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Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)

- It refers to selling of food grains by Government / Government agencies at predetermined prices in the open market from time to time.
- It enhance the supply of grains especially during the lean season and thereby to moderate the general open market prices especially in the deficit regions.
- For transparency in operations, the Corporation has switched over to e-auction for sale under Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic).
- The FCI conducts a weekly auction to conduct this scheme in the open market using the platform of commodity exchange NCDEX (National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited).
- The State Governments/ Union Territory Administrations are also allowed to participate in the e-auction, if they require wheat and rice outside Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)
- The present form of OMSS comprises 3 schemes as under

  (i) Sale of wheat to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction.

  (ii) Sale of wheat to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction by dedicated movement.

  (iii) Sale of Raw Rice Grade 'A' to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction.

- Recently Government has decided that start date of procurement of pulses and oilseeds under the Price Support Scheme (PSS) may be decided by the respective States.
- The procurement shall continue for 90 days from the date of commencement of procurement.

Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)

- Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) is an ad-hoc scheme under which are

included horticultural commodities and other agricultural commodities which are perishable in nature.
- Market Intervention Scheme works in a similar fashion to Minimum Support Price based procurement mechanism for food grains.
- MIS covers commodities which are not covered under the minimum price support scheme.
- It aims to intervene the market to protect the growers of their commodities from making distress sale in the event of a bumper crop during the peak arrival period when the prices tend to fall below economic levels and cost of production.
- Government implements M.I.S. for a particular commodity on the request of a State Government concerned.
- Losses suffered are shared on 50:50 basis between Central Government and the State.

Minimum Support Price (MSP)

- Minimum support price (MSP) is one of the instruments of Agricultural Price Policy (APP).
- APP basically means government intervention to influence agricultural productivity and/or farm input prices.
- The kind and degree of intervention (or the policy instruments and their objectives) vary with the stage of agricultural development.
- The basic intent of announcing MSP before the sowing season is to help farmers take sowing decision keeping in mind that if they are not able to get a reasonable price by selling in the market, at least they will be able to get the MSP.
- In that sense, MSP is an assured or guaranteed price (insured price).

Decarbonising India's power system

- A recent report analysed health impacts stemming from exposure to particulate matter (PM), under various policy pathways to meet Paris Agreement 2015 targets.
- Highlights of recent findings

1. The report highlights that as many as 200,000 premature deaths can be avoided in three decades from 2020 to 2050.
2. This if India accelerates its efforts to decarbonise the power sector or adopts a 'Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)-Plus' scenario,
3. India can markedly improve the livelihoods of its citizens by reducing ambient air pollution.

4. In the business-as-usual scenario, almost 500,000 people will die prematurely due to exposure to particulate matter (PM10) particles in 2020; this number would rise to 830,000 premature deaths by 2050.

- The report defined four scenarios that compared socio-economic impacts of different ambition levels in decarbonising India's power system based on different power generation sources.
- It analysed, through mathematical modelling, the future development of the power sector in India over the next 30 years.
- These scenarios are:
- **Business-as-usual scenario (BAU) -** Assumes the uptake of more efficient technologies based on past trends, existing policies and targets rolled out by 2016.
- The current renewable energy targets based on this approach are partially achievable.
- **NDC scenario -** Has been designed to chart out strategies needed to achieve the targets laid out in India's Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Climate Agreement.
- NDCs embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- **NDC-PLUS scenario -** Entails adoption of strategies for deeper decarbonisation than the NDC scenario.
- It assumes rapid uptake of efficient technologies across all sectors, accelerated efficiency improvements for both appliances and vehicles and aggressive efforts towards improved energy efficiency across the industrial sector.
- **REmap India Scenario -** Provides a power-sector decarbonisation pathway for India to contribute towards limiting global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius by 2100.

India's Energy Needs Report

- According to recent findings on energy needs Less than 3% of India's energy needs met by hydro, solar, wind and nuclear sources
- More than 54%* of India's energy needs were met by coal production in FY19.
- Over 97%* of energy needs were served by fossil fuels: coal, crude oil, oil products and natural gas.
- Energy consumption includes electricity and transport.
- The calculations are done after converting all the energy sources into a solitary unit: a Tonne of Oil Equivalent.

- One tonne of oil equivalent is equal to the energy released by burning one tonne of crude oil (=11.63 megawatt-hours).

APG Enhanced Follow-up List

- APG is a regional affiliate of the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF).
- The FATF had placed Pakistan in the grey list in June 2018.
- The grey list of APG refers to countries that are "monitored jurisdictions", while the blacklist refers to countries facing a "call to action" or severe banking strictures, sanctions and difficulties in accessing loans.
- In February this year, the FATF had threatened Pakistan with a potential blacklist in a sternly worded note that said, "All deadlines in the action plan have expired."
- China, Pakistan's all-weather ally, has prevented it from being blacklisted by the FATF for the past two years, with support from Turkey and Malaysia.
- Recently Asia-Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering said, Pakistan will remain in the enhanced follow-up list.
- This decision makes after taking note of Pakistan's "meagre progress" in combating money laundering and terror financing.
- It will have to continue to report back to the APG on progress to strengthen its implementation of comprehensive Anti-money Laundering and Terrorist Financing measures.

Leave Travel Concession

- Finance Ministry has announced a slew of measures to spur spending and stimulate economic demand in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.
- Consumer spending proposals - It include a LTC cash vouchers scheme and a special festival advance scheme.
- **Leave Travel Concession -** The LTC Cash Vouchers scheme is mainly targeted to employees in the government and other organised sectors.
- Central government employees, in a block of four years between 2017-18 and 2020-21 would have normally availed of one leave travel concession for any destination of their choice plus one visit to their hometown.
- If they didn't choose leave travel to one destination of their choice, they would usually go twice to their native village.
- This would mean air or rail fare as per their pay scale is reimbursed to them.
- In addition, they also get ten days of leave encashment, which they pay

tax on, the travel fare is tax exempt.
- Conditions are as follows

1. Money would be offered to them based on three slabs, as per government rules and procedures, from which they could spend it to buy something of their choice.
2. This must be spent on items that have 12% GST or more; for instance, you cannot use it to buy food that has 5% GST slab.
3. It can only spend in digital mode and no cash payments are offered.

Special Festival Advance Scheme

- Till the Sixth Pay Commission, there was a festival advance scheme in which the highest level of advance was was ₹4,500 per non-gazetted officers.
- However, there was no such scheme in the Seventh Pay Commission.
- Under this scheme, ₹10,000 will be available to all central government employees, irrespective of their rank, instead of ₹4,500 that was available in the Sixth Pay Commission.
- This will be repaid in ten instalments and will be available upto March 31, 2021.
- A prepaid Rupay card will be given to the availees as an interest-free advance for use in any festival, however cash can't be withdrawn.

Taro Vegetable

- Taro, or *Colocasia esculenta*, better known as arbi, it is the fifth most consumed root vegetable in the world.
- This is a vegetable that restaurants rarely serve, but is cooked quite regularly in Indian homes.
- Its uniqueness lies in the fact that all its parts, from root to shoot, are consumed as each has its own distinct taste.
- But It may soon disappear from the earth due to climate change-led droughts.
- Taro is a great source of carbohydrate therefore, it is used in infant weaning diets and low glycemic index foods suitable for diabetics.
- Its tuber has starch molecules which are smaller than those of potato, corn and wheat and can be used in cosmetics and in pharmaceuticals as binders in tablets.
- Interestingly, the starch in taro's tuber has the capacity to end the world's plastic menace, it can be used to make plastic that degenerates over time.

Source: Down to Earth, the Hindu, PIB