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India's passport rank improves to 83 from 90: Henley Passport Index 2022



- India's passport power has improved this quarter compared to 2021. It now ranks at 83rd position in the Henley Passport Index 2022, climbing seven places from 90th rank last year (2021).
- The current rankings are for the first quarter of 2022.

Key Points

- India shares the position with Sao Tome and Principe in Central Africa, behind Rwanda and Uganda.
- India now has visa-free access to 60 destinations worldwide with Oman and Armenia being the latest additions. India has added 35 more destinations since 2006.

Best Passports:

- Japan and Singapore have been ranked 1st, with passport holders having access to 192 destinations visa-free.

Worst Passports:

- Afghanistan with access to just 26 countries, emerged as the worst performer.

Henley Passport Index:

- Since 2005, Henley Passport Index ranks world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without prior visa and is based on data from International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Source: The Hindu

India – South Korea Bilateral Trade Talks



- Yeo Han-Koo, Minister for Trade of South Korea held discussions with Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution and Textiles in New Delhi.

Key Points

- Both the Ministers held wide ranging discussions covering the whole gamut of Bilateral Trade and Investment related aspects.

CEPA negotiations:

- The Ministers agreed to impart fresh momentum to the discussions on **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** up-gradation negotiations and also promote extensive **B2B (Business-to-Business)** interactions on trade and

investment between the industry leaders of the two countries.

Bilateral Trade:

- India and South Korea set a bilateral trade target of USD50 billion before 2030, which was agreed at the summit meeting in 2018.
- These regular negotiations shall be a forum to discuss the difficulties of the business community from both countries and emerging trade-related issues including supply chain resilience.
- India's total exports to South Korea in FY21 were about \$4.68 billion against imports of \$12.77 billion.

Multilateral Platforms Shared by Both the Countries:

- United Nations
- G20
- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- ASEAN Plus
- East Asia Summit (EAS)

Note:

India's Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):

- India has signed CEPAs with South Korea and Japan.
- In 2021, India and the United Arab Emirates formally launched negotiations on the India-UAE CEPA.

Source: Indian Express

Prime Minister Modi inaugurates MSME Technology Centre at Puducherry



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a Technology Centre of the MSME Ministry, established at Puducherry, on the occasion of National youth day.
- He inaugurated 11 new medical colleges and a new campus of Central Institute of Classical Tamil (CICT) in Tamil Nadu.

Key Points

- This World Class Technology Centre set up with an investment of about Rs. 122 crore is spread across 10 acres, will train 20,000 youth, support 2000 MSMEs and incubate 200 Start Ups, thereby propelling the local economy to great heights.
- The Technology Centres across the country developed under the flagship Technology Centre Systems Program are supporting existing and prospective MSMEs by developing production facilities, manpower, providing consultancy and developing competitive edge through adoption of best practices.

Source: PIB

Report of second quarter of Quarterly Employment Survey (QES)

- Union Minister for Labour & Employment, Bhupender Yadav released the report of second quarter of **Quarterly Employment Survey (QES)** part of **All-India Quarterly Establishment-based Employment Survey (AQEES)**.
- The estimated total employment in the nine selected sectors in this round of QES (July-September 2021) came out as 3.10 crore approximately, which is 2 lakhs higher than the estimated employment (3.08 crore) from the first round of QES (April-June 2021).

- It is worthwhile to mention here that the total employment for these nine sectors taken collectively was reported as 2.37 crore in the sixth EC (2013-14).



Key Points

- The AQEES has been taken up to provide frequent (quarterly) updates about the employment and related variables of establishments in both organized and unorganized segments of nine selected sectors which account for a great majority of the total employment in the non-farm establishments.
- The nine selected sectors are Manufacturing, Construction, Trade, Transport, Education, Health, Accommodation & Restaurant, IT/BPO and Financial Services.
- The report on Quarterly Employment Survey being a demand side survey along with supply side survey i.e., Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) will bridge data gaps on employment in the country.

Source: PIB

Indian Government to become single largest shareholder in Vodafone Idea



- **Vodafone Idea's** board has informed the telecom department that it will opt for converting the interest on spectrum and **Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR)** dues into government equity.
- In this case, it would mean that the government will hold 35.8% stake and become the single largest shareholder in the third largest telecom of the country.

Key Points

- The Vodafone had to pay Rs 58,254 crores of Adjusted Gross Revenue to the Government of India. It has already paid around 7,000 crores of rupees.
- The company has converted this pending amount into shares.

Source: ET

DRDO flight tests final deliverable configuration of MPATGM

- Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) successfully flight tested the final deliverable configuration of **Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM)**.

Key Points

- The indigenously developed anti-tank missile is a low weight, fire & forget missile and is launched from a man portable launcher, integrated with thermal sight.
- The Indian Army has been mainly using various imported anti-tank guided missiles in the past, the DRDO has

been working on ATGMs to be launched from different platforms as part of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.



Note:

- The indigenously developed MPATGM, ATGM Nag and Helicopter launched ATGM Nag or Helina have been successfully tested in the recent past under various conditions.

Source: Indian Express

Alikhan Smailov named Kazakhstan's Prime Minister



- Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev nominated **Alikhan Smailov** as the Prime Minister.

Key Points

- Alikhan Smailov has served as First Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2019.
- This year, he served as the acting Prime Minister after the government resigned due to the fuel protests followed by terrorist uprising.

Source: TOI

IMF names Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas as next chief economist



- The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** said that it has appointed French-born University of California-Berkeley economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas as the IMF's next chief economist.
- He will succeed Gita Gopinath, who as previously announced will join the IMF's management team as First Deputy Managing Director.

Key Points

- Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas will start part-time on January 24, 2022, and transition to full-time Fund work on April 1, 2022.

Facts about IMF (International Monetary Fund):

- **Headquarters:** Washington, D.C., U.S
- **Formation:** December 1945
- **Membership:** 190 countries
- **Managing Director:** Kristalina Georgieva

Source: The Hindu

Actress Harshaali Malhotra receives Bharat Ratna Dr Ambedkar Award 2022



- 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan' actress **Harshaali Malhotra** received the prestigious 12th Bharat Ratna Dr Ambedkar Award 2022.

Key Points

- Harshaali Malhotra received the award from Bhagat Singh Koshyari, Governor of Maharashtra, for her performance in the film and for her contribution to the field of cinema.
- Harshaali featured in Bajrangi Bhaijaan, released in 2015, directed by Kabir Khan.

Source: HT