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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Maharashtra at 66 — A Federal Anchor in Search of Direction

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THE EDITORIAL ARGUMENT

Maharashtra at 66 is, by every numerical measure, India's most consequential state. Its **₹40 lakh crore GSDP** is the largest in the country. Mumbai alone produces approximately 6.5% of India's GDP. The state hosts India's principal financial institutions — RBI, SEBI, BSE, NSE — and remains the production base for Bollywood, pharmaceuticals, and a substantial share of Indian manufacturing.

Yet Maharashtra at 66 is also a state with three distinct economies — and the political will to address only one of them.

THREE MAHARASHTRAS

The first Maharashtra is Mumbai-Pune-Thane: globally connected, financially sophisticated, growing fast. This is the Maharashtra that drives the GSDP figures.

The second Maharashtra is Marathwada — the central interior, dependent on monsoon-fed agriculture, scarred by recurring droughts, and home to one of India's most acute agrarian distress crises since 2010.

The third Maharashtra is Vidarbha — the eastern region, which nearly became a separate state in 1960 and has experienced sustained farmer suicide patterns. Vidarbha's per-capita income lags Mumbai's by approximately 60%; its development indicators (literacy, healthcare, infrastructure) trail Maharashtra's averages.

Article 371(2) of the Constitution was supposed to address this. It empowers the Governor to ensure equitable allocation of development funds across Vidarbha, Marathwada, and the rest of Maharashtra. In practice, the article has rarely been used to compel reallocation. Three decades into Maharashtra's modern political evolution, the regional disparities persist.

THE MAHAYUTI COALITION'S TEST

CM Devendra Fadnavis's third term, which began in December 2024 with the BJP-Shinde Sena-Ajit Pawar NCP **Mahayuti** alliance winning 235 of 288 seats, faces a specific challenge: governing a state where political control is decisively concentrated while the underlying economic disparities are widening.

The 2024 mandate was extraordinary. The Mahayuti's combined vote share — approximately 49% — and the seat conversion (235/288) gave the alliance a near-monopoly on legislative power. There is no organised opposition with credible governance alternatives.

Such mandates create the conditions for either bold reform or comfortable status quo. The question for Fadnavis's third term is which Maharashtra he chooses to prioritise. Mumbai's globally-connected economy will continue to grow regardless of state policy. Vidarbha and Marathwada will not.

THE FEDERAL SIGNIFICANCE

Maharashtra's economic centrality makes its policy choices nationally relevant. When Maharashtra's investment incentive packages compete with Gujarat's, the result reshapes India's manufacturing geography. When Maharashtra's tax administration approach diverges from neighbouring states, businesses choose accordingly. The state operates as something between an Indian state and a sub-national economy in its own right.

The federal arithmetic also matters. Maharashtra has 48 Lok Sabha seats — second only to Uttar Pradesh's 80. Maharashtra's MLAs constitute approximately 7.5% of all state legislators in India. Decisions made in Maharashtra reverberate through national party politics, particularly for the BJP whose Hindi-belt dominance depends on Maharashtra's complementary support.

WHAT SHOULD DEFINE YEAR 66

The third Fadnavis term has the political space to undertake difficult reforms:

- ❶ **Vidarbha development authority with binding allocation rules** — moving beyond ad-hoc allocations
- ❷ **Mumbai infrastructure compact** — comprehensive plan for the city's housing, water, mobility crisis
- ❸ **Marathwada water security framework** — multi-decade investment in water infrastructure beyond drought-relief packaging
- ❹ **Tribal welfare audit** — Maharashtra's tribal districts (Gadchiroli, Nandurbar) have governance gaps that need state-level attention

The Maharashtra of 1960 was created by mass movements demanding linguistic identity. The Maharashtra of 2026 needs governance ambition equal to its political mandate.

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS2 — Polity	Article 371(2); regional development; coalition politics
GS3 — Economy	India's largest state economy; manufacturing; financial hubs
GS1 — Indian Society	Marathi linguistic identity; Vidarbha and Marathwada regional dynamics

Mains Keywords: Maharashtra 66 years, Article 371(2), Vidarbha, Marathwada, Mumbai financial capital, Devendra Fadnavis, Mahayuti coalition, Marathi classical language, regional disparity, Marathwada agrarian crisis

Prelims Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
Maharashtra formation	May 1, 1960
66th anniversary	2026
Current CM	Devendra Fadnavis (3rd term, since Dec 5, 2024)
Mahayuti seats (2024)	235 of 288
Maharashtra Lok Sabha seats	48 (2nd after UP's 80)
GSDP (FY25)	~₹40 lakh crore
Mumbai's GDP share	~6.5% of India
Article 371(2)	Special provisions for Vidarbha, Marathwada, rest of Maharashtra

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