

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

THEIAS AKADEMIA

Morning Edition · 08:00 IST

Thursday, 24 September 2026

"The Topper's Last Read. Every Morning."

INSIDE PART II

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§1 • Environment & Ecology

GS3

Conservation, environmental pollution & degradation · Climate change

22 September 2026 · Source: Down To Earth / Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)

Planetary Health Check 2026: Seven of Nine Planetary Boundaries Now Transgressed

Why in News: The Planetary Boundaries Science Lab at Germany's Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) released its "Planetary Health Check 2026" on 22 September 2026, finding that seven of the nine scientifically defined planetary boundaries have now been transgressed — four (climate change, biosphere integrity, biogeochemical flows, novel entities) in a "high-risk" zone of strong transgression, and three more (land-system change, freshwater change, ocean acidification) in an "increasing-risk" zone. Only atmospheric aerosol loading (which nonetheless shows regional transgression over South Asia) and stratospheric ozone depletion (recovering, but still below mid-20th-century levels) remain within the safe operating space.

Background: The Planetary Boundaries framework was first proposed in 2009 by a team led by Johan Rockstrom at the Stockholm Resilience Centre, identifying nine Earth-system processes whose stability underwrites the roughly 11,700-year-long Holocene epoch within which human civilisation has flourished. Crossing a boundary does not mean instant collapse but signals a growing risk of destabilising, potentially irreversible shifts in Earth-system functioning; the framework is now a standard reference point in global environmental-governance debates, including UN climate and biodiversity summits.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Published 22 September 2026 by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), Germany.
- 7 of 9 boundaries transgressed: 4 in "high-risk" (climate change, biosphere integrity, biogeochemical flows, novel entities), 3 in "increasing-risk" (land-system change, freshwater change, ocean acidification).
- 2 of 9 remain safe: atmospheric aerosol loading (regional transgression over South Asia) and stratospheric ozone depletion (slowly recovering).
- Coral-bleaching heat stress affected ~84.4% of the world's coral reef area, January 2023-September 2025.
- The 2025 Pakistan floods affected over 6.9 million people, cited as an example of cascading regional climate risk.
- Framework origin: proposed 2009 by Johan Rockstrom's team at the Stockholm Resilience Centre.
- Quote: "Pressure is rising across every Planetary Boundary already outside the safe operating space" — Boris Sakschewski, PIK.
- Humans have lived within a stable "safe operating space" for approximately 11,700 years (the Holocene).

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- South Asia relevance: the report flags regional transgression of the aerosol-loading boundary over South Asia (linked to particulate air pollution) — directly relevant to India's National Clean Air Programme and stubble-burning/urban air-quality debates.
- Framework critique: planetary boundaries are global-average thresholds; translating them into national policy (India's per-capita carbon space, common but differentiated responsibilities) remains contested in climate negotiations.
- Cascading-risk framing: linking coral bleaching, Pakistan's 2025 floods, and boundary transgression illustrates how Earth-system risks compound across sectors and borders — a key "disaster management as cross-cutting" theme.
- Institutional linkage: the framework informs negotiations under the UNFCCC, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the emerging UN plastics treaty (relevant to "novel entities").
- Way forward: report authors urge treating planetary boundaries as a policy-prioritisation "dashboard" rather than a binary pass/fail scorecard — relevant to India's own sustainable-development policy design.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"7 red, 2 amber-green, 1 epoch (11,700 years) ending" — picture a dashboard of 9 dials, only 2 still in the green.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring theme) — conservation of biodiversity and climate change; conceptually linked to Mains questions on sustainable development and Earth-system limits.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Planetary Boundaries framework:

1. It was first proposed by a team at the Stockholm Resilience Centre in 2009.
2. It identifies nine Earth-system processes critical to maintaining a stable planet.
3. As per the Planetary Health Check 2026, all nine boundaries remain within the safe operating space.

Which of the statements given above 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 false — seven of nine boundaries are now transgressed.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Discuss the significance of the Planetary Boundaries framework for global environmental governance, with reference to the findings of the Planetary Health Check 2026. (250 words)

#PlanetaryBoundaries

#ClimateChange

#EarthSystem

#SouthAsia

GS3

Conservation · Species profile · IUCN Red List

Static species profile — not used in the last 30 editions · Source: IUCN Red List / animalia.bio / WII

Static Species Profile — Forest Owlet (*Heteroglaux blewitti*)

Why in This Edition: Paired thematically with the Planetary Health Check card above — the Forest Owlet is a textbook case of a "Lazarus taxon" surviving inside a fragmented, human-modified deciduous-forest landscape, illustrating on a micro scale exactly the biosphere-integrity pressures the global report describes at planetary scale.

Background: The Forest Owlet is a small, diurnal owl endemic to a narrow belt of dry deciduous teak-forest landscape spanning the Satpura hill ranges of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, centred on the Melghat-Toranmal-Purna forest complex. First described in 1873, it was not recorded for 113 years and was widely presumed extinct until its dramatic rediscovery in 1997 by ornithologist Pamela Rasmussen near Shahada, Maharashtra — making it one of the most celebrated "rediscovered" bird species in Indian ornithology.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Scientific name: *Heteroglaux blewitti* (sometimes placed in genus *Athene*).

- IUCN Red List status: Critically Endangered.
- Distribution: a narrow belt in the Satpura ranges — Melghat, Toranmal and Purna landscapes of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.
- Estimated population: a few hundred individuals (roughly 250, per recent surveys), among the smallest ranges of any Indian bird.
- Rediscovered in 1997 after a 113-year gap since its last recorded sighting (1884).
- Habitat: dry deciduous teak (*Tectona grandis*)-dominated forest with large, hollow-bearing trees for nesting.
- Key threats: habitat loss from teak monoculture logging, tree-hollow scarcity, and forest fragmentation.
- Legal protection: Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- "Lazarus taxon" significance: species presumed extinct for over a century and rediscovered force a rethink of extinction-declaration protocols and the value of continued field surveys in under-explored habitats.
- Monoculture-plantation critique: commercial teak plantation management (favouring young, hollow-free trees) directly conflicts with the species' dependence on old-growth hollow-bearing trees — a specific instance of the broader "production forestry vs biodiversity" trade-off.
- Narrow-range endemism risk: an extremely restricted distribution makes the species disproportionately vulnerable to any single localised disturbance (fire, disease, land-use change) — a textbook case for conservation biology's "small population paradigm."
- Protected-area design implication: effective conservation requires managing forest matrix outside formal protected-area boundaries too, since much of the species' range lies in reserved/production forest rather than core sanctuary areas.
- Comparative angle: contrasts with charismatic mega-fauna conservation funding patterns — lesser-known, non-mammalian species like the Forest Owlet typically receive disproportionately less conservation investment despite comparable extinction risk.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"113 years missing, 1997 found" — the Forest Owlet is India's own real-life "presumed extinct" bird, rediscovered near Shahada, Maharashtra.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring) — conservation of biodiversity/IUCN Red List categories; conceptually linked to past Prelims questions testing species-habitat-status matching.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements about the Forest Owlet (*Heteroglaux blewitti*):

1. It is endemic to the Satpura hill ranges of central India.
2. It is listed as "Critically Endangered" on the IUCN Red List.
3. It was rediscovered after being presumed extinct for over a century.

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: (b). All three statements are correct.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Using the example of the Forest Owlet, discuss how commercial forestry practices can conflict with the habitat requirements of narrowly endemic species. (150 words)

#ForestOwlet

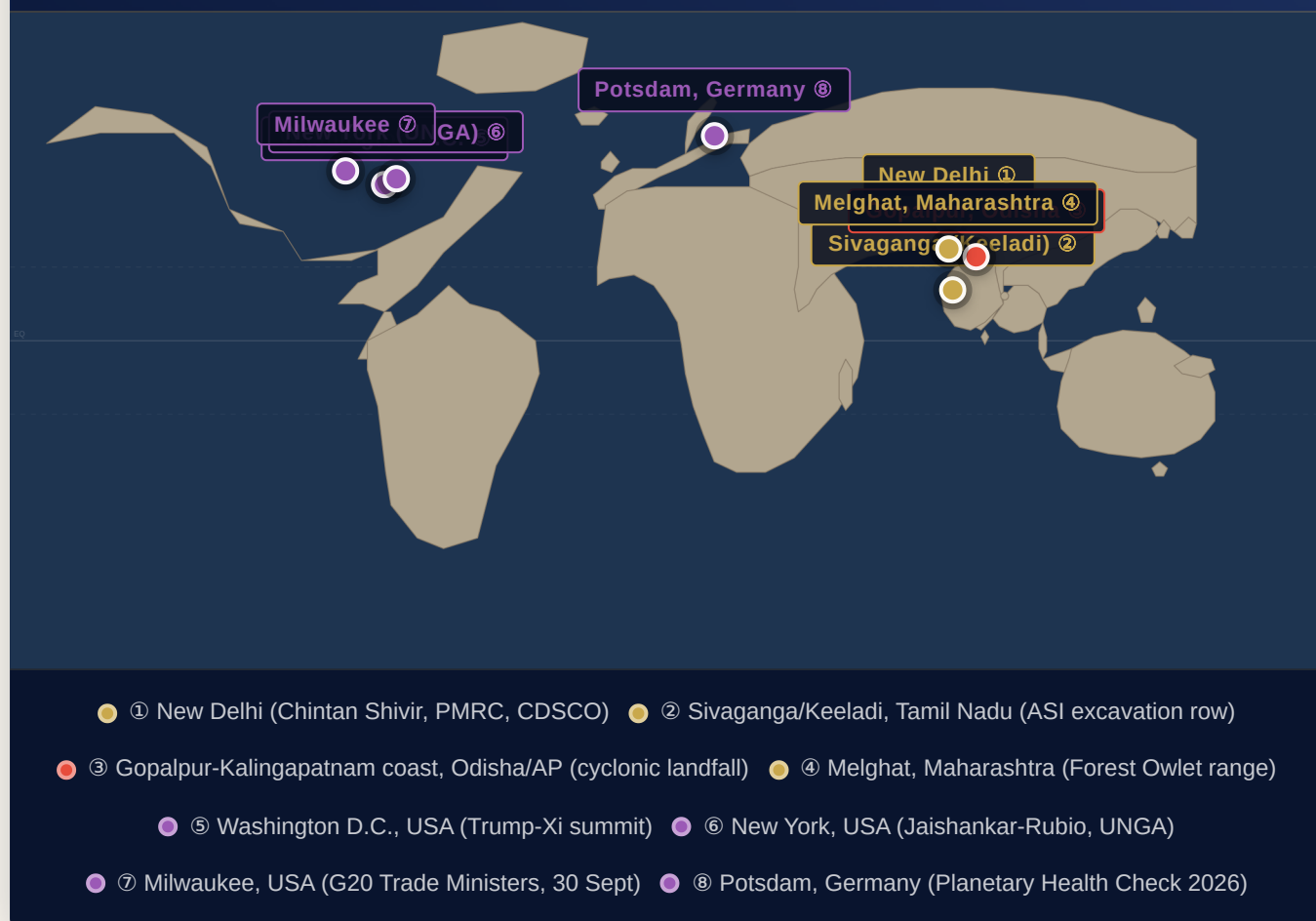
#IUCNRedList

#Satpura

#LazarusTaxon

§2 · Places in News

PLACES IN NEWS — 24 SEPTEMBER 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



① New Delhi, India

Hosted PM Modi's two-day Chintan Shivir (23-24 Sept) with the Council of Ministers, and remains the seat of the Department of Higher Education (PMRC Scheme) and CDSCO (AI expert committee).

Situated on the Yamuna's alluvial plain at the edge of the Delhi Ridge (an extension of the Aravalli range) — its administrative centrality mirrors its geographic position astride the historic Indo-Gangetic trade and invasion corridor.

② Sivaganga district (Keeladi), Tamil Nadu

Site of the ASI's Keeladi excavations on the Vaigai river, at the centre of the renewed Centre-Tamil Nadu row over scientific validation of Sangam-age findings.

Lies in the Vaigai river basin of the semi-arid southern Tamil Nadu plains, part of the ancient Pandya heartland — a river system whose historic irrigation tanks (like the Vaigai Dam) still anchor the region's agriculture.

③ Gopalpur-Kalingapatnam coast, Odisha & Andhra Pradesh

Landfall zone for the Bay of Bengal deep depression tracked as potential Cyclone Arnab, crossing overnight 23-24 September; red alerts issued for Koraput, Malkangiri, Kalahandi and Nabarangpur districts.

Sits on the low-lying, cyclone-prone northern stretch of India's east coast, within the Bay of Bengal's characteristic post-monsoon cyclogenesis belt, where warm sea-surface temperatures and weak wind shear favour storm formation.

④ Melghat landscape, Maharashtra

Core range of the Critically Endangered Forest Owlet, within the Satpura hill system's dry deciduous teak forests, also home to the Melghat Tiger Reserve.

Part of the Satpura range's east-west fold-mountain system flanking the Tapi river valley — a biogeographic transition zone between peninsular and central Indian forest types.

⑤ Washington D.C., USA

Venue for the Trump-Xi summit (week of 22-24 Sept) extending the US-China Busan trade truce and agreeing to operationalise the bilateral Board of Trade.

Located at the fall line of the Potomac River on the US Atlantic seaboard — a site chosen by the 1790 Residence Act specifically to balance northern and southern state interests at the young republic's founding.

⑥ New York, USA

Hosted the UN General Assembly's high-level week, where EAM Jaishankar met US Secretary of State Rubio to raise India's concerns over the Russian-oil tariff law.

Built around a natural deep-water harbour where the Hudson and East Rivers meet the Atlantic — the same estuarine geography that made it the United Nations' host city and a global financial/diplomatic hub.

⑦ Milwaukee, USA

Scheduled venue for the G20 Trade Ministers' Meeting on 30 September, where India's Commerce Minister will press for tariff parity with the US.

A Great Lakes port city on Lake Michigan's western shore — part of the US industrial Midwest, whose freshwater shipping access shaped its historic manufacturing base.

⑧ Potsdam, Germany

Home to the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), which released the "Planetary Health Check 2026" finding seven of nine planetary boundaries transgressed.

Situated amid the lake-studded glacial outwash plains southwest of Berlin, on the Havel river — a landscape itself shaped by the same Quaternary Ice Age processes that inform PIK's long-term Earth-system research.

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Eight pins, four continents, one morning — exactly the kind of geography-meets-current-affairs integration **Sahyog Mentorship** sessions help you map onto a blank outline before the exam. theiasakademia.com.

§3 · Ethics & Integrity Cases (GS4)

Case 1 — The Cabinet Retreat

Collective Responsibility vs Individual Ministerial Accountability

A Secretary preparing his Minister's "scorecard" for the Chintan Shivir discovers the ministry's flagship scheme has quietly missed three of five targets. Presenting the shortfall honestly may embarrass the Minister before the PM and peers; softening it preserves harmony but distorts the very stock-taking exercise meant to drive course-correction. **Concept:** tests the tension between the doctrine of collective Cabinet responsibility (which discourages public ministry-vs-ministry point-scoring) and the civil servant's individual duty of truthful reporting to political executives — a live application of the "speaking truth to power" principle central to bureaucratic neutrality.

Case 2 — The Excavation Report

Epistemic Autonomy of Scientific Institutions

An ASI archaeologist is told her nearly complete excavation report needs "further scientific validation" just as her preliminary findings begin attracting political attention on both sides of a federal dispute. She must decide whether continued delay serves genuine scientific rigour or has become a proxy for managing the report's politically inconvenient implications. **Concept:** examines the epistemic autonomy owed to technical/scientific arms of government — the ethical duty to insulate fact-finding

from the political consequences of the facts found, a principle as relevant to archaeology as to statistical or scientific data more broadly.

Case 3 — The Sanctions Dilemma

Extraterritoriality and Sovereign Equality in International Law

A trade-ministry official must advise on how far India should adjust its own energy-import behaviour in anticipation of another country's not-yet-enforced law. Complying pre-emptively might avert economic harm but could be read as ceding India's sovereign right to set its own energy policy under external pressure. **Concept:** weighs pragmatic national-interest compliance against the ethical/legal principle of sovereign equality of states, and the international-law debate over whether extraterritorial secondary sanctions are ever ethically legitimate exercises of one state's domestic law over others.

Case 4 — The Great-Power Summit

Strategic Autonomy / Non-Alignment as Practical Ethics

Watching two larger powers negotiate a bilateral trade truce that will shape global tariff and mineral-supply conditions, a foreign-service officer drafting India's response must choose between quietly free-riding on whatever stability the truce brings, or actively lobbying (at real diplomatic cost and risk of appearing presumptuous) for India's own seat at future such negotiations. **Concept:** applies India's historic "strategic autonomy"/non-alignment ethical tradition to a concrete, present-day dilemma of middle-power agency versus great-power accommodation.

Case 5 — The Cyclone Warning

The Precautionary Principle and the State's Positive Duty to Protect Life

A district collector, with a deep depression forecast to intensify only "possibly" into a cyclone, must decide whether to order costly, disruptive mass evacuations on a probabilistic warning, knowing that over-caution has real economic and trust costs if the storm fizzles, while under-caution risks lives if it does not. **Concept:** tests the precautionary principle (acting on scientific uncertainty rather than waiting for certainty) against the state's positive constitutional duty under Article 21 to protect life, and the administrative-ethics question of how to weigh probabilistic risk in irreversible-harm scenarios.

Case 6 — The Planetary Dashboard

Intergenerational Equity / the Rawlsian Just Savings Principle

A climate negotiator representing India at a multilateral forum must respond to a report showing seven of nine planetary boundaries breached, largely through cumulative historical emissions from industrialised nations, while being asked to commit India to costlier near-term climate action that will constrain the current generation's development choices. **Concept:** applies the philosophical principle

of intergenerational equity (and Rawls's "just savings principle" — each generation owes the next a fair share of the resources and stability it inherited) to the concrete diplomatic tension between historical responsibility and present-day shared obligation.

THEIAS AKADEMIA Every one of today's six ethics cases names its underlying theory explicitly — that theory-first discipline is exactly what **EMP (Ethics & Moral Philosophy)** drills into every GS4 answer. theiasakademia.com.

§4 • Prelims MCQs

Q1. (Statement-based)

Consider the following statements about the "Saptadhara" framework unveiled at the 2026 Chintan Shivir:

1. It organises government priorities into seven reform streams.
2. It replaces the Ten Sectoral Groups of Secretaries constituted in 2021.
3. Raksha Shakti (defence self-reliance) is one of its seven streams.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). Statement 2 is wrong — Saptadhara organises, but does not replace, the pre-existing Sectoral Groups structure.

Q2.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) functions as:

- (a) A statutory body created by an Act of Parliament
- (b) A constitutional body under Article 323
- (c) A subordinate/attached office of the Ministry of Culture
- (d) An autonomous society registered under the Societies Registration Act

Answer: (c).

Q3. (Statement-based)

Consider the following statements regarding the Trump-Xi Washington summit of September 2026:

1. It built upon a trade truce first agreed at Busan, South Korea, in October 2025.
2. The two sides agreed to operationalise a bilateral Board of Trade established in May 2026.
3. The summit resulted in a permanent, legally binding elimination of all tariffs between the two countries.

Which of the statements given above is/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 false — only about \$30 billion of goods were identified for possible tariff reduction, not a full/permanent elimination.

Q4.

The "Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026" primarily seeks to impose tariffs on:

- (a) Countries exporting rare-earth elements to China

- (b) Countries importing crude oil and natural gas from Russia
- (c) Countries supplying arms to Iran
- (d) Countries hosting Russian military bases

Answer: (b).

Q5. (Statement-based)

Consider the following statements about India's foreign trade with Russia:

1. India is the largest importer of Russian crude oil in the world.
2. China is the largest importer of Russian crude oil in the world.
3. India's imports of Russian crude rose significantly after Western sanctions on Russia post-2022.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b). India is the second-largest, not the largest, importer — statement 1 is false.

Q6.

INS Vikrant was commissioned in which year?

- (a) 2019 (b) 2020 (c) 2022 (d) 2024

Answer: (c). 2 September 2022.

Q7. (Statement-based)

Consider the following statements regarding India's Defence Acquisition Procedure categories:

1. "Buy (Indian-IDDm)" refers to indigenously designed, developed and manufactured equipment.
2. "Buy & Make (Indian)" involves initial import followed by licensed indigenous production.
3. The K9 Vajra-T howitzer was inducted under the "Buy & Make (Indian)" category.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d). All three statements are correct.

Q8.

The Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme's application portal permits applications from:

- (a) Only serving Indian government scientists
- (b) Indian nationals abroad, OCI cardholders and Persons of Indian Origin with outstanding research records
- (c) Only foreign nationals collaborating with Indian institutions
- (d) Only PhD students currently enrolled in India

Answer: (b).

Q9. (Statement-based)

Consider the following statements about India's drug regulatory framework:

1. CDSCO is headed by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).
2. The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 provides the primary statutory basis for drug regulation in India.
3. As of the date of this edition, CDSCO has published the full terms of reference of its AI expert committee.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). Statement 3 is false as of this edition.

Q10.

The Index of Eight Core Industries does NOT include which of the following?

- (a) Cement (b) Fertilisers (c) Automobiles (d) Refinery products

Answer: (c). Automobiles are not part of the ICI's eight constituent sectors.

Q11. (Statement-based)

Consider the following statements about the "Twin Deficit" problem:

1. It refers to the simultaneous occurrence of a fiscal deficit and a current account deficit.
2. India's twin-deficit crisis in 2012-13 contributed to the 2013 "Taper Tantrum."
3. The FRBM Act, 2003 has no provision for deviating from its prescribed fiscal-deficit targets under any circumstance.

Which of the statements given above is/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 false — the FRBM Act contains an "escape clause" permitting deviation under specified conditions.

Q12.

India was included among the "Fragile Five" emerging economies in 2013 alongside Brazil, Indonesia, Turkey and which other country?

- (a) Mexico (b) South Africa (c) Argentina (d) Nigeria

Answer: (b).

Q13. (Statement-based)

Consider the following statements about the Planetary Boundaries framework:

1. "Novel entities" is one of the nine boundaries, referring to substances like plastics and synthetic chemicals introduced by human activity.
2. Stratospheric ozone depletion is currently classified as being in the "safe operating space," though still recovering.
3. The framework was developed under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Which of the statements given above is/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 false — the framework originated with the Stockholm Resilience Centre, not UNEP.

Q14.

The Forest Owlet (*Heteroglaux blewitti*) is primarily associated with which forest type?

- (a) Tropical evergreen rainforest (b) Mangrove forest (c) Dry deciduous teak forest (d) Alpine coniferous forest

Answer: (c).

Q15. (Statement-based)

Consider the following statements regarding the IUCN Red List:

1. "Critically Endangered" is the highest risk category before a species is classified "Extinct in the Wild" or "Extinct."

2. A species classified as "Data Deficient" is considered to be at low extinction risk.
3. The Forest Owlet is currently classified as "Critically Endangered."

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). Statement 2 is false — "Data Deficient" means insufficient information exists to assess risk at all, not that risk is low.

Q16.

The UN's "Gender Snapshot 2026" report is prepared jointly by UN Women and which other UN body?

- (a) UNDP (b) UN DESA (c) UNICEF (d) UNFPA

Answer: (b).

Q17. (Statement-based)

Consider the following statements about cyclone nomenclature in the North Indian Ocean:

1. Cyclone names for the region are decided by a panel of countries under the WMO/ESCAP framework.
2. A system is formally named only after it intensifies from a depression into at least a "cyclonic storm."
3. India is one of the countries that contributes names to the North Indian Ocean cyclone naming list.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d). All three statements are correct.

Q18.

The Padma Awards are conferred by the President of India on the recommendation of a committee headed by:

- (a) The Vice President of India (b) The Prime Minister (c) The Cabinet Secretary (d) The Home Minister

Answer: (c). The Padma Awards Committee is headed by the Cabinet Secretary.

Q19. (Statement-based)

Consider the following statements about the Keeladi excavations:

1. The excavations have suggested evidence of a literate, urban settlement in Tamil Nadu independent of Gangetic "second urbanisation."
2. The original excavating officer was transferred amid controversy in 2017.
3. Findings from Keeladi have been formally accepted by the ASI as conclusively predating the Sangam Age.

Which of the statements given above is/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 false — this is precisely the point of ongoing dispute; ASI has not issued a conclusive, formally accepted final report.

Q20.

Which of the following best describes the "Board of Trade and Board of Investment" referenced in the 2026 Trump-Xi summit?

- (a) A World Trade Organization dispute-settlement mechanism
(b) A bilateral US-China institutional mechanism established at their May 2026 Beijing summit
(c) A G20 working group on global tariff harmonisation
(d) A United Nations agency overseeing international investment treaties

Answer: (b).

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Twenty statement-based and direct MCQs, drawn entirely from today's verified stories — exactly the live-fire practice **NEEB 300+ Live PYQ Writing** sessions are built around. theiasakademia.com.

§5 • Mains Questions

GS1 How do the Keeladi excavations contribute to the historiographical debate on early urbanisation in peninsular India, independent of the Gangetic "second urbanisation" narrative? (150 words)

GS1 Discuss the physical-geography factors that make India's east coast, particularly the Odisha-Andhra stretch, especially prone to post-monsoon cyclogenesis. (150 words)

GS2 "Ministerial retreats and internal stock-taking exercises are no substitute for statutory planning instruments with measurable, publicly disclosed targets." Critically examine this view with reference to the Viksit Bharat @2047 exercise. (250 words)

GS2 Examine the ethical and legal concerns raised by unilateral extraterritorial sanctions legislation, with reference to recent US measures targeting countries importing Russian energy. (250 words)

GS3 Discuss the significance of the Index of Eight Core Industries as a leading indicator, and explain how a widening current account deficit could be triggered by an external tariff shock on energy imports. (250 words)

GS3 "Aircraft carriers and self-propelled artillery represent two very different models of India's defence indigenisation journey." Elaborate with reference to INS Vikrant and the K9 Vajra-T. (250 words)

GS3 What does the Planetary Health Check 2026's finding of seven transgressed planetary boundaries imply for India's own sustainable-development policy priorities? (250 words)

GS4 "A civil servant's duty to report facts honestly can come into tension with the political costs those facts create for superiors." Discuss with a suitable example from contemporary governance. (250 words)

GS4 Examine the ethical basis of the "precautionary principle" in disaster-management decision-making, using the example of cyclone-evacuation orders issued under forecast uncertainty. (150 words)

§6 • Answer-Writing Value Addition

Quote to cite: "The diagnosis is unambiguous. Pressure is rising across every Planetary Boundary already outside the safe operating space." — Boris Sakschewski, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, on the Planetary Health Check 2026.

Data point: Coral-bleaching-level heat stress affected approximately 84.4% of the world's coral reef area between January 2023 and September 2025 — a striking single statistic for any GS3 marine-ecology answer.

Institutional fact: The Viksit Bharat @2047 exercise runs through Ten Sectoral Groups of Secretaries constituted in 2021 — useful shorthand for any GS2 answer on long-term policy planning without a formal Five-Year Plan.

Comparative fact: China holds roughly 90% of global rare-earth processing capacity — the single number that explains most of the leverage China wields in trade negotiations with the US, and the strategic rationale for India's own critical-minerals diplomacy.

Historical parallel: India's 2012-13 twin-deficit crisis (fiscal deficit ~5.9% of GDP, CAD ~4.8% of GDP) and the resulting 2013 "Taper Tantrum" remains the standard historical anchor for any answer on external-sector vulnerability.

Legal fact: The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972's Schedule I offers the Forest Owlet its highest tier of statutory protection — useful for linking any species-profile answer to the applicable legal framework.

Numeric anchor: One in three gender-equality institutions worldwide have had their authority weakened in the last two years (UN Gender Snapshot 2026) — a strong opening statistic for any GS1/GS2 answer on women's empowerment institutions.

Process fact: India's "Buy & Make (Indian)" defence-procurement category — exemplified by the K9 Vajra-T — sits between "Buy (Global)" and full "Make," and is a useful classificatory anchor for any GS3 defence-indigenisation answer.

§7 • AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

#	TOPIC	GS PAPER	ONE-LINE CAPSULE	PROBABILITY
1	Viksit Bharat @2047 / Chintan Shivr	GS2	Executive stock-taking mechanism; Saptadhara 7-stream framework	★★★★
2	Keeladi excavations row	GS1/GS2	ASI credibility vs Centre-Tamil Nadu federalism/historiography	★★★★★

3	Trump-Xi Washington summit	GS2/GS3	Busan truce extended; \$30bn tariff-reduction list; rare earths	★★★★
4	Jaishankar-Rubio / Graham Act	GS2/GS3	100% tariff law on Russian-oil buyers; India 2nd-largest importer	★★★★★
5	Cyclone Arnab (deep depression)	GS3	Odisha-Andhra landfall; IMD naming convention; disaster response	★★★
6	UN Gender Snapshot 2026	GS2	1-in-3 institutions weakened; SDG5 off-track	★★★
7	CDSCO AI expert committee	GS3	Announced but no charter; AI-in-drug-regulation governance gap	★★★
8	Planetary Health Check 2026	GS3	7 of 9 planetary boundaries transgressed; South Asia aerosol breach	★★★★★
9	PMRC Scheme	GS3	13 priority areas; diaspora research-chair repatriation scheme	★★★
10	Padma Awards 2026 investiture	GS2	Cabinet Secretary-headed selection committee; civil honours process	★★
11	Index of Eight Core Industries	GS3	4.8% Aug growth; ~40% IIP weight; cement/electricity lead	★★★★★
12	Twin Deficit / FRBM	GS3	2012-13 twin scars (5.9%/4.8%); Fragile Five; forex buffer as insurance	★★★
13	INS Vikrant	GS3	First indigenous carrier; 76% indigenous content; STOBAR	★★★★★
14	K9 Vajra-T howitzer	GS3	Buy & Make (Indian) category; L&T Hazira; 155mm/52-cal	★★★
15	Forest Owlet	GS3	Critically Endangered; rediscovered 1997 after 113 years	★★★
16	G20 Trade Ministers, Milwaukee	GS2/GS3	30 Sept meeting; India seeks tariff parity vs Vietnam/Bangladesh	★★★
17	US-China Board of Trade/Investment	GS2	Established May 2026 Beijing; operationalised Sept 2026	★★★
18	CAATSA/secondary-sanctions precedent	GS2	S-400 waiver precedent; extraterritoriality debate	★★★★★

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UPSC CSE Prelims 2026 Results

In what critics called the most unpredictable Prelims paper in a decade —

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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Proof of Precision

Every item mapped. Every claim verified.

2

ENVIRONMENT ITEMS

6

ETHICS CASES

20

MCQS GENERATED

9

MAINS QUESTIONS

8

PLACES MAPPED

0

REPEATED TOPICS

Environment

Geography

Ethics

Prelims

Mains

Economy

✓ Both Environment cards sourced from Down To Earth/Potsdam Institute (current) and IUCN Red List/animalia.bio (static, unused in the last 30 editions), per the Environment fallback ladder.

✓ All 8 map pins computed from real longitude/latitude coordinates using the standard equirectangular formula; no dated map image was found in the workspace folder for 24 September, so the inline-SVG fallback was used per Rule 12.

✓ Every Ethics case names its underlying ethical concept explicitly; every MCQ and Mains question traces to a verified Part I or Part II story.

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