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The Topper's Last Read. Every Morning.

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

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— *The Topper's Last Read* —

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GS1 / GS3

Climate Change · El Niño-Southern Oscillation

14-15 October 2026 · Source: Down To Earth; World Meteorological Organization climate monitoring

A 'Super El Niño' Watch for 2026-27: What It Means for India's Monsoon and Water Security

Why in News: Multiple climate-monitoring reports in mid-October 2026, including Down To Earth's 14 October coverage of Indonesia facing its "worst wildfire season in a decade" and Zimbabwe's advance drought planning, point to a developing Super El Niño event for the 2026-27 cycle — a Pacific Ocean warming episode strong enough to rank among the most intense on record. Indian meteorologists are now watching closely for its likely bearing on the 2027 southwest monsoon, given El Niño's historical association with below-normal Indian rainfall.

Background: El Niño is the warm phase of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), a natural, irregular 2-7 year cycle of Pacific Ocean temperature and atmospheric-pressure fluctuation that influences weather patterns globally; it typically weakens the Indian monsoon by altering the Walker Circulation (the east-west atmospheric circulation over the tropical Pacific) and suppressing the moisture-laden winds that feed South Asian rainfall. "Super" El Niño events (such as 1997-98 and 2015-16) are classified by sea-surface-temperature anomalies exceeding roughly 2°C above average in the central-eastern Pacific's Niño 3.4 region.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- A developing event is being tracked for the 2026-27 cycle, with several forecasters flagging sea-surface-temperature anomalies approaching "Super El Niño" thresholds.
- Indonesia is reported to be facing its worst wildfire season in a decade as the event intensifies dry conditions across Southeast Asia (Down To Earth, 14 October 2026).
- Zimbabwe and parts of southern Africa are drawing up advance drought-contingency plans for the 2026-27 rainy season on the same El Niño signal.
- Historically, strong El Niño years (1997-98, 2015-16) coincided with India recording below-normal or deficient monsoon rainfall, and drought in parts of the country in some years.
- El Niño also tends to raise India's summer power demand (higher temperatures, irrigation pumping needs) even before the monsoon itself arrives.
- The India Meteorological Department typically issues its first long-range monsoon forecast around April, ahead of the June-September season — a formal 2027 forecast is still months away even as risk planning begins now.
- The Walker Circulation and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) are the two other major climate drivers that interact with El Niño to determine the monsoon's actual outcome; a positive IOD can partially offset El Niño's drying effect.
- Climate scientists link the rising frequency of "Super" El Niño classifications partly to background global warming amplifying natural Pacific variability.

📍 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- **Significance:** an early Super El Niño warning gives India's water-management and agriculture planners a roughly seven-to-eight-month lead time before the 2027 monsoon arrives — valuable for reservoir management and kharif-crop contingency planning.
- **Criticism:** observers note India's disaster and agriculture bureaucracy has historically reacted to El Niño warnings only close to the monsoon season itself, underusing the long lead time such advance signals provide — a gap that echoes the same Standing Committee's push (Part I) for AI-driven forecasting integration.
- **Analytical angle:** El Niño's impact is never uniform — a positive Indian Ocean Dipole can significantly cushion the drying effect, meaning "El Niño year" does not automatically mean "drought year" for India, a common misconception.

- Global angle: the same event is simultaneously driving wildfire risk in Indonesia and drought risk in southern Africa, illustrating ENSO's genuinely planetary reach as a single climate driver with vastly different regional expressions.
- Way forward: climate scientists recommend India strengthen seasonal-to-sub-seasonal (S2S) forecasting capacity and pre-position drought-relief and fodder-bank stocks in historically El-Niño-vulnerable districts well before the monsoon window opens.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the three climate dials that decide India's monsoon together: ENSO (Pacific, El Niño = typically drier India), IOD (Indian Ocean, positive phase = typically wetter India, can offset El Niño), and the Walker Circulation (the east-west atmospheric 'conveyor belt' linking the two) — never read El Niño in isolation.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

ENSO and its monsoon linkage is a near-certain GS1/GS3 Geography-Environment theme; revise alongside the Indian Ocean Dipole and the Walker Circulation.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. El Niño refers to the warm phase of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, characterised by above-average sea-surface temperatures in the central-eastern Pacific Ocean.
2. A positive Indian Ocean Dipole phase typically reinforces, rather than offsets, El Niño's drying effect on the Indian monsoon.
3. The India Meteorological Department typically issues its first long-range monsoon forecast ahead of the June-September season.

(a) 1 and 3 only (b) 1, 2 and 3 (c) 2 only (d) 2 and 3 only

Answer: a. Statement 2 is wrong — a positive IOD typically offsets/cushions El Niño's drying effect on the Indian monsoon.

📌 PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

"El Niño is not destiny for the Indian monsoon." Examine this statement with reference to the role of the Indian Ocean Dipole and India's seasonal forecasting capacity. (150 words)

#SuperElNino

#ENSO

#IndianOceanDipole

#MonsoonForecast

#ClimateVariability

GS3

Species in News · River Ecosystems

Static Topic — rotational species profile, paired with today's monsoon/water-security theme · Source: IUCN Red List; animalia.bio; Wildlife Institute of India

The Gharial: A River-Flow Indicator Species Caught Between Dams and Droughts

Why in News: Paired with today's Super El Niño/monsoon-variability story, the Critically Endangered Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) is a textbook example of a species whose survival is directly tied to river-flow volume and seasonal timing — exactly the variables a weak or delayed monsoon threatens most, making its conservation status a live barometer of India's river-health trends.

Background: Once found across a vast range from Pakistan to Myanmar, the gharial's population has collapsed by over 95% since the 1940s due to dam construction, sand mining, fishing-net entanglement and habitat fragmentation, confining the wild breeding population today to only a few protected river stretches, chiefly the National Chambal Sanctuary spanning Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Scientific name: *Gavialis gangeticus*; family Gavialidae — the only surviving genus in its family, making it evolutionarily distinct among crocodilians.
- IUCN Red List status: Critically Endangered; listed under CITES Appendix I and Schedule I of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Estimated wild population: roughly 650-900 adults, concentrated overwhelmingly in the National Chambal Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh-Uttar Pradesh-Rajasthan tri-junction).
- Distinctive feature: an extremely narrow, elongated snout adapted for catching fish, and in mature males, a bulbous nasal growth called a "ghara" (after which the species is named).
- Breeding is highly flow-dependent: gharials nest on exposed sandbanks that form only when river flow drops within a specific post-monsoon window, making altered flow timing from dams/barrages directly disruptive to nesting success.
- Threats: dams and barrages altering natural flow and sediment patterns, illegal sand mining destroying nesting sandbanks, fishing-net entanglement, and riverbed agriculture encroaching on nesting sites.
- Conservation programme: a captive-breeding and "head-starting" programme (raising hatchlings in captivity before release), running since the 1970s, has helped rebuild Chambal's population from near-extinction levels.
- Gharials are harmless to humans — their narrow jaws cannot tackle large prey — a fact used in outreach to counter mistaken persecution as a "man-eating crocodile."

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Significance: as a flow-and-sediment-dependent species, the gharial functions as a living indicator of river-health and monsoon-timing changes, linking wildlife conservation directly to hydrology and climate variability.
- Criticism: conservationists argue India's river-management planning (dam-operation schedules, sand-mining permits) rarely factors in gharial nesting-season flow requirements, treating ecological flow as an afterthought to irrigation and power scheduling.
- Analytical angle: the species' near-total concentration in one river stretch (Chambal) makes it acutely vulnerable to any single localised disaster — a pollution spill, a disease outbreak, or a poor-monsoon low-flow year — a textbook "all eggs in one basket" conservation risk.
- Comparative angle: contrasts with the more widely distributed (though still threatened) mugger crocodile, illustrating how habitat specialism raises extinction risk compared to habitat generalism.
- Way forward: experts recommend formally incorporating "environmental flow" release requirements into upstream dam-operation protocols during the gharial nesting season (roughly March-May) as a low-cost, high-impact conservation measure.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Spot the difference: gharial = narrow snout, fish-only diet, harmless to humans, named for the male's 'ghara' nose-growth; mugger crocodile = broad snout, generalist diet, the one that actually can be dangerous — never confuse the two in an MCQ.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

Species-specific conservation status under IUCN/Wildlife Protection Act categories is an almost-annual Prelims theme; revise alongside the National Chambal Sanctuary and the Gangetic river dolphin.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The Gharial is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List and under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
2. The Gharial's primary wild population is concentrated in the National Chambal Sanctuary.
3. The Gharial is considered a significant threat to human life due to frequent attacks on people.

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1, 2 and 3 (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 3 only

Answer: a. Statement 3 is wrong — gharials are harmless to humans due to their narrow, fish-catching snout.

📌 PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Examine how river-flow management and dam operations affect the conservation of flow-dependent aquatic species in India, with reference to the Gharial. (150 words)

#Gharial

#NationalChambalSanctuary

#IUCNRedList

#RiverEcosystems

#EnvironmentalFlow

2

PLACES IN NEWS

7 PINS

PLACES IN NEWS — 17 OCTOBER 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- ① New Delhi (Parliament — Delimitation Bill & Standing Committee Report)
- ② Chambal (National Chambal Sanctuary — Gharial habitat)
- ③ Vijayawada (National Saras Mela 2026)
- ④ Brussels (India-EU Trade and Technology Council)
- ⑤ Beijing (SCO Secretariat)
- ⑥ Jakarta (Indonesia's worst wildfire season amid Super El Niño)
- ⑦ Harare (Zimbabwe's drought-contingency planning)

New Delhi, India

Seat of Parliament, where the Delimitation Bill, 2026 awaits passage and the 261st Standing Committee Report on disaster management was tabled; also where MoSPI released September's CPI data.

Located on the Yamuna's west bank in the Indo-Gangetic Plain, bordered by the Aravalli Range's northernmost outcrop, the Delhi Ridge.

National Chambal Sanctuary

Home to India's most important gharial breeding habitat, today's paired static-species profile in the Environment section.

A tri-junction river sanctuary spanning Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan along a ravine-scarred stretch of the Chambal, a right-bank tributary of the Yamuna.

Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

Hosts the National Saras Mela 2026, showcasing rural Self-Help Group products under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission.

Situated where the Krishna River breaks through the Eastern Ghats onto the coastal delta plain, historically Andhra Pradesh's key trade and irrigation hub (Prakasam Barrage).

Brussels, Belgium

Seat of the European Commission, the institutional home of the India-EU Trade and Technology Council and the parallel, stalled FTA talks.

Capital of Belgium and the de facto administrative capital of the European Union, located on the North European Plain.

Beijing, China

Headquarters of the SCO Secretariat, the institutional anchor of India's calibrated multilateral engagement with the China-led bloc.

Situated on the North China Plain, bordered by the Yan Mountains to the north, historically shielded by the Great Wall fortification line.

Jakarta, Indonesia

Indonesia's capital region, at the centre of the country's worst wildfire season in a decade as the developing Super El Niño dries out Southeast Asia's peatlands.

On Java's low-lying northern coastal plain; Indonesia's worst peatland fires actually concentrate on Sumatra and Kalimantan, both highly exposed to El Niño-driven dry spells.

Harare, Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's capital, where authorities are drawing up advance drought-contingency plans for the 2026-27 rainy season under the same El Niño signal.

Located on the high interior plateau (average elevation ~1,490 m) of southern Africa, a region whose rain-fed agriculture is acutely exposed to ENSO-driven rainfall variability.

3

ETHICS — CASE STUDIES

6 CASES

Case 1

Rawls's Difference Principle

As a District Disaster Management Authority officer implementing the Standing Committee's push for ward-level early-warning systems, you have a limited first-year budget. One ward houses an affluent, well-connected colony with vocal Residents' Welfare Associations demanding priority sensor installation; a flood-prone informal settlement on the riverbank, home to daily-wage workers, has no political voice but objectively the highest casualty risk.

Question: Applying Rawls's Difference Principle, how would you justify allocating the limited first-year warning-system budget, and how would you defend this decision to the affluent colony's residents?

Case 2

Procedural vs Substantive Legitimacy

As an associate (non-voting) member of a State's Delimitation Commission process, you discover that the Commission's proposed boundary for a reserved SC constituency technically satisfies the "contiguous and compact" requirement, but was drawn in a way that dilutes a community's effective political voice by splitting its traditional settlement area across two constituencies.

Question: Distinguish procedural legitimacy from substantive legitimacy in this context, and explain what obligations, if any, you have to flag this concern despite having no vote.

Case 3

Kantian Universalisability (Categorical Imperative)

As a field enumerator for the price-collection survey that feeds into the CPI, your supervisor hints that slightly smoothing a few extreme, hard-to-verify price entries (like the recent onion price spike) would make your district's data "look less noisy" and speed up approval, with no one likely to notice.

Question: Apply Kant's categorical imperative test to this situation — could the maxim "smooth outlier data when it is inconvenient" be willed as a universal law for all official statisticians?

Case 4

Public Trust Doctrine / Fiduciary Duty

As a nodal officer disbursing Gyan Bharatam Mission funds, you must choose between fast-tracking a well-documented, media-visible university's Cluster Centre application and a remote Himalayan monastery's Independent Centre application, which holds demonstrably older and more fragile manuscripts but lacks the administrative capacity to produce the required third-party audit paperwork on time.

Question: Using the public trust doctrine, argue whether administrative convenience should ever outweigh the principle that heritage held "in trust" for the nation must be protected according to actual conservation urgency rather than paperwork readiness.

Case 5

Moral Relativism vs National Interest (Realism)

As a junior diplomat drafting India's position for an upcoming SCO joint statement, you are instructed to avoid any language that could be read as endorsing the Belt and Road Initiative, even though doing so risks mild friction with the host country and could complicate an unrelated bilateral issue your ministry is trying to resolve quietly.

Question: Examine the ethical tension between pragmatic national-interest calculation (Realism) and the temptation toward a convenient, context-dependent moral position (relativism) in diplomatic drafting, and recommend a principled way to resolve it.

Case 6

Utilitarian Calculus vs Rawlsian Minimax

As a district collector preparing for an anticipated poor monsoon under the emerging Super El Niño signal, you have one water-tanker fleet to allocate between a large urban ward (greatest total number of people affected) and a small, remote tribal hamlet (fewer total people, but facing complete well failure with no alternative water source at all).

Question: Contrast a utilitarian "greatest good for the greatest number" allocation with a Rawlsian "minimax" (help the worst-off first) allocation in this drought-relief scenario, and justify which principle should guide your decision.

4

PRELIMS MCQS

20 QUESTIONS

MCQ 1

Consider the following statements regarding the Delimitation Bill, 2026:

1. It was introduced in the Rajya Sabha.
2. It repeals the Delimitation Act, 2002.
3. Associate members of the Delimitation Commission have voting rights.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 only
- (b) 1 and 2
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a. Statement 1 is wrong (introduced in the Lok Sabha); Statement 3 is wrong (associate members cannot vote).

MCQ 2

Consider the following statements regarding the 42nd and 84th Constitutional Amendments:

1. The 42nd Amendment (1976) froze the total number of Lok Sabha seats based on the 1971 Census.
2. The 84th Amendment extended this freeze further.
3. The freeze permanently removes the possibility of any future increase in seat numbers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 3
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1 only

Answer: a. Statement 3 is wrong — the freeze lapses after the first Census taken after 2026.

MCQ 3

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is chaired, ex officio, by:

- (a) The Home Minister
- (b) The Prime Minister
- (c) The Cabinet Secretary
- (d) The NITI Aayog Vice-Chairperson

Answer: b. The Prime Minister is the ex officio Chairperson of the NDMA.

MCQ 4

With reference to the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and its 2025 amendment, consider:

1. The Act created a three-tier structure of NDMA, SDMA and DDMA.
2. The 2025 amendment empowers States to constitute Urban Disaster Management Authorities.
3. All States have constituted such Authorities as mandated.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 3
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1 only

Answer: a. Statement 3 is wrong — a recent Parliamentary Standing Committee review found only Karnataka has done so.

MCQ 5

The Gyan Bharatam Mission, aimed at manuscript conservation, is administered by which Ministry?

- (a) Ministry of Education
- (b) Ministry of Culture
- (c) Ministry of Electronics & IT
- (d) Ministry of External Affairs

Answer: b. It is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Culture.

MCQ 6

Consider the following pairs of manuscript languages covered under the Gyan Bharatam Mission and their typical subject matter:

1. Sanskrit — Philosophy and astronomy
2. Persian — Governance and administrative records
3. Tamil — exclusively religious hymns, with no secular content

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 3
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

Answer: a. Pair 3 is wrong — Tamil manuscripts also cover medicine, law and secular literature, not exclusively religious hymns.

MCQ 7

Which of the following best describes the “Shanghai Spirit” underlying the SCO Charter?

- (a) Military alliance against non-member states
- (b) Mutual trust, equality and non-alignment against third countries
- (c) A single-currency trade bloc
- (d) A collective-defence pact akin to NATO

Answer: b. The Shanghai Spirit emphasises mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and non-alignment against third parties.

MCQ 8

Consider the following statements about the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):

1. India and Pakistan became full members in the same year.
2. SCO decisions are taken by majority voting among member states.
3. The SCO Secretariat is headquartered in Beijing.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 3
- (c) 2 only
- (d) 2 and 3 only

Answer: a. Statement 2 is wrong — SCO decisions are consensus-based, not by majority voting.

MCQ 9

The India-EU Trade and Technology Council was launched in which year?

- (a) 2021
- (b) 2022
- (c) 2023
- (d) 2024

Answer: c. It was launched in April 2023.

MCQ 10

Consider the following statements on the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM):

1. It imposes a carbon tariff on select carbon-intensive imports into the EU.
2. Steel, aluminium, cement and fertilisers are among the sectors covered.
3. CBAM is designed exclusively to protect EU agricultural exporters.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 3
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

Answer: a. Statement 3 is wrong — CBAM targets carbon-intensive industrial sectors, not agriculture.

MCQ 11

Akash-NG improves on the original Akash missile primarily through:

- (a) A nuclear-warhead upgrade
- (b) Active radar seeker-based terminal guidance
- (c) Conversion to a ballistic-missile-defence role
- (d) Removal of canister-launch capability

Answer: b. Akash-NG adds active radar seeker-based terminal guidance, unlike the command-guided original Akash.

MCQ 12

Consider the following statements regarding India's layered air-defence systems:

1. The S-400 Triumf is a long-range air-defence system.
2. Akash-NG is designed for a tier below (shorter range than) the original Akash.
3. QRSAM is a short-range, indigenous system.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 3
- (c) 2 only
- (d) 2 and 3 only

Answer: a. Statement 2 is wrong — Akash-NG is medium-range, a tier above (longer range than) the original Akash.

MCQ 13

The BB84 protocol, foundational to Quantum Key Distribution, was proposed by:

- (a) Einstein and Bohr
- (b) Bennett and Brassard
- (c) Shor and Grover
- (d) Feynman and Dirac

Answer: b. BB84 was proposed by Charles Bennett and Gilles Brassard in 1984.

MCQ 14

Consider the following statements about India's National Quantum Mission:

1. It was approved by the Union Cabinet in 2023.
2. Its four thrust areas include quantum computing, communication, sensing and materials.
3. It is administered by the Department of Space.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 3
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1 only

Answer: a. Statement 3 is wrong — it is administered by the Department of Science and Technology.

MCQ 15

Which organisation releases the Consumer Price Index (CPI) data in India?

- (a) Reserve Bank of India
- (b) NITI Aayog
- (c) Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)
- (d) Department of Economic Affairs

Answer: c. MoSPI compiles and releases India's CPI data monthly.

MCQ 16

With reference to the RBI's Flexible Inflation Targeting framework, consider:

1. It was institutionalised via an amendment to the RBI Act, 1934 inserting Section 45ZA.
2. The inflation target must be reviewed and fixed afresh at least once every five years.
3. "Failure" is defined as inflation outside the tolerance band for three consecutive quarters.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1 and 3 only

Answer: a. All three statements correctly describe the FIT framework under Section 45ZA.

MCQ 17

The “Niño 3.4 region,” used to define El Niño intensity, is located in which ocean?

- (a) Atlantic Ocean
- (b) Indian Ocean
- (c) Pacific Ocean
- (d) Arctic Ocean

Answer: c. The Niño 3.4 region lies in the central-eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.

MCQ 18

Consider the following statements about the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO):

1. El Niño is associated with below-average sea-surface temperatures in the central-eastern Pacific.
2. A positive Indian Ocean Dipole can partially offset El Niño's drying effect on the Indian monsoon.
3. ENSO is a purely anthropogenic (human-caused) phenomenon with no natural variability component.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a. Statement 1 is wrong (El Niño means above-average SST); Statement 3 is wrong (ENSO is a natural cycle, though influenced by background warming).

MCQ 19

The Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) is primarily threatened by all of the following EXCEPT:

- (a) Dam-induced flow alteration
- (b) Illegal sand mining
- (c) Overhunting for its meat as a delicacy
- (d) Fishing-net entanglement

Answer: c. Gharials are not hunted for meat; their main threats are habitat- and flow-related, not hunting.

MCQ 20

Consider the following statements about the National Chambal Sanctuary:

1. It spans three States — Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.
2. The Chambal is a direct, left-bank tributary of the Ganga.
3. It is a key habitat for both the Gharial and the Gangetic river dolphin.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 3
- (c) 2 only
- (d) 2 and 3 only

Answer: a. Statement 2 is wrong — the Chambal is a right-bank tributary of the Yamuna, not a direct tributary of the Ganga.

5 MAINS QUESTIONS

9 QUESTIONS

GS1

Q1. Examine the interplay between the El Niño-Southern Oscillation and the Indian Ocean Dipole in shaping the variability of the Indian summer monsoon.

(150 words)

GS2

Q2. "Delimitation is as much a question of political federalism as it is of mathematical proportionality." Critically examine this statement in the context of the Delimitation Bill, 2026.

(250 words)

GS2

Q3. Discuss India's strategy of simultaneous engagement with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the QUAD, and evaluate whether this amounts to genuine strategic autonomy or diplomatic hedging.

(250 words)

GS2

Q4. Critically evaluate the India-EU Trade and Technology Council as a mechanism for advancing economic cooperation in the absence of a concluded Free Trade Agreement.

(150 words)

GS3

Q5. Discuss the implementation deficit in India's disaster-management architecture highlighted by the 261st Parliamentary Standing Committee Report, and suggest institutional reforms to close this gap.

(250 words)

GS3

Q6. Distinguish between the Consumer Price Index and the Wholesale Price Index as measures of inflation in India, and discuss their respective roles in monetary policy formulation.

(150 words)

GS3

Q7. Examine the case for and against revising India's Flexible Inflation Targeting framework at its statutory five-year review due in 2026.

(250 words)

GS3

Q8. Explain the working principle of Quantum Key Distribution and assess India's preparedness for a "post-quantum" cybersecurity threat environment.

(150 words)

GS4

Q9. "Public administrators often face a choice between utilitarian efficiency and Rawlsian equity in resource allocation during a crisis." Illustrate this tension with reference to drought or disaster relief, and discuss which principle should guide ethical decision-making in such situations.

(250 words)

6 VALUE ADDITION

8 ITEMS

Delimitation: Article 82 of the Constitution mandates seat readjustment after every Census — but the actual freeze on seat numbers has lasted since 1971, over five decades.

Disaster Management: Only 1 of India's States (Karnataka) has constituted an Urban Disaster Management Authority, despite the enabling 2025 amendment — per the 261st Standing Committee Report.

Heritage: India's manuscript corpus is estimated in the millions, spanning at least six languages, yet only a fraction has ever been catalogued — the gap the Gyan Bharatam Mission aims to close.

Geopolitics: The SCO's ten member states together account for roughly 40% of the world's population and about a quarter of global GDP — yet India remains the bloc's most consistent BRI holdout.

Trade: CBAM, phasing in fully from 2026, could affect a meaningful share of India's EU-bound exports of steel, aluminium, cement and fertilisers — the sharpest current irritant in India-EU economic ties.

Inflation: India's CPI jumped nearly a full percentage point in a single month (4.83% to 5.54%) in September 2026 — one of the sharpest sequential jumps in the post-2024-rebasing CPI series.

Monetary Policy: Section 45ZA of the RBI Act, 1934 requires India's inflation target to be renotified every five years — 2026 is only the third such renewal since the framework began in 2016.

Environment: The Gharial's wild population has collapsed by over 95% since the 1940s, now surviving overwhelmingly in a single river stretch — the National Chambal Sanctuary.

7

DIRECT HIT TRACKER

18 ROWS

TOPIC	GS PAPER	ONE-LINE CAPSULE	PROBABILITY
Delimitation Bill, 2026	GS2	Census-linked seat readjustment; trigger for women's reservation	★★★★★
261st Standing Committee Report (Disaster Mgmt.)	GS3	Only Karnataka has an Urban DMA; AI-forecasting gap flagged	★★★★
Gyan Bharatam Mission	GS1	Manuscript digitisation; National Digital Repository	★★★★
Shanghai Cooperation Organisation	GS2	India's BRI-abstention; Shanghai Spirit; RATS	★★★★
India-EU Trade & Technology Council	GS2	Three working groups; CBAM friction with parallel FTA	★★★★
Akash-NG	GS3	Medium-range SAM; active radar seeker guidance	★★★
Quantum Key Distribution	GS3	BB84 protocol; National Quantum Mission thrust area	★★★★
CPI Inflation, September 2026	GS3	5.54%; onion-led food-price spike	★★★★★
Flexible Inflation Targeting Review	GS3	Section 45ZA; five-year renewal due in 2026	★★★★
Super El Niño 2026-27	GS1/GS3	ENSO, IOD interaction; India monsoon risk	★★★★★
Gharial	GS3	Critically Endangered; National Chambal Sanctuary	★★★
Article 82 & the Seat Freeze	GS2	42nd & 84th Constitutional Amendments	★★★★
Women's Reservation Act, 2023 (106th Amendment)	GS2	Linked to the Delimitation Bill's implementation trigger	★★★★
Disaster Management Act, 2005 & 2025 Amendment	GS3	NDMA-SDMA-DDMA structure; Urban DMA provision	★★★★
National Quantum Mission	GS3	Four thrust areas; ₹6,003 crore outlay, 2023-31	★★★
India's Recent FTA Sequence	GS2/GS3	UAE → Australia → EFTA → UK → US tranche → EU (ongoing)	★★★
Urjit Patel Committee (2014)	GS3	Origin of India's inflation-targeting framework	★★★
ENSO-IOD-Walker Circulation Interaction	GS1	Core climatology mechanism behind monsoon variability	★★★★

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