

MORNING EDITION · 08:00 IST

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

TheIAS Akademia — Daily UPSC Intelligence

Saturday, 18 July 2026

“The Topper’s Last Read. Every Morning.”

PART II CONTENTS

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GS3

Disaster Management · River Ecology · NE India

July 15–18, 2026 · Source: Sentinel Assam / Rozana Spokesman / NDMA

Assam Floods 2026: Brahmaputra Above Danger Level; Dhemaji Railway Bridge Partially Collapses; 46,000 Affected

Why in News: The first major flood wave of the 2026 monsoon has affected over 46,000 people across six Assam districts as the Brahmaputra river breaches danger levels; a railway bridge in Dhemaji district partially collapsed, and nearly 4,000 hectares of agricultural land and 100 villages are submerged, with the flood wave expected to reach Bangladesh within 48 hours.

Background: Assam is India's most flood-vulnerable state; 64% of its land is flood-prone (vs. national average of 12%). Brahmaputra carries the highest sediment load of any major world river; annual floods are worsened by upstream embankment construction, deforestation, and China's Zangmu and Metog dam projects upstream in Tibet altering natural flow patterns.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- **Impact:** 46,000 persons affected | 6 districts (Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Biswanath, Chirang) | ~100 villages submerged | 4,000 hectares crop damage | Railway bridge (Dhemaji) partial collapse | SDRF deployed; NDRF on standby.
- **Brahmaputra ecology:** Carries ~736 million tonnes of sediment/year (world's highest); feeds Kaziranga floodplains (critical for rhinos) and Dibru-Saikhowa NP; annual inundation regenerates grassland ecosystems vital for wild buffalo and elephants.
- **Structural causes:** River embankments (1,500+ km in Assam) built since 1950s prevent short-term flooding but worsen long-term vulnerability; bed level rising due to sedimentation; climate change intensifying monsoon peak flow.
- **India-China dimension:** China's Metog Hydropower Project (60,000 MW, world's largest proposed dam) on Yarlung Tsangpo raises strategic concern; no bilateral water treaty between India and China on Brahmaputra; China shares flood season data as "goodwill" (not treaty obligation).

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Formula: $\text{Flood Vulnerability} = \text{Brahmaputra sedimentation} + \text{Embankment failure} + \text{Deforestation upstream} + \text{Seismic risk (Assam in Seismic Zone V)}$ = structural flood vulnerability. For UPSC: remember Kaziranga floods are "good floods" (ecological) but Dhemaji-type floods are "bad floods" (infrastructure). NDMA vs SDRF vs NDRF: National → State → National Response Force (deployment).

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2021: "India's northeastern states are particularly vulnerable to floods. Examine structural and non-structural measures for flood mitigation." | GS1 2016: "Discuss the geographical factors responsible for the recurrence of floods in Assam."

GS1

GS3

Assam Floods

Brahmaputra

NDMA

Disaster Management

Kaziranga

India-China Water

GS3

Biodiversity · Static Species Card · Wetland Ecology

Static UPSC Topic · Source: IUCN Red List / WWF India / The Federal (Kaziranga Study)

Fishing Cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) — India's Wetland Predator; Kaziranga Now Confirmed Stronghold

Why in News: The first scientific census of the Fishing Cat in Kaziranga National Park (Assam) has confirmed 57 unique individuals across 450 sq km, establishing it as one of the most significant global strongholds for this wetland-dependent felid; findings presented at IWE26 (Indian Wildlife Ecology Conference, Sonapat, July 10–12, 2026).

Background: The Fishing Cat is India's specialist wetland predator — uniquely adapted to aquatic hunting in mangroves, marshes, and reed-beds. It is losing habitat at an accelerating rate as wetlands are converted for aquaculture, agriculture, and urban expansion across its South and Southeast Asian range.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- **Classification:** Scientific name *Prionailurus viverrinus* | Family: Felidae | IUCN: **Vulnerable** | CITES: Appendix II | WPA 1972: Schedule I | State animal of **West Bengal** and **Tripura**.
- **Indian distribution:** Sundarbans (West Bengal & Bangladesh) ~385 individuals | Chilika Lagoon, Odisha ~341 | Bhitarkanika NP, Odisha | Kaziranga NP, Assam ~57 (newly documented) | Dudhwa-Kishanpur, UP | Pilibhit TR, UP.
- **Key adaptations:** Webbed feet (partially); stout body for aquatic ambush; can dive and swim underwater; preys primarily on fish but also frogs, crustaceans, birds; nocturnal and largely solitary.
- **Threats:** Wetland drainage for aquaculture & agriculture; fishing net entanglement; poaching for skin/traditional medicine; habitat loss from Brahmaputra embankment construction (destroys floodplain wetlands); climate change altering monsoon flood dynamics.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Prionailurus = “before nail” (Greek) — retractile claws only partially retract. State animals: West Bengal + ripura = both starting with letters near “Wetland”. IUCN Vulnerable = 3 categories below Extinct; CITES Appendix II = trade regulated (not banned). Contrast: Clouded Leopard (Appendix I, banned); Fishing Cat (Appendix II, regulated).

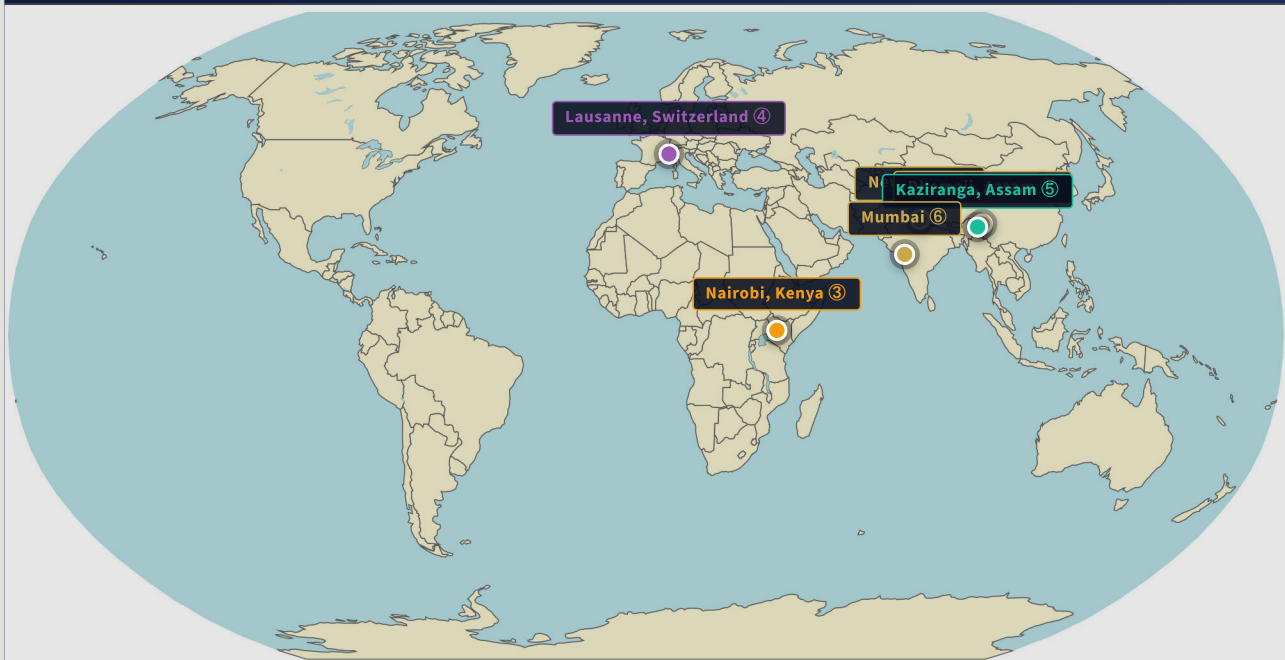
PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2022: “India’s wetland ecosystem: Significance, threats and conservation measures including Ramsar Convention.” | GS3 2019: “CITES Appendix categories and their significance for biodiversity conservation in India.”

GS3 Fishing Cat *Prionailurus viverrinus* IUCN Vulnerable Kaziranga West Bengal Wetland CITES App II

§2 Places in News

PLACES IN NEWS — 18 JULY 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- ① New Delhi (Securities Code, FCRA, DRDO DFP-2026) ● ② Dhemaji, Assam (Brahmaputra Floods 2026)
- ③ Nairobi, Kenya (India-Africa \$100B trade, Africa AI Skilling) ● ④ Lausanne, Switzerland (WADA HQ; Anti-Doping Act alignment)
- ⑤ Kaziranga, Assam (Fishing Cat stronghold; 57 individuals) ● ⑥ Mumbai, Maharashtra (RBI BOP data; CA surplus April 2026)

① New Delhi, India

Securities Markets Code 2025 committee report; FCRA Amendment Bill 2026 listed as Monsoon Session priority; DRDO DFP-2026 framework unveiled by Defence Minister; Parliament session starts July 20. 28.6°N, 77.2°E

② Dhemaji, Assam, India

Partial collapse of railway bridge over Brahmaputra tributary; 46,000 people affected across 6 Assam districts; 100 villages submerged; SDRF deployed; Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh also severely hit. 27.5°N, 94.6°E

③ Nairobi, Kenya

India-Africa bilateral trade officially crossed \$100 billion milestone in Q1 FY27; Africa AI Skilling Initiative (1M youth by 2028) active; India Stack Global integrated into 12 African nations including Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana. 1.3°S, 36.8°E

④ Lausanne, Switzerland

WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) headquarters; National Anti-Doping Act 2022 enforced July 15 brings India’s doping framework in line with WADA Code; all Indian labs must get WADA accreditation. 46.5°N, 6.6°E

⑤ Kaziranga NP, Assam

IWEC26 study confirms 57 unique Fishing Cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) individuals across 450 sq km — first scientific census making Kaziranga a confirmed global stronghold. UNESCO World Heritage Site (2006). 26.6°N, 93.4°E

⑥ Mumbai, Maharashtra

RBI data (released from Mumbai HQ): India’s Current Account surplus \$4.7B in April 2026; monthly remittances record \$16B; services exports \$18.6B; RBI CRAR at 17.7% (multi-decadal high). 19.1°N, 72.9°E

§3 Ethics & Integrity (GS4)

Case 1 The Revolving Door

A senior SEBI officer who actively participated in drafting the Securities Markets Code retires and within 6 months joins a top securities law firm that will advise major stock exchanges on Code compliance. His former SEBI colleagues are made uncomfortable by seeing him represent clients they are now regulating. *Values at stake: Post-retirement integrity, conflict of interest, institutional credibility, "cooling-off" period ethics, public trust in regulatory independence.*

Case 2 The Designated Functionary's Dilemma

A government officer appointed to the FCRA "Designated Authority" discovers that one of the NGOs whose assets she must vest is actively running nutrition centres in a conflict-affected tribal area. Vesting the assets immediately (as mandated) will abruptly close the centres. She has discretion on timing but her superior wants instant action for political reasons. *Values at stake: Rule of law vs. humanitarian obligation, procedural discretion, political pressure, vulnerability of beneficiaries.*

Case 3 The Pharma Partnership

A NADA (National Anti-Doping Agency) official receives a proposal from a pharmaceutical company offering free blood-testing equipment to 10 NADA laboratories, significantly reducing the cost of doping tests. In return, the company wants NADA to mention them in its annual report as a "technical partner." India is under pressure to get WADA accreditation for all labs. *Values at stake: Independence of regulatory bodies, conflict of interest, institutional integrity, short-term pragmatism vs. long-term credibility.*

Case 4 The Under-Reported River

An Assam DM is pressured by his state government superior to report only 22,000 flood-affected persons (not the actual 46,000) to minimise media coverage before the Chief Minister's scheduled visit. Under-reporting would reduce the SDRF funds allocated, delaying relief to actual victims. The DM knows the real numbers will come out in NGO and UN reports. *Values at stake: Data integrity, public accountability, courage of conviction, political loyalty vs. public duty, victim dignity.*

? §4 Prelims MCQs (15 Questions)

Q1 The Securities Markets Code 2025 seeks to consolidate which of the following Acts? 1. Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956 2. SEBI Act, 1992 3. Depositories Act, 1996 4. Insurance Regulatory Act, 1999

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

Answer: (a) — The Code consolidates three Acts: SCRA 1956, SEBI Act 1992, and Depositories Act 1996. Insurance is regulated separately under IRDAI Act 1999.

Q2 Under the Securities Markets Code 2025, SEBI cannot order investigation after how many years from date of contravention?

(a) 5 years (b) 6 years (c) 8 years (d) 10 years

Answer: (c) 8 years — The Code introduces an 8-year statutory limitation bar on SEBI investigations, the first such bar in Indian securities law.

Q3 FCRA 2010 is administered by which Ministry in India?

(a) Ministry of Finance (b) Ministry of External Affairs (c) Ministry of Home Affairs (d) Ministry of Corporate Affairs

Answer: (c) Ministry of Home Affairs — FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) 2010 is administered by MHA, not MoF or MEA, though it involves foreign funding.

Q4 The National Anti-Doping Act 2022 (No. 15 of 2022) was brought into force on which date?

(a) August 12, 2022 (b) January 1, 2024 (c) July 15, 2026 (d) July 16, 2026

Answer: (c) July 15, 2026 — The Act was passed on August 12, 2022, but enforced from July 15, 2026. The Amendment Act 2025 came into force one day later, July 16, 2026.

Q5 WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) is headquartered at:

(a) Geneva, Switzerland (b) Lausanne, Switzerland (c) Montreal, Canada (d) Vienna, Austria

Answer: (c) Montreal, Canada — WADA is headquartered in Montreal; its European office is in Lausanne. A common trap: Lausanne hosts IOC, CAS (Court of Arbitration for Sport), not WADA HQ.

Q6 The Fishing Cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) is the state animal of which pair of Indian states?

(a) West Bengal and Assam (b) West Bengal and Tripura (c) Tripura and Meghalaya (d) Assam and Odisha

Answer: (b) West Bengal and Tripura — Fishing Cat is the state animal of West Bengal (since 2012) and Tripura. Assam's state animal is the one-horned rhinoceros.

Q7 Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) between India and Bangladesh was established in:

(a) 1960 (b) 1972 (c) 1977 (d) 1996

Answer: (b) 1972 — JRC was established immediately after Bangladesh's independence in 1971, formalised in 1972. The 1977 Ganges Waters Agreement came later; the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty is a separate instrument.

Q8 The Brahmaputra river is called 'Jamuna' in which country, and what is its name in Tibet?

(a) Bangladesh; Yarlung Tsangpo (b) Myanmar; Irrawaddy (c) Bangladesh; Koshi (d) China; Lancang

Answer: (a) — Yarlung Tsangpo (Tibet/China) → Siang/Dihang (Arunachal) → Brahmaputra (Assam) → Jamuna (Bangladesh). Lancang is the Mekong in China.

Q9 India-Africa bilateral trade crossing \$100 billion is associated with which initiative for digital infrastructure?

(a) Africa Digital Gateway (b) India Stack Global (c) e-RUPI Africa (d) Digital Bharat Initiative

Answer: (b) India Stack Global — India's digital public infrastructure (UPI, Aadhaar-equivalent, DigiLocker) exported globally including into 12 African nations under the "Digital Africa" declaration (2026).

Q10 Which of the following correctly describes India's Current Account?

1. A current account surplus always means a healthy economy.
2. Remittances are part of the current account.
3. Services exports are NOT counted in the current account.

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

Answer: (a) — Only statement 2 is correct. $CA = Goods + Services + Primary Income + Secondary Income$ (remittances). CA surplus can signal import suppression (not always healthy). Services are counted in CA.

Q11 The FCRA Amendment Bill 2026 creates a 'Designated Authority' primarily to:

(a) Approve foreign contributions above ₹1 crore (b) Vest and manage assets of NGOs with cancelled/expired FCRA registration (c) Grant FCRA registration to new NGOs (d) Investigate foreign-funded political parties

Answer: (b) — The Designated Authority manages provisional and permanent vesting, supervision and disposal of foreign contributions and assets of organisations whose FCRA registration is cancelled, surrendered, or expired.

Q12 DRDO DFP-2026 refers to:

(a) Defence Funding Programme 2026 (b) Delegation of Financial Powers to DRDO 2026 (c) Defence Frontier Projects 2026 (d) DRDO Future Projects 2026

Answer: (b) — DFP = Delegation of Financial Powers to DRDO; the 2026 version upgrades the empowerment framework, reducing approvals needed for technology development expenditure.

Q13 Kaziranga National Park (Assam), recently confirmed as a Fishing Cat stronghold, is located primarily on the floodplains of which river?

(a) Manas (b) Barak (c) Brahmaputra (d) Lohit

Answer: (c) Brahmaputra — Kaziranga lies on the south bank of the Brahmaputra; annual floods are ecologically beneficial for the park, regenerating short grass habitat for rhinos and elephants.

Q14 India topped the global doping offenders list maintained by:

(a) WADA (b) IOC (c) AIU (Athletics Integrity Unit) (d) NADA

Answer: (c) AIU (Athletics Integrity Unit) — est. 2017 under World Athletics; independent body investigating doping and corruption in athletics. India has topped its doping list consecutively.

Q15 China's Metog (Motuo) Hydropower Project on the Yarlung Tsangpo concerns India primarily because:

(a) It diverts water to Pakistan (b) It may alter flow and sediment load of the Brahmaputra in Assam (c) It generates electricity for Bangladesh (d) It blocks navigation on the Brahmaputra

Answer: (b) — Metog dam will create a large reservoir upstream, potentially altering seasonal flood pulses and reducing sediment load reaching Assam — affecting Kaziranga's ecology and Assam's agriculture. No navigation treaty exists.

THEIAS AKADEMIA Q5 (WADA vs Lausanne) and Q7 (JRC year) are classic Prelims traps. **NEEB 300+ Live PYQ Writing** students: practice timed elimination on river-treaty questions — 3 similar options = check which year. theiasakademia.com

§5 Mains Questions

GS3 · 250W “The Securities Markets Code, 2025, replaces three separate securities laws with a single unified framework. Critically examine the rationale, key changes, and implications for investor protection and market regulation in India.”

Framework: Fragmentation problem (3 laws, 40-year gap) → Key changes (8-year bar, decriminalisation, SEBI-MII separation) → Benefits (legal certainty, faster adjudication, cross-border capital) → Concerns (weakened enforcement? overreach?) → Compare with UK FSMA 2000 model.

GS2 · 250W “The FCRA Amendment Bill 2026 seeks to tighten foreign contribution regulation by creating a Designated Authority. Does this strengthen accountability or shrink civil society space? Discuss.”

Framework: Intent (plugging cancellation gaps, preventing asset misuse) → Mechanism (Designated Authority, provisional and permanent vesting) → Pro-government case (national security, financial transparency) → Civil society concern (chilling effect, political misuse) → Comparative: UK Charity

GS3 · 250W “India’s current account recorded a surplus in April 2026. Is this a sign of structural improvement or a temporary anomaly?

Examine the components and policy implications.”

Framework: CA components breakdown → Drivers (remittances surge, services exports) → Structural concern (high merchandise deficit, energy imports) → CA surplus vs. GDP growth (import compression risk) → Policy: diversify exports, reduce crude import dependence, leverage remittances for development finance.

GS1 · 250W “Assam’s annual floods are both a natural hazard and an ecological necessity. Critically examine the paradox and evaluate the effectiveness of India’s flood management strategy in the Brahmaputra basin.”

Framework: Ecological necessity (Kaziranga renewal, sediment, grasslands) vs. human hazard (64% flood-prone, 46,000 affected 2026) → Current strategy (embankments — why they fail) → Alternative: floodplain zoning, community-based early warning, live with floods philosophy → China Metog dam strategic dimension → NDMA Policy 2020.

GS2 · 250W “India-Africa relations are evolving from an aid-based partnership to a digital and trade-driven strategic engagement. Illustrate with recent developments and examine the challenges ahead.”

Framework: Historical (NAM, IAFS-I 2008) → Shift (IAFS-III 2015, \$100B trade FY27, India Stack Global, Africa AI Skilling) → Drivers (Indian diaspora, pharmaceutical exports, IT services) → Challenges (China in Africa competition, IAFS-IV postponed, infrastructure deficit) → Way forward (debt-light FDI, people-centric engagement).

GS4 · 250W “An Assam DM is pressured to under-report flood victims to protect his superior’s political image. Analyse the ethical dimensions and the appropriate course of action.”

Framework: Stakeholders (DM, CM, flood victims, SDRF system, taxpayers) → Consequences of under-reporting (fewer resources, delayed relief, precedent) → Ethical frameworks: Deontological (duty of truthful reporting), Consequentialist (victims lose most), Virtue (what integrity demands) → Whistleblower protections → Recommended action with procedural steps.

§6 Answer Writing Value Addition

“India must learn to live with its rivers, not fight them.” — Brahmaputra Board Policy Document, Ministry of Jal Shakti (2024)

“India’s anti-doping regime has long been hobbled by weak institutional design. The 2022 Act, now in force, is not a cure — it is the beginning of one.” — SCC Online Legal Commentary, July 2026

Data anchor — India-Africa: \$100B bilateral trade (Q1 FY27) | India’s 4th largest FDI source to Africa (AfDB) | 3M+ Indian diaspora in Africa | India Stack in 12 nations | Africa AI Skilling: 1M youth by 2028 | IAFS-III (2015) pledged \$600M credit — now superseded by \$10B+ commercial framework.

Data anchor — Assam Floods: 64% of Assam’s land is flood-prone (national avg: 12%) | 1,500+ km of embankments in Assam since 1953 | Brahmaputra sediment load: 736 million tonnes/year (world highest) | Kaziranga inundates 80-90% annually — ecologically beneficial | SDRF 2026 corpus: ₹32,000 crore nationally.

§7 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

Securities Markets Code 2025

GS2/GS3 · Regulation

★★★★★

SCRA+SEBI Act+Depositories; 8-yr bar; decriminalise; MII oversight

FCRA Amendment Bill 2026

GS2 · Governance

★★★★☆

Designated Authority; asset vesting; MHA; Monsoon Session priority

Anti-Doping Act 2022 in force

GS2 · Statutory Body

★★★★★

NADA statutory; WADA code; Amendment Act Jul 16; AIU list

DRDO DFP-2026

GS3 · Defence R&D

★★★★☆

Financial delegation; ₹29,100cr budget; Rajnath Singh; MoD

Assam Floods 2026

GS1/GS3 · Disaster

★★★★☆

Brahmaputra; 46,000 affected; Dhemaji bridge; NDMA; JRC

India-Africa \$100B Trade

GS2 · IR

★★★★★

Q1 FY27; India Stack Global; Africa AI Skilling; IAFS Memory Hook

India CA Surplus April 2026

GS3 · Economy

★★★★★

\$4.7B surplus; remittances \$16B; services \$18.6B; BOP components

Fishing Cat (Prionailurus)

GS3 · Biodiversity

★★★★☆

IUCN Vulnerable; WB+Tripura state animal; 57 in Kaziranga; CITES App II

JRC India-Bangladesh

GS2 · IR/Water

India Stack Global — Africa

GS2/GS3 · Tech Diplomacy

WADA & AIU Distinction

GS3 · Sports Governance

Brahmaputra China Dimension

GS2 · IR/Water

★★★★☆

est. 1972; Brahmaputra flood data sharing; Sylhet-Mymensingh risk

★★★★★

DPI export; 12 African nations; UPI+Aadhaar equivalent; Digital Africa

★★★★☆

WADA HQ Montreal (not Lausanne); AIU est. 2017; India tops AIU list

★★★★☆

Metog dam; Yarlung Tsangpo; no India-China water treaty; goodwill data sharing

★ THEIAS AKADEMIA — PROOF OF PRECISION

UPSC CSE Prelims 2026 Results

In what critics called the most unpredictable Prelims paper in a decade —

48

QUESTIONS FROM
ANTIM ASSURED 100+

7

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

6

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE CLASS

Our students had seen 48 questions before the paper was opened.

This is not luck. This is TheIAS Akademia.

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