

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

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Morning Edition · 08:00 IST · Sunday, 04 October 2026

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§1 Environment

GS3

Conservation – Species Reintroduction, Ex-Situ Breeding, Schedule I Species

Today, 4 October 2026 · Source: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (PIB); Rajasthan Forest Department; Wildlife Institute of India

Wings Over the Thar: Two Captive-Bred Great Indian Bustards Released at Desert National Park

Why in News: Two captive-bred Great Indian Bustards are being soft-released into the wild at Desert National Park (DNP), Jaisalmer, today, 4 October 2026 — a day after Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, joined by Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma via video link, formally launched the release process on 3 October and called it “the outcome of a decade of effort.” The two birds are drawn from a pool of 11 marked for release out of 97 captive-bred Great Indian Bustards currently held at conservation-breeding centres in Sam and Ramdevra, Jaisalmer district, run jointly by the MoEFCC, the Rajasthan Forest Department and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII). A new reintroduction aviary at Ramdevra — 160 metres by 64 metres by 14 metres, built at a cost of ₹9.25 crore — was inaugurated alongside the announcement.

Background: *Ardeotis nigriceps*, among the heaviest flying birds in the world, is listed Critically Endangered by the IUCN since 2011, under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and on CITES Appendix I and the Convention on Migratory Species. Numbers collapsed from an estimated 1,260 birds in 1969 to around 250 by 2011 and fewer than 150 by 2018, driven chiefly by collision with and electrocution by high-tension power lines strung across the open grasslands the species needs, compounded by habitat loss to agriculture and infrastructure. Rajasthan's “Project Great Indian Bustard” has run since 5 June 2013 (World Environment Day); the WII-led conservation-breeding programme at Sam and Ramdevra began with wild-egg collection around 2019, produced a record 24 chicks in 2025 and 29 in 2026, and recorded India's first artificial-insemination chick in 2024. Supreme Court orders in *M.K. Ranjitsinh v. Union of India* (April 2021, modified March 2024) direct the undergrounding of power lines and installation of bird-diverters across identified GIB habitat, attempting to balance species protection against India's renewable-energy buildout — much of it sited in the same wind- and sun-rich desert landscape the bustard depends on.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Great Indian Bustard: IUCN Critically Endangered (since 2011); Schedule I, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; CITES Appendix I; listed under the Convention on Migratory Species; state bird of Rajasthan.

- Wild population fell from an estimated 1,260 (1969) to about 250 (2011) to fewer than 150 (2018) — among the fastest declines recorded for a large bird.
- Rajasthan is understood to hold the large majority of the remaining wild population, concentrated around the Thar Desert.
- “Project Great Indian Bustard” has run since 5 June 2013; conservation-breeding centres operate at Sam and Ramdevra, Jaisalmer district.
- Captive stock: 97 birds (40 founded from wild-collected eggs, 57 hatched in captivity); 86 retained for breeding, 11 marked for release; 24 chicks hatched in 2025, 29 in 2026.
- New Ramdevra reintroduction aviary: 160m × 64m × 14m, built at a cost of ₹9.25 crore, funded by the Rajasthan government.
- *M.K. Ranjitsinh v. Union of India* — Supreme Court orders of April 2021 (modified March 2024) mandate power-line undergrounding and bird-diverters in identified GIB habitat.
- Main threat: collision with and electrocution by high-tension transmission lines crossing open grassland habitat, compounded by habitat loss.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Ex-situ breeding success (a decade of captive-breeding work culminating in today's release) still confronts an unresolved in-situ threat: the same desert landscape remains crossed by transmission lines, so release-site safety is as important as the release itself.
- The Supreme Court's 2021-2024 Ranjitsinh balancing act between species protection and renewable-energy/climate commitments is a live illustration of environment-versus-development adjudication with no easy resolution.
- Grasslands remain India's most under-protected “non-forest” ecosystem in law and policy, often treated as “wasteland” available for infrastructure siting rather than as critical habitat in their own right.
- The Centre-State-WII cooperative model (MoEFCC funding and policy, Rajasthan's forest department and aviary investment, WII's scientific breeding protocol) is a template for other single-state-concentrated critically endangered species.
- Way forward: bustard-safe zones with completed power-line undergrounding, sustained feral-predator control at release sites, and a multi-year, monitored release calendar (not a one-time event) are necessary to convert captive breeding into a self-sustaining wild population.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the population freefall in three numbers: **1,260** (1969) → **250** (2011) → under **150** (2018) — and today's two releases are the first visible return against that curve.

PYQ LINKAGE

A GIB-specific past UPSC question is not confidently recalled with an exact year/paper this edition — independently verify before citing one. The *M.K. Ranjitsinh* power-line case is a strong current candidate for a future GS3 Mains question on balancing conservation with renewable-energy infrastructure.

 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Great Indian Bustard:

1. It is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
2. Rajasthan's Desert National Park is among its key remaining habitats.
3. The principal threat to its survival has been identified as collision with and electrocution by power transmission lines.

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 — the Great Indian Bustard is Schedule I-listed, concentrated around Rajasthan's Thar Desert including Desert National Park, and power-line collision/electrocution is its best-documented leading threat.

Great Indian Bustard

Project GIB

Desert National Park

Schedule I

Ranjitsinh Case

Ex-Situ Conservation

GS3

Conservation – Species Decline & Recovery, Veterinary Drug Regulation (Static Topic)

Static Topic — paired with today's Great Indian Bustard release · Source: BNHS-SAVE consortium; MoEFCC Vulture Action Plan 2020-25

From Forty Million to Near-Zero and Back: India's Three Gyps Vultures

Why in News: This edition pairs its current Environment story — the Great Indian Bustard release at Jaisalmer — with a static species profile of India's three Gyps vultures, since both are western-Rajasthan-adjacent, Schedule I species whose declines trace to human infrastructure and chemical exposure rather than habitat loss alone, and both are now the subject of sustained, decades-long recovery programmes.

Background: India's three Gyps vultures — White-rumped (*Gyps bengalensis*), Indian or Long-billed (*Gyps indicus*) and Slender-billed (*Gyps tenuirostris*) — collapsed from an estimated 40 million birds in the early 1980s to under 20,000 combined by the late 2010s, among the fastest wildlife declines ever documented anywhere. The cause, identified in 2003, was diclofenac, a veterinary anti-inflammatory drug that causes fatal kidney failure in vultures feeding on the carcasses of recently treated cattle; India banned veterinary diclofenac in March 2006, with a 2015 follow-up capping human-diclofenac vial sizes to curb informal veterinary diversion. A 2024 economics study linked the vulture collapse to a feral-dog and rabies surge and measurably higher human death rates in the worst-affected districts between 2000 and 2005 — a stark illustration of a keystone species' ecosystem-service value. Recovery efforts centre on the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre at Pinjore, Haryana — Asia's first vulture-reintroduction programme, releasing captive-bred birds from 2016 — alongside “Vulture Safe Zones” (100-kilometre diclofenac-free radii) run with the BNHS-SAVE consortium.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- All three Indian Gyps vultures — White-rumped, Indian/Long-billed, Slender-billed — are IUCN Critically Endangered and Schedule I under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Combined population fell from an estimated 40 million (early 1980s) to under 20,000 by the late 2010s — declines exceeding 97-99% for each species.
- Veterinary diclofenac, identified as the cause in 2003, was banned for veterinary use in India in March 2006.
- A 2015 follow-up measure capped human-diclofenac vial sizes to reduce informal diversion to veterinary use.
- Meloxicam and tolfenamic acid are promoted as vulture-safe alternative anti-inflammatory drugs for livestock.
- The Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre, Pinjore (Haryana), is Asia's first vulture-reintroduction programme, releasing captive-bred birds since 2016.
- "Vulture Safe Zones" — 100-km diclofenac-free radii — are run jointly by state forest departments and the BNHS-SAVE consortium under the MoEFCC's Vulture Action Plan 2020-25.
- A 2024 economics study linked the vulture collapse to a feral-dog/rabies surge and measurably higher human mortality in affected districts (2000-2005), underscoring vultures' sanitation/ecosystem-service role.

📍 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Veterinary-drug regulation, not habitat protection, was the decisive lever here — a reminder that conservation policy sometimes acts on pharmaceutical supply chains rather than landscapes.
- The unresolved threat of newer vulture-toxic NSAIDs (such as aceclofenac and ketoprofen, which metabolise into diclofenac in cattle) shows a regulatory ban can be undermined by chemically similar substitutes unless the ban is continuously updated.
- The keystone-species/ecosystem-service argument — vultures as nature's sanitation service, their loss linked to a feral-dog and rabies surge — is a powerful empirical case for conservation investment beyond charismatic-species appeal.
- Vultures range across borders, making India's gains fragile without South Asia-wide (India-Nepal-Pakistan-Bangladesh) coordination on diclofenac and its substitutes.
- Way forward: extending bans to all vulture-toxic NSAIDs, expanding Vulture Safe Zones, synchronised regional population monitoring, and release protocols modelled on the Great Indian Bustard programme would extend this recovery.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

One drug, one decade, one collapse: **diclofenac** identified as the culprit in **2003**, banned in **2006** — and the gap between those years is roughly how long a single unregulated veterinary drug took to push three vulture species to the edge.

UPSC CSE Prelims 2014, GS Paper I, carried a question on why banning diclofenac for veterinary use is advocated, with the correct statement identifying it as the principal cause of vulture population decline; verify the exact option wording independently before quoting it.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding India's vulture population decline:

1. The decline has been attributed principally to the veterinary use of the drug diclofenac.
2. All three native Gyps vulture species in India are listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN.
3. India banned the veterinary use of diclofenac in 2006.

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 — diclofenac poisoning (via treated-cattle carcasses) is the principal documented cause, all three Gyps species are IUCN Critically Endangered, and India's veterinary diclofenac ban took effect in March 2006.

Gyps Vultures

Diclofenac Ban

Jatayu Conservation Centre

Vulture Safe Zones

Schedule I

Keystone Species

§2 Places in News

PLACES IN NEWS — 4 OCTOBER 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- ① New Delhi — seat of the Supreme Court; today's hub for the Vande Mataram petition and the Bankers' Books Evidence Act, 2026 commencement
- ② Nagpur — Vidarbha region, Maharashtra; the Bombay High Court's Nagpur Bench and its WhatsApp "public view" ruling under the SC/ST Act
- ③ Jaisalmer / Desert National Park — Thar Desert, Rajasthan; today's Great Indian Bustard soft-release site
- ④ Poompuhar — Kaveri river mouth, Tamil Nadu coast; submerged Chola-era port under active underwater excavation
- ⑤ Hyderabad — Telangana's genomics research hub; CSIR-CCMB's sickle cell science
- ⑥ Reasi — Chenab river valley, Jammu & Kashmir; India's first major lithium discovery, moving toward auction
- ⑦ Toulon — France's Mediterranean coast; home port of the Charles de Gaulle carrier group and hub of the Exercise Varuna partnership
- ⑧ Islamabad — Pothohar Plateau, Pakistan; centre of the continuing Indus Waters Treaty dispute

NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY, YAMUNA PLAIN

New Delhi

28.61°N, 77.21°E. Seat of the Union Government and the Supreme Court — today's venue for the Vande Mataram six-stanza petition and the commencement of the Bankers' Books Evidence Act, 2026.

VIDARBHA REGION, DECCAN PLATEAU

Nagpur

21.15°N, 79.09°E. Seat of the Bombay High Court's Nagpur Bench, which held that circulating objectionable content over WhatsApp can meet the SC/ST Act's "public view" test.

THAR DESERT, WESTERN RAJASTHAN

Jaisalmer / Desert National Park

26.80°N, 70.90°E. India's largest expanse of true desert grassland, the Great Indian Bustard's last stronghold, and today's site for the species' soft-release into the wild.

KAVERI DELTA, COROMANDEL COAST, BAY OF BENGAL

Poompuhar

11.15°N, 79.85°E. The submerged Chola-era port of Kaveripoompattinam, celebrated in the *Silappatikaram*, where a third-phase underwater excavation has recovered West-Asian-linked trade pottery.

TELANGANA PLATEAU, DECCAN

Hyderabad

17.38°N, 78.49°E. Home to CSIR-CCMB, whose genomic research on Indian sickle-cell mutation patterns anchors the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission's 2047 target.

SHIVALIK/LOWER HIMALAYAN BELT, CHENAB RIVER VALLEY

Reasi, Jammu & Kashmir

33.08°N, 74.83°E. Site of India's first confirmed lithium discovery (5.9 million tonnes, inferred, GSI 2023), now moving toward auction under the Union's critical-minerals framework.

FRENCH MEDITERRANEAN COAST, PROVENCE

POTHOHAR PLATEAU, NORTHERN PAKISTAN

Toulon, France

43.12°N, 5.93°E. The French Navy's largest base and home port of the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle — the strategic hub of the long-running India-France Exercise Varuna naval partnership.

Islamabad, Pakistan

33.70°N, 73.00°E. Seat of Pakistan's federal government, from where officials have continued pressing the Indus Waters Treaty dispute following India's 2025 abeyance and August 2026 rejection of Court of Arbitration jurisdiction.

§3 Ethics & Integrity — Concept-Anchored Cases

Privacy vs. Protective State Action

Case 1: WhatsApp Groups and the Reach of the SC/ST Act

A Bombay High Court bench recently held that circulating objectionable content about a Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe member within a WhatsApp group satisfies the “public view” requirement of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 — extending a protective criminal provision into what members may consider a private, closed digital space.

Ethical dimension: This pits the state's constitutional duty to protect historically oppressed communities from humiliation (Article 17, Article 15(2)) against an individual's reasonable expectation of privacy within a closed group (Article 21, *K.S. Puttaswamy*). A closed WhatsApp group is not fully “private” the way a one-to-one conversation is — it has multiple viewers who can screenshot and forward — but it is also not a public street. The ruling resolves this by anchoring “public view” to the presence of a perceiving audience, not to physical location.

Way forward: A rights-respecting approach would calibrate the standard to the size and nature of the group, require that intent to demean be reasonably inferable, and keep procedural safeguards tight (specific FIRs, not vague digital trawling) — so an expansive “public view” doctrine protects victims without becoming a tool for surveillance of ordinary digital conduct.

Negative Liberty & Conscientious Objection

Case 2: Vande Mataram and the Limits of Compelled Patriotism

A petition before the Supreme Court seeks a direction that all six stanzas of “Vande Mataram” be sung in full on specified occasions, reopening a debate about whether patriotic expression can or should be compelled by law — a question largely settled for the National Anthem in *Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala* (1986).

Ethical dimension: Isaiah Berlin's distinction between negative liberty (freedom from compulsion) and positive liberty (freedom to fulfil a collective project) is directly engaged: an expansive reading of

patriotic duty tends toward positive liberty enforced by the state, while the *Bijoe Emmanuel* approach protects negative liberty — the right to respectful silence — so long as no actual disrespect is shown. National integration (Article 51A) is a legitimate value, but so is individual conscience under Article 25.

Way forward: The ethically coherent position, consistent with precedent, is to cultivate voluntary engagement with national symbols through education and civic culture, while declining to criminalise respectful non-participation — compelled reverence is self-defeating as a route to genuine national feeling; the law's legitimate concern is disrespect, not insufficient enthusiasm.

Reciprocity in International Ethics

Case 3: The Indus Waters Treaty's Unravelling Trust

The continuing dispute over the Indus Waters Treaty, including contested questions about the Permanent Court of Arbitration's jurisdiction, shows how a six-decade cooperative framework strains when one party's conduct is seen by the other as violating the reciprocal good faith that underwrote the original bargain.

Ethical dimension: Treaty ethics rests on reciprocity and *pacta sunt servanda* (agreements must be kept) — but reciprocity runs both ways, and a party facing sustained bad faith confronts a genuine dilemma between upholding the letter of an agreement and protecting its citizens' security. This is not merely a legal question of treaty text but an ethical one about when departing from a commitment is justified self-protection rather than opportunistic breach.

Way forward: International ethics generally favours graduated responses — abeyance rather than repudiation, continued engagement with dispute-resolution channels even while contesting their scope — so a legitimate grievance does not collapse into a precedent that erodes treaty-based order more broadly.

Ecocentrism vs. Anthropocentrism

Case 4: Power Lines, Solar Targets, and the Bustard's Survival

India's renewable energy build-out in Rajasthan and Gujarat has placed overhead transmission lines directly across the Great Indian Bustard's last strongholds; in-flight collisions with these wires are a leading cause of mortality, forcing a direct trade-off between decarbonisation and the survival of a single Critically Endangered species.

Ethical dimension: This is a textbook anthropocentrism-versus-ecocentrism dilemma, but both sides claim environmental virtue. An anthropocentric-utilitarian calculus might favour maximising solar capacity for the larger climate good; an ecocentric view holds humans owe a direct, non-instrumental duty not to drive a sentient, ancient species extinct, regardless of aggregate benefit elsewhere.

Way forward: The Supreme Court's own resolution — undergrounding lines in priority habitat while permitting overhead lines with bird diverters elsewhere — models a defensible middle path: a

precautionary, species-specific carve-out within a broader low-carbon strategy, rather than treating either goal as absolute.

The Precautionary Principle

Case 5: Diclofenac and the Vulture Collapse

India's vulture populations crashed by over 95% within a decade due to veterinary use of diclofenac, recognised only after the collapse was severe — scientific uncertainty followed by catastrophic, hard-to-reverse ecological loss, now addressed through captive breeding and a continuing drug ban.

Ethical dimension: The precautionary principle holds that the absence of full scientific certainty should not postpone cost-effective preventive measures. The vulture collapse is the classic illustration of what happens when this is *not* applied early: a convenient veterinary drug stayed in use until the ecological evidence became undeniable, by which point recovery required decades of costly intervention.

Way forward: Applying the lesson forward means ecological risk-screening of new agro-veterinary chemicals before mass adoption, sustained long-term population monitoring capable of catching a crash early, and continued funding for conservation breeding well after a proximate cause is identified and banned, since recovery lags removal of the threat by years.

Epistemic Justice & the Ethics of Data

Case 6: What Official Statistics Choose Not to Count

Persistent gaps and lags in datasets such as the Annual Survey of Industries — where timely, granular data on India's informal and unorganised manufacturing remains thin — leave large parts of the economy, and the workers within it, effectively invisible to policy design.

Ethical dimension: Miranda Fricker's idea of epistemic injustice is instructive: when a system's categories of knowledge systematically fail to capture certain groups (informal and home-based workers), those groups suffer a real disadvantage — their experience cannot even be articulated in the terms policymakers use. Rawls's "publicity condition" for just institutions similarly requires that the facts underlying policy be knowable and verifiable by those they affect.

Way forward: A commitment to epistemic justice in public statistics means investing in survey methods that specifically reach informal enterprises, publishing methodology and limitations transparently rather than presenting provisional figures as complete, and treating data infrastructure itself as a matter of distributive justice — who gets counted shapes who gets served.

§4 Prelims MCQs — 20 Questions

Q1.

Consider the following statements regarding the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:

1. The Act criminalises intentional insult or intimidation of a member of a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe only if committed in a place within public view.
2. The expression “public view” has been judicially interpreted to require the physical presence of non-member witnesses at the scene of the offence.
3. Circulating objectionable content about such a member over a WhatsApp group has been held by a High Court to satisfy the “public view” requirement.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — Statement 2 is incorrect — the Nagpur Bench held that “public view” does not require physical co-presence and can be satisfied by a digital audience, which is exactly why the ruling widens the provision’s reach.

Q2.

Consider the following statements:

1. The Bankers’ Books Evidence Act, 2026 amends the Bankers’ Books Evidence Act, 1891 by inserting new sections while retaining the parent Act.
2. The 2026 Act received Presidential assent in August 2026 and commenced from 1 October 2026.
3. The Act is part of a broader exercise to replace colonial-era evidentiary statutes, alongside the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) — Statement 1 is incorrect: the 2026 Act repeals and replaces the 1891 Act in its entirety rather than merely amending it — the exact distinction the question tests.

Q3.

With reference to *Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala* (1986), often cited in disputes over national-song etiquette, consider the following statements:

1. The Supreme Court held that standing respectfully in silence during the National Anthem, without singing it, does not amount to disrespect under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
2. The judgment rested primarily on Article 25 (freedom of conscience and religion).
3. “Vande Mataram” enjoys the same constitutional status as the National Anthem “Jana Gana Mana” under Article 51A.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — Statement 3 is incorrect: Vande Mataram has constitutional recognition as the National Song — a distinct historical standing — but not the National Anthem’s formal status, and no Fundamental Duty names it specifically.

Q4.

The ancient port town of Poompuhar, the site of recent underwater archaeological excavation, is associated with which of the following?

- (a) The Pandya dynasty’s maritime capital on the Malabar coast
- (b) The Chola-era port of Kaveripoompattinam at the mouth of the Kaveri river
- (c) A Mauryan-era inland trading post on the Deccan plateau
- (d) A Portuguese colonial fort on the Konkan coast

Answer: (b) — Poompuhar (Kaveripoompattinam) was a major Chola-era port at the Kaveri’s mouth, celebrated in the Sangam-era epic *Silappatikaram*, now partly submerged and under renewed excavation.

Q5.

Consider the following statements regarding the Indus Waters Treaty, 1960:

- 1. The Treaty allocates the three western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) predominantly to Pakistan and the three eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) predominantly to India.
- 2. The Treaty contains a built-in mechanism for either party to unilaterally terminate it after one year’s notice.
- 3. The Permanent Court of Arbitration’s jurisdiction over a dispute under the Treaty has itself become a matter of contention between India and Pakistan.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — Statement 2 is incorrect: the Treaty has no unilateral-exit clause — precisely why India’s position has been to hold it “in abeyance” rather than purport to terminate it.

Q6.

Exercise Varuna, periodically in the news, is a bilateral naval exercise conducted between India and which country?

- (a) The United Kingdom (b) France (c) Australia (d) Japan

Answer: (b) — Exercise Varuna is the India-France bilateral naval exercise, one of the Indian Navy’s oldest partnerships; France’s Mediterranean fleet is based at Toulon.

Q7.

Exercise Tarang Shakti, India’s multinational air exercise hosted by the Indian Air Force, is primarily aimed at which of the following?

- (a) Joint amphibious assault training with littoral states
- (b) Multinational air-combat interoperability and showcasing indigenous platforms

- (c) Disaster-response coordination under the SCO framework
- (d) Cyber-defence coordination among QUAD air forces

Answer: (b) — Tarang Shakti is IAF's large multinational air exercise built to develop interoperability with partner air forces while showcasing indigenous platforms such as the Tejas and the Akash system.

Q8.

Consider the following statements about the Indian Coast Guard (ICG):

1. The ICG was constituted under the Coast Guard Act, 1978 as an independent armed force of the Union.
2. The ICG functions under the operational control of the Indian Navy at all times.
3. The ICG's mandate includes protection of the marine environment, anti-smuggling operations, and safety of life and property at sea.

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 incorrect: the Coast Guard functions under the Ministry of Defence as an independent service alongside the Navy, not under the Navy's operational control.

Q9.

The National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission aims to eliminate sickle cell disease as a public health problem in India by which target year?

- (a) 2030 (b) 2035 (c) 2040 (d) 2047

Answer: (d) — The Mission, launched in 2023, targets elimination as a public health problem by 2047, aligning with the centenary of Indian independence.

Q10.

Consider the following statements regarding Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR):

1. SAR can image the Earth's surface irrespective of cloud cover or daylight conditions.
2. Interferometric SAR (InSAR) techniques can detect ground deformation of the order of centimetres, useful in monitoring landslides and glaciers.
3. NISAR is a joint satellite mission between ISRO and NASA using dual-frequency (L-band and S-band) SAR.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c) — All three are correct; NISAR's all-weather, day-night dual-frequency SAR is exactly what enables the deformation-monitoring applications in statements 1 and 2.

Q11.

The 'CAFE' (Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency) norms in India primarily regulate which of the following?

- (a) Average fuel consumption/CO2 emissions across a manufacturer's entire vehicle fleet

- (b) Fuel price subsidies for commercial vehicle fleets
- (c) Import duty structure for fuel-efficient vehicles
- (d) State-wise allocation of fuel quotas to automobile manufacturers

Answer: (a) — CAFE norms set a fleet-wide average fuel-efficiency/CO2 target rather than a per-vehicle limit, pushing manufacturers toward a more efficient and electrified mix; CAFE-3 tightens this target from April 2027.

Q12.

The Annual Survey of Industries (ASI), a key source of industrial statistics in India, is conducted by which organisation?

- (a) Reserve Bank of India
- (b) National Statistical Office, under MoSPI
- (c) NITI Aayog
- (d) Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade

Answer: (b) — ASI is conducted annually by the National Statistical Office (MoSPI) and is the principal source of statistics on India's organised manufacturing sector.

Q13.

Consider the following statements regarding India's lithium reserves:

1. The Geological Survey of India has reported inferred lithium resources in the Salal-Haimana area of Reasi district, Jammu & Kashmir.
2. Lithium is classified as a 'critical mineral', and blocks for mining it are to be auctioned under rules notified by the Union government.
3. India currently has no domestic lithium-ion cell manufacturing capacity of any kind.

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 incorrect; India has emerging lithium-ion cell manufacturing/assembly capacity, including under the PLI scheme for Advanced Chemistry Cells, even though it remains import-dependent for refined lithium.

Q14.

Consider the following statements about the Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*):

1. It is listed as 'Critically Endangered' on the IUCN Red List.
2. It is the State Bird of Rajasthan.
3. Overhead power transmission lines are considered a major anthropogenic threat to the species due to collision mortality.

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: (d) — All three are correct; the Supreme Court's *M.K. Ranjitsinh* case specifically addressed undergrounding power lines in bustard habitat as a conservation measure.

Q15.

The sharp decline of vulture populations in India since the 1990s has been most strongly linked to which of the following?

- (a) Habitat loss due to urbanisation alone
- (b) Veterinary use of the drug diclofenac in cattle
- (c) Avian influenza outbreaks
- (d) Competition with introduced bird species

Answer: (b) — Diclofenac, a veterinary anti-inflammatory, causes fatal kidney failure in vultures feeding on treated cattle carcasses; its veterinary use is now banned in India.

Q16.

Consider the following statements:

1. India is permitted limited non-consumptive and run-of-the-river hydroelectric use of the western rivers under the Indus Waters Treaty.
2. The World Bank acts as a guarantor that underwrites financial losses arising from disputes under the Treaty.
3. The Permanent Indus Commission, comprising a Commissioner from each country, is required to meet at least once a year.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — Statement 2 is incorrect; the World Bank facilitates the Treaty's mechanisms (including arbitrator/expert appointments) as a signatory, but is not a financial guarantor of either party's losses.

Q17.

Consider the following statements:

1. Under the Bankers' Books Evidence framework, certified printouts or copies of banking records are admissible as evidence without the original ledger being produced in court.
2. The 2026 Act explicitly extends this evidentiary framework to electronic and digital banking records.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c) — Both reflect the Act's core purpose: easing the burden of proof in banking litigation by allowing certified copies, now explicitly extended to digital records.

Q18.

Consider the following statements:

1. CAFE norms in India are administered under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.
2. Manufacturers exceeding the prescribed average corporate fuel-consumption target are liable to monetary penalties.
3. Electric vehicles are assigned zero tailpipe CO₂ for the purpose of calculating a manufacturer's fleet average under CAFE.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c) — All three are correct; crediting EVs with zero/low tailpipe emissions is precisely the lever meant to push manufacturers toward electrification to meet fleet-wide targets.

Q19.

Consider the following statements on India's coastal security architecture:

1. The 'three-tier' coastal security arrangement involves the Indian Navy, the Indian Coast Guard, and State Marine/Coastal Police.
2. Coastal security was comprehensively restructured following the 26/11 Mumbai attacks of 2008.
3. Sagar Prahari Bal is a specialised force raised by the Indian Coast Guard for close-coastal and offshore asset protection.

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 incorrect; Sagar Prahari Bal was raised by the Indian Navy, not the Coast Guard, specifically to protect naval and critical coastal/offshore assets.

Q20.

The Supreme Court's directions in *M.K. Ranjitsinh and Ors. v. Union of India* concerning the Great Indian Bustard primarily dealt with a perceived conflict between which two considerations?

- (a) Mining rights versus forest conservation
- (b) Renewable energy infrastructure (overhead transmission lines) versus bustard conservation
- (c) Urban expansion versus wetland protection
- (d) Tourism revenue versus protected-area integrity

Answer: (b) — The case addressed whether solar/wind-linked overhead power lines across bustard habitat in Rajasthan and Gujarat should be mandatorily undergrounded, balancing renewable-energy commitments against collision-mortality risk.

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§5 Mains Questions — 9 Across GS I–IV

GS1 Q1. The excavation at Poompuhar is a reminder that India's maritime heritage remains under-leveraged in the national historical imagination. Discuss the significance of

India's ancient port-towns in reconstructing Indian Ocean trade networks, and suggest measures to strengthen underwater archaeology as a discipline in India. (15 marks, 250 words)

GS2 Q2. The Bombay High Court's recent ruling on the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act's 'public view' requirement reflects the judiciary's evolving interpretation of older statutes to address digital-age realities. Discuss, with reference to other instances where courts have reinterpreted pre-digital laws for online conduct. (15 marks, 250 words)

GS2 Q3. Examine the significance of replacing colonial-era evidentiary statutes such as the Bankers' Books Evidence Act, 1891 with contemporary legislation. How does such reform aid the ease of doing business and judicial efficiency? (10 marks, 150 words)

GS2 Q4. The continuing dispute over the Indus Waters Treaty highlights the limits of international adjudication in transboundary water-sharing disputes. Critically examine India's options going forward, in light of the Permanent Court of Arbitration's jurisdictional findings. (15 marks, 250 words)

GS3 Q5. Discuss the ecological and conservation significance of the Great Indian Bustard, and critically examine the Supreme Court's directions on undergrounding transmission lines as a conservation measure, in the context of India's renewable energy targets. (15 marks, 250 words)

GS3 Q6. What is the rationale behind Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) norms? Discuss how CAFE-3 norms are expected to shape India's automobile sector and its transition toward electric mobility. (10 marks, 150 words)

GS3 Q7. India's emerging lithium discoveries, such as in Reasi district, Jammu & Kashmir, are critical to its clean-energy and battery-manufacturing ambitions. Discuss the significance of critical-mineral security and the challenges in translating mineral discovery into domestic extraction and processing capacity. (15 marks, 250 words)

GS3 Q8. Discuss the architecture of India's coastal security framework. In light of evolving non-traditional maritime threats, suggest measures to strengthen multi-agency coordination in coastal and offshore security. (15 marks, 250 words)

GS4 Q9. Discuss the ethical tension between the state's duty to protect vulnerable communities (as under the SC/ST Act) and concerns around the expanding reach of 'public view' standards into private digital spaces such as WhatsApp groups. (10 marks, 150 words)

§6 Value Addition — 8 Facts Worth Memorising

- *Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala* (1986): three Jehovah's Witness children were expelled from school in Kerala for not singing the National Anthem, though they stood respectfully; the Supreme Court restored their right to admission, holding that Article 25 protects genuine conscientious objection that causes no disrespect.
- The Indus Waters Treaty, 1960, was brokered by the World Bank and signed by Jawaharlal Nehru and Ayub Khan; it survived three India-Pakistan wars (1965, 1971, 1999) without formal suspension, until India's 2025 decision to hold it in abeyance.
- Exercise Varuna traces its origins to 1983 and is among the Indian Navy's longest-running bilateral exercises; France was also the first country with which India held a '2+2' format dialogue extending into the Indian Ocean Region.
- CSIR-CCMB (Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology), Hyderabad, is one of India's premier life-sciences laboratories and has been at the forefront of genomic studies into India-specific sickle-cell mutation haplotypes.
- NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) is the first satellite mission to use dual-frequency (L-band and S-band) SAR, and is designed to scan nearly all of Earth's land and ice surfaces roughly every 12 days.
- India's CAFE norms evolved through two prior phases — CAFE-1 (2017–2022) and CAFE-2 (2022–2027) — before CAFE-3, each phase tightening the permissible fleet-average CO2 ceiling.
- The Great Indian Bustard is one of the heaviest flying birds native to India, historically found across 11 states; its population is now estimated at under 150 individuals, concentrated mainly in Rajasthan's Thar landscape.
- India's vulture population crashed by over 97% between the early 1990s and early 2000s across the three main *Gyps* species (White-rumped, Indian/Long-billed, and Slender-billed), prompting India's first Vulture Action Plan in 2006 and the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centres.

§7 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker — 18 Watchlist Items

TOPIC	GS PAPER	WHY IT'S TRACKED	HIT PROBABILITY
Bombay HC — WhatsApp & SC/ST Act 'public view'	GS2	Digital-age reinterpretation of a 1989 protective statute	★★★★☆
Bankers' Books Evidence Act, 2026	GS2/GS3	Colonial 1891 Act fully replaced; commenced 1 Oct 2026	★★★★★
Vande Mataram six-stanza petition	GS1/GS2	Compelled patriotism vs. conscientious objection, & Bijoe Emmanuel precedent	★★★★☆
Poompuhar underwater excavation	GS1	Chola-era submerged port; TNSDA + Indian Maritime University	★★★★☆
Indus Waters Treaty dispute	GS2/GS3	Abeyance, PCA jurisdiction rejection, treaty-reciprocity ethics	★★★★★
Exercise Varuna (India-France)	GS3	Toulon-based naval partnership since 1983	★★★★☆
Exercise Tarang Shakti 2026	GS3	2nd edition, multinational air exercise, 24 Sep–12 Oct 2026	★★★★☆
Indian Coast Guard & coastal security architecture	GS3	Three-tier structure; Sagar Prahari Bal distinction	★★★★☆
National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission	GS2/GS3	CCMB genomics; 2047 elimination target	★★★★☆
SAR/InSAR & NISAR	GS3	Dual-frequency ISRO-NASA mission; deformation monitoring	★★★★☆
CAFE-3 norms	GS3	Fleet-average fuel-efficiency ratchet; effective April 2027	★★★★★
Annual Survey of Industries	GS3	NSO/MoSPI data architecture; informal-sector data gap	★★★★☆
Reasi lithium block, J&K	GS1/GS3	5.9 MT inferred resource; critical-minerals auction push	★★★★★

TOPIC	GS PAPER	WHY IT'S TRACKED	HIT PROBABILITY
Great Indian Bustard soft-release	GS3	Ramdevra/Sam centres; M.K. Ranjitsinh case	★★★★★
Indian Vultures & diclofenac	GS3	Precautionary principle; Jatayu breeding centres	★★★★★
Ethics: Privacy vs. protective state action	GS4	Closed-group digital conduct vs. Article 21	★★★★★
QUAD / Indo-Pacific watch	GS2	Standing high-frequency IR tracker — monitor for fresh summit outcomes	★★★★★
RBI monetary policy framework	GS3	Standing high-frequency Economy tracker — monitor for next MPC decision	★★★★★

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