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WEEKLY
MAGAZINE

CURRENT AFFAIRS WEEKLY

ANALYSE
UNDERSTAND
APPLY

*Beyond
News
Towards
Nations*

INDIA AT THE HELM

BRICS 2026

PEOPLE | PLANET | PARTNERSHIP
FOR A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

New Delhi Declaration
Global Governance Reform
Voice of the Global South

**A STRONGER
AND SAFER INDIA**

- ₹1.10 Lakh Crore Defence Approvals
- Indigenisation
- Tri-Service Capabilities
- Atmanirbhar Bharat

**EXPLORING
NEW FRONTIERS**

- ORV Sagar Manthan
- Ocean Science
- Blue Economy
- Deep Ocean Mission

**CLEANER AIR
HEALTHIER CITIES**

- Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan 2026
- NCAP
- Airshed Approach
- People-Centred Solutions

**CLIMATE-RESILIENT
AGRICULTURE**

- ASEAN-India Cooperation
- Food Security
- Digital Agriculture
- Sustainable Future

**DIGITAL INDIA
FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE TOMORROW**

- Aadhaar Face Authentication
- OneTag for Seamless Mobility
- Interoperability
- Trust and Safeguards

*“In a changing world,
India’s strength lies in its people,
its partnerships and its purpose.”*

— TOWARDS A VIKSIT BHARAT

**NOURISHED INDIA
BRIGHTER TOMORROW**

- Rashtriya Poshan Maah
- Anganwadi Strengthening
- Maternal & Child Nutrition
- Human Capital for Viksit Bharat

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

PRELIMS PRACTICE

MAINS PERSPECTIVE

QUICK REVISION

BIGGER PICTURE

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REFLECT
PREPARE
SERVE

00. Inside This Issue

A weekly current-affairs magazine for understanding, revision and answer writing

01	Week at a Glance
02	International Relations
03	Defence & Internal Security
04	Economy & Digital India
05	Science & Technology
06	Environment & Ecology
07	Agriculture
08	Social Sector
09	Cross-Cutting Theme: Strategic Autonomy
10	Prelims Corner
11	Mains Corner
12	One-Page Revision Capsule

Editorial philosophy: What happened → Why it matters → Background → UPSC significance → Larger issue.

This issue deliberately avoids treating current affairs as isolated facts. The week's developments are connected to broader themes such as multipolarity, strategic autonomy, defence indigenisation, digital public infrastructure, Blue Economy, environmental governance and human-capital formation.

01. Week at a Glance

The week of 7-13 September 2026 was dominated by India's BRICS Presidency and the 18th BRICS Summit, alongside important developments in defence procurement, digital public infrastructure, ocean science, air-quality management, agriculture and nutrition.

- BRICS: New Delhi Declaration, Global South cooperation and global-governance reform.
- India-China: Engagement alongside structural economic and strategic competition.
- Defence: DAC approvals of approximately ₹1.10 lakh crore, with about 98% of procurement value from Indian industry.
- Digital India: Aadhaar Face Authentication SDK/Sandbox and OneTag FASTag portability.
- Space: India emphasised peaceful, sustainable and cooperative use of outer space.
- Ocean science: ORV Sagar Manthan strengthens indigenous deep-ocean research.
- Environment: Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan highlights city performance and the need for airshed-level thinking.
- Agriculture: ASEAN-India cooperation on food security, climate resilience and digital agriculture.
- Nutrition: Rashtriya Poshan Maah places Anganwadi institutions and community participation at the centre.

BIG IDEA OF THE WEEK

India is simultaneously strengthening strategic autonomy, building domestic technological and industrial capability, and diversifying international partnerships.

02. International Relations

BRICS, India-China engagement and India's neighbourhood diplomacy together illustrate the changing structure of India's external relations.

2.1 BRICS New Delhi Summit 2026

Why in News? India hosted the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi on 12-13 September 2026 during its fourth BRICS chairship. The theme is "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability."

BRICS now comprises 11 members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The grouping collectively represents roughly 49.5% of the world's population, 40% of global GDP and 26% of global trade.

New Delhi Declaration: The declaration reaffirmed sovereign equality, mutual respect, solidarity, inclusiveness and consensus-based cooperation, while stressing global-governance reform. BRICS cooperation continues across three broad pillars: political and security cooperation; economic and financial cooperation; and cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

UPSC Significance

- BRICS has evolved beyond an economic grouping into a wider platform for Global South coordination.
- Its importance lies partly in questions of representation and reform of global governance institutions.
- Its internal diversity means that consensus itself is a diplomatic achievement.
- BRICS should not be simplistically described as an anti-Western military or political bloc.

Core concept: Cooperative multipolarity — strengthening representation and strategic space without replacing universal institutions.

2.2 BRICS and West Asia

The New Delhi Declaration came against the backdrop of continuing tensions in West Asia. BRICS called for restraint, dialogue and a multilateral approach. The issue highlights the difficulty of maintaining consensus within a grouping containing countries with different regional alignments and strategic interests.

2.3 India-China: Engagement without ignoring Competition

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met during the BRICS Summit. The relationship continues to combine dialogue with structural competition involving the border, trade imbalance, market access, critical minerals, supply-chain vulnerabilities and technology.

Strategic lesson: India increasingly needs a China policy based on dialogue + deterrence + diversification + domestic capability, rather than either unrestricted dependence or permanent confrontation.

2.4 India-Sri Lanka Defence Cooperation

During Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's Sri Lanka visit, India and Sri Lanka advanced cooperation in defence and security. MoUs covered L70 gun upgrading for the Sri Lankan Air Force and cooperation involving defence colleges/NCC. Three Bailey bridges constructed by Indian defence forces were also inaugurated.

Why Sri Lanka matters: its location near major Indian Ocean sea lanes makes it important for maritime security, regional stability, connectivity, disaster response and India's neighbourhood policy.

2.5 India-Morocco Defence Cooperation

The inaugural India-Morocco Joint Defence Committee meeting covered military training and education, peacekeeping, exercises, medical cooperation, cyber defence, defence industry, co-production, joint ventures, technology and maintenance.

This reflects India's expanding engagement with Africa and the wider Global South through defence cooperation and capacity building.

03. Defence & Internal Security

3.1 Defence Acquisition Council: ₹1.10 Lakh Crore

On 7 September, the Defence Acquisition Council accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for proposals worth approximately ₹1.10 lakh crore. Around 98% of the procurement value is to be sourced from Indian industry.

Proposals included CBRN reconnaissance vehicles, High Mobility Vehicles, self-propelled mechanical mine layers, Advanced Light Helicopters, trawl tanks and Sarvatra Bridge Systems, along with naval requirements such as Arudhra radars and Marine Gas Turbines.

What is AoN? Acceptance of Necessity is an in-principle approval to proceed with a defence acquisition proposal. It is not the same as final contracting, delivery or induction.

UPSC angle — Atmanirbhar Bharat in Defence

- Move from import dependence towards domestic design, production and sustainment.
- Strengthen defence MSMEs and private-sector participation.
- Develop indigenous supply chains and critical technologies.
- Build export capability rather than pursuing self-sufficiency as an end in itself.

3.2 Strategic Security Partnerships

The India-Sri Lanka and India-Morocco developments show how India's defence diplomacy is increasingly linked to training, capacity building, cyber security, technology, co-production and maintenance — not merely arms sales.

04. Economy & Digital India

4.1 Global Fintech Fest 2026

The Global Fintech Fest in Mumbai highlighted the evolution of India's digital financial architecture around interoperable public infrastructure, including Aadhaar, UPI and consent-based data systems.

4.2 Aadhaar Face Authentication SDK and Sandbox

UIDAI launched a Face Authentication SDK and Sandbox to enable ecosystem partners to integrate Aadhaar face authentication into native Android and iOS applications and test the authentication journey before deployment.

Governance lens: Biometric convenience must be balanced with privacy, cybersecurity, consent, reliability, exclusion risks, algorithmic concerns and effective grievance redressal.

4.3 OneTag and FASTag Portability

OneTag enables FASTag users to change the issuer bank without replacing the physical tag. It is an example of interoperability — shifting digital public infrastructure from isolated services towards portability and user choice.

4.4 Why Digital Public Infrastructure Matters

DPI is best understood as interoperable foundational digital infrastructure that enables large-scale service delivery and transactions. India's model combines digital identity, payments, data and authentication layers.

UPSC caution: Digital inclusion is not merely access. It also requires privacy + security + reliability + accessibility + accountability.

05. Science & Technology

5.1 Space Governance and Sustainability

At the International Space Summit in Paris, India emphasised peaceful, secure and sustainable use of outer space and argued for cooperation over confrontation.

Space is now critical to communications, navigation, weather forecasting, agriculture, disaster management, defence, finance and climate monitoring. Consequently, space governance increasingly involves debris mitigation, space traffic management, satellite collisions, frequency allocation, dual-use technology and responsible behaviour.

5.2 ORV Sagar Manthan

Sagar Manthan is an indigenous ocean research vessel designed and constructed by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers for the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research under the Ministry of Earth Sciences. It strengthens India's deep-ocean scientific capabilities.

Its capabilities support bathymetric surveys, seismic studies, oceanographic sampling, atmospheric observations and deployment of remotely operated and autonomous underwater systems.

Why it matters: Ocean science connects climate + biodiversity + mineral resources + fisheries + disaster warning + Blue Economy + maritime strategy.

5.3 Deep Ocean Mission — Static Link

The Deep Ocean Mission seeks to develop technologies and scientific capability for exploration and understanding of India's deep-ocean resources. Polymetallic nodules may contain manganese, nickel, cobalt and copper, giving the issue both economic and strategic dimensions.

06. Environment & Ecology

6.1 Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan 2026

The Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan Awards were presented around the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies. The exercise assesses the performance of cities covered by the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

The wider significance is that air pollution affects public health, labour productivity, agricultural productivity, healthcare expenditure and urban quality of life.

6.2 From City-Level Management to the Airshed Approach

Pollution can move across administrative boundaries. Emissions from transport, industry, construction, road dust, waste burning and agriculture interact with regional meteorology. Hence, city-level interventions need to be complemented by airshed-level governance.

Airshed: a geographical area within which atmospheric pollutants can move and interact across administrative boundaries.

6.3 UPSC Analytical Point

Environmental governance should move from simply monitoring concentrations to preventing emissions at source. It also requires coordination between Union, State and local institutions.

07. Agriculture & Rural Development

7.1 ASEAN-India Cooperation on Agriculture

The 9th ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry focused on food security, sustainable agriculture, climate resilience, digital agriculture, AI and resilient value chains.

India and ASEAN face common pressures from climate change, water stress, fragmented value chains, food-price volatility, smallholder vulnerability and post-harvest losses.

Technology opportunities: satellite-based agriculture, AI advisories, precision farming, weather forecasting, remote sensing and digital markets.

Policy caution: Technology should remain farmer-centric. Digital agriculture can deepen inequalities if access, affordability, digital literacy and data governance are ignored.

7.2 Agriculture as a Strategic Sector

Food security is increasingly linked to climate resilience, trade policy, logistics, storage, technology and international cooperation. Thus, agriculture is simultaneously an economic, environmental, social and strategic issue.

08. Society & Social Justice

8.1 Rashtriya Poshan Maah 2026

The 9th Rashtriya Poshan Maah was launched on 9 September with the theme “Hamari Anganwadi, Hamari Jimmedari.” The campaign focuses on dietary diversity, adequate protein, maternal nutrition, early childhood development, community participation and strengthening Anganwadi Centres.

The government stated that more than 14 lakh Anganwadi Centres serve over 7.5 crore children and approximately 1.10 crore pregnant and lactating women.

Human-capital perspective: Anganwadi Centres are not simply supplementary nutrition points. They link nutrition, maternal health, early childhood care, preschool development and community participation.

8.2 Nutrition and Development

Nutrition policy must move beyond calorie sufficiency towards dietary quality, maternal health, micronutrients, early stimulation, sanitation and access to health services. This makes nutrition an investment in long-term human capital.

09. The Big Theme: Strategic Autonomy

The week's developments become more coherent when viewed through the idea of strategic autonomy.

Development	Strategic meaning
BRICS Presidency	Diversified international partnerships and Global South diplomacy
India-China engagement	Dialogue while managing strategic competition and vulnerabilities
Defence procurement	Domestic capability and reduced import dependence
Digital Public Infrastructure	Indigenous digital state capacity and interoperability
Space governance	Responsible participation with independent capability
Sagar Manthan	Scientific and technological capability in the maritime domain

Strategic autonomy does not mean isolation or autarky. It means having sufficient economic, technological, industrial, diplomatic and military capability to preserve freedom of choice.

A useful UPSC formula:

Strategic autonomy = diversified partnerships + domestic capability + supply-chain resilience + technological capacity + freedom of choice.

10. Prelims Corner

1. With reference to BRICS, consider the following statements:

1. India chaired BRICS in 2026 for the fourth time.
2. Indonesia is a BRICS member.
3. China will chair BRICS in 2027.

Which is correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only B. 1 and 3 only C. 2 and 3 only D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: D — All three statements are correct.

2. Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) in defence procurement most appropriately refers to:

- A. final payment B. in-principle approval to proceed with acquisition C. completion of trials D. delivery of equipment

Answer: B — AoN is an in-principle approval; it is not final contracting or delivery.

3. ORV Sagar Manthan is primarily associated with:

- A. deep-ocean research B. satellite launch C. river interlinking D. coastal policing

Answer: A — It is an advanced indigenous ocean research vessel.

4. An airshed is best understood as:

- A. an urban municipal boundary B. a protected forest C. a geographical atmospheric region across which pollutants can move and interact D. an industrial estate

Answer: C — Atmospheric pollution frequently crosses administrative boundaries.

5. OneTag, launched during the Global Fintech Fest, is associated with:

- A. passport portability B. FASTag issuer portability C. crop insurance portability D. digital driving licences

Answer: B — OneTag enables issuer-bank portability without replacing the physical FASTag.

6. Which of the following are concerns relevant to biometric digital authentication?

1. Privacy
2. Cybersecurity
3. Exclusion due to authentication failure
4. Surveillance risks

- A. 1 and 2 only B. 2 and 3 only C. 1, 2 and 3 only D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: D — All are relevant governance concerns.

7. The three broad pillars of BRICS cooperation include:

- A. political-security, economic-financial, cultural/people-to-people
B. military, nuclear, monetary
C. agriculture, defence, tourism only
D. trade, currency, migration only

Answer: A — These are the three broad pillars.

8. Which of the following can contribute to climate-resilient agriculture?

1. AI
 2. Remote sensing
 3. Precision agriculture
 4. Weather advisories
- A. 1 and 2 only B. 1, 2 and 3 only C. 2, 3 and 4 only D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: D — All can support climate-resilient farming.

9. Deep Ocean Mission is relevant to:

1. deep-sea technologies

- 2. ocean resources
 - 3. marine scientific research
 - 4. Blue Economy
- A. 1 and 2 only B. 1, 2 and 3 only C. 2, 3 and 4 only D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: D — All four are relevant.

10. Which statement best describes strategic autonomy?
- A. complete withdrawal from international institutions
 - B. freedom of policy choice supported by diversified partnerships and domestic capabilities
 - C. rejection of all imports
 - D. exclusive military alignment with one power

Answer: B — Strategic autonomy is capability-backed freedom of choice.

10A. Prelims Fact File

Fact	Remember
BRICS members	11
India's 2026 BRICS chairship	Fourth
18th BRICS Summit	12-13 September 2026, New Delhi
BRICS theme	Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability
DAC approvals	Approximately ₹1.10 lakh crore
Indian industry share in DAC package	Approximately 98%
Rashtriya Poshan Maah theme	Hamari Anganwadi, Hamari Jimmedari
Aadhaar initiative	Face Authentication SDK + Sandbox
FASTag initiative	OneTag — issuer portability
Ocean research vessel	ORV Sagar Manthan

Current affairs should be revised through concepts, not numbers alone. Every number above should be connected to its institutional or policy context.

11. Mains Corner

GS-II | International Relations

“BRICS is increasingly becoming an important platform for reforming global governance rather than merely an economic grouping.” Discuss in the context of India's 2026 BRICS Presidency.

GS-II | International Relations

What is strategic autonomy? How does India's contemporary foreign policy seek to reconcile strategic autonomy with deeper global engagement?

GS-II | India-China

India-China relations are characterised by a paradox of economic interdependence and strategic competition. Examine.

GS-III | Defence

“Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence should mean capability creation rather than mere import substitution.” Discuss.

GS-III | Blue Economy

What is the significance of indigenous ocean research capabilities for India's Blue Economy and strategic interests?

GS-III | Environment

Urban air pollution cannot be solved through city-level interventions alone. Explain the need for an airshed-based approach in India.

GS-II | Governance

Digital Public Infrastructure can become an instrument of inclusion, but only if accompanied by safeguards. Discuss.

GS-II | Social Justice

Nutrition policy should move beyond calorie sufficiency towards comprehensive human-capital development. Discuss with reference to Anganwadi institutions.

GS-III | Agriculture

How can digital technologies transform Indian agriculture without deepening inequalities among farmers?

Essay

“Strategic autonomy in the twenty-first century is built not by isolation, but by the capacity to choose.” Discuss.

11A. Mains Answer Frameworks

BRICS and multipolarity

Intro: evolution from BRIC to expanded BRICS. Body: Global South representation; governance reform; development finance; economic cooperation; technology; limitations due to divergent interests. India: strategic autonomy, practical cooperation, consensus. Conclusion: BRICS should complement universal multilateral institutions.

Strategic autonomy

External: diversified partnerships and issue-based alignment. Economic: supply-chain diversification and domestic manufacturing. Technology: AI, digital, space. Defence: indigenous design and sustainment. Maritime: ocean capability. Challenges: resource and technology gaps. Conclusion: capability-backed freedom of choice.

Air pollution

Problem: pollutants cross administrative boundaries. Sources: transport, industry, dust, waste, agriculture. Governance: airshed approach, inter-state coordination, source reduction, monitoring. Conclusion: administrative boundaries must be supplemented by atmospheric realities.

Digital public infrastructure

Benefits: scale, interoperability, lower transaction costs, inclusion. Risks: privacy, exclusion, cybersecurity, surveillance, algorithmic bias. Way forward: privacy by design, consent, grievance redressal, auditability, accessibility.

12. One-Page Weekly Revision Capsule

Theme	Revision keywords
BRICS	18th Summit New Delhi 12-13 Sept India's 4th chairship 11 members New Delhi Declaration Global South governance reform
Defence	DAC ₹1.10 lakh crore ~98% Indian industry CBRN vehicles ALHs mine layers Sarvatra bridges naval systems
Digital	Aadhaar Face Authentication SDK/Sandbox OneTag FASTag portability interoperability privacy + cybersecurity
Space	Peaceful and sustainable use of outer space debris space traffic responsible behaviour international cooperation
Ocean	ORV Sagar Manthan GRSE NCPOR Ministry of Earth Sciences Deep Ocean Mission Blue Economy
Environment	Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan NCAP city performance source reduction airshed approach
Agriculture	ASEAN-India food security climate resilience digital agriculture AI resilient value chains
Nutrition	Rashtriya Poshan Maah Anganwadi maternal + child nutrition dietary diversity early childhood development

THE WEEK'S MASTER CONNECTION

BRICS → Multipolarity | India-China → Competition + Engagement | DAC → Defence Indigenisation | Aadhaar/OneTag → Digital Interoperability | Sagar Manthan → Ocean Capability | Swachh Vayu → Airshed Governance | ASEAN Agriculture → Climate Resilience | Poshan → Human Capital

Strategic autonomy = diversified partnerships + domestic capability + resilience + technological capacity + freedom of choice.

13. Selected Official Sources

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- UIDAI / Press Information Bureau — Aadhaar Face Authentication SDK and Sandbox.
- Press Information Bureau — OneTag / FASTag portability.
- Press Information Bureau — International Space Summit, Paris.
- Press Information Bureau — ORV Sagar Manthan and Deep Ocean Mission.
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- Press Information Bureau — ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry.
- Press Information Bureau — Rashtriya Poshan Maah 2026.

Editorial note: This booklet is designed as a UPSC learning resource. Current-affairs facts should be cross-checked against the latest official notifications and releases when used in high-stakes examination preparation.