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Current Affairs Today – February 27, 2026

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WHY IN NEWS

February 27, 2026 is a rich day for UPSC content — covering defence milestones, renewable energy achievements, biodiversity discoveries, geopolitical conflict, climate science, and social policy.

PRESIDENT MURMU FLIES LCH PRACHAND — FIRST PRESIDENT IN AN ATTACK HELICOPTER

President Droupadi Murmu became the first Indian President to fly in an **attack helicopter**, undertaking a 25-minute sortie in the indigenously developed **Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) Prachand** from **Jaisalmer Air Force Station, Rajasthan**.

Key Details:

She flew as **co-pilot** in an olive-green flying suit and helmet

LCH Prachand: India's **first indigenously designed and developed combat helicopter**, built by **HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited)**

Equipped with: advanced avionics, stealth features, night-attack capability, air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles, rockets, **20mm turret gun**; designed for **high-altitude Himalayan warfare**

Earlier sorties: **April 2023** — Sukhoi-30MKI (Tezpur); **October 2023** — Rafale (Ambala)

Context: Coincided with IAF's "**Vayu Shakti**" exercise preparations

UPSC RELEVANCE

LCH Prachand, HAL, Jaisalmer, Vayu Shakti exercise.

MAINS GS-3:

Indigenous defence manufacturing; HAL's role; high-altitude warfare capability.

INDIA CROSSES 520 GW INSTALLED POWER CAPACITY

Union Minister of State for Power **Shripad Yesso Naik** announced India's installed power capacity has exceeded **520 GW**, with **more than half from non-fossil fuel sources**.

Key Details:

Announced at: **India Energy Transition Summit 2026** (organised by **FICCI**)

Solar capacity has **more than tripled** in recent years

Government initiatives: competitive bidding, **Green Energy Corridors**, ultra-mega renewable parks, **PM Surya Ghar Yojana** (rooftop solar)

India's 2030 target: **500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity**

Net-zero target: **2070**

UPSC RELEVANCE

520 GW milestone, FICCI, PM Surya Ghar Yojana, Green Energy Corridors, Shripad Naik.

MAINS GS-3:

India's renewable energy transition; energy security; climate commitments.

NEW PLANT SPECIES IMPATIENS NAGORUM FOUND IN NAGALAND

Botanists formally described **Impatiens nagorum** — a new flowering plant found in **Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary, Kiphire district, Nagaland**. Published in *Phytotaxa* by researchers from Kohima Science College, Nagaland University, University of Warsaw, and **Botanical Survey of India (BSI)**.

Key Details:

Features: **striking purple flowers**; height up to **35 cm**; elevation **2,336 m**; moist temperate broadleaf forests

Only **~20 individuals** observed — indicating rarity and vulnerability

Confirmed by **SEM (Scanning Electron Microscopy)** pollen and seed analysis

Genus *Impatiens*: commonly called "**balsams**" or "**touch-me-nots**"

Eastern Himalayas + Northeast India: global hotspot for *Impatiens* diversity

Species name honours **Naga indigenous communities**

UPSC RELEVANCE

Impatiens nagorum, Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary, BSI, Phytotaxa, Kiphire Nagaland.

MAINS GS-3:

Biodiversity; Northeast as biodiversity hotspot; new species discovery process.

CONGO BASIN PEATLANDS RELEASE ANCIENT CARBON

Research from **ETH Zurich** (published in *Nature Geoscience*) found lakes in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** — **Lake Mai-Ndombe** and **Lake Tumba** — are releasing carbon trapped for **thousands of years** in surrounding tropical peatlands.

Key Details:

Up to **40% of CO₂ emissions** from these lakes originates from peat **>3,000 years old**

Congo Basin peatlands: cover only **0.3% of Earth's land surface** but store **~one-third of global tropical peatland carbon**

Threats: climate change, deforestation, conversion to cropland → accelerates peat drying → carbon release

Congo Basin: **world's second-largest rainforest** (after Amazon); least-studied major forest ecosystem

UPSC RELEVANCE

Congo Basin, Lake Mai-Ndombe, peatlands, ETH Zurich, Nature Geoscience.

MAINS GS-3:

Carbon sinks; tropical forests; climate feedback loops; peatland ecology.

RARE SMEW SIGHTED AT KAZIRANGA FOR FIRST TIME

A **Smew** (*Mergellus albellus*) — a striking white diving duck — was documented for the **first time at Kaziranga National Park** during the **7th Waterbird Census** at Rowmari-Donduwa beels (Laokhowa buffer zone).

Key Details:

Over **105,000 waterbirds** documented across the park's wetlands

Smew: winter migrant from **Eurasian taiga**; males — distinctive black mask + white plumage

Global population: **~130,000 mature individuals**; declining due to habitat degradation

Census: January 4–11; **120+ enumerators + 50 volunteers**

Kaziranga: **UNESCO World Heritage Site**; part of **Central Asian Flyway**; hosts **500+ bird species**

UPSC RELEVANCE

Smew (*Mergellus albellus*), Kaziranga, Central Asian Flyway, Laokhowa WLS.

MAINS GS-3:

Biodiversity; wetland conservation; bird census significance.

BRO RESTORES CHUNGTHANG–LACHEN AXIS IN NORTH SIKKIM

Raksha Rajya Mantri Sanjay Seth inaugurated the restored **Chungthang–Lachen road** (28 km) and **Taram Chu Bridge** (400-foot Bailey suspension bridge) in North Sikkim, rebuilt by **BRO under Project Swastik**.

Key Details:

Damaged by: cloudburst (May–June 2025), **Cyclone Remal** (June 2024), **Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF)** — October 2023

BRO cleared **96 landslides**; built **4 major bridges**; **8 km fresh formation cutting**

Sikkim borders: **China, Bhutan, Nepal**; strategic proximity to international borders

Bailey bridges: portable, prefabricated truss structures for rapid military deployment

UPSC RELEVANCE

BRO, Project Swastik, GLOF, Bailey bridge, Chungthang, Taram Chu.

MAINS GS-3:

Border infrastructure; disaster resilience; BRO's strategic role.

GS-1:

GLOF risk in Himalayan states.

CBIC LAUNCHES SWIFT 2.0 ON INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS DAY

The **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)** announced **SWIFT 2.0** (upgraded Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade), a **Digital Travellers Guide**, and revamped **Atithi app** on **International Customs Day 2026**.

International Customs Day: Observed annually on **January 26**

CBIC under: **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance**

SWIFT 2.0: End-to-end digital trade compliance; transparency; trust-based customs

UPSC RELEVANCE

SWIFT (trade), CBIC, International Customs Day, Atithi app.

MAINS GS-3:

Ease of doing business; trade facilitation; digital governance.

INDIA-GERMANY CLIMATE ADAPTATION PARTNERSHIP DEEPENED

India and Germany committed **EUR 20 million** (new Large Grant under **IKI — International Climate Initiative**) for climate adaptation, focusing on **ecosystem-based approaches** in the Himalayas, Western Ghats, island territories, Northeast, and Lower Gangetic floodplains.

Key Details:

Germany's representative: State Secretary **Jochen Flasbarth** (Federal Environment Ministry)

India's **National Adaptation Plan (NAP)**: under **MoEFCC**

Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA): Using biodiversity and ecosystem services for climate resilience

UPSC RELEVANCE

IKI, EbA, NAP, Jochen Flasbarth, India-Germany climate partnership.

MAINS GS-3:

Climate change adaptation; international climate finance; India's NAP.

PERSONS IN NEWS

President Droupadi Murmu — First Indian President to fly in an attack helicopter; flew LCH Prachand at Jaisalmer.

Shripad Yesso Naik — Union MoS Power; announced India's 520 GW power milestone.

Sanjay Seth — Raksha Rajya Mantri; inaugurated BRO's restored Chungthang-Lachen axis.

Park Chan-wook — South Korean filmmaker; named jury president of **79th Cannes Film Festival** (first Korean in this role). His films: Oldboy (Grand Prix 2004), Thirst (Jury Prize 2009), Decision to Leave (Best Director 2022).

UPSC RELEVANCE

LCH Prachand, HAL, 520 GW, Impatiens nagorum, Fakim WLS, Congo peatlands, Durand Line, Smew, Central Asian Flyway, BRO/GLOF, SWIFT 2.0, IKI.

MAINS GS-2:

South Asian security; diplomacy.

GS-3:

Renewable energy; biodiversity; climate adaptation; border infrastructure.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA
LCH PRACHAND:

Developer/Builder: **HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited)**

Type: India's first indigenous **combat/attack helicopter**

Features: Night-attack, stealth, high-altitude capability; **20mm turret gun**, missiles, rockets

President Murmu's sortie: **25 min**, Jaisalmer, as **co-pilot**

Previous President sorties: Su-30MKI (April 2023, Tezpur), Rafale (October 2023, Ambala)

INDIA'S POWER CAPACITY:

Total installed: **>520 GW** (February 2026)

Non-fossil share: **>50%**

Solar: more than tripled in recent years

2030 target: **500 GW non-fossil** (already exceeded in total; target for specifically non-fossil)

Net-zero target: **2070**

Key scheme: **PM Surya Ghar Yojana** (rooftop solar for 1 crore homes)

IMPATIENS NAGORUM:

Location: **Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary, Kiphire district, Nagaland**

Published: **Phytotaxa** journal

Teams: Kohima Science College, Nagaland University, University of Warsaw, **BSI**

Elevation: **2,336 m**; individuals: **~20** (very rare)

SEM (Scanning Electron Microscopy): confirmed species identity

Named after: **Naga indigenous communities**

CONGO PEATLANDS:

Lakes: **Lake Mai-Ndombe + Lake Tumba** (DRC)

Peat age releasing: **>3,000 years**

Peatland global share: **0.3% of Earth's land** but **~1/3 of tropical peatland carbon**

Congo Basin: **world's 2nd largest rainforest** (after Amazon)

Study: ETH Zurich in **Nature Geoscience**

SMEW AT KAZIRANGA:

Scientific name: *Mergellus albellus*

Type: Diving duck; winter migrant from Eurasian taiga

Global population: **~130,000**

Census: **7th Waterbird Census** (Jan 4–11, 2026); **105,000+ waterbirds** at Kaziranga

Kaziranga: UNESCO World Heritage Site; **Central Asian Flyway**; **500+ bird species**

BRO — NORTH SIKKIM:

Project: **Project Swastik**

Infrastructure: **28 km Chungthang–Lachen road + 400-ft Taram Chu Bailey Suspension Bridge**

Cleared: **96 landslides**; built **4 major bridges**

Disasters: GLOF (Oct 2023), Cyclone Remal (June 2024), cloudburst (May–June 2025)

Sikkim borders: **China, Bhutan, Nepal**

CBIC / SWIFT 2.0:

CBIC: Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs

Under: **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance**

International Customs Day: **January 26** annually

SWIFT = Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Park Chan-wook: **79th Cannes Film Festival** jury president (2026); first Korean to hold this role

South Korea's Parasite (Bong Joon-ho) won Palme d'Or in **2019**

Epstein-Barr Virus (EBV): Human Herpesvirus 4; ~95% global population carries it; linked to MS, lymphoma

BSISO advance heatwave forecast: 2–4 weeks ahead (published in *Climate Dynamics*)

IndiaAI Mission + Sweden signed: **SITAC** (Sweden-India Technology and AI Corridor)

Sources: GKToday, PIB, The Hindu

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