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Current Affairs - 22 February 2026

TRUMP'S GLOBAL TARIFF SURCHARGE - IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA AND WORLD TRADE

- Following the judicial setback to his tariff policy, U.S. President Donald Trump announced a temporary blanket tariff surcharge of **15%** (from 10% earlier) on global imports for 150 days, invoking powers under the Trade Act of 1974.
- The move came a day after the Supreme Court of the United States invalidated his sweeping reciprocal tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). The decision has significant implications for India–U.S. trade relations, global trade flows, and the ongoing negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement.

Legal Basis and Exemptions:

- **Section 122 of the Trade Act, 1974:**
 - It empowers the U.S. President to impose temporary import surcharges, restrict imports, and address balance-of-payments problems.
 - The proclamation justified the tariffs as necessary to correct global trade imbalances.

Impact on India:

- **Tariff changes:**
 - The new tariff rate (15%) is lower as compared to the previous rate (18%).
 - Earlier effective tariff under IEEPA (~22.3%).
 - Potential tariff after court verdict (without surcharge) - ~8.2%.
 - Thus, India **benefits** compared to earlier tariffs, but **loses** potential gains from the court ruling.
- **Government response:** India's Commerce Ministry stated that it is studying implications, assessing impact on exports and trade negotiations.
- **Implications for India–U.S. trade deal:**

Current Affairs - 22 February 2026

- **Changing negotiation dynamics:** India and the U.S. are negotiating an interim trade agreement. The Supreme Court ruling has altered tariff expectations. The U.S. administration has signalled -
 - India will continue to pay tariffs
 - The U.S. expects market access concessions
- **Strategic significance:** The tariff policy may influence market access negotiations, rules of origin, supply-chain diversification, and strategic economic alignment.

Global Trade Implications:

- **Major exporters** such as China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, and Vietnam would have seen double-digit reductions in tariff burden.
- **Smaller economies** like Myanmar, Laos, Serbia, and Tunisia would have experienced over 20 percentage point reductions.
- The surcharge therefore **preserves** higher U.S. tariff protection levels.

Challenges:

- **Trade uncertainty:** Frequent policy changes increase unpredictability for exporters. Temporary tariffs complicate long-term contracts.
- **Protectionism:** Expansion of tariff tools indicates rising economic nationalism. Risks fragmentation of global trade.
- **Impact on Indian exporters:** Affected sectors may include engineering goods, textiles, chemicals, and auto components.
- **Legal and institutional concerns:** Tension between executive power and judicial oversight in U.S. trade policy.
- **Negotiation pressure:** Tariffs may be used as leverage in India–U.S. trade negotiations.

Way Forward:

- **For India:** Accelerate conclusion of India–U.S. trade agreement. Diversify export markets (EU, ASEAN, Africa). Strengthen domestic manufacturing competitiveness. Use WTO-compatible trade diplomacy.
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Current Affairs - 22 February 2026

EASTERN NAGALAND AUTONOMY

Recently, the Centre signed a tripartite agreement with the Nagaland Government and the Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO) to establish the **Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA)**.

The FNTA is designed as a model of “devolutionary autonomy”, granting substantial administrative and financial powers to six relatively underdeveloped eastern districts — Kiphire, Longleng, Mon, Noklak, Shamator, and Tuensang. The aim of this devolution is to address long-standing demands for greater self-governance and focused development.

ENPO's Demand for a Separate Frontier Nagaland

- ENPO has long demanded the creation of a separate State called Frontier Nagaland, carved out of existing Nagaland.
- First formally conveyed to the Centre in 2010, the demand stems from historical neglect dating back to British-era policies that left the eastern hills largely unadministered.
- After Nagaland became a State in **1963**, eight Naga tribes in the eastern districts felt politically and economically marginalised compared to western tribes.
- This perceived developmental and administrative imbalance gradually intensified into a sustained movement for greater autonomy and, ultimately, statehood.

Why the Centre Accepted the Eastern Nagaland Autonomy Demand?

- The Centre's move to grant autonomy through the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA) was shaped by both political pressure and strategic concerns.
- Earlier measures, including a ₹500-crore package and standard operating procedures, failed to address the deeper political aspirations of the ENPO region.
- Tensions peaked in 2024 when ENPO leaders called for a Lok Sabha election boycott, highlighting their significant political leverage.
- Additionally, **eastern Nagaland's location** along the sensitive Myanmar border made prolonged unrest a security risk, given the presence of armed groups across the porous frontier.

Current Affairs - 22 February 2026

Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA): Powers and Provisions

- **Semi-Autonomous Governance Structure** - The FNTA grants semi-autonomous status to six eastern Nagaland districts. A mini-Secretariat, headed by a senior officer, will function within the region to decentralise administration and reduce reliance on Kohima.
- **Financial and Administrative Devolution** - Development funds will be allocated proportionately based on population and area, with the Ministry of Home Affairs supporting initial establishment costs. This ensures direct financial empowerment of the region.
- **Legislative and Executive Authority** - The FNTA will exercise powers over 46 subjects, enabling local decision-making in areas such as land use, agriculture, rural development, and infrastructure, tailored to local needs.
- **Safeguarding Constitutional Protections** - Importantly, the arrangement does not alter Article 371(A), preserving Nagaland's special constitutional safeguards related to customary laws and social practices.

Can the FNTA Model Address the Kuki-Zo Demand in Manipur

- The FNTA demonstrates that the Centre can create territorial authorities as a compromise between full statehood and regular district administration.
 - Structurally, it resembles Manipur's Hill Areas Committee under Article 371(C), designed to protect tribal interests.
 - The model suggests that constitutional innovation can grant autonomy without redrawing State boundaries.
 - This raises the possibility that a similar territorial arrangement could address the Kuki-Zo demand for a separate administrative setup.
 - However, conditions differ sharply. In Nagaland, negotiations occurred without violent conflict and had the cooperation of Chief Minister. In Manipur, deep ethnic tensions persist, and the Meitei-dominated state government strongly opposes administrative separation.
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DELHI AI DECLARATION: 88 NATIONS BACK DEMOCRATIC AND INCLUSIVE AI GOVERNANCE

The AI Impact Summit, held in New Delhi from February 16–20, drew massive participation, including leading AI executives and heads of state.

At the end of the summit, 88 countries and international organisations adopted the **New Delhi Declaration on AI**, emphasising that artificial intelligence must be democratised and made widely accessible to ensure it delivers meaningful global impact.

Evolution of Global AI Summits Since 2023

- Global AI summits began in 2023 with a **safety-focused** dialogue at **Bletchley Park** in the UK. These gatherings are not convened by any formal international organisation; instead, host countries pass the responsibility to the next venue.
- The **2024** summit was held in **Seoul**, followed by the **AI Action Summit in Paris** in February 2025, co-chaired by PM Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron.
- The Paris edition marked a shift in tone, as US Vice-President J.D. Vance rejected a safety-first approach, advocating instead for rapid innovation and unrestricted investment in AI research and commercialisation.

India's Priorities at the AI Impact Summit

- **Democratising AI Access** - India emphasised that artificial intelligence must be widely accessible, ensuring its benefits reach as many people as possible.
 - A key focus was expanding AI relevance for the Global South, particularly by improving language representation in large language models.
- **Safe and Trusted Technology** - The summit underscored the need for AI systems that are “safe and trusted”, balancing innovation with responsible development and risk mitigation.
- **Boosting Domestic AI Ecosystem** - On the home front, India aimed to position itself as a global hub for AI infrastructure and research. The government sought to attract



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Current Affairs - 22 February 2026

investment and promote AI adoption in sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, and education.

- **Thematic Working Groups** - Dedicated working groups reflected these goals, covering areas such as human capital, inclusion and social empowerment, resilience, innovation and efficiency, democratising AI resources, and AI for economic development and social good.

New Delhi Declaration on AI: Key Provisions

- The New Delhi Declaration aligns with India’s multilateral priorities, with commitments described as voluntary and non-binding to encourage broad global participation.
 - A central feature is a charter promoting the “**democratic diffusion**” of AI, ensuring wider access and preventing concentration of technological power.
 - **Institutional and Knowledge Platforms**
 - The declaration proposes several collaborative mechanisms, including:
 - **Global AI Impact Commons** – a shared database of AI use cases.
 - **Trusted AI Commons** – a repository of tools, benchmarks, and best practices for secure and trustworthy AI.
 - **International Network of AI for Science Institutions** – linking technical institutes worldwide.
 - **Social and Workforce Focus**
 - It also introduces:
 - AI for Social Empowerment Platform
 - AI Workforce Development Playbook and Reskilling Principles
 - Guiding Principles on Resilient and Efficient AI
 - The declaration underscores broad global consensus on leveraging AI for economic growth and social good, aiming to catalyse long-term international partnerships.
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INDIA-BRAZIL PARTNERSHIP DEEPENS WITH RARE EARTH MINING AGREEMENTS

- India and Brazil share a long-standing partnership based on democratic values, South-South cooperation, and multilateral engagement.
- Diplomatic relations were established in 1948, and the relationship has evolved into a strategic partnership covering trade, defence, energy, and global governance.
- Both countries are key members of major multilateral groupings such as BRICS, G20, IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum), and BASIC (climate negotiations grouping).
- They advocate reform of global institutions, including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and support a multipolar world order.

Trade and Economic Relations

- Brazil is India's largest trading partner in Latin America. Bilateral trade has fluctuated between \$12-15 billion in recent years.
 - **India's exports to Brazil:** Organic Chemicals, Diesel oil, pharmaceuticals and chemicals, engineering goods including auto components and mechanical and electrical equipment, apparel and textile products, Iron and Steel (and products), Plastic, Ceramic, etc.
 - **India's imports from Brazil:** Crude oil, soya oil, Gold, raw sugar, Asbestos, copper ores, iron ores, Manganese, Kidney beans, Cowpeas, valves, motor pumps, etc.

Defence and Strategic Cooperation

- India and Brazil cooperate in defence production, technology sharing, and maritime security.
- Both nations support peaceful dispute resolution and multilateralism. As large democracies of the Global South, they often coordinate positions at the UN, WTO, and G20.

Current Affairs - 22 February 2026

Energy and Climate Cooperation

- Brazil is a global leader in renewable energy, particularly biofuels, while India has expanded solar and green energy initiatives.
- Both countries have cooperated in the **Global Biofuels Alliance**, announced in 2023. Renewable energy and clean technology remain central pillars of bilateral ties.

Digital Partnership for the Future

- India and Brazil launched a joint declaration and action plan on a digital partnership. Cooperation is expected in emerging technologies such as:
 - Artificial Intelligence, Semiconductors, Blockchain, Supercomputing
- This reflects India's growing status as a digital technology hub and Brazil's interest in leveraging digital transformation.

Trade Expansion and Visa Facilitation

- Both countries are committed to significantly increasing bilateral trade, with Brazil proposing a target of \$30 billion annually by 2030.
- Brazil also announced the extension of business visas for Indian ordinary passport holders to 10 years, facilitating long-term business collaboration.

Response to Global Trade Uncertainty

- The discussions occurred amid global trade disruptions following developments in U.S. tariff policies. Both leaders agreed to study the implications of recent tariff decisions and adopt a "wait and watch" approach.
- This underscores the shared interest of India and Brazil in protecting trade autonomy and strengthening South-South economic cooperation.

Strategic Significance

- **Supply Chain Diversification:** Reducing dependence on China for critical minerals.
 - **Strengthening the Global South:** Coordinating positions in multilateral forums.
 - **Technological and Energy Transition:** Promoting renewable energy and advanced digital technologies.
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INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY



- It is an **autonomous intergovernmental organisation** within the **OECD framework**.
- It works with governments and industry to shape a secure and sustainable energy future for all.

Background: It was established in 1974, in the **wake of the 1973-1974 oil crisis**, to help its members respond to major oil supply disruptions, a role it continues to fulfill today.

Mandate: Tracking and **analyzing global key energy trends**, promoting sound energy policy, and fostering multinational energy technology cooperation.

Focus Area: It focuses on four main areas **energy security, economic development, environmental awareness, and engagement worldwide.**

Member Countries: It consists of **31 member countries** and eleven association countries.

- A candidate country to the **IEA must be a member country** of the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**.

India joined this organization in 2017 as an Associate member.

Reports published by IEA: World Energy Outlook, World Energy Balances, Energy Technology Perspectives, World Energy Statistics and Net Zero by 2050.

Headquarters: Paris, France.
