

THE IAS AKADEMIA PRESENTS

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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR UPSC PRELIMS & MAINS

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

MONDAY, 16 JUNE 2026

Morning Edition · 8:00 AM IST

"From News to Questions, From Questions to Selection"

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PROOF OF PRECISION

State of India's Environment 2026 (SoE 2026) — CSE / Down to Earth

GS3 · Environment

WHY IN NEWS

The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and Down to Earth magazine released the State of India's Environment 2026 annual report. Key findings: 97,000 hectares of forest diverted for development; only 15% of India's population lives near functional air quality monitoring stations; 4 Indian cities (Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Delhi, Kolkata) among global top-50 for extreme heat risk.

BACKGROUND

SoE is an annual flagship report by CSE/DTE tracking India's environmental performance across forests, air, water, biodiversity, and climate. India has ratified the Paris Agreement (NDCs), CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) from the EU creates trade pressure. Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act 2023 changed afforestation rules. NCAP (National Clean Air Programme) targets 40% PM reduction by 2026.

PRELIMS FACTS

- 97,000 hectares forest diverted (SoE 2026)
- 15% population near functional air quality monitors (monitoring gap)
- 4 Indian cities in global heat-risk top-50 (Oxford University study, 2026)
- CSE: Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi
- NCAP: National Clean Air Programme — launched 2019; 40% PM reduction target
- Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act 2023: redefined "forest" — controversy

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Right to clean air: constitutional basis (Article 21 — Right to Life)
- Urban heat island effect: infrastructure planning failures
- Forest diversion vs. development: legislative framework gaps post-2023 amendment
- Environmental justice: unequal distribution of pollution burden (lower-income communities)
- Climate finance: India's NDCAP implementation gaps

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS3: Environment — air pollution, deforestation, climate change.
GS3: Conservation, biodiversity. GS2: Government policies — NCAP, Forest (Conservation) Act. GS4: Environmental ethics, intergenerational equity.

PYQ LINKAGE

Prelims 2023: Urban heat island question. Mains 2022 GS3: "Critically examine India's progress on forest conservation." NCAP and urban air quality have been tested in Prelims 2021, 2022. SoE data is a reliable source for Mains GS3 answer enrichment.

PROBABLE PRELIMS Q

Q: Which of the following are findings of the State of India's Environment 2026 report?

1. 97,000 hectares of forest were diverted for development purposes.
2. Only 15% of India's population lives near functional air quality monitors.
3. India met its NCAP PM reduction target of 40% ahead of schedule.

Answer: 1 and 2 only — NCAP target was not met by 2026.

PROBABLE MAINS Q

"The State of India's Environment 2026 report highlights structural failures in India's environmental governance. Critically examine the key concerns raised and suggest a comprehensive policy response." (GS3, 250 words)

GS3

PYQ 2022

SoE 2026

Forest Diversion

Urban Heat Island

NCAP

Air Quality

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

SoE report data is gold for Mains answers — UPSC markers reward "recent data" citations heavily. The 97,000 ha forest diversion figure paired with Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act 2023 controversy is a near-certain Mains GS3 combination for UPSC 2027. Urban heat + Right to Life (Article 21) is the GS2/GS4 angle. Always frame environmental governance answers using the equity + science + institutional failure triangle.



Please ensure **world_map.jpg** (or .png) exists in the **Maps/** folder alongside this HTML file.

- 1. Bratislava, Slovakia ● 2. Evian-les-Bains, France ● 3. Chandipur, Odisha ● 4. New Delhi ● 5. Bengaluru, Karnataka ● 6. Gaza / Middle East
● 7. Arctic Region ● 8. Mumbai Coast

Bratislava, Slovakia

WHY IN NEWS

PM Modi's first-ever visit; India-Slovakia Comprehensive Partnership announced.

LOCATION FACTS

Capital of Slovakia; situated on the Danube River; borders Austria and Hungary. NATO + EU member since 2004.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Know Slovakia's borders (Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine), currency (Euro), and NATO membership year (2004).

MAINS ANGLE

India's Central European strategy; tech diplomacy; defence manufacturing partnerships with NATO members.

PYQ TREND

European capitals and bilateral partnerships tested in Prelims as part of India's foreign policy questions. G7 outreach nations tested in Mains GS2.

Evian-les-Bains, France

WHY IN NEWS

Host of G7 Evian Summit 2026; India-France pledged \$32 billion bilateral trade; 'Bharat Innovates 2026' launched.

LOCATION FACTS

Resort town in south-eastern France, at the foot of the Alps on the southern shore of Lake Geneva (Lac Léman). Bordering Switzerland.

PRELIMS ANGLE

G7 host country 2026 = France. Lake Geneva is shared by France and Switzerland. Evian is famous as the namesake of the Evian mineral water brand.

MAINS ANGLE

India's multi-alignment: G7 outreach + BRICS Presidency simultaneously. India-France 'special partnership' since 1998.

PYQ TREND

G7/G20 host cities and summit themes have appeared in Prelims 2019, 2022, 2024.

Chandipur, Odisha

WHY IN NEWS

DRDO's Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur used for BMD system testing (PAD + AAD) and NASM-MR maiden flight.

LOCATION FACTS

Located on the coast of Odisha (Bay of Bengal, Balasore district). India's primary missile testing range since 1989.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Chandipur = DRDO's Integrated Test Range (ITR). Almost all Indian missile tests conducted here: Agni, Prithvi, BrahMos, NASM-MR.

MAINS ANGLE

Defence indigenisation milestones; DRDO's role in strategic autonomy; Odisha's defence infrastructure.

PYQ TREND

DRDO test ranges appear in Prelims as match-the-following: Chandipur (missile), Pokhran (nuclear), SHAR Sriharikota (ISRO).

Bengaluru, Karnataka

WHY IN NEWS

One of 4 Indian cities in global heat-risk top-50 (SoE 2026 / Oxford University study). DRDO-CAIR (PRAJNA developer) also located here.

LOCATION FACTS

Capital of Karnataka; situated on the Deccan Plateau at ~920 m altitude. India's IT capital. ISRO HQ, DRDO-CAIR, HAL, NAL are located here.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Bengaluru is headquarters of: ISRO, DRDO-CAIR, HAL, NAL. Urban heat island effect and heat stress are now explicitly tested in environment questions.

MAINS ANGLE

Urban heat islands, lake encroachment, urban planning failures, climate resilience in Indian cities.

PYQ TREND

Urban ecology and heat island questions Prelims 2023. ISRO HQ location in Prelims geography match-the-following.

Gaza / Eastern Mediterranean

WHY IN NEWS

India's stand on ceasefire, humanitarian aid, and the Two-State Solution was articulated at the G7 Evian Summit by PM Modi.

LOCATION FACTS

Gaza Strip: 365 sq km coastal enclave on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean; borders Israel (north, east) and Egypt (south). Administered by Hamas since 2007.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Gaza's borders, area, and geopolitical status. Israel-Palestine conflict timeline, Two-State Solution framework, UNRWA role.

MAINS ANGLE

India's traditional Two-State Solution position; balancing Israel-Palestine relationships; India at international forums on West Asia.

PYQ TREND

West Asia and India's foreign policy: Mains 2023 GS2. Israel-Palestine geography tested in Prelims 2019.

Arctic Region

WHY IN NEWS

SoE 2026 references accelerating Arctic ice melt contributing to rising sea levels affecting India's coastal zones (relevant to NCP-2025).

LOCATION FACTS

Arctic Ocean region north of 66.5°N (Arctic Circle). India has a research station — Himadri — at Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard (Norway).

PRELIMS ANGLE

India's Arctic station = Himadri at Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard. India's Arctic Policy 2022. Arctic Council members (8): USA, Canada, Russia, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland.

MAINS ANGLE

India's Arctic Policy 2022; climate change and sea-level rise; polar geopolitics and shipping routes (NSR).

PYQ TREND

Arctic / Himadri station appeared in Prelims 2020. Arctic Council membership tested in Prelims 2021.

Mumbai Coast, Maharashtra

WHY IN NEWS

NCP-2025 replaces CRZ framework; Mumbai's coastline (Mangroves, Dharavi, Bandra-Worli sea link corridor) directly affected by new coastal management regulations.

LOCATION FACTS

Mumbai is on a peninsula on the west coast (Konkan coast, Arabian Sea). India's financial capital. Host of Dharavi — one of Asia's largest informal settlements.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Mumbai coastline affected by CRZ/NCP-2025 regulations. Mangrove coverage in Mumbai under ecological protection. Flamingo habitat at Sewri important biodiversity angle.

MAINS ANGLE

Urban coastal development vs. ecological protection; informal settlements and coastal regulation; sea-level rise risk to Mumbai.

PYQ TREND

Mumbai's mangroves and CRZ questions Prelims 2014, 2017. Coastal regulation + urban ecology is recurring Prelims theme.

Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard (Norway)

WHY IN NEWS

India's Arctic research station Himadri located here. Referenced in context of Arctic ice melt data in SoE 2026 and India's Arctic Policy linkage.

LOCATION FACTS

Svalbard archipelago, Norway. Ny-Ålesund is the world's northernmost permanent research settlement (~78°N). International research hub with 11+ countries' stations.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Himadri = India's Arctic station at Ny-Ålesund. India's other polar stations: Maitri + Bharati (Antarctica). Svalbard is governed by Norway but open to research under Svalbard Treaty 1920.

MAINS ANGLE

India's polar research programme; India's Arctic Policy 2022; importance of polar science for climate data.

PYQ TREND

Himadri/Svalbard directly tested Prelims 2020. India's polar stations (Maitri, Bharati, Himadri) appear in Prelims match-the-following.

Case 1: AI Surveillance vs. Right to Privacy (PRAJNA and MHA)

NEWS EXAMPLE

DRDO hands PRAJNA AI surveillance system to MHA for internal security monitoring — tracking movements, identifying threats via satellite imagery and AI analysis.

ETHICAL ISSUE

Does the state's obligation to ensure security justify mass surveillance of citizens without their knowledge or individualised suspicion?

STAKEHOLDERS

Government / Security agencies / Citizens / Civil society / Judiciary / Media

VALUES AT STAKE

Right to Privacy (Article 21, K.S. Puttaswamy 2017) · Accountability · Transparency · Proportionality · Human Dignity · Rule of Law

GS4 MAPPING

Attitude and its influence on behaviour (government attitude to citizen monitoring) · Emotional intelligence (understanding citizens' vulnerability) · Accountability and ethical governance · Public service values · Moral dilemma (security vs. liberty)

HOW TO USE IN ANSWER WRITING

Apply the **Proportionality Principle**: security measures must be necessary, appropriate, and limited to what is needed. Suggest a **statutory oversight framework** — Parliamentary Standing Committee on PRAJNA use + independent Ombudsman + mandatory sunset clauses on surveillance data retention. Cite K.S. Puttaswamy and the European GDPR framework as comparative benchmarks. Conclude: technology in service of security must itself be governed by constitutional values, not just operational utility.

Case 2: Environmental Justice — Unequal Burden of Air Pollution (SoE 2026)

NEWS EXAMPLE

SoE 2026 reveals only 15% of India's population lives near functional air monitors — meaning 85% breathe unmonitored air. The poorest communities bear the greatest pollution burden with no data to support their claims.

ETHICAL ISSUE

Is it morally acceptable that environmental regulation protects the affluent (who live near monitors) while the poor suffer invisible harm? Is ignorance of harm ethically neutral?

STAKEHOLDERS

Urban poor / Marginalized communities / State governments / MoEFCC / Industries / Civil society (CSE, Greenpeace)

VALUES AT STAKE

Equity · Intergenerational Justice · Right to Life (Article 21) · Compassion · Accountability · Transparency · Distributive Justice

GS4 MAPPING

Public service values — serving marginalised communities equitably. Probity and accountability — government's duty to monitor harm it cannot see. Emotional intelligence — recognising invisible suffering. Attitude toward systemic inequality in environmental governance.

HOW TO USE IN ANSWER WRITING

Frame the dilemma as **environmental injustice**: those who contribute least to pollution (the poor) suffer most. Apply **Rawlsian Justice** — policy should favour the least advantaged. Propose: expansion of low-cost sensor networks in peri-urban and rural areas; community-level monitoring by trained volunteers; mandatory MoEFCC reporting on monitoring coverage equity. Conclude with intergenerational equity: the children of today's unmonitored zones inherit both the pollution and the data deficit.

Case 3: A Civil Servant's Dilemma — Coastal Land and Political Pressure

NEWS EXAMPLE

Following the NCP-2025 notification, a District Collector is pressured by a local MLA to approve a resort project on ecologically sensitive coastal land that would normally be restricted under the new policy.

ETHICAL ISSUE

Should the officer comply (to maintain political relationships and career stability), selectively apply the law, or uphold the regulation at personal professional risk?

STAKEHOLDERS

District Collector · MLA · Coastal communities (fisherfolk) · Mangrove ecosystems · Tourism investors · State government

VALUES AT STAKE

Integrity · Rule of Law · Probity in public life · Courage of conviction · Accountability · Impartiality

GS4 MAPPING

Integrity in public service — action consistent with stated values regardless of consequences. Moral courage — willingness to uphold law under pressure. Public service as a trust, not a privilege. Leadership and conflict of interest.

HOW TO USE IN ANSWER WRITING

Present the **five-step ethical framework**: (1) Identify the dilemma, (2) Map stakeholders, (3) Apply relevant rules/law, (4) Consider consequences, (5) Choose the value-consistent action. Here: NCP-2025 must be applied uniformly — the MLA's informal request has no legal standing. The officer should document the pressure, seek guidance from the State NCZMA, and deny the application with full written reasons. Mention AIS (All India Services) conduct rules, Article 311 protections. Courage of conviction quotation: M.K. Gandhi — "Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good."

Case 4: Defence Diplomacy Ethics — Arms Deals and Human Rights

NEWS EXAMPLE

India's comprehensive defence partnership with Slovakia (NATO member) and its growing arms export ambitions raise the question: should India export weapons to nations involved in active conflicts?

ETHICAL ISSUE

When a nation with a stated policy of strategic autonomy and peaceful coexistence supplies weapons to conflict zones (even indirectly through alliance chains), does it bear moral responsibility for the outcomes?

STAKEHOLDERS

Indian government · Defence exporters · Recipient nations · Civilian populations in conflict zones · UN · Civil society

VALUES AT STAKE

Moral responsibility · Non-interference · Humanitarian values · Strategic autonomy · Accountability · International law

GS4 MAPPING

Ethical issues in international relations. India's foundational values — Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (world as one family). Tension between national interest (export revenues, geopolitical influence) and moral duty (humanitarian responsibility). Leadership in international institutions.

HOW TO USE IN ANSWER WRITING

Apply the **consequentialist vs. deontological debate**: a consequentialist would approve arms deals if they ultimately deter larger wars; a deontologist would argue moral duty requires ensuring weapons do not directly harm civilians. India's position: the **Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) 2014** framework (India is a signatory) requires consideration of humanitarian impact before arms transfers. Suggest: India adopt a transparent Arms Export Review Committee with human rights impact assessment as a mandatory pre-approval step.

4

Prelims MCQs

15 QUESTIONS · TODAY'S CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Q.01

HARD

With reference to India's Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) programme, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The Prithvi Air Defence (PAD) missile is designed for exo-atmospheric intercepts at altitudes of 80–120 km.
2. The Advanced Air Defence (AAD) missile operates in the endo-atmospheric layer at 15–40 km altitude.
3. India became the 4th country globally to develop a multi-layer BMD capability after the USA, Russia, and Israel.

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only

✓ (c) 1 and 2 only [Statements 1 and 2 correct; India is the 5th nation — China precedes India]

- (d) 1, 2, and 3

Explanation: PAD (exo-atmospheric, 80–120 km) and AAD (endo-atmospheric, 15–40 km) are both correct. However, Statement 3 is wrong — India is the 5th nation (USA, Russia, Israel, China, India), not the 4th.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2021 — Prithvi missile family characteristics

Source: [DRDO.gov.in](https://drdo.gov.in) / PIB

Q.02

MODERATE

Consider the following statements regarding the RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):

1. The MPC was constituted under Section 45ZB of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
2. The MPC has 6 members — 3 from RBI and 3 external members appointed by the Central Government.
3. In case of a tie, the RBI Deputy Governor (in-charge of monetary policy) has the casting vote.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only

✓ (b) 1 and 2 only

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

Explanation: Statements 1 and 2 are correct. Statement 3 is wrong — the *RBI Governor* (not the Deputy Governor) has the casting vote in case of a tie. A classic UPSC trap.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2023 — Section 45ZB; UPSC 2021 — MPC composition

Source: [RBI Act 1934 \(amended 2016\)](https://rbi.org.in)

Q.03

EASY

PRAJNA, recently handed over by DRDO to the Ministry of Home Affairs, is best described as:

(a) A quantum communication satellite jointly developed by ISRO and DRDO

✓ (b) An AI-powered satellite surveillance and predictive intelligence system developed by DRDO-CAIR

(c) A predictive analytics system for economic risk assessment under NITI Aayog

(d) An AI-enabled drone swarm system for counter-terrorism operations

Explanation: PRAJNA = Predictive Real-time AI for Joint National Assessment. Developed by DRDO's Centre for AI and Robotics (CAIR), Bengaluru. Handed to MHA for internal security applications.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2023 — AI systems in Indian governance

Source: PIB / DRDO

Q.04

MODERATE

With reference to Slovakia, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Slovakia shares a border with Ukraine.

2. Slovakia uses the Euro as its official currency.

3. Slovakia is a member of both NATO and the European Union, having joined both in 2004.

Select the correct answer:

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

✓ (c) 1, 2, and 3 all correct

(d) 3 only

Explanation: All three statements are correct. Slovakia shares borders with Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Ukraine. It adopted the Euro in 2009 (joined EU in 2004). Both NATO and EU membership are from 2004.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2022 — NATO membership; India foreign policy bilateral visits

Source: MEA / ANI

Q.05

HARD

Consider the following about the G7:

1. India is a permanent member of the G7 since 2023.

2. The European Union participates in the G7 summits but does not hold the rotating Presidency.

3. Russia was suspended from the then G8 format following its annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Which statements are correct?

(a) 1 and 3 only

✓ (b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1, 2, and 3

(d) 3 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is WRONG — India is NOT a permanent G7 member; it participates as an outreach partner. Statements 2 and 3 are correct. The EU participates without holding the Presidency rotation; Russia was suspended in 2014 after annexing Crimea.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2024 — G20 and multilateral forums; UPSC 2022 — NATO/Russia question

Source: MEA / Outlook India

Q.06

MODERATE

The National Coastal Policy 2025 (NCP-2025), which replaced the CRZ Notification 1991, introduces which of the following new concepts?

1. Coastal Economic Zones (CEZ)
2. Statutory National Coastal Zone Management Authority (NCZMA)
3. Coastal Biodiversity Heritage Sites (CBHS)

✓ (a) 1 and 2 only

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

Explanation: NCP-2025 introduces CEZ (Coastal Economic Zones) and a statutory NCZMA. CBHS (Coastal Biodiversity Heritage Sites) is not a provision of NCP-2025 — it's a distractor.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2019 — CRZ Notification; UPSC 2014 — Coastal regulation zones

Source: PIB / MoEFCC

Q.07

EASY

India's Arctic research station 'Himadri' is located at:

- (a) Longyearbyen, Norway

✓ (b) Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard, Norway

- (c) Barrow, Alaska, USA
- (d) Tromsø, Norway

Explanation: India's Himadri station is at Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard (an archipelago of Norway). It is the world's northernmost permanent international research settlement (~78°N). India's other polar stations: Maitri and Bharati in Antarctica.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2020 — Polar stations; UPSC 2021 — Arctic Council

Source: Ministry of Earth Sciences

Q.08

HARD

Consider the following statements about the 73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992):

1. It added Part IX to the Constitution of India, covering Articles 243 to 243-O.
2. Article 243-I mandates the constitution of a State Finance Commission every five years.
3. The 11th Schedule to the Constitution was added by the 73rd Amendment and contains 29 subjects.
4. Article 243-ZE provides for the constitution of Metropolitan Planning Committees in cities with over 10 lakh population.

- (a) 1, 2, and 3 only
- (b) 2, 3, and 4 only

✓ (c) 1, 2, and 3 only [Statement 4 is about 74th Amendment / urban bodies]

- (d) All four correct

Explanation: Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct for the 73rd Amendment. Statement 4 is WRONG — Article 243-ZE (Metropolitan Planning Committee) was added by the 74th Constitutional Amendment (for municipalities), not the 73rd (Panchayati Raj).

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2021 — 11th Schedule subjects; UPSC 2019 — Article 243-ZD

Source: Constitutional provisions

Q.09

MODERATE

Which of the following correctly pairs the DRDO test range / facility with its location?

1. Integrated Test Range (ITR) — Chandipur, Odisha
2. Proof and Experimental Establishment (PXE) — Balasore, Odisha
3. Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL) — Chandigarh, Punjab
4. National Institute of Oceanography — Goa

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1, 2, and 4 only

✓ (c) 1, 2, 3, and 4 — all correctly matched

- (d) 2 and 4 only

Explanation: All four are correctly matched. ITR Chandipur and PXE Balasore are both in Odisha's missile testing corridor. TBRL is in Chandigarh. NIO (under CSIR) is in Goa — a standard match-the-following staple.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2022 — match DRDO establishments; UPSC 2020 — research institutions

Source: [DRDO.gov.in](https://drdo.gov.in)

Q.10

MODERATE

With reference to the State of India's Environment (SoE) 2026 report, consider the statements:

1. The report is published annually by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and Down to Earth magazine.
2. SoE 2026 found that 4 Indian cities featured in a global top-50 list for extreme urban heat risk.
3. According to SoE 2026, India has achieved a 40% reduction in PM_{2.5} levels under the NCAP programme.

- (a) 1 only

✓ (b) 1 and 2 only

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

Explanation: Statements 1 and 2 are correct. Statement 3 is FALSE — India has NOT achieved the NCAP 40% PM reduction target; this is one of the key failures highlighted in the SoE 2026 report.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2023 — urban heat island; UPSC 2022 — NCAP

Source: [CSE / Down to Earth SoE 2026](#)

Q.11

HARD

K.S. Puttaswamy judgment (2017) by the Supreme Court of India is significant for which of the following reasons?

1. It declared the Right to Privacy as a fundamental right under the Constitution of India.
2. It held that privacy is protected under Part III of the Constitution, particularly Articles 14, 19, and 21.
3. It overruled the earlier judgments in M.P. Sharma (1954) and Kharak Singh (1962) which had denied constitutional protection to privacy.

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 2 only

✓ (c) 1, 2, and 3 — all correct

(d) 2 and 3 only

Explanation: All three statements accurately describe the K.S. Puttaswamy 9-judge constitutional bench judgment (2017). It unanimously held privacy as a fundamental right under Articles 14, 19, and 21, explicitly overruling M.P. Sharma (1954) and Kharak Singh (1962).

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2018 — Fundamental Rights and privacy; UPSC 2021 — landmark SC judgments

Source: K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)

Q.12

EASY

The inflation targeting framework in India, with a target of 4% CPI inflation ($\pm 2\%$ band), was adopted under which act/mechanism?

(a) RBI Act 1934, Section 45-ZA, through FRBM framework 2003

✓ (b) RBI Act 1934 (amended 2016), under the Flexible Inflation Targeting framework agreed between GoI and RBI

(c) The Banking Regulation Act 1949

(d) The Finance Act 2014, as part of Raghuram Rajan's recommendations

Explanation: Flexible Inflation Targeting (FIT) was formally adopted via amendments to the RBI Act 1934 in 2016. The target ($4\% \pm 2\%$) was agreed between the Government of India and the RBI through a Monetary Policy Framework Agreement.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2023 — Inflation targeting in India; monetary policy framework

Source: RBI Act 1934 (2016 amendment)

Q.13

MODERATE

Consider the following statements about BrahMos missile system:

1. BrahMos is a joint venture between DRDO and NPO Mashinostroyeniya of Russia.
2. BrahMos is the world's fastest operational supersonic cruise missile with a speed of approximately Mach 2.8–3.0.
3. BrahMos can be launched from land, sea, sub-sea, and air platforms.
4. The NASM-MR missile recently tested by DRDO is part of the BrahMos family.

(a) 1, 2, and 3 only

✓ (b) 1, 2, and 3 only [Statement 4 is false — NASM-MR is a separate indigenous programme]

(c) 2 and 4 only

(d) All four

Explanation: BrahMos (1, 2, 3) are all correct. Statement 4 is false — NASM-MR is a completely separate, purely indigenous anti-ship missile programme by DRDO; it is NOT part of the BrahMos family.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2022 — BrahMos characteristics; UPSC 2020 — India-Russia defence cooperation

Source: DRDO / PIB

Q.14

HARD

The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), launched in 2019, targets which of the following?

1. A 40% reduction in PM2.5 and PM10 concentrations by 2026 (base year: 2017) in non-attainment cities.
2. It covers 132 non-attainment cities identified by CPCB based on ambient air quality data.
3. NCAP is a legally binding programme under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

✓ (a) 1 and 2 only [NCAP is not legally binding; it is a national action plan/programme]

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

Explanation: Statements 1 and 2 are correct. Statement 3 is WRONG — NCAP is a *national programme* (policy framework), not a legally binding statute. The Air Act 1981 exists separately; NCAP has no penal provisions for non-compliance, which is one of its weaknesses highlighted by SoE 2026.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2022 — NCAP; UPSC 2021 — Air pollution legislation

Source: MoEFCC / CPCB

Q.15

MODERATE

Consider the following about India's BRICS Presidency 2026:

1. India holds the BRICS Presidency for the calendar year 2026.
2. BRICS expanded to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and UAE in 2024.
3. India previously held the BRICS Presidency in 2021.
4. The BRICS Presidency theme for India 2026 is "BRICS for a Just World and Better Tomorrow."

- (a) 1 and 3 only

✓ (b) 1, 2, and 3 only

- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

Explanation: Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct. Statement 4's specific theme cannot be verified with certainty and is a likely distractor — be cautious with specific theme/slogan questions unless confirmed from official sources.

PYQ Resemblance: UPSC 2024 — BRICS expansion; UPSC 2022 — India's multilateral presidencies

Source: MEA / BRICS 2026 India

5

Mains Questions

6 QUESTIONS · GS1-GS4

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"India's engagement with Central European nations like Slovakia represents a strategic recalibration of its Act West policy. Critically examine with reference to the India–Slovakia Comprehensive Partnership 2026."

SYLLABUS TOPIC

India's bilateral relations; India's foreign policy — multi-alignment, technology diplomacy, defence partnerships.

MODEL INTRODUCTION

India's foreign policy, historically focused on immediate neighbours and major powers, is undergoing a strategic expansion. The 2026 India–Slovakia Comprehensive Partnership marks a significant step in India's engagement with Central Europe — a region at the intersection of NATO's eastern flank, EU's internal market, and the Ukraine conflict zone.

BODY POINTS (FRAMEWORK)

- What is 'Act West'? Extension of Act East — deepening ties with Europe beyond traditional partners (UK, France, Germany)
- Slovakia as a strategic entry point: Danube corridor, NATO-EU access, shared history of industrial collaboration
- 14 outcome documents: diversity of partnership — from quantum communication to counter-terrorism JWG signals comprehensive depth, not just ceremonial ties
- ICCR AI Chair at Bratislava: soft power + tech diplomacy — unique approach using cultural institutions for science collaboration
- Limitations: bilateral trade at \$1.2 billion — low relative to potential; India's Slovakia engagement lacks institutionalisation compared to India-Germany or India-France
- Broader context: India leveraging Central European nations' desire to diversify away from US/traditional NATO dependence on defence supply chains

CONCLUSION

India's Act West policy is evolving from transactional partnerships to comprehensive strategic engagements. Slovakia signals that India is now mapping Central Europe as a zone of strategic interest — not just economic opportunity. The quantum-defence-culture trinity of the 2026 partnership represents India's most sophisticated Central European diplomatic offering to date.

Act West

Strategic Autonomy

Tech Diplomacy

Multi-alignment

ICCR Soft Power

NATO Engagement

"India's achievement of a multi-layer Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) capability represents a strategic inflection point. Examine its implications for India's nuclear deterrence doctrine and regional security architecture."

SYLLABUS TOPIC

Defence indigenisation; nuclear deterrence; India's strategic posture; DRDO and technology self-reliance.

MODEL INTRODUCTION

When India became the 5th nation to demonstrate multi-layer BMD capability in 2026, it did not merely add a weapon to its arsenal — it reshaped the mathematics of deterrence. PAD's exo-atmospheric intercept combined with AAD's endo-atmospheric response creates a layered shield that fundamentally alters India's defensive posture.

BODY POINTS (FRAMEWORK)

- Technical significance: PAD (80–120 km) + AAD (15–40 km) = comprehensive intercept coverage for ballistic missiles approaching from any trajectory
- Deterrence implications: BMD complicates adversary first-strike calculations — increases confidence in India's No-First-Use (NFU) doctrine by strengthening second-strike survivability
- Does BMD destabilise? Debate: China/Pakistan may feel compelled to expand missile arsenals to overwhelm India's shield — arms race concern
- Indigenisation achievement: DRDO-led BMD programme reduces dependence on S-400 (imported) for ballistic defence; strategic autonomy enhanced
- Regional architecture: Pakistan's Ghaznavi/Shahen series and China's DF-21D — India now has credible intercept capability against both
- Implications for arms control: India not party to New START; BMD may complicate future non-proliferation negotiations

CONCLUSION

BMD is not a silver bullet but a strategic multiplier. India's layered BMD capability strengthens deterrence stability by making India's second-strike credibility less vulnerable — but it must be paired with diplomatic engagement to prevent the regional arms spiral that defensive systems historically trigger.

BMD

No First Use

Deterrence Stability

DRDO Indigenisation

PAD/AAD

Arms Race

"The State of India's Environment 2026 report exposes structural failures in India's environmental governance. Critically examine the key concerns and suggest a comprehensive policy response."

SYLLABUS TOPIC

Environment and ecology — forests, air pollution, climate change. Conservation. Government policies — NCAP, Forest (Conservation) Act.

MODEL INTRODUCTION

India's environmental governance faces a credibility gap: ambitious policy frameworks (NCAP, Forest Conservation Act) coexist with alarming ground realities — 97,000 hectares of forest diverted, 85% of population breathing unmonitored air, and 4 cities in the global heat-risk danger zone. The SoE 2026 report is not just data — it is an indictment of governance priorities.

BODY POINTS (FRAMEWORK)

- Forest governance failure: 97,000 ha diverted despite Forest (Conservation) Act 1980; 2023 amendment weakened protection by redefining "forest" — compliance vs. intent gap
- Air quality monitoring gap: 15% coverage = environmental injustice — the poor disproportionately bear invisible harm (Environmental Justice framework)
- Urban heat risk: Bengaluru, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Kolkata — urban planning failures, loss of green cover, heat island intensification
- NCAP underperformance: 40% PM reduction target unmet — absence of legal enforceability is a critical design flaw
- Policy response needed: Make NCAP legally binding; expand low-cost sensor networks; reform Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act 2023; create urban heat resilience index; mandatory Green Cover Ratio for all cities

CONCLUSION

Environmental governance must move from compliance-on-paper to outcomes-on-ground. The right to breathe clean air is a dimension of the right to life (Article 21); India's governance architecture must reflect this constitutional obligation through enforceable standards, equitable monitoring, and accountability mechanisms that have real consequences for failure.

SoE 2026

NCAP

Forest Diversion

Environmental Justice

Article 21

Urban Heat Island

"AI-powered surveillance systems like PRAJNA enhance India's internal security capability but raise fundamental questions about civil liberties and constitutional rights. Critically examine the ethical and governance dimensions."

SYLLABUS TOPIC

S&T — AI in governance and security. Internal security — technology. GS4 — ethics of surveillance, Right to Privacy, proportionality.

MODEL INTRODUCTION

When DRDO handed PRAJNA to the Ministry of Home Affairs, India crossed a threshold: AI-integrated satellite surveillance for internal security management is no longer aspirational — it is operational. This raises the fundamental question that Justice D.Y. Chandrachud articulated in K.S. Puttaswamy (2017): can the state's security obligations justify surveillance of citizens without individualised suspicion?

BODY POINTS (FRAMEWORK)

- Security benefits: LWE monitoring, border management, disaster response — legitimate and compelling state interests
- Constitutional tension: Right to Privacy (Article 21, K.S. Puttaswamy) — privacy is fundamental; surveillance must satisfy necessity and proportionality
- Ethical concerns: mass surveillance without consent; algorithmic bias in threat identification (misidentifying communities); no audit trail accountability
- Governance gap: India's Personal Data Protection Act 2023 has exemptions for "national security" — these exemptions need judicial scrutiny
- Comparative frameworks: GDPR (EU) — strict purpose limitation; UK Investigatory Powers Act — judicial authorisation required
- Suggested governance safeguards: Parliamentary oversight committee; independent PRAJNA use Ombudsman; sunset clauses on data retention; mandatory annual transparency report

CONCLUSION

PRAJNA is neither a solution nor a threat in itself — it is a capability whose ethical value is entirely dependent on the governance framework that oversees it. India must build that framework before PRAJNA's reach expands, not after a misuse incident forces a reactive response.

PRAJNA

K.S. Puttaswamy

Right to Privacy

Proportionality

AI Governance

PDPA 2023

"With crude oil prices at \$110/barrel, India's Flexible Inflation Targeting framework faces a fundamental stress test. Critically examine the RBI's policy options and their trade-offs in this context."

SYLLABUS TOPIC

Monetary policy — RBI, MPC, inflation targeting. Energy security. Macro-economic management.

MODEL INTRODUCTION

India's Flexible Inflation Targeting framework, adopted in 2016, rests on one foundational assumption: the primary driver of inflation is demand-side, which monetary policy can address. When crude oil at \$110/barrel becomes the dominant inflationary force, this assumption breaks down — and the MPC faces a trilemma for which no interest rate decision is a clean solution.

BODY POINTS (FRAMEWORK)

- The MPC trilemma: price stability (hold/hike rates) vs. growth support (cut rates) vs. external balance (current account implications of crude)
- Imported inflation dynamics: \$110/barrel crude → higher petrol/diesel → higher transport costs → CPI pressure (fuel has ~8% weight in India's CPI basket)
- MPC's current position (Jun 2026): held repo at 5.25% — signalling priority on inflation control even at cost of GDP (6.6% vs. 7.2% forecast)
- Policy options and trade-offs: Option A: rate cut (supports growth, risks inflation spiral); Option B: hold (current — balanced but stagnant); Option C: fiscal-monetary coordination (GoI reduces fuel taxes to absorb crude shock — outside RBI's remit but optimal solution)
- Structural limitation: FIT framework cannot address supply-side inflation; recommends fiscal policy reform

CONCLUSION

The June 2026 MPC decision reflects the limits of monetary policy in an energy-import dependent economy. The optimal solution requires fiscal-monetary coordination — GoI absorbing crude price shock through excise duty modulation while RBI maintains credibility by holding the line on its inflation target. Monetary policy cannot solve a supply-side problem alone.

RBI MPC

Flexible Inflation Targeting

Section 452B

Crude Oil

Fiscal-Monetary Coordination

Trilemma

"Despite three decades of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, Panchayati Raj institutions in India remain functionally weak due to inadequate devolution of the 3Fs. Critically examine with reference to recent data and digital governance initiatives."

SYLLABUS TOPIC

Panchayati Raj — 73rd Amendment, devolution, democratic decentralisation. e-Gram Swaraj, SVAMITVA.

MODEL INTRODUCTION

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992) was a democratic revolution on paper — creating 2.5 lakh gram panchayats as the 3rd tier of government. Yet 33 years later, PRIs remain, in the words of the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission, "elected but disempowered." The 3Fs gap — Functions, Functionaries, Finances — persists despite constitutional intent.

BODY POINTS (FRAMEWORK)

- Functions gap: 29 subjects in 11th Schedule remain largely un-devolved; states retain most governance functions; PRIs act as implementation agencies, not autonomous local governments
- Functionaries gap: dedicated PRI cadre absent in most states; GPs dependent on state-deployed staff who report to state government, not GP
- Finances gap: State Finance Commissions (Article 243-I) often not constituted on time; grants-in-aid skewed toward tied (purpose-specific) grants rather than untied; own-revenue mobilisation by GPs minimal
- Digital governance silver lining: e-Gram Swaraj — unified planning and accounting; SVAMITVA (drone mapping of property rights) — economic empowerment, collateral creation
- Women's leadership: 50%+ reservation in GPs in several states — positive outcome but proxy candidacy (Sarpanch Pati phenomenon) persists

CONCLUSION

Digital initiatives like e-Gram Swaraj and SVAMITVA are building the infrastructure for genuine local democracy — but structural devolution requires political will at the state level that technology alone cannot generate. India must complete the 3Fs devolution to make the constitutional promise of self-governance real.

73rd Amendment

3Fs Devolution

11th Schedule

e-Gram Swaraj

SVAMITVA

State Finance Commission

6

Answer Writing Value Addition

QUOTES · DATA · ARTICLES

Quote Bank

"The earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth."

— Chief Seattle (attributed)

Use for: GS3 Environment answers, intergenerational equity arguments, forest diversion discussions

"Privacy is not something that I'm merely entitled to, it's an absolute prerequisite."

— Marlon Brando

Use for: GS4 Ethics / PRAJNA surveillance question; Right to Privacy as a fundamental right

"Ahimsa is not the goal. Truth is the goal. Ahimsa is the path."

— M.K. Gandhi

Use for: GS4 Ethics answers involving moral dilemma — specifically arms export, AI surveillance ethics

"In a democracy, the opposition is not our enemy but our critic."

— Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

"Inflation is always and everywhere a monetary phenomenon."

— Milton Friedman

Use for: GS3 Economy — inflation targeting. Caveat: Friedman's view is demand-side; today's crude-driven inflation is supply-side — use to set up the *counter-argument* that monetary policy has limits.

Key Data Points

TOPIC	DATA POINT	SOURCE
Forest Diversion	97,000 hectares diverted in recent years	SoE 2026 / CSE
Air Quality Monitoring Gap	Only 15% of India's population near functional air monitors	SoE 2026
Urban Heat Risk	4 Indian cities (Bengaluru, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Kolkata) in global heat-risk top-50	Oxford University / SoE 2026
India's Coastline	7,516 km (mainland) + 1,382 km (island territories)	MoEFCC / NCP-2025
RBI Repo Rate (Jun 2026)	5.25% (unchanged)	RBI MPC Jun 2026
FY27 GDP Forecast	6.6% (revised down from 7.2%)	RBI MPC Jun 2026
India–France Trade Target	\$32 billion (doubled from ~\$16 bn)	G7 Evian Summit 2026
BMD Milestone	India is the 5th nation with multi-layer BMD (USA, Russia, Israel, China, India)	DRDO / PIB
Slovakia–EU/NATO	Member of both NATO and EU since 2004	MEA / ANI
Inflation Target Band	4% ±2% (2%–6%) under RBI's FIT framework	RBI Act 1934 (2016 amendment)

Articles, Committees & Reports

REFERENCE	RELEVANCE	KEY POINT
Article 21, Constitution	Right to Life — applies to air quality, privacy, coastal livelihoods	Expanded interpretation by SC to include right to clean environment
K.S. Puttaswamy (2017)	Right to Privacy as fundamental right	9-judge bench; overruled M.P. Sharma (1954) and Kharak Singh (1962)
Section 45ZB, RBI Act 1934	Constitution of MPC	6 members; Governor has casting vote; FIT framework
73rd Constitutional Amendment	Panchayati Raj institutions	Part IX, Articles 243–243-O, 11th Schedule (29 subjects)
Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act 2023	Environmental governance	Redefined "forest" — controversy over weakening protection
Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) 2014	Defence export ethics	India signatory; requires humanitarian impact assessment before arms transfer
2nd Administrative Reforms Commission	PRI reforms	Recommended meaningful devolution of 3Fs to PRIs
NCAP (National Clean Air Programme) 2019	Air quality governance	40% PM reduction target by 2026 — unmet; non-binding limitation

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BRAND INTEGRATIONS

PROOF OF PRECISION

"From Daily News to Direct UPSC Questions — Every Time."

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ECONOMY

Prelims 2026 Evidence: From one document of government schemes under 50 pages — 7 questions came directly. From one class of Vikash Sir — 6 questions came directly. Total 48 questions from classroom teaching in what was called an "impossible" Prelims paper.

Today's Ethics Case 2 (Environmental Justice + Rawlsian framework) directly mirrors UPSC GS4 2021 Case Study format. The Proportionality Principle applied to PRAJNA (Ethics Case 1) is the precise analytical framework UPSC rewards in surveillance-related case studies — used in 3 previous UPSC Mains answers that scored 14+/20.

Q.11 (K.S. Puttaswamy — all three statements correct) and Q.08 (73rd vs. 74th Amendment distinction) are the type of "all-correct trap" questions UPSC uses to separate aspirants who have truly mastered the topic from those relying on guesswork. Both have direct PYQ ancestors from UPSC 2017–2023.

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