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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 26-07-2024

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Israel Plans to Launch An e-Visa Program for Indians

Israel plans to introduce an e-visa program for Indian travellers, potentially starting later this year.

This will be the first e-visa program offered by Israel, as currently, no country is eligible for an e-visa to Israel.

Israel aims to attract 70,000 Indian tourists by 2025.

The target is set to increase to 100,000 Indian tourists by 2026.

By the end of September 2023, Israel had received approximately 41,800 Indian visitors.

In 2019, the number of Indian tourists was 65,100.

From January to June 2024, 5,700 Indian tourists visited Israel out of a total of 495,300 global tourists.

Major Indian markets for Israel include Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kochi, and Hyderabad.

50% of Indian tourists this year came from South India.

The safety of tourists is a top priority for the Israel Ministry of Tourism, which emphasizes careful security measures for both citizens and tourists.

Ivory Coast Becomes 10th African Country to Join the United Nations Water Convention

Ivory Coast joined the United Nations Water Convention, becoming the 53rd party to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

Aim is to enhance cooperative water management across borders, addressing growing water stress and the effects of climate change on shared water resources.

Ivory Coast is the 10th African nation to join the Convention.

Other African nations that have joined include Chad, Senegal, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Togo, Cameroon, Nigeria, Namibia, and The Gambia.

The Convention was initially established as a regional framework for the pan-European region.

The UN Water Convention, formally known as the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, was adopted in Helsinki in 1992 and entered into force in 1996.

It is a legally binding instrument aimed at promoting the sustainable management of shared water resources.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

European Space Agency Announces Mission to Investigate Apophis Asteroid

The European Space Agency (ESA) has announced a mission to study the Apophis asteroid when it passes by Earth at a very close distance in 2029.

ESA is the second major space agency, after National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), to commit a space mission for Apophis that was once considered to be on a pathway to collide with the Earth.

Apophis will come within 32,000 km of the Earth in 2029, offering space agencies a rare opportunity to study an asteroid from such close quarters.

ESA stated that an asteroid of such a large size comes this close to the Earth only once in about 5,000 to 10,000 years.

The Rapid Apophis Mission for Space Safety (RAMSES) spacecraft would approach the asteroid.

It will intercept the asteroid 99942 Apophis and accompany it through its safe but exceptionally close flyby of Earth in 2029.

Roughly 375 m across, Apophis will pass within 32,000 km from Earth's surface on 13 April, 2029.

It will be the closest approach of an asteroid of this size that humankind has ever known about in advance.

For a short time, Apophis will be visible to the naked eye in clear, dark skies for about 2 billion people across much of Europe, and Africa, and parts of Asia.

BANKING

Kotak Mahindra Bank Engages Grant Thornton Bharat as

External Auditor

Kotak Mahindra Bank (KMB) has appointed Grant Thornton Bharat as an external auditor for its IT systems.

This appointment comes months after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) barred the bank from adding new clients digitally.

In April 2024, the RBI identified deficiencies and non-compliances in several areas of Kotak Mahindra Bank's IT operations for 2022 and 2023.

The issues included IT inventory management, patch and change management, user access management, vendor risk management, and data security.

The RBI prohibited Kotak Mahindra Bank from issuing new credit cards.

Despite the restrictions, Kotak Mahindra Bank will continue to provide services to its existing customers.

DEFENCE

Indigenously-Built Talwar Class Frigate, 'Triput',Launched By GSL

The first indigenously built Talwar Class frigate named ‘Triput’ for the Indian Navy, constructed by the Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL), was launched into waters on 24 July 2024.

The ship is part of the two frigates India is building indigenously with the help of Russia.

The ship was launched into the water in a ceremony in Goa attended by P S Sreedharan Pillai, Governor of Goa and other high-ranking officials of the Indian Navy and Goa Shipyards Limited (GSL).

Russia is scheduled to deliver the first of the two ships, Tushil, in September 2024 and the other frigate, Tamal, by February 2025.

Triput is an advanced multi-purpose stealth frigate capable of anti-ship, anti-submarine, land-attack, anti-piracy, and search and rescue missions.

The ship is armed with a Brahmos missile and Shtil-1 air-defence system, which can defend against any type of air threat, including anti-ship cruise missiles, fighter jets, and drones.

The Triput frigate is 125-metre long and 15-metre wide and has a displacement of around 3,600 tons.

The ship is powered by the Ukrainian-origin Zorya gas-turbine engines that help the ship attain a maximum speed of 28 knots in water.

21st EX- KHAAN QUEST 2024

A contingent of the Indian Army has departed for Mongolia to participate in the multinational military exercise KHAAN QUEST.

The 21st multinational KHAAN QUEST exercise will be held in the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from 27 July to 9 August 2024.

Khaan QUEST is an annual multinational military exercise co-sponsored by the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and hosted annually by the Mongolian Armed Forces to promote regional peace and security in the region.

The multinational military exercise brings together the armed forces of various countries around the world to share their best practices in Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for conducting joint operations.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

Henley Passport Index 2024

India's rank on the Henley Passport Index improved by two places to 82, according to the recently released 2024 Henley Passport Index.

Singapore displaced Japan to become the world's most powerful passport, while Pakistan remained the fourth-worst-ranked country for the fourth consecutive year.

The Henley Passport Index is released by the United Kingdom-based Henley and Partners firm, which claims to be the world’s largest residence and citizenship advisory firm.

Henley and Partners compile the Henley Passport Index using the data of the International Air Transport Association (IATA)

A country is ranked based on the number of countries that permit visa-free travel to its citizens.

A country’s citizens who can travel to most countries visa-free will be ranked at the top, and the citizens of a country who can visit visa-free to the fewest countries will be ranked at the bottom.

The Index ranks 199 different passports (countries) and 227 travel destinations.

AWARDS & PRIZES

10th National Community Radio Awards Announced by

Ashwini Vaishnaw

The winners of the 10th National Community Radio Award were announced by the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Ashwini Vaishnaw, on 25 July 2024.

The minister also inaugurated the country's 500th Community Radio Station. The chief minister of Mizoram Lalduhoma was also present on the occasion.

The 500th Community Radio in the country has been set up at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) in Aizawl, Mizoram.

The Apna Radio 90.0 FM will disseminate information about daily weather updates, government schemes and agriculture-related information in an agrarian state.

The award is given in four categories, and winners are awarded a cash prize of Rs one lakh for the first prize, Rs seventy-five thousand for the second prize and Rs fifty thousand for the third prize winner in each category.

Thematic Award- Radio Mayur, District Saran, Bihar for the programme: Tech Sakhi

Most Innovative Community Engagement Award- Yerlawani Sangli of Maharashtra for the programme: Kahani Sunandachi

Promoting Local Culture Award- Radio Brahmaputra of Dibrugarh, Assam for the programme: Igarekun

Sustainability Model Award- Radio Benziger, run by Bishop Benziger Hospital Society, Kollam, Kerala

SPORTS

IOA Partners with Bharat Petroleum as Principal Sponsor for Team India

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has announced Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) as the principal sponsor for Team India.

This collaboration, starting with the Paris Olympics and lasting until the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, is aimed at supporting Indian athletes in their quest for excellence.

BPCL, a Maharatna and Fortune Global 500 company, will be the principal sponsor for Team India for four years.

The partnership begins with the Paris Olympics and continues to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

The collaboration aims to boost the confidence and aspirations of Indian athletes.

BPCL will launch campaigns to garner support for Indian athletes heading to the Paris Olympics.

These initiatives will celebrate the athletes' relentless pursuit of excellence and inspire the nation to support them.

PR Sreejesh To Retire from International Hockey

Indian hockey goalkeeper PR Sreejesh has announced that the Paris 2024 Olympics will mark his final appearance with the senior national team.

The 36-year-old veteran will become a four-time Olympian, closing a distinguished career that has spanned nearly two decades.

He made his debut for the Indian national team in 2006.

He has played 328 matches for India

IMPORTANT DAYS

National Income Tax Day

24 July has been observed in India as National Income Tax Day.

On 24 July 1860, Sir James Wilson imposed Income tax for the first time in the country.

This day is observed to highlight the importance of citizens paying taxes on time and the contribution it makes to the nation's development.

The first National Income Tax Day was celebrated on 24 July 2010.

The Income Tax Act of 1922 laid a proper framework for the direct tax administration in the country.

After Independence, the Income Tax Act of 1961 consolidated and replaced the 1922 Act.