1. **Sacred Groves:** Recently, the Supreme Court directed the Forest Department of Rajasthan to map on the ground and via satellite every 'sacred grove' in detail.
   - **About:** Sacred groves are forested areas that have special religious significance and are protected by local communities.
   - **Classified as 'forests'** and **notified as 'community reserves'** under **WLPA 1972**.
   - **Impact**: Shifts control from **community conservation** to **Forest Department**, contradicting **FRA 2006**, which seeks **community rights** over forest lands.
   - **Sacred Groves in Rajasthan:** Known as **'orans', 'malvan', 'deo ghat', 'baugh'** in Rajasthan, approx. **25,000 groves** covering **~6 lakh hectares**.
   - **Presence Across India**: Names include 'devara kadu' (Karnataka), 'devban' (Himachal), 'sarna' (Jharkhand), 'kavu' (Kerala), 'devgudi' (Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh), 'ki law kyntang' (Meghalaya), 'jahera' (Odisha), etc.
   - **Community Reserves under WLPA 2002: New Protected Area Category** (alongside **National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries**).
     - **Criteria**: Notified over **community/private land** for **conserving flora, fauna, and cultural practices**.
     - **Community Responsibilities**: Prevent **WLPA violations**, report **wildlife deaths**, **fire prevention**, **assist authorities**.
     - **Restrictions**: **Land-use changes require approval** of the **management committee & State government**.
     - **Management**: Controlled by **Chief Wildlife Warden**, assisted by **Community Reserve Management Committee** (includes **Gram Sabha/Panchayat representatives**).
     - **Honorary Wildlife Warden**: **Elected chairperson of the committee**.
   - **Conflict with the FRA 2006**
     - **FRA's Definition**: Sacred groves = 'Community Forest Resources' (CFR), managed by **Gram Sabhas**, not **Forest Department**.
     - **Community Forest Resource Management Committees**: Responsible for **management plans** with **State support**.
     - **Legal Conflict**: FRA grants rights to communities, while SC order shifts control to the Forest Department, overriding customary governance systems.

2. **Gaza strip:** The US president recently announced that U.S. will **take over Gaza**, "own it," and develop it economically.
   - **About:** Gaza is a strip of land, just 365 sq km in size, wedged between the **Mediterranean Sea** to the west, **Israel** to the north and east, and **Egypt** to the south. It is 41 km long and 12 km wide at its widest point.
   - **About Gaza Development Plan**: Remove **unexploded bombs and weapons → Level** the area and clear **destroyed buildings → Create jobs and housing** for people in the region.



3. **United Payments Interface (UPI):** The United Payments Interface (UPI) has become the dominant force in India's digital payments landscape, accounting for 83% of the total payment volume by the end of 2024, according to the Payments System Report by the **Reserve Bank of India** (RBI).
   - **About:** The UPI is a payment system that allows users to transfer money between bank accounts and make merchant payments.
     - Developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) in 2016.
   - **UPI's Dominance in Digital Payments: UPI Market Share**: **83% of total digital payment volume** by end of 2024 (up from **34% in 2019**).
     - Other payment systems (RTGS, NEFT, IMPS, Credit & debit cards) saw a decline from **66% to 17%**.
   - **Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR): 89.3% in volume**, **86.5% in value**.
   - **RBI's Role in Payment Innovation**: Encourages innovation & regulatory support to make India's payment system **one of the most modern globally**.

4. **Stryker Infantry Vehicle:** India and the U.S. are in advanced discussions and deals for the **Co-production of Stryker armoured infantry combat vehicles (ICVs).**
   - The deal also includes **General Electric F-414 jet engine production in India** and **delayed F-404 engine deliveries for LCA-Mk1A**.
   - **About Stryker Infantry Vehicle:** Manufactured by General Dynamics, the Stryker was tested in Ladakh (Sep-Oct 2023) at altitudes of 13,000-18,000 feet.

- **Javelin Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM)** was also tested but did not perform optimally due to an **older system variant**.
- **Proposed Stryker Procurement & Assembly in India: Two-stage plan**, **Stage 1**: Direct **import of a small number of Strykers → Stage 2**: **License manufacture in India**, likely by **Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML)**, with customizations.
- **About Stryker Armoured Infantry Combat Vehicles (ICVs):**
  - **Type:** Eight-wheel-drive armoured infantry combat vehicle.
  - **Developers:** General Dynamics Land Systems (GDLS) Canada & GDLS USA.
  - **Induction:** First new military vehicle in U.S. Army since the **Abrams tank (1980s).**
  - **Mobility:** Moves **faster than tanks** on paved roads, ensuring **quick response** in war-like situations.
  - **Survivability:** Offers **better protection** against **IEDs** than other light military vehicles.
  - **Transportability:** Can be **airlifted** via **Chinook helicopters** (used by the Indian Air Force).
- **Key Features:**
  - V-hull structure made of **high-hardness steel** with **ceramic tile armor** for added protection.
  - **Weapons:** Equipped with a **30 mm cannon** & **105 mm mobile gun.**
  - **Crew Capacity:** Operated by **two crew members** and carries a **nine-member infantry squad.**
  - **Range & Speed:** Covers **483 km** with a **top speed of ~100 km/h.**

5. **Fort William:** The Indian Army has recently decided to rename its Eastern Command headquarters Fort William in Kolkata as 'Vijay Durg'.
   - **About Fort William:** Situated in **Kolkata, West Bengal**, on the **eastern banks of the Hooghly River**, a distributary of the Ganga.
   - Built between **1696-1706** by the **British East India Company** under **Sir John Goldsborough**.
   - **Rebuilt Fort: 1758-1781**, reconstructed under **Robert Clive** after the **Battle of Plassey (1757).**
   - **Architecture: Covers 70 hectares**, one of the **largest British-era military structures** in India.
   - **Star-shaped layout** for enhanced defense.
   - **Current Use:** Serves as the **headquarters of the Indian Army's Eastern Command**.
   - **Cultural & Military Heritage:** Houses a **war memorial & museum** with artifacts from the **1971 Indo-Pakistani War** and **Bangladesh Liberation War**.

6. **Intellectual Property:** A question recently arose before SC, does 'damage to property' in the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act include intellectual property (IP)?
   - **SC judgement:** It expanded the definition of 'damage to property' in the Act to include intellectual property.
   - **About:** Intellectual property rights are the rights given to persons over the creations of their minds. Ex - patents, trademarks, copyrights, trade secrets, industrial designs, geographical indications & plant variety rights.
     - **Aim**: To foster an environment in which creativity and innovation can flourish.
     - **Protection of IPR in India:** Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry is the apex body regulating IPR.
       - ✓ IPR regime of India is in compliance with the WTO's agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).



7. **North Pole:** Recently, temperatures at the **North Pole** rose more than **20°C above average**, crossing the threshold for ice to melt.
   - **About:** The North Pole is found in the Arctic Ocean, on constantly shifting pieces of sea ice, northernmost point on Earth. The recent study has found:
     - Since **1979**, the Arctic has warmed **four times faster** than the global average.
     - The Arctic acts as a **refrigerator** for the planet, and its warming can lead to **rising sea levels** and disruption of weather patterns.
     - The unusually mild temperatures in the Arctic were due to a **deep low-pressure system** over **Iceland**, allowing warmer air from lower latitudes to enter the region.
     - **Hot sea surface temperatures** in the **northeast Atlantic** further intensified the wind-driven warming.
     - **Arctic warming** has been **3.8 times faster** than the global average since the late **1970s**.

- **Global temperatures** have risen by **1.3°C** since the **1850-1900 baseline**, but this increase is uneven across the planet.
- The **albedo effect** is a major factor in the Arctic's rapid warming: **sea ice** reflects sunlight, but as ice melts, more **land or water** absorbs heat.

8. **International Meeting of World Pharmacopoeias (IMWP):** The 15th International Meeting of World Pharmacopoeias (IMWP) recently held in New Delhi.
   - **About:** The event was hosted by the **Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC)** in collaboration with the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.
   - **IMWP** was recognized as a crucial platform for **international collaboration** in **pharmacopoeial science** and **regulatory harmonization**.
   - Key focus areas of the **15th IMWP** include: Updates on recommendations from the **14th IMWP** → Review of progress on **harmonization initiatives** → Emerging issues in **impurity assessment** (Q3) and implications of **ICH Q6** guidelines → Defining the **IMWP Charter** for long-term governance → Enhancing collaboration among global pharmacopoeias and regulatory bodies → Promotion of **environmental sustainability** in pharmaceutical practices.
9. **Aga Khan IV (Prince Karim Al-Hussaini)**: The 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, passed away.
   - **About Aga Khan:** Born on **December 13, 1936**, in Creux-de-Genthod, Switzerland, to Joan Yarde-Buller and Aly Khan.
     - He succeeded his grandfather, **Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan**, as Imam in 1957 at the age of 20.
     - Regarded as a **spiritual leader**, advocating Islam as a compassionate, tolerant faith that upholds human dignity.
     - He was known as a **builder of bridges** between Muslim societies and the West, avoiding political involvement.
     - He was the founder and chairman of the **Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)**.
       - ✓ Key AKDN projects include **Aga Khan Health Services**, **Aga Khan Schools**, **Aga Khan Foundation**, **Aga Khan University**, and the **University of Central Asia**.
     - In 2015, he was awarded the **Padma Vibhushan**, India's second-highest civilian award.