

THEIAS AKADEMIA • MORNING EDITION • 08:00 IST

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

PART II • ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Wednesday, 22 July 2026

"The Topper's Last Read. Every Morning."

Wild Water Buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*) — Kaziranga to Kanha Translocation: India's Longest Wildlife Corridor Journey

Why in News: India's most ambitious wildlife translocation — moving 15 Wild Water Buffaloes (Phase 1 of 50) from Kaziranga National Park (Assam) to Kanha Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh) — is underway. The first batch of 4 buffaloes arrived at Kanha on April 28, 2026, travelling over 2,000 km, making it India's longest inter-state wildlife translocation.

Background: Wild Water Buffalo is locally extinct in Central India (last seen in MP over 100 years ago). The translocation aims to re-establish the species in its historic range and restore grassland ecosystems in Kanha, where Barasingha (hard-ground swamp deer) and tigers share habitat. IUCN listed the species as Endangered with <4,000 individuals globally — over 99% confined to Assam (mainly Kaziranga and Manas).

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Scientific name: *Bubalus arnee*; IUCN status: Endangered; Schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972; also protected under CITES Appendix III.
- Translocation plan: 50 buffaloes in 3 phases; Phase 1 (4 buffaloes, April 2026); Partners: Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), Assam Forest Dept, MP Forest Dept + NTCA; CAMPA-funded.
- Ecological role — "grassland engineers": Wild Water Buffaloes create wallows (depressions filled with mud + water), trample coarse grass, and enable diverse plant and animal communities. Without them, floodplain grasslands degrade into dense scrub.
- Kaziranga NP facts: Assam; UNESCO World Heritage Site (1985); 6 ranges; ~3,000 one-horned rhinos (largest concentration globally); also home to ~90% of India's wild buffalo population.

Mnemonic: "Buffaloes Are Kaziranga's Engineers" = Bubalus Arnee, Kaziranga, Endangered. Wild Water Buffalo ≠ Domestic Buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*). Kanha Tiger Reserve was India's 1st Tiger Reserve under Project Tiger (1973).

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2019: "Discuss the significance of wildlife corridors for conservation in India." | GS3 2022: "Examine translocation as a tool for species recovery — successes and limitations."

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. Wild Water Buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*): (1) Listed as Endangered by IUCN (2) Over 99% of global population is in Assam (3) Protected under Schedule I of WPA 1972 (4) Classified as a "keystone" or "grassland engineer" species. How many of these are correct? (a) Two (b) Three (c) All four (d) One. **Answer: (c) All four are correct.**

GS3

Wild Water Buffalo

Bubalus arnee

Kaziranga

Kanha TR

Translocation

WTI

GS3

Static Species · Aquatic Animal

Species Profile (Static) · Source: IUCN / Project Dolphin / WII

Ganges River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica gangetica*) — India's National Aquatic Animal; 2nd Range-Wide Survey Underway

Why in News: The 2nd comprehensive range-wide survey of the Ganges River Dolphin has been launched under Project Dolphin. Phase I covers the Ganga from Bijnor (Uttar Pradesh) to Ganga Sagar (West Bengal); Phase II extends to the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, adding to the 2025 baseline count of 6,327 individuals.

Background: The Ganges River Dolphin is India's National Aquatic Animal (declared 2009) and is classified as Endangered by IUCN. It belongs to the family Platanistidae and is functionally blind — navigating entirely by echolocation. Project Dolphin was launched in 2020 on the same lines as Project Tiger, with dedicated funding and legal protection enhanced under the Wildlife Protection Act (Amendment) 2022.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Scientific classification: *Platanista gangetica gangetica*; IUCN: Endangered; Schedule I, WPA 1972; CITES Appendix I; only freshwater cetacean in South Asia; lifespan 26-28 years.
- Project Dolphin (2020): ₹50 crore outlay; modelled on Project Tiger; Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (Bhagalpur, Bihar, 1991) is India's only dedicated dolphin sanctuary; first tagging programme: Assam, December 2024.
- Threats: Gillnet fishing (bycatch), sand dredging, barrages blocking migration, river traffic, industrial effluents. Ganga between Narora and Bijnor (UP) and Sultanganj-Kahalgaon (Bihar) are critical habitats.
- Population trend: 1982 estimate ~4,000; 2025 census: 6,327 — a positive signal of Namami Gange + Project Dolphin impact; Ganga Gangetic plain holds ~83% of population.

🌿 AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

Trick: "Platanista = Platinum status for Ganga" — it cannot survive outside freshwater; functionally blind (tiny eyes, no lens). Susu = local name = the sound of its breathing. National Aquatic Animal since 2009; National River = Ganga since 2008. Both declared the same era — remember together.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2021: "Discuss Project Dolphin — objectives, implementation and challenges." | GS3 2016: "Threats to freshwater biodiversity in India's river systems — examine."

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary is located in: (a) UP (b) Bihar (c) West Bengal (d) Assam. **Answer: (b) Bihar.** Near Bhagalpur; established 1991; India's only dedicated river dolphin sanctuary; named after the ancient Vikramshila Mahavihara Buddhist university nearby.

GS3

Ganges Dolphin

Platanista gangetica

Project Dolphin

National Aquatic Animal

Vikramshila

GS4 Ethics: The Wild Water Buffalo translocation raises questions of inter-generational equity and ecological responsibility. EMP — Ethics & Moral Philosophy programme covers conservation ethics in detail.

§2 · PLACES IN NEWS — 22 JULY 2026

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



- ① New Delhi (Parliament / NSA Doval)
- ② Karwar (INS Malvan commissioned)
- ③ Tel Aviv (India-Israel FTA 2nd round)
- ④ Visakhapatnam (NSTL Naval Stealth)
- ⑤ Kaziranga, Assam (Wild Buffalo source)
- ⑥ Kanha, MP (Wild Buffalo destination)

● ① New Delhi

Why in News: Parliament Monsoon Session Day 3 — NEET protests, both Houses adjourned. NSA Ajit Doval selected for Lokmanya Tilak National Award 2026. RBI polymer banknote policy headquartered here.

● ② Karwar, Karnataka

Why in News: INS Malvan commissioned at Naval Base Karwar (INS Kadamba) — India's largest naval base on the west coast; strategically located ~500 km from Karachi. INS

Kadamba is Project Seabird — world's 3rd largest naval base by planned size.

● ③ Tel Aviv, Israel

Why in News: India-Israel FTA 2nd Round of negotiations in Israel (Jul 2026). Bilateral trade ~\$3.9B annually. Israel is India's 3rd largest trading partner in West Asia. India cut 60% of the world's rough diamonds sourced from Israel.

● ④ Visakhapatnam, AP

Why in News: NSTL (Naval Science and Technological Laboratory) — DRDO's premier naval R&D centre — hosted "Naval Stealth Beyond 2030" workshop. NSTL is also developer of Abhay sonar fitted on INS Malvan.

● ⑤ Kaziranga, Assam

Why in News: Source of Wild Water Buffalo translocation. Kaziranga NP holds ~90% of India's Wild Water Buffaloes and ~3,000 one-horned rhinos (largest globally). UNESCO WHS since 1985. 6 ranges; also a Tiger Reserve.

● ⑥ Kanha, Madhya Pradesh

Why in News: Destination of Wild Water Buffalo translocation (India's longest inter-state wildlife translocation, 2,000+ km). Kanha TR — India's 1st Tiger Reserve (1973, Project Tiger). Also home to critically endangered Barasingha (hard-ground swamp deer).

§3 · ETHICS & INTEGRITY CASES

Case 1 · Conflict of Interest

Award to an Active National Security Adviser

NSA Ajit Doval receives a national award for operations — some of which remain classified. Ethical tension: civilian honours are meant to be transparent but the basis for this award involves state secrets. A civil servant is asked by media to comment. Discuss his ethical duty of confidentiality vs public accountability.

Case 2 · Institutional Ethics

Speaker's Dilemma: Order vs Free Debate

The Lok Sabha Speaker faces adjournment demands on NEET — a genuine public grievance. Enforcing order helps the legislative calendar but stifles a legitimate debate. Not enforcing it signals that disruption is rewarded. Analyse the Speaker's constitutional position and ethical options.

Hint: loyalty to office vs transparency; GS4 values — probity, impartiality.

Hint: Art 93, Speaker's neutrality, House discipline.

Case 3 • Professional Ethics

Defence Contractor Pressured to Certify Substandard Sonar

An engineer at a defence firm is asked by management to certify a sonar system for INS Malvan despite incomplete sea trials — timeline pressure from the Navy. Certification risks operational failure in combat. Refusing delays commissioning. Discuss the ethical course of action for the engineer. Hint: professional ethics, Kohlberg's stages, whistleblower protection.

Case 4 • Conservation Ethics

Tribal Opposition to Wild Buffalo Translocation

A forest officer implementing the Kaziranga-Kanha Wild Buffalo translocation is pressured by local tribal communities who consider the species sacred and fear it will damage their crops. The scientific case for translocation is strong but community consent was not sought adequately. What should the officer do? Hint: FPIC (Free Prior Informed Consent), Schedule V, Art 244.

§4 • 15 PRELIMS MCQS — 22 JULY 2026

Q1. INS Malvan (commissioned July 22, 2026) is built by which shipyard?

- (a) Mazagon Dock, Mumbai
- (b) Garden Reach, Kolkata
- (c) Cochin Shipyard Limited
- (d) Hindustan Shipyard, Vizag

✓ (c) Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), Kochi — under Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways. CSL is India's largest public shipyard.

Q2. Under which Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) category are Mahe-class ASW ships built — requiring GoI-funded R&D but private production?

- (a) Buy (Indian)
- (b) Buy and Make (Indian)
- (c) Make-I
- (d) Make-II

✓ (c) Make-I — government funds 70% of R&D cost; industry builds. Make-II = industry self-funded. This ensures DRDO designs translate to industry production.

Q3. The Lokmanya Tilak National Award is conferred on which date each year?

- (a) July 23 (Tilak's birth anniversary)
- (b) August 1 (Tilak's death anniversary)
- (c) October 2 (Gandhi Jayanti)
- (d) January 26 (Republic Day)

✓ (b) August 1 — Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak died on August 1, 1920. The award is conferred annually on this date in Pune by the Lokmanya Tilak Smarak Trust.

Q4. India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in which year?

- (a) 1950
- (b) 1975
- (c) 1992
- (d) 2000

✓ (c) 1992 — under PM Narasimha Rao's government. India had recognised Israel's statehood in 1950 but full diplomatic relations waited until 1992 (also when India normalised ties with China post-tensions).

Q5. CITI stands for (in context of India's textile industry body):

- (a) Central Indian Textile Institute
- (b) Confederation of Indian Textile Industry
- (c) Comprehensive Indian Textiles Initiative
- (d) Council for Indian Trade and Industry

✓ (b) Confederation of Indian Textile Industry — apex industry body for India's textile sector, including spinning, weaving, garments, and technical textiles.

Q6. Who signs and issues the ₹1 note in India?

- (a) RBI Governor
- (b) Finance Secretary on behalf of RBI
- (c) Finance Secretary on behalf of Govt of India
- (d) BRBNMPL CEO

✓ (c) Finance Secretary, Government of India — the ₹1 note is the only currency issued by the Government of India directly. All other denominations (₹2 to ₹2000) are issued by RBI, signed by the RBI Governor.

Q7. BRBNMPL currency presses are located at:

- (a) Nashik and Dewas
- (b) Mysuru and Salboni
- (c) Mumbai and Chennai
- (d) Hyderabad and Kolkata

✓ (b) Mysuru (Karnataka) and Salboni (West Bengal) — BRBNMPL presses. Security Printing Press at Nashik and Dewas (currency paper) are under SPMCIL, not BRBNMPL.

Q8. The Wild Water Buffalo's IUCN Red List status is:

- (a) Critically Endangered
- (b) Endangered
- (c) Vulnerable
- (d) Near Threatened

✓ (b) Endangered — global population <4,000; over 99% in Assam (primarily Kaziranga and Manas). Distinguished from domesticated buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*).

Q9. Wild Water Buffalo's scientific name is:

- (a) *Bubalus bubalis*
- (b) *Bos gaurus*
- (c) *Bubalus arnee*
- (d) *Bison bonasus*

✓ (c) *Bubalus arnee*. *Bubalus bubalis* = domestic buffalo. *Bos gaurus* = Gaur (Indian bison). *Bubalus arnee* is the true wild progenitor of domesticated Asian buffaloes.

Q10. Ganges River Dolphin was declared India's National Aquatic Animal in which year?

- (a) 2005
- (b) 2007
- (c) 2009
- (d) 2012

✓ (c) 2009 — declared National Aquatic Animal alongside Ganga being declared the National River (2008). IUCN status: Endangered; Scientific name: *Platanista gangetica gangetica*.

Q11. Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary — which of these is correct?

- (a) Located in Uttar Pradesh
- (b) Established in 2001
- (c) Near Bhagalpur, Bihar, established 1991
- (d) India's largest river sanctuary

✓ (c) Near Bhagalpur, Bihar; established 1991 — India's only dedicated river dolphin sanctuary, spanning ~60 km of the Ganga.

Q12. Project Dolphin was launched in which year, modelled on Project Tiger?

- (a) 2015
- (b) 2018
- (c) 2020
- (d) 2022

✓ (c) 2020 — launched by PM Modi on Independence Day 2020 (August 15). Covers both freshwater Gangetic dolphins and marine Irrawaddy dolphins in India's coastal waters.

Q13. NSTL (Naval Science and Technological Laboratory) of DRDO is located at:

- (a) Kochi, Kerala
- (b) Pune, Maharashtra
- (c) Chennai, Tamil Nadu
- (d) Visakhapatnam, AP

✓ (d) Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh — established 1969; develops sonar systems (Abhay, HUMSA-NG, USHUS), underwater weapons, and stealth technologies. Director: part of DRDO's Naval Systems cluster.

Q14. Kaziranga National Park was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in:

- (a) 1980
- (b) 1985
- (c) 1992
- (d) 2000

✓ (b) 1985 — Kaziranga is also a Tiger Reserve, an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA), and a Ramsar Site (2006). Assam, India.

Q15. The "5F Vision" in India's textile policy refers to:

- (a) Five-Factor Export Framework
- (b) Farm-Fibre-Factory-Fashion-Foreign
- (c) Five flagship PM MITRA parks
- (d) Five-year PLI disbursement targets

✓ (b) Farm-Fibre-Factory-Fashion-Foreign — India's ambition to control the entire textile value chain from raw material (farm) to international exports (foreign). Linked to PM MITRA parks (7) and PLI Textiles (₹31,687 crore).

§5 · MAINS QUESTIONS — 22 JULY 2026

Q1 · GS2 · Parliament

"Parliamentary disruptions have become India's democratic deficit — the weapon of obstruction is wielded equally by the ruling party and the opposition, undermining the purpose of Parliament

as a deliberative body." Critically examine with constitutional provisions and recent examples. (250 words)

Hint: Art 105 (MP privileges), Rule 267 (RS), Speaker's role, procedural reforms; compare with UK/US Parliament discipline.

Q2 · GS2 · National Security

"The office of the National Security Adviser has evolved from a coordinating role to the apex of India's security decision-making architecture." Examine the constitutional basis, functions, and expanding operational role of the NSA in India's security framework. (250 words)

Hint: NSC 1998, NSA vs CDS distinction, Strategic Policy Group, NSA's role in Operation Sindoor, Balakot, Doklam.

Q3 · GS2 · IR

"From cautious non-recognition to a deepening strategic partnership — trace the evolution of India-Israel bilateral relations and assess the strategic significance of the proposed Free Trade Agreement." (250 words)

Hint: 1948 recognition but 1992 full ties; 2017 Modi visit; post-Pahalgam Operation Sindoor convergence; diamonds, defence, agri-tech, FTA sectors.

Q4 · GS3 · Defence

"India's ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare) capability deficit in the Indian Ocean Region is its most critical security gap. Examine the threat context and India's response through indigenous platform development." (250 words)

Hint: China PLAN 76 subs vs India's ~16; IOR 60% oil trade; Mahe-class 16 ships; NSTL sonar; Project 75I + P75 Alpha submarines complement.

Q5 · GS3 · Environment

"Wildlife translocation is both a promise and a peril — an ecological intervention that can restore lost species or displace communities and disrupt ecosystems." Critically examine the regulatory framework, success conditions, and ethical considerations for wildlife translocation in India with suitable examples. (250 words)

Hint: NTCA guidelines, WTI protocols, Wild Buffalo (success), Cheetah (mixed results), Asiatic Lion Gir; FPIC, Schedule-V communities.

Q6 · GS3 · Economy

"The revival of India's polymer banknote plan reflects both the rising cost of currency management and the evolving security demands of modern monetary systems." Assess the feasibility and readiness of India's transition to polymer currency. (150 words)

Hint: 2012 pilot failure (ATM issues); FY25 printing cost ₹6,372 crore; polymer: 4-5 yr lifespan vs 1-2 yr for paper; ATM tech now polymer-compatible; 40+ countries.

§6 · ANSWER WRITING VALUE ADDITION

Quote — Lokmanya Tilak on Self-Rule

"Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it." — Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Kesari editorial, 1897. Use in: GS1 (freedom struggle), GS2 (constitutional morality), GS4 (moral courage in public life). Tilak pioneered "constructive nationalism" — use civic tools (Ganapati Utsav, Shivaji festival) to build mass consciousness without direct confrontation.

Data — IOR Submarine Threat Context

Indian Ocean Region carries 60% of global maritime oil trade and 80% of global seaborne trade in manufactured goods. China's PLAN operates ~76 submarines; India operates ~16. PLAN SSN/SSBN patrols into the IOR have increased 5-fold since 2015. This context explains the urgency of 16 Mahe-class ASW ships + Project 75I (6 submarines) + Project 75 Alpha. India's ASW: Mahe-class + P8I Neptune aircraft + DRDO ALTAS lightweight torpedo.

Concept — "Grassland Engineers" and Ecological Role

Wild Water Buffaloes are "grassland engineers" — they create wallows (mud pits), trample invasive vegetation, maintain open grassland structure, and facilitate diverse plant and animal

communities. Their absence from Central India's floodplains for 100+ years has contributed to grassland degradation → dense scrub → loss of species like Barasingha. Translocation is ecological restoration, not just conservation. Compare: African Elephant as "savanna engineer," Beaver as "riparian engineer."

Data — India's Textile Export Ambition

India's textile and apparel exports: ~\$44 billion (FY25). Target: \$100 billion by 2030. EU is India's 2nd largest market. Post India-EU FTA (Jan 2026), EU market opens with reduced tariffs (currently 12% average on textiles). CITI-EURATEX TAD will jointly lobby for smoother tariff phase-down and mutual recognition of technical standards. PM MITRA 7 parks across 7 states will be hubs for integrated textile manufacturing.

§7 · AKADEMIA DIRECT HIT TRACKER — 22 JULY 2026

INS Malvan / Mahe-class ASW-SWC

GS3 DEF

2nd of 8 Mahe-class; CSL Kochi; 78.8m; 1,150T; Abhay sonar; "Silent Claws"; 80%+ indigenous; commissioned Karwar July 22.

Parliament Monsoon Session Day 3

GS2

Both Houses adjourned; NEET paper leak protests; Rule 267 notices (RS); Dharmendra Pradhan resignation demand; Vande Mataram Bill listed.

NSA Ajit Doval — Tilak Award 2026

GS2

Lokmanya Tilak National Award 2026; Aug 1 Pune; Amit Shah to present; 3rd consecutive NSA term; Op Sindoor, Balakot, Doklam.

India-Israel FTA 2nd Round

GS2 IR

Round 2 in Israel; Round 1 Feb 2026 New Delhi; ToR Nov 2025; bilateral \$3.9B; diamonds, defence, pharma, agri-tech, digital trade.

CITI-EURATEX TAD (India-EU FTA)

GS2 GS3

EU-India Textile Apparel Dialogue; signed Bharat Tex July 14; India-EU FTA Jan 2026; CITI+EURATEX;

RBI Polymer Banknotes

GS3

BRBNMPL bids by Aug 18; ₹10+₹20 pilot; polymer substrate; previous pilot 2012 recalled; FY25

\$44B→\$100B export target.

printing cost ₹6,372 crore.

NSTL Naval Stealth Beyond 2030

GS3 S&T

DRDO NSTL Visakhapatnam; 2-day workshop Jul 20-21; acoustic, RCS, IR stealth; Navy+DRDO+Industry+Academia; shapes 2030 warship design.

Wild Water Buffalo Translocation

ENV GS3

Kaziranga→Kanha TR; 15 buffaloes Phase 1; 2,000+ km; IUCN Endangered; <4,000 globally; 99% Assam; WTI+Forest Depts; CAMPA funded.

Ganges River Dolphin Survey

ENV GS3

2nd Range-Wide Survey underway; Project Dolphin 2020; National Aquatic Animal (2009); 6,327 baseline (2025); *Platanista gangetica gangetica*.

India-EU FTA (Jan 2026) — Context

GS2 GS3

Concluded Jan 27, 2026; ratification by 27 EU states pending; largest bilateral FTA for India; textiles, pharma, digital, services.

Windfall Gains Tax Revision

GS3

Diesel + ATF export tax revised upward; petrol export tax reduced; government balances fiscal revenue vs export competitiveness amid global energy volatility.

Prevention of Insults Bill (RS — Memory Hook)

GS2

Listed RS Day 3 (Jul 22). Covered fully Jul 19. Amends 1971 Act; adds Vande Mataram; 3-yr jail for public insult. Pending introduction in RS.

DIRECT HIT All 12 Direct Hit topics are sourced from verified PIB/Ministry/primary media sources — zero unverified claims. ANTIM ASSURED 100+ maintains Proof of Precision as a commitment, not a claim.

§8 · PROOF OF PRECISION — 22 JULY 2026

✓ **INS Malvan — Verified**

Builder: Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), Kochi — confirmed. Class: 2nd Mahe-class ASW-SWC. Commissioned: Karwar, July 22, 2026. Length 78.8m, displacement 1,150T, Abhay sonar, BEL CMS, 30mm gun, torpedo launchers — all cross-verified via ANI / Bharat Shakti official commissioning sources.

✓ **NSA Doval Lokmanya Tilak Award — Verified**

Award announced July 20, 2026; ceremony August 1 (Tilak's death anniversary), Pune; Amit Shah to present; past recipients include PM Modi (2014) — verified via PIB and BusinessToday. Prize: ₹1 lakh + citation + memento.

✓ **India-Israel FTA — Verified**

1st Round: February 24-26, 2026, New Delhi. 2nd Round: July 2026, Israel. ToR signed November 2025. Bilateral trade ~\$3.9B. Full diplomatic ties 1992 — all facts verified via MEA / Economic Times / IBEF sources.

✓ **Wild Water Buffalo Translocation — Verified**

15 buffaloes Phase 1 target; 1st batch 4 buffaloes arrived Kanha April 28, 2026. 2,000+ km journey. Partners: WTI + Assam + MP Forest Depts + NTCA. IUCN: Endangered; <4,000 globally; 99% Assam — all verified via Wildlife Trust of India records and published conservation reports.

★ 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
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7

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

6

QUESTIONS FROM
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