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Current Affairs - 24 February 2026

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY 2026



- It is observed every year on **February 21** to **promote linguistic and cultural diversity** across the world.
- The day highlights the **importance of preserving mother languages** and encouraging **multilingual education** for inclusive and sustainable societies.
- With over **40% of the world's languages vulnerable**, the day reinforces the global **commitment to safeguarding languages** that are at risk of disappearing.

History:

- The day **commemorates the 1952 Bengali Language Movement in Bangladesh**, where students protested for recognition of their mother tongue.
- Their sacrifice led to global recognition of linguistic rights and diversity.
- The day was **first proposed by Bangladesh**.
- In **1999, UNESCO declared February 21 as International Mother Language Day**, and it has been observed worldwide since 2000.

Theme for 2026: This year's theme, "**Youth voices on multilingual education**," emphasises the crucial role young people play in preserving and promoting linguistic diversity.

KEY FACTS ABOUT LAKE BAIKAL



- It is located in the southern part of **eastern Siberia, south-central Russia**, near the border with Mongolia.
- It is the **oldest existing freshwater lake on Earth**.



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- It is also the **world's largest freshwater lake**.
- It is also the **world's deepest lake**.
- **Barguzini, Selenga, Upper Angara, Sarma, and Turka** are the major rivers that drain into the lake.
- However, the lake has **only one outlet**, the **Angara River**.

It is also home to the **Buryat people**, who **follow the Tibetan Buddhist religion** and **reside on the eastern side** of the lake, rearing goats, camels, cattle, and sheep.

- The lake was declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1996.

Known as the '**Galapagos of Russia**', its age and isolation have produced one of the world's richest and most unusual freshwater faunas.

WHAT IS THE LUNAR NEW YEAR?



- It marks the **beginning of a new year in the lunisolar calendar**, which was **developed in ancient China**.
- Often known in the West as **Chinese New Year**, the Lunar New Year **occurs on the first new moon of the lunar calendar**.
 - **Lunar calendars consist of 12 months**, each month corresponding roughly to **one cycle of the moon**.
 - **Because 12 lunar cycles do not fill a whole year** an extra month is added **periodically to Lunar calendars to stay close to the solar year**.

Since the lunar calendar is based on the cycles of the moon, the **date of Lunar New Year is different each year**.

- However, it is **usually in January or February**.
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FISHING CAT



Recently, the first scientific assessment of the fishing cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) has established Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve as a stronghold of the small feline species.

- It is a **medium-sized wild cat species**.
- **Habitat:** It is found in a variety of **wetland habitats, mangrove forests, swamps, marshes**.
- It is **adapted to both fresh and saltwater habitats**, and is able to tolerate a wide range of weather conditions, from tropical rain forests to temperate regions.
- **Distribution:** It is native to **South and Southeast Asia**.
 - It inhabits the peninsular region of India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand, Java, and Pakistan.
 - In India, fishing cats are mainly found in the mangrove forests of the **Sundarbans**, on the foothills of the Himalayas along the **Ganga and Brahmaputra river valleys**, and in the Western Ghats.

Fishing Cat Features:

- The **fishing cat is an adept swimmer** and enters water frequently to prey on fish, as its name suggests. It is known to even dive to catch fish.
- They show **strong sexual dimorphism**. Males are considerably larger.
- They are

Conservation Status:

- **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
 - **Wildlife Protection Act of 1972:** Schedule I
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PM SURYA GHAR: MUFT BIJLI YOJANA



- It was launched in 2024 with an aim to provide **free electricity to households in India.**

- Under the scheme, households will be provided with a **subsidy to install solar panels** on their roofs.
- Subsidy: The scheme provides for a **subsidy of 60% of the solar unit cost** for systems up to 2 kW capacity and **40 percent of additional system cost** for systems between 2 to 3 kW capacity.
- The subsidy has been **capped at 3 kW capacity.**

Implementing agency: It is implemented by a **National programme Implementation Agency (NPIA)** at the National level and by the **State Implementation Agencies (SIAs)** at the state level.

- Under this, **DISCOMs** are **designated as State Implementation Agencies (SIAs)** responsible for facilitating various measures, including net meter availability, timely inspection, and commissioning of installations.
- DISCOMs will **receive incentives based on their achievement** in the installation of additional grid-connected rooftop solar capacity beyond a baseline level.

Eligibility Criteria for PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana

- The household must be an **Indian citizen.**
 - The household **must own a house** with a roof that is suitable for installing solar panels.
 - The household must have a **valid electricity connection.**
 - The household **must not have** availed any **other subsidy for solar panels.**
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TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE DIGITAL LIBRARY



Recently, the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI), Brazil and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), India have entered into a cooperation arrangement on access to the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library.

- It is a unique **initiative, established in 2001** by the Government of India through collaboration **between CSIR and the Ministry of AYUSH.**
- **Objective:** Its primary objective is to **prevent the erroneous grant of patents on Indian traditional knowledge** and to safeguard the country's knowledge heritage from misappropriation.
- **Features of Traditional Knowledge Digital Library**
 - It currently contains information on numerous **formulations and practices** drawn from Indian systems of medicine such as **Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Sowa Rigpa**, as well as Yoga, sourced from authoritative traditional texts.
 - Under this initiative, knowledge from multiple languages and disciplines is translated, structured and linked with modern scientific and technical terminology.
 - The database is available in **five international languages**—English, German, French, Japanese and Spanish.
 - To this platform, access is provided to patent offices through **Non-Disclosure Agreements.**
 - With the inclusion of INPI, Brazil, the number of **patent offices worldwide** with access to the TKDL **risers to eighteen.**
- The TKDL is widely regarded as a global benchmark for the defensive protection of traditional knowledge.

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INDIA'S BID TO JOIN THE IEA: WHY MEMBERSHIP IS NOT A SIMPLE ROAD AHEAD

- The IEA was established in 1974 in response to the global oil crisis triggered by the Arab oil embargo during the Yom Kippur War.
- The embargo led to soaring oil prices and fuel shortages, exposing the vulnerability of major industrial economies dependent on imported oil.
- In response, member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) decided to collaborate to manage energy security and reduce dependence on imported oil. As a result, **17 OECD** nations founded the **IEA**.
- **Core Mandate and Emergency Mechanism**
 - The IEA's primary objective was to safeguard stable oil supplies and anticipate future disruptions through coordinated action.
 - A key feature of its framework is the requirement that each member maintain minimum strategic oil stocks to cushion supply shocks.
 - This emergency mechanism has been activated multiple times, including during the 1991 Gulf War and after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.
- **Membership Structure**
 - Although more countries joined over time, full membership remained restricted to OECD members.
 - The IEA currently has **32 full members**. At the recent ministerial meeting, **Colombia** became the 33rd member after joining the OECD in 2020, thereby qualifying for IEA membership.

India's Quest for Full IEA Membership

- India has been pursuing full membership of the International Energy Agency (IEA) for several years and formally submitted its request in October 2023.
- The issue has also featured in India-US bilateral discussions.

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- **Why India Seeks Full Membership?**

- As an associate member, India participates in discussions but lacks voting rights. Full membership would give India a voice in IEA's decision-making processes.
- The IEA plays a crucial role not only in energy security and emergency response but also as a leading knowledge platform on energy transition, climate change, and clean technologies.

- **Legal and Structural Hurdles**

- IEA membership is currently limited to OECD countries. Since India does not intend to join the OECD, granting it full membership would require:
 - Amending the IEA's founding charter, or
 - Making a special exception.
- Discussions indicate that a legal amendment may be considered. Brazil, another non-OECD country, has also sought full membership.

IEA's Support for India

- The IEA has expressed strong support for India's bid, highlighting:
 - India's growing central role in global energy security.
 - Its expected leadership in inclusive energy transitions and climate action.
 - The projection that India will see the largest growth in energy demand over the next three decades.
- At the recent ministerial meeting, delegates welcomed progress in discussions following India's request.

Growing India-IEA Engagement

- **Expanded Cooperation** - IEA's engagement with India has deepened significantly, with multiple India-focused reports and data initiatives.
 - **LiFE Initiative Collaboration** - IEA prepared a special report on India's LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) initiative, estimating that widespread lifestyle changes could avoid up to 2 billion tonnes of global emissions by 2030.
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GOVT. UNVEILS COUNTRY'S FIRST COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICY

- The Centre has unveiled India's first comprehensive counter-terrorism policy, "Prahaar", aimed at strengthening the country's fight against extremist violence through a coordinated, intelligence-driven approach.

STRESS ON DISRUPTING TERROR FUNDS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special emphasis given to disrupting terror funding networks 'through legal framework under Indian laws' Response to terror attack a multi-stakeholder exercise involving agencies at central, state and district levels, with an SOP issued by MHA Indian laws, including anti-terrorism laws, 'give due importance to human rights'. India adheres to rule 	<p>of law 'where laws are just, applied evenly and protect fundamental rights'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extremists based on foreign soil using the latest tech, including drones, to unleash terror in Punjab and J&K Poverty and unemployment among vulnerable sections addressed through govt schemes to prevent inimical elements from exploiting these conditions
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- Core Objective**

- Prahaar aims to:

- Criminalise all terrorist acts.
- Starve terrorists, their financiers and supporters of funding, weapons, safe havens and cyber resources.
- Strengthen coordinated action

financiers and supporters of funding, weapons, safe havens and cyber resources.

among central and state agencies.

- Guiding Principles**

- **Zero Tolerance:** No justification for terrorism under any circumstances.
- **Victim-Centric Approach:** India stands firmly with victims of terror.
- **No Religious Attribution:** Terrorism is not associated with any religion, ethnicity, or civilisation.
- **Concern Over State Sponsorship:** Notes that some countries in the region have used terrorism as an instrument of state policy.

- Seven Key Pillars of Prahaar:** Each letter of the acronym represents a strategic pillar:

- **Prevention**

- Intelligence-led, proactive measures to stop attacks before they occur.
- Continuous disruption of overground worker networks and cyber activities.

- **Responses**

- Swift, proportionate, and graded counter-terror responses.



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- Uniform anti-terror structures and standard operating procedures across levels of governance.
- **Aggregating Internal Capacities**
 - Whole-of-government approach.
 - Modernisation of law enforcement agencies (LEAs) with advanced tools, technology, and weaponry.
 - Enhanced coordination in intelligence collection and investigation.
- **Human Rights and Rule of Law**
 - Safeguarding due process with multiple levels of redressal and appeal.
 - Legal reforms in the counter-terror framework as required.
- **Attenuating Enabling Conditions**
 - Graded police response to radicalisation.
 - Legal action based on degree of radicalisation.
 - Addressing socio-economic vulnerabilities of youth through education, engagement and de-radicalisation programmes.
- **Aligning International Efforts**
 - Strengthening global cooperation.
 - Use of treaties, extradition and deportation under UN norms.
 - Collaboration to counter misuse of ICT by terrorists.
- **Recovery and Resilience**
 - Whole-of-society approach to rebuilding and strengthening community resilience after terror incidents.

Conclusion

Prahaar institutionalises India's counter-terror strategy as a doctrine rooted in proactive intelligence, coordinated governance, technological preparedness, legal safeguards and international cooperation, aimed at comprehensively dismantling terror networks and strengthening national security.
