

- Previously, Google delisted some well-established mobile applications from its platform and Android Play Store over a dispute on fee payments.
 - ⊕ IAMAI (Internet and Mobile Association of India), an industry association, condemned the removal of apps and some start-up founders have raised issue of digital monopolies.
- Digital monopolies refer to a scenario wherein a few companies, such as e-commerce giants or Big Tech companies, etc., tend to dominate the digital market in their specific domains.
- Threats posed by Digital Monopolies
 - ⊕ Anti-competitive practices: Self-preferencing, restricting third-party applications, mergers and acquisitions, etc. (e.g., Apple restricting installation of third-party applications on iPhones.)
 - ⊕ Limited consumer choices: Anti-steering provisions of digital firms to prevent users to leave the platform and use other alternatives. (e.g., App stores mandating use of own payments systems.)
 - ⊕ Data privacy and security: Concentration of user data may be misused for surveillance, privacy breach, targeted marketing, etc.
- Recommendations (Standing Committee on Finance Report, 2022)
 - ⊕ Systemically Important Digital Intermediaries (SIDIs): Categorize leading players in digital markets as SIDIs and subject them to specific ex-ante provisions to ensure fair competition.
 - ⊕ Legal and Institutional: Enact Digital Competition Act and strengthen CCI.

Measures to address issues with Digital Monopolies

- Competition Commission of India (CCI): Protects Indian markets against anti-competitive practices by enterprises.
 - ⊕ It is a statutory body under Competition Act, 2002.
- Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020: To regulate e-commerce platforms and protect rights of consumers.
- Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023: To ensure data privacy and security.

Crop Husbandry, Agriculture Inputs, Demand and Supply report released by NITI Aayog

- Key highlights
 - ⊕ Positives of Agriculture:
 - ◆ Domestic production sufficiently meets the demand for most food commodities, except edible oils and pulses.
 - ◆ Agricultural exports have been rising steadily, and the export basket is also changing.
 - » India, with a share of 40% in global rice (Semi-milled) exports, is the largest exporter.
 - ⊕ Major Challenges:
 - ◆ Land and water resources will further shrink in future on account of their competing demand for domestic, energy and industrial uses.
 - ◆ Food production system will also come under a confluence of several biotic and abiotic pressures, including climate change and infestation of insect pests and diseases, etc.
 - ◆ Deceleration in the growth of oilseeds production on account of the stagnation in their area.
 - » India imports about 60% of its edible oil demand.
- Recommendations
 - ⊕ Land use planning i.e evolving economically feasible cropping patterns suited to the resource endowments of different agro-ecological zones.
 - ⊕ Limit open-ended procurement of rice and wheat as it acts as a disincentive for diversification.
 - ◆ Compensate farmers for additional surplus through a price deficiency scheme.
 - ⊕ Promote millet consumption and production.
 - ⊕ Other recommendations: Enhance pulses production, Establish seed hub, promote climate-resilient technologies and practices, etc.

Government initiatives for crop diversifications

- Crop Diversification Programme (CDP), a sub-scheme of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) to divert the area of water intensive paddy crop to alternative crops.
- The state can promote crop diversification under RKVY with the approval of State Level Sanctioning Committee.
- National Food Security Mission (NFSM): The government of India supplements the efforts of state governments to encourage diversified production of crops

State	Product and Description
Odisha	<p>Cuttack Rupa Tarakasi (Silver Filigree)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It was incorporated into jewellery around 3500 BCE in Mesopotamia where it is practiced eventoday as Telkari work. ⊕ It reached Cuttack from Persia through Indonesia.
West Bengal	<p>Banglar muslin which is a traditional handloom craft made of cotton.</p>
Andhra Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Narasapur crochet lace products were brought by missionaries to Narsapur.
Madhya Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ratlam Riyawan Lahsun (Garlic)
Assam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Majuli Mask and Majuli Manuscript Painting.
Tripura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Risa Textile.
Telangana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hyderabad Lac Bangles.
Gujarat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Kutch rogan craft. ➤ Ambaji White ➤ Marble ⊕ Formed when limestone is re-crystallised under the earth's crust.

- A GI is a sign used on products that have a **specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.**
- **International Recognition:**
 - ⊕ Under the **Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property**, GI is covered as an element of **Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs).**
 - ⊕ Also covered under the **WTO's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement.**
- In India, GI registration is administered by the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act of 1999.**
 - ⊕ It is used to identify **agricultural, natural, or manufactured goods.****Registered**
 - ⊕ **by: Registrar of Geographical Indications (RGI).**
 - ⊕ **Duration:** 10 years and can be renewed.
 - ⊕ **Nodal Ministry:** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry. **Significance:**
 - ⊕ Confers legal protection against unauthorized use, boosts exports, Conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, etc.

Union Minister of Cooperation inaugurated National Urban Cooperative Finance and Development Cooperation (NUCFDC)

- NUCFDC will be an **Umbrella Organization (UO)** for **Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs)** in India and will be allowed to operate as a **Self-Regulatory Organisation for the sector.**
- **About NUCFDC**
 - ⊕ UO for UCBs was **recommended by Vishwanathan Committee on Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks** constituted by RBI. **In 2019, RBI accorded regulatory approval to National Federation of Urban Co-operative Banks and Credit Societies Ltd (NAFCUB)** for formation of an UO for the UCB sector.
 - ⊕ NUCFDC is **registered with RBI as non-deposit taking NBFC** and **UCBs can subscribe to its capital on voluntary basis.** **Key objectives:** Expand numbers of credit societies and UCBs, facilitate dialogue between banks and regulators, extend liquidity to UCBs, set up IT infrastructure for shared use of members to enable them widen their range of services, etc.
- **Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs)**
 - ⊕ Refer to primary cooperative banks located in urban and semi-urban areas.
 - ⊕ **Registered as cooperative societies** under either respective State Cooperative Societies Act or Multi State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.
 - ⊕ **Dual control: RBI regulates and supervises banking functions under Banking Regulation Act, 1949.**
 - ◆ **State/Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies** exercises supervision over managerial, administrative and, other matters.

border remittances

- ▶ It is a joint communication from 4 countries (India, Bangladesh, Nepal & Sri Lanka) to the Committee on Trade in Financial Services (CTFS).
- ▶ **Key Highlights of Declaration**
 - ⊕ **Significant socio-economic impact** of remittances, especially for developing nations.
 - ◆ **78 % of remittance flows** in 2023 went to **Low and Middle-Income Countries**.
 - Reaffirms commitment to **UN SDG Goal 10.C** to,
 - ◆ **Reduce transaction costs** of remittances to **less than 3 %**, and,
 - ◆ **Eliminate remittance corridors** with costs higher than 5 % by 2030
 - Current **global average transaction costs** of remittances is at **6.18 %** (more than twice the SDG target)
 - Instruct the CTFS to undertake a work program consisting of efforts toward **reducing the cost of remittances**.
- ▶ **Remittances:** Generally, refer to **money or goods that migrants send back to families and friends in origin countries**.
 - India is the **world's largest recipient** of remittances estimated at 125 billion USD in 2023.
- ▶ **Significances of Remittances for India**
 - Important **source of family income**, increasing people's purchasing power which **drives the consumption market**.
 - One of the **largest sources of external financing** and a major **contributor to forex reserves**.
 - It tends to be **more stable than capital flows**.
- ▶ **Concerns:** Create dependency, human cost of migrants, etc.

Committee on Trade in Financial Services (CTFS)

It is a subsidiary body under the **Council for Trade in Services (CTS) under the World Trade Organization (WTO)**.

CTS is responsible for facilitating the **operation of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)** and for furthering its objectives.

Swachhata Green Leaf Rating (SGLR) initiative

- ▶ The **Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (Jal Shakti Ministry)**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Tourism**, launched **SGLR for the tourism industry**.
- ▶ **Bison Resorts, Madhya Pradesh** obtained the first Five Swachhata Green Leaf Rating Certificate of Recognition.
- ▶ **About SGLR**
 - ⊕ It is a **type of rating system, which evaluates various tourist facilities** based on their adherence to specific hygiene and sanitation standards.
 - ⊕ **Aim:** Revolutionize **sanitation practices** within the country's flourishing **tourism industry**.
 - ⊕ It aligns with the **Travel for LiFE (TFL) program** under **Mission LiFE**.

Hospital Treatment Charges for entire country

- ▶ SC while hearing a **writ petition of mandamus** directed Union Government to fix hospital treatment charges to be paid by patients within next 6 weeks.
 - ⊕ **Writ of Mandamus under Article 32** seeks to direct a public official or authority to perform a duty they are legally bound to perform.

Petitioners sought enforcement of **Rule 9 of the Clinical Establishment (Central Government) Rules, 2012**.

Rule mandates that **hospitals and clinical establishments display rates for services provided and charge fees within the range determined by the Centre in consultation with state governments**.

Need to fix charges

Affordability: Healthcare costs can be prohibitively expensive, particularly when significant proportion of population does not have health insurance coverage.

Transparency: Fixed charges can bring transparency to healthcare pricing to prevent instances of overcharging, billing discrepancies, and exploitation of patients.

Standardization and fair competition: Create a fairer playing field among hospitals, with competition focusing on quality of care.

Responsibility of the State: **Article 47** directs the State to improve Public health.

Challenges in fixing treatment charges: Cost variability depending on location, quality of facilities, etc.; fixed charges may discourage hospitals from investing in new technologies, may result in artificial market distortion, administrative burden to ensure compliance, etc.

Initiatives taken to ensure Affordability of Healthcare in India

Ayushman Bharat scheme: Health and Wellness Centres and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana

National List of Essential Medicines: To monitor prices of essential medicines.

PM Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana: To provide generic medicines at affordable prices.

Cavum Cloud

NASA shares picture of the 'Cavum cloud' formed **above the Gulf of Mexico and off the coast of Florida**.

About Cavum Cloud

- ⊕ They are also called **hole-punch clouds or fallstreak holes**. They
- ⊕ are formed **when planes fly through banks of altocumulus clouds**,
 - ◆ **Altocumulus clouds** are **mid-level clouds** that have supercooled (below the freezing point of water but still liquid) water droplets.
- ⊕ As air moves around the plane, a **process called adiabatic expansion can make the droplets freeze into ice crystals**. The ice
- ⊕ crystals eventually grow heavy and fall out of the sky, **leaving a hole in the cloud layer**.



Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP)

- › Nicaragua becomes the first Spanish-speaking nation to recognize IP.
 - ⊕ IP is recognized as the **official book of standards for the drugs** being manufactured and/or marketed in India.
 - ⊕ IP is published by the **Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC)** under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** and Rules 1945 thereunder.
- › **About IPC:** An autonomous institution under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, created to deal with matters relating to the timely publication of the IP.

Hangul

- › Experts suggested the roars or calls made by hangul during rutting indicate that their number will cross 300 this spring.
- › **Protection status**
 - IUCN status: Critical Endangered
 - Schedule I of WPA.
 - CITES: Appendix I
 - Covered under the **National Species Recovery Program**.
- › **Characteristics**
 - Subspecies of **Central Asian red deer** endemic to Kashmir.
 - The female Hangul does not have horns.**
 - They have a **matriarchal society that follows a female leader.**
- › **Habitat:** found primarily in Dachigam National Park (DNP) and Tral Wildlife Sanctuary.
- › **Conservational measures:** Project hangul, the state animal of Jammu and Kashmir.

Tripartite agreement in Tripura

- › **Government of India, Government of Tripura and The Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance (TIPRA)** & other stakeholders signed a tripartite agreement.
- › **Agreement aims to amicably resolve all issues of indigenous people of Tripura** relating to history, land and political rights, economic development, identity, culture and language.
- › It will also constitute a **Joint Working Group/Committee to implement mutually agreed points** and directs all stakeholders to refrain from resorting to any form of protest/agitation.

Mauritius (Capital: Port Louis)

- › Prime Ministers of India and Mauritius jointly inaugurated new airstrip and 6 community development projects at **Agalega Island in Mauritius**.
- › **Political Features**
 - It is an island country in the **Indian Ocean**, located off the **south-eastern coast of Africa**. Nearest neighbour is **French island of Réunion**.
- › **Geographical features:**
 - Island is **volcanic in origin** and is almost entirely **surrounded by coral reefs**.
 - Designated by IUCN as a **“Centre of Plant Diversity”**.
 - Part of **Madagascar and Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity hotspot**.
 - Major rivers:** Grand River South East, Black River.
 - Highest Peak:** Piton de la Petite Rivière Noire (Black River Peak).



Dual-use Goods

- › Indian Security agencies detained a vessel over suspicion of **dual-use consignment**.
- › **Dual-use Goods**
 - ⊕ Goods that can have **both civilian and military applications**, such as chemical substances, nuclear materials, etc.
 - ⊕ **Dual-use items are categorized as Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment and Technologies (SCOMET)** under **Foreign Trade Policy, 2023**.
 - Export of dual-use items is either prohibited or permitted under an Authorization**, unless specifically exempted.
 - It is also regulated under **Wassenaar Arrangement**.
- Wassenaar Arrangement:** Voluntary **multilateral export control regime** for conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies.
- It has **42 members, including India**.

World Poverty Clock (WPC)

Latest data on **World Poverty Clock** showed that India has managed to bring down ‘**extreme poverty**’ below **3% of its population**.

About WPC

Developed by **World Data Lab**, a global data enterprise. Monitors **global progress against Ending Extreme Poverty**. Funded by **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)** and **Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany**.

Global Resources Outlook 2024

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released **Global Resources Outlook 2024** report titled, ‘**Bend the trend: Pathways to a liveable planet as resource use spikes**’.

Report sheds light on how resources are **essential to effective implementation of Agenda 2030** and **multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)** to tackle the **triple planetary crisis (TPC)**.

TPC refers to the three interlinked crises: **climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss**.