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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Current Affairs Today — February 19, 2026

19 February 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED

POLITY   ECONOMY   ENVIRONMENT   SCIENCE & TECH   IR   SECURITY & DEFENCE

SOCIAL ISSUES   HISTORY & CULTURE   GEOGRAPHY   REPORTS & SCHEMES

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Current Affairs Today — February 19, 2026

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CADET TRAINING SHIP *KRISHNA* LAUNCHED AT L&T KATTUPALLI

India launched the indigenously built **Cadet Training Ship (CTS)** *Krishna* at **L&T Shipbuilding, Kattupalli, Chennai, Tamil Nadu**. The ship was launched by **Anupama Chauhan**, President of the **Defence Wives Welfare Association (DWWA)**.

Specifications: Length: **122 metres**; displacement: **4,700 tonnes**; max speed: **20 knots**; endurance: **60 days at sea**. The ship is named after the **River Krishna** — India's third longest river. Purpose: provide basic naval cadet training in seamanship, navigation, and ship-handling. India plans a total of **three Cadet Training Ships (CTS)** under the programme.

The launch is a milestone in **naval indigenisation** — reducing dependence on foreign training platforms and building domestic shipbuilding capacity at L&T's Kattupalli yard.

UPSC angle: Naval indigenisation, Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP), L&T Shipbuilding (private sector in defence), Make in India in defence, India's strategic maritime training, iDEX (Innovation for Defence Excellence).

INDIA AI IMPACT SUMMIT 2026 — SARVAM AI, VOICERA, AI GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The **India AI Impact Summit 2026** (February 16–20, New Delhi) saw major Indian AI announcements:

Sarvam AI (Bengaluru-based):

   Unveiled **Sarvam-30B** and **Sarvam-105B** large language models (30-billion and 105-billion parameters)

   Launched **"Vikram"** multilingual chatbot supporting Indian languages

   Represents India's push for **sovereign AI infrastructure** — LLMs built on Indian data

MeitY VoicERA:

   Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) launched **VoicERA** — an open-source, end-to-end **Voice AI stack** for Indian languages

   Supports multilingual voice interfaces for government services and rural outreach

India's National AI Governance Framework:

MeitY released India's first comprehensive AI governance principles (**February 2026**)

Seven principles: **Trust, People First, Innovation, Fairness, Accountability, Understandability, Safety**

Sectors: healthcare, education, agriculture, finance, public administration

Google America-India Connect Initiative:

Google announced a **$15 billion subsea cable project** with a new international gateway at **Visakhapatnam (Vizag)**

Three new subsea cable routes: to Singapore, South Africa, Australia

UPSC angle: IndiaAI Mission (₹10,371 crore), sovereign AI, AI governance frameworks, Digital India, MeitY's role in AI regulation, data centres, AI ethics.

SUPREME COURT: MENSTRUAL HEALTH IS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

The **Supreme Court of India** declared **menstrual health a Fundamental Right** under **Article 21** (Right to Life with Dignity) in the case *Dr. Jaya Thakur v. Government of India* (decided January–February 2026). Bench: **Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice R. Mahadevan**.

Key directions:

Free sanitary napkins must be provided in government schools from **Classes 6–12**

Oversight by **District Education Officers** and **NCPCR (National Commission for Protection of Child Rights)**

States must ensure dignified sanitation infrastructure in schools

UPSC angle: Article 21 (Right to Life), expansion of fundamental rights through judicial interpretation, women's health as a constitutional right, NCPCR, Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) under Swachh Bharat Mission.

RAJYA SABHA BIENNIAL ELECTIONS — 37 SEATS IN 10 STATES

The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** announced biennial elections for **37 Rajya Sabha seats across 10 states**. Rajya Sabha elections are held via **proportional representation with single transferable vote** by state/UT Legislative Assemblies (Members of Legislative Assembly vote). The **Vice-President** is the ex-officio Chairperson of Rajya Sabha. Rajya Sabha members serve **6-year terms**, with one-third retiring every 2 years. The house has a maximum strength of **250 members** (238 elected + 12 nominated).

UPSC angle: Rajya Sabha composition (Article 80), election method (proportional representation + single transferable vote), special powers of Rajya Sabha (Articles 249, 312), open ballot system, Federal Chamber vs People's House.

GUJARAT SHOPS AND ESTABLISHMENTS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

Gujarat Legislative Assembly **unanimously passed** the **Shops and Establishments (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, enabling women to work **night shifts (9 pm–6 am)** with mandatory safeguards: employer-arranged transportation, crèche facilities, and protection against sexual harassment. The bill also raised the daily working hours limit from **9 to 10 hours** and quarterly overtime limits from **125 to 144 hours**.

UPSC angle: Labour laws in India, women's workforce participation, International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, maternity and workplace safety regulations, state labour law amendments under the concurrent list.

INDIA SIGNS FIVE-YEAR RICE PACT WITH UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

India signed a **five-year agreement with the World Food Programme (WFP)** to provide sustained rice supplies to support WFP's global hunger relief operations. The pact consolidates India's role as a key donor of food grain to WFP amid growing global food insecurity concerns.

UPSC angle: WFP (UN World Food Programme) — established 1961, HQ Rome; India's food security architecture (FCI, PDS); India's humanitarian diplomacy; global food insecurity and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).

TARIQUE RAHMAN SWORN AS BANGLADESH PRIME MINISTER

Tarique Rahman (57) was sworn in as **Prime Minister of Bangladesh** on **February 17, 2026** at **Bangabhaban (Presidential Palace), Dhaka**. His party, the **Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)**, won **212 of 299 seats** in the general election (voter turnout: **59.44%**). A cabinet of **25 ministers + 24 state ministers** was formed. Rahman succeeds **Muhammad Yunus** (Chief Adviser, August 2024–February 2026).

UPSC angle: India-Bangladesh bilateral relations, Teesta river water sharing, Rohingya crisis, Bangladesh's political landscape, India's Neighbourhood First Policy, trade with Bangladesh (India's largest trading partner in South Asia).

OL CHIKI SCRIPT CENTENARY — PRESIDENT MURMU INAUGURATES

President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the **centenary celebrations of the Ol Chiki script** on **February 16, 2026**, in New Delhi. The script was devised in **1925** by **Pandit Raghunath Murmu** from **Rairangpur, Odisha** to write the **Santhali language**. A **commemorative coin and postal stamp** were released. The **Santhali language** was added to the **Eighth Schedule** of the Indian Constitution in **2003** (92nd Constitutional Amendment Act).

UPSC angle: Eighth Schedule (22 languages), Santhali, Ol Chiki script, Pandit Raghunath Murmu, tribal languages of India, 92nd Constitutional Amendment Act 2003, Presidential Mansion (Rashtrapatna Bhavan).

TAMIL-BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS FOUND IN EGYPT'S VALLEY OF THE KINGS

Researchers from **Lausanne University** and **French School of Asian Studies** documented approximately **30 inscriptions** in **rock-cut royal tombs** at the **Valley of the Kings, Egypt**, including ~20 in **Tamil-Brahmi script** dating to the **1st–3rd century CE**. The name **"Cikai Korran"** appears 8 times across 5 tombs — likely an ancient Tamil trader or pilgrim. The findings were presented at the **International Conference on Tamil Epigraphy, Chennai**.

UPSC angle: Ancient Indian trade routes (Indo-Roman trade), Tamil maritime history, Sangam Age, Tamil-Brahmi script, India's cultural soft power and civilisational outreach, Indic inscriptions abroad.

KERALA DECLARES TIDAL FLOODING A STATE-SPECIFIC DISASTER

Kerala became the first state to officially declare **tidal flooding (coastal inundation)** as a **state-specific disaster**, enabling affected communities to access financial assistance from the **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)**. This recognises tidal flooding as distinct from storm surges or tsunamis — driven by combined effects of sea-level rise, land subsidence, and high tides.

UPSC angle: SDRF (State Disaster Response Fund) vs NDRF (National Disaster Response Fund), Disaster Management Act 2005, NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority), climate change adaptation, Kerala's coastal vulnerability.

NHAI BEE CORRIDORS — 40 LAKH TREES IN 2026-27

The **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** launched the **Bee Corridor initiative**, targeting the planting of **40 lakh trees along national highways in 2026-27**, of which **60% will be under Bee Corridor plantings** of pollinator-friendly native species: Neem, Karanj, Mahua, Palash. Planting intervals: **500 m–1 km** to support bee foraging ranges.

UPSC angle: Pollinators and food security, biodiversity conservation, green highways, NHAI's environmental obligations, India's declining bee populations, SDG 15 (Life on Land).

SALW TRAINING — FIRST TIME IN ASIA, HOSTED BY INDIAN ARMY

The **Indian Army** (at **Military College of Materials Management (MCMM), Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh**) is hosting a **UN Fellowship Training programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)** from **February 16 – March 6, 2026**. Organised by the **UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)**, the programme includes participants from **13 Asia-Pacific nations** — the **first time** this training has been conducted in Asia.

UPSC angle: UNODA, SALW proliferation as a global security challenge, India-UN defence cooperation, India's peacekeeping role, Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), disarmament conventions.

MALDIVES: INDIA PROVIDES HIGH-SPEED FERRY UNDER HICDP PHASE III

India provided its **first high-speed ferry to the Maldives** under **High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP) Phase III**, operating under the **Raajje Transport Link (RTL)** network and connecting **Faafu and Dhaalu Atolls**. HICDP is a grant-based community development programme under India's Neighbourhood First Policy.

UPSC angle: India-Maldives bilateral relations, India's Indian Ocean Region (IOR) strategy, HICDP, Neighbourhood First Policy, India's SAARC commitments, Maldives geopolitical significance (China vs. India influence).

NATIONAL BIOBANK FOR LYSOSOMAL STORAGE DISORDERS (LSD) — GUJARAT

India's first **National Biobank for Lysosomal Storage Disorders (LSDs)** was launched in **Ahmedabad, Gujarat** by the **Foundation for Research in Genetics and Endocrinology (FRIGE)** in collaboration with **Tata Institute for Genetics and Society (TIGS), Bengaluru**. The biobank contains **530 patient samples** (2008–2025) for rare genetic disorders research.

UPSC angle: Rare diseases policy in India (National Policy for Rare Diseases 2021), biobanks and health research infrastructure, public-private collaboration in healthcare, genome sequencing, TIGS.

GALAXEYE-NSIL SYNCFUSED IMAGERY PARTNERSHIP

Bengaluru-based startup **GalaxEye** signed a **data reseller agreement with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)** — ISRO's commercial arm — to distribute its **SyncFused OptoSAR imagery** (combined optical + Synthetic Aperture Radar data). Applications: agriculture monitoring, disaster management, infrastructure planning.

UPSC angle: NSIL (NewSpace India Limited), India's commercial space economy, Earth Observation satellites, SAR imagery applications, Make in Space India, ISRO commercialisation framework.

ASSAM INTERIM BUDGET 2026-27 — ₹62,294 CRORE

Assam Finance Minister **Ajanta Neog** presented the **Interim Budget (Vote-on-Account) for FY 2026-27** of **₹62,294.78 crore** ahead of state elections. Key highlights: projected GSDP growth of **16.93%** (estimated ₹8,71,451 crore in FY27); per capita income grew **113%** from FY21 to FY26; Assam GSDP grew **45%** from FY20–FY25 (vs. national GDP 29%); target: **₹10 lakh crore economy by 2028**.

UPSC angle: State fiscal policy, Vote-on-Account vs full budget, GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product), fiscal federalism, Assam's development trajectory under North-East Special Package.

PERSONS IN NEWS

Manik Gupta: Veteran cricket umpire; passed away after a **bee swarm attack** during an under-13 cricket league match in **Unnao, Uttar Pradesh**.

Frederick Wiseman: Legendary American documentary filmmaker; passed away on **February 16, 2026** at age **96**. Honorary Academy Award (2016); directed 40+ films including *Titicut Follies* and *High School*.

Nambi Narayanan, A.S. Kiran Kumar, Saina Nehwal: Felicitated with **Bhavya Bharat Bhushan Award 2026** by Union Minister **Rajnath Singh** at Isha Yoga Centre, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

📌 FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

Cadet Training Ship Krishna:

Launched: **L&T Shipbuilding, Kattupalli, Chennai**, February 19, 2026

Launched by: **Anupama Chauhan** (DWWA President)

Length: **122 m** | Displacement: **4,700 tonnes** | Speed: **20 knots** | Endurance: **60 days**

Named after: **River Krishna** (India's 3rd longest river)

Programme: **3 Cadet Training Ships (CTS)** total planned

India AI Impact Summit 2026 (Feb 16-20, New Delhi):

Sarvam AI: **Sarvam-30B** + **Sarvam-105B** LLMs + "Vikram" multilingual chatbot

MeitY VoicERA: Open-source Voice AI stack for Indian languages

AI Governance Framework: 7 principles — Trust, People First, Innovation, Fairness, Accountability, Understandability, Safety

Google: **$15 billion** subsea cable project; new gateway at **Vizag**; routes to Singapore, South Africa, Australia

IndiaAI Mission: ₹10,371 crore (approved 2024)

SC on Menstrual Health (Article 21):

Case: **Dr. Jaya Thakur v. Government of India**

Bench: **Justice J.B. Pardiwala + Justice R. Mahadevan**

Right: Menstrual health = Fundamental Right under **Article 21**

Direction: Free sanitary napkins in schools (Classes 6-12); oversight by **NCPCR**

Rajya Sabha Elections:

Seats announced: **37 seats** across **10 states**

Max strength: **250** (238 elected + 12 nominated by President)

Election method: Proportional representation + **Single Transferable Vote (STV)**

Tenure: **6 years** | One-third retire every **2 years**

Chairman: **Vice-President** (ex-officio)

Special powers: **Article 249** (State List legislation) | **Article 312** (All-India Services)

Ol Chiki Script:

Devised: **1925** by **Pandit Raghunath Murmu**, Rairangpur, Odisha

Language: **Santhali** | Added to Eighth Schedule: **2003** (92nd Amendment Act)

Centenary event: Inaugurated by **President Droupadi Murmu**, Feb 16, 2026

Tamil-Brahmi Inscriptions (Egypt):

Location: **Valley of the Kings**, Egypt (rock-cut royal tombs)

Count: ~30 inscriptions; ~20 Tamil-Brahmi | Date: **1st–3rd century CE**

Key name: **"Cikai Korran"** (appears 8 times, 5 tombs)

Documented by: Lausanne University + French School of Asian Studies

Kerala — Tidal Flooding as State Disaster:

First state to declare tidal flooding a **state-specific disaster**

Enables **SDRF (State Disaster Response Fund)** assistance

DM Act: **Disaster Management Act, 2005**

SALW Training (Indian Army):

Venue: **MCMM, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh** | Period: Feb 16–Mar 6, 2026

Organised by: **UNODA (UN Office for Disarmament Affairs)**

Participants: **13 Asia-Pacific nations** | **First time** in Asia

Tarique Rahman (Bangladesh PM):

Sworn: **February 17, 2026** | Party: **BNP** | Seats: **212/299**

Venue: **Bangabhaban (Presidential Palace), Dhaka**

Predecessor (as Chief Adviser): **Muhammad Yunus** (Aug 2024–Feb 2026)

National Biobank for LSD:

Location: **Ahmedabad, Gujarat** | Institute: **FRIGE**

Collaborator: **TIGS (Tata Institute for Genetics and Society), Bengaluru**

Samples: **530 patient samples** (2008–2025)

Other Relevant Facts:

India-WFP Rice Pact: **5-year agreement** for sustained rice supply to global hunger relief

GalaxEye-NSIL: SyncFused OptoSAR imagery (optical + SAR); NSIL = ISRO's commercial arm

Gujarat Shops & Establishments Bill 2026: Women night shifts (9 pm–6 am); daily limit raised 9→10 hrs; OT limit 125→144 hrs/quarter

NHAI Bee Corridors: **40 lakh trees** in 2026-27; 60% under Bee Corridor; native species: Neem, Karanj, Mahua, Palash

Assam Interim Budget 2026-27: **₹62,294.78 crore** | FM: Ajanta Neog | GSDP target: ₹8,71,451 crore (FY27)

Maldives Ferry (HICDP Phase III): Faafu and Dhaalu Atolls; Raajje Transport Link (RTL) network

Death Penalty India 2025: Zero SC death sentences last 3 years; 574 on death row (highest since 2016); Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab (1980) key precedent

Sources: AffairsCloud, GKToday, Drishti IAS, IndiaBix

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