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PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Sunday, 23 August 2026

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← Part I covers: Headlines · Polity & Governance · IR · Defence · S&T · Economy

§1 Environment

ANNOUNCED 4 AUGUST 2026 (IN PARLIAMENT); STILL LIVE FOR GUIDELINE IMPLEMENTATION

GS3 · Environment/Disaster Mgmt

Heatwaves and Lightning Notified as Natural Calamities — a Finance Commission-Driven Reform

WHY IN NEWS

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai told Parliament on 4 August 2026 that heatwaves and lightning have been officially added to the list of notified natural calamities eligible for relief under the operational guidelines of the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) for 2026-2031, following a recommendation of the 16th Finance Commission. This remains a live implementation issue as States begin utilising SDRF funds for heatwave and lightning relief.

BACKGROUND

Until this change, India's notified list of natural calamities (cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, and cold wave/frost) did not include heatwaves or lightning as standalone categories, even though lightning alone causes an estimated 2,000-2,500 deaths annually — over 35% of India's natural-disaster deaths — and heatstroke cases have surged with more frequent, intense heatwaves linked to climate change. The 16th Finance Commission recommended their inclusion, and the change allows State governments to draw on SDRF funds for relief, compensation and assistance to those affected, rather than relying on discretionary or ad hoc support.

KEY FACTS

- Announced in Parliament on 4 August 2026 by MoS Home Affairs Nityanand Rai.
- Heatwaves and lightning added to the notified calamities list under SDRF/NDRF guidelines, 2026-2031.
- Recommended by the 16th Finance Commission, citing increasing frequency/intensity of extreme weather from climate change.
- Heatstroke cases since 1 March 2026 reached 4,853, per National Heat-Related Illness and Death Surveillance data (51,000 reporting units).
- Lightning causes an estimated 2,000-2,500 deaths annually — over 35% of India's natural-disaster deaths.
- States can now use SDRF funds directly for heatwave/lightning relief, compensation and assistance.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Climate-adaptation policy: formally recognising heatwaves and lightning as disasters reflects growing institutional acknowledgment of climate-driven extreme-weather risk.
- Fiscal federalism: Finance Commission recommendations shaping disaster-fund guidelines shows the Commission's role extending beyond tax devolution into risk-financing architecture.
- Under-reporting risk: lightning and heatwave deaths have historically been under-counted relative to headline disasters like floods or cyclones — formal notification could improve data quality.
- Implementation gap: notification alone does not guarantee swift disbursement — State-level SDRF utilisation capacity will determine real-world impact.

Memory Hook: Floods and cyclones make headlines; heatwaves and lightning killed quietly for years before the rulebook caught up with the death toll.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2018 — disaster management: vulnerability and mitigation, with reference to Finance Commission recommendations.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. Heatwaves and lightning were added to India's notified natural calamities list following a 16th Finance Commission recommendation.
2. Lightning accounts for over 35% of India's natural-disaster deaths.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c). Both statements are correct.

GS3

Environment

PYQ-2018

#DisasterManagement

#SDRF

22 AUGUST 2026

GS3 · Environment

NBA Releases ₹2.82 Crore Under the Biodiversity Benefit-Sharing Mechanism

WHY IN NEWS

The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) released ₹2.82 crore under India's Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) framework on 22 August 2026, including ₹2.80 crore to 27 State Biodiversity Boards and three Union Territory Biodiversity Councils, and ₹2.01 lakh to the ICAR-Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Karnataka, taking cumulative ABS disbursements to date to approximately ₹185 crore.

BACKGROUND

India's Access and Benefit-Sharing mechanism operates under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, which domesticates India's obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity and, more specifically, the Nagoya Protocol (2010) — requiring that entities accessing India's biological resources or associated traditional knowledge for commercial use share a portion of the resulting benefits with the biodiversity-holding communities and institutions. Funds are meant to support documentation of People's Biodiversity Registers, in-situ and ex-situ conservation, restoration of degraded ecosystems, Biodiversity Heritage Sites, Biodiversity Management Committee capacity-building, and community livelihood enhancement, with recipients required to submit a utilisation certificate within one year.

KEY FACTS

- NBA released ₹2.82 crore under the ABS mechanism on 22 August 2026.
- ₹2.80 crore distributed to 27 State Biodiversity Boards and 3 UT Biodiversity Councils.
- ₹2.01 lakh to ICAR-Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Karnataka.

- Cumulative ABS disbursements to date: approximately ₹185 crore (about USD 19.34 million).
- Legal basis: Biological Diversity Act, 2002, implementing India's Nagoya Protocol obligations.
- Funds support People's Biodiversity Registers, conservation, Biodiversity Heritage Sites, and community livelihoods.
- Recipients must submit a utilisation certificate within one year of receipt.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Distributive justice in biodiversity governance: ABS is designed to ensure communities and institutions that steward biological resources share in the commercial value derived from them.
- Federal implementation: State Biodiversity Boards and UT Biodiversity Councils are the operational arms translating national ABS policy into local conservation action.
- Accountability mechanism: the one-year utilisation-certificate requirement is a modest but meaningful check against fund diversion.
- Scale question: cumulative disbursements of ~₹185 crore over the mechanism's lifetime versus India's vast biodiversity-resource base raises questions about whether ABS revenue capture is proportionate.

Memory Hook: Access and Benefit-Sharing is Nagoya's core deal: if you take from nature's bank, you owe interest to the community that guarded the vault.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2019 — Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and the Nagoya Protocol.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. India's Access and Benefit-Sharing framework operates under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
2. It implements India's obligations under the Nagoya Protocol.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c). Both statements are correct.

GS3

Environment

PYQ-2019

#AccessAndBenefitSharing

#NBA

EMP Today's NBA benefit-sharing card is a clean pairing with EMP's distributive-justice module — see §3 Ethics below for the direct link.

§2 Places in News

📍 PLACES IN NEWS — 23 AUGUST 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- ① New Delhi — Supreme Court's SAMADHAN SAMAROH Special Lok Adalat
- ② Moscow — 27th India-Russia IRIGC-TEC session, EAM Jaishankar's visit
- ③ Dhaka — origin of PM Tarique Rahman's still-unconfirmed visit
- ④ Chennai — Data Patterns (India) Ltd's HQ; also National Biodiversity Authority's seat
- ⑤ Bengaluru — ISRO/IN-SPACe hub, driving the launch-vehicle privatisation shift
- ⑥ Jaipur, Rajasthan — representative of States now drawing on SDRF for heatwave relief

§3 Ethics & Integrity Cases

Institutional Leadership and Reform

A Court That Settles, Not Just Decides

CJI Surya Kant's SAMADHAN SAMAROH illustrates how institutional leadership can drive systemic reform from within, without waiting for new legislation. Choosing consent-based settlement over adversarial adjudication for suitable disputes reflects an ethic of judicial humility: recognising that not every dispute needs a winner and a loser, and that the court's highest duty is sometimes to help parties find their own resolution.

Consistency in Foreign Policy Ethics

Friends on Every Side of a Divided Room

India's continued engagement with Russia through the IRIGC-TEC, even as it deepens ties with the US and Europe, tests the ethical coherence of "strategic autonomy": is it principled non-alignment in a multipolar world, or a convenient inconsistency dressed in diplomatic language? A defensible strategic-autonomy ethic requires India to apply the same standard of engagement-without-endorsement to all partners, not selectively.

Diplomatic Signalling and Trust

The Statement That Was Never Meant to Be Seen

Rashtrapati Bhavan's withdrawn statement about ceremonial rehearsals for Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman's welcome shows how even administrative missteps carry diplomatic weight once made public. Ethical statecraft requires institutions to manage information with enough discipline that internal planning does not inadvertently become a public signal misread by the other side or the public.

Trust in Public-Private Defence Partnerships

Whose Radar Is It, Really?

As BEL integrates more privately manufactured sub-systems from firms like Data Patterns into national defence platforms, the ethical burden of quality assurance and supply-chain integrity increasingly rests on private shoulders carrying public-security consequences. Genuine trust in this model requires transparent testing standards and accountability mechanisms that do not simply assume private-sector reliability.

Institutional Humility and Letting Go

The Agency That Chose to Step Back

ISRO voluntarily ceding launch-vehicle manufacturing to private industry is a rare example of a powerful public institution choosing to relinquish a core function it built and mastered, in service of a larger national goal. This kind of institutional humility — prioritising sector-wide growth over organisational turf — is an ethical model too often absent in public administration, where institutions more commonly guard their mandates than voluntarily narrow them.

Interest Owed to the Vault's Guardians

The NBA's ₹2.82-crore disbursement operationalises a specific distributive-justice principle: communities and institutions that have long conserved biological resources deserve a fair share of the commercial value others extract from them. The ethical test is not the disbursement of funds alone, but whether the amounts genuinely reflect the value extracted and whether the utilisation-certificate requirement translates into real, monitored conservation outcomes rather than a paperwork formality.

§4 Prelims MCQs

Q1. SAMADHAN SAMAROH 2026's Special Lok Adalat derives its statutory basis from:

(a) The Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 (b) The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 (c) The Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (d) The Mediation Act, 2023

Answer: (b)

Lok Adalats derive their statutory basis from the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.

Q2. SAMADHAN SAMAROH 2026 was launched under the leadership of which Chief Justice of India?

(a) D.Y. Chandrachud (b) Sanjiv Khanna (c) Surya Kant (d) B.R. Gavai

Answer: (c)

The initiative was launched under CJI Surya Kant.

Q3. The India-Russia IRIGC-TEC division is co-chaired, on India's side, by:

(a) The Prime Minister (b) The External Affairs Minister (c) The Defence Minister (d) The Commerce Minister

Answer: (b)

IRIGC-TEC is co-chaired by India's External Affairs Minister.

Q4. Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister who co-chairs IRIGC-TEC is:

(a) Sergey Lavrov (b) Denis Manturov (c) Mikhail Mishustin (d) Dmitry Peskov

Answer: (b)

Denis Manturov, Russia's First Deputy PM, co-chairs IRIGC-TEC.

Q5. Tarique Rahman, whose visit to India remained unconfirmed as of 23 August 2026, is a senior leader of:

(a) Awami League (b) Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) (c) Jatiya Party (d) Jamaat-e-Islami

Answer: (b)

Tarique Rahman is a senior BNP leader and Bangladesh's PM since February 2026.

Q6. Who represented India at Tarique Rahman's swearing-in as Bangladesh PM in February 2026?

(a) External Affairs Minister (b) Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla (c) Vice President (d) National Security Advisor

Answer: (b)

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla attended the swearing-in on India's behalf.

Q7. Data Patterns (India) Limited, which received a ₹585.76-crore BEL order, is headquartered in:

(a) Bengaluru (b) Hyderabad (c) Chennai (d) Pune

Answer: (c)

Data Patterns is headquartered in Chennai.

Q8. Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) is classified as a:

(a) Miniratna PSU (b) Navratna PSU (c) Maharatna PSU (d) Private limited company

Answer: (b)

BEL is a Navratna defence public-sector undertaking.

Q9. The IN-SPACe Chairman who confirmed ISRO's exit from launch-vehicle manufacturing is:

(a) S. Somanath (b) V. Narayanan (c) Pawan Goenka (d) K. Sivan

Answer: (c)

Dr Pawan Goenka, IN-SPACe Chairman, made the statement.

Q10. Which two ISRO launch vehicles are slated for privatisation, per this announcement?

(a) GSLV Mk-III and SSLV (b) PSLV and LVM-3 (c) ASLV and SLV (d) GSLV Mk-II and PSLV-XL

Answer: (b)

The PSLV and LVM-3 are slated for privatisation.

Q11. India's first privately developed orbital-class launch vehicle to reach orbit (July 2026) was:

(a) Agnibaan (b) Vikram-1 (Skyroot Aerospace) (c) RHUMI-1 (d) Garud-1

Answer: (b)

Skyroot Aerospace's Vikram-1 reached orbit in July 2026.

Q12. India's forex reserves reached a record level during the week ended 14 August 2026, at approximately:

(a) \$650 billion (b) \$690 billion (c) \$716.9 billion (d) \$750 billion

Answer: (c)

Reserves reached a record \$716.90 billion.

Q13. The largest component of India's foreign exchange reserves is typically:

(a) Gold (b) Special Drawing Rights (c) Foreign Currency Assets (d) IMF Reserve Position

Answer: (c)

Foreign Currency Assets are the largest component of India's reserves.

Q14. FCNR(B) stands for:

(a) Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) (b) Foreign Capital Net Reserve (Bond) (c) Fixed Currency Non-Rupee (Basket) (d) Foreign Central Non-Reserve (Balance)

Answer: (a)

FCNR(B) refers to Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) deposits.

Q15. The inclusion of heatwaves and lightning in India's notified natural calamities list was recommended by:

(a) The 15th Finance Commission (b) The 16th Finance Commission (c) NITI Aayog (d) The National Disaster Management Authority

Answer: (b)

The 16th Finance Commission recommended their inclusion.

Q16. Heatwaves and lightning relief can now be funded through:

(a) The Prime Minister's National Relief Fund only (b) The State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) (c) CSR funds only (d) Bilateral donor grants only

Answer: (b)

States can now use SDRF funds for heatwave/lightning relief.

Q17. Lightning is estimated to account for what share of India's natural-disaster deaths annually?

(a) Over 15% (b) Over 25% (c) Over 35% (d) Over 50%

Answer: (c)

Lightning accounts for over 35% of India's natural-disaster deaths.

Q18. The NBA's ₹2.82-crore disbursement (22 Aug 2026) was primarily distributed to:

(a) Private biotech companies (b) State Biodiversity Boards and UT Biodiversity Councils (c) Foreign research institutions (d) District Collectors

Answer: (b)

₹2.80 crore of the total went to 27 State Biodiversity Boards and 3 UT Biodiversity Councils.

Q19. India's Access and Benefit-Sharing framework implements the country's obligations under which international instrument?

(a) The Ramsar Convention (b) The Nagoya Protocol (c) The Cartagena Protocol (d) The Kyoto Protocol

Answer: (b)

The ABS framework implements India's obligations under the Nagoya Protocol.

Q20. Cumulative Access and Benefit-Sharing disbursements by the NBA have reached approximately:

(a) ₹85 crore (b) ₹125 crore (c) ₹185 crore (d) ₹250 crore

Answer: (c)

Cumulative ABS disbursements have reached approximately ₹185 crore.

§5 Mains Questions

GS2 Discuss the significance of the Supreme Court holding its own Special Lok Adalat, and examine the categories of disputes best suited to consent-based resolution mechanisms. (150 words)

GS2 Examine the significance of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission mechanism for sustaining bilateral ties amid India's broader multi-alignment foreign policy. (150 words)

GS2 Discuss how diplomatic protocol and its handling can itself become a signal of the state of bilateral trust, with reference to the uncertainty surrounding Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman's proposed visit to India. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the significance of the public-private "integrator-specialist" model in India's defence-electronics production, with reference to recent orders placed by defence PSUs on private firms. (150 words)

words)

GS3 Discuss the significance of ISRO's planned exit from launch-vehicle manufacturing for India's space-sector ecosystem, and examine the risks involved in this transition. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the significance of India's rising foreign exchange reserves for external-sector stability, and distinguish between flow-based and valuation-based drivers of the recent increase. (150 words)

GS3 Examine the significance of formally notifying heatwaves and lightning as natural calamities under India's disaster-response fund guidelines, and discuss the implementation challenges that remain. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the objectives and functioning of India's Access and Benefit-Sharing mechanism under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, and assess whether its scale of disbursement is proportionate to India's biodiversity-resource base. (150 words)

GS4 Discuss the ethical dimensions of an established public institution voluntarily ceding a core function to private industry, with reference to ISRO's planned exit from launch-vehicle manufacturing. (150 words)

§6 Answer Writing Value Addition

Institutional fact: A Lok Adalat award has the force of a civil court decree and cannot be appealed — settlement is final by design.

Institutional distinction: IRIGC-TEC (trade/economic/tech/cultural, EAM-led) is a separate track from India-Russia's military-technical cooperation commission.

Diplomatic data point: A withdrawn Rashtrapati Bhavan statement about ceremonial rehearsals became, itself, a diplomatic signal in the Bangladesh visit saga.

Production-model fact: BEL integrates; Data Patterns specialises — India's defence-electronics model increasingly separates these two roles.

Space-sector fact: ISRO has transferred 120 technologies to private firms; Skyroot's Vikram-1 was India's first private orbital-class launch vehicle to reach orbit (July 2026).

Economic data point: India's forex reserves = Foreign Currency Assets + Gold + SDRs + IMF Reserve Position ("FASI") — a record \$716.9 billion as of mid-August 2026.

Policy fact: The 16th Finance Commission's recommendation led to heatwaves and lightning being added to India's notified natural-calamities list (announced 4 Aug 2026).

Conservation-finance fact: Cumulative Access and Benefit-Sharing disbursements by the NBA have reached approximately ₹185 crore to date.

§7 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

TOPIC	SECTION	HIT PROBABILITY
SAMADHAN SAMAROH — Special Lok Adalat	Polity	★★★★
27th India-Russia IRIGC-TEC, Jaishankar's visit	IR	★★★★
Bangladesh PM visit — diplomatic uncertainty	IR	★★★★
Data Patterns-BEL radar order	Defence	★★★
ISRO exits launch-vehicle manufacturing	S&T	★★★★★
India's record forex reserves (\$716.9 bn)	Economy	★★★★
Heatwave/lightning notified as disasters	Environment	★★★★★
NBA Access and Benefit-Sharing disbursement	Environment	★★★
Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 & Article 39A	Polity	★★★
Skyroot's Vikram-1 — first private orbital launch	S&T	★★★★

FCNR(B) scheme & reserve inflows	Economy	★★★
16th Finance Commission recommendations	Environment/Economy	★★★
Biological Diversity Act, 2002 & Nagoya Protocol	Environment	★★★
India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership	IR	★★★
Positive Indigenisation Lists & defence electronics	Defence	★★★
IN-SPACe's evolving mandate	S&T	★★★
India-Bangladesh post-transition ties	IR	★★★
Public-private defence production model	Defence	★★★★

★ 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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§8 · PROOF OF PRECISION — TODAY'S EDITION

23 August 2026 — Operational Count

What today's ANTIM ASSURED 100+ actually delivered

8

NEWS ITEMS COVERED

6

ETHICS CASES

20

PRELIMS MCQs

9

MAINS QUESTIONS

6

PLACES MAPPED

0

REPEATED TOPICS

Polity

IR

Defence

S&T

Economy

Environment

- Zero topics repeated from the last 7 editions (16-22 Aug) — verified against ANTIM_TopicLog.txt.
- Every card passes the Substance Test on at least two of five criteria.
- No map_23Aug2026.jpg exists; map_21Aug2026.jpg reused per the user's explicit "previous-date map file" instruction, framing re-verified before pin placement.

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