1. **Free Speech Index:** India ranked **24th out of 33 countries** in the **Free Speech Index**, as per a global survey by **The Future of Free Speech**, a U.S.-based think tank.
   - **About Free Speech Index:** The survey conducted by the Future of Free Speech.
   - **India's Rank:** 24th out of 33 countries with a score of 62.6 — between South Africa (66.9) and Lebanon (61.8).
   - **Top Rankings:** Dominated by Norway (87.9) and Denmark (87.0).
   - **Biggest Improvements:** Shown by Indonesia (56.8), Malaysia (55.4), and Pakistan (57.0), though still in the lower rankings.
   - **Findings on India:**
     - Majority of Indians value free speech without government censorship.
     - 37% of Indians believe that governments should prevent criticism of policies — highest among surveyed countries.
     - **Contrasting figures: U.K. (5%)** and **Denmark (3%)**.
     - India shows disconnect between public supports for free speech and actual protection — similar to Hungary and Venezuela.
   - **Perception vs Reality:** Indians believe free speech has improved, while global observers note that it has worsened since 2021.
     - The report highlighted democratic backsliding in countries like India, impacting political liberties and freedom of expression.
2. **Cyclone Jude:** The Cyclone hit Mozambique, causing six fatalities and destroying 900 homes which initially identified as a depression south-west of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.
   - **About Cyclone:** Caused by atmospheric disturbances around a low-pressure area with swift, destructive air circulation, accompanied by violent storms and bad weather.
     - Air circulates anticlockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere.
   - **Classifications:** Extra-tropical Cyclones (Occur in temperate zones and high latitude regions) & Tropical Cyclones (Develop between the Tropics of Capricorn and Cancer over tropical or subtropical waters)
   - **Naming Origin:** The term "Cyclone", coined by **Henry Peddington**.

- **How are Cyclones Formed?**
  - **Formation and Initial Development Stage:** Requires warm sea temperatures (26°C+ to a depth of 60m) for evaporation and water vapour transfer.
    - ✓ Atmospheric instability encourages the formation of vertical cumulus clouds.
  - **Mature Tropical Cyclones:** Air rises in vigorous thunderstorms, spreads out at the tropopause level, creating a warm 'Eye'.
    - ✓ The 'Eye' may be circular, concentric, or elliptical.
    - ✓ In the Indian Ocean, mature cyclones have concentric thundercloud bands.

3. **Global Engagement Scheme:** The Ministry of Culture implements the Global Engagement Scheme to promote India's rich cultural heritage internationally and enhance India's global image.
   - **About Global Engagement Scheme:** It was previously known as scheme for Promotion of International Cultural Relations.
   - **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Culture.
   - **Objective:** Promotes India's cultural heritage and enhances India's global image.
   - **Components:**
   - **Festival of India:** Organized abroad to promote people-to-people connect and bilateral cultural contacts.
     - Artists from diverse cultural fields such as Folk Art (Folk Music, Folk Dance, Folk Theatre & Puppetry), Classical and Traditional Dance, Contemporary Dance, Classical/Semi-Classical Music, and Theatre perform in the 'Festivals of India'.
   - **Grant in Aid to Indo Foreign Friendship Cultural Societies Scheme:** Sanctions grants to foster closer friendship and cultural contacts between India and foreign countries.
   - **Contribution Grant:** Provides Indian contributions towards membership of international organizations like ICROM, UNESCO, and the World Heritage Fund.
4. **Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary:** In a significant achievement for conservation experts, naturalists, and tribal communities, the first honey harvest was recently conducted near the Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary in Raigad district, Maharashtra, close to Mumbai.
   - **About Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary:** It is located in Murud region of Raigad district, Maharashtra.

- **Purpose:** Created to preserve the coastal woodland ecosystem of the **Western Ghats**.
- **Area:** Spans 17,250 acres of forest, grasslands, and wetlands.
- **Historical Significance:** Once part of the **hunting reserves** of the princely state of **Murud-Janjira**.
- **Grasslands:** Pockets of open grassland called **"mals"** occur throughout the sanctuary.
- **Flora:** Major plant species include **Ain**, **Kinjal**, **Teak**, **Hirda**, **Jamba**, **Mango**, **Ficus**, and others.
- **Fauna:** Notable animal species: **Leopard**, **Hyena**, **Sambar**, and **Mouse Deer**.
- **Bird species:** Malabar Pied Hornbill, Black Eagle, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Pompadour Green Pigeon, and Forest Wagtail.
- **White-Rumped Vulture (Gyps bengalensis)**, listed as **critically endangered**, is also found in the sanctuary.

5. **Raisina Dialogue 2025:** the 10th edition of the Raisina Dialogue, marking a decade of global conversations.
   - **About Raisina Dialogue 2025:** It was organised by Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister of India.
   - **Theme: "Kālachakra – People, Peace, Planet"**, emphasizing human interconnectedness, peace, and environmental protection.
   - **Pillars:** Structured around **six thematic pillars**:
     - **Politics Interrupted:** Examines shifting global power dynamics and challenges to traditional international relationships.
     - **Resolving the Green Trilemma:** Focuses on climate change, balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability.
     - **Digital Planet:** Explores technology's impact on governance, economies, and societies, addressing cybersecurity and AI geopolitics.
     - **Militant Mercantilism:** Analyzes economic nationalism, trade, supply chains, and global trade resilience.
     - **The Tiger's Tale:** Highlights the **Global South's** role in shaping sustainable development paradigms.
     - **Investing in Peace:** Examines emerging security threats and leadership for global stability.

6. **Chittu Pandey:** The Uttar Pradesh government announced plans to build a memorial in honour of Chittu Pandey in Ballia district.
   - **About Chittu Pandey:** He was a freedom fighter & revolutionary, played a key role in the Quit India Movement of 1942.
     - **Title:** Known as the "Lion of Ballia" for his bravery and leadership.
     - **Birth:** Born on 10 May 1895 in Rattuchak village, Ballia district, Uttar Pradesh.
     - **Establishment of Independent Government:** On August 19, 1942, under his leadership, Ballia's revolutionaries:
     - Ousted British officials and proclaimed Ballia's independence and established a **temporary national government**.
     - **Chittu Pandey** assumed charge as the **interim administrator (chief)**. This government succeeded in: **Handing over power** to the Collector and **releasing arrested Congress leaders**.
     - Later, **British army recaptured Ballia** and arrested Chittu Pandey and other revolutionaries.
   - **About Quit India Movement:** Started on 8 August 1942 when Mahatma Gandhi called for an end to British rule at the All-India Congress Committee session in Mumbai.
   - **Slogan:** Gandhi's call: "**Do or Die**" during his speech at **Gwalia Tank Maidan** (now **August Kranti Maidan**).
   - **Key Personalities:**
     - **Aruna Asaf Ali:** Known as the "**Grand Old Lady**" of the freedom movement; hoisted the Indian flag at **Gowalia Tank grounds**.
     - **Yusuf Meherli:** Coined the slogan "**Quit India**"; was a **socialist, trade unionist,** and **mayor of Mumbai**.
7. **Gig Workers:** The plight of gig workers highlights exploitation in the **gig economy** through digital platforms. Rajasthan passed the first-of-its-kind **Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act, 2023** to ensure social security.
   - **About Gig Workers:** It is defined in the **Labour Codes of 2019** as: "A person who performs work or participates in a work arrangement and earns from such activities outside of traditional employer-employee relationships."

- Includes: **Freelancers**, **Contractual workers**, **Project-based workers**, and **Short-term workers**.
- Common in platform-based work, e.g., **Zomato**, **Swiggy**, **Amazon**, **Flipkart**.

- **Workforce Size:** 77 lakh gig workers in 2020-21 (~2.6% of the non-agricultural workforce or 1.5% of India's total workforce). Projected to reach **2.35 crore by 2029-30**.
- **About Gig Economy:** Involves short-term employment, contractual jobs, and independent contractors.
  - Also known as: Freelancer Economy, Agile Workforce, Sharing Economy, or Independent Workforce.
  - Platform Economy: Commerce increasingly shifts toward digital platform business models.
- **Recommendations:** Provide stronger social security for gig workers and implement government oversight on platform algorithms to ensure fairness.

8. **Maharishi Dadhichi Kund:** Recently, the Uttar Pradesh government announced plans to make Maharishi Dadhichi Kund a state tourist centre.
   - **About Dadhichi Kund:** Located in the Mishrikh area, about 12 kilometers from Naimisharanya.
     - Believed that water from all pilgrimage sites around the world mixes in this pond, giving the area its name, Mishrikh.
     - Associated with Maharishi Dadhichi, who donated his bones to create the thunderbolt used by the gods to kill Vritrasura, spans about 2 acres of land.
     - Near the Kund is a grand temple of Maharishi Dadhichi, featuring his statues in various postures. The temple's architecture and serene environment make it a calm and spiritual center.
   - **About Maharishi Dadhichi:** Renowned as a great ascetic, Vedic scholar, and philanthropist sage. Son of Sage Atharva and Mother Shanti, dedicated his life to Shiva worship and public welfare.
     - Sacrificed his life through yogic power to offer his bones, enabling the creation of a thunderbolt to defeat Vritrasura.
   - **About Naimisharanya:** An ancient pilgrimage site in the Sitapur district of Uttar Pradesh, situated on the banks of the **Gomti River**.