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#01

Union Cabinet approves international status for Madurai airport

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for granting international status to Madurai airport. This move is expected to boost the airport's connectivity and facilitate easier approvals for foreign airlines. The airport currently handles limited international flights. With this new status, the airport is likely to see an increase in regular international routes. The development is seen as a significant boost to the region's economy and tourism industry.

Background

The Madurai airport has been seeking international status for several years. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has been working to upgrade the airport's infrastructure to meet international standards, with the aim of increasing its connectivity and appeal to foreign airlines.

Key Points

- ◆ **Union Cabinet — International Status:** Approved for Madurai airport.
- ◆ **Airports Authority of India (AAI) — Airport Upgradation:** Infrastructure development to meet international standards.
- ◆ **Madurai Airport — International Routes:** Expected increase in regular international flights.
- ◆ **Foreign Airlines — Approval Process:** Easier approvals for operating in Madurai airport.
- ◆ **Regional Economy — Tourism Industry:** Expected boost to the local economy and tourism sector.

Policy Implication

The granting of international status to Madurai airport is expected to have a positive impact on the regional economy and tourism industry. The increased connectivity and easier approvals for foreign airlines will likely attract more tourists and businesses to the region, contributing to its growth and development.

 The Hindu

#02

Kerala Cabinet approves new anti-narcotics bureau

The Kerala Cabinet has given its nod to set up a new anti-narcotics bureau, which will be headed by an ADGP-rank officer. The bureau will have 3 units, including a narcotics intelligence unit, a narcotics investigation unit, and a narcotics prosecution unit. The new bureau is expected to have 300 personnel, including 20 DySPs, 50 inspectors, and 100 sub-inspectors. The Kerala government has allocated ₹10 crore for the initial setup of the bureau.

Background

The decision to set up a new anti-narcotics bureau comes in the wake of a growing concern over the increasing drug abuse cases in Kerala. The state has seen a significant rise in drug-related crimes in recent years, prompting the government to take stringent measures to curb the menace. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, provides the legal framework for the government to tackle drug-related issues.

Key Points

- ◆ **Kerala Cabinet — Anti-Narcotics Bureau:** Approved the formation of a new anti-narcotics bureau.
- ◆ **Kerala Government — Anti-Narcotics Bureau:** Allocated ₹10 crore for the initial setup of the bureau.
- ◆ **Anti-Narcotics Bureau — Personnel:** Will have 300 personnel, including 20 DySPs, 50 inspectors, and 100 sub-inspectors.
- ◆ **Anti-Narcotics Bureau — Units:** Will have 3 units, including a narcotics intelligence unit, a narcotics investigation unit, and a narcotics prosecution unit.
- ◆ **Kerala Government — ADGP:** The bureau will be headed by an ADGP-rank officer.

Policy Implication

The formation of the new anti-narcotics bureau is expected to strengthen the state's efforts to combat drug abuse and related crimes. The bureau will work in coordination with other law enforcement agencies to identify and prosecute those involved in drug trafficking and other narcotics-related activities.

 The Hindu

#03

Chhattisgarh Cabinet approves new anti-conversion law draft

The Chhattisgarh Cabinet has approved a draft of the Chhattisgarh Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2023. The Bill aims to prevent forced conversions in the state. With this approval, the decks are now clear for the introduction of the Bill in the State Assembly, which is currently in session. The Bill proposes stringent penalties for those found guilty of forced conversions. The Chhattisgarh government has been working on this legislation for some time now.

Background

The issue of forced conversions has been a concern in Chhattisgarh for several years. In 2020, the state government had announced its intention to bring in a law to prevent such conversions, citing instances of forced conversions in the state. The draft Bill is a follow-up to this announcement, and its approval by the Cabinet is a significant step towards its enactment.

Key Points

- ◆ **The Chhattisgarh Cabinet — Chhattisgarh Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2023:** Approved draft for introduction in State Assembly.
- ◆ **The Chhattisgarh government — Anti-conversion law:** Proposes stringent penalties for those found guilty of forced conversions.
- ◆ **The State Assembly — Legislative session:** Currently in session, where the Bill is expected to be introduced.
- ◆ **The Chhattisgarh government — Legislation:** Has been working on this for some time now, with the aim of preventing forced conversions.
- ◆ **The Chhattisgarh Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2023 — Penalty:** Proposes punishment for those found guilty of forced conversions.

Policy Implication

The approval of the draft Bill has significant implications for the state's legislation on forced conversions. If enacted, the law would provide a legal framework for preventing and punishing forced conversions in Chhattisgarh. The introduction of the Bill in the State Assembly is the next step in the legislative process.

 The Hindu

#04

Cabinet nod for 23% hike in cost of link road from Noida airport to Delhi-Mumbai Expressway

The link road project, which will connect Noida airport to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, has been approved by the Cabinet with a revised cost of ₹3,630 crore, marking a 23% increase. The 31-km link road will be developed on Hybrid Annuity Mode in Haryana and U.P. Notably, 11 km of the link road will be an elevated highway. The project aims to improve connectivity between Noida airport and the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway. The revised cost and project details were recently announced.

Background

The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway is a significant infrastructure project aimed at reducing travel time between Delhi and Mumbai. The link road from Noida airport to the expressway is a crucial component of this project, and its development is expected to enhance connectivity and facilitate economic growth in the region. The Hybrid Annuity Mode, under which the project will be developed, is a popular model for infrastructure projects in India, allowing for private sector participation and reducing the financial burden on the government.

Key Points

- ◆ **Cabinet — Link Road Project:** Approved a 23% hike in the project cost to ₹3,630 crore.
- ◆ **National Highways Authority of India — Hybrid Annuity Mode:** The 31-km link road will be developed under this model in Haryana and U.P.
- ◆ **Project Details — Elevated Highway:** 11 km of the link road will be an elevated highway, enhancing connectivity and reducing travel time.
- ◆ **Cabinet — Project Approval:** The revised project cost and details were recently approved, marking a significant step forward for the project.
- ◆ **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways — Infrastructure Development:** The project is part of the government's efforts to improve infrastructure and enhance connectivity in the region.

Policy Implication

The approval of the revised project cost and details marks a significant step forward for the link road project, which is expected to improve connectivity and facilitate economic growth in the region. The project's development under the Hybrid Annuity Mode is also expected to attract private sector participation and reduce the financial burden on the government.

 The Hindu

Now, Rajasthan Assembly passes Bill to repeal two-child norm for ULB elections

The Rajasthan Assembly has passed a Bill to repeal the two-child norm for Urban Local Body (ULB) elections. The two-child norm was introduced in 2019, which barred individuals with more than two children from contesting ULB elections. The Bill aims to remove this restriction, allowing individuals with more than two children to participate in ULB elections. The move is expected to impact approximately 10% of the total ULB seats in the state. The Rajasthan government has stated that the decision was made to increase participation in local governance.

Background

The two-child norm was introduced in 2019 as part of the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Act, 2019. The Act aimed to promote family planning and population control, but it faced criticism from various quarters, including opposition parties and social organizations, who argued that it was an unfair restriction on individuals' right to participate in the democratic process.

Key Points

- ◆ **Rajasthan Assembly — ULB Elections:** Repealed two-child norm.
- ◆ **Rajasthan Government — Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Act, 2019:** Introduced two-child norm in 2019.
- ◆ **Rajasthan Government — ULB Elections:** Approximately 10% of total ULB seats expected to be impacted.
- ◆ **Rajasthan Government — Local Governance:** Aims to increase participation in local governance.
- ◆ **Rajasthan Assembly — Bill:** Passed to remove restriction on individuals with more than two children.

Policy Implication

The repeal of the two-child norm is expected to have a significant impact on the upcoming ULB elections in Rajasthan, with more individuals now eligible to contest. However, the move may also raise concerns about the effectiveness of population control measures in the state.

QUICK BITES — Q&A

1. Under which article does the Supreme Court direct the formation of special tribunals to hear appeals?

Answer: Article 142

2. What is the key provision of the Maharashtra government's early departure scheme for women staff in MMR?

Answer: Flexible working hours

3. By which year has the age-checking technology come of age amid the wave of kids' online safety laws?

Answer: 2026

4. What is the name of the award given to six persons by IIT-M?

Answer: First Principles Teachers Award

5. Under which article does the Supreme Court allow withdrawal of life support to a person in coma?

Answer: Article 21

6. What is the purpose of the special tribunals directed to be formed by the Supreme Court in Bengal SIR case?

Answer: To hear appeals of people left out of Bengal SIR

7. Who confers the First Principles Teachers Award?

Answer: IIT-M

8. Under which ministry does the railway project inaugurated by the PM in Kerala fall?

Answer: Ministry of Railways
