

**GS PAPER 2 – GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE**
**Caste Census in India: Need and Challenges**
**Why in News?**

The Indian government has approved the inclusion of caste enumeration in the delayed Census 2021, reviving a practice discontinued post-independence. This decision is driven by increasing political and social demands, with implications for governance, social justice, and affirmative action.

**What is a Caste Census?**

A caste census refers to the systematic collection of data on individuals' caste identities during a national population census. Historically, caste enumeration was part of British censuses (1881-1931) but was discontinued post-1951 except for SCs and STs. The last caste data collection was the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011, which faced methodological challenges.

**Need for a Caste Census**

- **Data Gap:** Lack of updated, reliable data on OBCs hampers effective policy formulation.
- **Affirmative Action:** Updated data is essential for reassessing reservation policies; Mandal Commission (1980) estimated OBCs at 52%, while Bihar's 2023 survey reported OBC+EBC at 63%.
- **Sub-categorization:** Enables equitable distribution of reservation benefits, aligning with Rohini Commission (2017) recommendations.
- **Better Representation:** Helps address under-representation of marginalized groups in politics and administration.
- **Targeted Policies:** Facilitates evidence-based interventions addressing caste-linked inequalities in poverty, education, and healthcare.

**Concerns and Challenges**

- **Reinforcing Caste Identities:** Risks deepening caste consciousness, undermining the goal of a caste-less society.
- **Political Exploitation:** May fuel vote-bank politics and "competitive backwardness" as groups demand lower status for benefits.
- **Data Reliability:** Absence of a standardized caste list; SECC 2011 saw over 46 lakh caste entries due to open-ended reporting.
- **Misclassification:** Similar caste names and differing state classifications complicate accurate enumeration.
- **Institutional Limitations:** Census lacks a dedicated verification mechanism, risking unreliable data akin to SECC 2011.

**Way Forward**

- **Standardized Caste List:** Finalize caste categories through expert consultation to ensure consistency.
- **Verification Mechanism:** Multi-tier verification, Aadhaar linkage, and community oversight for data accuracy.
- **Use of Technology:** Employ AI/ML for data sorting and analysis.
- **Sub-categorization Implementation:** Apply Supreme Court's endorsement of SC/ST sub-classification (State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh, 2024) for equitable reservations.
- **Socio-Economic Integration:** Complement caste data with poverty, education, and health indicators for holistic policy design.
- **Safeguards Against Misuse:** Ensure data is used for inclusive development, not electoral gains, with robust monitoring of outcomes.

**Conclusion**

A caste census offers an opportunity for evidence-based policymaking, but its success depends on addressing challenges of accuracy, politicization, and social harmony through transparent, inclusive, and data-driven execution.

**GS PAPER 3-ECONOMY- GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**
**India needs monetary easing to sustain cyclical growth recovery**

India's growth slowdown was cyclical, not structural. Growth is reviving due to higher government spending and changing global conditions. This article urges sharper monetary easing, effective liquidity management, and stable exchange rate policy to support growth and manage global spillovers.

**Growth Recovery and Monetary Policy Response**

1. **Signs of a Cyclical Recovery:** Growth improved from 5.6% in Q2 FY25 to 6.2% in Q3, supported by public expenditure. This, along with the reversal of the Trump trade, helped strengthen the rupee and equity markets.
2. **MPC's Delayed Action:** The MPC failed to cut rates earlier, contributing to the slowdown. Since policy acts with lags, it must anticipate inflation. Inflation fell below target in February, and FY26 projections are at the 4% target.
3. **Need for Sharper Rate Cuts:** The February cut was timely but too small. A 50bps cut in April was needed to bring real repo rates closer to equilibrium. Market rates have started adjusting, but a bigger cut would improve the pace.

**Arguments Against Aggressive Rate Cuts**

1. **Gradualism in Uncertainty:** Some resist sharp cuts, fearing global shocks. But India must recognise its capacity to absorb shocks and respond decisively.
2. **Food Inflation and Climate Worries:** Fears of heatwaves and food shocks often delay action. However, many States have liberalised agricultural markets, and startups are improving supply chains. Food is also a smaller part of the consumption basket now.
3. **Bank Concerns Over Margins:** Banks are cautious due to slow deposit growth. They prefer surplus liquidity before cutting lending rates. Yet their profits remain strong as borrowing costs fall and treasury gains rise.
4. **Market Focus vs Real Sector Needs:** Markets obsess over nominal rates, but the MPC must prioritise real rates that drive consumption and investment. Banks ultimately benefit as the economy grows, regardless of rate direction.

**Liquidity Management and Banking Reforms**

1. **New Liquidity Perspective:** The RBI has injected significant liquidity recently. The approach is shifting from 'liquidity first' to 'liquidity fast,' showing readiness to respond to shocks.
2. **Maintaining Surplus Liquidity:** Durable surplus liquidity suits India's conditions of external shocks and weak inter-bank lending. The RBI's accommodative stance restricts it to pausing or cutting rates.
3. **Avoiding Overreaction:** Rate cuts and liquidity injections must be measured. Over-stimulation leads to future tightening and volatility. A low, positive real repo rate supports demand while balancing saver and investor interests.

**Exchange Rate Trends and Policy Response**

1. **Reversal of Rupee Outflows:** After initial FPI outflows in Jan–Feb 2025, inflows resumed in March. Debt inflows also returned, despite narrowing US-India rate gaps. The rupee appreciated above 85 as reserves were rebuilt.
2. **Strategic RBI Intervention:** The RBI intervened only to prevent excess volatility, using reserve buffers strategically. This policy restored rupee stability.
3. **Balancing Volatility and Stability:** Some volatility helps markets and hedging, but excess volatility hurts exporters and widens rate spreads. The RBI must ensure real alignment, not cater to market demands for volatility.

**Exchange Rate Management and Structural Factors**

1. **Real Exchange Rate Alignment:** A real effective exchange rate near 100 supports trade. Sustained misalignment must be avoided. Adjustments also reflect Renminbi's weight in trade indices.

2. **Limits of Global Models:** Standard theories often misjudge India's structure. For instance, interest rate links with the US hold only in economies with open capital accounts.

**Policy Coordination Over Conflict:** A central bank–government conflict arises only if fiscal deficits fuel inflation. India is cutting deficits and spending wisely. Hence, monetary policy must quickly use available space to reduce growth volatility.

### PRELIM FACTS

#### 1. Iгла-S

Indian Army gets new **Russian** missiles Iгла-S to counter drones, choppers, jets.

#### **About Iгла-S**

- The Iгла-S is a **man-portable, shoulder-launched surface-to-air missile (SAM)** system that uses **infrared (IR) homing to lock** onto the heat signatures of aerial targets.
- It is also known as **Very Short Range Air Defence Systems (VSHORADS)**.
- **Working:** Once fired, the missile homes in on the target's engine heat, making it **effective even against small, fast-moving threats** like drones and helicopters.
- **Range:** It is capable of engaging **targets up to 6 km away** and at **altitudes of up to 3.5 km**.
- This missile is in use by Indian Army since 1990s but this advanced variant **improves upon the earlier Iгла models**— offering **better resistance to countermeasures and improved seeker accuracy**.

#### 2. Operation Sindoor

In response to the **Pahalgam terrorist attack** that killed 25 Indians and one Nepali citizen on April 22, 2025, India launched '**Operation Sindoor**', a precise military offensive targeting **nine terrorist camps** across **Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)**.

#### **About Operation Sindoor:**

- **Background:**
  - **Trigger:** A terror attack in Pahalgam (J&K) attributed to The Resistance Front (TRF), linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba.
  - Attack resulted in 26 civilian deaths, including one foreign national.
  - Marked the most serious civilian-targeted attack since 26/11 Mumbai attacks.
- **Objectives of Operation Sindoor:**
  - **Neutralise cross-border terror infrastructure.**
  - Deliver **justice to the victims** of the Pahalgam attack.
  - Prevent **imminent future attacks**, as indicated by actionable intelligence.
  - Reassert India's **right to self-defence** under international law.
- **Operation Details**
  - **Targets:** 9 terror camps — 4 in **mainland Pakistan**, 5 in **PoK**.
  - Terror groups targeted: **Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hizbul Mujahideen**.
  - Carried out by **Indian Air Force and Special Forces**, avoiding civilian zones and Pakistani military installations.
- **Strategic and Diplomatic Implications:**
  - Sends a **strong deterrent message** to terror sponsors and their safe havens.
  - Draws global attention to **Pakistan's continuing support** to UN-designated terrorists like **Sajid Mir**.
  - Reinforces India's shift towards **pre-emptive counter-terrorism doctrine** post-Uri and Balakot strikes.
  - Likely to increase **international diplomatic support** for India's right to protect its civilian

### 3. Satellite Communication Regulation in India

India has framed **new regulatory guidelines for satellite communication companies** mandating **local manufacturing, data localisation, NavIC compliance**, and enhanced national security cooperation.

**About Satellite Communication Regulation in India:**

- **What is Satellite Communication?**
  - Satellite communication (satcom) enables **wireless transmission of signals** using satellites orbiting the Earth. It supports broadband, TV broadcasting, GPS navigation, and remote area connectivity.
- **Regulating Agencies:**
  - **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** – Issues operational guidelines and approvals.
  - **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** – Finalises policy framework including **spectrum allocation** and pricing.
- **Key Provisions under New Satcom Guidelines (2025):**
  - **Local Manufacturing & Indigenisation**
    - Satcom firms must submit a **5-year phased manufacturing plan**.
    - At least **20% of the ground segment** should be **indigenously produced** by Year 5.
  - **Data Localisation & Monitoring:**
    - No user traffic should be routed through **foreign gateways or PoPs**.
    - All **user data, DNS services, and control systems** must be located in **India**.
    - Mandatory **lawful interception**, user monitoring, and data security protocols.
  - **NavIC Compliance**
    - User terminals should support NavIC (India's regional navigation system) on a **best-effort basis**.
    - Full implementation deadline set for **2029**.
  - **National Security Provisions**
    - Must enable **service restrictions** during hostilities or emergencies.
    - Establish **Special Monitoring Zones** (within 50 km of borders and coastal EEZ).
    - Report unregistered/foreign user terminals **in real-time** to law enforcement agencies.
  - **Service-Specific Security Clearance**
    - Separate **security clearance** needed for **voice and data services**.

### 4. Human Development Index (HDI)

India has climbed **three positions to rank 130 out of 193 countries** in the **2023 Human Development Index (HDI)**, according to the **2025 Human Development Report** by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.

**About Human Development Index (HDI):**

- **What is Human Development Index (HDI)?**
  - The **Human Development Index (HDI)** is a **composite statistical measure** that assesses a country's average achievements in **three key dimensions**:
- **Health** – Measured by **life expectancy at birth**
- **Education** – Measured by **mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling**
- **Standard of Living** – Measured by **Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (PPP adjusted)**
- **Published by:** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

- **First introduced:** In 1990, in the first Human Development Report authored by Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen.

### Key Highlights of Human Development Report 2025:

- **India-Specific Insights:**
  - **India's 2023 HDI Rank: 130 out of 193** (up from 133 in 2022)
  - **HDI Value (2023): 0.685** (up from 0.676 in 2022)
  - **Category:** Still under Medium Human Development; nearing the High Development threshold (**0.700**)
  - **Comparison:** Same HDI value as Bangladesh, but with differing indicators; India ahead of **Pakistan (168th, 0.544)** and **Nepal (145th, 0.622)**.
  - **Progress Made:**
    - **Life Expectancy:** Increased to 72 years in 2023, (from 67.7 years in 2022).
    - **Expected Years of Schooling:** Rose to **13 years** (from 12.6 years).
    - **Mean Years of Schooling:** Improved to **9 years** (from 6.57 years).
    - **GNI per capita:** Rose to \$9,046.76 in 2023 (from \$6,951 in 2022)
    - **Multidimensional Poverty:** 135 million Indians exited poverty between 2015-16 and 2019-21
  - **Persisting Inequality:**
    - **Inequality-adjusted HDI:** India faces a 30.7% loss due to inequality, one of the highest in Asia
    - **Gender Inequality:** Female labour force participation and political representation remain low (**India ranks 102nd** with a score of **403**.)
    - **GNI per Capita Rank: 7 ranks below HDI rank** → income remains a weak spot.
  - **Global Trends:**
    - **Top performer:** Iceland (0.972), Norway (0.970), Switzerland (0.970).
    - **Bottom:** South Sudan, Somalia, Central African Republic.
    - **BRICS Comparison:** Brazil (89), Russia (59), China (75), South Africa (110) all ahead of India.
    - The pace of HDI growth globally is the slowest since 1990.
    - Inequality between low and very high HDI countries has worsened for the fourth consecutive year.

### 5. Civil Defence in India

Ahead of rising geopolitical tensions, the **Union Ministry of Home Affairs** has ordered a **nationwide Civil Defence Mock Drill** across 244 districts on **May 7, 2025**, to assess emergency preparedness against military and disaster threats.

#### About Civil Defence in India:

- **What is Civil Defence?**
  - Civil defence refers to **organized efforts to protect civilians, infrastructure, and essential services** during emergencies, especially in wartime or during natural or man-made disasters.
  - Globally, it functions across six pillars: **prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, evacuation, and recovery.**
- **Legal Framework in India::**
  - **Civil Defence Act, 1968:** Enacted post-Indo-China and Indo-Pak conflicts to **institutionalize civil protection.**
  - **Amendment in 2009 (Act No. 3 of 2010):** Expanded the role to include **disaster management** along with war-related functions.
- **Structure and Functioning::**

- Manned primarily by **volunteers from various professions**, trained to assist in emergency response.
- Activated during **terror attacks, fires, floods, explosions, earthquakes, or other calamities** before official responders arrive.
- Special focus on **critical initial minutes** of emergencies.
- **Application:**
  - Though the Act is pan-India, active **civil defence units are raised only in tactically vulnerable areas**.
  - These include **nuclear power plants, ports, military bases, dams, oil refineries**, and metropolitan cities.
- **About Civil Defence Districts:**
  - Civil Defence Districts are specially designated areas where civil defence programmes are actively implemented by the Government of India under the **Civil Defence Act, 1968**.
  - **The Ministry of Home Affairs** selects Civil Defence Districts based on strategic vulnerability:
    - **Proximity to International Borders:** E.g., Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir
    - **Critical Infrastructure Presence:** Nuclear plants, military bases, ports, telecom hubs
    - **Urban Density & Civilian Risk:** Metro cities requiring evacuation planning
    - **Coastal Sensitivity:** Maritime security in states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal

### ANSWER WRITING

**Critically examine the need for conducting a caste-based census in India. Discuss the challenges and implications associated with it.” (250 words )**

The decision to conduct a caste-based census in India after decades revives a critical debate on data, governance, and social justice. While the Census of India has collected caste data for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), comprehensive data on Other Backward Classes (OBCs) is absent at the national level.

**A caste-based census is necessary for several reasons:**

- **Bridging data gaps:** Current policies rely on outdated estimates like the Mandal Commission’s 1980 figure of 52% OBC population. Recent state surveys, such as Bihar’s 2023 caste survey showing 63% OBC+EBC population, highlight discrepancies.
- **Affirmative action:** Reliable caste data is essential to reassess reservation quotas, targeting benefits to the most deprived.
- **Sub-categorization:** The Rohini Commission (2017) recommended subdividing OBCs to ensure equitable benefit distribution among marginalized subgroups.
- **Better representation:** Accurate data can enhance political inclusion and representation of backward communities.
- **Evidence-based policy:** It enables targeted interventions to address caste-based inequalities in education, employment, and health.

However, a caste census faces **critical challenges:**

- **Data reliability:** SECC 2011 faced over 46 lakh caste entries due to open-ended responses, resulting in unusable data.
- **Misclassification risks:** Similar caste names (e.g., Dhanak, Dhanuk) and differing state classifications complicate accurate categorization.

- **Institutional capacity:** Census operations lack a verification and coding system to ensure consistency.
- **Reinforcing identities:** Critics argue it may entrench caste consciousness, countering the constitutional goal of fraternity.
- **Political misuse:** Fresh data could fuel vote-bank politics, competitive backwardness, and demands for proportional representation beyond the 50% ceiling set by Indra Sawhney (1992).

The implications of a caste census are far-reaching. While it can make affirmative action more equitable, it risks deepening social divisions and creating policy instability.

**Way forward:** Preparing a standardized caste list, integrating Aadhaar for verification, establishing multi-tier validation, leveraging AI/ML for data sorting, and ensuring community-level oversight can improve credibility. Complementing caste data with socio-economic indicators will make policies holistic.

**Conclusion:**

A caste census is a double-edged sword. Its success depends on transparent, accurate, and impartial execution, ensuring it strengthens social justice without compromising constitutional values of equality and fraternity.

**MCQ**

- With reference to the Iгла-S missile system, consider the following statements:
  - It is a shoulder-launched surface-to-air missile system.
  - It uses radar guidance to track aerial targets.
  - It is categorized under Very Short Range Air Defence Systems (VSHORADS).
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
  - 1 and 2 only
  - 1 and 3 only**
  - 2 and 3 only
  - 1, 2 and 3
- The recent 'Operation Sindoor' carried out by India is best described as:
  - A naval anti-piracy operation in the Arabian Sea
  - A military offensive targeting terrorist camps across Pakistan and PoK**
  - A humanitarian aid mission to Nepal after an earthquake
  - A joint military exercise with Russia
- Which of the following is/are key provisions under India's 2025 Satellite Communication Regulatory Guidelines?
  - Mandatory local manufacturing targets for satellite ground equipment.
  - Mandatory routing of user data through foreign data centers.
  - Mandatory NavIC compliance in user terminals.
 Select the correct answer using the code below:
  - 1 and 2 only
  - 1 and 3 only**
  - 2 and 3 only
  - 1, 2 and 3
- The Human Development Index (HDI) published by UNDP includes which of the following dimensions?
  - Life expectancy at birth
  - Mean years of schooling
  - Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita
 Select the correct answer using the code below:
  - 1 and 2 only**
  - 2 and 3 only
  - 1, 2 and 3
  - 1 and 3 only
- The Civil Defence Act, 1968 in India was originally enacted for which primary purpose?
  - To regulate fire safety standards in industries
  - To provide civil protection during war emergencies**
  - To establish a disaster insurance scheme
  - To regulate private security agencies
- Consider the following statements regarding Civil Defence Districts in India:

1. They are declared based solely on the population size of a district.
  2. They are focused on areas with critical infrastructure and high strategic vulnerability.
- Which of the statements is/are correct?
- A. 1 only
  - B. 2 only**
  - C. Both 1 and 2
  - D. Neither 1 nor 2
7. With reference to Operation Sindoor, which of the following statements is/are correct?
1. It targeted both terrorist camps and Pakistani military installations.
  2. It avoided civilian zones during its execution.
  3. It was launched after a terror attack in Pahalgam.
- Select the correct answer using the code below:
- A. 1 and 2 only
  - B. 2 and 3 only**
  - C. 1 and 3 only
  - D. 1, 2 and 3
8. With reference to the caste census in India, consider the following statements:
1. The last official caste-based enumeration in India was conducted as part of the 1951 Census.
  2. The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 was free from any methodological challenges.
  3. The caste census aims to aid in sub-categorization within reservation policies.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- A. 1 and 2 only
  - B. 2 and 3 only
  - C. 1 and 3 only
  - D. 1, 2 and 3
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 3 only**
- D. 1, 2 and 3
9. Which of the following factors support the case for monetary easing in India's current economic scenario?
1. Inflation projections have fallen below the RBI's target.
  2. Growth slowdown is assessed as structural rather than cyclical.
  3. Surplus liquidity has returned to the banking system.
- Select the correct answer using the code below:
- A. 1 and 2 only
  - B. 1 and 3 only**
  - C. 2 and 3 only
  - D. 1, 2 and 3
10. With reference to India's recent monetary and exchange rate management policies, consider the following statements:
1. The RBI has intervened in the foreign exchange market primarily to defend the rupee against appreciation.
  2. The central bank prefers some volatility in the rupee to aid hedging and price discovery.
  3. Maintaining a real effective exchange rate (REER) close to 100 is considered beneficial for trade competitiveness.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- A. 1 and 2 only
  - B. 2 and 3 only**
  - C. 1 and 3 only
  - D. 1, 2 and 3