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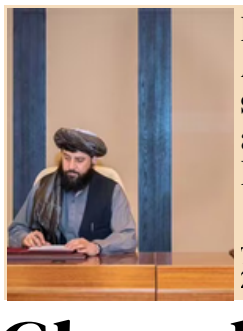

Pakistan, Afghanistan sign truce agreement in Doha

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Israelis allege violation of ceasefire, launch new attacks in Gaza

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First phase of underwater archaeological survey in Poompuhar completed

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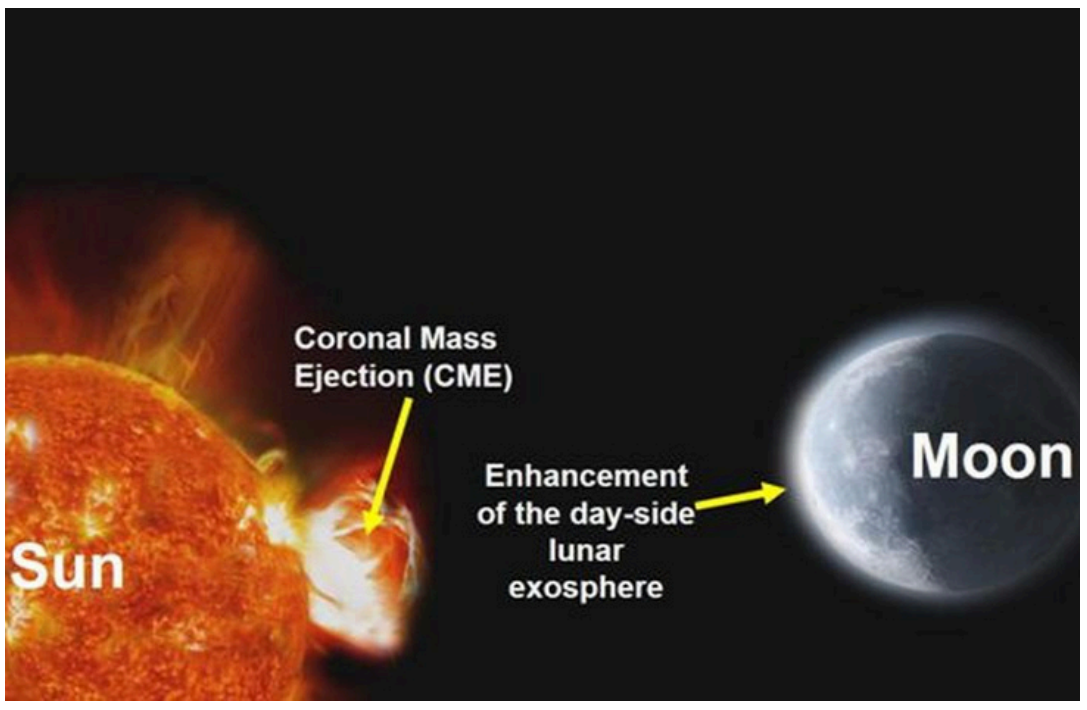
Chandrayaan-2 makes first-ever observations on lunar exosphere: ISRO



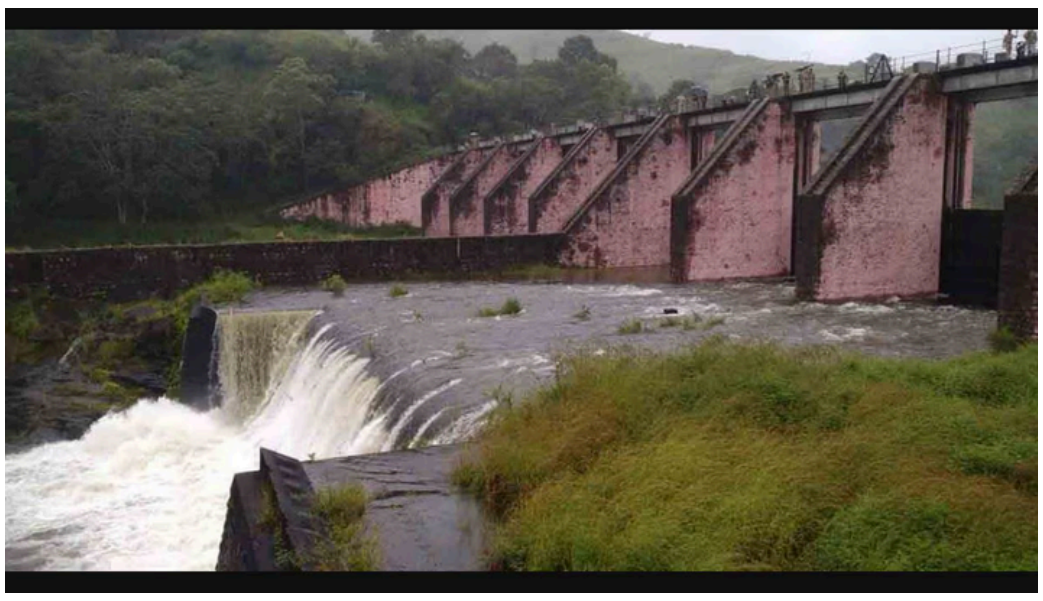
The lunar orbiter of India's second moon mission, Chandrayaan-2, has made the first-ever observation of the effects of the sun's coronal mass ejection (CME) on the moon. The Chandra's Atmospheric Composition Explorer-2 (CHACE-2) pay load onboard the orbiter had made the observation. The CHACE-2 payload aboard the spacecraft's orbiter showed an increase in total pressure of dayside lunar exosphere when impacted by the sun's coronal mass ejection, says space agency

The space agency added that the opportunity to directly observe the effects of the CME on the moon came on a rare occurrence, on May 10, 2024, when a series of CMEs were hurled by the sun. ISRO said that this observation would provide scientific insight into the understanding of the lunar exosphere and space weather effects on the moon. Apart from pushing the edge of our scientific understanding about the moon and the lunar space weather, this observation also indicates the challenges of building scientific bases on the Moon. Lunar base architects need to account for such extreme events, which would temporarily alter the lunar environment, before the effects subside. Launched on July 22, 2019 using the GSLV-MkIII M1 rocket, Chandrayaan-2 carried eight experiment payloads. However, the Vikram lander, while attempting to make a soft landing on the moon's surface, lost communication from the lander and the ground stations.

Deepotsav in Ayodhya shines with two Guinness records: Most diyas lit; largest aarti performed together. The night sky came alive with a drone show featuring 1,100 indigenous drones, recreating Lord Ram's divine form and scenes from the Ramayana, a visual treat that left devotees awe-struck.

Army chief meets troops deployed in forward areas

Chief of the Army Staff(COAS) General Upendra Dwivedi on Sunday celebrated Deepavali with troops deployed in high-altitude areas of the central sector, extending festive greetings to all ranks and their families. General Dwivedi interacted with personnel stationed in remote locations, commending their resilience, courage, and steadfast devotion to service. He reaffirmed the Indian Army's full preparedness to counter evolving security challenges, invoking the core ethos of "Service Before Self." The Army chief also met veterans and local communities, acknowledging their invaluable contributions and strong bond with the armed forces.



Monsoon wreaks havoc in Idukki, Mullaperiyar dam opened

- The intensifying northeast monsoon in Kerala's mountainous Idukki district and surrounding areas, caused widespread damage due to heavy rainfall and flooding.
- Intense rainfall over the weekend led to inundated roads, swept-away vehicles, traffic disruptions, landslides, and property damage in Idukki and Tamil Nadu's Theni district.
- Floodwaters have affected critical routes such as Kumily interstate road and caused traffic blocks due to mudslides.
- Significant water was released from the Mullaperiyar reservoir into the Periyar river after a rise in water level, worsening flooding in Kerala's downstream villages.
- Kerala government increased the alert level for dam releases; residents of riverbank villages were forced to relocate to safer locations.
- Villages along the river in Kerala reported consistent flooding, with homes and neighborhoods like Ayyappancoil, Vikas Nagar, Manjumala, and others heavily impacted.
- The Tamil Nadu Forest Department closed Suruli waterfalls to tourists for safety; Kerala issued advisories warning against driving during nights and declared high-risk routes.
- The heavy rain triggered a series of secondary impacts including landslips, disruption of public services, isolation of villages, and inconvenience to commuters and tourists.
- Authorities emphasized caution, with both state governments coordinating responses, closing tourist attractions, and warning fishermen against venturing to sea.

First phase of underwater archaeological survey in Poompuhar completed

- The Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA) has completed the first phase of its underwater archaeological survey off the coast of Poompuhar in Mayiladuthurai district.
- The ancient port city, known in the Sangam era as Kaveripoompattinam, is the focus of the survey, with the aim of identifying submerged archaeological remains in the Bay of Bengal.
- A team of 10 divers conducted the survey over 12 days, operating between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. for optimum underwater conditions.
- Advanced marine exploration instruments, including a scanner for ocean floor mapping and anomaly detection, were used along with mechanical boats and small fiber boats to reach survey sites.
- The survey specifically targeted the coastal stretch between Thirumullaivasal and Neithavasal, with divers and experts searching for signs of archaeological structures or objects, and for distinguishing these from natural formations.
- This is part of a broader underwater archaeology initiative by the TNSDA, which previously conducted a survey at Korkai and is collaborating with the National Institute of Ocean Technology and the Indian Maritime University.
- Initial findings show that data is now being analyzed to identify potential ancient port city remains, and the conditions for further exploration are considered favorable.
- Ancient port cities historically functioned as key trading hubs, connecting local economies with global markets.
- Restoration of these centers can boost trade, tourism, and local economic activity by leveraging their strategic coastal locations.
- Reviving these sites provides opportunities for further archaeological research and historical education, unveiling the stories and technologies of past societies.
- Artifacts and urban planning insights from sites like Lothal and Muziris continue to inspire modern understanding of history and engineering.

STATE

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

GRAP Stage 2 curbs kick in across Delhi as air quality turns 'very poor'

- The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has implemented Stage II of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi-NCR due to the city's air quality index (AQI) slipping into the "very poor" category, with readings above 300.
- This action follows warnings and forecasts from the India Meteorological Department and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology about worsening pollution levels and further deterioration.
- The AQI was recorded at 296 at 4 p.m. and 302 at 7 p.m., prompting immediate Stage II curbs alongside ongoing Stage I measures.
- The main pollutants driving these numbers are PM2.5 and PM10, with PM2.5 concentrations reaching over 16 times the World Health Organization's recommended limits.
- Major contributing factors include the bursting of firecrackers during Diwali, stubble burning in neighboring states, high vehicular emissions due to traffic congestion, dust from construction and demolition sites, and adverse meteorological conditions like low wind speeds and temperature inversions that trap pollutants.
- Authorities have been directed to enforce stricter dust mitigation, ensure compliance with anti-pollution actions, and intensify inspections, especially targeting construction and demolition sites.
- Specific interventions under Stage II include mechanized and vacuum sweeping, increased water sprinkling on roads, and stepped-up enforcement against dust emissions.
- Public transportation is being augmented by adding more bus and metro services, and power plants are required to minimize the use of polluting fuels, shifting to cleaner sources like natural gas, biomass, and waste during winters.
- The overall objective of these measures is to curb particulate pollution, promote cleaner mobility, and protect public health during the peak pollution season.
- The Delhi government also launched an updated "Winter Action Plan", focusing on dust control, vehicle emissions checks, industry regulation, and enhanced urban greenery and enforcement measures.

Modi to face Quad and BRICS leaders at ASEAN summit next week

- India's strategic balancing act between the Quad and BRICS will be highlighted at the upcoming ASEAN summit in Kuala Lumpur (October 26-28), with PM Narendra Modi set to attend the East Asia Summit (EAS) alongside major leaders from the U.S., China, Russia, Japan, and Australia.
- India will also take over as BRICS chair, preparing to host its own BRICS summit in 2026, and faces policy challenges between the pro-U.S. orientation of Quad and the anti-West positioning of Russia and China within BRICS.
- The recent strain within the Quad, including a U.S.-India summit invitation declined by President Trump and disagreements over defense, tariffs, and technology transfer.
- The economic divide is emphasized: the U.S. and allies use sanctions and trade restrictions, whereas Russia and China promote alternative institutions and have their own stances on global economic issues, creating further divides.
- A focus on supply chain resilience, especially in pharmaceuticals and minerals, is outlined as a way to counter ongoing disruptions and mitigate dependencies.
- The ASEAN-India gathering is also positioned as a test for India to maintain productive relations with both Quad and BRICS partners, with external affairs officials working to navigate rising global uncertainties and competitive pressures.
- ASEAN is India's fourth-largest trading partner, accounting for 11% of India's global trade and with bilateral trade reaching over USD 120 billion in 2023-24.
- ASEAN occupies a central role in the Indo-Pacific region and is vital for the success of India's 'Act East' policy and Indo-Pacific strategy.

EC revives economic intelligence panel ahead of Bihar polls

- The Election Commission (EC) has reactivated its economic intelligence panel after a six-year gap, aiming to curb the use of money, liquor, and drugs to influence voters ahead of the upcoming Bihar polls.
- The Multi-Departmental Committee on Election Intelligence (MDCEI) met in New Delhi on October 17 for the first time since 2019 to strengthen collaboration between enforcement agencies and central police forces, focusing on preventing money power and freebies in elections.
- Originally formed in 2014, the panel was previously active until 2019; after this period, meetings were less frequent, but monitoring of financial flows continued.
- Participating agencies include the Income Tax Department, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Economic Intelligence Bureau, Financial Intelligence Unit, RPF, RBI, various police forces, and other key security agencies.
- The recent meeting aimed to develop a comprehensive strategy and road map to tackle inducements, ensuring the electoral process in Bihar is free from undue influence by cash and gifts
- Reviving economic intelligence is essential for the Election Commission because it directly tackles the influence of money, liquor, drugs, and freebies on voters, thereby strengthening electoral integrity and fairness.
- Their coordinated actions with enforcement agencies ensure that election rules are enforced, criminal and financial violations monitored, and electoral contests remain unbiased.
- Minimizing the role of money power curtails criminalization and prevents wealthy candidates from gaining unfair advantage, fostering a more representative democracy.

SEBI crackdown on insider training: How traders exploited CERC data to profit from IEX stock

- SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) has cracked down on insider trading involving the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) after finding that traders exploited unpublished price-sensitive information (UPSI) from the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) to profit from IEX stock.
- Eight individuals were served orders—alleging they used confidential CERC documents and communications (including live-streaming of a key CERC meeting) to anticipate negative impacts of a new market mechanism, and then executed large, coordinated share trades just before price-sensitive decisions were made public.
- SEBI's probe found strong evidence of frequent meetings, communication between CERC officials and traders, confidential document leaks, and pre-planned trading activities designed to benefit from insider knowledge of regulatory orders.
- The price of IEX stock dropped significantly after the regulatory order, matching the pattern predicted by those privy to the UPSI. This allowed the accused traders to book substantial profits at the expense of ordinary investors.
- SEBI issued preliminary injunctions, freezing the ill-gotten gains (Rs 173.14 crore) and barring the accused from further trading. It emphasized the importance of upholding market integrity and signaled that regulatory coordination failures and misuse of internal contacts would be closely scrutinized.
- The episode highlights the risks of regulatory and market information leaks, especially when entities with potential to influence stock prices have relaxed controls over sensitive data flows.

Deendayal Port may build popular ship models

- Deendayal Port Authority (DPA) is pursuing an ambitious plan to convert 2,000 acres of its coastal land into a major shipbuilding cluster, moving from its earlier focus on very large crude carriers (VLCCs) to more market-aligned ship models like panamax and handymax vessels.
- The revised plan involves engaging with technology partners, market consultants, and shipbuilders to create favorable and flexible tender conditions, after previous attempts failed due to low industry interest.
- DPA is keen to attract private investment by offering incentives, restructuring its approach, and exploring opportunities to develop both shipbuilding and repair services in alignment with India's growing maritime ambitions.
- The government's new strategy (September 2025) introduces multiple schemes: shipbuilding financial assistance, a dedicated maritime development fund, affordable financing and tax exemptions, and significant budget allocations for new infrastructure, technology, and R&D.
- The four-pronged approach also includes institutional and policy support, focusing on skill development, capacity building, green practices, and an upcoming National Shipbuilding Mission to steer implementation in the sector.
- Deendayal Port (formerly Kandla Port) is profoundly important for India because of its strategic location, cargo-handling capacity, economic impact, and role in boosting national and international trade.
- Deendayal Port is situated on the western coast in the Gulf of Kutch, Gujarat, close to key international shipping routes connecting the Middle East, Europe, and Asia.
- Its proximity to landlocked northern India makes it a lifeline for states like Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan to access global markets.
- It is India's largest port by volume, consistently handling record tonnage, including crossing 150 million tonnes in FY 2024-25 and being the first major port to handle 100 MMT cargo in a year

Israelis allege violation of ceasefire, launch new attacks in Gaza

- The fragile ceasefire in Gaza faces a major challenge after Israel suspended the transfer of aid, citing alleged violations by Hamas and launching new airstrikes against what it called Hamas targets.
- Israeli officials stated the halt on aid was "until further notice" and accused Hamas of violating the ceasefire, prompting dozens of airstrikes in southern Gaza, particularly around Khan Younis and Rafah.
- The Israeli military reported that its troops came under fire from Hamas militants and said at least nine Palestinians were killed in airstrikes in central and southern Gaza, as confirmed by Gaza's Health Ministry.
- In response to these incidents, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu directed the military to take "strong action" but stopped short of threatening a full-scale return to combat.
- Hamas denied responsibility for ceasefire violations, claiming communication with its troops in Rafah was cut and that it was not responsible for attacks in Israeli-controlled zones.
- Additional Israeli strikes targeted areas such as Beit Lahiyia and Nuseirat, killing and wounding multiple civilians, including children, according to hospital sources.
- Egyptian officials involved in ceasefire negotiations indicated ongoing efforts for de-escalation, with round-the-clock talks to restore calm in the region.
- The updated casualty figures remain partial, but reports indicate heightened civilian suffering, including attacks on schools and hospitals sheltering displaced families, intensifying the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- The ceasefire was intended to allow for aid distribution, gradual prisoner exchanges, and steps toward de-escalation, but these efforts are now at risk.
- Egypt and international mediators are conducting urgent, round-the-clock negotiations to salvage the truce and prevent a return to full-scale conflict.

Pakistan, Afghanistan sign truce agreement in Doha

- Pakistan and Afghanistan have signed an immediate ceasefire agreement in Doha after days of violent clashes along their border that led to multiple casualties among soldiers and civilians on both sides.
- The agreement includes mechanisms for lasting peace and stability, with follow-up meetings planned to ensure the implementation and sustainability of the truce in a "reliable and sustainable manner".
- Negotiations were facilitated by Qatar and Turkey, and involved Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Afghanistan's Acting Defence Minister Mullah Yaqoob Mujahid.
- The breakthrough comes amid heightened tensions along the border, including cross-border terrorist attacks by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and retaliatory airstrikes; both sides have accused each other of violations.
- Pakistan urged Afghan authorities to take action against the TTP militants operating from Afghan soil, emphasizing its need for "legitimate security concerns" to be addressed.
- The agreement followed a particularly deadly period, including TTP attacks that killed several Pakistani soldiers, and Pakistani airstrikes reported in Afghanistan.
- The foreign offices of both countries stressed the importance of honoring commitments and contributing to regional peace, while welcoming the mediation efforts by Qatar and Turkey.
- Despite the ceasefire, sporadic violence persists, and the long-term success of the agreement depends on continued diplomatic engagement and efforts to address underlying security issues.
- Escalation risks pulling in external actors (Iran, China, Russia, U.S.), complicating diplomatic calculations and adding layers of strategic competition to an already unstable situation.
- The conflict transforms the border from a regional frontier to a geopolitical flashpoint, influencing broader dynamics in Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific.
- India closely monitors the situation due to potential spillover into Kashmir and increased security risks from terrorism and refugee influx.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

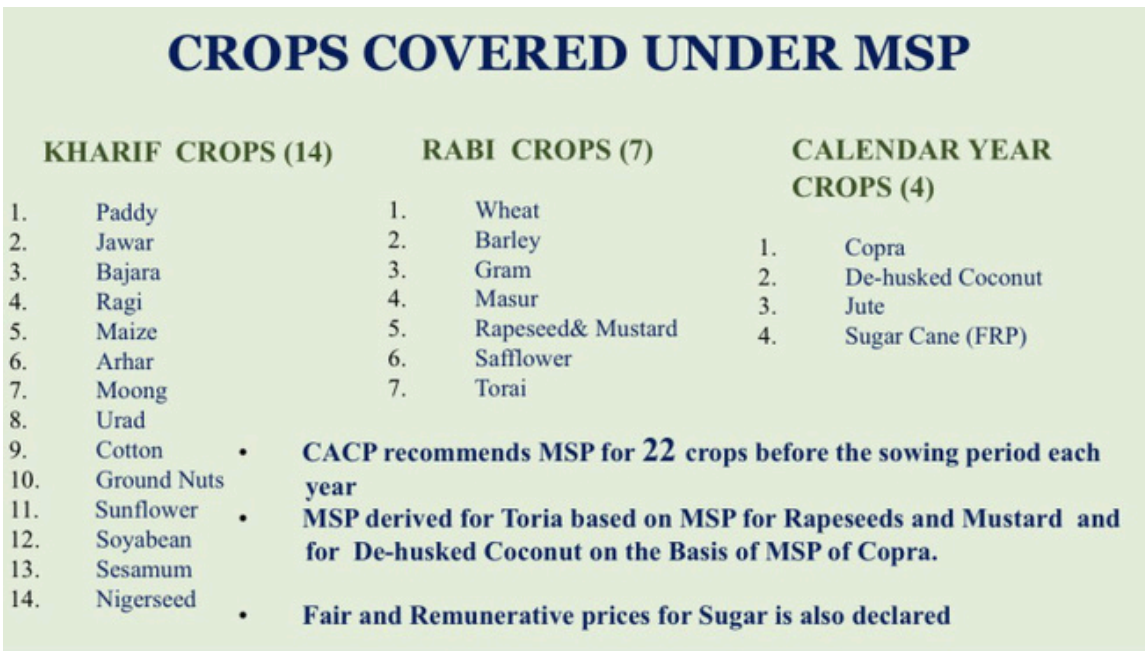
Q1. Ans d

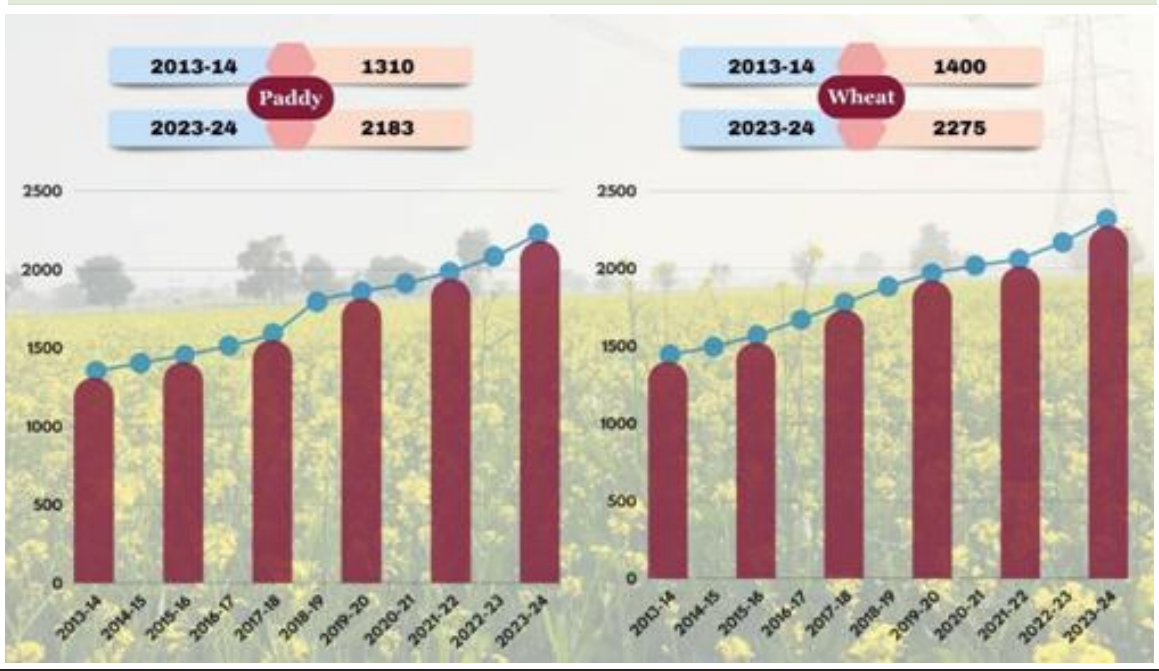
The Government of India has launched the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' initiative to improve India's ranking under the Human Development Index (HDI), raising the living standards of its citizens and ensuring inclusive growth for all. This initiative aims for the mass movement to quickly 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.





Q3. Ans b

In India, Vembanad lake, in the state of Kerala, is the second largest wetland after the Sunderbansof 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'.

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Case Study:

From steering Kaziranga through floods and poaching threats to breaking barriers in a male-dominated field, Dr Sonali Ghosh's journey has redefined conservation leadership — earning her India's first-ever IUCN Kenton Miller Award for innovation and inclusion. The forests of Kaziranga have long been a testing ground for courage — of guards who wade through waist-deep floods to protect the rhinos, elephants that carry them across swelling rivers, and leaders who must hold it all together when the wild turns unpredictable. Among them is Dr Sonali Ghosh, the Park's Field Director, whose steady hand and deep empathy have guided this fragile landscape through challenge after challenge. Her work has now earned her one of the world's highest honours in conservation — the IUCN's Kenton Miller Award.

The recognition — a first for India — celebrates a form of leadership that is as much about compassion as control, as much about listening to people as protecting wildlife. Her approach is rooted in coexistence, not control — rooted in the belief that conservation cannot be sustained unless it involves those who live closest to the forest. She was chosen for her "innovative contributions" to protected area management, including scientific interventions in habitat conservation, community integration, and the creation of replicable, people-centric conservation models.

Happy Deepavali: The festival of lights

World Statistics Day was first observed in 2010 and is celebrated every five years on October 20th. The day was established by the United Nations Statistical Commission to honor the achievements of official statistics and the importance of reliable data for policy and development. World Statistics Day 2025 Theme is "Driving Change with Quality Statistics and Data for Everyone." The United Nations promotes and motivates countries to improve data quality and work together internationally.