Prelim Bits 10-09-2018

International Whaling Commission

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- The 67th biennial meeting of International Whaling Commission (IWC) is going to be held in Brazil.
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- IWC was set upfor the proper conservationof whale stocks and orderly development of the whaling industry.
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- Its objectives are
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i. Setting out catch limits by species and area which may be zero as it the case for commercial whaling,
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ii. Designating specified areas as whale sanctuaries,
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iii. Protection of calves and females accompanied bycalves,
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iv. Prescribe open and closed seasons and areas for whaling and restrictions on hunting methods.
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- The headquarters of the IWC is in Impington, near Cambridge, England.
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- Currently, 88 nations are members to this commission including India.
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- In 1982 the IWC adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling, which is opposed by Japan, Russia, and other nations.
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- It allows non-zero whaling quotas for aboriginal subsistence and member nations may issue'Scientific Permits' to their citizens.
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- In the upcoming meeting, Brazil is going to push for “Florianopolis Declaration”.
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- The declaration insists that commercial whaling is no longer a necessary economic activity and would allow the recovery of all whale population to pre-industrial whaling levels.
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Commercial Whaling

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- The resolution banning the commercial whaling was vehemently opposed by Japan, Russia.
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- Australia supported the resolution and opposed the attempts to undermine the moratorium.
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- Iceland and Norway are the only countries that allow commercial whaling.
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- Iceland has come under direct pressure to end whaling from the European Union.
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- Aboriginal subsistence hunting is allowed in several countries including the US, Russia, Greenland, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean.
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- Japan continued to hunt whales despite the moratorium, exploiting a loophole allowing "scientific research".
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Definition of a Planet

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- There is a recent debate among the astronomical community to reclassify Pluto as a planet.
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- International Astronomical Union (IAU), a group of experts, is the authorised body to define the criteria for any object to be designated as a planet.
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- In 2006, IAU defines three criteria to classify any object as a planet

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i. It needs to be in orbit aroundany fully-fledged star.

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ii. It needs to have enough gravity to pull itself into a spherical shape.

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iii. It has cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit

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- This last criterion is the point at which planets and dwarf planets differ. Dwarf planets have other objects inits orbit around its star.
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- In accordance with this, IAU decided to demote Pluto as a dwarf planet.
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- IAU recognizes five named dwarf planets - Ceres, Pluto, Eris, Haumea, and Makemake.
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- Except Ceres, otherdwarf planets are also known as Plutoids.
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Continuous Emission Monitoring System

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- Continuous emission monitoring system (CEMS) is a real time air and water pollution monitoring system.
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- It comprises of analytical components and software designed to provide continuous real time measurements of pollution by analyzing representative samples of air and water.
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- It is an initiative by Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF&CC) and Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to strengthen pollution regime.
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- In 2014, CPCB makes installation of CEMS compulsory for 17 categories of highly polluting industries, Common Bio-Medical Waste and Common Hazardous Waste incinerators.
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- Recently, CPCB has recommended that even non-polluting industries should also consider installing CEMS as a tool of self-regulation.
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Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

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- UN chief has recently reiterated his appeal to eight nations, including India and the US, to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.
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- CTBT is a multilateral treaty that bans all nuclear explosions, for both civilian and military purposes, in allenvironments.
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- It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 September 1996.
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- It can only enter into force after it is ratified by eight countries with nuclear technology capacity, namely China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the United States.
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- China, Egypt, Iran, Israel and the United States have signed but not ratified the Treaty.
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- India, North Korea and Pakistan have not signed it.
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- According to CTBT, each State Party undertakes not to carry out any nuclear weapon test explosion or anyother nuclear explosion, and to prohibit and prevent any such nuclear explosion at any place under itsjurisdiction or control.
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- The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), an internationalorganization headquartered in Vienna, Austria, was created.
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Bonnethead shark

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- According to researchers from the University of California, Bonnethead

Shark is the first known omnivore shark.
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- One possible reason for the shark's omnivorous lifestyle is potentially avoiding conflict with other species such as bull sharks or nurse sharks for food.
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Source: The New Indian Express

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