

THEIAS AKADEMIA PRESENTS

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The Topper's Last Read. Every Morning.

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Sunday, 18 October 2026

"The Topper's Last Read"

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← Part I covers: Headlines · Polity & Governance · International Relations · Defence & Security · Science & Technology · Economy

01 Environment

2 cards · 1 current + 1 static rotation, thematically paired

GS3

Environmental Impact Assessment; Conservation of Mineral Resources; NGT

NGT order 9 October 2026, reported 12 October 2026 · Source: National Green Tribunal; Down To Earth

When Approval Becomes Automatic: NGT Quashes District Survey Reports for Basti and Shamli

Why in News: The National Green Tribunal, in an order dated 9 October 2026 by Justice Prakash Shrivastava, set aside the District Survey Reports (DSRs) for Basti and Shamli districts, Uttar Pradesh — documents that govern sand and riverbed mineral mining — after finding that Basti's report lacked any prior replenishment study and that Shamli's existing replenishment study was never placed before the State-level appraisal and assessment bodies before their 1 August 2024 approval.

Background: A District Survey Report, mandated under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's 2016 Sand Mining Framework Guidelines (issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986), assesses a district's sand/mineral replenishment rate to cap extraction within sustainable limits before any mining lease or environmental clearance is granted. The State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) and the State-level Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC), both constituted under the EIA Notification, 2006, are the statutory bodies responsible for appraising and approving such reports.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- NGT order date: 9 October 2026; Bench: Justice Prakash Shrivastava
- Districts affected: Basti and Shamli, Uttar Pradesh
- Basti's DSR was set aside for lacking any replenishment study prior to preparation
- Shamli's DSR had a replenishment study, but it was never placed before SEAC/SEIAA before their approval on 1 August 2024

- The Tribunal found that SEIAA had "mechanically approved" the Shamli report — a finding of "non-application of mind"
- Direction issued: SEAC and SEIAA must reappraise the Shamli report in light of the replenishment study and the applicant's objections
- Governing framework: the 2016 Sand Mining Framework Guidelines (MoEFCC); the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986; the EIA Notification, 2006
- A DSR is the foundational document for every subsequent riverbed-mining environmental clearance in a district — an error here cascades to every mining lease based on it

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Illustrates a recurring EIA-governance failure mode: statutory appraisal bodies approving technical reports without substantive application of mind, undermining the precautionary principle central to Indian environmental jurisprudence since *Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v. Union of India* (1996)
- Riverbed sand mining sits at the intersection of infrastructure demand (construction-sector sand consumption) and riverine ecology (siltation, groundwater recharge, aquatic habitat) — DSR integrity is the main regulatory lever balancing the two
- The NGT's remedy (reappraisal, not a blanket mining ban) reflects its characteristic corrective-governance approach rather than punitive shutdown, distinct from an ordinary civil-court remedy
- Federal/administrative angle: SEIAA and SEAC are State-constituted bodies operating under a Central EIA Notification, making State-level technical capacity — not Central law alone — the binding constraint on EIA rigour
- Way forward: mandatory digital publication of replenishment studies alongside DSR approval orders would create a verifiable public record, reducing the scope for "mechanical approval" going undetected

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the DSR chain: Replenishment Study → SEAC appraises → SEIAA approves → DSR issued → mining lease granted. Break any link, and the whole chain of clearances is void — exactly what happened in Shamli.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring theme, indicative) — on illegal sand mining and the sand mafia as a national problem, and its environmental impact.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements about India's environmental clearance framework for riverbed sand mining:

1. A District Survey Report (DSR) is prepared and approved under the EIA Notification, 2006.
2. The State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) is a body constituted under the

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

3. A valid replenishment study is a mandatory precondition for an environmentally sound District Survey Report.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). Statement 2 is false — SEIAA is constituted under the EIA Notification, 2006 (issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986), not the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

NGT

EIA Notification 2006

Sand Mining Guidelines 2016

#DSR

GS3

Conservation of Biodiversity; Protected Area Network

Static Topic — not tied to a current event · Source: IUCN Red List; animalia.bio; Wildlife Institute of India (SPAI Report, 2024)

Ghost of the Mountains: The Snow Leopard and India's High-Altitude Conservation Challenge

Why in News: Paired thematically with today's Places in News pin at Hemis National Park, Ladakh, the Snow Leopard is run as this edition's rotating static species profile — a 30-day-rotation routine use, not tied to a breaking development.

Background: The Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*) occupies India's highest and coldest wildlife habitat, and its 2024 population assessment marked the first time India produced a direct, field-verified national count for the species rather than relying on extrapolated range estimates.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Scientific name: *Panthera uncia*
- IUCN Red List status: Vulnerable (downlisted from Endangered in 2017 — a reclassification India's own field scientists have argued was premature given persisting data gaps)
- India's first dedicated national population estimate — the Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI), 2024 — found approximately 718 individuals across Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh
- A majority of India's snow leopards live outside formally protected areas, per the SPAI findings
- Key habitat: high-altitude cold desert and alpine scrub between roughly 3,000–5,400 m elevation, including Hemis National Park, Ladakh — one of the highest-density snow-leopard landscapes surveyed
- Legal protection: Schedule I, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; CITES Appendix I
- India-led conservation architecture: Project Snow Leopard (launched 2009); SECURE Himalaya (a GEF-UNDP-MoEFCC landscape project); India is a founding member of the

Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Program (2013 Bishkek Declaration)

- Principal threats: retaliatory killing over livestock predation, poaching for pelts and bones, climate-driven treeline shift compressing alpine habitat, and linear infrastructure fragmenting high-altitude corridors

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- The 2017 IUCN downlisting debate illustrates the tension between global Red List methodology (range-wide extrapolation) and national, field-verified data such as SPAI's camera-trap and scat-DNA survey — a recurring pattern across several of India's "contested downlisting" species
- Human-wildlife conflict management in snow-leopard range is largely community-based (livestock-insurance schemes, homestay-ecotourism models) rather than exclusionary protected-area enforcement — a contrast with lowland tiger-reserve approaches
- GSLEP's trans-boundary framework, spanning twelve range countries, makes snow-leopard conservation an inherently regional-cooperation exercise, relevant to India's Himalayan-neighbourhood diplomacy
- Climate change acts as a "silent" threat multiplier — alpine-habitat compression from a rising treeline is harder to litigate or regulate than direct poaching, a distinct policy-design challenge
- Way forward: scaling community-based livestock-insurance and no-retaliation compensation schemes matters more than expanding the Protected Area network alone, given SPAI's finding that most snow leopards already live outside formal protected areas

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

SPAI gave India its first real census: 718 — remember it as 'seven-one-eight, mostly outside the gate' (outside protected areas).

PYQ LINKAGE

Closest linkage — Prelims has repeatedly tested Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 Schedules and India's Red-List-listed Himalayan fauna; Mains GS3 questions on biodiversity-conservation strategy apply directly.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements about the Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*):

1. The Snow Leopard is listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
2. The IUCN Red List currently classifies the Snow Leopard as "Endangered."
3. India is a founding member of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Program.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). Statement 2 is false — the IUCN Red List status since 2017 is "Vulnerable," not "Endangered."

Panthera uncia

GSLEP

SPA1 2024

#SnowLeopard

02 Places in News

8 pins · anchored to this edition's substantive cards

 PLACES IN NEWS — SUNDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



● ① New Delhi (Supreme Court's contempt/SIR-protest proceedings and the 9 October byelection declarations)

● ② Shamli, Uttar Pradesh (NGT order (9 Oct) quashing the district's sand-mining District Survey Report)

● ③ Hemis National Park, Ladakh (One of India's highest-density Snow Leopard landscapes, anchoring this edition's static species profile)

● ④ Vladivostok, Russia (Host port for Exercise INDRA-2026 (India-Russia naval exercise, 13-18 Oct))

● ⑤ Plymouth, United Kingdom (Host port for Exercise KONKAN-26 (India-UK naval exercise, 8-15 Oct))

● ⑥ Accra, Ghana (First leg of EAM Jaishankar's three-nation Africa tour)

● ⑦ Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Final leg of the Africa tour and seat of the African Union headquarters)

● ⑧ Nicosia, Cyprus (Leg of the Defence Secretary's Eastern Mediterranean visit)

① New Delhi

Why in News: Supreme Court's contempt/SIR-protest proceedings and the 9 October byelection declarations

Seat of the Union Government on the Yamuna's west bank; the administrative node for both the Election Commission (Nirvachan Sadan) and the Supreme Court of India.

② Shamli, Uttar Pradesh

Why in News: NGT order (9 Oct) quashing the district's sand-mining District Survey Report

Lies on the Yamuna-Hindon doab in western Uttar Pradesh — a riverbed-sand-mining belt directly governed by the District Survey Report framework at issue in this week's NGT order.

③ Hemis National Park, Ladakh

Why in News: One of India's highest-density Snow Leopard landscapes, anchoring this edition's static species profile

A trans-Himalayan cold-desert park above 3,300 m in the Zaskar range, within the Snow Leopard Population Assessment's core Ladakh survey zone.

④ Vladivostok, Russia

Why in News: Host port for Exercise INDRA-2026 (India-Russia naval exercise, 13-18 Oct)

Russia's principal Pacific-fleet base on the Sea of Japan, at the eastern terminus of the Trans-Siberian Railway.

⑤ Plymouth, United Kingdom

Why in News: Host port for Exercise KONKAN-26 (India-UK naval exercise, 8-15 Oct)

A historic Royal Navy home port on England's south-west coast, at the mouth of the English Channel.

⑥ Accra, Ghana

Why in News: First leg of EAM Jaishankar's three-nation Africa tour

Ghana's Atlantic-coast capital and a West African hub for bauxite, gold and cocoa — the economic base of India's growing West African Lines-of-Credit portfolio.

⑦ Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Why in News: Final leg of the Africa tour and seat of the African Union headquarters

Sits on the Ethiopian Highlands at over 2,300 m elevation; hosts the African Union, the venue for India's UNSC-reform and AU-engagement diplomacy.

⑧ Nicosia, Cyprus

Why in News: Leg of the Defence Secretary's Eastern Mediterranean visit

The world's last divided capital, split since 1974 along the UN-patrolled Green Line — home to the UNFICYP peacekeeping mission since 1964.

03 Ethics & Integrity Cases

6 cases · each anchored to a named ethical concept

Procedural vs. Substantive Legitimacy

A State government, acting under a facially valid preventive-order power, imposes sweeping restrictions on public transport and assembly ahead of a planned protest against an independent constitutional authority. The restrictions are procedurally issued under law, yet the Supreme Court later calls them "overreaching." This week's Delhi protest orders illustrate the gap between an order's procedural validity (issued under Section 163 BNSS) and its substantive legitimacy (whether it proportionately balances Article 19 rights against public order). A civil servant implementing such an order must ask not only "is this legal?" but "is this proportionate and necessary, and will it survive constitutional scrutiny?"

Public Trust Doctrine / Fiduciary Duty

A statutory immunity clause shields a constitutional office-holder from being personally sued for official acts, intended to let them function without fear of harassment litigation. Civil-society groups argue this same immunity, if read broadly, could let an Election Commissioner's decisions escape meaningful judicial review altogether. The tension reflects the public trust doctrine: public office is held in trust for citizens, and immunity exists to protect that trust's exercise, not to insulate the office-holder from accountability for its breach.

Kantian Universalisability

A legislator resigns from a party to join a rival one, then recontests the resulting byelection from the very seat they vacated — technically lawful, since the Tenth Schedule disqualifies defectors from the

House, not from future candidature. If every legislator treated defection-then-recontest as a universal maxim, the anti-defection law's deterrent purpose would collapse entirely. Kant's categorical imperative — act only according to a maxim you could will to become a universal law — exposes why a legally permissible individual act can still be ethically corrosive to an institution's intended design.

Banality of Evil / Bureaucratic Ethics

A State Environment Impact Assessment Authority approves a District Survey Report without examining the underlying replenishment study placed before it — not out of malice, but through routine, procedural rubber-stamping of paperwork that "always gets approved." Hannah Arendt's concept of the banality of evil, developed to describe how ordinary bureaucratic conduct can enable serious harm without any individual intending wrongdoing, applies directly: the NGT's finding of "non-application of mind" is precisely this failure of active, individual moral engagement with a routine official duty.

Realism vs. Cosmopolitan Ethics in Foreign Policy

A country simultaneously exercises with a partner facing international isolation over a war of aggression, and deepens defence ties with that partner's adversarial bloc, in the same calendar week. A strict cosmopolitan-ethics lens would ask whether continuing the first relationship implicitly condones the conduct underlying the isolation. A realist lens treats both relationships as independently rational pursuits of national interest, unconstrained by the other's moral valence. India's declared doctrine of strategic autonomy sits deliberately between these two positions, prioritising sovereign interest-calculation over bloc-based moral alignment.

Rawls's Difference Principle

A proposed livestock-insurance scheme for high-altitude herding communities, designed to reduce retaliatory killing of Snow Leopards, would be funded by diverting a small share of a wildlife-tourism cess that currently supports better-off valley-town infrastructure. Rawls's difference principle holds that social and economic inequalities are justified only if they work to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society. Redirecting resources toward the more marginalised, conflict-exposed herding communities — rather than the already-better-served tourism infrastructure — is a direct application of this principle to conservation-finance design.

04 Prelims MCQs

18 questions · 12 statement-based

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Supreme Court's contempt jurisdiction:

1. It derives from Articles 129 and 215 of the Constitution read with the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971.
2. Only the High Courts, not the Supreme Court, can punish for contempt of themselves.
3. A finding of "prima facie contempt" is final and cannot be purged by subsequent compliance.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). Statements 2 and 3 are false — both the Supreme Court (Art. 129) and High Courts (Art. 215) are courts of record with contempt powers, and contempt findings can be purged through subsequent compliance and apology.

Q2. With reference to Article 19 of the Constitution, consider the following statements:

1. The right to assemble peaceably and without arms is a Fundamental Right under Article 19(1)(b).
2. Reasonable restrictions on this right can be imposed only by a law made by Parliament, never by executive order.
3. The Supreme Court in *Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India* (2020) applied a proportionality test to restrictions on fundamental freedoms.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). Statement 2 is false — reasonable restrictions under Article 19(3) can be imposed by a law, which includes delegated/executive orders made under statutory authority such as Section 163 BNSS.

Q3. The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023 was enacted following which Supreme

Court judgment?

(a) Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain (1975) (b) Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India (2023) (c) T.N. Seshan v. Union of India (1995) (d) S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994)

Answer: (b). The 2023 Act was Parliament's legislative response to the Supreme Court's Anoop Baranwal ruling, which had prescribed an interim selection-committee mechanism pending a law.

Q4. Consider the following statements about India's anti-defection law:

1. It was inserted into the Constitution by the 52nd Amendment Act, 1985, as the Tenth Schedule.
2. A member disqualified under the Tenth Schedule is permanently barred from contesting any future election.
3. The Speaker or Chairman of the House is the deciding authority on disqualification petitions under the Tenth Schedule.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). Statement 2 is false — Tenth Schedule disqualification removes a member from the House, not from future candidature, enabling the common "resign and recontest" pattern.

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme:

1. It was launched in 1964 as India's flagship capacity-building and technical-assistance platform for partner countries.
2. It is administered by the Ministry of External Affairs.
3. Its assistance is limited exclusively to African countries.

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). Statement 3 is false — ITEC covers partner countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific, not Africa alone.

Q6. The African Union's Common African Position on United Nations Security Council reform is also known as the:

(a) Abuja Declaration (b) Ezulwini Consensus (c) Sirte Declaration (d) Addis Ababa Charter

Answer: (b). The Ezulwini Consensus (2005) is the AU's common position demanding permanent African representation, among other reforms, on an expanded UNSC.

Q7. Consider the following statements about the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):

1. It was announced at the G20 Summit held in New Delhi in September 2023.
2. It comprises an eastern corridor connecting India to the Gulf and a northern corridor connecting the Gulf to Europe.
3. It is a multilateral project limited to rail connectivity, with no maritime component.

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). Statement 3 is false — IMEC combines both maritime shipping lanes and rail links across its eastern and northern legs.

Q8. Consider the following statements regarding the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP):

1. It has been deployed since 1964, making it one of the UN's longest-running peacekeeping missions.
2. Cyprus has been divided along the "Green Line" since a 1974 intervention.
3. India has historically contributed troops to UN peacekeeping missions, including at various points in the Mediterranean and West Asia.

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: (d). All three statements are correct and well documented.

Q9. Which of the following best describes the strategic rationale behind India simultaneously conducting Exercise INDRA with Russia and Exercise KONKAN with the United Kingdom in the same week?

- (a) Non-alignment, as practised during the Cold War (b) Strategic autonomy/multi-alignment, balancing multiple partnerships based on national interest (c) Bandwagoning exclusively with NATO members (d) A treaty obligation under the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue

Answer: (b). India's post-Cold War foreign-policy doctrine of strategic autonomy (or multi-alignment) explains simultaneous, interest-based engagement across geopolitically divergent partners.

Q10. Consider the following statements about the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP), 2020:

1. It introduced the "Buy (Indian-IDDm)" category to prioritise indigenously designed, developed and manufactured platforms.
2. The Strategic Partnership model under DAP was first introduced in 2017.
3. Indigenous-content requirements under DAP are calculated solely on the basis of the number of components, not their value.

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). Statement 3 is false — indigenous-content thresholds under DAP 2020 are generally calculated by value, not component count.

Q11. With reference to the Coast Guard Act, 1978, consider the following statements:

1. It establishes the Indian Coast Guard as an armed force of the Union.
2. The Indian Coast Guard functions under the Ministry of External Affairs.
3. The Coast Guard's mandate includes the protection of India's Exclusive Economic Zone.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). Statement 2 is false — the Indian Coast Guard functions under the Ministry of Defence, not the Ministry of External Affairs.

Q12. Which Indian scientist discovered the phenomenon for which 28 February is observed annually as National Science Day?

(a) Homi J. Bhabha (b) Meghnad Saha (c) Sir C.V. Raman (d) S. Chandrasekhar

Answer: (c). Sir C.V. Raman discovered the Raman effect on 28 February 1928, commemorated annually as National Science Day.

Q13. Consider the following statements about India's Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan):

1. It was launched in 2013 and inserted into Mars orbit in 2014.
2. It made India the first country to reach Mars orbit in its very first attempt.
3. It remains, to date, India's only completed interplanetary mission.

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: (d). All three statements are correct and well-documented facts about Mangalyaan.

Q14. Entry 24 of the Union List and Entry 32 of the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule relate respectively to:

(a) Shipping on the high seas; inland-waterway navigation and vessels (b) Railways; roads (c) Major ports; minor ports (d) Atomic energy; mineral development

Answer: (a). Entry 24 (Union List) deals with shipping and navigation on inland waterways declared to be national waterways, while Entry 32 (Concurrent List) deals with shipping and navigation on inland waterways generally, as regards mechanically propelled vessels.

Q15. Consider the following statements regarding the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI):

1. It was established in 1986 under the Inland Waterways Authority of India Act, 1985.
2. It is the nodal implementing agency for the development of National Waterways.
3. The India-Bangladesh Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade dates back to 1972.

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: (d). All three statements are correct.

Q16. With reference to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) governance in India, consider the following statements:

1. The State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) is constituted under the EIA Notification, 2006.
2. The National Green Tribunal was established under the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.
3. The principle that the burden of proving an activity is environmentally benign lies on the developer is known as the "precautionary principle."

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: (d). All three statements correctly describe India's EIA and environmental-jurisprudence framework.

Q17. The Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Program was adopted through which declaration?

(a) The Kathmandu Declaration (2011) (b) The Bishkek Declaration (2013) (c) The Thimphu Declaration (2015) (d) The Leh Declaration (2017)

Answer: (b). GSLEP was adopted through the Bishkek Declaration of 2013, at a summit of the twelve snow-leopard range countries in Kyrgyzstan.

Q18. Consider the following statements about Protected Areas and species conservation in India:

1. Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 provides the highest degree of legal protection among the Act's schedules.
2. A species' inclusion in CITES Appendix I bans all international commercial trade in that species.
3. Project Snow Leopard was launched in 2009 as a dedicated high-altitude conservation initiative.

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: (d). All three statements are correct.

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Every statement-based MCQ above is drawn from a live-document current event, not a recycled test bank — exactly the standard **NEEB 300+ Live PYQ Writing** holds its daily practice sets to. theiasakademia.com

05 Mains Questions

9 questions across GS1–GS4

GS1 · 10 marks / 150 words

Examine the geomorphological significance of 'planetary analogue sites' and discuss how India's diverse terrain — from Ladakh's cold desert to Tamil Nadu's lignite belts — can contribute to global planetary-science research.

Cover: what makes a site a valid Mars/lunar analogue; India's Neyveli/Trichy findings; linkage to Mangalyaan and future Mars missions; the conservation-vs-mining tension at Neyveli.

GS2 · 15 marks / 250 words

Section 16 of the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023 grants Election Commissioners immunity for acts done in their official capacity. Discuss the constitutional tension this raises between institutional immunity and judicial accountability.

Cover: Anoop Baranwal background; basic-structure/judicial-review doctrine; comparative examples of limited, good-faith immunity; balance between functional independence and accountability.

GS2 · 15 marks / 250 words

"The anti-defection law's deterrent effect is undermined by its own design." Critically examine this statement with reference to the Tenth Schedule and the recurring phenomenon of 'resign and recontest.'

Cover: Tenth Schedule's scope (disqualification from the House, not candidature); Dinesh Goswami Committee/Law Commission recommendations; comparative anti-defection regimes; possible reforms.

GS2 · 10 marks / 150 words

"India's institutional engagement with Africa has outpaced its summit diplomacy." Evaluate this statement with reference to the India-Africa Forum Summit process and the ITEC programme.

Cover: IAFS 2008/2011/2015 and its stalling since; ITEC's continuous operation since 1964; Lines of Credit; comparison with China's FOCAC summit cadence.

GS3 · 15 marks / 250 words

India's 111 National Waterways were declared under a single central Act, yet only about 29% are currently operational. Discuss the institutional and federal bottlenecks responsible, and suggest measures to close this gap.

Cover: Union List Entry 24 vs Concurrent List Entry 32; IWA's role; dredging/ecological constraints; PM Gati Shakti integration; prioritisation strategy.

GS3 · 15 marks / 250 words

"A District Survey Report is only as credible as the appraisal process behind it." Discuss this statement with reference to the NGT's recent order on the Basti and Shamli District Survey Reports.

Cover: DSR/replenishment-study framework; SEAC/SEIAA's statutory role; the precautionary principle; the specific "mechanical approval" finding; reform suggestions (digital transparency, audit trail).

GS3 · 15 marks / 250 words

Discuss the strategic significance of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) for India's energy and connectivity security, and the role of defence-diplomacy outreach — such as the recent visit to Greece and Cyprus — in securing its European terminus.

Cover: IMEC's eastern and northern legs; India-EU Security and Defence Partnership; comparison with China's Belt and Road Initiative; implementation challenges in a geopolitically contested Eastern Mediterranean.

GS3 · 10 marks / 150 words

India conducted Exercise INDRA with Russia and Exercise KONKAN with the United Kingdom in the same week of October 2026. Discuss what this reveals about India's

doctrine of strategic autonomy in defence diplomacy.

Cover: definition of strategic autonomy/multi-alignment; historical roots in non-alignment; INDRA/KONKAN as concurrent evidence; criticism of 'hedging' versus genuine partnership depth.

GS4 · 20 marks / 250 words

As a newly posted member of a State Environment Impact Assessment Authority, you discover that your predecessor approved several District Survey Reports without reviewing the underlying replenishment studies. Reversing these approvals now would halt several ongoing, revenue-generating mining leases that fund local infrastructure projects on which communities already depend. Identify the ethical issues involved in this situation and discuss the course of action you would adopt.

Identify: procedural duty vs practical disruption; the banality-of-evil risk of simply continuing the status quo; stakeholder mapping (local communities, lease-holders, environment); a phased, transparent course of corrective action balancing legality and continuity.

06 Answer-Writing Value Addition

8 citable data points/quotes

Only 32 of 111 declared National Waterways ($\approx 29\%$) are currently operational — PIB backgrounder, 16 October 2026.

218 MMT — inland-waterway cargo carried in 2025–26, surpassing the 200 MMT Maritime India Vision 2030 target five years early.

718 — India's first camera-trap-and-DNA-based Snow Leopard population estimate (SPAI, 2024), with most individuals found outside protected areas.

Section 151A, RPA 1951: a casual vacancy must be filled within six months, unless less than one year of the term remains.

\$12 billion+ — India's cumulative concessional Lines of Credit to Africa since 2015, across more than 40 countries.

INDRA (since 2003, with Russia) and KONKAN (since 2004, with the United Kingdom) are India's two oldest bilateral naval-exercise series, both active in the same week of October 2026.

1928 → 1930: the two-year gap between Sir C.V. Raman's discovery of Raman scattering and his Nobel Prize in Physics.

Over 65% — indigenous content by value in the newly commissioned Fast Patrol Vessel ICGS Ajit, built at Goa Shipyard Limited.

07 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

18 rows · across both parts

TOPIC	GS PAPER	ONE-LINE CAPSULE	EXAM-YIELD
Section 16, CEC Act 2023 — immunity challenge	GS2	Tests EC accountability vs statutory immunity	★★★★★
RPA 1951 Section 151A — byelection machinery	GS2	6-month rule, anti-defection linkage	★★★★☆
Jaishankar's Africa tour (Ghana/Côte d'Ivoire/Ethiopia)	GS2	ITEC, IAFS, UNSC-reform diplomacy	★★★★☆
India-EU Security & Defence Partnership (Cyprus/Greece)	GS2	IMEC's European terminus	★★★★☆
Exercise INDRA-2026 (India-Russia)	GS3	Strategic autonomy in practice	★★★★☆
Exercise KONKAN-26 (India-UK)	GS3	UK-India Vision 2035 defence track	★★★★☆
NGOPV Shreyas & ICGS Ajit	GS3	Atmanirbhar patrol-vessel shipbuilding	★★★★☆
Mars-analogue sites (Neyveli/Trichy)	GS3	Raman spectroscopy, astrobiology	★★★★☆
National Waterways navigability gap	GS3	111 declared, only 32 operational	★★★★★
NGT Basti/Shamli DSR order	GS3	EIA/SEIAA governance lapse	★★★★☆
Snow Leopard / SPAI 2024	GS3	718 individuals, mostly outside PAs	★★★★☆
GSLEP Program	GS3	Trans-boundary snow-leopard conservation	★★★★☆
Contempt jurisdiction (Art. 129/215)	GS2	SC's protest-management directions	★★★★☆

Anti-defection law (Tenth Schedule)	GS2	Resign-and-recontest loophole	★★★★★
India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor	GS2 / GS3	Connectivity diversification from BRI	★★★★★
Sand Mining Framework Guidelines, 2016	GS3	DSR/replenishment-study mandate	★★★★★
ITEC Programme	GS2	India's capacity-building diplomacy since 1964	★★★★★
SAGAR doctrine / coastal security	GS3	Coast Guard mandate, EEZ surveillance	★★★★★

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Morning Edition · Sunday, 18 October 2026