Prelim Bits 06-01-2022 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Aquamation

The body of Nobel Peace Prize winning Anglican archbishop and anti-apartheid campaigner Desmond Tutu underwent aquamation.

- Also known as water cremation, green cremation or chemical cremation or alkaline hydrolysis, Aquamation is a "flameless cremation" process that involves of cremation by water rather than fire.
- Aquamation is a process in which the body of the deceased is immersed for 3 to 4 hours in a mixture of water (95%) and a strong alkali (5%) in a pressurized metal cylinder and heated to around 150 degree centigrade.
- The combination of gentle water flow, temperature and alkalinity in this process accentuate the breakdown of the organic materials.
- The decomposition that occurs in alkaline hydrolysis is the same as that which occurs during burial, just sped up dramatically by the chemicals.
- **Resultant** - The process liquifies everything, and leaves behind bones and a neutral liquid called effluent.
- Bones are then dried with the help of an oven and reduced to white dust.
- Effluent is sterile, and contains salts, sugars, amino acids and peptides. There is no tissue and no DNA left after the process completes.
- This effluent is discharged with all other wastewater, and is a welcome addition to the water systems.
- **History** - The process of Aquamation was developed and patented in 1888 by Amos Herbert Hanson, a farmer who was trying to develop an ingenious way to make fertilizer from animal carcasses.
- The first commercial system was installed at Albany Medical College in 1993. Thereafter, the process continued to be in use by hospitals and universities with donated body programmes.
- **Benefits** - The process of aquamation uses energy which is 5 times less than fire.
- It also reduces by about 35% the amount of greenhouse gases that are emitted during cremation.
- The process is a greener alternative to the traditional cremation methods as it uses significantly less fuel and has an overall lower carbon footprint than traditional methods.
- **Legality** - Aquamation was introduced in South Africa in 2019. It is authorized in only a few countries.

Reference

1. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-desmond-tutu-aquamation-green-alternative-cremation-7704534/
2. https://www.firstpost.com/world/what-is-aquamation-know-all-about-the-green-alternative-to-cremation-chosen-by-south-africas-desmond-tutu-10253891.html
3. https://www.wionews.com/world/explainer-what-is-aquamation-process-undertaken-for-archbishop-desmond-tutus-cremation-441922

Wintering Grounds

Around 10.74 lakh birds, including uncommon Mongolian gull, flock to Chilika Lake.

- **Wintering Ground** is the place where migrating birds go after summer breeding season ends.
- It is the area where an animal that migrates spends the part of the year when it is not breeding and raising young.
- Other Wintering Grounds in India - Pulicat Lake (Tamil Nadu/Andhra Pradesh), Nelapattu (AP), Kumarakom (Kerala), Ranganathittu (Karnataka), Bharatpur (Rajasthan), Desert National Park (Rajasthan), Nal Sarovar & Rann of Kutch (Gujarat), Bhigwan Bird Sanctuary (Maharashtra), Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary (Arunachal Pradesh), Sundarban National Park (West Bengal), etc
- **Chilika Lake** is the largest brackish water lake and the largest wintering ground of the birds in the Indian subcontinent.
- Chilika Lake hosts birds migrating from the Caspian Sea, Lake Baikal, Aral Sea, remote parts of Russia, Kirghiz steppes of Mongolia, Central and South East Asia, Ladakh and the Himalayas.
- As per the Water Bird Status Survey-2022, in Chilika, a total of 10,74,173 birds of the 107 water bird species and 37,953 individuals of 76 wetland dependent species were counted at the entire lagoon.
- To know more about the Chilika Lake, click here.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/1074-lakh-birds-flock-to-chilika-largest-wintering-ground-in-indian-subcontinent/article38123554.ece
2. https://dictionary.university/Wintering%20Grounds

English is the Language of Court

A Division Bench of the Gujarat High Court has asked a journalist facing contempt of court proceedings to speak only in English as that was the language in the higher judiciary.

- In the High Court, there is a rule that even if any party who does not hire a lawyer and appears in person, he has to speak in English only.
- The Bench also underlined that the Article 348 of the Constitution mandates that the language of the High Court would be English.
- **Article 348 (1)** of the Constitution of India provides that all proceedings in the Supreme Court and in every High court shall be in English Language until Parliament by law otherwise provides.
- But, **Article 348 (2)** provides that, with the consent of the President, the Governor of the State may authorize the use of Hindi or other official language of the State in the proceedings of the High Court provided that decrees, judgments or orders passed by such Courts shall be in English.
- Section 7 of the Official Languages Act, 1963, provides that the use of Hindi or official language of a State in addition to the English language may be authorized in the High Court for that State.
- This authorization can be done with the consent of the President of India, by the Governor of the State for purpose of judgments etc. made by the High Court for that State.
- The provision of optional use of Hindi in proceedings has already been made in the High Courts of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/english-is-the-language-of-court-says-gujarat-hc/article3814106ece
2. https://www.business-standard.com/article/government-press-release/use-of-hindi-language-in-courts-116042801074_1.html

UJALA Programme

Ministry of Power has successfully completed seven years of distributing and selling LED lights under its flagship UJALA programme.

- Launched in January 2015, the Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA) programme has evolved to be world's largest zero-subsidy domestic lighting programme.
- It addresses concerns like high electrification cost and high emissions that result from inefficient lighting.
- **Purpose** - Efficient light bulbs like LEDs consumes only one-tenth of energy used by ordinary bulb to provide the same or better light output.
- So, under the scheme, 20W LED tube lights and BEE 5-star rated energy efficient fans are also distributed to the consumers.
    1. The 20W LED tube lights are 50% more energy efficient than conventional 40W tube lights and are available for Rs. 220/- per tube, as against the market price of Rs. 400-600.
    2. The energy efficient fans are rated 30% more energy efficient than conventional fans and are priced at Rs. 1200/- per fan.
- **Implementation** - The Electricity Distribution Company and Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) are implementing the programme.
- Leveraging increased industry competition and mass procurement, EESL has adopted an innovative procurement strategy, which resulted in well-known benefits, and EESL is now known as the USP of programme UJALA.
- **Achievements** - UJALA succeeded in bringing down the retail price of LED bulbs from INR 300-350 per bulb to INR 70-80 per bulb.
- Apart from making affordable energy accessible to all, the programme also resulted in massive energy savings - around 47,778 Million kWh per annum energy has been saved.
- **Related Links** - Gram Ujala Programme

Reference

1. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1787594
2. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/govt-distributes-36-78-cr-leds-under-ujala-scheme/articleshow/88710534.cms
3. https://vikaspedia.in/energy/policy-support/energy-efficiency/domestic-efficient-lighting-programme-delp

Restructuring of SDF Loans

The Department of Food and Public Distribution issued guidelines for restructuring of Sugar Development Fund (SDF) Loans under Rule 26 of the SDF Rules 1983.

- These guidelines were issued to facilitate rehabilitation of financially weak but economically viable sugar mills which have availed loans under the Sugar Development Fund Act, 1982.

- These guidelines are uniformly applicable for SDF loans availed by all types of concerns, including Co-operative Societies, Private Limited Companies and Public Limited Companies.
- The Guidelines have provision for 2-years moratorium and then 5 years of repayment of the SDF loans.
- Waiver of additional interest in full will be given to the eligible sugar factories.
- **Eligibility** - The following sugar factories are eligible to apply for re-structuring,
    1. A sugar factory that has been incurring cash losses continuously for the last 3 financial years or
    2. Sugar factory's net worth is negative, and
    3. The sugar factory is not closed/has not ceased to crush cane for more than 2 sugar seasons, excluding the current sugar season.

Sugar Development Fund

- Sugar Development Fund (SDF) was established in 1982, through the Sugar Development Fund Act 1982.
- It provides financial assistance to the sugar factories at concessional interest rates in accordance with SDF Act, 1982 and SDF Rules, 1983.
- It is being utilized presently to grant loans to the sugar mills for
    1. Facilitating the rehabilitation and modernization/
    2. Cane Development/
    3. Bagasse based co-generation power projects/
    4. Production of anhydrous alcohol or ethanol from alcohol/
    5. Conversion of existing ethanol plant into Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) plant and development of Sugar cane.
- The loans are provided at a concessional rate of 2% below the prevailing bank rate.

Reference

1. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1787743
2. https://dfpd.gov.in/SDF-Main.htm
3. https://sdfportal.in/DocumentRepository/Common/Schemes.pdf

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