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# National Statistics Day 2026 and 75 Years of the National Sample Survey

29 June 2026

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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# National Statistics Day 2026 and 75 Years of the National Sample Survey

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## WHY IN NEWS

*On June 29, 2026, India observed the 19th National Statistics Day on the birth anniversary of Prof. Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) adopting the theme “75 Years of the National Sample Survey (NSS)”.*

National Statistics Day is celebrated every year on June 29 to honour the contributions of Prof. P.C. Mahalanobis (born June 29, 1893), the “father of Indian statistics”, and to spread public awareness about the role of official statistics in social and economic planning.

## WHO WAS PRASANTA CHANDRA MAHALANOBIS?

Prof. Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis (1893 to 1972) was a physicist-turned-statistician whose work built the foundations of India’s modern statistical system.

CONTRIBUTION	DETAIL
Indian Statistical Institute (ISI)	Founded in <b>1931</b> at Kolkata; now an Institute of National Importance
Mahalanobis Distance	A statistical measure of the distance between a point and a distribution, widely used in classification and outlier detection
Mahalanobis Model	The two-sector and four-sector growth model that shaped the <b>Second Five-Year Plan (1956)</b>
National Sample Survey (NSS)	Launched in <b>1950</b> on his recommendation as Statistical Adviser to the Cabinet
Sankhya	Founded the statistical journal that gave Indian statistics global standing

## The Mahalanobis Strategy

The **Second Five-Year Plan (1956 to 1961)** adopted the Mahalanobis Model, which prioritised **heavy and capital-goods industries** in the public sector as the engine of long-run growth. It reflected the Nehruvian vision of a self-reliant, industrialised, mixed economy and shaped India’s planning approach for decades.

### WHAT IS THE NATIONAL SAMPLE SURVEY?

The **National Sample Survey (NSS)** is India’s largest socio-economic survey apparatus, gathering data through large-scale household and enterprise surveys across the country. Established in 1950, it has completed **75 years** in 2026, the basis of this year’s theme.

The NSS is conducted by the **National Statistics Office (NSO)** (<https://ujivari.com/terms/nso-mospi-statistical-architecture/>) under MoSPI. In **2019**, the erstwhile (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/erstwhile/>) **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)** and the **Central Statistics Office (CSO)** were merged to form the NSO, unifying survey and statistics functions.

SURVEY	FULL FORM	WHAT IT MEASURES
PLFS	Periodic Labour Force Survey	Employment, unemployment, labour-force participation
HCES	Household Consumption Expenditure Survey	Consumption patterns; feeds poverty and CPI estimates
AHS / NSS rounds	Various NSS rounds	Health, education, land, debt and asset holdings

National Statistics Day was instituted by the Government of India in **2007** to mark Mahalanobis's birth anniversary. It is distinct from **World Statistics Day**, observed under the United Nations every five years (most recently October 20, 2025).

## ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

Reliable official statistics are a public good: they underpin evidence-based policy, fiscal planning, welfare targeting and the measurement of development outcomes such as poverty, employment and consumption. The 75-year journey of the NSS is also a story of evolving data needs, from food security and land holdings to gig work and the digital economy.

The way forward lies in modernising data collection through technology (computer-assisted personal interviewing, satellite and administrative data), shortening the time between data collection and release, improving the granularity of state and district-level data, and rebuilding public trust in the timeliness and credibility of official statistics. Strengthening statistical capacity is essential as India targets a developed-nation status by 2047.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

**GS Paper 3 (Indian Economy):** Planning, mobilisation of resources, growth; data as the backbone of economic policy.

**GS Paper 1 (Modern India):** Economic history of post-independence planning and the Five-Year Plans.

### Prelims pointers:

- National Statistics Day: June 29, the birth anniversary of **P.C. Mahalanobis**; instituted in **2007**; 2026 marks the **19th** edition.
- 2026 theme: “**75 Years of the National Sample Survey (NSS)**” (NSS launched 1950).
- Mahalanobis founded the **Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Kolkata, in 1931**, and devised the **Mahalanobis Distance** and **Mahalanobis Model**.
- The Mahalanobis Model underpinned the **Second Five-Year Plan (1956)**, focused on heavy industry.
- NSS is conducted by the **National Statistics Office (NSO)** under **MoSPI**; the NSSO and CSO were merged into the NSO in **2019**.
- Key surveys: **PLFS** (employment) and **HCES** (consumption).

**Mains question:** “Credible and timely official statistics are a prerequisite for good governance. In light of the 75-year journey of the National Sample Survey, examine the challenges facing India’s statistical system and suggest reforms.” (15 marks, 250 words)

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National Statistics Day: Observed on June 29 every year since 2007; 2026 is the 19th edition.

Honours: Prof. Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis (1893 to 1972), the “father of Indian statistics”, born June 29, 1893.

2026 theme: “75 Years of the National Sample Survey (NSS)”; the NSS was launched in 1950.

ISI: Mahalanobis founded the Indian Statistical Institute at Kolkata in 1931.

Key legacy: The Mahalanobis Distance (statistics) and the Mahalanobis Model behind the Second Five-Year Plan (1956).

NSO: The National Statistics Office under MoSPI conducts the NSS; formed in 2019 by merging the NSSO and CSO.

Flagship surveys: PLFS (Periodic Labour Force Survey) and HCES (Household Consumption Expenditure Survey).

*Sources: MoSPI (<https://www.mospi.gov.in/>), Press Information Bureau (<https://pib.gov.in/>), Indian Statistical Institute (<https://www.isical.ac.in/>)*

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

## Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari →](#)<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/06/29/national-statistics-day-2026-mahalanobis/>

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