Prelim Bits 19-03-2018

HAMMER Spacecraft

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- NASA has drawn up plans to build a huge nuclear spacecraft that is capable of shunting or blowing up dangerous space rocks and safeguarding life on Earth.
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- The spacecraft is named Hammer (Hypervelocity Asteroid Mitigation Mission for Emergency Response), an 8 ton spaceship.
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- The asteroid that is targeted is Bennu which is circling the sun at 63,000 mph. It is now at a comfortable 54 million miles from Earth.
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- NASA’s Osiris-Rex mission is en route to Bennu to take samples which is been monitored since its discovery in 1999.
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- Bennu’s impact over earth would release three times more energy than all nuclear weapons detonated throughout history.
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- Click here to know about OSIRIS-REX which is a part of New Frontiers Program.
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Australian humpback dolphin

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- The S. sahulensis is a separate species within the Sousa (Humpback dolphin) family.
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- It is endemic to northern Australia and southern New Guinea.
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- They are referred to as an 'inshore' species because they mostly occur in shallow near shore waters, often at the mouths of estuaries and in tidal channels.
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- They are considered vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List.
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- Australian humpback dolphin populations along the east coast of Queensland are characterized by low levels of genetic diversity, limited gene flow, and small effective population size.
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Acheulian artefacts

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- Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) have discovered a number of Acheulian artifacts (dated to about 1, 500,000–1, 50,000 years ago) at Ghumarwin in Bilaspur district of Himachal Pradesh.
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- The site is close to the site where scientists in the 19th century discovered fossil remains of **Sivapithecus**, the last common ancestor of orangutans and humans.
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- The oldest dated Acheulian sites in India are at Attirampakkam in Tamil Nadu, dating to 1.5 million years ago.
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- It is the first time that the AnSI has found a large number of Acheulian artifacts along with the Soanian tools (about 6,00,000 years ago) at a same site.
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- Acheulian is an archaeological industry of stone tool manufacture

characterized by distinctive oval and pear-shaped "hand-axes" associated with early humans.
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- The Soanian is an archaeological culture of the Lower Paleolithic in the Siwalik region of the Indian subcontinent.
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Snowflake crystal holds clues to climate change

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- Scientists are collecting the most fine-grained details about freshly fallen snowflakes and their evolution once they fallen in New York’s Catskill Mountains.
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- Snowflake is a flake of snow, especially a feathery ice crystal, typically displaying delicate sixfold symmetry.
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- The data collected could provide clues to the changing climate.
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- Snowflakes formed in different places have different characteristics.
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- In the Eastern U.S. it tends to be moister than the powdery snow that falls in higher elevation in the West.
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- The specimens collected displayed more rounded edges and irregularities than the classic crystalline forms.
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- This is characteristic of flakes formed up high in warmer air, suggesting climate change.
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Financial Stability Board (FSB)

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- The FSB released its initial assessment of crypto-assets recently which states that they do not pose risk to global financial stability at present time.
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- It is an international body that monitors and makes recommendations about the global financial system.
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- In the G20 Leaders Summit of April 2009, the expanded Financial Stability Forum was re-established as the Financial Stability Board (FSB) with a broadened mandate to promote financial stability.
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- It coordinates financial regulation for the Group of 20 Economies.
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- Its headquarters is at Basel, Switzerland.
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Pobitora Wildlife sanctuary

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- Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in the flood plains of River Brahmaputra in the district of Morigaon, Assam, India.
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- It harbors world's highest density of rhinoceros.
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- In addition it has second highest concentration of Rhino in Assam after Kaziranga National Park.
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- In winter, Pobitora becomes a birder’s heaven, with thousands of waterfowl thronging the wetlands.
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- Pobitora can be divided into three distinct categories: forest, grassland and water bodies or beels.
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- The animals found in the region are one-horned rhino, leopard, wild boar, Barking deer, wild buffalo etc
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Map of the day

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Africa

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· Morocco joining AU in 2017, all 55 countries on the African continent are part of African Union (AU).

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· The Horn of Africa denotes the countries of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

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· “Cotton Four” (C4) countries are Burkina Faso, Benin, Chad and Mali.

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· Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Mauritania, Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia & Comoros are part of Arab League.

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· East African Community (EAC) is composed of six countries in the African Great Lakes region viz. Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

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· Sub-Saharan Africa describes the area of the African continent which lies south of the Sahara Desert.

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· Maghreb region consists of the Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania and some areas of Western Sahara.

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· The landlocked countries in Africa are Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

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Source: PIB, The Hindu, Business Standard

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