VISTAR Scheme: Cabinet Approval for Transforming India's Statistical System

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Why in the News

The Union Cabinet approved VISTAR as a central sector scheme on 4 November 2026. Its full name is Viksit Bharat Initiative for Statistical Transformation, Analytics & Research. The approved outlay for financial years 2026-27 to 2030-31 is Rs 4,371.10 crore. It would not be correct to understand this as a scheme of any one survey; its scope covers MoSPI's statistical and data-management activities.

From National Figures to Local Decisions

Conducting more surveys alone is not the goal under the scheme. The proposal is to make the entire process of data collection, processing, checking and analysis digital. AI and machine learning are to be used especially in processing and verification. Alternative sources such as mobile phones, scanners and e-commerce will complement traditional surveys, not directly replace them.

Under SSS 2.0, the assistance to states will be linked to fixed achievements. Technical assistance is proposed for preparing district-level estimates and estimates for cities with a population of more than ten lakh. Along with surveys like PLFS, HCES and ASUSE,

expanding the capacity for state and district GDP and state IIP is part of it. This can help local policy understand the condition of small areas beyond the national average. This is an expected benefit, not a claim of an already achieved result.

Outline of the Scheme

- **Objective:** a dynamic, real-time and future-ready official statistics system linked to "Viksit Bharat 2047" - better timeliness, fine-grained data (granularity), interoperability and AI-ready datasets.
- **Three components:** (1) comprehensive statistical operations and strengthening of the ecosystem; (2) assistance for statistical strengthening; (3) **Economic Census**.
- **Survey expansion:** MoSPI has proposed conducting **59 surveys** in the 16th Finance Commission cycle - compared with 43 major surveys earlier.
- **Implementation:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

Why It Matters

- Old questions on official statistics - GDP base year, census delay, timeliness of consumption and employment data - are tied to the credibility of policymaking; VISTAR addresses these institutionally.
- State statistical systems have remained weak; assistance to states is included as a component of the scheme.
- The eighth Economic Census will be conducted with the cooperation of states and Union Territories. It proposes gathering information on non-agricultural establishments and the workers employed in them down to the gram panchayat and ward level. This will become the base for preparing a national statistical business register.

Importance from the Exam Angle

- **Prelims:** the scheme's full name/amount/period/ministry, three components, Economic Census, MoSPI's major surveys (PLFS, NSS, CPI, IIP, NAS).
- **Mains (GS-2/3):** the role of data in good governance, the credibility debate of official statistics, centre-state statistical coordination.

Prelims Practice Questions

Question 1. What are the approved amount and period of the VISTAR scheme?

(a) Rs 2,500 crore, 2025-30

(b) Rs 4,371 crore, 2026-27 to 2030-31

(c) Rs 5,000 crore, 2024-29

(d) Rs 4,371 crore, 2025-26 to 2029-30

▼ Answer and Explanation
Answer: (b) - the Cabinet approved the Rs 4,371 crore VISTAR scheme on 4 November 2026 for 2026-27 to 2030-31.

Question 2. Which of these is included among VISTAR's three components?

(a) Census 2031

(b) Economic Census

(c) Caste census

(d) Electoral roll revision

▼ Answer and Explanation
Answer: (b) - the components: comprehensive statistical operations, statistical strengthening assistance, and the Economic Census - the updated list of enterprises is the foundation of the survey framework.

Question 3. Who implements the PLFS?

(a) Ministry of Labour

(b) MoSPI

(c) NITI Aayog

(d) RBI

▼ Answer and Explanation
Answer: (b) - MoSPI (NSO). The official survey system is centred here; VISTAR is the transformation of this very system.

Sources

PIB: Cabinet's approval of VISTAR, 4 November 2026