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One Nation One Ration Card

- One Nation One Ration Card (RC) will ensure all beneficiaries especially migrants can access PDS across the nation from any PDS shop of their own choice.
- The objective of the scheme is no poor person should be deprived of getting subsidized food grains under the food security scheme when they shift from one place to another.
- It also aims to remove the chance of anyone holding more than one ration card to avail benefits from different states.
- This will provide freedom to the beneficiaries as they will not be tied to any one PDS shop and reduce their dependence on shop owners and curtail instances of corruption.
- A standard format for ration card has been prepared after taking into account the format used by different states.
- For national portability, the state governments have been asked to issue the ration card in bi-lingual format, wherein besides the local language, the other language could be Hindi or English.
- The states have also been told to have a 10-digit standard ration card number, wherein first two digits will be state code and the next two digits will be running ration card numbers.
- Besides this, a set of another two digits will be appended with ration card number to create unique member IDs for each member of the household in a ration card.
- Under the 'One Nation-One Ration Card' initiative, eligible beneficiaries would be able to avail their entitled food grains under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) from any Fair Price Shop in the country using the same ration card.
- The food ministry is aiming to implement this facility across the country from June 1 2020.
- Recently five states has joined ration card portability namely, Bihar, Punjab, UP, Himachal and Daman and Diu.
- They have been integrated with the 'one nation, one ration card' scheme.
- Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Jharkhand and Tripura are 12

states where ration card portability has been implemented.

- The beneficiaries can lift 50 per cent of their entitlement.
- About 60 crore beneficiaries from 17 states and UTs can benefit from the ration card portability and they can purchase the subsidized food grains using the existing ration cards.
- Recently, the Supreme Court had asked the Centre to consider the feasibility of 'temporarily' adopting the 'one nation, one ration card' scheme during the ongoing coronavirus lockdown period to enable the migrant workers and economically weaker sections (EWS) get subsidized food grain.

Antibody Testing Vs Rapid Test for COVID-19

- In the COVID-19 fight, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) had advised States to use antibody testing for surveillance and reiterated that the focus has always been on real time RT-PCR (or real-time reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction) tests for diagnosis.
- The rapid testing kits that State governments had been using to detect antibodies to the novel coronavirus were throwing up unreliable results.
- There are two ways to detect the presence of a virus, directly or indirectly.

Antibody Tests (Rapid Test)	RT-PCR Tests

• **Antibody tests**, also called serological tests, have usually been the time-tested approach to finding out the presence of a virus in the body. • They do so by detecting the presence and quantity of antibodies that are produced by the immune system to battle an infection. • It is an indirect test because it cannot find the virus, but it can determine if the immune system has encountered it. • Antibodies can show up between nine to 28 days after an infection has set in; by that time, an infected person, if not isolated, can spread the disease. • Sometimes the antibodies may be produced in response to a closely-related pathogen and sometimes they may not be the right kind to counter the infection. • These are the factors that can make an antibody test erroneous. • Antibody tests are fast and relatively inexpensive. • Antibody tests are portable, can be administered on-site, conducted en masse and give quick answers. • Antibody tests can be used to gauge the extent of infection in a community or a large group of people who may have had exposure to the virus. • Two kinds of antibodies result from an infection: Immunoglobulin M and Immunoglobulin G (IgM and IgG). • In response to an infection, the IgM is first produced within a week of infection. • Two weeks later, the levels of IgM reduce and are replaced by IgG. • The latter is a longer-lasting antibody and, depending on the infectious agent involved, can offer different durations of immunity. • Rapid antibody tests can also play a role in determining the degree of "herd immunity" in a population.	• In an RT-PCR test, a nasal or throat swab is taken from a patient suspected of having the disease. • The test involves extracting RNA or ribonucleic acid, the genetic material of the virus, and checking if it shares the same genetic sequence as the SARS-CoV-2 virus. • If it is a match, the sample is deemed positive. • The only way such tests turn negative is if the actual sample does not have the virus or the swab was not properly administered and too little of the virus was gleaned. • The RT-PCR tests began to be followed as the 'gold standard' in detecting the virus. • The current RT-PCR technology requires RNA extracting machines, a specialized laboratory, and trained technicians. • And at least a minimum of 30 samples are needed to make the process economically viable. • The tests are done in batches and it can take up to four hours to confidently test for the presence of a virus from a batch.

ATULYA

- Defence Institute of Advanced Technology (DIAT), Pune has developed a microwave sterilizer to kill the coronavirus.
- DIAT is a deemed university supported by the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO).
- The microwave sterilizer has been named ATULYA a cost-effective solution to disintegrate corona virus.
- This microwave sterilizer can be operated in portable or fixed installations and helps in disintegrating the virus by differential heating in the range of 56 to 60 Celsius temperatures.
- This system was tested for human/operator safety and has been found to be safe.
- The sterilization time can range from 30 to 60 seconds depending on the size and shape of objects.
- Weighing three kilos, it can be used for sterilizing non-metallic objects only.

Partnerships for Affordable Healthcare Access and Longevity (PAHAL) project

- PAHAL - Partnerships for Affordable Healthcare Access and Longevity is USAID flagship innovative financing platform to promote health financing models and provide catalytic support to social enterprises (IBMs) for improving access to affordable and quality healthcare solutions for the urban poor communities, with a with a focus on Tuberculosis, Maternal and Child Health and WASH.
- PAHAL has built a platform that provides unparalleled access to social enterprises for reducing cost and improving access to quality healthcare services.

- US announced that it will provide an additional $3 million to India, through its aid agency USAID, for mitigating the spread of Covid-19.
- In coordination with the Indian government, USAID is providing these funds to the Partnerships for Affordable Healthcare Access and Longevity (PAHAL) project.
- Till now, USAID has provided $5.9 million to assist India in responding to the pandemic.
- This assistance will help India slow the spread of Covid-19, provide care for the affected, disseminate essential public health messages to communities and strengthen case finding and surveillance.

- Through the PAHAL project, USAID will support the National Health Authority in establishing a financing facility that can mobilize resources from the private sector to assist over 20,000 health facilities enrolled under the health scheme Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

USAID

- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent agency of the United States federal government that is primarily responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and development assistance.
- With a budget of over $27 billion, USAID is one of the largest official aid agencies in the world, and accounts for more than half of all U.S. foreign assistance, the highest in the world in absolute dollar terms.
- Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act on September 4, 1961, which reorganized U.S. foreign assistance programs and mandated the creation of an agency to administer economic aid.
- USAID was subsequently established by the executive order of President John F. Kennedy, who sought to unite several existing foreign assistance organizations and programs under one agency.
- USAID became the first U.S. foreign assistance organization whose primary focus was long-term socioeconomic development.
- USAID has missions in over 100 countries, primarily in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe.

Unicode Standards

- Unicode Standard assigns code to characters from different languages in the world so that they can be understood and displayed across software platforms.
- Recently Unicode consortium has recently accepted the proposal to add Tamil two characters to Telugu characters for transcribing religious Tamil Texts.
- This initiative will help preserving Tamil texts written in Telugu.
- Using this the original Tamil phonetic realization of the source text was appropriately preserved in the Telugu script without any loss.
- The need for the proposal is that the Telugu equivalents of these characters were either not well known or were out of use for centuries.

Unicode Consortium

- The Unicode Consortium (Unicode Inc.) is a non-profit organization based

in California, USA.
- Its primary purpose is to maintain and publish the Unicode Standard which was developed with the intention of replacing existing character encoding schemes which are limited in size and scope, and are incompatible with multilingual environments.
- Unicode's success at unifying character sets has led to its widespread adoption in the internationalization and localization of software.
- The standard has been implemented in many recent technologies, including XML, the Java programming language, Swift, and modern operating systems.

Source: The Hindu, Hindustan Times, Indian Express, New on Air