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01

Saving Soil, Securing Farms

"Beneath Every Harvest Lies Healthy Soil"

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Soil is a strategic national resource that supports agricultural productivity, food security, and rural livelihoods in India. National initiatives are promoting scientific soil management through soil testing, balanced nutrient use, and climate-resilient farming practices. **The Soil Health Card Scheme** has generated **over 25.89 crore** cards, supporting informed nutrient management. **The National Mission on Natural Farming** has expanded to **18,786 clusters covering 8.80 lakh hectares**. Public outreach efforts, including the **Khet Bachao Abhiyan**, are encouraging wider adoption of sustainable practices. Digital platforms, geospatial mapping and artificial intelligence are improving soil assessment and advisory services, strengthening productivity, resilience and long-term agricultural sustainability.

Soil as a Strategic National Resource

Soil forms the very foundation of India’s agricultural systems, supporting crop production, sustaining ecosystems, and securing livelihoods. More than **46 percent of the workforce is employed in agriculture and allied activities**. As a result, soil health has a direct influence on rural incomes, food systems, and overall economic stability.

According to the Land Use Statistics 2022-23, the total reported area of India is **306.65 million hectares**, of which nearly **59 per cent is under agriculture**. This highlights the critical role of soil in sustaining productivity and meeting the nutritional needs of a growing population. Healthy soil enables higher yields and reduces dependence

on external inputs. In this context, soil security and sustainability are vital for achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030**. This is particularly important for those related to zero hunger (SDG 2) and climate action (SDG 13).

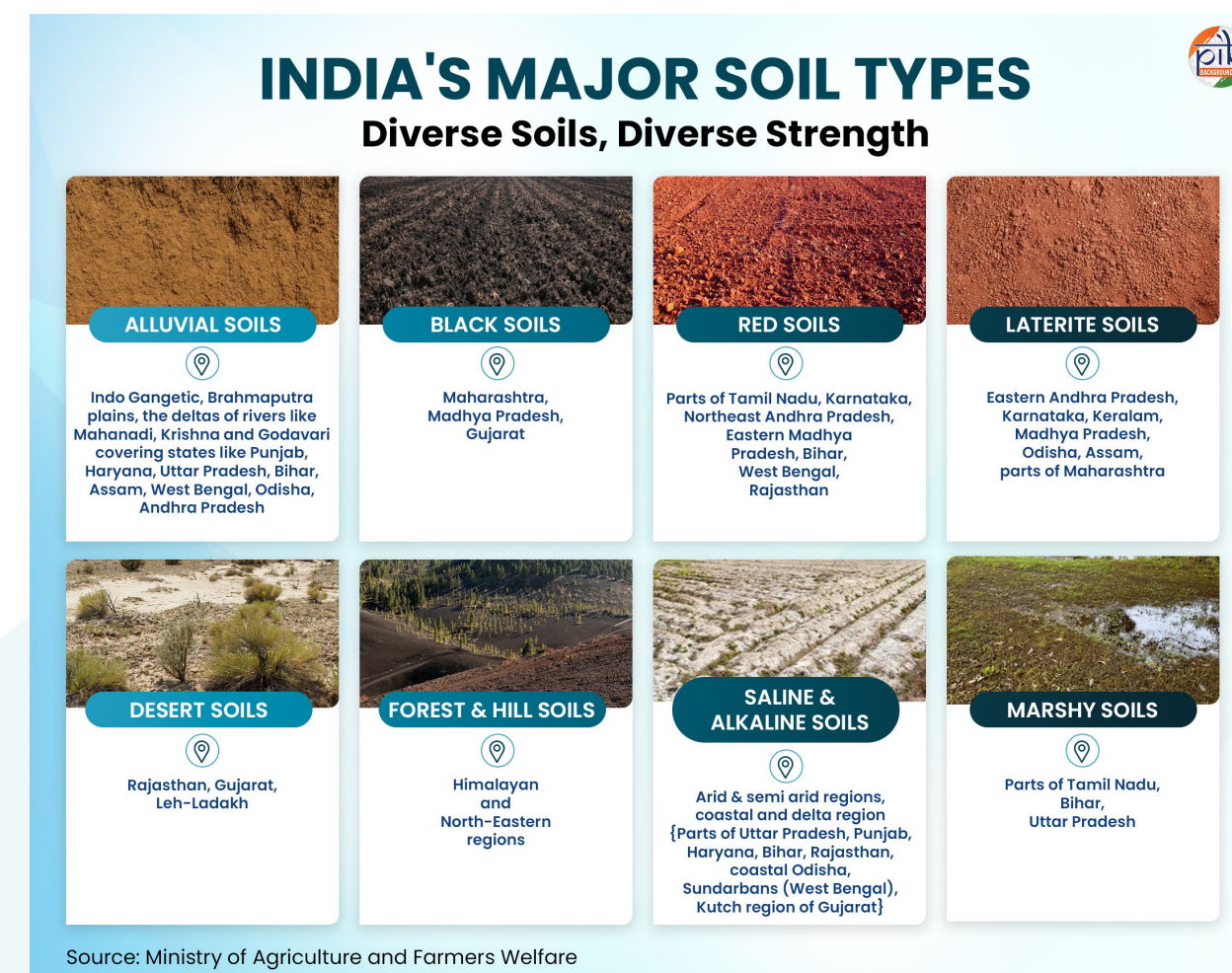
Recognising this strategic importance, India has expanded its focus on sustainable soil and land management. National efforts span **climate resilience, natural farming, soil mapping, and digital agriculture**. Initiatives such as the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) and the **National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF)** promote resilient and resource-efficient agricultural practices. **The Soil Health Card Scheme** further supports informed nutrient application through soil testing and advisory services. These efforts reflect the journey of

soil science evolving from traditional farming practices to modern scientific approaches.

Alongside institutional interventions, recent awareness initiatives such as the **“Khet Bachao Abhiyan”** are also strengthening public engagement. This is helping in soil conservation, balanced use of fertilisers and sustainable agricultural practices.

Soil Diversity: Foundation of Agricultural Strength

India’s varied climate, geology, and relief have resulted in a wide range of soils that support region-specific agricultural practices. These soils differ in composition and fertility, enabling diverse cropping patterns and improving resilience across regions.



Alluvial soils are found in the Indo-Gangetic and Brahmaputra plains and the deltas of rivers like Mahanadi,

Krishna and Godavari covering states like Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, West Bengal, Odisha,

Andhra Pradesh. These soils are fertile and widely distributed across river plains. **Black soils** in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat are clayey, retain moisture, and are rich in lime and calcium. **Red soils** are spread across parts of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, north-east Andhra Pradesh, eastern Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Rajasthan. These soils vary in colour due to iron content and are generally porous and low in key nutrients.

Laterite soils are predominantly found in Eastern Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Assam, and parts of Maharashtra. They develop under conditions of high rainfall and intense leaching, which removes soluble nutrients from the soil. **Desert soils**, in Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Leh-Ladakh, are characterised by their sandy texture, low moisture retention, and the presence of soluble salts. **Forest and hill soils** are distributed across the **Himalayan and North-Eastern regions**, varying according to altitude, climate, and vegetation cover.

Saline and alkaline soils are found in the arid and semi-arid regions, coastal and delta regions or areas with prolonged poor drainage and waterlogging. These include parts of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Bihar, Rajasthan, coastal Odisha, the Sundarbans of West Bengal, Kutch region of Gujarat. These soils are characterised by surface salt

accumulation, which can affect crop productivity. **Marshy soils** occur in parts of Tamil Nadu, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, where prolonged waterlogging results in high organic matter content. Such wide range of soil types across the country reflects India's **diverse agro-climatic landscape** and underpins **varied cropping systems**.

Soil and Climate Action: Building Resilience

Soil plays a critical role in climate change mitigation and adaptation by acting as a significant **natural carbon sink**. Soils absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it as soil organic carbon. This process is facilitated by **vegetation growth, roots, and soil microorganisms**. The stored carbon can remain in the soil for long periods, helping reduce greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. In addition, higher soil organic carbon levels improve soil structure, enhance moisture retention capacity, and increase nutrient availability. This further strengthens soil fertility and resilience to climate variability. Moreover, **carbon farming** is emerging as an important component of climate-smart agriculture. It focuses on removing atmospheric carbon and storing it in **soils through sustainable land management practices**.

Soil for Climate Resilience

Key Policy Measures

**National Mission for a Green India**

Enhances forest and tree cover to strengthen carbon sinks and ecosystem services

**National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture**

Promotes climate-resilient farming through improved soil health and efficient water use

**National Mission on Natural Farming**

Advances nature-based farming to improve soil fertility and reduce input costs

**Carbon Credit Trading Scheme**

Enables farmers to earn carbon credits through verified emission reduction practices

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare

In this context, government interventions support practices that increase soil organic carbon and enhance long-term carbon storage. These include **the National Mission for a Green India, National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture, National Mission on Natural Farming, and the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme**. Their interventions align closely with the principles of carbon farming.

National Mission for a Green India

The National Mission for a Green India (GIM) is one of the initiatives under the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**. It addresses climate change through actions that enhance ecosystem services, **particularly carbon storage in forests and trees**. Forests play a vital role in climate mitigation by absorbing carbon dioxide and improving natural carbon sinks. The mission focuses on increasing and improving forest and tree

cover, including on-forest and degraded lands. This strengthens carbon sinks and supports India's climate commitments. In pursuance of India's commitments under its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the mission aims to create an additional carbon sink of **2.5-3.0 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent** by 2030. As per the India State of Forest Report

(ISFR) 2023, an additional carbon sink of **2.29 billion tonnes** of CO₂ equivalent was created between 2005 and 2021, demonstrating significant progress towards this goal. These interventions also enhance soil and biomass carbon while improving ecosystem resilience.

NAPCC provides a comprehensive framework to address climate change while facilitating sustainable development. It promotes actions that deliver both developmental benefits and climate outcomes, with a focus on adaptation and mitigation. The Plan is implemented through eight national missions. These missions cover areas such as solar energy, water, green India, agriculture, ecosystems and knowledge systems, providing a comprehensive framework for climate action.

National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture

Sustainable agriculture strengthens climate resilience while improving soil health, resource efficiency, and long-term farm productivity. To advance these objectives, in 2014-15, the **National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)** was launched as a key component of NAPCC. It focuses on promoting sustainable farming through improved **soil health, efficient water use and adoption of climate-resilient practices**. The mission facilitates farmers through financial assistance and incentives to adopt better soil

management and water conservation measures. Since 2014-15, **Rs.2,119.84 crore** has been released under **Rainfed Area Development**, covering **8.50 lakh hectares** and **benefiting 14.35 lakh farmers** through **Integrated Farming System**. These interventions are enhancing soil organic carbon and supporting practices aligned with carbon farming.

National Mission on Natural Farming

The **National Mission on Natural Farming**, launched in 2024, promotes sustainable agricultural practices

through scientifically informed approaches that strengthen soil health and enhance climate resilience. The mission focuses on reducing farmers' input costs while encouraging safe, environmentally responsible food production. It represents a shift towards **nature-based farming systems** that improve soil organic carbon and support long-term farm viability.

- The mission has expanded significantly, with **18,786 clusters covering 8.80 lakh hectares** and over **18.19 lakh farmers enrolled** as of March 2026. This reflects the growing adoption across States.
- Capacity building remains a key component. **33,676** trained Community Resource Persons and a wide network of training institutions support knowledge dissemination on natural farming bio-inputs at the grassroots level.
- The mission also contributes to the development of local input systems through Bio-input Resource Centre (BRC) and certification mechanisms. Bio-input Resource Centres are local facilities that supply ready-to-use natural farming inputs such as Beejamrit and Jeevamrit to farmers. They also provide training and demonstrations to farmers to adopt natural alternatives to chemical fertilisers and pesticides. This encourages farmers to adopt sustainable practices while strengthening the overall agricultural

ecosystem.

Carbon Credit Trading Scheme

Carbon markets create financial incentives for activities that reduce, avoid, or remove greenhouse gas emissions. The **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme**, adopted in 2023, enables farmers and organisations to undertake greenhouse gas mitigation activities. It also enables them to earn tradable **carbon credit certificates** through **voluntary carbon markets (VCM)**. Each carbon credit represents one metric tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent that is reduced, avoided, or removed. Verified standards such as the **Verified Carbon Standard (VCS)** and **Gold Standard** provide frameworks for measuring and validating emission reductions in agriculture. By adopting sustainable, eco-friendly practices and obtaining proper verification, farmers can generate carbon credits. They can further sell them to entities seeking **emission offsets**, thereby enabling climate mitigation while creating an additional income stream.

Integrated Approaches to Soil Health and Fertiliser Management

Soil Health and Fertility Scheme, launched in 2015, promotes scientific soil management by assessing soil nutrient status and guiding farmers on balanced fertiliser use. It provides **Soil Health Cards** with crop-specific recommendations to improve soil health and productivity. Training and demonstration programmes further support farmers in adopting the judicious use of chemical fertilisers. This includes secondary and micronutrients, along with organic manures and bio-fertilisers. **The School Soil Health Programme** further extends this effort by engaging students.

Students participate in soil sample collection, testing, and preparation of Soil Health Cards. This enables them to support advisory services for farmers. As of 13 March 2026, a total of **25.89 crore Soil Health Cards** have been generated since inception. Around **7.17 lakh demonstrations** have been conducted to promote balanced fertiliser use. These demonstrations were conducted through advisories supported by the **Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA)** and **Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs)**. In addition, **70,002 Krishi Sakhis** have been trained to support the dissemination of soil health advisories at the grassroots level. **The School Soil Health Programme** has registered **4,430 schools** and **1,29,167 students in 2025-26**.

Soil Health Management

Key Achievements



- Nearly 26 crore Soil Health Cards issued**
Empowering farmers with nutrient-based, crop-specific fertiliser recommendations
- 7.2 lakh demonstrations conducted**
Promoting balanced fertiliser use through Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs)
- 70,002 Krishi Sakhis trained**
Strengthening last-mile delivery of soil health advisories

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (As of 13 March 2026)

From Soil Testing to Higher Yields: A Farmer's Experience

Shri Nirapado Gorai, a farmer from Dhanbad district, Jharkhand, adopted Soil Health Card recommendations on his 3-acre farm. Prior to this, his nutrient management practices relied largely on nitrogen and phosphorus, with limited use of other essential nutrients. Based on the soil health advisory, he shifted to balanced fertiliser application, including potash and lime. He also applied urea in split doses at different stages of crop growth.



Shri Nirapado Gorai holding Soil Health Card

This transition reduced fertiliser costs from Rs.1,910 to Rs.1,190 per acre, resulting in savings of Rs.720 per acre. At the same time, paddy yield increased from 1,000 kg to 1,320 kg per acre, along with visible improvement in plant health. Reflecting on the change, he observed less infestation of disease and insect pests. He observed that this was probably due to the judicious use of nitrogenous fertilisers and application of potash.

Balanced Nutrient Management

India has taken significant steps to improve fertiliser management through reforms that promote efficiency and transparency.

The **Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS)** scheme links subsidy support to the nutrient content of fertilisers, encouraging balanced nutrient application. Under

this scheme, the government provides subsidies on **28 grades** of Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilisers, including Diammonium Phosphate (DAP), to farmers at subsidised prices through fertiliser manufacturers and importers. The subsidy rates are notified separately for the two major cropping seasons. The Kharif season rates are applicable from **1 April to 30 September**, while the Rabi season rates apply from **1 October to 31 March**.

Aadhaar-linked Point of Sale (PoS) devices authenticate beneficiaries and enable real-time tracking of fertiliser sales. Under the Direct Benefit Transfer in Fertilisers system, subsidies are released based on actual sales through PoS devices. Fertiliser subsidy disbursements totalled **Rs.6.77 lakh crore** between 2022-23 and July 2025. **Neem-coated urea** slows nitrogen release, improves nutrient-use efficiency, and reduces diversion for non-agricultural purposes. The Government mandated a 100 per cent neem coating on all domestically produced urea. The **Integrated Fertiliser Management System** further strengthens monitoring and logistics, ensuring better control over fertiliser availability and use.

Khet Bachao Abhiyan: Promoting Balanced Fertiliser Use

To further strengthen balanced fertiliser use, the Government intensified awareness efforts through the **Khet Bachao Abhiyan**. The campaign promoted scientific nutrient management practices among farmers. Led by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the DA&FW, the

campaign involved the entire National Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Systems (NAREES) and was held during June 1-30, 2026. It promoted soil test-based nutrient management so as to reduce overdependence on chemical fertilisers through camps, demonstrations, and farmer outreach activities. The campaign also raised awareness of alternative agricultural practices in low-rainfall conditions.

A total of 99,489 interaction meetings and events, **25,178 awareness camps** were organised. In addition, **6,721 training programmes** and **96,227 field demonstrations** on green manuring and bio-fertilisers were conducted to promote balanced nutrient management. The campaign strengthened grassroots participation through **4,916 Janpratinidhi Sammelans**, including fertiliser and input dealers. These activities directly engaged around **1.07 crore farmers/other stakeholders**, and **about 4.5 crore citizens through social media**.

These reforms and awareness initiatives are strengthening balanced fertiliser use, improving nutrient efficiency, and supporting long-term soil sustainability.



KHET BACHAO ABHIYAN

Reaches **4.5 Crore** Citizens

1.07 Crore Farmers/ Stakeholders
Engaged through awareness camps,
training programmes and field
demonstrations

**Focuses on soil health, balanced fertiliser
use, and sustainable agriculture**



Source: Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare

As of May 2026

Building a Digital Soil Ecosystem

India is advancing towards a data-driven approach to soil management by integrating geospatial mapping, digital platforms, and artificial intelligence.

Geospatial Soil Mapping and Resource Assessment

The Nationwide Soil Resource Mapping project, implemented by the Soil and Land Use Survey of India (SLUSI), is generating high-resolution soil profile maps. They combine satellite imagery with field observations to create village-level soil inventories. The inventories support scientific land use planning and informed crop selection.

As of September 2024, around 29 million hectares had been mapped. The target is 142 million hectares of agricultural land. To accelerate this effort, Rs.1,076 crore was provided to six States. These include Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. The support is strengthening the creation of reliable soil resource datasets across regions.

Integrating Soil, Land, and Farmer Data

Digital technologies are transforming agricultural decision-making through integrated data systems and targeted advisory services. The Digital Agriculture Mission is building a unified data framework by linking

soil information with land and crop datasets. Platforms such as AgriStack are enabling the integration of farmer, land, and soil data to support targeted advisory services. As part of this effort, as of 27 November 2025, over 7.63 crore Farmer IDs have been generated. During Rabi 2024-25, 23.5 crore crop plots were surveyed. This has enabled mapping soil information to individual land parcels, supporting more accurate, location-specific advisories.

AI and Precision Soil Management

Artificial intelligence is transforming soil management by converting complex data into actionable insights for farmers. Under the Digital Agriculture Mission, platforms such as the Krishi Decision Support System (KDSS) integrate soil, weather, and crop data. These platforms generate location-specific advisories for crop planning and nutrient management. This integration of data and technology is improving soil assessment and supporting informed farm-level decisions.

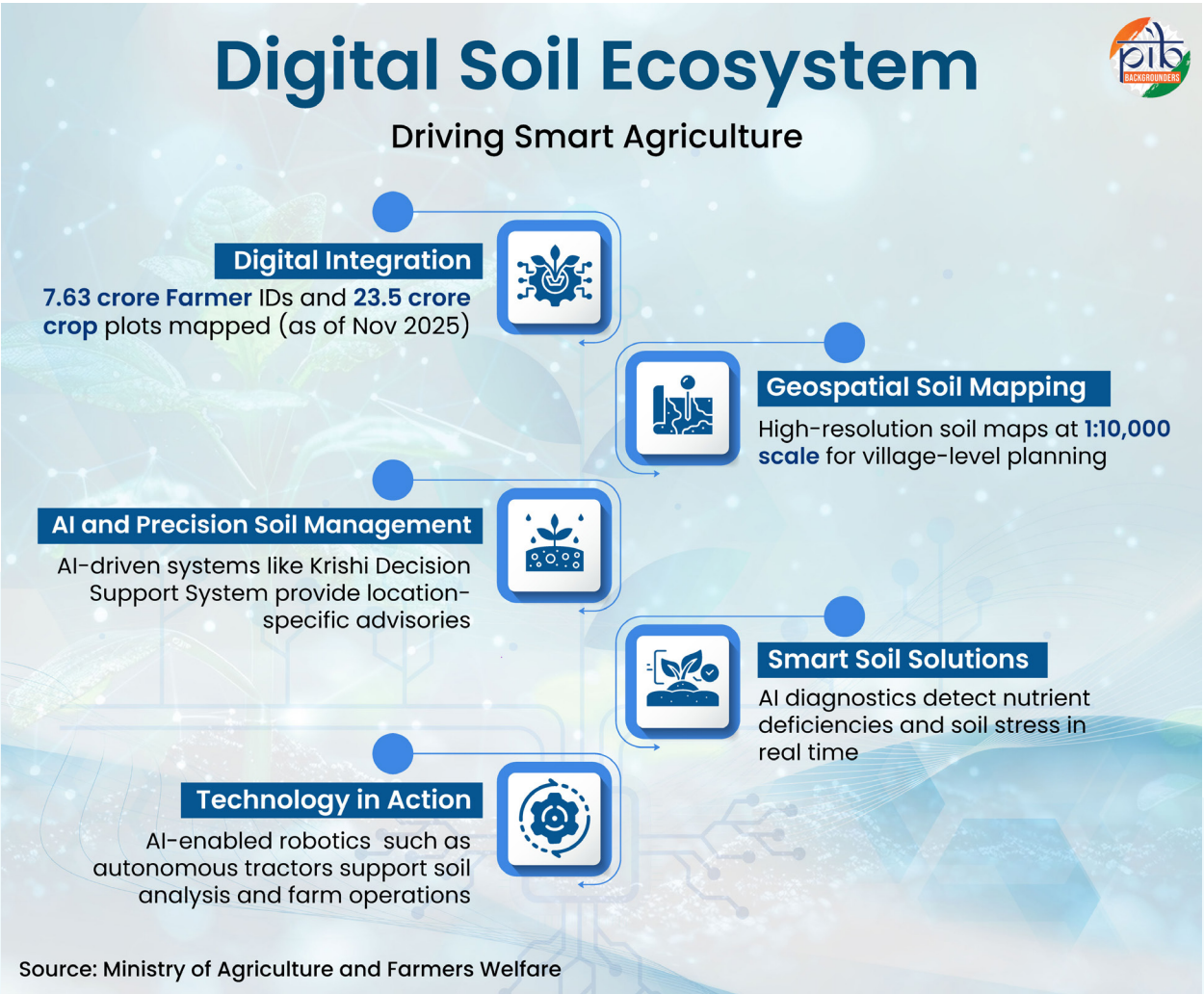
- **AI-based soil diagnostics** use satellite imagery, remote sensing, and farm-level data to identify nutrient deficiencies. They also detect soil stress and support timely corrective action.
- **AI-enabled precision farming** supports site-specific application of water and fertilisers based on local soil conditions. This improves

resource efficiency, reduces input costs, and minimises environmental impacts.

- **AI-driven advisory systems** help farmers make decisions on crop selection, sowing time, and nutrient management.
- **Advances in agri-robotics** are promoting operations such as analysis, planting, and field management. Technologies, including autonomous tractors, use

GPS, cameras, and AI for greater precision. Institutions such as ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute are also developing robotic systems for sampling and crop monitoring.

These advancements are enhancing precision, improving productivity, and strengthening the foundation for sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture in India.



Unlocking the Potential Beneath Our Feet

Soil remains one of India's most valuable natural resources, sustaining agriculture, livelihoods, and food security. Scientific assessment, sustainable farming practices, and improved nutrient management are strengthening its long-term health. Through initiatives such as the Soil Health Card Scheme, NMSA, NMNF, and Green India Mission, the country is promoting scientific and sustainable soil management. Efforts to improve soil health have encouraged balanced nutrient use, enhanced resource efficiency, carbon storage, and supported climate-resilient farming. At the same time, geospatial mapping, artificial intelligence, and digital agriculture platforms are enabling more precise and data-driven farm decisions. As awareness grows through efforts such as the Khet Bachao Abhiyan, India is steadily unlocking the true potential of soil as a critical national resource.

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02

India–UK CETA Comes into Effect

Strengthening Bilateral Trade and Investment

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The India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) marks a major milestone in the economic partnership between the two countries. It seeks to deepen trade and investment through improved market access, simplified trade procedures, enhanced services commitments, and greater professional mobility. CETA further creates new opportunities across agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing, services, and other key sectors by reducing trade barriers and improving export competitiveness. At the same time, it safeguards India's sensitive sectors through calibrated market access and phased tariff liberalisation. The agreement promotes digital trade, innovation, sustainable development, and stronger people-to-people linkages. By strengthening bilateral cooperation across multiple areas, the agreement lays the foundation for a more inclusive, future-oriented economic partnership.

India-UK CETA: A Landmark Trade Agreement

The India-UK (United Kingdom) Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is a modern, comprehensive and landmark trade agreement. It seeks to deepen economic integration between India and the UK through **enhanced market access, trade liberalisation and tariff concessions**. India will benefit from one of the most ambitious services commitments ever offered by the UK under a Free Trade Agreement . By granting **zero-duty**

access on nearly 99% of India's exports, covering almost 100% of the trade value, the CETA is expected to strengthen India's export competitiveness. The agreement is also expected to **expand bilateral trade, attract investment and create new opportunities for businesses**.

Beyond its economic and commercial significance, the CETA has been designed as an **inclusive and future-oriented agreement**. It seeks to ensure the benefits of trade reach every section of the society. More than a trade agreement, the CETA lays the foundation for a resilient, innovation- driven and people-centric economic partnership.



India-UK Bilateral Trade

India and the UK share a strong and expanding economic partnership. In 2025, India recorded a GDP of **USD 3.96 trillion**, while the UK economy stood at **USD 3.84 trillion**, reflecting the significance of both economies in global trade.

Merchandise trade between the two countries reached **USD 25.12 billion** in **2025- 26**, with India's exports to UK valued at **USD 13.44 billion** and imports at **USD 11.68 billion**, resulting in a trade surplus of **USD 1.76 billion**.

Services trade has been equally robust, with total bilateral services trade

touching **USD 35.44 billion** in 2024. India exported services worth **USD 21.66 billion** to the UK and imported **USD 13.78 billion**, generating a services trade surplus of **USD 7.88 billion**.

How CETA Benefits Key Stakeholders

The CETA has been designed to deliver broad-based benefits across various sectors of the economy. It also ensures that the gains from trade are widely shared.

- **Indian farmers and fisherfolk** are expected to benefit from improved access to the UK market through tariff elimination. This is likely to create new export opportunities and strengthen incomes.
- The agreement recognises the importance of **sustainable livelihoods** for forest- dependent communities. It encourages responsible resource management and environmental cooperation.
- **Labour-intensive sectors** such as textiles, leather, footwear, gems and jewellery, handicrafts, food processing, auto components, plastics, and organic chemicals are poised to witness higher exports. This is likely to boost employment generation.
- The agreement places strong emphasis on **inclusive and**

future-ready growth. It expands opportunities for **women, youth, MSMEs, businesses, and professionals**. Dedicated provisions promote greater participation of **women and under-represented groups** in trade, innovation, and entrepreneurship. It also reinforces commitments to internationally recognised labour rights, gender equality, and fair working conditions.

- Improved access to the UK services market, mobility provisions, and recognition of professional qualifications create new opportunities. These opportunities benefit **skilled Indian professionals and young talent**.
- **Small and Medium Enterprises** stand to gain from simplified customs procedures, paperless trade, and digital systems. These measures reduce compliance costs and improve market access. Indian MSMEs will also benefit from **duty-free access to 99% of Indian exports** entering the UK. It includes textiles, leather, jewellery, footwear, and food products- saving 4- 16% in tariffs.
- **Businesses** benefit from streamlined trade facilitation measures, digital cooperation, an stronger integration into global value chains. This enhances ease of doing business and supports sustained economic growth. The agreement further promotes digital trade facilitation and electronic

certification. It leverages established mechanisms such as the Single Window and Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) frameworks.

From Vision to Reality: The India-UK CETA Journey

The India-UK Trade Agreement is the culmination of years of sustained



engagement, negotiations, and strategic cooperation between the two countries.

Beyond Trade: India-UK Strategic Partnership

India and the UK share a strong and multifaceted partnership built on trade, investment, people-to-people ties, and strategic cooperation.

Investment Partnership

The UK is India's **6th largest inward investor**. It has made cumulative equity investments of **USD 35 billion** until September 2024. India's outward investment in the UK stood at **USD 19 billion** until March 2024.

As of July 2025, there are 971 Indian companies operating in the UK that employ over **1 lakh people**. Moreover, there are **667 British companies** operating in India, with over **5 lakh people**.

Mobility and Professional Exchange

India and the UK signed the **Migration and Mobility Partnership (MMP) Agreement** on **4 May 2021**. The agreement aims to facilitate faster movement of working professionals which is an important pillar of the India-UK economic partnership.

In **November 2022**, the **Young**

Professional Scheme between India and the UK was announced, made on the sidelines of the **G20 Bali Summit**. Under the scheme, **3,000 visas** are issued every year. Graduates aged **18–30 years** receive a **two-year visa**. The scheme allows them to live and work in each other's country.

Indian Diaspora in the UK

The UK is home to a large Indian diaspora of **1.864 million** people, according to the **2021 Census**. This accounts for **2.6%** of the UK's population which was estimated at **68 million** in **2022**. The census also recorded **369,000 Indian passport holders** living in the UK. The Indian diaspora has high rates of employment and professional qualifications. It has made valuable contributions to academia, literature, arts, medicine, science, sports, industry, business, and politics. According to **Grant Thornton's** and **FICCI's March 2022** report '**India in the UK: The diaspora effect**', over **65,000 companies** are owned by the Indian diaspora.

Safeguarding National Interests While Expanding Market Access

The India-UK CETA balances trade liberalisation with the protection of India's strategic sectors, domestic industries,

and long-term development priorities.

India has offered tariff concessions on 89.5% of its tariff lines, covering 91% of the UK's exports. **24.5% of the UK's export value will receive immediate duty-free access**, with concessions on other products to be implemented gradually.

Sensitive sectors which include agriculture and strategically important industries have been protected through exclusions or phased tariff reductions.

- Products under agriculture include dairy, cereals and millets, pulses, apples, edible oils, oats, and vegetables.
- CETA also protects high-value products such as gold, jewellery, lab-grown diamonds, certain essential oils, critical energy fuels, marine vessels, worn clothing, critical polymers, their monofilaments, smartphones, and optical fibres.
- Strategically important products have been considered carefully. These include sectors where domestic capacity is being developed under Make in India and the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme. Tariff concessions are phased over 5, 7, or 10 years through gradual tariff reductions.
- Further, India has gradually and selectively opened its market for alcoholic beverages.

- For automobiles, India has adopted a calibrated, phased, and development-oriented quota-based liberalisation strategy. At the same time, it continues to protect sensitive segments of India's automotive industry.
- Quota-based, phased market opening with an annual quota of **37,000 passenger vehicle CBUs** has been provided at preferential tariffs. This balances enhanced market access with domestic industry priorities.
- Sensitive segments including **small and mid-segment ICE vehicles and affordable EVs** remain protected. **EV** access has been cautiously regulated, with concessions commencing only from Year 6, allowing Indian manufacturers to strengthen scale, technology, and competitiveness.
- Greater concessions are offered to **large-engine ICE vehicles** (above **3000 cc petrol / 2500 cc diesel**), with in-quota tariffs dropping to **10% over five years** and out-of-quota tariffs reducing to **50% over 10 years**.

Sectoral Gains from the India-UK CETA

The India-UK CETA is poised to deliver significant gains across key sectors of

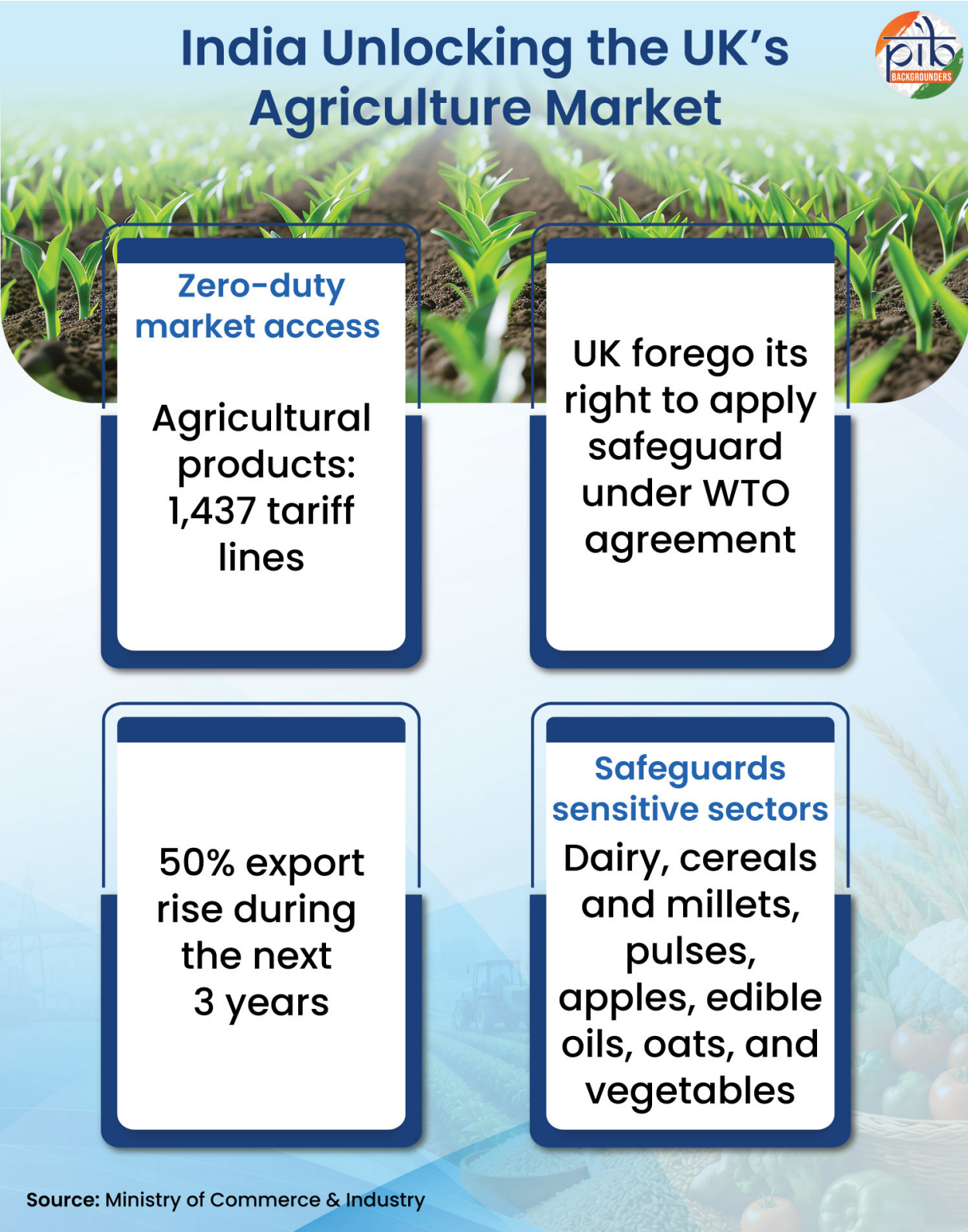
Textile Products

Sector Overview	The UK imports textiles and clothing worth USD 28.8 billion while India’s global textile exports stand at ~USD 37 billion India exports USD 1.79 billion to the UK and holds a 6.1% market share India is also the 4th largest supplier of textiles to the UK
Key Provisions under CETA	Zero-duty access on 1,143 tariff lines Elimination of tariff disadvantage vis-a -vis Bangladesh, Pakistan and Cambodia.
Key Beneficiaries	Ready-Made Garments (RMG), home textiles, carpets, handicrafts
Key Product Categories	Products that stand to gain include women’s cotton dresses, cotton shirts/blouses, terry cotton toilet and kitchen linen, artificial fibre dresses, knitted cotton dresses, men’s cotton formal shirts, cotton T-shirts and vests, mattresses, cushions and bedding products
Opportunities under CETA	Enhanced competitiveness of Indian textiles and apparel in the UK.

Agricultural Products

Sector Overview: India’s agricultural exports were valued at **USD 45.05 billion** in **2022–23**, rising from **USD 41.3 billion** in **2020–21**. India exports agricultural products worth more than **USD 57 billion** globally. UK’s global agricultural

and processed food imports are worth **USD 90 billion+**, wherein India’s exports to UK are only **USD 1.11 billion**. This highlights significant untapped export potential. The UK is also a high-value market for Indian products such as **tea, mangoes, grapes, spices, and marine products**.



the Indian economy through enhanced market access, tariff concessions, and improved trade facilitation.

Key Provisions under CETA: The agreement provides zero-duty market access for agricultural products across 1,437 tariff lines. These account for 14.8% of all tariff lines under the agreement. Further, the UK has agreed to forego its right to apply safeguards under WTO agreement on Agriculture.

Key Beneficiaries: The India-UK CETA will allow Indian farmers to fetch premium prices for agricultural products in the UK market. Farmers will also benefit from commitments to acknowledge traditional knowledge, especially in the patent process for genetic resources. In

addition, the CETA will facilitate inclusive and tech-agnostic innovation across diverse sectors, including agriculture sector. Further, the agreement is expected to benefit producers from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Maharashtra (grapes and onions), Gujarat (groundnut and cotton), Kerala (spices), and the North Eastern States (horticulture).

Growth Opportunities under CETA: Duty-free access across key agricultural categories is expected to increase agricultural exports by over 50% during the next 3 years. The agreement is expected to strengthen exports of fresh grapes, processed food preparations, bakery products, preserved vegetables, fruits, nuts, fresh and chilled vegetables,

Food Processing Sector

Sector Overview	India exports processed food worth USD 14.07 billion globally. The UK imports processed food worth USD 50.68 billion, but imports only USD 309.5 million from India. This highlights significant untapped export potential.
Key Provisions under CETA	The agreement provides zero-duty market access for the food processing sector across 985 tariff lines, accounting for 10.1% of all tariff lines under the agreement.
Key Beneficiaries	Processed food manufacturers, exporters

sauces, and prepared sauces. It also places Indian agricultural products on par with major EU exporters, including Germany and the Netherlands, which already enjoy zero-tariff access to the UK market.

Plantation Sector

Sector Overview: The UK is an important export market for India’s plantation products. It accounts for 1.7% of India’s coffee exports, 5.6% of tea exports, and 2.9% of spice exports.

Key Provisions under CETA: The

agreement provides duty-free market access for instant coffee, improving the competitiveness of Indian value-added coffee products in the UK market.

Key Beneficiaries: The agreement is expected to benefit **exporters, producers, and manufacturers**. Duty-free access will help Indian businesses compete more effectively with instant coffee suppliers from **Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands**.

Growth Opportunities under CETA: The

Leather & Footwear Products

Sector Overview	The UK imports textiles and clothing worth USD 28.8 billion while India’s global textile exports stand at ~USD 37 billion India exports USD 1.79 billion to the UK and holds a 6.1% market share India is also the 4th largest supplier of textiles to the UK
Key Provisions under CETA	Zero-duty access on 1,143 tariff lines Elimination of tariff disadvantage vis-a -vis Bangladesh, Pakistan and Cambodia.
Key Beneficiaries	Leather and footwear clusters across Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Delhi NCR

Key Product Categories	Leather footwear with rubber/plastic soles, leather shoes with rubber/plastic soles, textile sports/casual footwear, safety shoes with metal toe caps, handbags, and purses are expected to benefit
Opportunities under CETA	Conservative estimates project exports to the UK could exceed USD 900 million FTA strengthens India's competitiveness against Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia, Turkey, and Bangladesh in the UK. This is expected to encourage production and stimulate exports while supporting job creation in rural and semi-urban areas

agreement is expected to significantly boost exports of value-added coffee products, particularly Indian instant coffee, to the UK market.

Marine Products

Sector Overview: The UK imports marine products worth USD 4.9 billion annually, while India's exports account for only USD 126 million, highlighting significant untapped potential. With India's global marine exports of USD 7.8 billion, duty-free access can unlock new opportunities across India's marine value chain. The UK is a high-value market for Indian frozen seafood. Fish, shrimp, and cuttlefish were among the leading export categories. Demand is driven by a large Indian diaspora and growing consumption of processed seafood.

Key Provisions under CETA: The agreement eliminates UK tariffs on Indian marine products. This improves price realisation for Indian exporters and increases returns across the fisheries value chain. Earlier UK tariffs on Indian shrimp ranged from 4.2% to 8.5%. Tariff elimination is expected to accelerate exports and encourage higher-value processing and product diversification.

Key Beneficiaries: The agreement is expected to benefit seafood exporters, seafood processing units, coastal fisherfolk, and the fisheries sector. Higher export demand is expected to improve procurement prices and strengthen livelihoods. According to Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), seafood processing plants employ thousands of women workers. Greater access to the UK

market is expected to increase capacity utilisation. Coastal states such as Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil

Nadu, Odisha and West Bengal are also expected to benefit significantly through higher exports, employment generation, and coastal economic development.

Engineering Goods

Sector Overview	UK is India's 6th largest export market for engineering goods. Engineering exports to the UK grew by 11.7% in 2024–25 over the previous year. UK imports engineering goods worth USD 193.52 billion, but only USD 4.28 billion is sourced from India. This highlights significant export potential.
Key Provisions under CETA	Zero-duty market access across 1,659 tariff lines, which is 17% of all tariff lines under the agreement. Eliminates tariffs of up to 18%
Key Beneficiaries	Engineering manufacturers and exporters, particularly those producing electrical machinery, auto components, industrial equipment, construction machinery. Clusters across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Telangana
Opportunities under CETA	Enhanced competitiveness of Indian textiles and apparel in the UK.

Electronics and Software Products

Key Provisions under CETA: The agreement provides zero-duty market

access for eligible electronic products. It also secures ambitious market access commitments from the UK for software and IT-enabled services.

Opportunities under CETA: The agreement is expected to accelerate exports of smartphones, optical fibre cables, and inverters, strengthening India’s presence in the UK market. It is also expected to unlock new markets for software and IT-enabled services, drive job creation, and enhance export potential. Exports from Indian software firms are projected to grow by 15–20% annually.

Pharmaceuticals Products

Sector Overview	UK imports pharmaceuticals worth nearly USD 30 billion, but imports less than USD 1 billion from India.
Key Provisions under CETA	Zero-duty market access for the pharmaceutical sector across 56 tariff lines, accounting for 0.6% of total. Eliminates duties on a wide range of medical devices, including surgical instruments, diagnostic equipment, ECG machines, and X-ray systems.
Key Beneficiaries	Indian med-tech companies and manufacturers
Opportunities under CETA	Expected to enhance the competitiveness of Indian generic medicines in the UK market. With the UK’s reduced reliance on Chinese imports after Brexit and COVID-19, Indian manufacturers are well positioned to emerge as a preferred and cost-effective supplier.

Chemicals Goods

Sector Overview: India exports chemicals and allied products worth USD 40 billion globally. The UK’s chemical market, valued at **USD 35.8 billion**, offers growth prospects for Indian exporters. However, India’s exports to the UK account for only USD 843 million. Current chemical exports to the UK stand at USD 570.32 million, representing about 2% of India’s global chemical exports. This indicates significant untapped potential in the UK market.

Key Provisions under CETA: The agreement provides **zero-duty market access** across 1,206 tariff lines. These account for 12.4% of all tariff lines. The covered products include **fertilisers, industrial chemicals, and petrochemicals**, reflecting the sector’s importance in bilateral trade. Chemical manufacturing hubs across **Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana stand to benefit**.

Plastics Products

Sector Overview	India is the 13th largest supplier of plastics to the UK.
Key Provisions under CETA	The agreement provides duty-free market access for plastic products- where India has proven manufacturing strength.
Opportunities under CETA	Lower landed costs will enhance the competitiveness of Indian plastic products. Duty-free access will boost exports of films, sheets, pipes, packaging, tableware, and kitchenware, enabling India to compete more effectively with major global suppliers such as Germany, China etc.

Sports Goods and Toys

Key Provisions under CETA: The

agreement eliminates UK import duties on eligible products. It also encourages compliance with UK and EU standards,

strengthening buyer confidence and promoting greater business collaboration.

Growth Opportunities under CETA: Exports of soccer balls, cricket equipment, rugby balls, and non-electronic toys are expected to grow.

The sector is projected to grow by 15%, with exports targeted to reach USD 186.97 million by 2030. Duty-free access is expected to improve the price competitiveness compared to suppliers from China and Vietnam, which do not have similar trade agreements with the UK.

Gems & Jewellery Goods

Sector Overview	India's gems and jewellery exports to the UK are valued at USD 1.03 billion. The UK imports approximately USD 4 billion worth of jewellery annually, indicating significant growth potential for Indian exporters.
Key Provisions under CETA	Tariff relaxations for gems and jewellery exports
Key Beneficiaries	Manufacturers and traditional craftsmen Major gems and jewellery clusters in Surat, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Jaipur, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Thrissur are expected to gain significantly
Opportunities under CETA	Tariff relaxations are projected to double India's gems and jewellery exports to the UK within the next 2–3 years. Higher exports are expected to generate employment in design, manufacturing, and artisan sectors.

Steel Sector

In March 2026, UK introduced **new steel measures on 188 tariff lines**, that came into effect from 1 July 2026. India's exports on these tariff lines were only ~14% (USD 137 million) of its total steel exports (out of USD 960 million). In order to protect the interest of Indian steel exporters, both countries engaged extensively to ease the effect of the measures. It **protects commercial interests, minimises market disruptions, and maintains a balanced and stable trading environment**.

Key Provisions under CETA: To mitigate potential trade impacts and maintain equilibrium in the deal, the UK has expanded tariff-free access across 3 critical product categories:

- Category 1 (non-alloy and other alloy hot-rolled sheets and strips):** The country-specific quota for India increased about 3x from 12,405 tonnes to 33,456 tonnes. The UK has reserved an exclusive 40% of

the quota under the Authorised Use Scheme (AUS) for India. It benefits Indian exporters and translates to ~9.45 lakh tonnes of dedicated trade volume.

- Category 28 (non-alloy wire):** 9 commodity codes from the scope of the measure have been removed, improving market access. This ensures that 95% of India's exports in this category remain completely free of restrictions.
- Expanded Residual Quotas:** India has secured expanded access in critical sub-categories. This includes Category 12B (non-alloy merchant bars and light sections) residual quota scaling up to 4,540 tonnes (from 468 tonnes) and Category 26 (other welded tubes) residual quota rising to 16,327 tonnes (from 10,809 tonnes).

Opportunities under CETA: India's total country-specific quota under the new framework is now elevated at 1,68,029 tonnes, complemented by the exclusive 9.45 lakh tonnes under the AUS.

Indian Oilseeds Products

Sector Overview	Reduced tariffs and streamlined procedures
Key Provisions under CETA	Indian Oilseed exporters

Opportunities under CETA	The UK market offers Indian oilseed exporters an opportunity to expand their consumer base, strengthen market presence, and enhance export competitiveness.
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Services: Expanding Market Access and Professional Mobility

Sector Overview

The services sector is a key pillar of the India-UK economic partnership. India records a services trade surplus of around USD 7.9 billion with the UK. Services exports stand at USD 21.6 billion, compared to imports of USD 13.7 billion.

Key Provisions under CETA

India has secured wide-ranging

commitments from the UK, covering all 12 major service sectors and 137 sub-sectors, which represents over 99 per cent of India’s export interests. However, on the Indian side, commitments have been extended in 108 sub-sectors.

Mutual Recognition and Professional Mobility

Both countries have agreed to pursue **Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)** for professional qualifications within 12 months of the agreement entering into force. The proposed MRAs cover **nursing, accountancy, and architecture**. They are expected to reduce barriers for professionals and facilitate the exchange of best practices.

The UK has agreed not to impose numerical restrictions or an Economic Needs Test (ENT). The removal of the ENT is expected to reduce uncertainty and **facilitate smoother mobility for Indian professionals**. The agreement also reserves a dedicated annual quota of 1,800 positions for Contractual Service Suppliers, recognising **India’s cultural expertise**.

Further, the agreement provides an

assured framework for the temporary entry and stay of Indian professionals. This reduces employment costs and increases take-home earnings. Industry

Category	Stay Duration
Business Visitors (BV)	90 days in any 6-month period across all sectors.
Intra-Corporate Transferees (ICT)	3 years across all sectors, including partners and dependants. Graduate Trainees are also covered.
Investors	1 year.
Contractual Service Suppliers (CSS)	12 months in any 24-month period across 33 sub-sectors, including IT/ITeS, business, finance, hospitality, and transport.
Independent Professionals (IP)	12 months in any 24-month period across 16 sub-sectors, including IT/ITeS, business, professional services, telecommunications, and finance.

Double Contribution Convention

Previously, Indian professionals on short-term assignments in the UK, and their employers, contributed nearly 23% of salaries to the UK’s National Insurance system. They were not eligible to receive any benefits in return.

Under the Double Contribution Convention (DCC), these **dual social security contributions are eliminated for assignments of up to 60 months**. The convention is expected to **benefit over 75,000 Indian professionals and around 900 Indian companies**.

estimates suggest current annual saving of **more than USD 600 million USD** on this account.

Digitally Delivered Services and Investment Opportunities

The agreement strengthens market access for digitally delivered services such as **IT, professional consultancy, education, training, and telecommunications**. This is expected to boost India’s IT and IT-enabled services sector, which already enjoys a trade surplus with the UK.

Global Opportunities for India's Young Talent

- Indian on contract to UK across 33 sub-sectors can operate in UK for 12 months in any 24-month period
- Independent professionals in UK across 16 sub-sectors can operate in UK for 12 months in any 24-month period
- No Economic Needs Test (ENT) for Indian professional going to UK
- Dual social security contributions are eliminated for assignments of up to 60 months
- Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) for professional qualifications in nursing, accountancy, and architecture

It also creates new opportunities for Indian companies to establish operations in the UK. These opportunities span **management consultancy, education, and environmental services.**

Key Beneficiaries

- **Businessmen and startup ecosystem:** The service commitments giving certainty to Indian businesses planning to invest in the UK. The agreement reduces compliance hurdles, helping Indian start-ups reach new customers, especially in digital services
- **IT professionals:** Mobility-related commitments will have a significant impact, making it easier for Indian IT professionals to work in the UK. These changes will allow seamless and cost-effective talent movement.
- **Global Capability Centres (GCCs):** This agreement could shift UK companies' approach to India-from a low-cost back-office destination to a strategic partner for research and development, analytics, cybersecurity, and emerging technologies. It will also support the growth of GCCs.
- **Health & Education:** Indian hospitals can work with UK counterparts to deliver better healthcare and adopt advanced medical technologies. UK educational institutions will be able to establish campuses in India,

while Indian institutions can set up operations in the UK and expand in areas such as EdTech.

- **Indian financial firms:** The firms will gain better access to the UK, improving their ability to serve the Indian diaspora and businesses there. Non-discrimination rules guarantee fair treatment for Indian firms. The agreement is also expected to support the growth of electronic payments, fintech, and other digital financial solutions, strengthening overall market integration.
- **Government Procurement:** Indian suppliers gain access to the UK's government procurement market worth GBP 90 billion (USD 122 billion), while the UK receives reciprocal access to India's USD 114 billion procurement market. The agreement ensures fair treatment for Indian suppliers, and opens opportunities in sectors such as IT, construction, financial services, insurance, and select educational institutions.

Opportunities under CETA

The agreement is expected to accelerate growth in IT and business services. It creates opportunities for Indian firms to expand their share in UK's USD 200 billion services import market, building on India's current exports of ~USD 14 billion.

Towards a Stronger India-UK Economic Partnership

The India-UK CETA marks a new chapter in the bilateral economic relationship. It combines greater market access with opportunities for trade, investment, innovation, and professional mobility. **The agreement is expected to strengthen India's global competitiveness while supporting inclusive and sustainable growth. The agreement lays the foundation for a resilient and future ready India-UK partnership.**

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03

India's First Hydrogen-Powered Train:

Advancing Green Rail Mobility

Published on: July 16, 2026

The Hydrogen Rail Transition

Indian Railways is entering a new era of clean and sustainable transportation. Hydrogen fuel cell technology has emerged globally as a promising alternative to fossil fuel-based traction systems. India's first indigenous hydrogen-powered train marks an important step in adopting this next-generation technology. It is a locomotive that generates its own electricity onboard using hydrogen. With the inauguration on 17 July 2026, the hydrogen fuel cell-powered train is set to begin operations. It will run on the Jind-Sonipat section of the Northern Railway. The project combines advanced propulsion technology with dedicated hydrogen storage, refuelling and operational infrastructure. It will demonstrate the feasibility of clean rail transportation in India. Developed as a pilot initiative, the project reflects Indian Railways' commitment to innovation.



It also advances energy efficiency and environmentally responsible transportation.

With this, India joins a select group of countries exploring hydrogen-powered rail transportation. These include Germany, Japan, China and the United States. As the technology remains at a nascent stage, the project will provide valuable operational experience. This will support future applications of hydrogen-powered mobility in the railway sector.

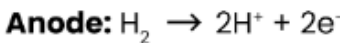
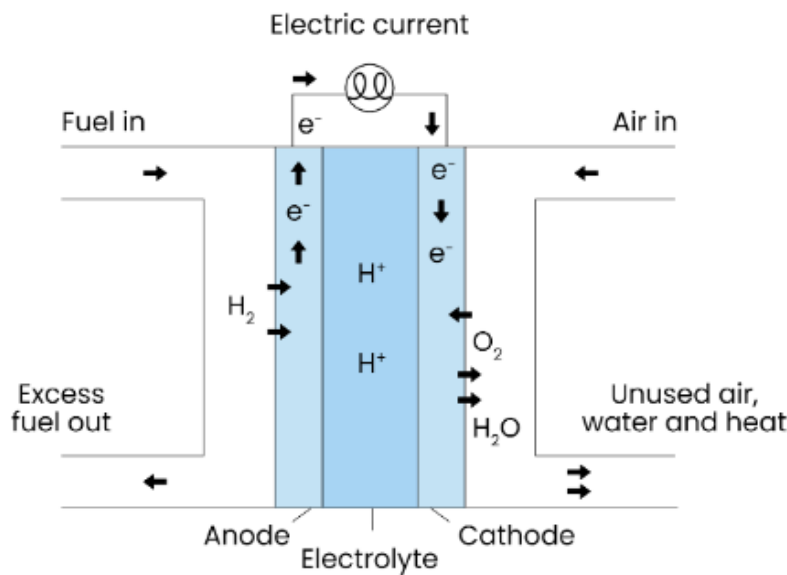
Inside India's First Hydrogen Train

The hydrogen train project has been developed in accordance with design approval and technical specifications prepared by the Research, Design & Standards Organisation (RDSO). Designed and developed entirely in India, the project demonstrates the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

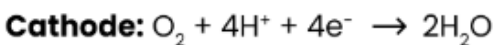
Key Features of the Hydrogen Powered Train on the Jind- Sonipat Section

- Capacity of Around **2,600** Passengers.
- Developed from the **design stage** through **prototype manufacturing**.
- It will connect Jind Junction, Gohana Junction and Sonipat while serving intermediate stations.
- Proposed halts include Jind City, Pandu Pindara Junction, Lalit Khera
- **10-car** hydrogen fuel cell-based trainset.
- Powered by a **1200 kW** hydrogen fuel cell propulsion system.
- Approved to operate at a maximum speed of **75 kmph** with a design speed of **110 kmph**.

Proton-Exchange Membrane Fuel Cell



Membrane: Conducts protons (H^+), blocks electrons



Source: Ministry of Railways

Halt, Bhambhewa, Isapur Kheri Halt, Butane Halt, Khandrai Halt, Rabrah Halt, Lath Halt, Mohana, Barwasni Halt and Sonipat New.

Technology Behind the Train

Hydrogen fuel cell technology produces electricity through a chemical reaction using hydrogen. The primary energy source is a **Proton Exchange Membrane Fuel Cell (PEMFC)**. This is a fuel cell that generates electricity by reacting hydrogen and oxygen across a proton-conducting Perfluorosulfonic Acid (PFSA) polymer membrane. The process produces only water vapour and heat as byproducts. Hydrogen is a high-energy fuel, 120 MJ/Kg (megajoules per kilogram) in comparison to diesel, which is 43 MJ/Kg. It is low maintenance with a manageable carbon footprint. This makes hydrogen the cleanest propulsion technology currently available for rail transport. To support this, Indian Railways has established dedicated infrastructure.

Hydrogen Infrastructure

The country's largest railway hydrogen storage and refuelling facility has been established at Jind, Haryana. The indigenous facility stores nearly 3,000

kg of hydrogen at a time. It will support hydrogen-powered train operations. The Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) has granted the required licence. The licence covers storage and dispensing of compressed hydrogen gas at the site. The hydrogen ecosystem has been designed in accordance with internationally accepted standards. This includes NFPA-2 (National Fire Protection Association) and ISO (International Organisation for Standardisation) 19880 Series. The entire system underwent an independent third-party safety assessment. It was done by TÜV SÜD, Germany, one of the world's leading technical inspection and certification agencies.

The train consists of two Hydrogen Driving Power Cars (DPCs) and eight Trailer Coaches (TCs). Each DPC houses fuel cells, lithium iron phosphate (LFP) batteries and hydrogen storage cylinders. To ensure reliable operations, the facility has been equipped with:

- A hydrogen compression system for refuelling operations.
- Technical support and critical spares for reliable functioning.
- A standby compressor to ensure uninterrupted refuelling.
- The integrated infrastructure supports safe and efficient hydrogen-powered rail operations.

Hydrogen Facility at Jind

Hydrogen Storage



View of Hydrogen Facility



H2 Compressor



Dispenser

Ensuring Safe Operations

Indian Railways has established a comprehensive operational and safety framework to support the hydrogen train operations. Multiple independent safety systems continuously monitor, verify and protect every stage of hydrogen storage, transfer and utilisation.

Operational Preparedness

- Standard operating procedures, regular audits and prescribed safety provisions are in place.

- The maintenance facility at Shakurbasti in Delhi has been prepared for hydrogen train operations.
- Trained and certified personnel will manage critical operations.
- Technical staff will accompany the train during the initial phase.
- The hydrogen refuelling system will remain under 24x7 monitoring.

Safety Measures

- Hydrogen leak detectors have been installed at the production, storage and dispensing facilities.

- Flame detectors have also been installed for continuous monitoring.
- Safety sensors will undergo regular inspection and cleaning.
- Non-stop ventilation keeps air moving through the train at all times.
- If anything unusual is detected, like heat, flame or smoke, the system can automatically cut off the hydrogen supply on its own.
- The Loco Pilot's cabin has been designed with a special mode that allows the train to be moved to safety in an emergency.
- A screen shows the real health of the whole system to the Loco Pilot at all times.
- Inspection and maintenance schedules have been prescribed to ensure safe operations.

Towards Sustainable Rail Mobility

The hydrogen train represents more than the introduction of a new trainset. It establishes the systems, infrastructure and institutional capacity needed for future hydrogen-powered rail operations.

The project helps validate technology, operating procedures and maintenance practices. It also strengthens the technical capabilities required to support hydrogen-powered mobility at scale. It supports the National Green Hydrogen Mission and net-zero carbon emission goals. With the continued modernisation of Indian Railways, the initiative lays the foundation for wider adoption. The project represents an important step towards building a more resilient transport system.

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PIB Research



04

India Leads the Wilderness in Tiger Conservation

Protecting Tigers, Preserving Ecosystems

Published on: July 28, 2026



India has emerged as a global leader in tiger conservation through science based policies and strong institutional support. The country is now home to nearly 70% of the world's wild tigers. Technology driven monitoring, effective governance and community participation have strengthened conservation outcomes. India is also advancing global cooperation to secure the future of tigers and their habitats.

Thriving Tigers, Resilient Ecosystems

International Tiger Day, observed every year on **29 July**, highlights the global importance of tiger conservation. For India, it reaffirms the Government's long-standing commitment to science-based conservation and sustainable development. The day also showcases India's remarkable conservation achievements. Today, India is home to the **world's largest wild tiger population**, accounting for nearly **70% of all wild tigers globally**. This success reflects decades of sustained policy support, scientific management and community participation, positioning India as a global leader in tiger conservation.

This achievement is rooted in India's deep cultural and ecological connection with the tiger. For centuries, ancient coins, royal seals and temple carvings have portrayed the tiger as a symbol of strength and sovereignty. Recognising this enduring legacy, the Government declared the **Royal Bengal Tiger** as



the National Animal in **1972**. Today, the tiger continues to represent India's rich biodiversity, ecological wealth and shared natural heritage across diverse landscapes.

Beyond its cultural significance, the tiger plays a vital ecological role. As an apex predator and umbrella species, it helps maintain healthy forest ecosystems. Conserving tiger habitats protects forests, rivers and countless other species. These forests regulate water, conserve soil, support pollination and moderate local climates. They also reduce disaster risks and provide

ecosystem services that sustain rural livelihoods and urban economies. By protecting tigers and their habitats, the Government is strengthening

biodiversity conservation, enhancing ecological security and advancing the vision of **Viksit Bharat** through sustainable development.

Did you know?



International Tiger Day traces its origins to the **Saint Petersburg Tiger Summit held in November 2010**. Leaders from 13 tiger-range countries, including India, adopted the ambitious Tx2 goal to double the global wild tiger population by 2022. Today, it serves as a global platform to review conservation progress, strengthen international cooperation and raise awareness. In 2010, only about 3,200 wild tigers were estimated to remain globally. By 2022, improved conservation and scientific monitoring increased the estimate to around 4,500, with a plausible range of 3,700–5,600 tigers. According to recent global estimates, approximately 5,711 wild tigers remain worldwide, representing an increase of around 78% since 2010.

Rise in the Tiger Numbers: From Crisis to Recovery

India's tiger conservation efforts have emerged as a global model of wildlife recovery. The country has more than doubled its scientifically assessed tiger population since 2006. The **All India Tiger Estimation (2022)** places India's tiger population at **3,682**. The **2022 All India Tiger Estimation** covered **20 States** and surveyed over **6.41 lakh kilometres** on foot. It is among the



world's largest and most comprehensive wildlife assessments. This remarkable recovery reflects sustained policy support, science-based conservation and strong institutional governance. Long-term habitat protection, rigorous monitoring and coordinated implementation continue to strengthen tiger conservation across India.

Robust Governance
Architecture for Tiger
Conservation

India's policy framework for tiger conservation combines long term vision with sustained institutional support at national and state levels. Project Tiger, the National Tiger Conservation

Authority (NTCA) and Tiger Conservation Plans together provide a robust, science based governance architecture for tiger habitats.

Project Tiger

Project Tiger is a flagship Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Government of India. It is implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). The scheme aims to secure viable tiger populations in their natural habitats. It provides financial and technical assistance to tiger range States for conservation efforts. The programme combines habitat protection, scientific management and regular field based monitoring. This approach has strengthened conservation measures over time.



According to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) Report (2023), Project Tiger has established a network of 58 tiger reserves across 18 tiger-range States. These reserves cover around 84,500 square kilometres,

which is about 2.56% of India's geographical area. Today, Project Tiger remains a cornerstone of India's wildlife conservation efforts and reflects the Government's long term commitment to protecting tigers and their habitats.

Did you know?

 **Section 38 V (3)** of the Wildlife Protection Act, (WPA), 1972 requires every State Government to prepare a Tiger Conservation Plan for each tiger reserve. Such plans must ensure protection of tiger reserves and provide habitat inputs to maintain viable populations of tigers, co predators and prey animals.

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)



NTCA oversees the implementation of Project Tiger and related conservation initiatives. NTCA provides scientific, technical and financial guidance to tiger range States. It approves

Tiger Conservation Plans and issues standard operating procedures for reserve management. The Authority also monitors the management of tiger reserves through periodic assessments. Its science based approach improve habitat protection, improves conservation outcomes and supports the long term survival of wild tigers across India.

Did you know?

NTCA is chaired by the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change. It also includes Members of Parliament, senior government officials and experts. The Authority guides tiger conservation, oversees tiger reserves and ensures effective implementation of Project Tiger across the country.

Tiger Task Force

The Government of India constituted the Tiger Task Force to re-examine conservation policies and recommend reforms. The Tiger Task Force reviewed India's tiger conservation framework and recommended key policy reforms. It brought together administrative experts, ecologists and community representatives. The Task Force emphasised transparency, community participation and stronger institutional support for Project Tiger.

Its recommendations shaped a more robust conservation framework. They led to significant amendments to the **Wildlife (Protection) Act** in **2006**. The amendments established the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** and the **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)** as statutory bodies.

India's tiger conservation framework reflects a strong governance model built on institutions and cooperative federalism. This integrated approach is helping secure the future of tigers while advancing India's biodiversity.

Did you know?

India's tiger reserves follow a **landscape-based conservation approach**. Each reserve includes a **Core Area** (also known as Critical Tiger Habitat) and a Buffer Area. Core Areas receive the highest level of protection. Buffer Areas balance conservation with sustainable livelihoods. Also, **Wildlife corridors** connect tiger reserves, enabling safe movement and maintaining healthy tiger populations across landscapes.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Tigers in India

India has developed a robust, science-based system to monitor and evaluate its tiger population. The approach combines field surveys, camera traps, digital technologies and scientific

analysis. It generates reliable data on tiger populations, prey species and habitat quality. This information guides evidence-based conservation planning and adaptive management. Continuous monitoring strengthens habitat protection and enables informed management decisions across tiger landscapes.



All India Tiger Estimation (AITE): The World's Largest Biodiversity Survey

AITE is the world's largest biodiversity survey. Conducted every four years, it is led by the **NTCA** in collaboration with the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**. It estimates tiger populations,

co-predators, prey species and habitat quality across all tiger bearing States. The **2022 assessment** also included India's first nationwide survey of ungulates. The exercise highlighted the importance of healthy prey populations for sustaining viable tiger populations.

Did you know?



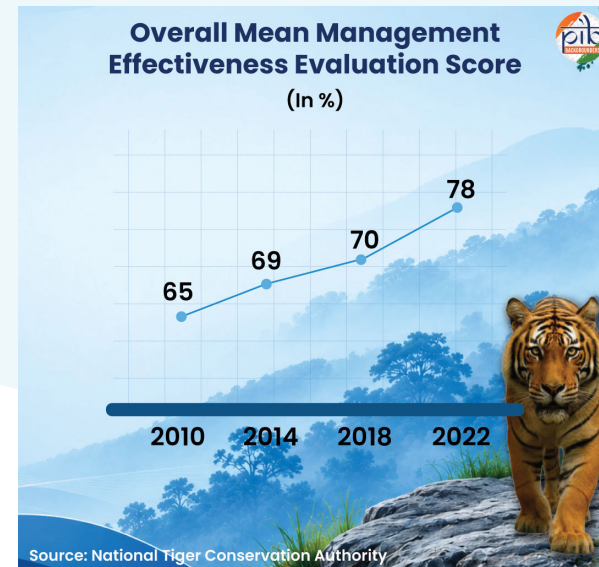
The **All India Tiger Estimation** is recognised as the world's largest biodiversity survey. The **NTCA's camera trap survey** also holds a **Guinness World Record** as the world's largest camera trap wildlife survey. Together, advanced technologies and scientific monitoring make India's tiger estimation among the most rigorous in the world.

Technology Driven Monitoring

India has integrated advanced digital technologies into every stage of tiger monitoring. The **Monitoring System for Tigers – Intensive Protection and Ecological Status (M-STrIPES)** uses GPS, GPRS and remote sensing technologies for field monitoring. GPS tagged photographs improve data accuracy and reduce human error. The platform integrates field observations into a central database for scientific analysis and informed decision making. Artificial intelligence further strengthens monitoring. The **Camera Trap Data Repository and Analysis Tool (CaTRAT)** automatically classify camera trap images by species. **ExtractCompare** identifies individual tigers using their unique stripe patterns. Collectively, these tools improve the accuracy and reliability of tiger population estimates.

Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE)

The MEE assesses how well tiger reserves are managed. The framework evaluates planning, protection, management processes and conservation outcomes. It helps identify management gaps and reinforce accountability. By **2022, 51 tiger reserves** had been evaluated under the framework. **Twelve reserves** received “Excellent” ratings, while the average management score reached **78%**. The findings guide policy decisions,



strengthen reserve management and support long-term conservation planning.

India's Global Leadership in Tiger Conservation

India is actively collaborating with countries across the world to strengthen tiger and wildlife conservation. Key partnerships include transboundary biodiversity conservation with **Nepal** and **Bhutan**. Collaboration with **Myanmar** focuses on combating timber trafficking and conserving tigers and other wildlife. India also cooperates with **Russia** on camera trap data management and through the **Indo-Russia Working Sub-Group on Tiger and Leopard Conservation**. Partnerships with Botswana, South Africa, Guatemala,

Cambodia, Kenya and Namibia strengthen wildlife conservation, management and sustainable biodiversity use. India has also established bilateral cooperation with China on tiger conservation. These partnerships reinforce India's commitment to global wildlife conservation through science, cooperation and shared action.

International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)



IBCA is a global coalition of **95 big cat range and partner countries**, scientific organisations and conservation partners.

The Alliance promotes cooperation for conserving **seven big cats**—tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, cheetah, jaguar and puma. The **Union Cabinet** approved its establishment on 12 March 2024, with its Secretariat headquartered in **India**. Building on India's globally recognised tiger conservation experience, the IBCA strengthens international collaboration to protect big cats and their habitats.

Global Tiger Forum (GTF)



GTF is the world's only intergovernmental organisation dedicated exclusively to tiger conservation. **Headquartered in New Delhi**, it brings together **13 tiger range countries**—

Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam. The Forum promotes a common approach to conserving tigers, their prey and habitats. It supports landscape-scale conservation, regional capacity building and technological innovation to strengthen tiger conservation across member countries. Through knowledge sharing and international cooperation, the GTF reinforces India's leadership in global tiger conservation.

Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme (ITHCP)

ITHCP is the **International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN)** flagship tiger conservation initiative. It is funded by the German Government through KfW Development Bank. The programme supports science-based conservation projects across priority tiger landscapes in Asia. It promotes habitat protection, landscape level conservation and international collaboration. **India** actively participates in ITHCP programmes, strengthening regional efforts to conserve tigers and their habitats.

India's international partnerships are strengthening collective action for tiger conservation across borders. By sharing knowledge, technology and best practices, India continues to advance global efforts to protect tigers and their habitats.

Did you know?

Conservation Assured Tiger Standards CA|TS is a global certification system that ensures effective management specifically of tiger conservation areas. Launched at the **1st Asian Parks Congress in Japan in 2013**. It sets benchmarks for protection, habitat management, community involvement, and wildlife monitoring. CA|TS supports efforts to create safe, sustainable environments for tigers and preserve global biodiversity. **CA|TS has accredited 23 Indian tiger reserves ensuring global best practices in conservation.**

Towards a Secure Future for Tigers

Tiger conservation remains a dynamic and evolving priority for the India. Looking ahead, India’s vision is to secure connected, climate resilient tiger landscapes that support both wildlife and people. Continued investment in data driven monitoring, technology-enabled protection and capacity building of frontline staff will support this vision. Cooperation with other tiger range countries and global partners will also help share knowledge and reinforce collective conservation gains. International Tiger Day offers a recurring opportunity to engage citizens, particularly youth, in this forward looking agenda. By combining strong policy direction with sustained implementation, India aims to keep its tiger conservation journey on a path of global leadership.

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PIB Research



05

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

India's Digital Health Backbone

Published on: July 6, 2026



The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission has built one of the world's largest digital health ecosystems, with over 104 crore health records linked to over 93 crore ABHA accounts. By eliminating paperwork and reducing waiting times, ABDM is seamlessly connecting patients to insurers, hospitals, and doctors on a single unified network.

Building a Digital Health Infrastructure



India is steadily progressing towards **Universal Health Coverage**, where everyone can access quality healthcare services without facing financial hardship.

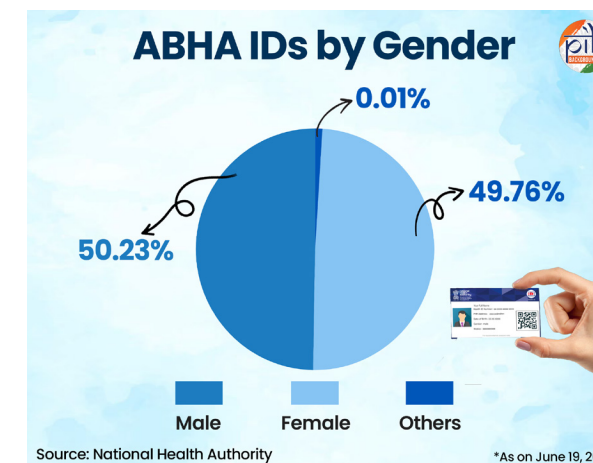
Achieving this goal in a country as vast and diverse as India requires a strong digital backbone. A **robust digital public infrastructure** is essential for making healthcare delivery more **seamless, efficient, and accessible**.

A digitised health ecosystem:

- Enables the secure **management of patient records**
- **Connects individuals with healthcare and insurance providers**
- **Enables seamless portability of health records, allowing citizens to securely access and share their health records at any ABDM-enabled healthcare facility across the country**
- **Generates anonymised health data.**

This data can be used to **improve healthcare planning and service delivery** and power India's emerging **artificial intelligence ecosystem**. Innovations in disease surveillance, diagnostics, and healthcare management is a possibility with such an infrastructure in place.

Recognising this, the Government of India launched the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)** in September



that **securely links individuals to the wider health system**. It helps patients **access to digital health services**. They can connect to insurers, healthcare facilities, doctors, and other services with all their medical history intact through this **one interoperable network**.

In a major milestone achieved in May 2026, **over 100 crore health records are now linked to more than 90**



2021 to develop an integrated, citizen-centric national digital health ecosystem.

Using an ABDM-enabled software, health facilities can create digital health records linked to the **Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA)**. Also, they can access the previous records of the patient digitally after taking the patient's consent and exchange digital health records through the patient's revocable, time-bound consent.

ABHA is a unique identifier like Aadhaar

crore ABHA accounts. This marks a significant progress in India's journey towards a connected digital public health ecosystem.

ABDM: A Complete Digital Health Ecosystem

Beyond the ABHA, ABDM is a full-fledged digital health ecosystem. It connects patients to records, links insurers to hospitals, and brings all healthcare

providers onto one single network.

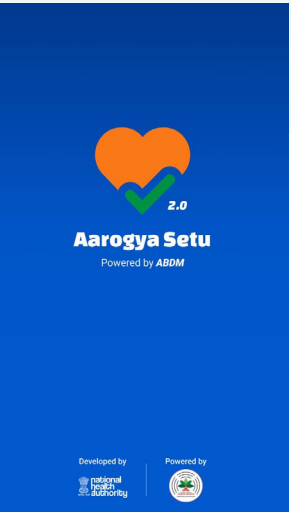
- **ABHA number:** A 14-digit unique health identifier that links all your health records across hospitals, labs, insurers, and national health programs with your consent.
- **Healthcare Professionals Registry:** A national registry of all healthcare professionals – from doctors to AYUSH practitioners – verified and digitally connected.
- **Health Facility Registry:** A national registry of health facilities – hospitals, clinics, labs, pharmacies – public and private, all in one place.
- **Unified Health Interface:** An open network for health services – like UPI for healthcare. Book appointments, consult doctors and discover services across any app.
- **Aarogya Setu 2.0:** It serves as a unified gateway to digital health services and a Personal Health Record (PHR), accelerating nationwide adoption of digital health.

Aarogya Setu 2.0

Originally developed as India's COVID-19 contact tracing application, **Aarogya Setu** has been transformed into a comprehensive citizen-facing digital health application under ABDM. It serves as a **unified gateway to digital health services** and a Personal Health Record

(PHR), accelerating nationwide adoption of digital health.

Aarogya Setu 2.0 was launched on June 29, 2026, by the Minister of Health & Family Welfare Jagat Prakash Nadda as a revamped, citizen-facing digital health application under ABDM.



Key Features

- Access to ABDM-enabled services, including ABHA creation, health record management, and Scan & Register for seamless digital registration.
- Smart Reports which are backed by Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to read digital documents
- View Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) wallet and private insurance details through NHCX for transparent coverage and claims information.
- Discover nearby healthcare facilities and view real-time blood unit availability via e-RaktKosh for timely access to critical care.
- Gain AI-driven health insights by combining uploaded records with ABDM-linked data for biomarker and wellness trend analysis.
- Ability to book both teleconsultations

and in-person appointments through UHI for connected, accessible care.

- The user will be able to monitor and manage their health seamlessly with integrated vitals, personalised reminders, goal tracking, and wearable-device syncing for steps, calories, heart rate, and glucose

levels.

- Access wellness content, including blogs, IEC materials, videos, and FAQs to stay informed and build health literacy.

ABDM: Cutting Waiting Times at Hospitals Through Online Appointment Registrations

The National Health Authority's Scan and Share service, launched in 2022 under ABDM has significantly streamlined outpatient registration by leveraging mobile technology and QR codes, as per a study conducted by the Indian Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR).

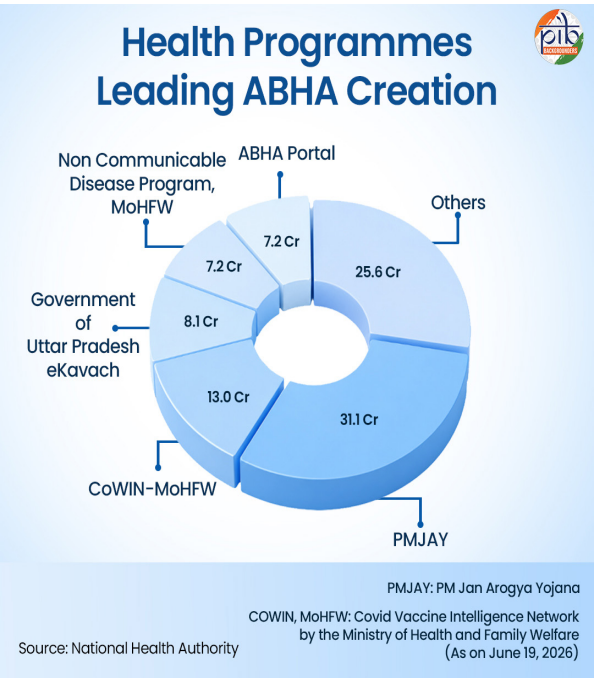
The service enables patients to scan a QR code at participating health facilities to generate a digital queue token, with demographic details securely retrieved from their Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) and integrated with the facility's Health Information System.

The IIHMR study found that Scan and Share reduced patient waiting times from approximately one hour to just 2 to 5 minutes. Over 23.21 crore ABHA-linked tokens were issued at healthcare facilities across the country (as on June 18, 2026).

Developed in collaboration with government agencies, healthcare providers, and patient advocacy groups, the service adheres to established data protection, security, and interoperability standards.

Connecting Healthcare Professionals & Facilities to ABDM

All healthcare facilities – public and private – can join the ABDM network. This includes hospitals, clinics, diagnostic laboratories and imaging centres, pharmacies, etc. Once connected to the system, patients can seamlessly link their health records across the system. Facilities are reimbursed for joining and can also get more exposure. Registration is simple and is available on the ABDM website.



Health Facility Registry:

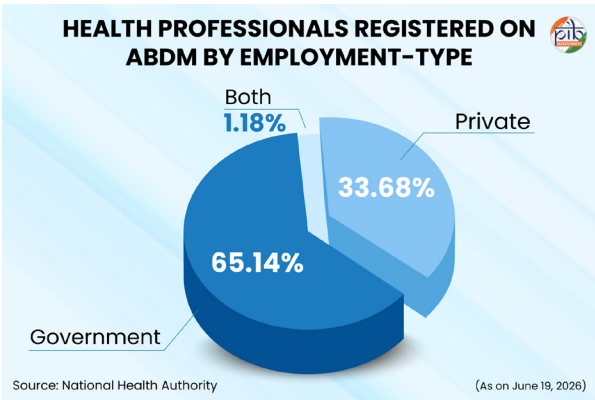
The **Health Facility Registry** is a repository of public and private health facilities connected to ABDM.

Once a health facility enrolls, patients can find it on the ABHA app. If they visit that facility for treatment, their health records are automatically linked and can be shared with the patient's consent. Insurance coverage is also connected if the facility uses the **National Health Claims Exchange (NHCX)**. This simplifies the entire process — from finding a provider and verifying identity to processing claims and managing queues.

Digital Health Incentive Scheme:

To encourage more facilities to join ABDM, the government runs the **Digital Health Incentive Scheme**. Health facilities are incentivised to join the ABDM ecosystem through:

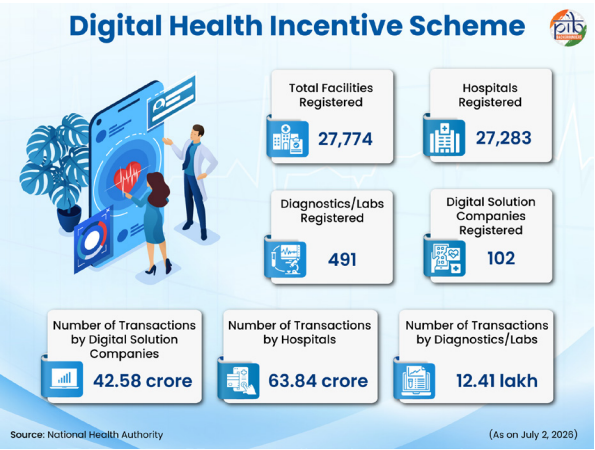
- Reimbursement of expenses incurred for digitisation to all participating healthcare facilities
- Seamless access to the patient's



full health records, which makes administrative work easier.

Hospitals and Digital Solutions Companies (DSCs) earn cash incentives for creating interoperable digital health records. Both public and private sector players are incentivised through DHIS.

Who Is Eligible?



- All health facilities such as clinics, nursing homes and hospital
- Laboratory/radiology diagnostics centres and pharmacies
- Entities providing **ABDM-enabled digital solutions** (digital solution companies).

Amount paid through the scheme to (as on June 18, 2026):

- Hospitals: Rs. 107+ crore
- Diagnostics/Labs/Pharmacies: Rs. 2.95 crore
- Digital Solution Companies: Rs. 26+ crore

eSushrut@clinic Hospital Management Information System:

While initiatives such as Dr. Sikka's pharmacy illustrate how individual healthcare facilities are adopting digital health solutions under ABDM, the Government has also introduced a dedicated solution to support the digital transformation of smaller clinics.

Launched in June, **eSushrut@Clinic** is a plug and play, lightweight Hospital Management Information System (HMIS) developed by the **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)**. The platform enables small

ABDM is Making Healthcare Delivery More Efficient

Dr. Praveen Sikka registered his Gurugram pharmacy on ABDM, which took about 2 hours. He notes that now patients can store and access all their health records in one place through the ABHA app. Dr. Sikka also benefits directly — through the DHIS incentive scheme, his pharmacy gets compensated for every health record linked to ABDM.

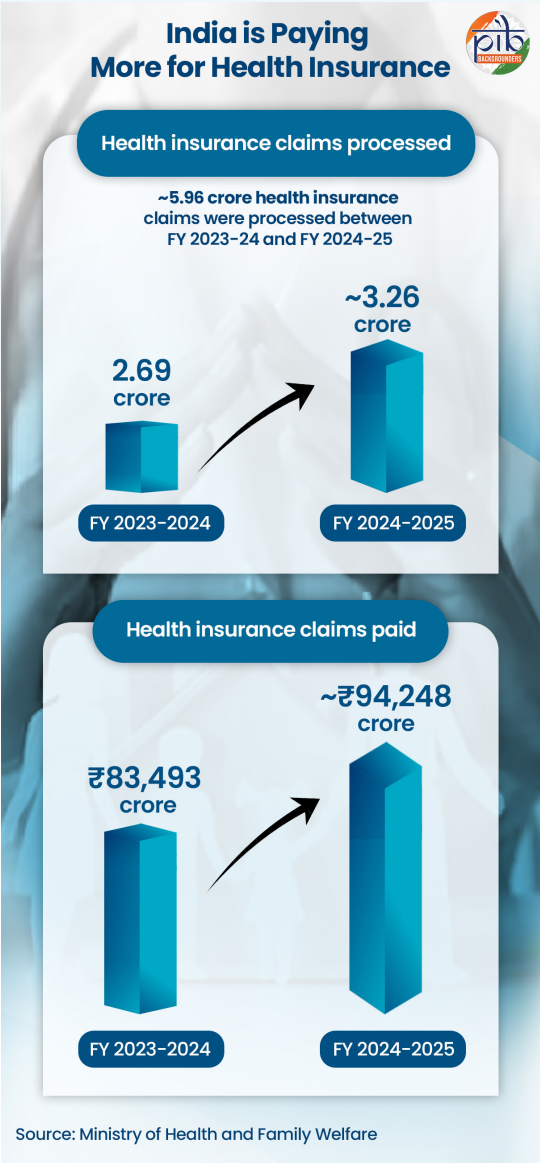
clinics to digitise patient records and streamline routine administrative functions in an affordable and standardised manner.

The system automates key operational processes, including patient registration, billing, and reporting. Access is granted only after verification of healthcare professionals and facilities through the **Healthcare Professionals Registry (HPR)** and the **Health Facility Registry (HFR)**, ensuring that only verified providers use the platform.

To date, **more than 2200 healthcare facilities have been onboarded**, generating **over 1633 health records**. While eSushrut@Clinic provides a standardised framework for digitising records at smaller healthcare facilities, the next critical step is ensuring that these digital records can seamlessly integrate with the broader health financing and insurance ecosystem.



ABHA does not just help patients store and share their health data — it also helps **streamline their health insurance claims processing**. And with rising health insurance claims in India, the National Health Claims Exchange (NHCX) can fill a gap for patients during the tedious processing period. It can also make the



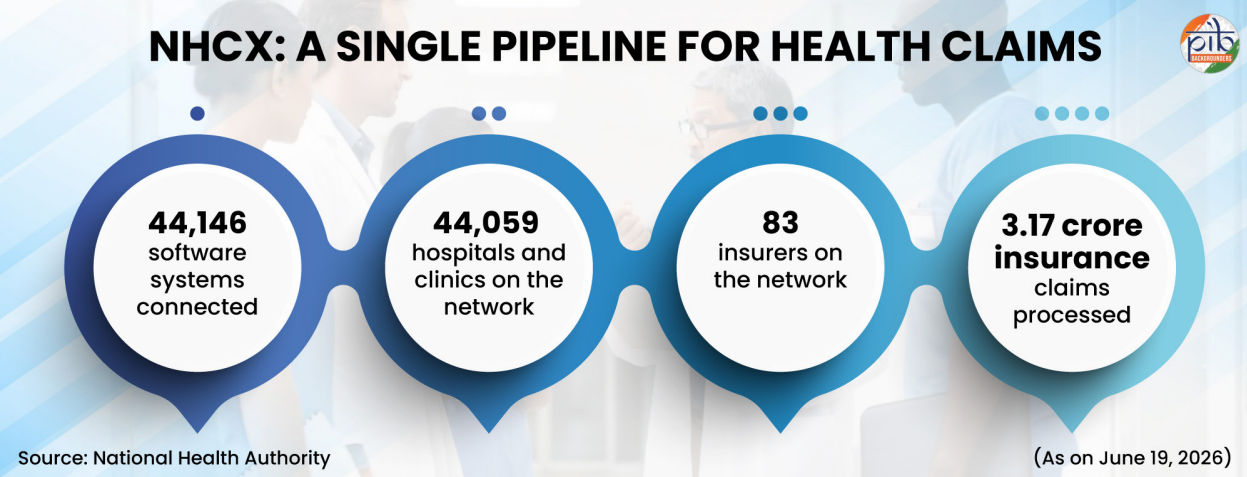
claims process more structured and fitting for patients of non-communicable diseases that need regular, continuous treatments.

The NHCX establishes is a digital highway for exchanging claims-related

information amongst payers, providers, beneficiaries, regulators and observers.

The system has many benefits:

- It speeds up decisions, reduces discharge times, and cuts hospital



- administrative costs.
- It leads to faster claims processing.
- Patients can see their benefits, medical history, and entitlements in one place.
- Providers can access a patient's full treatment history — with consent — reducing duplicate tests and improving clinical decisions.
- Insurers can make better decisions and design new products.
- Since patients can track every claim on one platform, it improves their financial security and planning, and health outcomes

Unified Health Interface

Traditionally, patients and healthcare providers could interact only if they were using the same digital platform. UHI removes this constraint by **enabling any**

patient using a UHI-enabled application to discover, connect with, and transact with any verified healthcare provider, regardless of the application used by the provider. Requests are routed through a common gateway operated by the National Health Authority (NHA), which authenticates patients using their ABHA credentials, while healthcare providers and facilities are verified through the HPR and HFR registries.

- The UHI is built on four principles:**
- Interoperability
 - Fair discoverability for providers of any size
 - Verification of only credentialed

- doctors and facilities
- Open protocols that any developer can build on

The UHI platform currently has five live services:

- Blood bank discovery
- PM Jan Arogya Yojana – which provides Rs. 5 lakh free public health

data generated across ABDM to power public health research and policy.

ABDM is Central for India's Public Health Data & AI Push

ABHA and the linked health records are fast emerging as a **goldmine for public**

Privacy-By-Design

When patients upload health records on ABDM, the data stays with whoever created it — the hospital, lab, or insurer. There is **no central government server storing all this data**. Records are only shared within the ABDM network when the patient consents.

Apps and platforms cannot simply connect to ABDM. Every new app must first be tested in a “sandbox” — a safe, simulated version of the real system. It must also **pass a security audit** before going live. This audit checks how the app handles and protects patient data.

- insurance to the poorer sections of society – hospital search
- Jan Aushadhi Kendra – centres where generic medicines are available for 50-90% cheaper prices than market prices – discovery
 - Ambulance booking
 - Doctor consultation

Beyond enabling these everyday transactions, UHI also feeds into a much larger ambition. That is the usage of the

health research and policy. Health data on ABDM is anonymised. This data also allows the government to track disease prevalence, monitor public health trends, and design more targeted health programmes.

The data is also central to integrating artificial intelligence into healthcare. In February 2026, the government launched **SAHI (Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare for India)**

and **BODH (Benchmarking Open Data Platform for Health AI)** at the India AI Impact Summit 2026

- SAHI provides structured guidance on ethics, accountability, safety, and collaboration, ensuring that AI deployment in healthcare remains transparent, inclusive, and people centric.
- BODH is a secure, federated ecosystem where developers can train AI models on-site without accessing raw patient data - returning only refined model weights to ensure total privacy.

Together, they represent India's commitment to building a trustworthy, inclusive, and globally competitive health AI ecosystem — one grounded in innovation, responsibility, and public trust.

Universal Health Coverage Through Digitisation

ABDM is one of the most ambitious and successful digital health programmes in the world. It is already delivering — **shorter waiting times, paperless records, faster claims, and better access** for millions of patients.

With **over 104 crore health records now linked with over 93 crore ABHA**, ABDM has marked another important milestone

towards **creating detailed and digital medical history accounts of patients over time**. The government aims to expand the ABDM network to cover all patients and health facilities across India, working towards fully digital health records for every citizen.

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PIB Research

06

White Gold: India's Cotton Story

From Seed to Shirt

Published on: July 20, 2026

Cotton occupies a unique position in India's agricultural and industrial economy. India is the only country cultivating all four recognised cotton species. It ranks first globally in acreage and second in production and consumption. Cotton production stood at **290.91 lakh bales** in 2025-26 (provisional). Domestic consumption reached **328 lakh bales** during the same period. The sector contributes nearly **19 percent** of global fibre production. Recent interventions focus on productivity, quality, market access and value addition. MSP operations continue to provide price support during market downturns. The Mission for Cotton Productivity aims to raise output to **498 lakh bales** by 2031. Technology demonstrations, digital procurement and traceability initiatives are strengthening competitiveness. These efforts are enhancing productivity, improving quality and reinforcing India's position in the global cotton economy.

The Thread That Connects Millions

Imagine fields stretching across India where tiny white blossoms slowly turn into soft clouds of fibre under the sun. From these fields begins a journey that threads through spinning mills, handlooms, and finally reaches wardrobes across the world. Cotton is not merely a crop. It is a thread that binds agriculture, industry, and trade into one continuous story.

Cotton is one of the most important commercial crops cultivated in India. It accounts for around **23 percent** of global fibre production. The crop supports the livelihoods of around **6 million** cotton farmers. It also sustains employment for

another **40-50 million** people engaged in related activities such as cotton processing and trade. Beyond clothing, cotton plays a vital role in earning foreign exchange through exports of fibre, yarn, fabrics and garments. Due to its economic importance in India, it is also termed as **"White-Gold"**.

India's cotton sector reflects both depth and dynamism. Its strength lies in biological diversity, extensive cultivation, and a robust textile ecosystem. Policy interventions, including MSP operations, the Mission for Cotton Productivity, and Kasturi Cotton Bharat, are reinforcing this foundation. Technology adoption, market reforms, and quality enhancement efforts are further shaping the sector's future trajectory.

From Swadeshi to Atmanirbhar Bharat

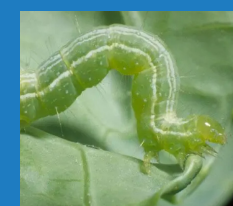
India's association with cotton stretches back thousands of years. The subcontinent was once a global centre for cotton textiles, trading its fabrics across Eastern and European markets. In ancient times, cotton cloth even functioned as a medium of exchange. This highlighted its economic value and widespread acceptance.

The modern cotton industry began taking shape in the 19th century with the establishment of textile mills in Kolkata, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad. The latter earned the title "Manchester of India". Expansion gathered pace in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Swadeshi movement promoted the establishment of Swadeshi Mills to contest against British goods. Global demand during the World Wars further boosted the domestic industry. By the mid-20th

century, the number of textile mills had risen steadily across the country. This resulted in a significant increase in cotton cloth production in the years leading up to Independence. This reflected the expanding scale and resilience of India's cotton industry.

The Many Dimensions of India's Cotton Sector

India is the only country that cultivates all four recognized cotton species. These include **G. Arboreum** and **G. Herbaceum**, commonly referred to as **Asian cotton**. The other species are **G. Barbadense**, known as **Egyptian cotton**, and **G. Hirsutum**, known as **American upland cotton**. Among these, **G. Hirsutum** accounts for nearly **90 percent** of hybrid cotton production in India. All Bt cotton hybrids currently cultivated in the country belong to this species.



Bt refers to **Bacillus thuringiensis**, a naturally occurring soil bacterium. **Bt cotton** is a genetically modified cotton crop that incorporates genes from this bacterium. These genes provide resistance against bollworms, a major pest affecting cotton cultivation. Introduced commercially in India in 2002, Bt cotton significantly reduced bollworm infestation and lowered the need for insecticide sprays. The combined effect of higher yields and reduced pest control costs contributed to improved farm incomes following its adoption.

In addition to botanical diversity, cotton in India is also classified by staple length. This length determines fibre quality and

end use. The country produces the full range of staple categories:

Staple Categories	Staple Length (in mm)
Short Staple	20 and below
Medium Staple	20.5 to 24.5
Medium Long Staple	25.0 to 27.0
Long Staple	27.5 to 32.0
Extra-Long Staple	32.5 and above

Geographical Spread of Cotton Cultivation

Cotton production in India is largely concentrated in **9 major states**, grouped into **3 distinct agro-ecological zones**:

- **Northern Zone** comprising Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan

- **Central Zone** comprising Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh

- **Southern Zone** comprising Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka

In addition to these states, cotton is also grown in Odisha and Tamil Nadu.



Source: Ministry of Textiles

India's Cotton Strength in Area, Production, and Consumption

India ranks **first in the world in cotton cultivation area (in hectares)**, with **114.84 lakh hectares** devoted to the

crop. This accounts for around 38 percent of the global cotton area of **304.08 lakh hectares**. A large share of the country's cotton production depends on rainfall, with approximately **62 percent** grown in rain-fed regions.

The remaining **38 percent** is cultivated under irrigated conditions.

India ranks **second** globally in both **cotton production and consumption**. This shows the scale of its cultivation base and the strength of its textile industry. Cotton production is commonly reported in **bales**; it is the standard unit used in the cotton trade. **One bale** is equivalent to **170 kg**. During the **2024-25 cotton season**, cotton production pegged at **297.24 lakh bales (5.06**

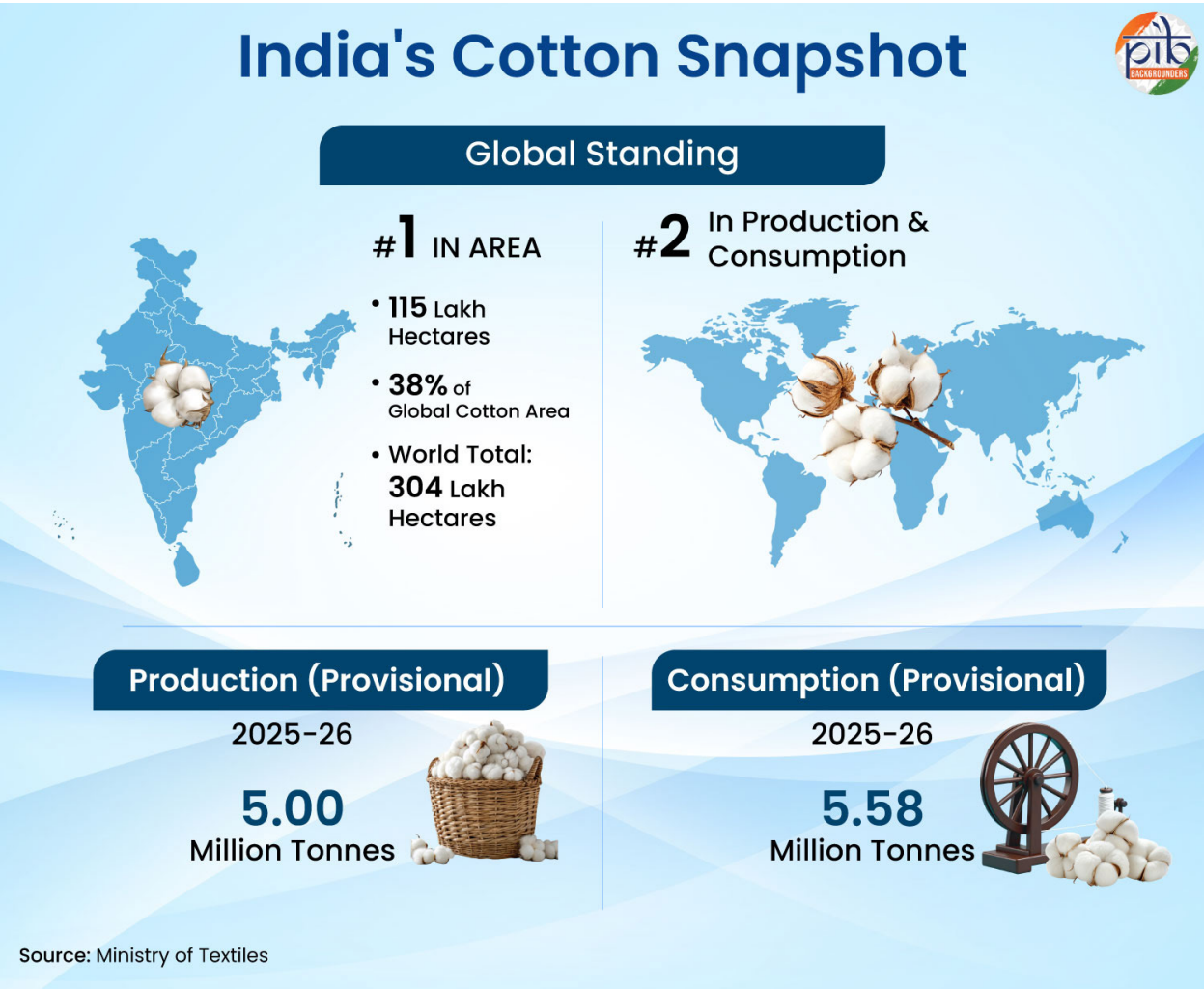
million tonnes). This accounts for nearly **20 percent** of global cotton output.

For **2025-26 (provisional)**, cotton production stood at **290.91 lakh bales (4.95 million tonnes)**. **Domestic consumption**, including Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME), non-MSME, and non-textile segments, stood at **328 lakh bales (5.58 million tonnes)**. These reflect India's prominent position in the global cotton economy.

Cotton Exports and India's Trade Footprint

India continues to maintain a strong presence in the global cotton trade. In **2024-25**, the country exported an estimated **18 lakh bales**, equivalent to **0.31 million metric tonnes**. This accounts for about **3.37 percent** of total world exports, amounting to **541.69 lakh bales (9.21 million metric tonnes)**. This reflects India's role as a significant exporter in the international cotton market.

Further, India exports cotton to several major global markets, reflecting strong and diversified international demand. In value terms, cotton exports reached **US\$ 11.49 billion in FY25**. **The United States of America** emerged as the largest destination for Indian cotton fabrics and made-ups exports, accounting for **26.35 percent of cotton exports**. This was followed by **Bangladesh** at **19.81 percent** and **Sri Lanka** at **5.11 percent**. Other important destinations included the **United Kingdom**, with a share of **2.38 percent**, and the **United Arab Emirates**, at **2.32 percent**.



These export patterns highlight the diverse global demand for Indian cotton and reinforce its importance in the country's agricultural and textile economy.

Building a Competitive Cotton Ecosystem

A multi-pronged strategy has driven the development of the cotton sector. Key priorities include price support, productivity enhancement, technology adoption, and market strengthening. To safeguard farmer incomes and improve the competitiveness of Indian cotton, several targeted initiatives have been undertaken, as outlined below.

Minimum Support Price Operation

Stable returns are essential for sustaining cotton cultivation. The **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** system serves as a key safeguard for cotton farmers. It ensures remunerative prices when market rates fall below the announced support level. Before each cotton year (Oct. to Sept.), MSP is recommended by the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**. It is announced for **Medium Staple and Long Staple** varieties of seed cotton (kapas). The objective is to ensure that farmers receive at least 50 percent of their returns on production costs.

Cotton MSP Operations and the Role of CCI

The government has designated the **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)** to undertake MSP operations for cotton procurement. It intervenes when seed cotton prices fall below the MSP level. As the central nodal procurement agency, CCI has steadily expanded its operational network. The number of procurement centres increased from **508** in 2024-25 to **571** in 2025-26. These centres cover **152 districts** across **11 cotton-growing states**.

Strengthening Cotton Farmers through MSP

- For **2025-26**, the MSP for cotton was fixed at **Rs. 7,710 per quintal** for medium-staple cotton and **Rs. 8,110 per quintal** for long-staple cotton. For 2026-27, it was increased to **Rs. 8,267 per quintal** for medium-staple cotton and **Rs. 8,667 per quintal** for long-staple cotton. This marked an increase of **Rs. 557 per quintal** for both varieties.
- During the **Cotton Season 2025-26**, the Cotton Corporation of India Ltd. (CCI) procured **105.09 lakh bales** of cotton, valued at **Rs.41,530 crore**, through **24 lakh** procurement transactions with cotton farmers under MSP operations.

Strengthening Cotton Farmers through MSP (2025-26)



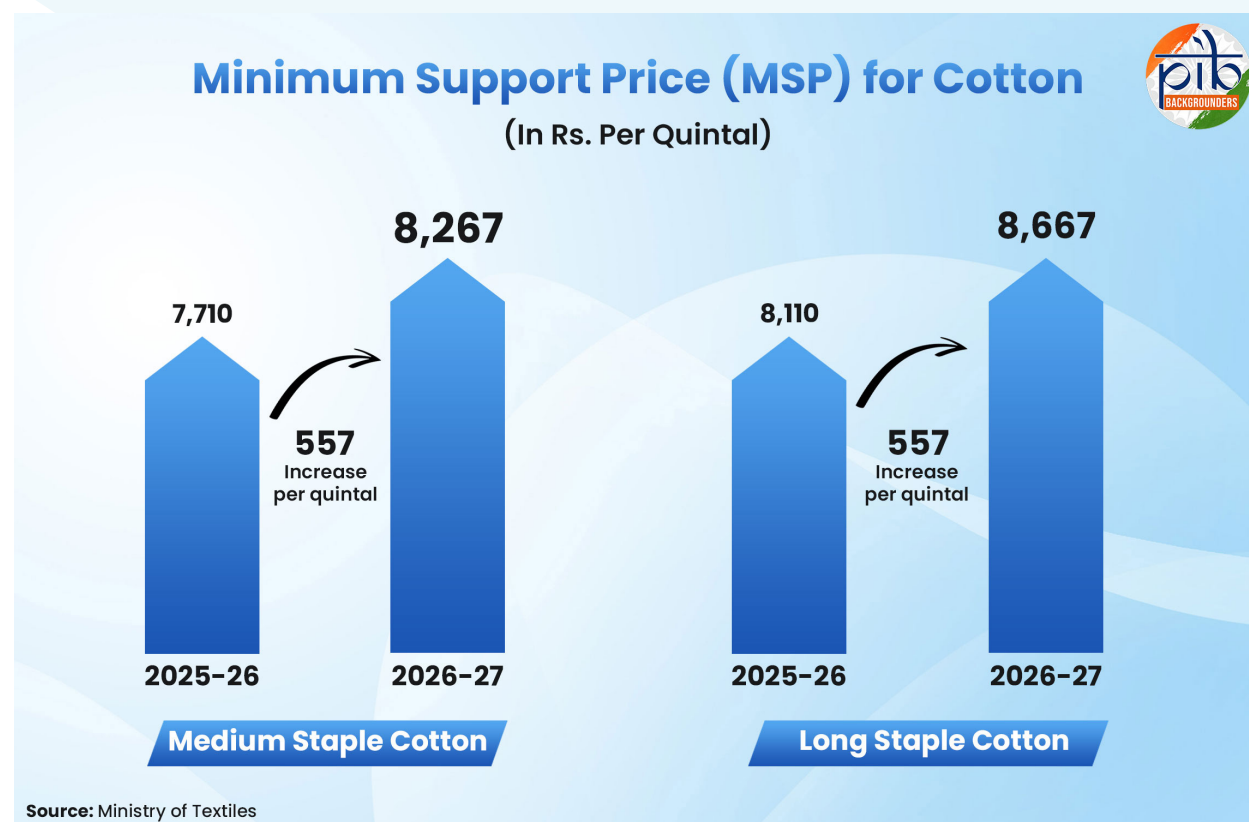
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Source: Ministry of Textiles



Mission for Cotton Productivity

Sustained growth in the cotton sector depends not only on remunerative prices but also on higher productivity. To address this, a five-year **Mission for Cotton Productivity** was launched in 2025-26 to strengthen cotton production nationwide.

With the provision of **Rs. 5,659.22 crore**, the mission focuses on research, innovation, and field-level extension support. It aims to develop climate-resilient, pest-resistant, and high-yielding cotton varieties. Special emphasis has been placed on **Extra Long Staple (ELS) cotton**. These efforts will be supported by advanced breeding and biotechnology tools.

Aligned with the **'5F' vision** of farm, fibre, factory, fashion and foreign, the initiative seeks to enhance farmer incomes and ensure a steady supply of quality cotton. The mission will cover **nearly 24 lakh hectares** across **140 districts in 14 cotton-producing states** and is expected to benefit around **32 lakh** farmers. The Mission also sets ambitious production targets for the coming years. Cotton production is targeted to increase from **297 lakh bales to 498 lakh bales by 2031**. Higher productivity is expected to improve domestic cotton availability. It will also reduce dependence on imports and strengthen the textile sector. **Special Project on Cotton under National Food Security Mission**

The field-level demonstrations play an important role in improving cotton productivity. Since 2023-24, a **Special Project on Cotton** has been implemented under the **National Food Security Mission (NFSM)**. It focuses on large-scale demonstrations of technologies suited to different agro-ecological zones. It covers 8 major cotton-growing states across the country. The pilot interventions focus on three key

technologies. These include the **High-Density Planting System** and the **Closer Spacing Planting System**. Production technology for **Extra Long Staple (ELS) cotton** is also being promoted. The objective is to improve productivity, fibre quality, and farmer incomes.

In 2023-24, an outlay of **Rs. 41.87 crore** covered **9,175 hectares**. During 2024-25, **Rs. 50.98 crore** supported about

High-Density Planting System

A method of planting cotton at higher plant population per hectare to improve yield and resource efficiency.



High-Density Planting System

Closer Spacing Planting System

A technique where cotton plants are grown at reduced row and plant spacing to increase productivity and optimise field utilisation.



Closer Spacing Planting System

Production Technology for Extra Long Staple Cotton

A set of production and crop management practices including improved varietal selection, balanced nutrition and pest-management protocols. These practices aim at enhancing fibre length and quality of Extra Long Staple cotton for premium textile use.

14,740 hectares. Field demonstrations recorded yield gains of about **40 percent** under the **High-Density Planting System (HDPS)** and more than **32 percent** under the **closer spacing planting system**. Encouraged by these results, the project was extended to **2025-26** with a total

outlay of **Rs. 60.32 crore**, including committed liabilities. These encouraging field-level outcomes demonstrate the tangible impact of targeted technology interventions on cotton productivity and farmers' incomes.

Success Stories of Special Project on Cotton

Kapas Kisan App

Technology is also being leveraged to make cotton procurement more transparent and efficient. The **Kapas**

Kisan mobile application has been introduced to streamline procurement under the MSP system and place farmers at the centre of the process. The platform enables cotton growers to complete self-registration and book procurement slots on a **four weeks rolling basis**. This has significantly reduced waiting time and eliminated long queues at procurement centres.

With over **41 lakh farmers registered so far**, the application has strengthened transparency and efficiency in MSP operations. It facilitates advance slot booking, Aadhaar-linked payments, and real-time SMS updates. These provisions are provided at every stage, from registration and procurement to final payment. By digitizing the process, the app has transformed cotton procurement into a paperless and farmer-friendly system.

Branding of Indian Cotton - Kasturi Cotton Bharat

Kasturi Cotton Bharat is a flagship initiative of the government. It seeks to enhance the value and global positioning of Indian cotton through **traceability, certification, and branding**. The programme is implemented in partnership with the **Ministry of Textiles**, the **Cotton Corporation of India Limited**, and the **Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council (TEXPROCIL)**. It has a total outlay of **Rs.30**



crore, with **Rs.15 crore** contributed by trade and industry bodies and an equal share from the Ministry of Textiles.

Key Highlights

The Kasturi Cotton Bharat website (<https://www.kasturicotton.com/>) has been launched as a digital platform for information, updates, and ginner registration. It also highlights the unique processes that set Kasturi Cotton Bharat apart.

116 units, including **41 ginner** and **75 supply chain members**, have renewed registration.

As of 30 June 2026, **3,29,550 bales** have been certified, including **3,22,400 bales** from CCI.

Certification covers long-staple cotton with a staple length of 28 mm or more and extra-long staple (ELS) cotton with a staple length of 35 mm or more. **National Accreditation Board tests these varieties for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL)** accredited agencies.

QR-based certification and blockchain technology ensure end-to-end traceability.

Further initiatives, such as Kasturi Villages, awareness workshops, branding, traceability, and sustainability practices, strengthen the program. Thus, positioning Indian cotton as a global symbol of purity, quality, and sustainability.

High-Density Planting Improves Cotton Yield in Rajkot

Shri Vinodbhai Virjibhai Vadodriya, a cotton grower from Gujarat's Rajkot district, adopted the High-Density Planting System under the Special Project on Cotton. He planted cotton at a spacing of **90 cm x 15 cm** between plants. This increased the number of plants per acre compared to his earlier method of **135 cm x 45 cm** spacing. The intervention resulted in a cotton yield of **15 quintals per acre**, with productivity increasing by about **30-35 percent** over traditional planting. Early harvesting also helped him reduce losses from pink bollworm. The gains improved farm income and encouraged neighbouring farmers to adopt the technology.



High-Density Planting System adopted by farmers in Rajkot, Gujarat

Closer Spacing Transforms Cotton Productivity in Jalgaon

Shri Bhaskar Tapiram Chaudhary, a cotton farmer from Jalgaon district, Maharashtra, adopted closer spacing at **90 cm x 30 cm** under the Special Project on Cotton. Improved crop management, recommended fertiliser application and integrated pest and nutrient management were adopted. This intervention strengthened crop growth even under dry spell conditions. The demonstration recorded a yield of **11 quintals per acre** compared to **8 quintals** under farmer practice. It marked a **37.5 percent** increase and improved overall profitability.



Closer Spacing in Cotton adopted in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra

Cotton Beyond the Loom: The Versatility of Cotton

Cotton is far more than a source of fibre for clothing. The crop also generates valuable by-products that contribute to **food, feed, and rural energy needs**. **Raw cottonseed** comprises roughly **one-third lint** and **two-thirds seed**. The seed contains about 18 percent edible oil, while the remaining meal is widely used as nutritious feed for cattle, poultry, and fish.

Cottonseed oil is often referred to as **"heart oil"**. It contains nearly **50 percent** essential polyunsaturated fatty acids compared to about **30 percent** in many traditional oils. This composition is associated with supporting heart health. After oil extraction, the residue is processed into **Deoiled cake** for animal feed. Other by-products include **linters and hulls, while dried cotton stalks serve as biomass fuel in rural areas**.

Cotton fibres also have **medical applications**. Short-staple fibres unsuitable for spinning are processed into **absorbent or surgical cotton**. These are therefore used in healthcare due to their high absorbency and purity.

These diverse uses highlight cotton's role in supporting **nutrition, livestock, industry, and healthcare**. Its broad utility underscores the crop's importance to the agricultural economy and everyday life.

Threads of Continuity and Change

India's cotton story is one of continuity and change. Rooted in centuries of cultivation and trade, the sector continues to evolve through advances in science and technology and targeted policy support. Efforts to improve productivity, strengthen farmer incomes, modernize procurement, and enhance global competitiveness are shaping a more resilient cotton ecosystem. From the farm to the global marketplace, cotton remains deeply woven into India's agricultural and industrial landscape. As new initiatives expand quality, sustainability, and value addition, the sector is well-positioned to support livelihoods, industry, and economic growth in the years ahead.

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PIB Research



07

Empowering India's Skill Ecosystem

Government's Initiatives from Classroom to Enterprise

Published on: July 15, 2026



India's talent ecosystem is evolving through a whole-of-life approach that integrates education, skilling, employment and entrepreneurship. Policy reforms and flagship programmes are embedding vocational education in curricula from school onwards while promoting continuous upskilling and lifelong learning. The framework increasingly emphasises industry relevance, digital technologies, artificial intelligence and future-ready competencies to meet changing workforce demands. Strong partnerships with academia, industry, international organisations and technology leaders are expanding access to quality training and employment opportunities. Special initiatives for women, artisans, rural communities and other underserved groups are making skill development more inclusive. Together, these efforts are creating a resilient, innovation-driven workforce that is better prepared to support economic transformation, global competitiveness and sustainable growth.

Empowering India's Talent Ecosystem

India's journey towards **Viksit Bharat 2047** is anchored in building a robust talent ecosystem. A skilled, productive and innovative workforce is essential for sustaining economic growth, enhancing competitiveness and ensuring equitable development. Recognising talent development as a lifelong journey, **the Government has adopted a life-cycle** approach. It includes vocational education in schools, workforce upskilling, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship development, women-centric skilling and lifelong learning. Together, these initiatives are aimed at creating an inclusive, industry-responsive talent architecture.

Skill development at every stage of life is critical for sustaining employability and workforce productivity. It also positions India to emerge as the world's primary talent hub, driving long-term economic growth and global competitiveness.

Recently, the need for continuous skilling has become more pronounced as global labour markets undergo rapid transformation. Automation, artificial intelligence, digitalisation, climate action and demographic shifts are reshaping the nature of work. These trends are creating demand for new and evolving skills.

India's improving skill readiness further strengthens the opportunity of achieving



sentiment further indicates growing demand for workforce for tomorrow.

Skill Development: A Priority

Skill development is now a strategic pillar of India's economic and social transformation. It equips individuals with the capabilities needed to adapt to changing labour markets and emerging technologies. It also enables India to leverage its demographic advantage, meet global workforce demand and sustain long-term economic growth.

100% skilled labour by 2047 with meaningful employment. The India Skills Report 2026 shows employability rising from 46% in 2020 to 56.4% in 2026. This reflects the impact of targeted skilling and inclusion initiatives. Strong hiring

- **Driving Economic Growth:** Skills and knowledge remain fundamental drivers of economic growth and social development. By enhancing employability and productivity, skill development plays a critical role

15th July 2026

Skill India Mission Anniversary & World Youth Skills Day

Over the past eleven years, the Skill India Mission has transformed India's skilling landscape through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. It has strengthened India's skilling ecosystem through industry-aligned training, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship and digital skilling initiatives. The World Youth Skills Day 2026 theme, "Skills for a Shared Future," underscores the importance of equipping young people with skills for inclusive and sustainable development. India is committed to building a people-centric, industry-responsive and globally competitive talent architecture.



Role of Skill Development in Indian Economy



Source: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

in poverty reduction, sustainable enterprise creation and broad-based growth. This further creates a virtuous cycle of higher productivity, expanded employment opportunities and rising incomes.

- **Responding to Globally Emerging Skill Requirements:** Rapid technological and demographic changes are reshaping economies and labour markets worldwide. Imparting relevant skills to our youth to make them future ready and their continuous upskilling is essential to remain competitive in an evolving landscape shaped by automation, climate action, digitalisation and demographic shifts. . The IMF's **AI Preparedness Index** awarded India a score of **49.3**, higher than the **42.1**

average for emerging and developing economies. It reflects India's strong readiness to adopt and benefit from artificial intelligence.

- **Harnessing the Demographic Dividend:** India has over **54%** of its population below **25 years** of age. More than **62%** belongs to the working-age group (15–59 years). This demographic advantage is expected to last until around **2040**. Focused skilling is therefore essential to harness this opportunity and build a future-ready workforce.
- **Meeting Global Talent Demand:** India is expected to generate a surplus of **45 million skilled professionals** by 2030. At the same time, global labour shortages are projected to reach **85 million**. This presents a significant

opportunity for India to meet rising global demand for skilled talent. Building a life-cycle approach to skill development is therefore essential

Building Skills from an Early Age

Early skilling lays the foundation for lifelong employability, workforce participation and industry-relevant skills. The Government has introduced several initiatives to promote skill development from an early age.

Sustainable Development Goal for Education (SDG-4). As of December 2025, the scheme has achieved various milestones with regard to skill education:

- A total of **138 job roles** have been approved and skilling initiatives have been implemented in **25,140 schools**, covering over **35.5 lakh students**.
- Under the scheme, **the Hub and Spoke Model has been adopted** so that the infrastructure available in the Hub schools is utilized by the students of nearby schools (spoke

Laying the Groundwork for Skills



Samagra Shiksha Scheme

Samagra Shiksha is an overarching programme for school education from pre-school to Class XII. The objective is to improve school effectiveness through equitable access and learning outcomes. The scheme treats school education as a continuum and is in accordance with

schools) for Skill training. **975 spoke schools** optimises infrastructure and expands access to skill training nationwide .

- To strengthen skill training infrastructure in schools, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has

established **1,200 vocational skill labs**. These labs are spread across 400 Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs) and 200 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs).

PM Shri Schools

Launched in 2022, PM SHRI Schools strengthen existing schools to implement the National Education Policy 2020. These schools act as exemplar institutions providing mentorship to neighbouring schools. They aim to deliver quality teaching while nurturing holistic, well-rounded students equipped with 21st-century skills.

- Out of the targeted 14,500 PM SHRI Schools, **13,092 have been developed across 776 districts** as of June 2026.

Atal Tinkering Laboratories

With a vision to 'Cultivate one Million children in India as Neoteric Innovators', Atal Innovation Mission established Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATLs) in schools. This fosters curiosity, creativity and innovation-oriented skills among students. As of June, 2026:

- Over **10,000 ATLs** have been established in 722 districts
- And, more than 1.1 crore students have been engaged

Skilling for AI Readiness (SOAR)

Skilling for AI Readiness (SOAR) aims to equip students from Classes VI–XII and educators with evolving AI skills through courses. These courses are delivered in partnership with Microsoft, HCL Technologies and NASSCOM.

- As of February 2026, 2.30 lakh students have been enrolled in AI to be Aware, AI to Aspire, AI to Acquire, AI for Educators.

National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)

The National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) is a competency-based framework that organises qualifications into eight levels based on learning outcomes. **It recognises knowledge, skills, aptitude, responsibility and practical experience acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning.** The framework integrates academic education, vocational education and skill training through a common structure. It also enables credit-based progression across school education, higher education and skilling, promoting lifelong learning and career mobility.

YUVA AI for ALL

Under the **IndiaAI Mission**, MeitY has launched '**YUVA AI for ALL**', in November, 2025. It is a free 4.5- hour

self-paced course to introduce AI basics to all citizens, especially youth. Available on **FutureSkills Prime** and **iGOT Karmayogi**, the course offers practical learning and a **Government of India certificate on completion**.

- As of 8 July 2026, total **enrolment stood at 85.27 lakh** Indian Diaspora in the UK

Vidyanjali Programme

Vidyanjali is an initiative that advances schools through community and private sector participation. **It connects schools with volunteers**, including professionals, retired teachers, government officials, NGOs, CSR partners and the Indian diaspora. Volunteers contribute through mentoring, career guidance, skill development and other educational support.

- As of June 2026, **8,44,925 schools have been onboarded**.
- The initiative has registered **5,62,296 volunteers** and 2,705 CSR organisations and NGOs.
- More than **2.04 crore students** have benefited from the programme

Upskilling and Re-Skilling the Workforce

As labour markets evolve rapidly,

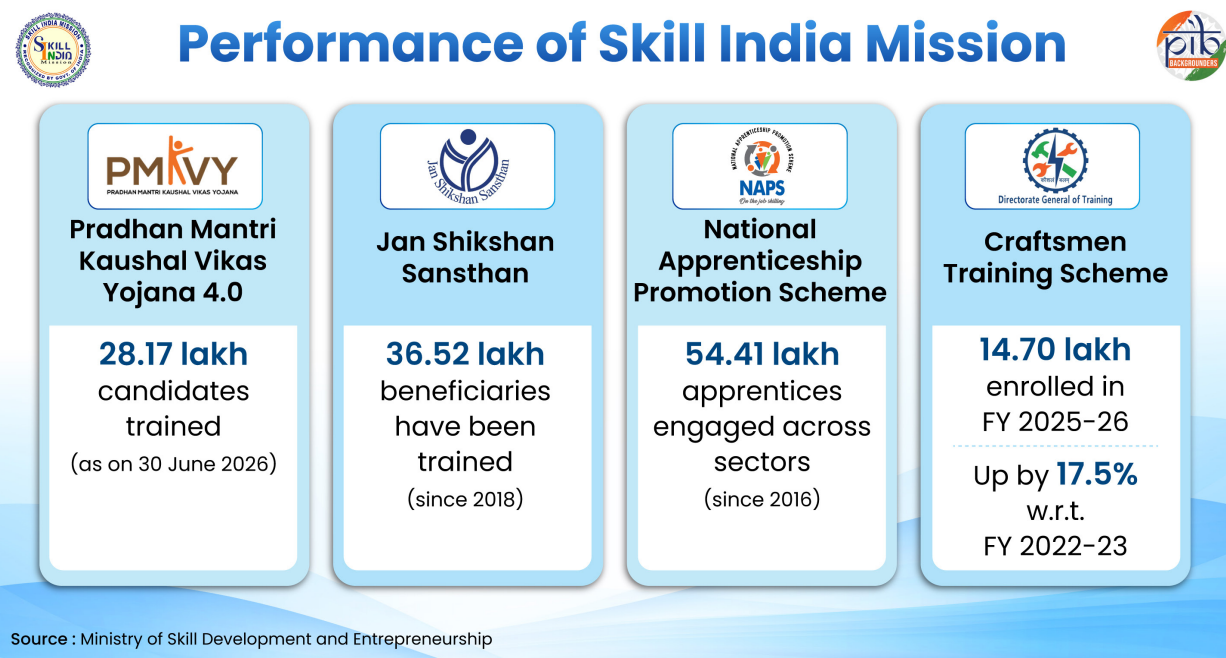
continuous upskilling and re-skilling have become essential to support new professionals and enable mid-career transitions. Focused interventions keep the workforce employable and industry-ready.

Skill India Mission

The Skill India Mission (SIM) provides NSQF-aligned skilling, upskilling and reskilling for the working-age population. This is supported by nationwide outreach through Rozgar Melas and the Skill India Digital Hub. The trainings are also provided through an extensive network of Skill Development Centres (SDCs). The flagship schemes under the mission include:

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY),
- Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS),
- National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), and
- Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS) in Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs).





Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is a **flagship short-term skilling initiative**. Over the course of its **four phases**, it has **progressed from a pilot incentive-based certification initiative to a large-scale, demand-driven and outcome-oriented skilling network**. Key achievements are highlighted below:

- **PMKVY 4.0 has trained 28.17 lakh candidates** across 36 sectors in 36 States and 738 districts as on 30th June 2026.
- Over **21.91 lakh candidates were trained between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2026**. Key sectors include IT-ITeS, aerospace & aviation, agriculture, rubber, leather, apparel, electronics, construction, and tourism & hospitality.

- The scheme has introduced **68 customised courses and 189 future-skill job roles** to address emerging industry requirements.

- More than **16,900 institutions**, including over 6,800 Skill Hubs, are implementing PMKVY 4.0 nationwide.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) provides community-based, non-formal skill training to neo-literates and school dropouts through NGOs with 100% Government funding. As of 31 March 2026, significant milestones of the scheme are:

- **36.52 Lakh beneficiaries** have been trained since 2018.
- **4.8 Lakh tribal beneficiaries** have completed training.

- **Women constitute more than 82% of beneficiaries under JSS.**
- **83 NCVET-approved courses** at NSQF Levels 3, 3.5 and 4 have been introduced.
- Locally relevant courses include tailoring, embroidery, handicrafts, food processing and health services.
- Since December 2024, JSS products have been marketed through the UdyamKart portal, improving market access for artisans and micro-entrepreneurs.

National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) promotes industry-led apprenticeship training through the 'Earn While You Learn' model. Under NAPS 2.0, the Government provides 25% of the stipend, up to ₹1,500 per month, directly to apprentices' bank account and 75% of the stipend is paid by the employer. As of 31 March 2026, significant contributions of the scheme are:

- **More than 54.41 lakh apprentices have been engaged since 2016** across sectors including automotive, IT-ITeS, electronics, retail and manufacturing.
- Around 12.35 lakh apprentices were engaged during FY 2025-26, while 6.42 lakh completed on-the-job training.

- **1,32,000 Certificates of Proficiency (CoP)** have been issued since their launch in 31 March 2026.
- **Over ₹562.75 crore was disbursed** through 40.10 lakh Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) transactions between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.

Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS) provides long-term vocational training through Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) to develop a skilled workforce aligned with industry requirements. As of March 2026, key achievements are:

- Training is offered in **169 courses** through 13,888 ITIs
- 14 new **CTS courses have been introduced** and 22 existing courses revised over the past 3 years to align with industry needs.
- **ITI enrolment increased** from 12.51 lakh in FY 2022-23 to 14.70 lakh in FY 2025-26.

PM -SETU

Launched in 2025, PM-SETU (Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs) aims to:

- **Upgrade 1,000 Government Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)** into modern, industry-aligned skilling institutions. These ITIs will be upgraded in a **hub-and-spoke**

cluster model where 200 Hub ITIs connected with 800 Spoke ITIs.

- Set up **5 National Centres of Excellence for Skilling**.
- **Train 20 lakh youth** over a period of five years.

The courses are introduced related to the service sector, multi-skill courses, and livelihood promotion. This improves employability and makes vocational training relevant to current and future job markets.

- As of May 2026, 32 States and Union Territories have constituted State Steering Committees. 12 among them have floated Requests for Proposals to onboard industry partners under PM-SETU.
- **Andhra Pradesh became the first State to operationalise PM-SETU** through the Visakhapatnam ITI Cluster.
- The rollout has expanded further with Strategic Investment Plans (SIPs) worth ₹1,237.58 crore approved for **ITI clusters in Odisha, Gujarat and Telangana**.

FutureSkills Pillar

The FutureSkills Pillar under the IndiaAI Mission aims to build a strong AI talent ecosystem and widen

access to AI education across India. It supports learners from undergraduate to PhD levels. The initiative offers national AI fellowships for UG, PG, dual degree and PhD students. It is also setting up 570 AI and Data Labs in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, to promote hands-on learning. Market oriented, NCVET-recognised AI courses are being delivered across sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing and education.

Future Skill Prime

FutureSkills Prime is an initiative by NASSCOM & Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. The programme focuses on skilling, reskilling and upskilling individuals in new and emerging technologies through a flexible, online digital learning platform.

- It offers **2,800+ courses and pathways**, has **33 lakh+ registered users**.
- The reach has widened to **41% women learners**, and **740 Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities**.

Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana

Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (2025) provides a one-time incentive of up to ₹15,000 in two instalments to support first-time employees registered with EPFO during their initial learning phase. The scheme

Strategic Partnerships for Skill Development



IGNOU

PMKVY Skill Centres at 70 Regional Centres



World Economic Forum

Skills Accelerator for industry-aligned skilling



IPE Global

Gender-responsive skilling



AWS, Microsoft, Intel, Red Hat, Pearson VUE & BCG

Digital and emerging technology courses



Microsoft

AI-led skilling and 15,000+ employers onboarded to the National Career Service platform



MoU with 7 Countries

Australia, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Qatar, Singapore and UAE for international skill mobility



IBM, Cisco, AWS & Microsoft

Industry-led training in emerging technologies

Source : Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

offsets upskilling costs, enhances productivity and employability. It also promotes financial literacy to equip new entrants with essential money management skills. The scheme also incentivizes employers, up to Rs 3000 per month, for two years, for each additional employee with sustained employment for at least six months.

- The scheme has supported the creation of **15 lakh employment opportunities** with disbursement of incentives worth **₹2,400 crore** (19 June, 2026).

Strengthening International and Private Sector Partnerships

Public-private and international partnerships are playing a key role in transforming India's skilling ecosystem. They are promoting industry-aligned training, digital skills and global mobility opportunities.

Nurturing Entrepreneurial Skills

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in job creation, innovation and economic growth. Skilling strengthens the capabilities needed to build successful enterprises.

PM Vishwakarma

PM Vishwakarma provides end-to-

end support to traditional artisans and craftspeople through skill upgradation, toolkit incentives, credit support and market linkages. The scheme gives special focus to women and disadvantaged groups. This includes SCs, STs, OBCs, persons with disabilities, transgender persons, and artisans from the North Eastern Region, island territories and hilly areas. **Beneficiaries receive a stipend of ₹500 per day during skill training.**

- As of June 2026, over 24.50 lakh applicants have successfully completed basic training.
- Loans worth ₹5,165.84 crore have been sanctioned.
- More than ₹35 crore of digital incentive has been disbursed.

Start Up India Courses

Hands-on learning and free of cost online courses are available for all registered users on the Startup India platform. The courses range from Programming, Security, Accounting & Finance to Management and Entrepreneurship. **These courses help users gain entrepreneurial knowledge while enabling them to upskill their organisations.**

Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programmes

MSDE through its autonomous institutions implements Entrepreneurship

Development Programmes (EAPs) and Entrepreneurship Skill Development Programmes (ESDPs). The institutions are National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD), Noida and Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati. This promotes entrepreneurship and fosters an entrepreneurial culture across the country. These institutes provide end-to-end support to entrepreneurs through entrepreneurship and management training, post-training support through mentorship, handholding and incubation support.

Entrepreneurship Skill Development Programmes (ESDP) of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) encourage youth to pursue self-employment and entrepreneurship. The programmes focus on SCs, STs, women, persons with disabilities, ex-servicemen and BPL beneficiaries by providing technical and business skills.

Empowering Women through Skilling

Skill development for women is essential to enhance workforce participation, economic independence and equitable growth. Targeted skilling initiatives help address gender gaps in employment while enabling women to access emerging opportunities across sectors.

AI Careers for Women

AI Career for Women (2025) is an intensive 320-hour training programme. It intends to empower young women and girls in rural undergraduate colleges with future ready AI skills. The programme is strengthening women's participation in emerging technologies through **25 AI Centres of Excellence** operating under a hub-and-spoke model.

- The programme has reached over **10,000 students**, including 2,500+ in Hub Colleges and 7,500+ in Spoke Colleges.

Swavalambini

MSDE, in collaboration with NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform, launched the Swavalambini – Women Entrepreneurship Programme in **February 2025. It is being implemented** across **Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana**. The programme fosters an entrepreneurial mindset among women through Entrepreneurship Awareness and Development Programmes. During FY 2025-26, Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship conducted:

- Faculty Development Programme for 82 faculty members,
- Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme for 1200 participants and;

- Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme for 602 candidates.

NAVYA (Nurturing Aspirations through Vocational Training for Young Adolescent Girls)

NAVYA was launched in June 2025 by MSDE in partnership with the Ministry of Women & Child Development. The scheme aims to empower adolescent girls aged 16-18 years in aspirational districts through skill-based interventions for socio-economic independence.

- Covering **27 districts across 19 States**, NAVYA targets training of **3,850 girls** under PMKVY 4.0.

The initiative provides **demand-driven vocational training in non-traditional and future-oriented job roles**. It also builds life skills, financial literacy and digital competencies in areas such as digital marketing, cybersecurity, AI-enabled services and green jobs. This supports employability, self-employment opportunities and gender-inclusive skilling in underserved areas.

The Union Budget 2026-27: Key Skilling Initiatives

- The **Khelo India Mission** proposes an integrated talent pathway, coach development, and greater use of sports science and technology.
- A **pilot programme to upskill 10,000 tourist guides** through a standardised 12-week hybrid course.
- 3 new **All India Institutes of Ayurveda** to strengthen education, research and clinical services.
- A **National Institute of Design** in eastern India to strengthen design education.
- **AVGC Content Creator Labs** in 15,000 schools and 500 colleges.
- NSQF-aligned programmes to **train 1.5 lakh multi-skilled caregivers** in geriatric and allied care.
- **Five University Townships** near industrial and logistics corridors. These townships will integrate higher education, research, skilling and residential infrastructure.

Conclusion

India's skilling landscape is being strengthened through a comprehensive, life-cycle approach. It spans school education, higher education, workforce upskilling, entrepreneurship and women-centric initiatives. Skilling is being aligned with emerging technologies, industry demand and global labour market shifts. Targeted interventions for youth, women and vulnerable groups are ensuring inclusive participation and equitable growth.

Collectively, these initiatives position India to harness its demographic dividend and build a globally competitive workforce.

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PIB Research



08

India's High-Speed Rail Future:

Building a Standardised Path for Expansion

Published on: July 3, 2026

Fast, Reliable and Connected Rail Travel

India is nearing completion of its first bullet train corridor – the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR). In doing so, it is shaping the future of high-speed rail in India. These trains have a design speed of upto 350 km per hour – much faster than the Vande Bharat trains that have a design speed of 180 km/hour. Based on the MAHSR project, a standardised template is being developed for upcoming bullet train corridors across the country. The approach aims to implement proven engineering designs, construction methods, and operational practices. It will improve efficiency and accelerate

project execution. The MAHSR project is thus laying the foundation for a transformation. Unified designs, components, and maintenance procedures will simplify spare-part management, training, and procurement across the network. Future high-speed rail corridors will follow a replicable construction philosophy. Foundations will be designed according to the exact soil characteristics of the spot. The remaining subsystems will follow common engineering standards. These include piers, viaducts, tracks, station structures, overhead electrification, and signalling systems. This approach will support faster construction across future corridors. It will improve quality and reduce costs across future high-speed rail corridors.

Under the Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiatives, Indian Railways is promoting indigenous high-speed rail manufacturing. This aims to reduce dependence on imported systems and components. Integral Coach Factory (ICF), in collaboration with Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML), is designing and manufacturing indigenous 280 kmph high-speed train sets. The tooling, testing and production ecosystem for future high-speed rail projects is also being developed in the country. Indian companies are increasingly manufacturing specialised components, construction equipment and slab-track systems required for high-speed rail. Aditya, a newly inaugurated specialised complex in Bengaluru, is designed for the development of B-28 coaches. Research by IITs, specialised training and the adoption of Japanese engineering practices are strengthening India's high-speed rail capabilities. This is further strengthening localisation.

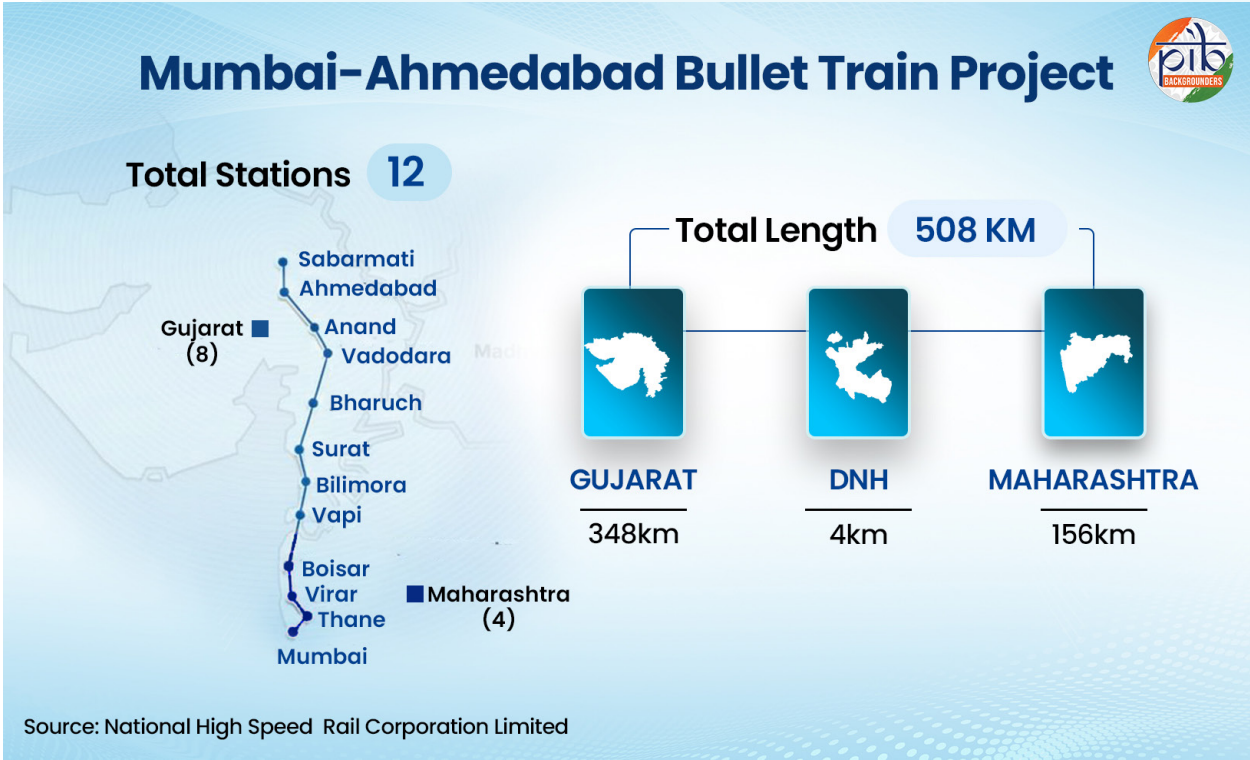


Mumbai–Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Corridor

The Mumbai–Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (MAHSR) corridor marks India's entry into the era of high-speed rail. As the country's first dedicated bullet train corridor, it introduces advanced technologies and world-class safety standards.

- The corridor will connect Mumbai and Ahmedabad in about **1 hour 58 minutes**.

- It covers a total length of approximately **508 kilometres**.
- **12 stations** have been planned along the route.
- The **first high-speed rail service** is expected to commence in **August 2027**. The first section to open will be from Surat to Vapi.
- The corridor has a design speed of **350 kmph** and an operational speed of **320 kmph**. It is supported by advanced rolling stock, signalling, and train control systems.



Technical Features and Systems of MAHSR

The MAHSR Project is being developed using Japanese Shinkansen technology and operational practices. The corridor incorporates advanced systems for traction, electrification, track infrastructure, and operations. Key technical components include:

- **Overhead Electrification (OHE):** More than 20,000 OHE masts are planned across the corridor. The 2×25 kV overhead traction system is based on Shinkansen-style OHE cantilever designs.
- **Traction and Power Supply:** The

project comprises 12 traction substations, 2 depot traction substations, and 16 distribution substations.

- **Track System:** J-Slab ballastless track technology is being introduced in India for the first time.
- **Track Construction Bases:** Dedicated Track Construction Bases are being developed. These are for the storage and handling of rails, track slabs, machinery, and other equipment.
- **Rolling Stock Depots:** Three depots are being constructed at Sabarmati and Surat in Gujarat, and at Thane in Maharashtra.

Seven High-Speed Rail Corridors

India is expanding its high-speed rail vision beyond the Mumbai-Ahmedabad corridor. Seven high-speed rail corridors, covering nearly 4,000 kilometres, have

been identified for future development. The proposed network is expected to attract investments of around ₹16 lakh crore.

The proposed seven high-speed rail corridors are strategically distributed across different regions of the country:

Routes	Travel Time
Delhi-Varanasi	3 hours 50 minutes
Varanasi-Patna-Siliguri	2 hours 55 minutes
Chennai-Bengaluru	1 hour 13 minutes
Bengaluru-Hyderabad	2 hours
Chennai-Hyderabad	2 hours 55 minutes
Mumbai-Pune	48 minutes
Pune-Hyderabad	1 hour 55 minutes

Towards a National High-Speed Rail Network

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail project represents a significant step in India's transportation journey. It is creating the knowledge, capabilities and industrial ecosystem needed for

future expansion. India is drawing on the experience gained through this landmark corridor. It is establishing a scalable approach for future high-speed rail expansion. This approach can support upcoming high-speed rail routes across the country. As new corridors are developed, this foundation will help enhance connectivity. It will also help reduce travel times and contribute to long-term economic growth.

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PIB Research



09

Guardians of India's Maritime Frontiers

Three Indigenous Naval Classes for Combat,
Survey and Coastal Defence

Published on: July 13, 2026



India's maritime strength depends on a balanced fleet protecting national interests across the full spectrum of naval operations. The Nilgiri, Sandhayak and Arnala classes represent three vital pillars of this capability. Recently commissioned INS Dunagiri, INS Sanshodhak and INS Agray demonstrate the steady expansion of these indigenous warship classes. INS Mahendragiri further strengthens this capability. Built with high indigenous content, these platforms embody Aatmanirbhar Bharat and strengthen India's defence manufacturing ecosystem. Together, they enhance maritime security, support the Blue Economy and reinforce India's position as a leading maritime power.

India's Layered Naval Capability

The Indian Navy is a primary security provider in the Indian Ocean Region. It safeguards a **coastline of about 11,098 kilometres, an Exclusive Economic Zone of nearly 2.4 million square kilometres**, and sea lanes carrying close to **90 per cent of India's trade** by volume. Achieving this requires a balanced fleet, with each class of warship contributing to a distinct layer of maritime security. In India, **four new-generation indigenous naval platforms** inducted in just one month now bring this layered approach to life.

The ability to deter and fight on the ocean surface sits at the front of this structure. The latest in this segment are **Nilgiri-class stealth frigates** which are built under Project 17A for high-intensity operations. Their reduced radar, thermal

and acoustic signatures improve survivability in combat.

Maritime power also depends on a deep understanding of the seas. The **Sandhayak-class Survey Vessel (Large)** ships strengthen India's hydrographic capability. They map the seabed, gather ocean data and produce accurate nautical charts for safe navigation. This work supports naval operations, maritime trade and the Blue Economy, and it reinforces India's standing as a trusted hydrographic partner across the Indian Ocean Region.

Closer to the coastline, anti-submarine warfare forms the next layer of defence. **The Arnala-class Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Crafts** are designed to detect and neutralise submarines in littoral waters. Alongside their core roles, all three classes can take on humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and search and rescue missions.

Did you know?



On 21 June 2026, three indigenously designed and built platforms were commissioned together at Kolkata: INS Dunagiri, a Nilgiri-class stealth frigate; INS Sanshodhak, a Sandhayak-class survey vessel (large); and INS Agray, an Arnala-class anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft. All three ships were designed by Navy's own Warship Design Bureau and manufactured by the Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata, a defence public sector undertaking.

On 11 July 2026, the sixth indigenously designed and built Nilgiri-class stealth frigate INS Mahendragiri was commissioned at Visakhapatnam

Together they mark the success of India's indigenous shipbuilding programmes. Their move into serial production strengthens maritime security, advances **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** and shows India's growing ability to design and build its own warships.

Stealth Frigates: The Cutting Edge of Surface Power

Stealth frigates form the backbone of the Indian Navy's surface combat capability. They protect aircraft carriers, secure vital sea lanes and project power across distant waters. Designed for modern naval warfare, they integrate advanced weapons, sensors, and



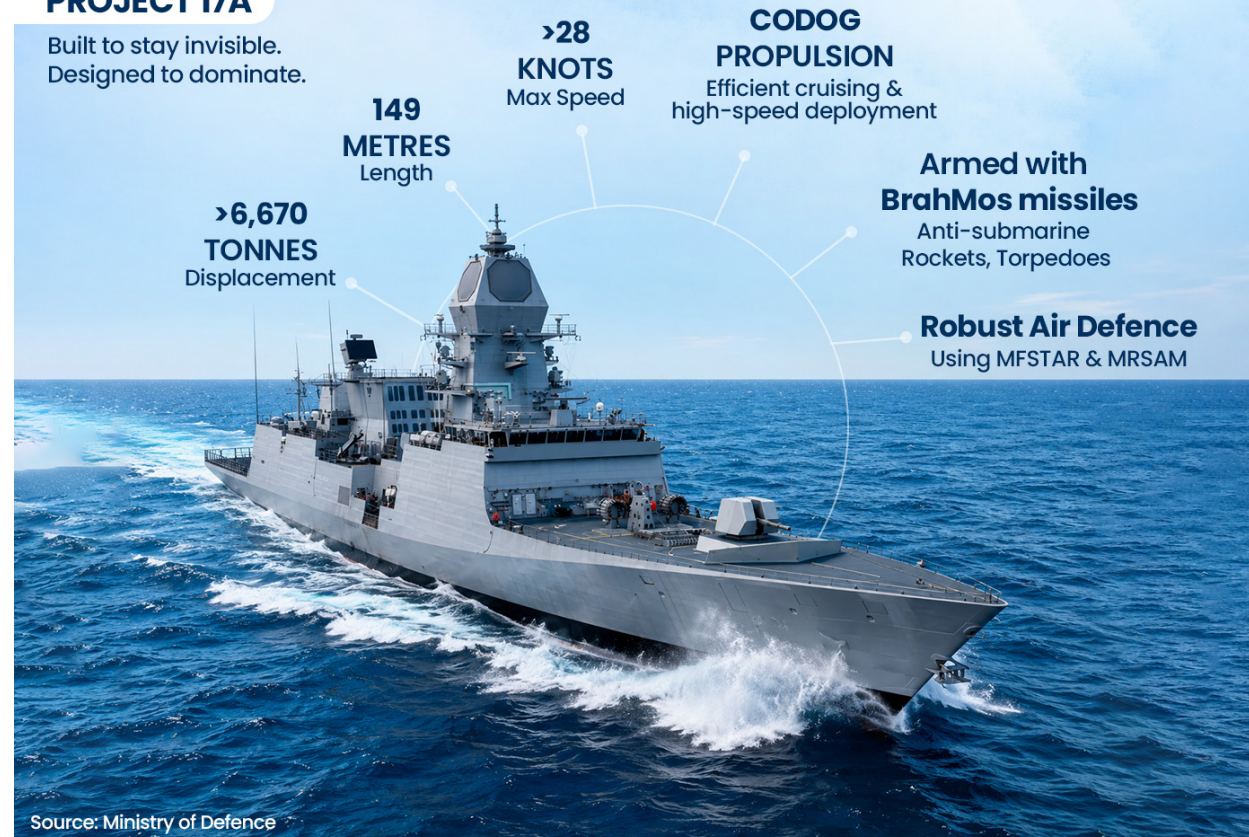
aviation facilities while optimizing radar, infrared (thermal), and acoustic signatures for enhanced stealth. This makes them difficult to detect while enabling both offensive and defensive operations.

Building on this capability, Project 17A represents the latest generation of indigenous stealth frigates. The Nilgiri-class comprises **INS Nilgiri, INS Himgiri, INS Taragiri, INS Udaygiri, INS Dunagiri, INS Mahendragiri** and the under construction **Vindhyagiri**. Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Mumbai, built four ships, while Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited, Kolkata, is building three. The latest additions to the class, **INS Dunagiri**, was commissioned recently as its fifth ship and **INS Mahendragiri**, the vessel

STEALTH FRIGATE

PROJECT 17A

Built to stay invisible.
Designed to dominate.



Did you know?



Project 17A is the Indian Navy's advanced stealth frigate programme to build seven next-generation guided-missile warships. These frigates are designed for multi-mission operations, including anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-submarine warfare. Project 17A reflects India's growing strength in self-reliant warship design and construction.

of the class, was commissioned on **11 July 2026 at Visakhapatnam**. These warships strengthen India's maritime security and reinforce its presence across the Indian Ocean.

Key specifications of Project 17A Nilgiri-class Stealth Frigates

- **Size:** Around 149 metres long, displacing about 6,670 tonnes.

Displacement is the weight of water a ship pushes aside.

- **Propulsion:** A Combined Diesel or Gas (CODOG) system, that is Combined Diesel or Gas, pairing diesel engines with gas turbines for range and speed.
- **Speed:** Maximum speed of **28 knots**. A knot is about 1.85 kilometres per hour.
- **Strike power:** Supersonic surface-to-surface missiles that hit distant ships and shore targets.
- **Air defence:** These frigates feature advanced weaponry including **Brahmos missiles**, Medium-range air-defence missiles and close-in guns that stop aircraft and incoming missiles.

Did you know?

Apart from Project 17A frigates, Indian Navy also has two more classes of stealth vessels, namely: **Talwar-class** and the **Shivalik-class**. The Talwar class (Project 1135.6/11356) was designed and built in Russia, from a time when the Navy still bought its frontline warships abroad. That changed with the Shivalik class (**Project 17**), India's first indigenously designed stealth frigate, created by the Navy's own Warship Design Bureau and built at Mazagon Dock, Mumbai. Project 17A (Nilgiri class) takes this legacy forward with better sensors, weapons and much higher indigenous content, marking the Navy's shift from a Buyer's Navy to a Builder's Navy under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat vision.



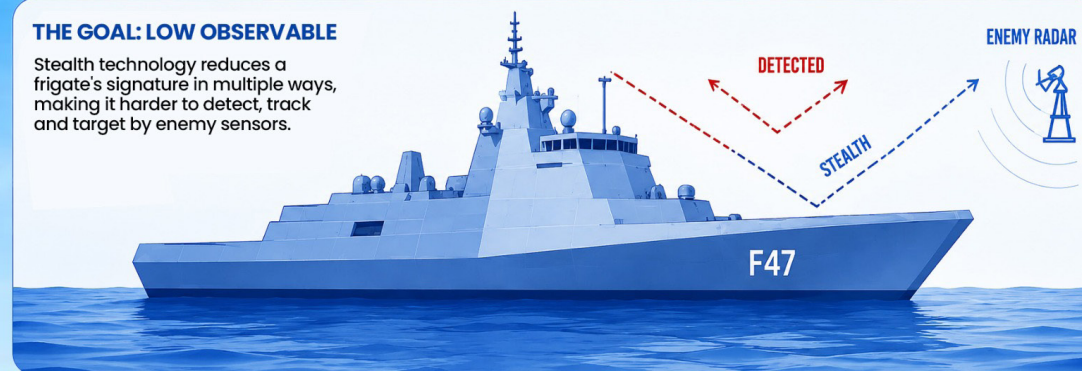
How Stealth Actually Works?

Stealth technology makes a warship harder for the enemy to detect. It does not make the ship invisible rather it simply makes the ship appear much smaller and quieter than it really is. Warships achieve this in a few key ways. Their angled surfaces deflect enemy radar waves away, while special coatings absorb radar signals instead of reflecting them.

How stealth technology works on frigates?

THE GOAL: LOW OBSERVABLE

Stealth technology reduces a frigate's signature in multiple ways, making it harder to detect, track and target by enemy sensors.



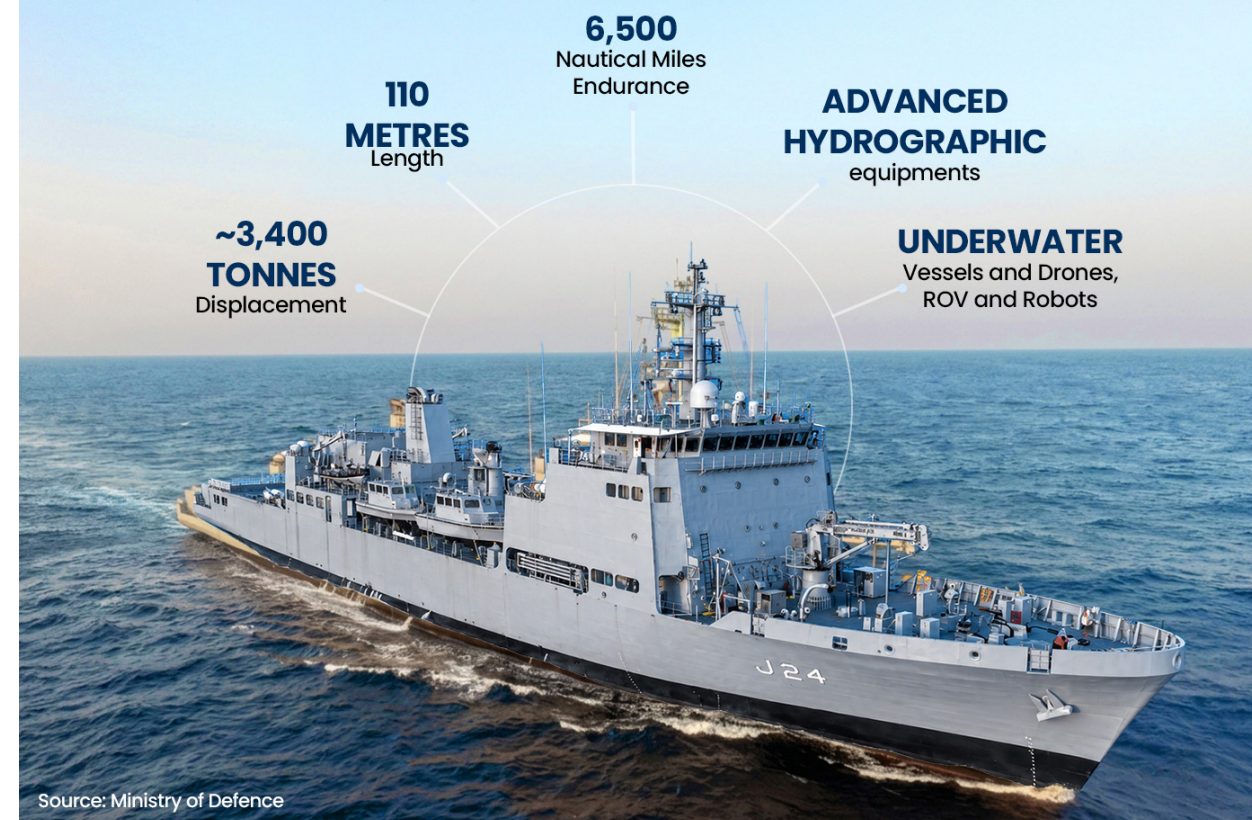
Survey Vessels: Charting Seas for Security and Prosperity

Survey vessels strengthen the Indian Navy's hydrographic capability by mapping the seabed and coastal waters. Accurate nautical charts ensure safe navigation for warships and merchant vessels. They also support the Blue Economy through the sustainable use of ocean resources. These ships regularly undertake humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and search and rescue missions.

To sustain this vital capability, the Indian Navy is inducting the indigenous **Sandhayak-class survey vessels**. The class comprises **INS Sandhayak**, **INS Nirdeshak**, **INS Ikshak** and **INS Sanshodhak**. Built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited, Kolkata. INS Sanshodhak was recently commissioned as the fourth and final ship of the class. They strengthen India's maritime domain awareness and reinforce its leadership in hydrographic cooperation across the Indian Ocean Region.

HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY VESSEL OF THE INDIAN NAVY

Researching the seas. Strengthening the nation.



Key specifications of Sandhayak-class survey vessels.

- **Size:** Around 110 metres long, displacing about 3,400 tonnes.
- **Speed and range:** Capable of a top speed of over 18 knots and an operational range of 6,500 nautical miles. The vessel can undertake long-distance missions across the Indian Ocean and beyond.
- **Complement:** These ships have a crew of about 178 personnel.
- **Survey suite:** Multi-beam echo sounders, side-scan sonar and autonomous underwater vehicles that map the seabed in detail.
- **Secondary roles:** It can operate helicopters and serve as a hospital ship in an emergency.
- India's hydrographers have surveyed 89,000 square kilometres and produced 96 charts in five years (2019-24), aiding many friendly nations.

Did you know?



The 21st of June is celebrated worldwide as **World Hydrography Day**. INS Sanshodhak, India's newest survey ship, was commissioned on that very day.

Shallow-Water Sub-Hunters: Guarding the Littorals

Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft strengthen the Indian Navy's coastal defence capability. They detect and neutralise submarines operating in shallow waters near the coast. Larger warships cannot manoeuvre effectively in these areas, making these agile vessels essential. They also support humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and search and rescue missions.

To reinforce this crucial layer of maritime security, the Indian Navy is inducting the indigenous **Arnala-class craft**. The eight-ship class comprises **Arnala, Androth, Anjadip, Amini, Abhay, Agray, Akshay and Ajay**. Built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited in partnership with L&T Shipbuilding, these vessels replace the ageing **Abhay-class** corvettes. INS Agray was recently commissioned as the fourth ship of the class. A parallel Mahe-class is under construction at Cochin Shipyard, raising the planned strength

to 16 Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft. They will secure India's littoral waters and allow larger warships to focus on open ocean operations.

Key specifications of Arnala-class crafts

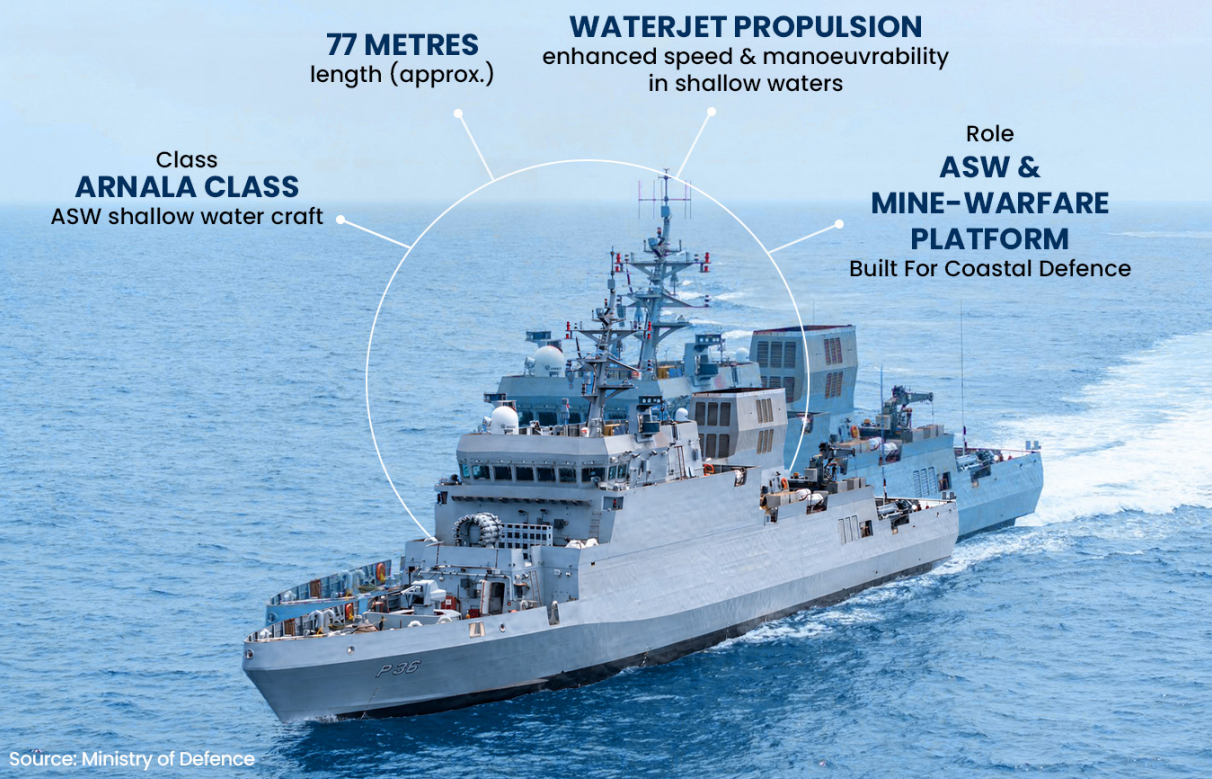
- **Size:** Around 77.6 metres long, displacing about 900 tonnes.
- **Propulsion:** Waterjets that drive the craft with a jet of water instead of a propeller, giving agility in shallow waters.
- **Speed:** A top speed of about 25 knots.
- **Weapons:** Lightweight torpedoes and anti-submarine rockets to strike submarines below the surface.
- **Sensors:** Shallow-water sonar and a combat management system that links sensors to weapons.

Did you know?

INS Arnala is the largest waterjet-propelled warship yet inducted by the Indian Navy.

ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE

Shallow water craft



Strategic Value Beyond Combat

The Nilgiri, Sandhayak and Arnala classes deliver far more than frontline naval capability. They strengthen national security, advance self-reliance and support India's maritime ambitions. Their impact extends across defence manufacturing, employment, maritime diplomacy, the Blue Economy and defence exports. The table below highlights how these indigenous-warship classes contribute to India's broader national goals.



Goal	How These Vessels Deliver
Aatmanirbharta (Indigenisation)	All three classes are designed by the Navy's Warship Design Bureau (Nilgiri and Sandhayak Class) and Indian Shipyards (Arnala and Mahe class), and built in Indian yards. Indigenous content is 75 percent for the Project 17A frigates and over 80 percent for the Sandhayak survey vessels. Across the Navy, 64 of 66 ships and submarines on order are being built in India.
Jobs Creation)	Building these classes in series sustains shipyards and a wide vendor base. The Project 17A frigate line engaged over 200 MSMEs and about 4,000 direct jobs. It created over 10,000 indirect jobs, and the Arnala-class adds a GRSE and L&T Kattupalli partnership.
Maritime Security (Preferred Security Partner)	The classes give layered strength: frigates for sea control, survey ships for safe passage, ASW craft for the littorals. As the region's first responder, the Navy counters piracy at choke points like the Gulf of Aden. It safeguards freedom of navigation and trade for all.
Blue Economy	Survey-class charts open ports, channels and the Exclusive Economic Zone. This supports fishing, offshore energy and safe shipping, guarded by the frigate and ASW classes. India's blue economy contributes about 4 percent of GDP.
Maritime Export of Warships	India is shifting from importer to exporter of naval platforms. GRSE, builder of the survey and ASW classes, is executing overseas orders. National defence exports hit a record Rs 23,622 crore in 2024-25, up about 12 percent over the defence exports figures of FY 2023-24, which were Rs 21,083 crore.

SAGAR and MAHASAGAR Vision

The Sandhayak-class survey ships chart the oceans for safe navigation. They protect India's maritime interests and those of friendly nations. This advances the SAGAR (2015) and MAHASAGAR (2025) visions, with warships deploying to partner countries.

Did you know?

India launched SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) in 2015 to secure its immediate Indian Ocean neighbourhood. It later evolved and expanded its reach globally by launching MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) in 2025 to build partnerships across the broader Global South. Both doctrines work to improve regional security, grow the ocean economy, and respond to disasters.

Securing India's Maritime Future

The Nilgiri, Sandhayak and Arnala classes reflect the steady evolution of India's naval capability. Together, they strengthen surface combat, hydrography and coastal anti-submarine warfare. Each class is designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau and built in Indian shipyards. They demonstrate India's growing expertise in designing and building complex frontline warships. Their expanding production also deepens self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

Their contribution extends well beyond naval operations. They sustain Indian

shipyards, support hundreds of MSMEs and generate thousands of skilled jobs. They also advance the SAGAR and MAHASAGAR visions through stronger maritime security and regional cooperation. As India's maritime interests expand, these indigenous warship classes will safeguard national interests and reinforce India's position across the Indian Ocean Region.

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10

Academic Bank of Credits and APAAR

Building India's Lifelong Learning Ecosystem

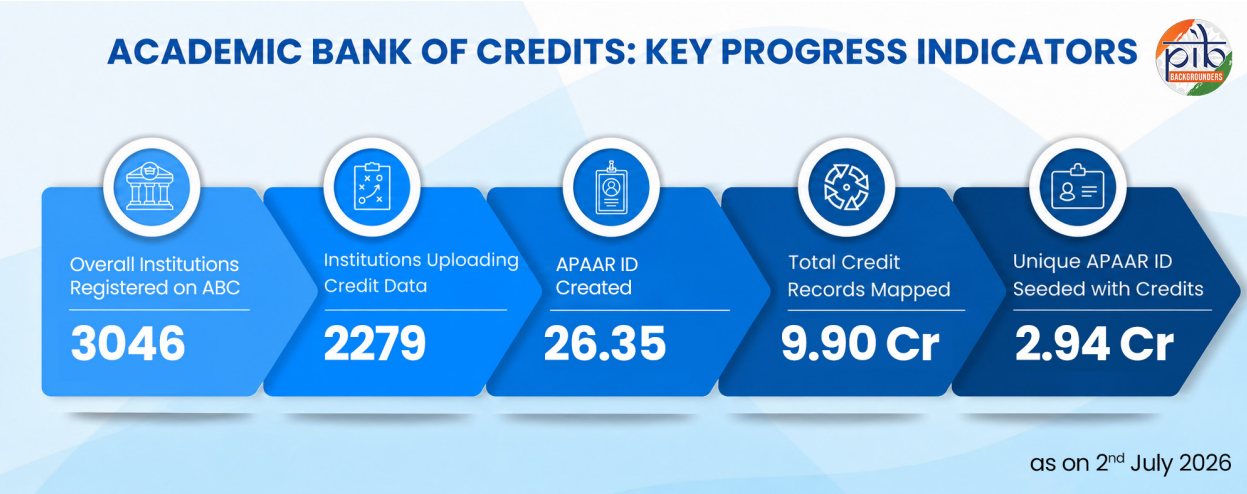
Published on: July 4, 2026

Academic Bank of Credits: An Overview

The **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)** is a revolutionary initiative by the Ministry of Education and is regulated by the University Grants Commission (UGC). It is a digital platform built to support every learner's journey by providing a secure digital platform for storing, managing, transferring, and redeeming academic credits earned by students from recognised award granting institutions.

and other learning professional programmes onto one platform. Further School education records will be also credeitized and mapped with APAAR ID under NAD-ABC. For remote and underserved areas, APAAR IDs can be generated through the nearest **Common Service Centre (CSC)** too. As of July 2nd 2026, **26.35 crore verified APAAR IDs have been generated across India.**

Together, ABC and a student's APAAR ID helps build their education brick by brick, across institutions and over time.



APAAR ID (Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry) is a unique 12-digit student identification number linked to the ABC system. Introduced as part of the **"One Nation, One Student ID"** initiative, APAAR creates a single academic identity for every learner. Accessible through DigiLocker & ABC platform, it brings together a student's educational records from higher education, skill & vocational education,

Objectives of ABC

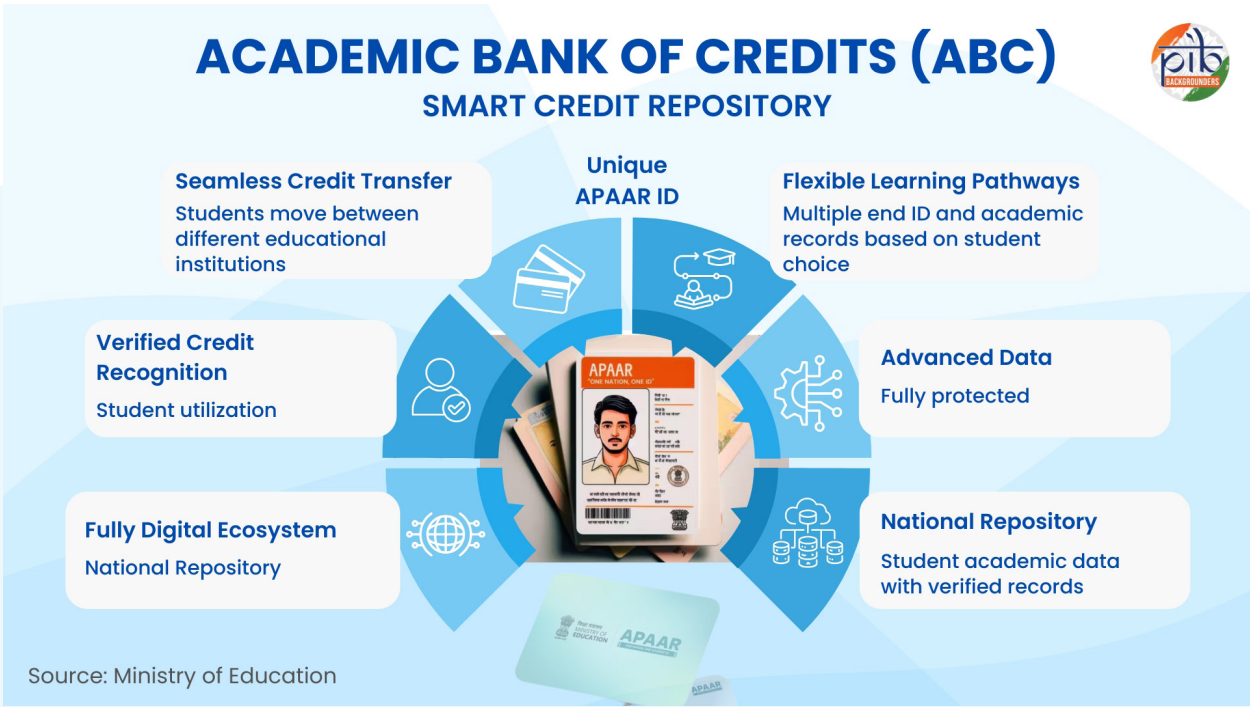
The main objective of ABC is to create a flexible, learner-friendly education system in which learning achievements can be recognised, stored, and used throughout a person's life. It supports the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Credit Framework (NCrF) by enabling credit transfer, multiple entry and exit options,

and recognition of learning across different institutions and disciplines. This means that if a student chooses to drop out of studies after having completed it partially, the credits that he earned are stored in this ABC data bank. These credits can be used by him towards completion of his studies when he chooses to rejoin in future, under the self-life of seven years for redemption and transfer of the credits.

ABC and APAAR help learners maintain a digital record of their achievements, simplify credit transfer between institutions, and improve transparency in maintaining academic records. The platform also supports integration with schools, universities, skill institutions, and other education stakeholders, creating a connected education ecosystem.

How Does ABC Work

- Students register on the ABC portal and receive a unique ABC ID (Renamed as APAAR ID) linked to their Aadhaar and DigiLocker account.
- Students belonging to eligible Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Skill Awarding Bodies can use the ABC facility.
- Award Granting Institutions in a capacity to issue Certificates, Degrees & Marksheets, can upload credit data directly to the NAD-ABC portal against each student's APAAR ID.
- Students can accumulate, transfer, and redeem credits across HEIs without losing academic progress.
- Credits are valid for a maximum of



7 years or the duration prescribed by the relevant academic discipline. Once redeemed, credits cannot be reused for transfer or redemption.

- Certificates & Marksheetworks issuance is handled by academic institutions (AGIs) via the National Academic Depository (NAD) platform.

- The NAD serves as the backbone of ABC, securely storing all academic awards and records.

Academic Bank of Credits: Progress Report

Organization Type	Institution Type	Institutions Registered for ABC (Count)	APAAR IDs Created and Mapped to the Awarding Institution	Credit records (Grade sheet) mapped with Learners APAAR ID
Autonomous College	Autonomous College	1287	33,25,904	1,04,27,612
Standalone Institutions	Standalone Institutions	258	5,54,652	2,95,351
Institute of National Importance	AIIMS	10	8,697	
	IIIT	25	36,175	89,767
	IIM	21	30,971	98,216
	IISER	7	13,493	46,161
	IIT	23	1,09,262	3,41,666
	NID	5	1,922	3,690
	NIFTEM	1	1,188	5,270
	NIPER	6	2,240	6,334
	NIT	31	1,59,807	4,05,168
	Others INI	14	22,769	66,923
University	SPA	3	2,706	7,774
	Central University	57	49,09,200	57,73,788
	Deemed to be University	141	15,45,183	42,03,142
	Private University	521	34,56,172	87,17,160
State University		489	3,37,32,125	6,73,09,371
Total Count of (HEIs)		2899	4,79,12,466	9,77,97,393
Skill Awarding Bodies	Skill ABs	98	36,98,558	3,37,838
School Education	(APAAR IDs in School)		16.62 (Cr.)	
Unmapped	(APAAR ID)		3.39 (Cr.)	

The initiative has already achieved significant scale across the country. For all examinations held in 2025, the UGC were mandated all Higher Education

document exchange system that streamlines verification and significantly reduces processing time.

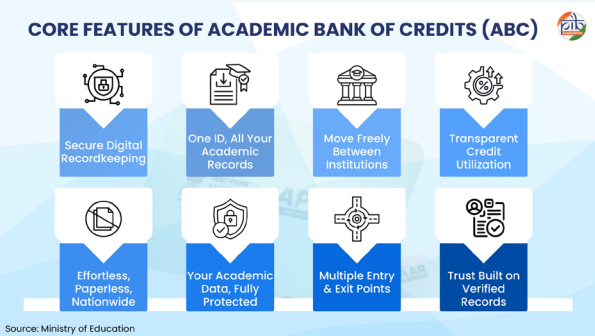
Managing Data Security in ABC and APAAR

The platforms adopt robust security protocols and encryption standards to ensure data privacy and integrity. Access is authenticated via APAAR ID and Aadhaar-linked DigiLocker credentials, safeguarding user information while maintaining seamless accessibility across all integrated systems and institutional frameworks.

Institutions to upload credit data on the NAD-ABC portal by 30th June, 2026. Report As on dated 2nd July 2026

Key Features and Outcomes

- **Academic Mobility:** Students can study across multiple HEIs and transfer their credits seamlessly between programmes and institutions.
- ABC provides students with a **seamless, consent-based**



- **Multiple Entry Multiple Exit (MEME):** ABC enables the MEME framework under NEP 2020. This allows provisions for obtaining a Certificate after completion of one year; Diploma after two years; Degree after three or four years. More than 700 Universities & 6,600 Colleges are offering multiple entry exit options.
- Students can access their academic records and **digital certificates** from anywhere, at any time.
- **Reduced dropout rates** and improved motivation to learn continuously.
- ABC is bridging the gap between the formal, informal and experiential learning.
- Under this initiative, there are several student-linked benefits. By authenticating the APAAR ID, students between the ages of 13 and 30 can unlock exclusive travel

benefits, including up to a **10% discount** on base airfares and an extra **10kg baggage allowance**.

- **SWAYAM Integration:** Students may avail up to 40% of credits from the SWAYAM online platform.
- About 450 universities have adopted this regulation, broadening access to quality learning.
- **National Credit Framework (NCrF):** NCrF is aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and encompasses academic, vocational, and experiential learning. NCrF has been adopted by 196 universities across India as of 2026.

ABCs Digital Public Infrastructure

ABC is a key component of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for education, under the Digital India Programme.

- Integration with **NAD-DigiLocker** allows students secure, anytime access to their own verified academic records.
- The Digital India Corporation/ NeGD (Ministry of Electronics and IT) featured ABC-NAD in its Digital India '**Ask Our Experts**' series in November 2024.
- Deploying the **SAMARTH ERP (prominent, cloud-based**

e-governance platform) for **ABC** integration provides a standardised, unified gateway for students and university administration.

- ABC Providing APIs for the Integration with the Institutional platform to verify Students APAAR ID and issuance of records on NAD-ABC.
- For students authentication institutions and their educational platform may also consume login with APAAR ID module using Single-sign-on.
- **CSCs in remote villages** now serve as on-ground points for ABC and APAAR registration, bridging the digital divide.

Towards A Trusted Digital Education Ecosystem

Together, ABC and APAAR are building a trusted digital ecosystem for academic records, making education more flexible, transparent, and accessible for every learner. By enabling seamless credit mobility, secure record management, and lifelong learning, these initiatives are laying the foundation for a future-ready education system.

As these platforms continue to evolve and scale, emerging technologies offer new opportunities to further strengthen the security and authenticity of digital

academic credentials. In this context, Blockchain for Digital Credentials offers the next step. Developed by the Digital India Corporation, it is India's sovereign blockchain platform for secure, verifiable and tamper-proof digital credentials at scale. Blockchain for Digital Credentials can be adopted in two ways: Through DIC's managed blockchain infrastructure for quick deployment or by operating dedicated blockchain nodes for greater autonomy and flexibility. All academic data remains within India's sovereign digital infrastructure, and the platform is fully compliant with the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act**.

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11

Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme

Catalysing Rural Economies through Grassroots Entrepreneurship

Published on: July 25, 2026

The Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme supports non-farm enterprises through training, finance, mentoring, and community-led institutional support. By June 30, 2026, SVEP had supported 4.32 lakh rural enterprises across the country. The programme has strongly focused on social inclusion and equitable access to entrepreneurship opportunities. Around 86% of entrepreneurs belong to SC, ST, Minority, and OBC communities. Through SHGs, CRP-EPs, bank linkages, and convergence with schemes like Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, SVEP has expanded its outreach. SVEP has emerged as an effective grassroots model for poverty reduction, local employment generation, and rural economic development.

Enterprise-Led Rural Transformation in India

India has the third-largest start-up ecosystem in the world. It has thrived with the support of favourable government policies and has proven highly beneficial for the economy's growth. However, most of the Indian start-up ecosystems are based in urban areas. Hence, the government has launched several initiatives to promote entrepreneurship and innovation in rural areas. One of the key initiatives is the Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP).

Launched in 2016, SVEP is a sub-scheme of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods

Mission (DAY-NRLM). The programme supports Self Help Groups (SHGs) and their family members in establishing small enterprises in the non-farm sector. It provides financial assistance, institutional support, business management training, soft skill development, and business development services. This promotes sustainable livelihoods and self-employment opportunities in rural areas.

SVEP also facilitates access to banking linkages and convergence with government schemes. The strategic focus has been on achieving long-term economic growth and wider social benefits. A key feature of SVEP has been community-based decision-making for funding and supporting enterprises locally.

Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Program

Being implemented under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission

Strategic Focus Areas of the Scheme



Source: Ministry of Rural Development

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) is one of the world's largest livelihood initiatives. It mobilizes rural poor households into Self-Help Groups (SHGs), predominantly women. The focus is on providing them with sustainable livelihoods, access to financial services, and skill development. As of mid-June 2026, more than 10.29 crore rural households have been mobilized into SHGs under DAY-NRLM.

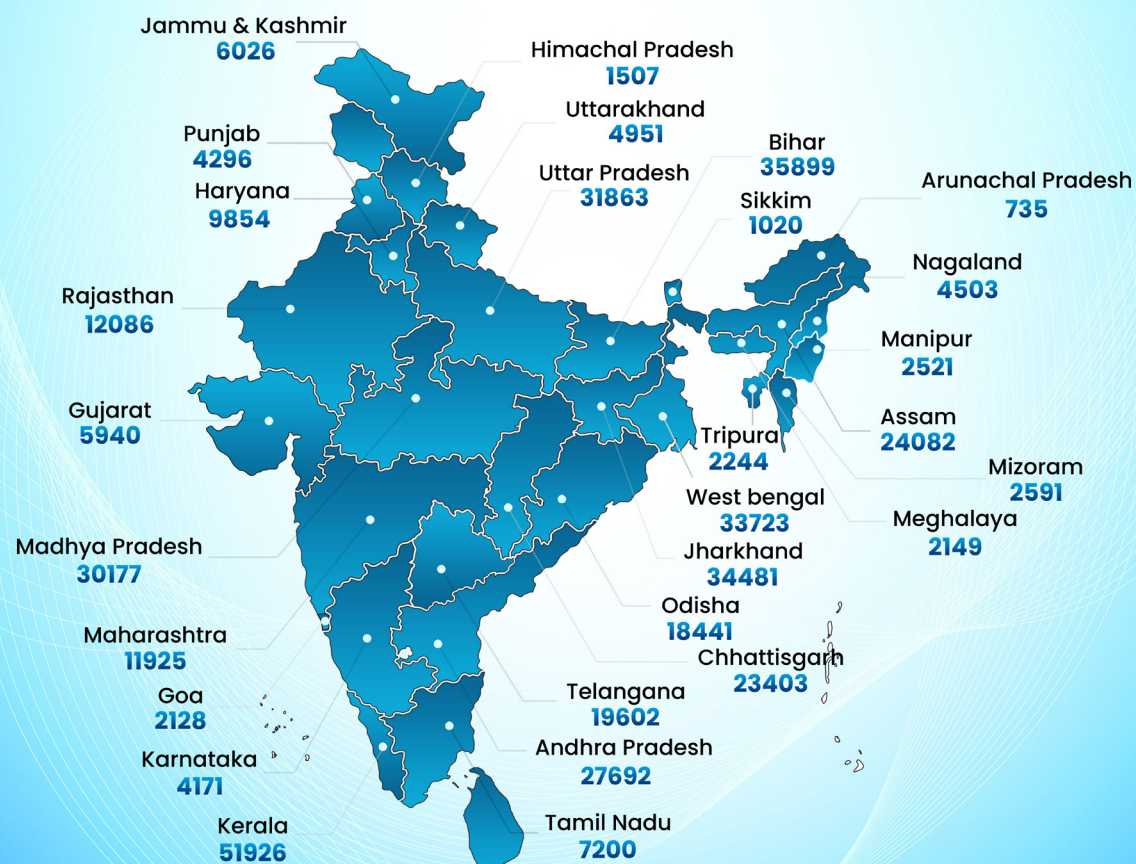
Scaling Rural Entrepreneurship Across India

SVEP has adopted an all-inclusive approach, with a strong focus on supporting women, marginalized communities, and individuals with

limited educational attainment. Since its inception till June 15, 2026, the programme has supported over 4.32 lakh rural enterprises. Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh have recorded the highest number of enterprises supported under the programme.

Number of Enterprises Supported Under SVEP

(Till Feb, 2026)



Source: Ministry of Rural Development

From SHG Member to Rural Business Leader

Ms. Bhagyashri Londhe from Jahanpur, Maharashtra, began her journey by joining an SHG in 2014. Participation in SHG and Village Organization (VOs) activities strengthened her leadership and business skills. She began her entrepreneurial journey by producing small-scale quantities of masala, papad, and pickles. A ₹45,000 **Community Enterprise** Fund loan under SVEP enabled her to scale up production by leveraging locally sourced raw

materials. Her entrepreneurial efforts gained recognition at Mahalaxmi Saras 2019-20, where she earned ₹5 lakh in revenue within ten days.

Her aspirations to learn and grow enabled her to upgrade her business knowledge and skills. She completed her Class 10 education through an open university while managing her enterprise. Training under NRLM and Krishi Vigyan Kendra enhanced her business literacy and technical capabilities. Consequently, her enterprise started producing large volumes daily, generating regular income, and creating employment for rural women. Her journey demonstrates how entrepreneurship, continuous learning, and institutional support can **transform aspiring women into successful business leaders**.

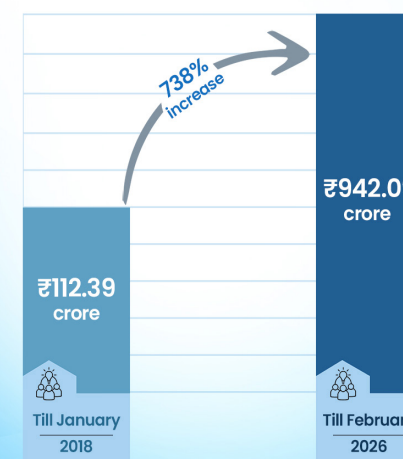
To support the continued expansion of SVEP, the government has released a cumulative central share of ₹942.09 crore up to February 2026. This is nearly 738% higher than the cumulative ₹112.39 crore released between the programme's launch in 2016 and January 2018.

Roadmap for Nurturing and Scaling Rural Enterprises

SVEP is implemented through the State Rural Livelihoods Missions (SRLMs), with a provision of **₹6.50 crore** per block and an average investment of **₹27,083 per enterprise**.

At the block level, **Block Resource Centres-Enterprise Promotion (BRC-EPs)** coordinate programme implementation. Trained **Community Resource Persons-Enterprise Promotion (CRP-EPs)** provide technical assistance to the Block Resource Centres on enterprise promotion. Banks extend financial support to eligible entrepreneurs. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and their federations help identify

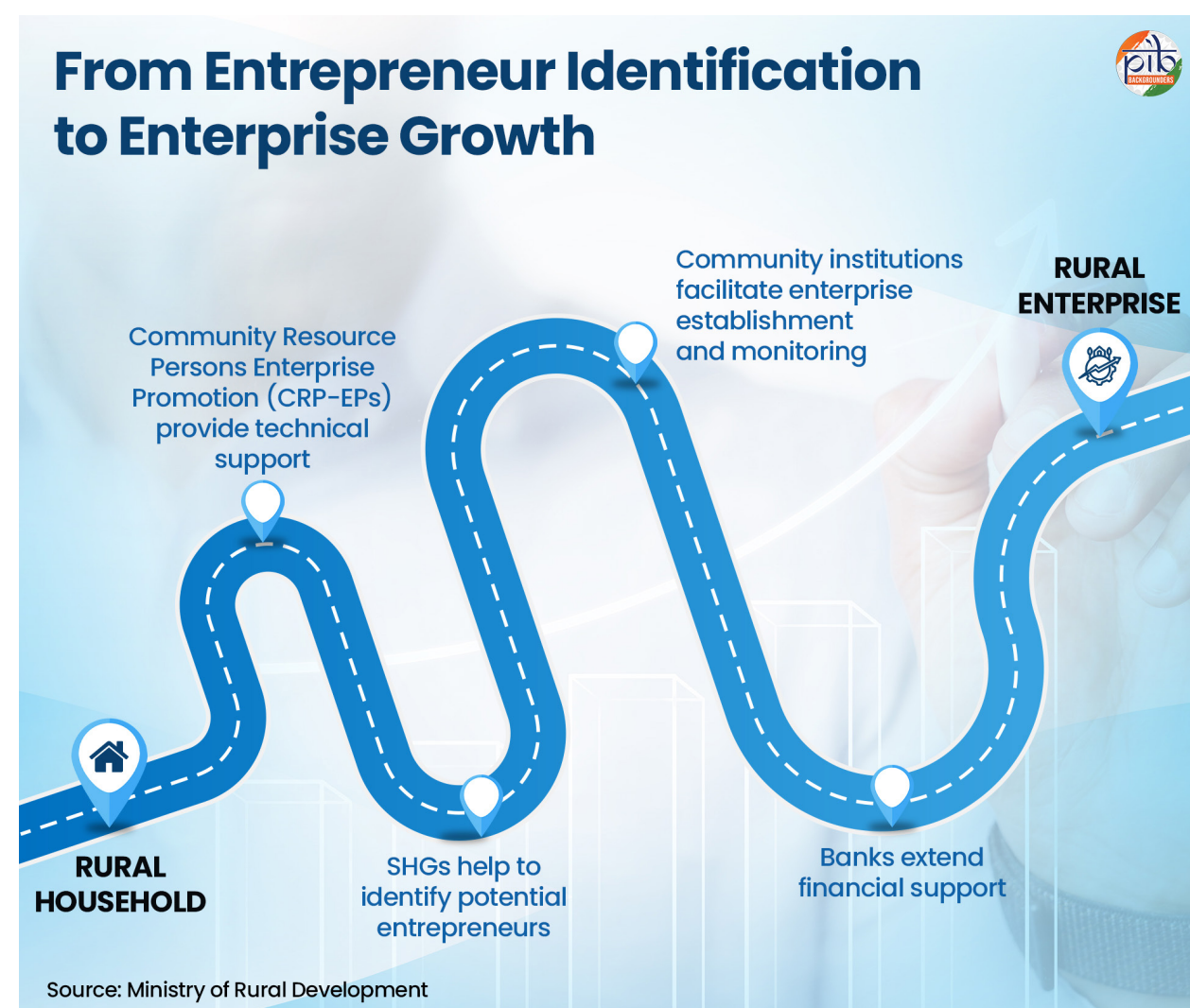
Central Share Released under SVEP Scheme



Source: Ministry of Rural Development

potential entrepreneurs. Community institutions facilitate enterprise establishment and provide handholding support. They also manage loans through the **Community Enterprise Fund (CEF)**. Community institutions also regularly monitor enterprise performance and growth. Digital tools support **business planning, loan appraisal, and enterprise tracking**. This integrated mechanism ensures effective implementation and enterprise development.

CRP-EPs are selected jointly by SRLMs and Project Implementing Agencies through testing, training, and certification. Preference is given to local residents with basic business and mathematical skills. At least 90% of CRP-EPs are selected from SHG households, with women constituting a minimum of 60% of the cadre. Each CRP-EP provides mentoring, training, and credit facilitation support to up to 50 enterprises.



From SHG Member to Best Performing CRP-EP

Ms. Poonam from Uttar Pradesh overcame social and financial barriers to become a successful CRP-EP. After joining a Self-Help Group, she was introduced to SVEP and completed a 54-day CRP-EP training programme. The training equipped her with skills in enterprise promotion and livelihood development. After completing her training, she began supporting nearly 40 enterprises by assisting with business planning, facilitating access to credit, establishing market linkages, and providing ongoing mentorship. Poonam credits SVEP for her financial independence and values the opportunity it has given her to help others establish and grow their businesses. Her journey reflects how community-based institutions and entrepreneurship support can strengthen rural livelihoods and advance women's economic empowerment.

Entrepreneurs are identified by community institutions based on need, poverty status, and entrepreneurial potential. Beneficiaries receive **training, mentoring, and financial support** after enterprise viability assessment, with final loan approval provided by community-based organisations. The programme mandates that at least 60% of beneficiaries are women, while ensuring representation of persons with disabilities and SC/ST/minority communities.

SVEP is monitored at the State and Central levels through quarterly reviews and periodic assessments. Further, there is a centralized MIS system for tracking enterprise performance, fund utilisation, and programme progress.

Impact of SVEP on Rural Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship

The Quality Council of India (QCI) conducted a mid-term evaluation of the SVEP for the Ministry of Rural Development, with major field assessments undertaken in 2019. The review assessed the programme's impact on rural enterprises, livelihoods, and social inclusion.

The findings indicate positive outcomes in income generation, enterprise development, and empowerment of vulnerable communities:

- 99% of SVEP-supported enterprises were profitable.

- SVEP enterprises contributed 57% of total household income.
- Average monthly enterprise revenue was about ₹39,000.
- Manufacturing enterprises recorded the highest average revenue at ₹47,800 per month.
- 96% of entrepreneurs reported increased savings.
- 75% of enterprises were owned or managed by women.

SVEP helped entrepreneurs earn incomes above their initial aspirations. Improved access to finance enabled entrepreneurs to establish and grow enterprises. Continuous mentoring strengthened enterprise management and sustainability.

Moreover, SVEP encouraged women and disadvantaged communities to become **first-generation entrepreneurs**. Beneficiaries reported **improved confidence** and livelihood security. Many households experienced **better education, nutrition, health, and sanitation outcomes**. Entrepreneurs gained stronger business management and financial skills. **Increased savings** and reinvestment supported long-term enterprise growth. The programme also **enhanced the social standing** of beneficiaries within their communities.

From Welfare to Enterprise-Led Development

SVEP has demonstrated that rural entrepreneurship can act as a powerful driver of inclusive economic growth when supported by strong community institutions. By empowering women, SC/ST communities, and first-generation entrepreneurs, the programme has transformed local aspirations into sustainable enterprises. This further leads to higher incomes, increased savings, and improved household well-being. More importantly, it has shown that entrepreneurial talent exists in every village and can flourish when provided with the right ecosystem. As India advances towards becoming a global start-up hub, programmes such as SVEP are laying the foundation for a vibrant rural start-up ecosystem. It is generating employment, strengthen local economies, and unlock new opportunities for millions of rural families. In conclusion, this is contributing to the vision of a self-reliant and developed India.

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12

Index of Services Production:

Measuring the Pulse of India's Services Economy

Published on: July 14, 2026

Index of Services Production: A Window into Services Sector Performance

India has significantly strengthened its statistical and administrative data ecosystem over the past decade. Some key developments include availability of high-frequency GST data, launch of Annual Survey of Incorporated Services Sector Enterprises (ASISSE), and the expansion of digital administrative databases, enabling more robust evidence-based policymaking. Building on these reforms, the Government has introduced the Index of Services Production (ISP), a new macroeconomic indicator to capture the performance of the services sector. The ISP is India's

first high- frequency indicator dedicated to measuring services sector output. It tracks short-term changes in the volume of output produced by the formal services sector relative to a specified base year. As services account for the largest share of India's economy, the ISP is expected to strengthen economic monitoring, improve national accounts estimation, and support more informed policy decisions.

First Release: Trial Index of Services Production

The Government has released the first sub-sectoral trial ISP for 19 sub-sectors for April 2026, covering ~60% of the services sector.

Out of the 19 sub-sectors, 14 recorded double-digit growth in April, 2026 as compared to April, 2025.

Top 5 sub-sectors with strong monthly growth include accommodation and food (37.2%), retail trade (30.8%), administrative & support services (28.7%), real estate (27.7%) and telecommunications (22.8%).

The yearly top 5 sub-sectors for 2025-26 include accommodation and food (35.6%), retail trade (30.5%), repair services (25.1%), wholesale trade (23.6%) and road transport (22.6%).

Key Features of the Index

With the introduction of ISP, India is advancing its statistical system with global standards. Some of the key features of the index include:

- The **base year of ISP has been selected as 2024-25**. This is well aligned with other sub-sectors that use the new Consumer Price Index (CPI) series, also 2024-based.
- Key users of the ISP include **national accounts, economic ministries and departments, researchers, and domain experts**.

- **Regular monthly trial indices** will be released with a lag of ~60 days. Data will be available on the 29th of each month or the next working day if 29th is a holiday.
- Currently, different **price deflators** are used for ISP compilation.

1. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) is used for wholesale trade.
2. For most other sectors, the relevant Consumer Price Index (CPI) or the closest matching CPI is used.
3. CPI-General is applied to repair & maintenance, banking, and insurance

Need for Deflator

The ISP tracks short-term changes in the volume of services produced. Since primary service data is usually collected in value terms, it captures the effects of both the prices and value addition. A price deflator is therefore required to remove the effects of change in prices from nominal service revenue.

A price deflator transforms “value-based” (nominal) data into “volume-based” (real) data, providing accurate measurement of actual changes over time.

4. CPI-Services is used for sectors where a specific CPI is not available.

Building India's ISP Framework

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme

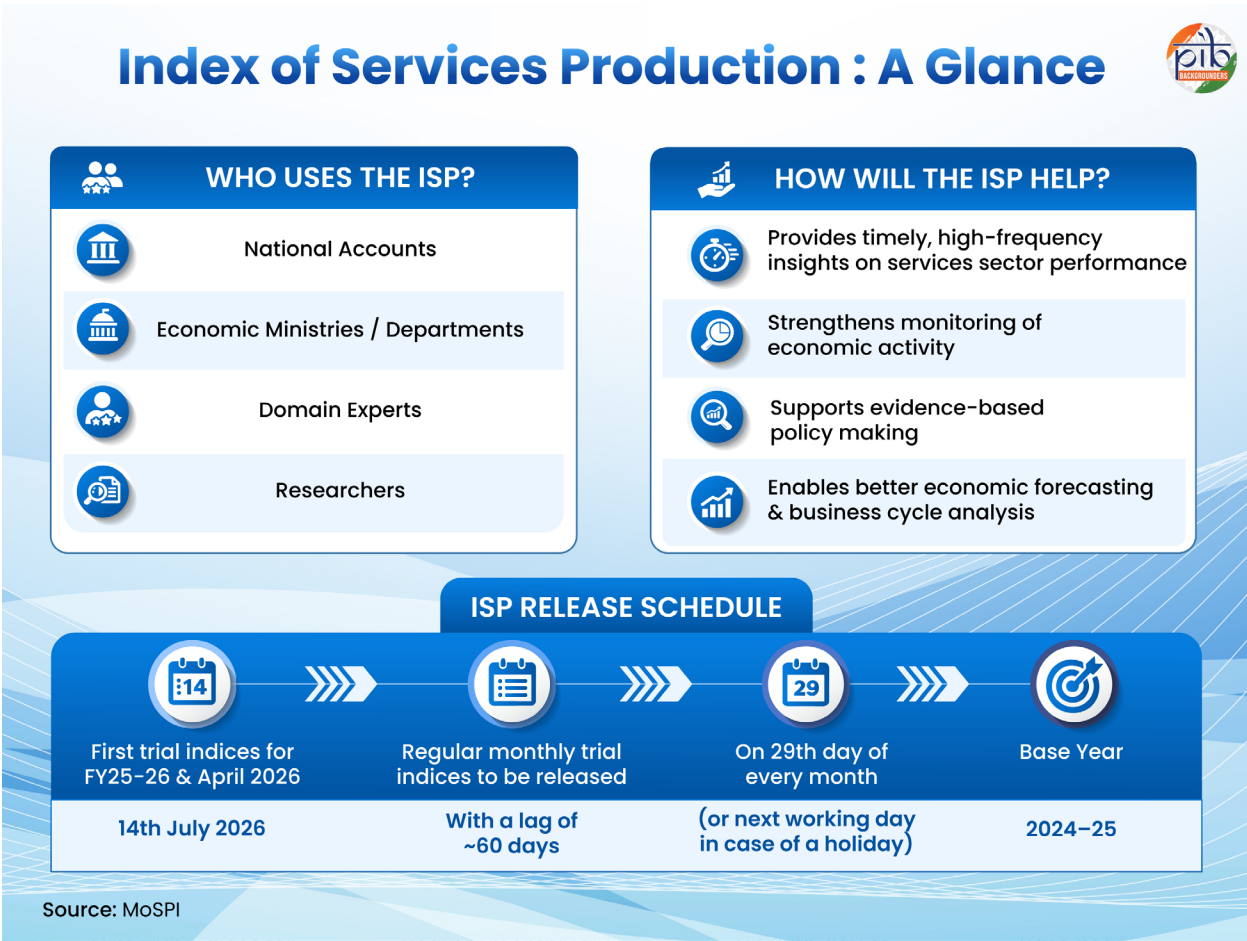
Implementation (MoSPI) constituted a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in May 2025 to develop the ISP's conceptual and methodological framework. TAC comprised experts from academia,

industry associations, ministries and departments representing the services sector. TThe proposed framework has been developed with reference to international best practices.

The OECD Compilation Manual for Index of Services Production (2007) is the most comprehensive set of guidelines on ISP compilation. Eurostat, the statistical

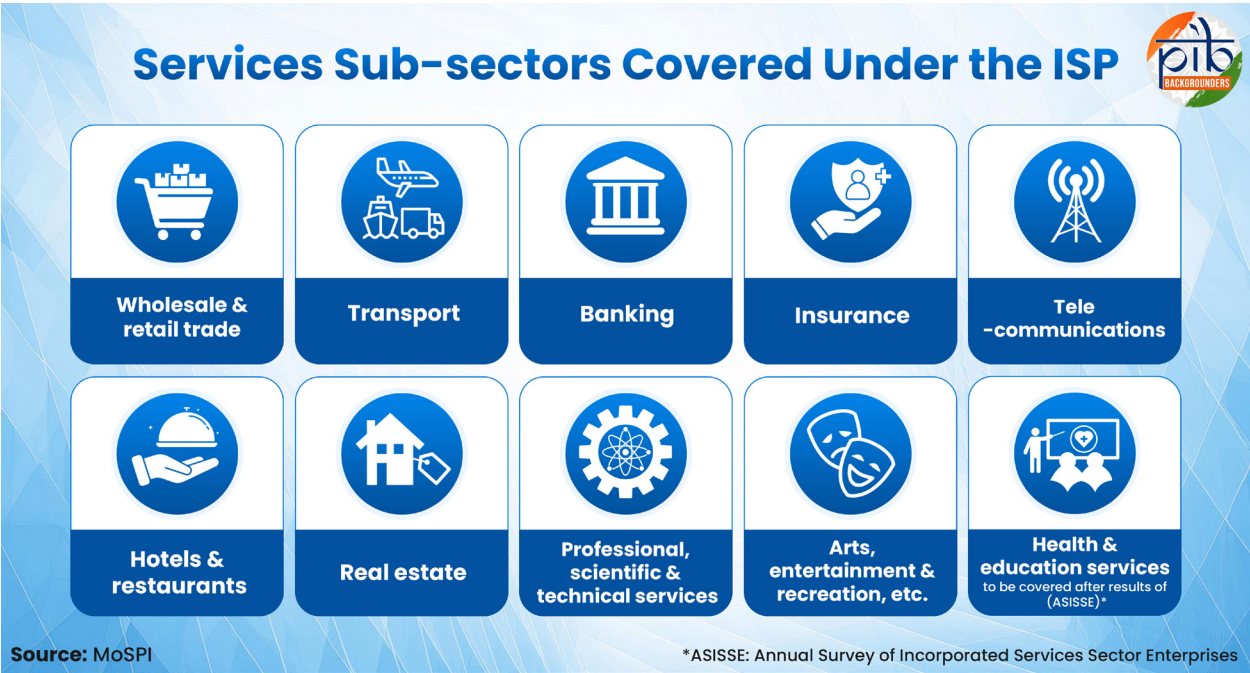
office of the European Union is another key global guide for ISP.

Notably, several advanced economies regularly publish an ISP or equivalent indicators, such as France, Spain, and Slovenia. Beyond the EU, South Korea publishes a monthly Service Industry Activity Index while the United Kingdom compiles a comprehensive Monthly Index of Services.



Sectoral Coverage of the Index of Services Production

The ISP initially covers service sub-sectors where reliable, high-frequency data is available.



Excluded services sub-sectors from the ISP are- public administration and defence, financial services excluding banking and insurance (such as activities of the central bank, money market funds), social work activities without accommodation, services of membership organisations, personal services, activities of private households with employed persons, activities of extraterritorial organisations, health and education services provided by Government and gambling and betting activities.

These sectors are either related to core government activities or are dominated by non – market activities and the informal sector.

The Data Ecosystem Powering ISP

Three main data sources are used for compiling the ISP- administrative data, GST and ASISSE-

- **Administrative/secondary data** for ISP of air transport, railway transport,

banking and insurance.

- **ASISSE data** (once available) for health and education (excluding Government) sectors. Launched in April 2026, it aims to develop a comprehensive database of the incorporated services sector.
- **GST data** for wholesale trade, retail trade, repair and maintenance,

accommodation and food, road transport, water transport, warehousing and support activities for transportation, postal & courier, telecommunications, information and broadcasting, real estate, information and computer related services, professional, scientific & technical services including R & D, administrative & support services and arts, entertainment & recreation, etc.

DID YOU KNOW?
GST data will be used for the first time in statistical applications.

Why ISP Matters?

India's economy has undergone a **significant structural transformation** over the past few decades. It is driven by economic reforms, technological advancements, and increasing integration with global markets. The services sector has become a key driver of economic growth and employment generation.

- It is the largest contributor to India's GDP, **contributing over 50% of the Gross Value Added (GVA) since 2013-14**. In 2024 -25, share of services GVA stood close to 52.9%.
- The sector accounts for ~30% of total employment across India and

generated ~40 million jobs over the past six years.

- India's **services exports** maintained strong momentum in FY2026-27. Across April-June 2026-27, services exports are estimated at USD 103.41 billion, registering a 6.16% Y-o-Y growth.
- The Government aims to position India as a world leader in services, targeting a 10% share in global services by 2047.

As the services sector is central to India's growth, a dedicated short-term indicator to track its performance has become essential. The **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** measures only industrial activity and does not capture short-term trends in the services sector. To address this gap, the Government has introduced the ISP.

A New Milestone in India's Economic Measurement

The launch of the ISP reflects India's commitment to modernising its statistical framework in line with a rapidly evolving economy. By bringing high-frequency data and robust methodology together, the ISP offers timely insights into India's largest economic sector. As a monthly indicator, it strengthens economic monitoring, improves policy responses

and deepens the understanding of India's growth trajectory.

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13

Modified UDAN

Strengthening India's Regional Aviation Network

Published on: July 17, 2026



Launched to expand regional air connectivity, the UDAN scheme has widened access to air travel across India. Over nine years, the scheme has operationalised 679 routes across 95 airports, heliports and water aerodromes. More than 3.58 lakh flights have served over 1.68 crore passengers under the scheme. Modified UDAN is being implemented from FY 2026–27 to FY 2035–36 with an outlay of ₹28,840 crore. The scheme also envisions 100 new airports and 200 modern helipads to strengthen last-mile connectivity.

Bridging Distances Through Regional Connectivity

Connectivity has long been the backbone of economic progress, linking production to markets and people to opportunity. The ability to move quickly and reliably has become essential to sustaining growth. In this evolving landscape, aviation has emerged as a powerful pillar of speed, access and reach. For generations, however, this connectivity did not reach everyone equally. Air travel in India was largely concentrated in a handful of major cities. Many smaller towns lacked regular air services. This gap highlighted the growing need to extend the benefits of air connectivity beyond metropolitan centres. More regions needed to be integrated into the national aviation map.

Recognising this need for inclusive and widespread connectivity, the

Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) – UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) was launched in October 2016. The scheme marks a major step towards making air travel more affordable and accessible to citizens. It also expands connectivity to underserved and unserved regions. India now ranks as the third-largest domestic aviation market globally. Over the past decade, India's civil aviation sector has grown significantly. The number of operational airports increased from 74 in 2014 to 165 as of 15th July 2026. The UDAN scheme plays a key role by operationalising new routes and strengthening the regional aviation ecosystem. It has created momentum for a more balanced aviation network across the country.

Building on this, the Modified UDAN Scheme, launched on 4th July 2026, marks another transformation in India's aviation journey. The scheme is being implemented over a period of 10 years,

from FY 2026–27 to FY 2035–36, with a total outlay of ₹28,840 crore. This new phase places greater emphasis on expanding airport infrastructure, improving operational support, and creating a viable ecosystem for airline operators serving smaller markets. It seeks to consolidate earlier gains and address emerging demands.



The recently inaugurated New Terminal Building at Jodhpur Airport further reaffirms the commitment to developing world-class aviation infrastructure. The 23,342-square-metre terminal accommodates 1,500 peak-hour passengers and 20 lakh passengers annually. It features 20 check-in counters, advanced security screening systems, modern baggage handling facilities and six aerobridges, ensuring a seamless passenger experience.

The Next Phase: Modified UDAN

Expanding connectivity requires more than new routes. It also needs stronger infrastructure and reliable operational systems. Airline operators in smaller markets require adequate support mechanisms. Several regions face difficult geographical conditions. In such areas, helipads and specialised aircraft improve access to essential services. The Regional Connectivity Scheme– Modified UDAN has therefore been designed as a strengthened and forward-looking framework to address these requirements.

Key Parameters of the Regional Connectivity Scheme

MODIFIED UDAN

- Duration: **10 years**
- Implementation Period: **FY 2026–27 to FY 2035–36**
- Total Outlay: **₹28,840 crore**

Source: Ministry of Civil Aviation

Components of the Modified UDAN Scheme

The Modified UDAN Scheme brings together a set of targeted components aimed at long-term growth and viability.

Development of Aerodromes

The development of aerodromes is a central pillar of the Modified UDAN Scheme. Under this component, **100 airports** will be developed from existing unserved airstrips to expand aviation infrastructure across the country. The initiative seeks to integrate smaller towns and remote regions more effectively into the national transportation network. It enables faster movement of passengers and goods while supporting regional economic development. A total outlay of **₹12,159 crore** has been proposed for the development of these aerodromes over the next eight years.

Operation and Maintenance Support

The sustainability of smaller aerodromes depends on continued operations. The Modified UDAN Scheme, therefore, provides structured Operation and Maintenance support. Many RCS-only aerodromes face high recurring costs alongside limited revenue streams during their initial years of operation. Operational support is therefore critical for reliable services. To address this challenge, the scheme proposes to

provide O&M support for a period of **three years**. This is capped at **₹3.06 crore per annum per airport** and **₹0.90 crore per annum per heliport or water aerodrome**. This component is estimated at **₹2,577 crore** and is expected to support approximately **441 aerodromes** across the country.

Development of Modern Helipads

In several parts of the country, conventional airport infrastructure may not always be feasible due to geographical constraints. In such areas, helicopter connectivity plays a vital role in ensuring timely access to essential services and improving last-mile connectivity. The Modified UDAN Scheme proposes the development of **200 modern helipads** focused on priority regions where connectivity gaps remain significant. These facilities are expected to improve access to healthcare, support emergency response operations, and facilitate administrative and economic activities. Each helipad has an estimated cost of **₹15 crore**. The total projected outlay for this component is **₹3,661 crore over eight years**.

Viability Gap Funding for Airlines

To support airline operators and encourage sustained route development in smaller markets, the scheme continues the provision of Viability Gap Funding (VGF). Regional routes often require financial support in the early stages due

to lower passenger volumes and higher operational costs. VGF helps ensure that services remain viable while demand gradually develops. Under the Modified UDAN framework, a total of ₹10,043 crore has been proposed towards VGF over a ten-year period. Airlines will receive funding support for up to five years. A tapered funding mechanism will begin from the third year, while exclusivity on routes will remain limited to three years. This structure is intended to balance market development with the gradual transition towards commercial sustainability.



Atmanirbhar Bharat and Indigenous Aviation Capacity

The Modified UDAN Scheme also incorporates a strong focus on strengthening indigenous aviation capacity under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. One of the operational challenges has been the limited availability of small fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters suited for operations in remote and difficult terrain. The scheme proposes two HAL Dhruv helicopters for Pawan Hans and two HAL Dornier aircraft for Alliance Air. These aircraft are designed to operate effectively in challenging conditions while supporting domestic manufacturing capability.

UDAN: Building a Strong Foundation

Over nine years of implementation, the UDAN scheme has delivered significant outcomes.

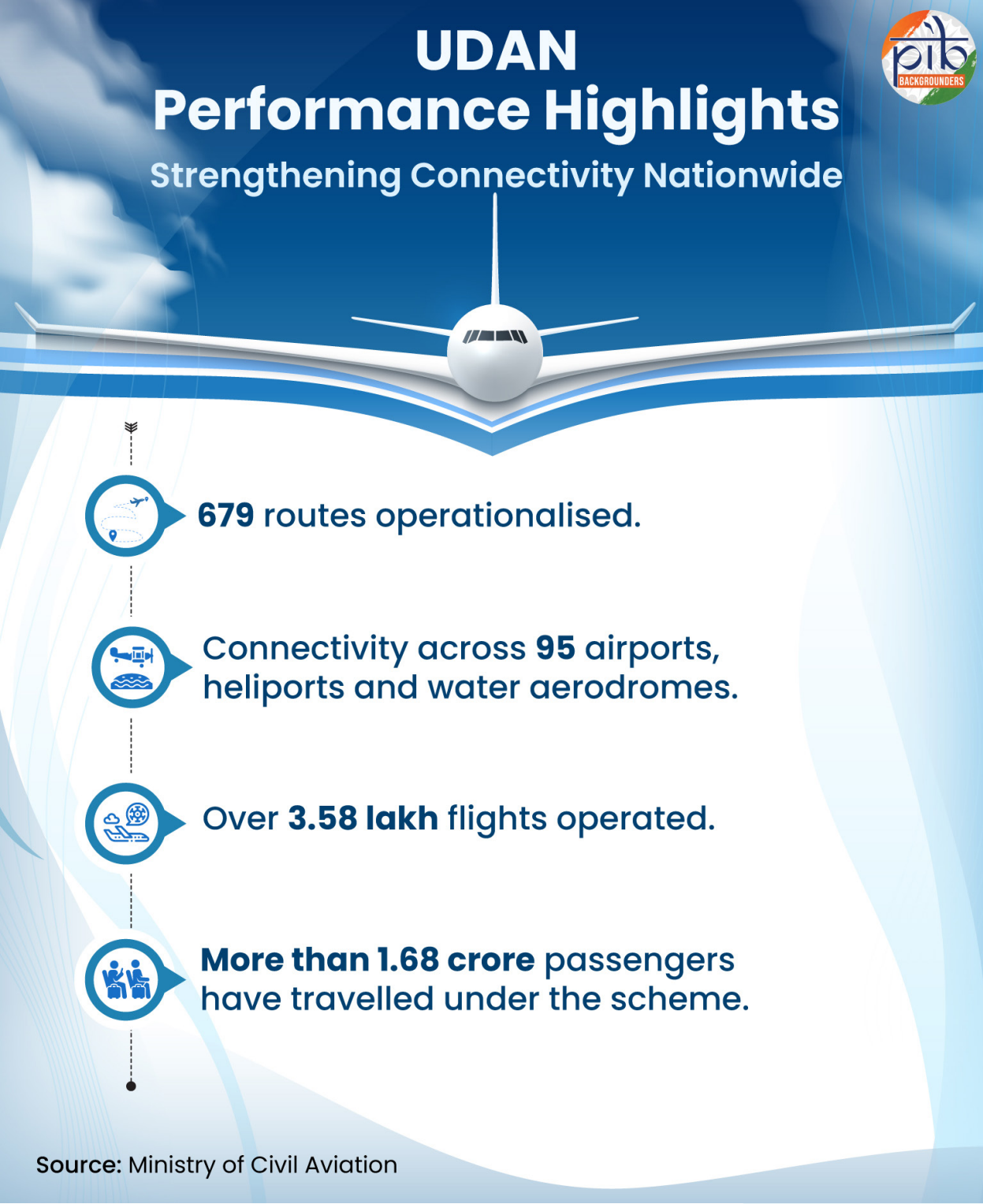
Operational Achievements

As of 15th July 2026, 679 routes connect 95 airports, heliports and water aerodromes nationwide. More than 3.58 lakh flights have operated under the scheme since its launch, benefitting over 1.68 crore passengers. These achievements highlight UDAN's contribution to mobility, economic activity and balanced development.

Impact on Connectivity and Services

The impact of UDAN has been visible across multiple regions. Its benefits are especially important in remote, hilly and island areas like Tezpur, Passighat, Diu, Pithoragarh, Rourkela among various others. The scheme has improved access to transportation services and strengthened links between smaller

towns and major urban centres. In addition, UDAN has supported the development of tourism and improved access to healthcare and emergency services in several areas. Passenger facilitation remains a key priority. Several initiatives have been introduced to improve passenger comfort and ease of travel. UDAN Yatri Cafés provide affordable food options at airports across the country. Flybrary for free access to books and free Wi-Fi services, further



A Journey Made Easier: How UDAN is Changing Everyday Travel

UDAN has significantly reduced travel time between cities. One such example is the air route connecting Vijayawada and Kadapa. What was once a long and time-consuming journey can now be completed in about an hour by air. This demonstrates the tangible benefits of improved regional connectivity. Sharing his experience, Nagendra Bharti from Andhra Pradesh noted that the journey between Vijayawada and Kadapa earlier took 8 to 10 hours by road, but has now become much easier and significantly shorter by air. Similarly, Sayyed Iliyaz Ahmed from Vidyanagar observed that a journey that once took around six hours can now be completed in just one hour at a reasonable cost. This reflects the broader success of the UDAN scheme in connecting regions, reducing travel barriers, and improving mobility for citizens. By bringing distant locations within quick reach, UDAN continues to enhance everyday convenience for communities across the country.

enhance the travel experience.

Funding Mechanism and Institutional Support

Geographically large countries such as the US, Canada, Brazil and Australia often rely on public funding to sustain regional air connectivity. India introduced a first-of-its-kind model — the RCS levy mechanism under the UDAN scheme, which enables funding from within the sector. This is done by levying a small fee on selected categories of domestic

flights. Government participation has improved coordination and airport-level ownership. Non-monetary concessions have helped reduce operational costs across the aviation ecosystem.

UDAN to Modified UDAN: Expanding India’s Aviation Vision

The journey from UDAN to Modified UDAN reflects India’s sustained commitment to building an inclusive and resilient aviation network. It connects regions, supports economic activity and improves everyday mobility for citizens. Over nine years, UDAN has transformed regional aviation across India. Hundreds of routes now connect previously underserved locations. Air travel has become accessible to millions. The approval of Modified UDAN reinforces the resolve to build a civil aviation ecosystem that is modern, inclusive and sustainable. It ensures that the promise of affordable and accessible air travel reaches every part of the country.

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A satellite with large solar panels is shown in orbit above the Earth's horizon. The satellite is illuminated by a bright light source, creating a lens flare effect. The background is the dark space of the universe with a few distant stars.

14

GAGAN: Navigating India's Skies with Precision

Published on: July 1, 2026

GAGAN (GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation) is India's indigenous Satellite-Based Augmentation System developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Airports Authority of India. It enhances GPS accuracy and provides integrity information for safer aircraft navigation. Certified to international standards, GAGAN supports satellite-based landing and serves sectors beyond aviation. By strengthening indigenous navigation capabilities, GAGAN reinforces India's vision of technological self-reliance and global leadership in satellite navigation.

The Need for Precise Navigation: Why India Created GAGAN

Aviation requires highly accurate navigation, where even slightest positioning errors can affect flight safety. While Global Positioning System (GPS) helps aircraft determine their position, its signals can be affected by atmospheric conditions and other sources of error. As India spreads its wings as a major aviation market, the need for precise and reliable navigation has become a national priority.

To address this need, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) jointly developed the **GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation (GAGAN) system**. It is a Satellite-Based Augmentation System (SBAS), a technology that improves GPS by providing real-time correction

and integrity information. Integrity information alerts pilots if a GPS signal is unsuitable for navigation.

The GAGAN project has been fully operational since 2015. It has placed India among a select group of countries with an operational SBAS, alongside the United States, Europe, and Japan. Today, GAGAN supports safer aircraft operations across Indian airspace and has applications beyond aviation. It also strengthens India's indigenous navigation capability and advances the country's vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.



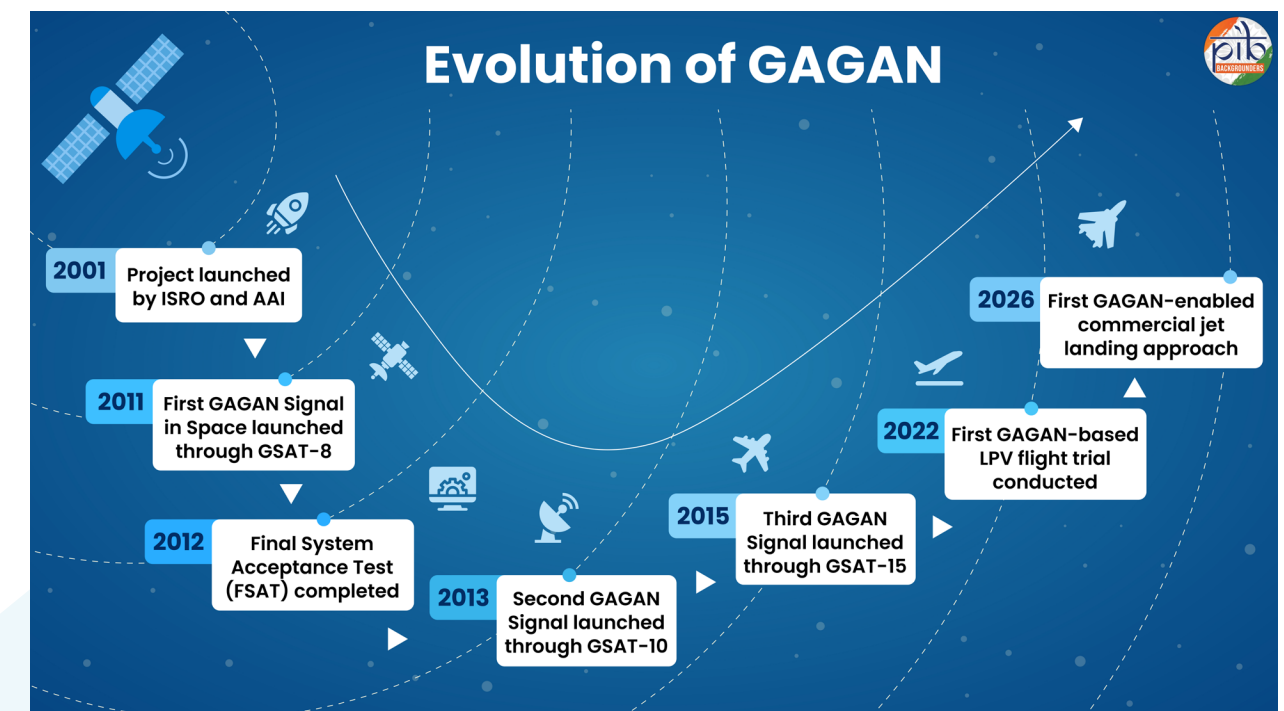
GAGAN in India's Navigation Ecosystem

Since its launch, GAGAN has steadily evolved into a globally recognised Navigational Satellite. Over the years, it has achieved key certifications and operational milestones. Its latest achievement came in June 2026, when the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) successfully conducted India's first satellite-based landing system

approach on a commercial jet aircraft using GAGAN.

Key Elements of GAGAN

GAGAN operates through an integrated network of ground stations, communication systems, and geostationary satellites. These elements monitor GPS signals in real-time, calculate corrections, and broadcast enhanced navigation information to aircraft.



Did you know?

Geostationary satellites orbit at the same speed as the Earth's rotation, making them appear fixed over the same location. GSAT-8, GSAT-10, and GSAT-15 are India's geostationary satellites that carry GAGAN payloads. These are specialised navigation systems that broadcast GAGAN's correction and integrity information to users.

Key Elements	No. of Elements Deployed	Role
Indian Reference Stations (INRES)	15	Continuously monitor GPS signals across the country and detect any errors.
Indian Master Control Centres (INMCC)	2	Process data received from all reference stations, calculate signal corrections, and generate integrity information.
Indian Land Uplink Stations (INLUS)	3	Transmit correction and integrity information from the ground to GAGAN satellites.
Communication Networks	4	Connect all GAGAN stations and enable secure, real-time transmission of navigation data.
Geostationary Satellites with GAGAN Payloads	3	Broadcast corrected navigation signals across the service area.

By enhancing navigation accuracy and seamless operations across the region, it

continues to reinforce India’s leadership in satellite-enabled aviation services.

India’s Indigenous Navigation Ecosystem

The integrated architecture of GAGAN forms an important part of India’s broader satellite navigation programme. Alongside GAGAN, India has

developed the **Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC)**, its indigenous regional navigation satellite system. While NavIC provides positioning, navigation and timing services, GAGAN enhances GPS signals to support precise aircraft navigation and landing.

GAGAN	NavIC
Satellite-Based Augmentation System (SBAS)	Independent regional navigation satellite system
Improves GPS through real-time corrections and integrity information	Provides positioning, navigation and timing services
Supports civil aviation across the Indian Flight Information Region	Coverage area includes India and a region up to 1500 km beyond Indian boundary

Did you know?



In 2025, India signed an agreement with South Africa to establish a NavIC reference station. This initiative will strengthen the performance and reach of India’s indigenous satellite navigation system beyond national boundaries. The partnership enhances navigation cooperation and demonstrates growing international confidence in India’s space-based positioning and timing capabilities.

Interoperable to the Global Navigation Network

GAGAN has been developed in accordance with international civil aviation standards and is interoperable with foreign systems which improve the accuracy of GPS signals like:

- The United States’ Wide Area Augmentation System (WAAS)
- European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS)
- Japan’s Multi-functional Satellite Augmentation System (MSAS)

GAGAN is also the first SBAS certified for the equatorial region, making India one of the few countries with an operational satellite-based augmentation system.

By combining indigenous innovation with international standards, GAGAN is strengthening India’s aviation safety and navigation services.

GAGAN in Action: Multi-Sectoral Applications Beyond Aviation

Although GAGAN was developed primarily for civil aviation, its high-accuracy positioning and navigation capabilities support several other sectors. By improving the accuracy and

reliability of GPS signals, GAGAN enables safer operations, better planning, and more efficient service delivery.

- **Maritime Navigation:** Enables more accurate positioning in coastal and offshore waters.
- **Road Transport and Highways:** Supports intelligent transport systems and fleet management.
- **Railways:** Improves operational efficiency and safety.
- **Disaster Management:** Enables accurate location tracking during emergencies and natural disasters.
- **Defence and Security:** Strengthens navigation for defence operations.
- **Telecommunications:** Supports reliable synchronisation of telecom infrastructure.
- **Surveying and Mapping:** Improves the accuracy of land surveys and geospatial mapping.

By extending benefits of precise satellite navigation beyond aviation, GAGAN is contributing more efficient public services.

The Road Ahead

Going forward, GAGAN will continue to strengthen India’s satellite navigation ecosystem by supporting safer air navigation, improving air traffic management, and expanding satellite-

based navigation services across the country. Alongside NavIC, it will play an important role in advancing indigenous navigation technologies and reducing dependence on foreign systems. With growing applications in transportation, disaster management, surveying, and other sectors, GAGAN is poised to remain a key pillar of India’s journey towards a connected, self-reliant, and technology-driven future.

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15

National Academic Depository (NAD)

Advancing Digital Governance in Education

Published on: July 7, 2026

Current Landscape of Academic Record Management

India has one of the world’s largest and most diverse education systems. It comprises approximately 14.71 lakh schools (as of 2024-25), 1420 universities, 53,583 colleges, 16,795 standalone educational institutions and 280 Research & Development institutes. Together, these institutions generate millions of academic records every year, including degrees, diplomas, certificates, mark sheets, and evaluation reports.

Managing such a vast volume of paper-based academic records is time-consuming, costly, and inefficient. Physical documents are vulnerable to loss, damage, and forgery, while manual verification processes create delays for students, educational institutions, employers, and other stakeholders.

The **National Education Policy (NEP)** 2020 envisions a more flexible, learner-centric, and multidisciplinary education system. Through initiatives such as **Multiple Entry-Multiple Exit (MEME)**, **the National Credit Framework (NCrF)**, and **the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)**, NEP 2020 enables flexible learning pathways and lifelong education. As students increasingly accumulate

learning outcomes across multiple institutions and stages of education, the need for a secure, interoperable, and easily accessible academic records system has become critical.

To support these reforms, the Government introduced the **National Academic Depository (NAD)**—a nationwide framework for the digital storage, verification, and authentication and issuance of academic awards. By maintaining academic records in a secure digital repository, NAD enables students to access their credentials anytime, anywhere, without the need to obtain physical copies from issuing institutions. It also simplifies verification for employers, educational institutions, and other organisations while significantly reducing the risk of fraud through authenticated digital records.

Since 2020, the NAD ecosystem has been implemented through **DigiLocker**. **Digilocker** launched on 1st July 2015 under the **Digital India** programme, DigiLocker serves as the operational digital platform for issuing and accessing academic credentials, within which NAD operates. There is a third component in this ecosystem - the **Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR)** and the **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)**, that manage the credit scores of students and facilitates academic mobility. Together

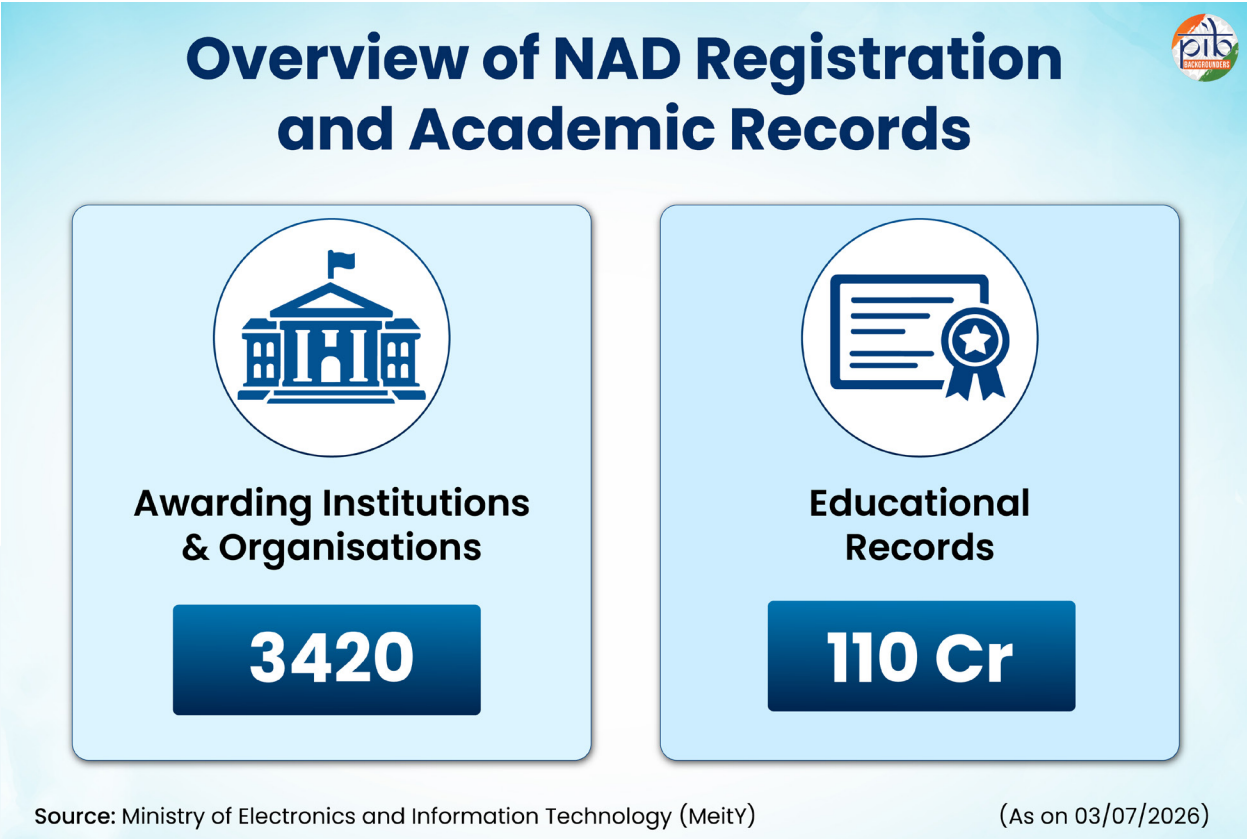
the three components create a unified ecosystem for secure academic record management. NAD is also integrated with the Government’s **e-Sanad** service, enabling electronic verification, attestation, and apostille of educational and other official documents. This integration simplifies document authentication for Indian nationals seeking higher education, employment, or other opportunities abroad.

NAD registers Central, State, Private, deemed-to-be Universities, CBSE and

Boards/Eligibility assessment bodies, Verifying Entities like banks, domestic & overseas employer companies, Government entities etc.

Governance Structure of NAD

The Ministry of Education is the parent ministry responsible for the NAD. It has designated the **University Grants Commission (UGC)** as the nodal agency



other school boards, Institutions of National Importance and other higher education institutions. Its stakeholders include students and other academic award holders, Academic Institutions/

for implementing the NAD through **DigiLocker**. The system works through a coordinated governance framework supported by a robust legal and regulatory

structure. Educational institutions issue verified digital academic records, which can be securely accessed and shared by students, and other organisations can verify them quickly and reliably. All digital credentials are legally valid and hold the same legal status as physical documents under the **Information Technology Act, 2000**.

sheets after completion of a course or examination.

- **Digital Upload to Digi Locker/NAD:** The institution securely uploads or issues these verified academic records into the National Academic Depository (NAD) through the DigiLocker platform.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

The system operates under a strong legal foundation, including:

- Information Technology Act, 2000 – Gives legal recognition to electronic records and digital signatures.
- Digital Locker Rules, 2016 – Ensures documents are shared only with explicit user consent.
- National e-Authentication Framework (NeAF) – Provides secure identity verification and authentication mechanisms.

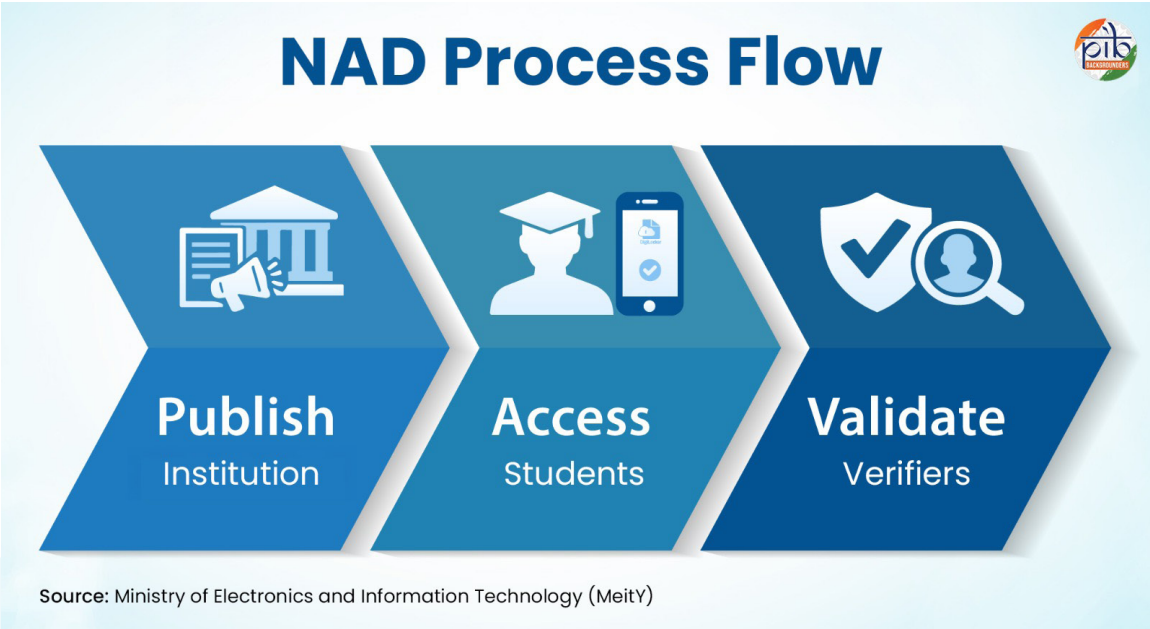
National Academic Depository (NAD): Process Flow

The functioning of NAD follows a structured digital workflow:

- **Academic Award Creation:** Educational institutions (schools, universities, boards, and other authorised bodies) generate academic awards such as degrees, diplomas, certificates, and mark
- **Students Access via DigiLocker:** Once issued, the digital academic documents are automatically linked to the student's DigiLocker account, where they can be securely accessed anytime.
- **Consent-Based Sharing:** Students can share their academic records with employers, higher education institutions, or government agencies only after giving explicit consent through DigiLocker.

- **Verification by Authorities:** Authorised organisations can verify the authenticity of documents directly through NAD/DigiLocker, ensuring that the records are genuine and unaltered.
- **Secure and Permanent Storage:** All records remain safely stored in digital form, reducing the need for physical certificates and eliminating risks such as loss, damage, or forgery.

lifelong access to digital academic credentials, allowing students and academic award holders to retrieve and share their records anytime and from anywhere. By facilitating instant verification of authentic credentials, NAD enhances transparency, improves service delivery, reduces the risk of document fraud. It also streamlines admission, recruitment, and other credential verification processes. The framework also aligns India with global



This process ensures a seamless transition from physical documentation to a fully digital academic record ecosystem.

best practices in digital academic credential management.

Key Benefits of NAD

The National Academic Depository (NAD) provides a secure, trusted, and paperless framework and enables

Secure and Paperless Documentation



Accessibility

Digital documents can be accessed anytime and anywhere.



Authenticity

Documents are issued directly by various Award Granting Institutions (AGIs).



Paperless Processing

Documents can be shared online. This helps to reduce delays and overall processing time.



Source: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)

Students and Academic Award Holders: Access, store, retrieve, and securely share their digital academic credentials throughout their lifetime.

Educational Institutions and Assessment Bodies: Universities, school boards, examination authorities, and certification agencies issue authentic digital academic records and awards through the NAD framework

Benefits for Students



01 Worldwide Recognition

Academic awards are globally recognised and accepted.

02 Digitally Stored

Academic awards are maintained as a permanent online digital record.



03 Hassle-free Sharing

Digital academic awards can be easily shared and verified by authorised individuals or organisations.

04 Safety

Eliminates the risk of losing, damaging, or spoiling academic awards through secure digital storage.



Source: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)

Benefits for Educational Institutions



Valid Awards

Digital awards are legally valid under the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000.



Secure

Ensures the secure issuance and storage of digital academic awards through DigiLocker.



Transparency

Promotes efficient, effective, and transparent administration of academic records.



Authentication by NAD

Provides a reliable mechanism for the verification and authentication of academic awards.



Source: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)

Verifying Entities: Employers, school and higher education institutions, government departments, banks, licensing authorities, can instantly

verify the authenticity of academic credentials, reducing verification time and administrative burden.

Benefits for Verifiers



Wide Accessibility



Provides access to millions of digital academic awards through a centralised platform.

Security



Eliminates the risk of relying on fake or forged academic credentials.

Reliable



Enables quick and reliable verification of academic awards.

Economical



Reduces the cost, time, and effort involved in the verification process.

Source: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)

NAD in India’s Digital Future

The National Academic Depository is a cornerstone of India’s digital governance framework for education, enabling the secure, standardised, and interoperable management of academic records. By facilitating consent-based access and

real-time verification of credentials, it enhances efficiency, transparency, and trust while reducing reliance on physical documents. As an integral part of the DigiLocker ecosystem, NAD advances India’s vision of a secure, citizen-centric, and digitally empowered education system.

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16

Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization

Enhancing Productivity through Farm Mechanization

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The Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) expands access for small farmers, women, and disadvantaged groups through targeted mechanization support nationwide. Special emphasis has been placed on underserved and North-Eastern States to address regional disparities in access to farm machinery and technology. Since its inception, **Rs. 9,404.47 crore** has supported the distribution of **21.61 lakh** agricultural machines to individual farmers across India. Over 40,928 drone demonstrations covering **40,918** hectares were conducted with **Rs. 52.5 crore** financial support, promoting precision agriculture adoption nationwide.

Strengthening Agriculture through Farm Mechanization

Farm mechanization plays a critical role in enhancing agricultural productivity in India. It involves using machines, equipment, and modern technologies for agricultural operations across the crop production cycle. These operations include land preparation, sowing, irrigation, plant protection, harvesting, and post-harvest management. By reducing dependence on manual labour and animal power, mechanization enables timely and efficient farm operations. It lowers production costs and improves the quality of agricultural practices.

To promote farm mechanization in India, the **Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)** was launched in 2014–15. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY). SMAM aims to “**reach the**

unreached” by extending the benefits of mechanization to underserved sections. It includes small and marginal farmers, including women, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Farmer-Producer Organizations (FPOs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and rural entrepreneurs.

The scheme promotes the establishment of **Custom Hiring Centres (CHCs)**. These are units comprising a set of farm machinery, implements, and equipment meant for hiring by farmers. It also supports the development of hubs for hi-tech and high-value agricultural equipment, and the distribution of farm machinery. Awareness generation through demonstrations and capacity-building initiatives is also undertaken. Special focus is placed on regions with low farm power availability and on addressing structural constraints such as small landholdings and high capital costs through affordable rental services via CHCs. Additionally, SMAM

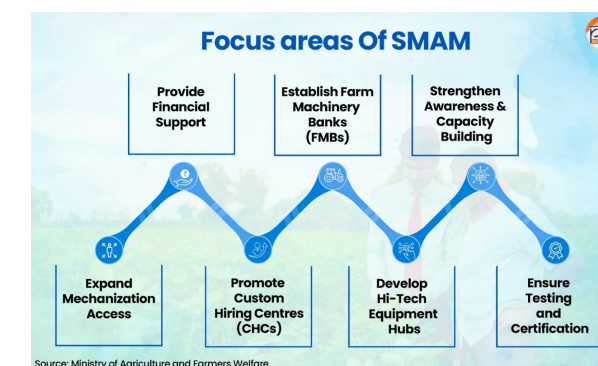
supports the performance testing and certification of agricultural machinery. Targeted Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities are undertaken to enhance adoption among stakeholders.

The Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), launched in 2007, is a flagship scheme that incentivizes states to increase public investment in agriculture and allied sectors. It provides states with **flexibility and autonomy** to design and implement projects tailored to local needs. The schemes encompass a broad range of interventions, including crop production, infrastructure development, mechanization, and value addition. In 2017-18, the Scheme was restructured as the **RKVY-RAFTAR (Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied Sector Rejuvenation)**, with an increased focus on strengthening both pre-and post-harvest infrastructure.



Strategic Pillars of SMAM for Enhancing Farm Productivity

The Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) is designed to promote inclusive and efficient farm mechanization by improving access to modern agricultural equipment, reducing drudgery, and enhancing farm productivity.



- **Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization through training, testing, demonstration, and post-harvest mechanization:** Enhances farm productivity and efficiency by improving access to modern agricultural technologies. It further strengthens post-harvest infrastructure for processing, storage, value addition, and crop residue management by promoting agricultural mechanization.
- **Financial Assistance for the Procurement of Agricultural Machinery and Equipment:**

Provides subsidy support for individual ownership of agricultural machinery through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system. It covers 40% of the machine cost for general beneficiaries and 50% for SC/ST farmers, small and marginal farmers, and beneficiaries in North-Eastern states. Small and marginal farmers receive Rs 2,000 per hectare for mechanized services, including drones, through CHCs, SHGs, and FPOs.



- **Establishment of Farm Machinery Banks (FMBs) for Custom Hiring:** Enhances farm mechanization through 80–90% financial support for SHGs, FPOs, and local institutions to acquire agricultural machinery. Financial assistance for CHCs is available at 40 percent of the project cost for projects up to ₹250 lakh, while FMBs receive 80 percent support for projects up to ₹30 lakh.



- **Establishment of Hi-Tech and High-Productivity Equipment Hubs:** Equipped with advanced, high-capacity machinery for crop-specific operations to improve operational efficiency and access to high-value equipment.



- **Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization in the North**

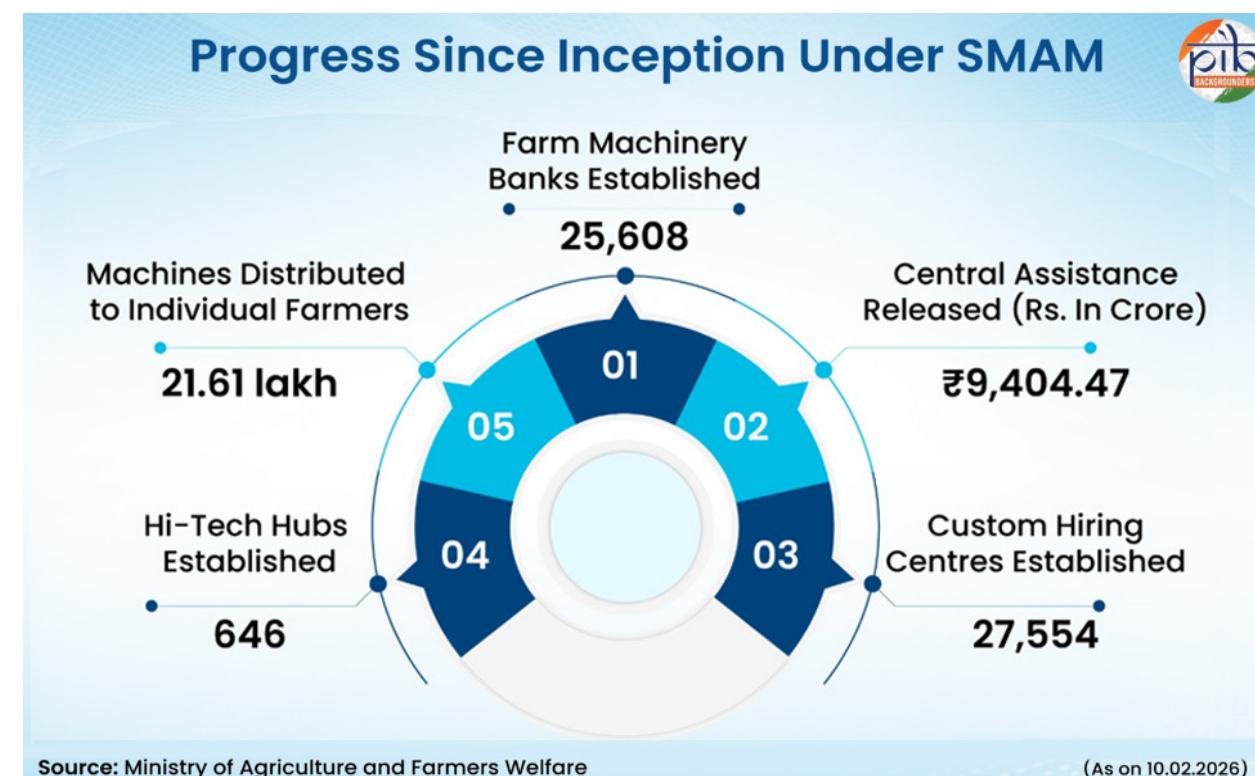
Eastern Region (NER): Provides enhanced support in North-Eastern states through region-specific interventions, including up to 100% subsidy for small machinery and 95% support for Farm Machinery Banks.



Powering Farm Mechanization: The Financial Backbone of SMAM

Under SMAM, from 2014–15 to 2025–26, central assistance of ₹9,404.47 crore has supported the distribution of **21.61 lakh** machines to individual farmers. Additionally, it supported the establishment of **27,554 Custom Hiring Centers, 646 Hi-tech Hubs, and 25,608 Farm Machinery Banks**. Under SMAM, the number of beneficiaries for individual farm machinery ownership increased from **2.07 lakh in 2020–21** to **2.32 lakh in 2024–25**, reflecting an overall expansion in scheme coverage.

The scheme follows a cost-sharing arrangement between the Central and State Governments. For most states, the funding pattern is 60:40, while for North-Eastern and Himalayan states, it is 90:10. In the case of Union Territories, assistance is provided as 100 percent Central funding. This differentiated funding structure facilitates broader mechanization adoption across diverse regional contexts.



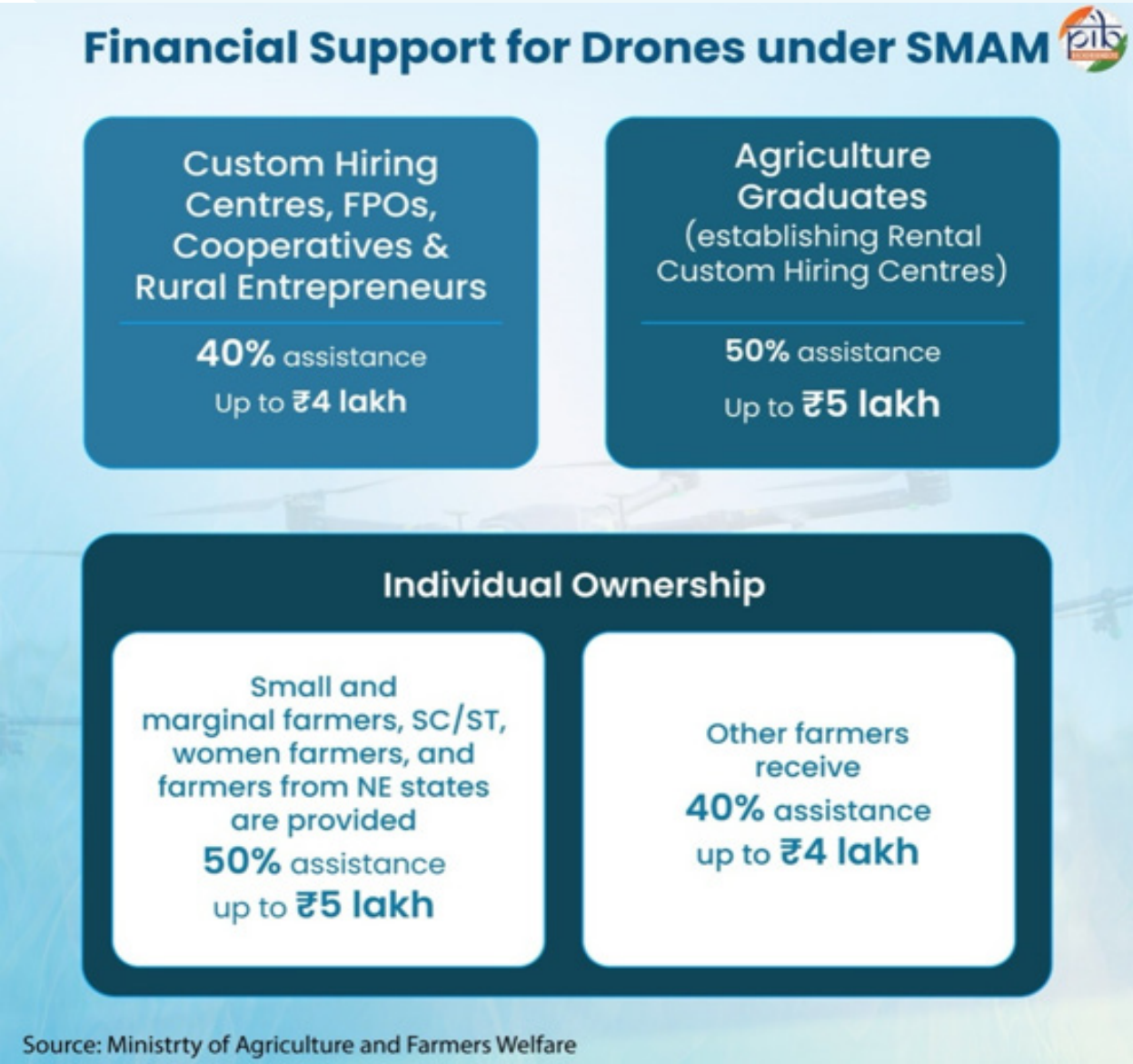
Innovation in Action: How SMAM is Scaling Drone-Based Farming

The Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) encourages the use of drones to improve agricultural operations. With financial support of ₹52.50 crore under the scheme, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has promoted drone adoption through large-scale field demonstrations across the country.

During 2023–24 to 2025–26, ICAR, in collaboration with State Agricultural Universities and Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVKs), conducted **40,928 Kisan Drone** demonstrations across covering **40,918**

hectares. These demonstrations focused on the application of nutrients, fertilizers, and agro-chemicals in accordance with prescribed standard operating procedures.

To facilitate widespread adoption, SMAM provides financial assistance for drone procurement and demonstrations. Eligible institutions such as **ICAR institutes, KVKs, and State Agricultural Universities** receive 100 percent financial support of up to ₹10 lakh per drone for these activities. Farmer-Producer Organizations (FPOs) are eligible for grant support of up to 75 percent. In addition, agencies utilizing drones through service models are supported with a contingency expenditure of **₹6,000 per hectare.**



Further, SMAM places a strong focus on inclusivity, earmarking 30 percent of total funds for women farmers. This provision aims to enhance their access to agricultural machinery and promote greater participation in mechanized farming systems.

Bridging Gaps, Boosting Growth: The SMAM Effect

SMAM has emerged as a key intervention in strengthening agricultural productivity, efficiency, and inclusiveness. By focusing on small and marginal farmers, women, SC/ST communities, and underserved regions, the scheme has helped bridge critical gaps in mechanization through subsidies, Custom Hiring Centre, Farm Machinery Banks, and targeted regional support. Its emphasis on training, demonstrations,

post-harvest management, and emerging technologies such as drones reflects a forward-looking approach to modernizing agriculture. By creating institutional infrastructure, SMAM has contributed to reducing labor drudgery, improving the timeliness of operations, and supporting higher farm productivity.



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Strengthening Rural Credit for Inclusive Growth in India

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India's rural credit system is a key pillar of rural development and agricultural growth. It supports agriculture, allied activities, rural enterprises, and household consumption needs. Over time, the system has evolved from informal lending to a diversified institutional framework. Institutions such as NABARD, commercial banks, regional rural banks, cooperative banks, and small finance banks drive rural credit delivery. Recent surveys indicate improving rural economic conditions and expanding access to formal credit. Policy measures have strengthened the availability of affordable and timely credit. Key initiatives include priority sector lending, ground level credit targets, and the modified interest subvention scheme. Government policies and programmes have expanded rural credit through institutional reforms, digital platforms and financial inclusion, improving access to formal finance and strengthening rural livelihoods and economic growth.

India's Rural Credit Landscape

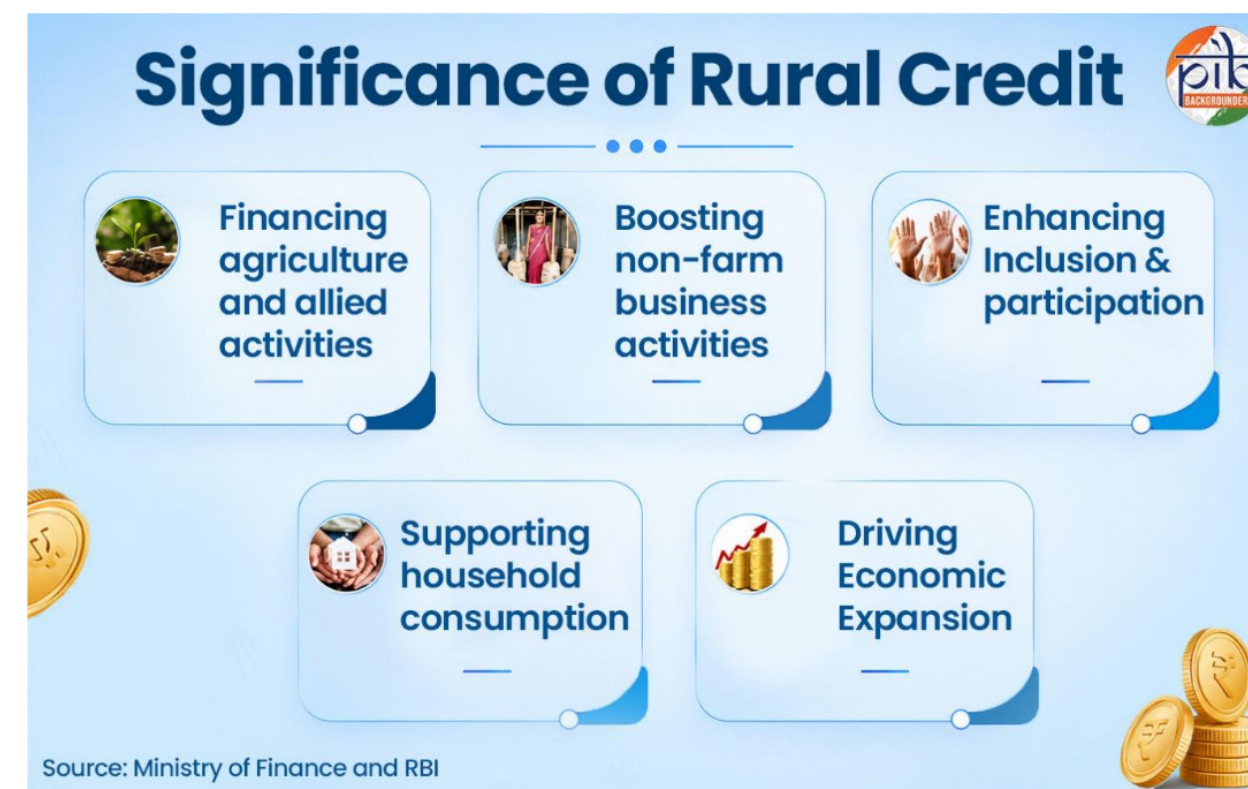
India's rural credit ecosystem has expanded significantly over the years. It provides timely and affordable finance for agriculture, allied sectors, rural enterprises and households, supporting inclusive rural development. It meets **short-term, medium-term and long-term** credit requirements for both production and consumption. By supporting income generation, asset creation and household resilience, rural credit has become a key driver of rural development. It is delivered through a network of **institutional sources**, including Scheduled Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks, Cooperative Banks and the National Bank for Agriculture

and Rural Development (NABARD), alongside **non-institutional sources**.

At the centre of this ecosystem is **NABARD**, the apex development financial institution for agriculture and rural development. It strengthens the rural credit architecture through refinance support, rural infrastructure financing, institutional development and supervision of Cooperative Banks and Regional Rural Banks. The growing reach of formal rural finance is reflected in NABARD's **Rural Economic Conditions and Sentiments Survey (May 2026)**. About **77.2%** of rural households reported higher consumption levels, reflecting rising purchasing power and sustained demand. Access to formal credit has also expanded significantly. Around **51%** of households relying

exclusively on formal sources and **over 27%** accessing both institutional and non-institutional channels.

agricultural growth, improving rural livelihoods and building a more resilient rural economy.



Building on this strong institutional foundation, India's rural credit system has evolved from conventional banking to a technology enabled and inclusive ecosystem. Policy reforms, digital innovations and financial inclusion measures have improved access to institutional finance, enhanced the efficiency of credit delivery and reduced dependence on informal borrowing. Together, these efforts are strengthening

Evolution of Rural Credit System

India's rural credit system has transformed into a more formal and diversified institutional framework. In the post-Independence period, the Government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) undertook key initiatives to strengthen institutional credit. These were among the earliest efforts to expand

rural banking and support agricultural financing.

- **1955: The National Agricultural Credit (Long-term Operations) Fund was created and the State Bank of India was established.** These initiatives marked a major step towards expanding rural banking and strengthening agricultural finance.
- **1969: 14 major commercial banks were nationalised.** It reoriented banking policies towards priority sectors, particularly small farmers, which enhanced the flow of institutional credit to rural areas.
- **1982: NABARD was established, strengthening the rural credit architecture.** It celebrated its **45th foundation day on 12th July 2026.** It integrated **financing, developmental, and supervisory functions** for agriculture and rural development. NABARD also promotes financial inclusion, prepares district credit plans and supports Government initiatives aimed at expanding access to formal finance.
- **1992: The Self-Help Group (SHG)-Bank Linkage Programme was introduced** which expanded access to formal credit for rural households.
- **1998: The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme** improved the availability of timely and affordable credit for farmers.

- **2014: Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** was launched to expand financial inclusion through universal banking access, supporting credit, insurance and Direct Benefit Transfers. It forms a key pillar of the **JAM (Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile) Trinity.** This has transformed the delivery of welfare benefits through digitally enabled, transparent and targeted service delivery.
- **2015: The MUDRA Scheme (PMMY)** was launched to provide collateral-free institutional credit to non-corporate, non-farm small and micro enterprises. This promotes rural entrepreneurship and self-employment.
- **2022 onwards:** Digital initiatives such as the **Jan Samarth Portal, e-KCC** and others have transformed rural credit delivery through technology-enabled, accessible and inclusive financial services.

Institutional Architecture of Rural Credit

A strong institutional network underpins India’s rural credit system. It plays a vital role in expanding access to formal finance and promoting inclusive rural development.

Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCB)

SCBs have significantly strengthened financial inclusion by expanding access to formal banking services. They deliver banking services through branches, Business Correspondents, digital platforms, and Government initiatives such as PMJDY and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). SCBs include public sector banks, private sector banks, foreign banks, payment banks, regional rural banks and small finance banks.

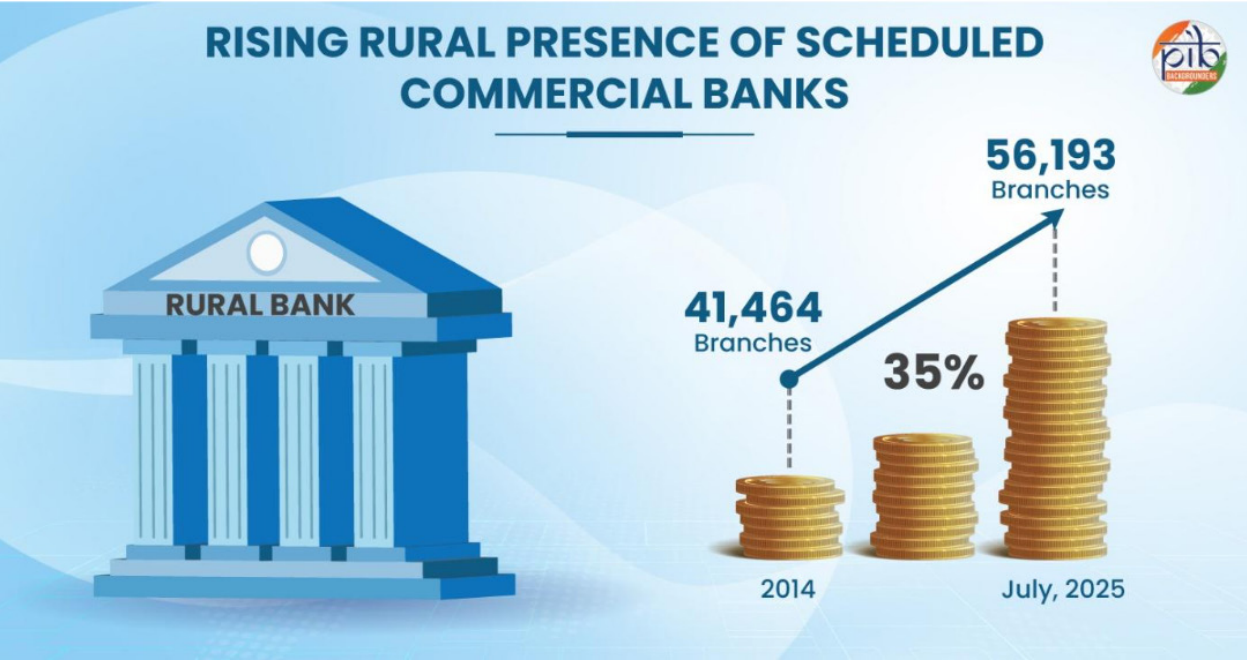
A SCB is a bank included in the Second Schedule of the RBI Act, 1934. These banks are eligible for loans at the bank rate from the RBI and are members of the clearing house.

At present, around **120 SCBs are providing banking services across the country.**

In rural areas, there were 41,464 SCB branches in 2014. This **increased by over 35% to 56,193 rural branches by July 2025**, playing a vital role in rural credit delivery.

Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)

RRBs were established under the RRB Act, 1976, with the objective of **strengthening institutional credit in rural areas.** They focus particularly on small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans, and small entrepreneurs. Since inception, RRBs have played a critical role in promoting rural development and financial inclusion. Currently, **28 RRBs operate across States and Union Territories,**



having a branch network of over 22,000 in 700 districts.

Co-operative Banks

The co-operative banking system forms an integral part of India’s financial system, with separate urban and rural segments. While urban cooperative banks operate as a single-tier system, rural cooperative credit institutions follow a multi-tier structure. Based on their structure, there are different types of cooperative banks, including:

- State Co-operative Banks (StCBs),
- District Central Co-operative Banks (DCCBs),
- Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACSS),
- State Co-operative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (SCARDBs),
- Primary Co-operative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (PCARDBs).

These institutions have played an important role in expanding institutional credit by promoting banking habits among the poor in remote areas. As per RBI and NABARD, **the co-operative network includes 1,458 Urban Cooperative Banks, 34 StCBs and 352 DCCBs.**

Small Finance Banks (SFB)

SFBs were introduced following the Union Budget 2014–15. Licensed by RBI,

SFBs aim to promote financial inclusion by **providing accessible and secure savings facilities.** They particularly focus on the unserved and underserved sections of the population. SFBs extend **credit to small businesses,** small and marginal farmers, micro industries, and other entities in the unorganised sector. **These services are delivered through technology-driven, low-cost operations.** At present, 11 Small Finance Banks are operational in the country.

These institutions collectively constitute the core of India’s rural credit system, enabling wider access to formal finance and supporting inclusive development.

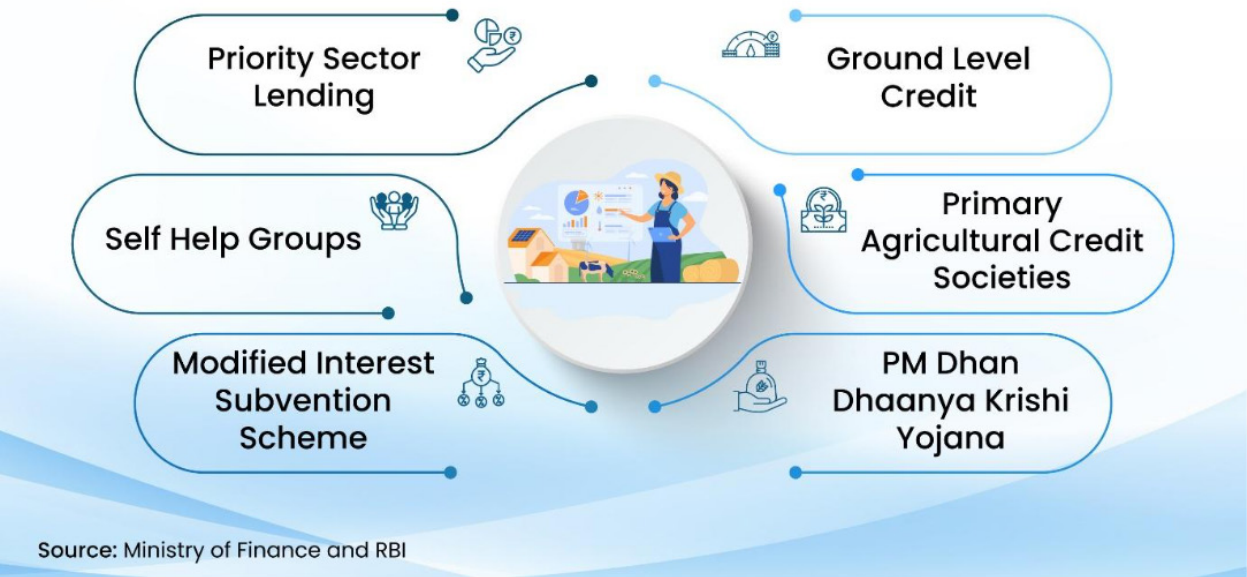
Policy Framework for Rural Credit

The policy framework for rural credit comprises various measures to ensure uninterrupted credit flow for rural development initiatives.

Priority Sector Lending (PSL)

Priority Sector Lending (PSL) is a mandatory framework set by the RBI. It requires banks to allocate a specific percentage of their total loans to critical or underserved sectors of the economy that struggle to access formal credit. This aims to ensure equitable distribution of credit.

Strengthening Rural Credit through Policy Measures



Adjusted Net Bank Credit = Net Bank Credit + investments made by banks in non-SLR bonds held in HTM category

The guidelines apply to Commercial Banks, including RRBs, SFBs, Local Area Banks, and Primary (Urban) Cooperative Banks (excluding Salary Earners’ Banks). These banks are mandated to allocate credit to agriculture. **At least 18% of their Adjusted Net Bank Credit or Credit Equivalent of Off-Balance Sheet Exposures, whichever is higher,** must be earmarked for this purpose.

Within this, a **sub-target of 14% is prescribed for non-corporate farmers**

and 10% for small and marginal farmers. Concessional refinance is provided to eligible Rural Financial Institutions (RFIs) through various funds created out of PSL shortfall. These include Short-Term Cooperative Rural Credit Fund (STCRCF), Short-Term RRB Credit Refinance Fund (STRRBF) and Long-Term Rural Credit Fund (LTRCF).

Ground Level Credit (GLC)

The Government sets annual GLC targets for agriculture and allied sectors, which banks must achieve each financial year. **These targets are set region-wise, agency-wise, and by loan category,** including crop and term loans. Since 2021-22, dedicated targets for allied activities like dairy, fisheries, and animal-husbandry have been introduced to enhance credit support.

During FY15-FY24 agricultural credit disbursement grew at over 13% annually, reflecting increasing financial support to the sector. For **FY 2025-26, the GLC target was ₹32.50 lakh crore**, with a sub-target of ₹ 5.0 lakh crore for Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries farmers. This marks more than fourfold increase from ₹8 lakh crore in FY 2014-15, reflecting effective targeted credit policies.

To enhance GLC in agriculture, **NABARD provides refinance support to banks** to supplement their resources for short-term and long-term lending to agriculture and allied sectors.

Self Help Group (SHG)

The **Self-Help Group-Bank Linkage Programme (SHG-BLP)**, was initiated by NABARD. It was launched to connect rural Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with the formal banking system, enabling access to affordable institutional credit and other financial services. The programme has emerged as an effective model for integrating the formal financial sector with rural poor households. This has particularly benefitted women who traditionally lacked access to formal credit due to the absence of a credit history.

To further strengthen this ecosystem, the **National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)** was launched in 2010 by restructuring the erstwhile Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY). Subsequently, NRLM was renamed as DAY-NRLM (Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission) w.e.f. March 29, 2016. The renaming further reinforced the **SHG-Bank Linkage Programme**, which received renewed momentum through the large-scale promotion and nurturing of women-led SHGs.

DAY-NRLM is a poverty alleviation programme. It organises rural poor households into SHGs and supports them in increasing incomes and improving their quality of life. The programme is being implemented across the country

(except Delhi and Chandigarh). As of 10 July 2026, **over 19.83 lakh SHGs are operational with loan disbursement of ₹13.28 lakh-crore recorded since inception.**

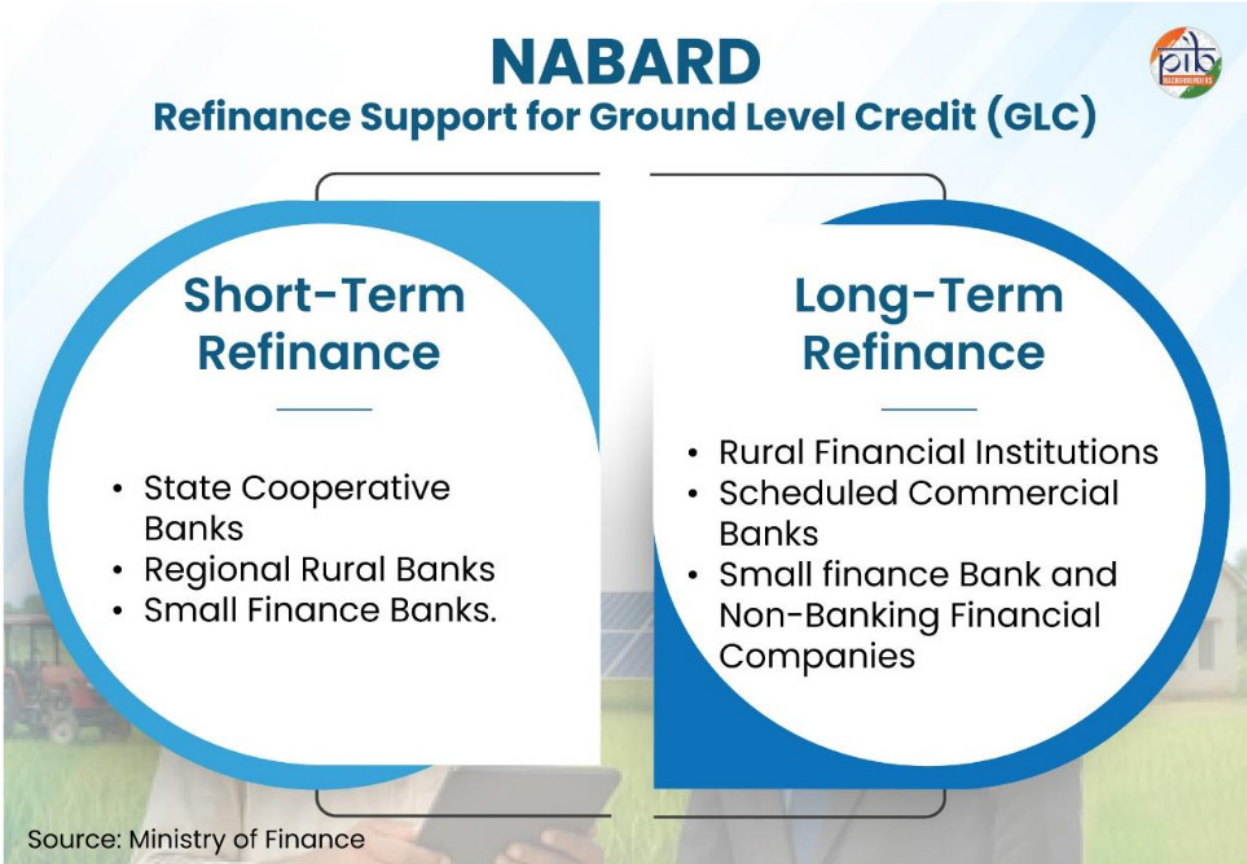
This mission has also improved access to bank credit through the deployment of Bank Sakhis. They assist SHG members in opening bank accounts, preparing and submitting loan applications, and ensuring timely repayment. This has helped strengthen credit linkage and reduce NPAs. Around **50,548 Bank Sakhis have been deployed, supporting SHGs in accessing bank credit of over ₹12.18 lakh crore since 2013-14 (as on February, 2026).**

Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)

PACS are the grassroots-level institutions of the short-term cooperative credit structure. They **directly interact with rural borrowers, providing loans and facilitating repayment.** PACS also undertake distribution and marketing functions for agricultural inputs and produce.

They form the base of the cooperative credit system. They also **serve as the final link between borrowers and higher financing institutions**, including SCBs and RBI/NABARD.

- In 2023, the Government approved a plan to establish **2 lakhs new**



Did You Know?

10.05 crore rural women have been mobilised into more than 90.90 lakh SHGs till July 2025. It covers a large number of districts and blocks nationwide.

multipurpose PACS, Dairy, Fishery Cooperative Societies. These will be set up across all panchayats over 5 years.

- So far, 32,836 new societies have been registered, and 15,793 dairy and fishery cooperatives strengthened as on 20 January 2026.
- Efforts to modernise PACS through digitisation are also underway. Out of 79,630 approved PACS, 61,842 PACS have successfully migrated to the Common ERP-based national software as of 10 March 2026.

Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS)

MISS is a central sector scheme ensuring the availability of **short-term credit to farmers at affordable interest rates through KCC**. Under the scheme, farmers receive short-term loans at a **subsidised interest of 7%**, with **1.5% subvention provided to lending institutions**. Farmers repaying loans promptly are eligible for an additional incentive of up to 3%, reducing the interest rate to 4%.

The Union Budget 2025–26 introduced several measures to strengthen MISS.

- **Enhanced the loan limit** under the MISS from ₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh for loans availed through KCC.
- The lending limit for fisheries and

allied activities increased from ₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh.

- From January 2025, the **limit for collateral-free short-term agricultural loans increased from ₹1.6 lakh to ₹2 lakh per borrower**.

This measure aims to enhance financial access for farmers amid rising input costs and inflation. It enables them to meet operational and developmental needs without collateral.

PM Dhan Dhanya Krishi Yojana (PM-DDKY)

PM-DDKY, approved in July 2025, aims to **catalyse growth in 100 low performing agri-districts. It adopts a saturation-based convergence of 36 Central schemes across 11 Ministries**. A key objective of the scheme is to enhance access to short-term and long-term agricultural credit for farmers. The scheme also focuses on improving agricultural productivity and promoting crop diversification. It encourages sustainable agricultural practices and strengthens irrigation infrastructure for reliable water access. It further aims to augment post-harvest storage capacity at the panchayat and block levels. Committees are being formed at District, State and National level for effective planning, implementation and monitoring of the Scheme.

Based on cumulative output from

inception to May 2026, the top-performing districts are:

- Banka, Bihar
- Mahoba, Uttar Pradesh
- Charaideo, Assam
- Kishanganj, Bihar
- Tikamgarh, Madhya Pradesh

Strengthening Rural Financial Inclusion

Financial inclusion is a key pillar of strengthening India’s rural credit ecosystem. The Government has adopted a multi-pronged approach to strengthen rural credit and financial inclusion.

Kisan Credit Card

The KCC scheme was introduced as an innovative **credit mechanism** to provide adequate and timely credit support from

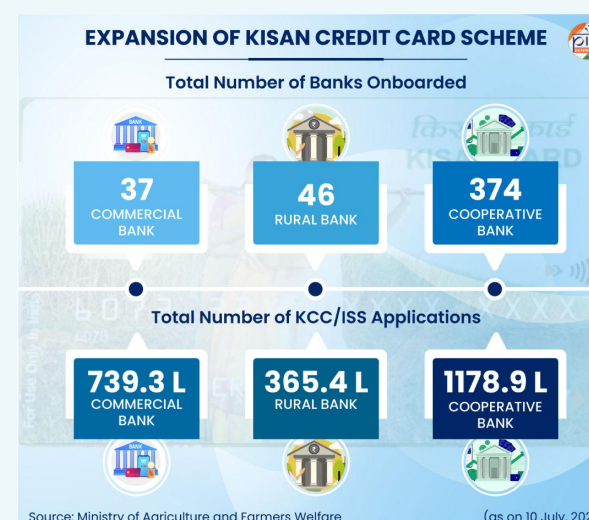
the banking system. It offers features such as an **ATM-enabled debit card and one-time documentation**. It also provides **in-built provision for cost escalation and flexibility for multiple withdrawals within the sanctioned limit**.

Loans under KCC are provided to farmers for wide range of agricultural requirements, including:

- short-term crop cultivation
- post-harvest operations
- marketing-related expenses
- household consumption needs
- working capital for farm maintenance
- investment credit for allied and non-farm activities.

As on 8 July 2026, total **KCC applications stand at ~739 lakh under commercial banks and more than 365 lakh under RRBs. Cooperative banks account for the highest number of applications at over 1178 lakh**.

The scheme coverage expanded to **include individual and joint borrowers who are owner cultivators, tenant farmers, oral lessees, and sharecroppers**. It also covers Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) of farmers. The scheme was further extended to allied sectors such as dairy, fisheries, and animal husbandry in 2019.



NABARD has also introduced the **e-KCC portal for RRBs and RCBs**, enabling end-to-end digitisation of the loan application process. Through this platform, farmers can submit applications without the need to visit bank branches. Additionally, the e-KCC facility allows farmers to apply for crop loans via nearby Common Service Centres (CSCs). It facilitates faster processing, enabling loan sanction within a short turnaround time of about 2 days.

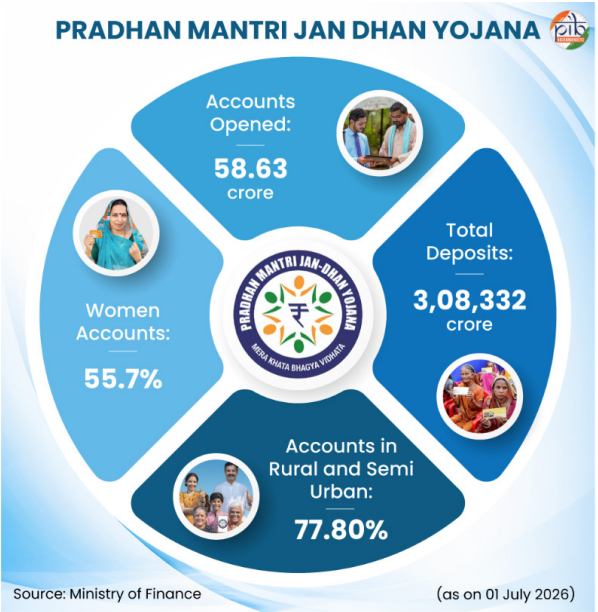
The Government, RBI, NABARD and banks conduct financial literacy programmes to promote awareness of KCC benefits among farmers. These are delivered through Centres for Financial Literacy (CFLs) and Financial Literacy Camps (FLCs). In addition, the RBI organises Financial Literacy Week (FLW) annually to disseminate financial education among the public across the country.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

PMJDY plays a key role in the development of marginalised communities. It provides **universal banking access through at least one basic account per household**. Besides, it offers access to credit, insurance, and pension. The scheme covers both rural and urban areas and offers RuPay debit cards to account holders. It supports the expansion of DBT by enabling government benefits to be transferred directly into bank accounts.

Additionally, it links instruments such as KCC to the RuPay platform. As part of the Jan-Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity, it provides a robust mechanism for delivery of subsidies and welfare benefits.

As on 24 June 2026, over 58.63 crore Jan-Dhan accounts have been opened, with deposits exceeding ₹3 lakh crore. Of these, 32.68 crore accounts (55.7%) belong to women, and **45.62 crore accounts (77.8%) are in rural and semi-urban areas**.



Jan Samarth Portal

The Jan Samarth Portal, launched in June 2022, is a **one-stop digital platform to link Government-sponsored loan and subsidy schemes**, including KCC. The portal aims to expand the reach of government schemes and streamline credit delivery. It provides easy access to beneficiaries, financial institutions, and

government agencies. The portal also promotes inclusive growth by guiding beneficiaries to suitable schemes through simple digital processes. It ensures end-to-end coverage of all linked schemes.



Jan Dhan Darshak App

The Jan Dhan Darshak App enables citizens to locate banking service points, including bank branches, ATMs, Bank Mitras and Common Service Centres (CSCs), across the country. It also helps the Government monitor banking access in villages.

- As of 6 March 2025, **99.92% of villages had a banking outlet within a 5 km radius**.
- Additionally, villages in Dadra and Nagar Haveli have achieved full coverage.

Inclusive Growth Ahead

Over time, India’s rural credit system has transitioned from an informal structure to a diversified, institution-led and policy-driven framework. Supported by institutions and targeted policies, the system has reinforced rural prosperity

to timely and affordable credit across agriculture and allied sectors.

With increasing digitisation, improved institutional reach, and financial inclusion, the rural credit ecosystem is becoming more accessible and efficient. This is contributing to inclusive rural development and long-term economic growth in the country.

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PIB Research

18

Ethanol Blending in India

Policy Evolution, Key Milestones and Frequently Raised Concerns

Published on: July 5, 2026



Overview of the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme

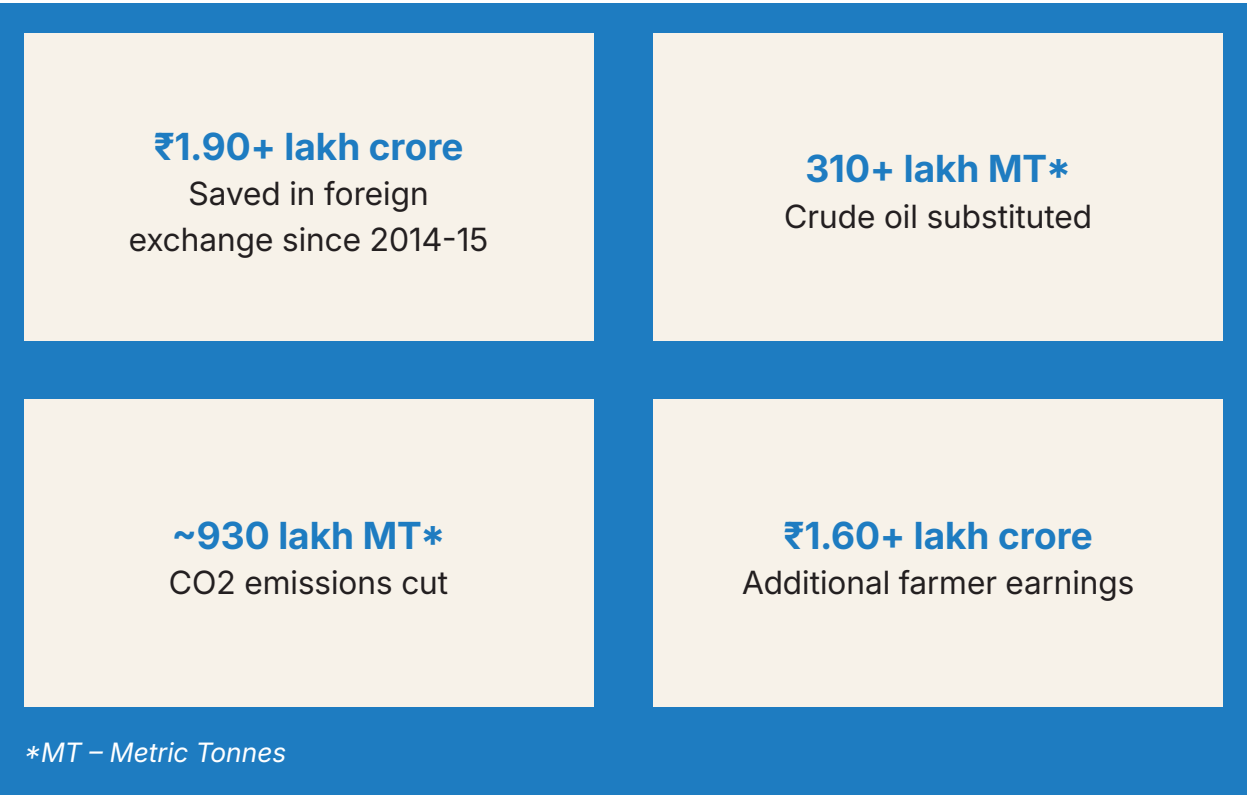
Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme has emerged as a key pillar of India’s energy transition and biofuel strategy. It aims to improve energy security, support farmers, and reduce environmental impacts. The programme also promotes greater use of domestically produced renewable fuel.

Under the EBP Programme, ethanol blending has increased from less than 1.5 percent in 2013-14 to 20 percent in 2025-26. India achieved the 20 percent blending target five years ahead of schedule. Ethanol procurement rose

from about 38 crore litres in Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2013-14 to over 1,200 crore litres (projected) in 2025-26. Production capacity expanded nearly fivefold from 421 crore litres in 2014 to about 2,000 crore litres in 2026. This expansion has reduced crude oil imports and saved valuable foreign exchange. It has also lowered greenhouse gas emissions and strengthened farmers’ incomes through new market opportunities.

Strengthening Energy Security through Ethanol Blending

India imports close to 88.5 percent of the crude oil it consumes. That single



number explains a great deal about why ethanol blending sits so high on the policy agenda. Every barrel of oil bought from abroad exposes the country to price swings and supply shocks that are entirely outside its control. Ethanol produced from Indian sugarcane, maize and rice offers a way to blunt that exposure using resources grown at home.

Since the ESY 2014-15 (up to May 2026),

the programme has delivered results that go well beyond a policy target on paper.

Setting the Record Straight

Here is what the evidence actually shows on the key concerns surrounding ethanol blending, along with the more colourful myths that have circulated on social media.

The Claim	The Record
E20 cuts mileage by 30 percent.	The 30 percent figure refers only to ethanol’s lower calorific value compared to petrol, not to a drop-in real-world mileage. Mileage depends on driving habits, tyre pressure, servicing and AC load far more than fuel type.
E20 damages engines, especially older ones.	No widespread pattern of engine failure linked to E20 has been reported since rollout. E20 was cleared only after extensive testing by SIAM, ARAI and IOCL together with vehicle makers.
Ethanol is not a high-performance fuel and reduces vehicle performance.	Ethanol is a high-octane fuel, with a research octane number of about 108.5, compared to 84.4 for petrol. E20 raises the effective octane rating of Indian petrol to around 95, improving combustion in modern engines. Vehicles calibrated for E20 can deliver better acceleration, smoother performance, and lower emissions.

The Claim	The Record
Insurance companies refuse claims for E20 related damage.	Insurers and OEMs have clarified: E20 has NO impact on insurance or warranty validity in India. SIAM has categorically confirmed warranties will be honoured for vehicles running spec-compliant E20.
Ethanol blended fuel should be cheaper, and government is pocketing the difference.	The NITI Aayog report cited for this claim is from 2020-21, when ethanol was indeed cheaper than petrol. Ethanol procurement costs have since risen above refined petrol costs, yet the mandate continues because of the energy security, environmental and farm income gains it delivers.
The Government told the Supreme Court that E20 is just an 'experiment'.	The case was about ethanol procurement contracts -not E20's merits. The Attorney General's office clarified on 30.06.2026 that the 'experiment' claim is incorrect.
Sugarcane juice is literally poured into petrol.	Viral videos showing raw juice mixed with petrol are misleading. Ethanol is produced through fermentation and industrial processing that changes its properties entirely, and it must meet strict fuel quality specifications before blending.
1 litre of ethanol consumes 10,000 litres of water.	An ethanol plant uses only 3-5 litres of processed water per litre of ethanol. Modern distilleries run Zero Liquid Discharge systems. Attributing the entire agricultural water footprint of paddy cultivation to ethanol production is incorrect. Only surplus rice, as determined and permitted by the DFPD after meeting national food security requirements, is diverted for ethanol production.

The Claim	The Record
Ants and bees swarm fuel caps because E20 contains sugar.	Fuel ethanol is distilled - residual sugars are eliminated. It contains insect-repellent denaturants, petrol's odour dominates, and E20 forms less vapour than regular petrol.
Ethanol's water absorbing nature will spoil fuel and ruin tanks.	Keeping water out of any fuel tank, ethanol blended or not, is basic vehicle design. Modern vehicles are equipped with design features and safeguards to prevent water entry into fuel tanks.

Industry Voices of Confidence

Confidence in E20 is reinforced by leading automobile manufacturers and energy sector experts, drawing on extensive testing and real-world service data.

Some of the key observations from industry leaders are as follows:

- **Vikram Gulati, Country Head and Executive Vice President, Toyota Kirloskar Motor:** Vehicles undergo rigorous, independent certification worldwide. Ethanol is a proven, high-performance fuel, in use since the early 1900s. Decision to move to E20 was taken only after rigorous testing on older vehicles
- **Rahul Bharti, Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Affairs, Maruti**

Suzuki: E10-designed vehicles have been tested extensively with E20 fuel. Across 2.84 crore vehicles serviced by Maruti Suzuki in FY 2025-26, more than 1.5 crore were over three years old and hence not E20-certified. Still no E20-related damage was found. On mileage, the real impact is small. For a car giving 20 km per litre, the drop is roughly 0.6 km. Driving habits and maintenance affect mileage far more than fuel type. Better acceleration and lower pollution offset this small difference.

- **Ashutosh Varma, Chief Business Officer, Hero MotoCorp:** Analysis of extensive service data found no incidence of higher damage in vehicles running on E20 compared to earlier fuels.
- **Vartika Shukla, Former Chairman and Managing Director, Engineers India Limited:** The ethanol blending

programme was developed through extensive consultation with all stakeholders. It is supported by scientific evidence, rigorous automotive testing, and global best practices. E20 fuel meets BIS standards and BS-VI emission norms. It is available uniformly across retail outlets nationwide.

Across manufacturing and energy sectors, the message from industry leaders is consistent. E20 is safe, well-tested, and backed by real-world data.

Ethanol Blending Is a Globally Proven Fuel Strategy

India is far from alone in adopting ethanol blending. It is now a globally accepted practice. Several major economies have built ethanol firmly into their fuel strategy.

- **United States:** E10 is the standard ethanol blended fuel nationwide. E15 is expanding rapidly, backed by the US government. Millions of vehicles are already flex fuel capable. These can run on blends as high as E85.
- **Brazil:** Brazil remains the global leader in ethanol use. It currently mandates E27 as its standard petrol blend. This is being raised further to around 35 percent. Over 80 percent of new cars sold are flex fuel

vehicles. These run on E27, E30, or pure hydrous ethanol.

- **Japan:** Japan has brought ethanol into its fuel mix too. This was done through a phased E10 rollout.

Countries including Canada, Thailand, and several European nations have also adopted ethanol blending as part of their clean fuel strategies.

Powering India's Energy Future

The Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme has evolved into a key pillar of India's energy strategy. Its progress reflects scientific evaluation, phased implementation, and collaboration across government, industry, and research institutions. The programme has strengthened energy security, reduced emissions, and created new income opportunities for farmers. It has also reduced crude oil imports and promoted the use of domestically produced renewable fuel. The EBP Programme will continue contributing to a cleaner, more resilient, and self-reliant transport fuel ecosystem.

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PIB Research





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India-Australia Civil Nuclear Cooperation

Administrative Arrangement signed to secure long-term
Australian uranium for India's clean energy programme

Published on: July 14, 2026

Fueling India's Long-term Nuclear Energy Programme

The Third India–Australia Annual Summit, held in Melbourne on 9 July 2026, marked a significant milestone in bilateral relations. Both countries reaffirmed their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The Summit delivered outcomes across maritime security, energy security, cyber cooperation, critical technologies, skill development and entrepreneurship, expanding collaboration in priority sectors.

A major outcome of the summit was the **finalisation of the Administrative**

Arrangement under the India–Australia Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement.

It enables long-term exports of Australian uranium to India for peaceful purposes under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. Australia possesses the largest uranium resources globally, accounting for more than one-third of the global total. Assured access to Australian uranium would strengthen the fuel base for India's expanding nuclear power programme.

The Arrangement is also significant for India's long-term energy security and nuclear ambitions. It complements the **Nuclear Energy Mission**, which targets **100 GW of nuclear power capacity by 2047**. It also reinforces the **Sustainable**

Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act,

enacted in December 2025. The Act enables participation by **Indian private companies and joint ventures** in building, owning and operating nuclear power plants. Assured long-term uranium supplies provide greater confidence to developers, investors and industry, supporting timely project implementation. The SHANTI Act and the Administrative Arrangement provide the policy framework and strengthen fuel security needed to expand nuclear power for energy security and support sustained economic growth.

India's Nuclear Energy Landscape

India is steadily expanding its nuclear power programme to strengthen energy security and support clean economic growth. Backed by indigenous technologies and long-term planning, nuclear energy will play an increasingly important role in India's low-carbon energy transition.

- India currently operates **24 nuclear power reactors** across seven sites with a total installed capacity of **8.78 Gigawatt (GW)**.
- Ten more reactor units with a combined capacity of 8000 Megawatt (MW) are under construction. Pre-

project activities for 10 additional reactors are also underway.

- These reactors are Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs), Boiling Water Reactors (BWRs) and Light Water Reactors (LWRs).
- India mainly uses natural uranium fuel to run the Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) to produce nuclear energy. Plutonium is produced as a by product.
- The Australian uranium will ensure a steady supply of the primary fuel to run these reactors.
- India's long-term strategy is centred on utilising its abundant thorium reserves for future nuclear fuel, found mainly in the coastal sands of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha. But naturally occurring Thorium has to be first made fissile by neutron absorption inside a nuclear reactor.
- India is advancing **Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs)** to utilise plutonium and support the transition to thorium-based reactors.
- The Government has allocated ₹20,000 crore in the Union Budget 2025–26, for the research, design, development, and deployment of indigenous **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)**.



- SMRs typically generate up to 300 MWe of electricity. Their compact, modular design enables factory-based manufacturing, faster construction, improved quality and phased deployment.
- The Government aims to operationalise at least five indigenous SMRs by 2033.

With continued investments in advanced reactor technologies and domestic innovation, nuclear energy is emerging as a reliable pillar of India's future energy mix.

A New Chapter in India–Australia Nuclear Cooperation

India and Australia's civil nuclear partnership is anchored in the Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement, signed in September 2014 and entered into force in November 2015.

- On **9 July 2026**, both countries finalised the **Administrative Arrangement**, operationalizing the Agreement.
- The Arrangement enables **long-term exports of Australian uranium** to India for **peaceful purposes**.
- Under Australian policy, uranium is exported only to countries covered by a civil nuclear cooperation agreement.
- All Australian uranium supplied to India will remain under IAEA safeguards.

- The Administrative Arrangement establishes the procedures for implementing the Agreement and provides a stable, long-term framework for cooperation between both governments and industry.
- The Arrangement marks a significant milestone in India–Australia bilateral energy cooperation and provides a reliable foundation for peaceful nuclear collaboration over the coming decades.
- Australia also reaffirmed its support for **India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**.

The administrative arrangement reinforces mutual trust and creates a stable foundation for sustained cooperation. It also expands the strategic dimension of the India–Australia

partnership while supporting secure and diversified energy supplies.

Why This is Crucial for India

The India–Australia Civil Nuclear Agreement bolsters India's long term fuel security, diversifies uranium imports, and deepens the comprehensive strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific.

- **Energy Security:** The Arrangement assures a long-term supply of fuel for an expanding fleet of reactors. Nuclear power provides dependable baseload generation, available at all hours, which lends stability to the grid and complements the variable output of solar and wind power.
- **Clean Energy:** Nuclear power is a low-carbon source that adds firm capacity to India's non-fossil energy mix. It can progressively meet demand currently served by coal while supporting the growing energy needs of industry, data centres and the digital economy.
- **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and net-zero:** India has committed to achieving **net-zero emissions by 2070** and has progressively raised its climate targets, including a greater share of non-fossil capacity. A secure supply of nuclear fuel supports this transition by enabling the expansion of clean and reliable generation.

Did you know?

India's indigenously built **500 MWe Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam attained first criticality on 6 April 2026**, marking the start of India's **second stage of its three-stage nuclear power programme**. Unlike conventional reactors, the PFBR uses plutonium recovered from spent fuel of Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) and is designed to **produce more nuclear fuel than it consumes**. It will eventually breed **Uranium-233 from thorium**, unlocking India's vast thorium reserves for future-ready clean energy generation. Developed indigenously by the Department of Atomic Energy, the reactor is a major milestone, strengthening India's reliable fuel supply, reducing dependence on imported uranium, and advancing the country's net-zero ambition by 2070.

Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)

The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a voluntary grouping of 48 nuclear supplier countries that seeks to prevent nuclear weapons proliferation by implementing common guidelines governing exports of nuclear materials, equipment and related technologies for peaceful use.



- India as a responsible nuclear power: Australia's decision to supply uranium reflects confidence in India's strong non-proliferation record and responsible use of nuclear technology.

The Arrangement further reinforce the India–Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership by adding a robust energy pillar to cooperation spanning trade, defence, critical minerals, technology and the Indo-Pacific.

Did You Know?



India has signed Inter Governmental Agreement (IGA) with 18 countries on Civil Nuclear Co-operation for peaceful purposes.

The Road Ahead

The Administrative Arrangement is a practical measure with far-reaching benefits. For the economy, it helps to secure clean and firm power for growth, manufacturing and digital infrastructure. For energy security, it diversifies India's fuel supply and strengthens the foundation of the power system. This momentum is already evident,

with milestones such as the PFBR at Kalpakkam attaining first criticality. For the bilateral partnership, energy now joins a broad and deepening relationship. Anchored in shared interests and mutual trust, India and Australia are well placed to widen their cooperation in the years ahead, with a dependable supply of uranium lending India's clean energy endeavour a firmer foundation.

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India's Fight to Combat Hepatitis

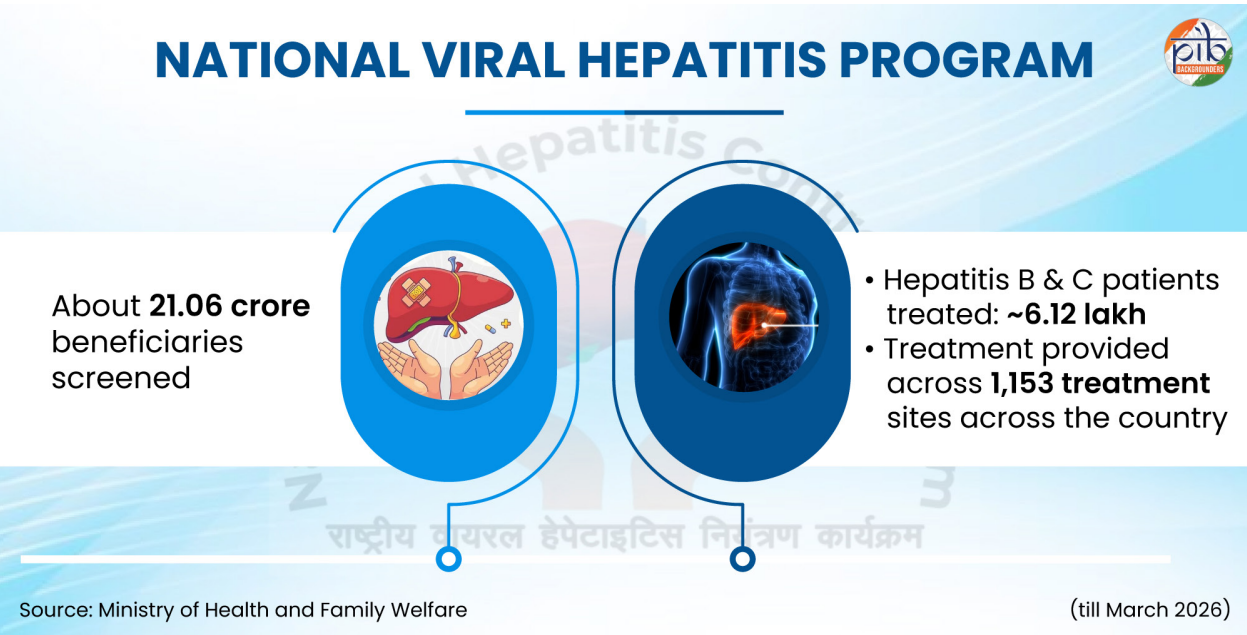
Published on: July 27, 2026

India is systematically breaking down healthcare barriers to achieve its 2030 goal of combating hepatitis. National Viral Hepatitis Control Program has adopted a health systems approach and integrated with various national programs to prevent infection and provide services including free drugs and diagnostics to the people affected with the disease.

What is Hepatitis?

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver, caused by hepatitis viruses or even other infections, toxic substances such as alcohol and drugs, and autoimmune diseases. There are five main hepatitis viruses, of which type B and type C are the most common and lead to chronic disease including cirrhosis and liver cancer.

Hepatitis has been recognised as a public health problem in India. In 2018, the Government launched the **National Viral Hepatitis Program** to combat this disease by providing screening and treatment services. This is in line with United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal of combating various viral diseases.



Modes of Transmission, Prevention and Management

Hepatitis Virus	Causes / Transmission	Prevention & Treatment
Hepatitis A (HAV)	• Faecal-oral route via contaminated food/ water • Poor sanitation and lack of safe drinking water	• Prevention: Safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation measures • Treatment: Usually Self-limiting. Supportive care (hydration/nutrition). No specific antiviral
Hepatitis B (HBV)	• Most commonly: Mother-to-child at birth • Contact with infected blood and blood products and body fluids etc	• Prevention: Vaccine preventable disease. Hepatitis B Vaccine under the Universal Immunisation Program (birth dose at the earliest and certainly within 24 hours of birth, at 6,10 and 14 weeks of birth) • Treatment: Chronic hepatitis B is managed with antiviral medication amongst those eligible as per the national guidelines
Hepatitis C (HCV)	• Exposure to blood from unsafe injections/ procedures • Sharing needles/ syringes	• Prevention: Adopting harm reduction measures (needle exchange), safe injection practices. There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C infection
Hepatitis D (HDV)	• Contact with infected blood and blood products and body fluids etc • Infection only amongst some chronic HBV carriers	• Treatment: Cured in 12-24 weeks in nearly all patients using pangenotypic regimen with Direct Acting Antiviral (DAAs) drugs • Prevention: By preventing the underlying HBV infection, the Hepatitis B vaccine concurrently confers full protection against HDV infection

Hepatitis E (HEV)	- Faecal-oral route via contaminated food/ water - Poor sanitation and lack of safe drinking water	- Prevention: Safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation measures - Treatment: Usually Self-limiting. Supportive care (hydration/nutrition). No specific antiviral drugs
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National Viral Hepatitis Control Program& Others

The key strategies adopted under the NVHCP include **preventive, promotive and curative interventions** with the focus on awareness generation, increasing access, providing diagnosis and treatment for viral hepatitis to all in need.

The **NVHCP** program deals with Hepatitis A, B, C, D and E viruses

- Hepatitis A and E are usually acute, symptomatic and outbreak prone and monitored through **Integrated Disease Surveillance Program**.
- Free diagnostics and drugs are being made available to all in need, for management of hepatitis C and

hepatitis B.

- The program uses paperless system of recording and reporting for patient management and monitoring through NVHCP-MIS portal

The government runs various national health programs that also help in the prevention and treatment of the disease.

- Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health and Nutrition program:**

Universal screening of pregnant women for Hepatitis B.

Universal Immunisation Program

- » To ensure 100% hepatitis B birth dose to all newborns and Hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) to newborns of positive pregnant women along with hepatitis B birth dose within 24

Seroprevalence is the share of people who test positive for a disease in a sample survey. In India's 2021 HIV Sentinel Surveillance data, about 0.85% of people tested positive for Hepatitis B and 0.29% for Hepatitis C — roughly 1 in 118 and 1 in 345 people, respectively.

hours of birth

- National AIDS Control Program (NACP):** Screening of high-risk groups for hepatitis B and C either through facility or outreach.
- Hepatitis B vaccination of healthcare workers and hepatitis B screened negative HRGs for infection prevention

expand this care further. Services are now moving from district hospitals down to local health centers, bringing testing and treatment closer to everyone. This reflects the spirit of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas — collective effort for inclusive growth, reaching every citizen.

The program also has its toll-free number (1800-11-6666) shared with the NTEP which provides general information about the infection, its prevention, modes of transmission, management and the various service delivery sites strengthened under the program across the country.

- National Tuberculosis Elimination Program (NTEP):** Use of existing machines under NTEP for molecular testing.
- Blood Transfusion services:** Linkage of Hepatitis B/C positive donors for further management.

Combating Hepatitis

Since 2018, India's National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme has offered free screening and treatment for Hepatitis B and C nationwide. Smart use of local funding, cheaper generic drugs, and existing health programs has helped

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LokOS: A Digital Backbone for Rural Livelihoods

Strengthening Transparency and Financial Inclusion

Published on: July 4, 2026

Strengthening Digital Governance under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)

LokOS (Lok = People, OS = Operating System) is a web and mobile platform under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) for end-to-end digitization of Self-Help Groups and their federations. DAY-NRLM is a flagship poverty alleviation programme promoting self-employment, skilled jobs, and sustainable livelihoods for poor rural households.

LokOS offers a comprehensive digital solution for managing Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) by digitizing member records, profiles, savings, lending, repayments, financial transactions, livelihoods, and convergence initiatives. The platform further strengthens governance and financial management by:

- reducing manual record-keeping through digital records,
- enabling real-time transaction tracking for SHGs,

- improving transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency, and
- capturing financial transactions amounting to ₹2 lakh crore per year within the SHG network.

LokOS comprises both web and mobile applications, each designed to serve distinct user groups and functionalities. The web application supports administrators, E-bookkeepers, and transaction approvers in creating and approving SHGs, Village Organizations (VOs), Cluster Level Federations (CLFs), and their members.

The mobile application enables efficient recording and management of Community-Based Organization (CBO) activities in the field.

The mobile application enables efficient recording and management of Community-Based Organization (CBO) activities in the field.



Self-Help Entrepreneur-Livelihoods and Enterprise Application for Prosperity and Sustainability (SHE-LEAPS) was recently launched on 29th June 2026 and is implemented under the LokOS platform. It is a digital platform for empowering women associated with Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across rural India. It provides a unified platform for enterprise creation, performance tracking, and business management. It supports farm and non-farm enterprises, strengthening a sustainable and resilient rural economy.

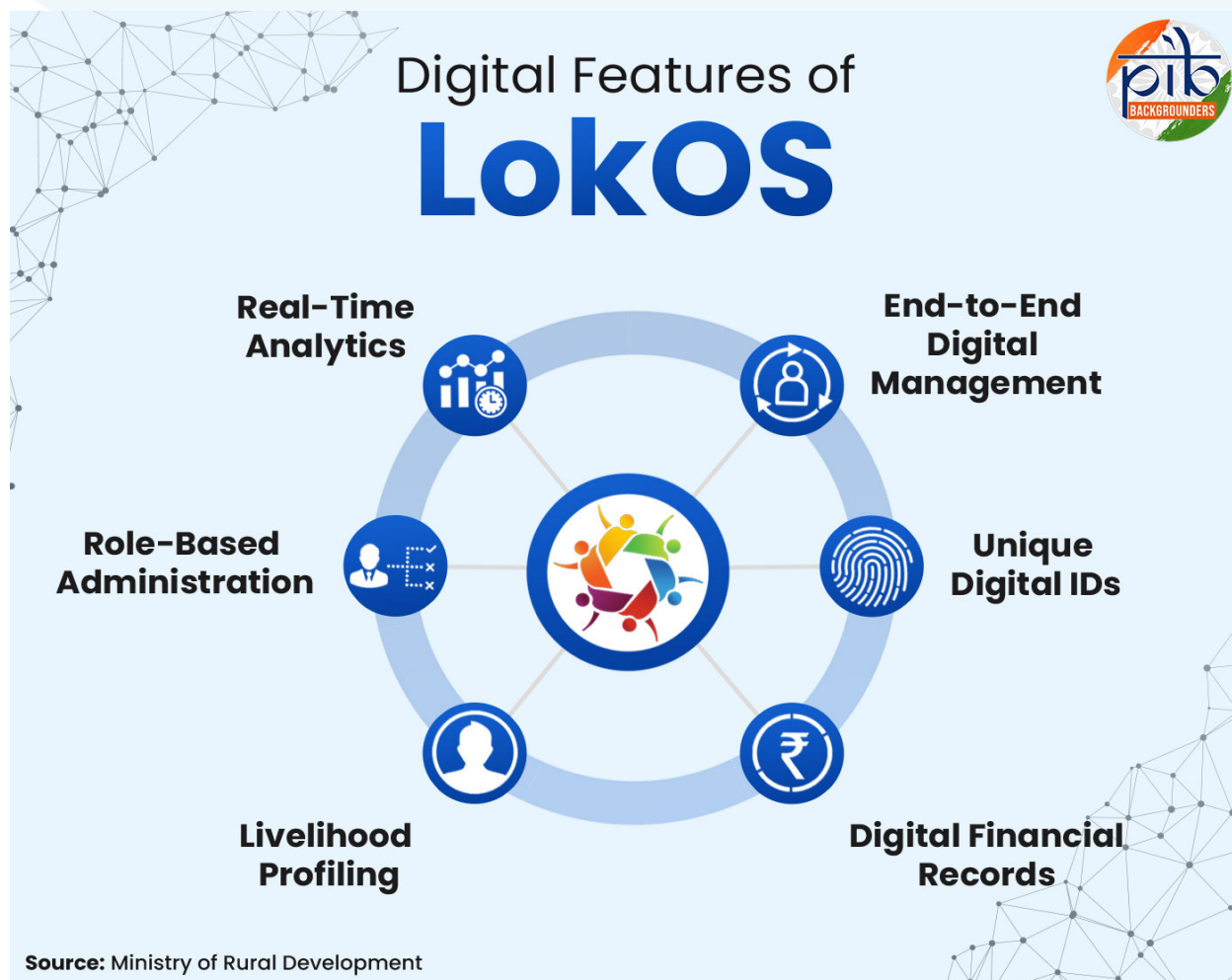
Digital Features of LokOS

The LokOS Mobile App empowers communities and community-based organizations by facilitating digitization and enabling enhanced data-driven decision-making. The key features include:

- **End-to-End Digital Management:** Registers and manages SHGs, Village Organizations (VOs), Cluster Level Federations (CLFs), and their members.
- **Unique Digital IDs:** Generates Aadhaar- and bank-linked digital identities for CBOs and members.
- **Digital Financial Records:** Records savings, loans, repayments, and

other financial transactions.

- **Livelihood Profiling:** Captures livelihood data to support planning and convergence with government schemes.
- **Role-Based Administration:** Enables user management, approvals, monitoring, and reporting from village to national level.
- **Real-Time Analytics:** Provides dashboards and one-click reports for data-driven decision-making.



LokOS: Driving Digital Transformation of Community Institutions

LokOS has significantly expanded its reach across India, enabling large-scale digital transformation of community institutions. The platform improves transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency while enabling integrated programme implementation and monitoring across all levels. It currently covers 34 States/UTs, 762 districts, 7,241 blocks, 2.57 lakh Gram

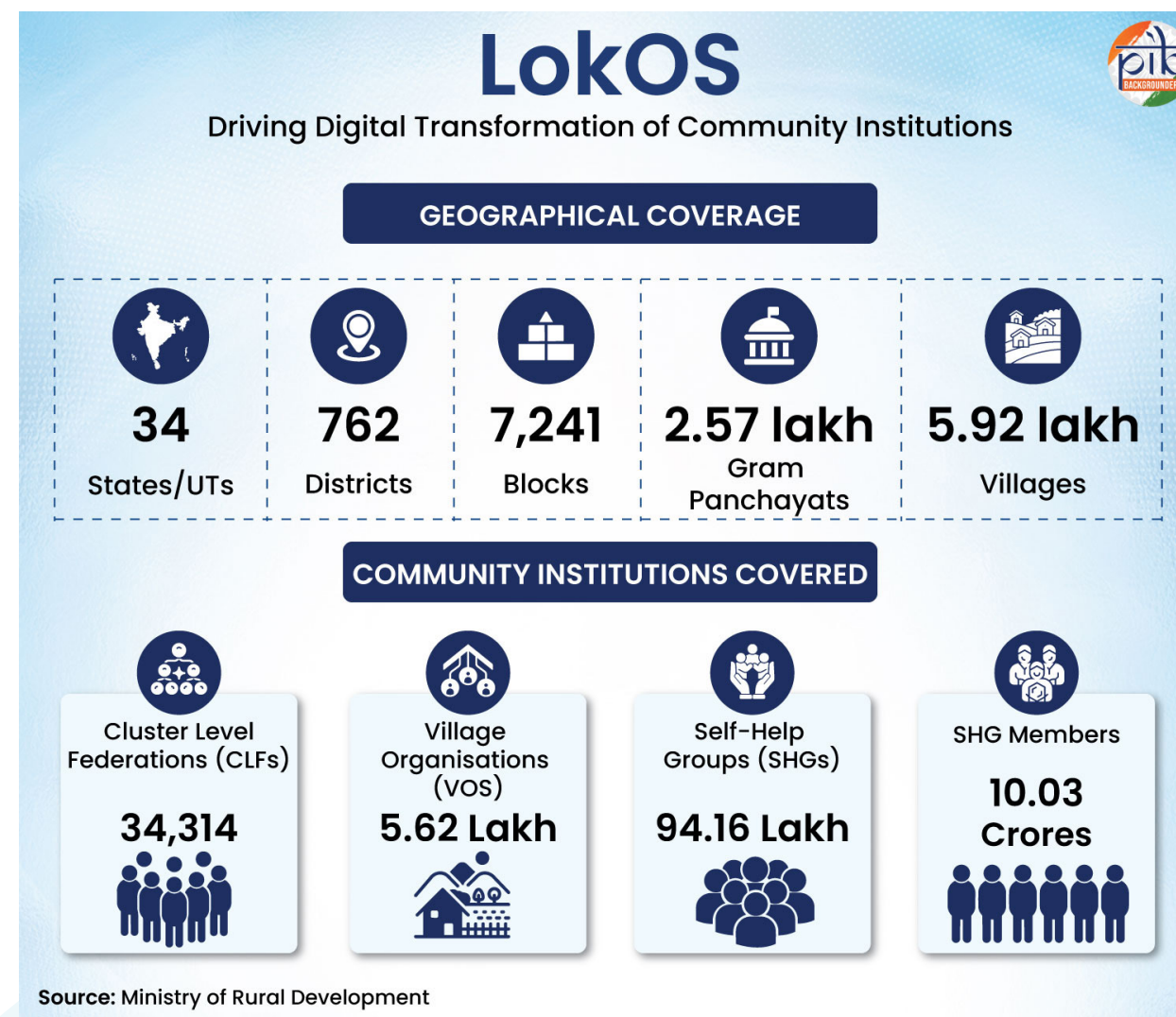
Panchayats, and 5.92 lakh villages.

Community Institutions Covered

The platform has enabled large-scale digital integration of community institutions nationwide. The linked community and community-based institutions are:

- **Cluster Level Federations (CLFs):** 34,314
- **Village Organizations (VOs):** 5.62 lakh

- **Self-Help Groups (SHGs):** 94.16 lakh
 - **SHG Members:** 10.03 crore
- LoKoS supporting Lakhpati Didis



Financial Support Mobilized

LokOS enables efficient tracking of financial support across community institutions, including ₹9,718.41 crore in the Revolving Fund (RF), **₹64,607.66 crore in the Community Investment Fund (CIF)**, and ₹38.34 crore in the Community Enterprise Fund (CEF).

LoKoS supports the **Lakhpati Didi** initiative through large-scale outreach, beneficiary tracking, and digital monitoring. It enables implementation through a robust network of **6,611 Master Trainers, 4.09 lakh Community Resource Persons (CRPs), and 3.87 crore Potential Lakhpati Didis (PLDs)**.

The platform also maintains **18.50 crore Digital Aajeevika Registers (DARs)**,

providing a strong digital foundation for livelihood planning, monitoring, and implementation.

Building a Digitally Empowered Rural India

LokOS is a transformative digital

platform under **DAY-NRLM** that enables end-to-end digitization of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). It is enhancing **transparency, governance, and operational efficiency** through **real-time monitoring and digital financial management**.

With nationwide reach, the platform is supporting the Lakhpati Didi initiative,

thereby promoting women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion. This platform is, thus, contributing to the creation of self-reliant rural communities.

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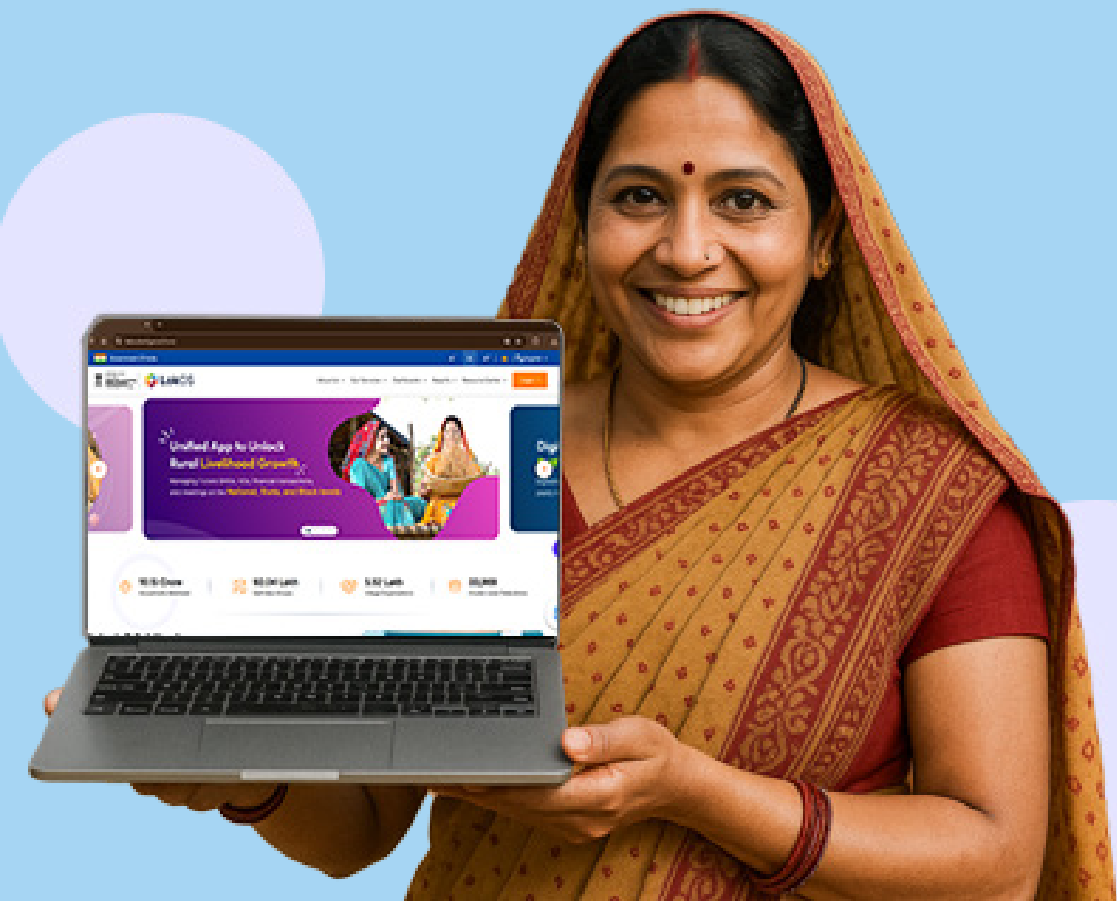
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A close-up photograph of a person's hands weaving a vibrant, multi-colored textile on a loom. The fabric features intricate geometric patterns in shades of red, yellow, green, and black. The background is a solid blue with abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in lighter and darker blue tones.

22

Weaving Sustainability into India's Textile Future

Published on: July 12, 2026

India's textile and apparel industry has long been central to the country's manufacturing strength. It makes a significant contribution to India's economy, industrial output, and exports, while holding a strong position in global textile trade. With changing global demand patterns, sustainability is becoming a major growth lever for the sector. Policy action is supporting organic fibres, safer chemicals, circular production, waste recovery, eco-labelling, and traceability. Cleaner technologies, recycling, responsible sourcing, and waste reduction can help Indian textiles remain competitive in international markets.

India's Textile Sector and the Pathway to Circular Growth

Often called the “**spinning wheel**” of India's industrial growth, the textile and apparel sector is a key pillar of the manufacturing economy. As per the **National Account Statistics 2025**, the sector accounts for **~2% of India's GDP** and **~11% of manufacturing GVA**. India is also the world's sixth-largest exporter of textiles and apparel, holding **~4%**

share in global exports. The sector also provides direct employment to more than **45 million people**, including many women and rural workers.

Given its economic scale, export linkages, and employment intensity, sustainability has become increasingly important for the sector. As global markets are shifting towards environmentally responsible production, India's textile industry has an opportunity to strengthen its competitiveness.



Circular Economy in the Textiles Sector

A circular economy is an economic system where materials and resources are reused, recycled, and kept in use for longer. This helps **reduce waste and emissions** while promoting a more sustainable mode of production. Its core principle is to ensure circularity in the use of inputs.

In the textile sector, sustainability and circularity are important for **reducing the adverse effects of a supply chain**. The existing materials are reused without changing their basic structure. This lowers the use of energy, chemicals, and water, while reducing environmental impact.

Within this scope, **circular production** is gaining momentum across the sector. India's rich heritage of textile craftsmanship and resource-conscious production is receiving wider recognition, as global markets increasingly value products with a lower environmental footprint.

Circularity Visible in India's Textile Value Chain

Circularity in India's textile value chain is reflected in measurable recovery, recycling, reuse and livelihood outcomes.

- Of the **~7.8 million tonnes** of textile waste managed annually, **over 90% is sourced** from domestic pre-consumer (factory scrap) and post-consumer waste.
- More than **70%** of the total textile

waste is currently recovered and channelled into recycling, upcycling, downcycling or reuse.

- Recovery is especially strong at the pre-consumer stage, where nearly **95%** of textile waste is collected and reused through established value-chain networks.
- The spinning sector shows one of the clearest examples of closed-loop circularity. **Nearly all spinning waste is reintegrated within production.**
- Circularity is also visible in post-consumer textiles. About 55% of this waste is diverted from landfills through India's extensive collection and sorting network.
- This ecosystem supports nearly **40-45 lakh livelihoods**, with women from marginalised communities playing a major role in collection, sorting and redistribution.

India's Local Textile Waste Recovery Models

Navi Mumbai's Circular Textile Recovery Model: India's first Municipal Textile Recovery Facility in Belapur, Navi Mumbai, recognises textile waste as a circular economy opportunity. The facility integrates collection, sorting, upcycling, technology and livelihoods into one circular recovery ecosystem. It has collected 30 MT of post-consumer textile waste, sorted 25.5 MT, processed over 41,000 items and developed 400+ upcycled samples. It has reached 1.14 lakh families, and supported women artisans through exhibitions and market access.

Panipat as a Downstream Textile Recycling Hub: Panipat has emerged as a **major textile recycling hub**. As a specialised downstream processing centre, it receives a large share of pre-consumer textile waste from other clusters. The cluster handles nearly 3,500-5,250 TPD of waste and supports collection, sorting, processing, knitting and recycling. This creates strong scope for higher-value textile-to-textile recycling through improved material separation.

Mongolpuri's Cutting Waste Sorting Network: Katran Market in Mongolpuri, Delhi, shows how informal networks support textile circularity. Roadside handlers collect cutting waste from trucks arriving from Noida, Gurugram, Manesar, Jaipur and Delhi. The waste is then sorted and segregated by colour, improving its value for recycling. The market supplies over 10 TPD of sorted cutting waste to formal recycling clusters in Panipat. Thus, creating an important link between local collection and downstream textile recovery.

Sustainability in textiles can further be understood through different stages of the production cycle. It is now influencing choices related to raw materials, manufacturing processes, quality standards, and market access across the value chain.

Input Stage: Fibre, Chemicals and Material Sustainability

The sustainability of textile production begins at the input stage. Fibre and

raw material choices shape the environmental footprint of the entire value chain. Policy support is therefore being directed towards organic fibres, new-age natural fibres, and reduced use of hazardous inputs.

Promoting Organic Fibre Production

India's push for organic fibre production is being strengthened through certification frameworks and cultivation support programmes.

- National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP):** It supports the development of certified organic products. It covers the **accreditation of certification bodies** and the setting of organic production standards. It also supports the promotion and marketing of organic products. The NPOP standards are recognised by the European Commission and Switzerland for unprocessed plant products. For textiles, it is especially relevant because it covers organic cotton fibre along with organic agricultural products.
- Jute-ICARE :** The Jute-ICARE (Improved Cultivation and Advanced Retting Exercise) programme was launched in 2015 to **promote sustainable and scientific jute cultivation**. Farmers receive support through high-yielding certified seeds and retting accelerators. It also promotes improved agronomic

practices to enhance productivity and fibre quality.

Since its launch, the programme has expanded from 130 blocks in 7 states to 289 blocks across 10 states. Coverage also increased from ~1.11 lakh hectares to ~2.15 lakh in 2024-25.

- New Age Fibre Mission (MM-III):** As one of the mini-missions under the Mission for Cotton Productivity, it seeks to promote allied natural fibres.

Organic Production

The focus is on preserving soil's reproductive and regenerative capacity through proper plant nutrition and sound soil management. It follows a grassroots-level approach to sustainable cultivation.



New age Natural fibres

These are plant-based fibres offering **eco-friendly alternatives** to traditional textiles and synthetic materials. These include innovative and sustainable materials derived from plants and other natural sources.

Natural fibres such as **ramie, sisal and flax** have significant economic and environmental value in India and global markets. They offer sustainable alternatives to synthetic fibres across the textile value chain, composites and other industrial uses.

Their lower environmental impact and versatile properties create strong potential for wider use in sustainable textile production.

The Mission aims to position India as a **global leader** in sustainable and high-quality fibre production. It promotes climate-smart cultivation, mechanisation, and innovation. The initiative also encourages the use of allied natural fibres as eco-friendly alternatives to synthetic materials, with a strong focus on optimising cultivation practices.

- **National Fibre Scheme:** The scheme aims to strengthen self-reliance across the fibre value chain, supporting natural fibres, man-made and new-age fibres. It focuses on enhancing domestic fibre availability, reducing import dependence, and encouraging innovation in advanced textile materials.

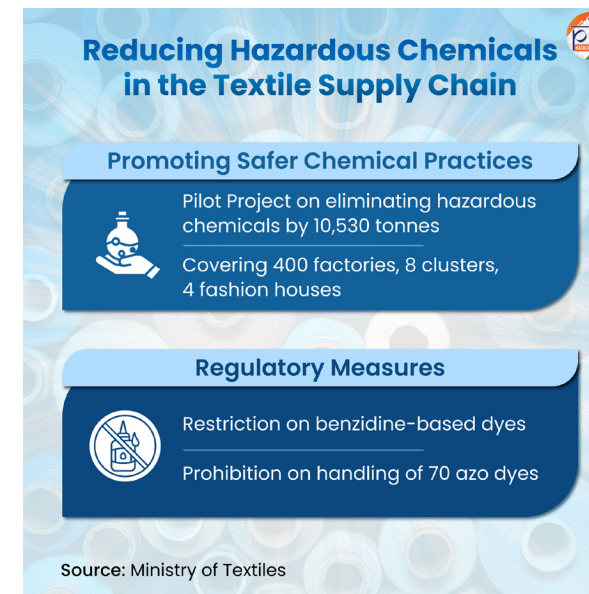
By encouraging natural and certified

inputs, these measures support the first step of circularity: reducing environmental stress at material stage.

Reducing Use of Hazardous Chemicals in Textiles Supply Chain

- **Pilots for Sustainable Textile Production:** A series of pilot projects have been undertaken to build awareness on sustainable production and consumption. They also strengthen capacity around global best practices. Their focus areas include safer chemicals, eco-friendly textiles, and organic textiles.

One such pilot project is **"Eliminating Hazardous Chemicals from the Textile Fashion Supply Chain in India"**. It covers **400 factories** across eight clusters and four fashion houses. The project is



designed to **mitigate 1,47,000 tCO₂eq** and also reduce harmful chemicals use by 10,530 tonnes.

This ongoing project aims to remove hazardous chemicals from India's apparel supply chain, promote sustainable production practices, and reduce environmental hazards.

Regulation of Hazardous Dyes and Persistent Pollutants: Use of benzidine-based dyes and their salts in dyeing and colour processing industries has been restricted. Further, the handling of **70 azo dyes has been prohibited**. India also ratified the **Stockholm Convention in 2006**; a global treaty aimed at protecting human health and the environment from Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

Reducing use of hazardous chemicals is important for circularity, as cleaner materials are easier to reintegrate into the value chain.

Production Stage: Textile Processing and Manufacturing

The manufacturing stage is central to textile sector's environmental footprint, given its intensive use of water, energy, and other resources. Sustainable manufacturing measures are promoting cleaner infrastructure, efficient resource use, circularity, and lower emissions.

Integrated Textile Parks for Sustainable Manufacturing

PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (MITRA) Parks are envisaged as **world-class, integrated textile hubs** to boost investment, employment, and exports. They are built around the **'5F' vision:** Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign. Under this approach, modern textile infrastructure is being developed with end-to-end manufacturing facilities. Sustainability is built in through Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs), wastewater recycling, scientific waste management, and shared utilities.



The development of **seven** PM MITRA Parks has been approved with an outlay of **₹4,445 crore up to 2027-28**. The seven sites have been finalised in Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu; Warangal, Telangana; Navsari, Gujarat; Kalaburagi, Karnataka; Dhar, Madhya Pradesh;

Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh; and Amravati, Maharashtra.

As on December 2025, MoUs with potential investments of over ₹27,434 crore have been signed. The required land has been fully acquired and handed over to the respective SPVs.

Green and Circular Economy Support under RAMP

As per the Economic Survey 2023-24, MSMEs accounted for over 80% of India’s textile and apparel production capacity. Several initiatives have therefore been undertaken to strengthen MSME participation, improve competitiveness and support sustainable growth.

Under the RAMP Programme, the Government has introduced the MSE-GIFT and MSE-SPICE schemes for Micro and Small Enterprises in 2023 . These schemes encourage sustainable practices through support such as interest subvention and capital subsidy.

MSE-GIFT: The scheme aims to support the **adoption of green technologies and clean energy in MSMEs**. It seeks to create an enabling ecosystem for sustainable practices through financial and awareness support. This includes 2% annual interest subvention on term loans up to ₹2 crore, 75% credit guarantee coverage, and IEC activities for outreach.

MSE-Scheme for Promotion and Investment in Circular Economy (MSE-SPICE): The Scheme aims to help micro and small enterprises **adopt sustainable practices** and contribute to greener development. It supports resource-efficient and circular solutions that reduce environmental impact while improving efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Its key features include 25% capital subsidy for eligible plant and machinery investments, along with nationwide awareness promotion.

Textile Sector under the Indian Carbon Market (ICM)

Greenhouse Gas Emission Intensity (GEI) targets have been notified for carbon-intensive sectors under the CCTS. This brings petroleum refineries, petrochemicals, textiles, and secondary aluminium under the ICM compliance mechanism. Under this framework, obligated entities, including those in the



textile sector, are required to disclose their **Scope-1 and Scope-2 emissions**:

- **Scope 1 emissions are direct greenhouse gas emissions** from sources owned or controlled by an organisation.
- **Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions** arising from an organisation’s consumption of purchased electricity, steam, heat, or cooling.

Entities that perform better than their assigned targets become eligible to receive Carbon Credit Certificates. These certificates can then be traded with entities that are unable to meet their targets, creating a market-based incentive for lowering emissions.

Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)

Notified in 2023, the Scheme provides the **framework** for operating the Indian Carbon Market (ICM). It aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by pricing emissions through carbon credit certificate trading. By attaching economic value to emission reduction, the scheme encourages industries to improve efficiency, shift to cleaner technologies and reduce their carbon intensity over time.

Roadmap for Sustainable Textile Manufacturing

The Government has undertaken several studies and projects to support cleaner textile manufacturing. These focus on best practices and guiding improvements in water and energy efficiency, chemical management, and related processes. They include the

preparation of Best Available Techniques Reference/ Comprehensive Industry Document (BREF/COINDS) documents and a roadmap for green transformation.

Tex Eco Initiative

The initiative promotes **globally competitive and environmentally sustainable** textile and apparel manufacturing. It aligns India’s textile industry with international sustainability standards and emerging green market opportunities.

Post-Production Stage: Waste Management

The post-production stage of textiles determines how textile waste is collected, recycled, and reintegrated into the value chain. Thus, efforts to strengthen circularity in this sector are increasingly focused on better waste mapping, recycling, and resource recovery.



India's Textile Waste Recycling Potential

India's textile recycling sector is projected to grow strongly with rising demand for sustainable fashion. The sector is estimated to reach **USD 3.5 billion by 2030**. This rapid growth highlights significant employment potential. The sector is expected to generate nearly **1 lakh green jobs** over the next five years.

Solid Waste Management and Resource Recovery

The Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, came into full effect on April 1, 2026. The revised rules incorporate the principles of circular economy and extend producer responsibility. They place greater focus on **efficient waste segregation and management**.

They also create a structured end-use pathway for non-recyclable dry waste. Industrial units using solid fuel,

including cement plants and waste-to-energy plants, are required to gradually increase the use of Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) from 5% to 15% over six years.

RDF is defined as fuel made from high-calorific municipal solid waste, including textiles. This supports the diversion of high-calorific waste, including textiles, from disposal towards productive use.

NTTM Support for Conversion of Textile Waste

Under the National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM), several R&D projects have been sanctioned for sustainable technologies and materials. These include projects on converting textile waste, biomass, and bio-residues into advanced green materials. The focus areas include carbon fibres and functional textiles.

Effluent Discharge Standards for the Textile Sector

Environmental standards for emission and discharge from industries, including textiles, are notified under the Environment Protection Rules, 1986. Under these, the textile industries and clusters must install and operate Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs) or Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs).



This ensures that effluent discharge meets the prescribed environmental standards.

Mapping India's Textile Waste Value Chain

Released in 2026, the report **"Mapping of Textile Waste Value Chain in India"** provides a data-driven assessment of textile waste generation. It identifies opportunities to strengthen circularity across the textile value chain. The report also offers a practical blueprint for turning textile waste into an economic resource through recycling, upcycling, and resource recovery.

Promotion Stage: Market and Enterprise Support

Sustainability in textiles goes beyond production and waste management. It is also being supported through

standards, traceability, market support, public procurement, and awareness initiatives. These measures help embed sustainable practices across the textile value chain.

Standards and Sustainability Benchmarks

- **Eco-Labeling for Sustainable Textile Products:** Under the Eco-Mark Scheme, 2024, textiles have been identified as one of the product categories eligible for Eco Mark certification under Indian Standards. For the sector, 13 Indian Standard titles have been notified. An Eco-Mark is granted to products that meet specified environmental criteria. These cover resource use, climate impact, biodiversity, energy use, waste, emissions, and hazardous substances.
- **Quality Certification and Traceability of Indian Textiles:** To strengthen the global positioning of **Brand India** in textiles, initiatives such as **Kasturi Cotton** and **Silk Mark** have been introduced. These give premium Indian cotton a distinct identity in domestic and international markets. Traceability systems also support responsible sourcing and greater supply chain transparency for global buyers.

Such standards can create market confidence for products made through



resource-efficient and environmentally responsible processes.

Promoting Upcycled Products through Public Procurement

A tripartite **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** was signed in 2024 between the Textiles Committee, Government e-Marketplace (GeM), and the Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE). It aims to encourage and institutionalise the public procurement of upcycled products.



This is intended to create **wider market access** while supporting circularity in the textile sector.

Awareness Initiatives for Sustainable Textiles

- **SU.RE (Sustainable Resolution):** This is one of the Indian apparel industry's **largest voluntary sustainability commitments**. It is led by the Clothing Manufacturers Association of India (CMAI), Reliance Brands Limited (RBL), the United Nations in India, and the Ministry of Textiles. The initiative seeks to drive the industry's transition towards more sustainable practices. It reflects a collective commitment to place the Indian fashion industry on a cleaner and more environmentally responsible path.
- **Circle Back Campaign:** Several

initiatives have been undertaken by the Government to promote sustainability across the textile value chain. These include the Circle Back campaign, which raises **awareness among students about textile recycling**. Exhibitions such as **Vastra Katha** at Bharat Tex 2024 and 2025 have also helped showcase sustainable textile practices.

- **ESG Platform for Sustainable Textile Practices:** An Environment, Sustainability and Governance (ESG) Task Force has been constituted to deliberate on sustainable production, certification, exports, and allied matters.

It has enabled industry-focused programmes such as Circular Samvaad and the Cluster Exchange Mechanism to promote knowledge exchange and best practices.

Bharat Tex: Advancing Sustainability and Innovation in Textiles

Bharat Tex is India's **flagship global textile event**. It reflects the country's growing role in the global textile economy. It brings together the full textile value chain, from fibre and yarn to fabrics, garments, technical textiles, and sustainability-led innovations, on a single integrated platform.

Following its first two editions in 2024 and 2025, Bharat Tex 2026 is being designed

as a broader industry platform. It will bring together exhibitions, knowledge sessions, reverse buyer-seller meets, and policy dialogue. The event places particular emphasis on sustainable and circular textiles, technical textiles, MSME participation, innovation, and global market access.

A Sustainable Future for India's Textile Sector

India's relationship with textiles is embedded as deeply in its cultural heritage as in its economic foundations. For centuries, Indian households and artisan communities have long practised reuse, repair, and resource-conscious production. These traditions closely reflect what is now described as circularity. Today, they are being reinforced through policy support for sustainable inputs, responsible production, better waste management and traceability.

These measures show how sustainability and circularity are becoming more closely linked in India's textile sector. It connects traditional wisdom with modern industrial transformation.



This is strengthening both competitiveness and environmental resilience in one of the country's most important sectors.

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NCW Women Helpline – 14490

A Dedicated Platform for Women's Support

Published on: July 3, 2026

Bringing Assistance Closer to Women



Ensuring the safety, dignity, and well-being of women is essential for an inclusive and equitable society. Accessible and responsive public service mechanisms play an important role in addressing issues and facilitating redressal. The **National Commission for Women (NCW)** is the apex statutory body to safeguard and promote the rights and interests of women. It serves as a platform to represent women’s concerns and advocate for their welfare

and empowerment. The subjects of NCW’s initiatives include dowry, equal employment opportunities, and labour exploitation.

Every year, NCW receives thousands of complaints related to domestic violence and other forms of abuse. Such experiences can have a significant impact on mental well-being and often require professional psychological support. To assist women in distress, NCW operates the 24×7 Women Helpline – 14490, providing a Digital Complaint Registration System for women affected by violence. This toll-free number acts as an easy-to-remember short code linked

to NCW’s existing helpline – 7827170170. Any woman or girl above 18 years of age can contact the helpline. It enables women to register complaints and access immediate assistance. It is staffed by trained psychological counsellors from leading mental health and counselling institutions. This ensures professional and compassionate intervention for those in need.

Bridging Distances Through Digital Access

The NCW Women Helpline exemplifies the principles of Digital India by leveraging technology to improve access to public services and grievance redressal.

- The helpline provides a round-the-clock Digital Complaint Registration System to seek assistance at any time.
- The helpline facilitates a digital access point for complaint registration, psychological counselling, referral support, and information on government schemes. This makes support services more accessible and citizen-centric.
- By providing a nationwide number linked to NCW’s existing helpline, the initiative enables quicker access to support, particularly during emergencies.

Supporting Reform Through Complaint Analysis

The complaints received by NCW provide valuable insights into the nature and trends of crimes against women.

- The analysis helps identify gaps in the functioning of institutions responsible for addressing violence against women.
- The findings support recommendations for corrective measures to improve the response to such cases.
- Complaints are also used as case studies during sensitization programmes for police personnel, judicial officers, prosecutors, forensic scientists, defence lawyers, and other administrative functionaries.

Complaint Processing and Redressal Mechanism

NCW follows a structured process to examine complaints and facilitate appropriate action. Complaints are reviewed in accordance with the Commission’s mandate before further proceedings are initiated.

- Complaints are scrutinized to

NCW Women Helpline

**14490**

Objectives



To provide a Digital Complaint Registration System for women in distress through trained counsellors.



To facilitate psychological counselling and referrals to relevant agencies, including:

• Police

• District Legal Service Authority (DLSA)

• One Stop Crisis Centre (OSC)

• Hospitals

• Protection Officer (PO)



To provide information regarding suitable support services, government agencies, etc.

Source: National Commission for Women

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NCW Women Helpline – 14490

NCW Women Helpline – 14490

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determine whether they fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission.

- Complaints covered under the NCW mandate are registered and assigned a unique case number.
- Complaints that do not fall within the mandate are closed after informing the complainant.
- Depending on the nature of the case, registered complaints are taken up with the concerned authorities. The following actions are mainly taken to redress the grievances of the complainants:
 - Expediting/monitoring police investigation
 - Monitor proper implementation of statutory provisions
 - Resolving the issues through mediation/counselling
 - For serious crimes, NCW forms an Inquiry Committee, which further examines various aspects of the case.

Towards a More Responsive Framework

The NCW Women Helpline reflects the evolving approach to women's welfare. It brings together responsive institutions and simplified public services to address

emerging needs. By creating a dedicated channel for engagement, the initiative strengthens the connection between women and established formal systems. It also promotes greater awareness and builds confidence in institutional processes. As its outreach continues to expand, the helpline plays an important role in strengthening safeguards for women across the country.

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24

Vikram-1 Charting India's Cosmic Future

Reforms, Progress and Liftoff

Published on: July 18, 2026



A New Era: India Emerging as a Global Space Hub

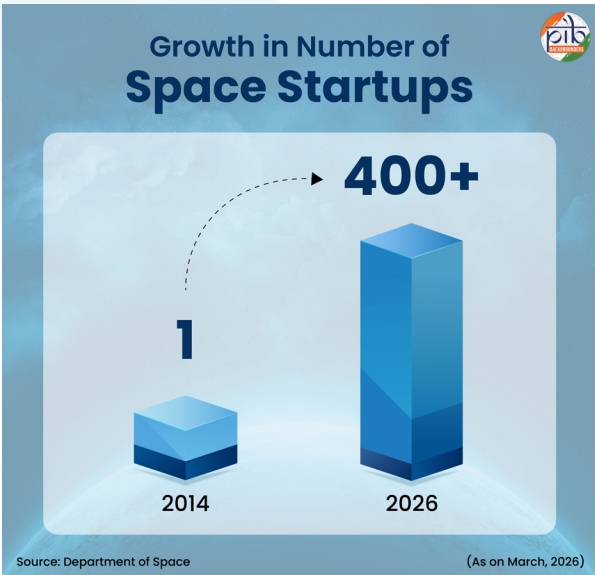


India's space sector is undergoing a historic transformation through the Government of India's forward-looking reforms. As Skyroot Aerospace prepares to launch Vikram-1, India's first privately developed orbital rocket, the country's growing private space ecosystem is demonstrating the impact of these reforms. The Indian Space Policy 2023 has opened the entire space value chain to private participation, fostering innovation, investment and enterprise across the space ecosystem. Indian industry is now participating in satellite manufacturing, launch services, space applications and downstream services.

The impact of these reforms is already visible in the numbers. India's space startup ecosystem has grown from just **one startup in 2014 to over 400 in 2026**, reflecting the rapid expansion of private participation and innovation across the space sector.

Government reforms are also accelerating the growth of India's space economy. Valued at **approximately USD 8.4 billion today**, the sector is **projected to grow five-fold to USD 40–45 billion**

by 2030. It is further aimed to reach **USD 100 billion by 2040**. Sustained Government support, enabling regulations and strong public-private partnerships continue to drive this



Mission Aagaman: Vikram-1

- Vikram-1, developed by Skyroot Aerospace, is India's first privately developed orbital launch vehicle, capable of placing 350 kg into Low Earth Orbit (LEO). Orbital launch vehicles deploy satellites into stable Earth orbits, supporting communication, navigation, Earth observation and scientific research.
- It is built with an all-carbon

composite structure, reliable solid-fuel boosters and a 3D-printed liquid engine, Vikram-1 showcases India's growing private-sector launch capabilities.

- Vikram-1 is scheduled to launch under Mission Aagaman between 12 July and 4 August 2026. A successful mission will validate the country's indigenous commercial launch capability and the success of the Government of India's space sector reforms.
- The mission will deploy multiple customer payloads into LEO at an altitude of 450 kilometres (280 miles). These include Skyroot's SCOPE satellite, DCUBED's technology demonstration payload, Grahaa Space's SOLARAS S3 satellite, and Cosmoserve Space's Embrace, a robotic arm designed to capture orbital debris.
- The maiden flight will also carry two symbolic payloads—"Cosmic Bloom", a floral-shaped artwork, and an 18-karat gold micro-rocket. The micro-rocket features microscopic sculptures of C. V. Raman, Vikram Sarabhai and A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, each smaller than a grain of rice, paying tribute to India's pioneering scientists.

growth, positioning India as a global hub for space technology, manufacturing, innovation and commercial space activities.

Key Reforms Enabling Private Participation in India's Space Sector

The Government of India has taken profound steps by introducing key reforms in the space sector to expand private sector participation and unlock new opportunities for innovation.

Indian Space Policy 2023

The Government notified the Indian Space Policy 2023, allowing **Non-Government Entities (NGEs)** to take part across the entire space value chain. This move opened doors for private players to space-related activities in India. The policy aims to drive innovation in technology, encouraging fresh ideas and advancements within the sector. Alongside this, the policy also encourages international collaboration, fostering partnerships that support peaceful exploration of

space. Collectively, these steps mark a significant shift toward a more open and inclusive space ecosystem in India.

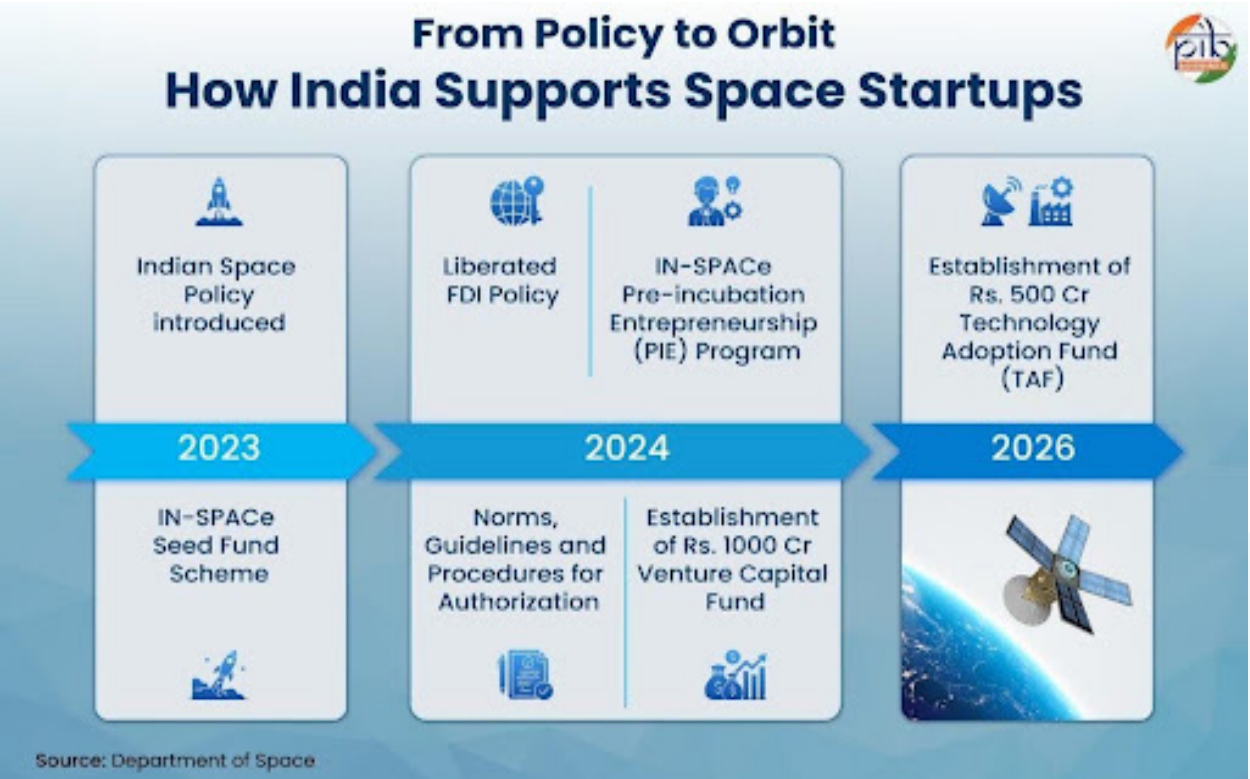
Single-Window Space Regulator

The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) is acting as an autonomous single-window agency to authorise and promote space activities by Government entities and NGEs. Strengthened by the Indian Space Policy 2023, IN-SPACe also provides a stable and predictable regulatory framework and facilitates end-to-end industry participation. Additionally, it enables access to ISRO facilities, technologies and technical expertise, and streamlines approvals through



transparent guidelines. As of June 2026, IN-SPACe has registered over 4,500 organisations, issued 133 authorisations, and signed 106 Memoranda of Understanding.

Additionally, as of February 2026, IN-SPACe facilitated USD 150 million in investments into Indian space startups during CY 2025, with the top 10 startups securing a confirmed order book of the same value. By June 2026, IN-SPACe had also facilitated 118 technology transfer agreements and signed 189 Joint Project Implementation Plans (JPIPs), Technology Partnership Agreements (TPAs) and Business Partnership Agreements (BPAs), accelerating technology commercialisation and industry collaboration.



Catalysing Private Investment

- IN-SPACe Seed Fund Scheme:** This scheme provides early-stage financial assistance to space startups and Micro and Small Enterprises. It supports them in developing innovative space technologies and practical applications for various uses. Moreover, the scheme offers grants of up to ₹1 crore to eligible applicants working in this space. Along with funding, it also provides mentorship, training, and networking support to help startups grow. Additionally, the scheme grants funds to Indian space startups working on agriculture-related technologies. It supports solutions for disaster management and urban development that rely on space technology.
- ₹1,000 crore Venture Capital (VC) Fund:** A VC under IN-SPACe aims to accelerate private participation in the space sector. This fund provides early-stage capital to promising startups working in space technology and related fields. It also attracts private investment into the sector while supporting the production of domestic space startups. The initiative aims to expand India's space economy five-fold over the coming decade. The fund will be deployed over five years, starting from FY 2025-26 through FY 2029-30. Annual investments under this fund will range between ₹100 crore and ₹250 crore.

- ₹500 crore Technology Adoption Fund (TAF):** IN-SPACe introduced the Technology Adoption Fund (TAF). This fund aims to accelerate the deployment of indigenous space technologies developed by NGEs. It also supports the transformation of early-stage technologies into commercially viable products for the market. The scheme offers funding of up to 60% of project cost for startups and MSMEs. Large industries can receive funding of up to 40% of their project cost. This funding is subject to a maximum limit of ₹25 crore per project.

Commercialisation of India's Space Programme

The Indian Space Policy 2023 defined the role of NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) as ISRO's commercial arm. NSIL manufactures and procures space



systems on commercial principles. It also delivers end-to-end space solutions to both Government entities and NGEs. NSIL further expands private participation through PSLV productionisation and small satellite technology transfer. It also supports satellite services while marketing space products and spin-off technologies.

Over the years, NSIL has witnessed a tenfold increase in revenue, reflecting its expanding commercial footprint in the global space sector. As of December 2025, over 70 Technology Transfer Agreements had enabled the transfer of ISRO-developed

technologies to industry, accelerating their commercialisation. As of July 2026, NSIL has launched a total of 141 satellites, including 138 international/customer satellites and 3 Indian satellites, reinforcing India's position as a trusted global launch service provider.

Liberalised FDI Policy for Space

The **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** policy for the space sector was liberalised to make it more investor-friendly. The revised policy permits **up to 74% automatic FDI** in satellite manufacturing and operations, **49% automatic FDI** in launch vehicles and spaceports,

Sector/Activity	Sectoral Cap	Entry Route
Satellites-Manufacturing & Operation	100%	Up to 74%: Automatic Beyond 74%: Government route
Satellite Data Products		
Ground Segment & User Segment		
Launch Vehicles and associated systems or subsystems	100%	Up to 49%: Automatic Beyond 49%: Government route
Creation of Spaceports or launching and receiving Spacecraft		

Manufacturing of components and systems/ sub-systems for satellites, ground segment and user segment	100%	Up to 100%: Automatic
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and **100% automatic FDI** in the manufacturing of satellite components and subsystems. The reform is expected to accelerate investments, promote technology transfer and collaborative research, and further improve the ease of doing business in India's space sector. These reforms reflect the government's commitment to building a stronger, more dynamic space ecosystem that encourages enterprise, accelerates growth, and strengthens India's global standing.

From Policy to Progress

Government reforms have unlocked innovation, private participation and commercial opportunities across India's space ecosystem. These reforms have translated into tangible outcomes in launch services, indigenous technology development, public-private partnerships and technology transfer.

- NSIL strengthened India's commercial launch capabilities by executing India's first dedicated commercial **LVM3** mission in October 2022, launching **36 OneWeb satellites**

into Low Earth Orbit and reinforcing India's position in the global launch services market.

- **Vikram-S**, launched under **Mission Prarambh** in **November 2022**. Vikram-S was **India's first privately developed rocket** and the country's first private launch authorised by **IN-SPACe**. The technology demonstration mission carried **three customer payloads** equipped with sensors to validate critical launch technologies for future orbital missions.
- Agnikul Cosmos became the first NGE to launch a rocket from India's first private launch pad ('**Dhanush**') at Sriharikota in May 2024. The mission also demonstrated the **world's first single-piece 3D-printed semi-cryogenic rocket engine**.
- IN-SPACe approved a Public-Private Partnership for an **Earth Observation satellite constellation**, led by Pixxel with Dhruva Space, SatSure Analytics India and Piersight Space, to strengthen applications such as

agriculture, disaster management, climate monitoring and urban planning.

- Technology commercialisation has also accelerated. In February 2026, IN-SPACe facilitated the **₹511 crore, 10-year transfer of SSLV technology** to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), enabling industry-led production and launch services. Bellatrix Aerospace also successfully demonstrated an **indigenous Green Propulsion System** under DRDO's Technology Development Fund, strengthening indigenous capabilities through cleaner propulsion technologies.

This collaborative ecosystem is shaping India's emergence as a global space technology hub.

The Road Ahead

India's space sector stands at the threshold of a new era, driven by Government-led reforms and a vibrant private ecosystem. The Indian Space Policy 2023, liberalised FDI norms, and dedicated funding initiatives have opened the entire space value chain to any potential players. These reforms have fostered a dynamic ecosystem marked by growing startups, indigenous



innovation, and expanding commercial activities. Moreover, as **Vikram-1 prepares for liftoff** under

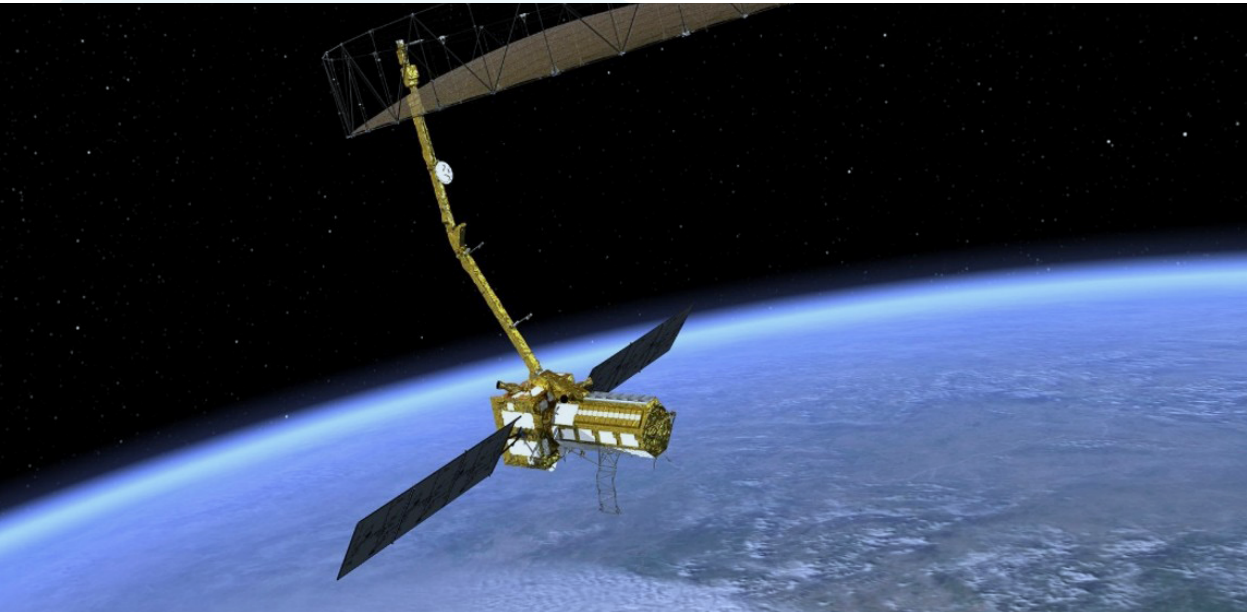
Mission Aagaman, it would represent more than a technological milestone. It reflects the growing confidence and capabilities of India's private space industry. The journey from ISRO-led missions to a thriving space ecosystem demonstrates the success of the Government's reform agenda. With sustained policy support, public-private partnerships, and technological innovation, India is well positioned to emerge as a leading global space power and a key driver of the future space economy.

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The Making of a Sporting Nation

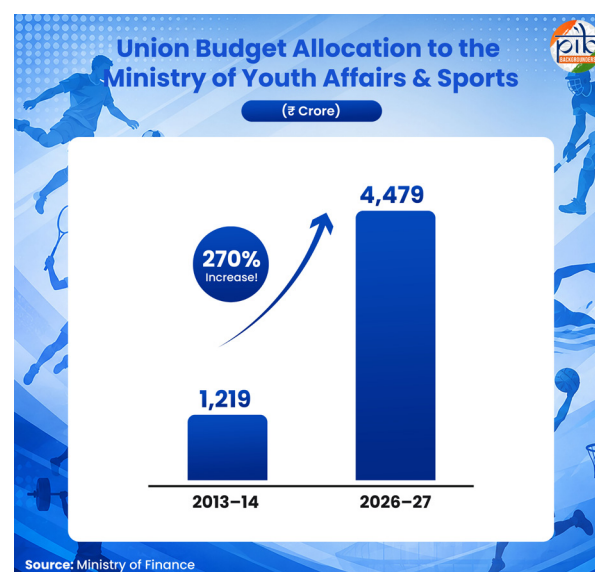
Khelo India and the Road to International Excellence

Published on: July 27, 2026

As India competes at the Commonwealth Games 2026, its growing success reflects years of sustained investment in sport. Driven by Khelo India and other initiatives, the country has strengthened athlete development, expanded sporting opportunities and improved international performances. From grassroots participation to global podiums, India is building a stronger sporting ecosystem and shaping the champions of tomorrow.

The Spirit of a Sporting India

As the Commonwealth Games return to Glasgow from 23 July to 2 August 2026, India begins another chapter in its sporting journey. This is India's 19th Commonwealth Games (CWG) appearance, continuing a legacy that began in 1934. Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu has already opened India's gold medal account in Glasgow, securing her third consecutive CWG title.



Such moments capture something larger than medals alone. Sport carries immense power to transform a nation, shaping individuals and elevating countries onto the world stage. It builds character and confidence in citizens, while announcing a nation's arrival as a sporting superpower. Victory on the field brings immense national pride, uniting people beyond caste, creed and religion. This shared pride helps build a happier, healthier and more cohesive society.

India's greatest sporting asset is its youth. Around 65 per cent of the population is below 35 years of age. Recognising this immense potential, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports continues to strengthen youth development and promote sporting excellence across the country. The Union Budget 2026-27 allocated a record ₹4,479.88 crore to the Ministry, up from ₹1,219 crore in 2013-14. At the heart of this transformation stands the Khelo India programme,

Did you know?

On 21 June 2026, three indigenously designed and built platforms were commissioned together at Kolkata: INS Dunagiri, a Nilgiri-class stealth frigate; INS Sanshodhak, a Sandhayak-class survey vessel (large); and INS Agray, an Arnala-class anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft. All three ships were designed by Navy's own Warship Design Bureau and manufactured by the Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata, a defence public sector undertaking.

On 11 July 2026, the sixth indigenously designed and built Nilgiri-class stealth frigate INS Mahendragiri was commissioned at Visakhapatnam

complemented by several other key initiatives. Together, they promote mass participation and sporting excellence across rural and urban India alike. They provide crucial infrastructure and financial support to identify, train and nurture talent at every level. These efforts are shaping a generation ready to carry India's colours with pride on the world's biggest stages.

The Khelo India Vision

Launched in 2017 to create a strong foundation for Indian sport, the Khelo India Scheme brought together three existing programmes. It merged the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan, Urban Sports Infrastructure Scheme and National Sports Talent Search Scheme into a unified framework for sports

development.

The scheme follows a comprehensive approach to strengthen every stage of the sporting ecosystem. Its five key pillars are:



- Establishing training centres at different levels to identify talented athletes and guide them towards professional excellence.
- Building the capacity of coaches and support staff through dedicated development programmes.
- Expanding the use of sports science and advanced technology to improve athlete performance.
- Organising competitions and leagues to promote a vibrant sporting culture and provide competitive

opportunities.

- Developing sports infrastructure to support both training and competitive events.

The Mission envisions one Khelo India Training Centre in every district through State and Union Territory plans. It also

promotes structured athlete pathways supported by sports science, psychology and nutrition. Data driven platforms enable real time athlete tracking. This integrated approach aims to position India among the world's leading sporting nations by 2036.

Growing Investment in Khelo India

2017-18 to 2019-20: ₹1,756 crore approved for three years to revamp the scheme.

2020-21: Allocation of ₹328.77 crore for one year.

2021-22 to 2025-26: Financial outlay increased to ₹3,790.50 crore for five years, expanding activities and strengthening sports infrastructure.

2026-27: Allocation of ₹924.35 crore, reinforcing continued support as the scheme enters a new phase of outcome-oriented implementation.

Key achievements of the Khelo India Scheme include (As of July 2026):

- **349** new sports infrastructure projects approved, with a total investment of **₹3,176 crore**.
- **1,067 Khelo India Centres (KICs)** established to strengthen grassroots training and athlete support.
- **267 academies** supported to nurture sporting talent across disciplines.
- **2,745 Khelo India Athletes (KIAs)** supported with coaching, equipment, medical care and a monthly out of pocket allowance.

Through sustained investment and a clear long-term vision, Khelo India is creating a strong pipeline of champions

for India.

Khelo India Games: A Stage for Future Champions

The Khelo India movement entered a new phase with the launch of the Khelo India School Games in 2018. Held in New Delhi, the event brought young sporting talent from across the country onto one platform.

Later that year, the Indian Olympic Association joined the initiative. From 2019, the event was renamed the Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG). It continues to serve as the flagship competition under the Khelo India umbrella.



The Khelo India Games have steadily expanded to create more opportunities for athletes across disciplines. Annual competitions now bring together participants representing their States and universities, helping them compete, excel and prepare for higher levels. **Since 2018, more than 63,000 athletes have participated in the Khelo India Games.**

The **Khelo India University Games (KIUG)** and the **Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG)** were introduced in 2020. The **Khelo India Para Games (KIPG)** followed in 2023. The expansion continued in 2025 with the launch of the **Khelo India Beach Games (KIBG)** and the **Khelo India Water Sports Festival**. The **Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG)** made their debut in 2026.

The Khelo India Games continue to strengthen India's sporting culture by giving young athletes a national stage to pursue excellence.

Enabling India's Sporting Success

India's sporting rise extends beyond infrastructure and competitions. Several focused initiatives strengthen athlete development, identify emerging talent and build long term sporting capacity. Collectively, these efforts are creating a stronger pathway from grassroots participation to global success.

Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports launched the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) in September 2014 to improve India's performance at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The scheme was revamped in April 2018 with a dedicated technical support team to provide holistic assistance to athletes.

TOPS supports athletes through foreign training, international competitions, coaching camps, specialised equipment and a monthly stipend of ₹50,000. A Development Group was also introduced to support junior athletes with a monthly stipend of ₹25,000.

As of April 2026, the scheme currently supports **51 Core Athletes, 52 Para Core Athletes and 130 Development Athletes**. TOPS played an important role in India's medal winning performances at the Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

KIRTI

- The **Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI)** initiative identifies and nurtures sporting talent among children between 9 and 18 years of age. It uses Talent Assessment Centres, standardised assessment protocols and advanced IT tools, including Artificial

Intelligence and data analytics, to ensure transparent and merit-based selection.

- At present, **174 Talent Assessment Centres** operate across **3 States and Union Territories**, with **1,87,921 assessments** completed. KIRTI aims to build a sustainable talent pipeline to help India become a top 10 sporting nation by 2036 and a top 5 sporting nation by 2047.

Sports Goods Manufacturing

The Union Budget 2026–27 announced a dedicated initiative for sports goods manufacturing with an allocation of ₹500 crore. The initiative seeks to strengthen India's position as a global hub for high quality and affordable sports goods.

Its key objectives include expanding domestic manufacturing capacity, promoting research and innovation in equipment design, advancing material sciences, strengthening India's presence in global sports supply chains and generating employment across manufacturing and allied sectors.

These initiatives are strengthening India's sporting ecosystem and preparing athletes to compete with confidence on the global stage.

India's Rise on the Global Sporting Stage

The investments made in India's sporting ecosystem are delivering results on the global stage. India's performances at major international sporting events reflect the country's growing strength across Olympic, Paralympic and multi-sport disciplines. Stronger athlete development, better training support and sustained investment have translated into consistent improvements on the world stage. The steady rise in participation and medal tallies highlights India's emergence as an increasingly competitive sporting nation.

Olympic Games

India's Olympic journey witnessed a remarkable transformation between 2016 and 2024. The country progressed from two medals at Rio 2016 to seven at Tokyo 2020. India maintained this momentum with six medals at Paris 2024. Neeraj Chopra became India's first Olympic athletics gold medallist at Tokyo 2020. Mirabai Chanu also emerged as one of India's most consistent Olympic medallists.

Year	Host City	Indian Athletes	Medals Won
2016	Rio de Janeiro	117	2
2020	Tokyo	119	7
2024	Paris	117	6

Paralympic Games

India’s Paralympic performances have witnessed exceptional growth over the last three editions. The medal tally increased from four at Rio 2016 to 19 at Tokyo 2020. Paris 2024 marked

India’s best ever Paralympic campaign with 29 medals. Avani Lekhara, Sumit Antil and Pramod Bhagat have been among the country’s standout performers. Programmes such as TOPS and the Khelo India Para Games have strengthened support for para-athletes.

Year	Host City	Indian Athletes	Medals Won	Gold	Silver	Bronze
2016	Rio de Janeiro	19	4	2	1	1
2020	Tokyo	54	19	5	8	6
2024	Paris	84	29	7	9	13

Asian Games

India has consistently raised its performance at the Asian Games through larger contingents and stronger medal winning displays. The country won 57 medals at Incheon

2014 and improved to 69 at Jakarta 2018. Hangzhou 2023 became a landmark edition as India recorded its highest ever medal tally of 107. Neeraj Chopra, Lovlina Borgohain, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty were among the leading contributors.

Year	Host City	Indian Athletes	Medals Won	Gold	Silver	Bronze
2014	Incheon	541	57	11	9	37
2018	Jakarta	570	69	15	24	30
2023	Hangzhou	655	107	28	38	41

Commonwealth Games

India has remained one of the strongest performers at the Commonwealth Games. The country won 64 medals at Glasgow 2014 and improved to 66 at Gold Coast 2018. India followed this with 61 medals at Birmingham 2022. Wrestling, weightlifting, table tennis, badminton and athletics have consistently contributed to India’s success. PV Sindhu, Vinesh Phogat and Achinta Sheuli have been among the country’s notable performers.

India is represented by a 124-member contingent, comprising 78 male and 46 female athletes. The contingent reflects the country’s growing depth of talent across multiple sporting disciplines.



As of 27 July 2026, India has won four medals, comprising one gold, two silver and one bronze. Jhandu Kumar opened India’s medal account with a bronze in para powerlifting. Rishikanta Singh became the first able bodied

Year	Host City	Indian Athletes	Medals Won	Gold	Silver	Bronze
2014	Glasgow	215	64	15	30	19
2018	Gold Coast	218	66	26	20	20
2022	Birmingham	210	61	22	16	23

India’s growing global success reflects the strength of its sporting ecosystem and the determination of its athletes to excel on the world stage.

Commonwealth Games 2026

The Commonwealth Games 2026 are being held in Glasgow from 23 July to 2 August 2026. The Games have brought together athletes from 74 countries across a 10-sport programme, including six fully integrated Para Sports, hosted at four venues.

Indian medallist after winning silver in the men’s 60 kg weightlifting event. He also set a new Commonwealth Games record in the snatch.

Mirabai Chanu delivered another historic moment by winning India’s first gold medal in Glasgow. The victory marked her third consecutive Commonwealth Games title. Muthupandi Raja also added to India’s medal tally with a silver in the men’s 65 kg weightlifting event.

With several events still to be contested, Indian athletes continue

to compete with determination and confidence. The nation looks forward to more memorable performances as the Tricolour flies high in Glasgow.

The Pursuit of Sporting Excellence

India's sporting journey continues to gather momentum. Sustained investment, stronger support systems and focused athlete development are creating a lasting foundation for success. Rising participation and improved performances at international competitions reflect the impact of these efforts. With the Commonwealth Games 2026 still underway, Indian athletes continue to compete with determination and pride. Every performance inspires the next generation to dream bigger and aim higher. As India looks to the future, the nation remains committed to building champions and strengthening its place among the world's leading sporting nations.

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Journeys of Grit, Pathways of Growth

RSETIs Empowering Rural Aspirations through Enterprise

Published on: July 21, 2026

Vishnu Bai reflects on a belief that has shaped her journey: that **those who rise find the world lifting them further**. She was born into a modest farming family, where dreams rarely stretched beyond daily survival. Her schooling stopped after eighth standard, cut short by an early marriage and new responsibilities. Within eighteen months, she returned home, as her marital household sank under financial strain. When her brothers refused to provide financial support, she chose self-reliance and began stitching clothes at home. Each small earning carried not just income, but a fragile sense of independence.



Her turning point came through the Shri Ram Self-Help Group, which introduced her to training opportunities at the **Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI)** in Bhopal. She wanted to learn tailoring alongside other women, but

social barriers stood firm. Facing mobility restrictions, she requested training in her village. The institute responded, and the Panchayat Bhawan became a classroom of hope. Women gathered

RSETIs: The Bridge from Aspirations to Enterprise

At the centre of this transformation are **Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs)** under the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**, working steadily in the background to **promote self-employment and nurture micro-enterprises**. These district-level institutes offer free, short-term, practical, residential training to unemployed rural people between **eighteen and fifty years of age**. Through three-way partnerships linking the Ministry of Rural Development, State/UT governments, and sponsor banks, their role extends beyond classrooms, reaching into livelihoods through credit support and continued guidance.

Seventy-three courses span agriculture, manufacturing, services, and entrepreneurship and align with national skill standards. Sponsor banks play a crucial role, ensuring trainees have access to credit to build viable enterprises. This integrated approach ensures that skills do not remain theoretical but translate into real economic activity. For many, this support system becomes the turning point where possibility begins to take shape.

there, learning stitching alongside the basics of running a small business. For many, it was their **first step into a world beyond household boundaries**.

After completing training, Vishnu Bai opened a modest tailoring shop in her village.

Her work slowly expanded to include men's garments. A government order for school uniforms brought steady income and renewed confidence. Soon after, she owned industrial sewing machines and built a stable livelihood through her growing enterprise. Her journey reflects quiet courage, shaped not by sudden change but persistent determination. Stories like hers echo across rural India, where transformation often unfolds without noise or spectacle.

Another such journey of **Umesh Shivaji Ingle from daily wage to employment generator** reflects how RSETIs reshape lives with strength. Coming from a financially constrained family, he could study only up to the tenth standard. For nearly **five years**, he worked as a daily

wager in a noodle factory. Despite long hours, his earnings barely sustained his household's needs. A friend's suggestion introduced him to the RSETI training programme, opening an unexpected door. He enrolled in an Entrepreneurship



Development Programme, drawing on his factory experience to deepen his learning. After training, he started a small noodle unit with a second-hand machine and basic tools. At first, he produced around **1,000 to 1,200 kilograms of noodles daily**. Gradually, demand grew, and his enterprise began earning a **monthly profit of about thirty thousand rupees**. He employed **four women** from vulnerable backgrounds, extending opportunity beyond his own family. A loan of **eight lakh rupees from the bank** helped him scale his operations. He shifted to a larger unit in MIDC Akola, expanding production to meet rising demand. From a daily wage earner to an employer, his journey had redefined purpose by creating livelihoods for others.

While some journeys begin with economic needs, others emerge from creative aspirations. In Dharwad, **Sanjay Malagi's story** reflects how RSETIs help diverse dreams grow into enterprises. After completing a diploma in electrical engineering, he worked in a multinational company in Bengaluru. Over time, dissatisfaction grew, urging him to leave and return home in search of purpose. During this uncertain phase, he discovered a photography course offered by **RSETI Dharwad**. He enrolled, and what began as curiosity soon turned into a clear entrepreneurial vision. In 2019, he founded his company, **Cinewinks**, stepping into a world of storytelling.

His work spans videography, editing, and direction, weaving narratives across multiple Indian languages. His films explore migration, politics, and technology misuse with striking emotional depth. His film **'Tamasoma Jyotirgamaya'** earned two international awards for portraying the struggles of weavers. Another work, **'Hinnota'**, brought him the Best Director award at **Cochin International Short Film Festival** in the year 2020-21. Over time, he won nearly **ten awards**, gaining recognition for his creative voice. His company began operating across multiple cities and undertaking diverse professional projects, while also generating local employment.

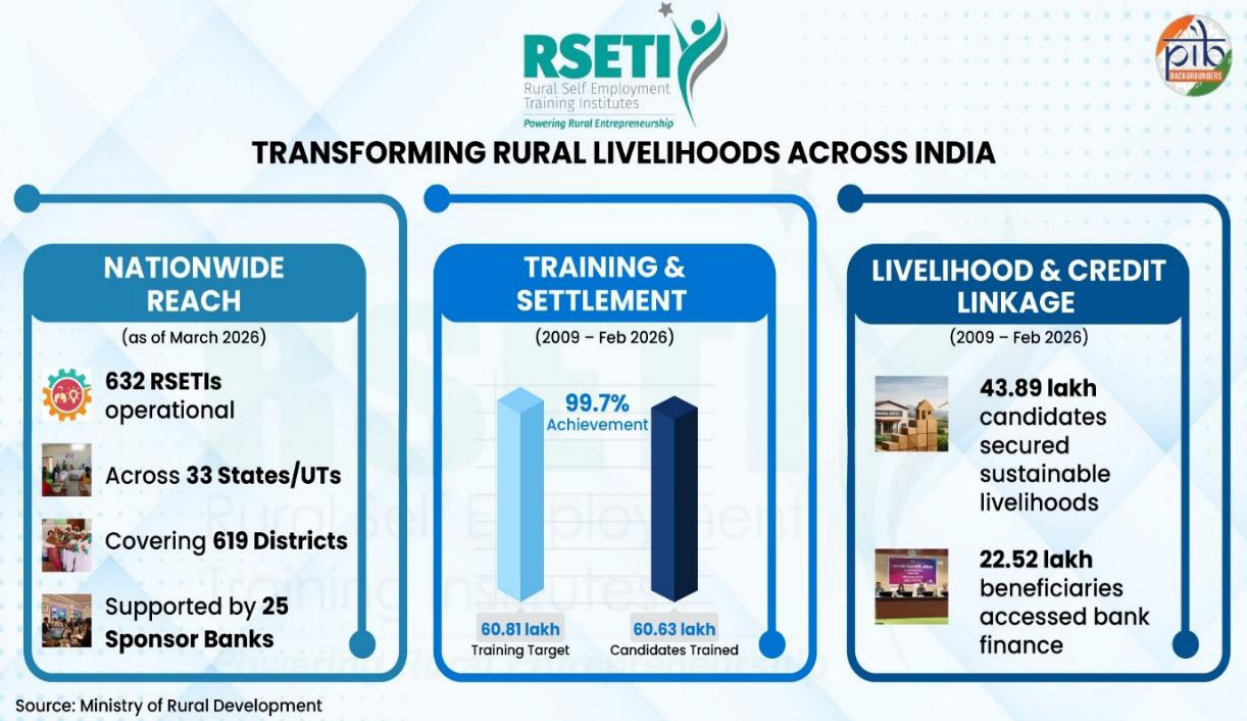
Together, these journeys reveal a larger story unfolding across the country.

They reflect not isolated success, but a growing ecosystem of resilience and opportunity. As of March 2026, **632 RSETIs** operate across **33 States/UTs**. They cover **619 districts** and are supported by **25 sponsor banks nationwide**. Since inception in 2009 until February 2026, RSETIs have demonstrated sustained and impactful progress nationwide. Against a **training target of 60.81 lakh**, about **99.7%**



has been achieved, with **60.63 lakh** candidates trained. Of these, **43.89 lakh** candidates have secured sustainable livelihoods. Institutional support has further enabled **22.52 lakh beneficiaries** to access bank finance. Recent years

have witnessed considerable growth, indicating expanding outreach and improved institutional effectiveness. Notably, **2024-25** recorded the **highest annual training achievement**, with **6.21 lakh candidates trained**.



These numbers tell a story, but the deeper narrative lies in human transformation. RSETIs are not merely training centres, but spaces where aspiration takes root. Across villages, small enterprises are **reshaping local economies** and **restoring dignity**. With every success story, confidence replaces hesitation, and hope becomes tangible. In these quiet shifts, rural India moves steadily towards a **future shaped by self-reliance and belief**.

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eSARAS: Expanding Markets, Empowering Rural Women

Published on: July 1, 2026

From weavers and potters to women-led cooperatives, rural artisans are powering India's inclusive growth story. Through the eSARAS platform, thousands of Self-Help Groups are gaining direct access to national markets, digital infrastructure and institutional support. By eliminating intermediaries and integrating with major commerce platforms, eSARAS is transforming how rural craft reaches the consumer. The platform's expanding reach across blocks and districts nationwide underscores its growing significance in rural livelihoods. Initiatives like eSARAS continue to play a pivotal role in driving women's entrepreneurship, preserving cultural heritage and building a digitally empowered, self-reliant rural economy.

Crafting Change from the Grassroots

Over the past eleven years, the Digital India programme has transformed

governance and public service delivery-making them more transparent, accessible and efficient. This transformation has reached beyond cities into rural India, where technology is now a tool for economic empowerment,



livelihood strengthening and community-led enterprise.

Within this landscape, eSARAS (SARAS Aajeevika) has emerged as one of the most significant outcomes. It is developed by the Ministry of Rural Development under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM). It stands as a flagship example of how digital infrastructure can be channelled into grassroots economic change.

What is eSARAS?

eSARAS is the official online marketplace of DAY-NRLM, built exclusively for products made by women Self-Help Groups and their federations. The well-curated handcrafted goods emerge from the very heart of the country—from weavers in Chanderi sarees from Madhya Pradesh to marble artisans in Rajasthan. They also include Pashmina producers nestled in the hills of Jammu & Kashmir. Every product on eSARAS carries a story, and every purchase is a direct connection to the artisan behind it.

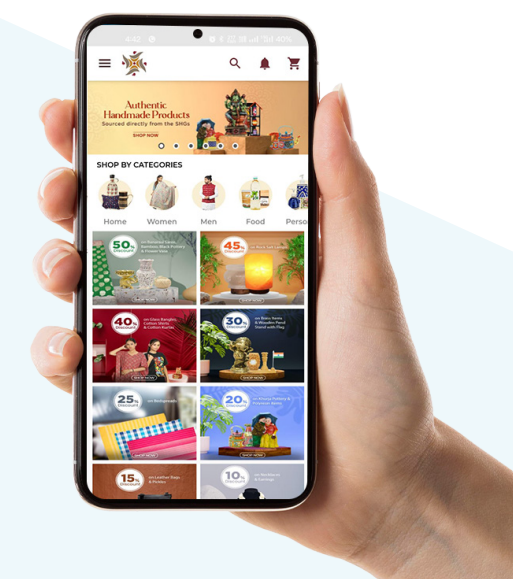
The platform lists local products across major categories:

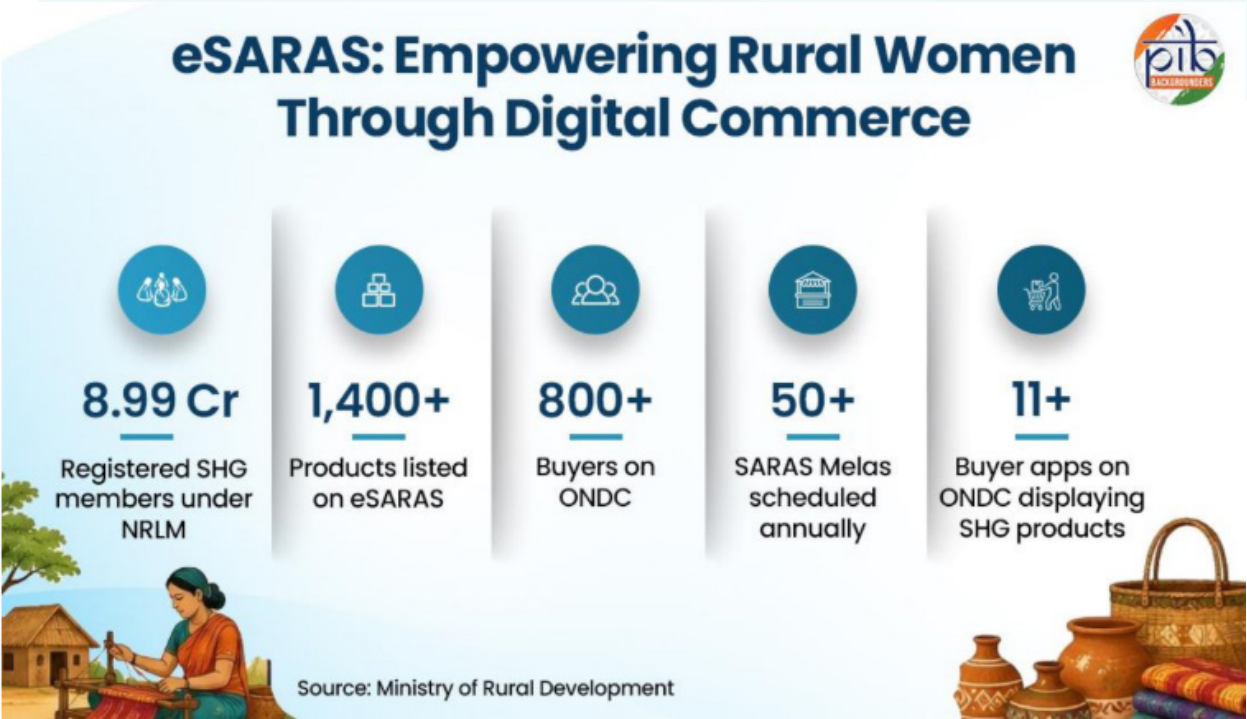
- Home and Living
- Women's Apparel and Accessories
- Men's Apparel and Accessories

- Personal Care
- Food Items
- Kids Toys & Accessories

Over 8.62 crore women SHG members have a digital storefront through eSARAS, of whom 85% are directly linked to the Ministry of Rural Development's network (as on February 2024). It gives them not just a marketplace, but institutional support for marketing, branding and logistics.

DAY-NRLM covers **7,627 blocks nationwide** and has built a cadre of **1.51 crore community members** to support these enterprises at the grassroots level.





From Portal to e-Commerce Ecosystem: Key Milestones

What started as a simple web portal has, in just a few years, grown into a full-stack e-commerce ecosystem. It now combines a mobile app, physical gallery, national melas, a logistics fulfilment centre and integrations with India’s largest online marketplace platforms.

Platform Evolution	Detail
eSARAS Portal Launch	e-Commerce portal https://www.esaras.in/ launched for better and more effective marketing of Saras products
eSARAS Mobile App Launch	Mobile app launched alongside the eSARAS Fulfilment Centre . It is used for processing, packaging and shipping of products.

ONDC	SHG products made available across 11+ buyer apps (20 crore+ buyers on ONDC platform) with 800+ handcrafted products listed
UMANG	eSARAS listed on UMANG ; platform now serves 2,572 services with 796.69 crore transactions (June 2026)
SARAS Shakti Collection	Premium curated gift collection launched at Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Sammelan 2026 for institutional and corporate markets
SARAS Aajeevika Gallery	Permanent retail gallery established at Baba Kharak Singh Marg, New Delhi, showcasing curated SHG products.



The Road Ahead: Craft, Commerce and Community

With expanding integrations across ONDC, UMANG and other digital platforms, eSARAS is positioning rural producers to compete in larger markets while preserving India’s craft heritage. As the ecosystem grows, it is expected to play an increasingly important role in creating sustainable livelihoods and advancing inclusive rural development.

In doing so, eSARAS exemplifies how Digital India is empowering women, preserving India’s rich craft heritage and driving inclusive, women-led rural development.

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Kargil Vijay Diwas 2026

A Tribute to Valour, Sacrifice, and the Spirit of India

Published on: July 24, 2026

Kargil Vijay Diwas honours the courage, sacrifice, and unwavering resolve of the Bravehearts of Operation Vijay. It commemorates India's historic victory in the Kargil War and celebrates the spirit that safeguarded the Nation's sovereignty. The occasion also reflects Kargil's enduring legacy. It continues to strengthen India's military preparedness, inspire generations, and reinforce the Nation's unwavering commitment to its security.

When Courage Conquered the Peaks

The Kargil War stands among the greatest chapters in India's military history. It reflects unmatched bravery, grit, and determination. It remains a

lasting symbol of national pride and inspiration.

This year, the nation marks the 27th Kargil Vijay Diwas with gratitude and reverence. It commemorates India's historic victory in 1999. Indian soldiers reclaimed the snow-covered heights of



Kargil through extraordinary courage and unwavering resolve. On 26 July, the Tricolour once again flew proudly over the rugged mountains of Ladakh. It became a timeless symbol of sacrifice, valour, and India's unbreakable spirit.

The Kargil conflict began in May 1999. Intruders crossed the Line of Control and occupied Indian positions on commanding heights. Their aim was to cut the link between Kashmir and Ladakh. The larger objective was to force India into negotiations on the Kashmir dispute. But they underestimated the will of a nation. India responded with Operation Vijay. The mission reflected meticulous planning, unwavering determination, and the indomitable spirit of Indian soldiers. After more than two months of intense fighting, every intruder was driven out. Every occupied position returned to Indian control.

Kargil Vijay Diwas honours every Braveheart who sacrificed everything for the motherland. Their sacrifice strengthened India's resolve to secure every inch of its territory. The conflict reshaped the nation's military preparedness and defence outlook for the years ahead. Its lessons continue to guide India's march towards a stronger and more self-reliant future. It reminds every Indian that courage, sacrifice, unity, and sovereignty will forever remain the nation's greatest strength.

The Road to Operation Vijay

The Kargil War began in the summer of 1999, soon after the Lahore Declaration. While much of India endured scorching heat, fierce battles unfolded across the icy heights of Kargil. Pakistani forces infiltrated Indian territory and occupied winter vacated posts on commanding ridges. The conflict tested courage, endurance, and sacrifice in one of the world's harshest battlefields. It remains the only conventional war fought between two nuclear armed nations.



The Infiltration

The intrusion was part of Pakistan's Operation Badr. Pakistani forces, disguised as Kashmiri terrorists, crossed the Line of Control and occupied Indian positions. Their aim was to cut the link between Kashmir and Ladakh. They also sought to isolate Indian Army troops on the Siachen Glacier. The larger objective was to force India into negotiations on the Kashmir dispute.

On 3 May 1999, local residents first reported suspicious movement in the Kargil sector. Reconnaissance patrols were immediately dispatched to verify the reports. Extensive patrolling and aerial surveillance soon revealed the scale of the occupation. The infiltrators had entrenched themselves on dominating heights overlooking the Srinagar to Leh Highway. Many positions stood above 5,000 metres, making every military operation exceptionally challenging.

Operation Vijay Begins

India responded with restraint, resolve, and determination. The government directed that the Line of Control would not be crossed. The mission was clear. Every occupied post had to be reclaimed.



The Indian Army launched Operation Vijay to evict the intruders. The Indian Air Force joined the campaign through Operation Safed Sagar on 26 May 1999. The Indian Navy also deployed in full strength, demonstrating India's resolve across every domain. Together, the three Services executed a coordinated campaign.

Operation Vijay followed the strategy of contain, evict, and deny. Priority was given to recapturing the heights dominating the Srinagar to Leh Highway. Additional troops, artillery, engineers, specialised equipment, and logistics were rapidly inducted. Soldiers climbed near vertical cliffs under relentless enemy fire. They battled freezing temperatures, thin air, and unforgiving terrain.

Battles That Changed the Course of the War

The Battle of Tololing marked one of the first major breakthroughs of the campaign. Indian troops launched their assault in the last week of May 1999. Point 4590 and Tololing was fully recaptured on 13 June, opening the way for further advances.

The Battle of Tiger Hill became one of the defining moments of the war. Tiger Hill was among the highest peaks in the Dras sector and one of the Indian Army's most important objectives. After a daring assault, the peak was recaptured on 4 July 1999, significantly shifting the momentum in India's favour.



Fierce fighting also took place at Point 4875, Batalik, Mushkoh Valley, and Kaksar. Indian soldiers fought peak by peak to reclaim every occupied position. After nearly three months of relentless operations, every occupied Indian post was recaptured. India secured victory without crossing the Line of Control, earning global respect for its restraint, professionalism, and unwavering resolve.

A Victory That Inspired a Nation

The Kargil War became a defining chapter in India's history. It showcased the extraordinary courage of Indian soldiers and united the nation in pride. On **14 July 1999**, then Prime Minister **Atal Bihari Vajpayee** addressed the nation and declared **Operation Vijay** a success. He paid tribute to the courage, sacrifice, and unwavering resolve of the Armed Forces.

The victory reaffirmed that every inch of Indian territory would be defended at any cost. It strengthened the nation's faith in its Armed Forces and inspired generations of Indians.

The Bravery That Defined Kargil

The victory in Kargil was made possible by countless acts of courage. Every peak reclaimed reflected the determination and sacrifice of India's Armed Forces. While every soldier contributed to Operation

Vijay, several acts of exceptional gallantry became defining moments of the conflict. Heroes such as Grenadier Yogendra Singh Yadav, Captain Vikram Batra, Captain Vijyant Thapar, and many others became symbols of courage and selfless service.

The nation honoured this extraordinary valour with its highest military decorations. 4 soldiers were awarded the **Param Vir Chakra**, India's highest gallantry award. 9 received the **Maha Vir Chakra**, while 55 were honoured with the **Vir Chakra**. 1 soldier was conferred the **Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal**. 6 received the **Uttam Yudh Seva Medal**, and 8 were awarded the **Yudh Seva Medal**. The Sena Medal was awarded to 83 personnel, while 24 received the Vayu Sena Medal. These honours reflect the extraordinary courage, leadership, and sacrifice displayed during the Kargil War.

From Battlefield Lessons to a Stronger Defence Ecosystem

The Kargil War became a turning point in India's defence journey. It highlighted the need for stronger coordination, faster modernisation, and greater self-reliance.

Over the years, India has undertaken wide ranging reforms to strengthen its defence ecosystem and



build indigenous capabilities. Today, these efforts are shaping a stronger, more capable, and increasingly Atmanirbhar military.

Some of the key reforms and initiatives are outlined below:

Establishment of the Department of Military Affairs

The Department of Military Affairs was created as a part of Higher Defence Management Reforms. It functions under the CDS, who serves as its Secretary. The department promotes jointmanship among the Army, Navy, and Air Force. It also supports coordinated defence doctrines, planning, and procedures across the three Services.

Creation of the Chief of Defence Staff



One of the most significant reforms was the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). The CDS serves as the single point military adviser to the Government. The role also promotes greater jointness among the Army, Navy, and Air Force. General Bipin Rawat became India's first CDS in 2020. The post is currently held by General N. S. Raja Subramani.

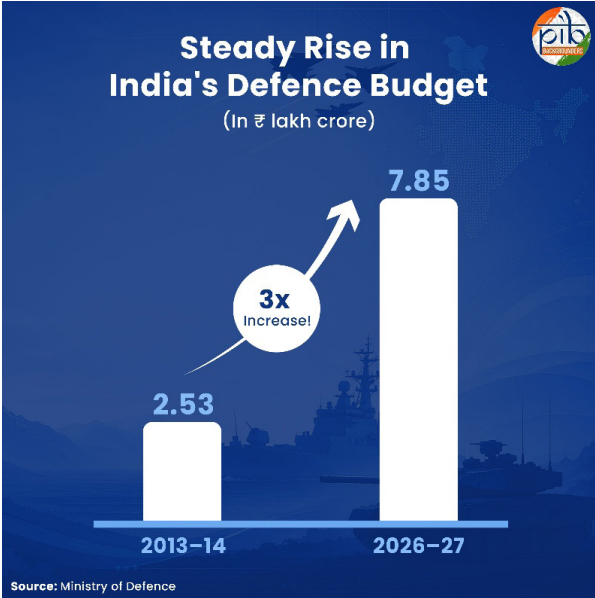
Foreign Direct Investment in Defence

The defence industry was opened to private sector participation. The FDI limit

has increased to 74 per cent through the Automatic Route for new defence industrial licences. It also allows up to 100 per cent through the Government Route where modern technology is introduced. As of March 2026, the sector has attracted FDI worth ₹6,670.59 crore. The Government also promotes co-development and co-production with Foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers to strengthen advanced defence manufacturing.

Enhanced Defence Budget

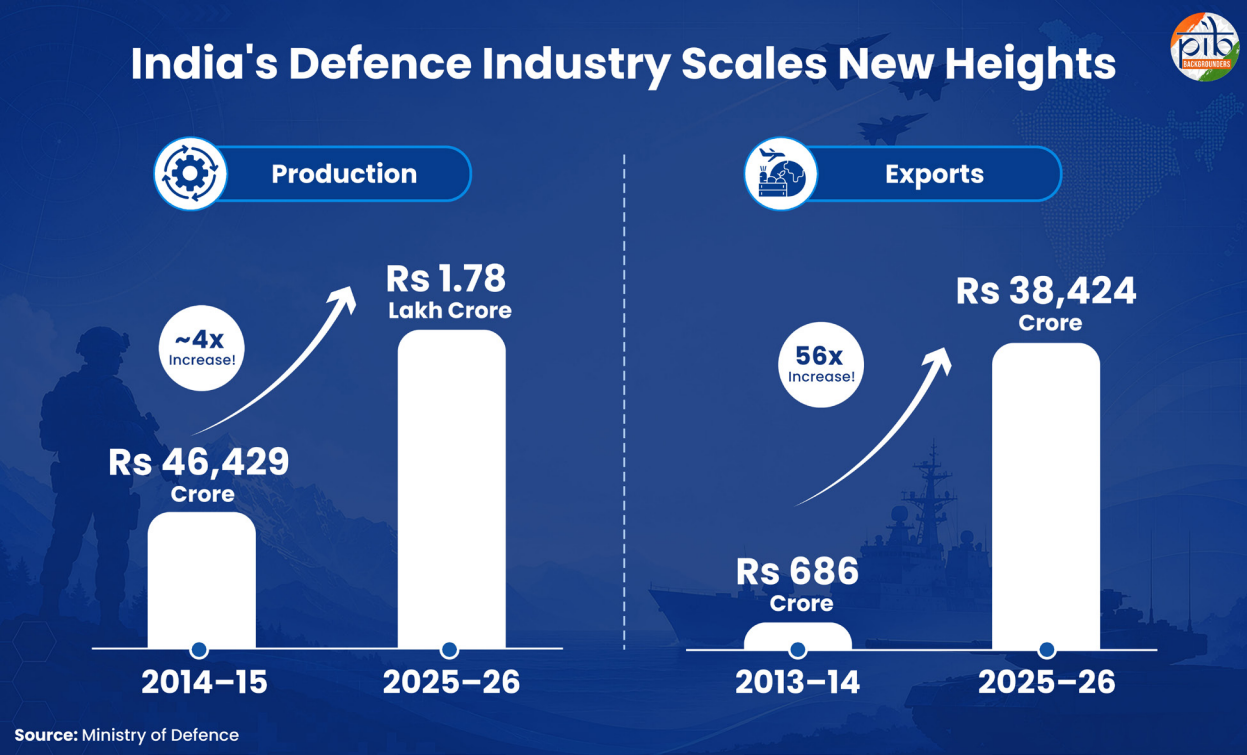
India's defence allocation has risen steadily from ₹2.53 lakh crore in 2013-14 to ₹7.85 lakh crore in 2026-27. Capital expenditure has also increased from ₹94,587.95 crore in 2014-15 to ₹2.19 lakh crore in 2026-27. These investments are strengthening long term military capability through modern equipment, infrastructure, and strategic assets.



Growth in Defence Production and Exports

India's defence production reached

an all-time high of ₹1.78 lakh crore in 2025-26, almost four times higher than ₹46,429 crore in 2014-15.



Defence exports increased from ₹686 crore in 2013-14 to ₹38,424 crore in 2025-26, a rise of more than 56 times. Today, Indian defence products are exported to over 80 countries. Driven by Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat, India is steadily emerging as a defence manufacturing nation. Nearly 65 per cent of defence equipment is now produced within the country, compared to an earlier import dependence of 65 to 70 per cent.

Accelerating Indigenous Defence Manufacturing

The Ministry of Defence launched the **Srijan Defence Portal**. The portal connects Defence Public Sector Undertakings and Service Headquarters with industries, MSMEs, and startups for indigenisation. Positive Indigenisation Lists were introduced in 2021 under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

Till May 2026, five **Positive Indigenisation Lists** covering 5,012

items of DPSUs have been notified. More than 15,700 defence items, including 3,204 Positive Indigenisation List items, have been indigenised during the last five years. DPSUs have placed domestic orders worth ₹9,782 crore, strengthening MSMEs, startups, research institutions, and India's defence manufacturing ecosystem.

Defence Industrial Corridors Driving Regional Manufacturing

Defence Industrial Corridors have emerged as key growth centres for defence manufacturing, strengthening regional supply chains and fostering integrated industrial ecosystems. By April 2026, the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor had attracted investment commitments worth ₹42,057 crore, with grounded investments of ₹4,409 crore, supported by the establishment of the Defence Technology & Test Centre (DTTC) to enhance testing and innovation capabilities. During the same period, the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor attracted investments worth ₹32,699 crore, with actual investments reaching ₹6,446 crore. Together, these corridors are accelerating industrial infrastructure development, expanding domestic manufacturing capacity, and generating new employment opportunities.

Agnipath Scheme

The Agnipath Scheme was launched to recruit young men and women into

the Armed Forces as Agniveers for a four-year service period. The scheme aims to create a youthful, tech-savvy, and combat-ready military force with a modern outlook. Agniveers receive military training, specialised skill development, and educational opportunities through partnerships with institutions such as IGNOU and NIOS. The scheme also provides nationally recognised skill certificates and career pathways after service.

The legacy of Kargil continues to inspire reforms that are strengthening India's Armed Forces and reinforcing the nation's security.

Towards a Future Ready Military

The character of warfare has changed significantly since the Kargil War. Modern conflicts demand advanced technology, superior firepower, and rapid decision making. India has strengthened its military capabilities through the induction of modern platforms and the development of next generation defence technologies. These capabilities are enhancing operational readiness across land, air, sea, space, and emerging domains.

Some of the key platforms and emerging technologies driving this transformation are outlined below.

INDIA'S DEFENCE MILESTONES

2014-2026

A DECADE OF INDIGENOUS STRENGTH & STRATEGIC CAPABILITY

2015

AKASH SAM

Inducted in Army Air Defence Corps

- DRDO-developed short-to-medium range surface-to-air missile system.
- Capable of engaging targets up to 25 km.

2016

TEJAS Mk1

- India's first indigenous light combat aircraft (DRDO/HAL).
- Inducted into 45 Squadron "Flying Daggers" at Sulur.

2019

MISSION SHAKTI
ASAT Test

- Showcased India's capability to destroy satellite in low earth orbit.
- Made India the 4th nation after the USA, Russia and China to demonstrate a live anti-satellite kill capability.

2020

RAFALE-17 SQUADRON
"GOLDEN ARROWS"

- 36 Rafale multirole fighters inducted at Ambala on 10 Sept 2020.
- Equipped with Meteor BVR missiles, HAMMER bombs & Spectra EW suite.

2020

RUDRAM-1

- New generation Anti Radiation Missile (RUDRAM) flight tested successfully in 2020.

2021

S-400 TRIUMF-1ST SQUADRON
(INDIA-RUSSIA)

- First S-400 squadron delivered and operationalised.
- Can track & destroy aircraft, cruise missiles & ballistic missiles up to 400 km away.

2021

HELINA / DHRUVASTRA
Helicopter-launched ATGM

- Joint trials of Helina (Army) and Dhruvastra (IAF) from Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) platform successful.

2022

INS VIKRANT

India's first indigenous aircraft carrier

- Commissioned on 2 Sept 2022 at Cochin Shipyard Limited.
- 262 m long, 45,000 tonnes displacement.
- Built with over 76% indigenous content.

2022

HAL LCH "PRACHAND"
Light Combat Helicopter

- LCH indigenously designed with 45% made-in-india components.
- Aerial combat capability of operating at an altitude of over 5000m.

2022

BRAHMOS EXTENDED RANGE
(450 KM)-AIR-LAUNCHED

- Successful air-launch of 450 km range BrahMos from Su-30MKI in May 2022.
- World's fastest operational cruise missile for deep-strike capability.

2024

INS ARIGHAAT

2nd Indigenous Nuclear-powered Submarine
Adds new tech upgrades

- 2nd Nuclear Ballistic Missile Submarine
- Strengthens India's nuclear triad at sea.

2024

LONG RANGE ANTI-SHIP
HYPERSONIC MISSILE

- DRDO Conducts the successful flight trials of India's first Long Range Hypersonic Missile (LR-ASHM)

2024

MISSION DIVYASTRA
Project 75 Complete

- DRDO conducted First Trial of Agni 5 with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRV).

2025

6TH SCORPENE (VAGSHEER)
Project 75 Complete

- INS Vagsheer, 6th & final Kalvari-class submarine.
- Built at Mazagon Dock Limited under Project 75. (DRDO-Naval Group France collaboration).

AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT | SURAKSHIT BHARAT | VIKSIT BHARAT

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Kargil Vijay Diwas 2026

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Modern Platforms in Service

India has inducted advanced platforms across the three Services to strengthen combat capability and enhance operational effectiveness.

- **Arjun Mk IA Battle Tank:** The Arjun Mk IA battle tank was inducted into the Indian Army in February 2021. It strengthened India's indigenous armoured capability.
- **INS Vikrant:** India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant, was commissioned on 2 September 2022. It marked a major milestone in maritime capability and self-reliance.
- **Rafale Fighter Aircraft:** By 2030, India will operate 62 Rafale fighter aircraft, including 26 Rafale M aircraft. India will become the first country after France to operate both variants.
- **Apache and Chinook Helicopters:** The induction of Apache attack helicopters and Chinook heavy lift helicopters has enhanced combat capability and strategic airlift capacity.
- **Integration of Drone Warfare:** India has integrated drone warfare into its military doctrine. Drones now strengthen surveillance, reconnaissance, precision operations, and battlefield effectiveness.
- **BrahMos Cruise Missile:** The first successful BrahMos launch took place on 12 June 2001. This multi-platform supersonic cruise missile can be launched from land, sea, and air. It has a range of up to 290 kilometres and travels at nearly Mach 2.8.
- **Project 17A Stealth Frigates:** Project 17A is the Indian Navy's advanced stealth frigate programme to build seven next generation guided missile warships. These frigates are designed for anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-submarine warfare.
- **Sandhayak Class Survey Vessels:** The Sandhayak class survey vessels strengthen the Indian Navy's hydrographic capability by mapping the seabed and coastal waters. The indigenous class comprises INS Sandhayak, INS Nirdeshak, INS Ikshak, and INS Sanshodhak, enhancing India's maritime survey and navigation capabilities.
- **Arnala Class Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft:** The Arnala class strengthens the Indian Navy's coastal defence and anti-submarine warfare capability. The indigenous eight ship class comprises INS Arnala, INS Androth, INS Anjadip, INS Amini, INS Abhay, INS Agray, INS Akshay, and the recently commissioned INS Ajay.

INS Arnala is the largest waterjet propelled warship inducted into the Indian Navy.

Emerging Technologies and Strategic Capabilities

India is investing in advanced technologies to prepare its Armed Forces for the battlefields of tomorrow.

- **Mission Shakti:** On 27 March 2019, India successfully conducted Mission Shakti, an anti-satellite missile test, from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island. With this achievement, India joined the exclusive group of nations possessing anti-satellite capability.
- **Artificial Intelligence in Defence:** In 2022, India introduced 75 Artificial Intelligence based technologies for surveillance, cyber security, logistics, autonomous systems, and battlefield support.
- **Mission Divyastra:** On 11 March 2024, India successfully tested a long range missile carrying multiple warheads against different targets under Mission Divyastra.
- **Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket:** The maiden flight test of the Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket was successfully conducted on 29 December 2025. The rocket demonstrated a maximum range of 120 kilometres and achieved textbook precision during the trial.
- **Advanced Air Defence System:** On 23 August 2025, DRDO successfully tested an advanced air defence system. It combines missile interceptors, short range air defence weapons, and laser based technologies.
- **Hypersonic Missile Technologies:** India has advanced next generation propulsion systems for hypersonic missiles. In January 2026, DRDO completed a successful long duration scramjet combustor ground test. A new Hypersonic Wind Tunnel in Hyderabad now supports future high speed missile development.
- **Kusha Long Range Surface to Air Missile:** In July 2026, DRDO successfully conducted the maiden flight test of the Kusha missile. It intercepted a simulated high speed aerial threat. The system can neutralise fighter jets, missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, and large enemy aircraft across a wide range and altitude. It has been developed indigenously by DRDO laboratories and industry partners.
- **Long Range Land Attack Cruise Missile:** In June 2026, DRDO successfully flight tested the Long Range Land Attack Cruise Missile from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island. The missile successfully achieved all test objectives. It is an indigenously

developed system with all major sub systems developed by DRDO laboratories and Indian industry partners.

- **Netra Airborne Early Warning and Control System:** In June 2026, DRDO handed over the Final Operational Clearance certificate for the indigenous Netra Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) system. The system was developed jointly by DRDO, the Indian Air Force, and industry partners. It significantly enhances airborne surveillance, situational awareness, and battle management capabilities.

From modern combat platforms to next generation technologies, India continues to build a future ready military. These capabilities strengthen deterrence, enhance operational preparedness, and reinforce the Nation's ability to safeguard its sovereignty.

Kargil's Enduring Legacy

A stronger military is most meaningful when matched by unwavering resolve. Since Kargil, India has steadily strengthened both its defence capabilities and its response to evolving security challenges. This approach continues to shape the Nation's security doctrine and operational posture.

Surgical Strikes and Balakot Air Strikes

India's response to cross border terrorism has entered a new phase over the last decade. Following the Uri terror attack, India conducted Surgical Strikes on 28 and 29 September 2016. The operation inflicted heavy losses on terrorists and their protectors across the Line of Control. It marked a more proactive approach against cross border terrorism.

A few years later, on 14 February 2019, the Pulwama terror attack claimed 40 CRPF jawans. India's response came swiftly. On 26 February 2019, in an intelligence-led operation, the Balakot airstrikes eliminated a large number of Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorists. The facility targeted was located far from civilian areas and headed by Maulana Yousuf Azhar, brother-in-law of JeM chief Masood Azhar. These pre-emptive actions showed the world that India would no longer tolerate proxy war through terrorism.

Operation SINDOOR

India's evolving military doctrine was further demonstrated during Operation SINDOOR in May 2025. The operation followed the terrorist attack on civilians in Pahalgam. The Armed Forces struck nine terrorist camps in Pakistan and Pakistan occupied Jammu and Kashmir.



The operation relied on accurate intelligence, drones, loitering munitions, and layered air defence. Key Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba command centres were destroyed. The strikes resulted in over 100 terrorists killed in action. Those eliminated included individuals linked to IC-814 hijack and Pulwama blast like Yusuf Azhar, Abdul Malik Rauf and Mudassir Ahmad.

Pakistan launched drone and missile attacks on 7 and 8 May. India's integrated air defence systems intercepted them swiftly. The response showcased India's net centric warfare capabilities and integrated counter unmanned aerial systems grid.

From Kargil to Operation SINDOOR, India's response to terrorism has become increasingly proactive, precise, and decisive.

Celebrating the Spirit of Kargil

While the legacy of Kargil continues to shape India's military resolve, it also lives

on in the Nation's collective memory. Every year, Kargil Vijay Diwas brings the country together to honour the courage and sacrifice of the Bravehearts of 1999. Across the country, commemorative events are being organised to pay tribute to their supreme sacrifice. These initiatives celebrate their legacy while inspiring future generations with the values of courage, duty, and patriotism.

Shaurya Vijay Yatra

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh flagged off the 13-day **Shaurya Vijay Yatra** on 14 July 2026. The motorcycle expedition began at the National War Memorial in New Delhi. It will conclude at the Kargil War Memorial in Dras after covering 1,900 kilometres. 28 riders, including serving and retired defence personnel



with their families, are participating. The expedition carries the motto "**One Ride, One Nation, One Salute.**"

Wheels of Valour: Sanchar Shakti

As part of the nationwide Wheels of Valour: Sanchar Shakti expedition, the



Honouring Veterans and Bravehearts

On 16 July 2026, Tri Services Ex Servicemen and their families visited the Kargil War Memorial and Heritage Hut Museum. The visit honoured the Bravehearts of Kargil and strengthened the enduring bond among veterans, serving personnel, and their families.



Corps of Signals Dare Devils created a new world record on 1 July 2026. Ten riders performed on two motorcycles inside the Atal Tunnel. They completed the 9.8-kilometre tunnel in 9 minutes and 47.97 seconds. The feat honoured the spirit of Kargil Vijay Diwas while showcasing military skill, endurance, and teamwork.

Tiger Hill Expedition 2026

The Indian Army and the Civil Administration, Dras, organised the Tiger Hill Expedition on 17 July 2026. The initiative promoted military tourism while preserving the legacy of the Kargil War. Eleven trained local trekking guides also participated, creating livelihood opportunities for local youth.



Ex Servicemen, school children, and villagers also paid tribute at the Khalubar War Memorial on 10 July 2026. The ceremony reaffirmed the enduring values of patriotism, courage, and selfless service.

Commemorative Treks and Military Displays

On 13 July 2026, 137 soldiers undertook a commemorative trek to Point 5140, also known as Gun Hill. The trek honoured the Regiment of Artillery for its decisive contribution during Operation Vijay.

Indian Army also organised a Weapon and Equipment Display at Hanle.

The exhibition showcased modern weapons, drones, and surveillance systems. It highlighted the Indian Army's technological capabilities and operational readiness in high altitude areas.

Leh to Dras Motorcycle Expedition

On 12 and 13 July 2026, Indian Army riders undertook a motorcycle expedition from Leh to the Kargil War Memorial in Dras. The riders crossed the challenging Fotu La, Namika La, and Umba La passes. The expedition honoured the Bravehearts of Operation Vijay while demonstrating endurance, camaraderie, and military spirit.



These commemorative events ensure that the legacy of Kargil continues to inspire every generation with the timeless ideals of courage, sacrifice, and service to the Nation.

The Victory That Lives On

Twenty-seven years later, the echoes of

Kargil still resonate across the Nation. The victory stands as an enduring symbol of courage, sacrifice, and unwavering patriotism. Every peak recaptured reminds us that India's sovereignty is non-negotiable and will be defended at any cost. Inspired by the valour of its Bravehearts, India has emerged stronger, better prepared, and increasingly self-reliant. As the Nation salutes the heroes of Kargil, it also renews its solemn resolve to uphold their legacy. Their courage will forever inspire generations to serve the Nation with honour, duty, and unwavering commitment.

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The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Published on: July 30, 2026

The **Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026** amends Section 3 of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971. It extends the same legal protection to the National Song, Vande Mataram that is currently afforded to the National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana. The amendment makes it an offence to intentionally prevent the singing of the National Song or to cause a disturbance to an assembly engaged in its singing.

Why Was the Amendment Proposed?

According to the Statement of Objects and Reasons, the 1971 Act safeguards the National Anthem by making it a criminal offense to deliberately stop its singing or to cause disruptions to any group engaged in singing it.

It recalls the Constituent Assembly meeting held on 24th January 1950. At the meeting, its then President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, highlighted the historic role of Vande Mataram in India’s freedom struggle. He stated that it should be honoured equally with Jana Gana Mana and accorded equal status.

However, there was no specific legal provision extending similar protection to the National Song. The Bill addressed this gap. It proposed to include Vande Mataram within Section 3 of the 1971 Act.

Major Provisions of the 2026 Bill

- **Amendment of Section 3:** Clause 2 substitutes the existing Section 3 with a provision covering both the National Anthem (Jana Gana Mana) and the National Song (Vande Mataram).
- **Conduct covered:** The substituted Section 3 applies where a person intentionally:
 1. prevents the singing of the National Anthem or the National Song; or
 2. causes disturbance to any assembly engaged in such singing.
- **Short title:** Clause 1 provides that the law may be called the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Act, 2026.



The Amendment at a Glance

Feature/Provision	The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 (Original Act)	The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026
Scope of Protection under Section 3	Specific legal protection solely to the Indian National Anthem (Jana Gana Mana).	Expands the scope of Section 3 to include both the National Anthem and the National Song (Vande Mataram).
Prohibited conduct	Penalises whoever intentionally prevents the singing of the Indian National Anthem, or causes disturbance to any assembly engaged in such singing.	Penalises whoever intentionally prevents the singing of the National Anthem or the National Song, or causes disturbance to any assembly engaged in such singing.
Punishment	Imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.	The punishment remains unchanged.

Feature/Provision	The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 (Original Act)	The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026
Repeat convictions	Under Section 3A (added in 2003), anyone convicted a second or subsequent time for an offense under Section 2 or 3 is punishable with imprisonment for a minimum term of one year.	The enhanced penalty of a minimum one-year imprisonment remains in effect. Repeat offenders who intentionally disrupt the singing of Vande Mataram will now also face this mandatory minimum one-year prison sentence.

Vande Mataram: A Melody That Became a Movement

- Vande Mataram, meaning “Mother, I Bow to Thee”, was composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.
- It was first published in the literary journal Bangadarshan on 7th November 1875. It was later included in the novel Anandamath, published in 1882.
- Rabindranath Tagore set it to music and first sang it at the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta.
- The song became a powerful symbol of resistance during the freedom struggle. It was first used as a political slogan on 7th August 1905 during the Swadeshi movement.
- On 24th January 1950, Constituent Assembly President Dr. Rajendra Prasad stated that Vande Mataram should be honoured equally with Jana Gana Mana and accorded equal status.

The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971

To contextualise the 2026 Amendment, it is essential to understand the foundation laid by the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971. Enacted on 23rd December 1971, the Act extends to the whole of India and provides statutory protection to the Indian National Flag, the Constitution of India and the Indian National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana.

Key Provisions of the Existing Act

- **Section 2 - National Flag and Constitution:** Deals with insults to the Indian National Flag and the Constitution of India. It stipulates that anyone who burns, mutilates, defaces, defiles, disfigures, destroys, tramples upon, or otherwise shows disrespect to the Flag or the Constitution in a public place can face imprisonment for up to three years, a fine, or both.
- **Lawful criticism protected:** Comments criticising the Constitution, the National Flag or government measures, when made with a view to securing lawful amendment or alteration, do not constitute an offence under Section 2.
- **Section 3 - National Anthem:** Specifically addresses the National Anthem. It states that anyone who intentionally prevents the singing

of the Indian National Anthem or causes a disturbance to any assembly engaged in singing it shall be punished with imprisonment extending up to three years, or a fine, or both.

- **Section 3A - Repeat offences:** Added by a 2003 amendment, this section enforces an enhanced minimum penalty of one year of imprisonment for second and subsequent convictions under Sections 2 or 3.

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SHE-LEAPS: Digital Empowerment for Lakhpati Didis

Enabling Data-Driven Growth for Women-Led SHG Enterprise

Published on: July 1, 2026

Transforming Rural Livelihoods through Digital Empowerment

SHE-LEAPS stands for Self-Help Entrepreneur-Livelihoods and Enterprise Application for Prosperity and Sustainability. It is a digital platform for empowering women associated with Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across rural India. This is being accomplished through a unified platform for enterprise creation and performance tracking. SHE-LEAPS supports livelihood creation, enterprise growth, and financial inclusion for rural women. It supports both farm and non-farm rural enterprises, aiming to build a stronger and more sustainable rural economy.

The SHE-LEAPS mobile application has been developed by the Digital India Corporation, and implemented under the LokOS platform. LokOS is a digital system designed to capture the activities of community-based organizations (CBOs) across India. These include SHGs, Village Organizations, and Cluster Lever Federations. LokOS helps in digitizing CBO activities like maintaining member records, financial transactions, and livelihood records, and tracking convergence initiatives.

SHE-LEAPS was launched on **June 29, 2026**, at the **Rashtriya Gramin**

Vikas Sammelan held in New Delhi. This two-day conference, themed 'Gramodaya Se Rashtrodaya', reviewed the implementation and progress of major rural development schemes. The focus was on formulating strategies to translate the government's vision of 'Viksit Gram - Viksit Bharat'.

Nationwide Rollout of SHE-LEAPS

SHE-LEAPS is focused on fulfilling the following objectives:

- Empowering rural SHG women entrepreneurs nationwide.
- Creating and strengthening women-led enterprises in rural areas.
- Integrating rural producers with formal value chains.
- Enhancing the financial inclusion of SHG households.
- Enabling data-driven rural entrepreneurship.

SHE-LEAPS will be implemented in 34 States and UTs. It will assist the State Rural Livelihood Missions in the selected states/UTs. The platform captures real-time enterprise data, thereby improving visibility into rural economic activities. The system thereby also strengthens monitoring at multiple levels. It would consequently support both local and national decision-making.

Digital Services for Enterprise Development

SHE-LEAPS captures real-time operational data across sectors and tracks the complete livelihood journey. The platform supports every stage, from profile creation to enterprise performance tracking. It further strengthens digital monitoring, improves governance, and enables better planning, intervention, and informed policy decisions. Services offered by the SHE-LEAPS mobile application are:

Advancing the Lakhpati Didi Initiative

SHE-LEAPS will strengthen the Lakhpati Didi mission by providing end-to-end tracking of income growth and enterprise performance. Recently, the government has increased the target of the Lakhpati Didi scheme from **3 crore to 6 crore women**.

The government also plans to release ₹10 lakh crore to benefit Lakhpati Didis over the next five years. This reflects a major commitment of the government towards



women's empowerment. Therefore, the SHE-LEAPS mobile application is an integral part of this plan to support **enterprise expansion at scale.**

Building a Stronger Women-Led Rural Economy

SHE-LEAPS marks a major step in digital rural transformation by combining digital infrastructure, entrepreneurship, and women's empowerment. By supporting enterprise growth and strengthening financial inclusion, this platform will help scale the Lakhpati Didi mission nationwide. It is poised to become a key driver of inclusive and sustainable rural transformation.

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Bharat Tex 2026

Where Every Thread Opens a New Opportunity

Published on: July 17, 2026

A Global Platform for Indian Textiles

At Bharat Tex 2026, India's textile ambition comes alive through the diversity gathered under one roof. Manufacturers are exhibiting alongside handloom cooperatives, traditional artists and technology ventures. Indian enterprises are exploring global markets, while overseas companies are assessing opportunities in India.

Guided by the **5F vision, Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign**, it brings together India's textile heritage, manufacturing strength and innovation on a unified global platform.



The **3rd edition** is being held from **14 to 17 July** at **Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi**. It covers the textile value chain



across fibre, yarn, fabric, apparel, home textiles, technical textiles, handlooms and handicrafts. The event has attracted more than **6,000 buyers** from over **130 countries** and over **1.3 lakh trade visitors**. Spread across 1.6 million square feet, **the exhibition features over 20,000 textile products**.

Beyond the scale of the exhibition, the significance of Bharat Tex is emerging through conversations around recognition, livelihoods and taking locally rooted enterprises to new markets. The event has emerged as a **meeting point for heritage, enterprise, sustainability and global commerce**.

Where the Making Becomes the Showcase

At the **Weaves stall**, visitors could watch fabric-making and block printing unfold in real time. Live demonstrations **Kashyap Kedia, manager at Weaves**, represents an enterprise built on six



generations of textile experience. The enterprise works with around 200 artisans and reportedly produces nearly 2.5 lakh metres of block-printed fabric. The enterprise works with traditional printing styles including Dabu, Bagru and Batik. "Of our six printing styles, five can only be produced in India, particularly in Rajasthan, where the climate supports the process", he mentioned.

"This year, the response has been tremendous because we have done live demonstrations," he said. "Potential customers from Qatar, Sri Lanka and Myanmar have come to see our work."

Introducing a Regional Tradition to New Visitors

Bharat Tex is also placing traditional art forms at the centre of global attention. Among them is Tikuli art from Bihar,

recognised for its vibrant colours and intricate enamel work.

Arundhati Mahato, a Tikuli folk artist from Patna, is attending Bharat Tex for the first time. "Tikuli is an art form from Patna with a history of over 800 years," she explained. "It has evolved from decorative tikulis into enamel painting on wood, fabrics and everyday products." The art is also creating flexible livelihood opportunities for women. "I have been



providing free training to around 25 women who are directly or indirectly associated with me," she said. "They can make these products from home and work at their own convenience." "I feel privileged to have this opportunity to promote Tikuli," she added. "The response has been overwhelming because many people are still unfamiliar with the art."

With its debut at Bharat Tex, the art form is gaining greater visibility among textile businesses, buyers and craft enthusiasts.

tribal textiles into contemporary fashion, transforming traditionally woven shawls into shirts, jackets and trench coats. **Pawan Kumar, the brand's creative and operations head**, explained that the designs are **drawn from traditional patterns** associated with the Uraon and Munda communities.

"Around 80 weavers are now engaged as global demand has increased," he said. "The business-to-business experience

presenting Jharkhand's textile traditions beyond silk and highlighting their potential in contemporary design.



A Handloom Cooperative Meets a Wider Market

For **Niryaatak Handloom Cooperative Society Limited**, the event is bringing home-based handloom production to a wider circle of buyers. **Mohammad Imran, president of the Kanpur-based cooperative**, is presenting rugs, carpets and other home décor products made from cotton, wool and recycled PET yarn.

Around 120 weavers are part of the cooperative. Some work on looms at its premises, while others collect yarn and weave from home.

The cooperative has received good buyer interest and hopes to participate



again. "We have had discussions with buyers from Iraq and Algeria, including a company that supplies to European markets."

A subsidised stall facilitated by the **Handloom Export Promotion Council** has enabled the cooperative to access the trade event and begin further conversations with prospective buyers.

A Wider Stage for Textile Circularity

At one of the stalls, the textile journey began after a garment's first use.

Manoj Wanvari, Chief Operating Officer of ReFiber, is presenting a technology-enabled system for collecting post-

India's Craft Traditions in Focus

Running alongside Bharat Tex, **Indie Haat 2026 at National Crafts Museum, Delhi** presents India's handloom and handicraft heritage. It has attracted 48 artisans and weavers, along with 12 design-led brands. **The showcase places regional craftsmanship at the heart of the larger textile event. It is giving handmade traditions a prominent and contemporary setting.** It spans crafts such as Gulabi Minakari, Dokra, Usta Kala, Pichwai, Sozni embroidery, Blue Pottery, silver filigree, Cheriya painting, Mata Ni Pachedi, papier-mâché, Bagru block printing, Jamdani sarees, Muga and Eri silk, and Odisha Ikat, among several others.

A photograph of a display of various Indian handicrafts. The display is arranged in a hexagonal pattern, with each hexagon showcasing a different craft. The crafts include textiles, pottery, and other traditional Indian handicrafts. The display is set against a blue background.

Contemporary Fashion, Rooted in Tribal Weaves

Johargram is bringing Jharkhand's

has been very encouraging," he said. "We are connecting with many buyers and exporters."

Now in its third participation, the brand is

consumer textile waste. Once collected, the garments are sent to partner NGOs for recycling. ReFiber facilitates a marketplace where upcycled products can be sold.

Exhibiting for the first time, the exhibition is opening conversations with businesses and potential partners.



"The response has been very good—very phenomenal," he said. "We have interacted with visitors from Bangladesh, Spain, the United States, Portugal and Sri Lanka."

ReFiber now plans to expand its collection network across India and work with more organisations involved in textile reuse.

Bharat Tex: Bringing Every Strand Together

Bharat Tex brings textile sector's many strands onto a common platform. Stories from across the exhibition floor illustrate how the event connects artisans, enterprises, institutions and buyers at different stages of the textile value chain.

By bringing diverse products, processes and possibilities together, Bharat Tex captures the breadth of India's textile ecosystem - everything textiles, in one place.



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Ethanol Blended Petrol Programme

Frequently Asked Questions

Published on: July 10, 2026

The Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme is one of India's key energy initiatives. It aims at improving energy security, supporting farmers, and reducing environmental impact through greater use of domestically produced renewable fuel.

concerns. Automobile manufacturers also issued their own clarifications during a press conference held on July 4, 2026. Despite clarifications, certain concerns have continued to be raised regarding

EBP Programme's Impact, at a Glance

Since Ethanol Supply Year 2014-15, the Programme has delivered results that go far beyond a number on a policy document.

₹1.97+ lakh crore Saved in foreign exchange	~ 316 lakh Metric Tonnes Crude oil substituted
₹1.66+ lakh crore Transferred directly to farmers	~ 952 lakh Metric Tonnes CO 2 emissions reduced

Our farmers are no longer merely **Annadata**s; they have become **Ujjadatas**, contributing directly to India's energy security.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas issued a detailed clarification on the programme through a press release on June 23, 2026, addressing various

the EBP Programme. The following Frequently Asked Questions provide factual, evidence-based responses to these concerns.

Was the Ethanol Policy Rushed?

► Is ethanol a new fuel that India invented or rushed into?

No. Ethanol is not a new fuel. Henry Ford designed the Model T to run on ethanol more than a century ago. Countries like Brazil and the United States have blended ethanol into petrol for decades. India's own ethanol story also began long before the present government. This has been a journey spanning over two decades. Here is the timeline:

- **2001:** A pilot ethanol blending programme was launched.
- **2004:** The programme was formally announced.
- **2006:** E5, or 5 percent blending, rolled out across several states.
- **January 2013:** The policy framework was notified in the Gazette of India with a target of achieving 5% ethanol blending across 10 States and Union Territories.
- Despite this, blending stayed stuck at around **1.5 percent until 2014**, because India simply could not produce enough ethanol from sugarcane alone.
- **May 2018:** The National Policy on Biofuels widened the raw material base beyond sugarcane, to maize and surplus grain, and turned ethanol

production into a genuine whole of government mission.

- **June 2021:** NITI Aayog released a detailed roadmap after consulting automakers, oil companies and farm experts.
- **August 2021:** IOCL, BPCL and HPCL invited private investment to set up Dedicated Ethanol Plants, backed by guaranteed purchase agreements and bank financing.



► How did India move to 20 percent blending so quickly?

In 2021, India required around 500 to 600 crore litres of ethanol annually to achieve 10 percent blending. As fresh investments expanded production capacity, annual ethanol availability approached 1,200 crore litres. With adequate supply in place, advancing to 20 percent blending became a logical and responsible next step. The rise in blending tells its own story of steady, calibrated progress, not a sudden leap:

Ethanol Supply Year	Blending Achieved
2020-21	~8.1%
2021-22	10.0%
2022-23	12.1%
2023-24	14.6%
2024-25	19.2%
2025-26 (Nov to June)	20%

Brazil built the world’s first large ethanol ecosystem from scratch, which naturally took decades. India had the advantage of learning from that experience. What looks like speed was actually two decades of groundwork, followed by disciplined execution.

Vehicle Compatibility and Consumer Choice

► **Why can’t I simply choose between pure petrol, E10 and E20 at the pump, like I choose premium fuel?**

India runs over one lakh retail outlets through a vast network of refineries, terminals and pipelines. Stocking three separate base fuels nationwide would multiply costs and complicate quality control at every single outlet.

Premium petrol is not a fair comparison. It is a small, additive enhanced product sold at a premium in limited quantities, not a separate nationwide base fuel.

There is also the question of what already exists. Public sector banks have financed close to Rs 1 lakh crore a year in ethanol plants, storage and logistics. Reverting to E10 now would strand this investment and hurt the farmers and entrepreneurs who built it in good faith.

► **Was the automobile industry actually consulted before E20 was rolled out?**

Yes, from the very start of the transition, not after it. E10 compatibility was discussed with manufacturers as early as 2020-21, and India met its E10 target in June 2022, five months ahead of schedule.

For E20, the process was even more thorough. Engine calibration, fuel systems, rubber components, emissions and fuel efficiency were all examined over several rounds of testing before the fuel reached any petrol pump. Manufacturers would not have honoured warranties on E20 if they were not convinced of its safety.

► **Will E20 reduce my vehicle’s mileage or hurt its performance?**

Some vehicles may experience a 3 to 5 percent reduction in fuel economy. However, real world mileage depends more on driving habits, tyre pressure, servicing, and air conditioner use than fuel type. Mileage is only one part of the picture.

Beyond fuel economy, E20 delivers several performance and environmental advantages:

- A Research Octane Number of about 108.5, compared to 84.4 for petrol.
- Raises the effective octane rating of Indian petrol to around 95, improving combustion in modern engines.
- Vehicles calibrated for E20 deliver smoother acceleration.
- E20 offers superior anti-knock characteristics.
- E20 also enables cleaner engine operation with significantly lower particulate emissions.

- E20 can reduce lifecycle carbon emissions by nearly 40 percent.

► **My vehicle manual says ‘E10 compatible’. Does that mean E20 is unsafe for my car?**

No. A vehicle manual reflects the fuel standard that existed when the vehicle was certified. It does not mean the vehicle becomes unsafe the moment fuel standards move forward, after extensive testing and regulatory approval.

Before E20 was rolled out, the government set up expert committees involving ARAI, SIAM, automobile manufacturers and oil companies. The 2021 NITI Aayog roadmap specifically addressed the shift from E10 to E20 and gave manufacturers years of advance notice.

► **Will E20 damage rubber parts, fuel lines or engines in older vehicles?**

E15-plus blends have already been running across India for over three and a half years. E20 went through extensive lab testing and field validation covering engine durability, corrosion resistance and drivability before it reached the market.



The strongest evidence comes from the real world. Maruti Suzuki serviced 2.84 crore cars in FY 2025-26, of which 1.5 crore were older vehicles never certified



for E20. No E20 related damage was found. If E20 genuinely damaged rubber hoses, fuel lines or engines, this would have shown up as a wave of warranty claims and complaints. That wave never happened.

Additionally, India’s ethanol supply chain is also tightly regulated. Ethanol and blended petrol must meet strict BIS specifications, checked at every stage from distillery to depot to retail pump. Chief Secretaries of all states have been asked to enforce zero tolerance against adulteration.

Pricing and Value for Money

► Ethanol should be a cheaper fuel. So why isn’t E20 priced lower than pure petrol?

The Government ensures that farmers receive a fair price for the ethanol supplied under the programme. For example, maize based ethanol is procured at around Rs 71.86 per litre, even before GST, transport, and storage costs are added.

When global crude oil prices are around USD 70 per barrel, producing E20 can cost as much as, or even more than, pure petrol. Ethanol becomes the cheaper option only when crude prices



rise sharply, typically to USD 120 to 130 per barrel or higher.

Even when E20 is priced similarly to pure petrol, consumers still benefit. Nearly **20 percent of every litre of petrol** sold in India is now domestically produced ethanol. Unlike crude oil, ethanol prices are not affected by Brent crude fluctuations, wars, or global shipping disruptions.

This means that **one fifth of every fuel tank** is sourced from a stable domestic supply, helping reduce India’s exposure to global oil price shocks while strengthening energy security.

► Has ethanol blending helped keep petrol prices in India more stable than in other countries?

Yes. The results are visible in how Indian fuel prices have moved compared to the rest of the world.

Every litre of ethanol blended into petrol

Country	Petrol, June 2022	Petrol, June 2026	Rise
Pakistan	92.64	129.48	39.77%
Bangladesh	76.97	109.82	42.69%
Sri Lanka	90.43	123.59	36.66%
Nepal	113.99	137.19	20.35%
France	174.18	205.08	17.74%
Germany	163.18	194.26	19.05%
Italy	166.85	197.52	18.39%
India (Delhi)	96.72	102.12	5.58%

means four things. **Less crude imported. Less foreign exchange spent. More income for Indian farmers and a more stable pump price for the citizen.**

Ethanol Blending Is a Global Practice

India is far from alone in adopting ethanol blending. It is now a globally accepted practice. Several major economies have built ethanol firmly into their fuel strategy.

- **United States:** E10 is the standard ethanol blended fuel nationwide. E15 is expanding rapidly, backed by the

US government. Millions of vehicles are already flex fuel capable. These can run on blends as high as E85.

- **Brazil:** Brazil remains the global leader in ethanol use. It currently mandates E27 as its standard petrol blend. This is being raised further to around 35 percent. Over 80 percent of new cars sold are flex fuel vehicles. These run on E27, E30, or pure hydrous ethanol.
- **Japan:** Japan has brought ethanol into its fuel mix too. This was done through a phased E10 rollout.

Countries including Canada, Thailand, and several European nations have also

adopted ethanol blending as part of their clean fuel strategies.

A Proven Path to Energy Security

India's ethanol journey spans more than two decades. It began with pilot projects in 2001 and evolved through policy reforms, industry collaboration, and sustained investments. Achieving **20 percent blending in 2025-26** is the

outcome of careful planning and steady execution, not a sudden decision.

Every stage of the E20 rollout involved automobile manufacturers, testing agencies, fuel retailers, and farmers. Claims of engine or component damage have been assessed against service data from crores of vehicles maintained by Maruti Suzuki and Hero MotoCorp. The evidence has not supported these claims.

The Ethanol Blended Petrol Programme has strengthened India's energy security, reduced crude oil imports, lowered emissions, and increased farmers' incomes. E20 is a safe, cleaner, and thoroughly tested fuel, backed by scientific evaluation, phased implementation, and collaboration across industry and research institutions. **It represents a major step towards an Atmanirbhar, sustainable, and energy secure India.**

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Stronger Law, Safer Exams India Tightens the Noose on Paper Leaks

Tougher Prison Sentences, Special Task Forces, Fast-Track Courts

Published on: July 31, 2026

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 sharply raises jail terms and fines for exam fraud, adds Special Task Forces for investigation, mandates Special Fast Track Courts for speedy trials, and creates a time-bound appeal process, strengthening the 2024 Act to protect the students.

Every year in the country, lakhs of youth sit for government exams hoping for a fair chance at a better future. When a question paper leaks or a racket manipulates results, it is not just a rule that is broken. It is the hard work and trust of an honest student that is broken.

To protect that trust, Parliament passed the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, India's first dedicated law against exam cheating, paper leaks and organised exam fraud. Now, the Government has introduced the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha, to make this law even stronger. The Bill increases punishments, speeds up investigation and trial, and gives victims a clear path to justice.

Why This Amendment Was Needed

The 2024 Act gave India a strong foundation. But recent years have still seen cases of question paper leaks and exam malpractice, which hurt the fairness and credibility of the public examination system. The 2026 Bill responds to this directly. It sharpens the punishments so they act as a real deterrent, and it builds a faster, time-bound system of investigation and trial, so that guilty persons are punished quickly and students get closure sooner.

Tougher Punishment for Offenders

The clearest change in the Bill is punishment. Sentences and fines for exam fraud have been raised sharply across the board, for individuals, service providers, and those who run organised rackets.

Provision	Earlier Position (2024 Act)	What Changes Now (2026 Bill)
Individual offenders (Section 10)	Jail term of 3 to 5 years, with a fine of up to ₹10 lakh.	Jail term of 5 to 10 years, with a fine of up to ₹50 lakh.
Service providers (Section 10)	Fine of up to ₹1 crore, and a 4-year ban from conducting any public examination.	Fine of up to ₹5 crore, and an 8-year ban from conducting any public examination.
Directors and senior management held responsible (Section 10)	Jail term of 3 to 10 years, with a fine of ₹1 crore.	Jail term of 5 to 10 years, with a fine of ₹5 crore.
Organised crime and exam-fraud syndicate (Section 11)	Jail term of 5 to 10 years, with a fine of at least ₹1 crore.	Jail term of 7 to 10 years, with a fine of at least ₹10 crore.

Faster, More Focused Investigation

Under the 2024 Act, cases were investigated by a police officer of at least Deputy Superintendent rank, and the Central Government could also

hand a case to a Central Investigating Agency. The 2026 Bill adds one more option: the Central Government can now set up a dedicated Special Task Force to investigate exam fraud cases. Once a Special Task Force is set up for a case, it alone will investigate that

case, so responsibility stays clear and focused.

The Bill also puts a clock on investigation for the first time. Whoever is investigating, whether a police officer, a Central Investigating Agency, or a Special Task Force, must finish the investigation within two months. The two-month clock starts from the day the police officially record the case, or from the day the case is referred to a Central Investigating Agency, or from the day a Special Task Force is notified, whichever applies.

New Special Fast Track Courts

Designating a Court of Session, to be a Special Fast Track Court is one of the biggest additions in the Bill. Every State and Union Territory will now have to designate a Court of Session as a Special Fast Track Court, in consultation with the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court, to try exam fraud cases.

- These courts must hear cases day-to-day, without unnecessary breaks.
- A trial must be completed within 3 months of the chargesheet being filed.
- Cases already pending in other courts on the date this amendment comes into force will be transferred to these new Special Fast Track Courts, and

must be completed within 3 months of transfer.

- Every State and Union Territory will also appoint Special Public Prosecutors dedicated to arguing these cases.
- If an accused also faces other connected charges under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita or any other law, the Special Fast Track Court will try those charges together in the same trial, instead of sending the case to multiple courts.

Together, this means an exam fraud case will no longer languish for years. It moves through a dedicated, deadline-bound system from investigation to trial.

A Clear Right to Appeal

The Bill also lays down, for the first time, how an appeal against a Special Fast Track Court's decision works.

- An appeal against any judgment, sentence or order (other than routine interim orders) will go to the High Court.
- It will be heard by a bench of two judges, and the High Court must try to dispose of the appeal within 3 months of it being admitted.
- Even an order granting or refusing bail can be appealed directly to the High Court.
- An appeal must normally be filed

within 30 days. The High Court may allow a delay for good reason, but no appeal can be filed after 90 days.

- Apart from this High Court route, no other appeal or revision against a Special Fast Track Court's order can be filed in any other court, keeping the process quick and final.

This gives both the accused and the prosecution a fair, but time-bound, path to a higher court, so justice is not delayed indefinitely at any stage.

What This Means for Students

Put together, these changes send one message: exam fraud will now cost offenders far more, and it will be caught, tried and punished far faster. A student preparing honestly for a government exam can have greater confidence that paper leaks and cheating rackets will

be dealt with severely, and that justice, when needed, will not take years to arrive.

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 builds on the foundation of the 2024 Act to make India's public examination system more transparent, more secure, and more trustworthy for the youth, who depend on it for their future.

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Sahkar Se Samriddhi

Five Years of Strengthening India's Cooperative Movement

Published on: 06 July 2026

India's Cooperative Journey: Rooted in Collective Growth

India's cooperative movement is deeply rooted in the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the belief that the world is one family. Cooperatives have long served as institutions of shared ownership, mutual support, and inclusive development. From rural credit to dairy, fisheries, housing, and marketing, cooperatives have enabled millions to access markets, finance, and livelihoods. Established on July 6, 2021, the Ministry of

Cooperation reflects the government's commitment to unlocking the cooperative sector's transformative potential by strengthening institutions and making them future-ready.

Cooperatives in India: Scale at a Glance

India today has one of the largest cooperative ecosystems in the world, spanning nearly every sector of the economy. These institutions form the backbone of grassroots economic participation, linking farmers, dairy producers, fishers, artisans, and workers to income opportunities.

Advancing Digital and Institutional Reforms

The 5th Foundation Day of the Ministry of Cooperation was celebrated on July 6, 2026, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. The occasion marked significant progress in strengthening India's cooperative ecosystem through a series of major digital and infrastructure initiatives. This included the key highlight of the transformation of 50,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) into e-PACS.

The programme also witnessed the laying of foundation stones for 47 grain storage godowns to enhance cooperative storage infrastructure. A Milk Supply Review Dashboard Portal for the National Dairy Development Board was launched to improve management of milk procurement and distribution. Additionally, two flagship initiatives of the National Urban Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation (NUCFDC) were unveiled - Sahakar CBS and Sahakar Sahyogi. Sahakar CBS is a centralized Core Banking Solution for Urban Cooperative Banks. Sahakar Sahyogi is a conversational AI-powered platform designed to enhance customer services and banking operations.

India's Cooperative Footprint



Source: Ministry of Cooperation



Strengthening Cooperatives through Structural Reforms

Over the last five years, the government has driven transformative reforms to strengthen India's cooperative ecosystem. These reforms have focused on making cooperatives more inclusive, transparent, digitally empowered, and economically vibrant. These efforts have enabled cooperatives to emerge as stronger engines of grassroots prosperity and inclusive socio-economic growth. **Over 152 major initiatives** have been launched since the establishment of the Ministry of Cooperation. These initiatives have modernized traditional cooperative institutions while creating new opportunities for growth and diversification.

1. Revitalizing PACS: From Credit Institutions to Rural Growth Centres

Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) form the grassroots foundation of the short-term cooperative credit structure. They are actively functioning as multi-service institutions that serve as the first point of contact for rural economic services.

Key progress made for serving PACS, as of June 2026, is.

- Model bye-laws enable PACS in **32 states/UTs** to undertake **25+ business activities**
- **PACS now functions beyond credit**, covering retail, storage, healthcare,

- fuel, and digital services
- 394 PACS have applied for retail fuel outlets, and 3 outlets have been commissioned
- 39,177 PACS are functioning as **PM Kisan Samriddhi Kendras**
- 54,117 PACS are functioning as **Common Service Centres**
- 4,248 PACS are approved for **Jan Aushadhi Kendras**; 843 are ready to function

This diversification has improved access to essential services at the village level.

2. Digital Transformation of PACS

Technology has become central to strengthening cooperative governance and efficiency. Following progress has been made in the digitalization of PACS, as of June 2026:

- Total financial outlay has been increased to ₹2,925.39 crore in 2025 from the initial allocation of **₹2,516 crore** in 2022
- The timeline for computerization of **63,000 PACS** is up to March 31, 2027
- **79,630 PACS** sanctioned; **63,428 PACS** are currently using ERP software
- Hardware delivered to more than **65 thousand PACS**

- Online audits completed in more than **42,700 PACS**
- ERP software is made available in **14 languages**

Digitization of PACS has significantly improved transparency, accounting, and service delivery

3. Expanding Grassroots Cooperative Coverage

The government has focused on ensuring that every panchayat is connected to the cooperative institutions:

- 37,454 new multipurpose PACS, dairy & fisheries cooperative societies registered so far
- PACS present in more than 2.55 lakh Gram Panchayats
- Dairy cooperatives cover more than 87,159 Gram Panchayats
- Fisheries cooperatives cover more than 29,964 Gram Panchayats

This expansion is strengthening cooperative access in underserved regions.

4. Building Rural Infrastructure through Cooperatives

The government is also implementing the **world's largest decentralized grain**

storage plan through cooperatives:

- Godowns completed in 145 PACS
- Storage capacity created: more than 68,702 MT.

This initiative helps reduce post-harvest losses and improve farmer incomes by enabling local storage and better market timing

5. Strengthening Farmer-Producer Institutions (FPOs)

Cooperatives are being **integrated with modern farmer collectives** for better aggregation and market access:

- 1,863 FPOs formed in the cooperative sector
- 1,117 FPOs formed through PACS
- 1,070 Fisheries FPOs formed and ₹98 crore disbursed for their benefit

This is improving market linkage, processing, and farmer income realization.

6. Tax Relief & Ease of Doing Business

Policy reforms have also improved the financial health of cooperatives. Key tax relief measures introduced for cooperatives are:

- Surcharge reduced from 12% to

7% for cooperatives having income between ₹1-10 crore

- Minimum Alternative Tax (MAT) reduced from 18.5% to 15%
- TDS cash withdrawal limit raised from ₹1 crore to ₹3 crore
- Higher cash transaction limits for PACS & Primary Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks

These measures have increased liquidity and reduced compliance burden.

7. White Revolution 2.0

The cooperative dairy sector is being strengthened under White Revolution 2.0 with a focus on increasing milk procurement by 50% by 2028-29.

- 25,282 dairy cooperative societies have been registered so far
- Focus is on women-led dairy cooperatives and wider cooperative coverage

8. New National Cooperative Institutions

To strengthen sector-specific growth, three new national multi-state cooperative institutions have been established, and their progress has been recorded so far:

New National Cooperative Institutions



National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL)
15.4 LMT exports worth ₹6,295 crore to 38 countries



National Cooperative Organics Limited (NCOL)
14,286 member cooperatives



Bharatiya Beej Sahakari Samiti Limited (BBSSL)
38,665 member cooperatives

- **National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL):** NCEL serves as an umbrella organization for exporting **surplus goods/services** produced by various cooperative societies across the country. NCEL recorded **15.4 LMT** exports worth **₹6,295 crore** to **38 countries** as of June 2026.
- **National Cooperative Organics Limited (NCOL):** NCOL acts as an umbrella organization for aggregation, procurement, certification, testing, branding, and marketing of **organic products**. It has 14,286 member cooperatives as of June 2026.
- **Bharatiya Beej Sahakari Samiti Limited (BBSSL):** BBSSL undertakes the production, procurement, and distribution of **quality seeds** under the brand name **"Bharat Beej"** through the cooperative network. It

has 38,665 member cooperatives as of June 2026

9. Capacity Building and Cooperative Education

The government is strengthening cooperatives through education and institutional development.

Tribhuvan Sahkari University (TSU) has been established as India's first cooperative university.

The University supports education, research, and skill development in the cooperative sector.

Training programmes are conducted through the National Council for Cooperative Training (NCCT) and

NABARD. These initiatives strengthen governance, leadership, and operational efficiency in cooperatives.

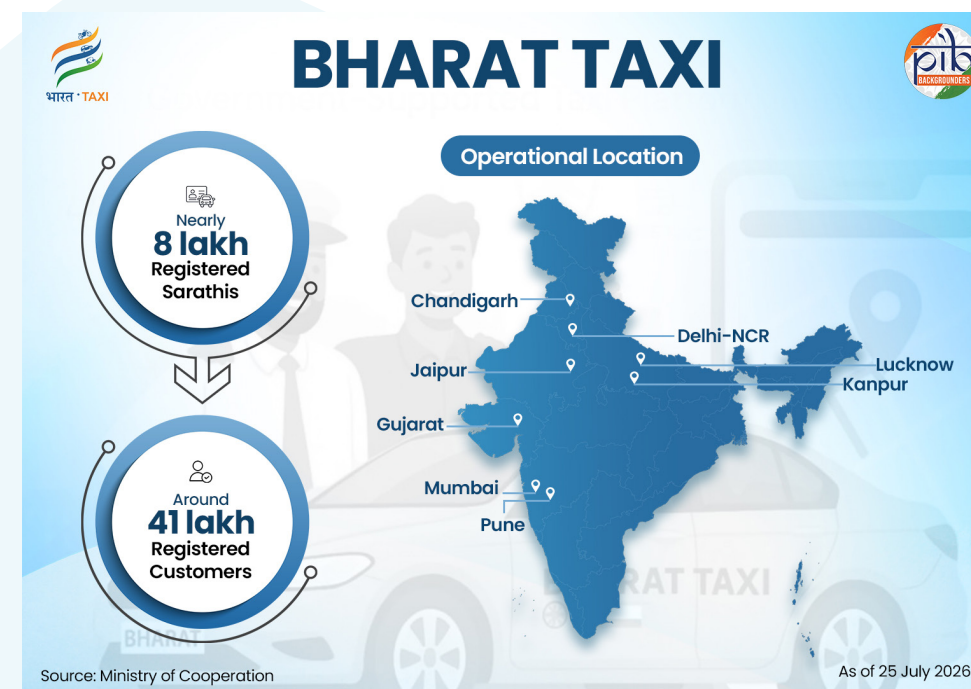
National Cooperative Development Corporation: Driving Investments

The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) has played a major role in financing the growth of cooperatives. During FY 2025-26, NCDC has sanctioned ₹1.55 lakh crore and **disbursed ₹1.27 lakh crore**. It has also disbursed **₹2,320 crore** to FPOs/ Cluster-Based Business Organizations (CBBOs) under the scheme for **Formation and Promotion of 10,000 FPOs**, as of May 2026. This sustained financing is accelerating cooperative expansion across sectors.

Bharat Taxi: India's First Cooperative-based Mobility Platform

Bharat Taxi is an initiative of Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Limited. Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Limited is a driver-centric mobility platform based on the cooperative model. It aims to economically empower drivers while offering affordable, safe, and reliable transport services to the public.

At present, Bharat Taxi has 6.37 lakh registered drivers and 35.77 lakh registered customers. The service is operational in Delhi-NCR, Gujarat, Lucknow, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Jaipur, and Kanpur. Operations are planned to be launched in Ranchi, Patna, Guwahati, Bhopal, Kolkata, Indore, and Nagpur in the next few months.



Cooperatives Powering Viksit Bharat

In five years, the Ministry of Cooperation has transformed cooperatives into engines of inclusive growth. Stronger institutions, improved service delivery, and broader digital adoption have enhanced grassroots impact. Expanded infrastructure and better market access have strengthened rural economies.

Women and farmers now have greater opportunities through cooperative-led development.

As India advances on its path of inclusive and sustainable development, cooperatives will continue to foster equitable growth and resilience. Guided by the vision of **“Sahkar Se Samriddhi,”** the cooperative movement continues to build a resilient, self-reliant, and prosperous India.

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Indiahandmade: A Digital Platform for India's Craft Heritage

Published on: July 6, 2026

Indiahandmade is a dedicated digital marketplace that brings India's handloom and handicraft traditions into the online economy. The platform connects artisans and weavers directly with buyers, expanding market access while supporting livelihoods and cultural preservation. It showcases diverse handmade products, including GI-tagged and ODOP items, giving regional crafts greater visibility.

A Digital India Bridge for Handmade Livelihoods

India is home to one of the world's richest handloom and handicraft traditions. The sector represents not only India's cultural heritage, but is also an important source of inclusive livelihoods.

With a large number of artisans and weavers, the sector continues to hold an important place in India's evolving marketplace. As commerce becomes increasingly digital, online access is helping these craft communities participate more directly in the market. Through the Digital India initiative, traditional livelihoods are increasingly gaining access to digital commerce opportunities.

India currently has an estimated **64.66 lakh** handloom and handicraft artisans. Women form a major part of this workforce, accounting for **71%** of handloom weavers and **64%** of total artisans as of August 2025. This strong participation highlights the sector's role in supporting employment and empowerment, especially in rural communities.



Launched in 2023, **IndiaHandmade** turns this vision into a dedicated digital marketplace. Developed by **Digital India Corporation** under the Ministry of Textiles, the platform strengthens the visibility of handmade products and opens wider market opportunities for sellers.

Salient features of IndiaHandmade Platform

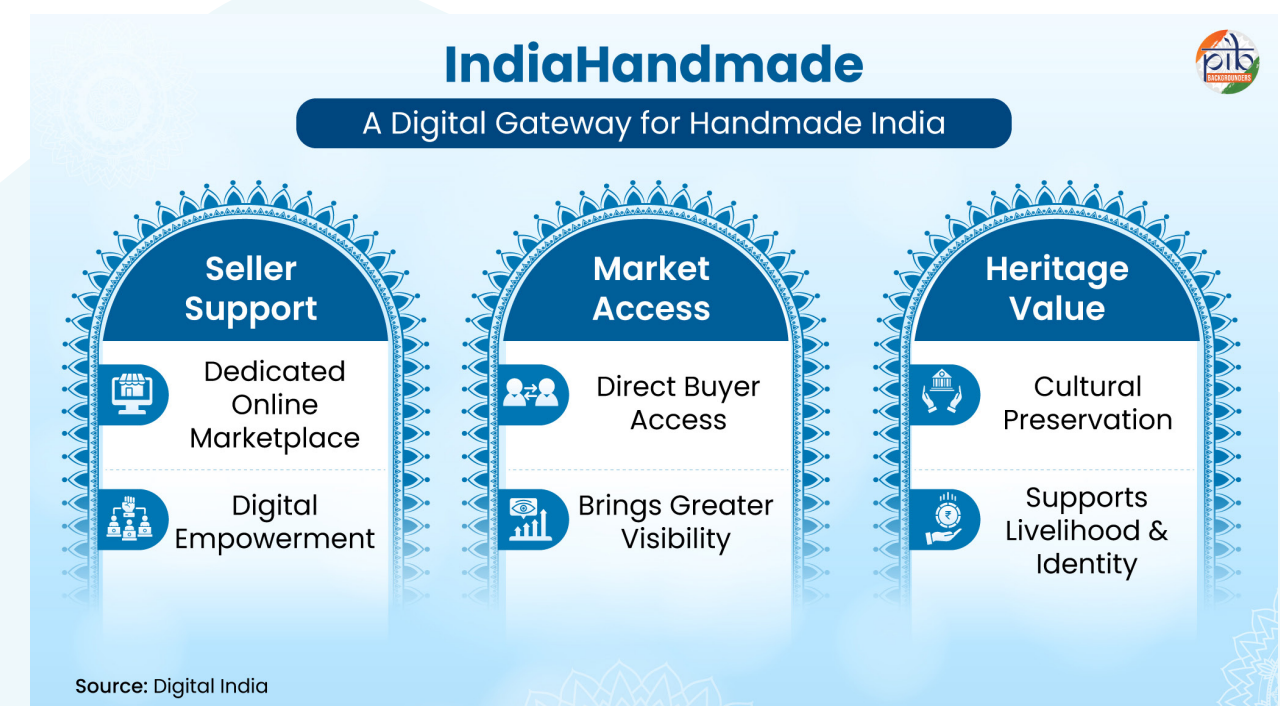
IndiaHandmade brings traditions into the online marketplace through a set of features designed to support sellers, buyers and craft heritage:

- **Specialised Online Marketplace:** It enables weavers and artisans to sell their handloom and handicraft products online.
- **Direct Buyer Access:** Artisans and weavers are directly connected with buyers, helping reduce intermediaries and support fair compensation.
- **Greater Visibility:** The platform showcases handmade products to a broader customer base, expanding market opportunities for sellers.

- **Digital Empowerment:** Artisans and weavers are provided with digital tools and visibility to participate more effectively in online commerce.
- **Financial and Social Empowerment:** Wider market access strengthens livelihoods and supports income opportunities.
- **Cultural Preservation:** A diverse range of craft-based products keeps India's handmade heritage visible and helps preserve traditional skills for future generations.

What Makes IndiaHandmade Stand Out

The portal is designed around trust, accessibility and seller empowerment.



It offers a seamless marketplace where artisans and weavers can reach buyers, and buyers can discover handmade products with greater confidence.

ODOP products. This gives recognised regional crafts greater visibility and a distinct identity.

The IndiaHandmade Promise

A Govt. Of India Initiative

Unique Handcrafted Products

Community-Driven Marketplace

Niche Sellers, Niche Buyers

No Commission, No Shipping Fee

Directly from the Hands of Artisans

PAN-India Recognition of Sellers

Easy Returns & Customer Support

Safe & Secure Payments

Source: IndiaHandmade.com

Craft Diversity and Regional Identity

The platform provides a **curated** digital space for everyday handmade products and recognised regional crafts. It offers a wide range of products, including **apparel, home décor, furnishings, paintings, furniture, religious items, stationery, musical instruments, jewellery, bags and footwear.** It also highlights special product categories such as **GI-tagged** and

GI-Tagged Products

GI-tagged products carry a Geographical Indication, linking them to a specific region, quality and reputation. The platform offers variety of GI-tagged products such as Aipan art, pure Pashmina shawls, Dokra décor and Mundu products.

ODOP Products

The One District One Product (ODOP) initiative identifies and promotes a unique product from each district to support balanced regional growth. The platform features Tangail sarees, Banarasi silk products, Ikat, Tussar silk sarees, Chanderi silk and terracotta products.

Building Trust and Easing Seller Participation

Better Access, Better Assurance: Buyers benefit from a more reliable shopping experience through free shipping, purchase protection, secure payments and buyer support mechanisms. It also reinforces trust by offering handcrafted products at competitive prices.

Simple Onboarding for Sellers: The platform provides a guided onboarding pathway for artisans, weavers and producer organisations to access the marketplace.

Success Stories Behind the Marketplace

Behind the platform are artisans, weavers and enterprises whose craft

Bringing Small Sellers into Digital Commerce

No GSTIN? No Problem!
You can still sell on Indiahandmade.

Sellers without GST registration can register using an Enrolment ID, with a mandate to sell only within their own state. This makes the portal more **inclusive and accessible** for smaller artisans and first-time digital sellers.

Santarms brings the **warmth of handmade** craft into everyday living. From wooden décor and scented candles to terracotta diyas, marble idols and handloom sarees, each piece reflects care, tradition and a quiet sense of beauty.

366 Indiahandmade: A Digital Platform for India's Craft Heritage

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Dastkar Craft carries the **skill of over 500 artisans** into modern homes through cane and bamboo products. They create high-quality, export-worthy pieces that celebrate India's heritage while seamlessly fitting into contemporary homes.



Villages Craft celebrates the **simplicity and strength of handloom traditions**. Its cotton towels, gamchas and bedsheets are made with care by skilled artisans, turning everyday essentials into products rooted in comfort, quality and heritage.



traditions continue to thrive through digital commerce.

These stories give handmade products a human face, showing how tradition, skill and livelihood come together in the digital marketplace.

Carrying India's Heritage into the Digital Future

Indiahandmade reflects the spirit of Digital India, recognising crafts as both a livelihood source and a reflection of India's cultural identity. With plans to onboard 60 lakh+ artisans, the platform supports the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat. It gives artisans and weavers wider market access while helping buyers discover handmade products with trust and ease.

With every handmade product, it ensures that India's handmade legacy continues to inspire livelihoods and opportunity for generations to come.

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MANAS: A Digital Shield Against Drugs

National Narcotics Helpline Empowering
Citizens for a Nasha Mukta Bharat

Published on: July 5, 2026

MANAS: An Architecture that Puts Power in Citizens' Hands

The Government of India has identified substance abuse and drug trafficking as major social and public health concerns. Beyond individuals, these issues affect families, communities, and public safety. To strengthen citizen participation and improve access to support services, the Government recognised the need for an accessible and confidential platform for reporting drug-related activities and seeking assistance.



To bridge this need, National Narcotics Helpline **MANAS (Madak Padarth Nishedh Asoochna Kendra)** was launched on 18 July 2024 under the aegis of the **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Ministry of Home Affairs**, Government of India, in collaboration with the Digital India Corporation (DIC). Built as a secure, technology-driven platform, MANAS enables citizens to report drug-related activities, seek counselling, and access rehabilitation support at any time.

MANAS brings together the vision of **Digital India** and the **mission of a Nasha**

Mukt Bharat. The platform is accessible through the national **helpline number 1933**, the **official portal**, **email** and the **UMANG app**. By making support available through these platforms, MANAS empowers citizens to actively participate in the fight against drug abuse instead of remaining silent bystanders.

Did you know?

India's first comprehensive **report on Magnitude of Substance Abuse of India (2019)** revealed the true scale of the drug abuse problem.

- Around **16 crore** people consume **alcohol**, out of these over 5.7 crore are severely affected.
- **3.1 crore** use **cannabis**, **2.26 crore** use **opioids**, and about **1.18 crore** use **sedatives**.
- Roughly **2.8 crore** people depend on **opioids** alone, including about 28 lakh needing urgent treatment.



How Citizens Can Reach MANAS

- **Toll-Free Number**
Dial **1933** from anywhere in India

- **Web Portal:**
Visit www.ncbmanas.gov.in

- **UMANG Mobile App:**
Use the UMANG app to connect on the move.

- **Email:**
Write to info.ncbmanas@gov.in

Source: NCB, MHA

What MANAS Offers

TMANAS is designed around citizen needs, combining reporting, counselling, and awareness within a single architecture.

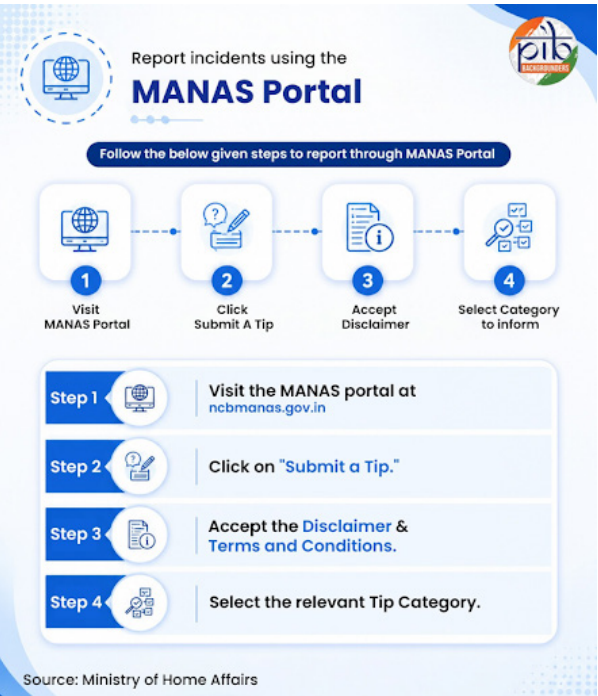
- Citizens can confidentially report drug trafficking, peddling, illegal

cultivation, and related activities without revealing their identity.

- People affected by addiction can access counselling and support, with calls transferred to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment helpline 14446.
- Services remain accessible anytime through the **1933 helpline**, the **web**

portal, and the UMANG application, ensuring nationwide reach.

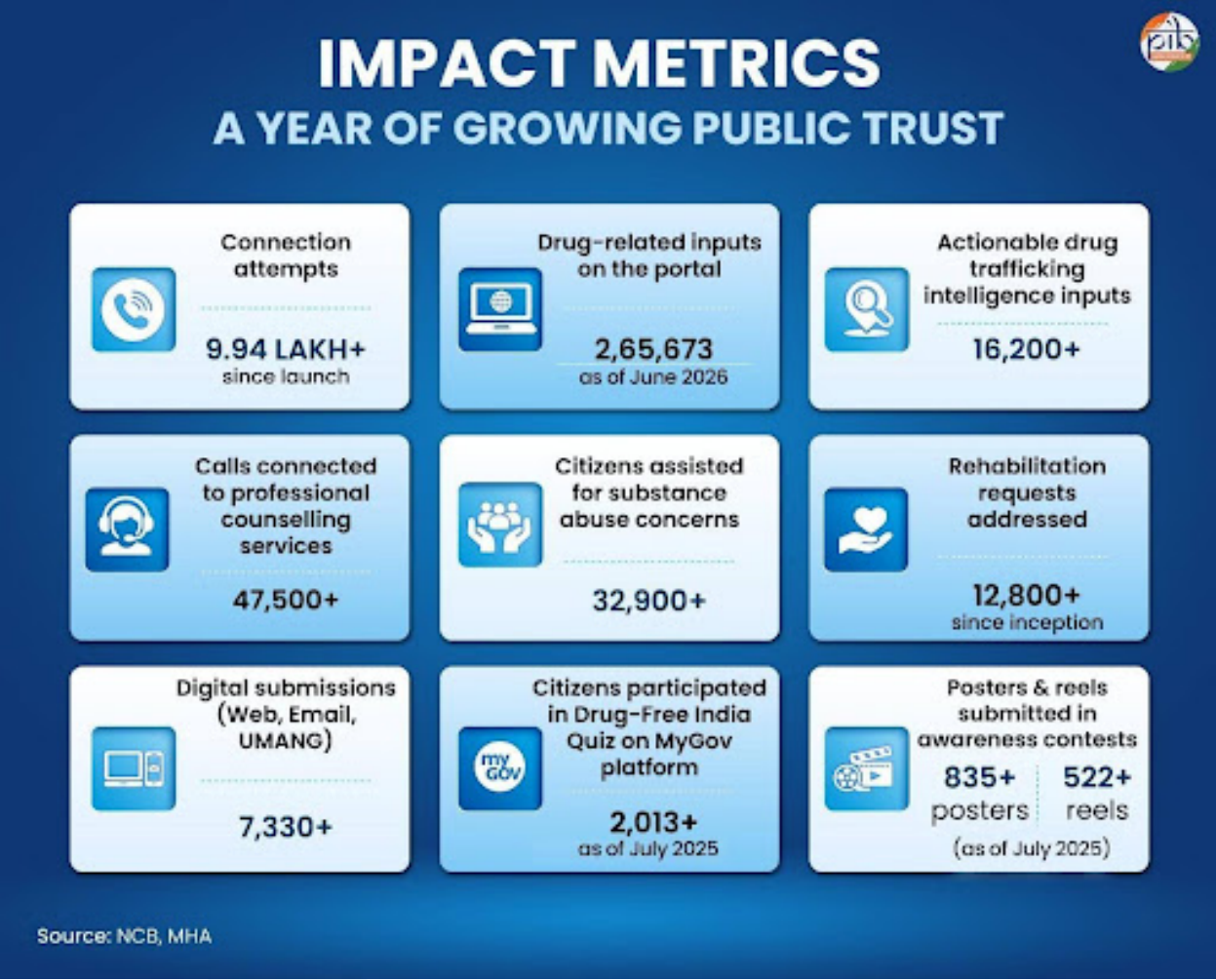
- Digital ticket generation and workflow management enable faster information sharing with concerned agencies, improving coordination and response time.
- Inclusive features such as multilingual call support, a Smart IVRS, chatbot integration and regional language assistance are being developed to widen access further.



Impact: Steadily Growing Public Trust

Since its launch, MANAS has expanded citizen outreach, strengthened public service delivery, and improved coordination among drug law-enforcement agencies. The platform has enabled citizens to report drug-related activities more easily through secure channels. It has also strengthened information-sharing between citizens and enforcement agencies, improving response mechanisms against drug trafficking and substance abuse.

It has also improved access to **counselling, rehabilitation, and awareness services** across the country. Increasing use of professional counselling support reflects greater willingness among citizens to seek help for substance abuse concerns. **Awareness activities** through online platforms have encouraged wider public and youth participation in anti-drug campaigns. The platform's fully digitized workflows have improved coordination



and service delivery. It is also supporting the larger vision of a **Nasha Mukht Bharat** through **technology-driven citizen engagement**.

How MANAS Strengthens the Digital India Promise

MANAS is a working example of how technology can be leveraged to protect citizens and deliver public services. It advances the vision of the mission in clear, practical ways:

- MANAS works around the clock, and can be reached from anywhere in India.
- It turns public alertness into useful, on-record intelligence, making people active partners in governance rather than passive recipients of services.
- Every report can be logged, registered, tracked and resolved through digitized workflows, bringing speed, transparency and accountability.
- It links the public directly with the **30**

How can I help a drug addict?



The drug addict is the victim in the vicious circle of drug supply and demand. He or she should be seen with respect and encouraged to seek professional and medical help in the nearest government de-addiction center. He or she should be encouraged for counseling and therapy.

NCB Zonal Units and 36 State and Union Territory Anti-Narcotics Task Forces (ANTFs).

- The portal is designed as a unified, secure and bilingual platform.
- It runs awareness drives on the **MyGov portal**, such as quizzes, poster contests and reel-making contests, to engage teenagers and youth across the country.
- Because information is captured digitally, the data can be studied for **patterns and trends**, helping agencies see where problems are rising and plan their response.

Towards a Nasha Mukt Bharat

MANAS shows how Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) can be put to work for citizen protection and social good. By weaving together **technology**, citizen participation, counselling, analytics and secure reporting, the platform is helping build a safer, healthier and **drug-free India**, one report and one call at a time. As its reach grows and its tools mature, MANAS stands as a clear example of governance that is both digital and deeply human.



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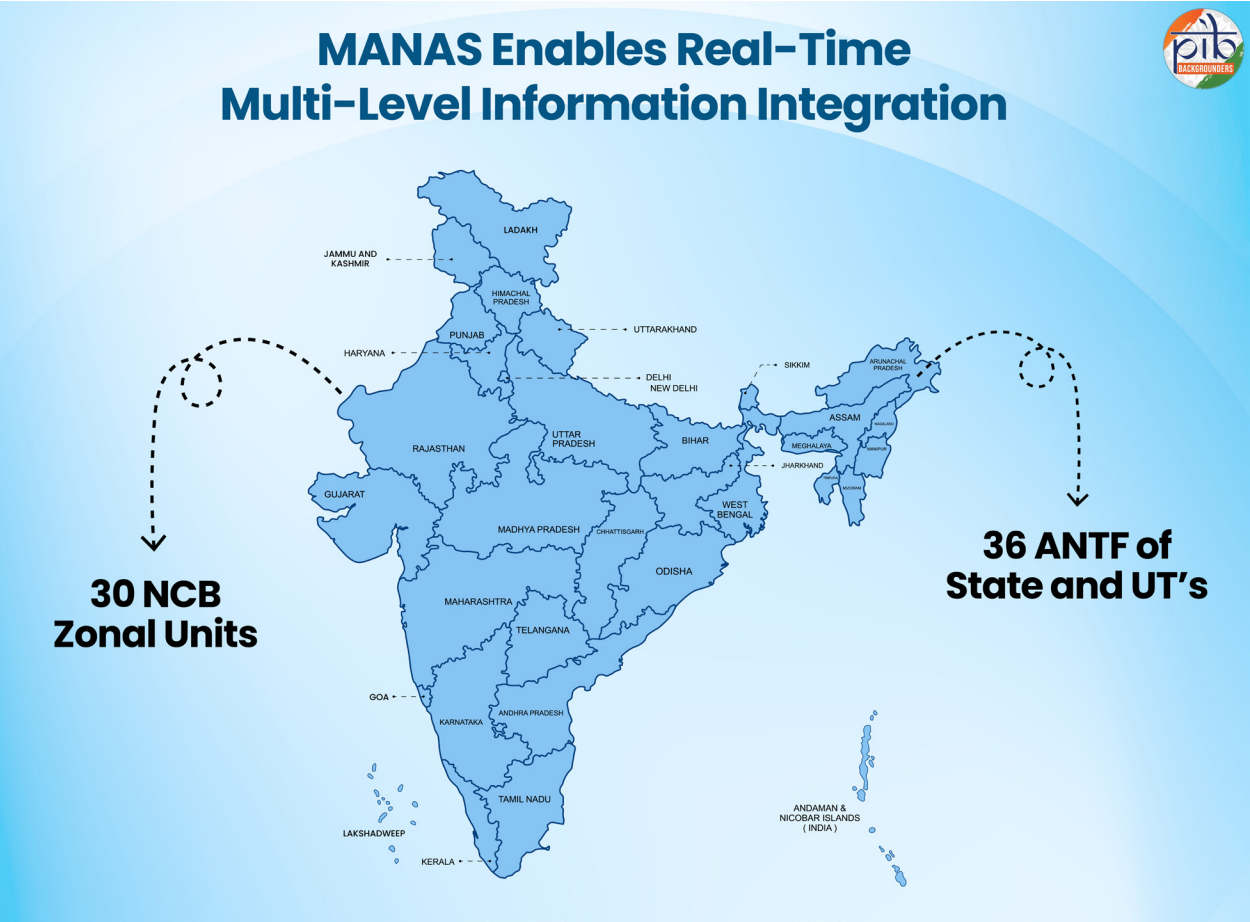
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PM Vidyalaxmi Scheme

Promoting Educational Inclusion in India

Published on: July 29, 2026

The Pradhan Mantri Vidyalaxmi Scheme is a flagship initiative of the Education Ministry that seeks to make quality higher education accessible to deserving students facing financial constraints. The scheme provides collateral-free and guarantor-free education loans to such students for studying in top ranked higher education institutions in the country. It further supports beneficiaries through interest subvention based on family income, reducing financial constraints to educational attainment. In doing so, the scheme contributes to India's progress towards SDG 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.

Bridging Financial Barriers to Higher Education

India has witnessed rapid expansion in higher education enrolment over the last decade, with the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) rising from 23.7% in 2014-15 to 30.0% in 2023-24. However, for many meritorious students, access to quality higher education in the top-ranked institutions of the country often remains difficult due to financial constraints. Many try to fill the gaps through education loans, but there are many more who cannot afford the high interest rates on these loans. The dreams of these students to study in IITs, IIMs and many other top-ranked institutions of the country remain unfulfilled despite their merit. The PM Vidyalaxmi Scheme (PM-Vidyalaxmi), approved by the Union Cabinet on 6th November 2024, comes to the aid of such students. This

is a mission-mode intervention under which **collateral-free, guarantor-free** education loans are provided to students who have got admission on their own merit to one of the designated **Quality Higher Educational Institutions (QHEIs)** in the country. A **3% interest subvention** is also provided for students with annual family income up to ₹8,00,000. The entire process for getting these loans is **simple, transparent, student-friendly** and **entirely digital**. There is a unified portal through which students can apply for education loans, track the status of their applications, claim interest subvention and also raise grievances.

The scheme stems from the **National Education Policy (NEP)**, 2020, which recommends that financial assistance should be made available to meritorious students through various measures for studies in both public and private **Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)**.

The **objective** is to ensure that lack of finance does not prevent any meritorious student from studying in the best institutions in the country. PM-Vidyalaxmi positively contributes to the goals of **SDG 4** and **NEP 2020** by advancing **inclusive** and **equitable** quality education and promoting **lifelong learning** opportunities for all.

Features, Benefits and Coverage

PM-Vidyalaxmi provides **collateral-free and guarantor-free education** loans for students admitted on their own merit

to designated **QHEIs** in the country. Currently, **1,425 QHEIs** are covered under the scheme, including both **public** and **private** institutions. Management quota, NRI quota, etc. admissions will not get this benefit.

Loans up to ₹ 7.5 lakhs are provided **75% credit guarantee** by Government of India, to support banks to expand coverage. For students with up to ₹ 8 lakhs annual family income, the scheme provides for **3% interest subvention** on loans up to ₹ 10 lakh. This is in addition to the full interest subvention already offered to students with up to ₹ Rs. 4.5 lakhs annual family income.



PM Vidyalaxmi Scheme

At a Glance

About The Loan

- Provides collateral-free and guarantor-free education loans
- Loans are available for both degree and diploma programmes
- No cap on loan amount or income category for availing the loan

Loan covers:

- Tuition fees
- Hostel charges
- Examination fees
- Books & equipment
- Other approved academic expenses

- Interest rate is capped at the individual bank's EBLR + 0.5%

Interest Subvention

- 3% interest subvention on loans up to ₹10 lakh for students whose family's annual income is up to ₹8 lakh.

Credit Guarantee

- 75% government credit guarantee for loans up to ₹7.5 lakh

Eligibility

- Students admitted to top educational institutions based on their own merit.
- Institutions are shortlisted based on their NIRF rankings.

Loan Repayment Period

- Up to 15 years, excluding the course period + 1-year moratorium

Why Is It Beneficial?

- Meritorious students get an opportunity to pursue higher education from top institutions.
- Ensures that financial constraints do not hinder the prospects of meritorious students from acquiring quality education.
- Advances equity and inclusivity in Higher Education.

Collateral-free, Guarantor-free Education Loans

Students admitted to eligible QHEIs can obtain education loans without furnishing collateral or third-party guarantees under PM-Vidyalaxmi. There is no cut-off on highest amount of education loan. It will depend on course fee and other fees charged by the QHEI and other associated expenses (like mess, hostel fee, other refundable and non-refundable fees of the QHEI, cost of a reasonable quality laptop and reasonable amount of living expenses required by the student during the course period) and students from all income categories are eligible to apply.

To encourage lending institutions to extend loans to students, the Government provides a **75% credit guarantee** for loans up to **₹7.5 lakh**. This significantly reduces lender risk and improves loan accessibility.

The interest rates charged on the educational loan under the scheme will be capped at the individual bank's **Externally Benchmarked Lending Rate (EBLR) + 0.5%**. The rate will always be less than the interest rate charged by the bank on other education loans not covered under PM-Vidyalaxmi. The repayment period of the education loan is up to **15 years**, excluding a moratorium period of the course period plus one

year. The loan is available for all degree /diploma programmes in India and there is no limit on the number of students getting such loans. The educational loans are provided through **Scheduled Banks, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), and Cooperative Banks** participating in the scheme.

Interest Subvention

PM-Vidyalaxmi supplements the PM-USP CSIS (Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Protsahan Central Sector Interest Subsidy Scheme). Under PM-USP CSIS, students who are pursuing technical/ professional courses from approved NAAC accredited HEIs/ NBA accredited courses and whose annual family income is up to ₹4.5 lakhs, shall be eligible for 100% interest subvention during moratorium period for education loan up to ₹ 10 lakhs.

PM-Vidyalaxmi interest subvention scheme's coverage is broad-based and includes all courses at designated Quality Higher Educational Institutions (QHEIs). Under the scheme, **interest subvention of 3%** on loans up to **₹ 10 lakhs** is awarded during the moratorium period (course period plus one year) to those meritorious students whose family's **annual income** is less than **₹8,00,000**.

If the education loan amount is more

than ₹ 10 lakhs, interest subvention is provided for the disbursed total principal amount of the loan up to ₹ 10 lakhs only.

Student availing any other Central / State Government Scholarship or any other interest subvention scheme or Fee reimbursement shall not be eligible for availing interest subvention benefits under CSIS or PM-Vidyalaxmi.

In a year, a maximum of one lakh students shall be eligible for 3% interest subvention during the moratorium period. No such limit is for CSIS beneficiaries.

Understanding Interest Subvention under PM-USPCSIS and PM-Vidyalaxmi – available on PM-Vidyalaxmi Portal:

	PM-USP CSIS	PM-Vidyalaxmi
Institutions	NAAC/ NBA accredited, INIs, technical institutes approved by regulatory bodies like Medical Commission of India, Nursing Council, Bar Council, Pharmacy Council, Dental Council	Top 100 in NIRF – Private State govt- top 200 in NIRF Remaining central govt
Course	Professional/ technical courses	All degree/diploma courses
Family income	₹ 4.5 lakh	₹ 8 lakh
Interest subvention	Full interest subvention during moratorium period	3% interest subvention during moratorium period
No of slots	No limit	1 lakh fresh slots per year
Loan repayment	Up to 15 years after moratorium period (course period + 1 year)	

The scheme offers affordable education loans with interest rates capped at the bank’s Externally Benchmarked Lending Rate **(EBLR) + 0.5%**. In addition, banks may provide up to **1% additional interest concession** to the borrowers if the interest is serviced during the study and the moratorium period. The scheme also provides **tax benefits** on the interest paid under Section 80E.

Interest subvention and credit guarantee benefits are available **only once** for undergraduate, postgraduate, or integrated courses. **The Government has allocated a budget of ₹ 3,600 Crores from 2024-2025 to 2030-2031** for the scheme. **7 lakh** fresh students are expected to get the benefit of this interest subvention during the seven-year period.

Eligibility Criteria for Students

- The scheme is available to students who have secured merit-based admission through competitive exams in any of the designated **Quality Higher Education Institutions (QHEIs) in India**.
- The scheme provides education loans for all **degree and diploma courses**.
- The repayment period of the education loan would be up to **15 years** excluding the moratorium period (course period + 1 year).

- To avail all these benefits, students are required to register through **Aadhaar**, remain enrolled in their courses, and maintain a satisfactory academic performance.

Additional Conditions:

- The applicant must not discontinue the course midway or be expelled from the institution due to disciplinary or academic reasons.
- From the second year onwards, the student must maintain satisfactory academic performance to continue receiving interest subvention benefits.
- The student can avail of interest subvention and credit guarantee benefits only once, either for an undergraduate, postgraduate, or integrated course.

Eligibility Criteria for Higher Education Institutions

The criteria for shortlisting institutions are based on their NIRF rankings. It currently covers institutions that are

- Top 100 ranked HEIs in the overall/ category-specific and/or domain-specific rankings in the latest list of NIRF published by the Ministry of Education
- Top 200 ranked HEIs under the governance of State/Union Territories governments in the latest

list of NIRF published by the Ministry of Education

- All remaining HEIs under the governance of the Government of India.

Indian campuses of foreign education institutions, foreign campuses of Indian education institutions and foreign education institutions are not covered under the scheme.

The criteria to select HEIs across India ensures equitable inter-state representation.

This list is updated using the latest NIRF ranking. As of now, **1,425 institutions**

are covered under PM-Vidyalaxmi and are eligible for PM-Vidyalaxmi education loans.

Steps for Availing Benefits

PM-Vidyalaxmi aims to make higher education more accessible by providing students with easy access to educational loans through a user-friendly digital platform. The scheme simplifies the loan process by enabling students to apply online, track their applications, and receive timely approvals and disbursements.

The scheme operates through a dedicated scheme portal that enables:

- Common loan applications
- Bank selection
- Tracking of application status
- Interest subvention requests
- Digital processing and transparency.

Once the loan is sanctioned and disbursed, eligible students can apply for interest subvention based on their family income. The subsidy amount is credited to the beneficiary's **PM Vidyalaxmi Digital Rupee App (CBDC Wallet)** and subsequently transferred to the education loan account.

Central Sector Interest Subsidy Scheme (CSIS) provides full interest subsidy during the moratorium period on loan availed for pursuing technical/professional courses in India. Students whose annual gross parental/ family income is up to ₹ 4.5 lakh are eligible under the scheme.

PM Vidyalaxmi Digital Rupee App (CBDC Wallet)



PM Vidyalaxmi Digital Rupee Wallet



- **PM VIDYALAXMI DIGITAL Rupee App** is a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) based dedicated mobile application for receiving education loan interest subvention benefits from Dept. Of Higher Education Ministry of Education, Gol.
- The application is available for download at **Play store** for android based mobiles and **App store** for i-phones.
- **Mobile number of beneficiaries** updated in PM-Vidyalaxmi portal by the financing Bank, against beneficiary claim should be used for downloading the application.
- Beneficiaries can activate their **PM VIDYALAXMI DIGITAL Rupee App** through **AADHAAR based authentication** process via **OTP** received in their AADHAAR registered Mobile number.
- **PM VIDYALAXMI DIGITAL Rupee App** is applicable for both **PM-VIDYALAXMI** and **CSIS** interest subvention schemes of Dept. Of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Gol.



Source: Ministry of Education

PM Vidyalaxmi Scheme

Steps for Loan Application

- Students Register and Create a Profile on the Vidyalaxmi Portal using Aadhaar ID
- Fill the Common Education Loan Application Form (CELAF)
- Select Maximum up to Three Banks
- Apply for Education Loan by Uploading Academic Documents, KYC Documents, Income Certificate, Entrance Exam Result, Admission Letter and Fee Structure
- Track Status of Education Loan Application
- Apply for Interest Subvention after Loan Sanction and Disbursement from the Banks



Source: Ministry of Education

Existing PM-USP CSIS is being administered through the PM-Vidyalaxmi portal and PM-Vidyalaxmi Digital Rupee Wallet. As of **July 22, 2026**, there are 35,777 active wallets enabling disbursement of subsidies worth ₹57.66 crore. This digital mechanism has helped streamline benefit delivery, reduce delays, and ensure that financial support reaches eligible students efficiently. For FY 2025-26, total claims pertaining to 2024-25, received at Canara Bank are 414844 amounting to ₹ 892.81 crores, which will significantly reduce repayment burden of the student beneficiaries. The portal also provides students with a platform to raise and monitor

grievances, ensuring transparency and timely resolution of disputes.

Impact of PM
Vidyalaxmi Scheme

PM-Vidyalaxmi is designed as a unified, fully digital and transparent education loan facilitation platform, enabling students to apply to banks for all kinds of education loans including PM-Vidyalaxmi loans, through a single portal and track their application status online. The dashboard provides real-time statistics on applications, approvals and processing stages.

In FY 2025-26, 645514 education loan applications were received on the portal across all education schemes. Out of these, 110667 applications were for PM-Vidyalaxmi loans.

Out of these, 70852 loans were sanctioned and 67728 loans have already been disbursed.

Gender Inclusion

PM-Vidyalaxmi ensures that all eligible meritorious students have access to financial support for higher education, regardless of their gender. Women and transgender students also stand to benefit from the scheme, making higher education more inclusive and accessible. By reducing financial barriers, the scheme helps students pursue quality education, improve their skills, and build better career prospects. This, in turn, increases their employability and encourages greater participation in the workforce, contributing to more inclusive social and economic development. In **FY 2025-26, 368742 men and 276764 women** applied for loans. **203438 loans** were sanctioned for men and **158629** for women.

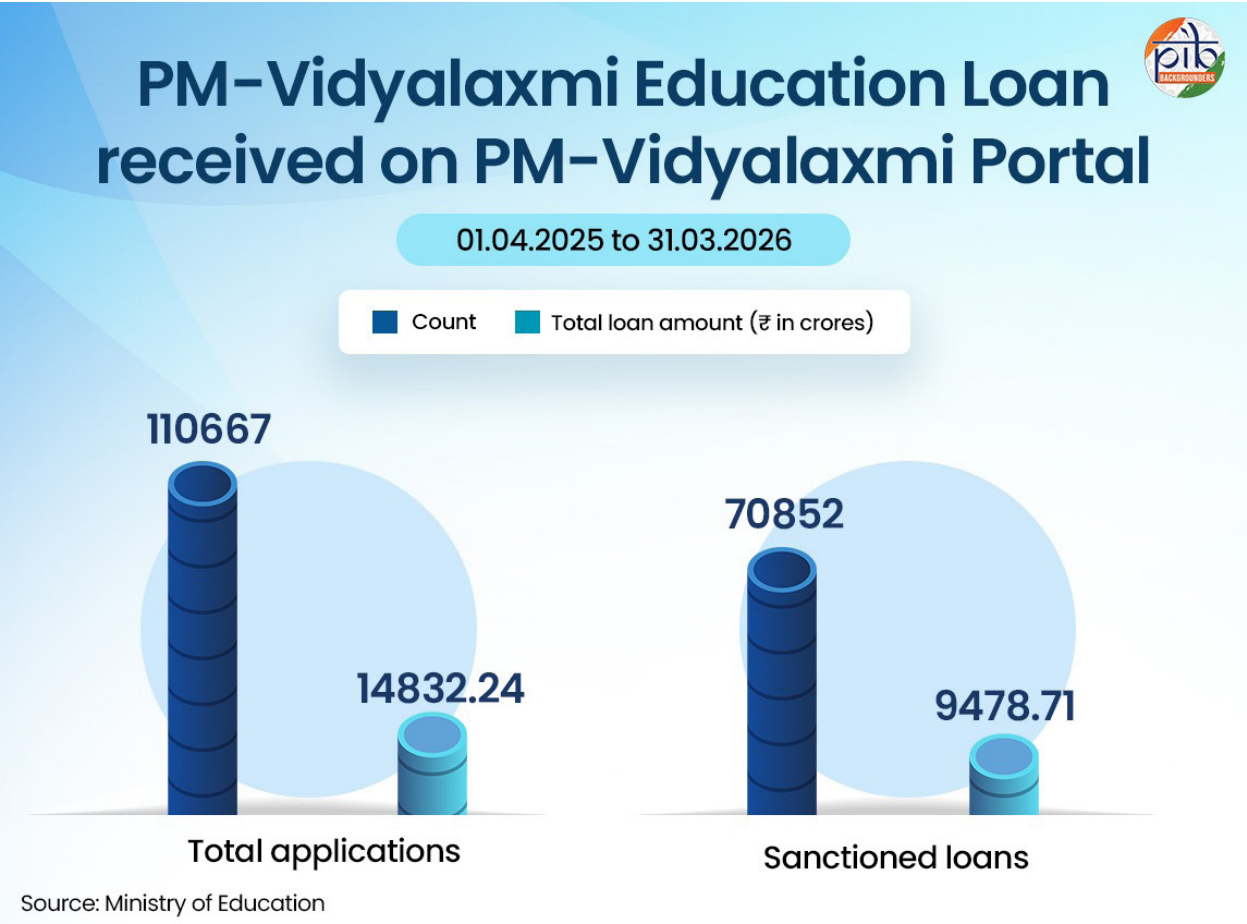
Empowering Underprivileged Students

The scheme facilitates the inclusion of students from financially weaker backgrounds into the mainstream education system, thereby enhancing overall inclusivity. Among the total

applications submitted, there were students from the Economically Weaker Section (EWS), General category, Non-Creamy Layer Other Backward Classes (NCOBC), Other Backward Classes (OBC), Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Persons with Disabilities (PwD). The involvement of applicants from all major social groups reflects the scheme's extensive reach and inclusive framework. This underscores the scheme's contribution to reducing financial barriers and promoting fair and equitable access to educational opportunities across different sections of society.

PM Vidyalaxmi Scheme:
A Step Towards
Educational Equity

The PM-Vidyalaxmi is a significant step towards expanding equitable access to higher education by providing collateral-free and guarantor-free education loans to meritorious students, complemented by targeted interest subvention for eligible families. By reducing financial barriers, the scheme enables greater participation in quality higher education, particularly for economically disadvantaged students. In doing so, it advances the objectives of the NEP 2020, contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive



and equitable quality education, and supports the development of a skilled and future-ready human capital base for the country.

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Catch the Rain: A Renewed National Call for Water Conservation

Published on: July 19, 2026

In the 135th episode of Mann Ki Baat on 28 June 2026, the Hon'ble Prime Minister called upon citizens to save every drop of rain and ensure that the momentum of water conservation continues across the country. Responding to this call, a focused nationwide campaign was undertaken from 4 July to 4 August 2026 to intensify rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, restoration of traditional water bodies, plantation activities, and public participation.

“Catch the Rain -Through this mission, we have to collectively save every drop of rainwater. My special appeal to save every single drop of rainwater collectively.” ~ Hon’ble PM. Shri. Narendra Modi

- Restore **Baolis, Wells and Traditional Water Bodies** and make them usable.
- Enhance Water Retention capacity by removing silt from **ponds and water reservoirs** in your vicinity for maximum Monsoon water conservation.
- Ensure maximum **tree plantation to enhance green coverage** in water retention areas.

Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari 1.0 (6 September 2024)

To further strengthen community participation in water conservation,



Tasks we have to perform:

- Adopt **Rain Water Harvesting** system in every home, society & workplace.
- Install **Recharge Pit & Shaft** at appropriate places & repair the unused borewells to enable groundwater recharge.

Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari launched on 6th September 2024 in Surat, Gujarat, graced by Hon'ble Prime Minister virtually, reflecting his unwavering resolve to make water conservation a national priority.

Guided by the principles of Community, CSR, and Cost (3Cs), the initiative mobilized community participation, institutional support, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions, and convergence with ongoing government schemes to accelerate water conservation efforts. The initiative focuses on constructing low-cost groundwater recharge and water storage structures, revival of defunct borewells, and adoption of scientifically designed, locally appropriate solutions through a Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach.

Implemented from 1 April 2024 to 31 May 2025, **JSJB 1.0 surpassed its target of constructing at least 10 lakh groundwater recharge structures, with more than 27 lakh artificial recharge structures reported across the country.**

Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari 2.0 (2025)

Building on the success, **JSJB 2.0** was launched on 1 June 2025 with a special focus on accelerating groundwater recharge in Over-Exploited and Critical districts through low-cost, hyper-local interventions.

Against the target of constructing at least one crore groundwater recharge structures by **31 May 2026, more than 1.5 crore structures have been reported nationwide**, exceeding the target

by over 50 percent. These reported structures are presently undergoing physical verification and field validation.

Recognizing outstanding contributions under JSJB 1.0, the Government honoured exemplary performers during the **6th National Water Awards** held in November 2025.

Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari: Catch the Rain (2026)

Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari: Catch the Rain (JSJB: CTR) was launched on 1st June 2026 enhancing the scope of the Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari (JSJB) initiative and simultaneously integrating it with the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain (JSA: CTR) campaign.

With renewed emphasis on rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, water storage, and community participation, the campaign aims to transform every rainfall event into an opportunity for water conservation. It promotes locally appropriate, low-cost interventions and strengthens climate resilience through sustainable water management.



The campaign leverages convergence with several Central and State Government schemes, including:

- Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission – Gramin (VB-G RAM-G)
- Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) under PMKSY



- Repair, Renovation and Restoration (RRR) of Water Bodies under PMKSY
- CAMPA
- Finance Commission Grants
- State Government Schemes

At its core, JSJB: CTR is driven by Jan Bhagidari, mobilizing Panchayati Raj Institutions, Urban Local Bodies, women's groups, youth, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and local communities to actively participate in water conservation efforts.

Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain (JSA: CTR)

Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain

(JSA: CTR) was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on **World Water Day** (22 March 2021) with the theme **"Catch the Rain, where it falls, when it falls."**

The campaign builds on the success of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan 2019, which was implemented in 1,592 water-stressed blocks across 256 districts and promoted rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, watershed development, rejuvenation of water bodies, and afforestation through a Jan Andolan approach. Since then, the campaign has been implemented annually with evolving themes and focus areas.

2021 – Catch the Rain, Where It Falls, When It Falls.

- Rainwater harvesting and water conservation
- Geo-tagging of water bodies
- Scientific water conservation planning
- Jal Shakti Kendras and awareness activities

2022 – Expanding Water Conservation Activities

- Restoration of traditional water bodies
- Groundwater recharge and watershed development
- Wetland and river rejuvenation
- Spring-shed development and catchment protection

2023 – Source Sustainability for Drinking Water

- Focus on 150 water-stressed districts
- Strengthening drinking water sources
- Groundwater recharge and source sustainability
- Field monitoring and community participation

2024 – Nari Shakti se Jal Shakti

- Women-led water conservation initiatives
- Desilting and cleaning of water bodies
- Revival of abandoned borewells for recharge
- Afforestation and rejuvenation of local water resources

Women-led initiatives across the country demonstrated how community leadership can strengthen water security. Their contributions continue to be recognized through the Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman, celebrating exemplary efforts in water conservation, sanitation, and hygiene.

Jal Shakti Kendras (JSKs)

A key institutional component of the campaign is the establishment of Jal Shakti Kendras (JSKs) in districts across the country. These centres serve as knowledge and facilitation



hubs for water conservation. They disseminate information on water harvesting techniques, provide technical guidance to local communities and district administrations, and support planning and implementation of water conservation activities.

From Rainwater Harvesting to Rural Resilience

Under the visionary leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, water conservation has emerged as a national priority and a people's movement. Through initiatives such as the Catch the Rain and Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari, the Government has successfully transformed water conservation from a sectoral programme into a nationwide Jan Andolan driven by community participation, scientific planning, and convergence of resources.

As India advances towards the vision of Viksit Bharat, sustained efforts in rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, restoration of water bodies, and efficient water use will remain critical for strengthening agriculture, supporting rural livelihoods, enhancing climate resilience, and securing water resources for future generations.

By promoting scientific planning, local ownership, and collective action, the campaign is creating resilient water assets across rural India. As climate variability and water demand continue to increase, conserving every drop of rainwater remains essential for ensuring water security. It will further strengthen agriculture and support sustainable rural development.

The Prime Minister's consistent emphasis on conserving every drop of water, reflected in platforms such as Mann Ki Baat, has inspired citizens, institutions, and governments at all levels to work collectively towards water security.

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Strengthening India's Toy Ecosystem

From Local Craftsmanship to Global Markets

Published on: July 7, 2026

India's toy industry reflects a unique blend of cultural heritage, innovation, and manufacturing growth. With a legacy spanning thousands of years, traditional toys continue to support artisans, preserve craftsmanship, and sustain livelihoods. Strong domestic demand, driven by a young population, rising incomes, and growing preference for educational toys, is creating new opportunities. Government initiatives such as the National Action Plan for Toys, international exhibitions, ODOP, have strengthened domestic manufacturing. Measures promoting GI-tagged products and indigenous toys have enhanced global competitiveness and market access. As a result, toy exports have grown significantly, employment has increased, and India has emerged as a net exporter of toys. The sector is steadily positioning itself as a global hub for quality and culturally rooted toys.

India's Toy Industry: From Origins to Opportunity

India's toy industry is emerging as a vibrant contributor to manufacturing, exports, and innovation. Supported by favourable demographics, evolving consumer preferences, and sustained policy support, the sector is witnessing renewed momentum. Growing global demand for safe, sustainable, and educational toys has created new opportunities for Indian manufacturers, artisans, and entrepreneurs. Building on a rich heritage of craftsmanship, the industry is steadily strengthening its position in domestic and global markets.

From the clay carts of the Indus Valley Civilization to modern educational and

electronic toys, India's tradition of toys spans nearly 5,000 years. This rich legacy reflects the country's enduring culture of creativity, learning, and craftsmanship. Besides, excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro reveal a vibrant tradition of toy-making showcasing the ingenuity of ancient India. Handcrafted wooden figurines were once produced in village workshops across the country. Colourful dolls inspired by the Ramayana and Mahabharata also became part of this tradition. Together, they connected children with India's rich heritage and diverse cultural traditions.

Today, traditional craftsmanship is being complemented by modern technology, design, and entrepreneurship. This transformation is positioning India as an emerging hub for quality toy manufacturing.

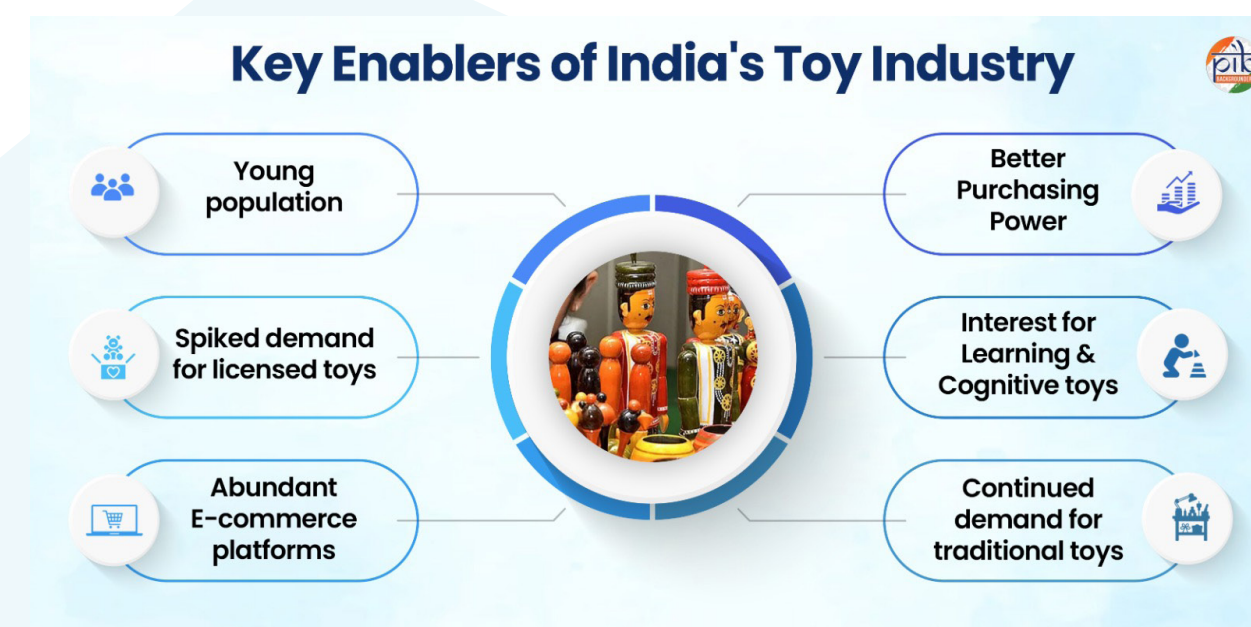
Emerging Opportunities in India's Toy Industry

On the supply side, the **rapid expansion of e-commerce platforms** has improved product accessibility and expanded market reach for manufacturers. On the demand side, India's rich tradition of toy-making provides a unique advantage, with traditional toys continuing to attract both domestic and international buyers. Several factors are strengthening the growth prospects of India's toy industry.

- A large and growing **consumer base is a key driver**. With India's population exceeding 1.4 billion, a significant share of which is below the age of 25. **Rising incomes and**

improving purchasing power are further boosting spending on toys.

- **Rapid urbanisation and changing lifestyles** are also driving demand for modern, innovative and licensed products.
- Parents are increasingly opting for **educational, skill-based and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) toys** that support learning and cognitive development.
- **Technology and digitalisation** are creating new opportunities for the sector. Smart toys incorporating technologies such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality and virtual reality are gaining popularity among tech-savvy consumers.



Rising Exports, Stronger Competitiveness

India's toy industry has recorded significant progress in international trade over the past decade, reflecting its growing competitiveness and manufacturing capabilities.

Overall exports of toys (HSN 9503, 9504 & 9505) were US\$152.7 million in 2017-18. It rose to US\$ 384.7 million in

2025-26, **reflecting a growth of over 151.9%**. The most significant expansion was seen in Electronic & Non-Electronic Toys (HSN 9503). **The exports grew by nearly 160%**, from US\$ 77.35 million to US\$ 200.89 million during the same period. The United States (US) emerged as the leading export destination, **with shipments more than quadrupling**, from US\$ 26.7 million to about US\$ 111.9 million. Other key markets included the United Kingdom, Poland, the Netherlands and Germany.

Exports of video **game consoles, machines and others** (HSN 9504) **nearly tripled**. It expanded from US\$ 15.68 million in 2017-18 to US\$ 46.75 million in 2025-26, reflecting growing global demand for Indian-made gaming and recreational products. Major destinations included the UAE, Russia, France and the United Kingdom, with the US remaining the largest market.

Similarly, **exports of festive, carnival or other entertainment articles** (HSN 9505) **increased by nearly 130%**, from US\$ 59.69 million in 2017-18 to US\$ 137.03 million in 2025-26. The United States, Germany, the **United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Sweden** were among the leading destinations for these products. This highlights India's growing presence in global festive and entertainment goods markets.

On the import side, while video game consoles and festive and entertainment articles recorded moderate growth, **imports of traditional and educational toys declined sharply by 66%**. This decline significantly strengthened

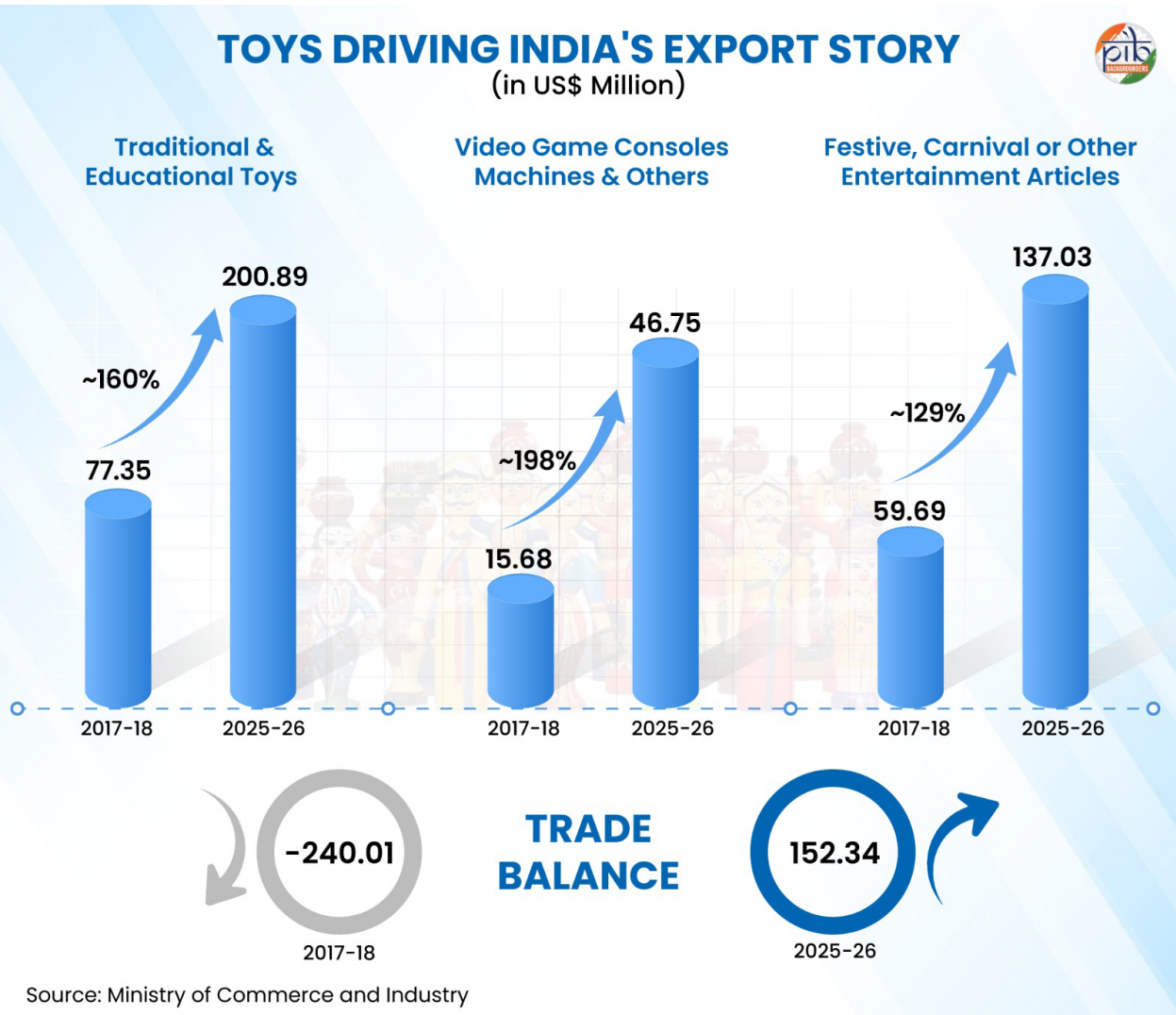
domestic manufacturing capabilities of the sector. As a result, India achieved a **trade surplus of US\$ 152 million in 2025-26** across key toy categories (HSN 9503, 9504, and 9505). This marks a significant improvement from the trade deficit of US\$ 213.01 million recorded in 2017-18, when imports exceeded exports.

Overall, these developments highlight the toy industry's growing contribution to manufacturing, employment, and economic development.

Economic Impact of India's Toy Industry

Beyond creating products for children, the toy industry is emerging as an important contributor to India's economy. The sector enables entrepreneurship across rural and urban areas and generates livelihood opportunities for artisans, manufacturers, traders, and small businesses. It also promotes economic participation among women and socio-economically diverse groups. The government's focus on local manufacturing and entrepreneurship has further enhanced the sector's economic contribution.

Employment in Games and Toys (NIC Code 324) more than doubled, rising from 8,685 in 2018-19 to 17,693 in 2023-24. This highlights the sector's potential



Trade surplus, with exports exceeding imports, has strengthened domestic manufacturing, supported economic growth, and boosted foreign exchange earnings.

to create productive employment while supporting local enterprise development across the country.

Government Initiatives Shaping the Future of Toy Industry

Recognizing the sector’s economic and cultural significance, the government has introduced several initiatives to strengthen domestic manufacturing and promote indigenous toys. These efforts are helping create a vibrant environment that promotes innovation, quality, and global market presence.

National Action Plan for Toys (NAPT), 2020

NAPT was formulated to **promote the design of toys based on Indian values, culture, and history**. It encourages the use of toys as a learning resource. The initiative **monitors the quality of toys and restricts imports of sub-standard and unsafe products**. Furthermore, it also promotes indigenous toy clusters, boosts local manufacturing, and incentivises toy manufacturers.

A major component of this strategy was the introduction of the **Quality Control Order (QCO) for Toys in 2020**. The

QCO was implemented in response to concerns regarding the quality and safety of imported toys.

BIS has granted 1786 licenses to domestic manufacturers and 56 licenses to foreign manufacturers for safety of toys as per IS 9873/IS 15644 as in May 2026.

- It mandated compliance with Indian safety standards and made **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) certification compulsory** for both domestic and foreign manufacturers.
- It exempts products manufactured and sold by artisans registered with the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles.
- The exemption was also extended to registered proprietors and authorised users of products bearing a Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

The measure aimed in ensuring that toys sold in India meet prescribed physical, chemical, and electrical safety requirements. The implementation of QCO also helped create a level playing field for domestic manufacturers.

Under this policy framework, the **Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) tariff on toys increased from 20% to 60% in 2020. It further rose to 70% in 2023. Further, the tariff on Parts of Electronic Toys (HS 95030091) revised as 20% in the Union Budget F.Y. 2025-26**. The MFN tariff is the standard customs duty applied to imports from most WTO trading partners. **The increased tariffs reduce the price advantage of imported toys**, encouraging domestic manufacturing and investment.

The measure supports local employment, strengthens the toy industry, and helps improve India's trade balance.

Toy Biz International B2B Exhibition

The exhibition provides a platform for toy manufacturers to showcase their products to domestic and international buyers. As **one of the largest toy trade exhibitions in the country**, it facilitates business networking. It also enables direct interactions between manufacturers, toy dealers, and potential buyers from across the world. It creates opportunities for market expansion and promotes India’s toy industry in global markets.

The Exhibition took place from 4-7 July,2026 in New Delhi.

Toycathon

Launched in 2021, Toycathon supports the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat. It encourages collaborative development of innovative toys and games by students,

To strengthen the electronic toy segment, the Government also organised the **Electronic Toy Hackathon (e-Toycathon)** for the first time in 2025. The initiative showcased innovative and educational electronic toys that promote creativity, learning and child development.

teachers, designers, experts, and start-ups. The initiative promotes designs inspired by Indian culture, heritage, local folklore, heroes, and value systems.

e-Toys Lab

The e-Toys Lab, established by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) at C-DAC, Noida, aims to strengthen India’s indigenous electronic toy industry. **It provides hands-on training in designing and developing electronic toys, prototype**

development, and product testing. Selected young engineers, including candidates from SC/ST and North Eastern Region backgrounds, undergo one year of structured training.

The programme combines six months of research at the e-Toys Lab with **six months of industry training.** By integrating electronics and information technology with toy manufacturing, it promotes innovation, entrepreneurship, and the development of technology-driven toys.

Manak Manthan

In April 2026, BIS organized a Manak Manthan on IS 9873 (Part 1):2025. It focused on the **mechanical and physical safety requirements for toys.** It is a BIS initiative aimed at promoting the adoption of Indian Standards across industries. The programme sought to create awareness among toy manufacturers and other stakeholders. This encourages the production of safer, high-quality, and reliable toys for children.

ODOP (One District, One Product)

The ODOP initiative aims to **promote district-specific products by identifying, branding, and supporting unique products from each district of the country.** The initiative seeks to boost manufacturing, exports, and employment while fostering balanced

regional development. It also encourages new ideas, technology adoption, and competitiveness in domestic and international markets.

Under the initiative, several traditional and indigenous toy products have also been identified. It adopts a win-win approach by encouraging product diversification, branding, packaging, skill development, and quality standardisation. It also facilitates market access through e-commerce, international expos, and awareness of buyer requirements and export certifications. In addition, the initiative assists in funding, marketing, technology upgradation and scheme awareness.

Geographical Indication (GI) Tagged Toys

Several traditional Indian toys have received GI status, recognizing their unique craftsmanship and regional identity. GI tagging helps preserve centuries-old traditions while creating new opportunities for artisans through greater visibility and market access. **GI-tagged products benefit from legal protection that recognizes their unique qualities and reputation linked to a specific geographical region.** This protection enhances their market value, prevents unauthorized use and supports local producers. It also helps in preserving traditional knowledge and cultural heritage while promoting rural economic development. GI Tagged toys

include Channapatna Toys and dolls of Karnataka, Leather Toys of Indore, Madhya Pradesh, Thanjavur Doll of Tamil Nadu, etc.

Trade and Market Development

GST reduction



The reduction of GST on toys from 12% to 5% has made toys more affordable and accessible for consumers.

It encourages early childhood learning through play and promotes the wider adoption of educational and developmental toys. The measure also benefits domestic manufacturers and MSMEs by stimulating demand in the toy market.

Free Trade Agreements (FTA)



India has signed trade agreements such as the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), and India-European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement, India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement, and India-United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. Under these agreements, partner countries provide **zero-duty market access for exports of Indian toys.**

Districts as Export Hubs (DEH)

The DEH initiative aims to transform districts into export growth centres by leveraging their unique products, skills, and resources. It involves State Export Promotion Committees (SEPC) and District Export Promotion Committees (DEPC) as key stakeholders. These committees have been constituted in 36 States/UT and seek to strengthen India's export and promote balanced inclusive growth.



The initiative has identified products and services with export potential in all districts across the country, including GI products, agricultural clusters, and toy clusters. **More than 10 districts have been identified with toy and doll export potential.** This leverages each district's export potential by strengthening local industries, facilitating market linkages, driving employment and economic development.

India's Toy Industry: Looking Ahead

India's toy industry is successfully blending its rich cultural heritage with modern advancements, emerging as a vibrant contributor to manufacturing, exports and employment. Supported by strategic policy interventions and initiatives promoting indigenous

production, the sector has transitioned from import dependence to global competitiveness.

In doing so, India’s toy industry is strengthening its position in global markets while continuing to preserve the country’s unique legacy of play.

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Poshan Tracker

India's Real-Time Nutrition Monitoring Platform

Published on: July 8, 2026



Poshan Tracker: Enabling Technology- Driven Nutrition Governance

POSHAN Abhiyaan (Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment) is India's flagship National Nutrition Mission focused on improving nutrition outcomes through convergence, technology and community mobilisation. Launched on March 8, 2018, it is the Government of India's flagship multi-ministerial mission that works under a unified framework with time-bound targets, digital monitoring and a Jan Andolan approach. Anchored in the **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD)**, the mission has transformed nutrition

from a welfare concern into a national development priority.

Later, under Budget 2021-22, three nutrition related schemes - Poshan Abhiyan, Anganwadi Services and Scheme for Adolescent Girls were consolidated under **Mission Poshan 2.0** (Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0).

Poshan Tracker is a mobile-based governance application that forms the digital backbone of POSHAN Abhiyaan. It serves as the primary governance tool to strengthen digital monitoring under the Abhiyaan. It was launched in **March 2021** through the **MoWCD** and the **National e-Governance Division (NeGD)**, under **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0**. It enables near real-

time monitoring of nutrition and service delivery under Anganwadi Services through a unified digital platform.

Poshan Tracker captures data on **Anganwadi infrastructure, service delivery, beneficiary coverage, and growth monitoring**. Smartphones and internet connectivity enable seamless data entry by Anganwadi Workers. Real-time dashboards support transparent and evidence-based decision-making at district, state, and national levels. Poshan Tracker is working as an aid to Anganwadi Workers and is being leveraged for dynamic identification of stunting, wasting, and under-weight prevalence among children and last-mile tracking of nutrition service delivery.

Advanced Features of Poshan Tracker

Before Poshan Tracker, Anganwadi Workers had to maintain 11 manual registers. This delayed decision-making and created service gaps. Home visits depended largely on individual knowledge and experience, leading to inconsistent assessments. There was also no beneficiary authentication system or integration with state and central schemes, reducing efficiency in addressing malnutrition.

Poshan Tracker addressed these gaps through several technology-enabled features:

- **Aadhaar-Based Verification:** Prevents leakages, eliminates ghost entries and ensures benefit delivery only to registered beneficiaries.
- **Facial Recognition System (FRS):** Integrated for last-mile tracking and service delivery authenticity.
- **IT-Enabled Home Visit Scheduler:** Supports 23 structured home visits with auto-scheduling and age-appropriate counselling prompts. These include 4 visits during pregnancy, 4 in the first postpartum month, 7 from 2 months to 1 year, 5 from 1-2 years, and 3 from 2-3 years.
- **ECCE Content Delivery:** Provides 249 videos, 190 voice notes, and

Did You Know?



The Government of India's **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0** integrated programme addresses malnutrition and promotes health, wellness, and immunity. The restructured Mission Integrates **Nutrition Support for children, pregnant women & lactating mothers and adolescent girls; Early Childhood Care and Education (3-6 years)** and early stimulation for (0-3 years) and **Anganwadi Infrastructure including upgradation of centres into Saksham Anganwadi**. The Saksham Anganwadi initiative is concerned with improving service quality through upgradation of existing Anganwadi Centres with modern amenities such as LED screens, water purifiers, smart learning aids, and Poshan Vatikas (nutri-gardens).

Did You Know?

Aadharshila, launched in March 2024, is the National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for children aged 3-6 years. Implemented through Anganwadi Centres, it promotes play-based learning using toys, art, music, and storytelling. Meaning "foundation stone," Aadharshila supports children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development and prepares them for Grade 1.



159 ECCE activity PDFs based on Aadharshila for children aged 3–6 years.

- **Poshan Calculator:** Uses WHO Child Growth Standards to assess height, weight, age and gender, classifying children across stunting, underweight, wasting, SAM/MAM and overweight/obesity for standardised, accurate growth monitoring.
- **Poshan Helpline:** Toll-free number 1515 for grievance registration.
- **Smartphone and Connectivity:** All AWWs equipped with smartphones; internet connectivity charges at ₹2,000 per annum per AWW. Growth

Monitoring Devices (GMDs) provided at each AWC.

These advanced features have enhanced the efficiency, consistency, and responsiveness of nutrition interventions at the grassroots level.

Tracking Progress Towards a Well-Nourished India

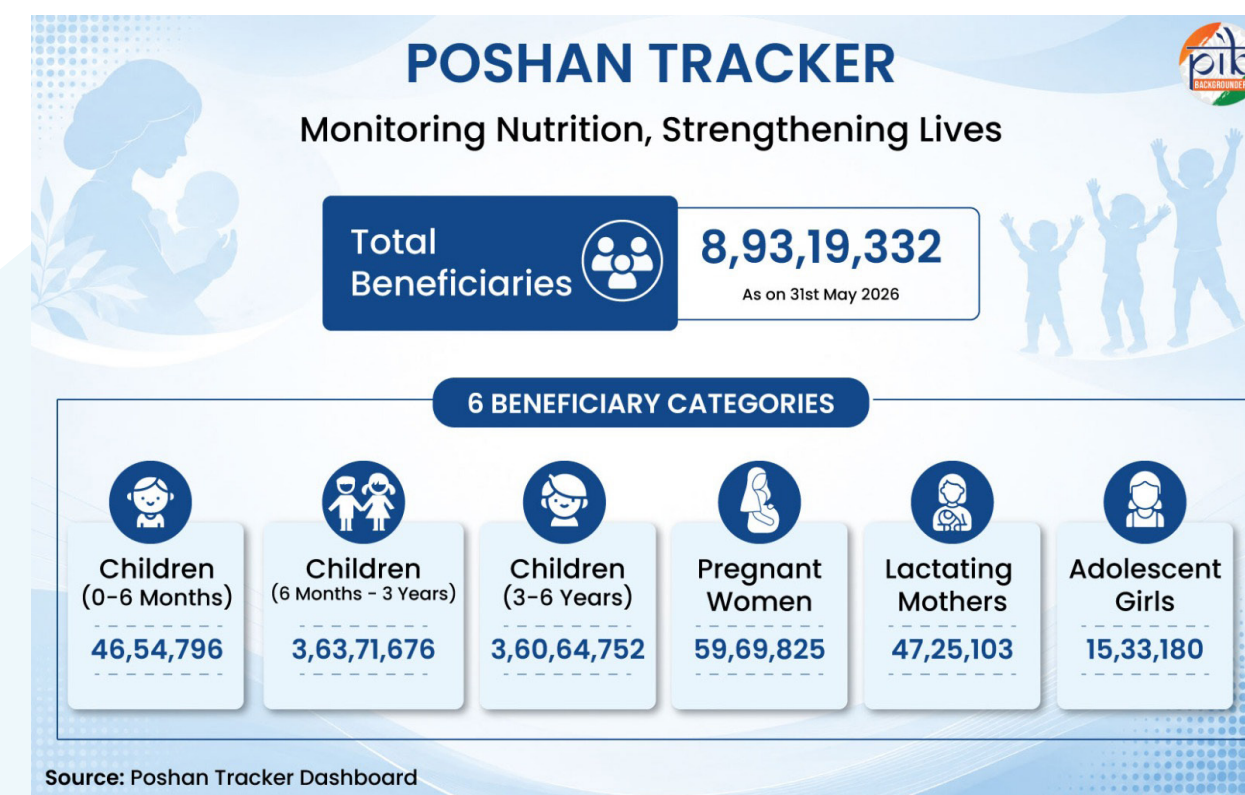
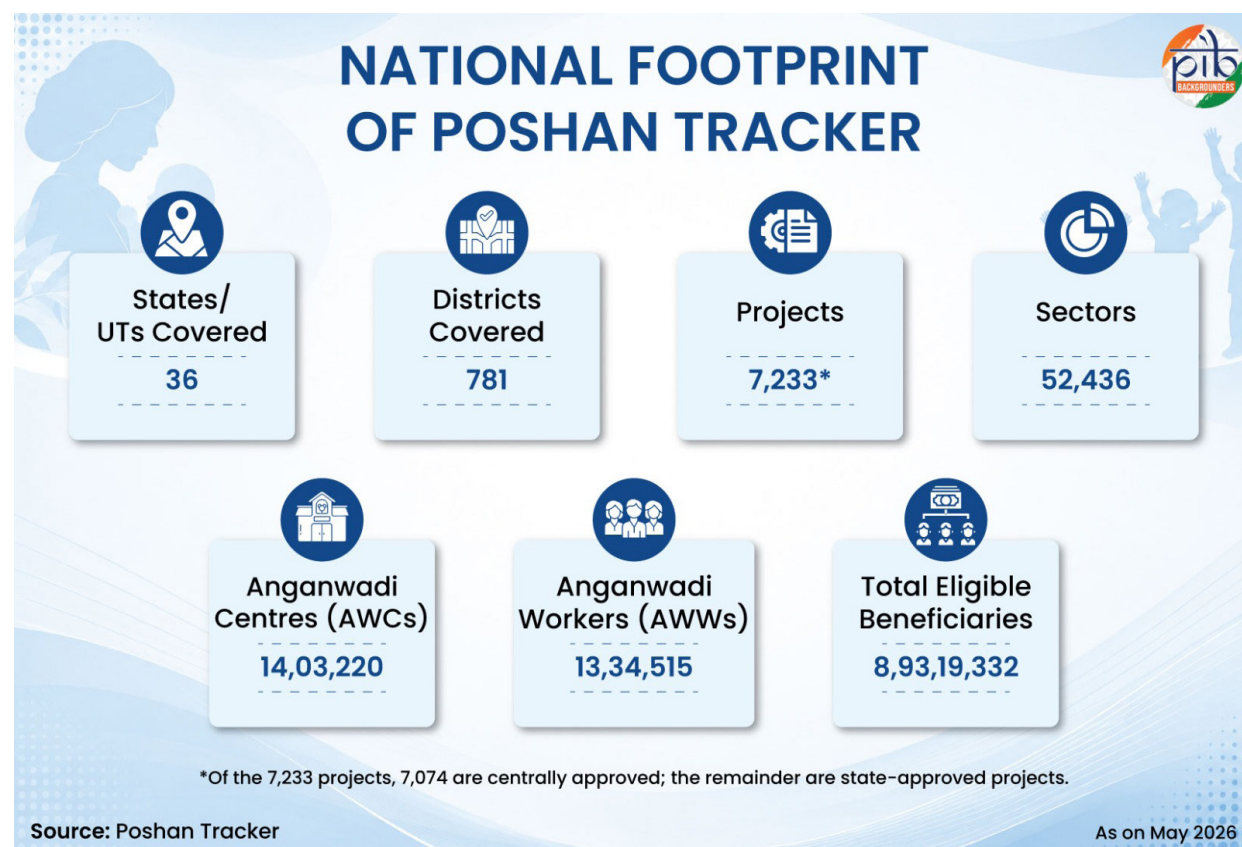
The Poshan Tracker was deployed in a phased manner, starting with pilot projects before expanding nationwide. Utilizing cloud infrastructure, the platform efficiently manages large data volumes and concurrent users, ensuring

scalability. Advanced dashboards offer real-time visual insights, allowing stakeholders to address nutrition gaps promptly. A **“Train the Trainer”** model, supported by state-level coordinators and regular virtual interactions, facilitates ongoing training. Continuous supervision and time-bound directives ensure compliance.

- As of May 2026, the Government of India has achieved nationwide coverage of Poshan Tracker **across all 28 States and 8 Union Territories**.
- As of May 2026, the Poshan Tracker registered over **8.93 crore beneficiaries**. The platform covers six beneficiary categories across the life cycle, from early childhood and adolescence to pregnancy

and motherhood, reflecting the comprehensive and inclusive approach of Poshan Abhiyaan.

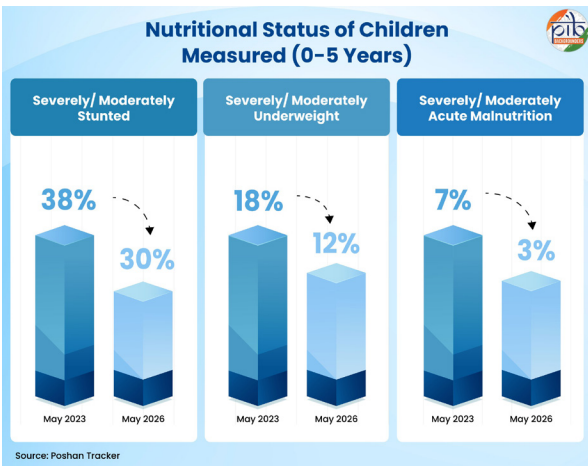
- Poshan Tracker enables dynamic monitoring of the **Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP)** under Anganwadi Services. As per the May 2026 data, over 5.5 crore beneficiaries received SNP for at least 15 days, while 5.17 crore beneficiaries received SNP for at least 21 days.
- As of May 2026, Poshan Tracker maintained a live monthly database tracking nutrition indicator for over **7.7 crore children using verified Aadhaar-authenticated data**. The platform enables real-time dashboards, heat maps, and evidence-based policymaking.



- The tracker also enabled growth monitoring for over **6.3 crore children aged 0–5 years**, covering nearly 94% of registered beneficiaries as of May 2026. The application tracks stunting, underweight, wasting (SAM/MAM), and overweight/obesity indicators.
- delivery. It transformed paper-based reporting into real-time, evidence-driven nutrition governance. The platform strengthens transparent and accountable decision-making through timely, ground-level data. **The World Health Organization (WHO)** cited it as an

Did You Know?

The Ministry of Women and Child Development implements the **Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP)** under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme to improve the nutritional status of women and children. The programme covers children aged 6 months to 6 years, pregnant women, lactating mothers, and adolescent girls from NE States and Aspirational Districts aged 14-18 years.



Poshan Tracker: A Digital India Success Story

Poshan Tracker demonstrates the Government's successful use of technology for large-scale public service

exemplary nutrition data ecosystem. **The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** appreciated its simplicity and beneficiary tracking features for AWWs. In **2023**, Poshan Tracker was showcased at the **G20 Ministerial Conference on Women Empowerment**. The Chair's Statement recognised its role in nutrition monitoring and ECCE delivery. In April **2025**, POSHAN tracker received the **Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration**. Also, Poshan Tracker won the National Award for e-Governance (Gold) at the 27th National Conference on e-Governance in September 2024. Poshan Tracker reflects India's growing digital capability



under the **Digital India** vision and will remain central to building a well-nourished **Viksit Bharat**.

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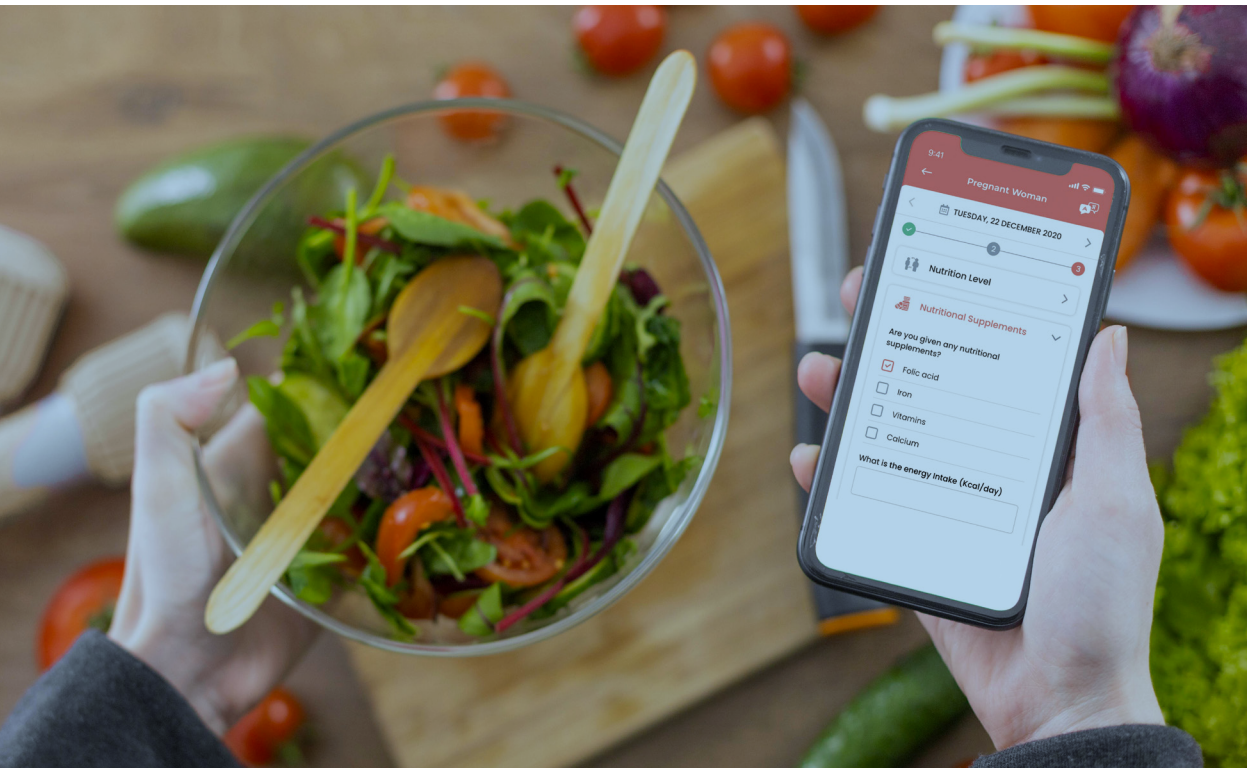
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A hand is shown holding several small, yellow, oval-shaped capsules. In the background, there are several white plastic bottles of different sizes, some with blue or orange caps, and a blister pack of white capsules. Two glasses, one containing a green smoothie and the other an orange juice, are also visible. The entire scene is set against a background of geometric shapes in shades of blue and white.

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Affordable Nutrition for Every Indian: Jan Aushadhi Nutraceuticals

Published on: July 30, 2026

In an increasingly health-conscious India, nutraceuticals have gained recognition as an essential part of overall well-being. Be it for school-going children or senior citizens, dietary supplements, herbal products that include vitamins & minerals, herbs & botanicals, probiotics, etc., have found wide acceptance. Yet, affordability continues to be a challenge for millions of families seeking nutritional supplements. The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana

(PMBJP) is addressing this gap with its nutraceutical basket. From nutrition bars to disease-specific formulations, the Jan Aushadhi nutraceuticals Basket is making nutrition supplements more accessible to people across India.

Nutrition for Diverse Needs

The Jan Aushadhi portfolio is designed to respond to the varied needs of young,

old, women, and people with different health issues. The range includes protein supplements, immunity products, nutritional foods and specialised formulations for individuals with specific dietary requirements.

Manufactured in accordance with prescribed quality standards and offered at affordable prices, these products aim to make regular nutritional support more accessible without placing an undue burden on household budgets.

Convenient Nutrition for Active Lifestyles

Nutrient-dense Jan Aushadhi Protein Bar & Jan Aushadhi Immunity Bar offer a portable source of nourishment for children, working professionals and fitness enthusiasts. Available in chocolate flavour in a 35-gram pack, protein bar provides a convenient way to supplement daily protein intake while on the go. Enriched with Immunity-Supporting Ingredients tasty Immunity Bar provides energy and strengthens body's protective barriers. These nutrition bars offer an economical alternative for consumers craving a quick snack but averse to junk food.

For a more substantial protein supplement, 100% Whey Protein Powder & Jan Aushadhi Protein Powder support daily protein intake and muscle recovery,

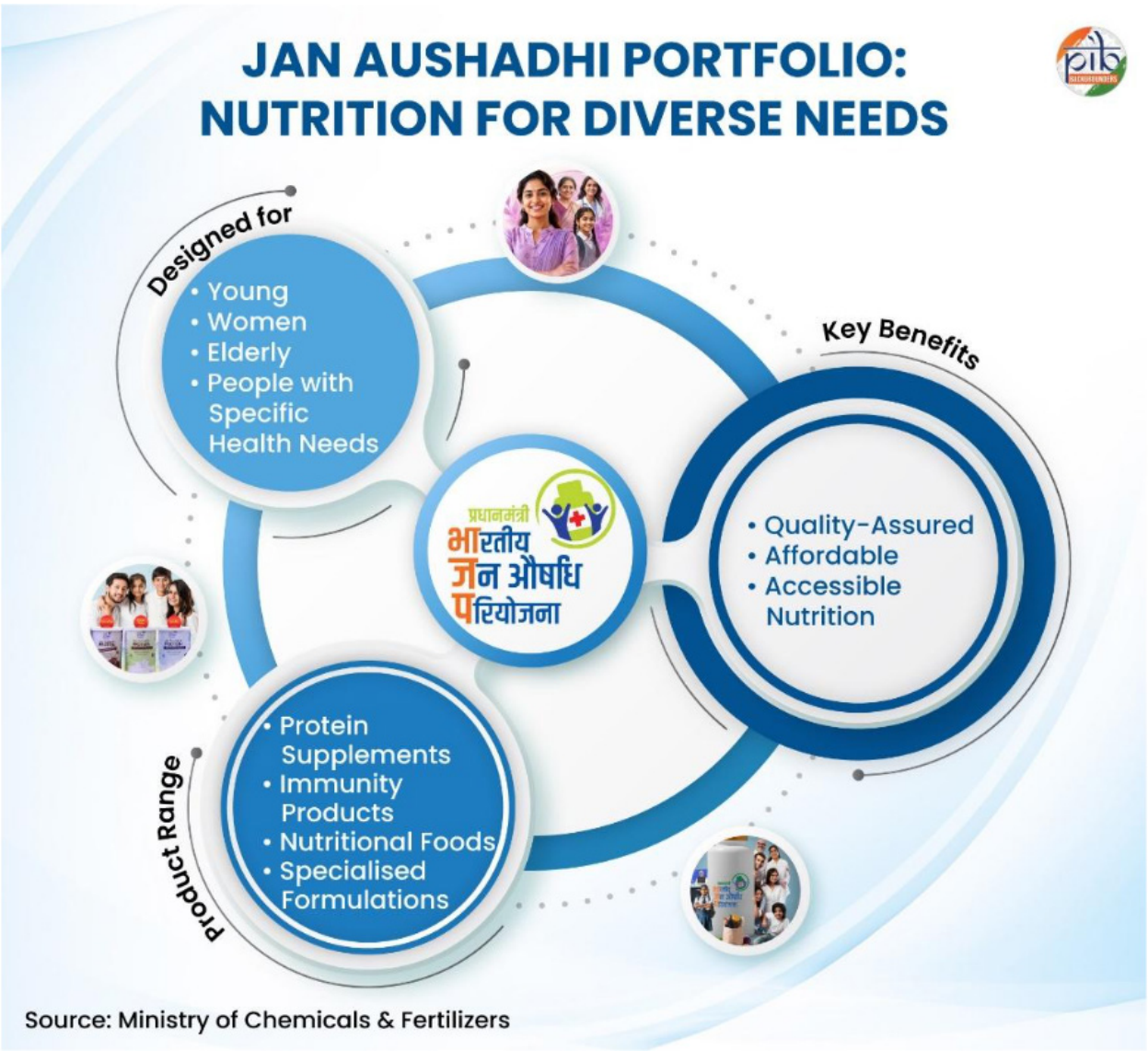
making it suitable for fitness enthusiasts. Protein Powder is available in Vanilla and Kesar Pista flavours, giving consumers greater choice.

Supporting Women's Nutritional Needs

Women have distinct nutritional requirements at different stages of life. Jan Aushadhi Women Protein Boost is formulated to support daily protein intake, energy levels, and healthy bones and muscles. Available in chocolate and vanilla flavours, the 250-gram pack is priced at ₹204.66. By offering specialised nutrition at affordable rates, this product seeks to make it easier for more women to incorporate nutritional supplementation into their daily routines.

Nutrition Designed for Specific Health Needs

For individuals managing specific health conditions such as Diabetes, Kidney problems etc, dietary requirements can be more complex. Diabetes Care Protein Powder from JanAushadhi complements the nutritional requirements of people living with diabetes. For individuals with kidney-related conditions, Renal Care Protein Powder is available in both Low Protein and High Protein variants, allowing the choice of formulation to be guided by medical advice and individual dietary needs.



Jan Aushadhi Poshan: Everyday Nutrition for Families

For affordable everyday nutritional support for everyone in the family, the Jan Aushadhi Poshan range offers malt-based nutritional food enriched with essential vitamins and minerals.

Available in regular malt and cocoa variants, the range includes:

- Malt Based Food, 500 g: ₹160.17

- Malt Based Food with Cocoa, 500 g: ₹164.62
- Malt Based Food with Cocoa Sachet, 30 g: ₹8.90

The multiple pack sizes offer flexibility for different consumption needs and budgets. Easy to prepare and suitable for regular consumption, the Poshan range provides families with an accessible nutritional supplement for everyday use.

Making Quality Nutrition More Accessible



These products highlight the growing importance of nutrition as part of a broader approach to health management. While specialised nutritional products should be used in accordance with professional medical and dietary guidance, affordable access can help make appropriate nutritional support more attainable for families. For overall well-being, lifestyle choices that include quality nutrition cannot be stressed more. Families are increasingly opting to make healthy choices when it comes to food and nutrition supplements. By offering affordable alternatives to expensive branded nutrition supplements through the Jan Aushadhi Kendra network, PMBJP is ensuring that quality nutritional support is not limited by income.

Affordable medicines remain the core of PMBJP, but nutrition is an essential part of the same larger health journey.

Whether it is a student seeking convenient nourishment, a working professional managing a demanding routine, a homemaker supporting family nutrition, a senior citizen with specific dietary needs or an individual managing a health condition, access to appropriate nutrition can play an important role in supporting well-being.

By combining quality, affordability and accessibility, the Jan Aushadhi nutraceutical range is helping make nutrition a more attainable choice for Indian families reinforcing the vision of "Quality Healthcare and Nutrition for All."

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From Playrooms to Global Markets: India's Toy Story at Toy Biz 2026

Published on: July 7, 2026



Where Imagination Meets Industry



The 17th Toy Biz International B2B Expo. welcomed another vibrant day at Bharat Mandapam. There brightly coloured puzzles, STEM kits, construction vehicles and educational toys greeted visitors streaming into the exhibition halls. Buyers, retailers, manufacturers and entrepreneurs moved from one stall to another, exploring products and exchanging ideas across the venue.

From early business meetings to live product demonstrations, the day unfolded at an energetic pace. School representatives examined learning aids, overseas buyers discussed export

opportunities, while entrepreneurs enthusiastically showcased their latest innovations. Conversations revolved around product design, manufacturing, exports and innovation, highlighting the growing diversity of India's toy industry.

The message is simple: toys are no longer viewed merely as products for play. Across the venue, it was evident that toys have emerged as tools for learning, creativity and innovation. This reflects Government's continued emphasis on strengthening domestic manufacturing, encouraging quality production and building globally competitive Indian brands. Ideas were not just displayed; they were demonstrated, discussed and transformed into products designed for classrooms, homes and markets across the world.

It is through this spirit of innovation and enterprise that the exhibition evolves beyond a conventional trade fair. Bringing together manufacturers, startups, educators, designers, retailers and exporters from across India and abroad, **Toy Biz reflects the country's expanding toy ecosystem.**

Every aisle presents a different story. Together they reveal an industry steadily combining traditional craftsmanship, modern technology and indigenous manufacturing with global ambition.

From Factory Floors to Exhibition Halls

One of the busiest stalls in the exhibition showcases battery-operated construction vehicles, toy trucks and remote-controlled machines. Visitors pause to watch live demonstrations while retailers compare designs and discuss business opportunities with exhibitors.

At the centre is **vu toys - THE INDIAN TOYS COMPANY**. It is a Jaipur-based company that has spent the last four years building its presence in the Indian toy market. Gesturing towards the colourful range of products on display, founder and CEO **Mr. Pankaj Sharma** says, **"Everything you see here is made in India. From mould making to injection moulding, everything is done by us."** The company's fully integrated manufacturing process has helped it



steadily build its brand. Toy Biz provides an important platform to connect with buyers from across the country.

The company's growth has also been supported by initiatives such as the **Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)**. It enabled production expansion, while Government support for participation helped showcase products before a wider audience.

As the discussion turns to market dynamics, Mr. Sharma points another visible change. **"Earlier, most of the toys were imported, but now things are changing in favour of India. Today, Indian manufacturers are producing high-quality toys at competitive prices,"** he says. This reflects the confidence shared by many exhibitors who see growing opportunities for indigenous brands.



Where Learning Meets Play

Just across the hall, the atmosphere changes. Visitors pause to explore wooden puzzles, activity kits and educational games, discovering innovative ways to make learning more engaging, interactive and enjoyable.



Among the exhibitors is **EDu edge**, a Mumbai-based company specialising in preschool and early learning toys. Founder and Director **Ms. Bela Desai** says the company's journey has been inspired by the Montessori method of education. Showcasing nearly **16 new STEM and eco-friendly learning toys**, she explains, **"Our focus has always been on creating toys. This has helped children learn through play. This year, we've introduced several new products designed to make learning more interactive and engaging."**

For Ms. Desai, exhibitions like Toy Biz are an opportunity to interact directly with

schools and educators. **"Government support for MSME participation in such exhibitions helps us manage travel and exhibition expenses. This allows us to take a larger stall and showcase a wider range of products. It also encourages us to innovate, reach more institutions and expand our market presence,"** says Ms. Desai.

She also adds, **"Every product is made in India, reflecting the company's commitment to indigenous manufacturing. Alongside serving the domestic market, the enterprise also exports its educational toys to Europe. This showcases the growing global appeal of Indian-made learning products."**

The rising interest around the stall reflects a wider shift towards experiential and play-based learning. Educational games, science kits and interactive learning tools are increasingly being recognised for fostering creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving. This makes learning more engaging and meaningful for children.

Innovation Finds a New Playground

A little ahead, telescopes, microscopes and electronic STEM kits draw another group of curious visitors. Educators, distributors and overseas buyers gather around live demonstrations, exploring products that blend science, technology and learning.

Leading the conversation is **Mr. Anirban Gupta, CEO of Dr. MADY'S INNOVATION Pvt. Ltd.** It is a fourteen-year-old Kolkata-based company, specialising in educational and electronic toys. Picking up one of the learning kits, Mr. Gupta says, **"From electronic circuit design and tooling to mould development, every stage of manufacturing is carried out in-house. Even the moulds are built in our factory."** Years of innovation have also earned the company several patents, design registrations and copyrights. This highlights the growing importance of Intellectual Property in India's toy industry.



Today, the company's products are **exported to the United States, Europe, Dubai and the Middle East.** Reflecting on the exhibition's journey, Mr. Gupta recalls, **"When we first participated, there were around 60 to 65 stalls. Today, there are more than 400."** For him, the transformation mirrors the rapid

growth of India's toy manufacturing ecosystem.

He believes the industry's next phase depends on stronger support for innovation and intellectual property through continued Government support. Manufacturers are increasingly investing in research, product design and indigenous technologies. **The Toy Biz exhibition continues to provide a platform for Indian companies to showcase their capabilities across the world.**

Young Dreams, Global Ambitions

The final few aisles introduce visitors to another side of the exhibition, the energy of young startups. Conversations here are less about established markets and more about future possibilities, export destinations and new product ideas.



One such enterprise is **Kitoy Creations** 6 from Pune. Barely two-and-a-half years old, the company has built its journey around products designed and manufactured entirely in India. **Mr. Kartik Jain, CEO of Kitoy Creations** says, "Registering under MSME has been a turning point for our business. **It enabled us to receive Government support for participating in this exhibition. This gives us a valuable platform to showcase our products and connect with new customers.** We are exploring other Government schemes and initiatives to strengthen our market presence and create more opportunities."

Speaking about the company's vision, he says **"Our next goal is to take our Made in India products to international markets."** While still strengthening its domestic footprint, the startup is already exploring export opportunities and developing products that can compete globally.

The optimism at the stall echoes across the exhibition floor. For many young entrepreneurs, Toy Biz is more than an exhibition. It offers an opportunity to meet buyers, understand global markets and shape brands with international aspirations. As visitors continue through the halls of Bharat Mandapam, they encounter a new generation of Indian manufacturers. These manufactures look beyond production; towards design, innovation and global competitiveness.

The Story Continues to Unfold

As the curtains fall on another edition of Toy Biz at Bharat Mandapam, visitors linger over product displays. Also, buyers exchange business cards and entrepreneurs look ahead to new opportunities. **From Jaipur and Mumbai to Kolkata and Pune, each stall tells a unique story. Together this reflects an industry driven by innovation, indigenous manufacturing and enterprise.** With Toy Biz set to return next year, the exhibition has already given exhibitors, buyers and innovators something to look forward to.

Visitors leave with catalogues, fresh ideas and new business connections, carrying with them the story of an industry in transformation. Across every aisle, Toy Biz reinforces a clear message: **India's toy industry is no longer just making toys. It is designing, innovating and creating products that are steadily finding their place in homes, classrooms and markets across the world.**

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PIB Research



43

India as a Tourism Hub

Building a Globally Competitive, Inclusive
and Sustainable Visitor Economy

Published on: July 31, 2026



India is steadily emerging as a major tourism hub, backed by its civilisational heritage, natural diversity, spiritual appeal and expanding visitor economy. With stronger destination infrastructure, improved connectivity, digital platforms, travel facilitation and global promotion, the sector is moving towards higher-value tourism experiences. The focus is also on sustainable and inclusive growth, ensuring tourism supports local livelihoods, community participation, heritage preservation and India's long-term competitiveness as a global destination.

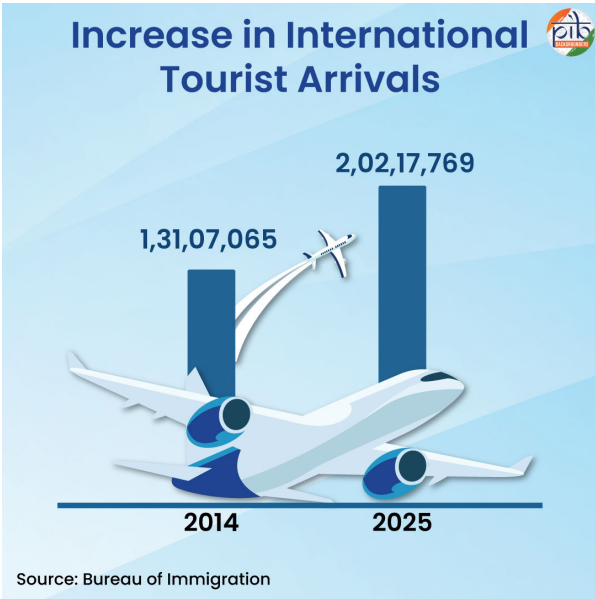
Tourism as a National Growth Engine

Tourism has emerged as one of India's key drivers of economic growth, employment and regional development. More than a travel industry, it supports a wide ecosystem of hospitality, transport, handicrafts, food services, wellness, culture and local enterprises, creating livelihood opportunities across both urban and rural India. As domestic travel reaches record levels and international arrivals strongly continue to recover, the sector is playing an increasingly important role in strengthening local economies while showcasing India's rich cultural and natural heritage to the world.

Today, the sector reflects both scale and momentum:

- **2.9 billion domestic tourist visits** in 2024, exceeding pre-pandemic levels.

- Around **2.02 crore International Tourist Arrivals** 2025.
- **₹15.73 lakh crore** contribution to India's GDP in FY 2023-24, accounting for **5.22%** of the economy.
- **84.6 million jobs** supported by tourism and hospitality in 2023-24.
- Nearly **USD 31.7 billion** in international tourism receipts in 2025.



Yet, India's tourism story is not merely about rising visitor numbers. The country's unparalleled cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, spirituality, wellness

traditions and experiential offerings provide a strong foundation to emerge as a leading global tourism destination.



India's Tourism Advantage: Diversity, Demand and Soft Power

India's greatest tourism strength lies in the sheer diversity of experiences it offers. Within one country, visitors can explore ancient civilisations, living cultural traditions, sacred pilgrimage sites, pristine forests with diverse wildlife, snow-clad mountains, vibrant festivals, diverse cuisines and world-renowned wellness practices. This

unique combination of tangible and intangible heritage enables our country to cater to a wide range of travellers throughout the year.

India's tourism asset base includes:

- **44 UNESCO World Heritage Sites**, reflecting the country's rich cultural and natural heritage.
- **106 National Parks and 18 Biosphere Reserves**, supporting wildlife and nature-based tourism.

- A vast network of **pilgrimage centres, heritage monuments, museums, protected forests, beaches, islands and cultural landscapes.**
- Rich traditions of **handicrafts, cuisine, festivals, performing arts, Yoga and Ayurveda** that continue to attract visitors from across the world.

Major Tourism Segments

India’s tourism offerings span multiple high-potential segments, allowing destinations to cater to varied visitor interests and create year-round tourism demand.

Spiritual and Pilgrimage Tourism

As the birthplace of **Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism** and **Sikhism**, India is home to some of the world’s most significant pilgrimage destinations. From the sacred circuits of Char Dham, Kashi and Ayodhya to the holy sites of Bodh Gaya, Amritsar, Tirupati and Puri, spiritual tourism continues to attract millions of domestic and international visitors every year. Continued investments in connectivity, infrastructure and visitor

amenities are further strengthening India’s position as a global spiritual tourism destination.

Buddhist Circuits and Transnational Cultural Linkages

India’s Buddhist heritage continues to attract pilgrims and scholars from across Asia and beyond. Destinations associated with the life of Lord Buddha, together with other shared civilisational and cultural linkages, strengthen our nation’s role as an important centre for religious and cultural tourism.

Heritage and Cultural Tourism

India’s rich civilisational legacy is reflected in its **forts, palaces, temples, archaeological sites, museums and historic cities.** Complementing these tangible treasures are the country’s vibrant living traditions—**classical dance, music, festivals, handicrafts** and **regional cuisines**—which offer visitors immersive cultural experiences beyond monuments. Together, they showcase the remarkable continuity and enduring vitality of India’s cultural heritage across generations.



Virupaksha Temple, Hampi, Karnataka

Wellness, Yoga and Medical Tourism

India has emerged as a leading destination for wellness tourism, drawing visitors from around the world seeking holistic health and well-being. Yoga, recognised globally as India’s gift to the

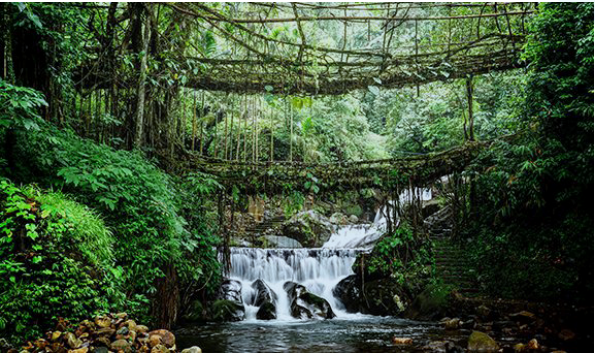
world, along with Ayurveda, naturopathy and traditional healing systems, forms the foundation of this rapidly growing segment. Complementing these offerings are world-class healthcare facilities and high-quality, cost-effective medical treatment, which have further strengthened India’s position as a preferred destination for medical tourism.



Eco-tourism and Wildlife Tourism

India’s diverse ecosystems provide a wealth of nature-based tourism experiences. **National parks, tiger reserves, wetlands, mangroves, biosphere reserves and Himalayan landscapes** offer opportunities for wildlife safaris, birdwatching, trekking, turtle conservation trails, nature

interpretation etc. At the same time, responsible eco-tourism is also creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities while promoting conservation and protection of natural habitats.



**Double Decker Living Root Bridge,
Cherrapunjee, Meghalaya**

Rural, Homestay and Community-based Tourism

Beyond established destinations, rural tourism is bringing visitors closer to India's villages, local traditions and indigenous knowledge systems. **Homestays, village walks, traditional cuisine, handicrafts, agricultural experiences and meaningful cultural interactions** enable travellers to experience authentic local life while generating sustainable livelihoods and direct income for rural households, artisans and community enterprises.



Homestay in Himachal Pradesh

MICE Tourism

India is emerging as a leading destination for **Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE)** tourism, supported by expanding convention infrastructure and a proven track record of hosting major international events. Modern convention centres, enhanced connectivity and destination-based business events are diversifying the country's tourism offerings beyond leisure travel, while generating year-round economic activity.



Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

G20: Showcasing India's Tourism Potential to the World

India's G20 Presidency provided an unprecedented opportunity to showcase the country's tourism diversity on the global stage.

- Over 200 G20 meetings were organised across more than 60 cities, taking international delegates beyond conventional metropolitan destinations.
- The events highlighted India's heritage monuments, local crafts, regional cuisines, cultural performances and tourism experiences across different States and Union Territories.
- The multi-city approach strengthened destination branding, promoted lesser-known locations and demonstrated India's capability to host world-class international events.
- The experience has also reinforced India's growing potential as a destination for MICE tourism while enhancing its global visibility and soft power.

Coastal, Cruise, Adventure and Experiential Tourism

With a coastline spanning over **7,500 km, island territories, rivers, vast deserts and mountain landscapes**, India offers a diverse range of tourism experiences. From coastal and cruise tourism, to water sports, trekking, mountaineering, river rafting, desert safaris, film tourism and other experiential travel offerings- the country caters to a wide range of traveller interests. These diverse

interests are expanding visitor choices and encouraging longer stays across destinations.



Infrastructure-Led Destination Development

India's tourism development strategy has progressively shifted from improving individual attractions to creating integrated destination ecosystems. The focus has shifted beyond developing standalone monuments and heritage sites to building holistic tourism destinations with seamless connectivity, high-quality visitor infrastructure and immersive experiences. This approach seeks to improve the overall visitor journey while ensuring that tourism generates sustained economic and long-term benefits for local communities.

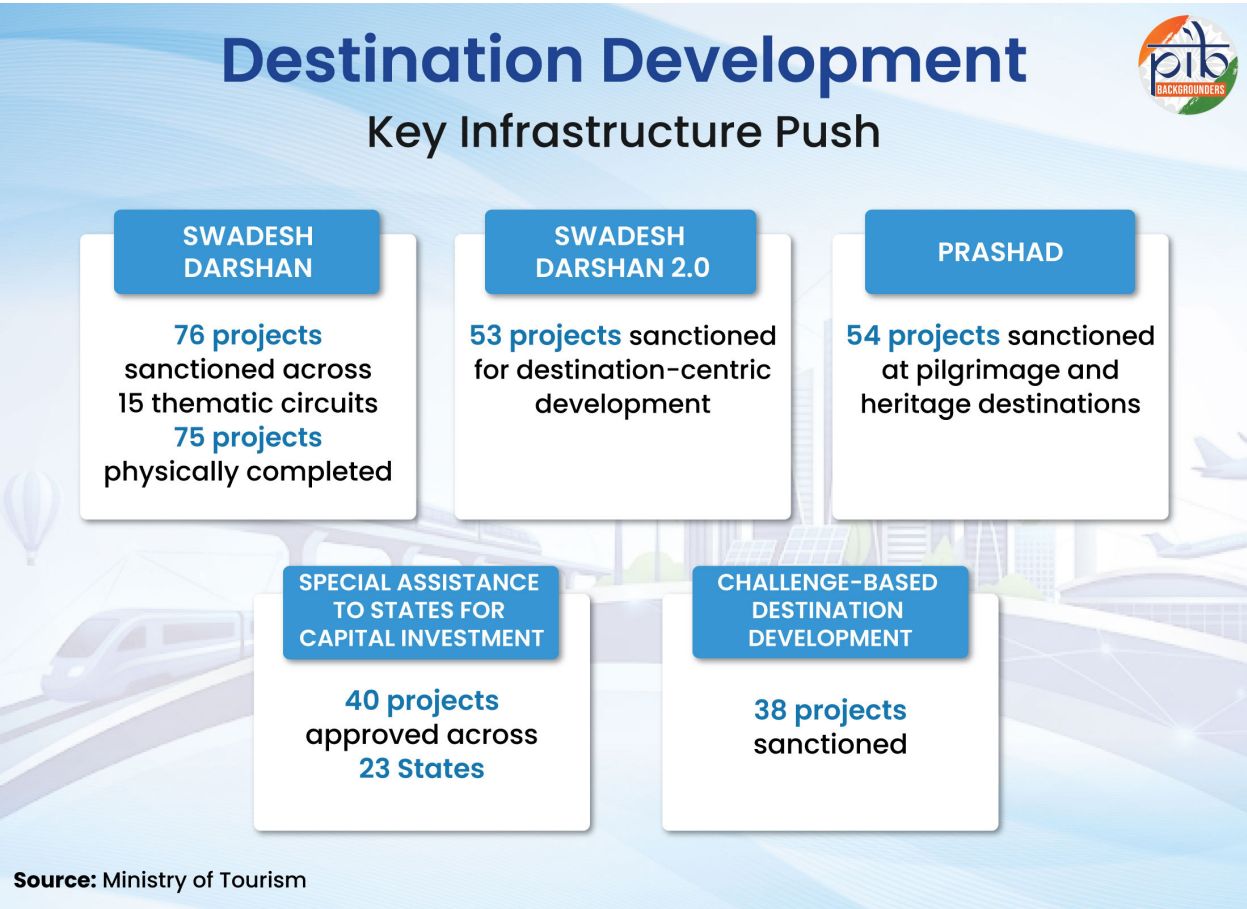
Strengthening Destination Infrastructure

A number of flagship initiatives are driving this transformation across the country. These investments are shifting India's tourism model from isolated attractions to integrated destinations that encourage longer visitor stays, higher local spending and improved visitor experiences.

- **Swadesh Darshan** has sanctioned **76 projects** with an investment of over **₹5,295.24 crore** across **14 thematic tourist circuits**. Of these, **75 projects have been physically completed**. The programme has developed infrastructure across

the Buddhist, Coastal, Desert, Eco, Himalayan, North East, Ramayana, Rural, Spiritual, Tribal and other thematic circuits.

- Building on this, **Swadesh Darshan 2.0** adopts a destination-centric approach, focusing on sustainable and experience-based tourism. **53 projects**, worth **₹2,207.08 crore**, have been sanctioned to develop destinations through better planning, infrastructure and visitor experience.
- Under the **PRASHAD** scheme, **54 projects** worth over **₹1,726.24 crore** have been sanctioned to improve infrastructure at major pilgrimage and heritage destinations, enhancing facilities for pilgrims while preserving their cultural and spiritual significance.
- Through the **Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI)**, **40 projects** across **23 States** have been approved with an outlay of **₹3,295.76 crore** for the development of iconic tourist centres and transform them to match global standards.
- The **Challenge-Based Destination Development (CBDD)** initiative has sanctioned **37 projects** worth **₹687.99 crore**, focusing on destinations with high tourism potential under the spiritual and eco-tourism categories.



Connectivity as Tourism Infrastructure

Tourism infrastructure extends far beyond the destination itself. Improved accessibility has become a critical component of destination development.

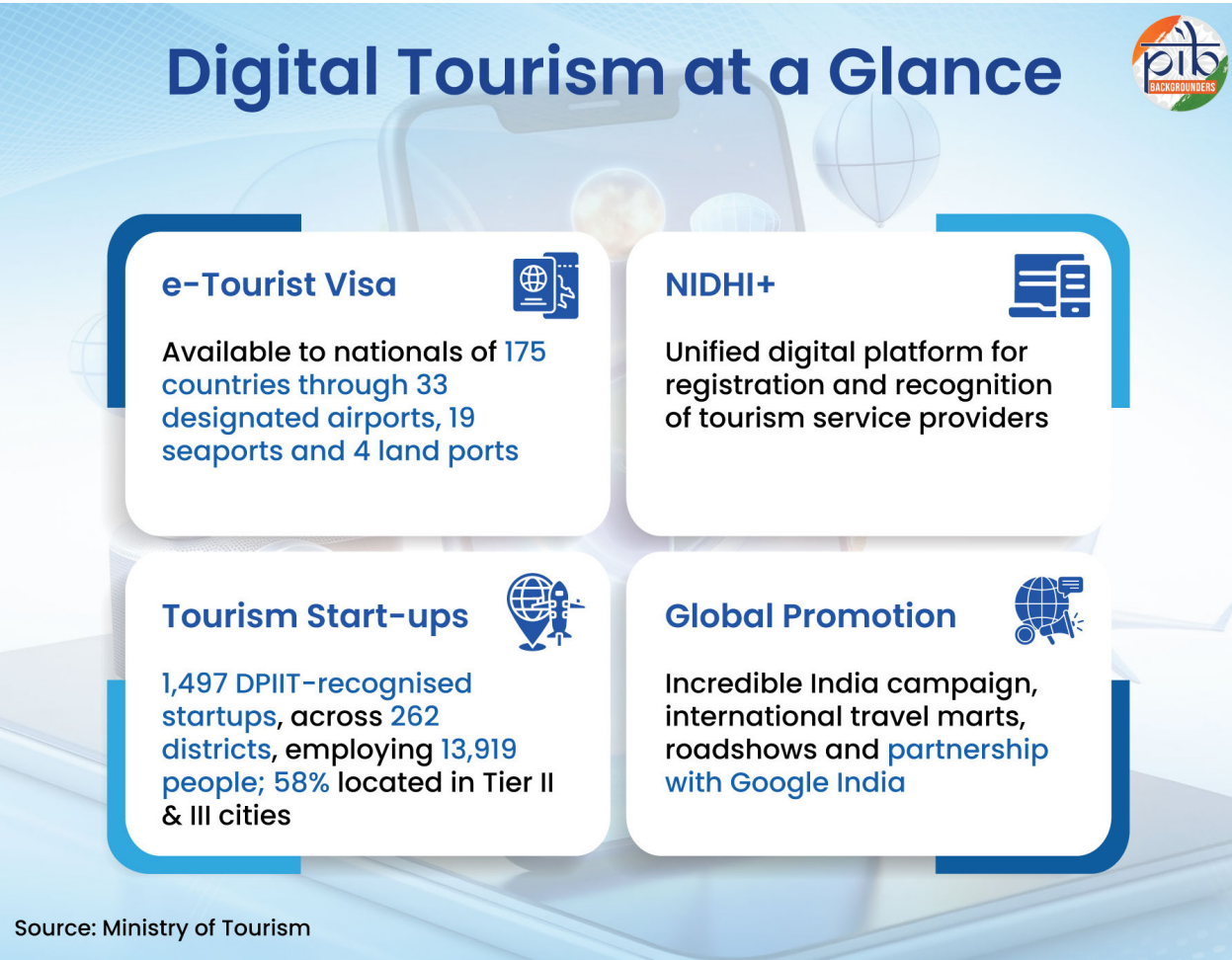
Expansion of the national highway network, modernisation of railway stations, introduction of Vande Bharat trains, enhanced regional air connectivity through UDAN, airport development, better last-mile connectivity, e-buses

and improved public amenities are making tourist destinations more accessible and reducing travel time. The next phase of regional connectivity, **Viksit UDAN**, with an outlay of over **₹28,840 crore**, is expected to further strengthen air travel in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities and remote regions, including through the development of **over 100 new aerodromes and 200 helipads**. These investments are helping connect tourism circuits rather than keeping them as isolated attractions, enabling visitors to explore multiple destinations within a region.

Ease of Travel, Digital Tourism and Global Market Access

In an increasingly competitive tourism landscape, destinations are judged not only by what they offer but also by how

easy they are to access, discover and experience. From visa facilitation and digital services to destination promotion and technology-driven innovation, India is steadily working to create a seamless visitor journey while strengthening its presence in global tourism markets.



Making Travel Easier

Travel facilitation has emerged as a key driver of international tourism. India has steadily simplified entry procedures

through the e-Tourist Visa system, making travel more convenient for international visitors.

Key initiatives include:

- **e-Tourist Visa** facility extended to nationals of **175 countries**.
- Entry permitted through **33 designated airports, 19 seaports and 4 land ports**.
- Expansion of visa categories and designated ports of entry under the **e-Visa framework**.
- Continued efforts towards simplified documentation, digital authorisation and easier travel procedures for visitors from high-potential source markets.

Building a Digital Tourism Ecosystem

Digital platforms are becoming central to both visitor experience and tourism governance.

The **National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry (NIDHI+)** has been developed as a unified digital platform for registration, recognition and classification of tourism service providers. It provides end-to-end online processing, integrated payment facilities and transparent approvals while improving ease of doing business.



Innovation Driving Tourism Growth

Innovation and entrepreneurship are emerging as important drivers of tourism growth. The travel and tourism sector has **1,497 DPIIT-recognised startups** (as on **17 April 2023**) across **262 districts**, generating employment for nearly **13,919 people**. Notably, **58%** of these startups are based in **Tier II** and **Tier III** cities, highlighting the growing spread of tourism entrepreneurship beyond major urban centres.

These startups are developing solutions across travel-tech, online booking, homestays, rural and experiential tourism, smart mobility and AI-enabled travel planning. Notable examples include **Highway Delite**, which has created a digitally connected highway amenities network; **VilloTale**, which promotes rural tourism through homestays and community-based experiences; and **udChalo**, which provides technology-enabled travel services to over **2.8 million** defence personnel, veterans and their dependants through digital platforms and a network of more than **70** booking offices.

Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism: The Long-Term Model

As India strengthens its position as a global tourism hub, sustainability is emerging as a key principle of tourism development. The focus is

increasingly on creating destinations that are environmentally responsible, economically inclusive and capable of delivering high-quality visitor experiences. Alongside investments in infrastructure, connectivity and digital transformation, tourism policies are placing greater emphasis on responsible travel, community participation, skill development and long-term destination management.

Sustainable Destinations

India is promoting a more balanced model of tourism by encouraging **Travel for LiFE** and responsible visitor behaviour. Greater emphasis is also being placed on diversification through **trekking, birdwatching, turtle trails and other nature-based experiences**, helping distribute visitor flows beyond saturated destinations while also supporting conservation and local livelihoods. Sustainable tourism also contributes directly to the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** by promoting inclusive economic growth, employment, cultural preservation and environmental protection.

- **SDG 8.9** focuses on promoting sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products,
- **SDG 12.B** emphasises on developing tools to monitor sustainable tourism impacts, and

- **SDG 14.7** highlights increasing the economic benefits to Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries through the sustainable use of marine resources, including tourism.

Looking Ahead

India's tourism vision extends beyond increasing visitor arrivals to building a resilient, high-value tourism ecosystem. Investments in destination infrastructure, enhanced connectivity, digital transformation, travel facilitation, skill development and sustainable destination management are strengthening India's competitiveness as a global tourism destination while ensuring that growth remains inclusive. By balancing economic development with environmental responsibility and community participation, the Government is creating a tourism sector that drives higher visitor spending, generates quality employment and delivers long-term economic and social benefits for destinations and local communities.

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MY Bharat – Where Digital India Meets Young India

Empowering Amrit Peedhi

Published on: July 2, 2026





India has the largest youth population in the world, with nearly 65% of its population below the age of 35. Recognising the immense potential of this demographic dividend, **MY Bharat (Mera Yuva Bharat)** was launched in **October 2023** under the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**. The initiative aims to place

youth at the centre of nation-building by providing opportunities for volunteering, skill development, leadership and civic participation.

MY Bharat serves as a digital platform that connects the Government, educational institutions, non-profit organisations and industry to create meaningful youth engagement. Enabled by India's strong Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) under the broader **Digital India initiative**, the platform seamlessly connects millions of young Indians with learning and nation-building

opportunities, ensuring greater inclusion, accessibility and participation across the country. Through this initiative, young citizens are being empowered to actively contribute towards the vision of **Viksit Bharat@2047**.

Empowering Amrit Peedhi Through Opportunities

MY Bharat serves as a unified digital platform by combining physical engagement with digital technology. The opportunities accessible through the portal are:

Digital Volunteerism

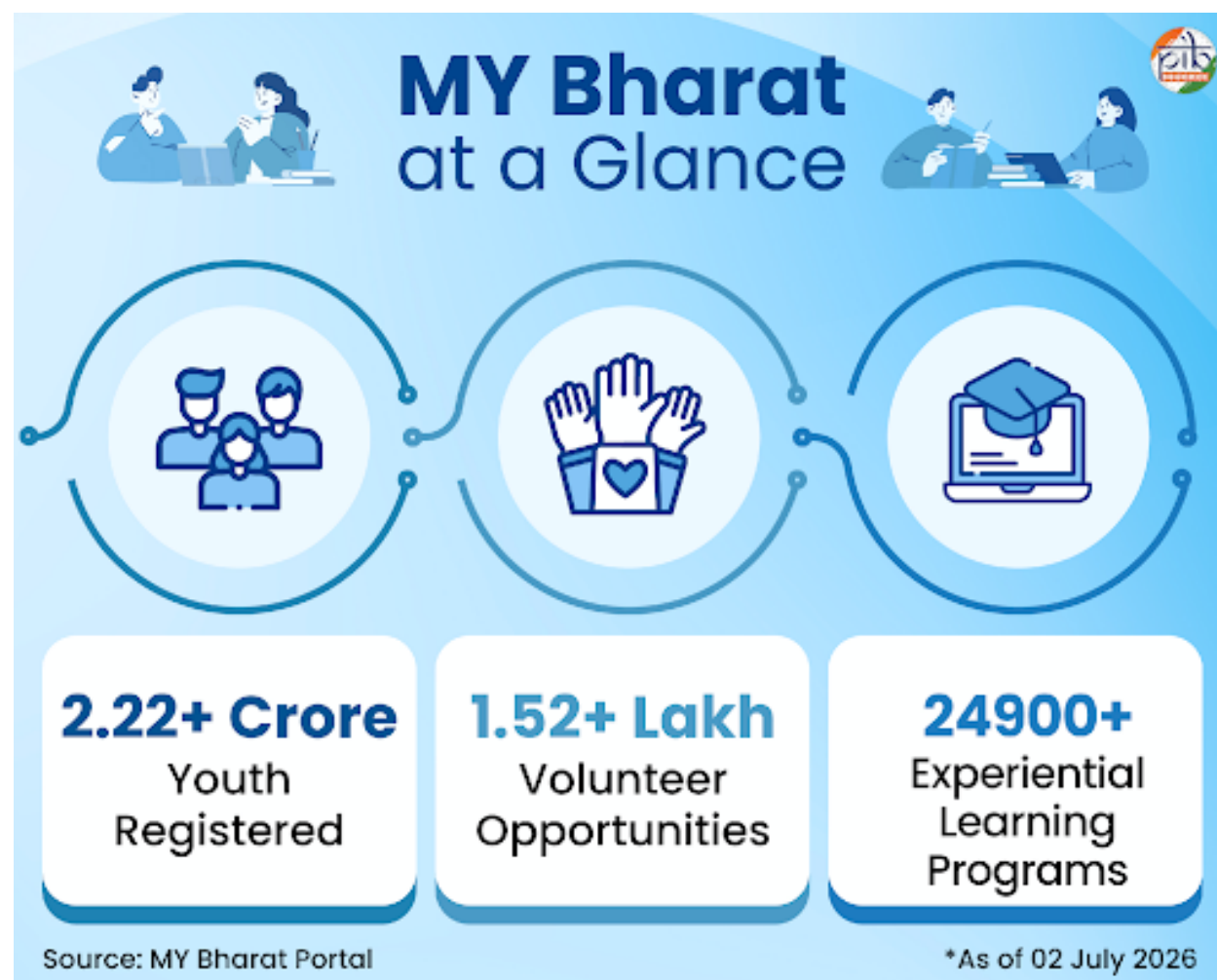
- Over **1.52 lakh volunteer opportunities** are available on the

platform across cleanliness, blood donation, sports, disaster response, and community service, as of June 2026.

- It offers end-to-end digital volunteer management through online registration, **attendance**, geo-tagging, certificate generation and impact tracking.

Experiential Learning Beyond Classrooms

- As of July 2026, the platform offers over **24900+ Experiential Learning Programs (ELP)**, promoting hands-on learning and workforce readiness.
- Additionally, opportunities also include **internships** with public and private organisations, apprenticeships for workplace training, and industry exposure.



- The platform promotes civic leadership through **quizzes and competitions** that engage youth in understanding national issues like the Union Budget.

Leadership Development and Career Support

- The platform offers leadership development through initiatives such as the **Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament**, enabling youth to debate national issues and build leadership skills.
- **AI-powered Resume builder and mentoring support helps** youth prepare for their academic and career prospects.
- **Multilingual digital quizzes** on governance, the Constitution, innovation and public policy, making learning interaction.

Initiatives Connecting Youth with the Nation

Youth-led Nation-building

- MY Bharat **MY Vote' campaign** promoted informed voting and constitutional awareness among first-time voters.
- National Youth Festival: **Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2026** witnessed participation of over 50.42 lakh youth, making it one of India's



largest youth consultation exercises.

- The **Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue (VBYLD) 2026** provided a national platform for youth to deliberate on ideas and solutions for Viksit Bharat@2047, encouraging leadership, innovation and meaningful participation in nation-building.
- Youth for Viksit Bharat – **MY Bharat Youth Convention 2026** brought together 6,000+ youth to celebrate the aspirations and achievements of the Amrit Peedhi.
- The **Nari Shakti Youth Parliament**, conducted across 17 zones, engaged over 7,000 young women in structured democratic dialogue and policy discussions.

Volunteerism & Social Action

- The **National Service Scheme (NSS)** leverages the MY Bharat platform to facilitate volunteering, participation and monitoring.
- MY Bharat volunteers mobilised lakhs of youth during **International Day of Yoga 2026** through yoga sessions across educational institutions, community spaces and iconic landmarks.
- Through the **Nasha Mukht Bharat campaign**, youth volunteers support awareness drives, rehabilitation initiatives and community outreach for a drug-free India.

- MY Bharat organises nationwide **Padyatras, cleanliness drives and community service activities** to strengthen civic participation and Jan Bhagidari.

Young Voices Beyond Borders

- The **Viksit Vibrant Village Programme** enabled youth to experience life in India's border villages, fostering national integration and grassroots engagement.
- The **MY Bharat Podcast Series**, launched on 21 March 2026, features conversations with inspiring personalities and changemakers to promote active citizenship.
- MY Bharat enabled India's youth participation at the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum 2026**. This provided young leaders with



a platform to represent India's perspectives in global policy discussions.

MY Bharat Advancing Digital India's Vision

MY Bharat showcases how technology is making youth participation more accessible, recognised and future-ready across the country.

Participation and Recognition

- MY Bharat earned a **Guinness World Record title** on 04 June 2026 for the **"Most Users to Take an Online Quiz in One Week"** with **390,812 verified participants**.
- The portal offers digital badges, certificates and verified participation records recognising volunteering, learning programmes and civic engagement.



Digital Governance in your Pocket

- MY Bharat mobile application, available in 22 Indian languages, has recorded over 1 lakh downloads, as of 02 July 2026.
- Single registration enabling seamless access to opportunities, learning resources, digital certificates and government initiatives across the country.

Future-ready Platform

- MY Bharat 2.0 is transforming

youth engagement through Artificial Intelligence (AI), multilingual technologies, open APIs and digital credentials to expand youth participation.

- The platform represents India’s vision of empowering over 100 million youth through technology-driven governance aligned with Viksit Bharat@2047.

**Building Future-ready
Mera Yuva Bharat**

Built on the foundations of Digital India, MY Bharat is empowering the Amrit Peedhi to participate in nation-building and drive India’s journey towards a developed, inclusive and self-reliant nation.

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