

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIP**

**15th BRICS Summit**

**In Context:** 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit is held in Johannesburg from 22-24 August 2023.

**15th BRICS Summit 2023**

- ✓ At the BRICS Summit 2023, the leaders of BRICS Countries announced the admission of six new countries from next year 2024, as the club of large and populous emerging economies seeks to reshape the global order.
- ✓ The six countries Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates full members of BRICS from 1st January 2024
- ✓ The global leaders in the 15th BRICS Summit 2023 will take part in the BRICS-Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogue events.
- ✓ The Summit will give the platform to discuss issues of concern for the Global South and other areas of development.
- ✓ Agreement for the expansion of BRICS – currently Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa has allowed dozens of interested nations to seek admission as Beijing and Moscow push to forge it into a viable counterweight to the West.
- ✓ **BRICS Summit 2023 Theme:** ‘BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Multilateralism’.

**This theme informs South Africa’s five priorities for 2023:**

- ✓ Developing a partnership towards an equitable just transition,
- ✓ Including managing the risks associated with climate change;
- ✓ Transforming education and skills development for the future;
- ✓ Unlocking opportunities through the African continental free trade area;
- ✓ Strengthening post-pandemic socioeconomic recovery and the attainment of the 2030 agenda on sustainable development; and strengthening multilateralism, including reform of global governance institutions and strengthening the meaningful participation of women in peace processes.

**The agenda of the 15th Summit**

- ✓ A major item on the agenda is on the expansion of BRICS.
- ✓ More than 40 countries have shown an interest in joining BRICS, and around 23 countries have applied formally for membership.
- ✓ Of these, consensus appears to be developing around four countries: Argentina, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iran.
- ✓ BRICS leaders are also expected to take forward earlier talks on intra-BRICS trading in national currencies.
- ✓ Although a much-discussed plan pushing for a BRICS currency to challenge the dollar does not appear to be on the agenda.

**What is the significance of 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit?**

- ✓ It is the first in-person summit since 2019, which meets at an important geopolitical and geo-economic moment.
- ✓ It is first in-person meeting since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.
- ✓ **Participation in dialogues-**
  - BRICS-Africa Outreach
  - BRICS Plus Dialogue
- ✓ **Develop partnership-**
  - Equitable just transition, including risks associated with climate change,
  - Transforming education and skills development for the future,
  - Strengthening post-pandemic socioeconomic recovery
  - Attainment of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.
- ✓ **Discuss political issues-**
  - Russia- Ukraine conflict
  - Post-coup scenario in Niger
  - Increased tension between the West and Russia.
- ✓ **Economic reforms-** It is expected to advance the cause of
  - Emerging Markets and Developing Countries (EMDCs) gaining more space in international economic decision-making
  - Reform of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and relief for debt stress
  - Unlocking opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Area.
- ✓ **Expand BRICS-** It is seen as an attractive alternative to the G-7 developed countries “club”.

- ✓ More than 40 countries have shown an interest in joining BRICS, and at least 19 countries have applied formally for membership.
- ✓ **Wider participation-** South Africa has invited African Union (AU) and about 20 other leaders who represent the Global South for sessions on the sidelines of the summit.

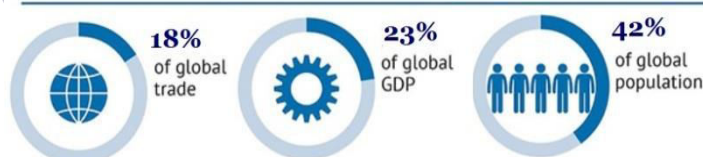
**What is BRICS?**

- Originally conceived as BRIC by Jim O'Neill, the grouping consisted of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- **Launch-** It was launched by a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Russia, India and China in 2006.
- BRIC turned into BRICS in 2010, with the entry of South Africa.
- **Current Members-** Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.



- **Chair-** Chaired by member countries in rotational basis.
- *South Africa* is the chair for 2023.
- **First summit-** It was held in Yekaterinburg in 2009.

**BRICS countries make up**



**What is the need for BRICS?**

- ✓ **New world order-** It aims to assert their position particularly in relation to the United States and the European Union.
- ✓ **Multipolar global order-** It promotes the recognition of a multipolar global order with economic and political balance.
- ✓ It aims to break away from organisations formed in the post-World War II era, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.
- ✓ **De-dollarization-** BRICS account for 18% of the world trade, supports the increased use of members' national currencies for trade and the introduction of a common payment system in the long term.
- ✓ **Global South-** It helps in representation from voices of the 'Global South', a term used to refer to countries that have not traditionally been at the centre of international agenda-setting.
- ✓ **Economic rise-** In recent decades, India and China witness economic rise. The creation of their own forums has been utilised as an alternative.
- ✓ **Financial structure-** *New Development Bank (NDB)*, the *Shanghai-headquartered bank* has since invested \$30 billion in infrastructure development projects.

**What is the significance for India?**

- ✓ **Multi-alignment-** It is an issue-based alignment strategy, which aims to simultaneously participate and pursue its interests in multiple strategic and economic coalitions, such as the Quad and BRICS.
- ✓ **Reflect multidirectional foreign policy-** It strengthens economic prosperity, technology advancements, research and innovation, norm influencing, and strengthening security.
- ✓ **Diplomacy-** It allows India to pursue a development focused diplomatic engagement which aims at increasing the membership of BRICS.
- ✓ **Broader agenda**
  - Energy security
  - Combating terrorism

- Climate change financing
- ✓ **Geopolitical force-** BRICS attempts to amplify non-traditional security threats and promote economic security within the forum.
- ✓ **Political push-** It would be a political push against unfair coercive practices
  - European Union's Carbon border tax
  - Economic transaction and
  - Unilateral sanction
- ✓ **Strategic interest-** It is the first in-person summit since the military standoff with China at the Line of Actual Control in 2020.
- ✓ Ahead of summit, 19th round of India-China Corps Commander Level Meeting resulted in a joint statement is a positive sign.

#### Way Ahead

- ✓ BRICS should prioritize economic and social convergences among its member states and should focus on institution building, fostering trust, sharing knowledge, promoting trade and development, and advancing developmental finance. It is important for BRICS to remain committed to its core objectives.
- ✓ By maintaining a steadfast focus on its core goals and patiently working towards them, BRICS can strengthen its cooperation, enhance mutual understanding, and foster sustainable development within its member states and beyond.
- ✓ Expansion should be gradual and based on how the new countries would contribute to mutual complementarities, strengthening, and long-term functioning of the group without deepening ideological and other divisions.
- ✓ India has to find creative ways of blunting Chinese strategy while opening up BRICS to countries that will ensure equitable distribution of power in the group.
- ✓ Also, the expansion of BRICS should be based on rule-based order and the forum should not leave any room for 'economic hegemony' and 'anti-West agenda'.
- ✓ Inclusion of more countries into BRICS should be by consensus and before any move is made to expand BRICS, there must be a clear definition of principles and criteria for membership.

#### Science and Technology

#### India's One Health Mission

**In Context:** India is currently preparing for a 'National One Health Mission' which can help India respond better to health crises.

#### About One Health Approach

- ✓ One Health is a holistic approach to problems that recognises the interconnections between the health of humans, animals, plants, and their shared environment.
- ✓ An early articulation can be found in the writings of Hippocrates (460-367 BC), who contemplated the relationships between public health and clean environments.

#### Significance of One Health Approach

##### ✓ **Link with Zoonoses:**

- Human population growth, urbanisation, and industrialisation have compounded the damage to biodiversity and ecosystems.
- These harmful environmental changes are linked to zoonoses – diseases shared between animals and humans.
- Researchers have estimated that 60% of emerging diseases that can infect humans are zoonotic in nature. They include bird flu, Ebola, rabies, and Japanese encephalitis.

##### ✓ **Issues of antimicrobial resistance:**

- Humankind has also become beset by major issues of antimicrobial resistance, food safety and security, and the control of vector-borne diseases.
- Taken together, these issues warrant both the intersectoral management and the efficiency that characterises the One Health strategy.

##### ✓ **Minimising resource requirements:**

- One Health minimises resource requirements across sectors.
- An important way it does this is by encouraging coordination across governmental units, including the Ministries of Health and Family Welfare, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Environment, and Science and Technology.
- Taking a One Health approach allows researchers to, for example, share their laboratories and findings, and ultimately make decisions that lead to resilient, sustainable, and predictable policies.

##### ✓ **Economic benefits:**

- The economic benefits of One Health are understood in contrast to the cost of managing a pandemic with a non-One-Health approach.

- An assessment of the G20 Joint Finance and Health Taskforce estimated the latter to be around \$30 billion a year.
- On the other hand, estimates by the World Bank have indicated that the former would cost \$10.3 billion to \$11.5 billion annually.

### **India's One Health initiatives**

- ✓ **COVID-19 initiatives:** The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2023 highlighted the importance of adopting a One Health approach. Since COVID-19, many interventions based on the One Health model have been launched worldwide.
- ✓ **Standing Committee on Zoonoses:** The Government of India established its 'Standing Committee on Zoonoses in 2006 under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
  - The purpose of this committee was to provide the Union and the State governments guidance and recommendations on challenges related to zoonoses.
  - But the pandemic provided a real boost to this topic; India has also floated a number of initiatives in this direction since then.
- ✓ **Consortium on One Health:** The Department of Biotechnology launched India's first consortium on One Health in 2021.
  - It brings together 27 organisations from several ministries and plans to assess the burden of five transboundary animal diseases and 10 select zoonotic diseases.
- ✓ **One Health pilot project:** In 2022, the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairy (DAHD) – in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Confederation of Indian Industry – launched a One Health pilot project in Karnataka and Uttarakhand.
  - This initiative intends to strengthen intersectoral collaborations through capacity-building, with the goal of improving livestock health, human health, wildlife health, and environmental health.
- ✓ **National One Health Mission:** India is also currently preparing for a wider 'National One Health Mission' to be spearheaded by the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor.
  - The idea behind this mission is to coordinate, support, and integrate all existing One Health initiatives in the country.

### **Suggestions to switch to a One Health approach**

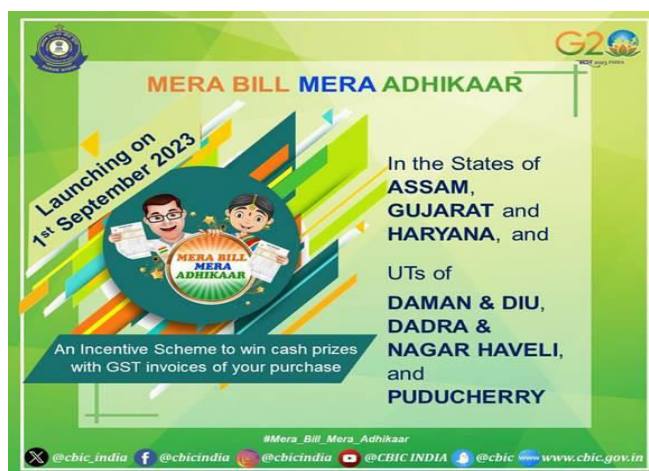
- ✓ **Communication:** Basic mechanisms for communication between various ministries and/or sectors are required.
  - The focus is on keeping the important stakeholders informed and engaged throughout the One Health transformation, and helping them meet regularly and review progress.
- ✓ **Collaboration:** After initiating communication between the relevant sectors, sector members need to exchange their knowledge and expertise in order to translate ideas into short-term interventions.
  - Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of different sectors in zoonoses management is crucial in this stage.
  - For example, to manage a zoonotic disease, collaboration means assessing and lowering disease risk, surveillance, building capacity at different institutions, research, and public outreach.
- ✓ **Coordination:** The activities carried out during this stage are usually routine and long-term. Initiatives to achieve One Health in this stage are spearheaded by a national or a subnational agency (so that it has the authority and the resources to coordinate several ministries).
  - India's forthcoming 'National One Health Mission' would be an appropriate example of this stage.
- ✓ **Integration:** A policy framework that helps the relevant sectors to efficiently share resources and streamline their current programmes is essential.
  - India's national and subnational programmes – such as MoHFW's Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme and DAHD's Livestock Health and Disease Control scheme – are currently not integrated with other sectors, resulting in uncoordinated, ad hoc initiatives.

**Way ahead:** To reap all the advantages of a One Health approach, India should move beyond short-term collaborations and create an integrated, science-based environment. Certain samples like blood, tissue, faecal matter, and effluent water are also expensive and come with ethical implications, and an integrated system that deals with them can prove especially beneficial. In such a system, researchers from various disciplines should be able to use laboratories as necessary and generate the requisite inputs will go a long way to meeting major challenges with the One Health approach.

## **PRELIM FACTS**

### **1. 'Mera Bill Mera Adhikaar':**

**IN CONTEXT:** The Government of India, in association with State Governments, is launching an 'Invoice incentive Scheme' by the name 'Mera Bill Mera Adhikaar' to encourage the culture of customers asking for invoices/bills for all purchases.



**ABOUT:**

- ✓ The objective of the scheme is to bring a cultural and behavioural change in the general public to ‘Ask for a Bill’ as their right and entitlement.
- ✓ The Scheme will be launched on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2023.
- ✓ This scheme will initially be launched as a pilot in the States of Assam, Gujarat & Haryana and UTs of Puducherry, Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu.
- ✓ All B2C invoices issued by GST registered suppliers (registered in the States of Assam, Gujarat & Haryana and UTs of Puducherry, Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu) to consumers will be eligible for the scheme. Minimum value for invoices to be considered for a lucky draw has been kept at Rs. 200.
- ✓ Invoices can be uploaded on Mobile Application ‘Mera Bill Mera Adhikaar’ available on IOS and Android as well as on web portal ‘web.merabill.gst.gov.in’.

**How does the scheme work?**

- ✓ All invoices issued by GST-registered suppliers to consumers will be eligible for the scheme.
- ✓ A monthly and quarterly draw of lots will be made, and winners will be eligible for cash reward prizes beginning from Rs 10,000 to up to Rs 1 crore.
- ✓ The minimum purchase value for the invoice to be considered for the lucky draw is Rs 200, and individuals can upload a maximum of 25 invoices in a month.
- ✓ The 'Mera Bill Mera Adhikaar' mobile app will be made available on both IOS and Android platforms.
- ✓ The invoice uploaded on the app should have the GSTIN of the seller, invoice number, amount paid and tax amount.

**2. ASTRA Missile**

**IN CONTEXT:** Recently, Tejas, Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) LSP-7 successfully fired the ASTRA off the coast of Goa.

**About ASTRA Missile:**

- ✓ It is an indigenous Beyond Visual Range (BVR) air-to-air missile.
- ✓ It is to engage and destroy highly manoeuvring supersonic aerial targets.
- ✓ It is designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL), Research Centre Imarat (RCI) and other laboratories of DRDO.
- ✓ The indigenous Astra BVR firing from homegrown Tejas fighters is a major step towards ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’.

**Key facts about LCA Tejas**

- ✓ It is the lightest, smallest and tailless multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft in its class.
- ✓ This aircraft is designed to carry a range of air-to-air, air-to-surface, precision-guided weapons.
- ✓ It has the air-to-air refuelling capability.
- ✓ The maximum payload capacity of Tejas is 4000 kg.
- ✓ Speed: Mach 1.8.

**3. Fukushima nuclear disaster: Japan to release treated water**

**In Context:** Japan is gearing up to release the treated radioactive water from the tsunami-hit Fukushima nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean, despite opposition.

**Background**

- ✓ In 2011, a tsunami triggered by a magnitude 9.0 earthquake flooded three reactors of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

- ✓ The event is regarded as the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl.
- ✓ Shortly after, authorities set up an exclusion zone which continued to be expanded as radiation leaked from the plant, forcing more than 150,000 people to evacuate from the area.

**Key-highlights**

- ✓ Some 1.34 million tonnes of water - enough to fill 500 Olympic-size pools - have accumulated since the 2011 tsunami destroyed the plant.
- ✓ The water will be released over 30 years after being filtered and diluted.
- ✓ As per Japan, the water is a necessary step in the lengthy and costly process of decommissioning the plant, which sits on the country's east coast, about 220km (137 miles) north-east of the capital Tokyo.
- ✓ The U.N.'s nuclear watchdog has endorsed the move.

**Where is the plant?**



- ✓ The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant is in the town of Okuma, in Fukushima Prefecture.
- ✓ It sits on the country's east coast, about 220km (137 miles) north-east of the capital Tokyo.

**How safe is the water?**

- ✓ The water has been filtered to remove more than 60 radioactive substances.
- ✓ But the water will not be entirely radiation-free as it will still contain tritium and carbon-14-radioactive isotopes of hydrogen and carbon that cannot be easily removed from water.

**4. One Week One Lab Programme (OWOL)**

**In context:** The Curtain Raiser programme for the week-long OWOL for CSIR-Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute (CGCRI), was held recently.

**One Week, One Lab programme**

- ✓ **The aim of the program** is to create awareness about the available technologies and services present at **37 CSIR** (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research) Labs spread across the country to showcase their work among potential stakeholders.
- ✓ These technologies help in providing solutions to societal problems, and develop the scientific temperament among the masses, especially among students who are the future of the country.
- ✓ The programme will ignite the minds of young innovators, students, start-ups, academia, and industry to look for opportunities.

**Council of Scientific and Industrial Research(CSIR)**

- ✓ **CSIR is a R&D organization** known for its cutting edge R&D knowledge base in diverse S&T areas. CSIR has a dynamic network of **37 national laboratories, 39 outreach centers, 1 Innovation Complexes**, and three units with a pan-India presence.
- ✓ **The CSIR laboratories** specialize in topics ranging from the genome to geology, food to fuel, minerals to materials, and so on.

**5. Sulina Channel:**

**In context:** The Sulina Channel holds immense importance for Ukraine's grain trade as an alternative passage after Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea grain deal.



**About Sulina Channel**

- ✓ It is a distributary of the Danube river , connecting major Ukrainian ports on the river to the Black Sea lying within the borders of Romania
- ✓ The Sulina Channel is deep and wide enough for freight transport.
  - This makes it a sort of a riverine ‘expressway’ – crucial for transport of goods from inland to the Black Sea.

**Danube river:**

- ✓ The Danube River is the second longest in Europe after the Volga.
- ✓ It rises in the Black Forest mountains of western Germany and flows for some 2,850 km to its mouth on the Black Sea.
- ✓ Along its course it passes through 10 countries: Germany, Austria, Slov.

**ANSWER WRITING**

**Q. Women empowerment in India needs gender budgeting. What are the requirements and status of gender budgeting in the Indian context?**

**INTRODUCTION:** A gender budget is not a separate budget for women. Instead, the gender budgets are an attempt to assess government priorities as they are reflected through the budget and examine how they impact women and men. Gender budgets look at what the impact of the spending is on men and women and whether or not budgets respond to the needs of both women and men adequately.

**Following below are the key requirements of a gender budget:**

- ✓ An analysis of the situation for women and men and girls and boys (and the different sub- groups) in a given sector.
- ✓ An assessment of the extent to which the sector’s policy addresses the gender issues and gaps described in the first step. This step should include an assessment of the relevant legislation, policies, programme and schemes. It includes an analysis of both the written policy as well as the implicit policy reflected in government activities. It should examine the extent to which the above meet the socio-economic and other rights of women.
- ✓ An assessment of the adequacy of budget allocations to implement the gender sensitive policies and programme identified in step mentioned above.
- ✓ Monitoring whether the money was spent as planned, what was delivered and to whom? This involves checking both financially and the physical deliverable (disaggregated by sex).
- ✓ An assessment of the impact of the policy/ programme/scheme and the extent to which the situation described in step mentioned above has been changed, in the direction of greater gender equality. Ever since the gender budgeting has been adopted in 2005, the Indian budget lists out schemes exclusively for women. States like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa, Kerala, Assam, Bihar, etc have adopted gender budgeting. An IMF research paper shows the impacts on states which have accepted gender budgeting, in regard of gender equality:
  - ✓ Greater gender equality wrt enrollment in schools. More girls are enrolling with increase in awareness.
  - ✓ Spending on infrastructure has also increased for eg. women in BPL categories given free LPG for better health prospects.
  - ✓ Providing women with safe toilets in school especially in villages, giving free cycles for easy commutation(for eg. In Bihar), providing them with drinking water facilities are some steps in this direction.
  - ✓ This has helped improve women’s economic equality. However not every objective could be achieved by gender budgeting:
  - ✓ India has low level of female labour force participation- women coming forward only during economic distress.
  - ✓ Gender disparity- in terms of economic freedom, financial rights, freedom to work and legal status.
  - ✓ Social customs also bind women to achieve greater heights.
  - ✓ Access to public goods is not readily available to women- for eg. safe streets, clean drinking water in rural areas, sanitation.
  - ✓ Lack of a standardized nomenclature for the various schemes related to women is also a concern. A gender sensitive budget helps in translating gender-specific commitments into budgetary commitments. Since women comprise approx 48% of the population of India, it becomes important for their voices to be heard. Gender based inequality will reduce provided this step is effectively implemented.

**MCQs**

1. Consider the following statements regarding Khanan Prahari App:
  1. It allows citizens to report incidents of illegal coal mining through geo-tagged photographs.

2. The app user's identity is kept confidential to ensure privacy and security.

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
2. With reference to the Fujiwhara effect, consider the following statements:
1. It occurs when a warm and cold ocean currents mix with each other.
  2. It is aided by rapid warming of ocean waters.
- 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
3. Consider the following statements regarding Lion-tailed macaque:
1. It is a primate endemic to the rainforests of the Himalayan region.
  2. Males of this species define the boundaries of their home ranges.

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
4. The term "White Shipping" is often in the news. Which of the following best describes it?
- a) Sustainable shipping that avoids well-to-wake emissions by switching to biofuel.  
b) **Exchange of advance information on the identity and movement of commercial non-military merchant vessels.**  
c) When people or goods are transported by ships using the minimum resources and energy possible, to protect the environment from the pollutants generated by the ships.  
d) Ships carrying a ballast water record book and an international ballast water management certificate.
5. Which film won the award for the best feature film at the 69th National Film Awards announced in August 2023?

- a) Gangubai Kathiawadi  
b) RRR  
c) Pushpa: The Rise-Part 1  
d) **Rocketry: The Nambi Effect**
6. Considered the following statement About Sulina Channel:
1. It is a distributary of the Danube river.
  2. It is connecting major Ukrainian

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

7. Considered the following statement regarding

1. The objective of the scheme is to bring a cultural and behavioural change in the general public to 'Ask for a Bill' as their right and entitlement.
2. The Scheme will be launched 2024.
3. This scheme will initially be launched as a pilot in the all States of India.

How many of the above statement is/are correct?

- a) Only 1  
b) **Only 2**  
c) Only 3  
d) None

8. Considered the following statement regarding BRICS:

1. BRICS Summit 2023 Theme: 'BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Multilateralism'.
2. South Africa is the chair for 2023.
3. First summit was held in Yekaterinburg in 2009

How many of the above statement is/are correct?

- a) Only 1  
b) Only 2  
c) **Only 3**  
d) None

9. The Chess World Cup 2023 took place in Baku, Azerbaijan. Which country shares a boundary with Azerbaijan?

1. Armenia
2. Georgia
3. Iran
4. Russia

Select the correct code

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

10. With reference to the global tax deal, consider the following statements:

1. The member nations have agreed to revise global tax regulations to guarantee that multinational corporations pay taxes at a minimum of 20 per cent.
2. India is not a part of this deal.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

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