
2. Census First Phase, NPR Data Collection deferred till September

Prelims Syllabus: Policies

Mains Syllabus: GS-II Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Why in News?

- The first phase of the census and collection of details to update the National Population Register (NPR) have been postponed at least till September.

About the News:

- The Registrar General of India (RGI) had in December informed the States that freezing of boundaries of districts, sub-districts, tehsils, talukas, police stations etc. has been postponed till June 2022.
- Freezing of boundary limits of administrative units, at least three months prior, is a prerequisite for conducting the census. Even if the RGI issues an order in June to freeze the boundaries again, the exercise can take place only in September.
- Finalisation of administrative units entails covering all jurisdictional changes in an administrative area between two consecutive censuses.
- The first phase of Census 2021 — the House listing and Housing Census along with updating the NPR — was scheduled to be held from April-September, 2020 but was postponed indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The second and main phase of the decennial exercise — the population enumeration — was to be concluded by March 5, 2021.
- There was a ban on States to create new administrative units from January 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.
- The RGI informed the States in July 2020 that after the outbreak of the pandemic, the field work of the first phase of Census 2021 and the other related activities have been postponed until Further Orders.
- In Census, data is collected on demographic and various socio-economic parameters like education, SC/ST, religion, language, marriage, fertility, disability, occupation and migration of the individuals.
- The forthcoming Census is to be the first digital Census and there is a provision for self-Enumeration.

What is Census?

- The census provides information on size, distribution and socio-economic, demographic and other characteristics of the country's population.
- The Census was first started under British Viceroy Lord Mayo in 1872. It helped in framing new policies, government programs to uplift areas of improvement in the community.
- The first synchronous census in India was held in 1881. Since then, censuses have been undertaken uninterruptedly once every ten years.

Who Conducts Census?

- The responsibility of conducting the decennial Census rests with the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India under Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- The Census is one of the most credible sources of information on the following:
 - ✓ Demography.
 - ✓ Economic Activity.
 - ✓ Literacy and Education.
 - ✓ Housing & Household Amenities.
 - ✓ Urbanization, Fertility, and Mortality.
 - ✓ Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
 - ✓ Language.

Historical Significance:

- 'Rig-Veda' reveals that some kind of population count was maintained during 800-600 BC in India.
- Arthashastra by 'Kautilya' written in the 3rd Century BC prescribed the collection of population statistics as a measure of state policy for taxation.
- During the regime of the Mughal king Akbar, the administrative report 'Ain-e-Akbari' included comprehensive data pertaining to population, industry, wealth and many other Characteristics.