

EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

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BRICS bridges Iran-UAE divide, adopts New Delhi Declaration

Last-minute compromise on language about war in West Asia enables a consensus in the bloc, declaration calls for 'maximum restraint' in war with no specific mention of strikes; it rebukes Israel and calls for humanitarian aid to Gaza

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India forged a consensus of BRICS countries on Saturday, after Iran and the United Arab Emirates agreed to a last-minute compromise on the language used about the war in West Asia, allowing the 11-member grouping to adopt the New Delhi Declaration at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The statement, which did not directly mention the attacks against Iran by the United States and Israel nor Iran's subsequent strikes on its Persian Gulf neighbours, including the UAE, called for "maximum restraint" in the war. It made no separate mention of the Russian war in Ukraine.

The meeting was attended by the leaders of eight member countries, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, and the leaders of Indonesia, Ethiopia, Egypt, and South Africa. Brazil and the UAE sent high-level representatives.

Significantly, given India's close ties with Israel and Mr. Modi's own visit to Jerusalem in February, the grouping declared its strong criticism of the country for its bombardment of Gaza. It expressed support for South Africa's case against Israel in international courts, calling for the provision of humani-

Common ground

The New Delhi Declaration adopted at the 18th BRICS summit reaffirmed members' commitment to the bloc's spirit of mutual respect, sovereign equality, and democracy

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

■ Iran, UAE **back down** from tough positions as text on West Asia **omits direct references** to U.S.-Israel attack on Iran and Iran attack on UAE

■ Support for Palestinian state and strong **8-para criticism** of Israel for strikes on Gaza and Lebanon, and displacement of Palestinians

■ It condemns imposition of **unilateral coercive measures** like tariffs and sanctions

■ Call for comprehensive reform of UN, support for **greater role** for Brazil, India in UNSC

■ Support for BRICS trade mechanisms, including **intra-BRICS payments** through national currencies



■ It strongly **condemns terrorism** in all forms, including the 2025 Pahalgaon attack

itarian aid in Gaza.

The New Delhi declaration called for "comprehensive reform" of the United Nations, including support for Brazil and India to get a bigger role in the Security Council. It also stressed the need to protect civilians and expressed "deep concern" over attacks on civilian infrastructure and nuclear facilities in West Asia, in reference to the U.S. and Israel's missile strikes in Iran.

Addressing the leaders, Mr. Modi said that 20 years after the grouping of emerging economies was originally formed, BRICS was "coming of age" with a "distinct identity" not aimed against others on the global stage. "We respect each other's perspectives and move forward through consensus. We strive to move ahead with an approach that is not against anyone but instead seeks to take everyone along," the Prime Minister

said, in a possible reference to the criticism of BRICS in the U.S. as an "anti-western" grouping.

Mr. Modi suggested that BRICS build a "troika" system like the G-20, so incoming and outgoing Presidents of the grouping bring continuity to discussions. He also proposed a road map for global governance reform, a seafarer distress network, and a BRICS global south mechanism for skill development in new technologies. Chinese President Xi Jinping, who held an hour-long bilateral meeting with Mr. Modi after the session, announced that China would take over the presidency of BRICS for the next year. The grouping had become the "world's most influential platform for cooperation among emerging markets and developing countries," he said.

The declaration also criticised the U.S. blockade of Cuba, and expressed

concern over violence in Sudan.

Previous ministerial meetings of BRICS this year had failed to issue joint statements on the Iran-UAE tussle. Sources privy to the negotiations said that Iran had wanted a strong condemnation of the U.S. and Israel for starting the war with strikes that assassinated its Supreme Leader, similar to the statement issued by the SCO grouping, which does not include the UAE. The UAE wanted "equal condemnation" of Iran's attacks against its neighbours. Eventually, the text agreed to include non-specific references to the conflict.

'Months of discussions'

The consensus was achieved through months of "threadbare" discussions, according to Sudhakar Dalela, Indian Sherpa at the talks and Secretary (Economic Relations) in the Ministry of External Af-

Modi makes a strong pitch for global reform

NEW DELHI

Highlighting the current imbalance between decision-makers and those impacted by their decisions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday made a strong pitch for global reform and called for BRICS to transition from "rule-takers to rule-shapers". » PAGE 5

airs. He was addressing a media briefing after the closed BRICS session on the future of global governance and strengthening multilateralism. Side-stepping a question from *The Hindu* on whether India had asked for support from other leaders in BRICS to help convince Iran and UAE to agree to the draft language, he said that the cooperation and collaboration of all members was "key".

He also underlined BRICS countries' consensus against cross-border terrorism, with a specific reference to the Pahalgaon terror attack in 2025.

On Sunday, Mr. Modi will chair a session of BRICS Plus countries and regional representatives for an outreach session that will include the leaders of Malaysia, Uzbekistan, Uganda, Vietnam, and Kazakhstan.

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GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE HINDU PAGE: 04

India building economic bridges amid rise in global trade barriers, says Modi

At the BRICS Business Forum, PM calls for freedom of navigation; Putin says leading powers of the late 20th century being replaced by emerging economies; Pezeshkian highlights link between economic security and national security, urges BRICS nations to expand trade in local currencies

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday highlighted the issue of rising trade barriers and constrained sea trade routes, saying India was building bridges among these constraints and using its presidency of BRICS this year to establish new cooperation networks among the BRICS nations. He was speaking at the BRICS Business Forum in New Delhi.

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke about how the leading powers of the late 20th century were being replaced by new emerging economies and that this competition was now taking "ugly forms" such as military attacks and threats of secondary sanctions.

During his speech, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian highlighted the dangers of the global financial system being dependent on only a few countries and called for increased BRICS trade in local currencies. He also said that the attacks by the U.S. and Israel on his country showed how economic security could not be separated from national and regional security.

Mr. Modi took note of the fact that BRICS coun-



At the forum: Prime Minister Narendra Modi holds the hand of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian as they walk alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa. ANI

tries represented 50% of the world's population, 40% of global GDP, and more than 25% of global trade.

Cooperation networks

"Not only that, over these years, while global GDP has increased by around two-and-a-half times, the combined GDP of BRICS countries has increased by around four-and-a-half times," he said.

Mr. Modi said that while trade barriers were increasing around the world, India was building economic bridges. "Since 2014, we have entered into free trade agreements with around 40 countries," he

said. "Here too, our approach is the same: reduce barriers and increase opportunities for businesses. Therefore, under our presidency [of BRICS in 2026], we have established new cooperation networks in areas such as agriculture, health, skills and smart grids," he said.

He added that India has taken additional initiatives such as the BRICS Incubator Network, BRICS MSME Portal, and Start-Up Innovation Fund to connect start-ups and MSMEs with markets and finance.

Profound global shifts

"Global trade can move forward only when sea

technological and scientific advantages, Mr. Putin said it was in the nature of humanity and the economy to change.

He added that this change was accompanied by Russia's "Western competitors doing everything to get back their erstwhile competitive edge".

"Sometimes this competition is taking ugly forms," Mr. Putin noted. "Sometimes there are measures resorted to of a physical nature, when pipelines are being destroyed, when attempts are undertaken to block international transport corridors, to seize maritime vessels, other illegal restrictions are being applied."

"And there's also the threat of so-called secondary sanctions against those who do not want to follow someone else's interest and rather look after their own," he added, without mentioning India or the U.S. threat to impose 100% tariffs on India as a penalty for its Russian oil imports.

Mr. Pezeshkian also noted the "increasing use of economic instruments to exert political pressure", and asked the assembled leaders what the BRICS response would be to the ongoing global challenges.

"We believe that the true strength of BRICS is

not confined merely to the size of its members' economies," he said. "Rather, it becomes more apparent when these capacities are transformed into a network of trade, investment, and joint financing that is a transition from potential cooperation to operational."

Mr. Pezeshkian talked about how the decades of sanctions Iran has faced has now entered a new phase as a result of the "active military act of aggression of the United States and the Israeli regime" against Iran.

"This act of aggression, in addition to its human and material losses, once again revealed an important reality: economic security cannot be separated from national and regional security," he emphasised.

"Therefore, by creating resilient capacities for the economies of its members and the global south, BRICS must create an environment in which no country can disrupt the legitimate trade of another country through monopolising a financial instrument or technology," Mr. Pezeshkian said.

He said that one of the most important steps the BRICS countries could take was to expand the use of national currencies in trade.

GS 2: POLITY

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Why has the Census been deferred in Manipur?

Why are many civil society organisations demanding that the State's National Register of Citizens be prepared first? What are the differences between some communities and the Kukis on this issue? How is the NRC demand related to the Manipur ethnic conflict?

Rahul Karmakar

The story so far:

In August 31, the Centre deferred the Census operations in Manipur amid demands from several community-based and civil society organisations (CSOs) to first conduct the State's National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise with 1951 as the base year. The decision followed Union Home Minister Amit Shah's meeting with Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla and Chief Minister N. Biren Singh in New Delhi. The message conveyed was that Manipur can ill-afford fresh tension amid the ongoing Kuki-Meitei and Kuki-Naga conflicts, with elections to the State's 60-member Assembly less than a year away.

What led to the Census deferment?

The decennial Census operation in poll-bound Manipur was scheduled to start on September 1. Data collection for the exercise began in January.

A few months later, several community-based and CSOs began opposing the scheduled headcount, demanding that the State's NRC be prepared first. The Meiteis, who are in the majority in Imphal Valley, opposed the Census 2027 exercise. The Meitei Pangals (Muslims), largely inhabiting the valley, joined the NRC-before-Census bandwagon, as did the Nagas, who dominate at least five of the State's 10 hill districts.

The Kuki community, led by the Kuki-Zo Council, supported the Census operation. Their leaders said an impartial headcount would dispel false claims about Kuki population growth and the perception that they were "illegal migrants", and ensure a fair delimitation process based on verified population numbers. The Kukis also said updating the NRC before the Census was premature and biased, fearing that the community members might face unfair exclusion if 1951 was used as the base year. This is because there remains a perception among some communities that the Kukis are not the

Pro-NRC groups say an NRC is necessary to identify "illegal migrants" who migrated to Manipur from Bangladesh, Burma (Myanmar), and Mizoram to "pose a threat" to the State's "original inhabitants".

"original" inhabitants.

However, the other communities intensified their pro-NRC protests. Shutdowns and boycotts of all the Central and State government offices followed. A citizens' group, Campaign for Just and Fair Delimitation, threatened to intensify its protest. Leaders of 14 CSOs met with the Governor before travelling to New Delhi to meet with the Union Home Secretary, Registrar General of India, and the High-Level Committee on Demographic Change to explain why Manipur needed the NRC to find a permanent solution to the ethnic conflict that has scarred the State since May 3, 2023.

Has the Census been deferred or withheld earlier?

Yes, at least thrice. The exercise was withheld or not conducted in 1981 for Assam, which was in the midst of a mass movement (1979-1985) against undocumented immigration. The agitators feared that conducting a Census amidst unresolved citizenship disputes would legitimise illegal settlers on the voters' list. Normal Census operations were resumed after the Assam Accord was signed in August 1985.

The 1991 Census for Jammu and Kashmir was also not conducted due to the rise of extremist activities and the mass exodus of Kashmiri Hindus (Pandits) from the Kashmir Valley following widespread violence.

The 2021 Census cycle was postponed nationally due to the COVID-19 pandemic and rescheduled to 2026-27.

What is the argument of the pro-NRC groups?

In a memorandum submitted to the Governor on July 1, the 14 CSOs said an NRC was necessary to identify "illegal migrants" who migrated to Manipur from Bangladesh, Burma (Myanmar), and Mizoram to "pose a threat" to the State's "original inhabitants". They claimed that the Inpui, Kabuis, Liangmais, Maos, Marams, Meiteis, Poumais, Rongmeis, Tangkhuls, and Zemes were the original inhabitants. They said the population of Meitei Pangals, descendants of Muslims from present-day Bangladesh who migrated to the State since 1606 and settled by marrying Manipuri women, increased to 2,39,886 (Census 2011) from 4,881 in 1881 with an "unexpected" growth rate of 4,814% over 130 years. The population of the Meiteis and the original tribes increased by 880% and 897%, respectively, during this period, they said.

Claiming large-scale migration into Manipur's hills from Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Mizoram since the 15th century, the CSOs said the total population in the hills jumped to 5,49,599 in 2011 from 25,384 in 1881, recording a growth rate of about 2,165%. They said protecting their ancestral land from "infiltrators" and keeping their socio-cultural environment intact became a "headache" for most original inhabitants, given the demographic scenario.

The CSOs said those who fail to establish a

link between people in the 1951 Census and those in the (demanded) NRC should be declared "non-citizens of Manipur" and duly detected and deported.

How is the NRC demand linked to Manipur's ethnic conflict?

The Manipur government has consistently backed the NRC. Its formal demand gained traction after the Manipur Legislative Assembly adopted a unanimous resolution on August 5, 2022, seeking the establishment of a State Population Commission and the implementation of the NRC. One of the triggers was the military coup in Myanmar in February 2021, following which several hundred people crossed over to Manipur through porous borders. Most of those who took refuge were Kuki-Chin, ethnically related to the Kukis of Manipur and the Mizos of Mizoram. Many in Manipur blame the illegal influx for the ongoing ethnic conflict, first between the Kukis and Mizos and then between the Kukis and Nagas, which has claimed almost 300 lives since May 2023 and displaced more than 62,000 people. Although the State government or any other agency has not conducted any survey of "illegal immigrants", Meiteis and Nagas believe that the Kuki population has jumped exponentially in the hill districts. While non-tribal Meiteis feel the Census could reduce their representation in the Assembly from the current 40 seats, the Nagas believe the scale could tip in favour of the Kukis in the hills. The 20 Assembly seats in the hills are divided equally between the Kukis and the Nagas. The latter, however, say the hill areas should have had at least three more Assembly seats based on the 2011 population.

Is an error-free NRC guaranteed?

The NRC, entailing the transfer of data from Census slips, was born out of independent India's first Census in 1951. Assam compiled the NRC in 1951, although all States were mandated to do so. The intention behind that exercise in Assam was to prepare a village-based inventory of residents in view of the resistance from the State – then undivided – to house post-Partition refugees. The fear of the indigenous people of being outnumbered by "illegal immigrants" during and after the 1971 Bangladesh War led to the Assam Agitation from 1979 to 1985. A demand during the agitation was to eject undocumented foreigners by updating the 1951 NRC. The exercise, supervised by the Supreme Court, began in 2014, and the complete draft was published on August 31, 2019. This draft excluded 19.06 lakh out of the 3.3 crore people who had applied for inclusion. The Assam NRC process, however, remains incomplete because the Registrar General of India has not issued any notification declaring it as final. Organisations such as the All Assam Students' Union claim the NRC 2019 was manipulated to pass a majority of an estimated 41 lakh illegal immigrants as citizens. The BJP-led Assam government remains adamant that the NRC was erroneous, with at least 20% of the enlisted names in districts bordering Bangladesh requiring re-verification. Assam's updated NRC has been in limbo, with cases against it pending in the Supreme Court.



Women hold placards during a sit-in protest demanding the conduct and update of the National Register of Citizens before the Census, in Imphal. ANI

GS 2: POLITY

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Why is NCPDR investigating Meta, Instagram?

What did a BBC investigation show? Why is child sexual exploitation and abuse material appearing on Instagram? Under what powers can the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights summon social media platforms and other companies?

Aroon Deep

The story so far:

Following an investigation by British public broadcaster BBC, which found that Instagram was running paid advertisements promoting child sexual exploitation and abuse material (CSEAM) in India, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) summoned Meta officials for a hearing on September 9. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has also summoned the company on the issue.

What did the BBC investigation show?

In July, BBC created a test account and found that dozens of ads were promoting CSEAM on Instagram. The distribution of CSEAM is a criminal offence in India.

Meta's policy also states that ads must not contain content that sexually exploits children. Meta said in a statement, "Before these cases were brought to our attention, our enforcement

While social media platforms prohibit CSEAM, automatic moderation systems that use some AI to detect unlawful media are not able to catch every violative submission

systems had already identified and disabled several of the violating ads and the accounts behind them." The company said that it automatically removes millions of CSEAM posting accounts each year, but that "no system is perfect and that determined criminals will continue to try to exploit our platform".

This month, the Tech Transparency Project (TTP), a U.S.-based nonprofit, also reported that it found hundreds of CSEAM ads on Facebook and Instagram, including some served to India.

Why are CSEAM ads appearing on Instagram?

While social media platforms prohibit CSEAM, automatic moderation systems that use some AI to detect unlawful media are not able to catch every violative submission. TTP said that Meta's efforts were not enough even within the scope of what it could do. The nonprofit said that, even in cases where Meta did take down CSEAM, it sometimes classified the ads as adult sexual content, potentially "undercounting instances of child sexual abuse".

While Meta revised this information for ads reported by TTP, it "did not fix the flow of child exploitation content in its advertising system" and continued to show CSEAM ads to certain audiences, the nonprofit said. One of the ads appeared to feature an unidentified "underaged European royal," TTP said.

Even when a human reported CSEAM posts, action was not guaranteed, TTP found. "With 57% (73) of the CSEAM ads reported to Meta, the company sent back a message that said, 'We've taken a look and found that this ad doesn't go against our Advertising Standards,'" TTP said.

What was the NCPDR's reaction to the report?

NCPDR issued a notice on July 3, the same day the BBC report came out, demanding an explanation from the company. MeitY also

sought an explanation from Meta.

Shortly after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's July 23 video message to the Indian youth was briefly removed from Facebook due to an "error," MeitY summoned Meta's global public affairs director, Joel Kaplan, to demand an explanation for that removal. The BBC's report was also discussed during that meeting. The government's summons came as it sent a large number of takedown notices over Instagram posts about the Jantar Mantar protests, while footage of the protests and the ensuing police crackdown went viral.

Meta provided written responses to both MeitY and NCPDR. The latter declined a Right to Information request by *The Hindu* for a copy of the company's response, arguing that providing this information would impede its investigation.

After the written response, Meta officials were summoned by NCPDR this month. Neither side provided a description of the meeting.

What powers does NCPDR have to conduct an inquiry like this?

Like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the NCPDR's founding law, the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, gives the body the powers of a civil court under the Criminal Procedure Code (replaced by the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023). As such, it has the statutory power to demand explanations on issues of child safety from private organisations and can demand reports from law enforcement. NCPDR's remit includes "matters relating to children in need of special care and protection, including children in distress, marginalised and disadvantaged children, children in conflict with law, juveniles, children without family, and children of prisoners, and recommend appropriate remedial measures," and to "[i]nquire into complaints [relating to] non-implementation of laws providing for protection and development of children," the commission said.

NCPDR has in the past issued notices to companies such as Netflix in response to the show *Bombay Begums*, and to Bournvita maker Mondelez over sugar content in their malt powder.



The new Instagram logo. REUTERS

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Senior living market can grow into a \$10.1 bn prospect: ASLI-JLL

Soundariya Preetha

COIMBATORE

India's senior living market is expected to become a \$10.1 billion opportunity by 2030, requiring \$7.7 billion capital investment to meet new supply under a policy-driven scenario, according to a ASLI-JLL report "India's Silver Economy: From Niche to Necessity".

"With over 166 million Indians aged above 60 and the number projected to double by 2050, there is a need to build an ecosystem of senior citizens. The organised senior living facility penetration is just 1.5%. The opportunity is about



The organised senior living sector reached 25,050 dwelling units as of June 2026.

building a strong, accessible, and trusted senior care ecosystem," G. Rajagopal, chairman of the Association of Senior Living India (ASLI), said in a press release.

The addressable market

of urban, financially independent senior households in India is expected to grow from 1.7 million in 2026 to 2.1 million by 2030. The opportunity is not just in senior living friendly properties and communities but includes assisted care, healthcare, specialised care, rehabilitation, and other supporting services, says the report.

The organised senior living sector reached 25,050 dwelling units as of June 2026 (at 1.5 %) compared with 6-7 % in the U.S. and 14-15% in New Zealand. The sector registered 14.2 % CAGR between 2024 and first half of 2026.

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INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 8

Four agricultural initiatives announced, aimed at climate resilience, productivity

Harikishan Sharma

New Delhi, September 12

THE BRICS nations on Saturday announced four new agriculture initiatives, including the establishment of Agroecology and Regenerative Agriculture for Climate Resilience and Productivity and Digital Agriculture.

In a significant breakthrough for India, the BRICS grouping adopted the New Delhi joint declaration with consensus, in which the leaders also agreed to the establishment of a collaborative, non-binding, and farmer-centric BRICS AGRIN (Agro-Inputs, Genetic Resources, and In-

• 4 AGRI INITIATIVES

BRICS AGRIN (Agro-Inputs, Genetic Resources, and Information Network)

GLOBAL FORUM on Farmers' Rights in Seed Systems

BRICS NETWORK of Centres of Excellence on Agroecology and Regenerative Agriculture for Climate Resilience and Productivity

BRICS NETWORK on Digital Agriculture, including agroforestry, fisheries, and aquaculture

formation Network), while welcoming the launch of a Global Forum on Farmers' Rights in Seed Systems.

"We welcome the outcomes of the 16th BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting, held in Indore. We agree to the establishment of a collaborative, non-binding, and farmer-centric BRICS AGRIN (Agro-Inputs, Genetic Resources, and Information Network), drawing upon relevant national, regional, and international practices. We also welcome the launch of a Global Forum on Farmers' Rights in Seed Systems to address shared challenges, promote effective policies, and encourage the documentation and exchange of traditional knowledge related to agriculture and seed systems," the New Delhi Dec-

laration stated.

It also welcomed the strengthening of cooperation in agriculture through the establishment of a BRICS Network of Centres of Excellence on Agroecology and Regenerative Agriculture for Climate Resilience and Productivity, and a BRICS Network on Digital Agriculture, including agroforestry, fisheries, and aquaculture. We also encourage further cooperation under the BRICS Dialogue on Development of Fisheries and Aquaculture, it said.

The BRICS nation also reiterated their commitment to advancing agriculture negotiations at the WTO.