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1. Akasa Air Airlines gets Air Operator Certificate (July 8, 2022)

The country's newest airline Akasa Air has received the Air Operator Certificate (AOC) from aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on 7 July to start its commercial operations.

- **Important facts**

- The AOC Certificate signifies the airline's operational readiness to satisfactorily meet all regulatory and compliance requirements.

- Under the supervision of DGCA, the airline concluded the process with a number of flights proving to be successfully operated.

- The airline, backed by stock market investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, took delivery of its first Boeing 737 MAX aircraft in India on June 21.

- Akasa Air is the first airline in India whose end-to-end AOC process was conducted using the government's progressive EGCA digital platform.

- It will commence commercial operations at the end in July 2022.

- By the end of the financial year 2022-23, the airline will have 18 aircraft and after that, 12-14 aircraft will be added per year.

- Last November, Akasa Air announced the order for 72 '737 MAX' aircraft from Boeing.

- **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)**

- It is a statutory body and formed under the Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

- It investigates aviation accidents and enforces all regulations related to aviation.

- It registers and provides certificates to civil aircrafts.

- It is attached to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India.

- It coordinates all regulatory functions with the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

2. Centre to promote dragon fruit cultivation in 50,000 hectares (July 8, 2022)

Following in the footsteps of the Gujarat and Haryana governments, the Center has decided to promote the cultivation of dragon fruit, which is known as "super fruit" for its health benefits.

- The centre is planning to expand dragon fruit cultivation in India considering nutritional values, cost-effectiveness and global demand.

- Currently, this exotic fruit is being cultivated in India in 3,000 hectares, which is planned to be increased to 50,000 hectares in five years.

- **About dragon fruit (Kamalam)**

- Dragon fruit originated in Central and South America and has also spread to Asian countries.

- It is the fruit of a species of wild cactus indigenous to South and Central America.

- It is also called pitaya or pitahaya.

- It belongs to the cacti family.

- The fruit is fleshy with tiny black seeds.

- The inner part of the fruit is consumed while the outer part is discarded.

- The plant grows nearly five to six feet in height during which time it requires support.

- **Cultivation of Dragon fruit**

- Dragon fruit is also cultivated in Thailand, Taiwan, China, Australia, Israel, and Sri Lanka apart from its native Latin America.

- It was introduced to India in the 1990s, and is grown in Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

- It is grown in all types of soil and does not require much water.

- At present, Mizoram is at the forefront in the states cultivating this fruit.

- The export of the fruit has made a huge contribution to Vietnam's GDP.

- All the states of India except the cold regions are suitable for dragon fruit plants.

- **Nutritional benefit**

- It is considered beneficial for diabetic patients, is low in calories and is rich in nutrients like iron, calcium, potassium and zinc.

- It is rich in Vitamin C and is believed to be helpful in improving the platelet count during infectious diseases.

- **Farmers benefit**

- It doesn't need much water and can be cultivated on dry land.

- It gives maximum production from non-productive, less fertile areas.

- This is beneficial for a lot of farmers.

3. PT Usha, Ilaiyaraaja, V Vijayendra Prasad, and Veerendra Heggade nominated to Rajya Sabha (July 7, 2022)

Music maestro Ilaiyaraaja, sports icon PT Usha, screenwriter V Vijayendra Prasad and philanthropist and spiritual leader Virendra Hegde were nominated to the Rajya Sabha on 6 July.

- The nominations were made after the term of Rajya Sabha of Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi of BJP and RCP Singh of JD(U) ended.

- **Ilaiyaraja**

- Ilaiyaraja is from Tamil Nadu.

- In a career spanning nearly five decades, Ilaiyaraaja has composed songs in several Indian languages and won several awards.

- He has won national awards five times. In 2010, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan and in 2018 the Padma Vibhushan.

- **PT Usha**

- Usha, born in Kozhikode in Kerala, is India's best known track and field athlete.

- She also runs the Usha School of Athletics for training young athletes in the sport.

- He has won 11 medals at the Asian Games, including four golds at the 1986 Seoul Games.

- She has been awarded the Arjuna Award and Padma Shri in the past.

- **V Vijayendra Prasad**

- He is from Telangana.

- He is Telugu cinema's leading screenwriter.

- He has been associated with the creative world for many decades.

- His works showcase India's glorious culture and have made a mark globally.

- Sivaji Ganesan (1982-86), Vyjayantimala Bali (1993-99) and S Ramaswamy (1999-2005) are the other Tamil film personalities who have served as nominated members of the Rajya Sabha.

- **Veerendra Heggade**

- He is from Karnataka.

- He has been the 'Dharmadhikari' (custodian) of the Dharmasthala temple in Karnataka from the age of 20.

- He established the Institute of Rural Development and Self-Employment Training to provide awareness about self-employment opportunities and to train rural youth.

- He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in the year 2015.

- **Nomination of Rajya Sabha members by the President**

- Of the 245 members of the Rajya Sabha, 12 are nominated by the President on the recommendation of the government.

- They are nominated under Article 80(3) of the Constitution.

- As per Article 80(3) they should have special knowledge or practical experience in matters like literature, science, art and social service.

- A nominated member is allowed to join a political party within the first six months of taking membership.

4. CBSE has launched the Pariksha Sangam portal (July 6, 2022)

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has launched the Pariksha Sangam portal for the convenience of the students.

- Pariksha Sangam will provide at one place various examination related procedures to be conducted by the School Regional Offices and CBSE Headquarters.

- It has 3 parts – School (Ganga), Regional Office (Yamuna) and Head Office (Saraswati).

- Here complete information will be given from the registration of the student to the declaration of the board's examination results.

- Almost all the processes of CBSE are online which is going on through various portals. Now all these activities will be integrated in the Pariksha Sangam portal by CBSE.

- Students will be able to register their request for revaluation, photocopy of answer sheets through this portal.

- Apart from all this, this portal will also be used in the registration process of class 9th and 11th.

- **About Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)**

- The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is a national level board of education in India for public and private schools, controlled and managed by the Government of India.

- The first education board to be set up in India was the Uttar Pradesh Board of High School and Intermediate Education in 1921

- Formation- 2 July 1929

- Headquarters- New Delhi

- Chairperson- Nidhi Chibber

5. Odisha tops first national food security ranking, Tripura best among smaller states (July 6, 2022)

Union Food Minister Piyush Goyal released on 5 July the first State Ranking Index for implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013.

- **Odisha** has been placed at the top position in the 'State Ranking Index for NFSA' among the general category states.

- In the ranking, **Uttar Pradesh** is second and **Andhra Pradesh** is at third position.

- **Tripura** ranks first among special category states/UTs followed by **Himachal Pradesh** and **Sikkim** respectively.

- In addition, among the 3 union territories where Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)-cash driven, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu are in top position.

- **Three key pillars for ranking**

- The index for ranking of states and union territories is built on three major pillars-

1. NFSA - Coverage, Targeting and Provisions of the Act

2. Delivery platform

3. nutritional initiatives

- These pillars cover end-to-end implementation of NFSA through TPDS.

- **State Ranking Index for NFSA**

- It attempts to document the status and progress of implementation of NFSA across the country and various reform initiatives in consultation with the states.

- It highlights the reforms undertaken by States and UTs and creates a cross-learning environment and scale-up reform measures by all States and UTs.

- The index largely focuses on NFSA distribution and will include future buyouts, PMGKAY distributions.

- **National Food Security Act (NFSA)**

- It was enacted on July 5, 2013.

- NFSA provides a legal right to persons belonging to "eligible households" to receive food grains at subsidized prices under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

- It provides rice at Rs 3/kg, wheat at Rs 2/kg and coarse grain at Re 1/kg under the TPDS.

- Overall, the NFSA caters to 67% of the total population.

- It is responsible for the provision of subsidized food grains to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population of all states and union territories.

- The Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), Public Distribution System (PDS), and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) are covered under this Act.

6. Airports Authority of India inks pact with UP government to operate 5 airports (July 5, 2022)

The Airports Authority of India has signed an operation and management agreement to operate five airports owned by the UP government for a period of 30 years.

- These five airports are Aligarh, Azamgarh, Chitrakoot, Mirpur and Shravasti.

- The airport will be developed by the state government and will be operated and managed by the Airports Authority of India as a service provider.

- In the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, a letter of agreement (MoU) was exchanged between Additional Chief Secretary of Civil Aviation Department SP Goyal and AAI President AK Pathak.

- The communication navigation monitoring services will also be provided by the Airports Authority of India, for which the state government will enter into a separate agreement.

- After the MoU, now the process of licensing of these airports will be done and soon all the five airports will start air service.

- **About Airports Authority of India**

- Airports Authority of India is an organisation/authority functioning under the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India.

- The Airports Authority of India (AAI) manages a total of 125 airports which include 11 international airports, 8 customs airports, 81 domestic airports and 25 civil enclaves in defence airfields.

- Established- 1st April, 1995

- President- Sanjeev Kumar

- Headquarters - New Delhi

7. Saving Chenkurinji from climate change (July 5, 2022)

Chenkurinji (Gluta travancorica) is a species endemic to the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve. Its numbers are continuously decreasing due to climate change.

- **About Chenkurinji tree**

- It belongs to the Anacardiaceae family.

- This tree was once found in abundance in the hills of the southern parts of Aryankavu Pass, Kollam district (Kerala), but over the years its presence is rapidly decreasing from this area.

- It is susceptible to climate change and the current status of these species is poor due to low regeneration.

- There are sufficient numbers of these trees but most of them are not productive, thereby creating a negative trend in its population.

- Flowering and fruiting rates are very poor in most trees.

- **Medicinal properties of the tree**

- It has medicinal properties and is used to lower blood pressure and treat arthritis.

- The forest department has launched a 'Save Chenkurinji' campaign.

8. PM Narendra Modi inaugurate Digital India Week 2022 at Gandhinagar (July 4, 2022)

Digital India Week 2022 inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Gandhinagar in Gujarat on 4 July.

- During the programme, several digital initiatives were launched by the Prime Minister with an aim to streamline service delivery to increase access to technology, make life easier and promote startups.

- The State Information Technology Department (IT) is organizing this event to mark the completion of seven years of Digital India.

- Theme of Digital India Week - New India Technology Inspiration

- PM also announced the first cohort of 30 Institutions to be supported under the Chips to Startup Programme.

- **Objective of the program**

- Enhancing technology penetration, streamlining service delivery systems to ease lifestyles and promoting startups.

- **'Digital India Bhashini'**

- On this occasion, 'Digital India Bhashini' was unveiled by the Prime Minister.

- This will enable easy access to the Internet and digital services in Indian languages, including voice-based access, and help in content creation in Indian languages.

- **'Digital India GENESIS'**

- PM also launched 'Digital India GENESIS'.

- It is a national deep-tech startup platform that will explore, support, develop and build successful startups in Tier-II and Tier-III cities in India.

- A total outlay of Rs 750 crore is envisaged for this scheme.

- **'Indiastack.global'**

- PM also launched 'Indiastack.global'.

- It is a global repository of key projects implemented under India Stack like Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker, Coin Vaccination Platform and Government e-Marketplace.

- This offering from India for the Global Public Digital Goods Repository will help position India as a leader in building population-scale digital transformation projects.

- It will also prove to be of great help to other countries that are looking for such technological solutions.

- **'MyScheme'**

- The Prime Minister dedicated the citizens 'MyScheme'.

It is a service discovery platform facilitating access to Government Schemes.

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• It aims to offer a one-stop search and discovery portal where users can find the plans they are eligible for.

• 'Meri Pehchaan'

• The PM also dedicated the citizens 'Meri Pehchaan'- National Single Sign On for One Citizen Login.

• National Single Sign-On is a user authentication service in which a set of credentials provides access to multiple online applications or services.

• About Digital India Programme

• It was launched on July 1, 2015.

• Its vision is to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.

• Its aims are-

1. creating digital infrastructure,

2. delivering services digitally

3. making people digitally literate

9. Ashadhi Bij - The Kutch community's New Year (July 2, 2022)

Ashadhi Beej is celebrated every year on the second day of the month of Ashadha as Hindu New Year by the Kutch community in the Kutch region of Gujarat.

• Important facts

• In 2022, it was celebrated on 1 July. It is also known as Kutchi New Year.

• Kutchi New Year is a traditional festival and is celebrated in homes.

• This festival marks the beginning of rains in the Kutch region of Gujarat.

• During Ashadhi seed, the humidity in the atmosphere is tested to predict which crop will do better in the coming monsoon.

• Lord Ganesha, Goddess Lakshmi and other regional deities are worshipped on this occasion.

• In other parts of Gujarat, the Hindu New Year is celebrated on Kartik Shukla Paksha after Diwali.

• Rann of Kutch

• The Rann of Kutch in India is located in the Thar Desert biogeographic region in the Indian state of Gujarat. This area is also spread in the Sindh province of Pakistan.

- The Rann of Kutch covers a vast area of about 10,000 square miles and is located between the Gulf of Kutch and the mouth of the Indus River in southern Pakistan.

- In the north-east corner of the Rann of Kutch is the Luni River, which originates from Rajasthan.

- The Rann of Kutch is counted among the wetlands of India.

- The Gulf of Kutch lies to the west of this region and the Gulf of Khambhat is to the east.

- The region is home to a large population of the wild Asian donkey, which is a member of the wild horse family.

- The Indian Wild Ass Sanctuary is famous for the Chote Rann of Kutch.

- The Rann of Kutch is the only region in India that gives refuge to migratory flamingos.

- The region is home to a total of 13 species of lark.

- Some of the other bird species found in the marshlands of Kutch include Ibis, Spoonbill, Common Crane, Pelican etc.

- The Biosphere Reserve of the Rann of Kutch is considered an important area for the conservation of critically endangered vulture species.

10. Habitat World Cities Report 2022 (July 2, 2022)

Recently the United Nations published its report titled "Habitat World Cities Report 2022".

- The urban population in India is projected to reach 675 million in 2035. This will be the second highest figure after China.

- After the COVID-19 pandemic, the global urban population is on the rise again. This will increase to 2.2 billion by 2050.

- India's urban population is expected to reach 675,456,000 in 2035 as compared to 483,099,000 in 2020.

- The percentage of population in India's urban areas will be 43.2 percent by 2035.

- **Global scenario**

- The urban population in China is projected to reach 1.05 billion in 2035.

- The urban population in Asia will increase to 2.99 billion in 2035.

- In the past two decades, India and China experienced rapid urbanisation and economic growth. As a result, the number of people living in poverty has decreased.

- Large economies like China and India account for the bulk of the world's population. The growth trajectory in these countries has affected global inequality.

- **About United Nations Human Settlement Program (UN-Habitat) -**

- It was established in 1978.

- UN-Habitat is the United Nations agency for human settlements assigned by the United Nations General Assembly the task of promoting socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities towards the goal of providing affordable housing for all.

- Headquarters- Nairobi, Kenya

- Executive Director- Maimunah Mohammad Sharif