Cabinet approves Census of India 2027

Census 2027 will mark the 16th census in the country and the 8th conducted after India gained independence.

Key Details of Census 2027

- **Phased Conduct:** The exercise will occur in two phases: (i) Houselisting and Housing Census (April to September 2026) and (ii) Population Enumeration (PE) (February 2027).
- **First Digital Census:** Using mobile applications.
- **Caste Data:** Census will capture Caste data during the Population Enumeration phase.
- **New Technology:** A dedicated Census Management & Monitoring System (CMMS) portal has been developed for real-time monitoring of the process.
  - ⊙ Census-as-a-service (CaaS) will deliver data to ministries in a clean, machine-readable and actionable format.
- **Participation:** The public will be provided with an option to self-enumerate.

About Census in India

- **Gensis:** The first non-synchronous census was conducted in 1872.
- **Conducted by:** Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Statutory Mandate:** The Census Act, enacted in 1948, provides the legal framework for the conduct of the census.
- **Parameters:** The data gathered covers various parameters including Demography, Housing Condition, Religion, and Literacy, providing micro-level data down to the village or ward level.
- **Last Census:** 2011. The 2021 census was postponed due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Standing committee presents a report on Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) in Lok Sabha

Report highlights key challenges faced in the implementation of the mission and puts forward important recommendations to improve its effectiveness.

About AMRUT

- **Ministry:** Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- **Type:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- **Objective:** Development of basic infrastructure in sectors of Water supply, Sewerage and septage management, Storm water drainage, green spaces and parks, and non-motorized urban transport in selected cities and towns.

Topic	Key Issues	Recommendations
Funding and Financial Capacity	✓ **Inadequate Funding for Infrastructure** ✓ **Lack of Operation and Maintenance Funding** and limited alternative financing	✓ **Enhanced central and multilateral funding support** especially in underserved regions ✓ **Scale up innovative financing mechanisms** like Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) and municipal bonds
Implementation and Institutional Framework	✓ **Slow Pace of Execution:** Under AMRUT 2.0, While projects worth ₹1.90 lakh crore have been approved, physical completion stands at only about ₹48,050 crore ✓ **Limited involvement of urban local bodies** while dominance of Parastatal agencies in execution ✓ **Absence of Integrated Water Management** and long term strategy	✓ Formulate a **national roadmap for building the institutional and technical capacity of ULBs** ✓ Ensure **100% submission of City Water Action Plans (CWAPs)** by all ULBs ✓ **Long term Planning:** Urgently commission a unified national-level assessment and projection of urban drinking water demand for the next 25 to 30 years ✓ Enforce **convergence across central schemes**
Technical, operational and Monitoring issues	✓ **Insufficient reporting of data** on water coverage, Non-Revenue Water (NRW), metering, wastewater reuse ✓ **Significant untreated sewage** (total sewage generation in urban India ~48,004 MLD and installed treatment capacity is about 30,001 MLD in 2021).	✓ Formulate a **National Urban Wastewater Reuse Policy** ✓ **Augment Wastewater Capacity and Reuse** ✓ **Operationalize the incentive mechanism for NRW reduction** and **accelerate Smart Metering**

India's Resolution on 'Strengthening the Global Management of Wildfires' adopted at UNEA-7, in Nairobi

The resolution aimed at **strengthening international cooperation and coordinated action** for wildfire management.

- **UNEP's report 'Spreading Like Wildfire',** warns that wildfires may rise 50% by 2100, if current trends continue.
- Total **11 resolutions were passed at the UNEA-7** including **coral reefs, anti-microbial resistance, cryosphere, chemical, waste,** etc.

Key Provisions of India's Resolution

- **Strengthening International Cooperation:** Development of early warning systems, risk assessment, satellite- and ground-based monitoring and community alerts.
- **Enhanced Regional and Global Collaboration:** Mechanisms supporting prevention, post-response recovery, and ecosystem restoration.
- **Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building:** Creation of platforms for best practices and training and programmes.
- **Support for National and Regional Action Plans:** Assistance for integrated fire management and wildfire resilience strategies.
- **Facilitating Access to Finance:** Help in project preparation for multilateral and results-based funding.

Current status of wildfires in India

- **According to Forest Survey of India Report,** more than 36% of the country's forest prone to frequent forest fires, nearly 4 % extremely prone, 6% found to be very highly fire prone (ISFR 2019).
- Satellite based remote sensing technology and GIS tools have been **effective in better prevention and management of fires, like MODIS** sensor and **SNPP-VIIRS.**

> **About United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA, HQ: Nairobi, Kenya)**
> - **Established in 2012,** at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.
> - **Roles and Functions:**
>   - **Highest-level decision-making body on the matters related to environment.**
>   - It set the global environmental agenda; provide policy guidance and define policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges in the world.

Sustainable Harnessing of Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India(SHANTI) Bill

The Union Cabinet has approved the **SHANTI** Bill 2025, enabling regulated private sector participation in nuclear power generation.

Key Features of the bill

- **Private Participation:** Opens the nuclear sector to private companies across the value chain, ending the **exclusive monopoly** of the Department of Atomic Energy.
- **Unified Legal Framework: Consolidates existing laws into a single, comprehensive statute** to enhance regulatory clarity and investor confidence.

Significance of Private Sector Participation

- **Resource Mobilisation:** Private participation expands **capital availability, attracting domestic and global investment** and supporting India's long-term **target of 100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047.**
- **Technological Innovation:** Private sector entry accelerates adoption of **advanced technologies such as Small Modular Reactors (SMRs),** modular reactor designs and modern safety systems.
- **Energy Security:** Private sector capacity augments generation, manufacturing and supply-chain resilience, reducing **dependence on fossil fuels.**

Challenges to Private Sector Participation

- **Safety and Liability Issues:** Heavy **liability under Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA) 2010** deter private suppliers and investors.
- **National Security Risks:** Private involvement requires stronger safeguards, and traceability due to **sensitive materials and technology.**
- **Long Project Timelines:** Nuclear plants have **7 to 10 year gestation periods, reducing investor interest** without viability-gap or risk-sharing mechanisms.

Parliamentary Panel Report on Air Pollution in Delhi

Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change has released a report on **Air Pollution in Delhi NCR.**

📋 Subject	🔍 Key Observations of report	⭐ Recommendations of report
Air Quality Standards and Monitoring	✓ WHO guidelines are advisory, not enforceable. ✓ Current NAAQS were last revised in 2009.	✓ Set standards suited to Indian conditions. ✓ Revise National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). ✓ Aim for near-zero emissions across sectors.
Vehicular Emissions	✓ Vehicles are a major source of pollution. ✓ Older and polluting vehicles still operate. ✓ Volatility of ethanol-blended petrol leads to increased evaporative emissions, which are precursors to ozone formation.	✓ Strengthen PUCC (Pollution under Control Certificate) enforcement. ✓ Phase out End-of-Life vehicles via scrappage. ✓ Review vehicular emission standards.
Stubble Burning	✓ Seasonal crop residue burning worsens winter pollution. ✓ Farmers face time and cost constraints.	✓ Strengthen in-situ and ex-situ residue management. ✓ Ensure strict enforcement at district level. ✓ Improve inter-State coordination.
Industrial Pollution	✓ Use of dirty fuels persists in some industries. ✓ Monitoring of small and unorganized units is weak. ✓ Coal-based thermal power plants contribute to air pollution.	✓ Shift industries to cleaner fuels ✓ Bring natural gas under GST. ✓ Close non-compliant units. ✓ Curb illegal fuels such as pet coke. ✓ Expand Online Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems.
Afforestation in Delhi	✓ Forest cover is only 13% of Delhi's area. ✓ Presence of invasive species in forest cover reduces ecological value.	✓ Treat afforestation as vital public infrastructure. ✓ Adopt Miyawaki method. ✓ Replace invasive species with native trees.

Also In News

Pax Silica Initiative

India has been left out of new US critical mineral diversification plan 'Pax Silica'.

About Pax Silica Initiative

» It is a **U.S.-led strategic initiative** to build a **secure, prosperous, and innovation driven** silicon supply chain from critical minerals and energy inputs to advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, AI infrastructure, and logistics.

» **Aim: To reduce dependencies** and ensure aligned nations can develop and deploy transformative technologies at scale.

» **Members:** Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, the Netherlands, The United Kingdom, Israel, United Arab Emirates, and Australia.

National Makhana Board

₹476-crore Central Sector Scheme has been rolled out for holistic development of makhana sector in first meeting of National Makhana Board.

» Roadmap has been approved for research, quality seed production, value addition, and export promotion.

About National Makhana Board (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare)

» Established to **boost value addition, branding, and global positioning** of makhana.

» **Location:** Bihar

» **Objectives:** Improve **farmers' income** and promote scientific cultivation, post-harvest processing and value addition.

Uneven Digital Progress Across States

The recent ICRIER-Prosus Centre Report highlights significant disparities in digitalisation across Indian states, with some advancing rapidly while others lag behind.

Key Findings of the Report

- Highlights uneven digital transformation at the subnational level, with **states progressing at varied paces.**
- **Delhi tops digitalisation scores,** followed by Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Haryana.
- States like **Jharkhand rank much lower,** indicating wide inter-state gaps in digital adoption.
- Risks **slowing India's ambitious Digital Bharat** goals if weaker states do not catch up.

MAVEN Spacecraft

NASA loses contact with MAVEN spacecraft in Mars orbit.

About Mars Atmosphere and Volatile EvolutioN (MAVEN) spacecraft

- **Launched:** In 2013 by NASA.
- **Objective:** To explore Mars' upper atmosphere, ionosphere, and interactions with the Sun and solar wind to explore the loss of the Martian atmosphere to space.

IFAD

Government of India highlighted **rural transformation and development leadership at International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)–India Day.**

About IFAD (HQ: Rome, Italy)

- **UN Specialised Agency:** IFAD is an **international financial institution** and a United Nations specialised agency dedicated to eradicating rural poverty and hunger.
- **Focus on Smallholders:** It supports **smallholder farmers, pastoralists and rural entrepreneurs** through finance, training and technology.
- **Rural Development Financing:** Provides **loans and grants for agriculture, climate resilience,** value-chain development and livelihood diversification.

Preah Vihear Temple

India Calls for Protection of Preah Vihear Temple amid the Thailand–Cambodia border clashes.

About Preah Vihear Temple

- **Location:** Cambodia (Near the border with Thailand).
- **Principal Deity:** The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva.
- **History:** The temple began under King Yashovarman I (889–910 CE) and completed during the reign of King Suryavarman II (1113–1150 CE) of Khmer dynasty.
- It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

CoalSETU Policy

Cabinet has approved the Policy for Auction of Coal Linkage for Seamless, Efficient & Transparent Utilisation (CoalSETU) Policy.

About CoalSETU

- It creates a **new auction window for coal** under the Non-Regulated Sector (NRS) Linkage Auction Policy of 2016.
- **Purpose:** It will allow allocation of coal linkages on auction basis on **long-term** for any industrial use and export.
- **Exception: Coking coal** shall not be offered under this window.
- **Participation:** Any domestic buyer requiring coal can participate in the linkage auction.
  - **Traders are not allowed** to bid under this window.
- **Usage of Coal Obtained:**
  - **Own consumption** by the buyer.
  - **Export** of coal (up to 50% of linkage quantity).
  - **Coal washing** or other purposes permitted under policy.
  - **Exception:** Resale in the country is not allowed.

PMGKY Package: Insurance Scheme for Health Workers

Supreme Court Extends ₹50 Lakh Insurance to All Doctors Who Died on COVID Duty under **"Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package: Insurance Scheme for Health Workers Fighting COVID-19".**

About Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package: Insurance Scheme for Health Workers Fighting COVID-19

- **Objective:** To provide financial protection to health workers engaged in COVID-19 duties.
- **Implementing Ministry:** Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
- **Insurance Coverage:** ₹50 lakh accident insurance cover per beneficiary.
- **Coverage Provided:**
  - Death due to COVID-19 infection during duty.
  - Accidental death while performing COVID-19–related duties.
- **Beneficiaries:** Healthcare workers including doctors, nurses, paramedics and support staff directly involved in COVID-19 duties.