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PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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ADVISORY TO UMRAH PASSENGERS

JEDDAH: The Consulate General of India in Jeddah is continuing to assist Indian nationals affected by flight disruptions, particularly Umrah pilgrims. Its 24×7 Control Rooms in Jeddah and Makkah are facilitating help with food, essential medicines and other immediate requirements wherever feasible, with support from Indian community associations and volunteers.

In an advisory, the Consulate said it remained in regular contact with Saudi authorities, including the ministry of Haj and Umrah and the ministry of foreign affairs, to address difficulties involving visa validity and delayed departures.



With flight suspensions extended by Akasa Air, Air India, Air India Express and IndiGo, Indian travellers heading for or from Saudi Arabia should confirm their bookings before making their way to the airport. Additional flynas services and one-stop connections may offer alternatives, but availabili-

(Cont. on page - 2)

IndiGo may raise ticket prices to offset fuel costs, says CEO

MUMBAI: IndiGo may increase airfares to offset a sharp rise in fuel costs, CEO Willie Walsh has said, even as the country's largest airline reported a loss of Rs 1,879.1 crore in the Sept quarter amid higher fuel expenses and rupee depreciation.

Walsh said the airline would seek to minimise fare increases but had little choice but to raise ticket prices to counter the significant increase in its fuel bill. He also stressed that IndiGo's efficient cost base and strong liquidity put it in a better position to manage rising operating expenses without significant cost-cutting measures.

"But we have no choice but to look to increase fares in an effort to offset the very significant increase that we have seen in the fuel bill," Walsh said during a virtual media briefing.

"Obviously, we want to try and minimise the increase in fares that we are encountering. It has always been the case that India stimulates a lot of additional growth through the low fare that IndiGo has been able to offer in the market.

"But we have no choice but to look to increase fares in an effort to offset the very significant increase that we have seen in the fuel bill," Walsh said during the virtual briefing.

In his first media interaction after taking charge as IndiGo's chief in August, Walsh said the airline was starting from a position of strength because of its efficient cost structure and strong cash position. "We have very strong liquidity and that gives us a lot of options that many of our competitors won't have available to them. So we will continue to look at any measure that can be taken, but you should not expect any significant cost measures being undertaken by IndiGo.

"We can always trim some of our costs, but we have a very efficient cost base to start with and obviously the higher cost base of many of our competitors is an additional challenge that they face in the current environment," the airline CEO said.

Rising fuel prices, triggered by the West Asia

(Cont. on page - 2)

DGCA okay for Air India's flying academy in Maharashtra

MUMBAI: India's first flying training organisation established by an airline has secured regulatory approval, with Air India announcing the clearance for its academy at Amravati's Belora Airport in Maharashtra .

"The Air India Flying Academy, the first such academy established by an Indian airline in the country, will operate a fleet of 31 single-engine and three twin-engine aircraft for pilot training," the airline said.

Air India said it has got approval from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for the academy, which is at Amravati's Belora Airport in Maharashtra. Spread across 10 acres, the academy will feature digitally enabled classrooms, student accommodation, a digital operations centre and a dedicated maintenance facility. The facilities at the academy are in place. Air India also has an aviation training academy in Gurugram, Haryana.



Indian travellers move beyond New Year parties

NEW DELHI: Indian travellers are increasingly looking beyond traditional New Year's Eve parties and celebrations, opting for holidays that combine cultural experiences, outdoor adventures, cruises and spiritual journeys, according to Thomas Cook (India) and SOTC Travel.

The travel companies said that year-end holiday preferences are changing, with travellers seeking experiences that go beyond the midnight countdown, including Northern Lights excursions in Europe, cultural celebrations in Japan, premium island holidays and pilgrimage trips within India.

"New Year travel is increasingly about combining the excitement of celebration with the opportunity to discover a destination and its experiences," said Rajeev Kale, President and Country Head - Holidays, MICE and Visa, Thomas Cook. He said Indian travellers are looking to make the occasion memorable through different experiences, ranging from watching New Year fireworks over Sydney Harbour to exploring European festive markets and Alpine landscapes.

"Indian travellers are looking to make the occasion memorable through distinctive experiences, whether it is experiencing multiple destinations on a cruise or choosing a premium island escape like Lakshadweep or a spiritual journey in India," Kale said. Destinations such as Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland are among the options for travellers seeking winter experiences, including Northern Lights viewing, husky and reindeer sledding, snowmobile excursions and stays in glass igloos.

Japan is another desti-

(Cont. on page - 2)

CIAL makes aviation history with International DigiYtatra

KOCHI: Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) has become the first airport in India to introduce DigiYatra for international passengers, marking a significant milestone in the country's digital aviation journey.



The facility was launched on a trial basis for select airlines, with the first passenger travelling to the Maldives on an IndiGo flight on Oct 27.

The system integrates electronic passports (e-passports) with biometric facial recognition technology to verify passenger identities at designated airport checkpoints. It aims to simplify passenger processing, reduce repetitive document verification and provide a faster, seamless airport experience.

CIAL had introduced DigiYatra for domestic passengers on Aug 15, 2023. Since its launch, the technology has gained considerable acceptance, with approximately one-third of domestic passengers opting for the facility.

In another significant development, CIAL has launched Aviation Consultancy and Expert Services (ACES), offering its technological and operational expertise to other airports and aviation organisations. Kerala Chief Minister and CIAL Chairman VD Satheesan inaugurated the initiative.

Durgapur Airport in West Bengal has become the first client under ACES, with CIAL set to provide its in-house developed Passenger Verification System. CIAL Managing Director S Suhas said the expansion of DigiYatra to international departures reflects the airport's commitment to innovation and technology-driven passenger services. With these initiatives, CIAL continues to strengthen its reputation as a pioneer in digital transformation and passenger facilitation in Indian aviation.



At the Hyatt-Saraca signing ceremony

Hyatt, Saraca sign four-hotel partnership

LUCKNOW: Hyatt Hotels Corporation has signed strategic agreements with Saraca Hotels & Resorts to expand its hospitality portfolio with four Hyatt-branded properties across UP and Uttarakhand.

The partnership will introduce Hyatt's Unscripted brand to India through two existing properties — Saraca Hotel Lucknow and Saraca Resort & Spa Corbett. The agreement also includes plans for two new hotels near Jim Corbett National Park under the Destination by Hyatt and Hyatt Place brands.

Located on Mall Avenue, Saraca Hotel Lucknow features 41 rooms and offers dining and cultural experiences reflecting the city's rich heritage. Saraca Resort & Spa Corbett, spread across nine acres on the edge of the Corbett Tiger Reserve, offers 44 rooms and suites, wellness facilities, dining venues and

(Cont. on page - 6)

IndiGo may raise ticket prices...

(Cont. from page - 1)

crisis and geopolitical uncertainties, have pushed up airline operating costs and contributed to higher airfares. IndiGo and other carriers have also introduced fuel surcharges on tickets. InterGlobe Aviation, IndiGo's parent company, reported a loss of Rs 1,879.1 crore for the Sept quarter compared with Rs 2,582.1 crore in the corresponding period a year ago.

The airline's total income rose to Rs 24,311.9 crore in the second quarter of the current fiscal year from Rs 19,599.5 crore in the year-ago period.

However, total expenses surged to Rs 26,188.4 crore in the latest quarter, with aircraft fuel expenses jumping 67.2pc to Rs 9,966.8 crore. The airline said exceptionally high fuel costs and rupee depreciation weighed on profitability.

During the September quarter of 2026, IndiGo reduced capacity by one per cent to 40.8 billion ASKs (Available Seat Kilometres), while the number of passengers flown fell 4.7pc cent to 27.5 million.

ADVISORY TO UMRAH PASSENGERS

(Cont. from page - 1)

ty depends on the travel date. Passengers, particularly Umrah pilgrims, should check directly with airlines and travel operators for confirmed schedules, rebooking and refund options.

Accommodation and other services: Pilgrims facing difficulties during an extended stay can contact the Saudi ministry of Haj and Umrah's Pilgrim Care Centre on 1966, accessible within Saudi Arabia. They should register their concerns and obtain a case reference number.

Contact Umrah service providers: Pilgrims should remain in touch with their respective service provider companies for assistance. The case reference number can be shared with the Consulate's Control Rooms if further co-ordination is required. Refund concerns: The Consulate is in contact with Indian airlines regarding cancellations and passenger concerns, including difficulties obtaining refunds reported by affected passengers and tour operators.

Alternative travel: The Consulate is connecting Indian Umrah tour operators with airlines continuing to operate services to India. These arrangements depend on seat availability, applicable fares and other airline requirements.

Consular assistance: Indian nationals requiring help can contact the 24×7 Control Rooms in Jeddah and Makkah. The Consulate has urged affected passengers to stay in regular contact with their airlines, travel agents and Umrah service providers about cancellations, rebooking, refunds and alternative travel arrangements. It is continuing to co-ordinate with the relevant authorities, airlines and other stakeholders to facilitate the early return of affected Indian nationals.

What Indian travellers in Saudi need to know? The Consulate has advised passengers to verify flight schedules, bookings and travel arrangements directly with the relevant airlines before proceeding to departure airports. Indian nationals requiring assistance can contact the Consulate's 24-hour control rooms in Jeddah and Makkah, which remain operational. The Indian community in Saudi has also been asked to follow local rules and regulations.

Indian travellers move...

(Cont. from page - 1)

nation being highlighted for its traditional New Year customs, including Hatsumode, the first shrine or temple visit of the year, while Southeast Asian destinations offer cultural experiences alongside festive celebrations. Closer to home, spiritual tourism is also gaining momentum, with travellers seeking faith-based experiences during the year-end holiday season.

The companies said pilgrimage destinations such as Char Dham, Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain, Tirupati and Vaishno Devi continue to attract travellers looking to combine holidays with prayer and reflection. Cruises are another option for travellers seeking to combine New Year celebrations with visits to multiple destinations, with itineraries covering Southeast Asia, the Middle East, the Mediterranean and Australia-New Zealand.

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Currency	Bill Buy	Bill Sell
US Dollar	94.24	95.48
British Pound	126.12	127.89
Euro	104.94	107.16
Japanese Yen	59.67	60.63
Swiss Franc (CHF)	113.8	116.32
Canadian Dollar	67.08	68.61
Australian Dollar	65.98	67.42
Norwegian Krone	10.11	10.41
Swedish Krona	9.5	9.77
New Zealand Dollar	52.6	53.8
Hong Kong Dollar	11.86	12.22
Kuwaiti Dinar	312.1492	301.4158
Singapore Dollar	73.35	74.98
Saudi Arabian Riyal	24.79	25.57
U A E Dirham	25.39	26.12

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South Asian-Americans turn against Trump

WASHINGTON: At least 25pc of South Asian Americans who voted for US President Donald Trump in the 2024 presidential election plan to support Democratic candidates in the Nov 3 mid-term elections, according to a survey. The survey, conducted by advocacy group Indian American Impact, lists cost of living (65pc), healthcare (53pc), jobs and wages (33pc) and education (28pc) as key issues for the mid-term polls.

The Indian-American community has a strong presence in states such as California, Texas, New Jersey, New York, Washington, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Georgia. Texas is home to more than seven lakh South Asian residents and nearly one lakh registered South Asian voters did not vote in 2022. In battleground states such as Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and North Carolina, even one or two per cent vote matters to swing an election in favour of a particular candidate.

Among 800 South Asian registered voters surveyed, 87pc were Indian-Americans and the remaining 13pc were Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Nepali, Bhutanese, Maldivian, Afghani, Khmer and Burmese people.



Among those who voted for Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential election, 96pc cent plan to cast their ballots in favour of a Democratic candidate in the upcoming polls. The survey found that 67pc of South Asian Americans who voted for Trump still backed the Republicans, but 25pc said they would support Democrats.

The survey findings come as early voting has begun in several states, including Texas, where Democratic nominee James Talarico is in a tight race against Republican Ken Paxton, who is supported by Trump. Vasant Bhatt, a 21-year-old second-generation Indian American who had interned on Senator Ted Cruz's election campaign in 2024, said in a social media post that had voted for Talarico. "I just cast my ballot for James Talarico. As a second-generation Indian American, I am thoroughly disgusted by the xenophobia, racial resentment and increasingly brazen attacks on my identity," Bhatt wrote.



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GULF FAQs

Why UAE driving test takers fail even with 75pc score?

I am an NRI based in UAE. Can you please explain the nitty-gritty of getting a driving licence in the UAE?

Scoring 75pc in your UAE driving test may not be enough to secure a licence. Under new federal traffic regulations taking effect on Jan 1, 2027, learner drivers can still fail their practical test if they make certain dangerous mistakes, even after achieving the minimum passing score.

The regulations also set out how theory and practical tests must be conducted, the driving skills applicants will be assessed on and what happens if they fail.

The requirements are outlined in Cabinet Decision No. 174 of 2026, approving the Executive Regulation of Federal Decree-Law No. 14 of 2024 on the Regulation of Traffic. The decision was published in the UAE Federal Official Gazette on Oct 6, 2026.

Under Article 68, applicants must obtain at least 75pc of the total evaluation marks to pass the practical driving test. However, the regulation explicitly states that candidates can still fail, even after achieving the required score, if they cause actual or potential danger to themselves or others.

The same applies if an examiner has to intervene verbally or physically to prevent a dangerous situation. Under the previous UAE traffic regulations, Article 97 of Ministerial Resolution No. 130 of 1997, applicants needed to score at least 75pc to pass. The old law also listed dangerous driving mistakes that could result in automatic failure.



The new regulations make this clearer by explicitly stating that applicants can fail even if they score 75pc or above, if they make dangerous mistakes or require examiner intervention. The updated regulations provide greater clarity on the passing requirements and specify the driving errors that can result in automatic failure, regardless of the applicant's overall score.

What are the most common reasons for failing the RTA road test in Dubai?

Article 68 identifies several mistakes that can be classified as potential danger, including:

*Hitting barriers: The vehicle's body or wheels touching designated barriers or boundaries.

*Losing control when starting: The vehicle moving unintentionally because the driver fails to control it.

*Gear-changing mistakes: Making errors while shifting gears.

*Incorrect parking: Failing to stop or position the vehicle in the designated space.

*Ignoring traffic rules: Violating traffic signs or signals.

*Motorcycle errors: A motorcycle applicant's foot touching the ground while riding.

*These errors can result in failure regardless of the applicant's overall score.

*UAE Traffic Law: Driving offences that can lead to licence suspension or cancellation.

What will examiners assess during the practical test?: Under Article 66, applicants who pass the theory test must complete a practical assessment according to the licensing authority's approved testing plan. The assessment covers several essential driving skills, including:

*Starting the engine and controlling the vehicle.

*Driving forwards and backwards, including on slopes.

*Changing gears and stopping safely in normal and emergency situations.

*Parallel parking and parking between vehicles or designated markings.

*Changing lanes, turning and using indicators correctly.

*Navigating intersections and roundabouts.

*Overtaking and maintaining a safe distance from other vehicles.

*Using mirrors and parking brakes correctly.

*Following traffic signals, road markings and examiner instructions.

Licensing authorities may introduce additional assessment criteria where necessary.

Does the 75pc passing mark also apply to the theory test? According to Article 65, the theory test is graded out of 100 marks and applicants must obtain at least 75pc to pass.

What happens if you fail the practical test? Under Article 69, applicants who fail their practical driving assessment will be scheduled for another test. The provision does not specify a uniform waiting period for retaking the test. The relevant licensing authority determines the applicable testing arrangements.

All about parent-school contract

Can you please explain the significance of the parent-school contract?

One of the most important documents parents in the UAE encounter each year is the parent-school contract, a government-regulated agreement that outlines exactly what schools and families owe one another, from tuition fees to attendance rules.

Whether you're enrolling your child for the first time or renewing for a new academic year, knowing what this contract covers and how to sign it correctly can save your time and confusion and help you understand what your duties are as a parent as well as your child's school's responsibilities.

A parent-school contract is a legally binding agreement between parents (or legal guardians) and a school that sets out the duties, rights and expectations of both parties. Introduced by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) in 2013, the contract was created to reduce the number of disputes reported by parents and schools by making the relationship more transparent and accountable.

The contract acts as a single reference point for resolving conflicts and misunderstandings and it is now formalised and regulated by educational authorities including KHDA in Dubai and the Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) in Abu Dhabi. Parents must sign an updated version every academic year before their child can be officially enrolled.

The parent-school contract sets clear expectations across four key areas: Tuition and fees – a breakdown of annual tuition, mandatory and optional fees, sibling discount policies and refund guidelines. Academic policies – curriculum details, mandatory subjects, grading systems and promotion or retention policies. Behavior and attendance – discipline expectations anti-bullying policies, daily attendance requirements and punctuality standards.

Parental responsibilities: Supporting the child's learning at home, attending school meetings and maintaining respectful communication with staff.

How to sign your parent-school contract in Dubai? Once your child's school registers them with KHDA and publishes the contract, you'll receive an SMS or email with a signing link. The contract can be completed online through the KHDA Portal or via the KHDA or DubaiNow mobile apps. Ensure registration: Wait for the school to officially register your child and publish the contract in the KHDA system.

Access the contract – Open the link from the SMS or email or log in directly to the KHDA Portal or smart apps using your registered mobile number, email or Emirates ID. Review and sign – read each section carefully, including fees, attendance and curriculum details, then click "Mark this section as read" at the bottom of each page to accept the terms.

Confirmation: Once signed, you'll receive an SMS and email confirming your registration is complete. For parents in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, signing the parent-school contract isn't just a formality, it's a protective step that ensures both families and schools understand their obligations from day one. Reviewing the contract carefully each year helps avoid surprises around fees, academic expectations and school policies and gives parents a clear path for resolving any disputes that may arise during the school year.

PIL REJECTED

Airfares high? Don't travel by air, says Supreme Court

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday declined to entertain a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking intervention against steep increases in domestic airfares, with Justice VikramNath responding to the petitioner's concerns by saying, "Alright, don't travel by air. Next case."

The remark came when an advocate mentioned the matter before the court, arguing that airfares had surged by as much as 700pc and that air travel had become an essential service for many passengers. The court declined to take up the plea at that stage and proceeded to the next matter, as reported by Live Law.

The petition alleges that airlines sharply increase ticket prices overnight under the dynamic pricing system, particularly during festivals, holidays and emergencies. It seeks guidelines to regulate such fluctuations and prevent steep fare hikes during periods of high demand.

A related PIL filed by S. Lakshminarayan on the issue is already pending before a bench comprising Justice VikramNath and Justice Sandeep Mehta.

Airfares Soar

The court proceedings come amid a sharp rise in domestic airfares during the Diwali travel season, with passengers facing significantly higher costs to visit their hometowns or travel for holidays. An analysis of fares found that ticket prices on several domestic routes had increased by more than 300pc with some fares climbing over 450pc compared with regular levels.

The Delhi-Mumbai corridor recorded some of the steepest increases. An Air India one-way ticket for Nov 7 was priced at Rs 26,560, against a usual fare of around Rs 5,000, marking a 431pc rise. A SpiceJet return flight for Nov15 was listed at Rs 28,130, approximately 462pc higher than its regular fare. Other routes have also witnessed substantial increases.

NRIs cash in on weak rupee

DUBAI: The softness of Asian currencies, including the Indian rupee, Philippine peso and Pakistani rupee, is providing a benefit to UAE-based expatriates sending remittances. These currencies are trading near multi-year lows against the UAE dirham, allowing expats to receive more funds in their home countries.

Expats in the UAE are still getting a boost from weak Asian currencies, as each dirham converts into more when sent home. The Indian rupee, Philippine peso and Pakistani rupee are sitting close to their weakest levels in years.

The Indian rupee has opened weaker against the dirham on Friday, drawing support from a retreat in the dollar and a plunge in US Treasury yields overnight. Currently the Indian rupee is trading at Dh25.95 versus Dh25.83 in the previous session. Now, an expat will have to spend DH38.71 to get a Rs1000 in exchange.

PF Scheme to replace gratuity for expats in Oman from July

MUSCAT: The new Provident Fund Scheme for expatriate workers will come into effect from July 18, 2027. The scheme requires employers to contribute nine per cent of each worker's basic wage monthly, in accordance with the Social Protection Law. From the date of implementation, the Scheme will replace the end-of-service gratuity for the period of service covered by the Scheme. Workers' savings and the returns accrued on them will be disbursed in accordance with the provisions of the Social Protection Law.The gratuity for previous service periods may be settled through one of the following options:

1.Retained by the Employer: The Employer keeps the gratuity and pays it to the worker at the end of service. It is calculated using the worker's basic wage at that time, in accordance with the Labour Law.

2.Paid Directly to the Worker: The gratuity is paid into the worker's bank account upon implementation of the scheme.

3.Deposited with the Social Protection Fund: The gratuity is deposited into the worker's account with the Social Protection Fund.

MP projects 10,000 jobs as semiconductor, tech proposals cross Rs 5,800cr

BHOPAL: Madhya Pradesh has received investment proposals worth over Rs 5,800 crore in the semiconductor and technology sectors during the two-day MP Semiconductor Summit-2026 in Indore. The state government projects more than 10,000 jobs from the proposed projects.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav inaugurated the summit at the Brilliant Convention Centre on Friday . He said the proposals were received after one-to-one meetings with representatives of more than 12 companies and institutions working in semiconductors, electronics manufacturing, data centres, IT infrastructure, AVGC-XR and health-tech.

The state government also issued letters of intent for land allotment to five companies with proposed investments of Rs 9,625 crore. These projects are At the summit, the Madhya Pradesh government allotted land to five semiconductor companies for projects with a proposed investment of about Rs 10,000 crore, Yadav said. "At this event, we allotted land to five semiconductor companies for projects with a proposed investment of approximately Rs 10,000 crore," the CM told reporters after the conference.

India's white-collar hiring rises two per cent

MUMBAI: White-collar hiring grew marginally by two per cent year-on-year (YoY) in Sept, driven mainly by record growth in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (AI/ML) roles, followed by the auto sector. White-collar hiring remained largely teady in Sept, growing two per cent YoY, with the Naukri JobSpeak Index reaching 3,053 compared with 3,002 in the year-ago month, according to a report by Naukri.com, Info Edge's flagship brand.

The Naukri JobSpeak report is a monthly index that tracks trends in India's job market and hiring activity, based on new job postings (including free job listings) and recruiter searches on Naukri.com's platform. The report revealed that AI/ML roles continued to record growth, rising 20pc in Sept, while the Auto sector grew 11pc. BPO/ITES and GCC hiring grew four per cent each during the month, the report added. Among other key sectors, Insurance, retail, banking and financial services and real estate remained largely stable.

Hyatt, Saraca sign...

(Cont. from page - 2)

ature-based experiences.

The proposed Destination by Hyatt resort near Jim Corbett will cover approximately 20 acres and feature around 111 accommodation units, including villas, suites and residences. Meanwhile, Hyatt Place Jim Corbett Mohaan is expected to offer 70 guestrooms, dining facilities, meeting spaces, a fitness centre and recreational amenities.

Vikas Chawla, President, India and Southwest Asia, Hyatt, said India remains one of the company's most important growth markets, with significant opportunities in destinations offering distinctive cultural and natural experiences.

Mohammad Abdullah, Founder of Saraca Hotels & Resorts, described the partnership as an important milestone in bringing the company's properties to a wider international audience while retaining their local identity.

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