

The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

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The Union Government's decision to advance the Population Enumeration phase of Census 2027 in four poll-bound States (UP, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa) and include expanded identity-related questions has reignited debate over Census data integrity. Former Census officials have raised technical concerns regarding data confidentiality, under-enumeration risks, and the structural linkages between the Census, National Population Register (NPR), and National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Key Concerns Raised by Former Officials

• Confidentiality vs. Administrative Usage:

- Census data is legally mandated for macro-statistical purposes only.
- The inclusion of personal identity attributes (Aadhaar, Voter ID, Passport, parents' birth details) in the notified 40-question Census schedule mirrors data collected in the 2019 NPR rehearsal form.
- Historical precedent from the 1951 Census shows Census slips were transcribed to create Assam's initial NRC, creating a technical friction point with current statutory protections.

• Risk of Under-Enumeration:

- Advancing the Census schedule exclusively in select source States (e.g., Uttar Pradesh) ahead of destination States risks missing seasonal and interstate migrant populations, causing data skew.

• Redundancy & Data Quality:

- Information such as ID proofs and vaccination records already exists in administrative databases (e.g., CoWIN, UIDAI), raising questions regarding the statistical necessity of collecting them during household enumeration.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Framework)

• Statutory & Legal Framework:

Ex-officials flag concerns over Census data quality, potential NPR, NRC link

While records show Census data was used to prepare NRC in 1951, former senior official says such data is confidential and can only be used for statistical purposes; advancing Census in 4 States may lead to under-enumeration of migrants, he adds

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union government's decision to advance the Population Enumeration phase of Census 2027 in four poll-bound States, coupled with the introduction of several new questions in the Census schedule, has prompted some former Census officials to raise concerns regarding the quality of data that is to be collected and the potential links between the Census, the National Population Register (NPR), and ultimately, the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

There is a precedent for Census data having been used to prepare the NRC. Records show that this took place in 1951, during independent India's first Census, when the NRC was prepared across the country by "copying" data from the Census schedules. However, for unspecified reasons, a countrywide NRC was never published, except in undivided Assam, which at the time also included Manipur and Tripura.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, former Deputy Registrar General of India K. Narayanan Unni stressed that any link between the Census



Keeping track: A final updated NRC list, after a long exercise, was published for Assam on August 31, 2019. FILE PHOTO

and population-registration activities remains speculative. However, some of the information being sought in the latest Census questionnaire resembled data collected during previous NPR update exercises.

The NPR, first created in 2011 and initially proposed to be updated with the first phase of the now-scrapped Census 2021, has been put on the back burner due to stiff opposition from political parties and civil society groups.

Mr. Unni said, "NPR is generated under the Citizenship Act, and data is supposed to be published. However, Census data is confidential and can only be used for statistical purposes. But in 1951, Census

data was used to prepare the NRC in Assam."

On August 14, 2026, the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India (RG&CCI) notified a set of 40 questions to be asked during the Population Enumeration phase of the Census.

Some of the additional questions, such as particulars of a person's parents, including their names, religion, place of birth, Aadhaar, mobile phone number, voter ID and driving licence details, mirror those asked in the rehearsal form of the NPR in 2019.

The 1951 exercise

The NPR had been updated in 2015 and already has the family-wise database of 119 crore residents.

The 1951 Census report by R.B. Vaghaiwalla, the Superintendent of Census Operations for Assam, Manipur and Tripura, shows that the NRC was conceived primarily as a Census and administrative tool rather than a citizenship-verification exercise.

"An important innovation of this Census was the preparation of the NRC, in which all important Census data was transcribed from the Census slips. The Register uses the same symbols and abbreviations and is a copy of the Census slips," the 1951 report said.

Missing NRC entries were copied from Census slips, and missing Census slips were recreated from NRC entries under a special reconciliation exercise undertaken by Vaghaiwalla.

According to Vaghaiwalla, the register was intended to be maintained permanently and updated by village officials, thereby providing continuity between Censuses. Though Section 15 of the Census Act, 1948 ensures confidentiality and says that "records of census [are] not open to inspection nor admissible in evidence", the NRC was prepared using the data, establishing a precedent of using Census

data to prepare the register.

A former Census official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the NPR and the Census were legally distinct exercises governed by different laws. The official pointed out that the update of the NRC in Assam in 2019 was not based on NPR data and required a separate data collection exercise.

On September 5, the RG&CCI advanced the Population Enumeration phase of Census 2027 in the poll-bound States of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Goa, while deferring the exercise in violence-hit Manipur.

Mr. Unni said that the decision to conduct the Census in four States ahead of the rest of the country could lead to under-enumeration of migrant workers, particularly from Uttar Pradesh.

Mr. Unni also questioned the utility of some of the new questions, particularly those relating to identity documents and vaccination history.

"Many of these details are already available in administrative databases. It is not clear what statistical purpose some of these questions will serve," he said.

Daily News Analysis

- **Census Act, 1948 (Section 15):** Guarantees strict confidentiality. Mandates that Census records are not open to public inspection nor admissible as evidence in legal proceedings.
- **Citizenship Act, 1955 & Citizenship Rules, 2003:** Provide the legal framework for the creation of the NPR (register of usual residents) and the NRC (register of verified citizens).
- **Data Governance & Privacy Principles:**
 - **Purpose Limitation:** Under data protection principles (K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India, 2017), data collected for macro-demographic statistics should not be cross-linked with identification registers without explicit legal safeguards.
- **Institutional Governance:**
 - **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India (RG&CCI):** Functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to conduct demographic surveys and manage population registers.

Key Distinctions: Census vs. NPR vs. NRC

- **Legal Basis:**
 - Census: Governed by the **Census Act, 1948**.
 - NPR & NRC: Governed by the **Citizenship Act, 1955** and **Citizenship Rules, 2003**.
- **Target Population:**
 - Census & NPR: Enumerate all **usual residents** (including foreign nationals staying >6 months).
 - NRC: Contains data specifically of **verified Indian citizens**.
- **Public Nature of Data:**
 - Census: Individual details remain **confidential** by law; only aggregated data is published.
 - NPR/NRC: Designed as **published administrative databases** subject to verification and local objections.

Conclusion

Maintaining the functional separation between statistical data collection (Census) and individual identity verification (NPR/NRC) is critical to preserving public trust. Adherence to Section 15 of the Census Act, 1948 ensures respondent honesty, safeguarding the scientific validity of India's fundamental demographic repository.

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UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: With reference to the Census in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Census is conducted under the Census Act, 1948.
2. Individual census records are subject to statutory confidentiality protections.
3. Census information is primarily intended for producing aggregate demographic statistics.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Ans:D)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "The credibility of the Census depends as much on public trust as on administrative capacity." Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

Aim, Think & Achieve

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A recent working paper by the World Resources Institute (WRI) India reveals a critical seasonal spike in urban air pollution: open waste burning triples during winter across Indian cities compared to summer. Driven by stagnant atmospheric conditions, lower ambient temperatures, and unequal municipal infrastructure, open waste burning poses a severe localized public health risk, particularly for vulnerable socioeconomic groups.

Pollution from open waste burning triples in cities during winter: study

Jacob P. Koshy
NEW DELHI

Open waste burning rises sharply in winter across different categories of Indian cities, with the average incidence, quantity of waste burned, and associated emissions as much as three times higher than in summer, according to a working paper by the World Resources Institute (WRI) India.

The findings come as cities approach the post-monsoon period, when falling temperatures and stagnant atmospheric conditions typically make it harder for pollutants to disperse.

The study, based on field surveys from 2019-2026 in 11 polluted Indian



Tier 3 cities recorded the highest incidence of open waste burning in winter, among the cities examined. FILE PHOTO

cities, the names of which have not been disclosed, found that Tier 2 cities, with their population between 500,000 and five million, had the highest quantities of waste burned among the cities examined.

Tier 3 cities, however,

recorded the highest winter incidence of burning, at an average of 49.6 incidents per square kilometre per day, compared with 46 in Tier 2 cities, and 39.4 in Tier 1 cities.

Open waste burning was not the dominant source of citywide particu-

late pollution, and contributed less than 1% of total citywide PM2.5 and PM10 emissions in the cities assessed. But because it happens closer to homes, streets and waste dumps, it can increase short-term exposure to toxic smoke.

The burden, the report assessed, was also strongly associated with socio-economic conditions. Poorer areas recorded substantially more burning than higher-income areas, with the highest incidence in the study, at nearly 84 incidents per square kilometre per day, recorded in the poorer areas of Tier 2 cities during winter. The researchers say the pattern points to disparities in waste collection and other municipal services.

Key Findings of the WRI India Study

- **Seasonal Surge:**
 - Incidence of burning, volume of waste burned, and corresponding emissions increase by up to **three times in winter** relative to summer.
- **Tier-Wise Variations:**
 - **Tier-2 Cities** (Population: 0.5 to 5 million): Accounted for the **highest absolute volume** of waste burned.
 - **Tier-3 Cities:** Recorded the **highest frequency/density** of winter burning incidents, averaging **49.6 incidents/km²/day** (compared to 46 in Tier 2 and 39.4 in Tier 1).

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- **Localized Health Impact vs. Citywide Footprint:**

- Waste burning contributes **less than 1%** to total citywide PM2.5 and PM10 loads.
- However, ground-level proximity to residences and streets causes acute **short-term toxic exposure**, posing severe respiratory hazards.

- **Socioeconomic Disparities:**

- Poorer neighborhoods experienced significantly higher burning rates due to systemic gaps in municipal waste collection.
- The highest recorded burning density occurred in low-income zones of Tier-2 cities during winter (**~84 incidents/km²/day**).

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Framework)

- **Statutory Framework:**

- **Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2016:** Expressly bans open burning of solid waste on public, private, or commercial premises. Directs local bodies to establish segregation and processing infrastructure.
- **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981:** Empowers State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) to enforce air quality standards and penalize illegal emission sources.

- **Environmental & Atmospheric Dynamics:**

- **Thermal Inversion:** Winter atmospheric trapping prevents vertical dispersion of pollutants, keeping ground-level emissions concentrated near breathing zones.
- **Ground-Level Toxins:** Burning mixed municipal waste releases high levels of hazardous pollutants, including **dioxins, furans, black carbon, and heavy metals**.

- **Institutional Governance & Challenges:**

- **Municipal Capacity Deficits:** Tier-2 and Tier-3 urban local bodies (ULBs) face resource constraints, weak collection mechanisms, and insufficient waste processing capacity.
- **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM):** Mandated to address regional air quality issues in the National Capital Region (NCR) and adjoining areas through coordinated monitoring.

Key Drivers: Why Open Waste Burning Escalates in Winter

- **Municipal Service Deficits:** Inadequate door-to-door collection in informal and low-income settlements leads to localized waste accumulation and burning for disposal.

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Daily News Analysis

- **Space Heating Needs:** Low-income populations often burn accumulated dry waste and biomass for warmth during winter cold waves.
- **Seasonal Leaf Litter:** Post-monsoon and autumn leaf drop increases combustible organic biomass in urban areas, leading to open burning.

Conclusion

Addressing winter open waste burning requires shifting from end-of-pipe enforcement to structural municipal reforms. Strengthening door-to-door waste collection in low-income pockets, enforcing the SWM Rules 2016, and equipping Tier-2 and Tier-3 ULBs with proper waste processing infrastructure are essential to eliminating localized toxic exposure and achieving equitable air quality management.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: Which of the following best explains why an emission source can have a relatively small citywide contribution to PM_{2.5} but still produce substantial health impacts?

- A. Pollutants emitted near the ground can create high local concentrations and direct exposure.
- B. PM_{2.5} is harmless when emitted in small quantities.
- C. Citywide averages automatically exclude residential areas.
- D. Local emissions are converted into oxygen before reaching the atmosphere.

Ans: A)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: Open waste burning is a localised but significant public-health hazard in Indian cities. Discuss its causes, environmental consequences and mitigation measures. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has proposed establishing an directly elected body for the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh by introducing a new constitutional provision, Chapter 'K', under Article 371. This sui-generis governance model seeks to grant legislative safeguards over local identity and resources while balancing Union administration in the strategic border region.

MHA proposes new Chapter 'K' under Article 371 for Ladakh

Provision being made to bring elected body for Union Territory; civil society members who attended MHA meet say they were 'disappointed' as they are yet to receive draft proposal; they also sought compensation for families of violence victims

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has proposed an elected body for the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh by introducing a new constitutional provision under Article 371 of the Constitution in a proposed Chapter K, civil society members who attended a meeting with MHA officials in Delhi on Wednesday said.

Cherrong Dorjay Lakruk of the Leh Apex Body (LAB) told *The Hindu* that they were "disappointed" as this was a reiteration of the May 22 meeting, and were given a PowerPoint presentation mentioning Chapter K on Wednesday but were yet to get a detailed "draft proposal" from the MHA.

A statement released by the civil society members said, "The MHA stated that the intended UT-level body, would be elected by direct



Making a point: People from Ladakh have staged several protests over the years seeking Statehood. ANI

election, and would have legislative powers with respect to land, culture and language, forest, environment, natural resources, and any other subject matter reserved for the UT under Article 240."

Ladakh chief secretary Ashish Kundra, who attended the meeting, said in a post on X, "Attended the sub-committee meeting with leaders of Ladakh at MHA in Delhi today. A general air of positivity prevailed as the broad con-

tours of a Sui-generis model of governance under Article 371 of the Constitution were discussed. Deepening democracy is the goal."

Representatives of the LAB and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) asked the MHA to ensure that the Lieutenant-Governor of Ladakh does not take any major decisions concerning the administration, bureaucracy or land until the proposed constitutional safeguards are put in place,

while pressing for the legislation to be passed in the upcoming Winter Session of Parliament.

The members also sought compensation for the families of the victims of the violence that broke out on September 24, 2025, in Leh city, where four people were killed in police firing. They further sought the withdrawal of criminal cases against 80 people, along the lines of the protection afforded to those who took part in the "Gen Z protest" at Delhi's Jantar Mantar in July. The violence in Ladakh erupted amid a protest that was called to demand constitutional safeguards.

Article 371, which currently has chapters that run from A to J, deals with "Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions" and exists under Part XXI of the Constitution. It is currently applicable in 12 States: Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra

Pradesh, Telangana, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Sikkim, and Karnataka.

After Ladakh lost its special status under Article 370 of the Constitution as part of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir, it was turned into a Union Territory without a legislative assembly in 2019. Since then, the LAB and the KDA have been demanding Statehood and tribal status for Ladakh and seeking a larger role for local residents in decisions relating to land and infrastructure projects.

Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who was also part of the delegation that met MHA officials, said, "We cannot say that the meeting was a complete success. We hoped to get a draft proposal assuring us protection under Article 371. However, that was not provided. We have asked the government to take back the cases registered against protesters after last year's incident in Leh city."

Key Aspects of the MHA Proposal & Regional Demands

- **Proposed Constitutional Framework (Chapter 'K'):**
 - Envisages a directly elected UT-level body with legislative powers covering land, culture, language, forests, environment, natural resources, and subjects under Article 240.
 - Intended as a constitutional mechanism under Part XXI to protect local interests without full statehood.
- **Concerns Raised by Civil Society (LAB & KDA):**

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Daily News Analysis

- **Lack of Formal Draft Text:** Representatives expressed disappointment over being shown only a PowerPoint presentation rather than a negotiated draft Bill text.
- **Scope of Control:** Stakeholders are seeking legislative authority over local administration, police, and bureaucracy, which remain unaddressed in the preliminary outline.
- **Interim Moratorium Demand:** Demanded that the Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) hold off on major administrative and land decisions until safeguards are enacted in Parliament.
- **Legal Relief & Compensation:** Requested financial compensation for families of victims of past violence and the withdrawal of criminal cases filed against local protesters.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Framework)

- **Part XXI of the Constitution (Special Provisions):**
 - **Article 371 (A to J):** Contains tailored administrative safeguards for 12 states (e.g., Article 371A for Nagaland, 371G for Mizoram) to accommodate cultural identity, land ownership rights, and customary laws.
 - **Asymmetric Federalism:** Demonstrates the constitutional flexibility to accord varying degrees of autonomy to regions based on historical, strategic, or demographic requirements.
- **Union Territory Governance Framework:**
 - **Article 239 & 240:** Article 239 governs direct UT administration via the L-G, while Article 240 empowers the President to make regulations for specific UTs.
 - **Reorganisation Context:** Following the 2019 bifurcation of Jammu & Kashmir under Article 370, Ladakh was designated a Union Territory without a legislature, centralizing decision-making under the L-G.
- **Alternative Demands — Sixth Schedule vs. Article 371:**
 - **Sixth Schedule (Article 244):** Focuses on tribal self-governance through Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) with specific revenue-raising and judicial powers.
 - **Article 371 Amendment:** Functions via parliamentary legislation creating a region-specific macro-assembly structure at the state or UT level.

Institutional Distinction: Proposed Chapter K vs. Existing Sixth Schedule

- **Structural Architecture:**
 - **Proposed Chapter K:** Establishes a centralized, UT-wide legislative assembly directly elected by residents.
 - **Sixth Schedule:** Creates decentralized Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) operating at regional/district tiers.

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- **Legislative Jurisdiction:**

- Proposed Chapter K: Broad legislative mandate over land, natural resources, environment, culture, and statutory subjects.
- Sixth Schedule: Focuses on customary law, local land allotment, inheritance, and village administration.

Conclusion

The MHA's proposal to introduce Chapter 'K' under Article 371 marks a shift toward establishing a formal constitutional setup for Ladakh. Fulfilling local governance aspirations effectively will depend on providing a concrete draft text, clearly delineating powers between the elected body and the Lieutenant-Governor, and establishing financial and administrative clarity.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution primarily provides for:

- A. Direct administration of all tribal areas by the Union Government
- B. Autonomous governance through District and Regional Councils in specified tribal areas of the Northeast
- C. Special legislative powers for all Union Territories
- D. Creation of State Legislatures in Scheduled Areas

Ans: B)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question:Examine the constitutional significance of Article 371 and its differentiated approach to regional governance. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

Driven by judicial intervention from the Supreme Court, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has proposed a red hexagonal Front-of-Pack Nutrition Label (FOPNL) for packaged foods high in fat, salt, or sugar (HFSS). While marking a critical shift in public health communication, expert consensus indicates that warning labels alone are insufficient to counter India's growing childhood obesity, type-2 diabetes, and non-communicable disease (NCD) crisis without broader structural and fiscal reforms.

Key Issues & Policy Gaps Highlighted

• Scale of Childhood Obesity & Unhealthy Marketing:

- According to the World Obesity Atlas 2026, **41 million Indian children and adolescents (aged 5–19)** are overweight or obese.
- Ultra-processed ultra-cheap foods, "health drinks," and energy drinks are heavily marketed to minors under misleading wholesome or energetic claims.

• Enforcement & Institutional Gaps:

- Existing school canteen recommendations from CBSE and FSSAI remain largely advisory and unenforced.
- A major limitation of packaged food regulation is its inability to reach the vast **unorganised food sector** (street vendors, dhabas, sweet shops), which accounts for a substantial share of total trans-fat, salt, and sugar consumption.

• Flaws in the Fiscal/Tax Structure:

- India currently levies a 40% GST slab broadly across all aerated and sweetened beverages, treating regular sugary colas and zero-sugar alternatives identically.
- This flat tax structure eliminates financial incentives for manufacturers to reformulate recipes to lower sugar content.

India has to act on its 'sugar' problem

This week, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), prodded by the Supreme Court, proposed a simple but overdue idea. Packaged foods high in fat, salt, or sugar should carry a bold red warning on the front of the pack, not buried in fine print on the back. Someone picking up instant noodles, a breakfast cereal, or a "health drink" will finally be told, at a glance, that it is not as wholesome as its advertising claims. This is a welcome step. It is also, on its own, nowhere near enough.

The number of children presenting with morbid obesity and diabetes has climbed sharply within just a few years. The World Obesity Atlas 2026 bears this out – 41 million Indian children and adolescents aged 5 to 19 are now overweight or obese. This is not just because children are eating more; it is about what they are being sold. Breakfast cereals, sweetened yoghurts, and "health drinks" are marketed to parents as filling gaps in a child's diet, emphasising "energy" and vitamins while saying little about the sugar content inside. In 2024, a leading multinational was found adding sugar to infant food sold in India and other lower income countries; sugar was left out of the same product in Europe. When a health drink, popular in Indian homes, turned out to be nothing more than flavoured sugar syrup, it took a social media storm, and not a regulator, to force the company to prescribe a 15% cut in its added sugar.

The problem is worse around schools and colleges, where studies show that the cheapest, most easily



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available snacks are also the least healthy. A popular "energy drink" among teenagers, priced at just ₹20, packs close to 17 grams of sugar, caffeine, and artificial colour into a single bottle. Its label says it is not meant for children, yet nothing stops a child from buying it. This is the market pricing unhealthy calories to fit within the range of a child's pocket money.

Need for enforcement None of this is a secret. What has been missing is enforcement. The FSSAI and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) have long recommended what schools should not sell, but optional rules get treated as optional, and canteens stock whatever sells cheapest. A red warning label only works if it is actually enforced.

Moreover, the new rule stops at the edge of organised retail. Most of India's sugar, salt, and trans fat is eaten unbranded, from street stalls, dhabas, and sweet shops that make up the unorganised sector, none of which is required to declare anything. A red label on a biscuit packet does nothing about the jalebi sold loose beside it. Regulation that reaches only packaged food leaves the unregulated half of the plate untouched.

Then there is the conversation India keeps avoiding – a tax on sugar. When the U.K. introduced its soft drinks industry levy, sugar consumption fell. Manufacturers reformulated their drinks to slip below the tax threshold rather than raise prices. A well-designed sugar tax does not just discourage people from buying a product, it pushes the industry to make the

product itself less harmful. India already taxes sugary drinks heavily, just not usefully. Since September 2025, aerated and sweetened beverages, sugar free versions included, were folded into one 40% GST slab – so a "normal" cola and its zero-sugar counterpart pay the same tax, leaving manufacturers with no reason to cut sugar. The U.K.'s levy worked differently, taxing drinks in tiers by sugar content, so that companies could lower their bill by reformulating the product. India could tax products in the same way so that manufacturers have a reason to cut sugar.

The standard objection – that such a tax would hit the poor the hardest – is not wrong, but it is only half the argument. Unregulated, cheap sugar already extracts a heavy price from the poor, who bear the brunt of the diabetes, hypertension and childhood obesity epidemic that sugar heavy diets drive, with the least means to treat it. Doing nothing is not neutral; it is a slower, costlier tax, paid in ill health rather than rupees at the till. The answer is to design the tax calibrated to sugar content so that it nudges reformulation, with part of the revenue set aside to make healthy food cheaper. The FSSAI's proposed red label is a genuine, if belated, first step. What India needs now is the resolve to finish what it has started – mandatory food standards; limits on how unhealthy food is marketed to children; rules that reach the unorganised sector; and an honest debate on taxing sugar in a way that protects families with the least room to absorb either cost, the tax, or the disease.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Framework)

• Constitutional Mandate:

- Article 21 (Right to Life & Health):** The Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed that the constitutional Right to Life encompasses the right to health, imposing a affirmative duty on the State to protect citizens from avoidable health risks.

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Daily News Analysis

- **Article 47 (Directive Principles):** Directs the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people, and to consider the improvement of public health as among its primary duties.

- **Regulatory & Statutory Framework:**

- **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006:** Empowers FSSAI to establish science-based standards for food items and regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, and sale.
- **Dietary Guidelines for Indians (2024):** Formulated by ICMR-NIN, these provide the scientific thresholds for defining "High Sugar," "High Salt," and "High Saturated Fat" levels.

- **Global Best Practices (Fiscal & Regulatory):**

- **Tiered Sugar Tax (U.K. Model):** A graduated soft drinks industry levy that taxes beverages based on tiered sugar thresholds, forcing widespread industry reformulation without imposing uniform consumer price shocks.
- **Warning Labels (Chile/Mexico Model):** Combines bold black/red warning octagons with strict prohibitions on marketing labelled products to children or using cartoon mascots on packaging.

Policy Matrix: Current vs. Proposed Reform Architecture

- **Front-of-Pack Labeling (FOPNL):**

- Current Mechanism: Fine-print Nutritional Information Table on the back of packaging (BOPNL).
- Proposed Reform: Bold, red hexagonal front-of-pack warnings for HFSS products.

- **Indirect Taxation (GST on Sugar):**

- Current Mechanism: Flat 40% GST on aerated/sweetened beverages regardless of actual sugar concentration.
- Proposed Reform: Tiered sugar-content tax structure to incentivize product reformulation.

- **Target Population & Scope:**

- Current Mechanism: Exclusively targets organised, packaged food brands.
- Proposed Reform: Mandatory baseline standards for organized canteens, marketing restrictions aimed at children, and gradual safety norms for unorganised retail.

Conclusion

The FSSAI's proposed front-of-pack red warning label is a vital regulatory first step toward informed consumer choice. However, tackling India's non-communicable disease burden requires a holistic public health strategy: combining mandatory front-of-pack warnings with strict restrictions on child-directed marketing, a calibrated tiered sugar tax, and targeted capacity-building within the unorganised food sector.

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: "The Gram Sabha is not merely an administrative consultative body but an instrument of participatory self-governance in Scheduled Areas." Discuss in the context of PESA and the Forest Rights Act. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**



Turning economic cooperation into shared prosperity

At a time when the international landscape is becoming more complex and uncertain, the case for meaningful international cooperation has rarely been stronger. Its value must increasingly be measured by its ability to deliver stability, resilience and shared prosperity.

For the United Arab Emirates (UAE), this is central to how it approaches BRICS. Since becoming a full member in January 2024, its engagement has been guided by a straightforward principle: economic cooperation should create tangible opportunities for countries, businesses and people.

A diversity that creates opportunities

The strength of BRICS lies partly in its diversity. Its members bring different economic structures, resources, capabilities and development experiences – from major producers and consumers to sources of capital, investment destinations, energy exporters and manufacturing centres.

These differences create opportunities for complementarity – connecting markets, capital, capabilities and ideas in ways that can benefit its members, and by extension the Global South.

The UAE's participation in BRICS is part of its broader commitment to multilateralism, constructive dialogue and diversified international partnerships. It seeks to build bridges between economies and regions. It supports an open international system that advances peace, stability, sustainable development and shared prosperity.

For the UAE, BRICS' ultimate value lies in implementation. Dialogue should translate into easier trade, stronger investment flows, more resilient supply chains, better connectivity and greater opportunities for businesses.

India's 2026 BRICS Chairship, centered on resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability, provides a timely framework for this agenda. At a time when trade restrictions, supply-chain disruptions and uncertainty are increasing costs for businesses and consumers, the response should not be to retreat from global economic integration, but to make it more resilient and inclusive.

BRICS stands out when cooperation can produce tangible benefits: through strengthening



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Minister of State at the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs

the multilateral trading system, facilitating trade and investment, improving connectivity, supporting resilient global value chains, and promoting sustainable development.

Development finance is also part of this equation. The New Development Bank (NDB) has approved more than \$40 billion in financing since its establishment, supporting infrastructure and sustainable development across its member countries. The UAE's active engagement with the NDB long before joining BRICS reflects its wider commitment to mobilising capital towards productive investment and long-term growth.

The UAE's own economic partnership with India demonstrates what practical connectivity can achieve.

On UAE-India ties, the UAE's advantages

The UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement has helped create a more enabling environment for trade and investment between two highly complementary economies. In 2025, non-oil bilateral trade grew by 17% to exceed \$76 billion and the UAE and India have set the ambition of increasing bilateral trade to \$200 billion by 2032.

But the strength of the UAE-India relationship extends beyond trade. It is reinforced by investment, innovation, education, tourism and long-standing connections between their businesses, institutions and people.

This experience points to a broader lesson for BRICS: the strongest economic partnerships are built not only through agreements between governments, but through lasting connections across societies – creating the trust, opportunity, and resilience that allow commercial ties to deepen over time.

Economic connectivity is strengthened when businesses, entrepreneurs, investors, and institutions develop greater familiarity with one another. It is reinforced through education, research, tourism, cultural exchange and engagement of younger generations, which help build the trust and networks on which longer-term economic relationships grow.

The opportunity for BRICS is therefore to deepen the quality of connectivity among its members – connecting not only economies but also institutions, ideas and people.

The UAE is particularly well positioned to contribute because connectivity lies at the heart of its own economic model.

Non-oil sectors accounted for almost 79% of GDP in 2025, supported by world-class infrastructure, trusted financial institutions, advanced logistics and energy capabilities, and an open investment environment that enables businesses to scale-upwards and outwards.

The UAE's ports, airports and logistics networks connect markets across Asia, Africa, Europe and beyond. Its financial centres connect international capital with opportunities across the region, while, its universities, research institutions and innovation ecosystem connect talent, knowledge and ideas.

With sovereign wealth assets exceeding \$2.9 trillion, and 38 concluded Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements, the UAE has built the capacity to connect capital, markets and economies at scale.

For the UAE, connectivity is not simply about moving goods from one market to another. It is about creating the conditions in which capital, knowledge, technology, talent and people can interact and create new opportunities.

The UAE's approach is not to build economic cooperation around division, but around connectivity.

The path under India's leadership

As India leads BRICS through 2026, there is an opportunity to move further toward delivery: building resilience without closing markets, supporting innovation while widening opportunity, and strengthening connections among the businesses, institutions and people of the UAE and India. The UAE also looks ahead with confidence to China's BRICS Chairship in 2027, where it hopes to build on the momentum of India's leadership and carry forward the same energy of openness, connectivity and practical cooperation.

Ultimately, the success of BRICS cooperation will be measured by the opportunities it creates. That is the approach that the UAE brings to BRICS. As India hosts the 2026 Summit (September 12-13), the UAE stands ready to continue the work that translates cooperation into ways that support shared prosperity.

The United Arab Emirates promotes open, resilient economic cooperation through its engagement with BRICS

GS Paper II: International Relations

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Questions: Discuss the constitutional framework governing Union Territories under Articles 239 and 240. How does it differ from State governance?(15Marks, 250 Words)

Context :

The article, authored by UAE Minister of State Saeed bin Mubarak Al Hajeri, emphasizes how economic cooperation within BRICS should deliver tangible opportunities, stability, and shared prosperity. Highlighting the bilateral relationship between the UAE and India under India's 2026 BRICS Chairship, the piece outlines a vision where global economic integration is strengthened through robust trade, capital flows, logistics networks, and societal connections.

Key Analytical Takeaways

- **Core Operational Principle:**
 - Economic cooperation must move beyond high-level dialogue to practical implementation—facilitating trade, investment, supply chain resilience, and connectivity for member states and the broader Global South.
- **The Strategic Role of Diversity:**
 - Complementarity among BRICS economies—connecting capital sources, energy exporters, manufacturing hubs, and large consumer markets—creates shared economic strength amidst rising global trade restrictions.
- **UAE–India Bilateral Model:**
 - **Trade Momentum:** Following the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), non-oil trade expanded by 17% (exceeding \$76 billion in 2025), targeting \$200 billion by 2032.
 - **Beyond Trade:** The relationship is driven by capital mobility, research, education, and people-to-people connections.
- **The UAE's Value Proposition to BRICS:**
 - High economic diversification (non-oil sectors accounting for nearly 79% of GDP in 2025).
 - Significant capital deployment capabilities, with sovereign wealth assets exceeding \$2.9 trillion and 38 concluded CEPAs.
 - Robust development finance integration through active participation in the New Development Bank (NDB), which has approved over \$40 billion in regional infrastructure projects.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Framework)

- **Multilateral Economic Architecture:**
 - **BRICS Expansion & Dynamics:** Represents an expanding block of major emerging economies aiming to reform global governance, facilitate local currency trade settlements, and build alternative financial institutions.

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- **New Development Bank (NDB):** Headquartered in Shanghai, the NDB finances infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other developing countries, serving as a non-Bretton Woods development finance mechanism.

- **India's Foreign & Economic Policy:**

- **Neighborhood and Extended Neighborhood Strategy:** Deepening linkages with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) through economic agreements, trade corridors, and diaspora integration.
- **India's 2026 BRICS Chairship:** Focused on the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability", prioritizing people-centric growth, trade facilitation, digital public infrastructure, and climate action.

- **Institutional Economic Tools:**

- **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA):** Free trade agreements covering trade in goods, services, investment, and regulatory cooperation to reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers.

Institutional Focus: Structural Framework of India-UAE Bilateral Ties

- **Trade & Investment Mechanisms:**

- Driven by CEPA provisions, joint venture investments, and sovereign wealth fund allocations targeting renewable energy, infrastructure, and technology sectors.

- **Strategic Connectivity Projects:**

- Positioning as key nodes in broader trans-regional trade networks (such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor framework), leveraging UAE logistics hubs (ports, airports) and Indian industrial capabilities.

- **Socio-Economic Ties:**

- Supported by a large Indian expatriate workforce in the UAE, robust remittance flows, cultural exchange, and institutional collaboration in higher education and innovation.

Conclusion

As India leads the 18th BRICS Summit, the UAE-India economic framework offers a practical template for intra-BRICS cooperation. By converting multilateral dialogue into resilient supply chains, capital alignment, and people-to-people connections, the grouping can foster tangible economic development across the Global South.

