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Weekly Current Affairs Compilation · UPSC Prelims · 18 Topics

A Prelims-focused current affairs compilation — every topic mapped across Why in News, static links, a Prelims Matrix, a unique fact, an exam trap, and a fully worked model MCQ with approach.

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"innovation in learning"

Giant African Snail

WHY IN NEWS

Experts warned in July 2026 that the Giant African Snail (Lissachatina fulica) poses serious health risks to Chennai residents after heavy rains triggered a citywide infestation, reviving concerns first raised during Kerala's Kottayam outbreak.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Invasive alien species in India (Lantana camara, water hyacinth, African catfish)**
  Same 'no natural predator, unchecked spread' invasion pathway as GAS
- **IUCN's '100 Worst Invasive Alien Species' list**
  GAS is itself named on this exact global list
- **One Health approach — Kerala's 2022 Kottayam model**
  Template for the coordinated human-animal-environment response GAS outbreaks require
- **Vector-borne parasitic diseases (Angiostrongylus)**
  Same nematode pathway links GAS to human meningitis cases

PRELIMS MATRIX

IUCN status	Not Evaluated — invasive alien species
CITES appendix	Not listed
WPA Schedule	Not applicable — invasive pest, actively controlled, not protected
Native range	East Africa
Introduced to India	1847, via colonial trade ships
Shell size	up to ~20 cm
Reproduction	Hermaphrodite; 50–200 eggs/clutch
Health risk	Carries nematode causing eosinophilic meningitis

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

It is a hermaphrodite that self-fertilises and lays up to 200 eggs per clutch, letting a single introduced snail found an entire invasive population.

EXAM TRAP

As an invasive pest, the snail carries **no** IUCN threat category, CITES listing, or WPA Schedule — the opposite of most 'species in the news' in this edition. Don't assume every species making conservation headlines is protected; some are being actively controlled.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Giant African Snail (Lissachatina fulica), consider the following statements:
1. It is native to East Africa and was introduced to India in the 19th century.
2. It features on the IUCN's list of the world's worst invasive alien species.
3. It can act as a vector for a parasitic nematode that causes meningitis in humans.
How many of the statements given above are correct?

A Only one
B Only two
C All three
D None

Answer: All three

Approach

All three statements describe well-documented, independent facts about the snail — origin, IUCN invasive-species listing, and its role as a disease vector. When a UPSC-style question stacks multiple factual statements about one species with no contradictions between them, and each is a standard textbook fact rather than an obscure exception, 'all correct' is often the intended answer. The giveaway here is the specific, technical detail in statement 3 (a named health risk) — such specificity is usually included because it is verifiably true, not as a distractor.

Nameri Tiger Reserve

WHY IN NEWS

Assam's Nameri Tiger Reserve recorded a fourfold rise in tiger numbers — from 3 (2022) to 12 (2025), validated by the Wildlife Institute of India — with two tigers returning to Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary after decades of local extinction (announced 3 July 2026).

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Assam's four tiger reserves (Kaziranga, Manas, Nameri, Orang)**
  Revise Nameri alongside the other three for area/species comparisons
- **Project Tiger (1973) and NTCA**
  Nameri's tiger recovery is a direct outcome of NTCA-monitored management
- **Sonitpur Elephant Reserve**
  Nameri lies within this larger reserve — a classic overlapping-PA trap
- **All India Tiger Estimation (WII + NTCA)**
  Source of the exact 'fourfold rise' figure in this news item

PRELIMS MATRIX

State / district	Assam, Sonitpur district
Declared Tiger Reserve	2000 — Assam's 2nd, after Manas
Core areas	Nameri NP (200 sq km) + Sonai-Rupai WLS satellite core (120 sq km)
Total area	344 sq km
Key river	Jia Bhoroli (tributary of Brahmaputra; Golden Mahseer habitat)
Signature species	White-winged wood duck (one of India's last strongholds)

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Nameri shares its northern boundary with Pakke Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh, forming a contiguous cross-state tiger landscape in the Eastern Himalayan foothills.

EXAM TRAP

Don't confuse Nameri (Assam, Sonitpur district) with Namdapha (Arunachal Pradesh) — a frequent name mix-up in prelims. Also remember Nameri is Assam's **second** tiger reserve after Manas, not its first.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Consider the following pairs of Tiger Reserves and their bordering Protected Areas:
1. Nameri Tiger Reserve — Pakke Tiger Reserve
2. Kaziranga Tiger Reserve — Orang National Park
3. Manas Tiger Reserve — Royal Manas National Park (Bhutan)

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

A 1 only
B 1 and 3 only
C 2 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 and 3 only

Approach
Verify each pair against known geography rather than guessing: Nameri's shared boundary with Pakke (Arunachal Pradesh) is a well-established, frequently tested fact, so pair 1 is correct. Manas Tiger Reserve's transboundary link with Bhutan's Royal Manas National Park is equally well documented, confirming pair 3. Pair 2 is the trap — Kaziranga and Orang are both in Assam and ecologically linked via wildlife corridors, but they do not share a direct administrative boundary, so treat geographically 'nearby' as different from 'bordering'.

Cyttopsis indica

WHY IN NEWS

ICAR-CMFRI scientists (July 2026) identified Cyttopsis indica, the 'Indian Dory', as a new deep-sea fish species from the Arabian Sea off Kollam, Kerala — resolving a long-standing taxonomic mix-up with the Atlantic species Cyttopsis rosea.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Deep-sea biodiversity exploration off India's coast**
  Part of India's push to document unexplored EEZ/slope fauna
- **DNA barcoding / integrative taxonomy methods**
  The exact technique used to confirm this as a new species
- **ICAR-CMFRI's mandate and marine fisheries research**
  Tests whether CMFRI is correctly placed under agriculture, not environment
- **Continental slope ecosystems of the Lakshadweep Sea**
  Locates the discovery within India's marine geography syllabus

PRELIMS MATRIX

Order / family	Zeiformes / Parazenidae
Depth of discovery	350–500 m
Location	Continental slope off Sakthikulangara, Kollam, Kerala
Discovering institute	ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi
Method	Morphology + mitochondrial COI gene barcoding
Common name	Indian Dory
IUCN status	Not yet assessed — too recently described
CITES appendix	Not listed
WPA Schedule	Not applicable — marine fish, no commercial fishery threat identified yet

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Genetic analysis showed 4.6–11% divergence from its closest relatives, and also proved that Cyttopsis rosea — long assumed to occur in the Indian Ocean too — is in fact confined to the Atlantic.

EXAM TRAP

ICAR-CMFRI operates under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (via ICAR), **not** the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change — a common ministry mix-up when a marine species discovery is framed as an 'environment' story.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to Cyttopsis indica, recently in the news, consider the following statements:
1. It was discovered by the Zoological Survey of India.
2. It belongs to the order Zeiformes, commonly known as dories.
3. Its discovery was confirmed using DNA barcoding along with morphological analysis.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only
B 2 and 3 only
C 1 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 2 and 3 only

Approach
Isolate the one statement that names a specific institution — statement 1 — and check it against the known discovering body. Since ICAR-CMFRI, not ZSI, made this discovery, statement 1 fails immediately regardless of how plausible it sounds. The other two describe method and taxonomy, both directly confirmed by the source reporting, so they stand. Whenever a statement names a specific agency, treat it as the highest-value one to verify first, since institutional attribution is a favourite prelims trap.

Borjuli Wetland

WHY IN NEWS

The Borjuli wetland in Assam's Sonitpur district was notified as a Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS) in July 2026 to protect its population of Oryza rufipogon, a disease- and pest-resistant wild rice that is the direct progenitor of cultivated rice.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Biodiversity Heritage Sites under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002**
  Borjuli's notification is a live example of this legal category
- **Crop Wild Relatives (CWR) and in-situ gene conservation**
  Oryza rufipogon is the textbook CWR conserved in its native habitat
- **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) and State Biodiversity Boards**
  The two-tier institutional structure that notified Borjuli
- **Assam's other BHS — Majuli, Hajong Tortoise Lake**
  Revise together for a 'match the BHS to state' question

PRELIMS MATRIX

State / district	Assam, Sonitpur district
Area	Just 0.41 hectare
Species protected	Oryza rufipogon (wild rice, progenitor of Oryza sativa)
Legal basis	Section 37, Biological Diversity Act, 2002
Implementing agency	ICAR-NBPGR with Assam State Biodiversity Board; funded by NRAA
National standing	Assam's 3rd BHS; India's 55th BHS (as of July 2026)
IUCN status (O. rufipogon)	Least Concern (2017 assessment)
CITES appendix	Not listed
WPA Schedule	Not applicable — protected via Biological Diversity Act, not WPA

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Despite covering barely 0.41 hectare — smaller than a football field — Borjuli is globally significant as a live gene bank for developing flood- and salinity-tolerant rice varieties.

EXAM TRAP

A Biodiversity Heritage Site is notified under the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002** — a completely different law from the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 under which National Parks and Sanctuaries are declared. Don't club BHS notifications with WPA protected-area categories.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS) in India, consider the following statements:
1. They are notified under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
2. The Borjuli wetland in Assam was notified as a BHS to conserve a wild rice population.
3. Oryza rufipogon, found at Borjuli, is the wild progenitor of cultivated rice.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only
B 2 and 3 only
C 1 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 2 and 3 only

Approach
Treat statement 1 as a law-attribution claim and check it independently of the other two — BHS notifications flow from Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, not the Wildlife Protection Act, so statement 1 is false regardless of how correct 2 and 3 are. This is a standard prelims pattern: bundle two accurate factual statements with one plausible-sounding but wrong legal attribution.

Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary

WHY IN NEWS

A large-scale eviction drive began in July 2026 at Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam's Nagaon district, targeting alleged illegal jute cultivation and encroachment spread across hundreds of bighas of protected forest land.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Kaziranga Tiger Reserve's buffer zone network**
  Laokhowa is one notified buffer — tests PA-hierarchy knowledge
- **Rhino translocation and reintroduction ecology in Assam**
  The failed 2016 Laokhowa reintroduction is a standard case study
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 — eviction and rights provisions**
  The 2026 eviction drive is a live application of these provisions
- **Laokhowa-Burachapori ecosystem**
  Tests whether you can separate these two adjoining but distinct sanctuaries

PRELIMS MATRIX

State / district	Assam, Nagaon district
Area	70.13 sq km
Location	Southern bank of the Brahmaputra River
Status	Notified buffer of Kaziranga Tiger Reserve
Key species	Indian one-horned rhinoceros, Asiatic water buffalo, Bengal tiger
History	Rhino population wiped out by poaching in the early 1980s; a 2016 reintroduction of two rhinos from Kaziranga failed within months

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The failed 2016 rhino reintroduction — where both translocated animals died of natural causes within months — is a frequently cited cautionary case study in reintroduction ecology and habitat-readiness assessment.

EXAM TRAP

Laokhowa lies on the **southern** bank of the Brahmaputra, not the northern bank — a directional trap. Also don't merge it administratively with the adjoining Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary (~44 sq km); the two are distinct notified sanctuaries within one shared ecosystem.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary, consider the following statements:
1. It lies on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River.
2. It functions as a notified buffer of the Kaziranga Tiger Reserve.
3. It is administratively the same protected area as the Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 2 only
B 1 and 2 only
C 2 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 2 only

Approach
Check the two 'trap-shaped' statements (1 and 3) against precise facts rather than general impression — Laokhowa is on the southern bank (not northern), eliminating statement 1, and it is a legally distinct sanctuary from Burhachapori despite being part of the same shared ecosystem, eliminating statement 3. Statement 2, its buffer status for Kaziranga, is a clean, well-documented fact. When two statements sound almost right but invert a direction or merge two similar-sounding entities, suspect a deliberate trap.

Matcha Tea

WHY IN NEWS

Assam's Chota Tingrai Tea Estate in Tinsukia became India's first commercial matcha tea producer, auctioning its debut batch at the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre on 3 July 2026 — the result of a decade-long Indo-Japan collaboration.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Geographical Indication status of Assam/Darjeeling tea**
  Contrast a GI-tag story with this pure production-technique story
- **India's tea auction system (Guwahati, Kolkata)**
  The same Guwahati Centre hosted matcha's landmark first sale
- **India-Japan agricultural and technology collaboration**
  Matcha's decade-long tech transfer is a case study in this bilateral theme
- **Speciality/value-added agri-exports**
  Matcha diversification fits India's push into premium agri-exports

PRELIMS MATRIX

State / district	Assam, Tinsukia district
Estate	Chota Tingrai Tea Estate
First auction	Guwahati Tea Auction Centre, Sale 27, Lot No. 7001
Auctioneer / buyer	J Thomas & Co Pvt Ltd / Sheosons Chai Co, Guwahati
Collaboration	10-year partnership with Japanese tea experts and equipment
Significance	First state in India to commercially produce matcha

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Matcha is not a separate tea plant — it is a finely ground powder made from specially shade-grown green tea leaves, traditionally processed using Japanese stone-milling techniques.

EXAM TRAP

This is a production/technique innovation story, **not** a Geographical Indication (GI) tag story — unlike Sirsa Kinnow or Ladakh Sea Buckthorn elsewhere in this compilation. Don't conflate 'first to commercially produce X' with 'first to receive a GI tag for X'.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the recent matcha tea development in Assam, consider the following statements:
1. Assam became the first Indian state to commercially produce matcha tea.
2. Matcha received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag for the first time in India in this development.
3. The initiative involved a long-term collaboration with Japanese tea experts.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 3 only
B 2 and 3 only
C 1 and 2 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 and 3 only

Approach
Separate the 'production milestone' claim from the 'legal/IP recognition' claim — these are two different kinds of achievement that current-affairs questions often deliberately mix up. Statement 2 introduces a GI tag, which was never part of this story; the news was about commercial production capability, not intellectual property registration. Once that distractor is isolated, statements 1 and 3 both hold up directly against the reported facts.

Canscora agni

WHY IN NEWS

Researchers discovered Canscora agni, a new plant species, on Sus Hill in Maharashtra's Pune district (reported July 2026) — found only in fire-prone savanna habitat and proposed for Critically Endangered status.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Fire ecology and savanna ecosystems of the Deccan Plateau**
  The species' name and survival strategy hinge on this concept
- **Western Ghats and peninsular India plant endemism**
  Situates this single-location discovery within India's endemism hotspots
- **IUCN Red List assessment criteria for newly described species**
  Explains why it's only 'proposed' CE, not formally assessed
- **Grassland/savanna conservation vs afforestation debates**
  Directly informs the GS3 debate on tree-planting harming grasslands

PRELIMS MATRIX

Family	Gentianaceae
Genus	Canscora
Location	Sus Hill, Pune district, Maharashtra
Habitat	Fire-prone savanna
Closest relative	Canscora alata (grows up to 60 cm; C. agni is a small dwarf herb)
IUCN status	Proposed Critically Endangered (not yet formally assessed)
CITES appendix	Not listed
WPA Schedule	Not applicable — plant, not yet notified under any Schedule

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Its species name 'agni' means 'fire' in several Indian languages, reflecting the plant's dependence on the periodic natural fires that clear overgrown woody vegetation and let dwarf savanna herbs like it thrive.

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume all fire in Indian ecosystems is destructive — Canscora agni is direct evidence that periodic natural fire is ecologically necessary in savanna systems, the opposite of the standard GS3 'prevent forest fires' narrative applied uncritically.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Canscora agni, a plant species recently discovered in India:
1. It was discovered in a fire-prone savanna ecosystem in Maharashtra.
2. It belongs to the same family as the Gentian group of plants.
3. Its dependence on periodic fire indicates that all fire events in Indian ecosystems are ecologically destructive.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only
B 1 and 3 only
C 2 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 and 2 only

Approach
Notice that statement 3 makes a sweeping generalisation ('all fire events... destructive') from a single specific case — this pattern of overreach is a common prelims trap. The discovery of a fire-adapted species is evidence against, not for, a blanket claim about fire being destructive. Statements 1 and 2 are narrow factual claims (location and taxonomic family) that match the reporting directly.

Seabuckthorn

WHY IN NEWS

Seabuckthorn seeds from Ladakh were sent to the International Space Station aboard NASA's Crew-11 mission as part of a 'Space for Agriculture' experiment, while Ladakh inaugurated a new Centre of Excellence for Sea Buckthorn at Nimoo to boost it as India's 'Sea Buckthorn Capital.'

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **GI-tagged Ladakh products (Pashmina, Apricot/Raktsey Karpo, Wood Carving)**
  Seabuckthorn is Ladakh's 4th GI product — revise together
- **DIHAR (Defence Institute of High Altitude Research)**
  The nodal defence-research institute behind its cultivation science
- **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)**
  The scheme that formally brought seabuckthorn into India's horticulture mission
- **Cold-desert ecology and soil-binding plants**
  Its nitrogen-fixing, erosion-control role is a classic ecology link

PRELIMS MATRIX

Botanical name	Hippophae rhamnoides
Local names	Leh Berry (Ladakh), Chharma (HP), also called 'Sanjivani Booti'
GI status	4th GI tag granted to Ladakh
Area under growth	~70% of India's total sea buckthorn area lies in Ladakh (~11,500+ ha)
Temperature tolerance	-43°C to +40°C
IUCN status	Not evaluated — widespread, commercially cultivated shrub
CITES appendix	Not listed
WPA Schedule	Not applicable — not a protected wild species

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

It is an actinorhizal, nitrogen-fixing shrub capable of colonising barren, low-fertility cold-desert soil — making it one of the few plants able to establish itself on completely unimproved land in Ladakh.

EXAM TRAP

Its popular name 'Sanjivani Booti', linked to the Ramayana legend of reviving Lakshmana, is a traditional/cultural association — **not** a scientifically verified taxonomic identity. Treat it as folklore context, not a factual botanical claim.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to Seabuckthorn (Hippophae rhamnoides), consider the following statements:
1. It is a nitrogen-fixing shrub capable of growing in low-fertility cold desert soils.
2. Ladakh accounts for the majority of India's area under seabuckthorn.
3. It has been scientifically confirmed as the 'Sanjivani Booti' referenced in the Ramayana.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only
B 2 and 3 only
C 1 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 and 2 only

Approach
Flag statement 3 immediately — any claim that a modern plant has been 'scientifically confirmed' as a mythological entity is inherently unverifiable and should be treated as a trap regardless of how often the folk association is repeated in popular sources. Statements 1 and 2 describe measurable, source-backed facts about growth conditions and geographic distribution, so they can be accepted.

Bandipur Tiger Reserve

WHY IN NEWS

Karnataka's Forest Department partially restricted evening jungle safaris at Bandipur (and neighbouring Nagarahole) Tiger Reserve for conservation reasons in 2025–26, triggering resort and homestay booking cancellations and reviving the conservation-versus-tourism debate.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve — India's first Biosphere Reserve (1986)**
  Bandipur is one of the core reserves inside this Biosphere Reserve
- **Tri-junction PA cluster: Bandipur-Nagarahole-Mudumalai-Wayanad**
  Revise together for a state-matching question on bordering PAs
- **Project Tiger and core-buffer safari regulation norms**
  The 2025-26 safari restriction is a direct application of these norms
- **Western and Eastern Ghats biogeography**
  Bandipur's 'ecological confluence' tag is rooted in this concept

PRELIMS MATRIX

State / districts	Karnataka — Mysuru & Chamarajanagar
Bordering PAs	Nagarahole TR (Karnataka), Mudumalai TR (Tamil Nadu), Wayanad WLS (Kerala)
Boundary river	Kabini River (separates Bandipur from Nagarahole)
Biosphere status	Part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO)
History	Former hunting ground of the Kingdom of Mysore
Unique feature	Ecological confluence of the Western and Eastern Ghats

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Bandipur represents a rare 'ecological confluence' where the Western and Eastern Ghats meet — a specific biogeographic feature that is frequently and directly tested in prelims.

EXAM TRAP

Nagarahole Tiger Reserve, separated from Bandipur only by the Kabini reservoir, is in **Karnataka itself**, not Kerala — students often misplace it. Kerala's neighbouring protected area is Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, and Tamil Nadu's is Mudumalai.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Bandipur Tiger Reserve, consider the following statements:
1. It is separated from Nagarahole Tiger Reserve by the Kabini reservoir.
2. Nagarahole Tiger Reserve lies in the state of Kerala.
3. Bandipur forms part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 3 only
B 2 and 3 only
C 1 and 2 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 and 3 only

Approach
Test statement 2 against a simple state-boundary check rather than assuming proximity implies a state change — Nagarahole is in Karnataka, the same state as Bandipur, despite bordering Kerala's forests nearby. This is the classic 'nearby state ≠ actual state' trap. Statements 1 and 3 are direct, well-documented geographic facts that hold up independently.

Sirsa Kinnow

WHY IN NEWS

'Sirsa Kinnow' received its Geographical Indication (GI) tag in June-July 2026 from the GI Registry, Chennai — becoming Haryana's first fruit ever to receive GI recognition, credited to a decade of scientific citrus farming under the Indo-Israel Centre of Excellence.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**
  The legal framework under which Sirsa Kinnow was registered
- **Darjeeling Tea — India's first GI product (2004-05)**
  Benchmark for how GI recognition has expanded since 2004-05
- **Indo-Israel Centres of Excellence in agriculture**
  The institution credited with Sirsa's scientific citrus farming gains
- **GI tags as IP protection vs indicators of native origin**
  The core conceptual trap this topic itself is built around

PRELIMS MATRIX

District	Sirsa, Haryana
GI applicant	Kharisureran Farmer Producer Company Ltd
Registering authority	GI Registry, Chennai (Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trade Marks)
Origin of Kinnow	Hybrid bred in 1915 by H.B. Frost, California (King × Willow Leaf mandarin)
Area under cultivation	~13,106 hectares
Annual production	~1.82 lakh metric tonnes

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Kinnow is not native to India at all — it is a 1915 Californian hybrid — yet the GI tag was still validly granted, because GI status certifies a distinctive local quality tied to a place of cultivation, not the geographic origin of the plant variety itself.

EXAM TRAP

A common misconception is that a GI tag certifies a product's **native or indigenous origin**. Sirsa Kinnow disproves this directly — the fruit variety originated in California, but its GI tag is based on the distinct quality it has developed through Sirsa's specific soil and climate.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Geographical Indication (GI) tag recently granted to Sirsa Kinnow, consider the following statements:
1. A GI tag certifies that a plant variety is native to the region for which it is registered.
2. Kinnow was originally developed as a citrus hybrid in California.
3. Sirsa Kinnow is the first fruit from Haryana to receive a GI tag.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 3 only
B 2 and 3 only
C 1 and 2 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 2 and 3 only

Approach
Test statement 1 against the definition of a GI tag rather than intuition — a GI certifies that a product's distinctive quality or reputation is linked to its place of production, not that the underlying species or variety originated there. Sirsa Kinnow is the textbook counter-example: a California-bred hybrid with a valid Indian GI tag. Once that conceptual trap is spotted, statements 2 and 3 are confirmed as accurate, specific facts from the reporting.

The Himalayan Pangolin

WHY IN NEWS

Conservationists in Nagaland's Kiphire district secured a community-led hunting ban across 42 villages (2026) to protect the Critically Endangered Chinese Pangolin — popularly called the 'Himalayan pangolin' — amid rising trafficking along the Indo-Myanmar border, even as a CITES report (Feb 2026) recorded over 500,000 pangolins seized worldwide between 2016–2024.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **CITES Appendix I uplisting of all pangolin species (2016/2017)**
  Explains why the Chinese Pangolin now carries top CITES protection
- **Community-led conservation and customary tribal courts in Nagaland**
  The exact mechanism behind the 2026 Kiphire hunting ban
- **India's two native pangolin species**
  Tests the Chinese vs Indian pangolin identification distinction
- **Golden Triangle wildlife trafficking corridor**
  Situates Nagaland/Manipur pangolin seizures within this trade route

PRELIMS MATRIX

Correct species name	Chinese Pangolin — Manis pentadactyla
IUCN status	Critically Endangered
CITES	Appendix I (all 8 pangolin species, since 2017)
WPA Schedule	Schedule I
Range in India	Himalayan foothills, Northeast India (Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal)
Key ID trait	Lacks the terminal tail scale present in the Indian Pangolin

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

India hosts only two of the world's eight pangolin species — the Chinese Pangolin (Himalayan foothills/Northeast) and the Indian Pangolin (peninsular India) — distinguished chiefly by the presence or absence of a terminal tail scale.

EXAM TRAP

'Himalayan pangolin' is not an official taxonomic name — the correct species is the **Chinese Pangolin** (*Manis pentadactyla*), distinct from the Indian Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) of peninsular India. Don't treat the popular name as a separate species.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the pangolin species found in India, consider the following statements:
1. India is home to two native pangolin species — the Chinese Pangolin and the Indian Pangolin.
2. All eight pangolin species worldwide are listed under CITES Appendix I.
3. The Chinese Pangolin can be distinguished from the Indian Pangolin by the presence of a terminal tail scale.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only
B 1 and 3 only
C 2 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 and 2 only

Approach
Isolate statement 3, which hinges on a single identifying feature, and check the direction of the claim carefully — the Chinese Pangolin is identified by the ABSENCE of the terminal tail scale, while the Indian Pangolin has it present. A statement that inverts a diagnostic feature is a classic prelims trap; the fact itself is real, but the direction is flipped. Statements 1 and 2 are straightforward factual claims that match the reporting.

LAST ONE MONTH

Eurasian Lynx

WHY IN NEWS

WWF-India confirmed the first-ever photographic record of the Eurasian Lynx in Sikkim in January 2026 — only the second photographic record of the species from the entire Eastern Himalayan region — captured by a camera trap at 5,250 m on the Tso Lhamo plateau, Mangan district.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Snow leopard and high-altitude rangeland monitoring programmes**
  The same WWF-India camera-trap network yielded this lynx record
- **The four extant Lynx species worldwide**
  Place Eurasian Lynx among Iberian, Canada and Bobcat for a match MCQ
- **Trans-Himalayan cold-desert wildlife of Sikkim and Ladakh**
  Situates the Tso Lhamo plateau sighting within this ecology
- **Camera-trap based wildlife survey methodology**
  The exact technique used to obtain this first photographic record

PRELIMS MATRIX

IUCN status (global)	Least Concern
CITES	Appendix II
WPA Schedule	Schedule I
Genus	Lynx (4 species: Eurasian, Iberian, Canada, Bobcat)
Habitat in India	Extremely rare; trans-Himalayan cold desert above 4,500 m
Key ID feature	Tufted ears, short bobbed tail

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Eurasian Lynx is the largest of the four lynx species and has the widest global range of any wild cat species after the cougar — yet remains one of the rarest and most elusive cats recorded in India.

EXAM TRAP

Don't equate the IUCN's global 'Least Concern' status with rarity in India — nationally, the Eurasian Lynx is exceptionally rare, with only a handful of confirmed records, illustrating how a species can be globally secure yet nationally elusive.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Eurasian Lynx, recently photographed for the first time in Sikkim, consider the following statements:
1. It is currently classified as 'Least Concern' on the IUCN Red List globally.
2. Its rarity in India means it is also considered globally threatened.
3. It is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 in India.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 3 only
B 1 and 2 only
C 2 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 and 3 only

Approach
Separate 'global IUCN status' from 'national rarity' as two independent axes of information — statement 2 wrongly assumes that because a species is rare within India, it must be globally threatened too. A species can be nationally elusive at the edge of its range while remaining globally secure elsewhere, exactly as with the Eurasian Lynx. Once that logical leap is rejected, statements 1 and 3 stand as accurate, independently verifiable facts.

Mugger Crocodile

WHY IN NEWS

Recent current-affairs roundups on India's crocodilian diversity (2026) have spotlighted Odisha's Kendrapara district — home to Bhitarkanika National Park — as the only place in India where all three native crocodile species, including the mugger, coexist.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **India's three crocodilian species (mugger, gharial, saltwater crocodile)**
  Revise mugger alongside gharial and saltwater croc for size/status recall
- **Bhitarkanika National Park, Odisha**
  The only site where all three species coexist — frequently tested
- **Crocodile Conservation Project (1975)**
  The origin programme behind the mugger's recovery across reserves
- **WII's Ganga-basin gharial survey (2026)**
  A related 2026 reptile survey often confused with mugger-specific data

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Crocodylus palustris
IUCN status	Vulnerable
CITES	Appendix I
WPA Schedule	Schedule I
Range	Freshwater rivers, lakes, reservoirs across the Indian subcontinent (extinct in Bhutan, Myanmar)
Size	Males average 3–4 m; can rarely reach 5 m

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Mugger crocodiles dig burrows to shelter from extreme temperatures — retreating underground whenever conditions drop below 5°C or exceed 38°C — a distinctive thermoregulatory behaviour among Indian reptiles.

EXAM TRAP

The word 'mugger' derives from the Sanskrit/Hindi 'makara', unrelated to the English word for an attacker. Also, students often wrongly assume the mugger is India's largest crocodile — that title belongs to the saltwater crocodile (up to 7 m), not the mugger.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Mugger Crocodile (Crocodylus palustris), consider the following statements:
1. It is the largest of the three crocodilian species found in India.
2. It is listed as 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List.
3. Odisha's Kendrapara district is the only district in India where all three native crocodile species coexist.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 2 and 3 only
B 1 and 2 only
C 1 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 2 and 3 only

Approach
Check statement 1 against a simple size comparison across the three Indian crocodilians rather than assuming the most commonly discussed species is also the largest — the saltwater crocodile, not the mugger, holds that title, reaching up to 7 metres against the mugger's 5-metre maximum. This 'most familiar ≠ most extreme' trap is common when one species dominates news coverage. Statements 2 and 3 are direct, verifiable facts.

Egyptian Vulture

WHY IN NEWS

The Wildlife Institute of India's landmark national vulture nesting survey (IDWH Vulture Report, 2025–26) recorded 7,715 Egyptian Vultures at dumping-site counts — the highest single-species count among all surveyed vultures — even as a systematic breeding-population estimate remains difficult due to its widely dispersed nesting habits.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **India's nine vulture species and their conservation categories**
  Place Egyptian Vulture correctly among the CR Gyps trio and others
- **Diclofenac ban (2006) and Gyps vulture population collapse**
  Tests whether you wrongly extend this single cause to this species
- **Vulture Safe Zones and Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre**
  Conservation infrastructure covering all Indian vulture species
- **Action Plan for Vulture Conservation (2020–25)**
  The umbrella policy behind this species' 2025-26 survey

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Neophron percnopterus
IUCN status	Endangered
CITES	Appendix II
WPA Schedule	Schedule I
Historical decline rate	~35% per year
Nickname	'Pharaoh's Chicken' — linked to ancient Egyptian iconography

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Egyptian Vulture is one of the few birds known to use tools in the wild — it picks up stones and hurls them at ostrich eggs to crack the shell, a rare documented case of tool use among birds.

EXAM TRAP

Don't attribute the Egyptian Vulture's decline solely to diclofenac poisoning — unlike the three Critically Endangered Gyps vultures (White-rumped, Indian, Slender-billed), its decline stems from a broader mix of poisoning, electrocution, collision, and food-source decline. Over-generalising the diclofenac cause across all vulture species is a frequent exam trap.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Egyptian Vulture (Neophron percnopterus), consider the following statements:
1. It is currently classified as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List.
2. Its population decline in India is attributed solely to diclofenac poisoning, similar to Gyps vultures.
3. It has been documented using stones as tools to break open ostrich eggs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 3 only
B 1 and 2 only
C 2 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 and 3 only

Approach
Treat the word 'solely' in statement 2 as a red flag — it converts an otherwise plausible fact into an overreach, since the Egyptian Vulture's decline (unlike the Gyps genus) results from multiple compounding threats, not diclofenac alone. Absolute qualifiers like 'solely', 'only', or 'entirely' are frequently inserted into an otherwise-true statement to make it false. Statements 1 and 3 make no such absolute claims and match documented facts directly.

PaBV-4 Bird Virus

WHY IN NEWS

Indian scientists identified and genetically characterised Parrot Bornavirus 4 (PaBV-4) circulating among captive birds for the first time in India (reported 11 July 2026) — a significant advance in avian disease surveillance for the exotic pet-bird and aviary sector.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **One Health approach to zoonotic and animal disease surveillance**
  Situates a captive-bird virus story within India's wider surveillance push
- **Proventricular Dilatation Disease (PDD) in captive birds**
  The specific disease this virus causes — a direct definition question
- **India's exotic pet-bird trade and biosecurity regulation**
  The sector most directly affected by this first-time detection
- **CITES-listed psittacine (parrot family) species**
  Many affected parrot species carry their own CITES protections too

PRELIMS MATRIX

Full name	Parrot Bornavirus 4 (PaBV-4)
Classification	Single-stranded RNA virus, species Orthobornavirus alphapsittaciforme
Disease caused	Proventricular Dilatation Disease (PDD) — neurological & digestive disorder
Species affected	Psittacine birds — parrots, macaws, parakeets, cockatiels, lovebirds
Significance for India	First genetic characterisation of this virus strain in the country
Conservation relevance	Threatens captive breeding programmes for conservation-priority parrot species

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

PDD, the disease caused by PaBV-4, damages a bird's nervous system so severely that it loses the ability to properly digest food — often leading to rapid death even when the bird continues eating normally.

EXAM TRAP

PaBV-4 affects **captive, psittacine (parrot-family) birds** specifically — don't confuse it with avian influenza (bird flu, H5N1) or Nipah virus, which involve entirely different pathogens, transmission routes, and host ranges, despite all being 'bird-linked' disease stories in current affairs.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to Parrot Bornavirus 4 (PaBV-4), recently identified in India, consider the following statements:
1. It is the causative agent of Proventricular Dilatation Disease in psittacine birds.
2. It is the same pathogen responsible for avian influenza (bird flu) outbreaks in India.
3. It was genetically characterised in India for the first time in captive bird populations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 3 only
B 1 and 2 only
C 2 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 and 3 only

Approach
Spot statement 2 as a false-equivalence trap — it merges two distinct 'bird disease' current-affairs stories (PaBV-4 and avian influenza) purely because both involve birds, when they are unrelated pathogens with different classifications and hosts. When a question links two separately reported news items via a shared surface theme, verify whether they are actually the same entity before accepting the statement. Statements 1 and 3 stick to the specific, confirmed facts about PaBV-4 itself.

Mitrephora rashmiae

WHY IN NEWS

Researchers from Mumbai's Thackeray Wildlife Foundation discovered a new flowering tree species, Mitrephora rashmiae, in the remote forests of Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Subansiri district (reported July 2026) — only the second Mitrephora species ever recorded from the Eastern Himalayan Biodiversity Hotspot.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot**
  Situates this single-specimen find within a global biodiversity hotspot
- **Annonaceae (custard apple) family diversity in India**
  Places it correctly within the custard-apple family for taxonomy MCQs
- **Citizen-science and foundation-led species discovery in India**
  An unusual non-government body made this discovery, not a state agency
- **IUCN 'Data Deficient' category for newly described species**
  Explains why a single-specimen species can't yet get a threat rating

PRELIMS MATRIX

Family	Annonaceae (custard apple family)
Location	Upper Subansiri district, Arunachal Pradesh
Discovering body	Thackeray Wildlife Foundation
Known population	A single wild specimen — a 7-metre tree beside a forest stream
Distinguishing trait	First known Mitrephora species to bear both male and bisexual flowers on the same tree
IUCN status	Data Deficient — known from only one specimen
CITES appendix	Not listed
WPA Schedule	Not applicable — plant, not yet notified under any Schedule

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

It is only the second species of the genus Mitrephora ever recorded from the Eastern Himalayan Biodiversity Hotspot, and the first in the genus known to bear both male and bisexual flowers on a single tree.

EXAM TRAP

A species known from only a single wild specimen cannot yet be assigned a standard IUCN threat category like Endangered or Critically Endangered — it is classified 'Data Deficient' until a broader population survey is possible, the same pattern seen with other newly described species in current affairs.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to Mitrephora rashmiae, a plant species discovered in Arunachal Pradesh, consider the following statements:
1. It belongs to the Annonaceae or custard apple family.
2. It has been officially classified as 'Critically Endangered' by the IUCN.
3. It is known to bear both male and bisexual flowers on the same individual tree.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 3 only
B 1 and 2 only
C 2 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 and 3 only

Approach
Question the plausibility of statement 2 before accepting it — a species known from a single specimen has not undergone the population assessment required for a specific IUCN threat category; it would instead be labelled 'Data Deficient'. Any statement assigning a precise threat category (Endangered, Critically Endangered) to a species explicitly described as newly discovered from one individual should be treated with suspicion. Statements 1 and 3 describe confirmed taxonomic and botanical facts from the discovery report.

Behali Wildlife Sanctuary

WHY IN NEWS

Behali Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam's Biswanath district has faced serious allegations of illegal encroachment, large-scale tree felling, and attacks on forest personnel in 2026, even as it continues to be recognised for its rich, recently documented biodiversity.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Sonitpur Elephant Reserve (notified 2003)**
  Behali sits inside this larger reserve — another overlapping-PA case
- **Reserve Forest to Wildlife Sanctuary upgrade process (2022)**
  Behali's own century-long status change exemplifies this process
- **Important Bird Areas (IBA) and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) in Assam**
  Behali holds both tags — useful for a match-the-recognition question
- **Assam-Arunachal Pradesh interstate boundary disputes**
  Compounds Behali's encroachment problems along its northern edge

PRELIMS MATRIX

State / district	Assam, Biswanath district
Status history	Reserve Forest since 1917; notified Wildlife Sanctuary in 2022
Area	157.25 sq km, under Borgang Forest Range
Location	Between Nameri National Park (west) and Kaziranga National Park (south)
Recognition	Important Bird Area (1994); Key Biodiversity Area (2004)
Key species	Asian Elephant, Tiger, Chinese Pangolin, White-winged Wood Duck, Black Softshell Turtle

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Botanist Dipankar Borah described three plant taxa new to science from Behali's forests, including two — Chlorophytum assamicum and Peliosanthes macrophylla var. assamensis — found nowhere else on Earth.

EXAM TRAP

Behali was a Reserve Forest for over a century (from 1917) before being upgraded to Wildlife Sanctuary status only in 2022 — don't assume its sanctuary status is old just because the forest itself is over a century old.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Behali Wildlife Sanctuary, consider the following statements:
1. It was declared a Reserve Forest in 1917 and elevated to Wildlife Sanctuary status only in 2022.
2. It lies between Nameri National Park and Kaziranga National Park.
3. It has been recognised as both an Important Bird Area and a Key Biodiversity Area.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 2 only
B 2 and 3 only
C 1 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1, 2 and 3

Approach
Check each statement independently against the sanctuary's documented timeline and geography rather than assuming one is a distractor by default — all three are separately verifiable and consistent with each other: the 1917–2022 status upgrade, its location between two well-known parks, and its dual IBA/KBA recognition. Not every three-statement question contains a false statement; when each claim is specific, consistent, and matches the source, 'all three correct' is the right call.

Yak: Smart Health Monitoring System

WHY IN NEWS

Scientists from ICAR–National Research Centre on Yak (Dirang) and Assam Don Bosco University (July 2026) developed an IoT-based smart system for yak health monitoring, stress prediction, and geo-fencing — aimed at high-altitude Himalayan yak husbandry and border-area livestock tracking.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **20th Livestock Census — India's yak population distribution**
  Source of the '58,000 yaks, half in Ladakh' statistic used here
- **Arunachali Yak — India's only officially recognised yak breed**
  Reared in the same NRC-on-Yak landscape developing this tech
- **IoT applications in precision livestock management**
  The broader technology theme this specific innovation belongs to
- **Transhumance and pastoral livelihoods in the Himalayan region**
  The traditional herding pattern this tech is designed to support

PRELIMS MATRIX

Developing institutions	ICAR–National Research Centre on Yak, Dirang (Arunachal Pradesh) + Assam Don Bosco University
Technology	IoT-based sensors for health monitoring, stress prediction, geo-fencing
India's yak population	~58,000 (20th Livestock Census); nearly half in Ladakh
Domestic yak (Bos grunniens)	Livestock breed — not IUCN/CITES/WPA assessed
Wild yak (Bos mutus) — ancestor species	IUCN: Vulnerable · CITES: Appendix I · found in Ladakh/Tibetan plateau
Purpose of system	Early disease detection, geo-fencing near international border areas

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Nearly half of India's entire yak population is concentrated in Ladakh alone, with the rest spread across Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand — making the new IoT system especially relevant for remote, hard-to-monitor border terrain.

EXAM TRAP

This is a livestock technology/animal husbandry innovation under ICAR, not a wildlife conservation measure under MoEFCC — don't classify it alongside species-protection stories elsewhere in this compilation just because it involves an animal.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the recently developed IoT-based smart system for yaks, consider the following statements:
1. It was developed jointly by the ICAR–National Research Centre on Yak and Assam Don Bosco University.
2. It falls under the conservation mandate of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
3. Nearly half of India's yak population is found in Ladakh.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 and 3 only
B 1 and 2 only
C 2 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 and 3 only

Approach
Check the institutional/ministerial attribution in statement 2 separately from the factual claims in 1 and 3 — ICAR falls under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, not MoEFCC, because yaks here are treated as livestock (animal husbandry), not wildlife. Whenever a question links an ICAR-led innovation to an environment-ministry mandate, that mismatch is usually the intended trap. Statements 1 and 3 are direct, specific facts drawn from the reporting.