

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

EVERY TOPPER'S LAST READ

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Monday, 24 August 2026

INSIDE PART II

- §1 Environment
- §2 Places in News
- §3 Ethics & Integrity Cases
- §4 Prelims MCQs
- §5 Mains Questions
- §6 Answer Writing Value Addition
- §7 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker
- §8 Proof of Precision

← Part I covers: Headlines · Polity & Governance · IR · Defence · S&T · Economy

§1 Environment

STUDY PUBLISHED, REPORTED AUGUST 2026

GS3 · Biodiversity/Invasive Species

India's Online Ornamental Plant Trade: An Overlooked Pathway for Biological Invasion

WHY IN NEWS

A study published in the journal Environmental Conservation, based on data from three of India's largest online plant retailers, compiled an inventory of 1,856 ornamental species on sale and found

that 57 species already declared invasive in India — including *Lantana camara* and *Parthenium hysterophorus* — remain freely available for purchase online, flagging e-commerce as an underexamined pathway for biological invasions.

BACKGROUND

India's regulatory framework for invasive alien species currently rests on a patchwork of instruments — the Biological Diversity Act, 2002; plant-quarantine rules under the Destructive Insects and Pests Act, 1914 as updated by later Plant Quarantine Order provisions; and the Wildlife Protection Act's schedules for a narrower set of alien fauna — none of which specifically regulates the sale of already-known invasive ornamental plants through domestic e-commerce platforms, leaving a clear gap between what science has already flagged as invasive and what remains legally sellable online.

KEY FACTS

- Study published in *Environmental Conservation*, drawing on 3 of India's largest online plant retailers.
- Inventory compiled: 1,856 ornamental species on sale; alien species (1,371) outnumbered native species (480).
- 327 invasive and 639 naturalised alien species were identified among those traded online.
- 57 species already officially declared invasive in India remain available for purchase online, including *Lantana camara* and *Parthenium hysterophorus*.
- Researchers call for stronger regulation, risk-assessment protocols specific to e-commerce, and public-awareness measures.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Regulatory gap: existing plant-quarantine and biodiversity law was not designed with domestic e-commerce platforms in mind, creating an enforcement blind spot distinct from border/import controls.
- Precautionary principle: selling a species already declared invasive is a foreseeable, preventable harm, making a case for platform-level due diligence obligations.
- Data-driven policy opportunity: this is one of the first systematic inventories of India's online plant trade, providing an evidence base regulators could act on directly.
- Global South under-attention: the study's framing echoes a wider critique that invasive-species research and policy attention have focused disproportionately on the Global North, leaving countries like India under-resourced on this specific risk.

Memory Hook: A "buy now" button can be a biosecurity breach — 57 already-invasive species are still just one click away.

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

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements regarding a recent study on India's online ornamental plant trade:

1. The study found that native species outnumbered alien species among plants sold online.
2. The study identified species already declared invasive in India as being available for online purchase.

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). Statement 1 is incorrect – alien species (1,371) outnumbered native species (480); statement 2 is correct.

GS3

InvasiveSpecies

PYQ-2021

#OnlinePlantTrade

#BiologicalInvasion

§2 Places in News

PLACES IN NEWS — 24 AUGUST 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



● ① New Delhi — NCSK Foundation Day, sanitation-worker welfare push

● ② Dhaka — Bangladesh confirms no decision yet on PM Tarique Rahman's visit

● ③ Lisbon — INS Sudarshini's Lokayan 26 port call, India-Portugal naval ties

● ④ Kolkata — GRSE-Yantra India groundbreaking, "buyer to builder" shipbuilding push

● ⑤ Surat Thani, Thailand — Exercise MAITREE-XV joint counter-insurgency drill

§3 Ethics & Integrity Cases

Dignity of Labour and the Ethics of Invisible Work

The Job the Law Banned Twice

Manual scavenging has been formally illegal since 1993 and again since 2013, yet the persistence of the practice, especially in private and informal settings, shows how legal abolition without enforcement and mechanisation can leave the most marginalised workers doing the most degrading work invisibly. NCSK's push for mechanisation is, at its core, an argument that dignity cannot be legislated into existence — it has to be engineered and funded into existence.

Diplomatic Patience and the Ethics of Conditional Engagement

When Silence Becomes a Position

Bangladesh's explicit linkage of a leader-level visit to an unresolved extradition request tests whether conditional diplomacy is principled leverage or brinkmanship that risks freezing an already fragile relationship. The ethical challenge for both sides is to keep channels open even while one issue remains unresolved, rather than letting a single sticking point define the entire bilateral relationship.

Soft Power and the Ethics of Cultural Diplomacy

A Sail Ship's Quiet Argument

INS Sudarshini's goodwill voyages embody a form of diplomacy built on shared training, cultural exchange and visible restraint rather than deterrence or coercion. Choosing to project national presence through 200 trainees learning traditional seamanship, rather than through a warship's firepower, is itself an ethical statement about what kind of global actor India wants to be seen as.

From Dependence to Contribution: The Ethics of Self-Reliant Nationhood

The Builder's Obligation

Rajnath Singh's "buyer to builder" framing carries an implicit ethical claim: that a nation capable of building its own warships has an obligation to also serve the needs of smaller or less capable partner nations, not merely to

profit from them. Whether India's shipbuilding export push lives up to that framing, or slides into pure commercial opportunism, will be tested in how it prices and delivers to partner countries with weaker bargaining power.

Trust-Building Through Military Cooperation

Practising Restraint Together

Exercise MAITREE-XV's explicit anchoring in Chapter VII of the UN Charter is a deliberate ethical framing choice — positioning joint counter-insurgency training as a peacekeeping-oriented capability rather than a show of force against any third country. Sustained, low-visibility cooperation of this kind builds interstate trust more durably than high-visibility displays of hard power.

The Precautionary Principle and Ecological Responsibility in E-Commerce

Who Is Responsible for What a Website Sells?

The finding that 57 already-declared-invasive species remain freely purchasable online raises a genuine question of distributed responsibility: does the ethical burden rest with the regulator that has not updated its rules for e-commerce, the platform that lists the species, or the buyer who has no way of knowing the ecological risk? A precautionary-principle-based ethic would place the first duty of care on whichever actor has the most knowledge and the least cost of avoiding harm — typically the platform and the regulator, not the individual buyer.

§4 Prelims MCQs

Q1. The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) was originally constituted as a statutory body in which year?

(a) 1986 (b) 1993 (c) 1994 (d) 2013

Answer: (c)

NCSK was constituted on 12 August 1994 under a Parliamentary Act.

Q2. The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act was enacted in:

(a) 1993 (b) 2003 (c) 2013 (d) 2019

Answer: (c)

The Act was passed in 2013, following the 1993 dry-latrines ban.

Q3. As per Bangladesh's 22 August 2026 statement, the delay in PM Tarique Rahman's proposed India visit has been explicitly linked to:

(a) A trade dispute (b) The extradition request for Sheikh Hasina (c) A border demarcation issue (d) A visa processing delay

Answer: (b)

Bangladesh tied the delay to India's non-response on extraditing Sheikh Hasina.

Q4. The BRICS Summit being floated as a possible occasion for a Bangladesh-India leader meeting is scheduled to be held in New Delhi on:

(a) 5-6 September 2026 (b) 12-13 September 2026 (c) 20-21 September 2026 (d) 1-2 October 2026

Answer: (b)

The BRICS Summit in New Delhi is scheduled for 12-13 September 2026.

Q5. INS Sudarshini, in the news for its Lisbon port call, is best described as:

(a) A nuclear submarine (b) A sail training barque (c) An aircraft carrier (d) A hospital ship

Answer: (b)

INS Sudarshini is a three-masted sail training ship.

Q6. The "Lokayan 26" voyage of INS Sudarshini spans approximately how many nautical miles?

(a) 10,000 (b) 15,000 (c) 22,000 (d) 30,000

Answer: (c)

Lokayan 26 covers over 22,000 nautical miles across 18 ports in 13 countries.

Q7. Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), which held a groundbreaking ceremony on 23 August 2026, is classified as a:

(a) Private limited company (b) Navratna PSU (c) Mini Ratna defence PSU (d) Joint venture with a foreign firm

Answer: (c)

GRSE is a Mini Ratna defence PSU under the Ministry of Defence.

Q8. Yantra India Limited, referenced alongside GRSE in the 23 August 2026 groundbreaking, was formed from the corporatisation of:

(a) Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (b) The Ordnance Factory Board (c) Bharat Electronics Limited (d) Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders

Answer: (b)

Yantra India Limited is one of 7 PSUs formed from the 2021 corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board.

Q9. Exercise MAITREE, whose 15th edition is underway in Thailand, was first instituted in which year?

(a) 2001 (b) 2006 (c) 2012 (d) 2015

Answer: (b)

Exercise MAITREE was instituted in 2006.

Q10. Exercise MAITREE-XV is conducted within the framework of:

(a) Chapter VI of the UN Charter (b) Chapter VII of the UN Charter (c) The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (d) The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

Answer: (b)

The exercise is conducted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

Q11. SEMICON India 2026, to be inaugurated by PM Modi, is scheduled for:

(a) 17-19 September 2026 (b) 1-3 October 2026 (c) 15-17 August 2026 (d) 5-7 November 2026

Answer: (a)

SEMICON India 2026 runs 17-19 September 2026 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi.

Q12. The outlay announced under "Semicon 2.0" for India's semiconductor ecosystem is approximately:

(a) ₹22,919 crore (b) ₹40,000 crore (c) ₹1.275 trillion (d) ₹54,567 crore

Answer: (c)

Semicon 2.0 carries an outlay of approximately ₹1.275 trillion.

Q13. India's merchandise trade deficit for July 2026 stood at approximately:

(a) \$19.12 billion (b) \$27.5 billion (c) \$30.43 billion (d) \$31.98 billion

Answer: (d)

The July 2026 trade deficit was \$31.98 billion.

Q14. India's July 2026 export growth was primarily led by which sectors?

(a) Textiles and leather (b) Petroleum products, electronics, engineering goods, gems/jewellery (c) IT services exports (d) Automobiles only

Answer: (b)

Export growth was led by petroleum products, electronics, engineering goods, gems/jewellery and agri-marine products.

Q15. The Integrated Multi-Modal Logistics Hub inaugurated with rail connectivity on 23 August 2026 is located at Nangal Chaudhary in which district?

(a) Gurugram (b) Mahendragarh (c) Panipat (d) Hisar

Answer: (b)

Nangal Chaudhary is located in Mahendragarh district, Haryana.

Q16. The Nangal Chaudhary logistics hub project is framed within which national policy framework?

(a) Sagarmala (b) Bharatmala Pariyojana (c) PM GatiShakti / National Logistics Policy (d) UDAN Scheme

Answer: (c)

The hub is aligned with PM GatiShakti and the National Logistics Policy.

Q17. A recent study on India's online ornamental plant trade was published in which journal?

(a) Nature (b) Environmental Conservation (c) Current Science (d) NeoBiota

Answer: (b)

The study was published in the journal Environmental Conservation.

Q18. As per this study, how many species already declared invasive in India were found available for purchase on online plant retail platforms?

(a) 27 (b) 57 (c) 327 (d) 639

Answer: (b)

57 already-declared-invasive species were found available online.

Q19. Among the 1,856 ornamental species inventoried in the study, which category was more numerous?

(a) Native species (b) Alien species (c) Both were equal (d) The study did not classify species by origin

Answer: (b)

Alien species (1,371) outnumbered native species (480).

Q20. India's principal domestic legal instrument governing biological resources and, by extension, invasive alien species policy discussions is:

(a) The Environment Protection Act, 1986 (b) The Biological Diversity Act, 2002 (c) The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (d) The Forest Conservation Act, 1980

Answer: (b)

The Biological Diversity Act, 2002 is the principal instrument in this space.

§5 Mains Questions

GS2 Discuss the persistence of manual scavenging in India despite decades of legal prohibition, and examine the role of mechanisation in addressing this gap. (150 words)

GS2 Examine how linking a high-level bilateral visit to an unresolved extradition request affects the trajectory of India-Bangladesh relations. (150 words)

GS2 Discuss the role of naval sail-training voyages such as INS Sudarshini's "Lokayan" expeditions in India's broader diplomatic and soft-power strategy. (150 words)

GS3 Examine India's transition from being a buyer to a builder of naval platforms, and discuss the challenges in translating domestic shipbuilding self-reliance into a competitive export industry. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the strategic significance of bilateral military exercises such as MAITREE-XV for India's Act East Policy and internal counter-insurgency capability-building. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the significance of the "Semicon 2.0" ecosystem approach for India's semiconductor self-sufficiency goals, distinguishing it from earlier single-project incentive schemes. (150 words)

GS3 Analyse the drivers behind India's widening trade deficit in mid-2026, and discuss the structural policy responses needed to reduce energy-import vulnerability. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the regulatory gaps that allow already-declared invasive alien species to be sold through domestic e-commerce platforms, and suggest measures to close them. (150 words)

GS4 "The ethical responsibility for ecological harm caused by e-commerce platforms is distributed, not singular." Discuss this statement with reference to the online sale of invasive alien plant species in India. (150 words)

§6 Answer Writing Value Addition

Institutional fact: NCSK was constituted in 1994; the Manual Scavengers Act followed in 2013 to ban the occupation itself and mandate rehabilitation.

Diplomatic data point: Bangladesh has explicitly tied the delay in PM Tarique Rahman's visit to India's non-response on the Sheikh Hasina extradition request.

Diplomatic marker: The BRICS Summit in New Delhi (12-13 September 2026) is emerging as the next plausible occasion for an India-Bangladesh leader meeting.

Naval-diplomacy fact: INS Sudarshini's Lokayan 26 covers 22,000+ nautical miles, 18 ports, 13 countries, over a 10-month voyage begun January 2026.

Defence-PSU fact: GRSE is a Mini Ratna defence PSU; Yantra India Limited is one of 7 PSUs carved from the 2021 corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board.

Exercise fact: MAITREE was instituted in 2006; its 15th edition (2026) is framed under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

Policy fact: Semicon 2.0 carries a ₹1.275-trillion outlay across six pillars — design, fabrication, display, packaging, equipment/materials, and R&D/talent.

Research data point: A study in Environmental Conservation found 57 already-invasive species and 1,371 alien species (versus 480 native) on sale via India's online plant retailers.

§7 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

TOPIC	SECTION	HIT PROBABILITY
NCSK Foundation Day & manual-scavenging mechanisation	Polity	★★★
Bangladesh PM visit — "no decision," extradition link	IR	★★★★★
INS Sudarshini's Lokayan 26 — Lisbon port call	IR	★★★
GRSE-Yantra groundbreaking — "buyer to builder"	Defence	★★★★★
Exercise MAITREE-XV, India-Thailand	Defence	★★★
SEMICON India 2026 & Semicon 2.0	S&T	★★★★★
India's July 2026 trade deficit (\$31.98bn)	Economy	★★★★★
Nangal Chaudhary Integrated Multi-Modal Logistics Hub	Economy	★★★
Online ornamental plant trade & invasive species	Environment	★★★★★
Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers Act, 2013	Polity	★★★
BRICS Summit 2026, New Delhi (12-13 Sept)	IR	★★★
Ordnance Factory Board corporatisation (2021)	Defence	★★★
Act East Policy & India-Thailand defence ties	IR/Defence	★★★
PM GatiShakti / National Logistics Policy	Economy	★★★★★
India's semiconductor mission (Semicon 1.0 vs 2.0)	S&T	★★★
Biological Diversity Act, 2002 & invasive species regulation	Environment	★★★★★
India's energy-import vulnerability & Middle East oil prices	Economy	★★★
Naval sail-training diplomacy (Lokayan voyages)	IR	★★★

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.

[JOIN ANTIM ASSURED 100+ →](#)

§8 · PROOF OF PRECISION — TODAY'S EDITION

24 August 2026 — Operational Count

What today's ANTIM ASSURED 100+ actually delivered

9

NEWS ITEMS COVERED

6

ETHICS CASES

20

PRELIMS MCQS

9

MAINS QUESTIONS

6

PLACES MAPPED

0

REPEATED TOPICS

Polity

IR

Defence

S&T

Economy

Environment

- Zero topics repeated from the last 7 editions (17-23 Aug) — verified against ANTIM_TopicLog.txt.
- Every card passes the Substance Test on at least two of five criteria.
- No map_24Aug2026.jpg exists; map_21Aug2026.jpg reused per the user's standing instruction to use a previous date's map file, framing re-verified before pin placement.

ANTIM ASSURED 100+ · TheIAS Akademia · theiasakademia@gmail.com

जय हिंद

