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CHINA AND INDIA PLEDGE TO BE 'PARTNERS NOT RIVALS': SCO SUMMIT

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on the **sidelines of the SCO summit in Tianjin.**

Key Outcomes of SCO Summit

- **High-level Engagements:** Both leaders met and welcomed the positive momentum in their ties.
    - Reaffirmed they are development partners, not rivals; differences must not turn into disputes.
- **Border Issues:** Leaders noted successful border disengagement in 2024 and maintenance of peace since then.

BORDER MILESTONES

OCTOBER 2024: Border patrol deal restores pre-2020 rights in sensitive areas like Depsang Plains and Demchok.

JUNE 2025: At Defence Ministers' meeting, India seeks "structured road-map" for better border management.

AUGUST 2025: 24th round of boundary talks held with Chinese FM Wang Yi's visit; focus on easing tensions, boosting economic ties and addressing India's concerns over Chinese export curbs. Both pledge to maintain 'peace and tranquility' along the LAC.

- **People-to-People Ties:** Agreed to expand exchanges through direct flights, visa facilitation.
    - Building on the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra resumption and tourist visas.
- **Economic & Trade Cooperation:** Recognized their economies' role in stabilizing world trade.
- **Multilateral Engagements:** PM supported China's SCO Presidency and Tianjin Summit.
    - Invited President Xi to India's BRICS Summit 2026.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- **The Shanghai Five** emerged in **1996** from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks between **4 former USSR republics and China.**
    - **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan** were members of the **Shanghai Five.**
    - With the accession of **Uzbekistan** to the group in **2001**, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO.
- **Objective:** To enhance regional cooperation for efforts to curb terrorism, separatism, and extremism in the Central Asian region.

- **Members (10):** China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Belarus, and the four Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
    - India became a full member in **2017** and assumed the rotating **chairmanship in 2023.**
    - Member countries contribute around **30 per cent of the global GDP** and about **40 percent of the world's population**.
- **Observer status:** Afghanistan and Mongolia.
- **Language:** The SCO's official languages are Russian and Chinese.
- **Structure: The supreme decision-making body** of the SCO is the **Council of Heads of States (CHS),** which meets once a year.
    - **The Organization has 2 standing bodies** — the Secretariat in Beijing and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent.
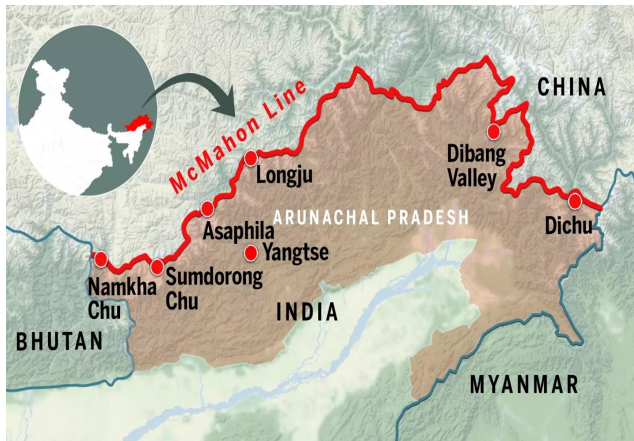
India-China Relations

- **2025 marks 75 Years** of India-China diplomatic ties.
- **Historical Tensions:**
    - Strained since the **1962 Sino-Indian war,** deepened by recent clashes and mistrust.
    - **2020:** Post Galwan Valley clashes, India restricted Chinese investments, banned Chinese apps (e.g., TikTok), and halted flights to China.
- **Trade Relations:** China was India's second-largest trading partner in FY2024–25. Out of total bilateral trade worth US$131.84 billion, India's trade deficit increased to US$99.2bn.
- **Ongoing Mechanisms:** Despite tensions, mechanisms like the Special Representatives (SR) and Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) have been in place to address the boundary issue.
- **Recent Developments:**
    - **2024 Disengagement:** India and China announced successful disengagement in eastern Ladakh.
    - **2024 BRICS Meeting:** PM Modi and President Xi Jinping emphasized "mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual sensitivity."

Areas of Concern

- **Ongoing Border Tensions:**
    - The unresolved border dispute spans over 2,000 miles, marked by frequent clashes.

- ◆ Incidents in Doklam (2017), Galwan Valley (2020), and northeastern states (Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh).

- **Military Infrastructure:** Both countries have heavily fortified their border with roads, railways, and airstrips for rapid troop mobilization.

- **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):** India has expressed reservations about China's Belt and Road Initiative, especially regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through the territory of India.

- **Trade imbalance:** While politically desirable, reducing trade dependence is complicated by China's economic influence and India's need for foreign investment.

- **China's growing presence in the Neighbouring Region:**
  - ◆ **Sri Lanka:** China's presence at Hambantota Port and investments in an oil refinery raise concerns in India.
  - ◆ **Nepal:** China's investments in infrastructure (e.g., Pokhara airport) challenge India's strategic position.
  - ◆ **Bangladesh:** China's growing influence, including loan agreements, threatens India's regional influence.
  - ◆ **Myanmar:** China's deepening ties with Myanmar, including the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, strengthen its presence in India's backyard.

Way Ahead

- The Tianjin meeting reflects measured progress in restoring stability along the LAC since the 2020 Galwan clash.

- As India and China look to build mutual trust, sustained dialogue will be essential to better align India's and China's intentions vis-à-vis the Asian security order.

Source: PIB

RAJASTHAN PROPOSES NEW ANTI-CONVERSION BILL

Context

- The Rajasthan government has announced stringent provisions under its proposed **Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2025.**

Key Provisions of the New Bill

- **General offences:** Unlawful conversions will invite imprisonment of **seven to fourteen years** and a minimum fine of **₹5 lakh**. (Earlier: one to five years and 15,000 fine).

- **Vulnerable groups:** If the converted person is a minor, woman, differently abled, or from SC/ST communities, the punishment will be **ten to twenty years** of imprisonment and a fine of **₹10 lakh.**

- **Mass conversions:** In cases of mass conversions, guilty parties face **twenty years to life imprisonment** along with a minimum fine of **₹25 lakh.**

- **Voluntary conversion procedures:**
  - ◆ Individuals must submit a declaration to the **District Magistrate (DM) 60 days** before the conversion.
  - ◆ The convertor (priest/organiser) must also give a **30-day prior notice.**
  - ◆ The DM will order a police inquiry to verify the **intent of conversion.**
  - ◆ After conversion, the individual must appear before the DM within **21 days** to confirm their identity and declaration.

- **Expanded definition of "allurement":** The bill defines allurement broadly, including promises of a better lifestyle, divine blessings, material benefits, or free education from a religious institution.

- **FIR by family members:** Blood relatives will be allowed to file an FIR if they suspect an unlawful conversion.

- **Repeat offences:** A repeat offender can face life imprisonment and a fine of **₹50 lakh.** The state can also cancel the organisation's registration, stop grants, and confiscate/demolish property used for illegal conversions.

Concerns

- **Burden of proof:** The accused has to prove innocence, making all offences cognizable and non-bailable.

- **Misuse of provisions:** Critics warn the bill could be used to harass minorities and interfaith couples, given its stringent provisions and reversal of burden of proof.

Source: IE

MEDICAL TOURISM & NON-RESIDENT INDIANS (NRIS)

Context

- Medical tourism is increasingly driven by rising healthcare costs abroad and the promise of timely, high-quality treatment back home for millions of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs).

About Medical Tourism in India

- **Medical tourism** *(also called medical travel, health tourism or global healthcare)* is a term used to describe the rapidly-growing practice of travelling across international borders to seek healthcare services.

- **India's medical tourism sector** has evolved into a global phenomenon, attracting patients from across continents seeking affordable, high-quality healthcare.

- In 2023 alone, India welcomed **over 635,000 foreign medical tourists,** and is expected to grow exponentially.

Why Does India Stand Out?

- **Cost Efficiency:** A surgery costing over $100,000 in the US can be performed in India for just $10,000–$20,000.
    - NRIs save anywhere from **60–90%** on major procedures.
    - India's hospitals deliver advanced care at a fraction of global costs, from heart bypasses to kidney transplants.
    - Even medicines are up to **90% cheaper** compared with international markets.

- **Insurance & Financial Protection for NRIs:** Health insurance adoption among NRIs has surged by over 150% in the past year.
    - Young NRIs under 35 led this growth, with a 148% rise, while women buyers increased by 125%.
    - Notably, 60% of NRIs are purchasing health cover for elderly parents living in India.
    - Premiums in India are often 25–40 times cheaper than in the US or Gulf countries.

- **Expanding Access Beyond Metro Cities:** Medical tourism is no longer confined to Delhi, Mumbai, or Chennai.

- **Tier-2 cities** like Hyderabad, Kochi, and Ahmedabad and **Tier-3 towns** such as Thrissur, Kollam, and Thane are emerging as healthcare destinations.
- Improved flight connectivity and streamlined visa processes are making these cities more accessible to NRIs.

- **World-Class Infrastructure:** Indian hospitals are equipped with advanced diagnostic and surgical technologies, and many doctors are trained internationally.

- **Shorter Wait Times:** Procedures are scheduled faster than in many developed nations, reducing delays in critical care.

- **English Proficiency:** Most medical professionals speak fluent English, easing communication for international patients.

Key Concerns & Issues in Medical & Wellness Tourism in India

- **Quality Assurance & Regulation:**
    - **Unregulated Growth:** The mushrooming of wellness centers has raised concerns about inconsistent service standards.
    - **Accreditation Gaps:** While NABH and AYUSH have developed guidelines, not all centers adhere to them, risking patient safety and trust.
    - **Medical Ethics:** In some cases, aggressive marketing and lack of transparency in treatment outcomes have led to ethical concerns.

- **Accessibility:**
    - **Logistical Challenges:** International patients often face hurdles in navigating visa processes, hospital selection, and travel coordination.

- **Cost Transparency & Insurance:**
    - **Hidden Costs:** While India is known for affordability, lack of clear pricing structures can lead to unexpected expenses for foreign patients.
    - **Limited Insurance Integration:** Many international insurance providers do not cover treatments in India, creating financial uncertainty.

- **Patient Safety & Legal Recourse:**
    - **Limited Legal Protections:** Foreign patients may struggle to seek redress in cases of malpractice or negligence.
    - **Infection Control & Hygiene:** Inadequate sanitation in some facilities can pose health risks, especially for immunocompromised patients.

Related Government Initiatives

- **Heal in India Portal:** A digital platform to help international patients find hospitals, book appointments, and manage travel logistics.
- **E-Medical Visa:** Available to citizens of 167 countries, simplifying access to Indian healthcare.
- **Medical Value Travel Summits:** Organized by the **Ministry of Ayush** to foster collaboration between states, hospitals, and industry leaders.

Wellness Tourism in India

- India's ancient healing systems — **Ayurveda, Yoga, Siddha, and Naturopathy** — are now central to its wellness tourism strategy. The Ministry of Tourism promotes this through:
    - **Accreditation of Wellness Centers:** In partnership with NABH and AYUSH, ensuring quality and safety standards.
    - **Market Development Assistance (MDA):** Financial support for wellness service providers to participate in global events.
    - **Ayush Visa Category:** Introduced for those seeking traditional treatments under **Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy** systems.
- It appeals to travelers seeking preventive care, rejuvenation, and spiritual healing.

Source: TH

DECARBONISATION OF INDIA'S EMISSION-HEAVY SECTORS

In News

- A new study by the Centre for Social and Economic Progress estimates that India will need an **additional $467 billion by 2030 to decarbonise four major emission-heavy sectors: steel, cement, power, and road transport.**

What Does Decarbonisation Mean?

- Decarbonisation is the process under which carbon dioxide emissions (or its equivalents) are reduced to **achieve a lower output of greenhouse gasses**.
- As per the Paris Agreement, reducing the amount of carbon dioxide from transport and power generation is essential to meet global temperature standards.
- This process involves using renewable energy sources like wind, solar, and biomass.

Need of Decarbonisation of India's emission-heavy sectors

- **Steel, cement, power, and road transport** together account most of India's CO_2 emissions.
    - Reducing their carbon footprint is crucial to meet global and national climate commitments.
    - India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement require deep sectoral reforms.
- **Public Health & Air Quality:** Emission-heavy sectors contribute significantly to PM2.5 and NOx levels, impacting urban health.
- **Energy Security:** Reducing fossil fuel dependence enhances strategic autonomy and reduces import bills.
- **Economic Competitiveness:** Global markets are shifting toward low-carbon supply chains; India risks losing trade advantages without green transitions.

Challenges

- **Environmental imperative:** Over 70% of electricity still comes from coal; phasing it out requires massive renewable scale-up.
- **Technology Gaps:** Green hydrogen, CCS (carbon capture and storage), and battery storage remain costly and underdeveloped.
- **Regulatory Fragmentation:** Overlapping mandates between central and state agencies slow implementation.
- **Financing needs:** India needs an estimated $467 billion by 2030 to decarbonize its four biggest emission sectors
    - Steel and cement—among the hardest to decarbonise—require the bulk of this investment ($251B and $141B respectively), primarily for technologies like carbon capture and storage.
    - The power sector, already transitioning to renewables, needs $47B, while road transport requires $18B.
- Millions employed in fossil fuel sectors need **reskilling and social protection**.

Progress

- India has reached a major milestone in its energy transition by achieving **50% of its installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuel sources**—five years ahead of its 2030 target under the Paris Agreement.
- This progress reflects strong policy leadership, especially through schemes like PM-KUSUM and PM Surya Ghar, which have empowered farmers and households with solar energy.
- **Utility-scale solar parks, wind energy, and bioenergy have expanded** rapidly, delivering co-benefits such as rural employment, improved public health, and reduced air pollution.

- India's achievement positions it as a global climate leader, advocating for equity and sustainable lifestyles.

Suggestions & Way Forward

- India achieving 50% non-fossil fuel capacity ahead of schedule highlights its strong commitment to sustainable development.
- It proves that economic growth and decarbonisation can go hand in hand.
- As **India targets 500 GW of non-fossil capacity by 2030** and net-zero by 2070, it must pursue a bold, inclusive, and tech-driven path to lead global climate action.
- To decarbonize key emission-heavy sectors, India needs sector-specific roadmaps with clear milestones, grid modernization, and strong public-private partnerships.

Source :IE

FERTILISER SHORTAGES AMID MONSOON BOOM

Context

- A well-distributed southwest monsoon in 2025, has boosted kharif sowing along with triggering an unprecedented surge in fertilizer demand.

Fertiliser Sale Impact

- A good monsoon ensures soil moisture, reservoir filling, and groundwater recharge, encouraging higher sowing and proportionately higher fertilizer use.
- Fertilisers supply key nutrients like **nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), and sulphur (S)**, that are indispensable for crop growth.
- India stands as the **second-largest user** and the **third-largest producer** of fertilizers globally
- **Supply-Side Constraints:**
  - While demand surged, supply failed to keep pace.
  - Domestic production of urea **fell from 102.1 lakh tonnes** in April–July 2024 to **93.6 lakh tonnes** in April–July 2025, while DAP production remained stagnant at 13.7 lakh tonnes.
  - **Imports have also declined**, largely due to supply **restrictions from China,** which has been a major exporter of fertilisers to India.

TABLE 1 SALE OF MAJOR FERTILISER PRODUCTS

	2023-24	2024-25	Apr-Jul 2024	Apr-Jul 2025	%Growth
Urea	357.80	387.74	108.86	124.28	14.2
DAP	108.12	92.81	29.44	25.68	-12.8
NPKS	110.73	142.14	39.34	50.03	27.2
SSP	45.44	49.28	15.55	20.01	28.7
MOP	16.45	22.02	4.94	7.05	42.8

Source: The Fertiliser Association of India.

Source: NCERT

Subsidy Framework & Pricing Dynamics of fertilizers

- **Urea Subsidy Scheme:** Under the scheme, urea is provided to farmers at a statutorily notified **maximum retail price (MRP).**
  - The MRP of 45 kg bag of urea is ₹242 per bag (exclusive of charges towards neem coating and taxes as applicable) while the actual cost is around ₹3,000 for 45 kg bag.
- **Nutrient-based subsidy policy:** It aims to promote the balanced use of fertilizers by linking subsidies to the nutrient content (nitrogen, phosphorus, potash, and sulfur) rather than the final product.
  - Under this scheme, the government sets a fixed subsidy amount per kilogram for each nutrient in P&K fertilizers.
- In the broader budget for **FY2025–26**, the urea subsidy stands at ₹**1.19 lakh crore,** while the **NPK subsidy** is budgeted at approximately ₹**0.49 lakh crore**, reflecting the government's massive fiscal commitment.

Government's Initiatives in the Fertilizer Sector

- The Government introduced the **Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS)** scheme in **2010** for phosphatic and potassic fertilizers.
  - Under this scheme, a fixed subsidy is provided for subsidised P and K Fertilizers, including di-ammonium phosphate, based on their nutrient content.
- **The One Nation One Fertilizer scheme** was introduced to bring uniformity in branding and ensure transparency in the Fertilizer sector.
- **PM PRANAM scheme:** PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness Generation, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother – Earth (PMPRANAM)" was launched to incentivize States/ Union Territories to promote alternate fertilizers and balanced use of chemical fertilizers.

Way Ahead

- **Advance Demand Forecasting:** Fertiliser allocation must be synchronised with crop acreage patterns to prevent shortages in years of good monsoon.
- **Diversified Imports:** Over-reliance on China for DAP and urea creates vulnerability; long-term contracts with multiple suppliers are needed.
- **Capacity Expansion:** Speeding up commissioning of domestic urea plants under "Atmanirbhar Bharat" will reduce import reliance.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Wider adoption of nano-urea, bio-fertilisers, and soil health cards can reduce chemical fertiliser intensity over time.
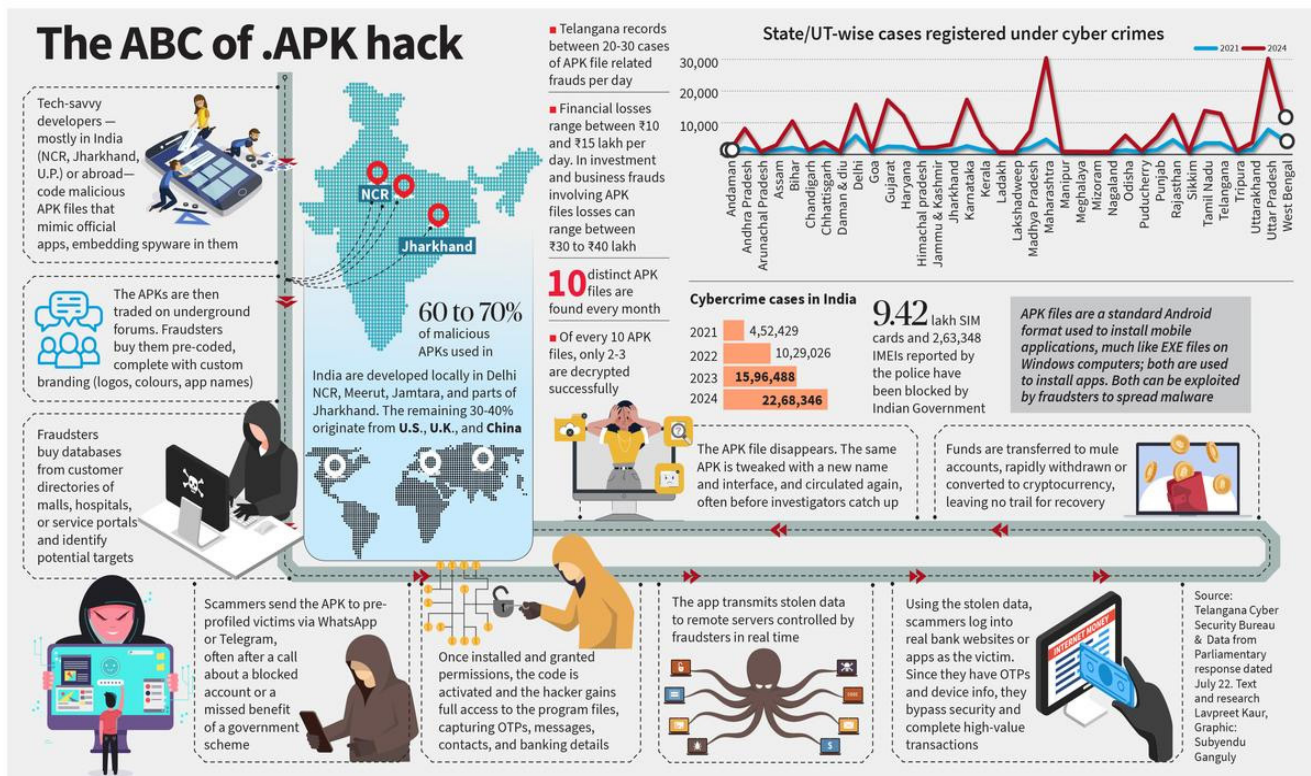
Source: IE

RISE IN ANDROID PACKAGE KIT (APK) FRAUD

Context

- Banks have issued a new warning for customers to **stay vigilant against Android Package Kit (APK) frauds.**

Android Application Package (APK) fraud

- APK fraud is a **phishing scam** where criminals send malicious Android Application Package (APK) files to **trick users into downloading and installing them**, often by impersonating trusted entities like banks or government officials.
- Once installed, these fraudulent apps **gain control of the user's device,** stealing financial information (including OTPs and PINs), and conducting unauthorized transactions without consent.
- Once in circulation, the same **APK file is reused with minor modifications** in the interface, allowing it to bypass detection even after earlier versions are blacklisted.

Reasons for increase in Cybercrime

- **Rapid Digitalization:** With a growing number of individuals and businesses relying on the Internet and digital technologies there are more opportunities for cybercriminals to exploit vulnerabilities.
- **Inadequate Cybersecurity Infrastructure:** In India the cybersecurity infrastructure is still developing. Many organizations, especially smaller businesses, may not have robust cybersecurity measures in place, making them easy targets for cybercriminals.
- **Insider Threats:** Insider threats, where employees or individuals with access to sensitive information misuse it for malicious purposes, are a significant concern in India, particularly in the corporate sector.

- **Payment Systems Vulnerability:** With the rise of digital payments and online transactions, there is an increased risk of financial crimes such as phishing, credit card fraud, and online scams.

- **Low digital literacy:** Lower awareness among the general public and digital gaps amongst nations create an unsustainable environment in the cyber domain.

- **Vulnerable population:** Many senior citizens aren't aware of using UPI (features) and they fall prey to online scams.

Government steps for Cybersecurity

- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Section 43, 66, 70, and 74 of the IT Act, 2000 deal with hacking and cyber crimes.

- **Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)** issues alerts and advisories regarding latest cyber threats/vulnerabilities and countermeasures to protect computers and networks on a regular basis.

- **National Cyber Coordination Centre (NCCC)** has been set up to generate necessary situational awareness of existing and potential cyber security threats and enable timely information sharing for proactive, preventive and protective actions by individual entities.

- **Cyber Swachhta Kendra (Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre)** has been launched for detection of malicious programs and provides free tools to remove the same.

- **Chakshu Facility:** It is a newly introduced feature on the **Sanchar Saathi portal** that encourages citizens to proactively report suspected fraudulent communications received via call, SMS, or WhatsApp.

- **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C):** It was established in **2018** under the Central Sector Scheme within the Cyber and Information Security Division of the **Ministry of Home Affairs.**

- It provides a framework and eco-system for Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) to deal with Cybercrime in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.

International Measures

- **Budapest Convention:** It is the 1st international treaty to address cybercrime. India is not a signatory to the treaty.

- **Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN):** It is a US-based not-for-profit organization for coordinating & maintenance of several databases.

- **Internet Governance Forum:** It is the **United Nations forum** for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on Internet governance issues.

Way Ahead

- Enhance investment in **advanced threat detection systems**, AI-driven monitoring, and secure digital payment gateways to reduce vulnerabilities.

- Expedite implementation of the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023** to secure user information and reduce misuse of leaked databases.

- Conduct **large-scale public campaigns,** especially targeting vulnerable groups like senior citizens, to promote digital literacy and safe online practices.

Source: TH

AI, LONELINESS AND THE ILLUSION OF COMPANIONSHIP

In Context

- Users described AI as empathetic, supportive and these reactions underline a deeper societal issue: rising loneliness and the growing role of artificial intelligence in filling human emotional gaps.

Idea of AI Companionship

- **Parasocial relationships reborn:** Earlier, the term was used for one-sided bonds with celebrities. With AI chatbots, the bond feels two-way, even though only one side is truly alive.

- **The illusion of empathy:** Chatbots are trained to remember personal details, offer affirmations, and mimic patience. The warmth is engineered, not organic.

Why It Resonates Today?

- **Loneliness as a social crisis:** Despite hyper-connectivity, people lack time and meaningful listeners.

- **Tech as a profitable placebo:** Companies monetize companionship by marketing AI partners, friends, or mentors. Human flaws—impatience, conflict, prejudice—are eliminated, making AI seem a "perfect" alternative.

- **A billion-dollar market:** Apps like Nastia promise uncensored romantic AI alternatives with customisable faces, voices, and personalities.

Legal and Ethical Dimensions

- **Global parallels:** Corporations already enjoy legal personhood; rivers and animals too in some regions. Extending this to AI would fundamentally alter legal frameworks.

- **Risks:** Emotional dependency, blurred reality–illusion boundaries, and exploitation of vulnerable individuals.

Implications for India

- **Social:** With India's rising urban loneliness and mental health crisis, AI companions may see a sharp rise.

- **Economic:** Scope for AI-driven startups in healthcare, eldercare, education, and entertainment—but with risks of over-dependency.

- **Regulatory:** India lacks a clear AI rights or personhood framework. Current policy focus is on data security, bias, and accountability, but not companionship.

- **Ethical:** The question arises—should AI be allowed to replace human bonds in a society already battling social fragmentation?

Way Ahead

- **Regulatory safeguards:** India should proactively clarify that AI cannot hold rights or personhood, while ensuring consumer protection in AI companionship apps.

- **Mental health support:** AI tools may supplement, but cannot substitute professional help. Awareness campaigns must caution against over-reliance.

- **Ethical design:** Developers should avoid manipulative features that deepen dependency. Transparency in AI's non-sentience must be mandatory.

- **Societal reforms:** Tackling loneliness requires strengthening community spaces, work-life balance, and social safety nets, not just technological fixes.

Source: IE

═══ NEWS IN SHORT ═══

POPULATION CENSUS-2027

Context

- The **Registrar General of India (RGI)** has sought a Rs 14,618.95-crore budget to conduct the Census 2027, which will be the **first "Digital Census"** and collect data on caste.

About

- The Population Census-2027, has been decided to be conducted in **two phases** along with enumeration of castes.

- More than 35 lakh enumerators and supervisors will be deployed to conduct the Census, which is over 30% higher (27 lakh) than the functionaries deployed to conduct the Census in 2011.

Census in India

- **A census is a survey of the population** of an area that includes collecting details of a country's demographics including **age, sex and occupation**.

- **History:** Under **W.C. Plowden**, the Census Commissioner of India, the first synchronous decennial (every ten years) census was conducted in **1881,** building on an earlier non-synchronous effort in 1872.

  - **Independent India's first census** was held in **1951** and since then it has happened in the first year of every decade.

- **The Constitution mandates** that enumeration is carried out but the **Census of India Act of 1948** does not specify its timing or periodicity.

- The population census is conducted by the **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs.**

Source: IE

BETA VERSION OF "ADI VAANI"

In News

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has launched the beta version of **"Adi Vaani," app**.

About Adi Vaani

- It is an AI-powered translation tool designed to support a future large language model for tribal languages.

- It combines advanced technology with community efforts to protect and revive tribal languages and cultures in India.

- It is **India's first AI-powered translator** for tribal languages which was developed under **Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh.**

- **Adi Vaani supports:** Santali (Odisha), Bhili (Madhya Pradesh), Mundari (Jharkhand), Gondi (Chhattisgarh)

  - Additional languages including Kui and Garo are under development for the next phase.

Importance

- India has 461 tribal languages, with 81 vulnerable and 42 critically endangered due to limited documentation and transmission.

- Adi Vaani uses AI to digitize, preserve, and revitalize these tribal languages.

- It aims to bridge communication gaps and preserve endangered tribal languages.

Source :PIB

INDIA'S FIRST MULTI-LANE FREE FLOW (MLFF) TOLLING SYSTEM IN GUJARAT

In News

- The Indian Highways Management Company Limited (IHMCL) and ICICI Bank have signed an agreement to implement **India's first comprehensive Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) tolling system** at Choryasi Fee Plaza in Gujarat on NH-48.

Multi Lane Free Flow Tolling

- It is a **barrier-less tolling system** that enables transactions through reading of FASTag and Vehicle Registration Number (VRN) by High performance **RFID Readers** and ANPR Cameras.

- It **enables seamless toll collection** without stopping vehicles at fee plazas, reducing congestion and travel time leading to enhanced fuel efficiency and lowering emissions.

- It will also contribute towards **improving toll revenue collection** and creating a smarter, faster and more efficient National Highway network across the country.

Source :PIB

CHANGES IN GREEN CREDIT PROGRAMME NORMS

Context

- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change has issued a new notification regarding the methodology for calculating Green Credit through the planting of trees and establishing a canopy on wasteland.

Key Changes in Rules

- **Five-Year Benchmark:** Credits will be awarded only after completion of five years of restoration work, replacing the earlier two-year criterion.

- **Canopy-Based Evaluation:** Credits will be granted only if tree plantation achieves a minimum canopy density of 40% and tree survival.

- **New Formula:**
  - One green credit will be awarded for each surviving tree older than five years.
  - Evaluation and verification will be done by designated agencies.

- **Non-Tradable Credits:**
  - Tree plantation credits are non-tradable and non-transferable, except between a holding company and its subsidiaries.

- Earlier provision for market-based trading has been diluted.

- **Permitted Use:** Credits can be exchanged once for;
  - Compensatory afforestation obligations.
  - Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) requirements.
  - Other legal tree planting obligations.
  - Reporting under Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) indicators.

Green Credit Programme (GCP)

- The GCP is an innovative market-based mechanism launched in **2023** to **incentivize voluntary environmental actions** across diverse sectors.

- **Stakeholders:** Individuals, communities, private sector industries, and companies.

- Governance framework:
  - The Inter-ministerial Steering Committee provides oversight.
  - **Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)** is the Administrator, responsible for implementation, management, monitoring, and operation.

- So far, 57,986 hectares of degraded forest land have been registered under GCP.

Source: IE
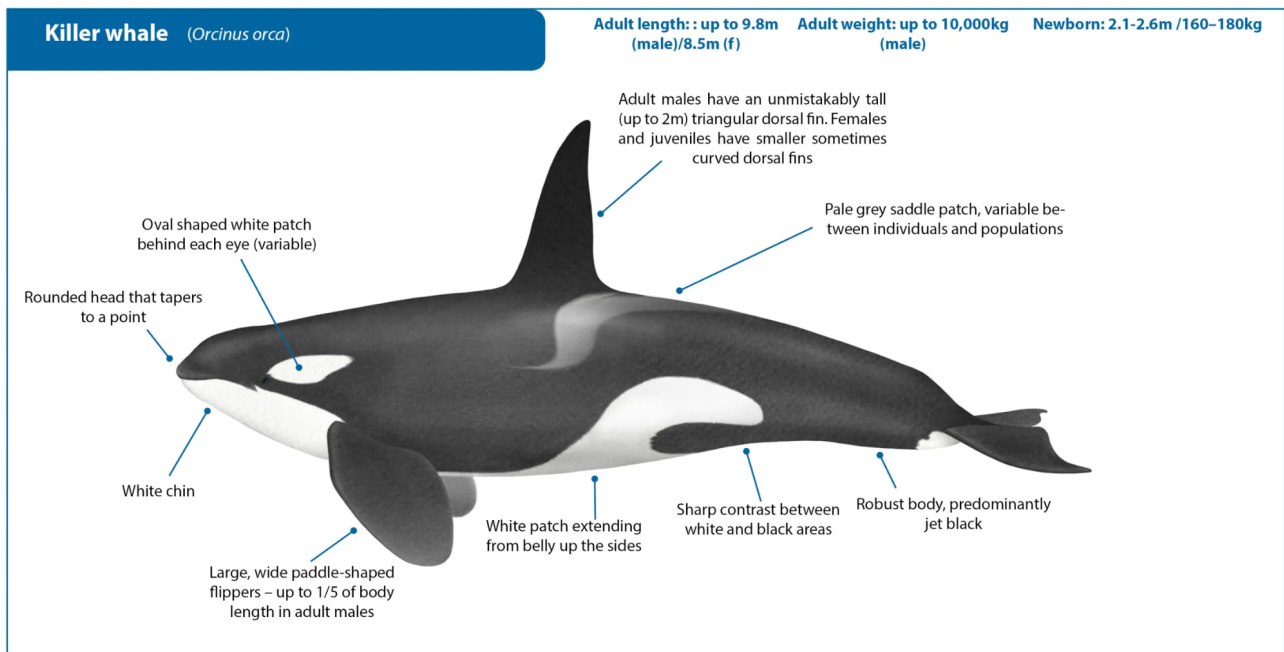
ORCAS

Context

- Researchers have recently found that **many orcas** share freshly killed prey with humans.

About

- Orcas are the largest species of dolphins and are often **called killer whales.**

- While orcas are known to be prosocial animals, they **rarely interact with humans**.

- The recent interactions could pique human curiosity about killer whales and potentially improve conservation efforts.

Orcas

- Orcas, also known as **killer whales**, are among the world's most easily recognized marine mammals.

- **Scientific Name:** Orcinus orca

- **Family:** Delphinidae (they are the largest members of the dolphin family).

- **Distribution:** Found in all oceans — from Arctic and Antarctic regions to tropical seas.

Killer whale *(Orcinus orca)*

Adult length: : up to 9.8m (male)/8.5m (f) | Adult weight: up to 10,000kg (male) | Newborn: 2.1-2.6m /160–180kg

- Adult males have an unmistakably tall (up to 2m) triangular dorsal fin. Females and juveniles have smaller sometimes curved dorsal fins
- Pale grey saddle patch, variable between individuals and populations
- Oval shaped white patch behind each eye (variable)
- Rounded head that tapers to a point
- White chin
- White patch extending from belly up the sides
- Sharp contrast between white and black areas
- Robust body, predominantly jet black
- Large, wide paddle-shaped flippers – up to 1/5 of body length in adult males

- **Characteristics:**
  - **Distinctive black-and-white coloration** with a white patch near each eye.
  - Highly intelligent and social animals, living in groups called **pods** (can range from 5–40, sometimes hundreds).
  - **Apex predators** (no natural predators) – they hunt fish, seals, dolphins, sharks, and even large whales.
- **Behavior:**
  - **Echolocation:** Use sound waves to navigate and hunt.
  - **Cooperative Hunting:** Pods work together like wolf packs. Hunting strategies vary by pod and region.

Source: TH

BLUE DRAGON

In News

- Several Spanish beaches closed after **venomous blue dragon sea slugs** washed ashore.

What are Blue Dragons?

- **Blue dragons (Glaucus atlanticus)** are small sea slugs that float upside down on the ocean surface, using an air bubble for buoyancy.

- Their blue and white coloring helps them camouflage from predators.
- They feed on **venomous jellyfish like the Portuguese man o' war** and store their stinging cells in finger-like appendages, making their sting stronger than their prey's.
  - While their sting can cause severe pain and symptoms in humans, it is not deadly.
- Blue dragons occur in the warm tropical waters of the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian oceans.

Source :IE

RAMON MAGSAYSAY AWARD

Context

- An Indian non-profit organisation, 'Foundation to Educate Girls Globally', dedicated to girls' education, has been named a **2025 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee.**

About Ramon Magsaysay

- **Established:** 1958, in memory of Ramon Magsaysay, the 7th President of the Philippines, known for his integrity, courage, and democratic leadership.
- **Instituted by:** The Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF), in partnership with the Philippine government.
- **Administered by:** The Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation (RMAF), Manila.
- **Nature:** Recognizes individuals or organizations in Asia who show selfless service and transformative leadership.

- **Prestige:** Considered Asia's highest honour, equivalent in stature to the Nobel Prize in Asia.
- From **1958 to 2008,** the Award was given in **six categories annually, these are:**
  - Government Service, Public Service, Community Leadership, Journalism, Literature, Creative Communication Arts, Peace and International Understanding, and Emergent Leadership.
  - Starting in **2009,** the Ramon Magsaysay Award is no longer being given in fixed Award categories, except for **Emergent Leadership.**

Source: AIR