



Gopi plans spiritual tourism circuit

THRISSUR: Union Minister of State for Tourism Suresh Gopi has said that a spiritual tourism circuit connecting major pilgrim centres was in discussion.

Speaking at the "Meet the Press" programme of Thrissur Press Club here, Gopi said that he has shared with the officials of the tourism ministry his plan to connect certain pilgrim centres and would soon finalise a project. The spiritual tourism circuit will start from Velankanni Church and proceed to a temple

in Dindigal, Tamil Nadu. It will then connect the Mangaladevi temple in Idukki, St Alphonsa's tomb in Bharananganam, Malayattoor church, Ernakulam, Kalady Sankaracharya Tower, Kodungallur temple and Cheraman Juma Masjid.

The circuit will end at Lourde's Cathedral in Thrissur. The minister has directed the tourism officials to check the feasibility of the project. "The pilgrims can also take a detour and visit the Jewish Synagogue at Fort Kochi," he said.

Indo Gulf Middle East Chamber to launch sick unit revival project

KOCHI: Indo Gulf Middle East Chamber of Commerce (INMECC) has proposed to launch an initiative to revive sick industrial units in Kerala depending on its revivability and market potential of its products.

The idea is to identify such industries and carry out expert studies to find the reasons for being sick, details of liabilities and encumbrances, possibility of rebuilding and restructuring, future market potential and to prepare new DPR by hand holding the promoter.

The scheme is aimed at helping investors who are stuck in problems and are not able to start the venture by themselves. The DPR prepared by expert bodies would be presented before potential NRI investors through regional INMECC chapters in GCC countries, said its chairman N M Sharafudheen.

The additional investment needed to revive the industry will be in the form of equity only. Union budget may aim to increase disposable income for indi-

viduals, incentives for industry. Kerala has a large number of industrial units marked as sick units. These units are closed for various reasons. Huge investments spent to establish these units are stuck and are considered as dead investment. Entrepreneurs who are experiencing difficulties in running their units and are confident in taking their units forward with professional partnership and support may contact and register with INMECC, said Sharafudheen.

Kottayam man British MP now



Sojan Joseph with his family.

KOTTAYAM: Sojan Joseph, hailing from the tranquil village of Kaipuzha in Kottayam, has scripted history by becoming Britain's first Malayali-origin member of parliament. He rode the anti-incumbency wave against the Conservative party, which saw Labour return to power after a gap of 14 years. The 49-year-old won from Kent county's Ashford.

The constituency has been a stronghold of the Conservatives ever since it was created in 1885, adding sheen to his victory. Sojan, a nurse who has been in the UK with his family for the last 22 years, polled 15,262 votes. He trounced Damian Green, a former first secretary of state and seven-time Tory MP from Ashford, by 1,779 votes.

"We were all having a

sleepless night until news trickled in this morning about my brother's stunning victory. It was a tight contest as the seat

was a Conservative stronghold. We're so happy for him," said a beaming Alice Joseph, Sojan's eldest sister.

Survey shows NRIs will buy more homes

MUMBAI: A survey has highlighted that as many as 80pc of developers expect NRIs to buy more homes in the country in 2024 due to an attractive investment landscape, favourable regulations and potential for gains.

CREDAI - Colliers Developer Sentiment Survey 2024 - said, "To cater to this growing demand, developers are likely to launch upscale residential projects in relevant micro-markets across cities." It analysed the responses of 553 developers in 18 states.

At the survey, as many as

27pc of respondents said that they believe housing demand will increase by up to 25pc in 2024. Alongside, 52pc of developers expect home prices to increase in 2024 due to demand. About 48pc of developers said that to tackle this, the new government must focus on decreasing interest rates on both home and construction loans and rationalise goods and services tax (GST).

Boman Irani, president of CREDAI, said, "The survey suggests that the current developer sentiment remains largely positive with more than half of the

Visa renewal: expats can now do medical test at home

DUBAI: Expats in Dubai can have their medical test done in the comforts of their homes. VFS Global and AMH have launched the "Medical Examination Doorstep service" which enables expats with a UAE residence visa in Dubai to do their medical without visiting a designated medical centre.

The Medical Examination Doorstep service will be available as a premium offering through VFS Global. This service caters specifically to Category A visa holders seeking to renew their residency visas. It is an optional add-

on to the standard medical examination services provided at the centres. The collaboration is keeping with the Emirates Health Services' (EHS) vision on expansion of services. Customers can book their medical examination appointments directly from their homes or offices through an online or offline process.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED: Passport copy, residence permit/visa copy, 1 Passport size photograph with white background (photograph cannot be more than three months old) and Emirates ID copy

NRI businessman dies in Qatar

DOHA: Prominent Indian businessman and community leader Bekal Mohammed Salih Haji (74) passed away in Doha. He was undergoing treatment for certain illnesses for some time.

He has been in Qatar about 54 years and founded prominent establishments, Bombay Silk Centre and Lexus Tailoring. Bekal Haji has also been the chairman of several enterprises in Qatar. He was buried at Abu Hamour. He is survived by his wife and a daughter

respondents feeling bullish about the sustenance of the current market dynamics in 2024."

"With over 50pc of surveyed developers witnessing a rise in homebuyer enquiries, residential real estate has been on an upswing throughout 2023. This strong streak is expected to continue in 2024," said Badal Yagnik, chief executive officer, Colliers. The survey further highlighted that the new project launches have increased in the last two years due to high demand but are likely to slow down in 2024.

UK elections: 28 Indian origins in new British parliament

LONDON: A record 28 persons of Indian origin were elected to the UK parliament with several Conservatives surviving a largely brutal outcome for their party.

Of the 28, a record 12 members from the Sikh community, including six women, were elected to the House of Commons. All the Sikh MPs belong to the Labour Party. They include nine first-timers, two who have been elected for the third straight time, and one who made it to the House of Commons for the

second time.

British Sikh MPs Preet Kaur Gill — who defeated Tory first-timer Ashvir Sangha — and Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi won their seats for Labour in Birmingham Edgbaston and Slough, respectively, for the third time. Nadia Whittome, who identifies as queer and a Catholic Sikh, won from Nottingham East for the second consecutive time. At the age of 23, Whittome was the youngest MP in the House of Commons when she was first elected in 2019.

Apparel, retail dominate informal enterprises, employ most workers

MUMBAI: Retail trade, manufacturing of wearing apparel and community, social and personal services were the top activity categories in the informal sector and employed the highest number of workers among the informal enterprises, says the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Enterprises (ASUSE) for 2021-22 and 2022-23 released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

The total number of

establishments in the informal sector increased to 6.50 crore in 2022-23 from 5.97 crore in 2021-22, recording a 5.88pc annual growth. Out of the total number of establishments, other services sector topped with the highest share of enterprises at 37.88pc in ASUSE 2022-23, followed by trade (34.71pc) and manufacturing (27.41pc), the MoSPI release said. Other retail trade accounted for 30.38pc of the enterprises and employed

29.80pc of the total workers in ASUSE 2022-23, followed by manufacturing of wearing apparel with 11.27pc share of establishments and 8.39pc share of total workers.

The unincorporated non-agricultural sector employed about 11 crore workers from Oct 2022 to Sept 2023, up from 9.8 crore in ASUSE 2021-22. More than one-third of this labour force was engaged in UP, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

Dubai Airport imposes curbs on non-passengers

DUBAI: Airport authorities have announced some restrictions for non-passengers as Dubai International (DXB) gears up for the summer vacation travel rush till July 17. Schools in the UAE remain closed in July and August, making it the most popular time of the year for families to travel.

As was the case ahead of the Eid Al Adha travel rush, only passengers will be permitted inside the terminals during peak periods. Authorities advised those dropping passengers to the airport to exchange their farewells at home. Additionally, ac-

cess to the arrivals' forecourts in both Terminals 1 and 3 is restricted to



public transport and authorised airport vehicles only.

DXB will see a "significant increase" in traffic till 17, with an anticipated total of 3.3 million

guests arriving and departing through its terminals. During this pe-

riod, 914,000 travellers are expected to fly out of DXB.

Traffic will peak over the weekend of July 12-14, when DXB is set to welcome 8.4 lakh passen-

gers, marking the busiest weekend. July 13 is projected to be the single busiest day, with 2.86 lakh travellers expected. On average, the airport will handle approximately 2.74 lakh travellers daily during the peak period.

Flydubai passengers are advised to arrive at least four hours prior to departure, while those flying with other airlines should arrive at DXB "no earlier than three hours" before their scheduled departure time. This summer is forecast to be exceptionally busy, with travel provider dnata reporting a 35pc increase in bookings

for international travel across July and August, compared with the same months last year.

Emirates Airline earlier told passengers to plan for extra traffic on the roads leading to the airport. Dubai Airports, which operates DXB, advised travellers: "Use the Dubai Metro to get to and from the airport and between Terminals 1 and 3 to avoid road congestion.

"We advise all travellers to allow extra time for check-in, security screening, and boarding processes to ensure a smooth journey," says Dubai Airport

Countries Indians can visit visa-free or get visa-on-arrival

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trian, Canadian, Schengen, Singapore or UK visa, or permanent residence permit from these states) Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste

AMERICA: Americas: Bolivia, El Salvador

CARIBBEAN: Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica,

Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago

OCEANIA: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Niue, Palau Islands, Samoa, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

MIDDLE EAST: Oman, Qatar



car, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Zimbabwe

ASIA: Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Laos, Macao (SAR China), Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines (valid or unexpired American, Japanese, Aus-

Dubai NRI businessman Ram Buxani passes away



Ram Buxani

DUBAI: Indian businessman Dr Ram Buxani passed away in Dubai. He was 83.

The veteran businessman had landed in Dubai in Nov 1959 by sea when he was just 18 years old. A well-known business personality and a philanthropist in the UAE, Dr Buxani was chairman of the ITL Cosmos Group. Hailing him as an inspiration for the Indian and business communi-

ty, tributes poured in from prominent figures. Dr Buxani held various positions at different companies in UAE.

Indian Ambassador to the UAE, Sunjay Sudhir, mourned the loss of "a guide, a role model and a mentor" to the community.

"He will remain an inspiration for generations of Indians who call the UAE home. He was one of the most prominent Indians in the UAE whose hard work, entrepreneurial spirit and service to the community will always be remembered," Sudhir said. The ambassador recalled the "warmth, optimism and passion" that Dr Buxani showed during their meetings.

Bharat Chachara, CEO of

India Club, expressed his deep sorrow over Dr Buxani's passing. "It is a big loss for the Indian community. He belonged to the generation of individuals for whom making money was not everything; they gave back to the community. Visionaries like him were instrumental in establishing institutions such as the Indian High School and the India Club."

Chachara, a prominent Indian expat, said Buxani was one of the founding members of the India Club and served as chairman for two terms. "He had a very dynamic personality and was very passionate about Sindhi culture. Retaining the community's art was a

(Cont. on page-3)

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Dubai NRI businessman...

(Cont. from page-2) project close to his heart.”

Kamal Vachani, group director and partner at Al Maya Group, extended his condolences to Dr Buxani’s loved ones.

“I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Dr Ram Buxani. He was a prominent figure in the

UAE business community and will be dearly missed. I extend our sincerest condolences to his family and friends during this difficult time.”

Dr Buxani was the founder chairman of the Overseas Indians Economic Forum (UAE), a prime NRI organisation in the region until its merger with “Indian Business and Professional Council” in 2003. Consequently, Dr Ram Buxani played a proactive role in bridging the gap between the Government of India and the NRIs.

His group’s first showroom of Cosmos was opened in Deira in 1969. Later, Dr Buxani’s group ventured into the hospitality sector, acquiring stakes in Ambassador Hotel, Deira, and Astoria Hotel. IITL Cosmos Group later also forayed into the F&B sector and launched Kwaliti Ice Cream. Dr Ram Buxani was the re-

ipient of several honours in the UAE. He received the Shield of Honour from the then President of India, the late Shri Giani Zail Singh, at the Vishva Sindhi Sammelan (World Sindhi Conference) for services to the community, in 1983.

Buxani is ranked as one of the most influential Indians in UAE by Forbes Middle East and is also listed as one of the richest Indians. Dr Buxani was the recipient of the Shiromani Award by the Association of Shiromani Awards, New Delhi, presented by Dr Shanker Dayal Sharma, the then Vice President of India in 1987.

Dr Buxani also won the Bharat Gaurav Award by the Indian Merchants’ Chamber, Mumbai presented by Balasaheb Vikhe Patel, the Union Minister of State for Finance, Government of India, in 2002.

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GULF FAQs

UAE travel ban explained

Please explain the reasons for UAE travel ban. How to cancel this ban?

The UAE has tightened visa-related regulations – from visit visa holders being urged to book their roundtrip tickets on the same airline to carrying Dh3,000 cash. Sometimes, when a visitor or resident of the UAE finds themselves in hot water legally or has issues with immigration, they may get a travel ban issued against them. This could also happen if one has missed out on loan or credit card payments. If you think this is a good idea to check if a travel ban has been imposed.

If you do have one, here's how you can cancel your travel ban online: 1. Visit the website of the Ministry of Justice and log in using UAE Pass. You may need to register separately if you have not registered with the website previously.

2. Once you log in, look for "Cancellation Request of Travel Ban Order". There, you will be able to find a tab called "Case Management". 3. After you click on that tab, click on "My Cases" to see the cases against you. 4. You can view the details of each case

and "request" for a cancellation on each case. You will be required to fill out a form and fill in your details at this step. 5. Finally, you may be required to make a payment on the basis of your case.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: According to the ministry of Justice, this service could take up to five working days to process. While filing the application, you could be required to provide documents that support your case for the cancellation of a travel ban.

NEW SYSTEM: A first-of-its-kind system in the UAE and the region instantly tracks all judicial enforcement decisions and cancels them after the required payment of dues. Recently, the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department adopted a new system that tracks the payment status, and once the respondent has completed the payment, it cancels the original decision. After electronic approval, this is then forwarded to the relevant authorities. In the case of travel bans being imposed due to non-payment, respondents can download a copy of the cancellation decision through the smart app. They can then proceed with travel procedures and show the soft copy if required.

What to do when cheque bounces?

Two months ago, I submitted my resignation from work and received my end-of-service benefits through a cheque. The cheque was returned by the bank due to the account being closed. My question is: What is the appropriate measure to take against the employer to claim my rights? Do I have the legal right to file a new complaint before the Ministry of Labour?

To answer such question, I would advise the questioner that: As a general rule, the cheque that bounces without being cashed from the drawee bank is considered an executive document pursuant to Article 667 of the Commercial Transactions Law no. 50 of 2022, which states that ("The cheque on which the drawee states that it has no or insufficient balance shall be an executive instrument. The bearer of cheque may request the execu-

tion thereof, in whole or in part, by force. The provisions, procedures and rules set out in the Civil Procedures Law shall apply to the application for execution and contention therein.")

The Authority for the Unification of Federal and Local Judicial Principles decided on Dec 21, 2023, by majority rule, in Request No. (1) of 2023 submitted by the Attorney General of the Federation, to unify the legal principle, considering that the phrase "closing the account" is equivalent to the phrases "has no or insufficient balance" stipulated in Article 667 of the Federal Decree Law no. 50 of 2022 regarding the issuance of the Commercial Transactions Law.

As a result, you have the right to file a direct execution case in front of the court to recover the amount of the cheque. With regard to filing a new complaint, if you have signed a previous settlement before the Labour Of-

fice that resulted in the cheque you currently have, this means that you have signed a clause in the settlement stating that you

have waived your rights, which means that you are not entitled to file a new complaint before the Labour Office.

Verbal abuse in office, what to do?



I work at a freezone company as an administrative executive. A new team leader recently joined our small three-member department. He is highly disrespectful and often demeans us; his directives are usually inappropriate and unprofessional. Sometimes, he shouts at us and, moments later, buys us snacks to make up for it! However, he is cordial with the company's directors and C-suit executives, and it is impossible to register a formal complaint against him. What do I do in such a scenario? Who do I complain to without worrying about repercussions, especially since ours is a freezone company?

An employer in the UAE must provide a safe and appropriate working environment to an employee in line with Article 13(13) of the Federal Decree Law No. 33 of 2021 on the Regulation of Employment Relations, which states: "The Employer shall provide a safe and appropriate working environment."

Article 14(2) of the Employment Law explicitly prohibits various forms of harassment, including sexual, verbal, physical and psychological harassment. These forms of harassment may come from employers, superiors, colleagues, or anyone working with the affected employee. The said provision reads as: "It shall be prohibited to exercise sexual harassment, bullying or any verbal, physical or mental violence against the employee by his employer, manager or colleagues."

Furthermore, if your boss is being disrespectful and is using demeaning language or shouting at you in front of others, he is liable for imprisonment for at least six months or a fine up to Dh5,000. This is by the Article 427 of the Federal Law No. 31 of 2021 On the Issuance of the Crimes and Penalties Law, states: Article 427: "A penalty of punished imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding Dh5,000 shall be imposed if the libel or slander is committed on the telephone or directly against the victim in the presence of others."

If your boss verbally abuses or shouts at you, you may consider filing a complaint against your new boss with the Ministry of HR and Emiratization (MoHRE). Thereafter, you may consider resigning from your employment without serving notice within five days after registering the complaint with MoHRE.

This is by Article 45(2) of the Employment Law, which states, "The employee may quit work without notice and reserve all his entitlements at the end of the service if the employee is subject to assault, violence or harassment at the workplace by the employer, or his legal representative, provided that the employee reports such act to the concerned authorities and the ministry within five working days from the date on which he is able to report."

Approach to virtual interviews

How to prepare for a virtual interview?

Here are some important things to prepare effectively for virtual interviews:

- **Allow sufficient time or advance notice to prepare for the interview.** It is important to give candidates time to prepare for the virtual interview. It is also a professional courtesy. This scenario ensures confidence in the candidates by giving them an opportunity to prepare and perform well. Interviewing with advance notice allows candidates to demonstrate their professionalism and thoughtfulness, leading to a more positive candidate experience.

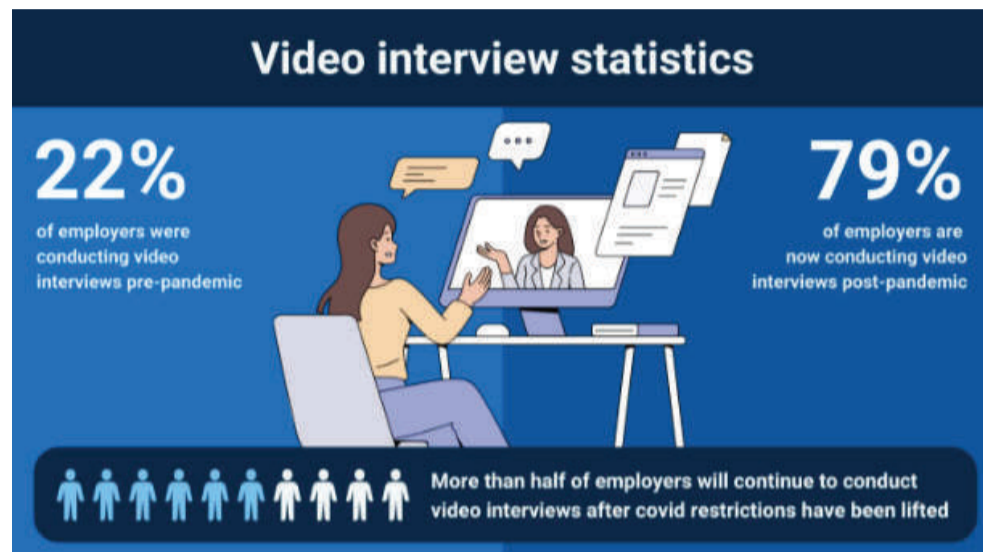
- **Prepare questions and develop a standardised rating system.** Prepare questions to ask in the virtual interview. Use the candidate's resume, cover letter, additional documentation, special experience, and qualifications to develop questions to ask. As with in-person interviews, make sure each virtual interview question has a specific purpose and develop a standardised system for evaluating each candidate's qualifications. A rating system can be used to keep track of the virtual interview process. Once the virtual interviews



By Sajan MS

panel. There may be multiple people from different departments, roles, and backgrounds to interview the candidates. Find out

visible to minimize technical glitches as there is limited time to submit for the interview call. A tech test can avoid poor connection,



what skills panel members need when interviewing and give them sample questions to ask. The technical-know-how of the virtual interview platform used should also be imparted to the panel members.

Test your tech for a video interview

Testing the technology for video interview appointments is essential to get the best results from the virtual interview process. Doing these checks before the video interview appointment will ensure that there are no technical

inaudible audio or other issues disrupting the virtual interview. Testing the video setup ahead of time is essential to making a good impression. Interviews are about getting to know a person. If the virtual interview is fraught with technical issues or inefficiencies, the perception that your company is disorganised or inefficient may cause potential candidates to decline the job offer.

Tips for virtual interview testing and preparation-

Download the software and create an account

- Have the necessary software on the computer before the virtual interview date is a critical starting point. After confirming on which platform the video interview will be conducted, the video setup should be checked on that particular platform. Check the internet speed

- **A flawless video interview cannot be done with a slow internet connection.** Internet speed test is easy to do from any device. Make sure the internet connection provides good upload and download speed. Check the audio input and output settings

Ensure that the best audio input and output results are available. Make sure Input and Output are set to "Built-in" and that speakers are selected if using speakers. Check your lighting/ video

• Video components of a virtual interview is just as important as having reliable audio. In most office settings, overhead fluorescent lighting creates shadows. For best results, front-light should be on during the virtual interview. It may be worth investing in a portable Ring light for setting up virtual interviews. If the office has a window, the camera can see the natural light illuminating the face while facing the window during the interview. Check the camera position

- **Adjustments of camera angles will help you look good and make a good impression in interviews.** Preview what the camera angle will look like before con-

process you plan to use for this video interview. Send them a link to check and connect for a short call where you can make sure you can hear each other. You can judge how clear your audio is and what the background looks like. Dress that matters*Even if you're at home for the interview, it's important to dress appropriately for the occasion, as what you wear reflects your level of professionalism.

Checklist to follow on the day of virtual Interview

- * Make sure that there are no external disturbances
- * Prepare a copy of resume and any other notes for reference
- * Check if webcam is working
- * Check if au-

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necting to the call. Open the video chat software to see a preview of what it looks like on the device's camera. What is in the background? * It is essential to consider what is in the background in the virtual interview. If in an office, make sure nothing confidential is visible. If interviewing at home, check beforehand that nothing inappropriate or unprofessional is visible in the frame. Make a test interview /mock interview * once you have prepared as many technical settings as possible for the video interview, conduct a test call with a colleague. This person can work from home or in another room. Connect with him using the same

dio is working * Clear desk space, except for a notepad and pen/pencil to take notes * Have a glass or bottle of water ready for use * Close windows, tabs or applications on computer that are not using * Check the internet connection and make sure that not downloading anything in the background * Put phone on silent * Check that the background behind is neutral and uncluttered * Adjust the lights in the room. If things seem dark or dim, bring in an extra desk lamp to brighten up the space * **(To Be Continued Later with updates / NEXT: Go with Trending Jobs)**

Why Do Recruiters Use Virtual Interviews?



are completed, this rating system will help determine the most promising applicants.

- **Prepare your interview**

difficulties on the day. The most important of which is to ensure smooth communication throughout the interview. It would be ad-