

THEIAS AKADEMIA · MORNING EDITION · 08:00 IST

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

Tuesday, 28 July 2026

World Nature Conservation Day 2026 Observed Globally

Why in News: World Nature Conservation Day was observed on July 28, 2026, renewing focus on protecting natural resources — forests, water, soil, and biodiversity — amid mounting pressure from habitat loss, pollution, and climate change.

Background: The day aims to raise awareness that a healthy environment underpins food security, water availability, and climate resilience; India marks it alongside domestic conservation milestones under Project Tiger, Project Elephant, and various species-recovery programmes.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Observed annually on July 28 to raise awareness about protecting natural resources and biodiversity.
- Falls in the same week as India's NGT scrutiny of unchecked construction near Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, Uttar Pradesh.
- Coincides with continuing Assam flood relief operations — a reminder of the links between ecological degradation and disaster vulnerability.
- India's key conservation programmes: Project Tiger (1973), Project Elephant (1992), Project Snow Leopard (2009), Project Dolphin (2020).

💡 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: don't confuse World Nature Conservation Day (July 28, general resource-conservation awareness) with World Environment Day (June 5, UN-designated, themed annually) or World Wildlife Day (March 3, CITES-linked) — three distinct international days often mixed up in Prelims options.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring): "International days related to environment and their significance." | GS3: India's species-specific conservation projects timeline.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. World Nature Conservation Day is observed annually on: (a) June 5 (b) July 28 (c) March 3 (d) September 16. **Answer: (b).**

Snow Leopard — 718 Individuals in India's First Scientific Population Estimate, Ladakh Leads with 477

Why in News: The Snow Leopard is this edition's static species profile, chosen to complement both World Nature Conservation Day and today's Ladakh statehood story, since the species is the flagship indicator of trans-Himalayan ecosystem health that Ladakh's civil-society groups cite in their ecological-safeguard demands.

Background: India's first scientific, standardised population assessment covered over 70% of potential snow leopard habitat (~120,000 sq km) across the trans-Himalayan region, using SECR (Spatially Explicit Capture-Recapture) camera-trap methodology under the Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI) programme.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- IUCN status: Vulnerable; first scientific national estimate: 718 individuals (~10-15% of global population).

- State-wise: Ladakh 477, Uttarakhand 124, Himachal Pradesh 51, Arunachal Pradesh 36, Sikkim 21, Jammu & Kashmir 9.
- Found at 3,000-5,000+ metres elevation across the western and eastern Himalayas; over half the population lives outside protected areas.
- Key threats: livestock grazing by migratory herders and developmental pressures in high-altitude habitats.

📌 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: Ladakh alone holds roughly two-thirds of India's snow leopards (477 of 718) — remember "Ladakh = Snow Leopard capital of India," which is also why Ladakhi civil-society ecological demands (as in Wangchuk's hunger strike) so often centre on high-altitude wildlife corridors and grazing-land protection.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring): "Project Snow Leopard and India's high-altitude biodiversity conservation." | GS3: camera-trap/SECR methodology in wildlife census.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. As per India's first scientific national assessment, which Union Territory/State holds the largest snow leopard population? (a) Himachal Pradesh (b) Uttarakhand (c) Ladakh (d) Sikkim. **Answer: (c)** — Ladakh, with an estimated 477 individuals.

ENV

Snow Leopard

Ladakh

IUCN Vulnerable

§2 · PLACES IN NEWS — 28 JULY 2026

📌 PLACES IN NEWS — 28 JULY 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- ① New Delhi (Wangchuk hunger strike, SC ruling, FTA talks venue)
- ② Leh, Ladakh (statehood/Sixth Schedule demand; Snow Leopard stronghold)
- ③ Mumbai, Maharashtra (RBI G-Sec buyback auction)
- ④ Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh (NGT tiger-reserve construction order)
- ⑤ Tel Aviv, Israel (FTA negotiating partner)
- ⑥ Sanand, Gujarat (semiconductor OSAT hub)

① New Delhi, India

Sonam Wangchuk's hunger strike at Jantar Mantar; SC ruling on peaceful protest; India-Israel FTA 2nd round venue.

② Leh, Ladakh

Epicentre of the statehood and Sixth Schedule demand; also India's snow-leopard stronghold with ~477 individuals.

③ Mumbai, Maharashtra

RBI headquarters; site of today's ₹20,000 crore government securities buyback auction.

④ Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh

NGT flags unchecked commercial construction within 1 km of Pilibhit Tiger Reserve boundary.

⑤ Tel Aviv, Israel

India's FTA negotiating partner; second round of talks concluded in New Delhi, July 20-23.

⑥ Sanand, Gujarat

Home to India's first chip-packaging (OSAT) facility, symbol of the broadening Semicon 2.0 strategy.

§3 · ETHICS & INTEGRITY CASE STUDIES

Case 1 · Policing Peaceful Protest vs Public Order

A police officer at Jantar Mantar must decide how to respond to a prolonged hunger strike drawing large crowds without infringing on the constitutionally protected right to peaceful assembly. **GS4**

Values: Proportionality, restraint, respect for constitutional rights.

Case 2 · Regional Autonomy vs National Integration

A Union government official weighing Ladakh's Sixth Schedule demand must balance genuine local aspirations for autonomy against concerns about administrative fragmentation in a strategically sensitive border region. **GS4 Values:** Empathy, federalism, national security considerations.

Case 3 · Cyber Whistleblowing and Institutional Reputation

A contractor employee who discovers a data-security lapse in a sensitive defence project faces a dilemma between reporting it through proper channels (risking professional consequences) and staying silent. **GS4 Values:** Courage of conviction, institutional loyalty vs public interest.

Case 4 · Local Enforcement vs Commercial Pressure

A district official verifying NOCs for farmhouses near Pilibhit Tiger Reserve faces pressure from influential landowners to overlook unauthorised commercial conversions. **GS4 Values:** Objectivity, environmental stewardship, resistance to undue influence.

§4 · PRELIMS MCQS — 28 JULY 2026 (15 QUESTIONS)

Q1. Sonam Wangchuk's hunger strike, which began June 28, 2026, primarily demands: (a) Reservation for Ladakhi youth in central services (b) Statehood and Sixth Schedule status for Ladakh (c) A new international airport in Leh (d) Removal of Border Roads Organisation projects

✓ Answer: (b) — statehood and Sixth Schedule inclusion, along with a separate Public Service Commission.

Q2. Ladakh became a Union Territory without a legislature following: (a) The 73rd Constitutional Amendment (b) The J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 (c) The North-Eastern Areas Reorganisation Act, 1971 (d) The States Reorganisation Act, 1956

✓ Answer: (b).

Q3. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution currently applies to Autonomous District Councils in: (a) Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram (b) Ladakh, Sikkim, Nagaland (c) Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha (d) Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland

✓ Answer: (a).

Q4. The right to assemble peaceably and without arms is guaranteed under which constitutional Article? (a) Article 19(1)(a) (b) Article 19(1)(b) (c) Article 21 (d) Article 32

✓ Answer: (b).

Q5. Restrictions on the right to assemble peaceably can be imposed under which Article? (a) Article 19(2) (b) Article 19(3) (c) Article 19(4) (d) Article 19(6)

✓ Answer: (b) — Article 19(3) allows reasonable restrictions in the interest of sovereignty, integrity, and public order.

Q6. India's second round of FTA negotiations with Israel, concluded in July 2026, was hosted in: (a) Tel Aviv (b) New Delhi (c) Geneva (d) Jerusalem

✓ Answer: (b) — New Delhi.

Q7. India-Israel merchandise trade in FY2025-26 stood at approximately: (a) \$1.5 billion (b) \$3.93 billion (c) \$8.2 billion (d) \$12 billion

✓ Answer: (b).

Q8. DRDO, at the centre of July 2026's data-breach claims, operates under which Ministry? (a) MeitY (b) Ministry of Defence (c) Ministry of Home Affairs (d) Ministry of Science and Technology

✓ Answer: (b).

Q9. "OSAT" in the semiconductor value chain stands for: (a) Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (b) Optical Sensor Array Technology (c) Overseas Semiconductor Advanced Trade (d) Open Semiconductor Access Terminal

✓ Answer: (a).

Q10. India's Semicon India Programme 2.0 carries a total outlay of approximately: (a) ₹76,000 crore (b) ₹1,27,500 crore (c) ₹50,000 crore (d) ₹2,00,000 crore

✓ Answer: (b).

Q11. A government securities "buyback" auction primarily: (a) Raises fresh borrowing (b) Retires existing debt ahead of maturity (c) Sets the repo rate (d) Increases the fiscal deficit target

✓ Answer: (b).

Q12. World Nature Conservation Day is observed annually on: (a) June 5 (b) July 28 (c) March 3 (d) October 4

✓ Answer: (b).

Q13. India's first scientific national assessment estimated the snow leopard population at approximately: (a) 350 (b) 718 (c) 1,200 (d) 2,000

✓ Answer: (b).

Q14. Which Union Territory/State holds India's largest snow leopard population, per the first scientific estimate? (a) Himachal Pradesh (b) Uttarakhand (c) Ladakh (d) Jammu & Kashmir

✓ Answer: (c) — approximately 477 individuals.

Q15. Consider the following statements on the snow leopard: (1) It is listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. (2) Over half its Indian population lives outside protected areas. (3) It is typically found below 1,000 metres elevation. Which is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

✓ Answer: (a) — statement 3 is incorrect; snow leopards are found at 3,000-5,000+ metres elevation.

§5 · MAINS QUESTIONS — 28 JULY 2026

GS2 Federalism Q1. Examine the constitutional and administrative case for extending Sixth Schedule protections to Union Territories like Ladakh. (250 words)

Hints: Fifth vs Sixth Schedule distinction; Autonomous District Councils' powers; Ladakh's unique ecological/cultural context post-2019 reorganisation; concerns around administrative fragmentation in border regions; comparative experience of NE Sixth Schedule areas.

GS2 Fundamental Rights Q2. "The right to peaceful protest must be balanced against public order, but the burden of proof for restricting it lies with the state." Discuss with reference to recent judicial observations. (250 words)

Hints: Article 19(1)(b) vs Article 19(3); proportionality doctrine in policing; comparative cases (Shaheen Bagh, farmer protests); accountability mechanisms for excessive force; balancing dissent with order in a democracy.

GS2 GS3 Q3. Discuss the strategic and economic rationale behind India's deepening trade engagement with Israel. (250 words)
Hints: FTA negotiation stages and ToR; existing defence-technology partnership; agriculture/water-tech cooperation; balancing ties with West Asia amid regional tensions; trade diversification strategy.

GS3 Cyber Security Q4. "Classification of sensitive information is necessary but not sufficient for national security." Examine with reference to recent concerns over defence-data security. (250 words)
Hints: classification vs technical cybersecurity controls; supply-chain and contractor vulnerabilities; insider-threat mitigation; institutional information-governance reforms needed; comparative practices in other countries' defence R&D security.

GS3 Industrial Policy Q5. Assess India's evolving semiconductor strategy as it expands from fabrication/assembly toward equipment and materials. (250 words)
Hints: value-chain stages (design/fab/OSAT); import dependence on equipment and specialty materials; Semicon 1.0 vs 2.0 differences; global semiconductor supply-chain diversification (China+1); skill and R&D ecosystem needs.

GS3 Environment Q6. "High-altitude conservation in India's trans-Himalayan region faces unique governance challenges distinct from lowland forest conservation." Discuss with reference to snow leopard conservation and Ladakh's ecological concerns. (250 words)
Hints: SECR/camera-trap methodology; livestock-grazing conflict; habitat outside protected-area boundaries; linkage between local self-governance demands and conservation outcomes; Project Snow Leopard's transboundary cooperation angle.

§6 · ANSWER WRITING VALUE ADDITION

DATA — SNOW LEOPARD POPULATION

718 total (India's first scientific estimate); Ladakh 477, Uttarakhand 124, Himachal Pradesh 51, Arunachal Pradesh 36, Sikkim 21, J&K 9; survey covered ~120,000 sq km (70%+ of potential habitat). Use in: GS3 wildlife census methodology answers.

DATA — DRDO DATA-BREACH CLAIMS

31 GB offered for \$8,000 on dark web; sample documents dated 2020; DRDO denies ownership. Use in: GS3 cyber security/internal security answers.

DATA — INDIA-ISRAEL TRADE

\$3.93 billion merchandise trade FY2025-26; 2nd FTA round July 20-23, 2026, New Delhi; ToR signed November 2025. Use in: GS2 West Asia relations answers.

QUOTE — ON PEACEFUL PROTEST

"Mere agitation cannot justify lathi-charge" — CJI Surya Kant, on policing at Jantar Mantar, July 2026. Use in: GS2 fundamental rights and policing answers.

§7 · AKADEMIA DIRECT HIT TRACKER — 28 JULY 2026

#	TOPIC	GS	PRIORITY	ONE-LINE RECALL
1	Sonam Wangchuk's Hunger Strike / Ladakh Statehood	GS2	 HIGH	Day 31; Sixth Schedule + statehood demand; began June 28 at Jantar Mantar
2	SC on Peaceful Protest Rights	GS2	 HIGH	Article 19(1)(b); "mere agitation cannot justify lathi-charge" — CJI Surya Kant
3	India-Israel FTA 2nd Round	GS2/GS3	 MEDIUM	New Delhi, July 20-23; \$3.93bn trade FY25-26; ToR Nov 2025
4	DRDO Data-Breach Claims	GS3	 HIGH	31GB, \$8,000 dark-web listing; DRDO denies; docs dated 2020

5	Semicon 2.0 Broadening Strategy	GS3	 MEDIUM	₹1,27,500cr; expands to equipment/materials beyond fabs/OSAT
6	RBI ₹20,000cr G-Sec Buyback	GS3	 LOW	4 securities maturing Oct 2026-Feb 2027; active debt management
7	World Nature Conservation Day	ENV	 MEDIUM	July 28; distinct from World Environment Day (Jun 5)/Wildlife Day (Mar 3)
8	Snow Leopard First National Estimate	ENV	 HIGH	718 total; Ladakh 477; SECR camera-trap methodology
9	NGT — Pilibhit Tiger Reserve Construction	ENV	 MEDIUM	Unchecked construction within 1km boundary; NOC verification ordered
10	Assam Floods (4.45 lakh affected)	GS1/GS3	 LOW	6 districts; Dhansiri above danger mark; zero fresh casualties
11	Fifth vs Sixth Schedule	GS2	 LOW	Fifth = mainland tribal areas, Governor-led; Sixth = NE ADCs, legislative powers
12	Article 19(1)(b) vs 19(1)(a)	GS2	 LOW	(a) = speech/expression; (b) = peaceful assembly without arms

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QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

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QUESTIONS FROM
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