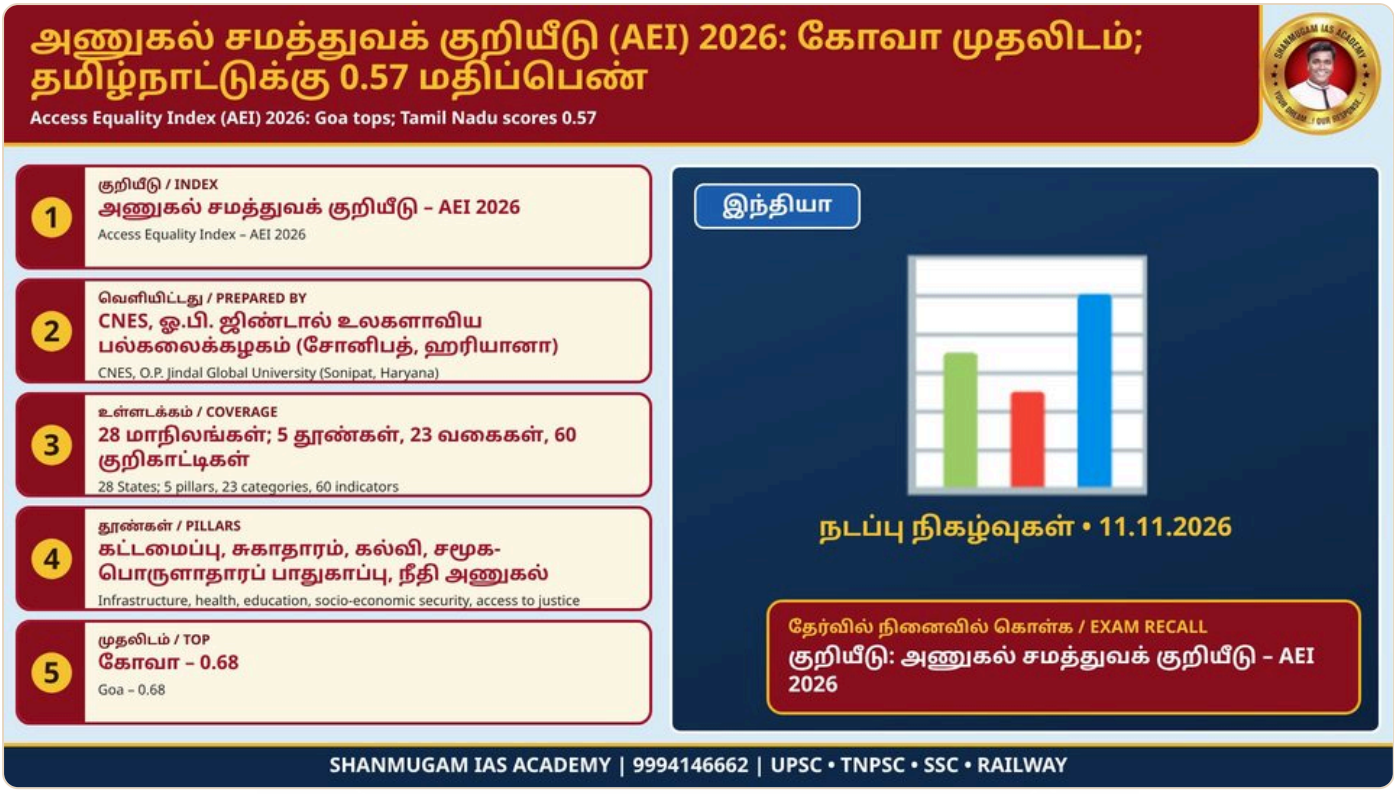
Access Equality Index (AEI) 2026: Goa tops; Tamil Nadu scores 0.57

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News

News reports on 9–10 November 2026 covered the 2026 edition of the Access Equality Index (AEI), prepared by the Centre for New Economics Studies (CNES), O.P. Jindal Global University. It measures how equally people in 28 States get basic opportunities and services – showing, beyond income alone, how well governments turn their resources into equal access. It uses five equally weighted pillars – basic infrastructure, healthcare, education, socio-economic security and access to justice (legal services) – with 60 indicators in 23 categories. Goa topped with a score of 0.68; Andhra Pradesh was second with 0.66 (top among large States), followed by Sikkim (0.63) and Keralam (0.60). Tamil Nadu and Telangana scored 0.57 each (reports differ on Tamil Nadu's exact rank). The report notes that Andhra Pradesh, 13th in per capita income, scored far above its income-based expected score of 0.51.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Index	Access Equality Index – AEI 2026
Prepared by	CNES, O.P. Jindal Global University (Sonipat, Haryana)
Coverage	28 States; 5 pillars, 23 categories, 60 indicators
Pillars	Infrastructure, health, education, socio-economic security, access to justice
Top	Goa – 0.68

Point	Details
Next	Andhra Pradesh 0.66, Sikkim 0.63, Keralam 0.60
Tamil Nadu	0.57 (level with Telangana)
Key finding	AP beats its income-expected score by 0.15; Keralam by 0.07

Background

- Why it matters: inequality is usually measured by income (the Gini coefficient). The AEI instead measures gaps in people's access to drinking water, sanitation, housing, clean energy, healthcare, education, jobs, banking, insurance, pensions and legal aid. States are grouped as 'Front-runners', 'Achievers' and 'Aspirants'.
- Global comparison: the UNDP has published the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) in its Human Development Report since 2010. A Gini coefficient of 0 means perfect equality and 1 means perfect inequality. In India, NITI Aayog has published the SDG India Index since 2018.
- Constitutional background: Article 38(2) (44th Amendment, 1978) – the State shall strive to minimise inequalities in income and eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities. Article 39(b), (c) – material resources to serve the common good; no concentration of wealth. Article 39A – free legal aid (linked to the AEI's 'access to justice' pillar).

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu's 0.57 is below Andhra Pradesh (0.66) and Keralam (0.60) and equal to Telangana. Its universal Public Distribution System (kept even after implementing the National Food Security Act in 2016), the school-meal scheme and its network of primary health centres are the foundations of access to basic services in the State. Pillar-wise scores for Tamil Nadu were not given in the reports.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

News reports on 9–10 November 2026 covered the 2026 edition of the Access Equality Index (AEI), prepared by the Centre for New Economics Studies (CNES), O.P. Jindal Global University.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Index: Access Equality Index – AEI 2026; Prepared by: CNES, O.P. Jindal Global University (Sonipat, Haryana); Coverage: 28 States; 5 pillars, 23 categories, 60 indicators; Pillars: Infrastructure, health, education, socio-economic security, access to justice.

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Practice questions (with answers)

1. Which body prepared the 'Access Equality Index (AEI) 2026'?

A) NITI Aayog

B) CNES, O.P. Jindal Univ.

C) UNDP

D) MoSPI

Answer: B – Explanation: Centre for New Economics Studies (CNES), O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat.

2. Which State ranked first among 28 States in AEI 2026?

A) Goa

B) Keralam

C) Sikkim

D) Andhra Pradesh

Answer: A – Explanation: Goa (0.68). Andhra Pradesh was second with 0.66 – top among large States; Sikkim 0.63; Keralam 0.60.

3. Who publishes the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI)?

A) UNDP

B) World Bank

C) World Economic Forum

D) Oxfam

Answer: A – Explanation: UNDP – in its Human Development Report since 2010. The HDI itself was designed in 1990 by Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen.

4. Unlike most States, which type of Public Distribution System does Tamil Nadu follow?

A) Targeted PDS

B) Cash transfer only

C) Food coupon system

D) Universal PDS

Answer: D – Explanation: Universal PDS – retained even after adopting the National Food Security Act in 2016. Most other States run a targeted PDS.

5. Which Directive Principle asks the State to minimise inequalities in income, status, facilities and opportunities?

A) Article 39(b)

B) Article 41

C) Article 43

D) Article 38(2)

Answer: D – Explanation: Article 38(2) – added by the 44th Amendment (1978). 39(b) – distribution of resources; 41 – work, education; 43 – living wage.

Sources: Deccan Chronicle (PTI); Deccan Chronicle; The Hans India; UNI; The Wire; Scroll (2021 edition); The Week (2024 edition); UNDP Human Development Report; Constitution of India. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.