MISSION X FOR UPSC

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WEEKLY

Weekly Current Affairs Compilation · 20 – 27 October 2026 · 13 Topics

A three-toothed wasp and a deep-sea electric ray join the species list, satellite-tagged Amur falcons return to Manipur, the Loss and Damage fund backs Nepal, and the world's largest battery ship sails. This week's compilation tracks thirteen stories across species, climate, wetlands, birds, and forests.

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"innovation in learning"

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NEW SPECIES DISCOVERIES

Homoporus tridentata: New Three-Toothed Parasitoid Wasp Found in Kashmir

WHY IN NEWS

Entomologists from the University of Kashmir and SKUAST-K, with scientists from two Saudi universities, described Homoporus tridentata, a new parasitoid micro-wasp collected on the University of Kashmir campus during surveys from 2014 to 2020. It is named for the three teeth on its clypeal margin and was published in the Journal of the Kansas Entomological Society.

3
Clypeal teeth that give the wasp its name

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **Biological Pest Control**
   Parasitoid wasps of the genus attack larvae and pupae of crop and forest pests, so new species widen the toolkit for pesticide-free management.

2. **Himalayan Biodiversity Documentation**
   Campus-level surveys show how undocumented insect diversity persists even in well-studied urban and academic landscapes.

3. **Taxonomy and Species Description**
   New species are validated through peer-reviewed description; use this to link discovery news with the ZSI and BSI role.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Homoporus tridentata
Type	Parasitoid micro-wasp, family Pteromalidae
IUCN status	Not assessed (newly described)
Size	About 3.9 mm (male)
Appearance	Metallic green head and thorax, copper-brown eyes
Key trait	Three clypeal teeth, middle one longest; mandibles with 4 teeth right, 3 left
Behaviour	Genus parasitises larvae and pupae of flies, moths, beetles and gall wasps
Collection site	University of Kashmir campus, Jammu and Kashmir

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
A parasitoid, unlike a typical parasite, eventually kills its host, which is why parasitoid wasps are valued as natural biological control agents against agricultural and forestry pests.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Homoporus tridentata | Pteromalidae | Three clypeal teeth | University of Kashmir campus | Biocontrol agent

EXAM TRAP
Do not call a parasitoid a simple parasite. A parasitoid kills its host to complete development, while a parasite usually lives off the host without killing it.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Homoporus tridentata, recently in the news, is

(a) a newly described parasitoid wasp
(b) a deep-sea electric ray
(c) a migratory falcon
(d) a wild edible mushroom

Answer: (a) a newly described parasitoid wasp

APPROACH
Homoporus tridentata is a parasitoid micro-wasp from the University of Kashmir campus, named for its three clypeal teeth and relevant to biological pest control.

NEW SPECIES DISCOVERIES

Arabian Black Electric Ray: New Deep-Sea Species Described

WHY IN NEWS

ZSI scientists K.K. Bineesh and Anil Kasinath, with David Ebert, described Tetronarce ramanamurthyi, a new electric ray from the deep southeastern Arabian Sea, in Zootaxa. It is the first confirmed record of the genus Tetronarce in the northern Indian Ocean.

9
Specimens used to describe the new species

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **Deep-Sea Biodiversity**
   Discoveries from deep waters show how little of India's EEZ fauna is catalogued, supporting deep-ocean survey missions.
2. **Role of ZSI**
   The Zoological Survey of India's Marine Biology Regional Centre in Chennai is the nodal institution for such taxonomic work.
3. **Cartilaginous Fish Conservation**
   Rays and sharks face fishing pressure, so new species need baseline data before any assessment.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Tetronarce ramanamurthyi
Group	Electric ray, family Torpedinidae
Habitat	Deep waters of the southeastern Arabian Sea
Appearance	Uniform dark bluish black or brown above, whitish belly, no papillae around spiracles
Behaviour	Bottom-dwelling ray that stuns prey with electric discharge
IUCN status	Not yet assessed (newly described)

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
The species forms a separate evolutionary lineage from all other known electric rays, and this is the first time the genus Tetronarce has been confirmed in the northern Indian Ocean.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Tetronarce ramanamurthyi | SE Arabian Sea | ZSI Chennai | First northern Indian Ocean genus record | Zootaxa

EXAM TRAP
Do not call it a fish with bones or a shark. Electric rays are cartilaginous fishes, and 'Arabian Black Electric Ray' is a descriptive name for a species not yet assessed by the IUCN.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the newly described Tetronarce ramanamurthyi, consider the following :

I. It is an electric ray.

II. It was described from deep waters of the southeastern Arabian Sea.

III. It is categorised as Endangered by the IUCN.

IV. It has papillae around its spiracles.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) All the four

Answer: (b) Only two

APPROACH
Statements I and II are correct. The species is newly described and not yet assessed by the IUCN, and it lacks papillae around the spiracles.

CLIMATE, ENERGY & WETLANDS

Puzhal Lake, Chennai's Red Hills Reservoir, in the News

WHY IN NEWS

Puzhal Lake, also called Red Hills Lake in Thiruvallur district, drew attention after two Class 10 students drowned near Murugambedu. The incident puts the spotlight on safety around Chennai's drinking-water reservoirs, which also host resident waterbirds and winter migrants.

3,300 mcft **Approximate storage capacity of Puzhal Lake**



Puzhal Lake intake tower

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **Urban Water Security**
   Puzhal is one of Chennai's main rain-fed reservoirs; use it to show how a single city depends on a few storage lakes.
2. **Wetland Habitat Value**
   The lake hosts resident waterbirds and autumn migrants arriving via the Central Asian Flyway.
3. **Disaster Management**
   Drowning at reservoirs is a local hazard; link it to fencing, signage and community awareness as preventive measures.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Also called	Red Hills Lake
Location	Thiruvallur district, near Chennai, Tamil Nadu
Type	Man-made freshwater lake built in the British period
Water source	Rain-fed; water treated and piped to Chennai
Capacity	About 3,300 million cubic feet
Chennai peers	Chembarambakkam, Poondi and Cholavaram reservoirs

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Puzhal sits on the Central Asian Flyway, so the same reservoir that supplies drinking water to Chennai doubles as a winter refuge for trans-continental migratory birds.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Puzhal Lake | Red Hills Lake | Thiruvallur district | Man-made, rain-fed | Central Asian Flyway

EXAM TRAP

Do not place Puzhal in Chennai district itself. It lies in Thiruvallur district and supplies water to the city, and it is a reservoir, not a Ramsar site.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Consider the following statements :

Statement I :
Puzhal Lake, also called Red Hills Lake, is one of the rain-fed reservoirs that supply drinking water to Chennai.

Statement II :
Puzhal Lake is located in Chennai district.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

(a) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II explains Statement I

(b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct but Statement II does not explain Statement I

(c) Statement I is correct but Statement II is not correct

(d) Statement I is not correct but Statement II is correct

Answer: (c) Statement I is correct but Statement II is not correct

APPROACH

Puzhal supplies Chennai but lies in Thiruvallur district, so Statement II is incorrect.

CLIMATE, ENERGY & WETLANDS

Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary Yet to See Ramsar Site Transformation

WHY IN NEWS

A report on 21 October 2026 noted that more than four years after notification as a bird sanctuary, Nanjarayan in Tiruppur district has not yet changed in the way a Ramsar site is expected to. The wetland was designated a Ramsar site in 2024 and is Tamil Nadu's 17th bird sanctuary.

191
Bird species recorded in and around the lake

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **Ramsar Wise Use Obligation**
   Designation carries a management-plan expectation; use the gap between status and ground action as the answer's critique.
2. **Central Asian Flyway Sites**
   Nanjarayan is a breeding and foraging stop for resident and migratory birds on the flyway.
3. **Tank Wetlands of Tamil Nadu**
   Seasonal irrigation tanks hold biodiversity value that protected status alone does not secure.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Location	Uthukuli taluk, Tiruppur district, Tamil Nadu
Area	About 126 hectares
Water source	Freshwater lake fed by the Nallar, a Noyyal tributary
Status	Bird sanctuary 2022, Ramsar site 2024; TN's 17th bird sanctuary
Recorded biodiversity	191 birds, 87 butterflies, 21 reptiles, 7 amphibians
Migratory visitors	Bar-headed goose, northern shoveler, spot-billed pelican

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
Nanjarayan was repaired and restored by a local ruler, King Nanjarayan, which is how the shallow tank wetland got its name.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Nanjarayan BS | Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu | Ramsar 2024 | TN's 17th bird sanctuary | Nallar, Noyyal tributary

EXAM TRAP
Do not confuse the two Tamil Nadu wetlands added with it. Kazhuveli is a different bird sanctuary in Villupuram, while Nanjarayan is inland in Tiruppur district.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary, consider the following statements :

1. It is located in Tiruppur district of Tamil Nadu.
2. It was designated a Ramsar site in 2024.
3. It is a coastal brackish lagoon.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

APPROACH
Nanjarayan is an inland freshwater lake fed by the Nallar, not a coastal lagoon, so statement 3 is wrong.

CLIMATE, ENERGY & WETLANDS

UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2026: Overshoot of 1.5°C Now Certain

WHY IN NEWS

Released on 21 October 2026 from Nairobi, UNEP's Emissions Gap Report says global temperatures will exceed 1.5°C and that limiting warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot is no longer possible. It projects 2.6°C if all climate plans, including conditional ones, are delivered.

2.8°C
Projected warming by 2100 under current policies

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **NDC Ambition Cycle**
   124 countries had submitted new targets by 1 September 2026, covering about 75 percent of emissions, yet pledges fall short.
2. **Carbon Dioxide Removal**
   The best-case path needs about 320 Gt of CO2 removed this century, so link it to storage and land-based options.
3. **Paris Agreement Gap Metrics**
   Use the gap between pledged and needed cuts to frame climate finance and equity arguments.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Issued by	UNEP, released 21 October 2026, Nairobi
Current policies	2.8°C by 2100
All plans delivered	2.6°C by 2100
With net-zero pledges	2.1°C by 2100
Cuts needed vs 2025	18% by 2030, 45% by 2035, 69% by 2040
Plans deliver by 2035	Only 11 to 15% reduction

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
Even the lowest possible scenario peaks at about 1.7 to 1.8°C around mid-century and returns to 1.5°C or below by 2100 with roughly a 50 percent chance, hence the report's overshoot framing.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

UNEP Emissions Gap | 1.5°C overshoot | 2.8°C current policies | 45% cut by 2035 | 320 Gt removal

EXAM TRAP
Do not confuse it with UNEP's Adaptation Gap Report or the WMO State of the Climate report. The Emissions Gap Report compares pledged emissions with Paris-aligned pathways.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Consider the following statements :

Statement I :
UNEP's Emissions Gap Report 2026 concludes that overshooting 1.5°C is now certain.

Statement II :
Current national plans would cut emissions by only 11 to 15 percent by 2035, against the 45 percent cut needed.

Statement III :
The report compares pledged emissions with the cuts needed to meet Paris Agreement temperature goals.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

(a) Both Statement II and Statement III are correct and both of them explain Statement I
(b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II explains Statement I
(c) Only one of the Statements II and III is correct and that explains Statement I
(d) Neither Statement II nor Statement III is correct

Answer: (a) Both Statement II and Statement III are correct and both of them explain Statement I

APPROACH
Both Statements II and III are correct, and the shortfall between pledged and needed cuts explains why overshoot is certain.

CLIMATE, ENERGY & WETLANDS

Loss and Damage Fund Sets Aside Money for Nepal Floods

WHY IN NEWS

At its first extraordinary board meeting on 22 October 2026, the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) provisionally set aside about $21.6 million (some reports say $20 million) for Nepal after the August 2026 Bhote Koshi flash floods. It is the fund's first disaster-specific response, under a pilot approach within the Barbados Implementation Modalities.

$21.6 M
Provisionally set aside for Nepal flood recovery

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **Climate Finance Architecture**
   Link the fund to the third pillar of climate action, after mitigation and adaptation, when answering on finance gaps.
2. **Glacier and Flood Hazards**
   The Nepal event followed a glacier rock and ice collapse; use it as a Himalayan hazard example for India's own risk planning.
3. **Equity in Climate Negotiations**
   Developing countries seek more contributions, so cite the gap between needs and the allocation.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Full name	Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD)
Set up	Agreed at COP27 (2022), operationalised at COP28 (2023)
Nepal allocation	About $21.6 million set aside, under 0.5% of $4.77 billion recovery needs
Trigger event	August 2026 Bhote Koshi flash floods
Mechanism	Barbados Implementation Modalities, pilot approach
Fund position	About $350 million to allocate against roughly $2.8 billion in requests

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
The allocation was described by developed countries as setting no precedent, while campaigners want larger contributions, which shows the unresolved debate over who pays for climate losses.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

FRLD | COP27 agreed, COP28 operational | Nepal $21.6 M | Barbados Implementation Modalities | Bhote Koshi floods

EXAM TRAP
Do not confuse loss and damage finance with adaptation finance. Loss and damage covers impacts that adaptation cannot avoid, and it is a separate fund from the Green Climate Fund.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

The Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage was agreed at which Conference of the Parties?

(a) COP26 (Glasgow)
(b) COP27 (Sharm el-Sheikh)
(c) COP28 (Dubai)
(d) COP29 (Baku)

Answer: (b) COP27 (Sharm el-Sheikh)

APPROACH
The fund was agreed at COP27 in 2022 and operationalised at COP28 in 2023, so the agreement year points to COP27.

CLIMATE, ENERGY & WETLANDS

China Zorrilla, World's Largest Battery-Electric Ship, Enters Service

WHY IN NEWS

China Zorrilla, built by Incat Tasmania for Buquebus, is the world's largest battery-electric ship and has entered service on the Buenos Aires to Colonia route. The 130 m vessel carries up to 2,100 passengers and 225 vehicles and runs without tailpipe carbon emissions.



China Zorrilla at Incat shipyard

40 MWh **Battery capacity of China Zorrilla**

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **Green Shipping Transition**
   Use the vessel to show battery propulsion as a route to decarbonise short-sea ferries.
2. **Maritime Decarbonisation Policy**
   Link it to IMO emission goals and India's green port and coastal shipping plans.
3. **Battery Storage at Scale**
   A 40 MWh pack shows how storage technology moves beyond cars into heavy transport.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Builder	Incat Tasmania, Hobart, Australia (Hull 096)
Operator	Buquebus, Uruguay
Length	About 130 m, three decks
Battery	Above 40 MWh, over 250 tonnes of batteries
Capacity	2,100 passengers, 225 vehicles
Route and speed	Buenos Aires to Colonia, 55 to 60 km, up to 25 knots

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The ship is named after Uruguayan actress and theatre personality China Zorrilla, and its eight electric motors drive waterjets instead of conventional diesel engines.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

China Zorrilla | 40 MWh battery | Incat Tasmania | Buquebus | Buenos Aires to Colonia

EXAM TRAP

Do not call it a hydrogen or LNG ship. It is fully battery-electric, and 'zero emission' refers to its operation, not to the electricity source used for charging.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the ship China Zorrilla, consider the following :

I. It was built by Incat Tasmania.

II. It is powered by hydrogen fuel cells.

III. Its batteries are of about 4 MWh capacity.

IV. It operates between Sydney and Hobart.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) All the four

Answer: (a) Only one

APPROACH

Only Statement I is correct. It is a 40 MWh battery-electric ferry on the Buenos Aires to Colonia route.

BIRDS IN THE NEWS

European Bee-Eater Recorded in Chennai for the First Time

WHY IN NEWS

A juvenile European Bee-eater was photographed at Broken Bridge near the Adyar estuary in Chennai, the first documented record for the city. The sighting was submitted to eBird and accepted after review, and a Eurasian Wryneck was seen the same day.

1st **Documented record of the species in Chennai**



European Bee-eater

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **Citizen Science Data**
   eBird review and acceptance show how volunteer records establish new distribution limits.
2. **Migration and Vagrancy**
   Birds outside the usual range reveal shifting routes; use it to link movement records with climate and habitat change.
3. **Urban Wetland Value**
   Adyar estuary's mixed habitat can attract rare visitors, strengthening the case for estuary protection.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Merops apiaster
IUCN status	Least Concern
Appearance	Chestnut crown and back, yellow throat, blue-green underparts, black eye stripe
Behaviour	Aerial insect-hunter, catches bees and wasps in flight
Range	Breeds in Europe and western Asia, winters mainly in Africa
Chennai record	Juvenile at Broken Bridge, Adyar estuary

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The European Bee-eater removes a bee's sting by striking the insect on a perch before eating it, a handling habit seen across the bee-eater family.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Merops apiaster | Least Concern | First Chennai record | Broken Bridge, Adyar | eBird accepted

EXAM TRAP

Do not treat it as a resident Indian bee-eater. The Green and Chestnut-headed bee-eaters are common residents, while the European species is a migrant, and this was a first city record.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Consider the following statements :

Statement I :
The European Bee-eater is a migratory species.

Statement II :
The European Bee-eater is listed as Least Concern by the IUCN.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

(a) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II explains Statement I

(b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct but Statement II does not explain Statement I

(c) Statement I is correct but Statement II is not correct

(d) Statement I is not correct but Statement II is correct

Answer: (b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct but Statement II does not explain Statement I

APPROACH

Both are correct, but migratory behaviour does not explain the IUCN category, so Statement II does not explain Statement I.

BIRDS IN THE NEWS

Himachal Soft-Releases Captive-Bred Cheer Pheasants in Shimla

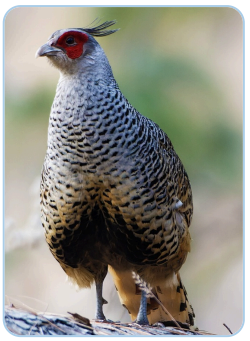
WHY IN NEWS

On 6 October 2026, during Wildlife Week, the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department soft-released captive-bred Cheer Pheasants at Moi Jubbar in Koti, Shimla, the third release site in the district. Reports cite the Khadiyun breeding centre at Chail and radio-tag monitoring, with released-bird survival rising sharply since 2019-20.

100% **Reported survival of released birds in 2024-25**



Cheer Pheasant



Cheer Pheasant (front)

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **Ex-Situ to In-Situ Conservation**
   Captive breeding followed by gradual soft release is a model for threatened Himalayan galliformes.
2. **Schedule I Protection**
   Listing under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 gives the highest legal safeguard and supports enforcement against hunting.
3. **Monitoring Tools**
   Radio transmitters and camera traps track survival, so use them to show evidence-based reintroduction.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Catreus wallichii
IUCN status	Vulnerable
Legal status	WPA 1972 Schedule I
Appearance	Large pheasant, long barred tail, drooping crest, red facial skin
Behaviour	Ground-dwelling, groups in coveys, dawn calling, grassy slopes
Breeding centre	Khadiyun, Chail, Solan (HP Zoo Conservation and Breeding Society)

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Cheer Pheasant, locally called Chir Tittar, is named after its loud call, and it prefers steep grassy slopes with scattered trees and scrub in the western Himalaya.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Catreus wallichii | Vulnerable | Schedule I | Khadiyun, Chail | Soft release, Koti

EXAM TRAP

Do not confuse it with the Western Tragopan, the state bird of Himachal Pradesh. Both are Himalayan pheasants, but the Cheer is not the state bird.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the Cheer Pheasant, consider the following statements :

1. It is categorised as Vulnerable by the IUCN.
2. It is protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
3. It is the State bird of Himachal Pradesh.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

APPROACH

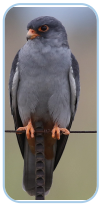
The Western Tragopan, not the Cheer Pheasant, is the State bird of Himachal Pradesh, so statement 3 is wrong.

BIRDS IN THE NEWS

Satellite-Tagged Amur Falcons Return to Manipur's Tamenglong

WHY IN NEWS

Two satellite-tagged Amur falcons, Apapang (male) and Alang (female), returned to Tamenglong district, Manipur, on 22 October 2026 after crossing 23 countries, about 11 days after leaving northeastern China. They were tagged by WII scientists at Chiuluan village on 11 November 2025 and may stay two to three weeks.



Amur Falcon (male)

23 **Countries crossed by the tagged falcons**

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **Migratory Species Conservation**
   Amur falcons are protected under the Wildlife Protection Act and the CMS, so cite both for flyway-level cooperation.
2. **Community Conservation**
   Hunting bans and local stewardship in Manipur and Nagaland turned former hunters into protectors.
3. **Satellite Telemetry**
   WII tagging gives route data on the Arabian Sea crossing to guide stopover protection.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Falco amurensis
IUCN status	Least Concern
Legal status	WPA 1972 Schedule I (Part B)
Appearance	Small raptor; male slate grey with red thighs, female barred with a dark eye-mask
Behaviour	Gregarious, hunts insects such as termites in flocks, roosts in large groups
Route	Breeds in Far East Asia, winters in southern Africa via India
Sea crossing	About 6,000 km non-stop in six days, 3,000 km over the Arabian Sea

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Of the three birds tagged at Chiuluan, Apapang and Alang have now completed a round trip, while a third female, Ahu, lost contact in Somalia, showing the risk on the Africa leg.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Falco amurensis | Tamenglong, Manipur | WII satellite tags | 23 countries | Schedule I

EXAM TRAP

Do not treat Manipur as the only stopover. Nagaland's Doyang reservoir area (Longleng) is the best-known roost, and the falcon is a migrant, not an Indian breeder.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Consider the following statements :

Statement I :
Amur falcons make one of the longest raptor migrations, crossing the Arabian Sea non-stop.

Statement II :
The satellite-tagged falcons flew about 6,000 km non-stop in six days, including nearly 3,000 km over the Arabian Sea.

Statement III :
Amur falcons are resident breeding birds of Manipur and Nagaland.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

(a) Both Statement II and Statement III are correct and both of them explain Statement I

(b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II explains Statement I

(c) Only one of the Statements II and III is correct and that explains Statement I

(d) Neither Statement II nor Statement III is correct

Answer: (c) Only one of the Statements II and III is correct and that explains Statement I

APPROACH

Statement II is correct and supports Statement I, while Statement III is wrong because the species breeds in Far East Asia and only stops over in India.

FORESTS & PROTECTED AREAS

Ranthambore Tiger Reserve: Tigress T-2403 Spotted With Three Cubs

WHY IN NEWS

Tigress T-2403 was spotted with three cubs in Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, Sawai Madhopur, on 26 October 2026. The reserve has also been highlighted as a key source population in a National Tiger Conservation Authority assessment.

3 cubs **Tigress T-2403 spotted with cubs in Ranthambore**



Tigress and cub, Ranthambore

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **Source-Sink Tiger Management**
   Ranthambore's surplus tigers supply other reserves, so cite it for population recovery and translocation.
2. **Project Tiger History**
   It was among the first nine reserves of 1973; use it for the evolution of tiger policy.
3. **Hill Forts and Heritage**
   Ranthambore Fort lies inside the reserve and is part of a UNESCO site, linking ecology with heritage tourism.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Location	Sawai Madhopur district, Rajasthan
Area	About 1,411 sq km (tiger reserve)
Landscape	Junction of Aravalli and Vindhyan ranges, Great Boundary Fault
Boundaries	Banas river to the north, Chambal river to the south
Lakes	Padam Talab, Raj Bagh Talab, Malik Talab
Vegetation	Dry deciduous forest, prominent Dhok (Anogeissus pendula)

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Ranthambore takes its name from Ranthambore Fort inside the reserve, and its open dry forest and lakeside setting make tigers unusually easy to observe.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Ranthambore TR | Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan | Banas and Chambal | Dhok forest | Project Tiger 1973

EXAM TRAP

Do not confuse Ranthambore with Sariska or Mukundra Hills, the other Rajasthan tiger reserves. Ranthambore lies between the Banas and Chambal rivers in Sawai Madhopur.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Ranthambore Tiger Reserve is bounded by which two rivers?

(a) Banas and Chambal
(b) Luni and Sabarmati
(c) Mahi and Banas
(d) Chambal and Luni

Answer: (a) Banas and Chambal

APPROACH

Ranthambore lies in Sawai Madhopur district with the Banas to the north and the Chambal to the south.

FORESTS & PROTECTED AREAS

Girdling: Over 500 Trees Girdled in Udanti Sitanadi Tiger Reserve

WHY IN NEWS

The Chhattisgarh forest department is seeking expert help to save over 500 trees allegedly girdled by encroachers in Karka village inside Udanti Sitanadi Tiger Reserve. It plans bridge-grafting 'surgery' to restore sap flow, as reported on 25 October 2026.

500+ **Girdled trees in Karka village, Udanti Sitanadi TR**



Girdled tree



Bark ring removed

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **Forest Encroachment**
   Use the case to show how illegal clearing pressure works inside notified tiger reserves.
2. **Forest Conservation Enforcement**
   Girdling kills a tree without felling it, so link it to detection and penalties under forest and wildlife law.
3. **Tree Restoration Techniques**
   Bridge grafting reconnects tissue above and below the wound, a practical rescue method for forest managers.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Technique	Continuous ring of bark and cambium removed around the trunk
Effect	Cuts water and nutrient flow, tree dies if wound does not heal
Location	Karka village, Udanti Sitanadi Tiger Reserve, Chhattisgarh
Scale	Over 500 trees
Rescue plan	Bridge grafting with scions from one-year-old dormant stems
Cambium	Dividing cell layer between xylem and phloem driving wood growth

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Girdling is also used deliberately in forestry to leave standing dead trees (snags) for wildlife or to remove unwanted woody species gradually, so context decides whether it is management or damage.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Girdling | Cambium cut | Karka, Udanti Sitanadi TR | Bridge grafting | 500+ trees

EXAM TRAP

Do not treat girdling as felling. The tree stays standing and dies slowly, which makes it harder to detect than cutting.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

With reference to the girdling of trees, consider the following :

I. A ring of bark and cambium is removed around the trunk.

II. It cuts the downward flow of food to the roots.

III. The tree is felled immediately.

IV. Bridge grafting can help reconnect the damaged tissue.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) All the four

Answer: (c) Only three

APPROACH

Girdling kills a tree slowly while it stays standing, so Statement III is wrong; the others are correct.

FORESTS & PROTECTED AREAS

Rugda Mushroom: Wild Sal Forest Delicacy and Tribal Income Source

WHY IN NEWS

Rugda, also called Rugra or 'vegetarian mutton', is a wild subterranean mushroom foraged by tribal households in Jharkhand and nearby states after the first monsoon showers. It was in news as a seasonal non-timber forest produce that supports forest-dependent livelihoods.



Wild forest mushrooms

Rs 3,000 **Reported top price per kg of Rugda mushroom**

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

1. **Non-Timber Forest Produce**
   Use Rugda to show seasonal NTFP income for tribal households and the value of intact sal forests.
2. **Mycorrhizal Association**
   Its link with sal roots shows why forest loss also removes the fungi that depend on it.
3. **Livelihood and Forest Rights**
   Collection rights under forest laws let communities earn from such produce.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Astraeus hygrometricus (reported also as A. asiaticus)
IUCN status	Not assessed
Appearance	Round, brownish earthstar-like fungus with a star-shaped outer skin
Behaviour	Grows under the soil, appears after first monsoon showers, forms ectomycorrhiza with sal
Region	Chhotanagpur Plateau: Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal
Collection	Hand-foraged for a few weeks each year by tribal communities

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Rugda cannot be farmed like a button mushroom because it depends on a living partnership with sal tree roots, so it comes only from healthy sal forest.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Rugda or Rugra | Astraeus hygrometricus | Sal ectomycorrhiza | Chhotanagpur Plateau | NTFP

EXAM TRAP

Do not call Rugda a gilled cap mushroom or a cultivated crop. It is a wild, soil-dwelling earthstar fungus and a tree-dependent species.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Consider the following statements :

Statement I :
Rugda mushroom is collected from the wild and is not commonly farmed.

Statement II :
Rugda forms an ectomycorrhizal association with the roots of sal trees.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

(a) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II explains Statement I

(b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct but Statement II does not explain Statement I

(c) Statement I is correct but Statement II is not correct

(d) Statement I is not correct but Statement II is correct

Answer: (a) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II explains Statement I

APPROACH

Both are correct, and its dependence on living sal roots explains why it cannot be farmed like button mushroom.