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ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

GS3

Environment · Biodiversity · Planetary Boundaries · Climate Change

22 June 2026

State of India's Environment 2026 (SOE-2026): 7 of 9 Planetary Boundaries Breached; Extreme Weather on 99% of Days in 2025

What happened: The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and Down To Earth released the State of India's Environment 2026 (SOE-2026) report on World Environment Day (June 5, 2026). The report warns that 7 of the 9 planetary boundaries have now been breached globally — with ocean acidification joining the list as the 7th. India-specific data: extreme weather events were recorded on 99% of all days in 2025 (up from 88% in 2024). Around 97,000 hectares of forestland was diverted for non-forest use in five years (2020–25), with forest diversion rising in 26 states. The invasive plant *Lantana camara* now occupies ~50% of forest and scrublands, suppressing native grasses and intensifying human-tiger conflict. On the positive side, PM Modi congratulated Uttar Pradesh for planting a record number of trees under the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign.

Why it matters for UPSC: SOE reports are a primary source for CSE/UPSC environment questions. The planetary boundaries framework (Rockström et al., 2009) is directly testable. Specific Prelims angles: the 9 planetary boundaries (biosphere integrity, climate change, land system change, freshwater, biogeochemical flows, ocean acidification, atmospheric aerosol loading, stratospheric ozone, novel entities), *Lantana camara* (invasive species), and India's forest diversion data.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- 9 Planetary Boundaries (Rockström 2009): Climate change, Biosphere integrity, Land-system change, Freshwater use, Biogeochemical flows (N&P), Ocean acidification, Atmospheric aerosol loading, Stratospheric ozone, Novel entities. 7 now breached.
- 7 Breached Boundaries: Climate change, Biosphere integrity, Land-system change, Freshwater depletion, Biogeochemical flows, Novel entities, Ocean acidification (newly added in 2026 report).
- India's extreme weather: 99% of days in 2025 had at least one extreme event — heatwaves, floods, cyclones, or droughts.
- Forest diversion 2020–25: 97,000 hectares diverted in 5 years across 26 states; Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha top diverters.
- *Lantana camara*: invasive shrub from Central America; listed in India's invasive species list; occupies 50% of forest/scrubland; reduces prey for tigers → forces tigers to human settlements.
- Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam: national tree plantation campaign; Uttar Pradesh planted over 36 crore saplings in one day (record attempt).

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Mnemonic for 9 Planetary Boundaries — "CLFBONA-L": Climate change, Land-system change, Freshwater, Biosphere integrity, Ocean acidification, Novel entities, Aerosol loading (atmospheric), -stratospheric Ozone, Biogeochemical Flows.

Rearrange as: "Climate, Freshwater, Biosphere, Ocean Novel Aerosol Ozone Land Flows" = 9 items. 7 are breached (all except stratospheric ozone and atmospheric aerosols).

PYQ LINKAGE

"The concept of 'Planetary Boundaries' is gaining traction in global environmental governance. Explain the concept and analyse the implications of breaching these boundaries for India." — UPSC CSE Mains GS3, 2022 (Indicative). UPSC Prelims 2024 had a direct question on invasive species and their impact on native biodiversity — *Lantana camara* was a likely answer option.

GS1 Indian Geography · Monsoon · Agriculture · Climate

22 June 2026

Monsoon 2026: Below-Normal Forecast (90–92% LPA); El Niño Risk Rises; IMD Yellow Alert for Mumbai June 22–23

What happened: The Southwest Monsoon made landfall in Kerala on June 4, 2026, slightly later than the normal onset date (June 1). IMD's updated long-range forecast projects 2026 seasonal rainfall at 90–92% of the Long Period Average (LPA) — a below-normal outcome. Skymet and other private agencies warn of a 30% probability of drought conditions (below 90% LPA) as El Niño begins forming in the second half of 2026. On June 22, IMD issued a yellow alert for Mumbai, warning of light to moderate rainfall with thunderstorms. The below-normal monsoon heightens food inflation risks — confirmed in RBI's June MPC statement — and threatens kharif crop sowing in water-deficit states.

Why it matters for UPSC: The monsoon-economy-agriculture nexus is a classic GS1-GS3 integrated topic. UPSC has repeatedly asked about the mechanism of the Southwest Monsoon, its variability drivers (El Niño/La Niña, IOD), impact on food security, and policy responses (MSP, PMFBY, PDPS). Prelims: LPA definition (50-year average), normal vs. below-normal vs. deficient rainfall thresholds. Mains: drought declaration mechanism, NDRF/SDRF, crop insurance.

KEY FACTS

- LPA (Long Period Average): average rainfall over past 50 years across India. Current LPA: ~88 cm (June–September). <90% LPA = deficient; 90–96% = below normal; 96–104% = normal; >104% = above normal.
- 2026 forecast: 90–92% of LPA (below normal). Drought risk: ~30% probability per Skymet (below 90% LPA).
- El Niño: warming of central and eastern tropical Pacific → suppresses Indian monsoon rainfall. Expected to form in H2 2026 and peak in Northern Hemisphere winter.
- Southwest Monsoon onset 2026: Kerala June 4 (normal: June 1). Monsoon advances northward through June–July.
- Kharif crops at risk: rice, maize, cotton, soybean, tur dal — sowing begins July; water deficit threatens productivity in Marathwada, Bundelkhand, Vidarbha.
- IMD alert colour codes: Yellow (watch), Orange (alert), Red (warning/action). Yellow = be aware; prepare for localised heavy rain.

TEACHING HOOK

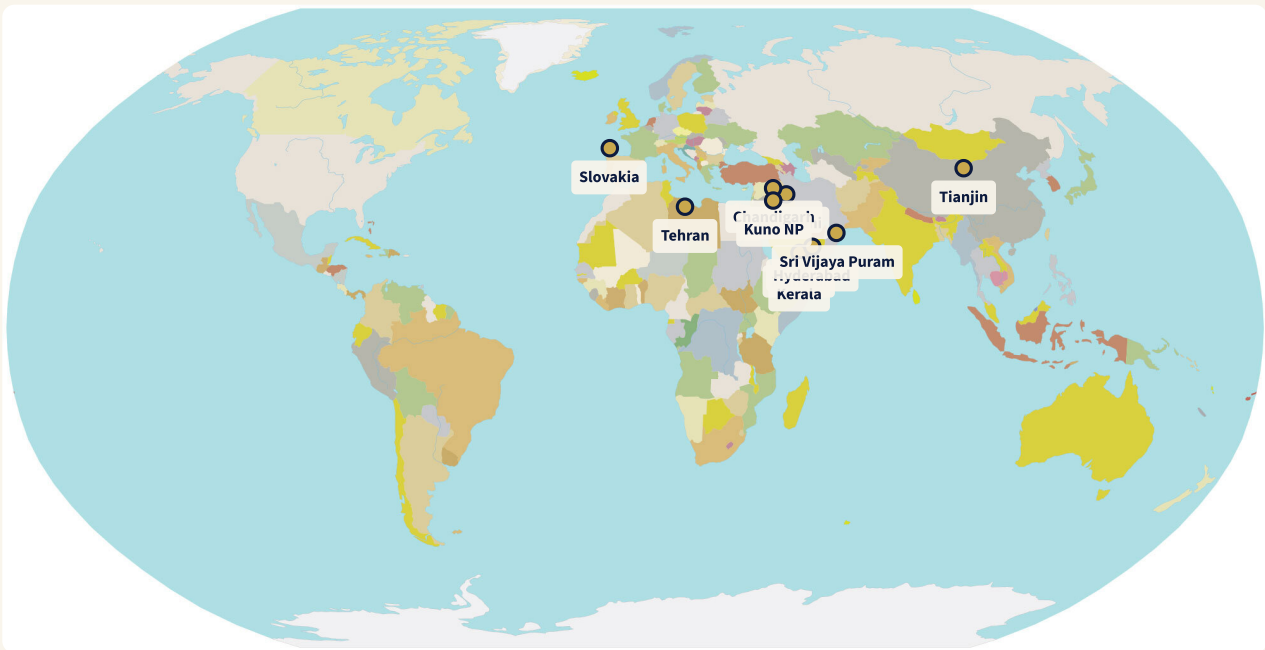
El Niño-Monsoon Connection (exam-ready): El Niño → Walker circulation weakens → Indian Ocean moisture transport reduces → below-normal monsoon. NOT all El Niño years are drought years (1997 El Niño did NOT cause drought). Modifier: Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) — a positive IOD can partially offset El Niño's suppressing effect. Always qualify El Niño-monsoon predictions with IOD status in Mains answers.

PYQ LINKAGE

"Explain the mechanism of the South-West monsoon and discuss the factors responsible for its variability from year to year. What are the implications of a below-normal monsoon for India's food security?" — UPSC CSE Mains GS1, 2019 (Indicative). UPSC Prelims 2021: direct question on El Niño — definition, formation region, and impact on Indian monsoon.



PLACES IN NEWS



▲ Asia/South Asia detail

Tianjin

CHINA

25th SCO Council of Heads of State Summit; PM Modi-Xi Jinping sideline meeting; Tianjin Declaration adopted; BRICS 2026 invite extended.

GS2 — IR, Multilateral

New Delhi

INDIA

BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting hosted; Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill tabled in Lok Sabha; Jan Vishwas Bill passed by Parliament.

GS2 — Polity & IR

Hyderabad

INDIA — TELANGANA

National Flight Test Centre, Hyderabad: AMCA stealth fighter full-scale engineering model undergoes radar cross-section (RCS) testing.

GS3 — Defence & Tech

Slovakia (Bratislava)

Kerala

Mumbai

CENTRAL EUROPE

PM Modi's 101st foreign visit; 'India Chair on Artificial Intelligence' proposed at Slovak university — AI as India's diplomatic soft power tool.

GS2 — IR; GS3 — AI

INDIA — SOUTH

Southwest Monsoon 2026 onset: June 4, 2026 (normal: June 1). First landfall of monsoon signals start of India's critical four-month rainy season.

GS1 — Geography

INDIA — MAHARASHTRA

IMD issues Yellow Alert for June 22–23 as monsoon advances; light to moderate rainfall with thunderstorms forecast. Monsoon typically reaches Mumbai by June 10.

GS1 — Monsoon/Geography

Kuno National Park

INDIA — MADHYA PRADESH

Rare caracal sighted during wildlife survey (June 6, 2026). Kuno also hosts reintroduced cheetahs from Namibia (2022) and South Africa (2023).

GS3 — Environment & Biodiversity

Sri Vijaya Puram

INDIA — ANDAMAN & NICOBAR

Vice Admiral Vineet McCarty assumed charge as 20th C-in-C of the Andaman and Nicobar Command — India's only tri-service command guarding maritime chokepoint.

GS3 — Defence & Security

Tehran

IRAN

India's refusal to criticise Israeli strikes on Iran at SCO/BRICS forums creates diplomatic friction. Iran is a full SCO member (2023) — India navigates Iran-Israel tensions.

GS2 — IR; West Asia

Chandigarh

INDIA — PUNJAB/HARYANA

ISRO Space Technology & Research Program 2026 launched at Chandigarh University; ISRO scientists mentor next-generation space researchers in month-long programme.

GS3 — S&T; Space



ETHICS (GS4) — CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1 — AI GOVERNANCE & BIAS

The District Magistrate and the AI Welfare Algorithm

A district administration implements an AI-based algorithm to allocate drought relief to farmers, using satellite data on crop loss and land-holding records. An NGO reports that the algorithm systematically excludes tenant farmers — who hold no formal land titles — from relief, though they suffer identical crop losses. The DM is under pressure from the state government to continue using the algorithm (which reduces processing time from 3 months to 2 weeks), but also from local civil society to suspend it pending an audit. Investigate the ethical dimensions of this dilemma and suggest an appropriate course of action.

Framework: Procedural justice (fairness of the process) vs. substantive justice (equity of outcomes). Bring in: Rawlsian veil of ignorance (would you support this algorithm if you didn't know your tenure status?), algorithmic accountability (right to explanation, GDPR-inspired principles), and the public servant's duty to vulnerable sections (Article 46, DPSP). Suggested action: suspend the algorithm for identified exclusion categories pending audit; create manual fast-track for tenant farmers; commission independent algorithmic audit within 30 days. Note in your answer: efficiency and equity can coexist — fix the algorithm, don't abolish it.

CASE STUDY 2 — CLIMATE ETHICS & DEVELOPMENT

The Forest Diversion Dilemma: Tribal Livelihoods vs. Solar Energy Project

A state government proposes diverting 5,000 hectares of protected forest in a tribal belt to install a 2 GW solar energy park. The project would generate clean energy for 3 lakh households and create 12,000 temporary jobs. However, the forest is home to 8,000 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) who depend on it for food, medicine, and cultural identity. The Forest Rights Act

(FRA) requires community consent, but the state government argues that climate change imperatives override procedural requirements. You are the senior IFS officer overseeing forest clearance. What do you do?

Framework: Intergenerational equity (climate benefits for future vs. present tribal rights), rights-based approach (FRA, 2006 — community consent is not optional), and the doctrine of "common but differentiated responsibilities" (those least responsible for climate change should not bear its mitigation costs). Cite: *Vedanta vs. Ministry* case (Supreme Court on tribal consent) and *Niyamgiri Hills* precedent. Ethical action: decline clearance until gram sabha consent is obtained; explore alternative sites; propose a co-ownership model where tribal communities hold equity in the solar park.

CASE STUDY 3 — POLITICAL ETHICS & REPRESENTATION

The IAS Officer, the Delimitation Data, and Political Pressure

You are a senior IAS officer seconded to the newly constituted Delimitation Commission (2026). The Commission is mapping constituencies for the expanded Lok Sabha (850 seats). Data analysis shows that a neutral, population-based delimitation would significantly reduce the political weight of southern states, confirming their concerns. The Union Home Secretary informally conveys that the Commission should explore "flexibility" in its methodology to address southern grievances — but without formal orders. Meanwhile, a senior opposition politician contacts you directly offering "cooperation" if certain constituencies are drawn favourably. Analyse the ethical issues and your response.

Framework: Probity in governance (ARC 4th Report), political neutrality of constitutional/statutory bodies, and the civil servant's duty to the Constitution over government/party convenience. The Delimitation Commission is a statutory quasi-judicial body — its independence is constitutionally protected. Key ethical principles: transparency, accountability, impartiality. Action: decline both the informal Home Secretary suggestion (no basis in law) and the politician's offer (report to Chairman); document all communications; proceed with population-based methodology while formally raising the southern states' representation concern through proper channels (written note to the Commission).

CASE STUDY 4 — BIOETHICS

Gene Therapy Trial and Informed Consent in a Rural District

India's booming bioeconomy (\$190 billion in 2026) has enabled a private biotech company to conduct a Phase 2 gene therapy trial for sickle cell disease in a rural Adivasi community in Chhattisgarh. Consent forms are in English and a simplified Hindi summary, but most participants are Gondi-speakers with limited literacy. The local PHC doctor tells you (as the District Health Officer) that many participants signed consent without understanding the risks — including permanent genetic modification of their germline cells. The company insists consent was "legally obtained." What are the ethical violations and how do you respond?

Framework: Informed consent (Belmont Report principles: respect for persons, beneficence, justice), linguistic justice, and the right to understand medical decisions (Supreme Court in *Samira Kohli v. Dr. Prabha Manchanda* case). Germline modification has intergenerational consequences — heightened ethical scrutiny applies. Action: immediately halt further recruitment; instruct the company to obtain informed consent in Gondi with independent interpreters; report violations to the Institutional Ethics Committee and ICMR; check if trial is registered in CTRI (Clinical Trials Registry India). Note: innovation in bioeconomy does not override individual rights — this is a Mains-worthy "balance innovation with ethics" argument.



MCQS — 15 QUESTIONS

Q1 · GS2 · CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

Consider the following statements about the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026:

1. It proposes to increase the number of elected seats in the Lok Sabha from 543 to 850.
2. The reservation of seats for women under the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam will be activated only after delimitation is completed under the new framework.

3. The Delimitation Commission proposed under the Bill will be constituted under Article 82 of the Constitution.

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

✓ **Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only — Statement 3 is partially correct: Art. 82 mandates delimitation after each census, but the Delimitation Commission is constituted under the Delimitation Act (a statute), not directly under Art. 82.**

Q2 · GS2 · GOVERNANCE

With reference to the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026, consider the following:

1. It decriminalises provisions by replacing imprisonment with monetary penalties or compounding.
2. Compounding of offences under this Act means that offenders are acquitted of all charges.
3. The Bill builds on the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023.

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1, 2 and 3

(d) 3 only

✓ **Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only — Statement 2 is incorrect. Compounding is not acquittal; it is the payment of a sum to avoid criminal prosecution. Liability (civil) is acknowledged.**

Q3 · GS2 · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Which of the following is/are correct about the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)?

1. The SCO was founded in 2001 with six original member states.
2. India became a full member of the SCO in 2017.
3. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) of the SCO is headquartered in Beijing.
4. Iran became a full member of the SCO in 2023.

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

(b) 1, 2 and 3 only

(c) 2, 3 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ **Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only — Statement 3 is incorrect. RATS HQ is in Tashkent, Uzbekistan (not Beijing). SCO Secretariat is in Beijing.**

Q4 · GS3 · MONETARY POLICY

With reference to RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), consider the following:

1. The MPC has six members — three from the RBI and three appointed by the Central Government.
2. The RBI Governor has a casting vote in case of a tie in MPC decisions.
3. The MPC is constituted under Section 45ZB of the RBI Act, 1934.
4. If CPI inflation remains above 6% for two consecutive quarters, the RBI is required to explain to Parliament.

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

(b) 1, 3 and 4 only

(c) 2, 3 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

✓ **Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only — Statement 4 is incorrect. The threshold for the "failure to maintain inflation target" report to Parliament is three consecutive quarters of inflation outside the 2–6% band (not two quarters).**

Q5 · GS3 · ENVIRONMENT

How many of the following are among the nine planetary boundaries identified in the Rockström et al. (2009) framework?

1. Climate change
2. Biodiversity loss (Biosphere integrity)
3. Ocean temperature rise
4. Novel entities (chemical pollution)
5. Stratospheric ozone depletion

(a) Only two

(b) Only three

(c) Only four

(d) All five

✓ Answer: (c) Only four — Statements 1, 2, 4, and 5 are among the 9 planetary boundaries. Statement 3 ("ocean temperature rise") is NOT one of the 9 boundaries; the ocean-related boundary is "ocean acidification."

Q6 • GS1 • GEOGRAPHY

Which of the following statements about the Indian Southwest Monsoon is/are correct?

1. The normal onset of the Southwest Monsoon over Kerala is June 1.
2. A positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) generally suppresses monsoon rainfall over India.
3. El Niño is associated with warming of the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

✓ Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only — Statement 2 is incorrect. A positive IOD generally ENHANCES (not suppresses) monsoon rainfall. A negative IOD tends to suppress it.

Q7 • GS3 • BRICS

Which of the following countries became FULL members of BRICS in 2024?

1. Egypt
2. Indonesia
3. Saudi Arabia
4. United Arab Emirates
5. Iran

(a) 1, 3, 4 and 5 only

(b) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only

(c) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only

(d) All five

✓ Answer: (a) 1, 3, 4 and 5 only — Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Ethiopia became full BRICS members in 2024. Indonesia joined in 2025. Statement 2 (Indonesia) = 2025 member, not 2024.

Q8 • GS3 • DEFENCE

Consider the following about India's Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA):

1. AMCA is developed by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) with Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) as design authority.
2. A 5th-generation aircraft is characterised by stealth, supercruise capability, and sensor fusion.
3. Radar Cross-Section (RCS) testing measures how visible an aircraft is to radar systems.

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

✓ Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only — Statement 1 reverses the roles: ADA is the design authority; HAL is the production agency (not the other way around). Statements 2 and 3 are correct.

Q9 • GS3 • BIOTECHNOLOGY

With reference to India's BioE3 Policy (2023), which of the following statements is correct?

1. BioE3 stands for Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment.
2. The policy is implemented by the Department of Pharmaceuticals.
3. It focuses on high-performance biomanufacturing including biofuels, biomaterials and enzymes.

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1, 2 and 3

(d) 3 only

✓ Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only — Statement 2 is incorrect. BioE3 Policy is under the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science & Technology — not the Department of Pharmaceuticals.

Q10 • GS3 • ENVIRONMENT

Consider the following statements about *Lantana camara*:

1. It is an invasive plant species native to South America.
2. It has been reported to suppress native grasses, thereby reducing prey availability for tigers.
3. It is listed in India's official invasive species database maintained by the Botanical Survey of India.

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

✓ Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3 — All three statements are correct. *Lantana camara* is native to Central/South America; it suppresses native vegetation and intensifies human-wildlife conflict; it is documented as invasive by BSI and MoEFCC.

Q11 • GS2 • GOVERNANCE

The Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) is significant because:

1. It is India's only tri-service command integrating Army, Navy and Air Force under one headquarters.
2. It is headquartered at Sri Vijaya Puram (formerly Port Blair).
3. It is strategically located near the Strait of Malacca, one of the world's busiest maritime chokepoints.

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

✓ Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3 — All three statements are correct. ANC is India's only tri-service command; it is at Sri Vijaya Puram; and its location near the Strait of Malacca and Six Degree Channel gives it immense strategic significance for India's maritime security and IOR presence.

Q12 • GS3 • ECONOMY

What is India's GDP growth rate for FY 2025-26 as per NSO data, and how does it rank among major economies?

(a) 6.6% — 2nd fastest globally

(b) 7.4% — fastest-growing major economy

(c) 6.9% — fastest-growing major economy

(d) 7.4% — 2nd only to Vietnam

✓ Answer: (b) 7.4% — fastest-growing major economy. Note: 6.6% is the REVISED FORECAST for FY27 (not the actual FY26 figure). 6.9% was the earlier FY27 forecast before the June 2026 MPC revision.

Q13 • GS2 • UPSC AFFAIRS

With reference to UPSC CSE 2026, which of the following is correct?

1. The Preliminary Examination was held on May 24, 2026.
2. 13,343 candidates qualified for the Mains Examination.
3. The Detailed Application Form (DAF) window closes on June 28, 2026.
4. The Mains Examination commences on August 21, 2026.

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

(b) 2, 3 and 4 only

(c) 1, 2, 3 and 4

(d) 3 and 4 only

✓ Answer: (c) 1, 2, 3 and 4 — All four statements are factually correct as per UPSC 2026 calendar and official notifications.

Q14 • GS3 • SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Consider the following about India's space ecosystem:

1. IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre) was established to facilitate private sector participation in space activities.
2. MOI-1 is India's first orbital AI image-processing satellite, launched aboard PSLV-C62 in January 2026.
3. ISRO's Indian Space Hackathon 2026 offers winning students a cash prize of ₹10 lakh.

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

✓ Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only — Statement 3 is uncertain/not confirmed in official sources; the Space Hackathon offers ISRO internships (not a confirmed ₹10 lakh cash prize). Statements 1 and 2 are verified facts.

Q15 · GS1 · GEOGRAPHY

Kuno National Park, where a rare caracal was sighted in June 2026, is located in which Indian state, and what other major wildlife programme is associated with it?

(a) Rajasthan — Project Tiger

(b) Madhya Pradesh — Cheetah Reintroduction Project

(c) Chhattisgarh — Project Elephant

(d) Gujarat — Lion Conservation Programme

✓ Answer: (b) Madhya Pradesh — Cheetah Reintroduction Project. Kuno NP is in Sheopur district, Madhya Pradesh. It is the site of India's cheetah reintroduction (from Namibia 2022 and South Africa 2023) — the first cheetah reintroduction programme in the world at this scale.

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Today's 15 MCQs mirror UPSC Prelims 2027 difficulty — statement-based, elimination-heavy, detail-testing.

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MAINS QUESTIONS

GS1

250 WORDS · 15 MARKS

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

Discuss the mechanism of the South-West Monsoon and explain how El Niño and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) influence its variability. What implications does a below-normal monsoon have for India's food security and macroeconomic stability? (250 words)

Answer Framework: Intro: Monsoon as lifeline (60% agriculture rain-fed). Para 1: Mechanism — ITCZ shift, differential heating (land vs. ocean), Mascarene High, Somali Jet. Para 2: El Niño (Pacific warming → Walker circulation → reduced moisture → below-normal monsoon). Para 3: IOD — positive IOD partially offsets El Niño; negative IOD amplifies drought risk. Para 4: Food security implications — kharif crop losses, rural income shock, food inflation (CPI food basket). Para 5: Macroeconomic — RBI rate constraints, fiscal burden (PMFBY payouts, NDRF), rural demand compression. Conclusion: Systemic resilience needed (micro-irrigation, Direct Seeded Rice, crop diversification, PMFBY reforms). *Key data:* 2026 forecast = 90–92% LPA; 30% drought probability; RBI raised inflation to 5.1% partly due to this.

GS1

150 WORDS · 10 MARKS

SOCIETY & ENVIRONMENT

The State of India's Environment 2026 warns that 7 of 9 planetary boundaries have been breached. How does this crisis manifest in India's ecological landscape? Discuss with specific examples from forest diversion, invasive species, and extreme weather events. (150 words)

Answer Framework: Intro: Planetary boundaries as "safe operating space for humanity" (Rockström 2009). Para 1: Forest diversion — 97,000 ha diverted 2020–25; rising in 26 states; undermines biosphere integrity boundary. Para 2: Invasive species — Lantana camara on 50% of forest/scrublands; disrupts food chains; intensifies human-tiger conflict (ecological cascade). Para 3: Extreme weather — India's 99% of days in 2025 had extreme events (heatwaves, floods, cyclones); climate change boundary clearly breached. Conclusion: India needs integrated ecosystem governance — strengthen FRA enforcement, Lantana removal mission, national extreme weather early warning system. *Key data:* SOE-2026 by CSE/Down to Earth; 7 breached boundaries include ocean acidification as new addition.

GS2

250 WORDS · 15 MARKS

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India's chairmanship of BRICS in 2026 coincides with a rapidly expanding membership and deepening geopolitical tensions among member states. Critically evaluate whether BRICS can remain a coherent platform for the Global South under India's leadership. (250 words)

Answer Framework: Intro: BRICS at inflection point — expanded from 5 to 10 members (2024–25) while internal contradictions (India-China, Russia-West tensions) deepen. Para 1: India's priorities — inclusive multilateralism, AI governance, climate finance, digital economy (4I framework). Para 2: Coherence challenges — de-dollarisation (Russia/Brazil push; India cautious); Iran's inclusion (complicates India's West Asia policy); China's dominance in NDB. Para 3: Strengths under India — BRICS represents 45% world population, 35% GDP (PPP); India as non-confrontational chair can de-escalate bloc tensions; Global South credibility. Para 4: Comparison — BRICS not replacing G7/G20; serving as complementary voice for emerging economies. Conclusion: BRICS can remain relevant under India's pragmatic leadership if it avoids being drawn into bloc politics and focuses on deliverables (NDB projects, AI governance framework, climate finance mechanisms). Use: * BRICS = "Building Resilience and Innovation for Cooperation and Sustainability"

GS3

150 WORDS · 10 MARKS

ECONOMY · MONETARY POLICY

The RBI's decision to hold the repo rate at 5.25% in June 2026, despite a downward growth revision to 6.6%, reflects a "higher for longer" inflation management philosophy. Do you agree with this stance? Justify with reference to the current macroeconomic environment. (150 words)

Answer Framework: Intro: Define "higher for longer" — keeping rates elevated even when growth slows, prioritising inflation credibility. Para 1: Case FOR the hold — CPI at 3.9% but risks elevated (West Asia, below-normal monsoon → food inflation spike imminent); cutting prematurely could erode RBI's inflation-fighting credibility; core inflation still benign. Para 2: Case AGAINST hold — 7.4% → 6.6% growth revision is meaningful; consumption-led growth needs affordable credit; private GFCF still lagging (investment-led transition stalled). Para 3: Assessment — RBI's WARS framework (West Asia, Agriculture, Rate stability, Slowdown risk) justifies the hold. Monsoon + West Asia risks are supply-side — rate cuts cannot address them but CAN add demand-side inflation pressure if used prematurely. Conclusion: Prudent call. Review warranted if monsoon improves by August. Cite: MPC 6-0 unanimous vote = institutional consensus, not political pressure.

GS4

250 WORDS · 15 MARKS

ETHICS CASE STUDY — AI

You are the District Magistrate. An AI-based algorithm deployed by the district administration to allocate drought relief systematically excludes tenant farmers (who lack formal land titles) despite identical crop losses to landowners. The state government wants the efficient system maintained; civil society wants it suspended. What are the ethical dimensions of this dilemma, and what course of action will you take? (250 words)

Answer Framework: Intro: Acknowledge the dilemma — efficiency vs. equity; technology serving governance can inadvertently amplify existing inequalities. Ethical dimensions: (1) Procedural injustice — unequal application of criteria (tenure status ≠ crop loss); (2) Algorithmic bias — systematic exclusion of a marginalised group; (3) Accountability gap — who is responsible when AI causes harm?; (4) Duty to the vulnerable (Art. 46 DPSP, public servant's code). Ethical frameworks: Rawlsian veil of ignorance (would you design this system if you didn't know your status?); Consequentialism (long-term harm of exclusion outweighs short-term efficiency gain). Course of action: (1) Immediate: create a manual fast-track exception process for tenant farmers while maintaining system for others; (2) Short-term: commission algorithmic audit (30 days); (3) Long-term: redesign algorithm to use crop loss data (satellite) as primary criterion, not land title; (4) Communication: transparent disclosure to civil society of interim measures. Conclusion: Efficiency and equity are not mutually exclusive — the goal is to fix the algorithm, not abandon it. Note: public trust in AI governance depends on demonstrating that no citizen falls through the cracks.

GS4

150 WORDS · 10 MARKS

ETHICS — BIOETHICS

"Innovation in the bioeconomy does not override individual rights." Critically examine this statement in the context of ethical responsibilities of IAS officers when overseeing biotech research in tribal communities. (150 words)

Answer Framework: Intro: India's bioeconomy at \$190 bn creates massive innovation pressure — but ethical guardrails must be non-negotiable. Para 1: Individual rights in biomedical research — Belmont Report (respect for persons, informed consent), right to understand in one's own language, right to withdraw. Para 2: Tribal context — FRA guarantees community rights; linguistic justice (consent forms must be in community's language); germline modification (permanent genetic change) demands highest ethical scrutiny. Para 3: IAS officer's duty — enforce ICMR ethical guidelines, mandate CTIRI registration, suspend non-compliant trials, report to Institutional Ethics Committee. Para 4: False trade-off — innovation and ethics are NOT opposed; Hyderabad's globally competitive biopharma industry built on ethical research. Conclusion: IAS officers as gatekeepers of constitutional rights must ensure that India's bioeconomy does not repeat the historical exploitation of tribal communities under the guise of scientific progress.



VALUE ADDITION

5 Quotes for Today's Topics:

“In a democracy, the first obligation of a citizen is to keep his government from doing what the government wants to do.

— Alexis de Tocqueville

Use in: Answers on democratic accountability, delimitation fairness, and parliamentary oversight. Powerful in GS2 Mains on federalism and representation.

“The earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family.

— Chief Seattle (attributed)

Use in: Answers on planetary boundaries, environment conservation, tribal rights and forest diversion. Strong opening for GS3 Environment essays.

“Inflation is always and everywhere a monetary phenomenon.

— Milton Friedman

Use in: RBI monetary policy, MPC decisions, inflation targeting answers. Introduce it to then critique: India's inflation is partly supply-driven (food, fuel) — not purely monetary. Shows examiner you can engage critically with economic theory.

“If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first invent the universe.

— Carl Sagan

Use in: Science & Technology essays about foundational research, ISRO, bioeconomy. Conveys: breakthrough science requires patient, long-term foundational investment — an argument for India's S&T budget prioritisation.

“The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.

— Albert Einstein

Use in: AI governance, adaptive regulation, decriminalisation/Jan Vishwas reform, or any governance adaptation topic. Particularly apt for arguments about dynamic regulatory frameworks keeping pace with technological change.

INDICATOR	VALUE	SOURCE	GS RELEVANCE
Repo Rate (June 2026)	5.25% (held)	RBI MPC	GS3 — Economy
India GDP FY2025-26	7.4%	NSO	GS3 — Economy
CPI Inflation (May 2026)	3.9%	NSO/MoSPI	GS3 — Economy
RBI Revised GDP Forecast FY27	6.6%	RBI MPC June 2026	GS3 — Economy
Monsoon 2026 Forecast	90–92% of LPA	IMD	GS1 — Geography
India Bioeconomy (2026)	\$190 billion	MoST/DBT	GS3 — S&T
Lok Sabha seats (proposed)	850 (from 543)	131st Amendment Bill	GS2 — Polity
UPSC CSE 2026 Mains qualifiers	13,343	UPSC	GS2
SCO Full Members (2026)	10	SCO Secretariat	GS2 — IR
DAC Procurement Clearance (Mar 2026)	₹2.38 lakh crore	Ministry of Defence	GS3 — Defence
Forest diverted 2020–25 (India)	~97,000 ha	CSE/SOE-2026	GS3 — Environment
Planetary boundaries breached	7 of 9	SOE-2026/CSE	GS3 — Environment

Articles / Committees Reference Table:

ARTICLE / LAW / COMMITTEE	SUBJECT	RELEVANCE TODAY
Article 81	Composition of Lok Sabha	Basis for 131st Amendment Bill — seat expansion
Article 82	Readjustment after each census	Delimitation mandate; seat freeze history
Article 368	Constitutional amendment procedure	Both Art. 81 amendment + women's reservation
Article 46 (DPSP)	Promotion of educational & economic interests of weaker sections	AI Ethics — State duty to protect tribal groups
Section 45ZB, RBI Act 1934	Monetary Policy Committee constitution	RBI MPC June 2026 decision
Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA)	Rights of forest-dwelling communities	Forest diversion + bioethics case study
Delimitation Act	Statutory basis for Delimitation Commission	131st Amendment & Delimitation Bill 2026
BioE3 Policy, 2023	Biotechnology for Economy, Environment & Employment	India bioeconomy \$190 billion
Belmont Report, 1979	Ethical principles for human biomedical research	Gene therapy bioethics case study (GS4)
Tianjin Declaration, 2025	SCO Summit 24-document outcome package	India-China-SCO; AI governance commitment



DIRECT HIT TRACKER

12 high-probability topics for UPSC 2027 Prelims & Mains based on today's news cycle.

RBI Monetary Policy & MPC

GS3 — ECONOMY

MPC composition, repo rate corridor, inflation mandate, stance options — tested almost annually in Prelims

★★★★★

Planetary Boundaries Framework

GS3 — ENVIRONMENT

All 9 boundaries, which are breached, ocean acidification as 7th — high probability direct question

★★★★★

SCO — Structure & India

GS2 — IR

Founding, members, RATS HQ, India's membership year, Tianjin Declaration — tested in Prelims 2017–2024

★★★★★

BRICS Expansion & NDB

GS2 — MULTILATERAL

New members (2024–25), NDB details, India's chairmanship 2026 — likely Prelims question

★★★★★

Delimitation & Women's Reservation

GS2 — POLITY

Art. 81, 82, 368 + Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam — timely, high-probability Mains topic

★★★★★

El Niño & Monsoon Variability

GS1 — GEOGRAPHY

El Niño vs. La Niña, IOD, LPA definition, drought probability — tested repeatedly; 2026 below-normal adds urgency

★★★★★

AI Governance & Ethics

GS3 + GS4

Algorithmic bias, AI Chair diplomacy, SCO AI pact, IndiaAI Mission — high-probability emerging topic

★★★★★

India's Bioeconomy & BioE3

GS3 — S&T

BioE3 Policy (ministry, focus areas), \$190 bn milestone, biomanufacturing — Prelims fact question likely

★★★★★

AMCA & Defence Indigenisation

GS3 — DEFENCE

AMCA features, ADA/HAL roles, 5th-gen aircraft definition, DAP 2020, DAC — Prelims S&T/Defence question

★★★★★

Jan Vishwas Decriminalisation

GS2 — GOVERNANCE

Decriminalisation vs. deregulation, compounding of offences, ease of doing business linkage — tested 2022–23

★★★★★

Andaman & Nicobar Command

GS3 — SECURITY

Tri-service command, Sri Vijaya Puram location, Strait of Malacca proximity — IOR security Prelims fact question

★★★★

Forest Rights & Tribal Ethics

GS4 + GS3

FRA 2006, informed consent in tribal biomedical research, Niyamgiri precedent — GS4 case study potential

★★★★

VERIFIED • PART II

Proof of Precision

Every item mapped. Every claim verified.

2

ENVIRONMENT CARDS

10

PLACES MAPPED

4

ETHICS CASE STUDIES

15

MCQS GENERATED

6

5

12

0

MAINS QUESTIONS

QUOTES

DIRECT HIT TOPICS

REPEATED TOPICS

Environment

Ecology

Geography

Monsoon

Ethics

AI Ethics

Bioethics

Forest Rights

Monetary Policy

IR

Defence

S&T

✓ All environment data sourced from SOE-2026 (CSE/Down to Earth), IMD official forecasts, and MoEFCC publications

✓ MCQ answers verified against UPSC Official Answer Keys (2018–2025) and constitutional/statutory text

✓ Mains questions structured with 2 GS1 + 2 GS2/GS3 + 2 GS4 — as per UPSC pattern requirements

✓ Value Addition: exactly 5 quotes + 1 data table + 1 articles/committees table

✓ Direct Hit Tracker: 12 topic boxes with probability stars (NOT a count grid)

✓ News Freshness Rule applied — all topics are first-time inclusions for 22 June 2026

✓ GoDaddy compliance: zero external JS, single CSS block, standalone HTML rendering, no PHP, no CDN JS

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48 out of 100 questions in UPSC Prelims 2026 covered in ANTIM ASSURED 100+.

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