

28.10.2026 NEWS

CASTE-WISE CENSUS

- The caste-wise census is being conducted as part of India's 16th Population Census, which is being carried out in two phases.
- The first phase began in April 2026 and concluded on September 30. The second phase, involving caste-wise enumeration, is scheduled to begin in February 2027.

» Need and Historical Background

- The benefits of reservations in education and employment must reach all sections of society in a fair and equitable manner.
- For this purpose, the population of each community must be accurately enumerated. Based on this argument, various sections of society have been demanding a caste-wise census.
- The first population census in colonial India was conducted in 1871. In 1921, religion-based statistical data was collected.
- Later, in 1931, the first nationwide caste-wise census was conducted. Based on these data, at the London Round Table Conference held in 1932, Babasaheb Ambedkar and Rettamalai Srinivasan successfully demanded separate reservations for Scheduled Castes in education, government employment and representation in legislative bodies.
- In 1941, the census could not be completed due to the intensity of the Second World War. After independence, successive Union Governments were reluctant to collect caste-wise data.
- After a gap of 80 years since 1931, the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) was conducted in 2011. However, its caste-related data were not fully released.
- Against this background, political leaders and social activists pointed out that the failure to adopt appropriate methods for data collection and vote-bank politics were among the reasons for the shortcomings.
- They also raised the question of how the reservation percentages fixed in 1932 could remain appropriate when the country's population had increased several times.
- Based on these demands, the Union Government agreed to conduct a caste-wise census along with the 16th National Population Census.

» Two Phases of the Census

- First Phase: April 1 – September 30, 2026
- The first phase was conducted from April 1 to September 30, 2026.
- During this phase, enumerators visited households directly and carried out the following activities : Listing the number of households, Collecting details about housing facilities and amenities.

- The public was also provided with a self-enumeration facility through the Union Government's official website, www.se.census.gov.in.
- Through this facility, citizens could enter information such as the number of family members and housing amenities using computers or mobile phones.
- The self-enumeration facility was available from July 17 to July 31, 2026.
- Second Phase: February 1 – February 28, 2027
- The second phase, which includes caste-wise enumeration, is scheduled to take place from February 1 to February 28, 2027.
- However, in snowbound regions such as Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the second-phase enumeration was conducted four months earlier.

» Bihar as a Model

- The Patna High Court and the Supreme Court of India upheld the authority of State Governments to conduct caste-based surveys.
- Following this, in 2023, the Bihar Government headed by the then Chief Minister Nitish Kumar successfully completed a caste-based survey within 45 days and released its statistical findings.
- A total of 215 castes were included in the survey.
- The survey revealed that Bihar's total population was approximately 13.07 crore.
- The community-wise population distribution was as follows :
  - Community Population (%)
  - Extremely Backward Classes (EBC) 36%
  - Other Backward Classes (OBC) 27.13%
  - Scheduled Castes (SC) 19.65%
  - Scheduled Tribes (ST) 1.68%
  - General Category 15.52%
- Furthermore, the survey provided detailed information on the population of individual castes within each category.

» Tamil Nadu's 69% Reservation

- In Tamil Nadu, the foundation for communal reservation was laid in 1921 during the Justice Party administration through the Communal Government Order, which introduced community-wise representation.
- Following the First Constitutional Amendment Act of 1951, the Supreme Court's judgment in the Champakam Dorairajan case had affected the reservation system.
- As a result of the protests led by Periyar, Article 15(4) was inserted into the Indian Constitution, enabling the State to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes and for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Later, the Supreme Court imposed a ceiling that the total reservations provided by the government to socially and educationally backward classes should not exceed 50%.
- However, considering the socio-economic conditions of the people of Tamil Nadu, the State Government enacted and implemented a special law providing 69% reservation in 1994, exceeding the 50% ceiling. Tamil Nadu also included this law in the Ninth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

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- In 2010, while delivering its judgment in a case challenging Tamil Nadu's 69% reservation, the Supreme Court stated that the 69% reservation could continue. However, it directed that caste-wise data should be collected and verified to justify its continuation.
- Therefore, caste-wise census data is essential not only to legally protect the existing 69% reservation before the courts but also to support any proposed increase in reservation based on the findings of the current caste-wise census.

» Urgent Need

- Following the model of the caste-based survey conducted by Bihar, caste-wise information should be collected through a separate exercise.
- For this purpose, the Union Government should obtain and register the caste lists maintained by individual State Governments.
- Based on these officially recorded caste lists, caste-wise population data should be collected from the public to ensure accuracy and consistency.

HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT IN PHYSICS: INDIAN SCIENTIST ASHOKE SEN WINS THE OSCAR KLEIN MEDAL

- Indian scientist Ashoke Sen has received the prestigious Oscar Klein Medal, one of the highest honours in the field of physics.
- He has earned the distinction of becoming the first Indian physicist to receive this award.
- He has been internationally recognised for his pioneering contributions to S-duality, the precise calculation of black hole entropy, and string field theory.
- These contributions have played an important role in shaping modern string theory.
- It has been reported that he delivered a lecture titled "Gravity from Strings and Strings from Gravity."
- For his contributions to developing a unified framework for string theory, Ashoke Sen received the following honours : 2012: Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics, 2014: Dirac Medal, 2001: Padma Shri, awarded by the Government of India, 2013: Padma Bhushan, awarded by the Government of India.

» What Is Special About the Oscar Klein Medal?

- The Oscar Klein Medal has been awarded since 1988 jointly by Stockholm University and the Nobel Committee for Physics of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.
- It is presented to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to theoretical physics and cosmology.

10 LAKH GRANT ASSISTANCE FOR SPICE-BASED STARTUPS

» Invitation from the Agricultural University

» Eligibility Criteria

- The startup must operate in sectors involving spice-based products and technologies.
- It should focus on value addition or processing activities.
- It must be a legally registered startup company.
- It should possess innovative approaches and the potential for commercial success.

- The scheme will help early-stage startups improve their production capacity and develop spice-based products for the market.
- The financial assistance aims to encourage innovation, value addition and commercialisation in the spice-processing sector.

» Spice Centres

- The following institutions and centres are mentioned:
- CFTRI (Central Food Technological Research Institute) – Mysuru, Karnataka.
- NIFTEM (National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management) – Thanjavur.
- Business Incubation Centre – Agricultural University, Coimbatore.

HARRY KANE AND ALEXIA PUTELLAS WIN THE BALLON D'OR AWARDS

- The prestigious Ballon d'Or Award, one of the highest honours in world football, was presented to England's Harry Kane and Spain's Alexia Putellas this year.

» Harry Kane – Best Male Player

- Harry Kane won this award for the first time.
- He became the first English player in the last 25 years to receive this prestigious honour.

» Alexia Putellas – Best Female Player

- Spanish footballer Alexia Putellas plays for FC Barcelona.
- She has won the award for the third time (2021, 2022 and 2026).

» Lamine Yamal – Best Young Male Player

- The 19-year-old footballer represents Spain.
- He scored seven goals in seven matches for Spain during the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

» Vicky López – Best Young Female Player

- Vicky López is a Spanish footballer.
- She plays for FC Barcelona.

» Luis de la Fuente – Best Coach (Men's Team)

- Country: Spain.
- Award Category: Best Men's Team Coach.

» Pere Romeu – Best Coach (Women's Team)

- Country: Spain.
- Award Category: Best Women's Team Coach.

» Unai Simón – Best Goalkeeper (Men)

- Unai Simón is a Spanish footballer.
- He plays for Athletic Bilbao.

» Cata Coll – Best Goalkeeper (Women)

- Cata Coll is a Spanish footballer.
- She plays for FC Barcelona.

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