



NPR and Census 2021

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Why in News

The office of the **Registrar General of India (RGI)** has said the schedule or the questionnaire of the **National Population Register (NPR)** is “being finalised” and the information about the expected date of first phase of **Census 2021** is “not available.”

- The first phase of Census 2021 and updating of the NPR were **postponed indefinitely** until further orders on 25th March 2020 due to the **Covid-19 pandemic**.
- As many as **13 States and Union Territories have opposed** the update of the NPR due to its link with the proposed **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** and the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA)**.

Key Points

- **National Population Register:**
 - NPR is a **database** containing a list of all **usual residents** of the country. Its **objective** is to have a comprehensive identity database of people residing in the country.

A usual resident for the purposes of NPR is a person who has resided in a place for six months or more, and intends to reside there for another six months or more.
 - The NPR was **first collected in 2010** and then **updated in 2015**.
 - It is **generated through house-to-house enumeration** during the “house-listing” phase of the **census**, which is **held once in 10 years**.

The **last census was in 2011**, and the next was scheduled for 2021.

- **NPR vs Census:**
 - **Objective:**
 - The **census** involves a **detailed questionnaire** - there were 29 items to be filled up in the 2011 census - aimed at eliciting the particulars of every person, including age, sex, marital status, children, occupation, birthplace, mother tongue, religion, disability and whether they belonged to any Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe.
 - On the other hand, the **NPR collects basic demographic data and biometric particulars.**
 - **Legal Basis:**
 - The census is legally backed by the **Census Act, 1948.**
 - The NPR is a mechanism **outlined in a set of rules** framed under the **Citizenship Act, 1955.**
- **NPR and NRC:**
 - According to the **Citizenship Rules** framed in 2003, the NPR is the **first step towards** compilation of the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) or **NRC.**
 - **Section 14A** was inserted in the Citizenship Act, 1955, in 2004, providing for the compulsory registration of every citizen of India and the issue of a “national identity card” to him or her. It also said the Central government may maintain a “National Register of Indian Citizens”.
 - **The Registrar General India** shall act as the “National Registration Authority” (and will function as the Registrar General of Citizen Registration).

The Registrar General is also the **country’s Census Commissioner.**
 - After a list of residents is created (i.e. NPR), a nationwide NRC **could go about verifying the citizens from that list.**

Recently, **NRC for Assam was prepared.**
- **Concerns:**
 - **Some States** such as West Bengal and Rajasthan have **objected to additional questions** to be asked in the fresh NPR such as “date and place of birth of father and mother, last place of residence and mother tongue”.
 - There are apprehensions and fears that the CAA 2019, followed by a country-wide NRC, will **benefit non-Muslims** excluded from the proposed citizens’ register, while **excluded Muslims will have to prove their citizenship.**
 - The **CAA 2019 allows citizenship on basis of religion to six undocumented communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh** who entered India on or before 31st December, 2014.
 - **Six Communities** are: Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians.

- **Government's Stand:**

- The government has **denied that the CAA and the NRC are linked.**
- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informed a parliamentary panel earlier this year that there was a **need to update the NPR** to “incorporate the changes due to birth, death and migration” and “Aadhaar is individual data whereas NPR contains family wise data.”
- The MHA informed the panel that it proposes to collect details on additional questions such as “date and place of birth of parents” in the NPR to **“facilitate back end data processing** and making the data items of date and place of birth complete for all household(s)”.

Source: TH