

DISCIPLINE



Important Issues of the Day

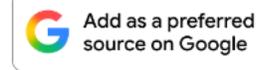
- **Board of Peace – Page No. 10, GS 2**
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A piece of board: On India and Donald Trump's Board of Peace

India must eschew temptation to be a part of Trump's peace board

Updated - January 23, 2026 01:13 am IST

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India on Thursday **skipped** the U.S. President **Donald Trump**-led “**Board of Peace**” charter announcement held in Davos, although the government is said to be still discussing the **invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi** to join it. The Board of Peace is part of the Trump administration’s **Phase 2 of the Gaza Peace Proposal**, which is meant to oversee security, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction in the Gaza strip, and pursue a path to

- **India on Thursday skipped the U.S. President Donald Trump-led “Board of Peace” charter announcement held in Davos, although the government is said to be still discussing the invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to join it.**
- **The Board of Peace is part of the Trump administration’s Phase 2 of the Gaza Peace Proposal, which is meant to oversee security, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction in the Gaza strip, and pursue a path to resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict through talks on a two-state solution.**
- **This was cleared unanimously by the UN Security Council (Russia and China abstained) last month, after Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire and all living Israeli hostages were returned home.**



- **The proposal has been welcomed by many countries, not the least because it paused Israel's relentless bombing campaign and ground operations in which more than 70,000 Palestinians have been killed including 20,000 children, in retaliation for Hamas-led terror strikes in October 2023.**
- **There are some reasons for India to seriously consider joining the BoP, as about 20 other countries already have. India has been a principled supporter of the Palestinian cause, and a consistent provider of humanitarian assistance including through the UN agency UNRWA, and this could be an opportunity to help the brutalised Palestinian population directly and help rebuild their land.**
- **The decision by regional powers UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Turkiye to join may put pressure on the Modi government to follow suit.**

- **Neither pragmatism nor principle dictates taking such a decision in haste, however, and a country of India's standing cannot act based on the fear of missing out on a position of influence, or fear of punishment by the US.**
- **Mr. Trump has appointed himself as Chairman, with personal friends and family on the Executive board**
- **For India, Pakistan's decision to join the board is a red-flag, particularly if Mr. Trump decides to include the Kashmir dispute to peace plans the BoP will seek to resolve.**

4. Consider the following pairs:

	Region often mentioned in news	Reason for being in news
1 .	North Kivu and Ituri	War between Armenia and Azerbaijan
2 .	Nagorno-Karabakh	Insurgency in Mozambique
3 .	Kherson and Zaporizhzhia	Dispute between Israel and Lebanon

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

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

Mains Question

In the context of the ongoing Israel–Palestine conflict and rising instability in West Asia, examine India's role in promoting world peace through diplomacy, strategic autonomy, and humanitarian engagement. What challenges does India face in balancing its national interests with its commitment to global peace?

(250 words | 15 marks)

इज़राइल-फिलिस्तीन संघर्ष तथा पश्चिम एशिया में बढ़ती अस्थिरता के संदर्भ में, कूटनीति, रणनीतिक स्वायत्तता और मानवीय सहायता के माध्यम से वैश्विक शांति को बढ़ावा देने में भारत की भूमिका का परीक्षण कीजिए। राष्ट्रीय हितों और वैश्विक शांति के प्रति प्रतिबद्धता के बीच संतुलन बनाने में भारत को किन चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ता है?

(250 शब्द | 15 अंक)

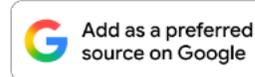
Welcome deescalation: On Donald Trump, Greenland and Europe

Europe and rest of the world should still be wary of U.S. moves

Updated - January 23, 2026 01:00 am IST



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In a move that brings a sense of relief to European nations and NATO members, **U.S. President Donald Trump**, in a speech at the World Economic Forum at Davos, **appeared to back down from the possibility of the use of force** to acquire Greenland, an autonomous Arctic territory administered by Denmark. Simultaneously, he hit out at world leaders, including from friendly countries such as Canada, France and Switzerland. His remarks came after weeks of rising tension over his earlier **proposal to impose on eight European countries a 10% tariff** on “any and all goods” beginning on February 1, which was then set to increase to 25% on June 1 until an agreement was reached for the U.S. to purchase or otherwise acquire Greenland. Given the broader context of the Trump administration

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- **The names of 10.56 lakh voters have been deleted on the draft electoral rolls of Assam which were published on Saturday after a house-to-house verification of the voter lists during the special revision exercise conducted by the Election Commission in the State from November 22 to December 20.**
- **Given the broader context of the Trump administration using military force to kidnap Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro to the U.S. and it hinting publicly at similar interventions in the affairs of Colombia, Cuba, Iran and Mexico, European nations came close to retaliating with an anti-coercion instrument that is a counter-tariff facility targeting the business of major U.S. tech firms in the EU.**
- **Hinting that the time frame of such a deal would be “infinite”, Mr. Trump also indicated that additional discussions on Greenland are ongoing, relating to the \$175 billion **Golden Dome missile defence** plan, to position U.S. weapons in space.**

- **The names of 10.56 lakh voters have been deleted on the draft electoral rolls of Assam which were published on Saturday after a house-to-house verification of the voter lists during the special revision exercise conducted by the Election Commission in the State from November 22 to December 20.**
- **U.S. President Donald Trump's plan for a “Golden Dome” to protect the United States from long-range missiles was at least partly inspired by Israel's multitiered missile defences.**
- **Mr. Trump announced the \$175 billion concept in the Oval Office on Tuesday (May 20, 2025), saying it would put the U.S. weapons in space for the first time and would be “fully operational” by the end of his term in early 2029, though a U.S. official familiar with the programme said it could take longer time.**
- **Israel's multilayered defences, often collectively referred to as the “Iron Dome,” have played a key role in defending it from rocket and missile fire from Iran and allied militant groups in the conflict unleashed by Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack.**



BENEATH THE ICE GREENLAND

a frozen mineral fortune

Home to ~57,000 people, Greenland is an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark. The country is 80% covered by the Greenland Ice Sheet, though climate change is helping uncover vast natural resources.

NATURAL RESOURCE WEALTH

\$200 B

Estimate from the American Action Forum on the value of Greenland's natural resources

Unknown, but large

36.2 million tonnes

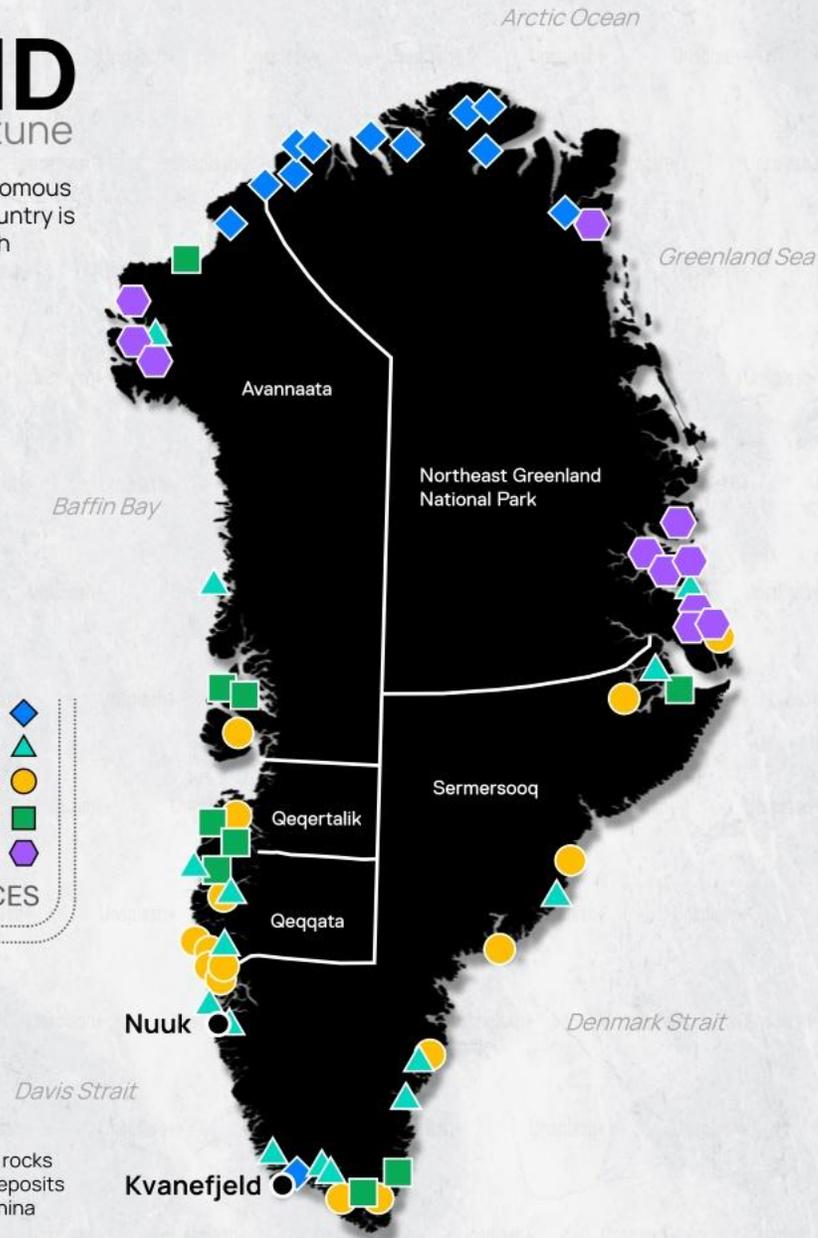
3,800 million tonnes

6.0 million tonnes

3.68 million tonnes

CRITICAL MINERAL RESOURCES

zinc	◆
rare-earths	▲
nickel	●
graphite	■
copper	⬡



Greenland Minerals and Energy estimates rocks near **Kvanefjeld** have one of the largest deposits of rare-earth oxides on Earth outside of China

Which one of the following countries has its own Satellite Navigation System?

(a) Australia

(b) Canada

(c) Israel

(d) Japan

Mains Question

India's mineral strategy has emerged as a critical pillar of economic security and strategic autonomy in the context of energy transition and global supply chain disruptions. Critically examine the objectives of India's mineral strategy and assess the challenges in ensuring sustainable, resilient, and equitable mineral resource management.

(250 words | 15 marks)

ऊर्जा संक्रमण और वैश्विक आपूर्ति शृंखला में व्यवधान के संदर्भ में भारत की खनिज रणनीति आर्थिक सुरक्षा और रणनीतिक स्वायत्तता का एक महत्वपूर्ण स्तंभ बनकर उभरी है। भारत की खनिज रणनीति के उद्देश्यों का समालोचनात्मक परीक्षण कीजिए तथा सतत, सुदृढ़ और न्यायसंगत खनिज संसाधन प्रबंधन सुनिश्चित करने में आने वाली चुनौतियों का आकलन कीजिए।

(250 शब्द | 15 अंक)

A dangerous march towards a Himalayan ecocide

Page No. 10, GS 3

In 2025, which saw nearly 331 days of near-continuous climate impacts, the human cost was staggering: over 4,000 deaths attributed to climate-induced disasters in 2025 alone, with Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand bearing the heaviest toll. Towns such as Dharali, Harsil, Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Kullu, Mandi and Kishtwar were ravaged by sudden cloudbursts, landslides, and avalanches that morphed into deadly flash floods, obliterating lives and livelihoods.

This onslaught of scorching heat, catastrophic floods and land subsidence appears to be the new normal. And yet, how does one explain the government's decision to endanger Dharali and Harsil – areas recently devastated by an avalanche-turned-flash-flood – by pushing forward a massive infrastructure project that would fell nearly 7,000 Devdar trees and countless native species?

Pushing infrastructure in a disaster zone

On November 12, the Uttarakhand Forest Department approved the felling of these trees, diverting 43 hectares of forest land for the Char Dham road-widening project, with 10 hectares meant for muck dumping. This decision again relies on the flawed DL-PS (double-lane with paved shoulder) standard that mandates a 12-metre paved surface in an area demonstrably prone to disasters.

The region, located north of the Main Central Thrust (MCT), is classified as a critical zone where major infrastructure is explicitly discouraged. There are also hanging glaciers and the area is fed by the Gangotri, one of the world's fastest receding glaciers, which sustains several unstable, moraine-laden glaciers in the valley. One of these glacier avalanches contributed to the disaster in Dharali.

This raises a pivotal and urgent question: what is the true value of these trees for this region?

The Devdar (Deodar) forests are crucial ecological assets in the delicate Himalayan landscape. Their extensive root systems stabilise slopes, prevent landslides and serve as natural barriers against avalanches and glacial debris flows, safeguarding downstream communities. These forests are also essential for the water quality of the Ganga. This is important as they are situated within the Bhagirathi Eco-Sensitive Zone, a nearly 4,000-square-kilometre buffer that was established in 2012 to protect the river's last pristine stretch.

The unique antimicrobial qualities of Devdar trees (from terpenoids, essential oils, and phenolic compounds found in the wood, bark and resin) fundamentally influence river ecology. As leaf litter and organic material enter mountain streams, they inhibit harmful bacteria while promoting the development of beneficial microbial communities, resulting in a naturally regulated, biologically active river system, especially in the upper reaches where industrial pollution remains limited.

These forests also maintain cooler microclimates, regulate water temperature in snowmelt-fed streams, and help sustain dissolved oxygen levels essential for aquatic life.



Mallika Bhanot

is a member of Ganga Ahvaan, a citizen forum working for Himalaya-Ganga conservation, and Member of the Bhagirathi Eco-sensitive Zone Monitoring Committee



C.P. Rajendran

is an Adjunct Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, and author of the book, 'The Rumbling Earth: The Story of Indian Earthquakes'

In the ecologically vulnerable Himalayas, disaster resilience must take precedence over disaster-prone projects and infrastructure

Deforestation would trigger warmer air and water, reduced oxygen, diminished bacteriophage activity, and an irreversible shift in the river's ecological character. This is why the Supreme Court, in its judgment, discouraged the felling of precious deodar trees in the area.

However, recent proposals by forest departments suggest "translocating" these ancient trees – an ecologically flawed notion. Uprooting centuries-old Devdars is tantamount to cutting them down. Their complex, site-specific ecological functions cannot be replicated elsewhere, and no suitable alternative terrain exists. Their preservation is not a matter of convenience but of environmental necessity.

A project built on falsehoods

The Char Dham Road Widening Project has been built on falsehoods. Its execution is a case study in how not to build in the Himalayas. This is evident in the bypassing of a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment, through project fragmentation, the adoption of an incorrect road-width standard contrary to its own mandate, the destabilising practice of vertical hill-cutting on fragile slopes, and the indiscriminate dumping of muck in vital water sources.

These are the consequences – along the nearly 700 kilometres of widened road, over 800 active landslide zones have emerged. Key border routes have been closed for extended periods, and the government's touted "all-weather road" is now derisively called an "all-paidal (all-pedal)" road by locals.

To prevent such damage, the government needed only to regulate road width and prioritise stability over excessive widening, as warned by experts. Yet the Union Minister's recently proposed remedy, which is belated and inadequate – to retrofit slopes with Swiss fibreglass bolts and wire mesh – comes eight years after large-scale destabilisation.

The fundamental failure lies not in the absence of reinforcement, but in the original engineering decision to execute excessively steep hill cuts. Cutting slopes at angles that violate the natural "angle of repose" of Himalayan geology is a profound act of either ignorance or hubris. No amount of anchoring later can rectify this intrinsic flaw that was engineered into the landscape from the outset.

The Union Government's current developmental initiatives directly contradict a key policy framework: the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE).

Approved in 2014 under the National Action Plan on Climate Change, the NMSHE was established to protect the fragile Himalayan ecology. Its mandate includes monitoring glaciers and biodiversity, mitigating natural hazards and securing sustainable livelihoods for Himalayan communities. It was designed to build scientific capacity and guide policymakers toward genuinely sustainable development.

The government, therefore, owes the nation a clear explanation on why its actions violate its own flagship environmental policy. When *Devbhoomi* (the land of the gods) is turned against

the *Devdaaru*, which are believed to be abodes of the deities, this is not development. It is a profound betrayal of traditional culture, ecology and scientific reason. Better sense must prevail, and those who enable these prejudiced, mindless, and disaster-prone projects must be held accountable.

The vulnerability of the Himalayan – one of the world's most climate-sensitive landscapes – is escalating. The current snowless winters and raging forest fires in this area resonate with the conclusion of a recent study, revealing that high-altitude areas have been warming 50% faster than the global average since 1950. This accelerated warming means extreme weather events such as the Dharali disaster will become increasingly frequent and severe.

If border security, connectivity and national interest are our true objectives, then disaster resilience must take precedence over disaster-prone infrastructure. This is not a matter of ideology; it is a scientific, ecological, and economic necessity.

The primary catalyst for disasters is unsafe land use: cutting into unstable slopes for wide highways, drilling massive tunnels without adequate geological surveys, and constructing large-scale hydropower projects. These activities have been repeatedly flagged by the National Green Tribunal and other bodies. Crucially, the clearance of deodar forests removes the natural anchors that bind fragile soils, directly accelerating erosion and amplifying the risk of landslides and floods.

While this development provides the fuse, climate change acts as a powerful "risk multiplier." It intensifies the threat by creating erratic rainfall patterns, supercharging weather events and accelerating glacial melt. This leads to a dangerous "water peak phase" of increased run-off and catastrophic flash floods, which, once the glaciers have fully retreated, inevitably gives way to a prolonged phase of water scarcity and drought.

These physical pressures are compounded by unsustainable human behaviours, including unregulated tourism, unchecked vehicular traffic in fragile zones, and the absence of carrying capacity assessments or functional solid waste management plans. These symptoms point to deeper, systemic governance failures: a persistent prioritisation of short-term, economic gains over long-term disaster resilience, and a chronic inability to plan and implement genuine, science-based sustainable development policies.

The subcontinent's foundation

This ground reality solidifies the axiom that "without the Himalayas, there is no India." The range is more than just a geographical entity; it is the very foundation of the subcontinent's existence. The Himalayas have shaped India into a fertile and habitable land, while also forging a syncretic cultural identity as enduring and majestic as the mountains themselves. The continuing sequence of disasters in the Himalayas is a non-negotiable lesson in earth system science and a loud reminder that India exists because of the Himalaya.

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- **Deforestation would trigger warmer air and water, reduced oxygen, diminished bacteriophage activity, and an irreversible shift in the river's ecological character. This is why the Supreme Court, in its judgment, discouraged the felling of precious deodar trees in the area.**
- **However, recent proposals by forest departments suggest “translocating” these ancient trees — an ecologically flawed notion. Uprooting centuries-old Devdars is tantamount to cutting them down.**

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- **These are the consequences — along the nearly 700 kilometres of widened road, over 800 active landslide zones have emerged. Key border routes have been closed for extended periods, and the government's touted "all-weather road" is now derisively called an "all-paidal (all-pedal)" road by locals.**
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- **Approved in 2014 under the National Action Plan on Climate Change, the NMSHE was established to protect the fragile Himalayan ecology.**
- **Its mandate includes monitoring glaciers and biodiversity, mitigating natural hazards and securing sustainable livelihoods for Himalayan communities. It was designed to build scientific capacity and guide policymakers toward genuinely sustainable development.**
- **If border security, connectivity and national interest are our true objectives, then disaster resilience must take precedence over disaster-prone infrastructure. This is not a matter of ideology; it is a scientific, ecological, and economic necessity.**

Mains Question

The Himalayan ecosystem is ecologically fragile yet central to India's water security, biodiversity, and disaster resilience. Examine the impact of developmental activities such as hydropower projects, road construction, and tourism on the Himalayan region. How can India achieve a balance between ecological conservation and sustainable development in the Himalayas?

(250 words | 15 marks)

हिमालयी पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र पारिस्थितिक दृष्टि से अत्यंत संवेदनशील होने के साथ-साथ भारत की जल सुरक्षा, जैव विविधता और आपदा सहनशीलता के लिए भी अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है। जलविद्युत परियोजनाओं, सड़क निर्माण और पर्यटन जैसी विकासात्मक गतिविधियों के हिमालयी क्षेत्र पर प्रभावों की चर्चा कीजिए। हिमालय क्षेत्र में पर्यावरण संरक्षण और सतत विकास के बीच संतुलन भारत कैसे स्थापित कर सकता है?

(250 शब्द | 15 अंक)

BRICS India summit needs a green and resilient agenda

The next BRICS Summit will be held in India this year. Having hosted the G-20 (2023), infrastructure and organisational processes are in place, but India must quickly hone in on the Summit's focus. This should obviously resonate with India and BRICS, but critically be an issue that is of vital importance for the Global South.

Given its vastly increased vulnerabilities to climate change, resilience is a top priority for the South, and also underscores India's and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's global leadership on an inclusive green agenda.

Need for a stabilising force

In the Trump polar world, collaborative multilateralism is under immense stress, with climate change being particularly singled out by the United States and being called a hoax along with a visible push for more fossil fuel use. The Donald Trump administration has said that it will withdraw the U.S. from 66 international organisations, which includes the India-helmed International Solar Alliance. In fact, the U.S. stayed away from the COP30 in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025 – something that possibly ensured a continuation of the COP process. With the Europeans, who for long positioned themselves as climate champions, facing domestic climate fatigue and external national security priorities, there is a certain space for a stabilising force for collaborative action on sustainability and resilience. BRICS can endeavour towards this.

The acronym, BRICS, however, raises the hackles of President Trump who thinks that it is anti-American and an attempt to dislodge the dollar. Given the vast gamut of India-U.S. ties, including the imperative of an acceptable trade deal, staying clear of massive tariffs relating to



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It is a critical imperative for the Global South and under an expanded BRICS

Russian oil imports and ensuring a certain presidential happiness in Washington DC will certainly need a certain adroitness on the part of India at the BRICS Summit. Such diplomatic capacity was on display during the G-20 Summit in Delhi that saw a successful balancing of global geopolitics with Indian interests, including protecting its strategic autonomy through multi-alignment and leadership of the Global South.

Climate change is a common concern

At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the old grouping of BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, China) has been useful and will continue to have its role but a larger grouping of major developing country players may add greater heft. This was seen in Belém to ensure that the handling of fossil fuels did not stymie development imperatives of developing countries. Climate impacts, while varying in form and intensity, are a common concern across BRICS, ranging from risks to infrastructure, health, livelihoods and ecosystems arising from permafrost thaw, pressures on the Amazon and the Himalayas, and growing vulnerabilities in coastal and riverine regions. It is in their own interest to collectively advance a stronger international agenda on adaptation, resilience, equity and sustainable development.

This role is further reinforced by several BRICS members having shouldered responsibility for steering the global climate process after the Paris Agreement came into force. Brazil, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have presided over climate conferences in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period, helping safeguard momentum on climate action. A BRICS act would also be useful on a unilateral side-stepping of UNFCCC principles such as the European Union's Carbon

Border Adjustment Mechanism. An opening of a broader climate debate, including trade, was initiated at Belém.

A major outcome of the July 2025 BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro was BRICS Leaders' Framework Declaration on Climate Finance, a matter where India has been strong in articulating the demands of the Global South.

With finance being the key enabler for climate action, there is a need to include the World Bank and International Monetary Fund chiefs in the BRICS Summit. It is not the time not to treat them as "theirs (G-7 or G-20's)" and not just confine BRICS to the New Development Bank. Any global push on climate finance without them is hardly possible, given the U.S.'s antipathy to climate change – a fact also reflected in how their corporates and private monies are reacting, including pulling back from Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) requirements and even 'green' bonds and other funds.

BRICS is now about Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, and the UAE, together comprising half of the global population, around 40% of global GDP, and around 26% of global trade. Its voice and heft are considerable.

A chance for Indian to drive change

As the helmsman of BRICS this year, India is in a pivotal position to push for collaborative global action, at least as among much of the world that will join, on resilience and an inclusive green agenda. This will be in its interest as well as a critical imperative for the Global South.

Moreover, geopolitically for India, a BRICS push keeps Chinese ambitions on global leadership on a green agenda in check. India's green agenda focusing on resilience at the BRICS Summit 2026 would also resonate with Ethiopia, the host of COP32 in 2027.

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- **Given its vastly increased vulnerabilities to climate change, resilience is a top priority for the South, and also underscores India's and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's global leadership on an inclusive green agenda.**
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In which one of the following groups are all the four countries members of G20?

- (a) Argentina, Mexico, South Africa and Turkey**
- (b) Australia, Canada, Malaysia and New Zealand**
- (c) Brazil, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam**
- (d) Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and South Korea**

National Legislative Index (NLI)



- **At the 86th All India Presiding Officers Conference, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla announced the initiation of a National Legislative Index (NLI) to objectively assess and compare the performance of legislatures.**
- **The National Legislative Index is a proposed performance-evaluation framework to objectively measure and compare the functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures using predefined indicators.**

Aim:

- **To promote healthy competition among legislatures.**
- **To enhance efficiency, accountability, and quality of legislative deliberation.**
- **To make legislatures more people-centric and outcome-oriented.**

Key features:

- **Objective performance metrics:** Assesses legislatures on measurable parameters such as number of sittings, legislative output, committee work, and utilisation of House time, reducing subjective political judgement.
- **Comparative and competitive framework:** Enables comparison across Parliament and State Legislatures to foster healthy competition and best-practice sharing.
- **Accountability & transparency focus:** Encourages discipline, quality debate, and citizen-centric law making by linking performance with public scrutiny.

Significance:

- **Discourages disruptions and improves deliberative quality,** reinforcing legislatures as core pillars of constitutional democracy.
- **Aligns institutional performance with long-term national development goals** by making legislatures more efficient and outcome-oriented.

Thank You!

