

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

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INSIDE PART II

1. Environment
2. Places in News
3. Ethics & Integrity Cases
4. Prelims MCQs (20)
5. Mains Questions (9)
6. Value Addition
7. AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker
8. Proof of Precision

← Continued from Part I: Headlines · Polity · GS1 · International Relations · Defence ·
Science & Technology · Economy

GS3

Conservation – Species Reintroduction, Project Tiger, NTCA

2 October 2026 · Source: Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (PIB); National Tiger Conservation Authority; The Week; Insights on India

T138 Comes Home: West Bengal's First Tiger Reintroduction in Four Decades Lands in Buxa

Why in News: On 2 October 2026, during Wildlife Week 2026, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav released a three-year-old tigress — T138, translocated from Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bihar — into Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal, marking the state's first tiger reintroduction in decades. Yadav credited the West Bengal Forest Department for completing in a few months what an eight-year restoration programme (2018-2026) had built toward, noting “the prey area here is sufficient” after sustained habitat work, and that two villages were voluntarily relocated to reduce biotic pressure on the core area.

Background: Buxa, declared India's 15th Tiger Reserve in 1983 and upgraded to a National Park in 1997, sits in the Dooars region of North Bengal at the Eastern Himalayan foothills, spanning 760.87 sq km (390.58 sq km core, 370.29 sq km buffer) along the Indo-Bhutan border. It once supported resident tigers, but suffered a local population collapse from habitat fragmentation, high biotic pressure and a depleted natural prey base. The Tiger Augmentation and Recovery Project, run jointly since 2018 by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Wildlife Institute of India and the West Bengal Forest Department, is the direct institutional vehicle behind today's release — the same reintroduction model (source-reserve translocation preceded by prey-base building) used at Panna, Sariska and Rajasthan's Ramgarh Vishdhari.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Tigress T138, age 3, translocated from Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bihar, to Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal — released 2 October 2026.
- Buxa Tiger Reserve: India's 15th Tiger Reserve (declared 1983); National Park status since 1997; 760.87 sq km total area.
- Tiger Augmentation and Recovery Project running since 2018 — a joint NTCA-WII-West Bengal Forest Department initiative.
- Over 800 chital released since 2018 to rebuild the prey base; approximately 380 hectares of degraded grassland restored.
- Two villages voluntarily relocated from the core area to reduce human-wildlife pressure.
- Location: Dooars region, North Bengal, at the Eastern Himalayan foothills along the Indo-Bhutan border.
- Reintroduction model mirrors precedents at Panna, Sariska and Ramgarh Vishdhari (Rajasthan) tiger reserves.

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Demonstrates that tiger reintroduction success depends less on the release event itself than on multi-year prey-base and habitat groundwork preceding it — a template-worthy conservation sequencing lesson.

- Criticism/trade-off: voluntary village relocation, even when consensual, raises rehabilitation-adequacy and community-rights questions that recur across India's tiger-reserve core-area management (echoing Forest Rights Act tensions).
- Implementation challenge: a single founder tigress cannot re-establish a breeding population; genetic viability requires a planned multi-individual, multi-year translocation schedule, monitored for inbreeding risk.
- Comparative angle: directly parallels India's landmark big-cat reintroduction science — from Panna's post-2009 tiger revival to the (unrelated) Kuno cheetah reintroduction — as case studies in source-population-based carnivore recovery.
- Way forward: sustained prey-base monitoring, corridor connectivity to neighbouring Bhutanese and Indian forest patches, and a transparent multi-year translocation calendar would convert a single release into a self-sustaining population.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

“2018 to 2026, 800 chital, 380 hectares — eight years of groundwork for one tigress's first steps”: T138, Valmiki to Buxa, Bihar to Bengal.

PYQ LINKAGE

Thematically adjacent to UPSC Prelims 2020 (on Project Tiger/tiger reserves) and the recurring GS3 theme of species reintroduction and conservation translocation.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Buxa Tiger Reserve:

1. It was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1983 and was later upgraded to National Park status.
2. It is located in the Dooars region of West Bengal along the Indo-Bhutan border.
3. The 2026 tigress reintroduction at Buxa involved a translocation from Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bihar.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d). All three statements are correct.

GS3

Buxa Tiger Reserve

NTCA

Tiger Reintroduction

Project Tiger

GS3

Invasive Alien Species – Biodiversity Conservation, Taxonomy

Returning topic — original Madras High Court order 21 March 2026; paired here with the Buxa card's prey-habitat theme · Source: Madras High Court order; GKToday; Down To Earth court digest

Neltuma, Not Prosopis: The Renamed Invader the Madras High Court Has Ordered Removed

Why in This Edition: The Madras High Court's 21 March 2026 order issuing 34 directives for the systematic eradication of *Prosopis juliflora* from Tamil Nadu remains the operative instrument behind active grassland-restoration drives this year, and is paired here with the Buxa card because both turn on the same ecological mechanism: invasive vegetation and habitat degradation choking a native prey/grazing base, whether for Project Tiger herbivores in Bengal or Blackbuck and grassland avifauna in Tamil Nadu's dry zones such as Pudukkottai.

Background: *Prosopis juliflora* (locally seemai karuvelam, vilayati kikar, gando baval) is a thorny, drought-hardy tree native to Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean, introduced to India by British colonial administrators, notably around Delhi in the 1920s, for afforestation and sand-dune stabilisation. A recent taxonomic revision has reclassified much of the genus *Prosopis* into a newly recognised genus, *Neltuma* — so the species now carries the accepted name *Neltuma juliflora*, a live point of nomenclatural confusion in ongoing eradication literature. Its ecological adaptability and high reproductive capacity let it dominate arid and semi-arid landscapes, consuming disproportionate groundwater, altering soil chemistry, and forming dense thickets that suppress native grassland regeneration and depress bird and herbivore diversity.

KEY FACTS

- Madras High Court order: 21 March 2026 — 34 directives for systematic *Prosopis juliflora* eradication across Tamil Nadu.
- Native range: Mexico, Central/South America, Caribbean; introduced to India in the 1920s, notably around Delhi, for afforestation.
- Taxonomic update: much of genus *Prosopis* has been reclassified as *Neltuma*; the species is now formally *Neltuma juliflora*.
- Local/common names: seemai karuvelam (Tamil Nadu), vilayati kikar (North India), gando baval (Gujarat).
- Ecological impacts cited by the Court: groundwater depletion, altered soil chemistry, suppressed native grassland regeneration, reduced bird-life support.
- Court's stated objective: "systematic removal" and "restoration of native ecosystems" via coordinated state-government and ecological-rehabilitation action.
- Family: Fabaceae (legume family) — shares nitrogen-fixing biology with other invasive leguminous trees flagged in Indian grassland-invasion literature (e.g. *Lantana camara*, *Mikania micrantha*).

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- A century-old colonial-era afforestation choice is now the subject of judicial intervention — illustrating how yesterday's state-sponsored ecological engineering can become today's conservation liability.
- Criticism/implementation challenge: eradication of an established, deep-rooted, widely-dispersed invasive is resource- and labour-intensive, and incomplete removal can trigger faster regrowth; the Court's 34 directives will require sustained multi-year monitoring, not a one-time clearance drive.
- Analytical angle: *Prosopis* also has local livelihood uses (fuelwood, charcoal in arid Gujarat/Rajasthan), creating a genuine conservation-versus-livelihood trade-off in eradication planning.
- Comparative angle: parallel to other judicially-driven invasive-species interventions (Delhi Ridge's *Prosopis* removal drives; Western Ghats' *Lantana* management), showing courts increasingly stepping into ecological-restoration governance via PIL and suo motu orders.
- Way forward: linking eradication to native-species replanting (as at Buxa's grassland restoration) rather than bare clearance, to prevent the vacated niche from inviting a second invasive coloniser.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"*Prosopis* in the textbooks, *Neltuma* in the taxonomy" — same invader, new genus name, same 1920s colonial origin story.

No confirmed exact-year PYQ naming *Prosopis juliflora* specifically identified; thematically adjacent to the recurring GS3 Prelims theme of invasive alien species (e.g. past questions on *Lantana camara*, *Parthenium*, water hyacinth).

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding *Prosopis juliflora*:

1. It is native to the Indian subcontinent and was never introduced from elsewhere.
2. It was introduced to India during British colonial rule, including for sand-dune stabilisation and afforestation.
3. Recent taxonomic revision has reclassified the species under a newly recognised genus, *Neltuma*.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b). Statement 1 is false — the species is native to the Americas, not the Indian subcontinent.

GS3

Invasive Alien Species

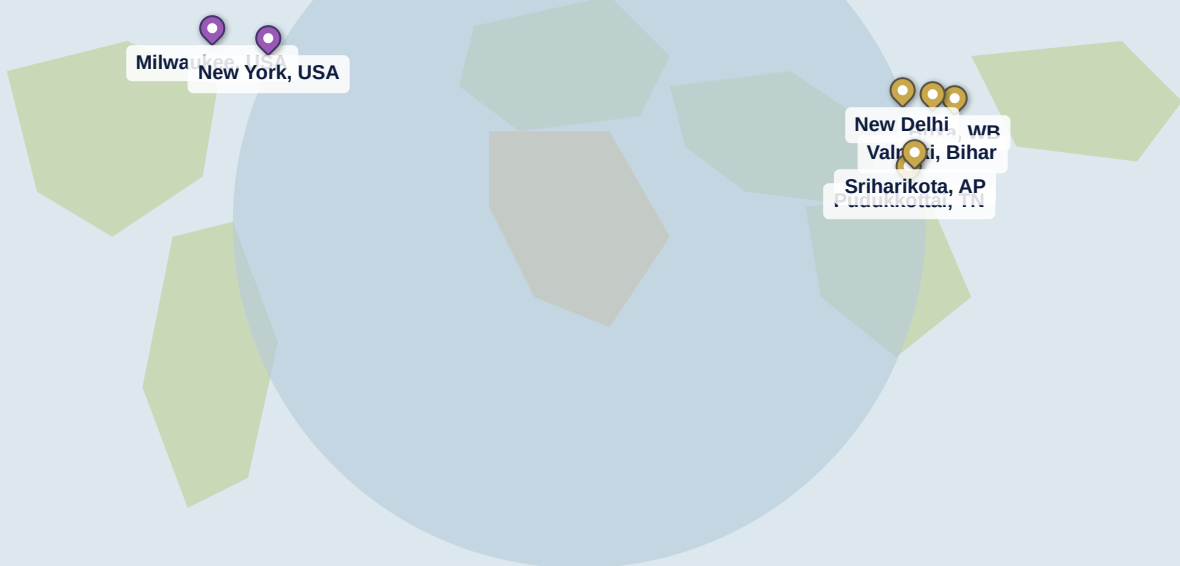
Prosopis/Neltuma

Madras High Court

Biodiversity

§2 Places in News

TODAY'S DATELINE MAP



● India ● North America (multilateral fora)

DOOARS REGION, EASTERN HIMALAYAN FOOTHILLS

Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal

GANGETIC PLAIN / INDO-NEPAL BORDER

Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bihar

26.65°N, 89.58°E. Site of West Bengal's first tiger reintroduction (tigress T138) on 2 October 2026, along the Indo-Bhutan border; India's 15th Tiger Reserve (1983).

27.33°N, 84.16°E. Source reserve for the tigress translocated to Buxa — one of only two tiger reserves in Bihar, bordering Nepal's Chitwan National Park.

SOUTHERN DECCAN PLATEAU FRINGE, SEMI-ARID ZONE

Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu

10.38°N, 78.82°E. A Tamil Nadu dry-zone district where native Blackbuck grassland habitat is threatened by the Prosopis (Neltuma) juliflora invasion the Madras High Court has ordered eradicated.

YAMUNA RIVER PLAIN, NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY

New Delhi

28.61°N, 77.21°E. Seat of the Union Government: site of the CCEA's Delhi ITMS approval, the Census 2027 coordination apparatus, and the Supreme Court's Bar Council reservation hearings.

COROMANDEL COAST, BAY OF BENGAL BARRIER ISLAND

Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh

13.72°N, 80.23°E. Home to the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, where ISRO's NVS-03 NavIC satellite is undergoing launch-campaign integration with GSLV-F18.

GREAT LAKES BASIN, LAKE MICHIGAN SHORELINE

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

43.04°N, 87.91°W. Venue of the 2026 G20 Trade and Investment Ministers' Meeting, where the US contested the WTO's unconditional MFN principle.

MANHATTAN ISLAND, EAST RIVER CONFLUENCE

New York, USA

40.71°N, 74.01°W. Seat of UN Headquarters, where G4 Foreign Ministers declared nearly two decades of UN Security Council reform talks a “failure.”

§3 Ethics & Integrity Cases

Substantive vs Formal Equality

Case 1: Whose Seat Is It Anyway? Reservation, Merit and the Bar Council Arithmetic

A Supreme Court-mandated 30% women's reservation in State Bar Councils has, under a fixed 25-seat statutory ceiling, displaced a candidate who polled far more votes than the woman elected to meet the quota. The petitioner frames this as a merit violation; the Court frames it as a necessary correction for near-zero historical women's representation (roughly 2% nationally).

Ethical dimension: this is the classic tension between formal equality (equal treatment: the candidate with more votes should win) and substantive equality (equal outcomes: structural barriers mean formally-equal rules reproduce unequal results). John Rawls's difference principle offers one resolution — inequalities in opportunity

are justified only if they improve the position of the most disadvantaged group, here, women systematically excluded from professional self-governance.

Way forward: the ethical resolution lies not in choosing one principle over the other permanently, but in using reservation as a time-bound, outcome-monitored corrective — paired with a seat-expansion remedy (as Tamil Nadu has sought) so merit and representation stop being a zero-sum contest.

Informational Privacy & Ethics of Classification

Case 2: Counting Caste — Data for Justice or a New Axis of Division?

Census 2027 will enumerate caste beyond SC/ST for the first time since 1931. Supporters argue verified data enables evidence-based welfare targeting; critics warn that formally classifying every citizen by caste in a state record could entrench identity politics and invite data misuse.

Ethical dimension: this is a trade-off between the utilitarian case for data-driven policy (better-targeted reservation and welfare benefits more people) and the deontological concern for individual dignity and informational privacy (a person's caste identity, once centrally recorded, becomes permanently retrievable state data, however the Census Act's Section 15 confidentiality guarantee is framed).

Way forward: transparent, pre-published classification taxonomies, strict Section 15 confidentiality enforcement, and aggregate-only (never individual-identifying) data release are the standard public-ethics safeguards for turning sensitive classification into accountable public data rather than a surveillance risk.

Institutional Accountability in Divided Federalism

Case 3: Who Answers for Delhi's Traffic? Accountability Without Authority

The ₹1,789-crore Delhi ITMS project is run by Delhi Police, a Union subject under Article 239AA, even though traffic management is conventionally a local/municipal responsibility. If the project under-delivers on congestion reduction, Delhi's elected government bears public blame for a system it does not control.

Ethical dimension: an ethical breach of the accountability principle in public administration — the actor held politically responsible (the elected Delhi government) is not the actor with operational control (Union-run Delhi Police), violating the basic governance norm that authority and accountability should be co-located.

Way forward: formal joint-review mechanisms with publicly reported outcome metrics, shared between Delhi Police and the Delhi government's transport department, would at least partially re-align accountability with authority within the existing constitutional division.

Fairness & Reciprocity in Rule-Making

Case 4: Equal Rules for Unequal Powers — The MFN Dilemma

The US wants Most-Favoured-Nation treatment made “conditional”; India insists it must stay a universal, unconditional guarantee so that the smallest trading nation gets the same terms as the largest.

Ethical dimension: echoes the Rawlsian “veil of ignorance” test for fair rules — a rule-maker who did not know whether their country would be large or small would rationally choose unconditional MFN, since it is the rule most

protective of the weakest party. Conditionality, however well-intentioned (targeting unfair subsidies), risks becoming a tool the powerful use selectively against the weak.

Way forward: address genuine overcapacity concerns through existing WTO-consistent trade remedies (anti-dumping, countervailing duties) rather than diluting a universal fairness norm that protects the very countries conditionality would otherwise be used against.

Moral Complicity & Strategic Autonomy

Case 5: Selling to Friends, Partnering with Their Rival — The BrahMos Dilemma

India exports BrahMos missiles to the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia specifically to help them counter Chinese assertiveness — yet Russia, which holds 49.5% of the BrahMos joint venture and must approve every export, simultaneously deepens its own strategic partnership with China.

Ethical dimension: a question of moral complicity and consistency — can a strategic partnership be treated as purely transactional (arms-sales approval on one track, geopolitical alignment on another) without ethical contradiction? It tests whether strategic autonomy is a coherent principle or a convenient label for compartmentalised self-interest.

Way forward: the ethically consistent path is reducing dependency on any single joint-venture partner for export sign-off — accelerating fully indigenous successor systems so India's export choices are never contingent on a third country's own rival alignments.

Intergenerational Justice & Ecological Restoration Ethics

Case 6: Eight Years for One Tigress — Is Slow Conservation Still Justice?

Buxa's tiger reintroduction took eight years of unglamorous habitat work — chital releases, grassland restoration, voluntary village relocation — before a single tigress could be released, with no guarantee of a self-sustaining population even now.

Ethical dimension: embodies intergenerational justice — the ecological restoration ethic that today's generation owes future generations an intact, functioning ecosystem, even where the benefit (a breeding tiger population) will only be realised, if at all, well beyond the term of any single official or government that funded the work.

Way forward: institutionalising multi-year conservation financing and monitoring that is insulated from electoral and budgetary cycles is the practical expression of this ethic — treating ecological restoration as a long-horizon public trust, not a one-off announcement.

Q1.

With reference to the Advocates Act, 1961 and recent Supreme Court directions, consider the following statements:

1. The Advocates Act, 1961 fixes the maximum elected strength of a State Bar Council at 25 members where the roll of advocates exceeds 10,000.
2. The Supreme Court's December 2025 direction mandates that 30% of State Bar Council seats be filled by women entirely through direct election.
3. Supreme Court directions permit a State Bar Council to fill part of the women's reservation quota through co-option.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (c) — Statement 2 is false; the quota splits 20% election + 10% co-option.

Q2.

Consider the following statements regarding Panchayati Raj institutions in India:

1. The People's Plan Campaign is conducted under the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act.
2. Gram Panchayat Development Plans are uploaded on the eGramSwaraj portal.
3. Article 243ZD provides for District Planning Committees to consolidate Panchayat and Municipal plans.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) — Statement 1 is false; the campaign flows from the 73rd Amendment, not the 74th.

Q3.

With reference to Article 239AA of the Constitution, consider the following statements:

1. It empowers the NCT of Delhi's Legislative Assembly to legislate on all State List and Concurrent List matters.
2. "Police," "Public Order" and "Land" remain under Union control in the NCT of Delhi.
3. Article 239AA was inserted by the 69th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1991.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) — Statement 1 is false; Police, Public Order and Land are excluded from the Delhi Assembly's competence.

Q4.

Consider the following statements regarding Census 2027:

1. It is being conducted under the Census Act, 1948, with India's first web-based self-enumeration phase.
2. Caste, beyond SC/ST, is being enumerated for the first time since 1931.
3. 1 October 2026 is the Population Enumeration reference date for the entire country.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — Statement 3 is false; that date applies only to snow-bound regions.

Q5.

Consider the following statements:

1. IGNCA was registered as an autonomous trust under the Ministry of Culture in 1987.
2. The MoTA-IGNCA MoU (2026) links Tribal Research Institutes with IGNCA's archival expertise.
3. IGNCA's mandate is confined exclusively to tribal arts.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — Statement 3 is false; IGNC's mandate spans all Indian art forms.

Q6.

Consider the following statements regarding the Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) principle:

1. It is a founding principle of GATT, 1947, continuing under the WTO.
2. It requires extending any trade concession unconditionally to all WTO members.
3. The WTO's Appellate Body has functioned continuously since 1995.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

Answer: (b) — Statement 3 is false; the Appellate Body has been non-functional since December 2019.

Q7.

With reference to UN Security Council reform, consider the following statements:

1. The "Uniting for Consensus" group proposes new permanent seats with veto power for Asia, Africa and Latin America.
2. The G4 comprises India, Brazil, Germany and Japan.
3. UN Charter amendment requires ratification by all five permanent members.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) — Statement 1 is false; Uniting for Consensus opposes any new permanent/veto seats.

Q8.

Consider the following statements regarding India's 114-jet MRFA procurement:

1. The DAC's Acceptance of Necessity for the deal was granted in 2026.
2. A majority of the 114 aircraft would be assembled domestically rather than delivered fly-away.
3. The deal has no connection to the earlier 126-aircraft MMRCA tender.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — Statement 3 is false; the 114-jet requirement traces to the abandoned 126-aircraft MMRCA tender.

Q9.

With reference to the BrahMos missile system, consider the following statements:

1. It is a DRDO-Russia joint venture formed under a 1998 intergovernmental agreement.
2. Its export range was capped below 300 km prior to India's MTCR membership.
3. The Philippines was the first foreign recipient of BrahMos under an export contract.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d) — All three statements are correct.

Q10.

Consider the following statements regarding NavIC:

1. NavIC (formerly IRNSS) is designed as a seven-satellite regional constellation.
2. A minimum of four satellites broadcasting navigation signals is needed for a standalone position fix.
3. NVS-03 is scheduled for launch aboard the GSLV-F18 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

Answer: (c) — All three statements are correct.

Q11.

Consider the following statements regarding Quantum Key Distribution (QKD):

1. Its security rests primarily on the computational difficulty of factoring large prime numbers.
2. Intercepting a quantum-encoded key is expected to measurably disturb it, alerting the parties.
3. ISRO has demonstrated free-space QKD between ground stations within India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) — Statement 1 is false; that describes classical RSA cryptography, the opposite of QKD.

Q12.

Consider the following statements:

1. As of 31 March 2026, India's NBFC sector's average CRAR stood above the RBI's regulatory minimum.
2. The Financial Stability and Development Council is a statutory body chaired by the RBI Governor.
3. Per the RBI Governor's October 2026 remarks, systemic risk can originate outside the formal financial sector.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (c) — Statement 2 is false; the FSDC is non-statutory and chaired by the Union Finance Minister.

Q13.

Consider the following statements regarding India's foreign exchange reserves:

1. Foreign Currency Assets form the single largest component of India's forex reserves.
2. A weekly fall in headline reserves always indicates a worsening current account position.
3. The RBI intervenes in both spot and forward markets to manage rupee volatility.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) — Statement 2 is false; reserve changes also reflect valuation effects and active RBI intervention.

Q14.

Consider the following statements regarding India's Goods and Services Tax (GST):

1. GST is a destination-based tax levied concurrently by the Union and the States.
2. Net GST revenue is computed after adjusting gross collections for refunds issued.
3. Faster growth in import-linked GST than domestic GST necessarily indicates stronger domestic demand.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — Statement 3 is false; faster import-GST growth reflects trade dynamics, not domestic demand.

Q15.

Consider the following statements regarding Buxa Tiger Reserve:

1. It was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1983 and later upgraded to National Park status.
2. It is located in the Dooars region of West Bengal along the Indo-Bhutan border.
3. The 2026 tigress reintroduction involved translocation from Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bihar.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d) — All three statements are correct.

Q16.

Consider the following statements regarding *Prosopis juliflora*:

1. It is native to the Indian subcontinent and was never introduced from elsewhere.
2. It was introduced to India during British colonial rule for sand-dune stabilisation and afforestation.
3. Recent taxonomic revision has reclassified the species under the genus *Neltuma*.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) — Statement 1 is false; the species is native to the Americas.

Q17.

With reference to proposals for UN Security Council reform, consider the following statements:

1. The Ezulwini Consensus is the African Union's common position demanding at least two permanent seats with full veto rights for Africa.
2. The G4 nations have formally endorsed the Ezulwini Consensus as their own negotiating position.
3. Russia has publicly opposed new permanent UNSC seats for both Germany and Japan.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) — Statement 2 is false; the G4 and the African Group hold distinct, not identical, reform positions.

Q18.

Consider the following statements regarding India's defence exports:

1. India's total defence exports crossed ₹38,000 crore in FY2025-26, reflecting year-on-year growth of over 60%.
2. Defence Public Sector Undertakings contributed a greater share of FY2025-26 defence exports than the private sector.
3. All third-country BrahMos missile exports require case-by-case consultation with Russia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d) — All three statements are correct.

Q19.

Consider the following statements regarding India's Panchayati Raj devolution instruments:

1. SVAMITVA uses drone-based mapping to establish property rights in rural inhabited areas.
2. The Panchayat Advancement Index benchmarks Panchayat performance against devolved-subject indicators.
3. Own Source Revenue generation by Panchayats has historically been strong enough to make them fiscally independent of Finance Commission grants.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — Statement 3 is false; Panchayats' Own Source Revenue remains weak nationally, keeping them grant-dependent.

Q20.

Consider the following statements regarding India's forex reserve composition (week ended 25 September 2026):

1. Gold formed a larger share of total reserves than Special Drawing Rights (SDRs).
2. India's Reserve Tranche Position at the IMF is counted as a component of total forex reserves.
3. The rupee depreciated against the US dollar during the same week that reserves recorded their largest-ever single-week fall.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d) — All three statements are correct.

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§5 Mains Questions (9)

GS2 Q1. “Judicially-mandated reservation often collides with statutory ceilings designed for an earlier era.” Discuss with reference to the Supreme Court's women's-reservation direction for State Bar Councils and the Advocates Act, 1961's seat ceiling. (150 words)

GS2 Q2. Examine the effectiveness of the People's Plan Campaign as an instrument for operationalising Article 243G and genuine bottom-up planning by Panchayats. What structural constraints limit Gram Sabha deliberation in practice? (150 words)

GS2 Q3. “The NCT of Delhi's special constitutional status under Article 239AA creates structural gaps in democratic accountability for urban governance.” Critically examine with a recent example. (250 words)

GS1 Q4. Census 2027 will enumerate caste beyond Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for the first time since 1931. Discuss the potential administrative and social implications of this exercise for India's reservation policy architecture. (250 words)

GS1 Q5. “Intangible cultural heritage disappears faster than it is documented.” In light of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs-IGNCA MoU, discuss the institutional challenges in preserving India's tribal cultural heritage. (150 words)

GS2 Q6. The Most-Favoured-Nation principle has come under renewed pressure at the WTO and G20. Critically evaluate the case for and against making MFN treatment conditional, with reference to India's stated position. (250 words)

GS2 Q7. “Two decades of Intergovernmental Negotiations have not moved UN Security Council reform forward.” Analyse the structural reasons for this impasse and suggest a realistic way forward for India's permanent-seat aspirations. (250 words)

GS3 Q8. India's defence modernisation increasingly relies on joint ventures and co-production arrangements with foreign partners. Discuss the trade-offs between accelerated capability acquisition and strategic dependency, with reference to the MRFA deal and BrahMos exports. (250 words)

GS4 — Case Study Q9. You are a senior civil servant on a committee implementing a Supreme Court-mandated women's-reservation quota within a fixed-size elected professional body. Applying the quota under the current rules means displacing a candidate who received significantly more votes than the reserved-category candidate declared elected, triggering litigation and public criticism from both sides — one alleging betrayal of merit, the other alleging continued institutional resistance to genuine representation. (a) Identify the key ethical principles in conflict in this situation. (b) Discuss the options available to you within the existing legal framework. (c) What would be your recommended course of action, and why? (250 words)

§6 Value Addition

- **“The next financial crisis may not originate in a bank, or even in finance.”** — RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, 5th Kautilya Economic Conclave, 3 October 2026, on systemic risk beyond the regulatory perimeter.
- **\$18.3 billion** — the largest-ever single-week fall in India's forex reserves, recorded for the week ended 25 September 2026, taking reserves to \$747.6 billion.
- **25.9% vs 10.1%** — the growth-rate gap between import-linked and domestic GST revenue in September 2026, showing headline 14.7% growth partly reflects trade dynamics.

- **95 years** — the gap since India's last full caste enumeration (1931) before Census 2027's Phase II count, reviving data last fully available to the Mandal Commission only by extrapolation.
- **\$600 million-plus** — cumulative BrahMos missile export earnings across the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam, as stated by Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh on 1 October 2026.
- **₹3.25 lakh crore** — the estimated value of the 114-jet MRFA (Rafale) deal the IAF Chief says is likely to be finalised by this financial year's end.
- **9 of 441 (≈2%)** — the share of elected women members across State Bar Councils nationally before the Supreme Court's 30% reservation mandate, with 11 of 18 councils having zero women members.
- **800 chital, 380 hectares** — the prey-release and grassland-restoration record behind Buxa Tiger Reserve's eight-year (2018-2026) build-up to its first tiger reintroduction.

§7 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

TOPIC	GS PAPER	ONE-LINE CAPSULE	RELEVANCE
Bar Council Women's Reservation vs 25-Seat Cap	GS2	SC asks AG to examine raising the statutory seat ceiling	★★★★★
People's Plan Campaign (9th edition)	GS2	2.42 lakh Gram Sabhas launch FY27-28 GDPDs	★★★★☆
Delhi ITMS & Article 239AA	GS2	₹1,789-cr traffic system run by Union-controlled Delhi Police	★★★★☆
Census 2027 Caste Enumeration	GS1	First full caste count since 1931 begins in snow-bound regions	★★★★★
MoTA-IGNCA MoU	GS1	Tribal arts/languages/oral traditions digitisation partnership	★★★★☆
G20 MFN/WTO Rift	GS2	US contests unconditional MFN; India defends it at Milwaukee	★★★★☆
UNSC Reform — G4 “Failure” Declaration	GS2	G4 signals shift beyond the stalled IGN process	★★★★☆
MRFA/Rafale 114-Jet Deal	GS3	₹3.25-lakh-crore deal likely by FY27-end, squadron deficit persists	★★★★★
BrahMos Exports Cross \$600 Million	GS3	Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam buyers counter China in South China Sea	★★★★☆

NVS-03/NavIC Restoration	GS3	Launch campaign begins to restore NavIC's 4-satellite floor	★★★★★
Quantum Key Distribution	GS3	Physics-based cryptography ahead of TDS-01's QuTDS payload	★★★★★
RBI Governor's Systemic-Risk Warning	GS3	“Next crisis may not start in a bank” — cyber/AI risk flagged	★★★★★
Forex Reserves Record Weekly Fall	GS3	−\$18.3 bn in one week, rupee past 96/dollar	★★★★★
GST Collections Cross ₹2 Lakh Crore	GS3	+14.7% headline, but import-GST outran domestic-GST growth	★★★★★
Buxa Tiger Reintroduction	GS3	Tigress T138 from Valmiki ends West Bengal's decades-long gap	★★★★★
Prosopis/Neltuma Juliflora Eradication	GS3	Madras HC's 34 directives target a renamed century-old invader	★★★★★
WTO Appellate Body Paralysis (Trend)	GS2	Non-functional since Dec 2019 — context for every MFN/trade story	★★★★★
GST State-Wise Divergence (Fiscal Federalism)	GS2/GS3	Assam/Manipur surge, Sikkim/Tamil Nadu decline — uneven recovery	★★★★★

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