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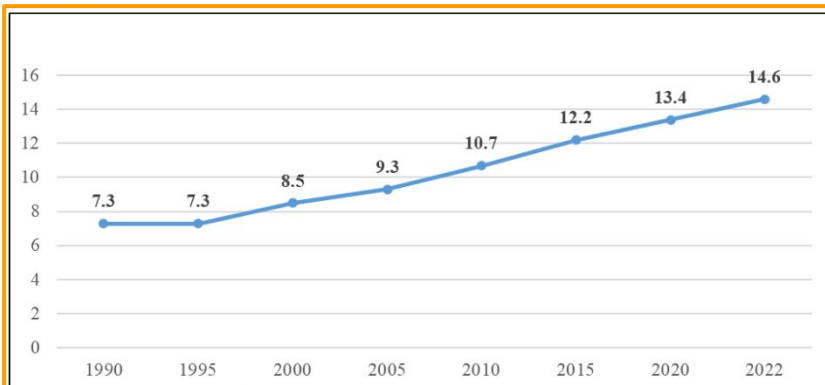
The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

9th June 2025

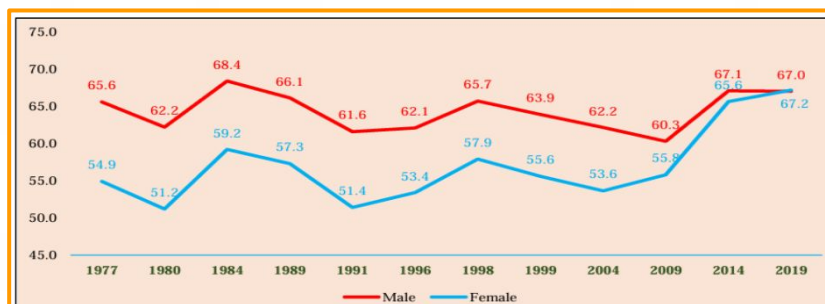


CONTEXT: Focus area of the govt



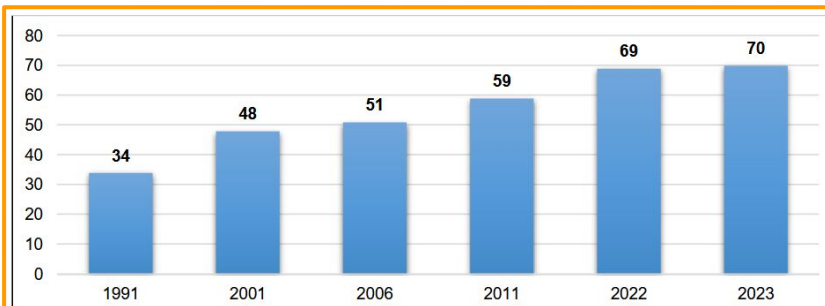
Source: Human Development Reports (2024)

Figure 14: Share of Seats in Parliament (%)



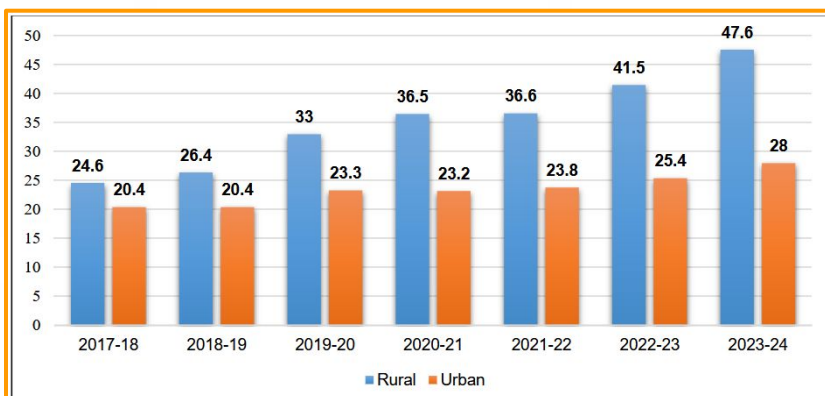
Source: Ministry of Statistics & Program Implementation (2024)

Figure 12: Percentage of Electors Participating in Lok Sabha Elections



Source: World Bank (2023)

Figure 10: Literacy rate, Adult Female (% of Females Ages 15 and above)



Source: Ministry of Statistics & Program Implementation (2024)

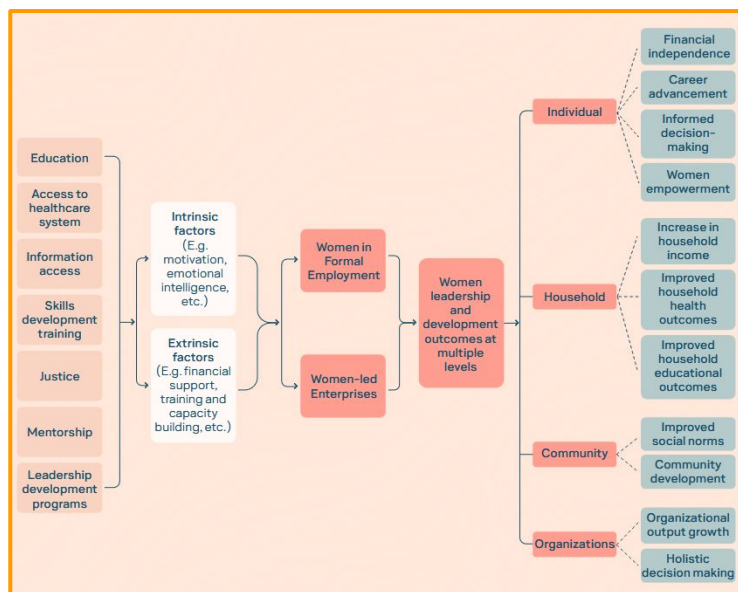
Figure 2: Female Labour Force Participation Rate (in %) (LFPR)



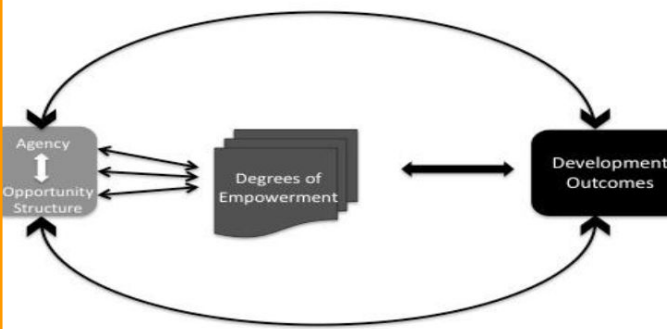
CONTEXT: Focus area of the govt

Why

- Agents of Empowerment
- Gender Equality
- Economic Empowerment
 - a. half popu but 18% GDP
 - b. Only 20% of MSMEs
- Rural Development & Poverty
 - a. DAY NRLM
- Inclusive Growth
- Sustainable Development



World Bank's Model



Constitutional Provisions

Economic Empowerment:

- Article 16
- Article 39(a)
- Article 39(d)
- Article 42

Political Empowerment:

- 73rd Amendment (Article 243D)
- 74th Amendment (Article 243T)

Social Empowerment:

- Article 14
- Article 15
- Article 15(3)
- Article 51A(e)

Government Schemes & Programs

Political Empowerment

- Nari Shakti Adhiniyam
- Permanent Commission in 12 Arms and Services
- Agniveers

Economic Empowerment

- MUDRA
- Stand-Up India
- PM Awas Yojana (Gramin)
- Mahila E-Haat (2016)
- Mahila Shakti Kendra (2017)



CONTEXT: Focus area of the govt

Iceland

- Iceland has a female labor force participation rate of 70.1% (2023).
- Iceland has made it illegal to pay women less than men.
- Iceland has made it a criminal offence for employers not to take action on unequal pay. They've effectively made it like a health and safety violation.

Source - (Government of Iceland, 2022)

Tanzania

- Tanzania has a total female labor force participation rate of 77.1% (2023).
- Tanzania has established a Rural Roads Agency's Road Network, which aims to make it easier for women to access markets and modes of transportation.
- The Public Procurement Act of 2011 allocated 30% of all services acquired for women and youth, directly supporting

Ontario

- Ontario has a total female labor force participation of 61.2% (2022)
- Offers equal pay for equal work, including but not limited to casual, part-time, temporary, and seasonal workers.
- Fairer scheduling rules- a minimum of 3 weeks' vacation after five years with the same employer.
- Up to 10 individual days of leave and up to 15 weeks of leave, without the fear of losing their job when a worker or their child has experienced or is threatened with domestic or sexual violence.
- Expanded personal emergency leave in all workplaces.
- Unpaid leave to take care of a critically ill family member.

Source - FAO Ontario, 2023



CONTEXT: Focus area of the govt

Social Empowerment

- Paid maternity leave
- Abolition of Triple Talaq
- PM Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan
- MMR 97/lakh live births (2018–20) from 130 (2014–16)
- 3.2 crore Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana accounts for girls' education/marriage
- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015)
- One Stop Centres (2015): violence-affected (medical, legal aid)
- Ujjawala Scheme (2016): trafficking & rehabilitation
- Swadhar Greh (2001): Shelter & support

Others

- 43% STEM graduates
- Ujjwala Yojana
- Nirbhaya Fund (2013)

NGO Initiatives for Women Empowerment

- Apna Ghar Ashram: destitute & disabled women
- Maitri: violence; widows in Vrindavan
- Ashadeep Mission: mental health issues
- SeSTA: Mobilized 8,000 rural women into 700 SHGs in Northeast India
- Majlis Manch's Rahat: Legal aid for domestic violence & abuse victims

CSR for Women

- Mandatory CSR (Companies Act 2013)

Challenges

1. Patriarchy

- Independent Decision-Making: Only 3%
- Unpaid Care Work
- Land Ownership

2. Education Gaps

- Literacy Gap: Female literacy (71%) world 80%
- STEM Barriers: 43% grads, only 14% join the workforce

3. Workplace Discrimination & Economic Barriers

- Glass Ceiling & Gender Pay Gap: 20% less
- Labor Force Participation

4. Digital Exclusion

- Internet Access: 15% of women vs. 45% men
- Tech Gender Gap: Rural women 15% less likely – phone

5. Early Marriage & Health Inequities

- Child Marriage: 23% women (20–24 years)
- Anemia

6. Safety & Violence

- Crime Rates: 4.5 lakh
- Domestic Violence: 30%

Recommendations

- **Policy Focus:** healthcare access, skill development, land rights
- **CSR/NGO Collaboration:** SHGs & digital literacy
- **SDG-5 Acceleration:** violence prevention and political representation

Mains Practice Question: "Women-led development is not only a moral imperative but also an economic necessity for inclusive growth in India. In this context, discuss the need for women-led development in India, examine the challenges that hinder its realization, and analyze the government initiatives aimed at promoting it."



CONTEXT: EAM visit for diplomatic push

- 1962: diplomatic relations with EEC
- 2004: Strategic Partnership

Trade & Economic Partnership

- India's largest trading partner (\$137 bn in 2023–24)
- EU's 9th-largest trading partner (trade surplus)
- FDI: 6,000+ European firms

Strategic Alignment

- Security Cooperation: Dialogues on counter-terrorism, cyber security, maritime security
- Indo-Pacific Synergy
- Multilateral Reforms: Joint push for WTO
- India-EU Clean Energy & Climate Partnership (2016)

Connectivity & Infrastructure

- Connectivity Partnership (2021): Focus on digital, energy, transport, P2P

Benefits for India

- Investment & Jobs: MII (e.g., Airbus C-295 manufacturing)
- Export Growth: IT, pharma, textiles, agri
- Tech Collaboration: Trade & Technology Council (2022) advances AI, digital innovation

Benefits for the EU

- Market Access: 1.4 billion
- De Risking Agenda
- Talent Pool
- Geopolitical Leverage: EU's Global South outreach
- Maritime Security



India Europe Cooperation



CONTEXT: EAM visit for diplomatic push

Sticking Points:

A. Market Access Priorities

- **EU Demands:**
 - 150% tariff cuts on wine, cheese, spirits
 - Agricultural concessions (India's 60% agrarian workforce vs. EU's <2% in Germany)
- **India's Focus:**
 - Services liberalization
 - Mutual Recognition Agreements for professionals

B. Impact of Negotiation Failure

- Loss of GSP Benefits

Persistent Challenges

1. **Agriculture & Dairy:**
 - India's 39% agri tariffs vs. EU's 11.7% average
 - EU seeks access to dairy market
2. **Services & Digital Trade:**
 - EU visa rules: High salary thresholds
 - Mode 1 restrictions: Forces Indian firms to establish local offices
 - GDPR compliance: India lacks "data secure" status, raising costs
3. **CBAM:**
 - 20–35% levy on carbon-intensive imports (steel, cement, hydrogen)
 - India's objections: Per capita emissions

Potential Solutions

- **Carbon Pricing:** Adopt domestic mechanisms (e.g., Argentina's \$10/tonne tax)
- **Sectoral Exemptions:** Exclude agriculture temporarily (e.g. EU-Vietnam FTA)
- **Phased Liberalization:** Gradual tariff cuts (mirroring India-UK FTA – 90% tariff reduction commitment)
- **Flexibility:**
 - India: Lower tariffs, improve regulatory access
 - EU: Pragmatism over perfection (e.g., EU-Mercosur FTA model)

India Belgium:

Historical & Diplomatic Ties

- Diplomatic relations – 1947
- Supports India's bid for UNSC
- High-Level Visits
 - PM visited in 2016 after the Brussels terror attack; MoUs in biotechnology & shipping

Economic & Commercial Relations

- Trade: €8.8 billion, balanced
- 5th largest exporter to Belgium
- Import Precious metals & stones, chemicals, machinery
- India's 18th largest investor
- 175 Belgian companies operate in India
- IMEC (Belgium) to provide semiconductor tech support for India's chip-making ecosystem



India Europe Cooperation



CONTEXT: EAM visit for diplomatic push

Sectoral Cooperation

- MoU on S&T cooperation (2006); joint projects in space tech, nuclear research
- MoU on Renewable Energy (2015)
- MoU on ICT cooperation (2017)
- MoU with Antwerp Port Authority for training Indian port officials

Education & Culture

- 5 MoUs between Indian & Belgian universities (2013)
- Statues of Mahatma Gandhi installed in Antwerp & Rabindranath Tagore bust in Leuven

Indian Diaspora

- ~25k Indians
- Indian soldiers' sacrifice in WWI honored with memorial pillar in Ypres

Recent Developments

- Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (2023) – execution of search warrants
- MoU for 300-tonne/day plastic recycling plant in Varanasi
- Support for India's NSG membership

Mains Practise Question:

"In the backdrop of rising global uncertainty, supply chain disruptions, and shifting geopolitical alliances, India-Europe relations have gained renewed strategic and economic relevance. Analyze the significance of India-Europe relations in this context. What are the key challenges in finalizing the India-EU Free Trade Agreement, and how can they be effectively addressed?"



SYLLABUS : GS Paper 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment

Newspaper : Indian Express **Page No :** 8

FIGURES OF HOPE

Release of new data clears the air on poverty in India, it should now lead to more informed policymaking

POVERTY AND INEQUALITY estimation in India have been subjects of considerable debate, especially in recent years with the economy experiencing several shocks. The great India poverty debate has, in fact, been marked by significant differences of opinion on the household survey data which forms the basis of estimation, the construction of the poverty lines, and on the trends over the decades. The debate has been particularly heated in the absence of data — the government did not release the consumption expenditure survey data for 2017-18 due to "data quality issues". This led to several studies trying to estimate poverty levels in India by drawing on alternate data sources such as the Periodic Labour Force Surveys and the CMIE data. Recently, the government has attempted to fill the data gap by conducting two rounds of household consumption expenditure surveys for 2022-23 and 2023-24. These surveys now allow for an examination of the trends in poverty over the past decade or so. The decline has been significant.

Extreme poverty in India is estimated to have declined from 27.1 per cent in 2011-12 to 5.3 per cent in 2022-23 as per the latest World Bank data reported in this paper. This steep decline has occurred even as the Bank has raised the threshold for measuring extreme poverty to \$3 a day from \$2.15 earlier. To put these figures in perspective — the number of people living in extreme poverty in India fell from 344.47 million to 75.24 million over this period. While there has been some concern over the comparability of the consumption expenditure surveys carried out in 2011-12 and 2022-23 due to changes in the manner in which the recent survey was carried out and its sampling design, this is a steep decline. Moreover, even considering the poverty line for lower-middle income countries of \$4.2 per day (revised upwards from \$3.65), the poverty ratio in India fell from 57.7 per cent in 2011-12 to 23.9 per cent in 2022-23. The decline appears to have continued in the year thereafter. Earlier, Niti Aayog had estimated that multidimensional poverty in India had also registered a steep decline — falling from 55.34 per cent in 2005-06 to 24.85 per cent in 2015-16 to 14.96 per cent in 2019-21. This estimate of poverty was based on 12 indicators and drew on data from the National Family Health Surveys.

Alongside these poverty estimates, the World Bank has also estimated that inequality in India, based on measures such as the Gini and Theil indices, did fall between 2011 and 2022. However, these estimates of inequality are based on the household consumption expenditure data, which typically tends to be lower than estimates based on household income. This is not just an academic exercise. The data from the latest rounds of the consumption expenditure surveys as well as the labour force surveys must serve as a valuable input for policy, informing the choices of policymakers.

• Types of Poverty

- Absolute Poverty
- Relative Poverty

• Categorizing the Poor

- Chronic Poor
- Churning Poor
- Occasionally Poor

• Approaches

- Monetary
- Capability
- Social Exclusion

Measuring Poverty:

- **Head Count Ratio**
- **PC Expert Group (1962)**
 - ₹20 and ₹25 per capita per year
- **VM Dandekar and N Rath (1971)**
 - Expenditure for 2250 calories per day
- **YK Alagh Committee (1979)**
 - Nutrition – 2400 cal & 49rs. In rural, 2100 cal & 56rs. In urban
- **Lakdawala Committee (1993)**
 - State specific – based on CPI (AL & IW)
- **Tendulkar Committee (2009)**
 - Uniform R & U Poverty Line Basket
 - Mixed Reference Period
 - i. 5 low-frequency items (clothing, footwear, durables, education and institutional health expenditure) – 1 year
 - ii. Other – consumption in 30 days
 - Rs. 446.68 & 578.80 per capita
- **Rangarajan Committee (2014)**
 - calories, proteins and fats based on ICMR norms
 - Modified Mixed Recall Period



Estimates of Poverty

SYLLABUS : GS Paper 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment
Newspaper : Indian Express **Page No :** 8

NITI Aayog MPI:

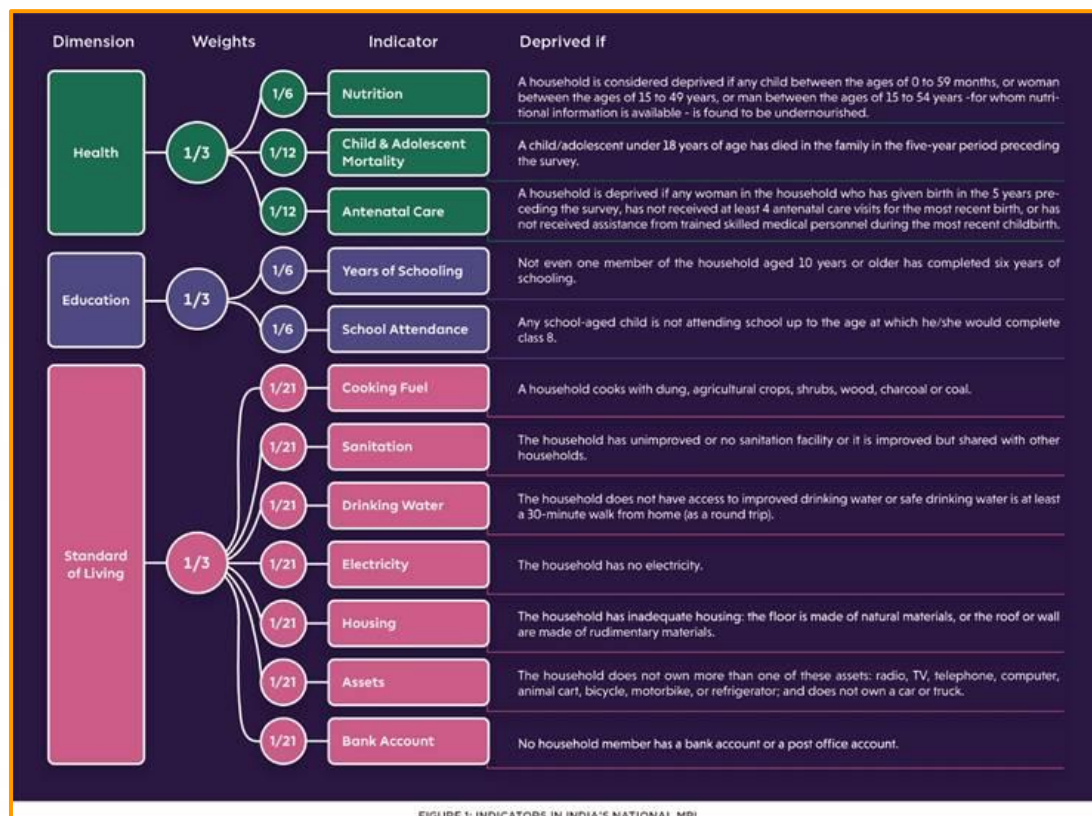


FIGURE 1: INDICATORS IN INDIA'S NATIONAL MPI

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SYLLABUS : GS Paper 2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora

Newspaper : Indian Express **Page No :** 1

Eye on strong export advantage, India not keen to dent Turkey trade ties with curbs

RAVI DUTTA MISHRA
NEW, DELHI, JUNE 8

AMID MOVES to curb the role of Turkish companies in critical infrastructure, citing national security grounds, there is palpably less appetite within the Government to extend this approach to the bilateral trade basket despite calls from industry groups to ban the import of items such as apples and marbles. Reason: India runs a \$2.73 billion bilateral goods trade surplus and any blockade could be counterproductive.

"We have received a number of representations to ban imports from Turkey. Apple-growers from Himachal Pradesh have sought a ban on apple imports from Turkey. But India runs a trade surplus with Turkey and we have to keep in mind our exporters' interests too. It (a trade ban) could be a strong geopolitical message, but it's about how far you want to take it," a Government official told *The Indian Express*.

The trade surplus assumes significance as India's outbound shipments to Turkey largely consist of industrial exports, such as

EXPLAINED
E Amid calls for boycott

TURKEY'S SUPPORT for Pakistan, including supplies of drones, during Op Sindoor had led to India cancelling the security clearance for Turkish aviation firm Celebi — and tourism numbers to Turkey showing a sharp dip. But India holds the edge in bilateral trade: exports in FY25 totalled \$5.72 bn, driven by engineering exports, while imports stood at \$2.99 bn, mainly of fruits and nuts.

engineering goods, electronics, and organic and inorganic chemicals, which have increased over the past five years. In contrast, Turkey's exports to India are largely limited to fruits, nuts, gold and marble. Turkey had also stepped up petroleum product imports from India following the Ukraine war but this category has seen a significant decline in FY25.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Economic & Commercial Relations

- 1973: Bilateral trade agreement
- 1983: Joint Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation
- 1996: India-Turkey Joint Business Council
- Key Sectors: Pharmaceuticals, steel, oil, aviation, healthcare

Cultural & P2P Ties

- Cultural exchanges: Music, films, yoga, and art exhibitions
- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, IDY

Strategic Importance

- Geopolitical Bridge: Asia and Europe
- Trade Hub: Key partner in the Middle East
- Tourism: Popular destination for Indians
- Multilateral Cooperation: G20, UN

Challenges

- Major arms supplier to Pakistan
- India aligned with Greece-backed Republic of Cyprus
- India supports Armenia militarily – conflict with Turkey-backed Azerbaijan
- Erdogan criticizes IMEC

Trade Relations

- **Trade Surplus: \$2.73 billion (FY25)**
- **Exports:**
 - Engineering goods (\$3 billion, ~50%)
 - Chemicals, electronics (MSMEs 35–40%)
- **Imports**
 - Fruits & nuts, Gold, Marble



SYLLABUS : GS Paper 2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora

Newspaper : Indian Express **Page No :** 1

Domestic Industry Pressures

- Apple Growers (Himachal Pradesh): Demand ban on subsidized Turkish apples
- Marble Processors (Udaipur): Seek curb on Turkish marble imports

Geopolitical Tensions Impacting Trade

- Turkey's Pro-Pakistan Actions - Drone supplies during Op Sindoor
- India revoking Celebi Aviation's security clearance (ground-handling sector)
- Tourism Dip:
 - 3 lakh Indian tourists in 2024
 - Shift to Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbek)

Government's Cautious Approach

- No Broad Trade Bans
- Targeted Restrictions: Limited to critical sectors (e.g., aviation security)



SYLLABUS : GS Paper 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment
Newspaper : Indian Express **Page No :** 13

'New base year for GDP, CPI, IIP from early 2026; Services survey from Jan'

WITH THE Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) undertaking a base revision exercise and expansion of its data indicators, key economic datasets — GDP, IIP and CPI — will see a new base from next year onwards. MoSPI Secretary SAURABH GANG said in an interview with ANCHAL MAGAZINE, Gang also said that the weights and items for the new retail inflation basket will now be linked with the Household Consumption and Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2023-24 instead of the earlier decision to derive it from HCES 2022-23. Edited excerpts:

At what stage is the Statistics Ministry on revision of base years for GDP, IIP and CPI? By when can we expect the base revision?

The base year revision exercise of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and Consumer Price Index (CPI) is currently underway. For GDP, the new series is scheduled to be released on February 22, 2025 with financial year 2022-23 as base year. For IIP, 2022-23 has been tentatively identified as the revised base. IIP on revised base would be released from 2025-27. For CPI, 2024 has been identified as the revised base year as the item basket and the weights of the items would be decided based on the NSO's Household Consumer Expenditure Survey (HCES) conducted in 2023-24. The new CPI series is expected to be published from the first quarter of 2026.

You mentioned that the item basket and the items' weightage for inflation would be decided based on HCES 2023-24. Some of the earlier statements from the Ministry had pointed out that the item basket would be based on HCES 2022-23. So, is it 2022-23 or 2023-24?

Initially, the Ministry decided to use 2022-23 HCES data for deriving weights and item basket for CPI base updation. Now, since data for HCES 2023-24 is released and available for use, the Ministry has decided to use the latest data that is HCES 2023-24 data for deriving weights and item basket for the new series.

How are the changes of segments in the CPI basket going to change? There were indications earlier that the housing segment will go beyond the government accommodation to capture the real picture of rentals and housing prices. What are the other items that will be included afresh or see a boost in the current inflation basket?

For the new CPI series with base year 2024, the item basket will be based on data from HCES 2023-24. The finalisation of both the item basket and the weighting diagram is currently in progress.

In the new series, chief things provided by the government or employers will not be covered. To better capture the true picture of rental and housing prices, rental data from rural areas is being explored.



releasing five PDS items in CPI is under discussion in the Ministry. MoSPI will release a white paper on the methodology in the public domain after its finalisation.

When is the next Economic Census going to be launched? What will be the changes in the statistical design for it?

Approval for the conduct of the next Economic Census is awaited. Preparatory activities for the same are underway. The EC will commence as soon as the approval process is completed. The time, the Ministry intends to make EC tech-driven by making use of end-to-end digital solutions having modules for data collection through mobile devices, data supervision & monitoring, data processing & report generation and dissemination dashboard.

The Ministry also brought out the forward-looking private capex survey last month. Since the response rate was low at 58.3%, a caveat was given to see the findings as indicative and representative of mainly larger enterprises. How will the survey results be expanded and refined going ahead?

To improve the response rate and enhance the quality and representativeness of the Forward-Looking Private Corporate Capex Survey, the Ministry plans several strategic interventions:

Data User Conference on CAPEX survey has been organised on May 22, 2025 in Hyderabad to sensitise researchers on the findings of the first survey.

The Regional Offices of the Field Operations Division will conduct targeted awareness and outreach campaigns to improve visibility and participation among enterprises across regions.

Collaborations with key industry bodies and business chambers will be undertaken to build trust, address concerns, and highlight the importance of participating in the survey. The sample size will be expanded to offset non-response bias, ensuring a more robust and statistically reliable dataset that better represents the broader private corporate sector.

Field officials will be deployed to assist enterprises in filling out the survey correctly, ensuring better data quality and improving the overall response rate. Web portal will include user-friendly navigation, integrated chatbot support, FAQs, and clearer instructions to facilitate smoother self-compilation by respondents.

The Ministry is planning other surveys such as the service sector survey that is also tapping into the data from the GSTN. What do you plan to cover through that survey? When are the results expected?

Service sector in India is growing rapidly and its contribution to the GDP of the country is the largest in recent years. But there is no comprehensive publicly available database of the incorporated service sector.

The contribution of the incorporated service sector in GDP is captured through the analysis of the data on profit and loss accounts and balance sheets, filed by the companies, to the MCA. NSO does this exercise for all the incorporated companies that have filed data to MCA. However, MCA data does not provide any state-level information and further the data is not available in public domain. This lack of comprehensive granular data at state level for the incorporated service sector, enterprises realise it difficult to assess the sector's performance at state level. For the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) providing data for the registered manufacturing sector, Annual Survey of Service Sector Enterprises (ASSESE) aims to bridge the gap for the incorporated service sector. ASSESE plans to utilise GSTN data as a base for the survey.

A pilot study of this survey has just been carried out and findings of the same have been published in the form of Technical Report on April 30, 2025. The experiences gained during the pilot are being harmonised into a full-fledged survey on ASSESE, which is expected to start from January 2026. The results of the same may be expected in 2027.

MoSPI has now started with a monthly bulletin for labour force indicators. What are the challenges and advantages in increasing the frequency of the dataset?

The PLFS launched in 2017 provided quarterly estimates of the total labour force indicators for urban areas only and the overall country level labour market estimates including those of the rural areas also were available only on the annual basis.

In order to address this issue, a revamped PLFS has been launched from January 2025 which will provide monthly and quarterly PLFS estimates of labour force indicators including those of the rural areas. This will give timely insights into the labour market, for better policy decisions. The main challenge in producing the monthly estimates from PLFS was the change in sampling strategy and increase in sample size. In the new PLFS 2025 the number of households to be surveyed is a little over 2.72 lakh, which is almost 2.5 times higher than the earlier sample size of 1.02 lakh households. It was covered up to December 2024. This needed more resource mobilisation.

FULL INTERVIEW ON www.indianexpress.com

Base Year Revisions for Key Indicators

- **GDP:** New series (base 2022-23) to be released on Feb 27, 2026
- **IIP:** Revised base (2022-23) from 2026-27
- **CPI:** New base (2024) using HCES 2023-24 data (weights & basket)

Changes in CPI Basket

- **HCES Shift:** From 2022-23 to 2023-24 for updated weights
- **Housing Adjustment:** Excludes government/employer-provided dwellings; explores rural rental data
- **PDS Items:** Methodology under discussion; white paper to be released

Data Source Expansions

- **GDP Calculation:**
 - New sources: GSTN, E-Vahan, UPI (NPCI), MCA-21
- **CPI Enhancements:**
 - Online platforms: Airfare, rail fare, OTT prices
 - Admin records: Petrol, diesel, LPG prices (via IRCTC, PPAC)
 - Tech-driven: Scanner data, e-commerce scraping under consideration

Surveys & New Initiatives

- **Economic Census:**
 - Tech-driven (mobile data collection, digital dashboards).
- **Private Capex Survey:**
 - 58.3% response rate (initial); plans for broader outreach, industry collaborations.



New Base Year for GDP, CPI, IIP



SYLLABUS : GS Paper 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment

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- **Upcoming Surveys:**

- **Health Expenditure Survey:**
Jan–Dec 2025
- **Domestic Tourism & Travel Surveys:** Launching July 2025–June 2026
- **Service Sector Survey:**
 - Uses GSTN data; pilot completed (Apr 2025)
 - Full survey from Jan 2026

Labour Market Reforms (PLFS 2025)

- **Monthly Estimates:** Rural + urban data (from Jan 2025)
- **Sample Size:** 2.72L households (2.6x increase)

- **New Data Points:**

- Education: Mean Years of Schooling
- Household Income: Rent, pensions, remittances (no detailed income estimates)

- **Challenges:**

- No back series due to design changes
- Higher precision expected from larger sample



China US: Weaponization of Tariffs



SYLLABUS : GS Paper 3: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora

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Tariffs & Competitiveness:

- "Tariff King" Label: India's tariffs higher than most developing nations
- 1991 Reforms: Tariff reduction boosted exports; reversed in 2017 hurt competitiveness
- Manufacturing Issues: High costs due to logistics, bureaucracy, power prices
- Currency Depreciation: Could aid exporters but risks inflation
- **US Tariffs Impact**
 - MFN Principle Violation: US adopting country-specific tariffs
 - Uncertainty: Disrupts global trade, FDI, and supply chains
- **US Protectionism & Rationale**
 - Rust Belt Decline: Job losses in old industries, but gains in tech/finance
 - China's Rise: trade surplus, tech, military
 - Biden's Approach: Initially targeted, now broad "weaponization of tariffs"
- **Protectionism vs. Reforms**
 - Sectoral Protection: Hurts exports by raising input costs
 - Solution: Fix infrastructure, logistics, credit access instead of tariffs.

Trade Policy with China

- Non-Transparent Subsidies: Counter with anti-dumping duties
- Overdependence: E.g., pharma APIs, rare earths – diversify sources

- Cybersecurity Risks: Ban untrusted electronics in critical infrastructure
- Balanced Approach: Allow low-cost solar imports but secure key sectors
- **US-China Tensions & India's Opportunity**
 - Friend-Shoring: If US shifts supply chains from China, India can attract FDI, tech
 - iPhone Example: Assembly

Deregulation & State Reforms

- Cut red tape for SMEs
- Tax Devolution: 16th FC should increase state shares
- Local Governance: empower municipalities
- **PLI Schemes – Boon or Burden?**
 - Subsidy Model: Supports industry without price hikes
 - Lack of Export Linkage: Unlike East Asia, no performance-based withdrawal
 - Need for Independent Review: By NITI Aayog/PMEAC, not ministries



SYLLABUS : GS Paper 2: Functioning of the Judiciary
Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 8

Judicial sensitivity to sentiments is a sign of regression

Indian courts today are not defending free speech. They are managing it. And in this curious inversion of constitutional values, we are witnessing a quiet retreat from the principle that animated Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution: that speech, even provocative, offensive, or unsettling, is the citizen's shield against tyranny – not its tool.

Once envisioned as the counter-majoritarian bulwark of our democracy, the judiciary now increasingly resembles an arbiter of decorum, demanding apologies and deference in the name of civility, sensitivity, or national pride. But when courts focus on what was said rather than why the right to say it must be protected, the Republic is left vulnerable to a new tyranny: that of sentiment, outrage, and the lowest tolerance denominator.

Let us begin with a chillingly ordinary example: a social media post by a 24-year-old man criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, after the ceasefire with Pakistan following Operation Sindoor in May 2025. Was this tasteless? Perhaps. But taste is not a constitutional metric. The Allahabad High Court thought otherwise. In rejecting the plea to quash the first information report (FIR), the Bench declared that "emotions cannot be permitted to overflow to an extent that constitutional authorities of the country are dragged into disrepute". That is a remarkable formulation. It subtly inverts the constitutional design: the citizen is no longer the source of power holding the state to account, but a child to be reprimanded for speaking too freely.

A validation of outrage

Instead of interpreting Article 19(1)(a) as a liberty that limits state power, courts have begun treating it as a licence that comes with behavioural conditions – conditions defined not by law but by the perceived dignity of public figures and institutions. Take the Kamal Haasan controversy in connection with his film, *Thug Life*. The actor made a remark about Kannada being a daughter of Tamil. The Karnataka High Court responded not by evaluating whether the actor's statement met the threshold of incitement, defamation, or hate, but by advising him to apologise to the "sentiments of the masses". This advice is corrosive. When courts suggest apologies for lawful speech, they set a precedent that expression must pass a popularity test. They validate the very outrage that threatens free speech, rather than shielding expression from it. An apology does not close the loop but only widens it, inviting further claims of offence. In *Ramveer Gautam Allahabadia vs Union Of India*, the 'digital content creator and podcaster' was confronted with judicial comments bordering on cultural supervision for his use of explicit language in a podcast. The court directed the



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Union to clarify whether such "vulgar" language fell outside constitutional protection. Here again, the concern was not whether the speech incited harm, but on whether it offended prevailing norms of taste and modesty – a dangerously subjective threshold. Similarly, historian and a professor, Ali Khan Mahmadabad, was dragged into proceedings after sharing critical views on the optics of India using a woman soldier to explain its war situation with Pakistan. The argument was that his comments hurt sentiments. That it even reached court underscores the problem: invoking hurt feelings is now sufficient to invite judicial scrutiny of constitutionally protected speech. The professor's scholarly critique became a matter for judicial assessment and a special investigation to assess whether there was any dog whistle intent that played on the fragility of the audience.

A misreading

Two disturbing patterns emerge from these cases.

First, the judiciary is increasingly equating speech that provokes emotional reactions with legally actionable harm. This misreads the Constitution and the rationale of a democracy. The test for restricting speech under Article 19(2) is not whether it angers, irritates, or offends but whether it incites violence, hatred or disrupts public order. Second, by encouraging apologies and moral policing of language, courts create a perverse incentive. The more outrage a comment generates, the more likely it is to be litigated. This does not protect society. It emboldens mobs and serial litigants. It creates a market for offence.

This shift is starkly evident in cases that involve the armed forces. In a recent judgment, the Allahabad High Court denied the Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, relief in a defamation case on his alleged derogatory remarks about the Indian Army. The High Court said that the freedom of speech does not include the freedom to "defame" the military. But defamation, as a legal standard, must be carefully assessed particularly when invoked by or on behalf of state institutions by busy-bodies.

Likewise, in a previous first information report against a man using the word "coward" to describe the Prime Minister after the recent military stand-down, the court saw no issue with Sections 152 and 353(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita being invoked – laws meant for threats to sovereignty and public mischief. These laws, meant for seditious scenarios, are being contorted to punish sarcasm and satire. It is telling that courts will routinely deny the quashing of FIRs in such cases, claiming that it is too early to interfere and that police investigations must run their course. But this abdication is neither neutral nor passive. For the citizen facing criminal prosecution, the process

itself is the punishment. The system does not need a conviction to chill speech. A summons and a charge sheet do the job. The Madras High Court has occasionally resisted this drift. But this was more about narrative correction than structural protection of speech.

Courts in India must return to a principle-centric model of speech protection. Instead of obsessing over what was said, they must ask whether the speaker's right was violated, and not someone else's sentiment. Apologies should not be judicial recommendations. They should be individual choices. Otherwise, courts become confessional booths where speech is absolved not by legal reasoning but by remorse. And remorse demanded is remorse devalued – it empowers the outraged, not the rational.

The signal to the citizen

Moreover, as long as laws such as sedition or the ever-morphing public order clauses remain vague, courts must lean toward liberty. The doctrine of "chilling effect" that is robust in American and European jurisprudence, has been acknowledged in India's courts but seldom enforced with spine. This is not just about high-profile speech or celebrities. It is about the slow attrition of constitutional confidence. When a YouTuber is told to bleep a joke, or a professor is dragged to court for a tweet, or a film-maker is told to grovel for linguistic pride the signal to the ordinary citizen is clear: express only what is safe, bland and agreeable.

But democracies are not built on agreeable speech. They thrive on disagreement – noisy, rude, even reckless at times. The test of a society's strength is not how well it tolerates politeness, but how it handles provocation. Free speech is not just about giving offence, but about withstanding it. If India is to preserve its democratic soul, it must restore the dignity of dissent. It must not demand the dignity of institutions at the cost of liberty.

Judges are the guardians of the Constitution, and not the curators of culture. They must protect the right to speak and not the comfort of the listener. Because when speech is chilled in courtrooms, freedom dies not with a bang, but with a sigh of deference. The new age of judicial sensitivity to sentiments is not a sign of progress. It is a sign of regression. It confuses harmony with homogeneity, and respect with restraint. Apologies should never be a legal strategy. And speech should not need blessings to be legitimate. Let our courts not forget that the Republic was not born from politeness but from protest. The Constitution came from the pen of a Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who also wrote, "...the world owes much to rebels who would dare to argue in the face of the pontiff and insist that he is not infallible".

The judiciary in India is eroding free speech by policing its content



SYLLABUS : GS Paper 2: Functioning of the Judiciary
Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 8

- Judiciary now acts as arbiter of decorum rather than protector of constitutional liberty
- Focus on "Civility": Courts prioritize sentiments, outrage, and national pride over free expression

Case Studies of Judicial Role

- Criticism of PM Modi (2025):
 - Allahabad HC upheld FIR against a 24-year-old for "disrepute" to constitutional authorities.
 - children needing reprimand, not source of power
- Kamal Haasan's Remarks:
 - Karnataka HC demanded apology for hurting linguistic sentiments
- Ranveer Allahabadia's Podcast:
 - Court questioned if "vulgar" language deserved constitutional protection
- Prof. Mahmudabad's Critique:
 - Judicial scrutiny over commentary on military optics

Disturbing Judicial Trends

- Equating Offense with Harm:
 - Courts conflate emotional reactions with legal harm (vs. Article 19(2) standards: incitement, public disorder).
- **Apology Culture:**
 - Encouraging apologies validates outrage mobs and chills dissent

- **Weaponizing Vague Laws:**
 - Sedition (Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita) used against sarcasm
 - Process as Punishment: FIRs and summons suffice to suppress speech

Consequences of Judicial Abdication

- **Chilling Effect:**
 - Citizens self-censor to avoid legal harassment
 - Examples: YouTubers told to "bleep" jokes, professors prosecuted for tweets
- **Erosion of Democratic Values:**
 - Democracies thrive on noisy, provocative dissent, not "safe" speech

Path Forward for Courts

- **Principle-Centric Approach:**
 - Ask: Was the speaker's right violated? Not: Did someone feel offended?
- **Reject Sentiment-Based Tests:**
 - Apologies should be personal choices, not judicial mandates
- **Strict Scrutiny of Vague Laws:**
 - Apply "chilling effect" doctrine (as in U.S./EU jurisprudence)
- **Protect Dissent:**
 - Ambedkar: "Rebels argue against pontiffs" – democracy needs defiance



Q1. Which of the following countries share a land border with Belgium?

1. France
2. Germany
3. Netherlands
4. Switzerland

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 2 and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: a

Q2. Consider the following pairs:

	Type of poor	Example
1.	Chronic poor	Casual workers
2.	Churning poor	Loss of job due to natural disaster
3.	Transient poor	Seasonal worker

How many of the above pair/s is/are correctly matched?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All Three
- d) None

Answer: a

Q3. Consider the following criteria:

1. A woman between the ages of 15 to 49 years is found to be undernourished.
2. No household member aged 10 years or older has completed six years of schooling.
3. Primary source of cooking fuel is dung, charcoal or wood.
4. No member of the household files an Income Tax Return.

A household is considered deprived if it fulfils how many of the above criteria as per the National Multidimensional Poverty Index?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) Only Three
- d) All four

Answer: c

Q4. The term “Friend-Shoring”, sometimes seen in the news, refers to:

- a) Strengthening military cooperation among allied nations
- b) Shifting supply chains to geopolitically aligned countries
- c) Promoting cultural exchanges among friendly nations
- d) Establishing trade blocs among neighbouring countries

Answer: b

Q5. Regarding the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, consider the following statements:

1. It aims to provide LPG connections to adult women from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe households.
2. The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Power.
3. It contributes to reducing indoor air pollution and improving women's health.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: c





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