



28 October, 2023

Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic)

Context: From November 1, 2023, buyers can purchase up to 200 MT of wheat under OMSS (D), and the total nationwide e-auction quantity has been increased to 3 LMT to boost wheat availability and price stability.

- As part of the Indian government's initiative to control retail prices of rice, wheat, and atta, weekly e-auctions are conducted for both wheat and rice.
- The 18th e-auction of the 2023-24 fiscal year took place on October 26, 2023, with 2.01 LMT of wheat from 444 depots offered nationwide.
- Both **FAQ wheat** and **URS wheat** were sold, with FAQ wheat exceeding its reserve price.
- **OMSS (D)**
 - The OMSS is a program **managed by the FCI** to facilitate the sale of surplus food grains, mainly wheat and rice, from the central pool in the open market.
 - **Purpose and Objectives:**
 - Increase food grain supply during lean seasons.
 - Regulate open market prices and manage inflation.
 - Ensure food security and grain availability in regions with deficits.
 - Enable the sale of surplus food grains from the central pool.
 - **Implementation and Process:**
 - FCI conducts e-auctions for traders, bulk consumers, and retail chains to purchase specified food grain quantities at predetermined prices.
 - States can procure additional food grains through OMSS for distribution under the **National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA)**.
 - Weekly OMSS auctions for wheat are conducted by FCI on the **National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX) platform**.
- **Food Corporation of India**
 - FCI, established in **1965**, is a **statutory body** under the **Food Corporations Act of 1964**.
 - FCI manages India's food security system.
 - It **maintains buffer stocks** of food grains for times of scarcity.
 - FCI is responsible for distributing food grains nationwide through the public distribution system.
 - FCI **conducts e-auctions** to dispose of surplus food grains.
- **FAQ Wheat**
 - FAQ wheat **adheres to all specified procurement standards**.
 - It is **fully matured and possesses a noticeable shine** or luster.
 - Common FAQ wheat varieties have a **golden or pale yellow hue**, with grains free from darkness or streaks.
 - FAQ wheat is **adequately dry and meets all nutritional requirements**, which are subject to laboratory testing if uncertainty arises.

Credit Information Companies

Context: RBI has instructed credit information companies (CICs) to notify customers via SMS or email when banks and NBFCs access their Credit Information Report (CIR).

- Credit institutions (banks and NBFCs) are **required to alert customers through SMS or email** when they report default or Days Past Due (DPD) on existing credit to CICs.
- These rules will become **effective within six months**.
- **CICs**
 - Credit Information Companies (CICs) in India **maintain and analyze credit information for individuals and businesses**. They receive this data from banks and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs).
 - Using the provided data, **CICs calculate credit scores** for individuals and credit ranks for companies, assessing their creditworthiness and past credit history.
 - A **high credit score can help customers secure loans at favorable rates**, while a low score, often resulting from previous loan defaults, can make it challenging to obtain loans or credit cards. However, a credit score is not the sole determinant for loan approval.
 - Prominent CICs in India include **TransUnion CIBIL Ltd, Equifax India, and CRIF High Mark**. Credit scores typically range from 300 to 850, with a score of 700 considered good.
 - CICs are **independent third-party agencies** that **collect and share financial data related to loans and credit cards** with their member banks and financial institutions.
 - These companies must be registered under the **Companies Act, 1956**, and granted a Certificate of registration under the **CIC Act, 2005**.
 - CICs create **Credit Information Reports and Credit Scores** based on individual credit histories, categorizing them into Negative data and Positive data.

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- When individuals apply for loans or credit with lenders such as banks or NBFCs, the lender checks the applicant's Credit Score and Credit Information Report from a CIC.
- All CICs in India are **licensed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** and must have a Certificate of Registration to operate in the credit information business.
- CICs are governed by the Credit Information Companies Regulation Act (CIC Act), 2005, and adhere to RBI regulations and guidelines, as well as the Credit Information Companies, Regulations, and Rules Act, 2006.
- Currently, there are **four CICs operating in India**: Credit Information Bureau (India) Ltd (CIBIL), Equifax Credit Information Services Pvt Ltd, Experian Credit Information Company of India Pvt Ltd, and CRIF High Mark Credit Information Services Pvt Ltd.

➤ Credit Rating

- Credit rating is an **evaluation of a borrower's creditworthiness**, whether for a specific debt or in a broader context.
- It **applies to various entities**, including individuals, corporations, state or provincial authorities, and sovereign governments, when they seek to borrow funds.

➤ Credit Information Report

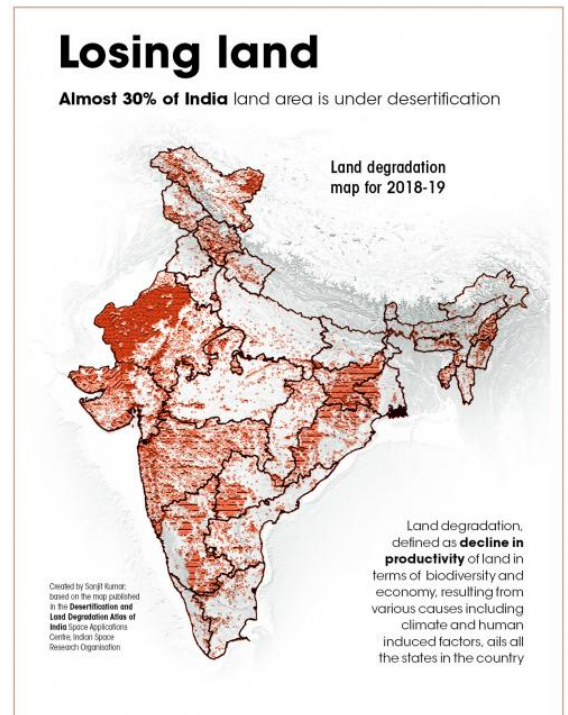
- **Credit Information Report (CIR)** significantly influences a lender's decision when applying for credit.
- The report includes their **complete credit history**, encompassing loans from banks and NBFCs.
- Credit Bureaus like **CIBIL™, Equifax, and Experian compile data** from multiple credit institutions into a single CIR.
- The CIR details **past payment performance**, covering both timely payments and defaults.
- It also lists inquiries by banks, financial institutions, and NBFCs for credit approval purposes.
- Consistent CIR monitoring is vital for managing their creditworthiness and making improvements when necessary.



Land Degradation in India

Context: From 2015 to 2019, about 30.51 million hectares of India's reported land underwent degradation, as per UNCCD data.

- It accounted for **9.45% of the country's degraded land in 2019**, reflecting an increase from 4.42% in 2015 according to UNCCD data.
- The data is based on the reporting year 2019 and uses the period from 2015 to 2019 as a baseline.
- In 2019, **18.39% of India's population, totaling 251.71 million people, was exposed to land degradation** during the same period.
- Additionally, **854.4 million people in India were exposed to drought from 2015 to 2018**, as per the reporting cycle year.
- The total land area affected by drought is calculated by summing the reported area under various drought intensity classes, including mild, moderate, severe, and extreme.
- Globally, from 2015 to 2019, the world lost a minimum of 100 million hectares of healthy and productive land each year, as indicated by the data.
- The UNCCD data dashboard also provides information on the reported voluntary targets related to land degradation neutrality and strategic objectives for selected countries.
- The dashboard is based on data compiled from **126 Parties' 2022 UNCCD national reports**, presenting a partial estimate of progress at the global and regional levels regarding land degradation neutrality since not all Parties have reported the status and trends for every indicator.
- **United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification**
 - Established in **1994**, the UNCCD is the **only legally binding international agreement connecting environment and development to promote sustainable land management**.



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- It focuses on **arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas**, known as drylands, where vulnerable ecosystems and populations exist.
- The **Convention unites 197 parties** to enhance living conditions in dry lands, preserve and restore land and soil productivity, and mitigate drought effects.
- The UNCCD **collaborates with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** to address interconnected land, climate, and biodiversity challenges.
- The **UNCCD's 2018-2030 Strategic Framework** is a global commitment to achieve **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)**, aiming to restore degraded land, enhance livelihoods for over 1.3 billion people, and reduce drought impacts.
- In alignment with **Sustainable Development Goal 15**, the UNCCD is dedicated to protecting the planet from degradation, promoting sustainable resource management, and taking climate action to meet the needs of present and future generations.

Parliamentary Standing Committee

Context: The Home Affairs Committee delayed the adoption of a report on three Bills replacing criminal laws under pressure from the Opposition, who sought more time for review.

- A **Parliamentary committee consists of Members of Parliament (MPs)** who are either **elected, appointed** from within the house, or **nominated** by the Speaker or Chairman.
- The **concept of Parliamentary committees** finds its roots in the **British Parliament**.
- These committees operate **under the guidance of the Speaker of Lok Sabha or Chairman of Rajya Sabha**.
- They are **responsible for presenting their findings and recommendations** to the respective houses of Parliament.
- Parliamentary committees derive their **authority from the constitution**.
- **Article 105** of the constitution addresses the powers, privileges, and responsibilities of the houses of Parliament and their members, including committees.
- **Article 118** empowers each House of Parliament to establish rules for regulations, considering the constitution's provisions, to govern its procedures and the conduct of its business.
- Parliamentary committees in India are **categorized into two main types: Standing committees and Ad hoc committees**.
- **Standing committees** are permanent and deal with specific areas of public policy or administration.
 - These committees are constituted at the start of each session of Parliament and remain in operation until the session ends.
 - Examples of **Standing Committees include the Estimates Committee** with 30 members, the **Public Accounts Committee with 22 members** (15 from Lok Sabha and 7 from Rajya Sabha), and the **Committee on Public Undertakings** with 22 members (15 from Lok Sabha and 7 from Rajya Sabha).
 - The **tenure** for members in these committees is typically **one year**.
 - Members for Standing Committees are either elected by the Lok Sabha or the two houses, depending on the specific committee.
- **Adhoc Committees**
 - They are **temporary committees** formed with a particular purpose in mind.
 - These committees **operate for a limited duration**, typically until their designated task is completed.
 - Their **primary roles** are to **examine and report on specific bills** or investigate matters of significant public concern.
 - Once their assigned work is finished, ad hoc committees are disbanded.
 - Ad hoc committees fall into **two main categories: Inquiry committees and Advisory committees**.
 - The notable ad hoc committees include the Select and Joint committees on Bills, the Railway Convention Committee, and the Joint Committee on Food Management in the Parliament House Complex, among others.
- **Functions**
 - **Oversight of government work:** These committees assess government policies and programs, offering suggestions for enhancement.
 - **Authority to summon ministers and officials:** They possess the ability to request the presence of ministers and officials for questioning regarding their policies and actions.
 - **Scrutiny of bills:** Parliamentary committees play a pivotal role in the legislative process by thoroughly reviewing and assessing bills before they become law.
 - **Offering recommendations:** They have the capacity to propose amendments to bills, ensuring their alignment with the constitution and existing laws.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Public Distribution System



Recently, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested West Bengal Forest Minister in connection with a Public Distribution System (PDS) scam.

About Public Distribution System:

- Public Distribution System (PDS) is an **Indian Food Security System** under the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**.
- It was evolved to manage food scarcity through affordable distribution of food grains.
- This scheme was launched in June **1947**.
- It operates under the **Central and State Governments**, with distinct roles.

Evolution of PDS in India:

- Public Distribution System was introduced during **World War II** for rationing.
- In the **1960s**, the Public Distribution System expanded to tackle food shortages and the **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** was created.
- The Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) launched in **1992**.
- The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was initiated in **1997**, focusing on the poor.
- Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) was introduced in **2000** for the poorest **BPL** families.
- The National Food Security Act, **2013**, ensured that the right to food became a legal right through the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

Glow Worms



Recently, there has been a growing focus on the conservation of glow worms in the United Kingdom.

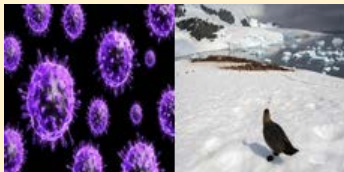
About the Glow Worms:

- Glow worms (**Lampyris Noctiluca**) are **bioluminescent insects** that belong to the family **Lampyridae**, primarily found in the beetle order Coleoptera.
- They emit a **bioluminescent glow**, primarily the females to **attract mates**.

Habitat and Diet:

- Glow worms require **natural grassy habitats** with an abundance of **snails**, which they use as their primary food source.
- The larvae of glow worms inject a **paralyzing toxin** into snails and consume their insides.

Avian Flu



Recently, the scientists have found that the skua seabird of the Antarctic region have been primarily affected by the avian flu.

About the Avian Flu:

- Avian flu or **avian influenza**, is a viral disease primarily affecting birds.
- It can cause mild to severe illness and is categorized into low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) and **highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)**.
- Avian influenza viruses are classified into various subtypes based on surface proteins, such as **H5N1** and **H7N9**.
- Avian influenza can be **transmitted between birds through direct contact**, contaminated surfaces and **respiratory** secretions.

About Skuas:

- Skuas are predatory **seabirds** commonly found in **polar and subpolar regions**.
- They are **medium to large-sized birds** with distinctive features, including dark plumage and strong, hooked bills.
- Skuas are opportunistic predators known for their aggressive behavior.
- They often feed on a variety of prey, including **fish, small birds** and **scavenged carrion**.

Tectonic Activity on Venus



Recently, a new research suggests Earth's sister planet may have been home to microbial life billions of years ago due to tectonic activities.

Tectonic Activity on Venus:

- According to the research, Venus experienced tectonic activity about **4.5 to 3.5 billion** years ago.
- Plate tectonics on Venus likely played a significant role in shaping its **carbon dioxide** and **nitrogen-rich** atmosphere.
- Venus's atmosphere is primarily composed of **carbon dioxide (96.5%)** and **nitrogen (less than 3.5%)**.
- The presence of plate tectonics on both **Earth** and **Venus** suggests greater similarities between the two planets in the past.
- Tectonic activity on Venus likely ceased when it **lost water** and its **atmosphere** became too hot and thick, hampering tectonic movements.

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Place in News

Bering Sea

A recent study has found that decreasing sea ice flow from the Arctic to the Bering Sea is associated with an increased wildfire risk in Northeastern China.

About the Bering Sea:

- The Bering Sea is a **marginal sea** located in the northernmost part of the **Pacific Ocean**.
- It serves as a natural boundary, **separating Asia and North America**.
- In the north, the Bering Sea connects to the **Arctic Ocean** through the **Bering Strait**.
- The sea is bordered by the **US state of Alaska** to the east, **Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula** and Far Eastern region to the west, and the Aleutian Islands to the south.
- The boundary between the United States and Russia passes through the sea and the Bering Strait.



Geological Features:

- There are approximately **16 submarine canyons** in the Bering Sea.
- The **Zhemchug Canyon**, located at the sea's center, is the world's largest and deepest submarine canyon.
- The two major rivers that drain into the Bering Sea are the **Anadyr and Yukon Rivers**.

Place in News

Qatar

Recently, India has initiated discreet efforts to address the issue of eight former Indian Navy personnel sentenced to death by a Qatari court.

Qatar: (Capital:Doha)

Location: Qatar is located in West Asia on the northeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula.

Political Boundaries: It shares its only land border with Saudi Arabia to the south and is surrounded by the Persian Gulf on all other sides.

Geographical Features:

- To the southeast, there is the **Khor al Adaid**, known as the "**Inland Sea**," which features rolling sand dunes surrounding an inlet of the Persian Gulf.
- In the western part of Qatar, the **Jebel Dukhan range** includes low **limestone outcroppings**.
- The highest point in Qatar, **Qurayn Abu al Bawl**, is part of **Jebel Dukhan Range**.
- The **Jebel Dukhan area** contains Qatar's main **onshore oil deposits**.



POINTS TO PONDER

- ❖ What type of surrogacy is allowed under the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021? - **Altruistic surrogacy**
- ❖ In which constellation is Betelgeuse star located? - **Orion constellation**
- ❖ Which countries have adopted the Global Declaration for River Dolphins? - **Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, and Venezuela**
- ❖ What is the full form of PAT in the context of the Indian carbon market? - "**Perform, Achieve and Trade**"
- ❖ Who is the Portuguese traveler who noticed the Vajra Mushti Kalaga wrestling in the Vijayanagara Empire? - **Fernão Nuniz**

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