MISSION X FOR UPSC

XTERRA

WEEKLY

Weekly Current Affairs Compilation · 21-28 July 2026 · 8 Topics

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

"innovation in learning"

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CLIMATE CHANGE & ADAPTATION

Killai — Tamil Nadu's First Climate Resilient Village

WHY IN NEWS

Killai village in Cuddalore district became Tamil Nadu's first fully operational Climate Resilient Village on 22 July 2026, adopting a community-driven model near the ecologically vital Pichavaram mangrove forest to tackle cyclones, coastal erosion, rising seas and saline intrusion.

230.15 RS LAKH — KILLAI PROJECT COST

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission & TNGCC**
  State-run mission implementing the Climate Resilient Villages Programme
- **Pichavaram Mangrove Forest**
  One of the world's largest mangrove forests, adjoining Killai
- **Climate adaptation vs mitigation**
  Climate Resilient Villages focus on local adaptation, not emission cuts

PRELIMS MATRIX

Programme	Climate Resilient Villages Programme, launched 2022-23
Nodal body	Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company (TNGCC)
Partner	World Resources Institute (WRI) India
Coverage	11 districts, 11 selected villages statewide
Killai project cost	Rs 230.15 lakh
Key work completed	Restoration of 3-km Buckingham Canal stretch (14 March 2026)

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Tamil Nadu's Economic Survey 2025-26 recognised the Climate Resilient Villages project as a model best practice; the broader programme has already helped nearly 2.7 million people across 11 districts adapt to floods and droughts.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Killai = TN's 1st fully operational CRV (22 July 2026) | **Run by TNGCC + WRI India** | **Near Pichavaram mangroves, Cuddalore district** | **Funded via District Climate Change Mission + CER**

EXAM TRAP

Don't attribute the Climate Resilient Villages Programme to the Union government — it is a Tamil Nadu state flagship scheme under the Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission, not a central ministry programme.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to Killai, Tamil Nadu's first Climate Resilient Village, consider the following statements:
1. Killai is located in Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu.
2. The Climate Resilient Villages Programme is implemented by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
3. The programme currently covers 11 districts of Tamil Nadu.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

A Only one
B Only two
C All three
D None

Answer: Only two

Approach
Statement 2 is the distractor — the Climate Resilient Villages Programme is a Tamil Nadu state scheme run through TNGCC, not a central ministry initiative. Statements 1 and 3 are accurate, specific facts.

CLIMATE CHANGE & ADAPTATION

Pyrocumulonimbus Clouds — Europe's Wildfire Storms

WHY IN NEWS

Massive wildfires around Bordeaux, France and Madrid, Spain produced France's first-ever officially recorded pyrocumulonimbus, or "fire cloud", by late July 2026, forcing over 300,000 evacuations in one of Europe's largest displacements since World War II.

300,000+ PEOPLE EVACUATED IN FRANCE & SPAIN

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Cloud classification & extreme weather**
  PyroCbs are a rare fire-generated thunderstorm class, distinct from ordinary smoke plumes
- **Climate change & worsening wildfire seasons**
  Rising heat and dryness are making such extreme fire behaviour more frequent in Europe
- **Disaster response & mass evacuation**
  Compare with India's own monsoon-disaster evacuation and relief mechanisms

PRELIMS MATRIX

Phenomenon	Pyrocumulonimbus ("fire cloud") — a wildfire-generated thunderstorm
First recorded in	France, during the July 2026 Gironde/Bordeaux fires
Countries affected	France and Spain
Area burnt (France)	116,000+ hectares — the country's largest fires on record
People evacuated	300,000+, one of Europe's largest evacuations since WWII
Associated hazards	Dry lightning, fire tornadoes, erratic winds, ember transport

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

PyroCbs are far more commonly documented over Australia, Siberia, and North America; France's July 2026 event was the country's first-ever officially reported pyrocumulonimbus, marking what officials called an unprecedented fire season.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

PyroCb = wildfire-generated thunderstorm cloud | **France's first-ever recorded PyroCb — July 2026**

300,000+ evacuated, 116,000+ ha burnt in France | **Can trigger fire tornadoes + dry lightning**

EXAM TRAP

Don't equate a pyrocumulonimbus with an ordinary smoke plume — a true PyroCb reaches into the upper atmosphere and generates its own lightning, wind and rain, making it self-sustaining and far more dangerous.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to pyrocumulonimbus clouds, consider the following statements:
1. Pyrocumulonimbus clouds are generated purely by volcanic eruptions and never by wildfires.
2. They can produce dry lightning and even fire tornadoes.
3. The July 2026 wildfires produced France's first officially recorded pyrocumulonimbus cloud.

How many 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
Statement 1 wrongly restricts pyroCbs to volcanic origin — they most commonly form above intense wildfires, which is exactly what triggered France's first recorded case. Statements 2 and 3 are accurate, documented facts.

INFRASTRUCTURE VS CONSERVATION

Rishikesh–Bhaniyawala Road — Tree-Felling Halted

WHY IN NEWS

Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami ordered a halt on 18 July 2026 to the felling of about 3,000 trees for the Rishikesh-Bhaniyawala four-lane highway project, after prolonged "Black Harela" protests over the road's passage through a sensitive Rajaji National Park elephant corridor.

~3,000 TREES PROPOSED FOR FELLING

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Rajaji Tiger Reserve & elephant corridors**
  Linear infrastructure fragmenting wildlife connectivity is a recurring UPSC theme
- **Forest clearance process for protected/sensitive areas**
  Road-widening through elephant corridors needs specific wildlife mitigation clearances
- **Harela festival, Uttarakhand**
  Traditional tree-planting/monsoon festival — protesters observed a symbolic "Black Harela"

PRELIMS MATRIX

Project	Bhaniyawala-Jolly Grant-Rishikesh 4-lane highway (~20 km, Rs 743 crore)
Trees proposed for felling	~3,000 (protest estimates cite up to ~4,000 at Saat Mod)
Route passes through	Elephant corridor of Rajaji National Park/Tiger Reserve
Protest	"Black Harela" observed 16 July 2026 instead of the festival
Government action	CM Dhami suspended felling on 18 July 2026 pending consensus
Executing agency	NHAI, which cites elephant underpasses as mitigation

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

RTI data released by activist Anoop Nautiyal shows nearly 46,203 hectares of Uttarakhand forest land have been diverted for development projects since 2000, with almost 47% of that diversion concentrated in Dehradun district alone.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

~3,000 trees proposed felled, 20-km highway widening | **Route cuts through Rajaji NP elephant corridor** | **"Black Harela" protest, 16 July 2026** | **CM Dhami suspended felling, 18 July 2026**

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume the project itself has been cancelled — Dhami's order only suspends the tree-felling pending stakeholder dialogue; the four-lane highway proposal remains active.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Rishikesh-Bhaniyawala road-widening project, consider the following statements:
1. The project involves widening a road that passes through an elephant corridor of Rajaji National Park.
2. The Uttarakhand government has permanently cancelled the road-widening project.
3. The protests against tree-felling coincided with the state's traditional Harela festival.

How many 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
Statement 2 overstates the government's response — the Chief Minister ordered only a suspension of felling pending consensus, not a permanent cancellation of the project. Statements 1 and 3 are accurate, reported facts.

INFRASTRUCTURE VS CONSERVATION

Western Ghats Eco-Sensitive Area — 7th Draft Notification

WHY IN NEWS

The Union Environment Ministry issued a fresh, seventh draft notification on 27 July 2026 proposing to declare 56,825.7 sq km across six Western Ghats states as an Ecologically Sensitive Area, opening a fresh 60-day public consultation window.

56,825.7 SQ KM PROPOSED AS ESA

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Western Ghats — UNESCO World Heritage biodiversity hotspot**
  One of the world's eight "hottest hotspots" of biological diversity
- **Gadgil Committee (2011) vs Kasturirangan Committee (2013)**
  Current ESA drafts follow Kasturirangan's smaller, more development-friendly extent
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**
  Legal basis for notifying any area as an Eco-Sensitive Area / Zone

PRELIMS MATRIX

Legal basis	Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
Based on	Kasturirangan Committee report (2013)
Total proposed area	56,825.7 sq km across 6 states
Villages covered	1,463 villages (7th draft)
This draft	7th draft, published 27 July 2026, 60-day window
Key restrictions	Ban on new mining/quarrying; no new thermal power projects

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Western Ghats ESA notification process has now stretched over 12 years since its first 2014 draft; under this draft, existing mining leases inside the ESA must close within five years of final notification or on lease expiry, whichever comes first.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

7th ESA draft published 27 July 2026, 60-day window | Basis = Kasturirangan Committee (2013) | Total proposed area ~56,825.7 sq km, 6 states | Goa unchanged: 108 villages, 1,461 sq km

EXAM TRAP

Don't mix up the Gadgil Committee (2011, recommended ~1,29,000 sq km as ecologically sensitive) with the Kasturirangan Committee (2013, scaled this down to ~56,825 sq km) — the ESA drafts follow Kasturirangan's figure, not Gadgil's.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the proposed Ecologically Sensitive Area in the Western Ghats, consider the following statements:
1. The notification is issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
2. The current ESA proposal is based on the recommendations of the Madhav Gadgil Committee.
3. The proposed ESA spans six states of the Western Ghats region.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: 1 and 3 only

Approach
Statement 2 is the trap — the notified extent of ~56,825 sq km reflects the smaller, more development-friendly Kasturirangan Committee report, not the stricter, much larger area recommended by the Gadgil Committee. Statements 1 and 3 are accurate.

BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION

Great Indian Bustard — First Chicks Enter Rewilding Tunnel

WHY IN NEWS

For the first time, three captive-bred Great Indian Bustard chicks were released into a specially designed rewilding tunnel at the Godawan Conservation Breeding Centre in Jaisalmer's Ramdevra on 26 July 2026, marking a shift from captive breeding toward actual reintroduction into the wild.

3 GIB CHICKS IN REWILDING TUNNEL — A FIRST

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Project Great Indian Bustard (2013, Rajasthan)**
  India's flagship captive-breeding programme for the critically endangered GIB
- **Conservation status of GIB**
  Schedule I (WPA 1972), CITES Appendix I, CMS-listed, IUCN Critically Endangered
- **Desert National Park, Jaisalmer**
  Core wild habitat where rewilded chicks are ultimately meant to be released

PRELIMS MATRIX

Facility	Rewilding tunnel, Godawan Conservation Breeding Centre, Ramdevra
Facility cost	Rs 9.25 crore
Chicks released	3 — a first for the programme
Duration in tunnel	~4 months, under CCTV surveillance, minimal human contact
Next step	Release into Desert National Park after the rewilding phase
Wild population	Fewer than 150 birds; GIB is the State Bird of Rajasthan

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The rewilding tunnel is built to simulate natural desert conditions while minimising human contact, letting chicks — conditioned to humans since hatching — relearn wild survival behaviour before any release into Desert National Park.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

3 GIB chicks in rewilding tunnel — a first, 26 July 2026 | **Location: Godawan Conservation Breeding Centre, Ramdevra**

Facility cost: Rs 9.25 crore | **Wild GIB population: under 150 birds**

EXAM TRAP

Don't confuse this rewilding-tunnel placement with a direct wild release — the chicks stay under close, camera-monitored conditioning in the tunnel for about four months before any actual habitat release is even considered.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Great Indian Bustard, consider the following statements:
1. It is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
2. The rewilding tunnel released the chicks directly into Desert National Park.
3. The Great Indian Bustard is the State Bird of Rajasthan.

How many 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
Statement 2 misreads the process — chicks spend about four months of monitored conditioning inside the rewilding tunnel before any release into Desert National Park is considered; they are not released directly. Statements 1 and 3 are well-established facts.

BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION

Campus Biodiversity Register — Nationwide Initiative Launched

WHY IN NEWS

The National Biodiversity Authority and the Nature Conservation Foundation launched a nationwide Campus Biodiversity Register initiative for colleges and universities on 21-22 July 2026, inviting institutions into a year-long exercise to document their campus flora and fauna.

2027 DOCUMENTATION COMPLETES BY JUNE

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002 & People's Biodiversity Registers**
  CBR is explicitly modelled on the older, jurisdiction-level PBR framework
- **National Biodiversity Authority**
  Statutory body under the Act, co-anchoring this initiative with NCF, Mysuru
- **Citizen science in conservation**
  Uses platforms like eBird and iNaturalist for public biodiversity recording

PRELIMS MATRIX

Launched by	National Biodiversity Authority + Nature Conservation Foundation (Mysuru)
Launch window	21-22 July 2026
Modelled on	People's Biodiversity Register (PBR)
Registration deadline	November 2026
Documentation completes	June 2027
Tools used	iNaturalist, eBird, SeasonWatch

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Kerala became the first Indian state to complete People's Biodiversity Registers across all its local governing bodies, and had already launched its own Campus Biodiversity Register drive as a Phase II effort on 16 June 2026, ahead of this national rollout.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

CBR launched by NBA + NCF (Mysuru), 21-22 July 2026 | **Modelled on PBR under Biological Diversity Act, 2002** | **Registration open till Nov 2026; ends June 2027** | **Tools: iNaturalist, eBird, SeasonWatch**

EXAM TRAP

Don't confuse the new Campus Biodiversity Register (a campus-level record launched nationally in 2026) with the older People's Biodiversity Register (a jurisdiction-level record for villages, towns and cities) — the CBR is modelled on, but distinct from, the PBR.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Campus Biodiversity Register initiative, consider the following statements:
1. Participation in the Campus Biodiversity Register is compulsory for all colleges and universities in India.
2. It is modelled on the People's Biodiversity Register under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
3. Kerala was the first state to complete People's Biodiversity Registers across all its local governing bodies.

How many 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
Statement 1 oversells the initiative — participation is voluntary, with institutions merely invited to register until November 2026, not mandated. Statements 2 and 3 are accurate facts about its lineage and Kerala's precedent.

BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION

India's First AI-Powered Bird Sanctuary — Thane Creek

WHY IN NEWS

Maharashtra approved a Rs 45-crore Eco-Nature Park featuring India's first AI-powered bird detection and monitoring centre at the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary near Mumbai, with administrative approval announced in the last week of July 2026.

45 RS CRORE ECO-NATURE PARK AT THANE CREEK

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Ramsar Convention & Wetlands of International Importance**
  Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary (TCFS) is a designated Ramsar site
- **Technology in wildlife conservation**
  AI-based species identification and tracking is a growing conservation tool
- **Coastal wetlands & flamingo migration**
  TCFS is a key stopover for migratory flamingos along India's west coast

PRELIMS MATRIX

Project	Eco-Nature Park with AI Bird Detection & Monitoring Centre, Bhandup
Location	Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary (TCFS), Mumbai-Navi Mumbai
Cost	Rs 45 crore (District Planning Committee special fund)
Area	20.09 hectares total; only 0.35 ha for physical infrastructure
Tech scope	AI-based tracking/identification across a 1.5-km radius
TCFS status	Ramsar site; India's first dedicated flamingo sanctuary (2015)

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

TCFS was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 2015 and remains India's first dedicated flamingo sanctuary; the new AI system is designed to combine real-time species identification with a minimal physical footprint, using under 2% of the park's total area for built infrastructure.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

India's 1st AI-powered bird sanctuary: Thane Creek | **Rs 45 crore park, 20.09 ha, only 0.35 ha built-up** | **TCFS = Ramsar site, India's 1st flamingo sanctuary (2015)** | **AI tracking radius: 1.5 km**

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume the entire 20.09-hectare park will be built over — official plans restrict physical infrastructure to just 0.35 hectares, with the rest retained for ecological and habitat purposes.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the AI-powered bird sanctuary project at Thane Creek, consider the following statements:
1. The Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary is a Ramsar site.
2. The entire 20.09-hectare park area will be used for physical infrastructure.
3. The AI system is designed to track and identify birds within a 1.5-km radius.

How many 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 3 only

Approach
Statement 2 misstates the project design — only 0.35 hectares of the 20.09-hectare park is earmarked for built infrastructure, with the rest preserved as ecological space. Statements 1 and 3 are accurate.

BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION

Malvi Camel — Facing a Serious Extinction Threat

WHY IN NEWS

The National Research Centre on Camel launched a dedicated breeding and conservation programme after officials confirmed on 27 July 2026 that the rare Malvi (white) camel breed faces a serious extinction threat, with only 102 animals remaining.

102 MALVI CAMELS LEFT — EXTINCTION RISK

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Livestock genetic resource conservation**
  India's indigenous camel breeds are a shrinking, climate-adapted genetic resource
- **NBAGR breed-recognition framework**
  Basis on which distinct Indian livestock breeds like Malvi are formally registered
- **Arid-zone livestock economies**
  Camels' declining utility reflects wider changes in India's desert/semi-arid livelihoods

PRELIMS MATRIX

Breed	Malvi (white) camel — one of 9 recognised camel breeds in India
Population	Only 102 animals remaining
Risk threshold	Breeds with under 300 breeding females are classed 'at risk'
Also endangered	Mewari and Mewati camel breeds
Distribution	Malwa region of MP (Mandsaur, Neemuch, Ratlam, Gwalior) + parts of Rajasthan
Nodal body	National Research Centre on Camel (NRCC), Bikaner

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Malvi is considered the smallest of India's camel breeds by size, distinctively white/grey-coated, and valued chiefly for its milk yield of 4-5 kg per cycle, unlike most Indian camel breeds prized mainly for load-carrying.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Malvi camel population: only 102 animals (2026) | **1 of 9 recognised Indian camel breeds; endangered** | **Nodal agency: NRCC, Bikaner** | **Core range: Malwa region (MP) + parts of Rajasthan**

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume every Indian camel breed is thriving just because camels are closely associated with Rajasthan's desert economy — Malvi, Mewari and Mewati are all now formally classed as endangered due to falling utility.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Malvi camel, consider the following statements:
1. It is one of nine recognised camel breeds in India.
2. A camel breed is considered at risk if it has fewer than 300 breeding females.
3. The Malvi camel is primarily found in Rajasthan's Thar desert region.

How many 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
Statement 3 is the trap — the Malvi camel's core range is Madhya Pradesh's Malwa region, with only a partial spread into parts of Rajasthan; it is not primarily a Thar desert breed. Statements 1 and 2 are accurate, stated facts.