

Modi bats for Brics space exploration consortium

Says India remains hopeful for support on proposal to include African Union in G20

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India fully supports the expansion of the Brics grouping to include other nations and welcomes consensus-based discussions on the issue, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi said on Wednesday.

Speaking at the plenary session of the ongoing 15th Brics Summit in Johannesburg, Modi also pointed out that India remained hopeful for support from Brics nations on New Delhi's proposal to include the African Union in the Group of Twenty (G20) grouping at the G20 Leaders' Summit next month. Brics brings together five of the largest developing countries in the world, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, representing 41 per cent of the global population, 24 per cent of the global gross domestic product, and 16 per cent of the global trade.

Nations in the grouping have been approached by at least 23 other countries with applications to join the bloc, officials have said.

The PM welcomed the move to give special importance to the countries of the Global South at Brics under the chairmanship of South Africa. On Thursday, Modi will also participate in a special event called Brics-Africa Outreach and Brics Plus Dialogue, which will bring together a large number of African nations.

He also proposed the creation of a Brics Space Exploration Consortium to promote cooperation in the space sector.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Chinese President Xi Jinping, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov during the 2023 Brics Leaders Retreat Meeting, in Johannesburg on Wednesday

BRICS NATIONS AGREE ON ADDING NEW MEMBERS

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The Brics nations are already working on the Brics satellite constellation. In 2021, the nations had agreed to cooperate on sharing remote-sensing satellite data by placing a virtual constellation of specified remote sensing satellites from Brics space agencies into orbit. The move was aimed at addressing myriad challenges such as global climate change, major disasters, and environmental protection.

Reiterating India's existing position, Modi said India would be happy to offer its sophisticated home-grown digital public infrastructure delivery platforms such as CoWin and the artificial intelligence-based language plat-

form Bhashini to the other Brics nations. The PM also suggested a Brics-led effort in skill mapping.

The PM noted the progress made on initiatives suggested by India, including a railway research network, closer cooperation among micro, small, and medium enterprises, an online Brics database, and closer linkages between the startup ecosystems of Brics nations. Modi held bilateral meetings with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa. There was no confirmation of a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the time of writing this story.

Arguing that the Brics should expand political and

security cooperation to uphold peace and tranquillity, Jinping said that the Cold War-era mentality is still haunting the world and the geopolitical situation is becoming tense.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin has deputed his Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to attend the event. Last month, the South African judiciary ordered his arrest if he set foot in the country, in line with the warrant issued by the International Criminal Court.

In a virtual address, Putin said de-dollarisation is 'gaining momentum' worldwide as an objective and irreversible process, while Brics members are seeking to reduce their reliance on the currency for mutual transactions.