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# Current Affairs Today – February 6, 2026

6 February 2026

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## WHY IN NEWS

February 6, 2026 saw the India-GCC FTA Terms of Reference signed, a record single-day Kavach commissioning, Manipur's return from President's Rule, and the expiry of the last US-Russia nuclear arms control treaty.

## INDIA-GCC FREE TRADE AGREEMENT — TERMS OF REFERENCE SIGNED

India and the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** formally signed the **Terms of Reference (ToR)** for a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, defining the scope and modalities of negotiations. Union Commerce Minister **Piyush Goyal** signed for India; **Raja Al Marzoqi** signed for GCC.

India-GCC bilateral trade in FY 2024-25 stood at **USD 178.56 billion** (India's exports: USD 56.87 billion; imports: USD 121.68 billion), constituting **15.42%** of India's global trade. Average annual trade growth over 5 years: 15.3%. GCC cumulative FDI to India: **USD 31.14 billion** (September 2025). Indian diaspora in GCC: **~10 million**. India exports engineering goods, textiles, gems and jewellery; imports crude oil, LNG, gold. GCC (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman) has a combined GDP of **~USD 2.3 trillion**.

**UPSC Angle (GS2/GS3):** India's trade diplomacy, energy security, Gulf relations, FTA negotiation frameworks.

## KAVACH 4.0 — RECORD 472.3 KM COMMISSIONED IN SINGLE DAY

Indian Railways commissioned **472.3 route kilometres** of **Kavach Version 4.0** (Automatic Train Protection system) in a single day — the highest-ever single-day expansion. Total Kavach 4.0 coverage now stands at **1,306.3 route kilometres** across five railway zones.

Kavach prevents Signal Passing at Danger (SPAD), controls overspeeding, and applies emergency brakes automatically. It integrates GPS and radio communication and meets the **Safety Integrity Level (SIL)-4** standard — the highest available. Development began in 2012 under the Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO).

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Railway safety, infrastructure modernisation, RDSO mandate, SIL-4 standard.

## DEFENCE BUDGET 2026-27 — RECORD RS 7.85 LAKH CRORE

Union Budget 2026-27 allocates the highest-ever **Rs 7.85 lakh crore** to defence. Capital allocation to defence forces: **Rs 2.19 lakh crore**; domestic procurement earmark: **Rs 1.39 lakh crore** (~three-fourths of capital budget). ECHS (Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme) allocation increased 45.49% to Rs 12,100 crore. Defence pension rise: 6.56%. Defence spending as % of GDP: ~**2%** (benchmark target: 3%). India remains the world's **2nd-largest arms importer** (SIPRI). Active Air Force squadrons: 31 (authorised: 42). Institutions: Ministry of Defence, DRDO, Border Roads Organisation, SPARSH (System for Pension Administration Raksha).

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Defence indigenisation, modernisation gaps, defence budget trends, SIPRI rankings.

## INDIA AI STACK — FIVE-LAYER NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

India unveiled the **India AI Stack** — a five-layer framework for population-scale AI deployment:

Application Layer (health diagnostics, farm advisories, language translation, e-Courts)

AI Model Layer (IndiaAI Mission, BharatGen, Bhashini, IndiaAIKosh)

Compute Layer (GPU/TPU access via IndiaAI Compute Portal)

Data Centres and Network Infrastructure (optical fibre, 5G)

Energy Layer (500+ GW installed capacity; >51% non-fossil)

Institution: Ministry of Science and Technology, IndiaAI Mission.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** AI governance, digital infrastructure, BharatGen, Bhashini.

## MANIPUR — NEW CHIEF MINISTER SWORN IN AFTER PRESIDENT'S RULE

**Yumnam Khemchand Singh** (BJP) was sworn in as Chief Minister of Manipur, ending approximately one year of **President's Rule** imposed under **Article 356** (from February 13, 2025). **Nemcha Kipgen** was sworn in as Deputy CM — the first woman to hold this post in Manipur. A second Deputy CM, Losii Dikho, was also sworn in. President's Rule is invoked when constitutional machinery breaks down in a state and requires Cabinet approval and Parliamentary sanction within two months.

**UPSC Angle (GS2):** Article 356, federal relations, conditions for President's Rule, Sarkaria Commission recommendations.

## SODIUM-ION BATTERIES — INDIA'S PATH TO CRITICAL MINERAL INDEPENDENCE

India is advancing **sodium-ion battery (SiB)** technology to reduce dependence on imported lithium. Sodium is derived from abundant domestic soda ash; SiBs use aluminium current collectors (cheaper than copper in Li-ion). Energy density is approaching Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) batteries; cost parity projected by mid-2030s. PLI for Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC): 50 GWh target; only 1 GWh commissioned; 40 GWh awarded to four firms. SiBs can be transported at zero volts (safer). Institutions: PLI-ACC scheme, National Critical Minerals Mission, KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd).

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Energy storage, critical minerals, battery technology, PLI-ACC scheme.

## SACRED GROVES — CONSERVATION AND LEGAL CHALLENGES

Communal tensions in Kapena village, Odisha brought focus on India's **sacred groves** — community-protected forest patches of cultural and ecological significance. India has **1 lakh–1.5 lakh documented sacred groves** and over 1 million sacred forests. Regional names: **Sarna** (Bihar/Jharkhand), **Dev Van** (HP), **Devarakadu** (Karnataka), **Kavu** (Kerala), **Devrai** (Maharashtra), **Law Kyntang** (Meghalaya), **Oran** (Rajasthan). Protected under Forest Rights Act 2006 (Community Forest Resources) and Wildlife Protection Act 1972. Qualify as **OECMs** (Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures) under IUCN.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Biodiversity conservation, community forest rights, FRA 2006, OECMs.

## NEW START TREATY EXPIRES — NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL VOID

The last legally binding **US-Russia nuclear arms control treaty** — **New START** — expired on **February 5, 2026**, leaving no legal ceiling on strategic nuclear weapons for the first time since 1972. New START was signed in **April 2010** and entered force **February 2011**; Russia suspended participation in **February 2023** (amid Ukraine war). Treaty limits: **1,550 deployed warheads** per side; **700 deployed delivery vehicles**; **800 total launchers**. USA and Russia hold **87% of global nuclear warheads**.

**UPSC Angle (GS2):** Nuclear non-proliferation regime, New START, NPT framework, strategic stability, India's position.

## SAGAR DEFENCE DELIVERS UNMANNED SURFACE VESSELS TO INDIAN NAVY

Mumbai-based **Sagar Defence Engineering** delivered the first batch of **Unmanned Surface Vessels (USVs)** to the Indian Navy. Vessels exceed **50 knots** speed; armed with 12.7mm gun; capable of maritime surveillance, reconnaissance, and anti-submarine warfare support. **Indigenous content: 70%**. Contract for 12 USVs was signed January 8, 2023.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Defence indigenisation, unmanned systems, maritime security, Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

## BEML-IISC-FSID TRIPARTITE R&D AGREEMENT

**BEML** (Bharat Earth Movers Limited) signed a tripartite R&D agreement with **IISc Bengaluru** and the **Foundation for Science, Innovation and Development (FSID)** for collaboration on aerospace, defence, rail, mining, maritime, and green technologies. Persons: Shantanu Roy (BEML CMD), Govindan Rangarajan (IISc Director), B. Gurumoorthy (FSID Director).

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Public sector R&D, defence PSU, industry-academia linkages.

## DR. ANDRE BETEILLE — EMINENT SOCIOLOGIST PASSES AWAY

Renowned Indian sociologist **Dr. Andre Beteille** passed away at age 91. Born September 30, 1934, in Chandannagar, West Bengal. He was Professor Emeritus at University of Delhi and received the **Padma Bhushan (2005)** in Literature and Education. Major works: *Caste, Class and Power* (1965) and *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure* (1974) — landmark contributions to understanding India's social stratification.

**UPSC Angle (GS1):** Indian society, caste studies, prominent scholars.

## DELHI — WORLD'S MOST AFFORDABLE STUDENT CITY

New Delhi was ranked the world's **most affordable city for international students** in a joint report by **Knight Frank India, Deloitte India, and QS** (Quacquarelli Symonds). The study assessed 150 cities globally across 6 parameters: affordability, employer activity, university ranking, city desirability, student voice, and student mix.

**UPSC Angle (GS2):** Education, soft power, India's higher education rankings.

## ALWAR (RAJASTHAN) — FIRST 100% INSURED DISTRICT IN INDIA

**Alwar district, Rajasthan** achieved 100% insurance coverage across 9 pilot villages — the first district in India where all eligible adults are insured. Institutions: IRDAI (Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India) and United India Insurance Company Limited. Villages covered: Bhulla Ka Bas, Bichpuri, Palankheda, and six others.

**UPSC Angle (GS2/GS3):** Social security, financial inclusion, insurance penetration, IRDAI.

## INDIA JOINS BRICS CENTRE FOR INDUSTRIAL COMPETENCIES (BCIC)

India formally joined the **BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies (BCIC)** — an Industry 4.0 initiative under BRICS focused on smart manufacturing and MSME support. Persons: Agrim Kaushal (Economic Adviser, MoCI), Dr. Cristiano Pasini (UNIDO Director). Institutions: DPIIT, UNIDO, BRICS nations.

**UPSC Angle (GS2):** BRICS, multilateral groupings, industrial policy, UNIDO.

## ADANI DEFENCE-LEONARDO MOU FOR HELICOPTER MANUFACTURING

**Adani Defence and Aerospace** signed an MoU with Italian **Leonardo S.p.A.** for co-manufacturing, assembly, MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul), and pilot training for **AW169M** and **AW109 TrekkerM** helicopters in India. Persons: Ashish Rajvanshi (Adani Defence CEO), Stefano Villanti (Leonardo SVP), Rajesh Kumar Singh (Defence Secretary). Policy: Make in India, Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Defence FDI, indigenisation, helicopter manufacturing.

## NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY AUTHORITY — E-PORTAL FOR CERTIFICATES OF ORIGIN

The **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** launched a digital portal for issuing **Certificates of Origin** for medicinal plants, implementing the **Biological Diversity Amendment Act 2023** and the **Nagoya Protocol** on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS). Institution: NBA, MoEFCC.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Biodiversity governance, Nagoya Protocol, Biological Diversity Act 2002/2023, ABS.

## AIRBUS CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE AT GATI SHAKTI VISHWAVIDYALAYA, GUJARAT

**Airbus** inaugurated a Centre of Excellence at **Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV)**, Vadodara, Gujarat for **Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)** research — with 45 full scholarships (one-third reserved for women). GSV is a central university specialising in railways and logistics education.

**UPSC Angle (GS3):** Aviation, green fuel, industry-academia linkage, central universities.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

*India-GCC trade (USD 178.56B, 15.42% of India's global trade); Kavach 4.0 (SIL-4, 1,306.3 route km total); Defence Budget 2026-27 (Rs 7.85L crore; Rs 1.39L crore domestic); New START (1,550 warheads limit, expired Feb 5, 2026); Alwar 100% insured district (IRDAI); Sacred groves regional names (Kavu/Devrai/Law Kyntang/Oran/Sarna); Dr. Andre Beteille (Padma Bhushan 2005); BEML (DRDO PSU); NBA e-portal (Nagoya Protocol); Sodium-ion batteries (PLI-ACC 50 GWh); Sagar Defence USVs (70% indigenous, 50 knots); BCIC (BRICS-UNIDO); Article 356 Manipur.*

*India-GCC FTA diplomacy; Article 356 and President's Rule conditions; nuclear non-proliferation and New START expiry; BRICS multilateralism. **GS-3:** Kavach safety system; defence budget and indigenisation; India AI Stack; sodium-ion battery policy; sacred groves and biodiversity; defence FDI.*

## ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

### INDIA-GCC TRADE:

Bilateral trade FY25: **USD 178.56 billion**  
 India exports: **USD 56.87 billion** (engineering, textiles, gems)  
 India imports: **USD 121.68 billion** (crude oil, LNG, gold)  
 Share of India's global trade: **15.42%**  
 5-year average growth: **15.3% annually**  
 GCC FDI to India: **USD 31.14 billion** (cumulative, September 2025)  
 Indian diaspora in GCC: **~10 million**  
 GCC GDP: **~USD 2.3 trillion** (9th globally)  
 GCC members: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman

### KAVACH 4.0:

Single-day record: **472.3 route km** (February 6, 2026)  
 Total coverage: **1,306.3 route km** (5 railway zones)  
 Standard: **SIL-4** (Safety Integrity Level 4 — highest)  
 Developed by: **RDSO** (Research Designs and Standards Organisation)  
 Function: Prevents SPAD, controls overspeeding, auto emergency brakes  
 Development started: **2012**

### DEFENCE BUDGET 2026-27:

Total: **Rs 7.85 lakh crore** (record)  
 Capital (Defence Forces): **Rs 2.19 lakh crore**  
 Domestic procurement: **Rs 1.39 lakh crore** (~75% of capital)  
 ECHS allocation: **Rs 12,100 crore** (+45.49%)  
 Defence pension: +6.56%  
 India arms import rank: **2nd globally** (SIPRI)  
 Active IAF squadrons: **31** (authorised: **42**)  
 Target: Defence spending 3% of GDP (current: ~2%)

### NEW START TREATY:

Signed: **April 2010** (US-Russia)  
 In force: **February 2011**  
 Expired: **February 5, 2026** (no successor treaty)  
 Warhead limit: **1,550 deployed** per side  
 Delivery vehicle limit: **700 deployed**  
 Launcher limit: **800** (deployed + non-deployed)  
 Russia suspended: **February 2023** (Ukraine war context)  
 US + Russia share: **87%** of global nuclear warheads

### SACRED GROVES — REGIONAL NAMES:

Sarna: Bihar/Jharkhand

Dev Van: Himachal Pradesh

Devarakadu: Karnataka

Kavu: Kerala

Devrai: Maharashtra

Law Kyntang: Meghalaya

Oran: Rajasthan

Protected under: FRA 2006 (Community Forest Resources), WPA 1972

IUCN category: **OECMs** (Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures)

#### **OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:**

Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV): Central university in Vadodara, Gujarat; focuses on railways, transport, logistics

BCIC: BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies; Industry 4.0 focus; UNIDO co-ordination

Sagar Defence USVs: Speed 50 knots+, 12.7mm gun, 70% indigenous, 12-unit contract (January 8, 2023)

Article 356: President's Rule — Cabinet recommendation, Parliamentary approval within 2 months; max 3 years (with safeguards); Sarkaria Commission recommended very limited use

Sources: Drishti IAS, AffairsCloud

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