

Compassionate Appointments



❖ Context

- Recently, the Supreme Court rejected some applications for 'compassionate appointment' that were filed by the dependents of deceased government employees in West Bengal.

❖ Key Highlights:

- SC underlined that compassionate appointment is not a vested right of such dependents of a deceased employee.

❖ About Compassionate Appointments:

- The concept of compassionate appointments can be traced to the Indian Constitution's **Article 39**
 - Art 39 is under the **Directive Principles of State Policy** and talks about the right to livelihood.
- It aims to provide employment on compassionate grounds to the dependent family members of a **government servant who dies in harness or retires on medical grounds**, leaving the family without any source of sustenance.
- Multiple factors are looked at while assessing a request for compassionate appointments-
 - Financial condition of the family, the presence of earning members, family size, children's ages, and the essential needs of the family.
- These appointments can only be made for "**Group 'C' posts** against the direct recruitment quota."
- **Eligibility** : Compassionate appointments can extend to dependent family members of a government servant who-

- Dies while in service (including death by suicide).
- Retired on medical grounds.
- The measure can also extend to the family members of an Armed Forces employee who:
 - Dies during service.
 - Is killed in action; or.
 - Is medically boarded out and is unfit for civil employment.
- The government servant must have been **appointed on a "regular basis"** and not on a daily wage, casual, apprentice, ad-hoc, contract, or reemployment basis.
- The deceased's **dependents can only be first-degree relations** such as their spouse, son or daughter (including adopted ones) etc.
- The applicant should also be eligible and suitable for the post.
- **Appointment Authority:**
 - Compassionate appointments are made by either the **Joint Secretary in charge of administration** in the Ministry or Department concerned or the "**Head of the Department**."
 - They can also be made by the **Secretary of a Ministry or Department in special cases.**

Climate Crisis Could Lead to More Wildfire-inducing 'Hot Lightning' Strikes

❖ Context

- The climate crisis is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of wildfires around the world, and a new study suggests that it could also lead to more "hot lightning" strikes that ignite these fires.



❖ Key Highlights:

- The scientists analyzed 5,858 fires ignited by lightning selected based on satellite imagery of US wildfires between 1992 and 2018.
- "**Hot lightning**" has more potential of triggering a wildfire than typical lightning.
 - **Lightning with continuing currents (LCC)** can transport more energy from cloud to ground than typical lightning.
 - When lightning with continuing currents attach to ground or vegetation, they produce more Joule heating & higher temperature than typical lightning, increasing the probability of ignition.
- According to the study, the areas that might witness a significant increase in wildfires triggered by the LCC strikes are **Southeast Asia, South America, Africa, Australia, North America and Europe.**

❖ Lightning Mechanism:

- Lightning is a rapid and **massive electrical discharge** that takes place between storm clouds and the ground, or within the clouds themselves.

- For lightning to occur, positive and negative charges must separate within a cloud.
- This happens, when the water droplets in the bottom part of the cloud are moved upwards, where the much colder atmosphere freezes them into **small ice crystals**.
- As these small ice crystals continue to go up, they **gain more mass and eventually become so heavy** that they start to fall down to Earth.
- This causes a system in which ice crystals going down collides with the water vapours coming up, leading to the accumulation of **positive charges on the top of the cloud & negative charges gathering at the base.**
- The **atmosphere** between them in the cloud acts as an **insulator**.
- When the positive and negative charges grow large enough, their strength overpowers the insulating properties of the properties.
- As a result, the two kinds of **charges meet with each other and produce lightning.**
- Although most of the lightning takes place within the clouds, sometimes it is directed towards Earth also.

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Pattaya Mission

❖ Context

- The state government of Kerala has announced the launch of the **Pattaya Mission**, which aims to tackle land record issues in the state.



❖ Key Highlights:

- Under the leadership of MLAs in each district, the mission will work towards providing **title deeds for all individuals**.
- Despite the implementation of the Land Reforms Act five decades ago, land record problems have persisted, and the Pattaya Mission is expected to **expedite the distribution of title deeds**.
- Kerala has a history of feudal systems, and while land reforms were implemented in the **state in the 1970s**, cash crop plantations were placed outside the purview of the reforms.
- As a result, the majority of lands in the state were not distributed.
- This has resulted in **bureaucratic hurdles** and legal challenges for citizens seeking to obtain land titles.

❖ Significance:

- The Pattaya Mission is expected to streamline the process of **land record maintenance & provide an efficient system** for citizens to obtain their land titles.
- It will **leverage technology** to digitize land records & make them easily accessible to citizens.
- It will focus on **conducting surveys** to identify and resolve disputes related to land ownership.

News in Between the Lines

Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin



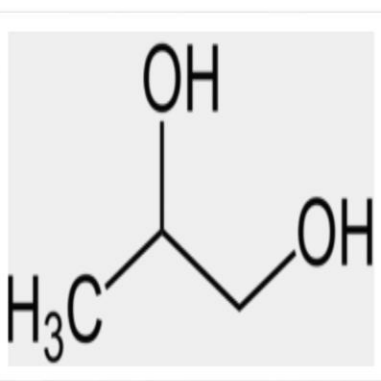
❖ Context

- The Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin has been in the news recently as a group of over 30 to 40 dolphins were spotted off the coast of **Injambakkam**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- These dolphins are commonly found in the coastal waters of the eastern Indian and western Pacific Oceans, & are also known as the Chinese white dolphin in some regions.
- They are threatened by **pollution, fishing nets**, declining fish stocks, and the degradation of mangrove habitats.
- One interesting feature of the Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin is their **unique coloration of pink and grey**.
- This is due to their well-developed blood vessels which help with **thermoregulation**, or the control of body temperature.
- The pinkish complexion is a result of overdeveloped blood vessels that aid in maintaining thermal equilibrium with the environment.
- The species is classified as **Vulnerable by the IUCN**, meaning it faces a high risk of extinction in the wild.
- However, they are not currently included in the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 in India, with only **Gangetic dolphins and Snubfin dolphins** being included in the act.

Propylene Glycol



❖ Context

- India directed drug manufacturers to stop using propylene glycol sourced from the Delhi-based firm that supplied the ingredient to Marion Biotech.
- Its cough syrups were linked to deaths of 19 children in Uzbekistan.

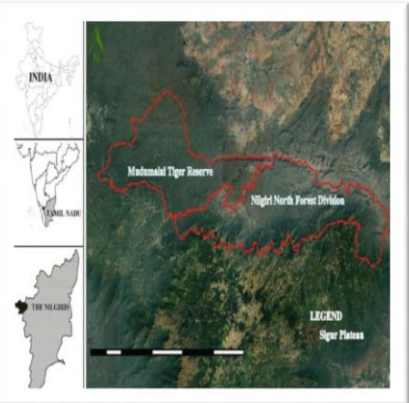
❖ Key Highlights:

- Propylene glycol (IUPAC name: propane-1,2-diol) is a **viscous, colorless liquid, which is nearly odorless but possesses a faintly sweet taste**.
- Its chemical formula is **CH₃CH(OH)CH₂OH**.
- **Application :**
 - Propylene glycol is generally recognized as safe by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) (FDA 2017) for uses in **food and tobacco products, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics**.
 - Propylene glycol is used to **make polyester compounds** and as a base for deicing solutions.
 - It is used to **absorb extra water and maintain moisture** in certain medicines, cosmetics, or food products.
 - It is a solvent for food colors and flavours and in the paint and plastics industries.
 - Propylene glycol is also used to **create artificial smoke or fog** used in fire-fighting training and theatrical productions.

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Sigur Plateau



❖ Context

- The Sigur Plateau, located in Tamil Nadu, is making headlines due to a recent study that warns of the threat to vultures in the area from **poisoning events**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The study, conducted by the Centre for Wildlife Studies, highlights the availability of harmful **(Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs)NSAIDs** near the habitats of vultures and their dependence on cattle carcasses as a food source in the region.
- The study highlights the decreasing availability of expansive areas for vultures due to invasive plant species like **Lantana camara** and **Eupatorium**, which could have a significant impact on the ecosystem's biodiversity.

❖ About the Plateau:

- The Sigur Plateau is a crucial wildlife corridor that connects the western & eastern ghats, providing a vital passage for tigers & elephants to sustain their genetic diversity in the area. The plateau is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves, and is home to the **Irular tribal community**.
- The Sigur plateau is enclosed by the **Bandipur National Park, the Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary**, making it a significant protected area for conservation efforts.

Integrated Pensioners' Portal



❖ Context

- The Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare in India has decided to create an Integrated Pensioners' Portal to bring pension portals under one platform.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The new portal will integrate Pension Disbursing Bank portals, **Anubhav, CGHS, and the websites of pension disbursing banks**.
- This move will mitigate the problems faced by pensioners such as change of bank, submission of life and death certificates, pension slips, retrieval of pension slip, and pension receipt information.
- Currently, the task of integrating Pension Seva **Portal of SBI and Canara Bank** with Bhavishya portal is complete.
- The pensioners can now get their pension slip, status of submission of Life Certificate and Form-16 through the integrated portal.
- All 18 pension disbursing banks will be integrated into the Integrated Pensioners' Portal.
- The **Digital Life Certificate (DLC)** is another step towards this direction.
- In November 2014, an Aadhar-based scheme for online submission of the digital life certificate, 'Jeevan Pramaan' was launched.
- The pension department has undertaken a **nationwide Digital Life Certificate through Face Authentication** campaign in November 2022.
- This has resulted in 30 lakhs pensioners submitting their **life certificate digitally**.
- The new integrated portal will take care of not only serving/retiring employees but also work for the **Ease of Living** of the pensioners.

Keeladi Museum



❖ Context

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister recently inaugurated a museum in Sivaganga that will showcase the **archaeological findings at the Keeladi site** in the district.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The state Archaeological department has been conducting excavations at the site since 2018 and has found a number of artefacts that indicate the existence of a thriving urban civilisation on the banks of **river Vaigai** in the 6th century BC.
- The museum aims to showcase the history, heritage & culture of Tamils, and includes exhibits such as earthenware and brick structures, along with animation and virtual reality displays.
- Scientific evidence from the findings show that the Tamil society was literate and educated during that period.

Safe Harbour

❖ Context

- The government is reviewing the **"safe harbour"** clause in the **Information and Technology Act 2000**.

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❖ **Key Highlights:**

- In a few months from now, the **draft of the Digital India Act**, meant to be the most significant piece of IT legislation in India, will be out for discussion.
- The Act will have a huge impact on how citizens use IT tech or online services, and social media companies like Twitter and Facebook may be held accountable for whatever is posted on their site.
- Last year, the government had mandated, through the **IT Rules of 2021**, that social media platforms must appoint a **Chief Compliance Officer (CCO)**, **Resident Grievance Officer (RGO)**, and **Nodal Contact Person**.

❖ **Safe Harbour:**

- According to the safe harbour principle, an online platform such as Facebook or Twitter **cannot be held accountable for the content posted on them by users**.
- The government is debating whether such platforms should continue to have zero liability for what users post on their platform.
- The safe harbour provision has been given under **Section 79 of the IT Act 2000**.
- It states that **"an intermediary shall not be liable for any third-party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted by him"**.
- **Section 79** states that safe harbour wouldn't be given if the intermediary "fails to expeditiously" take down a post or remove a particular content even after the government flags that the information is being used to commit something unlawful.

Mimeusemia Ceylonica



❖ **Context**

- Recently, two researchers from Tamil Nadu have spotted a rare moth species **Mimeusemia ceylonica** for the first time in India in the buffer zone of Kalakkad–Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR).

❖ **Key Highlights:**

- It was last sighted 127 years ago - at Trincomalee in Sri Lanka in 1893.
- The researchers are the first in the world to photograph the moth species *Mimeusemia ceylonica*, as only an illustration of the insect existed previously.

❖ **About Mimeusemia Ceylonica:**

- *Mimeusemia ceylonica* is a moth species belonging to the **subfamily Agaristinae and family Noctuidae**. It was first illustrated and described by English entomologist George Hampson in 1893.
- The species was rediscovered during a moth survey conducted on October 11, 2020 at the Agasthyamalai Community-based Conservation Centre (ACCC) situated in the buffer zone of KMTR. There is deficient data about the history of this species.

❖ **About Moths:**

- Moths are a **paraphyletic group of insects** that includes all members of the **order Lepidoptera** that are not butterflies.
- **Butterflies VS moths:** While the butterflies form a monophyletic group, the moths, comprising the rest of the Lepidoptera, do not.

Sickle Cell Disease



❖ **Context**

- With barely 2-weeks left in the fiscal year, the Health Ministry has completed a miniscule 1% of its ambitious target to scan one crore people for sickle cell disease in 2022-23.

❖ **Key Highlights:**

- In her 2023 Budget speech, Finance Minister said that India aims to eliminate sickle cell anaemia by 2047. It will entail awareness creation, **universal screening of 7 crore people in the age group of 0-40 years in affected tribal areas**.
- It will also have counselling through collaborative efforts of central ministries & state govts

❖ **Sickle Cell Disease (SCD):**

- SCD is a genetic disorder in which the red blood cells of the patient turn into a sickle-shaped crescent shape, become rigid and sticky, and get clogged in the blood vessels.
- The capacity of these cells to carry oxygen reduces, which leads to excruciating pain and organ damage in the affected patients.
- **Side Note** : SCD is widespread among the tribal population in India where about 1 in 86 births among STs have SCD. **Treatment** : Bone marrow or stem cell transplantation.

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