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# Current Affairs Today – February 2, 2026

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## WHY IN NEWS

February 2, 2026 — World Wetlands Day — brought a cluster of significant policy announcements: World Bank approved USD 830 million for India's ITI transformation, Yantra India earned Miniratna status from OFB corporatisation, the NYPS 2.0 youth parliament portal was launched, and India announced its first comprehensive migration survey in nearly two decades.

## WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2026 — FEBRUARY 2

**World Wetlands Day** is observed annually on **February 2** — the date the **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** was signed in **1971** in Ramsar, Iran. The 2026 theme: **“Wetlands and Human Wellbeing”**, highlighting the links between healthy wetland ecosystems and food security, water availability, and climate resilience. India now has **98 Ramsar sites** — the highest number in Asia and third globally — covering over 1.33 million hectares. Two new sites were recently added: **Patna Bird Sanctuary** (Etah, Uttar Pradesh) and **Chhari-Dhand** (Kutch, Gujarat; critical flamingo breeding ground).

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Ramsar Convention (1971), India's Ramsar sites count, wetland ecosystem services, Montreux Record.

## WORLD BANK APPROVES USD 830 MILLION FOR PM-SETU — UPGRADING 1,000 ITIS

The **World Bank** approved a **USD 830 million** loan for **PM-SETU (Pradhan Mantri — Skilling and Employability Transformation Through Upgraded Industrial Training Institutes)** on **February 2, 2026**. The scheme will upgrade **1,000 government ITIs** using a **hub-and-spoke model: 200 hub ITIs + 800 spoke ITIs**. Key terms: final maturity **19.5 years**, grace period **4 years**; prepared jointly with the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**; private capital mobilization target **USD 680 million**. Women's participation target: **minimum 25% enrolment**. Targeted sectors: **Manufacturing, EVs, AI, green energy, textiles, construction**. Annual target: **over 1 million better-skilled workers**. PM-SETU is under the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**. Part of the new **World Bank-India Country Partnership Framework FY2026-31** (USD 8–10 billion annually).

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Skill development — ITIs, hub-spoke model, demographic dividend, World Bank–India partnership. **GS2:** PPP in education, vocational training policy, National Education Policy 2020.

## YANTRA INDIA LIMITED GETS MINIRATNA CATEGORY-I STATUS

**Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** approved **Miniratna Category-I** status for **Yantra India Limited (YIL)** on **February 2, 2026**. Yantra India was established in **October 2021** as one of **7 new Defence PSUs** created by the **corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)** — converting its 41 factories. Yantra India produces **ammunition, artillery shells, propellants, and explosives**. Miniratna Category-I significance: capital expenditure approval up to **Rs 500 crore** without government approval. Revenue growth: Rs 956 crore (H2 FY22) → **Rs 3,108 crore (FY25)**; export growth: **nil** → **Rs 321.77 crore (FY25)**. Yantra India is classified as a **Schedule ‘A’ DPSU** under the Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Defence industrialisation — OFB corporatisation, 7 DPSUs, Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence, Miniratna criteria, CPSE classification.

## NYPS 2.0 PORTAL — YOUTH PARLIAMENT EXPANDED TO ALL CITIZENS

**Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA)** launched the upgraded **NYPS 2.0 portal** on **February 2, 2026**. The **National Youth Parliament Scheme** was originally started in **1966–67** (in-school format). NYPS 2.0 expands participation from recognised educational institutions to **all educational institutions AND individual/group citizens**. Two tracks: **Kishore Sabha** (school students) + **Tarun Sabha** (undergraduate/postgraduate). Statistics at launch: **95,319 participants** across **660 Youth Parliament sittings** (up to January 27, 2026). The scheme familiarises youth with parliamentary procedures, democratic values, and civic participation.

**UPSC Angle (GS2):** Parliamentary democracy, civic participation, youth engagement in governance, Mission Karmayogi.

## NSO TO CONDUCT FIRST COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL MIGRATION SURVEY (JULY 2026–JUNE 2027)

**Rao Inderjit Singh**, Minister of State, **MoSPI** (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation), announced India’s first comprehensive **National Migration Survey** in nearly two decades. Conducted by: **National Statistics Office (NSO)**. Survey period: **July 2026 to June 2027**. Coverage: **all states and UTs** except inaccessible parts of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The survey will capture: **rural-urban, inter-state, return, and seasonal migration**; socio-economic/employment profiles; reasons for migration. **PLFS 2020-21 baseline:** overall migration rate **28.9%**; female migration **47.9%** (of whom **86.8% migrated due to marriage**); male migration **22.8% for employment**; rural migration rate **26.8%**. Last dedicated migration survey: **NSS 64th Round (2007-08)**.

**UPSC Angle (GS1/GS2):** Internal migration, urbanisation, labour mobility, evidence-based policymaking, e-Shram, One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC).

## SAKSHAM 2026 — ANNUAL FUEL CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN BEGINS

**SAKSHAM 2026 (Sanrakshan Kshamta Mahotsav)** — India's annual **fuel conservation campaign** — was launched from **February 1–16, 2026** by the **Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA)** under the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**. PCRA was established in **1978** to promote energy conservation across transport, domestic, agricultural, and industrial sectors. The campaign includes fuel efficiency drives, pledge campaigns, public awareness, and competitions in schools and colleges.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Energy conservation, petroleum sector, PCRA mandate, India's oil import dependence (~85–88%).

## IHMCL-NFSU SIGN 3-YEAR MOU ON HIGHWAY CYBERSECURITY

**Indian Highways Management Company Limited (IHMCL)** — which implements **FASTag** electronic tolling and manages highway systems under **NHAI** — signed a **3-year MoU** with **National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU)**, Gandhinagar. Scope: **CCTV analysis, digital forensics, Advanced Traffic Management Systems (ATMS) security**. Planned: **Security Operations Centres (SOCs)** and forensic validation labs on the highway network. Signatories: A.R. Chitranshi (COO, IHMCL) + Dr. S.O. Junare (Campus Director, NFSU Gandhinagar). NFSU was established under **NFSU Act 2020** (Ministry of Home Affairs). India's national highway network: **~146,000 km**. FASTag (mandatory since February 2021) collects **over Rs 600 crore daily** in tolls.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Infrastructure security, intelligent transportation systems, cybersecurity, NFSU mandate.

## TRIPURA GRAMIN BANK — INDIA'S FIRST RRB CO-BRANDED RUPAY CREDIT CARD

**Tripura Gramin Bank (TGB)** launched **India's first Regional Rural Bank co-branded RuPay credit card** at its **Golden Jubilee** celebrations in February 2026. Co-branded with: **Punjab National Bank (PNB)** (TGB's sponsor bank) + **PNB Cards & Services Limited**. Network: **RuPay** (managed by **NPCI — National Payments Corporation of India**). Target: rural and semi-urban customers. Regional Rural Banks were established under the **RRB Act, 1976** — capitalised by **Central Government (50%), State Government (15%), Sponsor Bank (35%)**. India has **43 RRBs** (consolidated from 196 in 2005). RuPay, launched by NPCI in 2012, has over **760 million cardholders**.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Financial inclusion, rural banking, RRB structure, RuPay network, NPCI mandate.

## IOM GLOBAL APPEAL 2026 — RECORD DISPLACEMENT, RECORD MIGRANT DEATHS

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** released its **Global Appeal 2026**, requesting **USD 4.7 billion** to assist 41 million people. Key data: global **internal displacement reached 83.4 million** (all-time high, by end 2024); **disaster-related displacement: 9.8 million** in 2024 (29% increase YoY); **recorded migrant deaths in 2024: 9,197** — deadliest year since IOM began tracking in 2014. Global **remittances: USD 905 billion** in 2024. Migrant workers worldwide: **168 million**. Funding secured: USD 1.3 billion; Gap: **USD 3.4 billion**. IOM DG: **Amy Pope**; HQ: **Geneva**; became a UN-related organisation in **2016**. IOM has announced a **“Humanitarian Reset”** amid constrained global donor funding.

**UPSC Angle (GS1/GS2):** Migration, internal displacement, humanitarian governance, climate-induced migration, India as top remittance receiver (~USD 120 billion FY25).

## UPSC RELEVANCE

*Coking Coal Critical Mineral (MMDR Act; 780 kg per tonne steel; 95% imported; resources 37.37B tonnes mostly Jharkhand; India 2nd largest steel producer); RBI-ESMA MoU (CCIL recognised by ESMA; CCIL = Clearing Corporation of India; G-Sec settlement infrastructure; EMIR = European Market Infrastructure Regulation); LNG-Diesel DEMU (Sabarmati/Ahmedabad; 40% diesel substitution; 2,200L LNG tanks; 222 km/day range; Rs 11.9L savings/unit/year); Guru Ravidas (circa 1450-1520; Seer Goverdhanpur, Varanasi; Nirguna Bhakti; Beghumpura (egalitarian city concept); 40 hymns in Guru Granth Sahib; Ravidassia religion; contemporary of Kabir; guru of Mirabai); NIOS founded 1989 (Father Thomas Kunnunkal; CBSE chair 1980-87; NPE 1986; world's largest open schooling); Exercise KHANJAR (India-Kyrgyzstan; 13th edition; Misamari, Assam; Kyrgyzstan in SCO + CSTO); Esha Singh (21 years; 239.8 score; gold Asian Rifle & Pistol Championship; Paris Olympian); World Wetlands Day (Feb 2; Ramsar Convention 1971); PM-SETU (World Bank USD 830M; 1,000 ITIs; 200 hub + 800 spoke; Ministry of Skill Development; 19.5-yr maturity; ADB joint); Yantra India (OFB corporatisation Oct 2021; 7 DPSUs; Miniratna Cat-I; capex Rs 500 Cr; revenue Rs 3,108 Cr; exports Rs 321.77 Cr); NYPS 2.0 (MoPA; 1966-67 origin; 95,319 participants; Kishore Sabha + Tarun Sabha); NSO Migration Survey (Jul 2026-Jun 2027; MoSPI; PLFS baseline 28.9% rate; 86.8% female migration = marriage); SAKSHAM 2026 (Feb 1-16; PCRA; MoPNG; 1978); IHMCL-NFSU MoU (3yr; NFSU Act 2020; MHA; FASTag Rs 600 Cr/day; SOCs); TGB RuPay (first RRB co-branded RuPay; PNB sponsor; NPCI; RRB Act 1976; 50-15-35 capitalisation); IOM Global Appeal 2026 (USD 4.7B; 83.4M displaced; 9,197 deaths; Amy Pope; Geneva; UN 2016).*

*PM-SETU and India's skill development ecosystem; OFB corporatisation and Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence; RRB financial inclusion and rural credit. **GS-2:** Parliamentary democracy and youth participation (NYPS 2.0); evidence-based governance (migration survey); IOM and humanitarian multilateralism. **GS-1:** Internal migration patterns and drivers; wetland ecosystem services.*

## ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

### PM-SETU:

Full name: Pradhan Mantri — Skilling and Employability Transformation Through Upgraded ITIs

World Bank loan: **USD 830 million** (approved Feb 2, 2026); prepared jointly with ADB

Maturity: **19.5 years**; Grace period: **4 years**

ITIs to be upgraded: **1,000** (200 hub + 800 spoke)

Annual target: Over **1 million** better-skilled workers

Women target: **25% minimum** enrolment

Private capital mobilization target: **USD 680 million**

Ministry: **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**

Previous WB scheme: STRIVE (**2017**); ITI total in India: **~15,000**

### YANTRA INDIA LIMITED (YIL):

Parent event: OFB corporatisation — **October 2021** (41 factories → 7 DPSUs)

Other 6 DPSUs: AVNL, AWEIL, MIL, ITOL, GIL, TCL

Products: Ammunition, artillery shells, propellants, explosives

Status: Miniratna Category-I (approved **Feb 2, 2026** by Rajnath Singh); Schedule 'A' DPSU

New power: Capex approval up to **Rs 500 crore** independently

Revenue: Rs 956 Cr (H2 FY22) → **Rs 3,108 crore** (FY25)

Exports: **Nil** → **Rs 321.77 crore** (FY25)

### NYPS 2.0 PORTAL:

Ministry: **Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs**

Original scheme started: **1966–67**

Participants (as of Jan 27, 2026): **95,319** across **660** sittings

Tracks: **Kishore Sabha** (school) + **Tarun Sabha** (undergraduate/PG)

New addition: Individual citizens can also participate

### NSO MIGRATION SURVEY:

Nodal ministry: **MoSPI** (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation)

Survey period: **July 2026 – June 2027**

PLFS 2020-21 data: Overall migration rate **28.9%**; female migration **47.9%**

Female migration reason: **86.8% due to marriage**; male: **22.8% for employment**

Last dedicated survey: **NSS 64th Round, 2007-08**

### IOM GLOBAL APPEAL 2026:

Funding requested: **USD 4.7 billion** (for 41 million people)

Internal displacement: **83.4 million** (all-time high, end 2024)

Migrant deaths 2024: **9,197** (deadliest since tracking began 2014)

Global remittances (2024): **USD 905 billion**

DG: **Amy Pope**; HQ: **Geneva**; UN-related since **2016**

### COKING COAL CRITICAL MINERAL:

Designation under: **MMDR Act** (Mines and Minerals Development and Regulation Act)

Steel requirement: **780 kg** coking coal per tonne of steel

India's import dependence: **~95%** of steel-grade coking coal

India's domestic resource: **37.37 billion tonnes** (mostly Jharkhand)

India's imports FY25: **57.58 million tonnes**

India's steel ranking: **2nd largest** crude steel producer globally

#### RBI-ESMA MOU ON CCIL:

Parties: **Reserve Bank of India + European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA)**

Purpose: ESMA recognition of **CCIL (Clearing Corporation of India Ltd.)** as third-country CCP

Background: ESMA's non-recognition had forced European banks out of Indian G-Sec markets

EMIR: EU's European Market Infrastructure Regulation (requires CCP recognition)

CCIL: Clears govt securities, forex, money market; India's systemically important FMI

#### INDIA'S FIRST LNG-DIESEL DEMU TRAIN:

Location: **Sabarmati Integrated Coaching Depot, Ahmedabad, Gujarat**

Diesel substitution: Up to **40%** with LNG

LNG tank capacity: **2,200 litres per unit**

Field trials completed: **2,000+ km**

Max daily operational range: **222 km**

Annual saving: **~Rs 11.9 lakh/unit** (Rs 23.9 lakh per 8-coach set)

#### GURU RAVIDAS MAHARAJ (649TH ANNIVERSARY):

Born: circa **1450–1520, Seer Goverdhanpur, Varanasi (UP)**

Bhakti philosophy: **Nirguna Bhakti** (formless God; no caste distinctions)

Social vision: **"Beghumpura"** — egalitarian, caste-free, discrimination-free city

Scripture: **40 hymns** in the **Adi Granth (Guru Granth Sahib)**

Religion founded: **Ravidassia religion**

Contemporaries: **Kabir**; spiritual guru of: **Mirabai**

#### PERSONS IN NEWS:

Father Thomas Kunnunkal: Padma Shri **1974**; CBSE Chair **1980-87**; founded **NIOS** (National Open School, **November 1989**); per **NEP 1986**

Esha Singh: **Gold**, women's 10m Air Pistol, Asian Rifle & Pistol Championship 2026; score **239.8**; team gold with Manu Bhaker + Suruchi Singh

Exercise **KHANJAR** (13th ed.): India + **Kyrgyzstan**; venue: **Misamari, Sonitpur, Assam**; 14 days; counter-terrorism under UN mandate

#### OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

World Wetlands Day: **February 2** (Ramsar Convention signed Feb 2, 1971); India: **98 sites** (highest in Asia; 3rd globally)

SAKSHAM: Annual fuel conservation campaign by **PCRA** (est. **1978**); Ministry of Petroleum; held **Feb 1-16** yearly

Tripura Gramin Bank: First RRB co-branded **RuPay** credit card; sponsored by **PNB**; NPCI established **2008**; RRB Act **1976**; 43 RRBs in India

IHMCL-NFSU MoU: 3 years; NFSU under **NFSU Act 2020** (Ministry of Home Affairs); FASTag mandatory since **February 2021**

RRB capitalisation: Centre **50%** + State **15%** + Sponsor Bank **35%**

## COKING COAL DECLARED CRITICAL AND STRATEGIC MINERAL

The Government of India declared **coking coal** a “critical and strategic mineral” under the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act (MMDR Act)**. This is significant: approximately **780 kg of coking coal** is required to produce **1 tonne of steel**, and India imports approximately **95%** of its steel sector’s coking coal requirement. India’s coking coal imports FY2024-25: **57.58 million tonnes**. India’s domestic coking coal resources: **37.37 billion tonnes** (primarily in **Jharkhand**). India is the world’s **2nd-largest crude steel producer**. The critical mineral designation enables enhanced exploration funding, mining lease prioritisation, and can unlock auction of previously excluded blocks. India’s critical minerals list (first notified 2023) now includes coking coal alongside lithium, cobalt, nickel, REEs, etc. Major global producers: China, Australia, Russia, USA, Canada.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Mineral resources, MMDR Act, National Steel Policy, import dependence in strategic industries, critical minerals list, Khanij Bidesh India Ltd (KABIL).

## RBI-ESMA MOU — INDIAN CCPS GET EUROPEAN RECOGNITION

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** and the **European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA)** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** formally recognising India’s **Central Counterparties (CCPs)** — specifically the **Clearing Corporation of India Ltd. (CCIL)** — under ESMA’s regulatory framework. The MoU removes regulatory hurdles for European banks and institutional investors operating in Indian financial markets. **Background:** ESMA had previously refused to recognise CCIL, forcing European banks to either exit Indian G-Sec markets or face compliance penalties under EMIR (European Market Infrastructure Regulation). This MoU resolves a longstanding dispute that had disrupted India-EU financial integration. CCIL clears and settles government securities, forex, and money market transactions — it is India’s most systemically important financial market infrastructure.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Financial market infrastructure, Central Counterparties, CCIL role in government securities settlement, India-EU financial integration, payment and settlement systems regulation.

## INDIA’S FIRST LNG-DIESEL DUAL-FUEL DEMU TRAIN LAUNCHED

Indian Railways launched **India’s first Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)-diesel dual-fuel Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) train** at **Sabarmati Integrated Coaching Depot, Ahmedabad, Gujarat**. Two 1,400 HP units were modified with **2,200-litre LNG tanks per unit**, achieving up to **40% diesel substitution** with LNG. After **2,000+ km field trials**, the train is operational with a maximum daily range of **222 km**. Annual savings per unit: **~Rs 11.9 lakh**; full 8-coach set: Rs 23.9 lakh. LNG is a lower-carbon

transition fuel — reduces CO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, and particulate emissions vs. pure diesel. India's National Rail Plan 2030 targets net zero carbon by 2030 for traction; this LNG DEMU serves as a bridge technology for non-electrified routes. Over 34% of India's railway network (23,000 km) is still diesel-operated — LNG dual-fuel technology addresses this gap.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Railways decarbonisation, LNG as transition fuel, India's Net Zero targets, National Rail Plan 2030, Railway Budget (now merged with Union Budget since 2017).

## GURU RAVIDAS MAHARAJ — 649TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY (FEBRUARY 1)

PM Narendra Modi paid tribute to **Guru Ravidas Maharaj** on his **649th birth anniversary** (Magh Purnima — observed February 1, 2026). Born circa **1450–1520** in **Seer Goverdhanpur, Varanasi**, Guru Ravidas was a prominent saint of the **Bhakti Movement**, contemporary of **Kabir**, and spiritual guru of **Mirabai**. He pioneered **Nirguna Bhakti** — formless God worship that transcended caste and ritual. He conceptualised “**Beghumpura**” — a utopian caste-free, discrimination-free city, a profound early articulation of egalitarianism. **40 of his hymns** are incorporated in the **Adi Granth (Guru Granth Sahib)**. His teachings form the theological foundation of the **Ravidassia religion**. For UPSC, Guru Ravidas represents the intersection of the Bhakti Movement's social reform dimension and Dalit assertion in Indian history.

**UPSC Angle (GS1):** Bhakti Movement, Nirguna vs. Saguna bhakti, Sant tradition of North India, social reform movements, Dalit literature.

## PERSONALITY RIGHTS AND AI — DELHI HIGH COURT

The **Delhi High Court** issued notices addressing unauthorised use of Bollywood actor **Salman Khan's** name, image, and voice by an AI platform — extending India's developing jurisprudence on **personality rights**. Personality rights protect a public figure's persona (name, voice, image, mannerisms) against commercial exploitation without consent. **Constitutional basis: Article 21** (Right to Life and Personal Liberty; includes Right to Privacy per *K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* [2017]). Relevant laws: Copyright Act 1957, Trade Marks Act 1999, IT Act 2000 (Section 66C for identity theft). The court had similarly restrained AI-generated impersonation of **Aishwarya Rai** (2025). India's **Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023** also provides some protection but does not explicitly address celebrity/personality rights — this remains a gap requiring legislative action.

**UPSC Angle (GS2):** Right to Privacy, AI regulation, deepfakes, Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023, Article 19-21 balance, IP law in digital age.

## PERSONS IN NEWS

**Esha Singh (21)** won **gold in women's 10m Air Pistol** at the **Asian Rifle and Pistol Championship 2026** with a score of 239.8 — her second senior Asian Championship individual gold. She won the team gold alongside **Manu Bhaker** and **Suruchi Singh**. Paris 2024 Olympian.

**Father Thomas Kunnunkal (99)** — Jesuit priest awarded **Padma Shri 1974**; **CBSE Chairman 1980–1987**; founded the **National Open School (NOS) in November 1989** (later renamed **National Institute of Open Schooling/NIOS** — the world's largest open schooling system). NIOS established per **National Education Policy 1986** mandate. Born July 3, 1926, Alappuzha, Kerala.

**Exercise KHANJAR (13th edition)** — Bilateral joint military exercise between **India and Kyrgyzstan** held at **Misamari Military Station, Sonitpur, Assam**; 14 days; focus: urban warfare and counter-terrorism under UN mandate. Kyrgyzstan is a member of both **SCO** and **CSTO**. India-Kyrgyzstan bilateral exercise since 2011.

## INDIA-US TRADE FRAMEWORK — MODI-TRUMP JOINT STATEMENT

On the sidelines of global diplomacy in early February 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump announced a landmark **bilateral trade framework** through a White House Joint Statement. Key terms:

**Reciprocal tariff on India reduced** from 25% to **18%** — immediate relief for Indian exporters

Additional **25% tariff** (imposed because India purchases Russian crude oil) removed — conditional on India reducing Russian oil dependency

India to commit to purchasing **USD 500 billion worth of US products over 5 years**

An **Interim Agreement** to be signed by March 2026; final comprehensive bilateral trade agreement to follow

**Why this matters:** India-US bilateral trade is approximately **USD 190 billion** annually. The US is India's single largest trading partner. The tariff reduction directly benefits India's IT services, textiles, pharmaceuticals, and gems-jewellery export sectors. The Russian crude condition touches India's **energy security** — India currently imports approximately **40% of its crude from Russia** at a discount (post-2022 sanctions arbitrage). Any reduction would increase India's import costs.

**UPSC Angle (GS2):** India-US strategic relations; trade diplomacy; CAATSA implications; India's strategic autonomy vs. US alignment; LRS vs. Russian energy dependency.

## UPI JANUARY 2026 — ALL-TIME TRANSACTION RECORD

India's **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** hit an all-time monthly record in January 2026:

**Total transactions:** 21.7 billion — record high (+28% YoY)

**Total value:** Rs 28.33 lakh crore (~USD 3.3 trillion) — record high (+21% YoY)

**Average daily transactions:** ~700 crore

PhonePe + Google Pay hold ~**80% combined** UPI market share

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** UPI operates on **NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India)** infrastructure under the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**. RBI regulates payment systems. India's digital payments story is central to financial inclusion and the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity narrative.

## PADMA AWARDS 2026 — SPORTS AND CULTURE HONOUREES

India announced its 2026 Republic Day Padma Awards (announced January 25, 2026). Notable sports and culture recipients:

### Padma Bhushan:

**Vijay Amritraj** — tennis legend; India's greatest individual tennis player; reached Wimbledon quarterfinals multiple times in the 1970s–80s

### Padma Shri (Sports):

**Rohit Sharma** — Test/ODI/T20 cricket captain; record 5 IPL titles; 3 ODI double-centuries

**Harmanpreet Kaur** — India women's cricket captain; ICC Women's T20 World Cup runner-up 2023; 171\* in 2017 WWC semifinal (iconic innings)

**Savita Punia** — India women's hockey goalkeeper; 2 Commonwealth Games medals

**Baldev Singh** — field hockey; Olympic medallist (1964 Tokyo)

### BCCI Naman Awards 2026 (New Delhi):

Best International Cricketer (Men): **Shubman Gill**

Best International Cricketer (Women): **Smriti Mandhana**

C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement (Men): **Rahul Dravid** and **Roger Binny**

BCCI Lifetime Achievement (Women): **Mithali Raj**

**UPSC Angle (GS1/GS2):** Padma Awards established 1954; three categories: Padma Vibhushan (exceptional service), Padma Bhushan (distinguished service), Padma Shri (distinguished service in various fields).

Awarded by President of India.

## 16TH FINANCE COMMISSION — HEATWAVES AND LIGHTNING TO BE NATIONAL DISASTERS

The **16th Finance Commission** (Chair: Dr Arvind Panagariya; report submitted to President November 17, 2025) recommended adding **heatwaves** and **lightning strikes** to India's list of nationally notified disasters — enabling states to access the **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)** for these events.

### Data driving the recommendation:

2024 = warmest year in India since **1901**; Delhi/Rajasthan crossed 50°C; **446 heatwave days** in 2024 (highest since 2000)

Lightning strikes rose **400%** between 2019–2025

Lightning = **#1 cause of natural disaster deaths in India** — 2,887 deaths in 2022 (**35.8%** of all 8,060 disaster-related fatalities that year)

**Disaster finance framework:** Total disaster management corpus recommended for 2026-31: Rs 2,04,401 crore (Centre: Rs 1,55,916 crore; States: Rs 48,485 crore). Currently only **12 disasters** are nationally notified (cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, cold wave/frost). States can spend up to **10% of SDRF** on locally severe events not on the national list.

**UPSC Angle (GS2/GS3):** Finance Commission under Article 280; SDRF/NDRF under Disaster Management Act, 2005; NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority); Sendai Framework 2015-2030 (disaster risk reduction).

## NEW ORCHID SPECIES DISCOVERED — DIPLOCENTRUM PAPILLOSUM, KERALA

A new orchid species — **Diplocentrum papillosum** — was discovered at **Kanthalloor, Marayoor, Idukki district, Kerala** in the southern ranges of the **Western Ghats**.

Features: Unbranched flower clusters; pink-and-white fragrant blooms; lithophytic/epiphytic (grows on rocks and tree branches)

**Diplocentrum genus** is endemic to the southern Western Ghats

Research team: Dr Jose Mathew (SD College, Alappuzha), A.K. Pradeep, Mathew Jose Mathew (Jonas Orchidarium), Salim Pichan (MS Swaminathan Research Foundation)

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Western Ghats = UNESCO World Heritage Site (2012) + one of 36 global biodiversity hotspots; India has ~1,300 orchid species (2nd highest in Asia); Biological Diversity Act, 2002; CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992, Rio).

## EXERCISE AGNI PARIKSHA — INDIAN ARMY + ITBP, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Joint training exercise “**Agni Pariksha**” between the **Indian Army (Spear Corps, Eastern Command)** and **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)** was conducted in **East Siang district** and **Tezu, Arunachal Pradesh** (January 19–28, 2026). Objective: break traditional role barriers — familiarise non-artillery soldiers with artillery coordination and firing in high-altitude terrain.

## ★ ADDITIONAL FACTS — FEBRUARY 2, 2026

### INDIA-US TRADE FRAMEWORK:

Tariff reduction: India reciprocal tariff **25% → 18%**

Russia crude condition: additional 25% tariff removed if India reduces Russian oil imports

India commitment: buy **USD 500 billion** of US products over 5 years

Interim Agreement target: **March 2026**

India-US bilateral trade: **~USD 190 billion/year**

India's Russian crude dependency: **~40%** of imports (post-2022 discount arbitrage)

### UPI JANUARY 2026 RECORD:

Transactions: **21.7 billion** (all-time high; +28% YoY)

Value: **Rs 28.33 lakh crore** (all-time high; +21% YoY)

Operated by: **NPCI** (National Payments Corporation of India; incorporated 2008)

Governed under: **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**

### PADMA AWARDS 2026 (SPORTS):

Padma Bhushan: **Vijay Amritraj** (tennis)

Padma Shri: **Rohit Sharma, Harmanpreet Kaur, Savita Punia, Baldev Singh** (hockey)

Padma Awards established: **1954**; Awarded by President of India

### BCCI NAMAN AWARDS 2026:

Men: **Shubman Gill**; Women: **Smriti Mandhana**

Lifetime Achievement (Men): **Rahul Dravid + Roger Binny** (C.K. Nayudu Award)

Lifetime Achievement (Women): **Mithali Raj**

### 16TH FINANCE COMMISSION — DISASTERS:

Chair: **Dr Arvind Panagariya**; report to President: **November 17, 2025**

New proposed national disasters: **heatwaves + lightning**

Lightning deaths India 2022: **2,887** (35.8% of all disaster fatalities)

Heatwave days 2024: **446** (highest since 2000)

Total SDRF+NDRF corpus 2026-31: **Rs 2,04,401 crore**

Currently notified disasters: **12** categories

States SDRF discretionary spending: up to **10%** on local disasters

### NEW ORCHID SPECIES:

Name: **Diplocentrum papillosum**

Location: Kanthalloor, Marayoor, **Idukki**, Kerala (Western Ghats)

India orchid species: **~1,300** (2nd highest in Asia)

### EXERCISE AGNI PARIKSHA:

Forces: Indian Army (Spear Corps) + **ITBP**

Location: East Siang + Tezu, **Arunachal Pradesh**

ITBP guards: India-China (Tibetan) border, **~3,488 km**; est. **1962**

Sources: World Bank, PIB, GKToday, White House, NPCI, Insights on India

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