Census 2027

Mains Syllabus: GS II - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Why in the News?

Recently, the government has decided to conduct Population Census-2027 in two phases along with enumeration of castes.

How will the census 2027 be conducted?

The Census of India is conducted under the provisions of the Census Act, 1948 and the Census Rules, 1990.

- **Two Phases & Caste Enumeration** - It has been decided to conduct Population Census-2027 in two phases along with enumeration of castes.

  Two phases of census are House Listing phase and then Population Enumeration phase which will be completed 5-6 months and 1 month respectively.

- **Reference Date** – It will be 00:00 hours of the first day of March, 2027.

  The reference date is the specific point of time for which the data on population is collected.

- For the Union Territory of Ladakh and the non-synchronous snow-bound areas of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir and States of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the reference date will be 00.00 hours of the first day of October, 2026.
- **Period** - Phase I will be conducted during April-September 2020 and second phase in February 2021.
- **Digital Method** - The 2027 Census in India will be the first digital census, using a mobile app for data collection and a centralized management portal for data security and accessibility.

  All the preparations for the first phase of the Census to be conducted in 2021 were completed, but the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic across the country stalled the census work further.

- **Self-Enumeration** - Office of the Registrar General of India, which conducts the

census, had developed a self-enumeration portal in English for the planned 2021 census.
- This option, however, will only be available to those households that have updated the NPR online.

Census 2011
• The last Census of India was conducted in 2011 in two phases, - **Phase I** – House Listing (HLO) (1 April to 30 September 2010) - **Phase II** – Population Enumeration (PE) (09 February to 28 February 2011) • **Reference Date** - The last Census provided population data as on March 1, 2011. • For snow-bound non-synchronous areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, It was conducted during 11 to 30 September 2010 with reference date as 00.00 hours of the first day of October 2010.

What are the challenges in conducting census 2027?

- **Timeline** – The many processes of the census exercise need to be completed before the next Lok Sabha elections in 2029.

  The 2011 Census data was released only in April 2013, 2 years after the enumeration.

- **Enumerators** – Around 30 lakh enumerators, including a sizeable number of government school teachers, will be trained afresh on the mobile application, caste enumeration.
- **Removal of Discrepancies** – Usually the provisional data of the population becomes available within 10 days and removal of discrepancies through verification may take six months.
- **Caste Census** – Conducting the caste enumeration alongside the census would be difficult task in terms of listing & categorization of castes, training enumerators, and logistics issue.
- **Fair Demiliation** – It has been a contentious subject with parties ruling the southern states fearing that they will lose representation in Parliament if delimitation is conducted based on population enumeration of the latest Census.
- **Women's Reservation** – The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023, reserving one-third of Lok Sabha and assembly seats for women, makes the reservation contingent upon the delimitation process.

  The Act states that the quota "shall come into effect after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose after the relevant figures for the first census taken after the commencement of The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-eighth Amendment) Bill 2023.

- **NPR Update** – There is a lack of clarity on updating the National Population Register

(NPR), which already has a database of 119 crore residents.
- The population register was to be updated during the first phase of the planned 2021 census and the collection of these details has been opposed by several Opposition-ruled States in the past.

According to the Citizenship Rules 2003, the NPR is the first step towards compilation of a National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC/NRC).

How will the delimitation be conducted after Census 2027?

- **Delimitation** - It is mandated under Articles 81 and 82 of the Constitution and is required to be carried out after every Census.
- This happened thrice, based on the Census of 1951, 1961 and 1971.
- **First Freeze** - The 42nd Amendment to the Constitution, passed during the Emergency, froze the total number of Parliamentary and state Assembly seats until the 2001 Census.
- **Present Delimitation** – At present, Parliamentary constituencies within states, are organized based on the 2001 Census, under the provisions of Delimitation Act, 2002.
- However, only the boundaries of constituencies have been altered and not the number of seats which remain the same as based on the 1971 Census.
- **Freeze till 2026** - The Constitution of India was specifically amended (84th amendment) in 2002, not to have interstate delimitation of constituencies until the first Census conducted after the year 2026.
- **Delimitation 2027** - Once the final data of census 2027 is out, which could be in late 2027 itself, it will open the doors to start the process of delimitation.
- **Delimitation Commission** - Parliament will have to pass a Delimitation Act to pave the way for formation of a Delimitation Commission.
- **Delimitation Formula** - This Commission would then devise a formula (population per constituency), in consultation with various stakeholders including state governments, based on which the delimitation exercise would be conducted.
- **Composition of the Commission** - According to the Delimitation Act of 2002, the Delimitation Commission will have
    - Chairperson - A retired Supreme Court judge
    - Members - Chief Election Commissioner and State Election Commissioner
    - Associates - MPs and MLAs from states will be associated but none of these members have voting rights.
- **Changing the Parliamentary Seats** - A Constitutional amendment Bill will have to be brought to increase the seats in Parliament which remain frozen at 543.

According to Article 81 of the Constitution, the total number of seats in Lok Sabha cannot exceed 550.

What lies ahead?

- Census 2027 is a much anticipated and significant exercise that engenders other important exercises such as delimitation, caste census and women reservation.
- Detailed planning, sufficient allocation of resources will be required to conduct the exercise stress-free and error free.
- Proper training and education of people, enumerators and all the stake holders are essential to get the co-operation of the stakeholders to conduct the exercise.

References

1. Indian Express | Population Census-2027
2. The Hindu | Next Census to conclude by March 2027

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