Easier Market Access for Small Exporters

News context: 18 November 2026 | Publication: 19 November 2026
Mains: GS-III, exports and MSME competitiveness



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Why in the news

The Department of Commerce has changed guidelines on market access, certification and freight support under the Niryat Disha sub-scheme of the Export Promotion Mission (EPM). The changes were made on 17 November and announced on 18 November 2026. Their policy value lies in addressing different costs faced by small exporters, rather than treating every barrier as a shortage of credit. [1]

Two complementary sub-schemes

The Union Cabinet approved EPM on 12 November 2025 with an outlay of ₹25,060 crore for FY 2025-26 to FY 2030-31. It places particular emphasis on MSMEs, first-time exporters and under-represented regions. [1]

Niryat Protsahan facilitates access to trade finance. **Niryat Disha** supports market access and addresses non-financial export barriers. They are not simply two names for the same loan subsidy. Eleven interventions across the two sub-schemes have been operationalised so far. [1]

Related reading: **RELIEF Component-II Deadline Extended to 31 March 2027: 95% Risk Cover for Exporters Under ECGC**

MAS: reaching buyers

Market Access Support (MAS) supports buyer-seller meetings, trade fairs, exhibitions and related market-access activities. The maximum eligible export turnover in the preceding year for airfare reimbursement has risen from ₹75 lakh to ₹50 crore. Reimbursement is now up to 95% for micro and small exporters and up to 80% for other eligible exporters. [1]

The mandatory period of Export Promotion Council membership has been reduced from six months to three. These are maximum support rates, not a promise of a fixed payment to every applicant; the relevant eligibility conditions and guidelines continue to apply. [1]

TRACE: meeting market standards

Trade Regulations, Accreditation & Compliance Enablement (TRACE) supports certification connected with overseas quality, safety and technical requirements. The list of certificates eligible for reimbursement has expanded from 462 to 600. [1]

Finding a buyer is only part of gaining market access. Products may also need testing and conformity with the destination market's standards. Initial certification costs can burden a small business. Assistance can reduce that cost, but does not remove the responsibility to maintain product quality.

LIFT: overcoming distance

Logistics Interventions for Freight and Transport (LIFT) addresses geographical disadvantages and logistics gaps in low export-intensity areas. Coverage of such districts has expanded from 13 States/UTs to 34 States/UTs. This is not a change from 13 districts to 34 districts. [1]

Eligible port categories now include Land Customs Stations and Integrated Check Posts. Waterways have been added alongside road, rail and air. Air-freight support for export shipments has been extended to Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh in addition to the North Eastern Region. The minimum distance criterion has fallen from 200 km to 100 km. Support extends to exportable merchandise, except products or export categories in the negative list. [1]

Way forward

These measures target separate barriers: reaching buyers, demonstrating conformity and transporting goods. Policy assessment should consider durable participation by new exporters, market diversification and timely reimbursement, not only the number of approvals or money spent. These are suggested assessment criteria, not claims of results already achieved. Clear guidance and application support will matter if smaller businesses are to use the assistance in practice.

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Prelims Practice Questions

Question 1

Consider the following statements about the Export Promotion Mission:

Statement 1: Niryat Protsahan facilitates access to trade finance.

Statement 2: Niryat Disha addresses market access and non-financial export barriers.

Statement 3: TRACE supports certification linked to overseas quality and compliance requirements.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

▼ Answer and Explanation

Correct answer: (d)

Statement 1 is correct: Niryat Protsahan deals with trade finance.

Statement 2 is correct: Niryat Disha addresses market access and non-financial barriers.

Statement 3 is correct: TRACE supports quality, safety and technical-compliance certification.

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Question 2

Consider the following pairs:

#	Intervention	Main support area
1	MAS	market-access activities
2	TRACE	certification and compliance
3	LIFT	freight and transport barriers

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

▼ Answer and Explanation

Correct answer: (c)

All three pairs are correctly matched. They address different costs connected with market access, compliance and logistics.

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Question 3

Which statement correctly describes the November 2026 LIFT changes?

(a) Coverage of low export-intensity areas expanded from 13 States/UTs to 34

(b) Every product is eligible without exception

(c) Waterways were removed from eligible transport modes

(d) The minimum distance rose from 100 km to 200 km

▼ Answer and Explanation

Correct answer: (a)

The coverage figure refers to States/UTs, not the number of districts. Negative-list exceptions remain; waterways were added and the minimum distance fell from 200 km to 100 km.

Mains Practice Question

Why must non-financial barriers be addressed alongside finance to improve small firms' export competitiveness? Explain with reference to recent export-support measures. (150 words, 10 marks)

Answer Outline

Introduction:

Even with production finance, an enterprise may struggle to export because it lacks buyers, certification or affordable transport. Competitiveness therefore extends beyond cheap credit.

Main Body:

MAS seeks to reduce market-access costs. TRACE assists certification for overseas quality and safety requirements. LIFT addresses transport disadvantages in remote and low export-intensity areas. Together, these cover different stages of the export process.

Implementation requires clear eligibility, application support and timely reimbursement. A maximum support rate is not an automatic entitlement to payment. Evaluation should track sustained exports, new markets and regional participation, rather than expenditure alone.

Conclusion:

Combining finance, quality, buyer access and logistics can help a small firm become a regular exporter.

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Does the ₹50 crore threshold mean an exporter receives that amount?

No. It is the maximum export turnover in the previous year for airfare-reimbursement eligibility, not the size of a grant. Reimbursement depends on eligible costs, the applicable rate and other guidelines.

Does the wider TRACE list change overseas product standards?

No. It expands the list of certificates eligible for Indian support. It should not be read as evidence that an importing country has changed its quality or technical standards.

Is this the same as extending RELIEF Component-II?

No. This story concerns November changes to MAS, TRACE and LIFT guidelines. Extending RELIEF's deadline is a separate intervention and event.

Sources

1. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetailm.aspx?PRID=2337815&lang=1&reg=1