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Chandigarh Declaration: 16th BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting Under India's 2026 Chairship

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Chandigarh Declaration: 16th BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting Under India's 2026 Chairship

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

*The concluded in **Chandigarh (July 22 to 24, 2026)** under **India's 2026 BRICS chairship**. The meeting unanimously adopted the **16th BRICS Health Ministerial Declaration** and launched a **BRICS Mission for Healthy Lifestyle** and a **BRICS Network of Centres of Excellence** on mental wellness. Union Health Minister **J.P. Nadda** led the Indian side, describing the declaration as a document that creates enduring institutional mechanisms rather than a one-time consensus.*

WHAT BRICS IS

BRICS began as an acronym for **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**, five major emerging economies that formalised the grouping to give the Global South a bigger voice in world governance. Following a major expansion, its full members now include **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia**, with Saudi Arabia invited, alongside a wider circle of partner countries. The bloc represents a very large share of the world's population, land area and economic output.

India assumed the **BRICS chairship on January 1, 2026**, taking over from Brazil, and will host the 18th BRICS Summit. Its chairship theme is “**Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability**”, a people-centric and humanity-first framing that shaped the Chandigarh meeting.

KEY DELIVERABLES OF THE CHANDIGARH MEETING

The meeting produced concrete, institution-building outcomes rather than only a statement of intent.

DELIVERABLE	WHAT IT DOES
16th Health Ministerial Declaration	Commits members to resilient, equitable and people-centric health systems
BRICS Mission for Healthy Lifestyle	Promotes healthy diets, physical activity and traditional food cultures
Roadmap for Healthy Lifestyle (2026 to 2029)	Time-bound plan for behavioural-change interventions
Network of Centres of Excellence	Coordinated by NIMHANS, focused on mental wellness
Working group on traditional medicine	Approved to deepen cooperation on systems such as Ayush

The **BRICS Network of Centres of Excellence on mental wellness** is to be coordinated by India's **NIMHANS**, Bengaluru, giving India a lead institutional role. The newly approved **working group on traditional medicine** places systems such as Ayurveda, Yoga and other Ayush practices on the BRICS health agenda, an area where India seeks global recognition.

GLOBAL HEALTH GOVERNANCE

The Chandigarh meeting fits into the wider agenda of **global health governance**, the set of institutions and rules through which countries jointly manage cross-border health risks. The declaration emphasised **pandemic preparedness**, **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**, resilient supply chains for medicines and vaccines, and equitable access to health technologies. These are areas where BRICS positions itself as a complement to, and at times a corrective for, existing **multilateral** health architecture that Global South countries see as skewed toward richer nations.

INDIA'S DIGITAL HEALTH PUSH

A distinctive Indian contribution to the meeting was **digital health**. India showcased its **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** for health, built around the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)**, which gives citizens a unique health identity and interoperable digital records. It also highlighted **U-WIN**, the platform that digitises routine immunisation, extending the model pioneered by the Co-WIN vaccination system.

By offering these open, low-cost digital tools to fellow BRICS members, India frames technology as a shared public good, reinforcing its identity as a provider of scalable, affordable health solutions.

HEALTH DIPLOMACY AND STRATEGIC WEIGHT

For India, hosting the health track advances its long-running **health diplomacy**, the use of health cooperation to build goodwill and influence. India's global standing as the "pharmacy of the world," its vaccine manufacturing scale and its digital health stack give it real assets to offer. Leading a BRICS mission on healthy lifestyles, anchoring the mental-wellness network through NIMHANS and driving the traditional-medicine agenda together strengthen India's soft power within the Global South and support its case for reformed, more representative multilateralism.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2: Important international institutions, agencies and groupings; **bilateral**, regional and global groupings involving India and affecting India's interests; issues relating to health.

Prelims pointers:

- The **16th BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting** was held in **Chandigarh, July 22 to 24, 2026**, under **India's chairship**.
- India assumed the **BRICS chairship on January 1, 2026**; theme: "**Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability**."
- Founding members: **Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa**; expanded members include **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the UAE and Indonesia**.
- Deliverables: **BRICS Mission for Healthy Lifestyle, Roadmap (2026 to 2029)**, and a **Network of Centres of Excellence on mental wellness coordinated by NIMHANS**; a **working group on traditional medicine** was approved.
- India's digital health tools: **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)** and **U-WIN**.

★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences), Bengaluru, is an Institute of National Importance and will coordinate the BRICS mental-wellness network.

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) creates a unique Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) ID for interoperable digital health records.

U-WIN digitises India's Universal Immunisation Programme, building on the Co-WIN model.

Indonesia became the newest full BRICS member in early 2025, the first Southeast Asian nation in the bloc.

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) means all people receive needed health services without financial hardship, a UN Sustainable Development Goal target.

Sources: Press Information Bureau, “16th BRICS Health Ministers’ Meeting Concludes Successfully under India’s BRICS Chairship 2026”; ANI; The Tribune; brics2026.gov.in.

Source: Chandigarh Declaration: 16th BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting Under India's 2026 Chairship —
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