



OVERSEAS NEWS AND EMPLOYMENT

PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES



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Navi Mumbai Airport conducts successful commercial flight test

MUMBAI: The upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport is set to be functional from early next fiscal year with the expected inauguration of the facility on April 17, a senior Adani Group official informed.

Earlier in the day, an IndiGo A320 passenger aircraft landed successfully at runway 26/08 of the under-construction Navi Mumbai International Airport, paving the way for securing an aerodrome licence to start commercial operations.

“Our ambition is to do the commercial inaugu-



An IndiGo commercial flight landed safely at the Navi Mumbai Airport on Sunday. The airport will be operational in May or June.

ration of the airport by April 17,” Adani Airport Holdings CEO Arun Ban-

sal told media after the successful trial landing of the first civil passen-

ger aircraft. Bansal said that the domestic operations will start from

the second half of May as after the inaugural flight some procedures will have to be followed which will take about four weeks time. And by the end of July, he said, “we expect to start international operations.”

Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMAI) took a further step toward becoming operational with its first commercial flight validation test, with the successful touchdown at 1.32 pm at runway 26/08. The aircraft was welcomed with the traditional water salute by two Crash Fire Tenders (CFT) of NMIA.

Indians issued one million non-immigrant visas

NEW DELHI: The US mission in India said it issued more than one million non-immigrant visas for the second year in a row, including a record number of visitor visas, underscoring the huge demand of Indians for travel to the US.

Washington is also working to formally establish a US-based to renew H-1B visas in that country in 2025 that is expected to benefit a significant number of Indians.

In the past four years, visitor numbers from India have increased by five times, and more than two million Indians travelled to the US in the first 11 months of 2024, a 26pc increase over the same period in 2023, it said.

Over five million Indians already have a non-immigrant visa to visit the US and each day the mission issues thou-

sands more, the embassy said. “The US mission to India issued more than one million non-immigrant visas for the second year in a row, including a record number of visitor visas, underscoring the huge demand of Indians for travel to the US for tourism, business and education,” it said in a readout.

The embassy noted that the State Department completed a successful pilot programme to renew H-1B visas in the US this year. This allowed many specialty occupation workers from India to renew their visas without leaving the US.

“This pilot programme streamlined the renewal process for thousands of applicants and the Department of State is working to formally establish a US-based renewal programme in 2025,” it said.

The US mission to In-

dia issued tens of thousands of immigrant visas, facilitating legal family reunification and the migration of skilled professionals, according to the readout. These immigrant visa holders became permanent residents upon their arrival, adding to the already rich and sizable Indian diaspora community in the US, it said.

The US mission to India also provided more than 24,000 passports and other consular services to American citizens living and travelling in India, it noted.

A new version of the Smart Traveller Enrollment Programme debuted in 2024, making it easier for the embassy and consulates to contact American citizens during emergencies and send them safety and security alerts, the embassy added.

It said increase in pro-

(Cont. on page-2)

Akasa Air offers fares from Rs 1599 for domestic routes

MUMBAI: Akasa Air has announce its New Year sale, offering attractive discounts on fares across its domestic and international network.

It is offering all-inclusive (one-way) fares starting from Rs 1599 for domestic routes and discount of up to 25pc on the basic fare for flight bookings in international sectors using the promo code NEWYEAR

The sale is valid for “Saver” and “Flexi” fares on bookings made between Dec 31, 2024 and Jan 3, 2025 for travel starting from Jan 7. It applies to non-stop and through flights across Akasa Air’s network and covers both one-way and round-trip tickets.

Bookings can be made through all channels, including the Akasa Air website - www.akasa-air.com, mobile app and

travel partners. This sale is in line with Akasa Air’s commitment to delivering an affordable, comfortable and customer-centric flying experience. It presents a perfect opportunity for both leisure and business travellers to secure affordable flights to a wide range of destinations, whether they’re planning a domestic getaway or an international trip.

Akasa Air currently connects with 22 domestic and five international cities, namely Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kochi, Delhi, Guwahati, Agartala, Pune, Lucknow, Goa, Hyderabad, Varanasi, Bagdogra, Bhubaneswar, Kolkata, Port Blair, Ayodhya, Gwalior, Srinagar, Prayagraj, Gorakhpur, Doha, Jeddah, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait City.



Trump backs H-1B visa programme

WASHINGTON: In a major shift from his earlier stance, US President-elect Donald Trump has expressed his support for the H-1B visa programme and acknowledged frequently using it for his own properties, calling it a “great programme,” according to a report by New York Post.

Calling it a “great programme,” the President-elect said he has “always” been in its favour.

“I’ve always liked the visas, I have always been in favour of the visas. That’s why we have them,” Trump said in a telephonic interview with the New York Post.

He added: “I have many H-1B visas on my properties. I’ve been a believer in H-1B. I have used it many times. It’s a great programme.”

Notably, during Trump’s first term, the administration imposed restrictions on H-1B visas, citing concerns over “abuse” and “economic strain.”

In 2016, Trump con-

demned the programme, describing it as a means for companies to replace American workers with lower-paid foreign employees. Restrictions tightened further in 2020 in response to economic challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Trump’s latest remarks comes after a major divide emerged within his MAGA team in the US, as Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy who advocated for the expansion of the visa programme for “highly skilled workers” faced heavy backlash from within President-elect’s base.

The debate over H-1B visas and immigration policy has intensified following Trump’s announcement of Sriram Krishnan as the White House policy adviser on artificial intelligence. Krishnan has previously supported removing per-country caps for green cards, a stance that has sparked mixed reactions.

Taj Cochin Airport Hotel opened



Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Industries Minister P Rajeeve and CIAL Managing Director S Suhas at the inauguration of five-star hotel Taj Cochin International Airport in Kochi.

IndiGo launches daily flights to Phuket

KOLKATA: Travellers can now rejoice as IndiGo has launched a daily direct flight from Kolkata’s Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport to the popular tourist destination of Phuket, Thailand. This new route is expected to meet the rising demand for seamless travel between India and Southeast Asia, offering greater convenience and boosting tourism and business ties.

The Airports Authori-

ty of India (AAI) extended its best wishes to IndiGo for this milestone, highlighting its commitment to providing world-class infrastructure, safety and operational efficiency to support such ventures. Phuket, renowned for its pristine beaches and vibrant nightlife and known as the sex capital of the world, has long been a favourite destination for Indian travellers. With the introduction of this

direct flight, passengers can now experience shorter travel times and improved accessibility.

IndiGo officials expressed excitement about expanding their international network and serving the growing needs of Indian travellers.

The daily service is expected to further strengthen cultural and economic exchanges between the two regions, making travel smoother and more enjoyable.

Tata Group to create five lakh jobs over next half decade

MUMBAI: The Tata Group plans to create 500,000 manufacturing jobs over the next half-decade in sectors like battery, semiconductors, electric vehicles and solar industries, Tata Sons Chairman N. Chandrasekaran has said.

In his annual letter to group employees, Chandrasekaran said these jobs would come in part from facilities across India – factories and projects that will produce batteries, semiconductors, electric vehicles, solar equipment and other critical hardware destined to play a central role in the economy of tomorrow.

“This is in addition to the many services jobs we expect to introduce across retail, tech services, airlines and hospitality, among other sectors,” he wrote.

In a recap of 2024 for the salt-to-software conglomerate, Chandrasekaran highlighted key milestones



N. Chandrasekaran

like groundbreaking ceremonies at over seven new manufacturing plants, including India’s first semiconductor fab at Dholera in Gujarat and an outsourced semiconductor assembly and test facility in Assam. Ground-breaking ceremonies and construction began at over seven new manufacturing plants in 2024, including India’s first semiconductor fab in Dholera, Gujarat and a brand new semiconductor OSAT plant in Assam.

“There is the electronics assembly plant in

Narasapura, Karnataka, an automotive plant in Panapakkam, Tamil Nadu and new MRO facilities in Bengaluru, Karnataka. We also have new battery cell manufacturing factories in Sanand, Gujarat, and in Som-

erset, UK. We inaugurated the C295 final assembly line (FAL) in Vadodra, Gujarat, and began solar module production in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu,” he said.

This year, TCS and Tejas Networks delivered the first indigenous 4G mobile telecom stack for BSNL, and stand poised for 5G. “Our retail companies continue to scale up. Air India has brought together four airlines to create one integrated airline group to serve India and the world. And Indian Hotels’ Taj

brand continues to be the world’s strongest hotel brand,” Chandrasekaran told the employees.

Stressing that sustainability remains a focus of growth plans, he mentioned that in Bhutan, “we began our hydroelectric power initiative, with a commitment to developing five GW renewable capacity”. “With the UK government, we announced 1.25 billion pounds of investment in the transition to high-quality,

low-CO2 steel production in South Wales,” the chairman noted.

While AI-led breakthroughs in healthcare and mobility can help the whole of humanity, manufacturing has the potential to transform our economy in India.

“Global supply chains continue to shift in India’s favour as the world’s largest businesses strike a new balance between resilience and efficiency,” he said.

Indians issued one...

(Cont. from page-1)

in-person interviews, reducing wait times for all applicants,” it said. “More Indian students than ever before now have US student visas. In 2024, India became the top sender of international students for the first time since the 2008/2009 academic year with more than 331,000 students overall studying in the US,” it said.

“By streamlining operations and utilising global consular resources, the US mission has been able to redirect its own resources to focus on

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Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	85.92	85.07
British Pound	108.19	106.98
Euro	89.99	88.36
Japanese Yen	0.54	0.53
Swiss Franc (CHF)	95.71	93.88
Canadian Dollar	59.94	58.77
Australian Dollar	53.91	52.90
Norwegian Krone	7.60	7.46
Swedish Krona	7.85	7.69
New Zealand Dollar	48.77	47.94
Hong Kong Dollar	11.12	10.91
Singapore Dollar	63.62	62.36
Saudi Arabian Riyal	23.01	22.55
United Arab Emirates	23.5	23.05

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Govt to promote lighthouse tourism

NEW DELHI: With India being home to 204 lighthouses, the Central government is actively promoting lighthouse tourism as part of its broader Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030 and Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 to enhance India's cultural heritage and maritime legacy.

With a coastline spanning over 7,500 km by developing these sites, the government seeks to enhance India's tourism offerings while creating employment opportunities and fostering local economic growth. In fact, it is planning to set up a national framework to empower the coastal communities and ensure sustainable development around lighthouses.

Additionally, serving as navigational aids for seafarers, these iconic structures are now being envisaged as tour-

ism destinations under the government of India's developmental vision. This initiative aims to preserve the historical and architectural significance of lighthouses and unlock their potential for economic growth and community empowerment.

Lighthouse tourism involves transforming lighthouses and their surroundings into vibrant tourist attractions. These structures, often located in scenic coastal or island settings, offer visitors a unique combination of natural beauty, maritime history and recreational opportunities.

India's lighthouses are not mere functional structures but repositories of history and culture. Their potential as tourist destinations stems from several key factors including stra-

tegic locations, cultural importance, adventure and leisure and economic impact.

Recognising this potential, the government has identified lighthouse tourism as a priority area for development. The initiative aligns with the broader objectives of enhancing India's global appeal as a travel destination while promoting sustainable tourism practices.

In Feb this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated 75 lighthouses with tourist facilities in 10 states and Union territories. They have been developed with an investment of Rs 60 crore. Each lighthouse has become a beacon of both heritage and recreation, with modern amenities such as museums, amphitheatres, children's parks, and more.

In the fiscal year 2023-24 alone, these 75 dedicated lighthouses attracted an impressive 16 lakh visitors, an increase of more than 400pc footfall of tourists from four lakh in 2014. As of Sept 2024, the current fiscal year 2024-25 has already welcomed more than 10 lakh visitors. More than five lakh tourists visited the lighthouses between April and June, 2024, validating the vision of transforming these iconic maritime structures into vibrant tourist hotspots as envisioned by Modi.

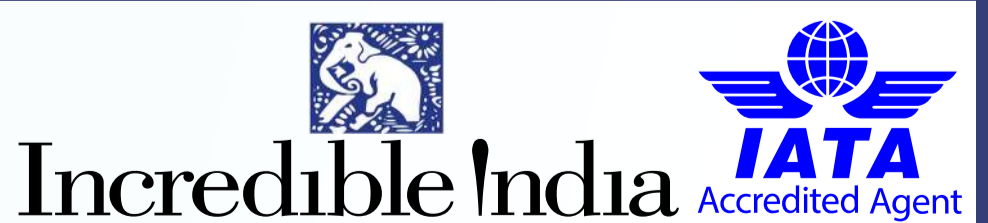
These developments have also resulted in job creation, with 150 direct and 500 indirect employment opportunities emerging in nearby hotels, restaurants, tour operators, transportation services, and local shops and artisans.

Steps taken by the government to boost Lighthouse Tourism include Indian Lighthouse Festival series and Stakeholders Meet.

The government's commitment to lighthouse tourism is also evident from its efforts under the Sagarmala Programme and its focus on fostering partnerships with private stakeholders. It exemplifies integrated development, blending infrastructure growth, sustainability, and community welfare to drive India's maritime and economic progress. The Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships (DGLL) actively collaborates with private players to ensure these projects meet international standards while safeguarding environmental sustainability.



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Explore The Unexplored

SOUTH INDIA



GULF FAQs

How many breaks can employees take during UAE work hours?

What does the UAE employment law say about employees taking breaks during work hours? My colleagues and I work for a mainland UAE company. Whenever we take a break, our boss tells us to return to work as we are expected to use the full 9.5 hours productively. Is it legal?

In the UAE, an employee is entitled to break(s) between working hours (if required in intervals) which may be not less than one hour in aggregate.

Furthermore, an employee may not work for more than five consecutive hours in a day without a break. This is in accordance with Article 18 of the Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 on the Regulation of Employment Relations (the "Employment Law"), which states, "The employee may not work over five consecutive hours without one or more breaks

which shall amount in aggregate to not less than one hour, provided that such break(s) shall not be calculated as part of the working hours. Working hours and breaks in the establishment shall be regulated by shifts, or for certain categories depending on their na-



ture – such as on-site positions – and as per the manpower classification specified in the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law."

In addition, the maximum working hours for an employee in the UAE should not exceed eight hours per day or 48 hours per week. This is in accordance with Article 17(1) of the Employment Law: "The maximum normal working hours for employees shall be eight

hours per day or 48 hours per week."

Additionally, an employer calling upon an employee to work for more than eight hours without

any overtime payment may lead to employment by force.

This is in accordance with Article 14(1) of the Employment Law, which states, "An employer may not use any means susceptible of obliging or threatening him with any penalty, to work for him, or forcing him to do a work or deliver a service against his will."

Based on the aforementioned provisions of law, you as an employee may work for more than five consecutive hours without taking breaks and overall you may avail

one hour of break time per working day.

Moreover, your employer may not call upon its employees to work for more than 48 hours per week without paying overtime as it will amount to a violation of provisions prevailing in the Employment Law.

Therefore, you may inform your employer that you are only supposed to work for eight hours in a day or 48 hours in a week and between working hours you can avail of one hour of break probably divided into two or three breaks so it will not affect your efficiency as well. In the event that your employer disagrees with you, you may consider filing an employment complaint with the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation.

In debt, employee goes to court with gratuity claims

I am an employer. Two months ago, I filed a civil lawsuit against my employee to return a loan with other amounts he took from the company. The lawsuit has not ended yet, but now this employee has submitted his resignation from work and filed a labour lawsuit to claim his rights at the end of service. What is the appropriate procedure to take to stop his claims until I obtain my rights from him?

According to Article 103 of the Federal Decree-Law No. (42) Of 2022 Promulgating the Civil Procedure Code, the legal proceedings may be suspended if the parties agree not to proceed with the

same for not more than six months from the date of the court's endorsement of their agreement. Such suspension shall have no legal effect on any mandatory date which the law has prescribed for a certain action to occur, and neither litigant may request resumption of the legal proceedings within the suspension period without the consent of the other party.

In the event that neither party requests resumption of the legal proceedings within eight days following the expiry of the suspension period, the plaintiff shall be deemed to have abandoned the case, and the appellant shall be deemed to have abandoned the appeal.

Moreover, the court, according to Article 104 of the

above law, shall order suspension of a legal proceedings if it is convinced that the decision on its merits would be contingent upon the determination of any other issue, and that once such reason for suspension ceases to exist, either litigant may apply for resumption of the case.

So as a principle, there is no way to stop his labour case since each subject is different from the other and there is no reason stipulated by law. But you may request the suspension on the bases mentioned in Article 104 since the decision on one case would be contingent upon the determination of any other issue and leave the matter to the court to decide.

India's largest IPOs in 2024

MUMBAI: India's key IPOs in 2024 included Hyundai Motor's US\$ 3.3 billion issue, Swiggy's \$1.3 billion offering, NTPC Green Energy's \$1.2 billion IPO, Vishal Mega Mart's \$0.9 billion listing and Bajaj Housing Finance's \$0.8 billion issue.

Other Asia-Pacific (APAC) nations also reported significant IPO activity. Japan experienced a phenomenal 275.1pc growth, with 69 IPOs generating \$12.6 billion, while Malaysia recorded a 145.9pc increase, with 36 IPOs raising \$1.1 billion.

However, China saw a substantial decline in IPO numbers with a 51.3pc drop attributed to tightened regulations. The country had 64 IPOs, raising just over \$5.2 billion.

The region recorded 604 IPOs, raising a total of \$33.9 billion--a 21.5pc increase in proceeds compared with 2023. Among APAC countries, India stood out as the top performer, with over 200 companies going public, according to Global Data, a prominent data and analytics firm.

The APAC IPO market was led by the technology and communications sector, which recorded 118 transactions worth \$3.8 billion, followed by the financial services sector, with 60 deals amounting to \$2.6 billion. On the broader APAC front, standout deals included Lineage Inc's \$4.4 billion IPO and Tokyo Metro's \$3.2 billion listing, both in Japan.

The report stated that globally too, 2025 IPO market will surpass 2024 IPO activity, with a strong pipeline already in place. However, the trajectory will depend on global factors such as FedReserve rate decisions and the performance of emerging markets.

KNOW YOUR SCHENGEN

The requirements for a Schengen visa

The following paperwork is required in order to apply for a Schengen visa:

Passport: A passport must be current, no more than 10 years old and valid for at least three months following your departure from the Schengen area. For the visa, the passport must also contain a minimum of two blank pages. Photo: a current, passport-sized photo that meets ICAO requirements.

Visa application form: A filled-out visa application.

Medical Insurance: Travel insurance that includes coverage for hospital stays, emergency medical attention, and repatriation. The insurance must remain in effect for the whole time you are traveling and for the whole Schengen Area. At least €30,000 should be covered by the plan for medical emergencies.**Proof of travel:** An itinerary or round-trip reservation that contains the dates of entry and departure from the Schengen state as well as flight numbers.

Proof of accommodation: Reservations for a hotel, a holiday home, or campus residence reservation. Proof of sponsorship and/or private housing is required if you are staying with a friend or relative.

Evidence of financial resources: Proof of funds to cover your stay, such as bank statements or a letter of sponsorship. You must present your bank account statements and pay stubs for the previous three months if you are employed.**Supporting documents:** Depending on the reason for your trip, additional paperwork, like an invitation letter, employment verification or enrollment verification, might be needed. Unless you are exempt, you will also need to provide your fingerprints when you apply for the visa.

Schengen Information System(SIS): The largest and most popular informa-



tion-sharing platform for border control and security in Europe is the Schengen Information System (SIS). Since Schengen countries in Europe do not have internal borders, SIS serves as a substitute for border controls and is the most effective tool for border, immigration, police, customs, and judicial authorities in the EU and Schengen-affiliated nations to cooperate.

One common database allows competent national authorities, like the police and border guards, to enter and consult alerts on

tem is a central database that facilitates data sharing on short-stay visas among Schengen Area member states or to transit through the Schengen Area. Established in 2004, the VIS went into operation in 2011. VIS links all Schengen State external border crossing points with consulates in non-EU nations. It is utilised to process visa applications, match biometrics and improve European security. Schengen States are able to share visa information through the Visa Informa-

possible by using biometric information to verify a visa holder's identity. Additionally, the system makes it easier to issue visas, especially for frequent travellers. For example, VIS will assist in combating and preventing fraudulent activities like visa shopping, which is the act of applying for visas to other EU countries again after a first application has been denied. Biometric technology helps prevent identity theft and makes it possible to identify travelers using some-

gen Area are exempt from providing fresh finger scans each time they apply for a new visa. After being saved in VIS, finger scans can be used for additional visa applications for up to five years. The finger scans of the visa holder may be compared to those stored in the database at the external borders of the Schengen Area. A mismatch will only result in additional identity verification for the traveller; it does not automatically mean that entry will be denied.

Who operates VIS and which nations use it? VIS is applicable to all Schengen States as a Schengen instrument. VIS's operational management is under the purview of eu-LISA, the EU Agency for Large-Scale IT Systems.

Who has access to VIS? The VIS can be searched by the officials in charge of conducting inspections at international borders and inside national borders in order to confirm the individual's identity, the validity of the visa, or whether they fulfill the requirements to enter, remain in, or live in the country. Asylum authorities and, in specific cases, national authorities and Europol have access to search the VIS. This VIS access is for the purposes of preventing, detecting, and investigating terrorist and criminal offenses and for the examination of an asylum application.

How does VIS protect my data? Only authorised personnel are able to access VIS data while carrying out their duties. They have to make sure that they only use VIS data that is required, suitable, and proportionate to the tasks they are performing. The VIS retains data for five years. This period of retention begins on the day the issued visa expires. Everyone has the right to know what information is in the VIS about them.

New Year-2025 message from SKILLS GURU

We are looking forward to a new beginning in 2025 as 2024 comes to an end. The New Year is a time for introspection, rejuvenation and facing the future with optimism and resolve. It is an opportunity to move past the difficulties of the previous year and look forward to new possibilities. As one chapter comes to an end and another begins, it is a time of hope, joy, and reflection. The New Year inspires us to set new resolutions and embrace new opportunities. It also gives us an opportunity to stop and connect with the people in our lives! Beginning a new year is similar to beginning a new phase of our lives. The New Year is the opportunity to write a fantastic tale for ourselves!

Think for a moment about what we achieved in 2024. The possibilities for 2025 are endless! May we find within ourselves everything we seek in the coming year! May we live in the present, dream of the future, and heal the past. The days that lie ahead are even better than the ones that have already passed.

Thank all of you for the invaluable and immeasurable support you have given to SKILLS GURU and the ONE in the past year. We couldn't have done it without you!

We will continue to stay connected with you in your journey for the year ahead, sharing hopes, information and embracing new opportunities with optimism.

Stay Inspired! Stay determined!! Above all, stay blessed!!!

With you in coming times too—SKILLS GURU

individuals and objects. During border, police, or other legal checks, these individuals and items may be found anywhere in the EU and Schengen region. In the absence of internal border controls, the system has assisted Europe in maintaining its security since 1995. The second generation of SIS, known as SIS II, was released in 2013 and included new features like the ability to attach photos and fingerprints to alerts. SIS was updated in March 2023 with improved features, updated data, and new alerts.

What is Visa Information System(VIS)?

Visa Information Sys-

tem (VIS) (consolidated version). A central IT system and a communication infrastructure connecting it to national systems make up this system.

What does VIS stand for?

Enhancing and strengthening external borders can be greatly aided by technology. Checks and visa issuance are made easier by VIS, which allows border guards to confirm that a person presenting a visa is the legitimate holder and to identify individuals who are discovered on Schengen territory without valid documents or with fake ones. Faster, more accurate, and more secure checks are made

one else's travel documents. VIS helps prevent, identify, and look into terrorist attacks and other major crimes.

How does VIS actually function?

When someone applies for a visa, their digital photo and 10 fingerprints are taken. These biometric details are stored in a safe central database together with information submitted on the visa application form. Children under the age of twelve or those who are physically incapable of providing finger scans are exempt from the 10-digit finger scan requirement. Regular visitors to the Schen-