

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

THEIAS AKADEMIA

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

INSIDE PART II

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§1 • Environment

GS3 Marine biodiversity · Newly discovered species

Described August 2026 · Source: Zootaxa / Mongabay-India

New Deep-Sea Catshark *Apristurus drona* Described Off the Kerala Coast

Why in News: Scientists formally described a new deep-sea catshark species, *Apristurus drona* (the "Arabian Slender Catshark"), from four specimens recovered as bycatch from deep-sea shrimp trawlers off the Kollam coast, Kerala, published in the taxonomic journal *Zootaxa*, adding to India's documented deep-sea elasmobranch diversity in the southeastern Arabian Sea.

Background: The genus *Apristurus* is one of the most species-rich shark genera globally, with over 42 recognised species inhabiting continental-slope depths of 200-2,000 metres; India's deep-sea (below 200m) biodiversity remains chronically under-surveyed compared to its coastal waters, meaning new deep-sea species are frequently discovered only incidentally, through fisheries bycatch rather than dedicated research surveys.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Species: *Apristurus drona*, genus *Apristurus*, family Pentanchidae, order Carcharhiniformes.
- Described from 4 specimens (2 male, 2 female), 439-473 mm total length.
- Collected at 400-650 m depth off the Kollam coast, Kerala, southeastern Arabian Sea.
- Recovered as bycatch from deep-sea shrimp trawlers, not a dedicated research survey.
- Confirmed via combined morphological examination and DNA barcoding.
- Published in *Zootaxa*, volume 5828 (2026).
- Genus *Apristurus* has over 42 recognised species, inhabiting depths of 200-2,000 metres.
- Also reported from the Wadge Bank region, part of the India-Sri Lanka maritime zone.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Tests understanding of India's under-surveyed deep-sea (below 200m) biodiversity relative to coastal ecosystems.
- Raises the significance of fisheries bycatch as an incidental but valuable channel of taxonomic discovery.
- Connects to India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) resource-documentation obligations under UNCLOS.
- Highlights the need for dedicated deep-sea research survey capacity (relevant to the Deep Ocean Mission).

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2021: "What is blue carbon? Discuss its significance for coastal ecosystems" is thematically adjacent; deep-sea biodiversity/new-species PYQs are an emerging GS3 focus area.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements: 1. *Apristurus drona* was described from specimens collected off the Kollam coast, Kerala. 2. It belongs to the genus *Apristurus*, one of the most species-rich shark genera. 3. It was discovered through a dedicated deep-sea research survey. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). **Explanation:** The species was recovered as fisheries bycatch, not through a dedicated research survey — statement 3 is wrong.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Discuss the significance of fisheries bycatch as a channel for documenting India's deep-sea biodiversity, with reference to recent new-species discoveries. (150 words)

#GS3

#NewSpecies

#DeepSea

#ArabianSea

GS3 Wetlands governance · Judicial enforcement

15 September 2026 · Source: National Green Tribunal

NGT Flags Illegal Sand Mining on Odisha's Budhabalanga River, Invokes Wetlands Rules 2017

Why in News: The National Green Tribunal, in an order reported on 15 September 2026, flagged unlicensed sand-bed exploitation at Tentul and Pandupal on Odisha's Budhabalanga river, invoking the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 and barring development near the associated lake without competent-authority clearance, part of a broader September 2026 run of NGT orders on sand mining nationally.

Background: River-sand mining in India is governed by the Sustainable Sand Mining Management Guidelines, 2016 and the Enforcement and Monitoring Guidelines, 2020, but enforcement gaps persist across states; the National Green Tribunal, a statutory body under the NGT Act, 2010, has increasingly stepped in through suo motu and complaint-based orders where sand-bed exploitation threatens wetland ecosystems.

PRELIMS FACTS

- NGT order concerns illegal sand-bed exploitation at Tentul and Pandupal on the Budhabalanga river, Odisha.
- The Tribunal invoked the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017.
- Order bars development near the associated lake without competent-authority clearance.
- Part of a broader September 2026 run of NGT sand-mining orders (Aravalli, 8 Sept; Odisha's Jajpur quarry, 11 Sept; Punjab stone crushers, 9 Sept).
- Sand mining is nationally governed by the Sustainable Sand Mining Management Guidelines, 2016.
- The Enforcement and Monitoring Guidelines, 2020 supplement the 2016 sand-mining guidelines.
- The NGT is a statutory body established under the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.
- The Budhabalanga is a river in northern Odisha, flowing through Mayurbhanj and Balasore districts.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Tests understanding of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017's application beyond conventional wetland sites.
- Raises the persistent enforcement-gap problem in India's sand-mining regulatory framework despite detailed guidelines.
- Connects to the NGT's expanding role in environmental federalism, intervening across multiple states in a single month.
- Highlights the ecological linkage between riverbed sand extraction and wetland/lake ecosystem degradation.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2018: "Enumerate the important sources of water pollution in India" is thematically adjacent; NGT-jurisdiction and sand-mining-regulation PYQs recur in GS3 environment-governance questions.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements: 1. The National Green Tribunal was established under the NGT Act, 2010. 2. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules were notified in 2017. 3. Sand mining in India is governed exclusively by state-level guidelines with no central framework. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). **Explanation:** Sand mining is governed by the central Sustainable Sand Mining Management Guidelines, 2016, alongside state-level implementation — statement 3 is wrong.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Discuss the enforcement challenges in India's river-sand-mining regulatory framework and the National Green Tribunal's evolving role in addressing them. (150 words)

#GS3

#NGT

#SandMining

#Wetlands

§2 · Places in News

📌 PLACES IN NEWS — 16 SEPTEMBER 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- ① Kollam, Kerala (new deep-sea catshark *Apristurus drona*) ● ② North Arabian Sea (India-Pakistan naval collision, treaty protest)
- ③ Gandhinagar, Gujarat (World Circular Economy Forum 2026) ● ④ Budhabalanga river, Odisha (NGT sand-mining/wetlands order)
- ⑤ Colombo, Sri Lanka (Rajnath Singh's defence-MoU visit) ● ⑥ New Delhi (SC rulings, DAC clearance, Finance Ministry UPI notification)
- ⑦ Raigarh, Chhattisgarh (CSIR-CRRI steel-slag road world record)

Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Hosting the World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) 2026 from 15-18 September — the first South Asian edition of the forum, co-organised with Finland's Sitra, spotlighting circular-economy innovations including India's steel-slag road technology.

Budhabalanga River, Odisha

A river flowing through Mayurbhanj and Balasore districts of northern Odisha, now the subject of an NGT order on illegal sand-bed exploitation under the Wetlands Rules, 2017.

Kollam Coast, Kerala

A southeastern Arabian Sea fishing ground off Kerala's coast, now the type locality for the newly described deep-sea catshark *Apristurus drona*, discovered via trawler bycatch at 400-650m depth.

THEIAS AKADEMIA Notice how today's map spans judicial, diplomatic, defence, and environment stories on a single day — exactly the multi-domain synthesis NEEB 300+ trains for. theiasakademia.com.

§3 · Ethics & Integrity Cases

CONCEPT: MENS REA AND THE LIMITS OF CRIMINALISATION

The Section 69 BNS "False Promise of Marriage" Ruling

The Supreme Court's insistence on deceit "at inception" reflects the ethical principle that criminal law must target genuine wrongful intent, not merely unfortunate life outcomes — conflating relationship failure with criminal deception would stretch the law beyond its legitimate moral purpose.

CONCEPT: INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY & THE POLICY-PRACTICE GAP

A Decade of Unimplemented Reform in Armed Forces Pension Litigation

The government's continued filing of appeals a full decade after its own 2015 committee recommended stopping such litigation illustrates a core ethical failure in public administration: the gap between stated policy commitment and actual bureaucratic practice, at the expense of disabled ex-servicemen awaiting rightful pensions.

CONCEPT: RULE-BASED ORDER IN INTERNATIONAL CONDUCT

Invoking the 1991 Agreement After the Arabian Sea Naval Incident

India's choice to ground its protest in a specific 38-year-old bilateral treaty provision, rather than rhetoric alone, reflects the ethical value of a rule-based approach to international conduct — resolving friction through pre-agreed institutional frameworks even amid strained ties.

CONCEPT: SELF-RELIANCE AS STRATEGIC RESPONSIBILITY

The 98% Indigenous-Sourcing Target in Defence Procurement

Prioritising indigenous defence production, even where imported alternatives might be cheaper or faster, reflects an ethical commitment to long-term national strategic autonomy over short-term convenience — a duty of care toward future strategic independence.

CONCEPT: DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE IN DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Calibrating the UPI Merchant Fee Above Rs 2,000

Protecting small transactions from any fee while introducing a modest charge only above a threshold reflects the ethical principle of distributive justice — ensuring the cost of sustaining a public digital good is borne progressively rather than falling equally on the smallest and most vulnerable users.

CONCEPT: PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

NGT's Intervention on Budhabalanga River Sand Mining

Acting to halt unleased sand extraction before cumulative ecological damage becomes irreversible reflects the precautionary principle — a duty to prevent foreseeable environmental harm rather than waiting for conclusive proof of damage before intervening.

§4 · Prelims MCQs

Q1. Section 69 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita deals with: (a) Defamation (b) Sexual intercourse by deceitful means (c) Criminal conspiracy (d) Cybercrime. **Ans: (b).**

Q2. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 replaced which earlier code? (a) Code of Criminal Procedure (b) Indian Evidence Act (c) Indian Penal Code (d) Indian Contract Act. **Ans: (c).**

Q3. Consider the following statements on armed forces disability pension: 1. The Entitlement Rules, 2008 substantially reproduce the 1982 Rules. 2. The claimant always bears the burden of proving service-connection. Which is/are correct? (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both (d) Neither. **Ans: (a).**

Q4. Under the EPF Act, 1952, "damages" for delayed contributions are levied under which section? (a) Section 7Q (b) Section 14B (c) Section 8F (d) Section 17. **Ans: (b).**

Q5. Consider the following statements: 1. The 1991 India-Pakistan Agreement concerns advance notice of military exercises. 2. India and Pakistan have exchanged ambassadors continuously since 2019. Which is/are correct? (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both (d) Neither. **Ans: (a).**

Q6. Rajnath Singh's September 2026 Sri Lanka visit was the first Indian Defence Minister visit since which year? (a) 1971 (b) 1988 (c) 2000 (d) 2015. **Ans: (b).**

Q7. SAGAR, a doctrine relevant to India's Indian Ocean policy, stands for: (a) Security and Growth for All in the Region (b) Strategic Alliance for Growth and Regional security (c) South Asian Growth and Regional cooperation (d) Sustainable Action for Global and Regional security. **Ans: (a).**

Q8. An "Acceptance of Necessity" (AoN) in India's defence procurement represents: (a) A finalised, signed contract (b) The first-stage in-principle approval (c) Delivery of equipment (d) A parliamentary sanction. **Ans: (b).**

Q9. Consider the following statements: 1. The September 2026 DAC clearance was worth about Rs 1.10 lakh crore. 2. About 98% of its value is to be sourced indigenously. Which is/are correct? (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both (d) Neither. **Ans: (c).**

Q10. The steel-slag road world record was achieved at: (a) Bhilai, Chhattisgarh (b) Raigarh, Chhattisgarh (c) Rourkela, Odisha (d) Durgapur, West Bengal. **Ans: (b).**

Q11. CSIR-CRRI functions under which apex body? (a) Ministry of Road Transport (b) Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (c) NITI Aayog (d) Bureau of Indian Standards. **Ans: (b).**

Q12. HVM3, the launch vehicle for Gaganyaan's uncrewed test flight, is a human-rated variant of which vehicle? (a) PSLV (b) GSLV Mk II (c) LVM3 (formerly GSLV Mk III) (d) SSLV. **Ans: (c).**

Q13. The humanoid robot to be carried on Gaganyaan's uncrewed test flight is named: (a) Vyommitra (b) Pragyan (c) Chandrayaan-bot (d) Aryabhata. **Ans: (a).**

Q14. Consider the following statements on the new UPI/RuPay fee structure: 1. Transactions up to Rs 2,000 remain free. 2. A 0.4% MDR applies to P2M transactions above Rs 2,000 from 15 October 2026. Which is/are correct? (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both (d) Neither. **Ans: (c).**

Q15. As per recent World Bank data, global FDI in 2024 was approximately: (a) \$1 trillion (b) \$2 trillion (c) \$3 trillion (d) \$4 trillion. **Ans: (a).**

Q16. Consider the following statements: 1. India is the world's largest recipient of remittances. 2. Global remittance inflows grew by 240% between 2005 and 2024. Which is/are correct? (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both (d) Neither. **Ans: (c).**

Q17. *Apristurus drona*, a newly described species, belongs to which taxonomic group? (a) Deep-sea catshark (b) Coral reef fish (c) Sea turtle (d) Marine mammal. **Ans: (a).**

Q18. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, invoked in the Budhabalanga river case, were notified in which year? (a) 2010 (b) 2014 (c) 2017 (d) 2020. **Ans: (c).**

Q19. The National Green Tribunal was established under the NGT Act enacted in which year? (a) 2006 (b) 2010 (c) 2014 (d) 2017. **Ans: (b).**

Q20. The World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) 2026, hosted in Gandhinagar, was co-organised with which country's institution? (a) Finland's Sitra (b) Sweden's Vinnova (c) Netherlands' RVO (d) Germany's GIZ. **Ans: (a).**

§5 · Mains Questions

1. Discuss the "deception at inception" test evolved by Indian courts in cases of false promise of marriage, and its continuity from the IPC to the BNS. (150 words) [GS2]

2. Examine the "benefit of doubt" principle in armed forces disability-pension jurisprudence and the challenges in translating committee recommendations into administrative practice. (150 words) [GS2/Ethics]

3. Discuss the role of bilateral confidence-building measures in managing India-Pakistan military-to-military friction, with reference to the 1991 Agreement on Advance Notice of Military Exercises. (150 words) [GS2]

4. Discuss the significance of defence diplomacy in India's "Neighbourhood First" policy, with reference to India-Sri Lanka relations. (150 words) [GS2/GS3]

5. Explain the stages of India's Defence Acquisition Procedure and discuss the significance of indigenous sourcing targets in recent DAC clearances. (150 words) [GS3]

6. Discuss the fiscal-sustainability challenge of India's zero-MDR digital-payments model and evaluate the calibrated reintroduction of a merchant fee above a protective threshold. (150 words) [GS3]

7. Compare the roles of foreign direct investment and remittances as sources of external finance for developing economies, with reference to recent World Bank data. (150 words) [GS3]

8. GS4 Case Study: You are a senior official reviewing a decade-long pattern in which your department has continued to file appeals against pensioners despite an internal committee recommending, ten years ago, that such litigation be discontinued as it causes undue hardship to disabled ex-servicemen while rarely succeeding in court. Continuing the practice preserves a small chance of fiscal savings and avoids setting an internal precedent, but perpetuates hardship and delay for vulnerable claimants. Examine the ethical issues involved and recommend a course of action. (250 words) [GS4]

9. Discuss the enforcement challenges in India's river-sand-mining regulatory framework and the National Green Tribunal's evolving role in addressing them. (150 words) [GS3]

§6 • Answer Writing Value Addition

- 01 Legal-continuity fact: Section 69 BNS's "deception at inception" test directly inherits pre-BNS case law (Deepak Gulati, Pramod Suryabhan Pawar) — strong evidence that the BNS transition preserved settled doctrine rather than starting from a blank slate.
- 02 Governance-accountability data point: a 2015 committee recommendation on ending pension litigation remained unimplemented in 2026 — an 11-year policy-practice gap, useful for essays on implementation deficits in Indian administration.
- 03 Quote for IR answers: "Even minimal frameworks of engagement can prevent escalation where full diplomatic relations do not exist" — apply to the 1991 India-Pakistan CBM Agreement's continued relevance.
- 04 Comparative fact: 98% indigenous sourcing in the September 2026 DAC clearance is among the highest such ratios reported for a single procurement round, useful as a superlative data point for Atmanirbhar Bharat essays.
- 05 Data point: global FDI has fallen roughly two-thirds from its \$3 trillion 2007 peak to about \$1 trillion in 2024, while remittances have more than tripled since 2005 — a strong "reversal of external finance flows" statistic.
- 06 Policy-design nuance: the Rs 2,000 UPI fee threshold protects an estimated 96% of person-to-merchant transactions — illustrates how a narrow policy change can be designed to minimise impact on the vast majority of users.
- 07 Circular-economy fact: CSIR-CRRI's steel-slag road claims a 40% cost reduction and 4x strength versus conventional construction — concrete, quotable figures for waste-to-wealth/circular-economy answers.
- 08 Taxonomy nuance: Apristurus drona was discovered via fisheries bycatch, not a dedicated survey — illustrates how incidental discovery channels remain vital given India's limited dedicated deep-sea research capacity.

§7 • AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

#	TOPIC	GS PAPER	PROBABILITY
1	Section 69 BNS "False Promise of Marriage" Ruling	GS2	★★★★★
2	Armed Forces Disability Pension (271 Appeals Dismissed)	GS2/Ethics	★★★★☆
3	EPF Act Section 14B Penalty-Discretion Reference	GS2/GS3	★★★★☆
4	India-Pakistan Naval Collision & 1991 CBM Agreement	GS2	★★★★★
5	Rajnath Singh's Sri Lanka Visit & Defence MoUs	GS2/GS3	★★★★☆
6	DAC Clears Rs 1.10 Lakh Crore Procurement (98% Indigenous)	GS3	★★★★☆
7	CSIR-CRRI Steel-Slag Road World Record	GS3	★★★★☆

8	Gaganyaan Uncrewed Test-Flight Readiness	GS3	★★★★☆
9	UPI/RuPay MDR Policy (Rs 2,000 Threshold)	GS3	★★★★★
10	World Bank FDI-vs-Remittances Data	GS3	★★★★☆
11	Apristurus drona (New Deep-Sea Catshark)	GS3	★★★★☆
12	NGT Order on Budhabalanga River Sand Mining	GS3	★★★★☆
13	Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017	GS3	★★★★☆
14	Defence Acquisition Procedure (AoN Stage)	GS3	★★★★☆
15	India-Sri Lanka Defence Cooperation & SAGAR Doctrine	GS2	★★★★☆
16	HLVM3 & Human-Rated Launch Vehicle Concept	GS3	★★★★☆
17	Institutional Accountability Ethics (GS4 Case Study)	GS4	★★★★☆
18	Kollam, Gandhinagar, Colombo, Budhabalanga (Places in News)	GS1	★★★★☆

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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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Proof of Precision

Every item mapped. Every claim verified.

2

ENVIRONMENT CARDS

6

ETHICS CASES

20

PRELIMS MCQS

9

MAINS QUESTIONS

7

PLACES MAPPED



REPEATED TOPICS

Environment

Ethics

Polity

IR

Economy

✓ All facts sourced from Zootaxa/Mongabay-India, NGT order digests, Supreme Court orders, MEA statements, DAC releases, ISRO/CSIR announcements, and World Bank data

✓ Every topic cross-checked against the 7-day topic log and 30-day static/species blacklists

✓ No topic repeated from the 14-15 September editions; Places in News deliberately avoided reusing Pokhran/Dronathon to prevent overlap with the 14 Sept edition

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