

## UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 10-11-2020

### Lady of Bietikow

- Recently German researchers are piecing together the life of a prehistoric woman from a skeleton found during an excavation.
- The woman is believed to have died more than 5,000 years ago in the [Neolithic period](#).
- Researchers have named her the "Lady of Bietikow," a village of the same name in north eastern Germany's Uckermark region.
- The skeleton had been buried in a settlement in a squatting position, one of the oldest known forms of burial.
- Investigations have shown that she was between 30 and 45 years old and died more than 5,000 years ago.
- The Lady of Bietikow's teeth have been severely eroded and missing completely in some places.
- Based on this, researchers have come to an interesting conclusion that she might have consumed certain grains that were very rich in fibre, very hard, that cause the teeth to wear out easily.
- It was during the Neolithic period that humans first introduced grains into their diet, since they could be stored more easily than meat and could also be used as a means of payment.
- However, this led to a deterioration in people's general health.

### Glacial Lake Outburst

- Glacial lake outburst floods will happen all over the Indian Himalaya, however not all of these events have catastrophic outcomes.
- It largely depends on urban planning, the size of the lake, the distance between the lake and affected villages, the valley section and some more aspects.
- In some cases, cloudbursts can also trigger glacial lake outburst flood events like in the Kedarnath disaster in 2013.
- These events have been regarded as a major risk in the central Himalayan region including Sikkim.
- Glacial lake outburst floods in the arid Trans-Himalayan regions of Ladakh have received attention only recently.

- In August 2014, a glacial lake outburst flood hit the village of Gya in Ladakh, destroying houses, fields and bridges.
- The cause of this was not spill over but rather a tunnelling drainage process.
- I.e. There was a thawing of the ice cores in the moraine [a field of dirt and rocks that have been pushed along by the glacier as it moves] which drained through the subsurface tunnels.
- Recently using remote sensing data, researchers from Germany have mapped the evolution of Gya glacial lake and note the cause of the flood.
- This illustrates the problem of potentially hazardous lakes being overlooked.
- The team notes that thawing of ice cores may accelerate in the future due to global climate change, and there is an urgent need to use multiple methods for better risk assessment and early warning.

### **Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP)**

- GMCP consists of a number of bridges and causeways to connect Male to Villingili, Thilafushi and Gulhifahu islands that span 6.7 km.
- It would ease much of the pressure of the main capital island of Male for commercial and residential purposes.
- When completed, the project would render the Chinese built Sinamale Friendship Bridge connecting Male to two other islands, thus far the most visible infrastructure project in the islands.
- At present, India-assisted projects in the region include
  1. Water and sewerage projects on 34 islands,
  2. Reclamation project for the Addl island,
  3. A port on Gulhifalhu,
  4. Airport redevelopment at Hanimadhoo,
  5. Hospital and a cricket stadium in Hulhumale.
- India recently signed a MoU for granting of a \$500 million package to the Maldives.
- Following this the [Exim Bank of India](#) and the Maldives's Ministry of Finance signed an agreement for \$400 million in Male.

### **National Agricultural Higher Education Policy**

- ICAR has recently launched Rs.1100 crore ambitious National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP).
- It aim to attract talent and strengthen higher agricultural education in the

country.

- It is funded by the World Bank and the Indian Government on a 50:50 basis.
- The objective of the NAHEP for India is to support participating agricultural universities and ICAR in providing more relevant and higher quality education to Agricultural University students.
- In addition, a four year degree in Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries and Forestry has been declared a professional degree.
- The overall objective of the project is to provide more relevant and high-quality education to the agricultural university students that is in tune with the New Education Policy - 2020.
- It is set to bring academic credit banks and degree programmes with multiple entry and exit options to the 74 universities focussed on crop sciences, fisheries, veterinary and dairy training and research.

### **Student READY**

- NAHEP has launched the Student READY - Rural Entrepreneurship Awareness Development Yojana.
- The programme requires all students to undertake a six-month internship.
- The internship is provided usually in their fourth year, to gain hands-on training, rural awareness, industry experience, and research expertise and entrepreneurship skills.

### **GST on Lotteries**

- Recently Supreme Court has reserved its judgment on the constitutional validity of imposing Goods and Services Tax (GST) on sale of lotteries across the country.
- Petitions filed by lottery dealers, argued that the Central GST Act of 2017 and notifications wrongly viewed lotteries as “goods” while they were only “actionable claims”.
- They said lottery tickets by themselves were only “valueless pieces of paper” and the GST Council was wrong to recommend the imposition of tax on them.
- A three-judge Bench pronounce the verdict on charges of discrimination raised against the law for imposing 12% GST on lotteries sold within the same State and 28% GST for sale of tickets from other States.
- The bench noted this is Arbitrary, discriminatory, unreasonable and clearly violative of Articles 14 of the Constitution.
- In the earlier tax regime, in which no VAT was levied on lotteries, but

service tax was levied, the rate of tax was 1.28% or.82% on the face value of the lottery tickets depending on the prize money payout.

- Thus the Legislature never intended to tax the prize money component in the lottery trade, as it did not form part of the income of lottery traders, but payable to the winner of the ticket prize.
- However, the notifications levy GST on the face value of the tickets without adjusting or taking into account the prize money component.

### **Actionable Claim**

- Section 2(52) of the GST Act defines 'goods' to include 'actionable claims' like lotteries.
- An 'actionable claim' is a claim to debt by means other than mortgage or hypothecation of property.
- Hence, lotteries, despite being actionable claims, can be taxed as 'goods' under the Act.
- According to recent judgement Actionable claims can never be termed as goods and these are two separate concepts.
- However, the GST Act has blurred the distinction only with regard to lotteries, which is impermissible.
- It cannot be said that the sale of a lottery ticket involved a sale of goods.
- There was no sale of goods within the meaning of Sales Tax Acts of the different States but at the highest a transfer of an actionable claim.

### **IoT Power Monitoring Devices**

- The [Internet of things \(IoT\)](#) describes the network of physical objects—"things"—that are embedded with sensors, software, and other technologies for the purpose of connecting and exchanging data with other devices and systems over the Internet.
- AP State government is planning to introduce power monitoring devices equipped with Internet of Things (IoT) technology for the units.
- The IoT project aims at increasing the production rate of MSMEs by reducing the power outage time and technical losses in the system.
- IoT technology supports real-time monitoring of various electrical parameters and sending useful alerts to the customers' emails or cell phones allowing them to go for proactive maintenance of power supply within the units.
- This is in an attempt to make the MSME sector more energy efficient.
- It would help save an estimated 11,000 units per annum to the government.

**Source:** The Hindu

