

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

EVERY TOPPER'S LAST READ

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Saturday, 22 August 2026

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§1 Environment

22 AUGUST 2026

GS3 · Environment/Polity

Supreme Court Sets Aside NGT's Yamuna-Floodplain Order Against Art of Living — ₹5-Crore Refund Directed

WHY IN NEWS

The Supreme Court on 22 August 2026 set aside a December 2017 National Green Tribunal (NGT) order that had held Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's Art of Living Foundation responsible for damaging the Yamuna floodplain through its March 2016 World Culture Festival, with a bench of Justices Satish Chandra Sharma and N.K. Singh directing the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to refund the ₹5-crore environmental compensation the Foundation had deposited, while still directing the DDA to continue floodplain-rehabilitation work.

BACKGROUND

The three-day World Culture Festival, held on the Yamuna floodplain in Delhi from 11-13 March 2016, drew a large multi-lakh audience and was widely criticised by environmentalists for constructing temporary structures directly on the ecologically sensitive floodplain. The NGT in December 2017 held Vyakti Vikas Kendra India (the Art of Living-linked petitioner) liable and ordered ₹5 crore in environmental compensation, to be used by the DDA for floodplain restoration. The Supreme Court's 2026 reversal turned on evidentiary standards, holding there was no direct evidence proving the festival caused the alleged floodplain damage — reopening debate on how environmental liability should be established under the "polluter pays" principle when causation is contested.

KEY FACTS

- SC ruling: 22 August 2026; Bench of Justices Satish Chandra Sharma and N.K. Singh.
- Sets aside a December 2017 NGT order against Vyakti Vikas Kendra India (Art of Living Foundation).
- World Culture Festival held on the Yamuna floodplain, Delhi, 11-13 March 2016.
- NGT had ordered ₹5-crore environmental compensation for floodplain damage.
- SC directed the DDA to refund the ₹5-crore deposit to the Foundation.
- SC held there was no direct evidence proving the festival caused the floodplain damage.
- DDA has still been directed to continue floodplain rehabilitation work independently.
- Case: Vyakti Vikas Kendra India v. Manoj Misra (Dead) and Ors.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Evidentiary burden in environmental liability: the "polluter pays" principle requires demonstrable causation, not just presence at a sensitive site.
- Institutional tension between the NGT (specialised environmental adjudicator) and the Supreme Court's appellate review of its factual findings.
- Floodplain ecology: the Yamuna floodplain's role in groundwater recharge, flood-buffering and biodiversity, and cumulative event impacts on it.
- Precedent effect: the ruling could raise the evidentiary bar for future environmental-compensation claims against large public events on sensitive land.
- Balancing cultural/religious event permissions against environmental due diligence for floodplain and riverbank land use.

Memory Hook: The NGT said the festival left footprints on the floodplain; the Supreme Court asked for clear photographs of those footprints — and none were produced.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2018 — river floodplain management and environmental compensation mechanisms.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. The National Green Tribunal's 2017 order held the Art of Living Foundation liable for Yamuna floodplain damage.
2. The Supreme Court in 2026 upheld this finding and increased the compensation amount.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a). The Supreme Court set aside, not upheld, the NGT's finding, and ordered a refund rather than an increase.

GS3

Environment

PYQ-2018

#YamunaFloodplain

#PolluterPays

Glaw Lake Becomes India's 101st Ramsar Site — a High-Altitude Eastern Himalayan Milestone

WHY IN NEWS

Glaw Lake in Arunachal Pradesh was designated as India's 101st Ramsar Site on 3 August 2026, and remains a live UPSC-relevant milestone as India's Ramsar network crossed the 100-site threshold this year. The designation extends Ramsar coverage to a high-altitude Eastern Himalayan wetland in a strategically sensitive border state.

BACKGROUND

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1971) is an intergovernmental treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, with signatory countries designating "Wetlands of International Importance" based on criteria such as representativeness of a wetland type, support for threatened species, or ecological significance for a biogeographic region. India's Ramsar count has grown rapidly in recent years — from 49 sites in 2022 to 101 by August 2026 — reflecting an accelerated designation push by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, though conservationists caution that formal designation alone does not guarantee on-ground protection without adequate management-plan implementation and funding.

KEY FACTS

- Glaw Lake, Arunachal Pradesh, designated a Ramsar Site on 3 August 2026.
- Becomes India's 101st Ramsar Site overall.
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: an intergovernmental treaty adopted in 1971 (Ramsar, Iran).
- India's Ramsar site count grew from 49 in 2022 to 101 by August 2026.
- Arunachal Pradesh is a strategically sensitive Eastern Himalayan border state (China border).
- Designation criteria include wetland-type representativeness and support for threatened species.
- Nodal ministry: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Quantity versus quality debate: rapid Ramsar-count growth versus the adequacy of on-ground management-plan implementation and funding.
- Border-state biodiversity: designating wetlands in strategically sensitive states like Arunachal Pradesh links conservation policy with border-area development.
- High-altitude wetland ecology: distinct hydrology and biodiversity value compared to India's more commonly designated riverine/coastal wetlands.
- International commitment versus domestic capacity: India's expanding Ramsar count as a diplomatic signal under the Convention's framework.

Memory Hook: From 49 to 101 in about four years — India's Ramsar count more than doubled, but a plaque on a lake is not the same as a warden at the gate.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2022 — Ramsar Convention and India's wetland conservation efforts.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. Glaw Lake is located in Arunachal Pradesh.
2. It is India's first Ramsar Site in the wider Himalayan/northeastern region.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a). India already has other Ramsar sites in the wider Himalayan/northeastern region; Glaw Lake is not the first.

GS3

Environment

PYQ-2022

#RamsarSites

#GlawLake

EMP Today's Yamuna/NGT case and the Ladakh HC bench story both turn on institutional-evidence and access questions — strong material for EMP's GS4 case-study clinic this week.

§2 Places in News

PLACES IN NEWS — 22 AUGUST 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- ① New Delhi — Supreme Court (CAPF Act notice, Yamuna-floodplain ruling); Cabinet decisions
- ② Leh — new High Court bench; also the Himalayan-arc focus of DRDO-ISRO snow-cover monitoring
- ③ Eyl, Puntland — Somalia's pirate coast; M/V Lutuf hijacking site
- ④ Mogadishu — intended destination of the seized vessel's Turkish-arms cargo
- ⑤ Dhaka — origin of PM Tarique Rahman's likely visit to India
- ⑥ Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan — SCO Council of Heads of State summit, 1 Sept 2026
- ⑦ Glaw Lake, Arunachal Pradesh — India's 101st Ramsar Site, Eastern Himalayan border state

§3 Ethics & Integrity Cases

Institutional Checks and Balances

Undoing the Umpire's Call

The CAPF Act, 2026's "notwithstanding any judgement" clause tests the ethical limits of institutional checks and balances: a legislature has the power to change the law, but using that power merely to nullify a specific court ruling — without curing the underlying defect — risks treating judicial review as an obstacle to route around rather than a constraint to respect. Public officials drafting such legislation carry a special integrity obligation to distinguish genuine policy correction from a bare override of an inconvenient judgment.

Distributive Justice

A Bench for the Border

The Ladakh High Court bench illustrates distributive justice in access to public institutions: geographic remoteness should not translate into a lesser quality of justice for citizens of a Union Territory. Yet true distributive fairness would also weigh Ladakh's broader, unaddressed demands (statehood, Sixth Schedule protection) — a partial concession, however welcome, should not be mistaken by the state for having fully discharged its distributive obligation to a remote and strategically sensitive population.

Complicity and the Ethics of the Arms Trade

Whose Weapons, Whose Risk?

The M/V Lutuf hijacking, involving a cargo of Turkish weapons destined for a Mogadishu military facility, raises the question of complicity: shipping companies, flag states and arms exporters bear some ethical responsibility for foreseeable risks when moving weapons through a piracy-prone corridor, even when the immediate wrongdoing (the hijacking) is committed by a third party. Genuine ethical due diligence in the arms trade requires route-risk assessment and crew-safety planning that treats seafarers' lives as more than an acceptable operating cost.

Competence vs Representation in Public Institutions

A Rocket Scientist on the Rate-Setters' Board

Appointing former ISRO Chairman S. Somanath to the RBI's Central Board raises a subtle governance-ethics question: public institutions must balance appointing genuinely competent, high-integrity individuals against ensuring the board's composition still represents the sectoral and regional interests it is meant to oversee. Diversifying expertise is valuable, but it should be pursued transparently, on the basis of what the institution's mandate actually requires, not merely to signal prestige.

Burden of Proof in Environmental Justice

Ten Years Later, Still Asking for the Photograph

The Supreme Court's decision to set aside the NGT's Art of Living ruling, nearly a decade after the original event, illustrates the ethical tension between environmental precaution (acting on reasonable suspicion of harm to protect fragile ecosystems) and due process (requiring the accused party to be held liable only on adequately proven causation). Neither value should be sacrificed entirely to the other; the ethical challenge for environmental adjudication is designing evidentiary standards that protect ecosystems without becoming a rubber stamp for any liability claim.

Symbolic Compliance vs Substantive Commitment

The Hundred-and-First Plaque

India crossing 100 Ramsar Sites is a genuine achievement, but the ethics of environmental governance demand asking whether each designation is backed by real management capacity, or whether the count itself has become the goal. Symbolic compliance with an international framework, without matching on-ground investment, risks becoming a form of institutional self-deception rather than an honest accounting of conservation outcomes.

§4 Prelims MCQs

Q1. Ladakh became a separate Union Territory in which year?

(a) 2014 (b) 2019 (c) 2021 (d) 2023

Answer: (b)

Ladakh became a UT in August 2019 after J&K's reorganisation.

Q2. Before the new Ladakh bench, the High Court of J&K and Ladakh functioned from which two locations?

(a) Srinagar and Jammu (b) Srinagar and Leh (c) Jammu and Leh (d) Jammu and Kargil

Answer: (a)

The High Court had benches at Srinagar and Jammu; Ladakh is the third.

Q3. The CAPF Act, 2026 overrides which prior Supreme Court ruling?

(a) Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (b) Sanjay Prakash v. Union of India (c) Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (d) S.R. Bommai v. Union of India

Answer: (b)

The Act overrides the Supreme Court's 2025 ruling in Sanjay Prakash v. Union of India on CAPF deputation.

Q4. Which of the following is NOT a Central Armed Police Force?

(a) CRPF (b) BSF (c) NSG (d) ITBP

Answer: (c)

NSG (National Security Guard) is a separate specialised force, not classified among the CAPFs (CRPF, BSF, ITBP, SSB, CISF).

Q5. Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman is associated with which political party?

(a) Awami League (b) Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) (c) Jatiya Party (d) Jamaat-e-Islami

Answer: (b)

Tarique Rahman is a senior BNP leader, now heading Bangladesh's post-transition government.

Q6. The BRICS Summit in September 2026 is being hosted by which country?

(a) Brazil (b) Russia (c) India (d) South Africa

Answer: (c)

India holds the BRICS Presidency for 2026 and is hosting the September Summit in New Delhi.

Q7. The SCO Council of Heads of State summit (1 September 2026) is scheduled to be held in:

(a) Kazakhstan (b) Kyrgyzstan (c) Tajikistan (d) Uzbekistan

Answer: (b)

The summit is scheduled in Kyrgyzstan, which PM Modi is planning to attend.

Q8. M/V Lutuf, hijacked off Somalia's Puntland coast in August 2026, was flagged under which country?

(a) Panama (b) Liberia (c) Cameroon (d) Malta

Answer: (c)

M/V Lutuf was a Cameroon-flagged general cargo vessel.

Q9. The Indian Navy's rescue operation for MV Ruen's crew in 2024 lasted approximately how long?

(a) 10 hours (b) 24 hours (c) 40 hours (d) 72 hours

Answer: (c)

The Indian Navy conducted a 40-hour operation to rescue MV Ruen's crew and capture 35 pirates.

Q10. India's Navy has maintained anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden since:

(a) 2001 (b) 2008 (c) 2014 (d) 2020

Answer: (b)

India's Gulf-of-Aden anti-piracy patrols have been maintained since 2008.

Q11. The DRDO-ISRO Himalayan meteorology collaboration primarily focuses on monitoring:

(a) Seismic activity (b) Snow cover (c) Air pollution (d) Forest fires

Answer: (b)

The collaboration focuses on space-based Himalayan snow-cover monitoring.

Q12. GLOF stands for:

(a) Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (b) Global Land Observation Framework (c) Ground Level Ozone Formation (d) Glacier Loss Oversight Fund

Answer: (a)

GLOF refers to Glacial Lake Outburst Flood, a Himalayan hazard relevant to snow/glacier monitoring.

Q13. The RBI Central Board of Directors is constituted under:

(a) The Banking Regulation Act, 1949 (b) The RBI Act, 1934 (c) The FEMA, 1999 (d) The SEBI Act, 1992

Answer: (b)

The RBI Central Board is constituted under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.

Q14. The policy repo rate in India is set by:

(a) The RBI Central Board (b) The Monetary Policy Committee (c) The Ministry of Finance (d) NITI Aayog

Answer: (b)

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) sets the policy repo rate, distinct from the Central Board's general-superintendence role.

Q15. S. Somanath, recently appointed to the RBI Central Board, previously chaired:

(a) DRDO (b) ISRO (c) CSIR (d) AICTE

Answer: (b)

S. Somanath is the former Chairman of ISRO.

Q16. The NGT's 2017 order that was set aside by the Supreme Court in August 2026 pertained to damage to which floodplain?

(a) Ganga floodplain (b) Yamuna floodplain (c) Sutlej floodplain (d) Godavari floodplain

Answer: (b)

The case concerned alleged damage to the Yamuna floodplain in Delhi.

Q17. The World Culture Festival (2016) that triggered the NGT case was held over how many days?

(a) 1 day (b) 3 days (c) 5 days (d) 7 days

Answer: (b)

The festival was held over three days, from 11-13 March 2016.

Q18. Glaw Lake, India's 101st Ramsar Site, is located in which state?

(a) Sikkim (b) Arunachal Pradesh (c) Himachal Pradesh (d) Uttarakhand

Answer: (b)

Glaw Lake is located in Arunachal Pradesh.

Q19. India's total Ramsar Site count reached approximately how many by August 2026?

(a) 85 (b) 92 (c) 98 (d) 101

Answer: (d)

India's Ramsar count reached 101 with Glaw Lake's designation.

Q20. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was adopted in which year?

(a) 1965 (b) 1971 (c) 1982 (d) 1992

Answer: (b)

The Ramsar Convention was adopted in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran.

§5 Mains Questions

GS2 Discuss the significance of establishing a High Court bench in Ladakh, and examine how it addresses (and does not address) Ladakh's broader demands for greater administrative autonomy. (150 words)

GS2 "A legislature may remove the defect that led to a judgment, but it cannot simply annul the judgment's binding effect." Discuss with reference to the constitutional challenge to the CAPF (General Administration) Act, 2026. (150 words)

GS2 Examine the significance of early bilateral engagement with a transitioning neighbouring government, with

reference to Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman's proposed visit to India in August 2026. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the factors behind the periodic resurgence of piracy off the Horn of Africa, and evaluate India's role as a "net security provider" in the western Indian Ocean. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the significance of satellite-based Himalayan snow-cover monitoring for disaster preparedness and high-altitude defence logistics, with reference to recent DRDO-ISRO cooperation. (150 words)

GS3 Distinguish between the roles of the RBI's Central Board of Directors and its Monetary Policy Committee, and discuss the significance of appointing technocrats from outside the finance sector to the Central Board. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the significance of establishing clear causation in environmental liability cases, with reference to the Supreme Court's 2026 ruling on the Art of Living Foundation's Yamuna floodplain case. (150 words)

GS3 India's Ramsar site count has more than doubled in recent years. Critically examine whether this expansion has been matched by adequate on-ground wetland management capacity. (150 words)

GS4 Discuss the ethical responsibilities of shipping companies and flag states in preventing arms cargo from becoming a target and tool of maritime piracy and regional instability. (150 words)

§6 Answer Writing Value Addition

Institutional design: "A bench, not a new house" — the Ladakh High Court bench remains part of the existing J&K and Ladakh High Court.

Constitutional principle: A "notwithstanding" clause is valid only if it cures the defect behind a judgment, not if it merely reverses the judgment's effect.

Diplomatic data point: Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman's proposed visit is being sequenced around both the BRICS Summit (New Delhi, Sept) and the SCO Summit (Kyrgyzstan, Sept).

Security data point: 6 of M/V Lutuf's 10 crew members were Indian; the vessel's cargo included Turkish weapons bound for Mogadishu.

Dual-use fact: DRDO-ISRO's Himalayan snow-cover monitoring serves both GLOF/avalanche disaster preparedness and high-altitude defence logistics.

Institutional fact: The RBI Central Board (under the RBI Act, 1934) now has 11 members, down from 15, following the August 2026 reconstitution.

Judicial fact: The Supreme Court ordered a ₹5-crore refund to the Art of Living Foundation after finding no direct evidence of Yamuna floodplain damage.

Conservation data point: India's Ramsar Site count rose from 49 (2022) to 101 (August 2026) with Glaw Lake's designation.

§7 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

TOPIC	SECTION	HIT PROBABILITY
Ladakh High Court bench	Polity	★★★★
CAPF Act 2026 — Parliament vs Judiciary	Polity	★★★★★
Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman's visit	IR	★★★★
M/V Lutuf piracy, Somalia	Defence/Security	★★★★
DRDO-ISRO Himalayan meteorology	S&T/Defence	★★★★
RBI Central Board restructuring	Economy	★★★★
SC sets aside NGT order — Art of Living	Environment	★★★★★
Glaw Lake — 101st Ramsar Site	Environment	★★★★
SAGAR doctrine & Indian Ocean security	Defence	★★★
Legislative override doctrine	Polity	★★★★
India-Bangladesh Teesta water-sharing	IR	★★★
GLOF & Himalayan disaster preparedness	S&T/Environment	★★★
RBI Act, 1934 — Central Board vs MPC	Economy	★★★
Ramsar Convention & wetland conservation	Environment	★★★
Union Territory judicial architecture	Polity	★★★
Polluter Pays principle & burden of proof	Environment	★★★★
BRICS 2026 Presidency & September Summit	IR	★★★
SCO Council of Heads of State, Kyrgyzstan	IR	★★★

★ THEIAS AKADEMIA — PROOF OF PRECISION

UPSC CSE Prelims 2026 Results

In what critics called the most unpredictable Prelims paper in a decade —

48

QUESTIONS FROM
ANTIM ASSURED 100+

7

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

6

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE CLASS

Our students had seen 48 questions before the paper was opened.

This is not luck. This is TheIAS Akademia.

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§8 · PROOF OF PRECISION — TODAY'S EDITION

22 August 2026 — Operational Count

What today's ANTIM ASSURED 100+ actually delivered

8

NEWS ITEMS COVERED

6

ETHICS CASES

20

PRELIMS MCQS

9

MAINS QUESTIONS

7

PLACES MAPPED

0

REPEATED TOPICS

Polity

IR

Defence

S&T

Economy

Environment

- Zero topics repeated from the last 7 editions (16-21 Aug) — verified against ANTIM_TopicLog.txt.
- Every card passes the Substance Test on at least two of five criteria.
- map_21Aug2026.jpg reused per standing instruction, since no map_22Aug2026.jpg exists; framing re-verified before pin placement.

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