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## Current Affairs - 21 February 2026

### WHAT IS THE OTTAWA CONVENTION?



- The Ottawa Convention, also referred to as the "Mine Ban Treaty," prohibits the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines (APLs).
- It requires states-parties to destroy their stockpiled APLs within four years and eliminate all APL holdings, including mines currently planted in the soil, within 10 years.
- Countries may request a renewable extension, which can be up to 10 years long, to fulfill their destruction obligations.
- States-parties are also required annually to report their total APL stockpiles, the technical characteristics of their APLs, the location of all mined areas, and the status of APL destruction programs.
- The convention, which is of unlimited duration and open to all nations, entered into force in 1999.
- The Treaty has 164 States Parties, including 34 out of the 50 States that produced mines before 1997, and 33 Signatories.
- However, six major countries remain outside the Convention: China, India, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and United States.
- States Party to the Ottawa Treaty commit to:
  - Never use APLs, nor “develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain, or transfer” them;
  - Clear mined areas in their territory within 10 years;
  - In mine-affected countries, conduct mine risk education and ensure that mine survivors, their families, and communities receive comprehensive assistance;
  - Adopt national implementation measures (such as national legislation) in order to ensure that the terms of the treaty are upheld in their territory.



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### INS KRISHNA



Indian naval cadets will now get to train aboard dedicated “floating classrooms” as the Indian Navy has commissioned ‘INS Krishna’, the first of three indigenously built cadet training ships (CTS).

Indian naval cadets will now get to train aboard dedicated “floating classrooms” as the Indian Navy has commissioned ‘INS Krishna’,

- It is the first of three **indigenously built cadet training ships (CTS)** of the Indian Navy.
  - These CTS will be utilised for **training officer cadets, including women, at sea** after their basic training ashore, and **cadets from friendly foreign countries**.
  - These vessels function as “floating classrooms and living labs”, offering hands-on **instruction in navigation, seamanship, and watch-keeping** under real maritime conditions.
- Apart from serving as a training platform, the ship is designed to undertake **non-combatant evacuations, humanitarian aid and disaster relief**, and search-and-rescue operations.

### NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE MARKETING FEDERATION OF INDIA



**NAFED**

National Agriculture Cooperative  
Marketing Federation of India Ltd

### INDIA

- It is an apex **organization of marketing cooperatives** for agricultural produce in India.
- It was **founded in 1958** to promote the trade of agricultural produce and forest resources across the nation.
- It is **registered** under the **Multi State Co-operative Societies Act**.
- It has **headquarters in New Delhi**, NAFED has **four regional offices** in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata.
- **Objectives:**



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- To **organize, promote and develop marketing**, processing and storage of agricultural, horticultural and forest produce.
- To **distribute agricultural machinery**, implements and other inputs, undertake inter-state, import and export trade, wholesale or retail as the case may be.
- To **act and assist for technical advice** in agricultural production for the promotion and the working of its members, partners, associates and cooperative marketing, processing and supply societies in India.
- **Nodal Ministry:** It is an apex Organisation under the **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare**, Government of India.

### TETANUS AND ADULT DIPHTHERIA (TD) VACCINE



#### TETANUS AND ADULT DIPHTHERIA (TD) VACCINE

- It provides protection **against both tetanus and diphtheria.**
- **Preparation:** It is prepared by combining **purified diphtheria toxoid** and **purified tetanus toxoid.**
- The antigens are **adsorbed onto aluminum phosphate**, which acts as an adjuvant, and **thiomersal** is added as a preservative.
- The Td vaccine is aimed at **strengthening protection among adolescents** and adults and reducing morbidity and mortality associated with these vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Td is **freeze and heat sensitive.**
- The vaccine has been **developed and manufactured** by the **Central Research Institute (CRI)**, which functions under the **Directorate General of Health Services.**

#### Key Facts about Tetanus

- Tetanus is an acute infectious disease caused by toxigenic strains of the **bacterium Clostridium tetani.**
- The **disease may occur at any age** and case-fatality rates are high even where intensive care is available.



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- **Symptoms:** It causes painful **muscle stiffness and spasms** and can lead to severe health complications.
- Inability to open the mouth (lockjaw), difficulty in swallowing and breathing, and may result in death.

### About Diphtheria

- It is **caused by Corynebacterium diphtheriae**, has been one of the most feared infectious diseases globally, which causes devastating epidemics.
- South East Asia is the primary driver of global diphtheria incidence, especially since 2005.
- **Spread:** It can spread from person to person, usually through respiratory droplets, like from coughing or sneezing.
- **Symptoms:** It is a potentially life-threatening infection that can **cause breathing difficulties, heart failure, paralysis, and death.**

### PANAMA DISEASE



- Panama disease is also known as **fusarium wilt**.
- It is a **devastating disease of bananas** caused by the soil-inhabiting fungus species.
- **Cause:** It is caused by the **fungus Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. cubense**, which lives in **soil** and can survive there for many years.
- This disease **affects the Cavendish variety** or the G9 Banana cultivar, which is the most widely grown banana in the world.
- **Spread:** The fungus resides below ground and **infects the plant through its roots**.
  - The infection **then stops water** and essential nutrients from being transported to the rest of the plant.
- The disease is so deadly that it is **sometimes referred to as 'banana cancer'**.
- **Symptoms of Panama Disease:**

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- The **leaves begin to wilt**, and the stem of the plant starts turning dark brownish before the plant dies.
  - The first external symptom of Panama is the **irregular yellowing of the margins of older leaves**, which later turn brown and dry out.
  - These leaves eventually collapse along the leaf stalk or at the junction of the stalk and stem, resulting in a skirt of dead leaves forming around the lower part of the plant.
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### US-IRAN TENSIONS THREATEN OIL SUPPLIES, WITH BIG STAKES FOR INDIA

International oil prices have climbed to a six-month high amid rising US-Iran tensions and fears of potential American military strikes on Tehran. Although recent nuclear talks in Geneva showed limited progress, no concrete breakthrough has emerged to ease concerns.

The US has increased its military presence in the region, and President Donald Trump's statement giving Iran 10–15 days to agree to a “meaningful deal” has been widely viewed as an ultimatum, intensifying market anxiety over possible supply disruptions.

#### **Strait of Hormuz: A Critical Chokepoint**

- Oil markets are nervous that any US military action against Iran could disrupt supplies from the Gulf, which dominates global exports.
  - Brent crude has already risen above \$71 per barrel, up over 12% in a month, reflecting market anxiety.
  - Future price movements hinge on whether the US undertakes military action and how Iran responds.
  - Prices could ease if diplomacy prevails, or spike sharply—possibly into triple digits—if conflict escalates regionally.
- The key concern is the **Strait of Hormuz**, a vital transit route for global oil and gas. If Iran blocks or disrupts the strait, energy flows could be severely affected.
- Major producers such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the UAE, and Kuwait depend heavily on Hormuz for exports.

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### Implications for India

- **Rising Import Bill** - India imports around 2 billion barrels of oil annually. Every \$1 rise in crude prices adds roughly \$2 billion to its annual import bill.
- **Strategic Vulnerability** - Over 40% of India's crude imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz. As the world's third-largest oil consumer, meeting more than 88% of its needs through imports, India faces significant energy security risks if supplies are disrupted.

### Blockade Risks and Strategic Calculations

- Although Iran often threatens to close the Strait of Hormuz, analysts say a complete blockade would be self-defeating.
- It could alienate China—its key oil buyer—strain ties with Oman, and invite international military retaliation.
- Despite these deterrents, risks persist. If Tehran feels existentially threatened, it may escalate.
- Any disruption in this globally critical energy corridor would sharply raise oil prices and damage the fragile global economy.

### Oil Price Scenarios if Conflict Escalates

- **Limited Disruption: Iranian Shipments Targeted** - If the US or Israel disrupts Iranian oil exports alone, analysts project oil prices might rise by around \$10–\$12 per barrel as buyers like China seek alternative supply sources.
  - **Strait of Hormuz Disruption** - If Iran moves to throttle oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz—a chokepoint for roughly 20% of global oil and LNG trade—prices could exceed \$90 per barrel.
  - **Attacks on Iranian Oil Facilities** - Should military action target Iranian refineries, platforms, or terminals and keep Iranian supply off the market for longer, oil prices could top \$100 per barrel amid broader escalation risk.
  - **Broad Regional Conflict** - In the worst case, if Iran directly attacks major Arab Gulf oil infrastructure or the conflict spreads, prices could surge past \$130 per barrel, rivaling spikes seen after major geopolitical shocks.
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### INDIA JOINS TRUMP'S PEACE BOARD AS OBSERVER

The US President Donald Trump's "Board of Peace" held its first meeting in Washington to discuss Gaza's reconstruction, with India participating as an observer. New Delhi said it supports the Gaza Peace Plan and efforts aligned with **UNSC Resolution 2803**.

While 27 countries joined the body, India chose not to become a member. By attending as an observer, India signalled cautious engagement—supporting diplomatic efforts without fully endorsing a controversial initiative, especially amid evolving ties with the US.

#### **Composition of the Board of Peace**

- The 27-member board includes key West Asian nations such as Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Turkey, and Bahrain.
- Other members include Argentina, Hungary, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Pakistan, whose Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif attended the inaugural meeting.
- **Observer Participation**
  - Twenty-two countries joined as observers, including the UK, Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, Poland, the Netherlands, Japan, Oman, and the European Union.
  - India participated as an observer, represented by its Deputy Chief of Mission in Washington, Namgya Khampa, after weighing diplomatic considerations.

#### **Financial Commitments Announced**

- **Pledges from Members** - President Trump announced that nine member countries had collectively pledged \$7 billion for Gaza's relief and reconstruction efforts.
- **US Contribution** - The United States pledged an additional \$10 billion for the Board of Peace, though specific allocations were not detailed. Trump described the funding as an investment in regional stability and harmony.

#### **Observer Status as a Strategic Off-Ramp**

- India initially stayed away when President Trump unveiled the Board of Peace in Davos, choosing to assess its membership and direction.



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- With the first meeting held, the board's composition has become clearer—featuring key West Asian states, Trump's ideological allies, and countries seeking closer ties with the US, but notably **excluding** permanent UN Security Council members such as Russia, China, France, and the UK, which limits its legitimacy.
- New Delhi is also weighing the initiative's durability, viewing it largely as Trump's personal project that may lose relevance after his term.
- Concerns about policy unpredictability further shape India's cautious approach.
- By participating as an observer, India maintains diplomatic engagement while preserving flexibility and an exit option.

### Balancing Multilateral Commitments

- India is cautious that the Board of Peace could evolve into a parallel platform that sidelines the United Nations.
- Although Trump has said the board will work “in conjunction with the UN,” its broad mandate and vague charter raise concerns in New Delhi.
- While initially framed around Gaza's reconstruction, the board's charter does not explicitly limit its scope.
- Trump has described it as a body “for the world,” prompting worries that it could intervene in other conflicts.

### Regional Diplomacy and Strategic Interests

- **Upcoming Diplomatic Engagements** - India's participation comes ahead of the Prime Minister's visit to Israel and ongoing ceasefire negotiations. India continues to support a two-state solution and seeks regional stability.
  - **Economic Stakes** - Peace in West Asia would advance initiatives such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. Observer status provides India a strategic vantage point without committing to formal negotiations.
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### U.S. SUPREME COURT CURBS TRUMP'S EMERGENCY TARIFF POWERS

- The U.S. Supreme Court, in a 6–3 ruling, **struck down** President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), 1977.
- The judgment marks a critical moment in the debate over **separation of powers**, executive overreach, and the future of U.S. trade policy.
- The ruling has **significant implications** for the global economy, including countries like India, which have been directly affected by U.S. tariff measures.

#### **Broader Implications:**

- **For the U.S. political system:** Reassertion of judicial review. Curtailment of expansive executive authority. Reinforcement of Congressional primacy in taxation.
- **For Global trade:** Potential rollback or restructuring of tariff regimes. Increased uncertainty in the short term. Possible shift toward more rules-based trade measures. Affects WTO dynamics and global trade governance.
- **For India:** Relief potential in select sectors (aircraft parts, auto components). Continued exposure to 232 tariffs. Trade diplomacy becomes critical. **Strategic balancing** amid U.S.–China competition.

#### **Challenges and Way Forward:**

- **Conflict:** Between Executive-Legislative branches over trade authority. Strengthening Congressional oversight in trade policy.
  - **Risk:** Of renewed protectionism under alternative provisions. Greater adherence to multilateral trade norms (WTO-consistent measures). Targeted, transparent use of national security provisions.
  - **Instability:** Of the global supply chain. Diplomatic engagement to prevent tariff escalation. For India, proactive trade negotiations and diversification of export markets is the way ahead.
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