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PSB Reforms EASE 9.0 Launched — GCC Strategy for Public Sector Banks

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PSB Reforms EASE 9.0

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✎ WHY IN NEWS

The government launched **EASE 9.0** (Enhanced Access and Service Excellence) — the ninth edition of the PSB reform agenda — on March 3, 2026. A key new focus is the **Global Capability Centre (GCC) strategy** for public sector banks, with SBI having already set up India's first PSB-GCC in Karnataka.

PSB REFORMS EASE 9.0

Background: What is EASE?

EASE (Enhanced Access and Service Excellence) is a comprehensive reform agenda for **Public Sector Banks (PSBs)** in India. It was launched in **January 2018** as a joint initiative between the **Indian Banks' Association (IBA)** and the **Ministry of Finance**. The agenda emerged from the broader **Ease of Doing Business** drive and the need to professionalise PSBs following the NPA (Non-Performing Asset) crisis of 2015-18.

Each annual edition of EASE builds on the previous year's themes and introduces new focus areas. Progress on EASE parameters is measured and publicly ranked, creating competitive pressure among PSBs.

EASE 9.0 – RISE Framework

EASE 9.0 is structured around the **RISE** pillars:

Pillar	Full Form	Focus
R	Responsible Banking	ESG integration, governance, risk management
I	Inclusive Finance	Financial inclusion, Jan Dhan deepening, credit to underserved
S	Smart Operations	Technology, automation, AI in banking
E	Eco-system Development	GCC strategy, fintech partnerships, cross-sector collaboration

GCC Strategy – The New Frontier

The **Global Capability Centre (GCC) strategy** is the headline initiative of EASE 9.0. GCCs are offshore units established by companies to handle high-value functions – analytics, technology, legal, finance, HR – for their global operations. Previously called “captive centres,” GCCs now go beyond back-office work to include AI/ML development, cybersecurity, and product engineering.

Why PSBs Need GCCs:

- Access to specialised technology talent without full outsourcing
- Build internal AI and data analytics capability
- Reduce dependence on expensive third-party IT vendors
- Compete with private sector banks (HDFC, ICICI) that already have in-house tech labs

State Bank of India (SBI) has taken the lead – establishing India’s **first PSB-GCC in Karnataka** (Bengaluru). The Karnataka location leverages the city’s deep talent pool in software, data science, and fintech.

India’s GCC Sector

India is the **global leader in GCC establishments**, driven by its combination of English-speaking talent, lower labour costs, and mature IT infrastructure.

Metric	Data
Total GCCs in India	1,900+ (across all sectors)
BFSI sector GCCs	185–190 entities
India GCC revenue (2024)	~\$46 billion
Projected revenue (2032)	\$125 billion
Projected workforce (2032)	4.5 million+
Top GCC cities	Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai, NCR

The **BFSI (Banking, Financial Services, Insurance)** sector accounts for a significant share of GCC activity – with global banks like Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan, Citi, and HSBC all running large India GCCs. EASE 9.0 aims to position PSBs alongside these private/foreign banks in the GCC ecosystem.

Evolution of EASE Reforms

Edition	Year	Key Focus
EASE 1.0	2018	NPA resolution, credit discipline, governance
EASE 2.0	2019	Tech-enabled banking, digital products
EASE 3.0	2020	Digital and data-led banking during COVID
EASE 4.0	2021	Collaborative banking, fintech tie-ups
EASE 5.0	2022	Purpose-driven banking, ESG integration
EASE 6.0	2023	AI-powered customer service
EASE 7.0	2024	Cybersecurity, fraud prevention
EASE 8.0	2025	Green finance, sustainability banking
EASE 9.0	2026	GCC strategy, RISE pillars

PSB Landscape

India has **12 public sector banks** (post-consolidation). The PSB consolidation happened in two phases:

Phase 1 (April 2019): Bank of Baroda + Vijaya Bank + Dena Bank → **Bank of Baroda**

Phase 2 (April 1, 2020): 10 PSBs merged into 4:

Oriental Bank of Commerce + United Bank of India → **Punjab National Bank**

Syndicate Bank → **Canara Bank**

Andhra Bank + Corporation Bank → **Union Bank of India**

Allahabad Bank → **Indian Bank**

The **State Bank of India** remains India's largest bank by assets, followed by Punjab National Bank and Bank of Baroda among PSBs.

UPSC Angle — GS-3: IBA (Indian Banks' Association): Founded 1946; represents all scheduled banks. GCCs are distinguishable from BPOs — BPOs do process outsourcing; GCCs are owned subsidiaries. PSB consolidation (2019-20) reduced PSB count from 27 to 12. The NPA crisis (GNPA peaked at 11.5% in 2018) was the backdrop for EASE reforms.

UPSC RELEVANCE

EASE 9.0, IBA, RISE pillars, GCC (definition, India's position), SBI Karnataka GCC, PSB count (12), BFSI GCC entities.

MAINS GS-3:

Banking sector reforms — NPA resolution, PSB consolidation, tech modernisation; India's GCC advantage; financial inclusion and PSB mandates.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

EASE 9.0 — CORE DATA:

Full form: **Enhanced Access and Service Excellence**

Edition: **9th** (launched March 3, 2026)

Joint initiative: **IBA (Indian Banks' Association) + Ministry of Finance**

Framework: **RISE** (Responsible, Inclusive, Smart, Eco-system)

Key new focus: **GCC Strategy** for public sector banks

Pioneer: **SBI** — first PSB-GCC in **Karnataka (Bengaluru)**

EASE series started: **January 2018**

INDIA'S GCC SECTOR:

Total GCCs in India: **1,900+**

BFSI GCCs: **185–190 entities**

Revenue target by 2032: **\$125 billion**

Workforce target by 2032: **4.5 million**

Top cities: Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai, NCR

GCC ≠ BPO: GCCs are owned subsidiaries doing high-value work; BPOs are outsourced vendors

PSB LANDSCAPE:

Number of PSBs: **12** (post-2019-20 consolidation, from 27)

Largest PSB: **SBI** (by assets, market cap, branches)

IBA: Indian Banks' Association — **founded 1946**; represents all scheduled commercial banks

NPA CONTEXT (EASE ORIGINS):

Gross NPA peak: **11.5% (2018)** — triggered banking sector reforms

Net NPA (2025): ~2% (improved significantly)

SARFAESI Act (2002): Enables banks to recover NPAs without court intervention

IBC (2016): Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code — key NPA resolution tool alongside EASE

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

PSB consolidation: Phase 1 (April 2019, 3 into 1: BoB + Vijaya + Dena → BoB); Phase 2 (April 2020, 10 into 4: OBC+UBI→PNB, Syndicate→Canara, Andhra+Corp→Union, Allahabad→Indian Bank); net: 27 → 12 PSBs

All PSBs are now EASE-ranked publicly — creates competitive accountability

EASE ranking criteria include: customer service scores, digital transaction share, credit growth, HR metrics

ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance): Integrated into EASE since 5.0 (2022)

Sources: [Drishiti IAS](#), [IBA](#), [PIB](#)

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