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# Current Affairs Today – February 20, 2026

20 February 2026

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# Current Affairs Today — February 20, 2026

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## BIHAR DECLARED NAXAL-FREE — LAST ARMED MAOIST SURRENDERS

**Bihar** became India's first state to be declared completely **Naxal-free** after **Suresh Koda**, the last known armed Maoist, surrendered in **Munger district**. All **23 previously LWE (Left Wing Extremism)-affected districts** in Bihar have now been cleared. Not a single Naxalite incident was recorded in Bihar in 2025, during which **220 arrests** were made.

The Naxal movement in India traces its origin to the **Naxalbari uprising of 1967** (West Bengal). Bihar saw its Naxal insurgency rise in the 1970s, peaking in the 1990s with armed groups like CPI (Maoist). Bihar's clearance is a significant milestone in the central government's **SAMADHAN strategy** for LWE reduction under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

**UPSC angle:** LWE/Naxalism (GS-3 Internal Security), MHA's SAMADHAN strategy, NIA Act 2008, CARO/CRPF deployments in LWE districts, Right to Development in tribal areas vs. armed conflict.

## EXERCISE MILAN 2026 — 74 NATIONS AT VISAKHAPATNAM

The **13th edition of Exercise MILAN**, India's multilateral naval exercise, was inaugurated by **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** on February 20, 2026, at **Visakhapatnam** (Eastern Naval Command), making it the **largest and most inclusive MILAN** in the exercise's history with **74 participating countries**.

MILAN was first held in **1995** at **Port Blair** (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) with just 4 nations; it shifted to Visakhapatnam from the 2022 edition. It focuses on interoperability, professional naval exchange, and Indo-Pacific maritime security.

**UPSC angle:** India's Act East Policy, Indo-Pacific security, Eastern Naval Command (ENC), QUAD, India-ASEAN maritime relations, UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), freedom of navigation.

## INDIA JOINS PAX SILICA ALLIANCE WITH US

**India formally joined the US-led Pax Silica** strategic alliance for AI and semiconductor supply chain security. The agreement was signed by **Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw** and **US Under Secretary Jacob Helberg**. Other members include Australia, Greece, Israel, Japan, Qatar, South Korea, Singapore, UAE, and the UK. India has **10 semiconductor plants under development** as part of the India Semiconductor Mission.

**UPSC angle:** India Semiconductor Mission, semiconductor geopolitics, Chips Act (USA), India-US technology partnership, critical minerals and supply chain security (GS-2/GS-3).

## DELHI LAUNCHES ULPIN 'BHU-AADHAAR' LAND DIGITISATION

**Delhi** became the **29th state/UT** to implement the **Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN)** system, also called **Bhu-Aadhaar**. The system assigns a **14-digit unique ID** to every land parcel using drone surveys and ortho-imaging (generating 2 TB of geospatial data). The initial phase covers **48 SVAMITVA Scheme villages**. It is part of the **Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP)**.

**UPSC angle:** SVAMITVA Scheme, DILRMP, land rights of rural households, Article 300A (right to property), Digital India initiative, e-governance.

## CMA CGM ORDERS 6 LNG VESSELS FROM COCHIN SHIPYARD — USD 360 MILLION

**Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)** secured a landmark order from French shipping giant **CMA CGM** for **six 1,700 TEU LNG-fuelled container feeder vessels** worth **USD 360 million** (~Rs. 3,200 crore) — USD 60 million per vessel. This is the **first “Made in India” container ship order** from a global shipping major. Design partner: **Korea Maritime Consultants Co. (KOMAC)**. CSL's total unexecuted order book stands at Rs. 23,000 crore.

**UPSC angle:** Sagarmala Programme, Make in India in shipbuilding, Cochin Shipyard (PSU under Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways), LNG as marine fuel, India's shipbuilding ambitions.

## KERALA CABINET APPROVES NATIVITY CARD BILL

The **Kerala Cabinet** approved legislation enabling **Nativity Cards** as official identity documents for state government services. The card covers: (1) persons born in Kerala who have not acquired foreign citizenship, and (2) diaspora with Keralite parents. Applications are submitted to the local Tahsildar. The Bill was scheduled for introduction in the Assembly on February 23, 2026. Governed by the **Citizenship Act, 1955**.

**UPSC angle:** Citizenship (Article 5-11, Constitution), overseas Indian communities, state vs. central identity documents, domicile-based rights.

## NATIONAL BIOBANK FOR LYSOSOMAL STORAGE DISORDERS LAUNCHED IN GUJARAT

India's first government-backed **National Biobank for Lysosomal Storage Disorders (LSDs)** was launched at **FRIGE (Foundation for Research in Genetics and Endocrinology)**, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, funded by the **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)**. It maintains samples from **530 patients across 15 states**. LSDs are rare inherited metabolic diseases caused by enzyme deficiencies in lysosomes.

**UPSC angle:** Rare diseases policy (India Rare Diseases Policy 2021), Department of Biotechnology, biobanks in genomics research, National Health Policy and orphan diseases, gene therapy prospects.

## FCI-WFP MOU — 2 LAKH MT RICE FOR GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

The **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** signed a **5-year MoU with the World Food Programme (WFP)** (effective February 17, 2026) to supply **2 lakh metric tonnes of rice at Rs. 2,800 per quintal** (till March 31, 2026). This reflects India's role as a global food security contributor under PM Modi's vision of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam."

**UPSC angle:** FCI (established 1965, under Food Corporation Act), WFP (UN Nobel Peace Prize 2020), Public Distribution System, India's food security commitments, export controls on rice vs. humanitarian supply.

## GEAPP — INDIA GRIDS OF THE FUTURE ACCELERATOR

The **Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP)** launched the **India Grids of the Future Accelerator** with a **USD 25 million commitment through 2028** (target USD 100 million by 2030), announced at **Mumbai Climate Week 2026** at Jio World Convention Centre. The **D4 Framework** (Digitalisation, Distributed Energy Resources, Democratisation, Development) aims to support **15+ DISCOMs** impacting ~300 million people. Partners: All India DISCOM Association (AIDA), International Solar Alliance (ISA).

**UPSC angle:** DISCOM reforms (UDAY scheme, Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme), India's solar+wind capacity (272+ GW non-fossil), ISA, climate finance, energy transition.

## INDIA-UK OFFSHORE WIND TASK FORCE LAUNCHED

India and the UK launched a joint **Offshore Wind Task Force** (February 18, 2026) under Union Minister **Pralhad Joshi** and UK Deputy PM **David Lammy**, part of the **India-UK Vision 2035** framework. Identified zones: **Gujarat and Tamil Nadu**. India's Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme allocated **Rs. 7,453 crore** for offshore wind development.

**UPSC angle:** India's offshore wind policy, India-UK FTA negotiations, renewable energy targets (500 GW by 2030), Gujarat and Tamil Nadu as offshore wind hubs, ISA, Paris Agreement commitments.

## INDIA-NEPAL MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT

India and Nepal signed a **Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT)** on February 18, 2026, in Kathmandu. Signatories: Nepal's **Binod Kumar Bhattarai** and Indian Ambassador **Naveen Srivastava**. The agreement covers cross-border crimes: fraud, money laundering, terrorism, human trafficking, and cybercrime. Each country designates a **Central Authority** for coordination.

**UPSC angle:** India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950), India's neighbourhood policy, MLATs and international legal cooperation, FATF and anti-money laundering, extradition treaties.

## TAMIL NADU INTERIM BUDGET FY2026-27

**Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu** presented Tamil Nadu's **Interim Budget for FY2026-27** with total expenditure of **Rs. 2.55 lakh crore** (7.30% increase over 2025-26 RE). Key allocations: Education (Rs. 57,039 crore), Urban Development (Rs. 35,773 crore), Rural Development (Rs. 28,687 crore). Context: Ahead of **April 2026 Tamil Nadu state assembly elections**.

**UPSC angle:** State budget making, fiscal federalism, Article 202 (state budget = Annual Financial Statement), TN's social welfare model, Finance Commission devolution.

## ESA CHEOPS DISCOVERS FOUR-PLANET SYSTEM

The European Space Agency's **CHEOPS (CHaracterising ExOPlanet Satellite)** mission discovered a **four-planet system** including a small, rocky outer planet. CHEOPS is specifically designed to characterise exoplanet-hosting stars through ultra-precise photometry.

**UPSC angle:** Exoplanet detection methods (transit, radial velocity), ESA vs. NASA missions, India's space science contributions, habitable zone concept.

## SPINOSAURUS MIRABILIS — NEW DINOSAUR SPECIES FROM SAHARA

A new dinosaur species **Spinosaurus mirabilis** was discovered in **Niger's Sahara Desert** (Jenguebi site), dating to ~95 million years ago (Cretaceous period). The semi-aquatic predator measured ~12 metres and weighed up to 7 tonnes, with a 20-inch blade-like skull crest. Described as a **"hell heron"** (wading predator, not fully aquatic) — challenging prior theories about Spinosaurus being fully aquatic.

**UPSC angle:** Palaeontology, Cretaceous period, biodiversity evolution, African archaeological sites.

## GALATHEA BALASUBRAMANIANI — NEW CRAB FROM LAKSHADWEEP

A new squat lobster species **Galathea balasubramaniani** was discovered from **Agatti coral reefs, Lakshadweep Islands**. It belongs to **anomuran crabs** (squat lobsters) and measures only ~3 millimetres. Discovered by Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) researchers.

**UPSC angle:** Marine biodiversity, Lakshadweep (India's smallest UT by area), coral reef conservation, ZSI (established 1916, Kolkata), anomuran crabs vs. true crabs.

## WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE — FEBRUARY 20

**World Day of Social Justice** is observed every year on **February 20** (proclaimed by the UN General Assembly). India's **Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (DoSJE)** and **National Law University (NLU) Dwarka** organized Preamble reading led by MoS **B.L. Verma**. NALSA (National Legal Services Authority) officials participated.

**UPSC angle:** Article 38-39 (DPSP on social justice), ILO's role in social justice, NALSA, National Commission for SCs/STs, DoSJE programmes.

## MILAN-CORTINA 2026 — USA WINS WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY GOLD

At the **2026 Winter Olympics in Milan-Cortina, Italy**, the **USA defeated Canada 2-1 in overtime** to win the Women's Ice Hockey gold medal — USA's **3rd Olympic gold** in women's hockey and first since 2018. Goal scorers: Hilary Knight (equalizer), Megan Keller (overtime winner); Canada goalie: Ann-Renée Desbiens.

**UPSC angle:** Olympic host city selection process, IOC, India at Winter Olympics, sports diplomacy.

## TARIQUE RAHMAN SWORN IN AS BANGLADESH PRIME MINISTER

**Tarique Rahman** was sworn in as **Bangladesh's 11th Prime Minister** on **February 17, 2026**. His party **BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party)** and allies won **212 of 299 seats** in the general election. He succeeds **Muhammad Yunus**, who served as Chief Adviser of Bangladesh's interim government from **August 2024 to February 2026** (following the fall of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government in August 2024 amid mass protests).

Tarique Rahman is the son of former PM **Khaleda Zia** and was previously convicted in absentia in Bangladesh on corruption charges — his return to power marks a significant political shift. India-Bangladesh relations will be closely watched given historical ties with the Awami League.

**UPSC angle:** India-Bangladesh relations (Treaty of Friendship 1972, Teesta water dispute, Farakka Barrage, border management), Sheikh Hasina's fall (2024), Muhammad Yunus's interim period, BNP vs Awami League, India's Act East Policy and Bangladesh's strategic position.

## SUPREME COURT ON FREEBIES CULTURE

The **Supreme Court** expressed concern over political parties announcing **unconditional cash transfers and freebies**, with the Economic Survey 2025-26 estimating such transfers at **₹1.7 lakh crore in FY26**. Gross fiscal deficit of states rose from **2.6% GDP (FY22)** to **3.2% (FY25)**; outstanding state liabilities: **28.1% of GDP**. In **S. Subramaniam Balaji Case (2013)**, SC had ruled freebies fall within legislative policy — but the question of fiscal sustainability remains.

**UPSC angle:** Fiscal federalism, state finances, FRBM Act, Subramaniam Balaji case, RBI's state finances report, fiscal consolidation vs. welfare spending debate.

## PERSONS IN NEWS

**Tarique Rahman:** Bangladesh's 11th PM (sworn in Feb 17, 2026); BNP leader; son of former PM Khaleda Zia

**Ranvir Sachdeva (age 8):** Youngest speaker at India AI Impact Summit 2026, Bharat Mandapam; previously world's youngest TEDx speaker (age 6); met Google CEO Sundar Pichai and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman.

**Eric Dane:** American actor ("McSteamy" in Grey's Anatomy) passed away at 53 after ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis / Lou Gehrig's Disease) — a progressive motor neuron disease diagnosed April 2025.

## FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

### Exercise MILAN 2026:

13th edition | Venue: Visakhapatnam (Eastern Naval Command) | Date: Feb 20, 2026

Inaugurated by: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh

Participating nations: **74** (largest ever)

Founded: **1995** at Port Blair (4 nations); shifted to Vizag from 2022 edition

Focus: Interoperability, Indo-Pacific maritime security

### **Bihar Naxal-Free:**

Last armed Maoist: **Suresh Koda**, surrendered in **Munger district**

LWE districts cleared: **23** | Naxal incidents in Bihar in 2025: **0**

Naxalbari uprising: **1967**, West Bengal (origin of Naxalism)

Strategy: MHA's **SAMADHAN** (Smart Leadership, Aggressive Strategy, Motivation and Training, Actionable Intelligence, Dashboard-based KPIs, Harnessing Technology, Action Plan for each district, No access to financing)

### **ULPIN / Bhu-Aadhaar:**

Full form: Unique Land Parcel Identification Number

Delhi: **29th** state/UT to implement

ID type: **14-digit** (using drone surveys + ortho-imaging)

Programme: **DILRMP** (Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme)

First phase: **48 SVAMITVA villages** in Delhi

### **Pax Silica Alliance:**

Led by: **United States** | India joined: Feb 20, 2026

Indian signatory: **Ashwini Vaishnaw** | US signatory: **Jacob Helberg**

Members: India, USA, Australia, Greece, Israel, Japan, Qatar, South Korea, Singapore, UAE, UK

Focus: AI and semiconductor supply chain security

### **Cochin Shipyard / CMA CGM:**

Order: **6 LNG-fuelled container feeder vessels** (1,700 TEU each)

Order value: **USD 360 million** (~Rs. 3,200 crore)

Per vessel: **USD 60 million**

Design partner: KOMAC (Korea Maritime Consultants Co.)

CSL order book: **Rs. 23,000 crore** | Ministry: Ports, Shipping and Waterways

### **National Biobank for LSDs:**

Location: **FRIGE, Ahmedabad, Gujarat**

Funded by: **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)**

Samples: **530 patients, 15 states**

LSDs: Lysosomal Storage Disorders — rare inherited metabolic enzyme deficiency diseases

### **FCI-WFP MoU:**

Quantity: **2 lakh MT rice** | Validity: **5 years** (from Feb 17, 2026)

Price: **Rs. 2,800 per quintal** (till March 31, 2026)

FCI established: **1965** (Food Corporation Act 1964) | Under: Ministry of Consumer Affairs

### **Galathea balasubramaniani:**

Type: Squat lobster (anomuran crab) | Size: ~3 mm

Found: **Agatti coral reefs, Lakshadweep**

Discovered by: **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)**

### **2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics:**

Women's Ice Hockey Gold: **USA** (beat Canada 2-1, OT)

USA's 3rd Women's Hockey gold (previous: 1998, 2018)

Host: **Milan-Cortina, Italy**

### **Tarique Rahman / Bangladesh:**

Role: Bangladesh's **11th Prime Minister** | Sworn in: **February 17, 2026**

Party: **BNP** (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) + allies | Seats won: **212 of 299**

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

Context: Sheikh Hasina (Awami League) fled August 5, 2024 amid mass protests

India-BD ties: Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (**1972**), Teesta water-sharing dispute, Farakka Barrage

### **SC on Freebies:**

Economic Survey 2025-26: Unconditional cash transfers = **₹1.7 lakh crore** (FY26 est.)

State gross fiscal deficit: **3.2% of GDP (FY25)** | Outstanding liabilities: **28.1% of GDP**

Landmark case: **S. Subramaniam Balaji v. State of TN (2013)** — SC held freebies within legislative policy

### **Other Relevant Facts:**

World Day of Social Justice: **February 20** every year (UN)

Kerala Nativity Card governed by: **Citizenship Act, 1955**

India-UK Vision 2035: Framework for bilateral cooperation

CHEOPS (ESA): Characterising ExOPlanet Satellite — studies known exoplanet hosts

ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease): Progressive motor neuron disease; no cure yet

Lakshadweep: India's smallest UT by area; coral atoll ecosystem

IT Amendment Rules 2026: Regulate synthetically generated (deepfake) content

Sources: GKToday, AffairsCloud, Drishti IAS

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