DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 20-02-2026

NATIONAL NEWS

Union Health Minister Launches SAHI and BODH

Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda will launch SAHI and BODH at the India Artificial Intelligence Summit 2026 held at Bharat Mandapam.

The initiatives aim to strengthen Artificial Intelligence adoption in India's healthcare sector and build a safe, ethical and globally competitive Health Artificial Intelligence ecosystem.

The launch aligns with India's broader digital health vision under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

SAHI (Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare for India) is a national guidance framework for responsible Artificial Intelligence adoption in healthcare.

SAHI focuses on:
– Governance and data stewardship
– Ethical and evidence-based Artificial Intelligence deployment
– Monitoring and validation mechanisms
– Alignment with public health priorities
– Support to States and health institutions for safe implementation

SAHI aims to ensure safe, inclusive and transparent Artificial Intelligence integration while protecting patient rights and ensuring data security.

BODH (Benchmarking Open Data Platform for Health Artificial Intelligence) is a privacy-preserving digital platform for evaluating Artificial Intelligence models in healthcare.

BODH has been developed by the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur in collaboration with the National Health Authority.

BODH enables evaluation of Artificial Intelligence models using real-world health data without sharing underlying datasets, thereby ensuring data privacy.

It functions as a Digital Public Good under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

BODH promotes transparency, quality assurance and rigorous testing of Artificial Intelligence tools before deployment.

The launch of SAHI and BODH signals India's commitment to innovation-driven yet ethically governed Artificial Intelligence in healthcare.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Inaugurates Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated major infrastructure projects in Assam worth over ₹5,450 crore, aimed at boosting connectivity and strategic preparedness in the Northeast.

The projects include the Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu over the Brahmaputra River in Guwahati and the Northeast's first Highway Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) in Dibrugarh district.

Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu is a 2.86 km-long, six-lane extradosed Prestressed Concrete (PSC) bridge built at a cost of approximately ₹3,030 crore.

It connects Guwahati with North Guwahati and is the first extradosed bridge in Northeast India.

The bridge reduces travel time between the two sides of the city to seven minutes.

It improves access to major landmarks, including the Kamakhya Temple.

Advanced engineering features include:
– Base isolation technology using friction pendulum bearings
– High-performance stay cables
– Bridge Health Monitoring System (BHMS) for real-time structural monitoring

The Northeast's first Highway Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) was inaugurated on the Moran Bypass in Dibrugarh district.

The ELF has been developed in coordination with the Indian Air Force (IAF) as a dual-use infrastructure for both military and civilian aircraft during emergencies.

After inauguration, Sukhoi Su-30MKI and Dassault Rafale fighter jets conducted successful take-offs and landings on the highway stretch.

The ELF is a 4.2 km-long reinforced concrete highway stretch designed to function as an emergency runway.

Cabinet Approves PM RAHAT Scheme

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the launch of PM RAHAT (Road Accident Victim Hospitalization and Assured Treatment).

The scheme ensures that no road accident victim is denied life-saving treatment due to lack of money.

Under PM RAHAT, eligible victims will receive cashless treatment up to ₹1.5 lakh per person.

Coverage is available for 7 days from the date of accident.

The scheme strengthens India's emergency healthcare system and promotes timely trauma care.

India records a high number of road accident fatalities annually, and nearly 50% of deaths can be prevented if treatment is provided within the Golden Hour.

The scheme ensures:
– Immediate hospital admission
– Financial certainty for hospitals
– Structured emergency coordination
– Protection for vulnerable citizens

Key features of PM RAHAT:
– ₹1.5 lakh cashless treatment per victim
– Coverage for 7 days
– Stabilization treatment up to 24 hours (non-life-threatening cases)
– Stabilization treatment up to 48 hours (life-threatening cases)
– Police authentication through digital system
– Applicable on any category of road

The scheme is integrated with the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) 112 helpline, allowing victims, Good Samaritans (Rah-Veer), or bystanders to dial 112 for ambulance support and nearest designated hospital details.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Bodhan AI to Build Bharat EduAI Stack as Digital Public Infrastructure

The Government of India plans to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in school education from pre-primary to higher secondary levels starting from the next academic session.

The initiative is driven by Bodhan AI, a not-for-profit entity under the Centre of Excellence in AI for Education at IIT Madras, with an initial budget allocation of ₹500 crore.

Bodhan AI will develop the Bharat EduAI Stack as a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for education, modeled after scalable systems like UPI.

The platform will support Indian languages, integrating speech recognition, speech synthesis, and AI-based learning tools tailored to local needs.

The initiative aligns with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, promoting technology-enabled learning, multilingual education, and adaptive assessment systems.

Academic content and implementation frameworks will draw from NCERT and SCERT

AI in education will enable personalised learning, real-time assessments, automated feedback, and intelligent tutoring systems for students.

Tools will generate instant feedback, personalised worksheets, and targeted practice modules, specifically supporting foundational literacy and numeracy.

Voice-based learning solutions will be deployed via phones, tablets, and laptops to reduce screen dependency.

Teachers will receive AI-generated performance reports and diagnostic insights to design remedial interventions.

Parents may access AI dashboards tracking their child's academic progress and learning gaps.

Rocket Debris Bearing Indian Space Research Organisation Logo Discovered Near Uninhabited Island In Maldives

Debris bearing the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) logo and India's National Emblem was found on Kunahandhoo island in the Maldives in December 2025.

The debris is believed to be part of the Payload Fairing from ISRO's LVM3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-3)

The LVM3-M6 mission on 18 December 2025 successfully launched the BlueBird Block-2 satellite for AST SpaceMobile from Sriharikota.

The LVM3 is India's heaviest rocket, a three-stage vehicle with solid strap-ons, a liquid core stage, and a cryogenic upper stage.

The debris washed up on an uninhabited island in the Maldives, causing no damage to human life or property.

ISRO has not yet confirmed whether the debris belongs to an Indian launch vehicle.

Earlier in November 2025, the LVM3 was also used to launch the CMS-03 communication satellite.

BANKING

RBI proposes mandatory reporting of OTC forex and interest rate derivatives by AD Cat-I banks

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed mandatory reporting of Over-the-Counter (OTC) foreign exchange and interest rate derivative contracts by Authorised Dealer Category-I (AD Cat-I) banks.

The reporting requirement covers transactions done directly or via overseas related parties, including parent companies, subsidiaries, and entities under common control, while associate companies are excluded.

Banks must report all such trades to the Clearing Corporation of India Ltd (CCIL) trade repository, ensuring transparency in offshore rupee derivative markets.

Transactions must be reported on the trade date or within two working days; contracts with a notional value of $1 million or less may be exempt from reporting.

The RBI has proposed a phased implementation:

Within 12 months: At least 70% of the notional value must be reported.

After 18 months: Threshold rises to 80%.

After 24 months: Threshold reaches 90%.

The directions apply to all OTC rupee derivative contracts, including those traded on electronic platforms, but exclude exchange-traded derivatives.

Back-to-back transactions and trades between related parties and other AD Cat-I banks in India are exempted from reporting.

Reported transaction details must include notional value, counterparty name, maturity, currency, and other specifications, with reporting formats prescribed by CCIL and approved by RBI.

The proposed framework extends existing reporting norms under the Master Direction on Risk Management and Master Direction on Rupee Interest Rate Derivatives (2025) to include global rupee-linked OTC derivatives by offshore related parties.

The initiative aims to improve transparency, risk monitoring, and regulatory oversight in offshore rupee derivative markets where many transactions currently remain unreported.

NSE Gets SEBI Nod to Introduce Indian Natural Gas Futures

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to launch Indian Natural Gas futures.

The move aims to enable market-based price discovery and improve the availability of natural gas in India.

The NSE Indian Natural Gas futures will be monthly contracts, with up to 12 contracts available for trading at any point.

NSE is collaborating with the Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) to leverage IGX's gas trading infrastructure for futures development.

Natural gas futures will benefit gas producers, city gas distributors, power generators, fertiliser manufacturers, industrial consumers, traders, and financial participants.

The contracts provide a transparent, efficient, and robust risk management tool aligned with India's evolving natural gas pricing framework.

Futures will enable effective hedging against price volatility and support long-term planning for market participants.

The launch reinforces India's strategy to develop a market-based mechanism for natural gas pricing and availability.

RBI Revises External Commercial Borrowings rules, allows companies to raise up to $1 billion

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released the final guidelines on External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs), aiming to rationalise fundraising through the route.

Under the new guidelines, companies can raise ECBs up to $1 billion or 300% of net worth, whichever is higher, compared to the previous $750-million annual cap.

Eligible borrowers must raise ECBs with a minimum average maturity of three years.

Manufacturing sector borrowers can raise ECBs with a 1–3 year average maturity, provided the outstanding amount does not exceed $150 million.

The cost of borrowing through ECBs should be market-determined, with fixed-rate loans linked to floating rate plus spread capped at the ceiling.

RBI expanded the borrower and lender base, allowing any entity, including firms under restructuring or investigation, to raise funds through ECBs.

Proceeds of ECBs can be utilised in deposits or other debt instruments with maturity up to one year.

End-use restrictions apply: ECB funds cannot be used for chit funds, Nidhi companies, real estate, construction of farmhouses, or stock market investments.

The guidelines aim to simplify reporting, rationalise borrowing limits, and remove restrictions on cost of borrowing, promoting greater flexibility in overseas fundraising.

16th Finance Commission boosts Urban Local Government Grants by 230% to ₹3.56 Trillion

The 16th Finance Commission (2025–30) has increased grants to Urban Local Governments (ULGs) by 230%, allocating ₹3.56 trillion, up from ₹1.55 trillion under the 15th FC.

The share of grants to ULGs has risen to a record 45%, compared to 36% in the previous Finance Commission period.

The 16th Finance Commission has retained 41% vertical devolution while introducing GDP contribution as a new criterion for horizontal distribution.

The Finance Commission is a constitutional body under Article 280 that strengthens India’s fiscal federalism.

The Finance Commission is constituted by the President of India every five years.

Shri Arvind Panagariya, former Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog, is the Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission.

DEFENCE

INS Tarangini to Participate in IFR 2026 and MILAN

Exercises at Visakhapatnam

INS Tarangini, the Indian Navy's sail training ship, is among the prominent vessels arriving at Visakhapatnam for the International Fleet Review (IFR) 2026 and multinational naval exercise MILAN, commencing February 18, 2026.

Around 75 naval vessels are expected to participate, including 20 foreign warships, highlighting India's expanding naval diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific.

INS Tarangini was commissioned in 1997 and became the first Indian naval vessel to circumnavigate the globe in 2003–2004.

The ship represented India at the International Fleet Review during the Sri Lankan Navy's diamond jubilee in December 2010, being the only tall ship present and the first reviewed by the Sri Lankan President.

INS Vikrant, India's first indigenously built aircraft carrier, will headline IFR 2026, symbolising naval self-reliance and blue-water capability.

IFR 2026 provides a platform to showcase naval strength, operational readiness, and defence manufacturing achievements.

Foreign naval participation includes the Philippine Navy's BRP Miguel Malvar, Maldives' CGS Huravee, Seychelles Coast Guard SCGS Zoroaster (P609), and Vietnam People's Navy frigate VNPS 17.

Participation from 20 foreign navies reflects India's focus on cooperative security, interoperability, and maritime partnerships in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and Indo-Pacific.

The simultaneous conduct of IFR 2026 and MILAN underscores India's emphasis on strategic maritime engagement and promoting regional stability.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Ramalingam Sudhakar Steps Down As President Of The National Company Law Tribunal

Ramalingam Sudhakar demitted office as President of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) after completing a distinguished tenure.

He joined the Tribunal in November 2021 and served for over four years at its helm.

During his tenure, he significantly strengthened the institution and enhanced the dispensation of justice in corporate and insolvency matters.

His leadership was marked by diligence, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to judicial excellence.

At the farewell reference, he highlighted that the resolution rate of cases increased substantially due to collective cooperation of all stakeholders.

In the last four years, nearly 54,800 cases were instituted before the Tribunal.

Out of these, more than 48,000 cases were disposed of, achieving an impressive resolution rate of over 85 percent.

Apart from judicial functions, he focused on strengthening administrative systems and improving infrastructural facilities.

These initiatives ensured the smooth functioning of the Tribunal and created an efficient and conducive working environment for Bar Members, litigants, and staff.

SPORTS

Smriti Mandhana Wins BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year 2025

Smriti Mandhana was named the BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year 2025 for her outstanding role in India's historic Women's World Cup 2025 victory.

The award ceremony was held in New Delhi on February 16, 2026.

At 29 years of age, Mandhana played a pivotal role in India's World Cup triumph, marking a landmark moment in Indian women's cricket history.

She described 2025 as a "special year for women's cricket" in a video message while touring Australia with the Indian team.

Major achievements of Smriti Mandhana include:
– Second-highest centuries in Women's One Day Internationals
– Third-highest total runs among current women cricketers
– Fastest 50-over international century (50 balls) by an Indian, surpassing the record of Virat Kohli

Divya Deshmukh won the Emerging Player of the Year Award for her victory at the International Chess Federation Women's World Cup at the age of 20.

Para-Sportswoman of the Year was awarded to Preethi Pal for winning two bronze medals at the Paris Paralympics 2024 (Track and Field).

The Lifetime Achievement Award was conferred on Anjali Bhagwat, India's first woman shooter to reach an Olympic final.

BBC Star Performers of the Year included:
– Indian Women's Cricket Team – Women's World Cup victory
– Indian Women's Cricket Team for the Blind – World Cup win
– Indian Women's Kabaddi Team – World Cup champions
– Ekta Bhyan, Deepthi Jeevanji and Preethi Pal – Para Athletics achievements

BBC Changemakers of the Year included:
– Indian Women’s Ice Hockey Team
– Rajbir Kaur
– Savita Punia
– Paani Devi

The winners were selected by a distinguished jury including Leander Paes, Deepa Malik, and Anju Bobby George.

The award highlights the growing global recognition of Indian women’s sports and reflects increasing investment, visibility, and inspiration for young athletes across the country.

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