

THEIAS AKADEMIA · MORNING EDITION · 08:00 IST

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Sunday, 26 July 2026

World Mangrove Day 2026 — "Inspired by Nature for Climate and Future"; India Wins Global Photography Recognition

Why in News: The International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem was observed on July 26, 2026, with the Mangrove Society of India adopting the regional theme "Inspired by Nature for Climate and Future"; separately, a photograph taken near Nandgaon village, south of Mumbai, won recognition in the Mangrove Action Project's 12th annual global photography awards.

Background: Designated by UNESCO, the Day raises awareness of mangroves as a unique, carbon-dense, and highly vulnerable coastal habitat. India holds a significant share of the world's mangrove cover, concentrated in the Sundarbans (West Bengal), the Gujarat coast (Kutch), and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, all facing pressure from coastal development, aquaculture expansion, and sea-level rise.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Observed annually on July 26; designated by UNESCO to promote sustainable management, conservation, and protection of mangrove ecosystems.
- Carbon significance: mangroves sequester carbon at up to 4× the rate of tropical rainforests per unit area; mangrove soils hold 6.4+ billion tonnes of carbon globally.
- Coverage: mangroves occupy under 2% of tropical/subtropical coastlines but account for ~30% of all carbon buried by coastal ecosystems worldwide.
- India's major mangrove zones: Sundarbans (West Bengal, largest single mangrove forest globally, shared with Bangladesh), Kutch (Gujarat), and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

💡 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: mangroves are "blue carbon" ecosystems — along with seagrasses and salt marshes, they form the three classic "blue carbon" habitats tested in Prelims. Remember the carbon-storage hierarchy: mangrove soil (waterlogged, anoxic) locks carbon for centuries, unlike terrestrial forest soil where decomposition releases it faster. This is why mangrove loss is disproportionately damaging to climate goals despite their small global footprint.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring): "Blue carbon ecosystems — significance for climate change mitigation." | GS1: "Distribution and significance of mangrove forests in India."

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. Which of the following are classified as "Blue Carbon" ecosystems? (1) Mangroves (2) Seagrass meadows (3) Salt marshes (4) Tropical rainforests. Select the correct answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1 and 4 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4. **Answer: (a)** — tropical rainforests are terrestrial, not blue carbon, ecosystems.

ENV

Mangroves

Blue Carbon

Sundarbans

Fishing Cat — IUCN Vulnerable; State Animal of West Bengal; Key Bio-Indicator of the Sundarbans' Mangrove Wetlands

Why in News: The Fishing Cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) is this edition's static species profile — a deliberate pairing with World Mangrove Day, since the species is one of the most important bio-indicators of mangrove and wetland ecosystem health in West Bengal and beyond.

Background: One of four wild cat species found in the Sundarbans, the Fishing Cat is a medium-sized, semi-aquatic feline uniquely adapted to hunting fish and other aquatic prey in wetlands and mangrove forests, making it especially vulnerable to wetland degradation and habitat loss.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Scientific name: *Prionailurus viverrinus*; IUCN status: Vulnerable; Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972: Schedule I.
- State Animal of West Bengal; found across Sundarbans mangroves, wetlands, and marshes in South and Southeast Asia.
- Population density example: Lothian Wildlife Sanctuary (Sundarbans) recorded $\sim 44 \pm 13$ individuals per 100 sq km in recent camera-trap studies.
- Threats: habitat loss and wetland degradation, human-wildlife conflict, and declining fish stocks in degraded wetlands.

💡 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: the "Sundarbans Big Four" wild cats — Royal Bengal Tiger, Fishing Cat, Leopard Cat, and Jungle Cat — occupy the same landscape but very different niches. Fishing Cat is the only one specialised for semi-aquatic hunting; its presence/absence is used by researchers as a proxy indicator for overall wetland health, unlike the Tiger, which indicates forest-apex-predator health.

📖 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring): "Wetland ecosystems of India — significance and conservation challenges." | GS3: "Bio-indicator species and their role in ecosystem monitoring."

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. The Fishing Cat, State Animal of West Bengal, is primarily associated with which habitat? (a) High-altitude cold desert (b) Mangrove and wetland ecosystems (c) Dry deciduous scrub forest (d) Alpine grassland. **Answer: (b).**

ENV

Fishing Cat

IUCN Vulnerable

West Bengal

Sundarbans

§2 · PLACES IN NEWS — 26 JULY 2026

📌 PLACES IN NEWS — 26 JULY 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



① New Delhi, India

Supreme Court's Navi Mumbai mall ruling; PM Modi's video interaction with Viksit Vibrant Village Programme participants.

② Bengaluru, Karnataka

BRICS Heads of Space Agencies (HOSA) 2026 concludes; Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation expansion; BRICS Space Council discussed.

③ Dras, Ladakh

27th Kargil Vijay Diwas main ceremony at the Kargil War Memorial; Shaurya Vijay Yatra (1,900 km from Delhi) concludes here.

④ Sivasagar, Assam

Worst-hit district in the 2026 Assam floods, with around 3 lakh people affected; Central inter-ministerial team assessing damage.

⑤ Nandgaon, Maharashtra

Photo taken near this village south of Mumbai wins recognition in the Mangrove Action Project's 12th annual global photography awards.

⑥ Kulasekarapattinam, Tamil Nadu

Site of ISRO's upcoming second spaceport, targeted for December 2026; DRDO charting strategic roadmap for dual-use potential.

§3 · ETHICS & INTEGRITY CASE STUDIES

Case 1 · Judicial Proportionality vs Strict Rule of Law

A court must choose between demolishing an irregularly-allotted but fully operational commercial complex (protecting rule of law) and allowing regularisation on payment of costs (protecting jobs and public assets). **GS4 Values:** Proportionality, justice, balancing competing public interests.

Case 2 · Border Development vs Environmental Sensitivity

Officials implementing the Vibrant Villages Programme in ecologically fragile Himalayan border areas face pressure to fast-track infrastructure for strategic reasons, potentially bypassing environmental safeguards. **GS4 Values:** Sustainable development, precautionary principle, national security vs ecological prudence.

Case 3 · Relief Distribution in Disaster Zones

A Central inter-ministerial team assessing Assam's flood damage must decide how to prioritise districts for relief funding when political and administrative pressures compete with objective need-

Case 4 · Commemoration vs Political Messaging

A district administration organising Kargil Vijay Diwas events must balance genuine military commemoration with the temptation to use

based assessment. **GS4 Values:** Objectivity, compassion, evidence-based administration.

the occasion for partisan political messaging. **GS4 Values:** Political neutrality, integrity, respect for institutions of the state.

§4 · PRELIMS MCQS — 26 JULY 2026 (15 QUESTIONS)

Q1. In *K. Raheja Corp. v. State of Maharashtra* (2026), the Supreme Court's remedy for irregular plot allotment was: (a) Mandatory demolition (b) Regularisation on payment of costs (c) Nationalisation of the property (d) Criminal trial only

✓ Answer: (b) — the Court held demolition would be against public interest and allowed regularisation instead.

Q2. The Vibrant Villages Programme primarily covers border areas facing which country? (a) Pakistan (b) China (c) Nepal (d) Myanmar

✓ Answer: (b) — covering Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Ladakh along the China border.

Q3. The Viksit Vibrant Village Programme 2026 is delivered through which youth engagement platform? (a) Digital India Portal (b) MY Bharat (c) SWAYAM (d) National Career Service

✓ Answer: (b) — MY Bharat, the Centre's unified youth engagement and volunteering portal.

Q4. The BRICS Heads of Space Agencies (HOSA) 2026 Meeting was hosted by which Indian institution(s)? (a) DRDO only (b) ISRO, IN-SPACE, and Department of Space (c) IIT Bombay (d) Ministry of External Affairs alone

✓ Answer: (b) — jointly hosted in Bengaluru under India's BRICS Chairship.

Q5. IN-SPACE, involved in hosting BRICS HOSA 2026, was established in which year? (a) 2018 (b) 2020 (c) 2022 (d) 2024

✓ Answer: (b) — 2020, as India's private space-sector regulator and facilitator.

Q6. Kargil Vijay Diwas, observed on July 26, commemorates events of which year? (a) 1965 (b) 1971 (c) 1999 (d) 2001

✓ Answer: (c) — the 1999 Kargil War, concluding with Operation Vijay's success.

Q7. The Indian Air Force's operation during the Kargil War was code-named: (a) Operation Meghdoot (b) Operation Safed Sagar (c) Operation Trident (d) Operation Cactus

✓ Answer: (b) — Operation Safed Sagar was the IAF's air component within the larger Operation Vijay.

Q8. ISRO's Kulasekarapattinam spaceport is being built primarily for launching: (a) GSLV Mk III (b) Small Satellite Launch Vehicles (SSLV) (c) Human spaceflight missions (d) Reusable launch vehicles only

✓ Answer: (b) — designed for SSLV missions carrying payloads up to 500 kg.

Q9. Why does India need a second spaceport at Kulasekarapattinam in addition to Sriharikota? (a) Sriharikota lacks fuel storage (b) Its southerly location avoids overflying Sri Lanka for polar/SSO launches (c) Sriharikota is being decommissioned (d) It is closer to Bengaluru's ISRO HQ

✓ Answer: (b) — avoids the fuel-costly "dog-leg" trajectory needed at Sriharikota for southward polar launches.

Q10. As per the RBI's July 2026 Bulletin, India's FY2025-26 GDP growth forecast was revised to: (a) 6.8% (b) 7.2% (c) 7.6% (d) 8.1%

✓ Answer: (c) — up from an earlier estimate of 7.4%.

Q11. Which RBI publication provides monthly macroeconomic data commentary without announcing policy rate decisions? (a) Monetary Policy Committee Resolution (b) RBI Bulletin (c) Financial Stability Report (d) Annual Report

✓ Answer: (b) — the Bulletin is a monthly analytical publication, distinct from bi-monthly MPC resolutions.

Q12. The International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem is observed on: (a) June 5 (b) July 26 (c) September 16 (d) November 6

✓ Answer: (b) — designated by UNESCO; observed annually on July 26.

Q13. Which of the following are classified as "Blue Carbon" ecosystems? (1) Mangroves (2) Seagrass meadows (3) Salt marshes (4) Tropical rainforests. Select the correct answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1 and 4 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ Answer: (a) — tropical rainforests are terrestrial ecosystems, not blue carbon systems.

Q14. The Fishing Cat is the State Animal of: (a) Assam (b) West Bengal (c) Odisha (d) Kerala

✓ Answer: (b) — West Bengal; the Fishing Cat is closely associated with the Sundarbans.

Q15. Consider the following statements about the Fishing Cat: (1) It is IUCN Vulnerable. (2) It is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. (3) It is a fully terrestrial hunter avoiding water. Which 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 incorrect; the Fishing Cat is semi-aquatic and specialised for hunting in water.

§5 · MAINS QUESTIONS — 26 JULY 2026

GS2 Judiciary Q1. Discuss the doctrine of proportionality as a tool of judicial review, with reference to the Supreme Court's approach to irregular constructions and demolitions in India. (250 words)

Hints: proportionality vs blanket rule application; K. Raheja Corp case as illustration; contrast with cases ordering demolition (coastal/environmental violations); balancing rule of law with public/economic cost; risk of moral hazard if regularisation becomes routine.

GS2 GS3 Q2. Examine the strategic and developmental rationale behind the Vibrant Villages Programme, and assess its progress since launch. (250 words)

Hints: "first villages not last villages" reframing; VVP vs BADP distinction; MY Bharat youth engagement; depopulation reversal along China border; infrastructure-tourism-livelihood triad; challenges — connectivity, climate, migration trends.

GS2 IR Q3. "Space has become a new frontier for South-South cooperation." Discuss with reference to India's role in BRICS space diplomacy. (250 words)

Hints: BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation; HOSA 2026 outcomes; proposed BRICS Space Council; India's institutional troika (ISRO/IN-SPACe/DoS); comparison with other multilateral space frameworks (Artemis Accords, ISS); disaster-management and climate applications.

GS3 Space Infrastructure Q4. Discuss the significance of a second Indian spaceport at Kulasekarapattinam for India's small-satellite launch ecosystem. (250 words)

Hints: Sriharikota's Sri-Lanka overflight constraint; SSLV commercial market; capacity (24 launches/year); dual-use/DRDO tactical interest; timeline risk (Dec 2026 target); private-sector launch ecosystem (NSIL, Skyroot, Agnikul) benefiting from added capacity.

GS1 GS3 Q5. "Military history serves not only to honour sacrifice but to instruct future strategy." Discuss with reference to the lessons of the Kargil War for India's higher defence management. (250 words)

Hints: intelligence failure pre-war; Kargil Review Committee 2000 recommendations; creation of CDS/theatre commands debate traced partly to Kargil lessons; high-altitude warfare logistics; civil-military coordination; continuing relevance to current LAC/LoC posture.

GS3 Environment Q6. "Mangroves are disproportionately important to climate mitigation relative to their geographic footprint." Examine this statement with reference to India's mangrove ecosystems and conservation challenges. (250 words)

Hints: blue carbon concept; carbon storage in waterlogged soils; Sundarbans/Kutch/A&N distribution; threats — aquaculture, coastal development, sea-level rise; Fishing Cat as bio-indicator; India's mangrove restoration initiatives (MISHTI scheme); international cooperation (Mangrove Alliance for Climate).

§6 · ANSWER WRITING VALUE ADDITION

Death toll: 66 (up from 50+ on Jul 25); ~7 lakh affected across 12 districts; Sivasagar worst-hit (~3 lakh sufferers), followed by Charaideo and Jorhat; 35,000+ hectares of crop area damaged. Use in: GS1/GS3 disaster management answers.

DATA — BRICS SPACE COOPERATION

HOSA 2026: 26 delegates, 10 countries; BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation expansion agreed; BRICS Space Council under discussion. Use in: GS2 multilateral cooperation, GS3 space diplomacy answers.

DATA — RBI JULY 2026 BULLETIN

GDP forecast raised to 7.6% (from 7.4%); repo rate held at 5.25% for 2nd straight meeting; FPI turned positive June 2026, continued positive in July. Use in: GS3 macroeconomic policy answers.

QUOTE — KARGIL VIJAY DIWAS

"The nation expresses gratitude to the brave soldiers for their extraordinary courage and commitment towards securing India." — PM Narendra Modi, Kargil Vijay Diwas 2026. Use in: GS1 military history, GS4 courage-and-sacrifice value answers.

§7 · AKADEMIA DIRECT HIT TRACKER — 26 JULY 2026

#	TOPIC	GS	PRIORITY	ONE-LINE RECALL
1	Kargil Vijay Diwas (27th anniversary)	GS1/GS3	HIGH	Operation Vijay 1999; Dras War Memorial; Shaurya Vijay Yatra 1,900 km Delhi-Dras
2	Assam Floods Update (toll 66)	GS1/GS3	HIGH	7 lakh+ affected, 12 districts; Sivasagar worst-hit; Central team dispatched; PM review
3	Viksit Vibrant Village Programme 2026	GS2/GS3	MEDIUM	74 border villages; 400+ youth; MY Bharat; "first villages not last villages"
4	SC — Navi Mumbai Mall Ruling	GS2	MEDIUM	K. Raheja Corp v Maharashtra; proportionality doctrine; regularisation over demolition
5	BRICS HOSA 2026	GS2/GS3	HIGH	Bengaluru; Remote Sensing Constellation expansion; BRICS Space Council proposed
6	Kulasekarapattinam Spaceport	GS3	MEDIUM	India's 2nd spaceport; Tamil Nadu; SSLV-focused; targeted Dec 2026
7	RBI July 2026 Bulletin	GS3	MEDIUM	GDP forecast 7.6%; repo rate 5.25% unchanged; FDI/FPI positive
8	World Mangrove Day 2026	ENV	MEDIUM	July 26; Mangrove Society of India theme; blue carbon; Nandgaon photo award
9	Fishing Cat	ENV	MEDIUM	IUCN Vulnerable; State Animal WB; Sundarbans bio-indicator; semi-aquatic
10	Vibrant Villages Programme vs BADP	GS2/GS3	LOW	VVP = China border specific (2023); BADP = broader, older, all borders
11	India's Space Governance Troika	GS3	LOW	ISRO (agency) + IN-SPACe (regulator, 2020) + NSIL (commercial arm)
12	Operation Vijay — Disambiguation	GS1	LOW	1961 Goa vs 1999 Kargil vs 1971 Vijay Diwas (Dec 16) — do not conflate

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.

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