

A troubling judgment and endorsement of the SIR

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2
Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions

1. What is the Supreme Court judgment on SIR about?

- The Supreme Court (May 27, 2026) upheld the **Election Commission of India's (ECI) Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls in Bihar (2025).
- It rejected all challenges raised by petitioners and accepted the ECI's arguments fully.
- The case, though Bihar-specific, has wider implications for **voter inclusion and electoral roll rights in India**.
- The judgment deals with the scope of **ECI powers under constitutional and statutory provisions** for electoral roll revision.

2. What laws govern electoral roll preparation and revision?

- Article 325:** One electoral roll per constituency; no discrimination in inclusion.
- Article 326: Adult suffrage**—every citizen 18+ has voting rights unless disqualified by law.
- Article 324:** ECI controls preparation and conduct of elections.
- Article 327:** Parliament can legislate on elections and electoral rolls.
- Representation of the People (RP) Act, 1950 (Section 21):** Provides for routine revision, ECI-directed revision, and **special revision with recorded reasons**.
- Rule 25, Registration of Electors Rules, 1960:** Allows **summary or intensive revision**, mainly linked to pre-election processes under Section 21(2).

Basis	RP Act, 1950	Rules, 1960
Nature	Parliamentary law	Subordinate rules under the Act
Role	Sets legal framework for electoral rolls	Lays down procedures for implementation
Scope	Defines eligibility, inclusion, revision powers	Details how rolls are prepared and revised
Function	Substantive provisions	Operational/ administrative guidelines

3. Why is the SIR process controversial?

- SIR was conducted as a **large-scale intensive revision just before Bihar Assembly elections (2025)**.
- Critics argue **Section 21(3) of RP Act, permits only "special revision"**, not a state-wide intensive exercise.
- Intensive revision** is normally linked to Section 21(2) and requires more time and detailed procedure.
- Legal dispute exists over interpretation of **"any constituency" versus entire state application**.
- Allegation that **millions of voters were removed without effective redress mechanisms**.

4. What concerns arise from ECI's role in citizenship verification?

- The court allowed **ECI to decide documents required for proving citizenship for electoral rolls**.
- Critics argue citizenship determination is the **Ministry of Home Affairs' (MHA) function**, not ECI's.
- ECI issued its own document list and used it for inclusion/exclusion in rolls.
- This raises concerns of **institutional overlap and possible overreach by ECI**.
- The judgment also noted **systemic inaccuracies and structural flaws in past electoral rolls**.

- Promote **transparency, judicial oversight, and procedural fairness** in all electoral roll revisions to protect **Article 326-based universal adult franchise**.

The Oman CEPA, a new gateway for India's exports

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2
Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

1. What are the key features and significance of the India–Oman CEPA?

- India–Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) **came into force on 1 June 2026**, strengthening bilateral trade and economic cooperation.
- Oman has **granted duty-free access on 98.08% of tariff lines, covering 99.38% of India's exports** by value.
- Covers goods, services, investment, professional mobility, and regulatory cooperation.
- **Strengthens India's economic and strategic engagement** with the Gulf region.

2. How will the CEPA benefit Indian exports?

- **Textiles and apparel:** Removal of the 5% tariff improves competitiveness; India holds 43% of woven apparel and 31% of knitted apparel imports in Oman.
- **Chemicals:** India supplies nearly 39% of Oman's inorganic chemical imports.
- **Engineering goods:** Preferential access can expand exports of machinery and automobiles.
- **Pharmaceuticals:** Fast-track approvals reduce compliance costs and speed market access.
- Sensitive sectors such as **dairy, cereals, edible oils, and some agricultural products remain protected**.

3. What trade facilitation and services provisions are included in the CEPA?

- Oman will **recognize certificates issued by India's Export Inspection Council (EIC)**.

- **Recognition of India's organic and halal certification systems**.
- **Dedicated Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) provisions** improve regulatory cooperation.
- **Faster customs clearance**, including for perishable goods.
- **Commitments in IT, engineering, healthcare, education, accounting, and consulting, along with higher quotas** for intra-corporate transferees.

4. Why is the India–Oman CEPA strategically important?

- **Oman links the Gulf, Indian Ocean, and East Africa**.
- Ports such as **Port of Sohar, Port of Duqm, and Port of Salalah are key logistics hubs**.
- **Provides access to the wider Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) market** and East Africa.
- **Supports India's integration into Global Value Chains (GVCs)**.
- **Benefits sectors such as textiles, gems and jewellery, engineering, pharmaceuticals, and seafood exports**.

What is lost and gained in NFHS-6

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Economic and Social Development-Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 3
Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

1. What are the major findings of NFHS-6?

- **Improvements recorded in:**
 - **Child nutrition** (reduction in stunting).
 - **Maternal healthcare**, including higher rates of **four or more antenatal check-ups**.
 - **Institutional births**.
 - **Women's Internet usage**.
 - Reduction in **spousal violence** against women.
- **Declines observed in:**
 - **Exclusive breastfeeding** of infants below six months.
 - Use of **modern contraceptive methods**.
 - Continued rise in **overweight and obesity** among women across all States.

2. Which important indicators were removed from NFHS-6?

- NFHS-6 reduced the number of key indicators from **131 (NFHS-5)** to **101**.
- Major indicators removed include:
 - Anaemia prevalence.
 - Neonatal, infant, and under-five mortality rates .
 - Sex ratio at birth and overall sex ratio. .
 - Sanitation coverage.
 - Clean cooking fuel usage.
 - Cancer screening indicators (breast, cervical, and oral cancers).
- These removals create gaps in **nationally comparable data on several critical social and health outcomes**.

3. Why was the anaemia indicator dropped?

- NFHS-5 showed **worsening anemia levels** despite the launch of **Anaemia Mukh Bharat (2018)**.
- Researchers questioned the **finger-prick haemoglobin testing method** used by NFHS, arguing it may **overestimate anaemia prevalence**.
 - Finger-prick method- Collecting a few drops of blood from the finger.
- Anaemia will now be tracked through the **Diet and Biomarkers Survey in India (DBSI)** conducted by the **ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition (NIN)**.
- DBSI measures anemia **using blood drawn from a vein**, which is considered more accurate than the **finger-prick method** used in NFHS.
- NFHS-6, however, has **reintroduced biological HIV testing** and added **Hepatitis-B and Hepatitis-C testing**.

4. What other changes were made and why do they matter?

New additions in NFHS-6

- Questions on:
 - Direct Benefit Transfers (DBTs).
 - Self-Help Group (SHG) membership.
 - Digital literacy.
 - Digital financial transactions.
- Testing for:
 - Hepatitis-B and Hepatitis-C among adults.
 - Hepatitis-B among children aged 4-5 years.

Why do the removals matter?

- No current survey-based national data on:
 - Infant mortality.
 - Sanitation coverage.
 - Sex ratio at birth.
 - Cancer screening rates.
 - Comprehensive HIV awareness.
- Other data sources, such as the **Sample Registration System (SRS)**, do not provide the same **district-level and socio-economic detail** available through NFHS.

Notable State-level changes

- West Bengal** recorded the largest increase in **health insurance coverage**.
- Andhra Pradesh** showed the biggest rise in **women's Internet use**.
- Haryana** witnessed the sharpest decline in **exclusive breastfeeding**.
- Women's overweight/obesity levels increased in every State**.

Exclusive breastfeeding means that the infant receives only breast milk. No other liquids or solids are given, not even water, with the exception of oral rehydration solution, or drops/syrups of vitamins, minerals or medicines.

The **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)** is commissioned by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, which designates the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) to conduct the survey. Over the years, the scope of the survey has been additive by design, retaining the previous questionnaire and adding to it.

Why Census 2027 matters for development, democracy and representation

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2
Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

1. Why is Census 2027 significant?

- Census 2027 is India's **eighth Census since Independence** and one of the **largest population counts globally**.
- It is being conducted after a **15-year gap** due to COVID-19 and election delays, instead of the usual 10 years.
- India currently relies on **2011 Census data**, with the **United Nations Population Fund** estimating **146+ crore population in 2025**.

The **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** is a UN agency that works on improving **reproductive health, population data, and gender equality** across countries. It supports governments by providing **demographic estimates, policy guidance, and programs related to population dynamics and sustainable development**.

- The Census is expected to record a **25-30 crore population increase**, making updated data crucial for governance.

2. Structure and purpose of Census 2027

- Conducted in **two phases**:
 - First phase: **Household conditions, amenities, assets**.
 - Second phase: **Demographic and socio-economic data including education, migration, fertility, caste**.
- Aims to support **modern governance and inclusive development**, unlike colonial-era administrative use.
- Will capture India's changes in **infrastructure, mobility, health, and education**.

3. Political and policy implications

- Census data will shape **delimitation and constituency boundaries**, affecting representation.
- Linked to **women's reservation (33%) in legislatures**.
- First-time **caste enumeration** will significantly impact political and social debates.
- Influences **SC/ST reservation policy** and **Finance Commission fund allocation**.
- Guides both **public policy and private investment decisions**.

4. Why is Census crucial for governance and inclusion?

- Enables **targeted welfare delivery** in jobs, food, housing, water, sanitation, education, and health.
- Strengthens **social justice and affirmative action policies** through reliable data.
- Introduces **digital self-enumeration**, improving efficiency and accuracy.
- Supported by **Census Act, 1948 ensuring data privacy and confidentiality**.
- Around **3 million enumerators** ensure door-to-door coverage so no one is left out.
- Ultimately, it ensures **accurate counting for effective democracy and development**.
- The Census process should be completed in a **timely, accurate, and inclusive manner** with strong **digital safeguards** and **transparent use of data** to ensure **effective governance and equitable democratic outcomes**.

KEYWORDS

Gallantry Awards

- **President Droupadi Murmu recently conferred seven Kirti Chakras**, including two posthumously, on armed forces personnel.
- Gallantry Awards are **instituted by the Government of India to honour acts of bravery and sacrifice by personnel of the Armed Forces** and other lawfully constituted forces.
- They are announced twice a year on Republic Day and Independence Day.
- The peacetime highest gallantry awards include :
 - **Ashoka Chakra**, the highest military award during peacetime for some courageous action or self sacrifice other than in the face of the enemy.
 - **Kirti Chakra**, the second highest peacetime gallantry award for valor, courageous action or self sacrifice away from the field of battle.
 - **Shaurya Chakra**, is awarded to the personnel of the armed forces for instances of extraordinary gallantry.
- India also has **war-time gallantry awards including Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra**

and Vir Chakra.

Padma Awards

- President Droupadi Murmu **will present the Padma Awards to distinguished personalities during the second round of the civil investiture ceremony.**
- The **Padma Awards are among India's highest civilian honours, instituted in 1954 and announced annually on the eve of Republic Day.**
- They are conferred in three categories:
 - **Padma Vibhushan – for exceptional and distinguished service.**
 - **Padma Bhushan – for distinguished service of a high order.**
 - **Padma Shri – for distinguished service.**
- The **awards are generally not conferred posthumously, except in highly deserving cases**
- The **awards do not constitute a title and cannot be used as a prefix or suffix to a person's name.**
- Nominations are **examined by the Padma Awards Committee, constituted annually by the Prime Minister.**
- The Committee is **headed by the Cabinet Secretary, and its recommendations are submitted to the Prime Minister and the President for final approval.**

Sample Registration System (SRS)

- **Sample Registration System (SRS)** is conducted by the **Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.**
- It provides reliable estimates of **birth rate, death rate, infant mortality rate (IMR)** and other **fertility and mortality indicators** at the **national and sub-national levels.**
- SRS serves as the **primary source of fertility and mortality data** for India and its States.
- Its unique **dual-recording system** combines **continuous enumeration** and **retrospective half-yearly surveys**, followed by **matching and field verification** to improve data accuracy.

PLACES IN NEWS

Red Sea



- The **Red Sea** is a **narrow inland sea** located between the **Arabian Peninsula** and **Africa**, extending from **Suez (Egypt)** in the north to the **Bab-el-Mandeb Strait** in the south.
- It is connected to the **Gulf of Aden** and the **Arabian Sea** through the **Bab-el-Mandeb Strait**, and to the **Mediterranean Sea** through the **Suez Canal**.
- The Red Sea separates the coasts of **Egypt, Sudan, and Eritrea** from those of **Saudi Arabia and Yemen**, while its northeastern extension, the **Gulf of Aqaba**, borders **Israel and Jordan**.
- It contains some of the world's **warmest and saltiest seawater** and is among the **most important international shipping routes** linking **Europe and Asia**.

Zojila Tunnel



