

CURRENT AFFAIRS: 28.06.2026

Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme

Recently, Union Government issued directions countering misleading social media claims regarding the quality, safety & impact of 20% Ethanol -Blended Petrol (E20).

- **Initiated by** – Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

About Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Program

- **Launch** - In 2003 to enhance energy security by reducing oil imports & promote environmental sustainability.
- **Stage Wise Rollout** – Implemented Progressively based on technical preparedness, Fulfilling in the nationwide rollout of E20 (20% **ethanol blending**) **from 2023 onwards**.
- **Global Standards** – It is Globally accepted practice. For example, Brazil uses E27 as its standard petrol blending, while countries like USA & Japan also employs high blending levels.

Technical details

- **Ethanol absorbs moisture (Hygroscopic)** – To Prevent water entering into fuel tanks, modern vehicles are equipped with structural safeguards.
- **Feedstock**- like Sugarcane juice, B-heavy molasses, damaged food grains like broken rice & Maize are used to produce Ethanol. Distillation & Fermentation Process completely eliminates residual sugars.
- **"Ant Attraction" Myth** – There is zero scientific basis linking E20 fuel attracting ants. Fuel-grade ethanol conforms to stringent industrial specifications and contains denaturants that act as insect repellents.
- **Insurance Validity** - Regulatory stakeholders have clarified that using government-mandated E20 fuel does not impact or invalidate vehicle insurance policies.

Ecological & Economic Significance

- **Forex Savings**: Around 1.4 lakh crore in foreign exchange has been saved by India by cutting expensive crude oil imports.

- **Rural Economy** - It provides a structured remunerative demand for farmers produce, boosting rural incomes, by using diverse domestic feedstocks.
- **Climate Commitments** - It directly aids India's transition toward cleaner mobility and helps meet its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for carbon emission reduction.

What is Ethanol?

- It is an anhydrous ethyl alcohol (C_2H_5OH) with a high-octane rating, making it an excellent fuel extender when blended with petrol. In India, it is primarily produced as a biofuel under the **National Policy on Biofuels**.

Index of Services Production

Why in News?

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is set to launch the **Index of Services Production (ISP)** in **July 2026**. This initiative creates a new macro-indicator to track the growth of India's services sector, acting as a counterpart to the existing **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**.

- Developed by a **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** chaired by **Debjani Ghosh**, the ISP will initially be released on a **trial basis** with sectoral indices.

What are the Key Facts About the Index of Services Production (ISP)?

- **About:** The **Index of Services Production (ISP)** is a **monthly high-frequency macroeconomic indicator** developed by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** to measure **short-term changes in the real output of India's formal services sector**, similar to the **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** for industry.
- **Need:** Services contribute **over 50% of India's Gross Value Added** since 2013-14, but there's been no monthly, high-frequency indicator tracking how that sector is actually growing in real (inflation-adjusted) terms.
- **Objective:** It provides timely information on **services sector growth**, strengthens economic monitoring, supports **policy formulation**, improves **economic forecasting**, and complements the IIP in tracking overall economic activity.
- **Improved Data Ecosystem:** The availability of **high-frequency GST data** on outward supplies of service enterprises and the launch of the **Annual Survey of Incorporated Services Sector Enterprises (ASISSE)** have made it possible to compile a reliable **ISP**.

Key Mechanics of ISP

- **Scope and Limitations:** The ISP is restricted to the **formal sector** and excludes non-market government activities, personal services, and the **informal sector**.
- **Excluded areas:** Public administration & defence, gambling, personal services, government-run health/education, and a few other non-market activities

- **Methodological Framework:** The ISP is compiled using a **fixed-weight Laspeyres volume index** with **2024–25 as the base year** (aligned with the rebased **CPI series**), and assigns **Gross Value Added (GVA)-based weights** to reflect the relative economic importance of each services sector.
 - It tracks the volume of output, transforming **nominal turnover data into real growth measures** using **deflators like CPI (Consumer Price Index) and WPI (Wholesale Price Index)**.
- **Major Data Sources for ISP:**
 - **Administrative/Secondary Data:** Used for **Air Transport, Railways, Banking, and Insurance**.
 - **GST Data:** Covers sectors such as **trade, transport, telecommunications, accommodation, real estate, professional services, and arts & recreation** through outward supplies.
 - **ASISSE Data:** Used for **Health and Education (excluding government)** services.
- **Quantity vs Value Indicators:** **Air Transport and Railways** are measured using **quantity-based indicators** (e.g., passenger-kilometres), while most other services use **value-based indicators** such as **turnover, sales, or GST outward supplies**.
- **Preferred Output Measure:** The preferred indicator is **turnover adjusted (deflated) by an appropriate price index**, as services are consumed immediately after production and turnover closely reflects output.
- **Deflators Used:** ISP uses **WPI** for wholesale trade, **sector-specific CPI** where available, **CPI General** for banking and insurance, and **CPI Non-Food** for other services.
 - A **deflator** removes the effect of price changes from nominal service revenues to measure the **real growth** in service output.
- **Trial Phase:** MoSPI will release **experimental/trial indices** for 2025–26 and April 2026 starting July 2026, to ensure stability before transitioning to regular, monthly dissemination with a **60-day lag**.
- **Deflator Strategy:** In the absence of comprehensive **Service Producer Price Indices (SPPI)**, MoSPI will use **CPI (Non-Food)** as a proxy deflator.
 - This is justified by the fact that over 80% of non-food inflation is directly linked to services or their cost-push factors, such as energy, transport, and housing.

Hemis Festival 2026 Begins in Ladakh

The Hemis Festival 2026 commenced with devotion and enthusiasm at the historic Hemis Monastery in the Leh district of Ladakh.

Hemis Festival

- **About:** Hemis Festival, also known as Hemis Tsechu, is celebrated annually at Hemis Monastery in Ladakh on the 10th day of the Tse-Chu month according to the Tibetan lunar calendar.
 - The origin of the festival is associated with the 8th century and the spiritual legacy of **Guru Padmasambhava**, who is believed to have removed evil forces from Ladakh.
- **Religious Significance:** The festival marks the birth anniversary of Guru Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, who is revered as the Second Buddha in Tibetan Buddhist tradition.
- **Events:** Hemis Monastery, one of the largest Buddhist monasteries of Ladakh, is beautifully decorated for the celebration. The main attraction is the sacred Cham mask dance performed by lamas and monks in the courtyard of Hemis Monastery to the sound of drums, cymbals and longhorns.

- **Ritual Practice:** At the end of the ceremony, a dough sculpture symbolising evil forces is destroyed, and its pieces are thrown in four directions, representing the warding off of evil and the purification of the soul.
- **Local Tradition:** Chhang, a traditional local drink, is served during the festival as part of the cultural celebration.
- **Thangka Display:** Every 12th year, in the Tibetan Year of the Monkey, a large thangka of Guru Padmasambhava, decorated with semi-precious stones and pearls, is displayed.
- **Significance:** Hemis Festival preserves Ladakh's Buddhist heritage, strengthens cultural tourism, promotes brotherhood and offers a blend of spirituality, history, culture and entertainment.