



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



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## 15TH BRICS SUMMIT

*This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "15th BRICS Summit". The topic "15th BRICS Summit" has relevance in the International Relations section of the UPSC CSE exam.*

### **For Prelims:**

*Key Highlights of the 15th BRICS Summit?  
BRICS Overview?*

### **For Mains:**

*GS 2: International Relations  
India's Role in the BRICS Summit?  
International Relations?*

### **Why in the news:**

In the recently held 15th BRICS summit, it expanded its membership to include 6 more members.

### **Key Highlights of the 15th BRICS Summit:**

#### **Expansion of BRICS:**

- The 15th BRICS Summit marked a significant expansion of its membership, evolving from five to eleven countries. This move is aimed at strengthening its global influence.
- The inclusion of Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Ethiopia, and Argentina enhances geographical representation across the Middle East, Africa, and South America.
- This expansion will come into effect on January 1, 2024.
- Their substantial economies and growth potential united the original BRIC members. The newly expanded BRICS-11 introduces greater diversity, with some members confronting challenges while others experience economic prosperity.

## SHARE OF GLOBAL

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GDP 2023 EoY PROJECTION

BRICS total with new members



29%

Saudi Arabia is the only trillion-dollar economy being added to BRICS.

POPULATION 2023



46%

Adding high-population-growth countries like Ethiopia means BRICS could soon represent over half the world's population.

OIL PRODUCTION 2022



43%

The addition of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE will more than double BRICS' share of global oil production.

EXPORTS OF GOODS\* 2022



25%

BRICS' share of global exports will increase slightly, continuing to be led by China.

### India's Role in the BRICS Summit:

- The BRICS Summit holds immense importance for India, especially since it marks the first face-to-face interaction after the India-China military standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- Following bilateral discussions between the Prime Minister of India and the President of China, both nations have committed to intensifying efforts towards troop disengagement and de-escalation along the LAC.
- Leveraging the BRICS platform, India seeks to expand its partner network and enhance its global geopolitical influence.
- India perceives BRICS as a platform representing diverse perspectives rather than one that is exclusively against Western influences.
- A novel proposition from the Indian Prime Minister involves establishing a BRICS consortium for space exploration to foster collaboration in space technology and research.
- Furthermore, India's dedication to environmental and wildlife protection is evident through its call for collaborative efforts within the International Big Cat Alliance to safeguard endangered big cat species residing within BRICS nations.

### Geopolitical Significance:

- The ongoing summit holds paramount importance in the aftermath of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, an event that has reverberated across the globe, profoundly impacting global stability and security.
- Discussions within BRICS carry an inherent geopolitical weight, often seen as representing a perspective that contrasts Western influences.
- In light of the diplomatic efforts to "isolate" Russia due to the Ukraine conflict, the deliberations within BRICS gain heightened significance, potentially shaping broader geopolitical dynamics.

### United Nations Reform:

- India and its BRICS counterparts share a cohesive stance, advocating for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations. This overhaul extends to the institution's Security Council, aiming to imbue it with greater attributes of democracy, representation, effectiveness, and efficiency.

### **Addressing Climate Change:**

- BRICS member nations have achieved consensus on addressing the pressing challenges of climate change. Their collective commitment extends to facilitating a just, cost-effective, and sustainable transition towards economies characterized by low carbon emissions.
- This joint commitment underlines the shared belief that developed countries should lead by example, embracing similar transitions and supporting developing nations as they strive for sustainable transformations.
- Additionally, BRICS nations express their opposition to trade barriers imposed by specific developed countries under the pretext of addressing climate change concerns, highlighting the intricacies of the intersection between climate policies and global trade dynamics.

### **BRICS Overview:**

- BRICS is an acronym representing a coalition of prominent emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

### **Origins and Formation:**

- The term BRIC was coined in 2001 by British Economist Jim O'Neill to refer to the four emerging economies – Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- The grouping was formally established during the inaugural meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers in 2006.
- South Africa became a part of BRICS in December 2010, leading to the adoption of the acronym BRICS.

### **Collective Share:**

- BRICS effectively brings together five of the world's largest developing nations, collectively accounting for 41% of the global population, 24% of the global GDP, and 16% of global trade.

### **Rotational Chairmanship:**

- Leadership within the forum rotates annually among the members following the sequence of B-R-I-C-S

**Source:**

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-global/brics-expansion-significance-for-india-8907925/>

### **Q.1 Consider the following regarding expansion of BRICS:**

1. All the new nations admitted to BRICS have robust and stable economies
2. All the new members are from Africa or Asia

### **Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**ANSWER:B**

### **Q.2 Discuss the significance of expansion of BRICS. How it helps to create a perception of a multipolar world order as desire by India.**

**Rishabh**

# THE STATE OF SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MINORITIES

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "The State of Scholarships for Minorities". The topic "The State of Scholarships for Minorities" has relevance in the "Governance" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

## **For Prelims:**

Various initiatives aimed at enhancing educational empowerment among minority communities.

## **For Mains:**

GS2: Polity and Governance

## **Why in the news?**

Recent years have witnessed the discontinuation of two major minority education schemes, a reduction in the scope of another, and a gradual budget decrease for various Ministry of Minority Affairs programs.

## **Who are the Minorities?**

- While the Constitution of India does not provide a definition for "minority," the **National Commission for Minorities Act of 1992** outlines a minority community as "a community notified as such by the Central Government."
- Under this Act, the following six communities have been notified as minorities: **Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis (Zoroastrians)**.
- India is home to more than 300 million ( 20% of the population) belonging to religious minority groups.

## **Introduction of Scholarships for Religious Minorities in India:**

- **Addressing Minority Deprivation:** The introduction of scholarships for religious minorities aims to address the social, economic, and educational challenges faced by these communities.
- **Sachar Committee Report:** The Sachar Committee's findings underscored the marginalised status of Muslims and other minorities in various aspects of development. This report highlighted the need for targeted measures.
- **Establishment of Ministry of Minority Affairs:** In response to these findings, the UPA government established the Ministry of Minority Affairs to focus on issues affecting notified minorities. This move aimed to ensure a more concentrated approach to their upliftment.
- **Revised 15-Point Programme:** The government revamped its 15-Point Programme to include educational empowerment, leading to the provision of scholarships for minority students.

## **Various Welfare Schemes aimed at Educational Empowerment among minority communities and their Status:**

Scheme	Description	Current Status
<b>Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme</b>	Financial assistance for minority students in classes 9 and 10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discontinued for classes 1 to 8.</li><li>• Reduced funds in Union Budget 2023-24.</li></ul>
<b>Post-Matric</b>	Scholarship for minority students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased funds in Union</li></ul>

<b>Scholarship Scheme</b>	from class 11 to Ph.D.	Budget 2023-24.
<b>Merit-cum-Means based Scholarship Scheme</b>	Scholarships for professional and technical courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced funds in Union Budget 2023-24.</li> </ul>
<b>Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF)</b>	Financial support for M.Phil and Ph.D. research scholars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cancelled in 2022.</li> <li>Government cited scheme overlap as the reason for its discontinuation.</li> </ul>
<b>Padho Pardesh</b>	Interest-free education loans for international studies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discontinued from 2022-23.</li> </ul>
<b>Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship</b>	Scholarship for meritorious girls pursuing higher secondary education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zero allocation.</li> </ul>
<b>Naya Savera</b>	Free coaching for minority students for technical courses and exams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocated reduced funds in Union Budget 2023-24.</li> <li>Discontinued due to New Education Policy 2020.</li> </ul>
<b>Nai Udaan</b>	Support for minority students preparing for competitive exams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No funds allocated in the ongoing financial year.</li> </ul>
<b>Scheme for Providing Education to Madarasas</b>	Subsidy for modern subjects in recognized madrasas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced allocation in Union Budget 2023-24.</li> </ul>
<b>Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK)</b>	Infrastructure development in minority concentration areas, including education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced allocation in Union Budget 2023-24.</li> <li>Restructured in 2018.</li> </ul>

### Impact of Reduced Budget on Minority Education Schemes:

- **Decrease in Beneficiaries:** Over the past three years (2019-2022), the beneficiaries of central educational schemes for minorities reduced by around 7%. Specifically, scholarships awarded dropped from 67.3 lakh in 2019-20 to 62.6 lakh in 2021-22.
- **Underutilization of Funds:** Despite initial allocations, several programs faced underutilization of funds. The pre-matric and post-matric scholarship schemes, for instance, saw lower spending than initially estimated.
- **Impact on Scholarships:** The merit-cum-means scholarship for professional and technical courses faced funding cuts. The allocation for the post-matric scholarship scheme increased, but underutilization issues persisted.
- **CBGA Report Findings:** A 2022 report by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) highlighted a declining trend in minority budget allocation. It also noted that scholarships



were often disbursed toward the end of the academic year, implying that recipients were obtaining their scholarships solely in the latter part of the academic year.

### Importance of Strengthening Educational Aid for Minorities

- **Affirmative Action for Socio-economic Progress:** Niti Aayog's 2018 Strategy Document emphasizes the necessity of affirmative action to enhance the socio-economic standing of religious minorities, particularly Muslims, who lag behind in various domains.
- **Alarming Dropout Rates:** Data from the Institute of Objective Students indicates a higher dropout rate among Muslims (23.1%) compared to the national average (18.96%). This raises concerns about the effectiveness of education policies, including the Right to Education.
- **Lower Higher Education Enrollment:** The All India Survey on Higher Education reveals a substantial gap in higher education enrollment for Muslim students, dropping from 5.5% to 4.6% in 2020-21. Other minority groups also experienced declines.
- **Regional Disparities:** The survey highlights regional disparities, with Kerala and Telangana showing increased Muslim student enrollment while Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir have lower figures.

### Way Forward:

- **Strengthening Scholarships:** The 2018 Niti Aayog policy document suggests boosting pre-matric, post-matric, and merit-cum-means scholarships, among others. A recommended annual increase of 15% from 2019-20 is advised. Additionally, a yearly augmentation of 10% in scholarships for girls from minority communities is proposed.
- **Customized Interventions:** The Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability's Report underscores leveraging the 15-Point Programme to formulate tailored interventions for minority development.

Sources:

[Explained | The reality of scholarship schemes for religious minorities in India - The Hindu](#)

### Q1. With reference to Minorities, consider the following statements:

1. The term "minority" is not explicitly defined in the Constitution of India.
2. According to the National Commission for Minorities Act of 1992, a minority community is defined as any community apart from Hindus.
3. The Act designates the following communities as minorities: Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Parsis (Zoroastrians).

### Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c)

### Q2. Consider the following pairs:

1. Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF)	Financial support for M.Phil and Ph.D. research scholars.
2. Nai Udaan	Free coaching for minority students for

	technical courses and exams.
3. Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship	Scholarship for meritorious girls pursuing higher secondary education.
4. Naya Savera	Support for minority students preparing for competitive exams.

**How many of the abovementioned pairs are correctly matched ?**

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

**Answer: (b)**

**Q3. Recent years have witnessed significant changes in minority education schemes in India. Discuss the impact of these changes on minority education and highlight the importance of strengthening educational aid for minorities.**

**Gaurav Nikumbh**

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