

Current Affairs (January 2026)

Interview Answers - Bharath Kumaran M

Context Note

These answers address current affairs questions as of January 2026. Specific events and developments mentioned reflect the landscape at this time.

Q1: What will be hosted by China in 2026, bringing Asia-Pacific leaders together?

Based on the current affairs question, the likely reference is to regional economic or political forums that China typically hosts or leads.

Possible interpretations:

1. BRICS Summit 2026:

- If China holds BRICS presidency
- Brings BRICS members from Asia-Pacific + emerging markets
- Economic/geopolitical coordination forum
- India's participation critical (balances Chinese influence)

2. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):

- If expanded or special summit scheduled
- Regional security, economic cooperation focus
- India, Pakistan, Central Asian nations participate

3. Belt and Road Forum:

- Periodic conference on Chinese infrastructure initiatives
- Assembles developing world leaders
- India relationship critical (both cooperation and tension)

India's strategic posture:

Opportunities:

- Regional forum participation shows engagement
- Can advocate for India's interests (development, fair trade)
- Relationship building with participating nations
- Understanding Chinese strategies directly

Considerations:

- Balance participation with independence
- Don't become vassal state
- Assert India's distinct interests
- Build coalitions with like-minded nations

My perspective on Asia-Pacific engagement:

India should engage Asia-Pacific forums actively:

1. **Economic participation:** Trade, investment opportunities
 2. **Security cooperation:** Regional stability, counter-terrorism
 3. **Technology collaboration:** Research, innovation partnerships
 4. **Diplomatic presence:** Assert regional role
 5. **Balance-building:** Coalition with Japan, ASEAN, Australia
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Q2: What is the significance of 2026 UN Security Council election scheduled for mid-2026?

Background:

The UN Security Council has rotating membership:

- 5 permanent members (P5): US, Russia, China, France, UK
- 10 non-permanent members: 2-year terms, rotated

Mid-2026 election:

The election will select new non-permanent members to replace rotating members whose terms end June 2026.

What's significant:

1. Geopolitical influence:

- UNSC votes on military intervention, sanctions, international responses
- Non-permanent members can influence outcomes
- Strategic positioning matters

2. India's potential involvement:

- India may seek election (last served 2021-22)
- Campaign involves building coalition
- Represents soft power

3. Competing interests:

- India likely competes with Pakistan/other South Asian nations
- African nations, Latin American nations all competing
- Geographic representation principle guides selection

4. Current geopolitical alignment:

- P5 dynamics strained (US-China, US-Russia tensions)
- Non-permanent members increasingly important
- Developing world voice elevated when P5 divided

India's UNSC positioning:

Strengths:

- Permanent member aspirations (non-permanent currently only option)
- Large economy, military power
- Democratic nation (appealing to Western powers)
- Global South representative

Challenges:

- Competing with other aspirants (Brazil, Germany, Japan)
- Pakistan opposition (if India elected)
- Regional balancing (African, Latin American candidates)

My perspective:

India should:

1. **Actively campaign** for non-permanent seat (builds profile for future permanent seat)
2. **Build coalitions** with other developing nations
3. **Demonstrate value** as responsible UNSC participant
4. **Use platform** for global south advocacy
5. **Prepare for permanence** (long-term goal)

This is stepping stone toward permanent membership—important for India's global power aspiration.

Q3: What expanded international sporting event will take place in 2026 featuring 48-team format for the first time?

Almost certainly the FIFA World Cup 2026:

- **Location:** Joint hosting by USA, Canada, Mexico
- **Format:** First-ever 48-team format (expanded from traditional 32)
- **Significance:** Largest World Cup ever

Why this matters:

1. Sporting significance:

- Expansion reflects global football growth
- More teams = more competitive parity
- Increased viewership globally

2. Economic impact:

- Host nations: \$15-20 billion combined economic benefit
- Construction, hospitality, infrastructure investment
- Long-term stadium/infrastructure legacy

3. Geopolitical implications:

- North American unity (US-Canada-Mexico cooperation)
- Strategic importance of sports diplomacy
- Soft power through sports hosting

4. India's perspective:

Cricket dominance:

- India doesn't qualify for World Cup typically (football)
- But India could influence other tournaments
- Cricket more important for India (IPL model globally recognized)

Opportunity:

- India could eventually bid to host World Cup (unlikely but strategic)
- Focus on cricket World Cups (India hosted 2011, could host again)
- Sports infrastructure investment pays long-term dividends

What I'd recommend (for India):

Rather than focus on football, India should:

1. **Leverage cricket tournaments** (Commonwealth Games, Cricket World Cup hosting)

2. **Develop Olympic sports** (shooting, wrestling, badminton)
 3. **Host regional tournaments** (SAARC, Asian Games)
 4. **Build sports infrastructure** (legacy stadia for multiple uses)
 5. **Develop sports tourism** (spectator experience priority)
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Q4: In the context of late 2025-2026 Iran protests, what economic issues partly fueled the unrest?

Iran's economic crisis drivers (2025-2026):

1. Sanctions impact:

- Longstanding US sanctions (escalated under Trump administration)
- Oil export restrictions (largest revenue source)
- Financial system isolation
- Technology sanctions (limiting industrial modernization)

2. Currency collapse:

- Iranian Rial depreciation (inflation accelerating)
- Import prices spike (oil, food, medicines)
- Salary erosion (purchasing power collapse)
- Savings destruction

3. Inflation:

- Official: 40-50% annually
- Black market: Higher effective rates
- Food, electricity, fuel become unaffordable
- Young people especially hurt

4. Unemployment:

- Official: 10%+, actual significantly higher
- Youth unemployment: 20-30%

- Limited opportunity (especially for educated youth)
- Brain drain (youth emigration)

5. Energy crisis:

- Power shortages despite oil production
- Refining capacity insufficient
- Fuel import dependency
- Winter power problems

Why protests emerged:

Economic grievances:

- Can't afford basic living (young people hit hardest)
- No job prospects (college-educated unemployed)
- Currency collapse (savings worthless)
- Inflation erodes stability

Political expression:

- Economic crisis becomes proxy for regime discontent
- Protests broaden: From economic to political
- Regime legitimacy questioned (can't deliver prosperity)
- Generational divide (youth vs. regime)

India's concerns:

1. Energy implications:

- Iran oil sanctions: Affect global oil price
- India relied on Iran oil (heavily sanctioned recently)
- Price spikes impact India's inflation

2. Regional stability:

- Unstable Iran: Creates vacuum (Saudi/US competition)
- Proxy wars accelerate (Yemen, Syria, Iraq)

- India's Gulf interests threatened

3. Humanitarian:

- Refugee outflows potential
- Regional instability spills over
- Economic collapse creates migration pressure

What I'd watch:

1. **Sanctions trajectory:** Will new US administration maintain/escalate sanctions?
 2. **Regime stability:** Will economic crisis destabilize regime further?
 3. **Regional dynamics:** How do Saudi, US, Israel respond?
 4. **India's position:** Maintain pragmatic engagement while respecting international community
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Q5: Which Indian minister recently called for BRICS leaders to support multilateral institutional reform?

This likely refers to an Indian government official (possibly Foreign Minister or a senior cabinet member) advocating for BRICS cooperation on global institutional reform.

Context:

BRICS leaders' priorities:

- Challenge Western-dominated institutions
- Reform IMF, World Bank voting shares
- Strengthen New Development Bank (BRICS bank)
- Create alternative payment systems (reduce dollar dependency)

India's position on multilateral reform:

Advocacy areas:

1. **UN Security Council:** India pushing for permanent seat

2. **IMF/World Bank:** Developing country voting power increase
3. **Climate finance:** Rich nations funding poor countries
4. **Trade systems:** WTO reform, fair trade rules
5. **Technology governance:** Digital rights, data sovereignty

Why this matters:

Power shift represented:

- Western institutions developed post-WWII (Western dominance)
- Developing world rising (demanding proportional voice)
- BRICS as developing world coalition pushing reform
- India as coalition participant + individual aspirant

India's leverage:

- Large economy, billion people
- Growth engine of future
- Democratic values (appealing to West)
- Regional power (appealing to developing world)
- Technology leader (appealing to innovation focus)

What India should push for:

1. **UNSC permanent seat** (primary objective)
2. **IMF governance reform** (voting share increase)
3. **Climate finance** (rich to poor transfer)
4. **Technology sharing** (for development)
5. **Trade fairness** (reduce protectionism)

This multilateral reform agenda aligns India's interests with developing world aspirations.

Q6: What key infrastructure commitment did UK government reaffirm related to regional rail in January 2026?

This likely refers to UK rail infrastructure investment—possibly:

Possible UK initiatives:

1. **HS2** (High Speed 2): Expansion or continuation commitment
2. **Levelling Up**: Regional rail investment commitment
3. **Northern Powerhouse**: Rail connection improvements
4. **Specific regional project**: Scotland, Wales, Northern England rail

Why this matters globally:

1. **Economic development**: Infrastructure investment drives growth 2. **Regional equity**: Rural/secondary cities receive investment 3. **Soft power**: Infrastructure seen as government delivery capacity 4. **Post-pandemic recovery**: Infrastructure as stimulus

India's infrastructure perspective:

India should learn from UK infrastructure models:

1. Regional equity focus:

- Tier-2/3 cities underinvested
- Infrastructure investment in secondary cities drives inclusive growth
- Reduces urban congestion, encourages balanced development

2. Technology integration:

- Modern rail combines technology + infrastructure
- Digital ticketing, predictive maintenance, real-time tracking
- India should leverage technology in rail modernization

3. Public-private partnerships:

- Private sector funding + government oversight

- Risk-sharing improves project execution
- Infrastructure development accelerates

4. Long-term vision:

- Multi-decade infrastructure vision (clarity for investors)
- Phased implementation (manageable scale)
- Completion transparency (accountability)

India's rail opportunity (high-speed rail, suburban expansion, freight modernization):

- Investment critical for growth
 - Employment generation massive
 - Regional development unlock
 - Technology export potential
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Q7: Which major legal action was reported in early 2026 involving U.S. Federal Reserve Chair?

Early 2026 legal actions at the Federal Reserve Chair level would likely involve:

Possible scenarios:

1. **Regulatory action:** Congressional investigation
2. **Civil matter:** Lawsuit related to policy decisions
3. **Political challenge:** Opposition to appointment/reappointment

Why Fed leadership matters:

Global implications:

- US monetary policy affects global capital flows
- Interest rates impact emerging markets (India included)
- Dollar policy influences all other currencies

India's perspective on US monetary policy:

Interest rate implications:

- US rate rises → Capital outflows from India
- US rate falls → Capital inflows to India
- India needs stable, predictable US policy

Dollar implications:

- Strong dollar: Makes Indian imports expensive
- Weak dollar: Helps Indian exports
- Dollar dominance: Constrains India's currency autonomy

What India should do:

1. **Reduce dollar dependency:** Develop rupee as regional currency
2. **Foreign exchange reserves:** Maintain stability
3. **Interest rate management:** Align with global trends while managing inflation
4. **Capital controls:** Manage inflows/outflows prudently

Early 2026 Fed issues are significant for India's monetary policy management.

Q8: Name one key issue from recent Indian current affairs emphasized in weekly government/current affairs briefs (e.g., digitalization, solar manufacturing, internal security topics).

Key Indian current affairs issues (Jan 2026 context):

Likely priority issues:

1. Digitalization:

- Digital India 2.0 expansion
- Fintech regulation development

- Cybersecurity strengthening
- Data privacy (Digital Personal Data Protection Act implementation)

2. Solar manufacturing:

- PLI (Production-Linked Incentive) scheme success
- Solar module manufacturing capacity
- Export opportunities
- Energy security through renewables

3. Internal security:

- Terrorism in Kashmir/Northeast
- Cyber security threats
- Organized crime (mafia, smuggling)
- Communal violence prevention

4. Economic growth:

- GDP growth trajectory
- Employment generation (Skill India)
- Inflation management
- Foreign investment attraction

5. Climate action:

- Net-zero 2070 target progress
- Renewable energy capacity additions
- Climate finance needs
- Disaster management (floods, droughts)

My perspective on priority:

I'd prioritize (in order):

1. **Economic growth acceleration** (foundation for everything)
2. **Digital infrastructure building** (enables all modern development)

3. **Energy transition** (climate imperative, energy security)
 4. **Skill development** (employment creation, demographic dividend)
 5. **Security and governance** (stability foundation)
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Integrated Current Affairs Analysis

Patterns I observe (Jan 2026):

1. Geopolitical realignment:

- US-China competition intensifying
- India's role increasingly central
- Multilateralism fragmented but evolving

2. Economic transitions:

- Developed economies slowing
- Developing economies (India) accelerating
- Tech reshaping competitive advantage

3. Regional dynamics:

- Asia-Pacific becoming global center
- India-China-Japan triangle critical
- QUAD importance growing

4. Global challenges:

- Climate crisis persisting
- Technology governance urgent
- Migration pressures rising
- Economic inequality widening

For India specifically:

2026 outlook:

1. **Growth continues:** India likely 6-7% GDP growth
2. **Geopolitical role expands:** UNSC election, QUAD participation, BRICS involvement
3. **Technology advances:** AI adoption, semiconductor manufacturing
4. **Energy transition accelerates:** Solar capacity additions, coal phase-down begins
5. **Challenges persist:** Climate vulnerability, Pakistan tensions, China border

India should:

1. **Leverage growth window** (invest in capability building)
 2. **Strengthen institutions** (democracy resilience critical)
 3. **Build regional partnerships** (SAARC, ASEAN, Indian Ocean community)
 4. **Invest in people** (education, health, skills)
 5. **Lead on global issues** (climate, technology, development)
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Personal reflection on current affairs

As someone working in technology and systems (Kafka, Spring Boot, blockchain), I see **technology governance** as underappreciated in current affairs.

Why technology matters:

1. **Data as new oil:** Who controls data controls geopolitics
2. **AI determinism:** AI policy decisions reshape economies
3. **Cybersecurity:** National security depends on digital infrastructure
4. **Fintech:** Alternative financial systems redistributing power
5. **Space:** Space tech enables everything (satellites, communications)

India's technology positioning (opportunity):

- 1.4 billion population = massive data resource
- Strong IT services sector = ecosystem foundation
- Government digitalization commitment = infrastructure building
- Startup ecosystem = innovation engine

- But: Need chip manufacturing, AI expertise development

What I'm tracking:

1. **Semiconductor geopolitics** (US-China competition, India opportunity)
2. **AI regulation development** (government policy shaping)
3. **Data sovereignty** (India's approach to data)
4. **Digital rupee adoption** (CBDC development)
5. **Cybersecurity threats** (emerging attack vectors)

These technical dimensions often overlooked in traditional current affairs analysis, but critical for India's future.

Final thought on current affairs

Understanding current affairs isn't about memorizing facts; it's about **seeing patterns and implications**.

The pattern I see in early 2026:

- **Old world order fragmenting** (Western dominance declining)
- **New powers rising** (India, Indonesia, Vietnam, others)
- **Rules being rewritten** (UN, trade, tech governance)
- **India positioned uniquely** (large, democratic, growing, tech-capable)

India's success depends on:

1. **Recognizing the opportunity** (window open but closing eventually)
2. **Building capabilities** (especially technology, institutions)
3. **Making strategic choices** (not reactive, but proactive)
4. **Leading globally** (not just participating)
5. **Serving humanity** (not just national interest)

The next 5-10 years will determine whether India becomes:

- **Option A:** Global power (shaping world order)

- **Option B:** Regional power (significant but not global)
- **Option C:** Middle power (relevant but not determinative)

Where we end up depends on decisions being made now in boardrooms, government offices, universities—and by individuals like me, building the systems that will power this transition.