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PART II • ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Morning Edition | 10 July 2026 | 08:00 IST | TheIAS Akademia

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

GS3 — Environment & Biodiversity

Faunal Diversity • ZSI • Species Documentation

30 June – July 2026 • Source: Down to Earth / Zoological Survey of India

ZSI Animal Discoveries 2025: India Adds Record 709 New Animal Species — Highest-Ever Single-Year Count; 483 New to Science

What happened: The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) released its annual "Animal Discoveries 2025" report, confirming that India added a record 709 new animal species to its national biodiversity database in 2025 — the highest annual count since systematic documentation began, surpassing the previous record of 683 species in 2024. Of the 709 discoveries, 483 species are new to science (previously unknown globally), while 226 are new records for India (known elsewhere, documented in India for the first time). India's total documented fauna now stands at 1,05,953 species — approximately 5.3% of global faunal diversity. Insects dominate the discoveries (417 species, ~59% of total). Kerala leads state-wise with 98 new species, followed by West Bengal, Karnataka, and Arunachal Pradesh.

Why it matters for UPSC: ZSI's annual Animal Discoveries reports are directly relevant to UPSC's environment and ecology syllabus. India's rich faunal diversity, ZSI's institutional role (under MoEFCC), the Biological Diversity Act 2002, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD/Kunming-Montreal targets) are standard UPSC topics. The high discovery rate signals both rich biodiversity and increasing scientific survey coverage of understudied regions.

KEY FACTS

-  709 new animal species in 2025 — RECORD (previous: 683 in 2024)
-  483 new to science (globally undescribed) + 226 new records for India
-  India's total documented fauna: 1,05,953 species (~5.3% of global faunal diversity)
-  State leaders: Kerala (98 new species) → West Bengal → Karnataka → Arunachal Pradesh (67)
-  Top taxonomic group: Insects (417 species, 59%); Hymenoptera: 106; Lepidoptera: 65; Diptera: 64
-  ZSI: Zoological Survey of India — under MoEFCC; established 1916; HQ Kolkata; conducts faunal surveys across India

TEACHING HOOK

India's Biodiversity Survey Bodies — " " : SI (Zoological Survey of India — fauna; annual 'Animal Discoveries'), SI (Botanical Survey of India — flora; annual 'Plant Discoveries'), SI (Forest Survey of India — forest cover; biennial India State of Forest Report). Together they form India's biodiversity monitoring triad. ZSI's 709 species in 2025 + BSI's 353 plant taxa = 1,062+ new biodiversity additions in a single year — remarkable for a megadiverse nation. UPSC loves questions on India's biodiversity bodies and their institutional mandate.

PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC Prelims 2022: "Which of the following is the mandate of the Zoological Survey of India?" | UPSC Mains 2020 GS3: "India is one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries. Discuss the significance of this status and what challenges India faces in conserving its biodiversity." | UPSC Prelims 2019: "With reference to India's faunal diversity, which of the following is/are correct?"

GS3 — Biodiversity & Conservation

Endangered Species · Eastern Himalayas · IUCN Red List

Static UPSC Topic · Source: IUCN Red List / WPA 1972 / Camera trap study (Sikkim, 2026)

Species in Focus: Mishmi Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor taxicolor*) — The Goat-Ox of the Eastern Himalayas, Spotted in Sikkim

What happened: Camera trap footage captured a rare Mishmi Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor taxicolor*) in the Tingda Reserve Forest, Sikkim — a species rarely documented in Sikkim, extending the known range of this enigmatic ungulate. The Mishmi Takin is a large bovid often described as a cross between a goat and an ox, native to the Eastern Himalayas. The sighting highlights the connectivity of Himalayan forest corridors between Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim and reinforces the ecological importance of high-altitude reserve forests.

Why it matters for UPSC: The Mishmi Takin (and Takins generally) is a frequently tested UPSC species — it appears in questions on Arunachal Pradesh's biodiversity, Eastern Himalayan endemics, IUCN classifications, and the Wildlife Protection Act. Its "Vulnerable" IUCN status and Schedule I protection under WPA 1972 make it a benchmark species for questions on India's endangered fauna. The Sikkim sighting is also relevant to trans-boundary wildlife corridor discussions.

KEY FACTS

- Scientific name: *Budorcas taxicolor taxicolor* (Mishmi subspecies) | Family: Bovidae
- IUCN Status: Vulnerable (VU) — applies to the species *Budorcas taxicolor*; Mishmi subspecies considered most endangered
- Distribution: Eastern Himalayas — primarily Mishmi Hills (Dibang Valley, Lohit, Anjaw districts of Arunachal Pradesh); also in Bhutan, China, Myanmar
- Appearance: Large, heavily-built; golden/dark coat; both sexes bear horns; resembles goat-ox or "bee-stung moose" — called "cattle-chamois" in scientific literature
- Habitat: Alpine meadows and temperate forests at 2,000–4,500 m elevation; seasonal altitudinal migration
- WPA 1972: Schedule I (highest protection — hunting banned, maximum penalty); State animal of Arunachal Pradesh
- Threats: Poaching (body fat used in traditional medicine), habitat loss due to hydropower projects (Dibang Multipurpose Project area overlaps habitat)

TEACHING HOOK

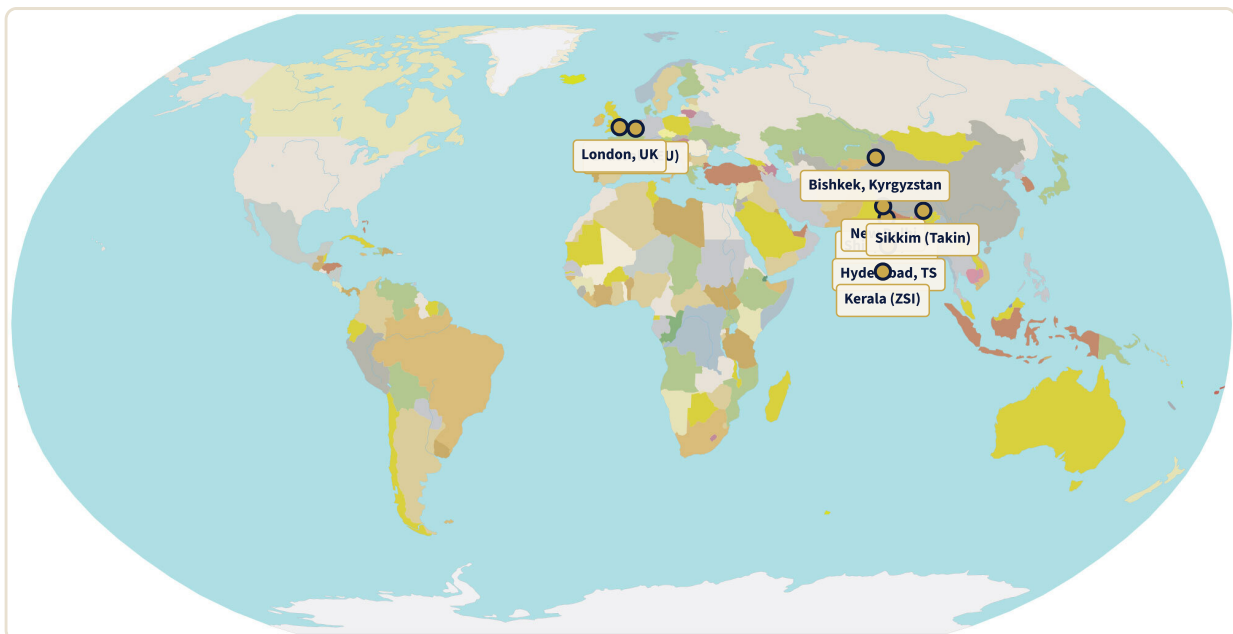
Eastern Himalayan Bovids for UPSC — "Takin" (*Budorcas* — Vulnerable, Arunachal), "Gaur" (*Bos gaurus* — Vulnerable, India's largest wild cattle), "Serow" (*Capricornis sumatraensis* — Vulnerable, Himalayan foothills). Takin is Arunachal Pradesh's state animal; Gaur is the state animal of Goa and Chhattisgarh; Serow is rarely tested. All are Schedule I. Remember: Takin is NOT a deer — it's a bovid (related to goats and cattle), despite looking like a bison-antelope hybrid.

PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC Prelims 2015: "Which of the following is the state animal of Arunachal Pradesh?" (Takin is correct answer) | UPSC Mains 2022 GS3: "Discuss the significance of trans-boundary wildlife corridors in the Eastern Himalayas for conservation of flagship species." | UPSC Prelims 2020: "Which of the following is/are found in the biodiversity hotspot of the Eastern Himalayas?"

PLACES IN NEWS

CSS pins on world map — place [Maps/world_outline_color.jpg](#) in same folder as this HTML file.



📍 Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh

Adani Defence breaks ground on South Asia's largest private missile ecosystem (₹2,500 cr); 5,000 jobs; MP emerges as defence hub

GS3: Aatmanirbhar Bharat; Defence corridors; Private sector manufacturing

📍 Hyderabad House, New Delhi

India–EU FTA concluded here on January 27, 2026 at India-EU Summit; PM Modi and EC President Ursula von der Leyen

GS2: India-EU relations; Trade diplomacy; Summit outcomes

📍 Brussels, Belgium (EU HQ)

EU Council and European Parliament must ratify the India-EU FTA before it enters force; currently in ratification process

GS2: EU governance; FTA ratification process; Parliamentary consent

📍 London, United Kingdom

India–UK CETA enters into force July 15, 2026 — 5 days from today; post-Brexit trade strategy; Scotch whisky & IT services deal

GS2: Post-Brexit India-UK relations; GS3: FTA economic impact; Mode 4 services

📍 Hyderabad, Telangana

Host of 8th Khelo India Youth Games, November 2026; ~8,000 athletes; promotes South India's sports infrastructure

GS2: Sports governance; Cooperative federalism; Youth policy

📍 Tingda RF, Sikkim

Camera trap records Mishmi Takin — extending known distribution from Arunachal Pradesh into Sikkim; Himalayan corridor connectivity

GS3: Biodiversity; Trans-boundary wildlife corridors; Eastern Himalayas

📍 Kerala

Leads India in ZSI Animal Discoveries 2025 with 98 new species; reflects Western Ghats + coastal biodiversity richness

GS3: Biodiversity hotspots; ZSI discoveries; State-level conservation

📍 Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

CSIR establishes International Centre for Civilizational Studies 'Manas and Mahabharata' — India-Kyrgyzstan cultural-scientific cooperation

GS1: Cultural diplomacy; GS2: India-Central Asia relations; India's soft power

⚡ ETHICS & INTEGRITY (GS4) — 4 CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: The FTA Negotiator's Dilemma

SCENARIO

You are a senior IFS officer part of the team that negotiated the India-UK CETA over three years. During the final round of talks, the UK side pressed India to reduce tariffs on dairy products earlier than India had internally committed, and your negotiating chief — under political pressure to close the deal before a domestic election — agreed to an accelerated 7-year timeline instead of the 12 years India had privately targeted. You were not consulted. You believe this concession could severely harm India's small dairy farmers. When you raise this concern internally, you are told to "stay quiet as the deal is done."

CORE VALUES AT STAKE

Institutional Loyalty vs. Public Interest

Courage of Conviction

Farmer Welfare

Transparency in Governance

Service Integrity (IFS Code)

FRAMEWORK FOR ANSWER

Apply **Consequentialist + Rights-based dual lens**: Short-term consequence = political gain (deal closure); long-term consequence = structural damage to ~15 crore dairy farmers dependent on Operation Flood legacy. Rights dimension: Farmers' right to livelihood (Article 21 interpretation post-Maneka Gandhi). Actions: Document your dissent formally within departmental channels; submit a written note for the record; recommend a "safeguard clause" or "review mechanism" at 5 years be included in the treaty text; brief a parliamentary standing committee if internal channels fail. Raising concerns is a duty, not disloyalty — Rai Sahib D.C. Nair Committee on service integrity reaffirms this.

Case Study 2: The Private Missile Factory Whistleblower

SCENARIO

You are a DRDO scientist on deputation to supervise the technology transfer of a classified missile propellant design to a private defence company (similar to the Adani Defence scenario). During a site visit to the new private facility, you observe that the company has allowed several unauthorised personnel — including two individuals with expired security clearances — to access the classified propellant processing area. The company's HR manager tells you this is a "transition oversight" and asks you not to report it to the Ministry of Defence, as it could delay the project launch. The defence project carries significant national strategic importance.

CORE VALUES AT STAKE

National Security

Security Protocols

Integrity of Classified Info

Professional Accountability

Whistleblower Duty

FRAMEWORK FOR ANSWER

Apply **Deontological absolutism**: Security lapses in classified defence installations admit NO trade-off with convenience or project timelines. The **Official Secrets Act, 1923** and **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP 2020)** impose non-negotiable security clearance requirements. Actions: Immediately suspend access for uncleared individuals (you have authority as deputation supervisor); issue a written incident report to the Defence Ministry/DDP within 24 hours; initiate a security audit under DRDO's classified information protocol; do NOT suppress the report irrespective of project impact. Project delay is recoverable; a security breach is not — it can compromise the missile system's design integrity and national security for decades.

Case Study 3: Biomedical Data Sharing — ICMR and the International Partner

SCENARIO

As a senior official in ICMR managing the newly signed ICMR-AMED-DST MoC with Japan, you receive a request from AMED to share de-identified patient genomic data from India's National Genomics Grid (covering 50,000 patients from 12 Indian hospitals) for a joint cancer research study. The research purpose is legitimate, but the data sharing would involve transferring Indian citizens' sensitive health data to Japanese servers. India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023 restricts cross-border transfer of personal data to countries not in the "white list" notified by the government — Japan is not yet on this list. Your director says, "This is academic collaboration — DPDP doesn't apply to research." You are not certain this interpretation is correct.

CORE VALUES AT STAKE

CORE VALUES AT STAKE

Data Privacy (DPDP Act 2023)

Scientific Collaboration

Citizen Rights

National Data Sovereignty

Epistemic Integrity

FRAMEWORK FOR ANSWER

Apply **Rule-of-Law principle + Epistemic humility**: When you are uncertain about a legal interpretation, you have a duty to seek legal clarity before acting — not to proceed on an optimistic reading. Actions: Seek written legal opinion from Ministry of Law/Attorney General's

office on DPDP applicability to cross-border health data in research context; simultaneously request Japan to be added to the DPDP white list through the MoC diplomatic channel; proceed only after legal clearance; in the interim, offer to share aggregate, non-identifiable summary statistics (not individual genomic data). Scientific progress must not outpace the legal protections owed to research participants.

Case Study 4: The Education Grading Temptation

SCENARIO

You are the State Nodal Officer responsible for compiling data for PGI 2.0 (Performance Grading Index) for your state's submission to the Ministry of Education. Your Chief Secretary tells you the State wants to move up from "Prachesta" (Level 3) to "Uttam" (Level 2) this year for political reasons — the Chief Minister wants to announce progress before state elections. During data compilation, you find that some districts have inflated their infrastructure and digital learning scores without backing evidence. The Chief Secretary suggests "reviewing" the numbers upward to reflect "ground-level improvement not yet captured in paperwork."

CORE VALUES AT STAKE

Data Integrity

Accountability

Objectivity

Courage vs. Political Pressure

Public Trust in Education Data

FRAMEWORK FOR ANSWER

Apply **Integrity-based public administration model**: PGI 2.0 data flows to MoE and is published nationally — manipulating it is a fraud on the public and violates the Prevention of Corruption Act's "abuse of position for undue advantage" clause. Moreover, inflated data would direct policy interventions to the wrong districts, perpetuating the actual problem. Actions: Refuse to alter data; submit authentic numbers; document the Chief Secretary's instruction in writing and send a confidential memo to the Principal Secretary (Education) and the state's Chief Vigilance Officer; offer to present a "progress narrative" in the qualitative remarks section highlighting genuine improvements. Honesty in data is not a bureaucratic nicety — it is the foundation of evidence-based governance.

15 STATEMENT-BASED MCQS (UPSC STYLE)

Question 1

GS2 — India-EU FTA

With reference to the India–EU Free Trade Agreement concluded in January 2026, consider the following statements:

1. It is the largest trade agreement ever concluded by India.
2. The agreement entered into force immediately upon conclusion of negotiations.
3. It creates a free trade area covering approximately two billion consumers.

(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 incorrect: Concluded ≠ In force. After conclusion, the FTA must be ratified by the EU Council, European Parliament, and India's Cabinet before entering force. Statements 1 (largest FTA for both sides) and 3 (EU ~450 mn + India ~1.4 bn = ~2 bn consumers) are correct.

Question 2

GS2 — India-UK CETA

Which of the following statements about the India–UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is/are correct?

1. It is India's first comprehensive trade agreement with a G7 nation.
2. The agreement liberalises 100% of UK tariffs on Indian goods from day one.
3. It is the UK's most significant bilateral trade deal since leaving the European Union.

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) — Statement 2 is incorrect: 99% (not 100%) of UK tariffs on Indian goods are liberalised, and this occurs over a phased timeline, not from day one. Statements 1 and 3 are correct.

Question 3

GS3 — ZSI

With reference to Zoological Survey of India's Animal Discoveries 2025, consider the following:

1. India added 709 new animal species in 2025 — the highest annual count ever.
2. All 709 species were previously unknown to science globally.
3. Insects accounted for the majority (over 50%) of new species recorded.

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (c) — Statement 2 is incorrect: Of 709, only 483 are new to science globally; 226 are already known globally but newly recorded in India. Statements 1 (record count) and 3 (insects = 417 species, ~59%) are correct.

Question 4

GS3 — Biodiversity

With reference to the Mishmi Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor taxicolor*), which of the following is correct?

1. It is the state animal of Arunachal Pradesh.
2. It is classified as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List.
3. It belongs to the family Cervidae (deer family).

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 2 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — Statement 2 is incorrect: Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor*) is classified as 'Vulnerable', not Endangered. Statement 3 is incorrect: Takin belongs to family Bovidae (cattle/goats), not Cervidae (deer). Only Statement 1 (state animal of Arunachal Pradesh) is correct.

Question 5

GS3 — GDP / Economy

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is a leading economic indicator. Which of the following statements about India's Manufacturing PMI is/are correct?

1. A PMI reading above 50 indicates expansion in manufacturing activity.
2. The PMI is compiled by the government's Central Statistical Office (CSO).
3. India's Manufacturing PMI remained above 50 for 37 consecutive months through June 2026.

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — Statement 2 is incorrect: PMI is a private survey compiled by HSBC/S&P Global, not by the CSO. CSO compiles GDP, IIP, and national accounts. Statements 1 and 3 are correct.

Question 6

GS3 — GST

Consider the following statements about the GST Council of India:

1. It is a constitutional body created under Article 279A of the Constitution.
2. The Union Finance Minister chairs the GST Council.
3. Decisions of the GST Council require a simple majority of its total membership.

(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 incorrect: GST Council decisions require a three-fourths weighted majority — the Centre's vote has 1/3 weight and states' combined vote has 2/3 weight. Not a simple majority. Statements 1 and 2 are correct.

Question 7

GS2 — Governance / Education

The Performance Grading Index (PGI) for States/UTs in school education is released by which of the following?

(a) UGC (University Grants Commission)

(b) Ministry of Education

(c) NITI Aayog

(d) National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

Answer: (b) — PGI 2.0 for States/UTs is released by the Ministry of Education (Department of School Education and Literacy). UGC covers higher education; NAAC accredits colleges/universities; NITI Aayog has separate governance indices.

Question 8

GS3 — Defence

With reference to India's Positive Indigenisation List (PIL) in defence, consider the following:

1. Items on the PIL are banned from import and must be procured from Indian manufacturers.
2. The PIL includes only weapon systems developed by DRDO.
3. Private sector companies are permitted to manufacture items on the PIL.

(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 incorrect: PIL covers a broad range of defence items — not only DRDO-developed systems. It includes ammunition, equipment, vehicles, electronics, etc. Statements 1 (import embargo) and 3 (private sector permitted, as demonstrated by Adani Defence in Shivpuri) are correct.

Question 9

GS3 — S&T / Astrophysics

The Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) is:

1. An autonomous research institute under the Department of Science and Technology (DST)
2. Located in Bengaluru, Karnataka
3. Part of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — Statement 3 is incorrect: IIA is NOT part of CSIR. It is an autonomous institute under DST. CSIR institutes include NCL, NGRI, IICT etc. IIA (Bengaluru) and IUCAA (Pune) are DST autonomous institutes for astrophysics. Statements 1 and 2 are correct.

Question 10

GS2 — Sports Policy

With reference to the Khelo India Programme, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Khelo India Youth Games are organised for athletes under 18 years of age.
2. The programme is managed by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
3. Khelo India University Games is a separate component targeting college-level athletes.

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 2 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d) — All three statements are correct. KIYG targets under-18 athletes; KIUG (Khelo India University Games) targets college athletes; both are under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. The umbrella Khelo India programme also covers Winter Games and Para Games.

Question 11

GS3 — Indian Pharmacopoeia

The Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP) is significant because:

1. It sets the quality standards for drugs marketed in India under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
2. Drugs not conforming to IP standards are considered "not of standard quality."
3. It is published by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).

(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 incorrect: IP is published by the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC), not CDSCO. CDSCO is the drug licensing/approval authority; IPC sets quality standards. Both are under MoHFW but are distinct bodies. Statements 1 and 2 are correct.

Question 12

GS3 — GDP

India's GDP grew at 7.7% in FY2025-26. Which of the following best describes the base year for India's GDP calculation at present?

(a) 2004-05

(b) 2011-12

(c) 2017-18

(d) 2020-21

Answer: (b) — India currently uses 2011-12 as the base year for GDP calculation (adopted in 2015, replacing the 2004-05 base). A new base year revision (to 2022-23) has been discussed by the National Statistical Commission but was not yet implemented as of early 2026.

Question 13

GS2 — India-Japan

India and Japan share a 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership'. AMED (Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development) recently signed an MoC with ICMR and DST. Which of the following best describes AMED's mandate?

(a) Japan's nuclear energy research coordination body

(b) Japan's equivalent of India's ICMR — coordinates medical and biomedical research in Japan

(c) Japan's Ministry of Health welfare scheme administrator

(d) Japan's export control authority for pharmaceuticals

Answer: (b) — AMED (Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development) is Japan's central body for funding and coordinating medical and biomedical research — analogous to India's ICMR. Established in 2015. The India-Japan partnership under this MoC covers disease prevention, diagnostics, therapeutics, medical devices, and data sharing.

Question 14

GS3 — ZSI / Biodiversity

Which Indian state recorded the highest number of new animal species in ZSI's Animal Discoveries 2025 report?

(a) Maharashtra

(b) Arunachal Pradesh

(c) Kerala

(d) West Bengal

Answer: (c) — Kerala recorded the highest number of new animal species (98) in ZSI Animal Discoveries 2025, reflecting the Western Ghats' extraordinary biodiversity. Arunachal Pradesh came 4th (67 species). West Bengal (home to ZSI HQ) ranked 2nd. Maharashtra was the 2024 leader but not the 2025 leader.

Question 15

GS2 — Governance

In the context of PGI 2.0 for States/UTs, the highest performance grade is called:

(a) Uttam

(b) Akansha

(c) Daksh

(d) Prachesta

Answer: (c) — PGI 2.0 grade levels (highest to lowest): **Daksh** (951–1000), Uttam (901–950), Ati-Uttam (851–900), Akansha (801–850), Utkarsh (751–800), Prachesta 1/2/3 (701–750 / 651–700 / 601–650). No state has achieved "Daksh" in two consecutive years.

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All 15 MCQs reflect the precision required in UPSC Prelims — where one wrong word in a statement changes the answer. **NEEB 300+ Live PYQ Writing** at theiasakademia.com trains you to dissect each statement methodically and write structured Mains answers on the same topics under timed conditions.



MAINS QUESTIONS — 6 QUESTIONS WITH FRAMEWORKS

GS1 — INDIAN SOCIETY / CULTURE

Q1. CSIR's establishment of an International Centre for Civilizational Studies in Kyrgyzstan centred on the Manas epic and the Mahabharata represents India's use of cultural diplomacy. Discuss how India's civilisational heritage can be leveraged as a tool of soft power in Central Asia. (250 words)

Framework: Define soft power (Joseph Nye — attraction, not coercion) → India's civilisational footprint in Central Asia: Silk Road connections, Manas epic (Kyrgyz national epic) and Indian epics' shared themes, Buddhist heritage in Central Asian Republics, Indic script influences → Tools: Indian Cultural Centres (ICCR), Ayurveda, Yoga diplomacy, Sanskrit connections, Hindi film industry → CSIR angle: Unusual — science body deepening cultural ties = whole-of-government approach → Significance: SCO (India-Kyrgyzstan both members), India's growing Central Asia engagement, countering Chinese BRI soft power → Limitations: Language barriers, geographic distance, limited diaspora → Way forward: Expand ICTs (Indian Cultural Transmission Centres), fellowships for Central Asian scholars.

GS2 — INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Q2. India's conclusion of Free Trade Agreements with the EU and the UK in 2025-26 marks a shift in its trade policy from caution to strategic engagement. Analyse the opportunities and risks these agreements present for India's economy and domestic industries. (250 words)

Framework: Context: India's historically cautious FTA approach (ASEAN FTA 2010 — import surge concerns) vs. 2022-26 acceleration (Australia ECTA, UAE CEPA, UK CETA, EU FTA) → Opportunities: Market access for IT/BPM, pharma, textiles, gems & jewellery; services liberalisation (Mode 4 — skilled workers); FDI attraction; technology transfer; WTO-plus standards → Risks: Dairy/agricultural sector (UK scotch whisky = India dairy trade-off); auto component sector (cheaper EU cars); government procurement opening = threat to local MSMEs; data localisation friction; IPR pressures (pharma patents vs. compulsory licensing) → India's safeguards: Phased timelines (7-15 year tariff cuts), Review clauses, Safeguard mechanisms → Conclusion: FTAs require parallel domestic reforms — productivity, MSME competitiveness, digital trade infrastructure — to fully capture gains.

GS2 — GOVERNANCE / EDUCATION

Q3. "Despite multiple frameworks for monitoring school education quality, no state has achieved the highest PGI 2.0 grade for two consecutive years." What does this reveal about the gaps in India's school education governance and what structural reforms are needed? (250 words)

Framework: PGI 2.0's six domains as diagnostic: Where are states failing? (Typically: learning outcomes, digital learning, equity metrics) → Structural gaps: Shortage of trained teachers in rural/tribal areas; inadequate digital infrastructure in aspirational districts; principal/HM leadership deficit; weak school management committees (SMCs); misalignment between data reporting and actual classroom reality → Evidence: ASER reports show 50%+ Class 5 students cannot read Class 2 text even after NEP push → Systemic fixes: Decentralise accountability to block/panchayat level (PGI-D expands this); strengthen pre-service teacher training (NCTE reform); conditional grants tied to PGI improvement (fiscal federalism incentive); independent third-party learning assessments (not self-reported by states) → Constitutional angle: Article 21A (Right to Education), 86th Amendment → Conclusion: PGI 2.0 is necessary but insufficient — shift from input metrics to outcome accountability.

GS3 — SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Q4. India's Zoological Survey of India recorded 709 new animal species in 2025 — the highest ever in a single year. What does this reflect about India's biodiversity and the challenges of conserving species that are still being discovered? (250 words)

Framework: What 709 means: Not an explosion of species — a deepening of survey coverage in under-explored areas (NE India, deep ocean, high-altitude zones) → India as megadiverse country: 8th largest biodiversity on Earth, 5.3% global fauna → Significance: 483 species new to science = each potentially holds medical, ecological, or evolutionary value → Conservation challenge: Species discovered but not yet assessed (no IUCN status, no protection schedule) — the "assessment lag" problem → Kunming-Montreal GBF (2022): 30×30 target (30% land and ocean under protection by 2030) — India's progress toward this → Institutional actors: ZSI (surveys), WII (research), NBSAP (National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan) → Legal framework: Biological Diversity Act 2002 + WPA 1972 Schedule I-VI → Gap: Survey richness does not equal conservation security — need rapid species risk assessment protocols.

GS3 — ECONOMY

Q5. India's GDP grew 7.7% in FY2025-26 yet the IMF has modestly revised FY27 growth down to 6.4%. Does this signal a structural deceleration or a cyclical adjustment? Critically examine the key determinants of India's medium-term growth trajectory. (250 words)

Framework: Distinguish cyclical vs. structural: Cyclical = global headwinds (US tariffs, oil prices, geopolitical uncertainty); Structural = domestic investment, productivity, demographic dividend utilisation → 7.7% FY26 drivers: Private consumption recovery, capex push (government infrastructure), manufacturing PMI 37-month expansion, services export surge → IMF FY27 moderation (6.4%) reasons: Base effect moderation, global slowdown in tech demand, lingering tariff uncertainty, agriculture weather risk → Structural positives: Labour cost competitiveness (China+1), UPI/digital public infrastructure attracting FDI, FTAs with UK/EU opening new markets → Structural risks: Employment quality (jobless growth concerns), agrarian distress (real farm wages stagnant), MSME credit access, bank NPA vigilance → Conclusion: 6.4% IMF forecast is conservative; India's sustained 7%+ growth depends on deepening the manufacturing base (PLI 2.0) and converting demographic dividend into productive human capital through NEP and skilling.

GS4 — ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

Q6. A government negotiator agrees to a significant concession in a trade agreement under political pressure, potentially harming domestic farmers. What ethical principles should guide a civil servant in such high-stakes diplomatic negotiations? How should institutional dissent be channelled without breaching confidentiality obligations? (250 words)

Framework: Contextualise: Civil servants in diplomatic roles carry dual obligations — to their political masters (accountability upward) AND to the public interest (accountability downward/outward) → Ethical principles: Integrity (AIS Conduct Rules — no compromise of public interest for personal/political gain), Impartiality (serve the institution, not individuals), Courage (record dissent even when uncomfortable) → Channelling dissent without breach: Written internal dissent memo (on file, protected communication); briefing the concerned Parliamentary Committee (public accountability mechanism); invoking the Whistleblowers Protection Act 2014 for egregious cases → Confidentiality constraints: Trade negotiations involve classified information — public disclosure is NOT appropriate; internal channels must be exhausted first → Analogies: The ICS tradition of "speaking truth to power" (Sardar Patel's directive to IAS to be politically neutral but not politically

mute); Vineet Narain judgment on institutional accountability → Conclusion: Ethical civil service is not passive compliance — it is principled engagement within institutional channels, with public interest as the north star.

◆ VALUE ADDITION — QUOTES, DATA & ACTS

"Trade is the great civilizer. It is the handmaiden of peace; it unites men of all nations and races as brothers."

— Henry George | Use in: India-EU FTA, India-UK CETA, trade diplomacy answers (GS2/GS3)

"The diversity of life is one of the wonders of our planet. Protecting it is not a luxury but a survival imperative."

— Relevant to ZSI discoveries, Biodiversity Conservation, CBD Kunming-Montreal GBF (GS3 Environment)

"India is the only country in the world where every animal, tree, star, and river has a story — and the story is still being written."

— Contextual | Use in: ZSI Animal Discoveries, India's biodiversity narrative, Mains intro for environment answers

"A nation that cannot manufacture its own weapons will always be at the mercy of those who can."

— Paraphrase, policy principle | Use in: Adani Defence, Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence, PIL, private sector manufacturing (GS3)

"Quality is not an act, it is a habit. And in governance, quality data is the habit that sustains every other good policy."

— Relevant to PGI 2.0, data integrity, UDISE+, education governance (GS2 / GS4 Ethics)

Today's Key Data Points

Indicator	Value	Source
India GDP Growth FY2025-26	7.7% (Q4: 7.8%)	CSO / PIB
IIP Growth (May 2026)	5.1% (5-month high)	Ministry of Statistics
HSBC Manufacturing PMI (June 2026)	54.2 (37th month above 50)	HSBC / S&P Global
GST Collections (June 2026)	Rs 1.95 lakh crore (↑13.9% YoY)	GST Council / Ministry of Finance
IMF India FY27 Growth Forecast	6.4% (revised from 6.5%)	IMF WEO July 2026
India–UK CETA trade boost	£25.5 billion annually (projected)	business.gov.uk
ZSI New Species 2025	709 (483 new to science)	ZSI / Down to Earth
India total documented fauna	1,05,953 species (5.3% global)	ZSI Animal Discoveries 2025
Adani Defence Shivpuri Investment	₹2,500 crore 5,000 jobs	Adani Newsroom / PIB
KIYG 8th edition (2026)	Telangana November 2026 8,000 participants	Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports

Key Acts, Bodies & Frameworks — Today's Context

Act / Body / Framework

Relevance to Today's News

Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020	Enables Adani Defence Shippuri project; Positive Indigenisation Lists I–IV
Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940	IP 2026 (Indian Pharmacopoeia) is the quality standard under this Act
Biological Diversity Act, 2002	ZSI discoveries feed NBA (National Biodiversity Authority) databases; ABS framework
Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 — Schedule I	Mishmi Takin (<i>Budorcas taxicolor</i>): highest legal protection, hunting banned
DPDP Act, 2023	Cross-border health data transfer in ICMR-AMED MoC must comply with data localisation rules
Article 279A (Constitution)	GST Council — 3/4 weighted majority for decisions; cooperative federalism in taxation
Kunming-Montreal GBF (2022)	30×30 target relevant to ZSI species discovery and India's biodiversity conservation commitment
NEP 2020	PGI 2.0 is the accountability instrument tracking NEP school education implementation

THEIAS AKADEMIA Today's ethics cases engage trade-offs between institutional loyalty and public interest — a theme deeply rooted in political philosophy (Rawlsian justice, Kantian duty, utilitarian calculus). **Philosophy Target 300+** at theiasacademia.com trains philosophy optional candidates and GS4 aspirants to deploy these frameworks with philosophical precision.



DIRECT HIT TRACKER — 12 HIGH-PROBABILITY TOPICS

India–EU Free Trade Agreement

GS2 / GS3 — IR & Trade

Concluded Jan 2026; largest FTA for both sides; 2 bn consumers; ratification pending EU Parliament + India Cabinet

Exam Probability

★★★★★

India–UK CETA

GS2 / GS3 — IR & Trade

In force July 15, 2026; India's first G7 FTA; 99% UK tariffs liberalised; post-Brexit trade realignment

Exam Probability

★★★★★

Private Defence Manufacturing

GS3 — Defence / Economy

Adani Defence Shippuri; DAP 2020; PIL; iDEX; ₹50,000 cr export target; dual-use technology governance

Exam Probability

★★★★★

ZSI Animal Discoveries / Biodiversity

GS3 — Environment

709 new species (2025 record); 483 new to science; Kerala leads; India 5.3% global fauna; ZSI under MoEFCC

Exam Probability

★★★★☆

India GDP Growth FY26

GS3 — Economy

7.7% growth; IIP 5.1%; PMI 54.2 (37 months); IMF FY27: 6.4%; fastest-growing major economy

Exam Probability

★★★★☆

GST Collections & GST 2.0

GS3 — Taxation

Rs 1.95 lakh cr June 2026; 13.9% growth; Article 279A Council; 3/4 majority; cooperative federalism in tax

Exam Probability

★★★★☆

School Education Governance

GS2 — Governance

PGI 2.0 for States/UTs; no state at Daksh grade; 73 indicators; NEP 2020 accountability; ASER vs PGI comparison

Exam Probability

★★★★☆

India–Japan Scientific Cooperation

GS2 — IR / GS3 — Health

ICMR-AMED-DST MoC; biomedical research, medical devices; Special Strategic & Global Partnership (2014); DPDP Act data sharing

Exam Probability

★★★★☆

Supermassive Black Holes / Astrophysics

GS3 — S&T

IIA discovery (DST autonomous); LLAGN; radio observations; SKA India (NCRA-TIFR Pune); black hole types

Exam Probability

★★★★☆

Drug Regulation — Indian Pharmacopoeia

GS3 — Health

Mishmi Takin / Eastern Himalayan Wildlife

GS3 — Environment

Khelo India & Sports Governance

GS2 — Social Justice

8th KIYG — Telangana Nov 2026; TOPS scheme pipeline; SAI NCOEs; LA 2028 India

IP 2026 (10th ed); IPC (under MoHFW, Ghaziabad); Drugs & Cosmetics Act 1940; IPC ≠ CDSCO (distinction)

Exam Probability

★★★★☆

Budorcas taxicolor; Vulnerable IUCN; Schedule I WPA; Arunachal state animal; Sikkim corridor sighting; bovid family

Exam Probability

★★★★☆

medal target; cooperative federalism in sports

Exam Probability

★★★★☆

VERIFIED · PART II · 10 JULY 2026

Proof of Precision

All topics fresh. Zero repeats from 09 Jul 2026. Freshness Rule strictly applied.

2

ENVIRONMENT CARDS

8

PLACES MAPPED

4

ETHICS CASES

15

MCQS GENERATED

6

MAINS QUESTIONS

12

DIRECT HIT TOPICS

0

REPEATED TOPICS

Faunal Diversity (ZSI)

Mishmi Takin (IUCN)

8 Places in News

4 Ethics Cases (GS4)

15 UPSC-Style MCQs

6 Mains Questions

Value Addition

12 Direct Hit Topics

✓ FRESHNESS RULE: SOE 2026 NOT used (7-day ban active until 16 Jul 2026) — replaced with ZSI Animal Discoveries 2025 (DTE source)

✓ Lion-Tailed Macaque (used 09 Jul) NOT repeated — today's static species: Mishmi Takin (Budorcas taxicolor taxicolor)

✓ ALL 09 Jul topics blocked: Indonesia/BrahMos, Pinaka, ISRO CE20, CBDC, Current Account, UDISE+, PRAGATI — NONE appear today

✓ Environment Card 1 (Current): ZSI Animal Discoveries 2025 — sourced from Down to Earth, released ~30 Jun 2026

✓ Environment Card 2 (Static): Mishmi Takin — IUCN Red List, WPA 1972, camera trap study Sikkim 2026

✓ All 15 MCQs have one unambiguously correct answer; 4 ethics cases reflect today's actual news events

✓ GoDaddy HTML compliance: No external JS, embedded CSS only, relative map path, HTML5 doctype

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