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Weekly EXPECTED **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

IAS EXAMINATION



From
2nd To 7th Feb 2026

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Date - 2nd Feb 2026, Monday

1.1. COCONUT PROMOTION SCHEME

Context:

- Recently, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, while presenting the **Union Budget 2026–27**, proposed a dedicated "**Coconut Promotion Scheme**" aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of India's coconut sector.
- The scheme prioritizes increasing productivity through interventions such as replacing old, senile, and non-productive trees with high-yielding saplings in major coconut-growing states.
- This initiative is part of a broader shift toward supporting high-value plantation crops like coconut, cashew, and cocoa to diversify farm outputs and enhance farmers' incomes.



Basic of Coconut

1. Production Status and Ranking

- Global Position:** India is the **third-largest producer** of coconuts in the world, following Indonesia and the Philippines.
- Livelihood:** Approximately **30 million people** and nearly **10 million farmers** in India depend on coconut cultivation for their livelihoods.
- Major Producing States:** The four southern states—**Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh**—collectively account for about **90%** of India's total coconut production.
- Expansion:** Cultivation is expanding to non-traditional areas, including the North-Eastern states (Assam and Tripura) and coastal regions of Odisha and West Bengal.

2. Climatic and Geographical Requirements

- Nature of Crop:** It is essentially a **tropical plant**, typically grown between **20°N and 20°S latitudes**.
- Temperature:** It requires an ideal mean annual temperature of **22°C-32°C**. Reproductive growth is hindered if temperatures fall below **10°C**.
- Rainfall:** A well-distributed annual rainfall of **1300 mm to 2300 mm** is preferred. In areas with uneven rainfall, irrigation is essential.
- Sunlight:** The palm requires plenty of sunlight (roughly **2000 hours** of sunshine annually) and **does not thrive in heavily shaded or cloudy regions**.
- Soil:** It can grow in diverse soil types including laterite, coastal sandy, alluvial, and saline soils. A pH range of **5.0 to 8.0** is tolerable, provided there is proper drainage.

3. Institutional and Regulatory Framework

- **Coconut Development Board (CDB):** It is a **statutory body** established in 1981 under the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**. Its headquarters is located in **Kochi, Kerala**.
- **Mandate:** The CDB focuses on integrated development, productivity increase, product diversification, and providing technical advice to the coconut industry.
- **Minimum Support Price (MSP):** The government fixes the MSP for **Milling Copra** and **Ball Copra**.
 - **Nodal Agencies:** **NAFED** and **NCCF** act as the central nodal agencies for procurement under the **Price Support Scheme (PSS)**.

4. Key Highlights: Coconut Promotion Scheme

- **Primary Goal:** Transform India from the 3rd largest producer to a global leader in yield and quality.
- **Rejuvenation:** Financial support to replace **senile and non-productive palms** with high-yielding, early-bearing varieties.
- **Cluster Development:** Part of a **₹350 crore** allocation for high-value crops (Coconut, Cashew, Cocoa, Sandalwood).
- **Processing Hubs:** Establishing dedicated facilities for **Value Addition** (Virgin Coconut Oil, Coconut Water, Coir Pith).
- **Digital Integration:** Linking coconut farmers to the **Bharat-VISTAAR** (AI-Advisory) platform for real-time pest and nutrient management.
- **Export Branding:** Positioning Indian coconut as a premium global brand to compete with Indonesia and the Philippines

Q. With reference to coconut cultivation and its status in India, consider the following statements:

1. India is currently the largest producer of coconuts globally, surpassing Indonesia and the Philippines.
2. The Coconut Development Board is a statutory body headquartered in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
3. The Union Budget 2026-27 has proposed a scheme to replace senile and unproductive trees with high-yielding varieties.
4. NAFED is one of the nodal agencies for the procurement of copra under the Price Support Scheme.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A) Only one
- B) Only two
- C) Only three
- D) All four

Answer: B) Only two

Solution:

STATEMENT 1 INCORRECT: While the Budget speech highlighted India's prominence, according to global data (FAO), India is the third-largest producer, behind Indonesia and the Philippines.

STATEMENT 2 INCORRECT: The Coconut Development Board is indeed a statutory body, but its headquarters is in Kochi, Kerala, not Chennai.

STATEMENT 3 CORRECT: The Union Budget 2026–27 explicitly introduced the Coconut Promotion Scheme to rejuvenate old plantations with high-yielding saplings.

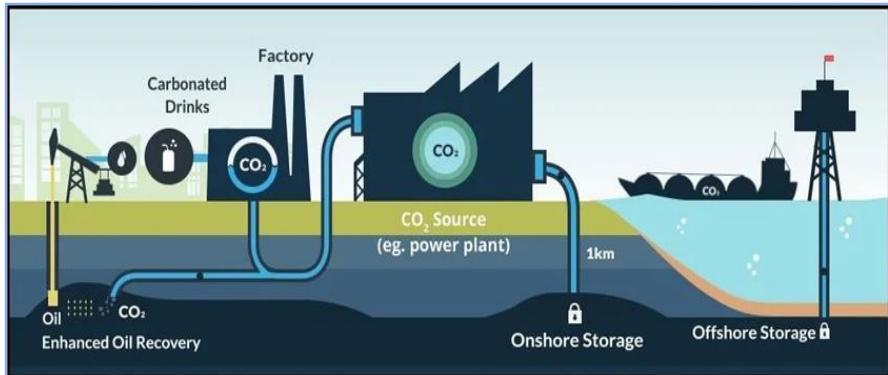
STATEMENT 4 CORRECT: NAFED (along with NCCF) serves as the central nodal agency for the procurement of copra.

Date - 2nd Feb 2026, Monday

1.2. CARBON CAPTURE, UTILISATION, AND STORAGE (CCUS)

Context:

Recently, while presenting the **Union Budget 2026–27**, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a significant financial outlay of **₹20,000 crore** over the next five years to accelerate the development and deployment of **Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS)** technologies.



Details About CCUS

1. Fundamental Concept

- Definition:** CCUS is a suite of technologies designed to capture carbon dioxide emissions from large point sources (like power plants or factories) or directly from the atmosphere, and either reuse it or store it permanently underground.
- Objective:** To prevent CO₂ from entering the atmosphere and contributing to global warming, especially where switching to renewable energy is technically difficult.

2. The Three Stages of CCUS

- Capture:** CO₂ is separated from other gases produced at industrial facilities.
 - Post-combustion:** Capturing CO₂ from flue gases after burning fossil fuels (most common for existing plants).
 - Pre-combustion:** Trapping CO₂ before the fuel is fully burned (used in coal gasification).
 - Oxy-fuel combustion:** Burning fuel in nearly pure oxygen, resulting in a residue of almost pure CO₂ and water vapor.

- **Transport:** The captured CO₂ is compressed into a liquid-like state and moved via **pipelines, ships, or trucks** to a storage or utilization site.
- **Utilisation or Storage:**
 - **Utilisation (CCU):** Converting CO₂ into value-added products like **Green Urea**, synthetic fuels (methanol), building materials (carbonated concrete), or for **Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR)**.
 - **Storage (CCS):** Injecting CO₂ into deep geological formations such as **depleted oil and gas fields, saline aquifers, or unmineable coal seams** for permanent sequestration.

3. Budget 2026 Highlights & India's Strategy

- **Outlay:** ₹20,000 crore allocated for the next five years (2026–2031).
- **Target Sectors:** Power, Steel, Cement, Refineries, and Chemicals.
- **Technology Readiness Levels (TRL):** The budget aims to move Indian innovations from **TRL 3/4** (laboratory/pilot) to **TRL 9** (commercial deployment).
- **Blue Hydrogen:** CCUS is the critical enabler for producing **Blue Hydrogen** (hydrogen produced from natural gas where the resulting CO₂ is captured).

4. Key Challenges for India

- **High Cost:** CCUS is currently capital-intensive; CO₂ capture alone can account for 70–80% of the total cost.
- **Energy Penalty:** Running a capture plant requires significant energy, which can reduce the net power output of a station.

Q. Consider the following statements:

Statement I: Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) is considered a key technological option for achieving deep decarbonisation in hard-to-abate industrial sectors such as cement, steel, and chemicals.

Statement II: CCUS enables the capture of carbon dioxide from point sources and its permanent geological storage, thereby preventing its release into the atmosphere.

Statement III: CCUS allows captured carbon dioxide to be reused for industrial applications such as enhanced oil recovery, synthetic fuels, and building materials.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- Both Statement II and Statement III are correct and both of them explain Statement I
- Both Statement II and Statement III are correct but only one of them explains Statement I
- Only one of the Statements II and III is correct and that explains Statement I
- Neither Statement II nor Statement III is correct

Correct Answer: (a)

Statement II is correct because CCUS directly reduces industrial carbon emissions by capturing CO₂ at the source and storing it in deep geological formations such as depleted oil and gas fields or saline aquifers. This permanent storage prevents greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere, which is a core reason why CCUS is considered essential for decarbonising sectors where direct electrification is not feasible.

Statement III is also correct because CCUS includes the utilisation component, where captured CO₂ is converted into value-added products such as synthetic fuels, chemicals, carbonated concrete, and is also used for enhanced oil recovery. This reuse improves the economic viability of CCUS and supports industrial adoption.

Both statements ii and iii explain statement i: Together, they justify why CCUS is viewed as a key decarbonisation tool for hard-to-abate industries. The combination of permanent carbon storage and productive utilisation explains its strategic importance in climate mitigation frameworks, thereby correctly explaining Statement I.

Date - 2nd Feb 2026, Monday

1.3. SANT GURU RAVIDAS

Context:

Recently, the nation observed the **649th birth anniversary** of Sant Guru Ravidas on **February 1, 2026** (Magh Purnima), marked by high-profile visits and state-level celebrations. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited **Dera Sachkhand Ballan** in Jalandhar, Punjab—a prominent spiritual center for the Ravidassia community—to offer prayers and emphasize the government's commitment to the saint's vision of an egalitarian society.



1. General Profile and Life

- Era:** He was a 15th–16th century mystic poet-saint of the **Bhakti Movement**.
- Birth:** He was born in **Seer Goverdhanpur** near Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. His birthplace is now a major pilgrimage site known as **Shri Guru Ravidas Janam Asthan**.
- Lineage:** He belonged to a family of leather workers (**Chamar** community), and he continued to take pride in his profession as a symbol of the dignity of labor (Kirat).
- Contemporary Figures:** He was a contemporary of **Saint Kabir** and is widely believed to be a disciple of the Brahmin Bhakti poet **Ramananda**.

2. Philosophy and Teachings

- Nirguna Bhakti:** Guru Ravidas was a prominent figure of the **Nirguna Sampradaya**, emphasizing the worship of a formless, omnipresent God rather than idol worship or ritualistic orthodoxy.
- Equality:** He was one of the earliest advocates for the **abolition of the caste system** and gender discrimination, teaching that God resides in every human soul regardless of birth.
- Sahaj:** He used the term "Sahaj" to describe a mystical state where the individual soul and the Divine unite in a state of spiritual harmony.

- **Association with Meera Bai:** Sant Guru Ravidas is traditionally considered the spiritual guide (**Guru**) of the famous Rajput princess and poetess **Meera Bai**.

3. The Concept of "Begumpura"

- **Definition:** Derived from "Be-gham" (without sorrow) and "Pura" (city), it represents a **Utopian city** envisioned by Ravidas in one of his famous hymns.
- **Characteristics:** He described it as a land where there is no suffering, no taxes, no private property, and no social hierarchy.
- **Constitutional Link:** Modern scholars and political leaders often draw a parallel between the vision of **Begumpura** and the principles of **Social Justice** and **Equality** enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

4. Literary Contributions

- **Guru Granth Sahib:** His spiritual influence is immortalized in the Sikh holy scripture, which contains **41 of his hymns (Shabads)**. He is one of the 36 contributors (Bhagats) to the Adi Granth.
- **Panch Vani:** His verses are also found in the **Dadu Panthi** tradition of Rajasthan.
- **Amritbani Guru Ravidas Ji:** This is the primary holy book of the **Ravidassia religion**, which emerged as a distinct faith in the 21st century.

Q. With reference to Sant Guru Ravidas, consider the following statements:

1. He was a prominent proponent of the Saguna tradition of Bhakti, focusing on the worship of personal avatars of God.
2. The concept of "Begumpura," a sorrowless and casteless society, was first articulated in his hymns.
3. His devotional poems are included in the Guru Granth Sahib, the central scripture of Sikhism.
4. He is traditionally regarded as the spiritual guru of the Bhakti saint Meera Bai.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- A) Only one
- B) Only two
- C) Only three
- D) All four

Correct Answer: C) Only three

Solution:

STATEMENT 1 INCORRECT: Guru Ravidas belonged to the Nirguna (formless) tradition of Bhakti and generally rejected idol worship and Saguna forms.

STATEMENT 2 CORRECT: Begumpura is a unique socio-spiritual utopia envisioned by him to describe a just and equal society.

STATEMENT 3 CORRECT: 41 hymns of Guru Ravidas are part of the Guru Granth Sahib, making him a highly revered figure in the Sikh tradition.

STATEMENT 4 CORRECT: Historical and hagiographical accounts, particularly in Rajasthan, identify him as the Spiritual Guru of Meera Bai.

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1.4. 16TH FINANCE COMMISSION

Context:

Recently, the Union Finance Minister tabled the report of the **16th Finance Commission** in Parliament along with the Union Budget 2026-27. The government has accepted the Commission's recommendation to maintain the **vertical devolution** of central taxes to States at **41%** for the five-year period starting from April 1, 2026.



1. Constitutional and Statutory Framework

- **Article 280:** The Finance Commission (FC) is a **quasi-judicial, constitutional body** constituted by the President of India every five years or earlier.
- **Article 281:** It mandates the President to lay the recommendations of the FC, along with an **Action Taken Memorandum (ATM)**, before both Houses of Parliament.
- **Article 275:** Deals with **Grants-in-aid** from the Consolidated Fund of India to specific states in need of assistance.
- **Finance Commission Act, 1951:** Provides the legal framework for the qualifications of the Chairman and members.

2. Qualifications for Members of the 16th FC

The Chairman

The Chairman must be a person having "**experience in public affairs.**" * This is a broad qualification, allowing for the appointment of eminent economists (like Dr. Arvind Panagariya), seasoned bureaucrats, or distinguished politicians.

The Four Members

The four members are selected from among people who possess the following specific qualifications:

- **Judicial Expert:** A person who is, or has been, or is qualified to be appointed as a **Judge of a High Court.**
- **Financial Expert:** A person who has specialized knowledge of the **finances and accounts of the Government.**
- **Administrative Expert:** A person who has had wide experience in **financial matters and in administration.**
- **Economic Expert:** A person who has **specialized knowledge of economics.**

3. Key Recommendations (2026-2031)

A. Vertical Devolution

- The Commission recommended retaining the share of states in the net proceeds of central taxes at **41%**.
- The remaining **59%** stays with the Centre to fund national priorities, defense, and centrally sponsored schemes.

B. Horizontal Devolution (The Distribution Formula)

The 16th FC adjusted the weights for distributing funds among states to balance "Equity" (need-based) and "Efficiency" (performance-based).

Criterion	Weightage (16th FC)	Weightage (15th FC)
Income Distance	42.5%	45%
Population (2011 Census)	17.5%	15%
Area	10%	15%
Forest and Ecology	10%	10%
Demographic Performance	10%	12.5%
Contribution to GDP (New)	10%	—
Tax & Fiscal Efforts	Removed	2.5%

C. Grants and Local Bodies

- Local Body Grants:** Recommended **₹7.91 trillion** for the award period, split **60:40** between rural and urban local bodies.
- Urbanization Premium:** Introduced a **₹10,000 crore** incentive to support states in transitioning from rural to urban governance.
- Wastewater Management:** Allocated **₹56,100 crore** specifically for revamping drainage systems in middle-level municipalities.

D. Fiscal Road Map

- State Deficits:** Recommended capping states' fiscal deficits at **3% of GSDP**.
- Cesses and Surcharges:** The Commission suggested a "grand bargain" where the Union folds a portion of cesses/surcharges into the divisible pool in exchange for state-level fiscal reforms.

Q. In the context of the 16th Finance Commission's horizontal devolution formula, consider the following criteria:

- Income Distance
- Population (2011)
- Area
- Forest and Ecology

How many of the above are proposed to be used as criteria for horizontal devolution among States?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All the four

Correct Answer: (d) All the four

Solution

Statement I – CORRECT: Income Distance continues to remain the most important criterion under the 16th Finance Commission framework as well, since fiscal equalisation among States is a core constitutional mandate under Article 280.

Statement II – CORRECT: Population based on the 2011 Census is retained in the devolution formula to reflect current demographic realities rather than historical population figures.

Statement III – CORRECT: Area is included to compensate States that face higher administrative, infrastructure and service delivery costs due to large geographical size.

Statement IV – CORRECT: Forest and Ecology is included to reward States that preserve forest cover and ecological assets that provide national and global environmental benefits.

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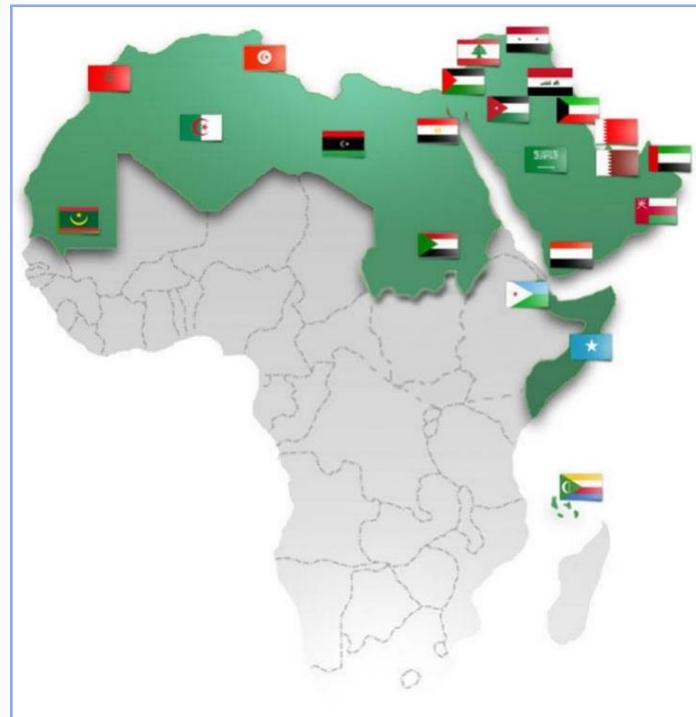
2.1. LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES (LAS)

Context:

Recently, the **League of Arab States (LAS)** and India successfully concluded the second **India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting** in New Delhi, resulting in the adoption of the "**New Delhi Declaration**."

1. Overview of the League of Arab States (LAS)

- **Establishment:** The League was founded on **March 22, 1945**, in Cairo, Egypt, following the signing of the **Alexandria Protocol** (1944).
- **Headquarters:** It is permanently headquartered in **Cairo, Egypt**.
- **Nature of Organization:** It is a voluntary intergovernmental association of Arabic-



speaking nations designed to strengthen ties, coordinate political activities, and safeguard the sovereignty of member states.

- **Charter:** The **Pact of the League of Arab States** serves as the founding treaty, stipulating that only independent Arab states may join.

2. Membership and Geography

- **Current Members:** There are **22 member states** spanning North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and West Asia.
- **Founding Members:** Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen (North Yemen at the time).
- **Geographic Reach:** The region extends from the **Atlantic Ocean** in the west to the **Arabian Sea** in the east, and from the **Mediterranean Sea** in the north to the **Indian Ocean** in the southeast.
- **Observation Status:** India is one of the five official **Observer States**, a status it has held since 2002 to facilitate closer diplomatic and economic coordination.

3. India and the League of Arab States

- **Institutional Framework:** Engagement is primarily conducted through the **Arab-Indian Cooperation Forum (AICF)**, established in 2008.
- **Strategic Ties:** India views the LAS as a critical partner for energy security (sourcing over 50% of its crude oil) and as a destination for its **9 million-strong diaspora**.
- **New Delhi Declaration (2026):** The latest summit emphasized a “**Zero Tolerance**” policy toward terrorism and sought a just solution for the Palestinian people based on the **1967 borders**.
- **Economic Corridors:** The League is a central stakeholder in the proposed **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**, aimed at enhancing global supply chain resilience.

Q. With reference to the League of Arab States (LAS), consider the following statements:

1. Every member state has one vote in the Council, and decisions are binding on all members regardless of whether they voted in favor.
2. India holds the status of a Permanent Observer in the League of Arab States.
3. The "Alexandria Protocol" of 1944 provided the foundational framework for the establishment of the League.
4. All member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are also members of the League of Arab States.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one statement
- (b) Only two statements
- (c) Only three statements
- (d) All four statements

Correct Answer: (c) Only three statements

Explanation:

STATEMENT 1 IS INCORRECT: According to the LAS Charter, decisions made by the Council are binding only on those states that have voted for them. If a decision is made by consensus, it is binding on all.

STATEMENT 2 IS CORRECT: India was granted Observer Status in 2002, making it the first non-Arab country to have such a formal link with the organization.

STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT: The Alexandria Protocol signed in 1944 by Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Transjordan (Jordan) laid the groundwork for the formal Pact signed in 1945.

STATEMENT 4 IS CORRECT: All six members of the GCC (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain) are integral members of the 22-nation League of Arab States.

Date – 3rd Feb 2026, Tuesday

2.2. COCOA CULTIVATION

Context:

Recently, the Union Finance Minister announced a dedicated mission for **cocoa** and cashew in the Union Budget 2026-27 to make India self-reliant in production and processing by 2030. According to The Hindu and The Indian Express, cocoa has gained significant attention due to a 2025-26 global price surge- reaching record highs of over **USD 10,000 per tonne**-triggered by severe supply deficits in West Africa.



The "Cocoa Promotion Scheme" aims to boost domestic productivity through the replacement of old trees and integration with the "Link South" agri-policy, particularly in coastal and hilly regions of Southern India.

1. Geographical and Climatic Requirements

- Origin:** The cocoa tree (*Theobroma cacao*) is native to the **Amazon rainforest of South America**.
- The Cocoa Belt:** It thrives in a narrow band known as the "Cocoa Belt," located within **20 degrees north and south of the Equator**.
- Temperature:** It requires high temperatures ranging between **18°C and 32°C**. It is highly sensitive to frost and extreme heat above 35°C.
- Rainfall:** Optimal growth occurs with well-distributed annual rainfall between **1500 mm and 2000 mm**.
- Humidity:** A hot and humid atmosphere is essential, with relative humidity levels often reaching **100% during the day**.

- **Shade Requirement:** Cocoa is traditionally an **under-storey crop** (shade-loving) and requires about 40–50% shade, which is why it is often intercropped with coconut and arecanut.
- **Soil:** It prefers deep, well-drained, nutrient-rich soils with a pH between **6.5 and 7.0**.

2. Global Production Status (2025-26)

- **Leading Producers:** West Africa accounts for approximately 70% of global production. The top three producers are **Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire)**, **Ghana**, and **Indonesia**.
- **Rising Contenders:** **Ecuador** has recently emerged as a significant player, overtaking traditional rankings due to better productivity.
- **The 2026 Crisis:** Production in West Africa has been hit by the **Swollen Shoot Virus, Black Pod disease**, and extreme weather (El Niño), leading to a global supply shortage and record-high prices.

3. Cocoa in India

- **Major Producing States:** India is the 15th largest producer globally. Within India, **Andhra Pradesh** is the largest producer (accounting for over 40% of production), followed by **Kerala, Karnataka**, and **Tamil Nadu**.
- **Intercropping Model:** In India, cocoa is predominantly grown as an **intercrop** in coconut and arecanut plantations, providing farmers with an additional income stream.
- **Trade Position:** India is a **net importer** of cocoa. Domestic production meets only about 20–25% of the total industry demand of 50,000 MT per annum, with the remainder imported from West Africa and Southeast Asia.
- **Varieties:** The three main varieties cultivated are:
 - **Forastero:** Most common (90% of global production), hardy and high-yielding.
 - **Criollo:** Premium quality, delicate, and prone to disease.
 - **Trinitario:** A hybrid of the two.

Q. With reference to the cultivation of Cocoa in India, consider the following statements:

1. In India, Andhra Pradesh is currently the leading producer of cocoa, surpassing traditional growers like Kerala.
2. Cocoa is primarily grown as a monoculture crop in the hilly regions of the North East to maximize sunlight exposure.
3. The Union Budget 2026-27 has proposed a dedicated mission to make India self-reliant in cocoa production by 2030.
4. India is a net exporter of cocoa beans, significantly contributing to the foreign exchange reserves through its premium "Criollo" variety.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one statement
- (b) Only two statements
- (c) Only three statements

(d) All four statements

Correct Answer: (b) Only two statements

Explanation

STATEMENT 1 IS CORRECT: Andhra Pradesh has emerged as the leading producer of cocoa in India, leveraging its extensive coconut and arecanut plantations for intercropping.

STATEMENT 2 IS INCORRECT: Cocoa is a shade-loving crop and is primarily grown as an intercrop (not monoculture) in Southern India. While the government is exploring the North East, the crop requires protection from direct wind and intense sun.

STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT: The Union Budget 2026-27 explicitly announced a program for cocoa to enhance domestic production and processing.

STATEMENT 4 IS INCORRECT: India is a net importer of cocoa, as domestic production satisfies only a small fraction of the total demand from the chocolate industry.

Date – 3rd Feb 2026, Tuesday

2.3. TURTLE TRAILS

Context:

Recently, the Union Finance Minister announced the development of "**Turtle Trails**" along the coastal areas of **Odisha, Karnataka, and Kerala** during the presentation of the Union Budget 2026-27.



Key Highlights of the Turtle Trail Initiative (2026)

1. Strategic Objectives

- Sustainable Eco-Tourism:** The trails are designed to offer world-class, ecologically sensitive tourism experiences without disturbing the sensitive nesting habitats.
- Habitat Protection:** By formalizing tourism "trails," the government aims to regulate visitor movement, thereby reducing the impact of unregulated beach tourism on nesting sites.
- Livelihood Generation:** The project includes training local youth as "**Turtle Guardians**" and professional tour guides through a pilot project in collaboration with the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).

2. Geographic Focus Areas

- Odisha Coast:** Focuses on the world-renowned "Rookeries" at **Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, Rushikulya River mouth**, and the **Devi River mouth**.
- Karnataka Coast:** Focuses on the districts of **Uttara Kannada** and **Dakshina Kannada**, where nesting frequency has significantly increased in recent years.

- **Kerala Coast:** Aims to preserve the sporadic nesting sites along the Malabar coast, integrating them into the larger maritime heritage circuit.

3. Technological Integration: Satellite Telemetry

- **Tracking Migration:** To support these trails with scientific data, India has intensified **satellite tagging**. Recent studies showed a turtle tagged in Odisha traveled as far as the **Sri Lankan shore**.
- **Bycatch Mitigation:** Data from these "trails" and tags help the Fisheries Department identify high-risk zones where fishing activity may be regulated to prevent accidental entanglement in trawl nets.

Olive Ridley Sea Turtles: Basic Details

Feature	Details
Scientific Name	Lepidochelys olivacea
IUCN Status	Vulnerable
Legal Protection	Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (Highest protection).
Unique Behavior	Arribada: Mass nesting where thousands of females come ashore simultaneously to lay eggs.
Diet	Carnivorous (jellyfish, snails, crabs, and shrimp).
Major Threats	Marine pollution, plastic ingestion, coastal lighting (disorients hatchlings), and trawling.

Q. With reference to the "Turtle Trail" initiative and sea turtle conservation in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Turtle Trail initiative was specifically announced in the Union Budget 2026 to be developed along the coasts of Odisha, Karnataka, and Kerala.
2. Olive Ridley turtles are the only sea turtle species in the world that exhibit the unique mass nesting behavior known as "Arribada."
3. Under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, Olive Ridley turtles are placed under Schedule II, allowing for regulated community harvesting of eggs.
4. Satellite telemetry studies in India have confirmed that Olive Ridley turtles nesting in Odisha can migrate as far as the coast of Sri Lanka.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Correct Answer: (b) Only two

Explanation:

STATEMENT 1 IS CORRECT: The Union Budget 2026-27 explicitly named Odisha, Karnataka, and Kerala as the primary states for the development of ecologically sustainable Turtle Trails.

STATEMENT 2 IS INCORRECT: While Olive Ridleys are most famous for it, the Kemp's Ridley sea turtle also exhibits the Arribada mass nesting behavior.

STATEMENT 3 IS INCORRECT: Olive Ridleys are protected under Schedule I (not Schedule II) of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, which prohibits any form of harvesting or trade.

STATEMENT 4 IS CORRECT: Recent satellite tagging programs conducted by the Odisha Forest Department and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) have successfully tracked turtles migrating from the Odisha coast to the Tamil Nadu coast and Sri Lankan waters.

Date – 3rd Feb 2026, Tuesday

2.4. GORILLA

Context:

Recently, the **“Gorilla Conservation Action Plan 2026-2030”** was discussed at a global wildlife summit, with reports highlighting the critical role of conservation leaders like **Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka** in protecting the world’s largest primates.



1. Classification and Distribution

Gorillas are the largest living primates and share approximately **98.3% of their DNA with humans**. They are divided into two distinct species, each with two recognized subspecies:

A. Western Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*)

- **Western Lowland Gorilla:** The most numerous subspecies; found in the rainforests of Cameroon, Gabon, and the Congo Basin.
- **Cross River Gorilla:** The rarest subspecies, limited to a small mountainous border region between Nigeria and Cameroon.

B. Eastern Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei*)

- **Mountain Gorilla:** Inhabits high-altitude montane forests in Rwanda, Uganda, and the DRC.
- **Eastern Lowland Gorilla (Grauer's Gorilla):** Found only in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

2. Key Biological and Physical Features

- **Size and Weight:** Adult males can weigh up to **200 kg** and stand **1.7 meters** tall. They are roughly twice the size of females—a phenomenon known as **sexual dimorphism**.

- **The Silverback:** Mature males develop a saddle of **silver-grey hair** on their backs. They serve as the undisputed leaders and protectors of their social groups (troops).
- **Locomotion:** Gorillas are primarily terrestrial and move using "**knuckle-walking**," where they support their weight on the third and fourth phalanges of their hands.
- **Diet:** They are predominantly **herbivorous**. Their diet consists of bamboo shoots, stems, fruits, and occasionally insects like ants.

3. Social Behavior and Intelligence

- **Troop Dynamics:** A typical troop consists of one dominant silverback, several females, and their offspring. Groups are cohesive and non-territorial, often with overlapping home ranges.
- **Nesting:** Every evening, gorillas construct **new sleeping nests** on the ground or in trees using foliage. This behavior is used by researchers to estimate population density.
- **Communication:** They utilize a wide range of vocalizations, facial expressions, and physical displays such as **chest-beating** to convey dominance or warn of threats.
- **Tool Use:** Gorillas have been observed using sticks to measure water depth and as "walking sticks" to support their weight while crossing swamps.

4. Conservation Status and Threats

Species/Subspecies	IUCN Status	Primary Habitat
Western Lowland Gorilla	Critically Endangered	Lowland Swamps/Forests
Cross River Gorilla	Critically Endangered	Montane Forests
Eastern Lowland Gorilla	Critically Endangered	Tropical Rainforests
Mountain Gorilla	Endangered	High-altitude Cloud Forests

Major Threats:

- **Poaching:** For the illegal bushmeat trade and trophies.
- **Habitat Loss:** Due to mining (especially for **Coltan** used in electronics), agriculture, and logging.
- **Disease:** Their genetic similarity makes them highly susceptible to human diseases like **Ebola** and respiratory infections.

Q. With reference to the "Gorilla" species found in the wild, consider the following statements:

1. Both the Western and Eastern species of gorillas are currently classified as "Critically Endangered" under the IUCN Red List.
2. Gorillas are primarily nocturnal animals that construct permanent nests in the canopy to avoid ground-based predators.
3. The "Cross River Gorilla" is considered the rarest subspecies and is found exclusively along the border of Nigeria and Cameroon.
4. Sexual dimorphism is a prominent feature in gorillas, with adult males significantly larger than females.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Correct Answer: (c)

STATEMENT 1 IS CORRECT: While the Mountain Gorilla was recently moved to "Endangered," both species (Gorilla gorilla and Gorilla beringei) as a whole remain Critically Endangered.

STATEMENT 2 IS INCORRECT: Gorillas are diurnal (active during the day) and they build new nests every single night, usually on the ground or in low branches, rather than permanent canopy nests.

STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT: The Cross River Gorilla is the most endangered subspecies with fewer than 300 individuals left in the wild, restricted to the Nigeria-Cameroon border.

STATEMENT 4 IS CORRECT: Gorillas show high levels of sexual dimorphism; males are nearly twice the weight of females and possess distinct sagittal crests.

Date – 4th Feb 2026, Wednesday

3.1. REMOVAL PROCESS OF THE CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER (CEC)

Context:

Recently, the political discourse in India has intensified following a series of public confrontations between the Election Commission and opposition parties over the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has publicly suggested her party would support an **impeachment**



motion against the current Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, alleging bias and "insulting" behavior during meetings.

1. Constitutional Basis (Article 324)

The Constitution of India ensures the independence of the Election Commission through specific tenure protections.

- **Article 324(5):** This article explicitly states that the Chief Election Commissioner shall not be removed from office except in **like manner and on the like grounds** as a Judge of the Supreme Court.
- **Grounds for Removal:** The only two grounds for removal are "**Proved Misbehaviour**" or "**Incapacity**."

2. The Parliamentary Procedure

While the term "impeachment" is colloquially used, the technical process is a **Removal Motion** governed by the **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968**:

- **Initiation:** The motion must be signed by at least **100 members** in the Lok Sabha or **50 members** in the Rajya Sabha.
- **Investigation:** The presiding officer (Speaker or Chairman) may admit or refuse the motion. If admitted, a **three-member committee** (comprising a Supreme Court judge, a Chief Justice of a High Court, and a distinguished jurist) investigates the charges.
- **Voting (Special Majority):** If the committee finds the CEC guilty, the motion must be passed by **each House** of Parliament with a **Special Majority**:
 - A majority of the **total membership** of that House.
 - A majority of not less than **two-thirds of the members** of that House **present and voting**.
- **Presidential Order:** Once passed by both Houses in the same session, an address is presented to the President, who then issues an order for removal.

3. CEC vs. Other Election Commissioners

There is a significant constitutional asymmetry in the removal process:

- **The CEC:** Enjoys the "Supreme Court Judge" level of protection described above.
- **Other ECs:** Can be removed by the President simply on the **recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner**. They do not require a parliamentary motion or a special majority.

4. Recent Legislative Framework

The **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023**, retains these removal protections. It further equates the salary, allowances, and service conditions of the CEC and ECs to that of a **Supreme Court Judge** (previously equated to a Cabinet Secretary in the initial draft of the Bill).

Q. With reference to the Election Commission of India, consider the following statements:

1. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the other two Election Commissioners (ECs) enjoy the same constitutional protection regarding their removal from office.
2. A motion for the removal of the CEC can be initiated in either House of Parliament but requires a simple majority for its passage.
3. The grounds for the removal of the CEC are limited to "proved misbehaviour" and "incapacity" as per the Constitution.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- A) Only one
- B) Only two
- C) All three
- D) None

Correct Answer: A) Only one

Explanation:

STATEMENT 1 IS INCORRECT: Only the CEC has the protection of being removed like a Supreme Court Judge. Other ECs can be removed by the President on the mere recommendation of the CEC.

STATEMENT 2 IS INCORRECT: The motion requires a Special Majority (majority of total membership AND 2/3rd of members present and voting), not a simple majority.

STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT: Under Article 324(5), the CEC is removed on the same grounds as a SC Judge, which are specifically "proved misbehaviour" or "incapacity."

Date – 4th Feb 2026, Wednesday

3.2. SUBORBITAL TOURISM

Context:

Recently, the global space tourism industry has gained renewed momentum following the successful completion of several high-profile civilian missions by private aerospace firms like **Blue Origin** and **Virgin Galactic**, alongside the Government of India's increased budgetary focus on **IN-SPACe** to regulate private space participation.



1. Defining Suborbital Flight

A suborbital flight is a spaceflight in which the spacecraft reaches **outer space** but its trajectory intersects the atmosphere or surface of the Earth, preventing it from completing one full orbital revolution.

- **Mechanism:** The vehicle is launched to a high altitude but does not reach the **orbital velocity** (approx. 28,000 km/h) required to stay in orbit around the Earth.
- **Trajectory:** It follows a **parabolic path**, looping up into space and then falling back down, similar to a high-toss ball.
- **Experience:** Passengers experience **3 to 5 minutes of weightlessness** (microgravity) and can view the curvature of the Earth against the blackness of space.

2. The Karman Line: The Boundary of Space

The **Karman Line** is an imaginary boundary located at an altitude of **100 km (62 miles)** above mean sea level.

- **Scientific Basis:** It represents the altitude where the atmosphere becomes too thin to support traditional aeronautical flight (wings can no longer provide lift).

- Legal Significance:** It is widely accepted by the **Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI)** as the boundary separating Earth's atmosphere from outer space, used to distinguish between aircraft and spacecraft.
- Varying Standards:** While the FAI uses 100 km, agencies like **NASA** and the **US Air Force** consider 80 km (50 miles) as the edge of space.

3. Comparison: Suborbital vs. Orbital

Feature	Suborbital Flight	Orbital Flight
Velocity	Lower than Orbital Velocity	Must reach ~28,000 km/h
Duration	10–15 minutes (Total)	Days to Months
Altitude	Reaches ~100 km (Edge of Space)	400 km+ (Low Earth Orbit/ISS)
Cost	Relatively lower (Lakhs to Crores)	Very High (Hundreds of Crores)

4. Major Players and Indian Perspective

- Global Players:** **Blue Origin** (New Shepard) and **Virgin Galactic** (SpaceShipTwo) are the leaders in suborbital trips, while **SpaceX** focuses primarily on orbital missions.
- Indian Ambition:** **ISRO** is reportedly working on its own space tourism module, aiming for a domestic capability by **2030**.
- Commercial Arm:** **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)** and the regulator **IN-SPACe** are facilitating private Indian startups to enter the suborbital launch segment.

Q. With reference to 'Suborbital Space Tourism', consider the following statements:

1. A suborbital vehicle travels at a speed higher than the Earth's escape velocity to ensure it reaches the Karman line.
2. The Karman line is the internationally recognized boundary of space located approximately 100 kilometers above sea level.
3. Passengers on a suborbital flight experience weightlessness because they are in a region where Earth's gravity is zero.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- A) Only one
- B) Only two
- C) All three
- D) None

Answer: A) Only one

Solution:

STATEMENT 1 IS INCORRECT: A suborbital vehicle travels at a speed lower than the orbital velocity (and much lower than escape velocity). If it reached escape velocity (11.2 km/s), it would leave Earth's gravity entirely and never return.

STATEMENT 2 IS CORRECT: The Karman Line is the most widely accepted conventional boundary (100 km) used to define where outer space begins.

STATEMENT 3 IS INCORRECT: Weightlessness is experienced not because gravity is zero (gravity at 100 km is still about 90% of that on the surface), but because the vehicle and passengers are in freefall while following the parabolic trajectory.

Date – 4th Feb 2026, Wednesday

3.3. NEW START TREATY

Context:

Recently, the global security landscape has reached a critical juncture as the **New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty)**, the final remaining pillar of bilateral nuclear arms control between the United States and Russia, is set to **expire on February 5, 2026**.

1. Basic Overview

- **Full Name:** Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms.
- **Signatories:** Signed by U.S. President **Barack Obama** and Russian President **Dmitry Medvedev** on April 8, 2010, in Prague.
- **Timeline:** It entered into force on **February 5, 2011**. Originally set for ten years, it was extended in 2021 for an additional five years, concluding in February 2026.



2. Core Limitations (The 700-800-1550 Rule)

The treaty imposes three central aggregate limits on strategic offensive arms:

- **700 Deployed:** Limit on deployed Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers.
- **1,550 Warheads:** Limit on nuclear warheads on deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers (calculated by specific counting rules).
- **800 Launchers:** Limit on both deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, SLBM launchers, and heavy bombers.

3. Verification and Transparency

To ensure neither side "cheats," the treaty includes a robust verification regime:

- **On-site Inspections:** Up to 18 inspections per year divided into two types (Type One for operational bases and Type Two for non-deployed storage).

- **Data Exchanges:** Biannual exchange of detailed data on the status and basing of treaty-accountable systems.
- **Bilateral Consultative Commission (BCC):** A dedicated body that meets at least twice a year to resolve compliance issues and technical ambiguities.
- **National Technical Means (NTM):** Permission to use satellites and other remote sensing tools for monitoring without interference.

4. Current Challenges and "Suspension"

- **Suspension by Russia (2023):** In February 2023, Russia officially announced the "suspension" of the treaty, citing U.S. involvement in the Ukraine conflict.
- **Operational Status:** While Russia stopped providing notifications and allowing inspections, both nations have largely indicated they would continue to respect the central numerical limits (the 1,550 warhead cap) until the formal expiration in 2026.

Q. With reference to the 'New START Treaty', which was recently in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It is a multilateral treaty signed under the aegis of the United Nations to eliminate all tactical and strategic nuclear weapons.
2. The treaty limits the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads for both the United States and Russia to 1,550 each.
3. Under the treaty's provisions, a state party can only extend the agreement once for a maximum period of five years.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A) Only one
 B) Only two
 C) All three
 D) None

Answer: B) Only two

Solution:

STATEMENT 1 IS INCORRECT: The New START is a bilateral treaty specifically between the United States and the Russian Federation, not a multilateral UN-led treaty. It focuses on strategic (long-range) weapons, not tactical ones.

STATEMENT 2 IS CORRECT: One of the core pillars of the treaty is the cap of 1,550 deployed strategic warheads for each side.

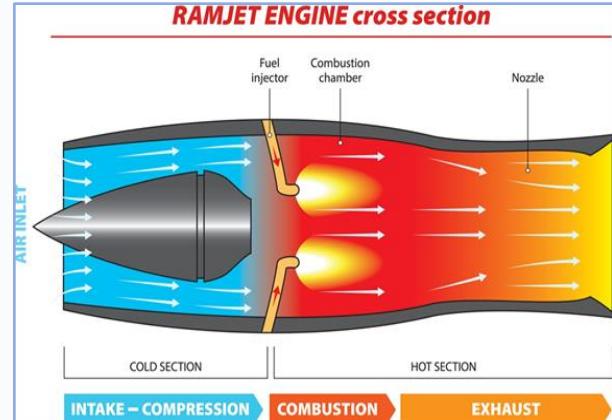
STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT: According to the treaty text, it allowed for one single extension for a period of up to five years, which was exercised by Presidents Biden and Putin in early 2021.

Date – 4th Feb 2026, Wednesday

3.4. SOLID FUEL DUCTED RAMJET (SFDR) TECHNOLOGY

Context:

Recently, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has made significant strides in the flight testing and refinement of the **Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR)** propulsion system, with recent reports highlighting its integration into future long-range air-to-air missiles (LRAAM) to ensure air superiority.



1. What is SFDR?

The SFDR is a missile propulsion system based on the **Ramjet** engine principle. Unlike standard rockets that carry both fuel and an oxidizer, the SFDR takes oxidizer (oxygen) from the atmosphere during flight. This significantly reduces the weight of the missile, allowing it to carry a larger payload or achieve a much longer range.

2. How it Works

- Air-Breathing Mechanism:** The missile uses its forward motion to compress incoming air into the engine (the "ram" effect).
- Solid Fuel Component:** It utilizes a solid fuel propellant that reacts with the compressed atmospheric oxygen to create thrust.
- No Moving Parts:** Ramjets are unique because they have no rotating compressors or turbines, making them simpler yet highly efficient at supersonic speeds.
- Boost-Sustain Phase:** The missile is initially launched using a conventional solid rocket motor to reach supersonic speeds, after which the SFDR takes over for the sustained long-range cruise.

3. Key Technical Features

- Thrust Modulation:** SFDR technology allows the missile to throttle its thrust based on the altitude and speed requirements, which is difficult to achieve with standard solid motors.
- Supersonic Speed:** It is designed to operate optimally at speeds between **Mach 2 and Mach 5**.
- No-Escape Zone:** Because the engine can maintain high speeds for a longer duration, it significantly increases the "No-Escape Zone" for enemy aircraft, making the missile much harder to evade.

4. Comparison with Conventional Systems

Feature	Conventional Solid Rocket	SFDR (Ramjet)
Oxidizer	Carried on board	Taken from the atmosphere
Weight	Heavier (due to oxidizer)	Lighter and more efficient
Range	Limited	Significantly Extended
Speed	Decelerates after fuel burnout	Maintains high speed longer

Q. With reference to the 'Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR)' technology, consider the following statements:

1. It is a propulsion system that eliminates the need for an onboard oxidizer by using atmospheric oxygen.
2. The SFDR-based missiles are primarily used for low-speed, subsonic cruise flight to ensure fuel efficiency.
3. The technology has been developed indigenously by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- A) Only one
- B) Only two
- C) All three
- D) None

Correct Answer: B) Only two

Explanation:

STATEMENT 1 IS CORRECT: SFDR is an air-breathing engine that uses a ramjet to suck in atmospheric oxygen, negating the need for an internal oxidizer.

STATEMENT 2 IS INCORRECT: SFDR technology is specifically designed for supersonic speeds (typically Mach 2 to Mach 5); ramjets do not function efficiently at subsonic speeds as they require high velocity to compress incoming air.

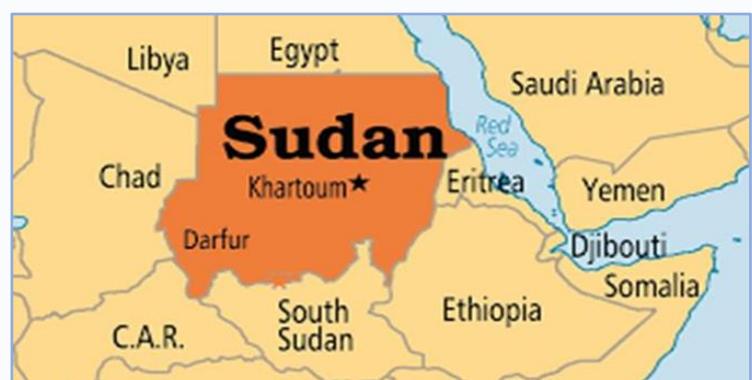
STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT: The SFDR system is an indigenous project led by DRDO's Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL) in Hyderabad.

Date – 5th Feb 2026, Thursday

4.1. MAPPING SUDAN: STRATEGIC GEOGRAPHY AND CRITICAL CITIES

Context:

Recently, Sudan has witnessed a major strategic shift in its ongoing civil war between the **Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)** and the **Rapid Support Forces (RSF)**. The Sudanese military recently claimed to have regained control over significant portions of the capital, **Khartoum**, and the strategic city of **Wad Medani**, signaling a potential turning point in the conflict.



Concurrently, the international community has raised alarms over the humanitarian blockade in **El Fasher**, the last major stronghold in the Darfur region not fully controlled by paramilitary forces, making the geographical understanding of these urban centers vital for global security analysis.

1. Geographical Location and Borders

Sudan is located in **Northeast Africa** and is the **third-largest country** on the African continent (after Algeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo). It is **not landlocked**; it possesses a strategic coastline of approximately 853 km along the **Red Sea**.

Neighboring Countries (Clockwise from North):

- **Egypt** (North)
- **Eritrea** (Southeast)
- **Ethiopia** (Southeast)
- **South Sudan** (South) — Seceded in 2011
- **Central African Republic** (Southwest)
- **Chad** (West)
- **Libya** (Northwest)

2. Key Physical Features

- **The Nile River System:** The **White Nile** (flowing from Lake Victoria) and the **Blue Nile** (flowing from Lake Tana, Ethiopia) meet in the heart of **Khartoum** to form the main Nile River, which then flows north into Egypt.
- **Red Sea Hills:** A range of mountains running parallel to the Red Sea in the east.
- **Marrah Mountains (Jebel Marra):** Located in the Darfur region of the west, containing the **Deriba Caldera**, the highest point in Sudan.
- **Nubian Desert:** Covers the northeastern part of the country, situated between the Nile and the Red Sea.
- **Gezira Plain:** The fertile “peninsula” between the Blue and White Niles, south of Khartoum, known for the Gezira Scheme (one of the world’s largest irrigation projects).

3. Important Cities and Their Strategic Significance

City	Significance
Khartoum	The capital city located at the confluence (Al-Mugran) of the Blue and White Niles.
Omdurman	Located on the west bank of the Nile, it is the country’s most populous city and a major cultural hub.
Port Sudan	The primary seaport on the Red Sea. It has become the de-facto administrative capital during the current conflict.
El Fasher	The capital of North Darfur; a critical humanitarian hub and a major site of ongoing battles.
Wad Medani	Capital of the Gezira state; a strategic agricultural and transit hub between Khartoum and Port Sudan.

Wadi Halfa	A key border town in the north near Lake Nubia, serving as a primary transit point for trade with Egypt.
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Q. Consider the following pairs of places in Sudan and the reasons they were recently in the news:

Place	Context / Significance
1. El Fasher	Last SAF stronghold in the Darfur region
2. Port Sudan	Main maritime outlet for Sudanese oil and exports
3. Khartoum	Confluence of the White Nile and Blue Nile

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- A) Only one
- B) Only two
- C) All three
- D) None

Answer: C) All three

Solution:

STATEMENT 1 CORRECT: El Fasher is the capital of North Darfur and has been the focus of international concern as the last major city in the region held by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) amidst RSF advances.

STATEMENT 2 CORRECT: Port Sudan is the nation's principal port on the Red Sea and serves as the primary gateway for international trade and humanitarian aid.

STATEMENT 3 CORRECT: Khartoum is geographically famous for being the site where the White Nile and the Blue Nile merge to form the Nile River.

Date – 5th Feb 2026, Thursday

4.2. PRESIDENT'S RULE: ARTICLE 356 AND CONSTITUTIONAL MACHINERY

Context:

Recently, the Union Government issued a notification **revoking President's Rule in Manipur** on February 4, 2026, following nearly a year of direct central administration. This move comes after the election of **Yumnam Khemchand Singh** as the leader of the ruling party, paving the way for the restoration of a popular elected government in the state.



1. Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 355:** Imposes a duty on the Union to protect every state against external aggression and internal disturbance and to ensure that the government of every state is carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.
- **Article 356:** Empowers the President to issue a proclamation if they are satisfied (based on a report from the Governor or "otherwise") that a situation has arisen where the state government cannot be carried on in accordance with the Constitution.
- **Article 365:** Provides that whenever a state fails to comply with or give effect to any direction from the Centre, it shall be lawful for the President to hold that a situation has arisen in which the government of the state cannot be carried on in accordance with the Constitution.

2. Parliamentary Approval and Duration

- **Approval Timeline:** A proclamation must be approved by both Houses of Parliament within **two months** from the date of its issue.
- **Majority Required:** It must be approved by a **Simple Majority** (majority of the members of that House present and voting).
- **Initial Period:** Once approved, it continues for **six months**. It can be extended for a maximum period of **three years** with repeated parliamentary approval every six months.
- **44th Amendment Act (1978) Restraint:** Extension beyond one year is only possible if:
 - A Proclamation of **National Emergency** is in operation in the whole of India or the state.
 - The **Election Commission** certifies that the holding of general elections to the legislative assembly is difficult.

3. Consequences of President's Rule

- **Executive Power:** The President dismisses the state council of ministers headed by the chief minister. The **Governor**, on behalf of the President, carries on the state administration with the help of the chief secretary or advisors appointed by the President.
- **Legislative Power:** The state legislative assembly is either **suspended or dissolved**. The Parliament passes the state legislative bills and the state budget.
- **Judicial Power:** The President **cannot** assume the powers vested in the High Court or suspend the operation of any constitutional provisions relating to High Courts.

4. Judicial Review: S.R. Bommai Case (1994)

The Supreme Court laid down several guidelines to prevent the misuse of Article 356:

- The proclamation is subject to **judicial review**.
- The satisfaction of the President must be based on **relevant material**.
- The burden of proof lies on the Centre to justify the imposition.
- If the court finds the proclamation unconstitutional, it has the power to **revive the dismissed state government** and restore the dissolved assembly.
- The state assembly should be dissolved **only after** Parliament has approved the proclamation.

5. Comparison between National Emergency and President Rule

Feature	National Emergency (Article 352)	President's Rule (Article 356)
Grounds of Imposition	War, External Aggression, or Armed Rebellion .	Failure of Constitutional Machinery in the state (Art. 356) or failure to comply with Union directions (Art. 365).
Scope	Can be applied to the entire country or a part of it.	Applied only to a specific state .
Parliamentary Approval	Must be approved within one month .	Must be approved within two months .
Majority Required	Special Majority (50% of total + 2/3rd of members present & voting).	Simple Majority (Majority of members present and voting).
Maximum Duration	Indefinite (with 6-monthly approval).	Maximum 3 years (with 6-monthly approval).
State Government	State executive and legislature continue to function , but the Centre gets concurrent power.	State Executive is dismissed ; State Legislature is suspended or dissolved .
Fundamental Rights	Affects Fundamental Rights (Art. 358 & 359). Art. 20 & 21 can never be suspended.	No effect on Fundamental Rights of citizens.
Law-making Power	Parliament can make laws on State List; power cannot be delegated to others.	Parliament can make laws on State List and can delegate this power to the President.
Revocation	Can be revoked by the President or by Lok Sabha passing a resolution for disapproval.	Can be revoked by the President alone . No specific provision for Lok Sabha to force revocation.

Q. With reference to the imposition of President's Rule in a state under Article 356, consider the following statements:

- I. A proclamation of President's Rule must be approved by a special majority in both Houses of Parliament within two months.
- II. The President has the power to revoke the proclamation at any time through a subsequent proclamation, which does not require parliamentary approval.
- III. During President's Rule, the Parliament can delegate the power to make laws for the state to the President or any other authority specified by him.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A) I and II only
- B) II and III only
- C) I and III only

D) I, II, and III

Answer: B) 2 and 3 only

Solution:

STATEMENT I IS INCORRECT: While the timeline of two months is correct, the proclamation of President's Rule requires only a Simple Majority (not a special majority) for approval in both Houses of Parliament.

STATEMENT II IS CORRECT: Under Article 356(2), a proclamation may be revoked or varied by a subsequent proclamation by the President. This revocation does not require the approval of Parliament.

STATEMENT III IS CORRECT: Under Article 357, when President's Rule is in force, the Parliament can confer the power of the State Legislature on the President and authorize him to delegate this power to other authorities.

Date – 5th Feb 2026, Thursday

4.3. KHEJRI TREE: THE LIFELINE OF THE DESERT

Context:

Recently, the **Khejri tree** has come into the spotlight due to the escalating '**Khejri Bachao Andolan**' (Save Khejri Movement) in Rajasthan's Bikaner district. Environmental activists and members of the **Bishnoi community** have launched massive protests and hunger strikes against the large-scale felling of these trees by solar power companies.



1. Botanical Profile and Characteristics

- Scientific Name:** Prosopis cineraria. It belongs to the **Fabaceae** (Pea) family.
- Common Names:** Known as **Shami** in Sanskrit, **Jand** in Punjab, **Ghaf** in the Middle East (National tree of UAE), and **Jammi** in Telangana.
- Physical Features:** It is a small, thorny, evergreen tree that typically grows to a height of 3–5 meters. It possesses a **bipinnate leaf** structure and deep taproots that can reach water tables at great depths.
- Hardiness:** The tree is exceptionally drought-resistant and can survive in areas with as little as 15 cm of annual rainfall. It can withstand extreme temperatures ranging from below **0°C to 50°C**.

2. Ecological Significance

- Nitrogen Fixation:** Like other legumes, it has a symbiotic relationship with bacteria that fix atmospheric nitrogen, thereby **enhancing soil fertility**.

- **Soil Binder:** It acts as an effective stabilizing agent for sandy soils, preventing desertification and soil erosion.
- **Keystone Species:** It provides shade, shelter, and food for various desert wildlife, including the Blackbuck, Chinkara, and numerous bird species.

3. Socio-Cultural and Historical Importance

- **State Tree:** It was officially declared the **State Tree of Rajasthan** in 1983. It is also the state tree of **Telangana**.
- **The Khejari Sacrifice (1730 AD):** Led by **Amrita Devi Bishnoi**, 363 members of the Bishnoi community sacrificed their lives to protect Khejri trees from being cut by the Maharaja of Jodhpur's men. This event served as the primary inspiration for the **Chipko Movement** of the 1970s.
- **Religious Significance:** Mentioned in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the tree is worshipped during the **Dussehra** festival. It is also associated with Lord Krishna and worshipped on Janmashtami.

4. Economic Utility

- **Sangri:** The unripe pods, known as Sangri, are a staple in Rajasthani cuisine (e.g., Ker Sangri). Efforts are currently underway to secure a **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** for Sangri.
- **Loom/Fodder:** The leaves, locally called Loom, serve as highly nutritious fodder for camels, goats, and cattle.
- **Medicine:** Different parts of the tree are used in Ayurveda to treat ailments like skin disorders, asthma, and rheumatism.

Q. With reference to the Khejri tree (*Prosopis cineraria*), consider the following statements:

1. It is a nitrogen-fixing tree that helps in improving the fertility of arid soils.
2. It is the state tree of both Rajasthan and Telangana.
3. The historical Khejari sacrifice, which inspired the Chipko Movement, was dedicated to protecting this tree.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- A) Only one
- B) Only two
- C) All three
- D) None

Answer: C) All three

Solution:

STATEMENT 1 IS CORRECT: As a member of the Fabaceae family, the Khejri tree fixes atmospheric nitrogen through its root nodules, making it a natural fertilizer for the desert ecosystem.

STATEMENT 2 IS CORRECT: Khejri (*Prosopis cineraria*) is indeed the designated state tree for Rajasthan (since 1983) and Telangana (where it is called Jammi Chettu).

STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT: The 1730 massacre in Khejarli village involving Amrita Devi Bishnoi was specifically to save Khejri trees, and this non-violent resistance became the ideological blueprint for the modern Chipko Movement.

Date – 6th Feb 2026, Friday

5.1. MOTION OF THANKS ON THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Context:

Recently, the Lok Sabha passed the **Motion of Thanks** on the President's Address through a voice vote amidst significant procedural drama. For the first time since 2004, the motion was adopted in the Lower House without the customary reply by the Prime Minister, as Speaker Om Birla advised the PM to avoid the House due to intelligence regarding planned disruptions by the Opposition.



While the Lok Sabha passed the motion amid slogans and rejected all Opposition amendments, the Prime Minister successfully concluded his reply to the debate in the Rajya Sabha on the same day.

1. Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 87(1):** It mandates the President to deliver a “**Special Address**” to both Houses of Parliament assembled together at the commencement of:
 - The first session after each general election to the Lok Sabha.
 - The first session of each year (usually the Budget Session).
- **Article 86(1):** This article gives the President the right to address either House or both Houses at any time, but unlike Article 87, this is not a mandatory “special address.”
- **Article 87(2):** It requires that the rules of the House provide time for the discussion of the matters referred to in such an address.

2. Nature of the President's Address

- The address is prepared by the **Council of Ministers** and approved by the Cabinet; hence, it is a statement of the government's policy and programs.
- It reviews the government's activities/achievements of the previous year and outlines the legislative and policy agenda for the upcoming year.
- No other business is transacted by the Parliament until the President has delivered this address.

3. The Motion and Debate

- The address is followed by a discussion in both Houses on a motion termed the “**Motion of Thanks.**”

- **Proposer and Seconder:** The motion is moved by a member and seconded by another, both of whom are selected by the Prime Minister.
- **Scope of Debate:** The discussion is very broad. Members can criticize the government's policies or mention issues that were omitted from the address.
- **PM's Reply:** At the end of the discussion, the Prime Minister (or any other Minister) replies to the points raised.
- **Voting:** After the reply, amendments are put to vote, followed by the main motion. It must be passed by a **simple majority** (majority of members present and voting).

4. Significance and Impact

- **Accountability:** It is a vital tool for the Parliament to examine and criticize the executive's performance.
- **Defeat of Government:** If the Motion of Thanks is defeated in the Lok Sabha, it is viewed as a **lack of confidence** in the government and leads to the **resignation of the Council of Ministers**.
- **Amendments in Rajya Sabha:** Unlike the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha has adopted the Motion of Thanks with amendments on rare occasions (e.g., 1980, 1989, 2001, 2015, and 2016). This does not lead to the government's resignation but signifies a moral or political setback.

Q. With reference to the 'Motion of Thanks' in the Indian Parliament, consider the following statements:

1. The President's Special Address is a constitutional obligation that must be delivered at the commencement of every session of Parliament.
2. The Motion of Thanks must be passed in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, and its defeat in either House necessitates the resignation of the government.
3. Amendments to the Motion of Thanks can be moved by members to highlight issues that were not mentioned in the President's Address.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- A) Only one
- B) Only two
- C) All three
- D) None

Correct Answer: A (Only one)

Explanation

STATEMENT 1 IS INCORRECT: Under Article 87, the Special Address is mandatory only at the commencement of the first session after a general election and the first session of each year, not every session.

STATEMENT 2 IS INCORRECT: While the motion must be passed in both Houses, only its defeat in the Lok Sabha amounts to a lack of confidence requiring the government's resignation. Defeat/amendment in the Rajya Sabha does not force a resignation.

STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT: Members of Parliament have the right to move amendments to the motion to include matters they believe the Address failed to mention or to criticize specific policies.

Date – 6th Feb 2026, Friday

5.2. DGP APPOINTMENT PROCESS

Context:

Recently, the Supreme Court of India expressed strong disapproval of the growing trend among State Governments to appoint "Acting DGPs" instead of regular police chiefs. The Bench, led by Chief Justice Surya Kant, authorized the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) to issue formal reminders to States for timely proposals and directed the Commission to initiate contempt proceedings in the Prakash Singh case if States continue to default on these constitutional and judicial mandates.



1. The Landmark Prakash Singh Case (2006)

The appointment process is governed by the directives issued by the Supreme Court in **Prakash Singh vs. Union of India**. The court aimed to insulate the police from political interference and ensure a merit-based selection.

- **Empanelment:** The State Government must select the DGP from a panel of the three senior-most officers of the department who have been empanelled for promotion by the UPSC.
- **Tenure Security:** Once selected, the DGP should have a minimum tenure of **at least two years**, irrespective of their date of superannuation (retirement).
- **No "Acting" DGPs:** The Supreme Court has repeatedly clarified that there is no concept of an "Acting DGP." States must appoint a permanent DGP to ensure stability in the police hierarchy.

2. The Appointment Procedure

The process involves a collaboration between the State Government and the Union:

1. **Proposal Submission:** The State Government must send a proposal containing a list of eligible IPS officers to the UPSC **three months** before the incumbent DGP is due to retire.
2. **Empanelment Committee:** The UPSC convenes a committee to shortlist names. This committee typically includes:
 - Chairman or Member of the UPSC (Chairperson).
 - Union Home Secretary.
 - State Chief Secretary.
 - State DGP (Incumbent).
 - A Chief of a Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) nominated by the Center.

3. **Shortlisting:** The committee selects a panel of **three officers** based on seniority, service record, and range of experience.
4. **Final Selection:** The State Government is then mandated to "immediately" appoint one of the three persons from the UPSC-recommended panel.

3. Eligibility Criteria (As per UPSC 2023 Guidelines)

The UPSC has refined the eligibility rules to ensure only the most experienced and capable officers reach the top:

- **Length of Service:** In 2023, the UPSC reduced the minimum service requirement from 30 years to **25 years** to expand the pool of eligible candidates.
- **Residual Tenure:** To avoid "token" appointments, only officers who have at least **six months of service remaining** before retirement are considered for the panel.
- **Experience:** Preference is given to officers with at least 10 years of experience in critical areas such as Law and Order, Intelligence, or the Crime Branch.
- **Willingness:** An officer is not included in the panel unless they express their willingness to be considered for the post.

4. Key Constitutional and Statutory Points

- **State Subject:** "Police" and "Public Order" are subjects under the **State List (List II)** of the Seventh Schedule.
- **All India Services:** While the police force is a state subject, the DGP is an **IPS officer**, belonging to an All India Service, which is why the UPSC (a central body) plays a role in the selection.
- **Single Window System:** The Government of India has introduced a "Single Window System" for States to submit proposals to the UPSC to expedite the empanelment process and reduce delays.

Q. With reference to the appointment of the Director General of Police (DGP) in India, consider the following statements:

- I. The DGP of a State is appointed by the Governor upon the sole recommendation of the State Cabinet.
- II. According to Supreme Court guidelines, an officer must have at least six months of service remaining to be eligible for empanelment as DGP.
- III. The Supreme Court has mandated a fixed minimum tenure of two years for the DGP, regardless of their date of retirement.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A) I and II only
- B) II and III only
- C) I and III only
- D) I, II and III

Correct Answer: B

Explanation

STATEMENT I INCORRECT: The DGP is appointed by the State Government, but they must choose from a panel of three names prepared by the UPSC, not based on the sole recommendation of the Cabinet.

STATEMENT II CORRECT: As per the UPSC's 2023 revised guidelines, only police officers with at least six months of service left before retirement are considered for empanelment.

STATEMENT III CORRECT: The Prakash Singh judgment (2006) mandates a minimum tenure of two years for the DGP to protect the office from political whim and frequent transfers.

Date – 6th Feb 2026, Friday

5.3. GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC)

Context:

Recently, India and the six-nation **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** officially signed the **Terms of Reference (ToR)** to launch formal negotiations for a long-pending **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**. This significant diplomatic step, announced during a high-level meeting in New Delhi, aims to revitalize trade talks that have been stalled for nearly two decades.



The move is particularly timely as the GCC has emerged as India's largest merchandise trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching approximately **\$178.5 billion** in the 2024-25 fiscal year.

1. About the GCC

- **Establishment:** The GCC is a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern nations established on **May 25, 1981**, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- **Member States:** It comprises **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, **Saudi Arabia**, **Qatar**, **Oman**, **Kuwait**, and **Bahrain**.
- **Headquarters:** The Secretariat-General is located in **Riyadh**, Saudi Arabia.
- **Objectives:** Its primary goal is to achieve coordination, integration, and interconnection between its members in all fields, including economy, finance, trade, and customs.
- **Structure:**
 - **Supreme Council:** The highest authority, composed of the Heads of State; the presidency rotates annually.
 - **Ministerial Council:** Composed of Foreign Ministers who meet every three months to implement policies.
 - **Secretariat General:** The administrative arm responsible for policy monitoring.

2. India-GCC Economic Relations

- **Largest Trade Partner:** The GCC as a bloc is India's largest trading partner. In 2024-25, trade with the GCC surpassed that with the USA (\$132.1 billion) and the European Union (\$136.5 billion).
- **Trade Deficit:** India currently faces a significant trade deficit with the region (approx. \$64.8 billion) due to heavy imports of **crude oil, LNG, and petrochemicals**.
- **Key Exports:** India primarily exports engineering goods, rice, textiles, machinery, and gems and jewelry to the Gulf nations.
- **Remittances:** The region is home to nearly **10 million Indian expatriates**, who contribute significantly to India's foreign exchange through remittances.

3. Energy and Strategic Security

- **Energy Anchor:** The GCC countries contribute significantly to India's energy security, accounting for roughly **35% of oil imports** and **70% of gas imports**.
- **Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR):** India is engaging GCC nations like Saudi Arabia and the UAE to participate in the second phase of its SPR program.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** While India maintains close ties with all six members, it has formal "Strategic Partnership" agreements with **Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Oman**.

4. Recent Initiatives

- **FTA Negotiations (2026):** The signing of the Terms of Reference (ToR) in February 2026 sets the framework for scope, objectives, and procedures for the final trade pact.
- **Unified Tourist Visa:** The GCC is working toward a "Schengen-style" unified tourist visa (expected pilot in late 2026) to allow seamless travel across all six member states.

Q. With reference to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), consider the following statements:

1. It is a regional intergovernmental union comprising all the littoral states of the Persian Gulf.
2. The Supreme Council is the highest authority of the GCC, and its presidency rotates periodically among the Member States.
3. As of 2025, the GCC as a bloc has surpassed the United States and the European Union to become India's largest merchandise trading partner.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- A) Only one
- B) Only two
- C) All three
- D) None

Correct Answer: B (Only two)

Explanation

STATEMENT 1 IS INCORRECT: While the GCC countries are located around the Persian Gulf, the council does not include all littoral states. Specifically, Iran and Iraq are littoral states of the Persian Gulf but are not members of the GCC.

STATEMENT 2 IS CORRECT: The Supreme Council, consisting of the Heads of State, is the top decision-making body, and its presidency rotates among members in alphabetical order.

STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT: According to the latest trade data (2024-25), India's total bilateral merchandise trade with the GCC stood at \$178.5 billion, which is higher than its trade with the EU (\$136.5 billion) and the US (\$132.1 billion).

Date – 6th Feb 2026, Friday

5.4. INDIA'S AIRCRAFT FLEET

Context:

Recently, in light of the official visit of French President Emmanuel Macron to India this February 2026, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) is set to convene to grant the final Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for the mega-deal involving 114 Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA). This follows the landmark Inter-Governmental Agreement signed in April 2025 for 26 Rafale-Marine (Rafale-M) jets for the Indian Navy.

1. Combat Aircraft (Fighters)

- **Sukhoi Su-30MKI:** **Type:** 4.5-Generation Multirole Air Superiority Fighter.
- **Features:** Twin-engine, two-seater aircraft equipped with **Thrust Vectoring Control (TVC)** and canards for extreme maneuverability (e.g., Pugachev's Cobra maneuver).
- **Key Weapons:** BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, Astra BVRAAM, and R-77 missiles.
- **Dassault Rafale:** **Type:** 4.5-Generation "Omnirole" Fighter.
- **Features:** Equipped with **AESA Radar (RBE2)**, SPECTRA electronic warfare suite, and "cold start" capability for high-altitude airbases.
- **Key Weapons:** **Meteor** (Long-range air-to-air), **SCALP** (Deep-strike cruise missile), and **HAMMER** (Precision-guided munitions).
- **HAL Tejas (LCA):** **Type:** Indigenous Light Multirole Fighter.

Indian Active Fighter Aircraft



- **Features:** World's smallest lightweight multi-role supersonic fighter; features a glass cockpit, **Fly-By-Wire (FBW)** system, and extensive use of composite materials (45% of airframe).
- **Variants:** Mk1 (Initial), Mk1A (Advanced radar/jammer), and Trainer.
- **Mirage 2000: Type:** Single-engine Multirole Fighter.
- **Features:** Known for its delta-wing design and high accuracy in bombing; played a pivotal role in the Kargil War and Balakot airstrikes.
- **MiG-29 (UPG): Type:** Twin-engine Air Superiority Fighter.
- **Features:** Highly agile; the UPG variant includes modern avionics, a refined radar, and mid-air refueling capabilities.

2. Transport Aircraft

- **C-17 Globemaster III:Role:** Strategic Heavy-lift Transport.
- **Details:** Can carry 77 tonnes of cargo; capable of landing on short, unpaved runways (STOL) and transporting tanks like the T-90 or Arjun.
- **C-130J Super Hercules:Role:** Tactical Special Operations Transport.
- **Details:** Ideal for landing on "Advanced Landing Grounds" (ALGs) in rough terrain like Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO).
- **C-295: Role:** Tactical Airlifter.
- **Details:** Replacing the Avro-748; features a 9-tonne capacity and rear ramp for rapid loading. It is the first military aircraft project in India involving a private-sector final assembly line (Tata-Airbus).

3. Rotary Wing (Helicopters)

- **HAL Prachand (LCH): Role:** Indigenous Light Combat Helicopter.
- **Details:** The only attack helicopter in the world capable of taking off and landing at an altitude of **5,000 meters** (Siachen Glacier) with a significant weapon load.
- **AH-64E Apache: Role:** Multi-role Attack Helicopter.
- **Details:** Features "Longbow" Fire Control Radar; armed with **Hellfire** missiles and a 30mm chain gun slave-linked to the pilot's helmet.
- **CH-47 Chinook: Role:** Heavy-lift Transport Helicopter.
- **Details:** Recognizable by its tandem rotors; used for transporting heavy artillery (like M777 howitzers) and troops to high-altitude zones.

4. Special Mission Aircraft

- **Netra AEW&C: Details:** Indigenous system developed by DRDO on an Embraer-145 platform; provides 240-degree radar coverage to detect incoming threats.
- **Phalcon AWACS: Details:** Israeli radar mounted on Russian IL-76 aircraft; provides a **360-degree** "eye in the sky" coverage over a range of 400 km.
- **IL-78 MKI:Role:** Mid-air Refueller (Tanker).
- **Details:** Extends the combat radius of fighter jets by providing fuel during flight.

Q. With reference to Indian military aircraft, consider the following statements:

- I. The C-295 aircraft project is the first instance of a military aircraft being manufactured in India by a private sector consortium.
- II. The HAL Prachand is currently the only attack helicopter globally capable of landing at altitudes exceeding 5,000 meters.
- III. The Netra Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C) system provides 360-degree radar coverage using a rotodome antenna.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) I and II only
- (b) II and III only
- (c) I and III only
- (d) I, II, and III

Correct Answer: (a) I and II only

Explanation

STATEMENT I CORRECT: The C-295 is being manufactured by a partnership between Airbus and Tata Advanced Systems, marking the first private-sector military aircraft assembly line in India.

STATEMENT II CORRECT: The HAL Prachand (LCH) was specifically designed for high-altitude operations, making it the only attack helicopter that can operate at the Siachen Glacier heights.

STATEMENT III INCORRECT: The Netra system provides 240-degree coverage using an Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar fixed on the fuselage. It is the Phalcon AWACS that provides 360-degree coverage via a rotodome.

Date – 7th Feb 2026, Saturday

6.1. CHABAHAR PORT

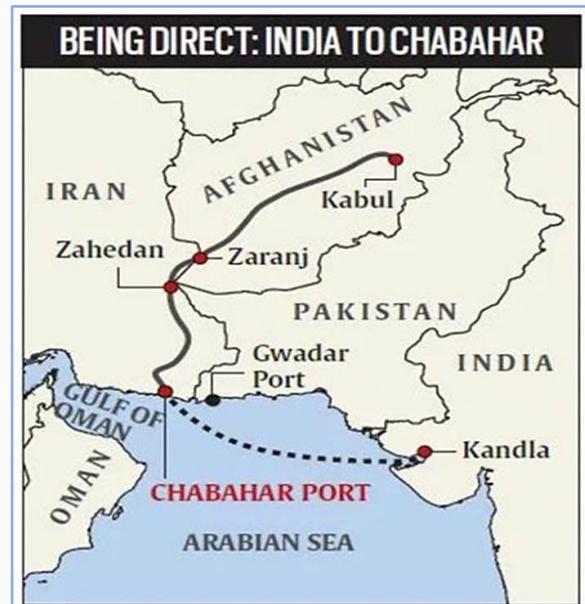
Context:

The government recently told Parliament that it has completely paid up its commitment of \$120 million for the Chabahar port, well before the U.S. sanctions waiver runs out in April 2026.

Further, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the U.S. has extended a conditional sanctions waiver for the Chabahar project until April 26, 2026, following India-U.S. discussions, and added that India remains engaged with all stakeholders amid uncertainty over any further extension.

About the Chabahar Port Project

- In January 2015, **India Ports Global Limited (IPGL)** was incorporated under the Companies Act, 2013 for the development of ports overseas.



- **April 2016:** India, Iran, and Afghanistan signed a **trilateral agreement** to develop Chabahar Port.
- **December 2017:** The **first phase of Shahid Beheshti Port** was inaugurated after rapid development by India's Shipping Ministry.
- In December 2018, IPGL took over part of the operations at Shahid Beheshti Port.
- Two years later, Afghan exports to India passed through the port for the first time. India received four such consignments that year.

Key Geographic and Operational Features

- **Location:** Situated in the **Gulf of Oman**, it provides direct access to the Indian Ocean, bypassing the sensitive **Strait of Hormuz** choke point.
- **Structure:** The port consists of two separate complexes: **Shahid Beheshti** and **Shahid Kalantari**, each featuring five berths.
- **Infrastructure:** It is a deep-sea port capable of handling massive cargo ships that cannot be accommodated at other Iranian ports like Bandar Abbas.

Strategic Significance

- **Alternative trade route:** Provides India an alternative trade route to **Afghanistan and Central Asia**, bypassing Pakistan.
- **Regional Connectivity:** Enhances India's connectivity to Central Asia, Russia, and Europe via the **International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**.
- INSTC is a multi-modal transportation route **linking** the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran and onward to northern Europe via St. Petersburg in Russia.
- **Counterbalance:** Acts as a **counterbalance to Gwadar Port (Pakistan)** developed with Chinese assistance.
- **Energy security:** The port facilitates India's access to regional energy reserves and secures a stable supply chain by enabling direct investment in Iran's energy infrastructure

With reference to the Chabahar Port, consider the following statements:

- I. Chabahar Port is Iran's only oceanic port with direct access to the Indian Ocean.
- II. India operates the Shahid Beheshti terminal at Chabahar through India Ports Global Limited (IPGL).
- III. The port provides India a direct land route to Afghanistan and Central Asia bypassing Pakistan.
- IV. The project is part of the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) I, II and III only
- (b) I, II and IV only
- (c) I, III and IV only
- (d) I, II, III and IV

Correct Answer: D

Explanation:

Statement I is correct: Chabahar is Iran's only oceanic port, located on the Gulf of Oman, giving it direct access to the Indian Ocean.

Statement II is correct: India operates the Shahid Beheshti Terminal through India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) under an agreement with Iran.

Statement III is Correct: Chabahar provides India a direct connectivity route to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan, which is strategically significant.

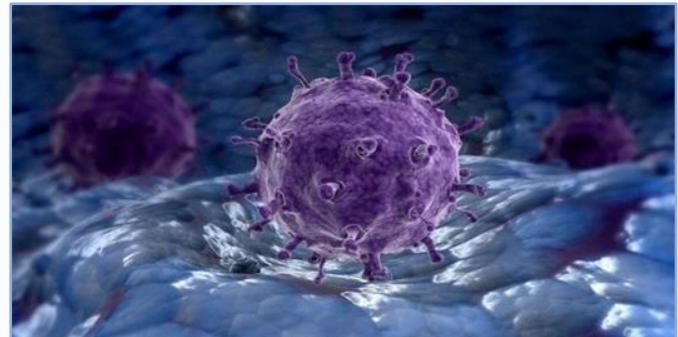
Statement IV is correct: The port is a key component of the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC), linking India with Central Asia, Russia, and Europe.

Date – 7th Feb 2026, Saturday

6.2. H5N1 AVIAN INFLUENZA VIRUS

Context:

Recently, the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying confirmed an outbreak of the **Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1** in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, following the mass death of crows in the Adyar region. Laboratory tests conducted at the **ICAR-National Institute of High Security**



Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) in Bhopal confirmed the presence of the virus, prompting the state government to issue a public health advisory and intensify surveillance in wet markets and poultry farms.

1. What is H5N1?

- **Definition:** Avian Influenza, commonly known as **Bird Flu**, is a highly contagious viral infection caused by **Influenza Type A** viruses.
- **Pathogenicity:** H5N1 is classified as "Highly Pathogenic" (HPAI) because it causes severe disease and high mortality rates (up to 90–100%) in domestic poultry.
- **Origin:** The current lineage (Goose/Guangdong) was first detected in **1996** in China.

2. Biological Structure

- **Subtyping:** Influenza A viruses are classified based on two surface proteins:
 - **Hemagglutinin (H):** Responsible for the virus's ability to **attach and enter** a host cell. There are 18 known H subtypes.
 - **Neuraminidase (N):** Facilitates the **release** of new viral particles from the host cell to spread the infection. There are 11 known N subtypes.
- **Combination:** H5N1 is just one of 198 possible combinations (e.g., H5N8, H1N1, H3N2).

3. Transmission Dynamics

- **Natural Reservoirs:** Wild aquatic birds (especially ducks and geese) are the natural hosts. They often carry the virus without showing symptoms but can spread it via saliva, nasal secretions, and feces.
- **Spillover to Mammals:** The virus has increasingly been detected in mammals such as foxes, bears, sea lions, and recently, **dairy cattle** and captive wildlife (tigers/leopards) in India.
- **Human Transmission:** Human infection is **rare** and usually occurs through direct contact with infected birds or contaminated environments. **Human-to-human transmission** remains extremely uncommon and inefficient.

4. Global and National Governance

- **WHO (Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System – GISRS):** Monitors circulating strains to provide risk assessments.
- **WOAH (World Organisation for Animal Health):** Coordinates international efforts to improve animal health.
- **India's Response:** Governed by the **National Action Plan for Prevention, Control, and Containment of Avian Influenza (revised 2021)**.

Q. With reference to the H5N1 Avian Influenza, consider the following statements:

1. It is caused by the Influenza Type B virus, which primarily affects domestic poultry.
2. The Hemagglutinin protein on the virus surface is responsible for the release of viral progeny from the host cell.
3. While it is highly lethal for birds, sustained human-to-human transmission has not yet been established.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
- 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: (b)

Explanation

STATEMENT 1 INCORRECT: Avian Influenza is caused by Influenza Type A viruses, not Type B. Type B viruses almost exclusively infect humans and do not cause pandemics.

STATEMENT 2 INCORRECT: The Neuraminidase (N) protein is responsible for the release of progeny; Hemagglutinin (H) is responsible for entry/attachment.

STATEMENT 3 CORRECT: H5N1 has a high fatality rate in birds and humans, but it has not yet acquired the mutations necessary for efficient or sustained human-to-human spread.

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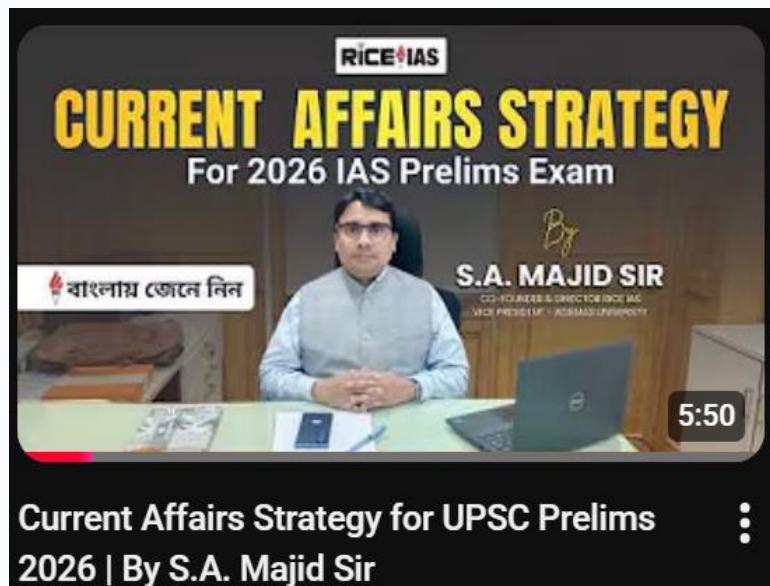
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