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PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Monday, 27 July 2026

Centre's Restructuring of India's Environmental Clearance Procedure Draws Continuing Scrutiny

Why in News: Two MoEFCC notifications restructuring how a large share of India's industrial and infrastructure projects receive environmental clearance continue to draw expert concern over reduced independent scrutiny, weeks after being issued.

Background: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in India is governed by the EIA Notification, 2006 (under the Environment Protection Act, 1986); the July 2026 changes affect "Appendix VI" expert-committee safeguards that assess project-specific technical and ecological risk before clearance.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Notifications alter Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures for a large share of India's industrial/infrastructure project approvals.
- Concerns centre on weakened "Appendix VI" expertise safeguards used to vet projects before clearance.
- EIA Notification, 2006 issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 remains the parent legal framework.
- Experts flag risk to the quality and independence of scrutiny for projects with significant ecological footprints.

💡 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: EIA clearance in India has two tracks — Category A (Centre-level, via Expert Appraisal Committees) and Category B (State-level, via SEIAA). "Appendix VI" changes here concern how technical expertise is built into these appraisal committees — remember "EAC/SEIAA appraise, MoEFCC/SEIAA finally clear."

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring): "Environmental Impact Assessment — significance and challenges in India." | GS3: EIA Notification 2006 vs draft EIA 2020 controversy.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification in India is issued under which Act? (a) Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (b) Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 (c) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 (d) Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. **Answer: (b).**

Gharial — Critically Endangered Since 2007; Chambal River Holds 68% of the World's Wild Population

Why in News: The Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) is this edition's static species profile, chosen as a companion piece to today's environmental-governance card, since gharial recovery is one of India's most closely watched river-ecosystem conservation stories.

Background: Once found across the Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Mahanadi river systems, the gharial's population has collapsed by roughly 98% in under a century, driven by dam construction, sand mining, and fishing-net entanglement.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- IUCN status: Critically Endangered (since 2007); Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972: Schedule I.
- Chambal River hosts 68% of the world's wild gharial population — the largest concentration globally, with ~500 breeding individuals recorded there.

- Despite release of 5,000+ captive-bred gharials into Indian rivers over past decades, only around 200 breeding adults are estimated to survive in the wild.
- Key threats: dams and embankments disrupting nesting sites, sand mining, and entanglement in fishing gillnets.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: distinguish "Gharial" (fish-eating, thin elongated snout, Critically Endangered) from "Mugger crocodile" (broad snout, generalist diet, Vulnerable) and "Saltwater crocodile" (largest living reptile, found in Bhitarkanika/Sundarbans) — all three occur in India but occupy different threat categories and habitats.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring): "National Chambal Sanctuary and river-reptile conservation." | GS3: Critically Endangered species and Schedule I protections under WPA 1972.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. The Chambal River, which hosts the world's largest wild gharial population, is a tributary of which river? (a) Ganga (b) Yamuna (c) Narmada (d) Godavari. **Answer: (b)** — the Chambal is a major tributary of the Yamuna.

ENV

Gharial

Chambal River

Critically Endangered

§2 · PLACES IN NEWS — 27 JULY 2026

📍 PLACES IN NEWS — 27 JULY 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- ① New Delhi (Nepal CJJ's visit, Parliament resumes)
- ② Kathmandu, Nepal (CJ Sharma returns home)
- ③ Geneva, Switzerland (WTO 8th Trade Policy Review)
- ④ Kochi, Kerala (Operation Southern Readiness 26.2)
- ⑤ Ballari-Guntakal (3rd/4th rail line approval)
- ⑥ Chambal River (Gharial conservation)

① New Delhi, India

② Kathmandu, Nepal

③ Geneva, Switzerland

Nepal CJ Sharma's bilateral meeting with CJI Surya Kant; Parliament resumes for Monsoon Session Day 7.

Nepal Chief Justice Manoj Kumar Sharma returns home after concluding his five-day India visit.

India concludes its Eighth WTO Trade Policy Review; 68 members intervened across two sessions.

④ Kochi, Kerala

Indian Navy hosts Operation Southern Readiness 26.2, a 26-nation maritime security exercise, at Southern Naval Command.

⑤ Ballari-Guntakal, Karnataka-Andhra Pradesh

Cabinet approves ₹1,264 crore for 3rd/4th railway lines on this 46 km economic-corridor stretch.

⑥ Chambal River, Madhya Pradesh-Rajasthan-Uttar Pradesh

Hosts 68% of the world's wild Gharial population; National Chambal Sanctuary spans all three states.

§3 · ETHICS & INTEGRITY CASE STUDIES

Case 1 · Bureaucratic Accountability vs Administrative Capacity

An official facing a ₹250/day penalty under Delhi's new Services Bill for a delay caused by genuine systemic backlog, not personal negligence, must balance accountability with fairness. **GS4 Values:** Natural justice, proportionate accountability, empathy in enforcement.

Case 2 · National Symbols and Pluralism

Legislators extending statutory protection to a national symbol must weigh reverence for shared heritage against concerns that criminal penalties could be misapplied against dissent or minority sentiment. **GS4 Values:** Constitutional patriotism, tolerance, proportionality in criminal law.

Case 3 · Environmental Expertise vs Administrative Speed

A regulator streamlining environmental clearances to speed up infrastructure approval must ensure procedural simplification doesn't erode independent technical scrutiny of ecologically sensitive projects. **GS4 Values:** Objectivity, intergenerational equity, precautionary principle.

Case 4 · Diplomatic Protocol vs Institutional Independence

Judges engaging in cross-border judicial exchanges must maintain the independence and neutrality of their institutions even while building diplomatic goodwill through such visits. **GS4 Values:** Institutional integrity, professional courage, separation of powers.

§4 · PRELIMS MCQS — 27 JULY 2026 (15 QUESTIONS)

Q1. Delhi's new Right of Citizen to Time-Bound and Ease of Delivery of Services Bill, 2026 replaces which earlier law? (a) Delhi Right to Service Act, 2011 (b) Delhi Public Services Act, 2005 (c) Right to Information Act, 2005 (d) Delhi Citizen Charter Act, 2015

✓ Answer: (a) — Delhi's original Right to Service law of 2011.

Q2. Under the Delhi Bill, the maximum penalty on an official for unjustified service delay is: (a) ₹1,000 (b) ₹2,500 (c) ₹5,000 (d) ₹10,000

✓ Answer: (c) — ₹250/day capped at ₹5,000.

Q3. The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026 seeks to extend statutory protection equal to the National Anthem to: (a) The National Flag (b) The National Emblem (c) "Vande Mataram" (d) The Constitution's Preamble

✓ Answer: (c) — "Vande Mataram," India's National Song.

Q4. "Vande Mataram" was originally composed as part of which literary work? (a) Anandmath (b) Gora (c) Ghare Baire (d) Devi Chaudhurani

✓ Answer: (a) — Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's "Anandmath" (1882).

Q5. Nepal Chief Justice Manoj Kumar Sharma's India visit coincided with an international conference marking 60 years of: (a) UNCTAD (b) UNCITRAL (c) WIPO (d) ICSID

✓ Answer: (b) — UN Commission on International Trade Law.

Q6. India's Eighth WTO Trade Policy Review concluded in which city? (a) Geneva (b) Vienna (c) Brussels (d) The Hague

✓ Answer: (a) — Geneva, Switzerland, headquarters of the WTO.

Q7. The WTO's Trade Policy Review Mechanism functions primarily as a tool for: (a) Dispute adjudication (b) Transparency and periodic policy assessment (c) Imposing tariffs (d) Currency regulation

✓ Answer: (b) — it enhances transparency, not adjudication (that is the Dispute Settlement Body's role).

Q8. Operation Southern Readiness 26.2, hosted by the Indian Navy in Kochi, operates under which multinational construct? (a) Quad (b) Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)/CTF 154 (c) BIMSTEC Naval Command (d) IORA Maritime Council

✓ Answer: (b) — Combined Task Force 154, under the Combined Maritime Forces.

Q9. ISRO's GSLV rocket, unlike the PSLV, uses which key technology for heavier payloads? (a) Solid rocket boosters only (b) Cryogenic upper stage (c) Air-breathing scramjet (d) Ion propulsion

✓ Answer: (b) — a cryogenic upper stage enables heavier geosynchronous payloads.

Q10. The Cabinet-approved Ballari-Guntakal 3rd/4th railway line project falls under which national initiative? (a) Bharatmala Pariyojana (b) Sagarmala (c) PM-Gati Shakti National Master Plan (d) UDAN Scheme

✓ Answer: (c) — PM-Gati Shakti National Master Plan for integrated infrastructure.

Q11. The EIA Notification governing environmental clearances in India is issued under which Act? (a) Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 (b) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 (c) Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (d) National Green Tribunal Act, 2010

✓ Answer: (a) — the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Q12. Category A projects under India's EIA process are appraised at which level? (a) District level (b) State level via SEIAA (c) Central level via Expert Appraisal Committees (d) Panchayat level

✓ Answer: (c) — Category A projects are appraised centrally by Expert Appraisal Committees (EACs).

Q13. The Gharial has held which IUCN status since 2007? (a) Vulnerable (b) Endangered (c) Critically Endangered (d) Near Threatened

✓ Answer: (c) — Critically Endangered.

Q14. The Chambal River, hosting 68% of the world's wild gharial population, is a tributary of: (a) Ganga (b) Yamuna (c) Narmada (d) Betwa

✓ Answer: (b) — the Yamuna River.

Q15. Consider the following statements about the Gharial: (1) It is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. (2) It is primarily a generalist predator feeding on mammals. (3) Its population has declined by about 98% in under a century. Which is/are correct? (a) 1 and 3 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

✓ Answer: (a) — statement 2 is incorrect; gharials are specialist fish-eaters, unlike the generalist Mugger crocodile.

§5 · MAINS QUESTIONS — 27 JULY 2026

GS2

Governance

Q1. "Right to Service legislations in India remain a fragmented, state-by-state patchwork rather than a uniform citizen guarantee." Critically examine with reference to Delhi's 2026 Bill. (250 words)

Hints: RTS as a state subject vs RTI as central law; Madhya Pradesh's pioneering 2010 Act; digitisation as an enforcement upgrade; penalty design and moral hazard; need for a possible model central framework.

GS2

Constitutional Values

Q2. Discuss the significance of statutory protection for national symbols, with reference to the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026. (250 words)

Hints: 1971 Act's original scope; equal-respect doctrine (Constituent Assembly, 1950) vs unequal statutory protection until now; balancing reverence with free expression and dissent; comparative symbolism laws in other democracies.

GS2 IR Q3. "Judicial diplomacy is a quiet but important pillar of India's neighbourhood-first policy." Discuss with reference to Nepal Chief Justice Sharma's 2026 visit to India. (250 words)

Hints: institutional trust-building distinct from treaty diplomacy; UNCITRAL's 60th-anniversary judicial exchange; India-Nepal legal-system linkages (common law heritage); comparison with China's growing judicial/legal outreach in Nepal.

GS2 GS3 Q4. Examine the significance of the WTO's Trade Policy Review Mechanism for a large developing economy like India. (250 words)

Hints: TPRM as transparency tool distinct from Dispute Settlement Body; PLI/QCO scrutiny by trading partners; India's DPI and MSME-integration achievements highlighted; balancing industrial policy autonomy with multilateral transparency commitments.

GS3 Maritime Security Q5. Discuss India's growing role in multinational maritime security frameworks, with reference to Operation Southern Readiness 26.2. (250 words)

Hints: CMF/CTF 154 partnership without full membership; complementary role of SAGAR and IFC-IOR; Indian Ocean Region security architecture; balancing multilateral naval cooperation with strategic autonomy.

GS3 Environment Q6. "Procedural simplification of environmental clearance must not come at the cost of independent technical scrutiny." Examine with reference to the 2026 EIA procedural changes and gharial conservation in the Chambal. (250 words)

Hints: EIA Notification 2006 and Appendix VI expert-committee role; ease-of-business vs precautionary principle; river-reptile conservation as an indicator of riverine ecosystem health; sand mining/dam-linked habitat threats to Critically Endangered species.

§6 · ANSWER WRITING VALUE ADDITION

DATA — WTO TRADE POLICY REVIEW

1,094 written questions from 44 members; 68 members intervened across sessions on July 21 and 23, 2026. Use in: GS2/GS3 multilateral trade governance answers.

DATA — BALLARI-GUNTAKAL RAIL LINE

46 km, ₹1,264 crore, 3-year timeline, benefits ~99 villages/~7 lakh population; includes 8 major and 52 minor bridges. Use in: GS3 infrastructure/PM-Gati Shakti answers.

DATA — GHARIAL CONSERVATION

Chambal hosts 68% of global wild population (~500 breeding adults); overall wild population ~200 breeding adults despite 5,000+ captive releases; 98% historical decline. Use in: GS3 species conservation answers.

QUOTE — INDIA AT WTO

"[India's] growing importance in the global economy and its expanding role as a driver of global growth and trade" — Chair, WTO Trade Policy Review Body, on India's Eighth TPR. Use in: GS2/GS3 India's global economic standing answers.

§7 · AKADEMIYA DIRECT HIT TRACKER — 27 JULY 2026

#	TOPIC	GS	PRIORITY	ONE-LINE RECALL
1	Delhi Right to Time-Bound Services Bill 2026	GS2	MEDIUM	Replaces 2011 law; ₹250/day penalty (cap ₹5,000); Delhi Right to Service Commission
2	Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amdt.) Bill 2026	GS2	HIGH	Equal statutory protection for "Vande Mataram" as National Anthem
3	Nepal CJ Sharma's India Visit	GS2	MEDIUM	5-day visit; met CJI Surya Kant; UNCITRAL 60th-anniversary exchange

4	India's 8th WTO Trade Policy Review	GS2/GS3	 HIGH	Geneva; 1,094 questions, 44 members; PLI/QCO scrutiny
5	Operation Southern Readiness 26.2	GS3	 MEDIUM	Kochi; 26 nations; first hosted in India; under CTF 154/CMF
6	ISRO's Seven-Launch FY2026-27 Plan	GS3	 MEDIUM	GSLV F16; Gaganyaan precursors; busiest ISRO year
7	Ballari-Guntakal 3rd/4th Rail Line	GS3	 LOW	₹1,264 crore; 46 km; PM-Gati Shakti; AP-Karnataka corridor
8	MoEFCC's EIA Procedure Restructuring	ENV	 HIGH	Appendix VI expert-safeguard concerns; EIA Notification 2006
9	Gharial	ENV	 MEDIUM	Critically Endangered since 2007; Chambal = 68% of global wild population
10	Assam Floods (toll 68)	GS1/GS3	 MEDIUM	Situation improving; Sivasagar/Charaideo/Jorhat worst-hit; NDRF/SDRF active
11	TPRM vs Dispute Settlement Body	GS2	 LOW	TPRM = transparency review; DSB = binding dispute adjudication — do not conflate
12	National Anthem vs National Song	GS1/GS2	 LOW	Jana Gana Mana (Anthem) vs Vande Mataram (Song) — "equal respect," 1950

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QUESTIONS FROM
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7

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

6

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE CLASS

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