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Amit Shah launches digital tools and mascots for Census 2027

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah soft-launched four digital platforms that will power India's first fully digital Census of India, which is scheduled to begin on April 1, 2026.
- The exercise will be the 16th Census of India and is estimated to cost about ₹11,718 crore.
- The decennial Census, originally scheduled for 2021, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Census-2027 exercise will introduce several firsts, including a fully digital enumeration process, the option for citizens to self-enumerate online, and caste enumeration.

The Census will be conducted in two phases:

Phase 1: Houselisting and Housing Census (HLO):

- During Phase 1, data on housing conditions and household amenities will be collected while Phase 2 will record demographic, social, and economic particulars of every person in the country.
- Notification for Phase 1 was issued on 7th January 2026.

- The Houselisting and Housing Census will be conducted between 1st April 2026 and 30th September 2026, during a 30-day continuous period, notified by each State/Union Territory.
- An optional 15-day Self-Enumeration period will precede the house-to-house survey.

Phase 2: Population Enumeration (PE):

- Population Enumeration will be conducted in February 2027 across India.
- For the Union Territory of Ladakh and snow-bound non-synchronous areas of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, enumeration will take place in September 2026.
- In the second phase of Census, caste-related question will also be included.
- The reference date for Census 2027 will be 00:00 hours on 1 March 2027 for all States and Union Territories.
- However, for the Union Territory of Ladakh and the snow-bound non-synchronous areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, the reference date will be 00:00 hours on 1 October 2026.
- The house-listing phase will record all structures, houses and households across the country, creating the framework for the population enumeration exercise.
- Four key digital platforms were launched to support the Census operations.

1. **Houselisting Block Creator (HLBC) Web Application**:

- A web-map application that enables Charge Officers to digitally create Houselisting Blocks using satellite imagery, ensuring standardized geographic coverage across the country.

2. **HLO Mobile Application**:

- A secure offline mobile application for enumerators to collect and upload Houselisting data.
- Only enumerators registered on the CMMS Portal can access the application.

- The app enables direct field-to-server data transmission, eliminating traditional paperwork.
- All Houselisting data will be collected through this app, which can only be operated using registered mobile numbers.
- The application is compatible with Android and iOS platforms and it can be operated in 16 regional languages.

3. **Self-Enumeration (SE) Portal**:

- For the first time, the option of Self-Enumeration is being introduced.
- The SE Portal is a secure web-based facility that allows eligible respondents within a household to submit their household information online prior to field operations.
- Upon successful submission, a unique Self-Enumeration ID (SE ID) will be generated.
- This Self-Enumeration ID (SE ID) will be shared with the enumerator on the basis of which enumerator will be able to verify the information.

4. **Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) Portal**:

- A centralized, web-based digital platform designed to plan, manage, execute, and monitor all census-related activities across administrative levels.
- Officers at Sub-district, District, and State levels can track enumeration progress, field performance, and operational readiness in real-time through an integrated dashboard.
- All four digital platforms have been developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).
- During the event, mascots for Census-2027 — 'Pragati' (female) and 'Vikas' (male) — were also unveiled, symbolising equal participation of women and men in achieving the vision of making India a developed nation by 2047.

Amazon becomes India's most trusted brand in 2026: TRA Research

- ➢ E-commerce giant Amazon has been named the most trusted brand in India in 2026, according to the Brand Trust Report by TRA (Trust Research Advisory) Research.
- ➢ In a major shift, Amazon has climbed from the 12th rank last year to dethrone laptop manufacturer Dell, which occupied the top spot for six consecutive years.
- ➢ While Dell slipped to second place, motorcycle brand Honda climbed two ranks to number three, followed by LG (televisions) and Titan (watches) at four and five, respectively.
- ➢ This is the 15th edition of TRA's report which ranks India's 1,000 most trusted brands across categories.
- ➢ Among the top 10 names are Sony televisions (6), LG refrigerators (7), LG washing machines (8), Vivo (9) and Flipkart (10).
- ➢ Indian names dominate the top 50 brands listed, with 27 brands across sectors like auto, financial services and home appliances.
- ➢ The top 50 include six American brands, six Chinese names and five from South Korea.

- Some of the standout performers this year include Whirlpool refrigerators, which jumped 50 ranks to 13, boAt, which climbed 25 places to 17, and Kent water purifiers, which advanced from 44 last year to 19 in 2026.
- The Apple iPhone brand recorded a sharp decline in rankings, falling from 2nd position in 2025 to 16th in 2026.
- Hewlett-Packard laptops also witnessed a significant drop, moving from 3rd rank in 2025 to 35th position in 2026.
- Similarly, Maruti Suzuki experienced a decline in its ranking, slipping from 19th place in 2025 to 42nd in 2026.
- According to N. Chandramouli, CEO of TRA Research, the rankings show a dramatic shift at the top, highlighting the dynamic nature of brand trust.
- Amazon surged 11 ranks to dethrone Dell from the top position in the rankings.
- Vivo recorded a major jump of 48 positions, enabling it to enter the top 10 brands.
- The report shows that 324 brands improved their rankings, while 349 brands recorded a decline in their positions.
- Additionally, 327 brands either entered the rankings for the first time or exited the list, indicating continuous changes in brand performance.
- The findings highlight that brand trust can be built or lost depending on customer experience, communication strategies, and perceived authenticity of brands.

Padma awardee nadaswaram maestro Sheikh Mahaboob passes away at 71

- ➢ Padma Shri awardee and renowned Nadaswaram maestro Sheik Mahaboob Subhani passed away at the age of 71 in Srirangam, Tamil Nadu.
- ➢ Subhani was born in Peda Kothapalli village, Prakasam district, Andhra Pradesh, he belonged to an eighth-generation family of traditional Nadaswaram artistes.
- ➢ He was initially trained by his father and later honed his skills under Sheikh Chinna Moulana Sahib, a distinguished Nadaswaram exponent.
- ➢ Along with his wife Kaleeshabi Mahaboob, he performed Carnatic music concerts across India and internationally.
- ➢ He was honoured with the Padma Shri in 2020 for his outstanding contribution to classical music.
- ➢ In 1994, he received the Kalaimamani Award from the Government of Tamil Nadu.
- ➢ He also served as Asthana Vidwan of prominent religious institutions, including the Sringeri Sharada Peetham.
- ➢ He was renowned for his exceptional mastery of the Nadaswaram and performed classical Carnatic ragas and kritis at major concerts, temple festivals, and cultural events.
- ➢ Through his music, he promoted cultural inclusivity, bridging regional and religious divides.

SBI strongest Indian bank; HDFC Bank leads in brand value: Brand Finance

➢ State Bank of India (SBI) has been ranked the 16th strongest bank globally according to the 2026 Banking 500 report by brand valuation consultancy Brand Finance.

➢ SBI is the only Indian bank to receive a AAA+ rating, the highest accolade for brand strength.

➢ The report also identifies HDFC Bank as the most valuable Indian banking brand.

➢ However, HDFC Bank dropped seven places in the global rankings, moving from 24th in 2025 to 31st in 2026.

➢ State Bank of India (SBI)'s brand value increased by 2% year-on-year, reaching $8.1 billion, while the bank ranked 56th among the most valuable global brands, down from 49th last year.

➢ HDFC Bank's brand value declined by 7% to $12.4 billion, but it improved its global brand strength ranking, climbing four places to 28th in 2026.

➢ ICICI Bank's brand value rose significantly by 19% to $5.5 billion, moving six places up to rank 76 in the global list.

➢ Indian banking brands continue to strengthen their global presence, with 19 banks from India featured in the rankings, collectively accounting for $47.8 billion in total brand value.

- The report attributes State Bank of India (SBI)'s latest performance to its continued diversification and digital initiatives, which have helped drive customer acquisition, cross-selling opportunities, and higher transaction volumes.
- HDFC Bank's performance during the last year was largely supported by its acquisition of HDFC Limited in 2023, which enabled the bank to become a direct provider of housing loans and significantly expand its retail product portfolio.
- India's banking sector has made significant investments in back-end technology and customer experience (CX) interfaces in recent years to improve service delivery and customer engagement.
- These technological investments have enabled smoother interaction with a large customer base and improved banking services.
- Mid-sized banks, both public and private sector, are rapidly closing the gap with large established banks due to the adoption of technology.
- According to Ajimon Francis, Managing Director (India) of Brand Finance, technology is helping bring banking services closer to end customers.
- Banks identified as brands to watch include Canara Bank, Punjab National Bank, Federal Bank, and Yes Bank.
- Some of the other Indian names on the global list include Axis Bank (96), Canara Bank (136), Union Bank of India (151), Punjab National Bank (153), Kotak Mahindra (160), Indian Bank (194), Bank of India (209), IndusInd (247), IDBI (286), Federal Bank (293) and Yes Bank (346), among others.

India's First Riverine Lighthouses to Come Up on Brahmaputra (NW-2) as Sarbananda Sonowal Lays Foundation Stones

➢ Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal laid the foundation stone for India's first river lighthouses along the banks of the Brahmaputra River in Assam, marking the first lighthouse infrastructure on an inland waterway in India.

➢ The project involves the construction of four riverine lighthouses at Bogibeel (Dibrugarh district), Pandu (Kamrup Metropolitan district), Silghat (Nagaon district), and Biswanath Ghat (Biswanath district) at strategic points along the Brahmaputra.

➢ The lighthouses are being developed along National Waterway-2 (NW-2), one of India's most important inland cargo and passenger corridors, which runs along the Brahmaputra.

➢ The total project cost for constructing the four river lighthouses is about ₹84 crore.

- Each lighthouse will be about 20 metres tall, with a geographical range of 14 nautical miles and a luminous range of about 8–10 nautical miles, and will be powered entirely by solar energy.
- The project aims to enable 24×7 safe navigation on the Brahmaputra, improve night navigation, and support the growth of freight and passenger transport through inland waterways.
- The initiative comes amid a 53% surge in cargo movement on the Brahmaputra waterway in FY 2024-25, highlighting the increasing importance of inland waterways for transportation and trade.
- Apart from navigation infrastructure, each lighthouse site will also include tourism and public facilities such as a museum, amphitheatre, cafeteria, children's play area, souvenir shop, and landscaped public spaces, making them both navigation aids and tourist attractions.
- The project is being implemented through collaboration between the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) and the Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships (DGLL) under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
- The construction of these lighthouses is expected to strengthen inland water transport in Northeast India, reduce logistics costs, lower carbon emissions, and ease pressure on road and rail transport.

11th Edition Of Raisina Dialogue Begins In New Delhi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 11th edition of the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi.
- It is India's premier conference on geopolitics and geo-economics, bringing together global leaders, policymakers, diplomats, scholars and business representatives.
- The dialogue is organised by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India.
- The Raisina Dialogue has been held annually in New Delhi since 2016 and has emerged as one of the world's leading strategic affairs conferences.
- The theme of the 2026 edition is "Saṁskāra: Assertion, Accommodation, Advancement."
- The theme focuses on global power shifts, international cooperation and pathways for advancement in a changing geopolitical and geo-economic environment.

- The forum serves as a multi-stakeholder platform that hosts heads of state, foreign ministers, military leaders, policy experts, academics, media professionals and industry leaders from around the world.
- Major discussion areas include global governance, economic security, geopolitical competition, technological transformation, climate change, sustainability and regional security issues.
- The dialogue is often compared with major global strategic forums such as the Munich Security Conference and the Shangri-La Dialogue.
- The platform highlights India's growing diplomatic influence and role in shaping global discussions on international security, economic cooperation and multilateral governance.
- Initiatives associated with the dialogue include the Raisina Science Diplomacy Initiative, which promotes cooperation between science, technology and diplomacy.
- Another initiative is the Raisina Young Fellows Programme, which engages young global leaders in policy discussions and strategic dialogue.

NITI Aayog and UNICEF Join Hands to Transform Aspirational Districts

➢ NITI Aayog and UNICEF India signed a Statement of Intent (SoI) to strengthen collaboration for improving nutrition and health outcomes in Aspirational Districts Programme and Aspirational Blocks Programme.

➢ The SoI was signed by Rohit Kumar, Additional Secretary and Mission Director of the Aspirational Districts and Blocks Programme, and Arjan de Wagt, Deputy Representative of UNICEF India.

➢ The collaboration aims to improve maternal and child nutrition outcomes in underserved regions and strengthen implementation systems for nutrition and health interventions at the block level.

➢ The partnership will promote multi-stakeholder engagement involving government, private sector organisations, industry associations and community stakeholders to accelerate progress in nutrition and health indicators.

➢ Through the IMPAct4Nutrition (I4N) platform, UNICEF India will provide technical expertise and facilitate engagement with businesses, PSUs and industry bodies to channel CSR investments into nutrition-focused initiatives.

- The collaboration will focus on strengthening Anganwadi infrastructure, improving nutrition literacy, increasing the uptake of services under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, and building the capacity of frontline workers.
- Key activities include mobilising CSR partners to support nutrition and health interventions, promoting community participation, and creating knowledge-sharing platforms to identify and scale best practices across Aspirational Districts and Blocks.
- The partnership emphasises convergence, collaboration and data-driven governance to accelerate development outcomes in high-priority districts and blocks.
- The initiative reflects the shared commitment of NITI Aayog and UNICEF India to improving nutrition and public health through evidence-based strategies, stronger partnerships and coordinated action.

About Aspirational Districts Programme:

- The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) was launched by the Government of India in 2018.
- The programme was introduced to accelerate development in some of the country's most underdeveloped districts through focused and targeted interventions.
- It focuses on key sectors such as health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development, and basic infrastructure.

President Murmu Appoints 9 New Governors and Lieutenant Governors in India

➢ Droupadi Murmu, the President of India, approved a major gubernatorial reshuffle, appointing nine new Governors and Lieutenant Governors across various states and Union Territories of India.

➢ The announcement was made on 6 March 2026 through an official communication issued by Rashtrapati Bhavan.

➢ The reshuffle involves transfers, fresh appointments, and reassignment of roles among Governors and Lieutenant Governors.

➢ The changes affect several states including Telangana, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, and Nagaland, as well as the Union Territories Delhi and Ladakh.

➢ The appointments will come into effect from the date on which the newly appointed Governors and Lieutenant Governors assume charge of their respective offices.

S.No	Person	Previous Position	New Position
1	Vinai Kumar Saxena	Lieutenant Governor of Delhi	Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh
2	Taranjit Singh Sandhu	Former Indian Ambassador to US	Lieutenant Governor of Delhi
3	Shiv Pratap Shukla	Governor of Himachal Pradesh	Governor of Telangana
4	Jishnu Dev Varma	Governor of Telangana	Governor of Maharashtra
5	Nand Kishore Yadav	BJP leader from Bihar	Governor of Nagaland
6	Syed Ata Hasnain	Retired Lt. General (Indian Army)	Governor of Bihar
7	R. N. Ravi	Governor of Tamil Nadu	Governor of West Bengal
8	Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar	Governor of Kerala	Additional charge of Governor (Tamil Nadu)
9	Kavinder Gupta	Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh	Governor of Himachal Pradesh

First bust of Mahatma Gandhi unveiled at Northwestern University in Illinois

➢ NITI Aayog and UNICEF India signed a Statement of Intent (SoI) to strengthen collaboration for improving nutrition and health outcomes in Aspirational Districts Programme and Aspirational Blocks Programme.

➢ A bust of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled at Northwestern University in the state of Illinois, marking the first installation of Gandhi's bust on the university campus and highlighting the global recognition of his philosophy of peace and non-violence.

➢ The installation of the bust reflects the growing cultural and academic connections between India and the United States, emphasizing Gandhi's enduring influence on global movements advocating non-violence, civil rights, and social justice.

➢ The bust was unveiled as part of efforts to commemorate Gandhi's contributions to humanity, especially his philosophy of Ahimsa (non-violence) and Satyagraha (truth-force), which played a major role in India's struggle for independence.

➢ Mahatma Gandhi is internationally regarded as a symbol of peaceful resistance, and his ideas have inspired several global leaders and movements, including civil rights movements in the United States and other parts of the world.

➢ The installation of the bust at Northwestern University aims to encourage students and scholars to reflect on Gandhi's ideals of ethical leadership, peaceful protest, and social harmony.

- The event was attended by university officials, members of the Indian diaspora, students, and community representatives, reflecting the strong cultural ties between the academic institutions of India and the United States.
- The unveiling also symbolizes the role of universities as platforms for cross-cultural dialogue, historical remembrance, and global values, reinforcing the importance of Gandhi's teachings in addressing contemporary social and political challenges.
- Mahatma Gandhi continues to remain one of the most respected global icons of peace, and statues and memorials dedicated to him are installed in many countries to honour his legacy and to promote the ideals of peaceful coexistence and moral leadership.
- Such installations abroad are often considered part of India's cultural diplomacy, which promotes Indian heritage, values, and historical leaders on international platforms.
- The unveiling of the bust at Northwestern University further strengthens people-to-people ties between India and the United States while highlighting Gandhi's universal relevance in promoting peace and non-violent conflict resolution.