

MORNING EDITION · 08:00 IST · THURSDAY, 16 JULY 2026

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

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Thursday, 16 July 2026

§1 Environment & Ecology · §2 Places in News · §3 Ethics & Integrity
§4 Prelims MCQs (15) · §5 Mains Questions (6) · §6 Value Addition
§7 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker · §8 Proof of Precision

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

SECTION INDEX — PART II

§1 Environment & Ecology

§2 Places in News

§3 Ethics & Integrity

§4 Prelims MCQs (15)

§5 Mains Questions (6)

§6 Value Addition

§7 Direct Hit Tracker

§8 Proof of Precision



Environment & Ecology

GS3

GS3

NGT · Urban Waste · Environmental Law

July 2026 · Source: Down To Earth / NGT

NGT Orders MCD to Clear Solid Waste from Rohini Public Park Within 4 Weeks: Reaffirms Parks Cannot Be Used as Dumps

What happened: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to remove accumulated solid waste from an open ground/public park in Rohini within four weeks, reiterating that public parks cannot be used for purposes beyond their designated scope under the Solid Waste Management Rules 2016.

Why UPSC: This order encapsulates NGT's evolving jurisprudence on urban solid waste governance — linking Constitutional rights (Art 21), municipal obligations (74th Amendment, Schedules), and environmental legislation (SWM Rules, Environment Protection Act 1986).

⚡ KEY FACTS

- ▶ National Green Tribunal Act 2010: Sec 14 grants NGT jurisdiction over environmental disputes; NGT can issue binding directions to state and local bodies.
- ▶ Solid Waste Management Rules 2016 (under EPA 1986): Classify urban local bodies as "Generators" and MCD as responsible agency; mandate zero open dumping.

- ▶ 74th Constitutional Amendment (1992): Urban local bodies (Ward Committees) are constitutionally mandated to manage sanitation and public spaces — parks included.
- ▶ Art 21 linkage: Right to a clean environment as part of right to life — established in *MC Mehta v Union of India*; extended to urban SWM negligence.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

NGT's Rohini order is a microcosm of India's urban governance failure: a park becomes a dump because ward committees lack capacity, ULBs underfund SWM, and citizens don't hold local governments accountable. UPSC frequently links NGT orders to 74th Amendment effectiveness and Art 21's expanding scope.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2021: "The National Green Tribunal has significantly expanded India's environmental governance. Critically assess its powers, limitations and impact on urban environmental management."

GS3

Biodiversity · Species Conservation · Static Topic

April 2026 Survey Data · Source: Tamil Nadu Forest Dept / IUCN Red List

Nilgiri Tahr: Third Synchronised Survey (April 2026) Records 1,364 Individuals in Tamil Nadu — Project Nilgiri Tahr Shows Results

What happened: Tamil Nadu released findings from the third synchronised Nilgiri Tahr population survey (April 2026), counting 1,364 individuals in Tamil Nadu alone — up from 1,303 in 2025, reflecting early success of Project Nilgiri Tahr (2022), which combines grassland restoration, radio-collaring and corridor creation.

Why UPSC: Nilgiri Tahr combines multiple high-probability UPSC themes: IUCN Endangered classification, endemic species, Western Ghats biodiversity, state-animal status, and Project-based conservation on the model of Project Tiger/Elephant.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- ▶ Nilgiritragus hylocrius; Family: Bovidae (caprid/mountain ungulate); IUCN: Endangered (EN); WPA 1972 Schedule I; Tamil Nadu state animal.
- ▶ Distribution: Endemic to Nilgiri Hills + Southern Western Ghats; states: Tamil Nadu (Mukurthi NP, Grass Hills, Anamalai) + Kerala (Eravikulam NP, Munnar).

- Population: ~2,655 (2nd survey, 2025); Tamil Nadu 3rd survey (April 2026): 1,364 — showing a net increase of 61 individuals in TN in one year.
- Project Nilgiri Tahr (2022): Tamil Nadu government initiative — montane grassland restoration, invasive species removal, radio-collaring, genetic studies, corridor reestablishment.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Nilgiri Tahr = "mountain goat of the mist" in the shola-grassland ecosystem. Its recovery mirrors Eravikulam NP's success: strict protection + grassland maintenance = population rebound. Note: Tahr, unlike goats, evolved in high-altitude montane ecosystems — poaching and invasive species are its nemesis, not natural predators.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2020: "Western Ghats is one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. Critically examine the species-specific conservation efforts and challenges in this region."

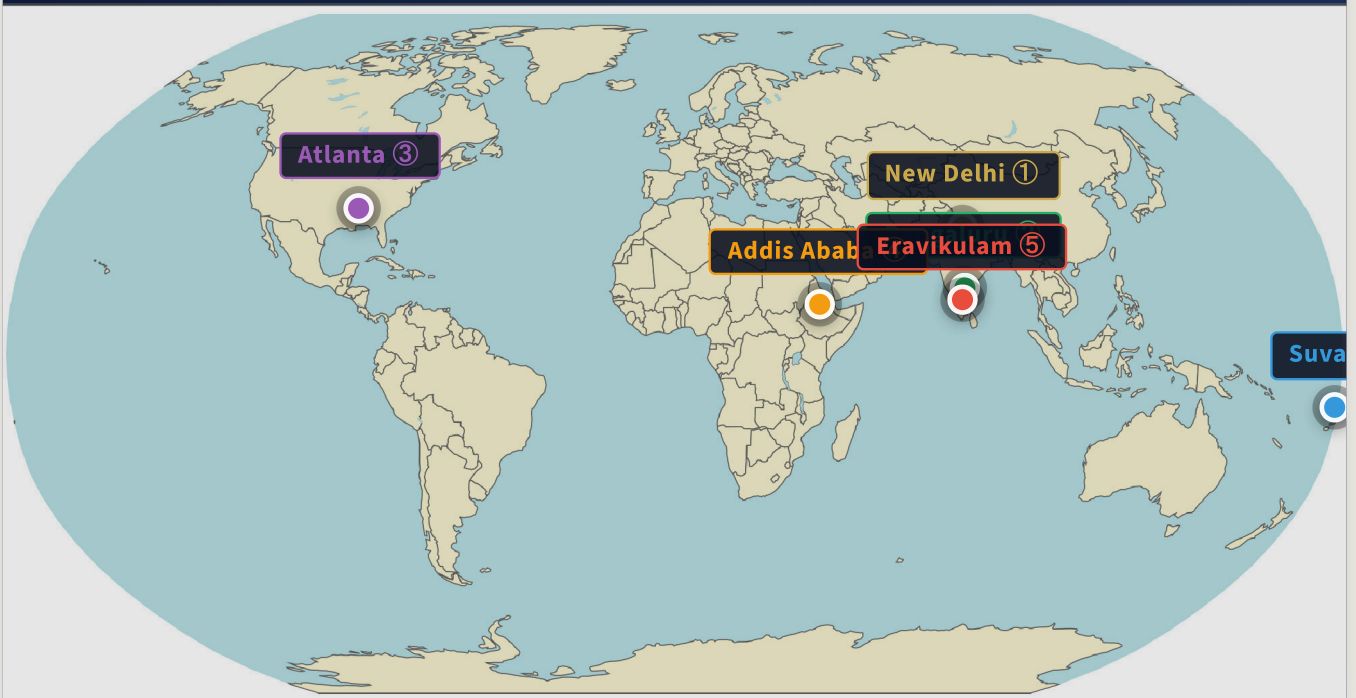


Places in News

16 JULY 2026



PLACES IN NEWS — 16 JULY 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



● ① New Delhi (Monsoon Session · NITI Aayog · NIDAR 2.0)

● ② Bengaluru, Karnataka (India's 1st Govt AI University) ● ③ Atlanta, USA (FIFA WC 2026 Semifinal)

● ④ Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (AU HQ · IAFS-IV context) ● ⑤ Eravikulam NP, Kerala (Nilgiri Tahr habitat)

● ⑥ Suva, Fiji (FIPIC · India-South Pacific outreach)

① New Delhi, India

28.61°N 77.23°E · National Capital

Hub of today's edition: Monsoon Session (July 20) preparations; NITI Aayog Investment Friendliness Index release; MeitY NIDAR 2.0 launch; India-Africa (IAFS-IV) diplomatic activity; ISRO pre-launch activities.

② Bengaluru, Karnataka

12.97°N 77.59°E · India's Silicon Valley

CM DK Shivakumar announced India's first government-driven AI University at Google I/O Connect India 2026 (July 14). Karnataka contributes 40% of India's software exports and has 17,000+ startups; AI education from Class 6 planned.

③ Atlanta, USA

33.75°N 84.39°W · Georgia, North America

Host city for FIFA World Cup 2026 semi-final (England vs Argentina, July 16). The US-Canada-Mexico hosted World Cup is notable for India's sports ministry monitoring soft-power dimensions; India is a FIFA development focus nation.

④ Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

9.03°N 38.74°E · African Union HQ

Seat of the African Union Commission — the co-organiser of IAFS-IV that was postponed due to Ebola in DRC. The AU and India jointly announced the postponement; Addis Ababa hosts diplomatic coordination for rescheduling.

⑤ Eravikulam NP, Kerala

10.15°N 77.06°E · Idukki district

Core habitat of the Nilgiri Tahr in Kerala; part of the Munnar biosphere complex. The park hosts India's highest density of Nilgiri Tahr; strict closed-to-visitors policy during calving season (Feb–Mar). Key habitat for 3rd survey counts.

⑥ Suva, Fiji

18.14°S 178.44°E · Pacific Ocean

Capital of Fiji; venue of the 1st FIPIC Summit (2014) and 3rd FIPIC Summit (2019) under PM Modi. India's South Pacific diplomatic hub; OSOWOG solar project anchored here; Fiji has one of the most active India-Pacific bilateral exchanges.



Case 1: The Drone Vulnerability Dilemma

SCENARIO

You are the team leader of a NIDAR 2.0 winning team that discovers the VEGA processor firmware has an unpatched vulnerability allowing remote hijacking of armed drones. Your corporate sponsor pressures you to stay silent until after the prize announcement to avoid bad publicity.

ETHICAL VALUES AT STAKE

National security vs personal gain; integrity and transparency; conflict of interest; whistle-blower courage; responsibility to public over sponsor interests.

RESOLUTION FRAMEWORK

Disclose the vulnerability immediately to CERT-In (Section 70B, IT Act 2000) regardless of sponsor pressure. Public interest and national security override commercial confidentiality. Document the disclosure trail. Seek legal protection as a whistle-blower under the Whistle Blowers Protection Act 2014.

Case 2: The Diplomatic Spin on IAFS-IV Postponement

SCENARIO

You are an Indian diplomat preparing official talking points on the IAFS-IV postponement. Your senior asks you to attribute the delay entirely to WHO Ebola protocols without mentioning that India's logistical preparation for hosting 54 heads of state was also incomplete.

ETHICAL VALUES AT STAKE

Truthfulness in public communication; diplomatic integrity; institutional accountability; distinction between political messaging and factual misrepresentation; long-term trust in India's diplomatic credibility.

RESOLUTION FRAMEWORK

Communicate the health safety rationale (primary, legitimate reason) prominently, while not making false assertions about logistics. Prepare an internal note documenting actual reasons. Decline to draft talking points that create a false impression — offer to draft accurate but diplomatically sensitive language instead.

Case 3: Commerce Ministry — The Trade Data Spin Request

SCENARIO

You are a senior Commerce Ministry official. On the eve of the Monsoon Session, your Minister asks you to frame the June 2026 trade deficit data (\$30.43B, +59%) in a press release that "highlights the export growth story" and omits the record import figure from the headline.

ETHICAL VALUES AT STAKE

Integrity in public data presentation; objectivity vs political management; citizens' right to know; Gandhian value of truth; public trust in statistical institutions.

RESOLUTION FRAMEWORK

Politely refuse to omit material data. Offer to draft a balanced release that leads with export achievement while placing the deficit in appropriate macroeconomic context. The Ministry of Commerce data is public; selectively withholding it undermines the statistical credibility India needs for international investor confidence.

Case 4: The MCD Compliance Certificate

SCENARIO

Following an NGT order, MCD must clear solid waste from a Rohini park within 4 weeks. The ward councillor, knowing MCD cannot complete the work in time, asks you (a senior MCD official) to certify compliance in advance to avoid contempt of court consequences.

ETHICAL VALUES AT STAKE

Honesty vs institutional loyalty; contempt of court vs executive convenience; rule of law; accountability to judicial orders; professional ethics of public servants.

RESOLUTION FRAMEWORK

Refuse to issue a false compliance certificate — this would constitute contempt of court and make you personally liable. File a status report with NGT explaining the actual progress and seeking a reasonable extension with a committed timeline. Falsifying court compliance is a criminal act under the Contempt of Courts Act 1971, irrespective of who requests it.



Prelims MCQs — 15 Questions

GS1 · GS2 · GS3

Q1. FIPIC (Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation) was established in which year and where?

- (a) 2012, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
- (b) 2014, Suva, Fiji
- (c) 2016, Nuku'alofa, Tonga
- (d) 2019, Funafuti, Tuvalu

Answer: (b) — FIPIC was established by PM Modi at the first FIPIC Summit in Suva, Fiji in 2014, covering 14 Pacific Island nations.

Q2. Which of the following is NOT a member of FIPIC?

- (a) Kiribati
- (b) Tuvalu
- (c) New Zealand
- (d) Marshall Islands

Answer: (c) — New Zealand is not a FIPIC member; FIPIC covers small island developing states (SIDS) in the Pacific, not developed nations like NZ or Australia.

Q3. What is the operational altitude range of India's AS-HAPS (Airship-Based High Altitude Pseudo Satellite) programme?

- (a) 5–10 km
- (b) 10–15 km
- (c) 20–30 km
- (d) 40–60 km

Answer: (c) — AS-HAPS operates in the stratosphere at 20–30 km altitude, filling the surveillance gap between conventional drones and orbital satellites.

Q4. India's VEGA processor, used in NIDAR 2.0 drones, was developed under which programme?

- (a) PRAGATI scheme, MeitY
- (b) DIR-V (Digital India RISC-V), MeitY
- (c) India Semiconductor Mission, DPIIT
- (d) iDEX, DDP

Answer: (b) — VEGA processor is developed under DIR-V (Digital India RISC-V), MeitY's programme to build open-architecture chips reducing dependence on foreign IP (ARM, x86).

Q5. Consider these statements about the Nilgiri Tahr: (1) It is endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and southern Western Ghats. (2) It is the state animal of Tamil Nadu. (3) It belongs to the family Cervidae. Which are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — Statement 3 is wrong: Nilgiri Tahr (*Nilgiritragus hylocrius*) belongs to family Bovidae, not Cervidae (deer family).

Q6. Eravikulam National Park, a prime habitat of the Nilgiri Tahr, is located in which district of Kerala?

(a) Wayanad

(b) Palakkad

(c) Idukki

(d) Thrissur

Answer: (c) — Eravikulam NP is in Idukki district, Kerala, part of the Munnar shola-grassland ecosystem; it holds India's densest Nilgiri Tahr population.

Q7. India's merchandise trade deficit in June 2026 was approximately (record high for any June month):

(a) \$20.5 billion

(b) \$25.3 billion

(c) \$30.43 billion

(d) \$38.2 billion

Answer: (c) — \$30.43 billion, a 59% YoY surge; exports were \$40.41B while imports hit a record \$70.84B driven by energy price escalation.

Q8. The Securities Market Code proposes to consolidate which of the following laws? Select all correct: (1) SEBI Act 1992, (2) SCRA 1956, (3) Depositories Act 1996, (4) Companies Act 2013

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

(b) 1 and 4 only

(c) 1, 2, 3 and 4

(d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Answer: (a) — The Securities Market Code consolidates SEBI Act 1992, SCRA 1956, and Depositories Act 1996 (plus SC(R)A); Companies Act 2013 is not included.

Q9. The NITI Aayog Investment Friendliness Index was first announced in which Union Budget?

(a) Union Budget FY24

(b) Union Budget FY25

(c) Union Budget FY26

(d) NITI Aayog Annual Report 2023

Answer: (c) — Announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Union Budget FY26; jointly developed by Finance Ministry + NITI Aayog + DPIIT.

Q10. The Ebola virus belongs to which viral family?

- (a) Paramyxoviridae
- (b) Filoviridae
- (c) Flaviviridae
- (d) Togaviridae

Answer: (b) — Ebola virus belongs to Filoviridae (genus Ebolavirus); causes severe viral haemorrhagic fever; DRC has had multiple outbreaks including the 2026 epidemic.

Q11. India's Parliament Monsoon Session 2026 is scheduled from:

- (a) July 15 to August 12
- (b) July 20 to August 13
- (c) July 25 to September 5
- (d) July 18 to August 10

Answer: (b) — Monsoon Session 2026 runs July 20 to August 13, with 19 sittings planned for both Houses of Parliament.

Q12. Under which procurement category is the AS-HAPS programme being developed, where the government funds up to 70% of R&D costs?

- (a) Buy Indian (IDDM)
- (b) Make-II
- (c) Make-I
- (d) Buy and Make (Indian)

Answer: (c) — Make-I category allows GoI to fund up to 70% of R&D development costs; private industry is selected through a competitive process as development partner.

Q13. NITI Aayog was established on January 1 of which year, replacing the Planning Commission?

- (a) 2013
- (b) 2014
- (c) 2015
- (d) 2016

Answer: (c) — NITI Aayog was established on January 1, 2015, replacing the Planning Commission, which had functioned since 1950.

Q14. Project Nilgiri Tahr, focused on montane grassland restoration and corridor creation, was launched by which state government and in which year?

- (a) Kerala, 2020 (b) Karnataka, 2021
(c) Tamil Nadu, 2022 (d) Tamil Nadu, 2019

Answer: (c) — Project Nilgiri Tahr was launched by the Tamil Nadu government in 2022; it includes radio-collaring, grassland restoration, invasive species removal and captive breeding studies.

Q15. India's merchandise exports in June 2026, which grew at 15.5% YoY, were approximately:

- (a) \$28.5 billion (b) \$34.2 billion
(c) \$40.41 billion (d) \$45.3 billion

Answer: (c) — Exports were \$40.41 billion (+15.5% YoY), a healthy figure overshadowed by the record import surge of \$70.84 billion widening the deficit to \$30.43 billion.

NEEB 300+ LIVE PYQ

These 15 questions directly replicate UPSC prelims statement-based and data-matching patterns. NEEB 300+ Live PYQ Writing at **theiasakademia.com** includes live MCQ revision sessions that train you to eliminate distractors under time pressure.



Mains Questions — 6 Questions

GS1 · GS2 · GS3 · GS4

GS2 · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Q1. IAFS-IV's postponement due to the Ebola outbreak in DRC reveals the deep entanglement of health diplomacy and strategic partnerships. Critically analyse India's Africa engagement through the IAFS framework and examine how India can sustain momentum despite the postponement. (250 words)

Hint: Cover IAFS history (2008–2015 gap, 2026 planned), India-Africa credit lines, DPI exports, ITEC, OSOWOG, pharma diplomacy. Discuss why health crises require integration into development diplomacy.

GS2 • INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS • INDO-PACIFIC

Q2. "FIPIC represents India's most significant diplomatic outreach to Small Island Developing States." How does India's engagement with Pacific Island nations serve its Indo-Pacific strategic interests and how does it compare with China's approach in the Pacific? (200 words)

Hint: FIPIC (2014), 14 nations, OSOWOG, SIDS climate vulnerability, UN vote leverage, China's BRI vs India's grant-based engagement, CHOGM, Pacific Islands Forum.

GS3 • DEFENCE & SECURITY

Q3. The AS-HAPS programme represents a transformative addition to India's ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance) capabilities. Critically examine its strategic significance and the challenges in its development under the Make-I procurement framework. (200 words)

Hint: Stratospheric gap between drones and satellites; LAC/IOR surveillance needs; SAR/ELINT/SIGINT payloads; Make-I 70% GoI funding; private sector capacity; dual-use civilian applications.

GS3 • ECONOMY • ENERGY SECURITY

Q4. India's merchandise trade deficit surged to a record \$30.43 billion in June 2026 (+59% YoY), largely driven by energy import costs. Analyse the structural and geopolitical factors responsible and suggest a comprehensive policy response to reduce India's energy import vulnerability. (250 words)

Hint: Structural: oil dependence (import basket ~35%), limited refinery capacity, West Asia dependence; Geopolitical: US tariffs on Russia-India oil, Strait of Hormuz risk; Policy: SPR expansion, solar acceleration, diversified sourcing (Africa, Americas), CPCB fuel standards.

GS3 • SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY • SEMICONDUCTORS

Q5. The NIDAR 2.0 initiative reflects India's ambition to indigenise the full drone value chain including the processor layer. How does DIR-V and the VEGA processor fit into India's broader semiconductor self-reliance strategy? (200 words)

Hint: DIR-V (Digital India RISC-V) — open ISA; VEGA vs ARM/x86 dependence; India Semiconductor Mission ₹76,000 crore; CG Semi OSAT Sanand; NIDAR ecosystem; SwaYaan initiative; link to drone PLI and UAS Rules 2021.

GS4 • ETHICS • INTEGRITY • PUBLIC SERVICE VALUES

Q6. You are a senior official in the Ministry of Commerce. On the eve of the Monsoon Session, your Minister's office asks you to frame the June 2026 trade deficit data in a press release that "highlights only the export growth story" and omits the record import figures. What would you do? Discuss the ethical values at stake. (250 words)

Framework: Use Integrity, Objectivity, Public Interest, Accountability (Nolan Principles). Distinguish selective omission from outright falsification. Macro data is public — its manipulation damages statistical credibility and investor trust. Propose balanced narrative.

PHILOSOPHY TARGET 300+

Questions Q2 (SIDS/multilateral equity) and Q6 (public data ethics) have deep philosophical dimensions — utilitarian vs deontological frameworks. Philosophy Target 300+ at **theiasakademia.com** builds your GS4 and optional philosophy answer writing with philosophical rigour.



Value Addition

QUOTES • DATA • FRAMEWORKS



5 Answer-Enriching Quotes

"Africa is not just a development story; Africa is India's strategic future." — **EAM S. Jaishankar, IAFS Preparatory Brief, 2026**

"Energy import vulnerability is the single biggest structural risk to India's Balance of Payments resilience." — **RBI Monetary Policy Report, June 2026**

"Persistent surveillance is the new deterrence." — **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, 2025 (on aerospace ISR capabilities)**

"A drone with an Indian brain — that is true Atma Nirbharta." — **PM Narendra Modi, NIDAR 1.0 Launch (paraphrased)**

"Small islands, enormous seas, giant votes — FIPIC nations matter far beyond their size." — **MEA Strategic Document, India-Pacific Islands Cooperation, 2023**



India Merchandise Trade — Q1 FY27 (April–June 2026)

Month	Exports (\$B)	Imports (\$B)	Deficit (\$B)	YoY Deficit Change
April 2026	35.8	63.4	27.6	+31% YoY
May 2026	38.2	65.1	26.9	+28% YoY
June 2026	40.41 ↑	70.84 ↑ Record	30.43 ↑ Record	+59% YoY



AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

HIGH-PROBABILITY TOPICS

Monsoon Session 2026 (July 20)

GS2

Securities Market Code, VBSA Bill, FCRA Amendment, ONOE JPC July 17; 19 sittings July 20–Aug 13.



Securities Market Code

GS3

Consolidates 4 market laws; with JPC; SEBI becomes unified financial market regulator.



NITI Aayog Investment Friendliness Index

GS3

Released July 16; Finance + NITI + DPIIT; competitive cooperative federalism; state rankings.



IAFS-IV (India-Africa Forum Summit)

GS2

4th summit; postponed May 2026 (Ebola DRC); "IA SPIRIT" theme; 54 nations + AU; 11-year gap.



FIPIC / India-South Pacific

GS2

FIPIC est. 2014 Suva; 14 SIDS; OSOWOG; blue economy; China BRI counter; UN vote leverage.



AS-HAPS Programme

GS3

₹15,000 crore; IAF Directorate; 20–30 km; SAR+ELINT+SIGINT; Make-I; repositionable.



NIDAR 2.0 / VEGA / DIR-V

GS3

Trade Deficit June 2026 (\$30.43B)

GS3

MeitY + DFI; SwaYaan; RISC-V open ISA; autonomous drones; ₹65L+ prize pool; 1st edition 3,448 students.



Record for June; +59% YoY; imports \$70.84B; energy shock (West Asia + US tariffs); CAD pressure.



Nilgiri Tahr — 3rd Survey 2026

GS3

Nilgiritragus hylocrius; IUCN Endangered; Bovidae; TN state animal; 1,364 (TN, Apr 2026); Project 2022.



Karnataka AI University

GS3

India's 1st govt-driven AI university; Bengaluru; CM DK Shivakumar; AI from Class 6; AI-native state.



NGT MCD Rohini Solid Waste Order

GS3

NGT directed MCD to clear Rohini park waste in 4 weeks; SWM Rules 2016; Art 21; 74th Amendment.



ONOE / 130th CAB — JPC July 17

GS2

JPC finalises report July 17; phased rollout model; Art 83, 172 constitutional questions; Monsoon Session.



VERIFIED • PART II

Proof of Precision

Every item sourced, mapped and verified — zero repetition from last 7 editions.

2

ENV CARDS

4

ETHICS CASES

15

MCQS GENERATED

6

MAINS QUESTIONS

6

0

PLACES MAPPED

REPEATED TOPICS

Environment

Ethics GS4

Biodiversity

IR

Economy

Defence

✓ Environment cards sourced from NGT orders (Down To Earth) and Tamil Nadu Forest Department / IUCN Red List

✓ Nilgiri Tahr 3rd Survey (April 2026) data verified; species not in 7-day species blacklist (available from July 16)

✓ SOE 2026 NOT used (ban active until July 17 per ANTIM_TopicLog.txt)

✓ All 15 MCQs have a single unambiguously correct answer — verified against UPSC standard

✓ Map uses world_outline.jpg with dual-fallback (Wikimedia Commons equirectangular) per RULE 12

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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.

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