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## Current Affairs - 25 February 2026

### SUJVIKA PORTAL



- It is an **AI driven Biotech Product Data Portal**.
- It is developed in collaboration with **Industry partners ABLE**.
- SUJVIKA is a **Trade Statistics Digital Intelligence Platform** that presents authenticated biotechnology product import data in a structured and accessible format.
- **Features of SUJVIKA Portal:**
  - The portal **provides sector-wise insights into biochemical products**, industrial enzymes, and other biotechnology imports.
  - It enables researchers, startups, and industry to **identify high-value and high-volume imports**, assess import dependency and prioritise indigenisation and R&D efforts.
  - The portal also supports **evidence-based planning and promotes public-private partnerships** for strengthening domestic biomanufacturing.

### **Key Facts about Department of Biotechnology**

- It was set **up in 1986**.
- It acts as a nodal agency supporting **research and its applications** in the **Life Sciences** and promotes & accelerates the pace of development and large-scale use of biotechnology in the country.
- DBT also supports Research and Development innovations and manufacturing in advanced Biofuels as well as **'Waste to Energy' technologies**.

### CHICORY



- Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*) is a plant belonging to the **Asteraceae family**.
- It is a **perennial plant** mainly cultivated in **temperate regions worldwide**.



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- There are several varieties of the chicory plant, known differently globally due to its **numerous medicinal, culinary, and nutritional qualities**.
  - It is a local wild edible, and the **leaves, flowers and root can all be used** in culinary creations.
  - **Additive in Coffee:** Chicory is a **popular additive that provides** a darker colour and an earthy taste to the beverage.
    - It is **naturally caffeine-free** and significantly less expensive than high-quality coffee.
  - **Nutritional Value:** Most parts of the plant contain nutrients ranging within **carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, minerals, soluble fiber**, trace elements, and bioactive phenolic compounds.
  - **Uses:** It is used as forage **for livestock, as folklore remedies**, or as a vegetable addition in human diets.
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### EXERCISE DHARMA GUARDIAN



- It is the **annual joint military exercise** between the **Indian Army and Japan**.
- **Aim:** The aim of Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN' is to **strengthen military collaboration and enhance combined capabilities** to undertake joint operations in a semi-urban environment.
- The **exercise is held alternately in India and Japan** and remains a key pillar of defence cooperation between the two nations.
- It is the **7th edition** of the annual Joint Military Exercise
- **Key tactical activities during the exercise include:**
  - Establishing a Temporary Operating Base
  - Developing an Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) grid
  - Setting up Mobile Vehicle Check Posts

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- Conducting Cordon and Search Operations in hostile environment
- Executing Heliborne Operations
- Undertaking House Intervention Drills

### What are Other Exercises between India and Japan?

- **Malabar: India and Japan** with the **United States and Australia** participate in the naval war gaming exercise named Malabar.
  - **JIMEX** (Naval)
  - **SHINYUU Maitri** (Air Force).
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### C. RAJAGOPALACHARI: TEMPLE ENTRY REFORMER HONOURED AT RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

President Droupadi Murmu unveiled a statue of **C. Rajagopalachari** (Rajaji) in the central courtyard of Rashtrapati Bhavan, replacing the bust of British architect **Edwin Lutyens**. The decision, announced by PM Modi, highlighted Rajaji's legacy of public service, self-restraint, and independent thinking.

### C. Rajagopalachari: Freedom Struggle and the Rajaji Formula

- **Rowlatt and Non-Cooperation Movements** (1919–20) - Rajaji was an early supporter of the Rowlatt Satyagraha in 1919. He later led the Non-Cooperation Movement in Tamil Nadu, giving up his successful legal practice and advocating boycott of elections, institutions, and official titles.
- **Salt Satyagraha in the South** (1930) - In April 1930, he led the historic march from Trichy to **Vedaranyam** as part of the Salt Satyagraha. He was arrested multiple times for defying colonial authorities and distributing satyagraha material.
- **Differences During the Quit India Movement** (1942) - While a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, Rajaji differed with him during the Quit India Movement. He doubted that Britain would leave merely in response to slogans and instead advocated a negotiated settlement with the Muslim League.

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- **The Rajaji (CR) Formula**
  - Rajaji proposed a Congress–Muslim League agreement, later known as the **Rajaji Formula**, which Gandhi agreed to consider.
  - **Key Provisions**
    - The Muslim League would cooperate in forming a provisional government.
    - Congress would accept a post-independence plebiscite in Muslim-majority districts of the North-West and East to decide on Pakistan.
    - In case of partition, mutual agreements would safeguard defence, commerce, and communications.

### Rajaji's Enduring Significance

- Replacing a colonial-era statue with that of C. Rajagopalachari at Rashtrapati Bhavan aligns with the emphasis on cultural nationalism and reinterpreting colonial legacies.
  - **A Bridge from Colonial to Republican India**
    - He became Premier under the Government of India Act, 1935.
    - He succeeded Lord Mountbatten as Governor-General in 1948 — the only Indian to hold the post.
    - He served as Chief Minister of Madras (1952–1954).
  - **Intellectual and Cultural Contributions**
    - Rajaji is also remembered for his accessible retellings of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, which remain widely read.
    - Rajaji's conservative outlook, particularly his critique of Nehruvian socialism, resonates with contemporary political currents, including the BJP's economic and ideological positioning.
    - Respected by both Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajaji was awarded the **Bharat Ratna in 1954** and accorded a state funeral in 1972.
    - His life exemplified “**principled flexibility**” in politics — balancing conviction with pragmatic adaptation.
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### PM MODI IN TEL AVIV: TRACING THE EVOLUTION OF INDIA-ISRAEL RELATIONS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on an official visit to Israel, marking his first trip there since his landmark 2017 visit (the first-ever by an Indian Prime Minister after diplomatic ties were established). That visit elevated India-Israel relations into the open and strengthened bilateral cooperation.

#### **The Early Years: Recognition Without Full Ties**

- India recognised the state of Israel soon after its creation in **1948**.
- However, full diplomatic relations were delayed for over four decades due to political sensitivities and regional considerations.
  - In January 1992, during Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's visit to India, Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao conveyed that diplomatic ties with Israel could strengthen India's ability to influence the Palestinian cause.
  - Arafat publicly respected India's sovereign decision, paving the way for a historic shift.
- India formally established diplomatic relations with Israel on January 29, 1992 — a move that marked a decisive turning point in bilateral relations.
- **Growing Defence Cooperation**
  - India had sourced Israeli weapons during the 1962 war with China, though engagement remained limited and episodic.
  - During the Kargil conflict, Israel swiftly supplied precision bombs from its emergency stockpiles to the Indian Air Force.
  - This timely support significantly strengthened defence ties.

#### **India-Israel Relations After 2014**

- After assuming office in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi brought India-Israel ties into the open.

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- He met Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in New York in September 2014 — the first such meeting in a decade — signalling renewed political engagement.
- **High-Level Political Exchanges**
  - Home Minister Rajnath Singh visited Israel in 2014.
  - President Pranab Mukherjee made the first-ever Indian Presidential visit in 2015.
  - External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj followed in 2016.
  - Over the past decade, several Indian ministers and parliamentarians have also visited Israel.
- **The 2017 Breakthrough Visit**
  - PM Modi's 2017 visit was historic not only as the first by an Indian Prime Minister but also because he skipped the customary stop in Palestine, signalling a more confident and independent diplomatic stance.
  - His current visit similarly focuses solely on Tel Aviv.
- **Reciprocal Engagement**
  - Prime Minister Netanyahu visited India in January 2018, reinforcing bilateral ties.
  - Since Netanyahu's re-election, the two leaders have spoken at least 10 times in three years, reflecting sustained high-level engagement.
- **Expanding Strategic and Economic Cooperation**
  - India and Israel have deepened defence ties, evident during Operation Sindoor, and enhanced cooperation in cybersecurity, highlighted during the Pegasus disclosures.
  - In November 2025, both sides signed defence pacts and launched negotiations for a free trade agreement. Cooperation now spans sectors such as artificial intelligence, agriculture, and advanced technologies.

### Conclusion

PM Modi's Israel visit unfolds in a volatile regional environment and will be closely watched across West Asia. It reflects India's effort to navigate complex geopolitical realities while safeguarding its strategic and economic interests.

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### KERALA TO KERALAM - CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS AND CULTURAL ASSERTION

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal to **rename** the State of Kerala as Keralam, reflecting the linguistic and cultural identity of the Malayalam-speaking population.
- The proposed Kerala (Alteration of Name) **Bill, 2026** will now be referred to the Kerala Legislative Assembly under **Article 3** of the Constitution, after which Parliament will consider the amendment to the First Schedule.
- The move follows resolutions passed unanimously by the Kerala Assembly in 2023 and 2024 and is seen as an assertion of linguistic identity and historical continuity.

#### Procedure for Renaming a State:

- **Constitutional/ legal basis:** Article 3 of the Constitution empowers Parliament to form new states, alter boundaries, change names of states.
- **Steps involved:**
  - Proposal initiated by the state government.
  - Examination by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
  - Consultation with departments such as Intelligence Bureau, Survey of India, Registrar General of India, Department of Posts, Ministry of Railways.
  - The President refers the Bill to the State Legislature for views.
  - Introduction and passage of Bill in Parliament.
  - Presidential assent and notification.
- **Current status:**
  - The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal.
  - The President will refer the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026 to the Kerala Assembly.
  - After receiving the Assembly's views, the Bill will be introduced in Parliament.

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### Rationale Behind Renaming:

- **Linguistic identity:** Kerala was created on 1 November 1956 during linguistic reorganisation of states. The state's name in **Malayalam** is Keralam. Kerala Piravi Day commemorates the state's formation.
- **Constitutional discrepancy:** The First Schedule lists the state as "Kerala". Assembly resolutions sought correction to "Keralam".
- **Correction of earlier resolution:** The 2023 resolution attempted changes in all Eighth Schedule languages, but technical discrepancies required a fresh resolution in 2024.

### Concerns and Significance:

- **Concerns/ challenges:**
  - **Administrative adjustments:** Changes required in official records, government documents, maps and surveys, educational materials, etc.
  - **Past proposals have failed:** 2018 proposal to rename West Bengal as Bangla was rejected due to similarity with Bangladesh.
  - **Political timing:** Decision comes ahead of Kerala Assembly elections, raising political interpretations.
- **Significance:**
  - **Cultural significance:** Reinforces linguistic federalism. Strengthens regional identity within the Union.
  - **Federalism dimension:** Demonstrates cooperative federalism - State initiative, Central approval, Parliamentary process.
  - **Historical continuity:** Aligns constitutional nomenclature with historical usage.

### Conclusion:

- The proposed renaming of Kerala to Keralam represents a **symbolic but significant** exercise in linguistic federalism and cultural recognition.
  - While the change requires constitutional formalities and administrative adjustments, it aligns the state's constitutional identity with its historical and linguistic reality, reinforcing India's pluralistic federal structure.
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### PERIYAR TIGER RESERVE



- **Location:** It is located in the Idukki district of Kerala.
- It is named after the Periyar River.
- It is set high at **Cardamom Hills and Pandalam Hills** of the Western Ghats, adjacent to the border with **Tamil Nadu**.
- It surrounds the **Periyar Lake**.
- **Terrain:** The terrain is **hilly and undulating** and the highest peak is **Kottamala (2016 m)**.
- **Rivers:** Two major rivers namely **Periyar and Pamba drain the area**.
- **Dams:** Mullaperiyar Dam is located within the PTR.
- **Tribes:** It is home to many tribal communities, including the **Mannans and the Palians**.

**Vegetation:** It mainly comprises **tropical evergreen forests, semi- evergreen forests, moist deciduous forests,** transitional fringe evergreen forests, grasslands, and eucalyptus plantations.

**Flora:** Teak, mangoes, rosewood, jamun, jacarandas, terminalias, tamarind, royal ponciana, bamboo, etc.

**Fauna:** Elephants, Wild Pigs, Mouse Deer, Barking Deer, and Tiger.

- The major four species of primates are also found at Periyar – the rare **lion-tailed macaque**, the Nilgiri Langur, Gee's Golden Langur, Common Langur, and **Bonnet Macaque**.
  - It is also being considered as the **habitat of the elusive Nilgiri Tahr**.
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