

Census 2025

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Census 2025 as a Comprehensive Citizen Registry

Context : The **2025 Census**, along with updating the **National Population Register (NPR)**, is the first step towards the **National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC)**. The NRIC aims to differentiate citizens from non-citizens, strengthening governance and security. However, it raises concerns about its implementation, data privacy, and possible exclusion.

Historical Background

The NRIC originates from the **Citizenship Act of 1955**, inspired by the **1951 Census**. It gained momentum after the **Kargil War (1999)** when the **Subrahmanyam Committee** highlighted the need for a citizen database for national security. This led to **Section 14A**, making citizen registration mandatory.

Objectives and Benefits

1. **Strengthening National Security:** Maintains a verified registry to counter illegal immigration and identity fraud.
2. **Streamlining Identity Verification:** Simplifies legal and administrative processes by unifying citizenship proof.
3. **Targeted Welfare Delivery:** Ensures subsidies and welfare programs benefit eligible citizens, reducing misuse.

NPR-NRIC Process

The NRIC process involves:

- Collecting demographic data during Census operations.
 - Verification and appeals to ensure accuracy and transparency.
- Unlike Aadhaar, which includes all residents, the NRIC specifically verifies **citizenship**.

Challenges

1. **Documentation Issues:** Many lack proper citizenship documents, especially in rural and marginalized communities.
2. **Data Privacy:** Managing sensitive data poses risks of misuse and surveillance.
3. **Exclusion Fears:** Vulnerable groups risk being left out, causing unrest.

Lessons and Moving Forward

The **Assam NRC** experience shows the need for fairness and transparency to avoid errors and exclusion. Addressing privacy concerns and engaging citizens through awareness campaigns will be essential for successful implementation.

Conclusion

The **NRIC initiative** has the potential to enhance governance and security. However, overcoming challenges of documentation, data protection, and inclusivity will be critical to its success. Lessons from past implementations can guide a fair and effective rollout.

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