

Work begins on 2011 Census

Home Minister Shivraj Patil Thursday kicked off the process for conducting India's next official census, the largest administrative exercise in the world involving a billion-plus people.

Launching the massive exercise at a two-day data users' conference for Census 2011, Patil said India's population was expected to touch 1.2 billion by that year and hoped all relevant data would be released within three years.

The results of the 2001 Census were released in less than five years as against eight years in the earlier exercise.

This will be the country's 15th census and the seventh after independence. It will give the government vital data to target its various schemes and programmes besides providing key insights into the country's demographic profile.

Millions of volunteers drawn from a vast pool of teachers and officials will visit virtually every household in the country to collect information on issues like size of family, education, employment status and economic status.

To help in this mammoth exercise, a committee was set up under the chairmanship of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India to look at the provisions of the India Census Act, 1948, and consider providing for supervision by independent observers, wherever deemed essential.

For the 2011 census, database of village locations for each sub-district has been digitally prepared and for the towns, the census organisation has undertaken preparation of digital geographic database with the support of the Survey of India.

The cost of conducting the 2001 Census was Rs.14.03 billion (\$350 million) that came to around Rs.14 per person given the country's population then, estimated at one billion.

This time, the government also intends to dovetail the process of preparing the National Population Register with the 2011 Census with specific characteristics of each individual.

"The photograph and finger biometrics will be added subsequent to the census," Patil said at the conference organised by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commission.

Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta said there was a need to ensure that the number of questions in the census did not become too much to disturb the balance essential to maintain between an enumerator's motivation and respondent's fatigue.

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