Red Planet Day 2026 (28 November)

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News

Red Planet Day is observed on 28 November, the anniversary of the launch of NASA's Mariner 4 (1964), the first spacecraft to fly past Mars and send back close-up pictures (1965).

Background

- Mars is the fourth planet from the Sun. It looks red because of iron oxide (rust) on its surface. It has two moons, Phobos and Deimos, and Olympus Mons, the largest volcano in the Solar System.
- India's Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan) was launched on 5 November 2013 by PSLV-C25 from Sriharikota and entered Mars orbit on 24 September 2014. India became the first Asian nation to reach Mars orbit and the first in the world to do so in its first attempt.
- Mangalyaan worked far beyond its planned six-month life; contact was lost in 2022.

Tamil Nadu link: Dr Mylswamy Annadurai, born at Kodhavadi (Coimbatore district), was the Project Director of Chandrayaan-1 and the Programme Director of the Mars Orbiter Mission.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What is the background to this news?

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Practice questions (with answers)

1. Red Planet Day (28 November) marks the launch of which spacecraft?

A) Viking 1

B) Mars Pathfinder

C) Mangalyaan

D) Mariner 4

Answer: D – Explanation: Mariner 4, launched 28 Nov 1964, was the first craft to fly past Mars and send close-up images.

2. Why does Mars appear red?

A) Methane

B) Copper sulphate

C) Iron oxide

D) Sulphur

Answer: C – Explanation: Iron oxide (rust) in Martian soil gives the red colour.

3. What are the moons of Mars?

A) Phobos and Deimos

B) Triton and Nereid

C) Titan and Rhea

D) Io and Europa

Answer: A – Explanation: Titan, Rhea – Saturn; Io, Europa – Jupiter; Triton, Nereid – Neptune.

4. Consider – which is/are correct?

1. India was the first Asian nation to reach Mars orbit.

2. India was the first nation to do so in its maiden attempt.

A) 1 only

B) 2 only

C) Both 1 and 2

D) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: C – Explanation: Mangalyaan entered Mars orbit on 24 Sept 2014, giving India both distinctions.

5. Which Coimbatore-born scientist was the Programme Director of Mangalyaan?

A) K. Sivan

B) Mylswamy Annadurai

C) M. Vanitha

D) Ritu Karidhal

Answer: B – Explanation: Kodhavadi-born Mylswamy Annadurai led Chandrayaan-1 and Mangalyaan.