Passport Reforms

What are the progressive changes made?

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- The government simplified the paperwork needed for an Indian citizen to get the document.
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- In order to screen applications to prevent impersonation, some of the earlier rules may have made sense at some point of time, but over the years the bureaucratic impediments that the cumbersome requirements posed to genuine applicants were so severe that many had to knock on the doors of high courts for remedy.
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What are the rules that provide relief for women?

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- Following the recommendations of an inter-ministerial committee comprising officials of the Ministries of External Affairs and Women and Child Development, crucial changes have been introduced.
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- The most specious form of harassment of women passport applicants related to those who were either separated or divorced.
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- Even something as routine as renewing a passport without any change of name or detail or getting a passport in the name of a child was a laborious process, as passport officials insisted on either the father’s consent or demanded a divorce decree.
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- The application form now requires only the name of one parent, not both. This will enable single parents to apply for passports for their children without the name of either the father or the mother being printed in the document.
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- The stipulation that marriage certifications and divorce decrees should be

provided has been removed
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- The old-fashioned concept of getting documents attested by notaries or magistrates has also been jettisoned, and self-declarations on plain paper would now be accepted.
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What has been reformed in proof documents?

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- A key reform is that a birth certificate is no more the main proof of date of birth, and other official documents, including Aadhaar number and PAN card, which contain the date, can be utilised.
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- In the case of orphaned children, actual proof for date of birth has been dispensed with and a declaration from the head of a child care home or orphanage confirming the date is enough.
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- In keeping with the times, adopted and surrogate children can be issued passports even in the absence of the relevant documents, based on a declaration on plain paper.
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- Sadhus and sanyasins have been allowed to mention their gurus in lieu of the names of their parents.
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- Ultimately, a passport ought to be every citizen’s right. Simplifying the procedures in obtaining one should be an ongoing exercise.
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Source: The Hindu

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