

Prelim Bits 21-05-2017

Combustible Ice

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- Combustible ice is a **frozen mixture of water and concentrated natural gas**.

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- Technically known as **methane hydrate**, it can be lit on fire in its frozen state and is believed to comprise one of the world's most abundant fossil fuels.

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- Commercial development of this **frozen fossil fuel** has now moved closer to reality after Japan and China successfully extracted the material from the sea floor off their coastlines.

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- Large-scale production, if not done properly, could flood the atmosphere with climate-changing greenhouse gases.

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- Methane hydrate has been **found beneath seafloors and buried inside Arctic permafrost and beneath Antarctic ice**.

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Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

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- India is participating in the five day Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) summit being held in Mexico.

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- The GPDRR is a global forum for strategic advice, coordination, partnership development and review of progress in the implementation of the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**, which was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan.

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- The summit will mark the first opportunity since 2015 to review global

progress in the implementation of SFDRR.

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Solibacillus kalamii

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- Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), the foremost lab of NASA for work on interplanetary travel, discovered the new bacteria on the filters of the International Space Station (ISS) and named it Solibacillus kalamii to honour the late President.

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- Even as it orbits the earth some 400 kilometres above, **the ISS is home to many types of bacteria and fungi.**

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- These spore formers tend to withstand high radiation and also produce some useful compounds protein-wise which will be helpful for biotechnology applications.

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Vaquita Porpoise

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- With an estimated 30 or fewer individuals remaining, vaquita porpoise — the world's most endangered marine mammal — may go extinct by 2018 if no action is taken to save them, a new study warns.

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- Known as the '**panda of the sea**' because of its distinctive markings, the vaquita is **endemic to the Upper Gulf of California.**

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- Unsustainable fishing practices and illegal wildlife trade driven by demand for the swim bladder, has caused the vaquita population to plummet.

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- Listed as the most endangered cetacean in the world these mammals are often accidentally killed in gillnets also.

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