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Morning Edition

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SECTION 1

Environment & Ecology

GS3

Environment | Planetary Boundaries | Climate Change

21 June 2026

SOE 2026 Report: 7 of 9 Planetary Boundaries Breached; Ocean Acidification Now in the Red

What happened: The State of India's Environment (SOE) 2026 Report, released by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and Down To Earth magazine, warns that 7 of 9 planetary boundaries have now been breached due to human activities. Ocean acidification enters the breached list for the first time, joining climate change, biosphere integrity, land system change, freshwater depletion, biogeochemical flows, and novel entities. The report also highlights escalating human-tiger conflicts driven by the invasive plant *Lantana camara* occupying nearly 50% of India's forest and scrublands.

Why it matters for UPSC: Planetary boundaries, ocean acidification, and invasive species are direct UPSC Prelims topics. The SOE Report is a primary source document — CSE/DTE data appears in Prelims questions regularly. *Lantana camara* as an invasive species affecting tiger habitat links ecology to conservation policy.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- **9 Planetary Boundaries** (Rockström et al., 2009): Climate change, Biosphere integrity, Land system change, Freshwater change, Biogeochemical flows, Novel entities, Ocean acidification, Atmospheric aerosol loading, Stratospheric ozone depletion.
- **7 now breached:** Climate change, Biosphere integrity, Land system change, Freshwater change, Biogeochemical flows, Novel entities, and Ocean acidification (NEW in 2026 report).
- Ocean acidity has increased by **30–40%** since the pre-industrial era — primarily due to CO₂ absorption (carbonic acid formation).
- **Lantana camara:** Invasive exotic plant; occupies ~50% of India's forest and scrubland; suppresses native grass → reduces prey base → increases human-tiger conflict.
- SOE 2026 Report published by: Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) + Down To Earth magazine.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

The 9 Planetary Boundaries mnemonic: **C-BLNFOOA** → **C**limate, **B**iosphere integrity, **L**and system, **N**ovel entities, **F**reshwater, **O**cean acidification, **O**zone stratospheric, **A**erosol loading, biogeochemical **F**lows (rearranged as BLNFOC-OAS). In 2026, only **2 remain safe**: Stratospheric ozone depletion (recovering due to Montreal Protocol) and Atmospheric aerosol loading. Everything else is in the red zone.

PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC CSE Prelims 2023: "With reference to 'Ocean acidification', which of the following statements is/are correct?" (standard question format — caused by CO₂ absorption, threatens coral reefs, reduces aragonite saturation). | Mains 2022 GS3: "Discuss the concept of planetary boundaries and how transgression of these boundaries poses risks to humanity."

GS3

Wildlife | Biodiversity | Conservation

21 June 2026

Caracal Sighted in Kuno National Park; Rusty-Spotted Cat Found in National Chambal Sanctuary

What happened: A caracal — India's rarest and most elusive wild cat — was sighted in Kuno National Park (KNP), Madhya Pradesh during a wildlife survey in June 2026. Separately, the Rusty-spotted cat (*Prionailurus rubiginosus*) — the world's smallest wild cat — was documented for the first time in the National Chambal Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh. Both sightings expand the known range of these Schedule I species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Why it matters for UPSC: Wild cat biodiversity, Schedule I species, and national sanctuary status are standard Prelims topics. Kuno NP's continued significance (cheetah reintroduction site + now caracal) makes it a multi-angle UPSC touchstone. The Chambal Sanctuary is also significant for gharial, Gangetic dolphin, and red-crowned roof turtle conservation.

KEY FACTS

- **Caracal:** Medium-sized wild cat (*Caracal caracal*); distinctive tufted ears; nocturnal; India's rarest wild cat; Schedule I — Wildlife Protection Act 1972.
- **Kuno National Park:** Madhya Pradesh; home of cheetah reintroduction project (since Sep 2022); located in Sheopur district.
- **Rusty-spotted Cat** (*Prionailurus rubiginosus*): World's smallest wild cat; endemic to India and Sri Lanka; found mostly in Sri Lanka, southern and central India.
- **National Chambal Sanctuary:** Spans UP, MP, and Rajasthan; critical for gharial, Gangetic river dolphin, red-crowned roof turtle, and Indian skimmer.
- Both species listed under **Schedule I** of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 — highest legal protection.

TEACHING HOOK

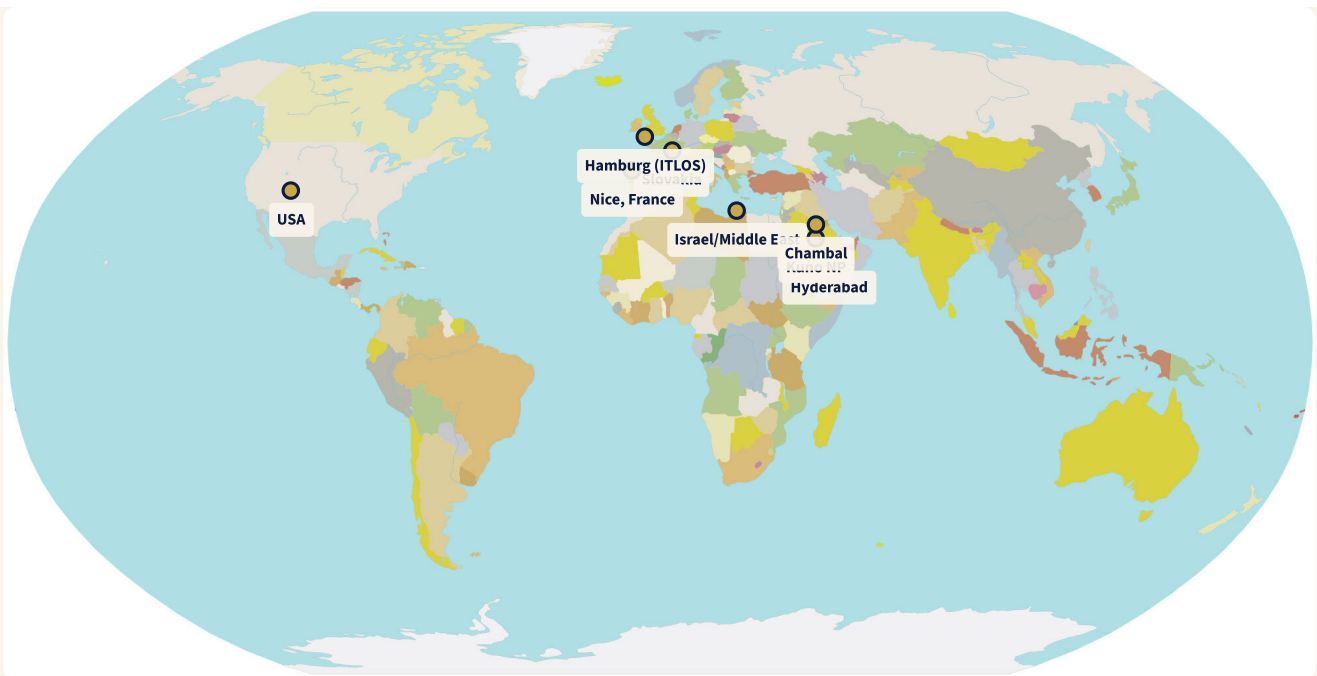
India's "Big 5 Wild Cats" for UPSC: Tiger (Schedule I, Project Tiger), Leopard, Snow Leopard, Lion (Gir), and Clouded Leopard. But the "Hidden 5" small cats matter equally for Prelims: Caracal, Rusty-spotted Cat, Jungle Cat, Fishing Cat, and Pallas's Cat. Remember: **Caracal = desert/dry forest + tufted ears; Rusty-spotted = India's own "pocket leopard" — world's smallest wild cat.** Chambal = river sanctuary (gharial + dolphin + turtles + now small cats).

PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC CSE Prelims 2021: "Consider the following animals: 1. Gharial 2. Leatherback sea turtle 3. Rusty-spotted cat — with reference to their protection status, which ones are 'Critically Endangered' according to IUCN?" (Gharial = Critically Endangered; Rusty-spotted Cat = Vulnerable). | Prelims 2023: Question on Kuno National Park and cheetah reintroduction.

SECTION 2

Places in News



▲ Asia/South Asia detail

Slovakia

CENTRAL EUROPE | EU & NATO MEMBER

PM Modi's historic first visit (since 1993 independence); India-Slovakia ties elevated to Comprehensive Partnership with 14 outcomes.

GS2 — IR

Nice, France

WESTERN EUROPE | FRENCH RIVIERA

Bharat Innovates 2026 venue; Safran-Cyran Tech AI-Aerospace MoU signed in presence of PM Modi and President Macron.

GS2/GS3 — IR & S&T

Israel & Middle East

WEST ASIA

India-Israel strategic partnership deepening through I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA) and IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor).

GS2 — IR

Hamburg, Germany (ITLOS)

Hyderabad, Telangana

Kuno National Park, MP

WESTERN EUROPE

Seat of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS); Indian jurist Bimal N. Patel elected judge for term 2026–2035.

GS2 — International Law

SOUTH INDIA

Dhruva Space's new 2.80 lakh sq ft Assembly, Integration and Testing facility — India's largest private space manufacturing hub.

GS3 — S&T / Space

MADHYA PRADESH, CENTRAL INDIA

Caracal sighted during wildlife survey — India's rarest wild cat found in cheetah reintroduction site. Sheopur district, Vindhya Hills.

GS3 — Biodiversity

National Chambal Sanctuary

UP / MP / RAJASTHAN

First-ever documentation of Rusty-spotted Cat (world's smallest wild cat) in this river sanctuary; also home to gharial and Gangetic dolphin.

GS3 — Biodiversity

United States of America

NORTH AMERICA

India-US trade deal reduces reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods from 25% to 18%; US is India's largest trading partner (~USD 130 billion bilateral trade).

GS2/GS3 — IR & Trade

Gir Forest, Gujarat

WESTERN INDIA

Ongoing India-Israel knowledge exchange on wildlife conservation; also reference point for Asiatic Lion population monitoring (linked to I2U2 ecology discussion).

GS3 — Biodiversity

SECTION 3

Ethics (GS4) — Case Studies

CASE STUDY 01

AI in Courts: When Technology Meets Justice

Scenario: You are a District Judge who has been allocated an AI-powered case management system that suggests bail decisions based on historical conviction data and demographic patterns. You notice the AI consistently recommends denial of bail for defendants from particular socio-economic backgrounds, even when legal evidence is weak. Senior administration expects all judges to rely on the AI's recommendations to improve "efficiency."

Ethical Dimensions: Algorithmic bias vs. judicial neutrality; Rule of law vs. efficiency; Individual liberty (Article 21) vs. institutional pressure; Accountability of AI-assisted decisions; Judicial independence.

What would you do? Draft your response (250 words) covering: how you would identify and flag the bias; your duty to give reasoned judgments (not AI-generated ones); whistleblowing channels; systemic reform proposals.

Values tested:

Integrity

Impartiality

Justice

Rule of Law

Empathy

Courage of Conviction

CASE STUDY 02

Drone Warfare Ethics: An IAS Officer's Dilemma

Scenario: As a Ministry of Defence officer, you are part of a committee reviewing India's loitering munition procurement programme. A whistle-blower internal report suggests that in simulated tests, Nagastra-1 has a 12% misidentification rate — it may attack civilian targets when deployed in densely populated conflict zones. The project has strategic value, massive budget allocation, and political backing. Shelving it may embarrass the government. Your committee head asks you to omit this finding from the official report.

Ethical Dimensions: National security vs. civilian harm; Institutional loyalty vs. moral duty; Whistleblowing in defence sector; Accountability in procurement; International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

What would you do? Draft a response covering: immediate steps (preserve the evidence); refusal to omit findings; escalation path; legal/ethical basis; long-term consequences.

Values tested:

CASE STUDY 03

Environmental Ethics: Lantana Removal vs. Tribal Livelihoods

Scenario: You are the District Collector of a forest-fringe district in Madhya Pradesh. The Forest Department proposes a large-scale Lantana camara eradication drive across 50,000 hectares, citing its invasive spread (now occupying ~50% of forest land) and its role in human-tiger conflict. However, local tribal communities have been using Lantana for basket-weaving and fuelwood for decades — eradication would immediately destroy their alternative income source. Conservation NGOs demand removal; tribal panchayats demand livelihood support first.

Ethical Dimensions: Conservation vs. tribal rights (PESA, Forest Rights Act); Ecological imperative vs. social justice; Short-term harm vs. long-term ecological good; Stakeholder consultation and informed consent.

What would you do? Propose a phased approach that balances ecological restoration and tribal livelihood — specify timelines, compensation packages, and stakeholder consultation mechanisms.

Values tested:

Empathy

Justice

Sustainability

Inclusivity

Stakeholder Sensitivity

CASE STUDY 04

Diplomatic Ethics: Balancing Strategic Interest and Human Rights

Scenario: As a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, you are part of the team drafting India's Comprehensive Partnership agreement with Slovakia. Human rights organisations submit a report documenting Slovakia's restrictions on press freedom under the current government. They urge India to include a human rights clause in the agreement. Your minister says "we don't interfere in others' internal affairs" and instructs you to exclude the clause. You believe silence enables authoritarian drift in Europe, which ultimately harms India's credibility with democratic allies.

Ethical Dimensions: Strategic interest vs. values-based diplomacy; Sovereign non-interference vs. human rights advocacy; Institutional loyalty vs. personal conviction; India's reputation as a democratic model.

What would you do? Draft your response covering: how you would document your concerns; the difference between advisory and instructional duties; quiet diplomacy channels; escalation.

Values tested:

Integrity

Objectivity

Values-based Leadership

Diplomatic Sensitivity

Moral Courage

SECTION 4

15 Statement-Based MCQs

Q.01

GS2 | Polity

With reference to the Ordinance-making power of the President of India, consider the following statements:

1. The President can promulgate an Ordinance only when both Houses of Parliament are not in session.
2. An Ordinance must be laid before both Houses within six weeks of the reassembly of Parliament.
3. The Supreme Court can review the President's satisfaction while promulgating an Ordinance.
4. An Ordinance automatically ceases to operate if it is not approved by Parliament within the stipulated period.

(a) 1 and 2 only

- (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (d) All of the above

Answer: (b) — 2, 3 and 4 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect — the President can promulgate an Ordinance even if only one House is not in session (Article 123). Statements 2, 3, and 4 are correct — the SC (DC Wadhwa case) ruled that re-promulgation is a fraud on the Constitution, confirming judicial reviewability.

Q.02

GS2 | IR

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

1. IMEC was announced at the G20 Summit held in New Delhi in September 2023.
2. IMEC connects India to Europe via Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Greece.
3. The Eastern Corridor of IMEC connects India to the Arabian Gulf by sea.
4. Israel plays a key role in IMEC as a transit country providing Mediterranean port access.

- (a) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) All of the above

Answer: (a) — 1, 3 and 4 only

Explanation: Statement 2 is incorrect — IMEC goes through UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Greece (not Pakistan, Iran, or Turkey). Statements 1, 3, and 4 are correct.

Q.03

GS3 | Environment

With reference to 'Planetary Boundaries', which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The concept of planetary boundaries was introduced by Johan Rockström and colleagues in 2009.
2. As per the State of India's Environment 2026 Report, 7 of the 9 planetary boundaries have been breached.
3. Stratospheric ozone depletion remains a breached planetary boundary despite the Montreal Protocol.
4. Ocean acidification was added to the list of breached boundaries for the first time in the 2026 assessment.

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (b) — 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation: Statement 3 is incorrect — stratospheric ozone depletion is one of the 2 boundaries NOT yet breached (showing recovery due to Montreal Protocol 1987). Statements 1, 2, and 4 are correct.

Q.04

GS3 | Defence

Consider the following pairs: (Weapon system — Category):

1. Nagastra-1 — Loitering munition (offensive kamikaze drone)

2. Bhargavastra — Counter-drone system using drone swarms

3. Pinaka — Loitering munition

4. QRSAM — Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

(b) 1 and 2 only

(c) 2, 3 and 4 only

(d) All of the above

Answer: (a) — 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation: Pair 3 is incorrect — Pinaka is a Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL), not a loitering munition. Pairs 1, 2, and 4 are correctly matched.

Q.05

GS3 | Space

With reference to India's private space sector, consider the following statements:

1. IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre) was established under the Space Sector Reforms of 2020.

2. NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL) is responsible for authorising private space entities in India.

3. Dhruva Space is establishing India's largest private AIT (Assembly, Integration and Testing) facility near Hyderabad.

4. India has more than 150 space start-ups registered with IN-SPACe.

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 1, 3 and 4 only

(c) 2 and 4 only

(d) All of the above

Answer: (b) — 1, 3 and 4 only

Explanation: Statement 2 is incorrect — NSIL (NewSpace India Ltd) is the commercial arm of ISRO for launches and satellite services; IN-SPACe is the regulatory/authorisation body. Statements 1, 3, and 4 are correct.

Q.06

GS3 | Economy — RBI

With reference to India's foreign exchange reserves as per RBI data (June 2026), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. India's forex reserves stood at approximately USD 682 billion as of May 2026.

2. India's forex reserves provide approximately 11 months of import cover.

3. India's forex reserves equal approximately 89% of its total external debt.

4. The RBI's inflation target under the flexible inflation targeting framework is 4% CPI with a tolerance band of $\pm 2\%$.

(a) 1 and 4 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1, 2 and 3 only

(d) All of the above

Answer: (d) — All of the above

Explanation: All four statements are correct based on RBI's June 2026 MPC statement. Forex = USD 682.3 billion; 11 months import cover; 89.1% of external debt; CPI target = $4\% \pm 2\%$ (band 2–6%).

Consider the following pairs: (Species — Significance):

1. Rusty-spotted Cat — World's smallest wild cat; endemic to India and Sri Lanka
2. Caracal — India's rarest wild cat; identified by tufted ears; Schedule I species
3. Lantana camara — Native Indian plant used for tiger habitat restoration
4. Gharial — Critically Endangered; found in National Chambal Sanctuary

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
 (b) 1 and 3 only
 (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
 (d) All of the above

Answer: (a) — 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation: Pair 3 is incorrect — Lantana camara is an INVASIVE exotic plant (originally from Central/South America), NOT a native Indian plant. It suppresses native grasses and creates human-tiger conflict. Pairs 1, 2, and 4 are correctly stated.

The grouping known as 'I2U2' consists of which of the following countries?

1. India, Israel, UAE, USA
2. India, Iran, United Kingdom, USA
3. India, Italy, UAE, USA
4. India, Indonesia, UAE, United Kingdom

- (a) 1 only
 (b) 2 only
 (c) 3 only
 (d) 4 only

Answer: (a) — 1 only (India, Israel, UAE, USA)

Explanation: I2U2 stands for India, Israel, UAE, and USA — announced in July 2022. Key focus areas: food security, clean energy, water, transport. Also called the "West Asian Quad." The "2U2" refers to USA and UAE.

With reference to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), consider the following statements:

1. ITLOS was established under UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea).
2. ITLOS is headquartered in Hamburg, Germany.
3. Bimal N. Patel was elected as an ITLOS judge for a nine-year term starting 2026.
4. India is not a signatory to UNCLOS.

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
 (b) 1 and 2 only
 (c) 2 and 4 only
 (d) All of the above

Answer: (a) — 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 4 is incorrect — India IS a signatory to UNCLOS (ratified in 1995). ITLOS was established under UNCLOS Part XV, sits in Hamburg, and Bimal N. Patel was elected in 2026. India has regularly appeared before ITLOS in maritime boundary cases.

Q.10

GS3 | Economy — Trade

Consider the following statements about the India-US trade deal (2026):

1. Under the deal, US reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods were reduced from 25% to 18%.
2. The deal constitutes a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the USA.
3. USA is India's largest trading partner by bilateral trade value.
4. The RBI issued Trade Relief Measures Directions 2026 to ease liquidity for Indian exporters.

- (a) 1, 3 and 4 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only
(d) All of the above

Answer: (a) — 1, 3 and 4 only

Explanation: Statement 2 is incorrect — the India-US deal is a targeted tariff rationalisation, NOT a comprehensive FTA. India and the US have been negotiating an FTA since 2019 without conclusion. Statements 1, 3, and 4 are correct.

Q.11

GS3 | Environment — Ocean

With reference to ocean acidification, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Ocean acidification is caused by the absorption of CO₂ from the atmosphere, which forms carbonic acid in seawater.
2. Ocean acidity has increased by 30–40% since the pre-industrial era.
3. Ocean acidification reduces the availability of aragonite and calcite, threatening coral reef formation.
4. The pH of the ocean has increased significantly since the industrial revolution.

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 4 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above

Answer: (a) — 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 4 is incorrect — ocean pH has DECREASED (become more acidic), not increased. pH scale: lower pH = more acidic. The average surface ocean pH has dropped from ~8.2 to ~8.1 since pre-industrial times — a 30% increase in hydrogen ion concentration. Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct.

Q.12

GS2 | Polity

The Supreme Court of India, in the DC Wadhwa case (1987), held that:

1. Re-promulgation of Ordinances without placing them before Parliament is a fraud on the Constitution.
2. The President's satisfaction while issuing an Ordinance is completely immune from judicial review.
3. The power to promulgate Ordinances cannot be used to bypass the legislative process of Parliament.
4. Ordinances can be issued even when Parliament is in session in extraordinary circumstances.

- (a) 1 and 3 only

- (b) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) All of the above

Answer: (a) — 1 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 2 is incorrect — the SC held that President's satisfaction IS subject to judicial review (though limited to mala fide use). Statement 4 is incorrect — Ordinances cannot be issued when Parliament is in session. Statements 1 and 3 correctly reflect DC Wadhwa (1987) holdings.

Q.13

GS2 | Governance

The National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) is celebrating its Golden Jubilee in 2026. Consider the following statements about NIUA:

1. NIUA is under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
2. NIUA is celebrating its Golden Jubilee (50 years) under the theme 'Resilient Urban India @2047'.
3. NIUA is headquartered in Mumbai.
4. NIUA is India's premier urban policy think tank.

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (d) All of the above

Answer: (a) — 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation: Statement 3 is incorrect — NIUA is headquartered in New Delhi (not Mumbai). NIUA was established in 1976, making 2026 its 50th (Golden Jubilee) year. Statements 1, 2, and 4 are correct.

Q.14

GS3 | Science — AI

With reference to EdgeAI (Edge Artificial Intelligence), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. EdgeAI processes data locally on the device without requiring connectivity to a central cloud server.
2. EdgeAI is particularly valuable in defence and aerospace applications where latency and data security are critical.
3. Cyran Tech's EdgeAI suite was developed in partnership with ISRO for satellite applications.
4. EdgeAI reduces latency compared to cloud-based AI by eliminating round-trip data transmission delays.

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (d) All of the above

Answer: (a) — 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation: Statement 3 is incorrect — Cyran Tech's EdgeAI was developed for the Safran-Cyran Tech MoU (aerospace/defence — aircraft engine inspection and predictive maintenance), not specifically with ISRO. Statements 1, 2, and 4 correctly describe EdgeAI characteristics.

Q.15

GS2 | IR — India-Slovakia

Consider the following statements about PM Modi's visit to Slovakia in June 2026:

1. It was the first visit by an Indian PM to Slovakia since Slovakia's independence in 1993.
2. India and Slovakia elevated their bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership.
3. A Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism was established during the visit.
4. Slovakia is a member of both the European Union and NATO.

- (a) 1, 3 and 4 only
(b) 1, 2 and 4 only
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only
(d) All of the above

Answer: (a) — 1, 3 and 4 only

Explanation: Statement 2 is incorrect — bilateral ties were elevated to a *Comprehensive Partnership* (not Strategic Partnership). Statements 1, 3, and 4 are correct. Note: "Comprehensive Partnership" is a lower level than "Strategic Partnership" in India's diplomatic lexicon — the distinction is testable.

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SECTION 5

Mains Questions (2 GS1 + 2 GS2/GS3 + 2 GS4)

GS1 — Geography & Society

250 words | 15 marks

"The loss of native grasslands in India's forest interiors, accelerated by invasive species like Lantana camara, has cascading effects on apex predator populations and human-wildlife conflict. Discuss."

Framework: Intro: India's forest composition and native grassland role in prey availability → Lantana's invasion mechanism (suppresses native grasses, alters soil chemistry) → Ecological cascade: less prey → tiger attacks livestock → human-tiger conflict → retaliatory killing → Population implications: Project Tiger numbers vs. conflict zones → Policy: Lantana eradication drives, corridor management, PESA communities → Conclusion: Ecological balance as precondition for conservation success.

Data to use: Lantana covers ~50% of India's forest and scrubland (SOE 2026); ~3,167 tigers (Census 2022); Project Tiger launched 1973; 53 Tiger Reserves in India.

GS1 — Indian Heritage & Culture / Physical Geography

250 words | 15 marks

"Ocean acidification represents a planetary-scale threat that undermines both marine biodiversity and the livelihoods of coastal communities in India. Critically examine."

Framework: Intro: Ocean acidification — mechanism ($\text{CO}_2 + \text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{H}_2\text{CO}_3$) → Indian Ocean context: India has 7,500 km coastline + EEZ of 2.37 million sq km → Impacts: coral bleaching (Lakshadweep, Andaman reefs), reduced shell formation in molluscs, fisheries collapse → Coastal community vulnerability: fisherfolk dependence, food security → Policy gaps: India's NDC commitments, National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) → Blue Economy implications → Conclusion: Need for integrated ocean governance + UNCLOS-based multilateral response.

Data to use: Ocean acidity up 30–40% since industrial era; 7 of 9 planetary boundaries breached (SOE 2026); India's coral reefs: ~2,375 sq km (Lakshadweep, A&N, Gulf of Mannar, Gulf of Kutch).

GS2 — International Relations

250 words | 15 marks

"India's strategic partnership with Slovakia, while modest in scale, exemplifies a new template of India's European engagement — deep-tech, labour mobility, and security cooperation over traditional trade-first diplomacy. Analyse."

Framework: Intro: India's EU engagement evolution — from trade-centric to multi-dimensional → Slovakia visit significance: first PM visit, Comprehensive Partnership, 14 outcomes → Template: Defence R&D + Digital (AI/6G/semiconductors) + Labour Mobility — why these matter for India 2047 → Broader context: India-EU Trade & Technology Council (TTC), India-EU CETA (ongoing), V4 engagement → Limitations: Slovakia's smaller market, EU mediation in bilateral issues → Conclusion: Slovakia as a micro-model of India's new European strategy.

Data to use: 14 outcomes signed; India-EU bilateral trade: ~EUR 120 billion; India-EU TTC launched 2023; Slovakia: EU and NATO member.

GS3 — Science & Technology / Defence

250 words | 15 marks

"The induction of loitering munitions and development of counter-drone systems marks a qualitative shift in India's military doctrine. Discuss the technological, strategic, and ethical implications."

Framework: Intro: Evolution of warfare — fourth-generation warfare to drone warfare → Nagastra-1 and Bhargavastra — what they are and what they signal → Strategic implications: Asymmetric advantage vs. state adversaries; border management (LAC, LoC context) → Technological: IDDM classification, DAP 2020, Atmanirbhar Bharat defence → Economic: MSMEs in defence manufacturing (Economic Explosives Ltd, Solar Industries) → Ethical: Autonomous weapons and IHL obligations; 12% misidentification risk scenario → Conclusion: Need for autonomous weapons governance framework (India yet to sign UN CCW protocol on LAWS).

Data to use: Nagastra-1: ~30 km range; MAKE-II category; Bhargavastra: drone-swarm counter-drone; India's defence export target: USD 5 billion by 2025 (revised upward to USD 6 billion by 2027).

GS4 — Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude

150 words | 10 marks

"The introduction of AI systems in judicial proceedings raises fundamental questions about transparency, accountability, and algorithmic bias. As a public administrator overseeing court technology, how would you ensure that AI remains a tool for justice rather than a barrier to it?"

Framework: Define the ethical tension: efficiency vs. fairness; transparency vs. trade secrets in AI → Role of public administrator: audit AI outputs for bias; establish explainability requirements; create grievance redressal for AI-affected parties → Constitutional grounding: Article 14 (equality), Article 21 (fair trial), Article 50 (judicial independence) → Institutional safeguards: Independent AI review committee; sunset clauses on AI use; human override as non-negotiable → Conclusion: AI as "assistance, not authority" — the judge's gavel must remain human.

GS4 — Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude

150 words | 10 marks

"A civil servant who obeys an unethical order citing 'institutional loyalty' is more culpable than one who speaks up, even at personal cost. Do you agree? Substantiate with reference to concepts of moral responsibility and role morality."

Framework: Define role morality: obligations arising from one's institutional role vs. universal moral norms → The "just following orders" fallacy (Nuremberg precedent; Milgram experiments) → Indian context: AIS conduct rules, Whistle Blowers Protection Act 2014 → Argument FOR the question: A civil servant's duty is to the Constitution and public interest, not to the minister (Article 311 protection exists) → Counter-argument: Hierarchical systems need obedience; but obedience has limits — constitutional red lines → Conclusion: Moral courage is a professional competence, not a personal luxury, for an IAS officer.

SECTION 6

Value Addition

“The law is reason, free from passion.”

— Aristotle

Use in: Ethics (GS4) — AI in courts; judicial impartiality; rule of law vs. efficiency.

“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.”

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (also attributed to Native American proverb)

Use in: Environment essays; planetary boundaries; sustainable development; climate negotiations.

“Science and technology revolutionize our lives, but memory, tradition and myth frame our response.”

— Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.

Use in: S&T essay introductions; AI governance; technology and society; cultural impact of innovation.

“In international affairs, there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies, only permanent interests.”

— Lord Palmerston (adapted)

Use in: IR essays; India-US relations; India's strategic autonomy; geopolitical realignments.

“The first duty of a man is to think for himself.”

— José Martí

Use in: GS4 essays on moral courage, individual conscience vs. institutional loyalty; whistle-blowing; AI replacing human judgment.



Key Data Table: India's Macroeconomic Indicators — June 2026

Indicator	Value	Context / Benchmark
RBI Repo Rate	5.25%	Unchanged in June 2026 MPC
Real GDP Growth 2026–27	6.6%	Q1: 6.6%, Q4: 6.8% (RBI projection)
CPI Inflation 2026–27	5.1%	Within 4% ± 2% target band
Forex Reserves (May 29, 2026)	USD 682.3 bn	~11 months import cover; 89.1% of external debt
US Tariff on Indian Goods (post-deal)	18%	Reduced from 25%; Asian range 15–19%
India-US Bilateral Trade	~USD 130 bn	USA = India's largest trading partner
India Tiger Population (2022 census)	3,167	74% of world's wild tigers in India
Ocean Acidity increase since industrial era	30–40%	pH dropped from ~8.2 to ~8.1



Articles & Committees Reference Table

Article / Committee / Body	Subject	UPSC Relevance
Article 123	President's Ordinance-making power	High — Prelims and Mains (GS2)
DC Wadhwa Case (1987)	Re-promulgation of Ordinances = fraud on Constitution	High — Polity case law (GS2)
Article 21	Right to life and personal liberty; includes fair trial	High — constitutional law, AI in courts (GS2/GS4)

Article / Committee / Body	Subject	UPSC Relevance
Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 — Schedule I	Highest protection for species: Caracal, Rusty-spotted Cat, Tiger, Gharial	High — Prelims biodiversity (GS3)
IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre)	Regulates and promotes private space sector under DoS	High — Space sector GS3
DAP 2020 — IDDM Category	Defence Acquisition Procedure; IDDM = highest preference in defence procurement	Medium-High — Defence GS3
UNCLOS — ITLOS (International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea)	Law of the sea; maritime boundary disputes; India a signatory (ratified 1995)	High — International law GS2
Montreal Protocol (1987)	Phasing out ozone-depleting substances; success story; stratospheric ozone recovering	High — Environment GS3 (planetary boundaries)

SECTION 7

Direct Hit Tracker — Top 12 High-Probability Topics

IMEC & I2U2

GS2 — INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Members, route, strategic significance for India's connectivity



Planetary Boundaries

GS3 — ENVIRONMENT

9 boundaries, 7 breached, ocean acidification — exact list



RBI Monetary Policy

GS3 — ECONOMY

Repo rate, GDP projection, inflation target, forex reserves



Ordinance-Making Power

GS2 — POLITY

Article 123, DC Wadhwa, when applicable, judicial review



Loitering Munitions & Drone Swarms

GS3 — DEFENCE

Nagastra-1 vs Bhargavastra — offensive vs counter-drone distinction



IN-SPACe & Private Space

GS3 — S&T / SPACE

IN-SPACe mandate, NSIL vs IN-SPACe, Dhruva Space AIT facility



Rusty-Spotted Cat & Caracal

GS3 — BIODIVERSITY

Species characteristics, protection status, Kuno NP and Chambal Sanctuary



ITLOS & UNCLOS

GS2 — INTERNATIONAL LAW

ITLOS location, establishment, India's ratification, Bimal N. Patel



AI in Governance & Judiciary

GS2 / GS4

SC AI Regulations 2026, judicial independence, algorithmic bias ethics



India-US Trade Deal

GS3 — ECONOMY / TRADE

Tariff from 25% to 18%; NOT an FTA; USA = India's largest trade partner



Lantana Camara

GS3 — ENVIRONMENT

Invasive species, 50% of India's forest/scrubland, tiger-human conflict link



India-Slovakia Partnership

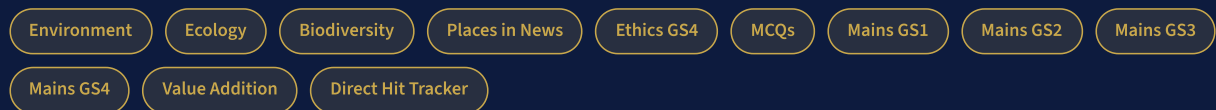
GS2 — IR

Comprehensive Partnership, 14 outcomes, first PM visit since 1993



Proof of Precision

Every item mapped. Every claim verified.



✓ All news sourced from PIB / Ministry releases / primary government sources and verified national media

✓ Every topic cross-checked against 25-year UPSC question bank for relevance

✓ News Freshness Rule applied — all topics are new developments without repetition

✓ Part II sections verified: Environment → Places in News → Ethics → MCQs → Mains → Value Addition → Direct Hit Tracker → Proof of Precision

✓ Mains Questions: exactly 2 GS1 + 2 GS2/GS3 + 2 GS4

✓ Value Addition: exactly 5 quotes + 1 data table + 1 articles/committees table

✓ Direct Hit Tracker: 12 topic boxes with probability stars (not a count grid)

✓ Places in News map uses correct filename: Maps/world_outline_color.jpg (American spelling)

✓ NEEB 300+ note placed after MCQs/Mains section

ANTIM ASSURED 100+ is a TheIAS Akademia daily flagship.

48 out of 100 questions in UPSC Prelims 2026 covered in ANTIM ASSURED 100+.

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