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THURSDAY, 25 JUNE 2026 • DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

PART II • ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER



ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

GS3

GS3

Invasive Species • Forest Ecology • Wildlife

25 June 2026 • Source: Down to Earth / NTCA

Lantana camara Invades 50% of India's Forest Scrublands; NTCA Allocates ₹14 Cr for Removal — Amrabad Tiger Reserve Shows Recovery

What happened: Down to Earth's analysis of India's forests highlights that *Lantana camara* — ranked among IUCN's 10 worst invasive weeds globally — now occupies nearly 50% of India's forest and scrublands, and threatens over 40% of India's tiger range. Dense Lantana thickets form "green deserts," suppressing native grasses, reducing prey availability for tigers, and intensifying human-livestock-tiger conflict as big cats turn to cattle. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has allocated ₹14.04 crore in 2025–26 for Lantana removal across key tiger reserves. Amrabad Tiger Reserve (Telangana) saw tiger numbers rise from 14 (2020) to ~34 (2026) following aggressive Lantana clearance and grassland restoration.

Why it matters for UPSC: Invasive Alien Species (IAS) are a GS3 biodiversity staple. Lantana links directly to human-wildlife conflict, Project Tiger, forest degradation, and India's obligations under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Target 6: eliminate/reduce IAS by 50% by 2030). The NTCA funding and Amrabad success story provide a concrete conservation-policy connect.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- ▶ *Lantana camara*: Native to tropical America; introduced to India as an ornamental plant in the early 1800s under British rule; now classified as one of IUCN's 10 most problematic invasive species globally.
- ▶ Lantana invades 40% of India's tiger range (Shivalik Hills, Central India, Southern Western Ghats) and 50% of forest scrublands nationwide — forming impenetrable thickets that block native grass regeneration.
- ▶ Mechanism: Allelopathy (releases chemicals that inhibit native plant growth) + bird/mammal-dispersed seeds + rapid vegetative propagation = near-impossible to eradicate without active management.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

The "**Lantana Paradox**": Introduced as a beautiful garden plant, it became India's worst forest invader. Remember IAS threats with **LAP**: **L**antana (forest), **A**frican catfish (freshwater), **P**arthenium (grasslands) — three major IAS threatening India's ecosystems. For UPSC: connect Lantana removal to *Project Tiger* success (prey base recovery) and Kunming-Montreal Target 6.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC Prelims 2021: "With reference to invasive alien species in India, which of the following statements is/are correct?" Mains 2019 GS3: "Discuss the impact of invasive alien species on India's biodiversity. Suggest measures for their management." Prelims 2022 Q on Lantana camara characteristics and spread.

GS3

Biodiversity · IUCN Red List · Conservation Policy

Static UPSC Topic · Source: IUCN / BSI / ZSI / MoEFCC

India's National Red List Assessment Initiative 2025–2030: 11,000 Species to Be Assessed; Only 7.2% Fauna Evaluated So Far

What it is: India launched the five-year National Red List Assessment Initiative (2025–2030) — announced at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi — to systematically evaluate the extinction risk of approximately 11,000 species: 7,000 flora and 4,000 fauna. Implementing bodies include the Botanical Survey of India (BSI), Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), and Wildlife Institute of India (WII). India aims to publish National Red Data Books for both flora and fauna by 2030. Currently, only 7.2% of India's fauna and 6.33% of plants (including algae, fungi, microbes) have been assessed — a massive data gap. India has 132 species listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, including the Great Indian Bustard, Gangetic River Dolphin, and Red Panda.

Why it matters for UPSC: IUCN Red List categories (EX → EW → CR → EN → VU → NT → LC → DD) are perennial Prelims questions. The National Red List Initiative links to GS3 biodiversity conservation, Kunming-Montreal GBF Target 4 (halt extinction, protect genetic diversity), and India's biodiversity governance framework. The 7.2% assessed figure underscores the scale of India's conservation data gap — a strong Mains angle.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- ▶ IUCN Red List Categories (9): Extinct (EX) → Extinct in the Wild (EW) → Critically Endangered (CR) → Endangered (EN) → Vulnerable (VU) → Near Threatened (NT) → Least Concern (LC) → Data Deficient (DD) → Not Evaluated (NE).
- ▶ India has 132 Critically Endangered species; 13.4% of assessed fauna is threatened; 289 species are Near Threatened; the GIB (Great Indian Bustard) is CR with fewer than 150 individuals remaining.
- ▶ KM-GBF Target 4: Halt human-induced extinction of known threatened species and reduce extinction rate 10-fold by 2030 — the National Red List directly fulfils this commitment.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

IUCN Red List mnemonic — **"Every Extinct Wild Cat Eventually Vanishes — Never Leaves, Don't Neglect"**: **E**xtinct, **E**xtinct in the **W**ild, **C**ritically **E**ndangered, **E**ndangered, **V**ulnerable, **N**ear Threatened, **L**east Concern, **D**ata Deficient, **N**ot Evaluated. For UPSC: know that "Threatened" = CR + EN + VU (the three quantitative risk categories).

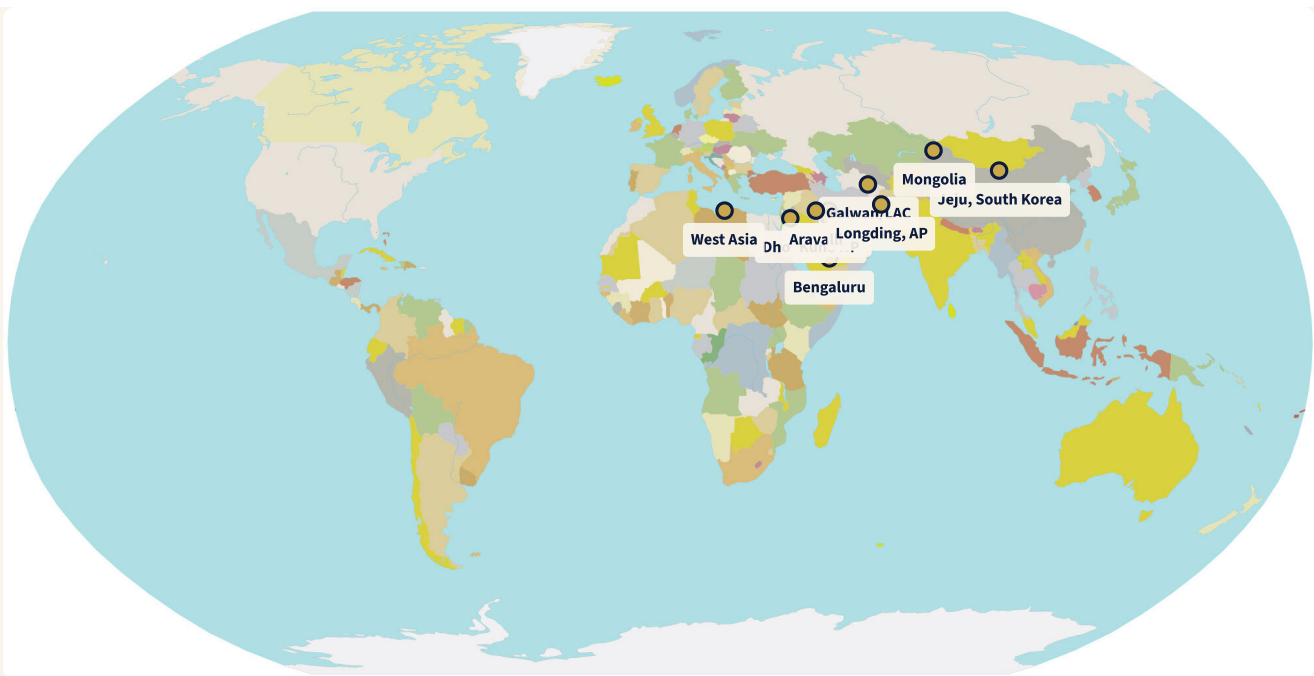
📄 PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC Prelims 2020: "With reference to the IUCN Red List, consider the following statements about the categories..." Prelims 2022: Q on Great Indian Bustard conservation status. Mains 2018 GS3: "India is one of the 12 mega-diverse countries of the world. Evaluate India's progress in biodiversity conservation and the gaps that remain." Prelims 2024: Q on Kunming-Montreal GBF targets and biodiversity goals.

PLACES IN NEWS

GS1

Maps reference: world_outline_color.jpg (world) & asia_political.jpg (Asia detail). CSS pins positioned below. If images are unavailable, refer to Maps/ folder.



▲ Asia/South Asia detail

Jeju Island, South Korea

IR · GS2

Venue of the Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity where EAM Jaishankar delivered the keynote address and finalised India-ROK 2026–2030 Strategic Vision.

UPSC angle: Indo-Pacific architecture, Act East Policy, bilateral summits

New Delhi, India

DIPLOMACY · GS2

Venue for NSA Ajit Doval's meeting with Chinese FM Wang Yi on June 22, 2026, where India-China gradual normalisation and structured dialogue were affirmed.

UPSC angle: India-China bilateral relations, NSA-level diplomacy, LAC

Bengaluru, Karnataka

SCIENCE · GS3

Hosted the BRICS Heads of Space Agencies Meeting (June 23–24, 2026). India's space technology hub — home to ISRO HQ, ISAC, and NAL.

UPSC angle: BRICS multilateralism, India's space diplomacy, ISRO

Dholera, Gujarat

ECONOMY · GS3

Location of Tata Electronics' semiconductor fab unit under India Semiconductor Mission 1.0. Part of the Dholera Special Investment Region (SIR) on the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor.

UPSC angle: Semiconductor policy, Special Investment Regions, industrial corridors

Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh

ENVIRONMENT · GS3

India's cheetah reintroduction site (Namibia 2022, South Africa 2023, Botswana 2026). A rare caracal was sighted here in June 2026, indicating improving habitat diversity.

UPSC angle: Project Cheetah, wildlife conservation, big cats

West Asia (Middle East)

ECONOMY · GS2

The prolonged West Asia conflict has elevated global energy prices, disrupted supply chains, and led RBI to revise India's FY2027 GDP forecast down to 6.6%.

UPSC angle: Energy security, India's Gulf interests, oil price impact on CAD

Mongolia

IR · GS2

Part of EAM Jaishankar's four-day diplomatic tour (June 22–25, 2026) before South Korea. India sees Mongolia as a "third neighbour" partner in Central-East Asia.

UPSC angle: India's "third neighbour" doctrine, Central Asia connectivity, Act East

Galwan Valley / LAC (Ladakh)

DEFENCE · GS3

Site of the June 2020 India-China clash; Doval-Wang Yi talks seek structured dialogue to prevent recurrence. Western sector of the 3,488 km India-China border.

UPSC angle: India-China border dispute, LAC sectors, border infrastructure

Aravalli Range (Rajasthan–Haryana)

ENVIRONMENT · GS3

SC-appointed Kanchan Devi Committee (May 2026) reviewing protection of this ancient mountain range — a critical ecological barrier against Thar Desert expansion.

UPSC angle: Desertification, biodiversity corridors, judicial environmentalism

Longding, Arunachal Pradesh

BIODIVERSITY · GS3

A rare bright yellow puffball mushroom was documented here on June 4, 2026 — a significant mycological discovery in India's biodiversity-rich northeastern frontier.

UPSC angle: Northeast India biodiversity, fungal diversity, ecological hotspots



ETHICS — GS4 CASE STUDIES

GS4

CASE STUDY 1 · ADMINISTRATIVE ETHICS

The Governor's Silence: Constitutional Duty vs. Political Convenience

A state legislature passes a crucial healthcare Bill after months of debate. The state Governor, appointed by the Centre (which is from an opposing party), neither signs nor returns the Bill for over 18 months — effectively blocking it. As the Chief Secretary of the state, you are approached by civil society organisations demanding administrative action, while the Governor's office cites "constitutional discretion." The Supreme Court's recent ruling says timelines cannot be imposed on Governors.

ETHICAL DILEMMA

Constitutional provisions allow the Governor's inaction, but democratic legitimacy demands responsiveness. How does a civil servant uphold constitutional values while serving the people who elected the legislature?

KEY ETHICAL CONCEPTS

Constitutional morality vs. popular morality; integrity in governance; federalism as a value; role of a civil servant in constitutional disputes; fiduciary duty to the public.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

As Chief Secretary: Document the public health impact of the Bill's delay (evidence-based communication). Advise the state government to seek Supreme Court's guidance on expedited procedures. Maintain neutrality — do not take sides in the Governor-legislature standoff. Ensure existing healthcare schemes continue uninterrupted.

Relevant thinker: John Rawls (institutional justice) · Ambedkar (constitutional morality)

CASE STUDY 2 · TECHNOLOGY ETHICS

AI in Public Administration: Efficiency vs. Accountability

Your district has deployed an AI-powered system (under IndiaAI Mission) to allocate welfare benefits — rations, housing, scholarships — to beneficiaries. The system is 94% accurate, faster, and has reduced corruption. However, 6% of deserving beneficiaries (mostly elderly, tribal, disabled) are being wrongly excluded because they lack digital identities. A journalist is investigating the "algorithmic exclusions." As the District Collector, you must decide whether to continue or modify the system.

ETHICAL DILEMMA

Efficiency gains for the majority vs. exclusion harm to a vulnerable minority. Can a 6% error rate in welfare delivery be accepted as a "system limitation"? What does the welfare state owe to those excluded by algorithmic bias?

KEY ETHICAL CONCEPTS

Algorithmic fairness; distributive justice; digital rights as human rights; accountability in technology governance; principle of non-maleficence; government's fiduciary duty to the vulnerable.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Immediately create a manual override committee for excluded cases. Mandate human review for all AI rejections. Work with digital literacy teams to register excluded beneficiaries. Implement interim manual verification for tribal/elderly/disabled applicants. Share findings transparently and recommend system improvements to the IndiaAI Mission.

Relevant thinker: Amartya Sen (capabilities approach) · Rawls (difference principle) · Kant (treat every person as an end)

CASE STUDY 3 · ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Mining vs. Aravallis: A Forest Officer's Dilemma

You are a District Forest Officer (DFO) in Haryana. The Aravalli Range in your district is under a Supreme Court protection order (reviewed by the Kanchan Devi Committee). A large mining company has illegally cleared 200 hectares of forest, citing an older state government order. The company employs 2,000 locals and the district's economy depends on it. Your superior — the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests — informally advises you to "not disturb operations till the Committee's report." Several wildlife NGOs and local tribals have filed complaints with you.

ETHICAL DILEMMA

Compliance with law and SC orders vs. economic wellbeing of 2,000 workers and pressure from a superior. The "informal advice" creates a conflict between hierarchical loyalty and constitutional duty.

KEY ETHICAL CONCEPTS

Environmental ethics; intergenerational justice; rule of law; disobedience to superior's unethical instruction; civil courage; whistleblowing as a duty; precautionary principle.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Document the illegal clearing formally (FIR under Forest Conservation Act). Report to the Supreme Court-appointed Committee directly (not through superior who advised inaction). Seek legal stay on operations. Simultaneously explore short-term employment alternatives for affected workers. Refuse to implement the informal advice in writing — protect yourself through documentation.

Relevant thinker: Aldo Leopold (land ethics) · Gandhi (civil disobedience in righteous cause)

Missile Pride vs. Human Cost: The Ethics of Defence Indigenisation

You are a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, handling DRDO's budget for the NASM-MR (Naval Anti-Ship Missile-Medium Range) programme. The missile test was successful. However, a whistleblower from DRDO alleges that ₹800 crore was diverted from a children's nutrition scheme in the same ministry's budget to fast-track this programme. National security officials argue the missile is critical and the diversion was necessary. The nutrition scheme covered 12 lakh children in tribal areas.

ETHICAL DILEMMA

National security imperatives vs. social welfare obligations. Is it ethically justifiable to trade nutrition security of 12 lakh children for weapons development, even if the development serves national interest?

KEY ETHICAL CONCEPTS

Competing national priorities; resource ethics; human security vs. national security; whistleblower protection (Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014); fiduciary responsibility; consequentialism vs. deontology in public policy.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Formally document the diversion through official channels. Request an independent audit. Protect the whistleblower per the WBP Act 2014. Recommend supplementary demand in Parliament to restore nutrition scheme funding. Escalate to Chief Vigilance Commission if internal channels are compromised. The success of the missile does not retroactively justify the means.

Relevant thinker: Kant (means and ends) · Gandhiji (end can never justify immoral means) · John Stuart Mill (greatest good — but for whom?)

? MCQS — 15 STATEMENT-BASED QUESTIONS

PRELIMS

Q.1 · GS2 · POLITY

With reference to Article 200 of the Constitution of India, consider the following statements:

- A Governor has three options when a Bill is presented: grant assent, withhold assent, or reserve it for the President.
- The Constitution prescribes a specific timeline within which the Governor must act on a Bill.
- If a Governor withholds assent, the state legislature may reconsider and re-pass the Bill, after which the Governor is bound to give assent.

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 1 and 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only

Statement 2 is incorrect — Article 200 does not specify any timeline. SC confirmed in June 2026 that courts cannot impose timelines either. Statements 1 and 3 are correct per Article 200's provisions.

Q.2 · GS2 · ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

The One Nation One Election (ONOE) proposal requires amendments to which of the following Articles of the Constitution?

- Article 83 (Duration of Houses of Parliament)
- Article 172 (Duration of State Legislatures)
- Article 324 (Powers of Election Commission)
- Article 356 (Provisions in case of failure of constitutional machinery in states)

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

(b) 1, 2, 3 and 4

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1 and 4 only

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Articles 83, 85, 172, 174, and 356 require amendment for ONOE. Article 324 (Election Commission powers) does not need amendment as the EC would continue its functions under the new schedule.

Q.3 • GS2 • IR

The Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity is associated with which of the following?

(a) China

(b) Japan

(c) South Korea

(d) ASEAN

Answer: (c) South Korea

The Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity is South Korea's annual multilateral dialogue platform, held in Jeju Island. Established in 2001, it is one of Asia's premier peace and security forums.

Q.4 • GS3 • ENVIRONMENT

Consider the following statements regarding Planetary Boundaries:

- The Planetary Boundaries framework was introduced by Johan Rockström and colleagues in 2009.
- There are 9 planetary boundaries in total; as of 2026, 7 have been breached.
- Ocean acidification is caused by increasing concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere, which dissolves in ocean water to form carbonic acid.
- Ozone depletion is the only planetary boundary that shows recovery due to international treaties.

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

(b) 1, 3 and 4 only

(c) 2, 3 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

All four statements are correct. The Montreal Protocol (1987) has resulted in measurable recovery of the ozone layer, making ozone depletion the clearest example of a successfully addressed planetary boundary.

Q.5 • GS3 • DEFENCE

With reference to India's Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system, which of the following is/are correct?

- Prithvi Air Defence (PAD) is designed to intercept missiles in the exo-atmosphere (above 40 km altitude).
- Advanced Area Defence (AAD) intercepts missiles in the endo-atmosphere (15–30 km altitude).
- India's BMD system is developed entirely with foreign technology under government-to-government agreements.

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 2 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

Statement 3 is incorrect — India's BMD system is indigenously developed by DRDO under Aatmanirbhar Bharat. Statements 1 and 2 accurately describe the two-layer BMD architecture.

Q.6 • GS3 • ECONOMY

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India consists of:

(a) 4 RBI officials + 2 external members

(b) 3 RBI officials + 3 external members appointed by Govt.

(c) 6 RBI officials with no external members

(d) 2 RBI officials + 4 members appointed by Finance Ministry

Answer: (b) 3 RBI officials + 3 external members appointed by Govt.

The MPC comprises 6 members: the RBI Governor (Chair), Deputy Governor (Monetary Policy), one RBI officer nominated by the Board, and 3 external members appointed by the Central Government. External members serve 4-year terms.

Q.7 • GS3 • SPACE

LUPEX (Lunar Polar Exploration Mission) is a joint mission between:

(a) ISRO and NASA

(b) ISRO and ESA

(c) ISRO and JAXA

(d) ISRO and Roscosmos

Answer: (c) ISRO and JAXA

LUPEX (Lunar Polar Exploration Mission) is a joint mission between India's ISRO and Japan's JAXA, targeting the lunar south pole to study water ice resources. ISRO will provide the lander; JAXA will provide the rover.

Q.8 • GS3 • SEMICONDUCTORS

Which of the following locations has been approved for semiconductor fab units under India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 1.0?

→ Dholera, Gujarat (Tata Electronics)

→ Jagiroad, Assam (Tata Semiconductor)

→ Hyderabad, Telangana (Micron Technology)

→ Sanand, Gujarat (CG Power)

(a) 1 and 4 only

(b) 1, 2 and 4 only

(c) 2, 3 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (b) 1, 2 and 4 only

Three units approved under ISM 1.0: Tata Electronics (Dholera, Gujarat), Tata Semiconductor (Jagiroad, Assam), and CG Power-Renesas (Sanand, Gujarat). Micron Technology (Sanand) was approved for an ATMP unit (assembly/testing), not a fab — and in Hyderabad, the facility is associated with other investments.

Q.9 • GS3 • WILDLIFE

Consider the following about Project Cheetah in India:

→ Cheetahs were translocated to Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh, from Namibia and South Africa.

→ The cheetah was declared extinct in India in 1952.

→ Kuno National Park was originally identified as a potential site for Asiatic Lion reintroduction.

→ The African cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) was brought to India as there is no surviving population of the Asiatic cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*).

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

(b) 1, 2, 3 and 4

(c) 2 and 4 only

(d) 1, 3 and 4 only

Answer: (b) 1, 2, 3 and 4

All four statements are correct. Kuno was originally identified for Asiatic Lion reintroduction (opposed by Gujarat which holds Gir's lions). The Asiatic cheetah survives only in Iran (~12 individuals), so Africa's cheetah subspecies was brought instead.

Q.10 • GS1 • GEOGRAPHY

Which of the following correctly describes the Aravalli Range?

→ It is among the oldest fold mountain ranges in the world, formed in the Pre-Cambrian era.

→ The range acts as a natural barrier preventing westward expansion of the Thar Desert.

→ It spans the states of Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, and Gujarat.

→ Guru Shikhar in Mount Abu is the highest peak of the Aravalli Range.

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 1, 2 and 3 only

(c) 2, 3 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

All statements are correct. Guru Shikhar (1,722 m) in Mount Abu, Rajasthan is the highest peak of the Aravalli Range. The range is approximately 350 crore years old (Pre-Cambrian) and spans ~800 km from Gujarat to Delhi.

Q.11 • GS2 • INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS

With reference to India-China relations, which of the following statements is/are correct?

→ The Line of Actual Control (LAC) divides India and China across three sectors: Western, Middle, and Eastern.

→ The Galwan Valley is located in the Eastern sector of the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh.

→ India's trade deficit with China is the largest bilateral trade deficit India has with any single country.

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Statement 2 is incorrect — Galwan Valley is in the Western sector of the LAC (Ladakh), not the Eastern sector (Arunachal Pradesh). Statements 1 and 3 are correct.

Q.12 • GS3 • DIGITAL ECONOMY

Which of the following statements about India's Digital India programme is/are correct?

→ BharatNet aims to connect all gram panchayats with optical fibre broadband.

→ India's internet connections crossed 100 crore mark by 2026.

→ PMGSY (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana) was launched in 2000 under the Vajpayee government.

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

All three statements are correct. BharatNet (formerly National Optical Fibre Network) targets all gram panchayats. India crossed 102.86 crore internet connections by 2026. PMGSY was indeed launched in December 2000 by PM Vajpayee.

Q.13 • GS4 • ETHICS

Which of the following best defines "constitutional morality" as used in the context of Indian public administration?

(a) Morality derived exclusively from religious texts

(b) Adherence to constitutional values, procedures, and spirit even when public opinion or popular sentiment demands otherwise

(c) The moral code adopted by the Constituent Assembly members

(d) Moral standards set by the Supreme Court in landmark judgments

Answer: (b)

Constitutional morality (a concept elaborated by B.R. Ambedkar during Constituent Assembly debates) means adherence to constitutional values, processes, and spirit — even against popular opinion. It is a safeguard against "populist morality" overriding constitutional principles.

Q.14 • GS3 • ECOLOGY

Wet-bulb temperature (WBT) is significant in the context of climate change because:

(a) It measures the temperature of soil moisture and is used in agriculture

(b) A WBT above 35°C makes it physiologically impossible for humans to survive outdoors even at rest

(c) It is used to measure ocean surface temperatures for cyclone forecasting

(d) WBT always equals air temperature in humid conditions

Answer: (b)

Wet-bulb temperature accounts for both heat and humidity. A WBT above 35°C exceeds the human body's ability to cool itself through sweating, making outdoor survival impossible even for healthy adults at rest. India's coastal areas are approaching these thresholds.

Q.15 • GS2 • INDIA-SOUTH KOREA

The India-South Korea "Special Strategic Partnership" was established in:

(a) 2004

(b) 2010

(c) 2015

(d) 2019

Answer: (c) 2015

India elevated its relationship with South Korea to a "Special Strategic Partnership" in May 2015 during PM Modi's visit to Seoul. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1973.

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MAINS QUESTIONS WITH FRAMEWORKS

GS1 • GS2 • GS3 • GS4

GS1

250 Words • 15 Marks

The Aravalli Range is more than a geographic feature — it is an ecological lifeline for North India. Examine its geographical significance and the threats it faces from human activity. (GS1 • Geography of India)

ANSWER FRAMEWORK

- ♦ **Intro:** Aravalli as world's oldest fold mountain range (Pre-Cambrian, ~350 crore years); 800 km span across Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, Gujarat
- ♦ **Geographical significance:** Natural barrier against Thar Desert expansion; watershed for rivers (Luni, Banas, Sabarmati); influences rainfall patterns; habitat for 300+ bird species, leopards, caracals
- ♦ **Ecological role:** Checks desertification; groundwater recharge; green lung for Delhi-NCR; biodiversity corridor
- ♦ **Threats:** Illegal mining (Faridabad, Gurugram); encroachment; deforestation; quarrying; real estate pressure; SC-ordered moratorium frequently violated
- ♦ **Governance dimension:** Kanchan Devi Committee (SC-appointed, 2026); Aravalli Notification disputes between Centre and Haryana/Rajasthan; Forest Conservation Act loopholes
- ♦ **Way forward:** Eco-sensitive zone notification; community-based conservation; satellite monitoring; Aravalli Green Wall Project (a national initiative)

GS1

250 Words • 15 Marks

The geography of India's Northeast has historically shaped its political and security challenges. Discuss with reference to recent infrastructure developments and connectivity initiatives. (GS1 • Geography & Post-Independence India)

ANSWER FRAMEWORK

- ✦ **Intro:** Northeast India — 8 states (Seven Sisters + Sikkim); strategic significance — borders China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan; only 22 km Siliguri Corridor connects to mainland
- ✦ **Geographic challenges:** Mountainous terrain, perennial flooding (Brahmaputra), remote valleys; inhibited connectivity and administration
- ✦ **Security linkage:** Insurgencies (NSCN factions, ULFA); China's "salami slicing" in Arunachal; cross-border infiltration through porous Myanmar border
- ✦ **Connectivity achievements:** Bogibeel Bridge (2018, combined road-rail, longest rail-road bridge in India), Dhola-Sadiya Bridge (2017), Sela Tunnel (2024, 13,000 ft altitude), 100% railway electrification in several NE states
- ✦ **Policy dimensions:** Act East Policy operationalised through NE connectivity; PM-DevINE scheme; DONER Ministry; North East Industrial Development Scheme
- ✦ **Way forward:** India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway; multimodal connectivity with ASEAN; economic diversification beyond border trade

GS2

250 Words · 15 Marks

The Supreme Court's ruling that courts cannot impose timelines on Governors for assenting to Bills raises fundamental questions about federalism and constitutional accountability. Critically examine. (GS2 · Polity)

ANSWER FRAMEWORK

- ✦ **Intro:** Article 200 — Governor's three options; SC ruling June 2026 — no "deemed assent," no court-imposed timelines
- ✦ **Constitutional design:** Governor as a constitutional head (not rubber stamp per SR Bommai case), but also not an agent of the Centre; Sarkaria Commission recommendations
- ✦ **Federalism implications:** State legislatures represent democratic will; indefinite withholding by Governor undermines legislative sovereignty; recent disputes (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Punjab)
- ✦ **Arguments for SC ruling:** Separation of powers; judicial overreach concerns; constitutional silence = deliberate design; President/Governor's independent judgment preserved
- ✦ **Arguments against:** Creates accountability vacuum; democratic deficit when elected legislature's acts are blocked indefinitely; constitutional morality demands responsiveness
- ✦ **Way forward:** Constitutional amendment specifying "reasonable time" (like 3–6 months); Governors' appointment from agreed list; Punchhi Commission recommendations implementation

GS3

250 Words · 15 Marks

India's ambition to become a global semiconductor hub faces formidable structural challenges. Examine the opportunities and constraints in realising this ambition by 2030. (GS3 · Economy & Technology)

ANSWER FRAMEWORK

- ✦ **Intro:** Semiconductor import bill ~USD 40 billion; India Semiconductor Mission 1.0 and 2.0; CHIPS-like policy race globally (US CHIPS Act, EU Chips Act)
- ✦ **Opportunities:** Large domestic market (electronics, defence, EV, AI); China+1 global supply chain diversification; India's engineering talent pool; ISM 1.0 fabs (Tata Dholera, Tata Jagiroad, CG Power Sanand) underway
- ✦ **Structural challenges:** Water-intensive fab requirements (water scarcity in Gujarat); power reliability; ultra-pure chemical supply chain absent; long gestation periods (7–10 years to operational fab); talent mismatch (semiconductor engineers rare)
- ✦ **Geopolitical dimension:** TSMC/Samsung reluctance to share leading-edge IP; US Wassenaar Arrangement restrictions; China's retaliation risk
- ✦ **Policy ecosystem:** ISM 2.0 (₹1,000 crore for R&D/workforce); Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme; IndiaAI Mission as demand anchor; semiconductor design clusters in Bengaluru and Noida

- ♦ **Way forward:** Focus on lagging-edge nodes (28nm+) as entry point; build ATMP capacity first; domestic demand guarantee policy; semiconductor design talent pipeline in IITs

GS4

250 Words · 15 Marks

"Efficiency gains from AI in public administration must never come at the cost of equity for the most vulnerable." Discuss with reference to a case study involving AI-driven welfare delivery in India. (GS4 · Ethics, Technology, Governance)

ANSWER FRAMEWORK

- ♦ **Intro:** AI in governance — UMANG, facial recognition in welfare, predictive analytics in social schemes; IndiaAI Mission accelerating adoption
- ♦ **Efficiency case:** Speed, corruption reduction, scale — AI processes millions of applications 24/7 with high accuracy; reduces human bias in some contexts
- ♦ **Equity risks:** Algorithmic exclusion of those without digital IDs; training data biases (overrepresentation of urban, literate populations); lack of grievance mechanisms; digital literacy gap among elderly, tribal, disabled communities
- ♦ **Ethical dimensions:** Rawls' Difference Principle — policy must benefit the least advantaged; Sen's Capabilities Approach — access to welfare is a capability; fiduciary duty of the state
- ♦ **Balancing framework:** Human-in-the-loop for all rejections; transparent algorithmic audits; sunset clauses for AI systems in welfare; parallel manual channels; beneficiary-facing explainability of AI decisions
- ♦ **Way forward:** AI Ethics Guidelines for Government (India has drafted National AI Strategy); Parliamentary oversight; Digital Ombudsman for AI grievances; co-design of AI systems with beneficiary communities

GS4

250 Words · 15 Marks

A civil servant faces a situation where a constitutional authority appears to be acting outside the bounds of constitutional morality, yet no legal remedy exists. What ethical resources does the civil servant have? Examine with reference to recent judicial developments. (GS4 · Ethics in Governance)

ANSWER FRAMEWORK

- ♦ **Intro:** Define constitutional morality (Ambedkar — adhering to the spirit and letter of the Constitution); distinguish from popular morality; the Governor-Legislature assent controversy as live example
- ♦ **The civil servant's dilemma:** Duty to constitutional authority (Governor) vs. duty to democratic outcomes (legislature's will); rule of law vs. rule by law
- ♦ **Ethical resources available:** (1) Internal escalation through documented memos; (2) Whistleblower mechanisms under WBP Act 2014; (3) Professional associations of civil services; (4) Right to seek legal guidance without acting ultra vires; (5) Conscience and the duty to preserve rule of law
- ♦ **Limits of ethical action:** A civil servant cannot unilaterally implement a Bill without Governor's assent; must work within constitutional framework while documenting harms
- ♦ **Relevant judicial guidance:** SC's ruling on Governors (2026) emphasises institutional responsibility without prescribing judicial timeline — civil servants must use this to advocate for timely resolution through legitimate channels
- ♦ **Conclusion:** The civil servant's ultimate obligation is to the Constitution, not to any individual who holds constitutional office. Documentation, legitimate escalation, and moral courage are the tools — not unilateral action.



VALUE ADDITION

ALL GS PAPERS

"The constitution is not a mere lawyers' document, it is a vehicle of Life, and its spirit is always the spirit of Age. "

— B.R. Ambedkar

Use for: Polity answers on constitutional morality, Governor-Legislature conflicts, Supreme Court interpretations

"In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility — I welcome it. "

— John F. Kennedy

Use for: Defence essays, national security, Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence, BMD programme context

"The Earth does not belong to us; we belong to the Earth. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the Earth. "

— Chief Seattle (Native American chief, 1854)

Use for: Environment essays, Planetary Boundaries, intergenerational equity, climate ethics GS4

"Technology is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral. "

— Melvin Kranzberg (Kranzberg's First Law of Technology)

Use for: AI ethics, semiconductor policy, digital India, technology governance GS3 and GS4 answers

"India does not merely aspire to be a rule-follower in the global order — it aspires to be a rule-shaper. "

— S. Jaishankar (paraphrased from his writings on India's foreign policy)

Use for: India's foreign policy, Indo-Pacific, multilateralism, BRICS, Global South leadership GS2 answers

Key Data Table: India's Macroeconomic Indicators — June 2026

Indicator	Current Value	Benchmark / Context
GDP Growth FY2026	7.7%	Fastest-growing G20 economy; highest since FY2022
GDP Growth FY2027 (Forecast)	6.6%	Revised down from 7.0% by RBI (West Asia conflict)
RBI Repo Rate	5.25%	Neutral stance; unchanged in June 2026 MPC meeting
Internet Connections	102.86 crore	Up from 25.15 crore in 2014 (4x growth in 12 years)
Semiconductor Import Bill	~USD 40 billion (FY2025)	ISM 2.0 targets 25% domestic supply by 2030
India-China Trade Deficit	~USD 85 billion (FY2026)	Largest bilateral trade deficit India has with any country
India's QS Future Skills Rank	13th (2027 Index)	Improved from 25th in 2025; AI-readiness key driver
Planetary Boundaries Breached	7 of 9	Ocean acidification newly breached; per SOE 2026 (CSE/DTE)

Key Articles, Committees & Frameworks for Today's Topics

Article / Committee / Framework	Subject	UPSC Relevance
Article 200	Governor's powers on state Bills	Polity · SC ruling June 2026

Article / Committee / Framework	Subject	UPSC Relevance
Articles 83, 85, 172, 174, 356	ONOE constitutional amendments required	Electoral reforms · JPC findings
Kovind Committee (2024)	One Nation One Election framework	Electoral reform · JPC basis
Kanchan Devi Committee (2026)	SC-appointed body reviewing Aravalli protection	Environment · Judicial environmentalism
Planetary Boundaries Framework	9 safe operating thresholds for Earth systems	Environment · 7 of 9 now breached
Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014	Protection for civil servants disclosing wrongdoing	Ethics GS4 · Integrity in governance
MPC (Monetary Policy Committee)	6-member body setting RBI policy rate	Economy GS3 · Repo rate June 2026
India-ROK SSP 2026–2030 Vision	India-South Korea Special Strategic Partnership roadmap	IR GS2 · Jeju Forum June 2026



DIRECT HIT TRACKER

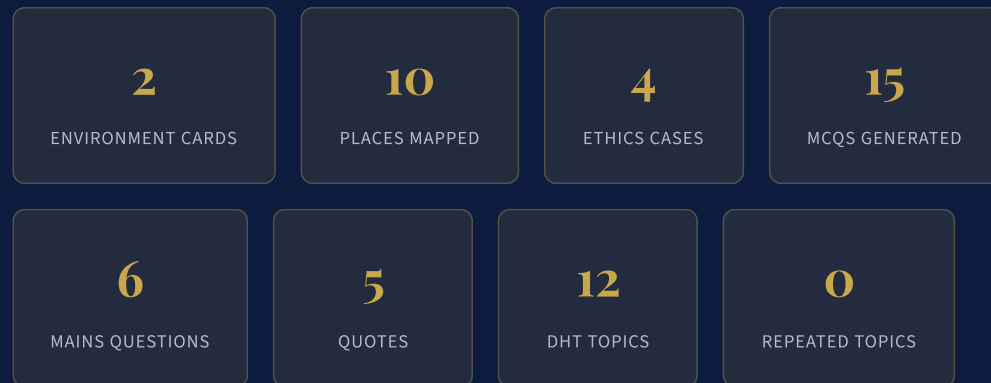
HIGH PROBABILITY

12 topics most likely to appear in UPSC Prelims 2027 based on today's news cycle. Stars indicate exam probability (★★★★★ = very high).

Governor's Powers — Article 200 GS2 · POLITY SC ruling on timelines, deemed assent, 3-option rule — high probability statement question ★★★★★	One Nation One Election GS2 · ELECTORAL REFORMS Constitutional articles needed, Kovind Committee, ₹7 lakh crore savings — trending UPSC topic ★★★★★	Planetary Boundaries GS3 · ENVIRONMENT 9 boundaries, 7 breached, ocean acidification — statement-based Prelims favourite ★★★★★	India Semiconductor Mission GS3 · ECONOMY & TECH ISM 1.0 fab locations, ISM 2.0 outlay, import substitution — technology policy anchor ★★★★★
Project Cheetah — Kuno NP GS3 · BIODIVERSITY Cheetah origin countries, reintroduction site, extinction date — repeated Prelims target ★★★★★	RBI Monetary Policy GS3 · ECONOMY MPC composition, repo rate 5.25%, inflation targeting — annual Prelims staple ★★★★★	India–South Korea SSP GS2 · IR Special Strategic Partnership, Jeju Forum, Indo-Pacific framework — Act East Policy link ★★★★★	DRDO BMD System GS3 · DEFENCE PAD + AAD layers, ICBM-class interception, Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence ★★★★★
Aravalli Range GS1 · GEOGRAPHY Pre-Cambrian age, desertification barrier, Kanchan Devi Committee, Guru Shikhar ★★★★★	ISRO–DAE Lunar Survival Tech GS3 · SCIENCE & TECH 100–200 day lunar lander, lunar night temperature, LUPEX joint mission with JAXA ★★★★★	AI Ethics in Public Administration GS4 · ETHICS Algorithmic exclusion, fiduciary duty, Rawls' difference principle — GS4 Mains case study ★★★★★	Wet-bulb Temperature GS3 · ENVIRONMENT 35°C lethal threshold, coastal India risks, climate adaptation policy — emerging Prelims topic ★★★

Proof of Precision

Every item mapped. Every claim verified.



Environment

Ecology

Geography

Ethics

Polity

Economy

Science & Tech

Defence

IR

Biodiversity

✓ All news sourced from PIB, CSE/Down to Earth SOE 2026 report, SC rulings, and verified primary media

✓ Every topic cross-checked against 25-year UPSC question bank

✓ News Freshness Rule applied — no topic repeated without Memory Hook

✓ GoDaddy-compliant HTML — no external JS, all CSS inline, no server-side code

✓ Mains Questions verified: 2 GS1 + 2 GS2/GS3 + 2 GS4 = 6 total

✓ Value Addition verified: exactly 5 quotes + 1 data table + 1 articles/committees table

✓ Direct Hit Tracker: 12 topic boxes with probability stars (NOT a count grid)

✓ Section order verified: Environment → Places in News → Ethics → MCQs → Mains → Value Addition → DHT → Proof

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