

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

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The Topper's Last Read. Every Morning.

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§1 Environment

GS3

Biodiversity Governance

06–07 Sept 2026 · Source: PIB / Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change

NBA's 16th National Meet of State Biodiversity Boards Concludes in Chandigarh

Why in News: The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) convened the 16th National Meet of State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) and Union Territory Biodiversity Councils (UTBCs) at Chandigarh on 6–7 September 2026, inaugurated by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav. The meet focused on local-level biodiversity planning, strengthening Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS), and capacity building for grassroots institutions. Yadav stressed that documenting local biodiversity and traditional knowledge is essential to India's conservation journey and Mission LiFE.

Background: The Biological Diversity Act, 2002 (India's response to its CBD obligations) created a three-tier biodiversity-governance structure: the NBA at the national level, SBBs/UTBCs at the state/UT level, and Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) at the local-body level, which maintain People's Biodiversity Registers documenting local bio-resources and traditional knowledge. ABS mechanisms, rooted in the Nagoya Protocol, ensure that communities and India share fairly in the commercial benefits arising from the use of their biological resources.

KEY FACTS

- 16th National Meet of SBBs/UTBCs held 6–7 September 2026, Chandigarh
- Inaugurated by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav
- NBA has shared over ₹200 crore in ABS funds with farmers, BMCs, SBBs/UTBCs and research institutions to date
- Three-tier structure: NBA (national) → SBBs/UTBCs (state/UT) → BMCs (local)
- BMCs maintain People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs) documenting local bio-resources and traditional knowledge
- Target: roughly 2.76 lakh BMCs to be constituted nationally

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Three-tier biodiversity governance and persistent implementation gaps at the grassroots BMC level
- ABS as a mechanism linking conservation incentives with community livelihoods and equity (Nagoya Protocol)
- Documenting traditional knowledge as both a conservation tool and a defence against biopiracy
- Alignment with India's commitments under the post-2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (30x30 target)

PYQ LINKAGE

India Marks International Vulture Awareness Day 2026 With 'Crisis to Recovery' Workshop

Why in News: Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav led International Vulture Awareness Day 2026 celebrations at Panchkula, Haryana on 5 September 2026, inaugurating a national workshop themed "From Crisis to Recovery – Conserving India's Vultures." A coffee-table book, *Story of Jatayu: Saving India's Vulture*, was released, chronicling India's vulture-recovery programme centred on the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC), Pinjore.

Background: India's vulture population collapsed by over 97% from the 1990s after diclofenac, a veterinary anti-inflammatory drug, was found to cause fatal kidney failure in vultures feeding on treated cattle carcasses. India banned veterinary diclofenac in 2006, since when Vulture Safe Zones (VSZs) and captive-breeding centres like JCBC Pinjore have anchored a slow, still-fragile recovery of India's three critically endangered Gyps vulture species.

KEY FACTS

- International Vulture Awareness Day observed annually on the first Saturday of September (5 Sept 2026)
- Workshop theme: "From Crisis to Recovery – Conserving India's Vultures", held at Panchkula, Haryana
- Three critically endangered Gyps species in India: White-rumped, Slender-billed and Indian (Long-billed) Vulture
- Veterinary diclofenac banned in India since 2006
- JCBC Pinjore is a key captive-breeding-and-release centre for vultures
- Persisting threats: other toxic NSAIDs (aceclofenac, ketoprofen), electrocution, habitat loss

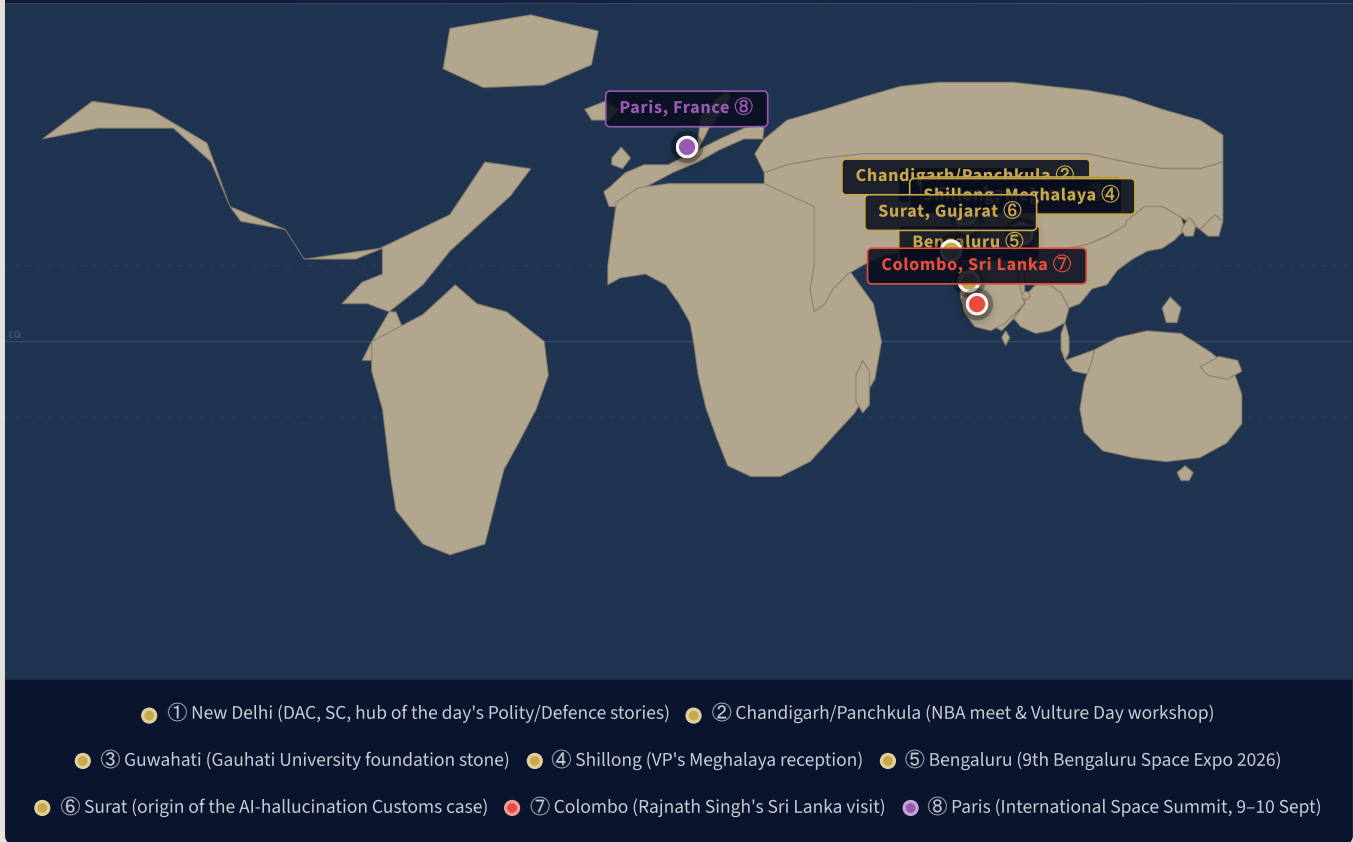
MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Vultures' ecological role as nature's "sanitation service" — rapid carcass disposal limits disease spread
- Diclofenac ban as a conservation-policy success story, but with persistent regulatory gaps for chemically similar NSAIDs
- Captive breeding versus habitat/Vulture-Safe-Zone protection as complementary, not competing, strategies
- A "One Health" approach linking veterinary drug regulation to wildlife and ecosystem health

PYQ LINKAGE

Prelims 2013: Reasons for the large-scale die-off of vultures, including the use of diclofenac in livestock (a genuine, well-known past UPSC question).

THEIAS AKADEMIA Species-and-policy pairs like today's vulture story are classic **Philosophy Target 300+** and Ethics-adjacent material — unintended consequences of a well-meant veterinary drug becoming a conservation crisis. theiasakademia.com



① New Delhi

National capital; seat of the DAC's ₹1.10-lakh-crore approval and the Supreme Court's AI-hallucination ruling; sits on the Yamuna, part of the Indo-Gangetic Plain.

② Chandigarh / Panchkula

Twin planned cities on the Punjab-Haryana border in the Shivalik foothills; hosted the NBA's biodiversity-governance meet and the national Vulture Awareness Day workshop (JCBC Pinjore is nearby).

③ Guwahati, Assam

On the south bank of the Brahmaputra; home to Gauhati University (1948), where the Vice-President laid a foundation stone on Day 2 of his Northeast tour.

④ Shillong, Meghalaya

Capital of Meghalaya on the Shillong Plateau; administered partly through Sixth Schedule Autonomous District Councils; hosted the VP's public reception.

⑤ Bengaluru, Karnataka

India's aerospace hub on the Deccan Plateau; host of the 9th Bengaluru Space Expo 2026 and headquarters of ISRO, IN-SPaCE-linked industry clusters.

⑥ Surat, Gujarat

Diamond-cutting and polishing capital on the Tapi river; origin of the Customs penalty order overturned by the Supreme Court's AI-hallucination ruling.

⑦ Colombo, Sri Lanka

Island nation's commercial capital on the Indian Ocean; destination of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's 8–10 September visit under the MAHASAGAR vision.

⑧ Paris, France

Host city of the first-ever International Space Summit (9–10 Sept 2026), where ISRO's Chairman is invited to keynote on India's human-spaceflight plans.

§3 Ethics & Integrity Cases

Epistemic Diligence in Automated Decision-Making

Case 1 — The Officer Who Trusted the Machine

Scenario: A customs officer used an AI tool to help draft a penalty order, unknowingly citing fabricated case law that led to a ₹425-crore penalty being overturned by the Supreme Court.

Values at stake: Due diligence, professional competence, the duty not to abdicate personal judgment to a tool one cannot verify.

Framework: A public official remains personally accountable for every fact and citation in an order bearing their signature, regardless of what assisted in drafting it — "the pilot must still fly the plane."

Subsidiarity and Cooperative Federalism

Case 2 — Whose University Is It, Anyway?

Scenario: A central university in Meghalaya sits inside a state whose tribal areas are separately governed by Sixth Schedule Autonomous District Councils, creating overlapping claims of authority.

Values at stake: Respect for local self-governance, national integration, non-discrimination between regions.

Framework: Subsidiarity holds that decisions should be taken at the most local level competent to handle them, while cooperative federalism requires Centre and periphery to coordinate rather than compete for legitimacy.

Distributive Justice in Access to Care

Case 3 — One Standard, Many States

Scenario: A national degree-standardisation reform (NCAHP) must be implemented uniformly even though states vary widely in existing allied-healthcare infrastructure and training capacity.

Values at stake: Equity, uniformity of professional standards, regional sensitivity.

Framework: Distributive justice requires that a uniform national standard be paired with differentiated, needs-based support so weaker states are not left further behind by the very reform meant to help them.

Reciprocity and Enlightened Self-Interest in Diplomacy

Case 4 — The Neighbour Who Keeps Showing Up

Scenario: India continues sustained defence-diplomacy engagement with a smaller neighbour even where short-term strategic returns are uncertain, as an investment in long-term trust.

Values at stake: Reciprocity, patience, long-term national interest over short-term transactional gain.

Framework: Enlightened self-interest recognises that consistent, low-drama engagement builds durable goodwill that pays off over decades, even if it cannot be measured in any single visit's outcomes.

Prudence and Stewardship of Public Funds

Case 5 — Signing Off on ₹1.10 Lakh Crore

Scenario: A high-value defence-procurement approval must balance urgent capability gaps against the risk of locking in decades of spending on the wrong platform.

Values at stake: Prudence, institutional accountability, stewardship of taxpayer resources.

Framework: Prudential decision-making in high-stakes institutional contexts demands rigorous technical vetting and phased commitments, resisting the temptation to approve everything at once merely because funds are available.

Intergenerational Stewardship / Ethics of Unintended Consequences

Case 6 — A Medicine That Nearly Erased a Species

Scenario: A veterinary drug approved for its intended benefit to livestock nearly wiped out India's vulture population before the causal link was identified and acted upon.

Values at stake: Precautionary responsibility, intergenerational stewardship, humility about the limits of foresight.

Framework: The precautionary principle counsels that regulators must actively monitor for unforeseen ecological harm from routine interventions, treating a species' silence (its absence) as itself a warning signal, not an oversight to be discovered decades later.

§4 Prelims MCQs

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the recent Supreme Court ruling in *Vijay Ghanshyam Gadiya v. Union of India*:

1. The case involved a penalty under Section 114 of the Customs Act, 1962.
2. The Gujarat High Court had earlier dismissed the challenge to the penalty.
3. The Supreme Court permanently quashed all proceedings against the appellant.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — The matter was remanded for fresh adjudication, not permanently quashed.

Q2. With reference to the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, which of the following states has areas governed by it?

- (a) Manipur (b) Meghalaya (c) Arunachal Pradesh (d) Sikkim

Answer: (b) Meghalaya (along with Assam, Tripura and Mizoram).

Q3. The National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions (NCAHP) was constituted under an Act of which year?

- (a) 2017 (b) 2019 (c) 2021 (d) 2023

Answer: (c) 2021.

Q4. "MAHASAGAR" is best understood as:

- (a) A missile-defence shield (b) India's vision for security and growth cooperation across the Indian Ocean Region (c) A coastal-shipping subsidy scheme (d) A tsunami early-warning network

Answer: (b).

Q5. Consider the following statements on India's textile sector:

1. India is the world's second-largest producer of textiles and garments.
2. PM MITRA parks aim to create integrated mega textile regions.
3. The National Technical Textiles Mission focuses exclusively on export promotion, not skilling.

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

Answer: (b) — NTTM includes a major skilling component (target: 50,000 trainees), so Statement 3 is incorrect.

Q6. "Acceptance of Necessity (AoN)" in India's defence procurement process is granted by:

- (a) The Cabinet Committee on Security (b) The Defence Acquisition Council (c) The Comptroller and Auditor General (d) NITI Aayog

Answer: (b).

Q7. Consider the following statements regarding Directed-Energy Weapons (DEW):

1. High-Power Microwave systems can disable enemy electronics without a kinetic kill.
2. DEW systems are being developed by DRDO partly in response to drone-swarm threats.
3. DEW technology has no dual-use or escalation concerns.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — DEW technologies do raise genuine dual-use and escalation concerns, making Statement 3 incorrect.

Q8. Under the Indian Space Policy 2023, which organisation functions as the single-window regulator authorising private-sector space activities?

- (a) NSIL (b) IN-SPACe (c) Department of Space (d) ISRO

Answer: (b).

Q9. Consider the following statements on India's coal sector:

1. Coal India Limited accounts for roughly 80% of India's domestic coal output.
2. Coal supplies over half of India's primary commercial energy needs.
3. Monsoon rains typically improve, rather than disrupt, open-cast coal mining.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — Monsoon rains disrupt, not improve, open-cast mining and haulage, making Statement 3 incorrect.

Q10. The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act primarily provides for:

- (a) A ceiling on state government borrowing alone (b) A glide path for reducing the Union government's fiscal deficit (c) Direct RBI control over government spending (d) Mandatory balanced budgets every year

Answer: (b).

Q11. Consider the following statements regarding the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA):

1. It was established under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
2. It operates through a three-tier structure involving State Biodiversity Boards and Biodiversity Management Committees.
3. Access and Benefit Sharing under the NBA's framework draws on the Nagoya Protocol.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (d) All three statements are correct.

Q12. Which of the following was identified as the primary cause of the catastrophic decline in India's vulture population since the 1990s?

- (a) Avian influenza (b) Habitat destruction alone (c) Use of diclofenac in livestock (d) Poaching for feathers

Answer: (c).

Q13. Consider the following statements on Vulture Safe Zones (VSZs) in India:

1. VSZs are areas where the use of vulture-toxic veterinary drugs is actively discouraged or monitored.
2. Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre, Pinjore is located within a VSZ initiative.
3. VSZs alone are sufficient without captive breeding to ensure vulture recovery.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — Captive breeding remains a necessary complement to VSZs, so Statement 3 is incorrect.

Q14. The "Colombo Security Conclave" brings together India, Sri Lanka and which other country as founding members?

- (a) Bangladesh (b) Maldives (c) Mauritius (d) Seychelles

Answer: (b) Maldives (Mauritius joined later as an observer/member in an expanded format).

Q15. Consider the following statements regarding the 18th BRICS Summit:

1. It is scheduled to be held in New Delhi in September 2026.
2. This marks India's fourth presidency of the BRICS grouping.
3. Bangladesh is a full member of BRICS.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — Bangladesh is not a BRICS member; it has been invited as a special guest in its BIMSTEC-chair capacity, so Statement 3 is incorrect.

Q16. "SUMAN" (Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan), in the context of Indian health policy, guarantees:

- (a) Free crop insurance for farmers (b) Zero-expense, dignified maternal and newborn care at public facilities (c) Universal old-age pension (d) Free legal aid for women

Answer: (b).

Q17. Consider the following statements on India's Vice-President:

1. The Vice-President is elected by an electoral college comprising members of both Houses of Parliament only.
2. The Vice-President serves as the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
3. The Vice-President's term is five years, renewable without limit.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d) All three statements are correct — unlike the President's electoral college, the Vice-President's electoral college (Article 66) comprises members of both Houses of Parliament only, with no state-legislature representation.

Q18. The "Directed Energy Weapon" category, to which DRDO's SHIELD system belongs, is distinguished from conventional kinetic weapons primarily because it:

- (a) Uses only nuclear propulsion (b) Disables targets via energy (e.g., microwave, laser) rather than physical projectiles (c) Can only be used underwater (d) Requires a UN Security Council resolution before deployment

Answer: (b).

Q19. Consider the following statements on India's fiscal deficit data (April–July FY27):

1. The fiscal deficit stood at a slower pace (as % of full-year target) compared to the same period of the previous fiscal year.
2. Fiscal deficit data for the Union government is released by the Controller General of Accounts.
3. A capex-front-loaded deficit is generally considered qualitatively worse than a revenue-led deficit.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — A capex-led deficit is generally viewed more favourably, not worse, than a revenue-led one, making Statement 3 incorrect.

Q20. The Première Vision-Bharat Tex Trade Federation MoU signed in September 2026 pertains to cooperation in which sector?

- (a) Semiconductor manufacturing (b) Textiles and fashion (c) Renewable energy (d) Pharmaceutical exports

Answer: (b).

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§5 Mains Questions

GS1 Discuss the historical and constitutional basis of the Sixth Schedule, and examine how Autonomous District Councils have fared in preserving tribal self-governance in India's Northeast. (150 words)

GS1 Examine the role of central universities as instruments of educational federalism in regions with historically lower access to higher education, with reference to India's Northeast. (150 words)

GS2 "The use of Artificial Intelligence in quasi-judicial administrative decision-making raises serious concerns for natural justice and institutional accountability." Discuss with reference to a recent Supreme Court ruling. (150 words)

GS2 Discuss how a "continuum of care" approach, as reflected in India's SUMAN Roadmap 2030, can help accelerate progress toward the SDG target on maternal mortality. (150 words)

GS2 "India's MAHASAGAR vision represents both continuity with, and evolution from, the SAGAR doctrine." Examine with reference to India's engagement with its Indian Ocean neighbours. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the significance of indigenisation-weighted procurement categories under the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP), 2020 for India's Atmanirbhar Bharat goals in defence manufacturing. (150 words)

GS3 Examine why India's coal supply chain remains vulnerable to seasonal monsoon disruption despite adequate mining reserves, and suggest measures to build resilience. (150 words)

GS3 Discuss the role of Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) mechanisms under India's Biological Diversity Act, 2002 in reconciling conservation with community livelihoods. (150 words)

GS4 (Case Study) You are a District Magistrate overseeing the rollout of a new AI-based document-drafting tool for revenue and quasi-judicial orders in your district. A junior official flags that the tool sometimes generates plausible-looking but fake case citations, though it saves significant drafting time under a heavy caseload. (a) What ethical concerns does this situation raise? (b) What safeguards would you institute before allowing continued use of the tool? (250 words)

§6 Answer Writing Value Addition

Quote: "Entrusting AI with the pilot's seat is dangerous" — Supreme Court of India, *Vijay Ghanshyam Gadiya v. Union of India*, 2026 INSC 947. Use in any GS4 answer on ethics of emerging technology in governance.

Data point: India's vulture population declined by over 97% since the 1990s due to diclofenac poisoning — a textbook single-cause ecological collapse for GS3 answers on unintended consequences of veterinary drug policy.

Data point: NBA has disbursed over ₹200 crore in Access and Benefit Sharing funds to farmers, BMCs and research institutions — use to substantiate the "conservation-with-livelihoods" argument in Biodiversity Act answers.

Framework: DAP 2020's indigenisation ladder (Buy Indian-IDDm > Buy Indian > Buy and Make Indian > Buy Global) — cite this hierarchy whenever discussing Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence procurement.

Concept pairing: Sixth Schedule (Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura, Mizoram) versus Article 371 special provisions (Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Sikkim, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka) — two distinct constitutional routes for regional autonomy, frequently confused in Mains answers.

Data point: India's private space start-up count has grown from 1 (2014) to over 400 (2026) — a strong statistic for any GS3 answer on the Indian Space Policy 2023's IN-SPACe/NSIL architecture.

Data point: India's fiscal deficit ran at 26.8% of the FY27 target through July 2026, versus 29.9% in the same period of FY26 — use as evidence of improving fiscal-glide-path adherence under FRBM.

Framework: MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) as the successor doctrine to SAGAR — cite both terms together to show doctrinal continuity in any Neighbourhood First answer.

§7 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

TOPIC

GS
PAPER

ONE-LINE CAPSULE

PROBABILITY

1	SC: AI-hallucinated citations, ₹425cr penalty set aside	GS2/GS4	First Indian case tracing an admin order to fake AI case law	★★★★★
2	VP's Northeast tour — Gauhati University, Sixth Schedule	GS1/GS2	Central-university outreach meets Sixth Schedule/Art. 371 asymmetry	★★★★★
3	SUMAN Roadmap 2030 + NCAHP degree reform	GS2	Maternal-care continuum meets allied-healthcare standardisation	★★★
4	Rajnath Singh's Sri Lanka visit — MAHASAGAR	GS2	Neighbourhood First operationalised via defence diplomacy	★★★★★
5	India-France textile MoU (Bharat Tex-Première Vision)	GS2/GS3	Textile diplomacy inside the Indo-French Year of Innovation	★★
6	DAC clears ₹1.10-lakh-crore acquisition package	GS3	CBRN vehicles, Dhruv helicopters, Arudhra radars — 98% Indian-sourced	★★★★★
7	DRDO's SHIELD high-power microwave system	GS3	Directed-Energy Weapon layer against drones/missiles	★★★★★
8	9th Bengaluru Space Expo 2026 opens	GS3	250 exhibitors, 20 countries — India's space-diplomacy showcase	★★★
9	Coal India output/dispatch recovery post-monsoon	GS3	Rake loading up 20% in four days as rains ease	★★
10	Fiscal deficit at 26.8% of FY27 target (Apr-Jul)	GS3	Improved pace over last year's 29.9% — FRBM glide path	★★★
11	NBA's 16th National Meet of SBBs/UTBCs, Chandigarh	GS3	Three-tier biodiversity governance, ₹200cr+ in ABS funds	★★★★★
12	International Vulture Awareness Day 2026, Panchkula	GS3	Diclofenac ban, Vulture Safe Zones, JCBC Pinjore	★★★★★
13	Colombo Security Conclave & IOR minilateralism	GS2	India-Sri Lanka-Maldives security architecture	★★★
14	IN-SPACe vs NSIL — roles under Space Policy 2023	GS3	Regulator vs commercial arm — a recurring Prelims distinction	★★★★★
15	DAP 2020 indigenisation ladder	GS3	Buy Indian-IDDm > Buy Indian > Buy & Make > Buy Global	★★★
16	PM MITRA & National Technical Textiles Mission	GS3	Mega textile parks + 50,000-worker skilling target	★★
17	18th BRICS Summit, New Delhi (12–13 Sept)	GS2	India's 4th presidency; Bangladesh invited as BIMSTEC-chair guest	★★★★★
18	FRBM Act — glide path and quality of fiscal deficit	GS3	Capex-led vs revenue-led deficit distinction	★★★

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UPSC CSE Prelims 2026 Results

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

48

7

6

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2

ENVIRONMENT CARDS

6

ETHICS CASES

20

MCQS GENERATED

9

MAINS QUESTIONS

8

PLACES MAPPED

0

REPEATED TOPICS

Environment

Ethics

Polity

IR

Defence

Economy

Sci-Tech

✓ All news sourced from PIB / MoEFCC / Supreme Court records / primary government and international sources

✓ Every topic cross-checked against the 25-year UPSC question bank

✓ News Freshness Rule applied — no topic repeated without a Memory Technique box; both Environment cards are genuinely fresh (RULE 16.2 rung 1)

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