Census Act, 1948

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Polity & Governance*

Why in News?

The Union Government said in the Lok Sabha that, under the Census Act, 1948, "the respondent is required to answer all questions to the best of his knowledge or belief."

- **Census Act, 1948** – It provides a ***legal framework*** for conducting a population census, including the appointment of census officers and defining their duties.

Key aspects of the act

- **Enactment –** Passed on 3rd September 1948.
- **Extent –** It applies to the ***whole of India***.
- **Purpose –** To provide for matters connected with the taking of census whenever necessary or desirable.
- **Authority –** The act empowers the ***Central Government*** to decide when a census will be conducted and to appoint Census Commissioners and necessary staff.
- **Definitions –** Includes terms like premises (land, building, hut, shed, etc.), vehicle (any transport used for census work), and prescribed (rules made under the Act).
- **Duties of Citizens –** Individuals are ***legally bound*** to provide accurate information to census officials when asked (***Section 8(2) of the act***).
- **Confidentiality –** Information collected during the census is protected and ***cannot be used for non-census purposes***, ensuring privacy (not even accessible to the courts of law).
- **Power to Requisition –** The government has the power to demand premises, vehicles, or animals for the purpose of conducting the census, with provisions for compensation to the owners.
- **Penalties –** It lays out penalties for various offenses, such as making

refusal or false statements or obstructing the process.

- **Status of Census Authorities –** The Census Commissioner, Directors of Census Operations, and all census officers are ***legally considered public servants*** by giving them legal protection and authority while performing census duties.
- **Amendments –** The Act was amended in 1994 to update certain provisions.
- **Importance –** The census data generated under this act serves as a crucial tool for data collection on population demographics, which informs government policy and planning.

To know about ***Census 2027***, Click here

References

1. The Hindu | People should disclose details as per Census Act
2. Indian Employees | Census Act, 1948

