

Appraisal of Manifestos

India Economy | Thematic Report

April 18, 2024

BJP strong on economic plan; Congress on democracy

Key Points

- The base case at the current juncture remains stable policy and polity. However, we see no major change in the broader economic policy direction, irrespective of political party.
- The BJP definitely has a more granular economic and infrastructure plan, but both parties are banking big on manufacturing. The Congress has also resolved to make India a manufacturing hub by raising the share of manufacturing from 14% to 20% GDP in the next five years. The Congress Manifesto completely misses the Services sector while sectors like Tourism and Technology-linked Services find notable mention in the BJP's Sankalp Patra.
- The Congress is focused on preserving constitutional values, upholding personal and institutional freedoms and uplifting minorities, which find limited mention in the BJP's Sankalp Patra.
- The Congress has shown greater proclivity towards emphasizing employment generation and support for the 'bottom of the pyramid'. Schemes like Rs. 1 lakh transfer to poor families, an urban employment generation programme and a revamped GST could lead to fiscal expansion at the margin. The BJP on the other hand is focusing on ease of living for the middle class.

	FY05- FY14 (UPA Government)	FY15-FY24 (BJP Government)
GDP (% YoY)	6.8	5.9
CPI (% YoY)	8.1	5.1
Fiscal deficit (% of GDP)	4.6	5.1
Current account Balance (% of GDP)	-2.3	-1.1

Source: NSO, RBI, CEIC, Nirmal Bang
Institutional Equities Research

The Economic framework: The BJP has set a clear agenda of 'Viksit Bharat' or achieving the developed economy status by 2047 and making India the third largest economy in the world. The BJP's granular economic plans include: **(1) Combining design services with production (2) Developing the Food Processing industry (3) Promoting Defence manufacturing (4) positioning India as a Global Railway Manufacturing Hub (5) Global Aviation Manufacturing and Maintenance, Repair & Overhaul (MRO) Hub (6) Promoting ship building (7) Strengthening India's positioning as Pharmacy of the World (8) Making India a Global Electronics hub by 2030 (9) Making India a major player in Semiconductor and Chip Manufacturing (10) A global leader in Textile Manufacturing (11) Automotive & EV manufacturing (12) Toy Export Hub and Sports Goods manufacturing (13) Renewable Energy manufacturing Hub and (14) Making India the largest producer of lab grown diamonds, among others.** On the other hand, the Congress while being realistic is found wanting on a bold vision for India. The Congress Manifesto states that sound economic policies will ensure that India, a developing country, will first attain the status of a middle-income country and then a developed country. The three goals of Congress' economic policy were and will be work, wealth and welfare. **Work** – primarily emphasizes job creation; **Wealth** - emphasizes business policies and regulations designed to facilitate the production of goods & services and better productivity; and **Welfare** – emphasizes building a fair, just and equal opportunity economy and ensuring prosperity for all sections of the society.

The Social framework: Social freedom finds no mention in the BJP's manifesto while the Congress Manifesto is replete with references to: (1) Religious Freedom (2) Personal Freedom (3) Freedom of Speech & Expression (4) Freedom of Media (5) Freedom of the Internet (6) Artistic Freedom and (7) Freedom of Academic Institutions.

The civil framework: BJP believes that there cannot be gender equality till such time Bharat adopts a Uniform Civil Code, which protects the rights of all women and the BJP reiterates its stand to devise a Uniform Civil Code, drawing upon the best traditions and harmonising them with the modern times. BJP will implement the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) to confer citizenship to all eligible persons. The BJP is in favour of common electoral rolls for all polls and One –Nation, One –Election while the Congress is opposed to the idea and believes in maintaining the status quo in the interest of parliamentary democracy.

Please refer to the disclaimer towards
the end of the document.

- 1. Agricultural & Allied sectors:** Both parties realise the importance of the Agricultural & Allied sectors. While the BJP is emphasising self-sufficiency (which will help in inflation control), the Congress policies are more inclined towards income enhancement of farmers like legal guarantee for MSP and more liberal trade policies. Both parties are keen to promote seafood exports.

CONGRESS	BJP
• Congress will give a legal guarantee to the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) announced by the government every year, as recommended by the Swaminathan Commission. • Crop insurance will be made farm and farmer specific. Premium will be charged from the farmer according to the sum insured and all claims will be settled within 30 days. • Make available to farmers three avenues for sale of agricultural produce: (a) Regulated Market under the prevailing APMC Act. (b) E-market - to be operated by an autonomous body (c) Freedom to the farmer to sell agricultural produce at farm-gate or at any other place of choice (with option to upload digital ledger) • Formulate and implement a sound import-export policy for agricultural commodities, which will give paramount importance to protecting the interests and concerns of farmers. • Major programme to install solar panels connected to tube wells to generate energy. • Double the value of output in Dairy and Poultry in five years. • Major initiative to promote horticulture, pisciculture and sericulture and encourage farmers to diversify into these activities to increase their income. • Restore the subsidy for diesel for sea-going fishing communities. • Congress will direct insurance companies to provide Insurance cover for sea-going fishing boats. • Inland fishing and aquaculture will be recognized as 'agriculture'. • Promote phytosanitary standards and the exports of marine products that meet such standards.	• Continue to increase MSP from time to time. • Strengthen the PM Fasal Bima Yojana (Insurance scheme) through more technological interventions to ensure speedy and more accurate assessment, faster payouts and quicker grievance resolution. • Make Bharat "Atmanirbhar" in the production of Pulses and Edible Oils. • Establish new vegetable clusters for the production of essentials like onion, tomato and potato with storage and logistics facilities. • Make Bharat a Global Millet Hub. • Expand crop diversification to make agriculture sustainable and remunerative. • Mission for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of agri-infrastructure projects like storage facilities, irrigation, grading and sorting units, cold storage facilities and food processing. • Launch technology-enabled irrigation initiatives to implement cutting-edge technology for efficient water management • Bharat Krishi satellite for farm-related activities like crop forecasting, pesticide application, irrigation, soil health and weather forecasting. • Expand access to and encourage adoption of Nano Urea. • Expand the network of dairy cooperatives in villages in the next five years with facilities of fodder banks, milk testing laboratories, bulk milk coolers, and milk processing units. • Extend the PM Matsya Sampada Yojana to increase fish production and increase our annual seafood exports. • Strengthen and expand the insurance coverage available under PM Matsya Sampada Yojana. • Create sustainable livelihood opportunities for fishermen through promotion of pearl farming.

2. **Manufacturing & Mining:** The Congress and the BJP are equally focussed on increasing the share of manufacturing in GDP. However, Congress' plan lacks granularity. The Congress is however laying greater emphasis on employment generation and promotion of all sizes of enterprise rather than monopolies and duopolies.

CONGRESS	BJP
• Congress resolves to make India a manufacturing hub by raising the share of manufacturing from 14% to 20% of GDP in the next five years. • Will aim for India attaining a position of leadership in multiple industries such as steel, metals, garments & textiles, cement, automobiles, electronic goods, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, petroleum products, chemicals and mining rare earths & critical minerals. • Reform the production-linked incentives (PLI) scheme to target specific sectors that can create thousands of jobs by making India one of the top 5 producers in the world in that sector. • Create a level playing field for all businesses. Opposed to monopolies and oligopolies.	• Make Bharat a trusted Global Manufacturing Hub through a series of programmes, including simplification of regulatory processes, investment in infrastructure, capital availability and R&D. • Bharat is an engineering and design services hub in the world. Build on this strength to become a major Product Nation by combining strengths in product design services with manufacturing. • Position Bharat as a major player in value chains of processed fruits, vegetables, fish, seafood and dairy, among others. • Expand domestic defence manufacturing and exports. This effort will be facilitated by accelerating indigenisation in major Air and Land Equipment Platforms. • Promote manufacturing, research and development in the railway sector to make Bharat a leading global railway manufacturing hub. • Bring a commercial aircraft manufacturing ecosystem to Bharat. Strengthen the civil aviation ecosystem by encouraging MRO activities as well as Aircraft Financing and Leasing Activities institutions. • Promote shipbuilding under the Make in India initiative. • Expand Research Linked Incentive schemes; encourage companies to invest in research for new drugs, chemical entities and new biological entities. • Make Bharat a Global Electronics Manufacturing Hub by 2030. • Deepen our component ecosystem to become one of the global majors in chip manufacturing. • Make Bharat a Global Leader in Automobile and EV Manufacturing. • Aim to become a major green hydrogen production hub. • Transform Bharat into the global hub for toy manufacturing. • Support exploration for rare earths and strategic minerals and secure supply chains. Support the processing industries and manufacture of final products. • Making Bharat a Global Leader in Textile Manufacturing. • Make India the largest producer for lab-grown diamonds.

- 3. Employment, wages, social support and taxation:** The Congress is more focussed on providing support to the 'bottom of the pyramid' section through urban employment generation schemes, employment linked incentive schemes, increasing wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and minimum wages of Rs.400/ day. They have also proposed expanding the Public Distribution System (PDS) to include Pulses and Edible Oils. The congress also proposes to revamp the Goods & Services Tax (GST) regime with a single GST rate. All of these measures point to some expansion of the fiscal deficit at the margin. Notably, if the proposed GST rate is not tax neutral, it could have more material implications for the fiscal deficit.

CONGRESS	BJP
• Policy preference will be in favour of business enterprises that create large number of jobs. • Launch an urban employment programme guaranteeing work for the urban poor in reconstruction and renewal of urban infrastructure. • Increase wages under MGNREGA to Rs.400/ day. MGNREGA funds and workers may also be deployed to build public assets such as classrooms, libraries and primary health centres. • The Congress guarantees a national minimum wage of Rs400/day. • Reorient tax policies towards employment and wages as well as investments and profits. • Introduce a new employment-linked incentive (ELI) scheme for corporates to win tax credits for additional hiring against regular, quality jobs. • Congress will replace the GST laws enacted by the BJP/NDA government with GST 2.0. The new GST regime will be based on the universally accepted principle that GST shall be a single, moderate rate (with a few exceptions) that will not burden the poor. • Congress will lessen the burden of tax on MSMEs owned by individuals and partnership firms. • Shopkeepers and small retail businesses that face intense competition from online businesses will be given significant tax relief. • PDS will include Pulses (dal) and Cooking Oil.	• Work towards making Bharat a global manufacturing hub and enhance employment in this crucial sector. • Continue investment in infrastructure development for employment growth. • Expand the range of programmes to further expand the Tourism sector and increase employment opportunities. • Strategic focus on sectors like manufacturing, services, rural industry, infrastructure, tourism and skill development, coupled with support through credit facilities via Svanidhi and Mudra, has greatly expanded livelihood prospects. Committed to increasing employment, self-employment and the enhancement of livelihood opportunities for our citizens. • Review of National Floor Wages from time to time. • Further simplify the GST portal to increase accessibility to users, especially MSMEs and small traders.

- 4. Infrastructure:** Infrastructure is a focus area for both parties, but the BJP has a far more concrete plan. Moreover, while Congress critiques the BJP agenda of public investment in infrastructure, it has no counter-plan laid out to increase private investment in infrastructure.

CONGRESS	BJP
• Congress will mobilize public and private capital, increase the pace of construction and augment infrastructure. • Private capital must be attracted to create public assets and infrastructure. The BJP/NDA government has inverted this model and is using public money to create assets that eventually find their way into private hands. • Modernise the outdated railway infrastructure and ensure that trains and stations serve the needs of the common people and commuters. • KAVACH (protection systems) will be installed in all train engines and routes to improve passenger safety on Indian railways. • Road tolls are perceived by road users as excessive and exploitative. The policy on Road Tolls will be reviewed and formulae will be applied to determine the toll amount and the period of levy for each stretch of the road. • Regulatory regime for ports and airports will be established to promote efficiency and competition among ports/airports. • Promote green energy.	• Expand the railway network to increase capacity for passenger as well as cargo transportation. Significantly increase passenger carrying capacity by 2030 to reduce waiting list. To add 5,000+ km of new tracks every year. • Expand manufacturing, design and installation of Kavach Systems in a mission mode. • Redevelopment of 1,300+ railway stations in progress and will be extended to other major and medium sized stations. • Expand coverage of new age trains and introduce high frequency trains for regional connectivity. Initiate feasibility studies for Bullet Train Corridors in North, South and East India. • Strengthen the modern road connectivity ecosystem to 15,000km of access-controlled highways. Construct ring roads around major cities to improve mobility and decongest cities. • Civil Aviation Master Plan to transform airports into regional international hubs, with the vision to position Bharat as the leading aviation ecosystem of South Asia. • Integrate inter-ministry initiatives like the National Waterway Project, Namami Gange, the National River Conservation Plan, Jal Marg Vikas Project and Arth Ganga, among others, to double the share of Inland Water Transport in transportation. • 'Land Record Digitization' and the integration of various institutions like Revenue Courts and Registration Offices. • Achieve energy independence for Bharat by 2047 and reduce petroleum imports. • Targeting 500GW of renewable energy through the establishment of mega solar parks, wind parks and the Green Energy Corridor. • Focus on developing small modular reactors as well as increased investment in nuclear energy production. • Expand the 5G networks and take the lead in the development of 6G technology.

- 5. Green transition and environment:** While the Congress does not lack in intent, the BJP's plans to capitalise on the green transition globally are far more concrete and the country is already gaining foothold in some of the value chains for green and clean technology.

CONGRESS	BJP
- In order to facilitate the funding required for Green Transition and to achieve the goal of Net Zero by 2070, will set up the Green Transition Fund of India together with state governments and the private sector. - Launch a Green New Deal Investment Programme focused on Renewable Energy, sustainable infrastructure and creation of green jobs. Implement renewable energy schemes that will make the panchayats or municipality self-sufficient in electricity as far as possible. Promote solar-powered engines for tapping groundwater for agriculture. - Constitute an independent Environment Protection and Climate Change Authority to establish, monitor and enforce environmental standards and to enforce the National and State Climate Change plans. Strengthen the National Clean Air Programme in order to urgently tackle the problem of air pollution. - Congress will provide clean cooking fuel at affordable prices to all households. and ensure that the use of LPG cylinders is increased from the current paltry average number of 3.7 per year among Ujjwala beneficiaries. - Congress will work with state governments to stop the discharge of effluents into the rivers and water bodies of India. Water harvesting will be made mandatory. Desalination plants will be installed in all coastal areas. The use of recycled water will be promoted for non-drinking and industrial purposes. - Congress will pay special attention to access to water and democratic sharing of water.	- Focus on technology and sustainability transition in steel, cement, metals and engineering goods industries. Support these industries to adopt greener manufacturing processes. - Lead in the Green Credit Programme by expanding the scope of activities to fulfil decarbonization requirements. - Promote a circular economy for green and clean Bharat by setting up of Bio-Manufacturing Hubs. - Harness Bharat's renewable energy potential, targeting 500GW of renewable energy mega solar parks, wind parks and the Green Energy Corridor project. Incentivise private sector investment in large-scale Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) infrastructure. - Enable homes across Bharat to run devices like Electric Stoves, Fan, AC, TV, among others and also enable EV charging through solar energy. - Set up a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for clean energy technologies and position the country as Global Manufacturing Hub for Wind, Solar and Green Hydrogen and scale up Bio-Energy Manufacturing facilities from all sorts of waste. - Initiated the National Clean Air Program (NCAP) framework, aimed at reducing air pollution across 131 cities. Ensure that the NCAP effectively achieves annual average ambient air quality standards, especially achieving National Air Quality Standards in 60 cities by 2029. Increase ethanol blending in petrol to mitigate environmental degradation. - Support state governments in developing systems to treat water contaminated with arsenic, mercury, industrial pollutants, or other naturally occurring issues. Building on the experience of Namami Gange, undertake phase wise improvement of health and cleanliness of all major rivers. Integrate check dam construction, Amrit Sarovar construction and basin management into the National River Conservation Plan. Through this, the conservation and regeneration of basins of all major rivers will be accelerated. Launch a National Atmospheric Mission to be called Mausam to make Bharat "weather ready" and "climate smart".

- 6. Services:** The Congress is surprisingly silent on the Services sector despite the fact that it constitutes ~50% of the Indian economy. On the other hand, the Services sector, including Tourism and Technology, find notable mention in the BJP's manifesto.

CONGRESS	BJP
Support the private sector and every kind of enterprise — large, medium, small and micro — in their endeavour to create jobs and produce goods and services.	Transform Bharat into a global centre for high quality services, including Tourism to generate high value and diverse employment opportunities nationwide. Strengthen efforts to make Bharat the global hub for High-Value Services by establishing more Global Capability Centres (GCCs), Global Tech Centres (GTCs) and Global Engineering Centres (GECs). Empower women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with the skills and tools in key service sectors like IT, Healthcare, Education, Retail and Tourism with an aim to increase their income. - Promote select destinations across Bharat as preferred venues to showcase the richness of Bharatiya weddings, highlighting the vibrant traditions and supporting cultural exchanges. - Launched a Swadesh Darshan programme for comprehensive development of tourist destinations. Work with state governments to implement and further strengthen this programme. - Developing thematic tourist circuits for promoting cultural experiences. Transform islands into premier global tourism destinations by developing world-class beach resorts, marine adventure activities and robust coastal infrastructure.

- 7. Urban and rural development:** While the BJP is in favour of greater urban development along with improving ease of living in cities, the Congress is more inclined to developing rural areas with connectivity to urban centres. Nevertheless, both parties are giving importance to multimodal urban connectivity and development, with the BJP's plans being more concrete.

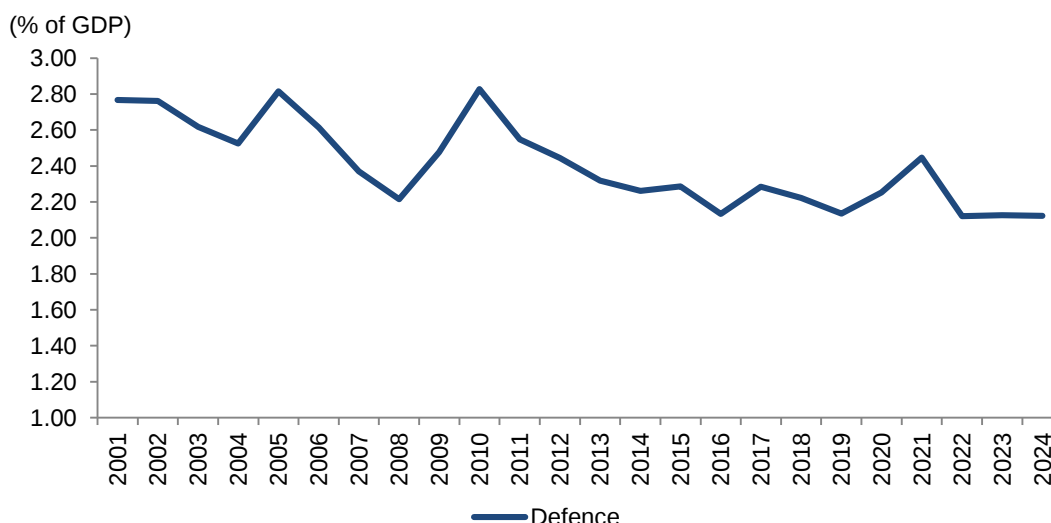
CONGRESS	BJP
• Congress will implement a comprehensive plan for multi-modal urban public transport. • Taking into account rapid urbanisation, it will amend laws to grant more executive, financial and administrative powers to the directly-elected Mayor/Chairperson for effective governance in urban local bodies. • To improve urban governance, the Mayor/Chairperson will be directly elected for a fixed term of 5 years along with a Council. Executive, financial and administrative powers will be conferred upon the Mayor/Chairperson. The administration will be accountable to the Mayor/Chairperson and the Council. • In collaboration with state governments, a comprehensive programme of underground drainage and safe disposal of sewage will be implemented in all towns and municipalities in 10 years. • To regulate the mindless expansion of existing cities, Congress will support construction of a twin city near an existing city but separated by a clear green and no-construction zone between the old and new cities. • Transport facilities and connectivity between rural areas and the nearby town/city will be augmented so that people may live in rural areas and work in urban areas. • Congress will pass the Right to Homestead Act, extend the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana to all villages and habitations and increase funds to quicken the pace of implementation of the National Drinking Water Mission.	• Expand the metro network in major urban centres, ensuring last mile connectivity. • Expand water metro services across all feasible regions, enhancing water-based public transportation networks and improving connectivity. • Extend PM-eBus Seva to eligible cities (fleet of e-Bus across cities) to provide affordable and safe transport to citizens. • Transform airports into multi-modal hubs with integrated transit facilities such as buses, metro and rapid rail, among others by effective use of PM Gatishakti National Master Plan. • Create water-secure cities, leveraging best practices for wastewater treatment, aquifer recharge and smart metering for bulk consumers. • Will begin long-term infrastructure projects with centre-state-city partnerships with a vision to revitalise urban landscapes and enhance the quality of life. • Encourage the creation of new satellite townships near metro cities across India through a combination of reforms and policy initiatives. It will encourage mixed use and transit oriented development through the same. • Will undertake creation of the Digital Urban Land Records System. • Will work with state governments and cities to encourage them to create a modern set of legislation, by-laws and urban planning processes using technology. • Continue eliminating open landfills to manage all kinds of waste being produced in Bharat through 'Waste to Wealth Mission'. • To ensure all round development of cities, will create a fresh curriculum to teach urban finance, urban infrastructure, urban environmental protection, urban water management, urban transport and more. • Extend the PM Gram Sadak Yojana to the remotest areas to ensure improved connectivity and access to healthcare, education, government services and markets. • Expand BharatNet to every village with broadband, making high-speed internet accessible to all.

- 8. Ease of living for the middle classes:** The BJP's manifesto recognizes the rise of the neo-middle class and has announced measures to support their aspirations, including quality housing and healthcare, access to quality education and ample employment opportunities. The Congress has promised stable taxation for the salaried class.

CONGRESS	BJP
Congress will maintain stable personal income tax rates throughout its term. This will ensure that the salaried class is not subjected to rising tax rates and have clarity to plan their finances over the medium-to-long period.	Strengthen the RERA Act, which has helped make the Real Estate sector more transparent and citizen friendly than ever before. Further, facilitate home ownership for middle-income families through comprehensive measures, including cost reduction in construction and registration, regulatory reforms like enabling automatic approvals for standard housing designs and promoting mixed-use housing. Create unified metropolitan transport systems that integrate multi-modal transport facilities and reduce commute time in cities. Implement AI technologies for traffic management and transport efficiency. Focus on the modern road network, enhance rail and metro connectivity with new-age trains and expanded networks, develop comprehensive EV charging stations, construct new airports and advance telecom infrastructure with affordable 5G and innovative 6G technology, promoting ease of living for middle class families. Develop more green spaces like parks, playgrounds etc., reviving water bodies and developing natural spaces to make cities more adaptable, sustainable and people-friendly.

- 9. Defense, National security, Foreign policy and Space missions:** We see no material difference in the approach towards the Defence sector between the two parties, except on matters such as recruitment and appointment strategy. Both parties are focussed on increasing domestic capacity in the Defence sector while Congress has vowed to arrest the spending decline (Exhibit 1). BJP is vying for a seat at the UN Security Council while the Congress is concerned about protecting India's human rights image. BJP has ambitious plans in the Space domain as well.

Exhibit 1: Defence spending below peak but hovering above 2% levels



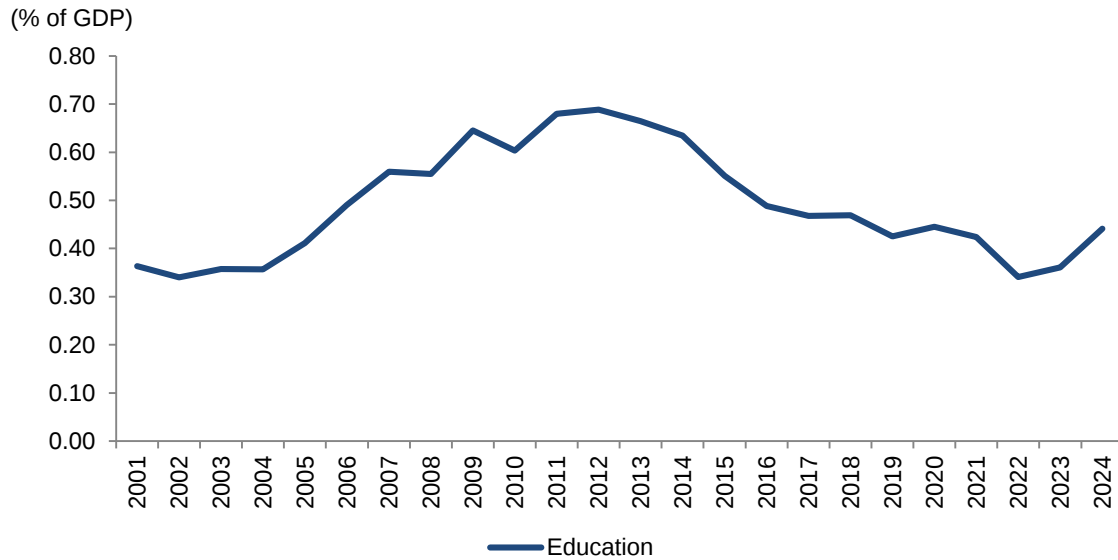
Source: Union Budget, CEIC, Nirmal Bang Institutional Equities Research

CONGRESS	BJP
- Will implement a comprehensive National Security Strategy. Reverse the decline in Defence expenditure as a proportion of total expenditure and will ensure that sufficient funds are allocated and spent. Rapidly expand domestic capacity to manufacture defence & security hardware and equipment. - Will institutionalise the process of appointing the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) to ensure transparency and military consensus. - Will scrap the Agnipath Scheme and return to the normal recruitment processes followed by the Army, Navy and Air Force that will guarantee economic and social security for soldiers. One Rank One Pension (OROP) will be implemented. Will restore the disability pension and make it tax-free. National Security Council (NSC) and the office of National Security Adviser (NSA) will be brought under the oversight of a select committee of Parliament. - Congress will establish a National Economic Security Board under the NSC with the following objectives: (a) monitor risks to global supply chain disruptions (b) measures to reduce over-dependence on large import sources (c) recommend future courses of action toward inward and outward investments that will strengthen India's footprint in the world (d) monitor global financial flows and identify potential threats to India (e) work on digital/cybersecurity issues that may threaten India's digital financial infrastructure. - There was a consensus on foreign policy since Independence. Unfortunately, in many areas, foreign policy under the BJP/NDA government has witnessed marked departures from this consensus, notably on the ongoing Gaza conflict. Congress pledges to restore India's global reputation as a voice of peace and moderation in world affairs. - Congress will work to repair India's international image that has been damaged by the present government's intolerance of dissent and suppression of human rights.	- Established the position of Chief of Defence staff (CDS) for better co-ordination in the military. Further establish the military theatre commands for more efficient operations. - Equipped the Armed Forces and the Central Armed Police Forces with modern state-of-the-art weapons, equipment and technology to aid the swift disposal of any current and emerging threats. Vastly expand domestic defence manufacturing This effort will be facilitated by accelerating indigenisation in major Air and Land Equipment Platforms. - Accelerate development of robust infrastructure along the Indo-China, Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Myanmar borders. Introduce technological solutions on fenced portions to make fencing smarter. - Will expand Bharat's defence footprint across strategic locations and partner with friendly countries to protect Bharat's and the Indian Ocean Region's security interests. - Launch a National Forensics Mission to strengthen the forensic infrastructure. - Will take further steps towards strengthening Bharat's digital sovereignty and will take stringent action against digital entities that threaten the safety of Bharatiya on the internet. - To regulate and monitor Bharat's cyber protection agencies and infrastructure, BJP will develop and implement robust cyber security policies. - Strengthen paramilitary forces with state-of-the-art equipment and trained personnel to eliminate Left Wing Extremism in all its forms. - Committed to seeking permanent membership in the UN Security Council to elevate Bharat's position in global decision making. - Facilitate the international movement of trade and services through Bharat by boosting connectivity to Europe via the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor. Launch Gaganyaan, Bharat's first human spaceflight mission, and land an astronaut on the Moon. Significantly increase value of the Space Economy, positioning Bharat as a leading space power and extending support to Global South countries in utilising space and space technology services.

10. Education, Youth, Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology: The Congress is focused on improving the quality of primary education while the BJP is focused on expanding the network of schools and higher education institutes. The Congress has announced education loan waivers as well as proposed to re-introduce some education loan schemes. The Congress has announced an apprenticeship scheme for the youth while the BJP is also advocating internships. Both parties are encouraging Start-ups.

CONGRESS	BJP
• Congress brought in the Right to Education (RTE) Act in 2009 that transformed education for children between the ages of 6 and 14 years. Will amend the RTE Act to make education from Class I to Class XII in public schools compulsory and free. • Congress will work with states to ensure that every class and every subject has a dedicated teacher. Take urgent measures to address deficiencies and ensure wholesome learning outcomes within a period of 5 years. • Accelerate the integration of pre-primary and primary education to ensure that all children receive at least two years of pre-school education. • Due to widespread unemployment, as a one-time measure of relief, the amount due including unpaid interest as on 15 March, 2024 in respect of all student educational loans will be written off and the banks will be compensated by the government. • Congress will revive the Education Loan programme to college students implemented under the UPA government and instruct banks to extend collateral-free education loans up to Rs. 750,000. • Congress guarantees a new Right to Apprenticeship Act to provide a one-year apprenticeship with a private or a public sector company to every diploma holder or college graduate below the age of 25 years. Apprentices will get Rs.100,000 a year. • Congress will restructure the Fund of Funds Scheme for start-ups and allocate 50% of the available fund, as far as possible equally among all districts, for providing funds to youth below 40 years to start their own businesses and generate employment. • Will eliminate "Angel tax" and all other exploitative tax schemes that inhibit investment in new micro, small companies and innovative start-ups. • Will protect innovation and intellectual property rights.	• Ensure that every student gets the opportunity for high-quality school education. Strengthen the network of schools to make them world-class. Work towards a 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio from pre-school to secondary level. • Make our youth future ready by adopting a dynamic learning curriculum at school level as mandated by National Education Policy, 2020 by incorporating industry-aligned curriculum and skill development in emerging technologies in higher education. • Achieve 100% implementation of 'One Nation, One Student ID' through the Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR) to store academic qualifications, credit scores and certificate. • Elevate the quality of education by expanding top educational institutions and upgrading universities to global standards. Introduce more IITs, IIMs and AIIMS. • Promote the use of education stack for personalised and flexible learning management systems • Will launch internship programmes to blend academic and practical skills. Will work with the private sector to expand the incubator network. • Expand the existing Startup India Seed Fund Scheme and Startup Credit Guarantee Scheme. Expand credit programmes like Mudra. • Expand Bharat's top-tier startup ecosystem to tier-2 and tier-3 cities. Encourage start-ups in government procurement. • Will develop a comprehensive ecosystem under the IndiaAI mission, to position Bharat as a global leader in AI innovation and ensure tech sovereignty. • Strengthen the Graphene-based technology programmes to develop more use cases and applications. • Operationalise the National Quantum Mission to position Bharat as a global leader in quantum technology.

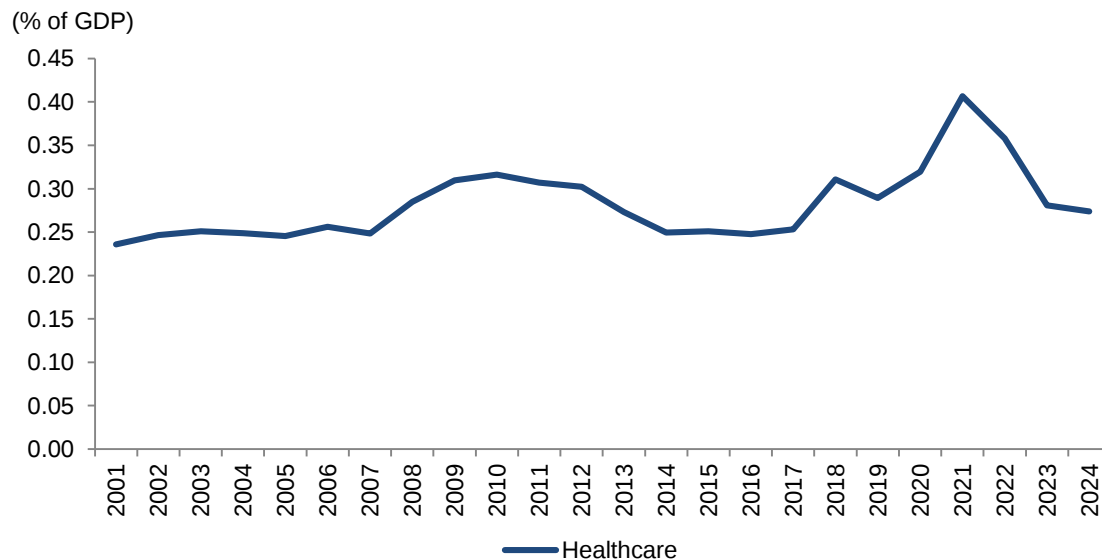
Exhibit 2: Spending on Education on a secular decline since 2013 but some pick up seen of late



Source: Union Budget, CEIC, Nirmal Bang Institutional Equities Research

11. Healthcare: The Congress has promised to increase spending on Healthcare by the central government to 4% of GDP in a phased manner by FY29 (which likely includes an expanded Mid-day meal scheme). However, this seems a tall ask given that it has never crossed even 1% of GDP. While the BJP has long been propagating health insurance, the Congress is now proposing the Rajasthan Model of cashless insurance up to Rs.25 lakhs (Rs2.5mn) be adopted for universal healthcare.

Exhibit 3: Central government spending on Healthcare down after pandemic spike



Source: Union Budget, CEIC, Nirmal Bang Institutional Equities Research

CONGRESS	BJP
• Budget allocation for Healthcare will be increased step by step every year to achieve 4% of total expenditure by 2028-2029. • The Rajasthan model of cashless insurance up to Rs.25 lakhs (Rs2.5mn) will be adopted for universal healthcare. • The contribution of the Central government to the pay of frontline health workers (such as ASHA, Anganwadi, Mid-Day Meal cooks, etc.) will be doubled. • Establish one government medical college-cum-hospital in each district. • Congress will double the hardship allowance of doctors serving in rural areas and provide suitable residence facilities. • All vacancies in medical and paramedical posts in public health institutions and all vacancies in medical colleges will be filled in three years. • The number of central government dispensaries will be rapidly expanded. All central government dispensaries will dispense brand and generic medicines of good quality at reasonable prices. • Nutritional deficiency among children will be addressed to rapidly reduce the incidents of stunting and wasting. Will expand the mid-day meal scheme up to Class XII. • Only 76% of Indian children receive full immunisation. Congress will ensure full immunisation of 100% of children within 5 years.	• Provided quality free health treatment of up to ₹5 lakh (0.5mn) to poor families under Ayushman Bharat. Will continue to provide free health treatment by strengthening Ayushman Bharat and other such initiatives. • Will expand the existing health services focused on the prevention and reduction of Anaemia, Breast Cancer, Cervical Cancer and Osteoporosis, ensuring a healthy life for women. Will launch a focused initiative to eliminate cervical cancer. • Through the increased number of AIIMS and various medical colleges, will increase the number of UG and PG seats in medical education. • Upgrading secondary and primary health care under PM-ABHIM (PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission). Will further expand PM-ABHIM for robust health care. • Will strengthen the Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and upgrade district hospitals and other secondary healthcare centres by expanding the full functionality for comprehensive healthcare. • Will expand the Jan Aushadhi Kendra network to provide high-quality, low-cost medicines to citizens across the country. • Will launch an Emergency And Trauma Care Mission to provide immediate and effective care to trauma patients. • Will intensify existing efforts to ensure elimination of TB, Leprosy, Lymphatic Filariasis, Measles and Rubella, Trachoma, and Kala Azar by facilitating timely testing and access to medicines. • Will encourage and extend support to Bharatiya vaccine manufacturers and biopharma companies in various capacities to boost production and distribution and aim to reduce our timeline for vaccine manufacturing. • We will strengthen the efforts being made to increase the training capacity for paramedics, technicians, pharmacists and nurses.

12. Women, backward sections and senior citizens: Both parties are equally committed to uplift women. However, the Congress has proposed to launch the Mahalakshmi scheme to provide Rs. 100,000 per year to every poor Indian family as an unconditional cash transfer (to the woman head of the family). The Congress has also made other commitments such as increasing the reservation quota for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and backward classes and increasing the pension for Senior Citizens. Some of these commitments entail higher fiscal outlays.

CONGRESS	BJP
• Congress resolves to launch a Mahalakshmi scheme to provide Rs. 100,000 per year to every poor Indian family as an unconditional cash transfer. The poor will be identified among the families in the bottom of the income pyramid. Absent a woman, it will be transferred to the account of the oldest member of the family. • The one-third reservation for women will be applied to State Assemblies that will be elected in the next round of Assembly elections in 2025. The one-third reservation for women will also be applied to the Lok Sabha that will be elected in 2029. • Reserve 50% of central government jobs for women starting in 2025. • Will substantially increase the amount of institutional credit that is extended to women. Will re-incorporate the Bhartiya Mahila Bank (Women's Bank) that was wound up by the BJP/NDA government. • The Labour Force Participation Rate of women is an abysmal 25%. We will embark on a massive exercise to expand women's participation in the workforce through measures such as fair and equal wages; safe places of work; childcare services; preventing sexual harassment and violence; and extending maternity benefits. • Will review all laws and ensure equality between men and women. • Congress will conduct a nation-wide Socio-Economic and Caste Census to enumerate the castes and sub-castes and their socio-economic conditions. Based on the data, strengthen agenda for affirmative action. • The Congress guarantees that it will pass a constitutional amendment to raise the 50% cap on reservations for SC, ST and OBC. • The central government's contribution to pensions for senior citizens, widows and persons with disabilities under the National Social Assistance Programme remains a pitiful Rs.200 - Rs500 per month. Congress will raise this amount to Rs. 1,000 per month. • Restore travel concessions in public transport (rail and road) for senior citizens.	• Empowered one crore (10mn) rural women to become Lakhpati Didis. Will now empower three crore (30mn) rural women to become Lakhpati Didis. • Empower women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with the skills and tools in key service sectors like IT, Healthcare, Education, Retail and Tourism with an aim to increase their income. • Integrate women SHGs with ongoing initiatives such as One District One Product (ODOP), Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), Ekta Mall, ONDC, GEM, One Station One Product for enhancing better market access for their products. • Enacted the long-awaited Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. Will systematically implement this to ensure representation for women in the Parliament and State Legislatures. • Ensure development of infrastructure such as working women's hostels, creches etc. with the specific focus on locations near industrial and commercial centres to facilitate increased participation of women in the workforce. • Expand livelihood opportunities for all families, including OBC, SC & ST, by measures like doubling the MUDRA loan limit to ₹20 lakh (Rs. 2mn). • Seamless access to social security benefits and other essential government services to senior citizens by leveraging the extensive reach and reliability of the postal and digital network. • Implement age-friendly public infrastructure and transportation systems to facilitate mobility and independence for senior citizens. • Expand the Ayushman Bharat Yojana to cover Senior Citizens and provide them access to free and quality healthcare.

13. Federalism and Judiciary: The Congress is in favour of granting greater autonomy to states on most matters. It also proposes to end the 'cess raj' to which the states do not have access. The BJP is focussed on fast tracking the judiciary procedures while the Congress is focussed on both independence and speed.

CONGRESS	BJP
- The New Education Policy (NEP) announced by the BJP/NDA government has been opposed by educationists and several state governments. Education is a concurrent subject and the rights of states to formulate an education policy must be respected. Congress will revisit and amend the NEP in consultation with the state governments. Will end the duplicitous "cess" raj to deny states their rightful share of tax revenues by introducing a law to limit Union cess and surcharges to 5% of gross tax revenues. - Will instruct the Finance Commission to take into account factors such as demographic performance and tax efforts in determining the shares of states in the devolution of central tax revenues. Will work with state governments to evolve a formula to devolve funds, including a share of GST revenues, directly to panchayats and municipalities. - Will prevail upon the states to implement the 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Constitution in letter and spirit and ensure that funds, functions and functionaries are devolved upon the panchayats and municipalities. In consultation with the Supreme Court and the Chief Justices of the High Courts, Congress will establish a National Judicial Commission (NJC). The composition of the NJC will be decided in consultation with the Supreme Court. The NJC will be responsible for the selection and appointment of judges of the High Courts and the Supreme Court. Congress will amend the Constitution to create two divisions in the Supreme Court: A Constitutional Court and a Court of Appeal. The Constitutional Court consisting of the seven seniormost judges will hear and decide cases involving the interpretation of the Constitution and other cases of legal significance or national importance. The Court of Appeal will be the final court of appeal that will, sitting in Benches of three judges each, hear appeals from the High Court and National Tribunals. Congress will establish a Judicial Complaints Commission consisting of retired judges of the Supreme Court and retired Chief Justices of the High Courts to investigate complaints of misconduct against judges of the higher judiciary.	Take further steps to facilitate fiscal autonomy and sustainability of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Formulate a National Litigation Policy to expedite the resolution of all matters in courts, lower the cost of contested court proceedings, and decrease the number of cases in which the government is a party. - Completely overhaul the commercial and civil justice systems, on the lines of criminal justice reforms. This revamp will aim to streamline procedures, enhance the efficiency of legal processes and ensure timely justice, fostering a more business-friendly and citizen-centric legal environment. Accelerate the e-Courts Mission Mode Project to complete the digitisation of entire court records and for easy access to court proceedings online. - Establish fast track courts for quick disposal of pendency in identified areas. Work towards further improving the legal framework to promote arbitration and mediation ecosystem.

14. Regional development: The BJP proposes to develop industrial cities in different industrial corridors for balanced regional development. They also propose to leverage the Northeast as a strategic gateway for Bharat's Act East Policy.

CONGRESS	BJP
- Will assess the infrastructure deficit in the North Eastern states and provide more funds for building infrastructure. - The situation in Manipur has gone from bad to worse due to the callous neglect of the BJP/NDA government. Congress will remove the present state government forthwith and heal the wounds among the communities. Congress will appoint a Reconciliation Commission to bring about a political and administrative settlement that will be satisfactory to all the people of the state.	- The government shall develop industrial cities in different industrial corridors for balanced regional development. Continue efforts to address the issues in the disturbed areas of the North East and remove Armed Forces (Special Forces) Act in a phased manner. Further work towards resolution of inter-state border disputes amongst Northeastern states through sustained efforts. Leverage the Northeast as a strategic gateway for Bharat's Act East Policy ensuring connectivity, education, health, economic development and security. Ensure flood management in the Northeast by conducting advanced satellite imagery to identify places where big reservoirs can be constructed to store excess waters according to topography, which will be used for irrigation, organising water sports among others. Continue to protect and preserve the unique ecological balance of Bharat's hill states through sustainable development initiatives.

15. Cultural development: Both parties intend to harness India's soft power. However, the agenda of the Congress is rooted more on the principles of secularism and artistic freedom.

CONGRESS	BJP
• Congress will guarantee artistic freedom. They will oppose censorship. Attempts by vigilante groups to censor or intimidate artists will be dealt with firmly and according to law. • Congress will commit resources and attention to sustaining India's living traditions, especially to the flourishing of our distinct indigenous cultures. • Congress will ensure the autonomy of national cultural institutions, including financial autonomy. These institutions will be administered by renowned artists and experts in the field. • Congress will support government and private efforts to establish museums, art galleries, libraries and archives. This will include smaller institutions at the district level, which are the repositories of local knowledge about artists, artisans, folk culture and communities. Support measures to create digital archives. • Offer grants for the translation of traditional and contemporary expressions of Indian culture into Indian and foreign languages to foster national integration and Indian soft power abroad.	• BJP will establish Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centres across the globe to showcase Bharat's rich culture and offer training in yoga, ayurveda, Bharatiya languages, classical music etc. We will promote Bharat's rich democratic traditions going back millennia as the Mother of Democracy. • Facilitate Yoga and Ayurveda Institutes in all the major countries for providing certified courses. Also establish a globally recognised certification mechanism for Yoga and Ayurveda. • Collaborate with countries across the globe to restore and revitalise sites of Bharatiya civilization. • Relentlessly work towards bringing back Bharatiya idols and artefacts that were taken away illegally from Bharat. • Ramayan is celebrated across the world, particularly in South and South-East Asia. Launch a global outreach program for documenting and promoting the tangible and intangible legacy of Lord Ram in all countries. Celebrate Ramayan Utsav with great fervour across the globe to commemorate the Pran Pratishtha of Ram Lalla.

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