

INDIA'S 2026 GDP UPDATE: WHAT IT MEANS FOR GLOBAL STANDING

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is set to revise the base year for calculating India's GDP from 2011-12 to 2022-23, with the updated data series to be released on February 27, 2026.

In addition, the base years for the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and Consumer Price Index (CPI) will be updated to 2022-23 and 2023-24 respectively, reflecting broader efforts to align key macroeconomic indicators with current economic realities.

Rationale Behind GDP Base Year Revisions

- The upcoming 2026 GDP base year revision will be the eighth such update in India's economic history.
- **Primary Purpose of Revising the Base Year**
 - To ensure more accurate measurement of the economy.
 - Precise GDP data is essential for policy formulation, business decisions, and broader economic analysis.
- **Complexity of GDP Estimation**
 - GDP tries to capture the entire economic activity in one number, but estimating it is challenging because:
 - It must exclude the value of intermediate goods to avoid double counting.
 - GDP only includes the market value of final goods and services.
 - Even when data is available, calculations are complex; often, all required data isn't fully accurate or updated.
- **Evolving Economic Structure**
 - India's economy has transformed structurally over the decades:
 - Earlier: Predominantly agrarian economy.

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- Now: Services sector contributes over 55% to GDP; agriculture's share has declined.
- Estimating output in these sectors requires different data sources and methods, reflecting the economy's changing nature.
- **Improvements in Data and Methodology**
 - With better data availability and evolving global best practices, statistical methods must be revised to:
 - Expand sectoral coverage.
 - Use updated datasets.
 - Reflect new economic activities (e.g. digital economy).

Benefits of Regular Revisions in GDP Base Year and Methodology

- **Reflects Structural Changes in the Economy**
 - Regular updates help capture shifts in economic composition.
 - New and emerging industries can be included, while outdated sectors can be excluded.
 - This ensures GDP calculations stay aligned with present-day realities.
- **Provides Accurate Measure of Real Growth**
 - Revising the base year helps in better adjustment for inflation.
 - It improves the estimation of real GDP, which reflects actual increase in output, not just price rise.
 - This leads to a clearer picture of true economic performance, aiding policymakers and analysts.

THE UNITED NATIONS OCEANS CONFERENCE (UNOC)

The United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC), held in France, concluded with 56 out of the required 60 countries ratifying the **Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)** agreement, also known as the **High Seas Treaty**.

About 2025 UN Ocean Conference

- The third edition of UNOC (2025) focused on **accelerating global action to protect oceans**, especially **international waters** beyond national boundaries.
- It was co-hosted by **France and Costa Rica**.
- Theme - “**Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean**”.
- The Conference sought to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (**SDG14 - Life Below Water**), with three main priorities, to produce an ambitious Nice Ocean Action Plan:
 - **Priority 1:** Working towards completion of multilateral processes linked to the ocean
 - **Priority 2:** Mobilizing finance resources for the SDG14 and supporting the development of a sustainable blue economy
 - **Priority 3:** Strengthen and better disseminate knowledge linked to marine sciences to enhance policy-making

Key Achievements of the United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC)

- **Major Financial Commitments**
 - The European Commission pledged €1 billion for ocean conservation, sustainable fishing, and marine science.
 - Germany announced a €100 million programme to clear old munitions from the Baltic and North Seas.
 - New Zealand committed \$52 million to support ocean governance in the Pacific Islands.
 - Italy allocated €6.5 million to improve marine surveillance and protection.
 - Canada contributed \$9 million to the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance for climate resilience in vulnerable coastal regions.

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- **Expansion of Marine Protected Areas**
 - French Polynesia pledged to establish the world's largest marine protected area, covering its entire exclusive economic zone (~5 million sq. km).
 - Spain committed to creating five new marine protected areas, aiming to protect 25% of its marine territory.
- **New Global Coalitions and Initiatives**
 - **The High Ambition Coalition** for a Quiet Ocean was launched by 37 countries, led by Panama and Canada, to combat ocean noise pollution.
 - A UN agency collective initiated the **One Ocean Finance** process to mobilize funding from blue economy sectors.

WHAT IS OPERATION SINDHU?



- It was launched by the Government of India to **evacuate Indian nationals from Iran** in view of the deteriorating situation as a result of the ongoing conflict between Iran and Israel.
- More than **10,000 Indians are currently in Iran**, including around **6,000 students**.
- **In the first leg** of the operation, **110 Indian students** from northern Iran were successfully **evacuated and transported by road to Yerevan, Armenia**, under the supervision of Indian Missions in Iran and Armenia.
- The Indian embassy in Tehran, together with the mission in Armenia, has been actively relocating citizens from high-risk areas within Iran to safer zones while coordinating further evacuation efforts via all available routes.
- To oversee and support the operation, the government has established a **24×7 Control Room in New Delhi** to monitor the situation and provide assistance to affected nationals.
- Additionally, the **Embassy of India in Tehran has set up** its own **24×7 emergency helpline** to assist citizens on the ground.
- Additional phases of Operation Sindhu are anticipated to proceed as developments occur.

PERFORMANCE GRADING INDEX (PGI) 2.0

- The Union Ministry of Education released the Performance Grading Index for Districts (PGI-D) 2.0 for the academic year 2023-24.
- This upgraded framework assesses **school education quality** across States and Union Territories (UTs) on a scale of 1,000 points.
- It measures performance across multiple domains such as:
 - **Learning Outcomes, Access, Infrastructure, Equity, Governance, and Teacher Education**

Top Performers: Chandigarh, Punjab, and Delhi

- **Chandigarh** secured the highest rank this year, becoming the only State/UT placed in the fifth-highest grade, **Prachesta-1**, with a score of 719 out of 1,000.
 - To attain this grade, a region must score between 701-760. The city showed balanced strength across domains such as learning outcomes, infrastructure, and equity.
- Following Chandigarh, ten other States and UTs were placed in **Prachesta-3** (scores between 581-640), including:
 - **Punjab, Delhi, Gujarat, Kerala, Odisha, Goa, Haryana, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu**
- These regions demonstrated consistent performance in indicators such as access to education, infrastructure development, and educational governance.

Bottom-Ranked and Lagging States

- **Meghalaya** scored the lowest in the PGI 2.0 with 417 points and was the only State placed in the lowest performance level, **Akanshi-3** (401-460 score bracket).
- Other States such as Bihar, Assam, Telangana, Jharkhand, Tripura, Manipur, Chhattisgarh, and the Northeastern States (Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh) also performed poorly, falling into the **Akanshi-2** category (scores between 461-520).

- These States struggled primarily with issues related to student retention, basic infrastructure, and governance-related challenges.

Middle Performers and Average Scores

- Fourteen States and UTs, including Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, were placed in the **Akanshi-1** category, scoring between 521-580.
- These regions performed moderately well but still have considerable scope for improvement, especially in learning outcomes and teacher training.

States Showing Highest Improvements

- The PGI 2.0 also highlighted the States that made the most significant improvements over the previous year (2022-23):
 - **Bihar and Telangana** showed the **most progress in access to education**, with enhancements in student enrolment, retention rates, and transition to higher grades.
 - **Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, and Telangana** made **notable improvements in school infrastructure**, with better availability of drinking water, electricity, clean toilets, and digital learning tools.
- These gains demonstrate the effectiveness of targeted interventions and public investments in school systems in underperforming regions.

PGI Methodology and Grading System

- The PGI 2.0 assigns scores based on weighted indicators. For instance, if the indicator “proficiency in Mathematics in Grade 5” carries a weightage of 20 and a State has 50% of students achieving the minimum proficiency, the score awarded is 10 (20 x 0.5).
- This method ensures that the quality of education is measured holistically, accounting for both outcomes and enabling conditions.
- Despite progress, no State or UT has yet achieved the highest performance grade, **Utkarsh**, which requires a score above 90% (761-1,000 points).
- This indicates the need for accelerated reforms across the country.

THE REAL CHALLENGES OF FOREIGN CAMPUSES

- At the heart of India's move to allow **foreign branch campuses** lies a **grand ambition**: to internationalise its higher education system, attract global expertise, and offer students a cosmopolitan learning experience without having to study abroad.
- **In theory, this policy holds immense potential.** By bringing in world-class curricula, pedagogical practices, and academic cultures, foreign campuses could complement domestic institutions and elevate academic standards across the board.
- Furthermore, **such campuses can create competitive pressures on Indian private universities**, pushing them toward innovation, accountability, and higher quality.
- For **India to truly benefit from this model**, both the **government and partnering institutions must focus not just on access and branding**, but on the deeper layers of academic substance and sustainable impact.

Challenges in a Crowded Educational Landscape

- **Political Uncertainty**
 - Globally, **transnational education is undergoing a period of flux.**
 - **Political uncertainty in the United States**, for instance, has severely affected outward-looking higher education strategies.
 - In India, **where elite institutions like the IITs and IIMs already command global respect and are expanding their international partnerships**, these **foreign entrants risk being seen as second-tier options** unless they can offer something distinctly valuable.
- **Academic Identity**
 - **Many of these campuses focus on market-driven disciplines**, business, data analytics, and computer science, which are already well-covered by high-performing Indian institutions. Without a broader academic mission or research agenda, these campuses may struggle to differentiate themselves.

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- Their narrow offerings, small scale, and often provisional infrastructures make them vulnerable to being perceived as diploma mills, institutions that confer degrees without rigorous scholarship or institutional depth.
- In this competitive environment, **branding alone cannot sustain credibility.**

Ways Ahead to Overcome These Challenges

- **Aligning with Local Needs**
 - From India's perspective, the challenge is not simply to attract foreign institutions but to attract the right ones, institutions aligned with local aspirations and capable of long-term engagement.
 - Universities from the Global North may be motivated by revenue generation, brand extension, or international recruitment goals.
 - But unless their Indian ventures also align with domestic academic and developmental needs, these campuses will remain peripheral.
- **Focus on Regulatory and Academic Ecosystem**
 - India must carefully evaluate each proposal based on several criteria: academic excellence, faculty strength, research orientation, willingness to engage with local challenges, and the ability to offer programs that genuinely complement existing Indian offerings.
 - Merely being a foreign institution should not be a qualification.

Conclusion

- The entry of foreign university campuses into India's higher education space is both a moment of opportunity and a test of policy wisdom.
- Done right, it can enrich India's academic landscape, provide new learning pathways for students, and foster global partnerships.
- Done hastily or superficially, it may undermine public trust, devalue academic integrity, and stall the broader internationalisation effort.
- What is needed now is a measured, criteria-driven approach, one that welcomes collaboration but insists on quality, relevance, and long-term commitment.

IDUKKI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



- **Location:** It is located in Kerala
- It covers forests surrounding the **Idukki Arch Dam**.
- **Terrain:** The terrain of the sanctuary is characterized by steep mountains, valleys, and hills.

Topography: Altitude ranging from 450 to 1272 m. The highest peak is **Vanjur Medu** (1272 m).

Rivers: The major rivers flowing through the area are **Periyar and Cheruthoniar**.

- **Rainfall:** Average rainfall is 3800 mm.

Vegetation: West Coast Tropical Evergreen forests, Semi Evergreen forests, Moist Deciduous Forests, Hill shoals, and Grasslands.

Flora: Forests are essentially dense teak, rosewood, jackfruit, ebony, cinnamon, and diverse bamboo species.

Fauna:

- It is home to Elephants, bison, sambar deer, wild dogs, jungle cats, tiger, wild boar etc apart from various species of **snakes** including cobra, viper, krait, etc.
- Birds include jungle fowl, myna, **laughing thrush, black bulbul**, peafowl, woodpecker, kingfisher, etc.
- It is home to the endangered species of **the Nilgiri Tahr**.