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Current Affairs Today – February 24, 2026

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SUBJECTS COVERED**POLITY****ECONOMY****ENVIRONMENT****SCIENCE & TECH****SECURITY & DEFENCE****IR****SOCIAL ISSUES****CURATED & WRITTEN BY****Bharat Choudhary**

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KERALA RENAMED AS “KERALAM” — UNION CABINET APPROVAL

The **Union Cabinet** approved the renaming of the state of **Kerala** to **Keralam**, reflecting the traditional Malayalam pronunciation of the state’s name. The change will be effected through an amendment to the **First Schedule of the Constitution**, which lists the names of States and Union Territories. The constitutional route requires amendment under **Article 3** of the Constitution, which empowers Parliament to alter a state’s name.

The Kerala Legislative Assembly had passed a resolution in 2023 requesting the name change to restore the original Sanskrit/Malayalam form.

UPSC angle: Article 3 of the Constitution (Parliament’s power to change state names/boundaries), First Schedule, process for constitutional amendment under Article 368, Centre-State relations, linguistic states reorganisation.

DELHI-MEERUT NAMO BHARAT RRTS — FULL 82 KM CORRIDOR INAUGURATED

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** inaugurated the full **Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)** corridor, completing India’s first operational RRTS project at **82 km** total length. The inauguration covered the remaining 26 km stretch (Sahibabad–New Ashok Nagar, 5 km in Delhi, and additional sections in UP), connecting **Sahibabad (Ghaziabad) to Meerut South** via 25 stations.

The corridor is operated by **NCRTC (National Capital Region Transport Corporation)** under the **Namo Bharat** brand at design speeds of 180 km/h and operational speeds of 160 km/h.

UPSC angle: Urban transport infrastructure, NCRTC, RRTS vs. Metro comparison, NCR planning, smart cities, Public-Private Partnership models.

NMP 2.0 AVIATION — ₹27,500 CRORE MONETISATION TARGET (FY26-30)

The government released the **National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) 2.0** aviation sector targets: **₹27,500 crore** from airport monetisation during FY2026-30, covering **25+ airports** under the Airports Authority of India (AAI) for long-term lease to private operators.

NMP was originally launched in August 2021 with ₹6 lakh crore worth of core infrastructure assets to be monetised. NMP 2.0 extends and scales the programme.

UPSC angle: National Monetisation Pipeline, asset monetisation vs. privatisation distinction, Airports Authority of India, PPP in aviation, fiscal management.

WAAREE BATTERY GIGAFACTORY — ₹8,175 CRORE, 16 GWH, ANDHRA PRADESH

Waaree Energies, India's largest solar panel manufacturer, announced a **₹8,175 crore battery energy storage gigafactory** in **Anakapalli, Andhra Pradesh** with a capacity of **16 GWh**. The facility will manufacture lithium iron phosphate (LFP) battery cells for grid-scale energy storage and electric vehicles.

The project supports India's **National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage** incentive scheme under the PLI framework.

UPSC angle: PLI scheme for ACC battery storage, energy transition, EV ecosystem, India's battery manufacturing ambition, Atmanirbhar Bharat, critical minerals (lithium).

SUAV RIVER — NGT ORDERS LEGAL STATUS RESTORATION IN UP

The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** ordered the **Uttar Pradesh government** to restore the **Suav River** (also called Sai tributary in Balrampur district) to its legal status as a river within **three months**, after it was found to have been illegally encroached upon and its course diverted for agricultural use. The NGT directed the UP revenue authorities to demarcate the river's original path and remove encroachments.

UPSC angle: NGT powers and jurisdiction (NGT Act 2010), river rights movement, encroachment on water bodies, UP river protection, environmental law.

NATIONAL AROGYA FAIR 2026 — SHEGAON, MAHARASHTRA

The **National Arogya Fair 2026** was held at **Shegaon, Maharashtra** (February 25–28), organised by the Ministry of AYUSH to showcase traditional Indian medicine systems — Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy. The fair includes live demonstrations, free health check-ups, and exhibition stalls by AYUSH practitioners.

UPSC angle: Ministry of AYUSH, traditional medicine promotion, National AYUSH Mission, soft power through traditional knowledge.

OPERATION DEMOLISHMENT — 203 NAXAL MEMORIALS REMOVED

Security forces under **Operation Demolishment** demolished **203 Naxal memorial structures** (called *shaheed stambh* or martyrdom pillars) across **Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra** in a single coordinated operation. These memorials, erected by the CPI (Maoist) organisation to commemorate fallen cadres, serve as propaganda and morale-boosting tools in areas of Maoist influence.

The operation is part of the broader anti-Naxal strategy under the Ministry of Home Affairs' **SRE (Security Related Expenditure) Scheme**.

UPSC angle: Left-Wing Extremism (LWE), CPI (Maoist), SAMADHAN doctrine, SRE scheme, development vs. security approach to LWE, conflict-affected districts.

VAAN ISLAND ARTIFICIAL REEF — GULF OF MANNAR

The Tamil Nadu government and **CMFRI (Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute)** reported a **₹61.67 crore** livelihood benefit to fishing communities from the **Vaan Island artificial reef** project in the **Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park**. Artificial reefs — constructed using old fishing vessels, concrete modules, and decommissioned structures — create marine habitat that increases fish biomass.

UPSC angle: Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve, Marine Protected Areas, artificial reefs for fisheries, Blue Economy, CMFRI, coastal community livelihoods.

TAKESHIMA/DOKDO — JAPAN-SOUTH KOREA TERRITORIAL DISPUTE RESURFACES

South Korea formally protested Japan's annual "**Takeshima Day**" ceremony held by **Shimane Prefecture** (February 22), asserting Japan's claim over the islets known as **Dokdo in Korean** and **Takeshima in Japanese**, currently administered by South Korea. The islets lie in the Sea of Japan/East Sea and have been administered by South Korea since 1954.

UPSC angle: Territorial disputes in Indo-Pacific, Japan-South Korea relations, significance for Quad dynamics, maritime boundary disputes (UNCLOS), Japanese/Korean historical grievances.

PRASHAD SCHEME — PILGRIMAGE REJUVENATION AND SPIRITUAL AUGMENTATION DRIVE

PRASHAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive) scheme of the **Ministry of Tourism** (launched 2014–15) was highlighted in Parliament. The scheme funds infrastructure development at identified religious/pilgrimage sites — entry plazas, illumination, toilets, signage — through central grants to state governments. As of 2026, **40+ sites** have been identified.

UPSC angle: PRASHAD vs. HRIDAY (Heritage City Development), tourism infrastructure, Ministry of Tourism schemes, Smart Cities and pilgrimage tourism.

NOTTO — NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE TRANSPLANT ORGANIZATION

NOTTO (National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization) under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** reported a 15% rise in **deceased donor organ transplants** in 2025 (over 2024). NOTTO coordinates the national organ and tissue donation and transplantation network, maintains recipient waiting lists, and ensures equitable organ allocation.

UPSC angle: Transplantation of Human Organs Act 1994, NOTTO, brain-death protocols, Donate Life campaign, organ trafficking law, NHP (National Health Policy) and organ donation.

VANJEEVI DIDI — WOMEN CONSERVATION INITIATIVE AT PALAMAU TIGER RESERVE

Palamau Tiger Reserve (PTR), Jharkhand, launched the “**Vanjeevi Didi**” initiative — engaging tribal women from buffer zone villages as frontline conservation facilitators. These women (called *Vanjeevi Didis* — Forest Life Sisters) receive training in wildlife monitoring, anti-poaching reporting, eco-tourism guiding, and NTFP (Non-Timber Forest Product) sustainable harvesting.

The initiative is modelled on similar women-led conservation efforts in Madhya Pradesh’s reserves and aligns with the **SHG (Self-Help Group)** framework under NRLM.

UPSC angle: Wildlife Protection Act, Tiger Reserves under Project Tiger/NTCA, community conservation, women empowerment in forestry, Palamau (also called Betla National Park area), NTFP economy, NRLM.

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

Kerala → Keralam Renaming:

Constitutional route: **Article 3** (Parliament alters state name/boundary) + **First Schedule** amendment

Kerala State Legislature passed renaming resolution: **2023**

Language basis: **Malayalam** — traditional form is “Keralam”

Article 3 amendment: Simple majority in Parliament (not special majority under Art. 368)

Does NOT require ratification by state legislatures (unlike most constitutional amendments)

Namo Bharat RRTS — Delhi-Meerut:

Operating body: **NCRTC (National Capital Region Transport Corporation)**

Total corridor length: **82 km** | Stations: **25**

Design speed: **180 km/h** | Operational speed: **160 km/h**

Delhi section: Sahibabad → New Ashok Nagar (~5 km)

First phase opened: **March 20, 2023** (Sahibabad–Duhai Depot, 17 km)

Full corridor completion: **February 2026**

RRTS vs. Metro: RRTS is intercity rapid transit; higher speed; longer station spacing

Waaree Battery Gigafactory:

Location: **Anakapalli, Andhra Pradesh**

Investment: **₹8,175 crore** | Capacity: **16 GWh**

Battery type: **LFP (Lithium Iron Phosphate)**

Scheme: **ACC (Advanced Chemistry Cell) Battery Storage PLI**

PLI scheme outlay: ₹18,100 crore (50 GWh target)

Waaree: India's largest solar PV module manufacturer

National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP):

Launched: **August 2021** by NITI Aayog

Original target: **₹6 lakh crore** (FY22-25)

NMP 2.0 aviation target: **₹27,500 crore** (FY26-30)

Asset monetisation ≠ privatisation — ownership retained by government; only operations leased

Suav River / NGT:

Location: **Balrampur district, Uttar Pradesh**

Order: Restore legal river status in **3 months**

NGT established under: **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010**

NGT jurisdiction: Environmental disputes; can award compensation; binding orders

Operation Demolishment:

Structures demolished: **203** Naxal memorials (*shaheed stambh*)

States: **Chhattisgarh + Maharashtra**

Strategic rationale: Deny propaganda space; weaken cadre morale

Related strategy: **SAMADHAN** doctrine (Smart Leadership, Aggressive Strategy, Motivation and Training, Actionable Intelligence, Dashboard-based KPIs, Harnessing Technology, Action Plan for LWE districts, No access to finance)

Vaan Island Artificial Reef:

Location: **Gulf of Mannar**, Tamil Nadu

Benefit: **₹61.67 crore** additional fish catch value

Agency: **CMFRI (Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute)**, Kochi

Gulf of Mannar: **Biosphere Reserve** (1989), first marine biosphere reserve in South/Southeast Asia

Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park: **21 islands**, designated 1980

Takeshima/Dokdo:

Japanese name: **Takeshima** | Korean name: **Dokdo**

Administered by: **South Korea** (since 1954)

Japan's annual ceremony: **Shimane Prefecture "Takeshima Day"** (February 22)

Sea: **Sea of Japan / East Sea** (naming itself disputed)

UNCLOS Article 121: Islands vs. rocks distinction affects EEZ claims

PRASHAD Scheme:

Full form: **Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive**

Ministry: **Ministry of Tourism**

Launched: **2014-15**

Sites identified: **40+** religious/pilgrimage locations

Companion scheme: **HRIDAY** (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) — urban heritage cities

NOTTO:

Full form: **National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization**

Ministry: **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**

Governing law: **Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994 (amended 2011)**

Function: Coordinates national organ donation; maintains registry; allocates organs

Brain death = legal basis for deceased donor transplant in India

Vanjeevi Didi:

Location: **Palamau Tiger Reserve (PTR)**, Jharkhand

Also known as: **Betla National Park** (core zone)

Tiger count (PTR): ~10-12 tigers

Initiative: Tribal women as conservation facilitators (monitoring, eco-tourism, NTFP)

NRLM: National Rural Livelihoods Mission (SHG framework used)

Other Relevant Facts:

Project Tiger launched: 1973; NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) set up under WPA amendment 2006

India's tiger count (2023 census): ~3,682 (highest ever)

PLI (Production Linked Incentive) schemes: 14 sectors, ₹2 lakh crore+ total outlay

Blue Economy policy (India): Launched 2019; targets \$250 billion maritime economy by 2030

India's oil import dependence: ~85-88% (relevant to Hormuz/West Asia security)

Sources: The Hindu, PIB, GKToday

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