



## News Analysis (20 Apr, 2020)

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### Rise in Digital Transactions

#### Why in News

According to the recent **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** data, the month of March 2020 (when **Covid-19** lockdown began) saw a sharp rise in digital financial transactions countrywide.

#### Key Points

- The total value of **Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS)** transactions rose by 34% across banks.  
It is the biggest **online payment method** offered by RBI.
- The **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**-run **United Payments Interface (UPI)**, registered more than 125 crore transactions in March.  
The numbers, however, dipped slightly compared to February as there was a dip in economic activity due to lockdown.
- **Recharges and bill payments** as well as retail **banking transactions**, accounted for the majority of the volume of all the transactions.  
NPCI-run **Bharat Bill Pay** was one of the beneficiaries, as it recorded 1.58 crore transactions in March as against 1.49 crore in February.
- According to the data, the usage of cash and other cash-based services dipped during the period.
  - Cash withdrawals from ATMs as well as usage of various cards (debit, credit) have also gone down significantly.
  - This could be because people's requirements for cash have fallen since the spending is mainly on essentials and necessities.
- The government's **Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS)** also saw a decline of 16.1 % in the number of transactions, in March.  
The government uses AePS mostly for direct benefit transfer schemes.

#### Real Time Gross Settlement

- RTGS is an **electronic fund transfer method** through which money is sent on a '**real time**' basis without any delays.
- RTGS allows the money sent by the remitter to immediately reach the beneficiary as and when the money transfer transaction is initiated.
- 'Gross Settlement' refers to the processing of transactions on an **individual basis** and not in a batch wise system.
- Minimum amount that can be sent via RTGS mode is **Rs.2 lakh** and has no maximum limit.
- **RTGS is not a 24x7 facility** and is available only during **working hours of banks**.

## Unified Payments Interface

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- It is an advanced version of **Immediate Payment Service (IMPS)**- round-the-clock funds transfer service to make cashless payments **faster, easier and smoother**.
- UPI is a system that powers multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application (of any participating bank), merging several banking features, seamless fund routing & merchant payments into one hood.
- **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** launched UPI with 21 member banks in 2016.

## Bharat Bill Payment System

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- The Bharat bill payment system is driven by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- It is a **one-stop ecosystem for payment of all bills** providing an interoperable and accessible **“Anytime Anywhere” bill payment service** to all customers across India with certainty, reliability and safety of transactions.

## Aadhaar enabled Payment System

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- AePS is developed by the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** that **allows people to carry out financial transactions on a Micro-ATM** by furnishing just their **Aadhaar number** and verifying it with the help of their fingerprint/iris scan.
- With the help of this payment system, funds can be transferred from one bank account to another simply through their Aadhaar numbers.
- This system adds another layer of security to financial transactions as **bank details would no longer be required** to be furnished while carrying out these transactions.

## National Payments Corporation of India

- NPCI is an **umbrella organization** for all **retail payments systems** in India.
- It was set up with the guidance and support of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
- NPCI was established with following **objectives** -
  - To **consolidate and integrate the existing multiple systems into a nation-wide uniform** and standard business process **for all retail payment systems**.
  - To **facilitate an affordable payment mechanism** to benefit the common man across the country and propel financial inclusion.

**Source: IE**

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## Draft National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage

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### Why in News

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The Ministry of Culture has launched the draft **National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India** .

### Key Points

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- The National ICH List is an attempt to **recognize the diversity of Indian culture embedded in its intangible heritage**.
- It aims to **raise awareness** about the various intangible cultural heritage elements from different states of India at national and international level and ensure their protection.

- This initiative is also a part of the **Vision 2024 of the Ministry of Culture.**
- The list has more than 100 elements which also include **13 elements recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
- Following **UNESCO's 2003 Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage**, this list has been classified into five broad domains in which intangible cultural heritage is manifested.  
The 2003 Convention is a part of the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage which was adopted by the **General Conference of UNESCO in 1972** in order to promote the **identification, protection and safeguarding of natural cultural heritage.**
- The five domains are:
  - Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage.
  - Performing arts.
  - Social practices, rituals and festive events.
  - Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe.
  - Traditional craftsmanship.
- **Kerala's** martial art form, **Kalaripayattu**, and the practice of making designs at the entrance of homes and temples called **kolam** in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh are included in the draft list.
- The present items in the list have been collated from the projects sanctioned under the scheme for **'Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India'** formulated by the Ministry of Culture in 2013.

### 13 ICH traditions recognised by UNESCO

1.	Tradition of Vedic chanting, 2008	8.	Buddhist chanting of Ladakh: recitation of sacred Buddhist texts in the trans-Himalayan Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir, India, 2012
2.	Ramlila, the traditional performance of the Ramayana, 2008	9.	Sankirtana, ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur, 2013
3.	Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre, 2008	10.	Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab, India, 2014
4.	Ramman, religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas, India, 2009	11.	Yoga, 2016
5.	Mudiyettu, ritual theatre and dance drama of Kerala, 2010	12.	Nowruz, 2016
6.	Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan, 2010	13.	Kumbh Mela, 2017
7.	Chhau dance, 2010		

#### **Scheme for Safeguarding the Intangible Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India**

- The scheme was set up under the **Ministry of Culture (MoC) during 2013-14.**
- The objective of the Scheme is to support and strengthen the **efforts of various stakeholders** vis-a-vis wider recognition and acceptance, dissemination, preservation and promotion of the rich, diverse and vast ICH of India including recognition of the same by UNESCO.

- The Scheme aims to support
  - Institutions/ Universities/ State Govts/ UT Administrations/ non-MoC Institutions/ Societies/ Non-government organisations, **involved in the preservation and propagation of intangible cultural heritage, cultural expressions etc.**
  - Individuals, researchers, scholars, professionals who are involved in the **research, training, preservation, perpetuation, dissemination, and propagation of intangible cultural heritage, cultural expressions etc.**

**Source: PIB**

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## Islamophobia in India: OIC

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### Why in News

Recently, the **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** has **criticised the Indian government** for what it called **“growing Islamophobia”** in India.

### Key Points

- OIC asked the government to take **steps to protect Muslim minorities** who are being **“negatively profiled,” facing “discrimination and violence”** amidst the **Covid-19** crisis.
- OIC urged the government to **protect the rights of its minority** as per its obligations under **international Human Rights law.**
- It also asked the government to take urgent steps to **stop the growing tide of Islamophobia** (dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims) **in India.**
  - A religious gathering of muslims (Tablighi Jamaat) was held in Delhi in March. The event was linked to many of the Covid-19 positive cases in India.
  - After this most sections of the media, people on social media blamed the Tablighi jamaat and muslims for deliberately spreading the Covid-19 in India.
- Earlier, the **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)** has also criticised India of **“increased stigmatisation”** of its muslim minorities.
  - It criticized the government for the reports that Covid-19 patients were **religiously segregated at a hospital** in Ahmedabad.
  - According to USCIRF, India continues to remain a **“tier 2 country of particular concern”** since 2009.
  - Tier 2 countries are those in which **“violations engaged in or tolerated by the government are serious** and characterized by at least one of the elements of the **‘systematic, ongoing, and egregious’** Country of Particular Concern (**CPC**) standard. CPCs are designated by the US State Department.
- The **Indian government has denied all the allegations** levelled by the USCIRF and accused the USCIRF for spreading misguided reports on the professional medical protocols followed to deal with spread of Covid-19 in India.

### Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

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- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the **second largest intergovernmental organization** after the **United Nations** with a membership of 57 states.

- It is the **collective voice of the Muslim world**. It **endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world** in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.
- It was **established** upon a decision of the **historical summit** which took place in **Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1969**.
- Headquarters: **Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**.

## OIC and India

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- **India is not a member of the OIC**. However, India was invited as a guest of honour at the **46<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of Foreign Minister** in 2019. 2019 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of OIC.  
This marked a high point in New Delhi's often tensed relations with the OIC.
- However, in recent months, the OIC has **repeatedly criticised the Indian government's handling of the situation in Kashmir and attacks on Muslims**.  
The external affairs ministry has rejected this criticism.

## U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)

- USCIRF is an **independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission**, dedicated to **defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad**.
- USCIRF reviews **the facts and circumstances of religious freedom violations** and makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress.
- It is **Headquartered at Washington DC**.

**Source: TH**

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## Gamma-ray Flux Variability of Blazars

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### Why in News

Researchers from the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bangalore** have conducted the **first systematic study** on the **gamma-ray flux variability nature of different types of blazars**.

- The research work based on characterizing the flux variability nature on month-like time scales in the **high energy gamma-ray (100 MeV to 300 GeV)** band for different types of blazars has been published in the journal **Astronomy and Astrophysics**.
- IIA is an **autonomous institute** of the **Department of Science and Technology**, Government of India.

## Blazars

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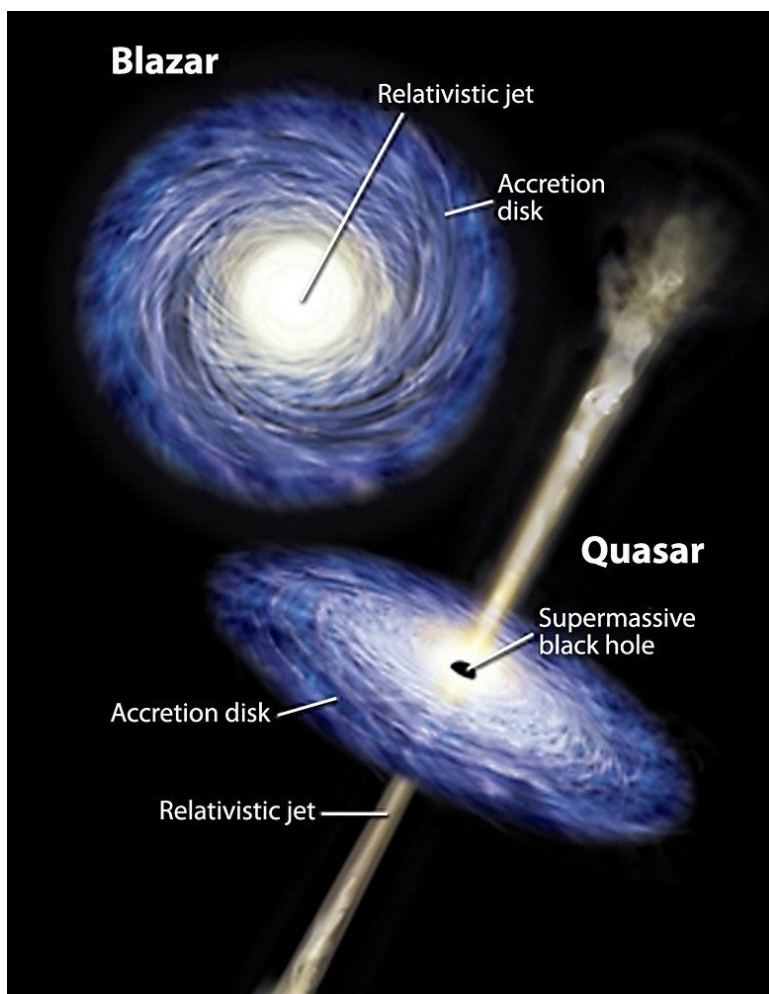
Blazars are **active galactic nuclei (AGN)**, whose **jets are aligned with the observer's line of sight**. Some blazars are thought to host binary black holes in them and could be potential targets for future gravitational-wave searches.

- **Active Galactic Nuclei:**

- At the center of most galaxies, there's a massive black hole with a huge mass accumulating gas, dust, and stellar debris around it. AGN is formed when the **gravitational energy of these materials, being pulled towards the black hole, is converted into light**.
- A **minority of AGN (~15%) emits collimated charged particles called jets** travelling at speeds close to the speed of light.

- **Quasar and Radio-Galaxies** are also AGN.

The **difference** between Quasar, radio galaxy and a Blazar is the **angle of the stream/jet**. If the stream is straight up, it is a radio galaxy and the observer is not in the firing line. If the stream is angled slightly towards the observer, then it is a Quasar and if the stream is angled directly towards the observer, it is a Blazar.



- Blazars are the **most luminous and energetic objects** in the known universe and they were **found to be emitters of gamma-rays** in the **1990s**.
- The **flux variability characteristics** of blazars on a range of time scales was found out with the help of **Fermi Gamma-ray space telescope** (launched in **2008**) which is **capable of scanning the entire sky once in three hours**.

- **Study by Indian Institute of Astrophysics:**

- The research **characterised the amplitude and time scale** of flux variations and then **looked for similarity and/or differences** in the amplitude and time scale between different types of blazars. With the availability of near-simultaneous data covering the **gamma-ray, X-ray, ultra-violet, optical, and infrared bands**, the **existing notion on high energy emission in blazars is challenged**.
- The reduction of large volumes of data for a large number of sources was accomplished by the **use of the High-Performance Computing facility** of the IIA.

## Significance of the Study

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- The study can provide **clues to the processes happening close to the black hole** which are not visible through direct imaging. It will also **enhance the knowledge of blazars**.
- Exploring the Gamma-ray band of the electromagnetic spectrum will provide **key inputs to constrain the high energy production site** as well as the **high energy emission processes**.
- The results of this work will **fill the gap on the knowledge of the high energy flux variability nature of blazars**.
  - **Gamma-ray band** is one of the bands of the **electromagnetic spectrum** on which there is limited knowledge on the flux variability of blazars.
  - **Localizing the site for the production of gamma-rays** is one of the **major problems** in high energy astrophysics.
- The expertise of handling high energy data from celestial sources gained in this work will **build capacity to interpret the gamma-ray data** that will emerge from India's upcoming facility, the **Major Atmospheric Cerenkov Experiment (MACE) Telescope** as well as from any **X-ray missions by India** in the future.

## Major Atmospheric Cerenkov Experiment Telescope

- It is the **India's largest and the world's highest gamma-ray telescope** being established at **Hanle, Ladakh**.
- It is being built by the **Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL), Hyderabad** for the **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)**.
- It is **remotely operated** and runs on **Solar Power**.
- It will help to explore the **exciting energy range of the gamma-ray energy region in between satellites and the traditional Atmospheric Cerenkov experiments**.
- The telescope is named after the **Russian scientist Cerenkov** who predicted that **charged particles moving at high speeds in a medium, emit light**.

**Source: PIB**

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## Lithium Abundance in Interstellar Space

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### Why in News

Recently, the researchers at the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA)** have discovered hundreds of **Lithium (Li) rich giant stars** which indicate that **lithium is being produced in the stars** and **accounts for its abundance** in the interstellar (between stars) medium.

The study was published in the **Astrophysical Journal Letters and Monthly Notices of Royal Astronomical Society (MNRAS)**.



## Key Points

- The scientists have discovered a **number of super Li-rich giants** with the **Li quantity equal** to or in some cases, **more than 10 times the present value,  $A(\text{Li}) = 3.2 \text{ dex}$**  (measured in logarithmic scale relative to hydrogen).
- Scientists followed a **two-fold strategy** of **systematically searching for high Li among low mass evolved stars** in the Galaxy and **determining the exact evolutionary phase of these high Li abundance stars**.
  - Hundreds of Li-rich giants were discovered by employing data from large scale ground and space missions.
  - However, **Li-rich giants still account for only about 1 in 100 in the Galaxy**.
- The **evolutionary phase** of these giants was determined by **analyzing relative positions of thousands of stars** using their **temperature** and **luminosity** and also **subjecting their independent data set to atmospheric oscillations analysis** using data from **Kepler Space Telescope**.

For the first time, it was shown that the **Li enhancement in giants is associated only with central He-burning stars** (also known as the **Red Clump Giants**)  
This discovery will **help to eliminate or validate many proposed theories** such as **planet engulfment** or **Big Bang Nucleosynthesis (BBN)** during the red giant evolution in which **helium at the center is not burning**.
- **Lithium (Li)**, is one of the **three primordial elements**, apart from **Hydrogen (H)** and **Helium (He)**, produced in the BBN.

This model **predicts primordial Li abundance** [ $A(\text{Li}) \sim 2.7 \sim \text{dex}$ ].
- **Stars** are also proposed as a **likely Li source** in the Galaxy and are considered as **Li sinks**.

The original Li, with which stars are born, only **gets depleted over stars' life-time as Li burns at relatively very low temperatures** of about  **$2.5 \times 10^6$  Kelvin** (a range which is easily encountered in stars).

### Planetary Engulfment

- In the universe, planets **accompany host stars** (like the Sun is the host star for the planets of the Solar system).
- As the **host star evolves off the main sequence to become a white dwarf**, the planets with **sufficiently close orbits** can be **engulfed** during the giant phase.
- Planetary engulfment events **involve the chemical assimilation of a planet into a star's external layer**.

This can cause a change in the chemical pattern of the stellar atmosphere in a way that mirrors the composition of the rocky object engulfed.

### Big Bang Nucleosynthesis

- It is the **leading explanation about how the universe began**. At its simplest, it says that the universe **started with a small singularity** and then **inflated over the next 13.8 billion years** to the cosmos currently observed.
- The **Universe's light-element abundance** is another important criterion by which this theory is verified.

It is now known that the elements observed in the Universe were **created in either of two ways**. **Light elements** (namely deuterium, helium, and lithium) **were produced in the first few minutes of the Big Bang**, while elements **heavier than helium** are thought to have their **origins in the interiors of stars which formed much later in the history of the Universe**.
- The theory predicts that **roughly 25% the mass of the Universe consists of Helium**. It also predicts **about 0.01% deuterium**, and **even smaller quantities of lithium**.



## Temporary Ration Cards to Access PDS Foodgrain

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### Why in News

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Recently, the Pune Zilla Parishad has decided to provide **temporary 'ration cards'** to more than 80,000 **undocumented people** in the district, so they can receive foodgrains under the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**.

- The delivery of benefits including **PDS grain to migrants** trapped by the lockdown, and to those who are **unable to provide documents**, has been a major concern across states.
- Earlier, **Nobel Laureates Amartya Sen and Abhijit Banerjee, and former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan** had suggested that **temporary ration cards** should be issued to enable the undocumented to draw rations through the PDS system.

### Key Points

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- It is a **first innovation** of its kind to help larger numbers of people access government benefits during the **Covid-19 lockdown**.
- **Use of Aadhaar:** The Pune scheme will use one-time **Aadhaar authentication** to open accounts for the people with the **India Post Payments Bank**.  
Once the biometric Aadhaar-based link is established and the account is opened, this would serve as the only authentication that will be needed for these undocumented people to draw rations from the PDS system.
- **Home Delivery:** It will enable the home delivery of grains at the gram panchayat level to avoid crowds and maintain physical distancing.
- **Coverage:** It will also include individuals belonging to the **Primitive Tribes** and the **transgender community** who are often left out of the ambit of such benefits.
- **Identification:** The job of identifying the beneficiaries has been given to the **village police patil**, who maintains records of outsiders in a register.  
Under the **National Food Security Act (NFSA)**, 2013, the gram sabha has the right to identify beneficiaries — however, in the current situation when the gram sabha is not functional, **a committee of three viz., the gram panchayat's sarpanch, a member of the gram sabha, and the local police patil will identify them**.
- **Verification:** The only verification that will be carried out is that of the kitchen of the beneficiary to prove that they qualify for the scheme.
- **Boost to Sharad Bhojan Yojana:** The scheme will widen and deepen the scope and reach of the Sharad Bhojan Yojana, under which cooked meals are provided to people in Pune district at concessional rates.  
The Sharad Bhojan Yojana is modelled after the Maharashtra government's flagship **Shiv Bhojan Yojana**, which serves subsidised meals to the poor.
- **Involvement of a Corporate:** The **Janakidevi Bajaj Gram Vikas Sansthan**, the **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) wing of the Bajaj Group**, will be the corporate CSR partner of the Pune Zilla Parishad for the scheme.

### Public distribution system (PDS)

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- The **PDS is an Indian food Security System** established **under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**.

- PDS evolved as a **system of management of scarcity** through distribution of food grains at affordable prices.
- PDS is operated under the **joint responsibility of the Central and the State Governments**.
  - The **Central Government**, through Food Corporation of India (FCI), has assumed the responsibility for **procurement, storage, transportation and bulk allocation** of food grains to the State Governments.
  - The **operational responsibilities** including allocation within the State, identification of eligible families, **issue of Ration Cards** and supervision of the functioning of Fair Price Shops (FPSs) etc., rest with the **State Governments**.
- Under the PDS, presently the commodities namely **wheat, rice, sugar and kerosene** are being allocated to the States/UTs for distribution. Some States/UTs also distribute additional items of mass consumption through the PDS outlets such as pulses, edible oils, iodized salt, spices, etc.

### National Food Security Act (NFSA)

- NFSA, 2013 legally entitles up to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidized food grains under the Targeted Public Distribution System.
- The eldest woman of the household of age 18 years or above is mandated to be the head of the household for the purpose of issuing ration cards under the Act.

**Source: IE**

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## Kartarpur Sahib Damage

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### Why in News

India has asked Pakistan to attend to repair and **reconstruction of parts of Kartarpur Sahib gurdwara** that were damaged in a storm on April 18, 2020.

The shrine in Pakistan's Narowal district, built where **founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak Dev**, lived the last years of his life, is highly revered by followers of the faith and other worshippers in India and the world.

### Key Points

- Kartarpur Sahib is in the midst of year long festivities associated with the **550<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Guru Nanak**.
- It has emerged as a major centre of Sikh pilgrimage in Pakistan over the last few months, after the **corridor from India was operationalised**.
- The corridor connects the **Kartar Sahib Gurdwara** in Narowal district of **Pakistan** with the **Dera Baba Nanak shrine** in Gurdaspur district in **India's Punjab province**.
- **Katarpur Sahib**
  - Guru Nanak Dev travelled through many countries spreading the message of universal peace, harmony and love before finally arriving in **Kartarpur in 1521**.
  - The then-governor of the region, Duni Chand, donated 100 acres of land on the bank of river Ravi to him.
  - Kartarpur became a **religious site after he settled there**.
  - The foundation stone of the gurdwara in Kartarpur was laid in 1572 and **Maharaja Ranjit Singh covered its dome with gold**.
  - The present structure was built by **Bhupinder Singh, the Maharaja of Patiala in 1925**.

## Guru Nanak Dev

- Guru Nanak Dev Jayanti is observed to celebrate the birth of Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), who is **first of the 10 Sikh Gurus** and the founder of Sikhism.
- He advocated the '**Nirguna**' (**devotion to and worship of formless divine**) **form of bhakti**.
- He rejected sacrifices, ritual baths, image worship, austerities and the scriptures **of both Hindus and Muslims**.
- He organised his followers into a community. He set up rules for congregational worship (**Sangat**) involving collective recitation.
- The fifth preceptor, Guru Arjan Dev, compiled Guru Nanak Dev's hymns along with those of his four successors and other religious poets like Baba Farid, Ravidas (also known as Raidas) and Kabir in the Adi Granth Sahib.
- These hymns, called '**Gurbani**', **are composed in many languages**.
- In the late seventeenth century the tenth preceptor, Guru Gobind Singh, included the compositions of the ninth guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and this scripture was called the **Guru Granth Sahib**.

**Source: TH**

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## Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme

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### Why In News

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Recently, the **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme** has been activated as a response to the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

- The **Integrated Disease Surveillance Project** was launched by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, in assistance with the **World Bank**, in **2004**.
- It continued as the **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP)** during **12<sup>th</sup> Plan (2012-17)** under the **National Health Mission** with a **domestic budget**.
- Under it, a **Central Surveillance Unit (CSU)** at **Delhi**, **State Surveillance Units (SSU)** at all State/Union Territories (UTs) head quarters and **District Surveillance Units (DSU)** at all Districts have been established.
- **Objectives:**
  - To strengthen/maintain decentralized laboratory based and IT enabled disease surveillance systems for epidemic prone diseases to monitor disease trends.
  - To detect and respond to outbreaks in the early rising phase through trained **Rapid Response Teams (RRTs)**.
- **Programme Components:**
  - **Integration and decentralization of surveillance activities** through establishment of surveillance units at Centre, State and District level.
  - **Human Resource Development** – Training of State Surveillance Officers (SSOs), District Surveillance Officers (DSOs), RRT and other medical and paramedical staff on principles of disease surveillance.
  - **Use of Information Communication Technology** for collection, collation, compilation, analysis and dissemination of data.
  - **Strengthening of public health laboratories**.
  - **Inter sectoral Coordination for zoonotic diseases**.

- **Helps in Controlling the Disease Outbreak:**

- Data is **collected on epidemic prone diseases** on a **weekly** basis.  
The weekly data gives information on the disease trends and seasonality of diseases.
- The information is collected on **three specified reporting formats**, namely **“S” (suspected cases)**, **“P” (presumptive cases)** and **“L” (laboratory confirmed cases)** filled by Health Workers, Clinicians and Laboratory staff respectively.
- Whenever there is a rising trend of illnesses in any area, it is investigated by the RRT to diagnose and control the outbreak.

- **IDSP Portal:**

The IDSP portal is a **one stop portal** which has facilities for data entry, view reports, outbreak reporting, data analysis, training modules and resources related to disease surveillance.

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## New FDI Rule

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### Why in News

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The Government of India has made its approval for **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** by neighbouring countries mandatory.

This revised FDI policy aims to curb opportunistic takeovers/acquisitions of Indian companies due to the current **Covid-19 pandemic**.

### Key Points

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- **FDI in India:** FDI is allowed under two modes - either through the **automatic route**, for which companies don't need **government approval**, or through the government route, for which companies need a go-ahead from the centre.
- **According to the new FDI policy:**
  - An entity of a country, which shares a land border with India or where the beneficial owner of an investment into India is situated in or is a citizen of any such country, **can invest only under the Government route**.
  - A transfer of ownership in an FDI deal that benefits any country that shares a border with India will also need government approval.  
India shares land borders with Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.
  - Investors from countries not covered by the new policy only have to **inform the RBI after a transaction** rather than asking for prior permission from the relevant government department.
- **Impact**
  - The **earlier FDI policy was limited to allowing only Bangladesh and Pakistan via the government route** in all sectors. The revised rule has now brought companies from China under the government route filter.
  - China's footprint in the Indian business space has been expanding rapidly, especially since 2014.

- **Chinese investment in India**

- The net Chinese investment in India, **which was \$1.6 billion in 2014, shot up five-folds to at least \$8 billion (Rs 60,800 crore) in the next three years** — with a noticeable shift from state-driven to market-driven investment from the Chinese private sector.
- **Official figures underestimate the amount of investment:** They neither account for all Chinese companies' acquisitions of stakes in the technology sector nor investments from China routed through third-party countries, such as Singapore.
  - For instance, a \$ 504-million investment from the Singapore arm of the mobile firm Xiaomi would not figure in official statistics because of how investments are measured.
- It has been seen that the **Chinese firms have escaped the kind of scrutiny in India** that their investments have attracted in the West despite several high-profile investments and acquisitions.
- Another concern is that there is **no clear separation between the Chinese state and private business**. They work closely in pursuing many goals.



### Foreign Direct Investment

- FDI is an **investment from a party in one country into a business or corporation in another country** with the intention of establishing a lasting interest.
- Lasting interest differentiates FDI from **foreign portfolio investments, where investors passively hold securities from a foreign country**.
- Foreign direct investment can be made by **expanding one's business into a foreign country or by becoming the owner of a company in another country**.

Source: IE

### Bangalore Blue Grapes

#### Why in News

The **Covid-19 lockdown** has impacted the sale of **banglore blue variety of grapes**.

#### Key Points

- Bangalore Blue, characterized by its **foxy flavour (effect of a flavor substance called methyl anthranilate)**, is exclusively grown in Bangalore Urban, Chikkaballapur and Kolar districts.
- It is grown in red sandy loam soil at a day temperature of about 35-37 degrees Celsius and night temperature of 12-15 degree Celsius which is unique to Bangalore and its surrounding areas. The grapes develop their **typical dark purple color** at this temperature.
- These grapes are mostly **used for making juice and wine/spirit**.

- In **2013**, the variety was given the **Geographical Indication (GI) status.**

### **Geographical Indication Status**

- GI is an indication **used to identify goods having special characteristics originating from a definite geographical territory.**
- The **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999** seeks to provide for the registration and better protection of geographical indications relating to goods in India.
  - The Act is **administered by the Controller General of Patents, Designs and TradeMarks-** who is the Registrar of Geographical Indications.
  - The **Geographical Indications Registry** is located at **Chennai.**
- The registration of a geographical indication is **valid for a period of 10 years.** It can be renewed from time to time for a further period of 10 years each.
- It is also a part of the **World Trade Organisation's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).**
- Recent Examples: **Tirur Vetilla** (Kerala), **Dindigul Lock and Kandangi Saree** (Tamil Nadu), **Odisha Rasagola** etc.

**Source: TH**

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