

Prelim Bits 09-09-2017

Fuel from Air

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- Scientists have found a way to produce methanol using oxygen in the air.
- Methanol is an important chemical used as fuel in vehicles.
- It is currently produced by 'Methanol Synthesis' process which is very expensive and energy intensive.
- It involves breaking down natural gas at high temperatures into hydrogen gas and carbon monoxide.
- But the new process uses oxygen, a 'free' product in the air and combines it with hydrogen peroxide at mild temperatures which require less energy.
- It is seen as an advance that may lead to cleaner, greener industrial processes worldwide.

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Pluto Mountains

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- Two mountain ranges on Pluto have been named after Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary respectively by the International Astronomical Union (IAU).
- These are the first geological features on the planet to be named following the close flyby by the New Horizons spacecraft in July 2015.
- IAU has officially approved the naming of 14 features on the dwarf planet for the first time.
- IAU is the internationally recognised authority for naming celestial bodies

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and their surface features.

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- Tenzing Norgay and Sir Edmund Hillary were the first to reach the summit of Mount Everest and return safely.

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West Bengal to Bangla

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- West Bengal cabinet has approved changing State's name to Bangla.

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- The state had earlier proposed that West Bengal be named Bangla in Bengali, Bangal in Hindi and Bengal in English.

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- But the Centre rejected the proposal of having 3 names in 3 different languages and state is compelled to have "Bangla" as the new name.

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- According to the Indian Constitution, the power of changing the name of the State lies with the Centre.

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- The Article 3 of the Constitution deals with the formation of new States and alteration of areas, boundaries or names of existing States.

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- It says that Parliament may by law, \n

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- a. form a new State by separation of territory from any State or by uniting two or more States or parts of States or by uniting any territory to a part of any State;

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- b. increase the area of any State;

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- c. diminish the area of any State;

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- d. alter the boundaries of any State;

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- e. alter the name of any State;

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Sahara Forest Project

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- Jordan has launched “Sahara Forest Project” to turn its sand dunes into farming land to produce food using sun and sea water.

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- The project is funded by Norway and the European Union.

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- It will use solar panels to provide power and include outdoor planting space, two saltwater-cooled greenhouses, a water desalination unit and salt ponds for salt production.

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- Jordan is a water poor country that is 90% desert, located on the east bank of Jordan River in West Asia.

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- It is bordered by Saudi Arabia to the east and south; Iraq to the north-east; Syria to the north; Israel, Palestine and the **Dead Sea** to the west; and the **Red Sea** in its extreme south-west.

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International Literacy Day

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- International Literacy Day is celebrated on 8th September every year by UNESCO.

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- This day marks the meeting of the world congress of Ministers of Education in Tehran for the first time in 1965 to discuss the programme of education at the international level.

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- The UNESCO in its 14th Session in November, 1966, declared 8th September as the International Literacy Day.

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- The theme of this year is ` **Literacy in a digital world** '.

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Hurricane Irma

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- Irma is a powerful category 5 Hurricane in the Atlantic Ocean.
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- It is second major hurricane of the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season after **Hurricane Harvey**.
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- It has a maximum sustained wind speed of **160 miles per hour**.
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- It made landfall in Cuba's Camaguey Archipelago, caused devastation in Caribbean islands and heading towards Florida, US.
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- It achieved one of the longest durations of Category 5 strength winds ever on record.
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- It is the strongest hurricane ever to form in the Atlantic Ocean outside of the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea.
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- Click [here](#) to know more about Hurricanes.
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Source: PIB, The Hindu, Business Standard.

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