



Current Affairs of the Day

'No volunteer list under cyber scheme'

The Union Home Ministry has said it does not maintain a centralised list of volunteers enrolled under the cybercrime volunteer programme since the police is a "State subject" under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.

Highlights:

1. The Ministry, through its cybercrime grievance portal, cybercrime.gov.in, aims to raise a group of "cybercrime volunteers" to flag "unlawful content" on the Internet.
2. A digital rights group, the Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF), has said the programme enables a culture of surveillance and could create potential social distrust by encouraging civilians to report the online activities of other citizens.
3. In response to a Right to Information Act (RTI) application by The Hindu on the total number of volunteers who have applied under the Cybercrime Volunteers Programme of the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal, the Ministry said the information could be sought directly from the respective States and Union Territories.

State subjects

1. The Ministry said in the RTI reply that "police" and "public order" were State subjects in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, and the States were primarily responsible for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of crimes through their law enforcement agencies (LEAs).
2. The Cybercrime Volunteer Framework has been rolled out as a part of cyber hygiene promotion to bring together citizens to contribute in the fight against cybercrime in the country and assist State/UT LEAs in their endeavour to curb cybercrimes.
3. The volunteers are registered, and their services utilised, by the respective State/UT LEAs as per their requirement. It is requested to kindly seek the information directly from the respective State/UT LEAs.



4. Though the Ministry did not provide information in the RTI reply, according to its Output Outcome Monitoring Framework Budget of 2021-22, the programme was expected to include 500 volunteers, 200 “cyber awareness promoters” and 50 “cyber experts”.
5. The National Cybercrime Ecosystem Management Unit, of which the Cybercrime Volunteers Programme is a constituent, is part of the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) scheme.

PM CARES to fund 551 oxygen plants in hospitals

The PM CARES Fund has approved the allocation of funds for setting up 551 Pressure Swing Adsorption medical oxygen generation plants at public health facilities across the country, the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) said in a statement on Sunday.

Highlights:

1. The Fund had earlier this year allocated ₹201.58 crores for the installation of 162 such plants, the PMO said. The aim is to set up an oxygen plant in all districts with government hospitals.
2. Oxygen plants in every district to ensure adequate oxygen availability. An important decision that will boost oxygen availability to hospitals and help people across the nation.
3. The PMO said the decision was taken “in line with the Prime Minister’s direction of boosting the availability of oxygen to hospitals”. The plants will come up in selected government hospitals in district headquarters and the procurement would be done via the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Ministry.
4. The basic aim behind establishing PSA oxygen generation plants at government hospitals in the district headquarters is to further strengthen the public health system and ensure that each of these hospitals has a captive oxygen generation facility. Such an in-house captive oxygen generation facility would address the day-to-day medical oxygen needs of these hospitals and the district.



RBI to issue cybersecurity norms for payment services

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will soon issue cybersecurity norms for payment service providers (PSPs), following a series of data breaches faced by operators including Mobikwik and payment aggregator JusPay, a top RBI official said.

Highlights:

1. While the standards for fintech-driven payment services providers will be similar to cyber hygiene norms issued recently for banks and non-banking finance companies, the RBI is quite clear that firms will have to do more than observe the minimum standards to ensure safety as digital transactions gain further traction.
2. Look at the popularity of UPI because of the client base of a couple of Big Tech companies. But this process has to be managed, the concentration of two or three third-party providers in this retail payments space could give rise to competitive weaknesses. That is a challenge that we need to look at and solve going forward.
3. Over the next decade, the critical challenge for regulators would be to speed up the absorption of fintech without undermining the financial system's integrity or stability, he asserted.
4. Stressing that there are not too many payment systems in India and the number of players is limited, Mr Sankar observed that two apps provide about 70% of third-party services in the UPI system.
5. If UPI is gaining popularity, you will have to think twice about stepping in and controlling the market share of two or three popular apps because that could actually hurt absorption of this tech in the population.

Groundwater depletion may reduce winter cropping intensity by 20% in India

India is the second-largest producer of wheat in the world, with over 30 million hectares in the country dedicated to producing this crop. But with severe groundwater depletion, the cropping intensity or the amount of land planted in



the winter season may decrease by up to 20% by 2025, notes a new paper. Some of the important winter crops are wheat, barley, mustard and peas.

Highlights:

1. The international team studied India's three main irrigation types on winter cropped areas: dug wells, tube wells, canals, and also analysed the groundwater data from the Central Ground Water Board.
2. They found that 13% of the villages in which farmers plant a winter crop are located in critically water-depleted regions. The team writes that these villages may lose 68% of their cropped area in future if access to all groundwater irrigation is lost. The results suggest that these losses will largely occur in the northwest and central India.
3. There are several first-generation (productivity) and second-generation (sustainability) problems. In the green revolution era, policy-supported environment led to a large increase in rice cultivation in northwestern India mainly in Punjab and Haryana which are ecologically less suitable for rice cultivation due to predominantly light soils.
4. This policy-supported intensive agriculture led to unsustainable groundwater use for irrigation and in turn groundwater scarcity. There was also post-harvest residue burning to make way for the timely sowing of wheat.
5. There are enough groundwater resources supported with higher monsoon rainfall in eastern Indian states like Bihar. But due to lack of enough irrigation infrastructure, farmers are not able to make use of natural resources there.

Alternative sources

1. The results showed that switching to canal irrigation has limited adaptation potential at the national scale. We find that even if all regions that are currently using depleted groundwater for irrigation will switch to using canal irrigation, cropping intensity may decline by 7% nationally.
2. Adoption of water-saving technologies like a sprinkler, drip irrigation and maybe switching to less water-intensive crops may help use the limited groundwater resources more effectively.



Justice N.V. Ramana is CJI

New role: President Ram Nath Kovind administered the oath of office to Justice N.V. Ramana.

Highlights:

1. Justice N.V. Ramana was sworn in as the 48th Chief Justice of India (CJI) by President Ram Nath Kovind. Justice Ramana will have a tenure of one year and four months as CJI and will demit office on August 26, 2022.
2. Born to agriculturist parents in 1957, Justice Ramana was known for his activism regarding issues involving farmers and industrial workers. Before turning to legal practice, he was a journalist with a prominent Telugu newspaper.