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9th November 2024

- **BRICS Summit**
- **Clean Energy and Cooling Solutions**
- **Antitrust Laws in India**
- **Mains**



By saurabh Pandey



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The BRICS journey — gaining heft while in transition



How things change within a year. Russia's President Vladimir Putin made only a brief digital appearance at the BRICS 2023 summit in Johannesburg, despite host South Africa's decision to provide him diplomatic immunity against an ICC-issued arrest warrant linked to the Ukraine war. As the host and Chair of the summit this year, Mr. Putin dominated the show. The three-day summit pushed news about the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia to the back pages.

Survival and a rejuvenation

The summit in Kazan, Russia (October 22-24, 2024) was the sixteenth in a series that began in 2009. Only four countries – Brazil, Russia, India and China – participated in the first two summits. South Africa joined the group at the third summit in 2011, giving it its present name, BRICS. The first decade recorded several accomplishments, but the second decade began on a difficult note. The outbreak of COVID-19 put China on the defensive; then the bloody clash between Chinese and Indian troops in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 brought ties between two member-states to a new low; finally, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered Moscow's confrontation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. All this made the grouping vulnerable.

Yet, it survived and showed signs of rejuvenation. The 15th summit's decision on expansion led to five new members: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Egypt, and Ethiopia. A disclosure by Mr. Putin that 34 more nations are desirous of joining the grouping signifies that BRICS is headed upwards. Post-summit, the Russian projection was that this grouping represents the 'Global Majority'.

This transition trajectory needs to be factored in while assessing the outcomes of the Kazan summit and their broad implications for the world. BRICS does not strive to create a new world order. It just wants to reform the present one so that it works for everyone. The grouping is driven by "the BRICS spirit", which is imbued with eight specific characteristics: mutual respect and understanding; sovereign equality; solidarity; democracy; openness; inclusiveness; collaboration, and consensus. It is committed to promoting intra-BRICS cooperation under three verticals: political and security; economic and financial, and cultural and people-to-people cooperation.

BRICS, initially a grouping of emerging economies, is now primarily a platform for Emerging Markets and Developing Countries (EMDCs). It is a combined grouping of the east and the south, juxtaposed to the Global North. There are notable anti-western tendencies within the BRICS, but its moderate members are



Rajiv Bhatia

a Distinguished Fellow at Gateway House, a former High Commissioner to South Africa, and the author of three books on foreign policy

committed to safeguarding its non-western orientation.

Pushing for comprehensive United Nations reform, the grouping devised at Johannesburg a careful formulation to support the aspirations of countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America, "including the BRICS countries" (meaning India, Brazil and South Africa) to play a more significant role in the UN, including its Security Council. This remained unchanged at Kazan; no further improvement was registered in favour of the three aspirants. None was expected as China's reluctance to go beyond this formula is an open secret.

Another significant element was the grouping's call for the elimination of unilateral economic sanctions. It depicts them as unilateral measures, aptly highlighting that they are contrary to international law and have far-reaching implications for human rights.

Verticals and their focus

On the first vertical relating to peace and security, the summit focused on the conflict in West Asia, to which several paragraphs were devoted in the declaration. Paragraph 30 has scathing criticism for Israel's actions without any reference to the October 7 terrorist attack by Hamas. The grouping has called for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, unconditional release of all hostages, and the establishment of an independent 'State of Palestine'. Israel, whose military dominance of the region continues, was not impressed. Its response came in the form of a direct air attack on Iran, a member of BRICS.

With Russia as the chair of BRICS, the grouping said much less about the continuing war in Ukraine. Members were content with reiterating their national positions and calling for the end of war through dialogue and diplomacy while underlining the need to address "the root causes" of conflicts.

On the second vertical of economic and financial cooperation, the common currency issue received maximum attention. The decision taken was along expected lines. The use of local currencies in financial transactions between BRICS countries and their trading partners will be facilitated further. However, the issue of deeper financial and banking cooperation will continue to be studied by the Finance ministries of the member-states.

With Saudi Arabia still hesitant about joining BRICS fully, initial expectations of a massive capital injection into the New Development Bank remain unfulfilled. Therefore, the leaders restricted themselves to suggesting further improvement in the bank's workings and expressing their commitment to develop it into "a new type of MDB in the 21st century."

The third vertical aims to strengthen

people-to-people exchanges for social and economic development. Cooperation involving sports, culture, parliaments, civil society, business, and think tanks could have a beneficial long-term impact.

Finally, a crucial decision related to the grouping's expansion. The outreach session was held on the last day, with the participation of 34 states. Having approved the guidelines and criteria, a new category of 'partner state' was created. Thirteen countries have been invited to join the grouping as partner states. Latin America: Cuba and Bolivia; Eurasia: Belarus and Türkiye; Africa: Algeria, Nigeria, and Uganda; Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam; and Central Asia: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Clearly, the third expansion will further augment the BRICS family's share of the world population, international trade and GDP. Between now and the next summit in Brazil in 2025, most of these states may be included as partners, but they are expected to clamour for their early elevation as full members. Hence, the transition may continue for some more time.


From India's lens

From India's perspective, BRICS figures among the top six plurilateral groupings today – G-20, Quad, BRICS, BIMSTEC (The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), G7 (where India has a nearly permanent guest status), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). BRICS helps India to promote multipolarity in the world, exercise its strategic autonomy, deepen its relations with Russia, and effectively advocate the interests and agenda of the Global South. In addition, the latest summit served as a useful platform for the first meeting in about five years between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping. Bilateral negotiations resulted in an agreement on border patrolling arrangements and disengagement. Hence, this meeting, held on the summit's sidelines, heralded the beginning of a rapprochement between New Delhi and Beijing. As China-India relations improve, the strategic space for India to deal with its western partners may also expand.


India attaches a high degree of importance to making BRICS an effective instrument for international cooperation. This nation has made a tangible contribution in this direction and is eager to continue doing so. Initial caution over expansion has now been replaced by a sober calculation that increased membership, if handled properly, will enhance the influence of this plurilateral grouping. Above all, BRICS allows India to serve as a bridge between the west and the east and between the north and the south, thus turning New Delhi into a geopolitical sweet spot today.


There is a realisation now that increased membership has the potential to enhance the influence of this plurilateral grouping


Key Highlights

 **Putin's Limited Presence:** President Vladimir Putin made a brief digital appearance at the BRICS 2023 summit, despite being granted diplomatic immunity by South Africa against an ICC arrest warrant related to the Ukraine war.


 **Upcoming Kazan Summit:** The sixteenth BRICS summit is scheduled for October 22-24, 2024, continuing a series that began in 2009.

 **Expansion of BRICS:** The 15th summit led to the inclusion of five new members: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran, Egypt, and Ethiopia, with 34 more nations expressing interest in joining.

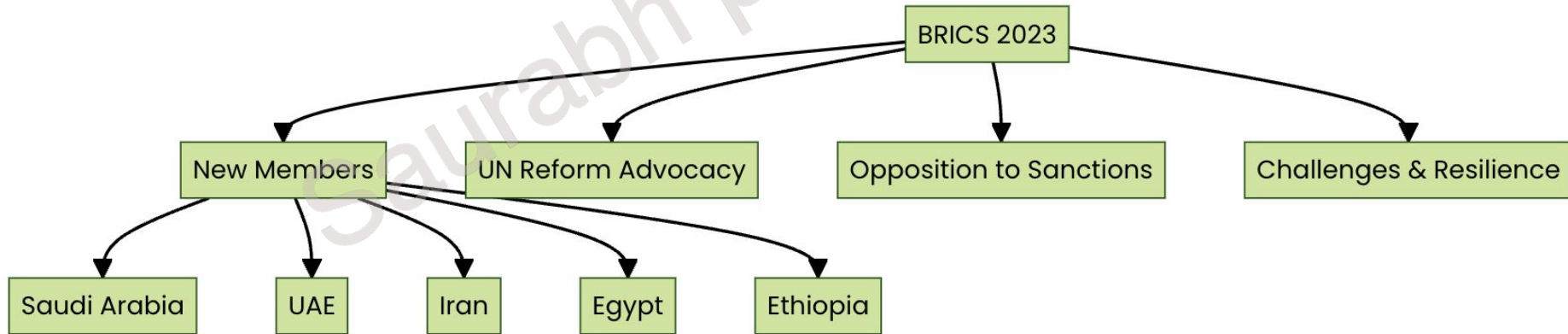
 **BRICS Spirit:** The grouping emphasizes mutual respect, sovereign equality, solidarity, democracy, openness, inclusiveness, collaboration, and consensus in its operations.

 UN Reform Advocacy: BRICS supports comprehensive reform of the United Nations, particularly advocating for a more significant role for emerging economies in the UN Security Council.



 Opposition to Sanctions: The grouping called for the elimination of unilateral economic sanctions, arguing they violate international law and have negative human rights implications.

BRICS Expansion and Influence:



Challenges Faced: COVID-19, India-China conflict, Ukraine invasion impacts

Survival and Growth: Despite challenges, BRICS has shown signs of rejuvenation.

New Members: Expansion to include Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran, Egypt, and Ethiopia.

Future Aspirations: 34 additional nations interested in joining BRICS.

Key Characteristics of BRICS

BRICS Spirit: Mutual respect, sovereign equality, solidarity, democracy.

Cooperation Verticals:

Political & Security

Economic & Financial

Cultural & People-to-People



Global Perspective

Emerging Markets Platform: Focus on Emerging Markets and Developing Countries (EMDCs).

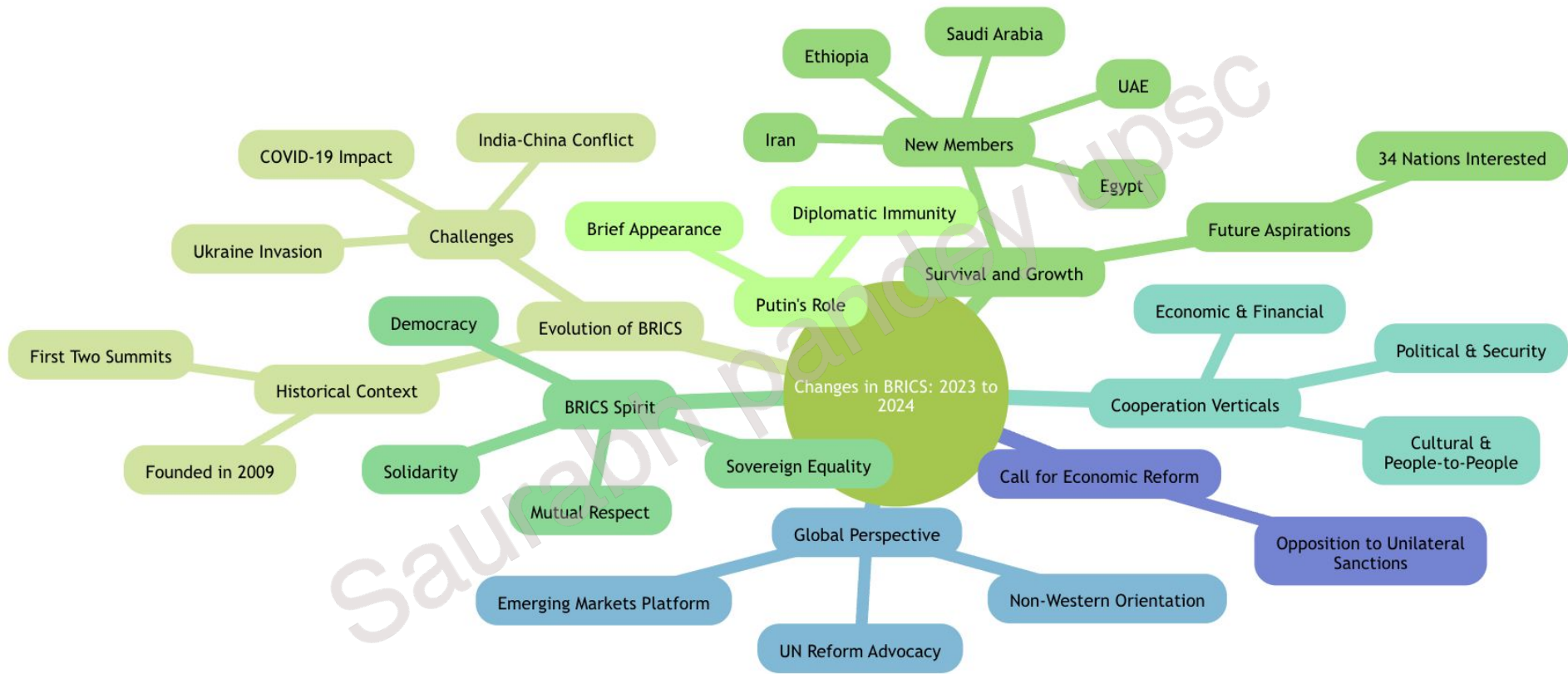
Non-Western Orientation: Anti-western tendencies but commitment to moderation.

UN Reform Advocacy: Support for a more significant role for developing nations in the UN.

Call for Economic Reform

Unilateral Sanctions: Opposition to unilateral economic sanctions, highlighting their legal and humanitarian implications.





BRICS Summit Verticals and Their Focus

Peace and Security

Conflict in West Asia 🌐

Criticism of Israel ✂️

Immediate ceasefire

Unconditional release of hostages

Establishment of an independent 'State of Palestine'

Israel's Response 🚀

Air attack on Iran

Military Dominance 💪

Ongoing military presence

Less focus on Ukraine war



Economic and Financial Cooperation

Common Currency Discussions

Facilitation of local currencies

Ongoing study by Finance ministries

New Development Bank

Expectations of capital injections

Commitment to improve bank's workings



People-to-People Exchanges

Social and Economic Development 🤝

Cooperation in sports, culture, and civil society

Long-term beneficial impacts

Expansion of BRICS

New Partner States 🌐

34 states participated in outreach session

13 countries invited to join:

Latin America: Cuba, Bolivia

Eurasia: Belarus, Türkiye

Africa: Algeria, Nigeria, Uganda

Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam


Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan


Impact on Global Share → increase in population, trade, and GDP




 BRICS as a Key Grouping: India views BRICS as one of the top six plurilateral groupings, alongside G-20, Quad, BIMSTEC, G-7, and SCO.


 Promoting Multipolarity: BRICS aids India in promoting a multipolar world, exercising strategic autonomy, and advocating for the Global South.


 India-China Relations: The latest BRICS summit facilitated a significant meeting between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping, leading to agreements on border patrolling and disengagement.

 Rapprochement with China: The summit marked the beginning of improved relations between India and China, potentially expanding India's strategic options with Western partners.

 Effective International Cooperation: India prioritizes making BRICS an effective tool for international cooperation and has contributed significantly to this goal.



 Membership Expansion: Initial hesitance regarding BRICS expansion has shifted to a belief that increased membership can enhance the group's influence.

 Geopolitical Bridge: BRICS positions India as a bridge between the West and East, and North and South, enhancing its geopolitical significance.

Summary: India views BRICS as a crucial platform for promoting multipolarity, enhancing international cooperation, and improving relations with China, thereby solidifying its geopolitical role.

Saurabh Pandey upsc

Staying cool, but with clean tech, global collaborations



In a rapidly warming world, cooling is not merely a luxury but a necessity, especially for vulnerable populations. International cooperation on clean energy and cooling solutions is a crucial step toward addressing the climate crisis. On September 21, 2024, the Quad nations (Australia, India, Japan, and the United States) issued the Wilmington Declaration, which underscores the Quad's commitment to sustainable energy solutions, particularly focusing on high-efficiency cooling systems. This aligns with the earlier joint statement by India and the U.S., which detailed a road map for building resilient and secure global clean energy supply chains, placing a special emphasis on clean cooling technologies. Both statements highlight the urgent need to deploy affordable and energy-efficient cooling systems in climate-vulnerable regions while advancing global climate goals.

India's leadership in these efforts is particularly noteworthy. As part of the Quad's clean energy initiatives, India has pledged significant investments in solar and cooling infrastructure across the Indo-Pacific region. Along with the U.S. and India's joint plan to expand manufacturing capacities for high-efficiency air-conditioners and ceiling fans, these developments could significantly reduce the climate impact of cooling systems.

Cooling-related emissions

The broader relevance of these international efforts can be seen through the lens of the Montreal Protocol and its Kigali Amendment (2016), which already set a precedent for collective global action on cooling-related emissions. As global temperatures rise, increasing demand for cooling makes it imperative for the world to adopt the lessons of these frameworks, reducing harmful emissions while transitioning to sustainable alternatives.

The Kigali Amendment expanded its scope to target hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), potent greenhouse gases used in cooling appliances. Left



Zerín Osho

Director of the India Programme at the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development (IGSD)

International cooperation on clean energy and cooling solutions is another crucial step in addressing the climate crisis

unchecked, HFCs could contribute to 0.52°C of warming by 2100. Maximising the Kigali Amendment's impact requires aligning the HFC phase-down with energy efficiency improvements. More efficient cooling systems could deliver about two-thirds of total greenhouse gas reductions by cutting electricity consumption. This would reduce emissions, lower air pollution from fossil fuel power plants, and save costs for manufacturers and consumers.

Climate change has heightened two critical threats related to cooling: the indirect emissions from inefficient air-conditioning and refrigeration systems powered by fossil fuels, and the direct emissions from harmful refrigerants. However, many countries still lack integrated energy efficiency and refrigerant standards. High-efficiency air conditioners using climate-friendly refrigerants are available, but inefficient models using outdated refrigerants still dominate many markets. Without stronger regulations, developing nations risk becoming dumping grounds for these inefficient appliances, exacerbating climate and energy challenges.

Having a mission-mode approach

In 2024, parts of India experienced temperatures over 50°C, underscoring the need for cooling to ensure thermal comfort, preserve food, medical supplies, and industrial processes. India, one of the most climate-vulnerable nations, faces increasingly severe heatwaves that endanger millions. By 2030, an estimated 160 million to 200 million Indians could face deadly heatwaves annually. The country's workforce, heavily exposed to extreme heat, risks significant declines in productivity, health, and food security. Cooling demand is expected to surge, with air conditioner sales rising 16% for every degree over 30°C. By 2050, India may have the world's highest cooling demand, with over 1.14 billion air conditioners in use.

India ratified the Kigali Amendment in 2021, committing to reduce HFCs by 85% by 2047. The India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) targets a

20%-25% reduction in cooling demand, 25-40% in energy consumption, and a shift to low-global warming potential (GWP) refrigerants, demonstrating leadership in climate-friendly cooling. A mission-mode approach is needed to tackle these challenges. A national mission for sustainable cooling would require focused leadership, cross-sectoral collaboration, and coordinated efforts across ministries. Establishing an inter-ministerial working group, planning a launch event, and allocating an initial budget are essential. National capacity-building initiatives and dedicated budget lines must follow for long-term success.

COP29 and the momentum of COP28

International commitments to clean energy cooling are encouraging, but technologies must remain affordable. The U.S.-India partnership and the Quad's initiatives emphasise deployment and local manufacturing of high-efficiency cooling systems. The challenge is in ensuring equitable access, particularly in developing regions where cooling needs are the greatest. Rising global temperatures require scaling up energy-efficient solutions without straining fragile electricity grids or leaving vulnerable populations behind.

India's proactive approach to cooling challenges, especially through the ICAP, positions it as a global leader in sustainable cooling. The country can protect its population from heat while leading the global fight against climate change, ensuring thermal comfort for all.

At COP28 (Dubai), 63 countries pledged to reduce cooling emissions by 68% by 2050. The Global Cooling Pledge, though non-binding, could provide cooling access to 3.5 billion people by 2050 and save \$17 trillion in energy costs. However, global action must accelerate to make this a reality. COP29 must build on the momentum of COP28 by expanding cooling commitments. This includes increasing participation in the Global Cooling Pledge and enhancing partnerships across sectors and nations.

Topic → Clean Energy and Cooling Solutions



Overview

In a warming world, cooling is essential for vulnerable populations 🌍
International cooperation on clean energy and cooling solutions is crucial for addressing the climate crisis ↻


- The Quad nations (Australia, India, Japan, USA) issued the Wilmington Declaration on September 21, 2024, emphasizing sustainable energy solutions and high-efficiency cooling systems.
- India leads in investments for solar and cooling infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Significant focus on affordable and energy-efficient cooling systems in vulnerable regions.


Key Concepts

Cooling-related Emissions: Addressing the emissions from cooling systems.

Montreal Protocol & Kigali Amendment: Frameworks for global action on cooling emissions.

Energy Efficiency: Importance of integrating energy efficiency with cooling technology.

 India's Leadership: India is making significant investments in solar and cooling infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region as part of the Quad's initiatives.

 Kigali Amendment Impact: The Kigali Amendment targets HFCs, which could lead to a potential 0.52°C increase in warming by 2100 if not addressed.

⚡ Energy Efficiency: Improved cooling systems could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by two-thirds through lower electricity consumption.


🏢 Regulatory Challenges: Many countries lack integrated energy efficiency and refrigerant standards, risking the proliferation of inefficient cooling appliances.


⊘ Environmental Risks: Inefficient air-conditioning and harmful refrigerants pose significant threats to climate and energy stability, especially in developing nations.


Summary: The Quad nations are prioritizing sustainable cooling solutions to combat climate change, with India leading investments in clean energy, while the Kigali Amendment aims to reduce harmful emissions from cooling systems.


Extreme Temperatures: In 2024, parts of India recorded temperatures exceeding 50°C, highlighting the urgent need for effective cooling solutions.





 Climate Vulnerability: India is one of the most climate-vulnerable nations, facing severe heatwaves that threaten millions of lives.


 Rising Heatwave Risk: By 2030, an estimated 160 to 200 million Indians could experience deadly heatwaves annually.

 Impact on Workforce: The extreme heat poses risks to productivity, health, and food security for India's workforce.


 Surge in Cooling Demand: Air conditioner sales are projected to increase by 16% for every degree above 30°C, with India potentially having over 1.14 billion air conditioners by 2050.

 **Kigali Amendment Commitment:** India ratified the Kigali Amendment in 2021, aiming to reduce HFCs by 85% by 2047.

 **Need for a Mission-Mode Approach:** A national mission for sustainable cooling is essential, requiring leadership, collaboration, and coordinated efforts across various sectors.

 **International Commitments:** COP28 saw 63 countries pledge to reduce cooling emissions by 68% by 2050.

 **U.S.-India Partnership:** The collaboration focuses on deploying and manufacturing high-efficiency cooling systems.

 **Equitable Access:** Ensuring access to cooling technologies in developing regions is crucial, as they face the greatest cooling needs.

⚡ **Energy Efficiency:** Solutions must be scalable without overburdening fragile electricity grids or neglecting vulnerable populations.

🇮🇳 **India's Leadership:** India's proactive approach, particularly through the ICAP, positions it as a leader in sustainable cooling and climate action.

💰 **Economic Impact:** The Global Cooling Pledge could potentially save \$17 trillion in energy costs and provide cooling access to 3.5 billion people by 2050.

🚀 **Future Actions:** COP29 aims to build on COP28's momentum by expanding cooling commitments and enhancing global partnerships.

Summary: COP29 must leverage COP28's commitments to enhance global cooling initiatives, focusing on equitable access and energy efficiency.

Zomato, Swiggy breached antitrust laws: CCI probe

Food delivery giants followed business practices favouring select restaurants listed on the platforms: CCI probe began in 2022 after complaint from National Restaurant Association of India

Reuters

NEW DELHI

An investigation by India's antitrust body found food delivery giants Zomato and SoftBank-backed Swiggy breached competition laws, with business practices favouring select restaurants listed on the platforms, documents show.

Zomato entered into "exclusivity contracts" with partners in return for lower commissions, while Swiggy guaranteed business growth to certain



Unpleasant flavours: Swiggy and Zomato pushed restaurants to maintain a parity on prices, directly reducing competition. REUTERS

players if they listed exclusively on its platform, according to non-public documents prepared by the Competition Commission

of India (CCI).

Exclusivity arrangements between Swiggy, Zomato and their respective restaurant partners "pre-

vented the market from becoming more competitive," the competition watchdog's investigation arm noted in its findings reviewed by Reuters.

The investigation began in 2022 after a complaint by National Restaurant Association of India about the impact on food outlets of the alleged anti-competitive practices of the platforms. The CCI documents are not public.

Zomato declined to comment, while Swiggy and the CCI did not respond to Reuters' queries.



Topic → Antitrust Laws in India

Overview

Definition: Antitrust laws are regulations that promote market competition and prevent monopolies.

Objective: Ensure fair competition, protect consumer interests, and promote innovation.

Antitrust laws are regulations that encourage competition by limiting the market power of any particular firm.

This often involves ensuring that mergers and acquisitions don't overly concentrate market power or form monopolies, as well as breaking up firms that have become monopolies

The Competition Act, 2002 (as amended) follows the philosophy of modern competition laws and aims at fostering competition and at protecting Indian markets against anti-competitive practices by enterprises

Key Points:

Regulatory Body: Competition Commission of India (CCI) 

Recent Cases: Zomato & Swiggy violations of antitrust laws 

Impact on Market: Effects on competition, pricing, and consumer choice 

Current Context:

Investigations: Recent findings indicate breaches by major food delivery platforms.

Legal Framework: Various laws under the Indian Competition Act, 2002.

Challenges:

Enforcement: Ensuring compliance and monitoring market practices.

Consumer Awareness: Educating consumers about their rights.

Future Directions:

Policy Developments: Ongoing reforms in competition policy.

Global Comparisons: Learning from international antitrust regulations.

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- (c) the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- (d) Kazakhstan

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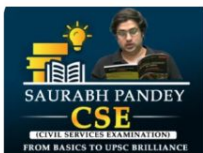
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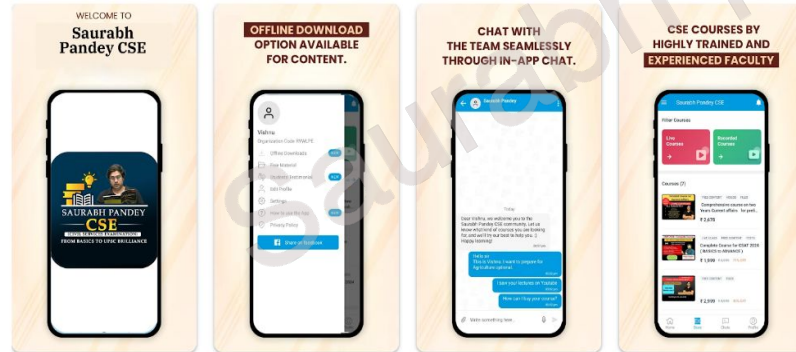
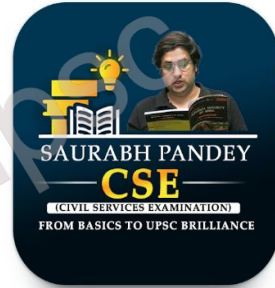
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