# Prelim Bits 26-09-2017

## Portal PENCIL

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- PENCIL (Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour) is an electronic platform for no child labour developed by the Labour Ministry.
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- The portal creates a robust implementing and monitoring mechanism for enforcement of the legislative provisions of National Child Labour Policy (NCLP).
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- Since the subject of labour is in the concurrent list, the enforcement of the policy depends on respective state governments.
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- This online portal aims to connect the Centre to the state government, district and to all project societies for effective implementation of NCLP.
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- The portal has a component of child tracking system.
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## Economic Advisory Council

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- Government has set up a five member economic advisory council headed by Niti Aayog member Bibek Debroy.
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- The council would address issues of macroeconomic importance and present views to the Prime Minister.
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- The body, which is an independent council, can take up the issues suo motu or on reference from the Prime Minister.
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- Ratan Watal, Principal Advisor of NITI Aayog, will be the Member Secretary to the Council.
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## EFTA

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- European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is a bloc comprising of four countries - Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.
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- The four EFTA countries are not part of the European Union.
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- India and EFTA started negotiating a free trade pact in 2008, shortly after India started FTA talks with the European Union.
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- The talks resumed last year in Geneva but hit a rough patch after the Switzerland insists on stringent IPR regime in India.
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- This is mainly due to number of Swiss pharmaceutical MNCs, including Novartis and Roche, having been aggressively fighting for their patent rights in India over the past few years.
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- The other areas covered by the proposed FTA include market access in goods, services, investments and public procurement.
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## Sixth Mass Extinction

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- Researchers from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), US predicted increasing carbon levels in the oceans may lead to sixth mass extinction in Earth’s history by 2100.
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- They analysed significant changes in the carbon cycle over the last 540 million years, including the five mass extinction events.
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- The last such event, known as the Cretaceous–Tertiary extinction, occurred about 66 million years ago and led to dinosaur extinction.
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## ASEM

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- The Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an exclusively Asian–European forum, established in 1996 at the first summit in Bangkok, Thailand.
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- It currently has 51 nations from the European Union and South Asia. India is also a member.
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- The grouping is a platform for non-binding discussion on economic and trade issues.
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- 7$^{th}$ ASEM Economic Ministers' Meeting was recently held in Seoul.
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- ASEM summits, attended by the Heads of State and Government of member countries have been once in two years.
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- Last year, **Ulaanbaatar declaration** to resolve fight against terrorism was signed in the summit.
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## Chromium VI

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- Researchers from CSIR have developed a new method to remove hexavalent chromium (Cr (VI)) from industrial effluents.
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- They have used the heat-dried fungal biomass which converts Cr (VI) to a tri-valent form of chromium.
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- Chromium VI is neurotoxic, genotoxic and a carcinogen whereas Chromium trivalent is a non-toxic.
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- Cr VI is found in high concentration in tannery waste which is slightly alkaline in nature.
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- The positively charged heat dried biomass binds to Cr VI and adsorb the negatively charged Cr VI and other toxic metals such as lead, arsenic which are normally found in tannery waste.
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## Source: PIB, The Hindu, Business Line

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