

# 19 nations queue up for joining BRICS

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As many as 19 countries expressed an interest in joining the BRICS group as it prepares to hold an annual summit in South Africa.

The emerging-markets bloc of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa will meet in Cape Town on June 2-3 to discuss its enlargement, Anil Sooklal, South Africa's ambassador to the group, said in an interview.

"What will be discussed is the expansion of BRICS and the modalities of how this will happen," he said. "Thirteen countries have formally asked to join and another six have asked informally. We are getting applications to join every day."

China initiated the conversation about expansion when it was BRICS chair last year, as the world's second-biggest economy tries to build diplomatic clout to counter the dominance of developed countries in the United Nations. The proposed enlargement triggered concern among other members that their influence will be diluted, especially if Beijing's close allies are admitted. China's GDP is more than twice the size of all four other BRICS members combined.

The foreign ministers from the five member states have all confirmed they'll attend the discussions in June, Sooklal said. Besides its membership, they will also discuss "hot spots" including Sudan, which is in the midst of conflict between the army and a paramilitary force.

Since its formation as the BRIC in 2006, the group has only admitted one new member — South Africa in 2010. Saudi Arabia and Iran are among those who've formally asked to join, Sooklal said in February. **BLOOMBERG**