

Current Affairs

National Events

National Events: April 2011

Census 2011 puts India's population at 1.21 billion

- India's population has jumped to 1.21 billion, an increase of more than 181 million during 2001-11, according to provisional data of Census 2011 released.
- Though the population is almost equal to the combined population of the U.S., Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Japan (1,214.3 million), the silver lining is that after 1911-21 the past decade (2001-11) witnessed the addition of smaller population than the previous decade's growth.
- Of the total provisional population of 1,210.2 million, the number of males stood at 623.7 million and females at 586.5 million. The percentage growth in 2001-11 was 17.64 — males 17.19 and females 18.12. India's population accounts for 17.5 per cent of the world's.
- Among the States and the Union Territories, Uttar Pradesh is the most populous State with 199 million people, followed by Maharashtra with 112 million people. Lakshadweep is the least populated at 64,429 people.
- The percentage decadal growth rates of the six most populous States have declined during 2001-11 compared with 1991-2001. The population growth in Uttar Pradesh has declined from 25.85 per cent to 20.09 per cent, in Maharashtra from 22.73 per cent to 15.99 per cent, Bihar from 28.62 per cent to 25.07 per cent, West Bengal from 17.77 per cent to 13.93 per cent, Andhra Pradesh from 14.59 per cent to 11.10 per cent and Madhya Pradesh from 24.26 per cent to 20.30 per cent. This shows that we have added population, but the growth [rate] has been less.
- The overall sex ratio nationwide has increased by seven percentage points to 940 against 933 in Census 2001. Sex ratio is defined as the number of females per 1,000 males. An increase in sex ratio was observed in 29 States/Union Territories. Kerala with 1,084 has the highest sex ratio followed by Puducherry with 1,038. With 618, Daman and Diu has the lowest ratio.
- This is the highest sex ratio at the national level since Census 1971 and a shade lower than 1961. Three major States — Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar and Gujarat — have shown a decline in sex ratio as compared to Census 2001,. India's skewed sex ratio due to female foeticide and selective sex determination has been a cause for concern.
- However, the area of grave concern, remained the lowest ever child sex ratio of 914. The provisional data showed that the child sex ratio [0 to 6 years] came down to 914 females per 1,000 males against 927 in Census 2001. It showed a continuing preference for male children in the last decade.

- An increasing trend in the child sex ratio was seen in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Mizoram and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, but in the remaining States/UTs, the ratio showed a decline. While the overall sex ratio has improved since 1991, the decline in child sex ratio has been unabated since the 1961 Census. The total number of children in the age group of 0-6 is now 158.8 million, less by five million since 2001.
- Literacy rate up
- The literacy rate has gone up from 64.83 per cent in 2001 to 74.04 per cent, an increase of 9.21 percentage points.
- Significantly, the female literacy level saw a significant jump as compared to males. The female literacy in 2001 was 53.67 per cent and it has gone up to 65.46 per cent in 2011. The male literacy, in comparison, rose from 75.26 to 82.14 per cent.
- Kerala, with 93.91 per cent, continues to occupy the top position among States as far as literacy is concerned, while Mizoram's Serchhip district (98.76 per cent) and Aizawl (98.50 per cent) recorded the highest literacy rates among districts. Madhya Pradesh's Alirajpur district has the lowest literacy rate of 37.22 per cent as also the naxalite-affected Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, where the literacy rate is 41.58 per cent.
- Lakshadweep followed Kerala with a literacy level of 92.28 per cent, while Bihar remained at the bottom of the ladder at 63.82 per cent, followed by Arunachal Pradesh at 66.95 per cent. Ten States and Union Territories, including Kerala, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Tripura, Goa, Daman and Diu, Puducherry, Chandigarh, NCT of Delhi and Andaman and Nicobar Islands achieved a literacy rate of above 85 per cent, which met the Planning Commission's target set to be achieved by 2011-12.
- The gap of 21.59 percentage points recorded between male and female literacy rates in 2001 census has reduced to 16.68 percentage points in 2011.
- The Planning Commission is targeting a reduction of this gap to 10 percentage points by 2011-12.
- A significant milestone reached in the 2011 census is the fall in the number of illiterate persons by 31,196,847. Of the total decrease in the number of illiterates, women comprise 17,122,197 and men, 14,074,650. It was also encouraging to note that out of a total of 217,700,941 literates added during the decade, females outnumbered males by 110,069,001 to 107,631,940.

SAARC sanitation meet opens

- As the 2015 deadline of meeting the Millennium Development Goals nears, the South Asian Association for Regional Conference (SAARC) nations got together to give a final push for creating sanitation facilities for the 700 million plus uncovered people of the region. India has the largest uncovered population in the world.
- According to the United Nations, 2.6 billion people in the world do not have good sanitation facilities. The most disconcerting fact is that 72 per cent of them live in Asia.

How are Koya Commandos appointed, asks Supreme Court

- The Supreme Court expressed concern over the creation of Koya Commandos by the Chhattisgarh government and giving them arms to deal with Maoists .

Hazare ends fast, says fight has begun

- Anti-corruption crusader Anna Hazare called off his five-day hunger strike after receiving a gazette notification from the Centre on the constitution of a joint committee, comprising members from the government and civil society, for preparation of the draft Lokpal Bill.
- After ending his fast, Mr. Hazare addressed a huge gathering of supporters and pointed out that this was just the beginning of the fight against corruption. “Our responsibility has now increased... we will ensure that the Lokpal Bill is passed before August 15 [2011],” the social activist said and urged the people to take up other crucial issues such as decentralisation of power and electoral reforms.
- The 10-member Joint Drafting Committee will have five Cabinet members — Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee (chairman), Home Minister P. Chidambaram, Law Minister Veerappa Moily (convener), Telecom and HRD Minister Kapil Sibal and Water Resources Minister Salman Khurshid.
- Apart from Mr. Hazare, civil society will be represented by the former Law Minister, Shanti Bhushan (co-chairperson), the former Supreme Court Judge, Justice N. Santosh Hegde, lawyer Prashant Bhushan and RTI activist Arvind Kejriwal.

IRRI to set up molecular centre for rice

- The Director General of International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) Robert S. Zeigler has said that the institute was discussing with the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) the possibility of developing an India specific programme of molecular genetic and breeding for rice.
- One possibility the Phillipines-headquartered IRRI was looking at was the creation of a single centre in Hyderabad. The other was the setting up of a number of institutions which would be coordinated by the IRRI and the ICAR.

Reprieve for 44 deemed universities

- The Supreme Court gave a reprieve to the 44 deemed universities (DUs) facing de-recognition on the basis of the deficiencies pointed out by the Tandon Committee, by extending the status quo order (viz., restraining the government from taking further action on the basis of the report). This would mean that these DUs would be at liberty to take admissions for the academic year 2011-12.

Government to issue biometric PAN cards to taxpayers

- The government has decided to issue biometric PAN cards to taxpayers across the country to weed out the problem of duplicate and fake ones.

- The decision was taken recently by the Finance Ministry, in the wake of a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report that asked the Income Tax department to ensure that a single tax payer was not issued multiple cards.
- The proposed new biometric Permanent Account Number (PAN) cards would bear the Income Tax assessee's fingerprints (two from each hand) and prints from the face.
- There could be an option for existing PAN card holders to opt for the biometric cards, but it may not be mandatory, a senior official in the I-T department said,

DGCA teams to check 40 flying schools

- The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has set up three teams to examine 40 flying schools across the country from April 18.
- The move comes amid reports of pilot training schools fudging their logbook entries to help candidates get licences.
- The teams would submit reports within three months. The authenticity of records submitted by those who underwent training in foreign institutions would also be scrutinised, official sources said.

Home Ministry studying Shunglu report on CWG scam

- The Union Home Ministry is studying the Shunglu Committee report on alleged irregularities in executing various infrastructure projects related to the Commonwealth Games by the Delhi government.
- The report, running into three volumes, was referred to the Ministry by the Prime Minister's Office for further action. The PMO directed the Ministry to reply to queries raised in the Shunglu report on works done by the Delhi government.

India has highest number of stillbirths: Lancet report

- India has the dubious distinction of having the highest number of stillbirths in the world.
- This finding comes after the country recorded the worst female child sex ratio ever (Census 2011). India figures at the top of 10 countries that have the highest number of stillbirths, according to the Stillbirth series published in the British medical journal, The Lancet.
- As high as 66 per cent (1.8 million) stillbirths in the world occur in just 10 countries. India is followed by Pakistan, Nigeria, China, Bangladesh, Congo, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Afghanistan and Tanzania.
- The top five — India, Pakistan, Nigeria, China and Bangladesh — alone represented half of all stillbirths worldwide. In India, the stillbirth rates varied from 20 to 66 per 1,000 total births in different States. China has made some progress over the years to reduce its figure.
- Almost half of all stillbirths, 1.2 million, happen when the woman is in labour. These deaths are directly related to the lack of skilled care at this critical time for mothers and babies. Two-thirds occur in rural areas, where skilled birth attendants — midwives and physicians in particular — are not always available for essential care during childbirth and for obstetric emergencies, including Caesarean section.

Binayak Sen gets bail in Supreme Court

- The Supreme Court granted bail to Dr. Binayak Sen, observing that no case of sedition was made out against the rights activist, who was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment by a trial court in Chhattisgarh.

India's population to surpass China's by 2025

- India will overtake China in terms of population by 2025, an analysis of the provisional Census, 2011 data suggests.
- With more than 1.2 billion people, India has about 17.5 per cent (every sixth person in the world is an Indian) of humanity. China is the only country with a larger population, with 144 million more people. The United Nations has estimated that the Indian population grew at an annual rate of 1.43 per cent during 2005-10. In comparison, China registered a much lower annual growth rate of 0.7 per cent during the corresponding period.
- In fact, the population growth is now almost on a par with that of the developed nations.
- Demographers expect India's population to surpass that of China. At that time, India is expected to have a population of more than 1.4 billion, which will begin to drop in subsequent years.
- In the last 20 years, India's population has increased by more than 350 million, while China's has increased only by 210 million.

Stamp out khap panchayats: court

- While deprecating the caste system in the country, the Supreme Court has declared illegal 'khap panchayats' which often decree or encourage honour killings or other institutionalised atrocities against boys and girls of different castes and religions who wish to get married or have married.
- "This is wholly illegal and has to be ruthlessly stamped out. There is nothing honourable in honour killing or other atrocities and, in fact, it is nothing but barbaric and shameful murder. Other atrocities in respect of the personal lives of people committed by brutal, feudal-minded persons deserve harsh punishment. Only this way can we stamp out such acts of barbarism and feudal mentality. Moreover, these acts take the law into their own hands, and amount to kangaroo courts, which are wholly illegal," a Bench of Justices Markandey Katju and Gyan Sudha Misra said.

Nod for e-district project

- The Union Cabinet's Committee on Infrastructure approved the rollout of the e-district mission mode project in all 640 districts of the country, including the 41 districts where pilot projects of the scheme have been initiated.
- The project is part of the national e-governance plan approved by the Centre in 2006 to make all government services accessible to the common man in his

locality, through common service delivery outlets, at affordable costs and in the most efficient, transparent and reliable manner.

Double fortified salt mandatory in midday meal

- The Union government will promote the use of iron fortified iodised salt (double fortified salt) to battle anaemia, one of the major causes of malnutrition, particularly among women and children.
- To begin with, the Ministries dealing with food and nutrition programmes such as the Integrated Child Development Services and midday meal will make the use of double fortified salt (DFS) mandatory. The Department of Food and Public Distribution will also examine the possibility of supplying DFS through the Public Distribution System. A major mass media campaign will be taken up to promote its use by the Ministries of Women and Child Development and Health & Family Welfare.
- Anaemia is caused by inadequate intake and poor absorption of iron. It can be prevented and cured by promoting consumption of iron rich foods and iron supplements. One cost-effective way of increasing iron intake is fortification of salt with iron in addition to iodine.

‘Centre will await ICMR report on endosulfan’

- Prime Minister Manmohan Singh assured an all-party delegation from Kerala, led by its Health and Social Welfare Minister P.K. Sreemathy, that the Centre would await the report of the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) before deciding further on the request to ban Endosulfan nationwide.
- He reminded the delegates that the Kerala government had already banned the pesticide in 2005. Dr. Singh said during his next visit to Kerala, he would visit Kasaragod district to see and interact with the victims suspected to be affected by the use of the pesticide in cashew plantations.
- Eighty-one countries had either banned Endosulfan or decided to phase out its use. The delegation wanted Dr. Singh to give appropriate instructions so that India took a strong stand against Endosulfan and sought its ban during discussion on Stockholm convention on the use of persistent organic pollutants to be held in Geneva.

Panel to probe Tawang helicopter crash

- The government has appointed a Committee of Inquiry to probe the circumstances of the Pawan Hans helicopter crash at Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh on April 19 that claimed the lives of 17 people. The committee, headed by Air Marshal (Retd.) P.P. Rajkumar,

Centre informs Supreme Court of the high level committee to probe black money cases

- The Centre informed the Supreme Court that it had constituted a high level committee comprising the heads of various probe agencies and specialised

- departments under the aegis of the Department of Revenue to monitor the investigation of all aspects relating to black money.
- Solicitor General Gopal Subramaniam told a Bench of Justice B. Sudershan Reddy and Justice S.S. Nijjar that the 10-member committee, headed by the Revenue Secretary, investigation of all aspects relating to black money.

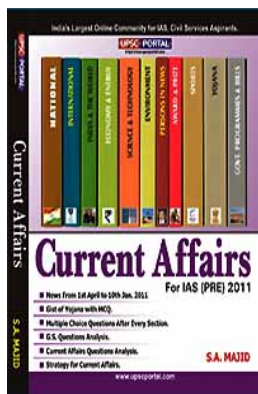
PAC draft report puts 2G loss at Rs.1.90 lakh crore

- The draft report of the Public Accounts Committee on the 2G scam has come out with yet another figure for the loss to the exchequer, putting it at Rs.1.90-lakh crore in the grant of 122 licences in 2008, dual technology licences and extra spectrum.
- Interestingly, the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India put the “presumptive loss” in the range of Rs.57,000 crore to Rs.1.76 lakh crore, based on four different assumptions. On the other hand, the Central Bureau of Investigation, which took up the case after the Central Vigilance Commission pointed to gross irregularities in licence allocation, estimated the loss at around Rs.22,000 crore. However, the CBI revised the figure to more than Rs.30,000 crore in its charge sheet.
- The PAC said the loss due to the grant of 122 licences to new entrants in 2008 was Rs.1.24-lakh crore. Further, the government lost Rs. 36,000 crore in the grant of dual-technology licences (to CDMA operators for offering GSM services) and Rs. 30,000 crore by giving the GSM operators excess spectrum (beyond 6.2 MHz of start-up frequency). The total loss, therefore, was Rs.1.90-lakh crore.

Court appoints expert to inspect Polavaram dam

- The Supreme Court has appointed M. Gopalakrishnan, a former Member of the Central Water Commission (CWC), to assist the commission in inspecting the Polavaram dam to ascertain whether it was being built as per the Godavari Tribunal Award.
- The Bench said the order was being passed without prejudice to the rights and contentions of the parties. It would be open to Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh to depute their technical team to assist the CWC and the expert during their inspection.
- The Bench passed this interim order on an application filed by the Orissa Government in its suit seeking stay of operation of the approval granted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to Polavaram project and for a direction to maintain status quo in its execution.

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