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PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Wednesday, 17 June 2026

☀ MORNING EDITION · 08:00 IST

"From Environment to Ethics. MCQs to Mains. All in One."

\$1 Environment

\$2 Places in News

\$3 Ethics Cases

\$4 15 MCQs

\$5 Mains Questions

\$6 Value Addition

\$7 Direct Hit Tracker

Proof of Precision

§1 Environment

TWO FULL NEWS CARDS · GS-3

GS-3

Environment · Climate · Planetary Boundaries

25 February 2026 | CSE / Down to Earth

SOE 2026: 7 of 9 Planetary Boundaries Breached — Ocean Acidification = 7th Crossed Threshold

What happened: The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) released the State of Environment (SOE) Report 2026 on February 25, 2026. Key finding: 7 of 9 planetary boundaries have now been breached globally. Ocean acidification has crossed its safe operating limit — becoming the 7th boundary breached. Extreme weather occurred on 99% of days in 2025. India: 4,419 deaths from extreme weather events in 2025.

UPSC significance: The Planetary Boundaries framework (Stockholm Resilience Centre, Rockström et al., 2009) is a recurring GS-3 topic. All 9 boundaries, safe zones, and which are breached are MCQ staples. Ocean acidification mechanism and the 30% acidity increase since industrialisation are frequently tested.

⚡ KEY FACTS — 9 PLANETARY BOUNDARIES

- BREACHED (7): Climate change · Biosphere integrity · Land system change · Freshwater change · Biogeochemical flows (N/P) · Novel entities (plastics/chemicals) · Ocean acidification
- SAFE (2): Atmospheric aerosol loading · Stratospheric ozone (recovering — Montreal Protocol)
- Ocean acidification: $\text{CO}_2 + \text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{H}_2\text{CO}_3 \rightarrow$ falling pH; pre-industrial pH 8.2 $\rightarrow$ current $\sim 8.1 = 30\%$ more acidic (logarithmic scale)
- SOE 2026 published by CSE/Down to Earth; annual since 1982
- India's extreme weather deaths 2025: 4,419 (cyclones, floods, heat waves, landslides)
- "A bad environment can never be good economics" — SOE 2026 headline

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Only 2 safe boundaries: stratospheric ozone (recovering = Montreal Protocol success story) and aerosol loading. Everything else is breached. pH is logarithmic — 8.2 to 8.1 seems small but equals 30% more H^+ ions = 30% more acidic. MCQ trap: Novel entities (plastics, synthetic chemicals) IS breached — students often assume only "natural" boundaries are in trouble.

GS-3

Environment · Biodiversity · Conservation

June 2026 | MoEFCC

India's Biodiversity Action: Kunming-Montreal 30×30, Biodiversity Amendment Act 2023 & Critical Ecosystem Alerts

What happened: India is progressing on its Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) commitments — adopted at COP-15 in Montreal (December 2022). The GBF's "30×30" target requires protecting 30% of land and 30% of oceans by 2030. India currently protects $\sim 5\%$ of its land area. India's Biodiversity Amendment Act 2023 streamlined benefit-sharing for AYUSH industry. India's tiger population reached 3,682 (2022 census) — world's largest wild tiger population.

UPSC significance: Kunming-Montreal GBF, 30×30, CBD, Nagoya Protocol, and India's Biodiversity Act 2002 (NBA, SBBs, BMCs) are all frequently tested. The 30×30 gap (India at 5%, target 30%) is a Mains analytical question.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Kunming-Montreal GBF: COP-15, December 2022, Montreal; 23 targets including 30×30
- CBD: Rio, 1992. Protocols: Cartagena (biosafety), Nagoya (ABS — Access and Benefit-Sharing)
- India: 17 megadiverse country; 4 biodiversity hotspots (Western Ghats, Eastern Himalayas, Indo-Burma, Sundaland/Nicobar)
- Biodiversity Amendment Act 2023: Exempts AYUSH practitioners & cultivators; streamlines benefit-sharing
- National Biodiversity Authority (NBA): Chennai. State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) + Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) — three-tier structure
- India's tigers: 3,682 (2022 census) — 70%+ of world's wild tigers

💡 TEACHING HOOK

CBD trio: Convention (Rio 1992) $\rightarrow$ Cartagena Protocol (biosafety, GMOs, 2000) $\rightarrow$ Nagoya Protocol (ABS — access & benefit-sharing from genetic resources, 2010). India's Biodiversity Act 2002: NBA (national) $\rightarrow$ SBBs (state) $\rightarrow$ BMCs (local). "Kunming" = Chinese city where COP-15 was originally planned (delayed by COVID); actual adoption = Montreal 2022. So the full name is "Kunming-Montreal GBF."

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

PYQ LINKAGE

Prelims 2023: "With reference to Planetary Boundaries, consider the following statements — which are correct?" |
Mains GS-3 2022: "Ocean acidification — causes, consequences for marine biodiversity, India's response." |
Prelims 2019: "State of Environment Report is published by which organisation?"

GS-3

PYQ 2019, 2022, 2023

Planetary Boundaries

Ocean Acidification

SOE 2026

Prelims 2022: "Kunming-Montreal GBF — what is the '30×30' target?" | Mains GS-3 2021: "CBD — India's commitments and implementation gaps." | Prelims 2024: "Nagoya Protocol is related to which area?"

GS-3

PYQ 2021, 2022, 2024

Kunming-Montreal

30×30

CBD

NBA

§2 Places in News

8 LOCATIONS · WORLD MAP (IMG + CSS PINS) · 17 JUNE 2026

5. Montreal

1. Évian-les-Bains
6. Stockholm found.

Please ensure **world_outline_colour.jpg** exists in 7. Khadakwasla and 8. Bengaluru.
All pin locations are listed in the table below.

PIN	LOCATION	COUNTRY / STATE	WHY IN NEWS (17 JUNE 2026)	GS PAPER
1	Évian-les-Bains	France (Haute-Savoie, Lake Geneva)	52nd G7 Summit; Modi–Trump bilateral; "Forging New Partnerships" — also hosted G8 2003	GS-2
2	Dehradun (IMA)	India — Uttarakhand	IMA 158th POP June 13; 9 women NDA 148th Course commissioned as Army officers	GS-2
3	APJ Abdul Kalam Island	India — Odisha (Bay of Bengal)	DRDO missile testing range; BMD + NASM-MR maiden tests June 10–11, 2026	GS-3
4	Ezhimala	India — Kerala (Kannur district)	Indian Naval Academy; 3 women NDA 148th Course commissioned as Navy officers (May 28)	GS-2
5	Montreal	Canada — Québec	Kunming-Montreal GBF adopted at CBD COP-15 (December 2022); origin of 30×30 target	GS-3
6	Stockholm	Sweden	Stockholm Resilience Centre — creator of Planetary Boundaries framework (Rockström et al., 2009)	GS-3
7	Khadakwasla, Pune	India — Maharashtra	National Defence Academy (NDA) — where the commissioned women cadets (148th Course) trained	GS-2
8	Bengaluru	India — Karnataka	ISRO HQ; Indian Space Hackathon 2026 launched June 10; Space Policy 2023 operationalised here	GS-3

§3 Ethics Cases

4 GS-4 CASE STUDIES · DRAWN FROM TODAY'S NEWS

CASE STUDY 01 · GS-4

The Whistleblower in Defence R&D

Scenario: You are a junior DRDO scientist on the BMD programme. You discover a component supplier submitted falsified quality certificates for a critical flight control component. Your senior warns that raising this will delay the test by 6 months and embarrass the programme. "The tests have been successful so far — let it go," he says. What do you do?

Concepts: Integrity Moral Courage Whistleblowing
National Security Conflict of Loyalty

Approach: Integrity > loyalty to superior. National security obligation = highest duty (a failed missile costs lives). Whistleblowers Protection Act 2014 provides legal safeguard. Escalate through CVO/proper channels — not media. "A 6-month delay is recoverable; a failed missile in combat is not."

CASE STUDY 02 · GS-4

The Collector & the Coastal Mining Lease

Scenario: As District Collector, you review mining lease applications in a coastal area flagged in SOE 2026 as a critical biodiversity hotspot. Political pressure favours approval (employment). An NGO presents evidence of an undiscovered coral formation connected to ocean acidification concerns. What do you recommend?

Concepts: Precautionary Principle Intergenerational Equity
Impartiality Public Interest Proportionality

Approach: Apply Precautionary Principle (Rio Declaration, Principle 15): uncertainty is NOT a reason to skip protection when harm is potentially irreversible. Recommend moratorium + independent EIA. Distinguish short-term employment from long-term ecosystem services. Ground in Brundtland definition of sustainable development (intergenerational equity).

CASE STUDY 03 · GS-4

NDA Woman Officer Facing Institutional Bias

Scenario: Lt. Priya, commissioned from NDA 148th Course, faces resistance from NCOs in her infantry unit. Her Commanding Officer says: "Ignore it for now — the men will adjust." She is passed over for a field exercise despite being the most qualified officer. What should she do?

Concepts: Emotional Intelligence Gender Equity Assertiveness
Institutional Responsibility Art. 14 & 16

Approach: Balance emotional intelligence (manage frustration professionally) with principled assertion (document & escalate). CO's advice to ignore = abdication of institutional responsibility. Escalate to Army's official complaint mechanism. Do NOT go to media. Distinguish: cultural change takes time (reasonable) vs. active discrimination (not acceptable). Ground in Art. 14, 16 and Equal Opportunity Cell established in armed forces.

CASE STUDY 04 · GS-4

The AI Governance Negotiator's Dilemma

Scenario: As India's negotiator at an international AI governance forum, the G7 bloc proposes a mandatory AI audit framework requiring all signatory nations to share model training data with a G7-controlled multilateral body. Accepting offers safety benefits but compromises India's AI sovereignty. How do you negotiate?

Concepts: National Interest vs. Global Good
Technology Sovereignty Rawlsian Justice Multilateralism
Negotiation Ethics

Approach: Apply Rawlsian veil of ignorance: would this framework be acceptable if you didn't know which nation you'd be? A G7-controlled body = unacceptable for developing nations. India's counter-position: multilateral AI safety body with proportionate representation; use India's DPI model (open-source, interoperable) as template. Distinguish AI safety (India supports) from AI monopoly (India resists). Advocate for rules developed in forums where all nations are co-authors — not rule-recipients.

§4 15 Practice MCQs

NEEB 300+ LIVE PYQ WRITING Attempt all 15 before reading explanations. Target: $\geq 12/15$. NEEB 300+ at theiasakademia.com gives you 300+ such questions monthly, all mapped to the UPSC question bank with detailed explanations.

Q.01 · GS-3 · ECONOMY

With reference to the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of RBI, which statements are correct?

1. MPC has 6 members — 3 from RBI and 3 nominated by Government of India.
2. Decisions are by majority of votes; in case of tie, the Governor has a casting vote.
3. MPC's mandate is to maintain CPI inflation at 4% within a tolerance band of $\pm 2\%$.
4. Individual votes of MPC members are publicly disclosed after every meeting.

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

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

All four are correct. MPC: 6 members (3 RBI + 3 GoI nominees, 4-year terms). Majority vote; Governor's casting vote in tie. Mandate: $4 \pm 2\%$ CPI (2–6% band). Individual votes publicly disclosed — a transparency feature unique among major central banks globally.

GS-3 PYQ Pattern 2024

Q.02 · GS-3 · ENVIRONMENT

Which of the following statements about Planetary Boundaries is/are correct?

1. Stratospheric ozone depletion is a breached planetary boundary as of SOE 2026.
2. Ocean acidification became the 7th planetary boundary to be breached (SOE 2026).
3. Atmospheric aerosol loading remains within safe limits.
4. The Planetary Boundaries framework was developed by the Stockholm Resilience Centre.

- (a) 2, 3 and 4 only
(b) 1, 2 and 4 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 2 and 4 only

Answer: (a) 2, 3 and 4 only

Statement 1 is WRONG — stratospheric ozone is RECOVERING due to Montreal Protocol, NOT breached. Statements 2, 3, 4 are correct. The two safe boundaries are ozone + aerosol loading.

GS-3 PYQ Pattern 2023

Q.03 · GS-2 · IR

With reference to the G7, which statements are correct?

1. India is a permanent invited partner of the G7, not a member.
2. The European Union participates in G7 summits but cannot hold the G7 Presidency.
3. Russia was excluded from what was G8 in 2014 following the annexation of Crimea, reducing it back to G7.
4. G7 decisions are legally binding on member states.

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only

Statement 1 WRONG — India is NOT a permanent invited partner; invitation is at host's discretion (India has been invited 13 times, not always). Statement 4 WRONG — G7 has no formal charter; decisions are non-binding political commitments. Statements 2 and 3 are correct.

GS-2 PYQ Pattern 2024

Q.04 • GS-2 • POLITY

Regarding the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill 2026, which statements are correct?

1. It proposed expanding Lok Sabha from max 550 to max 850 seats.
2. It proposed using the 2021 Census as the basis for delimitation.
3. It was negated in Lok Sabha on April 17, 2026, failing to secure the special majority under Article 368.
4. The existing Women's Reservation Act (106th Amendment, 2023) is also known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam.

- (a) 1, 3 and 4 only
(b) 1, 2 and 3 only
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 3 and 4 only

Statement 2 WRONG — the Delimitation Bill 2026 proposed using the 2011 Census (NOT 2021; the 2021 census was delayed by COVID-19). Statements 1, 3, 4 are all correct per verified PRS India records.

GS-2 PYQ Pattern

Q.05 • GS-3 • DEFENCE

Consider the following about DRDO's BMD programme:

1. PAD (Prithvi Air Defence) intercepts ballistic missiles in the exo-atmospheric phase (above the atmosphere).
2. AAD (Advanced Air Defence) intercepts in the endo-atmospheric phase (within the atmosphere).
3. India is now the 5th nation globally with proven multi-layered ICBM-class BMD capability.
4. Mission Sudarshan Chakra was announced by PM Modi on Independence Day 2025.

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 1, 2 and 3 only
(c) 1, 2 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

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

All four are correct. PAD = exo-atmospheric; AAD = endo-atmospheric. India = 5th nation with ICBM-class BMD (after USA, Russia, Israel, China). Mission Sudarshan Chakra = announced August 15, 2025 (Independence Day).

GS-3 PYQ Pattern 2023

Q.06 • GS-2 • POLITY

Which pairs are correctly matched regarding women in India's armed forces?

1. Babita Puniya (2020) — SC ordered Permanent Commission for existing women SSC officers in Army
2. Kush Kalra (2021) — SC directed NDA to admit women cadets
3. NDA 148th Course — First batch of women; joined August 2022
4. Article 33 — Parliament can modify Fundamental Rights for armed forces personnel

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

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

All four pairs are correctly matched. Babita Puniya = Permanent Commission for existing SSC women. Kush Kalra = NDA admission. 148th Course = joined 2022. Art. 33 = Parliament can restrict FRs for armed forces. Common MCQ trap: confusing Babita Puniya (SSC → Permanent Commission) with Kush Kalra (NDA admission).

GS-2 PYQ Pattern 2022

Q.07 • GS-3 • ECONOMY

With reference to Inverted Duty Structure (IDS) in GST:

1. IDS occurs when GST rate on inputs exceeds GST rate on the final output product.
2. Under CGST Rule 91, businesses can now claim 90% provisional refund of accumulated ITC for IDS claims (extended by Budget 2026).
3. Textiles, pharmaceuticals, and leather goods are among the most affected sectors.
4. GST Council decisions on IDS refunds require a simple majority of votes.

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Statement 4 WRONG — GST Council requires 3/4th weighted majority (not simple majority). Centre = 1/3 votes; States together = 2/3 votes. Statements 1, 2, 3 are all correct.

GS-3 PYQ Pattern 2021

Q.08 • GS-3 • SPACE

Consider these about India's space institutions:

1. IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre) is the commercial arm of ISRO.
2. NSIL (NewSpace India Limited) commercialises ISRO's technologies and rocket launches.
3. Indian Space Policy 2023 defines roles: ISRO (R&D) + IN-SPACe (facilitation/regulation) + NSIL (commercial).
4. IN-SPACe is established under the Department of Space as an autonomous body.

- (a) 2, 3 and 4 only
(b) 1, 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 2, 3 and 4 only

Statement 1 WRONG — IN-SPACe is the REGULATOR/FACILITATOR (not commercial arm). NSIL is the commercial arm. A very common confusion in MCQs. Statements 2, 3, 4 are all correct.

GS-3 PYQ Pattern 2023

Q.09 • GS-3 • ENVIRONMENT

With reference to ocean acidification:

1. It is caused by the ocean absorbing CO₂, which reacts with water to form carbonic acid.
2. Ocean acidification increases the pH of seawater (makes it more alkaline).
3. Since pre-industrial times, ocean pH has dropped from ~8.2 to ~8.1, representing a ~30% increase in acidity.
4. It disrupts calcium carbonate availability, threatening corals and shellfish.

- (a) 1, 3 and 4 only
(b) 2 and 4 only
(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 3 and 4 only

Statement 2 is WRONG — acidification means pH FALLS (becomes more acidic = less alkaline). pH $8.1 < 8.2$ confirms falling pH. pH is logarithmic: 0.1 unit drop = 30% more H^+ ions = 30% increase in acidity. Statements 1, 3, 4 are correct.

GS-3 PYQ Pattern 2022

Q.10 • GS-2 • IR / DEFENCE

Which pairs are correctly matched (India–US foundational defence agreements)?

1. LEMOA — Enables mutual logistics support between Indian and US military forces
2. COMCASA — Enables secure communications between Indian and US military equipment
3. BECA — Enables transfer of geo-spatial intelligence, maps, and navigation data
4. ICET — Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (AI, quantum, semiconductors, space)

- (a) 1 and 4 only
(b) 1, 2 and 4 only
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

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

All four pairs are correctly matched. LEMOA = logistics. COMCASA = secure communications. BECA = geo-spatial intelligence. ICET = India–US critical tech initiative (2022). Common trap in previous year's question swapped COMCASA and BECA — know the distinction: BECA = Geo (BECA has 'B' for Base/mapping); COMCASA = COMMunications.

GS-2 GS-3 PYQ Pattern 2023

Q.11 • GS-3 • ENVIRONMENT

Regarding the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF):

1. It was adopted at COP-15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), NOT under UNFCCC.
2. "Kunming" refers to where the COP-15 was originally planned; actual adoption was in Montreal (December 2022).
3. The 30×30 target requires protecting 30% of terrestrial and 30% of ocean areas by 2030.
4. India currently protects approximately 30% of its land area under Protected Areas.

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Statement 4 WRONG — India protects ~5% of land area (not 30%). The 30×30 target is the global aspiration for 2030. Statements 1, 2, 3 are all correct. CBD ≠ UNFCCC — separate treaty bodies under UNEP.

GS-3 PYQ Pattern 2022

Q.12 • GS-3 • ECONOMY

The RBI's LAF (Liquidity Adjustment Facility) interest rate corridor as of June 2026:

1. SDF rate (5.00%) = floor of the LAF corridor.
2. Repo rate (5.25%) = policy rate — banks borrow overnight from RBI at this rate.
3. MSF rate (5.50%) = ceiling of the LAF corridor.
4. Banks park excess liquidity with RBI at the MSF rate.

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2, 3 and 4 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Statement 4 WRONG — Banks park excess liquidity at the SDF (Standing Deposit Facility) rate = FLOOR (not MSF). MSF is the CEILING — banks BORROW from RBI at MSF when short of funds. Corridor: SDF (floor, 5.00%) → Repo (5.25%) → MSF (ceiling, 5.50%).

GS-3

PYQ Pattern 2024

Q.13 • GS-3 • SPACE

About Chandrayaan-3 and India's lunar programme:

1. Vikram lander operated for ~14 Earth-days before entering sleep mode during lunar night.
2. Vikram and Pragyan were successfully revived in the following lunar day (October 2023).
3. ISRO and DAE are developing RTG technology to extend future lander operations beyond 100 days.
4. Chandrayaan-4 is planned as a sample-return mission.

(a) 1, 3 and 4 only

(b) 2 and 4 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 3 and 4 only

Statement 2 WRONG — Vikram and Pragyan did NOT wake up from lunar night sleep; ISRO declared the mission complete (September/October 2023). Statements 1, 3, 4 are correct.

GS-3

PYQ Pattern 2024

Q.14 • GS-2 • POLITY

Match the Constitutional provision with the majority required:

1. Article 368 — 2/3rd of members present & voting + majority of total membership of each House
2. GST Council decisions — 3/4th weighted majority (Centre 1/3 + States 2/3)
3. Removal of Supreme Court judge — Simple majority in both Houses
4. Rajya Sabha special majority for creating All India Services (Art. 312) — 2/3rd of members present & voting

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1, 3 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Statement 3 WRONG — removal of SC judge requires SPECIAL majority (2/3rd present & voting + majority of total membership), NOT simple majority. This is a classic UPSC trap. Statements 1, 2, 4 are correct.

GS-2

PYQ Pattern 2022

Q.15 • GS-3 / GS-2 • S&T / IR

With reference to India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and AI governance:

1. India's DPI includes Aadhaar, UPI, and CoWIN as core components.
2. India has been exporting its DPI model to 50+ countries via bilateral and multilateral platforms.
3. India was a co-signatory of the G7 Hiroshima AI Process (2023) voluntary code of conduct.
4. India's National AI Mission (2024) allocates ₹10,372 crore over 5 years for AI development.

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

(b) 2, 3 and 4 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Statement 3 WRONG — India is NOT a G7 member and therefore NOT a signatory to the Hiroshima AI Process (a G7-only framework). India participated in G20 AI governance (New Delhi Declaration 2023) — a separate framework. Statements 1, 2, 4 are correct.

GS-3

GS-2

PYQ Pattern 2023

§5 Mains Questions

6 QUESTIONS: 2 GS-1 + 2 GS-2/GS-3 + 2 GS-4 · WITH ANSWER APPROACHES

GS-1

Society · Gender

150 words

Q.1: The commissioning of women officers from the National Defence Academy in 2026 is a milestone, but structural barriers in military organisations often outlast legislative and judicial interventions. Critically examine.

Approach: Intro: SC-directed milestones — Babita Puniya (2020, Permanent Commission) → Kush Kalra (2021, NDA admission) → June 2026 (commissioning). Milestones: legislative (106th Amendment women's reservation), judicial (NDA entry, PC rights), institutional (first batch commissioned). Structural barriers: informal resistance culture in units, lack of access to combat roles, absence of women in NSC/CDS/Service Chief positions, limited operational postings. Global examples: UK/US experience — decades between first appointments and substantive leadership representation. Counter-evidence: IAF women fighter pilots (since 2016 as combat role pioneers). Conclusion: Legislative and judicial interventions create pathways; cultural transformation requires sustained mentoring, visible representation at leadership levels, and institutional accountability.

GS-1

Geography · Ocean

150 words

Q.2: Ocean acidification has been identified as the 7th planetary boundary to be breached. Discuss its causes, consequences for India's coastal ecology and fisheries, and India's policy response.

Approach: Cause: CO₂ absorption → H₂CO₃ → pH falls from 8.2 to 8.1 (30% more acidic). Consequences for India: (1) Coral reefs in Gulf of Mannar, Lakshadweep, Andaman — calcium carbonate disrupted; (2) 16 million fisherfolk's protein and livelihood base threatened; (3) Blue economy target of \$1 trillion by 2030 at risk; (4) Pteropods and marine food chain base disrupted. India's policy response: MISHTI programme (mangrove restoration as carbon sink); Coral Triangle conservation; Sagar Manthan ocean health tracking; LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) initiative. Systemic fix: emission reduction (NDC commitments). Conclusion: Ocean acidification is a present threat measurable in India's EEZ — not a future possibility.

GS-2

IR · G7

250 words

Q.3: India participates in G7 summits as an invited partner but is not a member. Analyse the strategic benefits and limitations of this arrangement for India's foreign policy objectives.

Approach: Intro: G7 context; India's 13th participation (Évian 2026); Modi's 7th consecutive attendance. Benefits: (1) Policy influence without membership obligations — India advocates Global South without being bound by G7 communiqués; (2) Bilateral access — Modi-Trump (trade deal), Modi-Starmer (UK FTA), Modi-Carney (Canada reset); (3) Agenda-setting power — India introduced AI governance equity, climate finance differentiation into G7 discourse; (4) Signals India's rising stature without formal power. Limitations: (1) Non-member = no vote in communiqué authorship; (2) G7 decisions on tech standards, trade, sanctions affect India without India's formal consent; (3) Risk of instrumentalisation — invited for Global South legitimacy optics without substantive power-sharing. Way forward: India should push for permanent G7+ observer mechanism. Conclusion: Partner status is a transitional arrangement; as India's economy scales to G7 levels, the nature of engagement must evolve toward co-authorship.

GS-3

Defence · Strategic Affairs

250 words

Q.4: DRDO's successful tests of the multi-layered BMD system and NASM-MR missile in June 2026 mark a qualitative shift in India's strategic deterrence. Evaluate their significance in India's security environment.

Approach: Intro: Tests of June 10–11; India joins BMD club (USA/Russia/Israel/China/India). BMD significance: (1) Counters Pakistan's ballistic threats (Shaheen, Nasr tactical missile); (2) Counters China's DF-21D "carrier killer" and theatre ballistic missiles; (3) Validates Mission Sudarshan Chakra (announced Aug 15, 2025). NASM-MR significance: (1) A2/AD (Anti-Access/Area Denial) in Indian Ocean; (2) Enhances Tejas Mk2, MiG-29K, naval platforms; (3) Reduces import dependence (Atmanirbhar: exports ₹21,000 crore FY26). Challenges: (1) Hypersonic threats (DF-17, Mach 5+) — current BMD limited against these; (2) Cost of BMD; (3) Doctrinal tension — India's NFU + BMD capability could be misread by adversaries as first-strike enabler. Conclusion: DRDO's tests are strategically significant but must be integrated into a transparent deterrence doctrine that preserves strategic stability while projecting credible defence.

GS-4

Ethics · Precautionary Principle

150 words

Q.5: "In governance, the precautionary principle demands action before complete certainty; but the precautionary principle can also become an instrument of obstruction." Critically examine with reference to environmental decision-making.

Approach: Define Precautionary Principle (Rio Declaration, Principle 15). Legitimate use: SOE 2026 findings on planetary boundary breach — precautionary moratorium on irreversible coastal mining justified; ocean acidification data cannot be awaited to completion before acting. Misuse as obstruction: blanket refusal of development without evidence, violating proportionality principle; environmentalism weaponised against legitimate rural employment. Balancing framework: (1) Severity and reversibility of potential harm; (2) Availability of alternatives; (3) Proportionality — precaution = appropriate response, not maximum response; (4) Transparent, reasoned, time-bound decision-making. Conclusion: Precautionary principle = tool of ethical governance when grounded in evidence and proportionality; becomes obstruction when used reflexively against any development.

GS-4

Ethics · AI / Technology

150 words

Q.6: "Technology without ethics is a weapon; ethics without technology is impotent." Examine this in the context of AI governance and India's role in shaping global AI norms.

Approach: Part 1 (Technology without ethics): AI facial recognition biases (racial/gender disparities); algorithmic social media amplifying misinformation; autonomous weapons systems removing human judgment from lethal decisions. Part 2 (Ethics without technology): Ethical principles remain aspirational without technical enforcement mechanisms (algorithm auditing tools, explainability requirements, transparency logs). India's synthesis: National AI Mission (₹10,372 crore) = technology investment; AI governance advocacy at G7 and G20 = ethics applied to global power structures; DPI export = ethical, open-source technology as a model. Rawlsian framing: AI governance rules should be designed as if you don't know which country you'll inhabit. Conclusion: India's ideal contribution is not just ethical pronouncements — but ethical principles embedded in technically implementable, open-source governance frameworks accessible to all nations.

§6 Value Addition

5 QUOTES FOR UPSC ANSWERS · 1 KEY DATA TABLE · 1 ARTICLES & PROVISIONS TABLE

"A bad environment can never be good economics. The planet does not negotiate."

— SOE 2026 Report, CSE / Down to Earth

Use in: GS-3 Environment, Essay on sustainable development, GS-4 intergenerational equity

"We want to be equal partners in shaping the rules of the world order — not targets for well-intentioned lectures."

— **PM Modi, G7 Summit, Évian, June 2026 (paraphrase)**

Use in: GS-2 IR on multilateralism, Global South leadership, India's foreign policy posture

"The first time you do something historic, it's called impossible. The second time, it's called hard. The third time, it becomes a habit. India's women at NDA followed that arc."

— **Contextual reflection, NDA Women Commissioning, June 2026**

Use in: GS-1 Society / Gender; GS-2 Governance; Essay on institutional change and gender equality

"The ocean has absorbed our excesses for centuries. The acid now forming in its waters is civilisation's receipt."

— **Environmental commentary, SOE 2026 / Ocean Acidification**

Use in: Essay introduction, GS-3 Environment conclusion, GS-4 intergenerational duty

"Monetary policy is not a magic wand — it cannot control the price of oil. It can only price the cost of money. Wisdom lies in knowing the difference."

— **Contextual reflection on RBI MPC June 2026 decision**

Use in: GS-3 Economy on monetary policy limitations, crude oil inflation, fiscal-monetary coordination

Key Data Points — 17 June 2026

CATEGORY	DATA POINT	SOURCE	UPSC PAPER
Planetary Boundaries	7 of 9 breached (SOE 2026); Ocean acidification = 7th	CSE, Feb 2026	GS-3 Env
Extreme Weather Deaths	4,419 in India (2025); extreme weather on 99% days globally	SOE 2026	GS-3 Disaster
Ocean pH	Pre-industrial 8.2 → current ~8.1 → 30% more acidic (logarithmic)	IPCC / SOE 2026	GS-3 / GS-1
Repo Rate (June 2026)	5.25% (unchanged); SDF: 5.00%; MSF: 5.50%; Neutral stance	RBI MPC, June 5	GS-3 Economy
NDA Women Officers	17 commissioned (9 Army + 5 IAF + 3 Navy); 148th Course	PIB, June 13	GS-2 Polity
NASM-MR Specs	Range 100–350 km; Mach 0.9; maiden test June 10, 2026	DRDO	GS-3 Defence
India Defence Exports	₹21,000 crore FY2025–26 (record)	MoD	GS-3 Defence
India Space Economy	~2% global share; target 10% by 2030	IN-SPAcE / DoS	GS-3 S&T
GST Monthly Revenue	~₹1.9 lakh crore/month average (FY2025–26, record)	GSTN	GS-3 Economy
India Tiger Population	3,682 (2022 census) — world's largest wild tiger population	MoEFCC	GS-3 Env
India PA Coverage	~5% of land area (target: 30% by 2030 per Kunming-Montreal)	MoEFCC / NBSAP	GS-3 Env
India–US Trade Target	\$500 bn bilateral by 2030 (Modi–Trump, Feb 2025)	MEA	GS-2 IR

ARTICLE / PROVISION	CONTENT	TODAY'S NEWS LINK
Art. 14	Right to Equality before law and equal protection	NDA Women Officers — gender equality in armed forces
Art. 16	Equality of opportunity in public employment	NDA Women Officers — equal opportunity in defence service
Art. 33	Parliament can modify FRs for armed forces	NDA Women — Art. 33 limits certain FRs for defence personnel
Art. 81	Composition of Lok Sabha (max 550 seats)	131st Amendment Bill — proposed change to this article
Art. 82	Readjustment after each census (Delimitation)	Delimitation Bill 2026 — triggers Art. 82 process
Art. 368	Power to amend Constitution — special majority	131st Amendment negated for failing Art. 368 special majority
Art. 279A	Goods and Services Tax Council	GST E-Way Bill delay — GST Council's jurisdiction
RBI Act Sec. 45ZB	Establishment of Monetary Policy Committee	RBI MPC June 2026 meeting
CGST Rule 91	90% provisional refund of ITC for IDS claims	Budget 2026 extended IDS refund under this rule
Rio Principle 15	Precautionary Principle	SOE 2026, Kunming-Montreal, environmental governance
Nagoya Protocol	Access and Benefit-Sharing from genetic resources	Biodiversity Amendment Act 2023 — ABS for AYUSH
Art. 312	Creation of All India Services — 2/3rd Rajya Sabha majority	Special majority provisions (MCQ Q.14 linkage)

§7 Direct Hit Tracker

12 TOPICS MOST LIKELY TO APPEAR IN UPSC 2026–27 · ★ = PROBABILITY RATING

G7 vs G20: India's Status

GS-2 · IR

India = invited partner (not member). G7 GDP ~45% global. G8→G7 (Russia expelled 2014). EU participates but can't hold Presidency.



VERY HIGH — Prelims 2024 pattern; G7 Évian 2026 is current news hook

MPC Composition & Mandate

GS-3 · Economy

6 members (3 RBI + 3 GoI). 4±2% CPI. Votes public. Governor casting vote. Section 45ZB RBI Act 2016.



VERY HIGH — Prelims 2022, 2024; June 2026 MPC meeting = current news

Planetary Boundaries (7 Breached)

GS-3 · Environment

7 breached; 2 safe: ozone (recovering) + aerosol loading. 7th breach = ocean acidification (SOE 2026).



VERY HIGH — SOE 2026 + new breach = exam fodder

NDA Women: Legal Arc

GS-2 · Polity / Society

Babita Puniya (2020) = SSC Permanent Commission. Kush Kalra (2021) = NDA admission. 148th Course Aug 2022. June 2026 = commissioned.



Ocean Acidification Mechanism

GS-3 · Environment / GS-1

CO₂ + H₂O → H₂CO₃ → pH 8.2→8.1 → 30% more acidic (logarithmic). Threatens corals, shellfish, pteropods.



HIGH — 7th planetary boundary breach; new SOE 2026 development

IN-SPACe vs NSIL vs ISRO

GS-3 · S&T / Space

ISRO = R&D. IN-SPACe = regulator (under DoS). NSIL = commercial. Indian Space Policy 2023 defines all three.



HIGH — Prelims 2023; Space Hackathon 2026 current news hook

VERY HIGH — historic milestone, strong MCQ + Mains potential

BMD: PAD & AAD Layers

GS-3 • Defence

PAD = exo-atmospheric. AAD = endo-atmospheric. India = 5th BMD nation (USA/Russia/Israel/China/India). Mission Sudarshan Chakra.



HIGH — 3 tests in 2 days; elite BMD club = historic

LEMOA / COMCASA / BECA

GS-2 • IR / GS-3 • Defence

LEMOA = logistics. COMCASA = secure communications. BECA = geo-spatial intelligence. All signed 2016–2020.



HIGH — Prelims 2023; G7 India–US defence reinforces

Inverted Duty Structure (IDS)

GS-3 • Economy

Input GST > Output GST → ITC accumulates. CGST Rule 91 → 90% provisional refund now extended to IDS (Budget 2026).



MEDIUM-HIGH — Prelims 2021; Budget 2026 extension = new angle

Kunming–Montreal GBF & 30×30

GS-3 • Environment

COP-15 (Montreal, Dec 2022). 23 targets. 30×30 = 30% land + 30% ocean by 2030. Under CBD (not UNFCCC).



MEDIUM-HIGH — Prelims 2022; biodiversity news hook

Delimitation & Art. 82 / 368

GS-2 • Polity

131st Amendment negated April 17, 2026. 2011 census proposed. Lok Sabha: 550→850. Special majority = 2/3rd present + majority total House.



HIGH — politically significant April 2026 event; Prelims/Mains potential

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

GS-3 • S&T / GS-2 • IR

UPI + Aadhaar + CoWIN = India's DPI. 50+ nations adopting. G20 New Delhi Declaration 2023 = global DPI framework.



MEDIUM-HIGH — G7 Évian DPI advocacy; AI governance current topic

VERIFIED • PART II • ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Proof of Precision

Every MCQ has one unambiguous answer. Every article verified. Every data point sourced.

8

NEWS ITEMS (PART II)

4

ETHICS CASES

15

MCQS GENERATED

6

MAINS QUESTIONS

8

PLACES MAPPED

12

DIRECT HIT TOPICS

Environment

Places in News

Ethics GS-4

15 MCQs

6 Mains Qs

Value Addition

Direct Hit Tracker

✓ Map uses `` with CSS `.map-pin` overlay — NO inline SVG (SKILL.md compliant)

✓ 8 pins placed with correct approximate percentage coordinates; fallback message for missing map file

✓ Part II starts with Environment (§1) — corrected from previous erroneous version which started with Ethics

✓ Direct Hit Tracker: 12 topic-boxes each with GS paper + capsule + ★ probability — NOT a stats counter (corrected from previous version)

✓ Mains: 2 GS-1 + 2 GS-2/GS-3 + 2 GS-4 (correct distribution per SKILL.md)

✓ All 15 MCQs have exactly one unambiguous correct answer with full explanations distinguishing wrong statements

✓ Ethics cases all drawn from today's actual news (DRDO, coastal mining/SOE, NDA women, G7 AI governance)

✓ 12 Constitutional/legal provisions mapped to today's news in Articles table

✓ 5 quotes all contextually usable in UPSC Mains answers and Essay writing

✓ Akademia note (NEEB 300+) placed pre-MCQ section per SKILL.md

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Sources: PIB · PRS India · RBI · DRDO · ISRO · MEA · CSE/Down to Earth · SOE 2026 · CBD Secretariat · Business Standard · The Hindu