



OVERSEAS NEWS AND EMPLOYMENT



PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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Emirates announces 19 extra flights to meet Eid travel rush

DUBAI: Emirates added an extra seven flights to Jeddah till April 13. This will give passengers an opportunity to explore well as providing the opportunity for travellers to head home to Chennai, Hyderabad, Sialkot and Peshawar. Amman and two additional flights for Beirut scheduled to accommodate for more travellers. On board the Middle



destinations like London, the Maldives or visit family and friends in Colombo and Karachi. In Kuwait, Emirates will be layering on six extra flights till April 20, catering to the significant travel demand during that time to popular leisure gateways like Dubai, Bangkok, Osaka, as

Emirates' flight schedule to Bahrain will also expand to 22 weekly flights starting May 2 to meet an increased demand for travel to and from the kingdom. With families coming together to celebrate after the holy month, the airline will also be adding four additional flights onto

Eastern flights, travellers will be treated to a specially crafted Eid menu for customers for flights departing from Dubai. Favourites like chicken biryani and lamb kibbeh labanieh, machbous and vanilla and rose mousse cake will be served, among other savoury and sweet dishes.

FOREX RATES		
As on 9th Apr, 2024 (In rupees)		
Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	84.13	83.08
Euro	91.12	90.04
Australian Dollar	55.69	54.61
Japanese Yen	0.59	0.54
Canadian Dollar	62.10	61.05
Singapore Dollar	62.57	61.53
Swedish krona	8.82	7.03
UAE Dirham	23.15	22.53
Swiss Franc	93.26	91.46
British Pound	106.13	105.01
New Zealand Dollar	51.05	49.61
Thai Baht	2.37	2.17
Hong Kong Dollar	11.60	10.29
Saudi Arabian Riyal	22.91	21.96
Bahraini Dinar	226.90	212.90
Chinese Yuan	12.42	10.62
Danish Krone	12.60	11.60
Kuwaiti Dinar	277.23	261.23
Malaysian Ringgit	18.52	17.17
Omani Rial	222.31	210.31
Qatari Riyal	23.63	21.38
South African Rand	4.89	4.05

Term Insurance for NRIs

MUMBAI: With over 13 million NRIs scattered around the globe, the quest for securing a slice of home in the form of term insurance has become more relevant than ever before. Are you among those NRIs eyeing term insurance plans from India, perhaps because options abroad seem pricey or less appealing? The landscape of term insurance for NRIs might seem complex, but it's quite accessible and beneficial once you navigate through its intricacies.

What is Term Insurance for NRI? Term insurance for NRIs is essentially a life insurance policy that provides coverage at a fixed rate of payment for a limited period. After the term expires, coverage at the previous rate of premiums is no longer guaranteed, and the client must either forgo coverage or potentially obtain further coverage with different payments or conditions. If the insured dies during the term, the death benefit will be paid

(Cont. on page-2)



Trade Test Centres: an invaluable asset to HRAs

(Trade Test Centres constitute a sector that most of the overseas job seekers do not know in detail or have little information about their activities. How many job seekers know that this is a sector that plays a major role in technical recruitments to overseas countries? We are trying to introduce this Trade Test Centre sector a little bit here. Let us take this opportunity to commemorate the invaluable services rendered by this sector to the HRA fraternity and praise them for their commendable services! There are many Trade Test Centres in different states of our country discharging their services silently. If anyone knows or come across such trade test centers, please let us know their information on 8828737706 (WhatsApp number)

In India TRADE TEST CENTRES became active in the mid 1980s. This mainly stems from the idea of providing FACILITIES for conducting trade tests to SELECT the fittest Employee for various skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled positions available to Overseas Employers. In short, these Trade Tests /Centres were introduced with the aim of assessing the occupational knowledge and craft-skills of workers who were short-listed for overseas employment. Job seekers who are interested to get selected for the job need to pass this trade test. These Trade Tests ensure that the workers possess essential trade knowledge such as the materials, tools and equipment used in the trade, work sequence, good practices to be adopted and safety requirements. Technical skills and practical knowledge of a worker is assessed here using the expertise and overseas exposure of experienced and expert trade evalua-

tors. Those who pass the Trade Test will be given Trade Test Certificate and in most cases selection lists are finalised in the trade test itself by the employer or the selection authority.

A Look Back
In India, the recruitment of skilled workers to GCC countries began in earnest in the early 1980s. The acute workforce shortage in GCC countries forced companies and sponsors to go to other countries in search of skilled workers. The journeys that began in search of skilled workers at that time brought companies and sponsors mainly to Mumbai, the in-

(Cont. on page-6)

HOLIDAY NOTICE

Thursday, April 11, likely to be Eid-al-Fitr, our offices will remain closed on that day. Therefore, ONE e-newspaper will not be published on Friday, 12 April 2024.



Driven by heavy tourist buying, Singapore's retail sales up 8.4pc

SINGAPORE: Driven by hefty tourist buying, retail sales were well up in February to record their second straight month of gains in Singapore. Takings at the till rose 8.4pc over Feb, 2023 and came after a 1.6pc rise year on year in Jan, noted the Department of Statistics. If motor vehicles were excluded, sales were up 9.4pc reversing the 1.8pc decrease in Jan, with half of retail categories experiencing a rise in turnover. Sales on a seasonally adjusted basis increased three per cent in Feb over Jan.

Takings at food and alcohol retailers grew 31.4pc compared with Feb 2023, while supermarket and hypermarket turnover rose 19.2pc. Food and alcohol sales were the fastest-growing category in Feb 2024,

marking the quickest increase since about a year ago, said DBS Bank economist Chua Han Teng. "The improvement was likely driven by both local and foreign tourist spending amid the festive mood," he added, noting that Chinese tourists were a key contributor due to the Chinese New Year holidays and the kick-off of the Singapore-China mutual visa-free travel arrangement from Feb 9.

OCBC Bank chief economist Selena Ling said the drop in certificate of entitlement premiums in Feb due to the increased quota hiked demand and could see higher motor vehicle sales in the coming months. Feb's total retail sales value came in at an estimated \$3.9 billion, with online takings accounting for 10.9pc, down from Jan's 11pc.

Air fares skyrocket as Vistara stir continues

BENGALURU: With Vistara officially announcing the cancellation of multiple flights and the huge delays experienced by flyers on the flights that are operational too, passengers are either voluntarily cancelling their tickets booked with the airline or are forced to book on other airlines at the last minute after the cancellation is announced.

Air travel has become an expensive proposition now, according to flyers who shared their agony on social media. Among the routes where Vistara flights were cancelled are Bengaluru-Udaipur, Mumbai-Kochi, Delhi-Srinagar and Delhi-Indore. This gets changed daily as the airline puts out regular updates on can-

cellations.

Ashwin Siddaramaiah, a hospital safety consultant based in Bengaluru, posted this: "I spent Rs 16,000 to book a flight from Delhi to Bangalore because Vistara cancelled the flight I had booked for 7500. Hope @Tata-companies are happy."

A Delhi-based flyer who calls himself Post Master on X posed this query to Vistara: Are you guys refunding money for those you have cancelled flight? And when?"

Another flyer, Ankur Deshmukh, shared the harrowing experience he and his friends underwent on the Vistara UK-864 flight from Bengaluru to Mumbai on April 1 after the unannounced delay and subsequent cancellation post mid-

Indian student dies in US

NEW YORK: A student hailing from Telangana died in the US state of Ohio and police are investigating the case, the Indian consulate in New York said. "Deeply saddened by the unfortunate demise of Uma Satya Sai Gadde, an Indian student in Cleveland, Ohio," the Consul General of India in New York said in a post on X. Since the beginning of 2024, at least students of Indian origin were died in the US. The Consulate said that a police investigation into the death is underway, and it continues to remain in touch with the family in India. "All possible assistance is being extended, including to transport Uma Gadde's mortal remains to India at the earliest," the consulate said.

night. He mentioned the financial strain on them as they were compelled to book an alternative flight with IndiGo.

Ajay Prakash, Board Member of the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality, told a TV channel: "There has been an immediate impact on consumer behaviour—passengers are avoiding Vistara for now and looking for alternatives. It's too early to gauge the effect on fares, but any curtailment of capacity is bound to impact fares, which are already rather high. If the issue is not resolved urgently, it does not bode well for the upcoming summer holidays, and we might see a shift back to family travel by road to nearer destinations."

Average salary increment in India likely to be eight to 11pc

NEW DELHI: The average corporate salary increment in India is expected to be somewhere in the range of eight to 11pc across levels this year, a talent company said.

As per Randstad India, professionals with a work experience of up

to five years, are likely to outshine seniors with the highest increment in the range of 10 to 11pc. The demand for freshers and junior professionals is uniformly high across Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities in India.

Further, for senior professionals with more

than 15 years of work experience, the projected salary increases are anticipated to be in the range of eight to nine per cent. Professionals at an intermediate level can expect a slightly higher average annual raise estimated between nine to 10pc.

Oman Air revises flight frequencies

MUSCAT: Oman Air has announced the revised frequencies for its summer 2024 schedule as part of a strategic network optimisation programme. The airline has also altered its flight

Delhi -10, Bangalore - 09, Hyderabad - 07, Kozhikode - 07, Kochi - 14, Goa - 05. Thiruvananthapuram - 07, Lucknow - 11.

Far East: Bangkok - 12; Kuala Lumpur - 04, Phuket - 04, Jakarta - 07,



timings to allow better convenience and connectivity. Travellers can fly direct from Muscat to 40 destinations. The number of flights to be operated per week:

Indian Sub-continent: Chennai -11, Mumbai -10,

Manila - 07.

GCC: Dubai - 28, Kuwait - 10, Doha - 14, Medina - 07, Jeddah - 21, Riyadh - 21, Dammam - 09, Bahrain - 07

The national airline operates a Boeing 737 and 787 Dreamliner aircraft.

IT portal for tax filing open now

MUMBAI: Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has facilitated taxpayers to file their Income Tax Returns (ITRs) for the Assessment Year 2024-25 (relevant to Financial Year 2023-24) from April 1, 2024 onwards. The ITR-1, ITR-2 and ITR-4, commonly used by taxpayers are available on the e-filing portal from April 1, 2024 onwards for taxpayers to file their returns.

Similarly, companies have also been able to file their ITRs through ITR-6 from April 1 onwards. As a precursor to this, the ITR forms had been notified early, beginning with ITRs 1 and 4 which were notified on Dec 22, 2023, ITR-6 was notified on Jan 24, 2024 and ITR-2 was

notified on Jan 31, 2024, CBDT said.

To facilitate the e-Return Intermediaries (ERI), the JSON Schema for ITR-1, ITR-2, ITR-4 and ITR-6 and Schema of Tax Audit Reports have also been made available for A.Y- 2024-25. The same can be accessed under the downloads section of the e-filing portal. In fact, about 23,000 ITRs for AY- 2024-25 have already been filed till date. Facility to file ITRs 3, 5 and 7 will be made available shortly.

This is for the first time in recent times that the Income Tax Department has enabled taxpayers to file their returns on the very first day of the new financial year.

Term Insurance for NRIs

(Cont. from page-1)

to the beneficiary.

Who is Eligible to Buy Term Insurance for NRI in India? Eligibility for NRIs to buy term insurance in India hinges on a few criteria. NRIs can purchase term insurance while visiting India or even from their resident country, provided they disclose their country of residence and complete the necessary formalities. However, checking with insurers is crucial as some may have restrictions based on the applicant's resi-

dent country.

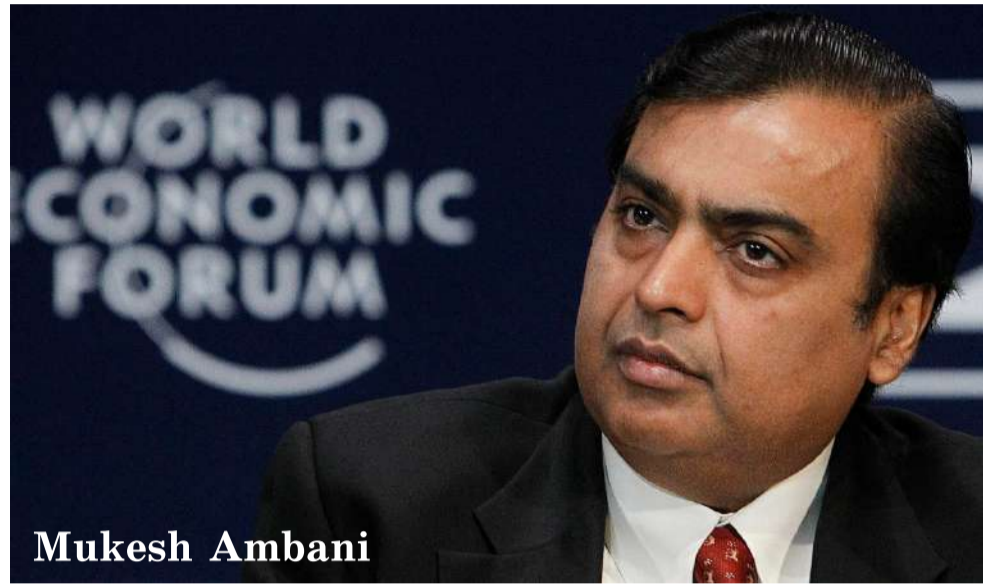
Features of Term Insurance for NRIs: Term insurance for NRIs reveals a treasure trove of features designed to meet the unique needs of those living abroad yet wanting to ensure their family's financial security back home. These features cater to the practical aspects of managing insurance from overseas and offer peace of mind knowing that distance does not diminish the safety net you can provide for your loved ones.

India has now 200 billionaires

NEW YORK: Mukesh Ambani is the richest Indian, as per Forbes 2024 Billionaires List.

Forbes has released its 2024 Billionaires List featuring 2,781 individuals, an increase of 141 names from last year's list. The billionaires, according to the list, have

Brenand Arnault, head of Louis Vuitton, features top in the list with a net worth of \$233 billion. The head of French luxury and cosmetics brand, Brenand is one of the consistent top five rankers of the Forbes list. He is followed by Elon Musk with a net



Mukesh Ambani

added \$2 billion to their net worth and now have a combined worth of the billionaires is \$14.2 trillion. The US has a record 813 billionaires followed by China with 473 billionaires. India added 31 more billionaires in the list compared to last year with the number now reaching 200.

Among the list of Indians, Gautam Adani is the second richest Indian after adding \$36.8 billion to reach \$84 billion. Savitri Jindal has maintained her position as the richest Indian in the list.

worth of \$195 billion and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos with a net worth of \$195 billion. Facebook founder comes next in the list Mark Zuckerberg with a net worth of \$177 billion.

Media mogul and Fox News founder Rupert Murdoch and his family owns a net worth of \$19.5 billion and is ranked at No.100 on the list. Popular celebrity Taylor Swift has a net worth \$1.1 billion. Adult star Kim Kardashian is also among the billionaires list with a worth of \$1.7 billion.

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Shortlisting in Progress

Abu Dhabi private sector grows by 35pc

ABU DHABI: In 2023, the private sector in Abu Dhabi continued its strong growth, reaching Dh338.9 billion, up 35pc compared with 2016. Supported by private

contribute 53.4pc of total real GDP.

Ahmed Jasim Al Zaabi, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development (ADDED), said: "The



Ahmed Jasim Al Zaabi

importance of our collaborative efforts is reflected in Abu Dhabi's growth indicators. Remarkably, we managed to achieve this strong performance despite global challenges, reflecting the strength and resilience of our 'Falcon Economy' and its ability to soar to new heights. Backed by decades-long experience,

the private sector and family-owned businesses in Abu Dhabi continue to contribute to economic diversification as evidenced by their share in the highest growing non-oil sectors". Family-owned businesses in Abu Dhabi represent 50pc of companies in the construction sector, which grew by 13.1pc in 2023 compared with 2022, reaching more than Dh97 billion, 60pc in the finance sector, which rose by 25.5pc to Dh79 billion, 80pc in the wholesale trade sector, which achieved a growth of 7.9pc to reach Dh63 billion and 70pc in the transportation sector, which rose by 17.1pc during past year.

Saudi can double hotel rooms in next 10 years

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia could double the number of hotel rooms in the next 10 years to meet the rising number of religious tourists, a top official has said.

In an interview to a TV channel, Elie Maalouf, CEO of IHG Hotels and Resorts, said the available capacity is not sufficient enough to meet the rising demand in Saudi Arabia, as the Kingdom is evolving as a global tourism destination.

"You have the religious travel, which is a unique segment of the Kingdom alone, which continues to grow. In fact, we understand that today we cannot accommodate all the potential of religious travel. So we probably need over the next 10 years, no less than double the hotel rooms that we have today in the Kingdom," said Maalouf. He said that IHG's two new hotels, which will come under the brand

names Regent and Intercontinental and will be built in the Kingdom's King Abdullah Financial District, are expected to commence operations in 2027. Maalouf said: "The development of these hotels, iconic properties, they are going to be the most luxurious and greatest hotels in Riyadh, and we are proud to be doing it with KAFD."

In a separate press statement, IHG said that

Regent Riyadh KAFD will mark IHG's inaugural Regent property in the Kingdom's capital city. Regent Riyadh is expected to be a 250-key hotel and will offer a signature restaurant, two specialty restaurants, a tea lounge and two cafes, along with a fitness facility and spa. InterContinental Riyadh KAFD will have 400 keys and will feature five food and beverage outlets, including a

signature offering, two specialty restaurants, and a lobby lounge. The hotel will also have conferencing facilities, a fitness center spa, a swimming pool, and an indoor recreation area. Maalouf said that IHG is trying to build hotels for both upper-luxury and middle-class people in the Kingdom, as well as opening facilities in Saudi Arabia's mega-projects and megacities across the Kingdom.

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GULF FAQs

How NRIs can register to vote?

I am an NRI based in Dubai. How can I register for voting in the ensuing parliament elections in India?

The Election Commission of India has announced the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. They are scheduled to start from April 19 and conclude on June 1, and it is possible for Indian expats in UAE to register as a voter. While non-resident Indians (NRIs) can register as a voter online as well as offline, they have to be physically present in their respective constituency to vote.

dress of the electoral district officer in India. The address can be found on the ECI website. What happens after submission of Form 6A?

The application will be scrutinised. For verification, the electoral registration officer will send a booth level officer of the polling area for field verification. The latter will visit your home address in India, as mentioned in the passport, for the purpose of enquiry.

In case you have no relatives to give a declaration for verification of your documents or if the officer



Up until 2010, NRIs were not allowed to exercise their right to vote during the elections. An amendment to the Representation of People (Amendment) Act, 2010 granted voting rights to the NRIs. Recently, the Press Information Bureau (PIB) shared a message on X "calling all NRI voters to cast their vote" this year.

FOR AN NRI TO GET VOTING RIGHTS, THEY MUST: Possess a valid Indian passport. Be 18 years of age as on Jan 1 in the year electoral roll is published in their constituency in India. Visit the Election Commission of India or voter portal service website. Select your state or union territory and go to the state election commission section. Choose Form 6A and download. You can also get Form 6A from the Indian mission in the country of your residence. Scan the filled form and affix a passport size coloured photograph on it. Scan self-attested photocopies of the passport pages having your photograph, your house address in India and other details. Also, scan the page with the valid visa endorsement. Create a login on the ECI website and upload the scanned form.

In case you want to apply by post, you need to send a signed copy of Form 6A and self-attested copies of the requisite documents to the ad-

is not satisfied with the verification, the documents will be sent for verification to the Indian mission in the country where you reside.

The final decision of the electoral registration officer will reach you by post on the address in the foreign country specified in Form 6A and also by SMS if you have given a mobile number in the form. As an NRI, you will find your name in a separate section for "Overseas Electors" on the ECI website." This is the last section on the roll of that particular part/polling station area of the constituency that corresponds to your home address as in your passport.

NRIs are not issued an Electors Photo Identity card (EPIC) and are required to vote in person at the respective polling station upon producing their original passport.

If you wish to apply for an NRI Voter ID offline, you need to visit the constituency in which your residence falls. This is how you can register as a voter: Visit the electoral registration office. Fill out Form 6A. Submit the requisite documents: including a recent passport-size coloured photograph, self-attested photocopies of relevant passport pages, address in India, and visa endorsement. You will need to show your passport for verification. Submit your application.

US H-1B visa lottery completed, check if you are eligible to file petition

NEW YORK: US Citizenship and Immigration Services has received enough electronic registrations for unique beneficiaries during the initial registration period to reach the fiscal year (FY) 2025 H-1B numerical allocations (H-1B cap), in-

in any subsequent selections for the fiscal year for which it was submitted.

SELECTED: Selected to file an H-1B cap petition.
NOT SELECTED: Not eligible to file an H-1B cap petition based on this registration.



cluding the advanced degree exemption (master's cap).

USCIS has randomly selected enough properly submitted registrations for unique beneficiaries projected as needed to reach the H-1B cap and have notified all prospective petitioners with selected beneficiaries that they are eligible to file an H-1B cap-subject petition for such beneficiaries.

Registrants' online accounts will now show one of the following statuses for each registration (that is, for each beneficiary registered):

SUBMITTED: The registration has been submitted and is eligible for selection. If the initial selection process has been completed, this registration remains eligible, unless subsequently invalidated, for selection

DENIED: duplicate registration: Multiple registrations were submitted by or on behalf of the same registrant for the same beneficiary. If denied as a duplicate registration, all registrations submitted by or on behalf of the same registrant for this beneficiary for the fiscal year are invalid.

INVALIDATED: failed payment: A registration was submitted but the payment method was declined, not reconciled or otherwise invalid.

DELETED: The submitted registration has been deleted and is no longer eligible for selection.

PROCESSING SUBMISSION: USCIS is processing your submission. It may take up to 72 hours for all of your case information to show on the case details page. While it is processing, you will be unable to access your draft.

able to access your draft.

Two NRIs killed in Sharjah fire

DUBAI: Two Indians were among the five residents who lost their lives in a fire that engulfed a residential building in Sharjah's Al Nahda area on Thursday night.

Michael Sathyadass, an employee of DXB Live at Dubai World Trade Center (DWTC), was one of the two Indians who succumbed to the tragedy. According to his brother's social media posts, Michael was a sound engineer who had contributed to concerts featuring renowned artists such as Bruno Mars and AR Rahman throughout his career.

The second victim was a 29-year-old woman from Mumbai and her husband is still battling for life in hospital. Requesting anonymity, the woman's friend said that the husband is currently in critical condition. "Right now, doctors have said that his condition is very critical. On Saturday night, we were told that the next 24 hours were going to be very important.

Trade Test Centres: an invaluable asset to HRAs

(Cont. from page-1)

Industrial capital of India. The foreign employers who came to Mumbai refused to go to other cities in search of manpower sources and overseas job seekers from different parts of India had to come to Mumbai for interviews, trade test etc. It is this incessant flow of overseas job seekers to

Mumbai that later earned the industrial capital the distinction of being The Hub of overseas manpower recruitments in India.

There is no mistake in saying that the history of trade test centres in India is the period from the time when people started going to the Gulf countries in search of employment till today. No research or historical studies are required to come to the conclusion that an FE (a Foreign Employer) was the inspiration and fuel for starting the first trade test center in India!!!!

Trade Test Centres—quickness meets placement

Though Trade Test Centers were started in

India with the idea of conducting skills assessment for overseas manpower recruitment, the industrial and technological revolution worldwide has forced these centers to extend their roles also in promotional and helpful services to HRAs fraternity like vocational and industrial training, overseas recruitments and overseas recruitment arrangements.

One or two trade test centers started in the industrial city of Mumbai in the 1980s were not sufficient to meet the growing demand for assessment and certification of skilled workers for overseas manpower recruitment especially to GCC countries. Subsequently, chain of trade test centres were started in different parts of the country following the inspiration and revolutionary changes brought about by the centres in Mumbai. Trade test centers have been started in all small and big cities like New Delhi, Thiruvananthapuram, Chennai, Madurai, Trichy, Patna, Lucknow, Ghorakhpur, Jaipur, Kolkata,

Visakhapatnam and Ahmedabad where human resources of peculiar skills are available to HRAs for their overseas job hunt.

Realizing the importance of trade test and trade test training, some prominent HRAs who conduct overseas manpower recruitment on a large scale have also started Trade Test Centres (TTCs). Tens of thousands of skilled and unskilled Indian workforce have successfully completed trade test training in these TTCs and got placed in various jobs in known and multi-national companies across GCC countries. Those programmes that started decades ago are still continuing today.

Quality meets technical skills

In assessing the technical skill and certify the craftsmanship of persons in various trades and grades for overseas recruitments, these Trade Test Centres excel in maintaining high skill standards.

The main objectives of Trade Test Centres are

as follows.

- To assess and certify the employability of overseas job seekers or persons participating in overseas recruitment drives.
- To maintain skill levels and reduce industrial skill gaps in both overseas employment market and domestic jobs.
- To find and train the required people in trades that are in high demand in foreign countries or in trades where skilled labour is in acute scarcity.
- Make necessary arrangements for trade test and interviews for HRAs
- To train and make fit the unskilled workers into skilled workers in various trades.

Trade Test Centres are considered to be pre-assessment centres for assessing the skills of overseas job seekers as per the requirement of Overseas Employers for overseas placement. These Centers are currently engaged in the supply of skilled manpower to overseas

/ global market in the fields of construction, automobile, welding, electrician, hotel and restaurant, plumbing, structural fitter, domestic help, refrigeration and AC, oil and natural gas sectors etc, etc. Through skills development programmes conducted in these trade test centres, skilled persons who are getting low salaries and benefits are moving to higher level jobs with higher remuneration packages.

All these centers have trade testing facilities for welding, fitting, plumbing, electrician, carpentry, masonry, steel fixing, overhead linesman, ducting, insulation, air condition etc. etc. More and more trades have been added on a continuous basis. Most of these Trade Test Centres have well-arranged and state-of-the-art facilities for the licensed recruitment agencies to conduct Interviews and Trade Tests.

(To Be Continued/Next attraction: SIMPLE BUT EVERGREEN TECHNICAL TRADES)

Expats in Oman's pvt sector up 4pc

MUSCAT: Oman's business climate received a positive boost in Feb 2024 with a significant rise in its expat workforce. Data published by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) revealed a notable 3.9pc year-on-year increase, reaching a total of 1.8 million expat workers. This growth signifies a growing demand for skilled labour across various industries, suggesting a healthy and expanding Omani economy.

The private sector emerged as the largest beneficiary, with its expat talent pool expanding by four per cent reaching over 1.4 million workers. Conversely, the government sector witnessed a 4.8pc

contraction in its expat workforce, indicating ongoing efforts to streamline operations.

A deeper dive into the data reveals interesting demographic shifts. Bangladesh emerged as the leading source of expat labour, exceeding seven lakh workers, followed by India and Pakistan. Notably, Myanmar saw a staggering 109pc surge in its expat workforce to over 26,000.

Muscat, Oman's commercial hub, unsurprisingly houses the largest expat population, with a slight increase of 1.6pc year-on-year. Dhofar governorate also witnessed a notable rise, due to ongoing tourism and infrastructure projects in the region.

Looking ahead, Oman

has a unique opportunity to leverage its growing expat workforce for sustained economic growth. Formulating effective integration strategies that foster social cohesion will be crucial. Policymakers could explore innovative solutions to channel outward remittances back into the Omani economy, potentially through targeted investment initiatives.

By implementing proactive policies to manage this demographic shift, Oman can maximise the benefits of its diverse workforce and solidify its position as a key player in the region's economic landscape. This latest data underscores Oman's growing appeal as a business destination.

More migrant workers fall prey to scams

SINGAPORE: As many as 500 migrant domestic workers fell victim to scams in 2023, Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam said. This is an 18pc increase from the 423 migrant domestic workers who were duped in 2022.

Shanmugam said this in a written parliamentary answer to a question from Zhulkarnain Abdul Rahim (Chua Chu Kang GRC) on whether the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) tracks the number of such workers who have fallen prey to scams. Zhulkarnain asked what measures MHA has taken to raise the workers' awareness of such scams during training, before they start work here.

In response, Shan-

mugam said as part of the Ministry of Manpower's mandatory settling-in programme, workers are taught measures that they can adopt to protect themselves from scams. He added that agencies regularly carry out anti-scam education efforts for workers already working here. "They are educated on the latest scam trends, so that they are equipped to detect scams and become advocates for scam prevention within their own community," said Shanmugam.

The police also run the Domestic Guardians Programme, which trains migrant domestic workers on how to prevent common crimes such as housebreaking, trespassing, and scams.