

Indian Passport Slips By 6 Places To 90th In The World's Ranking



India's rank has slipped by six places from last year to 90 on the Henley Passport Index 2021, which lists the world's most travel-friendly passports. Japan and Singapore hold the first rank on the passport index.

The index comes at a time when countries are easing travel restrictions for international visitors after almost two years since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rankings are based on the survey of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) data.

Japan and Singapore ranked on top of the list with their passport holders allowed to travel visa-free to 192 nations, while Germany and South Korea share the second spot. Japan has been ranked on top of the index for the third year consecutively. Meanwhile, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Yemen are among the least powerful passports.

China orders increase in coal production to tackle power crisis, resorts to hike in power tariffs



The Chinese government has ordered the coal producing regions to act immediately to expand their annual production capacity as China battles its worst power crunch and coal shortage in years amid all the efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

Increased demand for winter heating, slumped coal production, the record high coal prices and regulated power tariffs have caused massive electricity shortages that have prompted power rationing across the country, crippling industrial output and sending normal life to disarray in some parts. This may also cause major disruptions in the production of Christmas retail goods across the global supply chains. As coal prices continue to rise, more power plants are finding it difficult to operate and even face shutting down. Coal constitutes around 70% of China's energy mix, widely used for heating, power generation and steel making.

China-US hold 'constructive' talks in Switzerland seven months after acrimonious Alaska meeting



Top diplomats from China and the US held talks in Switzerland amid heightened tensions between the two countries over a range of issues.

China has said that talks with the US was 'constructive' as its top diplomat and in-charge of China's Foreign Policy Yang Jiechi met with U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in Zurich.

As per a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement, Yang highlighted the importance of positive gestures by Washington in improving the atmosphere and the two sides agreeing to a virtual summit between their Presidents near the end of this year. This is the second time in Biden Administration that senior officials of both countries met, seven months after their previous meeting in March, in Anchorage, Alaska, was marred by confrontations on various counts.

Journalists Maria Ressa, Dmitry Muratov win Nobel Peace Prize



The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to journalists Maria Ressa of Philippines and Dmitry Muratov of Russia for their fight for freedom of expression in their countries.

The pair were honoured for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace, said the chairwoman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Berit Reiss-Andersen.

They are representatives of all fearless journalists who stand up for truth in a world in which democracy and freedom of the press face increasingly adverse conditions, she said.

World Migratory Bird Day 2021: 09 October



Every year, World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) is officially celebrated twice in a year since it started in 2006. Firstly it is held on the Second Saturday of May and again on the Second Saturday of October.

In 2021, the WMBDD falls on May 08, 2021, and October 09, 2021.

The theme for 2021 WMBD is “Sing, Fly, Soar – Like a Bird!”

World Post Day: 09 October



World Post Day is celebrated each year on 9 October, the anniversary of the establishment of the Universal Postal Union in 1874 in the Swiss Capital, Bern.

The theme of 2021 World Post Day is “Innovate to recover.”

The purpose of World Post Day is to create awareness of the role of the postal sector in people’s and businesses’ everyday lives and its contribution to the social and economic development of countries.

Danish PM Mette Frederiksen arrives in India for 3-day visit



Prime Minister of Denmark Mette Frederiksen arrived in New Delhi on a three-day visit to India. Minister of State for External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi received her at the airport.

Ms Frederiksen will hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. She is also scheduled to call on President Ram Nath Kovind in the evening at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The visit by the Danish Prime Minister will give both sides an opportunity to discuss the entire gamut of bilateral relations and review the progress in implementation of the Green Strategic Partnership. Both sides will also discuss regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest.

Govt issues guidelines for optimum utilisation of power generation capacity



Ministry of Power issued guidelines for operationalising optimum utilisation of generating stations as per the requirement in the electricity grid.

According to the order of the ministry, it has been brought to the notice of the government that some power plants are not generating to their full capacity at any given time and the unutilised capacity remains idle as they are tied up under power purchase agreements.

Whereas in the public interest, such power needs to be despatched (supplied) where there is a requirement in the grid by the other users or consumers, it stated.

According to the Tariff Policy, 2016, power stations are required to be available and ready to dispatch supply at all times.

For optimum utilisation of un-requisitioned generation capacity of any generating stations regulated under Section 62 as well as those having PPA (power purchase agreement) under Section 63 of the Electricity Act, 2003, the generators have been permitted to sell power in the power market in consonance with laid down policy of the central government.

Unvaccinated govt. staff can't work from Oct. 16



No unvaccinated Delhi government employee will be allowed to attend office from October 16. In an order issued, the government said at least one dose of Covid vaccination is mandatory to attend office. All those who have not received even one dose will be marked absent.

Around 2 lakh people, including those in municipal corporations and educational institutions, are employed by the Delhi government. The move is aimed at ensuring 100% vaccination coverage in the huge workforce and making government offices safe. Most of the employee associations have welcomed the decision.

RBI keeps repo rate unchanged at 4 pc, reverse repo rate at 3.35 pc



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) kept the repo rate unchanged at 4 per cent and the reverse repo rate at 3.35 per cent. With this, RBI announced some developmental and regulatory decisions which will have an impact on the country's digital transactions and NBFCs customer interface.

In its policy statement, RBI announced digital payment solutions in offline mode also, where internet connectivity is low / not available (offline mode).

RBI said, The success of three pilot projects indicated that there is a scope to introduce such solutions, especially in remote areas. Now it has been proposed to introduce a framework for carrying out retail digital payments in offline mode across the country. The RBI statement also announced the enhancement of the limit of Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) of National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) per transaction from 2 lakh Rs. To 5 lakh Rs. The internet banking, mobile banking apps, bank branches, ATMs, SMS and IVRS will benefit from this. This will lead to further increase in digital payments and will provide an additional facility to customers for making digital payments beyond Rs 2 lakh.

Another important policy decision has been taken by the RBI about appointment of an internal ombudsman for Non Banking Financial Companies(NBFCs). With a view to further strengthen the internal grievance redress mechanism of NBFCs, it has been decided to introduce the Internal Ombudsman Scheme (IOS) for certain categories of NBFCs which have higher customer interface.

Air India returns to Tatas after group puts in winning bid of Rs 18,000 cr



The government announced the sale of the national carrier to the salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Group at an enterprise value of Rs 18,000 crore. This is the first major privatisation step in about two decades.

With this, Air India will return to the Tatas after 68 years. Along with the brand and the slots of the debt-ridden state-owned airline, the Tatas will get the low-cost subsidiary Air India Express and a 50 per cent stake in ground handling firm AISATS.

Of the bid amount of Rs 18,000 crore, the Tatas will pay Rs 2,700 crore in cash, while taking the remaining Rs 15,300 crore as debt.

Fitch Ratings cuts India's FY22 GDP growth projection to 8.7%



Fitch Ratings has cut India's economic growth forecast to 8.7% for the current fiscal but raised GDP growth projection for FY23 to 10%, saying the second COVID-19 wave delayed rather than derail the economic recovery.

Fitch Ratings said India's 'BBB-/Negative' sovereign rating "balances a still-strong medium-term growth outlook and external resilience from solid foreign- reserve buffers, against high public debt, a weak financial sector and some lagging structural factors".

Ladakh makes its debut in Nationals



Ladakh has reached a sporting milestone by making its debut in the National championships. Prior to this, Ladakhi archers' participation, as part of Jammu and Kashmir, in the National championships was minimal.

Gulzar Ahmed Khan, a former archer and manager of the Ladakh team, hopes participation in the elite event will promote the sport in the Union Territory.

India women to play in Pro League this season



India and Spain will play in the upcoming women's Hockey Pro League as replacement teams only for this season after pull-outs by Australia and New Zealand, the international Hockey Federation (FIH) said. The third season of the women's Hockey Pro League begins on October 13 with Olympic and world champion the Netherlands taking on Belgium.

Last month, Australia and New Zealand pulled out of the league as well as from the upcoming Junior World Cups and the Indoor World Cup due to COVID-related international travel restrictions.