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### 28<sup>th</sup> FEB 2026 DESCRIPTIVE

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### HEADLINES

- ❖ **Nine cheetahs from Botswana arrive at Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park**
- ❖ **IIFL Home Finance inks \$300 million loan pact with ADB**
- ❖ **Atal Innovation Mission launches the first State Innovation Mission (SIM) in Tripura**
- ❖ **Sri Lanka's 1st Blue Bond dually listed on NSE IX at GIFT City**
- ❖ **India's first 'Zero Prize' targets verified air, water and land pollution reduction**
- ❖ **Droupadi Murmu Becomes 1st Indian President To Fly In Attack Helicopter Prachand**
- ❖ **T.K. Oommen, a leading architect of modern Indian sociology, passes away**
- ❖ **National Science Day 2026**

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## Nine cheetahs from Botswana arrive at Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park



- Nine cheetahs (six females & three males) have safely arrived at Kuno National Park, Sheopur district, Madhya Pradesh on 28 Feb 2026 from Botswana.
- This brings India's total cheetah population to 48 animals (adults + cubs).
- This is the third batch of African cheetahs brought to India under the country's long-term cheetah reintroduction programme (Project Cheetah).
- This includes 29 Indian-born cubs. The latest to be added to the list were four cubs born to the South Africa-born female, Gamini, on 18 February.
- The Indian Air Force (IAF) operated the inter-continental flight; after landing at Gwalior Air Force Station, cheetahs were airlifted by three IAF helicopters to Kuno.
- The journey covered approximately 7,600 km and took about 10–12 hours of flight time.

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- On arrival, the animals were moved into special quarantine enclosures for about 1 month for health observation, acclimatisation and veterinary care before gradual release to larger areas.
- Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Bhupender Yadav oversaw their symbolic release into enclosures.

### **Project Cheetah:**

- India's Project Cheetah began in September 2022, with the first batch of eight cheetahs—five females and three males—being flown in from Namibia.
- In February 2023, another batch of 12 cheetahs was brought to India from South Africa under a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the Union Ministry for Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the government of South Africa.
- However, the reintroduction of cheetahs in India has not been smooth.
- Out of the 20 cheetahs that were brought to India from Namibia and South Africa, nine adults died in India due to various reasons.
- Ten more cubs born in India have also lost their lives.
- The authorities, however, are hopeful that despite the setbacks, the new batch of cheetahs will give India's Project Cheetah the much-needed push.
- “This is a huge step in the cheetah re-introduction project.

## IIFL Home Finance inks \$300 million loan pact with ADB



- IIFL Home Finance has signed a \$300 million loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to expand affordable housing finance in India.
- This marks the company's maiden syndicated External Commercial Borrowing (ECB).
- The financing package comprises \$150 million from ADB and \$150 million in parallel loans from MUFG, Emirates Bank, Sampath Bank, and Hatton National Bank.
- ADB acted as the Mandated Lead Arranger and Bookrunner (MLAB) for the transaction.
- The loan aims to provide affordable housing finance to economically weaker sections (EWS) and low-income groups (LIG) in India.
- A special focus is placed on women borrowers, as women constitute only 13% of homeowners in India.
- More than 25% of the loan proceeds will be extended toward green-certified affordable homes.
- The initiative promotes climate-resilient and sustainable construction practices in the housing sector.
- The ADB Country Director for India, Mio Oka, highlighted the need to address the affordable housing deficit among low-income women while advancing green housing.

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## Atal Innovation Mission launches the first State Innovation Mission (SIM) in Tripura



- Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) under NITI Aayog has launched India's first State Innovation Mission (SIM) in Tripura to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems at the state level.
- The State Innovation Mission is part of the AIM 2.0 programme, functioning under NITI Aayog's State Support Mission (SSM) framework.
- The mission is designed as a long-term institutional mechanism to help States and Union Territories build robust, inclusive, and context-specific innovation ecosystems aligned with national priorities and local development strengths.
- The initiative was launched at the Hapania International Exhibition Centre in Agartala, Tripura.
- Under SIM-Tripura, the mission has been institutionalised through the Tripura Institution for Transformation (TIFT) as the nodal body for innovation planning and implementation.
- A dedicated incubation and innovation hub, T-NEST (Tripura – Nurturing Entrepreneurship and Startups), has been launched to promote startup development and entrepreneurship in the state.

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- Innovation Centres have been established across all eight districts of Tripura to decentralise innovation support and encourage grassroots participation.
- The mission provides infrastructure, mentorship, policy support, partnerships, and funding assistance to startups and innovators.
- The initiative promotes inclusive innovation-led development, enabling states to unlock local potential and strengthen entrepreneurship ecosystems.

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## Sri Lanka's 1st Blue Bond dually listed on NSE IX at GIFT City



- DFCC Bank has issued Sri Lanka's first-ever Blue Bond worth LKR 3 billion, which has been dually listed on the NSE International Exchange (NSE IX) at GIFT City.
- This marks the first Blue Bond admitted for trading within India's International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) jurisdiction.
- The bond is primarily listed on the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE), and its dual listing on NSE IX expands its international visibility and investor access.
- The dual listing was facilitated under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between NSE IX and the Colombo Stock Exchange to strengthen cross-border capital market collaboration, enable dual listings, and promote innovative financial products across jurisdictions.
- DFCC Bank introduced the Blue Bond in November 2025 to finance the sustainable use of marine resources, clean drinking water supply, aquatic pollution control, and ocean-based sustainable economic activities.

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- Blue Bonds are a subset of green bonds, where proceeds are specifically channelled towards marine conservation, sustainable fisheries, ocean economy projects, and water-related environmental initiatives.
- The listing reinforces GIFT City's growing role as a platform for sustainable finance instruments and allows investor participation through its offshore regulatory framework, thereby diversifying the investor base.
- Earlier, in June 2025, NSE IX admitted DFCC Bank PLC's LKR 2.5 billion foreign-currency Green Bonds, which were Sri Lanka's first renewable energy-focused capital market debt instrument and the first foreign corporate issuance listed on the exchange.

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## India's first 'Zero Prize' targets verified air, water and land pollution reduction



- India has launched its first-ever 'Zero Prize', a results-based environmental award aimed at achieving verified reductions in air, water and land pollution across defined geographies.
- The initiative carries a total corpus of ₹5 crore, with ₹1 crore each allocated for three main categories — air pollution reduction, water pollution reduction, and land pollution reduction, while the remaining amount is earmarked for operational and evaluation purposes.
- The Zero Prize is designed as a performance-linked environmental accountability mechanism, where financial rewards are directly tied to independently verified, measurable pollution reduction outcomes, rather than policy proposals or theoretical commitments.
- The initiative has been convened by the School of Policy and Governance (SPG) with support from philanthropic contributors, corporate CSR partnerships and institutional stakeholders.

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- The award is open to startups, NGOs, corporates, municipal bodies, research institutions and individual innovators, provided they demonstrate scientifically verifiable pollution reduction.
- A key feature of the Zero Prize is third-party independent validation, ensuring transparency, credibility and scientific accuracy in measuring environmental impact.
- For air pollution, reductions must be verified using fixed-location pollutant monitoring, adjusted for meteorological variations to ensure accurate impact assessment.
- For water pollution, evaluation is based on recognised scientific parameters such as Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD), and nutrient load reduction, as per official standards.
- For land pollution, verification involves traceable audits, waste management metrics and measurable reductions in waste or contamination levels.
- The initiative aligns with major national environmental programmes such as the National Clean Air Programme, National Mission for Clean Ganga, and Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0, reinforcing India's broader pollution control and sustainable development agenda.
- The Zero Prize represents a shift toward outcome-based environmental governance, encouraging innovation, accountability and measurable environmental improvement.

## Droupadi Murmu Becomes 1st Indian President To Fly In Attack Helicopter Prachand



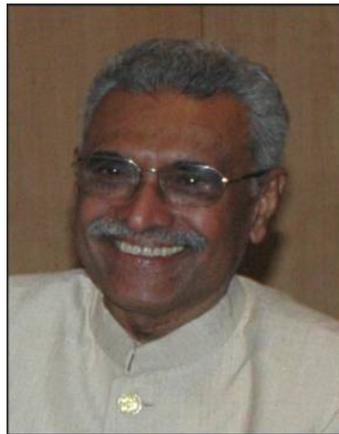
- Droupadi Murmu became the first Indian President to undertake a sortie in an attack helicopter, marking a significant milestone in India's defence history and civil–military engagement.
- She flew in the indigenously developed Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) 'Prachand', India's first home-grown attack helicopter designed for modern battlefield requirements.
- The LCH Prachand has been developed and manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) under India's indigenous defence production programme.
- The sortie was conducted in February 2026 near Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, close to the India–Pakistan border, during the President's two-day official visit.
- The flight lasted approximately 25 minutes, with the President flying as co-pilot after receiving a detailed pre-flight operational briefing from Indian Air Force officials.

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- The visit coincided with the Indian Air Force's firepower demonstration exercise Vayu Shakti 2026 held at the Pokhran field firing range in Rajasthan.
- The Light Combat Helicopter Prachand is capable of high-altitude warfare and is equipped with advanced avionics, stealth features, night-attack capability, and both air-to-ground and air-to-air weapon systems.
- During the sortie, the President described Prachand as a powerful symbol of Atmanirbhar Bharat, highlighting India's growing self-reliance in defence manufacturing and indigenous military technology.
- As the Supreme Commander of India's Armed Forces, the President's participation underscores the constitutional link between civilian leadership and the armed forces, while reinforcing confidence in India's operational readiness and indigenous defence capabilities.

## T.K. Oommen, a leading architect of modern Indian sociology, passes away



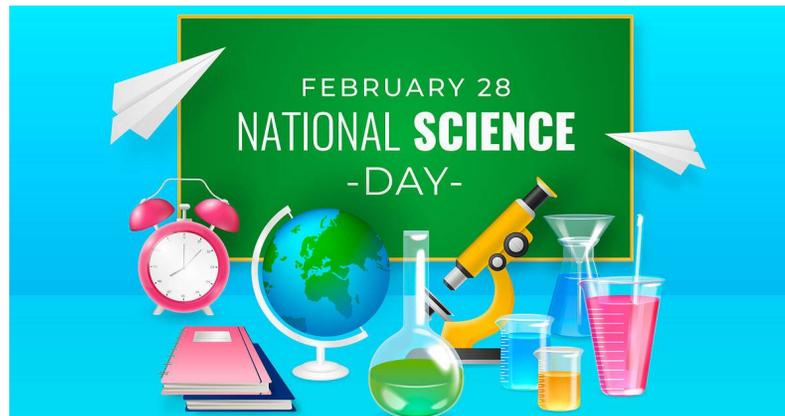
- T. K. Oommen, a leading architect of modern Indian sociology, passed away on 26 February 2026 at the age of 88 in Gurugram, Haryana, marking the end of an era in Indian sociological scholarship.
- Born on 16 October 1937 in Venmony, Alappuzha district, Kerala, he completed his higher education in sociology and earned his PhD with research on the Bhoodan–Gramdan movement, reflecting his early engagement with social reform movements in India.
- He served as a distinguished professor at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems (CSSS), Jawaharlal Nehru University, and later became Professor Emeritus, playing a pivotal role in institutionalising sociology as a discipline in India.
- Oommen significantly expanded the scope of Indian sociology by introducing and strengthening studies on social movements, citizenship, nationhood, ethnicity, pluralism, marginalisation, and collective mobilisations, grounding sociological theory in Indian socio-political realities.

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- He described India as a “multi-national society/state” and contributed extensively to debates on secularism, identity politics, minority rights, and inclusive nation-building, making his work highly relevant for polity and society sections of competitive exams.
- He served as the President of the International Sociological Association (1990–1994), becoming one of the prominent Indian sociologists to hold a key global academic leadership position.
- Oommen also contributed to public policy, notably serving as a member of the Sachar Committee (2005) which examined the socio-economic status of Muslims in India, linking academic research with governance and social justice.
- He authored over 20 books and numerous research papers, and was honoured with the Padma Bhushan in 2008 for his contribution to literature and education, cementing his legacy in Indian intellectual and academic history.

## National Science Day 2026



- National Science Day is observed on February 28 every year across India to commemorate the discovery of the Raman Effect by eminent Indian physicist C. V. Raman in 1928.
- This remarkable achievement later earned him the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930, making him the first Asian scientist to receive the prestigious award in the field of science.
- The day highlights the immense value of fundamental research and its lasting influence on technological and industrial advancement.
- Raman's discovery demonstrated how light changes its properties when it passes through a transparent material, helping scientists understand the molecular structure of substances and opening new paths for scientific exploration.
- The Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, has announced the theme for National Science Day 2026 as "Women in Science: Catalyzing Viksit Bharat."
- The theme aligns scientific advancement with India's vision of becoming a developed nation while recognising the role of women researchers and innovators.

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