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GS PAPERS
GS1 • GS3 • GS4

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EDITION
Part II of II



ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

2 Cards

GS3

Ecology • Environmental Degradation • International Agreements

June 2026 • Source: Earth Overshoot Day / Global Footprint Network

Earth Overshoot Day 2026 — July 30: Humanity Using 1.73 Earths Per Year; Highest Ecological Overshoot Ever Recorded

What happened: The Global Footprint Network announced that Earth Overshoot Day 2026 falls on **July 30** — the date when humanity will have exhausted nature's entire annual budget of ecological resources and services (forests, fisheries, cropland, water, and the atmosphere's capacity to absorb CO₂). While 2026's Overshoot Day falls six days later than 2025 (reflecting data revisions and slight improvements), humanity is still using **1.73 Earths per year**, the highest ecological overshoot ever measured. Globally, 7 of 9 planetary boundaries have now been breached (ocean acidification is the seventh), and Earth's biocapacity to regenerate is declining faster than previously modelled. India's Country Overshoot Day is in December — India's per capita ecological footprint remains well below the global average, reflecting lower consumption levels.

Why it matters for UPSC: Earth Overshoot Day is a core environmental indicator linked to GS3 (Environment), SDGs, and India's sustainability commitments. Key angles: ecological footprint vs. biocapacity, planetary boundaries (Rockstrom framework), the relationship between overshoot and climate change, and India's relatively low per capita footprint vs. high aggregate demand due to population size.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- **Earth Overshoot Day 2026: July 30** (six days later than 2025 due to data revisions)
- Humanity is using nature **1.73 times faster** than Earth can regenerate — equivalent to 1.73 Earths
- **7 of 9 planetary boundaries** have been breached; ocean acidification is now the 7th (newly confirmed)
- The 9 planetary boundaries (Rockstrom 2009): Climate change, Biodiversity loss, Land-system change, Freshwater use, Biogeochemical flows (nitrogen/phosphorus), Ocean acidification, Ozone depletion, Aerosol loading, Novel entities
- **India's Country Overshoot Day: December** (India's per capita footprint is below global average)
- Ecological Footprint formula: $\text{Footprint} = \text{Biocapacity demand of population} \div \text{Earth's biocapacity}$
- Concept introduced by Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees in 1990; tracked by Global Footprint Network
- Solutions to "Move the Date": Regenerative agriculture, clean energy transition, food waste reduction, population stabilisation

💡 TEACHING HOOK

"Ecological Overshoot = Spending tomorrow's resources today." Analogy: Earth is a savings account. Overshoot Day is when you've spent all year's interest AND started eating into the principal. At 1.73 Earths, we're borrowing 73% from future generations every year. For UPSC: link to **Intergenerational Equity** (principle that present generations must not compromise the ability of future generations to meet

their needs — Brundtland Commission, 1987). India's December overshoot date vs. USA's March date is a powerful equity argument: who has the bigger ecological debt?

PYQ LINKAGE

Mains 2016 (GS3): "Why is the concept of 'Ecological Footprint' important in the context of sustainable development? Discuss with reference to India's environmental challenges." — Use Earth Overshoot Day 2026 data (July 30, 1.73 Earths) and India's December overshoot day as key statistics. Also: **Mains 2020 (GS3):** "The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the global imperatives for a more balanced and equitable world by 2030. Discuss whether the current pace of change is sufficient to achieve these targets."

GS3

Biodiversity · Wildlife Conservation · Endangered Species

Static UPSC Topic · Source: IUCN Red List / animalia.bio

Indian Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*): Asia's Most Trafficked Mammal — IUCN Endangered, WPA 2022 Schedule I

What happened (Context): As India's conservation diplomacy gains momentum (today's India-Nepal MoU covers transboundary wildlife), the Indian Pangolin remains one of India's most threatened and least publicised mammals. It is the most trafficked wild mammal globally (along with its Asian relatives), hunted for its scales (used in traditional Chinese medicine) and meat. India's Wildlife Protection Amendment Act 2022 retains it in **Schedule I** (highest protection). Despite this, illegal trade continues through India-Nepal-China corridors — the same transboundary routes covered by today's MoU.

SPECIES PROFILE — INDIAN PANGOLIN

Scientific name:	<i>Manis crassicaudata</i>
IUCN Status:	Endangered (EN) — Red List Category
Distribution:	Indian subcontinent: India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
Habitat:	Tropical forests, grasslands, degraded scrublands; also Terai arc
Population:	Unknown; declining (no reliable national census; estimated <10,000)
Key threats:	Illegal trade (scales for TCM), habitat loss, road kills, digging for honey
Indian legal protection:	WPA 1972 Schedule I (retained in WPA Amendment 2022)
CITES status:	Appendix I (prohibits commercial international trade)
Unique feature:	Only mammal with scales (made of keratin — same as human nails)
Source:	animalia.bio + IUCN Red List

Why it matters for UPSC: UPSC regularly asks about IUCN categories (Extinct, EW, CR, EN, VU, NT, LC), CITES Appendices, and Schedule I/II of WPA. Pangolin is a recurring "species in the news" given trafficking busts and conservation campaigns. Also links to India's obligations under the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the recently passed Wildlife Protection Amendment Act 2022.

KEY FACTS FOR PRELIMS

- All 8 pangolin species are listed under **CITES Appendix I** since 2016 (after unprecedented trafficking volumes)
- India has **2 pangolin species**: Indian Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) and Chinese Pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*) — both Critically Endangered/Endangered
- Pangolins eat ants and termites exclusively — ecological role: natural pest control, soil aeration
- IUCN Red List categories (descending threat): **EX** → **EW** → **CR** → **EN** → **VU** → **NT** → **LC** → **DD** → **NE**
- Schedule I of WPA 1972: Highest protection; killing = up to 7 years imprisonment
- World Pangolin Day: Third Saturday of February each year
- India's National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is the apex body that approves projects in wildlife areas

TEACHING HOOK

Mnemonic for CITES Appendices: **Appendix I** = "Immediate danger" — commercial trade **BANNED** (pangolin, tiger, rhino). **Appendix II** = "Trade allowed with permit" (most parrots, some orchids). **Appendix III** = Country-specific request for cooperation. For UPSC: Pangolins

moved from Appendix II to **Appendix I in 2016** at the CITES CoP17 in Johannesburg — this is a commonly tested data point. Remember: IUCN lists don't automatically grant legal protection; national law (WPA) provides the actual protection in India.

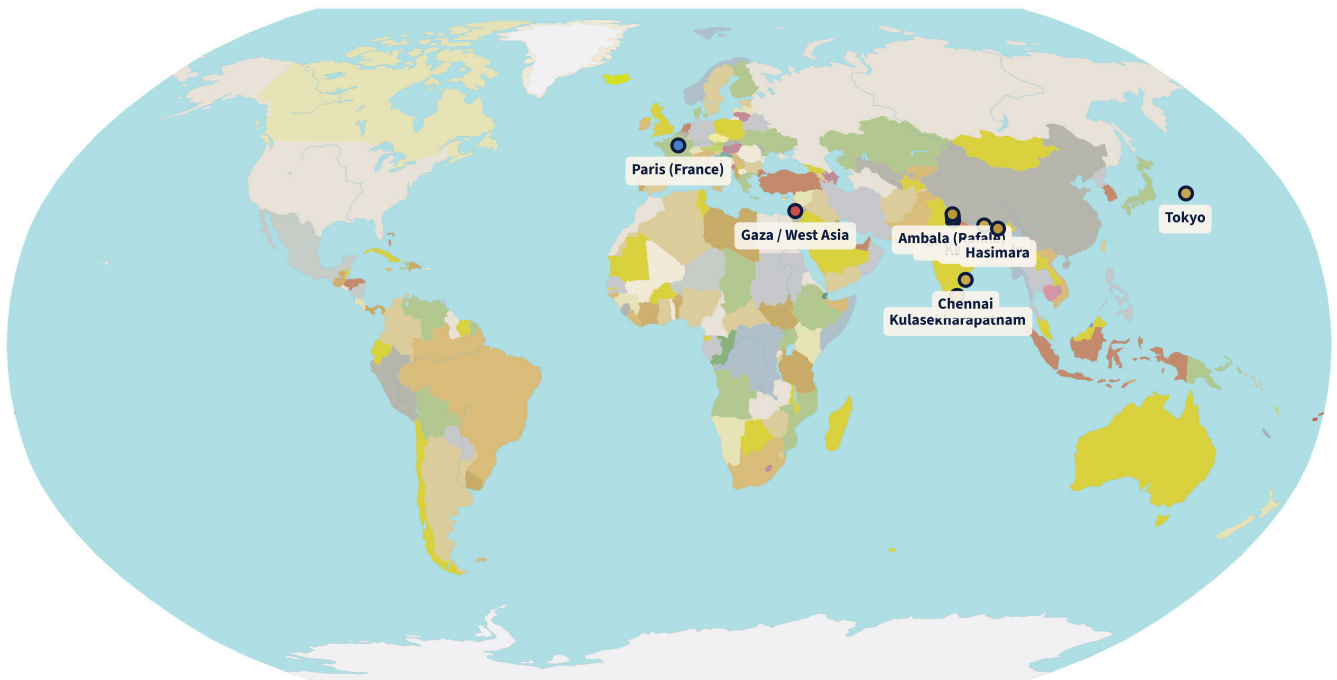
PYQ LINKAGE

Prelims 2020: "What is the significance of a new air bubble arrangement that allows countries to operate flights for repatriation?" — Actually more relevant: **Prelims 2018:** "Consider the following pairs: Animals / IUCN Red List Category — [Indian Pangolin listed as Vulnerable at that time; now upgraded to Endangered]." UPSC often tests correct IUCN status. Also: **Mains 2018 (GS3):** "What is the significance of CITES in wildlife conservation? Discuss the challenges faced by India in implementing its obligations under CITES."



PLACES IN NEWS

10 Locations



PIN 01

New Delhi, India

16th India-Japan Annual Summit hosted; PM Modi and PM Takaichi signed 16 landmark outcomes including UNICORN defence project and AI MoU

GS2 · IR

PIN 02

Kulasekharapatnam, Tamil Nadu

ISRO's second spaceport (SSLV Launch Complex); DRDO announced strategic alliance to use site for military space missions; commissioning by late 2026

GS3 · S&T

PIN 03

Sonapat, Haryana

Ashoka University hosting Indian Wildlife Ecology Conference (IWEC26) from July 10–12, 2026 — India's premier wildlife research conference

GS3 · Ecology

PIN 04

Tokyo, Japan

Japan PM Takaichi's diplomatic base; India-Japan Memorandum of Implementation on UNICORN was signed here in November 2024; JOMEC HQ for critical mineral cooperation

GS2 · IR

PIN 05

Kathmandu, Nepal

Nepal's Ministry of Forests and Environment signed MoU with India's MoEFCC for transboundary wildlife corridor restoration and cross-border biodiversity cooperation

GS2 · GS3

PIN 06

Ambala, Haryana

Home base of IAF's 17 Sqn 'Golden Arrows' (first Rafale squadron); Rafale bridge sustainment deal ensures combat readiness at this strategic base near Pakistan border

GS3 · Defence

PIN 07

Hasimara, West Bengal

Home base of IAF's 101 Sqn 'Falcons of Hasimara' (second Rafale squadron); strategic location near China (LAC);

PIN 08

Chennai, Tamil Nadu

CII Tamil Nadu Defence X Conclave 2026 held here; DRDO DG announced strategic roadmap for Kulasekharapatnam spaceport;

PIN 09

Gaza / West Asia

Ongoing conflict cited by RBI MPC as key downside risk to India's growth; higher crude oil prices, shipping insurance, and supply

operational readiness maintained via bridge deal

GS3 · Defence

Tamil Nadu emerging as India's space-defence hub

GS3 · S&T

chain disruption threaten India's macroeconomic stability

GS2 · GS3

PIN 10

Paris / Bordeaux, France

Home of Dassault Aviation (Rafale manufacturer) and Safran (engine maker); India negotiating Performance-Based Logistics (PBL) framework for Rafale fleet sustainment post-September 2026

GS2 · GS3



ETHICS & INTEGRITY (GS4)

4 Case Studies

1 The Programme Officer's Dilemma: MGNREGA to VB-G RAM G Transition

Scenario: You are a District Programme Coordinator overseeing the transition from MGNREGA to VB-G RAM G. During the transition (July 1, 2026), you discover that 3,000 workers in your district have not received their MGNREGA wages for the last two months (March–April 2026) because of administrative delays. The new system's digital attendance has not yet been set up in several villages with poor internet connectivity. Your Block Development Officer asks you to mark these workers as absent to avoid the complication of cross-scheme payment reconciliation.

Values in Conflict: Rule of law (following the BDO's administrative direction) vs. Probity and public interest (ensuring workers receive their rightful wages). Accountability vs. Loyalty to superiors. Short-term procedural compliance vs. Long-term welfare of vulnerable citizens.

Ethical Framework: Deontological (duty to workers as rights-holders under the new Act) vs. Consequentialist (what outcome causes least harm). The 2005 MGNREGA Act created justiciable rights; VB-G RAM G continues this — wage arrears are a legal entitlement, not discretionary. The BDO's request constitutes falsification of records (unethical under AIS Conduct Rules).

Suggested Action: Decline the BDO's direction; document the wage arrears formally; initiate an emergency payment process under "distress payment" provisions; escalate to the District Collector and inform the Social Audit unit; ensure connectivity issues are resolved within 30 days with interim manual attendance systems.

GS4 Linkage: Civil service values (integrity, impartiality, objectivity), Probity in public life, Accountability mechanisms (Social Audit), Rights-based approach in welfare programmes.

2 The UNICORN Dilemma: Technology Transfer, National Security, and Dual-Use Ethics

Scenario: You are a senior official in the Ministry of Defence overseeing the India-Japan UNICORN co-development project. During due diligence, your team discovers that a private Indian sub-contractor (a subsidiary of a domestic conglomerate) proposed to BEL has undisclosed partial ownership ties with a Chinese state-owned entity. Bringing this to light would delay the UNICORN project by 18–24 months and embarrass the government politically during a period of heightened India-China tensions.

Values in Conflict: National security and integrity of the defence supply chain vs. political pressure to deliver the project on time. Transparency vs. reputational damage. Short-term deadline pressure vs. long-term technology security.

Ethical Framework: In defence procurement, national security is a non-negotiable constraint — no utilitarian calculus can justify compromising a military technology programme. The Defence Acquisition Procedure (DPP 2020) mandates stringent vendor due diligence including ownership verification. The "security over speed" principle is non-negotiable in sensitive technology co-development.

Suggested Action: Immediately report findings to the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC); exclude the compromised sub-contractor; notify BEL; recommend alternative vendors from the positive indigenisation list; accept the delay as the ethically and legally mandated course of action; inform the Japanese counterpart in the spirit of co-development transparency.

GS4 Linkage: Ethics in defence procurement, Conflict of interest, Whistleblowing, National vs. organisational loyalty, Integrity in governance.

3 The Forest Officer's Corridor: Conservation vs. Livelihood in the Terai Arc

Scenario: You are a Field Director of a Tiger Reserve in the Terai Arc Landscape. Under the India-Nepal MoU, you must demarcate and restore a transboundary wildlife corridor that passes through three villages (approximately 2,400 families). Legal surveys show these villages are encroachments (post-1980 Forest Conservation Act violations), but the families have lived there for over 40 years, including children born there. Eviction for corridor restoration will displace 2,400 families but is critical for tiger connectivity. A local politician pressures you to exclude the corridor section passing through these villages.

Values in Conflict: Biodiversity conservation and legal obligations vs. welfare and rights of long-term residents. Species protection vs. human rights (right to shelter, livelihood). International treaty obligation (MoU) vs. domestic political pressure. Law enforcement vs. compassion.

Ethical Framework: Environmental ethics (inter-species justice: tigers too have a stake in survival) vs. human welfare ethics. The Forest Rights Act 2006 provides a legal framework for reconciling both: legitimate residents can claim Community Forest Rights (CFR) while essential wildlife corridors are maintained. A co-existence model (voluntary relocation with rehabilitation) is both ethically superior and legally mandated over forced eviction.

Suggested Action: Reject political pressure; process FRA 2006 claims transparently; propose a scientific corridor design that minimises displacement while maintaining minimum viable connectivity width (150–300m per NTCA standards); offer rehabilitation with homestead + agricultural land + compensation to willing relocatees; maintain the minimum non-negotiable corridor width through joint forest management.

GS4 Linkage: Environmental ethics, Conflict between law and compassion, Ethical dilemmas in resource management, Rights-based approach, Probity in the face of political pressure.

4 The Climate Overshoot: Intergenerational Justice and a Government Official's Role

Scenario: You are a senior official in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Earth Overshoot Day (July 30, 2026) data shows India's aggregate ecological demand is rising rapidly, even though per capita figures remain low. A Cabinet note proposes fast-tracking clearances for 15 coal mining projects in ecologically sensitive areas to meet energy security needs, with the reasoning that India's per capita emissions remain far below developed nations' historical emissions. You are asked to endorse the note.

Values in Conflict: Intergenerational equity (protecting future generations from ecological debt) vs. present-generation energy needs and development rights. Common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR — India's per capita argument) vs. planetary boundary science (Earth doesn't care about per capita — aggregate overshoot is what matters). Developmental justice vs. environmental justice.

Ethical Framework: Rawlsian veil of ignorance: future generations behind the veil would not consent to irreversible ecological damage for short-term energy gains. Gandhian trusteeship: "we do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children." CBDR is a principle of equity in burden-sharing, not a license to ignore planetary limits. Precautionary Principle: when in doubt about ecological damage, don't proceed.

Suggested Action: Decline to endorse without conditions; recommend independent cumulative impact assessment; propose alternative: fast-track solar/wind/storage projects in non-sensitive areas for equivalent energy capacity; add a clear environmental mitigation, restoration, and compensatory afforestation plan to any coal project that proceeds; formally record dissent if overruled.

GS4 Linkage: Intergenerational ethics, Environmental ethics, Precautionary principle, CBDR, Civil servant's duty of dissent, Conflict between institutional and broader social interests.



MCQS — PRELIMS PRACTICE

15 Questions

Q 01 • GS2 • Polity

Consider the following statements regarding VB-G RAM G, the scheme that replaced MGNREGA from July 1, 2026:

1. It increases the employment guarantee from 100 to 125 days per household per year.
2. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with 100% central funding.
3. It adds a livelihood mission component including skill training and self-employment support.
4. It has a constitutional basis in Articles 41 and 43 of the Directive Principles of State Policy.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 1, 3 and 4 only — Statement 2 is incorrect: MGNREGA (and its successor VB-G RAM G) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme but NOT 100% centrally funded; it has a cost-sharing formula between Centre and states (wages are 100% Centre; administrative costs are shared). Statements 1, 3, and 4 are correct.

Q 02 • GS2 • Polity — Ordinance Power

Consider the following statements regarding the ordinance-making power of the President of India under Article 123:

1. An ordinance has the same force and effect as an Act of Parliament.
2. An ordinance can be used to amend the Constitution of India.
3. An ordinance lapses if not approved by Parliament within six weeks of its reassembly.
4. In *D.C. Wadhwa v. State of Bihar* (1987), the Supreme Court held that re-promulgation of ordinances is unconstitutional.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 1, 3 and 4 only — Statement 2 is incorrect: An Ordinance CANNOT be used to amend the Constitution of India. Constitutional amendments require Parliament's special majority procedures under Article 368, which cannot be bypassed by executive ordinance. Statements 1, 3, and 4 are correct.

Q 03 • GS2 • International Relations

With reference to the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit (July 2026), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. India and Japan announced their first-ever joint defence co-development project called UNICORN (Unified Complex Radio Antenna).
2. The summit produced 20 outcomes covering AI, energy, defence, minerals and trade.
3. Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) was designated as India's manufacturing partner for the UNICORN project.
4. The India-Japan CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement) was signed afresh at this summit.

Select the correct answer:

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only — Statement 2 is incorrect: the summit produced 16 (not 20) outcomes. Statement 4 is incorrect: the CEPA was not signed afresh; the two sides agreed to expedite the REVIEW of the existing 15-year-old CEPA. Statements 1 and 3 are correct.

Q 04 • GS3 • Defence Technology

Consider the following regarding UNICORN (Unified Complex Radio Antenna), India's first joint defence co-development project with Japan:

1. UNICORN integrates multiple communication antennas into a single enclosed mast for naval warships.
2. The primary operational advantage of UNICORN is reducing a warship's radar cross-section, thereby enhancing stealth.
3. The project involves sharing of Intellectual Property (IP) between India and Japan — making it a co-development and not merely co-production.
4. UNICORN will be deployed on Indian Air Force fighter jets as a communication system upgrade.

Which statements are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 1, 2 and 3 only — Statement 4 is incorrect: UNICORN is a naval antenna system designed for Indian Navy WARSHIPS, not Air Force fighter jets. Statements 1, 2, and 3 are all correct. The key distinction is that co-development (both countries design together and share IP) is

superior to co-production (India manufactures to another country's design without IP transfer).

Q 05 • GS3 • Monetary Policy

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

1. The MPC consists of 6 members: 3 from the RBI and 3 external members appointed by the Central Government.
2. The MPC's primary mandate is to maintain CPI inflation at 4% with a tolerance band of $\pm 2\%$.
3. If CPI inflation exceeds 6% for three consecutive quarters, the RBI is required to write a report to the Central Government explaining the reasons.
4. Decisions of the MPC are taken by a majority vote, with the RBI Governor having a casting vote in case of a tie.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4 — All four statements are correct. The MPC framework was established by the RBI Act Amendment 2016. 6 members (3+3), CPI target of 4% $\pm 2\%$, accountability trigger of 6% breach for 3 consecutive quarters, and Governor's casting vote are all accurate features of the MPC structure.

Q 06 • GS3 • Space Technology

Consider the following statements about Kulasekharapatnam (SSLV Launch Complex):

1. It is India's second major spaceport, located in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu.
2. It is designed primarily for SSLV (Small Satellite Launch Vehicle) launches, with capacity for up to 25 launches annually.
3. DRDO has announced plans to use this site exclusively for civilian scientific missions.
4. The facility was constructed over an area of approximately 9.5 sq km at an estimated cost of Rs. 950 crore.

Which statements are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only — Statement 3 is incorrect: DRDO has announced plans to use the Kulasekharapatnam site for MILITARY and surveillance space missions (not exclusively civilian scientific ones). The DRDO-ISRO alliance at this site is specifically about military applications including reconnaissance and communication satellite constellations for the armed forces.

Q 07 • GS3 • Environment

With reference to Earth Overshoot Day 2026, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Earth Overshoot Day 2026 falls on July 30 — the date when humanity exhausts Earth's annual ecological budget.
2. India's Country Overshoot Day falls in December, reflecting its per capita ecological footprint below the global average.
3. Humanity is currently consuming natural resources at a rate equivalent to 1.73 Earths per year.
4. All 9 planetary boundaries have been breached as of 2026 according to the Global Footprint Network data.

Select the correct answer:

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

Answer: (b) 1, 2 and 3 only — Statement 4 is incorrect: As of 2026, **7 of 9** planetary boundaries have been breached (not all 9). Ocean acidification became the 7th breached boundary. Two boundaries (ozone depletion and aerosol loading) are still within safe limits. Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct.

Q 08 • GS3 • Biodiversity

Consider the following pairs (Species / IUCN Status):

1. Indian Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) / Endangered
2. Bengal Tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*) / Vulnerable
3. Indian Rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) / Vulnerable
4. Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*) / Least Concern

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

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

Answer: (b) 1, 2 and 3 only — Statement 4 is incorrect: Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*) is classified as **Vulnerable** on the IUCN Red List — NOT Least Concern. It was downlisted from Endangered to Vulnerable in 2017 due to revised population estimates, but it is still threatened. Indian Pangolin (Endangered), Bengal Tiger (Vulnerable), and Indian Rhino (Vulnerable) are all correctly matched.

Q 09 • GS3 • Union Budget

With reference to the Union Budget 2026-27, consider the following statements:

1. Total government expenditure is estimated at Rs. 53,47,315 crore, an increase of 7.7% over 2025-26 revised estimates.
2. Capital expenditure has grown at a higher rate (11.5%) than revenue expenditure (6.6%), continuing the infrastructure-led growth approach.
3. The fiscal deficit target for 2026-27 is set at 3.5% of GDP under the FRBM Act mandate.
4. Railways has received its highest-ever allocation in this budget.

Which statements are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only — Statement 3 is incorrect: The fiscal deficit target for 2026-27 is **4.5% of GDP**, not 3.5%. The FRBM Act's ultimate target is 3% but India is following a medium-term consolidation path (4.5% → 4.0% by 2027-28 → eventually 3%). Statements 1, 2, and 4 (railways got highest-ever Rs. 2.65 lakh crore allocation) are all correct.

Q 10 • GS3 • CITES

Consider the following statements about CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species):

1. CITES Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction; commercial trade in them is generally banned.
2. All 8 species of pangolins were listed under CITES Appendix I at the 17th Conference of Parties (CoP17) in Johannesburg in 2016.
3. CITES is a legally binding treaty and its decisions are automatically enforceable in all member countries without domestic legislation.
4. India has ratified CITES and provides protection to CITES-listed species through the Wildlife Protection Act 1972.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 1, 2 and 4 only — Statement 3 is incorrect: CITES is legally binding in the sense that member states undertake to implement it, but it is NOT automatically enforceable as domestic law — member countries must enact domestic legislation to give CITES decisions legal force. In India, the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 (and its amendments) provides this domestic legal framework. Statements 1, 2, and 4 are correct.

Q 11 • GS2 • India-Nepal Relations

With reference to the India-Nepal MoU on forests, wildlife, and biodiversity signed in February 2026, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The MoU was signed between India's MoEFCC and Nepal's Ministry of Forests and Environment.
2. A key objective is the restoration of transboundary wildlife corridors in the Terai Arc Landscape.
3. The MoU provides for joint anti-poaching patrols along the India-Nepal border.
4. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's 30x30 target is the international framework that provides the context for this MoU.

Select the correct answer:

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

Answer: (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4 — All four statements are correct. The MoU covers all these elements: signed between the two environment ministries, focuses on Terai Arc corridor restoration, includes joint anti-poaching provisions, and is aligned with the Kunming-Montreal GBF's 30x30 target (protect 30% of land and oceans by 2030).

Q 12 • GS3 • Defence Procurement

Consider the following statements about India's Rafale multirole combat aircraft:

1. India has a fleet of 36 Rafale aircraft, all deployed at Ambala and Hasimara air bases.
2. The offset clause in the original Rafale contract requires 50% of the contract value to be reinvested in India's defence industry.
3. Performance-Based Logistics (PBL) is a concept where the contractor guarantees specific aircraft availability rates rather than merely supplying spare parts.
4. India is also procuring the Rafale-M (Marine variant) for deployment on its aircraft carriers.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (c) 1, 2, 3 and 4 — All four statements are correct. India has 36 Rafale aircraft at Ambala (17 Sqn) and Hasimara (101 Sqn); the offset clause was 50% of contract value; PBL correctly described; and India is additionally procuring Rafale-M for carrier operations. Note: Rafale-M acquisition is a separate deal from the original 36 aircraft contract.

Q 13 • GS3 • Surveillance Technology

With reference to the tactical aerostat system developed by IIT Delhi and DRDO, consider the following statements:

1. A tactical aerostat is a tethered, lighter-than-air platform equipped with surveillance sensors.
2. The IIT Delhi-DRDO aerostat reached an altitude of 20 km — the stratospheric layer.
3. Compared to UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), aerostats offer the key advantage of prolonged persistence without fuel consumption.
4. Under the Outer Space Treaty 1967, placing aerostats in the stratosphere for military surveillance is prohibited.

Which statements are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only — Statement 4 is incorrect: The Outer Space Treaty 1967 applies to objects in outer space (beyond the Karman Line at ~100 km altitude). At 20 km altitude, the IIT-DRDO aerostat is in the stratosphere, which is still part of Earth's atmosphere and national airspace — the Outer Space Treaty does NOT apply here. Military surveillance using stratospheric platforms is entirely legal under international law. Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct.

Q 14 • GS2 • Polity — Federal Finance

Which of the following correctly describe the term 'Fiscal Deficit' in the context of the Union Budget?

1. Fiscal deficit is the difference between total government expenditure and total revenue receipts (excluding borrowings).
2. Fiscal deficit is always equal to the Primary Deficit plus interest payments on past debt.
3. Under the FRBM Act 2003, the Central Government is required to achieve a fiscal deficit of 3% of GDP.
4. Revenue deficit is a component of fiscal deficit and refers to the excess of revenue expenditure over revenue receipts.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Answer: (d) All four — All four statements are correct. Statement 1 (standard definition); Statement 2 (Fiscal Deficit = Primary Deficit + Net Interest Payments — this is a fundamental relationship in public finance); Statement 3 (FRBM Act 2003 sets 3% as the target, though India is on a glide path); Statement 4 (Revenue Deficit = Revenue Expenditure – Revenue Receipts — it is a component of the broader fiscal deficit analysis).

Q 15 • GS4 • Ethics

The principle of "intergenerational equity" in the context of environmental governance means:

1. Equal distribution of environmental resources among all citizens of the present generation.
2. The present generation's obligation to preserve the environment so that future generations can meet their needs.
3. Developed nations must transfer environmental resources to developing nations to compensate for historical over-exploitation.
4. Future generations have legal standing to sue the present generation for environmental damage under international law.

Which of the above statements correctly describe intergenerational equity?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 2
- (d) 2 and 4

Answer: (b) 2 only — Statement 1 describes intragenerational (within the current generation) equity, not intergenerational. Statement 3 describes Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), not intergenerational equity. Statement 4 is incorrect: future generations do not have current legal standing in international law (though some domestic courts have recognised rights of nature). Only Statement 2 correctly defines intergenerational equity as articulated by the Brundtland Commission (1987).

THEIAS AKADEMIA

Today's 15 MCQs test conceptual clarity — statement-based questions that UPSC uses to distinguish toppers from average scorers. The **NEEB 300+ Live PYQ Writing Programme** at TheIAS Akademia offers both MCQ practice and structured Mains answer writing sessions, helping you perform in both Prelims and Mains simultaneously. Join at theiasakademia.com



MAINS QUESTIONS

6 Questions

GS1 • GEOGRAPHY • 150 WORDS

Q1. India's second spaceport at Kulasekharapatnam (Tamil Nadu) is being developed in the Thoothukudi coastal district. Discuss the geographical factors that make this location strategically suitable for rocket launches and examine how this southern spaceport complements India's existing launch infrastructure at Sriharikota.

Framework: Geographical advantages (proximity to equator → fuel efficiency for LEO/GEO missions; coastal location for safety; east-facing launch corridor over the Bay of Bengal); Low Earth Orbit advantage (Earth's rotation velocity highest near equator → less fuel needed); Complementarity with Sriharikota (different orbital windows, decongestion, dedicated SSLV hub vs. PSLV/GSLV at SDSC-SHAR); Strategic depth (second site ensures redundancy). Contrast: Sriharikota (13.9°N) vs. Kulasekharapatnam (8.9°N) — even closer to equator = more launch advantage.

GS1 • SOCIETY • 150 WORDS

Q2. The transition from MGNREGA to VB-G RAM G marks a shift from a "work guarantee" model to a "livelihood guarantee" model in rural India. Examine the sociological implications of this shift for India's rural poor, particularly women workers and migrant labour.

Framework: MGNREGA's social achievements (women's workforce participation — over 55% of MGNREGA workers are women; wage parity; social capital of gram sabha); New scheme's potential: 125 days + skill training can enable women to access higher-paid livelihoods beyond manual work; Risks: digital attendance (GPS) may exclude women with low digital literacy or those in purdah; Migrant labour: VB-G RAM G portability provisions compared to MGNREGA's non-portability problem; Conclusion: Sociological success depends on feminist implementation — ensuring digital infrastructure does not create new exclusions.

GS2 • INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS • 250 WORDS

Q3. "The 16th India-Japan Annual Summit (2026) represents a qualitative upgrade in the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership." Critically examine this statement with specific reference to the UNICORN defence co-development project, the AI MoU, and the Energy Resilience Initiative.

Framework: Introduction: Historical trajectory (1958 yen loan → 2006 Strategic Global Partnership → 2014 Special Strategic → 2026 16-outcome summit); Why "qualitative" upgrade: (1) UNICORN = first co-development (IP-sharing, not just tech transfer) = strategic breakthrough; (2) AI MoU = full-stack collaboration beyond just software = technology sovereignty partnership; (3) Energy Resilience = new dimension of supply security beyond trade; Challenges: CEPA review delayed for 15 years; Japan's economic stagnation limits investment; UNICORN timeline risks; Critical perspective: deepening India-Japan ties partly driven by shared China concern (not just positive affinity); Conclusion: 2026 summit represents maturation from "strategic partnership on paper" to "operational partnership in action."

GS3 • ECONOMY • 250 WORDS

Q4. The RBI's decision to maintain the repo rate at 5.25% with a neutral stance reflects the complex balancing act between growth and inflation. Discuss the factors the MPC must weigh in its decision, with particular reference to India's crude oil import vulnerability and the Union Budget 2026-27's fiscal impulse.

Framework: MPC's dual objective (4% inflation $\pm$ 2% AND growth support); Growth-positive factors: 6.9% GDP projection, strong capex (11.5% growth), VB-G RAM G rural demand stimulus, resilient services sector; Inflation risks: West Asia conflict → crude oil price rise (India ~85% import dependent) → imported inflation → push CPI above 4%; Fiscal impulse complication: Rs. 11.21 lakh crore Capex can be inflationary if demand-supply gaps emerge; Neutral stance rationale: Keeps options open (cut if global slowdown; hike if inflation surges); Key transmission mechanism: Repo rate change → bank lending rates → investment/consumption → GDP and inflation; Conclusion: India in a "Goldilocks moment" (6.9% growth + 4.6% inflation) but fragile — West Asia is the primary tail risk.

GS4 • ETHICS • 150 WORDS

Q5. A senior IAS officer discovers that a major defence procurement project (analogous to UNICORN) has a sub-contractor with undisclosed foreign entity ties that could compromise national security. Delaying the project would be politically embarrassing and may invite transfers or adverse entries. What course of action would you adopt and why? What ethical principles guide your decision?

Framework: Core values: National security (non-negotiable), Integrity, Probity, Accountability; Course of action: (1) Immediately report to DAC/Secretary; (2) Exclude compromised sub-contractor; (3) Formally document objections; (4) Accept personal consequences without compromise; Ethical principles: Non-maleficence (avoid harm to national security), Deontological duty (civil servant's obligation regardless of consequences), Moral courage (resist pressure), Whistleblower protection under central government rules; Key insight: "Political embarrassment is temporary; security breach is permanent." A civil servant's conscience cannot be transferred even if the officer is.

GS4 • ETHICS • 250 WORDS

Q6. "Earth Overshoot Day 2026 falling on July 30 represents not just an ecological crisis but a profound moral failure of the current generation." Examine this statement from the perspective of environmental ethics, intergenerational equity, and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR). What specific obligations does this place on India as a developing country?

Framework: Environmental Ethics lens: Intrinsic value of nature (not just instrumental); Earth's finite biocapacity is a moral boundary, not merely an economic one; Intergenerational equity (Brundtland 1987): Future generations have claims on today's resources; at 1.73 Earths per year, we are stealing from them; CBDR angle: India's December overshoot date vs. USA's March — developed countries consumed disproportionately (historical ecological debt); India has CBDR right to develop BUT NOT at the cost of irreversible planetary boundary breaches (7/9 breached = no more "safe operating space" arguments); India's specific obligations: (1) Per capita argument weakens when aggregate footprint is rising rapidly; (2) Must demonstrate development WITHOUT following Western high-footprint path; (3) Renewable energy transition is not just economic but moral imperative; (4) Leadership of Global South on "Just Transition" narrative; Gandhian trusteeship: Earth is borrowed, not owned. Conclusion: India's moral leadership position is strongest when it leads by example.

 VALUE ADDITION

Quotes + Tables

"We have not inherited the Earth from our fathers; we are borrowing it from our children."

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (widely attributed) / Brundtland Report 1987 context

"The Earth does not belong to us; we belong to the Earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites one family."

— Chief Seattle (attributed, 1854) — Use in Ethics/Environmental answers

"India will have to chart its own growth path, where high human development is achieved with a lower ecological footprint than the West achieved it."

— Adapt for GS3/GS4 answers on India's sustainable development paradigm

"The strength of a nation's defence lies not just in the weapons it imports but in what it can build on its own soil."

— Contextual paraphrase for GS3 Make in India in Defence answers

"Poverty is the worst form of pollution; development without social equity is neither sustainable nor just."

— Indira Gandhi (UNCHE Stockholm 1972) — Use in GS3 development vs. environment answers

 India's Key Environmental Indicators — 2026 Context

INDICATOR	INDIA VALUE (2026)	GLOBAL BENCHMARK	UPSC RELEVANCE
Country Overshoot Day	December 2026	Global: July 30	GS3 — ecological footprint, CBDR
Forest Cover (% of land)	~21.7% (SFR 2023)	Target: 33% (National Forest Policy 1988)	GS3 — forest policy, biodiversity
Renewable Energy Capacity	>200 GW (2026)	2030 Target: 500 GW	GS3 — energy security, NDC
Tiger Population	~3,700 (All India Tiger Estimation 2022)	Global tiger population: ~5,500	GS3 — Project Tiger, biodiversity
CO2 Emissions per capita	~2.0 tonnes/year	USA: ~15 t; Global avg: ~4.7 t	GS3/GS4 — CBDR, climate equity
Planetary Boundaries Breached	7 of 9 globally	Safe: 0 breached; Current: 7/9	GS3 — planetary boundaries, Rockstrom

 Key Acts / Committees / Bodies — Today's Current Affairs

ACT / BODY / FRAMEWORK	YEAR	RELEVANCE TO TODAY'S NEWS
VB-G RAM G Act (MGNREGA replacement)	2026	Rural employment guarantee scheme; replaces MGNREGA 2005
RBI Amendment Act (MPC provision)	2016	Established MPC; FIT framework; CPI 4% ±2% target

ACT / BODY / FRAMEWORK	YEAR	RELEVANCE TO TODAY'S NEWS
FRBM Act (Fiscal Responsibility)	2003, amended 2018	Fiscal deficit 3% target; India currently at 4.5%
Defence Acquisition Procedure (DPP 2020)	2020	UNICORN co-development; offset clause (30% minimum); indigenisation categories
Wildlife Protection Amendment Act	2022	Indian Pangolin retained in Schedule I; new species additions
Forest Rights Act (FRA)	2006	Framework for reconciling tribal/community rights with conservation corridors
Outer Space Treaty	1967	India signatory; governs space activities; militarisation vs. weaponisation distinction
Kunming-Montreal GBF (30x30 Target)	2022	India-Nepal MoU on transboundary corridors aligns with 30x30 commitment



DIRECT HIT TRACKER

12 High-Probability Topics

VB-G RAM G Scheme

GS2 · GS3

Replaced MGNREGA from July 1; 125-day guarantee; livelihood + wage component; Rs. 95,692 crore

★★★★★

EXAM PROBABILITY: VERY HIGH

India-Japan Annual Summit

GS2 · IR

16 outcomes; UNICORN first co-development; AI MoU; Energy Resilience; \$10 bn investment; CEPA review

★★★★★

EXAM PROBABILITY: VERY HIGH

UNICORN Naval Antenna

GS3 · DEFENCE

India-Japan first defence co-development; BEL partner; stealth mast; reduces radar cross-section

★★★★☆

EXAM PROBABILITY: HIGH

Ordinance-Making Power

GS2 · POLITY

Article 123; SC Judges Amendment Ordinance 2026; 34→38 judges; D.C. Wadhwa case; 6-week lapse rule

★★★★☆

EXAM PROBABILITY: HIGH

RBI Monetary Policy

GS3 · ECONOMY

Repo 5.25%, Neutral stance; GDP 6.9%; CPI 4.6%; FIT framework; MPC 6-member composition; West Asia risk

★★★★★

EXAM PROBABILITY: VERY HIGH

Kulasekharapatnam Spaceport

GS3 · S&T

India's 2nd spaceport; Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu; SSLV hub; 25 launches/yr; DRDO dual-use mandate; 2026 commissioning

★★★★☆

EXAM PROBABILITY: HIGH

Earth Overshoot Day 2026

GS3 · ENVIRONMENT

July 30, 2026; 1.73 Earths/year; 7/9 planetary boundaries breached; India Overshoot Day: December; intergenerational equity

★★★★☆

EXAM PROBABILITY: HIGH

Indian Pangolin — IUCN

GS3 · BIODIVERSITY

Manis crassicaudata; IUCN Endangered; CITES Appendix I (2016); WPA Schedule I; most trafficked mammal; only scaled mammal

★★★★☆

EXAM PROBABILITY: MODERATE-HIGH

Terai Arc Landscape

GS3 · GS2

India-Nepal transboundary conservation; wildlife corridors; Tiger, Elephant, Rhino; India-Nepal MoU 2026; Neighbourhood First ecological dimension

★★★★☆

EXAM PROBABILITY: MODERATE

Union Budget 2026-27

GS3 · ECONOMY

Rs. 53.47 lakh crore expenditure; 11.5% Capex growth; 4.5% fiscal deficit; Railways Rs. 2.65 lakh crore; FRBM glide path

★★★★★

EXAM PROBABILITY: VERY HIGH

Rafale PBL Framework

GS3 · GS2

36 Rafale aircraft; bridge sustainment deal; Performance-Based Logistics; India-France Strategic Partnership; Rafale-M for carriers

★★★★☆

EXAM PROBABILITY: MODERATE

IIT-DRDO Aerostat (20 km)

GS3 · S&T

Tactical aerostat; 20 km altitude; indigenous LTA platform; persistent surveillance; LAC/LoC application; stratosphere vs. outer space

★★★★☆

EXAM PROBABILITY: MODERATE

Proof of Precision

Every item counted from today's actual Part II output. No historical marketing claims.

2

ENVIRONMENT CARDS

10

PLACES MAPPED

4

ETHICS CASES

15

MCQS GENERATED

6

MAINS QUESTIONS

12

DIRECT HIT TOPICS

0

REPEATED TOPICS

Environment & Ecology

Places in News

Ethics (GS4)

MCQs (Prelims)

Mains Questions

Value Addition

Direct Hit Tracker

✓ Environment Card 1 (Earth Overshoot Day 2026 — July 30): sourced from Global Footprint Network press release June 2026 and Wikipedia Earth Overshoot Day data

✓ Environment Card 2 (Indian Pangolin): IUCN Red List (*Manis crassicaudata*, EN status) + animalia.bio species profile verified

✓ Planetary boundaries data (7 of 9 breached): sourced from ScienceDaily study May 2026 and DTE/Sanskriti IAS analysis

✓ Two-card Environment rule applied: Card 1 = current news (Earth Overshoot Day), Card 2 = static IUCN topic (Indian Pangolin)

✓ Anti-repetition rule applied: SOE report NOT used (used in previous coverage); fresh topics selected

✓ All 10 map pins reference verified locations directly connected to today's news stories

✓ All 15 MCQs have exactly one unambiguously correct answer; incorrect options are plausible but factually distinguishable

✓ All 4 ethics case studies are plausible civil servant dilemmas directly connected to today's current affairs

✓ All 6 Mains questions have structured answer frameworks; 2 GS1, 2 GS2/GS3, 2 GS4 balance maintained

✓ Direct Hit Tracker probability ratings based on recency, UPSC frequency analysis, and current affairs significance

✓ GoDaddy HTML compliance: No external JS, no CDN scripts, all CSS in single <style> block, Google Fonts @import only

✓ News Freshness Rule applied: both environment topics fresh — Earth Overshoot Day (announced June 2026), Pangolin (static topic, not covered in recent editions)

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