

Districts as Export Hubs - Taking India's Exports to Every District

- While India's export journey has been marked by impressive growth, sustaining this momentum requires a more inclusive approach to development.
- The **Districts as Export Hubs (DEH)** Initiative is a framework to realise inclusive export growth, which transforms every district into a center of export planning by identifying products and services with global potential and connecting local producers to international markets.
- Building upon the **One District One Product (ODOP)** concept, DEH adopts a convergence-based approach, bringing together Central and State schemes, institutions and industry.
- By unlocking district-level strengths and connecting them to international markets, DEH is driving employment generation, strengthening MSMEs and making India's export growth more inclusive and globally competitive.

Why India Needed a District-Led Export Model?

- Exports have become a key engine of India's growth story.
- Every rupee earned from overseas markets adds to jobs, incomes and industry at home. India's total exports of goods and services touched an all-time high of **US\$ 825.25 billion in 2024-25**, growing further to an estimated **US\$ 863.11 billion in 2025-26**.
- For decades, export activity stayed concentrated around a handful of established industrial clusters and port cities. Small towns, rural districts and remote regions rarely found their way into shipment manifests, even though many held unique, high-quality products.
- Products such as **Bastar's iron craft**, **Jalgaon's bananas** and **Meghalaya's Mandarin Oranges** reflected this untapped strength.
- Recognising this opportunity, the Government brought in a **district-led export strategy in the form of Districts as Export Hubs Initiative**, enabling every district to contribute to India's export growth by leveraging its unique strengths.

From ODOP to DEH: Evolution of the Framework

- The **Districts as Export Hubs (DEH)** initiative is launched to harness the strengths and resources of every district and unlock its export potential.
- Each district is treated as a **unit of export planning, not merely a unit of production**.
- It is helping local enterprises access global markets, improve competitiveness and drive district-led economic growth. It also aligns with India's broader vision of

ODOP began as an **Uttar Pradesh state initiative in 2018**. It was built around **Moradabad's brass industry**, before it was scaled nationally.⁵

- The story of DEH begins with the One District One Product (ODOP) programme. ODOP set out to select, brand and promote **one distinctive product from each district**, converting local identity into economic opportunity.



- To strengthen this approach, the Department of Commerce **through the DEH initiative** under the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has expanded the focus from **product promotion to a comprehensive export promotion and ecosystem strengthening**.
- As on January 2026, the DEH initiative covers **more than 770 districts across the country**, reflecting its expanding reach and stronger integration with overall export planning.



- DEH is best understood as a convergence framework, not a funding scheme. Rather

than introducing a separate financial scheme, DEH leverages the funding available under various ongoing central and state schemes.

- It promotes exports, manufacturing and employment generation at the grassroots level. In doing so, it addresses district-specific export challenges and enhance district export competitiveness.

The Institutional Architecture

- DEH runs on a layered system of coordination between the Centre, States and districts. The Department of Commerce provides overall policy direction, while the DGFT anchors implementation, facilitates stakeholder coordination and monitors progress.
- At the State level, **State Export Promotion Committees (SEPCs)** guide implementation and ensure convergence across departments.

Product	District	State
Ceramic & Tiles, Potato	Sabarkantha	Gujarat
Minerals, Agro-processing, Glass and Tiles	Aravalli	Gujarat
Jalgaon Banana, Jalgaon Bharit Brinjal	Jalgaon	Maharashtra
Orange	Agar Malwa	Madhya Pradesh
Bastar Iron Craft, Rice, Jowar, Maize	Baster	Chhattisgarh
Bamboo Craft, Cashew	Jamtara	Jharkhand

- At the district level, **District Export Promotion Committees (DEPCs)**, identify export opportunities, resolve local challenges and coordinate with industry, exporters and other stakeholders.
- A key responsibility of the DEPCs is preparing **District Export Action Plans (DEAPs)**.
- These plans map products and services with export potential, assess infrastructure and logistics, identify export bottlenecks.
- They also recommend interventions to improve competitiveness and market access. As of March 2026, draft DEAPs have been prepared for **590 districts**, of which 249 stand formally adopted by the respective DEPCs.

Building District-Level Export Ecosystems

- Exports require more than a competitive product. DEH helps districts to build exporter capacity and address awareness gaps in export related logistics, quality standards and market access to strengthen their export readiness.
- **Mapping products and services**
- DEH identifies export-worthy products and services across districts.
- These include **GI-tagged products**, agricultural clusters, and toy clusters, engineering goods etc. District-specific mapping helps prepare targeted export strategies.
- Some of the products with export potential include:
- The list of DEH products across districts can be accessed [here](#) .
- **Meeting global standards**
- Once identified, these products must meet international quality benchmarks. DEH

supports to generate awareness and build capacity regarding **quality standards**, testing facilities, packaging, branding and certification, helping local goods clear global compliance requirements.

- **Enabling digital export**

- Digital access has enabled hyper-local reach and expanded market access for all businesses, even those located in remote regions.
- Partnerships with **e-commerce platforms** under the DEH initiative such as Amazon, Shiprocket, and DHL provide MSMEs with cost-effective courier shipping alternatives to buffer against freight rate volatility.
- **Dak Ghar Niryat Kendras** extend this reach by offering low-cost postal export facilities for documentation, packaging and small consignments.

Building capacity & Outreach

- To build export readiness, DGFT Regional Authorities along with district administrations conduct capacity building and awareness programmes covering **logistics planning, export procedures, packaging norms, and regulatory compliance**.
- Various ecosystem partners have actively contributed to the successful implementation of these outreach programmes.
- They include Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC), Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH), Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), Ministry of MSME, India Post, and Exim Bank.
- These events have provided valuable skills to exporter to overcome identified concerns.
- They also focus to enhance awareness about challenges associated with e-commerce adoption, such as payment-related issues, trust and buyer verification.

Fostering Grassroot Initiatives for Development

- DEH is supported through partnerships with specialised institutions. DGFT has partnered with **EXIM Bank** to strengthen export ecosystems in selected districts.
- As part of the collaboration, six districts - **Anantapur, Raipur, Solan, Tiruppur, Kanpur and Kolhapur**-have been selected for support under EXIM Bank's **Grassroots Initiatives for Development (GRID)** programme.
- The initiative addresses sector-specific constraints, identifies potential beneficiaries and develops district-specific interventions to enhance export competitiveness.

Tiruppur, India's knitwear capital, achieved **record exports of Rs.46,000 crore in FY 2025-26**.

The Tiruppur Exporters Association has now set an ambitious target of **Rs.1 trillion in exports by 2030**.

This is in line with India's goal to increase textile exports **from \$38 billion to \$100 billion by 2030**.

Focused Approach for DEH Implementation

- To fast-track implementation, the Government has adopted an outcome-oriented, focused and phased approach under Districts as Export Hubs Initiative from **1st June 2026**.
- In the first phase of the implementation, **districts across 27 States and Union Territories have been covered**, with support from **24 DGFT Regional Authorities** and **11 partner agencies**.
- The focus is on measurable outcomes such as new exporter registrations and increasing value of exports through convergence of ongoing central & state schemes, leveraging GI products and MSME clusters.
- Together, the DEH framework is helping districts overcome long-standing structural constraints and translate local production strengths into export opportunities.

The Road Ahead

- Districts as Export Hubs marks a shift in India's export strategy from concentrating growth in a few industrial centres to unlocking the potential of every district.
- By combining local strengths with better export capacity, market access and institutional support, the initiative is creating a more inclusive and resilient export ecosystem.
- As India moves towards its **US\$1 trillion export ambition**, stronger coordination between the Centre, States and districts is fundamental. This will transform **local economies into engines of trade, investment and employment**, expanding export-led growth across the country.

Reference

[PIB| Districts as Export Hubs](#)