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WEEKLY

Weekly Current Affairs Compilation · 1-7 August 2026 · 11 Topics

Grouped by theme for faster revision — Environmental Governance & Policy, Clean Energy & Circular Economy, and Wildlife & Biodiversity. Every topic includes a Prelims Memory Bank for instant recall.

"innovation in learning"

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ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE & POLICY

Supreme Court Curbs Retrospective Environmental Clearances

WHY IN NEWS

On 29 July 2026, a three-judge Bench led by CJI Surya Kant quashed the Centre's 2021 Office Memorandum that allowed ex post facto environmental clearances, ruling that prior clearance is mandatory unless altered through a proper statutory notification, not a mere administrative order.

29 Jul 2026 — SC QUASHES THE 2021 RETROSPECTIVE-EC MEMO

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 & EIA Notification, 2006**
  Legal basis for mandatory prior environmental clearance
- **Article 21 & right to a clean environment**
  The original Vanashakti ban had grounded ex post facto EC's illegality in Article 21
- **Delegated legislation vs administrative orders**
  Core distinction the Court drew between a statutory notification and an office memorandum

PRELIMS MATRIX

Case	Vanashakti v. Union of India
Bench	CJI Surya Kant, Justices Joymalya Bagchi & Vipul Pancholi
Ruling date	29 July 2026
What was quashed	Centre's 2021 Office Memorandum (perpetual ex post facto EC regime)
Effect	Prospective only; past 2017/2021-regime clearances stay valid unless challenged
Litigation history	May 2025 ban → Nov 2025 recall → July 2026 final ruling

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The judgment still permits a narrow "amnesty" exception if issued as a proper statutory notification, but closes the door on any perpetual administrative route — meaning the government now needs actual rule-making, not internal memos, to regularise unauthorised projects.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

2021 OM on retrospective EC quashed, 29 July 2026 | **Bench: CJI Surya Kant + Justices Bagchi, Pancholi**

Ruling applies prospectively only | **Statutory notification allowed; administrative memo not**

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume all existing retrospective clearances have been cancelled — the ruling is prospective, so ex post facto clearances already granted under the 2017 Notification or 2021 OM remain valid unless individually challenged.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Supreme Court's July 2026 ruling on retrospective environmental clearance, consider the following statements:
1. It struck down the Centre's 2021 Office Memorandum on retrospective environmental clearance.
2. The ruling cancels all previously granted ex post facto environmental clearances with immediate effect.
3. The Court held that a statutory notification, unlike an administrative memo, could still permit narrowly tailored exceptions.

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 ruling's effect — it applies prospectively, so clearances already granted under the 2017/2021 regime remain valid unless individually challenged. Statements 1 and 3 accurately capture the Court's holding.

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE & POLICY

Asan Wetland Conservation Reserve — SC Extends Mining Curbs Nationwide

WHY IN NEWS

The Supreme Court clarified in early August 2026 that its February 2024 order restricting mining within a 10-km radius of the Asan Wetland Conservation Reserve in Uttarakhand applies to wetland conservation reserves across India, not just Asan.

10 km — MINING-RESTRICTION RADIUS NOW EXTENDED NATIONWIDE

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (2002 amendment)**
  Legal basis for Conservation Reserves on government land near parks/sanctuaries
- **Eco-Sensitive Zones vs Conservation Reserves**
  ESZs are notified under the Environment Act 1986; conservation reserves under the Wildlife Act
- **Ramsar Convention**
  Asan is a Ramsar-designated wetland, adding an international dimension to the dispute

PRELIMS MATRIX

Reserve	Asan Wetland Conservation Reserve, Dehradun district, Uttarakhand
Original order	14 February 2024, 10-km mining-restriction radius
New clarification	Applies nationwide to all wetland conservation reserves
Restriction	Mining within 10 km needs wildlife & environment clearance
Dispute trigger	Himachal Pradesh contested extension near mining leases bordering Asan
Legal basis for reserves	2002 amendment to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Unlike national parks and sanctuaries, conservation reserves have no statutory buffer zone of their own — so the Court's 10-km mining-safeguard radius effectively creates the first nationwide buffer standard for this entire category of protected area.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Asan WCR = Dehradun, Uttarakhand; Ramsar site | **Feb 2024 order: 10-km mining curb, now extended nationwide** | **Conservation Reserves created via 2002 WPA amendment** | **Distinct from Eco-Sensitive Zones (Environment Act, 1986)**

EXAM TRAP

Don't confuse Conservation Reserves (declared under the Wildlife Protection Act on government land, with community participation) with Eco-Sensitive Zones (notified under the Environment Protection Act as buffers around protected forests) — this SC order concerns the former.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Asan Wetland Conservation Reserve, consider the following statements:
1. The Asan Wetland Conservation Reserve is located in Uttarakhand.
2. Conservation Reserves are notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
3. The Supreme Court's mining-restriction order now applies to wetland conservation reserves across India.
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 is the trap — Conservation Reserves are declared under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (2002 amendment), not the Environment (Protection) Act, which instead governs Eco-Sensitive Zones. Statements 1 and 3 are accurate.

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE & POLICY

India Ranks 176th in the Environmental Performance Index 2026

WHY IN NEWS

The Yale/Columbia-backed Environmental Performance Index 2026 ranked India 176th out of 177 countries with a score of 22.46, citing weak air quality, biodiversity protection and ecosystem vitality despite gains in renewable energy and sanitation.

176/177 INDIA'S RANK IN THE EPI 2026, SCORE 22.46

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **India's climate commitments (NDCs, Panchamrit goals)**
  Context for assessing India's climate-mitigation sub-score in the index
- **Environment (Protection) Act & pollution control boards**
  Relevant to India's stated rebuttal of the EPI's air-quality findings
- **Grassland ecosystems as carbon sinks**
  The 2026 EPI added grassland conversion as a new indicator for the first time

PRELIMS MATRIX

Publisher	Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy + Columbia CIESIN
India's rank	176 of 177 countries
India's score	22.46 out of 100
Top country	Estonia, 74.79
India's category ranks	174th (health), 171st (ecosystem vitality), 130th (climate mitigation)
South Asia standing	Ranked last among South Asian countries assessed

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The 2026 edition added grassland conversion as an indicator for the first time, and applying the current methodology retrospectively shows India's actual environmental performance has been improving over time even though its global rank has stayed near the bottom — a reflection of how fast other countries are improving too.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

EPI 2026: India ranks 176/177, score 22.46 | **Published by Yale (YCELP) + Columbia (CIESIN)** | **Top rank: Estonia (74.79)** | **India worst-ranked among South Asian nations**

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume India's EPI rank reflects zero progress — researchers note India's environmental performance has actually improved over the past decade; its low RANK reflects how much faster other countries have improved, not stagnation.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2026, consider the following statements:
1. It is published jointly by Yale and Columbia University-affiliated centres.
2. India recorded its worst-ever rank in the 2026 edition compared to all previous editions.
3. The 2026 edition included grassland conversion as an indicator for the first time.

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 is incorrect — India's lowest-ever RANK was 180th (last) in the 2022 edition; 176th in 2026 is actually a better rank, even though the country remains a poor performer overall. Statements 1 and 3 are accurate.

CLEAN ENERGY & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

PM Surya Ghar Yojana Crosses 50 Lakh Rooftop Solar Installations

WHY IN NEWS

The PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana crossed 50 lakh rooftop solar installations in early August 2026, with July 2026 recording its highest-ever monthly addition of 5.06 lakh households and daily installations rising to nearly 16,328.

50L+ ROOFTOP SOLAR INSTALLATIONS UNDER PM SURYA GHAR

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **National rooftop solar policy**
  PM Surya Ghar is India's flagship household rooftop solar subsidy scheme
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)**
  Mechanism used to release subsidy funds straight to beneficiaries
- **India's 500 GW non-fossil target by 2030**
  The scheme's household contribution to this larger national renewable goal

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scheme	PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana
Total outlay	Rs 75,021 crore
Milestone	50.06 lakh households benefited (Aug 2026)
July 2026 additions	5.06 lakh households, the highest-ever monthly figure
Daily pace	~16,328 installations/day, up from 5,038/day in Oct 2025
Subsidy released	Rs 28,024 crore via Direct Benefit Transfer

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Nearly 19 lakh households under the scheme now receive zero electricity bills, and over 12 lakh households collectively earned Rs 421 crore by selling their surplus solar power back to the grid in FY 2024-25.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

50 lakh+ rooftop solar installs under PM Surya Ghar (Aug 2026) | **July 2026: highest-ever month, 5.06 lakh installs**

Daily pace: 5,038/day (Oct '25) → ~16,328/day (Jul '26) | **~19 lakh households now on zero electricity bills**

EXAM TRAP

Don't confuse the scheme's household rooftop-solar milestone (50 lakh installations) with India's overall non-fossil fuel capacity target (500 GW by 2030) — Surya Ghar is one household-focused contributor within that larger national goal, not the target itself.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, consider the following statements:
1. Daily rooftop solar installations under the scheme have more than tripled between October 2025 and July 2026.
2. The scheme's subsidy is disbursed only after project completion, with no Direct Benefit Transfer mechanism.
3. July 2026 recorded the highest-ever monthly household addition under the scheme.

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 is the trap — subsidies are released through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) straight to beneficiaries, not withheld until a later stage. Statements 1 and 3 are accurate, sourced figures.

CLEAN ENERGY & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Cabinet Approves Rs 23,731-Crore GOBARdhan Bioenergy Scheme

WHY IN NEWS

The Union Cabinet approved the GOBARdhan National Circular Bioenergy Scheme on 6 August 2026 with an outlay of Rs 23,731 crore, aiming to scale up compressed biogas (CBG) production nearly ten-fold by 2035-36 through assured offtake, stable pricing and capital support.

23,731Cr OUTLAY FOR THE NEW GOBARDHAN BIOENERGY SCHEME

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Waste-to-wealth & circular economy**
  GOBARdhan converts cattle dung, agri-residue and municipal waste into fuel and manure
- **City Gas Distribution & CNG/PNG blending obligations**
  CBG procurement is tied to a notified blending trajectory in these segments
- **Swachh Bharat Mission linkage**
  GOBARdhan originated as a sanitation-linked organic-waste management initiative

PRELIMS MATRIX

Full name	GOBARdhan — National Circular Bioenergy Scheme
Outlay	Rs 23,731 crore
Implementation period	FY 2026-27 to FY 2035-36
Goal	~10-fold increase in compressed biogas (CBG) production
CBG blending trajectory	3% (FY27) → 4% (FY28) → 5% from FY29, in CNG/PNG
Administered CBG price	Rs 2,110 per MMBtu

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The scheme defines six “growth engines” — assured CBG offtake, stable pricing, capital assistance, pipeline infrastructure, credit guarantee support and a CBG Ecosystem Challenge Fund — with greenfield projects eligible for capital assistance of up to Rs 2 crore per tonne-per-day of installed capacity.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

GOBARdhan scheme approved 6 Aug 2026, Rs 23,731 crore | **Runs FY2026-27 to FY2035-36** | **Aims for ~10x rise in CBG production** | **CBG blending: 3% → 4% → 5% in CNG/PNG by FY29**

EXAM TRAP

Don't treat “GOBARdhan” as only the older biogas-plant registration portal — the 6 August 2026 Cabinet approval is a distinct, much larger National Circular Bioenergy Scheme with a decade-long window and a dedicated pricing/offtake framework for CBG.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the GOBARdhan scheme approved in August 2026, consider the following statements:
1. It has a total outlay of Rs 23,731 crore.
2. It mandates a CNG/PNG CBG blending obligation that rises from 3% to 5% by FY 2028-29.
3. The scheme will be implemented over a single financial year only.
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 scheme runs across a full decade, from FY2026-27 to FY2035-36, not a single year. Statements 1 and 2 are accurate, specific figures from the Cabinet approval.

WILDLIFE & BIODIVERSITY

Pygmy Hog Reintroduction Reaches 78 Released in Manas

WHY IN NEWS

The Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme's most recent release took 15 captive-bred pygmy hogs back into the Kuribeel grasslands of Manas National Park, Assam — the very site their founder population was captured from three decades ago — taking the total reintroduced since 2020 to 78.

78 PYGMY HOGS REINTRODUCED INTO MANAS SINCE 2020

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Manas National Park & UNESCO World Heritage status**
  Core habitat for the pygmy hog reintroduction effort
- **Ex-situ conservation & captive breeding**
  PHCP is a model multi-agency breeding-and-release programme
- **Grassland ecosystem restoration**
  Pygmy hogs are an indicator species for healthy tall, wet grasslands

PRELIMS MATRIX

Species	Pygmy hog (Porcula salvania), world's smallest wild pig
Programme	Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP)
Partners	Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Assam Forest Dept, IUCN WPSG, MoEFCC
Latest release	15 hogs (9 female, 6 male) into Kuribeel grasslands, Manas NP
Cumulative since 2020	78 hogs released (6th release)
IUCN status	Endangered; wild population estimated under 250 mature individuals

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The pygmy hog was believed extinct by the 1960s and rediscovered only in 1971 near Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary; the founder population for today's captive-breeding programme was itself captured from these same Kuribeel grasslands in 1996, making this release a three-decade "homecoming."

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Pygmy hog = world's smallest wild pig, Porcula salvania | **Latest release: 15 hogs, Kuribeel grasslands, Manas NP**

Total released since 2020: 78 (6th release) | **Wild population: under 250 mature individuals, IUCN Endangered**

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume Manas is the pygmy hog's only historical range — it once spanned wet grasslands from Uttar Pradesh through Nepal's terai and North Bengal to Assam; Manas National Park is now just its only confirmed surviving wild stronghold.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the pygmy hog, consider the following statements:
1. It is the world's smallest wild pig species.
2. The species was rediscovered in 1971 after being believed extinct.
3. Manas National Park has always been the pygmy hog's only historical range across India and Nepal.

How many 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
Statement 3 wrongly narrows the species' historical range — pygmy hogs once occurred across a wider belt of Himalayan foothill grasslands from Uttar Pradesh to Assam; Manas is now just its only confirmed surviving wild stronghold. Statements 1 and 2 are accurate.

WILDLIFE & BIODIVERSITY

Bagdara Wildlife Sanctuary — SC-NBWL Questions Proposed Denotification

WHY IN NEWS

The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife recently asked the Madhya Pradesh government to explore alternative areas for compensatory notification rather than proceeding with the proposed denotification of the Bagdara Wildlife Sanctuary in Sidhi and Singrauli districts.

478 SQ KM — BAGDARA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, MP

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **National Board for Wildlife & its Standing Committee**
  SC-NBWL vets denotification and land-diversion proposals within protected areas
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**
  Legal process and safeguards governing the denotification of a sanctuary
- **Compensatory conservation principle**
  Alternative-area compensation as a mitigation tool when protected-area status is reduced

PRELIMS MATRIX

Location	Sidhi and Singrauli districts, Madhya Pradesh
Established	1978, for blackbuck and other wildlife conservation
Area	~478 sq km
Boundary feature	Son River forms the sanctuary's southern boundary
Key fauna	Tiger, panther, sambar, chinkara, blackbuck, wild boar, hyena
Current issue	SC-NBWL asked MP govt to find alternate compensatory areas, not denotify

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Bagdara hosts natural caves and rock shelters alongside its dry deciduous mixed forest, and its location straddling Sidhi and Singrauli — both coal-rich districts — is central to why the sanctuary keeps facing denotification pressure for mining and industrial use.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Bagdara WLS: Sidhi & Singrauli, MP; ~478 sq km, est. 1978 | **Son River forms its southern boundary** | **SC-NBWL: seek alternate area, don't denotify** | **Key fauna: tiger, blackbuck, panther, sambar**

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume the Standing Committee has approved the denotification — its direction so far is to explore alternative compensatory areas, effectively pushing back on the state's original proposal rather than clearing it.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Bagdara Wildlife Sanctuary, consider the following statements:
1. It is located in Madhya Pradesh.
2. The Son River forms the sanctuary's southern boundary.
3. The SC-NBWL has approved the sanctuary's denotification.

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 Standing Committee has instead asked the state government to look for alternative compensatory areas, questioning rather than approving the denotification. Statements 1 and 2 are accurate, factual details.

WILDLIFE & BIODIVERSITY

Chhattisgarh Plans Fresh Translocation of Asiatic Wild Buffalo

WHY IN NEWS

The Chhattisgarh Forest Department is planning to translocate wild buffaloes from Assam into enclosures at the Pamed Wildlife Sanctuary, Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve and Indravati Tiger Reserve, aiming to revive the state's critically low central Indian wild buffalo population.

90%+ OF THE GLOBAL WILD BUFFALO POPULATION IS IN INDIA

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Central India Wild Buffalo Recovery Project**
  WTI-Chhattisgarh Forest Department partnership working to rebuild the state's population
- **Genetic conservation & inbreeding risk**
  Translocation aims to counter inbreeding with domestic buffaloes
- **State-animal symbolism in conservation politics**
  The wild buffalo has been Chhattisgarh's state animal since 2001

PRELIMS MATRIX

Species	Asiatic/Indian wild buffalo (Bubalus arnee)
Global population	~3,500-4,000; India holds over 90%
India's main populations	Assam (~3,000-3,500); smaller pockets in Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya, Maharashtra
Chhattisgarh translocation sites	Pamed WLS, Udanti-Sitanadi TR, Indravati TR
IUCN / legal status	Endangered (IUCN); Schedule I, WPA 1972; CITES Appendix III
State animal of	Chhattisgarh (declared 2001)

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Asiatic wild buffalo is the world's largest wild bovine and carries the largest horns of any living bovid, spreading up to 2 metres — yet Chhattisgarh's own population had crashed to about 125 animals across five scattered pockets by 1988, prompting decades of translocation efforts from Assam.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Wild buffalo = Bubalus arnee, world's largest wild bovine | **India holds 90%+ of global population (~3,500-4,000)** | **Chhattisgarh translocation: Pamed, Udanti-Sitanadi, Indravati** | **State animal of Chhattisgarh since 2001**

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume Assam's wild buffalo population needs urgent revival too — Assam holds the largest, relatively stable population (~3,000-3,500); it is Chhattisgarh's small, fragmented population that is critically low and driving these translocations.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Asiatic wild buffalo, consider the following statements:
1. It is the state animal of Chhattisgarh.
2. India holds more than 90% of the global wild water buffalo population.
3. Assam's wild buffalo population is the one facing critical decline that necessitates translocation.

How many 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
Statement 3 reverses the actual situation — it is Chhattisgarh's small, fragmented population that is critically low and driving translocations from the larger, stable Assam population, not the other way round. Statements 1 and 2 are accurate.

WILDLIFE & BIODIVERSITY

Himalayan Serow Filmed in Dalhousie After Two Decades

WHY IN NEWS

Forest staff recorded the first video evidence of the Himalayan serow in the Dalhousie catchment forests, near the Kalatop-Khajjiar Wildlife Sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh, marking its first confirmed presence in the landscape in about 20 years.

~20 yrs SINCE THE SEROW WAS LAST CONFIRMED NEAR DALHOUSIE

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Mountain ungulates of the Himalaya**
  Serow, tahr and goral occupy similar steep-forest niches across the range
- **Camera-trap & video-based biodiversity monitoring**
  Increasingly used to confirm the presence of elusive, low-density species
- **IUCN Red List reassessments**
  The serow's status has shifted between Near Threatened and Vulnerable across recent assessments

PRELIMS MATRIX

Species	Himalayan serow (Capricornis sumatraensis thar)
Location	Dalhousie catchment forests, near Kalatop-Khajjiar Wildlife Sanctuary, HP
Sighting	First video-graphic evidence in ~2 decades, during a routine forest patrol
Local extinction belief	Thought locally extinct after a 2005-06 mouth-hoof disease outbreak
IUCN status	Near Threatened (some assessments now cite Vulnerable)
Legal protection	Schedule I, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; state animal of Mizoram

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Himalayan serow is often described as looking like “a cross between a goat, a donkey, a cow and a pig” due to its large head, thick neck, short limbs and mule-like ears — an unmistakable, if rarely seen, silhouette in dense Himalayan forest.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Himalayan serow filmed in Dalhousie, first in ~20 yrs | **Near Kalatop-Khajjiar WLS, Himachal Pradesh** | **Locally believed extinct after 2005-06 disease outbreak** | **Schedule I (WPA 1972); state animal of Mizoram**

EXAM TRAP

Don't confuse this Dalhousie video record with the separate 2021 “first sighting in a cold desert” event at Spiti — that was an unprecedented record of a serow straying into trans-Himalayan cold-desert terrain, a different location and type of record.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Himalayan serow, consider the following statements:
1. It is the state animal of Mizoram.
2. It is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
3. The recent Dalhousie sighting marks the first-ever recorded sighting of the species anywhere in the Himalayas.

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 overreaches — this is the first video record specifically from the Dalhousie catchment in about two decades, not the first-ever sighting of the species across the Himalayas. Statements 1 and 2 are accurate.

WILDLIFE & BIODIVERSITY

ZSI Completes India's First Complete Catalogue of Lepidoptera

WHY IN NEWS

The Zoological Survey of India announced on 30 July 2026 the completion of the country's first comprehensive catalogue of Lepidoptera, documenting 13,703 butterfly and moth species after 12 years of taxonomic work, published as the concluding volume of a 22-volume series in Zootaxa.

13,703 LEPIDOPTERA SPECIES NOW CATALOGUED IN INDIA

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Zoological Survey of India (est. 1916)**
  Nodal body for faunal documentation, building on its 2024 complete animal checklist
- **Taxonomy & biodiversity baselines**
  Catalogues like this underpin ecological monitoring and climate-impact studies
- **Pollinators & ecosystem services**
  Lepidoptera's role as pollinators, herbivores and prey species in food chains

PRELIMS MATRIX

Catalogue	"Catalogue of Lepidoptera (Butterflies & Moths) of India"
Announced	30 July 2026
Species documented	13,703 (1,417 butterflies; 12,286 moths)
Time taken	~12 years of research
Taxonomic scope	3,705 genera, 240 subfamilies, 102 families, 31 superfamilies
Lead authors	Dr Rahul Joshi & Dr Navneet Singh, ZSI

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

India's Lepidoptera now account for about 8.25% of the world's known butterfly and moth diversity, and the catalogue alone records 2,205 species of Geometroidea — night-active moths — making up 8.8% of the world's known species in that single superfamily.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

ZSI Lepidoptera catalogue: 13,703 species, announced 30 July 2026 | **1,417 butterflies + 12,286 moths**

12 years of work; final volume of a 22-volume Zootaxa series | **India = ~8.25% of world's known Lepidoptera diversity**

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume butterflies dominate India's Lepidoptera diversity — moths vastly outnumber butterflies in the catalogue (12,286 vs 1,417), even though butterflies get far more public and conservation attention.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the ZSI's Lepidoptera catalogue, consider the following statements:
1. It was published by the Zoological Survey of India.
2. Butterflies outnumber moths in India's documented Lepidoptera diversity.
3. The catalogue documents a total of 13,703 species.

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 is the trap — moths (12,286 species) vastly outnumber butterflies (1,417 species) in the catalogue, the reverse of common public perception. Statements 1 and 3 are accurate.

WILDLIFE & BIODIVERSITY

Asiatic Lion Population Crosses 1,000, Parliament Told

WHY IN NEWS

The Union Environment Ministry informed the Rajya Sabha on 6 August 2026 that the Asiatic lion population has grown 32% since 2020 to reach 891 individuals per the 16th population estimation, with more recent analyses noting the wider Greater Gir landscape figure has now crossed 1,000.

891 ASIATIC LIONS COUNTED IN THE 16TH POPULATION ESTIMATION

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Project Lion (2020)**
  Landscape-based conservation initiative distinct from Project Tiger
- **Wildlife corridors & single-landscape risk**
  Concentration in one landscape is a core conservation vulnerability, as with cheetahs
- **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)**
  Global coalition India leads for seven big cat species

PRELIMS MATRIX

Species	Asiatic lion (Panthera leo persica)
16th population estimation	891 lions (May 2025), up 32% from 674 in 2020
Core habitat	Gir National Park & Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat — only wild population globally
Distribution	55.78% in forested areas; 44.22% in non-forested zones
Conservation programme	Project Lion (launched 2020)
Key concern in Parliament	Single-landscape concentration; need for a second free-ranging population

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

More than 44% of Gujarat's Asiatic lions now live outside traditionally protected forest areas — in farmland, wastelands and river corridors — an expanding footprint that reflects conservation success but also raises the risk of human-lion conflict.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Asiatic lion: 891 in 2025 census, up 32% from 674 (2020)

Only wild population globally: Gir, Gujarat

44%+ of lions now live outside protected forest areas

Project Lion launched 2020; India leads the IBCA (7 big cats)

EXAM TRAP

Don't assume Project Lion and Project Tiger are the same scheme just because both protect big cats in India — Project Lion is a distinct landscape-based initiative launched in 2020 specifically for the Asiatic lion in the Gir landscape.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Asiatic lion, consider the following statements:
1. Gir National Park in Gujarat is the only wild habitat of the Asiatic lion in the world.
2. More than 40% of Gujarat's Asiatic lions now live outside traditional protected forest areas.
3. Project Lion and Project Tiger were launched under the same scheme in the same year.

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 — Project Lion (2020) and Project Tiger (1973) are distinct schemes launched decades apart. Statements 1 and 2 are accurate, current facts about the Asiatic lion's status.