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Gujarat at 66 — From Mahagujarat Movement to the Gujarat Development Model

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ECONOMY**POLITY**

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WHY IN NEWS

May 1, 2026 marks the **66th anniversary of Gujarat's formation** under the **Bombay Reorganisation Act, 1960**. CM **Bhupendra Patel** addressed the state from Gandhinagar; PM Modi (a former Gujarat CM, 2001-2014) extended greetings. Gujarat's significance for Indian political economy and BJP's national identity makes Gujarat Day a moment of particular national importance.

GUJARAT BY THE NUMBERS (2026)

INDICATOR	VALUE
Population	~7 crore (5.5% of India)
Area	196,024 sq km
GSDP (2024-25)	~₹26 lakh crore
GSDP per capita	~₹3.5 lakh (highest among large states)
Industrial output share	~17% of India's manufacturing
Districts	33
Lok Sabha seats	26
Rajya Sabha seats	11
Assembly seats	182
Coastline	1,600 km (longest in India)

Gujarat has India's **highest per-capita income among large states**, the **longest coastline**, and the **largest manufacturing footprint per capita**. Its share of India's manufacturing output (~17%) is significantly larger than its population share (~5.5%).

THE MAHAGUJARAT MOVEMENT (1956-1960)

Gujarat's formation was the result of the **Mahagujarat Movement** (1956-1960) — the agitation for separate Gujarati-speaking statehood. Key facts:

ASPECT	DETAIL
Principal leader	Indulal Yagnik (1892-1972)
Organisation	Mahagujarat Janata Parishad
Trigger	1956 States Reorganisation Act retained Bombay as bilingual
Mass mobilisation	Student protests, political agitation 1956-1960
Outcome	Bombay Reorganisation Act 1960; Gujarat formed May 1, 1960

Yagnik's autobiography *Atmakatha* (in 6 volumes, written in Gujarati) is a key historical source on Gujarat's political emergence.

THE GUJARAT DEVELOPMENT MODEL — DEFINITION AND COMPONENTS

The "Gujarat Development Model" — popularised during Narendra Modi's tenure as CM (2001-2014) — refers to a particular approach to state-led economic development:

COMPONENT	MECHANISM
Investor-friendly policies	Single-window clearance; speedy land acquisition; minimal regulatory friction
Vibrant Gujarat Summits	Biennial investor meets since 2003 — major MoU events
Special Economic Zones (SEZs)	Mundra (largest container port); Dahej
Manufacturing focus	Auto (Maruti Suzuki, Tata Nano), Pharma, Petrochemicals (Reliance Jamnagar)
Infrastructure	Roads, power surplus state since 2006, water supply infrastructure
Cooperative dairy	Amul (founded 1946) — Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation

The model is celebrated by supporters for its high GSDP growth (sustained 8%+) and criticised by economists for its uneven welfare outcomes (lower social development indicators relative to its income).

CRITIQUE — THE GUJARAT MODEL’S LIMITATIONS

Critics (notably Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen, “An Uncertain Glory”) point out:

- **Lower-than-expected social development indicators** — Gujarat’s child malnutrition, infant mortality, female literacy lag behind its income level
- **Unequal regional development** — Saurashtra and Kutch development trails the southern Surat-Vadodara belt
- **Land acquisition controversies** — Tata Nano, Mundra Port land disputes
- **Tribal welfare gaps** — Gujarat’s tribal districts have poorer outcomes than tribal regions in some other states

The model’s defenders argue these gaps are narrowing and that high-growth states create the resources needed for social investment.

GUJARAT’S ROLE IN NATIONAL POLITICS

Gujarat occupies a special place in Indian political consciousness:

- Birthplace of **Mahatma Gandhi** (Porbandar) — international symbol of non-violent resistance
- Birthplace of **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** (Nadiad) — “Iron Man of India”; first Deputy PM and Home Minister
- **Statue of Unity** (182m, world’s tallest statue) at Sardar Sarovar
- Birthplace of **Narendra Modi** (Vadnagar) — current PM since 2014; former Gujarat CM 2001-2014
- 2002 Gujarat riots — defining political event of post-Babri Masjid era

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR GUJARAT

PROVISION	APPLICATION
Eighth Schedule	Gujarati included from original Constitution
Article 371	No special provisions specific to Gujarat (unlike Article 371(2) for Maharashtra)
Sardar Sarovar Project	Inter-state water dispute (Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal); resolved 1979
Special Status	Gujarat is one of the few major states with no Article 371 special provisions

GUJARAT AT 66 — THE CONTINUING DEBATE

The 66th anniversary occurs at a moment when Gujarat’s economic model is being tested:

- Rising fuel prices and oil import dependency hit Gujarat’s industrial base
- Climate change and coastal vulnerability (1,600 km coastline) raise long-term planning questions
- The April 26, 2026 local body elections gave BJP an overwhelming mandate — confirming political stability
- The Mundathikode-Thrissur fireworks tragedy (April 21, 2026) has reignited debate on PESO regulation; Gujarat’s Sivakasi-style fireworks units in Sivakasi, TN are a comparison point

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS3 — Economy	Gujarat development model; manufacturing-led growth; SEZ policy
GS2 — Polity	Mahagujarat Movement; state formation; cooperative federalism
GS1 — Modern History	Sardar Patel; Mahatma Gandhi; political linkages

Mains Keywords: Gujarat 66th anniversary, Mahagujarat Movement, Indulal Yagnik, Gujarat development model, Vibrant Gujarat, Sardar Patel, Statue of Unity, Mundra Port, Vadnagar Modi, BJP Gujarat dominance

Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
Gujarat formation	May 1, 1960
First CM	Jivraj Narayan Mehta
Current CM	Bhupendra Patel
Population	~7 crore (5.5% of India)
GSDP per capita	~₹3.5 lakh (highest among large states)
Manufacturing share	~17% of India's
Coastline	1,600 km (longest in India)
Mahagujarat Movement leader	Indulal Yagnik
Vibrant Gujarat Summit	Started 2003 (biennial)
Statue of Unity	182m; world's tallest statue (2018)
Lok Sabha seats	26
Assembly seats	182
Sardar Patel	Born Nadiad, Gujarat (1875)
Mahatma Gandhi	Born Porbandar, Gujarat (1869)

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