



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Coverage of

27th Feb. - 5th March, 2026

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**UPSC ESE, PSUs,
RRB, SSC, Banking &
State Services Exams**

Middle-East Crisis

The **USA** and **Israel** joined hands to attack **Iran**, wiping out its top leadership.



27th FEBRUARY 2026

PM Modi's visit to Israel

- **Context:** The Prime Minister paid an official visit to Israel. In a historic first, Prime Minister Modi addressed the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, becoming the first Indian Prime Minister to do so.



Major Outcomes

- Both nations elevated their relationship to Special Strategic Partnership.
- The Joint Commission on Science and Technology has been elevated to Ministerial level.
- Initiative to collaborate in Critical and Emerging Technologies led by National Security Advisors.
- 20 Joint Fellowships in Agricultural Research.
- Quota of up to 50,000 Indian workers over the next 5 years.
- Both nations also signed 17 pacts, the focus of the visit has been on technology, including in the area of artificial intelligence, cyber security, innovation research and startups.
- The two sides also vowed to expand their already close defence partnership by working towards joint development and joint production under the framework of the transfer of technologies.
- India and Israel also discussed the implementation of the India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor

(IMEC) and cooperation under the framework of I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA).

Significance of the Visit

- **Special Strategic Partnership:** The upgradation of relationship to a Special Strategic Partnership reflects deeper cooperation across defence, technology, trade, and people-to-people ties.
- **Strategic and Emerging Technologies:** Both countries agreed to launch major cooperation in critical and emerging technologies including AI, quantum computing, cybersecurity, and digital innovation. These areas align with India's goals like Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliance) and support Israel's strengths as a global innovation hub.
- **Defence and Security Collaboration:** The two sides agreed to expand collaboration from merely procurement to joint development, joint production, and technology transfer of defence systems. These moves strengthen India's defence capabilities and deepen security partnerships amid global uncertainties.
- **Economic Engagement and Trade Initiatives:** The visit accelerated economic cooperation:
 - Progress toward a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was reaffirmed.
 - A financial dialogue was launched.
 - Discussions included linking India's UPI payments system with Israel's payment infrastructure to boost financial connectivity.
- **Context of Regional Tensions:** The timing of the visit amid ongoing tensions in the Middle East, threats of conflict involving Iran, and wider geopolitical instability gave it added significance. It signalled India's intent to be an engaged global actor that advances its strategic interests while promoting peace and stability.

India-Israel Relations

- **Bilateral Relations:** India announced its recognition of Israel in 1950. Regular embassies opened in 1992 when full diplomatic relations were established between the two countries.

- The bilateral relations were elevated to strategic partnership in 2017 and were upgraded to Special Strategic Partnership after this visit.
- In 2022-23, the two countries jointly celebrated 30 years of the elevation of bilateral ties to full diplomatic ties.
- **Defense and Security:** Israel has been a key supplier of advanced technology from AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) radars and drones to missile and surveillance systems making it one of India's largest defense suppliers.
- **Bilateral Trade:** India is Israel's 2nd trading partner in Asia and the 7th largest globally. In FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25 the bilateral trade (excluding defense) was US\$ 6.53 billion and US\$3.75 billion respectively.
- **Investment:** During April 2000 – March 2024, Israel's direct FDI into India was U.S. \$334.2 million. There are over 300 investments from Israel in India mainly in the high-tech domain, agriculture and water.
- **Agriculture and Water Management:** In 1993, the first Agreement on Cooperation in Agriculture was signed. In 2006, the Comprehensive Work Plan on Agriculture launched (3 year cycles) – implemented through MASHAV (Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation).
 - In 2025, the Revised Agriculture Cooperation Agreement signed, expanding areas of partnership.
 - The Indo-Israeli Centers of Excellence (CoE) demonstrate Israeli expertise, technologies and innovation in the horticultural field.
- **Science, Technology, Counter-Terrorism and Innovation:** India-Israel cooperation in Science and Technology (S&T) is overseen by the Joint Committee on S&T, established under the Agreement of Science and Technology cooperation signed in 1993. A US\$ 40million India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F) for joint projects was also set up.
- **Multilateral Cooperation:** Both are active members of the I2U2 group (India, Israel, USA, UAE), focusing

on economic and space collaboration with projects like food parks and space-based environmental tools.

Hexagon Alliance

- **Context:** A new geopolitical grouping, the Hexagon Alliance, has been proposed by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, with India at its centre.

Key Highlights

- The "Hexagon of Alliances" would include Israel, India, Mediterranean partners such as Greece and Cyprus, along with other unnamed Arab, African and Asian states.
- The framework is designed to operate across three tracks: economic cooperation, diplomatic alignment and security collaboration.
- For India, participation would reflect its expanding strategic footprint in the Mediterranean and West Asia, complementing initiatives like India – Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).
- However, deeper alignment in such a bloc could complicate India's ties with Iran, a key energy and connectivity partner.

Global Mind Health 2025 Report

- **Context:** The Global Mind Health 2025 Report, released by Sapien Labs, highlights a significant mental health crisis among young adults in India and reveals a sharp generational divide in mind health outcomes.

About Report

- Formerly known as the Mental State of the World Report, it is published under the Global Mind Project.
- The study assesses emotional, social, cognitive and functional capacities required to manage life, work and relationships, using the Mind Health Quotient (MHQ) as a composite indicator.
- The study identifies four key drivers behind declining youth mental health:

- Weakening family bonds
- Decline in spirituality
- Early exposure to smartphones
- High consumption of ultra-processed foods.

Key Findings

• Global Trends:

- Young adults in economically developed countries show poorer mind health outcomes compared to those in less developed regions. Countries such as Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the UK and China ranked lower, while several sub-Saharan African nations like Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Tanzania performed relatively better.
- Notably, Finland ranks high in happiness but not proportionately in mind health, suggesting that life satisfaction and mental resilience are distinct measures.

India's Position:

- **Age 18-34:** Ranked 60th globally with an MHQ score of 33.
- **Age 55+:** Ranked 49th globally with an MHQ score of 96.

28th FEBRUARY 2026

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

- **Context:** According to the new series, the gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to grow at 7.6% during the current fiscal.

Key Highlights

- The new series has revised downward the growth for 2023-24 to 7.2% from the 9.2% estimated in the old series, and has revised upward the growth for 2024-25 to 7.1% from the earlier estimate of 6.5%.
- The base year for GDP Estimates has been revised from 2011-12 to 2022-23 to better reflect India's evolving economic structure.
- The revised GDP series strengthens estimation by integrating new, improved data sources.

About Base Year

- A base year is a benchmark year used for comparison in economic and statistical calculations.
- It provides a reference point against which current values of indicators like GDP, CPI, and IIP are measured to track real changes over time.
- **Significance:**
 - It allows us to remove the effect of inflation and see real growth.
 - Ensures that the data reflects the current structure of the economy, consumption patterns, and prices.

About GDP

- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** GDP is the total monetary value of all final goods and services produced within a country's domestic territory during a specific period (usually a quarter or a year).
- It is calculated by adding up all the expenditures made in the economy, including expenditures by Indians in their individual capacity, expenditures by governments, expenditures by private businesses, etc.
- This provides a picture of the demand side of the economy.

About GDP Calculation

- **India's GDP is calculated using two methods:** The factor cost method and the expenditure method.
 - The factor cost method evaluates performance across eight industries, including agriculture, manufacturing, and financial services.
 - The expenditure method examines spending in areas like household consumption and government costs to assess economic performance.
- The Central Statistics Office under India's Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation manages GDP data collection.
- India's GDP data is released quarterly with a two-month lag and annually on May 31.

- **Contribution of Sectors:** The largest contributor to India's GDP is the services sector, which accounts for 61.5% of GDP. The next largest contributor was the industrial sector (23%) and then the agriculture sector (15.4%).

Durand Line

- **Context:** Pakistan recently launched Operation Ghazab lil-Haq, a series of cross-border strikes against Afghan Taliban targets along the disputed Durand Line.

Key Facts

- The 2,640 km Durand Line, drawn in 1893 by British diplomat Sir Mortimer Durand and Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, separates Pakistan from Afghanistan but splits Pashtun tribes.
- Afghanistan has never fully recognized it as a legitimate border, viewing it as a colonial imposition. Disputes over the line have fueled decades of tensions, including fencing efforts and militant crossovers.

1st MARCH 2026

Most Favoured Nation Status

- **Context:** India and the European Union are set to grant each other 'Most Favoured Nation' status for five years from the date the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) comes into effect.

About Most Favoured Nation' Status

- According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the MFN principle guarantees non-discriminatory trade by requiring countries to treat all trading partners equally.
- **Core Principle:**
 - If a country grants a special favour such as a lower customs duty to one trading partner, it must extend the same benefit to all other WTO members.

- Countries cannot normally discriminate between their trading partners.
- MFN ensures equality, predictability, and transparency in international trade.
- The MFN principle is foundational to the multilateral trading system and is embedded in key WTO agreements:
 - MFN is enshrined in Article 1 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).
 - MFN is a priority principle under Article 2 of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).
 - MFN is reflected in Article 4 of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement.

National Science Day 2026

- **Context:** National Science Day is celebrated every year on 28th February to commemorate the discovery of the 'Raman Effect' made by the physicist Sir C.V. Raman.

Key Facts

- Sir C.V. Raman was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1930 for the discovery of the Raman Effect.
- The first celebration took place on February 28, 1987, marking the beginning of a tradition that continues to inspire generations.
- The objective of the observation of National Science Day is to spread the message of the importance of science and its application among the people.
- **Theme for 2026:** "Women in Science: Catalyzing Viksit Bharat"

About C.V. Raman

- He founded the Indian Journal of Physics in 1926.
- He became the first Indian director of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in 1933.
- He established the Raman Research Institute in 1948.
- In 1954, the Government of India honored him with the Bharat Ratna.

About Raman Effect

- When a beam of light passes through a transparent medium (such as a liquid or gas), a small fraction of the scattered light changes in wavelength.
- This change occurs due to the interaction of light with the vibrational and rotational energy levels of the molecules in the medium.

2nd MARCH 2026

INS Anjadip

- **Context:** INS Anjadip was formally commissioned into the Indian Navy.

About INS Anjadip

- 'Anjadip', the third of eight ASW SWC (Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft), indigenously designed and built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata. The ASW-SWC corvettes are being built indigenously to replace the Navy's aging Abhay-class vessels.
- It is engineered to act as a 'Dolphin Hunter', focused on detection, tracking, and neutralisation of enemy submarines.
- It is a state-of-the-art vessel specifically designed to address the challenges of the littoral combat environment, the coastal and shallow waters vital for the nation's security.

State Innovation Mission (SIM)

- **Context:** Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) under NITI Aayog, launched the first State Innovation Mission (SIM) in Tripura.

Key Facts

- SIM anchored under AIM 2.0, serves as a long-term institutional mechanism to strengthen state innovation ecosystems through policy support, capacity building, partnerships, and context-driven interventions, advancing the vision of Viksit Bharat through innovation-led development.

- Under this initiative, key interventions include institutionalising SIM under Tripura Institution for Transformation (TIFT), inauguration of T-NEST (Tripura – Nurturing Entrepreneurship and Startups) as a dedicated incubation facility, launch of a District Innovator Fellowship to scale grassroots innovation, and support for transforming Agartala into an AI-enabled city.

3rd MARCH 2026

Iran War

- **Context:** Following the launch of Operation Epic Fury (U.S.) and Operation Roaring Lion (Israel), the geopolitical landscape has shifted fundamentally with the confirmed death of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Key Highlights

- Iran retaliated with missile and drone attacks on U.S. facilities in Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, and Jordan.
- Iran has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz through threats and strikes on tankers, reducing shipping traffic by 70% and risking global oil supply disruptions.

Background of The Current Escalation

- **Long-standing Hostility and Ideological Rivalry:** Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the U.S. and Iran have been locked in a "Cold War" posture. This relationship has been defined by severe economic sanctions, the labeling of Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism.
- **Collapse of the Nuclear Deal (JCPOA):** The withdrawal of the U.S. from the 2015 Nuclear Deal in 2018 triggered a "maximum pressure" campaign. Iran responded by gradually breaching enrichment limits, leading the U.S. and Israel to view a nuclear-armed Iran as an imminent existential threat that could no longer be contained by diplomacy alone.

- **The “Gray Zone” and Proxy Warfare:** For years, the conflict was fought in the shadows via proxies. Iran’s support for the “Axis of Resistance” (Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis) expanded its influence across Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

Global Implications

- **Energy Shock and Inflation:** Oil prices likely to surge beyond sustainable levels. Higher transportation and insurance premiums. There is risk of global stagflation (slow growth + high inflation).
- **Global Supply Chain Disruption:** Oil, LNG, fertilizers, petrochemicals affected. Shipping rerouted via longer routes which led to increased freight costs.
- **China and Russia Factor:** China is the largest buyer of Iranian oil. Russia may benefit from high oil prices.

Impact on India

- **Energy Inflation:** As India imports 85% of its crude, the “war surcharge” on shipping and rising oil prices are putting immense pressure on the rupee.
- **Diaspora Safety:** With 8-9 million Indians in the Gulf, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has met to discuss potential large-scale evacuations as commercial flights to the region are being suspended.
- **Trade Disruptions:** Exports of agricultural goods and imports of essential fertilizers are currently at risk due to maritime insecurity.
- **Strategic Connectivity:** Chabahar Port (Iran) for Central Asia access; I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA grouping); IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Corridor); Gulf partnerships (UAE, Saudi Arabia), and Israel relations.

India’s First Semiconductor Facility

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India’s first semiconductor facility at Sanand in Gujarat.

Key Facts

- The semiconductor plant has been set up by Micron Technology (an American chipmaker) as an Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) facility, with an investment of ₹22,516 crore at Sanand, Gujarat.
- **The facility will manufacture memory and storage products including:** DRAM (Dynamic Random Access Memory), NAND Flash memory, and SSD (Solid State Drive) storage devices.
- India had approved 10 projects under the Semicon India programme, and besides the Micron plant, three more would start production very soon, in Noida (Uttar Pradesh), Assam, Odisha and Punjab.
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat Alignment:** This project directly tackles India’s 100% import reliance on semiconductors (India heavy dependence on China, Taiwan, and South Korea). Hence, it fits self-reliance goals by building domestic capabilities, reducing import bills, and fostering innovation.
- **Supply Chain Resilience:** Shields against disruptions like US-China trade tensions or pandemics, localizing critical backend processes.
- **Strategic Sectors:** Powers defense (e.g., missiles, radars), telecom (5G/6G networks), AI computing, space tech (ISRO satellites), and digital economy (data centers, EVs).
- **Economic Boost:** Projected to create 5,000+ direct high-skill jobs (engineers, technicians) and 15,000+ indirect ones. Aims to help India grab 5-10% of the \$1 trillion global semiconductor market by 2030, drawing FDI and spurring exports.

4th MARCH 2026

Sixteenth Finance Commission Recommendations

- **Context:** The Sixteenth Finance Commission presented its recommendations amid concerns over rising cess and the balance between efficiency and equity, raising questions about effective devolution and equalisation.

About Finance Commission

- The Finance Commission is a constitutional body constituted by the President of India under Article 280, that recommends how tax revenues collected by the Central government should be distributed among the Centre and various States in the country.
- The Commission is reconstituted every five years and usually takes a couple of years to make its recommendations to the Centre.
- The Sixteenth Finance Commission was chaired by Arvind Panagariya and its recommendations cover the five-year award period from 2026–27 to 2030–31. The Centre is not legally bound to implement the suggestions made by the Finance Commission.
- The Finance Commission decides what proportion of the Centre's net tax revenue goes to the States overall (vertical devolution) and how this share for the States is distributed among various States (horizontal devolution).
- The horizontal devolution of funds between States is usually decided based on a formula created by the Commission that takes into account a State's population, fertility level, income level, geography, etc.
- The vertical devolution of funds, however, is not based on any such objective formula.
- The Centre also aids States through additional grants for certain schemes that are jointly funded by the Centre and the States.

Key Provisions of The Sixteenth Finance Commission

- **Vertical Devolution:**
 - The FC retained the States' share in the divisible pool at 41% which was adjusted following the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir.
 - The Commission suggested that the centre should merge a substantial portion of cesses and surcharges into shareable taxes. However, no firm recommendation was made to limit or phase out excessive cesses and surcharges.

- The 16th FC has discontinued the grants recommended by the 15th FC which is revenue deficit grants, sector-specific grants, and state-specific grants

- **Horizontal Devolution:**

- A new efficiency-based criterion was introduced. It measured contribution through a State's share in total all-State Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). To moderate extreme effects, the square root of GSDP was used instead of GSDP directly.
- The earlier criterion of tax effort/fiscal discipline was dropped.

- **On Cesses and Surcharges:** Cesses and surcharges are not part of the divisible pool. Their growing share reduces effective transfers to States. The Commission did not strongly assert its constitutional role under Articles 270 and 280 in addressing this issue.

- **Missed Opportunity on Equalisation:** Devolution formulae alone cannot capture cost and need differentials across India's diverse States.

- Article 275 allows for grants to address specific needs and equalise public services.
- The discontinuation of revenue gap and State-specific grants reduces the equalisation function.

Canadian PM visit to India

- **Context:** Recently, India and Canada signed a \$1.9 billion, 10 year uranium supply agreement and committed to conclude a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2026.

India–Canada Relations

- **Establishment of Diplomatic Relations:** India and Canada established diplomatic relations in 1947, soon after India's independence.
 - Both countries are members of the Commonwealth of Nations, which initially shaped their diplomatic engagement.

- Canada opened its High Commission in New Delhi in 1947, while India established its mission in Ottawa soon thereafter.
- **Early Cooperation (1950s–1970s):** India and Canada maintained close cooperation in development and nuclear energy.
 - Canada supported India's nuclear energy programme for peaceful purposes by supplying CIRUS (Canada–India Reactor, US) research reactor.
 - Canada assisted in setting up reactors at the Rajasthan Atomic Power Project (RAPP) in the 1960s.
- **Strained Relations After 1974:** Relations deteriorated after India conducted its first nuclear test (Pokhran-I) in 1974. Canada alleged that plutonium from the CIRUS reactor contributed to the nuclear test, and suspended nuclear cooperation with India.
- **Gradual Normalisation (2000s Onwards):** Relations began improving in the early 21st century. Key developments included:
 - The 2008 India–US Civil Nuclear Agreement and the NSG waiver, which allowed India to engage in international nuclear trade.
 - In 2010, India and Canada signed a Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement.
 - In 2015, Canada agreed to supply uranium to India through Cameco Corporation.

Present Status of India-Canada Relations

- **Uranium Supply Agreement (2026):** Canada's Cameco Corporation will supply around 10,000 tonnes of uranium to India over a long-term period from 2027 to 2035, valued approx \$1.9 billion.
- **Strategic Energy Partnership:** India and Canada announced a Strategic Energy Partnership covering multiple sectors like Uranium supply and nuclear energy cooperation; Renewable energy development; Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cooperation; and Collaboration in critical and emerging technologies. Additionally, Canada

agreed to join two India-led global initiatives i.e. International Solar Alliance (ISA), and Global Biofuel Alliance.

- **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):** India and Canada agreed on Terms of Reference for CEPA negotiations with the aim of concluding the agreement within the year.
 - Expected Outcomes are expansion of trade in goods and services; investment promotion; supply-chain cooperation; and economic diversification
 - Both countries aim to double bilateral trade by 2030.
- **Security Cooperation:** The joint statement highlighted plans to strengthen cooperation in counterterrorism, combating violent extremism, organized crime, and intelligence sharing. Both sides agreed to convene an early meeting of the Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism.

5th MARCH 2026

Golestan Palace

- **Context:** Tehran's Golestan Palace, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, sustained damage from shockwaves and debris caused by US-Israeli airstrikes.

Key Facts

- Golestan Palace is a historic royal complex that served as the official residence of the Qajar dynasty and is one of the oldest historic monuments in Tehran.
- The origins of the complex date back to the Safavid Dynasty, when Tehran first gained importance as a political centre. Later rulers expanded and renovated the palace complex.
- Golestan Palace reflects a blend of traditional Persian architecture and Western influences introduced during the 19th century.
- Inscribed by UNESCO in 2013, it preserves cultural archives, early Iranian photography, and sites of historic coronations.

Important Structures within the Complex

- **Shams-ol-Emareh (Edifice of the Sun):** One of the most famous buildings in the palace complex. It was built in the 1860s by Naser al-Din Shah Qajar.
- **Marble Throne Hall (Takht-e-Marmar):** Used for royal coronations and official ceremonies.
- **Mirror Hall:** Famous for extensive mirror mosaics and luxurious decoration.
- **Museum Buildings:** The complex houses several museums displaying Qajar-era paintings and royal gifts and artefacts.

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

- **Context:** The Iranian frigate IRIS Dena was reportedly sunk off the south-western coast of Sri Lanka after a torpedo strike by a United States Navy submarine.

About UNCLOS

- UNCLOS is a comprehensive international treaty that establishes the legal framework for governance of oceans and seas.
- Adopted in 1982 at Montego Bay, Jamaica and entered into force in 1994.
- It defines:
 - Maritime boundaries of coastal states
 - Rights and duties of states in maritime zones
 - Rules for navigation, resource exploitation, and environmental protection

- Because of its extensive scope, it is commonly referred to as the “Constitution of the Oceans.”
- **Membership:** 168 parties, including the European Union.
 - Countries such as India, Japan, and China are parties.
 - The United States has signed but not ratified the convention.

Maritime Zones under UNCLOS

UNCLOS divides the oceans into several legal zones, each with different rights and responsibilities.

- **Territorial Sea:** Extends up to 12 nautical miles from a coastal state’s baseline. The coastal state has full sovereignty over these waters. Foreign ships enjoy the right of innocent passage.
- **Contiguous Zone:** Extends 12-24 nautical miles from the baseline. Coastal states can enforce laws relating to Customs, immigration, sanitation and security.
- **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):** Extends up to 200 nautical miles. The coastal state has exclusive rights over natural resources. However, other states retain freedom of navigation and overflight.
- **High Seas (International Waters):** Areas beyond the EEZ of any state. No country has sovereignty over them. Governed by international law and UNCLOS principles.

