



OVERSEAS NEWS AND EMPLOYMENT

PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES



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NRI's can save on tax by buying health insurance in India

MUMBAI: Are you a UAE-based Non-resident Indian (NRI) looking to invest in a health insurance plan back home? If you are, you may have realised that it isn't easy to decide what type of plan brings you the most tax-related savings.

"As an NRI, there are taxation norms you need to consider when buying health insurance in India. This is why many NRIs who migrate abroad often face hiccups on this before they return to India," said Brijesh Meti, a UAE-based consultant who decodes tax norms for residents in India and abroad.

"It doesn't matter if you are buying an insurance plan for yourself or for your parents, by purchasing health insurance in India, you automatically become eligible for tax deductions according to the prevailing income tax regulations."

The added benefit being health insurance premia in India are considerably lower than what you would pay in other countries. For instance, a family of four can get a cover of Rs 2 million by paying about Rs 70,000 to Rs 80,000 in premia per year.

Is the coverage limited?

However, Masher Suleian, a global tax planning associate based in Abu Dhabi, cautioned that most Indian health insurers only reimburse hospitalisation expenses incurred in India. "For instance, if you stay in Dubai and get hospitalised, your Indian health policy typically would not cover it," he said.

"Some insurers do offer health policies with global cover, but not all global covers are designed the same. For instance, some only provide global health coverage in case of emergencies. Others only provide it in case of planned hospitalisation."

In the latter case, you would need to take an Indian resident doctor's approval as well, Suleiman added. "There could be other restrictions and exclusions, aside from the fact that health policies with global covers are also expensive.

"Some premium policies do cover life-threatening emergencies if they occur abroad, but even they require a high co-payment by the insured person. There are also policies that cover medical expenses incurred abroad if that treatment and required infrastructure do not exist in India." Buying health insurance in India makes sense if the NRI is returning to the home country or intends to do so in a couple of years, agreed Meti, Suleiman and Bagley, particularly when it comes to

(Cont. on page-3)



SIMPLE BUT EVERGREEN SKILLED TRADES (Part-1)

There are still many trades that cannot be included in this. We will try to include them in the forthcoming parts. Similarly, there are many promotional areas for these trades starting from worker to foreman. Observations, information and analysis about various trades given here (other than scientific and technical information) are solely based on hands-on experience in the overseas HR recruitment industry. Views and analyses here vested with the responsibility of the writer only. For feedback please contact: 8828737706 (WhatsApp number).

The work itself is a dignity?

"Dignity of Labour" is something that should not be forgotten and should be mentioned first when talking about employment, vocational training etc. The dignity of labour or the dignity of work is the philosophical holding that all types of jobs are respected equally, and no occupation is considered superior and none of the jobs should be discriminated on social perceptions. It is important to maintain the dignity of

labour at all times because it promotes equality, respect and appreciation of all individuals in society. While upholding the dignity of work, it helps create a more inclusive and harmonious society that values the work of all. This, in turn, leads to a more creative and cohesive society.

In India, there are certain jobs that are considered to be only for "certain class".

The British used this stigma to create a dif-

(Cont. on page-6)

FOREX RATES		
As on 15th Apr, 2024 (In rupees)		
Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	84.24	83.24
Euro	89.70	88.68
Australian Dollar	54.95	53.91
Japanese Yen	0.58	0.53
Canadian Dollar	61.48	60.46
Singapore Dollar	62.19	61.16
Swedish krona	8.68	6.89
UAE Dirham	23.20	22.58
Swiss Franc	92.39	90.59
British Pound	104.86	103.77
New Zealand Dollar	50.55	49.12
Thai Baht	2.37	2.17
Hong Kong Dollar	11.61	10.30
Saudi Arabian Riyal	22.95	22.00
Bahraini Dinar	228.21	214.21
Chinese Yuan	12.43	10.63
Danish Krone	12.42	11.42
Kuwaiti Dinar	277.38	261.38
Malaysian Ringgit	18.47	17.12
Omani Rial	222.73	210.73
Qatari Riyal	23.67	21.42
South African Rand	4.87	4.03

Canada hikes permanent residence fees from April 30

OTTAWA: Canada government is increasing fees for all permanent residence applications from April 30, 2024 onwards. The hike in permanent residence fees by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is a part of a routine update.

Permanent residence application fees increase every two years to manage growing programme and service delivery costs and to keep up with inflation.

Fee hike includes economic, permit holder, family and humanitarian classes. If one plans to submit a permanent resident application on or after April 30, it is better to look at the list of the impacted programmes and fee increases.

One can pay the permanent residence applications fee online using credit or debit card. After selecting your fees, create an account or login to pay. You will

find past receipts in your transaction history.

The previous increase in fee was implemented in 2022. On April 30, 2022, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) increased fees for all permanent residence applications. In 2020, IRCC increased permanent residence fees to account for inflation for the first time since 2002. At that time, it was announced that fees would increase every two

years to adjust for inflation.

As such, they did not reflect the rise in inflation over the last 18 years and the increasing cost of permanent residence operations and processing. The fees are to be automatically adjusted for inflation every two years for all permanent residence applications, including the economic, family and humanitarian programmes, beginning in 2022.



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Higher income threshold for UK family visa now

LONDON: The minimum income required for British citizens and residents, including those of Indian heritage, wanting to sponsor their relatives on a family visa has been increased by over 55pc as the incremental increase in salary thresholds announced by the government last year are enforced.

From now, for someone to be sponsored to come to the UK on a family visa, they must have a minimum annual salary of Pound 29,000, up from pound 18,600. By early next year, this will have increased two more times to match the Skilled Worker visa salary threshold of pound 38,700.

The UK Home Office

said it marks the final measure in Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Home Secretary James Cleverly's package to reduce legal migration and "ensure those arriving here do not burden the taxpayer". "We have reached a tipping point with mass migration. There is no simple solution or easy decision which cuts numbers to levels acceptable to the British people," said Cleverly. "I promised action and we have delivered at remarkable speed. We've acted to cut unsustainable numbers, to protect British workers and their wages, to ensure those bringing family to the UK do not burden taxpayers, and to build an immigration

system fit for the future - and one the public can rightly have confidence in," he said

"Whether it was words unsupported by action, unfounded optimism or just plain wishful thinking that migration would fall on its own, indifference of any kind is never going to work "only determined action, backed by strong resolve, will deliver needed change," the minister added. The move had been criticised by the Opposition when it was first tabled in the House of Commons in Dec 2023. It led the government to opt for a more staged approach to the salary threshold hike, rather than an immediate hike to pound 38,700, as previously indicated.

Air India strike likely

MUMBAI: Dark clouds of uncertainty don't seem to move past the Tata owned aviation companies. This, as according to reports, aircraft technicians of Air India are said to be mulling over a strike.

According to a state-

airline.

This comes, just at back of similar protests by its pilots over remuneration issues. In addition the airline and its scheduled merger with Vistara has also been in the limelight for all the wrong rea-



ment from the All India Aircraft Maintenance Engineering Union, the union will strike on April, 23. The issues in focus include, well being of the employees and professional growth. The union, reportedly even wrote a letter to the CEO of the

sons. Vistara has been on flight cancellation streak, thanks to the airline's disagreement with its crew regarding concerns emerging from the merger. The airline (Vistara) even announced a 10pc slash in its existing services.

Sharp dip in rupee value triggers NRI remittances

MUMBAI: A significant depreciation of the Indian rupee over the past decade has substantially increased the remittance power of NRIs across the world, in particular the GCC and the US, leading to a remarkable jump in inward remittance to the third-largest Asian economy.

The value of the rupee against the US dollar has decreased from nearly Rs 60 to around Rs 83.31 over the last decade, leading to a corresponding decline in value against the dirham, which is pegged to the greenback. The 10-year depreciation represents a decline of 27.8pc, which is less than a three per cent fall on an annualised basis. The rupee had fallen to its lifetime low of 83.42 against the dollar on Nov 10, 2023.

On April 5, the Indian currency edged three paise lower to hit its all-time low of 22.727 against the dirham (83.41 against the dollar) in early trade, tracking higher demand for the American currency from importers. Forex traders said investors are awaiting cues from the RBI's monetary pol-

icy outcome. The sharp consistent dip in the rupee's value has sparked the highest amount of remittance inflows to India in 2023 at \$125 billion. Other factors driving the surge include India's agreement with the UAE for promoting the use of dirhams and rupees for bilateral trade, according to World Bank. In a report, World Bank further said growth in remittances in India is expected to halve to 12.4pc in 2023 from a historic peak of 24.4pc in 2022. In 10 years, India's foreign exchange reserves increased from \$304 billion to \$645 billion — an increase of 112.2pc and an annualised increase of 12pc. On April 5, the country's forex reserves jumped \$2.98 billion to hit a fresh peak of \$648.56 billion, RBI data shows.

Remittance outlook good

The remittance outlook for India for 2024 is strong. With unemployment rates edging up marginally in the US and the UK and declining in Singapore, remittance flows from India's highly skilled migrants should be sustained in 2024, barring further frag-

mentation of commodity markets and geopolitical tensions spawning new global shocks, according to World Bank. The use of dirhams and rupees in cross-border transactions would be instrumental in channelling more remittances through formal channels, it added.

Currency analysts said the rupee slide can benefit NRIs in a number of ways, depending on their income and budget. NRIs should pay close attention to the channels through which they execute their investments in order to maximise monetary benefits. The lower income groups of NRIs can invest in bank fixed deposits while higher income groups can invest in many schemes offered by banks and wealth management companies. Such facilities enable them to invest in stocks, mutual funds etc. Real estate is also a profitable option when the rupee is depreciating.

They said causes of the sharp rupee fall include the ongoing global geopolitical tensions, the rise in oil prices, a lack of food imports, and the subsequent rise in inflation.

For an NRI, there are opportunities to capitalise on in his home country while investing in assets or spending in Indian currency value in a foreign land may turn more expensive, experts said. "If you are an NRI investing in India, then with the depreciation in the value of the Indian currency, every dollar repatriated home by you is worth so much more. Historically, a reduction in the value of the rupee has resulted in an increase in NRI remittances from nations such as the US, the UAE, the UK, and a few Asian countries. Because of the growing value of the dollar, investment in India has become significantly more lucrative."

Real estate shines

According to currency experts, when the rupee is falling in value, real estate is a good investment. Real estate has been the most favoured asset by NRIs, especially by those in the Gulf who plan to return to their home country post-retirement. With the depreciation of the rupee, NRIs with existing home loans in India can now pay off higher values on loans at

the same value of EMIs as before.

However, income accrual taxation and inflation are the two main factors that erode an NRI's savings. "While inflation cannot be controlled, the right portfolio allocation can assist in mitigating risks. Furthermore, the efficient management of investments can contribute to lower tax payments and higher savings," they said.

The major drop in the rupee's value occurred in 2013, when it fell from 54.59 to 60.14 after the "taper tantrums" as markets reacted sharply to the US Fed's decision to "taper off" its liquidity support to markets introduced during the financial crisis. Usually, after such a sharp correction, the rupee remains stable for a long period, as the sudden drop in its value reduces imports and attracts more foreign capital

Forex dealers caution that merely comparing the rupee-dollar rate is not enough to determine the strength of the currency. This is because the dollar has appreciated against all major currencies

Saudis cut down Neom desert project

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has scaled back its medium-term ambitions for the desert development

plans for diversifying the oil-dependent economy.

By 2030, the govern-

sprawling, futuristic city it plans to contain within a pair of mirror-clad skyscrapers. Now, officials

expect the development will house fewer than three lakh residents by that time.

Officials have long said The Line would be built in stages and they expect it to ultimately cover a 170-km

stretch of desert along the coast. With the latest pullback, though, officials

expect to have just 2.4 km of the project completed by 2030.

As a result, at least one contractor has started to dismiss a portion of the workers it employs on the site. Crown Prince Mohammed Salman intends for Neom, a \$1.5 trillion development on the Red Sea coast, to be a showpiece that will transform his country's economy and serve as a test-bed for technologies that could revolutionise daily life. Along with The Line, Neom's plans include an industrial city, ports and tourism developments. It's also set to host the Asian Winter Games in 2029 at a mountain resort called Trojena.



of Neom, the largest project within Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's

ment at one point hoped to have 1.5 million residents living in The Line, a

Indian woman killed in Texas shooting

DALLAS: A 27-year-old Hyderabad woman, Aishwarya Thatikonda, has been identified as among the eight people killed when a gun-wield-



Aishwarya Thatikonda ing man opened fire at shoppers outside a mall in Dallas area in the US. The Indian consulate in Houston said on that one of the eight victims of the Texas mall shooting over the weekend was Thatikonda, an Indian civil engineer from Telangana.

The Indian Consulate in Houston said: "We express our deep condolences to the family of Ms. Aishwarya Thatikonda who died in the tragic shooting incident in Allen, Texas.

"We are in touch with the family of the deceased as well as the local authorities. Our officers are on the ground to render all possible assistance. We are closely monitoring the situation." Thatikonda was shopping at the Allen

DigiYatra likely to be rolled at 14 more airports

NEW DELHI: DigiYatra is likely to be rolled out at 14 more airports by the end of this month and efforts are on to make the facility more user friendly with certain changes in the architecture.

Based on Facial Recognition Technology (FRT), DigiYatra provides for contactless, seamless movement of passengers at various check points at airports and currently, there are nearly five million users. The facility is now there at 14

airports for domestic passengers and discussions are ongoing with various stakeholders concerned to make it available for international travellers as well.

DigiYatra Foundation CEO Suresh Khadakbavi told a TV channel that DigiYatra is expected to be available at 14 more airports by the

end of April. A not-for-profit entity, the foundation is the nodal agency

The 14 new airports where the facility is to be rolled out soon are Bag-

dogra, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Coimbatore, Dabolim, Indore, Mangalore, Patna, Raipur, Ranchi, Srinagar, Thiruvananthapuram and Vishakhapatnam. While DigiYatra is slowly gaining traction, there have been concerns expressed in various quarters about privacy of data of the passengers.



for DigiYatra, which was introduced in Dec 2022.

NRIs can save on tax by buying health.....

(Cont. from page-1)

tax perks for those repatriating back home.

"It's advisable to buy the insurance well in advance because most policies have a cooling period of two months before some illnesses are covered," added Bagley. "That way you will not have to rush to buy health insurance immediately after landing in India.

"Also, if the NRI has a history of diabetes or a heart condition or there is a new born baby in the family, it's cost effective to buy the insurance before you come to India. Certain pre-existing ailments such as diabetes and cardiac ailments are

not covered by insurance for the first four years.

"For other ailments like ENT disorders, hernia and osteoporosis, the waiting period can be 1-2 years. There is also a 90-day waiting period for infants. So even though you'll have to shell out a premium for two to four years without enjoying any benefit, it still works out cheaper than not buying insurance."

Should you buy in India?

The duration of stay is one of the important factors you will have to consider. If you are planning to stay overseas for a shorter duration, around three-four years,

then it would be advantageous for you to buy a health policy in both countries, the experts reiterate.

"Do not stop paying premia for your Indian health policy if you already have one. This way you can keep premia lower and make claims, if needed, as soon as you return without having to go through a waiting period for pre-existing diseases (PEDs)," added Suleiman. "On the other hand, if you have a long-term plan to stay abroad, then you don't need to take health insurance in India. You are better off buying a policy in the country of your resi-

dence. For short trips to India, travel insurance is a cheaper way to get insured."

It also makes eminent sense to buy medical insurance while traveling to India for holiday or business." It might just be a five to six-day trip, but don't travel without medical insurance. General insurance companies now offer customised plans that can fit your pocket," added Meti.

He further explained how for less than Rs 600 one can buy a cover for Rs 1.5 million to Rs 2 million. "Do watch out for a co-payment clause when you buy such a plan," Meti cautioned.

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GULF FAQs

Can a couple's kids be sponsored, insured under different cos?

My wife and I both work in separate mainland Dubai-based companies. Our two children are under my sponsorship and they enjoy insurance benefits. We are now expecting our third child, but he/she won't be covered under my company's insurance as it's capped at two. Can my third child be sponsored by my wife's company so we can avail of insurance from there? What's the procedure?

Pursuant to your queries, it is assumed that your employer is providing you and your two children with health insurance benefits. Therefore, the provisions of Federal Decree Law No. 33 of 2021 on the Regulation of Employment Relations and Law No. 11 of 2013 Concerning Health Insurance in the Emirate of Dubai are applicable.

In Dubai, it is the obligation of an employer to provide health insurance benefits and bear the health care costs of its employees. This is in accordance with Article 13 (8) & (9) of the Employment Law, which states "The Employer shall:

- Bear healthcare costs in accordance with the legislation in force in the UAE.
- Bear the costs of insurances, contributions and securities specified by the legislation in force.

Furthermore, it is also the obligation of the employer to provide health insurance benefits to its employees in Dubai in accordance with Article 10 of the Dubai Health Insurance Law. However, if an employer does not provide health insurance benefits to the family members of an employee, then it is the obligation of such employee (if he or she is on an employer's employment visa) or his/her sponsor to bear the health insurance cost of immediate

family members. This is in accordance with Article 11 of the Dubai Health Insurance Law, which states, "The sponsor shall be obliged of the following:

1. Cover the persons sponsored thereby if they have not been covered by the employer thereof.
2. Bear the cost of such health insurance coverage rather than making the beneficiaries bear such costs.
3. Verify that the health insurance of the persons sponsored thereby is valid for the length of their residence or visiting period.
4. Bear the health services and medical intervention costs in emergencies for any of the persons sponsored thereby if any of them has no health insurance in accordance with the provisions of this Law.
5. Give the persons sponsored thereby the health insurance card.
6. Provide the health insurance policy upon the residence or visiting issuance or renewal of the persons sponsored thereby.
7. Any other obligations specified by the Authority pursuant to the resolutions issued thereby in such concern."

Based on the aforementioned provisions of law, it is not mandatory for the employer of your wife to grant health insurance benefits to your child/children. As a sponsor, it is your obligation to bear the health insurance costs of your third (to be born) child if the same is not provided by your wife's employer. However, if the HR policy of your wife's employer allows children of employees health insurance benefits, then your wife may approach her employer and request to provide health insurance benefits to your third (to be born) child.

Experts find loopholes in India-Mauritius tax treaty

MUMBAI: A section of the income tax administration is wary of the new changes in India-Mauritius Double Tax Avoidance Treaty. Some officials feel that while the goal of the new protocol is to block tax evasion, it leaves room for interpretation in favour of the original intent of the treaty which was for promoting investment. Another fear is that the protocol is likely to lead to enhanced litigation.



Experts hope that the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) will issue explicit guidelines to clear the doubts. India and Mauritius signed the new protocol on March 7 to amend the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between two countries.

According to sources in the income tax department, a key concern is about the framing of the proposed Article 27B. The purpose of the amendment was to deny a benefit if an entity had entered into an arrangement or transaction solely for this purpose. However, this amendment

leaves the room open for interpretation. It says that if an entity enters into a transaction or arrangement in line with the original object and purpose of the convention, which is to further investment, the benefit can be given. This means going back to the original treaty and subverting the entire meaning of the re-

cent amendment, sources said.

India-Mauritius DTAA, one of the purposes is "Encouragement of Mutual Trade and Investment". The Supreme Court, in a landmark decision in Azadi Bachao, noted the importance of this purpose while interpreting the India-Mauritius DTAA. The protocol retains the said language. But it simultaneously changes the intent of the original DTAA to focus on tax evasion and not investment. "But taxpayers may contend that such benefit cannot be denied by the tax authorities because granting of the benefit would be as per the object and purpose of India-Mauritius DTAA," he said.

Lost passport in UAE; what to do?

Iwork in a real estate company in Sharjah which is run by an Indian national. We have not seen or heard from him for more than two weeks now. The rumour in the office is he is bankrupt and has decided to abscond. My passport is with the company and the remaining HR personnel do not know where it is, as the person I entrusted it is also missing. Other staff have the same issue. I only have copies of my labour card and passport, and my ID card is original. Do I report the issue to the labour department or the

police or do I approach the Indian consulate?

It is understood from your question that your employer is in possession of your passport, who you suspect has now absconded from the UAE. And, further to this, the HR department at your office has no knowledge regarding your passport. It is unlawful for an employer to detain or hold the passport of an employee without a court order and you may initiate legal recourse against your employer, if there was no justification on the part of your employer to keep your passport in its possession.

You would require a police complaint reporting the loss of your passport. Subsequently, with the police report, you will approach either of the Indian diplomatic missions in the UAE (i.e. the Indian Consulate in Dubai or the Embassy of India in Abu Dhabi) for issuance of a fresh passport to you. After your application is accepted, the authorities concerned shall carry out the requisite due diligence checks as to your background and on successful completion of those, you may be issued a new passport. Thereafter, you will obtain a print

from the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners' Affairs which will confirm your status in the UAE (i.e. whether you hold a valid visa), and then arrange an employment visa from your subsequent employer.

Your stay in the UAE shall be considered illegal if either of your passport or your visa has surpassed its date of validity and has not been renewed. Assuming that both the documents are still valid for the time being, your stay in the country shall not be considered illegal.

SIMPLE BUT EVERGREEN SKILLED TRADES

(Cont. from page-1)

ference so that they could rule well here. Although these views have changed over the time, it still persists at least in some areas without any counter-narratives. But, in western countries, there is dignity of all types of work. The fact that you are doing something and living an honest life gives your job position its dignity. Now all the occupations are considered with dignity and no one is made to feel inferior.

The “evergreen status” of the skilled trades mentioned here is largely defined by how well they fit the job opportunities available in Overseas Job Market. In a deeper examination, it can be seen that they have no less priority in the domestic labour market as well.

The factors that influence this evergreen status are the job opportunities, the wages worldwide, the time required to acquire training and work experience, the availability of manpower for training and work, the minimum period required for training, the cost of training.

What is meant by an Evergreen Skilled Trade?

There is no standard definition for the term ev-

ergreen skilled trades. But generally speaking, we can define it as popular trades with easy accessibility to training and technical exposure, fair salary, short-term training programmes, availability of job aspirants for training and job opportunities worldwide including domestic.

SKILLED TRADES—Your gateway to OVERSEAS JOB MARKET

As technical training is indispensable for acquiring skilled trades, importance is given here to training rather than learning. It differs from a college education because it focuses on practical training time rather than study time.

If you’re interested in pursuing a career away from a traditional university programme, you might want to consider taking up an evergreen skilled trade and step-by-step progressing to higher technical levels in that trade. Here, we are presenting (though you know) before you a handful of skilled trades that are surviving the tides of time and staying evergreen even in this technologically advanced era.

Learning a skilled trade can help you get

a lucrative job in many fields worldwide. People working in skilled trades get their skills upgraded through specialised training programmes (this is termed Technical Training). The type of programmes they complete varies by trade. These training programmes help them reach their professional goals and choose the right career.

The benefits of learning a skilled trade?/The best reasons why you pursue a skilled trade?

*Lower Costs (most of the skilled trades are less-expensive and do not require college education)*Start Earning Young (Most trades allow workers to begin work straight after a trade programme)*High Earning Potential (You may even be able to start your own company someday when you have more experience, which could be extremely lucrative)*Fulfilling Career (Individuals working in these skilled trades take great pride in their work because these trades require your direct presence and confer high social status.)*Job Security (Even in this age where automation is driving technology, most skilled trades offer strong future prospects.

By mastering a trade, you learn skills that will be useful throughout your professional career.)*

Skilled Trades – Limited Budget & Limited Time

A skilled Trade is generally a method acquired through so called technical training or vocational training by learning the key skills they need to complete their jobs or duties. Here the prime importance is given to identifying the key skills inherent in a person and nurturing them. This technical training can be done in a short education programme, an on-the-job training programme or a combination of both. A salient feature of these programmes is that the trainees are able to advance to different levels as they acquire more skills in these programmes. For example, as soon as one completes the apprenticeship is promoted to regular worker and in the future reaches the top level.

Technical training often focuses on the development of hard skills and may have a more hands-on approach than regular training and formal educational experiences. Vocational training is a valuable alternative to traditional college education

because of its affordability and other benefits. In less time than a bachelor’s programme, a vocational training programme gives you the opportunity to enter high-paying industries with rewarding benefits.

Skilled Trade training is beneficial for those with limited budget and limited time. It gets a short and fast paying position. It is easy to complete without the need for STEM programmes. It is good enough to balance with a job.

There are many different types of technical training programmes that can help you start your career as a skilled tradesperson.

What are the easiest skilled trades to learn?

This depends on your interests and skills. Different trades required different skills, knowledge and abilities, so choosing one that interests you can make it easier to learn and grow in your chosen field. For example, if you’re good at building things with your hands, you might consider a trade like carpentry. Exploring here is the types of skilled trades that can help you choose the right path for a right career goal.

(To be continued)

Thailand pushes for six-nation Schengen-like visa to lure tourists

BANGKOK: Thailand is steering an initiative for a joint-visa programme with countries that together hosted about 70 million tourists last year as Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin ramps up initiatives to attract more long-haul and high-spending travellers.

Srettha who’s pledged to elevate Thailand’s status as a tourism hotspot into an aviation and logistics hub “has discussed the Schengen-type visa idea with his counterparts in Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar and Vietnam in recent months. The facility is meant to ensure seamless mobility for travellers among the six neighbouring countries.

With most leaders pos-

itively responding to the single-visa concept, tourism-reliant Thailand aims to generate more revenue per traveller and cushion its economy from headwinds such as sluggish exports and weak global demand that’s hurt its manufacturing industry.

The six Southeast Asian nations reported a combined 70 million foreign tourist arrivals in 2023, according to official data. Thailand and Malaysia accounted for more than half of the tally, generating about \$48 billion in tourism revenue. The single-visa is the most-ambitious among Srettha’s lineup of tourism initiatives but targeted for the long-term. The industry has served the country well, account-

ing for about 20pc of total jobs and making up about 12 per cent to the nation’s \$500 billion economy. Barring the pandemic years, tourism has flourished and



provided a cushion against a slump in manufacturing and exports, the traditional bulwarks of the economy.

The tourism industry is upbeat, with Marisa Sukosol Nunbhakdi, a former president of the Thai Ho-

tels Association, saying: “a common visa could entice long-haul travelers to make an easier decision.” The visa validity will need to be extended to 90 days

en months ago, his government has signed a reciprocal visa waiver deal with China “Thailand’s largest market for tourists “- and offered temporary visa waivers for travelers from India, Taiwan and Kazakhstan. It’s also mulling a plan to open casinos inside large entertainment complexes and event-based tourism will help the country generate more revenue.

Schengen-type visa

If done right, the benefits of visa-free travel won’t be confined to tourism alone as ease of travel would be a boon for business travellers and trade, according to Bill Barnett, managing director of hospitality and property consultancy C9 Hotelworks.