

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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### Table of Content

Sarnath Added To UNESCO World Heritage List  
Supreme Court to Frame Guidelines for Police Handling of Public Protests  
India's Sports Ecosystem  
Drone-Based Transportation of Tea Leaves in Kerala  
Urban Co-operative Banks: RBI Reopens Licensing Window  
National Investment Policy for Urea (NIPU)-2026

#### News In Short

India's Fight to Combat Hepatitis  
Corporate Mitra Scheme  
Bank of Baroda (BoB) Data Leaks on Dark Web  
AI Data Centres to Add 26.3 GW load by 2031-32: Power Ministry  
Kimi K3

## SARNATH ADDED TO UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

### Context

- India's **ancient Buddhist site of Sarnath** in **Uttar Pradesh** has been inscribed on the **UNESCO world heritage list**.

### About

- The decision was taken during the ongoing meeting of the **UNESCO's World Heritage Committee's 48th session** in **Busan, South Korea**.
- With 45 sites in the List, India ranks 6th globally and 2nd in Asia Pacific Region** for the most number of World Heritage Sites.
- The last addition or 'inscription' was in 2024**, with the **Maratha Military Landscapes** located **Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu**.

### World Heritage Convention

- UNESCO adopted the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, commonly known as the **World Heritage Convention in 1972, it came into force in 1975**.
  - India ratified the World Heritage Convention in **1977**.
- The Convention aims to:**
  - Identify, protect, conserve, present, and transmit to future generations the world's cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).
  - Promote international cooperation and assistance for the conservation of heritage sites.
- Key Features:**
  - It provides the legal framework for the identification and protection of World Heritage Sites.
  - Heritage sites can be classified as:**
    - Cultural Heritage:** Monuments, groups of buildings, archaeological sites, and cultural landscapes.
    - Natural Heritage:** Natural features, geological formations, habitats of threatened species, and areas of exceptional natural beauty.
    - Mixed Heritage:** Sites possessing both cultural and natural significance.

- Countries that ratify the Convention are known as **States Parties and commit to protecting heritage sites within their territories**.
- The Convention is implemented by the **World Heritage Committee**, comprising 21 States Parties elected by the UNESCO General Conference. **Functions:**
  - Inscribes sites on the World Heritage List.
  - Maintains the List of World Heritage in Danger.
  - Monitors the conservation status of listed sites.
  - Administers the World Heritage Fund to provide financial and technical assistance.
- Criteria for Inscription**
  - A site must possess Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).
  - It must satisfy at least one of the ten selection criteria: Six cultural criteria, four natural criteria.
  - Represent a **masterpiece of human creative genius**.

### About Sarnath

- Location:** It is situated near Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.
  - It is one of the four major Buddhist pilgrimage sites (others: Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Kushinagar).
- Historical Importance:**
  - After attaining enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, Gautama Buddha **delivered his first sermon** at Sarnath (around 528 BCE).
  - This event is called **"Dhammachakrapravartana"** or "Turning of the Wheel of Dharma".
  - It marked the **beginning of the Buddhist Sangha** (community of monks) and the establishment of the **principles of the Noble Eightfold Path**.
- Monuments & Structures:**
  - Dhamek Stupa:** It was built by Ashoka and commemorates the Buddha's first sermon.
  - Chaukhandi Stupa:** It marks the spot where Buddha met his first disciples.
  - Ashokan Pillar:** It was established by Emperor Ashoka; its lion capital is now the National Emblem of India.
  - Monasteries & remains:** These are the ruins of ancient viharas, temples, and sculptures.

- **Ashoka's Contribution:** Emperor Ashoka visited Sarnath in **3rd century BCE**.
  - ♦ Built stupas, monasteries, and inscribed edicts promoting Dharma.
  - ♦ The Lion Capital of Ashoka from Sarnath was adopted as India's national emblem in 1950.

#### Significance

- World Heritage status would **reinforce India's identity as the birthplace of Buddhism** and enhance **cultural diplomacy with nations** such as Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, South Korea, Mongolia, etc.
- This recognition would further **support India's efforts to promote Buddhist heritage as a bridge for international engagement** and would also showcase India's expertise in heritage conservation.

Source: TH

## SUPREME COURT TO FRAME GUIDELINES FOR POLICE HANDLING OF PUBLIC PROTESTS

#### Context

- The Supreme Court of India decided to lay down pan-India guidelines on the police's handling of public protests, acknowledging the constitutional right to peaceful protest but also emphasising the value of a law-enforcer's life.

#### Background

- The order was passed on **petitions alleging police excesses** during the nationwide protests by students after the NEET exam paper leak.
- The petitioners sought **national norms to regulate the police response to demonstrations** and to avoid the arbitrary use of force.
- The Court said peaceful protest is a cornerstone of democracy but said protests should be peaceful and cannot violate the rights of others or threaten public safety.

#### Constitutional Basis of the Right to Protest

- The Constitution does not explicitly mention a **"right to protest"**; however, it is derived from several Fundamental Rights:
  - ♦ **Article 19(1)(a):** Freedom of speech and expression.
  - ♦ **Article 19(1)(b):** Right to assemble peacefully and without arms.
  - ♦ **Article 19(1)(c):** Right to form associations or unions.

- However these rights are subject to reasonable restrictions under:

- ♦ **Article 19(2):** Sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, public order, decency, morality, etc.
- ♦ **Article 19(3):** Restrictions on peaceful assembly in the interest of public order and sovereignty.

#### Challenges in Tackling Public Unrest

- **Distinguishing peaceful protestors** from violent or anti-social forces that infiltrate protests.
- **Maintaining public order** while not compromising on fundamental freedoms, especially during big demonstrations.
- **Handling misinformation and rumours** circulating on social media, which can quickly increase emotions.
- **Avoid disruption** to vital public services, transport infrastructure and economic activity during extended demonstrations.
- **Ensuring the safety and lives** of both demonstrators and police in hazardous situations.
- **Limited availability of current crowd-control tools**, including body cameras, surveillance systems and non-lethal technologies;
- **Lack of staff** and lack specialist training are among the capacity constraints of police units.

#### Supreme Court Judgments

- **Ramlila Maidan Incident (2012):** The Supreme Court of India held that peaceful protest is a basic right, the freedom to sleep is part of life under **Article 21** and midnight police crackdowns on sleeping masses are illegal.
- **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan v. Union of India (2018):** The Supreme Court concluded that the right to peaceful protest is a fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a) and Article 19(1)(b).
  - ♦ It said limits on public meetings must pass the requirements of constitutionality of reasonableness, necessity and proportionality.
- **Amit Sahni v. Commissioner of Police (2020):** The Court held that **public routes and public spaces cannot be occupied indefinitely for protests** balancing the fundamental right to peaceful dissent with the rights of the general public.
- **D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal (1997):** The Court established down necessary standards to



prohibit arbitrary arrest, detention and custodial assault. It held that police powers must be exercised in accordance with the rule of law and **Article 21 of the Constitution.**

#### Way Ahead

- Formulate standard **pan-India Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** for police dealing with peaceful protests in accordance with Supreme Court instructions.
- Embed the **principles of necessity, proportionality and minimum use of force** in crowd control activities.
- **Strengthen the implementation** of the Supreme Court's orders on police reforms, operational autonomy and accountability in **Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006).**
- **Use technology-enabled policing** includes body worn cameras, drones, CCTV surveillance and digital evidence management.
- **Enhance police training** on negotiation, mediation, de-escalation tactics, human rights and community policing.

Source: TH

## INDIA'S SPORTS ECOSYSTEM

#### In Context

- The sporting landscape in India is witnessing a major transformation with policy reforms, infrastructure development, promotion of grassroots talent, and increased investment.

#### Evolution of Sports in India

- India has a glorious sporting history and mentions of archery, wrestling (Malla-Yuddha), horse riding, swimming, hunting and chess (Chaturanga) can be found in the ancient texts such as Mahabharata, Ramayana, Manasollasa and Mallapurana.
- The **Mughal rulers** in the medieval period were fond of **Chaugan (Polo), Chess, Chaupar (Ludo) and hunting.** Wrestling also remained popular.
- The British introduced **cricket, football, tennis, golf and other modern sports** that led to the development of organised sporting culture.
- Sports also became a symbol of **nationalism during the freedom movement**, as in the case of Mohun Bagan's historic football victory against a British regiment.
- After Independence, India achieved several milestones such as **Olympic hockey gold in**

**1948**, hosting the **first Asian Games in 1951** and growing participation of women in international sports.

#### India's Rise on the Global Sporting Stage

- **Olympic Games:** India's Olympic journey witnessed a remarkable transformation between 2016 and 2024.
  - ♦ India progressed from two medals at Rio 2016 to seven at Tokyo 2020. India maintained this momentum with six medals at Paris 2024.
  - ♦ Neeraj Chopra became India's first Olympic athletics gold medalist at Tokyo 2020.
  - ♦ Mirabai Chanu also emerged as one of India's most consistent Olympic medalists.
- **Paralympic Games:** India's Paralympic performances have witnessed exceptional growth over the last three editions. The medal tally increased from four at Rio 2016 to 19 at Tokyo 2020.
  - ♦ Paris 2024 marked India's best-ever Paralympic campaign with 29 medals. Avani Lekhara, Sumit Antil and Pramod Bhagat have been among the country's standout performers.
  - ♦ Programmes such as TOPS and the Khelo India Para Games have strengthened support for para-athletes.
- **Asian Games:** India has consistently raised its performance at the Asian Games through larger contingents and stronger medal-winning displays. The country won 57 medals at Incheon 2014 and improved to 69 at Jakarta 2018.
- **Commonwealth Games:** India has remained one of the strongest performers at the Commonwealth Games. The country won 64 medals at Glasgow 2014 and improved to 66 at Gold Coast 2018.
  - ♦ India followed this with 61 medals at Birmingham 2022. Wrestling, weightlifting, table tennis, badminton and athletics have consistently contributed to India's success.
    - PV Sindhu, Vinesh Phogat and Achinta Sheuli have been among the country's notable performers.
  - ♦ The Commonwealth Games 2026 is being held in Glasgow 23 July – 2 August 2026, with athletes from 74 countries competing in 10 sports including six fully integrated Para Sports. India has sent a contingent of 124, comprising 78 men and 46 women. As of 27 July 2026, India has won 4 medals: 1 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze.

- Mirabai Chanu clinches India's third consecutive gold medal at the Commonwealth Games.
- Jhandu Kumar, Rishikanta Singh and Muthupandi Raja win bronze, silver and silver respectively to increase India's medal tally.

### Importance of Strong Sports Ecosystem

- **Demographic Dividend & Empowerment:** Sport is a positive outlet for India's large young population and will promote mental well-being, leadership and discipline.
- **Economic Engine & Job Creation:** Sports generate employment in event management, sports technology, physiotherapy, sports medicine, manufacturing & analytics.
- **Soft Power:** International sporting excellence is a major soft power tool and is a source of national pride and global diplomatic footprint.
- **Public Health Improvement:** Promotion of grassroots sports participation for the reduction of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and building a healthier workforce.

#### Do you know?

- **Sports' being a State subject**, the responsibility to promote and develop sports in the country rests primarily with the respective State/Union Territory Governments.
- At the national and international level (including meeting international treaty obligations), it falls within the realm and remit of the Union Government under its residuary powers.

### Various Initiatives of Government

- **Khelo India Scheme:** Launched in 2017 to create a strong foundation for Indian sport
  - ♦ It brought together three existing programmes. It merged the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan, Urban Sports Infrastructure Scheme and National Sports Talent Search Scheme into a unified framework for sports development.



- **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS):** Launched in September 2014 to improve India's performance at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The scheme was revamped in April 2018 with a dedicated technical support team to provide holistic assistance to athletes.
  - ♦ TOPS supports athletes through foreign training, international competitions, coaching camps, specialised equipment and a monthly stipend of ₹50,000.
- **Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI) initiative:** Identifies and nurtures sporting talent among children between 9 and 18 years of age.
- **Union Budget 2026–27:** Announced a dedicated initiative for sports goods manufacturing with an allocation of ₹500 crore.
- **National Sports Governance Act, 2025:** Aims to enhance athlete welfare and sports governance by mandating all National Sports Bodies to have a Safe Sports Policy, a Code of Ethics and internal grievance redressal mechanisms.
- **Khelo Bharat Niti, 2025:** Provides a long term roadmap to transform sports into a mass movement and a viable career in line with Viksit Bharat and India's ambition to host the Olympics in 2036.
- **National Sports Day (29 August):** The President of India presents National Sports Awards to honour excellence in sports.
- **Pension to Meritorious Sportspersons Scheme:** Provides a monthly pension ranging from ₹12,000 to ₹20,000 to retired international medal winners.
- **Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Programme for Sportspersons:** Offers financial aid of up to ₹10 lakh towards medical treatment, sports equipment and participation in competitions.
- **National Sports Development Fund (NSDF):** Calling for contributions from the private sector, NRIs and philanthropists to supplement government funding for sports infrastructure and athlete development.
- **National Centre of Sports Sciences and Research (NCSSR):** It was established in 2017 to promote sports science, sports medicine, injury prevention, rehabilitation and performance enhancement through dedicated research and institutional support.

### Challenges

- **Infrastructure issues:** Metro cities and elite centers have world-class facilities, but access to standardised equipment and training facilities is low in rural and tier 2/3 areas.
- **Governance Concerns:** Transparency, litigation and lack of professional management in some National Sports Federations (NSFs) sometimes delay the support and development programmes for athletes.
- **Skill Gaps:** India still lacks high performance coaches, biomechanists, sports psychologists and nutritionists and has to depend on expensive foreign experts.
- **Social Mindset & Job Security:** Non-cricket sports are still seen as a financially risky career path compared to traditional academic paths, even as this is changing.

### Suggestions for Improvement

- **Increase Collaboration:** The National Education Policy (NEP) should integrate sports as part of the core academic curriculum to create a strong talent pool from early childhood.
- **Professionalise Governance:** All National Sports Federations should have independent athlete representation, transparent financial audits and professional CEOs.
- **Strengthen Infrastructure:** There is a need to Establish regional sports science centers in collaboration with medical universities to train local physical trainers, physiotherapists and performance analysts
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** There is a need to encourage private businesses to sponsor certain sports, to ensure long-term financial support.

Source: PIB

## DRONE-BASED TRANSPORTATION OF TEA LEAVES IN KERALA

### Context

- A tea company has begun using drone-based transport to move freshly harvested green leaves from tea fields to weighment centres and processing factories in Kerala's Idukki.

### About

- Drones can transport tea leaves over **5–10 km** from plantations to weighment centres and factories.

- Aims to **reduce fuel costs, minimise manual handling, address labour shortages, and speed up processing**, thereby improving tea quality.
- The initiative marks a significant step towards **precision agriculture, digital transformation, and sustainable plantation management** in India's tea sector.

### Indian Tea Industry

- Tea is grown in **15 States in India**. Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are the **principal producing states**, while Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar and Karnataka are established but smaller contributors.
  - ♦ **Newer belt of non-traditional States:** Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim.
- India is the **largest producer and consumer of black tea** in the world.
  - ♦ It is the **second-largest tea producer overall** and, in 2024, stood as the third-largest tea exporter globally.
- **Prominent tea regions:** Assam (Assam Valley, Cachar) and West Bengal (Dooars, Terai, Darjeeling).
- **Global reputation:** Indian teas, especially Assam, Darjeeling, and Nilgiri, are renowned for their quality.
- **India's Export destinations:** United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Russia, China, the United States, Iran, the United Kingdom, Germany, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

### Government Schemes

- **Tea Development & Promotion Scheme (TDPS):** Implemented via the Tea Board of India under the **15th Finance Commission (2021–2026)**.
- **Plantation Development for Small Tea Growers (PDSTG):** Provides subsidies on field mechanization (pruning machines up to ₹30,000, mechanical harvesters up to ₹40,000, and power sprayers) alongside support for organic certification and soil testing.

### Challenges in Tea Industry

- **Climate change:** Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and extreme weather are affecting tea yield and quality.
- **Labour shortages:** Declining availability of plantation workers has increased dependence on mechanisation and migrant labour.

- **Low profitability:** Rising input costs, low tea prices, and ageing tea bushes have squeezed growers' margins.
- **Pest and sustainability concerns:** Increased pest pressure, residue management issues, and the need for sustainable cultivation practices.
- **Trade and market challenges:** Competition from low-cost producers, logistics bottlenecks, and non-tariff barriers affecting exports.

#### Geographical Condition for Tea production

- The tea plant grows well in **tropical and subtropical** climates. Tea bushes require a **warm and moist frost-free climate** all through the year.
- **Soil:** It requires deep and fertile well-drained soil, rich in humus and organic matter.
- **Temperature:** The average annual temperature for tea 150 plants to grow well is in the range of **15-23°C**.
- **Precipitation:** The rainfall needed is between **-200 cm**. Frequent showers evenly distributed over the year ensure **continuous growth of tender leaves**.

#### Tea Board of India

- It was set up as a **statutory body in 1954** under the **Tea Act, 1953**.
- It was established for the purposes of **regulating the Indian tea industry and protecting the interests of tea producers in India**.
  - ♦ All teas produced in the tea growing areas of India are **administered by the Tea Board**.
- The Board consists of **32 Members**, including Chairman and Deputy Chairman appointed by the Government of India representing different sections of the Tea industry.
- The Board's **Head Office is situated in Kolkata**.

Source: TH

## URBAN CO-OPERATIVE BANKS: RBI REOPENS LICENSING WINDOW

### Context

- The Reserve Bank of India looks set to allow fresh licences for Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) after the pause began in 2004.

### What the Proposal Involves?

- **Minimum Capital Requirement:** RBI has suggested a minimum capital requirement of Rs

300 crore for new entrants, a bar considerably higher than what earlier UCBs were expected to meet.

- **Eligibility Route:** Rather than allowing entirely new banks to be set up from scratch, the preferred route is conversion, where large and well run cooperative credit societies graduate into full UCBs.
- **Financial Health Criteria:** Only financially sound entities, those keeping Net NPAs below 3 percent, be allowed in.
- **Support Ecosystem:** To ease this transition, RBI has also set up an Umbrella Organisation that can support the sector with capital, technology and shared expertise.

### What are UCBs?

- UCBs are **member-owned, democratically governed banks** serving urban and semi-urban areas small traders, salaried workers, and MSMEs who are too small for commercial banks yet too formal for moneylenders.
- They work on **cooperative principles of mutual help & one member one vote**.
- **Dual control:** RBI (banking) + State Registrar of Cooperatives (membership, elections).



### Significance

- **Financial Inclusion:** UCBs have traditionally been the first point of contact for small traders, self employed individuals and households who commercial banks often overlook, so a well designed expansion could meaningfully deepen financial inclusion.
- **Sectoral Consolidation:** As of March 2025, the cooperative banking sector comprised 1,457 banks holding assets worth Rs 7.38 lakh crore, yet the distribution within this universe is heavily skewed.
  - ♦ Just 7 percent of UCBs hold deposits above Rs 1,000 crore, but together they account



for 62.5 percent of total deposits, while more than half the UCBs, holding under Rs 100 crore each, contribute barely 5.6 percent.

- **Regulatory Confidence:** Two decades of tiered regulation, stronger supervision and governance reform have improved sector resilience, giving RBI comfort to reopen licensing.
- **Vote for Cooperative Model:** Reopening licensing signals institutional confidence in the cooperative banking structure despite past failures.

### Challenges and Concerns

- **High Entry Barriers:** Industry stakeholders argue that the Rs 300 crore capital norm will exclude most genuine cooperative societies, defeating the inclusion objective.
- **Dual Control Structure:** UCBs continue to face overlapping jurisdiction between RBI and state Registrars of Cooperative Societies under respective Cooperative Societies Acts, complicating supervision and compliance.
- **Technological Deficit:** Many existing cooperative institutions lack the digital infrastructure needed to meet modern banking and compliance standards.

### Way Ahead

- **Ministry RBI Coordination:** A joint framework between the Ministry of Cooperation and RBI can align the inclusion mandate with prudential safeguards, avoiding contradictory signals to the sector.
- **Strengthening Umbrella Organisation:** Scaling up the Umbrella Organisation's role in providing liquidity support, technology and capacity building can help smaller societies meet eligibility norms over time.
- **Extending Deposit Insurance:** Bringing more cooperative credit societies under DICGC style protection, even outside full RBI licensing, can safeguard depositor interests in the interim.

Source: TH

## NATIONAL INVESTMENT POLICY FOR UREA (NIPU)-2026

### Context

- Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the **National Investment Policy for Urea (NIPU)-2026** to promote investment in domestic

urea production amid concerns over fertiliser availability during the ongoing kharif season.

### Fertilisers

- Fertilisers are **natural or man-made** compounds that offer critical nutrients to plants for their healthy growth, better crop productivity and maintenance of soil fertility.
- The **three major plant nutrients** are **Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P) and Potassium (K)**, collectively known as **NPK**.
- Fertilisers are generically characterised based on the nutrients given as:
  - ♦ **Nitrogenous fertilisers:** Urea Ammonium Sulphate Calcium Ammonium Nitrate (CAN)
  - ♦ **Phosphatic fertilisers:** Di Ammonium Phosphate (DAP), Single Super Phosphate (SSP).
  - ♦ **Potassic Fertiliser:** Muriate of Potash (MOP), Sulphate of Potash (SOP).
  - ♦ **Complex/compound fertilisers:** Have two or more primary nutrients.

### Evolution of India's Urea Policy

- **National Investment Policy, 2012:** It was announced to encourage fresh investment in the Urea sector in India. It was amended in **2013** and **October 2014** to facilitate new projects.
  - ♦ **Achievements of National Investment Policy, 2012:**
    - **Six new urea plants** were established. Four through Joint Venture Companies (JVCs) of public sector undertakings. Two by private companies.
    - Presently **33 operational urea manufacturing units**.
    - **Installed/Reassessed Capacity (RAC):** 207.54 LMT (2014-15); 269.42 LMT (2026-27)
  - ♦ **Amendment in 2015:** It applied to **25 existing gas-based plants**. It added 20-25 LMT of annual production above 2014-15 levels.
    - 225 LMT (2014-15) 314.07 LMT (2023-24) 293.30 LMT (2025-26)
- **Fertiliser Subsidy:** India gives huge subsidies to make fertilisers available to farmers at affordable prices.
  - ♦ **Total Subsidy on Fertiliser: Total Fertiliser Subsidy:** ₹1,77,162.06 crore (2024-25); ₹2,17,281.10 crore (2025-26). The **Union Budget (2026-27)** allocated ₹1.71 trillion for fertiliser subsidies.



- ♦ **Urea Subsidy:** ₹1,24,319.50 crore (2024-25); ₹1,42,175.74 crore (2025-26)
- ♦ **Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS):**
  - Phosphatic fertilisers: ₹74,999.99 crore
  - Potassic fertilisers: ₹52,810 crore
- ♦ **Organic Fertilisers:** ₹32.56 crore (2024-25); ₹105.37 crore (2025-26)
- **Subsidised fertilisers** are distributed through the **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** system using **Point of Sale (PoS)** devices with beneficiary authentication through **Aadhaar, Kisan Credit Card (KCC), Voter ID** and other approved identity documents.

#### Major Features of National Investment Policy for Urea (NIPU)-2026

- **Promotion of Domestic Manufacturing:** Policy encourages setting up of new gas-based urea plants with aim to reduce dependence on imported urea.
- **Transparent Cost Structure:** Distinguishes fixed and variable costs for improved transparency and efficiency.
- **Assured Return on Equity (RoE):** It introduces a viable **RoE band i.e. 12% (Minimum) to 16% (Maximum)**. It is intended to attract private and public investment.
- **Mitigation of Foreign Exchange Risk:** Fixed costs shall be translated into Indian Rupees at the prevailing rate after four years. minimises the volatility of the exchange rate for investors.

#### Government Initiatives for Balanced Fertiliser Usage

- **Integrated Nutrient Management (INM):** Encourages balanced use of organic manures, chemical fertilisers and bio-fertilisers.
  - ♦ It enhances fertiliser usage efficiency, maintains soil fertility in the long run, lowers environmental degradation, and supports sustainable agriculture.
- **Nano Urea:** It is marketed as an alternative to traditional urea. However, it is accepted only to a limited extent due to scientific efficacy, variable field level results and low farmer acceptance.
- **Sustainable and Green Agriculture:** Eco-friendly options such as Fortified Organic Manure, Liquid FOM and Phosphate-Rich Organic Manure. It grew to seven times the volume in Financial Year 2025-26 from 2024-25.

#### Challenges

- The **West Asia crisis**, increased demand for fertiliser due to **El Nino linked climatic conditions** and the continuous usage of chemical fertilisers have underlined the need for more self-reliance in urea production.

- Continued dependence on imported urea to bridge the demand-supply gap.
- The Exchequer's burden of fertiliser subsidies is rising.
- Too much application of urea leads to imbalance of nutrients and deterioration of soil health.
- Poor uptake of organic and bio-fertilisers.
- Global supply chain interruptions and geopolitical risk exposure.
- Call for higher energy efficiency in fertilizer production.

#### Way Forward

- NIPU-2026 implementation should be accelerated to increase domestic production capability.
- Ensure balanced fertilisation by practising Integrated Nutrient Management and Nutrient Based Subsidy regime.
- Encourage the use of organic, bio-fertilisers and scientifically proven nano fertilisers.
- Soil health cards, precision farming and awareness initiatives to increase nutrient-use efficiency.
- Diversify sources of imports and build up strategic stocks of fertilisers.
- Promoting the use of energy efficient and low-carbon fertiliser production methods.

Source: TH

## NEWS IN SHORT

### INDIA'S FIGHT TO COMBAT HEPATITIS

#### In News

- India is systematically strengthening its efforts to combat hepatitis, with the **National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme** aiming to eliminate the disease as a **public health threat by 2030**.

#### What is Hepatitis?

- Hepatitis is an **inflammation of the liver**, caused by **hepatitis viruses** or even other infections, toxic substances such as alcohol and drugs, and autoimmune diseases.
- There are **five major types of hepatitis viruses** — **Hepatitis A, B, C, D and E**. Among these, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C are the most serious public health concerns as they can become chronic infections and may lead to liver cirrhosis and liver cancer.

### Modes of Transmission, Prevention and Management

| Hepatitis Virus   | Causes / Transmission                                                                                                                                                                                                | Prevention & Treatment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hepatitis A (HAV) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faecal-oral route via contaminated food/water</li> <li>Poor sanitation and lack of safe drinking water</li> </ul>                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Prevention:</b> Safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation measures</li> <li><b>Treatment:</b> Usually Self-limiting. Supportive care (hydration/nutrition). No specific antiviral</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                        |
| Hepatitis B (HBV) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most commonly: Mother-to-child at birth</li> <li>Contact with infected blood and blood products and body fluids etc</li> </ul>                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Prevention:</b> Hepatitis B Vaccine under the Universal Immunization Program (birth dose at the earliest and certainly within 24 hours of birth, at 6,10 and 14 weeks of birth)</li> <li><b>Treatment:</b> Chronic hepatitis B is managed with antiviral medication amongst those eligible as per the national guidelines.</li> </ul> |
| Hepatitis C (HCV) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exposure to blood from unsafe injections/ procedures</li> <li>Sharing needles/syringes</li> <li>Contact with infected blood and blood products and body fluids etc</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Prevention:</b> Adopting harm reduction measures (needle exchange), safe injection practices. There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C infection</li> <li><b>Treatment:</b> Cured in 12-24 weeks in nearly all patients using pan-genotypic regimen with Direct-Acting Antiviral (DAAs) drugs.</li> </ul>                           |
| Hepatitis D (HDV) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact with infected blood and blood products and body fluids, etc</li> <li>Infection only amongst some chronic HBV carriers</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Prevention:</b> By preventing the underlying HBV infection, the Hepatitis B vaccine concurrently confers full protection against HDV infection.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Hepatitis E (HEV) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faecal-oral route via contaminated food/water</li> <li>Poor sanitation and lack of safe drinking water</li> </ul>                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Prevention:</b> Safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation measures</li> <li><b>Treatment:</b> Usually Self-limiting. Supportive care (hydration/nutrition). No specific antiviral drugs</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                  |

### India's Steps

- Hepatitis has been recognised as a **public health problem in India**. In 2018, the Government launched the National Viral Hepatitis Program to combat this disease by providing **screening and treatment services**.
  - This is in line with the **United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal of combating various viral diseases**.
- It has a comprehensive preventive, promotive and curative approach to eliminate viral hepatitis by increasing awareness, improving access to diagnosis and treatment, and providing free diagnostics and medicines for Hepatitis B and C.
- It deals with **Hepatitis A, B, C, D and E**. **Hepatitis A and E are under surveillance** through the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDS).

Source: PIB

### CORPORATE MITRA SCHEME

#### Context

- The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), Shillong organised a webinar for awareness of the **Corporate Mitra Scheme**.

#### Corporate Mitra Scheme

- The Corporate Mitra Scheme is an initiative of **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)** and administered by Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA).
- The purpose is to enhance the **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)** ecosystem by building a cadre of trained and accredited **Corporate Mitras (paraprofessionals)** providing affordable business and compliance help.
- The scheme targets **tier-2 and tier-3 cities**, which have less access to professional consulting services for MSMEs.

- The scheme is intended to teach 2,000 participants all throughout the country including 200 candidates from the North Eastern Region in the first phase, who will be provided **50% concession** on the course fee.

Source: PIB

## BANK OF BARODA (BOB) DATA LEAKS ON DARK WEB

### In News

- Bank of Baroda (BoB) was hit by a cyberattack after one of its employee's email accounts was compromised, allegedly leading to a leak of about 1 TB of customer and corporate banking data on the dark web.

### Do you know?

- The **World Wide Web** is broadly divided into the **Surface Web, Deep Web, and Dark Web**.
  - The **Surface Web** consists of publicly indexed websites accessible through search engines like **Google**.
  - The **Deep Web** contains unindexed content such as private databases, government and corporate intranets, and password-protected resources.
  - The **Dark Web** is a hidden part of the **Deep Web** that requires **specialized software** like **Tor (The Onion Router)** or **I2P (Invisible Internet Project)** to access, offering users a high degree of anonymity.

### Dark Web

- It is a section of the internet that is **intentionally concealed and cannot be found by regular search engines** or browsers.
- It requires special software like **Tor (The Onion Router)** or **I2P (Invisible Internet Project)** that use encrypted overlay networks to provide a high degree of anonymity to users and website operators.
- The Dark Web uses **onion routing**, which means internet traffic is encrypted in layers and sent through a series of relay nodes run by volunteers - meaning no single node knows the source and destination of the data.
  - Hidden services hide the location of the servers.

### Applications

- Legitimate** uses include privacy protection, censorship circumvention, free speech, secure

communications for journalists, whistleblowers, activists and businesses, and protection of sensitive communications.

- Law enforcement agencies also leverage the Dark Web for surveillance, undercover and anonymous tip line operations, and cybercrime investigations.
- Illegitimate** uses include darknet markets trafficking illicit drugs, counterfeit documents, stolen financial data, hacking tools, malware, cybercrime services, and other illegal goods.
- Cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and Monero are often used for these transactions.

Source: TH

## AI DATA CENTRES TO ADD 26.3 GW LOAD BY 2031-32: POWER MINISTRY

### Context

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) data centres** will put an **additional load of 26.3 gigawatts (GW) by 2031-32**, the Ministry of Power informed the parliament.

### About

- This additional load is expected **to be integrated into the grid and will primarily be served by renewable energy capacity**.
- The fresh projection is **almost double the government's earlier projection** in March this year when it estimated that electricity demand from data centres will **reach 13.56 GW by 2031-32**.
- A **data center** is a physical room, building or facility that houses IT infrastructure for building, running and delivering applications and services.
  - It also stores and manages the data associated with those applications and services.

### Data Centres in India

- India is expected to witness a **sharp increase in data centre capacity in the coming years**.
  - From a mere **375 megawatt (MW) data centre capacity in 2020**, India's current capacity stood at around **1.5 GW by 2025**.
- India's operational data centre capacity will increase to 12 GW by 2030**, at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of **approximately 40%**.
- AI-dedicated capacity** is expected to **expand nearly 24-fold** over the same period, **rising from 275 MW to 6,546 MW**.



- ♦ As hyperscale cloud providers, enterprise digitalisation and artificial intelligence accelerate demand for computer infrastructure.

Source: IE

## KIMI K3

### Context

- Chinese AI startup Moonshot AI has temporarily paused new subscriptions for its AI chatbot after overwhelming demand for its newly launched Kimi K3 model exhausted available GPU computing capacity.

### What is Kimi K3?

- Kimi K3 is a new **large language model (LLM)** developed by Moonshot AI, a Chinese artificial intelligence startup.
- It has demonstrated frontier-level performance in coding and reasoning benchmarks, with results comparable to leading AI models developed by **OpenAI and Anthropic on several tasks.**
- The model is expected to be released as an **open-weight model**, allowing developers to download and run it locally.

### What are Open-Weight AI Models?

- An open-weight AI model is a model whose **trained parameters (weights) are made publicly available.**
- **Features:** Developers can download, run, fine-tune, and modify the model.
  - ♦ The model can operate on private infrastructure without depending entirely on the developer's cloud service.

### Large Language Models (LLMs)

- A large language model (LLM) is a type of artificial intelligence (AI) algorithm that uses **deep learning techniques** and massively large data sets to understand, summarize, generate and predict new content.
- Deep learning involves the probabilistic analysis of unstructured data, which eventually enables the deep learning model to recognize distinctions between pieces of content without human intervention.
- It helps to understand how characters, words, and sentences function together.

Source: IE