

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

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 TheIAS Akademia

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 UPSC CSE 2027

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§1 Environment

India's 100th Ramsar Wetland — Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Taal, Ballia, Uttar Pradesh)

GS3

ENVIRONMENT

PYQ

RAMSAR

WETLANDS

BALLIA

WHY IN NEWS

PM Modi announced Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Taal), Ballia, Uttar Pradesh as India's 100th Ramsar Wetland on World Environment Day, 5 June 2026 (PIB verified). India is now 1st in Asia and 3rd globally in Ramsar site count.

BACKGROUND

India signed the Ramsar Convention (1971) in 1982; the convention follows a "wise use" principle of sustainable utilisation. Surha Taal is an oxbow lake of the Ghaghra (Saryu) river in eastern UP — critical habitat for Sarus Crane and migratory waterfowl.

PRELIMS FACTS

- ▶ Surha Taal: oxbow lake, Ballia district, UP; formed by meander cutoff of Ghaghra (Saryu) river; named after Jai Prakash Narayan
- ▶ India: 100 Ramsar sites | 13.26 lakh ha | 1st Asia | 3rd globally (UK-176, Mexico-144 lead)
- ▶ Ramsar Convention 1971, Iran; India signatory 1982; Chilika Lake = India's first Ramsar site (1981)
- ▶ Surha Taal = 13th Ramsar site in UP; Sarus Crane, migratory waterfowl habitat

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- ▶ Governance gap: designation does not guarantee protection — Ramsar sites lack funded management plans and effective legal enforcement
- ▶ Wetland-water nexus: Gangetic plain oxbow lakes recharge groundwater, buffer floods, support millions in agriculture
- ▶ Encroachment threat: sand mining, agricultural runoff, and construction pressure newly designated Ramsar sites within months of listing

UPSC SYLLABUS

GS3: BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION

GS3: INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTIONS

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2019: Ramsar Convention obligations vs. India's record of wetland protection.

PROBABLE MCQ

Consider statements about India's Ramsar sites:

1. Chilika Lake was India's first Ramsar site.
2. Surha Taal (Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary) is located in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh.
3. India ranks first globally in total Ramsar sites.

Which is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

✓ Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only — India is 3rd globally (behind UK-176, Mexico-144), NOT 1st.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

India has crossed 100 Ramsar Wetland designations yet wetland degradation is accelerating. Examine the gap between designation and conservation, and suggest institutional reforms. (250 words)

Ramsar designation is a beginning, not an end. UPSC Mains wants "critical analysis" — celebrate the milestone, then immediately pivot to the enforcement vacuum and "wise use vs. encroachment" paradox. Write "intent vs. implementation."

§2 Places in News — 10 June 2026

PLACES IN NEWS — 10 JUNE 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- ① Baltal/Minamarg (Zojila Tunnel breakthrough)
- ② Ballia, UP (India's 100th Ramsar — Surha Taal)
- ③ Naypyidaw, Myanmar (President state visit)
- ④ Canberra (Australia NDS 2026 — India top-tier)
- ⑤ Jakarta (BrahMos deal — Indonesia)
- ⑥ New Delhi (Defence Investiture Ceremony 2026)

① Baltal / Minamarg, J&K / Ladakh

Zojila Tunnel — Final Breakthrough

India's longest road tunnel (14.2 km) connecting Baltal, J&K to Minamarg, Ladakh achieved final breakthrough on 9 June 2026 — world's highest bi-directional road tunnel.

② Ballia, Uttar Pradesh, India

Surha Taal — India's 100th Ramsar Site

Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Taal), Ballia, UP designated India's 100th Ramsar Wetland (PIB-verified, 5 June 2026). 13th Ramsar site in UP.

Type: Oxbow lake (Ghaghra river) | **India:** 1st Asia, 3rd global

Length: 14.2 km | **Alt:** 3,528 m | **Builder:** NHIDCL/MoRTH | **Method:** NATM

③ Naypyidaw, Myanmar

Myanmar President State Visit to India

President Min Aung Hlaing's first-ever state visit to India (May 30–June 3, 2026); Kaladan project, Trilateral Highway, ICCR scholarships (raised to 100/yr) discussed.

Border: 1,643 km | **Key link:** Kaladan Multimodal Project

④ Canberra, Australia

Australia NDS 2026 — India Top-Tier Partner

Australia's NDS 2026 lists India among only 5 "top-tier security partners" (USA, UK, Japan, NZ, India) — highest bilateral security category.

MLSA: signed 2020 | **Exercise:** AUSINDEX (biennial) | **Quad:** member

⑤ Jakarta, Indonesia

BrahMos Missile Deal — India's Largest ASEAN Export

India finalised BrahMos supersonic cruise missile deal with Indonesia — India's largest single-platform defence export to any ASEAN nation, strengthening Act East Policy.

Speed: Mach 2.8–3.0 | **JV:** DRDO–NPO (India–Russia)

⑥ New Delhi, India

Defence Investiture Ceremony 2026

President Murmu conferred 51 gallantry awards at Rashtrapati Bhavan; Gaganyaan astronaut-designate Air Cdre Prasanth B. Nair received Kirti Chakra (2nd highest peacetime award).

Peacetime: Ashoka Chakra > Kirti Chakra > Shaurya Chakra

§3 Ethics & Integrity Cases

Case 1: Collector & Wetland Encroachment

A DC is pressured by a builder lobby to approve construction near India's newly designated Ramsar site. NGOs and fisherfolk oppose. The project displaces 2,000 but creates 500 jobs. How should the DC respond?

VIRTUES: INTEGRITY · PUBLIC TRUST · RULE OF LAW · STAKEHOLDER BALANCE

Case 2: MoD Official & Conflict of Interest

A senior MoD official discovers her spouse's firm has a subcontract in the BrahMos–Indonesia deal she processed. She was unaware during early-stage approvals. Should she disclose, recuse, or stay on?

VIRTUES: TRANSPARENCY · CONFLICT OF INTEREST · ACCOUNTABILITY

Case 3: IAS Probationer & Faculty Fraud

A DM finds an IIT campus in her district shows zero vacancies officially, yet teaches via unqualified ad-hoc lecturers. The Institution Director is connected to a senior Minister. What should the DM do?

VIRTUES: COURAGE · WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION · PROBITY · INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS

Case 4: OCI Cardholder & Security Breach

An OCI cardholder at a defence PSU attended a foreign government conference where India's procurement strategies were discussed. Security agencies flag it. As Ethics Officer, how do you advise HR?

VIRTUES: NATIONAL SECURITY · DUE PROCESS · FAIRNESS · PROPORTIONALITY

§4 Prelims MCQs — 15 Questions

Q1 — ENVIRONMENT / RAMSAR

Which of the following is CORRECT about the Ramsar Convention? 1. It was adopted at Ramsar, Iran in 1971. 2. India became a signatory in 1982. 3. Chilika Lake was India's FIRST Ramsar site. Select:

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

Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3 — All correct. Ramsar 1971, India 1982, Chilika first (1981).

Q2 — ENVIRONMENT / PLACES

Surha Taal (Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary), India's 100th Ramsar Wetland, is located in:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| (a) Begusarai, Bihar | (b) Ballia, Uttar Pradesh |
| (c) Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh | (d) Burdwan, West Bengal |

Answer: (b) Ballia, Uttar Pradesh — PIB verified; 13th Ramsar site in UP; oxbow lake of the Ghaghra river.

Q3 — INFRASTRUCTURE

The Zojila Tunnel connects:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| (a) Srinagar and Leh | (b) Baltal (J&K) and Minamarg (Ladakh) |
| (c) Banihal and Qazigund | (d) Jammu and Udhampur |

Answer: (b) Baltal (J&K) and Minamarg (Ladakh) — 14.2 km, NHIDCL, world's highest bi-directional road tunnel.

Q4 — POLITY

Which Article of the Indian Constitution prohibits dual citizenship?

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| (a) Article 5 | (b) Article 8 |
| (c) Article 9 | (d) Article 11 |

Answer: (c) Article 9 — Persons voluntarily acquiring citizenship of a foreign state lose Indian citizenship.

Q5 — DEFENCE AWARDS

Correct descending order for India's WARTIME gallantry awards:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (a) PVC > MVC > Vir Chakra | (b) Ashoka Chakra > PVC > MVC |
| (c) PVC > Ashoka Chakra > MVC | (d) MVC > PVC > Vir Chakra |

Answer: (a) PVC > MVC > Vir Chakra — Param Vir Chakra is India's highest wartime gallantry award.

Q6 — IR / CONNECTIVITY

The Kaladan Multimodal Transit Project route is:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| (a) Chennai → Colombo → Trincomalee | (b) Kolkata → Sittwe port → Kaladan river → Mizoram |
| (c) Moreh → Tamu → Mae Sot | (d) Kolkata → Dhaka → Agartala |

Answer: (b) — Sea from Kolkata to Sittwe (Myanmar), then inland waterway via Kaladan river to Mizoram.

Q7 — ECONOMY / BOP

In India's Balance of Payments, which belong to the CURRENT ACCOUNT? 1. Workers' remittances 2. FDI inflows 3. Software services exports 4. External commercial borrowings

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only — FDI (2) and ECB (4) are Capital/Financial Account items.

Q8 — ENVIRONMENT

India's rank globally in Ramsar Wetland sites as of June 2026:

- (a) 1st
- (b) 2nd
- (c) 3rd
- (d) 5th

Answer: (c) 3rd — India (100 sites) behind UK (176) and Mexico (144). Trap: "1st in Asia" ≠ "1st globally."

Q9 — SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

BrahMos missile is a joint venture of India and:

- (a) France
- (b) Israel
- (c) Russia
- (d) USA

Answer: (c) Russia — DRDO (India) + NPO Mashinostroyeniya (Russia); name from Brahmaputra + Moskva rivers.

Q10 — POLITY / OCI

Which are NOT available to OCI cardholders? 1. Voting rights in Indian elections 2. Right to work in India without separate work visa 3. Right to buy agricultural land in India

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only — OCI CANNOT vote and CANNOT buy agri land; they CAN work without a separate work visa.

Q11 — ENVIRONMENT

The "wise use" principle under the Ramsar Convention means:

- (a) Complete prohibition on human activity in wetlands
- (b) Sustainable use compatible with ecosystem maintenance
- (c) Maximum economic exploitation of wetland resources
- (d) Protection only if endangered species are present

Answer: (b) — Wise use = sustainable utilisation for human benefit while maintaining ecological character.

Q12 — IR / QUAD

The QUAD grouping comprises:

- (a) India, USA, Japan, South Korea
- (b) India, USA, Japan, Australia
- (c) India, USA, Australia, New Zealand
- (d) India, USA, Japan, UK

Answer: (b) India, USA, Japan, Australia — Revived 2017; Leaders' Summit format since 2021.

Q13 — EDUCATION / GOVERNANCE

IIT faculty appointments are governed by:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) UGC Act, 1956 | (b) IIT Act, 1961 |
| (c) AICTE Act, 1987 | (d) NEP 2020 Regulations |

Answer: (b) IIT Act, 1961 — IITs are autonomous; not subject to UGC Act for faculty appointments.

Q14 — DEFENCE / SPACE

Gaganyaan involves how many IAF astronaut-trainees?

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| (a) 2 | (b) 3 |
| (c) 4 | (d) 6 |

Answer: (c) 4 — Four IAF pilots; trained at Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre, Russia.

Q15 — ECONOMY / FDI

After the 2026 FDI policy amendment, the FDI limit in Indian insurance via automatic route is:

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| (a) 49% | (b) 74% |
| (c) 26% | (d) 100% |

Answer: (d) 100% — 100% FDI in insurance now permitted under FY26 liberalisation.

§5 Mains Questions — 6 Questions

GS3 — ENVIRONMENT

India has crossed 100 Ramsar Wetland designations yet wetland degradation is accelerating. Examine the gap between designation and conservation, and suggest institutional reforms. (250 words)

Hint: Ramsar "wise use" → Wetlands Rules 2017 limitations → enforcement vacuum → funding gaps → integrated management need.

GS2 — NEIGHBOURHOOD / IR

Critically evaluate India's engagement with Myanmar's military government within the "Neighbourhood First" policy. Does realpolitik override democratic values in India's neighbourhood diplomacy? (250 words)

Hint: Kaladan + Trilateral Highway value → China competition → India's democratic identity → ASEAN gateway argument.

GS3 — INFRASTRUCTURE + DEFENCE

The Zojila Tunnel represents a convergence of infrastructure development and national security. Analyse. (150 words)

Hint: Ladakh isolation history → Op Sindoor urgency → supply chain reliability → NATM technique → deterrence dividend.

GS2 — POLITY / CITIZENSHIP

OCI status is often described as "near-citizenship." Examine its legal contours and restrictions, and evaluate whether the constitutional framework permits any further extension of rights to India's global diaspora. (150 words)

Hint: Article 9 single citizenship → OCI origin 2005 → restrictions (vote, agri land, public office) → diaspora demand for voting rights.

GS2 — IR / INDO-PACIFIC

Australia's NDS 2026 designates India a "top-tier security partner" without a formal alliance. What does this reveal about India's strategic autonomy in the Indo-Pacific? (150 words)

Hint: "Alignment without alliance" → Quad → MLSA logistics access → Indian Ocean primacy → non-Five Eyes member status.

GS3 — ECONOMY / BOP

India's Q4 FY26 current account surplus and record remittances signal a structural shift in the Balance of Payments. Critically examine the drivers and sustainability of this trend. (250 words)

Hint: IT/ITES export surplus → diaspora remittances (\$43.5 bn) → FDI \$90 bn → CAD to CAS shift → global headwinds risk.

§6 Answer Writing Value Addition

Key Data & Quotes — 10 June 2026

Topic	Value Addition Data
Ramsar / Surha Taal	100 sites, 13.26 lakh ha; India 1st Asia, 3rd global; UK-176, Mexico-144; Surha Taal = 13th in UP; Chilika = first (1981); India signed Ramsar 1982
Zojila Tunnel	14.2 km; 3,528 m alt; 15 min vs 3.5 hr; NHIDCL/MoRTH; NATM method; Baltal (J&K)–Minamarg (Ladakh)
India–Myanmar	1,643 km border; Kaladan: Kolkata→Sittwe→river→Mizoram; Trilateral: Moreh→Tamu→Mae Sot; ICCR scholarships 100/yr
BrahMos Export	Mach 2.8–3.0; DRDO–NPO JV; name = Brahmaputra + Moskva; Indonesia = India's largest ASEAN defence export

§7 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

Today's Direct Hit Stories — UPSC CSE 2027 Probability Assessment

#	Story / Fact	GS Paper	Hit Type	Probability
1	Surha Taal location: Ballia, UP (not Bihar)	GS3	Prelims Factual	HIGH
2	Ramsar Convention obligations & wise use	GS3	Prelims + Mains	HIGH
3	Zojila: length, altitude, connecting points	GS3	Prelims Factual	HIGH
4	OCI vs. dual citizenship; Article 9	GS2	Prelims + Mains	HIGH
5	India–Myanmar border: 1,643 km; 4 states	GS2	Prelims Factual	HIGH
6	Kaladan route: Kolkata→Sittwe→Mizoram	GS2	Prelims Factual	HIGH
7	BrahMos: speed, JV, name etymology	GS3	Prelims Factual	HIGH
8	Gallantry award hierarchy (wartime vs. peacetime)	GS3	Prelims Factual	HIGH
9	Current Account vs. Capital Account (BoP)	GS3	Prelims Conceptual	HIGH
10	Gaganyaan: 4 astronaut-trainees; Russia training	GS3	Prelims Factual	HIGH
11	India 3rd globally in Ramsar (not 1st) — TRAP Q	GS3	Prelims Trap	HIGH
12	India "top-tier" in Australia NDS — QUAD context	GS2	Prelims + Mains	HIGH

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UPSC CSE Prelims 2026 Results

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

48

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7

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

6

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE CLASS

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