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Current Affairs Today – February 21, 2026

21 February 2026

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INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY 2026 — FEBRUARY 21

International Mother Language Day (IMLD) is observed every year on **February 21**, as proclaimed by **UNESCO in November 1999** and adopted by the UN General Assembly (Resolution 56/262, 2002). The **2026 theme** is “**Fostering multilingualism for inclusion in education and society.**”

IMLD commemorates the **Bengali Language Movement (Ekushey)** of **February 21, 1952**, when students in **Dhaka (then East Pakistan)** were killed by Pakistani police demanding recognition of Bengali as an official language. Bangladesh later made February 21 its **Language Martyrs Day (Shaheed Dibas)**. The movement eventually led to the **Liberation War of 1971** and the formation of Bangladesh.

India has over **6,000 languages and dialects**; the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution lists **22 scheduled languages**. IMLD supports **SDG 4 (Quality Education)** and the **International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032)**.

UPSC angle: Eighth Schedule (22 scheduled languages), Three Language Formula, NEP 2020 (mother tongue as medium of instruction till Class 5), Article 350-A (mother tongue instruction), UNESCO’s role, Bengali Language Movement as decolonisation.

MIZORAM AND ARUNACHAL PRADESH STATEHOOD DAY

Both **Mizoram** and **Arunachal Pradesh** attained statehood on **February 20, 1987** (celebrated on February 21):

Mizoram: Became India’s **23rd state** under the **53rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1986**. Previously a Union Territory (1972); before that the **Lushai Hills District** of Assam. The **Mizoram Peace Accord (1986)** — signed by PM Rajiv Gandhi and Laldenga (MNF) — ended two decades of insurgency and preceded statehood.

Arunachal Pradesh: Became India’s **24th state** under the **55th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1986**. Formerly the **North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA)**; boundary with China defined by the **McMahon Line (Shimla Convention, 1914)**. Both states are governed under the **Sixth Schedule** (tribal autonomous district councils).

UPSC angle: Constitutional Amendments for NE statehood, Sixth Schedule, NEFA history, McMahon Line dispute, Mizoram Peace Accord 1986, NE insurgency history.

NCST — 23RD FOUNDATION DAY

The **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)** observed its **23rd Foundation Day** on February 19, 2026. NCST was established on **19 February 2004** under **Article 338-A** of the Constitution, inserted by the **89th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003** (bifurcating the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Tribes).

Composition: Chairperson + Vice-Chairperson + 3 members (at least 1 woman); **3-year tenure**, maximum 2 terms. The Chairperson holds **Cabinet Minister rank**; Vice-Chairperson holds **MoS rank**.

Fifth Schedule governs Scheduled Areas in most states; the **Sixth Schedule** covers Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. Key laws: **PCR Act 1955, SC/ST (PoA) Act 1989, PESA 1996**.

UPSC angle: Article 338-A, 89th Amendment Act 2003, Fifth and Sixth Schedules, NCST vs NCSC, tribal rights framework, PESA 1996.

EXPORT PROMOTION MISSION — 7 NEW MSME INTERVENTIONS

The government launched **7 new interventions** under the **Export Promotion Mission (EPM)** with a total outlay of **₹25,060 crore** over 6 years (FY 2025-26 to 2030-31). EPM has two streams:

Niryat Protsahan (financial enablers)

Niryat Disha (non-financial enablers)

Key interventions:

Export Factoring — 2.75% interest subvention, ₹50 lakh annual cap

E-commerce credit — ₹50 lakh (90% guarantee) to ₹5 crore (75% guarantee)

TRACE — 60-75% reimbursement for testing/certification costs

LIFT — 30% freight reimbursement for geographically disadvantaged districts

Overseas warehousing support

Overseas branding support

MSME capacity building

70% of global GDP now accessible through India's FTAs. Targets 40+ countries including Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, UK, UAE.

UPSC angle: Foreign Trade Policy, MSME exports, ECGC (Export Credit Guarantee Corporation), RoDTEP, DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade), WTO's Dispute Settlement.

CHINA SHOWCASES CJ-1000 SCRAMJET HYPERSONIC CRUISE MISSILE

China showcased the **CJ-1000** — a **land-based, road-mobile, scramjet-powered hypersonic cruise missile** — during a military parade in **Beijing**. Estimated range: at least **2,500 km**. The road-mobile platform allows rapid deployment and survivability against first strikes. Scramjet propulsion sustains hypersonic speeds (Mach 5+) throughout flight — unlike boost-glide vehicles which decelerate after launch.

UPSC angle: Hypersonic weapons — types (boost-glide vs. cruise missile vs. MARV), China’s military modernisation, India’s hypersonic programme (HSTDV by DRDO), arms race in the Indo-Pacific, missile defence limitations.

INDIA ATTENDS BOARD OF PEACE AS OBSERVER — GAZA STRIP

India participated as an **observer** (not full member) in the inaugural **Board of Peace** meeting in **Washington D.C.** The Board includes **27 nations** and focuses on the **Gaza Strip** redevelopment with a **USD 10 billion US commitment**. India reaffirmed commitment to a **Two-State Solution** based on **1967 borders** with Palestinian sovereignty. India supported **UNSC Resolution 2803** and the Gaza Peace Plan. India’s approach: “**de-hyphenated**” **diplomacy** — maintaining independent ties with both Arab nations and Israel.

UPSC angle: India-Palestine-Israel diplomacy, India’s “de-hyphenated” Middle East policy, Two-State Solution, UNSC resolutions on Israel-Palestine, India’s observer status in multilateral forums.

SONEPUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT — BIHAR CABINET APPROVAL

Bihar Cabinet approved the **Sonepur International Airport** in **Saran district, Bihar**. Key specs: runway length **4,200 metres** (Airbus A380 capable); land area **4,228 acres**; land acquisition budget **₹1,302 crore**; target completion **2030**. Aim: enhance north Bihar connectivity, reduce congestion at Patna airport (Jay Prakash Narayan International Airport), and boost regional economic development.

UPSC angle: Airport development in India (AAI — Airports Authority of India), regional connectivity (UDAN scheme), infrastructure in Bihar, National Infrastructure Pipeline.

L&T VYOMA DATA CENTRE — DHOLERA SIR, GUJARAT

L&T Vyoma signed an MoU with the Gujarat government for a feasibility study on a **250 MW green AI-ready data centre** at **Dholera Special Investment Region (SIR)**, Gujarat. Project value: **₹25,000 crore**; target operational date: **2028**. Part of India’s push to become a global AI compute hub.

UPSC angle: Dholera SIR (India's first greenfield Smart City under DMIC), AI infrastructure, data localisation, India Semiconductor Mission, green energy for computing.

RBI REVISES LEAD BANK SCHEME (LBS)

RBI released draft guidelines to revise the **Lead Bank Scheme (LBS)**, introduced in **December 1969** on recommendations of the **Gadgil Study Group** and **Nariman Committee (1969)**. Each district is assigned one **Lead Bank** for financial inclusion coordination. Current coverage: **782 districts**; lead banks include 12 public sector + 2 private (J&K Bank, ICICI Bank). Key revision: **60% Credit-Deposit (CD) ratio** benchmark for rural/semi-urban branches; strengthening **State Level Bankers' Committees (SLBCs)** and **Lead District Manager (LDM)** offices.

UPSC angle: Financial inclusion, Lead Bank Scheme, Priority Sector Lending, SLBC, RBI's development finance role, rural credit delivery.

RODRIGO DUTERTE — ICC PRE-TRIAL HEARING

Former Philippine President **Rodrigo Duterte** faced an **International Criminal Court (ICC) pre-trial hearing** for alleged **crimes against humanity** during the Philippines' drug war (2016-2019). ICC (Headquarters: **The Hague, Netherlands**) was established under the **Rome Statute** (signed July 17, 1998; entered force July 1, 2002). ICC prosecutes individuals for: **genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression**. India, USA, and China are **non-signatories** to the Rome Statute.

UPSC angle: Rome Statute (1998), ICC jurisdiction, complementarity principle, India's non-signatory status, international criminal law, genocide vs. crimes against humanity.

KANLAON VOLCANO ERUPTION — PHILIPPINES

Mount Kanlaon (a **stratovolcano**) erupted on Negros Island in the Visayas region, Philippines, releasing heavy ash. At **~2,465 metres**, it is the tallest peak in the Visayas and one of the Philippines' most active volcanoes. Located on the **Pacific Ring of Fire**.

UPSC angle: Types of volcanoes (shield, cinder cone, stratovolcano/composite), Pacific Ring of Fire, volcanic hazards, India's volcanic geography (Barren Island — only active volcano in South Asia).

PUBLIC TRUST DOCTRINE — INDIA'S COURTS

The **Public Trust Doctrine** came into focus through Supreme Court proceedings. The doctrine holds that the government is a **trustee/custodian** of key natural resources — including tidal waters, lakes, rivers, wetlands, and ecosystems — in a **fiduciary relationship with the public**. The state cannot alienate these resources for private use. Recognised in India by the Supreme Court in landmark cases: **M.C. Mehta v. Kamal Nath (1997)** and **M.I. Builders v. Radhey Shyam Sahu (1999)**.

UPSC angle: Public Trust Doctrine, Article 21 (right to a clean environment), NGT (National Green Tribunal), Environmental law landmark cases, Writ Jurisdiction of Supreme Court.

POLAND EXITS OTTAWA CONVENTION — ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES TREATY

Poland announced its withdrawal from the **Ottawa Convention (1997 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty)** citing security threats from Russia and Belarus. Poland ratified the treaty in 2012 and destroyed its stockpiles by 2016, but now plans to re-acquire anti-personnel mines for the **Eastern Shield** border fortification programme.

Poland joins several other NATO/EU states that have exited or are reconsidering the treaty post-2022 invasion of Ukraine: **Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine**.

Key facts: The Ottawa Treaty has **164 signatories**. **India, Russia, USA, China, Pakistan** have never acceded to it. Anti-tank mines are regulated (not banned) under **CCW Protocol II (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, 1980)**.

UPSC angle: Ottawa Convention, arms control treaties, CCW 1980, NATO's eastern flank security, geopolitics of mine warfare, India's position on anti-personnel mines, human security framework.

INDIA'S CORE SECTOR GROWTH — JANUARY 2026

The **Index of Core Industries (ICI)** grew **4.0%** year-on-year in January 2026, down from a revised **4.7%** in December 2025. The ICI covers **8 core sectors** with a combined weight of **40.27%** in India's IIP (Index of Industrial Production): coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement, and electricity. Steel and cement showed strong performance; other sectors moderated.

UPSC angle: ICI, IIP (Index of Industrial Production), base year, economic indicators for Prelims, MoSPI role, India's industrial output tracking.

EMMANUEL MACRON INDIA VISIT — INDIA-FRANCE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

French President **Emmanuel Macron** visited India from **February 17-19, 2026** — his second visit as President (first was in 2018). Key outcomes:

H-125 helicopter manufacturing line: Tata Advanced Systems + Airbus Helicopters to set up an H-125 assembly line in India; addresses IAF/Indian Army requirement for light utility helicopters in high-altitude areas.

India-France Year of Innovation 2026 jointly launched — focuses on defence tech, AI, green hydrogen, and space collaboration.

6th India-France Defence Dialogue held; discussed deepening of the **Strategic Partnership (signed 1998)**.

India and France are **Comprehensive Strategic Partners**; France is India's largest defence supplier by value (Rafale jets, Scorpene submarines under P-75 Project).

UPSC angle: India-France strategic partnership, P-75 Scorpene submarines, Rafale deal, Tata Advanced Systems (Make in India defence), India-France Year of Innovation 2026, India's bilateral defence cooperation.

INTERNATIONAL FLEET REVIEW 2026 + IONS CONCLAVE — INDIA ASSUMES NAVAL LEADERSHIP

India hosted the **International Fleet Review (IFR) 2026** on **February 18, 2026**, presided by **President Droupadi Murmu** at Visakhapatnam. The theme: **“United through Oceans.”** IFR is a biennial show of naval camaraderie — navies from 50+ nations participated.

Alongside, the **9th Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave** was held. India assumed the **IONS Chairmanship for 2026-2028**. IONS was established in **2008** on India's initiative to promote maritime cooperation among littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Current member navies: **24 nations**.

UPSC angle: IONS (Indian Ocean Naval Symposium), IFR 2026, India's maritime diplomacy, Indian Ocean Region (IOR), SAGAR doctrine (Security and Growth for All in the Region), India-Navy's role in IOR security, Blue Water Navy concept.

VIBRANT VILLAGES PROGRAMME-II LAUNCHED

Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** launched **Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II)** at **Nathanpur, Assam** on February 20, 2026. Key details:

Outlay: ₹6,839 crore

Coverage: 1,954 border villages across 15 states and 2 Union Territories

Focus: Holistic development of villages along India's international borders to prevent migration, enhance security infrastructure, and improve livelihoods

VVP-I (launched 2023): focused on India-China border villages in **Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Ladakh**; covered ~2,963 villages

VVP-II extends coverage to India's borders with Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Pakistan

UPSC angle: Vibrant Villages Programme, border area development, India-China border infrastructure, National Security doctrine, connectivity in North-East India, India-China LAC fencing, Dorjee Khandu Committee recommendations on border villages.

TATA GROUP-OPENAI PARTNERSHIP — INDIA'S FIRST LARGE-SCALE AI DATA CENTRE

Tata Group announced a landmark partnership with **OpenAI** to establish India's first large-scale AI data centre:

Initial capacity: 100 MW (expandable to **1 GW**)

Location: Jamnagar, Gujarat (alongside existing Reliance data centre announcements)

TCS investment commitment: Up to **USD 7 billion** in AI infrastructure and cloud services over 5 years

OpenAI India offices: Mumbai and Bengaluru — OpenAI's first dedicated India operations

Part of the broader **Stargate** global AI infrastructure initiative; PM Modi met OpenAI CEO **Sam Altman** during his USA visit (February 2025)

UPSC angle: India AI Mission (2024, ₹10,371 crore), IndiaAI compute infrastructure, data centre policy, AI governance, Digital India, Tata Group's strategic role in India's tech ecosystem, India Semiconductor Mission, geopolitics of AI compute.

DRDO QUALIFIES GAGANYAAN DROGUE PARACHUTE SYSTEM

The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** successfully completed the **qualification test for the Gaganyaan crew module's drogue parachute system** at the **Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL), Chandigarh**.

The **drogue parachute** is the initial deceleration chute deployed at high altitude/high velocity to slow and stabilise the crew module before main parachutes deploy

Test validated: **RTRS (Rocket Test Rig System)** simulating ejection conditions

Part of the **Crew Escape System (CES)** qualification for Gaganyaan

Gaganyaan is India's first human spaceflight mission; target: carry a 3-member crew to 400 km LEO for 3 days; launch vehicle: LVM3 (GSLV Mk III)

UPSC angle: Gaganyaan mission, DRDO's role in space, Crew Escape System, ISRO-DRDO collaboration, India's human spaceflight roadmap, Gaganyaan test flight milestones (TV-D1 abort test Sept 2023), LVM3 launch vehicle.

PERSONS IN NEWS

Harsharan Kaur Trehan: Appointed as **Director (Commercial)** at **Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL)** — first woman technocrat to reach board level at PSPCL; also first woman **Engineer-in-Chief** at PSPCL; 3+ decades at the organisation (joined 1987).

Ranvir Sachdeva (age 8): Youngest keynote speaker at **India AI Impact Summit 2026** (Feb 16-20, New Delhi); started coding at age 3; interacted with Google CEO Sundar Pichai and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman.

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

International Mother Language Day:

Observed: **February 21** every year

Proclaimed by: **UNESCO**, November 1999 | First observed: **2000**

UN Resolution: **56/262** (2002)

2026 Theme: "**Fostering multilingualism for inclusion in education and society**"

Commemorates: **Bengali Language Movement (Ekushey), February 21, 1952**, Dhaka

India: **22 scheduled languages** (Eighth Schedule) | **6,000+ languages/dialects**

Related: International Decade of Indigenous Languages (**2022-2032**)

Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh Statehood:

Statehood date: **February 20, 1987** (celebrated Feb 21)

Mizoram: India's **23rd state** | **53rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1986**

Pre-statehood: UT (1972), Lushai Hills District (Assam) before that

Mizoram Peace Accord: **1986** (PM Rajiv Gandhi + Laldenga / MNF)

Arunachal Pradesh: India's **24th state** | **55th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1986**

Formerly: **NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency)**

China boundary: **McMahon Line (Shimla Convention, 1914)**

NCST (National Commission for Scheduled Tribes):

Established: **19 February 2004** | Foundation Day 2026: **23rd**

Constitutional basis: **Article 338-A** (inserted by **89th Amendment Act, 2003**)

Composition: Chairperson + VP + 3 members (min 1 woman); **3-year tenure**, max 2 terms

Ranks: Chairperson = Cabinet Minister; VP = MoS

Fifth Schedule: most states | Sixth Schedule: Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram

Export Promotion Mission (EPM):

Outlay: **₹25,060 crore** | Duration: **6 years** (FY 2025-26 to 2030-31)

Streams: **Niryat Protsahan** (financial) + **Niryat Disha** (non-financial)

Key interventions: Export Factoring (2.75% subvention), E-commerce credit, TRACE, LIFT, Overseas warehousing, Overseas branding, MSME capacity building

India's FTA coverage: **70% of global GDP**

Lead Bank Scheme (LBS):

Introduced: **December 1969** | Recommendations: Gadgil Study Group + **Nariman Committee (1969)**

Coverage: **782 districts** | Lead banks: 12 PSU + 2 private (J&K Bank, ICICI Bank)

CD ratio benchmark (draft): **60%** for rural/semi-urban branches

Service Area Approach (SAA): introduced **April 1989** (15-25 villages per branch)

ICC:

Full form: International Criminal Court | HQ: **The Hague, Netherlands**

Established: **Rome Statute** (signed July 17, 1998; entered force **July 1, 2002**)

Jurisdiction: Genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, crimes of aggression

Complementarity: Court of last resort (national courts must try first)

Non-signatories: India, USA, China, Israel, Russia

Current case: **Rodrigo Duterte** (Philippines) — pre-trial, crimes against humanity

CJ-1000 Hypersonic Missile (China):

Type: Land-based, **road-mobile, scramjet-powered hypersonic cruise missile**

Range: At least **2,500 km**

Showcased: Military parade, Beijing, February 2026

Scramjet: Air-breathing hypersonic engine (vs. rocket); sustains Mach 5+ throughout flight

Sonepur International Airport (Bihar):

District: **Saran district, Bihar** | Runway: **4,200 metres** (A380-capable)

Land: **4,228 acres** | Budget: **₹1,302 crore** | Target: **2030**

ICI (Index of Core Industries):

January 2026 growth: **4.0%** (revised Dec 2025: 4.7%)

8 sectors: Coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement, electricity

Weight in IIP: **40.27%**

India-France Strategic Partnership (Macron Visit):

Macron India Visit: **February 17-19, 2026** (2nd visit as President; 1st in 2018)

H-125 helicopter line: Tata Advanced Systems + Airbus Helicopters (assembly in India)

India-France Strategic Partnership established: **1998**

Year of Innovation 2026: Defence tech, AI, green hydrogen, space

France = India's largest defence supplier (Rafale jets, Scorpene submarines)

IFR 2026 + IONS:

IFR 2026: **February 18, 2026** | Visakhapatnam | Presided by **President Droupadi Murmu**

Theme: **"United through Oceans"**

IONS = Indian Ocean Naval Symposium | Established: **2008** (India's initiative)

Member navies: **24 nations** | India assumes **IONS Chairmanship 2026-2028**

Vibrant Villages Programme-II:

Launched by: **Amit Shah** (Home Minister) | Location: **Nathanpur, Assam**, Feb 20, 2026

Outlay: **₹6,839 crore** | Coverage: **1,954 border villages**, 15 states + 2 UTs

VVP-I (2023): India-China border; 5 states; ~2,963 villages

VVP-II: Extends to Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan borders

Tata-OpenAI AI Data Centre:

Capacity: **100 MW** (expandable to 1 GW) | Location: Jamnagar, Gujarat

TCS investment: up to **USD 7 billion** over 5 years

OpenAI India offices: **Mumbai + Bengaluru**

India AI Mission: Approved 2024 | Outlay: **₹10,371 crore**

Gaganyaan — Drogue Parachute Qualification:

Test conducted at: **TBRL (Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory), Chandigarh** (DRDO)

System: **Drogue parachute** — initial deceleration chute for Crew Escape System

Gaganyaan mission: 3-member crew, 400 km LEO, 3 days | Launch vehicle: **LVM3**

TV-D1 abort test (Crew Escape System): September 2023

Ottawa Convention (Poland Exit):

Ottawa Convention: **1997 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty** | Signatories: **164**

Poland: ratified 2012, stockpiles destroyed 2016, announced withdrawal Feb 2026

Reason: **Eastern Shield** fortification programme (Russia-Belarus border threat)

Other exits post-2022: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine

Non-parties: India, USA, Russia, China, Pakistan

Anti-tank mines regulated under: **CCW Protocol II (1980)** (not banned)

Other Relevant Facts:

Public Trust Doctrine: SC cases — M.C. Mehta v. Kamal Nath (1997); M.I. Builders v. Radhey Shyam Sahu (1999)

Kanlaon Volcano: Stratovolcano, Negros Island, Philippines; ~2,465 m; Pacific Ring of Fire

Barren Island: India's only active volcano; Andaman & Nicobar Islands; last erupted 2020

L&T Vyoma Data Centre: 250 MW, Dholera SIR, Gujarat; ₹25,000 crore; target 2028

Board of Peace: 27 nations; USD 10 billion US commitment for Gaza redevelopment

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