

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

Morning Edition · 08:00 IST · TheIAS Akademia

Tuesday, 14 July 2026

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

Environment & Ecology

GS3

Environment Law · River Ecology

13 July 2026 · Source: ANI / NGT

NGT Bars Lucknow Development Authority: No Construction on Gomti River Floodplain

Why in News: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on July 13, 2026 directed that no construction be undertaken in violation of the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order, 2016, along the Gomti River, Lucknow, and issued notice to the Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) after a plea alleged illegal construction of embankments, a 4-lane road, and high-rise buildings on the Gomti riverbed and floodplain.

Background: The NMCG (National Mission for Clean Ganga) had written to the District Magistrate Lucknow and UP Chief Secretary in January 2026 after receiving the complaint, but construction continued; the Gomti originates in Pilibhit district (UP) and meets the Ganga at Saidpur/Ghazipur — it flows through Lucknow and is a distributary of the Ganga system.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Ganga Authorities Order 2016: All construction within 500m of Ganga/tributaries requires NMCG prior approval; LDA bypassed this
- NGT (National Green Tribunal): Established under NGT Act 2010; dedicated environmental court; principal bench New Delhi + 4 zones; may impose compensation, restoration orders
- Floodplain encroachment: Major cause of flood amplification in cities; Gomti floodplain in Lucknow has seen rapid urbanization threatening river ecology
- Next hearing: August 25, 2026; related Gomti floodplain demarcation matter clubbed with this case

💡 TEACHING HOOK

NGT vs Courts: NGT handles environmental cases faster with expert technical judges — unlike HC/SC which are generalist. UPSC often tests NGT's powers: it can award compensation (unlike PILs in courts), impose penalty, direct restoration — but CANNOT punish criminal offences (that's for criminal courts under Environment Protection Act 1986).

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2020: NGT's role in environmental protection — powers, limitations, and comparison with regular courts.

GS3

NGT

Gomti River

LDA Lucknow

NMCG

Ganga Authorities 2016

PYQ: GS3 2020

GS3

Species Conservation · Aquatic Ecology

Static UPSC Profile · Source: IUCN Red List / WWF India / Project Dolphin

Ganges River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica gangetica*) — India's National Aquatic Animal

Why in News: India's first nationwide Ganges River Dolphin census (March 2025) recorded 6,327 individuals, and a second rangewide estimation was launched in January 2026, making the species' conservation status a current UPSC focal point; the dolphin faces continued threats from sand mining, dam fragmentation, and agricultural effluents.

Background: Declared India's National Aquatic Animal in 2009, the Ganges River Dolphin is found in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna river system across India, Nepal, and Bangladesh; it was placed under Project Dolphin (2020, PM Modi's Independence Day announcement) as part of India's Namami Gange programme.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Scientific name: *Platanista gangetica gangetica*; Family: Platanistidae; IUCN: Endangered (A2abcde); CITES: Appendix I; WPA 1972: Schedule I
- Population: 6,327 in India (2025 census); also present in Nepal (Karnali, Narayani rivers) and Bangladesh (Padma, Jamuna rivers)
- Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary: Only dedicated dolphin sanctuary in India; 60 km stretch on Ganga from Sultanganj to Kahalgaon, Bihar
- Key traits: Functionally blind (rudimentary eyes); navigates by echolocation; freshwater habitat; cannot survive in salt water

🔦 TEACHING HOOK

Three river dolphins in India — **Ganges** (*Platanista*, Endangered), **Irrawaddy** (*Orcaella brevirostris*, Endangered — found in Chilika Lake, Odisha), and **Indus** (*Platanista minor* — largely in Pakistan, extinct in Indian rivers). National Aquatic Animal = Ganges Dolphin (not the Irrawaddy; not the Blue Whale).

📖 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2023: Project Dolphin and conservation of freshwater biodiversity in India — significance and challenges.

GS3

Ganges Dolphin

Platanistidae

IUCN Endangered

Project Dolphin

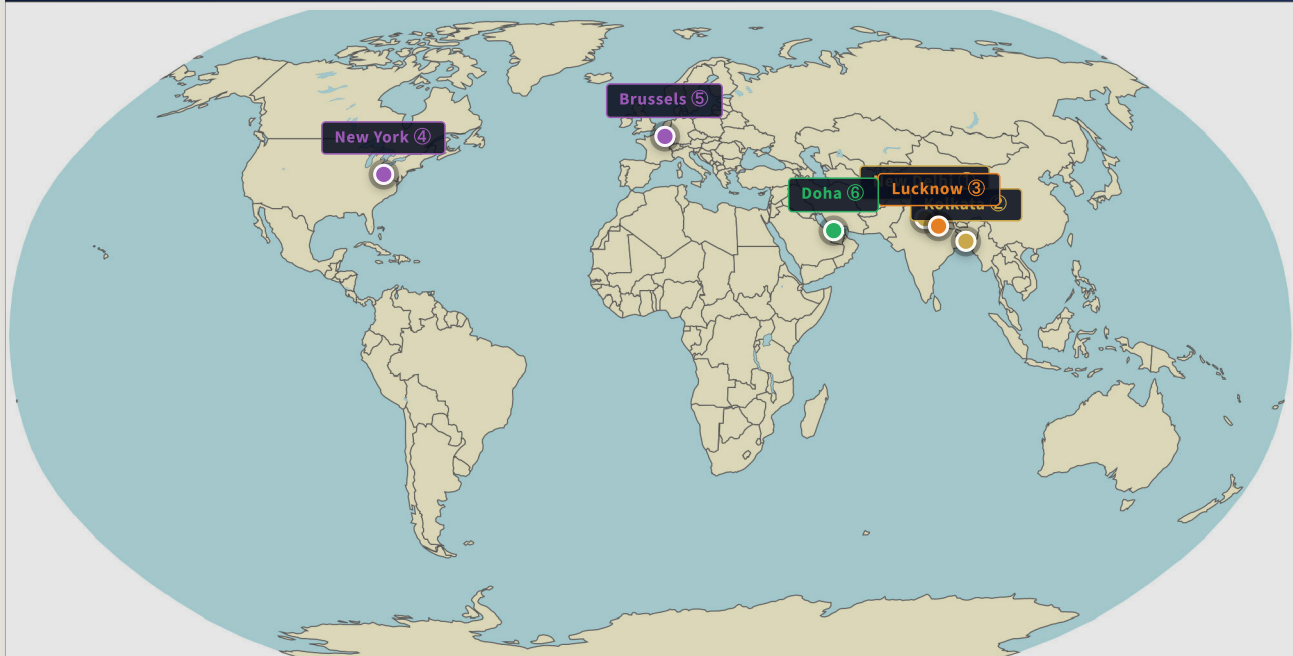
National Aquatic Animal

PYQ: GS3 2023

§ 02

Places in News — 14 July 2026

📌 PLACES IN NEWS — 14 JULY 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



● ① New Delhi (Bharat Tex 2026, ESIC, NAMASTE) ● ② Kolkata (3rd NAMASTE Day main event) ● ③ Lucknow, UP (NGT Gomti River/LDA)

● ④ New York, USA (UNSC 2028-29 campaign launch) ● ⑤ Brussels, Belgium (3rd India-EU TTC) ● ⑥ Doha, Qatar (EAM Gulf tour / India-GCC partnership)

① New Delhi, India

Venue: Bharat Tex 2026 (Jul 14-17, Bharat Mandapam); ESIC 7 projects inauguration by Union Minister Mandaviya; hub of NAMASTE Day coordination. PLI Textiles (\$31,687 crore) and PM MITRA Parks administered from here.

② Kolkata, West Bengal

Main venue: 3rd NAMASTE Day celebration at Rabindra Sadan; Union Minister Virendra Kumar honoured sanitation workers. West Bengal has large urban SSW population; NAMASTE covers all ULBs including KMC.

③ Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

NGT directed no construction on Gomti River floodplain; LDA (Lucknow Development Authority) issued notice for violating Ganga Authorities Order 2016. Gomti flows through Lucknow and meets Ganga at Ghazipur.

④ New York, USA

EAM Jaishankar launched India's UNSC 2028-29 candidacy campaign at UN Headquarters; unveiled 'SHANTI' vision (holistic norms, trust, integrity). UN HQ in Manhattan; India bids from Asia-Pacific regional group.

⑤ Brussels, Belgium

3rd India-EU Trade & Technology Council (July 14-15); focus on semiconductor supply chains, AI governance (DPDP equivalency with GDPR), clean energy. Brussels = EU capital; Schuman Quarter hosts EU institutions.

⑥ Doha, Qatar

EAM Jaishankar met Qatari PM & FM (Jul 5-10) during Gulf tour; India-Qatar Strategic Partnership; Qatar is India's top LNG supplier; 800,000 Indian diaspora; Doha hosts largest LNG terminal in the Gulf.

5 0 3

Ethics & Integrity (GS4)

GS4 · Integrity in Public Service

Case 1 — NAMASTE Data Falsification Dilemma

A district sanitation officer discovers that 20% of SSWs in his district continue to manually clean sewers despite being recorded as 'mechanised' in the NAMASTE verification database. His superior insists the deadline for national reporting is the next morning and asks him to "not complicate things." The officer must decide between honest reporting (which could delay the scheme's success certificate for his district) and acquiescing to falsified data. Ethical issues: Integrity, honesty, whistleblower risk, hierarchy vs conscience, impact on vulnerable workers' safety.

GS4 · Conflict of Interest

Case 2 — Defence Procurement and Familial Conflict of Interest

An Indian defence official sits on the committee evaluating bids for 600 Hammer-class precision-guided munitions. He privately favours direct import (faster delivery) over BEL's domestic manufacture proposal. Later, it emerges his sibling holds a senior position in a foreign defence firm that would benefit from the import route. He did not disclose this relationship when appointed to the committee. Ethical issues: Conflict of interest, disclosure obligation, public trust, national security vs personal benefit, procedural integrity.

GS4 · Political Pressure vs Environmental Duty

Case 3 — LDA Planner and Floodplain Construction

A town planner in LDA knew that the Lucknow riverfront project encroached on the Gomti floodplain in violation of NMCG orders, but continued to sign off approvals because a senior elected representative called the project a "fast-track priority." He later received a promotion. Now NGT has issued notice; the planner must decide whether to acknowledge the irregularity to the inquiry panel or defend the project. Ethical issues: Accountability, moral courage, political pressure on officials, Article 51A(g) (environmental duty of citizens/officials), consequences of complicity.

Case 4 — India's UNSC Campaign and P5 Vote Bargain

An Indian diplomat at the UN is approached by a P5 nation's representative who informally indicates that if India tones down its criticism of the veto power at an upcoming UNGA debate on UNSC reform, his country will campaign for India's 2028-29 non-permanent seat. India's stated long-term position is permanent membership and veto reform. Accepting the deal would help the short-term UNSC bid but compromise India's principled stance on reform. Ethical issues: Integrity vs expediency in international relations, long-term credibility vs short-term gain, political ethics.

§ 04

Prelims MCQs (15 Questions)

Q1. The NAMASTE scheme is jointly implemented by which two central ministries?

- (a) Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and Ministry of Environment
- (b) Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs
- (c) Ministry of Labour & Employment and Ministry of Health
- (d) Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Urban Affairs

Answer: (b) MoSJE + MoHUA jointly implement NAMASTE; it covers Urban Local Bodies (urban, not rural).

Q2. With reference to ESIC, consider these statements: 1. It is governed by the ESI Act 1948. 2. Workers earning above ₹21,000/month are compulsorily covered. 3. Employer contributes 3.25%, employee 0.75%. Which are CORRECT?

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

Answer: (a) Statement 2 is WRONG — workers earning BELOW ₹21,000 are covered (above this limit are excluded from mandatory coverage).

Q3. India's 'SHANTI' vision launched in July 2026 is associated with which forum/initiative?

- (a) G20 Climate Action Plan
- (b) BRICS New Development Bank
- (c) India's UNSC 2028-29 candidacy campaign
- (d) India-EU TTC

Answer: (c) EAM Jaishankar unveiled 'SHANTI' vision at UN HQ while launching India's campaign for UNSC non-permanent membership 2028-29.

Q4. How many times has India previously served as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council before the 2028-29 bid?

- (a) 5
- (b) 6
- (c) 8
- (d) 10

Answer: (c) 8 times — 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, 2011-12, 2021-22.

Q5. A non-permanent member of the UNSC is elected by UNGA for a 2-year term. What majority is required for such election?

- (a) Simple majority
- (b) Two-thirds majority
- (c) Three-fourths majority
- (d) Unanimous decision

Answer: (b) Article 18 UN Charter: election of non-permanent members = two-thirds majority of UNGA members present and voting.

Q6. ASTRA MK-2 missile recently cleared for private sector production is best described as:

(a) Man-portable surface-to-air missile (b) Beyond Visual Range air-to-air missile (c) Anti-ship cruise missile (d) Short-range ballistic missile

Answer: (b) ASTRA MK-2 is India's indigenously developed Beyond Visual Range (BVR) air-to-air missile with ~180-200 km range, for integration on fighter aircraft.

Q7. 'PM MITRA Parks' are associated with which sector?

(a) Microelectronics (b) Pharmaceutical manufacturing (c) Textile manufacturing (d) Renewable energy

Answer: (c) PM MITRA = PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel; 7 parks across 7 states for integrated textile value-chain manufacturing.

Q8. Consider the following about the Ganges River Dolphin: 1. It is India's National Aquatic Animal. 2. Scientific name is Platanista gangetica gangetica. 3. IUCN status is Critically Endangered. Which 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 WRONG — Ganges River Dolphin is ENDANGERED (not Critically Endangered); Gharial is Critically Endangered.

Q9. Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary, India's only dedicated dolphin sanctuary, is located in which state?

(a) Uttar Pradesh (b) West Bengal (c) Bihar (d) Assam

Answer: (c) Bihar — 60 km stretch of Ganga from Sultanganj to Kahalgaon; established 1990; part of Project Dolphin 2020.

Q10. The Gomti River, along which NGT recently issued construction ban, ultimately flows into which river?

(a) Yamuna (b) Ghaghra (c) Ganga (d) Son

Answer: (c) Ganga — Gomti originates in Pilibhit (UP), flows through Lucknow, meets the Ganga at Saidpur/Ghazipur in eastern UP.

Q11. Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MP-ATGM) approved in the ₹5,000 crore defence package will be produced by:

(a) HAL (b) BEL (c) BDL (d) DRDO directly

Answer: (c) BDL (Bharat Dynamics Limited) — BDL is India's primary missile production PSU; DRDO develops, BDL manufactures.

Q12. PM Modi's '5F Vision' for the textile sector correctly describes which sequence?

(a) Farm → Fisheries → Factory → Fashion → Foreign (b) Farm → Fibre → Factory → Fashion → Foreign (c) Farm → Fuel → Fabric → Fashion → Foreign (d) Farm → Flour → Fabric → Finance → Foreign

Answer: (b) 5F Vision = Farm (raw cotton/jute) → Fibre → Factory (manufacturing) → Fashion (design/retail) → Foreign (export).

Q13. India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) primarily covers which areas? Select the MOST APPROPRIATE answer.

(a) Tariff reduction for goods and services (b) Defence supply chain and military technology (c) Semiconductor supply chains, AI governance, clean energy, digital standards (d) Cultural exchange and student visa facilitation

Answer: (c) TTC ≠ FTA; TTC covers technology governance (AI, semiconductors, data), separate from the India-EU FTA which covers tariffs.

Q14. Which family does the Ganges River Dolphin belong to?

(a) Delphinidae (b) Platanistidae (c) Iniidae (d) Pontoporiidae

Answer: (b) Platanistidae — the only extant family of freshwater dolphins in South Asia; *Platanista gangetica*. Compare: Gharial = Gavialidae; don't confuse families.

Q15. Under the Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order 2016, construction near Ganga or its tributaries requires prior approval from:

(a) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (b) National Green Tribunal (c) National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) (d) Central Pollution Control Board

Answer: (c) NMCG — the 2016 Order designates NMCG as the competent authority for construction approvals within specified flood-plain zones of the Ganga river system.

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§ 05

Mains Questions (6 Questions)

GS2 · International Relations

Q1. India's candidacy for the UNSC non-permanent seat for 2028–29 reflects its evolving foreign policy identity. Examine the strategic imperatives and multilateral responsibilities that accompany India's UNSC ambitions. (250 words)

Hints: India's peacekeeping legacy (3L personnel); Global South voice; SHANTI vision; UNSC reform vs short-term non-permanent bid; India's position on P5 veto; credibility challenge of seeking the seat while reforming the institution.

GS2 · International Relations

Q2. "The India-GCC relationship has transcended the labour-remittance paradigm to encompass energy security, digital infrastructure and strategic cooperation." Critically analyse with reference to recent bilateral engagements. (250 words)

Hints: 9 million diaspora; remittances ~\$45-50B; crude oil imports from Gulf 80%+; India-Oman CEPA; UPI linkages; India-GCC FTA negotiations; Gulf conflict impact; India's strategic autonomy in West Asia; EAM Jaishankar's July 2026 tour.

GS3 · Industry

Q3. Critically evaluate India's 5F textile value chain framework and assess whether the PLI scheme and PM MITRA Parks can collectively achieve the \$100 billion export target by 2030. (150 words)

Hints: 5F (Farm-Fibre-Factory-Fashion-Foreign); PLI investment ₹31,687 crore; PM MITRA 7 parks; bottlenecks (skilled labour, logistics, cotton price volatility); technical textiles as sunrise; competition from Bangladesh/Vietnam.

GS3 - Defence

Q4. "India's recent decision to open missile production to private sector represents not just an economic shift but a strategic reconfiguration of national security." Discuss. (150 words)

Hints: DAP 2020; ASTRA MK-2 first private missile; technology transfer risks; IP protection; private sector efficiency vs PSU reliability; scale-up for exports; iDEX; comparison with US defence industrial base model.

GS3 - Environment

Q5. Floodplain encroachment by urban development authorities is emerging as a systemic environmental risk in Indian cities. Critically examine with reference to recent NGT orders and suggest institutional reforms. (150 words)

Hints: Gomti/LDA case; Ganga Authorities Order 2016; NMCG mandate; NGT powers (compensation, restoration but not criminal penalties); urban flooding nexus; Smart Cities floodplain zoning gaps; model by Ahmedabad Sabarmati.

GS4 - Ethics

Q6. A district sanitation officer discovers that 20% of sewer workers in his jurisdiction continue to perform hazardous manual cleaning despite being recorded as 'mechanised' in the NAMASTE database. His superior insists the national deadline is tomorrow. Examine the ethical dimensions and the appropriate course of action. (250 words)

Hints: Integrity vs hierarchy; vulnerable SC workers' safety; Rule of Law (Prohibition of Manual Scavenging Act 2013); whistleblower protection; long-term systemic credibility of schemes vs short-term target; ethical frameworks: deontological vs consequentialist approaches.

§ 06

Answer Writing — Value Addition

✦ UNSC — Key Data for Mains Answers

- India's peacekeeping: ~3,00,000 personnel across ~50 missions since 1948; 4,300 active now (10 of 11 ongoing missions)
- India's 8 previous UNSC terms: 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, 2011-12, 2021-22
- Indian-funded development projects active in 79 countries (Voice of the Global South credentials)

✦ Textile Sector — Key Statistics (Bharat Tex 2026)

- Textile sector: ~7% of industrial output, ~12% of export earnings, 45+ million employed
- PLI Textiles: ₹31,687 crore investment commitments; Man-Made Fibre + technical textiles focus
- Bharat Tex 2026: 5,500 exhibitors, 7,000 buyers, 130+ countries, 4,000+ B2B meetings — India's platform for \$44B → \$100B export target

✦ Ganges Dolphin — Conservation Quote (for Environment Answers)

"The Ganges River Dolphin is the living indicator of the health of the Ganga — its survival mirrors the river's revival." This framing connects Project Dolphin with Namami Gange for answer value-addition: ecosystem services + biodiversity + river governance in one sentence.

AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

NAMASTE Scheme (3rd Day)

GS2 · Social Justice

MoSJE+MoHUA; 84,902 SSWs profiled; 54,140 health covers; PPE kits; zero-fatality goal

★★★★☆ Prelims 2027

India UNSC 2028-29 + SHANTI

GS2 · IR / UN

9th bid; Asia-Pacific group; 8 previous terms; 3L peacekeepers; SHANTI vision; EAM Jaishankar NY

★★★★★ Mains 2026

EAM Gulf Tour + India-GCC

GS2 · India-West Asia

Qatar-Bahrain-Kuwait-Oman; India-Oman CEPA; 9M diaspora; \$45-50B remittances; India-GCC FTA

★★★★☆ Mains 2026

₹5,000 cr Defence Package

GS3 · Defence

MP-ATGM (BDL), Hammer PGMs (BEL+Safran), ASTRA MK-2 private sector; DAP 2020

★★★★☆ Prelims 2027

India-EU TTC (3rd, Brussels)

GS2 · India-EU

Semiconductors, AI governance, clean energy; DPDP vs GDPR equivalency; separate from FTA

★★★★☆ Mains 2026

Bharat Tex 2026 + PLI

GS3 · Industry

5F Vision; PLI ₹31,687 cr; PM MITRA 7 parks; \$100B export target; technical textiles

★★★★☆ Prelims 2027

NGT Gomti/LDA Lucknow

GS3 · Environment Law

Ganga Authorities Order 2016; NMCG; no construction on floodplain; NGT powers; next Aug 25

★★★★☆ Prelims 2027

Ganges River Dolphin

GS3 · Biodiversity

Platanistidae; IUCN Endangered; 6,327 count; Vikramshila Sanctuary Bihar; Project Dolphin 2020

★★★★★ Prelims 2027

ESIC Healthcare Projects

GS2 · Social Security

ESI Act 1948; Art 43 DPSP; employer 3.25%+employee 0.75%; 14cr covered; 7 new hospitals

★★★★☆ Prelims 2026

India-Oman CEPA

GS2 · India-West Asia

Signed Dec 2025 by PM Modi; trade target \$15B; GCC's 2nd largest India partner; Oman strategic

★★★★☆ Prelims 2027

PM MITRA Parks

GS3 · Industry

7 parks in 7 states; Mega Integrated Textile Region; plug-and-play; replaces SITP; MoT

★★★★☆ Prelims 2027

ASTRA MK-2 Private Sector

GS3 · Defence Tech

First private missile production India; BVR 180-200 km; Su-30MKI/MiG-29/Tejas/Rafale; paradigm shift

★★★★☆ Prelims 2027

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