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Dubai eases residence visa rules, scraps minimum property value threshold

DUBAI: Dubai has eased requirements for a two-year real estate investor residency visa, removing the minimum property value threshold for sole owners while introducing a Dh4 lakh minimum per investor for jointly owned investments, in a move aimed at widening investor access.

Under updated rules issued by the Dubai Land Department via its Cube platform, the previous Dh7.5 lakh minimum for individual property ownership has been scrapped, provided the applicant is the sole owner of the asset. For jointly owned properties, authorities have set a minimum share value of Dh4 lakh per investor, including cases where ownership is split equally between partners.

The changes reflect Dubai's broader push to increase regulatory flexibility, attract a wider pool

of investors and enhance the emirate's competitiveness in global real estate markets.

To sponsor a family in Dubai, you must provide the following documents with your application:

*Title deed of the property in Dubai (other emirates and DIFCA are not accepted).

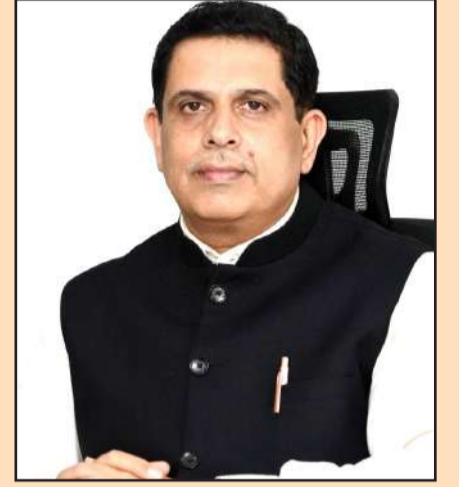
*A clear passport copy (Passport valid for more than six months).

(Cont. on page - 2)

Mangesh Joshi assumes charge as director of tourism, Maharashtra

MUMBAI: The government of Maharashtra has appointed Mangesh Joshi, (IAS), as the new Director of the Directorate of Tourism. He has assumed charge of his position at the Directorate of Tourism, Mumbai.

Prior to this appointment, Joshi served as Deputy Director General at the Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA), Pune, where he effectively discharged his responsibilities. Joshi brings with him substantial



administration experience. He has effectively discharged his responsibilities. Joshi brings with him substantial (Cont. on page - 2)

Brand USA introduces Global Ambassador Program in India

MUMBAI: Brand USA, the destination marketing organisation for the US has announced the expansion of its Global Ambassador Program to India in 2026, marking the initia-

tive's debut in the market as part of a wider international rollout aligned with the America250 celebrations.

The programme aims to appoint 250 travel trade

ambassadors across key global markets by July 4, 2026, strengthening engagement with the travel advisor community and supporting inbound tourism to the US.

Applications for the India cohort opened on April 27 with travel advisors invited to apply via <https://ambassador-application-five.vercel.app/> by submitting either a written or video

entry outlining their passion for the US and their contributions to the travel trade.

Malcolm Smith, Senior Vice President, Global Markets and Chief Trade and Product Development Officer at Brand US, said:

"Travel advisors are one of the most powerful drivers of international visitation and their influence extends well beyond individual bookings. Through the expanded Brand USA Global Ambassador Program, we're investing in a network of highly engaged experts who can amplify US destination knowledge within their markets. As a platform designed to connect the travel trade and in-

(Cont. on page - 2)

In five years, 50 new airports, says Naidu

NEW DELHI: Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu said that the government has committed to building 50 new airports within the next five years, which will greatly improve

regional connectivity and boost economic activity.

Building more airports is just one part of the government's global strategy to strengthen the aviation ecosystem, improve ac-

cessibility to tier-II and tier-III cities and meet the demands of growing passenger demand. Building more airports will help develop India's aviation infrastructure, allow people to travel by air easier and support the growth of tourism, commerce, and business travel throughout different regions. Increased connectivity will also improve logistics and create balanced development between regions.

According to the minister, developing and expanding the airport's infrastructure will likely create a significant multiplier effect on real estate development. This will happen mainly



in developing metropolitan areas due to improved connectivity of these areas, leading to an increase in the demand for residential, commercial, and hospitality developments. The stakeholders in this industry have indicated that improved air connectivity will contribute to increasing investment flow, employment generation and urbanisation, which will all promote economic growth at large.

UAE to exit OPEC from May 1

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced it will exit the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and the broader OPEC+ grouping with effect from May 1, marking a significant shift in its long-term energy strategy.

The move, it said, reflects the country's evolving energy profile and increased focus on expanding domestic production while maintaining a "responsible, reliable and forward-looking" role in global energy markets.

The move, it said, reflects the country's evolving energy profile and increased focus on expanding domestic production while maintaining a "responsible, reliable and forward-looking" role in global energy markets.

HOLIDAY NOTICE

Friday, May 1st, being **Labour Day & Maharashtra Day** our offices will remain closed on that day.





Win-win FTA

After signing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with UK, India has now inked a historic FTA with New Zealand. The pact will come into effect later this year. New Zealand's trade minister Todd McClay and Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal signed the official documents. The pact aims to double bilateral trade to about \$5 billion over the next five years -- a significant expansion from current levels.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the India-New Zealand FTA as both a "historic milestone" and a "once-in-a-generation" pact, highlighting its potential to significantly deepen economic ties and expand opportunities across sectors. In his statement, Modi said the FTA reflects a strengthening economic partnership anchored in shared democratic values, trust and ambition. He emphasised that the deal would unlock new opportunities for farmers, youth, women, MSMEs, artisans, startups, students and innovators.

Editorial
By El. Vaidyanathan



The investment commitment of \$20 billion by New Zealand will further strengthen our co-operation in agriculture, manufacturing, innovation and technology paving the way for a more prosperous and dynamic future for both countries, Modi said in a social media post.

It may be recalled that negotiations for the trade deal resumed in March 2025 after a decade-long pause in talks. The negotiations were wrapped up by Dec 2025 -- one of India's fastest FTA processes. It is important to mention here that the pact has won bipartisan support from New Zealand's major parties. Commenting on the FTA, Agneshwar Sen, Trade Policy leader, EY India, said: "New Zealand's offer to eliminate duties on 100pc of its tariff lines on entry into force of the agreement, covering all 8,284 lines, means Indian goods in textiles, apparel, leather, pharma, machinery and auto components enter New Zealand duty-free, erasing an average applied tariff of 2.2pc. It may be noted that the average includes a 10pc tariff on some of our labour intensive exports like clothing and leather products, which also now get the tariff free treatment."

On the job front, the FTA includes a visa pathway for 5,000 Indian professionals and 1,000 work and holiday visas annually. These visas will be available in sectors such as IT, healthcare, construction, education etc. Indian students and youth benefit from expanded post-study work opportunities.

With merchandise exports to New Zealand already on an upward trend, this FTA provides the policy certainty and assured market access to sustain that momentum.

Indian exporters will get 100pc duty-free access to the New Zealand market on 8,284 export products. About 70pc of Indian goods -- including leather, handloom, handicrafts and more -- will enter New Zealand duty-free under initial terms. New Zealand will eliminate or reduce tariffs on most of its exports to India -- including wool, wood, coal, wine and fruit -- boosting Kiwi farmer and export sectors. Some sensitive Indian sectors like dairy, onions, sugar, spices and edible oils are excluded from liberalisation to protect local farmers and industry.

Once implemented, the pact will reshape trade, boost goods-and-services exchange and deepen ties between the two economies. True, there has been some apprehension regarding dairy imports from New Zealand, the government has assured that the industry will be protected. Wonderful work done by both the governments and special kudos to Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal. It's a win-win situation for both the countries.

Modi hails FTA with New Zealand



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) as both a "historic milestone" and a "once-in-a-generation" pact, highlighting its potential to significantly deepen economic ties and expand opportunities across sectors.

India and New Zealand formally inked the agreement granting duty-free access to 100pc of Indian exports to the island na-

tion, including key sectors such as textiles, leather footwear and gems and jewellery. The agreement is expected to be implemented by the end of the year, subject to approval by the New Zealand Parliament, while in India, it requires clearance from the Union cabinet.

In his statement, Modi said the FTA reflects a strengthening economic partnership anchored in shared democratic values, trust and ambition. He

emphasised that the deal would unlock new opportunities for farmers, youth, women, MSMEs, artisans, start-ups, students and innovators. "The investment commitment of \$20 billion by New Zealand will further strengthen our co-operation in agricul- (Cont. on page - 6)

Brand USA introduces Global...

(Cont. from page-1) spire new USA specialists, it strengthens engagement and supports sustained inbound growth to the US as part of our broader international strategy during America250."

The program was first piloted in Australia and New Zealand in 2025, where it brought together 12 travel advisors to form the inaugural cohort of Brand USA Ambassadors. Focused on strengthening US destination expertise, fostering mentorship and encouraging knowledge sharing across the travel trade, the pilot demonstrated strong industry impact and set the foundation for global expansion. Central to the

program is a peer-to-peer approach, where agents share their knowledge and experiences within their own networks -- creating a more connected and informed travel trade community.

A platform for industry change-makers: positioned as a platform for engaged travel advisors, the program is designed for individuals who are passionate about the US and eager to deepen their expertise, share knowledge, and play a more active role in industry conversations.

With education at its core, ambassadors gain access to a range of opportunities through Brand

USA and its partners, including invitations to industry events, VIP networking access and a structured training program featuring:

Benefits for India Ambassadors

Official recognition as a Brand USA Ambassador for India for a one-year tenure, supported by a press release across leading travel trade media, along with a certified badge for use across the Ambassador's official platforms. Invitation to a kick-off event in India to onboard Ambassadors. A curated welcome kit featuring exclusive branded merchandise with the Ambassador emblem.

Mangesh Joshi assumes charge as director of...

(Cont. from page - 1) tial experience in administrative reforms, strategic planning and training, which is expected to contribute significantly to the development of tourism in the state.

Expressing his views after assuming office, Joshi said, "Maharashtra is a state rich in tourism potential. Our priority will be to ensure effective implementation of existing tourism policies and to promote the state's tourist destinations at a global level. We aim to position Maharashtra as a unique and safe destination on the global tourism map. Additionally, through sustainable tourism initiatives, we are committed to

generating local employment and accelerating the overall development of the state."

Joshi further noted that special initiatives will be undertaken in the coming

period to attract tourists by preserving and promoting the state's forts, expansive coastline, eco-tourism assets and cultural heritage, complemented by modern amenities.

Dubai eases residence visa...

(Cont. from page - 1)

*A high-quality digital photo of the applicant that matches ICP specifications.

Note: Please find the personal photo guidelines set by the Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs & Port Security here.

*Health insurance (from any insurance company in UAE).

*A certificate of good

conduct and behaviour from Dubai Police, addressed to the Dubai Land Department.

*Applicants from the following countries must bring their National ID: Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan.

*The applicant's name in the title deed must match the name in the passport.

*Medical insurance is compulsory for all residence permit applications.

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---Warren Buffett

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FOREX RATES
As on 30th April 2026 (In rupees)

Currency	Bill Buy	Bill Sell
US Dollar	94.55	95.8
British Pound	127.41	129.21
Euro	109.98	112.35
Japanese Yen	58.96	59.89
Swiss Franc (CHF)	118.99	121.59
Canadian Dollar	68.83	70.39
Australian Dollar	67.17	68.67
Norwegian Krone	10.03	10.32
Swedish Krona	10.04	10.33
New Zealand Dollar	54.87	56.12
Hong Kong Dollar	11.91	12.28
Kuwaiti Dinar	316.51	305.68
Singapore Dollar	73.51	75.2
Saudi Arabian Riyal	24.89	25.67
U A E Dirham	25.47	26.21

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Oman emerging as major logistics hub of GCC: Indian Ambassador

MUSCAT: Oman is rapidly emerging as a major logistics hub of the GCC and offers tremendous opportunities for Indian businesses," said His Excellency GV Srinivas, Ambassador of India to Oman, while addressing an exclusive webinar organized by the Indo Gulf & Middle East Chamber of Commerce (INMECC) in association with Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industries on "Logistics Opportunities in GCC Countries through Oman."

The ambassador emphasised that Oman's strategic geographic location, political stability, modern infrastructure and investor-friendly policies have positioned the Sultanate as a vital gateway connecting the GCC, Africa and European markets. Referring to the current global sup-

ply chain disruptions and evolving geopolitical situation in West Asia, he noted that Oman is increasingly becoming a preferred logistics and trade destination for businesses looking for resilient and diversified supply chain solutions.



Highlighting the strong and historic relationship between India and Oman, the ambassador stated that the bilateral partnership continues to expand across trade, logistics, infrastructure, manufacturing and investment sectors. He also underlined the im-

portance of the proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and Oman, which is expected to significantly boost bilateral trade, improve ease of doing business.

The webinar, held on April 26, 2026, witnessed overwhelming participation from business leaders, logistics companies, exporters, investors, and entrepreneurs from India and the GCC region. Thavishi Pandey, Deputy Head of Mission at the embassy of India in Oman, also participated in the session, reflecting the embassy's strong support for strengthening India-Oman economic co-operation and facilitating business engagement.

A keynote presentation was delivered by Dr Yousuf Hamed Al Balushi,

economist, strategic advisor, and Founder & CEO of SIG Oman, who elaborated on Oman Vision 2040, logistics sector reforms, infrastructure expansion and emerging opportunities in ports, manufacturing, re-export business and supply chain management. INMECC Chairman Dr NM Sharafuddin stated that the current global scenario presents highly favorable opportunities for businesses to establish operations and investments in Oman.

The welcome address was delivered by Dr Sureshkumar Madhusudhanan, Secretary General of INMECC, while Dr Davis Kallukaran, Director of INMECC, highlighted Oman's emergence as a strategic logistics and connectivity hub in the GCC region.

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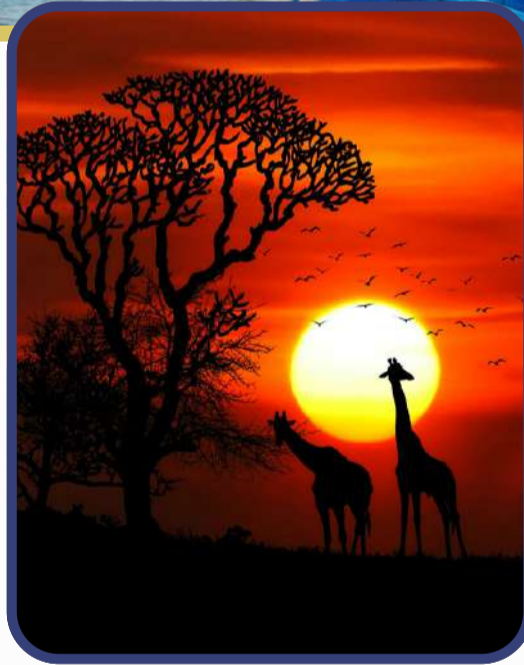
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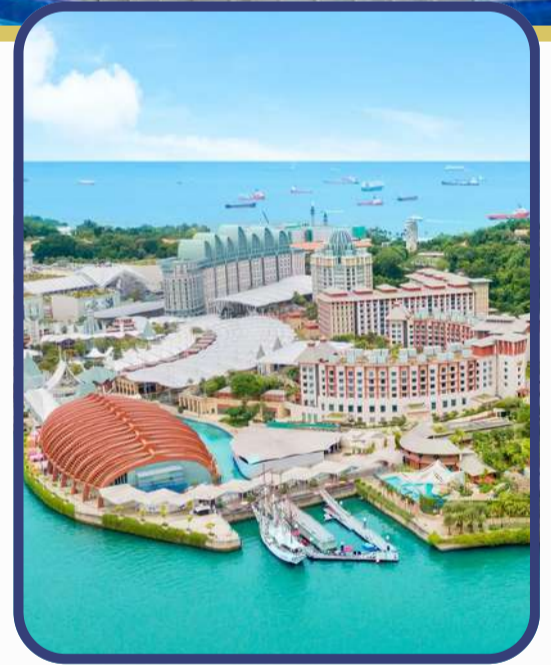
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GULF FAQs

Is WhatsApp text accepted in court as evidence?

Can you please explain the recent UAE judgment on the legal validity of WhatsApp messages?

Digital evidence like WhatsApp messages must be verified and examined for authenticity in disputes when they are presented as evidence, a legal expert in Dubai has said, citing a recent ruling by the emirate's highest court.

In a judgment, the Dubai Court of Cassation overturned a ruling by the Court of Appeal in a personal status dispute after finding that the lower court had failed to properly assess WhatsApp messages submitted by a wife who sought to prove that her husband had divorced her. The court referred the case back to the Court of Appeal for reconsideration in light of the electronic evidence and the arguments raised. In its judgment, the highest court stressed the need to carefully investigate WhatsApp messages in order to establish their authenticity, verify the sender and assess whether they satisfy the legal threshold for evidence.

Messages on platforms like WhatsApp can be edited, deleted or fabricated. Even real exchanges can be taken out of context through selective screenshots, altering their meaning. Metadata, such as timestamps or sender information, can also be tampered with or misinterpreted if not properly verified through forensic methods.

WHAT WAS THE CASE ABOUT? According to the judgment, the wife argued that her husband divorced her on separate occasions and relied on witness testimony as well as WhatsApp text messages that she said supported her claim.

However, the Court of Cassation found that the

lower court rejected the claim without sufficiently examining the messages, whether they were attributable to the husband and whether they fulfilled the legal conditions required for evidentiary weight.

Dr Hasan Elhais, legal consultant at Amal Al Rashedi Lawyers and Legal Consultants, said: "This ruling is significant because the court made clear that WhatsApp messages must be examined carefully to determine whether they are genuine or manipulated and to verify that they were sent by the person alleged to have sent them, before they can be accepted as valid evidence."

He said the ruling does not mean every WhatsApp message will automatically prove a claim, but it shows that in order to be used in court, digital messages must meet the legal requirements.

"In personal status cases, what matters is not whether the message was sent in a traditional way or through a modern platform," he said. "What matters is whether it is genuine, who sent it, and whether it meets the legal standards in the UAE."

WHY IS THIS RULING IMPORTANT? : Dr Elhais said the ruling is important for the public because it sends a wider message about the need to treat electronic communications seriously, particularly in disputes involving family rights and legal status.

"For members of the public, this judgment is a reminder that messages sent through mobile applications may have consequences beyond private conversation," he said, adding that these mes-

sages may later be used in court, particularly when they relate to rights, obligations or personal status.

In his view, the judgment strengthens legal certainty by clarifying that the courts are prepared to engage with the realities of modern communication while still applying safeguards to verify authenticity and legal reliability.

Heavy penalties

Penalties under the UAE Cybercrime Law can include substantial fines, often between Dh250,000

and Dh500,000 or higher, depending on the offence, along with potential imprisonment. Residents who use social media apps like WhatsApp daily for family, school, and community groups are cautioned that private chats are not exempt from the UAE's cybercrime laws. Lawyers say many people unknowingly break the law by forwarding unverified content or sharing images without consent.

"What many people often do not realise is that private chats and WhatsApp groups are not exempt from the laws of the UAE and sharing content may lead to legal consequences," said lawyer Sam Moore from BSA Law.

"Residents should therefore exercise caution and refrain from posting or forwarding content that may be misleading, offensive or intrusive."

Mistakes

He identified three common mistakes users make without realising

they are breaking the law: sharing private conversations by forwarding or taking screenshots without consent, forwarding unverified news on sensitive topics and tagging

or naming individuals in complaints that harm their reputation.

Dr Hasan Elhais, legal consultant at Amal Al Rashedi Lawyers and Legal Consultants, stressed that liability is not limited to public posts. "Private communications, including WhatsApp groups, have been the basis of successful prosecutions, reinforcing that "private" does not mean "legally protected," he said. "Penalties under the UAE Cybercrime Law can include substantial fines, often between Dh250,000 and Dh500,000 or higher, depending on the offence, along with potential imprisonment."

Several people have been arrested in the UAE this year for spreading information over WhatsApp. In March, 25 people were arrested and faced expedited trials for publishing and circulating digital content. Hamad Al Shamsi, the UAE Attorney General, described the video content as misleading and aimed at undermining national defence measures.



How can a housemaid file Case against employer

I am a housemaid. I would like to know what procedures I should follow to file a case and claim my rights from my employer. Do I need to pay any court fees?

To claim your rights, you must first file a complaint with the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MOHRE). The Ministry will take the necessary steps to try to settle the dispute amicably between you and your employer.

If the dispute is not resolved: If the value of your claim is less than Dh50,000, the ministry has the authority to issue a decision on the matter.

If the value of your claim exceeds Dh50,000, the ministry will refer the dispute to the competent court for judgment. Importantly, lawsuits filed by domestic workers are exempt from all judicial fees at every stage of litigation, meaning you do not need to pay court costs. These cases are also treated as

urgent. This is based on Article 23 of Federal Decree-Law No. (9) of 2022 on Domestic Workers, which states that:

The ministry shall take appropriate measures to settle disputes amicably. If no settlement is reached, the dispute will be referred to the competent court. The ministry may decide disputes where the claim does not exceed AED 50,000.

Either party may challenge the ministry's decision before the court within 15 working days of being notified. The court must schedule a hearing within three working days, and the case must be decided within 30 working days. The court's ruling in such cases is final.

In addition, Article 26(3) confirms that: "Lawsuits filed by workers under this Decree-Law shall be exempt from all judicial fees at all stages of litigation, and their consideration shall be urgent."

Extended Srinagar-Jammu Vande Bharat flagged off

SRINAGAR: Union Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnav flagged off the extended Srinagar-Katra Vande Bharat Express service from Jammu Tawi Railway Station.

The train, which previously operated from Srinagar up to Shri Mata

Vaishno Devi Katra, will now run all the way to Jammu Tawi, bringing the country's most modern train directly to J&K's largest city and railway hub.

Following the flag-off, the Minister inspected two of the most remarkable engineering structures on the

Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL), the Anji Bridge and the Chenab Bridge.

When Modi flagged off the Katra-Srinagar Vande Bharat Express last June, the train ran with eight coaches. Since then, the train has consistently been running at full capacity, with an overwhelming response from passengers. The decision to augment the rake to 20 coaches is a direct response to that demand, more than doubling the train's seating capacity at a stroke, and significantly easing the pressure on reservations and waitlists, particularly during peak



Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav flagged off the extended Srinagar-Jammu Vande Bharat Express service from Jammu Tawi railway station in the presence of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

pilgrimage and tourist seasons.

For the millions of devotees who travel each year to seek the blessings of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, this extension removes a persistent inconvenience, the mandatory interchange at Katra. Until now, a pilgrim had to alight at Katra and board a separate Vande

Bharat to continue onward, or vice versa. That break in journey is now eliminated.

OCI rules made easy

NEW DELHI: The Centre has changed the Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) framework, setting a uniform \$275 application fee and removing the six-month continuous stay requirement – steps that are expected to streamline access for thousands of applicants globally.

New OCI applications will now cost \$275, payable in rupees if applied within India or in local currency through Indian missions abroad. A \$25 fee applies for change of particulars or reissuance at age 20.

Six-month stay rule scrapped: Applicants above 12 years no longer need to complete a continuous six-month stay in India before applying. Earlier, applicants filing from India paid a flat Rs 15,000. The shift to a dollar-denominated fee standardises the process globally but may slightly alter the effective cost depending on currency movements.

The removal of the six-month stay requirement is a structural change. Many applicants, particularly students, professionals and spouses of Indian citizens, found it impractical to remain in India for such a long uninterrupted period.

Indians become Australia's largest migrant group

SYDNEY: Indians are now Australia's largest migrant group, supplanting the English for the first time ever, in a change that highlights the rise of immigration as an increasingly contentious political issue.

Some 971,020 people in

Australia — or 5.2pc of the population — were born in India, narrowly surpassing the 970,950 born in England, according to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The England-born population slipped from just over one million in 2013.

The third-largest cohort comprises those born in China, at 732,000, followed by 638,000 from New Zealand. Migration has long been a key pillar of Australia's economic growth, helping the country

avoid recession since the early 1990s, aside from a brief contraction during the pandemic. The population fell in 2021 due to international border closures, but the share of overseas-born residents has steadily risen each year since, climbing to 32pc in 2025 from 29.5pc in 2022, according to the ABS.

At the same time, immigration has become a political flashpoint as Australia grapples with its worst housing shortage in a generation.

ATF prices; airlines seek govt help

NEW DELHI: The Indian airlines have asked the government for urgent help in view of the rising aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices and said the industry is under extreme stress and on verge of closing down or stopping its operations.

Federation of Indian Airlines (FIA), comprising Air India, IndiGo & SpiceJet, wrote to the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) requesting urgent support required for ATF pricing to continue airlines operations amid West Asia crisis.

In its letter to the government, FIA seeks temporary deferment of excise duty on ATF, reduction of VAT in key states and reinstatement of crack band in line with pre-agreed formula.

FIA said airline industry in India is under extreme

stress and on verge of closing down or stopping its operations as the ATF Prices for international operations increased by Rs 73 per litre. FIA said the unprecedented increase in ATF cost has moved the airline's operation from 30-40pc to 55-60pc

creating completely non operatable conditions for airlines. Rupee has also depreciated further to its lowest level, adding additional burden on the airlines in terms of ATF pricing.

The recent surge due to the Iran War marked the first time jet fuel prices crossed the Rs 2 lakh per kilolitre level, surpassing previous highs recorded during the global energy crisis following the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022. Crude oil prices rose sharply by 45.5pc in

March due to the ongoing West Asia crisis. The oil marketing companies (OMCs) raised ATF prices by only 9.2pc sequentially in April 2026 for domestic operations.

Modi hails FTA with New Zealand

(Cont. from page-2)
ture, manufacturing, innovation and technology paving the way for a more prosperous and dynamic future for both countries", Modi said in a social media post.

The FTA marks only the second time India has secured such a long-term foreign direct investment (FDI) commitment in a trade pact. A similar pledge of \$100 billion was made by the European Free Trade Association in its agreement with India.

The agreement was

signed by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and New Zealand's Trade and Investment Minister Todd McClay, who was leading a 40-member delegation. The pact is expected to double bilateral trade in goods and services to \$5 billion within five years.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon described the agreement as a "once-in-a-generation" opportunity, noting that it would give exporters unprecedented access to India's vast market of 1.4 billion people and a rapidly growing econo-

my projected to become the world's third largest. Highlighting the broader impact, Modi said the agreement is "modern and balanced," aligning the complementarity ties of both economies while promoting collaboration across agriculture, manufacturing, technology, education and services.

He added that initiatives such as agricultural productivity partnerships and centres of excellence would combine New Zealand's expertise with India's priorities to boost rural development.