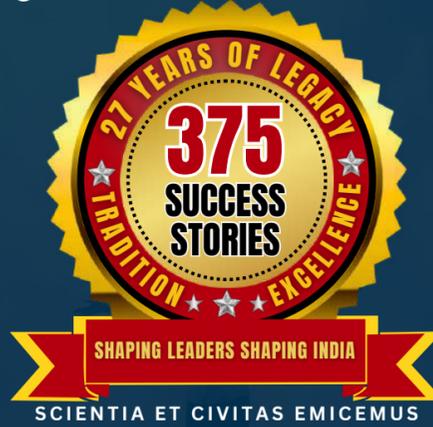


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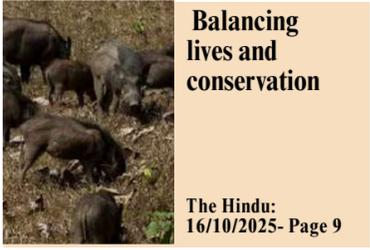
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Balancing lives and conservation

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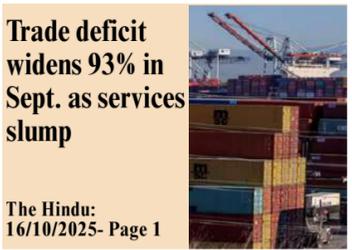
Aquaculture model of Sundarbans wins FAO recognition

The Hindu: 16/10/2025- Page 4



India needs a refugee policy document that is non-discriminatory

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Trade deficit widens 93% in Sept. as services slump

The Hindu: 16/10/2025- Page 1



NATO nations seek to strengthen Kyiv and its defences

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SC allows sale of green fireworks in Delhi



Ahead of Deepavali, the Supreme Court has eased the blanket ban on firecrackers in Delhi and the NCR, allowing the sale of green fireworks approved by NEERI and PESO from October 18 to 20. The court, led by Chief Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice K. Vinod Chandran, termed this decision a “test case” to evaluate whether a regulated framework could coexist with air pollution control efforts. The court permitted limited use of fireworks between 6 a.m.–7 a.m. and 8 p.m.–10 p.m., emphasizing that this relaxation is temporary and requires monitoring of air and water quality by the CPCB and state pollution boards. The Bench highlighted that a complete ban during the festive season had led to the illegal use of more harmful crackers and argued that the green variants, introduced in 2018, had significantly reduced emissions.

The court noted that both the Delhi and Central governments had sought relaxation of the ban during major festivals. It also acknowledged Haryana’s plea, as 14 out of its 22 districts fall within NCR, and similar requests from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Stressing that environmental safety must not be compromised, the court mandated that fireworks be sold only through licensed traders and produced by entities registered with NEERI and holding valid PESO licences. The Bench called this a balanced approach that considers festive sentiments while ensuring environmental protection.



Former Kenya PM Raila Odinga dies at 80 while undergoing treatment in Kerala, for an eye-related ailment. Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar paid tributes to the departed leader when his body was kept at the Kochi air port.



Kerala will get AIIMS, but only after March 2026, says Centre

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has confirmed that Kerala will get an AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) only after March 2026. The information came through an RTI reply to ophthalmologist K.V. Babu, stating that the AIIMS setup will occur in phases under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY). The Finance Ministry has already advised including AIIMS Kerala in the next phase. Nearly 150 acres in Kozhikode have been set aside, and another 100 acres are being acquired.





Aquaculture model of Sundarbans wins FAO recognition

- The Sustainable Aquaculture in Mangrove Ecosystems (SAIME) model, developed by Nature Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS) in West Bengal's Sundarbans, has received Global Technical Recognition from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.
- The recognition was given on October 15, coinciding with FAO's 80th Anniversary Celebrations and the World Food Forum in Rome.
- SAIME promotes sustainable aquaculture by ensuring 5%–30% mangrove coverage in aquaculture ponds, creating an ecosystem-based, climate-adaptive, and conservation-linked livelihood approach.
- After a few years of implementation across 29.84 hectares and 42 fish farmers, annual net profit increased by over 100% for farmers due to significant production cost reductions.
- Farmers use mangrove litter as fodder for input-intensive monoculture of Black Tiger Shrimp (*Penaeus monodon*).
- The model supports sustainable livelihoods, chemical-free shrimp farming, sequesters carbon, and aids climate adaptation in coastal regions, according to Ajanta Dey, Joint Secretary of NEWS, who received the award.
- It aligns Indian practices with global objectives for blue economy, climate resilience, and sustainable food systems—critical for India as the world's second-largest aquaculture producer.
- By showcasing the SAIME approach, India demonstrates leadership in balancing production with biodiversity and climate adaptation—a model that can be replicated both nationally and internationally.

Balancing lives and conservation

- Kerala, known for its ecological hotspots and strong grassroots conservation, faces increasing wildlife conflicts due to rising human and animal populations.
- Recent amendments to the Kerala Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 empower authorities to act against wild animals posing threats to humans, property, or crops, allowing immediate action and easier approvals for culling or handling problematic wildlife.
- The duality of state and central laws on wildlife protection creates legal and operational ambiguities, often leading to ecological impacts and judicial review.
- Experts caution that amendments risk undermining unified conservation frameworks, scientific wildlife management and national protocols.
- This emphasizes the value of decentralization and local solutions, but warns against measures that could erode India's collaborative, science-based, and balanced approach to conservation.
- Effective conservation, the author suggests, should focus on coexistence, informed protocols, habitat restoration, early warning systems, and dialogue for long-term success.
- Rapid urbanization, agricultural expansion, and fragmentation of natural habitats have reduced the space available for wildlife, intensifying encounters between people and animals.
- In March 2024, Kerala became the first Indian state to officially declare man-animal conflict a state-specific disaster, empowering disaster management authorities to respond rapidly and override certain legal hurdles associated with the Wildlife Protection Act.



78 Maoist cadres surrender in Chhattisgarh, further depleting insurgent group's ranks

- The Maoist movement in Chhattisgarh suffered a major blow as 78 alleged cadres, including 43 women, surrendered across three districts in the Bastar region, further depleting the ranks of the insurgent group.
- This mass surrender followed a similar event in neighboring Maharashtra, where 60 Maoists led by central committee member Mallojula Venugopal Rao (alias Bhupati) surrendered in Gadchiroli district.
- Of the 78 who surrendered in Chhattisgarh, 50 did so at a Border Security Force camp in Kanker district, with police stating many active cadres carrying substantial bounties turned themselves in.
- In Sukma district alone, 27 Maoists surrendered, some carrying bounties totaling ₹50 lakh; one key cadre surrendered with a reward of ₹10 lakh on his head.
- More than three dozen weapons were deposited, and several hardcore and high-value cadres, including women, surrendered.
- The surrenders were influenced by the State's Chhattisgarh Naxalite Surrender Rehabilitation Policy and the Niyad Nella Nar scheme.
- Maharashtra's Chief Minister remarked that these surrenders mark the beginning of the end for the Maoist movement in the region, stating that "the backbone of Maoism has broken."
- Authorities express hope that more surrenders will follow, emphasizing that fighting Naxalism is the next major challenge.



Refugees, infiltrators India needs a refugee policy document that is non-discriminatory

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah emphasized the importance of distinguishing between refugees and infiltrators, but practical distinctions are often blurred in India due to lack of a unified legal framework.
- India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, and relies on various older laws (Foreigners Act, 1946; Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939; Passport Acts; etc.) and later, the Immigration and Foreigners Act (2000), but still lacks a single refugee policy or definition.
- Absence of refugee-specific laws leads to arbitrary classification and potential harassment, as genuine refugees may be treated as illegal migrants or infiltrators.
- There is no formal rehabilitation policy for all refugee groups—Sri Lankan Tamils and others face lack of support, while past policies aided Tibetan refugees.
- The Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 provided citizenship for certain religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, but was criticized for excluding Muslims and others, such as Rohingya and Sri Lankan Tamils.
- The trend continues where legal relief is selective and not uniform, highlighting the need for a consistent, rational, and humanitarian approach to refugee protection in India.

A comprehensive refugee policy is needed for the following reasons:

- To provide clear, legal recognition and rights for refugees, including protection against arbitrary detention, deportation, and denial of basic services.
- To ensure humanitarian obligations and international credibility, aligning India's practice with both constitutional principles and global norms.
- To create consistent procedures for registration, documentation, and access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and livelihoods.
- To avoid selective or discriminatory relief based on religion, nationality, or geopolitical considerations, and to safeguard the interests of both refugees and India's own vulnerable citizens.
- To address emerging challenges such as large-scale migration due to regional crises, climate change, or conflict in South Asia.

A clear and transparent refugee policy would contribute to national security, social stability, and India's reputation as a responsible regional and global actor.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1. Which of the following are the identified thematic areas of the Aspirational Districts Programme of NITI Aayog ?

- 1. Health and Nutrition**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Agriculture and Water Resources**
- 4. Financial Inclusion**
- 5. Skill Development**
- 6. Infrastructure**

Select the correct answer using the code given below :

- (a) 1, 2, 5 and 6 only**
- (b) 3, 4 and 5 only**
- (c) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 only**
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6**

2. 'Sanjay Agarwal Committee' sometimes seen in the news recently, is related to :

- (a) Sugarcane and Sugar Industry**
- (b) Agricultural Credit System**
- (c) Public Distribution System**
- (d) Minimum Support Price**

3. Consider the following statements : 1. It is the second-largest wetland system in India. 2. Currently, it is shrinking, and its unique biodiversity is under threat of ecological decay. 3. It is declared as a Ramsar site. The above statements are about which of the below lake ?

- (a) Loktak Lake**
- (b) Vembanad lake**
- (c) Chilika Lake**
- (d) Kolleru Lake**

DETAILED ANSWER KEY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE CHRONICLE PAGE

Trade deficit widens 93% in Sept. as services slump

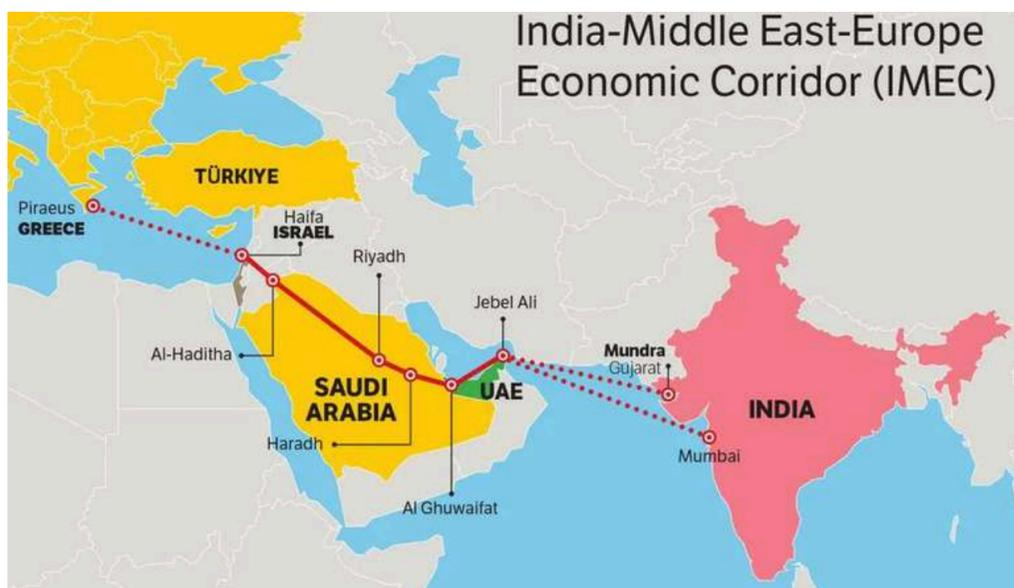
- India's trade deficit surged 93% in September 2025 compared to the same month last year, due to imports rising faster than exports.
- For the April–September 2025 period, the trade deficit actually shrank by 2.3% compared to the previous year, despite the September spike.
- Total exports for September 2025 were \$67.2 billion (up 0.8% year-on-year), while imports jumped 11.3% to \$83.8 billion.
- Goods exports grew 6.7% to \$36.4 billion, while services exports slumped 5.5% to \$30.8 billion, weakening overall export growth.
- In the April–September 2025 half-year, India's total exports (merchandise and services) reached \$413.8 billion, up 4.45% over the same period last year, but services export growth has slowed.
- The data shows a 13.4% increase in cumulative exports to the U.S. in this period, though monthly exports to the U.S. have been declining recently.
- Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal noted merchandise exports have performed better, though global uncertainties remain due to tariffs and weak demand; he expects steadiness from resilient sectors.
- Despite concerns, officials believe annual patterns can vary monthly and stress that the overall trade deficit for April–September improved compared to the previous year.

Negative Implications

- **Increased Foreign Debt:** Persistent trade deficits force a country to borrow from foreign lenders or attract foreign investments to finance the gap, resulting in rising external debt.
- **Currency Depreciation:** Sustained deficits put pressure on the national currency, leading to depreciation, making imports more expensive and potentially causing inflation.
- **Weakening Domestic Industry:** Over-reliance on imports might undermine local businesses, reduce competitiveness, and result in job losses, especially if domestic industries struggle against cheaper foreign goods.
- **Economic Vulnerability:** High external borrowing can make the country vulnerable to global financial shocks, sudden capital outflows, and international investor sentiment.
- **Balance of Payments Crisis:** If confidence in the country's ability to finance the deficit wanes, a sudden shortage in foreign exchange can trigger a broader economic crisis—like India's 1991 BoP crisis.
- **Loss of Economic Sovereignty:** Foreign investors may acquire significant domestic assets, increasing external influence over critical sectors.

EXPLAINED

The future of the IMEC



- India is intensifying efforts to diversify its economic relationships amid recent trade friction with the U.S., not only strengthening ties with the U.K. and EU, but also focusing on frameworks like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).
- IMEC aims to upgrade maritime connectivity between India and the Arabian Peninsula, linking ports in the UAE with Israel's Haifa port via high-speed rail through Saudi Arabia and Jordan, alongside building hydrogen pipelines, electricity cables, and digital infrastructure.
- The Abraham Accords initially raised hopes for West Asian stability, but the October 7 HAMAS attacks and Israel's military actions rapidly deteriorated security, casting doubt on the corridor's feasibility.
- The Mediterranean concerns, noting new trade opportunities via the Arctic and France's interest in both Mediterranean and Atlantic trade while Italy favors the Mediterranean route.
- IMEC's significance lies in its multi-member, adaptable nature that can help India, Europe, and Arab partners respond to shifting geopolitical dynamics and seek innovative approaches to economic cooperation.
- This emphasizes that IMEC gives India and partners space for creative responses to changing conditions, but cautions that India must not lose sight of economic opportunities in its interactions with Europe, even while investing in the corridor.

Economic Implications

- IMEC is designed to reduce logistics costs by up to 30% and transport time by 40% compared to traditional maritime routes like the Suez Canal, making Indian exports more competitive in global markets.
- It streamlines infrastructure including ports, transport networks, energy pipelines, and digital cables, directly supporting industrial growth, job creation, and improved access to markets.
- The corridor helps India tap into the European Union, which is already India's largest trading partner, and strengthens economic ties with high-income, tech-advanced European markets.

Strategic and Geopolitical Frontiers

- IMEC serves as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), giving India leverage to bypass regional roadblocks such as Pakistan while enhancing maritime and overland connectivity with Europe and the Gulf.
- It supports India's "Act West" policy, deepening engagement with the Middle East, which is vital for energy security, remittances, and the large Indian diaspora.
- IMEC can promote regional stability and cooperation, especially amid volatility in West Asia, by fostering robust diplomatic partnerships and shared infrastructure projects.

Access to New Domains

- Through clean energy initiatives, digital corridors, and technology partnerships, IMEC positions India as a hub for green energy and innovation, supporting long-term transition to a low-carbon, digital economy.
- By strengthening logistical chains and connectivity, India can become a critical link in future global supply networks and enhance its manufacturing competitiveness.

EDITORIAL

Navigating the global economic transformation



- The global economic order is being reshaped by rising state-driven capitalism (especially by populist autocrats), the emergence of new economic blocs, and increasing rivalry between the U.S. and China.
- Populist autocrats are enabling an unprecedented state-corporate nexus, where governments prioritize the welfare of big businesses or oligopolies, shift developmental aid away from vulnerable populations, and complicate financial flows with sanctions and regulatory barriers.
- New digital colonialism and economic disruptions are emerging, with global powers using technological, currency, and data control as instruments of influence (“Big Tech and cloud capitalists”).
- The Global South is responding by seeking alternatives to Western-dominated systems (e.g., through regional trading blocs, digital currencies, and bilateral supply chains), experimenting with new models to reduce dependency.
- Recent protectionist measures and the fragmentation of global aid by G7 countries are accelerating economic divergence, affecting global migration, trade, and development pathways.
- In this context, there is a window for India and the Global South to construct a fair “New Economic Deal” based on inclusive global norms, reformed multilateral institutions, and bipartisan engagement.
- There are calls for recalibration of India’s domestic priorities—focusing on diverse, equitable public goods and a rules-based system—if it hopes to shape the emerging multipolar order.
- China positions itself as a champion of the Global South, emphasizing development, security, and connectivity, and is now actively challenging Western-led norms and institutions by fostering new trade, financial, technological, and political alignments.
- Many countries remain uneasy about excessive dependence on China, and the U.S., EU, and other blocs are responding with their own protective measures and regional engagements.
- The coming years look poised for competition and pluralism, with China clearly emerging as a rival pole of influence—particularly among developing nations—rather than a single uncontested leader of the global order.
- India will remain a critical player in global trade and a hub for new technologies, aiming for leadership in digital payments, renewables, and high-tech manufacturing. Its geopolitical significance will grow, with a more active role in the Indo-Pacific, the Quad, BRICS, and regional partnerships, and strategic autonomy in foreign policy.
- By 2030, India is projected to become the world’s third-largest economy, overtaking Japan and Germany, with a GDP between \$7.3 trillion and \$12 trillion in nominal terms and potentially \$20.7 trillion in purchasing power parity (PPP). The country will be powered by its young workforce—a median age of around 29.
- India is also committed to a green energy transition, targeting 50% of its installed power capacity from non-fossil sources and pursuing aggressive decarbonization targets through 2030. Despite potential challenges like global tariff pressures, India’s strong internal market, policy resilience, and ongoing reforms position it as a key driver of global growth and innovation by 2030.

INTERNATIONAL

Indonesia to buy 42 fighter jets from China in first non-Western aircraft purchase deal

- Indonesia has announced it will acquire at least 42 Chinese-made Chengdu J-10C fighter jets, marking its first major purchase of non-Western military aircraft.
- The decision is part of a broader plan to modernize Indonesia's military, with potential regional and geopolitical implications due to the shift away from traditional Western suppliers.
- The proposed purchase, valued at over \$9 billion, was approved by Indonesia's Finance Ministry.
- Defence officials confirmed the plan, and analysts note such a deal could be sensitive considering Indonesia's traditional alliances and the growing influence of China.
- Further details about the purchase remain undisclosed, though it is expected to significantly strengthen Indonesia's air defense capabilities.
- The move signals a shift in regional procurement norms, with Indonesia—and potentially other ASEAN states—now willing to diversify away from long-standing Western suppliers in favor of Chinese technology. This reflects a drive for strategic autonomy rather than reliance on traditional alliances.
- China's military export footprint in South Asia may be bolstered by Indonesia's deal, especially as Pakistan already relies heavily on Chinese-made weapons and jets (over 80% of arms imports from China).



Tested by Russia, NATO nations seek to strengthen Kyiv and its defences

- NATO defence ministers met in Brussels amid heightened concern over Russian air incursions, signaling fears that Moscow is testing the West's resolve and blurring the lines between war and peace.
- The U.S. expects more NATO countries to buy American arms for Ukraine as the alliance aims to strengthen Kyiv's defenses and its own ability to counter Russia.
- NATO is focusing on improved air defence, increased ammunition, and rapid response capabilities, with concerns that Russia's Vladimir Putin is pushing the boundaries of conflict.
- High-profile Russian air violations and drone attacks along NATO's eastern borders have fuelled anxiety, prompting defensive upgrades and military exercises in countries like Poland and the Baltic states.
- NATO is discussing the acceleration of anti-drone technology and incorporation of low-cost Ukrainian battlefield innovations across the alliance.
- The EU is preparing a 'drone wall' initiative as part of its strategy for future conflict with Russia and is working on roadmaps for drone regulation and integration.
- Defence spending among NATO members is rising, with many aiming to reach 3.5% of GDP by 2035.
- The U.S. and the EU are pressing for unity and action as Washington weighs further support for Ukraine, including long-range missiles, depending on ongoing discussions with President Zelenskyy.
- NATO and the EU stress the need for regulations and procurement procedures to be simplified and harmonized to adapt to new warfare technologies.



Prelims Corner: Explanations

Q1. Ans d

The Government of India has launched the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' initiative to improve India's ranking under the Human Development Index (HDI), raising the living standards of its citizens and ensuring inclusive growth for all. This initiative aims for the mass movement to quickly and effectively transform these districts. At Government of India level, the programme is anchored by NITI Aayog. It identified thematic areas of the Aspirational Districts Programme based upon composite key indicators as follows,

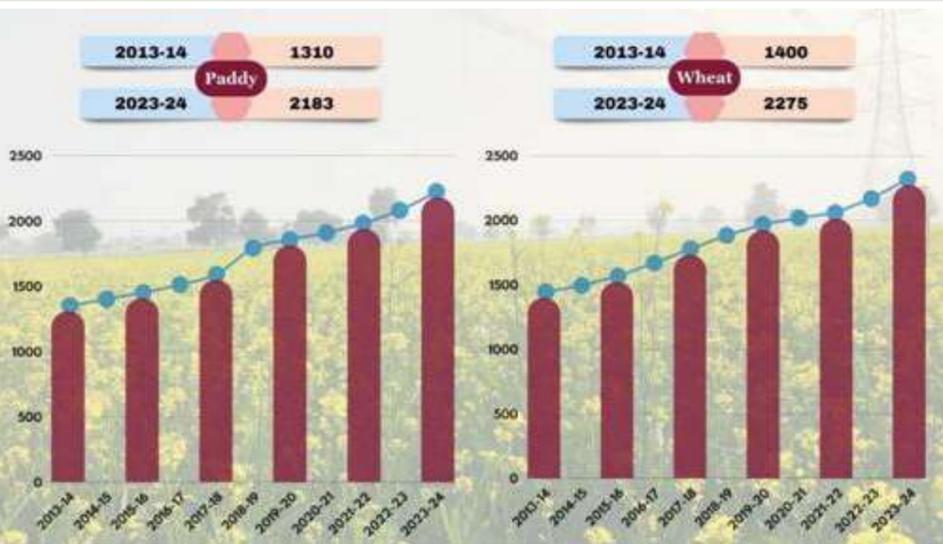
- ☒ Health & Nutrition
- ☒ Education
- ☒ Agriculture & Water Resources
- ☒ Financial Inclusion
- ☒ Skill Development
- ☒ Basic Infrastructure

Q2. Ans d

Recently, the central government set up a committee headed by Sanjay Agarwal for the Minimum Support Price (MSP) to make it a more effective instrument to boost farmers' earnings. The committee mandates are to make MSP more effective and transparent, change crop patterns keeping in mind the country's changing needs, and promote zero-budget natural farming.

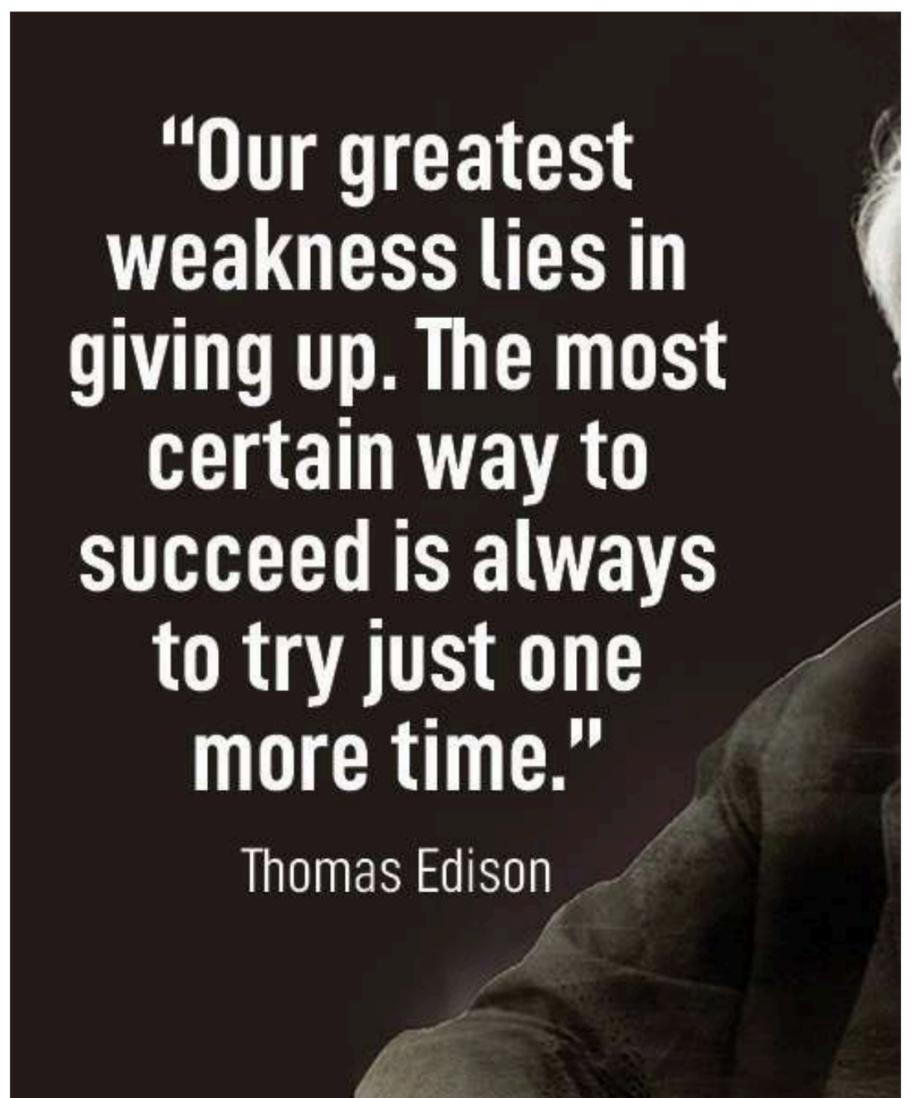
CROPS COVERED UNDER MSP

KHARIF CROPS (14)		RABI CROPS (7)		CALENDAR YEAR CROPS (4)	
1. Paddy		1. Wheat		1. Copra	
2. Jawar		2. Barley		2. De-husked Coconut	
3. Bajara		3. Gram		3. Jute	
4. Ragi		4. Masur		4. Sugar Cane (FRP)	
5. Maize		5. Rapeseed & Mustard			
6. Arhar		6. Safflower			
7. Moong		7. Torai			
8. Urad					
9. Cotton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CACP recommends MSP for 22 crops before the sowing period each year • MSP derived for Toria based on MSP for Rapeseeds and Mustard and for De-husked Coconut on the Basis of MSP of Copra. 				
10. Ground Nuts					
11. Sunflower					
12. Soyabean					
13. Sesamum					
14. Nigerseed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair and Remunerative prices for Sugar is also declared 				



Q3. Ans b

In India, Vembanad lake, in the state of Kerala, is the second largest wetland after the Sunderbans of West Bengal. Despite being declared a Ramsar site, the lake is now under serious environmental degradation because of the recurring floods, increased pollution, reduced water spread area and increased weed growth. ☒ The Vembanad Lake was declared as a Ramsar Site in the year of 2002. Vembanad Wetland is the largest brackish, humid tropical wetland ecosystem fed by 10 rivers. A Ramsar site is a wetland site designed to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, also known as the 'Convention of Wetlands'.



Sports:



Ahmedabad all set to host 2030 Commonwealth Games.

The Commonwealth Sport Executive Board has recommended Ahmedabad as the host city for the 2030 Centenary Commonwealth Games. Although the final decision will be confirmed at the Commonwealth Sport General Assembly in Glasgow on November 26, it is widely expected to be a formality. Ahmedabad, which is also bidding for the 2036 Olympics, competed against Nigeria's capital Abuja for the opportunity to host the 2030 Games.

After the Commonwealth Sport Evaluation Committee carefully reviewed the bids based on a range of criteria, Ahmedabad was selected over Abuja. The process was overseen jointly by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and the Commonwealth Games Association India (CGAI).

IOA president P.T. Usha noted that hosting the Games will not only highlight India's world-class sporting and event infrastructure but will also contribute significantly to India's progress towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.



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