

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

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Wednesday, 15 July 2026

MORNING EDITION · 08:00 IST

PART II — SECTION INDEX

1. §1 Environment & Ecology (2 cards: BEE CAFÉ II + Dugong)
2. §2 Places in News (World Map + 6 Locations)
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← Part I covers: Headlines · Polity & Governance · IR · Defence & Security · S&T · Economy

SECTION 1

Environment & Ecology

GS3

Energy Policy · Automotive Emissions · Environment

15 July 2026 · Down to Earth / BEE

BEE's Unprecedented CAFÉ II Credit Proposal: Infinite Regulatory Credits Risk Devaluing India's Fuel Economy Standards

Why in News: The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) has proposed offering infinite regulatory compliance credits and halving non-compliance liabilities under CAFÉ II (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) norms — a move experts at Down To Earth call an "unprecedented anomaly" that could render India's automotive emission targets toothless.

Background: CAFÉ (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) norms set fleet-average fuel consumption targets for automakers; India's Phase II (CAFÉ II) is in force April 2022 to March 2027, with Phase III (CAFÉ III) scheduled for April 2027 onwards requiring fleet average CO₂ down to 78.9 g/km by FY32 (from ~113 g/km at end of Phase II).

⚡ PRELIMS FACTS

- BEE (Bureau of Energy Efficiency) operates under the Energy Conservation Act 2001; nodal ministry = Ministry of Power; CAFÉ norms enforced by BEE in coordination with MoRTH
- CAFÉ II compliance credits: BEE allows multipliers for EVs (3.0×), PHEVs (2.5×), strong hybrids (1.6×) and 12 technology-based discounts (start-stop, 6-speed transmission, high-efficiency AC)
- DTE's concern: Proposal to offer "infinite" credits (no cap) = automakers can sell enough EVs/hybrids to claim unlimited CAFÉ compliance without improving their ICE vehicle efficiency
- CAFÉ III (April 2027–FY32): Fleet CO₂ target 78.9 g/km; Phase II ends at ~113 g/km — a 30% reduction required in 5 years, making Phase II compliance rigor now critical

● MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Regulatory capture risk: When industry lobbying causes regulatory bodies to dilute compliance mechanisms, the gap between stated environmental targets and actual outcomes widens — a systemic governance failure
- EV transition paradox: Infinite EV credits can incentivise a two-track strategy — EV showpiece + unreformed ICE fleet — allowing carmakers to claim compliance while total emissions continue rising
- India's NDC commitment: India has pledged to reduce GDP emission intensity by 45% by 2030; automotive sector accounts for ~13% of India's CO₂ — diluting CAFÉ II undermines NDC credibility at COP negotiations

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Think of CAFÉ norms as a "fleet diet plan" — if you sell one salad (EV) and say you've "cancelled out" ten burgers (diesel SUVs), that's not a diet. BEE's proposal allows exactly this "salad-offset" loophole with no limit.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2021: "Discuss the challenges of implementing emission norms in India's transport sector and their implications for climate commitments."

 PROBABLE MCQ

Q: BEE (Bureau of Energy Efficiency) under which Act? (A) Environment Protection Act 1986 (B) Energy Conservation Act 2001 (C) Air Prevention Act 1981 (D) CAFE Act 2022

Answer: B. BEE was established under the Energy Conservation Act 2001, under the Ministry of Power.

GS3

Environment

Energy Policy

BEE

CAFÉ II

Automotive

NDC

PYQ: GS3 2021

GS3

Marine Biodiversity · Conservation · IUCN

Static Species Profile · Source: IUCN Red List / WII / MoEFCC

Species Profile: Dugong (*Dugong dugon*) — India's Only Seagrass Mammal

UPSC Significance: Dugong appears in UPSC CSE for its unique ecology (seagrass dependent), taxonomy (only living species in family Dugongidae), and India's conservation obligations under CITES/WPA. Its distribution in India's EEZ adds a maritime sovereignty and marine conservation angle.

Background: Dugongs are the only strictly marine herbivorous mammals; they are the sole surviving members of family Dugongidae — Steller's Sea Cow (*Hydrodamalis gigas*, same family) went extinct in 1768, just 27 years after discovery, due to over-hunting.

 PRELIMS FACTS

- Scientific name: *Dugong dugon*; Order: Sirenia; Family: Dugongidae (only living member); closest relative = Manatees (Family: Trichechidae, also Order Sirenia)
- IUCN: Vulnerable (VU); CITES: Appendix I (highest protection); WPA 1972: Schedule I; listed under CMS (Convention on Migratory Species)
- India distribution: Gulf of Mannar (Tamil Nadu) — ~250 dugongs; Gulf of Kutch (Gujarat); Andaman & Nicobar Islands; Lakshadweep — only 4 areas with confirmed breeding populations
- Habitat: Seagrass meadows (exclusively herbivorous — eats up to 40 kg seagrass/day); keystone species for seagrass ecosystems; functionally extinct in many parts of their former range

 MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Seagrass–Dugong–Blue Carbon nexus: Dugong grazing maintains seagrass meadow health; seagrasses store 10× more carbon than terrestrial forests per unit area — protecting Dugongs = protecting blue carbon sinks
- India's marine conservation gaps: Despite WPA Schedule I status, Dugong faces bycatch mortality, boat strikes, and seagrass loss from coastal development — CRZ (Coastal Regulation Zone) rules are inadequately enforced
- Conservation model: Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park (Tamil Nadu) = India's first Marine NP; MoEFCC's Project Dugong provides community-based conservation — linking livelihood with conservation for coastal fisherfolk

 TEACHING HOOK

Remember Dugong with 3 D's: Dugongidae (family), *Dugong dugon* (species), Dugout eating (grazes seagrass like a lawnmower). It's the "sea cow" that is NOT a cow — it's a marine mammal more closely related to elephants than to whales.

 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2015: "What is biodiversity? How is India a mega-diverse country? Discuss its importance in terms of food security, livelihood and ecological services."

 PROBABLE MCQ

Q: Dugong (*Dugong dugon*) is a species associated with: (A) Freshwater rivers of north India (B) Mangrove ecosystems of Sundarbans (C) Seagrass meadows of Gulf of Mannar (D) High-altitude wetlands of Ladakh

Answer: C. Dugongs are seagrass-dependent marine mammals; Gulf of Mannar (Tamil Nadu) hosts India's largest population.

GS3

Biodiversity

Marine Conservation

Dugong

IUCN Vulnerable

Gulf of Mannar

Seagrass

Dugongidae

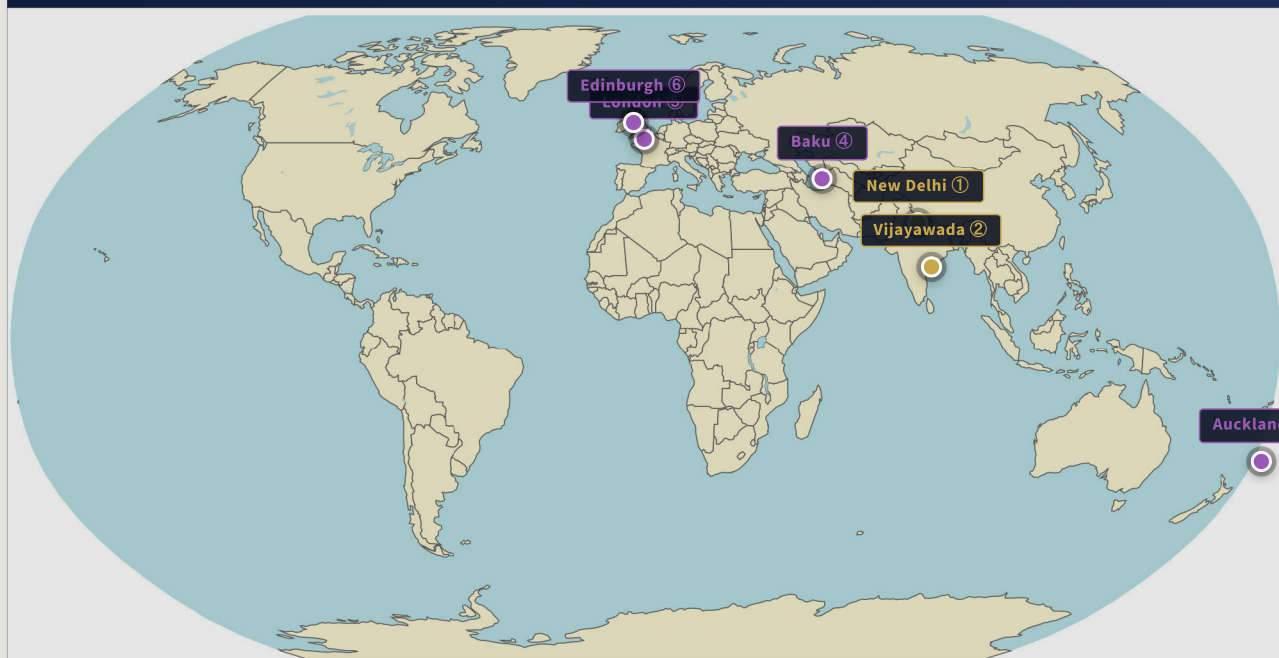
PYQ: GS3 2015

THEIAS AKADEMIA Marine biodiversity is an undercover Prelims topic — LAKSHYAM AIR1 has a dedicated module on IUCN species, marine mammals and blue carbon. theiasakademia.com

SECTION 2

Places in News — 15 July 2026

PLACES IN NEWS — 15 JULY 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- ① New Delhi (CPWD SANKALP; DoT-TSDSI TDIP MoU; ISRO Gaganyaan tests) ② Vijayawada, AP (AP 'Pillale Sampada' — CBN launched)
③ Auckland, New Zealand (PM Modi visit; India-NZ Strategic Partnership) ④ Baku, Azerbaijan (Egmont Group Plenary; BECA 2026; FIU-IND)
⑤ London, UK (India Women's Cricket; Lord's Test; 270-run win) ⑥ Edinburgh, Scotland (ICC Annual Conference; Anjum Chopra ICC Hall of Fame)

① New Delhi, India

CPWD 172nd Annual Day (Vigyan Bhawan); DoT-TSDSI TDIP MoU (9th TTDD); ISRO Gaganyaan Crew Module tests conducted at ISRO facilities. Gold pin = India location.

② Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

CM N. Chandrababu Naidu launched 'Pillale Sampada' initiative on World Population Day — Rs 30,000 for 3rd child, Rs 40,000 for 4th child to address fertility decline.

③ Auckland, New Zealand

PM Modi's first visit to New Zealand in 40 years (July 10–11); received Māori powhiri welcome; India-NZ elevated to Strategic Partnership; New Zealand joins GBA.

④ Baku, Azerbaijan

Egmont Group Plenary held here; FIU-IND named runner-up at BECA 2026 for Rs 868 crore cyber fraud investigation; Taiwan AMLD won BECA 2026.

⑤ London, United Kingdom

Lord's Cricket Ground: India Women beat England by 270 runs in the first-ever Women's Test at Lord's; Yastika Bhatia first woman to score a Test century at Lord's.

⑥ Edinburgh, Scotland

ICC Annual Conference: Anjum Chopra and Kevin Pietersen inducted into ICC Hall of Fame; Anjum = 3rd Indian woman and 13th Indian overall; total 125 inductees.

SECTION 3

Ethics & Integrity Cases (GS4)

Case 1: Regulatory Capture — BEE & CAFÉ II Credits

A senior BEE official, under pressure from the automotive lobby, proposes offering unlimited compliance credits that effectively allow carmakers to skip fuel efficiency improvements. He argues it will "boost EV sales." As a civil servant mandated to meet India's NDC targets, analyse the ethical conflict and the appropriate course of action.

Case 2: Fiduciary Breach — AMC & Investor Consent

An AMC fund manager extends a Fixed Maturity Plan's maturity date without informing investors, to avoid booking losses on a distressed corporate holding. Investors eventually profit, but the manager bypassed the regulatory requirement for investor consent. The AMC MD defends this as "beneficial outcome." Examine the ethical dimensions of ends vs means in financial management.

Case 3: Complicity in Financial Crime — Mule Accounts

A bank branch manager notices unusually high transaction volumes in several newly opened accounts — classic patterns of mule account activity. His branch is under pressure to meet account-opening targets. He suspects fraud but fears losing incentives if he flags accounts. Discuss the ethical duty of a bank official in preventing financial crime vs. institutional performance pressure.

Case 4: Demographic Policy Ethics — Pillale Sampada

AP's 'Pillale Sampada' scheme offers cash incentives for 3rd and 4th children to address declining fertility. Critics argue this puts disproportionate reproductive burden on women and may conflict with SDG 3 (maternal health) and SDG 5 (gender equality). A district welfare officer must implement the scheme while also promoting women's health and education. Analyse the ethical tensions.

SECTION 4

Prelims MCQs — 15 Questions

Q1 • GS2

CPWD (Central Public Works Department) functions under which Ministry?

(A) Ministry of Finance (B) Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (C) Ministry of Rural Development (D) Ministry of Commerce

✓ **Answer: B — CPWD functions under MoH&UA; established 1854; current DG: Satinder Pal Singh.**

Q2 • GS3

What did the Supreme Court rule in the Kotak AMC vs SEBI case (2026 INSC 681)?

(A) SEBI cannot penalise AMCs for outcome-based violations (B) Investor profit is a valid defence against regulatory infractions (C) Market integrity is paramount; profit/loss to investors is immaterial to determine regulatory infraction (D) FMPs can be extended with RBI approval

✓ **Answer: C — SC held that market integrity is the paramount consideration; investor profit is NOT a defence against SEBI's regulatory action.**

Q3 • GS2

New Zealand joined which India-led international initiative during PM Modi's July 2026 visit?

(A) International Solar Alliance (ISA) (B) Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA) (C) Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) (D) Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)

✓ **Answer: B — New Zealand joined GBA (launched at G20 New Delhi 2023); it also adopted IPOI Maritime Security pillar.**

Q4 • GS3

FIU-IND (Financial Intelligence Unit – India) was established in which year?

(A) 2001 (B) 2002 (C) 2004 (D) 2007

✓ **Answer: C — FIU-IND was established in November 2004; India became Egmont Group member in 2007.**

Q5 • GS3

The Digital Threat Report 2025–26 (2nd edition) was released by which combination of agencies?

(A) RBI + SEBI + IRDAI (B) MeitY + CERT-In + CSIRT-Fin + SISA (C) NCA + NCIIPC + DRDO (D) MHA + IB + RAW

✓ **Answer: B — Released jointly by MeitY, CERT-In, CSIRT-Fin and SISA; covers BFSI and payments ecosystem threats.**

Q6 • GS3

In ISRO's Gaganyaan programme, CMUS refers to:

(A) Crew Mission Umbilical System (B) Crew Module Up-Righting System (C) Central Management Unit System (D) Crewed Module Underwater Sensor

✓ Answer: B — CMUS = Crew Module Up-Righting System; tested for post-splashdown buoyancy and uprighing.

Q7 • GS3

Which organisation releases India's Wholesale Price Index (WPI)?

(A) CSO/MoSPI (B) RBI (C) DPIIT — Office of Economic Adviser (D) NITI Aayog

✓ Answer: C — WPI released by DPIIT's OEA (Office of Economic Adviser) under Ministry of Commerce; CPI released by MoSPI.

Q8 • GS3

BEE (Bureau of Energy Efficiency) was established under which Act?

(A) Environment Protection Act 1986 (B) Energy Conservation Act 2001 (C) Air Prevention Act 1981 (D) National Clean Energy Fund Act 2012

✓ Answer: B — BEE under Energy Conservation Act 2001; nodal ministry is Ministry of Power.

Q9 • GS3

Dugong (Dugong dugon) belongs to which Family and Order?

(A) Family Trichechidae; Order Cetacea (B) Family Dugongidae; Order Sirenia (C) Family Delphinidae; Order Sirenia (D) Family Mysticeti; Order Mammalia

✓ Answer: B — Dugong: Family Dugongidae; Order Sirenia. Manatees = Family Trichechidae (also Sirenia).

Q10 • GS3

Which of the following is the IUCN status of Dugong?

(A) Endangered (B) Critically Endangered (C) Vulnerable (D) Near Threatened

✓ Answer: C — Dugong (Dugong dugon) is IUCN Vulnerable (VU); CITES Appendix I; WPA 1972 Schedule I.

Q11 • GS3

TDIP Scheme (Telecom Development Innovation Programme) was launched by which Ministry/Department?

(A) Ministry of Electronics and IT (B) Department of Telecommunications (DoT) (C) DSIR, Ministry of Science (D) TRAI

✓ Answer: B — TDIP Scheme launched by DoT (Ministry of Communications); Rs 203 crore outlay 2026–31; complements Bharat 6G Mission.

Q12 • GS2

AP's 'Pillale Sampada' scheme offers financial incentive to families for:

(A) First two children only (B) A third child (Rs 30,000) and fourth child (Rs 40,000) (C) Girls only, regardless of birth order (D) Adopting orphans

✓ Answer: B — 'Pillale Sampada' (Children are Wealth) offers Rs 30,000 for 3rd child and Rs 40,000 for 4th child to boost TFR.

Q13 • GS2

Anjum Chopra inducted into ICC Hall of Fame (2026) was the _____ Indian woman to receive the honour:

(A) 1st (B) 2nd (C) 3rd (D) 4th

✓ Answer: C — Anjum Chopra is the 3rd Indian woman (after Diana Edulji and Neetu David) and 13th Indian overall in ICC Hall of Fame.

Q14 • GS3

Under CAFÉ II norms, what EV multiplier credit does BEE assign for Battery EVs (BEV)?

(A) 1.5× (B) 2.0× (C) 2.5× (D) 3.0×

✓ Answer: D — BEVs get 3.0× multiplier; PHEVs = 2.5×; Strong Hybrids = 1.6× under CAFÉ II compliance credit framework.

Q15 • GS3

WPI June 2026 Fuel & Power inflation stood at approximately:

(A) 9.87% (B) 15.3% (C) 27.41% (D) 7.48%

✓ Answer: C — Fuel & Power WPI = +27.41% in June 2026 (eased from 30.33% in May); overall WPI = 9.87%.

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SECTION 5

Mains Questions — 6 Questions

GS2 · IR · 250 WORDS

"India–New Zealand Strategic Partnership 2026 signals a shift from bilateral trade to multilateral convergence in the Indo-Pacific. Critically analyse." (250 words)

Hint: Cover GBA membership, IPOI Maritime pillar, 40-year gap in PM visits, NZD 7bn trade target, IPOI 7-pillar architecture, NZ defence cooperation.

GS3 · SECURITIES REGULATION · 250 WORDS

"The SC ruling in Kotak AMC vs SEBI (2026) asserts that market integrity is paramount over commercial outcomes. Examine its implications for India's mutual fund regulation." (250 words)

Hint: SEBI's regulatory authority; FMP governance gaps; fiduciary duty; investor protection framework (SEBI + PMLA + judicial oversight).

GS3 · TELECOM POLICY · 200 WORDS

"India's TDIP Scheme under the Bharat 6G Mission aims to transform India from a standards follower to a global standards leader in telecommunications. Discuss challenges and opportunities." (200 words)

Hint: 3GPP/ITU/oneM2M participation; MSMEs in standards bodies; Bharat 6G Mission; India Semiconductor Mission convergence; challenge of FRAND (Fair, Reasonable, Non-Discriminatory) IPR regime.

GS3 · INFLATION · 200 WORDS

"A rising WPI coexisting with a moderating CPI creates a complex macro-economic scenario for India's policymakers. Analyse the drivers and policy implications of WPI June 2026 data." (200 words)

Hint: WPI-CPI divergence; cost-push vs demand-pull; Fuel & Power 27.41%; RBI's CPI-anchored monetary policy; fiscal tools (petroleum excise, buffer stocks); supply-side reforms.

GS3 · ENVIRONMENT · 200 WORDS

"BEE's proposal to offer unlimited compliance credits under CAFÉ II norms risks undermining India's automotive emission reduction targets and NDC commitments. Examine." (200 words)

Hint: CAFÉ II vs CAFÉ III targets; EV salad-offset loophole; regulatory capture; India's NDC pledges (45% emission intensity reduction by 2030); international credibility at COP.

GS4 · ETHICS · 150 WORDS

"A regulatory official faces sustained pressure from industry to dilute environmental compliance penalties, arguing it will increase investment. Identify the ethical values at stake and the course of action." (150 words)

Hint: Regulatory independence; probity; integrity vs institutional pressure; public interest vs private gain; accountability; separation of regulatory and commercial interests; Nolan principles.

SECTION 6

Answer Writing Value Addition

India-NZ Partnership — Key Numbers

40 years since last Indian PM NZ visit | 18 outcomes, 10 MoUs | NZD 7 billion bilateral trade target by 2030 | 7 IPOI pillars (NZ takes Maritime Security; India leads Sustainable Fisheries) | GBA now has 40+ countries

Dugong Conservation — Key Data

~250 Dugongs in Gulf of Mannar (India's largest population) | Only surviving Dugongidae species (Steller's Sea Cow extinct 1768) | Eats 40 kg seagrass/day | India's Gulf of Mannar = first Marine National Park (1986) | Project Dugong: MoEFCC initiative

FIU-IND & Egmont — Key Facts

FIU-IND established November 2004 | Egmont Group: 164 member FIUs | India joined FATF 2010 | Rs 868 crore cyber fraud case (July 2026) | ED action: Rs 13.6 cr USDT + Rs 47 lakh cash seized | India: 2 PMLA Prosecution Complaints filed

SECTION 7

AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

CPWD SANKALP Framework

GS2 · GOVERNANCE

172nd Annual Day; Manohar Lal; MoH&UA; Vigyan Bhawan; CPWD est. 1854



SC upholds SEBI vs Kotak AMC

GS3 · SECURITIES REGULATION

2026 INSC 681; market integrity paramount; Essel FMP; Rs 30L costs; Nilesh Shah



India-NZ Strategic Partnership

GS2 · IR / INDO-PACIFIC

PM Modi Auckland; 40-yr gap; 18 outcomes; GBA; IPOI Maritime; NZD 7 bn 2030



FIU-IND BECA 2026 Runner-up

GS3 · INTERNAL SECURITY

Egmont Group Baku; Rs 868 cr; 5,000 mule accounts; USDT Rs 13.6 cr; PMLA



MeitY Digital Threat Report 2nd Ed

GS3 · CYBERSECURITY

CERT-In + CSIRT-Fin + SISA; 4-Layer Gap Archetype; BFSI; 18-month roadmap



ISRO Gaganyaan CM Tests

GS3 · SPACE TECHNOLOGY

CMUS (splashdown); CS-CDS (umbilical); Apex Cover (parachute load); crewed 2027



DoT-TSDSI MoU / TDIP Scheme

GS3 · TELECOM / 6G

Rs 203 cr; 2026–31; Bharat 6G Mission; 98% support startups; ITU/3GPP/oneM2M



WPI June 2026 — 9.87%

GS3 · MACROECONOMICS

Fuel+Power +27.41%; Primary +7.0%; Manufactured +7.48%; Food +6.14%; DPIIT OEA



BEE CAFÉ II Credits Dilution

GS3 · ENVIRONMENT / ENERGY

Infinite EV credits; halved penalties; CAFÉ II Apr 2022–Mar 2027; BEE under MoP



Dugong (Dugong dugon)

GS3 · BIODIVERSITY / MARINE

IUCN VU; Dugongidae; Gulf of Mannar; seagrass; WPA Sch I; CITES App I



AP Pillale Sampada

GS2 · SOCIAL POLICY

CBN; Rs 30K (3rd child); Rs 40K (4th child); Vijayawada; fertility decline; World Population Day



Anjum Chopra ICC Hall of Fame

GS1 · SPORTS / CULTURE

Edinburgh; 3rd Indian woman (after Diana Edulji, Neetu David); 13th Indian; 125 total; Padma Shri 2014



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7

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

6

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A SINGLE CLASS

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