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The Topper's Last Read. Every Morning.

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

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— *The Topper's Last Read* —

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GS3

Environment & Ecology · Conservation & Environmental Federalism

Reported 12 October 2026 (7th draft issued 27 July 2026) · Source: Down To Earth

Western Ghats ESA: Seventh Draft, Six States, No Consensus

Why in News: Down To Earth reported on 12 October 2026 that the Centre's seventh draft notification to declare parts of the Western Ghats an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) remains contested, with Karnataka's legislature unanimously rejecting it on 22 September 2026 and Kerala, Maharashtra, Goa and Tamil Nadu all seeking boundary or area changes. The draft, issued on 27 July 2026 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, proposes declaring 56,825.7 sq km across six States an ESA; its 60-day objection window has closed without resolution, and the objection-review committee's timeline has now been extended to July 2027.

Background: The ESA notification process began with the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel led by Madhav Gadgil (2011), which recommended extensive, decentralised protection across roughly 1,29,037 sq km. A High-Level Working Group led by K. Kasturirangan (2013) narrowed this to about 59,940 sq km of "natural landscape" only. Six subsequent draft notifications since then failed to reach finality; the July 2024 Mundakkai-Chooralmala landslides in Wayanad, which killed hundreds, intensified public pressure for a final notification, even though the Down To Earth report notes the disaster had multiple contributing causes beyond the absence of an ESA.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Seventh draft notification: issued 27 July 2026 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- Proposed ESA area: 56,825.7 sq km across Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- The draft itself does not order private-land acquisition, resident eviction, or a blanket farming ban.
- Core restrictions: new mining/quarrying/sand-mining banned; existing mines phased out within 5 years of final notification or lease expiry; new thermal power and red-category industries banned; construction $\geq 20,000$ sq m and large townships banned; hydropower allowed only with environmental conditions, including a minimum lean-season river flow.
- Karnataka's legislature unanimously rejected the draft on 22 September 2026, seeking a year for ground-truthing surveys.
- Kerala has sought to shrink its proposed ESA from 9,993.7 sq km to 8,590.69 sq km by excluding inhabited, agricultural and plantation land.
- History: Gadgil Committee (2011) recommended $\approx 1,29,037$ sq km; Kasturirangan Committee (2013) narrowed this to $\approx 59,940$ sq km — today's seventh draft (56,825.7 sq km) sits even below the Kasturirangan figure.
- Current status: the 60-day objection period has closed; the expert committee reviewing objections now has until July 2027.

📍 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Significance: the Western Ghats is one of the world's eight "hottest" biodiversity hotspots and a UNESCO World Heritage Site (2012, serial listing); the ESA is India's principal legal instrument to regulate development inside it.
- Criticism/trade-off: a classic federalism-versus-conservation conflict — States argue satellite mapping cannot reliably separate forest from farmland/habitation, risking livelihood disruption for lakhs of hill farmers, while conservationists warn further delay risks irreversible ecological loss.
- Analytical angle: the 15-year gap between the 2011 Gadgil Report and a still-unfinalised 2026 draft shows how a scientifically robust report can be diluted stage-by-stage when confronted with federal political economy — even the already-compromise Kasturirangan figure remains contested 13 years on.
- Syllabus-anchored: directly tests "conservation-related issues," Environment (Protection) Act 1986 rule-making, and Centre-State environmental federalism — a recurring GS3 pairing.

- Way forward: the report argues States should use the extended committee timeline for genuine field verification rather than indefinite delay, while the Centre must resolve village-boundary discrepancies before any final notification.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the two committees as 'G for Generous, K for Conservative': Gadgil (2011) ≈1,29,037 sq km, decentralised; Kasturirangan (2013) ≈59,940 sq km, "natural landscape" only — today's 7th draft (56,825.7 sq km) is narrower still.

📌 PYQ LINKAGE

The Western Ghats ESA notification (Gadgil vs Kasturirangan reports) is a repeatedly tested GS3 "conservation and environmental federalism" theme; revise alongside the 2018 Kerala floods and the 2024 Wayanad landslides as recurring triggers for this debate.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Western Ghats Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) notification:

1. The Kasturirangan Committee (2013) recommended a larger area for strict protection than the Gadgil Committee (2011).
2. The seventh draft ESA notification proposes a blanket ban on all agricultural activity within the notified area.
3. The draft permits hydropower projects subject to environmental conditions, including a minimum lean-season river-flow requirement.

(a) 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a. Statement 1 is wrong — Kasturirangan (2013) recommended a *smaller* area (≈59,940 sq km) than Gadgil's (2011) more expansive ≈1,29,037 sq km. Statement 2 is wrong — the draft explicitly does not impose a blanket farming ban.

📌 PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

The Western Ghats ESA notification has gone through seven drafts without finalisation since the Gadgil Committee's 2011 report. Examine the federalism-versus-conservation trade-offs that have repeatedly stalled this notification, and suggest a way forward. (250 words)

#WesternGhats

#EcologicallySensitiveArea

#GadgilReport

#KasturiranganReport

#EnvironmentalFederalism

GS3

Environment & Ecology · Species Profile (Western Ghats Endemic)

Static Species Profile — not tied to a current event; paired with Card 1's Western Ghats coverage · Source: IUCN Red List; animalia.bio; Wildlife Institute of India

Lion-Tailed Macaque: The Canopy Specialist the Western Ghats ESA Is Meant to Protect

Why in News: Paired with Card 1's Western Ghats ESA story, this edition profiles the Lion-tailed Macaque (*Macaca silenus*) — one of the Western Ghats' flagship endemic primates, whose survival depends entirely on the same intact rainforest canopy the ESA notification seeks to regulate.

Background: Named for the grey mane resembling a lion's, the Lion-tailed Macaque is among the most habitat-specific primates in India — unlike generalist macaques, it almost never descends from the rainforest canopy, making it acutely sensitive to the forest fragmentation that plantation expansion, hydropower works and road-building have caused across its Western Ghats range.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Scientific name: *Macaca silenus*.
- IUCN Red List status: Endangered.

- Distribution: endemic to Western Ghats rainforests in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu — found nowhere else on Earth.
- Population: estimated in the low thousands, surviving in fragmented forest patches (exact figures vary by survey; WII/Zoo Outreach Organisation assessments are the standard reference).
- Habitat: strictly tropical evergreen rainforest canopy, broadly above 600–1,500 m elevation; rarely forages on the ground.
- Legal status: Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 — India's highest statutory protection category.
- Key threats: habitat fragmentation from monoculture plantations (tea, coffee, eucalyptus) and hydropower/road corridors severing forest connectivity; small isolated populations raise inbreeding risk.
- Protected within reserves including Silent Valley National Park (Kerala) and the Anamalai/Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary complex (Tamil Nadu) — both inside the broader ESA debate's geography.

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Conceptual link to Card 1: shows concretely what an ESA notification is meant to protect — a canopy-obligate endemic that cannot survive habitat fragmentation, unlike more adaptable generalist species.
- Analytical: small, fragmented populations face classic “island biogeography” extinction risk (reduced gene flow, inbreeding depression) — a core ecological concept testable across species.
- Comparative angle: often grouped with the Nilgiri Tahr and Nilgiri Langur as the Western Ghats' signature endemic-mammal set.
- Policy angle: Schedule I status gives the species the strictest legal protection on paper, yet legal protection alone cannot substitute for intact, connected habitat — reinforcing Card 1's federalism-vs-conservation debate.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the Western Ghats' primate contrast: Lion-tailed Macaque = canopy-dependent, rainforest-only specialist; Bonnet Macaque = ground-adaptable generalist — a contrast that tests well in MCQs.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

Endemic Western Ghats fauna (Lion-tailed Macaque, Nilgiri Tahr, Nilgiri Langur) and their IUCN/Schedule status are a recurring Prelims theme; revise alongside the Western Ghats ESA notification for an integrated GS3 answer.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Lion-tailed Macaque (*Macaca silenus*):

1. It is endemic to the rainforests of the Western Ghats.
2. It is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
3. Its IUCN Red List status is 'Critically Endangered.'

(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 wrong — its IUCN status is 'Endangered,' not 'Critically Endangered.'

📌 PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Endemic, canopy-dependent species such as the Lion-tailed Macaque illustrate why habitat connectivity matters as much as protected-area boundaries on paper. Discuss, with reference to the Western Ghats' conservation challenges. (150 words)

#LionTailedMacaque

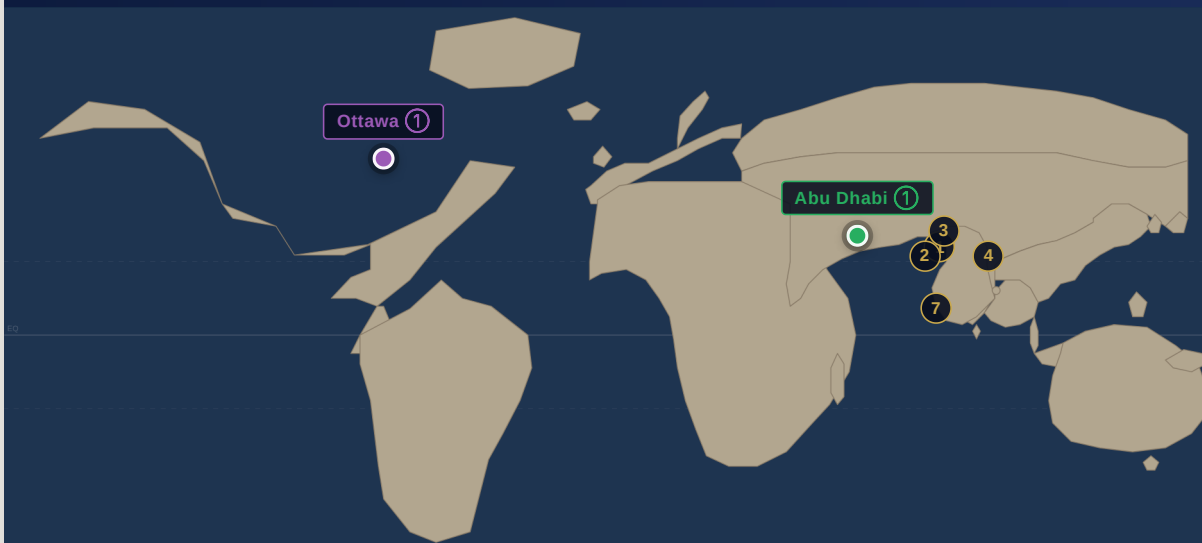
#WesternGhats

#ScheduleI

#IUCNRedList

#SpeciesConservation

PLACES IN NEWS — THURSDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- 1 New Delhi (National Capital Territory) ● 2 Jodhpur (Rajasthan) ● 3 Pang (Ladakh) (Union Territory of Ladakh) ● 4 Jogighopa (Assam)
- 5 Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates) ● 6 Ottawa (Canada) ● 7 Wayanad (Kerala)

1. New Delhi · National Capital Territory

Hosted the Supreme Court's seven-judge Bench disposal of the legislative-privilege reference, the GST Appellate Tribunal's Principal Bench, and the India-Canada ministerial CEPA talks (14 Oct 2026).

Sits in the Indo-Gangetic Plain on the Yamuna's west bank; as the seat of the Union Judiciary, Legislature and Executive, it anchors nearly every constitutional-bench and treaty-negotiation story in this edition.

2. Jodhpur · Rajasthan

Hosted Exercise Tarang Shakti 2026's entire second edition at Air Force Station Jodhpur (26 Sept–12 Oct 2026).

Located on the edge of the Thar Desert in western Rajasthan; its arid, high-visibility terrain and established IAF infrastructure make it a preferred venue for large-scale multinational air exercises.

3. Pang (Ladakh) · Union Territory of Ladakh

Starting point of the 480-km HVDC Green Energy Corridor transmission line evacuating Ladakh's 13 GW renewable-energy potential to Haryana.

A high-altitude settlement (≈4,500 m) on the Manali-Leh axis in the cold-desert Trans-Himalayan region — among India's most promising solar/wind sites given high year-round insolation and persistent wind.

4. Jogighopa · Assam

Site of the Multimodal Logistics Park integrating road, rail and National Waterway-2, paired with the under-construction Dhubri-Phulbari bridge.

On the Brahmaputra's northern bank in western Assam, near the Assam-Meghalaya-West Bengal tri-junction — a strategic gateway linking the Northeast to the rest of India via the narrow Siliguri Corridor.

5. Abu Dhabi · United Arab Emirates

Hosted EAM Jaishankar's review of the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the 2nd edition of the Raisina Middle East dialogue (14–16 Oct 2026).

Capital of the UAE on the Persian Gulf coast, roughly 240 km from the Strait of Hormuz chokepoint through which the bulk of India's Gulf LPG and crude-oil imports transit.

6. Ottawa · Canada

Venue of the fifth India-Canada CEPA negotiating round, concluded days before the 14 October 2026 ministerial meeting in New Delhi.

Capital of Canada on the Ottawa River at the Ontario-Quebec border; seat of the federal government whose CEPA posture has shifted markedly since the 2023 diplomatic rupture.

7. Wayanad · Kerala

Ground zero of the July 2024 Mundakkai-Chooralmala landslides that intensified the Western Ghats ESA debate now entering its seventh draft.

A high-rainfall plateau district in the Western Ghats' Nilgiri sub-range, part of the Western Ghats UNESCO World Heritage Site and among the areas most contested in the Kasturirangan/ESA boundary dispute.

3 ETHICS & INTEGRITY CASES

6 CASES

Goodhart's Law — when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure

1. The District Collector and the Ranking Game

A District Collector administering PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana notices that field officers, under pressure to protect the district's high monthly rank among 121 tracked indicators, have started filing paperwork showing "progress" on two indicators without any real change on the ground. The Collector must decide whether to flag this honestly — risking the district's hard-won rank and the morale of a team that delivered genuine gains elsewhere — or quietly let it pass since the indicators in question are minor.

What would you do, and how would you distinguish genuine convergence gains from indicator-gaming going forward?

Constitutional morality in Centre-State bargaining

2. Drafting the Eighth ESA Notification

An MoEFCC officer tasked with revising the Western Ghats ESA draft after six States' objections must decide how far to accommodate political resistance (Karnataka's outright rejection, Kerala's area-reduction request) against the scientific case for minimum viable protection. Diluting the area further may secure political consensus but could fall below the ecological threshold needed to protect endemic, canopy-dependent species.

How should a civil servant balance scientific mandate against federal political reality without compromising the law's underlying purpose?

Kantian universalisability / duty-based ethics

3. The Tribunal Member's Acquaintance

A GST Appellate Tribunal bench member realises, after a case is listed, that she is personally acquainted with a director of the taxpayer-company whose “place of supply” appeal she must hear at the Principal Bench. Recusal would delay an already backlogged docket; sitting on the case could later be alleged as compromised even if her actual decision is sound.

Should personal acquaintance alone (absent direct financial interest) be sufficient ground for recusal? Apply the test of universalisable duty.

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

4. Ground-Truthing Under Deadline Pressure

A survey team conducting the Western Ghats ESA's physical ground-truthing exercise reaches a village with a significant Scheduled Tribe population. Explaining the notification's full implications (on land use, compensation, rights) properly would take several extra days the team does not have before its submission deadline to the extended July 2027 committee.

Is a time-pressured, incomplete consultation better than none, or does it create a false appearance of informed consent that is itself unethical?

Dual loyalty — professional duty versus personal/sectoral conviction

5. The Trade Negotiator's Private Doubt

A mid-level MEA trade official working on the India-Canada CEPA file personally believes a dairy-market concession under discussion will hurt Indian dairy farmers, but has been instructed by political leadership to keep the chapter open for negotiation. The official must decide how far personal conviction can shape professional advice within the negotiating team.

Where is the line between a civil servant's duty to candidly flag concerns upward and the duty to loyally execute lawful political direction once a decision is made?

Whistleblowing and organisational loyalty (Sissela Bok's framework)

6. The Safety Shortcut During a Joint Exercise

A technical officer during Exercise Tarang Shakti 2026 notices a partner air force's ground crew bypassing a safety-inspection step under time pressure during a joint sortie. Reporting it up the Indian chain could strain the bilateral relationship being showcased at the exercise; staying silent risks an accident that could cause far greater diplomatic and human harm.

Using Bok's test (is the concern genuine, is there no less drastic alternative, is the disclosure proportionate), how should the officer proceed?

Which Article of the Constitution deals with the privileges of Members of Parliament (as distinct from State Legislatures)?

(a) Article 105 (b) Article 194 (c) Article 101 (d) Article 102

Answer: (a) Article 105. Article 105 covers Parliament's privileges; Article 194 is its analogue for State Legislatures — the provision at the heart of the *N. Ravi* reference.

Q2 · STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements about the GST Appellate Tribunal: 1. It has a single, centralised bench in New Delhi. 2. Taxpayers must make a 20% pre-deposit of disputed tax to appeal. 3. Appeals must ordinarily be filed within three months of the first appellate order. Which is/are correct?

(a) 2 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 1 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 2 and 3 only. Statement 1 is wrong — GSTAT has a Principal Bench plus 31 State Benches across 45 locations, not a single centralised bench.

Q3

India's Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with which country entered into force first, among the following?

(a) United Kingdom (b) United Arab Emirates (c) Canada (d) European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

Answer: (b) United Arab Emirates. The India-UAE CEPA (2022) was India's first major post-pandemic comprehensive trade agreement, preceding the EFTA TEPA (2024) and UK FTA (2025); the Canada CEPA remains under negotiation.

Q4 · STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements: 1. The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman. 2. It lies entirely within Omani territorial waters. 3. A significant share of global seaborne LPG trade transits through it. Which is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only. Statement 2 is wrong — the Strait is bounded by Iran to the north and Oman (and the UAE) to the south; it is not entirely within Omani waters.

Q5

Exercise Tarang Shakti 2026, in the news for its conclusion at Air Force Station Jodhpur, is organised primarily by which service?

(a) Indian Army (b) Indian Navy (c) Indian Air Force (d) Indian Coast Guard

Answer: (c) Indian Air Force. Tarang Shakti is the Indian Air Force's flagship multinational air exercise.

Q6 · STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements on India's cryogenic engine programme: 1. CE-20 is used on the LVM3 launch vehicle. 2. India's first successful indigenous cryogenic-stage flight was on GSLV-D5 in 2014. 3. The engine denial of 1992 involved technology from the United States. Which 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) 1 and 2 only. Statement 3 is wrong — the 1992 denial involved Russian (Glavkosmos) cryogenic technology, blocked by a US invocation of the MTCR, not US technology itself.

Q7

The PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana converges Central schemes from how many Ministries/Departments, tracked via how many indicators?

- (a) 11 Ministries; 121 indicators (b) 36 Ministries; 100 indicators (c) 100 Ministries; 36 indicators (d) 121 Ministries; 11 indicators

Answer: (a) 11 Ministries; 121 indicators. PMDDKY converges 36 schemes from 11 Ministries/Departments across 100 districts, tracked via 121 indicators.

Q8 • STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements on India's fertiliser-subsidy regime: 1. Urea is covered under the Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) scheme. 2. The ideal N:P:K use ratio is considered to be 4:2:1. 3. PM-PRANAM allows States to retain a share of the fertiliser subsidy they save as a grant. Which is/are correct?

- (a) 2 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 2 and 3 only. Statement 1 is wrong — urea remains outside the NBS regime, with its price fixed administratively; only phosphatic and potassic fertilisers are under NBS.

Q9

The Ladakh-Haryana Green Energy Corridor's transmission spine uses which technology, and why?

- (a) HVDC, for lower losses over long distances (b) Conventional AC, for lower capital cost (c) Gas-insulated AC switchgear, for compactness (d) Superconducting cables, for zero resistance

Answer: (a) HVDC, for lower losses over long distances. High-Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) is preferred for very long-distance transmission because of its lower transmission losses compared with conventional AC.

Q10 • STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements: 1. The Jogighopa Multimodal Logistics Park is linked to National Waterway-2 on the Brahmaputra. 2. National Waterway-1 runs on the Ganga between Haldia and Varanasi/Allahabad. 3. The Dhubri-Phulbari bridge connects Assam and Meghalaya. Which is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1 and 3 only

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3. All three statements are correct and describe India's inland-waterway and Northeast multimodal-connectivity architecture accurately.

Q11

The Western Ghats were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in which year?

- (a) 2012 (b) 2008 (c) 2016 (d) 2001

Answer: (a) 2012. The Western Ghats were inscribed in 2012 as a serial listing of 39 component sites across six States.

Q12 • STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements on the Western Ghats ESA notification: 1. Karnataka's legislature has unanimously rejected the seventh draft. 2. Kerala has sought to reduce its proposed ESA area. 3. The draft bans all new hydropower projects outright. Which is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only. Statement 3 is wrong — the draft does not ban hydropower outright; it permits it subject to environmental conditions, including a minimum lean-season flow requirement.

Q13

The Lion-tailed Macaque is endemic to which biogeographic region of India?

- (a) The Western Ghats (b) The Eastern Himalaya (c) The Sundarbans (d) The Deccan Plateau

Answer: (a) The Western Ghats. The Lion-tailed Macaque is endemic to the Western Ghats rainforests of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Q14 • STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements: 1. India's membership of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) dates to 2016. 2. India is also a member of the Wassenaar Arrangement. 3. India is a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Which is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only. Statement 3 is wrong — India is not (yet) a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, despite being a member of the MTCR (2016), Wassenaar Arrangement (2017) and Australia Group (2018).

Q15

Legislative privileges in India, as highlighted by the Supreme Court's 2026 disposal of the N. Ravi reference, are best described as:

- (a) Uncodified, resting on constitutional text, convention and judicial interpretation (b) Fully codified under the Parliament (Privileges) Act (c) Identical to UK privileges under a reciprocal treaty (d) Applicable only to Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils

Answer: (a) Uncodified, resting on constitutional text, convention and judicial interpretation. India has never enacted a specific statute codifying legislative privileges; they rest on Articles 105/194, convention, and evolving judicial interpretation.

Q16 • STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements on India-UAE relations: 1. The India-UAE CEPA was signed in 2022. 2. The UAE hosted the first edition of the Raisina Middle East dialogue before 2026. 3. The UAE is among the largest sources of remittances to India. Which is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3. All three statements are correct; the 2026 edition discussed in this edition is explicitly the *second* edition of Raisina Middle East.

Q17

The 'L. Chandra Kumar v Union of India' (1997) judgment is most relevant to which of the following debates?

- (a) Tribunals' relationship with High Courts' judicial-review power (b) Legislative privilege versus free speech (c) Centre-State water-sharing disputes (d) Reservation in promotions

Answer: (a) Tribunals' relationship with High Courts' judicial-review power. L. Chandra Kumar held that tribunals cannot wholly oust the judicial-review jurisdiction of High Courts under Articles 226/227 — directly relevant to GSTAT's design.

Q18 • STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements: 1. Exercise Tarang Shakti's first edition was held in 2022. 2. The 2026 edition's theme was 'Power in Partnership.' 3. LCA Tejas and LCH Prachand were both showcased in the 2026 edition. Which is/are correct?

- (a) 2 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 2 and 3 only. Statement 1 is wrong — the inaugural Tarang Shakti was held in 2024, not 2022.

Q19

The Indian Air Force was constituted under which legislative instrument, and in which year?

- (a) The Indian Air Force Act, 1932 (b) The Government of India Act, 1935 (c) The Air Force Act, 1950 (d) The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958

Answer: (a) The Indian Air Force Act, 1932. The IAF was constituted on 8 October 1932 under the Indian Air Force Act, 1932; its first flying unit was raised in 1933.

Q20 • STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements on India's renewable-energy evacuation infrastructure: 1. Green Energy Corridors are transmission projects designed to integrate renewable capacity into the national grid. 2. POWERGRID is the implementing agency for the Ladakh-Haryana corridor. 3. The corridor was approved by the National Development Council in 2023. Which 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) 1 and 2 only. Statement 3 is wrong — the Ladakh-Haryana corridor was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) in October 2023, not the National Development Council (a body that in any case no longer functions in its earlier form).

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5

MAINS QUESTIONS

9 QUESTIONS

GS1

1. Discuss the ecological and livelihood dimensions of the Western Ghats Ecologically Sensitive Area dispute, and explain why consensus has eluded policymakers for over fifteen years.

Frame around Gadgil vs Kasturirangan area figures, State objections, and the Wayanad landslides as a political trigger rather than sole cause.

GS2

2. Legislative privilege is often invoked in ways that appear to override individual fundamental rights. Critically analyse this tension in light of the Supreme Court's 2026 disposal of the 23-year-old N. Ravi reference.

Cover Articles 194/105, the Sharma (1958) vs Keshav Singh (1965) conflict left unresolved, and the codification debate.

GS2

3. Tribunalisation strengthens access to specialised adjudication but risks eroding regular judicial oversight. Discuss with reference to recent Indian tribunal reforms.

Use GSTAT's nine-year gap between statutory creation and operationalisation; cite L. Chandra Kumar and the Madras Bar Association line of cases.

GS2

4. India's recent bilateral trade negotiations with developed economies increasingly follow a 'political reconciliation first' sequencing. Elaborate with reference to the India-Canada CEPA talks.

Contrast with the faster-concluded UAE/Australia/EFTA/UK agreements; note the unresolved diplomatic strain since 2023.

GS2

5. Examine the strategic significance of India's Gulf partnerships for its energy security, with particular reference to the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Use the Hormuz-driven LPG supply-source swing data and the Raisina Middle East platform as evidence of deepening engagement.

GS3

6. India's defence diplomacy is visibly shifting from bilateral to multilateral engagement. Discuss with reference to Exercise Tarang Shakti 2026 and its implications for defence indigenisation and exports.

Cite the 7 flying/32 observing nations figure and the Tejas/Prachand showcase; weigh cost/logistics criticism against genuine interoperability gains.

GS3

7. Technology-denial regimes can inadvertently accelerate a nation's self-reliance rather than permanently constrain it. Discuss with reference to India's cryogenic rocket-engine programme.

Trace 1992 MTCR denial to 2014 GSLV-D5 success to 2016 MTCR membership; connect to Gaganyaan's human-rating requirements.

GS3

8. Convergence of existing welfare and development schemes, rather than creation of new ones, is emerging as India's preferred rural-development instrument. Critically examine with reference to the PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana.

Use the Aspirational Districts Programme parallel, the 36-scheme/121-indicator architecture, and the honest 'Year One measured process, not outcome' admission.

GS4

9. Ethical dilemmas in public administration often pit institutional loyalty against individual conscience or professional judgement. Discuss with suitable examples from recent governance episodes.

Draw on this edition's Ethics cases — Goodhart's Law in scheme-ranking, dual loyalty in trade negotiation, and Sissela Bok's whistleblowing test.

6

ANSWER-WRITING VALUE ADDITION

8 ITEMS

Legislative privilege has never been codified by statute in India, unlike the UK's Bill of Rights 1689 (Article 9), which gives parliamentary privilege an explicit statutory footing.

GSTAT's 45-location footprint makes it one of India's most geographically decentralised tribunals, comparable in spread to the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT).

India's FTA/CEPA portfolio has widened rapidly: UAE (2022), Australia ECTA (2022), EFTA TEPA (2024), UK FTA (2025) — with Canada's fifth round underway as of October 2026.

India imports roughly 60% of its LPG requirement; the Strait of Hormuz, only about 33 km wide at its narrowest point, carries a sizeable share of global seaborne oil and LPG trade.

Exercise Tarang Shakti 2026's 7 flying nations plus 32 observers (39 total) makes it one of the largest airpower-diplomacy platforms India has hosted to date.

Only a handful of entities worldwide — the USA, Russia, France/ESA, China, Japan and India — independently design, build and fly cryogenic upper-stage rocket engines.

India's actual N:P:K fertiliser-use ratio frequently departs sharply from the ideal 4:2:1 benchmark, a direct consequence of urea's administratively fixed low price versus market-linked DAP/MOP prices.

The Western Ghats were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2012 as a serial listing of 39 component sites across the same six States now contesting the seventh ESA draft.

7

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18 ROWS

TOPIC	GS PAPER	CAPSULE	PROBABILITY
SC 7-Judge Bench & Legislative Privilege (Art.194/19)	GS2	Infructuous disposal leaves codification debate alive	★★★★☆
GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) Rollout	GS2	Tribunalisation after a 9-year gap; L. Chandra Kumar doctrine	★★★★☆
India-Canada CEPA (5th Round)	GS2	Trade diplomacy amid political thaw since 2023	★★★★☆
India-UAE CSP & Raisina Middle East	GS2	Gulf energy security; Strait of Hormuz dependency	★★★★☆
Exercise Tarang Shakti 2026	GS3	7 nations flew, 32 observed — largest airpower-diplomacy drill	★★★★★
Cryogenic Engine Indigenisation (CE-20/MTCR)	GS3	Denial-to-indigenisation case study; Gaganyaan link	★★★★☆
PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (Year One)	GS3	Convergence model; 36 schemes, 121 indicators	★★★★☆
Khet Bachao Abhiyan / Fertiliser Balance	GS3	N:P:K imbalance; PM-PRANAM incentive design	★★★★☆
Ladakh-Haryana Green Energy Corridor	GS3	HVDC evacuation of 13 GW; POWERGRID, CCEA 2023	★★★★☆
Jogighopa MMLP & Dhubri-Phulbari Bridge	GS1/GS3	NE connectivity; National Waterway-2 integration	★★★★☆
Western Ghats ESA (7th Draft)	GS3	Federalism vs conservation; Gadgil-Kasturirangan	★★★★★
Lion-Tailed Macaque (Species Profile)	GS3	Western Ghats endemic; Schedule I, IUCN Endangered	★★★★☆

Tribunalisation & Articles 323A/323B	GS2	L. Chandra Kumar; Madras Bar Association line of cases	★★★★☆
India's FTA Portfolio (UAE-Australia-EFTA-UK-Canada)	GS2/GS3	Economic diplomacy sequencing and comparative pace	★★★★☆
Strait of Hormuz & Energy Chokepoints	GS3	Energy-security vulnerability; diversification debate	★★★★☆
MTCR / Wassenaar / Export-Control Regimes	GS3	India's regime memberships, 2016–2018	★★★★☆
IAF Organisational History (1932 Act, 7 Commands)	GS3	94 years; higher defence management context	★★★★☆
Legislative Privilege Codification Debate	GS2	Art. 194(3)/105(3); UK comparison; press-freedom angle	★★★★☆

★ 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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Environment

Places in News

Ethics

Prelims

Mains

✓ Environment coverage follows the two-card rule: one current story (Western Ghats ESA, Down To Earth, 12 Oct 2026) and one thematically paired static species profile (Lion-tailed Macaque), neither repeated from the last 7/30 days per ANTIM_TopicLog.txt.

✓ All 7 map pins are anchored to a substantive card above, each carrying physical/strategic geography context beyond the news hook.

✓ This file is GoDaddy-compliant: no external JavaScript, a single embedded stylesheet, and same-directory asset references only (inline SVG map used, as no dated map_15Oct2026.jpg was found in the output folder).

