1. **Untouchability in India:** Recently, the Madras High Court held that denying temple festival donations based on caste amounts to untouchability, which is abolished under Article 17 of the Constitution.
   - **About Article 17 :** Declares the abolition of untouchability and prohibits its practice in any form. Any enforcement of disabilities arising from untouchability is considered a punishable offence under the law.
     - **Amendment of the Act**: In 1976, the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955 was amended and renamed the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, broadening its scope and strengthening penalties.
     - **Civil Rights Definition**: The act defines civil rights as those derived from the abolition of untouchability under Article 17.
     - **Mysore High Court Clarification**: 'Untouchability' is not defined constitutionally or statutorily, but the Mysore High Court clarified it refers to social disabilities based on caste, excluding practices like social boycott or exclusion from religious services.
     - **Supreme Court Affirmation**: The Supreme Court confirmed that Article 17 rights apply against private individuals, and the State has a duty to prevent violations.
2. **Zero Waste Himalaya Alliance :** Recently, a report by the Zero Waste Himalaya Alliance raised alarm over the growing scale of plastic pollution threatening the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.
     - **Key Findings:** The audit revealed that **food and beverage packaging** alone makes up **over 84%** of plastic litter collected across the Himalayas.
     - Nearly 70% of all plastics collected were non-recyclable, with no market value, making them practically invisible to existing waste management systems.
     - Sikkim recorded the highest volume of trash, followed by Darjeeling (West Bengal), Ladakh, Nagaland, and Uttarakhand (**THC2024**).
   - **About Zero Waste Himalaya Alliance:** A collective of civil society organisations and individuals dedicated to tackling plastic pollution and advancing sustainable waste management across the Indian Himalayan region.
     - It was initiated by: **Zero Waste Himalaya**, based in Gangtok, Sikkim and **Integrated Mountain Initiative**, based in Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

- The alliance also lead The Himalayan Cleanup (THC) campaign.

3. **Germanium:** Recently, India formally raised concerns with the Chinese government over export restrictions on germanium, a critical material used in semiconductors, fiber optic cables, and solar panels.
   - **About Germanium** : A hard, brittle, lustrous grey-white metalloid with properties between metals and nonmetals. It has a diamond-like crystal structure similar to silicon.
     - **Position in the Periodic Table**: Located in Group 14, between silicon and tin.
     - **Uses**: Vital for semiconductors, fiber-optic cables, infrared imaging devices, and solar cells.
       - ✓ Enhances heat resistance and energy conversion efficiency in solar panels.
       - ✓ Improves the performance of weapon systems under harsh conditions.
     - Stable in air and water; resistant to most alkalis and acids, except nitric acid.
     - **Not found in its free form** due to high reactivity. It is sourced primarily from minerals like renierite and germanite.
     - **Additional Sources**: Trace quantities of germanium can also be found in zinc-blende ores, sulfidic ores of arsenic and copper, and certain coals.
   - **China is the world's largest producer and exporter** of germanium, it accounts for 60% of global production.
4. **Marine Environment Protection Committee:** Recently, the 83rd session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC-83) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) focused on decarbonizing the global shipping industry.
     - The session explored a Market-Based Measure (MBM) to impose emissions charges on the shipping sector, balancing environmental goals with economic fairness.
   - **About MEPC and Green Shipping**: MEPC, under the IMO, addresses ship-related environmental issues such as pollution (oil, sewage, chemicals, garbage), air emissions, and anti-fouling systems, as per the MARPOL treaty.
   - Singapore's hybrid model—based on India's proposal—was approved (63–16 vote) to reduce shipping emissions, pending final ratification under Annex VI of MARPOL.
   - Shipping contributes 2.8% of global emissions, which could rise by 50–250% by 2050 without strong mitigation measures.

- The IMO's GHG Strategy (2023) targets a 40% reduction in carbon intensity by 2030, 70% by 2040, and net-zero by 2050.
- Shipping is one of the few industries with binding international climate goals, unlike aviation, which lacks interim targets.

5. **Ranthambore National Park**: recently Tiger kills seven-year-old boy at Ranthambore National Park The forest officials launched a rescue operation and located the tiger with the corpse deep inside the forest.
   - **About Ranthambore National Park:** Located in the Sawai Madhopur district of southeastern Rajasthan, is one of the most renowned national parks in India. It is especially famous for its population of Royal Bengal Tigers.
   - **Historical Background:** Originally the hunting grounds of the Maharajas of Jaipur.
     - Declared a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1955.
     - Became part of Project Tiger in 1973.
     - Declared a National Park in 1980.
     - Adjacent areas like Sawai Man Singh Sanctuary and Keladevi Sanctuary act as buffers.
     - The IUCN Red List categorizes the Bengal tiger as Endangered.
6. **Most Favoured Nation**: Recently US most favoured nation" (MFN) policy increase pressure on India to hike drug prices.
   - **About MFN** : MFN principle is a key rule in international trade under the World Trade Organization (WTO). It means that a country must treat all WTO trading partners equally in terms of trade concessions, such as tariffs or regulations.
   - **Exceptions: Free Trade Agreements (FTAs):** Countries can give preferential treatment to partners in an FTA (e.g., SAFTA, ASEAN).
     - **Special treatment to developing countries**: Under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), developed countries can give duty-free or low-duty access to imports from developing countries.
   - **India's Position and Strategic Concerns**: India's patent laws follow global TRIPS rules but avoid stricter **"TRIPS-plus"** provisions like **patent evergreening** and data exclusivity. This helps keep medicine prices affordable and supports access to public healthcare.

- **TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights)**: Adopted in 1994, as part of the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations and WTO Agreement.
  - It Covers Copyrights Trademarks Patents Industrial designs Geographical indications (e.g., Darjeeling Tea) Trade secrets.
- **Key Features:** Minimum standards: Members must meet minimum standards of IP protection.
  - National treatment: Members must treat foreign IP holders the same as domestic ones.
  - Enforcement: Includes provisions on enforcement of IP rights through courts and administrative bodies.
  - Dispute settlement: TRIPS violations can be challenged under the WTO dispute settlement mechanism.

7. **River Bhadar:** Recently NGT directed the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) to file a fresh action taken report within four weeks on remedial action taken for abatement of pollution of River Bhadar near Ahmedabad.
   - **About The Bhadar River:** Is a major river in Gujarat, in the Saurashtra peninsula.
     - It flows from the mountain range near Hingolgadh, taluka Jasdan, Junagadh, and empties into the Arabian Sea near Navi Bandargam.
     - The river's catchment area is approximately 7953 sq. km, and it is roughly 190 km long.
     - Bhadar Dam (constructed in 1965) is a major reservoir on the river, located near Jetpur.
   - **About National Green Tribunal**: It is a statutory body created under an Act of Parliament — the NGT Act, 2010
     - (NGT) is a specialized judicial body in India established to handle cases related to environmental protection and conservation of natural resources
     - It was created to ensure expeditious and effective disposal of environmental cases,
     - NGT **does not deal with issues under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and Indian Forest Act, 1927.**
     - Decisions of the NGT are binding and enforceable as decrees of a civil court.
     - Any appeal against the NGT's decision lies with the Supreme Court of India within 90 days.

8. **Ethenol blending:** Recently Center approves additional 2.8 million tonnes of FCI rice for ethanol production, By Achieving 15% ethanol blending in 2024, now India targets 20% by 2025.
   - **About:** The Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme, a key component of the National Biofuel Policy 2018, aims to blend ethanol with petrol to reduce import dependency, boost the agricultural sector, and achieve environmental benefits.
   - **Ethanol Blending:** Ethanol blending refers to mixing ethanol (an alcohol fuel derived from biomass) with petrol to reduce fossil fuel dependence and carbon emissions. Ethanol can be produced from sugarcane, molasses, rice, maize, and other agricultural products.
   - **Ethanol Production:** Through distilleries using biochemical processes like fermentation and distillation.
     - Ethanol is produced in both sugar-based and grain-based distilleries.
   - **Goals of Ethanol Blending Programme in India**
     - **Reduce Import Dependency**: India imports ~85% of its crude oil.
     - **Environmental Benefits**: Ethanol burns cleaner than petrol, reducing CO_2 and particulate matter.
     - **Boost to Agriculture**: Ensures remunerative prices for sugarcane and surplus grains.
     - **Waste to Wealth**: Uses damaged food grains and agricultural residue.

9. **Yala Glacier:** Recently International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development(ICIMOD) to commemorate vanishing Yala glacier in high-altitude ceremony.
   - **About The Yala Glacier**: A small but significant glacier in the Langtang region of the central Himalayas, located in Nepal.
     - It is locatated at Langtang National Park, Rasuwa District, Nepal Mountain Range.
   - **About ICIMOD :** A regional intergovernmental organization dedicated to the sustainable development of mountain regions, particularly the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region.
     - It serves as a platform for regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and scientific research on mountain ecosystems.
     - ICIMOD serves eight regional member countries of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH): Afghanistan, Bangladesh ,Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan.