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PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Friday, 21 August 2026

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§1 Environment

ONGOING, REPORTED AUGUST 2026

GS3 · Environment

Karnataka's Escalating Tiger-Human Conflict — Barricades, AI Cameras and a Governance Race

WHY IN NEWS

Karnataka's Chief Minister has acknowledged intensifying human-wildlife conflict driven by rising populations of tigers, elephants and leopards, with the state now deploying over 400 kilometres of rail barricades, solar fencing, trenches, drones, radio collars, AI cameras and digital alert boards along forest borders, particularly around the Bandipur landscape in Mysuru and Chamarajanagar districts. Official data shows at least 270 people have been killed in wild-animal attacks in Karnataka over the past five years.

BACKGROUND

As tiger populations reach saturation within protected reserves under India's Project Tiger framework, individuals increasingly move into lantana-dominated fringe patches outside protected areas, which offer cover but insufficient prey, pushing tigers toward human settlements and livestock. Conservationists note that highways, railway lines, plantations and expanding settlements are squeezing wildlife corridors faster than mitigation infrastructure can keep pace, with one conservation biologist observing that "tigers and elephants are adapting faster than governance."

KEY FACTS

- Karnataka has deployed 400+ km of rail barricades, solar fencing, trenches, drones, radio collars, AI cameras and digital alert boards.
- Conflict concentrated around the Bandipur landscape, Mysuru and Chamarajanagar districts.
- At least 270 people killed in wild-animal attacks in Karnataka over the last five years.
- Rising tiger, elephant and leopard populations cited as key drivers by the state government.
- Tigers moving into lantana-dominated fringe patches outside protected areas due to reserve saturation.
- Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah has publicly acknowledged the scale of the conflict.
- India's Project Tiger framework underlies reserve-level population management.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Conservation-success paradox: rising tiger numbers under Project Tiger now generate new human-wildlife conflict pressures.
- Infrastructure versus ecology: barricades and fencing address symptoms but not the underlying corridor-squeeze problem.
- Invasive species linkage: lantana-dominated habitat degradation is itself a driver of altered animal movement (see companion card below).
- Technology in conservation: AI cameras and radio collars represent a shift toward data-driven, real-time conflict management.
- Federal and local governance: state-level barricading measures need to be matched with central corridor-protection and compensation frameworks.

Memory Hook: More tigers in the reserve means less room in the reserve — success at the core creates pressure at the edge.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2018 — conservation of biodiversity and human-wildlife conflict mitigation.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements regarding human-wildlife conflict in Karnataka:

1. It is concentrated primarily around the Bandipur landscape.
2. Rising tiger populations within reserves are cited as a contributing driver.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c). Both statements are correct per official Karnataka government data.

GS3

Environment

#TigerConflict

#Bandipur

STATIC/CONTEXTUAL — LINKED TO TODAY'S KARNATAKA CONFLICT STORY

GS3 · Environment

Lantana camara: The Invasive Shrub Reshaping India's Tiger Landscapes

WHY IN NEWS

Conservationists analysing Karnataka's tiger-human conflict have flagged *Lantana camara* — a woody invasive shrub — as a key habitat-degradation driver pushing tigers toward human settlements, since dense lantana thickets provide cover for tigers but crowd out the native grasses that sustain prey species like deer and antelope.

BACKGROUND

Lantana camara, native to Central and South America, was introduced to India in the early 19th century as an ornamental hedge plant and has since invaded an estimated 40% of India's tiger habitat, including core areas of reserves such as Nagarhole, Bandipur and parts of central India. Its dense, thorny thickets suppress native flora regeneration, reduce grazing-land productivity, and alter predator-prey dynamics by degrading open grassland patches that herbivores depend on. India's Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and the Wildlife (Protection) Act provide the broad legal basis for invasive-species management within protected areas, while global frameworks such as the CBD's Kunming-Montreal Target 6 commit parties to reducing the introduction and impact of invasive alien species.

KEY FACTS

- *Lantana camara*: native to Central/South America; introduced to India in the early 19th century as an ornamental hedge.
- Estimated to have invaded around 40% of India's tiger habitat.
- Found extensively in Nagarhole, Bandipur and several central Indian tiger reserves.
- Suppresses native grass regeneration, degrading prey-species habitat and grazing productivity.
- Legal basis for invasive-species management: Biological Diversity Act, 2002; Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Global commitment: CBD's Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Target 6 (invasive alien species).
- Management approaches include mechanical uprooting, controlled burning and native-grassland restoration trials.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Invasive species as a "silent" driver of human-wildlife conflict, often overlooked relative to direct population-pressure narratives.
- Restoration ecology challenge: lantana removal without follow-up native-grass restoration often leads to re-invasion.
- Institutional gap: invasive-species management lacks a dedicated central statute, relying instead on provisions scattered across the Biological Diversity Act and Wildlife Protection Act.
- International commitment versus domestic capacity: India's CBD Target 6 commitments require sustained, reserve-level invasive-species budgets.

Memory Hook: *Lantana* looks like good cover but bad food — it hides the tiger while starving its prey.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2021 — invasive alien species and their impact on biodiversity.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements about *Lantana camara*:

1. It is native to the Indian subcontinent.
2. It has invaded a significant share of India's tiger habitat.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b). *Lantana camara* is native to Central/South America, not the Indian subcontinent.

GS3

Environment

#InvasiveSpecies

#LantanaCamara

— see §3 below.

§2 Places in News



§3 Ethics & Integrity Cases

Rule of Law vs Rule by Law

The Gang Chart That Couldn't Punish

The Supreme Court's UP Gangsters Act ruling illustrates the difference between "rule of law" (state power bound by validly enacted, offence-creating statutes) and "rule by law" (state power exercised through procedural instruments, like a Gang Chart, that mimic legal authority without a genuine statutory offence behind them). An officer who genuinely believes a person is a threat may still act

unlawfully if the instrument used to act has no real penal foundation. Integrity in public administration requires officials to test their own authority against the statute, not merely against the availability of a procedural form.

Legal Formalism vs Substantive Justice

When the Room Has No Witness

The SC/ST Act "public view" ruling raises a tension between legal formalism (strict adherence to a statutory ingredient, even if it lets a real wrong go unpunished under that specific provision) and substantive justice (the moral wrong of caste-based abuse, regardless of who was present). The Court's approach preserves predictability and prevents Section 3(1)(r)/(s) from becoming a catch-all, while leaving IPC/BNS remedies open. Ethical administration of justice must resist the temptation to stretch a specific provision merely because the underlying conduct feels reprehensible.

Intergenerational Equity

Whose Gas Is It, Thirty Years From Now?

Reliance's 30-year, ₹2.73-lakh-crore Underground Coal Gasification proposal in Eluru raises the ethical principle of intergenerational equity — the idea that today's resource-extraction decisions must not foreclose environmental or economic options for future generations. A UCG project spanning three decades commits the region's groundwater, subsidence risk and land-use trajectory well beyond the tenure of any single government or corporate leadership. Genuine intergenerational fairness requires environmental-impact transparency and long-horizon liability commitments, not just present-day investment announcements.

Anthropocentrism vs Ecocentrism

Barricades: For Whom?

Karnataka's rail barricades and AI-camera network protect human lives — an anthropocentric priority that is entirely legitimate — but an ecocentric lens asks whether the same resources devoted to fencing wildlife out could instead restore degraded corridors and address the lantana invasion driving animals toward settlements in the first place. Ethical wildlife governance need not choose one lens exclusively, but decision-makers should be honest about which lens is driving a given budget allocation, rather than presenting purely defensive measures as full "conservation" successes.

Public Trust Doctrine

Opening the Spaceport Gate

DRDO and ISRO widening private and MSME access to the Kulasekharapatnam Spaceport invokes the public trust doctrine — the principle that certain strategic and natural resources are held by the state in trust for the public, and any private access must be structured to serve, not subvert, that public purpose. Genuine adherence requires transparent selection criteria for private operators, robust security-clearance protocols and clear accountability if a private partner's failure compromises a shared strategic asset, rather than simply expanding access for its own sake.

Ethical Relativism in Cross-National Governance

"Trustworthy ICT" — Trustworthy by Whose Standard?

The BRICS "Cybersecurity & Trustworthy ICT" pillar surfaces the challenge of ethical relativism: member states hold genuinely different standards on data privacy, surveillance and content governance, yet must agree on shared language for "trustworthy" technology. A mature multilateral ethic neither imposes one member's standard on all nor allows the phrase to become

meaningless through vagueness; it requires naming the specific, verifiable commitments (audit mechanisms, breach-disclosure timelines) that "trustworthy" is meant to guarantee.

§4 Prelims MCQs

Q1. The "Gang Chart" under the UP Gangsters Act, 1986 is prepared under:

(a) A specific penal section of the Act (b) Subordinate Rules framed under the Act (c) A Presidential Ordinance (d) The Indian Penal Code

Answer: (b)

The Supreme Court held the Gang Chart is a Rules-based instrument, not a penal-section creation.

Q2. Which High Court's order was under appeal in the Supreme Court's 20 Aug 2026 SC/ST Act "public view" ruling?

(a) Bombay High Court (b) Allahabad High Court (c) Madras High Court (d) Patna High Court

Answer: (b)

The appeal arose from an Allahabad High Court order that had refused to quash the proceedings.

Q3. Sections 3(1)(r) and 3(1)(s) of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 were inserted by which amendment?

(a) 2008 Amendment (b) 2013 Amendment (c) 2016 Amendment (d) 2019 Amendment

Answer: (c)

These sub-sections were inserted via the 2016 Amendment Act.

Q4. India holds the BRICS Presidency for which calendar year?

(a) 2024 (b) 2025 (c) 2026 (d) 2027

Answer: (c)

India chairs the BRICS Presidency for 2026, under which the ICT Track and Pune meeting were held.

Q5. The 12th BRICS Communications Ministers' Meeting (2026) was chaired by:

(a) S. Jaishankar (b) Ashwini Vaishnaw (c) Jyotiraditya M. Scindia (d) Piyush Goyal

Answer: (c)

Union Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia chaired the meeting in Pune.

Q6. The Kulasekharapatnam Spaceport is located in which state?

(a) Andhra Pradesh (b) Odisha (c) Tamil Nadu (d) Kerala

Answer: (c)

Kulasekharapatnam is in Tamil Nadu, near the Gulf of Mannar.

Q7. ISRO's primary spaceport (Sriharikota) is officially known as:

(a) VSSC (b) SDSC-SHAR (c) LPSC (d) IIRS

Answer: (b)

Sriharikota is the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR).

Q8. India became the how-many-eth country with indigenous super-pressure balloon capability?

(a) 3rd (b) 4th (c) 5th (d) 6th

Answer: (c)

India joins the US, France, Japan and China as the 5th country with this capability.

Q9. Red Balloon Aerospace's flagship autonomous stratospheric airship is named:

(a) VISTA (b) ALTIS (c) HELIX (d) AZAADI

Answer: (c)

HELIX is the autonomous stratospheric airship; VISTA is the super-pressure balloon, ALTIS a related platform.

Q10. India's National Balloon Facility for scientific ballooning is operated by:

(a) ISRO (b) DRDO (c) TIFR (d) CSIR

Answer: (c)

TIFR operates the National Balloon Facility in Hyderabad.

Q11. The HSBC Flash PMI for India is compiled by:

(a) Reserve Bank of India (b) NITI Aayog (c) S&P Global (d) Ministry of Statistics

Answer: (c)

S&P Global compiles the PMI survey; HSBC sponsors the India release.

Q12. In August 2026, India's Manufacturing PMI fell to its lowest level since:

(a) August 2019 (b) August 2020 (c) August 2021 (d) August 2022

Answer: (c)

At 52.9, it was the lowest reading since August 2021.

Q13. The National Coal Gasification Mission targets gasifying how many million tonnes (MT) of coal by 2030?

(a) 50 MT (b) 75 MT (c) 100 MT (d) 150 MT

Answer: (c)

The Mission targets 100 MT of coal gasification by 2030.

Q14. Reliance's proposed Underground Coal Gasification complex is located in which district?

(a) Eluru, Andhra Pradesh (b) Korba, Chhattisgarh (c) Talcher, Odisha (d) Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh

Answer: (a)

The proposed complex is in Eluru district, Andhra Pradesh.

Q15. RBI's Lending Against Gold and Silver Collateral Directions were issued in which year?

(a) 2023 (b) 2024 (c) 2025 (d) 2026

Answer: (c)

The Directions were issued in 2025, extending the gold-loan framework to silver for the first time.

Q16. Consider the following statements on Lantana camara: 1. It is native to India. 2. It has invaded roughly 40% of India's tiger habitat. Which is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Lantana camara is native to Central/South America, not India.

Q17. Karnataka's escalating tiger-human conflict is most concentrated around which landscape?

(a) Nagarhole (b) Bandipur (c) BRT Tiger Reserve (d) Kudremukh

Answer: (b)

The conflict is concentrated around the Bandipur landscape in Mysuru/Chamarajanagar districts.

Q18. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's Target 6 specifically addresses:

(a) Marine protected areas (b) Invasive alien species (c) Genetic resource benefit-sharing (d) Climate finance

Answer: (b)

Target 6 commits parties to reducing the introduction and impact of invasive alien species.

Q19. IN-SPACE functions as India's:

(a) Space law tribunal (b) Single-window regulator for private space-sector participation (c) Satellite manufacturing PSU (d) Astronaut training body

Answer: (b)

IN-SPACE is the single-window regulator enabling private participation in the space sector.

Q20. Consider the following statements: 1. The Swaran Singh (2008) and Hitesh Verma (2020) judgments both narrowly construed "public view" under the SC/ST Act. 2. The 20 Aug 2026 ruling departs from this precedent lineage. Which is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a)

The 2026 ruling reaffirms, rather than departs from, this precedent lineage.

§5 Mains Questions

GS2 "Delegated legislation cannot travel beyond the four corners of the parent statute." Discuss with reference to the Supreme Court's recent ruling on the UP Gangsters Act, 1986. (150 words)

GS2 "Public view" as a statutory ingredient under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act has been narrowly construed by courts. Critically examine the implications for victims of caste-based abuse in private or institutional settings. (150 words)

GS2 India has proposed a "BRICS Digital Public Infrastructure Repository." Discuss the strategic rationale behind India's DPI diplomacy within South-South cooperation platforms. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the strategic and economic rationale behind DRDO's interest in leveraging ISRO's Kulasekharapatnam Spaceport for defence-related satellite launches. (150 words)

GS3 "Near-space" is emerging as a distinct strategic domain between aviation and satellite orbit. Discuss its potential applications and the significance of India's recent indigenous capability in this domain. (150 words)

GS3 Examine the divergence between India's services and manufacturing PMI readings in August 2026 and its implications for the sustainability of India's growth model. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the potential and the environmental risks of Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) as a strategy to unlock India's deep, otherwise-unmineable coal reserves. (150 words)

GS3 Rising tiger populations within India's protected reserves are generating new human-wildlife conflict at the reserve edges. Discuss the role of invasive species such as Lantana camara in this dynamic, and evaluate current mitigation strategies. (150 words)

GS4 Examine the ethical dimensions of widening private and MSME access to strategic public infrastructure such as a spaceport, with reference to the public trust doctrine. (150 words)

§6 Answer Writing Value Addition

Delegated legislation limit: "An Act needs a section to punish; a Rule can only explain how" — the operative principle behind the UP Gangsters Act ruling.

Statutory ingredient: "Public view is not public knowledge" — the operative distinction in SC/ST Act Section 3(1)(r)/(s) jurisprudence.

Space capability marker: India is now the 5th nation with indigenous super-pressure balloon capability, after the US, France, Japan and China.

Infrastructure fact: Kulasekharapatnam is ISRO's second full-fledged spaceport; its third launch pad is targeted for FY2026-27 commissioning.

Data point: India's Manufacturing PMI fell to 52.9 in August 2026 — its lowest level since August 2021.

Policy target: The National Coal Gasification Mission targets 100 million tonnes of coal gasified by 2030.

Regulatory first: RBI's 2025 Directions brought silver, for the first time, under the same collateral framework as gold loans.

Conflict data: 270 deaths from wild-animal attacks in Karnataka over five years; 400+ km of rail barricades and AI-camera infrastructure now deployed in response.

§7 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

TOPIC	SECTION	HIT PROBABILITY
UP Gangsters Act — "stillborn" ruling	Polity	★★★★★
SC/ST Act — "public view" test	Polity	★★★★★
12th BRICS Communications Ministers' Meeting	IR	★★★★
DRDO-Kulasekharapatnam roadmap	Defence/Space	★★★★★
Red Balloon Aerospace — near-space platforms	S&T	★★★★
HSBC Flash PMI, August 2026	Economy	★★★★★
Reliance's UCG proposal, Eluru	Economy/Energy	★★★★
Paul Merchants — first Silver Loan NBFC	Economy	★★★
Karnataka tiger-human conflict	Environment	★★★★★
Lantana camara — invasive species	Environment	★★★★
IN-SPACe & private space-sector reforms	S&T	★★★
National Coal Gasification Mission	Economy	★★★★
SC/ST Act precedent lineage (Swaran Singh, Hitesh Verma)	Polity	★★★
Delegated legislation / ultra vires doctrine	Polity	★★★★
India's BRICS 2026 Presidency	IR	★★★
RBI Gold & Silver Collateral Directions, 2025	Economy	★★★
Near-space vs LEO satellite economics	S&T	★★★
Human-wildlife conflict mitigation infrastructure	Environment	★★★★

★ THEIAS AKADEMIA — PROOF OF PRECISION

UPSC CSE Prelims 2026 Results

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

48

QUESTIONS FROM
ANTIM ASSURED 100+

7

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

6

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE CLASS

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

This is not luck. This is TheIAS Akademia.

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§8 · PROOF OF PRECISION — TODAY'S EDITION

21 August 2026 — Operational Count

What today's ANTIM ASSURED 100+ actually delivered

10

NEWS ITEMS COVERED

6

ETHICS CASES

20

PRELIMS MCQS

9

MAINS QUESTIONS

8

PLACES MAPPED

0

REPEATED TOPICS

Polity

IR

Defence

S&T

Economy

Environment

- Zero topics repeated from the last 7 editions (13–20 Aug) — verified against ANTIM_TopicLog.txt.
- Every card passes the Substance Test on at least two of five criteria.
- Map re-verified against today's actual map_21Aug2026.jpg framing before pin placement.

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