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MONTHLY MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2026 | COMPLETE EDITION



GS I | GS II | GS III | GS IV | ESSAY | PRELIMS

All the month's major stories, with original analysis, maps, charts and practice

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Top stories this month

- **Budget 2026-27:** a debt anchor, 4.3% fiscal deficit and missions for strategic manufacturing.
- **India-US trade:** tariffs cut to 18%, then a US Supreme Court ruling changes the ground.
- **New data:** CPI with base 2024 and GDP with base 2022-23 (Q3 growth 7.8%).
- **AI Impact Summit:** the New Delhi Declaration and India's own AI models.
- **West Asia:** a Special Strategic Partnership with Israel, then strikes on Iran on 28 February.

How to read this magazine

Did you know? | Map | Chart

Prelims pointer | Key points | Revision tick box

About this issue

- The February 2026 issue: every GS paper, Essay and Prelims, with maps, charts, fact boxes, an ethics case study and practice questions.
- Facts are as reported up to 28 February 2026. Several stories, including the Iran conflict and US tariffs, kept developing in March; check later updates.
- Maps are location diagrams (points by latitude and longitude, no boundaries). Use an official Survey of India map for India's boundaries.

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01 | HISTORY GS 1

80 Years of the RIN Revolt: When the Navy Joined the Freedom Struggle

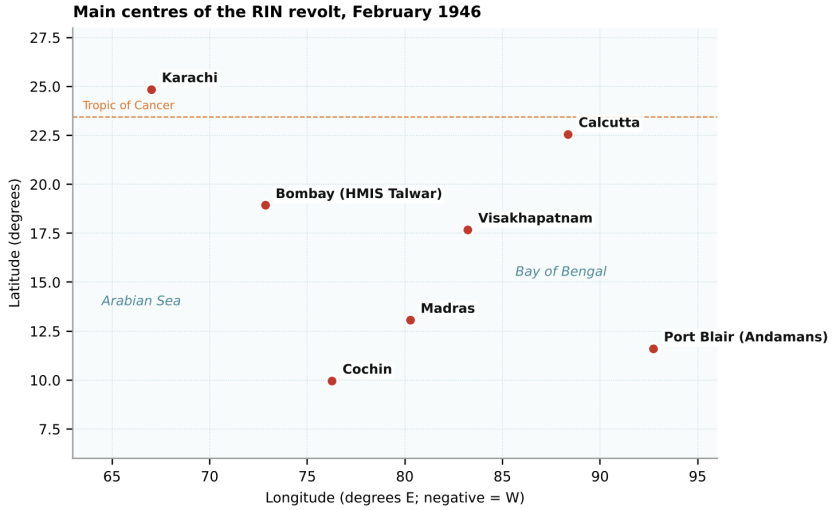
Syllabus Mapping: GS1: Modern Indian history (1945-47, last phase of the freedom struggle); role of the armed forces and people's movements

Context

18 February 2026 marked 80 years since the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) revolt of 18-23 February 1946, also called the Naval Mutiny. The anniversary was widely recalled in commentary that week. The revolt is a key example of how the armed forces and ordinary people shaped the last phase of the freedom struggle, alongside the INA trials.

Key Points

- **Start:** on 18 February 1946 ratings (sailors) of the signals training establishment **HMIS Talwar** in Bombay went on strike.
- **Grievances:** poor food and pay, racial abuse by British officers, slow demobilisation after the Second World War, and anger at the INA trials at the Red Fort.
- **Leadership:** a Naval Central Strike Committee, with **M.S. Khan** as president and **Madan Singh** as vice-president.
- **Spread:** about 20,000 ratings, 78 ships and 20 shore establishments took part, from Karachi and Bombay to Madras, Cochin, Visakhapatnam, Calcutta and the Andamans.
- **End:** on 23 February 1946 the ratings surrendered after **Sardar Patel** and **M.A. Jinnah** persuaded them to.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. The strike spread along both coasts within two days.

Why it mattered

- **Unity across communities.** The ratings flew the Congress, Muslim League and Communist flags together, a rare sight in the communally tense months of 1946.
- **Mass support.** Bombay mill workers struck in sympathy, and units of the Royal Indian Air Force also protested.
- **Loyalty of the forces.** Coming after the INA trials, it showed the British that they could no longer rely on Indian soldiers and sailors to hold India.
- **Timing.** On 19 February 1946, while the revolt was on, Prime Minister Attlee announced the Cabinet Mission, which reached India in March.

Analysis: why the leaders held back

The Congress and League leaderships did not back the revolt. They feared that indiscipline in the forces would weaken the army a free India would inherit, and that violence would derail negotiations for a transfer of power. Aruna Asaf Ali and the Communist Party supported the strikers. The episode is useful for Mains questions that compare negotiated, constitutional methods with mass upsurges in 1945-47: the upsurges raised the cost of staying for Britain, while the negotiations shaped how power was handed over.

Did you know?

Rating B.C. Dutt was arrested for writing 'Quit India' and 'Jai Hind' on the walls of HMIS Talwar, an act often cited as the spark for the revolt.

Prelims Pointers

- The revolt began at HMIS Talwar, Bombay, on 18 February 1946 and ended on 23 February 1946.
- M.S. Khan led the Naval Central Strike Committee.
- The Cabinet Mission (Pethick-Lawrence, Stafford Cripps, A.V. Alexander) arrived in March 1946.

02 | ART AND CULTURE GS 1

Living Root Bridges of Meghalaya: India's Next World Heritage Bid

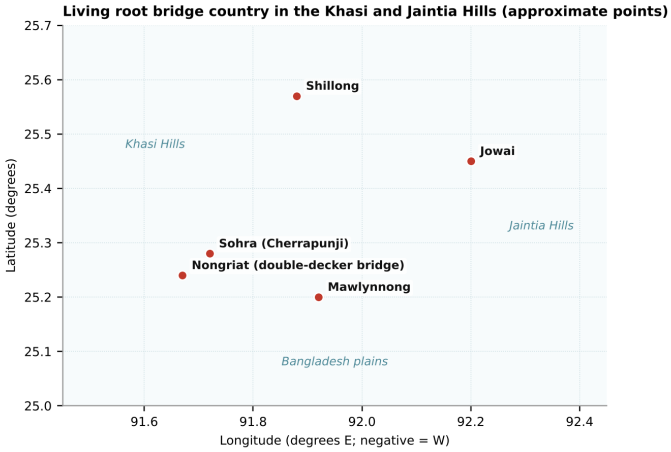
Syllabus Mapping: GS1: Indian culture and heritage; GS3: Conservation, indigenous knowledge

Context

India has nominated the living root bridges of Meghalaya for the UNESCO World Heritage List in the 2026-27 cycle. The dossier, titled **'Jingkieng Jri / Lyu Chrai Cultural Landscape'**, was handed to the Director of the World Heritage Centre on 29 January 2026 by India's Permanent Representative to UNESCO, just before UNESCO's annual 1 February deadline for nominations.

Key Points

- **What they are:** bridges grown, not built. Communities guide the aerial roots of the rubber fig tree (*Ficus elastica*) across streams until they knit into a strong, living walkway. This takes 10-30 years.
- **Who makes them:** the Khasi and Jaintia communities of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, who also maintain them.
- **Names:** 'Jingkieng Jri' in Khasi and 'Lyu Chrai' in the Jaintia (Pnar) language.
- **Category:** nominated as a **cultural landscape**, a living tradition of working with nature rather than a monument.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. The bridges are found mainly on the steep, very wet southern slopes facing the Bangladesh plains.

Why it matters

- **Climate-resilient knowledge.** The bridges survive the heavy rain of one of the wettest regions on Earth and grow stronger with age, unlike wooden bridges that rot.
- **Community heritage.** They are owned and cared for by villages, which suits UNESCO's growing focus on living, community-held heritage.
- **Northeast on the heritage map.** India's recent nominations show a shift beyond forts and temples: the Maratha Military Landscapes were inscribed in July 2025.

Challenges

- Tourism pressure: crowds and concrete repairs can damage roots and the forest around them.
- Young people moving away may weaken the knowledge needed to grow and repair the bridges.
- Listing must not take control away from the communities who created the bridges.

Prelims Pointers

- UNESCO's advisory body for cultural sites is ICOMOS; for natural sites it is IUCN.
- The World Heritage Convention was adopted in 1972; India ratified it in 1977.
- The Maratha Military Landscapes (12 forts, including Gingee in Tamil Nadu) were inscribed in 2025.

03 | ART AND CULTURE **GS 1**

Vande Mataram at 150: The Six-Stanza Protocol

Syllabus Mapping: GS1: Modern Indian history; national symbols; GS2: Fundamental duties

Context

As part of the year-long 150th anniversary of the national song, the Ministry of Home Affairs was reported on 11-12 February 2026 to have issued guidelines that **all six stanzas** of Vande Mataram (about 3 minutes 10 seconds) be sung or played on specified official occasions, before the national anthem. (The MHA order itself was not available for checking; the details here are as reported.)

Key Points

- **History:** written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (traditionally dated 7 November 1875), and included in his novel *Anandamath* (1882).
- **1896:** Rabindranath Tagore sang it at the Calcutta session of the Congress; after 1905 it became the cry of the Swadeshi movement.
- **1937:** the Congress Working Committee decided that only the first two stanzas would be sung at national gatherings, because some members objected to the later stanzas' religious imagery.
- **24 January 1950:** the Constituent Assembly gave it equal honour with Jana Gana Mana.

The debate

- **Supporters say** the full song is part of the national heritage, and singing it in full honours the freedom fighters who sang it.
- **Critics say** the 1937 decision was a deliberate compromise to keep the song inclusive, and reversing it may make some citizens uneasy.
- **Legal position:** unlike the anthem, the national song has no statutory protection. The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 covers the anthem and the flag only. In *Bijoe Emmanuel* (1986) the Supreme Court held that respectfully standing silent while the anthem is sung is not an offence.

Prelims Pointers

- Article 51A(a): a fundamental duty to respect the Constitution, its ideals, the national flag and the national anthem (the song is not mentioned).
- The national anthem was first sung at the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1911.
- The 150-year commemoration of Vande Mataram began on 7 November 2025.

04 | GEOGRAPHY GS 1

A Warm Start to 2026: La Nina Fades and El Nino Risk Rises

Syllabus Mapping: GS1: Climatology, ocean-atmosphere interaction, important geophysical phenomena; GS3: Climate change

Context

The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) reported that **January 2026** and **February 2026** were each the **fifth-warmest** on record for those months, at about **1.47 C** and **1.49 C** above pre-industrial levels. This happened even while a weak La Nina, which usually cools the globe a little, was in place. The World Meteorological Organization's February update said La Nina was fading towards neutral conditions, with chances of El Nino rising later in 2026.

Key Points

- **Sea surface:** February's average sea surface temperature (60S-60N) was 20.88 C, joint second-highest for the month.
- **Poles:** Arctic sea ice was the third-lowest for both January and February. The Antarctic summer minimum (2.58 million sq km, 26 February) was only the 16th-lowest in 48 years, as winds spread the ice out.
- **Extremes:** Europe had its coldest January since 2010, while the Southern Hemisphere saw record heat and wildfires; in February, atmospheric rivers brought record rain to Spain and Portugal.
- **India:** IMD (28 February) reported a weak La Nina and a neutral Indian Ocean Dipole, and forecast above-normal heatwave days in March over parts of Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

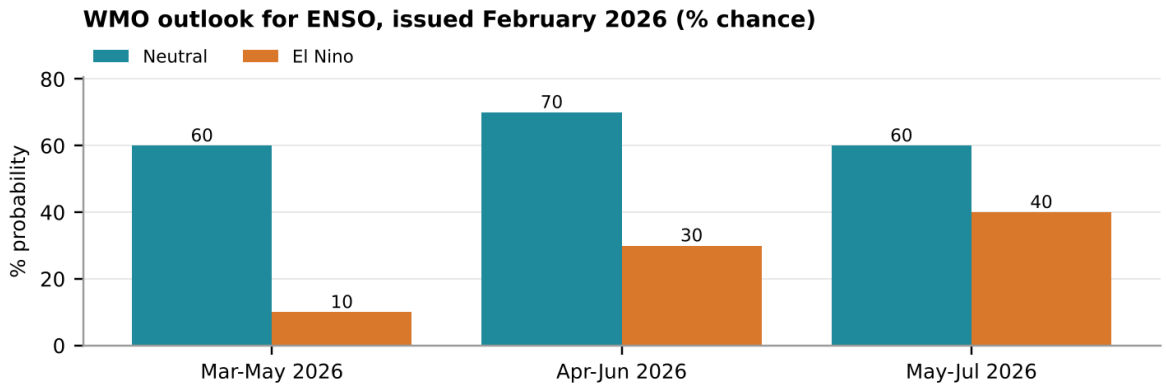


Chart. Values for Apr-Jun and May-Jul are approximate, read from the WMO update. The chance of El Nino rises through mid-2026. Source: WMO El Nino/La Nina Update, February 2026.

Key term	Meaning
ENSO	El Nino-Southern Oscillation: swings in sea temperature and winds across the tropical Pacific, tracked in the Nino 3.4 region
Indian Ocean Dipole	The temperature difference between the western and eastern Indian Ocean; a positive IOD usually helps the Indian monsoon
Atmospheric river	A long, narrow band of water vapour in the atmosphere that can dump very heavy rain when it hits land
Spring predictability barrier	ENSO forecasts made in northern spring are less reliable, so outlooks for the monsoon season stay uncertain

Why it matters for India

- **Monsoon risk.** El Nino years are often associated with weaker Indian monsoons, so a swing to El Nino by mid-2026 would affect kharif sowing, reservoirs and food prices.
- **Heat.** A warm baseline means more intense heatwaves, as IMD's March outlook already showed.
- **Policy.** Heat action plans, crop contingency plans and better ocean observation in the Indian Ocean need to be ready before the monsoon.

Did you know?
The Paris Agreement's 1.5 C limit refers to warming averaged over about two decades, so single months near 1.5 C do not by themselves mean the limit has been crossed.

Prelims Pointers
- C3S is part of the EU's Copernicus Earth observation programme, run by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF).
- El Nino: warmer-than-normal sea surface in the central and eastern tropical Pacific; La Nina: cooler than normal.
- The NSIDC (US) tracks sea-ice extent at both poles.

05 | INDIAN SOCIETY GS 1

Kerala to Keralam: Language, Identity and Article 3

Syllabus Mapping: GS1: Regionalism, diversity of India, linguistic states; GS2: Federalism, Articles 3 and 4

Context

On **24 February 2026** the Union Cabinet approved the proposal to rename the State of Kerala as **Keralam**, its name in Malayalam. The Kerala Legislative Assembly had passed a resolution seeking the change on 24 June 2024. The next steps are the President's reference of the **Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026** to the State Assembly for its views, the President's recommendation, and passage by Parliament.

Key Points
- **Article 3:** Parliament may by law alter the name of any State. The Bill needs the President's recommendation and must be referred to the State legislature for its views, which are not binding.
- **Article 4:** such a law amends the First and Fourth Schedules but is not a constitutional amendment under Article 368, so a simple majority is enough.
- **Precedents:** Orissa became Odisha (2011) and Uttaranchal became Uttarakhand (2007).
- **History:** Kerala was formed on 1 November 1956 under the States Reorganisation Act, the result of the Aikya Keralam movement for a single Malayalam-speaking State.

Why names matter

- **Identity.** A State's own-language name affirms linguistic and cultural identity, a key basis on which States were reorganised in 1956.
- **Federal dialogue.** The change follows a State Assembly resolution, showing how Articles 3 and 4 let States and the Union work together on identity questions.
- **Practical costs.** Renaming requires changes to official records, signboards and documents, which take time and money.

Analysis

Linguistic States, once feared as a threat to unity, have largely strengthened it by giving regional identities a place within the Union. Name changes are the gentlest form of this recognition. The wider lesson is that sub-national pride and national unity can reinforce each other when change is consensual and follows constitutional procedure.

Prelims Pointers
- Article 3 also covers forming new States and altering areas or boundaries.
- The States Reorganisation Commission (1953-55) was chaired by Fazl Ali, with K.M. Panikkar and H.N. Kunzru as members.
- Malayalam was declared a classical language in 2013.

06 | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GS 2

India-US Interim Trade Framework: From 50% to 18%, Then a Court Ruling

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Effect of policies of developed countries on India; bilateral agreements; GS3: External sector, agriculture

Context

In early February 2026 the United States cut its tariff on Indian goods from an effective **50%** to **18%**. The 50% had combined a 25% 'reciprocal' tariff with a 25% penalty imposed in August 2025 over India's purchases of Russian crude. A **joint statement on a framework for an interim trade agreement** followed on 6 February (US time; 7 February in India). Then, on **20 February**, the US Supreme Court ruled in *Learning Resources, Inc. v. Trump* (6-3) that the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) does not allow the President to impose tariffs. The US responded with a temporary global tariff under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, raised to 15% from 24 February.

Key Points

- **India's offer:** lower tariffs on US industrial goods and on some farm items such as dried distillers' grains (DDGS), red sorghum for feed, tree nuts, fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits; action on non-tariff barriers.
- **Purchases:** India 'intends to purchase' about **US$500 billion** of US energy, aircraft and parts, precious metals, technology products and coking coal over five years.
- **Protected:** according to the Commerce Minister, maize, wheat, rice, sugar, soybean, poultry and dairy were kept out of concessions.
- **Gains for India:** zero duty on items such as spices, tea, coffee, cashew and some fruit; generic medicines, gems and diamonds, and aircraft parts to follow once the agreement is concluded.
- **Still pending:** a full Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), the aim of the 'Mission 500' target of US$500 billion in bilateral trade by 2030.

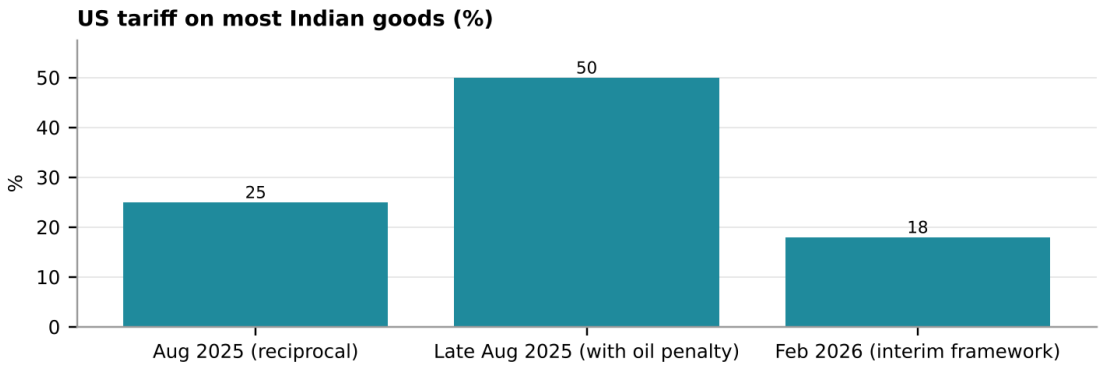


Chart. After the US Supreme Court ruling of 20 February, IEEPA tariffs lost their legal basis and a temporary Section 122 tariff (up to 15% for 150 days) was applied globally. Source: Joint statement of 6-7 February 2026 and Commerce Ministry statements, as reported.

Why it matters

- **Exports.** The US is India's largest export market. The 50% tariff had hit labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, gems and jewellery, and shrimp.
- **Competitiveness.** The Commerce Minister said 18% is lower than the rates on several competitors, including Vietnam and Bangladesh.
- **Trade rules.** Interim agreements are allowed under GATT Article XXIV if they lead to a full free trade area.

Concerns

- **Farmers:** farm groups held protests, fearing competition in feed and edible oil. The government says no sensitive item was opened.
- **Strategic autonomy:** US statements presented India as cutting Russian oil purchases; the Indian government's account focused on export gains.

- **Legal uncertainty:** commentators argued India should reassess the deal after the court ruling, since the legal basis of the US tariffs changed. The framework reportedly allows changes if US tariff terms change.
- **Feasibility:** whether US$500 billion of purchases in five years is realistic is open to question.

Prelims Pointers

- IEEPA (1977) is a US sanctions law; Section 122 of the Trade Act, 1974 allows balance-of-payments tariffs of up to 15% for up to 150 days.
- GATT Article I sets the Most-Favoured-Nation principle; Article XXIV allows free trade areas and customs unions.
- DDGS (dried distillers' grains with solubles) is a by-product of ethanol making, used as animal feed.

07 | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GS 2

India AI Impact Summit: The New Delhi Declaration

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Important international institutions and groupings; India's role in global governance; GS3: AI

Context

India hosted the **India AI Impact Summit** in New Delhi, with the leaders' segment on 19-20 February 2026. It ended with the **New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact**, adopted by **88 countries and international organisations**. It was the first summit in the global series (Bletchley Park 2023, Seoul 2024, Paris 2025) to be held in the Global South, and it moved the focus from AI 'safety' to AI 'impact'. French President Emmanuel Macron was among the visiting leaders.

Key Points

- **Motto:** 'Sarvajan Hitaya, Sarvajan Sukhaya' (welfare and happiness for all).
- **Three Sutras:** People, Planet, Progress.
- **Seven Chakras (pillars):** human capital; access for social empowerment; trustworthy AI; energy-efficient AI; AI in science; democratising AI resources; AI for economic growth and social good.
- **Outcomes (all voluntary):** a non-binding **Charter for the Democratic Diffusion of AI** (access to compute, data and models), a platform for sharing AI practices, and Guiding Principles on Resilient, Innovative and Efficient AI.

Why it matters for India

- **Voice of the Global South.** India framed AI as a development tool, stressing access to computing power and data for poorer countries.
- **DPI model abroad.** The idea of shared, open AI resources mirrors India's Digital Public Infrastructure such as UPI and Aadhaar.
- **Domestic showcase.** Indian sovereign AI models were unveiled at the summit (see the S&T section).

Limits

- Everything adopted is voluntary; critics note summit declarations rarely become binding rules.
- Frontier computing power and leading models remain concentrated in a few US and Chinese firms.
- Safety concerns, such as misuse and deepfakes, still need attention alongside 'impact'.

Prelims Pointers

- AI summit series: Bletchley Park, UK (November 2023), Seoul (May 2024), Paris AI Action Summit (February 2025), New Delhi (February 2026).
- IndiaAI Mission: approved March 2024 with an outlay of about Rs 10,372 crore; implemented by MeitY.
- The Global Partnership on AI (GPAI) was launched in 2020; India is a founding member.

08 | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GS 2

Bangladesh Votes: A BNP Government and a Chance to Reset Ties

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: India and its neighbourhood; bilateral relations

Context

Bangladesh held its general election on **13 February 2026**, the first since the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government in August 2024. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led alliance won a large majority, and **Tarique Rahman** was sworn in as Prime Minister on **17 February**. India was represented at the swearing-in by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, with the Foreign Secretary. A referendum on the 'July Charter' of political reforms was held with the vote and passed.

Key Points

- **Results (297 of 299 seats declared):** BNP-led alliance 212, Jamaat-e-Islami-led alliance 77, National Citizen Party 6; turnout about 60%.
- **July Charter:** approved by about 60% of voters; it includes term limits for the Prime Minister and more seats for women.
- **Awami League:** barred from contesting. Sheikh Hasina has lived in India since 2024 and was convicted in absentia in November 2025.
- **New government:** 25 cabinet ministers and 24 ministers of state took oath at the South Plaza of the parliament building.

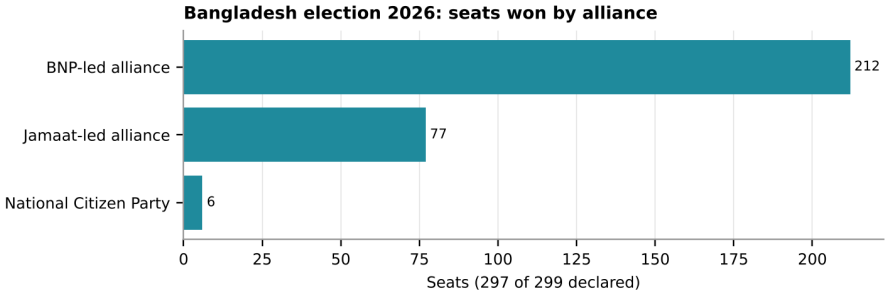
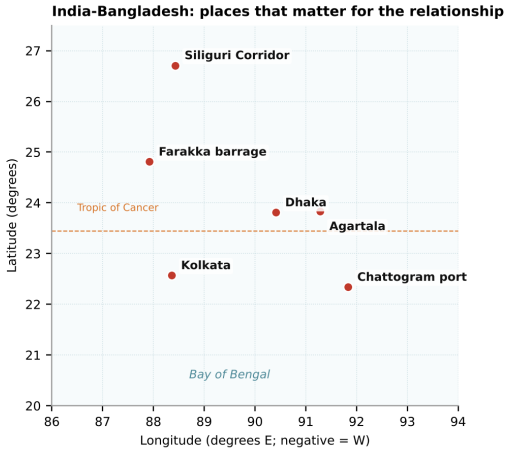


Chart. Parliament (Jatiya Sangsad) has 300 directly elected seats. Source: Al Jazeera, 13 February 2026.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Dhaka lies close to India's Northeast and to the narrow Siliguri Corridor.

What is at stake for India

- **Water:** the Ganga Water Treaty (1996), which shares lean-season flows at Farakka, expires in December 2026; the Teesta remains unresolved.
- **Security and connectivity:** border management, transit to the Northeast through Bangladeshi ports, and rail and power links.
- **Politics:** the new government's demand for Hasina's return, Jamaat as the main opposition, and the safety of minorities.

- **Competition:** China's investments and closer Bangladesh-Pakistan contacts since 2024.

Way forward

India's prompt, high-level presence at the swearing-in signals that it wants to work with whoever governs in Dhaka. A practical agenda would start with the Ganga treaty renewal, trade and power links, and a calm handling of the extradition question through legal channels.

Prelims Pointers

- India-Bangladesh border: about 4,097 km, India's longest land border.
- Land Boundary Agreement: 1974, implemented through the 100th Constitutional Amendment (2015).
- Ganga Water Treaty: signed 1996 for 30 years.

09 | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GS 2

India and West Asia: A Partnership With Israel, Then a War Over Iran

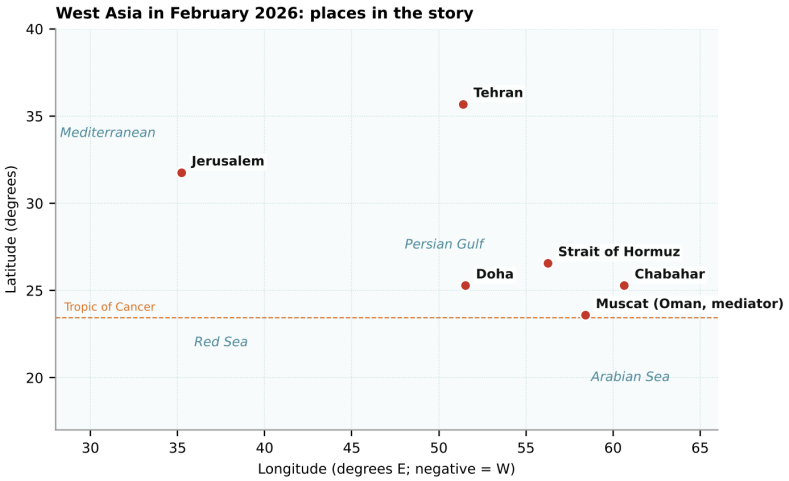
Syllabus Mapping: GS2: India and its neighbourhood (West Asia); effect of policies of other countries on India's interests; diaspora

Context

Prime Minister Modi paid a state visit to **Israel on 25-26 February 2026**, his second, and the two countries raised ties to a **Special Strategic Partnership**. Two days later, on **28 February**, after several rounds of indirect US-Iran nuclear talks mediated by Oman, the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran. Iran fired missiles and drones at Israel and at US facilities in Gulf countries. India's Ministry of External Affairs said it was 'deeply concerned', urged restraint and de-escalation, and issued travel advisories for Indian nationals.

Key Outcomes of the Israel visit

- **Status:** ties elevated to a Special Strategic Partnership; 17 agreements and MoUs signed.
- **People:** a quota of up to **50,000 Indian workers over five years**, with labour-mobility protocols.
- **Technology and finance:** a Critical and Emerging Technologies initiative led by the two National Security Advisers, a cyber-security centre of excellence in India, and use of UPI for remittances.
- **Agriculture and heritage:** Indo-Israeli agriculture centres of excellence to expand to 100; cooperation on the National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal.
- **Honour:** Modi addressed the Knesset and received the Speaker of the Knesset Medal.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Most of India's oil and gas imports and much of its diaspora are in the Gulf region.

Why it matters for India

- **People:** millions of Indians live and work in the Gulf; their safety and remittances are a priority.

- **Energy:** conflict near the Strait of Hormuz raises oil prices, shipping insurance and supply risks.
- **Connectivity:** Chabahar port and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) run through Iran; the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) runs through the Gulf and Israel.
- **Balance:** India has strong ties with Israel, Iran and the Arab states at once. The visit and the war, days apart, test that balance.

Analysis

Some commentators questioned the timing of the Israel visit during the Gaza conflict. The government points to its parallel outreach to Arab states and Iran. The lesson of February is that India's West Asia policy rests on many partners at once, and that its main tools in a crisis are evacuation planning, energy diversification and steady calls for dialogue.

Prelims Pointers

- India and Israel established full diplomatic relations in 1992; the first Indian PM visit to Israel was in 2017.
- The JCPOA (Iran nuclear deal) was agreed in 2015; the US left it in 2018.
- Reports on 28 February that Iran's Supreme Leader had been killed were unconfirmed at the end of the month; check later developments.

10 | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GS 2

New START Expires: The End of US-Russia Nuclear Limits

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Effect of policies of developed countries on India; international treaties; GS3: Security

Context

The **New START** treaty, the last agreement limiting US and Russian strategic nuclear forces, **expired on 5 February 2026**. In September 2025 President Putin had offered to keep to its central limits for one more year. President Trump rejected an extension, calling the treaty badly negotiated, and said he wanted a new, modernised treaty that also includes China, which has shown little interest.

Key Points

- **Limits:** 1,550 deployed strategic warheads and 700 deployed missiles and heavy bombers for each side, with on-site inspections.
- **History:** signed in Prague in 2010 by Presidents Obama and Medvedev; in force from 2011; extended for five years in 2021.
- **Russia's line:** the Kremlin said it regretted the expiry and would act 'responsibly'.
- **Arms control gap:** for the first time in decades there are no legal limits on the two largest nuclear arsenals.

Why it matters for India

- **Three-way race:** without limits, the US, Russia and China may all expand arsenals; China's build-up directly affects India's deterrence planning.
- **Weaker regime:** the NPT's Article VI commitment to disarmament loses credibility, which India has long criticised as discriminatory.
- **Opportunity:** India can argue for a broader, non-discriminatory dialogue on nuclear risk reduction, in line with its no-first-use doctrine.

Prelims Pointers

- Earlier treaties: START I (1991), SORT/Moscow Treaty (2002), INF Treaty (1987, ended 2019).
- India is not a party to the NPT (1968) or the CTBT (1996).
- India's nuclear doctrine (2003) includes credible minimum deterrence and no first use.

11 | POLITY GS 2

The Court and the Textbook: Supreme Court Acts on an NCERT Chapter

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Structure and functioning of the judiciary; contempt powers; education; GS4: Institutional integrity

Context

On **26 February 2026** a three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India **Surya Kant** took suo motu cognisance of a chapter in the NCERT Class 8 Social Science textbook that discussed corruption in the judiciary, poor court infrastructure, shortage of judges and complex procedures. The Court ordered the book withdrawn, physical copies seized and digital versions taken down, and issued show-cause notices to the NCERT Director and the School Education Secretary. NCERT called the content unintentional; the Solicitor General apologised on behalf of the Education Ministry.

Key Points

- **Powers used:** the Supreme Court is a court of record with power to punish for contempt (Article 129; Contempt of Courts Act, 1971).
- **Process questions:** how a sensitive chapter passed NCERT's review, and who drafted it.
- **Later:** the case was later closed after the chapter was rewritten (outside this month).

Two views

- **For the Court's action:** public trust is the judiciary's main strength. One-sided material for 13-year-olds that singles out one institution can damage it, and the textbook review process clearly failed.
- **Against:** commentators argued that children should learn about accountability in all institutions, including courts; seizure and a ban are harsh for academic content; and the Court acted in a matter concerning itself.

Way forward

- Stronger expert and peer review of NCERT textbooks, with clear records of who wrote and approved content.
- Balanced civics teaching on accountability across all three branches: pendency, vacancies, in-house inquiry and impeachment as well as legislative and executive checks.
- Clear limits on the use of contempt powers for academic matters.

Prelims Pointers

- Article 129: Supreme Court as a court of record; Article 215: High Courts.
- Article 124(4): removal of a Supreme Court judge for proved misbehaviour or incapacity.
- NCERT was set up in 1961 as a registered society.

12 | POLITY GS 2

West Bengal's Voter Roll Revision: Judges Step In

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Elections, Election Commission, Representation of People Acts; judiciary

Context

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal reached the Supreme Court in a petition by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee against the Election Commission of India. A Bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M. Pancholi heard it on 9, 20 and 24 February 2026. The final roll was published on **28 February**, with a large number of names still 'under adjudication'.

The 24 February order

- About **80 lakh** entries flagged for 'logical discrepancies' needed checking; about 250 judicial officers were already hearing about 50 lakh claims.
- The Calcutta High Court Chief Justice could draft more civil judges, and seek serving and retired officers from the **Orissa and Jharkhand High Courts**, with the Election Commission paying their costs.
- Documents filed before 14 February had to be considered; **Aadhaar** and Madhyamik (Class 10) admit cards were accepted.
- If checks were not done by 28 February, supplementary lists would follow.

The debate

- **For SIR:** clean rolls without dead, shifted or duplicate voters protect the integrity of elections, a duty of the Election Commission under Article 324.
- **Against SIR:** critics fear wrongful exclusion of genuine voters, especially poor people and migrants who lack documents, just before Assembly elections; they also question how 'discrepancy' flags were generated.
- **The Court's approach:** instead of stopping the exercise, it added judicial capacity and widened accepted documents, using its Article 142 powers.

On 19 February the Election Commission also asked States to prepare for the next phase of SIR from April 2026, to run alongside the Census houselisting (as reported).

Prelims Pointers

- Article 324: superintendence of elections by the Election Commission; Article 326: elections on the basis of adult suffrage.
- Electoral rolls are prepared under the Representation of the People Act, 1950 (Sections 21-23).
- Article 142: the Supreme Court's power to pass orders for 'complete justice'.

13 | POLITY GS 2

Akash v. State of U.P.: Attempt, Not Preparation, and Sensitive Trials

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Judiciary; protection of vulnerable sections (children); GS1: Women's issues

Context

On **10 February 2026** a Bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and N.V. Anjaria set aside an Allahabad High Court order of March 2025 that had reduced charges in a child sexual offence case from **attempt to rape** to the lesser offence of assault with intent to disrobe. The Supreme Court restored the trial court's summons, holding that the allegations showed an 'attempt' and not mere 'preparation'.

Key Points

- **Legal test:** preparation is planning an offence; attempt is a direct step towards committing it. The High Court had wrongly treated the acts as preparation.
- **Reasoning:** courts must apply settled legal tests, not stereotypes or 'judicial intuition'.
- **Guidelines:** the National Judicial Academy, Bhopal was asked to form an expert committee under Justice Aniruddha Bose (retired) to draft guidelines on sensitivity in sexual-offence trials, including the language judges use.

Why it matters

- It protects child victims under the POCSO Act, 2012 and corrects a ruling that drew wide public criticism.
- It builds on the Supreme Court's 2023 *Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes*.
- Guidelines are only as good as training and follow-up; child-friendly courts and time-bound trials are still needed.

Prelims Pointers

- POCSO Act, 2012: Section 29 presumes guilt in certain offences; Section 35 asks for trials to finish within one year.
- The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita replaced the IPC from 1 July 2024; offences committed earlier are tried under the IPC.
- The National Judicial Academy is in Bhopal.

14 | POLITY GS 2

A Two-Day Law: The Industrial Relations Code Amendment and Parliamentary Scrutiny

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Parliament, functioning and business; GS3: Labour reforms

Context

The **Industrial Relations Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026** was introduced on 11 February and passed by both Houses on 12 February, the only Bill passed in the first half of the Budget Session (which ran from the Budget on 1 February to 13 February; the second half was scheduled for 9 March to 2 April). It clarifies that the Trade Unions Act, 1926, the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946 and the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 stand repealed from **21 November 2025**, when the four labour codes came into force.

Key Points

- The four labour codes (wages, industrial relations, social security, occupational safety) replaced 29 central labour laws.
- Labour is in the Concurrent List, so States frame their own rules under the codes.
- On 16 February the Supreme Court revived a nine-judge reference on the meaning of 'industry' under the Industrial Disputes Act (*State of U.P. v. Jai Bir Singh*), which tests the 1978 *Bangalore Water Supply* judgment.

The debate

- **For:** the amendment removes legal doubt about pending disputes and gives employers and tribunals certainty.

- **Against:** a retrospective change passed within a day, without committee scrutiny; trade unions continue to object to the codes' thresholds for layoffs and strikes.
- **Wider point:** PRS data over the years show that a falling share of Bills is sent to parliamentary committees, which weakens scrutiny.

Prelims Pointers

- Department-related standing committees were set up in 1993.
- Article 107-108: legislative procedure and joint sittings for ordinary Bills.
- Other constitution-bench matters revived in February: the Sabarimala religious-freedom reference (hearings in April) and CAA challenges (listed for May).

15 | GOVERNANCE GS 2

Sixteenth Finance Commission: 41% Kept, a New Formula

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Fiscal federalism, constitutional bodies (Article 280); GS3: Government budgeting

Context

The report of the **Sixteenth Finance Commission**, chaired by **Arvind Panagariya**, was tabled in Parliament on **1 February 2026** with the Union Budget. It covers the five years 2026-27 to 2030-31. It keeps the States' share of the divisible pool of central taxes at **41%**, but changes how that share is divided among States.

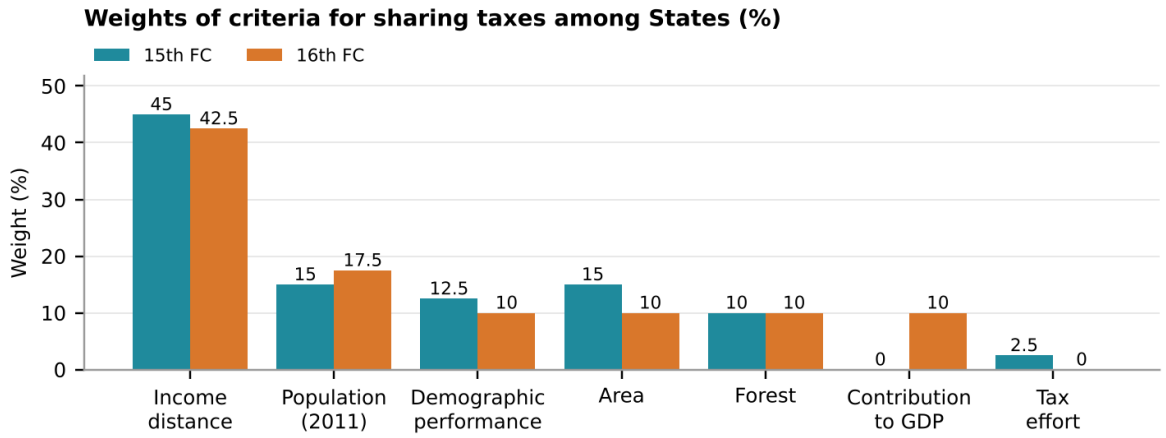


Chart. The 16th FC adds a new 'contribution to GDP' criterion and drops tax effort. Source: PRS summary of the 16th Finance Commission report.

Key Points

- **New criterion:** 10% weight for a State's contribution to national GDP, rewarding economic performance.
- **Demographic performance:** now measured by population growth between 1971 and 2011.
- **Grants:** about Rs 9.47 lakh crore over five years: rural local bodies Rs 4.35 lakh crore, urban local bodies Rs 3.56 lakh crore, disaster management Rs 1.56 lakh crore. Revenue-deficit and sector-specific grants are discontinued.
- **Fiscal path:** Centre's fiscal deficit at 3.5% of GDP by 2030-31; States capped at 3% of GSDP; an end to off-budget borrowing.
- **Winners and losers (examples):** Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab gain share; West Bengal and Odisha lose some.

Debate

- **Supporters** say the GDP criterion answers the long-standing complaint of richer southern and western States that they are penalised for doing well.
- **Critics** note many States asked for 50%; that cesses and surcharges, which are outside the divisible pool, reduce what States actually get; and that ending revenue-deficit grants hurts fiscally weaker and Himalayan States.

Prelims Pointers

- Article 280: Finance Commission, appointed every five years; Article 270: sharing of central taxes; Article 275: grants-in-aid.
- 14th FC (Y.V. Reddy): 42%; 15th FC (N.K. Singh): 41%.
- The divisible pool excludes cesses and surcharges.

16 | GOVERNANCE GS 2

Urban Challenge Fund: Making Cities Raise Their Own Money

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Local self-government (74th Amendment); GS3: Infrastructure, investment models

Context

On **14 February 2026** the Union Cabinet approved the **Urban Challenge Fund** with central assistance of **Rs 1 lakh crore**. Cities compete for funds by carrying out reforms. As reported, the Centre will fund 25% of a project's cost and cities must raise at least half from the market through municipal bonds, bank loans or public-private partnerships. A credit guarantee corpus is to help smaller cities and those in the Northeast and hill States.

Key Points

- **Challenge mode:** money follows reforms in municipal finance and governance rather than being shared out equally.
- **Market finance:** the aim is to make cities creditworthy rather than dependent on grants.
- **Related:** the Budget proposed City Economic Regions with Rs 5,000 crore per region over five years, and the 16th Finance Commission recommended Rs 3.56 lakh crore in grants for urban local bodies.

The debate

- **Supporters** call it a shift to market-led urban transformation that rewards well-run cities.
- **Critics** note that most Indian cities have weak finances, few have credit ratings, and property tax collection is low; without reforms there, money may flow mainly to big metros. The Smart Cities Mission also saw slow use of funds.

Prelims Pointers

- The 74th Amendment (1992) added the Twelfth Schedule with 18 functions for municipalities.
- Article 243Y: State Finance Commission to review municipal finances.
- Ahmedabad issued India's first municipal bond (1998).

17 | GOVERNANCE GS 2

Labelling Deepfakes: The IT Rules Amendment, 2026

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Government policies, rights (free speech, privacy); GS3: Cyber security, AI

Context

MeitY notified amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 on **10 February 2026**; they took effect on **20 February**. They introduce rules for AI-made content and sharply cut the time platforms get to remove unlawful content.

Key Points

- **New term:** 'Synthetically Generated Information' means audio, visual or audio-visual content created or altered by computer that appears authentic. Routine edits such as colour correction or compression are excluded.
- **Labels:** permitted synthetic content must be prominently labelled and carry embedded metadata; platforms may not let users remove these markers.
- **Takedown time:** cut from 36 hours to **3 hours** after a government or court order.
- **Big platforms:** Significant Social Media Intermediaries (over 50 lakh users) must ask users to declare synthetic content, verify declarations with tools, and label it.
- **Consequence:** failure can cost a platform its 'safe harbour' protection under Section 79 of the IT Act.

The debate

- **Supporters:** deepfakes are being used for fraud, election misinformation and harassment of women; labels and fast removal limit the damage.
- **Critics (digital rights groups, law firms):** three hours is too short for careful review, encouraging over-removal that may chill free speech under Article 19(1)(a); detection tools are unreliable; and major rules are being made by executive notification instead of a law passed by Parliament.

Way forward

Graded timelines (three hours for urgent harms such as non-consensual intimate images), transparency reports, appeals through the Grievance Appellate Committees, open technical standards for content provenance, and a comprehensive Digital India Act.

Prelims Pointers

- The IT Rules, 2021 are framed under Section 87 of the IT Act, 2000; safe harbour is in Section 79.
- *Shreya Singhal* (2015) struck down Section 66A of the IT Act.
- Grievance Appellate Committees were created by a 2022 amendment to the IT Rules.

18 | SOCIAL JUSTICE GS 2

A National HPV Vaccination Drive to Prevent Cervical Cancer

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Health, issues relating to women; government schemes

Context

On **28 February 2026** the Prime Minister launched a nationwide, free **HPV vaccination campaign for girls aged 14** from Ajmer, Rajasthan. The drive was planned to run until May. Some details, such as the vaccine used and the number of doses, were reported differently in early reports and should be checked against the Health Ministry's guidelines.

Key Points

- **The disease:** cervical cancer is among the most common cancers in Indian women; persistent infection with high-risk human papillomavirus (HPV) types, especially 16 and 18, causes most cases.
- **Global goal:** WHO's '90-70-90' targets for 2030: 90% of girls vaccinated by age 15, 70% of women screened, 90% of those with disease treated.
- **Indian capacity:** the Serum Institute's quadrivalent vaccine Cervavac was launched in 2022.

Challenges

- Vaccine hesitancy and misinformation, especially about a vaccine for adolescent girls.
- Reaching girls who are out of school, and keeping the cold chain in remote areas.
- Vaccination prevents future cases; screening of adult women must continue alongside it.

Way forward

School-based delivery with parental consent, digital tracking on U-WIN, trained health workers to answer questions, and expanded screening of women aged 30-49 through visual inspection and HPV-DNA tests.

Prelims Pointers

- U-WIN is India's digital registry for immunisation, modelled on CoWIN.
- Mission Indradhanush (2014) aims at full immunisation of children and pregnant women.
- HPV is a DNA virus spread mainly through intimate contact.

19 | SOCIAL JUSTICE GS 2

PM RAHAT and the Health Budget: Care at the Golden Hour

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Health, welfare schemes; GS3: Infrastructure (road safety)

Context

PM RAHAT (PM Road Accident Victims' Hospitalisation and Assured Treatment) was launched on 17 February 2026. It provides **cashless treatment up to Rs 1.5 lakh for up to seven days** after a road accident. The Union Budget (1 February) raised the Health Ministry's allocation to about **Rs 1,06,530 crore**, nearly 10% more than the previous year's revised estimate, and announced emergency and trauma care centres in every district hospital.

Key Points

- **Funding:** the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund; insurers pay for insured vehicles and the government covers uninsured and hit-and-run cases.
- **Process:** the State Health Agency approves claims within 10 days; the scheme links to the 112 emergency number.
- **Budget items (as reported):** National Health Mission about Rs 39,390 crore; PM-JAY Rs 9,500 crore; PM-ABHIM Rs 4,770 crore; 1.5 lakh caregivers to be trained for elderly and long-term care.

Why it matters

- India records the highest number of road deaths in the world; treatment in the first hour ('golden hour') saves many lives.
- Hospitals often delay care over payment worries; a cashless guarantee removes that excuse.
- Care for an ageing population is a growing need; trained caregivers also create jobs.

Challenges

- Low awareness among victims and bystanders; hospitals refusing patients or delays in reimbursement.
- Public health spending is still below the 2.5% of GDP target of the National Health Policy, 2017.

Prelims Pointers

- Motor Vehicles Act: Section 162 (golden-hour cashless treatment), Section 164B (Motor Vehicle Accident Fund), Section 134A (Good Samaritan protection).
- PM-JAY covers Rs 5 lakh per family per year.
- National Health Policy, 2017 target: public health spending of 2.5% of GDP.

20 | ECONOMY **GS 3**

Union Budget 2026-27: From a Deficit Target to a Debt Anchor

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Government budgeting, fiscal policy, mobilisation of resources; GS2: Article 112

Context

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget for 2026-27 on **1 February 2026**. It is the first Budget whose main medium-term target is the government's **debt** rather than the yearly fiscal deficit: central debt is to fall to about **50% of GDP (plus or minus 1)** by March 2031.

Key Numbers

- **Total spending:** about Rs 53.47 lakh crore, up 7.7% over the revised estimate for 2025-26.
- **Fiscal deficit: 4.3% of GDP** in 2026-27, after 4.4% in 2025-26 (on target) and 4.8% in 2024-25.
- **Debt:** 55.6% of GDP in 2026-27, down from 56.1%.
- **Capital expenditure:** about Rs 12.2 lakh crore, up from Rs 11.2 lakh crore.
- **Tax:** no change in income-tax rates or slabs; the new **Income-tax Act, 2025** replaces the 1961 Act from 1 April 2026; Minimum Alternate Tax cut from 15% to 14%; Securities Transaction Tax raised on futures and options.

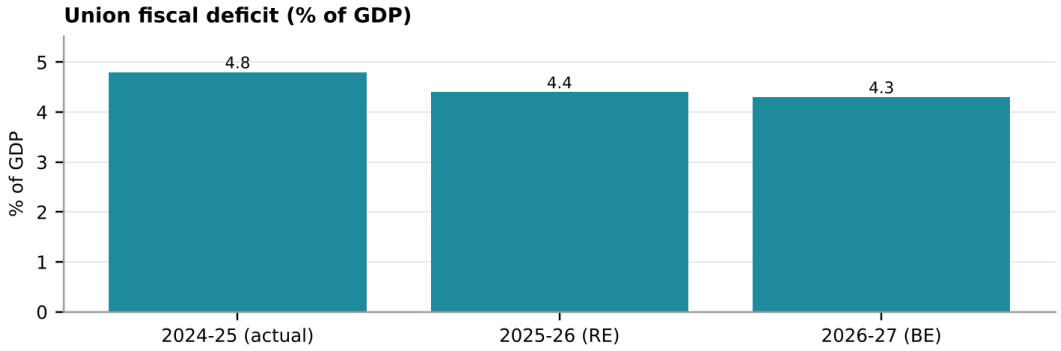


Chart. The deficit keeps falling slowly while debt becomes the main anchor. Source: PRS Legislative Research, Union Budget Analysis 2026-27.

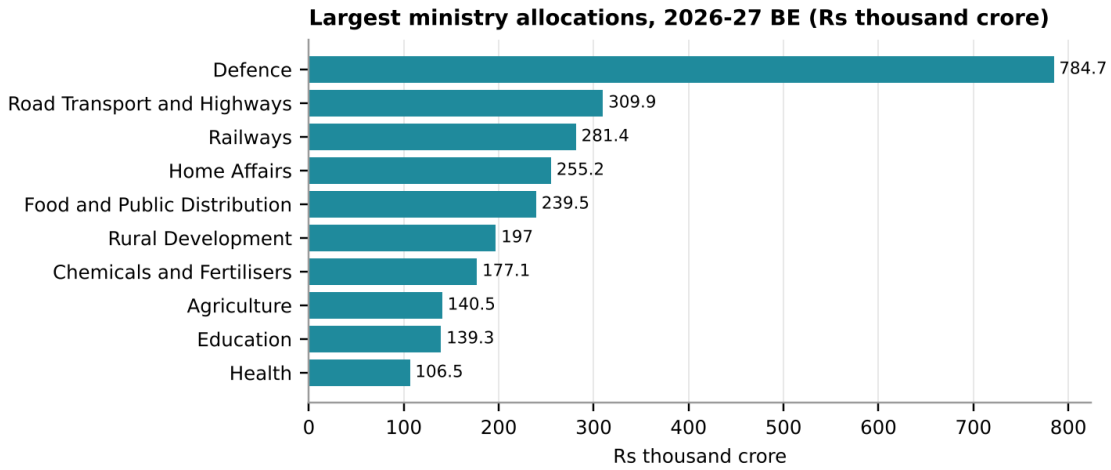


Chart. Defence remains the largest single ministry allocation. Source: PRS Legislative Research, Union Budget Analysis 2026-27.

Why a debt anchor

- **Flexibility with discipline.** A debt path allows the yearly deficit to adjust to shocks while keeping a clear long-term goal, as the FRBM Review Committee (N.K. Singh, 2017) recommended.
- **Interest costs.** Interest is the largest item of revenue spending; lower debt frees money for investment and welfare.
- **Credibility.** The government met its 2025-26 target despite GST rate cuts and income-tax relief.

Concerns

- Nominal GDP grew only about 8.6% in 2025-26 (new series); if growth stays below the roughly 10% assumed, the debt ratio falls more slowly.
- A 0.1 percentage point cut in the deficit is modest, and States' capital spending depends heavily on central loans.

Prelims Pointers

- Article 112: the 'Annual Financial Statement'; the word 'budget' does not appear in the Constitution.
- Fiscal deficit = total expenditure minus (revenue receipts + non-debt capital receipts); primary deficit = fiscal deficit minus interest payments.
- FRBM Act: 2003; the 2018 amendment made debt the key anchor.

21 | ECONOMY GS 3

Budget 2026-27: Missions for Strategic Manufacturing

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Industrial policy, Make in India, effects of liberalisation; GS2: Government policies

Context

Beyond the fiscal numbers, the Budget launched a set of missions to build manufacturing in sectors where supply chains are concentrated abroad, especially in China: medicines, electronics, semiconductors and rare earths.

Key Points

- **Biopharma SHAKTI:** Rs 10,000 crore over five years for biologics and biosimilars; three new NIPERs and upgrades to seven existing ones.
- **Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme:** outlay raised from Rs 22,919 crore to **Rs 40,000 crore**.
- **India Semiconductor Mission 2.0:** focus on equipment, materials, Indian chip designs and training.
- **Rare Earth Corridors:** in Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, covering mining, processing and magnet making.
- **Others:** a container manufacturing scheme, revival of legacy industrial clusters, a carbon capture (CCUS) programme, and a Rs 10,000 crore SME Growth Fund.
- **Data centres:** a tax holiday until 2047 for foreign cloud providers serving customers from data centres in India through Indian resellers.

Why it matters

- **Resilience.** Export curbs on rare-earth magnets and chips in 2025 showed how supply chains can be used as leverage.
- **Value addition.** India assembles many phones and electronics but imports most components; component schemes aim to change that.
- **Health security.** Biologics are the fastest-growing part of medicine; domestic capacity lowers costs and import dependence.

Concerns

- Past production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes paid out slowly and added limited value in some sectors.
- Rare-earth processing is polluting and needs technology India does not yet fully have; Indian Rare Earths Ltd is the main domestic player.
- Tax holidays for data centres raise questions of revenue loss and data governance.

Prelims Pointers

- Rare earth elements: 17 in all (15 lanthanides plus scandium and yttrium); monazite sands on the Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Odisha coasts are a key source.
- NIPER (National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research) is an institute of national importance under the Department of Pharmaceuticals.
- Biosimilars are near-copies of approved biological medicines; unlike generics, they are not chemically identical.

22 | ECONOMY GS 3

RBI Holds the Repo Rate at 5.25%

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Monetary policy, inflation, banking

Context

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) met on 4-6 February 2026 and on **6 February** kept the **repo rate at 5.25%** with a neutral stance, after cuts totalling 125 basis points in the current cycle. The RBI raised its 2025-26 GDP growth projection to **7.4%**.

Key Points

- **Corridor:** Standing Deposit Facility 5.00%; Marginal Standing Facility and Bank Rate 5.50%.
- **Inflation:** retail inflation was well below target (1.33% in December 2025 on the old series); the RBI expects it to rise towards 4% during 2026-27 (as reported).
- **Other measures (as reported):** the collateral-free loan limit for micro and small enterprises doubled from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh; banks allowed to lend to listed REITs; a proposed exemption from registration for small NBFCs that do not use public funds.

Why pause?

- Earlier cuts still had to pass through to borrowers' loan rates.
- A new CPI series was about to be released (12 February), and the RBI wanted to read it first.

- External risks, including US tariffs and a weaker rupee, called for caution.
- Some argue real interest rates are too high when inflation is near 2%; the majority expected inflation to rise from very low levels.

Prelims Pointers

- The MPC was set up under Section 45ZB of the RBI Act, 1934 (2016 amendment); it has six members and the Governor has a casting vote.
- Inflation target: 4% CPI with a band of 2-6%.
- SDF is the floor of the policy corridor (repo minus 25 bps); MSF is the ceiling (repo plus 25 bps).

23 | ECONOMY GS 3

A New Consumer Price Index: Base Year 2024

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Inflation, measurement of economic indicators

Context

On **12 February 2026** the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) released the first CPI with **2024 as the base year**, replacing the 2012 series. Retail inflation for **January 2026 was 2.75%** on the new series (rural 2.73%, urban 2.77%), with food inflation at 2.13%.

Key Points

- **Wider basket:** 358 items (308 goods and 50 services), up from 299; prices from 1,465 rural and 1,395 urban markets.
- **Online prices:** data from 12 online marketplaces is used for the first time.
- **New weights:** based on the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023-24. Food falls in weight; housing and services rise.
- **Linking:** MoSPI published linking factors so that the old and new series can be compared.

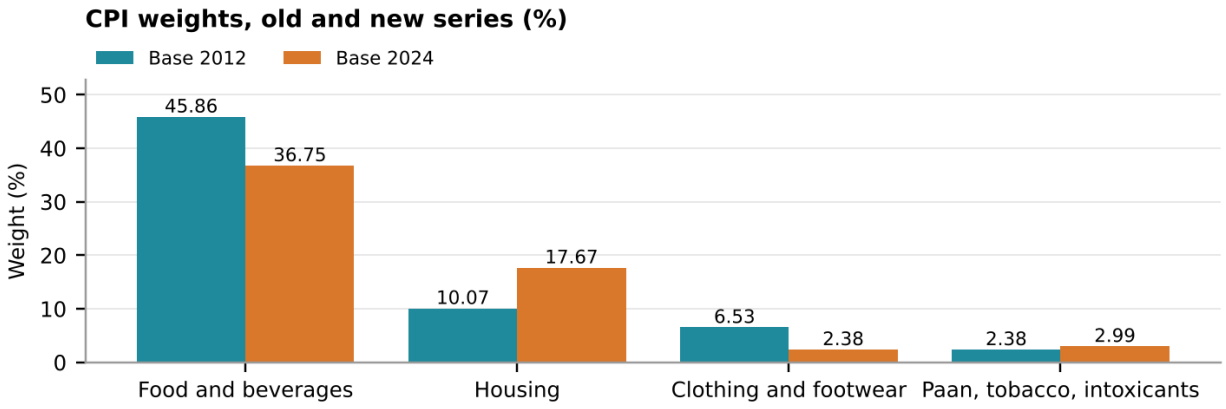


Chart. Food's weight falls by about 9 percentage points, reflecting how household spending has shifted towards housing and services. Source: MoSPI, as summarised by The Hindu and Vision IAS, 13 February 2026.

Why it matters

- **Monetary policy:** CPI is the RBI's target measure, so the new weights change how inflation is read; headline inflation may be less volatile with less weight on food.
- **Wages and allowances:** dearness allowance and some contracts are linked to price indices.
- **Concern:** poorer households spend a larger share on food, so a lower food weight may understate the inflation they feel.

Prelims Pointers

- CPI is compiled by the National Statistics Office (NSO) under MoSPI; WPI by the Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT (base 2011-12).
- CPI for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) is compiled by the Labour Bureau (base 2016).
- The NSO was formed in 2019 by merging the CSO and NSSO.

24 | ECONOMY GS 3

New GDP Series: Base Year 2022-23 and 7.8% Growth in Q3

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Growth and development, measurement of national income

Context

On **27 February 2026** MoSPI released a new series of national accounts with base year **2022-23**, replacing 2011-12, together with the Second Advance Estimates for 2025-26. Real GDP grew **7.8% in October-December 2025** (Q3) and is estimated to grow **7.6% in 2025-26**.

Key Numbers (new series)

- **Annual real growth:** 2023-24: 7.2%; 2024-25: 7.1%; 2025-26 (estimate): 7.6%.
- **Nominal GDP 2025-26:** about Rs 345.47 lakh crore, growing 8.6%.
- **Sectors in 2025-26:** manufacturing 11.5%; trade, hotels, transport and communication 10.1%; construction 7.1%; **agriculture only 2.6%**.
- **Demand:** private consumption up 7.7%; investment (gross fixed capital formation) up 7.1%.
- **Method:** 'double deflation' (output and inputs deflated separately) and newer data sources.

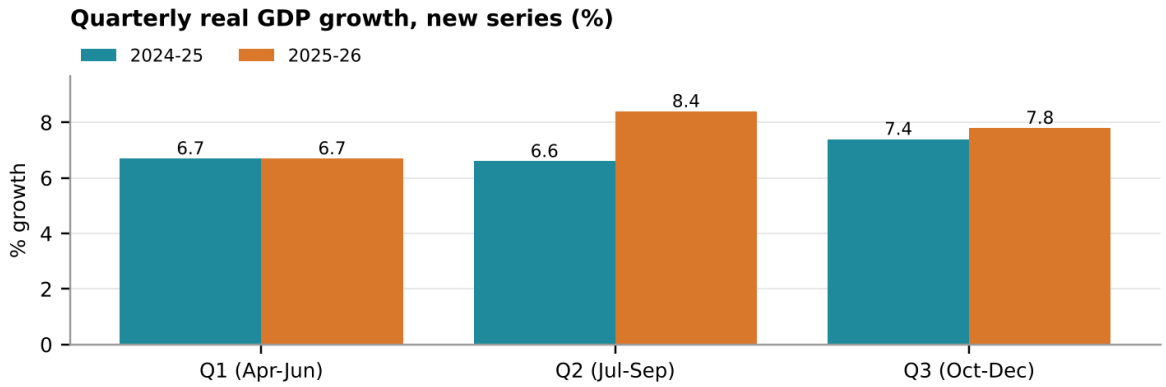


Chart. Growth stayed strong through 2025-26 under the new base. Source: MoSPI press release, 27 February 2026.

Why it matters

- The new base answers long-standing criticism of the 2011-12 series, such as single deflation.
- The gap between nominal growth (8.6%) and real growth (7.6%) shows a low deflator, which weakens tax growth and makes debt targets harder.
- Farm growth of 2.6% against 11.5% in manufacturing points to rural income stress.
- A new base also changes ratios such as debt-to-GDP and deficit-to-GDP, so comparisons need care.

Prelims Pointers

- GDP at market prices = GVA at basic prices + product taxes - product subsidies.
- Earlier base years: 2004-05 and 2011-12.
- The Second Advance Estimate is released at the end of February; the provisional estimate at the end of May.

25 | AGRICULTURE GS 3

Farms in the Budget and the Trade Deal: Slow Growth, New Tools

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Agriculture, farm subsidies, e-technology for farmers, agricultural trade

Context

February brought three signals for agriculture. The new GDP series estimated farm growth at only **2.6%** in 2025-26. The Budget set about **Rs 1.41 lakh crore** for the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and announced digital tools. And the India-US trade framework opened some farm imports while, the government said, protecting staples and dairy.

Key Points

- **Allocations (2026-27 BE):** PM-KISAN Rs 63,500 crore; the VB-G RAM G rural jobs programme Rs 95,692 crore; Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers' allocation down 7.4%.
- **Bharat-VISTAAR:** an AI-based, multilingual farm advisory platform combining AgriStack and ICAR data.
- **Trade:** lower tariffs on US feed (DDGS, red sorghum), tree nuts, fruit and soybean oil; maize, wheat, rice, sugar, soybean, poultry and dairy kept out (as stated by the Commerce Minister).
- **Women's enterprise:** 'SHE Marts', community-owned retail outlets for self-help groups (as reported).

Concerns

- Farm groups protested against the trade deal, fearing price pressure in feed and edible oils.
- A lower fertiliser allocation may not match global prices; States worry about their share of VB-G RAM G costs.
- Digital advisories help only if they reach small farmers in their language and are trusted.

Way forward

Raise farm productivity through irrigation, seeds and storage; protect farmers from sudden import surges with safeguard tools; and use AgriStack for better targeting of credit, insurance and advice while protecting farmers' data.

Prelims Pointers

- PM-KISAN: Rs 6,000 a year in three instalments by direct benefit transfer (launched February 2019).
- AgriStack is a federated farmer registry under the Digital Agriculture Mission.
- ICAR was set up in 1929 and works under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE).

26 | ENVIRONMENT GS 3

98 Ramsar Sites: India's Wetland Network Grows

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Conservation, environmental impact assessment; GS1: Geography (wetlands)

Context

On World Wetlands Day, **2 February 2026**, the Environment Ministry highlighted two new Ramsar sites, **Chhari-Dhand** (Kutch, Gujarat) and **Patna Bird Sanctuary** (Etah, Uttar Pradesh), which took India's total to **98**, up from 26 in 2014. India has the largest Ramsar network in Asia.

The new sites

- **Chhari-Dhand (Gujarat):** a seasonal saline wetland of about 80 sq km in the monsoon, on the edge of the Banni grasslands. It is Gujarat's only Conservation Reserve and hosts about 30,000 Common Cranes, flamingos and the Sociable Lapwing.
- **Patna Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh):** a small lake sanctuary of just over 1 sq km with 178 bird species, an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area.
- Both lie on the **Central Asian Flyway** used by migratory birds.

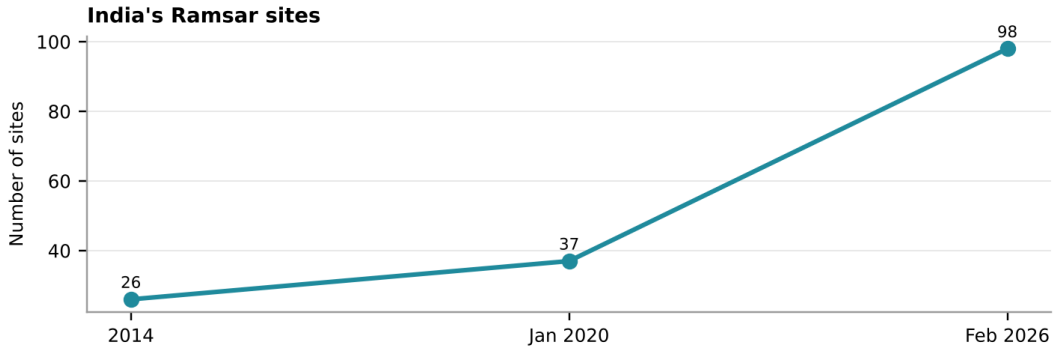


Chart. The network has almost quadrupled since 2014. Source: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Why wetlands matter

- **Climate:** wetlands store carbon and buffer floods and droughts.
- **Livelihoods:** fishing, grazing, salt and reeds support local communities.
- **Biodiversity:** they are stop-overs for migratory birds on international flyways.

Challenges and way forward

- A Ramsar listing does not by itself stop encroachment, sewage, invasive weeds or reduced water flows.
- Notify sites under the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, prepare management plans with funding, and use 'wetland mitras' (community volunteers) for monitoring.

Prelims Pointers

- Ramsar Convention: signed 1971 at Ramsar, Iran; India joined on 1 February 1982.
- Montreux Record: list of Ramsar sites under threat; in India, Keoladeo (Rajasthan) and Loktak (Manipur).
- World Wetlands Day: 2 February.

27 | ENVIRONMENT GS 3

Project Cheetah: Nine Cheetahs from Botswana

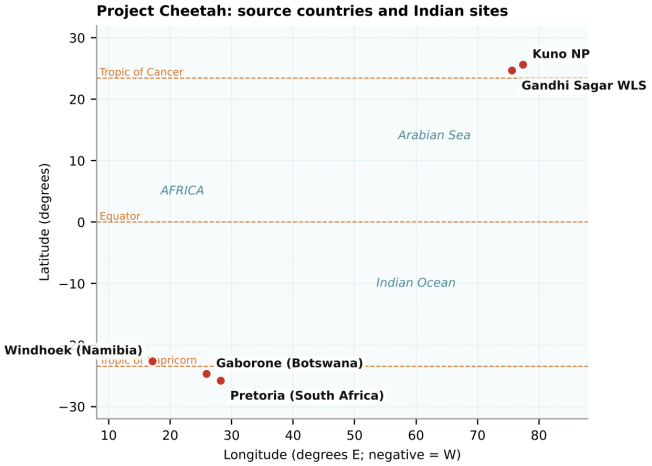
Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Conservation, biodiversity; species reintroduction

Context

On **28 February 2026** nine cheetahs (six females and three males) from **Botswana** arrived at **Kuno National Park**, Madhya Pradesh. This took India's cheetah count to **48**, including 28 born in India. Botswana is the third source country after Namibia (September 2022) and South Africa (February 2023).

Key Points

- **Aim:** restore the cheetah, declared extinct in India in 1952, and with it the grassland and open-forest ecosystems it depends on.
- **Sites:** Kuno National Park and Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary (both in Madhya Pradesh); more sites are being prepared.
- **New genes:** animals from a new source population widen the genetic base.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Cheetahs have come from three countries in southern Africa.

Challenges

- Deaths from infections (including septicaemia under thick winter coats), heat stress and fights.
- Limited space and prey in Kuno, and cheetahs straying into villages.
- Dependence on imports; a self-sustaining population needs several connected sites.

Way forward

Build a metapopulation across several prepared sites, strengthen prey bases, work with local communities on livestock losses, and publish scientific monitoring data so that the project can be assessed openly.

Prelims Pointers

- African cheetah: IUCN Vulnerable; Asiatic cheetah (only in Iran now): Critically Endangered.
- Kuno lies in Sheopur district; the Kuno river is a tributary of the Chambal.
- Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary lies on the Chambal in Mandsaur and Neemuch districts.

28 | ENVIRONMENT GS 3

Paying for Pollution: India's Carbon Market Takes Shape

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Environmental pollution and degradation, climate change mitigation; GS3: Investment

Context

India's **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)** moved closer to trading in February 2026. As reported on 25 February, about **490 industrial units in seven sectors** now have emission-intensity targets set by notifications of October 2025 and January 2026. 2025-26 is the first compliance year, with credits expected later in 2026. The Budget also announced a carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) programme, while the allocation for pollution control fell.

Key Points

- **How it works:** units that cut emissions per unit of output below their target earn tradable credits; those that miss must buy credits.
- **Two parts:** a compliance market for obligated industries and a voluntary offset market for projects (with approved methodologies).
- **Budget (as reported):** Environment Ministry Rs 3,759 crore; pollution control cut to Rs 1,091 crore from Rs 1,300 crore; Green India Mission raised.

Why it matters

- It puts a price on carbon, nudging heavy industry (aluminium, cement, refineries, textiles and others) to cut emissions at the lowest cost.
- Credible domestic carbon pricing can help Indian exporters respond to the EU's carbon border tax (CBAM).

Challenges

- Intensity targets allow total emissions to rise with output; ambition of targets matters.
- Reliable measurement and verification, avoiding double counting, and building market depth.
- Cuts to pollution-control funding sit uneasily with severe urban air pollution.

Prelims Pointers

- CCTS was notified in 2023 under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001; the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) administers it.
- Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT, 2012) was India's earlier energy-efficiency trading scheme.
- India's net-zero target year is 2070.

29 | DISASTER MANAGEMENT GS 3

Cyclone Gezani: Early Warning and Anticipatory Action

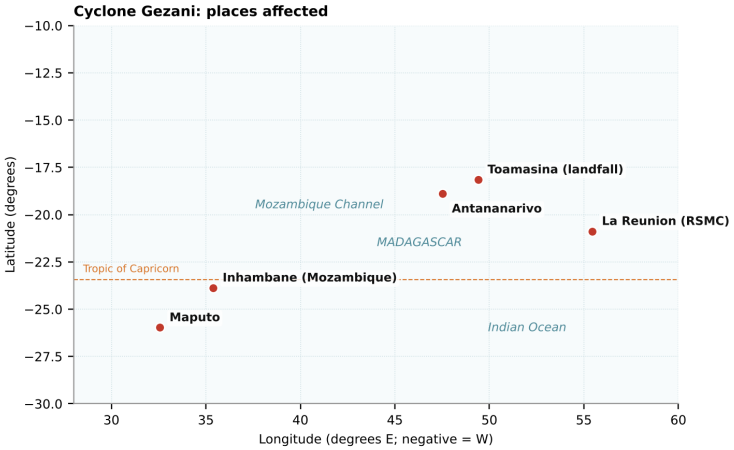
Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Disaster management; GS1: Important geophysical phenomena (cyclones)

Context

Tropical Cyclone **Gezani** formed in early February 2026 and made landfall near **Toamasina** on Madagascar's east coast on **10 February**, with sustained winds of about 180-185 km/h. The WMO reported on 13 February at least 40 deaths and about 270,000 people affected; later counts were higher. The storm then affected Mozambique's Inhambane province. It followed Cyclone Fytia in late January.

Key Points

- **Early warning:** the Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre at La Reunion (run by Meteo-France) tracks cyclones in the South-West Indian Ocean.
- **Anticipatory action:** the World Food Programme gave cash to about 30,000 people *before* landfall, so families could prepare.
- **Same season, other extremes:** storms Leonardo and Marta brought floods to Spain and Portugal, where over 11,000 people were evacuated.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. The Mozambique Channel separates Madagascar from mainland Africa.

Lessons for India

- **Forecast-based finance:** releasing cash or supplies on a reliable forecast reduces losses, an idea India can build into State disaster funds.
- **Early Warnings for All:** the UN goal is to cover everyone with early warning systems by 2027; India's cyclone warnings in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh are a model of how warning plus evacuation saves lives.
- **Climate links:** warmer seas can intensify cyclones quickly, so last-mile communication matters more.

Prelims Pointers

- Cyclones are called hurricanes in the Atlantic and typhoons in the north-west Pacific.
- IMD New Delhi is the RSMC for the North Indian Ocean and names cyclones from a list made by member countries.
- Cyclones in the Southern Hemisphere rotate clockwise.

India's Own AI Models: Sarvam, BharatGen and Gnani

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Developments in IT and AI, indigenisation of technology

Context

Several Indian 'sovereign' foundation models were unveiled around the India AI Impact Summit (19-20 February 2026). **Sarvam AI** released **Sarvam-30B** and **Sarvam-105B**; the government-backed **BharatGen** released **Param2**; and Gnani.ai showed voice-first speech models for Indian languages.

Key Points

- **Sarvam-105B:** 105 billion parameters and a 128,000-token context window, built for reasoning; Sarvam-30B (32,000 tokens) for real-time conversation. Both use a Mixture-of-Experts design, were trained in India, and target the 22 scheduled languages.
- **BharatGen Param2:** a 17-billion-parameter Mixture-of-Experts model in 22 Indian languages, drawing on a 'Bharat Data Sagar' data repository.
- **Compute:** the models used GPUs from the IndiaAI Mission's common compute programme.
- **Voice first:** speech models serve users who read or type little, a large part of India's population.

Key term	Meaning
Foundation model	A large AI model trained on broad data that can be adapted for many tasks
Parameter	A learned number (weight) inside a model; more parameters usually mean more capability and cost
Mixture-of-Experts	A design with many specialist sub-networks; only a few are switched on for each query, cutting running costs
Context window	How much text (in tokens) a model can consider at one time

Why it matters

- **Strategic autonomy:** less dependence on foreign models for government services, defence and sensitive data.
- **Inclusion:** models built for Indian languages and speech can power services in health, farming and education.

Challenges

- Indian models are still far smaller than the largest global models.
- Good-quality Indian-language data is scarce; benchmarks are mostly self-reported and need independent testing.
- Sustained access to computing power and talent.

Prelims Pointers

- IndiaAI Mission (2024): seven pillars including compute, foundation models, datasets (AIKosh) and safe and trusted AI.
- Bhashini is the government's Indian-language translation platform.
- BharatGen is supported by the Department of Science and Technology.

31 | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GS 3

Micron's Sanand Plant Opens and Semiconductor Mission 2.0 Begins

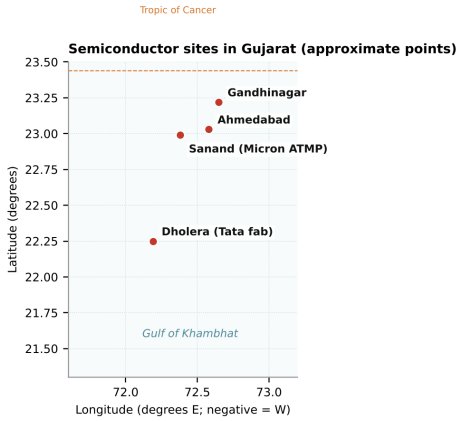
Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Indigenisation of technology, industrial policy, electronics

Context

On **28 February 2026** the Prime Minister inaugurated **Micron Technology's assembly, test, marking and packaging (ATMP) plant at Sanand, Gujarat**, the first project approved under the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM). Investment is over Rs 22,500 crore. The Union Budget (1 February) launched **ISM 2.0**, focused on equipment, materials, Indian chip designs and skills.

Key Points

- **The plant:** about 500,000 sq ft of cleanroom; turns memory wafers (DRAM and NAND) into finished modules.
- **ISM 1.0 (2021):** Rs 76,000 crore with up to 50% fiscal support per project; about 10 projects worth around Rs 1.6 lakh crore approved across six States by December 2025.
- **Front end still pending:** India's first commercial fab (Tata-PSMC at Dholera, Gujarat) is under construction.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Both projects lie in the Ahmedabad region near the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor.

Why it matters

- Chips go into everything from phones to missiles; supply shocks during COVID and tensions over Taiwan show the risk of depending on a few places.
- Packaging and testing (the 'back end') create jobs and skills that can support later fabs.

Challenges

- Fabs need huge investments, steady power and very large amounts of ultra-pure water.
- Shortage of experienced process engineers; equipment and chemicals are mostly imported.
- Global competition from the US, Japan and others offering large subsidies.

Prelims Pointers

- DRAM is volatile working memory; NAND flash is non-volatile storage memory.
- OSAT/ATMP = back-end (packaging and testing); fab = front-end (making circuits on wafers).
- ISM works as a division of the Digital India Corporation under MeitY.

32 | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GS 3

Air-Breathing Missiles and Shoulder-Fired Air Defence: SFDR and VSHORADS

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Indigenisation of technology, defence technology; security challenges

Context

DRDO tested two important technologies at the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Odisha in February 2026. On **3 February** it demonstrated **Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR)** technology for long-range air-to-air missiles. On **28 February** it carried out three successive flight trials of the **Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS)**, which hit high-speed aerial targets; the Defence Minister said it was ready for induction.

Key Points

- **SFDR:** the motor takes oxygen from the air instead of carrying an oxidiser, so it can keep the missile powered until it reaches its target. This enlarges the 'no-escape zone' for enemy aircraft.
- **The test:** it checked the booster, the ramjet motor and the system that controls fuel flow.
- **VSHORADS:** a man-portable air-defence missile (MANPADS) against drones, helicopters and low-flying aircraft, to replace older imported systems.

Why it matters

- Beyond-visual-range air combat is decisive; neighbours field long-range Chinese missiles.
- Recent wars show mass use of drones, making layered, short-range air defence essential.
- Both reduce import dependence and support Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence.

Challenges

Moving from demonstration to mass production takes years; India still imports key parts such as some seekers and engines; user trials and cost control remain hurdles.

Prelims Pointers

- A ramjet has no moving compressor and works only at high (supersonic) speed; a scramjet keeps combustion supersonic.
- ITR Chandipur and Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island (Wheeler Island) are off the Odisha coast.
- Astra is India's beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile family.

33 | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GS 3

Human Spaceflight Is Hard: Artemis II Slips, ISRO Regroups

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Space technology; awareness in the field of space

Context

February showed how carefully crewed missions must move. NASA's **Artemis II**, a crewed flight around the Moon, did not launch: a hydrogen leak stopped the first fuelling test on 2 February; a second test on 19 February succeeded; but a helium-flow problem in the upper stage on 21 February forced the rocket back to its hangar and moved the launch to April. Meanwhile SpaceX **Crew-12** reached the ISS on 14 February. In India, ISRO continued its review after the PSLV-C62 failure of 12 January, the second third-stage (PS3) failure in a row.

Key Points

- **Artemis II crew:** Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch (NASA) and Jeremy Hansen (Canadian Space Agency). It is a fly-by with no landing.
- **Crew-12:** launched 13 February; includes ESA's Sophie Adenot; brought forward after Crew-11 returned early for a medical reason.
- **China:** reported an abort test of its new Mengzhou crew capsule in February, as part of its aim of a crewed Moon landing by 2030.
- **Gaganyaan:** ISRO has said the crewed flight is planned for 2027; the first uncrewed flight (G1) did not take place in February.

Lessons for India

- **Transparency:** commentators have asked ISRO to publish its PSLV failure analysis, as NASA publishes mishap reports; open reports build trust with customers.
- **Quality control:** much PSLV hardware now comes from industry, so supplier checks matter more.
- **Safety before schedule:** NASA's delays show that crewed missions must wait until every system is proven.

Prelims Pointers

- PSLV stages: solid (PS1), liquid (PS2, Vikas engine), solid (PS3), liquid (PS4).
- India signed the Artemis Accords in June 2023.
- Gaganyaan's crew module is designed to splash down at sea after a mission in about 400 km orbit.

34 | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GS 3

Nuclear Power: Small Reactors and a Bigger Fleet

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Energy, nuclear technology, infrastructure

Context

Replies in Parliament in early February 2026 (as compiled by the Vivekananda International Foundation's science digest) gave an update on India's nuclear programme: **24 reactors with 8,780 MW** operating and **17 reactors with 13,100 MW** under construction or approval, with work on small modular reactors (SMRs). The SHANTI Act, 2025 has opened nuclear power to private participation.

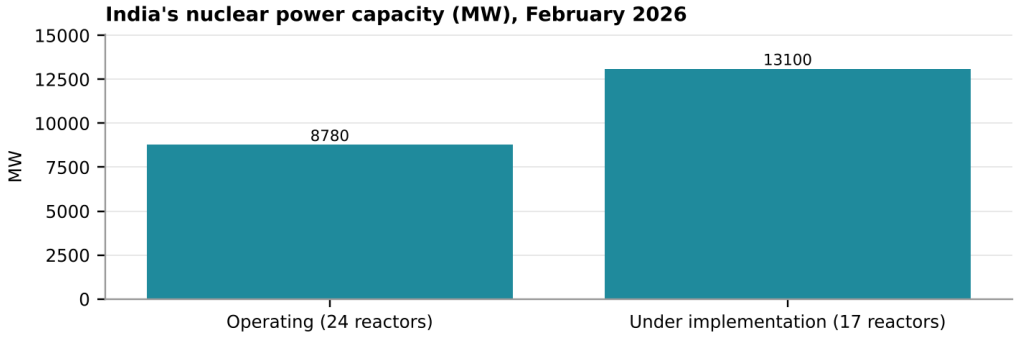


Chart. Completion would take capacity to about 21,880 MW, still far from the 100 GW target for 2047. Source: Parliament replies as compiled in VIF S&T; Digest Issue 79 (verify against DAE).

Key Points

- **SMRs:** Bharat Small Modular Reactor BSMR-200 (220 MWe) and SMR-55 (55 MWe) are being designed; lead units are proposed at Tarapur.
- **Policy:** the Nuclear Energy Mission (announced in the 2025-26 Budget) aims for at least five Indian-designed SMRs by 2033; the 2026-27 Budget extended customs duty exemptions for nuclear equipment.
- **Uranium:** a deposit was reported in Sikar district, Rajasthan.

Why it matters

- Nuclear power gives steady, low-carbon electricity, which a grid with more solar and wind needs.
- SMRs can be factory-built and placed at old coal-plant sites, using existing grid links.

Challenges

- High upfront cost and long delays (the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor took about 15 years longer than planned).
- Fuel supply, liability and insurance under the new law, and public acceptance near sites.

Prelims Pointers

- India's three-stage programme (Homi Bhabha): PHWRs on natural uranium, fast breeders on plutonium, then thorium.
- The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) was set up in 1983.
- PHWRs use heavy water as moderator and coolant; light water reactors need enriched uranium.

35 | INTERNAL SECURITY GS 3

International Fleet Review and MILAN 2026: Naval Diplomacy in the Indian Ocean

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Security challenges in border and maritime areas; GS2: Regional groupings (IONS)

Context

India hosted a large gathering of navies at **Visakhapatnam** in February 2026. President Droupadi Murmu reviewed the **International Fleet Review** on **18 February**, with **85 ships from 74 countries**. The 13th edition of the multilateral exercise **MILAN** ran from 17 to 20 February, and the 9th Conclave of Chiefs of the **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)** met on 20 February with 32 countries.

Key Points

- **Presidential yacht:** INS Sumedha, an indigenous offshore patrol vessel.
- **MILAN:** started in 1995 at Port Blair with a handful of navies; now one of the largest multilateral naval exercises in the region.
- **IONS:** founded by India in 2008 as a forum for navies of the Indian Ocean littoral states.
- **Other exercises in February:** KHANJAR with Kyrgyzstan (Misamari, Assam) and DHARMA GUARDIAN with Japan (Chaubattia, Uttarakhand).

Why it matters

- **Net security provider:** hosting so many navies supports India's role in the Indian Ocean under MAHASAGAR (the 2025 update of SAGAR).
- **Interoperability:** joint drills help in search and rescue, anti-piracy and disaster relief.
- **Balancing China:** a growing Chinese naval presence makes partnerships with regional and extra-regional navies more important.

Challenges

Fleet reviews are symbolic; lasting influence needs more ships and submarines, faster shipbuilding, and steady support to small island states for maritime awareness.

Prelims Pointers

- India's earlier International Fleet Reviews were held in 2001 (Mumbai) and 2016 (Visakhapatnam).
- The Eastern Naval Command is headquartered at Visakhapatnam.
- The Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) is at Gurugram.

36 | ETHICS GS 4

Case Study: The Roll Officer's Dilemma

Syllabus Mapping: GS4: Ethics in public administration; integrity, impartiality, compassion towards weaker sections; accountability

The case

You are an Electoral Registration Officer in a border district during a revision of the voter list. Assembly elections are three months away. Software has flagged 40,000 names in your area for 'discrepancies' such as spelling mismatches between old and new records. Most belong to poor migrant workers, many of whom are away and hold few documents. Your seniors want the work finished by the deadline and remind you that keeping ineligible names is a serious lapse. A local leader urges you to delete names quickly; another insists that not a single genuine voter be removed. Your staff are exhausted, and a reporter asks how many deletions you expect.

Stakeholders

- Genuine voters at risk of losing their vote, especially migrants and the poor.
- The Election Commission and the public, who need a clean and trusted roll.
- Political parties on both sides, and the media.
- You and your staff, who are legally accountable for every decision.

Ethical issues

- **Integrity of the roll versus inclusion:** removing ineligible names protects elections, but wrongly removing a citizen denies a basic democratic right.
- **Impartiality:** decisions must not bend to pressure from any party.
- **Compassion and fairness:** the burden of proof should not fall hardest on those least able to bear it.
- **Accountability and transparency:** each decision should be reasoned and open to appeal.

Option	Merits	Demerits
Delete all flagged names that are not cleared by the deadline	Meets the deadline; looks tough on errors	Many genuine voters may be excluded; legally and ethically weak
Keep all flagged names until after the election	No wrongful exclusion	Ineligible names may stay; breaks instructions
Verify in priority order, accept a wide set of documents, give notice and hearing before any deletion, and report pending cases honestly	Balances integrity and inclusion; defensible in law	Needs more staff and time; some cases may remain pending at the deadline

A reasoned course of action

Choose the third option. Treat the software flag as a reason to check, not as proof. Send notices in local languages, hold camps where migrants live and work, and accept all valid documents allowed by the Election Commission. No name should be deleted without notice and a chance to be heard, with the reason recorded. Ask seniors in writing for extra staff and report pending cases openly rather than clearing them by deletion. Tell the reporter the process, not a target number. This protects both the purity of the roll and the right to vote.

Ethics vocabulary to use

- **Audi alteram partem:** hear the other side before deciding against someone.
- **Impartiality and non-partisanship:** core values of the civil service.
- **Rule of law with compassion:** follow the rules, but apply them in a way that does not punish the weakest for system errors.

37 | ETHICS GS 4

Ethics in the News: Values Behind February's Headlines

Syllabus Mapping: GS4: Ethics and human interface; probity; ethical issues in technology and international relations

Why read the news for ethics

Use these links between February's stories and ethical ideas as ready examples in GS Paper IV answers. For each, practise writing one paragraph that names the value, gives the example, and shows how you would balance the competing value.

Story	Ethical question	Concepts to use
Supreme Court and the NCERT chapter	How do we protect an institution's dignity while teaching honestly about its flaws?	Institutional integrity; transparency; owning a mistake; nemo judex in causa sua
West Bengal voter roll revision	Is a clean roll worth the risk of excluding genuine voters?	Inclusion; procedural fairness; duty of care
Deepfake labelling rules	Who is responsible for truth online: creators, platforms or the State?	Truthfulness; responsibility; free speech and harm
HPV vaccination drive	How should the State persuade without pressuring?	Informed consent; beneficence; trust
India-US trade framework	How should a government weigh exporters' gains against farmers' fears?	Distributive justice; consultation; national interest
AI Impact Summit motto	Can technology serve 'the welfare of all' if its power is concentrated?	Equity; access; common good
Project Cheetah	Is bringing back a lost species worth the animals' suffering in the process?	Environmental ethics; animal welfare; stewardship

Thinkers to quote

- **Mahatma Gandhi's talisman:** recall the face of the poorest person you have seen and ask whether your step will help them. Use it for welfare, trade and voter-roll questions.
- **Immanuel Kant:** treat people as ends, never merely as means. Use it for consent and dignity questions.
- **John Rawls:** design rules from behind a 'veil of ignorance', not knowing where you will stand. Use it for fairness in public policy.
- **Swami Vivekananda:** service to people is service to God. Use it for public service motivation.

How to use these in an answer

- Define the value in one line, give the current example, then suggest a practical step an administrator can take.
- Show the competing value too, and explain how you would reconcile the two.

38 | ESSAY

ESSAY

Essay Corner: Themes from This Month

Three essay themes drawn from February's news, with a sample outline. Write one practice essay (1,000-1,200 words) this week.

Themes to practise

- **Trust is the currency of institutions.** Courts, election bodies and textbooks all depend on public trust.
- **Machines that speak our languages.** Technology, inclusion and sovereignty.
- **Old roots, new bridges.** Traditional knowledge in a changing climate.

Sample outline: 'Trust is the currency of institutions'

- **Opening:** a voter checking her name on the list the night before polling, and what she feels if it is missing.
- **Political dimension:** elections, courts and the press work only when people believe them fair.
- **Social dimension:** trust lowers the cost of cooperation; mistrust breeds rumour and conflict.
- **Economic dimension:** investors and taxpayers act on trust in rules and data (for example, new GDP and CPI series).
- **Technological dimension:** deepfakes make it harder to know what is real; labels and literacy help.
- **How trust is built:** transparency, admitting mistakes, fair procedure and consistent results.
- **Counter-view:** blind trust is dangerous; healthy democracies need questioning citizens.
- **Conclusion:** institutions earn trust by being open to scrutiny, not by avoiding it.

Did you know?

Strong essays use examples from several fields and regions. Keep a single notebook of examples from each month's magazine, grouped by theme.

39 | HISTORY

PRELIMS

History, Art and Culture: Quick Notes

Anniversaries, heritage and culture items from February 2026.

Anniversaries

- **Swami Dayanand Saraswati:** 202nd birth anniversary on 12 February; founded the Arya Samaj (Bombay, 1875), wrote *Satyarth Prakash*, called for a return to the Vedas.
- **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti (19 February):** link to the 'Maratha Military Landscapes of India' (12 forts, 11 in Maharashtra plus Gingee in Tamil Nadu), inscribed on the World Heritage List in July 2025.
- **Chauri Chaura (4 February 1922):** a crowd set fire to a police station in Gorakhpur district, killing 22 policemen; Gandhi withdrew the Non-Cooperation Movement (Bardoli resolution, 12 February 1922).
- **Chandra Shekhar Azad (died 27 February 1931):** HSRA leader; died at Alfred Park, Allahabad, now named after him.
- **RIN revolt (18-23 February 1946):** 80th anniversary; see the History section.

Culture and heritage

- **Living root bridges:** 'Jingkieng Jri / Lyu Chrai Cultural Landscape' (Meghalaya) nominated for the 2026-27 World Heritage cycle.
- **Surajkund International Crafts Mela (39th edition, Faridabad, Haryana):** inaugurated by Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan; partner nation Egypt; theme States Uttar Pradesh and Meghalaya.
- **'Boong':** Manipuri-language film directed by Lakshmipriya Devi won Best Children's and Family Film at the BAFTA Awards (London, February 2026), a first for an Indian film in that category.
- **Keralam:** Union Cabinet approved renaming Kerala as Keralam (24 February); procedure under Article 3.
- **Sant Ravidas:** 15th-16th century Bhakti saint; about 40 of his hymns are in the Guru Granth Sahib.

40 | ART AND CULTURE PRELIMS

Personalities and Sports: Quick Notes

People, awards and sporting events in the news in February 2026.

Personalities

- **T.K. Oommen (died 26 February, aged 88):** sociologist, Professor Emeritus at JNU, former President of the International Sociological Association, Padma Bhushan 2008.
- **BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year 2025:** cricketer Smriti Mandhana (announced February 2026).
- **Speaker of the Knesset Medal:** awarded to PM Modi during his Israel visit (25-26 February).

Winter Olympics: Milano Cortina 2026 (6-22 February)

- India sent two athletes: **Arif Khan** (alpine skiing, flag-bearer) finished 39th of 39 finishers in the men's slalom; **Stanzin Lundup** finished 104th in the men's 10 km cross-country.
- **Norway** topped the medal table (41 medals, 18 gold), ahead of the USA; Brazil won its first ever Winter Olympic medal.
- Next Winter Games: 2030 French Alps; 2034 Salt Lake City (USA).

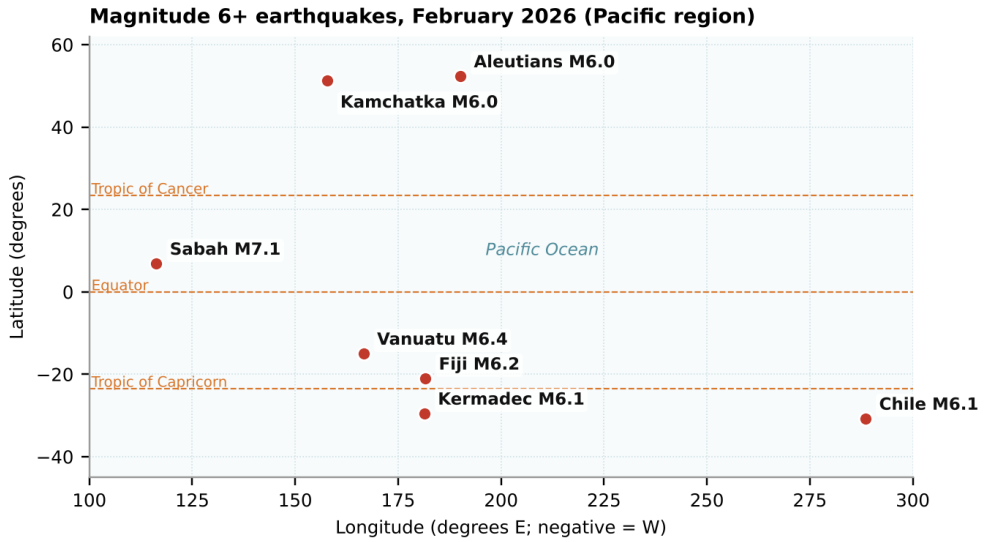
Cricket

- **ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026:** co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from 7 February; the final was in March.
- **Ranji Trophy 2025-26:** Jammu and Kashmir won their first title (28 February), on first-innings lead over Karnataka in the final at Hubballi.

41 | GEOGRAPHY PRELIMS

Geography: Phenomena in the News

Earthquakes, oceans and weather systems from February 2026.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Longitudes here run eastward from 0 to 360 so the Pacific is not split; for example, 190 E is 170 W. Almost all large quakes lie on the Ring of Fire.

Earth and oceans

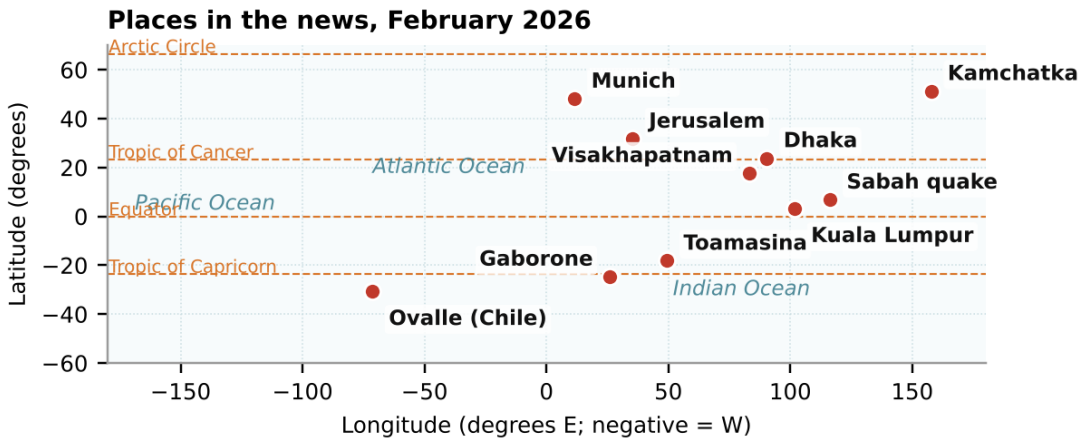
- **Deep-focus earthquakes:** quakes deeper than about 300 km, like the Sabah event (629 km), occur in sinking oceanic plates and cause less shaking at the surface.
- **Antarctic sea ice:** summer minimum of 2.58 million sq km on 26 February, the 16th-lowest in 48 years (NSIDC).
- **Arctic sea ice:** third-lowest extent for both January and February 2026 (Copernicus).

Weather and climate

- **ENSO:** weak La Nina fading; WMO gave a 60% chance of neutral conditions for March-May 2026.
- **Atmospheric rivers:** storms Leonardo and Marta caused floods in Spain and Portugal; more than 11,000 people evacuated.
- **Delhi-NCR air:** GRAP Stage II was revoked on 18 February as air quality improved; GRAP is enforced by the Commission for Air Quality Management.
- **India's winter:** reports of a dry, early-warm winter, including a large rain deficit in Sikkim (as reported).

Places in the News: February 2026 on the Map

Locate each place and learn one fact about it. Prelims map questions often test relative position.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Red dots mark the places; dashed lines mark the Tropics, the Equator and the Arctic Circle.

Asia

- **Dhaka:** capital of Bangladesh; election on 13 February.
- **Kuala Lumpur:** PM Modi's visit to Malaysia (7-8 February); Comprehensive Strategic Partnership reaffirmed.
- **Sabah (Borneo, Malaysia):** a magnitude 7.1 earthquake on 22 February at a depth of about 629 km, so damage was slight.
- **Kamchatka (Russia):** magnitude 6.0 quake on 16 February; part of the Pacific Ring of Fire.

Europe, Africa and the Americas

- **Munich:** Munich Security Conference; G4 (India, Germany, Japan, Brazil) foreign ministers met on 15 February on UN Security Council reform.
- **Toamasina:** Madagascar's main port; landfall of Cyclone Gezani (10 February).
- **Gaborone:** capital of Botswana, source of nine cheetahs for Kuno.
- **Ovalle (Chile):** magnitude 6.1 quake on 12 February near the Nazca-South American plate boundary.

43 | POLITY PRELIMS

Polity and Governance: Quick Notes

Courts, Parliament and governance from February 2026.

Parliament and the Union

- **Budget Session 2026:** Budget presented 1 February; first part ended 13 February; second part from 9 March to 2 April.
- **Industrial Relations Code (Amendment) Act, 2026:** introduced 11 February and passed by both Houses on 12 February.
- **Keralam:** Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026 approved by the Cabinet; Article 3 procedure.
- **16th Finance Commission:** report tabled 1 February; 41% share for States; chair Arvind Panagariya.

Supreme Court

- **Nine-judge benches revived (16 February):** the Sabarimala religious-freedom reference and the meaning of 'industry' under the Industrial Disputes Act.
- **CAA, 2019:** challenges listed for final hearing in May 2026.
- **Customs officers:** held not to be 'police officers', so a voluntary statement under Section 108 of the Customs Act is admissible (23 February).
- **WhatsApp and Meta:** told to comply with NCLAT directions on the 2021 privacy policy; the CJI said privacy cannot be compromised in the name of data sharing (23 February).
- **Akash v. State of U.P. (10 February):** attempt versus preparation; NJA committee on sensitivity in sexual-offence trials.
- **NCERT chapter (26 February):** suo motu action; book withdrawn.

Elections

- **West Bengal SIR:** final roll published 28 February; judicial officers from Orissa and Jharkhand High Courts allowed to help with claims.
- **Next phase of SIR:** Election Commission asked States on 19 February to prepare for the next phase from April (as reported).

44 | SOCIAL JUSTICE PRELIMS

Society, Health and Welfare: Quick Notes

Schemes, health and education items from February 2026.

Health

- **PM RAHAT:** cashless treatment up to Rs 1.5 lakh for seven days for road accident victims, from the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund.
- **HPV vaccination:** national drive for girls aged 14 launched from Ajmer on 28 February.
- **Nipah:** WHO reported two confirmed cases (nurses) in Barasat, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal in January; over 190 contacts tested negative; WHO rated the global risk low.
- **Draft drug rules (2 February):** amendments to the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules require makers to report changes in manufacturing, packaging or shelf life.

Budget for people

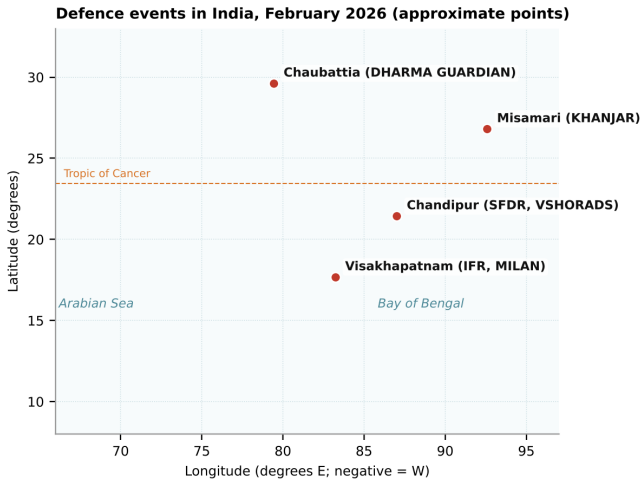
- **Health Ministry:** about Rs 1,06,530 crore; trauma care centres in every district hospital; 1.5 lakh caregivers to be trained.
- **Education:** a girls' hostel in every district; AVGC (animation, visual effects, gaming, comics) labs in 15,000 schools and 500 colleges (as reported).
- **Women and children:** the government said allocations rose by about 11.55%.
- **CBDC food subsidy pilot:** the first digital-rupee distribution of food subsidy under PMGKAY began in Puducherry on 26 February.

45 | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PRELIMS

International Relations and Security: Quick Notes

Visits, groupings, exercises and defence items from February 2026.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Locate each event and pair it with its partner country.

Visits and groupings

- **BRICS:** first Sherpa meeting under India's chairship in New Delhi from 10 February; India's fourth chairship (after 2012, 2016, 2021).
- **G4:** India, Germany, Japan and Brazil met at the Munich Security Conference (15 February) on UN Security Council reform.
- **Malaysia (7-8 February):** MoUs on disaster management, anti-corruption, peacekeeping, semiconductors and health; a Thiruvalluvar Centre announced.
- **Board of Peace (Gaza):** first meeting in Washington on 19 February; India attended as an observer.
- **Israel (25-26 February):** Special Strategic Partnership; up to 50,000 Indian workers over five years.

Exercises and defence

- **KHANJAR (13th):** India-Kyrgyzstan special forces exercise at Misamari, Assam, from 4 February.
- **DHARMA GUARDIAN (7th):** India-Japan army exercise at Chaubattia, Uttarakhand, from 24 February.
- **International Fleet Review:** 18 February, Visakhapatnam; 85 ships from 74 nations; MILAN 17-20 February; IONS conclave 20 February.
- **SFDR (3 February) and VSHORADS (28 February):** DRDO tests at ITR Chandipur.
- **Operation names (28 February):** 'Epic Fury' (US) and 'Lion's Roar' (Israel) were the names given to the strikes on Iran.
- **New START:** expired 5 February; limits were 1,550 deployed warheads and 700 deployed launchers.

46 | ECONOMY PRELIMS

Economy: Quick Notes

Numbers and policies from February 2026.

Macro numbers

- **Repo rate:** 5.25% (MPC, 6 February); SDF 5.00%; MSF and Bank Rate 5.50%.
- **CPI (base 2024):** January 2026 inflation 2.75%; 358 items; 12 online marketplaces included.
- **GDP (base 2022-23):** Q3 2025-26 growth 7.8%; 2025-26 estimate 7.6%; nominal GDP about Rs 345 lakh crore.
- **GST (January 2026):** gross collections about Rs 1.93 lakh crore, up 6.2%.
- **Forex reserves:** record US$725.7 billion in the week ending 13 February.
- **Trade (January 2026):** merchandise trade deficit US$34.68 billion, a three-month high, with gold imports sharply up.

Budget 2026-27

- **Fiscal deficit:** 4.3% of GDP; debt 55.6% of GDP; target about 50% by March 2031.
- **Capex:** about Rs 12.2 lakh crore.
- **Income-tax Act, 2025:** in force from 1 April 2026.
- **Infrastructure:** seven high-speed rail corridors proposed, a new Dankuni-Surat dedicated freight corridor, and 20 national waterways to be made operational.
- **Funds:** Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 (Rs 10,000 crore) and Urban Challenge Fund (Rs 1 lakh crore) approved by the Cabinet on 14 February.

Trade law

- **Learning Resources v. Trump (20 February):** the US Supreme Court held 6-3 that IEEPA does not authorise tariffs.
- **Section 122 (US Trade Act, 1974):** temporary tariffs of up to 15% for 150 days to deal with balance-of-payments problems.

47 | ENVIRONMENT PRELIMS

Environment and Ecology: Quick Notes

Wetlands, wildlife, climate policy and resources from February 2026.

Wetlands and wildlife

- **Chhari-Dhand (Kutch, Gujarat):** new Ramsar site; Gujarat's only Conservation Reserve; Common Cranes and flamingos.
- **Patna Bird Sanctuary (Etah, Uttar Pradesh):** new Ramsar site; about 1 sq km; 178 bird species.
- **India's Ramsar total:** 98 (26 in 2014).
- **Cheetahs:** nine from Botswana reached Kuno on 28 February; India's count 48, including 28 born in India.
- **Bandipur and Nagarhole (Karnataka):** tiger safaris to resume in phases with fewer vehicles (as reported).

Policy and resources

- **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme:** about 490 units in seven sectors under emission-intensity targets (as reported).
- **Rare Earth Permanent Magnet scheme:** Rs 7,280 crore over seven years for 6,000 tonnes a year of magnet capacity.
- **National Critical Mineral Mission:** launched 2025; Rs 440 crore in 2026-27.
- **Environment Ministry budget:** about Rs 3,759 crore; pollution control cut to Rs 1,091 crore.

48 | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PRELIMS

Science and Technology: Quick Notes

AI, space, defence, energy and health items from February 2026.

AI and digital

- **New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact:** adopted by 88 countries and organisations; three Sutras and seven Chakras.
- **Sarvam-105B:** 105 billion parameters, Mixture-of-Experts, 128,000-token context.
- **BharatGen Param2:** 17 billion parameters, 22 Indian languages.
- **IT Rules amendment:** 'Synthetically Generated Information' must be labelled; takedown within 3 hours; in force 20 February.

Space

- **Artemis II:** slipped to April after hydrogen and helium problems in February.
- **Crew-12:** launched 13 February; docked with the ISS on 14 February.
- **Space start-ups:** about 399 registered with DPIIT (Parliament reply, as compiled).
- **Third Launch Pad, Sriharikota:** completion targeted for 2029.

Semiconductors, energy and materials

- **Micron ATMP, Sanand:** inaugurated 28 February; first ISM project.
- **ISM 2.0:** equipment, materials, design and skills.
- **BSMR-200 and SMR-55:** India's small modular reactor designs; lead units proposed at Tarapur.
- **Lead-free perovskite photodetector:** Indian researchers reported a light sensor using a double perovskite (caesium silver bismuth bromide) as a safer alternative to lead-based materials.

49 | REVISION REVISION

Days and Themes of February 2026

Important days observed in February, with their themes where confirmed.

Days with themes

- **World Wetlands Day (2 February):** 2026 theme on wetlands and traditional knowledge (wording as reported).
- **World Cancer Day (4 February):** 'United by Unique' (2025-27 campaign of the Union for International Cancer Control).
- **World Radio Day (13 February, UNESCO):** 'Radio and Artificial Intelligence' (as reported).
- **World Day of Social Justice (20 February):** theme linked to renewed commitment after the Second World Summit for Social Development, Doha, 2025 (as reported).
- **International Mother Language Day (21 February):** 'Youth voices on multilingual education'; proposed by Bangladesh, proclaimed by UNESCO in 1999.
- **National Science Day (28 February):** 'Women in Science: Catalysing Viksit Bharat' (as reported); marks C.V. Raman's announcement of the Raman Effect on 28 February 1928.

Also in the news

- **Mahashivratri** fell on 15 February 2026.
- **International Day of Women and Girls in Science:** 11 February.

Practice Questions: Prelims and Mains

1. The RIN revolt of February 1946 began at which establishment?
(a) HMIS Hindustan (b) HMIS Talwar (c) INS Vikrant (d) HMIS Narbada
Answer: (b). HMIS Talwar was a signals training establishment in Bombay.

2. Who persuaded the RIN ratings to surrender on 23 February 1946?
(a) Nehru and Gandhi (b) Patel and Jinnah (c) Subhas Bose and Azad (d) Aruna Asaf Ali and Achyut Patwardhan
Answer: (b). Aruna Asaf Ali supported the strikers.

3. The living root bridges of Meghalaya are grown from the roots of:
(a) Banyan (b) Peepal (c) Ficus elastica (d) Bamboo
Answer: (c). The rubber fig's aerial roots are trained across streams.

4. Consider the following about renaming a State: 1. A Bill needs the President's recommendation. 2. The views of the State legislature are binding. 3. It is not an amendment under Article 368. Which are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
Answer: (b). Article 3 requires referral, but the State's views are not binding; Article 4 says it is not an Article 368 amendment.

5. The Sixteenth Finance Commission was chaired by:
(a) N.K. Singh (b) Y.V. Reddy (c) Arvind Panagariya (d) Bimal Jalan
Answer: (c). N.K. Singh chaired the 15th FC.

6. Which new criterion did the 16th Finance Commission add for sharing taxes among States?
(a) Tax effort (b) Contribution to GDP (c) Forest cover (d) Area
Answer: (b). It carries 10% weight; tax effort was dropped.

7. The fiscal deficit target in the Union Budget 2026-27 is:
(a) 4.8% of GDP (b) 4.5% of GDP (c) 4.4% of GDP (d) 4.3% of GDP
Answer: (d). It was 4.4% in 2025-26 (RE).

8. The new Income-tax Act comes into force from:
(a) 1 February 2026 (b) 1 April 2026 (c) 1 July 2026 (d) 1 April 2027
Answer: (b). The Income-tax Act, 2025 replaces the 1961 Act.

9. The base year of the new Consumer Price Index released in February 2026 is:
(a) 2012 (b) 2020 (c) 2022-23 (d) 2024
Answer: (d). The new GDP series uses 2022-23.

10. In the new CPI series, which group's weight fell the most compared with the 2012 series?
(a) Housing (b) Food and beverages (c) Health (d) Education
Answer: (b). Food fell from about 46% to about 37%; housing rose.

11. Consider the following: 1. The MPC has six members. 2. The RBI Governor has a casting vote. 3. The MPC was set up under Section 45ZB of the RBI Act. Which are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
Answer: (d). All three are correct.

12. 'Double deflation', used in the new GDP series, means:
(a) deflating GDP twice a year (b) deflating output and inputs separately (c) using both CPI and WPI (d) correcting for two base years
Answer: (b). It gives a better estimate of real value added.

13. In the new GDP series, which sector grew the slowest in 2025-26?
(a) Manufacturing (b) Construction (c) Agriculture (d) Trade, hotels and transport
Answer: (c). Agriculture grew about 2.6%.

14. In Learning Resources v. Trump (2026), the US Supreme Court held that:
(a) Section 232 tariffs were illegal (b) IEEPA does not authorise tariffs (c) the WTO overrides US law (d) tariffs need Senate approval
Answer: (b). The US then used Section 122 of the Trade Act, 1974.

15. Section 122 of the US Trade Act, 1974 allows tariffs of up to:
(a) 10% for 90 days (b) 15% for 150 days (c) 25% for one year (d) 50% without limit
Answer: (b). It is meant for balance-of-payments problems.

16. Which of these was kept out of India's concessions in the interim framework with the US, according to the Commerce Minister?
(a) Tree nuts (b) Dairy (c) Wine (d) Red sorghum for feed
Answer: (b). Maize, wheat, rice, sugar, soybean, poultry and dairy were protected.

17. The New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact rests on three 'Sutras'. They are:
(a) Safety, Security, Trust (b) People, Planet, Progress (c) Data, Compute, Talent (d) Access, Equity, Growth
Answer: (b). It also has seven 'Chakras'.

18. Which was the first AI summit of the global series held in the Global South?
(a) Seoul (b) Paris (c) New Delhi (d) Bletchley Park
Answer: (c). Earlier summits: Bletchley Park 2023, Seoul 2024, Paris 2025.

19. Under the IT Rules amendment of February 2026, the time to remove unlawful content after an order is:
(a) 72 hours (b) 36 hours (c) 24 hours (d) 3 hours
Answer: (d). It was earlier 36 hours.

20. 'Safe harbour' protection for intermediaries comes from which section of the IT Act, 2000?
(a) Section 66A (b) Section 69A (c) Section 79 (d) Section 87
Answer: (c). The IT Rules are framed under Section 87.

21. New START, which expired in February 2026, limited each side to how many deployed strategic warheads?
(a) 700 (b) 1,000 (c) 1,550 (d) 6,000
Answer: (c). It also limited deployed launchers to 700.

22. The 2026 general election in Bangladesh was won by an alliance led by:
(a) Awami League (b) Jamaat-e-Islami (c) Bangladesh Nationalist Party (d) National Citizen Party
Answer: (c). Tarique Rahman became Prime Minister on 17 February.

23. The Ganga Water Treaty between India and Bangladesh, which shares flows at Farakka, was signed in:
(a) 1977 (b) 1996 (c) 2011 (d) 2015
Answer: (b). It runs for 30 years, to December 2026.

24. During PM Modi's Israel visit (February 2026), ties were raised to a:
(a) Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (b) Special Strategic Partnership (c) Global Strategic Partnership (d) Privileged Partnership
Answer: (b). 17 agreements were signed.

25. The International Fleet Review 2026 was held at:
(a) Mumbai (b) Kochi (c) Visakhapatnam (d) Port Blair
Answer: (c). 85 ships from 74 nations took part.

26. The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) was founded by India in:
(a) 1995 (b) 2001 (c) 2008 (d) 2015
Answer: (c). MILAN began in 1995.

27. Exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN is held between India and:
(a) Kyrgyzstan (b) Japan (c) France (d) Australia
Answer: (b). KHANJAR is with Kyrgyzstan.

28. A Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet differs from a solid rocket motor because it:
(a) uses liquid fuel (b) takes oxygen from the air (c) has no nozzle at all (d) works only in space
Answer: (b). So it need not carry an oxidiser.

29. VSHORADS, tested by DRDO in February 2026, is a:
(a) long-range ballistic missile (b) man-portable air-defence system (c) anti-ship cruise missile (d) submarine-launched missile
Answer: (b). It targets drones, helicopters and low-flying aircraft.

30. Consider the following: 1. DRAM is non-volatile memory. 2. NAND flash is non-volatile memory. Which is/are correct?
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both (d) Neither
Answer: (b). DRAM loses data when power is off.

31. Micron's plant at Sanand, inaugurated in February 2026, is a:
(a) front-end fab (b) ATMP (assembly and test) unit (c) display fab (d) chip design centre
Answer: (b). India's first commercial fab is being built at Dholera.

32. Sarvam-105B uses which design that activates only part of the network for each query?
(a) Recurrent network (b) Mixture-of-Experts (c) Decision tree (d) Convolutional network
Answer: (b). This lowers running costs.

33. Artemis II, which slipped from February to April 2026, is a:
(a) crewed Moon landing (b) uncrewed lunar orbiter (c) crewed lunar fly-by (d) Mars sample return
Answer: (c). Its crew includes a Canadian astronaut.

34. With the two sites added in early 2026, India's number of Ramsar sites became:
(a) 89 (b) 94 (c) 98 (d) 100
Answer: (c). Chhari-Dhand and Patna Bird Sanctuary.

35. Chhari-Dhand, a new Ramsar site, is located in:
(a) Rann of Kutch region, Gujarat (b) Thar desert, Rajasthan (c) Sundarbans, West Bengal (d) Chilika, Odisha
Answer: (a). It lies on the edge of the Banni grasslands.

36. The cheetahs that reached Kuno on 28 February 2026 came from:
(a) Namibia (b) South Africa (c) Kenya (d) Botswana
Answer: (d). Namibia and South Africa were the earlier sources.

37. India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme is administered by:
(a) CPCB (b) Bureau of Energy Efficiency (c) SEBI (d) NITI Aayog
Answer: (b). It was notified in 2023 under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.

38. Cyclone Gezani (February 2026) made landfall in:
(a) Mozambique (b) Madagascar (c) Mauritius (d) Sri Lanka
Answer: (b). Near Toamasina on 10 February.

39. The Sabah earthquake of 22 February 2026 caused little damage despite magnitude 7.1 mainly because:
(a) it was offshore in deep water (b) it was very deep, about 629 km (c) the area is uninhabited (d) it was a volcanic quake
Answer: (b). Deep-focus quakes cause weaker shaking at the surface.

40. Under PM RAHAT, road accident victims get cashless treatment of up to:
(a) Rs 50,000 for 3 days (b) Rs 1 lakh for 5 days (c) Rs 1.5 lakh for 7 days (d) Rs 5 lakh for 30 days
Answer: (c). It is paid from the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund.

41. WHO's '90-70-90' targets relate to the elimination of:
(a) tuberculosis (b) malaria (c) cervical cancer (d) measles
Answer: (c). 90% of girls vaccinated against HPV by age 15.

42. The Royal Indian Navy revolt and the Cabinet Mission: Attlee announced the Cabinet Mission on:
(a) 19 February 1946 (b) 24 March 1946 (c) 16 May 1946 (d) 3 June 1947
Answer: (a). It was announced while the revolt was on; the Mission arrived in March.

Mains Practice

- **Q1.** The RIN revolt of 1946 showed that the British could no longer rely on Indian armed forces. Discuss its significance in the last phase of the freedom struggle. (GS I, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q2.** Traditional knowledge can offer climate-resilient solutions. Discuss with reference to the living root bridges of Meghalaya. (GS I, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q3.** How does a shift in ENSO phase affect the Indian monsoon? Discuss in the light of the outlook for 2026. (GS I, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q4.** Linguistic reorganisation strengthened rather than weakened Indian unity. Discuss with reference to recent demands to rename States. (GS I, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q5.** Examine the gains and risks for India from the interim trade framework with the United States. (GS II, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q6.** What does the change of government in Bangladesh mean for India's neighbourhood policy? (GS II, 15 marks, 250 words)

- **Q7.** India's West Asia policy rests on balancing many partners. Examine its strengths and limits in the light of the events of February 2026. (GS II, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q8.** The expiry of New START leaves the world without limits on the largest nuclear arsenals. What are the implications for India? (GS II, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q9.** Discuss the balance between protecting the judiciary's dignity and promoting honest civic education. (GS II, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q10.** Revising electoral rolls must ensure both integrity and inclusion. Examine with reference to the Special Intensive Revision. (GS II, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q11.** The Sixteenth Finance Commission tries to reward performance while supporting equity. Critically examine. (GS II, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q12.** Laws passed without committee scrutiny weaken Parliament's role. Discuss. (GS II, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q13.** Assess the challenges in achieving universal HPV vaccination among adolescent girls in India. (GS II, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q14.** Mandatory labelling of AI-generated content is necessary but not sufficient to tackle deepfakes. Discuss. (GS II/III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q15.** Why has the Union Budget shifted from a fiscal deficit target to a debt anchor? Discuss its merits. (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q16.** Explain the significance of revising the base years of CPI and GDP. What challenges do such revisions pose for policy? (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q17.** Strategic manufacturing missions aim to reduce dependence on concentrated supply chains. Examine with examples from the 2026-27 Budget. (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q18.** Agricultural growth continues to lag the rest of the economy. Suggest measures to raise farm incomes. (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q19.** Listing wetlands under the Ramsar Convention is not enough to protect them. Discuss. (GS III, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q20.** Evaluate the progress and problems of Project Cheetah. (GS III, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q21.** How can a carbon market help India meet its climate goals? What design features are critical? (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q22.** Anticipatory action can reduce disaster losses. Discuss with reference to recent cyclones. (GS III, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q23.** Why does India need sovereign AI models? Discuss the challenges in building them. (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q24.** Assess India's progress in semiconductor manufacturing and the challenges ahead. (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q25.** Small modular reactors could transform India's nuclear power programme. Discuss. (GS III, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q26.** Naval diplomacy is an important tool of India's Indian Ocean policy. Discuss with reference to recent events. (GS III, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q27.** 'A rule applied without compassion can become an injustice.' Discuss with reference to the duties of an electoral officer. (GS IV, 10 marks, 150 words)

Official Sources to Bookmark

Scan or click to open the official sites used most for monthly current affairs.

Press Information Bureau
https://pib.gov.in
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Ministry of External Affairs
https://www.mea.gov.in
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PRS Legislative Research
https://prsindia.org
Scan or click to open the official source.

Reserve Bank of India
https://www.rbi.org.in
Scan or click to open the official source.

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
https://www.mospi.gov.in
Scan or click to open the official source.

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Sources and Notes

- **India-US trade:** joint statement as reported by ETV Bharat (7 Feb 2026); All India Radio on the Commerce Minister (8 Feb); Jones Day on *Learning Resources v. Trump*; Outlook Business and Business Today (21-23 Feb).
- **AI Impact Summit:** All India Radio (21 Feb 2026); NeGD press release; Elysee (19 Feb).
- **Bangladesh:** Al Jazeera (13 and 17 Feb 2026); All India Radio (17 Feb).
- **Israel visit and Iran:** PM India list of outcomes; All India Radio and MEA (26 and 28 Feb); Al Jazeera timeline; FDD Long War Journal (28 Feb).
- **New START:** NPR (5 Feb 2026); Al Jazeera (6 Feb).
- **Supreme Court items:** SC Observer monthly review (February 2026) and reports on the West Bengal SIR and *Akash v. State of U.P.*; Careers360 and The Wire on the NCERT case.
- **Parliament:** PRS Session Track (Budget Session 2026) and Monthly Policy Review (February 2026).
- **Budget, 16th FC, GDP:** PRS Union Budget Analysis 2026-27; PRS summary of the 16th Finance Commission report; MoSPI press release on GDP (27 Feb 2026).
- **RBI and CPI:** IndiaBonds and The Week (6 Feb 2026) on the MPC; Business Today, All India Radio and Vision IAS/The Hindu (12-13 Feb) on the new CPI.
- **Urban Challenge Fund and FoF 2.0:** All India Radio and ETV Bharat (14 Feb 2026); IANS (14 Feb).
- **Health:** PRS Monthly Policy Review (PM RAHAT); Business Today (health budget, 1 Feb); Business Standard/PTI and PIB backgrounder (HPV drive); WHO Disease Outbreak News (Nipah).
- **IT Rules:** analyses by Hogan Lovells, S.S. Rana and AZB (February 2026).
- **Environment:** All India Radio and Drishti IAS (2 Feb, Ramsar); All India Radio (28 Feb, cheetahs); Copernicus C3S monthly bulletins; NSIDC; WMO ENSO update (February 2026); IMD press release (28 Feb); Vision IAS/Business Standard (CCTS, 25 Feb); Down To Earth and The Week (environment budget).
- **Cyclone Gezani:** WMO (13 Feb 2026); ReliefWeb.
- **Earthquakes:** USGS earthquake catalogue (February 2026).
- **S&T:** Drishti IAS and Voice&Data (sovereign AI models); All India Radio and PM India (Micron, 28 Feb); All India Radio (SFDR, 3 Feb; VSHORADS, 28 Feb); NASASpaceflight and collectSPACE (Artemis II); VIF Science and Technology Digest Issue 79 (Parliament replies on nuclear and space).
- **Navy:** Republic of Singapore Navy release (21 Feb 2026); All India Radio on KHANJAR; Aviation Defence Universe on DHARMA GUARDIAN.
- **History and culture:** Drishti IAS (RIN revolt, 18 Feb 2026); All India Radio (root bridges, 29 Jan; Keralam, 25 Feb; Dayanand Saraswati, 12 Feb); SCC Online (Vande Mataram guidelines, 12 Feb); Drishti IAS (Surajkund, Boong).
- **Sports and people:** The Bridge and 3wiresports (Winter Olympics); francsjeux (medal table); Manorama (Ranji Trophy); UNI (BBC award); ISA (T.K. Oommen).

Please verify before use

- **Facts are as reported up to 28 February 2026.** The Iran conflict, the US tariff position after the Supreme Court ruling, the West Bengal roll and the NCERT case kept developing in March.
- **Reported, not confirmed from primary documents:** the MHA Vande Mataram guidelines; RBI quarterly projections and other MPC measures; the UCF cost-sharing ratio; health and education budget details; the HPV vaccine brand and dose schedule; the CCTS unit count; the Iranian Supreme Leader's death (only an Israeli official's claim at month-end).
- **Single-source figures:** nuclear capacity numbers (Parliament replies compiled by VIF; check against DAE); space start-up count; Bangladesh seat totals (Al Jazeera).
- **Approximate map points:** root-bridge villages, Gandhi Sagar, Misamari and Chaubattia, and Dholera are placed approximately; all maps are location diagrams without boundaries.
- **Not covered this month:** the research tools reached their limits, so items such as GI tags, excavations, February appointments and some reports (ASER, PLFS) were not covered. Check PIB for these before final revision.
- The ethics case study and essay themes are original practice material, not reports of real events. Note: the 2034 (not 2030) Winter Games go to Salt Lake City.

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