, including Brazil, China and Indonesia.

The number of products covered under QCOs expanded rapidly after 2019, from 88 products in 2019 to 765 by the end of December 2024. However, the pace of expansion slowed considerably towards the end of 2025. This was driven by an important shift in the government's approach, with several QCOs being revoked or suspended, particularly those covering intermediate goods, as mandatory certification had raised concerns about input availability, costs and potential supply-chain disruptions.

The government's new order

Recently, the government introduced the Transition Facilitation (Quality Control) Order, 2026, notified by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) on June 25, 2026. The order seeks to ease regulatory bottlenecks by allowing eligible firms facing difficulties in obtaining BIS Scheme-I certification to source products temporarily from BIS Scheme-II-licensed suppliers in specified sectors, including toys, footwear and air conditioners. Access to this transition mechanism is subject to prescribed eligibility criteria and approval by a committee constituted by the DPIIT.

These developments are welcome steps towards reducing the risk that quality regulations inadvertently disrupt supply chains or constrain



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India's Quality Control Order (QCO) reset must go further in a changing global trade order

domestic manufacturing. More than 600 QCO-covered products remain to be reassessed, including several critical intermediate inputs used across key manufacturing sectors such as chemicals, steel, textiles, machinery and electronics, and rubber and plastics.

Existing regulations can place a disproportionate burden on smaller industrial players, both by constraining their access to critical inputs and by imposing relatively high compliance costs. Given the extensive downstream linkages of these inputs, the next phase of QCO rationalisation should focus particularly on regulations affecting intermediate goods and assess their implications not only for product quality but also for input availability, costs, competitiveness and domestic value addition.

Findings of a recent study

In this regard, a recent CSEP study examined this question in detail for firms that use chemicals. Chemicals are critical intermediate inputs for downstream sectors such as rubber and plastics, pharmaceuticals and electronics, among others. The first QCO for a chemical product was introduced in 2018, and the number of chemical products covered rose to 52 by 2024. Consequently, the share of chemical-using firms exposed to regulation on the input side rose from 11.8% in 2019 to 56.6% in 2024.

When examining the impact of QCOs on chemicals on downstream user industries, the study finds that the effects vary considerably by firm size. Among larger firms, input QCOs are associated with a 9.6% increase in production alongside a sharp 37% decline in gross value added (GVA). This suggests that while larger firms can sustain and even expand output, this comes at the cost of lower value addition, potentially reflecting higher input costs and their ability to

pass on at least part of these costs through higher output prices.

For smaller firms, input QCOs have no statistically significant effect on production or GVA but are associated with a steep 47.6% decline in profitability. This points to their more limited ability to absorb rising input costs and bear the additional compliance costs associated with QCOs.

The empirical evidence makes it clear that the adverse effects of QCOs on key inputs are not confined to smaller downstream firms. Even larger firms, which are better placed to absorb regulatory and input-cost shocks and are often able to sustain production, can experience significant declines in value addition. Supply-chain implications should therefore become an integral part of both the design of new QCOs and the reassessment of existing ones. Finally, the disproportionate burden on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) requires specific policy attention. Smaller firms need dedicated assistance to meet certification and compliance requirements, alongside appropriately designed exemptions or transition periods where compliance costs are particularly burdensome.

Quality standards, greater scale

As India works towards the ambition of Viksit Bharat 2047, achieving greater scale in manufacturing will be critical. Quality standards have an important role to play in that journey, but their success should ultimately be judged not by the number of products brought under mandatory regulation, but by whether they improve quality without constraining the scale, efficiency and competitiveness of Indian manufacturing.

The views expressed are personal

The Hindu, 24 September 2026 · Editorial, Page 6

◆ THE WAY FORWARD

- ▶ Build **supply-chain implications** into both the design of new QCOs and the reassessment of existing ones, prioritising **intermediate goods**.
- ▶ Specific support for **MSMEs** — dedicated certification assistance, calibrated exemptions and transition periods where compliance costs are burdensome.
- ▶ For **Viksit Bharat 2047**, judge QCOs not by the number of products covered but by whether they **improve quality without constraining scale, efficiency and competitiveness**.

VALUE ADDITION · QUALITY CONTROL ORDERS

- **What:** regulatory instruments issued by the Central Government through line ministries under the **BIS Act, 2016**, mandating conformity to specified Indian Standards. They **convert voluntary BIS certification into mandatory certification**.
- **Prohibition:** once in force, no one can **manufacture, import, sell, store or handle** covered products without a **BIS Standard Mark** under a valid Licence or Certificate of Conformity (CoC).
- **Imports too:** domestic rules apply equally to imports — foreign manufacturers must obtain a Licence/CoC under the **Foreign Manufacturers Certification Scheme (FMCS)**.

CONCERNS

- **High compliance costs:** intermediate-goods producers generally support QCOs, but downstream industries fear higher production costs and consumer prices. Smaller enterprises struggle more to comply.
- **Non-tariff barrier effect:** restricts imports of cheaper raw materials and may be seen by partners (US, EU and others) as NTBs, complicating trade negotiations.
- **Limited coverage:** of over 23,000 BIS standards, only a small fraction are under QCOs, mostly in steel and electronics.
- **Implementation:** delays in obtaining BIS certification can disrupt production and sales.

PRELIMS POINTERS **BIS** – National Standards Body under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution; HQ New Delhi; successor to the Indian Standards Institution (1947) · **DPIIT** – under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry · **WTO Trade Policy Review Mechanism** – periodic peer review of members' trade policies · **TBT Agreement** – WTO rules to ensure technical regulations and standards do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade.

SYLLABUS LINK · GS 3 — Indian economy and issues relating to growth; Industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth; Effects of liberalisation.



VEDANTA · PRACTICE ZONE · 24 SEPTEMBER 2026

Mains Answer Writing

MAINS Q1 · GS 2 · 15 MARKS · 250 WORDS

The recent controversy over internal dissent within the Election Commission of India has renewed the debate on its institutional independence. Discuss the constitutional and statutory framework governing the functioning of the multi-member Commission and suggest reforms to strengthen its credibility.

भारत निर्वाचन आयोग के भीतर आंतरिक असहमति से जुड़े हालिया विवाद ने इसकी संस्थागत स्वतंत्रता पर बहस को फिर से जीवित कर दिया है। बहु-सदस्यीय आयोग के कामकाज को नियंत्रित करने वाले संवैधानिक एवं वैधानिक ढाँचे की चर्चा कीजिए तथा इसकी विश्वसनीयता को सुदृढ़ करने हेतु सुधार सुझाइए। (15 अंक, 250 शब्द)

Approach:

- **Intro:** ECI as guardian of free and fair elections under Art. 324; hook — two ECs recording objections 14 times in 10 months.
- **Framework:** Art. 324(2) & (5); multi-member since 1993; T.N. Seshan (1995) — CEC first among equals, majority rule; 2023 Act — unanimity where possible, majority otherwise; Anoop Baranwal (2023) and the Act's Selection Committee.
- **Concerns:** executive-dominated selection panel; unequal removal protection for ECs; opacity of internal decisions; centralisation of electoral database; trust deficit over SIR.
- **Reforms:** equal removal protection for ECs (Law Commission 255th Report); independent collegium; recording and disclosure of dissent; independent secretariat with expenditure charged on the Consolidated Fund; third-party audit of electoral-roll databases.

- **Conclusion:** legitimacy of elections rests on both the process and the perception of neutrality.

MAINS Q2 · GS 3 · 15 MARKS · 250 WORDS

Quality Control Orders are meant to raise product standards, but their unchecked expansion risks turning them into a non-tariff barrier that hurts domestic manufacturing itself.

Critically analyse with special reference to MSMEs.

गुणवत्ता नियंत्रण आदेशों (QCOs) का उद्देश्य उत्पाद मानकों को ऊँचा उठाना है, किंतु उनका अनियंत्रित विस्तार उन्हें एक गैर-शुल्क बाधा में बदल सकता है जो स्वयं घरेलू विनिर्माण को नुकसान पहुँचाए। सूक्ष्म, लघु एवं मध्यम उद्यमों (MSMEs) के विशेष संदर्भ में आलोचनात्मक विश्लेषण कीजिए। (15 अंक, 250 शब्द)

Approach:

- **Intro:** QCOs under the BIS Act, 2016 make certification mandatory; expansion from 88 (2019) to 765 products (2024).
- **Benefits:** consumer safety, curbing substandard imports, brand India, alignment with global standards.
- **Costs:** CSEP findings — larger firms -37% GVA, smaller firms -47.6% profitability; input shortages; NTB concerns at WTO's TPR; trade-negotiation friction.
- **Steps taken:** revocation/suspension of intermediate-goods QCOs; Transition Facilitation (QC) Order, 2026.
- **Way forward:** supply-chain impact assessment, phased timelines, MSME certification support, more testing labs, faster FMCS approvals.
- **Conclusion:** quality with scale — the Viksit Bharat 2047 test.

TEST YOURSELF

10 Prelims MCQs

1 Consider the following statements regarding the CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023:

1. The Selection Committee consists of the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India.
2. A Search Committee headed by the Union Law Minister prepares a panel of names.
3. The CEC and ECs hold office for six years or until 65 years of age, whichever is earlier.

Which of the above are correct?

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

2 With reference to the removal of members of the Election Commission of India, consider:

1. The CEC can be removed only in like manner and on like grounds as a Judge of the Supreme Court.
2. An Election Commissioner can be removed only on the recommendation of the CEC.
3. The conditions of service of the CEC cannot be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment.

Which of the above are correct?

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

3 If the Chief Election Commissioner and the other Election Commissioners differ in opinion on any matter, the matter is decided:

- (a) by the CEC, whose opinion prevails (b) by the President in consultation with the Law Ministry
(c) according to the opinion of the majority (d) by referring it to the Supreme Court

4 Consider the following statements about the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC):

1. It is headquartered in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
2. It was established at a summit held in Rabat in 1969.
3. India enjoys observer status in the OIC.

Which of the above are correct?

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

5 With reference to SAT-SAAW, recently in news, consider:

1. It is a glide weapon that uses aerodynamic lift rather than continuous powered propulsion to cover long distances.
2. It is an air-to-air missile designed to intercept hostile aircraft over airfields.
3. Its procurement contract was signed under the Buy (Indian-IDDMM) category.

Which of the above are correct?

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

6 Consider the following pairs:

1. Gaurav – winged long-range glide bomb (~1,000 kg)
2. Gautham – non-winged glide bomb (~550 kg)
3. SAAW – anti-airfield weapon developed by DRDO

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

7 Consider the following statements about the OECD:

1. It is headquartered in Paris.
2. India is a full member of the OECD.
3. It conducts the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).
4. The FATF Secretariat is housed at OECD headquarters.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) All four

8 Which of the following are full members of BRICS?

1. Indonesia 2. Malaysia 3. Ethiopia 4. Nigeria 5. United Arab Emirates

Select the correct answer:

- (a) 1, 3 and 5 only (b) 2 and 4 only (c) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only (d) 1, 3, 4 and 5 only

9 Consider the following statements about BRICS:

1. The first BRIC summit was held at Yekaterinburg in 2009.
2. South Africa attended its first BRICS summit at Sanya in 2011.
3. The New Development Bank is headquartered in New Delhi.

Which of the above are correct?

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

10 With reference to Quality Control Orders (QCOs) in India, consider:

1. They are issued by the Central Government under the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016.
2. Once in force, a QCO applies to domestic manufacturers but not to imported goods.
3. The Transition Facilitation (Quality Control) Order, 2026 was notified by DPIIT.

Which of the above are correct?

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

◆ ANSWER KEY & RATIONALE

Q1	b	The 2023 Act replaced the CJI with a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the PM; the CJI-inclusive panel was the interim arrangement under <i>Anoop Baranwal</i> . Statements 2 and 3 are correct.
Q2	d	All three flow from Article 324(5). The asymmetry — ECs removable on the CEC's recommendation — is a long-standing reform demand.
Q3	c	Majority opinion prevails — upheld in <i>T.N. Seshan v. Union of India</i> (1995) and codified in the 2023 Act, which also seeks unanimity where possible.
Q4	a	India is neither a member nor an observer of the OIC; it attended the 2019 Abu Dhabi CFM as 'Guest of Honour'.
Q5	b	SAT-SAAW is an air-to- ground glide bomb meant to neutralise enemy airfields from stand-off range, not an air-to-air missile.
Q6	c	Gaurav (winged, ~1,000 kg) and Gautham (non-winged, ~550 kg) are DRDO glide bombs; SAAW is DRDO's Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon.
Q7	c	Statements 1, 3 and 4 are correct. India is a Key Partner, not a member.
Q8	a	Malaysia and Nigeria are BRICS partner countries (2025), not full members.
Q9	b	The NDB is headquartered in Shanghai ; it has a regional centre in India (GIFT City).
Q10	c	QCOs apply equally to imports — foreign manufacturers need a Licence/CoC under FMCS.

LAST-MINUTE REVISION

Quick Revision Recap

ECI row: Two ECs (Sandhu, Joshi) recorded objections at least 14 times in 10 months against CEC Gyanesh Kumar — issues include electoral-roll database centralisation, Form 6 changes, appeals against voter inclusion and 97 Goa voters left out. 2023 Act: unanimity where possible, else majority. Art. 324; multi-member since 1993; *T.N. Seshan* (1995); *Anoop Baranwal* (2023).

OIC: Contact Group on J&K (Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye) called India's May 2025 strikes "unlawful"; MEA — OIC has "no locus standi". OIC: 1969, Rabat; HQ Jeddah; 57 members; India not a member.

SAT-SAAW: ₹810.79 crore; 160 units; BDL; Buy (Indian-IDDM); air-to-ground glide bomb to neutralise airfields from stand-off range. Gaurav ≈ 1,000 kg (winged), Gautham ≈ 550 kg (non-winged).

OECD: 2026-27 India growth raised to 7.1% (from 6.3%); domestic demand and policy cushioned West Asia shock. OECD — Paris; 38 members; India a Key Partner since 2007.

BRICS: 18th summit, New Delhi, 12–13 September 2026; Delhi Declaration by consensus of 11 members incl. UAE & Iran; BRICS gives India room for strategic autonomy; internal divisions + external convergence = dialectic that sustains the group.

QCOs: 88 → 765 products (2019–24); Transition Facilitation (QC) Order, 2026 by DPIIT (25 June); CSEP: larger firms –37% GVA, smaller firms –47.6% profitability; more than 600 products still to be reassessed.

◆ PRELIMS TRAP-SETTERS

✗ "The CJI is a member of the committee that selects the CEC" — **No.** Under the 2023 Act it is PM, LoP and a Cabinet Minister.

✗ "ECs enjoy the same removal protection as the CEC" — **No.** ECs are removable on the CEC's recommendation.

✗ "The ECI conducts panchayat and municipal elections" — **No.** State Election Commissions do.

✗ "India is an observer at the OIC" — **No.** India is neither member nor observer.

✗ "SAT-SAAW is an air-to-air missile" — **No.** It is an air-to-ground glide bomb.

✗ "India is an OECD member" — **No.** India is a Key Partner.

✗ "Malaysia and Nigeria are BRICS members" — **No.** They are partner countries.

✗ "QCOs apply only to domestic producers" — **No.** Imports need BIS certification under FMCS.

◆ CONNECT THE DOTS — MAINS ENRICHMENT

Theme	Static linkage	Use in answers
Institutional integrity	Art. 324; T.N. Seshan (1995); Anoop Baranwal (2023); 2023 Act	"Collegial functioning is the internal check of a multi-member body" — Essay, GS 2 (constitutional bodies), GS 4 (accountability)
Electoral rolls & trust	RP Act, 1950; Forms 6/7/8; SIR under Section 21(3)	Audit trails for roll databases; transparency as a condition of electoral legitimacy
Kashmir diplomacy	Simla Agreement (1972); Art. 370 abrogation & J&K Reorganisation Act (2019)	Bilateralism vs. internationalisation; India's ties with Gulf states vs. OIC as a platform
Defence indigenisation	DAP 2020; Buy (Indian-IDDM); Positive Indigenisation Lists; DRDO–DPSU model	Stand-off precision weapons, cost-effective deterrence, Aatmanirbharta in defence

Growth resilience	OECD, IMF, World Bank forecasts; domestic-demand-led growth	Shock absorbers: consumption, public capex, policy buffers against energy-price shocks
Strategic autonomy	NAM legacy; BRICS, SCO, Quad, I2U2 — multi-alignment	"Internal divisions prevent domination; external convergence holds the group together"
Standards vs. scale	BIS Act, 2016; QCOs; WTO TBT Agreement; Trade Policy Review	Regulatory impact assessment; MSME compliance support; quality with competitiveness

◆ PRELIMS BYTES

National Voters' Day – 25 January (ECI's foundation day, observed since 2011) · **State Election Commissions** – Arts. 243K (panchayats) and 243ZA (municipalities) · **Symbols Order, 1968** – ECI's power to recognise parties and allot symbols · **OIC's first summit** – Rabat, 1969; renamed in 2011 · **DRDO's RCI** – Hyderabad; missile avionics and guidance · **OEEC → OECD** – 1948 → 1961 · **NDB** – Shanghai; first president K.V. Kamath (India) · **BIS** – statutory body since 1987; ISI mark for products, Hallmark for gold jewellery.

◆ PLACES & PERSONS IN NEWS

Name	Why in news
Gyanesh Kumar	Chief Election Commissioner; opposition seeks his removal
Sukhbir Singh Sandhu & Vivek Joshi	Election Commissioners who reportedly recorded objections
Rajesh Kumar Singh	Defence Secretary; present at the SAT-SAAW contract signing
Masoud Pezeshkian	President of Iran; attended the Delhi BRICS summit
Jeddah / Rabat	OIC headquarters / city where the OIC was founded (1969)
Paris	OECD headquarters
Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan)	SCO resolution condemning strikes on Iran
Goa	97 eligible voters reportedly left out of the roll

◆ GLOSSARY OF THE DAY

Collegial body – an institution whose members decide jointly, with no member able to override the others alone · **Dissent note** – a formally recorded disagreement by a member of a collective body · **Locus standi** – legal standing to act or speak on a matter · **Stand-off range** – a distance from which a weapon can be released while staying outside the enemy's defences · **Non-tariff barrier (NTB)** – a trade restriction other than a customs duty, such as standards, licensing or quotas · **Gross Value Added (GVA)** – value of output minus intermediate consumption · **Strategic autonomy** – freedom to decide on national interest without alliance obligations · **Plurilateral** – an arrangement among a limited group of countries rather than all.

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