MISSION X FOR UPSC

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WEEKLY

Weekly Current Affairs Compilation · 13–20 July 2026 · 11 Topics

Grouped by theme for faster revision — Climate Change, Energy & Sustainable Tech, and Biodiversity & Conservation. Every topic includes a Prelims Memory Bank for instant recall.

"innovation in learning"

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CLIMATE CHANGE & DISASTERS

Bonn Climate Conference 2026 & the Bonn Challenge

WHY IN NEWS

The 64th session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB64), the Bonn Climate Conference, ended in "gridlock" on 19 June 2026 as developing nations pushed back against developed countries over climate finance, trade-linked climate measures, and stalled adaptation funding, ahead of COP31 in Antalya, Türkiye.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **UNFCCC & Conference of Parties (COP) architecture**
  Bonn (SB) sessions are the mid-year technical rounds that prepare the ground for the annual COP
- **Just Transition Work Programme (from COP28 UAE)**
  Finance and governance of this mechanism was the most contested track at Bonn 2026
- **Bonn Challenge (2011)**
  Same host city, different initiative — a global pledge to restore 350 million hectares of degraded land by 2030

PRELIMS MATRIX

Full name	64th Sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB64)
Venue	World Conference Center, Bonn, Germany
Dates	16–26 June 2026
Key unresolved issue	Adaptation finance & Just Transition mechanism governance
Next stop	COP31, Antalya, Türkiye
Distinct from	Bonn Challenge — 2011 forest restoration pledge, same host city only

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Developed countries' climate finance hit a record $136.7 billion in 2024, but aid cuts since then mean public climate spending by developed countries is likely to have fallen sharply in 2025-26 — a key point of contention at Bonn.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

SB64 = Bonn Climate Conference 2026 | COP31 host = Antalya, Türkiye | COP30 host (2025) = Belém, Brazil | Bonn Challenge ≠ Bonn Climate Conference

EXAM TRAP

Don't confuse the annual **Bonn Climate Conference** (an SB session, a UNFCCC negotiating round held every June) with the **Bonn Challenge** (a 2011 global forest landscape restoration initiative) — they share only a host city, not an institutional identity.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to international climate governance, consider the following statements:
1. The Bonn Climate Conference and the Bonn Challenge are two names for the same initiative.
2. SB64 refers to the 64th session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies.
3. COP31 is scheduled to be held in Antalya, Türkiye.
How many of the statements given above are correct?

A Only one
B Only two
C All three
D None

Answer: Only two

Approach
Statement 1 conflates two things that merely share a host city — the Bonn Climate Conference is an annual UNFCCC negotiating round, while the Bonn Challenge is a one-off 2011 forest restoration pledge with its own separate targets. Once that distractor is isolated, statements 2 and 3 are accurate, specific facts confirmed by official UNFCCC scheduling.

CLIMATE CHANGE & DISASTERS

Cloudburst in Anantnag, Kashmir

WHY IN NEWS

Multiple cloudbursts struck Anantnag district's Chittergul, Shangus and Pahalgam areas in Jammu & Kashmir between 9–13 July 2026, triggering flash floods that damaged paddy fields, apple orchards and homes, reviving scrutiny of unplanned construction in natural drainage channels across the Himalayan region.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Orographic rainfall & the Himalayan monsoon**
  Cloudbursts are an extreme, localized form of orographic precipitation
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005 & DDMA**
  DDMA Anantnag led the ground-level relief response
- **Flash-flood-prone Himalayan districts (Kishtwar, Doda, Ramban, Reasi)**
  Revise together as a recurring 2026 cloudburst cluster

PRELIMS MATRIX

Definition	Rainfall exceeding 100 mm/hour over a small area
Cause	Sudden condensation of moisture-laden clouds trapped against steep slopes
2026 affected districts	Anantnag, Kishtwar, Doda, Ramban, Reasi
Nodal response agency	District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA)
Key hazard multiplier	Debris/construction waste dumped into drainage channels
Not the same as	A regular thunderstorm or a landslide, though it often triggers both

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

A cloudburst is officially defined as rainfall exceeding 100 mm in one hour over a geographically limited area of about 20–30 sq km — making it one of the most spatially concentrated extreme weather events on Earth.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Cloudburst ≈ 100mm/hr over ~20-30 sq km | **Nodal agency = DDMA (DM Act, 2005)** | **July 2026 cluster = Anantnag, Kishtwar, Doda, Ramban, Reasi** | **Hazard multiplier = drainage-channel encroachment**

EXAM TRAP

A cloudburst is not simply "very heavy rain" in casual usage — the technical threshold (>100mm/hour over a small area) distinguishes it from ordinary heavy monsoon rainfall, and questions often test this precise definition.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Which of the following statements about cloudbursts is/are correct?
1. A cloudburst involves rainfall exceeding 100 mm within an hour over a small geographic area.
2. Cloudbursts are unique to the Himalayan region and do not occur elsewhere in the world.
3. Human-made obstructions in natural drainage channels can worsen the impact of a cloudburst.

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 statement 2's absolute claim ("unique to... do not occur elsewhere") as a red flag — cloudbursts occur wherever steep terrain and moist air interact suddenly, not just in the Himalayas. Statements 1 and 3 are specific, verifiable facts about the phenomenon's definition and human-aggravated impact.

CLIMATE CHANGE & DISASTERS

A-23A Iceberg — End of the World's Largest Iceberg

WHY IN NEWS

A-23A, the world's largest and longest-tracked iceberg, completed its 40-year journey and fully disintegrated in the South Atlantic Ocean by early April 2026, after calving from Antarctica's Filchner Ice Shelf in 1986 and later becoming grounded near South Georgia Island for years.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Antarctic ice shelves & iceberg naming conventions**
  A-23A's name reflects its calving quadrant (0°-90°W) and calving order
- **Ocean currents — the Weddell Gyre**
  This current carried A-23A on its decades-long drift
- **Sea-level rise: floating ice vs land ice**
  Tests whether floating iceberg melt raises sea level (it largely doesn't)

PRELIMS MATRIX

Origin	Calved from the Filchner Ice Shelf, Antarctica, in 1986
Peak size	~4,000 sq km — nearly twice the size of Rhode Island
Grounded period	Stuck on the Weddell Sea floor for over 30 years
Drift trigger	Freed itself around 2020, carried north by the Weddell Gyre
Final grounding site	Near South Georgia Island (sub-Antarctic)
End	Fully disintegrated by early April 2026, after 40 years

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

For over three decades, A-23A remained motionless, pinned to the Weddell Sea floor by shallow underwater ridges — its eventual release and drift became one of the most closely tracked natural events in modern satellite oceanography.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

A-23A calved 1986, Filchner Ice Shelf | Grounded 30+ yrs in Weddell Sea | Carried by Weddell Gyre after ~2020 | Disintegrated near South Georgia, April 2026

EXAM TRAP

Melting of a floating iceberg like A-23A does **not** significantly raise global sea levels, because it already displaces its own weight in seawater (Archimedes' principle) — sea-level rise concerns apply mainly to land-based ice melting into the ocean.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to Iceberg A-23A, consider the following statements:
1. It calved from the Filchner Ice Shelf in Antarctica in 1986.
2. Its final melting significantly raised global sea levels.
3. It remained grounded in the Weddell Sea for over three decades before drifting north.
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
Apply the floating-ice-vs-land-ice principle to statement 2 before accepting it — since A-23A was already floating and displacing seawater equal to its mass, its melting does not meaningfully add to sea-level rise. Statements 1 and 3 are straightforward, well-documented facts about its origin and multi-decade grounding.

ENERGY & SUSTAINABLE TECH

River Kinetic Energy Demonstration Plant, Arunachal Pradesh

WHY IN NEWS

Arunachal Pradesh signed an MoU with Norway's Tidal Sail AS on 15 July 2026 to set up India's first 500 kW River Kinetic Energy Demonstration Plant, generating electricity directly from river currents without dams, under the India-Norway Green Partnership.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Renewable energy beyond solar/wind (tidal, kinetic, geothermal)**
  River kinetic energy is a distinct, dam-free hydro-adjacent technology
- **Decentralised power for remote/border regions**
  This project specifically targets inaccessible Himalayan regions
- **India's bilateral green partnerships (Norway, Denmark)**
  Revise alongside other clean-energy MoUs with Nordic countries

PRELIMS MATRIX

Technology	River Kinetic Energy — power directly from river current, no dam
Capacity	500 kW demonstration project
Partner	Tidal Sail AS, Norway
Implementing agency	Centre for Earth Sciences & Himalayan Studies (CES&HS), Arunachal Pradesh
Supported by	Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) + Innovation Norway
Framework	India-Norway Green Partnership

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Unlike conventional hydropower, river kinetic energy technology requires no large dam, reservoir, or major civil construction — making it especially suited to remote, ecologically sensitive Himalayan terrain where big dams are contentious.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Tech = River Kinetic Energy (no dam) | Capacity = 500 kW demo plant | Partner = Tidal Sail AS (Norway) | Nodal body = CES&HS, Arunachal Pradesh

EXAM TRAP

Don't confuse river kinetic energy with conventional run-of-river hydropower — the former uses submerged turbines with no dam or diversion structure at all, while run-of-river hydro still requires a small barrage/weir.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the River Kinetic Energy Demonstration Project recently launched in Arunachal Pradesh, consider the following statements:
1. It requires the construction of a large dam to generate electricity.
2. It is being developed in partnership with a Norwegian company.
3. It is supported by India's Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.
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 the core selling point of the technology itself — river kinetic energy is explicitly marketed as requiring no major dam or civil infrastructure, so a statement claiming the opposite directly contradicts the defining feature of the story. Statements 2 and 3 are direct, specific facts about the partnership and funding support.

ENERGY & SUSTAINABLE TECH

Liquid Nano Urea — Scientific Authenticity Debate

WHY IN NEWS

Recent peer-reviewed studies published in 2026 have questioned the scientific validity of IFFCO's Liquid Nano Urea, reporting that foliar nano-urea application substantially decreased rice and wheat yields and reduced grain nitrogen content compared to conventional urea — reigniting debate over its large-scale rollout.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Nanotechnology applications in agriculture**
  Nano-urea is a flagship case study of nanotech-enabled precision farming
- **Fertiliser subsidy burden & urea import dependence**
  Nano-urea was promoted specifically to cut India's urea subsidy bill
- **Sustainable agriculture & fertiliser runoff pollution**
  Nano-urea's core environmental pitch was reduced soil/water pollution

PRELIMS MATRIX

Developer	IFFCO's Nano Biotechnology Research Centre, Kalol, Gujarat
First plant inaugurated	2021, Kalol, Gujarat
Claimed efficiency	85–90% vs ~25% for conventional urea
Application method	Foliar spray (2–4 ml/litre water) directly on leaves
2026 controversy	Peer-reviewed studies report yield decline & lower grain nitrogen vs conventional urea
Price	~Rs 240 for 500 ml, claimed equal to one 45–50 kg bag of urea

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

A single 500 ml bottle of liquid nano urea is marketed as replacing an entire 45–50 kg bag of conventional granular urea in nutrient impact — a claim now under direct scientific scrutiny after 2026 field trials showed yield declines.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Developer = IFFCO, Kalol (Gujarat) | **Claimed efficiency = 85-90% vs ~25%** | **2026 studies report YIELD DECLINE** | **Application = foliar spray, not soil**

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume nano urea's efficacy claims are settled science just because of government backing and wide promotion — 2026 peer-reviewed field studies directly challenge the yield and nitrogen-content claims, making this an active scientific controversy, not a proven success story.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to Liquid Nano Urea, consider the following statements:
1. It is applied to crops through foliar spray rather than soil application.
2. Recent 2026 peer-reviewed studies have confirmed it consistently increases crop yields compared to conventional urea.
3. It was developed at IFFCO's Nano Biotechnology Research Centre in Kalol, Gujarat.
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 statement 2's confident, settled-sounding claim as suspicious precisely because the news hook for this topic is scientific controversy, not confirmation — recent studies actually report yield declines, the opposite of the claim. Statements 1 and 3 are neutral factual claims about method and origin that remain true regardless of the efficacy debate.

BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION

Pallikaranai Marsh

WHY IN NEWS

The Tamil Nadu State Wetland Authority told the Madras High Court in July 2026 that the contentious 1-km "zone of influence" development freeze around Chennai's Pallikaranai Marsh — a Ramsar site — is not a fixed circular buffer, offering potential relief to over a lakh affected landowners while its legal boundaries remain under scientific demarcation.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Ramsar Convention & Wetlands of International Importance**
  Pallikaranai has been a Ramsar site since April 2022
- **Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules**
  Governs the zone-of-influence and buffer demarcation dispute at the heart of this story
- **National Wetland Conservation and Management Programme**
  Pallikaranai is one of 94 wetlands identified under this 1985-86 programme

PRELIMS MATRIX

Location	Chennai, Tamil Nadu, ~20 km south of city centre
Type	Freshwater marsh, partly saline wetland
Ramsar designation	8 April 2022
Notified extent	1,247 hectares formally Ramsar-notified (historical extent much larger, ~80 sq km)
Key threats	Encroachment, sewage discharge, invasive species
Ecological role	Flood buffer for Chennai & Chengalpattu; linked to 31+ waterbodies

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Pallikaranai is the only surviving natural wetland ecosystem within Chennai city and one of the last remaining natural wetlands in South India — yet over 556 hectares of its notified area had already been taken over by private and government entities as of 2025.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Ramsar since = 8 April 2022 | Location = Chennai (~20 km south) | Governing rules = Wetlands (Conservation & Management) Rules | 2026 dispute = 1-km buffer NOT fixed/circular

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume the entire historical ~80 sq km extent of Pallikaranai marsh is under Ramsar protection — only 1,247 hectares was formally notified in 2022, and the additional "zone of influence" buffer is a separate, still-contested regulatory question.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Pallikaranai Marsh, consider the following statements:
1. It was designated a Ramsar site in April 2022.
2. Its entire historical extent of about 80 sq km is formally notified as the Ramsar site.
3. It serves as a natural flood buffer for Chennai and Chengalpattu districts.
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 statement 2's scope claim against the precise notified figure rather than the marsh's popularly cited historical size — only 1,247 hectares was formally Ramsar-notified, far less than its full historical ~80 sq km extent. Statements 1 and 3 are accurate, well-documented facts.

BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION

BSF's 90 km Sundarbans Border Fence

WHY IN NEWS

The Border Security Force is set to fence approximately 90 km of the marshy Sundarbans along the India-Bangladesh border in West Bengal for the first time ever, with BSF Director General Praveen Kumar reviewing feasibility and progress during a site visit from 11–14 July 2026.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Sundarbans — UNESCO World Heritage / Ramsar / Biosphere status**
  Understand its triple international designation
- **India-Bangladesh border management & BSF's mandate**
  The 4,097 km border includes this uniquely riverine, unfenced stretch
- **Sundarbans Tiger Reserve & Wildlife Sanctuary**
  ~71 km of the border runs through this protected area, where construction is normally barred

PRELIMS MATRIX

Proposed fence length	~90 km
Total India-Bangladesh border in WB	2,217 km (of India's total 4,097 km with Bangladesh)
Unfenced portion (WB)	569 km; ~456 km deemed feasible for fencing
Protected-area overlap	~71 km runs alongside Sundarbans Wildlife Sanctuary
Current security method	BSF Floating Border Outposts + marine patrolling
Trigger	Land release for fencing by West Bengal's new state govt (post-May 2026)

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

This will be the first-ever fencing attempted in the Sundarbans since Independence — until now, the entire marshy, tidal border has been secured only through floating outposts and boat patrols, since conventional fencing is structurally near-impossible in shifting mangrove mudflats.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Fence ≈ 90 km, first-ever in Sundarbans | WB unfenced border = 569 km of 2,217 km | ~71 km through Sundarbans Wildlife Sanctuary | Current method = Floating Outposts + marine patrol

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume the entire Sundarbans border can simply be fenced like a normal land border — roughly 71 km runs directly alongside the Sundarbans Wildlife Sanctuary, a protected area where construction is ordinarily prohibited, making this a genuine security-versus-conservation dilemma.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the proposed BSF fencing project in the Sundarbans, consider the following statements:
1. It marks the first time fencing has ever been attempted in the Sundarbans border region.
2. The entire stretch of the India-Bangladesh border in the Sundarbans passes through areas open to construction.
3. The border has so far been secured mainly through floating outposts and marine patrolling.

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

Scrutinise statement 2's blanket claim against the specific protected-area overlap — about 71 km of this border runs through the Sundarbans Wildlife Sanctuary, where construction is restricted, directly contradicting a claim that the "entire stretch" is open to construction. Statements 1 and 3 are specific, sourced facts.

BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION

Lestes paloti — New Damselfly from the Western Ghats

WHY IN NEWS

Researchers have discovered Lestes paloti, a new spreadwing damselfly species from the Western Ghats — the first new addition to the genus Lestes from the region in nearly a century, published in the International Journal of Odonatology in July 2026.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Western Ghats — UNESCO World Heritage biodiversity hotspot**
  Yet another new-species discovery underscoring the Ghats' exceptional endemism
- **Odonata as freshwater ecosystem health indicators**
  A thriving damselfly population signals a healthy freshwater ecosystem
- **Recent Western Ghats odonate discoveries (Euphaea wayanadensis, Protosticta armageddonia)**
  Revise together as a cluster of 2023-2026 Kerala damselfly discoveries

PRELIMS MATRIX

Genus	Lestes (spreadwing damselflies), family Lestidae
Significance	First new Lestes species from the Western Ghats since 1929
Last India-wide Lestes discovery	Lestes garoensis (1987, by scientist Lahiri)
Named after	Dr Muhammed Jafer Palot, scientist, Zoological Survey of India
Published in	International Journal of Odonatology
Region	Western Ghats (Kerala)

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

No new species of the genus Lestes had been recorded from the Western Ghats since British odonatologist Fraser described Lestes malabaricus in 1929 — a near-century gap in taxonomic documentation for this specific genus in the region.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Lestes paloti = 1st new Lestes in W. Ghats since 1929 | **Named after Dr M.J. Palot (ZSI)** | **Family = Lestidae** | **Last India Lestes find = L. garoensis (1987)**

EXAM TRAP

Don't confuse "first new Lestes species from the Western Ghats since 1929" with "first new damselfly species from the Western Ghats" — Kerala has seen several other new damselfly discoveries in other genera in recent years (e.g., Euphaea wayanadensis), so the 96-year gap applies specifically to the genus Lestes.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to Lestes paloti, recently discovered in the Western Ghats, consider the following statements:
1. It is the first new species of the genus Lestes discovered anywhere in India since 1929.
2. It has been named in honour of a scientist associated with the Zoological Survey of India.
3. It belongs to the damselfly family Lestidae.

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 the geographic scope embedded in statement 1 carefully — the 1929 benchmark applies specifically to the Western Ghats, not all of India; India's most recent Lestes discovery before this was actually Lestes garoensis in 1987, from a different region. Statements 2 and 3 match the discovery report directly.

BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION

NBWL Standing Committee — 91st Meeting

WHY IN NEWS

The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (SC-NBWL), chaired by Union Minister Bhupender Yadav, held its 91st meeting in Coimbatore on 9 July 2026, reviewing 118 proposals and reaffirming that development projects near wildlife habitats must include adequate safeguards under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, Section 5A/5B**
  The legal basis for both the NBWL and its Standing Committee
- **Species Recovery Programme**
  Pygmy Hog's inclusion was one of this meeting's key follow-ups
- **Recent species conservation strategies (GIB, Greater One-horned Rhino)**
  Both were reviewed at this same meeting

PRELIMS MATRIX

Meeting number	91st SC-NBWL meeting
Date & venue	9 July 2026, Coimbatore
Chair	Union Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change
Proposals reviewed	118
Key species follow-ups	Rhino DNA Indexing strategy, GIB strategy, Pygmy Hog added to Species Recovery Programme
Legal basis	Section 5A/5B, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Standing Committee's core function is fundamentally different from the full National Board for Wildlife — while the NBWL (chaired by the PM) sets policy, the Standing Committee (chaired by the Environment Minister) exclusively handles project clearances within Protected Areas and Eco-Sensitive Zones.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

SC-NBWL 91st mtg = 9 July 2026, Coimbatore | SC-NBWL chair = Union Environment Minister | Full NBWL chair = Prime Minister | SC role = project clearance ONLY

EXAM TRAP

Don't mix up the chairs of the two bodies — the National Board for Wildlife itself is chaired by the Prime Minister, but its Standing Committee (which handled this 91st meeting) is chaired by the Union Environment Minister, not the PM.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) and its Standing Committee, consider the following statements:
1. The National Board for Wildlife is chaired by the Prime Minister of India.
2. The Standing Committee of the NBWL is also chaired by the Prime Minister.
3. The Standing Committee is primarily responsible for project clearances within Protected Areas.
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 the two bodies' leadership carefully — the full NBWL is chaired by the Prime Minister, but its Standing Committee, which handles routine project clearances like this 91st meeting, is chaired by the Union Environment Minister instead. This “parent body vs subordinate committee, different chair” pattern recurs across several statutory bodies.

BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION

Ken-Betwa Link Project — Pyre Protest

WHY IN NEWS

A 17-day tribal protest against the Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP) and other development projects in Madhya Pradesh's Chhatarpur district was cleared by police on 19 July 2026, after activist Amit Bhatnagar's 11-day hunger strike worsened; the protest included a symbolic “pyre protest” staged earlier on 3 July 2026.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **National Perspective Plan & river interlinking policy**
  KBLP is India's first and only river-interlinking project currently under implementation
- **Panna Tiger Reserve**
  The project's submergence zone overlaps this tiger reserve — the central ecological objection
- **Bundelkhand region's water scarcity**
  The project's stated purpose is irrigation and drinking water for this drought-prone belt

PRELIMS MATRIX

Full name	Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP), National Perspective Plan
States involved	Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh
Key structure	Daudhan Dam + link canal
Cost	Rs 44,605 crore
Displacement	~2,000 families
Claimed benefits	10.62 lakh ha irrigation; drinking water to ~62 lakh people; 103 MW hydropower

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Ken-Betwa Link Project is India's first and, as of 2026, only river-interlinking project actually under implementation out of 30 such projects identified under the National Perspective Plan for inter-basin water transfer.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

KBLP = India's only implemented river-link project

Links Ken River → Betwa River

Key structure = Daudhan Dam

Core objection = overlap with Panna Tiger Reserve

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume the Ken-Betwa Link only affects Madhya Pradesh — while the Ken and Daudhan Dam are located in MP, the project explicitly benefits both Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, since the Betwa's drought-prone Bundelkhand command area straddles both states.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Ken-Betwa Link Project, consider the following statements:
1. It is India's first river-interlinking project to be under active implementation.
2. It exclusively benefits the state of Madhya Pradesh.
3. Its submergence zone overlaps with parts of the Panna Tiger Reserve.
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 word “exclusively” in statement 2 rather than dismissing it outright — the project centres on Madhya Pradesh, but its stated benefits extend into Uttar Pradesh's Bundelkhand districts too. Statements 1 and 3 are accurate, well-documented facts about the project's standing and ecological controversy.

BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION

LAST ONE MONTH

Colobus congoensis ('Likweli') — New Monkey Species

WHY IN NEWS

Scientists announced the discovery of Colobus congoensis, locally called “Likweli,” a new species of African monkey found in the remote forests between the Lomami and Congo rivers in the Democratic Republic of Congo — only the fifth new African monkey species identified in 75 years, published in PLOS ONE in July 2026.

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Global primate biodiversity & Africa's rainforest hotspots**
  Contextualises how rare a new African monkey discovery is
- **Integrative taxonomy (genetics + morphology + acoustics)**
  Same multi-evidence approach used for many recent Indian discoveries
- **Lomami National Park, DRC**
  A protected area created specifically around this species-rich interfluve region

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Colobus congoensis
Local name	Likweli (also “kasaba nkoni” — “the branch shaker”)
Location	Interfluve between Lomami and Congo (Lualaba) rivers, DRC
Range	~1,700 sq km, largely within Lomami National Park
Closest relative	Colobus satanas (black colobus) — diverged 4.3–5.8 million years ago
Proposed IUCN status	Endangered (preliminary, researcher-proposed)

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Likweli is only the fifth new African monkey species discovered in the last 75 years — it took nearly two decades from the first blurry 2008 photograph to a confirmed species description in 2026, since the monkey lives so high in the closed canopy that it is almost impossible to photograph.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

- Colobus congoensis = 'Likweli', 5th new African monkey in 75 yrs
- Found between Lomami & Congo rivers, DRC
- Sister species = Colobus satanas
- Proposed status = Endangered (preliminary)

EXAM TRAP

A “preliminary” IUCN status proposed by researchers in their own discovery paper is not the same as an official IUCN Red List assessment — Likweli's “Endangered” tag is a recommendation pending formal Red List evaluation.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to Colobus congoensis ('Likweli'), a newly described primate species, consider the following statements:
1. It was discovered in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
2. It has been formally assessed and confirmed as “Endangered” on the official IUCN Red List.
3. Its closest known relative is the black colobus, Colobus satanas.
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
Distinguish a researcher-proposed conservation status from a formal Red List assessment before accepting statement 2 — the discovery paper only proposes Endangered status as a preliminary recommendation, not a completed IUCN evaluation. Statements 1 and 3 are direct, sourced facts from the discovery report.