

# THE PALA CIVIL TIMES



Civil Service Institute | Pala | Thiruvananthapuram | South India's Premier Civil Service Coaching Institute | www.civilservicepala.org



Self-enumeration phase of Census begins in Jharkhand

THE HINDU : 02-05-2026 : Page 3



GST revenue hits record ₹ 2.43 lakh crore in April

THE HINDU : 02-05-2026 : Page 1



In a first, Karnataka govt. unveils digital grievance portal for gig workers

THE HINDU 02-05-2026 : Page 4

## WEEK

## IN

## A GLANCE

**27** India - Newzealand FTA takes shape

**28** China - Pakistan space cooperation

**29** CITU raises complains to ILO

**30** NSO Survey reveals rural healthcare reality

**01** Centre warns revenue-deficit states



### EDITORIALS DECODED

Page 5



Work in progress



Language policing is bad politics, bad economics



Bad policy



## Self-enumeration phase of Census begins in Jharkhand

Hemant Soren recently launched the self-enumeration phase of Census 2027 in Jharkhand by registering his own details on the official portal, marking the beginning of a key preparatory stage of India's upcoming national Census. Census 2027, the 16th Census overall and 8th since Independence, is crucial as it provides granular socio-economic and demographic data that forms the backbone of policy formulation, welfare delivery, and development planning across the country.

### Phases of Census 2027

The exercise will be conducted in two phases:

- **Phase I:** Houselisting and Housing Census (HLO) (April–September 2026), collecting data on housing conditions, assets, and amenities.
- **Phase II:** Population Enumeration (PE) (February 2027), focusing on demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

This phased approach ensures systematic and comprehensive data collection.

### Digital Transformation & Self-Enumeration

Aligned with Digital India, Census 2027 introduces technology-driven data collection:

- Enumerators will use a mobile application (**HLO App**).
- Citizens can opt for **Self-Enumeration (SE)** via an online portal.
- This marks a shift toward faster, more accurate, and transparent data systems.

### Self-Enumeration: Features and Process

Self-enumeration allows households to submit data online in advance:

- Available in 16 languages (Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu), enhancing accessibility.
- Requires mobile-based login.
- Generates a Self-Enumeration ID (SE ID), which must be shared with enumerators for validation.

Census 2027 represents a major evolution in India's statistical system, combining traditional enumeration with digital innovation. Ensuring inclusivity, data reliability, and technological robustness will be critical to maximise its role in shaping equitable and evidence-based development policies.



### Importance for Governance and Policy

Census data informs:

- Targeted welfare schemes and beneficiary identification
- Resource allocation and development planning
- Understanding trends in migration, fertility, employment, and literacy
- It acts as the backbone of governance, enabling better delivery of public services.

### Key Issues and Emerging Dimensions

**Digital Divide and Unequal Access :** Limited internet connectivity, low digital literacy, and lack of access to smartphones especially in rural and vulnerable populations may restrict participation in self-enumeration, leading to exclusion or underreporting.

**Data Privacy and Security Concerns :** The collection of sensitive personal and household data through online platforms raises concerns about data breaches, misuse, and the need for robust cybersecurity and legal safeguards.

**Accuracy and Verification Challenges :** Self-reported data may suffer from errors, omissions, or intentional misreporting, making the role of enumerators crucial in verifying and validating the information submitted online.

**Inter-State and Administrative Coordination Issues :** Differences in administrative capacity, preparedness, and timelines across States can create inconsistencies in data collection, requiring strong coordination mechanisms for uniform implementation.

## In a first, Karnataka govt. unveils digital grievance portal for gig workers

Karnataka has operationalised a first-of-its-kind digital grievance redressal system for gig workers through the Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System (IPGRS). Developed by the Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers' Board, it allows workers to formally raise complaints regarding wages, working conditions, and platform-related disputes.



### Why was it needed?

The rapid expansion of the gig economy in India has created a large workforce engaged in platform-based services like ride-hailing, delivery, and domestic work. However, these workers often fall outside traditional employer-employee frameworks, limiting access to labour rights and social security protections.

Around **12 lakh gig workers** have already been identified in the State of Karnataka. At the national level, NITI Aayog estimates that **India's gig workforce could reach 2.35 crore by 2030**, underlining the urgency of regulatory interventions.

### Key Features of the Mechanism

- Complaints filed on IPGRS are automatically routed to Internal Dispute Resolution Committees (IDRCs) set up by aggregator platforms.
- A time-bound resolution framework ensures accountability.
- The government acts as a facilitator and monitor, ensuring transparency and effective communication between workers and platforms.

This creates a formal institutional channel where none existed earlier.

### Legal and Institutional Framework

The initiative is backed by the Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act and Rules, which mandate platforms to establish grievance committees. This marks a shift towards formalising gig work within a regulatory framework.

Karnataka's model represents a significant step towards formalising gig work, but its success depends on effective implementation and expansion of social security measures. A coordinated national framework could further ensure equitable, secure, and sustainable growth of the gig economy.

### Key Issues and Challenges

- **Lack of formal labour recognition:** Gig workers are treated as independent contractors, limiting legal safeguards.
- **Platform dominance:** Algorithm-driven work allocation creates power asymmetry in wages and conditions.
- **Weak social security:** Limited access to insurance, pensions, and income stability.
- **Implementation gaps:** Ensuring compliance by private aggregators and timely dispute resolution remains uncertain.

### What lies next?

The initiative marks a significant step towards formalising the gig economy within India's labour governance framework, by extending regulatory oversight to a previously informal and weakly regulated sector. It enhances institutional accountability of digital platforms, reduces information asymmetry, and provides workers with a credible mechanism for grievance redressal. From an economic perspective, it contributes to inclusive growth by improving income security and working conditions, while also signalling a policy shift towards embedding social protection within technology-driven employment models. In the long run, such measures can strengthen labour market resilience and ensure that the expansion of the digital economy remains equitable and sustainable.

## India to tap augmented solar capacity, coal to weather El Nino, summer power demand

India is witnessing a surge in electricity demand due to peak summer conditions and the likelihood of El Niño, which is associated with heatwaves and weaker monsoons. This has intensified the need for reliable and scalable energy sources to ensure uninterrupted power supply.

### Current Energy Mix: Coal Dominance with Rising Solar Share

At a peak demand of 256.1 GW (April 2026), thermal (coal-based) power remained dominant, contributing 66.9% of generation, while solar power accounted for 21.5% on that day. Despite rapid renewable growth, coal continues to serve as the base-load backbone of India's power system.

### Solar Expansion and Structural Constraints

India has significantly expanded its solar capacity, adding a record **44.6 GW in 2025-26**, with solar now accounting for nearly **30%** of installed power capacity. However, this rapid capacity addition has not translated proportionately into electricity generation due to structural and technological constraints. Solar energy is inherently intermittent, being available only during daylight hours and subject to weather variability, which limits its reliability as a base-load source. Further, the absence of large-scale battery storage systems restricts the ability to store surplus daytime power for use during peak evening demand. In addition, grid integration challenges often lead to curtailment of solar power.

### Energy Security: Adequate Coal Availability

India currently holds about 200 million tonnes of coal stock, sufficient for over 80 days of consumption at current usage levels. This ensures short-term energy security, especially during periods of peak demand and climate-induced stress.

India's energy pathway must focus on accelerating storage solutions, strengthening grid infrastructure, and enhancing renewable integration, while ensuring short-term stability through conventional sources. A calibrated approach is essential to achieve both energy security and climate commitments in a warming world.



### Climate Linkages and Demand Pressures

India Meteorological Department has indicated that El Niño conditions may persist through the monsoon season, potentially causing:

- Higher temperatures and heatwaves
- Weak rainfall and longer dry spells
- Increased electricity demand (cooling needs)
- This adds pressure on conventional and renewable energy systems alike.

### Key Issues and Challenges

- Energy transition dilemma: Continued reliance on coal conflicts with clean energy goals.
- Grid integration challenges: Renewable intermittency requires stronger transmission and storage infrastructure.
- Climate vulnerability: Heatwaves increase demand while affecting hydropower and agriculture.
- Environmental trade-offs: Higher coal usage raises emissions, impacting climate commitments.

### Implications for Governance and Economy

The situation underscores the need for a balanced energy strategy, combining reliability (coal) with sustainability (renewables). It highlights gaps in infrastructure readiness, storage technology, and grid flexibility, which are critical for managing future demand and climate shocks.

**The Indian EXPRESS**

## Language policing is bad politics, bad economics

The decision of the Maharashtra government to mandate Marathi-language proficiency for auto and taxi drivers raises concerns over constitutional rights, economic efficiency, and social inclusion. While the deadline extension offers limited relief, the policy continues to impose barriers on internal migrants, potentially restricting their right to livelihood and mobility guaranteed under the Constitution. Such measures risk undermining labour mobility, which is essential for urban economies like Mumbai, and weaken the idea of a unified national market. The move also reflects a broader pattern of linguistic politics, where identity-based assertions can slip into exclusionary practices, disproportionately affecting vulnerable migrant workers. Instead of addressing structural issues in public transport such as affordability and accessibility, the policy diverts attention toward parochial concerns, posing a challenge to inclusive growth and cooperative federalism.

**Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial**

*Imposing linguistic requirements for employment raises questions about constitutional freedoms and economic efficiency. Critically examine the implications of such policies on internal migration, labour markets, and national integration in India.*



## Work in progress

The 80th round of the health survey by the National Statistical Office highlights significant expansion in health insurance coverage following the rollout of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, but reveals persistent gaps in actual access and financial protection. Despite wider coverage, hospitalisation rates remain below earlier levels, indicating that insurance does not lead to access due to hidden costs and low reimbursement rates, which lead private hospitals to shift expenses onto patients. While public healthcare has improved affordability, especially in primary care, rising non-communicable diseases and higher mean out-of-pocket expenditure point to growing long-term cost burdens. The coexistence of reduced median expenses with rising catastrophic costs reflects uneven financial protection, where the poor face exclusion and the middle class bears high healthcare shocks. The findings underline the need to strengthen public sector capacity, particularly in tertiary care to ensure effective, equitable, and comprehensive health coverage.

**Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial**

*Despite the expansion of health insurance coverage under schemes like PMJAY, out-of-pocket expenditure and access barriers persist in India. Critically examine the structural challenges in achieving effective financial protection in healthcare and suggest reforms.*

thehindu **businessline.**

TUESDAY - MARCH 31, 2026

## Bad policy

The decision of the Central government to sharply raise commercial LPG prices while keeping retail prices of petrol, diesel, and domestic LPG unchanged, despite a steep rise in global crude prices due to the Iran-U.S. conflict, reflects a n economically strained approach. With India heavily dependent on imported crude, insulating consumers from rising costs shifts the burden onto oil marketing companies like Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum, and Hindustan Petroleum, leading to mounting under-recoveries and fiscal stress. While short-term consumer protection may be politically expedient by insulating them from fuel costs, it distorts market signals, sustains demand, and increases subsidy burdens, with broader implications for inflation and currency stability. The situation highlights the need for a balanced burden-sharing mechanism among the government, consumers, and firms, alongside a more consistent fuel pricing policy that aligns with global price movements to ensure long-term economic sustainability.

**Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial**

*Critically examine the implications of government intervention in fuel pricing in India. How does insulating consumers from global crude price fluctuations affect fiscal stability, market efficiency, and energy demand?*

## GST revenue hits record ₹ 2.43 lakh crore in April

India's GST revenue reached a record high of ₹2.43 lakh crore in April 2026, marking an 8.7% year-on-year growth. Net collections after refunds stood at ₹2.11 lakh crore (up 7.3%). April collections, reflecting March activity, are typically high due to year-end compliance and reporting adjustments.

### Key Drivers of Growth

The surge in GST revenue was largely driven by imports, with collections from imports rising sharply by about 26%. In contrast, domestic transaction-based collections grew modestly at around 4.3%, indicating relatively slower growth in internal consumption demand.

### Understanding GST and GST 2.0

Goods and Services Tax (GST), introduced in 2017, unified multiple indirect taxes into a single system, reducing cascading effects and improving compliance.

**GST 2.0 (2025)** represents a major reform with rate rationalisation (simplified slabs like 5% and 18%), enhanced digitalisation, and a focus on easing the tax burden on common consumers and key sectors.

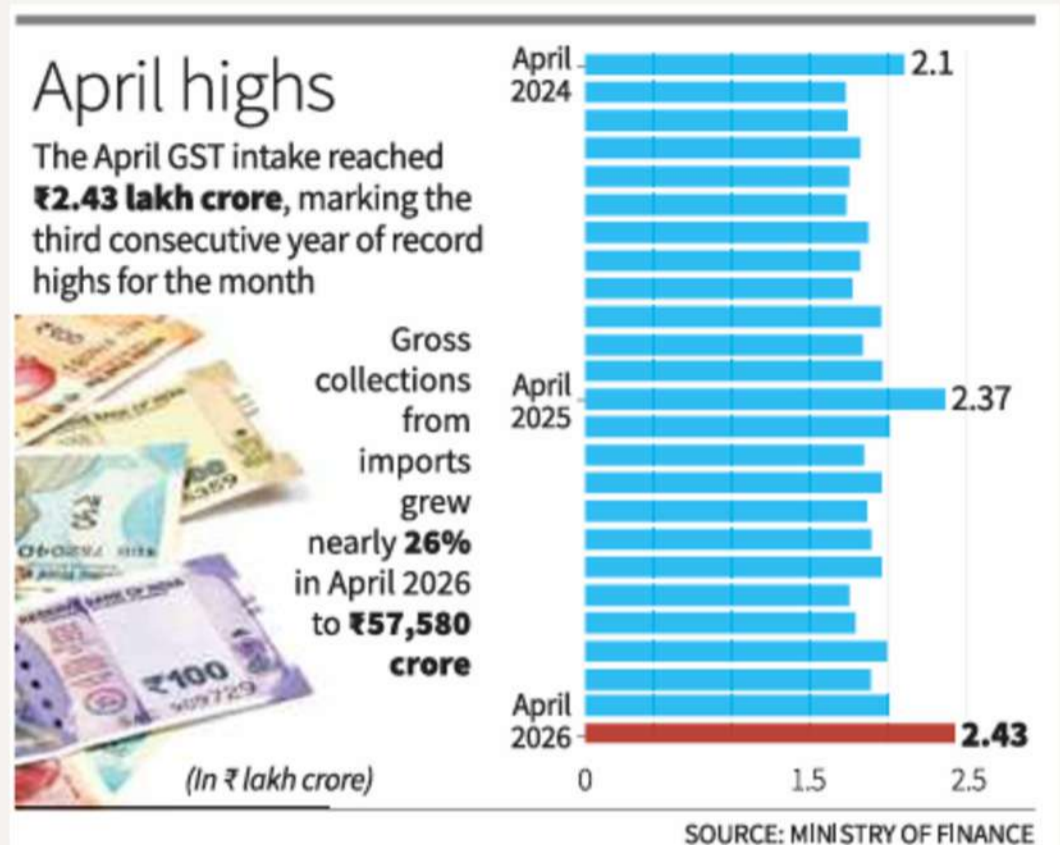
#### Key Takeaways

- GST simplified to a **two-slab structure (5% & 18%)**
- GST reforms cut taxes on **household essentials** (soaps, toothpaste, Indian breads) to 5% or Nil boosting affordability
- **Life-saving drugs, medicines** reduced from 12% to Nil or 5% making healthcare affordable
- **Two-wheelers, small cars, TVs, ACs, cement** cut from 28% to 18% bringing relief to middle-class.
- **Farm machinery, irrigation equipment** cut from 12% to 5%, reducing farming costs
- **Tobacco, pan masala, aerated drinks, and luxury goods** taxed at 40%.

### Emerging Concerns and Structural Issues

A key concern is the overdependence on import-led tax buoyancy, which may not reflect strong domestic demand. Slower growth in domestic GST collections suggests uneven economic recovery and subdued consumption trends, especially in certain sectors.

While record GST collections highlight the robustness of India's tax system, reliance on external factors and subdued domestic demand pose structural challenges. Sustaining revenue growth will require boosting consumption, ensuring policy stability, and deepening GST reforms to support a balanced and resilient economy.



### Macroeconomic and External Linkages

Import-driven growth may indicate resilient external trade linkages and supply chain normalisation. However, global uncertainties, including geopolitical tensions (e.g., West Asia crisis), could affect this trend. This raises questions about the sustainability of current revenue growth patterns.

### Seasonality and Future Outlook

Experts caution that April's high collections are partly seasonal due to year-end adjustments. Going forward, GST revenues are expected to stabilise at a steady growth rate of around 7–8%, aligning with broader economic trends rather than exceptional spikes.

### Implications for Governance and Economy

Strong GST collections reflect improved compliance and administrative efficiency. However, the divergence between import and domestic growth signals the need to strengthen internal demand and consumption-led growth for long-term fiscal stability.

**Key concern :** GST growth is increasingly driven by imports rather than domestic consumption, signalling underlying weakness in internal demand and raising questions about the sustainability of India's economic momentum.

## PRELIMS CORNER :

1) Consider the following substances:

- I. Ethanol
- II. Nitroglycerine
- III. Urea

Coal gasification technology can be used in the production of how many of them?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All the three
- (d) None



2) Consider the following:

- I. Cigarette butts
- II. Eyeglass lenses
- III. Car tyres

How many of them contain plastic?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All the three
- (d) None



## WONDERS OF INDIA

*Discover the diverse cultural heritage of India, one tradition at a time.*



### Muga silk

Muga silk, often called the “golden thread” of Assam, is one of India’s most distinctive and luxurious natural fibres. It is produced by a unique silkworm species that thrives only in the humid climatic conditions of the Brahmaputra Valley, making it geographically exclusive. Unlike other silks, muga is not dyed—its rich golden sheen is natural and becomes even more lustrous with age and use. Traditionally, sericulture was a household activity, with families rearing silkworms in their backyards, integrating livelihood with culture.

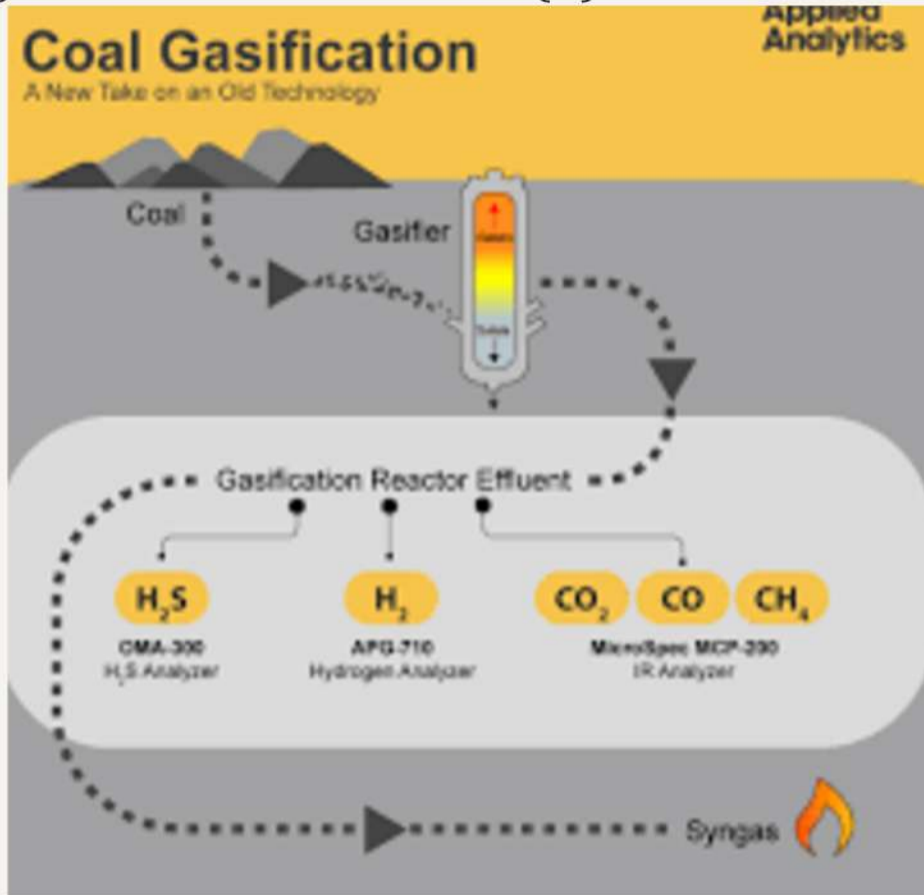
The heart of this tradition lies in Sualkuchi, popularly known as the “Manchester of Assam,” where a large section of the population depends on handloom weaving. Products like the mekhela chadar and sarees are prized for their durability and elegance, though they are extremely resource-intensive—around 1,000 cocoons are required to produce a single saree, contributing to its high cost. Assam is also unique as the only region in the world producing all four major natural silks: muga, eri, mulberry, and tussar.

Despite its cultural and economic significance—supporting millions of livelihoods—the muga silk industry faces serious challenges. Climate change, rising temperatures, and humidity threaten the survival of silkworms, while the informal nature of the sector makes it vulnerable to economic disruptions. Strengthening marketing, ensuring sustainable practices, and supporting artisans are crucial to preserving this heritage craft for the future.



# Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) The correct answer is (b)



Coal gasification is a process in which coal is converted into syngas, a mixture primarily of hydrogen ( $H_2$ ) and carbon monoxide ( $CO$ ), by heating it with oxygen or steam without complete combustion. This syngas acts as a versatile industrial feedstock for producing fuels, chemicals, and fertilizers.

1) Ethanol : Ethanol can be produced from syngas through catalytic conversion processes. The updated data highlights that syngas can be used to produce energy fuels such as methanol and ethanol, making ethanol a valid output of coal gasification technology.

II) Nitroglycerine : It is synthesised by treating glycerol with nitric and sulphuric acids and is unrelated to coal gasification processes. It is primarily used as an explosive.

III) Urea : urea can be produced using coal gasification. Syngas is first used to synthesise ammonia, which is then processed into urea fertiliser. This is evident in projects such as the Talcher coal gasification-based fertiliser plant.

2) Answer is option (C)

**Cigarette butts:** These are primarily made of cellulose acetate, a man-made plastic. Though small, they are one of the most common forms of plastic waste. The filter itself is almost entirely plastic and can take up to a decade to degrade, while releasing hundreds of toxic chemicals.

**Car tyres:** Tyres are composed of a mix of synthetic rubber (plastic-based polymers) and natural rubber. They are a major source of microplastics, contributing about 28% of global microplastic pollution, with additional chemicals like zinc oxide and 6PPD adding ecological risks.

**Eyeglass/contact lenses:** These are made from plastic polymers such as silicone hydrogel. Studies suggest a single pair can shed over 90,000 microplastic particles annually, contributing to microplastic exposure.

Thus, all three contain significant plastic components.



## National Coal Gasification Mission.

- The Government has launched the National Coal Gasification Mission.
- The mission targets 100 million tonnes of coal gasification by 2030.
- An incentive scheme worth ₹8,500 crore has been introduced to promote adoption.