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National Statistics Day 2026 & SDGs–National Indicator Framework (NIF) Progress Report 2026

Published On: 03-07-2026

Recent Developments:

- The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** celebrated the **20th National Statistics Day** on **29 June 2026** to commemorate the **133rd Birth Anniversary of Prof. P. C. Mahalanobis**, widely regarded as the **Father of Indian Statistics**.
- On the occasion, **MoSPI** released the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – National Indicator Framework (NIF) Progress Report, 2026**, presenting India's progress across all **17 SDGs**.
- The **2026 theme** was "**Unlocking the Potential of Administrative Data**", emphasizing the use of routinely generated government data for **evidence-based policymaking** and improved governance.

National Statistics Day:

About:

- **National Statistics Day** has been observed every year on **29 June** since **2007** to honour the contributions of **Prof. P. C. Mahalanobis** to India's statistical system.
- The observance promotes awareness about the importance of **official statistics, data-driven governance, and scientific policymaking**, especially among students and young researchers.
- **Administrative Data** refers to data generated during routine government functions, including **tax administration, civil registration, welfare schemes, health records, education databases, and land records**, which can supplement or reduce dependence on costly sample surveys.

Objectives:

- Promote the use of **reliable statistical systems** in socio-economic planning and public policy.
- Strengthen **data quality, transparency, accountability, and evidence-based governance**.
- Encourage adoption of **modern statistical techniques**, digital databases, and administrative datasets.

Prof. P. C. Mahalanobis: Contributions

About:

- **Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis (1893–1972)** laid the foundation of India's modern statistical architecture and transformed statistics into an essential tool for national development.

Major Contributions:

- Founded the **Indian Statistical Institute (ISI)** in **1931**, which became an **Institution of National Importance** in **1959**.
- Established **Sankhya** in **1933**, India's first dedicated statistical research journal.

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- Conceptualized the **National Sample Survey (NSS)** in **1950**, pioneering scientific sample survey methodology for national data collection.
- Played a leading role in establishing the **Central Statistical Organisation (CSO)**, strengthening India's official statistical framework.
- Served as a member of the **Planning Commission** and designed the **Mahalanobis Four-Sector Model**, which guided the **Second Five-Year Plan (1956–61)** by emphasizing heavy industries and capital goods.
- Developed the **Mahalanobis Distance** in **1930**, a statistical measure extensively used in **machine learning, artificial intelligence, pattern recognition, cluster analysis, multivariate statistics, and anomaly detection**.
- Demonstrated that scientifically designed **sample surveys** could produce reliable national estimates at significantly lower cost than complete enumeration.
- Applied statistical analysis in **meteorology, flood management, agriculture, and economic planning**, demonstrating the practical value of applied statistics.
- Served as **Chairman of the United Nations Subcommittee on Statistical Sampling (1947–1951)**.
- Elected **Fellow of the Royal Society, London** in **1945** and honoured with the **Padma Vibhushan** in **1968**.

National Indicator Framework (NIF):

About:

- The **National Indicator Framework (NIF)** serves as India's principal statistical framework for monitoring progress towards the **17 Sustainable Development Goals**.
- It has been developed by **MoSPI** in consultation with **NITI Aayog, United Nations agencies, Ministries, and other stakeholders**.
- The **2026 Framework** comprises **277 national indicators**, covering all SDGs.
- The framework is periodically revised by the **High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC)** to maintain consistency with the **Global Indicator Framework (GIF)** while incorporating national priorities.
- It also supports decentralized monitoring through **State Indicator Frameworks (SIFs)** and **District Indicator Frameworks (DIFs)**.
- **NITI Aayog** publishes the **SDG India Index**, while **MoSPI** develops statistical indicators and maintains national SDG databases.

Major Findings of SDGs–NIF Progress Report 2026:

SDG 1: No Poverty

- **Multidimensional Poverty** declined from **24.85% (2015–16)** to **14.96% (2019–21)**.
- Population covered under **social protection systems** increased from **22% (2019)** to **65.3% (2026)**.
- Major contributors include **PM Jan Dhan Yojana, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)**, financial inclusion, and targeted welfare delivery.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

- **Child underweight** prevalence declined from **35.7%** to **31.8%**.
- **Stunting** reduced from **38.4%** to **29.3%**.
- Improvements were supported by **POSHAN Abhiyaan, PM POSHAN**, nutrition interventions, and maternal-child health programmes.

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

- **Maternal Mortality Ratio** declined from **122** to **87** per **1,00,000 live births**.
- Institutional deliveries attended by **skilled health personnel** increased from **81.4%** to **91.3%**.
- **Under-five mortality, neonatal mortality, and TB treatment coverage** showed substantial improvement.

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- Major contributors include **National Health Mission, Ayushman Bharat, Mission Indradhanush, and Janani Suraksha Yojana.**

SDG 4: Quality Education

- Expansion of **internet-enabled schools** from **46.3%** to **84.2%** significantly improved digital learning capacity.
- Progress was supported by **Samagra Shiksha** and the **National Education Policy 2020.**

SDG 5: Gender Equality

- **Sex Ratio at Birth** improved from **896** to **918.**
- Female participation in the labour force increased steadily.
- Women's **Self Help Groups (SHGs)** linked to banking systems expanded significantly through financial inclusion initiatives.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

- Rural households with **tap water connections** increased from **48.15%** to **81.81%.**
- **Wastewater treatment** capacity expanded substantially.
- **Water-use efficiency** improved through better water management.
- Key programmes include **Jal Jeevan Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission, and Atal Bhujal Yojana.**

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

- India achieved **100% household electrification.**
- **Renewable energy capacity** nearly tripled on a per-capita basis.
- **Energy intensity of GDP** declined, indicating improved energy efficiency.
- Major drivers include **Saubhagya, PM-KUSUM, and PLI Scheme for Solar PV Modules.**

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

- **Unemployment Rate** declined from **6.1%** to **3.1%.**
- Tourism registered strong post-pandemic recovery.
- Key initiatives include **Startup India, PM Mudra Yojana, Swadesh Darshan 2.0, and e-Visa expansion.**

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

- Manufacturing employment increased gradually.
- **4G network coverage** reached **99.51%** of the population.
- **BharatNet, Startup India, and Atal Innovation Mission** strengthened digital and innovation infrastructure.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

- **Rural and Urban Gini Coefficients** declined, indicating reduced consumption inequality.
- Female participation in professional and technical occupations improved steadily.
- Financial inclusion and welfare portability contributed to more equitable development.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

- **Door-to-door waste collection** reached **97%** of urban wards.
- Waste processing capacity expanded significantly.
- India implemented a national disaster risk reduction strategy aligned with the **Sendai Framework (2015–2030).**

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- Important schemes include **AMRUT**, **Smart Cities Mission**, and **PMAY**.

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

- Number of **waste recycling plants** increased substantially.
- **Post-harvest storage losses** for food grains declined sharply.
- **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** strengthened circular economy initiatives covering plastics, e-waste, batteries, and tyres.

SDG 13: Climate Action

- India updated its **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** and long-term climate strategy.
- Industrial compliance with environmental standards improved.
- Climate actions continue under the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)** and State Action Plans.

SDG 14: Life Below Water

- **Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)** from fisheries increased considerably.
- Conservation initiatives include **mangrove restoration**, **coral transplantation**, **artificial reefs**, and coastal ecosystem management.

SDG 15: Life on Land

- **Forest cover** increased moderately.
- **Ramsar wetland coverage** expanded significantly.
- Important initiatives include **Green India Mission**, **Project Tiger**, **Project Elephant**, **Nagar Van Yojana**, and the **National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2024–2030)**.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

- Judge-population ratio and court infrastructure improved.
- **Aadhaar** coverage exceeded **95%**.
- India continues to maintain an **independent National Human Rights Institution** consistent with the **Paris Principles**.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

- India's share in **global merchandise exports** and **commercial services exports** increased.
- International partnerships, digital governance, trade expansion, and institutional cooperation supported SDG implementation.

Importance of Administrative Data:

Significance:

- Enables **real-time policymaking** and faster programme evaluation.
- Reduces dependence on expensive, time-consuming surveys.
- Improves targeting of welfare schemes through integrated databases.
- Enhances transparency, accountability, and monitoring of government programmes.
- Supports **Digital India**, **DBT**, **Aadhaar**, **PM Gati Shakti**, and data-driven governance.

Challenges:

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Key Issues:

- Variations in data quality across States and departments reduce comparability.
- Interoperability between multiple government databases remains incomplete.
- Data privacy, cybersecurity, and informed consent require stronger safeguards.
- Capacity building in statistical methods, data science, and digital governance remains essential.
- Timely reporting and standardization of administrative records require continuous institutional strengthening.

Way Forward:

Measures Needed:

- Strengthen **official statistical systems** through greater use of administrative datasets and modern analytical tools.
- Improve integration between **MoSPI**, Ministries, States, and local bodies for seamless data sharing.
- Promote **Artificial Intelligence, Big Data Analytics, GIS, and Machine Learning** for official statistics.
- Ensure stronger safeguards under the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act** while expanding data-driven governance.
- Enhance statistical literacy, research collaboration, and open-data initiatives for evidence-based public policy.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Facts:

- **National Statistics Day: 29 June.**
- **Started: 2007.**
- **2026 Theme: "Unlocking the Potential of Administrative Data."**
- **Father of Indian Statistics: Prof. P. C. Mahalanobis.**
- **Indian Statistical Institute: 1931.**
- **Sankhya Journal: 1933.**
- **National Sample Survey: 1950.**
- **Institution of National Importance (ISI): 1959.**
- **Mahalanobis Distance: Developed in 1930.**
- **Padma Vibhushan: 1968.**
- **National Indicator Framework (2026): 277 indicators.**

Monitoring Institutions: MoSPI (statistical framework), NITI Aayog (SDG India Index)