IIT Madras ₹600 Crore Venture Capital Fund for Deep-Tech Startups | National Current Affairs | 12 Feb 2026

Why in News?

The **IIT Madras Research Park** has launched a **₹600 crore deep-tech venture capital fund** aimed at nurturing early-stage and **technology-intensive startups** across **India's deep-tech ecosystem.**

Key Points:

- **Fund:** The **IIT Madras Research Park (IITMRP)**, in collaboration with **Unicorn India Ventures**, announced the establishment of a **₹600 crore deep-tech venture capital fund** called **IITM Unicorn Frontier Fund I.**
    - The fund includes an additional **₹400 crore 'greenshoe option'**, bringing potential total deployment capacity to **₹1,000 crore** for investment in deep-tech startups.
    - The fund targets **early-stage deep-tech companies** with technologies such as **AI, semiconductors, defence tech, robotics, and frontier research**.
- **Strategic Vision:** It emphasizes **technology sovereignty**, reducing reliance on imported technologies by supporting ventures building globally competitive solutions from India.
- **Innovation Support:** The fund aims to provide **patient capital**, recognizing that deep-tech startups often require **longer gestation periods** due to intensive R&D, prototyping, and regulatory challenges.
- **Impact:** The initiative is expected to strengthen India's **deep-tech startup ecosystem** by enabling growth of **intellectual property-led ventures** and fostering collaboration between research institutions and industry.
- **IITMRP:** It is one of India's prominent **university-based research parks**, designed to bridge the gap between **academia and industry** by incubating **startups** and hosting **R&D entities** within its facility.

Read More: **India's deep-tech ecosystem**, **AI**, **semiconductors**, **Intellectual property**

Gujarat Exchanges LoI with Starlink for High-Speed Internet Connectivity | National Current Affairs | 12 Feb 2026

Why in News?

The **Government of Gujarat** signed a **Letter of Intent (LoI)** with **Starlink**, a subsidiary of Elon Musk's SpaceX, to expand high-speed satellite internet connectivity across the state.

Key Points:

- **Signatories:** The document was exchanged in Gandhinagar between State Industries

Commissioner **P. Swaroop** and Starlink India Head **Prabhakar Jayakumar**, in the presence of Chief Minister **Bhupendra Patel** and Deputy CM **Harsh Sanghavi**.

- **Target Areas:** The initiative specifically focuses on remote, border, tribal, and underserved regions where traditional telecom infrastructure is limited or difficult to deploy.
- **Priority Districts:** Special emphasis is placed on "Aspirational Districts" such as **Narmada** and **Dahod**.
- **Pilot Project Scope:** The initial phase aims to connect key public infrastructure, including:
    - **Education:** State schools for smart classrooms.
    - **Healthcare:** Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and telemedicine services.
    - **Security:** Coastal police outposts and highway safety systems.
    - **Public Services:** Common Service Centres (CSCs) and e-Governance hubs.
    - **Logistics & Environment:** Ports, GIDC industrial parks, and wildlife sanctuaries.
- **Joint Working Group:** A collaborative team comprising representatives from the Gujarat government and Starlink will be established to oversee the pilot assessments and coordinate implementation.
- **Regulatory Standing:** While Starlink has been issued an LoI, final commercial rollout remains subject to licensing and security requirements from India's central authorities (DoT/IN-SPACe).
- **Significance:** This strategic move is part of **Gujarat's Digital Connectivity Mission** aimed at **bridging the digital divide** where terrestrial telecom networks are weak or unviable due to geography or cost.

India to Establish Two New Telescopes in Ladakh | National Current Affairs | 12 Feb 2026

Why in News?

In the Union Budget 2026-27, the Indian government approved a major expansion of its ground-based astronomy infrastructure in Ladakh, including the establishment of **two new mega-telescopes** and the **upgrade of an existing facility**.

Key Points:

- **New Telescope Projects:** Establish the National Large Solar Telescope and the National Large Optical–Near Infrared Telescope.
- **National Large Solar Telescope (NLST):** To observe the **Sun's surface and atmosphere** with high resolution.
    - **Location:** Near **Pangong Tso lake, Ladakh**.
    - **Scientific Focus:** Solar magnetic fields, flares, coronal mass ejections and space-weather phenomena.
- **Significance:** Once completed, NLST will be **India's third ground-based solar observatory**, complementing existing facilities such as the **Kodaikanal Solar Observatory (Tamil Nadu)** and **Udaipur Solar Observatory (Rajasthan)**, and augmenting data from India's **Aditya-L1 space observatory**.
- **National Large Optical–Near Infrared Telescope (NLOT):** A **deep-space optical and near-infrared telescope** for cutting-edge cosmic research.
    - **Scientific Applications:** Studies of **exoplanets, stellar and galactic evolution, cosmology, supernovae and distant galaxies**.
- **Significance:** With its large collecting area and high altitude site, NLOT will be among **the most powerful optical telescopes** in the region for deep-space observation.
- **Upgradation of Himalayan Chandra Telescope (HCT):**The HCT will be **upgraded to a telescope with a 3.7-metre segmented primary mirror**, improving its sensitivity and

wavelength coverage into optical-infrared regimes.
    - **Scientific Impact:** The enhanced HCT will allow deeper observations and complement both **international observatories** and the new telescopes being built under this programme.
- **Why Ladakh?**: Ladakh, located at high altitude with **clear, dry skies and low atmospheric disturbance**, has been identified as an **optimal site for astronomical observations**, and is already home to several important optical and high-energy astronomy facilities.

Himachal Pradesh CM Launches 'Padhai with AI' App | National Current Affairs | 12 Feb 2026

Why in News?

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu launched the **'Padhai with AI' digital learning initiative** in **Bilaspur district.**

Key Points:

- **Objective:** The initiative aims to provide a **fully digital learning environment** with **continuous academic counselling**, ensuring access to quality study materials and guidance for students preparing for competitive exams.
    - The initiative is **specifically designed for students** who are preparing for **various competitive examinations** and require technology-assisted learning support.
- **Vision:** CM emphasised that education is a **transformative force** that broadens thinking and shapes the **future of society**, and the state government is committed to strengthening education through **innovation and equal opportunities.**
    - The initiative is supported by **NTPC**, which aids in delivering **modern, technology-based and quality educational facilities** to students through the platform.
- **Equal Access:** The platform is intended to **ensure equal access to quality education** irrespective of students' geographical or **socio-economic background** by leveraging **AI-based technology.**
- **Significance:** This initiative reflects a broader push by the state government to **integrate artificial intelligence into public education delivery**.
    - Aiming to address **educational disparities and enhance learning outcomes** for students in **rural and semi-urban areas.**

Read More: AI, NTPC

Amaravati Quantum Valley Launched under National Quantum Mission | National Current Affairs | 12 Feb 2026

Why in News?

Union Minister **Jitendra Singh** laid the **foundation stone** of the **Amaravati Quantum**

Centre in **Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh**, as a part of India's ambitious **National Quantum Mission.**

Key Points:

- **National Quantum Mission:** India's **National Quantum Mission** has an allocation of about **₹6,000 crore** and spans **43 institutions** across **17 states and 2 Union Territories**.
    - Organised under four core areas: **Quantum Computing, Quantum Communication, Quantum Sensing and Metrology, and Quantum Materials and Devices.**
- **Nodal Ministry:** Department of Science & Technology (DST), Ministry of Science & Technology.
- **Vision:** Development of **intermediate-scale quantum computers** in the range of **50–1,000 physical qubits** using different **technology platforms (superconducting and photonic).**
    - **Objective:** Establishment of **satellite-based secure quantum communication** and **ground-based quantum networks.**
    - **Applications:** High-precision timing, navigation, imaging, and detection for defence and space applications.
- **Amaravati Quantum Valley:** Envisioned as a **dedicated quantum innovation cluster**, integrating research institutions, industry, startups, and talent development ecosystems.
    - Collaboration with global technology companies such as **IBM** and Indian IT major **TCS** for quantum cloud access and innovation centres.
- **Strategic Relevance:** Quantum technology is considered a **critical and emerging technology (CET)** globally, with implications for **national security and encryption systems.**

Read More: National Quantum Mission, Quantum Computing, Superconducting, critical and emerging technology (CET)
