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1. India and New Zealand signed MoU to enhance cooperation in the field of civil aviation (Aug. 30, 2023)

India and New Zealand recently formalized a cooperative agreement through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen their cooperation in the field of civil aviation.

An Overview of the News

- The MoU covers a wide scope of cooperation, focusing on key aspects such as the facilitation of new flight routes, the establishment of codeshare services, the allocation of traffic rights, and the determination of capacity entitlements.
- Eminent officials present: The signing ceremony took place in the capital of India, New Delhi with the presence of eminent officials from both countries. Civil Aviation Secretary Rajeev Bansal and New Zealand High Commissioner David Paine were the signatories to the MoU.
- The event was attended by key ministers including India's Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and New Zealand's Trade and Export Development Minister Damian O'Connor.

Major Provisions for Airlines

- The MoU outlines specific provisions to benefit New Zealand's airlines. New Zealand's designated airlines are permitted to operate an unrestricted number of services using any type of aircraft.
- New Zealand airlines have also been granted third and fourth freedom traffic rights for connectivity to six major Indian cities: **New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Kolkata.**
- Indian airlines designated by the agreement are similarly provided with enhanced operational freedom. They have the authority to operate unlimited services with any type of aircraft.
- Additionally, Indian airlines have been granted third and fourth freedom traffic rights to travel to and from important New Zealand cities: Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. In addition, the Government of India will later designate three additional destinations in New Zealand for equal traffic rights.

2. Sri Lanka hosts 'Karnataka Cultural Festival' for the first time (Aug. 29, 2023)

Sri Lanka hosted the Karnataka Cultural Festival on August 27, 2023.

An Overview of the News

- This program is organized by the **International Cultural Council of India, Swami Vivekananda Cultural Center, and M.E. Organized in association with the Global Peace Foundation.**

- The festival featured a variety of performances from over 30 artists from Karnataka: traditional dances, folk music, multilingual poems, ballet, and puppet shows
- The focus was on **highlighting the cultural heritage and heritage of Karnataka.**
- The cast included lead artist Madhuri Bondre and her troupe.

About Karnataka

- It is a state in southwest India and is bordered by Maharashtra to the north, Goa to the northwest, Andhra Pradesh to the east, Tamil Nadu to the southeast, and Kerala to the southwest.
- Chief Minister - **Siddaramaiah**
- Governor - **Thawar Chand Gehlot**
- Official language - **Kannada**
- Official Dance - **Yakshagana**

About Sri Lanka

- Capital - **Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte**
- President - **Ranil Wickremesinghe**
- Prime Minister - **Dinesh Gunawardena**
- Official Language - **Sinhala**

3. SBI launches innovative Aadhaar-based enrollment for social security schemes through Customer Service Points (CSPs) (Aug. 29, 2023)

State Bank of India (SBI) on August 25, 2023, introduced a new Customer Service Point (CSP) with an aim to enhance convenience for its customers through technology.

An Overview of the News

- SBI's Customer Service Points (CSPs) allow hassle-free and paperless enrollment for important social security schemes using Aadhaar.
- Customers can now easily enroll in schemes like **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), and Atal Pension Yojana (APY) with just their Aadhaar.**

Enhanced coverage of social security schemes

- SBI's initiative is aimed at taking the benefits of flagship social security schemes to a wider audience.

- The goal is **to ensure that those who need these schemes the most can take advantage of them.**
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Promoting Financial Inclusion through Innovation

- SBI's technology-driven approach empowers financial inclusion.
- By simplifying the enrollment process, SBI aims to uplift the marginalized and underprivileged sections of society.

Streamlined Enrollment Process

- Customers can now enroll in social security schemes using the Aadhaar-based mechanism, thereby eliminating the need for passbooks.
- SBI's advanced system speeds up the enrollment process, making it more convenient for customers.

Reduction in Paperwork

- The new system significantly reduces paperwork, making the overall process simpler and more efficient.
- Customers no longer need to carry passbooks to the CSP outlet for enrolment.

About SBI, or State Bank of India

- It is one of the largest and oldest banks in India.
- It was established in 1806 as the Bank of Calcutta and later renamed as the Imperial Bank of India.
- In 1955, the Government of India nationalized the bank and it became the State Bank of India.
- It offers a wide range of banking products and services to its customers including Personal Banking, Corporate Banking, Agricultural Banking, and International Banking.
- Its personal banking services include savings and current accounts, loans, credit cards, and investment products.
- It has launched several digital initiatives to provide convenient banking services to its customers. These include SBI YONO, an integrated digital banking platform, and SBI Quick, a mobile app for instant banking services.
- SBI has received several awards and honors for its performance and services, including the Best Bank Award by Euromoney Magazine, the Best Retail Bank Award in India by Asian Banker, and the Best Bank Award in India by Global Finance Magazine.

Headquarters - **Mumbai, Maharashtra**

SBI Chairman - **Dinesh Khara**

4. Indian Navy participates in 5th 'AUSINDEX-23' held in Australia (Aug. 28, 2023)

From August 22 to 25, 2023, the 5th edition of the biennial AUSINDEX maritime exercise occurred in Sydney, Australia, conducted collaboratively by the Indian Navy and the Royal Australian Navy.

An Overview of the News

- Indian Navy and Royal Australian Navy (RAN) jointly organized the exercise.
- The participating ships included **INS Sahyadri, INS Kolkata from the Indian Navy, and HMAS Choules and HMAS Brisbane from RAN**
- The exercise not only involved ships and their helicopters but also fighter aircraft and maritime patrol aircraft.
- Over the course of 4 days, AUSINDEX involved a series of complex exercises covering all three maritime operational domains.

Indian Navy (IN):

- It is the marine branch of the **Indian Armed Forces.**
- The **President of India is the Supreme Commander of the Indian Navy.**
- The Chief of Naval Staff, **a four-star admiral, leads the Navy.**
- The Navy operates as a blue-water force in areas such as the **Persian Gulf, the Horn of Africa, and the Malacca Straits.**

Establishment - **26 January 1950**

Headquarters - **New Delhi**

Motto - **Sham no Varunah (Sanskrit)** Translation - 'May the Lord of the waters be auspicious unto us'

Navy Day - **4 December**

About Australia

- It is a sovereign country located in the Southern Hemisphere and is geographically isolated from the rest of the world.
- Capital - **Canberra**
- Emperor - **Charles III**
- Governor-General - **David Hurley**
- Prime Minister - **Anthony Albanese**

5. Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa re-elected for final term (Aug. 28, 2023)

Emmerson Mnangagwa was re-elected as the President of Zimbabwe for a second and final five-year term.

An Overview of the News

- The announcement of Mnangagwa's victory was immediately denied by the opposition party's spokesman, who criticized the quick announcement and lack of proper result verification.
- The results of Mnangagwa's re-election ensure the continued dominance of the ZANU-PF party in governing the country.
- The party has maintained control of Zimbabwe's leadership throughout the 43-year period since the country's renaming in 1980, which followed liberation from white minority rule.

About Zimbabwe

- It is a landlocked country in Southern Africa.
- The Zambezi River flows through Zimbabwe and is home to Victoria Falls.
- Victoria Falls plunges 108 meters down the Batoka Gorge.
- Downstream of the Zambezi River are the Matusadona and Mana Pools National Parks.

Capital - **Harare**

Currency - **United States Dollar**

Official languages - **Shona, English, Tshwa language, Xhosa**

6. One-Day Open House Consultation Organized by NHRC in Mumbai (Aug. 24, 2023)

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is hosting a one-day Open House Consultation in Mumbai on 25 August.

An Overview of the News

- The consultation focuses on the topic of health insurance for persons with disabilities.
- The event is a collaborative effort between NHRC, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), and the National Center for Promotion of Employment of Persons with Disabilities, Mumbai.
- The main objective of the conference is to understand the challenges faced by Persons with Disabilities (PWD) while seeking insurance from providers, especially for retail policies.

- It also aims to address the challenges faced by insurance companies in offering policies tailored to persons with disabilities and regulatory issues looked after by IRDAI.
- This program will explore the difficulties faced by the insurance industry in providing comprehensive insurance services to persons with disabilities.
- **The conference will be divided into two sessions:**
 - Session 1: Identification of problems faced by persons with disabilities while seeking insurance facilities.
 - Session 2: Identification of provisions and challenges faced by insurance companies in providing coverage to persons with disabilities along with possible solutions.
- The conference will be presided over by Dr. Dnyaneshwar Manohar Mulay, Member, NHRC.
- Joint Secretary Devendra Kumar Nim and other officers of NHRC will also participate in the conference.

7. Last survivors of the Amazon rainforest tribe Piripkura found in Brazil (Aug. 22, 2023)



Last survivors of the Amazon rainforest tribe Piripkura found in Brazil

Three remaining survivors of the Amazon rainforest tribe - Piripkura found in Brazil

An Overview of the News

- In the heart of the Amazon rainforest, the Piripkura tribe remains one of the last bastions of indigenous culture.

- Despite having only three remaining members, they are engaged in the struggle against
- impending threats such as deforestation from logging and mining activities.

Piripkura Tribe:

- The Piripkura tribe comes from the Mato Grosso region of Brazil and leads a nomadic lifestyle.
- Renowned for their reclusiveness, they strive to preserve their traditional lifestyle.
- This indigenous group has faced significant hardships due to the invasion of their lands by illegal logging, mining, and other exploitative activities.
- Their territory faces threats from deforestation and resource exploitation.

Key facts about the Amazon rainforest:

- The Amazon rainforest, an extensive tropical rainforest, covers the basin of the Amazon River and its tributaries in northern South America, covering a vast area of 2,300,000 square miles.
- Covering about 40% of Brazil's total land area, it is bordered by the Guiana Highlands to the north, the Andes Mountains to the west, the Brazilian Central Plateau to the south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east.

Other tribes living in the Amazon rainforest:**Yanomami:**

- One of the largest indigenous groups in the Amazon.
- Residence in Brazil and Venezuela.

Kayapo:

- Found in Para and Mato Grosso, Brazil.
- Known for vibrant traditions like body painting and beadwork.

Ashaninka:

- Habitats of Peru and Brazil.
- Supporters of strong cultural identity and rights.
- The focus was on protecting the land from harvesting and illegal crops.

Tucano:

- Located in the upper Amazon in Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela.
- Known for spiritual practices and rainforest wisdom.

Awa:

- One of the most endangered tribes of the Brazilian state of Maranhao.
- Threatened by illegal logging and mining.

8. Indian Coast Guard and Philippine Coast Guard sign MoU to strengthen maritime cooperation (Aug. 22, 2023)

The Indian Coast Guard and the Philippine Coast Guard have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen their maritime cooperation.

An Overview of the News

- The objective of the MoU is to enhance bilateral maritime cooperation between the two countries with a focus on ensuring safe, secure, and clean seas in the region.
- The MoU was signed in New Delhi by Rakesh Pal, Director General of, the Indian Coast Guard, and Admiral Artemio M. Abu, Commandant of, the Philippine Coast Guard.
- The two sides held their inaugural bilateral meeting after the signing of the MoU, addressing a range of maritime issues.

Areas of Focus: The key areas of cooperation under the MoU include:

1. Maritime Law Enforcement: Strengthening cooperation in the enforcement of maritime laws.
2. Maritime Search and Rescue: To enhance joint efforts in search and rescue operations at sea.
3. Marine Pollution Response: Collaborating to respond effectively to marine pollution incidents.

Delegation visit: A five-member delegation of the Philippine Coast Guard is on an official visit to India from 20 August to 24 August.

9. India New Car Assessment Program (India NCAP) launched (Aug. 21, 2023)

On August 22, 2023, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari will launch the India New Car Assessment Program (Bharat NCAP).

An Overview of the News

- This initiative represents significant progress in the commitment of the Government of India to enhance road safety.
- The primary focus is on raising safety standards for motor vehicles weighing up to 3.5 tonnes across India.
- The central goal of the program is to equip car customers with a valuable tool to compare the crash safety features of various motor vehicles available in the market.

Voluntary Participation by Car Manufacturers:

- Car manufacturers have the option of voluntarily submitting their vehicles for testing as per the Automotive Industry Standard (AIS) 197.
- The test results will determine star ratings in two categories: Adult Occupant (AOP) and Child Occupant (COP).

Informed Purchase Decision:

- Potential car buyers can refer to these star ratings to measure and compare the safety standards of different vehicles.
- This information will play a vital role in helping customers make an informed decision before purchasing a vehicle.

10. Central Water Commission Chairman launches "Floodwatch" mobile app for real-time flood forecasts (Aug. 19, 2023)



Central Water Commission Chairman launches "Floodwatch" mobile app for real-time flood forecasts

Central Water Commission (CWC) Chairman Kushwinder Vohra launched the "Floodwatch" mobile application.

An Overview of the News

- The objective of the "Floodwatch" mobile app is to disseminate real-time flood information and forecasts up to 7 days to the public through mobile phones.
- User-friendly app developed in-house with readable and audio transmission available in English and Hindi.

Key Features of "Floodwatch" App:

- Users can check the current flood conditions across the country in real-time.
- The app collects river flow data in real-time from various sources.
- Provides flood forecast (24 hours) or flood advisory (7 days) of Central Water Commission.
- Users can directly select stations on the map or search by station name.
- The map zooms in on the station location when selected from the dropdown menu.
- Users can access flood forecasts or advisories (24 hours or 7 days).
- Select Options: Specific Station, State, or Basin from the dropdown menu.
- The app is accessible on Android devices through the Google Play Store; the iOS version coming soon.

Advanced Technologies Employed:

- "Floodwatch" uses satellite data analysis, mathematical modeling, and real-time monitoring.
- Its objective is to provide accurate and timely flood forecasts.