Prelim Bits 09-07-2018

Kepler Telescope

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- NASA has recently revealed that the Kepler Space Telescope is almost out of fuel and decided it to put the spacecraft in a hibernation-like state.
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- The Kepler telescope was originally launched in 2009 as part of NASA's Discovery Program.
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- It is an observatory in space dedicated to finding planets outside our solar system.
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- It targets particularly alien planets that are around the same size as Earth in the "habitable" regions of their parent star.
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- Since 2009, it has discovered extra-solar planets in the range between the size of Earth and Neptune.
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- Most of these planets were discovered in a small region of the constellation Cygnus.
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- Kepler was the first telescope to find a planet (Kepler-69c) approximately the size of Earth in the habitable region of a star.
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- It examined the TRAPPIST-1 system which likely has multiple Earth-sized planets in it between December 2016 and March 2017.
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- It was approved far beyond its original mission length and was operating well until May 2013, when a second of its four reaction wheels or gyroscopes failed.
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TESS

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- Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) is a new exoplanet hunting spacecraft.
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- While Kepler is nearing its mission lifetime, TESS is readying to take its place.
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- It was launched in 2018 to detect small planets with bright host stars in the solar neighbourhood.
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- The spacecraft will be looking for a phenomenon known as a transit, where a planet passes in front of its star, causing a periodic and regular dip in the star's brightness.
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- It will do an all-sky survey from an orbit between the Earth and the moon.
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Legal Entity for Animal Kingdom

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- The Uttarakhand High Court has declared the entire animal kingdom, including birds and aquatic animals, as a legal entity having rights of a "living person".
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- The court has invoked Article 21 of the Constitution - safeguarding the rights of humans, protects life. The court has clarified that the word 'life' includes animal world.
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- According to the judgement, Legal Entity means "The entity acts like a natural person but only through a designated person, whose acts are processed within the ambit of law".
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- This means the animal kingdom could be represented by a custodian.
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- It declared all citizens of Uttarakhand "persons in loco parentis" (in the place of a parent) giving them the responsibility to protect animals and ensure their welfare.
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- The high court, last year accorded the status of "living entity" to the Ganga and Yamuna rivers , a decision subsequently stayed by the Supreme Court.
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World Sanskrit Conference

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- World Sanskrit Conference is to promote, preserve and practice the Sanskrit language all over the world by the people.
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- It is being held in various countries across the globe once in every three years and so far it has been held thrice in India.
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- The latest edition, 17th World Sanskrit Conference is going to be held at Vancouver, Canada.
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- Union HRD minister will be inaugurating the conference.
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- More than 500 scholars and delegates from over 40 countries will be participating in this conference on various subjects.
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Formalin

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- Fish Samples in Chennai have shown the presence of Formalin.
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- This is the first time, samples of fish in Tamil Nadu have tested positive for formalin.
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- Formalin, a derivative of formaldehyde is a carcinogenic substance used to prolong the shelf life of fish.
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- It is harmful when consumed by humans.
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- Once ingested, formalin releases toxins into the body, and the sustained ingestion of formalin can eventually lead to cancer.
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- A solution which contains 37% formalin has the capacity to kill a fully grown adult.
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- Other chemicals added - **Sodium benzoate** was a preservative that was mixed when the ice was formed and **Ammonia** is also added to the ice, but it is done to prevent the ice from melting.
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Mattala Airport

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- Mattala Airport is referred to as the world’s “emptiest airport” located in Sri Lanka.
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- India is negotiating a joint venture with Sri Lanka to operate this loss making airport.
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- It is located strategically very near to Hambantota port which is operated by China.
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Source: The Hindu, PIB, Financial Express.

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